



Language

[D. Resisting Authoritarianism in Post-Communist and Post-Soviet Regimes \[1\]](#)

After the 'velvet revolutions' in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States of the Soviet Union, 1989-1991, and a period of political re-organization and consolidation, several countries involved developed relatively stable multi-party parliamentary systems. But many others (especially states formed after the disintegration of the Soviet Union) developed into authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes. As a result, a second wave of protests to oust these autocratic rulers and to promote a multi-party regime took place in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. There were significant mobilizations by opposition parties, combining street protests with contesting elections, in Romania (1996), Bulgaria (1996-97) and Slovakia (1998 – five years after Czechoslovakia's 'velvet divorce'). In all these cases the opposition won in the polls and, despite fears to the contrary, the ruling party stepped down.

Communist Yugoslavia had been outside the Soviet military and economic bloc, since 1948 and had in varying degrees at different times developed a rather more open society. After 1990, however, internal economic pressures, political intransigence and separatist nationalisms led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia into the separate states of Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia and the break-up of the former republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnically distinct enclaves, leaving Serbia and Montenegro to represent 'Yugoslavia' (until Montenegro's eventual independence in 2006). The breakaway of Slovenia, where there was an active civil society and peace movement, was achieved with relatively few casualties. But Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and finally Kosovo became engaged in bitter wars that not only led to crimes against humanity, but promoted extreme ethnic nationalism and poisoned the prospects of internal democracy.

By the late 1990s the processes of economic and political change influencing other parts of Eastern Europe impacted on both Croatia and Serbia, and both adopted models of protest mobilization and attempts at regime change through elections. A popular movement in Croatia developed in 1999, and underpinned a coalition between opposition parties that won the 2000 elections against the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) that had been dominated by President Tudjman during the 1990s (until his death in late 1999). The struggle in Serbia against the autocratic rule of Slobodan Milosevic, which achieved success in reversing the rigged presidential election in October 2000, drew on the tactics of the movements in Slovakia and Croatia (although Slovak activists had earlier learned from the sustained Serbian protests against rigged local government elections in Belgrade and elsewhere in 1996-97).

The Serbian example was especially dramatic, with protest culminating in miners and others from the provinces converging on Belgrade on October 5 and joining with activists in the city to seize the Parliament building and the TV station. The security forces chose to side with the demonstrators, and Milosevic soon conceded electoral defeat. This example subsequently influenced groups in Georgia, December 2003, and the Ukraine, December 2004, to prepare similar campaigns against rigged elections and to mount large demonstrations in Tbilisi and Kiev. Although occasionally labelled the 'Bulldozer Revolution' after the single bulldozer at the front of the 5 October procession, the Serbian revolution has often been presented as the first of the 'colour revolutions', and bracketed with the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia and the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine.

These successful (at least in the short term) combinations of people power with contesting elections in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union encouraged opposition groups in other countries in the region to use the electoral process to field opposition candidates and to organise protests against the rigging of elections. Similar protests – so far unsuccessful and on a smaller scale – have occurred in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Moldova. Kyrgyzstan achieved a change of political leadership in 2005, in what was hailed at the time as the 'Tulip Revolution', but the new president was ousted in turn amid widespread protests in 2010, and some commentators have queried whether Kyrgyzstan should be bracketed with Georgia and Ukraine.



Almost all the protests covered in this section have a number of common features that encourage comparison between them. They have all taken place in countries formerly ruled by communist one-party states. They have all occurred in semi-authoritarian regimes that included sometimes violent suppression of dissent but tolerated forms of civil society and formal political opposition – the most repressive ex-Soviet (Asian) republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not experienced this type of movement. Russia itself has oscillated since 1991 in degrees of authoritarianism, without major electoral protests until 2012.

This region still reflects former cold war antagonisms and both Russia and the USA still compete for economic, strategic and ideological advantage. These countries are almost all susceptible to the pull of the European Union and the influence of other European intergovernmental bodies; and the oppositions have been open to ideas, modes of protest and forms of organization in neighbouring countries. In addition the oppositions have adopted a strategy of linking popular mobilization to formal elections – a strategy that encourages external funding and support both for electoral monitoring (internally and by international organisations) and for electioneering. This electoral strategy is not confined to Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet bloc – it was successfully pioneered in the Philippines in 1986, and unsuccessfully attempted in the Iranian Green Revolution of 2009 (see Section E). But it has been dominant in the former communist states, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa (some of the literature attempts comparisons between the two regions).

Partly because of the political dynamics of the region, and partly because of the logic of a primarily electoral strategy, opposition movements have often (though not always) received an exceptional degree of external western support in terms of funding, organizational expertise and tactical advice. The role of various types of external support therefore often figures prominently in the literature. The post-communist states also provide a central focus for political and ideological debates about the underlying purposes of external intervention (although this is an issue that has also arisen in other parts of the world) – see commentary and literature under Section F.

Russia itself figures largely in the literature on electoral revolutions in former Soviet states as an external great power supporting authoritarian regimes. But developments within Russia itself are of course politically important, and there have been significant protests, though falling well short of threatening the Putin regime (see D.III).

Only one major and prolonged movement in this section does not fall into the pattern of electoral revolutions, and that is the unarmed struggle for secession and independence by the Albanian majority in the Serbian province of Kosovo from 1988 to the mid-1990s. This important movement committed to a nonviolent strategy was eventually superseded by a guerrilla wing that prompted Serbian armed attacks, which in turn led to NATO intervention in the conflict against Serbian forces. Kosovo is therefore covered first in a separate sub-section.

[D. I. Kosovo, Resisting Serbian Oppression 1988-1998 \[2\]](#)

Kosovo, with a large and growing Albanian population suspected of separatist leanings, suffered serious repression in Tito's Yugoslavia until 1966, when the powers of the political police were significantly curbed and the province gained greater autonomy, albeit still within the republic of Serbia. In 1981, however, protests erupted in which Kosovo Albanians demanded a republic, and for the rest of the decade tensions increased between the Serbian minority and Albanians within Kosovo, and between the rest of the republic and the province. A revived and aggressive Serbian nationalism was translated into a policy of oppressing the Albanians and suppressing their institutions from 1988 onwards. There was an impressive disciplined nonviolent mass struggle by the Albanian population from 1988 until 1998. But a group committed to guerrilla warfare (the Kosovo Liberation Army) began attacks in 1996, which led to a Serbian military offensive involving brutal retaliation in 1998, international condemnation of Serb actions and NATO bombing of Serb forces and Serbia in 1999.

For an insightful series of essays, which may not, however, be easily available, see:



- Maliqi, [Kosova: Separate Worlds: Reflections and Analysis](#) [3] (D. I. Kosovo, [Resisting Serbian Oppression 1988-1998](#) [2])

Clark, Howard, [Civil Resistance in Kosovo](#) [4], London, Pluto Press, 2000, pp. 266

This study, whilst explaining the historical and political context of the civil resistance, focuses primarily on the strategy, institutions and weaknesses of the nonviolent struggle.

Also , [Kosovo: Civil Resistance in Defence of the Nation – 1990s](#) [5] In Bartkowski, [Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation Struggles](#) [6] (A. 1.b. [Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [7])Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner, 2013, pp. 279-296 , pp. 279-96, and Clark, Howard , [The Limits of Prudence: Civil Resistance in Kosovo, 1990-98](#) [8] In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [9] (A. 1.b. [Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [7])Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 277-293 , pp. 277-94.

Farnsworth, Nicole, [History is Herstory Too: The History of Women in Civil Society in Kosovo, 1980-2004](#) [10], Prishtina, Kosova Gender Studies Centre, 2008, pp. 391

Gashi, Shkelzen, [Adem Demaçi Biography: a Century of Kosova's History through One Man's Life](#) [11], Prishtina, Rrokulia Publishing House, 210, pp. 240

Biography of long-term prisoner and human rights campaigner who was increasingly critical of Rugova's 'passive' approach.

Kostovicova, Denisa, [Parallel Worlds: Response of Kosovo Albanians to Loss of Autonomy in Serbia](#) [12], Keele, Keele European Research Centre, 1997, pp. 109

Kostovica's commentaries also appeared frequently in the on-line journal Transitions: <http://www.tol.org> [13].

Kostovicova, Denisa, [Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space](#) [14], London, Routledge, 2005, pp. 322

Primarily a study of education and on ethnic segregation.

Krasniqi, Gezim, "[For Democracy – Against Violence](#)": a Kosovar Alternative [15], In , [Resisting the Evil: \[Post-\]Yugoslav Anti-War Contention](#) [16] Baden-Baden, Nomos, , 2012, pp. 83-102

Maliqi, Shkelzen, [Kosova: Separate Worlds: Reflections and Analysis](#) [3], Peja/Pec, Dukagjini, 1998, pp. 261

Mertus, Julie, [Kosovo: How Truths and Myths Started a War](#) [17], Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1999, pp. 378

Interviews with both Serbs and Albanians about key episodes in the escalation from 1981 to 1990 are juxtaposed with a written history. See also: Mertus, Julie, 'Women in Kosovo: Contested terrains – the role of national identity in shaping and challenging gender identity' in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, University Park PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, pp. 171-86.

Waller, Michael ; Drezov, Kyril ; Gokay, Bulent, [Kosovo: The Politics of Delusion](#) [18], London, Frank Cass, 2001, pp. 190



Main focus on developments after 1996, the role of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the NATO war on Serbia (including documents such as the Rambouillet Text and the UN Security Council Resolution of June 1999). But chapter two (pp. 11-19) discusses Albanian schooling in Kosovo, 1992-98, and chapter 19 'The limitations of violent intervention' raises questions about nonviolent alternatives.

[D. II. 'Electoral Revolutions' and 'Critical Elections' in Post-Communist States](#) [19]

[D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [20]

The primary focus of many of the references in this section is on the nature of the movements that challenged rigged elections and tried to topple autocrats, the role of civil society, the significance of external support, and reasons for immediate success and failure. Many also discuss diffusion of protest. Since 'electoral revolutions' are also designed to secure longer term democratization of politics, important questions arise about longer term 'success' in changing the system. Within the democratization literature some authors query how far (if at all) system change was achieved by the colour revolutions – see for example Hale, Kalandadze and Orenstein, and Tudoriou below. (Some analyses of campaigns in particular countries covered under D.2. also comment on subsequent political developments which indicate little long term improvement in the conduct of government.) Accounts in the civil resistance literature tend to focus primarily on the movements and the immediate overthrow of governments, but for a very condensed sceptical assessment of subsequent politics in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan see Carter, [People Power and Political Change: Key Issues and Concepts](#) [21] ([A. 1.a.ii. Theories of Civil Disobedience. Power and Revolution](#) [22]), Chapter 6.

Beissinger, Mark, [Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions](#) [23], *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, issue 2 (June), 2007, pp. 259-276

Binnendijk, Anika Locke ; Marovic, Ivan, [Power and persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia \(2000\) and Ukraine \(2004\)](#) [24], *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 39, issue 3 (Special Issue 'Democratic Revolutions in Post-Communist States', ed. Taras Kuzio), 2006, pp. 411-429

Describes explicit strategies developed in both Serbia and Ukraine to increase costs of repression and reduce the willingness of the security forces to resort to violence. By combining deterrence and persuasion the organisers were able to avert major repression in 2000 and 2004.

Bunce, Valerie J. ; McFaul, Michael ; Stoner-Weiss, Kathryn, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [25], New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 360

Examines waves of change in 11 former communist nations, from 1989-1992, and the electoral defeat of authoritarian rulers from 1996 to 2005 in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine. This volume looks in



particular at issues of transmission and the role of transnational and international actors, with a particular focus on the role of the EU. The final section discusses the conundrum posed by political developments in Russia, and also Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. Individual chapters are also cited under particular countries.

Bunce, Valerie J. ; Wolchik, Sharon L., [Favourable conditions and electoral revolutions](#) [26], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 17, issue 4 (October), 2006, pp. 5-18

Analysis of 'second wave of democratization' in post-Communist states and why conditions in these states favourable to success, compared for example with failure of protests over fraudulent elections in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Cote d'Ivoire. See also by Bunce, Valerie J.; Wolchik, Sharon L., [International diffusion and postcommunist electoral revolutions](#) [27] Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 2006, pp. 283-302, discussing five factors in the diffusion of electoral revolutions, including the development of civil society and networks between 'international democracy promoters'.

Bunce, Valerie J. ; Wolchik, Sharon L., [Postcommunist Ambiguities](#) [28], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 20, issue 3 (July), 2009, pp. 93-107

Discusses why since 1996 some authoritarian rulers have been ousted but in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus opposition failed (in two successive elections in each case).

Bunce, Valerie J. ; Wolchik, Sharon L., [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 364

Discusses electoral defeats of authoritarian leaders from 1998 to 2005 (Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan), but also unsuccessful movements in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Analyses local and international actors and draws comparisons with other parts of the world.

Collin, Matthew, [The Time of the Rebels: Youth Resistance Movements and 21st Century Revolutions](#) [30], London, Serpent's Trail, 2007, pp. 224

Interviews activists from Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Belarus, as well as Serbia.

D'Anieri, Paul, [Explaining the success and failure of post-communist revolutions](#) [31], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 39, issue 3 (Special Issue 'Democratic Revolutions in Post-Communist States', ed. Taras Kuzio), 2006, pp. 331-350

Argues that while most studies focus on grassroots movements, elites – especially security services – are crucial in determining whether movements reach a 'tipping point'. Illustrates argument by comparing two 'failed revolutions' (Serbia 1996-97 and Ukraine 2001) with two 'successful revolutions' (Serbia 2000 and Ukraine 2004-2005). [Compare with Binnendijk; Marovic, [Power and persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia \(2000\) and Ukraine \(2004\)](#) [24] (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [20]) above.]

Forbrig, Joerg ; Demes, Pavol, [Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe](#) [32], Washington DC, German Marshall Fund of USA, 2007, pp. 254

First section includes contributions from Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia and the Ukraine. Second section is comparative discussion on range of issues by authors including Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, Taras Kuzio and Vitali Silitski.

Hale, Henry E., [Democracy, autocracy and revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia](#) [33], World Politics, Vol. 68, issue 1 (October), 2005, pp. 133-155



Includes references to Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine.

Hale, Henry E., [Democracy or autocracy on the march? The colored revolution as normal dynamics of patronal presidentialism](#) [34], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 39, issue 3 (Special Issue 'Democratic Revolutions in Post-Communist States', ed. Taras Kuzio), 2006, pp. 305-329

Argues that the 'color revolutions' 2003-2005 were fundamentally succession struggles in 'patronal presidential' regimes, rather than democratic breakthroughs, and therefore can result in retreat from democratic principles, as in Georgia.

Howard, Marc Morje ; Roessler, Philip G., [Liberalizing electoral outcomes in competitive authoritarian regimes](#) [35], American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 50, issue April, 2006, pp. 365-381

Makes comparisons between post-communist regimes and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Kalandadze, Katya ; Orenstein, Mitchel, [Electoral Protests and Democratization: Beyond the Color Revolutions](#) [36], Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 42, issue 11 (November), 2009, pp. 1403-1425

Sceptical assessment of role of popular protest in achieving genuine democratic change.

Kuzio, Taras, [Civil society, youth and societal mobilization](#) [37], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 39, issue 3 (Special Issue 'Democratic Revolutions in Post-Communist States', ed. Taras Kuzio), 2006, pp. 365-368

Examines the leading role of youth organizations – Otpor in Serbia (2000), Kmara in Georgia (2003) and Pora in Ukraine (2004) – and conditions for success, including training, western technical and financial assistance, choice of strategies and response of authorities.

Nikolayenko, Olena, [Youth Movements in Post-Communist Societies: A Model of Nonviolent Resistance](#) [38], Working Paper No 114, June, Stanford CA, Center on Democracy and the Rule of Law (Stanford University), 2009, pp. 50

O'Beachain, Donnacha ; Polese, Abel, [The Colour Revolutions in the former Soviet Republics: Successes and Failures](#) [39], London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 254

See also O'Beachain, Donnacha , [Roses and Tulips: Dynamics of regime change in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan](#) [40] Journal of Communist and Transition Studies, 2009, pp. 199-206 . Argues against the thesis that opposition unity is a prerequisite for success in overthrowing presidents, and also rejects claims that Western agents promoted protests to secure western interests.

Tucker, Joshua A., [Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and the Second Wave of Post-Communist Democratic Revolutions](#) [41], Perspectives on Politics, Vol. 5, issue 3 (September), 2007, pp. 537-553

Tudoriou, Theodor, [Rose, Orange and Tulip: The failed post-Soviet revolutions](#) [42], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 40, issue 2 (Sept), 2007, pp. 315-342

Argues that civil society (despite its role in the opposition) was too weak in these cases to achieve basic change, and that the democratic revolutions 'proved to be little more than a limited rotation of ruling elites within undemocratic political systems'.



