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Elite Power Games and Democratic Consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe [1999]

John Higley & Jan Pakulski [*]

Abstract: *»Machtspiele von Eliten und demokratische Konsolidierung in Mittel- und Osteuropa«*. Postcommunist elites play rational power games throughout East Central and Eastern Europe today. But their games differ according to the structure, behavioral codes, and informal orientations associated with the paths of elite change. Although democratic institutions and procedures are in place just about everywhere, the differing elite power games account for major differences in extra-electoral politics and, thus, for wide variations in the quality of postcommunist democracies. The extent of the particularisms – clientelism and patronage, blurred functional autonomies and boundaries, violations of horizontal accountabilities, manipulations of the media and judiciary, harassment of opposition elites, personal vendettas, persecutions of minorities – define these power games, and they can be linked systematically to the patterns of elite unity, differentiation, and circulation. We view combinations of these patterns as constituting the critical elite conditions for different types of political regimes, including consolidated democracies.

Keywords: elite, elite change, postcommunist democracies.

Except in conflict-ridden Bosnia and the heavy-handed regimes of Albania, Belarus, Croatia, and the current Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro), democratic elections involving reasonably fair and free contests between parties and relatively unhindered voting by citizens are being institutionalized in postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe. Elites and mass publics increasingly take for granted the continuance of democratic elections and their role in determining who will hold government office. Electoral competitions have produced one or more peaceful alternations of governing parties or coalitions in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Baltics; elsewhere, elections have reshuffled parliamentary constellations in ways that have checked the actions of governments. In these respects, democratic politics are or are becoming "the only game in town," and at least a handful of the postcommunist democracies are on the road to consolidation.

   As Guillermo O'Donnell (1996) has argued, however, the process of democratic consolidation belies large differences in how politics are actually played, or, as Linz and Stepan (1996) put it, consolidated democracies differ impor-

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tantly in their quality. This view is shared by demo-elite theorists and more institutional- and mass-oriented "consolidologists." Emphasizing the elite crafting of democracies, the former worry about power centralizations that reduce elites' accountability, but they also worry about power fragmentations that impede elite effectiveness. Consolidologists worry, inter alia, about plebiscitarian presidents, authoritarian enclaves, and weak civil societies that make for delegative or facade democracies (Schedler, 1998). Both groups of scholars agree that, especially in newly-formed democratic regimes, actual political practices often undercut democratic processes.

Gaps of varying sizes between formal electoral competitions and informal political practices clearly exist in the postcommunist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Our aim is to identify these gaps and assess their consequences for democratic consolidation. We believe that the key variable in comparing postcommunist democracies is not the institutionalization of freely contested and participatory elections; it is, rather, the informal rules and orientations that generate and govern elite power games.

Students of democratic consolidation too often underplay the role of elites in ensuring that democratic politics are continuous, effective, and of high quality. They concentrate on constitutions and electoral rules, and on civil society, economic markets, and state administrative arenas at the expense of studying informal elite relations and the tacit codes of conduct they involve. In previous work (Higley and Pakulski, 1995; Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski, 1998), we have highlighted two dimensions of change in elite relations: the extent of elite unity and differentiation. In this paper, we add a third dimension, which is the extent and form of elite circulation. Our hope is that by interrelating patterns of elite unity, differentiation, and circulation, we can shed light on the elite power games and particularistic practices that characterize politics in the postcommunist countries.

It is important to say immediately that we view elite "unity in diversity" as the crucial condition for effective and meaningful democratic politics. This involves not only a common elite commitment to democratic procedures, but also restrained partisanship and elite legitimation in the sense of a reciprocal recognition by elites that they are together legitimate power-wielders. Restrained partisanship and elite legitimation lie beyond the formal institutional-procedural aspects of democracy. They constitute an informal and prior set of conduct-guiding orientations amounting to an elite ethos. We hypothesize that the extent to which elites develop and adhere to this ethos, as well as the extent to which aspiring elites are socialized into it, are affected by patterns of elite circulation. Orientations and behaviors that are accepting of both elite inclusiveness and relative autonomy, which we and other scholars (e.g., Keller, 1963; Etzioni-Halevy, 1993) have identified as key aspects of elite differentiation, are also affected by patterns of elite circulation. By combining the dimensions of unity and differentiation and linking them to circulation patterns, we

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distinguish three main configurations in the postcommunist countries today: consensual elites, dominated by professional politicians and technocrats; fragmented elites, dominated by former apparatchiks and technocrats; divided elites, dominated by former apparatchiks and populists.

Path-dependency theorists point to the cumulative legacies that shape political regimes. We argue that these legacies are important in accounting for variations in the politics of the postcommunist countries, especially the consensual, fragmented, and divided elite configurations that undergird the several types of regimes found among the countries today. A "classic circulation" path was taken by elites in countries where the communist party-state was always quite incomplete (Poland) or where it was gradually eroded (Hungary, Slovenia, and, with qualifications, Czechoslovakia). This facilitated elite roundtable negotiations to effect democratic transitions, and it eased the post-transition reconstruction of regimes. By contrast, a "reproduction circulation" path was taken by elites in countries where the communist party-state was more firmly entrenched (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Russia, and Ukraine). This has led to fragmented elites in which former apparatchiks and technocrats have constituted, at least until very recently, "parties of power." A path of "quasi-replacement circulation," in which one clique in the old communist party displaced the ascendant clique and thereby greatly truncated the democratic transition (Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, and, with qualifications, Belarus and Croatia), led to power games of a perilously zero-sum character.

We argue, in short, that elites play rational power games throughout East Central and Eastern Europe today. But their games differ according to the behavioral codes and informal orientations associated with the paths of elite change. Although democratic institutions and procedures are in place just about everywhere, the differing elite power games account for major differences in extra-electoral politics and, thus, for wide variations in the quality of postcommunist democracies. The extent of the particularisms that O'Donnell (1996) has highlighted – clientelism and patronage, blurred functional autonomies and boundaries, violations of horizontal accountabilities, manipulations of the media and judiciary, harassments of opposition elites, personal vendettas, persecutions of minorities – define these power games, and they can be linked systematically to the paths that elite change followed.

Elite Unity, Differentiation, and Circulation

Let us begin with a model that interrelates patterns of elite unity, differentiation, and circulation. We view combinations of these patterns as constituting the critical elite conditions for different types of political regimes, including consolidated democracies. One component of the model is the typology of national elite unity and differentiation that we have offered previously (Higley and Pakulski, 1995; Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski, 1998). In a nutshell,

elite unity has two dimensions: normative and interactive. The normative dimension involves the extent of shared beliefs and values, as well as more specific shared norms, most of them informal and uncodified, about political access, competition, and restrained partisanship. The interactive dimension involves the extent of inclusionary channels, mechanisms, and networks through which elite persons and groups obtain relatively assured access to decisionmaking centers. Elite differentiation is the extent to which elites are sectorally and organizationally diverse, and partly autonomous. The most important for us is horizontal (functional) aspect of differentiation: the relative autonomy cum insulation of institutional power spheres from each other in the sense of power resource convertibility. As the students of communist regimes stress, it has been systematically eroded and obstracted by the overarching nature of "party leading role" resulting in "politicization" of all the areas of rule and the "unitary" image the elites (eg. Elster et al. 1998). Whereas the unity or disunity of elites originates in watershed political events, such as national state formation, revolutions, or major political crises, the differentiation of elites occurs more gradually in step with processes of industrialization and social modernization – though differentiation may be slowed, as it was during the 1960's-80's in the Soviet Union (Hough, 1997), where a dominant elite group forces all others to adhere to its distinctive orientation, ideology, religious dogma, or ethnonationalist creed.

