

**CAN DEMOCRACY FUNCTION ALONGSIDE WEAK CIVIL SOCIETY? THE CASE  
OF POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE**

by

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## **Abstract**

Post-Communist Europe poses a theoretical puzzle for students of democracy. There is a large body of political science literature that argues that civil society is not only good for democracy but critical for democratic deepening. While civil society is generally regarded as an essential feature of stable democracy, twenty years after the collapse of communism, post-communist civil society is relatively weak. This thesis examines the relationship between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe. Using the 2008 European Values Survey I conduct regression analysis to test whether or not there is a statistical link between relative differences in the strength of civil society and indicators of democracy at both the country and the individual level. I find no statistical link between civil society and democracy at the country level and found a relatively modest link between democratic values and membership in civil society organizations at the individual level. These results suggest that the link between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe is relatively modest. The thesis concludes by conducting a case study of Poland where I explore the relationship between civil society and democracy in a more extensive manner.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables .....	iv
List of Figures .....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Section 1: Introduction and Research Question .....	1
1.1 Background Information and Brief Literature Review .....	2
Section 2: Why Civil Society? The Link between Civil Society and Democracy .....	5
2.1 The Theoretical Link between Civil Society and Democracy.....	6
2.2 The School of Democracy Approach .....	7
2.3 The Comparative Associational Approach .....	8
2.4 The School of Sceptics.....	9
Section 3: Concepts - In Search of Civil Society and Democracy .....	11
3.1 Democracy .....	11
3.2 Civil Society .....	13
Section 4: Measures.....	17
4.1 Measuring Civil Society .....	17
4.2 Measuring Democracy .....	19
Section 5: Statistical Analysis .....	21
5.1 Country-Level Analysis .....	21
5.2 Individual-Level Analysis .....	25
5.3 Summary of Results .....	29
Section 6: Democracy and Civil Society in Poland .....	31
6.1 The Weakness of Civil Society in Contemporary Poland .....	32
6.2 The Success of Polish Post-Communist Democracy.....	33
6.3 The Shortcomings of Polish Democracy.....	34
6.4 Implications.....	37
Conclusion.....	39
References .....	41
Appendix A: Tables.....	45

## **List of Tables**

Table A1 The Determinants of Political Rights.....	45
Table A2 The Determinants of Civil Liberties .....	45
Table A3 The Determinants of Electoral Process.....	46
Table A4 The Determinants of Independent Media .....	46
Table A5 The Determinants of Corruption.....	47
Table A6 The Determinants of Regional Governance.....	47
Table A7 Voluntary Association Membership and General Trust .....	48
Table A8 Voluntary Association Membership and Political Interest .....	49
Table A9 Voluntary Association Membership and Talking Politics .....	50
Table A10 Voluntary Association Membership and Political Action .....	51

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 Voluntary Association Memberships Per Person ..... 22

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*For my Fiancée Joanna*

## **Section 1: Introduction and Research Question**

Post-Communist Europe poses a theoretical puzzle for students of democracy. While civil society is generally regarded as a critical feature of stable democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; Putnam 1993; Cohen and Arato 1992; Diamond 1994), twenty years after the collapse of communism, post-communist civil society is relatively weak. Even when compared to other newly democratizing countries, post-communist citizens are less likely to be members of civil society organizations (Howard 2003). Despite having weak civil societies, the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have proven to be stable democracies. Much of the region has joined the European Union after meeting strict accession criteria and there have been repeated elections with peaceful transitions of government. Even though civil society is weak, it would appear that democracy is here to stay in much of post-communist Europe. This phenomenon poses interesting questions for the democratization literature. Is the quality of democracy in post-communist Europe impacted by the weakness of civil society? If civil society does not correlate with democracy in post-communist Europe, is the widely held assumption that there is a positive link between democracy and civil society wrong? To this end, my principle research question is: what is the relationship between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe? In this thesis I will examine this question by comparing countries within post-communist Europe.

This paper will proceed as follows: I begin by conducting a brief literature review and establish a context for this research question. In section two, I discuss the theoretical link between civil society and democracy. In sections three and four, I operationalize my concepts and explain how they will be measured in my paper's analysis. Section five conducts a cross-region regression analysis testing the link between civil society and democracy at both the



individual and country-level. In the final section I conduct a case study of Poland in which I explore the relationship between civil society and democracy in more depth.

### **1.1 Background Information and Brief Literature Review**

This research project begins from the assertion that civil society is weak across post-communist Europe. In many ways, this project is a response to both Marc Howard's (2003) book entitled *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post Communist Europe* and more generally the debates surrounding the relationship between civil society and democracy. Howard conducted a cross-regional study and compared citizen membership in civil society organizations. He found that when compared to citizens in older democracies and citizens in post-authoritarian countries, post-communist citizens less frequently join civil society organizations. He argued that civil society was weak across post-communist Europe as a whole. To demonstrate the power of his argument he compared civil society in East Germany to that of Russia. While these two countries are generally assumed to be very different, he argued that in terms of civil society organizations, the two countries are very similar. Despite very significant structural differences between the two countries, civil society remains weak in both countries due to the experience of the communist past.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of brief speculation in the conclusion of his book, Howard's analysis stopped short of the logical follow-up question: what does the weakness of civil society mean for democracy across the region? This question is arguably the more important one for a number of reasons. First, there is a debate in the literature as to whether or not civil society is always beneficial for democracy. Scholars such as Berman (1997) and Armony (2004) have questioned

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<sup>1</sup> Other scholarship has come to similar conclusions when conducting either individual country case studies, studying multiple countries in the region or theorizing about the consequences of decades of authoritarian rule. See: (McMahon 2004; Kopstein 2003; Paczynska 2005; Bunce 1999; Letki 2003; Green 1999; Bădescu and Sum 2005; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2009).

the link between civil society and democracy. This paper will add to this debate by examining whether or not the weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe has negatively impacted democracy. Second, despite the fact that Western Governments and NGO's have spent billions of dollars funding and trying to develop civil society organizations in the region, they have had limited success (Sundstrom 2006; McMahon 2004). Knowing the ways in which civil society groups may or may not benefit democracy could allow more strategic funding to occur in the future.

Post-communist Europe is an ideal region to examine the relationship between civil society and democracy. While the western-oriented countries of Central and Eastern Europe have proven to be relative success stories in terms of their transitions to democracy, there is a great deal of diversity across post-communist Europe as a whole. This is true both in terms of comparative data on civil society and the relative robustness of the democratic regimes in place. These differences are all the more significant given that much of post-communist Europe transitioned to democracy post-1990 under similar starting conditions. The entire region experienced lengthy periods of time as non-democracies and emerged from communism with similar levels of economic development. For these reasons, studying post-communist Europe is perhaps as close as students of democracy can come to a natural experiment.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have tried to explain post-communist differences by examining numerous variables and some of the most prominent have been: the type of transition to democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; Higley and Burton 1998), the country's distance from Western Europe (Kopstein and Reilly 2000), whether or not the country quickly became an EU applicant (Grabbe 2001; Pridham 2002), how

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<sup>2</sup> Although the entire region was non-democratic for a long period of time, there were significant differences in both the degree of repression of the previous non-democratic regime and the length of time spent as non-democracies. Russia and the other former Soviet republics experienced severe repression between 1921 and 1953 whereas the Eastern Bloc countries only entered the communist sphere post-World War II and comparatively had less repressive regimes.

quickly the former authoritarian nomenklatura were removed from political power (Higley and Lengyel 2000; Fish 1998), and various ‘legacy factors’ which include whether or not the country was democratic during the inter-war years, the pre-communist empire the country was part of, the results of the first free and fair elections, and the initial institutional choice (Fish 1998; Pop-Eleches 2007; Kopstein 2003). However, one factor that has often been neglected in these studies is civil society. While civil society has often been prominently examined in individual case-studies, much less work has comparatively examined the link between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe. This is at least in part because the concept of civil society is notoriously difficult to measure which makes comparison between countries difficult. Nevertheless, given the attention that has been devoted to the concept of civil society in political science, it is necessary that scholars develop comparative measures of civil society that allow theory to be tested.

