Modes of Transition and Democratization

South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective

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Transitions, defined as periods of regime change, are formative or founding moments. As such, they set a society on a path that shapes its subsequent political development. This thesis, which is at the heart of path dependent analysis of democratization, has recently been articulated by a long list of prominent scholars who have sought to link the mode of transition from authoritarian rule to the problems and prospects of democratic consolidation.[1] Their contributions notwithstanding, their work has suffered from both conceptual imprecision and a dearth of conclusive findings,[2] deficiencies that have bred scholarly skepticism about assessing the impact of modes of transition.[3] A decade after this debate was initiated, it thus remains unclear not only how modes of transition affect political developments but, more fundamentally, if they matter at all.

However, the appeal of a path dependent analysis of democratization persists. Therefore, rather than dismiss the debate on the potential impact of modes of transition, we seek to revisit it. We begin by clarifying the key concept of mode of transition and by spelling out the causal mechanisms whereby the defining attributes of this concept generate consequential political legacies. We define the mode of transition in terms of the identity of the actors who drive the transition process and the strategies they employ; we then argue that these modalities shape the posttransitional regime and politics by affecting the pattern of elite competition, institutional rules crafted during the period of transition, and disposition of key actors to accept or reject the new rules of the game. Through these causal mechanisms the mode of transition helps to explain whether and how democracies emerge and consolidate. To substantiate this argument, we analyze several South American and East Central European countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.

The mode of transition is not the only factor affecting democratization. Nor are the legacies of modes of transition permanently fixed. However, we wish to stress that an eminently political factor, the process of transition itself, has continuing political relevance. We thus draw upon two of Dankwart A. Rustow's main arguments in his seminal article, "Transitions to Democracy": his critique of theories that stress social and economic prerequisites to the exclusion of political

factors, and his development of a process-oriented approach to democratization.[4] In stressing the centrality of transitions from authoritarian rule, however, we put a new twist on Rustow's significant proposition that "the factors that keep a democracy stable may not be the ones that brought it into existence."[5] Building upon the distinction between transition from authoritarianism and transition to democracy, our path dependent argument advances a slightly different proposition: the very process of transition from authoritarian rule, independently of the conditions that generated it, helps determine not only the prospects of democratic consolidation but also the success of the transition to democracy in the first place.

Modes of Transition and Their Impact

The concept of mode of transition distinguishes the different processes whereby the rules that define political regimes are jettisoned. All too often the literature on modes of transition has failed to distinguish between transitions from established regimes and transitions to new regimes and thus reduced the assessment of modes of transition to their impact on the consolidation of democracy. The mode of transition not only affects the consolidation of new regimes but also helps determine whether the transition is to democracy or some other regime type.

How can we distinguish among transitions from established regimes? Two basic criteria can be extracted from the existing literature. Strongly influenced by the contrast between Portugal and Spain, the early literature emphasized the degree of control that outgoing rulers exerted over the process of transition. In more dynamic terms, these studies targeted the strategies employed by the relevant actors in the transition process.[6] They distinguished transitions that advanced through different degrees of accommodation and confrontation between actors seeking change and defenders of the old order, thus differentiating transitions that broke with the old regime from those that proceeded within a preset legal framework or through agreements with the incumbent elites. It rapidly became clear, however, that this single criterion did not capture important differences in the transition process even in the cases that inspired it, and various scholars thus proposed new criteria.

Probably the most interesting of the alternative formulations was the suggestion that transitions should also be distinguished in terms of the identity of the primary agents of change. This criterion highlights a critical variable: whether a transition is carried out by elites within the established structure of power, by counterelites who challenge incumbent elites, or by some combination of the two.[7] Moreover, when conjoined with the first, strategic criterion, this two-dimensional conceptualization of modes of transition has the virtue of directly capturing a distinctive feature of transitions: they are uniquely fluid processes defined by the identity of regime

challengers and their strategies in challenging the old regime. This concept of mode of transition highlights who makes transitions and how they are made.

Two basic questions remain to be confronted. Why do modes of transition matter, and how do they matter? Transitions matter because they generate fairly durable legacies that affect the posttransitional regime and politics. Different modes of transition are likely to have distinct consequences for a country's politics. The primary challenge is to explain how modes of transition matter by specifying the causal mechanisms and significance of these legacies. A number of scholars has tackled this challenge. One productive line of inquiry has sought to link the relative balance of power between rulers and opposition during the transition to the choice of particular institutional rules that both persist beyond the transition period and shape the prospects for regime consolidation.[8] However, our analysis is somewhat broader.

