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[Potsdam, July 1992: A conversation between one of the authors and his friend, a 58 year-old carpenter and resident of former East Germany, who had lived for 28 years across the street from the wrong side of the Wall. He had just lost his job.]

Q: How would you compare life today with conditions before the Wall opened up?

A: *It was crap before. It's still crap, but with sugar on it.*

Q: Would you want to go back?

A: *Are you nuts? Of course not!*

Q: Why not?

A: *The freedom.*

Q: What do you mean by *freedom*?

A: *Only a professor would ask such a dumb question. Look, it's the freedom to sit here and talk to you. It is the freedom to know I could go to America if I could scrape together the cash. Sure, it's the consumer situation, too. But that is part of freedom. Now that I have the Opel, I can choose to drive wherever I want B and buy a cheap meal at McDonalds if I want to. Now that I have a new stereo, I can listen to the music I want, not that junk broadcast by the state. Now I can go to the grocery and choose from several vegetables, not just a single kind of canned peas ordered by some bureaucrat. Freedom means you can make a lot of little choices every day in how you want to live, it's not just some vague thing for poets and politicians. And it means not being scared of the Stasi every time my wife starts shooting off her mouth in public, complaining about this or that.*

Social scientists, journalists, and politicians concerned with the transition and consolidation process in the new democracies generally agree that long term success depends on developing a broad and deep consensus among the population regarding the propriety of the new regimes. In this essay, we address two alternative explanations for

the extent of citizens' satisfaction with the performance of the democratic experiments in the post-communist countries of Europe:

The *political* explanation: Satisfaction with the performance of democracy in the transition years depends on the individual's perception of how well human rights are respected;

The *economic* explanation: Satisfaction with democratic performance depends on personal economic circumstances.

These systems must build generalized as well as specific citizen support for the new regimes, beyond approval or disapproval of specific incumbent *authorities* (Easton, 1965; Mishler and Rose, 1996). Generalized support does not emerge overnight; it must be built upon a record of acknowledged *performance*. And, most often, analysts equate *performance* with *economic performance* (Lipset, 1994). Macro analyses support this hypothesis. Among the post-communist countries, those that have performed best economically also have the highest percentage of people expressing support for the status of democracy.2

Support for the newly installed post-communist regimes was generally higher in the immediate post-revolutionary period than later on.3 But the downward economic slide that had preceded the fall of communism continued, for varying lengths of time, into the period of democratic experimentation. Some research suggests that there was a honeymoon period of indeterminate length, during which the citizens showed some patience with the continuance of inherited problems (Aslund, 1994; Balcerowicz, 1995; Broderick, 1998). However, it was reasonable to assume that blame for continuing bad times would eventually shift from the former communist rulers to the recently installed office-holders, if not to the new regimes. Several countries indeed returned more or less reformed communists to office, either in the founding elections (e.g., Bulgaria and Romania) or a few years later (e.g., Poland and Hungary).4 Variation in economic conditions over time and across countries is generally seen as placing some of the fledgling democracies in a precarious position (Lipset, 1994; Przeworski, 1991).

Yet if the demonstrators on the streets of Prague or Leipzig in 1989 or Vilnius or Moscow in 1991 had been asked what they were seeking, few would have responded in terms of economics or consumer goods. Those demonstrations, while initially comprised of a high percentage of young people, also, as they went on, included more and more middle-aged and elderly protesters (Garton Ash, 1990). The rule that people with families are hostages to the *status quo*, at some point got suspended. If asked why they were engaging in such risky behavior, the demonstrators would have answered, more often than not, for *freedom*, not for a stereo, fresh broccoli, or a new car. And they would have meant it.5 Have they forgotten?

With the adoption of democratic constitutions and competitive elections, by the mid-1990s the process of transition from totalitarian rule had come to an end. However, while the formal structures of liberal democracy were in place, the durability of those newly established structures remains uncertain. While the likelihood of a return to a state-socialist regime does not seem probable, regression towards some form of non-democratic regime or anarchy cannot be ruled out in some of the countries.

As the citizens of the post-communist countries struggle with the dual transition to more or less democracy and to a more or less market economy, is the weight of history that they carry an advantage or a disadvantage? Does the concern for continuing

economic hardship overshadow the remembrance of human rights abuses under the old regime? More specifically, in terms of the research reported here, which one better predicts current evaluations of democratic performance: assessments of the status of human rights or concern for economic circumstances?