## **Section 2: Why Civil Society? The Link between Civil Society and Democracy**

Is the relationship between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe really worth examining? There has been a tremendous amount of research done on the concept of civil society, particularly in the older more established Western democracies. Will another paper on the concept of civil society really further our understanding on the subject? I believe that this project is a valid undertaking and will briefly discuss some of the reasons why. First, the vast majority of the research done on the concept has been conducted in older western democracies. The relationship has been less explored in newer democracies. To the extent that civil society has been studied in newer democracies, many of the assumptions made regarding older democracies have simply been carried over to new democracies without much consideration. For example, Howard, in his study of civil society in post-communist Europe assumed that the relationship between civil society and democracy was the same in post-communist Europe as it was in the older more established democracies. In his extensive theoretical framework he argued that civil society effects democracy by both educating citizens about democracy and giving citizens a direct ability to influence government. However, there are reasons to believe that the way civil society functions in new democracies may be different. In particular, in post-communist Europe where civil society is said to be weak, it is questionable whether or not civil society can function in the way theory would suggest.

The second reason why it is important to study the relationship between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe is that the purported benefits of civil society for democracy are tremendous. Indeed, the vast majority of research on civil society has carried forward the underlying assumption that civil society is not only good for democracy, but critical for democratic deepening. However, there have been some sceptics of civil society who have

questioned the positive correlation between civil society and democracy (see: Armony 2004; Berman 1997). If it turns out that the relationship between civil society and democracy is not as strong as it has been theorized to be, this poses not only theoretical questions for students of democracy, but practical questions for political reformers seeking to deepen democracy. Given that this paper's research question is situated in the debates surrounding civil society I will briefly review the theoretical link between democracy and civil society.

## **2.1 The Theoretical Link between Civil Society and Democracy**

One of the reasons the debate has persisted is the fact that the potential benefits civil society brings democracy cannot be easily analyzed. Diamond has conceptualized some of the perceived benefits. He has argued that civil society can not only check and limit the power of the state, but it

stimulates political participation, develops a democratic culture of tolerance and bargaining, creates additional channels for articulating and representing interests, generates cross-cutting cleavages, recruits and trains new political leaders, improves the functioning of democratic institutions, widens and enriches the flow of information to citizens, and produces supporting coalitions on behalf of economic reform. (1996, xxiii).

Although Diamond provides an extensive list of potential benefits civil society brings to democracy, his approach to civil society is not very useful analytically as he does not break down the benefits or describe how civil society can accomplish these tasks. Given the diversity of civil society groups and their various activities it is hard to say that any given civil society groups by itself could benefit democracy in all these ways (Warren 2001). Edwards (2009) argues that in order to understand how civil society interacts with democracy the transmission mechanisms that generate the relationship between civil society and democracy must be understood. In doing this, other works on civil society have generally broken down its benefits into two or three categories. Howard (2003) argues that the positive correlation between

democracy and civil society can be broken down into two approaches: the *school of democracy* approach and the *comparative associational* approach. Broadly speaking, Edwards (2009) agrees with breaking down the benefits of civil society into these two categories, but also adds a third category which he calls the *school of sceptics*. These three approaches to studying the link between civil society and democracy will be briefly discussed below.

## 2.2 The School of Democracy Approach

The first approach can broadly be defined as the *school of democracy* approach.<sup>3</sup> Although this approach goes back to Tocqueville, the modern proponent of it has been Putnam. Putnam (2000) argued that voluntary organizations “instil in their members habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness, as well as practical skills necessary to partake in public life” (338). These qualities impact the quality of democratic regimes. As Putnam demonstrated, in contemporary Italy,

the quality of governance was determined by longstanding traditions of civic engagement (or its absence). Voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs—these were the hallmarks of a successful region. In fact, historical analysis suggested that these networks of organized reciprocity and civic solidarity, far from being an epiphenomenon of socioeconomic modernization, were a precondition for it. (1995, 66)

Therefore, according to this approach, civil society acts as a ‘school of democracy’. It increases the performance of democratic institutions by creating a culture of cooperation (Putnam 1993). This culture of cooperation is facilitated by high levels of interpersonal trust, which can overcome collective action problems (see: Olson 1965) and increase government performance. In other words, according to the *school of democracy* approach, membership in civil society organizations produces better democratic citizens which in turn generate better democracies.

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<sup>3</sup> This approach is also sometimes referred to as the social capital approach

## 2.3 The Comparative Associational Approach

The second approach that positively correlates civil society and democracy is generally associated with Skocpol and is called the *comparative associational* approach. It argues that “organizations of civil society provide a direct source of popular influence on political or economic developments, thus benefiting individuals and society” (Howard 2003, 44). In other words, according to this approach civil society gives individuals in society a channel of access to government in order to influence the policy making process. There are two principal ways in which this can occur. First, civil society groups can act as watchdog groups by supervising government policy and providing citizens with insight into what the government is doing. Second, civil society groups can give citizens the ability to formulate public opinion which in turn can influence the government and overcome collective action problems. In summarizing the *comparative associational* approach, Edwards (2009) notes that, “the common theme of these studies is that the shape of associational life matters greatly in determining the influence of civil society on broader social goals, partly through effects on the health of the public sphere, and partly through effects on positive social norms” (90).

While ultimately both approaches argue that civil society is beneficial for democracy, the transmission mechanisms are different. The *school of democracy* approach focuses on individual values generated by civil society, while the *comparative associational* approach looks at broader societal outcomes that are the result of civil society. There is no theoretical reason to assume that either approach is mutually exclusive as both could affect a given country at the same time. In fact, there is a theoretical case to be made that both approaches are mutually reinforcing. If civil society is capable of forming public opinion as the *comparative association* approach asserts, it is likely facilitated through high levels of interpersonal trust and citizens who understand the

democratic process as the *school of democracy* approach asserts. Given the potential validity of both approaches, this paper will test both by examining how civil society impacts both individuals and societies in post-communist Europe.

## **2.4 The School of Sceptics**

In contrast to the two above approaches, the *school of sceptics* questions the positive link between civil society and democracy. Some scholars have noted that there are some voluntary organized groups like the KKK or Neo Nazi's – which may or may not be considered part of civil society – that seek to subvert democracy. Given that these types of groups can also be voluntary, some have questioned the virtues of voluntary associations. Sheri Berman (1997) has demonstrated that a strong civil society in Weimar Germany did nothing to prevent the collapse of democracy during the inter-war years. In fact, Berman argues that a robust civil society in Weimar Germany actually facilitated the Nazi's rise to power. These examples illustrate that there is clearly some debate as to whether or not civil society can contribute positively to democracy. Both Berman and Armony (2004) argue that civil society by itself is not beneficial for democracy as the establishment of strong political institutions that determine the flow of political power are far more important. Indeed, Diamond (1996), one of the more prominent supporters of civil society, has argued that “civil society... is not inevitably an unmitigated good for democracy. It depends in part on how civil society is organized in relation to the state” (xxiii). Armony takes this argument further and argues that any relationship between civil society and democracy is spurious at best as political institutionalization is far more important for the development of democracy.