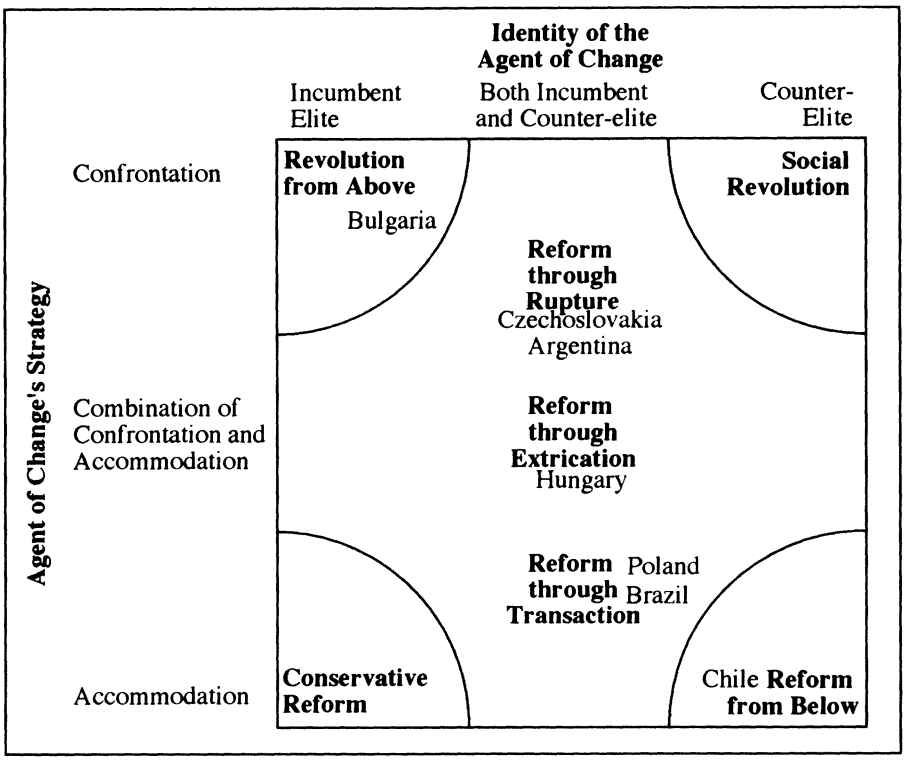
We argue that the mode of transition affects the form of posttransitional regime and politics through its influence on the pattern of elite competition, on the institutional rules crafted during the transition, and on key actors' acceptance or rejection of the new rules of the game. A probabilistic connection between modes of transition and democratization can thus be spelled out. A given mode of transition is likely to increase the odds for the emergence of democracy if it generates a more or less balanced pattern of elite competition.[9] And it is likely to increase the odds for consolidation of newly installed democracies if it facilitates the adoption of institutions suited to the management of elite conflict and the willingness of all major actors to accept the democratic rules of the game.

The South American and East European Cases

The recent transitions from military rule in South America and from Communism in East Central Europe provide excellent cases to test this argument. We have selected seven countries as examples (see Figure 1). This sample not only maximizes the amount of variation in our key explanatory variable, a methodological desideratum, but is also small enough to allow for the use of a "process tracing" methodology uniquely suited to verify that the causal mechanisms we posit are actually at work. Moreover, it includes two pairs of cases that share a mode of transition (Brazil and Poland, Argentina and Czechoslovakia) despite substantial variance in other respects. Thus, in addition to the use of process tracing, this sample allows us to exploit the strengths of a "most different" systems design.[10]

In each case, we date the transition and justify its placement within the possible modes of transition.[11] We then focus on how the mode of transition helps to

Figure 1 Modes of Transition: Some South American and East European Cases



explain the emerging type of political regime. Finally, we consider posttransitional political dynamics, especially the distinctive challenges of regime consolidation. To facilitate comparison, we start with Chile at one pole and proceed through the cases to Bulgaria at the other pole (see Figure 1).

Reform from Below: Chile In Chile's transition, the impetus for change came from outside the incumbent elite, from groups that were excluded and vehemently resisted by the outgoing military rulers, led by General Augusto Pinochet. Though failing to avert a change in regime, incumbent elites may well have exerted more control over the transition than in any other recent case of regime change. Pinochet's opponents were thus forced to advance their agenda within the legal framework of the old regime, through a purely accommodationist strategy. The transition was launched on the basis of a constitutionally mandated plebiscite in

October 1988 which the opposition won. Chile's transition was a case of reform from below.

The impact of these basic features of Chile's mode of transition is evident first in the type of regime crafted during the transition. To effectively challenge the incumbent elite from outside, antiregime forces needed to forge a broad-based coalition. The transition then opened the political process to a wide array of social forces. Moreover, because Chile's old elites remained a viable political force, the transition did not simply displace the incumbent elite by counterelites. Rather, Chile's mode of transition generated a system of fairly balanced elite competition, that is, a democracy.

But Chile's transition did not result in a fully democratic system. The old elites both resisted democratic change and exerted a high degree of control over the transition process. They were thus able to enforce a quid pro quo whereby the viability of the transition hinged upon the democratic opposition's acceptance of overtly undemocratic features, many of which were embedded in the constitution Pinochet had designed in 1980. Specifically, Chile's new regime accepted Pinochet's right to remain army commander in chief for eight years after transferring power and thereafter become senator for life, nine appointed senators, a national security council with strong powers and military representation, a packed supreme court, and an electoral law crafted by the military to favor right-wing parties and prevent amendment of the 1980 constitution without the consent of supporters of Pinochet's regime.[12] Chile's transition, in short, produced a restricted form of democracy that did not provide for elections to all key offices and that limited the power of elective offices.

Chile's mode of transition also affected posttransition politics, after the opposition defeated Pinochet in the general election of December 1989 and assumed power in March 1990.[13] Indeed, it shaped the actors and institutional rules: the broad, democratic, anti-Pinochet coalition, counterposed to the elite that had benefited under the old order and was questionably committed to democracy. This configuration underpins Chile's posttransitional political dynamics. On the one hand, democratic politicians have sought to eliminate the undemocratic restrictions on the scope and authority of elected offices. On the other hand, they have been keenly aware that the right-wing elite would use its legally sanctioned position to block reform of these "authoritarian enclaves" and that obliteration of them could trigger a powerful conservative backlash. The mode of transition left its legacy in a constrained pattern of elite contestation that obstructs democratic consolidation in Chile by making the acceptance of a restricted form of democracy the price for stability.[14]

Reform through Transaction: Brazil and Poland Brazil and Poland exemplify reform through transaction. Although the impetus for change did not originate

equally within and outside the incumbent elite, because incumbent elites remained ambivalent as counterelites pushed for democratic changes, incumbent elites in Brazil and Poland were sufficiently powerful to force the opposition to advance its agenda through negotiations. The legacies of the transitions likewise displayed important similarities, despite the otherwise vast differences between the two countries.