Way, Lucan, [The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions](#) [43], *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, issue 3 (July), 2008, pp. 55-69

See also follow-up debate:

Journal of Democracy, [Debating the color revolutions](#) [44] *Journal of Democracy*, 2009, pp. 69-97 (including contributions from Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, Mark Beissinger, Charles Fairbanks, Vitali Silitksy and Martin Dimitrou, with reply by Lucan Way).

[D. II.2. 'Electoral Revolutions' \(and 'Critical Elections'\) in Individual Countries](#) [45]

The literature available in English on campaigns centred primarily on elections in post-communist and post-Soviet states is variable, from good coverage of the overthrow of Milosevic in [Serbia \(2000\)](#) [46] to limited coverage of the 'critical election' in [Croatia \(2000\)](#) [47]. The 2009 protests against a disputed election in Moldova (which failed) have also not been well covered (and Moldova is not listed separately below) – but see:

Pipidi, Alina Mungu ; Monteanu, Igor, [Moldova's "Twitter Revolution"](#) [48], *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 20, issue 3 (July), 2009, pp. 136-143

This section does cover 'critical elections' – where civil society mobilization to promote voter turnout and ensure independent electoral monitoring helped achieve an ideologically significant opposition victory over the ruling party – in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Croatia. In these countries there were also popular protests and demonstrations on various issues in advance of the elections. The democratization literature on post-Communist states generally cites Romania 1996 as the first 'critical election', where the opposition defeated an illiberal ruling party in the ballot (see Bunce; Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29] ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [20]) above). But although there was civil society activity related to the elections, and Romanian activists did give advice to groups in the Slovak opposition, events in Romania do not really qualify for inclusion in a bibliography on nonviolent action.

Information on individual campaigns can generally be found on internet sources such as the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and also OSCE and/or EU reports on specific elections. Very short but informative articles can also sometimes be found in the journal *The World Today*.

[D. II.2.a. Armenia: 2003 and 2008 and 2018](#) [49]

Inspired by electoral protests elsewhere, a number of Armenian NGOs tried to mobilize to contest the rigging of presidential elections in both 2003 and 2008 and engaged in voter education and electoral monitoring. Despite



findings by the Constitutional Court in favour of opposition candidates' complaints about the unfairness of the poll, and a degree of external monitoring that criticised the electoral process, public mobilization to demand new elections, including marches and a tent city, were crushed by the regime both times.

The 'Velvet Revolution' of 2018

Ten years after the anti-government protests in 2008 were violently suppressed, and Serzh Sargsyan came to power as President, a wave of nonviolent resistance succeeded in ousting him in 2018. Unlike the earlier protests in Armenia (and other ex-Soviet states) the 2018 uprising did not occur in the context of a rigged general election, but was a popular revolt against constitutional and parliamentary manoeuvres to perpetuate autocratic rule.

Sargsyan was an authoritarian leader with close ties to Vladimir Putin, and Armenia is closely allied to Russia. The 'Velvet Revolution' erupted to prevent him trying to cling onto power after his presidential term (of a maximum of ten years) ran out. He was unpopular with many Armenians, who also feared he was making a bid to stay in power for life. He changed the constitution through a rigged 2015 referendum to make the Presidency largely ceremonial, and to give real power to the Prime Minister. He then resigned as President in 2018, when his term came to an end, and was scheduled, with the support of his Republican Party of Armenia, which had a parliamentary majority, to become Prime Minister.

This manoeuvre was resisted by the 42-year old ex-journalist and opposition parliamentarian, Nikol Pashinyan, leader of the very minor Civil Contract party. He began a protest march on 31 March from Gyumri (the second main city in Armenia) to the capital, Yerevan. Few initially joined his march. But by the time he arrived in Yerevan on 13 April, thousands of university and high school students, angry about corrupt political rule, had taken to the streets. Despite public anger, parliament voted Sargsyan into office as Prime Minister on 17 April. The protests then spread to most sectors of the population of 2.9 million. Pashinyan was arrested by the authorities on 22 April, after talks with Sargsyan fell through, but was released just a day later, when Sargsyan resigned - soldiers had now joined the national protests. The Republican Party of Armenia in parliament blocked a move to elect Pashinyan Prime Minister and on 1 May secured the parliamentary election of their own candidate. Pashinyan then called for a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience: there was a blockade of Yerevan on 2 May, when 12 year-old school children sat down in the streets, and the country was paralyzed for several days by what was in effect a general strike.

The Republican Party then capitulated to public pressure and agreed to stop voting as a bloc in parliament, and Pashinyan was elected acting Prime Minister on 8 May. He formed a cabinet from a mix of politicians from different parties and individuals with long experience of government - his Foreign Minister was a career diplomat. Pashinyan had to govern for several months without a parliamentary majority and to go through the regulatory steps for calling a parliamentary election. But he had survived in parliament through his overwhelming popular backing, demonstrated by his supporters winning over 80 per cent of the vote in municipal elections in September 2018. Pashinyan was able to call a snap election which was held in early December 2018. His coalition bloc (the My Step Alliance) won over 70% of the vote in an election where only about 49 per cent of the electorate went to the polls. The Republican Party of Armenia failed to win any seats. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which monitored the election, reported that (unusually by the standard of earlier Armenian elections) the elections were held fairly and respected basic political freedoms.

Pashinyan stood on a platform of promising to stamp out corruption and promote economic reform. Although he declared a desire to improve cooperation with the EU and the USA, he did not propose any fundamental change in the economic and military links to Russia. Armenia is part both of the Eurasian Economic Union, tied to Russia, and of a regional military alliance with Russia, which has a military base inside the country. Commentators have noted that Armenia's 'Velvet Revolution' was very different from the earlier 'Colour Revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine, where western NGOs and western governments gave active support to the protesters, and victory for the opposition suggested moving away from Russia towards alliance with the EU and the west. Putin's decision not to intervene to prop up Sargsyan was clearly influenced by these geopolitical considerations, as well as the social breadth of the support for Pashinyan.

The success of the revolution could be seen as a shift in power, from the elite 'old guard' brought up under Soviet rule, and accustomed to use force and corruption to consolidate their dominance, to a younger generation. The protesters were intensely proud of their national heritage, often wrapping themselves in the national flag as they took over the streets, but were also seeking a more just and decent politics and society.

When Pashinyan became Prime Minister in 2018 he indicated a desire to end the long-running conflict with



Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh. This was part of the republic of Azerbaijan in the Soviet period, but has a majority Armenian population. The break up of the USSR in 1991 led to bitter fighting between the Armenian majority (demanding the territory should become part of Armenia) and the Azerbaijani minority. Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments also took part in the fighting. Up to 30,000 had died and many others had been forced out of their homes before a cease fire was agreed in 1994, and the region has since been controlled by Armenian troops, but remained formally part of Azerbaijan. Pashinyan appeared to take a more militantly nationalist position when he called in 2019 for Nagorno Karabakh to be reunited with Armenia. Since then there is evidence Azerbaijan has been preparing for military action to recapture the region. Fighting broke out again in 2020, with clashes on the border in July in which at least 16 people were killed, and more serious fighting began again in late September. By 9 October 300 people had been killed, and the governments of both countries had been called to Moscow for talks on ending the fighting. Subsequent cease fires proved precarious.

Armenia has been less well covered than most other electoral protests in post-Soviet states. But see:

Cooper, Marc, [Armenia's Revolution: A Flickering Light in a Darkening Europe](#) [50], The Nation, 07/12/2018,

Cooper celebrates this under-reported 'velvet revolution' that 'boiled up from the streets' and was not influenced by outside forces. He notes that although there had been limited protests in the previous decade on specific economic, environmental or gender issues, no one expected a major political revolt.

See also: Avedissian, Karina, 'A real revolution? Protest leader Armen Grigoryan on what's happening in Armenia', *Open Democracy*, 30 April 2018.

Feldman, Daniel ; Alibašić, Haris, [The Remarkable 2018 "Velvet Revolution": Armenia's Experiment Against Government Corruption](#) [51], Public Integrity, Vol. 21, issue 4, 2019, pp. 420-432

Feldman attended a conference on anti-corruption organized by the new government in 2018 with judges, prosecutors and investigators. The focus of the article is an examination of how far the nature of the rebellion (and its wider context) might be expected to promote a more democratic government committed to end corruption. After making comparisons with other countries, they provisionally conclude that the prospects for a transition to a government respecting the rule of law are positive.

Grigoryan, Armen, ["Armenia First": Behind the rise of Armenia's alt-right scene](#) [52], 04/09/2019,

Grigoryan argues that a 'kleptocratic regime' has been ousted by the revolution, but a more radical conservative agenda is being promoted in this new context.

Grigoryan, Armen, [Armenia's Path to Democratization by Recursive Mass Protests](#) [53], Caucasus Survey, Vol. 7, issue 2, 2019, pp. 157-175

The article compares the 2018 revolution with earlier unsuccessful political protests in Armenia since 2003-4, to try to determine what made success possible. Grigoryan also makes comparisons with some other examples of regime change, and considers the implications of the nature of the 2018 revolution for post-revolutionary politics and society.

Hoellerbauer, Simon, [Armenia and the Velvet Revolution: The Merits and Flaws of a Protest-based Civil Society](#) [54], Foreign Policy Research institute, Geopolitics, 19/02/2019,

The author argues that comparison with the 'Colour Revolutions' are misleading since these were promoted by civil society organizations and opposition parties and focused on regime distortion of elections. Success in Armenia did demonstrate the power of civil society, but relied on 'grassroots organizing via social media' rather than on official NGOs, which are widely distrusted. The 2018 revolution drew on experience of earlier protests focused on limited issues. Hoellerbauer also speculates about future prospects for democracy under Pashinyan without a strong civil



society to hold him accountable, and in the light of Armenia's dependence on Russia and the problem of the 'frozen conflict' over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ishkanian, Armine, [Democracy Building in Post-Soviet Armenia](#) [55], London, Routledge, 2008, pp. 206

Critical assessment of western support for civil society groups, noting that it can create a backlash and needs to be considered in the historical, social and cultural context of the country involved. Also makes comparisons with other post-Soviet states.

Lanskoy, Miriam ; Suthers, Elspeth, [Armenia's Velvet Revolution](#) [56], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 30, issue 2, 2019, pp. 85-99

The authors, both from the National Endowment for Democracy, note that political revolution in other post-Soviet states have been followed by 'back sliding'. But they note how Armenia differs from Georgia and Ukraine. After exploring the background and context of the 2018 revolution, they conclude with a relatively optimistic assessment of the prospects for the Pashinyan government after the December 2018 election.

See also:

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57]), pp. 190-98 for useful summary and detailed references.

[D. II.2.b. Azerbaijan 2005](#) [58]

The Presidential election in 2003 confirmed Ilham Aliyev, son of President Heydar Aliyev (former First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party) as successor to his father. This election was criticized by the OSCE, but accepted internationally, and left the electorate disillusioned when the parliamentary elections took place in 2005. So only 50% of the electorate voted.

However campaigners (inspired by Georgia and later Ukraine) had been trying since 2003, when they organized minor protests, to promote popular resistance to electoral fraud and repression. The opposition gained unity in 2005 and the opposition Azadlig bloc ran 115 candidates and tried with public demonstrations to launch their own 'orange revolution'. The OSCE and Council of Europe condemned human rights abuses and government manipulation of the elections, but western diplomats encouraged the opposition to limit their protests to the courts and authorized rallies, although even authorized demonstrations attracted repressive measures.

Alieva, Leila, [Azerbaijan's frustrating elections](#) [59], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 17, issue 2 (April), 2006, pp. 147-160

Analysis of background and context of elections, the regime's role and actions of the opposition.

Bunce, Valerie J. ; Wolchik, Sharon L., [Azerbaijan's 2005 Parliamentary Elections: A Failed Attempt at Transition](#) [60], Working Paper No 89, September, Stanford CA, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (Stanford University), 2008, pp. 52



See also Bunce; Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries \[29\]](#) (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [20]), pp. 178-90.

Valiyev, Anar M., [Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan: A failed revolution \[61\]](#), Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 53, issue 3 (May/June), 2006, pp. 17-35

Argues that despite violence used against opposition and shattered hopes, the protests promoted increased political participation.

[D. II.2.c. Belarus 2006 and 2010 and 2020 \[62\]](#)

Belarus remains the most authoritarian regime among the European ex-Soviet states, despite a significant dissident movement among intellectuals and young people who grouped round Charter 97, Zubr (Bison) – a group committed to nonviolence – and other organizations. Commemoration of Chernobyl in April 2005 resulted in large scale arrests. Since the March 2006 presidential election, where the opposition failed to overthrow President Lukashenko, a major (but not exclusive) focus has remained on electoral protest. The opposition tried again in the presidential election of December 2010, despite arrest and torture of activists and journalists, and held a 30,000 strong demonstration in Minsk on election night. But the President retained a strong grip on power and still had significant popular support.

The Nonviolent Uprising of 2020

After the unsuccessful resistance to the rigged 2010 elections, many in Belarus focused on their private lives and abandoned political opposition. Therefore the scale of the popular resistance to the blatant rigging of the presidential election on 9 August 2020, in which Lukashenko was assigned 80 per cent of the vote, and the main opposition candidate 10 per cent, took outside observers and many in Belarus itself by surprise. Popular anger was in part a response to the regime's denial of the Covid-19 crisis (arresting doctors who tried to raise the alarm) as well as to the election results. The country-wide reaction was further fuelled by the regime's brutal handling of the initial mass popular protests, after the results were announced. Riot police physically assaulted demonstrators, as well as many reporters and passers by, used tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets, and smashed cars that hooted in sympathy with the protesters. Dead bodies were later found in the woods. An estimated 6,700 were imprisoned in the first four days and many were beaten or raped. Television cameras recorded families outside the prison being reunited with badly bruised demonstrators, and pictures of their wounds were circulated on social media.

Popular reaction also reflected the fact that by 2020 there was growing economic discontent. Lukashenko had retained support in the factories for many years (since coming to power in 1994) through his economic policies, which included maintaining state owned enterprises from the Soviet era and raising living standards with the help of Russian subsidies. But changing circumstances, including reduced subsidies and the impact of Covid-19, have undermined his strategy. Angry workers shouted Lukashenko down when he spoke at a factory after the election.

The Belarus protests have much in common, in terms of policy and tactics, with the Armenian revolution of 2018. Belarus is closely integrated into Russia's sphere of influence - Lukashenko was a former collective farm boss and adherent of the Soviet regime, who kept Soviet symbols and did not rename the Belorussian KGB. The opposition does not have a pro-EU agenda, and has not publicized a desire to move closer to the west, although it has received declarations of support from the EU, who promised to join the US, Canada and UK in sanctions against the regime at an emergency meeting on 19 August, 2020. The protests in Belarus have adopted (and adapted) the



style and symbols used in Armenia: for example women clad in white to symbolize purity, and carrying flowers confronting the black-clad security forces. There has also been an emphasis on the red and white flag, originally adopted in 1918, when Belarus gained brief independence, and re-adopted in 1991. Lukashenko, however, is linked to a different, red and green national flag, which dates from the Soviet era, when Belarus was part of the Soviet Union, but gained nominal representation with a seat at the United Nations in 1951. Lukashenko reintroduced the Soviet era flag (without the hammer and sickle) in 1994 through a referendum. In 2020 the contrasting flags symbolize the 'pro' and 'anti' Lukashenko forces.

The Belarus protests have also followed the Armenian revolution in remaining strictly nonviolent, as symbolized by the women with flowers. When on August 17 angry demonstrators gathered outside the Minsk prison to demand the remaining protesters should be released, they were stopped from trying to storm the prison by about 150 activists, including priests, who formed a human chain around it. The focus has been on peaceful marches, continued every weekend since the results of the election were announced in early August. Journalists on state television walked out in protest against the regime violence against protesters in August. Workers in varied parts of the economy, including a state-owned fertilizer plant and the Minsk Metro, also launched strikes in protest, though threats of arrests and sackings meant that some strikes were not long lasting.

