

# JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

July 2016, Volume 27, Number 3 \$14.00



## **The Danger of Deconsolidation**

*Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk* ■ *Ronald F. Inglehart*

## **The Struggle Over Term Limits in Africa**

*Brett L. Carter* ■ *Janette Yarwood* ■ *Filip Reyntjens*

## **25 Years After the USSR: What's Gone Wrong?**

*Henry E. Hale*

---

*Suisheng Zhao* on Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival

*Bojan Bugarič & Tom Ginsburg* on Postcommunist Courts

*Clive H. Church & Adrian Vatter* on Switzerland

*Daniel O'Maley* on the Internet of Things

---

## **Delegative Democracy Revisited**

*Santiago Anria* ■ *Catherine Conaghan* ■ *Frances Hagopian* ■ *Lindsay Mayka*

*Juan Pablo Luna* ■ *Alberto Vergara* and *Aaron Watanabe*

# 25 YEARS AFTER THE USSR: WHAT'S GONE WRONG?

*Henry E. Hale*

*Henry E. Hale is professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University. He is the author of *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective* (2015). His research focuses on political regimes, ethnic politics, and public opinion, especially in post-Soviet countries.*

After a quarter-century, the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union looks like a de-democratizing event. Leading up to that fateful year, Mikhail Gorbachev had been one of the world's great democratizers. In just six years after rising to the top post in one of history's most repressive regimes, he had almost completely freed the media, launched competitive elections, and ended the Communist Party's political monopoly. But this trend stopped in its tracks and even went into reverse when the Soviet Union broke apart into fifteen newly independent states in late 1991. In fact, if we take Freedom House measures and leave aside the three Baltic states, which were generally not recognized as being part of the USSR and soon joined the EU, there has not been a single year when the post-Soviet space on average has enjoyed the level of "political rights" (to use Freedom House's term) that was achieved under Gorbachev.<sup>1</sup> What accounts for this depressing reality?

There is no shortage of theories—most with at least some element of truth—but the best known all leave major puzzles unresolved. In recent years, it has become fashionable among Russia-watchers to blame that country's democratic woes on its strongman president, Vladimir Putin. But this fails to explain why so many other post-Soviet countries have similar or greater levels of authoritarian rule. Some see Russia as exporting autocracy to its neighbors, but the post-Soviet political systems that most resemble Russia's today actually appeared far earlier, years before anyone outside of St. Petersburg had heard of a midlevel city official and former KGB lieutenant-colonel named Putin. And Russia, which has from time to time destabilized leaders whom it dislikes, has

often failed spectacularly to keep friendly but unpopular client regimes in power. This has been true not only in Ukraine—a big country with a significant nationalist tradition—but even in tiny South Ossetia, a de facto Russian vassal state.

Perhaps post-Soviet Eurasia's nondemocratic rulers have simply learned on their own how to organize their repressive machines more effectively, but this too raises questions: Why have some authoritarians proved apter pupils than others? Why have some been able to act on their knowledge while others have failed to do so? And why have democracy's advocates failed to learn and apply counterlessons of their own as effectively as research on other parts of the world suggests they should?<sup>2</sup> Is it just a sad coincidence that Eurasia has had so many competent illiberal presidents at the same time?

A closer look shows that even presidents who were at first widely seen as democrats wound up using authoritarian methods. They include Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia, who as Gorbachev's foreign minister took part in ending the Cold War and then resigned to warn of the Soviet hard-liners' coup that came in 1991. They also include Armenia's President Levon Ter-Petrossian, a former dissident, and President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan, an academic who had made his career outside the Communist Party apparatus and was initially viewed as his country's great democratic hope. That leaders of such diverse backgrounds ended up ruling in the same nondemocratic way hints at something deeper.