In analyzing Brazil, the first problematic issue to be resolved concerns the dating of the transition. Although most analysts pinpoint 1974 as the beginning of Brazil's regime change, prior to 1982 Brazil actually underwent a process of liberalization rather than democratization which sought to broaden the social base of the existing authoritarian regime.[15] It is more accurate, then, to date the transition from 1982. In elections held that year the opponents of military rule made such substantial gains that they confronted the incumbent elites with a critical choice: either to adopt increasingly repressive measures to halt liberalization or to allow democratization. The incumbent elites chose not to block democratic change, but rather concentrated their considerable residual power over the transition process to force the counterelites to adopt an accommodationist stance.

The impact of these features of Brazil's transitional politics was manifest, first of all, in the complexity of the transition process. In an exercise of power that displayed their ambivalent attitude toward democracy, the military rulers staunchly rebuffed a massive opposition campaign in early 1984 for direct and popular presidential elections and forced their opponents to accept an indirect method of nomination. Even when the opposition's presidential candidate won in 1985, the military rulers effectively prolonged the transition and retained considerable control over the outlines of the future regime. Contrary to most interpretations, José Sarney's assumption of the presidency in 1985 did not conclude the transition. Sarney actually led an interim government during which the new rules of the game were established. Only as a result of an extended process—constituent assembly elections in 1986, approval of a new constitution in 1988, the first direct presidential election in November 1989, the assumption of power by Collor de Mello in March 1990, and congressional and gubernatorial elections in October 1990—did Brazil's transition come to an end.

The mode of transition, through this extended process, also affected the new form of government. Because elements within the incumbent elite increasingly accepted and embraced the external impetus for change, the transition's political opening not only sanctioned competition among political elites, but also generated a regime that lacked the explicitly undemocratic features found in Chile. However, the absence of an overtly antidemocratic right-wing elite also had drawbacks. In Chile, the presence of an antidemocratic right encouraged unity in the antiauthoritarian coalition during and after the transition. In Brazil, in contrast, the willingness of the traditional elites formerly sympathetic to military rule to

cooperate with and even enter the main opposition party, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), in the electoral college vote of 1985 diluted the PMDB's identity. The momentum of the forces most committed to democracy was severely weakened.[16]

Loss of identity within the antiauthoritarian coalition, in conjunction with the outgoing rulers' capacity to control the transition, affected Brazil's new constitution. Though the PMDB won a sizable majority in the 1986 elections for the constituent assembly, former supporters of the military infiltrated it, and conservative clientelist strongholds in the underdeveloped north and northeast (as a result of biased electoral laws) were overrepresented in it. Former supporters of the military rulers actually outnumbered the original PMDB leaders.[17] President Sarney's power to reject demands that would have made the constituent assembly independent, moreover, weakened its ability to break with the past. Thus, while the new constitution, ratified in 1988, nullified the authoritarian aspects of the old military constitution and included many progressive provisions, it was shaped in decisive ways by the military and its allies. Most significantly, the proposal to adopt a parliamentary system was defeated, and federalism was reinvigorated without introducing changes that would strengthen political parties and prevent fragmentation of the party system.[18] Though the new regime was clearly democratic, the most authentic proponents of change lost momentum, and the outgoing rulers controlled the transition process, thereby ensuring the adoption of far from optimal institutional rules for democracy.

The mode of transition also affected Brazil's posttransitional politics. Multiple elites competed for power as in Chile, but no actor directly opposed the new regime. Brazil's posttransitional political dynamics were not driven by the refusal of some actors to submit to democratic rules. Rather, actors experienced difficulties in managing conflicts within the democratic rules adopted during the transition. Specifically, the electoral laws facilitated the fragmentation of the party system; nineteen parties were represented in the chamber of deputies in 1990. Moreover, the electoral laws in conjunction with the presidential system reduced the likelihood of a presidential majority in congress. A key dysfunctional feature of Brazil's posttransitional politics has indeed been legislative-executive conflicts. The combination of presidentialism and multipartism, a direct legacy of the mode of transition, has impeded democratic consolidation in Brazil.[19]

In Poland, the impetus for change also came originally from outside the incumbent elite, from the labor-based social movement Solidarity, founded in 1980. However, the transition did not get underway until 1989 when the incumbent elites relaxed earlier repressive measures and initiated roundtable negotiations with Solidarity. While the impetus behind the decision to negotiate was to legitimate the Communist economic program in a time of economic crisis, not to introduce the democratic changes sought by Solidarity, this step represented a departure from the

central premise of the old regime: the Communist claim to a monopoly of political power. Incumbent elites nonetheless retained considerable control over the transition process. Indeed, the Polish Communists benefited from being the first country in the Soviet bloc to pursue a political opening; uncertainty about the scope of change Gorbachev was willing to countenance gave them the advantage that attended the lingering threat of Soviet intervention. As in Brazil, then, the Polish transition began when incumbent elites allowed a marginal opening that undermined the basic outlines of the *ancien régime*, while retaining sufficient control over the transition process to force antiincumbent elites to negotiate.

The transition process in Poland experienced some of the same complications witnessed in Brazil. While Solidarity won relegalization of its trade union in the roundtable agreement of April 1989, the Communists restricted opposition participation in elections to a mere 35 percent of the seats in the pivotal lower house (*Sejm*). The incompletely democratized, "contractual" *Sejm* was thus dominated by holdovers from the former regime. Moreover, a constitutional revision established a president, to be selected by the *Sejm*, with potentially substantial but ill-defined independent powers crafted as an additional foothold for Communist Party leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski. As in Brazil in 1985, these restrictions were not foolproof. The opposition exploited the restricted legal opening to deal incumbent elites a setback. Solidarity's shockingly strong electoral showing in June 1989, attributable to the sheer strength of the opposition, its mass base, and the leadership skills of Lech Walesa, showed that the Communist strategy had backfired. After much maneuvering, a mixed Communist-Solidarity government headed by Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki was installed in September 1989. But just as important, the constraining influence of the roundtable pact turned the transition into a complex and protracted process that affected the configuration of the new regime. As in Brazil, then, the Polish transition advanced in stepwise fashion. Its main landmarks included a power-sharing arrangement that operated through existing Communist institutions as modified by the roundtable, the popular election of the president in fall 1990, and competitive elections to parliament in October 1991, which ended the transition.