A major difference between the Belarus and Armenian mass protests is that the latter were focused round a central leading figure, who largely directed the protest strategy. The Belarus movement has no single figurehead and a much looser leadership structure, based after August 2020 largely on women. The leaders of three opposition parties came together ahead of the 2020 presidential elections. But Viktor Babaryko, a banker initially seen as the strongest opposition candidate, was barred from running and arrested in July. Another popular opposition leader, video blogger Sergie Tikhanovskiy, was also jailed with other candidates. His wife, school teacher Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, took his place and became the symbolic leader of the opposition, promising new free and fair elections. After the rigged poll she was detained by the regime. She then read out a prepared statement - clearly under duress - calling for protests to end, and was driven by security forces to Lithuania, whose government accepted her and also provided asylum for her two children. From exile she formed a coalition of opposition figures, including workers as well as intellectuals, to negotiate with the regime. As protests continued the regime seized several members of the leadership, including lawyer Maxim Znak, in early September. They also arrested the most prominent opposition figure, Maria Kolesnikova, a flautist who had campaigned with Tikhanovskaya during the election. Kolesnikova resisted an attempt to deport her forcibly to the Ukraine by tearing up her passport at the border, and was then kept in prison. The only prominent opposition figure still free by 9 September was the 72 year-old Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich - European diplomats in Minsk hurried to support her when she reported masked men trying to break into her apartment.

Lack of central leadership has not stopped the protests. From the beginning activists have also organized by coordinating through social media before and during demonstrations, for example regrouping to avoid barricades and riot police to reach the centre of Minsk. (The role of the messaging app Telegram is described by Shaun Walker, *Guardian Weekly*, 13 Nov. 2020 - see references below). Some strike committees were also formed.

Prospects for Success

Lukashenko, who has always used force and fear to bolster his rule, stepped up repression in October 2020, arresting hundreds of protesters and using water cannon and batons and flare guns. The Interior Ministry announced on 12 October that 'if necessary' it would use combat weapons against demonstrators. The Belarus regime was backed by Vladimir Putin (even though Lukashenko had presented Russia as a threat to Belarus sovereignty over the previous two years) because a successful popular uprising in Belarus, which borders Russia, would send a dangerous political message to the Russian people. Russian media have provided a barrage of propaganda designed to discredit the Belarus protesters. But major Russian military - as opposed to media and diplomatic - involvement seemed very unlikely. Lukashenko also adopted the propaganda line used by Moscow against the Ukrainian EuroMaidan protests in 2013-14: that the protests were promoted by neo-Nazi groups. This claim, which was certainly exaggerated when made about the Ukraine (though there were active far right groups politically involved), is not in the view of western reporters at all true in Belarus.

The breadth of popular support for the protests is a key strength of the opposition. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists and other middle class professionals have been prominent, but (as already noted) many workers have also joined in. Natalia Kaliada, an artistic director of the Belarus Free Theatre (banned by the regime), singled out a miner who handcuffed himself 300 metres underground to his machinery to highlight Lukashenko's 'genocide of his own people'. ('Dreaming Together', *New Internationalist*, Nov.-Dec. 2020, pp.8-9) Young people have been at the



forefront among the demonstrators, but at least some of the old (who are more likely to regret the end of the economic stability of the Soviet era) also became involved. There have been marches of pensioners. For example, a 'pensioners' march' of thousands waving red and white flags was held on Monday 12 October, after security forces used brutal methods against demonstrators over the weekend and detained over 700 of them. The opposition has not, however (unlike in Armenia in 2018) been able to claim there was any sign of security personnel (either at the top or at lower levels) defecting to them, although early on there were some reports of individuals refusing to obey orders to use violent intimidation. It was suggested in August that some mid-level civil servants might be willing to switch to the opposition, but there have been no further reports of such non-cooperation.

A possible sign of progress for the opposition, reported by the BBC, was Lukashenko's decision to hold a four and a half hour meeting with eleven imprisoned opposition figures, which he publicized on 11 October. However, the regime closed down some Minsk Metro stations and reduced mobile Internet coverage to undermine the tenth weekend of mass protests on October 17-18, and arrested over 200 demonstrators. At an international level Belarus accused the governments of Lithuania and Poland of meddling in its internal affairs by giving asylum to opposition figures, and on 9 October recalled its ambassadors to these countries and demanded a cut in the staff at their embassies in Minsk. Both reacted by recalling their own ambassadors from Belarus; the UK, Germany and six other European countries followed suit in solidarity with Lithuania and Poland.

After over two months of major weekly protests, Tikhanovskaya called on Lukashenko to resign and then launched a nation-wide one day general strike on Monday, 26 October, which was observed by many students and workers. The regime retaliated by ordering universities to expel striking students, and closing down on 'health grounds' restaurants that had joined the strike.

During November the two sides continued to confront one another. Lukashenko urged violence against protesters, and security police fired live bullets into the air as warning shots. The regime also ordered banks in the country to seize funds raised (mostly from individual Belarus citizens) to pay fines for demonstrators or to compensate them for being beaten. The opposition continued with major demonstrations, fuelled by anger at further deaths due to police brutality. For example, 31 year-old Roman Bondarenko died in hospital of head injuries from a police beating on 13 November. An estimated 20,000 protesters had been detained by that date and many faced court appearances and long prison sentences. The resistance has also become decentralized, with local groups communicating via the Telegram app and organizing local protests and events.

There was international condemnation of the brutality of the Lukashenko regime in suppressing resistance by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The UN Human Rights Council called in September 2020 for urgent monitoring of what was happening, and the EU refused to recognize the election results and imposed sanctions on Belarus officials responsible for suppressing protest. An investigation initiated by the OSCE condemned human rights violations before, during and after the elections. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have also issued reports.

Resistance from Exile as Repression Increases

By the beginning of 2021 Lukashenko backtracked from earlier conciliatory moves and increased repression of independent reporters and public protests. Protests that did still take place tended to be outside city centres, smaller and of shorter duration. Many prominent protesters and critics of the regime had already left the country to campaign from abroad. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who had been the figurehead of the resistance from exile in Lithuania, continued to issue calls for protest and to lobby EU governments to maintain pressure on Lukashenko. But in April 2021 Pavel Latushko, a former minister and diplomat in exile, announced in Warsaw the creation of a new political party which would in the future contribute to a new multi-party democracy. The banker Viktor Babaryko, who stood as a presidential candidate in 2020 and was imprisoned in advance of the election, also announced from prison the creation of a party. He was subsequently jailed for 14 years in July 2021 on fabricated charges of accepting bribes and money laundering.

Resistance to the Lukashenko regime became headline news again on 23 May 2021, when a Belarus fighter jet forced down a Ryan Air plane flying from Greece to Lithuania over Belarus airspace. The pretext was a bomb threat to the plane, but when the plane landed Belarus police boarded it and forcibly removed an activist in exile, Roman Protasevich, and his girlfriend. Protasevich, a journalist and co-founder of the Telegram channel Nexta, was well known for his blogs attacking the Lukashenko regime. He was subsequently coerced into making a televised 'confession' on 3 June clearly speaking under duress. The regime charged him with organizing 'mass



disorder'. Other prominent Belarus opposition figures in exile expressed fears that they might also be targeted by the regime: the head of the KGB had promised to 'eliminate all traitors to the motherland'. These fears seemed to be confirmed when a prominent resistance activist in Kiev, who helped those escaping from Belarus, was found hanged at the beginning of August.

The regime also intensified internal repression in June. Activists who had already been arrested faced assault and possible death in detention. Human Rights Watch reported on 'unprecedented raids' on the offices of human rights defenders in at least 10 cities in July, when staff were assaulted and documents seized, with the apparent aim of destroying evidence of the regime's human rights violations.

The dangers of any kind of public criticism surfaced again at the Tokyo Olympics at the beginning of August 2021. Some athletes who had taken part in the 2020 resistance had been excluded from Olympic teams and from funding and detained; calls for Belarus to be excluded from the Tokyo games were unsuccessful. The regime was, however, able to field an apolitical team of athletes in Tokyo; the Belarus team was headed by Lukashenko's son. A political crisis nevertheless erupted, when sprinter Kristina Timonovskaya was taken by Belarus officials to Tokyo airport on 1 August, after she criticized her coaches on the internet for being ordered to take part in an event which she had not trained for. She avoided forcible return to Belarus by appealing to Japanese officials at the airport and tweeting about her plight. She was then offered asylum by both the Polish and Czech governments, and given refuge in the Polish embassy in Tokyo. The resulting international publicity focused attention again on the Lukashenko regime, and Svetlana Tikhanovskaya met the British Prime Minister in London to urge further sanctions. The same week saw the opening of the trial of key opposition leaders already imprisoned in Belarus, including the defiantly irrepressible. Maria Kolesnikova, one of the leaders of the mass-street protests together with Veronica Tsepkalova and Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, is accused of plotting to seize power, a charge that could lead to 15 years in prison.

Buzgalin, AV ; Kolganov, AI, [The Protests in Belarus: Context, Causes and Lessons](#) [63], Critical Sociology, Vol. 47, issue 3, 2020, pp. 441-453

This article provides an analysis of the socio-economic background to the protests, the social and class composition of the protesters (and of those who did not take part) and the 'contradictions within the Belarusian "power elite"'. It was written whilst the protests were still taking place.

Forbrig, Joerg ; Marples, David R. ; Demes, Pavol, [Prospects for Democracy in Belarus](#) [64], Washington DC, German Marshall Fund of USA and Heinrich Boell Stiftung, 2006

Kascian, Karyl, [Lukashenko's Campaign against Nazism: One Must Imagine Sisyphus Happy](#) [65], New Eastern Europe, 24/05/2021,

Kascian explain how a new law to prevent the rehabilitation of Nazism is designed as part of the campaign to suppress Belarus civil society.

Kazharski, Aliaksei, [Belarus' new political nation? 2020 anti-authoritarian protests as identity building](#) [66], New Perspectives, Vol. 29, issue 1, 2021, pp. 69-79

Kazharski notes that the mass movement that arose to reject the rigged 2020 election had been interpreted as the creation of a new civil society or even a new political nation. His article focuses on the relevance of the symbolic politics of the movement in creating a new sense of identity.

Marples, David R., [Color revolutions: the Belarus case](#) [67], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 39, issue 3 (Special Issue 'Democratic Revolutions in Post-Communist States', ed. Taras Kuzio), 2006, pp. 351-357

Examines why protesters failed to achieve regime change in the 2006 presidential election. Argues that the historical background of the regime, the popularity of the president, and electors' concern with economic rather



than democratic issues were all important. Also considers role of Russia and its ambivalence towards the Belarus regime.

Mudrov, sergei, [Doomed to Fail? Why Success was almost not an Option in the 2020 Protests in Belarus](#) [68], *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 2021

Mudrov, an academic working inside Belarus, argues that despite the initial impetus of the movement against Lukashenko from August 2020, there were four main reasons why it failed. The degree of support for Lukashenko was underestimated, some social classes such as industrial and agricultural workers were not well represented in the protests, government institutions consolidated behind the government and the police and military stayed loyal to the regime. Other factors were that protest symbols alienated many people, and many were deterred by the harshness of the repression. Mudrov also argues that the protests exacerbated divisions in Belarusian society, and increased hatred and distrust. But he concludes that there is also, especially amongst the young, increasing desire for change.

Ramirez, Loic, [Can the Belarus protests Topple Lukashenko?](#) [69], *Le Monde diplomatique*, 2020

Article assessing who the protesters in Belarus are and what they want.

See also: Richard, Helene, 'Russia's Watchful Eye on Minsk' in this issue <https://mondediplo.com/2020/10/07belarus> [70]

Richard discusses the aims of the protesters and draws comparisons with the Armenian uprising of 2018.

Sierkowski, Slawomir, [Belarus Uprising](#) [71], *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 31, issue 4, 2020, pp. 5-16

A journalist's eyewitness account of the uprising in Belarus from 4 August to 2 September, covering major demonstrations, strikes and the brutal regime response in Minsk and other parts of the country.

See also: Way, Lucan Ahmad, 'Belarus Uprising: How a Dictator Became Vulnerable', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 31 no. 4. (October 2020), pp.17-27.

The author examines the mass popular response to the fraudulent presidential election, and clarifies how the protests differ from earlier 'colour revolutions', with leaders stressing not changes in foreign policy but free and democratic elections and constitutional government. He suggests that even if the uprising fails it shows that Lukashenko is vulnerable to popular challenge.

Silitski, Vitali, [Belarus: Learning from defeat](#) [72], *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, issue 4 (October), 2006, pp. 138-152

Examines presidential election of March 2006 and argues that, although the protests against abuses apparently failed, they created a 'network of solidarity' and a 'revolution of the spirit'. Two essays by Silitski focus on the effectiveness of the authoritarian regime and why it can contain protest are:

Silitski, Vitali, [Pre-empting Democracy: The Case of Belarus](#) [73] *Journal of Democracy*, 2005, pp. 83-97, and Silitski, Vitali, [Contagion Deterred: Pre-emptive Authoritarianism in the Former Soviet Union \(the Case of Belarus\)](#) [74] In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [25] (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [20]) New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 274-299.

Vock, Ido, [Newsmaker: Svetlana Tikhanovskya and the Battle for Belarus](#) [75], *New Statesman*, issue 26 November-2 December 2021, 2021, pp. 9-10

This article, incorporating an interview with Tikhanovskya, the leader of the opposition to the Lukashenko regime in exile, provides a useful summary of the resistance to the rigged election in 2020 and the subsequent repression. Vock notes the ruthlessness of Lukashenko against the opposition internally and those in exile in EU countries, and



his unscrupulous use of refugees from the Middle East to challenge the Polish/EU borders. He also indicates that the Belarus opposition, which initially did not challenge ties to Russia, has become explicitly hostile to Putin's backing for Lukashenko and more dependent on EU and western support. Vok also reports that a leaked poll from inside Belarus indicates that although Tikhonovskya has significant support, two of the jailed opponents of the regime, Babaryko and Kolesnikova, are more highly regarded.

Walker, Shaun, [The Signal and the Noise](#) [76], Guardian Weekly, 13711/2020, pp. 34-39

Walker analyzes how the protesters in Belarus in 2020 used the 'Nexta Live' channel (run by a young Belarusian man in Warsaw) on the Telegram messaging app. The app combines easy availability of information and advice - allowing rapid dissemination of instructions to protesters and advance organizing - with privacy. Governments have great difficulty in blocking channels on the app. Whilst focusing on the Belarus context, Walker also notes that the app is used by protesters in Hong Kong, in Russia and by Extinction Rebellion. It has also been used by Isis fighters - though Telegram has begun to try to prevent this. The creator of the app is a Russian now living abroad.

Wilson, Andrew, [Belarus – The Last European Dictatorship](#) [77], New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 256

Covers earlier Belarusian history and search for identity, but gives weight to analysis of President Lukashenka's rise to power and how he maintained it effectively for so long, including his handling of the challenge in the 2010 presidential election.

See also:

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57]), pp. 198-211, including detailed references.

[D. II.2.d. Bulgaria 1996-1997 and 2020](#) [78]

Bulgaria did not experience a full scale internal revolution in 1989 – although there was a degree of public internal dissent on economic, minority rights and ecological issues during the year. The ruling Communist Party moved to forestall major public unrest by forcing the resignation of its long term leader, Todor Zhivkov and adopting a number of resolutions on political and economic reform. The Party also agreed, after public protests mobilized by an opposition coalition demanding democratization, to hold negotiations on a new constitution. Initially, however, the Party (renamed the Bulgarian Socialist Party, but a still unreconstructed old-style party machine) was able to maintain political dominance, although it legalised private property. Bulgaria experienced a number of unstable coalition governments in the early 1990s, but in 1994 the Socialist Party returned to power and tried to promote a 'Bulgarian third way'. between state socialism and western neoliberal capitalism.

The main opposition to the Bulgarian Socialist Party was the Union of Democratic Forces (soon effectively a right wing party with strong backing from conservative parties and groups in Europe), and the final triumph of the UDF in the 1996 presidential election, and especially in the April 1997 parliamentary elections, was more clearly a victory of the ideological right than in most of the countries covered in this Section. Bulgaria was also under strong pressure from the IMF. But two factors make it relevant to include Bulgaria here: 1. the significant role of public protests, by workers, pensioners and students (organizing brief strikes, occupying buildings, threatening to block roads and using street theatre) in forcing the Bulgarian Socialist Party to hold early parliamentary elections; and 2. the role of Bulgaria in the transmission of protest tactics – learning from the Serbian protests of 1996-97, and



providing advice to the Slovak campaigners of 1998 (see below). The Bulgarian demonstrations were primarily centred on economic discontent, rather than on civil rights and democratization, but by January 1997 daily peaceful rallies in the capital (now led by the UDF) drew also on high school students and ordinary citizens, and were portrayed by parts of the Bulgarian media as 'the conscience of the people' opposed to the government.

Political Developments since 1997

After being defeated by the right in the 1997 parliamentary elections, the Bulgarian Socialist Party began to change its economic and foreign policies - by endorsing a market economy as well as the EU and NATO - and to transform itself into a western style social democratic party. This transformation, supported by socialist parties in the west, contributed to the decision to allow Bulgaria (together with Romania) to become a member of the European Union in 2007.

