

Foreword:

DEFECTIVE DEMOCRACIES

Since the collapse of communism and communist states from 1989-1992, the twenty-eight states that currently comprise postcommunist Europe and Eurasia have evolved to different political directions. Some regimes in this region have completed a transition to democracy; others have been arrested at some point on the path to democracy and became a sort of ‘defective democracies’; and still others have yet to break with the communist past. This issue focuses on this middle-ground category: countries where elections are regularly held, but the behavior of political actors, notably the government, but not only, is not always democratic. Albania, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, the Caucasus countries present a great variation among themselves, but have also something in common: they do not fit well the classic patterns of either democracy or authoritarianism. The regional trend, particularly noticeable over the past decade, showed hybrid regimes resisting to political change—either in the direction of becoming authentic democracies or reverting back to dictatorship.

The purpose of this issue is to explore the lessons for democratization that can be drawn from the postcommunist experience over the past seventeen years. First, what explains defective democracies? Second, what can and cannot be transferred from successful Central Europe to the rest of countries? Finally, is there still a future for democracy promotion in postcommunist Europe?