A Regime Transition Model

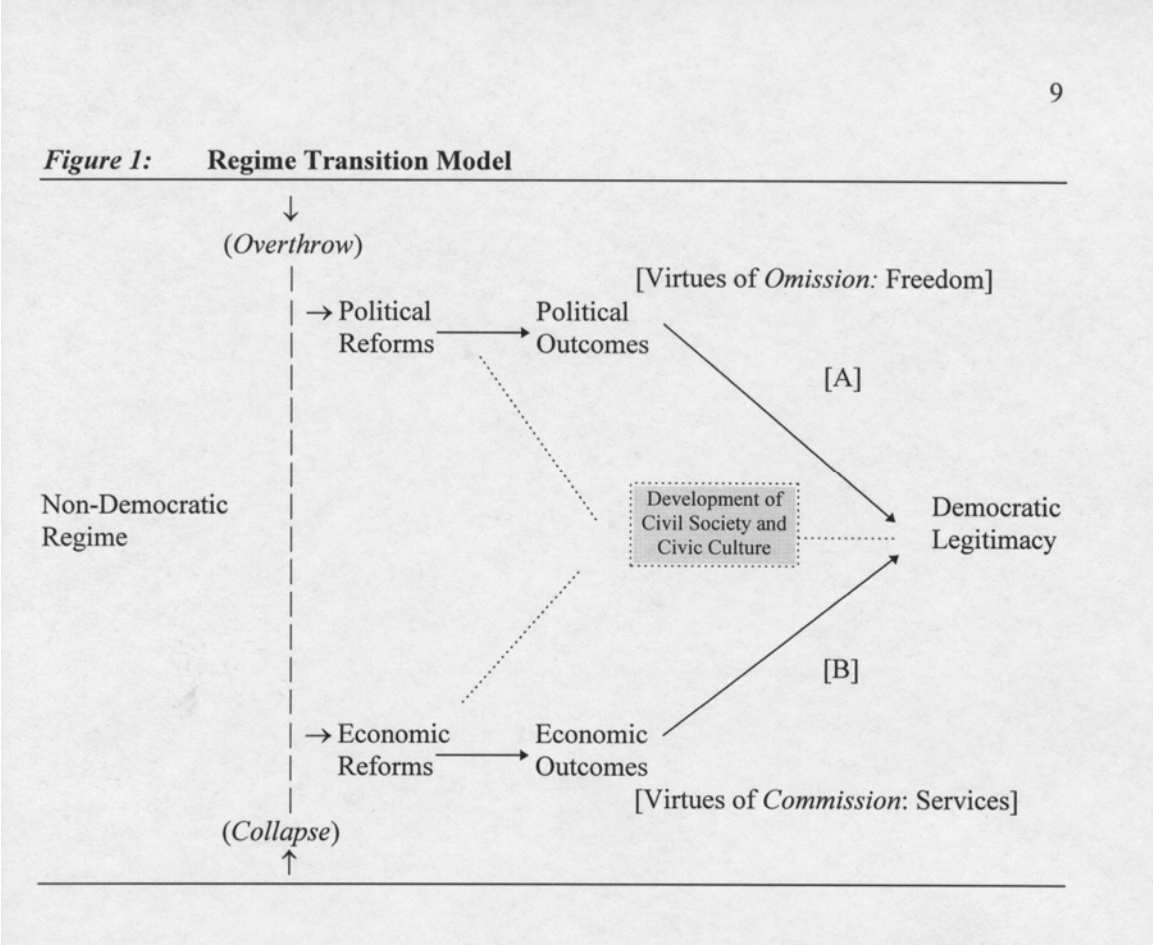
We offer the model portrayed in Figure 1 as especially fitting the circumstances of the formerly communist countries of central and eastern Europe, although it is likely to be of more general applicability. Our model suggests that a political regime is likely to survive when its basic institutions and processes are supported by the citizenry, that is, when the regime enjoys widespread *legitimacy*. A fact of democratic political life is the need to build legitimacy among the citizenries of the post-communist polities. In our model, we are careful to distinguish between *political* and *economic* outcomes, and, in particular, those political outcomes we label *virtues of omission* as contrasted to *virtues of commission*. Economic policies and conditions have ranked high among the strategies for consolidating democracy in the post-communist countries. Much attention has been given to policies that are risky, costly, complicated, and often have uncertain lag and payoff between enactment and impact.

However, our thesis is that citizens' patience and approval of regime performance in the transitional years are influenced more by the absence (or cessation) of undesirable state actionB *virtues of omission* Bthan by the presence of desirable action B*virtues of commission*. Of course, it is hardly deniable that legitimacy is enhanced when citizens perceive tangible products from positive state actions, such products as we call *virtues of commission*. The new regimes do not gain acceptance wholly by refraining from offensive actions. However, the legitimacy of fledgling democracies is enhanced by certain virtues of omission, that is, by the state's avoidance of delegitimizing actions. In particular during the early transition years, citizens will, in good measure, judge the effectiveness of new, experimental democracies by evidence of tangible reduction in oppressive actions B actions that by their omission constitute public virtues.

Between 1989 and 1991, an historically unprecedented number of largely unexpected and mostly peaceful revolutions dislodged the anti-democratic politics and command economics of Europe's communist states. Whether this was brought about by external pressure (the Cold War cost hypothesis), mass citizen action (the heroic revolution hypothesis), or internal collapse (the rot hypothesis) is not material to our analysis here. That it happened rapidly, followed by dramatic political and (sometimes less dramatic) economic reforms is a fact of life in that part of the world.

In contrast to most other participants in the *Third Wave* of democratization (Huntington, 1991), most of the communist countries of Europe had little warning or preparation time during which to sequence a degree of economic reform prior to the political upheaval. Thus, they were unable to ignore the need for simultaneous, broad, and deep political as well as economic reforms, as depicted in Figure 1. However, formal political changes, such as elections, constitution-writing, and the dismantling of the secret police took place more uniformly and rapidly than did economic reform. A short term improvement in individual human rights conditions was more readily achieved than were the consequences of new economic policies. Some of these countries adopted economic

shock therapy while others pursued a more gradual approach to currency reform, privatization, and removal of subsidies and price controls. However, virtually all of the European post-communist countries put in place at least parts of a package of political reforms (in particular elections, parliaments, and parties) well before implementation of most economic reforms could even be seriously started. Likewise, the outcomes of political changes B freeing of political competition, reduction of fear for exercising fundamental rights B were clearly and broadly perceivable well before such economic outcomes as increases in GDP, availability of goods and services, re-designed social programs, or reduction of inflation and unemployment. Thus, in terms of the model in Figure 1, we suggest that the *political* outcomes and their effects on democratic legitimacy (line "A") proceeded more rapidly than the progression from *economic* reforms to outcomes to legitimacy (line "B").



