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METHODOLOGY FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY “HOW FREEDOM IS WON: FROM CIVIC RESISTANCE TO DURABLE DEMOCRACY”

Summary

This Freedom House study examines and codes all political transitions that have occurred since 1972, the beginning of what political scientists call the “Third Wave” of democratization¹. In all, 67 transitions were identified and coded based on the 33-year time series and narrative data of the *Freedom in the World* survey. The report was conducted in collaboration with the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether key characteristics of the transition are related to-- and correlate with-- the type of post-transition state that emerges. The study rigorously tests the hypothesis that regime/system changes precipitated by strong, cohesive nonviolent civic coalitions are disposed toward the emergence of durable democratic government.

Transitions are examined and countries categorized according to the following typology:

Characteristics of the Transition

The Factor of Violence

- Nonviolent
- Mostly Nonviolent
- Some Violence
- High Levels of Violence

Forces Driving the Transition

- Powerholders
- Mixed: Civic Forces and Powerholders
- Civic Forces
- Military Intervention (External)

¹ Excluded are countries with a population under one million and transitions that occurred in the last two years.

Strength of Nonviolent Civic Forces

- Strong
- Moderate
- Weak or Absent

The study examines the relationship between the type of transition a country undergoes and the outcome in terms of the nature of the regime after the transition. The freedom ratings are derived from the annual Freedom House survey *Freedom in the World*, and include the category rating (Free, Partly Free, Not Free) and the numerical rating (1-7), with 1 representing best practices in the areas of political rights and civil liberties and 7 representing the worst practices. Post-transition ratings are taken from the most recent edition of the survey, *Freedom in the World 2005*.

Some countries have undergone more than one transition in the 33-year period under review. In such instances, the study includes and evaluates only the most recent transition.

The study also excludes political transitions caused by explicit de-colonization and military coups (when such coups occurred in the absence of—and independent of—civic ferment). It excludes transitions in countries with a population under one million people. It also includes transitions—such as those in Ukraine in 2004 and Georgia in 2003-- that occurred in the last two years, as it is too early to assess the full effect of these transitions.

Definitions of Terms

A) Transition and Time Frame

Transition

For the purposes of the study, the term “Transition” is applied to the following:

- a) transition from a one-party to a multiparty system
- b) transition from authoritarian government to democratic rule
- c) transition from monarchy to any form of civilian rule
- d) transition from a dominant-party state to multiparty democracy
- e) post-conflict regime change
- f) the emergence of a new state as a result of the decomposition of a larger, usually multinational state

Transition Point

The term “Transition Point” refers to the:

- a) Time of national executive leadership changes
- b) Date of the election of a new national leadership (or the installation of a new leadership in non-electoral transitions) issuing from a constitution representing a fundamentally new political system
- c) Date of the signing of a post-conflict settlement (in the case of civil wars)

Transition Period

For the purposes of this study, the term “Transition Period” is based on the definitions of the terms “Transition” and “Transition Point”, as noted above. Under these definitions, the study determines the typology of the Transition based on the characteristics present in the two-years preceding the Transition Point.

Time Frame

The time frame covered the period 1972-2005 (the period in which Freedom House has conducted its annual survey, *Freedom in the World*).

B) Definitions of the Terms “High Level of Violence”, “Significant Violence”, Mostly Nonviolent”, and “Nonviolent”:

“High Level of Violence” is defined as the following conditions occurring in the two-years before the transition:

- a) an ongoing civil war
- b) major and widespread political violence (including violent ethnic and religious sectarian conflict) with many hundreds or more deaths
- c) a widespread military operation, involving nationwide, long-term deployment of military/security forces and resulting in hundreds or more deaths
- d) a campaign of political killings and disappearances of many hundreds or more victims

“Significant Violence” is defined as dozens or hundreds killed short of the above threshold and conditions.

“Mostly Nonviolent” is defined as the deaths of a handful of people.

“Nonviolent” is defined as a condition in which the two-year pre-transition period did not result in fatalities.

