After the Collapse of Communism

Comparative Lessons of Transition

Edited by
MICHAEL McFAUL
Stanford University

KATHRYN STONER-WEISS
Stanford University

McFaul piece.

2

The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World

Michael McFaul

The transition from communism in Europe and the former Soviet Union has only sometimes led to democracy. Since the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, twenty-eight mostly new states have abandoned communism. But only eight – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, and just last year, Croatia – have entered the ranks of liberal democracies. The remaining majority of new postcommunist states are various shades of dictatorships or unconsolidated "transitional" regimes.

Why? Why did some states abandon communism for democracy, while others for authoritarian rule? Why are some states stuck in between?

The answers to these questions should be easy for political science. Simultaneous regime change in two dozen countries – all beginning from roughly similar places, but moving along very different trajectories over ten years – provides the perfect parameters to test extant theories and develop new hypotheses about regime change. Clear variation on the dependent variable with a finite set of independent variables offered up a unique laboratory to isolate causal patterns. A decade since the collapse of European communism, however, theory development regarding regime change has advanced only slightly. At the beginning of the decade, Adam Przeworski pointed to the inability to predict communism's collapse as a "dismal failure of political science." Yet, the paucity of plausible explanations for regime patterns in the postcommunist world ten years later stands as an even greater indictment.

This essay sketches an argument to explain regime changes in the postcommunist world. In endorsing actor-centric approaches that have dominated analyses of the third wave of democratization, this argument

nonetheless challenges some of the central hypotheses of the earlier literature concerning the relationship between the mode of transition and the resulting regime type. This chapter offers an alternative set of causal paths from *ancien regime* to new regime, which can account for both democracy and dictatorship as outcomes. The transitions from communist rule to new regime types are so different from democratic transitions in the 1970s and 1980s that they should not be grouped under the same rubric of the third wave.[1] Instead, decommunization triggered a fourth wave of regime change to democracy *and* dictatorship.

One of the central claims of this earlier literature was that the mode of transition influenced the resulting regime type. It was hypothesized that democracy emerged as a result of transitional moments, in which the balance of power between supporters and opponents of the authoritarian regime was relatively equal and also uncertain. Because neither side had the capacity to achieve their first preferences through the use of force, they negotiated power-sharing arrangements with their opponents, which represented second-best outcomes for both sides. Often called "pacts," these power-sharing arrangements negotiated during transition then were institutionalized into a set of checks and balances in the new democracy. Significantly, ideas, norms, and beliefs played little or no role in these transition theories, leading to the famous phrase that a country could become a "democracy without democrats."

This pattern is not easy to discern in the postcommunist world. Most postcommunist transitions did not produce democracy, and even the successful democratic transitions did not follow the pacted path. Instead, situations of *unequal* distributions of power produced the quickest and most stable transitions from communist rule. In countries with asymmetrical balances of power, the regime to emerge depended almost entirely on the ideological orientation of the most powerful. In countries where democrats enjoyed a decisive power advantage, democracy emerged. Institutions of power sharing or checks and balances did not result from

[1] Chronologically, the postcommunist transitions occurred within the time span typically referred to as the third wave of democratization. The wave metaphor, however, connotes some relationship between cases, which is only weakly present. Transitions in democracy in Southern Europe and Latin America did not cause, trigger, or inspire communist regime change. The temporal proximity of these cases was more accidental than causal. As explored in detail in this essay, however, the fact that Southern Europe and Latin American transitions occurred first had significant path-dependent consequences for how we conceptualized and explained the postcommunist transitions. On waves, see Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

compromises between the *ancien regime* and democratic challengers. Rather, they emerged only if the hegemonic democrats chose to implement them. Conversely, in countries in which dictators maintained a decisive power advantage, dictatorship emerged. In between these two extremes were countries in which the distribution of power between the old regime and its challengers was relatively equal. Rather than producing stalemate, compromise, and pacted transitions to democracy, such situations in the postcommunist world resulted in protracted confrontation. The regimes that emerged from these modes of transition are not the most successful democracies, but rather unconsolidated, unstable, partial democracies and autocracies.

To explore this alternative approach for explaining postcommunist regime change, this essay proceeds as follows. Section one outlines the basic tenets of the transitions literature that emerged from the analysis of Latin America and Southern Europe cases. Section two contrasts this earlier cooperative theory of regime emergence with a noncooperative model of regime change. Section three illustrates the analytical power of the noncooperative model for explaining regime change in the postcommunist world, highlighting the strong causal relationship between mode of transition and resulting regime type, but underscoring the weak resemblance this relationship bears to causal patterns identified in the earlier transitions literature. Section four examines cases that do not fit the theory outlined in section two. To account for these anomalous cases, two more factors must be added to the equation: the presence or absence of territorial disputes and proximity to the West. Section five concludes.

COOPERATIVE APPROACHES TO REGIME CHANGE

Inert, invisible structures do not make democracies or dictatorships; people do. Structural factors such as economic development, cultural influences, and historical institutional arrangements influence the formation of actors' preferences and power, but ultimately these forces have causal significance only if translated into human action. Individuals and the decisions they make are especially important for explaining divergent outcomes that result from similar structural contexts.

The importance of agency has figured prominently in theories of democratization for the past two decades. Dankwart Rustow's seminal article in 1970 first refocused the lens of inquiry on actors, and then the four-volume study edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead in 1986, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*,

resurrected elites as the central drivers of regime change. This school posits that division within the ruling class begins the process of political liberalization, whereas strategic interaction between elites from state and society establishes the mode of transition and the kind of regime that then emerges. Elite groups are constructed as real actors with autonomous causal power to influence the course of regime change.[2]

Since these intellectual tracks were laid down, they have framed in large measure the thinking about regime change, pushing alternative theories, metaphors, and levels of analyses to the periphery of inquiry.[3] A single theory of transition has not been universally recognized by all working in this field, nor has an actor-centric theory of democratization been formalized.[4] Nonetheless, several hypotheses have gained wide acceptance.[5] Strikingly,

[2] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); John Higley and Michael Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns, *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 1 (February 1989) pp. 17–32; Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (October 1990) no. 1, pp. 1–22; Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economics Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds. *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); and Josep Colomer, *Strategic Transitions: Game Theory and Democratization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). On an elite-centered approach to democratic breakdown, see Youssef Cohen, *Radical, Reformers, and Reactionaries: The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Collapse of Democracy in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and Juan Linz, *Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium* in the series by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[3] In the postcommunist world, the phenomenon in question might be more appropriately labeled something else besides democratization, such as revolution or decolonization. Illuminating adaptations of these alternative metaphors include Vladimir Mau and Irina Starodubrovskaya, *The Challenge of Revolution: Contemporary Russia in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[4] Przeworski's *Democracy and the Market* comes the closest. See also Colomer, *Strategic Transitions*; and Cohen, *Radical, Reformers, and Reactionaries*.

[5] Because proponents of strategic theories of democratization do not universally recognize a single theory, it is difficult to argue with "transitology." In the last decade, many scholars have added useful theoretical caveats and important definitional adjectives to the earlier transitology canons. Space limitations do not permit discussion of all these innovations and nuances. Instead, the focus here is on the set of the core principles that define this literature as a paradigm in the study of regime change today. As Ruth Collier summarizes, "The 'transitions literature,' as this current work has come to be known, has as its best representative the founding essay by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), which established a framework that is implicitly or explicitly followed in most other contributions. Without

many of the postulates are very similar to institutional arguments being generated by rational choice theorists working in the positivist tradition.

In their quest to refute structural approaches, "transitologists" recognize very few prerequisites for democracy. Only one, as identified by Rustow, is salient: elites must have a common understanding of the borders of the state to proceed with crafting new rules for governing this state.[6] Beyond Rustow's one prerequisite, one of the principle theoretical contributions from the democratization literature on the third-wave concerns the causal relationship assigned to the mode of transition in determining successful and unsuccessful transitions to democracy. More ambitiously, some have even traced a causal relationship between the mode of transition and the type of democracy.[7] The theory is based on temporal path dependence; choices made at certain critical junctures influence the course of regime formation. The model – especially as developed by O'Donnell and Schmitter, Karl, Huntington, and Przeworski – identifies four choice-making sets of actors in the transition drama: soft-liners and hard-liners within the ruling elite of the *ancien regime*, and moderates and radicals among the challengers to the *ancien regime*.[8] Many modes of transition can result from the strategic interaction of these actors. Democracy by imposition – a path in which the moderates from the *ancien regime*

denying differences and subtleties, one could say that certain emphases within O'Donnell and Schmitter's essay have been selected and elaborated by other authors so that it is possible to aggregate various contributions and in broad strokes map out a basic characterization and set of claims in this literature as a whole." Ruth Collier, *Paths towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and Southern America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5.

6 Dankwart Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (April 1970) pp. 337–363. Others, including Karl, have highlighted a second precondition, the decline of a land-based aristocracy, an idea first discussed by Barrington Moore in *Social Origins of Dictatorships and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Because few communist countries had land-based aristocracies, this variable is not discussed in this essay.

7 Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Southern and Eastern Europe, Southern and Central America," *International Social Science Journal* 128 (May 1991) pp. 269–284; Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "Democratization around the Globe: Opportunities and Risks," in Michael Klare and Daniel Thomas, *World Security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); and Gerardo Munck and Carol Sklalnik Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 29 (April 1997) pp. 342–362.