Differences in the extent of unity and differentiation define the main configurations of national elites: strong or weak unity, accompanied by wide or narrow differentiation. These configurations are, in turn, principal determinants of regime types: consolidated democracies, or perhaps a Rechtsstaat, where there is both strong unity and wide differentiation; authoritarian or sultanistic regimes where there is neither; totalitarian or post-totalitarian regimes where there is strong unity but narrow differentiation; and unconsolidated democracies, possibly oscillating with short-lived authoritarian regimes, where there is wide differentiation but weak unity (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Configurations of National Elites (and Associated Regime Types)

		Elite Unity	
		Strong	*Weak*
Elite Differentiation	*Wide*	Consensual elite (consolidated democ.) (possibly a Rechtsstaat)	Fragmented elite (unconsolidated democ.) (possibly a short-lived authoritarian regime)
	Narrow	Ideocratic elite (totalitarian or post-totalitarian regime)	Divided elite (authoritarian or sultanistic regime)

These four configurations generate distinct types of power games, that is, the strategies and tactics that elite players adopt. Power games in a consensual elite are unconstrained by some ideocratic blueprint or telos of change, and they involve competitions and rivalries with stable rules. There is high certainty about rules and procedures, but low certainty about political outcomes, with today's winners likely to become tomorrow's losers, though no one suffers mortal costs for losing. Power games in a divided elite, by sharp contrast, approximate continual warfare, the stakes in which are not just government power, but also political freedom and, perhaps, life itself. They are played amid deep ideocratic hostilities, the absence of much communication between elite camps, and the expectation or occurrence of power usurpations. The games approximate free-for-all struggles and have an erratic, oppressive character, with whatever low certainties there are depending upon effective domination and exclusion. Because of the distrust and hatred that pervade these games, breaking out of them is extremely difficult, probably requiring a sudden, deliberate, and fundamental elite settlement that can only occur amid some profound crisis (Higley and Burton, 1998; Burton and Higley, 1998).

Power games in a fragmented elite arise from the rapid proliferation of diverse political actors and the splintering of protest movements that accompany or soon follow many democratic transitions, especially transitions that involve regime collapses or implosions (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1989-90, the Soviet Union in 1990-91). They may involve tentative and partial elite pacts and armistices that stave off open political warfare, but that fail to develop an elite ethos of unity in diversity. Conflicts are heated, and monopolistic "parties of power," attached to the state, are likely to form. But whereas the power games played in a divided elite involve sharp polarization and exclusion, in which opponents typically view each other as enemies in unchecked struggles, the games in a fragmented elite are played across multiple and conflicting cleavage lines that skew the outcomes of, but do not eliminate, democratic competition. Finally, the power games in an ideocratic elite resemble a value-oriented quest involving the kinds of calculations that Weber termed "substantive." Even where (as in a post-totalitarian regime) a single doctrine has ceased to guide elite actions, it continues to provide power games with an idiom for elite self-legitimation and a formula for governing. Despite this veneer, however, the games consist of much jockeying for position in highly centralized and personalized patronage networks.

The four elite configurations in Figure 1 spawn modal varieties of political elites that help to define and shape the power games that are played in each configuration. If we reverse our order of description and start with the ideocratic configuration, its modal political elite consists of apparatchiks, reformers, and dissidents. The appratchiki are the product of the ruling party-state apparata, and they are characteristically oriented strongly toward the top echelons and the current party line (partiinost). This extreme form of other-

directedness involves a mixture of conformity and authoritarianism that has been exhaustively analyzed by students of the communist nomenklatura. Similar to the apparatchiki, the reformers in an ideocratic political elite view politics as an authoritarian "game at the top," though they support a "new line" and the party faction representing it. The dissidents in such an elite also see politics as a highly personalized game at the top, but they attach a strong moral value to political linkages and loyalties thus giving it a strong "anti-political" coloring. The size of the dissident category varied greatly among the old communist regimes, though some argue that they formed a sizable group only in Poland and, perhaps, Hungary. However that may be, the communist party-states' demise left behind legions of apparatchiks and reformers who were highly skilled in authoritarian and patronage politics and quite unskilled in democratic games of electoral competition and mobilization requiring diffuse appeals for support and the formation of coalitions for electoral, governing, and opposition purposes.

The divided configuration spawns a political elite in which committed partisans and mass mobilizers, especially of the populist-charismatic kind, are the principal actors. Popular tribunes, populist manipulators, seducers of crowds, and other demagogues emerge in, profit from, and fuel the bitter conflicts and battle lines that define the divided configuration. Adept in sudden mass mobilizations, they thrive on crises and find it hard to operate within institutionalized frameworks of norms and rules. The fragmented configuration, on the other hand, encourages the ascendancy of technocrats who tend to avoid partisan alignments and promise neutral and efficient government. In Central and Eastern Europe, technocrats first entered communist elites at the time of pre-transition reforms, and they became prominent actors in the gradually differentiating elite structures and societal sectors that followed democratic transitions. Unlike the communist party reformers they accompanied to power, the technocrats are oriented toward more universalistic sets of rules and criteria of expertise in economic, legal, managerial, and technical-scientific domains. Finally, the restrained, regularized, and only modestly rewarded political competitions that are characteristic of the consensual configuration make politics into a vocation and give rise to professional politicians. Their recruitment is elongated and institutionalized in hierarchical bodies (parliaments, councils, parties, trade unions, business associations, religious, educational and other cultural organizations) at local, regional, and national levels. In the course of this recruitment, they imbibe political norms and rules that constitute the ethos of unity in diversity.

Patterns of Elite Circulation

We next link the origin and persistence of the four basic elite configurations and associated regime types to patterns of elite circulation. As treated by Mosca and Pareto, elite circulation takes many forms, the two extreme forms being, on the one end, elite entrenchment and, thus, circulation mainly by inheritance, and, on the other end, sudden and sweeping revolutionary circulations. The two most important aspects of elite circulations are their scope – the horizontal range of the positions affected and the vertical depth from which the personnel entering elite positions come – and their mode, that is, the way in which elite succession occurs. With respect to scope, one must ask if the range of a circulation is narrow or wide – if only the most prominent and politically exposed position-holders are replaced, or if incumbents of elite positions are changed across the board. One must also ask if a circulation is shallow or deep – if elites are drawn from second-echelon ("deputy") positions within existing political and social hierarchies and, thus, represent the established elite political and social type, or if many come from far down political and social hierarchies or even outside them (i.e., from exile, prison, or an underground movement). The range and depth of circulations tend to co-vary: wide circulations typically bring many persons to power and influence who were previously distant from elite positions. The other key question is the mode of an elite circulation – the speed and manner of its occurrence. Circulations may be sudden and coerced, as in violent revolutionary overthrows, or gradual and peaceful, with elites being replaced incrementally through voluntary resignations, retirements, and transfers.