The impact of this protracted transition on the new regime was considerable. Because the Communists acquiesced in the demand of noncommunist elites to liquidate the restrictions on political contestation, overt constraints on elite competition were gradually eliminated. As in Brazil, Poland emerged from its transition with a fully competitive democracy, but the ability of the old elites to shape the initial roundtable breakthrough and their continued engagement in the democratization process impeded a clean break with the past in several important ways. First, the attenuated Communist threat to democratization helped undermine the unity of the antiauthoritarian coalition in a manner that directly affected the design of democratic institutions. When Solidarity leader Walesa, who had stayed

aloof from the mixed government of Prime Minister Mazowiecki for strategic reasons, found himself sidelined, he did not hesitate to attack the legitimacy of the very Solidarity-Communist cabinet alliance whose creation he had negotiated. Reentering politics through the institutional opening created by the roundtable agreement, Walesa successfully forced direct elections to the presidency, which he won in December 1990 in a bitter internecine challenge to the democratic credentials of his Solidarity allies.

In turn, the election of Walesa to the roundtable's still ill-defined but potent presidency affected institutional choices in a convoluted manner, setting the stage for legislative-executive conflict. Walesa could draw upon his elective authority to threaten a veto of any constitutional settlement crafted by the tarnished "contractual" *Sejm,* a body widely perceived to lack legitimacy as a constituent assembly. The combination of Walesa's election and the ever-present legacies of the roundtable agreement created a constitutional deadlock. This outcome would have been highly unlikely had a fully legitimate constituent assembly been free to act, without the constraint of the roundtable presidency.

Solidarity's fragmentation also directly affected the electoral law for the first fully competitive elections in October 1991. Increasingly doubtful of their electoral following, the Solidarity factions in the *Sejm* joined with the overrepresented Communists to adopt, against Walesa's wishes, a highly proportional electoral system without thresholds for representation. Institutionally, like Brazil, Poland chose a problematic multiparty presidential system.

In the posttransitional phase, it became increasingly clear that the key actors were committed to a system of elite competition. The protracted process of overcoming the limitations of the initial bargain effectively incorporated the former elites into the new democratic system. As in Brazil, the key obstacles to democratic consolidation lay instead in the problematic workings of the democratic institutions. The unrestrictive electoral law produced a fragmented *Sejm* of twenty-nine parties, heralding a prolonged period of government by successive minority coalitions, none of which had sufficient support or time in office to enact a constitution.[20] The repeated clashes between president and parliament that characterized the latter part of the transition persisted, only partially checked by the "little constitution" of August 1992, a detailed attempt to clarify the legislative-executive balance of power in response to the jurisdictional clashes. Even the more compact 1993 *Sejm*, elected with a threshold, could not strike a constitutional bargain as long as Walesa was president. As in Brazil, inadequate mechanisms to regulate legislative-executive conflict, a direct legacy of the mode of transition, continued to prevent the establishment of a routinized pattern of elite interaction and impeded the consolidation of Poland's democracy.

Reform through Extrication: Hungary In Hungary, the transition was

negotiated by opposition and incumbent elites who both had a stake in pursuing an opening. The reform wing of the Communist elite had been building bridges to the more responsive currents in the political and cultural opposition for several years prior to 1989, in search of a political liberalization formula for "socialist pluralism" that would validate effective economic reform. These reformers clearly hoped to preempt an anticommunist backlash by gaining credit for their responsiveness to political change. When younger, more flexible leaders took over the party's leadership after a massive housecleaning of the Politburo septuagenarians in May 1988, they pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy of negotiating separately with opposition groups according to their divergent nationalist-populist and urban-cosmopolitan tendencies. This strategy ultimately failed. The opposition temporarily succeeded in coordinating their positions; support for change increased in the course of popular protests; and events in Poland weakened Communists throughout eastern Europe by revealing the Soviet Union's unwillingness to defend the status quo. In June 1989 the Communists initiated talks with the key opposition groups in a Polish-style roundtable format that included all the major nascent parties and social organizations and reached an agreement with the opposition in September 1989. Hungary's "negotiated revolution" is thus a good example of reform through extrication. Both the old rulers and counterelites sought change, and the incumbents, though weaker than in Poland and Brazil, were still sufficiently in control to force the opposition to bargain.[21]

Hungary's transition was relatively uncomplicated. In contrast to Poland, where the penalty of being first to test Soviet tolerance for change was acceptance of undemocratic restrictions and a prolonged process of removing them, Hungary's transition was not constrained. The September 1989 agreement reflected the relatively equitable balance of power between rulers and opposition and the broad consensus for change and led directly to a full political opening in the competitive parliamentary elections of March 1990. While Poland's transition dragged on over two and a half years, Hungary's was complete in less than nine months.

The electoral law was also agreed to consensually. The Communists proposed a majoritarian system that they believed, misguidedly, would favor them as the party with superior organizational resources against a divided opposition. However, the final law resulted from a compromise. The very complex, mixed electoral system reflected the opposition's fear of Communist strength and demand for dilution of the majoritarian principle.

