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THE FOURTH WAVE OF DEMOCRACY *AND* DICTATORSHIP

Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World

By 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 post-communist states are various shades of dictatorships or unconsolidated transitional regimes.

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

One would think that answering these questions should be easy for political science. Simultaneous regime change in two dozen countries—all beginning in roughly similar places but moving along very different trajectories over ten years—provides the perfect data set for testing extant theories and developing new hypotheses about regime change. Clear variation on the dependent variable with a finite set of independent variables would seem to offer a unique laboratory to isolate causal patterns. Yet although a decade has passed since the collapse of European communism, theory development regarding regime change has barely advanced. At the beginning of the 1990s Adam Przeworski pointed to the inability to predict communism's collapse as a "dismal failure"¹ of political science. Ten years later the paucity of

* For comments on earlier drafts of this article, the author is grateful to George Breslauer, Daniel Brinks, Valerie Bunce, Timothy Colton, Thomas Carothers, Kathleen Collins, Larry Diamond, Jeffrey Herbst, Terry Lynn Karl, David Laitin, Marc Plattner, Vladimir Popov, Philip Roeder, Alex Sokolovski, Lisa McIntosh-Sundstrom, Celeste Wallander, Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, Joshua Tucker, Elizabeth Wood, and three anonymous reviewers.

¹ Przeworski, "The 'East' Becomes the 'South'? The 'Autumn of the People' and the Future of Eastern Europe," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24 (March 1991), 20.

plausible explanations for regime patterns in the postcommunist world stands as an even greater indictment.

This article proposes an argument to explain regime changes in the postcommunist world. Although the argument endorses actorcentric approaches that have dominated analyses of the third wave of democratization, it also challenges some of the central hypotheses of the earlier literature concerning the relationship between mode of transition and resulting regime type. The article offers an alternative set of causal paths from ancien régime to new regime that can account for both outcomes—democracy and dictatorship. These transitions from communist rule to new regime types are so different from the third wave democratic transitions in the 1970s and 1980s that they should not even be grouped under the same rubric.² Instead, decommunization triggered a fourth wave of regime change—to democracy *and* dictatorship.

A central claim of the 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 its first preferences through the use of force, the sides opted to negotiate power-sharing arrangements with their opponents, which represented second-best outcomes for both. Often called “pacts,” these power-sharing arrangements negotiated during transition were then institutionalized as a set of checks and balances in the new democracy. Significantly, ideas, norms, and beliefs played little or no role in these transition theories, and hence the famous notion that a country could become a “democracy without democrats.”

This pattern is not obvious in the postcommunist world, as most postcommunist transitions did not produce democracy, and even the successful democratic transitions did not follow the pacted path. To the contrary, it was situations of *unequal* distributions of power that produced the quickest and most stable transitions from communist rule. In countries with asymmetrical balances of power, it was the ideological orientation of the more powerful party that largely determined the type

² 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 that is only weakly present. Transitions to 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 article, however, the fact that Southern European 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).

of regime to emerge. Democracy emerged therefore in countries where democrats enjoyed a decisive power advantage. And hence institutions of power sharing or checks and balances did not result from compromises between the *ancien régime* and democratic challengers but rather 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, yielding unconsolidated, unstable partial democracies and autocracies.

This article explores this alternative approach for explaining postcommunist regime change as follows. Section I outlines the basic tenets of the transitions literature that emerged from the analysis of the Latin American and Southern European cases. Section II contrasts this earlier cooperative theory of regime emergence with a noncooperative model of regime change. Section III 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; at the same time it underscores the weak resemblance between this relationship and causal patterns identified in the earlier transitions literature. Section IV examines cases that do not fit the theory outlined in Section II. 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 V concludes.

I. 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 how divergent outcomes result from similar structural contexts.

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

Laurence Whitehead, *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, while strategic interaction between elites from state and society establishes the mode of transition and the type of regime that then emerges. Elite groups are constructed as real actors with autonomous causal power to influence the course of regime change.³

Since these intellectual tracks were laid down, they have framed in large measure the thinking about regime change, pushing aside alternative theories, metaphors, and levels of analysis.⁴ No single theory of transition has been universally recognized, nor has an actorcentric theory of democratization been formalized.⁵ Nonetheless, several hypotheses have gained wide acceptance.⁶ Strikingly, many of the postulates are very similar to institutional arguments being generated by rational choice theorists working in the positivist tradition.

³ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, vol. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); John Higley and Michael Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns," *American Sociological Review* 54 (February 1989); Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (October 1990); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); idem, "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, Ind.: 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, *Radicals, 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).

⁴ In the postcommunist world the phenomenon in question might be more appropriately labeled revolution or decolonization, rather than democratization. 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).

⁵ Przeworski's *Democracy and the Market* (fn. 3) comes the closest. See also Cohen (fn. 3); and Colomer (fn. 3).

⁶ Because proponents of strategic theories of democratization do not universally recognize a single theory, it is difficult to argue with transistology. In the last decade many scholars have added useful theoretical caveats and important definitional adjectives to the earlier canons of transistology. 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 defines 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 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"; Collier, *Paths towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South-ern America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5.

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 in order to proceed with crafting new rules for governing this state.⁷ Beyond this, one of the principal theoretical contributions of the literature on the third wave concerns the causal relationship assigned to the mode of transition in determining successful and unsuccessful transitions to democracy. The more ambitious have even traced a causal relationship between the mode of transition and the type of democracy,⁸ on the basis of temporal path dependence—that 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 sets of choice-making actors in the transition drama: soft-liners and hard-liners within the ruling elite of the ancien régime, and moderates and radicals among the challengers to the ancien régime.⁹ Many modes of transition can result from the strategic interaction of these actors. Most prevalent has been democracy by imposition—a path in which the soft-liners from the ancien régime set the terms of transition—but pacted transitions have received the most theoretical attention.¹⁰ A democratic outcome is most likely when soft-liners and moderates enter into pacts that navigate the transition from dictatorship to democracy.¹¹ If the transition is not pacted, it is more likely to fail.¹² In the earlier transi-

⁷ Dankwart Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2 (April 1970). 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 article.

⁸ Karl (fn. 3); 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); idem, "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).

⁹ 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 (fn. 2), 121.

¹⁰ 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 (fn. 3), 9; and Huntington (fn. 2), 124.

¹¹ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 3); Karl (fn. 3); Przeworski (fn. 3, 1991 and 1993); and Colomer (fn. 3). Though a pact is not a necessary condition for a successful democratic transition, it enhances the probability of success.

¹² In facilitating the transition to democracy, pacts can also lock into place specific nondemocratic practices, which in turn may impede the consolidation of liberal democracy over time. See Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), chap. 5.

tions 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."¹³ 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."¹⁴ If property rights, the territorial integrity of the state, or international alliances are threatened by a revolutionary force from below, then the hard-liners in the ancien régime will roll back democratic gains.¹⁵ 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."¹⁶ The pursuit of economic and political reform was considered dangerous and destabilizing.¹⁷ 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 are issues with divisible stakes and reversible outcomes.¹⁸ Consequently, keeping the former issues off the table was considered an essential component of a successful transition.

Second, sharing proportionally in the distribution of benefits resulting from regime change provides both sides with positive-sum outcomes. Trade-offs 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

¹³ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 3), 41.

¹⁴ Daniel Friedman, "Bringing Society Back into Democratic Transition Theory after 1989: Pact Making and Regime Collapse," *East European Politics and Societies* 7 (Fall 1993), 484.

¹⁵ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 3), 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69. See also Huntington (fn. 2), 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.

¹⁷ Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, "Economic Adjustment and the Prospects for Democracy," in Haggard and Kaufman, eds., *The Politics of Economic Adjustment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ See Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Civil War Settlement: Modeling the Bases of Compromise" (Manuscript, New York University, August 1999).

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.¹⁹

Thus, although no side achieves its optimal outcome in pacted transitions, all sides achieve relative gains over the nondemocratic past. From this perspective, “negotiations, compromises, and agreements” are central to making democracy.²⁰

Finally, these theorists have emphasized the need to limit the role of radicals and the masses in the negotiation process. Pacted transitions are elite affairs; mobilized masses spoil the party. Jacobins must therefore be sidelined,²¹ for if they are part of the equation, democracy is less likely to result.²² As Karl posited in 1990: “To date, *no* stable political democracy has resulted from regimes transitions in which mass actors have gained control even momentarily over traditional ruling classes.”²³ 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 then only a limited role in the new political system that eventually emerges.²⁴

Limiting the agenda of change, dividing the benefits proportionally, 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? Though not always explicitly stated, analysts of the third wave answer this question by examining the balance of power between the challenged and challengers. Negotiated transitions are most likely, they find, when the distribution of power is

¹⁹ Friedman (fn. 14), 483.