Having discussed these three approaches to understanding how civil society interacts with democracy, the next section of this paper will lay out a method by which I can measure how civil society interacts with democracy in post-communist Europe.

## Section 3: Concepts - In Search of Civil Society and Democracy

To complicate matters, there is a lack of scholarly agreement on the two concepts relevant to my research question as civil society and democracy are perhaps the two most contested concepts in the field of political science. As a result it is a necessary to establish working definitions of both civil society and democracy that can be used throughout this paper. I will begin by establishing a working definition of democracy and will then proceed to operationalize the concept of civil society.

### 3.1 Democracy

One of the reasons there is scholarly disagreement over the concept of democracy is that there is no single set of democratic institutions that have universal applicability. As Schmitter and Karl (1991) argue, “democracy does not consist of a single unique set of institutions. There are many types of democracy, and their diverse practices produce a similarly varied set of effects” (76). Although there can be different types of democratic institutions there are key criteria that virtually every scholar would agree that a regime must adhere to if it is to be considered democratic. For example, O’Donnell (1994) has argued that the establishment of a set of institutions that become the focal point in determining the flow of political power is fundamental for any democratic regime. However, given that different institutional arrangements can accomplish this task, building an all-encompassing definition of democracy is difficult. This is why using Dahl’s (1971) eight conditions for *polyarchy* to conceptualize democracy remains popular among political scientists to this day. Dahl’s conditions represent the institutional minimum requirements for democracy. These conditions consist of:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to Vote

4. Eligibility for public office
5. Right of political leaders to compete for support
- 5a. Right of political leaders to compete for votes
6. Alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

While very few scholars would disagree that these eight conditions are necessary for democracy, some scholars consider these conditions to be too minimalistic in order to view a regime as democratic. For example, Linz and Stepan (1996) have argued that a democratic regime must consist of five mutually reinforcing arenas: civil society, political society, economic society, working state bureaucracies, and the rule of law. However, one of the major weaknesses of this definition of democracy is that it combines requirements of democracy with requirements for a functional state. For example, if having an efficient state bureaucracy is a core component of democracy does this mean that a country that has democratic elections and changes in government coupled with an inefficient state bureaucracy is not democratic? This is particularly relevant in the context of post-communist Europe where there has been a great deal of post-communist diversity. While some countries have been relatively successful in their transitions to democracy, other countries have lagged behind and have been plagued with semi-authoritarian or outright authoritarian governments since the collapse of communism. For these reasons, this paper has elected to use Dahl's conditions for *polyarchy* to conceptualize democracy for the purposes of examining the link between civil society and democracy. This is of particular importance because if there is no link between civil society and democracy using this minimalist approach to democracy, it unlikely that link between civil society and democracy would be found if a more comprehensive measure of democracy was used.

### 3.2 Civil Society

The other core concept used throughout this paper is civil society. However, perhaps even more so than the concept of democracy, measuring civil society presents problems for political scientists as there are different definitions of civil society. There is even debate over which groups should be included and which should be excluded in a definition of civil society (see: Edwards 2009, 24-30). In this section I will discuss the conceptual problems in defining civil society and propose a method for conceptualizing civil society that can be used throughout this thesis.

Civil society is often defined as a spatial area in relation to the state and the economy. In their classic work on civil society Cohen and Arato (1992) defined civil society as “as a sphere of social interaction between the economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication” (ix). This early definition of civil society implies it is composed of almost everything in society not directly related to the state or the economy. Scholarship since Cohen and Arato has generally come to regard this definition as problematic on two fronts. First, including too much in a definition of civil society makes it virtually impossible to theorize about or empirically measure its effect on democracy. White (2004) argues that “though there is now a ‘paradigm’ of thought and a terrain of discussion about the development implications of ‘civil society’, the term means different things to different people and often degenerates into a muddled political slogan” (6). White suggests that in order for the term to be useful both politically and empirically, it must become more analytically precise. To this end, Linz and Stepan (1996) more narrowly define civil society as an arena in which “self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the

state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests” (7). In this definition the emphasis is placed on self-organizing groups which implies voluntary associations of individuals. In direct contrast to Cohen and Arato, Linz and Stepan exclude the family (or the private sphere) from their definition. In regards to excluding the private sphere from definitions of civil society, Warren (2001) notes that “the reason for excluding these conceptions from civil society is that there is nothing “civil” about such attachments—they are “private,” and operate below the threshold of common collective action” (57). This is particularly important in the context of post-communist Europe where private networks have been shown to have persisted past the collapse of communism and into the present day.

Other scholars have criticized Cohen and Arato’s definition as too encompassing for including social movements as part of civil society. Howard (2003) suggests that mass-movements and mass-demonstrations should not be considered part of civil society. He remarks that while these organizations can be extremely important for democracy, they should not be seen as part of civil society as civil society “requires a degree of routinization and institutionalization that is usually absent in such forms of mobilization” (39). Excluding these groups from civil society is particularly relevant in the context of post-communist Europe where mass citizen movements have sprung up in numerous countries over the decades since the transition from authoritarian rule. Examples include Solidarity in Poland, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Otpor in Serbia, and Kmara in Georgia. While all these groups brought about important consequences for their countries, none of them will be able to persist for an extended period of time. Indeed, as Tworzecki (2008) argues, one of the major problems with post-communist civil society groups is that they “do not last long enough to become useful as

intermediaries between the state and society” (50). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper mass social movements will be excluded from my analysis and I will focus on voluntary associations that are routinized and established within their countries.

The second major reason why Cohen and Arato’s definition of civil society has been criticized is due to their use of spatial language. While numerous scholars see civil society as a sphere in relation to both economic and political society (the state), the relationship is not as clear cut as Cohen and Arato suggest. While civil society is often celebrated for its ability to limit the arbitrary power of the state, the relationship is much more complicated. Howard (2003), argues that “rather than view civil society and the state in opposition to one another, or as being “zero-sum,” one should consider how – historically, across countries, and often in unintended ways – the state can be a major actor in creating and supporting civil society... a strong, active and supportive state will encourage the development of civil society” (44). In a study of how civil society developed in the United States, Skocpol (1999) found that “the story of American voluntarism has been clearly one of symbiosis between state and society – not a story of society apart from, or instead of the state” (70). In addition to there being overlap between civil society and the state, there is also a relationship between civil society and economic society. While civil society is often touted as the arena of the average citizen free from external constraints, some scholars have argued that civil society activity may unequally advance the interests of those with socioeconomic power. Young (2000) argues that “the activities of civil society may exacerbate problems of inequality, marginalization, and inhibition of the development of capabilities” (186). Indeed, Edwards (2009) has argued that to prevent civil society from being dominated by elites, you need a comprehensive social safety net (110). A social safety net allows citizens to have the time and resources needed to participate in civic life. This is not to say that civil society is

directly tied to economic society, but simply that there is some overlap between economic society and civil society which to a degree challenges the notion of three separate spheres in society. These two criticisms of Cohen and Arato's definition of civil society imply that a more precise measurement of civil society is necessary. This is true both for empirical reasons (ease of comparative measurement) and theoretical reasons (knowing the causal mechanisms).

## **Section 4: Measures**

Having laid out a theoretical conceptualization of democracy and civil society in the preceding section, in this section I will discuss how I intend to measure these concepts.