Many "deeper" explanations, however, fare little better. If weak civil society across the region is to blame, how to account for the massive outbursts of collective action and public spirit that we periodically witness there? If the problem is a "resource curse," why are resource-poor Belarus and Tajikistan as durably authoritarian as petrochemical-rich Russia and Kazakhstan? Is an authoritarian culture to blame? Many current democracies (Germany, for example) were once characterized in this way, and studies have found that support for competitive elections and political pluralism is strong even in Russia.<sup>3</sup>

If weak economic development is the trouble, why has authoritarianism grown in step with post-Soviet economic growth? And why are some of the region's poorer countries (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Ukraine) also among its more democratic? Corruption is a logical suspect, though that leads to other puzzles: Why is corruption so stubbornly pervasive in Eurasia? And why have vigorous even if imperfect democracies been able to flourish in other places vexed by corruption, such as India? A stronger case can be made that the decades-long communist experience is to blame, but scholars disagree about exactly which aspects of the communist legacy had this effect, and some research even finds that certain aspects belong to a "usable past" that can support democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Without denying some role for these other factors, I locate the main

source of Eurasia's democratic disappointment in a different kind of historical legacy, one that is older than communism and that has interacted in an unfortunate way with institutions that have worked well in other (especially Western) contexts. This legacy has done the most damage to democratic prospects, ironically, where leaders have had the broadest popular support. In some times and places, certain international forces and institutional designs have mitigated its effects, which helps to explain some of the partial exceptions to nondemocratic rule seen across Eurasia.

What is the malign legacy behind Eurasia's sorry silver jubilee? It is a combination of patronalism and presidentialism that would be even more damaging to democratic prospects were it not for the pull of the EU and the happenstance of nonpresidentialist constitutions in a few post-Soviet countries.

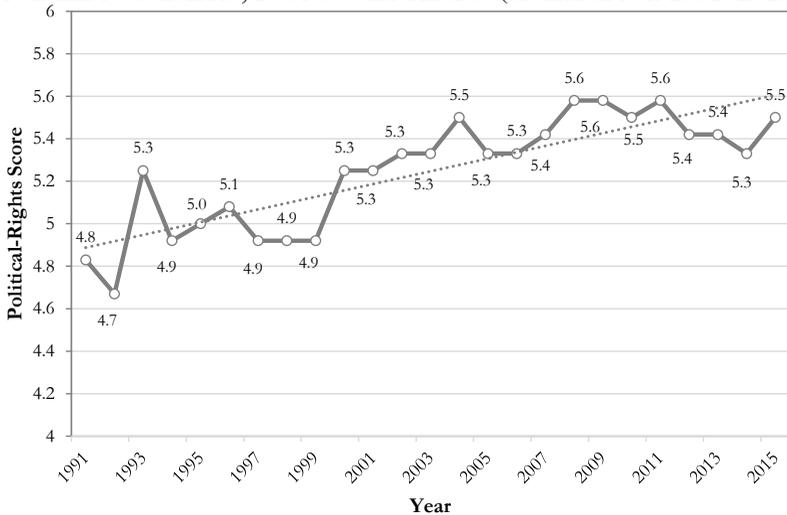
### A Pattern of Regime Cycling

According to the widely used metrics of Freedom House, the sole post-Soviet country aside from the Baltic states *ever* to have earned an annual rating of Free is Ukraine. And that was only between 2005 and 2010, after the Orange Revolution. Although the net regional trend since 1991 has been bad enough, it could be worse: The new authoritarianism of Eurasia is not that of today's China or even Saudi Arabia, and is certainly not as harsh and bloody as the dictatorships found in the pre-Gorbachev USSR or Pinochet's Chile.

Of course, things could always get worse. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have long had highly repressive governments, and maybe their model will spread. Occasional political killings are believed with varying degrees of evidence to have taken place in most post-Soviet countries. Ramzan Kadyrov, the Russian-sponsored strongman who keeps Chechnya in line for Moscow, is a brutal character. But to date, a sober look at Eurasia mainly reveals heavy-handed manipulations of the media and the political system (buttressed by corrupt cooptation) rather than mass killings or jailings.