²⁰ Huntington (fn. 2), 164.

²¹ Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

²² Important challenges to this argument include Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 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 (April 1997); Alfred Stepan, *Democratizing Brazil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Collier (fn. 6).

²³ Karl (fn. 3), 8. See also Samuel Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?” *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984), 6.

²⁴ Myron Weiner, “Empirical Democratic Theory,” in Myron Weiner and Ergun Ozbudin, eds., *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 26; and J. Samuel Valenzuela, “Labor Movements in Transitions to Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 21 (July 1989). Even a study devoted the role of the workers in democratization underscores the dangers of an overly mobilized society. See Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democratic Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 271.

relatively equal. In summing up the results of their multivolume study, O'Donnell and Schmitter assert that "political democracy is produced by stalemate and dissensus rather than by prior unity and consensus."²⁵ Philip Roeder makes 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."²⁶ 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."²⁷

Przeworski extends the argument to posit that *uncertain* balances of power are most likely to produce the most democratic arrangements: "If everyone is behind the Rawlsian veil, that is, if they know little about 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."²⁸ Uncertainty enhances the probability of compromise, and relatively equal distributions of power create uncertainty.

This approach emphasizes the strategic process itself as the primary causal variable producing successful transitions.²⁹ 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."³⁰ It is therefore the dynamics of the strategic situation, not the actors and their preferences, that produce or fail to produce democracy. As Levine excellently sums up: "Democracies emerge out of mutual fear among opponents rather than as the deliberate outcome of concerted commitments to make democratic political arrangements work."³¹ Moderate, evolutionary processes are considered good for democratic emergence; radical revolutionary processes are considered bad. Cooperative bar-

²⁵ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 3), 72. See also Huntington (fn. 2), 167.

²⁶ 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?* (Lanham, Md.: Roman and Littlefield, 1998), 209.

²⁷ Rustow (fn. 7), 352.

²⁸ Przeworski (fn. 3, 1991), 87.

²⁹ Roeder (fn. 26), 207.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 208. See also Philip Roeder, "Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10 (January 1994), 62; and Colomer (fn. 3).

³¹ Daniel H. Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics* 40 (April 1988), 379.

gains produce democratic institutions; noncooperative processes do not.³² "Democracy cannot be dictated; it emerges from bargaining."³³

This set of arguments has a close affinity with positivist accounts of institutionalism that have emerged from cooperative game theory.³⁴ The 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.³⁵ 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 that provides gains for everyone.

II. A NONCOOPERATIVE MODEL OF TRANSITION

Actorcentric, cooperative approaches to democratization offer a useful starting point for explaining transformations of postcommunist regimes. Actors did cause regime changes in this part of the world, and because many of them claimed to be building democracy, the transitions to democracy literature offers a useful starting point and appropriate language for analyzing postcommunist transitions. Moreover, many of the democratic challengers in the 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. Though 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 settling all border issues, the resolution of major sovereignty

³² See Hardin's review and then rejection of this approach in Russell Hardin, *Liberalism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³³ Przeworski (fn. 3, 1991), 90.

³⁴ Hilton Root, "Tying the King's Hands: Credible Commitments and the Royal Fiscal Policy during the Old Regime," *Rationality and Society* 1 (October 1989); Kenneth Shepsle, "Discretion, Institutions, and the Problem of Government Commitment," in Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, eds., *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991); Douglass North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History* 49 (December 1989); Kenneth Shepsle, "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach," *Journal of Politics* 1, no. 2 (1989); 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).

³⁵ Geoffrey Brennan and James Buchanan, *The Reason of Rules* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 30.

contests was a precondition for new regime emergence in 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 under the third wave of democratization at all. In addition, the causal pathways of the third wave do not produce the “right” outcomes in the fourth-wave transitions from communist rule. Imposed transitions from above in the former communist world produced not partial democracy but dictatorship. It is instead revolutionary transitions—the mode of transition thought to be least likely to facilitate democratic outcomes by third-wave theorists—that have actually produced 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 both the democratic and the 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 they 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 clear empirical confirmation in the postcommunist world. Because communism bundled the political and the economic and because the crumbling of communism occurred so rapidly, sequencing political and economic change proved impossible. Thus, although many had predicted at the beginning of the decade that the reorganization of economic institutions would undermine democratic transitions, that has not necessarily turned out to be the case.³⁶ To the contrary, those countries that moved the fastest on economic transformation have also achieved the greatest success in consolidating democratic institutions.³⁷

³⁶ The most theoretically rigorous prediction of failure was Przeworski (fn. 3, 1991).