The one complication was related to the Communists' effort to create an institutional base for themselves, in a manner reminiscent of Poland, by instituting a popularly elected presidency prior to the first competitive parliamentary elections. Communist strategists calculated that their better-known and better-organized candidate would win on a crest of popular appreciation of the Communists' willingness to open the system. The opposition Hungarian

Democratic Forum (HDF) initially accepted this proposal, but the strategem was torpedoed when the rest of the opposition took the issue to a popular referendum in fall 1989. The balance of power then shifted from the Communists to their opponents in the course of the negotiations, aborting the Communists' attempt to create a more presidential system. As a result of its mode of transition, Hungary created a new regime with no overtly undemocratic rules, a complex majoritarian electoral law, and a parliamentary system.

After the transition, no major actor remained opposed to democracy.[22] The institutional choices of the transition period also allowed Hungary to avoid the serious legislative-executive clashes that characterized Brazilian and Polish posttransitional politics. The complex majoritarian electoral rules accorded seat bonuses to large parties, turning pluralities into near HDF majorities in 1990 and ex-Communist majorities in 1994. This electoral system not only facilitated the reentry of the Communists' successor, the Hungarian Socialist Party, into the political system as a "normal" political actor playing by the new rules, but it also potentially generated the conditions for coherent policymaking. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that Hungary's relatively unrestricted negotiated settlement left no negative legacies. Ironically, despite their otherwise positive effects, Hungary's electoral rules exacted a toll on the legitimacy and responsiveness of the inaugural HDF government. Its disproportionate parliamentary strength after the first elections reinforced its sometimes highhanded tendency to regard itself as the only true arbiter cf Hungarian interests, especially in pursuing its own nationalist agenda to the partial neglect of other pressing issues. When viewed comparatively, however, Hungary's reform through extrication generated considerably less troubling legacies for democratic consolidation than other modes of transition.

Reform through Rupture: Argentina and Czechoslovakia Both Argentina and Czechoslovakia are cases of reform through rupture. In Argentina, the impetus for change clearly came from groups in society opposed to military rule. The transition itself, however, did not start until the military rulers capitulated to demands for regime change following their defeat by the British in the Falklands/Malvinas war in June 1982. Military defeat also rendered the incumbent elite too weak to control the transition, and the transitional agenda was dictated by the counterelites.

Thus, Argentina's transition was particularly straightforward. In contrast to Chile, the incumbent elite's acquiescence reduced the uncertainty of the transition process. Furthermore, in contrast to Brazil and Poland, the weakness of the old elite ensured that the advance of the opposition would not be complicated or slowed by constraining mechanisms. Finally, in contrast to Hungary, the political vulnerability of the old rulers and their allies prevented them from shaping the future regime through negotiations. Argentina's transition broke cleanly with the past.

The fact that Argentina's transition was overseen by an incumbent caretaker government, an interim form of government in which the old rulers usually set the terms of the transition and force accommodation on counterelites, is misleading. The agenda of the transition was actually set by the antiincumbent elites and accepted by the outgoing military rulers. The military rulers rapidly conceded to the demand of the *Multipartidaria*, the multiparty opposition alliance, for competitive elections, the compromise arrangement of the various parties that had united in opposition to military rule. The military rulers were largely powerless to craft institutional rules to protect their interests or improve the chances of their allies. Having failed to introduce a new constitution at the peak of their power and now incapable even of amending the existing one, the military resorted expediently to the wholesale resurrection of the 1853 presidentialist constitution. The new electoral law did not establish a sequence of elections but simply reintroduced a system of proportional representation that neither hampered the military's opponents nor favored its weak allies. Thus, Argentina's transition was rapidly completed. Without competition from the old rulers, the two main parties of the *Multipartidaria* faced off in elections in October 1983, and the newly elected president and congress assumed power in December 1993. Argentina adopted an unconstrained democratic system.[23]

The legacies of Argentina's transition through rupture were partially positive. No undemocratic measures restricted and no major actors opposed the democratic rules of the game. But they also posed a distinctive problem of elite competition. The securely positioned *Multipartidaria*, not needing to unify against an authoritarian opponent or to defend free elections, started to disintegrate in late 1982. In contrast to Brazil and Poland, this disintegration did not complicate or prolong the transition process. Indeed, the powerlessness of Argentina's old rulers was so extreme that it was even possible and convenient for the counterelites to defer resolution of key constitutional issues. However, the breakup of the antiauthoritarian coalition rapidly turned former allies into fierce competitors who were unable to forge consensus on a new constitution. The administrations of both Alfonsín (1983–89) and Menem (1989–95) sought to present themselves as the embodiment of the nation and to use their temporary majorities to become the hegemonic party by unilaterally resolving constitutional issues. Due to its reform through rupture, Argentina squandered the opportunity to tackle such issues before the consensus generated in the antiauthoritarian struggle dissipated in the heat of electoral competition. Its democracy has thus been threatened by the reluctance of the key political actors to see themselves as parts of a larger system, a defining feature of democracy.

Czechoslovakia's so-called velvet revolution was also a reform through rupture. The transition was triggered by an upsurge of popular mobilization in response to the repression of a student demonstration in November 1989. Thereafter,

previously isolated dissident leaders received validation in the approbation of the crowds at almost daily rallies, and a brief symbolic general strike ("revolution on the lunch hour") telegraphed the defection of the workers from the Communist leadership. This dramatic revelation of regime weakness, coupled with the already evident refusal of the Soviet Union to intervene coercively, induced the previously inflexible Communist rulers to abandon their resistance to change.

