



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2006

MIDDLE EAST PROGRESS AMID GLOBAL GAINS

by Arch Puddington

In a year in which the state of world freedom showed striking improvement in major countries from Ukraine to Indonesia, several places in the Arab Middle East saw modest but notable increases in political rights and civil liberties—even though none there yet approach the status of a free society. Although the region continues to suffer from a marked deficit of freedom, this progress was the most significant development cited by Freedom in the World 2006, Freedom House's annual survey of freedom worldwide. Furthermore, the positive trend in the Middle East was accompanied by gains in several majority Muslim countries in Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

In another significant development, the number of countries rated by Freedom House as Not Free declined from 49 in 2004 to 45 for the year 2005, the lowest number of Not Free societies identified by the survey in more than a decade.

Freedom showed improvement in the former Soviet Union, a region, like the Middle East, that has been resistant to the wave of democratization that brought positive change to much of the rest of the former communist world. In all, five countries that were once part of the Soviet Union recorded gains, the most significant being Ukraine's improvement from the status of Partly Free to Free. Ukraine thus becomes the first non-Baltic country of the former Soviet Union to attain a rating of Free, even while another important former Soviet republic, Uzbekistan, declined to the lowest possible score in the survey's methodology.

The survey shows that eight countries and one territory registered an increase in their freedom status. Along with Ukraine, Indonesia and Trinidad and Tobago moved to a Free status. Five countries and one territory moved from Not Free to Partly Free: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mauritania, and the Palestinian Authority.

At the same time, four countries registered negative status changes. Three countries declined from Free to Partly Free: Guyana, the Philippines, and Thailand. One country, Nepal, moved from Partly Free to Not Free.

To be sure, gains for freedom were not consistent across regions. There were approximately the same number of gains and losses in both Latin America and Asia, and slightly more gains than losses in sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet the overall picture was distinctly positive. As a result of these developments, at the end of 2005, there were 89 Free countries, in which there is broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. This represents 46 percent of the world's 192 countries and 2.969 billion people—45.97 percent of the global population. The number of Free countries did not change from Freedom in the World ratings for the year 2004. There were 58 Partly Free countries (30 percent of the total), in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties: an increase of four from the previ-

ous year. These states frequently suffer from an environment of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife, and often a setting in which a single political party enjoys dominance despite the façade of limited pluralism. Approximately 17.93 percent of the world's population, 1.158 billion persons, lived in such Partly Free societies. There were 2.331 billion people (36.10 percent of the global population) living in 45 Not Free countries (24 percent), where basic political rights are absent and fundamental civil liberties were widely and systematically denied: four fewer than the previous year.

The global picture thus suggests that 2005 was one of the most successful years for freedom since Freedom House began measuring world freedom in 1972. Not since 1992, the year following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has the percentage of Not Free countries been as low as in 2005. That year, 38 countries were assessed as Not Free: 21 percent of the global total.

This year saw an increase from 119 to 122 in the number of countries categorized as electoral democracies. This represented 64 percent of the world's countries—the highest number in the survey's 33-year history. The three additions were all from sub-Saharan Africa: Burundi, Central Africa Republic, and Liberia. While some electoral democracies had poor human rights records and weak democratic institutions, such states afforded considerable space for political opposition movements, provided opposition parties access to the media to express their viewpoints, and met the minimum standard of a fair vote count in conditions of ballot secrecy and relatively open election campaigning.

In addition to the countries that registered a status improvement in 2005, 19 countries

WHAT IS AN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY?

In determining whether a country is an electoral democracy, Freedom House examines several key factors concerning how its national leadership is chosen. To qualify as an electoral democracy, a state must have:

- A competitive multi-party political system;
- Universal adult suffrage for all citizens; *
- Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud that yields results that are unrepresentative of the public will;
- Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.

