

countries. While technical difficulties were evident in most elections, for the most part they were not sufficient to undermine the degree to which the results reflected the will of the electorate. The tradition of the military coup continued to be in evidence in Africa in 1995 (and early 1996), but regional and international intolerance for military rule resulted, in most instances, in an early pledge for a quick return to civilian rule. The most visible exception was Nigeria where the attitude of the ruling military hardened in 1995.

Developments in Europe reflected the east-west divisions which formerly marked the region, with a new divide perhaps emerging further east between Central Asia and other countries of the former Soviet bloc. While Central Europe saw continued progress in their democratic maturity, the Caucasus took important (but shaky) first steps towards democratic rule. The picture was less bright in Central Asia where Soviet-style electoral landslides produced "public approval" for a slower pace to the implementation of democratic reforms. Even the more established democracies of Western Europe saw important reforms aimed at broadening their democratic processes.

The main multilateral organizations continued to pursue the democracy promotion aspects of their mandates. While most continued to mount electoral observation and other support programs, the Commonwealth, through the Millbrook Declaration and the OSCE in Bosnia, undertook initiatives in 1995 to deepen their involvement in the support for democratic development internationally.

The outlook for 1996 is promising, but challenging, with 18 key elections scheduled for Africa alone. In Bosnia and the West Bank/Gaza democratic longevity will depend, in large measure on the strength of the peace processes in both regions, of which elections are such an integral part. The process of consolidating democracy in the Americas, especially Haiti will also warrant close international scrutiny. Nigeria will continue to be the focus of intense international concern, particularly as the Commonwealth moves to implement the Millbrook action plan on democratization.