Richard Rose (1995) argues convincingly for conceptually distinguishing the absence of governmental oppression, on the one hand, from efforts to realize material welfare, on the other. He adopts Isaiah Berlin's (1969) concept of freedom as a negative condition B *freedom from B* or what we refer to as *virtues of omission*. The good condition is when the state refrains from doing bad things, in particular oppressing its citizens. Rose goes to some pains to make clear that the absence of arbitrary oppression and the presence of the rule of law guaranteeing certain domains of individual dignity are

not logically or empirically dependent on the presence of democratic governing structures. The *Rechtstaat* held the King of Prussia to the same legal standards as a common miller, but the King was not , by any stretch of the imagination, a democratic governor.

Political reforms embodying respect for individual freedoms, the *virtues of omission*, are reached as a matter of will and decision, largely independently of resource accumulation. It does not cost precious or absent monetary resources for public officials to refrain from arbitrarily clapping citizens in jail or from abusing them once they are there. It does not cost serious amounts of money to hold public officials and ordinary citizens to the same legal standards. By and large, post-communist political reform was quick and extensive. Reasonably open, competitive elections were held within a few months, if not weeks, after the fall of the old regimes. New, more open media generally flourished quickly. The bureaucratic apparatuses of oppression were, if not entirely dismantled, reigned in severely. Such steps were not significantly dependent on a reliable revenue stream.

But it does cost scarce financial resources to maintain a system of positive services B infrastructure, education, health care, housing, economic stabilization B policies that we label *virtues of commission*. Where such services are not provided, it may indeed be that standards of well-being accepted by some as part of the definition of democracy remain unattained. But such conceptual interdependence does not obviate the usefulness of separating for analysis the form of government (e.g., democracy) from the outputs of governance (policies). Likewise, even if some empirical correlation is demonstrated, it is useful to distinguish virtues of omission from those of commission, that is, those bad actions from which the state refrains versus those perhaps good actions which it actively performs.

The post-communist countries provide an excellent natural laboratory for examining the relationship between conditions of freedom and the evaluation of democratic performance (Rose and Mishler, 1996). In established democracies, most of the virtues of omission have been relatively secure for a long time. Thus, citizens of older democracies lack the direct experience with dictatorship that would be a basis for comparison. This is in contrast to the vivid memories of former times implanted in the minds of nearly all adults in the post-communist countries. Those memories are likely to last at least for the lifetime of the transitional generation. These distinctions are built into the model sketched in Figure 1. The dependent variable is *democratic legitimacy*, to be measured in terms of citizens' evaluation of a country's constitutional reality ("Verfassungswirklichkeit") that is the way democracy works in a specific country. The *virtues of omission* BIsaiah Berlin's *freedoms from*Bare citizens' assessments of the status of human rights after the communist period. These evaluations are indicated by line [A], the hypothesis being:

Hypothesis A: *The higher the citizen's estimate of the condition of individual human rights, the more positive the evaluation of democratic performance.*

Although Figure 1 should indeed be read from left to right as movement through time, not depicted is the fact that there are differences in the rate at which particular stages are reached. As we noted earlier, formal political reforms have generally been

more quickly put in place than have been radical economic policy changes. Lipset has argued that this sequence is risky, especially for long term building of democratic legitimacy (1994; see also Przeworski, 1991). He argues that *Perestroika* should have preceded *Glasnost*. That assessment, we shall argue, underestimates the bridging function of reforms to enhance democratic values. However, we must take seriously the differential in circumstances and the relative disruption of economic security experienced by large segments of the population of the post-communist countries. And, as we acknowledged earlier, the evidence of a strong relationship between economic performance and democratic satisfaction at the macro level is persuasive. In the present research, however, we employ individual-level measures on both sides of the equation. There is no obvious reason why we should expect the relationship to be different at the micro level. Thus, the hypothesis implicit in line [B] in Figure 1 is:

Hypothesis B: *The more positive the citizen's estimate of personal economic conditions, the more favorable the evaluation of democratic performance.*

In western countries that have long been stable democracies, the evolution of congruence between economic systems, political structure, and culture took place gradually, modifying and reinforcing each other in stages. In his classic article on the *social requisites of democracy*, Lipset (1959) gives considerable attention to this staging process. He reaffirms these observations, with particularly skeptical reference to the post-communist countries, in his 1994 revisitation of the *social requisites*. Historically relatively relaxed patterns of structural and cultural change, however, are a luxury not always provided to people eager to be rid of anti-democratic politics and command economics.

Civil Society, comprised of diverse domains for human deliberation and action beyond the immediate reach of the state, takes time to build, especially in the wake of regimes that set out conscientiously to establish state monopolies over virtually all spheres of social interaction. Such features of civil society as autonomous unions, churches, and other private associations do not emerge overnight with the removal of their prohibition. And the habits of individual and collective responsibility B *civic culture* B that are reinforced by the diversity of domains of action in a civil society take even longer to develop.

Civic culture is the bundle of norms held by citizens that reciprocally relate to the structural elements of *civil society* (Almond and Verba, 1963). Thus attention is directed to the importance of a democratic political culture in trying to explain or predict the persistence of liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. Civic culture, as a feature of the common value system of a population, legitimizes the institutional arrangements of liberal democracy, but it may require more time to build than provided by the window of opportunity in the immediate post-communist period. This developmental process is illustrated in Figure 1 by the shaded box and the lines connecting it to political outcomes, economic outcomes, and democratic legitimacy. As these reciprocal processes unfold, with institutionalization of political outputs, improvement in economic outputs, and consequent growth of democratic legitimacy, the foundation stones of civil society and civic culture will be laid ever more securely, thus

enhancing the regime's capacity to survive shocks such as economic reverses, governmental scandals, or crime waves.