The ranking reflects a judgment about the last major national election/elections. In the case of presidential/parliamentary systems, both elections for the key offices must have been free and fair on the basis of the above criteria; in parliamentary systems, the last nationwide elections for the national legislature must have been free and fair. A country cannot be listed as an electoral democracy if it reflects the ongoing and overwhelming dominance of a single party or movement over numerous national elections. Such states are designated as dominant party states. Nor can a country be an electoral democracy if significant authority for national decisions resides in the hands of an unelected power (whether a monarch or a foreign or international authority). A country is removed from the ranks of electoral democracies if its last national election has failed to meet the criteria listed above, or if changes in law significantly erode the public's possibility for electoral choice.

* With exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offenses.

showed gains in freedom that, while significant, did not produce a change in their overall freedom designation: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Israel, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Namibia, Romania, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, six countries experienced a decline that likewise did not merit a status change: Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Gambia, Suriname, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

THE MIDDLE EAST: MODEST GAINS IN A TROUBLED POLITICAL CLIMATE

Although the countries of the Middle East lag behind other regions in adherence to democratic standards, human rights, and basic liberties, the progress registered in 2005 may have important implications for freedom's future prospects in the region and globally. Despite the fact that countries with a Not Free status continue to predominate in the Middle East, an analysis of Freedom in the World scores over the past five years—a period beginning just before the terrorist assaults of September 11, 2001—indicates a positive regional trajectory.

The Freedom in the World 2006 ratings for the Middle East represent the region's best performance in the history of the survey. Interestingly, this progress has taken place in an environment that many believe is not propitious for the spread of basic freedoms. It is one that during this period has seen a rise in terrorism, the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, war in Iraq, high poverty and unemployment rates in non-oil-producing countries, and growing animosity towards the United States. Indeed, some have argued that the rise in anti-American sentiment has tarnished the de-

mocratic idea in the minds of ordinary Arabs, although several of their countries have taken steps towards expanded freedom.

While remaining mindful of the modest nature of progress in the Arab world, policymakers, journalists, and scholars should take heed of the changes that have occurred in the context of a difficult regional and global political atmosphere. Some advancement, of course, has been propelled by geopolitical developments. This is particularly the case in Lebanon, where the departure of a Syrian occupation force paved the way for competitive elections and a wide-ranging expansion of civil liberties. Likewise, the death of Yasser Arafat—whose autocratic methods, aversion to the strengthening of major governing institutions, and tolerance for corruption stifled democratic development in the Palestinian Authority—has opened the way for a series of competitive and relatively honest elections, and an improvement in the overall civil liberties environment. A further boost followed on the heels of the withdrawal of Israel from the settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile in Egypt, parliamentary elections were held that were considered the most competitive in the country's recent history, despite some acts of repression and violence by the authorities and supporters of the Mubarak government. In this case, it is possible that pressure from the United States and the European Union on the Mubarak government to open up the political process played a role in the decision to permit more pluralism. Modest gains were also noted in Iraq where, despite brutal violence carried out by insurgents and terrorists, elections for an interim parliament and a constitutional referendum were conducted. Kuwait saw the extension of suffrage to women during the year, while in Saudi Arabia there were improvements in the media environment and academic freedom. It is worth noting that

until 2005, Saudi Arabia had earned the lowest possible Freedom in the World score—a 7 for political rights and a 7 for civil liberties—in every survey year. This year the civil liberties score improved to 6.

It is also clear that some of the gains noted in this year's survey are fragile and could be reversed in the future. Gains made in Iraq could be wiped out if the current level of violence escalates into outright civil conflict among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. Lebanon's tradition of communal strife could re-emerge, catalyzed by continuing political violence. Progress in the Palestinian Authority is in constant jeopardy from the government's inability to control violent militias like Hamas and from a possible escalation of conflict with Israel. The violence that accompanied the elections in Egypt, emanating principally from the state, is also cause for concern.

In addition to the progress in the core countries of the Middle East, the period since 9/11 has witnessed steady progress in majority Muslim countries in other regions. The most dramatic reflection of this trend has been the movement of Indonesia—the largest majority-Muslim country and one that has itself been the victim of acts of brutal terrorism—to the status of Free. Another large and geopolitically important majority-Muslim country, Turkey, has registered gains in both political rights and civil liberties during the past five years, gains that will be critical to its efforts to secure membership in the European Union. Improvements have also been registered in several African countries with Muslim majorities, including Mali, Senegal, and, in 2005, Mauritania.