In fact, trends in the average Freedom House political-rights score for the entire non-Baltic post-Soviet region reveal that the *net* movement toward authoritarianism has been slight and anything but steady. As the Figure illustrates, things were no worse, freedom-wise, in 2015 than they were in 2004 or 2010, and indeed they were worse still in 2008, 2009, and 2011. And the net change between the democratic high point of 1992 and 2016 is still less than a single point on this 7-point scale where 7 is least free. Over a quarter-century, that is not much: Gorbachev's reforms across the same swath of the world map moved the Freedom House needle in a positive direction by three full points in just the few short years between 1987 and 1991.

**FIGURE—FREEDOM HOUSE POLITICAL-RIGHTS SCORES FOR THE NON-BALTIC, POST-SOVIET REGION (AVERAGE FOR 1991–2015)**



*Note:* Freedom House assigns countries a Political Rights score between 1 and 7, with a rating of 1 representing the most-free conditions and a rating of 7 the least-free.

The non-Baltic post-Soviet states are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

If we were to look even more closely, what we would see would be a pattern of *cycling* or oscillation as regimes waver back and forth between the autocratic and democratic ends of the political-rights spectrum. The Figure records no fewer than *eleven* reversals of direction in Eurasia's net regime dynamics since the USSR dissolved. Plotting the paths of individual countries over the same period on a single chart (as I once tried to do), would yield a confusing, hard-to-read tangle of lines. For there is no lockstep movement to be shown. Instead, the twelve non-Baltic regimes in the old Soviet space have moved with great dynamism—each in its own way, and none fully in step with the others. The very thoroughness with which their ups and downs have offset one another is why the average regional level of political closure has only inched upward, in fits and starts.

Although regime cycling with only a slight overall trend to authoritarianism has been the regional norm since the Soviet collapse, it is possible to discern one set of countries with worse political closure (Russia plus Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and the five Central Asian states) and another that shows more openness (Ukraine plus Moldova and Georgia). Even within these clusters, however, substantial movements in both directions still occur. Thus it is wise to avoid treating regimes as if the most recent year's "snapshot" is everything. Instead, it is the dynamic oscillation itself—and not this or that movement in one direction or the other—that is the thing to be explained. The cycling between

movement away from and movement toward authoritarianism is mainly the product of one of this region's strongest legacies: patronalism.

Patronalism is "a social equilibrium in which individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorizations that include many people one has not actually met in person."<sup>5</sup> In short, highly patronalistic societies are those in which connections not only matter (as they do just about everywhere), but matter overwhelmingly. Such societies typically feature strong personal

---

*Arguably, patronalism is as old as the first human communities: They were small so everyone knew each other, and the most natural way to govern was through personal connections.*

---

friendships and family ties, weak rule of law, pervasive corruption, low social capital, extensive patron-client relationships, widespread nepotism, and what sociologists would recognize as "patrimonial" or "neopatrimonial" forms of domination.

These are not simply separate features that a society happens to display; they form an entrenched *equilibrium*, a "default setting" that determines how people relate to one another when it comes to political activity. People everywhere generally oppose "corruption" and "nepotism" and want to be able to rely on the law to protect them. But when they expect that virtually everyone else is likely to practice corruption and nepotism, and believe that they cannot rely on others to obey or enforce the law, then they face potent incentives to engage in the very same practices themselves if they want to get anything done, even good things. For example, a mayor who completely rejects any palm-greasing, favor-currying, and under-the-table connection-leveraging will in all likelihood be running a city that loses investment, businesses, and jobs to rival towns where the mayors "know how the game is played." What might seem like "clean government" heroism in Western eyes may look to locals more like naïve incompetence, even as these locals sincerely rail against rampant corruption. In short, if others are ignoring the rules, playing by them puts you at a competitive disadvantage and makes you honest but unproductive.