8 Huntington has different and more numerous categories – "standpatters, liberal reformers, and democratic reformers in the governing coalition, and democratic moderates and revolutionary extremists in the opposition." But there are close parallels to the O'Donnell and Schmitter labels. See Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 121.

dominate the terms of transition – has been most prevalent, but pacted transitions have received the most theoretical attention.[9] A democratic outcome is most likely when soft-liners and moderates choose to enter into pacts that navigate the transition from dictatorship to democracy.[10] If the transition is not pacted, it is more likely to fail.[11] In the earlier transitions literature, revolutionary transitions were considered most likely to produce nondemocratic outcomes. As defined by O'Donnell and Schmitter, democracy-enhancing pacts are interim arrangements between a "select set of actors" that seek to "(1) limit the agenda of policy choice, (2) share proportionately in the distribution of benefits, and (3) restrict the participation of outsiders in decision-making."[12] All three components are critical for success.

Agreements that limit the agenda reduce uncertainty about actors' ultimate intentions. A pact "lessens the fears of moderates that they will be overwhelmed by a triumphant, radical, majority which will implement drastic changes."[13] If property rights, the territorial integrity of the state, or international alliances are threatened by a revolutionary forces from below, then the hard-liners in the *ancien regime* will roll back democratic gains.[14] During the wave of democratization in Latin America and Southern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, the simultaneous renegotiation of political and economic institutions rarely occurred, because "during the transition, the property rights of the bourgeoisie are inviolable."[15] The pursuit of economic and political reform was considered dangerous

9 I am grateful to Terry Karl for this observation. On "transition from above" or "transformation" as the most common mode of transition to democracy, see Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," 9; and Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 124.

10 O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*; Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America"; Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market*; and Colomer, *Strategic Transitions*. A pact is not a necessary condition for a successful democratic transition, but enhances the probability of success.

11 In facilitating the transition to democracy, pacts also can lock into place specific nondemocratic practices, which in turn may over time impede the consolidation of liberal democracy. See Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Chapter Five.

12 O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 41.

13 Daniel Friedman, "Bringing Society Back into Democratic Transition Theory after 1989: Pact Making and Regime Collapse," *East European Politics and Societies* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1993), 484.

14 O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 27.

15 Ibid., 69. See also, Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 170; and Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 63.

and destabilizing.[16] More generally, negotiations over contested issues in which the stakes are indivisible or the outcomes irreversible are more likely to generate irreconcilable preferences among actors than issues with divisible stakes and reversible outcomes.[17] Consequently, keeping such issues off the table was considered an important component of a successful transition.

Second, sharing proportionally in the distribution of benefits resulting from regime change provides both sides with positive-sum outcomes. Tradeoffs that may even include institutionalizing nondemocratic practices are critical to making pacts stick. As Daniel Friedman has written, "Negotiated transitions increase democratic stability by encouraging important interests to compromise on such basic issues as to whether new democratic institutions should be parliamentary or presidential, when to schedule the first free elections, and whether to grant clemency to human rights abusers or attempt to 'even the score.' Without compromises on such fundamental issues, powerful interest groups can have less incentive to cooperate with the new democratic regime."[18] In pacted transitions, no side achieves its optimal outcome, but all sides make relative gains over the nondemocratic past. From this perspective, "negotiations, compromises, and agreements" are central to making democracy.[19]

Finally, these theorists have placed special emphasis on limiting the role of radicals and the masses in the negotiation process. Pacted transitions are elite affairs; mobilized masses spoil the party. Jacobins must be sidelined to have success.[20] If they are part of the equation, then democracy is less likely to result.[21] As Karl posited in 1990, "To date, *no* stable

[16] Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, "Economic Adjustment and the Prospects for Democracy," in Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, eds., *The Politics of Economic Adjustment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[17] See Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Civil War Settlement: Modeling the Bases of Compromise," unpublished manuscript (August 1999).

[18] Friedman "Bringing Society Back into Democratic Transition Theory after 1989," 483.

[19] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 164.

[20] Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[21] Important challenges to this argument include Elizabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: 2000); Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, *Rebellious Civil Society: Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989–1993* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Nancy Bermeo, "Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during the Democratic Transitions," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (April 1997) pp. 305–322; Alfred Stepan, *Democratizing Brazil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Collier (fn. 5).

political democracy has resulted from regimes transitions in which mass actors have gained control even momentarily over traditional ruling classes."[22] In successful transitions from dictatorship to democracy in capitalist countries, trade unions, the left, and radicals more generally must not play a major role in the transition process, and only a limited role in the new political system that eventually emerges.[23]

Limiting the agenda of change, dividing proportionally the benefits, and marginalizing radicals and the masses are considered key components of a successful pact. But what causes pacts between moderate elites to materialize in the first place? Although not always explicitly stated, analysts of the third wave answer this question by examining the balance of power between the challenged and challengers. When the distribution of power is relatively equal, negotiated transitions are most likely. In summing up the results of their multivolume study, O'Donnell and Schmitter asserted that "political democracy is produced by stalemate and dissensus rather than by prior unity and consensus."[24] Philip Roeder has made the same claim in his analysis of postcommunist transitions: "The more heterogenous in objectives and the more evenly balanced in relative leverage are the participants in the bargaining process of constitutional design, the more likely is the outcome to be a democratic constitution."[25] When both sides realize that they cannot prevail unilaterally, they settle for solutions that provide partial victory (and partial defeat) for both sides. Democratization requires a stalemate – "a prolonged and inconclusive struggle."[26]

Przeworski has extended this argument to posit that *uncertain* balances of power are most likely to produce to the most democratic arrangements. "If everyone is behind the Rawlsian veil, that is, if they know little about

[22] Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization," 8. See also Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (Summer 1984), 6.

[23] Myron Weiner, "Empirical Democratic Theory," in Myron Weiner and Ergun Ozbudin, eds., *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 26; and J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Labor Movements in Transitions to Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 21 (July 1989) pp. 445–472. Even a study devoted to the role of the workers in democratization underscores the dangers of a too-mobilized society. See Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democratic Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 271.

[24] O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 2), 72. See also Huntington (fn. 1), 167.

[25] Philip Roeder, "Transitions from Communism: State-Centered Approaches," in Harry Eckstein Frederic Fleron, Erik Hoffman, and William Reisinger, eds., *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* (Lantham: Roman and Littlefield, 1998), 209.

[26] Rustow (fn. 6), 352.

their political strength under the eventual democratic institutions, all opt for a maximin solution: institutions that introduce checks and balances and maximize the political influence of minorities, or, equivalently, make policy highly insensitive to fluctuations in public opinion."[27] Uncertainty enhances the probability of compromise, and relatively equal distributions of power create uncertainty.

This approach emphasizes the strategic process itself as the primary casual variable producing successful transitions.[28] As Roeder argues, "democracy emerges not because it is the object of the politicians' collective ambition but because it is a practical compromise among politicians blocked from achieving their particular objectives."[29] The dynamics of the strategic situation, not the actors and their preferences, produce or fail to produce democracy. As Levine excellently summarized, "democracies emerge out of mutual fear among opponents rather than as the deliberate outcome of concerted commitments to make democratic political arrangements work."[30] Moderate, evolutionary processes are considered good for democratic emergence; radical revolutionary processes are considered bad. Cooperative bargains produce democratic institutions; noncooperative processes do not.[31] "Democracy cannot be dictated; it emerges from bargaining."[32]

This set of arguments has a close affinity with positivist accounts of institutionalism that have emerged from cooperative game theory.[33] The

[27] Przeworski (fn. 2, 1991), 87.
[28] Roeder (fn. 25), 207.
[29] Ibid., 208. See also Philip Roeder, "Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10 (January 1994), 62; and Colomer (fn. 2).
[30] Daniel Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics* 40 (April 1988), 379.
[31] See Hardin's review and then rejection of this approach in Russell Hardin, *Liberalism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[32] Przeworski (fn. 2, 1991), 90.
[33] Hilton Root, "Tying the King's Hands: Credible Commitments and the Royal Fiscal Policy during the Old Regime," *Rationality and Society* 1, no. 2 (October 1989) pp. 240–258; Kenneth Shepsle, "Discretion, Institutions, and the Problem of Government Commitment," in Pierre Bourdeu and James Coleman, eds., *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (Boulder : Westview Press, 1991); Douglass North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (December 1989) pp. 803–832; Kenneth Shepsle, "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach," *Journal of Politics* 1, no. 2 (1989) pp. 131–149; and James Alt and Kenneth Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Barry Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *American Political Science Review* 91 (June 1997) pp. 245–263.

crafting of new democratic institutions is framed as a positive-sum game, in which both sides in the negotiation may not obtain their most preferred outcome, but settle for second-best outcomes that nonetheless represent an improvement over the status quo for both sides. Uncertainty during the crafting of rules plays a positive role in producing efficient or liberal institutions.[34] These approaches to institutional emergence also emphasize the importance of shared benefits that result from new institutional arrangements. Above all else, institutions emerge from a bargain in which everyone gains.