This steady record of progress represents a powerful argument against the propositions that Islam is incompatible with democracy or that Islam is necessarily an impediment to

the spread of freedom. Rather, the principal obstacle to further progress in the region remains an entrenched culture of political authoritarianism that predominates in the core countries of the Arab world. Progress in the Middle East also suggests that it may in fact be possible for the United States and Europe to implement policies to promote the growth of free institutions, and that these policies should be both strengthened and refined. The nascent openings in political space may lead to the normalization of political life in a part of the world notable for its political turbulence. On the other hand, the potential for a freer civic life might open the door to illiberal forces, who exploit democratic opportunities for what are ultimately undemocratic purposes. To the degree possible, the democratic world should seek to bolster those forces that are committed to peaceful change and to the building of the foundations of a stable, democratic society.

PROGRESS AND REPRESSION: THE FORMER SOVIET UNION'S DIVERGENT PATHS

Aside from the Middle East, countries in the former Soviet Union showed the most notable improvements in freedom during 2005. While Ukraine saw its status improve to Free and Kyrgyzstan improved from Not Free to Partly Free, less significant improvement was also noted in three other former Soviet republics: Georgia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As Latvia and Lithuania had already moved into the ranks of Free societies and stable democracies, the developments in the three non-Baltic countries were the most significant.

This progress took place in a region that is widely perceived as experiencing a general decline in liberty. Indeed, in many former Soviet countries, the prospects for competitive elections, an independent media, an ac-

tive civil society, a vibrant political opposition, and the rule of law are bleak. In Uzbekistan, state violence against demonstrators, the repression of civil society, and an overall decline in human rights conditions during the past year was sufficiently pronounced to warrant a drop in the country's Freedom in the World score to the lowest possible rating: a 7 for political rights and a 7 for civil liberties. Only eight countries worldwide earned a similar status as the worst of the worst, and two, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, are in Central Asia.

The prospects for further gains in the region will likely rest on the development of the kind of mature and credible alternative political movements that emerged in Ukraine and Georgia prior to their nonviolent revolutions. During the past year, the forces behind the "color revolutions" that succeeded in these two countries consolidated reforms that have significantly improved the democratic landscape of each. At the same time, the developments in both these countries, along with events in Kyrgyzstan—where the depth and durability of reform is less clear and where corruption and a lack of government transparency remain serious concerns—have provoked authoritarian leaderships throughout the region to adopt measures that will make it more difficult for the development of a genuine civil society. In Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and, most significantly, Russia, policies were adopted this year that not only will impede the development of a democratic political opposition, but will constrict the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions of civil society that are committed to the expansion of democratic space and the strengthening of human rights.

In this, Russia's position is the most powerful and influential. One year ago, Freedom House lowered Russia's freedom status from

Partly Free to Not Free because of the Putin government's actions to marginalize the political opposition, expand political control over the media, and undermine the independence of the judiciary. The Putin leadership's anti-democratic tendencies appeared, if anything, even more pronounced in 2005. At year's end, the government had proposed legislation that would severely squeeze think tanks, human rights organizations, and other members of the NGO sector, especially those that receive funding from outside Russia. Furthermore, Putin has taken initiatives to undermine the success of neighboring democracies—such as Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states—while offering support to some of the region's most repressive regimes, most notably those in Belarus and Uzbekistan. Moreover, the Russian media, which is largely under Putin's control, has elevated anxieties that the democratic revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere have been led by forces hostile to Russia and made possible by support from the United States and other countries in order to reduce Russian influence in the region and thwart Russian geopolitical and economic ambitions.

LOOMING PROBLEMS FOR EUROPE AND THE U.S.

