

I

Regime Change Waves and Eastern EU Democracy Promotion

“Dictators and oppressors [around the globe] should continue to fear me!” recently exclaimed Lech Walesa, the leader of the Polish peaceful democratic revolution.¹ He cofounded Solidarity, the independent Polish trade union that undermined the country’s communist regime and contributed to the unraveling of the Soviet bloc. Walesa and his fellow Solidarity activists fought for an independent and democratic Poland but also agitated, assisted, and cooperated with other opposition movements in the former Soviet bloc. After Poland’s democratic revolution in 1989, Walesa went on to assist other prodemocracy initiatives around the world, from neighboring Ukraine to Cuba, Iran, Tibet, and most recently Tunisia and Burma.² A number of other Polish activists and policymakers have similarly supported democracy abroad, especially in neighboring countries, where they have already helped secure some democratization gains, most notably the Ukrainian democratic breakthrough in 2004.

These Polish activists and policymakers are not unique among the organizers of the democratic transitions that collectively amounted to the “third wave” of democratization.³ This wave began during the mid-1970s in Southern Europe, spreading, through emulation and export, across Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and parts of Asia and the Middle East. The third wave of democratization thus unfolded in part because of the efforts of a number of

¹ “Walesa Leaves Texas Hospital After Heart Treatment,” *Reuters*, March 4, 2008.

² For example, see <http://www.ilw.org.pl/en/programmes>.

³ The *third wave of democratization* refers to the third major surge of democratic transitions in history. This book defines the span of the third wave as beginning in 1974 with the democratization of Portugal and ending in 2006, when the rate of democratic breakthroughs fell below the rate of democratic breakdowns and reversals. On the third wave of democratization and its original definition, see Huntington 1991.

new democracies to not only observe the principles of democracy at home but also support their diffusion abroad.

It is these third-wave diffusion entrepreneurs – both activists and policymakers – that this book is about. Diffusion entrepreneurs represent the supply side of the diffusion process “by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.”⁴ Diffusion entrepreneurs are actors, like Walesa, who mobilize political support for the acceptance and spreading of an innovation.⁵

This book offers a set of arguments explaining why regime change diffusion entrepreneurs, like the Polish activists and policymakers discussed above, emerge and why they promote some practices over others to some target countries over others. In other words, the book does not answer a single question but instead studies a phenomenon – the efforts of a class of diffusion entrepreneurs in spreading regime change abroad – by answering several important questions about these actors: Why do certain activists and states become such diffusion entrepreneurs? What motivates their diffusion efforts? What strategies do these entrepreneurs use and how effective have they been?

Previous studies on waves of regime change have documented that they propagate through emulation and export. Although there is already some work explaining emulation within regime change waves, the purposeful efforts of activists and states that have succeeded in organizing regime change at home to support similar regime change abroad have remained poorly understood. In examining their activism, this study theorizes an understudied mechanism underlying regime change waves.

The empirical focus of the book is on explaining the democracy promotion activities of the Eastern European members of the European Union (EU) in the first twenty years after the region’s transition to democracy (1989–2009). Since some of the eastern EU democratic revolutions occurred after 1989, this book examines these countries’ democracy promotion activities after their democratic breakthroughs. Whereas some of these new democracies have shown little interest in supporting democratization abroad, several Eastern EU countries began promoting democracy beyond their borders shortly after their own democratic breakthroughs. The eastern EU countries thus provide a full range of variation of the phenomenon of interest here as well as a representative picture of the population of third-wave democracies.⁶ They are thus paradigmatic of, and optimal for explaining, the phenomenon of interest in this book. Some of these eastern EU countries subsequently came to be noteworthy democracy

⁴ Rogers 1983, 10.

⁵ Diffusion entrepreneurs are thus akin to policy entrepreneurs – that is, “people who seek to initiate dynamic policy change . . . through attempting to win support for ideas for policy innovation” (Mintrom 1997, 739). They also resemble norm entrepreneurs in that they are interested in promoting norms and practices bundled into a regime (for a definition of norm entrepreneurs, see Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 896–99).

⁶ Herman and Piccone 2002.

promoters. This also makes them important contemporary cases of democracy promotion to account for.

