

EXPLORING INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRACY

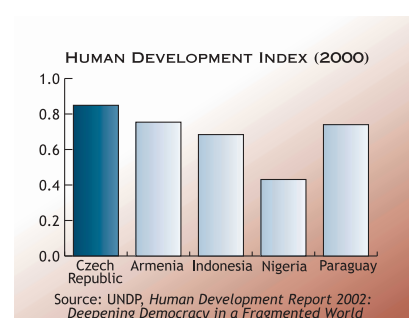
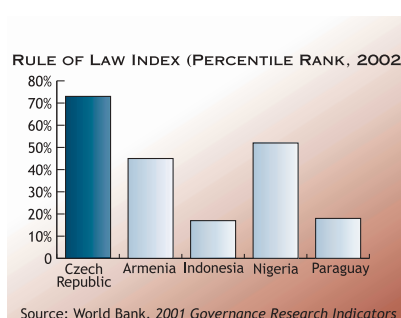
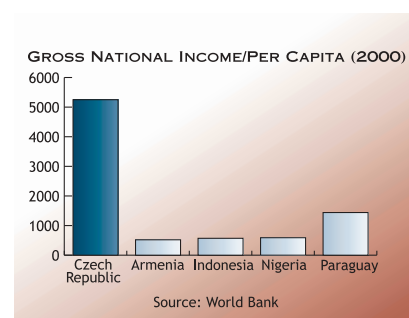
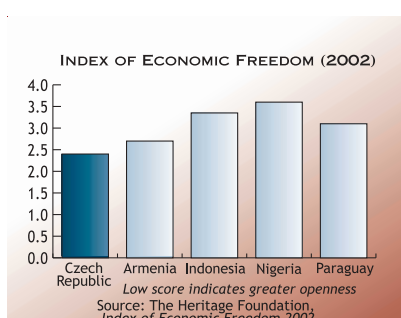
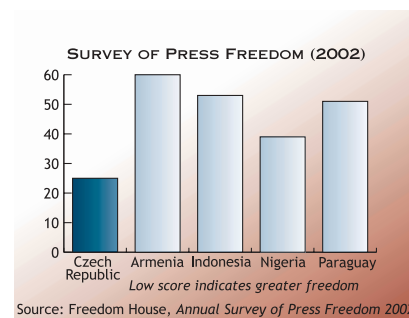
DEMOCRACIES IN TRANSITION

by Rakesh Sharma

Scholars have long recognized that the transition toward democracy is hardly a linear, unambiguous process. In response to the wave of democratization that swept the globe over the past twenty years, a variety of social, political and economic factors have been identified as measures of progress toward democracy. As we enter a prolonged phase of gradually consolidating the gains of democracy around the world, democracy practitioners need to develop more nuanced analytical tools that will enable them to diagnose more accurately the particular socio-political syndromes of “countries in transition” and to target their “democracy tool-box” more effectively.

In this section IFES takes a look at five “countries in transition” in different regions of the world: Czech Republic, Armenia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Paraguay. On one commonly-used democracy scale, the Freedom House Annual Global Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, the Czech Republic scores near the top as a “Free” country—representing a case of successful transition to democracy. The remaining four countries score somewhere in the middle of the Freedom House index. They are classified together as “Partly Free,” yet they display dramatic differences in their political and social dynamics. To illustrate, we have brought together data from additional indicators that broadly cover three key areas of socio-political development: economic freedom, good governance and social investment. These countries will clearly not mature politically at the same rate, nor will they pass through identical stages in a linear progression toward democracy.

Rakesh Sharma is Applied Research Officer at IFES.



January: Pope John Paul II visits Cuba.



April: Landmark peace settlement, the Good Friday Accord, reached in Northern Ireland.



May: Europeans agree on single currency, the euro.

May: Indonesian dictator Suharto steps down after 32 years in power.



June: Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha dies.

IFES establishes its first office in Asia, in the Philippines.



IFES helps Philippine Election Commission to acquire proper technology for vote counting and trains personnel in preparation for June 1998 elections.

IFES organizes official US election observation team in Albania. More than 200 US election officials are trained and mobilized in a matter of weeks.



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