Although the United States and the majority of countries in Western Europe registered the highest possible ratings on the freedom index—a 1 for both political rights and civil liberties—Freedom in the World 2006 noted several looming problems in a number of these established democracies. In addition to human rights concerns raised by counter-terrorism measures taken since 9/11, the survey pointed to the widespread use of sophisticated forms of gerrymandering in the drawing of congressional district lines in the United States as a weakness in that country's electoral process that has reduced com-

petitiveness in congressional and state legislative elections. At the same time, the survey findings revealed that several European countries are facing challenges to their democratic institutions from a failure to effectively integrate non-European immigrants socially or economically, a problem whose most vivid reflection was the rioting that afflicted France during the past year. In addition to France, the survey pointed to Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Denmark as among a group of countries that face the challenge of integrating large immigrant populations of differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

NEW DATA TO BE RELEASED; NEW ATTENTION TO CORRUPTION

In order to enhance an understanding of the factors that underlie the development of freedom and democracy, Freedom House will release for the first time the scores that each country received in seven broad categories as part of the 2006 survey. Thus, in addition to the overall scores for political rights and civil liberties that have traditionally been made public, Freedom House will release scores in the following categories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government (including transparency and corruption), freedom of expression and belief, association and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights.

These category scores will be published in spring 2006. However, a preliminary assessment by the Freedom in the World analytic team revealed that a critical impediment to the further expansion of democratic freedom is the combination of pervasive corruption and a weak or largely absent rule of law. The “rule of law” and “functioning of

government” categories are generally where countries in all six regions covered by the survey have the weakest scores. Moreover, this constellation of issues—official corruption, lack of governmental transparency, a weak and often corrupt judiciary, a capricious or biased legal system, and abusive security services—is the principal obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in numerous countries where competitive elections are conducted and a reasonable array of civil liberties are enjoyed.

The impact of corruption and rule of law issues on democratic institutions is perhaps most vividly on display in Latin America. Although the region overwhelmingly consists of electoral democracies, it is also marked by government instability, poverty, and weak public faith in democratic institutions. The region’s countries score quite well on indicators evaluating the conduct of elections, freedom of expression (including press freedom, freedom of religion, and academic freedom), and right of association (including the right to demonstrate, form NGOs, and trade union rights). However, scores evaluating corruption, government accountability, and the rule of law reveal substantially weaker adherence to democratic standards. While, as stated above, all regions suffer from relatively poor performance in these areas, it is the wide discrepancy in Latin America’s category scores that is particularly significant.

Indeed, the region’s uncertain democratic future is likely the result of this comparatively weak performance in combating corruption, improving transparency, and fortifying the rule of law. By contrast, the countries of formerly communist Central Europe (a group that excludes the former Soviet Union), which are also predominately electoral democracies, are notable for the increasing stability of their political institutions, eco-

conomic growth, and public faith in democracy. A comparison of Freedom in the World category scores shows that Central and Eastern European countries substantially outperform Latin America on issues of corruption and transparency and even more so on issues relating to the rule of law. This helps explain why many of the nascent democracies of formerly communist Central Europe have achieved a level of stability and popular support that continues to elude many countries of Latin America.

COUNTRY TRENDS IN 2005

According to the survey, outright improvements in freedom status—that is, positive movement across the threshold separating Not Free from Partly Free, or Partly Free from Free—occurred in eight countries and one territory in 2005. Lebanon moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to successful parliamentary elections in May and a general improvement in the civil liberties climate following large-scale, nonviolent protests against Syrian domination and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops. The Palestinian Authority moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to an improved civil liberties environment—including greater freedoms of expression and assembly—that followed the death of Yasser Arafat and facilitated the success of the relatively competitive and honest elections, along with the enhanced freedom of movement that followed Israel's abandonment of settlements in the Gaza Strip. Indonesia moved from Partly Free to Free as a result of peaceful and mostly free elections for newly empowered regional leaders, an orderly transition to a newly elected president that further consolidated the democratic political process, and the emergence of a peace settlement between the government and the Free Aceh movement. Despite continuing security problems in