Note: The factors used in this study to assess violence exclude many of the other brutal and violent methods authoritarian regimes often use to suppress and control their populations. These include torture and physical intimidation of

political opponents and prisoners of conscience. These were excluded because there is no comprehensive, comparative source of data for these abuses. In the end, we settled on those indicators that were most likely to be widely reported and recorded across the broad array of states we examined.

c) Definitions for the “Sources of Violence”:

In cases of transitions that are preceded by “high levels of violence” or “significant violence” we examine the sources of violence. Under the rubric “Only State Violence” we code those cases where the state was the only or overwhelming source of violence. We code as “State and Opposition Violence” those settings in which there was both state violence and a) a guerrilla opposition movement; b) major acts of opposition terror; c) violence by segments of the opposition against the government and against political rivals.

d) Definitions of the terms “Civic Forces,” “Powerholders,” “Mixed: Civic/Powerholders,” and “External Intervention (Military)” Transitions:

The determination of whether a transition is caused by Civic Forces, Powerholders, Mixed: Civic/Powerholders, or External Intervention (Military) is made by answering the fundamental question: What was the driving force in the transition?

The definition recognizes that in any setting “powerholders” are always present. However, the driving force is determined as the indispensable factor without whose positive action the transition would not have occurred. This would exclude decisions by militaries not to intercede in the process.

Civic Forces Transition

The term “Civic Forces Transition” is defined as one in which the major impetus for the transition came from the grassroots civic resistance led by civic organizations, student, trade union and other groups. Characteristic of such transitions is the presence of significant and organized civil society, which engages in nonviolent forms of resistance such as mass protests, strikes, boycotts, blockades, and/or civil disobedience. Mass civic protests, strikes, and other forms of nonviolent resistance can also occur in the absence of cohesive organizations. Occasionally, some civic forces employ violence or use force in self-defense. In all such transitions, the ruling elite is overwhelmingly opposed to systemic reform and is forced to make concessions under pressure of the civic movement and/or mass public protest.

Mixed: Civic Forces/Powerholder Transition

The term “Mixed: Civic Forces/Powerholder Transition” is defined as a transition in which there is both significant reform impetus from within the ruling elite and significant pressure from civic resistance. Countries included in this category are those where reforms are to a significant degree backed by important segments of the incumbent ruling elite, which acts in part from its own will/choice and in part as a result of external pressures from civil society and civic resistance.

Powerholder Transition

The term “Powerholder Transition” is defined as one in which top-down reforms and political/system changes are launched by powerful elites (military, economic, political) in the absence of a significant pressure from civic resistance. Such transitions, for example, include both military-led processes that transfer authority back to the civilian sector, voluntary political reforms announced by autocratic leaders, and reforms by leaders acting as a result of external pressures.

External Intervention (Military) Transition

The term “ External Intervention (Military) Transition is defined as one in which the military forces of foreign countries or of international organizations are the driving forces behind regime change and the subsequent political transition.

E. Definitions of the Strength and Cohesion of Nonviolent Civic Coalitions

The study adopts the following definitions with regard to Nonviolent Civic Coalitions.

“**Strong**” refers to the presence of a powerful, cohesive leading civic umbrella coalition that adheres to nonviolent forms of civic resistance.

“**Moderate**” refers to civic forces that have considerable membership strength, but whose influence is weakened by a) a lack of unity represented by multiple groupings rather than a single broad-based coalition; b) the presence of rival civic forces that reject nonviolence and employ violent force in their struggle; c) settings in which there are some active civic groupings, but these groupings do not have significant mass membership support.

“**Weak/Absent**” refers to a weak civic infrastructure, the absence of a significant civic coalition and the absence of even modest mass support.

Methodology Process

Basic research was carried out by Freedom House staff on the basis of a methodology developed in cooperation with the Study Advisors on Methodology. Country reports and coding were done by Freedom House staff and then

reviewed by the Academic Reviewers listed below, either at a review meeting or through written comments.

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