A number of empirical studies have shown that citizens of Central and Eastern Europe have a high level of support for democratic values and institutions, at least as abstract concepts. People there affirm that they think democracy is a good idea (Rose, 1995). This finding, however, has been interpreted in different ways. Frederick Weil (1989), Dieter Fuchs and Edeltraud Roller (1994), and others argue that the high level of support for democratic values and institutions is not strongly rooted. It is, rather, based on uncritical impressions of western conditions, not on any personal experience or indigenous socialization process. Thus, Fuchs and Roller observe: "Although this type of support is expressive of a positive assessment, it is nonetheless superficial, thus being relatively volatile in the face of concrete experience." (Fuchs and Roller 1994:13)

A quite different position is argued by Rose (1995). Writing on "freedom as a fundamental value," he demonstrates empirically (in 14 Central and Eastern European countries) a very high degree of popular appreciation for freedom as a central political value. And he concludes: "Whatever credit the Soviet system gained for its positive achievements, this did not blind subjects to the regime's interference with and obstruction of activities that in a civil society are outside the bounds of state control. The readiness of people in many different societies and cultures to recognize great gains in freedom from state interference implies that the desire for freedom was repressed but not erased by two generations of indoctrination."

These two positions, one emphasizing the fragility of such values and the other suggesting that they endure under harsh conditions, can, in fact, be reconciled. On the one hand, there is no doubt that a value like *freedom* is deeply rooted and not just superficially held by the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe. Such values, on the other hand, serve as yardsticks against which the reality of the democratic process in a given country will be evaluated. Thus, both aspects are important B the holding of democratic values and the way democracy actually develops in a country.

When system outcomes are congruent with citizen expectations, then the system is positively evaluated (Lipset, 1959 and 1960; Linz, 1988 and 1996: Dahl, 1989). A number of empirical studies have demonstrated that the elements of this model indeed have quite a lot of explanatory power. It has particular plausibility for anyone who has studied the development of a democratic political culture in post-World War II Germany (Dalton, 1988). There, the institutions of liberal democracy were imposed by the victorious allies. But the economic progress that ensued certainly helped to generate support for the new regime, to the point that severe economic reverses, such as those coming in the wake of unification in the 1990s, could be weathered without serious consequences for regime support. The implication of the model sketched in Figure 1 is that citizens keep a sort of running tally on the performance of the system (Kuechler, 1991: 280).

The political outputs in Hypothesis A are intrinsic to a democracy (Fuchs, 1998). The question they present is not about economic growth, inflation, unemployment or welfare services, but rather about the extent to which conditions attained in the democratic system satisfy the normative expectations enshrined in the institutions. Thus, the perceived difference between constitutional norms and constitutional reality forms the basis upon which citizens base their evaluation of democratic performance.

The economic outputs of Hypothesis B are extrinsic to democracy. They reflect the problem-solving competence of any political system, not specifically democracies. However, democratic regimes must eventually also deliver these goods, including a degree of law and order, protection from external conquest, and some level of social and economic development. In most attempts to analyze the relationship between outputs and assessments of the status of democracy, the emphasis has been on economic performance.6 This is particularly true for research at the macro level, which has been highly influenced by Lipset's famous dictum: "The better the economic situation, the higher the level of support for the democratic system" (Lipset, 1959). Democratic performance, as measured for example by the Comparative Studies of Freedom carried out annually by the Freedom House survey team, has rarely been used as an independent variable in such research using countries as the units of analysis.

A similar argument must be made for micro-level analyses which focus on the attitudes of citizens. Perceptions of economic and welfare-state performance are mainly used to predict support for democracy. In his article on freedom, Rose (1995) rightly points to the fact that survey data on democratic performance are conspicuously lacking. On the one hand, he notes, it is rarely possible to do surveys for regimes that oppress their subjects. Such research is normally obstructed or forbidden. On the other hand, such surveys are, paradoxically, also difficult to conduct in societies where freedom from state interference is long established. The idea that the state could censor what is said, unlawfully imprison individuals, or forbid or compel religious worship appears difficult for most people in established democracies to conceive (Rose 1995, 461). As a consequence, we do not know much about the relative importance of individual perceptions of economic versus political performance on support for democracy. Yet such knowledge is of more than academic interest. Would it turn out that economic performance is the primary source of support for the new institutions of fledgling democracies, then failure to deliver speedy results might lead people to look for an alternative form of regime. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with democratic performance, that is with *political* outputs, might lead a country to look for a rearrangement of democratic institutions and processes while still clearly remaining a member of the family of democratic states.

Empirical Evidence

Since our theoretical concern is with individual attitudes, the analysis is limited to survey data. We keep the design as simple as possible. That is, we relate the following three indicators (with their equivalents in the transition model, Figure 1, in parentheses):

Individual assessment of **democratic performance** is the dependent variable (*legitimacy).*

The first independent variable (Hypothesis A) is evaluation of **human rights conditions** (*political outcomes).*

The second independent variable (Hypothesis B) is the perceived **economic performance** of the system (*economic outcomes*).

The individual level analysis is replicated in 18 Central and Eastern European countries using survey data collected in the fall of 1995.7 All surveys consist of a representative national sample of the adult population (over 18). We cover three Slavic

countries (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus), the three Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), and two Transcaucasian countries (Armenia and Georgia). Missing from the map of the European part of the former Soviet Union are Moldova and Azerbaijan. Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia represent the Balkan countries. And from Central Europe we cover Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Serbia/Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina are missing for obvious reasons.