Bulgaria qualified for EU membership because it had a parliamentary system based on regular elections, and a constitution embodying the principles of an independent judiciary and freedom for the media. However, subsequent political developments have shown how hollow this liberal constitutional framework is. Real power is exercised corruptly through close links between dominant economic and political interests, judicial independence has been subverted, and centralised political control of the media prevents real political debate and journalistic scrutiny. These developments are linked to the political rise of a populist strongman, former policeman and security company boss, Boyko Borissov, who came to power in 2009 at the head of his new party, GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria), which allied with various right-wing groups in parliament. Borissov has been Prime Minister for much of the time since then - though he was displaced after mass protests in February 2013, and after the May 2013 elections lost out in the parliament to a coalition led by the Socialist Party, which remained in power until August 2014. Borissov returned to power after elections in October 2014. Unlike some other authoritarian leaders in Eastern Europe, Borissov does not promote a far right ideology or policy agenda, but he does consolidate illiberal and undemocratic forms of control.

Borissov's dominance has been aided by the lack of a strong left-wing opposition. The Socialist Party is nervous of promoting economic and social policies that might evoke comparison with its Communist past, and it has failed to challenge the prevailing political culture and corruption. It is in this context that popular movements protesting about economic injustices, demanding an end to corruption, and often calling for basic political change, have erupted. There were three waves of protest in the winter, summer and late autumn of 2013. Another significant uprising demanding fundamental political change erupted in the summer and autumn of 2020.

The Protests of 2013 and Borissov's Resignation

The 2013 movement is covered in more detail in Vol. 2 H. under 'Campaigns against Government', but a summary is relevant here as background to the movement against the Borissov regime in 2020.

The mass protests of February 2013 were sparked by a steep rise in electricity bills issued by foreign-owned companies, unregulated by the state. (Power supplies had been privatized in 2005). The protesters who marched in most Bulgarian cities, also calling for an end to corruption, represented a wide cross section of Bulgarian society. The protests quickly escalated to involve blocking roads and setting up barricades and were met by police violence. The scale of unrest led Borissov to offer his resignation at the end of February. The President's attempts to hold talks with protesters and experts, and to form a new government broke down. His proposals to form an interim government of experts and for parliamentary elections in May angered protesters, now demanding a new kind of assembly and elections with no parties, as well as an end to the existing privatization of key services.

The May elections did however go ahead and resulted in the Socialist Party winning half of the seats and so forming an unstable coalition government. Renewed protests soon broke out against this new government, after the appointment of a controversial businessman to head the State National Security Agency. The appointment was revoked, but protests continued, raising broader issues of political corruption and the need for transparency. With some slogans attacking a 'Red Mafia'. Public anger was still being manifested in October, when students held a three week sit-in at Sofia University (as part of a wider campaign against the Socialist government), and then stunts and other citizens tried to blockade parliament in early November.

The Protests of 2020 and Repercussions in 2021

A new wave of popular anger and demonstrations against the corrupt and autocratic nature of Bulgarian politics



erupted in July 2020, challenging the Borissov government, and his parliamentary ally the ethnic Turkish DPS party, which included figures well known for their dubious corporate interests and political influence, in particular Ahmed Dogan, associated with many construction projects, and Delyan Peevski, who controlled much of the media. The immediate cause of public anger was a police raid on the office of the President, Rumen Radev, then engaged in a dispute with the Borissov government over provision of public security to Dogan and Peevski, after widespread publicity about security officials forcibly ejecting three protesters near Dogan's Black Sea mansion. The police arrested two of the President's aides on doubtful charges, apparently as a prelude to impeaching President Radev, who was supported by the Socialist Party. This highhanded action was seen as both a proof of levels of government corruption and as a challenge to constitutional principles. People took to the streets demanding the resignation of both Prime Minister Borissov and of the Attorney General, an end to corruption and respect for the rule of law.

The protests that began in July 2020 involved daily protest marches by thousands in the capital Sofia and some other parts the country, as well as setting up tents to block major streets in Sofia. After they had continued for 100 days, though with some reduction in numbers demonstrating, their significance and prospects were assessed by a number of commentators. The protests had not only attracted considerable active support, but also had the approval of over 65 per cent of the population. The Bulgarian diaspora in major European cities also demonstrated against the Bulgarian regime. The demonstrations remained at the top of the news inside Bulgaria, but also attracted coverage in international media (often uninterested in Bulgaria), and prompted a debate and the passing of a resolution very critical of the Bulgarian government in the European Parliament. Moreover, five of the ministers in Borissov's government, including the Justice Minister, had to resign.

Borissov himself initially canvassed various possible reform measures, but remained in power and refused to resign, pointing to the immediate Covid crisis and elections scheduled for early 2021 as reasons for his staying on. When elections were held in April 2021, including several new reform parties, the results were inconclusive. Neither GERB (which won the most seats) nor the Socialist Party were able to form a majority coalition in parliament, so the President called for new elections in July. Borissov insisted that his experience and links to some EU governments made him the most credible candidate for prime minister. However, he came under increasing pressure, especially after a parliamentary committee, investigating the past conduct of the Borissov government, heard lurid testimony about the extent of the corrupt control exercised by economic bosses close to Borissov and the behaviour of the inner circle. Borissov and those criticized denied the claims, but his opponents hoped that more details of corrupt undemocratic control would emerge before the July 2021 elections.

Because Bulgarian politics is not usually covered by international media, or widely studied by the academic community, references are limited. But a number of articles on the nature of Bulgarian politics and on the 2013 and 2020 protests are included below.

Barnes, andrew, [Extricating the State: The Move to Competitive Capture in Post-Communist Bulgaria](#) [79], Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 59, issue 1, 2007, pp. 71-95

Barnes notes that, although academic analysis initially stressed the need to end extensive state control of the economy in post-Communist states, there was now increasing recognition that private economic interests can capture the state and prevent full-scale political reform. While no single economic group can control the political institutions, competing groups can struggle to gain leverage for their own economic benefit.

Daimov, E., [The Awakening: A Chronicle of the Bulgarian Uprising of January-February 1997](#) [80], Sofia, Democracy Network Program: Centre of Social Practices NBU, 1998, pp. 127

Notes that Bulgaria maintained a stable Soviet-style system until the collapse of the Soviet Union, but has made a surprisingly effective transition to parliamentary government and a market economy.

Dainov, Evgenii, [How to Dismantle a Democracy: The Case of Bulgaria](#) [81], OpenDemocracy, 15/06/2020,

Dainov analyzes Borissov's style of government, noting that democracy can be destroyed not only by far right ideologues, but also by non-ideological 'macho males' like Borissov.



Dimitrov, Martin, [How a Flag Planted on a Beach Led to a Bulgarian Uprising](#) [82], 04/09/2020,

Bulgarian reporter Martin Dimitrov explains the events which sparked the 2020 mass protests in Bulgaria against the Borissov government and corrupt political system.

Dimitrov, Vesselin, [Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition](#) [83], London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 132

Charts transition to multiparty democracy and a market economy from 1989, with a focus on party coalitions and alignments.

Ganev, Venelin, [Explaining Eastern Europe: "Soft Decisionism" in Bulgaria](#) [84], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 29, issue 3, 2018, pp. 91-103

The author discusses 'patterns of democratic backsliding' in Eastern Europe, but concentrates primarily on 'constitutional retrogression' in Bulgaria. The article argues that the declining political influence of the middle class has undermined respect for the rule of law, so enabling 'oligarchic networks' to capture key parts of the judiciary, and undermining media independence. Ganev describes Borissov's personalistic form of governing, suggesting this can be conceptualised as 'soft decisionism'.

Ganev, Venelin I., [Bulgaria's Symphony of Hope](#) [85], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 8, issue 4 (October), 1997, pp. 125-139

Hallberg, Delia ; Ossewaarde, Ringo, [Protest and Recognition in the Bulgarian Summer 2013 Movement](#) [86], In Thomas Davies, Holly Eva Ryan and Alejandro Milciades Pena (eds), *Protest, Social Movements, and Global Democracy since 2011: New Perspectives - Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Emerald Books, pp. 85-106

Against the background of the world-wide protests of 2011, the authors discuss the Bulgarian movement in early 2013 and its stronger manifestation during the summer. They aim to draw out aspects of the prolonged protests that are unique to Bulgaria, arguing they represent a 'distinctive struggle for cultural recognition' with links to the earlier 19th century National Awakening movement when Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Ivancheva, Mariya, [The Bulgarian Winter of Protests](#) [87], OpenDemocracy, 15/03/2013,

Article explaining the economic, social and political context of the protests that forced Boyko Borissov to resign at the end of February 2013, and the immediate repercussions. Ivancheva is highly critical of 'monopolies in the hands of private companies' within a context of no state regulation, and notes problems in electoral law making it hard for smaller parties to contest elections.

Nikolova, Madlen, [Anti-Corruption Protests Show the Hollowness of Bulgaria's Democracy](#) [88], Jacobin Magazine, 2020

This article provides an analysis of the socio-economic and political framework within which the movement of 2020 erupted, noting that both the right and the left in Bulgarian politics were accused of corruption, which indicated the 'lack of real political alternatives'. It also notes that issues such as high unemployment, low wages and failing health system are scarcely raised in parliament, even by the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Concludes by pointing to parallels with the 2013 protests.

Petrova, Tsveta, [A Postcommunist Transition in Two Acts: The 1996-7 Antigovernment Struggle in Bulgaria as a Bridge between the 1989-92 and 1996-2007 Democratization Waves in Eastern Europe](#) [89], In Bunce; McFaul;



Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World \[25\]](#) (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [20]), New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 107-133

A clear summary of developments from 1989-1997, that also lays emphasis on the role of popular mobilization and protests.

Price, Lada, [Media Corruption and Issues of Journalistic and Institutional Integrity in Post-Communist Countries: The Case of Bulgaria \[90\]](#), Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 52, issue 1, 2019, pp. 71-79

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 35 Bulgarian journalists, the author argues that the media in Bulgaria - far from exposing corruption as a free media should - has itself become increasingly 'an instrument to promote and defend private vested interests' and is itself corrupted.

Spirova, Maria, [The Bulgarian Socialist Party: The Long Road to Europe \[91\]](#), Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 41, issue 4, 2008, pp. 481-495

Examines how the BSP changed from a Marxist party in the 1980s, arguing that it only altered significantly after being defeated in the 1997 elections, when it began to adopt new economic and foreign policies which made accession to the EU possible. The author also discusses the role of socialist parties in Western Europe in promoting this change.

Vassileva, Radosveta, [Europe's Blind Spot: The Movement Against Corruption in Bulgaria \[92\]](#), Green European Journal, 04/11/2020,

Vassileva, an activist and legal scholar, responds to questions from the *Green European Journal* explaining the origins and causes of the protests that broke out in July 2020, including the nature of corruption and the role of the prosecutor's office.

See also:

Vassileva, Radosveta, 'Bulgaria: 100 Days of Protest', *New Eastern Europe*, 28 October 2020.

<https://neweasterneurope.eu/2020/10/28/bulgaria-100-days-of-protests/> [93]

Provides a brief commentary explaining how the Prosecutor raided the President's office with the aim of impeaching him (i.e. tried to 'orchestrate a coup') and so precipitated over a 100 days of protest. The author also comments on the role of the EU Parliament (unlike other EU institutions) in passing a resolution very critical of Borissov.

Vassileva, Radosveta, [Europe's Blind Spot: The Movement Against Corruption in Bulgaria \[94\]](#), Green European Journal, 04/11/2020,

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Vassileva, Radosveta, 'Bulgaria: 100 Days of Protest', *New Eastern Europe*, 28 October 2020.

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Borissov.

[D. II.2.e. Croatia 2000](#) [47]

The public campaign to defeat the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party in the January 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections was strongly influenced by the success in Slovakia of OK'98 (see below). But the mobilization also built on a growing internal opposition by civil society groups engaged in anti-war activity, aid to refugees and human rights (which had begun to develop under the Communist regime) and public discontent, shown by opposition success in local elections in Zagreb in 1995 (although the regime barred the opposition from taking office) and falling support for the HDZ in parliamentary elections that year.

Franjo Tudjman, who dominated Croat politics from 1990 to his death in 1999, and his HDZ party, promoted an extreme form of nationalism. The Croatian government was regularly condemned by international organizations for its role in the wars that fragmented Yugoslavia and for its treatment of the Serb minority in Croatia. Isolation also led to unemployment and high inflation.

The public mobilization to overthrow the HDZ in 2000 was led by two key organizations: Citizens Organized to Monitor Voting (GONG) and the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (Glas 99) (both of which received significant external western aid). Campaigners targeted youth, women (women's NGOs were very active), pensioners and environmentalists. Political parties formed two separate opposition coalitions, which defeated the HDZ, and Tudjman's successors, in both parliamentary and presidential elections.

Bellamy, Alex, [Croatia after Tudjman: The 2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections](#) [95], *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 48, issue 5 (September/October), 2001, pp. 18-31

Fisher, Sharon, [Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist](#) [96], New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 272

Analyses rise of nationalist movements, how the regimes in newly independent Croatia (1991) and Slovakia (1992) promoted nationalism and the subsequent decline of nationalism and rise of democratic civil society and opposition movements.

Irvine, Jill, [From Civil Society to Civil Servants: Women's Organizations and Critical Elections in Croatia](#) [97], *Politics and Gender*, Vol. 3, issue 1 (March), 2007, pp. 7-32

See also:

Joerg Forbrig; Pavol Demes, [Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe](#) [32], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57])

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57]), pp. 78-84



[D. II.2.f. Georgia 2003](#) [98]

Georgia inherited a legacy of widespread corruption from the Soviet era and immediately after independence suffered two bitter ethnic conflicts: in 1990 the Ossetian region tried to break away and in 1993 Abkhazian separatists claimed the strategically vital area on the Black Sea. The first elected president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was overthrown by the military in 1992 and Gorbachev's former Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze took over. He won an election in October 1992, but faced continuing civil war with supporters of Gamsakhurdia based in western Georgia.

Georgia had strong economic and political links to Russia, but the USA took an increasing interest in the region after 2001, both because of desire to extend its strategic reach and because of planned gas and oil pipelines to run from Baku through Georgia and Turkey.

When parliamentary elections were held in November 2003 opposition parties and foreign observers claimed that they were rigged. Thousands blocked the streets of the capital and then occupied the parliament building. After intensive negotiations, Shevardnadze resigned as president, and Mikhail Saakashvili, the main leader of the protests, won a landslide victory in the presidential elections of January 2004. The protesters had learned from Serbia – the activist youth group Kmara ('Enough!') had been in contact with their counterparts in Otpor – and the demonstrators stressed nonviolence and held red roses (hence the 'Rose Revolution').

Because the Georgian opposition received considerable funding and support directly and indirectly from the US Administration, and Saakashvili himself leaned strongly towards the west, the Rose Revolution is often seen as a victory for western states. Detailed studies suggest, however, a more nuanced analysis of events in November 2003. Saakashvili's policies since he achieved power have failed to meet western official standards of civil liberties and the rule of law and have created foreign policy crises (as over his attempt to re-establish control by force over the breakaway province of Ossetia in 2008).

Anable, David, [The Role of Georgia's Media – and Western Aid – in Georgia's Rose Revolution](#) [99], The Harvard Journal of Press/Politics, Vol. 11, issue 3, 2006, pp. 7-43

Also available online as Joan Shorenstein Center Working Paper no. 3, 2006.

Boers, Laurence, ["After the Revolution": Civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia](#) [100], Central Asian Survey, Vol. 24, issue 3, 2005, pp. 335-350

Analysis of the 'revolution' including some mention of role of nonviolence.

Collin, Matthew, [This is Serbia Calling: Rock 'n' Roll Radio and Belgrade's Underground Resistance](#) [101], 2nd edition, London, Five Star, 2004

Updated story of Radio B92 to 2004.

Coppierters, Bruno ; Levgold, Robert, [Statehood and Security: Georgia After the Rose Revolution](#) [102], Cambridge MA, MIT, 2005, pp. 406

Fairbanks, Charles H., [Georgia's Rose Revolution](#) [103], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 15, issue April, 2004, pp.



110-134

Explains background to the demonstrations, and elaborates on role of the US government in relation to the elections, and of the George Soros Open Society Foundation in funding opposition and promoting nonviolent protest. Comments also on the role of TV stations owned by private entrepreneurs.