By dichotomizing the scope and mode of elite circulation, four patterns may be distinguished:

Figure 2: Patterns of Elite Circulation

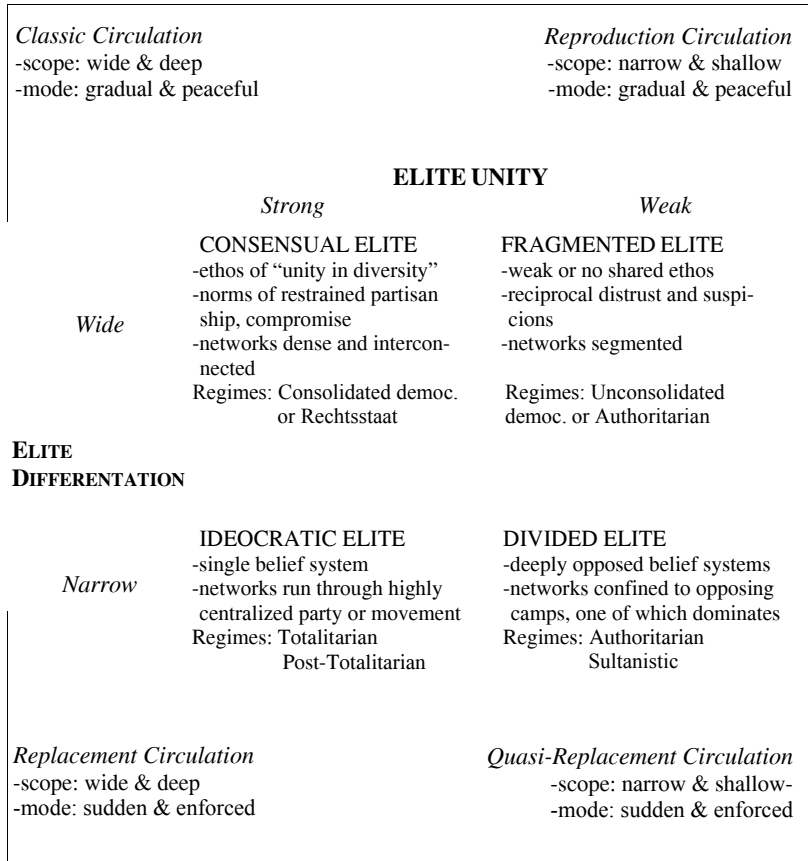|		Scope	
		Wide & Deep	*Narrow & Shallow*
	Gradual & Peaceful	Classic	Reproduction
Mode			
	Sudden & Coerced	Replacement	Quasi-replacement

The classic pattern is roughly what Mosca and Pareto regarded as essential for elite renewal and, thus, for stable and effective rule. We conceive it as positionally wide and socially deep in scope, but gradual and peaceful in mode. Classic circulation is associated with consensual elites whose ethos of unity in diversity allows a relatively smooth turnover of elites across many sectors, at

the same time avoiding social closure by keeping elite positions open to persons from different rungs on social and political ladders. The replacement pattern is also positionally wide and socially deep in scope, but its mode is sudden and coerced, typically involving a revolutionary overthrow. Replacement occurs mainly where elites have been deeply divided and where their mutually destructive struggles have opened the door to a seizure of power by a small, doctrinaire, but previously quite peripheral counterelite. The counterelite's political triumph is accompanied by sweeping elite replacement and the construction of an ideocratic elite.

By contrast, one may speak of reproduction where circulation is positionally narrow and socially shallow, and its mode is gradual and peaceful – where existing elites change their ideocratic colors and positional locations in order to survive, or where there is a "revolution of the deputies," in which second-echelon persons ascend to the top positions. There is no large change in the social profiles of elite position-holders so that, despite personnel and positional reshuffles, the elite as a whole continues to consist of the same, or very similar, social type. On the evidence of circulations that have occurred during the 1990's in countries that made up the former Soviet Union, reproduction seems most likely to occur where ideocratic elites have collapsed or imploded. Finally, the quasi-replacement pattern is also narrow and shallow in scope, but its mode is sudden and coerced, usually involving a palace coup in which a ruling clique is replaced by another clique that displays a different leadership style but effects no large change in the character of politics. Quasi-replacements are often responses to crises, engineered from within the ascendant camp in a divided elite. They typically involve replacements of the most politically exposed power holders in order to stave off or defuse challenges. Quasi-replacements may also occur in fragmented elites, though weak elite unity makes it difficult to engineer a change of top position holders without descending into the more or less open warfare that would indicate a shift to the divided configuration.

To repeat our thesis, it is that the power games played by elites in the post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe today, and the ways in which aspiring elites are being socialized, vary according to the extent of elite unity, differentiation, and circulation. A model relating all three aspects of elites to basic types of political regimes is presented in Figure 3. In the remainder of this paper, we assess the fit between this model and elite power games, first in the years surrounding the 1989-1991 transitions, and then in the most recent period.

Figure 3: Elite Unity, Differentiation, and Circulation in the
Production of Regimes

Classic Circulation -scope: wide & deep -mode: gradual & peaceful		*Reproduction Circulation* -scope: narrow & shallow -mode: gradual & peaceful

ELITE UNITY

	Strong	*Weak*
Wide	CONSENSUAL ELITE -ethos of "unity in diversity" -norms of restrained partisan ship, compromise -networks dense and intercon- nected Regimes: Consolidated democ. or Rechtsstaat	FRAGMENTED ELITE -weak or no shared ethos -reciprocal distrust and suspi- cions -networks segmented Regimes: Unconsolidated democ. or Authoritarian

ELITE
DIFFERENTATION

Narrow	IDEOCRATIC ELITE -single belief system -networks run through highly centralized party or movement Regimes: Totalitarian Post-Totalitarian	DIVIDED ELITE -deeply opposed belief systems -networks confined to opposing camps, one of which dominates Regimes: Authoritarian Sultanistic

Replacement Circulation -scope: wide & deep -mode: sudden & enforced		*Quasi-Replacement Circulation* -scope: narrow & shallow- -mode: sudden & enforced

Elite Change During the Transition Years

It is well recognized that democratic transitions in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were of the negotiated or pacted kind. As such, the transitions were conducive to the emergence of consensual elites, and we have argued that this was the main political outcome of the transitions in all three countries. A key reason was the way in which elite circulation in the three countries approximated the classic pattern, i.e., relatively wide and deep in scope, and relatively gradual and peaceful ("velvet") in mode. The 1989 roundtables in Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague were preceded by the political articulation of opposition elites: most dramatically in Poland with the emergence of Solidarity

nine years earlier; most gradually with the steady articulation of reformist and technocratic factions in Hungary under the Kadar regime during the 1970's and 1980's; and most unevenly in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring in 1968, its harsh repression, and the small but symbolically important Charter 77 dissidents during the 1980's. Especially in Poland and Hungary, these events gradually altered the composition of elites (Hanley, Yershova, and Anderson, 1995; Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski, 1995; Szelenyi, Szelenyi, and Kovach, 1995).

The roundtables in Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague during 1989 confirmed, rather than created, a broad elite consensus about the desirability – or, at least, the inevitability – of democratic reforms. Opposition elites were accommodated in the politically inclusive roundtables, but during the year or two following them, many of the less experienced and more idealistic opposition leaders, together with the communist leaders who had been most directly in charge of the old regimes, were eased out through democratic elections, the demobilization and splintering of reform movements, and the formation of political parties to contest elections. In Czechoslovakia, a power bid by the holdover Slovak section of the communist elite resulted in the 1992 velvet divorce, which boosted the unity of reformist Czech elites by removing the divisive Czech-Slovak ethnic rivalry and policy clashes arising from unequal Czech and Slovak economic development. The Slovak elite, by contrast, emerged from the divorce fragmented along political, ideological, and ethnic lines, with ex-communist nationalists, led by Vladimir Meciar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), entrenched and locked in a bitter fight with political opponents pushing for democratic reforms and minority rights.