The book finds that the democracy promotion efforts of the eastern EU countries have built on their democratization experiences in three main ways. These efforts (1) began with and are often carried out by some of the organizers of these revolutions; (2) are shaped by shared eastern EU understandings of the moral and material benefits of regime change at home; and (3) rely on the sharing of best practices from these countries' own transitions to democracy. This export of one's ideals, innovations, and experiences is a common thread in the literature on revolution, diffusion, and democracy assistance. The existence of this common thread, however, has been previously overlooked. Regime change, the export of revolutions, and the diffusion of democracy have all been treated as separate topics. They are, however, in fact, manifestations of the same phenomenon – regime change traveling across state borders. Accordingly, this book analyzes eastern EU democracy promotion to provide a number of lessons about the relationships among democracy, regime change/revolution, and diffusion.⁷

Although the book's empirical focus is on the eastern EU new democracies, its theorization of the efforts of these regime change diffusion entrepreneurs is applicable to other third-wave democracies and to other regime change waves in general. There are a number of other new democracies – for example, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, South Korea, and Indonesia – which, like the eastern EU countries, have supported the ideals of democracy abroad.⁸ Similarly, the liberal, communist, nationalist anticolonial, and Islamic regime change waves, like the third wave of democratization, unfolded in part because of the efforts of a number of revolutionary movements and states to spread their ideals beyond their borders. (See Appendix 1.1.) This book thus uses the eastern EU cases to shed light on a larger class of historical and contemporary cases of regime change diffusion around the globe.

The remainder of this chapter sets the stage for the analysis in this book by providing a brief overview of the democracy promotion activities of the Eastern European members of the EU – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia. This overview highlights some important characteristics of their activism as well as some of the puzzles that their efforts pose. The chapter then summarizes the

⁷ A *regime* is defined here as a set of “institution, operational rules of the game and ideologies,” and in the cases of interest in this book, such regimes represent these countries' fundamental institutions and ideologies (Easton, Gunnell, and Stein 1995). Relatedly, the term *revolution* is used in this book to denote “changes to the sociopolitical values, legal and political institutions, and leadership in a short period of time” (Sadri 1997, 10). Revolution is understood as peaceful or violent regime change that is formalized by a new constitution and that is different from similar political events such as coups and civil wars, which do not have comparable effects on the society.

⁸ Herman and Piccone 2002.

organization of the book and its main findings and contributions to previous works in comparative politics and international relations.

FROM RECIPIENTS TO PROVIDERS OF DEMOCRACY SUPPORT: THE ROLE OF NEW DEMOCRACIES IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

While different countries and different elites in them define democracy promotion differently, in this book the term describes purposeful actions taken to (1) encourage a transition to democracy, (2) enhance the quality of democracy in regimes that have already moved toward democratic governance, or (3) prevent the backsliding from or the breakdown of democracy in such regimes.⁹ There are two types of democracy promotion: *official democracy promotion*, that is, state support for the diffusion of democracy abroad through diplomacy (including political conditionality), aid, and intervention; and *civic democracy promotion*, namely the work of individual activists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to spread democratic norms and practices. Civic and official democracy promotion has tended to include three general categories of initiatives targeting different sectors of the domestic political order of the recipient: the political process, governing institutions, and civil society.¹⁰ In this study, democracy promotion is used interchangeably with support for democratization abroad and with democracy import/export, without loading these terms with any assumptions about the degree of adaptation of democracy to the recipient's local context.¹¹

The contemporary transnational democracy promotion network began developing in the late 1970s with the start of the third wave of democratization. Less than three decades later, in 2000, state and nonstate actors from 106 countries gathered together in Warsaw, Poland, to discuss a common interest in advancing an international “community of democracies.”¹² Especially after the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion became an explicit goal of many governmental and nongovernmental actors in international affairs, even if this objective has been pursued through inconsistent, ad hoc, and sometimes low-priority policies.¹³ The collapse of the Soviet bloc diminished the bargaining

⁹ In recent years, the term *democracy promotion* has acquired a somewhat negative connotation. Some have expressed concern that “democracy promotion” implies that democracy can and should be advanced by external actors. This book, however, uses the term *democracy promotion* with the acknowledgement that “*the primary force for democratization is and must be internal to the country in question*” (Burnell 2000).

¹⁰ Carothers 2000.

¹¹ Even though the concept of “donor” has traditionally been used to indicate supplier of development aid, this study uses it interchangeably with democracy promoter – an actor who focuses specifically on support for democracy and uses other instruments in addition to aid.

¹² On the Community of Democracies, see <http://www.community-democracies.org/>.