various regions of the country, Afghanistan saw its status move from Not Free to Partly Free because of a strengthening of civil society and a modest improvement in the rule of law following the holding of relatively successful parliamentary elections. The Central African Republic moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to successful elections and an improvement in freedoms of expression and assembly. Mauritania improved from Not Free to Partly Free due to an enhancement of the civil liberties environment following the overthrow of President Taya. Trinidad and Tobago moved from Partly Free to Free because of improvements in judicial independence and economic policies that enhanced equality of opportunity. Ukraine improved from Partly Free to Free due to overall changes in the political process and the civil liberties environment following the Orange Revolution of December 2004. Kyrgyzstan moved from Not Free to Partly Free due to relatively free presidential elections and modest improvements in freedoms of expression and assembly.

Only four countries registered an outright decline in status. Here the most significant development was the downgrading of the Philippines from Free to Partly Free, a decision based on credible allegations of massive electoral fraud, corruption, and the government's intimidation of elements in the political opposition. Nepal declined from Partly Free to Not Free due to a palace coup in which the king dissolved parliament and declared a state of emergency. Thailand declined from Free to Partly Free because of a progressive weakening of opposition political parties and a lack of political competitiveness. Guyana declined from Free to Partly Free because of the growing influence of the illegal narcotics trade on the country's political system.

In addition to the eight countries that registered changes in status from Partly Free to

Free and Not Free to Partly Free, 19 countries showed gains that, while significant, did not result in a status change. Brazil showed modest gains due to diligence in pursuing corruption investigations by the legislature and the press. Burkina Faso saw progress on civil liberties score due to increased press freedom and improvements in the human rights environment. Burundi's political rights rating improved due to fair and competitive elections at both the local and national levels and a successful rotation of power. Colombia registered progress in both political rights and civil liberties due to a step up in the government's fight against corruption, an enhanced security environment, and a decline in violent attacks against journalists. Georgia's civil liberties score improved because of a continued consolidation of freedom of expression and individual rights. Ghana registered improvements in political rights due to fair and competitive presidential and parliamentary elections and a general maturing of its electoral institutions. Guinea-Bissau saw its ratings for political rights improve because of elections deemed fair and competitive. Iraq registered small gains in political rights due to modestly successful national elections and the referendum on the new constitution. Israel's score for civil liberties improved due to an increase in civic activism and a reduction in terrorist attacks. Latvia's civil liberties score increased because of an increase in activity and visibility of the NGO and trade union sectors. Liberia's political rights score improved because of fair and competitive elections for the presidency and legislature. Lithuania's civil liberties score improved because of an increase in judicial independence and the implementation of judicial reforms. Namibia's civil liberties rating improved due to improvements in the rule of law. Romania experienced an increase in political rights due to a presidential run-off election that resulted in a victory for the op-

position candidate and that was widely viewed and fair and competitive. St. Kitts and Nevis's civil liberties score improved due to a consolidation of the rule of law. St. Lucia's civil liberties score increased due to an enhanced rule of law. Saudi Arabia registered a slight improvement in civil liberties because of the impact of regional private media and government reforms that enhanced academic freedom. Taiwan's political rights score improved due to a strengthening of the electoral process. Vietnam earned a modest increase in civil liberties due to improvements in cultural and religious expression.

Six countries experienced declines that did not merit a status change. Congo (Brazzaville) saw a decline in civil liberties due to a steady erosion of the rule of law, including the failure of the courts to sanction high-ranking military officials for a massacre of refugees. Gabon's political rights rating declined because of flawed, uncompetitive elections and continuing military influence over the electoral process. The Gambia's political rights score declined because of the failure to allow the opportunity for a rotation of power in the lead-up to elections in 2006. Suriname experienced a decline in political rights because of increased corruption and discrimination against the Amerindian population. Uzbekistan's civil liberties rating declined due to a violent government response to demonstrations in the town of Andijon that left hundreds dead, as well as greater overall government repression. Venezuela's political rights rating declined because of an increase in corruption and voter intimidation.