Research on the extent of elite circulation supports this depiction of elite change during the transition years in Poland, Hungary, and the two parts of Czechoslovakia. Studying what happened to the communist nomenklatura elites of Poland and Hungary between 1988 and 1993, Jacek Wasilewski (1998) analyzes large samples of those elites to reach the following conclusions: (1) persons in all nomenklatura elite sectors had by 1993 moved in more or less equal proportions to command positions in private business; (2) three nomenklatura elite groups – persons in the Communist Party apparatus and those in the economic and cultural nomenklaturas – had been virtually eliminated from top political positions by 1993; (3) roughly a quarter of communist governmental bureaucrats retained their governmental posts in the postcommunist regimes in 1993; (4) overall, just on half of the 1988 nomenklatura elites of Hungary and Poland continued to hold elite positions in 1993, albeit usually not the same positions; (5) if elderly nomenklatura elites who retired between 1988 and 1993 are excluded, the ratio of 1988 communist elites who still held some postcommunist elite position in 1993 to those who lost elite status during those years was 21:10 in Hungary, and 19:10 in Poland. Clearly, the scope of elite circulation was quite wide in both countries. Although we know less about

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its depth – about the extent to which new elites came from far down social and political hierarchies – it is a plausible surmise that the opening up of roughly half of all elite positions between 1988 and 1993 enabled more than a few such persons to gain elite status.

Patterns of circulation in Czechoslovakia and then in the separate Czech and Slovak republics during those years also appear to accord with our model.

A wide and rapid circulation of elites, especially the political elite, occurred in the velvet revolution of November and December 1989 and the subsequent June 1990 parliamentary election. However, this circulation was not as much a break with all that had gone before as it first seemed because it involved the return to power of a number of 1968 reformers, accompanied by dissidents, such as Vaclav Havel (Machonin and Tucek, 1997). In the next parliamentary election, in June 1992, liberal right-of-center elite groups in the Czech territories, and nationalist and former communist elites in Slovakia displaced the 1968 reformers and 1980's dissidents, with the latter forming the political opposition after that election. Studying these changes, Brokl and Mansfeldova (1998) conclude that the "grey zone" of middle-level communist technocrats and managers rose to front-rank elite positions in Slovakia, whereas circulation in the Czech territories was wider in range and depth, although there, too, persons who had been middle-level technocrats and managers in the old communist regime rose in conspicuous numbers to elite positions in the Czech Republic after 1992. Comparing the overall circulations of Czech and Slovak elites during the transition years, the Czech pattern was more nearly of the classic kind, while the Slovak pattern approximated reproduction.

In our model, the reproduction pattern is associated with fragmented elites, in which, though there is adherence to democratic elections, there is at most a limited elite accommodation that stops well short of a unity-in-diversity ethos. We will say more below about the fragmentation of Slovak elites since independence at the end of 1992. Here we want to note that the scope of elite circulation in Bulgaria was also narrow and shallow, though its mode was gradual and peaceful via haphazard, frequently deadlocked, and quite inconclusive roundtable negotiations during the first five months of 1990. After ousting Communist Party Secretary Todor Zhivkov in early November 1989, large parts of the communist establishment, including reformers, nationalists, and political opportunists, formed an ideologically loose coalition of convenience, centered in the ex-communist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). These persons continued to dominate, but not monopolize, elite positions in the postcommunist regime. Like Meciar's HZDS in Slovakia, the BSP elites constituted a "party of power" anchored in governmental bodies and government-controlled industrial conglomerates (Kostova, 1994). Political opposition was marginalized and harassed, though it was not suppressed (Nikolov, 1998). A brief and ineffective opposition coalition government during 1991-92 gave way to a caretaker government of technocrats that was supported by, and was favorable

to, the BSP establishment until the BSP recaptured government power in the December 1994 elections. During the transition years, in short, there was neither a fundamental elite accommodation nor a major elite circulation in Bulgaria. The postcommunist regime was dominated by apparatchik and technocratic elites. Wider and deeper circulation, possibly accompanied by some steps toward an elite accommodation, did not unfold until the harrowing financial crisis that Bulgaria experienced in the mid-1990's, to which we will return below.

The transitions in Romania, Serbia, and, with qualifications, Croatia involved real or de facto palace coups that slowed the dismantling of ideocratic elites and prevented significant elite circulation. Under the iron rule of the Ceausescus and the Securitate, the Romanian communist regime had straddled the line between the totalitarian and sultanistic types, relying more on demagogic nationalist appeals and deification of the Ceausescus than on socialist shibboleths for coerced mobilizations (Linz and Stepan, 1996). In the face of an insurrection by Romania's Hungarian minority in December 1989, the military elite, apparently in league with the Illiescu faction of the Communist Party, liquidated the Ceausescus. But no accommodation between competing elites was attempted, and a three-day "roundtable" discussion in late January 1990 was a smokescreen for the Illiescu faction's re-imposition of power, which was used later that year to smash opponents in the streets of Bucharest. Illiescu and his Democratic National Salvation Front routed challengers in the September 1992 elections, formed a coalition with far-right and far-left parties, and remained dominant during the next four years.

In 1987, when Serbia still formed the core of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, the new president of the Serb League of Communists, used Serb appeals for help against Muslims in Kosovo as a pretext for staging an internal party coup. He replaced reformist leaders with his own henchmen, and cloaked himself in Serb nationalist garb in order to stave off ultra-nationalists who were emerging rapidly as a powerful challenging force (Woodward, 1995, 89). Milosevic's pre-emptive moves enabled him and his entourage to survive the breakup of Yugoslavia during 1991 and to remain dominant in the rump Yugoslav state, which retained strong authoritarian features despite democratic trappings. Although a significant number of people took advantage of the subsequent warfare and international sanctions imposed on Serbia to enrich themselves illegally and enter business and other elite positions, as late as 1997 fully 60 percent of the business elite consisted of persons who had held high positions in the old communist regime, while the political elite remained centered on Milosevic and his cronies (Lazic, 1998). Despite the chaotic transition, in other words, elite circulation did not go far beyond the quasi-replacement pattern, and it was unaccompanied by pacts, negotiations, or other attempts at elite accommodation.

In May 1990, when Croatia was still a Yugoslav republic, former communist general Franco Tudjman, who had also donned the nationalist mantle, led his Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) to victory in the first multi-party elections, winning 41.5 percent of the popular vote, but garnering 68 percent of parliamentary seats. Controlling parliament, Tudjman was immediately elected by that body to the Croatian presidency, and from that position he and his lieutenants launched an intensive nationalist campaign (which included resurrecting symbols of the fascist Croatian state during World War II) that quickly drove most holdover communists from elite positions and made Tudjman and the HDZ crushingly dominant. In this displacement of communist elites, circulation was apparently a good deal wider (and perhaps deeper) than in Serbia-Montenegro, and, once independence was declared in June 1991, it produced a distinctly new regime. Lacking data on the extent of turnover (many of Tudjman's associates were returned ultra-nationalist Croat emigrés), we cannot say with confidence that the Croatian pattern was essentially that of a quasi-replacement via what amounted to a palace coup, though we suspect that this is the most apt classification. The relevant alternative classification – of a sudden and sweeping circulation via a revolutionary overthrow – fits the complex Croatian events less well. What is clear is that, once Croatia emerged as an independent country, elites divided immediately into opposing ultra-nationalist and pro-democratic camps, with the former adopting strongly authoritarian tactics to handicap opponents and retain the upper hand in all subsequent electoral contests (Pusic, 1998).