¹³ Diamond 1995; Burnell 2000; Glenn and Mendelson 2002; Youngs 2001b.

power of dictatorships and decreased ideological tensions, thereby facilitating the exchange of assistance.¹⁴ Moreover, political openings across Latin America, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of East and Southeast Asia and the Middle East presented opportunities for democracy promotion as local prodemocratic actors sought financing and advice.¹⁵ Such openings also produced a proliferation of hybrid regimes that combined elements of dictatorship and democracy and thus became appealing targets for international interventions meant to tip the political balance toward democracy.¹⁶ Finally, there was a growing consensus among donors that there is a virtuous cycle of democratization and development and that neither one of these requires rare and exacting preconditions that take a long time to materialize.¹⁷ As a result, the 1990s became a decade of unprecedented democracy promotion in terms of the sense of purpose, the diversity of recipients, the number and variety of donors, the range of approaches and principal concerns, and the resources involved.¹⁸ Democracy also became part of the normative underpinnings of a number of regional and global multilateral orders, including of organization such as the UN and the World Bank.¹⁹

The early and mid-2000s, however, witnessed waning enthusiasm about democracy promotion on the part of promoters and recipients alike. Democracy seemed to be in retreat in a number of countries around the globe.²⁰ Disappointment grew in the West, especially in the United States, with the slow and mixed results of democracy promotion.²¹ Having completed its most ambitious democracy promotion project – a massive, difficult, and controversial eastern enlargement – the second most prominent democracy promoter, the EU, began increasingly focusing on internal reforms.²² At the same time, recipients complained that democracy promotion had produced an array of unintended consequences, which undermined the democratization of recipient countries.²³ The inclusion of democracy promotion as an objective in

¹⁴ Carothers 1999.

¹⁵ Burnell 2000.

¹⁶ Bunce 2007.

¹⁷ On the virtuous cycle of democracy and development, see Nelson and Eglington 1992. On the pre-conditions to democracy, see Huntington 1991 and Bunce 2003.

¹⁸ Burnell 2000.

¹⁹ McMahon and Baker 2006.

²⁰ Doyle 2009 acknowledges this perception but argues that it is erroneous.

²¹ Carothers 1999. It should be noted, however, that despite this disillusionment, U.S. democracy assistance funding continued to grow steadily at least until 2005 but declined in the overall foreign aid budget (Azpuru de Cuestas et al. 2008).

²² Pridham 2007; Schimmelfennig 2008; interview with P. T., EU policymaker, July 11, 2007.

²³ Some have pointed out that democracy assistance, for example, has often made political and civic elites in democratizing countries opportunistic as well as dependent on and accountable to external actors rather than to the publics they are to serve. See, for example, Wedel 1998; van de Walle 2001; Carothers 2009.

the highly controversial war in Iraq since 2003 further discredited democracy promotion.²⁴

Although democracy promotion began to encounter skepticism and fatigue in the West and many recipient countries in the 2000s, some of the third-wave democracies continued to be and in some cases became increasingly involved in such work. To that end, they have cooperated and sometimes even competed with each other and with Western democracy promoters. These emerging democracy promoters have used both bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels to provide assistance in support of democracy abroad. Some of these new democracy promoters have created formal and informal regional democracy promotion regimes through forums such as the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, Mercosur, the Union of South American Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.²⁵ These regimes have not only been “homegrown projects” rather than Western imports,²⁶ but have also remained relevant to and useful in their members’ efforts to promote democracy. From 1990 to 2005, the African Union, for example, has suspended membership for all governments that came to power unconstitutionally and has pressured them to return to constitutional order.²⁷ Likewise, in the same period, the Latin American states have made efforts to protect democracy in forty-one of the forty-four democratic crises they have faced. Latin American countries have most frequently done this through multilateral forums,²⁸ sometimes playing an important role in reversing or deterring the deterioration of democracy.²⁹

Besides leveraging their membership in regional organizations to initiate and support multilateral democracy promotion efforts, a number of new democracies have also used bilateral diplomacy to prevent democratic backsliding and breakdowns and to provide political and moral support to neighboring prodemocratic forces. In Latin America, Brazil, for example, has played an important role – both multilaterally and bilaterally – in the democratic stabilization of Paraguay in 1996, Venezuela in 2002, Haiti in 2004, Honduras in 2009, and Bolivia throughout the 2000s.³⁰ Similarly, in Asia, Indonesia has put pressure on Myanmar to move toward democratic governance and has further worked to convince Laos, Singapore, Thailand and North Korea to implement political liberalization reforms.³¹

²⁴ Carothers 2006, 2007. For a critique of the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, see Goodson 2003; Diamond 2004.

²⁵ Legler and Tieku 2010.

²⁶ Legler and Tieku 2010.

²⁷ McGowan 2005.

²⁸ McCoy 2006.

²⁹ Arceneaux and Pion-Berlin 2007; Boniface 2007.

³⁰ McCoy 2006.

³¹ Brookings Institution 2011; Sukma 2011.