This helps to explain why patronalism has been so tenacious in Eurasia—and elsewhere. Arguably, patronalism is as old as the first human communities: They were small so everyone knew each other, and the most natural way to govern was through personal connections. Patronalism has been the rule of world history, not the exception.<sup>6</sup> It is not an artifact of Bolshevik rule: Even a cursory look at precommunist Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, and the Caucasus makes clear that patronalist

practices, including pervasive patron-client relations, were the dominant way of life for centuries before the Russian Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

In both 1917 and 1991, many hoped that things would change, that the old “corrupt” politics was dead and that a bright new future based on ideas, institutions, and laws (whether those of communism or of liberal democracy) would arise to take its place. But on both occasions, figures soon emerged who saw that the hard practice of patronal politics was their ticket to power, or at least to keeping it. To Josef Stalin, Boris Yeltsin, and others, patronalism was not a weed to be uprooted, but a resource and reality to be used.

The key to reducing patronalism is to create a pervasive and durable expectation across the whole of society (though especially among the elites) that people will no longer engage in the same practices as before. This belief must be sustained beyond a revolutionary moment and into the formative stages of a new regime, when disillusionment can gather force and a leader can be tempted by the patronalist path to keeping power. This is extraordinarily difficult, and while some countries in the West and elsewhere have largely escaped it over the course of many generations, failures to overcome patronalism fill the pages of history. Few leaders anywhere have even tried to defeat patronalism as this would be to cut off the branch upon which they sit. Fewer still have succeeded. Only in Georgia after the Rose Revolution did a post-Soviet leader try seriously to curtail patronalism’s reach within society. But most now agree that President Mikheil Saakashvili, despite certain impressive reforms, including the cleanup of his small country’s notoriously corrupt traffic police, always ran a (somewhat cloaked) patronal regime. World history has served up very few Lee Kwan Yews.

Liberal democracy requires a full-scale assault on patronalism. The former demands, at the very least, a strong rule of law, low corruption, and a robust civil society based on impersonal principles. Patronalism’s tenacity thus goes a long way toward explaining why there is so little liberal democracy in the post-Soviet space. The great exception, the three small Baltic countries, began with lower levels of patronalism and benefited from strong EU-membership prospects after 1991.<sup>8</sup>

In the post-Soviet space, the patronal legacy has meant that politics is first and foremost a *struggle among extended networks of personal acquaintances*, not among formal institutions such as “parties,” “parliament,” “firms,” or even “the presidency” or “the state.” Such networks often have roots in a particular formal entity—such as the Soviet-era KGB and its successor agencies—but the most powerful ones typically have their people in all major spheres that can affect politics, including state officialdom, business, the NGO world, the media, and an array of ideologically diverse political parties. And competing networks can share common roots, as with the bitter rivalries among former KGB officials in Russia today. Putin’s network is now the most powerful in

Russia and clearly has this kind of reach, though before Putin turned against billionaire Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his Yukos corporation in 2003, the latter's network too had connections across virtually the whole spectrum of Russia's formal entities. So did many others that still exist but have made their peace with the dominant patron.

Because competing political-economic networks cannot rely on courts and the rule of law to protect them if they lose power, they need *direct, personal* access to power. This creates an imperative to avoid being on the losing side of any struggle for supreme power. Thus while networks, their chief patrons, and their rank-and-file members can have varying policy preferences and interests just as do people in the West, these are routinely trumped by raw political considerations flowing from the extreme dangers that losing brings. Finally, because each network's choice of allies affects each potential partner's own prospects of being on the winning side, and because all networks must make such choices at the same time, *coordination* is central to patronal politics.

Political pluralism tends to emerge when networks fail to coordinate their political activities around a single recognized patron, with at least two "sides" having the support of roughly equal coalitions, a circumstance that creates space for opposition politics. Thus in Ukraine during its time as non-Baltic Eurasia's only country ranked Free, political pluralism was the byproduct of a highly corrupt power struggle among three roughly equal networks (those of Viktor Yushchenko, Viktor Yanukovich, and Yulia Tymoshenko). Similar conditions obtained in Russia before Putin; in Moldova after the Communist Party's July 2009 ouster; in Georgia after Saakashvili's political departure in 2013; and in Kyrgyzstan after its 2010 revolution.