In sum, ruling elites in Romania, Serbia, and Croatia relied to a large extent on nationalism, rather than communism, to justify their ascendancies immediately before and during the transitions to postcommunist regimes. These relatively painless political-ideological about faces, aided by coup-like displacements of ruling communist cliques, obviated the need for accommodations with opposition elites, and none of the three transitions was of the negotiated or pacted kind. The scope of elite circulation was narrow and shallow (except perhaps in Croatia), although its mode was fairly sudden and coerced. Despite putative democratic transitions, the three postcommunist regimes were in fact authoritarian, with entrenched elites adopting nationalist rhetoric and declaring virtual war on their opponents. The latter were excluded from power and suppressed, and many opposition figures sought shelter abroad.

The countries we have examined to this point do not, of course, exhaust the East European transitions to postcommunist regimes. We think, however, that they were relatively clear examples, during the transition years, of the elite configurations and circulation patterns we have posited: consensual elites and classic circulation (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic); fragmented elites and reproduction circulation (Slovakia and Bulgaria); divided elites involving quasi-replacements (Romania, Serbia, and probably Croatia). What we

know about other cases during the transition years leads us to see them as falling less clearly into our model's quadrants.

The transition in Slovenia, for example, paralleled the Polish, Hungarian, and Czechslovak transitions, but only up to a point. As in the three Central European countries, Slovenian politics and society underwent rapid pluralization during the late 1980's (Ramet, 1997, 1998). Even more than in Hungary, however, this pluralization was aided and abetted by the ruling Slovene League of Communists (LC), whose liberal wing had expelled conservatives from the party in 1986. Thus, in March 1989, well before the Polish roundtable had concluded, and before the Hungarian roundtable had even begun, the LC published a document calling for political pluralism, acceptance of open political conflicts, and rejection of communist doctrine as the only permissible form of political expression. A major reason for this at the time regionally unprecedented liberalization was external, namely, fear of the Serb nationalism that Milosowic was stoking in Yugoslavia's core republic. During the two years that followed, this fear kept Slovene elites marching in the same direction, though it is unclear if a negotiated elite accommodation occurred.

In December 1989, the Slovene LC called for multi-party elections, and these were held in April 1990. By that time, a phletora of parties had emerged and the elections were won by a seven-party coalition, DEMOS, which later in 1990 presided over the Slovene Assembly's annulment of thirty federal Yugoslav laws, as well as a referendum in which 88 percent of Slovenes voted for independence from Yugoslavia. It is possible that an important amount of elite accommodation was then achieved via the deliberations of a roundtable-like constitutional commission, which included a hundred leaders from most major sectors of Slovene society. In any event, after successfully prosecuting Slovenia's two-week, relatively bloodless "war of independence" in late June and early July 1991, the DEMOS coalition government unravelled in a host of deep political, clerical, and constitutional disputes. In the first post-independence elections, held at the end of 1992, the Liberal Democratic Party, which was a descendant of the former Communist youth organization, received the largest number of votes, and its leader, Janez Drnovsek, became prime minister. In simultaneous balloting, the former president of communist Slovenia, Milan Kucan, was elected to the presidency for a five-year term. While the Slovene transition was certainly complex and conducive to conflicting interpretations, we see no compelling evidence that an elite consensus emerged to the same extent as among the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech elites. We are inclined to view the prominence of communist and former communist elites during and after the Slovene transition as indicating a pattern of reproduction circulation, and we will assess below the extent of elite fragmentation since the transition years.

What of the former Soviet republics? Excluding the Baltics, about which we frankly know too little (but see Steen, 1997, who concludes on the basis of

extensive survey data that elites in Estonia and Latvia are strongly ethnocratic and exclusionary, while those in Lithuania have not achieved broad consensus), we think that no republic emerged from the Soviet Union's collapse at the end of 1991 with consensual elites. We have elsewhere reviewed the unsuccessful attempts to achieve elite accommodation in Russia during the transition years (Higley and Pakulski, 1995; Kullberg, Higley and Pakulski 1998), and the bitter fight between leaders of the Yeltsin-led coalition that founded the new Russian regime has been discussed extensively (e.g., Brudny, 1995; Gill 1998). Drawing on interviews that David Lane (1997) conducted during 1993 and 1994 with samples of both the Gorbachev and Yeltsin elite cohorts, we have concluded more recently (Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski, 1998; Kullberg, Higley and Pakulski 1998) that Soviet and then Russian elites are best viewed as fragmented before, during, and immediately after the 1991 regime collapse. Moreover, data on Russian elite circulation during the transition years show a strong reproduction pattern (Wasilewski, 1998; White and Krystanovskaya, 1998).

We have argued that a reproduction pattern also unfolded in Ukraine, where entrenched elites for the most part simply traded their communist badges for nationalist ones, declared independence in September 1991, but did not hold democratic elections until 1994, and where, once elected, a constitutionally powerful parliament, in which the re-legalized Communist Party bulked large (but in which fourteen other parties were also represented), stymied government reform efforts. Elite fragmentation was indicated not only by the heterogeneous parliament elected in 1994 and its conflicts with the executive branch, but also by regional elites rooted in opposing cultural and economic bases that pushed strongly for decentralization and challenged national integration. We are, however, unaware of interview and circulation data that would support placing Ukraine elites in our model's "fragmented" quadrant during the transition years, and we think that viewing them as divided is equally plausible.

As regards Belarus and the numerous other former Soviet republics (except for the Baltics), possibly the less said the better. Virtually none has yet completed a democratic transition. In Belarus, as in Ukraine, the first popularly contested presidential election was delayed until 1994, when an independent candidate, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, won a surprise victory. Parliamentary elections were held, for the most part unsuccessfully, in 1995, by which time Lukashenka was showing a marked plebiscitarian-populist bent. He has since acted in steadily more autocratic ways, so that politics in Belarus have been largely devoid of meaningful democratic content. Elsewhere in the former Soviet republics (with the notable exception of Mongolia and the partial exception of Georgia), although nominally contested and participatory elections were held and the old ideocratic elite configuration unravelled, elites divided into warring camps almost immediately. One camp had the upper hand and was led by a "strong man," who usually turned out to be the former Communist boss in

a new nationalist guise: Aliyev in Azerbaijan, Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Snegur in Moldova, Nabiyev in Tajikistan (until he died in the midst of civil war in 1993), Niyazov in Turkmenistan, Karimov in Uzbekistan.

Elite Change Since the Transition Years

Political developments in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic during the last few years strongly indicate the strengthening of consensual elites. In Poland, the 1989 roundtable agreement, subsequently renegotiated in 1990, laid the ground for a broad and lasting elite consensus. This has embraced not only democratic institutions and procedures, but such strategic goals as comprehensive privatization and joining NATO and the European Union. The consensus has persisted in spite of rapid elite turnover, institutional changes such as a new constitution and three successive sets of electoral rules, and important policy differences between, for example, liberal reformers and the Peasant Party. As was widely noted during the 1997 parliamentary election campaign, leaders of the major Polish political parties and groups have found it difficult to distinguish themselves from their rivals in more than cosmetic ways. They focus on personalities and take single-issue stands to delineate themselves and their parties to voters. Unlike in neighboring Ukraine, debates have centered on the pace of marketizing reforms and the exact makeup of democratic institutions, but not on the desirability of either. The main disputes have been over the scope of presidential power, the extent of welfare rights, and church-state relations, especially as regards policy toward abortion.