A NONCOOPERATIVE MODEL OF TRANSITION

Actor-centric, cooperative approaches to democratization offer a useful starting point for explaining postcommunist regimes' transformations. Actors did cause regime changes in this part of the world, and because many of these actors claimed to be building democracy, the transitions to democracy literature offered a useful starting point and appropriate language for analyzing postcommunist transitions. Moreover, many of the democratic challengers in this region studied previous transitions (especially Spain) as models for their own countries. Some third-wave hypotheses do indeed apply to the postcommunist world. Rustow's emphasis on territorial clarity as a prerequisite for democratic transition is still salient. Although consensus about borders was not necessary to begin political liberalization processes in the communist world and some transitions have continued along a democratic trajectory without firmly settling borders issues, the resolution of major sovereignty contests was a precondition for new regime emergence for most of the region. Three multiethnic states – the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia – had to collapse before democratic or autocratic regimes could consolidate.

Further application of the third-wave hypotheses, however, begins to distort rather than illuminate this fourth wave of regime change. Most importantly, the preponderance of nondemocracies raises real questions about why postcommunist transitions should be subsumed within the third wave of democratization at all. In addition, the causal pathways of the third-wave transitions do not produce the "right" outcomes in the fourth-wave transitions from communist rule. In the former communist world, imposed transitions from above did not produce partial democracy,

[34] Geoffrey Brennan and James Buchanan, *The Reason of Rules* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 30.

but dictatorship. Revolutionary transitions – the mode of transition thought to be least likely to facilitate democratic outcomes by third-wave theorists – actually produce the most stable and consolidated democracies in the postcommunist world. Balanced, stalemated transitions – those most likely to facilitate the emergence of democracy-enhancing pacts in Latin American and Southern Europe – have instead led to unstable regimes of the democratic and autocratic variety in the postcommunist world. In all three of these causal paths, negotiation, crafting, and compromise did not feature prominently. Even in the successful transitions to democracy in the postcommunist world, the three components of successful pacts played only a minor role in explaining regime change.

First, regarding limits on the agenda of change, earlier third-wave analysts celebrated the agenda-limiting function of pacts because these scholars presupposed that economic and political reform could not be undertaken simultaneously. The danger of multiple agendas of change frequently trumpeted in the earlier literature on democratization has not seen a clear empirical confirmation in the postcommunist world. Because communism bundled the political and the economic and the crumbling of communism occurred so rapidly, sequencing of political and economic change proved impossible. The reorganization of economic institutions did not necessarily undermine democratic transitions as many predicted at the beginning of the decade.[35] On the contrary, those countries that moved the fastest on economic transformation also have achieved the greatest success in consolidating democratic institutions.[36]

Second, the pacts literature assumed that the benefits of transition had to be divided and shared. In the postcommunist world, however, many of the contentious issues were not easily divisible. Empires are destroyed or retained; there are no successful models of third ways.[37] Likewise, there are few stable or efficient midpoints between a command economy and a

[35] The most theoretically rigorous prediction of failure was Przeworski (fn. 2, 1991).

[36] Joel Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Post-Communist Transitions," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1998) pp. 203–234; Jean-Jacques Dethier, Hafez Ghanem, and Edda Zoli, "Does Democracy Facilitate the Economic Transition? An Empirical Study of Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," unpublished manuscript, World Bank (June 1999); *Transition Report 1999: Ten Years of Transition* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1999), Chapter Five; and Anders Aslund, *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[37] See the cases discussed in Stephen Krasner, ed., *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

market economy.[38] In negotiations over borders or economy type in this region, the distribution of benefits has been highly skewed in favor of one side or the other. Even battles over political institutions resulted in skewed distributional benefits to the winners and did not produce compromise, benefit-sharing arrangements.

Third, the actors in these dramas were different from those scripted for leading roles in earlier models of democratization. Similar to earlier non-communist transitions, divisions existed between soft-liners and hard-liners in the *ancien regime*, but the splits played a much less significant role.[39] Instead, the degree of cooperation and mobilization within society was more salient, whereas the divides between moderates and radicals were less apparent.[40] The mass actors so damaging to democratization in third-wave analyses were instrumental to fourth-wave successes.

Fourth, the single most important condition for a successful pact – a stalemated balance of power – did not figure prominently as a causal force for democracy in the postcommunist world. As examined in the next section, pacts produced from stalemate played a role in only a small subset of successful democratic transitions. The mode of transition that most frequently produced democracy was an imbalance of power in favor of the democratic challengers to the *ancien regime*. Revolutionary movements from below – not elites from above – toppled communist regimes and created new democratic institutions. As feared by earlier writers on democratization, these mobilized masses often employed confrontational and uncooperative tactics. But such tactics promoted rather than impeded democratic change. When events such as elections or street demonstrations proved that the balance of power was in the opposition's favor, they imposed their will on antidemocratic elites. Communist rulers from the

[38] To be sure, market economies have incorporated aspects of the command economy such as state ownership and state control of prices over time, but without undermining the basic tenets of capitalism. Likewise, some command economies such as China have introduced market reforms gradually, but the process has undermined the command economy. The dispute over slavery is another instance in which a compromise solution benefiting both sides – those that advocated slavery and those that did not – was difficult to find.

[39] Only one reformist from the old regime, Mikhail Gorbachev, plays a central role in *all* the postcommunist transitions, as his reforms in the Soviet Union produce the opportunity for liberalization or new dictatorship in every country. There is no similar person or parallel dynamic in cases of democratization in Latin American and Southern Europe.

[40] A similar argument is made in Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 198–200.

old regime acquiesced to the new democratic rules because they had no power to resist.

Not all transitions from communism, however, resulted in democracy. A second mode of transition is when the distribution of power favors the rulers of the *ancien regime*, a configuration that results in autocracy. As is the case with the first path just described, the stronger side dictated the rules of the game to the weaker side. Only in this situation the stronger embraced autocratic ideas and preserved or reconstituted authoritarian institutions. Like the first path, and in stark contrast to situations in which the distribution of power was relatively equal, these imposed transitions from above reached a new equilibrium point rather quickly. In many cases, these regimes are just as consolidated as the liberal democracies. The logic of this kind of regime transition has no parallel in the third-wave literature, as regime change from dictatorship to dictatorship (albeit different kinds of dictatorships) was not part of the democratization research agenda.

In a third mode of regime change, when the distribution of power was more equally divided, the range of outcomes in the postcommunist world has been wider than liberal democracy. These strategic situations have produced pacted transitions leading to partial democracy, or protracted and oftentimes violent confrontations leading to either partial democracy, or partial dictatorship. A pacted transition resulting from a relatively equal distribution of power between the old and the new can be identified possibly in at least one postcommunist transition, Moldova, and perhaps in Mongolia as well. But other countries with similar power distributions such as Russia or Tajikistan did not produce pacts or liberal democracies. Instead, opposing forces in these countries fought to impose their will until one side won. The result of this "mode of transition" was partial, unstable democracy at best, civil war at worst.

That conflict can result from equal distributions of power should not be surprising. Analysts of the third wave focused on successful cases of democratization, deliberately ignoring unsuccessful cases. If all countries undergoing stalemated transitions are brought into the analysis, however, then the causal influence of this mode of transition becomes less clear. For instance, Angola has experienced stalemate between competing powers for decades, but no pacted transition to democracy has resulted. Equal distributions can compel both sides to negotiate, but they can also tempt both sides into believing that they can prevail over their opponents. As Geoffrey Blaney concluded in his analysis of international armed conflict, "War usually begins when two nations disagree on their relative strength and wars usually cease when the fighting nationals agree on their relative

strength."[41] The same could be said about confrontation and reconciliation between competing forces within a domestic polity, especially during periods of revolutionary change when domestic anarchy begins to approximate the anarchy in the international system. In earlier analyses of democratization, uncertainty generated by relatively balanced forces facilitated the emergence of democratic institutions. In this reformulation, this same uncertainty produced the opposite effect – conflict. Conversely, the two other transition pathways had more certain distributions of power and therefore much less confrontation.

In all three modes of transition just described, noncooperative strategic situations usually produced institutions that favored one side or the other. The process is the opposite of "democracy without democrats." "Negotiation and compromise among political elites were [*not*] at the heart of the democratization processes."[42] In imposed transitions, one side took advantage of its more powerful position to craft institutions that benefited itself more than they benefit the weak. If the powerful adhere to democratic principles, then they imposed institutions that widely distribute the benefits of the new polity. Such decisions about institutional design were undertaken initially not out of obligation, compromise, or even interest, but out of a normative commitment to democracy. If the powerful believed in democratic principles, then they *imposed* democratic institutions. If the powerful believed in autocratic principles, then they imposed autocratic institutions.

The logic of these arguments bears a strong resemblance to realist or distributional accounts of institutional design.[43] The crafting of new institutions – democratic or otherwise – is framed as a zero-sum game, in which one side in the contest obtains its most preferred outcome, and the other side must settle for second-best and third-best outcomes. These institutions are not efficient; they do not enhance the welfare of all. But they are perhaps stable.[44] In transitions to democracies, the losers usually obtain second-best outcomes, but they too make relative gains over

[41] Geoffrey Blaney, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 246.

[42] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 165. The word "not" is inserted by this author.