### **4.1 Measuring Civil Society**

The previous section of this paper argued that a tighter definition of civil society is necessary. In general, researchers defining civil society in this manner have come up with two ways to measure the concept. The first method involves counting the number of existing (or formed) civil society groups in a given country in a given year. In his study of civil society in post-communist Europe, Howard (2003, 48-56) argued that the counting method was insufficient and that the best way to measure civil society comparatively was through the use of survey data. He argued that the counting method suffered from the following weaknesses: 1) the measures tended to differ from country to country making comparison difficult, 2) by only looking at organizations created in a given year, these approaches did not account for organizations that may have ceased to exist after they were created, and 3) at least in the context of post-communist Europe, numerous foreign organizations have set up new organizations with very limited roots in their societies. While these groups ‘count’ as voluntary associations, given their weak roots in society the ability of these organizations to interact with democracy is questionable. In stating the importance of using survey data to measure civil society, Howard asserted that:

representative surveys provide a more valid and reliable starting point for such research. By measuring the percentage of respondents who are members of voluntary associations within a country, surveys not only give a better approximation of the development of that country’s civil society than can come from a hollow list of total numbers or types of registered organizations, but they also facilitate extensive comparisons among the social strata of the country being studied, as well as with other countries (53).



Howard used questions from the 1999 World Values Survey which asked respondents about their memberships in various voluntary associations. Using this data Howard determined the average number of voluntary association memberships per person in a given country.

Building on the work of Howard, I use the 2008 European Values Survey (EVS) to measure the average number of civil society memberships per person in a given country. The 2008 EVS specifies 14 different types of civil society groups and one catch-all “other” category. The group categories were as follows: 1) social welfare groups 2) religious or church organizations, 3) education, art, and cultural activities, 4) trade unions, 5) political parties, 6) local community action groups on issues such as poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality, 7) third world development or human rights groups, 8) conservation and environmental groups, 9) professional associations, 10) youth organizations, 11) sports or recreation groups, 12) women’s groups, 13) peace movements, 14) voluntary health organizations, and 15) other. This data is similar to the 1999 World Values Survey that Howard examined with the notable exception that the 2008 EVS specifies six additional types of civil society groups and includes a larger set of post-communist countries.<sup>4</sup> Using this data I calculate the average number of civil society memberships per person in a given country. Using this number, I can examine the relationship between the relative strength of civil society in a given country and indicators of democracy. Doing this allows me to test the *comparative associational* approach which asserts that civil society has societal level implications. At the same time, I can use the EVS data to test the *school of democracy* approach by examining whether or not there is a relationship between individual democratic values and membership in voluntary associations.

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<sup>4</sup> Because the 2008 EVS specifies six additional types of voluntary associations it is not directly comparable to the 1999 World Values Survey. While this is problematic for scholars looking to examine the development of civil society over time, this does not pose problems for this project as I am only concerned about examining civil society and democracy in a contemporary setting.

## 4.2 Measuring Democracy

As was previously discussed, I have elected to use Dahl's eight conditions for polyarchy to conceptualize democracy. I measure these eight conditions using quantitative indicators. This task was made easy given that Freedom House's yearly *Nations in Transit* report is based largely on Dahl's conditions for *polyarchy*. Each year Freedom House examines aspects of democracy in post-communist Europe and gives each country a score of one through seven for different indicators of democracy. One represents the highest score while seven represents the lowest score. For the purposes of this thesis, I have recoded these scores so that 0 represents the low score while six the high score.<sup>5</sup> I will briefly discuss below how each measure adheres to Dahl's eight conditions for *polyarchy*.

Dahl's first two conditions for *polyarchy* are freedom to form and join organizations and freedom of expression and these conditions generally go hand in hand. As a result, Freedom House's civil liberties score is a relatively good measure of these two conditions as this index measures freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. I measure Dahl's third and fourth conditions using Freedom House's measure of political rights which measures whether or not there are: free and fair elections, those who are elected rule, there are competitive parties, that the opposition plays an important role and has actual power, and that minority groups have reasonable self-government or can participate in the government through informal consensus. While this goes somewhat beyond Dahl's third and fourth conditions it is a

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<sup>5</sup> Using Freedom House to measure democracy does have some weaknesses. For example, Giannone (2010) has argued that Freedom House's measure of democracy is politically biased and reflects the hegemony of neoliberal ideology. Giannone argues that Freedom House's definition of democracy is narrower than Dahl's conditions for polyarchy. Other scholars such as Diamond (2002) have questioned Freedom House's methodological validity. Some of these criticisms are mitigated by the fact that I am using Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* reports which involve a more extensive test of democracy. At the same time, given that I have elected to use Dahl's minimalist conditions for *polyarchy* to conceptualize democracy, these criticisms are to a degree unavoidable.

good measure of them given that freedom to form and join organizations and freedom of expression are prerequisites for everything Freedom House measures with this index.

Dahl's fifth and seventh conditions also generally go together in the context of post-communist Europe as free and fair elections are a prerequisite for political leaders openly competing for support. To measure these conditions I use Freedom House's electoral process rating which measures the openness of elections in a given country and whether or not individuals are able to form and join political parties and compete for votes openly. To measure Dahl's sixth condition I use Freedom House's measure of media independence which looks at whether or not there is freedom of the press in a given country which implies access to alternative sources of information. Dahl's eighth condition is perhaps the most expansive one as it requires institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference. There are generally two ways to look at this condition. First, is the government capable of enacting policy within a given territory? For example, if a country suffered from rampant corruption, this condition would not be adhered to. To measure this aspect of Dahl's condition for democracy I use Freedom House's corruption index. The second way to look at this condition is by asking if the government is capable of enacting policy throughout the country? Of particular importance for post-communist Europe is the issue of local regional governance. Since the collapse of communism much of the region has attempted to decentralize some functions of government to a more local level. To measure this aspect of condition eight I use Freedom House's measure of the effectiveness of regional government.

## Section 5: Statistical Analysis

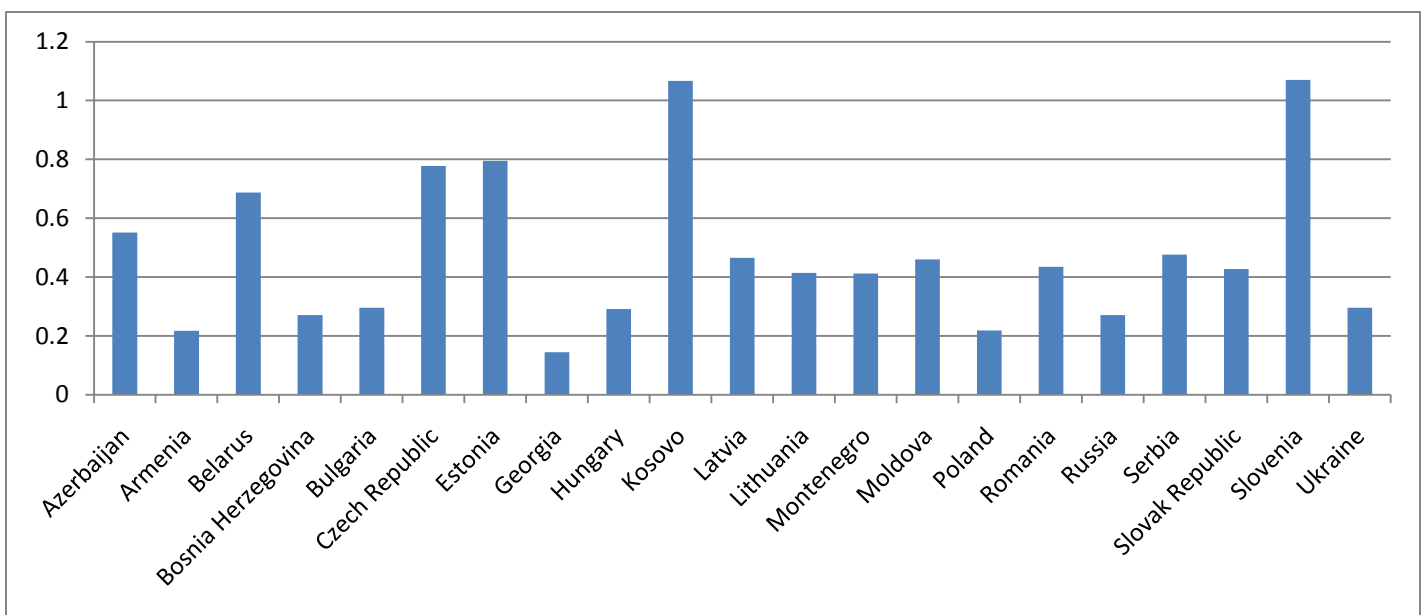
Having laid out a theoretical framework, I will now proceed to discuss my results. I have examined the link between civil society and democracy at both the individual and the country level. To briefly summarize my key findings; I was unable to find a statistically significant relationship between civil society and democracy at the country level. However, at the individual level, I was able to find a modest statistical correlation between membership in civil society groups and positive democratic values. It is worth noting that these regression results do not prove causation, they simply test whether or not there is a relationship between my independent and dependent variables.