As in Argentina, the transition was brief and fairly uncomplicated. The opposition seized the initiative and imposed its improvised program on the retreating incumbent elite. Negotiations took the form largely of iterative cycles of opposition demands, evasive government action, expanded opposition demands, and eventual and grudging government acceptance, all compressed within a two week period. Whereas opposition elites accepted conditions imposed by the old rulers in Chile, Brazil, and Poland, they forced the incumbent elites to make massive concessions that amounted to capitulation—in particular, the abandonment of the dogma of the leading role of the party and commitment to competitive elections—in Czechoslovakia. As in Argentina, expediency in the face of the opportunity for a rapid transition dictated the temporary retention of the Communist constitution which, in contrast to the earlier Czechoslovak democratic constitution of 1920, provided for a federal structure of government for the multinational state. The transition was rapidly completed in June 1990 when parliamentary elections inaugurated a fully competitive democratic system.

Despite its ease and the unconstrained institutional arrangement it produced, Czechoslovakia's transition also left a problematic legacy for posttransitional politics. As in Argentina, the mode of transition first encouraged the deferral of fundamental constitutional issues; the posttransition logic of electoral competition then made it virtually impossible to resolve them in a consensual manner. Even though Czechoslovakia's antiauthoritarian coalition was more unified throughout the transition than Argentina's, serious differences among the anticommunist forces, particularly regarding the long-troubled Czech-Slovak relationship, were already visible in the symbolic struggle over the state's postcommunist name and in the division along national lines of both the opposition front and the party system that emerged from the June 1990 elections.

The detrimental consequences of this legacy came fully to the fore at the beginning of the posttransitional phase. First, the two cooperating anticommunist movements, the Czech Civic Forum and the Slovak Public against Violence, dissolved in 1990 and 1991, respectively. More significantly, their successor parties merged into the broader currents of two increasingly hardened, ethnically segmented political subsystems. As the constitutional question of Czech-Slovak relations emerged on the political agenda, no statewide force generated consensus on the basic rules of Czech and Slovak elite interaction within a more decentralized state. Indeed, Slovak elite politics largely opposed Pragocentrism and the Czech

leadership. This centrifugal tendency was further reinforced by the retention of the "consociational" Communist constitution, which provided both national groupings in the federal assembly, regardless of size, a veto power over constitutional revision.[24] This provision was a formula for deadlock. As in Argentina, then, reform through rupture contributed to a particularly pernicious political dynamic. Czechoslovakia's particular cleavage structure differed from Argentina's pattern of elite hegemonic pretensions. The politics of ethnonational segmentation led to the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state in January 1993. Even if the breakup was a peaceful, "velvet divorce," it still represented Czechoslovakia's ultimate failure to institutionalize the rules of elite contestation and to consolidate its new democracy.[25]

Revolution from Above: Bulgaria In Bulgaria, the ruling elite lacked pressure from a strong opposition and was unreceptive to a political opening until the regional collapse of Communist power. These external events, with their message of Soviet nonintervention, shifted the internal power balance and prompted a preemptive opening from above. Younger, less implicated Communist leaders in the ruling center consulted with Gorbachev in November 1989 before initiating a "palace coup" that displaced the discredited top leadership. This move, which marked the beginning of Bulgaria's transition, can be understood as a preemption of mounting though weakly organized resistance to Communist rule assembled under the umbrella Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). Indeed, the Communist strategy was to open competition so as to forestall a fuller popular mobilization that might attenuate their dominance.

The impact of this revolution from above on the outcome of the transition was quite evident. The Bulgarian Communist party, renamed the Bulgarian Socialist Party, scheduled and won elections to a parliamentary/constituent assembly in June 1990 on the basis of a majoritarian electoral law that favored the better organized and prepared incumbents. From this victory the former Communists had the power to fashion the rules of the new regime in the constitution of 1991, a largely democratic document that lifted all major constraints on competition but nonetheless contained language potentially restrictive of free speech and minority organization. When the transition came to an end with the holding of competitive elections in October 1991, Bulgaria emerged as a democracy, though one that bore the marks of Communist control of the transition.

Unsurprisingly, the most direct impact of the mode of transition on posttransitional political dynamics was the strategic advantage it bestowed upon the former rulers. Superficially, it appeared that the incumbent's strategy backfired when the opposition edged out the ex-Communists in the 1991 elections. But the new government, based on a UDF coalition with the minority Turks, was incapable of governing and collapsed after a year, paving the way for the more cohesive and

better organized ex-Communists to return to government and to win the 1994 election handily, as well. As in Chile but unlike the other East European cases, the UDF held together tenuously in the face of continued Communist power; in contrast to Chile, however, the UDF's "premature birth" in the Communist-initiated transition impaired its ability effectively to counterbalance the ex-Communists.[26]

Bulgaria's posttransitional politics have thus been characterized by a lopsided pattern of elite contestation, which has raised the stakes of politics and impeded the normalization of interelite relations through mutual acceptance of the concept of loyal opposition. The deleterious effect of the mode of transition on the process of democratic consolidation is very clear in the questionable commitment to democratic rules by both the ex-Communists and the opposition, each side justifying deviations from democratic norms by referring to the antisystem behavior of the other. Posttransitional politics, indeed, have been marked by sporadic violations of democratic procedures, including canceled or invalidated local elections, frequent reports of electoral manipulation and fraud, and conflict with the mainstream media, engendering government criticism and the jailings of key journalists. Bulgaria's revolution from above has spawned a pattern of elite interaction that constrains democracy by weakening the commitment of key actors to its basic rules.

Conclusion

Our analysis suggests that in reforms from below, exemplified by Chile, broad opposition movements open up the political system by demanding their inclusion in the political arena, but simultaneously strong incumbent elites are able to impose constraints on elite contestation. The regime that emerges from this mode of transition is a restricted democracy. The challenge of democratic consolidation is to reform the undemocratic aspects, while avoiding a backlash from the old elites, whose commitment to democracy remains uncertain and who appear unwilling to play the role of loyal opposition.