[43] George Tsebelis, *Nested Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Stephen Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power: Life on the Pareto Frontier," *World Politics* 43 (1991) no.3, pp. 336–366; Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Lloyd Gruber, *Ruling the World: Power Politics and the Rise of Supranational Institutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[44] Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the status quo ante.[45] In transitions to dictatorship, the losers' gains are much less substantial. The transition is not a bargain, but a confrontation with winners and losers. Although the social contract metaphor is often employed to describe constitutional emergence and stability, institutional arrangements that maximize everyone's utility are rare in the political world.[46]

The process of creating democracy (and dictatorship) outlined here is antithetical to the analytic and spiritual thrust of the literature on third-wave democratization. For democratic philosophers and political theorists, negotiation, bargaining, moderation, stalemate, and compromise are the stuff of successful democratic systems. Confrontation, violence, dictation, and hegemony are the enemies of liberal democracy. This approach for explaining regime change in the postcommunist world (and maybe elsewhere) also deliberately leaves out many components of earlier theories of democratization. For instance, the design of institutions is assigned little explanatory power regarding either regime emergence or regime stability. If powerful democrats draft the rules, it does not matter what electoral system is adopted, or whether a parliamentary or presidential system is erected.[47] Different kinds of democracy can work equally effectively and endure equally long. What matters most is that the powerful are committed to the democratic project.

CAUSAL PATHS OF POSTCOMMUNIST REGIME CHANGE

This alternative, noncooperative model for regime change offers a more comprehensive explanation of all postcommunist regime changes than the framework outlined by earlier analysts of third-wave transitions. By placing power and ideas at the center of analysis, and relaxing the primacy placed on negotiation and cooperation for a successful democratic transition, this model yields a different set of causal paths from communism to democracy and dictatorship. A distribution of power clearly in favor

[45] For elaboration of this argument, see Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[46] Terry Moe, "The Politics of Structural Choice: Toward a Theory of Public Bureaucracy," in Oliver Williamson, ed., *Organization Theory: From Chester Barnard to the Present and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[47] For evidence undermining the importance of these designs choices for consolidation worldwide, see Thorsten Beck, George Clarke, Alberto Groff, Philip Keefer, and Patrick Walsh, "New tolls and new tests in comparative political economy: The Database of Political Institutions," World Bank, unpublished manuscript, 2000.

TABLE 1 *Typology of Postcommunist Regimes*

	Dictatorships	Partial Democracies[49]	Democracies
Balance of Power for Challengers		Armenia Bosnia-Herzegovina Georgia	Croatia Czech Republic Estonia Hungary Latvia Lithuania Poland Slovakia Slovenia
Balance of Power Even or Uncertain	Tajikistan	Moldova Russia Ukraine Albania Azerbaijan Macedonia	Bulgaria Mongolia
Balance of Power for *Ancien Regime*	Belarus Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	Yugoslavia/Serbia	Romania

of democrats at the moment of transition has helped to produce liberal democracy ten years later. A distribution of power clearly in favor of the *ancien regime* dictators has yielded new forms of authoritarian rule a decade later. Both of these causal paths have resulted in stable regimes. In contrast, a balanced distribution of power has resulted in a range of outcomes well beyond the consolidated democracy outcome predicted by the earlier actor-centric literature on democratization. In contrast to the first two causal paths, countries that experienced this mode of transition are still relatively unstable ten years later.[48]

The construction of Table 1 required the use of crude estimates for the balance of power and the degree of democracy. Independent measures of

[48] Such regimes may be the norm rather than the exception in the world today. See Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[49] This label is deployed loosely to include all of those countries somewhere in between democracy and dictatorship. If dissected further, one might find electoral democracies, pseudodemocracies, partial democracies, quasi-autocracies, and competitive autocracies in this one residual category. Specifying the differences is an important intellectual task,

both variables are the best immunization from tautology. Quantitative measures taken roughly at the same time also help comparison. Consequently, the balance of power tripartite typology axis is based on the legislative elections that determined the composition of a state's/republic's legislature for the immediate transition period, roughly spanning 1989–92.[50] In most cases, these were the first multiparty legislative elections with at least some participation from the noncommunist opposition.[51] Within the Soviet Union, most of these elections took place in spring 1990. If the election produced a clear communist victory for the old ruling Communist Party or its direct successor – with victory defined as winning more than 60 percent of the vote – then the case is classified as a balance of power in favor of the *ancien regime*.[52] If the election produced a clear victory for noncommunist forces – with victory defined as winning more than 60 percent of the vote – then the case is classified as a balance of power in favor of the challengers. Cases in which neither communist nor anticommunist forces won a clear majority are classified as countries with equal balances of power. The tripartite typology on democracy is adapted from Freedom House measures.[53]

but is both beyond the scope and not central to the arguments of this essay. On the distinctions, see Diamond, ibid.; Jeffrey Herbst, "Political Liberalization in Africa after Ten Years," *Comparative Politics* 33 (2001) 331–358; Steven Levistky and Lucan Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes in Peru and Ukraine in Comparative Perspective," unpublished manuscript (2001); and David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (April 1997).

[50] Steven Fish uses a similar method (with slightly different results), in his "The Determinants of Economic Reform in the Post-Communist World," *East European Politics and Society* 12 (1998). Polling data would add a nice complement to these election results, but unfortunately such data were not collected at the time.

[51] In certain cases, it is not so clear that the most temporally proximate election should be used, due to a speedy overhaul of the results within the next year or so. Albania and Azerbaijan are coded as more balanced cases and not clear victories from the *ancien regime* due to the tremendous change in the balance of power immediately following first votes. In Albania, the parliament elected in 1991 broke into discord. New general elections were held in March 1992 in which the democratic challengers (the PDS) won a two-thirds majority. In Azerbaijan, the Supreme Soviet elected in 1990 voted to disband after independence (in May 1992) in favor of a new National Assembly, which was then split equally between Communists and the Popular Front opposition group. Georgia is coded as a case in which the anticommunist challengers enjoyed overwhelming support due to the landslide victory of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in May 1991.

[52] CPSU party membership is not always a sufficient guide for coding "communist." In many cases, Popular Front leaders still were members of the CPSU. In these cases, these people are coded as anticommunist.

[53] Adrian Karanycky, ed., *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 2000–2001* (New York: Freedom House and Transaction Books,

Imposition from Below: Hegemonic Democrats

The first transition path outlined above is most apparent in East Central Europe and the Baltic States. In some of these transitions, negotiations played an important role in starting liberalization processes and impeding potential authoritarian rollbacks. However, the dominant dynamic was confrontation, not compromise, between the old elite and new societal challengers. In most of these cases, societal mobilization was critical. It produced transitional leaders – Walesa, Havel, Landsbergis – who were not previously members of the elite and who only became important actors because of their widespread societal support. When the balance of power became clear, these new political actors, acting with the support of society, imposed their will on the weaker elites from the *ancien regime*, be they soft-liners or hard-liners. Although the process itself was not always democratic, the ideological commitment to liberal principles held by these transition victors pushed regime change toward democracy.[54] Democrats with power, not the process of transition, produced new democratic regimes. The process of regime transformation was revolutionary, not evolutionary.[55]

At first glance, both Poland and Hungary look like classic pacted transitions. Emboldened by Gorbachev's reforms and Poland's economic crisis, challengers to the Polish communist regime initially tiptoed toward political reform. At the beginning of the roundtable negotiations, the challengers did not have a firm assessment of the power distribution between

2001). Freedom House, however, uses different labels – free, partly free, and not free. Although imperfect, Freedom House ratings offer clear categories, if the degree of specificity needed is only three regime types. In contrast to the balance of power index, which is based on assessments from a decade ago, the Freedom House ratings used here are from 2000.

[54] Why were these challengers democrats, and not fascists or communists? Why did they have societal support in some places and not others? The explanation cannot simply be culture, history, or location as much of East Central Europe and the Baltic States also produced autocratic leaders with fascist ideas earlier in the century. A full exploration of the origins of democracy as the ideology of opposition at this particular moment in this region is beyond the scope of this chapter. As a preliminary hypothesis, however, it is important to remember the balance of ideologies in the international system at the time. The enemies of communism called themselves democracies. Therefore, the challengers to communism within these regimes adopted the ideological orientation of the international enemies of their internal enemies.

[55] In an argument in the same spirit as that advanced here, Bunce prefers the term "breakage" to distinguish transitions in the "east" from bridging transitions in the "south." See Valerie Bunce, "Regional Differences in Democratization: The East Versus the South," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1998).

themselves and the *ancien regime*. First and foremost, Soviet power – always the chief constraint on all revolutionary change in the region – was now a variable, not a constant. The power of the democrats, however, was also uncertain. There had been no recent mass demonstrations and no free and fair elections that could provide measures of the power balance. Challengers responded to this ambiguity by seeking limited objectives and negotiations. The uncertainty about the balance of power also helped to fuel unrealistic expectations within the Polish communist elite, who believed that they could win a majority of seats if elections were held. The initial compromise reached was highly undemocratic. In the first elections in 1989, 35 percent of the seats in the Sejm were reserved for the communists and another 30 percent for their allies.

Yet, none of the concessions stuck. After Solidarity swept the elections for the contested seats, the balance of power between opposing sides became apparent, and thereby undermined the compromises that resulted from the roundtable negotiations. Poland has never again had a limited election in which only a portion of the seats was freely contested. Likewise, the roundtable concession that allowed Polish dictator Wojciech Jaruzelski to be elected president and the communists to maintain control over security institutions quickly unraveled. Once the election provided a better measure of the balance of power between the *ancien regime* and its challengers and after Gorbachev made clear that he would not intervene in Poland's internal affairs, the democratic winners began to dictate the new rules. In the long run, the Polish roundtable tried but failed to restrict "the scope of representation in order to reassure traditional dominant classes that their vital interests will be respected."[56] Importantly, these events also occurred in a relatively short amount of time, which did not allow enough time for the pacted institutional arrangements to become sticky.

