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Latvia and Lithuania in January 1991, which was instigated by Soviet troops stationed in the Baltics. The example of the Baltics would encourage other Soviet peoples to demand their independence as well, making the Baltic republics crucial actors in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Ultimately, Gorbachev refused to endorse major military operations to squash the independence movements. By September 1991, Moscow recognized their independence, which Baltic leaders asserted was a rightful restoration of their status as sovereign states.

### INDEPENDENT BALTIC STATES

Since gaining independence, the Baltic states rank as the most successful of the former Soviet states in terms of consolidating democratic governments and creating vibrant, market-oriented economies. After protracted negotiations, Russian troops pulled out of the region in 1994. By the mid-1990s, all three states had well-functioning parliamentary democracies, with tensions over citizenship and language status for Russian-speaking minorities resolved, due largely to international mediation and pressure. After a period of economic hardship in the early 1990s, governments in the Baltic states implemented market-based economic reforms and reoriented their economies westward. By the late 1990s, their economies began to rebound, with Estonia, thanks to its ties to Finland, becoming a high-tech leader for all the postcommunist world. In 2004, all three joined the EU and NATO, which they considered important both for economic reasons and for protection against any political or military threat from Russia.

**See also** *Europe, Democracy in; European Politics and Society; Glasnost; Soviet Union, Former.*

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## Banana Republic

In his 1904 novel, *Cabbages and Kings*, the author O. Henry first referred to a “banana republic,” and the resulting image of a corrupt, fruit-dependent country came from his own impressions of Honduras at the turn of the twentieth century. Over time, however, the term has transcended its specific historical, temporal, and geographical origins. It now typically refers to a small and poor country (generally, but not exclusively, Central American or Caribbean) that is deemed backward, weak, and unequal, and is ruled by a corrupt elite closely tied to foreign interests. Those foreign investors, in

turn, show a proclivity to appeal to their home government (especially the United States) to intervene if their investments seem at risk.

The reference to bananas reflected (and in many cases, continues to reflect) the dominance of a limited number of agricultural exports, particularly the fruit industry, and the political influence of foreign investors. The most prominent example was the United Fruit Company, which wielded tremendous power over a number of governments in the first half of the twentieth century in countries like Guatemala and Honduras. All national leaders, elected or not, were faced with a company that was the largest single land owner, employer, and tax payer, which had built its own infrastructure, encouraged the crushing of internal dissent and bought off or intimidated government officials at all levels, thus severely limiting any efforts at social, political, or economic change.

**See also** *Corruption and Other Political Pathologies; Corruption, Political; Elites, Political; Trade Diplomacy.*

..... GREGORY WEEKS

## Bandwagoning

In electoral politics, *bandwagoning* refers to supporting a candidacy or political position because it is already popular. This *bandwagon effect* can occur because the popularity of a preference is seen as evidence for its rightness. Individuals who “join the bandwagon” often free-ride by sharing the benefits of the victory without having shared the costs to accomplish it.

In foreign policy, bandwagoning is a strategy in which states seek to increase their security or prosperity by aligning with a strong regional or global power, whether through official alliance agreements or more informally through increased economic and political ties. A term popularized by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 *Theory of International Politics*, bandwagoning is often presented as the opposite of *balancing*, which can be defined as a strategy of increasing national security by siding against the dominant actors in the system.

Bandwagoning (in the foreign policy sense) may be undertaken for a number of reasons, ranging from self-preservation in a crisis to an opportunistic desire to free-ride on the success of others. Historically, bandwagoning is more likely to be undertaken by smaller and less powerful actors, which explains why theories of great and middle powers focus on balancing behavior. Bandwagoning is also more likely to occur near the end of major wars, when the winning alliance has nearly secured its victory. Traditionally, fear of bandwagoning and attempts to thwart it have influenced foreign policy far more than the actual practice of bandwagoning. Superpower relations during the cold war, for instance, were shaped in part by a fear of falling geostrategic dominoes at their periphery.

**See also** *Alliances; Balance of Power.*

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