Hash-Gonzales, Kelli, [Popular Mobilization and Empowerment in Georgia's Rose Revolution](#) [104], Lanham MA, Lexington, 2012, pp. 180

Jawad, Pamela, [Democratic Consolidation in Georgia after the "Rose Revolution"?](#) [105], PRIF Reports No. 73, Frankfurt Main, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2005, pp. 48

Jones, Stephen, [The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries?](#) [106], Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol. 9, issue 1, 2006, pp. 33-48

Argues that the role of civil society bodies was important, but not vital. He suggests that key factors were popular attitudes to the ideal of Europe, the impact of the global economy, the appeal of western models and the implications of the soviet legacy. See also Jones, Stephen, [Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003: Enforcing Peaceful Change](#) [107] In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [9] (A. 1.b. [Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [7]) New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 317-334 .

Kandelaki, Giorgi, [Georgia's Rose Revolution: A Participant's Perspective](#) [108], Special Report no. 167, Washington DC, US Institute of Peace, 2006, pp. 12

Account by student leader and founder of Kmara. Discusses background of Shevardnadze regime, comments on why protesters and the government avoided violence, assesses role of internal media (especially Rustavi-2) and argues that the role of foreign support was limited by lack of information and by caution. Summary and full report available online.

Karumidze, Zurab ; Wertsch, James V., [Enough! The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia](#) [109], New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2005, pp. 143

Features interviews with a number of Georgian political figures. Most of the contents are reproduced from the Spring 2004 issue of Caucasus Context.

Lansky, Miriam ; Areshidze, Georgi, [Georgia's Year of Turmoil](#) [110], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 19, issue 4, 2008, pp. 154-168

Argues there was domestic crisis in Georgia before the war with Russia. Flawed elections, a 'superpresidency' and arbitrariness towards the constitution marked politics after the Rose Revolution.

Welt, Cory, [Regime Vulnerability and Popular Mobilization in Georgia's Rose Revolution](#) [111], Working Paper No 67, September, Stanford CA, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (Stanford University), 2006, pp. 60

Discusses US involvement and assesses the 'Serbian factor' in diffusing strategic ideas. See also: Welt, Cory, [Georgia's Rose Revolution: From Regime Weakness to Regime collapse](#) [112] In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [25] (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [20]) New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 155-188 .



Wheatley, Jonathan, [Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution](#) [113], London, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 252

Mostly on the period 1989-2002 and the nature of the Shevardnadze regime, but chapter 6 covers 'pressure from below' and chapter 7 the 'Rose Revolution'.

See also:

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57]), pp. 148-66.

[D. II.2.g. Kyrgyzstan 2005 and 2020](#) [114]

The protests in March 2005 (the 'Tulip Revolution') were (as in Georgia) at least partially a response to rigged parliamentary elections. But the demonstrations, which erupted in the southern city of Osh before spreading to capital Bishkek, also appeared to be a protest against presidential nepotism and economic hardship. The protesters were more violent than in Georgia and the Ukraine, looting and rioting as they attacked the presidential and parliamentary buildings. Some observers have queried how far the uprising was spontaneous or was organized by opposition leaders seeking power. The immediate outcome was that President Akayev fled to Russia and an opposition leader, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, became interim president and prime minister, but agreed to work with the newly elected parliament. He won a landslide victory in the presidential election in July 2005, in an election approved by OSCE monitors. In Spring 2006 there were protests demanding further reforms and in early November 2006 mass demonstrations called on the President to sign a new constitution limiting his power. He did so, but tension between pro- and anti-government demonstrators indicated continuing instability.

President Bakiyev was faced by another unarmed uprising in April 2010, sparked by economic hardship and anger at presidential corruption. Like his predecessor he fled the country as protests turned into rioting, but has been accused by the new government (and UN observers) of fomenting serious ethnic violence against Uzbeks in the south (2,000 were killed).

The Revolution of 2020

The popular uprising in October 2020 was the third revolution since independence, and President Jeenbekov yet another president to be forced from office. Kyrgyzstan is, however, the only former Asian republic of the USSR that has a semblance of parliamentary democracy - it adopted a parliamentary constitution after independence and has held regular elections. Indeed, the immediate reason for protesters converging on the capital Bishkek was their belief that the president had rigged the parliamentary elections of 4 October, in which two parties loyal to the president won most seats, and some of the 16 competing parties won no seats. The election was denounced by opposition leaders as the most corrupt to date, a charge illustrated by video evidence of mass vote buying. One response to the protests was that the Central Election Commission annulled the elections. A section of the protesters had however stormed government buildings and also the prison; they freed several former politicians, including former MP Sadyr Japarov, who was serving 11 years for kidnapping a local official - a charge he denied. Japarov was appointed prime minister by the former members of parliament, but within days moved into the presidency, while the Supreme Court began to review his conviction.

Although the uprising began as a protest against rigged elections, political developments were rapidly influenced by those activists prepared to use serious violence. The storming of government buildings led to at least one death and at least 680 injured, and also to burned out cars and piles of debris on the streets. Moreover, supporters of Japarov were accused of intimidating outgoing MPs: one candidate to become prime minister had been seriously



assaulted when he spoke to a rally. Japarov is a fervent Kyrgyz nationalist, which gains him a popular base, and had earlier in his political career led a crowd in an attempt to occupy parliament and the presidential office. After attaining presidential power in 2020 he delayed new parliamentary elections in order to hold a presidential election in January 2021, which he won by a landslide. He then promoted plans to rewrite the constitution, sweeping away the constitutional limits on presidential power (introduced after the mass protests of 2010) to give himself overriding control not only over the state, but over parliament and the judiciary. The proposed constitutional changes, which included scrapping the one term limit on holding the presidency, were approved by 79 percent of those voting in a referendum in April 2021 - though only 37 percent of the electorate voted. The revolution of October 2020 now looks, therefore, more like a coup d'etat.

However, strident Kyrgyz nationalism may antagonize the ethnic Uzbek minority living in the south of the country and there is political opposition to autocratic rule, so Japarov may at some stage be challenged by a further uprising.

The uprising of October 2020 and subsequent political developments were not generally well covered by international media, but a substantial analysis by the Foreign Policy Centre (which has cross-party parliamentary support in the UK) is listed below. A few journal articles exploring the political implications of the 2010 deadly riots against Uzbeks, and the context of Kyrgyz nationalism in 2020 are also listed.

[Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan](#) [115], New Internationalist, 2021, pp. 38-39

Brief but informative overview of the historical background and socio-economic conditions in the country, plus a summary of political developments since 1991.

Fuhrmann, Matthew, [A Tale of Two Social Capitals: Revolutionary Collective Action in Kyrgyzstan](#) [116], Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 53, issue 6, 2007, pp. 16-29

Hager, Anselm, [Ethnic Riots and Prosocial Behavior: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan](#) [117], American Political Science Review, Vol. 113, issue 4, 2019, pp. 1029-1044

The author examines the aftermath of the 2010 riots in Osh, when 400 Uzbeks were killed in the city by Kyrgyz from outside. Hager tests the thesis that riots heighten cohesion within the ethnic group but reduce cooperation across ethnic divides. He found that - contrary to the theory - the neighbourhoods attacked in 2010 had low social cohesion and there was a sense of being abandoned by fellow Uzbeks.

Heuer, Vera ; Hierman, Brent, [Substate Populism and the Challenge to the Centre in Post-Riot Asian Contexts](#) [118], Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, Vol. 13, issue 3, 2018, pp. 40-54

The article compares Narendra Modi (when Chief Minister of Gujarat, India, after deadly anti-Muslim riots) with the Mayor of Osh in Kyrgystan after the 2010 Kyrgyz attacks on Uzbeks, to examine the use of populist rhetoric to cement local political support and undermine external attempts at reconciliation.

Hug, Adam, [Retreating Rights - Kyrgyzstan: Introduction](#) [119], Foreign Policy Centre, 2021

This introduction to a substantial report on the latest phase in Kyrgyz politics provides an analysis of the events of October 2020 to February 2021 against the background of the recent political past, including the legacy of the anti-Uzbek violence in 2010.

Kamila, Eshaliyeva, [Is Anti-Chinese Mood Growing in Kyrgyzstan?](#) [120], Open Democracy, 2019

Article discussing Kyrgyz protests in 2019 against migrant Chinese workers (both illegal and legal), in the context of alarm about Chinese government treatment of ethnic Kyrgyz inside China. The author considers how far fears of



large numbers of migrants could be substantiated and what the relationship was between protesters and state bodies.

Kulikova, Svetlana V. ; Perlmutter, David D., [Blogging Down the Dictator? The Kyrgyz Revolution and Samizdat Websites](#) [121], International Communication Gazette, Vol. 69, issue February, 2007, pp. 29-50

Marat, Erica, [The Tulip Revolution: Kyrgyzstan One Year After](#) [122], Washington DC, The Jamestown Foundation, 2006, pp. 151

Chronological collection of articles from Jamestown's Eurasia Daily Monitor.

Radnitz, Scott, [What really happened in Kyrgyzstan?](#) [123], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 17, issue April, 2006, pp. 132-146

Stresses that the 'Tulip Revolution' was very different from other 'colour revolutions' and notes the importance of localism. See also: Radnitz, Scott , [A Horse of a Different Color: Revolution and Regression](#) in Bunce [124] In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [25] (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [20])New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 300-324 , arguing that the events of 2005 better seen as a 'coup'.

See also:

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [57]), pp. 166-76.

[D. II.2.h. Serbia 1996-97 and 2000](#) [46]

The Dayton Accords of 1995 ended the bloody wars over the secession of Croatia and the future of Bosnia Hercegovina. In this period western powers saw Milosevic as central to achieving a settlement of the conflicts. From 1996, however, the USA and Western European states began to give increasing support to opposition groups in the form of western diplomatic and economic aid and of external training and advice about the tactics of unarmed resistance. The importance of this is one of the key issues debated about the subsequent overthrow of Milosevic in October 2000.

For a much cited source on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and of Serbia under Milosevic, see:

- Ramet, Sabrina Petra, [Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milosevic](#) [125] 4th editionBoulder CO, Westview Press, , 2002, pp. 426

For resistance to Serbia's wars, see:

- Women in Black, [Women for Peace](#) [126] , 1994 , published in English, Spanish and Serbian since 1994.

After the end of fighting a range of groups inside Serbia (including students and intellectuals and extreme



nationalists) began to rally against the increasingly corrupt and authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. There were daily mass demonstrations in the winter 1996-97, especially in the capital Belgrade, over the rigging of town hall elections, and after OSCE intervention Milosevic conceded defeat in 13 cities and nine municipalities of Belgrade. The youth group Otpor was created in 1998 by students who had been active in the 1996-97 protests and played an important role in promoting an almost united opposition to Milosevic in the elections of 2000 and in the resistance to his attempt to rig the results. But the role of miners and other groups from the provinces was crucial in the final days of protest leading to the fall of Milosevic. The most detailed account of his fall, hard to obtain outside Belgrade, is:

- Bujosevic, Dragan ; Radovanovic, Ivan , [OCTOBER 5 - A 24 - Hour Coup](#) [127] Belgrade, Medija Centar Beograd, , 2000, pp. 315 , which is based on interviews with 60 people and includes photos and map of Belgrade.

Ilic, Vladimir, [Otpor – In or Beyond Politics](#) [128], Helsinki Files No. 5, Belgrade, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2001

Similar material is contained in: Ilic, Vladimir , [Otpor - An Organization in Action](#) [129] , 2002, pp. 54 .

Jovanovich, Milja, [Rage Against the Regime: the OTPOR Movement in Serbia](#) [130], In von Tongeren, Paul ; Brenk, Malin ; Hellema, Marte ; Verhoeven, Juliette , [People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society](#) [131] Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner, , 2005, pp. 545-551

Krnjevic-Miskovic, Damjan, [Serbia's prudent revolution](#) [132], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 12, issue July, 2001, pp. 96-110

Lazi?, Mladen, [Protests in Belgrade: Winter of Discontent](#) [133], Budapest and New York, Central European University Press, 1999, pp. 242

Based on interviews with more than 1,000 participants in the 1996-97 protests.

Lebor, Adam, [Milosevic: A Biography](#) [134], London, Bloomsbury, 2002, pp. 386

Chapter 24 – ‘Toppling Milosevic from Budapest’, pp. 298-312 – covers Otpor demonstrations in 2000, but focuses on role of outside powers in toppling Milosevic and ensuring TV coverage.

Nenadic, Danijela ; Belcevic, Nenad, [Serbia – Nonviolent struggle for democracy: The role of Otpor](#) [135], In Clark, [People Power: Unarmed Resistance and Global Solidarity](#) [136] ([A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [7]), London, Pluto Press, pp. 26-35

Former Otpor activists assess its role and criticism made of the group. Accompanied by critical reflections on ‘Serbia eight years after’ by Ivana Franovic (pp. 35-38).

Smiljanic, Zorana, [Plan B: Using Secondary Protests to Undermine Repression](#) [137], St. Paul, MN, New Tactics in Human Rights/Centre for Victims of Torture, 2003, pp. 23

Specifically on Otpor’s demonstrations at police stations to mark the arrest of activists.

Thomas, Robert, [Serbia Under Milosevic: Politics in the 1990s](#) [138], London, Hurst, 1999, pp. 443



See especially pp. 263-318 on formation of united opposition and mass protests from March 1996 to February 1997. Account goes up to 1998.

Thompson, Mark R. ; Kuntz, Phillipp, [Stolen elections: The Case of the Serbian October](#) [139], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 15, issue 4 (October), 2003, pp. 159-172

(see also Thompson, [Democratic Revolutions: Asia and Eastern Europe](#) [140] (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [7]) , pp. 84-97).

Analysis of Milosevic regime and reasons for the October 2000 uprising, plus brief reflections on links between stolen elections and the democratic revolutions in the Philippines 1986, Madagascar 2002 and Georgia 2003. Useful references to other literature.

Veyvoda, Ivan, [Civil Society versus Slobodan Milosevic: Serbia 1991-2000](#) [141], In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [9] (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [7]), New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 295-316

See also:

Taras Kuzio, [Civil society, youth and societal mobilization](#) [37], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57])

Gene Sharp, [Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential](#) [142], (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [143]), pp. 315-39

Helena Flam, [Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to Domination and the Arts of Resistance by James Scott](#) [144], (A. 1.c. Small Scale, Hidden, Indirect and 'Everyday' Resistance [145]), which discusses how protesters in 1996-97 used 'ambivalent, amusing, satirical, carnivalesque forms of protest'

Paul D'Anieri, [Explaining the success and failure of post-communist revolutions](#) [31], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57])

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57]), pp. 85-113.

Sidney Tarrow, [The New Transnational Activism](#) [146], (A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements [147]), Chapter 6, on Otpor

Anika Locke Binnendijk; Ivan Marovic, [Power and persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia \(2000\) and Ukraine \(2004\)](#) [24], (D. II.1. Comparative Assessments [57])

Sidney Tarrow, [Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics](#) [148], (A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements [147]), Chapter 6, on 1996-7

[D. II.2.i. Slovakia 1998](#) [149]

Slovakia (part of Czechoslovakia since the Versailles settlement of 1919) broke away to form a separate state in 1992. Since this was motivated by a sense of a distinct historical and cultural identity and political difference, the new regime dominated by Vladimir Meciar was unsurprisingly nationalist in tone, and also relatively authoritarian. Its path towards EU membership was slowed down by its tendency to harass political opponents, ignore civil liberties and discriminate against ethnic minorities.

Meciar had won parliamentary elections in 1992 at the head of a new party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – he had broken with Public Against Violence (parallel to the Czech Civic Forum) associated with the 1989 'velvet revolution'. Although Meciar briefly lost office in 1994, during the parliamentary elections that year the opposition



was divided and easily defeated by his party. But by 1996 opposition parties began to cooperate, for example to campaign for direct elections to the presidency, and also to work with a strong civil society sector. As a result by the 1998 parliamentary elections political parties from the Christian Democrats to the Social Democrats and the Greens and a party of the Hungarian minority came together in a coalition to defeat Meciar. Electoral tactics were backed by a strong public campaign to inform the public and get out the vote, including local meetings with candidates and rock concerts, and also to organize electoral monitoring. A coalition of civil society bodies 'Civic Campaign '98' (OK '98) was responsible for this campaign, building on earlier experiences of campaigns and demonstrations, and managed to involve trade unions in electoral activity.

OK '98 received advice from Romanian and Bulgarian activists – and was in turn to become an important model for subsequent civil society campaigns in Croatia and Serbia. The Slovak campaigners also received substantial financial aid and some technical advice from the US and other governments (including Bulgaria) and from unofficial external groups.