Reforms through transaction are associated with more complicated and protracted transitions and less restricted versions of democracy. As Brazil and Poland show, because the incumbent elites acquiesce in regime change, reforms through transaction generate political openings for elite competition and subsequently create a stake in the new system for both old and new elites. The problem with cases like Brazil and Poland is not the overtly undemocratic nature of the transition's legacies or the disloyalty of the old elites toward the new regime. Rather, the lingering power of the old elites and the loss of identity of the antiauthoritarian coalition, two factors that manifest themselves in the stepwise

process of transition, lead to the adoption of institutional rules that are not optimal for democratization. More specifically, the new institutional rules generate repeated clashes between the executive and legislature and leave a legacy that hinders governability and democratic consolidation.

Reforms through extrication, like reforms through transaction, result in unrestricted democracy. Both the incumbent and counter elites accept the need for elite contestation. However, as Hungary shows, the old rulers are unable to mold the transition; the agenda of the transition is basically resolved on the terms of the counterelites. The transition process thus marks a clearer break with the past and avoids the costly complications associated with reforms through transaction. Nonetheless, the lingering power of the old elites has a moderating effect and makes the break somewhat smoother than in reforms through rupture. While the Hungarian Communist elites were unable to impose their conditions on the transition, they engaged the opposition in serious bargaining, which forced the counterelites, in contrast to Argentina and Czechoslovakia, to confront issues of constitutional design before competitive elections were held and the divisive struggles of normal politics fully took hold. The balanced strength of old and new elites increases the likelihood that the former rulers will adapt to democratic rules and not threaten the system. Reforms through extrication, in short, make both the process of transition to democracy and steady progress toward democratic consolidation easier.

Reforms through rupture, as exemplified by Argentina and Czechoslovakia, appear to be the most unproblematic type of transition. They break dramatically with the past and allow the opposition to impose its demand for unrestricted elections. On the positive side, the weakness of the old elites allows the establishment of a new institutional framework without the problematic constraints associated with more controlled transitions. But the weakness of the old rulers and the ease of the transition itself create their own negative legacies. Because counterelites achieve a breakthrough without serious, sustained negotiations with the old rulers, the rapid transition can defer debate on constitutional issues, and the interim institutional framework can be accepted out of expediency. Subsequently, the logic of posttransitional electoral competition pits former allies against each other and impedes consensual resolution of constitutional issues. The old rulers are too weak to pose a common threat that could convince counterelites to compromise. Intense elite competition within an institutional framework that does not ameliorate distrust or facilitate conflict resolution makes it increasingly difficult to contain competition within the existing democratic framework. Ironically, reforms through rupture make the transition to democracy relatively easy but also hamper democratic consolidation by reducing the incentive for counterelites to develop cooperative relationships and consensus on key institutional rules during the critical period of transition.

Finally, revolutions from above resemble reforms through rupture in their relative lack of complexity. However, as Bulgaria shows, the less complicated transition is due, not to the power of opposition elites to set the agenda, but rather to the ability of a segment of the incumbent elites to break with the old order and singlehandedly define a transitional agenda from above. Because their basic aim is to preempt or control more sweeping changes, this mode of transition also generates a political opening. But as in reforms through rupture, the conditions that enable a swift transition to democracy may encumber democratic consolidation. The former rulers are likely to retain a disproportionate influence within the political system vis-à-vis the still incoherent opposition. A lopsided pattern of elite contestation undermines mutual trust among competing elites and tempts the party in power periodically to abridge the democratic rules of the game. The lack of an effective counterbalance to the elite that oversees the transition impedes routinization of competition and acceptance of the concept of loyal opposition. In comparative terms, revolution from above is probably the mode of transition least likely to sustain steady progress toward the consolidation of democracy.

In sum, an essentially political factor, the process of transition itself, is important in determining the likelihood that the outcome of transition will be a democratic form of government, as well as the distinctive challenges new democracies face when they try to consolidate themselves. This focus on the process of transition advances the debate on modes of transition in two fundamental ways. First, it conceptualizes modes of transition as different types of transition from established regimes, rather than conflating the transition from an established regime and the transition to a new regime. We are thus able to demonstrate how the mode of transition helps to account, not only for posttransitional political dynamics, but also for the resulting regime, a key explanatory challenge. Second, much of the confusion in the debate about modes of transition can be dispelled by conceptualizing modes of transition in terms of two dimensions that capture the uniquely fluid nature of the transition process and by specifying the causal mechanisms whereby the legacies of modes of transition are generated.

To be sure, the precise mechanisms whereby a transition's legacies are produced and reproduced need to be clarified, and different modes of transition need to be linked with various subtypes of democracy and their distinctive dynamics. The debate about modes of transition needs to be connected with some of the most systematic attempts to conceptualize institutional variants of democracy. Further research is also needed on possible linkages between the mode of transition, which we have taken as an independent variable, and the character of the prior regime. Finally, a crucial, though daunting, task still to be confronted is to integrate the political determinants of democratization emphasized here with approaches that focus on sociological and economic factors. This article can not elaborate such a

research agenda. It has accomplished its goal if it has made the more modest suggestion that such an agenda is worth developing.

NOTES

1. Juan J. Linz, "Some Comparative Thoughts on the Transition to Democracy in Portugal and Spain," in Jorge Braga de Macedo and Simon Serfaty, eds., *Portugal since the Revolution: Economic and Political Perspectives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981); Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 11, 37–39; Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics,* 23 (October 1990), 1–21; Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe," *International Social Science Journal,* 128 (May 1991), 269–84; Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), chs. 4, 6; Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), ch. 3; Guillermo O'Donnell, "Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds.; Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz et al., *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 14–15, 163–74, 368–71, ch. 4; P. Nikiforos Diamandouros and Richard Gunther, "Preface," in Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. xii–xxvii; P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, Hans-Jürgen Puhle, and Richard Gunther, "Conclusion," in Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, eds., pp. 397–98, 402–7; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 71–72.