The Hungarian experience more closely reflects the pacted transition model, but is still better understood as an imposition of democracy from below. Organized opposition to the communist regime was weaker in Hungary than in Poland, while soft-liners dominated the government. Membership in anticommunist groups numbered in the mere hundreds when negotiations began. Hungary's last opposition uprising was in 1956, compared to the more recent experience with opposition mobilization in Poland in 1980–1. Consequently, soft-liners from the *ancien regime* were

[56] Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," 11.

in a much better position to craft a set of political reforms that protected their interests.[57] Hungarian communist officials secured their preferences regarding the electoral law, the creation of a presidency, and the timing of elections.

But these short-term advantages did not translate into long-term institutional legacies. During the turbulent months of the fall of 1989 and spring of 1990, the waning influence of communists in Hungary and the region became increasingly evident. Even before the first vote in March 1990, the old Communist Party already had become the new Hungarian Socialist Party, a renaming that occurred in most postcommunist countries when ruling elites realized that their old methods of rule were no longer viable. Yet, even this recognition of the changing power distribution did not help those from the *ancien regime*, as the renamed party captured only 8 percent of the popular vote in the party list vote, and won only one single-mandate district. Democrats won a massive electoral victory, an event that clearly revised balance of power between the old and the new. After this vote, the preferences of the powerful dominated all institutional changes, and quickly pushed Hungary toward liberal democracy.

In contrast to Poland and Hungary, the transitions in Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and East Germany had no elements of pacting whatsoever. Instead, the mode of transition in these countries was openly confrontational. The challengers to the *ancien regime* were mass-based groups who had limited experience in public politics before 1989. Mass actors and confrontational tactics produced street demonstrations, strikes, and violent clashes with the authoritarian authorities – not roundtable discussions in government offices – which were the pivotal moments in these regime changes.

In Czechoslovakia, the confrontation between the state and society was open and dramatic. The leaders of the *ancien regime* did not discern the real distribution of power among the country's political forces. An organized democratic opposition did not exist prior to 1989, but grew exponentially during the November 1989 demonstrations. Cooperative negotiations between the communists and the street leaders never occurred, and the use of force against demonstrators was considered.[58] Pitted against a stronger force, the *ancien regime* eventually surrendered power. In the first free and fair elections in the country, the Communist

[57] Miklos Haraszti, "Decade of the Handshake Transition," *East European Politics and Societies* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 290.

[58] The Central Committee wisely vetoed the idea on November 24, 1989.

Party won only 13 percent in both houses of parliament. The balance of power proved to be firmly on the side of the anticommunist challengers, who were then able to dictate changes to the country's regime without consulting old communist leaders.

In the Baltic republics, anti-Soviet groups sprouted during political liberalization in 1986–7, but elections in 1989 and 1990 were crucial to mobilizing anticommunist movements and demonstrating that the distribution of power between *ancien regime* and the challengers was in favor of the latter. In the 1990 elections, the anticommunist Sajudis won 80 percent of the parliamentary seats for the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet; the anticommunist Latvian Popular Front, the Latvian National Independence Movement, and candidates sympathetic to these two movements won 79 percent of the seats to the Latvian Supreme Soviet; and the Estonian Popular Front captured a solid majority of the contested seats for its Supreme Soviet. These elections did not result from or trigger negotiations with the *ancien regime* about power sharing or democratization.[59] Instead, all three republics unilaterally declared their independence and entered into a prolonged stalemate with Moscow. Instead of compelling moderates and soft-liners to compromise, this stalemate fueled confrontation. In January 1991, the Soviet government escalated the confrontation by invading Latvia and Lithuania with armed forces, killing over a dozen people. Demonstrations in defiance of the Soviet soldiers ensued. People assembled at the barricades and did not allow their leaders to negotiate. Polarization only ended after the failed coup attempt in August 1991 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. In the first post-Soviet elections in all three new states, the old Communist Party ruling elite made no significant showings.

In all of these cases, societal actors committed (to varying degrees) to democratic ideas enjoyed hegemonic power over their communist enemies and used this political power configuration to impose new democratic regimes and exclude the leaders of the *ancien regime* from the institutional design process. Some of these new regimes also implemented new antiliberal rules that restricted the franchise along ethnic lines. That such practices could occur further illuminates the basic dynamic of all of

59 In Lithuania, the moderate Communist Party leader Algirdas Brazauskas tried to negotiate a transition and even split with the Soviet Communist Party. This factor, however, did not distinguish the Lithuanian transition from Latvia or Estonia in any appreciable way. In some respects, his appointment was the result of popular mobilization, making him the result of the shifting balance of power, not the cause.

these cases: hegemonic imposition of the new rules, rather than pacted negotiation.

Imposition from Above: Hegemonic Autocrats

Scholars of noncommunist transitions have noted that imposition from above is a common path toward democratization.[60] In the postcommunist world, this mode of transition has produced new kinds of dictatorship, not democracy. This second transition occurred in Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus.

The moment of transition from communist rule to authoritarian rule for these four Central Asian states is the same and well-defined – the four months between August and December 1991. Before the failed coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, neither state nor societal leaders in these Soviet republics had pressed aggressively for independence. Nor were elections in 1989 and 1990 major liberalizing events in these republics. By 1991, some democratic groups had sprouted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, and Uzbekistan. In the fall of 1991, however, the distribution of power in these countries still clearly favored the *anciens regimes*.[61]

At the beginning of regime change in these countries, analysts hoped/hypothesized that "pragmatic" leaders from above might be able to guide their countries along an evolutionary path to democracy. In Kyrgyzstan, the distribution of power in 1990 between reformers and conservatives was relatively more balanced than in other central Asian states, a situation that allowed Askar Akaev to be elected by a coalition of reformers and clan elites as the country's first president in August 1990.[62] Akaev took advantage of the failed coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991 to ratify his political power and legitimacy in October 1991, running unopposed and thus capturing 94.6 percent of the vote. For the first years of his

60 Huntington, *The Third Wave*; and Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America."

61 The leaders in these countries had to cut deals with regional leaders to maintain autocracy, but these pacts preserved continuity with the past, rather than navigating a path to a new regime. See Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change through Continuity: Shifting Power and Prospects for Democracy in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

62 Just over 50 percent of deputies in the Kyrgyz Supreme Soviet supported Akaev, allowing him to inch out the Communist candidate for the post. See Kathleen Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transitions in Central Asia*, Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University (December 1999), 193.

rule, he used his unchallenged authority to implement partial democratic reforms. Democratization from above stalled midway through the decade, however, as Akaev found autocracy more convenient. Like Akaev, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev also demonstrated tolerance toward a free press and independent political organizations soon after independence. As he consolidated his power, however, Nazarbaev has used his dictatorial powers to control the press and political parties, rig elections, and harass nongovernmental organizations. In Turkmenistan, former first secretary of the Communist Party and now president, Saparmurad Niyazov, never pretended to adhere to any liberal principles and instead crafted a "cult of the individual" dictatorship. In Uzbekistan, former first secretary of the Communist Party and now president, Islam Karimov, allowed only one falsified election in December 1991, in which he captured 86 percent of the vote.[63] In all of these countries, there was a deficit of powerful democrats at the transitional moment and therefore a deficit of democratic practices thereafter.

Belarus initially followed a similar path of autocratic imposition from above. Hard-liners dominated the *ancien regime* while the opposition, the Belarussian Popular Front, was weak. In the 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet, the Communist Party of Belarus captured 86 percent of the seats while the Popular Front won less than 8 percent. In April 1991, strikes against the state demonstrated that society was capable of mass mobilization, and a few months later, the failed August 1991 coup undermined the legitimacy of the hard-liners in power, who had enthusiastically supported the coup leaders. A moderate, Stanislav Shushkevich, benefited from the failed coup attempt in August 1991. In contrast to more successful transitions to democracy, however, Belarus' first postcommunist leader was not a leader of the democratic opposition, but a reformer from within the system with almost no popular following. A divided elite allowed Belarus' first postcommunist vote for the presidency in June–July 1994 to be competitive, an opening cited in the third-wave democratization literature as positive for democratic emergence. Instead of creating an opportunity for a democrat to bubble up from society, however, the split in Belarus allowed an even more autocratic leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko, to emerge and win this election. Had a more powerful democratic movement emerged

[63] Karimov came to power before the Soviet collapse as a compromise between Uzbek clans. In Uzbekistan, the period of political instability occurred in the early Gorbachev years, but was over by the time of transition after Karimov had consolidated his political power. See ibid.

at the time, the trajectory of this transition might have been very different. The old hard-liners from the *ancien regime*, while initially wary of Lukashenko, quickly moved to work with the new leader in consolidating authoritarian rule.

Stalemated Transitions: Protracted Confrontation and Imposition

Unlike the first and second transition paths, which led to consistent, predictable regime types, the third postcommunist transition path – stalemated transitions – has produced radically different outcomes in the postcommunist world: electoral democracy in Moldova and Mongolia, fragile and partial democracies in Russia and Ukraine, and civil war followed by autocracy in Tajikistan. Transitions in which the balance of power between the *ancien regime* and its challengers was relatively equal have also been the most protracted and the least conclusive in the region. This result is the exact opposite of that predicted by earlier writers on third-wave democratization. Stalemated transitions were supposed to be most likely to produce both stable and liberal democracies.