Meciar had assumed the office of President in 1998 (when the previous incumbent stepped down) as well as Prime Minister, initiated changes in electoral law and stepped up harassment of opponents, so it seemed likely that he would try to rig the elections – hence the emphasis on independent monitoring. The opposition did not expect that Meciar would try to retain power by force (despite his support within the police and security services) and in the event (unlike Milosevic in Serbia) he immediately accepted electoral defeat.

Butora, Martin ; Meseznikov, Grigorij ; Butrova, Zora ; Fisher, Sharon, [The 1998 Parliamentary Election and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia](#) [150], Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs, 1999, pp. 215

Written by protagonists and supporters of the anti-Meciar campaign. Chapters on mobilization of trade unions, Slovak churches and other civil society bodies to turn out the vote for the anti-Meciar coalition, especially among the young (10% of the electorate were first time voters).

See also: Butora, Martin ; Butrova, Zora , [Slovakia's Democratic Awakening](#) [151] *Journal of Democracy*, 1999, pp. 80-93 ; and Butora, Martin , [OK'98: A Campaign of Slovak NGOs for Free and Fair Elections](#) [152] In Forbrig; Demes, [Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe](#) [32] (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [20]) Washington DC, German Marshall Fund of USA, 2007, pp. 21-52 . Butora was a founder member of Public Against Violence and a former Slovak ambassador to the USA.

Meseznikov, Grigorij ; Ivantysyn, Michal ; Nicholson, Tom, [Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society](#) [153], Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs, 1999, pp. 439

Pridham, Geoffrey, [Complying with the European Union's Democratic Conditionality: Transnational Party Linkage and Regime Change in Slovakia, 1993-1998](#) [154], *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 51, issue 7 (November), 1999, pp. 1221-1244

Reichardt, David, [Democracy Promotion in Slovakia: An Import or an Export business?](#) [155], *Perspectives: Central European Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 18, issue Summer, 2002, pp. 5-20

Rhodes, Matthew, [Slovakia after Meciar: A Midterm Report](#) [156], *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 48, issue 4 (summer), 2002, pp. 3-13

See also:

Sharon Fisher, [Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist](#) [96], (D. II.2.e. [Croatia 2000](#) [157])



Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], (D. II.1. [Comparative Assessments](#) [57]), pp. 63-79.

NB. Materials on subsequent developments in Slovakia (in English as well as Slovak) can be found on the [Institute for Public Affairs \(Bratislava\) website](#) [158].

[D. II.2.j. Ukraine 2004-2005](#) [159]

Ukrainian politics is influenced by divisions between those who for historical and cultural reasons desire to maximise Ukrainian independence from Russia and others who feel close historic and cultural ties to Russia (including some ethnic Russians). These deep divisions were manifested during the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, both in the polls and in opposing demonstrations, and have marked Ukrainian politics since then, for example in controversy over renewing the contract for a Russian naval base.

After 1991 Ukraine was governed by former Communist leaders who espoused cultural nationalism. Under pressure from opposition parties, parliamentary elections were held in 1994, but the government continued to be dominated by a coalition between Communists and financial oligarchs in a corrupt and semi-authoritarian regime.

Initial protests in the Ukraine focused on corruption and lack of freedom. In 2000 journalists launched the 'Wave of Freedom' protests, starting in the western city of Lvov and developing in Kiev. One of its key organizers, investigative journalist Gyorgy Gongadze, was later found murdered, and secret tape recordings suggested President Leonid Kuchma had been complicit. An opposition member of parliament, who released the tapes, demanded the President's impeachment. Demonstrators representing both right wing and leftist parties marched in Kiev in early February 2001 to demand Kuchma's resignation and set up a protest camp in the centre of the city. The government tore down the camp on March 1 and was able to suppress the relatively small protests in April. Viktor Yushchenko, who had been trying to end corruption and introduce controversial economic reforms, was forced from office, whilst thousands of supporters outside demanded the impeachment of Kuchma.

These issues came to the fore again in November 2004, when Yushchenko, despite an attempt to poison him, stood in the presidential elections against the then prime minister, Viktor Yanukovych (backed by Kuchma who was retiring). In the second round of the elections, Yanukovych was declared the winner, but Yushchenko's supporters and OSCE observers claimed that the poll was marked by intimidation and ballot rigging. Thousands of demonstrators set up a protest camp in Kiev, which they maintained for days despite freezing temperatures. Other similarities with Georgia (and Serbia) was the role of an active youth group (Pora), symbolic branding of protests (using the colour orange), internal electoral monitoring and foreign funding.

Three western Ukrainian cities, where thousands also took to the streets, declared Yushchenko the winner, despite the official results. However counter-demonstrations in favour of Yanukovych were held in Kiev. After prolonged protests, parliamentary debates and top level negotiations (in which President Putin of Russia, who openly backed Yanukovych, was involved), and a referral to the Supreme Court, a re-run ballot was organized. Yushchenko won, although the voting was close. (Yanukovych refused to concede defeat, claiming evidence of fraud, and took his case unsuccessfully to both the Central Election Committee and the Supreme Court.)

Political divisions in the Ukraine have been demonstrated in subsequent elections, when Yanukovych managed to return to power. So the 'Orange Revolution' was never the result of an overwhelming majority rebelling against authoritarianism. The events illustrated the strong involvement (official and semi-official) by both Russia and the USA in funding and advising the opposed parties, media outlets and 'civil society' bodies. Some leftist western commentators suggested that the 'Orange Revolution' was closer to a western-backed coup. (See for example Jonathan Steele, '[Ukraine's postmodern coup d'etat](#) [160]', Guardian, 26 November 2004, and host of letters representing different viewpoints, 27 November 2004, and follow-up article by Steele replying to critics, 31



December 2004.)

Aslund, Anders ; McFaul, Michael, [Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough](#) [161], Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment, 2006, pp. 216

Selection of essays including assessments of the role of civil society and of the youth group Pora, an examination of western influence, and a concluding analysis of the 'revolution' in comparative perspective.

D'Anieri, Paul, [What has changed in Ukrainian politics? Assessing the implications of the Orange Revolution](#) [162], Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 52, issue 3 (September/October), 2005, pp. 82-91

Garton Ash, Timothy, [Orange Revolution in Ukraine](#) [163], In Garton Ash, Timothy , [Facts Are Subversive: Political Writing from a Decade Without a Name](#) [164] London, Atlantic Books, , 2009, pp. 30-45

Places the Orange Revolution in a sequence of 'velvet revolutions' based on strict nonviolence.

Goldstein, Joshua, [The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution](#) [165], Research Publication No 2007-14 (Dec. 2007), Cambridge MA, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, 2007, pp. 20

Kurth, Helmut ; Kempe, Iris, [Presidential Election and Orange Revolution: Implications for Ukraine's Transition](#) [166], Kyiv, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005, pp. 152

Kuzio, Taras, [Special issue 'Kuchmagate Crisis to Orange Revolution: Civil Society, Elections and Democratisation in Ukraine'](#) [167], The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, Vol. 23, issue 1 (March), 2007

Eight contributions analysing various aspects of Ukrainian society from schools to rock 'n' roll, from politics to gender.

Kuzio, Taras ; D'Anieri, Paul, [Special Issue 'Ukraine: Elections and Democratisation'](#) [168], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 38, issue 2 (June), 2005, pp. 131-292

Much of this issue analyses the previous Kuchma regime and parliamentary elections in 1994, 1998 and 2002, but there are two articles on the 2004 presidential elections and impact of the 'Orange Revolution', one by Kuzio, Taras , [From Kuchma to Yushchenko](#) [169] Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 2005, pp. 229-244 .

McFaul, Michael, [Importing Revolution: Internal and External Factors in Ukraine's 2004 Democratic Breakthrough](#) [170], In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World](#) [25] ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [20]), New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 189-225

Wilson, Andrew, [Ukraine's Orange Revolution](#) [171], New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 232

Lively analysis by academic expert on the country, stressing the complexity of Ukraine's regional politics and of the 'Orange Revolution' itself. See also Wilson, Andrew , [Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" of 2004: The Paradoxes of Negotiation](#) [172] In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [9] ([A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [7])New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 335-353 .



See also:

Taras Kuzio, [Civil society, youth and societal mobilization](#) [37], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57])

Paul D'Anieri, [Explaining the success and failure of post-communist revolutions](#) [31], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57])

Valerie J. Bunce; Sharon L. Wolchik, [Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries](#) [29], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57]), pp. 114-47

Anika Locke Binnendijk; Ivan Marovic, [Power and persuasion: Nonviolent strategies to influence state security forces in Serbia \(2000\) and Ukraine \(2004\)](#) [24], ([D. II.1. Comparative Assessments](#) [57])

[D. II.2.j.i. Ukraine, Euromaidan Rebellion and Aftermath, 2013-2014](#) [173]

The 'Euromaidan' rebellion began on 21 November 2013 and ended on 21/22 February 2014, when President Yanukovych fled from Kiev (allegedly taking \$32 billion with him). It was not, as the 'Orange Revolution' had been, a challenge to the outcome of an election achieved by electoral malpractice, but began as a reaction against Yanukovych's sudden decision to suspend negotiations on a political and trade Association Agreement with the EU. This appeared to be a decisive turn towards Putin's Russia, which was putting pressure on other former Soviet states to renounce ties with the EU. The initial demonstrators looked at the the EU as a symbol of freedom and democracy, and called for Ukraine to sign the EU Association Agreement. Later, the growing movement also attacked the spectacular corruption of Yanukovych's Presidency since 2010, and demanded respect for human rights and a return to the Constitution as amended in 2004, which limited presidential powers and gave greater powers to Parliament, including the appointment of the Prime Minister.

Yanukovych had been seen as both authoritarian and pro-Russian by the activists in 2004, who forced him to accept the election of the more liberal Yushenko. But, in the following years, Yanukovych (who had always had a significant support base, especially in Eastern Ukraine) made an electoral come back, first as Prime Minister and then again as President in 2010. The conduct of the 2010 election (unlike in 2004) was not seriously criticised. But in office Yanukovych tried to discredit a former leader of the Orange Revolution, also a former Prime Minister and his rival in the 2010 election, Yulia Tymoshenko. After she was charged in May 2011 with exceeding her authority in signing a 2009 gas agreement with Russia (she used the trial to ridicule the prosecution), Tymoshenko was arrested in August 2011 for 'contempt of court', and remained in prison until 21 February 2014, when Parliament voted her release. Yanukovych also put pressure on the Constitutional Court, which in 2010 declared the 2004 Amendments unconstitutional and restored the 1996 Constitution, which entrenched his position. There were genuine constitutional issues related to the hasty 2004 Amendments, but in both 2004 and 2010 political requirements dominated.

The 'Orange Revolution' was a disciplined nonviolent movement against electoral corruption and authoritarianism, which was peacefully resolved, although it did not lead to fundamental systematic change. It also had a geopolitical dimension (some left wing commentators stressed the role of Western organisations and funding), but did not result in a decisive swing by Ukraine towards the West. Euromaidan, on the other hand, although it developed into an impressive self-organised and nonviolent protest in November and December 2013, erupted into a more violent confrontation in the later stages from 19 January until 23 February 2014. The Euromaidan movement met with serious violence from government security forces, including covert attacks on supporters by special police and unofficial government-funded mercenary agents, the 'titushki'. There were brutal beatings of demonstrators, and at the end snipers shot into the crowd. By 23 February 2014, 112 protesters were dead, over 600 injured and another 200 were still classed as missing in March 2014. An estimated 17 police members died in the fighting in the last three days, and nearly 200 were injured. Euromaidan was also much more revolutionary in its outcome, and threw Crimea and Eastern Ukraine into a geopolitical crisis.

Evolution of events



The Euromaidan protests began with a few hundred students and middle class demonstrators, but grew rapidly into rallies of around 100,000 and a tent occupation of the Maidan, Kiev's Independence Square. It also spread to other cities such as Lviv. The government escalated confrontation on 30 November, when it sent in the Berkut special police force who brutally attacked the few hundred protesters occupying the square overnight. In response an estimated 700,000 people rallied in Kiev and thousands more elsewhere. Groups, probably of agents provocateurs, fought with the police, but did not manage to discredit the main demonstration. When the government sent in Berkut again to clear the square at 1am on 11 December (joining shields and pushing demonstrators back), the protesters resisted with the mass of their bodies and began to set up barricades, but did not retaliate with violence. There were weekly Sunday rallies: on 29 December a Manifesto of the Maidan was put to the crowd, which included calls to disband the Berkut special force, dismiss legal charges against protesters, free all political prisoners, and for the resignation of the Interior Minister and others responsible for security force violence. In late December a new organization, 'Auto Maidan', used their cars to transport and provision the protesters, patrol the streets and, at times, block security forces. During January the regime stepped up covert violence against demonstrators, including the drivers of Auto Maidan, whilst the opposition developed new tactics: a widespread economic boycott of companies owned by prominent regime members, and setting up of neighbourhood watch groups.

Yanukovytych's public response to the protests was to announce on 17 December 2013 an agreement with President Putin that involved Russia cutting the price of natural gas supplies by a third and buying up many Ukrainian bonds, thus both indicating the economic gains from ties with Russia and rejection of the EU. Unable to quell the protests, Yanukovytych prompted Parliament (where he had a majority) to pass a stringent anti-protest legislation on 16 January 2014. In response there were further mass demonstrations and militant protests in many other parts of Ukraine, including seizures of government buildings. An impromptu march on Parliament from the Maidan after a rally on 19 January 2014 precipitated into serious fights between protesters and police.

In the final phase of the movement there was an escalation both in the violence used against protesters (including the wounded in hospital) and in the militancy of protest. Key buildings in Kiev and other cities were seized - often by the direct action group Common Cause, which was trying to focus attention on opposing the regime itself. There was also a turn towards greater willingness by some protesters to use violence. In the four days of confrontation from 19 January protesters threw stones and molotov cocktails, and there were reports of home-made weapons such as slings and *ad hoc* rocket launchers. During the final days of 18-23 February guns were also in evidence. Common Cause had authorized members with military training to shoot if the government did so first (according to Oleksander Danylyuk in an interview with Andrew Wilson). Police stations were occupied in Lviv, which led to over 1,000 guns going missing (it was not clear who acquired them), and the Right Sector advertised their possession of arms on stage at the Maidan on 21 February. But the great majority of protesters were not armed.

The Yanukovytych government adopted a dual strategy in the final phase. It negotiated with leaders of the protesters and offered apparent concessions, for example on freeing prisoners if occupations of buildings ended, and on a possible new Constitution (although Yanukovytych refused to reinstate the 2004 constitution as the protesters were demanding). His party in Parliament joined with the opposition on 28 January to repeal most of the laws against protest recently passed, and the Prime Minister resigned. But the government was also making preparations to crush the rebellion by force. On 18 February there were violent confrontations between protesters and regime forces in the streets and security forces tried unsuccessfully to clear the Maidan. On 20 February riot police again tried to clear the square while snipers on high buildings shot and killed demonstrators. The regime was apparently planning to use much greater military force on 21 February, but the government was losing its parliamentary majority, as members of Yanukovytych's Party went over to the opposition, and late on 20 February parliament voted for security forces to leave Kiev. There were also military defections in the final days, both at the top and in the ranks - many summoned to Kiev stayed in their barracks. Activists reportedly also blocked both railway lines and roads carrying troops.

The Interior Minister and other top officials left the country on 20 February, just ahead of Yanukovytych. An interim coalition government was created - Parliament endorsed an ally of Yulia Tymoshenko as a temporary president on 23 February and soon after accepted a new Prime Minister. The interim coalition was committed to holding new presidential elections in May. On 25 May 2014 Poro Poroshenko, a wealthy businessman who had supported the Orange Revolution and become prominent during the Maidan protests, was elected as the new President.

Important and Debatable Issues

Interpretations of both Euromaidan and the subsequent developments vary with different ideological



perspectives. One especially sensitive issue is the role of the far right in the protests. For brief analysis of the different rightist groups see Wilson (2014, pp. 70-72), and Ischenko (2014, pp. 5-6 & 8), both listed below. It is generally agreed that far right groups (though in a minority) were quite prominent in the square and in the movement across the country in the later stages, but their impact on events is less clear. Their role was highlighted by the Russian media. The far-right did have some influence in the temporary coalition government, although the leading role was played by Timoshenko's Party. For example, the far right Party Svoboda (founded in 1991), which first gained representation in Parliament in 2012, held four seats in the cabinet.