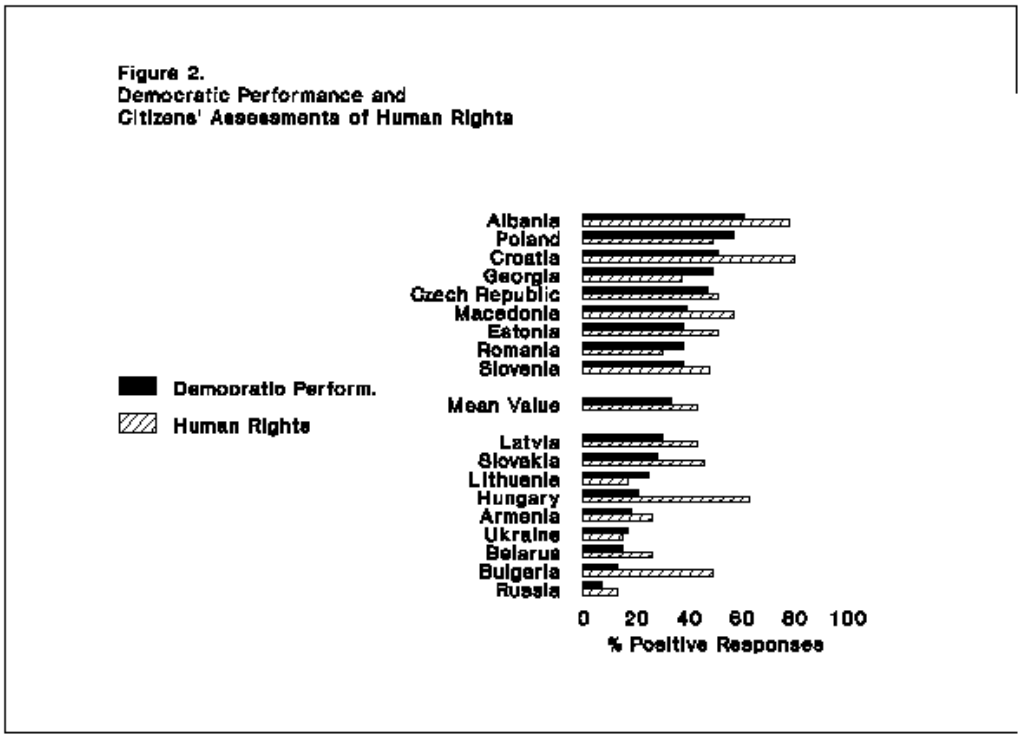
Measuring Democratic Performance

Individuals' support for democracy is measured by the following question:

"On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in [your country]?"

This response reflects attitudes toward a country's *constitution in operation* (Lane and Ersson 1994: 194) or its *constitutional reality* (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson, 1995: 328).8

On the average, about a third of the citizens in the countries we cover were *very* or *fairly* satisfied with the way democracy was working in 1995. Two thirds were not. However, the variation between countries is striking (see Figure 2, "democratic performance" bars). It ranges from Albania,9 where 61 percent of its citizens were satisfied with democratic performance, to Russia, where more than 90 percent were dissatisfied. We must reiterate that we are not engaged in a systematic effort to explain differences between countries, but rather we concentrate our analysis on the individual level. Our interest in the different countries is merely to check whether or not the individual level relationships hold up in various contexts. However, it is noteworthy that, compared to the present research as well as that conducted in Western Europe and Latin America, Russia pushes the range to a new minimum.



Measuring Political Outputs

Our indicator of political outputs taps the citizens' evaluations of human rights conditions in their country. The question reads:

"How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in [your country]? Do you feel there is a lot of respect for individual human rights, some respect, not much respect or no respect at all?"

The percentage of respondents indicating there was *a lot* or *some* respect for human rights are indicated in Figure 2 by the second bar to the right for each country. Unlike in most of the older democratic regimes, questions of individual human rights are relatively high on the agenda of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, no doubt because they were so wretched so recently. New constitutions have been written in most of the countries we are studying. And, given the great number of ethnic minorities, a constitution that guarantees individual human rights is of the highest importance, at least to these groups. In addition, a good record on human rights is often a precondition for membership in international organizations or for the availability of support for the reconstruction of these countries. When, for example, membership in the Council of Europe was denied to Croatia , this caused much public debate and attention to the issue. And, of course, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina demonstrated to all its neighbors what it is like when human rights are trampled with impunity.

Overall, 43 percent of Central and East Europeans believe that there is quite a lot or some respect for individual rights in their countries (Figure 2). As with satisfaction with democracy, however, there is a wide range of difference between countries. Eighty percent of Croatians evaluate human rights performance high, whereas the Russians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians are quite pessimistic about the condition of human rights in their respective countries.

Measuring Economic Outputs

Previous research has shown that public perceptions of both personal (egocentric) and national (sociotropic) economic conditions are related to system support. Unfortunately the surveys we are using did not include questions addressed precisely to those economic considerations. Thus, we rely on the respondents' expressed *expectations* for the financial situation of the household. The specific question is:

"Over the next twelve months, do you expect that the financial situation of your household will get a lot better, a little better, stay the same, get a little worse, get a lot worse?"