On the surface, relations between Polish elite groups have looked tense. Rapid turnover in government office holding, jockeying among Solidarity factions, and institutional ambiguities under the "little constitution" that was in force between 1990 and 1997 have made for a weak collective elite identity (Pankow, 1998). But neither these fragmenting tendencies nor the former communists' electoral successes in 1993 and 1995 threatened the underlying elite consensus achieved in 1989-90. The 1997 constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections clearly reflected this underlying consensus. Both proceeded successfully and peacefully, albeit with rather low levels of public interest and participation. The referendum approved a new constitution, which was a victory for the SLD, while the parliamentary elections ended with the center-right Solidarity Electoral Alliance (AWS) winning the largest share of Sejm seats (201 of 460). Protracted but eminently prosaic negotiations eventually produced a coalition government of the AWS and the liberal Freedom Union (UW). This change of government – Poland's fourth since 1989 – was as smooth as previous ones, and the cohabitation of the left-of-center president, Aleksander Kwasniewski, with the center-right government headed by Jerzy Buzek has since been harmonious enough. These recent events have buttressed the conclusion reached by Wasilewski (1998) that in Poland today democracy

is the only game in town and its consolidation is well advanced (see also Smolar, 1998). Mach and Wesolowski (1998), although more cautious in their conclusions based on a survey of 215 MPs and 61 candidates representing all political parties and conducted during the 1993 elections in Poland, seem to confirm this diagnosis. Politicians from all parties surveyed, they conclude, show consensus as to the desirable characteristics of politicians, namely, "the capacity to lead; ability to build social consensus for their programs and goals" (1998:23). A similar consensus was found in understanding of politics as activities strengthening the state and representing the entire society and "good authority" as involving respect for the letter of law, protection of personal freedoms and liberties and freedom of expression. Wesolowski and his team discovered a commonality of perceptions and attitudes in spite of sharp divisions in political rhetoric during the election campaign, as well as basic agreements as to the necessity and the main direction of the economic and political reforms. The differences appear mainly in the world-views declared during the election campaign (see also Jasiecki 1998).

Hungarian and Czech developments have followed a similar trajectory. The victory of the ex-communist Socialists in Hungary's May 1994 elections did nothing to weaken the consensual elite configuration that formed in the late 1980's and that was sealed at the 1989 roundtable in Budapest. In 1994, small and disaffected left- and right-wing elite groups gained no significant support, and the alternation of government that followed was as smooth as the Polish alternations. The Socialists' victory came less as a surprise than as a return to power of the original reformers. This can be seen, quite strikingly, in the careers of economic and cultural elites, which show strong links with the communist past (Lengyel 1998; Lengyel and Bartha, 1998; Szalai, 1998). But it is also apparent in politicians' careers. Most recently, for example, the Hungarian Democratic Forum's (HDF) national board announced that the party included Imre Pozsgay, a leading reformist in the former Communist party, on the HDF's national candidate list. Studies of Hungarian political and administrative elites show considerable elite circulation that rests on marked career continuities between the communist and postcommunist periods, increasing levels of education and administrative experience, and relatively high levels of personal satisfaction among elites (Lengyel, 1998). The victory of the crntre-right coalition in the May 1998 parliamentary election seems to confirm these regularities. The new generation of Fidesz parliamentarians, exemplified by Victor Orban, seem to approximate the professional type more closely than their socialist colleagues. The picture is one of ever more professionalized political and technocratic leaders engaged in the restrained competitions typical of consensual elites and consolidated democratic regimes.

As already noted, the velvet divorce in Czechoslovakia at the end of 1992 contributed to the unity of Czech elites by removing main sources of ethnic and economic policy conflicts. The Slovaks' departure also opened up numerous

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elite positions for younger technocratic and professional aspirants (Machonin, 1994; Brokl and Mansfeldova, 1998). In spite of personal animosities between "the two Vaclavs" (President Havel and Prime Minister Klaus), a consensus encompassed most governing and opposition elites. Havel and his entourage, the governing and merged Civic and Christian Democrats, and the opposition Social Democrats all stressed their support of democratic principles, EU membership, and privatization. They differed over the pace of economic reforms, governing style, and welfare policies. However, the differences over economic reforms seemed even less pronounced than in Poland, where many leaders of the strong trade union movement, including the remnants of Solidarity, hotly resisted the "shock therapy" instituted by Leszek Balcerowicz in 1992. The Czech trade union elite by and large supported economic reforms and cooperated with the Klaus government. Another difference with Poland, which helped Czech elite unity, was the presence of an unreformed Communist party that was too small to mobilize public discontent, but that could be handily blamed for the communist past. Thus, while in the 1993 Polish and 1994 Hungarian elections strong former communist parties – the SLD and the MSzP, respectively – harnessed widespread economic frustrations to stage political comebacks, in the Czech Republic it has been the Social Democrats, largely unconnected to the old communist regime, who have profited most from popular discontents, though not yet enough to form a government. Following the collapse of the Klaus government in Spring 1998, amidst the allegation of corruption, and following the June 1998 parliamentary elections, the centre-left coalition is emerging, with basically the same reformist program as their centre-right predecessors.

We are less certain about adding Slovenia to the list of postcommunist countries that clearly display a consensual elite, though there is a case for making this addition. Exhibit A in that case is the remarkably smooth and cooperative relations between leaders of the governing coalition's Liberal Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Social Democrats. Agreement about Slovene policies toward Italy and the current Yugoslavia extended to agreement about the 1996 budget – to the surprise of Prime Minister Drnovsek. On the other hand, elite tensions have been fueled by scandals and seedy political deals, and by the high-handed, plebiscitarian actions of former defense minister, Janez Jansa. President Kucan, who is in many ways similar in his political career, low-profile presidency, and conciliatory actions to Poland's president, Kwasniewski, has generally avoided taking sides in elite policy disputes.

If the Slovene patterns are ambiguous in terms of our model, those in Slovakia since 1992 square with our category of a fragmented elite operating an unconsolidated democracy (Szomolanyi, 1997). The velvet divorce from the Czech lands was at once the consequence of rising Slovak opposition to rapid and deep reforms and the basis for avoiding reforms subsequently. This avoidance contributed to fragmentation, even polarization of the political scene

between pro-reform and pro-Western "liberal" factions, on the one side, and "preservationist" and nationalist factions, some of which wanted to promote closer ties with Slovakia's eastern neighbors, on the other.

Students of the Slovak politics emphasize both the "informalities" that permeate elite power games, and the rather loose treatment of legal and political norms by the ruling groups (Gould and Szomolanyi 1998). Since the 1994 elections Meciar's HZDS formed a ramshackle alliance with the extremist right-wing Slovak National Party (SNS) and the far-left Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZSR). This political marriage of convenience, formed opportunistically in order to maintain the patronage and control structure of the "party of power", results in a HZDS-dominated government. Almost all top government posts have been held by ex-communists, and HZDS membership has been a criterion for appointment to key administrative posts, so that a strongly clientelist power structure clearly exists (Miklos, 1997). Moreover, a bitter and long-lasting confrontation between Meciar, as prime minister, and Michal Kovac, the president, indicated substantial elite disunity. The May 1997 debacle of a referendum about seeking NATO membership and altering the rules for presidential elections – invalidated because of spoiled ballot papers and low turnout – further increased elite tensions. The readiness of Meciar and his HZDS to bend or flout rules of the democratic game was apparent as Michal Kovac's presidential term ended in early March 1998. Refusing even to nominate a successor to Kovac while using HZDS numbers to prevent the three-fifths vote in parliament needed to elect a new president, Meciar arrogated presidential powers to himself, and he used them to halt a police investigation of the mysterious kidnapping of Kovac's son two years earlier and to cancel a Kovac-supported referendum calling for direct presidential elections. Through May 1998, the Slovak parliament remained stymied in its efforts to elect a new president, while Meciar wielded both prime ministerial and presidential powers.