A second source of confusion concerns who started the shooting in the Maidan on 20 February, when snipers fired at and killed demonstrators. Protest leaders continued to blame the security services and previous government, and it was also claimed that Russian security forces were involved. But there were rumours too of a third force trying to provoke trouble, and accusations against protesters. A leaked telephone call of 4 March 2014 between the Estonian Foreign Minister and the EU foreign affairs representative, Catherine Ashton, revealed that a doctor in Kiev had suggested that snipers shooting both protesters and policemen came from the opposition (MacAskill, Ewen, 'Ukraine Crisis: Bugged Call Reveals Conspiracy Theory about Kiev Snipers', *Guardian* (5 March 2014)). A BBC documentary a year later interviewed a man who claimed he was a protester in the square, was given a gun, and began to shoot at policemen, though he said he was trying to force them back, not to kill them. The report also noted conflicting evidence from various groups involved (Gatehouse, Gabriel, 'The Untold Story of the Maidan Massacre', *BBC News Magazine*, 12 February 2014: <http://www.bbc.co.uk> [174]).

A third question is how to assess the formal agreement reached in the evening on 21 February by three parliamentary opposition leaders with Yanukovyts (brokered by the EU foreign ministers from France, Germany and Poland) in the context of subsequent developments. The agreement was endorsed by Russia. It was accepted (under pressure from the Polish Foreign Minister) by the Maidan Council, which included many politicians, by 34 votes to 2. Under this compromise Yanukovyts would (among other concessions to demands of protesters) reinstate the 2004 Constitution immediately, but could remain in office until new elections to be held by December 2014 (three months ahead of the already scheduled elections in March 2015). Parliament voted unanimously that evening to reinstate the 2004 Constitution and to remove the Minister of the Interior. The protesters in the square had been radicalized further by the violence used against them in the preceding days, and there was booing when the terms were read out. There was also obvious support for a much reported speech of passionate rejection by a 26-year old man, who called for seizure for government buildings in Kiev unless Yanukovyts resigned by 10 am the next day. But there was no formal vote in the square on the terms of the agreement.

Yanukovyts, whose household had been recorded by security cameras packing up for several days, left very early on 22 February for Kharkov in Eastern Ukraine (perhaps to try to rally support), and then travelled on to Russia, where he was treated as the legitimate president of Ukraine. The Kiev Parliament voted by a majority on 22 February to remove him from the presidency, but did not follow the more prolonged constitutional procedure for impeachment, and the reported majority of 328 out of 450 fell slightly short of the constitutionally required three quarters. Moscow has continued to stress the legitimacy of the 21 February internationally endorsed agreement and accused the subsequent Ukrainian government of breaching it. Western states have backed the new government in Kiev.

A week after Yanukovyts and other senior government members fled, armed groups seized the Crimean Parliament and set up a pro-Russian 'government' in the Crimea. This led to Russian military annexation, given a semblance of legitimacy by a hasty referendum. Uprisings in other parts of eastern Ukraine against Kiev (interpretation of these is also disputed) led to a state of war between the new government and breakaway areas such as Donetsk, and threatened a revival of serious conflict between Russia and the West. As a result it is now difficult to assess Euromaidan without taking account of the immediate aftermath. Some of the references listed below cover both, although others focus on the Euromaidan movement.

Bachmann, Klaus ; Lyabashenko, Igor, [The Maidan Uprising, Separatism and Foreign Intervention. Ukraine's Complex Transition](#) [175], Frankfurt-am-Main, Peter Lang GmbH , 2014, pp. 523, hb.

Collection of 17 essays by academics, journalists, lawyers, policy makers and activists covering Euromaidan and the election of President Poroshenko in May 2014, and also developments in Crimea, from a multidisciplinary perspective. It is sponsored by the Polish National Research Institute, but includes also contributions from Germany, Sweden and the USA. There are chapters on post-1991 Ukrainian politics, on the Orange Revolutions



and Euromaidan (focusing only on Kiev).

Bartkowski, Maciej J. ; Stephan, Maria J., [How Ukraine Ousted an Autocrat: The Logic of Civil Resistance](#) [176], Atlantic Council, 01/08/2014,

This work discusses the Euromaidan movement from a perspective of nonviolent strategy, highlighting the role of 'backfire' when the police attacked peaceful students' sit-ins, nonviolent tactics used to combat covert intimidation and the importance of the army's refusal to crush the protest. It also comments on the negative impact of the 'radical flank' that turned to violence.

See also: Ackerman, Peter, Maciej J. Barkowski and Jack Duvall, '[Ukraine: A Nonviolent Victory](#)' [177], *OpenDemocracy* (3 March 2004)

Chapman, Annabelle, [Ukraine's Big Three: Meet the Opposition Leaders at the Helm of Euromaidan](#) [178], Foreign Affairs, Snapshot, 21/01/2014,

A journalist expert on Ukraine assesses the three opposition politicians - Vitaly Klitschko, Oleh Tyahnybok, and Arseniy Yatsenyuk - who, after the 2012 parliamentary elections, created a 'united opposition' and put themselves forward as 'leaders' of the Euromaidan protests.

Diuk, Nadia, [Euromaidan: Ukraine's Self-Organizing Revolution](#) [179], World Affairs, issue March/April, 2014

Report by a Vice-President of Endowment for Democracy covering the developments of Ukraine's demonstrations until the end of December 2014. It stresses the creative and disciplined popular organisation; the unwillingness to rely on politicians; the breadth of support not only in Kiev but in other cities of eastern Ukraine; how provocateurs have been kept out of Maidan and how violence was avoided when responding to brutal attempts to clear the square. Available on line: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/euromaidan-ukraine%E2%80%99s-self-organizing-revolution> [180]

Fishwick, Carmen, '[We were so naive and optimistic': Ukraine Euromaidan protesters tell us what's changed for them](#)' [181], *The Guardian*, 04/03/2014,

Interviews with three protesters, two of whom were then protesting against Russian military intervention.

See also: Stelmakh and Tom Bamforth, '[Ukraine's Maidan Protests - One Year On](#)' [182], *The Guardian*, 21 November 2014

Ischenko, Volodymyr, [Interview: Ukraine's Fractures](#) [183], *New Left Review*, issue 87 (May/June), 2014

Assessment by a Marxist sociologist in Ukraine who demonstrated in 2000 against the Kuchma regime. Topics include: the role of the far right in Euromaidan (he argues that an organised and effective minority was promoting nationalist slogans); the changing of the social composition of protesters; the *interim* government; the cultural roots of the eastern Ukrainian uprisings for independence, and the election of President Poroshenko.

Kurkov, Andrey, [Ukraine Diaries: Dispatches From Kiev](#) [184], London, Harvill Secker, 2014, pp. 272

Account by an enthusiastic Russian Ukrainian novelist, best known for his surreal *Deat of a Penguin*, who was a sympathetic observer of protests, and stresses popular anger at the systematic corruption of Yanukovytsch regime and the spontaneous self-organising nature of the Euromaidan movement.

Marples, David R. ; Mills, Frederick V., [Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution](#) [185], Stuttgart and Hannover, Ibidem Press, 2015, pp. 304, pb.



Collection of essays edited by two historians at the University of Alberta. Topics cover the role of nationalism, the issue of the Russian language, the mass media, the motives and aims of the protesters, gender issues, and the impact of Euromaidan on politics in Ukraine, the EU, Russia and also Belarus. The Russian annexation of Crimea, and the creation of pro-Russian republics in the east of Ukraine and ensuing wars are covered in an epilogue.

Popova, Maria, [Why the Orange Revolution Was Short and Peaceful and Euromaidan Long and Violent](#) [186], Problem of Post-Communism, Vol. 61, issue 6, 2014, pp. 64-70

Focuses on the lack of institutional channels to resolve the crisis and politicisation of the judiciary, and argues that the violence used strengthened the role of the far right.

Sakwa, Richard, [Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands](#) [187], London and New York, I.B.Tauris, 2015, pp. 220

A book by long-term academic expert on the Soviet Union/Russia, which situates coverage of Euromaidan and the subsequent local rebellions in Crimea and other parts of eastern Ukraine within a context of different cultural and ideological strands in Ukrainian society, and within the wider context of Russian-Western relations. Sakwa is very critical of Western policies after 1991 and, more recently, towards Putin, and also challenges the bias of much western reporting on the evolving Ukrainian crisis.

Wilson, Andrew, [Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West](#) [188], New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 224, pb.

British academic expert on Ukraine (author of books on the Orange Revolution) covers both the Euromaidan protests, which he witnessed (stressing variety of protesters and arguing that the far right played a minor role), and the subsequent developments in both western and eastern Ukraine. He concludes with a discussion of Russian policy. Wilson also wrote brief assessments during the course of the Maidan protests, for example: '[The Ukrainian #Euromaidan](#) [189]', by the European Council on Foreign Relations, 5 December 2013.

A film on the demonstration in the Maidan by Ukrainian Director Sergei Loznitsa (duration 134 minutes) was released in London in February 2015.

[D. III. Russia under Putin](#) [190]

In this bibliography, the Russian government figures primarily as a supporter of authoritarian regimes in former Soviet states. Now it also warrants its own sub-section on the potential of internal resistance. After an uncertain political course under Boris Yeltsin from 1991-2000, Vladimir Putin (first elected President in March 2000) has promoted greater economic and political stability and an efficient form of authoritarianism, which allows degrees of individual and social freedom but represses significant dissent from individuals and from organized groups.



Opposition parties are allowed to contest elections, but on unequal terms. Putin has served two terms as President, one four year term as Prime Minister (with an obviously subordinate ally as President) and was re-elected President (this time for six years) in May 2012. Putin undoubtedly has had widespread popular support for restoring stability, clamping down on some of the individuals who amassed fortunes in the 1990s by seizing the assets of the Soviet state, and appealing to Russian nationalism.

In general there was more protest, including strikes, under Yeltsin, whereas Putin has been more effective in repressing opposition demonstrations, mobilizing expressions of popular support for himself, and in channeling dissent. Key sources of opposition have been some investigative journalists – more than 20 of whom have been murdered – human rights defenders and ecological activists. It was not until the run-up to the elections of May 2012, and in their aftermath, that major protests erupted claiming the process was rigged. Hundreds were arrested. In the west considerable publicity has also been given to the feminist punk band Pussy Riot: their brief controversial protest before an altar in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Moscow (to oppose the political support given to Putin by the Russian Orthodox) has earned two members two years in prison. The regime in the latter part of 2012 initiated measures to tighten control of the internet and undermine civil society groups. The references listed below include assessments of the nature of Putin's authoritarianism as well as a few articles on the May 2012 protests.

Political Developments: 2012-2020

Vladimir Putin took a number of steps after 2012 to pursue his personal goals and consolidate his power and prominence within the Russian state. After the 2008-9 financial crisis, and a fall in the price of the oil and gas Russia exported, the regime's ability to win widespread popular support through its economic policies was weakened. The 2011-12 protests against the handling of the parliamentary and presidential elections also revealed the dangers of liberal opposition. Putin responded by adopting a more unequivocally anti-liberal, anti-western and nationalistic policy and ideology internally and externally. His foreign policy reasserted Russian political and military power internationally, for example through military intervention on the side of the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war in September 2015. It also cemented internal popular backing for his government. The 2014 annexation of Crimea (for long a part of Russia) from the Ukraine appeared in particular to have widespread public support.

The regime also continued to use official measures to weaken internal dissent. For example, Putin's United Russia Party in the Duma (parliament) passed a law in June 2016 that made it a crime for individuals not to give the authorities 'reliable' information about terror attacks and a range of other crimes, and undermined individual privacy by obliging telephone and internet companies to store personal information and assist intelligence agencies to decode them. The regime also continued to imprison and harass intellectuals and artists, arresting for example a prominent avant garde theatre director, Kiril Serebrennikov, whose productions raised sexual and political issues, on suspicion of fraud in March 2017.

Some of the most vocal opposition to Putin is conducted from abroad, by defecting intelligence agents like Alexander Litvinov, and exiled oligarchs like Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The latter, an extremely rich former energy company executive (jailed in Russia in 2005 and allowed to leave prison in 2014), set up a Dossier Centre which leaks secret information about Russian government activities to the media.

Putin is frequently accused of unofficially sanctioning (though not necessarily initiating) the murder of key opponents. Russian security officials are apparently designated to kill defecting members of the security services like Litvinov (poisoned with polonium in 2006) or Sergei Kripal (seriously harmed, though not killed, by Russian military intelligence operatives using the Novichok nerve agent in Salisbury, England in 2017). Other political killings may be carried out by members of the Russian criminal underworld with links to the regime (see Galleotti, *The Vory*, referenced below) or ordered by the brutal ruler of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, who has been backed by Putin since the crushing of the Chechen wars for independence from Russia. Investigative journalists have been a primary target: the shooting in 2006 of Anna Politkovskaya (who had publicized Russian military atrocities in Chechnya) is the best known, but the Committee to Protect Journalists recorded in 2016 that since then 20 Russian journalists had been killed. Many more suffered violent attacks. Prominent political opponents of the regime who have died are Boris Nemtsov and Sergei Magnitsky. Nemstov was a former deputy prime minister, and leader of the 2011-12 protests and presidential electoral challenge, who was shot in 2015, 100 metres from the Kremlin. Magnitsky was a lawyer, who died - apparently from beatings in jail - in November 2009, days before he was due to be either released or put on trial, whose name was used to promote sanctions against prominent Russian officials, legislated for by the US and other western government.

Between 2013 and 2017 there was little evidence of widespread discontent with Putin's rule or policies. Among the



intelligentsia only a small minority, for example human rights campaigners and opposition activists, risked serious dissent. The regime allowed enough personal freedoms (for example to travel or to use social media) to defuse general dissatisfaction. Even some forms of media independence and electoral political opposition were tolerated if they did not go too far: they in fact provided a degree of legitimacy to the regime and the electoral process. Many among the general population also seemed to support Putin's promotion of Russian nationalist identity and pride.

Putin's decision in 2013 to target the small Russian LGBT community through hostile media portrayals, local bans on 'gay propaganda' succeeded by a national law against gay propaganda at the end of 2013, meshed with an anti-liberal and anti-European assertion of Russian nationalism. Public reaction appeared to manifest itself through a rise in violence against gays and lesbians. Putin denounced gays as not truly Russian, and during the 2014 Sochi Olympics suggested gays and lesbians from abroad might abuse children in Russia. Linking Russian nationalism to the patriarchal family, and promotion of a rising birth rate, was taken a step further in February 2017, when the government decriminalized domestic abuse of women and children (unless beatings resulted in broken bones), a step approved by an official of the Russian Orthodox Church on the grounds of protecting family privacy.

Evidence of Growing Opposition

Given the regime's stance, the decision in 2019 to arrest a feminist artist, Yulia Tsvetkova, who is also a LGBT activist, for 'distributing pornography' by portraying women's bodies was unsurprising. However, the strong campaign on Tsvetkova's behalf by fellow artists and writers, LGBT groups and feminists, who held rallies and pickets, put on exhibitions and used social media, despite arrests and threats, represented a significant fight back against repression. There was an even more unexpected response by journalists and media figures in June 2019 to the arrest of an investigative reporter, Ivan Golunov, known for exposing corruption, on drug-dealing charges carrying a possible 20-year prison sentence. His arrest was based on evidence planted by the police and he was beaten up by them in custody. This treatment of Golunov was strongly and prominently condemned across a broad range of media, including those that usually supported the Kremlin line, and thousands demonstrated (despite a police ban) against the arrest. The regime rapidly backed down, and the interior minister admitted that there was no convincing evidence for the charge. (Forensic testing revealed no trace of drugs on his person, and photographs published by police of a drug laboratory at his flat were subsequently revealed to have no connection with Golunov)

Since 2018 the regime has also faced growing disillusion and sometimes anger not only among the intelligentsia, some of whom have become more willing to protest openly again, but also among some sections of the broader population. Opposition has also spread from Moscow to different regions of Russia. During 2018-19 Putin's previously very high official popularity ratings had dropped to 64 per cent by the summer of 2019, according to the only independent polling service in Russia. When he conducted a TV phone-in during June 2019, one caller asked him when he was going to leave office. The major popular protests in Armenia in 2018 and in Belarus in 2020 also provide reminders of the potential for mass unrest.

The largest protests by the liberal intelligentsia since 2012 took place in Moscow in the summer of 2019, sparked by handling of elections to the largely powerless, but highly symbolic, Moscow local council. The decision to disqualify not only official opposition candidates, but all independent candidates, led one candidate, who had collected the required thousands of signatures, lawyer Ljubov Sobol, to conduct a hunger strike for weeks. There were major public protests, which were at first tolerated. But after protesters put up a few tents suggesting a long term occupation, the security services reacted by beating up demonstrators, arresting about 1,400, and threatening parents with the removal of their children. Anger at the security services resulted in the protest broadening into a demand for basic rights and a rise in support for the small human rights groups. University staff and students also mobilized to sign open letters of protest and picket police stations, when 21 year old Moscow student Egor Zhukov was arrested for his 1 August blog, which claimed that the secret services response to protests showed they had seized power in Russia. About 50,000 people joined the next political demonstration on 10th August. In early September Zhukov was moved to house arrest.