Of all the postcommunist transitions, Moldova may be the closest approximation to a pacted transition.[64] Like every other regime change in the region, the Moldovan regime change began with an exogenous shock – Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms. These changes initiated from Moscow allowed for the emergence of nongovernmental groups, which eventually consolidated behind one umbrella organization, the Moldovan Popular Front (MPF). This MPF successfully combined nationalist and democratic themes, ensuring that militant nationalists did not dominate the anticommunist movement. In contrast to Poland, Hungary, or Lithuania, the opposition did not enjoy overwhelming support in society. On the contrary, the MPF won roughly a third of the seats to the Supreme Soviet in the spring 1990 elections, a percentage much closer to Democratic Russia's total in Russia than to the clear majorities captured by popular fronts in the Baltic Republics during elections at the same time.[65] The MPF's opponents in the *ancien regime*, however, were not communist stalwarts, but soft-liners seeking to cooperate with the opposition. When another

[64] Mongolia might be a close second. See M. Steven Fish, "Mongolia: Democracy without Prerequisites," *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 3 (July 1998).

[65] William Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Post-Communist Moldova," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, eds., *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 293.

"external" factor – August 1991 – rocked the transition, old institutions quickly broke down, the Communist Party found itself in disarray, and elites from both state and society joined together to denounce the coup and declare independence. Although no formal pact was ever codified between them, soft-liners from the *ancien regime* and MPF moderates cooperated to craft a relatively smooth transition from communism to democracy. Presidential power changed hands peacefully through a very competitive election in 1996, and the balance of power in parliament has since shifted between left and right over the course of several elections. Relative stalemate, however, has not produced democratic consolidation. In 2000, Moldova became the first postcommunist country to alter the fundamental rules of the game of its political system by moving from a presidential system to a parliamentary democracy. This change was not negotiated but highly contentious, serving to destabilize rather than consolidate democratic institutions.

In several respects, the basic players and distribution of power between them in Moldova and Russia were similar. In response to Gorbachev's reforms, anticommunist political groups in Russia also formed and eventually coalesced into a united front – Democratic Russia. Elections in 1989 and 1990 and strikes in 1989 and 1991 helped to mobilize mass demonstrations against the *ancien regime*. New opportunities for nontraditional political action also attracted defectors and reformists from within the old ruling elite, including most importantly Boris Yeltsin. Within the Soviet state, soft-liners such as Alexander Yakovlev, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Gorbachev himself offered cooperative interlocutors for Russia's democratic challengers. Throughout the fall 1990 and spring of 1991, stalemate appeared to force both sides toward compromise.

Yet, the anticipated pact proved elusive. Soft-liners from the Soviet government and moderates from the Russian opposition attempted to negotiate new economic and political rules in the fall of 1990 under the rubric of the 500-Day Plan, but they failed. Again in the summer of 1991, they came very close to implementing another cooperative agreement, the "9 + 1 Accord," which would have delineated jurisdictional boundaries between the central state and the nine signatory republics. Before this agreement could be enacted, however, Soviet government hard-liners interrupted the negotiated path and instead tried to impose their preference for the old status quo through the use of force. Their coup attempt in August 1991 failed, an outcome that in turn allowed Yeltsin and his allies to ignore past agreements such as the "9 + 1 Accord" and pursue their ideas about the new political rules of the game including, first and foremost, Soviet dissolution. Yeltsin's advantage in the wake of the August 1991 coup attempt, however, was only temporary. Less than two years later, opponents to his reform ideas coalesced to challenge his regime. This new stalemate, which crystallized at the barricades again in September–October 1993, also ended in violent confrontation. Only after Yeltsin prevailed again in this standoff did he dictate a new set of political rules that the population ratified in a referendum. The regime to emerge subsequently was a fragile electoral democracy, which may not be able to withstand the authoritarian proclivities of Russia's new president.[66] A relatively equal distribution of power between the old regime and its challengers did not produce a path of negotiated change, but a protracted and violent transition that ended with imposition of an unstable electoral democracy.

Ukraine began the transition from communism with a balance of power between *ancien regime* and challengers similar to Russia. The failed coup attempt in August 1991 altered the political orientations of key players in Ukrainian politics. Like their Central Asian comrades, the leadership of the Ukrainian Communist Party, headed by Leonid Kravchuk, quickly jumped on the anti-Soviet bandwagon after the failed coup attempt as a way to stay in power. Overnight, Kravchuk became a champion of Ukrainian nationalism. He allowed for a referendum on Ukrainian independence in December 1991, which passed overwhelmingly. This nationalist reorientation of elites within the old ruling Ukrainian Communist Party helped to defuse the conflicts between friends and foes of the *ancien regime* that had sparked open confrontation in Russia in October 1993. Compared to Russia, Ukraine experienced a smoother transition from communism. At the same time, the prolonged domination of the old CPSU leaders has stymied the development of liberal democracy. Compared to cases in the Baltics and East Central Europe in which the democrats won overwhelmingly, broke with the past, dictated the new terms of the democratic polity, and have since produced stable regimes, Ukrainian democracy is still unstable and unconsolidated.

Tajikistan is an extreme example of a violent, confrontational transition resulting from a relatively equal distribution of power among the main political forces in the country. On the surface, the 1990 elections appeared to produce a solid victory for the communist *ancien regime*. In

[66] For elaboration, see the final two chapters of McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*.

fact, however, a regionally-based split within the ruling elite developed as a result of political liberalization, which then deepened after Moscow's role in Tajik politics faded after the August 1991 coup attempt. Stalemate did not produce negotiations, but civil war.

In Tajikistan in the late 1980s, opposition groups coalesced around a mishmash of democratic, nationalistic, and religious ideas. Under the leadership of Khakhor Makhkamov, the state's response to these groups was at times cooperative and at times repressive.[67] After acquiescing to several liberal reforms guaranteeing the rights of social organizations and free expression, Makhkamov then used armed force to quell the so-called Islamic uprisings in February 1990, a move which helped to unite the democratic and religious strands of the opposition. The cleavage between state and opposition actors was more clan-based than ideologically motivated. For decades, the Khodjenti clan, with Moscow's support, had dominated political rule in Tajikistan. When challengers to Khodjenti hegemony consolidated and the distribution of power became more equal, especially after the failed August coup when Moscow's support was temporarily removed, the ruling elite could have opted to pact a transition and share power. Instead, they pushed to reestablish autocratic rule, first by rigging an election in favor of their new preferred leader, Rakhman Nabiyev, who in turn used his new office to crack down on opposition leaders and organizations. However, similar to his putschist counterparts in Moscow, Nabiyev overestimated the power of his clan and state. Opposition groups joined forces with frustrated leaders from other minority clans to resist old guard repression. Civil war ensued between relatively balanced foes.[68] By the end of the first year of independence, 50,000 people had been killed and another 800,000 displaced. Eventually, a settlement was brokered but the result for the regime was a new unstable autocracy, not democracy.

Although Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Tajikistan started the transition from communism with relatively equal distributions of power between *ancien regime* and challengers, all experienced a variety of transition paths, which in turn have influenced the formation of a variety of regime types. Other examples of each type can be found throughout the region, ranging from relatively democratic Bulgaria and Mongolia to less successful democratic transitions in Albania and Azerbaijan. In contrast

[67] Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics*, 231.

[68] The defection of the Soviet 201st Motorized Rifle Division to the opposition's cause gave the opposition access to weapons that opposition groups in other republics did not enjoy.

to asymmetric power distributions producing impositions of dictatorship from above or democracy from below, many of the regimes that emerged from more balanced distributions of power are still unstable.

Strikingly, negotiation between the challenged and challengers played a causal role in determining regime type in only a few cases. The countries most successful in consolidating liberal democracy were some of the most confrontational transitions. Countries in which the distribution of power was relatively equal are neither the most successful democracies nor the most stable regimes. Although the mode of transition does appear to have a strong causal effect on the type of regime that emerges, the causal patterns in the postcommunist world bear little resemblance to the modalities identified in the third-wave literature.

What are the underlying causes of the balances of power and ideologies that produced these different modes of transition? Some "analysts" have asserted that the balance of power is best addressed as part of the outcome rather than a cause of the outcome.[69] The strong correlation between geography and regime type suggests that deeper structural variables might explain the regime variance without a careful accounting of balances of power and ideologies at the time of transition. Geography, as well economic development, history, culture, prior regime type, and the ideological orientation of enemies, most certainly influenced the particular balances of power and ideologies that produced democracy and dictatorship in the postcommunist world. Future research must seek to explain these transitional balances of power. However, this essay treats balance of power as an independent variable rather than a dependent variable for two reasons. First, this is the analytic setup of the earlier third-wave literature, which this chapter seeks to challenge. That this earlier literature posited different causal relationships for the same set of variables suggests that hypotheses from both theories are falsifiable and not tautological.

Second, the argument advanced in this essay is that these big structural variables only have path-dependent consequences in historically specific strategic settings.[70] The moment of transition for all of these cases (except perhaps Russia) was exogenous and therefore not caused directly by the

[69] Herbert Kitschelt, "Accounting for Outcomes of Post-Communist Regime Change: Causal Depth or Shallowness in Rival Explanations," unpublished manuscript (1999).