³⁷ Joel S. Hellman, “Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions,” *World Politics* 50 (January 1998); Jean-Jacques Dethier, Hafez Ghanem, and Edda Zoli, “Does

Second, the literature on pacts 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.³⁸ Likewise, there are few stable or efficient midpoints between a command economy and a market economy.³⁹ 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, noncommunist transitions, there were divisions between soft-liners and hard-liners in the ancien régime, but the splits played a much less significant role.⁴⁰ Instead, the degree of cooperation and mobilization within society was more salient, while the divides between moderates and radicals were less apparent.⁴¹ The mass actors so damaging to democratization in the third wave were instrumental in its successes in the fourth wave.

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 régime. Rev-

Democracy Facilitate the Economic Transition? An Empirical Study of Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union" (Manuscript, World Bank, June 1999); EBRD, *Transition Report 1999: Ten Years of Transition* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1999), chap. 5; and Anders Aslund, *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁸ See the cases discussed in Stephen Krasner, ed., *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Only one reformist from the old regime, Mikhail Gorbachev, plays a central role in *all* the postcommunist transitions, since 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.

⁴¹ 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.

olutionary 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 did often employ 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 old regime acquiesced in the new democratic rules because they had no power to resist.

Not all transitions from communism resulted in democracy, however. A second mode of transition is when the distribution of power favors the rulers of the *ancien régime*, 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. 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 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, since 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 the successful cases of democratization and deliberately ignored unsuccessful cases. If all countries undergoing stalemated transitions are brought into the analysis, however, the causal influence of this mode of transition becomes

less clear. Angola, for instance, has for decades experienced stalemate between competing powers, 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 nations agree on their relative strength."⁴² 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 the 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. So unlike Huntington, who asserted that "negotiation and compromise among political elites were at the heart of the democratization processes," in fact they were not.⁴³ In imposed transitions, one side took advantage of its more powerful position to craft institutions that benefited itself more than they benefited the weak. If the powerful adhered 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. But if they 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.⁴⁴ The crafting of new institutions—democratic or otherwise—is framed as a zero-sum game, in

⁴² Blaney, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 246.

⁴³ Huntington (fn. 2), 165.

⁴⁴ George Tsebelis, *Nested Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Stephen D. Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power: Life on the Pareto Frontier," *World Politics* 43 (April 1991); 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).

which one side obtains its most preferred outcome and the other side must settle for second-best and third-best outcomes. These institutions are not efficient and they do not enhance the welfare of all, but they can be stable.⁴⁵ In transitions to democracies, the losers usually obtain second-best outcomes, but even they make relative gains over the status quo ante.⁴⁶ In transitions to dictatorship, the losers' gains are much less substantial. The transition is not a bargain but a confrontation with winners and losers. Though 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.⁴⁷

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, whereas confrontation, violence, and hegemony are its enemies. This approach to 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 established.⁴⁸ 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.

III. CAUSAL PATHS OF POSTCOMMUNIST REGIME CHANGE

This alternative, noncooperative model for regime change offers a more comprehensive explanation of all postcommunist regime changes than does the framework outlined by the earlier analysts of third-wave tran-

⁴⁵ Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴⁶ For elaboration of this argument, see Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ 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).

⁴⁸ For evidence undermining the importance of these design 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" (Manuscript, World Bank, 2000).

sitions. 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 either democracy or dictatorship over the last decade. A distribution of power clearly favoring democrats at the moment of transition has helped to produce liberal democracy ten years later. A distribution of power clearly favoring dictators of the ancien régime has yielded new forms of authoritarian rule a decade later. Both 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 actorcentric 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.⁴⁹

The construction of Figure 1 required the use of crude estimates for the balance of power and the degree of democracy. Independent measures of both variables are the best immunization against 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 régime.⁵² If

⁴⁹ 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).

⁵⁰ Steven Fish uses a similar method (with slightly different results); see Fish, "The Determinants of Economic Reform in the Post-Communist World," *East European Politics and Society* 12 (Winter 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, because the results were overhauled within the next year or so. Albania and Azerbaijan are coded as more balanced cases and not clear victories over the ancien régime due to the tremendous change in the balance of power immediately following first votes. In Albania the parliament elected in 1991 fell into discord. In new general elections held in March 1992 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. 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 were still members of the CPSU. Yet they are coded as anticommunist.