2. The debate whether pacts are beneficial or dysfunctional for democratization is a case in point. After an initial consensus that pacted transitions were more conducive to democratic consolidation, a position advanced by O'Donnell and Schmitter in 1986, the negative aspects of pacts were stressed by Karl and Valenzuela. However, Karl's argument, to the effect that pacts usually entail exclusionary elements that impede democratic consolidation, has in turn been criticized by Di Palma and Diamandouros, Puhle, and Gunther. In a further twist, O'Donnell has recently argued for a third position, stressing the negative aspects or trade-offs associated with both pacted and nonpacted transitions, a position shared by Huntington. O'Donnell and Schmitter, p. 39; Karl, pp. 9–12, 14; Valenzuela, pp. 76–78; Di Palma, pp. 122–25; Diamandouros, Puhle, and Gunther, pp. 406–7; O'Donnell, pp. 24–37; Huntington, p. 276.

3. See, most forcefully, Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 94–99.

4. Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics,* 2 (April 1970), 337–63.

5. Ibid., p. 346.

6. Because actors' strategies of change are conditioned by the relative power of the outgoing rulers, these are really two parallel characterizations. We follow Karl, pp. 8–9, in distinguishing transitions in terms of actors' strategies instead of the more common alternative of highlighting the degree of control exercised by the outgoing rulers. For conceptualizations that emphasize the relative power of the outgoing rulers, see Linz, "Some Comparative Thoughts"; and Scott Mainwaring, "Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., pp. 317–26.

7. Though Karl distinguishes among actors who dominate the transition process, her conceptualization emphasizes the relative prevalence of elite versus mass actors and does not directly target a crucial issue in transitions: the contest between incumbent elites and counterelites. Indeed, her conceptualization would conflate transitions that are initiated by incumbent elites with those that result from the actions of counterelites. Our conceptualization is closer to Valenzuela's emphasis on "the attitude of the last ruling elites of the authoritarian regime toward democratization," by emphasizing whether change comes from within or outside the incumbent elite. Karl, pp. 8–9; Valenzuela, pp. 73–78.

8. On institutional choices, see Arend Lijphart, "Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, 1989–91," *Journal of Theoretical Politics,* 4 (1992), 207–23. On the consolidation of specific institutional arrangements, see Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy, Volume 1: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

9. Here we follow Przeworski, p. 10, who argues that in the current era, in which restrictions on mass participation are rare, "the possibility of contestation by conflicting interests is sufficient to explain the dynamics of democracy. Once political rights are sufficiently extensive to admit of conflicting interests, everything else follows."

10. The value of cross-regional comparisons has been hotly debated. The ultimate test of the utility of such comparisons is whether they produce theoretically compelling explanations. See the exchange between Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl and Valerie Bunce in *Slavic Review* (Spring 1994, Spring 1995, and Winter 1995).

11. Placement of all cases does not coincide in similar coding efforts. This discrepancy is due to differing criteria used to define mode of transition, the coding of cases by causes rather than characteristics of the transition process, and new information about the cases. For other attempts to code transitions, see Karl and Schmitter, p. 276; Huntington, p. 113; Valenzuela, p. 77; James W. McGuire, "Interim Government and Democratic Consolidation: Argentina in Comparative Perspective," in Shain and Linz et al., pp. 194–95; and Felipe Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 65.

12. Valenzuela, pp. 62–67.

13. While some authors have correctly stressed that Chile had an "incomplete transition" because important constitutional issues remained on the political agenda, it is still accurate to state that the transition ended in 1990, when the basic features of the new regime were defined.

14. Gerardo L. Munck, "Democratic Stability and Its Limits: An Analysis of Chile's 1993 Elections," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 36 (1994), 1–38; Manuel Antonio Garretón, *Hacia una nueva era política: Estudio sobre democratizaciones* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995), pp. 34–42, 111–29, 216–17.

15. Most analysts of Brazil implicitly take liberalization as the beginning of a transition. But, as Przeworski, pp. 54–66, argues, "liberalization does not always lead to transition." It is crucial to distinguish clearly between liberalization and democratization.

16. Frances Hagopian, "The Compromised Consolidation: The Political Class in the Brazilian Transition," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation,* pp. 266, 247–48.

17. Thomas Bruneau, "Constitutions and Democratic Consolidation: Brazil in Comparative Perspective," in Diane Ethier, ed., *Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Southern Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 178–84.
18. Ibid., p. 184–90; Hagopian, pp. 272–77.
19. Scott Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination," *Comparative Political Studies,* 26 (July 1993), 198–228.
20. Lijphart, pp. 211, 213; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, "From Solidarity to Fragmentation," *Journal of Democracy*, 3 (April 1992), 55–69.
21. László Bruszt and David Stark, "Remaking the Political Field in Hungary: From the Politics of Confrontation to the Politics of Competition," *Journal of International Affairs,* 45 (1991), 201–45.
22. Adras Bozoki, "Party Formation and Constitutional Change in Hungary," in Terry Cox and Andy Furlong, eds., *Hungary: The Politics of Transition* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).
23. Gerardo L. Munck, *Authoritarianism and Democratization: Soldiers and Workers in Argentina, 1976–83, in Comparative Perspective* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, forthcoming), ch. 6.
24. Lijphart, pp. 216–17.
25. Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).
26. Georgi Karasimeonov, "Parliamentary Elections of 1994 and the Development of the Bulgarian Party System," *Party Politics,* 1 (October 1995), 579–88.