### 5.1 Country-Level Analysis

My country-level quantitative analysis involved comparing post-communist countries and statistically testing the relationship between civil society and democracy. Post-communist Europe is interesting in this context as while there are numerous similarities between countries with regards to their shared communist past, there is also a great deal of post-communist divergence. This divergence will allow me to test the relationship between civil society and Dahl's eight conditions for polyarchy. As I previously discussed, I use the 2008 EVS to ascertain the average number of associational memberships per person in twenty one post-communist countries. The 2008 EVS included a relatively diverse group of post-communist countries which include some of the democratic front runners and recent EU members, Balkan countries of the former Yugoslavia, and members of the CIS which have weak democratic track records. These countries provide a good opportunity to test the relationship between civil society and democracy. Although post-communist civil society is generally considered to be 'weak' the differences between countries are also quite substantial as can be seen in *graph 1* below. In fact,

the results are somewhat surprising given that some of the countries which are considered to be democratic front runners scored considerably lower than countries that are seen as semi-authoritarian. For example, Poland – a country that is often viewed as one of the most successful transitions in the region – has one of the lowest numbers of voluntary association memberships per person at 0.218. In stark contrast, Kosovo – a country that was deeply affected by the Balkan wars of the 1990s and has experienced a severe stateness problem – has one of the highest average numbers of voluntary association memberships per person at 1.067. These simple observations do not fit well with the theoretical framework articulated previously that saw a link between civil society and democracy. According to the *comparative associational* approach it would be expected that the democratic front-runners would also have more voluntary association memberships per person.

**Figure 1 Voluntary Association Memberships Per Person**



To explore the relationship between civil society and democracy I use indicators of Dahl's eight conditions for polyarchy. Using simple regression analysis I examine whether or not

there is a correlation between the average number of voluntary association memberships per person and these eight conditions. While the sample size is relatively small (only 21 countries) it is sizable enough to test whether or not there is a statistically significant relationship between civil society and democracy. Given that the sceptics of civil society argued that structural factors are far more important than civil society in generating democratic performance I control for two structural explanations which are EU membership and the country's per capita GDP. The control of EU membership was chosen as it is a significant structural factor that has important implications for the countries that have joined it. Controlling for per capita GDP is also of importance as it allows me to see if a country's relative level of economic development impacts democracy. The tables mentioned below can be found in the appendix.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Conditions 1-4*

*Table 1* examines whether or not there is a correlation between the average number of voluntary association memberships per person in a given country and Freedom House's political rights score. *Table 2* tests the relationship between voluntary association memberships and Freedom House's civil liberties score. These regressions test the relationship between civil society and Dahl's first four conditions for polyarchy. Surprisingly, there is a negative correlation between increased voluntary association memberships per person and Freedom House's civil liberties and political rights scores. However, these results are not statistically significant as the only statistically significant determinant of civil liberties and political rights is EU membership. In both regression results, the dummy variable EU membership had tremendous explanatory power. In the case of political rights, being a member of the EU predicts that a country would score over 3 points higher on a scale of 0-6. In the case of civil liberties, this

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that I also conducted the regression analysis among only EU members and did not find results that were different than the ones I presented below. Therefore, I have chosen to present the results which include all 21 post-communist countries.

relationship is slightly smaller, but still significant accounting for an increased score of 2.6 points. The countries' per capita GDP does not appear to be correlated with either political rights or civil liberties as the coefficient is very small and is not statistically significant. Of these results, only membership in the EU is statistically significant and there is a less than a 1% chance that I would get these results in a sample this size if the error in the sample is distributed like the disturbance in the population and if the population parameter is zero.

#### *Conditions 5, 5a and 7*

*Table 3* presents the regression results testing the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and Freedom House's electoral processes score which I have previously argued is an indicator of Dahl's fifth and seventh conditions of polyarchy. Similar to the previous regression results, there is no statistically significant relationship between increased numbers of voluntary associations per person and the electoral process score. In fact, while the correlation between increased membership in voluntary associations per person and electoral process is positive, the relationship is very small with a very large standard deviation. This suggests that any relationship between this indicator of democracy and civil society is entirely spurious. In predicting the electoral process score, the only statistically significant variable was that of EU membership which increased the score by 3.4 on a scale of 0-6.

#### *Condition 6*

*Table 4* presents the regression results which examine the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and Freedom House's media independence score. Similar to the previous regression results, I was unable to find a statistically significant correlation between my independent variable and this indicator of media openness. The average number of voluntary association membership per person was negatively correlated with media openness.

This implies that an increase in the average number of voluntary association memberships per person would not increase media openness. However, this result is not statistically significant. Once again EU membership proved to be the only statistically significant predictor of media openness. Being a member of the EU predicts that a country's media openness score would increase by 2.449 points on a scale of 0-6.

### *Condition 8*

Finally, *Tables 5 and 6* display the relationship between the average number of voluntary association memberships per person and two indicators of Dahl's eighth condition for polyarchy, which are the level of corruption in the country and the ability of the country to decentralize. As I argued in my theoretical framework, these are requirements for making government policy depend on votes and other expressions of preference. Similar to all previous regression results, the only statistically significant relationship is that of membership in the EU. In terms of political corruption, EU membership predicts that a country would score higher by 2.143 points on a scale of 0-6. Similarly, in terms of a country's ability to implement local regional government, EU membership predicts a country would score higher by 2.445 points. These correlations were both statistically significant at the .001 level. On the other hand, my independent variable does not predict corruption or local regional governance scores. The coefficients for civil society were very small and negative in the case of regional governance and neither was statistically significant.

## **5.2 Individual-Level Analysis**

Having shown that there is no statistically significant relationship between the average number of voluntary association memberships per person and country-level indicators of Dahl's conditions for democracy, I will now discuss the relationship between being a member of civil



society organizations and democratic virtues at the individual level. As my theoretical framework noted, the *school of democracy* approach asserts that membership in voluntary associations affects individuals in ways that are positive for democracy. Using regression I test the relationship between membership in civil society groups and four democratic virtues: generalized trust, interest in politics, whether or not the individual discussed politics with friends and whether or not the individual participated in various political activities. I conducted a separate regression analysis for each virtue for each post-communist country that participated in the 2008 EVS survey. In each regression I control for the individuals highest attained level of education, the annual household income of the individual, and for the individuals age broken down into four categories. These controls were chosen as they represent potential structural explanations for the attitudes associated with democracy. Going back to Almond and Verba (1963), it is generally theorized that civicness increases with education, income, and as one gets older. Using these controls ensures that the explanatory power of membership in voluntary associations is not overstated or endogenously determined by these controls.