	Dictatorships	Partial Democracies ^a	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 Régime	Belarus Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	Yugoslavia/Serbia	Romania

FIGURE 1
 TYPOLOGY OF POSTCOMMUNIST REGIMES

^a This label is deployed loosely to include countries somewhere in between democracy and dictatorship. If dissected further, one might find in this one residual category electoral democracies, pseudo democracies, partial democracies, quasi autocracies, and competitive autocracies. Specifying the differences is an important intellectual task, but is both beyond the scope of this paper and not central to its arguments. On the distinctions, see Diamond (fn. 49); Jeffrey Herbst, "Political Liberalization in Africa after Ten Years," *Comparative Politics* 33 (April 2001); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes in Peru and Ukraine in Comparative Perspective" (Manuscript, 2001); and David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997).

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

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—Wałęsa, Havel, Landsbergis—who were not previously members of the elite and who became important actors only because of their widespread societal support. When the balance of power became clear, these new political actors, aided by the support of society, imposed their will on the weaker elites, whether soft-liners or hard-liners, from the ancien régime. Though 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 eco-

⁵³ Adrian Karanymyck, ed., *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 2000–2001* (New York: Freedom House and Transaction Books, 2001). Freedom House, however, uses different labels—free, partly free, and not free. Though 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, since 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 article. 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 the bridging transitions in the “south.” See Valerie Bunce, “Regional Differences in Democratization: The East versus the South,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1998).

conomic 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 themselves and the ancien régime. First and foremost, Soviet power—always the chief constraint on all revolutionary change in the region—was now a variable, not a constant. But the power of the democrats 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 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 had resulted from the roundtable negotiations. Poland never again had a limited election in which only a portion of the seats was freely contested. Likewise, the roundtable concession that allowed the 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 régime 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 period of time, so there was not 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

⁵⁶ Karl (fn. 3), 11.

1956, compared with the more recent experience with opposition mobilization in Poland in 1980–81. Consequently, soft-liners from the ancien régime were 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 a long-term institutional legacy. During the turbulent months of the fall of 1989 and spring of 1990, the waning influence of communists in Hungary and in the region more generally became increasingly evident. Even before the first vote in March 1990, the old Communist Party had already 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 régime, 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 shifted the 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 régime were mass-based groups that had 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 régime 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. There were never cooperative negotiations between the communists and the street leaders, and the use of force against demonstrators was considered.⁵⁸ But pitted against a stronger force, the ancien régime eventually

⁵⁷ Miklos Haraszti, "Decade of the Handshake Transition," *East European Politics and Societies* 13 (Spring 1999), 290.

⁵⁸ The central committee wisely vetoed the idea on November 24, 1989.

surrendered power. In the first free and fair elections in the country, the Communist 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 1986–87, but elections in 1989 and 1990 were crucial to mobilizing anticommunist movements and demonstrating that the division of power between *ancien régime* and the challengers favored 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 in 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 régime* 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, the stalemate fueled confrontation. In January 1991 the Soviet government escalated the confrontation by invading Latvia and Lithuania with armed forces, killing more than 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 ended only 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 régime* 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

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

dynamic of all of 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 But in the post-communist world this mode of transition has produced new kinds of dictatorship, not democracy—as occurred in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, 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 five 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, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In the fall of 1991, however, the distribution of power in these countries still clearly favored the anciens régimes.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 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

⁶⁰ Huntington (fn. 2); and Karl (fn. 3).

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” (Manuscript, May 2000).

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

also demonstrated tolerance toward a free press and independent political organizations in the aftermath of 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 dictatorship based on a "cult of the individual." In Uzbekistan former first secretary of the Communist Party and now president Islam Karimov allowed only one, fixed election, in December 1991, in which he captured 86 percent of the vote.⁶³ In all of these countries, there was a paucity of powerful democrats at the transitional moment and therefore little in the way of democratic practice thereafter.

Belarus initially followed a similar path of autocratic imposition from above. Hard-liners dominated the ancien régime against a weak opposition, the Belarussian Popular Front. 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. In contrast to more successful transitions to democracy, however, Belarus's first postcommunist leader was not a leader of the democratic opposition but rather was a reformer from within the system with almost no popular following. A divided elite allowed Belarus's 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 opened the way for the emergence of an even more autocratic leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko, who won the election. Had a more powerful democratic movement emerged at the time, the trajectory of this transition might have been very different. The old hard-liners from the ancien régime, while initially wary of Lukashenko, moved quickly to work with the new leader in consolidating authoritarian rule.