In spite of the mixture of patronage and intimidation, the Slovak system maintains a fair amount of pluralism and the key democratic characteristics. The opposition is dominated, but through parliamentary majority; it is politically peripheralised, but not silenced and/or terrorized. The dominant ruling party does "colonize" existing interest groups, but its control is far from complete, and it does not extend to all spheres of power. The pattern of elite conflict and collusion has been described as "fragmented polarization" (Lukas and Szomolanyi 1996).

The Bulgarian elite has displayed similar signs of fragmentation. Partly due to divisions among the many parties making up the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), the ex-communist Socialists remained dominant through 1996. However, toward the end of that year, and amid virtual economic collapse, the situation began to change, with the election of a UDF leader, Petar Stoyanov, to the presidency, the resignation of BSF prime minis-

ter Zhan Videnov, and widening splits within the BSP elite over obviously failed economic policies. A "bloodless revolution" involving large-scale demonstrations in Sofia and other cities in early 1997 led to the removal of BSP supporters from local councils and to scheduling early parliamentary elections. Those elections, in April 1997, were won overwhelmingly by the UDF, which then constructed a reform-oriented government. No doubt recalling how its first attempt at governing disintegrated in 1992, the second UDF government has been marked by a closing of ranks around a democratic-reformist program. However, elite conflicts and distrusts remain large, elite differentiation continues to be limited, and a democratic-reformist consensus is weak at best. Although the principal elite groups try to paper over their lack of unity with appeals for national solidarity, they strike us as basically fragmented.

Elites in Romania and Ukrainia have recently straddled the line between the divided and fragmented configurations. Both sets of elites engaged in a brief period of reformist activity, backed by elite pacts, during the mid-1990's, but fundamental oppositions have not been eliminated. In Romania, as noted earlier, Illiescu was re-elected to the presidency in 1992. His ex-communist Party of Social Democracy governed in coalition with the Democratic Agrarian Party and, until the weeks preceding new elections in November 1996, with the ultra-nationalist and anti-Hungarian National Unity Party. The old communist establishment's entrenchment was even more pronounced than in Bulgaria under the BSP, and it displayed an extreme form of reproduction following the quasi-replacement that it underwent in the palace coup against the Ceausescus at the end of 1989. However, 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections resulted in an unexpectedly decisive victory by reformist forces. An alliance of the center-right Democratic Convention (DCR), the Social Democratic Union (SDU), and the Hungarian Democratic Federation (HDFR) formed a new government, with the DCR's Emil Constantinescu becoming president, and the alliance's Victor Ciroba taking the prime ministership. Wholly unfamiliar with governing, the coalition suffered immediately from internal divisions and conflicts that were in many ways analogous to the conflicts within the Bulgarian UDF during its first and failed period of government in 1991-92. Reforms were stalled, partly by internal squabbles over government posts, and partly by the opposition of unreformed ex-communist administrators. Tensions with the Hungarian and Roma minorities increased, fueled by heavy-handed policies and massive corruption scandals. In March 1997, Ciorba resigned, and, because of factional jockeying and policy fights within the weak coalition government, it took nearly a year to reach agreement on a new prime minister, Radu Vaile.

Elite changes in Ukraine have moved along a track similar to that in Romania, albeit without a change of government. The Ukrainian elite was born divided when independence was declared in 1991, with the dominant and mainly Russophone Communists facing what was initially a powerful Russophobe movement, the RUKH. Government machinery and economic enterprises have

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remained largely in the hands of former nomenklatura apparatchiks, whose machinations involve much corrupt and criminal activity and who, as their Illiescu-led counterparts long did in Romania, uphold the institutional status quo that anchors their positions. Leaders of military-industrial state corporations, which are the main employers in the more industrialized eastern half of Ukraine, have pressed to restore economic ties to Russia. Nationalist factions have agitated for greater independence from Russia, but they advocate conflicting policies and are generally ambivalent about privatization and marketization.

The result has been elite division and political deadlock amid drastic economic decline. In presidential elections during 1994, voters split cleanly along ethnic-regional lines. After a narrow victory, the Russian-speaking Leonid Kuchma appealed for national unity, and he signed a pact with key leaders that helped to limit elite conflict in the crucial post-election period. With Russian and Western support, Kuchma's administration tried to initiate serious economic reforms. But the power-sharing pact between Kuchma and leaders of the Communist-dominated parliament was far from successful. Relations between the president and parliament have since erupted periodically in confrontations over their respective powers. There are no signs of a democratic-reformist elite policy consensus; there is, instead, a "nostalgia for authoritarianism" (Prizel, 1997, 363). The March 1998 parliamentary elections appear to have cemented elite disarray. About one third of the electorate voted for small parties that failed to get into parliament. The proportion of those who won election as independents was even larger than in 1994, and the largest number of non-independent seats went to left-wing anti-reform parties, whose strength in parliament increased from 30 to 40 percent. Center-right forces were weakened and dispersed, parliament seems even more likely to block marketizing reforms, and the economic situation remains dire. The portents are for continuing political gridlock and increasing calls to rein in Ukraine's democratic "excesses".

To summarize, since the transition years there has been quite limited elite change in Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine. In all four countries, but especially in Romania and Ukraine, we continue to observe weak unity and narrow differentiation, indicated by the existence of deeply opposed elite camps. In Slovakia and Bulgaria, there is no evidence of a fundamental elite accommodation, and elites in both countries are best viewed as fragmented and as presiding over democratic regimes that are clearly unconsolidated. The change of government in Romania late in 1996 got a liberalization of entrenched institutions and power formations started, but in Ukraine there is scant evidence that such a liberalization has begun. Ethnic cleavages are high on the political agendas in Romania and Ukraine (and hardly absent in Slovakia and Bulgaria), and elites challenging the parties of power in both countries must be regarded as disorganized and ineffective. So long as elites in Romania and

Ukraine are divided over fundamental aspects of democracy, economic reform, and national unity, democratic regimes will remain fledgling at best.

During the first half of the 1990's, it was difficult to establish which elite configuration – divided or fragmented – was emerging in Russia. Analyses of elite circulation revealed a strong reproduction pattern. Using elite survey data, Wasilewski (1998) calculated that, if retirees were excluded, the ratio of 1988 nomenklatura elites who held elite positions in 1993 to those who had lost such positions was 88:10. Synthesizing a number of studies and themselves analyzing the fates of 3,610 executive, party, parliamentary, regional, and economic-business elite position holders from the Brezhnev government in 1980 to the Yeltsin government at the end of 1993, Stephen White and Olga Kryshtanovskaya (1998) have similarly concluded that only 10 percent of the Yeltsin elite were new to power circles, while the other 90 percent had spent an average of 11.4 years in nomenklatura (though not necessarily elite) positions before the U.S.S.R.'s demise in 1991. Meanwhile, and as already mentioned, David Lane, using interview materials, found that Russian elites in 1994 were split down the middle in their retrospective views of whether the Soviet regime had been basically healthy or irretrievably flawed and whether therapeutic measures (institutional reforms or a basic overhaul) might have saved the regime. He further found that Russian elites were similarly divided over the Yeltsin regime's goals and policies. Taken with the attempted coup in August 1991, the unpacted regime transition that followed it, the violent showdown between Yeltsin and parliament in 1993, as well as many indications in the disastrous Chechnya intervention of 1994-95 that military and security forces were going their own ways, a classification of the Russian elite during the first half of the 1990's as fundamentally divided and as awaiting the instauration of an authoritarian regime was plausible, even if we, writing in 1995, opted cautiously for a view of the elite as fragmented and of the regime as an unconsolidated democracy. The similar picture emerges from the elite analyses summarised by Gill (1997; 1998). He concludes that the instability in the Russian elite reflects deep fragmentation between different "camps" and regional alliances, which involve the new business leaders. However, there are also signs of post-1993 elite consolidation, though taking a form short-term interest-pacts, rather than more robust elite consensus.