### *Generalized Trust*

*Table 7* presents the regression coefficients for the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and trust while controlling for the highest level of education obtained, annual household income, and the individual's age. Trust is a dummy-variable measured by a question on the EVS that asks individuals whether or not "most people can be trusted". With the exceptions of Estonia and Slovakia, there is no statistically significant relationship between membership in voluntary associations and trust. Even for the countries that displayed a statistically significant relationship, the correlation is a modest one. In the case of Estonia – the country that had the strongest relationship between membership in voluntary associations and

trust – the coefficient was only 0.045. This means that for every voluntary association an Estonian joins, they are only 5% more likely to indicate generalized trust. While this relationship is statistically significant, it is important to understand that it is modest. The other countries for which the regression was conducted demonstrated even smaller coefficients which in some cases were negative.

### *Political Interest*

*Table 8* displays the coefficients for a regression analysis examining the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and an individual's level of political interest. Political interest is measured by a question on the EVS survey that asks individuals to indicate their interest in politics on a scale of one to four. In contrast to the regression for generalized trust, in the majority of post-communist countries there is a statistically significant relationship between membership in voluntary associations and political trust. Only five countries showed no statistically significant relationship. However, while there is a relationship between participation in voluntary associations and political trust the relationship is a modest one. Hungary was the country for which the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and political interest was the strongest. All else equal, if a Hungarian is a member of an additional three voluntary associations they would be predicted to indicate a higher level of political interest by half a point on a scale of one to four. This is a relatively modest correlation given that on average post-communist citizens are not members of more than one voluntary association. In fact, in most post-communist countries, the relationship is weaker than this given that Hungary displayed the strongest coefficient.

### *Discussing Politics*

*Table 9* displays the regression coefficients for the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and the degree to which the individual regularly discusses politics. The 2008 EVS asked participants how frequently they discussed politics with their friends on a scale of one to three. As can be seen in *table 9* in thirteen post-communist countries there is a statistically significant relationship between individuals who indicated that they discussed politics with their friends and membership in voluntary associations. However, once again the relationship is a modest one. In Poland the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and discussing politics was the strongest in post-communist Europe. All else equal, an individual who is a member of three voluntary associations is only predicted to move up 0.4 points on a scale of one to three. Most other coefficients are significantly less likely than this which suggests that the relationship between discussing politics and membership in voluntary associations is particularly modest.

### *Participation in Political Activities*

Finally, *table 10* analyzes the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and participation in political activities. Of the four variables analyzed at the individual level, participation in political activities shows the strongest relationship. Only five countries did not have statistically significant relationships between membership in voluntary associations and political activity. However, even though participation in political activities presented the strongest correlation it too was a fairly modest one. Once again, the modest nature of the correlation is highlighted by looking at the strongest correlation which in the case of participation in political activities is Georgia. If everything is held constant, the regression

analysis would predict that if a Georgian was a member of three civil society groups they would be likely to indicate that they have participated in an additional 0.7 political activities. Of the four variables analyzed, this is the strongest correlation as being a member of numerous civil society groups almost predicts that the individual will have participated in an additional political activity.

### **5.3 Summary of Results**

These quantitative regression results at both the individual level and the country level call into question the relationship between civil society and democracy. At the country level, the regression found no relationship between membership in voluntary associations and various indicators of democratic performance. These results question the *comparative associational* approach to studying the relationship between civil society and democracy. Given that there is no relationship between country level outcomes and the relative strength of civil society the argument that civil society is positive for democracy at the country level appears not to be the case in post-communist Europe. This is not to say that there will never be a correlation between civil society and democracy in post-communist Europe, only that today, 20 years after the collapse of communism there appears to be no relationship. At the individual level, I found a modest relationship between membership in voluntary associations and values associated with democracy. These results show modest support for the *school of democracy* approach which argued that membership in voluntary associations generates positive democratic values. However, not all countries displayed a statistically significant relationship for all values and in the majority of the cases the relationship was relatively small. The fact that there is a relationship between civil society and democracy at the individual level but not the country-level is particularly interesting. As I will discuss in my conclusion, these results may suggest that civil

society is too weak in post-communist Europe to have societal-level affects. As very few individuals are members of multiple civil society groups, the positive affect civil society has on the individual is simply too small to impact entire countries.

## **Section 6: Democracy and Civil Society in Poland**

Up until now this thesis has focused on the relationship between civil society and democracy at a relatively abstract level. I have shown that in post-communist Europe the link between civil society and democracy does not work as theory would suggest. I found that at the country-level there is very limited, if any, relationship between civil society and democracy. At the individual level there is some correlation; however, the relationship is relatively weak. In the final section of this thesis I will use a case study to further explore this relationship (or lack thereof) in Poland. I have chosen to examine Poland for a number of reasons. It is often regarded as having undergone one of the region's most successful transitions to democracy, it was the first country to have contested elections, and it embarked quickly on the path of economic and political reform. Poland is famous for the role the mass social movement Solidarity played during the country's transition to democracy. In fact, Solidarity's role in Poland's transition to democracy was an inspiration for renewed scholarly interest in the concept civil society that became vogue in the early 1990's (Edwards 2009). Despite the prominent role Solidarity played during the transition to democracy, twenty years after Poland's first democratic elections civil society has failed to rebound in the way analysts predicted in the early 1990's. After Poland transitioned to democracy, Solidarity quickly splintered into different groups and fell apart. According to the 2008 EVS, Poland has one of the lowest rates of voluntary association memberships per person across post-communist Europe. All this seems to contradict the theory that civil society goes hand in hand with democracy. In the case of Poland, it appears that stable democracy can function alongside a relatively weak civil society.

## **6.1 The Weakness of Civil Society in Contemporary Poland**

At the outset of Poland's transition to democracy the country appeared to be in an ideal starting position for the development of civil society. A proto civil society group in the form of Solidarity challenged the communist regime's authority and ultimately played a major role in enabling democratic elections. While Solidarity played a prominent role during the transition to democracy, once democracy was established Solidarity was unable to sustain or routinize its presence in civil society and quickly lost relevance. Although Solidarity still persists today as a trade union, its role in civil society in articulating interests or educating citizens is virtually non-existent. One of the principal reasons Solidarity disintegrated so quickly after the collapse of communism was the fact that it was a societal grouping which was very loosely held together by its opposition to the communist regime. As a political party in the 1989-1991 parliament Solidarity tried to prevent the articulation of different internal interests that would compromise its claim to represent the whole of Polish society (Staniszkis 1991). By the 1991 elections the differing interests within the organization boiled over causing a split. Solidarity's leader, Lech Wałęsa, who was elected president in 1990 became increasingly distant from the official Solidarity party and started his own party which at least in part claimed the mantle of Solidarity.

Even though the collapse of Solidarity was an important political event in Poland's history, it does not explain why civil society remains weak in contemporary Poland. Even though Solidarity ultimately fell apart, the relative weakness of civil society today is counter-intuitive to what may have been expected given Poland's ideal position at the outset of its transition to democracy. This paradox is well articulated by Paczynska (2005) who argues that

The conditions of the establishment of a vibrant system and an active civil society in Poland appeared particularly promising when juxtaposed to other Central and Eastern European countries. Not only was Poland one of the more aggressive economic reformers

in the region, but the transition to democracy took place as a consequence of the pressure put on the communist regime by a mass social movement, Solidarity. Yet even here, more than a decade following the initiation of market reforms, the emergent democracy has been seen as disappointing by a majority of Poles. (584).