WORST OF THE WORST

There are 45 states that are rated as Not Free, in which a broad range of freedoms are systematically denied. Among the Not Free countries, 8 states have been given the sur-

vey's lowest rating of 7 for political rights and 7 for civil liberties. The eight worst-rated countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. Cuba and North Korea are one-party Marxist-Leninist regimes. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are Central Asian countries ruled by dictators with roots in the Soviet period. Libya and Syria are Arab countries under the sway of secular dictatorships, while Sudan is under a leadership that has elements both of radical Islamism and of the traditional military junta. The remaining worst rated state is Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship.

There are two worst-rated territories: Tibet (under Chinese jurisdiction) and Chechnya, where an indigenous Islamic population is engaged in a brutal guerrilla war for independence from Russia.

REGIONAL PATTERNS

Democracy and freedom are the dominant trends in Western and East-Central Europe, in the Americas, and increasingly in the Asia-Pacific region. In the former Soviet Union, the picture remains quite mixed, while in Africa, Free societies and electoral democracies remain a minority despite recent progress. As noted above, the Middle East has experienced gains for freedom, though the region as a whole overwhelmingly still consists of countries in the Partly Free and Not Free categories.

Of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 11 are Free (23 percent), 23 are Partly Free (48 percent), and 14 are Not Free (29 percent). Of the African countries, 23 (48 percent) are electoral democracies.

In Asia, 16 of the region's 39 countries are Free (41 percent), 12 are Partly Free (31 percent), and 11 are Not Free (28 percent).

A solid majority of the region's countries, 23, are in the ranks of electoral democracies.

In East-Central Europe and the former USSR, there is now evidence of a deepening chasm. In Central Europe and parts of Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, democracy and freedom prevail; in the countries of the former Soviet Union, however, progress has been decidedly mixed. Overall, 17 of the 27 post-communist countries of East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union are electoral democracies. In addition, 13 of the region's states are Free (48 percent), 7 are Partly Free (26 percent), and 7 are Not Free (26 percent). Meanwhile, of the 12 non-Baltic former Soviet republics, 1 country is free (8 percent), 4 are Partly Free (33 percent), and 7 are Not Free (58 percent).

Western Europe consists largely of Free countries and democracies, with 24 states Free, 1 country (Turkey) Partly Free, and all 25 ranking as electoral democracies.

Among the 35 countries in the Americas, 33 are electoral democracies. In addition, 24 states are rated as Free (69 percent), 9 are Partly Free (26 percent), and 2—Cuba and Haiti—are Not Free (6 percent).

In the 18 countries of the Middle East and North Africa, only one, Israel, ranks as Free; Israel is also the only electoral democracy in the region. There are 6 Partly Free states (33 percent), and 11 countries that are Not Free (61 percent).

CONCLUSION: CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM DESPITE DIFFICULT TIMES

Under any circumstances, the state of global freedom at the end of 2005 would be cause for cautious optimism. The record is even more impressive given the conflicts and cri-

ses that dominated the news in 2005. These include war, civil conflict, ethnic cleansing, religious fanaticism, famine and epidemics, momentous natural disasters, terrorism, mass immigration, and the upheavals caused by economic globalization.

Since the events of 9/11, the United States has made the promotion of democracy—in the Middle East primarily but in other regions as well—a greater priority among the broad mix of foreign policy goals. As is often the case when governments set forth far-reaching and visionary objectives, the actual implementation has often fallen short of the leadership's bold words. Nevertheless, the administration of George W. Bush, building on policies initiated by his predecessors, has pushed forward an agenda in which the advancement of freedom plays a tangible role. Likewise, the European Union has incorporated democracy standards and human rights in its core mission. By insisting that new member states adhere to these standards, the EU has played an immense role in the process of democratic consolidation in the for-

mer communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Commonwealth has also helped further the cause of freedom by insisting that member countries adhere to democratic standards and by sanctioning countries like Zimbabwe that violate democratic norms and commit human rights offenses.