Conversely, political closure tends to result when a country's most powerful networks successfully coordinate their political activities around a single patron or manage to defeat those who failed to strike a deal with the winning side in time. Even when the country's chief patron does not ban opposition forces, their activists typically find it hard to raise funds, obtain media access, and even to locate venues in which to meet: Nobody wants to risk alienating the chief patron. Competition continues, but morphs into a contest for the president's favor and a higher place in the president's "power pyramid." Tensions run high as the president's closest associates (family members, old friends) try to elbow aside those who are merely "partners" in the regime.

The most effective presidents are those who can keep all the different networks on board and more or less pulling on the same oar. This can be delicate, painstaking work: A too-hasty presidential action (or, conversely, a failure to act) can spark a revolt. The sheer amount of time and energy that it takes to coordinate and referee among multiple networks explains why post-Soviet authoritarianism has been such a creeping affair. The smart course is to dial up the heat slowly, bringing

the proverbial frog in a pot to a boil before it realizes what has happened. Putin, Belarus's Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Tajikistan's Emomili Rahmon, Azerbaijan's Heydar and Ilham Aliyev (father and son), and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev all work (or worked) this way.

Should the "consensus" patron's will or ability to remain as patron ever come into doubt, coordination will break down and a new accommodation will need to be forged. Some rulers may groom successors with an eye toward keeping the old deal intact, but coalition members may not find this credible. Putin eventually turned against some of the networks that had aided his rise, and Ilham Aliyev jailed some of his late father's key partners soon after taking power. The longer a new accommodation takes to nail down, the better chance political pluralism has to emerge. So post-Yanukovych Ukraine maintains a corrupt but vibrant pluralism, while Turkmenistan had no opening whatsoever as the death of its president in 2006 was followed by swift elite agreement on a new supreme patron.

All this has several implications for regime dynamics in the former USSR. First, patronalism has fed a baseline public dissatisfaction with corrupt politics. Even where leaders are highly popular, as in today's Russia and Kazakhstan, people know from experience that corruption persists and they remain unhappy that their leaders have done little to fight it. They see the "necessary evil" side of this corruption, but still dislike it. Their distaste is dry tinder that a spark can ignite into the wildfire of mass protest. The clash of elite networks—over succession, for instance—can strike such sparks (consider the color revolutions). So can regime blunders such as Putin's clumsy fraud in the 2011 Russian parliamentary elections or Yanukovych's backfiring assaults on the EuroMaidan rallies in late 2013 and early 2014. The result, at least where somewhat contested elections remain the norm, is a pattern of regime cycling, a steady closure of the political space punctuated by periods of protest and competitive politics—even revolution—until the country's most important power networks coordinate again around a single patron.

### Why Not Patronal Democracy?

The general difficulty of achieving liberal democracy in highly patronal societies, however, cannot explain why Russian-style political closure remains more common than the patronal democracy that characterized Ukraine after the Orange Revolution. This was genuine democracy, just highly corrupt with political competition anchored more by a balance of power among political machines than by any rule of law. In the post-Soviet context, the prevalence of heavily presidentialist constitutions is a big part of the answer. Absent other constraints, such constitutions facilitate the coordination of networks' legal *and illegal* behavior around a single patron by making whoever is president the focal point of such coordination and by

signaling that the president's network is in all likelihood the strongest one (its head is president, after all).

As the various network chieftains who play this complex coordination game see things, therefore, presidentialist constitutions give whatever networks control the presidency an edge that can be used either to recruit other networks or to crush them. But a presidentialist constitution—especially one that sets term limits—also opens the door to the predictable power struggles known as regular elections. So networks must always look ahead, and calibrate their loyalty to the incumbent president as chief patron by asking if a new president is likely, and who that might be.