We think that events in Russia during the past three years have born out our somewhat optimistic assessment. First, it is now clearly impossible to discern just two or three well-articulated elite camps locked in mortal combat, as is the case in a divided elite. There is, rather, a phletora of elites: numerous business and parastatal groups that compete against each other (as in the "bankers' war" during 1997), a congeries of squabbling party elites, relatively autonomous but internally divided military and security leaderships, several trade union federations, powerful provincial governors and associations of the regions, a relatively efficient and autonomous central bank, an influential collective farm lobby,

the bloated but powerful presidential entourage, a variety of watchdog media organizations, the resurgent Orthodox church – not to mention an unknown but apparently large number of organized criminal groups. All of these formations, and more, are competing for the assets of a "soft state" that is largely unable to enforce its laws and decrees (Remington, 1997). Second, relatively free, fair, and participatory elections were held for the Duma in December 1995 and for the presidency in June 1996. Dire forecasts that the presidential election would be cancelled, or at least thoroughly rigged, proved incorrect. To be sure, signs of increasing elite moderation and adaptation to peaceful electoral contests are offset by bitter policy disputes and much elite mistrust, fueled by Yeltsin's erratic health and behavior, as well as by economic disarray and the social tensions it generates. Conflicts between the executive and legislative branches persist, and in April 1998 they again approached the boiling point when the Duma twice rejected Yeltsin's surprise nominee for the prime ministership, Kiriyenko. Nevertheless, each electoral contest has been more peaceful and orderly than the one preceding it, and each standoff between the executive and parliament has been defused or circumvented. In short, a fragmented, rather than a divided elite seems clearly to have emerged in Russia, and the regime is just as clearly an unconsolidated democracy.

Finally, there can be little doubt about the depth of elite divisions in Belarus, Serbia, Croatia, and Albania. Belarus risks the outbreak of civil warfare over the authoritarian and repressive actions of its president, Lukashenka. The media and judiciary are muzzled, and protestors are harassed by the police. In June 1996, Lukashenka launched a court case against the opposition Popular Front, the leader of which, Zyanon Pasnyak, fled to the United States. In 1997, Lukashenka illegally changed the constitution, dissolved parliament, and created a subservient legislature. In Serbia, Milosevic follows a similarly repressive line, which is described by his opponents as "a savage hunt for people" (Markotich, 1996). The main divisions are between the mafia-like Milosevic party machine, the opposition Serbian Renewal Movement, and the ultra-nationalist Radical Party led by Vojislav Seselj, with which Milosevic formed a coalition government in early 1998. A growing rift with Montenegro, led by the reformist president Miljo Djukanovic, and spreading civil war in Kosovo are clear symptoms of a divided elite and an authoritarian regime. Like Serbia, Croatia experienced a very limited elite mobility; most of elite circulation, in fact, occured before 1989 (Sekulic and Sporer 1998). Most of the changes consisted of ethnic purge in the leadership. There is a limited degree of political pluralism, religious freedom, and some social and economic pluralism. The ascendant and generally ultra-nationalist HDZ forces led by Tudjman exert near total control of the media and the judiciary, they have altered the electoral system to ensure absolute parliamentary majorities for themselves, and if they fare badly in local elections, as they did in the Zagreb municipal elections of 1995, they refuse to relinquish power (Pusic, 1998, 116-17). As for Albania, internal turmoil, bor-

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dering on anarchy, followed the collapse of several pyramid financial schemes and struggles between elites allied with Sali Berisha and those heading the formerly communist Socialist Party. The 1996 election was judged by international observers to be deeply flawed. After a second, less fraudulent election brought the Socialists back to power in 1997, Berisha was driven from the presidency by mass protests and political clashes. As in most of the former Soviet Republics, one cannot speak seriously of a democratic regime in Albania, where elites appear irremediably divided.

Conclusions

During the transition years, from roughly 1988 to 1994, elite change involved substantial accommodation and the emergence of what approximated an ethos of "unity in diversity," as well as fairly wide, deep, gradual, and peaceful circulation, in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech part of the former Czechoslovakia. Although explicit elite accommodation was not so evident in Slovenia, where top-level former communists continued to hold leading positions, the rapid liberalization of the Slovene League of Communists, reacting to ominous developments in Serbia, plus a surrogate roundtable in the form of a constitutional commission, produced a degree of elite unity sufficient to move Slovenia onto the road to democratic consolidation. Since the transition years, politics in all four countries have been dominated increasingly by professional politicians and technocrats practicing the tradeoffs required by democratic competitions and institutions.

During the transition years in Bulgaria and Slovakia, however, none of the forgoing was as evident, and politics were dominated by holdover "parties of power" that rode roughshod over their opponents. This was also the case in Russia. In all three countries, the prevailing elite configuration was one of fragmentation (especially apparent in the numerous but disorganized opposition groups), and the dominant elite alignment consisted of former apparatchiks and technocrats. The situation was worse in Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia, where palace coups or the mere exchange of communist for nationalist banners prevented elite accommodations and any significant amounts of elite circulation, and resulted in nominally democratic, but actually quite authoritarian, regimes dominated by former apparatchiks cum populists like Illiescu and Milosevic, ultra-nationalists like Tudjman, and the large bloc of Communists in the Ukraine parliament. Since the transition years, electoral victories by opposition elites in Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the successful conduct of two elections in Russia, have indicated a firming of formal democratic processes, though evidence of a greater degree of elite unity is lacking in all three countries. Meanwhile, elite divisions in Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia remain deep. It is not possible to speak of democratic consolidation in any of these countries.

Needless to say, the patterns of elite change and resulting configurations of national elites that we have distinguished are, to a large extent, ideal-typical constructs. Events and developments have often combined elements of two or more types, so that the actual elite configurations in postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe only approximate, with varying degrees of closeness, our ideal types. Our classifications and analyses should be judged, therefore, in terms of the plausibility of our theoretical constructs and the accuracy of our historical-political applications. We are acutely aware of the complexity of the historical processes and political configurations in each country, and of the simplifications we have introduced.

Finally, we hope it is clear that this paper's explanatory aspirations have been limited. We have constructed and linked several typologies that together point toward a more comprehensive model of elite and regime change. An important feature of the model is that it does not attribute causal priority to any one dimension of elites; rather, elite change occurs simultaneously along all three dimensions: unity, differentiation, and circulation. This leaves space for historical variations in causal sequences and loops. For example, patterns of elite circulation must be seen as both causes and outcomes of the extent of unity and differentiation. The task of identifying the directions of causal chains and of weighting causal factors must be left to more historically detailed investigations. Our effort has been to provide a model and some suggestions about broad historical patterns with which such investigations can better proceed.

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