While the precise impact of democracy promotion policies is often difficult to measure, it is by now clear that the efforts by the established democracies to expand freedom's reach are paying dividends. Democracy promotion has always had its critics, and the critics' objections, as might be expected, have been amplified during a controversial war. But if the gains for freedom revealed in this survey tell us anything, it is that the policies of the United States, Europe, and other free societies are achieving some crucial goals. These efforts should be strengthened, not diminished.

Aili Piano and Mark Rosenberg assisted in the preparation of this report.

THE SURVEY OF FREEDOM

Freedom in the World is an institutional effort by Freedom House to monitor the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 192 nations and in 14 major related and disputed territories. These year-end reviews of freedom began in the 1950s, when they were called the *Balance Sheet of Freedom*. In 1972, Freedom House launched a new, more comprehensive annual assessment called *Freedom in the World*, which assigned countries political rights and civil liberties ratings and categorized them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. This program has been issued in a more developed context as a yearbook since 1978. Entitled *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, the 2006 yearbook, which includes lengthy analyses of each country and territory, will be available from Freedom House in the summer of 2006.

The survey assesses a country's freedom by examining its record in two areas: political rights and civil liberties. A country grants its citizens political rights when it permits them to form political parties that represent a significant range of voter choice and whose leaders can openly compete for and be elected to positions of power in government. A country upholds its citizens' civil liberties when it respects and protects their religious, ethnic, economic, linguistic, and other rights, including gender and family rights, personal freedoms, and freedoms of the press, belief, and association. The survey rates each country on a seven-point scale for both political rights and civil liberties (1 representing the most free and 7 the least free) and then divides the world into three broad categories: "Free" (countries whose ratings average 1.0-2.5); "Partly Free" (countries whose ratings average 3.0-5.0); and "Not Free" (countries whose ratings average 5.5-7.0).

The ratings are not only assessments of the conduct of governments, but are intended to reflect the reality of daily life. Thus, a country with a benign government facing violent forces (for example, terrorist movements or insurgencies) hostile to an open society will be graded on the basis of the on-the-ground conditions that determine whether the population is able to exercise its freedoms. The survey enables scholars and policy makers both to assess the direction of global change annually and to examine trends in freedom over time and on a comparative basis across regions with different political and economic systems.

The survey project is a yearlong effort produced by our regional experts, consultants, and human rights specialists. The survey derives its information from a wide range of sources. Most valued of these are the many human rights activists, journalists, editors, and political figures around the world who keep us informed of the human rights situation in their countries.

The survey team is grateful for the advice and input of our academic advisors, consisting of Jon Alterman, Center for Strategic and International Studies; David Becker, Dartmouth College; Charles Dunbar, Boston University; John Entelis, Fordham University; John Harbeson, The City College of New York; Thomas Lansner, Columbia University; Peter Lewis, American University; Rajan Menon, Lehigh University; Jon Micgiel, Columbia University; Andrew Moravcsik, Princeton University; Alexander Motyl, Rutgers University; Andrew Nathan, Columbia University; Teresita Schaffer, Center for Strategic and International Studies; Michael Shifter, Inter-American Dialogue; Arturo Valenzuela, Georgetown University; and Bridget Welsh, Johns Hopkins University.

Throughout the year, Freedom House personnel regularly conduct fact-finding missions to gain more in-depth knowledge of the political transformations affecting our world. During these weeks-to-month-long investigations, we make every effort to meet a cross-section of political parties and associations, human rights monitors, religious figures, representative of the private sector and trade union movement, academics, and journalists.

This year's survey team includes Aili Piano and Arch Puddington, managing editors of the survey, Martin Edwin Andersen, Gordon Bardos, Vincent Boudreau, Dan Erikson, Ashley Esarey, Gary Gambill, Thomas Gold, Michael Goldfarb, Lane Greene, Barrie Hofmann, Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Brian Katulis, Edward McMahon, Sarah Repucci, Rick Rockwell, Mark Rosenberg, Hani Sabra, Cindy Shiner, Vitali Silitski, Sanja Tatic, Christopher Walker, and Anny Wong.