[70] The logic draws on the idea of punctuated equilibrium applied to institutional emergence in Stephen Krasner, "Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics," *Comparative Politics* 16 (1984) pp. 223–246.

balance of power between friends and foes of the regime. The confluence of these forces that produced powerful democrats in Poland and powerful autocrats in Turkmenistan was only causally significant at a unique moment in time at the end of the twentieth century. After all, Poland had the same religious and cultural practices, nearly the same location, and the same enemies a century ago, but these factors did not interact to produce democracy then. Imagine even if Solidarity had succeeded in forging a pact with Polish communist authorities in 1981 in the shadow of Brezhnev's Soviet Union. The regime type to emerge would have had more institutional guarantees for the outgoing autocrats, whereas the legacies of such a pact might have persisted for a long time.

Nor do cultural and historical patterns or prior regime types correlate neatly with the pattern of regime variation in the postcommunist world. Countries with shared cultures and histories, such as Russia and Belarus or Romania and Moldova, have produced very different regimes since leaving communism, whereas countries with no common culture like Belarus and Uzbekistan have erected very similar regimes. More generally, the causal significance of the communist or even Soviet legacy is not uniform or postcommunist regime type. The very diversity of regime type within subregions of the former Soviet Union – Belarus versus Ukraine or Georgia versus Armenia – calls into question the causal significance of a shared communist history. Conversely, upon closer analysis, "similar" prior regimes also look very different. For instance, the degree of autocratic rule in communist Czechoslovakia more closely approximated the Soviet Union or Romania than Poland, Hungary, or Yugoslavia. Yet, a decade after decommunization, democracy in the Czech Republic is more similar to Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia than to Russia, Romania, or even Slovakia.

Decades from now, big structural variables like economic development, culture, and geography may correlate cleanly with patterns of democratization around the world and thereby provide more sweeping explanations. However, in the short span of only one decade, broad generalizations based on deep structural causes hide as much history as they uncover.

EXPLAINING ANOMALIES: BORDERS, LEADERS, AND THE WEST

The model positing a causal relationship between balances of power and ideologies at the time of transition and regime type a decade later can explain many cases in the region, but not every one. There are many

boxes in the three-by-three matrix in Table 1 that should be empty but are not. Other factors must be introduced into the equation. First, the failure to meet Rustows's requisite of defined borders for the polity can impede democratic emergence indefinitely. Powerful challengers to the *ancien regime* can fail to establish democratic institutions if border issues linger. Second, over time, geographic location can override the causal influence of the initial mode of transition by offering neighboring state incentives to join the norm of the region.

Disputed Borders

The greatest number of cases defying the analytic framework outlined in this chapter are countries where the distribution of power was firmly in favor of the challengers yet the regime to emerge after transition was not fully democratic. This list includes Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, and, until last year, Croatia. These countries share one common problem that the more successful democracies in the region lacked – border disputes. To varying degrees, territorial debates sparked wars in the 1990s in all four of these countries. These territorial conflicts in turn empowered nationalist leaders with poor democratic credentials.

The actions of leaders, however, are not predetermined by geography. Ideas, leaders, and choice still play a role even in these cases. In Georgia, anti-Soviet sentiment fused with militant nationalism to produce Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In May 1991, Gamsakhurdia became Georgia's first democratically elected president by winning 85 percent of the vote. His nationalist ideas quickly fueled separatist movements among non-Georgian minorities and then civil war within the Georgian Republic. A change in leadership from Gamsakhurdia to the more democratic and less nationalistic Eduard Shevardnadze prevented the total collapse of the Georgian state and preserved some basic elements of a democratic regime in Georgia. Leadership changes, not a new consensus about borders, altered the course of regime change in Georgia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, battles over borders produced ethnic war on a scale not witnessed in Europe in decades. No democratic leaders emerged to slow the violence until international forces intervened. Border disputes and ethnic conflicts in Croatia also helped to consolidate the political power of Franjo Tudjman, another antidemocratic nationalist. Since Tudjman's death, however, Croatia has moved quickly toward European integration and more democratic governance.

Armenia has moved in the opposite direction, away from democracy. After an initially peaceful transition to democracy, accelerated by the August 1991 coup attempt, Armenia's decade-long war with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has not only depleted the country's scarce resources, but also produced an alternative elite within the armed forces of those from the embattled republic. This elite in turn has articulated a less democratic conception of the Armenian regime. Under the leadership of Robert Kocharian, the former President of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic, this new elite forced Ter Petrosian to resign in February 1998. Since the palace coup and Kocharian's election as president in 1998 in a falsified vote, Armenia's regime has become increasingly authoritarian. Many factors have produced political crisis in Armenia, but the territorial dispute has been especially destabilizing.[71]

Leaders

A final set of cases that departs from the general argument of this chapter cannot be explained without bringing individual leaders into the equation. Kyrgystan's drift toward democratic rule in the early 1990s, Georgia escape from anarchy and civil war in the mid-1990s, and Belarus' deepening dictatorship in the later 1990s cannot be accounted for without introducing the leadership skills and ideological orientations of individuals in these countries.

Individuals can play an instrumental role in crafting the political institutions of a regime in transition. In stable institutional settings in which individuals choose from the same menu of choices over multiple iterations, the particular causal role of unique individuals is minimal. Preferences and power of leaders in stable institutional settings also should be easier to identify, and behavior easier to predict or explain. In stable settings, the preferences and power of social groups also should be relatively fixed, thereby constraining the leaders who represent these groups. In uncertain institutional settings, however, the causal role assigned to unique individuals should be greater. As Weber argued, "Charismatic rulership in the typical sense always results from unusual, especially political and

[71] Imagine the counterfactual. If Armenia was not at war over Nagorno Karabakh, then the military and intelligence services would not enjoy the prominence that they do and hard-liners like Kocharian would not have risen to power. Public opinion surveys in Armenia show that "providing for defense" is the issue in which the government enjoys its highest approval rating. See Office of Research, Department of State, "Armenians More Hopeful, Despite Killings," No. M-13-00 (February 11, 2000), 3.

economic situations. . . It arises from collective excitement produced by extraordinary events and from surrender to heroism of any kind."[72] When institutions break down, individuals have less information about the consequences of their actions or the intentions of other actors. They must make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, which may produce unintended results. In volatile institutional settings, the preferences and power of leaders become variables, not constants, especially when the collapse of previous institutions eliminates from the menu past preferences and alters the balance of power equation. For instance, when communist regimes collapsed, communism as an ideology was discredited, but new ideologies were both poorly understood and multiple, making coordination around them difficult. An effective leader who proposes a new ideological or normative orientation for the state and society can fill the void. The collapse of communism undermined (at least temporarily) the power of communist parties and their allies, while new groups were just forming in most postcommunist transitions, creating great uncertainty regarding the balance of power. Because the preference and the power of social groups also were rendered ambiguous by the transition, leaders of these groups were not as beholden or constrained by their constituents as leaders in more stable contexts. In these moments of institutional breakdown, we should assume that leaders have autonomy and the possibility to influence outcomes. Yet, as Weber also argued, we should expect leadership in such settings to be unstable and ephemeral, producing short-term zigs and zags in regime change, which may not necessarily have lasting effects.[73]

Tracing the causal role of individuals is fraught with complexities. But even a cursory tour of postcommunist transitions provides at least some evidence that leaders matter. Throughout Eastern Europe, charismatic leaders of societal movements provided important focal points for anticommunist mobilization. Lech Walesa in Poland and Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia were catalysts of mobilization. The magnitude of their contribution, however, is harder to assess given the overwhelming support for democracy in those countries.

In Central Asia, the unique role that Kyrgyz president Askar Akaev played in steering his country *initially* toward democracy is more apparent

[72] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1121.

[73] Depending on how charisma was routinized, Weber also argued that it could be deployed for authoritarian or democratic projects. For elaboration and application to contemporary regimes changes, see Michael Bernhard, "Charismatic Leadership and Democratization: A Weberian Perspective," ms, January 1998.

against the backdrop of more authoritarian regimes in the region. In Kyrgyzstan, the distribution of power in 1990 between reformers and conservatives was relatively more balanced than in other Central Asian states, a situation that allowed Akaev to be elected by a coalition of reformers and clan elites as the country's first president in August 1990.[74] Akaev did not provoke open confrontation with the sizable minority of *ancien regime* holdovers, but he also did not negotiate with them a new set of constitutional rules for governing Kyrgyzstan that might have benefited both sides. Instead, he took advantage of the failed coup attempt in August 1991 to ratify his political power and legitimacy in October 1991. He ran unopposed and captured 94.6 percent of the vote, an indication of the distribution of power in the Kyrgyz polity. He then used his mandate to impose his preferences for reforms, many of which were *initially* pro-market and pro-democratic. One democrat with a lot of power appeared to fuel democratization in Kyrgyzstan for the first years of independence.