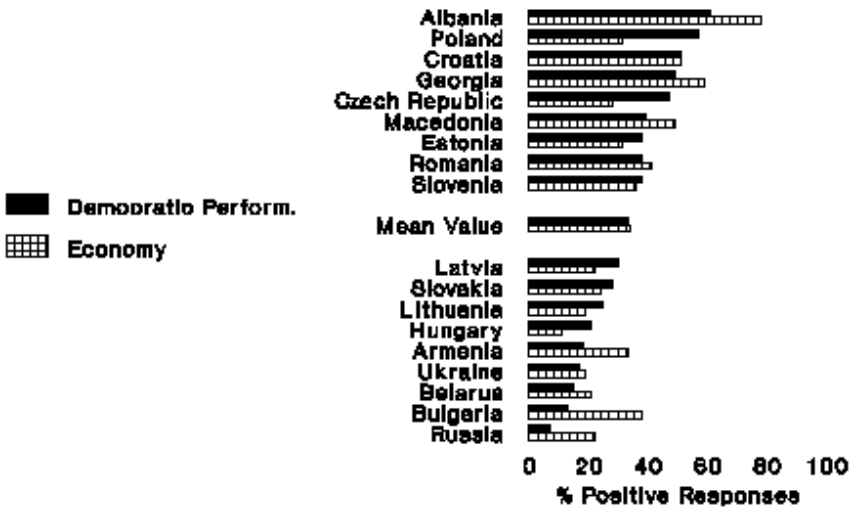
This indicator can, to some extent, be related to expectations about the development of the national economy, as everybody's income is broadly affected by general economic development, but it is certainly the case that our indicator leans more in the direction of egocentric rather than sociotropic projections.10

As previously with estimates of human rights conditions, the percentage of respondents expecting their own economic situation to be *a lot* or *a little bit* better is illustrated by each country's second bar in Figure 3, the top bars being, again, the percentage expressing satisfaction with the general performance of democracy. Thirty-four percent of all respondents believe that their financial situations will be better over

the next year. Again, the Albanians (sadly, as it turned out) were most euphoric about their financial future. The economic expectations of the Hungarians were the least optimistic. *Ad hoc* speculations are tempting, but not especially relevant to the present analysis.

We are concerned with the precursors of civic culture and shorter range conditions that help get the process of developing democratic legitimacy started. Thus, it is essential to measure values and attitudes at the level of individual citizens, as indeed we have done here. However, a side benefit of our mode of presentation of these data in Figures 2 and 3 is that we as well get a nice picture of the general aggregate (macro) relationships. The countries are arrayed from top to bottom by the percentage of respondents satisfied with democratic performance in their country. It is clear that, as that percentage declines, so, generally, does the ratio of citizens rating both human rights and economic performance positively. While interesting, however, it is not our purpose here to explain those macro relationships. Rather, we are concerned with the match in citizens' individual assessments of democracy, human rights, and economic circumstances. It is to those linkages that we now turn.

Figure 3.
Democratic Performance and
Citizens' Assessments of the Economy



Human Rights Assessment, Economic Expectations, and Support for Democracy

Do political outputs, as indicated by citizens' assessments of the condition of human rights, have an impact on support for democracy? And what is the relative importance of these assessments when compared to economic optimism or pessimism? The bivariate relationships for each country, presented in the first two columns of

Table 1: **Predicting Democratic Performance with Assessments of Human Rights Conditions and Economic Prospects** (18 Central and Eastern European Countries, 1995: Arrayed by R5)

	Correlation		Multiple Regression		
Country	r Hum. Rights Conditions	r Economic Prospects	b Hum. Rights Conditions	B Economic Prospects	Adjusted R5
Albania	.58	.38	.44	.42	.46
Macedonia	.65	.40	.55	.14	.45
Georgia	.60	.43	.58	.23	.43
Estonia	.55	.38	.43	.19	.35
Lithuania	.56	.36	.51	.16	.36
Czech Rep.	.53	.34	.47	.18	.31
Slovakia	.54	.30	.49	.12	.32
Armenia	.51	.33	.41	.12	.30
Romania	.47	.32	.42	.14	.27
Croatia	.61	.26	.53	.16	.29
Bulgaria	.40	.26	.30	.14	.19
Latvia	.43	.32	.34	.19	.24
Russia	.38	.31	.31	.14	.21
Poland	.39	.29	.37	.20	.21
Hungary	.36	.33	.28	.19	.19
Belarus	.40	.26	.34	.13	.20
Ukraine	.33	.26	.35	.15	.17
Slovenia	.30	.23	.24	.15	.12
Mean Value	*.47*	*.32*	*.41*	*.18*	*.28*