Finally, some new democracies have begun offering democracy aid. Some countries have channeled some democracy assistance through their development aid programs. For example, in 2001, South Africa established the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund and tasked it with “the promotion of democracy [and] good governance” among other development objectives.³² Similarly, South Korea provides some good governance assistance through its development aid agency, the Korean International Cooperation Agency.³³ And Indonesia has set up a specialized democracy aid agency, the Institute for Peace and Democracy, which was created as the assistance and implementation arm of the high-level Bali Democracy Forum. In addition, many new democracies provide technical assistance through various governmental and quasi-governmental institutions. The Mexican Federal Electoral Institute, for example, has, since its founding in 1990, been involved in sixty-one technical assistance missions in thirty-one countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and in eighty-seven electoral observation missions in twenty-four countries across the globe.³⁴

AN OVERVIEW OF EASTERN EU DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Some of the most active democracy promoters, which in the past themselves used to be recipients of democracy assistance, are the eastern EU countries.³⁵ With the collapse of communism in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, its former Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), some of its Central European satellites (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) and one of the former Yugoslav states (Slovenia) quickly entered the ranks of capitalist democracies. In the late 1990s, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, whose transitions had been arrested by illiberal nationalistic rulers, also embraced democracy. By the mid-2000s, all of these countries were members of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Besides consolidating democracy at home, most of these countries were also supporting democratization abroad. Many have shown a particular interest and enjoyed some success in securing a greater place for democracy promotion on the agendas of the Euro-Atlantic international organizations, such as the EU, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe. Additionally, especially following their EU accession, a number of the eastern EU members have also intensified their bilateral diplomacy and assistance aimed at strengthening democracy in the postcommunist space and beyond. Complementing such official democracy promotion

³² Carothers and Youngs 2011.

³³ <http://www.koica.go.kr/english/main.html>

³⁴ <http://www.ife.org.mx/portal/site/ifev2>

³⁵ For an overview of their efforts, see Jonavicius 2008 and Kucharczyk and Lovitt 2008.

have been the efforts of many civic actors in Eastern Europe seeking to spread democratic norms and practices around the globe.

Prodemocratic Diplomacy

Most eastern EU states have frequently joined other states and international organizations in expressing concern over electoral fraud and grave violations of human rights in Eastern Europe and beyond.³⁶ More importantly, many of the eastern EU states have extensively used bilateral diplomatic channels to pressure and persuade their neighbors to embrace democratic norms and practices.³⁷ This bilateral involvement has served to develop and maintain relatively broad and deep transnational networks, facilitating the diffusion of democracy in the region. These networks, linking countries with similar sociopolitical systems, have helped shape the expectations of elites in recipient countries about which reforms are possible and beneficial for them and their nations. For instance, these networks were crucial in inspiring and preparing prodemocratic forces in countries such as Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine to push these nations in a democratic direction through the electoral revolutions in the 2000s.³⁸

As small countries with limited foreign policy capacities and impact, the eastern EU countries also have leveraged their membership in various regional organizations for democracy promotion purposes. Already in the early 2000s, when the West had grown disenchanted with democracy promotion, the eastern EU countries continued to insist that support for democratization in their region (and beyond) remain high on the agenda of the Euro-Atlantic international organizations. Keeping these organizations engaged in the Eastern European space has been crucial for creating a generally congenial environment for the diffusion of democracy in that region. The appeal of Euro-Atlantic membership, for example, was very important to the success of the electoral revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine.³⁹

³⁶ Kral 2005.

³⁷ Interview with S. R., Slovak foreign policymaker, November 27, 2008; interview with M. V., Slovak foreign policymaker, November 27, 2008; interview with E. K., Slovak foreign policymaker, November 11, 2008; interview with M. J., Polish foreign policymaker, October 30, 2008; interview with M. S., Polish foreign policymaker, October 28, 2008; interview with L. A., Polish foreign policy analyst, October 25, 2008; interview with L. M., U.S. donor representative, April 1, 2010; and interview with P. T., EU policymaker, July 11, 2007.

³⁸ On the role of the eastern EU democracy promoters in these revolutions, see Bunce and Wolchik 2011 and Beissinger 2007. Electoral revolution is defined here as in Bunce and Wolchik's work: a campaign that exposed electoral fraud and used mass protest in defense of the existing democratic constitution to defeat the illiberal incumbent and begin a new democratic chapter in the country's history.

³⁹ Tucker 2007.