In the Caucasus and the Slavic states, charismatic leaders also have played crucial roles in pushing their countries either toward democracy or dictatorship. In Georgia, the return of Eduard Shevardnadze to local politics initially reversed the autocratic tendencies of Gamsakhurdia. In contrast, the return to power of Heydar Aliev in Azerbaijan (like Shevardnadze, also a former First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had the exact opposite effect, pushing Azerbaijan along a more autocratic route, after an initial period of more open politics.[75] In Russia, Yeltsin's militant anticommunism compelled him to adopt democracy as the most effective opposition ideology. Although his commitment to democratic principles proved dubious over time, his leadership did push Russia along a democratic trajectory.[76] Had a militant nationalist such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky gained control of Russia's anticommunist movement in the early 1990s, the weak Russian democratic polity might be an unambiguous dictatorship. This counterfactual is arguably approximated by Belarus under Lukashenka, a dictator who has openly praised Hitler. Lukashenka's charismatic style and mobilizing skills were key in transforming Belarus into one of the most autocratic regimes in the region, a prediction that few would have made at the beginning of the decade. Such a turn was not predetermined by deep historical or socioeconomic legacies. The absence of leadership can also be central. In Tajikistan, for instance, the dearth of strong, charismatic leaders allowed the stalemated transition to collapse into civil war.

It is still too early to know whether the role of leaders has long-term path-dependent effects. In countries such as Croatia and Serbia, the fall of autocrats has translated into new openings for democratic development. In the long run, the effects of these dictatorships may not be as consequential as other factors such as European integration. The limited impact of leadership in the long run, however, could translate into greater autocracy in nonwestern neighborhoods. In these regions, alternative regime types to democracy are both present and popular, whereas western models are remote.[77] Since 1995, Kyrgyzstan has drifted toward the regional norm of autocratic rule. Similarly, Georgian democracy has lost ground in the last few years. The original democratic impulses of Akaev and Shevardnadze do not seem to have produced long-term democratic institutions. Once Shevardnadze leaves power, democratic erosion in Georgia could accelerate even faster. In comparison to Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, democratic institutions in Russia erected in part due to Yeltsin are more robust, but even there, leadership change at the top has produced democratic erosion. None of these three leaders – Akaev, Shevardnadze, or Yeltsin – successfully translated their charismatic influence into stable democratic institutions. In sum, regime variations within regions that looked important at the moment of transition appear to be less important today. In the long run, regional convergence – be it democracy in Eastern Europe or dictatorship in Central Asia and the Caucasus – appears underway.

The West

Democratic overachievers comprise a third category of cases anomalous to the general model outlined above, a category that includes Romania and Bulgaria, two countries which started the transition from communism with leaders from the *ancien regime* with high degrees of power.

[74] Just over 50 percent of deputies in the Kyrgyz Supreme Soviet supported Akaev, allowing him to inch out the Communist candidate for the post. See Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics*, 193.

[75] Azerbaijan Civic Initiative, *Final Report on the October 11, 1998 Azerbaijan Presidential Election*. 1998.

[76] On Russia's democratic shortcomings that resulted from Russia's confrontational transition, see Michael McFaul, "What Went Wrong in Russia? The Perils of a Protracted Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 2 (April 1999).

[77] Francis Fukuyama, "The Primacy of Culture," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995), 11.

In Romania, anticommunist societal mobilization destroyed the *ancien regime*, but did not take the next step of filling the void with new societal leaders and organizations. After only two weeks of popular revolt, the Romanian dictatorship – the most totalitarian in the region – collapsed in December 1989. Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian leader, was killed and the Romanian Communist Party banned. There were no pacts, no negotiations, no compromises. After the Ceausescu regime perished, however, a phantom political organization, the National Salvation Front (NSF), rushed to fill the political vacuum. Quasi-dissidents, poets, and societal leaders initially allied with the NSF, but it gradually became clear that former communist officials had created this front as a means of staying in power. After "people power" destroyed the last communist regime, communist apparatchiks motivated by their own interests and not committed to democratic norms dominated the first postcommunist regime. In Bulgaria, the break with the *ancien regime* was less dramatic, but the resilience of the old guard was comparable. In the early 1990s, the prospects for Bulgarian and Romanian democracy were grim. A decade later, however, both of these countries have made progress toward consolidating liberal democracies.

Democratic consolidation in both countries has benefited from proximity to the West. Throughout the postcommunist world, there is a positive correlation between distance from the West and regime type.[78] Closeness to the West certainly does not explain regime type at the moment of transition. Before the fall of Milosevic, Serbia's dictatorship was much closer to Berlin than Georgia's electoral democracy, and autocratic Belarus is closer to the West than semidemocratic Russia. Over time, however, the pull of the West has helped weaker democratic transitions in the West become more democratic. Conversely, initially successful transitions to democracy farther from Europe such as Armenia or even Kyrgyzstan have had less success in consolidating. Neighborhoods matter. And it is not Christianity, education, or economic development that provides the causal push toward democracy, but location. Initially uncertain regimes in Bulgaria and Romania have become increasingly more democratic over time as these countries aggressively have sought membership in western institutions such as the European Union and NATO. Leaders in Romania and Bulgaria have real incentives to deepen democracy, because both countries have a reasonable chance of joining these western institutions. After a lost decade, Croatian and Serbian democracy now seem poised to benefit from European integration.

[78] See Jeffrey Kopstein and David Reilly, "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-Communist World," *World Politics* 53 (October 2000) no.1, pp. 1–37

CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined an actor-centric theory of transition that challenges many of the principle assumptions of the earlier actor-centric literature on third-wave democratization. Temporally, these regime changes occurred at the same time as other third-wave transitions. Yet, the causal mechanisms at play were so different, and the regime type so varied, that the postcommunist experience might be better captured by a different theory and a separate label – the fourth wave of regime change. (Why should the emergence of dictatorship in Uzbekistan be subsumed within the third wave of *democratization*?)

Furthermore, the approach outlined and the cases discussed in this chapter call into question the historical place of third-wave transitions in the development of theories about democratization more generally. Democratic imposition from below in which confrontation is the mode of transition is not a new phenomenon unique to the postcommunist world. On the contrary, democratic revolutions have tradition and include some of the most important case studies in democratization. Certainly, the American and French transitions were not pacted transitions. Rather, they were protracted, confrontational, armed struggles in which the victors then dictated the new rules of the game.[79] In several respects, France's violent, uncertain, and decades-long "transition" from autocratic rule looks more similar to Russia's ongoing transformation than Spain's negotiated path. Likewise, externally imposed regime changes, such as the democratic transitions in Germany, Austria, and Japan, involved no pacting or negotiation. Decolonization, which played no role in the third wave, has featured prominently in both the fourth wave discussed here as well as the second wave.[80] In the long stretch of history, the successful transitions from communism to democracy may look more like the norm, whereas the "pacted transitions" and "transitions from above" in Latin America and Southern Europe may look more like the aberration.

[79] Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Transformations*, 1 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998). To be sure, negotiations between liberal and anti-liberal (slave owning) elites in the United States helped to produce partial democratic institutions. These compromises, however, were not negotiated with moderates from the British *ancien regime*.

[80] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 112.

Yet, negotiated transitions with alternative causal modes did occur in Latin America, Southern Europe, Africa, Asia, and perhaps Moldova. They must now be explained in a new historical context in which non-pacted, revolutionary transitions from below occurred both before and after. The next generation of democratization theory must seek to specify more precisely the conditions under which pacts can facilitate democratization and the conditions under which pacts are inconsequential. In other words, the third and fourth waves must be fused to generate a comprehensive theory of transitions. In addition, without abandoning agency altogether, this research agenda should attempt to push the causal arrow backward in order to account for the factors that produce different modes of transition in the first place. A comprehensive theory of transition will include both structural and strategic variables. In the postcommunist cases, the different historical responses to Soviet imperialism most certainly influenced the balance of power between friends and foes of the *ancien regime* at the time of transition. Ideological polarization between the democratic United States and communist Soviet Union during the Cold War also framed the normative choices about regime change made by revolutionaries and reactionaries. At the same time, prior regime type – that is, communism – did not play the negative or uniform role on democratization that many predicted.[81] The true causal significance of the transition moment can only be fully understood when the deeper causes of these modes are fully specified. This essay has argued that the balance of power and ideologies at the time of transition had path-dependent consequences for subsequent regime emergence. Yet the importance of these contingent variables can only be determined if their causal weight can be measured independently of deeper factors that cause and impede democracy.[82] Whereas democratization theorists have devoted serious attention to isolating causal links between mode of transition and regime consolidation, much less attention has been given to the causes of transition paths in the first place.[83]

The project of constructing a general theory of democratization may very well fail. The causes of democratization in Poland may be distinct from the causes in Spain, let alone those most prominent in France. This essay's emphasis on temporal path dependence implies that different historical contexts may create unique factors for and against democratization. The unique patterns generated by the fourth wave of regime change in the postcommunist world suggest that the search of a general theory of democratization *and* autocratization will be a long one.

[81] Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market*; Ken Jowitt, *The New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Grzegorz Ekiert, "Democratization Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration," *British Journal of Political Science* 21 (July 1991), 288.

[82] Every independent variable can become the dependent variable of another study. In journal articles especially, as Michael Taylor has argued, the "explanatory buck has to stop somewhere." Michael Taylor, "Structure, Culture and Action in the Explanation of Social Change," *Politics and Society* 17 (1989), 199. To escape tautology and claim causal significance of more proximate variables, however, requires the researcher to demonstrate that the independent variables selected are not endogenous of more important prior variables, but that they have some *independent* causal impact.

[83] Recent studies that have pushed the causal arrow back one step include Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below*; Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999), 115–44; Alexander Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society: Political Crises and Their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*.