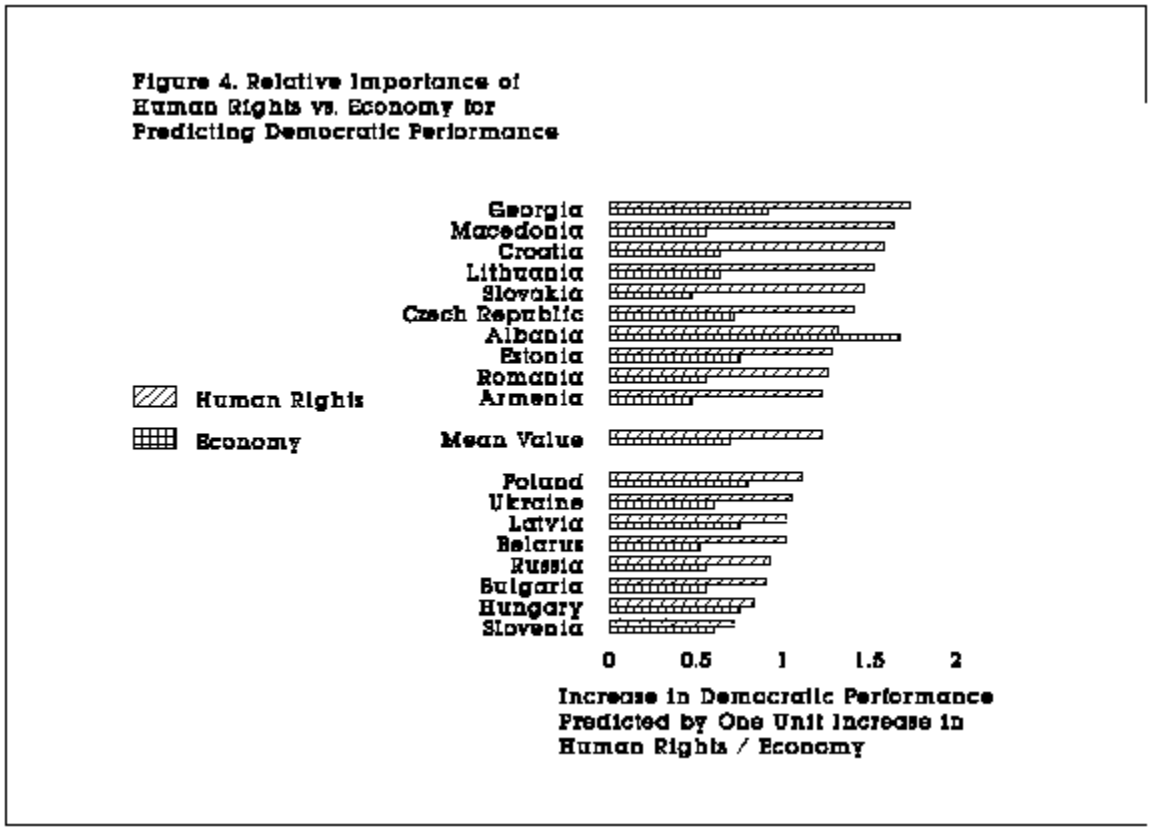
Scales: Support for Democracy: 1 = high, 4 = low; Human Rights: 1 = high, 4 = low; Economic Prospects: 1 = high, 5 = low. All coefficients significant at the .000 level.

coefficients in Table 1, are very interesting. Two general patterns are conveyed by these correlations. First, all of the coefficients are positive and highly significant. Second, in all 18 countries, the association of support for democracy with human rights performance *(political outputs*, in Figure 1) is stronger than with economic expectations (*economic outputs*, in Figure 2). The mean correlations are .47 and .32, respectively.

Multiple regression, controlling for the independent roles of human rights versus economic assessments vis-B-vis democratic performance, provides even more striking

reinforcement of our thesis, as seen in the three columns to the right in Table 1. At .28, the mean R5 is quite respectable for survey research. It ranges from a high of .46 in Albania to .12 in Slovenia. Thus, the individual level relationships are quite robust and can be replicated with basically the same result in each of 18 countries. In every country assessments of human rights conditions and of personal financial circumstances are significantly related to positive evaluations of democratic performance. And in every country the slope for human rights is steeper than for economic prospects.

We have taken the analysis a step further and followed Christopher Achen's lead in using the *level-importance* statistic.[11] This device has the attractive property that it has a straightforward interpretation of the net effect of each independent variable, accommodating scale differences. We have calculated the level-importance statistic for our 18 samples, with the results reported in Figure 4. The length of the two bars show for each country how many units of increase in democratic performance, on a four-point scale, would presumably result from a unit increase in assessments of human rights (top bar) and economic conditions (bottom bar), respectively. Satisfaction with democratic performance is most closely linked to human rights conditions in Georgia, and least in Slovenia. While, again, not engaged in a systematic effort to explain cross-national variations, we cannot resist speculation that the relative importance of human rights for democratic satisfaction is probably in good measure due to the relative improvement since the "bad old days."[12] The Slovenes were about the most open of the formerly communist countries, while Georgia was among the least.



In general, in all countries but Albania, views on human rights are stronger predictors of democratic satisfaction than are economic assessments. Respect for individual human rights is about twice as important for the generation of support for democracy than are personal economic expectations. The implicit contrast between the memory of the bad old days of communism and the current condition of individual freedom seems to be a substantially more potent force for democratic legitimacy, at least in the transition period, than are individual economic circumstances. That is certainly consistent with our speculations as to the motives of those who took to the streets to bring down the communist regimes of yore.

Conclusion

By the middle of the 1990s, the formal structures of representative democracy had been put in place in all of the Central and Eastern European countries. We have argued that the long-term success of these experiments in democracy depends on the development of a civil society and its individual counterpart, a civic culture. And those socio-cultural developments rest on some level and breadth of citizens' approval of regime performance. Two different types of performance have been distinguished: human rights conditions and personal economic circumstances.

We have aligned ourselves with the position that citizens of the formerly communist countries are especially well-suited to make an assessment of the condition of individual freedom, given the recency of their experiences with systems dedicated to its severe restriction. Unlike western democracies that have long learned to take for granted the virtues of omission B avoidance of bad actions Bof their governments, the adult citizens of the formerly communist countries can easily recall when those virtues were seriously compromised. Of course, we would expect the relevance of such recollections to system legitimacy to decline over the longer term. It is not that we expect citizens to forget the past. Rather, we expect they will, in the course of mortal time, be replaced by age cohorts who have not had direct experience with the human rights abuses of the communist regimes. An interesting question for the future will be whether or not the relevance of this form of political output becomes, fortunately, taken for granted and then declines in its ability to explain satisfaction with the status of democracy.