These calculations can be observed across post-Soviet history, and appear in even the most authoritarian cases. Post-Soviet presidentialism is mostly a product of the late Gorbachev era, when the USSR's leader created his own (not directly elected) presidency in a bid to retain political control while he dismantled the Communist Party. Each of the fifteen Soviet Socialist Republics had an incentive to acquire a president of its own in order to bargain with Gorbachev for a better deal within (or outright independence from) the Soviet Union.

By the early 2000s, every non-Baltic post-Soviet state but Moldova had a directly elected president who had consolidated power by taming parliament and building a potent reelection machine. Political closure increased as the new century dawned. But when a presidential turnover approached or arrived, network coordination broke down here or there, and a time of relative openness ensued, only to give way to a new bout of closure once the patronal networks recoordinates themselves. And so the cycling of regimes went round and round, out of sync across the former Soviet space.

In 2015, the only three non-Baltic post-Soviet countries that were less closed than Gorbachev's 1991 USSR—Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine—each had a nonpresidential constitution. Kyrgyzstan, the only other country with a nonpresidential constitution as of 2015, was among the most democratic of the rest, and was markedly more so than its Central Asian neighbors. Moreover, presidentialist constitutions in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine had coincided with growing political closure, punctuated by the periodic but temporary openings that presidentialism brings. The nonpresidentialist constitutions in these countries emerged either during revolutions as explicit efforts to avoid the future concentration of power (as in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan) or as the president was in his constitutionally final term and sought to weaken his successor or to reemerge as a strong prime minister (as in Georgia). The general trend in the nonpresidentialist countries has not been toward closure, in stark contrast with the presidentialist countries.

Perhaps surprisingly, another part of the answer has been strong popular support for post-Soviet leaders. Patrons with mass publics behind

them are less likely to face popular unrest, and also will meet less resistance to closure from within regime ranks because challengers cannot count on popular support. Popularity was crucial to the emerging authoritarianism of Putin and Lukashenka. Even in nonpresidentialist countries where elections are generally free and fair, networks whose leaders enjoy the highest popularity stand the best chance of capturing all major posts and setting regime closure in motion. The Communist Party of Moldova did this in that nonpresidentialist country during the 2000s. Yanukovych did something similar in Ukraine after he won the 2010 presidential election there, using his “honeymoon period” to convince parliament to elect his man prime minister, setting the stage to restore a presidentialist constitution.

Of course, a leader’s popularity may be to some extent a product of political closure, which prevents criticism and stifles positive coverage of the opposition. But in the post-Soviet world, the popularity of leaders such as Putin, Lukashenka, Nazarbayev, and Heydar Aliyev largely *preceded* the establishment of their political machines and media monopolies. Media monopolies *sustained* popularity in these cases, but did not cause it to emerge. And even the sustaining must be based on at least *something*. In the post-Soviet space, the most popular leaders have benefited from an appealing personal leadership style (a strong suit for Putin, Lukashenka, and Nazarbayev); a credible claim to have brought “stability” after the tumultuous 1990s (especially in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan); and good economic performance (the commodities boom of the 2000s helped).

A final factor, international “linkage and leverage,” helps to distinguish the post-Soviet experience from that of other world regions where patronal presidents are common. A strong case has been made that linkage and leverage underlie democratization in Latin America and Africa, where economies are vulnerable enough or ties to the West are dense enough for liberalizing pressure to complicate the lives of patronal presidents. But strong linkage and leverage have been little in evidence outside the Baltic States.<sup>9</sup> The EU and the prospect of joining its exclusive club showed a real ability to discourage antidemocratic practices in Central and Eastern Europe’s most patronalistic countries (including presidentialist Romania) in the 1990s and 2000s. But in the former USSR, only the Baltics have been allowed to join (they were admitted in 2004), while the other states have not even been treated as credible candidates.