For Paczynska, the reasons why civil society is weak are largely economic in nature. She goes on to state that,

Most important, the society has become increasingly divided into the well-off and well-educated urban residents who, while often critical of how Polish democracy has functioned, maintain a sense of efficacy of personal actions and participate in political and civic life; and the poor and less educated dwellers of small towns and rural areas, who remain deeply alienated from the political system. (584)

While Paczynska's explanation is centered on socioeconomic factors, Bunce (1999) and Howard (2003) have focused on the legacy of communism. Whether based on socioeconomic factors or based on the legacy of communism, the key point is that as a result of various structural factors the potentially favourable starting conditions have not lead to a vibrant civil society in contemporary Poland.

## **6.2 The Success of Polish Post-Communist Democracy**

Despite civil society being relatively weak in Poland, the country has a relatively impressive democratic track record. Perhaps the most visible achievement of Poland's democracy was joining the EU in 2004. Joining the European Union (EU) involved an extensive process of negotiations and required Poland to fulfill strict accession criteria that included adopting the entire body of EU law known as the *acquis*. Passing these laws demonstrated the ability of Poland's parliament and judiciary to enforce the extensive body EU of laws.

Throughout the accession period, Poland was often flagged as one of the region's front runners in the EU's progress reports (European Commission 1997). In fact, contemporary Poland passes virtually every common measure of democratic consolidation. It has had numerous peaceful transitions in government. All of the political elite in the country are wedded to democracy and it



is safe to say that among the political elite, democracy “is the only game in town” (Prezworski 1991). If acceptance of democracy by the political elite is almost universal, the vast majority of Poles also accept democracy as the best political system (Siemienska 2006). With the possible exception of the development of a vibrant civil society Poland even adheres to more comprehensive measures of democratic consolidation such as Linz and Stepan’s (1996) five arenas of democracy. However, despite all these virtuous qualities of Poland’s democracy, numerous scholars have raised alarm concerning elements of Poland’s democratic system.

### **6.3 The Shortcomings of Polish Democracy**

While Poland has numerous democratic achievements, in order to paint a complete picture of Polish democracy it is necessary to look at some of its shortcomings. There are generally two main criticisms levelled against Polish post-communist democracy. First, as with most post-communist party systems, the Polish party system is relatively fragile and second, there is a lack of mass citizen participation in democracy.

Scholarship tends to agree that a stable party system in Poland did not develop until the 1997 or 2001 elections (Antoszewski 2000; Castle and Taras 2002). In fact it would not be unreasonable to argue that even today the development of a stable party system remains a work in progress. It is not uncommon for new parties to spring up suddenly, command a significant percentage of the popular vote, and quickly disappear. This is particularly true of centre-left parties in Poland that have had a hard time forging a coherent support base. Take for example the *Lewica i Demokraci* (LiD) coalition that was formed in Poland in 2006 as a leftist alternative to the then dominant right-oriented main parties of *Platforma Obywatelska* and *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*. During the 2007 parliamentary elections LiD garnished 13.15% of the popular vote nationally only to split up in 2008.

Is the weakness of the Polish party system related to the weakness of civil society in Poland? There are numerous potential explanations and in his analysis of the Polish party system Antoszewski (2000) discusses five factors that have contributed to the weakness of the party system. 1) There are a relatively high number of political parties, 2) support for the parties has been fragmented, 3) the main political parties have been unable to gain significant support, 4) the level of voter volatility is high, and 5) there are frequent mergers and splits that bring about regular changes in the composition of parliament. In particular, Antoszewski's second and third reasons suggest that the weakness of civil society is playing a role. These conclusions are consistent with the recent work by Roberts (2010) who argued that in Eastern Europe citizens "cannot expect politicians to present clear programs or follow through on their campaign promises" (15). Other scholarship has documented the lack of citizen trust in political parties. Tworzecki (2008) has found that 90% of Poles claim to have no trust in political parties. Szawiel (2009) found that in Poland, trust in political parties is the lowest among EU countries which includes the new Eastern European member states. Szawiel goes on to demonstrate that even though Poles have low levels of trust in all government institutions such as the parliament, the legal system and the police, Poles by far trust political parties the least.

The lack of trust in Polish political parties has potentially generated a vicious cycle of further decreasing trust in parties. Czeńnik (2009) argues that Polish citizens are generally unstable in both their long term and short term voting patterns. He found that "Polish citizens relatively often transit from voting to non-voting and vice versa, either between elections, which are held every four years, or between elections that are two weeks [apart] one after another" (119). This instability is partly a product of the low level of trust in political parties. Citizen's who are unable to formulate ties with political parties, are less likely to trust political parties and

are therefore less likely to vote in elections which in turn continues the vicious cycle by making it less likely that links with political parties will be generated. The long term implications of this vicious cycle are troubling for the future of Polish democracy as it appears there is no end to the cycle in sight.

Alongside a relatively weak party system, Polish citizens are generally less likely to participate in politics than their Western European neighbors. As Tworzecki (2008) notes, “the litany of woes is extensive: turnout rates in national parliamentary elections are low, barely exceeding 40%, and participation in political activities other than voting... is at levels many times lower than those found in most of Western Europe” (48). Like much of post-communist Europe, while Polish citizens are generally favorable of democracy they are highly skeptical of their elected politicians (Siemienska 2006). Indeed, the recently released 2008 EVS finds that less than one third of Poles have participated in any political activity outside of voting. The problem of Polish political disengagement is compounded by the fact that there are limited opportunities for Polish citizens to participate in Politics. Rose-Ackerman (2007) argues that “there are few avenues for the direct incorporation of public and interest group concerns into government policy making” (35). She notes that in Poland the policy making process is very top-down and there is limited opportunity for public access to government. Specifically with regard to civil society groups, Rose-Ackerman argues that they have limited ability to access the government and notes that “even the most active groups... depend on the energy of few committed people, have few funds, and rely on short-term grants” (38). Regulaska (2009) has also come to similar conclusions when studying local regional governance in Poland. She argues that although Poland’s reforms to build regional governance in the early 1990’s were largely successful, the central state is starting to return to the regional level and is taking back some of

the power it initially delegated. She notes that part of the reason the central state has re-emerged at the regional level is due to the weakness of civil society. The moves on the part of the central government to enter regional government have had the consequence of providing even fewer opportunities for civil society to interact with government, particularly at the local and more grass-roots level.

The fact that so few Polish citizens are participating or have the opportunity to participate in politics is troubling. Letki (2003) has demonstrated that post-communist citizens who are exposed to the political process are more likely to participate in politics. She argues that “participatory culture should be understood as a result rather than a determinant of the democratic system” (2). Given that so many Poles are choosing not or do not have the opportunity to participate in politics, they are unlikely to gain the experience that induces them to participate more in politics. Letki’s findings are consistent with the *school of democracy* approach which asserts that citizens are educated to participate in politics through civil society activity. This suggests that the weakness of civil society is at least part of the explanation why Polish citizens are disengaged from the political process.

## **6.4 Implications**

What do the strengths and weaknesses of Polish democracy mean in terms of the relationship between civil society and democracy? At least in the context of Poland, it would appear that democratic institutions can successfully function and perhaps even thrive in the context of weak civil society. Does this mean that there is no correlation between civil society and democracy? Although the research in this paper seems to show that democratic political institutions can function alongside a relatively weak civil society, this case study does point to some potential weaknesses of Polish democracy that may have long-term implications. Weak

civil society appears to be related to a lack of citizen participation in politics and a weak party system in Poland. This would suggest that while civil society is not essential for the establishment and sustainability of democracy, it does imply that civil society can be beneficial for democracy.