Economic performance, to the extent that it can be viewed as a product of state action, indicates important virtues of commission, that is, the pursuit of worthwhile positive actions. Assessment of one's economic circumstances entails relatively short term comparisons and is not dependent, usually, on such dramatic events as the overthrow or collapse of a regime. As has long been supported with the evidence offered by democratic theorists, extended positive economic performance builds a firm foundation under democratic processes. And, likewise, long term economic malaise can weaken that foundation. Our assumption would be that just as the immediate relevance of human rights performance indicators will decline as they are taken more and more for granted by the citizenry, so will longer-term experiences with the economy probably take on increased salience to democratic legitimacy.

Our analysis shows that both political and economic outputs, as assessed by individual survey respondents, are positively related to evaluations of democratic performance. Thus, if a citizen perceives a positive development in household income,

assessment of democratic performance also goes up. The same is true if the citizen perceives that there is respect for individual human rights. Without dismissing the relevance of either, we nonetheless found it interesting, especially in light of the general emphasis given by scholars to economic performance, that the human rights circumstances were more important than economics at this critical junction in history.

This finding has significant implications for future research on the persistence of democracy in post-revolutionary systems. It calls for more complex measurement strategies to discover whether or not it holds up under more focused scrutiny. Our research also points to the need for multi-level analyses in order to explain differences in satisfaction between countries systematically. We readily acknowledge the probability that our findings are somewhat time-bounded. That, however, merely underscores their importance as part of a model of democratic transition. Citizens recently having experienced the demise of dictatorship will apparently forgive the new fledgling democracy much more in the economic realm than they will with regard to individual human rights. In the long run, virtues of commission are expected, regardless of regime type.

Virtues of omission, however, have a more immediate legitimizing impact. Policy makers in new democracies would be wise to pursue policies that build bridges across the transition period. Human rights belong on the top of the list. A half decade and a few elections after the fall of communism, the citizens had not forgotten why they faced down the old regimes. It was not for groceries that the people of the Central and Eastern European countries took to the streets between 1989 and 1991. It was for freedom.

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Endnotes

1. Copublished with the Research Unit: Institutions and Social Change, Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung Berlin (WZB). Discussion paper FS III 98-203.
2. In 1995 the proportion of citizens who were satisfied with the way democracy works in their country correlated with percent change of real GDP .42 on the macro-level for 16 post-communist countries.
3. Balcerowicz (1995). For a more general perspective see Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (1996:42). The natural political experiments following the fall of European communist regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s are the most well-documented such events in human history. Among the first people on the scene after the fall were western social scientists and, particularly, survey researchers. Time series surveys that would have made Almond and Verba green with envy in their younger days are routinely conducted and widely disseminated through the various data archives. Examples of these activities are the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), the New Democracies Barometer (NDB), The World Values Survey (WVS), or the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer Surveys (CEEB).
4. Powers and Cox (1997) show quite convincingly that voters' support for Poland's reformed communists in the 1993 election was closely related to the extent that they blamed the new versus the old regime for the ills of Polish society.
5. This distinction has a hallowed history in Central Europe. Cross-sectional surveys were conducted in Berlin before, during, and after the 1948-49 blockade and airlift. Berliners were asked whether they preferred a government that guaranteed them economic security and a good income or one that guaranteed free elections, and freedom of speech, press, and religion. Just before the blockade, about two-thirds choose the economic option. But during and after the blockade, even under conditions of extreme material privation, with people freezing and starving every day, the percentage of Berliners who choose a government guaranteeing fundamental freedoms nearly doubled. See Thome (1985).
6. A notable exception is Anderson and Guillory (1997), who demonstrate a strong relationship at the macro-level between structures of representation (proportional versus majoritarian) and the aggregate satisfaction of winners and losers of European elections. Their set of cases includes mostly Western European countries, but a few formerly communist systems are also examined.
7. Central and East European Barometer 6 (1995) ZA-Study-No. 2802. Included countries: Albania (N=893), Armenia (N=913), Belarus (N=1001), Bulgaria (N=1013), Croatia (N=946), Czech Republic (N=1029), Slovakia (N=1044), Estonia (N=940), Hungary (N=964), Latvia (N=1054), Lithuania (N=934), Macedonia (N=902), Poland (N=989), Romania (N=1105), Russia (N=1135), Slovenia (N=1111), Ukraine (N=1146), Georgia (N=1015).
8. A slightly differently worded question has been used in much of the research into support of democracy in Western democracies. Clarke and Kornberg (1992a; 1992b) as well as Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson (1995) report a variety of tests showing a high degree of construct validity.
9. It must be noted that this survey preceded widespread violence following an election generally suspected of severe irregularities as well as the financial collapse that wiped out a major portion of private savings in the country.
10. In 1991 both egocentric and sociotropic projections were included in the CEEB surveys (11 countries). Pearsonian correlations between the evaluation of the future development of the country's economic situation and the evaluation of the future development of the financial situation of the citizen's household ranged from .47 in Estonia and the Czech Republic to .61 in Russia. The overall mean correlation was .54.
11. This procedure allows us to compute unit increases in Y as a function of unit increases each of several Xs, even when the later have different scale composition. See the note to Table 1. For an elaboration of the procedure, see Achen (1983).

12. At some point, the refinement of the line of research represented here will have to give attention to rather more specific facets of the conditions under communism and to the chain of events following its fall. Both Georgia and Croatia, among the top ranked countries in terms of the relevance of concern for human rights to estimates of democratic performance, at the time of the survey had each just come away from a bloody civil war. Thus, the contrast of the situation in 1995 to very shortly before was enriched by that dreadful experience. There is promise here for substantial refinement of the transition model in terms of collective experiences.