## Disrupting Patronalism

The core problem is less that post-Soviet Eurasia is “not ready” than that “EU prospects” are something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The EU appears to be one of the few forces anywhere capable of systematically transforming the kind of expectations both elites and citizens have about “how things work” in their countries, and ensuring that this change en-

dures beyond a tumultuous transition period. And as noted above, transforming such expectations could potentially not only disrupt the coordination of a country's power networks around a single patron but could also even undermine the patronalist equilibrium in which these societies find themselves. In this light, the EU's inability to see promise in post-Soviet countries has itself done a lot to make this pessimistic assessment true. That said, recent trends in countries such as Hungary and Poland make clear that the EU is hardly a panacea.

If all this is right, post-Soviet authoritarianism is at once more deeply rooted and more contingent—even fragile—than is often realized. The deep, pre-Soviet historical legacy of patronalism raises huge obstacles to liberal democracy. Yet the region's particular authoritarian systems are often vulnerable and may even suddenly collapse if anything disrupts the political-economic network coordination on which they depend. Disruptors can include succession crises and major missteps by leaders, among other things.

But the disruptions are often temporary while the practice of networking is remarkably resilient. Thus periods of open political and even electoral competition tend to fade once a winner emerges and power networks coordinate themselves around the new patron, a process strongly encouraged by presidentialist constitutions. And ironically, leaders initially elected in the most democratic fashion with the strongest popular support are actually in the best position to effect political closure rapidly.

None of this is to say that nonpresidential constitutions are the solution. They help, but they too can be designed in ways that either promote or complicate the coordination of networks around a single patron, and they can sometimes be overpowered. But if designed in the right way, they can at least make longer-lasting periods of pluralism more likely, as has been the case with all of today's most democratic post-Soviet countries.

Indeed, patronal democracy is possible. It is even common in other parts of the world, especially where underpinned by nonpresidentialist constitutions or strong international linkage and leverage. But as in India and Romania today, it comes freighted with a massive load of corruption and other problems that favorite Western nostrums such as "leadership training" find hard to eradicate. International democracy promoters no doubt feel frustrated when their advice to post-Soviet party leaders about how to win votes in a democracy is ignored, but the problem is less the stupidity, greed, or power lust of these politicians than the whole different set of political incentives with which they must contend.

While the near-term outlook for full, liberal democracy in post-Soviet Eurasia is grim, there are slender rays of hope. Constitutions that appear designed to disrupt network coordination around a single patron have been appearing in a rising number of Eurasian countries. Accordingly, Geor-

gia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine all have avoided new authoritarian turns for several years now, though their politics remain rough affairs at best. In addition, Georgia's reforms (including its traffic-policing overhaul) have made a strong-enough impression both at home and across the region that they might catch on elsewhere, maybe even in enhanced form.

In the longer term, perhaps the "economic development always spurs democratization" school of thought will be proved correct.<sup>10</sup> From the vantage of 2016, however, that "longer term" appears long indeed. Many more of these mordant "anniversary celebrations" will likely have to pass before the former Soviet states regain even the level of political openness that they could boast when Gorbachev became the USSR's last leader in 1991.

## NOTES

1. Freedom House rates countries for "political rights" on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being most free and 7 being least free. When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the USSR was a 7. By 1991, it had improved to a 4. The mean score of all non-Baltic post-Soviet states in 1992, their first full year of independence, was 4.67, which proved to be the best average score for the whole post-Soviet period.

2. Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

3. Henry E. Hale, "The Myth of Mass Russian Support for Autocracy: The Public Opinion Foundations of a Hybrid Regime," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (October 2011): 1357–75.

4. Anna M. Grzymała-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5. Henry E. Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20.

6. Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

7. For example, David L. Ransel, "Character and Style of Patron-Client Relations in Russia," in Antoni Maczak, ed., *Klientelssysteme Im Europa Der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988), 211–31.

8. For example, Herbert Kitschelt and his couthors, in *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Cooperation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), code these countries as having experienced a lower degree of "patrimonial" communist rule during the Soviet period, while all other post-Soviet countries are found to have a highly patrimonial legacy.

9. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

10. In particular, see Daniel Treisman, "Income, Democracy, and Leader Turnover," *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (October 2015): 927–42.