The eastern EU states have supported, and some of them have actively argued for, the further EU and NATO expansion to the east and southeast, as well as for enhanced cooperation with such neighbors in the meantime. The eastern EU states have succeeded in accelerating the EU accession of the western Balkans. They also secured the adoption of a Polish proposal for a special EU instrument, the Eastern Partnership, for working with and supporting the democratization of the EU's immediate eastern neighbors – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.⁴⁰ In addition, Lithuania and especially Poland played leading roles in steering the EU's response to the Ukrainian electoral revolution in 2004 and contributed to that revolution's peaceful and prodemocratic resolution.⁴¹ Furthermore, several of the eastern EU states have worked to strengthen the EU's response to undemocratic regimes in the EU's immediate eastern neighborhood. Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia have enjoyed particular success in keeping the Belarusian question on the table and strongly influenced the EU's policy toward Belarus.⁴² Last, some of the eastern EU countries also have actively participated in the debates about enhancing the EU's support for democracy abroad, such as the 2006 reform of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the 2012 establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, and ongoing preparatory work for an EU-wide strategic framework for supporting democracy around the globe – the so-called Consensus on Democracy.

As with other democracy promoters and revolution exporters, eastern EU support for democratization abroad has sometimes been ad hoc, accorded lower priority, and sacrificed in favor of other foreign policy considerations. A Freedom House survey, examining the 1992–2002 foreign policies of forty countries worldwide, found that some of the more active eastern EU democracy promoters, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary, have a “good” record of supporting “the ideals of democracy” abroad. In comparison, the records of key democracy promoters among the established Western democracies, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, were similarly assessed as “good.” The democracy promotion commitment of Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden, meanwhile, ranked higher (“very good”), and that of France and Japan ranked lower (“fair”).⁴³

⁴⁰ Romania also put forward its own proposal for EU cooperation with the Union's eastern neighbors, but Romania's proposal focused more on the so-called Black Sea region and lost to the Eastern Partnership.

⁴¹ Centre for Eastern Studies 2005.

⁴² Interview with K. R., EU foreign policymaker, March 6, 2009; interview with J. M.-W., EU foreign policymaker, March 18, 2009; and interview with J. S.-W., EU foreign policymaker, February 25, 2009.

⁴³ Herman and Piccone 2002.

Democracy Assistance

Before the collapse of communism, many of the eastern EU countries used to provide aid to friendly developing countries “on the road to socialism.”⁴⁴ As they restructured their economies in the postcommunist period and entered clubs such as the OECD and the EU, the eastern EU states were required by these international organizations and increasingly encouraged by the Western members of these organizations to begin providing development assistance once again. In the late 1990s, with support from the United Nations Development Program and a few established donors, some eastern EU states began supplying aid.⁴⁵ By the mid-2000s, these aid frameworks were already fully functional in all eastern EU states except Bulgaria and Romania. The majority of eastern EU states quickly transformed these aid frameworks into platforms for democracy assistance.

Because most of the eastern EU countries are relatively small, the total democracy aid they have provided is rather modest.⁴⁶ (See Figure 1.1.) For instance, in 2006, these donors together supplied about €12 million in democracy assistance. By comparison, in the same year, Sweden alone gave an estimated €340 million.⁴⁷ Most of the democracy aid provided by the eastern EU states, however, is allocated to only a few recipients. As a result, Poland, for example, gave more democracy assistance to Ukraine in 2006 than did Sweden and the United Kingdom combined.⁴⁸

Another common measure of a country’s commitment to democracy promotion is the proportion of democracy aid as a percentage of the country’s overall development aid. The eastern EU donors’ proportions are about average for the donor community. The majority of the eastern EU democracy promoters spend about 2 percent, which is also the EU’s democracy aid-to-development aid ratio. The eastern EU donors do lag, however, behind some of the Nordic countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, which spend, respectively, 12 percent, 13 percent, and 24 percent of their official development aid on assisting democracy abroad.⁴⁹ A better measure of the eastern EU commitment to democracy promotion is a given country’s share of bilateral rather than

⁴⁴ Harmer and Cotterrell 2005; Krichewsky 2003. There is, no real practical legacy of such provision of development aid before 1989 in terms of continuity of personnel or practices, but there is some continuity in terms of certain development (rather than democracy) aid recipients. For a discussion, see Szent-Ivanyi and Tetenyi 2008.

⁴⁵ Interview with E. K., Slovak foreign policymaker, November 19, 2008; and interview with T. K., Polish foreign policymaker, March 23, 2009. Platforms of development NGOs such as Trialogue and to a lesser degree Concord have done similar work at the nonstate level. Interview with N. R., EU foreign policy analyst, March 17, 2009.

⁴⁶ Kucharczyk and Lovitt 2008.

⁴⁷ Kucharczyk and Lovitt 2008.

⁴⁸ Shapovalova and Shumylo 2008.

⁴⁹ Data on Western democracy promoters from Youngs 2008a.