Commentators and journalists suggest potential disaffection among a number of social groups. One is the well-educated younger generation in their twenties or thirties frustrated by the corruption, political style and lack of competence of the existing regime. Some may desire a more open and rule governed system in which to pursue their careers; others are angry at blatant manipulation of the electoral system and regime violence. Reportedly young people were much more prominent in the summer 2019 Moscow protests than in 2012. The rise of the internet as a source of alternative news has also weakened the previously key role of major TV channels under Putin's control to slant the information received by the public, especially those under 50. There has also been a rise



in Internet activism on a range of social issues across Russia. On the other hand, access to the net, whilst it may promote scepticism about the official line does not necessarily translate into a desire to change the regime, as interviews conducted by the *Economist* with mostly contented 18 year-olds across Russia before the 2018 presidential election revealed ('The Puteens'. *Economist*, 17 March, pp.31-2).

Evidence of social and economic discontent in parts of Russia distant from the capital suggests a potential weakening of the control exerted by Putin and his United Russia party. Regional and local elections provide an opportunity to register anger at corruption, opposition to cutbacks in social services and proposed raising of the retirement age, and disillusion with the ruling United Russia party. The potential for local protest has also been created by the regime's weakening of regional power and the ability of regional governments to control their own resources. In the 2018 regional election for governors, four United Russia candidates were defeated. One candidate in the local elections of 2019 who managed to capitalize on these sentiments was Sardana Avksentieva, elected mayor of Yakutsk in Siberia, who immediately cut back on the number of official cars, international travel and expensive hospitality of previous mayors, and stressed her personal frugal lifestyle and affinity with the local people. The most dramatic example of resistance to the Putin regime occurred in the city of Khabarovsk in the Far East (bordering China), when about 30,000 marched through the streets in July 2020 in defence of their governor, Sergei Furgal, who had been seized by security services and flown to Moscow to face charges linked to a 15 year old murder. Furgal was one of the opposition candidates elected in 2018 and his arrest aroused regional pride and anger at Moscow, with protesters waving regional flags. The protests continued for weeks.

Some of this opposition has been prompted, or intensified, by the tireless campaigning of Alexei Navalny, who since the death of Nemstov has been the leading figure in the political opposition. He trained as a lawyer, but has played an active role in electoral politics since the 2000s, and in organizing protests against electoral fraud. In his early years in politics he espoused right wing nationalist views (for example supporting the 2008 war against Georgia), but has since worked closely with liberals and also embraced social justice issues. He has long focused on exposing corruption, waging a vigorous campaign through YouTube video blogs against the endemic corruption of top figures in business and politics. This theme strikes a chord both with the general public and with some younger tech savvy entrepreneurs who want opportunities for fair competition. When, for example, Fedor Ovchinnikov, who ran a pizza business, was accused of drug dealing after criminals (protected by the police) planted drugs in one of his Moscow outlets, Navalny took up the case on YouTube and the prosecution dropped charges.

Navalny tried to stand in the 2018 presidential elections but was disqualified in December 2017 by fraud charges brought by the regime. He then urged a boycott of the poll. But he had already, while continuing to investigate and expose corruption, started to highlight social and economic concerns, for example assisting independent unionization, especially in the medical profession and among teachers. (The official trade union bodies are linked to the Putin regime) He has also pursued a strategy of challenging the regime in local and regional elections throughout Russia, setting up local organizations and travelling widely to publicize corruption and support candidates opposing United Russia.

Navalny has frequently been arrested and detained on bogus charges; he partially lost sight in one eye after green liquid was thrown at him in 2017, and believes he was poisoned whilst in custody in 2019. Nevertheless, his collapse into a coma on an aircraft at the end of August 2020, when returning from Siberia where he had been supporting local opposition candidates, indicated the regime's decision to move from intimidation to assassination. In response to internal and external pressure, the government eventually allowed Navalny to be moved from a Russian hospital to Germany for treatment. German scientists identified that Navalny had been poisoned with a new version of the Novichok military nerve agent. Navalny himself has suggested the reason for this attempt to kill him is his role in promoting opposition in regions like Siberia. Two of his associates were elected to city councils in Tomsk and Novosibirsk in September 2020.

Putin's Strategy to Remain in Power

The assassination attempt against Navalny suggests nervousness about the future of the regime. Putin's strategy for remaining in power has evolved over time with changing circumstances. Since 2017 he has emulated earlier tsars and portrayed himself as guardian of the people, ready to strike down subordinates who exceed their powers. One platform for doing this is periodic TV phone-ins when people can complain to him direct. A favoured tactic is to dismiss and bring proceedings against individual officials on charges of corruption and to publicize the individual's downfall. For example, Mikhail Abyzov, a former minister, was arrested in March 2019 accused of embezzling 4 billion roubles. In 2020 the regime also tried to modernize and update its political elite, launching a training



programme 'Leaders of Russia' to promote a younger and more expert, but loyal, new political elite. New tame opposition groups were also promoted to create a semblance of electoral competition. But this latter tactic could backfire. In the 2020 local elections in a village about 300 miles from Moscow the United Russia official asked a cleaner, Marina Udgodskaya, to run against him; although she did not try to campaign, she won 62 per cent of the vote and replaced him.

Putin was due under the constitutional rules to retire from the presidency in 2024, when he would have served two more consecutive six-year terms as president since 2012 (when Dimitri Medvedev, who had swapped roles for four years, reverted to being prime minister). By January 2020, however, Putin publicly indicated that he was considering his future, mooted various possible changes to Russia's constitution which might redistribute power to the prime minister and the Duma. Medvedev then 'resigned' from his long running post as prime minister, and was demoted to a more minor role. The impact of Covid-19, however, enabled Putin to abandon complex constitutional redrafting. Instead he held a referendum in June 2020 (extending voting over seven days and to a wide range of venues, such as playgrounds, which made checking impossible) on a range of proposals, which included a constitutional amendment nullifying the limit of two consecutive terms as president, and authorizing Putin to stand for two more six year terms from 2024. The referendum result announced was that almost 78 per cent of Russians supported this proposal. By the end of 2020, therefore, Putin appeared to have secured the presidency for life, but faced potential resistance in the provinces and a revived liberal political opposition.

Navalny's Return and Major Russian Protests

Alexei Navalny returned to Moscow, after recuperating in Germany for five months from being poisoned by Novichok, on 17 January 2021. He was arrested at the airport and temporarily sentenced the next day to 30 days for violating parole (while in Germany), until further charges were brought. Immediately after Navalny's sentence his supporters made public a two-hour video about Putin's financial affairs. The most arresting revelations were pictures secured by a camera on a drone, which showed the extensive grounds and luxury palace (including a casino) in a secret estate on the Black Sea, which it was alleged belonged to Putin. (He subsequently denied ownership and a close associate claimed the property was his, but Navalny maintains Putin is the real owner). The film, unlike earlier revelations of economic corruption and excess, which focused on Putin's circle, directly attacked the president himself. It immediately attracted millions of viewers, intrigued by details of the palace furnishings, such as the gold-plated lavatory brushes. By early February the video had apparently been watched by 100 million people and a poll by the Levada Centre found that trust in the president had dropped to 29 per cent of those questioned.

Navalny in his first court appearance called for people to lose their fear and for demonstrations across Russia on 23 January to demand better political future. This call met with an impressive response with thousands taking to the streets not only in Moscow and St Petersburg, but in Vladivostok on the Pacific and Yakutsk, where demonstrators turned out despite the - 50 centigrade temperature. A total of 180 cities and towns, including in Crimea, had protesters out on the streets and the range of social groups involved appeared much wider than in 2011-12. Many of the demonstrators called on Putin to resign. Students at Moscow university had been warned not to protest, but some did so. Police carrying truncheons forced protesters out of squares in several cities, and in both Moscow and St Petersburg marchers broke through police lines and fought back. The demonstrations were repeated on 31 January, some protesters waving gilded lavatory brushes. Demonstrators took part again on 7th February in further rallies across Russia demanding Putin's resignation. In Moscow protesters, some shouting 'Putin is a thief', tried to reach the prison where Navalny was held. The police were filmed using stun guns and beating women with batons, and in St Petersburg a policeman was revealed pulling his pistol. There were 5,100 arrests - Navalny's wife and brother, and many of his associates, had been arrested earlier.

The regime engaged in a barrage of hostile propaganda against Navalny, accusing him of criminal behaviour and acting as an agent of the West, pointing to official condemnation by the US, EU and UK governments of the treatment of Navalny. He was also described as a Nazi in the media. The authorities have brought him to trial on a series of charges. On 2 February he was sentenced to two years and eight months incarceration on the same charges that had led to a suspended sentence in 2014. His court appearance was marked by 350 further arrests in Moscow, not only of protesters but also journalists, who were targeted by the riot police. Navalny was in court again on 5 February, charged with insulting a war veteran. Western reporters suggested that more serious charges might be pending. By late February it was estimated a total of 10,000 protesters had been arrested - in Moscow the courts and detention centres were swamped and many had to be kept in police vans overnight.

Despite the mass arrests in February 2021, the moves by the government to outlaw Navalny's movement



throughout Russia, and the departure into exile of some of his key aides not yet imprisoned, tens of thousands protested in Moscow on 21 April in support of Navalny, who was on hunger strike in prison. The authorities did not (as expected) attack or detain the Moscow marchers, although police assaulted those protesting at the same time in St Petersburg. But Navalny's aides recognized that these might be the last major manifestations of public defiance for some time. The regime's move towards greater repression reflects fear of declining public support for Putin personally and for his United Russia parliamentary party - poll support for the party was down to 27 per cent in late April. The parliamentary elections due in September 2021 added to Putin's desire to discredit and destroy political opposition.

[The Kremlin Emboldened](#) [191], *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 28, issue 4, 2017, pp. 60-116

This supplement contains a number of articles exploring the nature of 'Putinism', the degree of regime stability, the extent of genuine popular support, and the implications of Putin's post 2014 international policy for Russia internally. Authors provide varied perspectives, including an assessment of increasing popular frustration, especially among young people.

Anderson, Perry, [Incommensurate Russia](#) [192], *New Left Review*, Vol. July-August 2015, issue 94, 2015

Anderson discusses the nature of Putin's regime, starting from two opposing assessments of it. The first, promoted by western journalists, stressed lack of legality, kleptocracy, thuggery and authoritarianism. The second, elaborated by some academic studies, suggested a more nuanced picture of gradual progress towards greater legal stability. Anderson then considers in some detail the implications of Russian policy in relation to the Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and situates Putin's rule in the wider context of Russian and Soviet history. He concludes by noting the tension created by trying to combine traditional Russian emphasis on military power and regional domination with the logic of financial capitalism.

Burrett, Tina, [Not Toeing the Kremlin's Line](#) [193], *New Internationalist*, 2021, pp. 44-46

This article focuses particularly on the growing role by 2019-21 of independent regional news media prepared to report corruption, uphold the right to independent comment and to explore taboo topics like Stalinist labour camps. These regional media (often online) give a voice to individual bloggers and have underpinned political, economic and environmental protests at a regional and local level throughout Russia. Burrett also discusses the attempts by the regime to suppress these channels through tightening its 'Fake News' law and classifying independent journalists as 'foreign agents', but notes the solidarity between regional media.

Democracy, Journal of, [Putin under Siege](#) [194], special section, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 23, issue 3 (July), 2012, pp. 19-70

Comprises 5 articles: Shevtsova, Lilia, 'Putin Under Siege; Implosion, Atrophy or Revolution?'; Krastev, Ivan and Stephen Holmes, 'An Autopsy of Managed Democracy'; Popescu, Nicu, 'The Strange Alliance of Nationalists and Democrats'; Volvkov, Denis, 'The Protesters and the Public'; Wolchick, Sharon, 'Can There be a Color Revolution?'

Dobson, William J., [The Dictator's Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy](#) [195], New York, Harvill Secker, 2012, pp. 341

Former editor of [Foreign Affairs](#) [196] and [Foreign Policy](#) [197] assesses the nature of various contemporary authoritarian regimes and discusses unarmed resistance. Chapter 1 'The Czar' analyses the Putin regime including its control over the media; Chapter 2 'Enemies of the State' gives prominence to a campaign to preserve the Khimki forest and the effectiveness of tactics used.

Enikolopov, Reuben, [Social Media and Protest Participation: Evidence from Russia](#) [198], *Econometrica*, Vol. 28,



issue 4, 2020

The article assesses the impact of the main Russian online social network, VK, on the likelihood of protest with a focus on 2011. It argues that increased use of the network did have some impact on the likelihood of protest, but did so through simplifying coordination rather than increasing the availability of criticism of the regime. The authors also suggest that wider social use of the network actually increased support for the government.

Galleotti, Mark, [The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia](#) [199], New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 344

Galleotti, a Russian expert at the Institute of International Relations in Prague, explores how the Russian underworld has evolved under Putin, and how the regime has both exerted control over it and also used it for semi-covert operations, which the government can distance itself from in public. Although the underworld can be used when violence and ruthlessness are required, Galleotti stresses that many criminals now have sophisticated financial and technological skills.

Greene, Samuel ; Robertson, Graeme, [Putin v the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia](#) [200], New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2019, pp. 296

The authors, academic experts on Russian politics, draw on surveys, social media, interviews and leaked documents to examine why there has been such long term popular support for Putin. They examine his changing tactics, his handling of the 2012 protests against electoral manipulation, and the role of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 that made pride in Russia the main pillar of his support. The authors argue that attempts to secure change are undermined by belief that it is impossible, but suggest there are limits to public acquiescence and Putin's power. The potential fragility of his rule is revealed for example by demonstrations by thousands of pensioners against pension reforms that raised the retirement age.

Robertson, Graeme B., [The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia](#) [201], New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 303

Thorough study, with substantial chapter on strikes and workers' mobilization.

Ross, Cameron, [Regional Elections in Russia: Instruments of Authoritarian Legitimacy or Instability?](#) [202], Humanities and Social Science Communications, 2018

This survey of regional elections for governors and assemblies in 2015, 2016 and 2017 finds that the regime has switched from a strategy primarily reliant on manipulating election results (liable to cause criticism and protest) to focus on manipulating the registration of candidates, so preventing serious opposition candidates from standing. Whilst this approach has strengthened Putin's United Russia party in regional elections up to 2017, it has also resulted in widespread apathy and low turn- out, which could undermine the regime.

Roxburgh, Angus, [The Strongman: Vladimir Putin and the Struggle for Russia](#) [203], London, I.B. Taurus, 2011, pp. 338

By BBC and *Sunday Times* journalist.

Saradzhyan, Simon ; Abdullaev, Nabi, [Putin, the protest movement and political change in Russia](#) [204], [17 Feb 2012], Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2012

Shevtsova, Lilia, [Russian under Putin: Titanic Looking for its Iceberg?](#) [205], Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Vol. 45, issue 3-4 (September), 2012, pp. 209-216



Smyth, Regina, [How Alexei Navalny Revolutionized Opposition Politics in Russia, before his Apparent Poisoning \[206\]](#), *The Conversation*, 21/08/2020,

An assessment, by a US academic, of Navalny's role and impact in the immediate aftermath of his poisoning.

See also: Nikitin, Vadim, 'As Alexei Navalny's Life Hangs in the Balance, So Does the Fate of the Russian Opposition', *The Nation*, 2 September, 2020.

Analysis of Navalny's changing political stance that discerns 'an unexpected but unmistakable left turn' in recent years.

See also: Gorokhovskaia, Yana, 'The Navalny Case may Weaken the Idea that Putin is in Total Control', *Guardian Weekly*, 4 September 2020, p. 47.

Stoner-Weiss, Kathryn, [Comparing Oranges and Apples: The Internal and External Dimensions of Russia's Turn Away from Democracy \[207\]](#), In Bunce; McFaul; Stoner-Weiss, [Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World \[25\] \(D. II.1. Comparative Assessments \[20\]\)](#), New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 253-273

Wilson, Kenneth, [Is Vladimir Putin a Strong Leader? \[208\]](#), *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 07/10/2020,

Examines Putin's strength both in terms of his personal power and the effectiveness of his policies measured by economic growth, social stability and international standing. The article compares Putin's record with that of governments in other former Soviet states, and concludes that his achievements are not especially impressive.

See also: White, David, 'State Capacity and Regime Resilience in Putin's Russia', *International Political Science Review*, 2018.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512117694481> [209]

White argues that although state capacity in Russia is 'relatively weak', the Putin regime has achieved relative stability through enriching elites, controlling civil society and opposition, and promoting public support through 'economic benefits and national-patriotic appeal'.

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