## Conclusion

The findings presented throughout this thesis provide reasons for scholars to question the perceived link between civil society and democracy. At the very least, this thesis should cause scholars to view the relationship between civil society and democracy as complex. Given that I found no statistical relationship between civil society and democracy at the country level, it is safe to conclude that differences in the relative strength of civil society cannot explain post-communist democratic divergence. While no serious scholar has argued that civil society can explain post-communist divergence, many of the theories of civil society would suggest such a relationship exists. The *comparative associational* approach argues that ultimately civil society would have country-level effects, however, this theory does not match the empirical reality in post-communist Europe. This thesis did find modest support for the *school of democracy* approach by demonstrating that there is a correlation between membership in voluntary associations and values associated with democracy. To a degree, these results were also replicated in my case study of Poland. In Poland, the weakness of civil society has not negatively impacted the establishment of democratic institutions or has had severe anti-democratic consequences. Nevertheless, the weakness of civil society has arguably had modest consequences for Polish democracy such as hampering the development of a robust party system and not educating citizens to participate in political life.

One possible explanation of these results is that civil society remains too weak in post-communist Europe to have societal-level effects but is strong enough to have individual level implications. The development of a vibrant civil society is not an overnight process. In his study of democracy in Italy, Putnam argued that Northern Italy's civic roots go back to the twelfth century. If it does indeed take decades or even centuries to develop robust civil societies, perhaps

it is asking too much to expect civil society to be strongly correlated with democracy only twenty years after post-communist Europe's transition. Over time, the relationship between the best democratic performers and civil society may grow and perhaps in ten years' time similar research projects will note that there is a country-level relationship between civil society and democracy.

In fact, future research on the subject could employ time series statistical methods to examine the relationship between civil society and democracy year-by-year since the regions transition began. If it does take a significant amount of time to develop strong civil societies, perhaps with time a relationship between civil society and democracy will be found. Another possible extension of this research project would be to examine other regions around the world. Latin America is a potentially interesting region given that the region never experienced totalitarian governments which, in the case of post-communist Europe, completely destroyed civil society and prevented it from growing. It is generally regarded that in authoritarian regimes a limited civil society can exist. Given this, perhaps a statistical correlation between the relative strength of civil society and democracy could be found in Latin America. Nevertheless, the core findings of this thesis would suggest that any relationship between civil society and democracy will at best be relatively modest.

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## Appendix A: Tables

**Table A1 The Determinants of Political Rights**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>(1.124)</b> (1.053)
EU Membership	<b>3.356*</b> (0.786)
GDPPC	<b>(0.081)</b> (0.381)
Constant	<b>3.076</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .001 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.731

**Table A2 The Determinants of Civil Liberties**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>(0.973)</b> (0.929)
EU Membership	<b>2.601*</b> (0.694)
GDPPC	<b>0.110</b> (0.336)
Constant	<b>3.349</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .01 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.694

**Table A3 The Determinants of Electoral Process**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>0.184</b> (1.097)
EU Membership	<b>3.442*</b> (0.819)
GDPPC	<b>(0.376)</b> (0.397)
Constant	<b>2.841</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .001 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.641

**Table A4 The Determinants of Independent Media**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>(0.476)</b> (0.950)
EU Membership	<b>2.449*</b> (0.709)
GDPPC	<b>0.140</b> (0.343)
Constant	<b>1.947</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .01 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.670

**Table A5 The Determinants of Corruption**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>0.009</b> (0.590)
EU Membership	<b>2.143*</b> (0.440)
GDPPC	<b>0.137</b> (0.213)
Constant	<b>1.225</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .001 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.809

**Table A6 The Determinants of Regional Governance**

Variable	<i>Estimate (std. err.)</i>
Civil Society	<b>(0.113)</b> (0.745)
EU Membership	<b>2.445*</b> (0.556)
GDPPC	<b>0.269</b> (0.213)
Constant	<b>1.343</b>
Notes: If not indicated otherwise, all correlations are not statistically significant	
*Statistically significant at the .001 level	
n=	21
R <sup>2</sup>	0.803

**Table A7 Voluntary Association Membership and General Trust**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>n</b>
Armenia	0.022	ns	1282
Azerbaijan	-0.012	ns	1444
Belarus	0.02	ns	1231
Bosnia Herzegovina	0.024	ns	1163
Bulgaria	0.005	ns	1282
Czech Republic	-0.021	ns	1301
Estonia	0.045	0.001	1295
Georgia	-0.052	ns	1301
Hungary	0.007	ns	1260
Kosova	0.003	ns	1417
Latvia	0.02	ns	1244
Lithuania	0.026	ns	1181
Moldova	0.007	ns	1263
Montenegro	0.007	ns	1222
Poland	0.027	ns	1069
Romania	0.017	ns	1086
Russia	0.033	ns	1237
Serbia	0.003	ns	1281
Slovak Republic	0.04	0.001	1023
Slovenia	0.015	ns	801
Ukraine	0.028	ns	1272

**Table A8 Voluntary Association Membership and Political Interest**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>n</b>
Armenia	0.101	0.001	1300
Azerbaijan	-0.005	ns	1399
Belarus	0.06	0.05	1332
Bosnia Herzegovina	0.046	ns	1188
Bulgaria	0.106	0.001	1315
Czech Republic	0.049	0.05	1336
Estonia	0.072	0.001	1310
Georgia	0.024	ns	1315
Hungary	0.193	0.001	1261
Kosova	0.006	ns	1458
Latvia	0.058	0.01	1272
Lithuania	0.099	0.001	1242
Moldova	0.064	0.001	1292
Montenegro	0.032	0.05	1248
Poland	0.074	0.05	1115
Romania	0.057	0.05	1152
Russia	0.137	0.001	1261
Serbia	0.073	0.001	1299
Slovak Republic	0.041	ns	974
Slovenia	0.052	0.01	812
Ukraine	0.101	0.01	1332



**Table A9 Voluntary Association Membership and Talking Politics**

Country	Coefficient	Significance	n
Armenia	0.087	0.001	1297
Azerbaijan	0.078	0.001	1410
Belarus	0.024	ns	1342
Bosnia Herzegovina	0.068	0.01	1181
Bulgaria	0.078	0.001	1311
Czech Republic	0.026	0.01	1330
Estonia	0.04	0.001	1310
Georgia	0.067	ns	1335
Hungary	0.096	0.001	1261
Kosova	0.003	ns	1449
Latvia	0.023	ns	1267
Lithuania	0.032	0.05	1241
Moldova	0.02	ns	1281
Montenegro	0.005	ns	1252
Poland	0.132	0.001	1113
Romania	0.036	0.01	1151
Russia	0.062	0.01	1257
Serbia	0.031	0.01	1295
Slovak Republic	0.029	ns	1068
Slovenia	0.019	ns	812
Ukraine	0.082	0.01	1328

**Table A10 Voluntary Association Membership and Political Action**

Country	Coefficient	Significance	n
Armenia	0.095	0.001	1261
Azerbaijan	0.02	ns	1415
Belarus	0.007	ns	1223
Bosnia Herzegovina	0.138	0.001	1043
Bulgaria	0.209	0.001	1046
Czech Republic	0.012	ns	1051
Estonia	0.097	0.001	1218
Georgia	0.252	0.001	958
Hungary	0.126	0.001	1244
Kosova	-0.015	ns	1190
Latvia	0.069	0.001	1030
Lithuania	0.037	ns	690
Moldova	0.076	0.001	1011
Montenegro	0.008	ns	1069
Poland	0.156	0.001	929
Romania	0.092	0.001	1051
Russia	0.107	0.001	1111
Serbia	0.222	0.001	1081
Slovak Republic	0.102	0.001	883
Slovenia	0.064	0.01	760
Ukraine	0.156	0.001	1225