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 Collins (fn. 62).

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 régime and its challengers was relatively equal have also been the most protracted and the least conclusive in the region—exactly the opposite of what earlier writers on third-wave democratization would have predicted. 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 of a pacted transition.⁶⁴ Like every other regime change in the region, the one in Moldova began with an exogenous shock—Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms. These changes initiated by Moscow allowed for the emergence of nongovernmental groups, which eventually consolidated under one umbrella organization, the Moldovan Popular Front (MPF). The 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 widespread support in society. On the contrary, the MPF won roughly one-third of the seats to the Supreme Soviet in the spring 1990 elections, a percentage much closer to the Democratic Russia Movement'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 régime, however, were not communist stalwarts but were soft-liners seeking to cooperate with the opposition. When another 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, because the communist leaders in Moldova in control at the time were more sympathetic to Gorbachev than to the coup plotters. While

⁶⁴ Mongolia might be a close second. See M. Steven Fish, "Mongolia: Democracy without Prerequisites," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (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.

no formal pact was ever codified between them, soft-liners from the ancien régime and MPF moderates cooperated to craft a relatively smooth transition from communism to democracy. Presidential power changed hands peacefully following 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 switching from a presidential system to a parliamentary democracy. This change was not negotiated. Highly contentious, it served to destabilize rather than consolidate democratic institutions.

In several respects the basic players and distribution of power between them were similar in Moldova and Russia. 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 régime. 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 were cooperative interlocutors for Russia's democratic challengers. Throughout the fall of 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 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 to pursue instead 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 was, however, only temporary. Less than two years later opponents of 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 latest 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 produced not a path of negotiated change but a protracted and violent transition that ended with the imposition of an unstable electoral democracy.

Ukraine began the transition from communism with a balance of power between *ancien régime* and challengers similar to that in Russia. The failed coup of 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. Kravchuk became a champion of Ukrainian nationalism overnight. In December 1991 he permitted a referendum on Ukrainian independence, 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 régime* that had sparked open confrontation in Russia in October 1993. Compared with 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 with 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 went on to produce 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 régime*. In 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 following the August 1991 coup attempt. Thus, instead of stalemate producing negotiations, it produced civil war.

⁶⁶ For elaboration, see McFaul (fn. 46), chaps. 9,10.

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 swung between cooperative and repressive.⁶⁷ After acquiescing in several liberal reforms guaranteeing the rights of social organizations and free expression, Makhkamov then used force to quell the so-called Islamic uprisings in February 1990, a move that 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, fifty thousand people had been killed and another eight hundred thousand displaced. A settlement was eventually brokered, but the result was a new unstable autocracy, not democracy.

Though Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Tajikistan started the transition from communism with relatively equal distributions of power between ancien régime and challengers, they experienced a variety of transition paths, which in turn 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 the less successful democratic transitions in Albania and Azerbaijan. In contrast to asymmetric power distributions that led to the imposition of dictatorship from above or democracy from below, many of the regimes that emerged from more balanced distributions of power are still unstable. Strikingly, in only a few cases did negotiations between challenged and challengers play a causal role in determining regime type. The countries most successful in consolidating liberal democracy

⁶⁷ Collins (fn. 62), 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.

experienced 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. Therefore, while the mode of transition does appear to have a strong causal effect on the type of regime that emerges, the causal patterns in the post-communist 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 contend that the balance of power is best addressed as part of the outcome rather than as 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 the need for 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 article treats balance of power as an independent variable rather than as part of the dependent variable, for two reasons. First, this is the analytic setup of the earlier third-wave literature, which this article seeks to challenge. That the 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 article is that these big structural variables have path-dependent consequences only 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 balance of power between friends and foes of the regime. The confluence of the 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

⁶⁹ Herbert Kitschelt, "Accounting for Outcomes of Post-Communist Regime Change: Causal Depth or Shallowness in Rival Explanations" (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 (January 1984).

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, while 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, while 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 regarding 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 that in the Soviet Union or Romania than that in Poland, Hungary, or Yugoslavia. Yet a decade after decommunization, democracy in the Czech Republic is more similar to democracy in Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia than to democracy in 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, for the short span of only one decade, broad generalizations based on deep structural causes hide as much history as they uncover.

IV. EXPLAINING ANOMALIES: BORDERS 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, but not all, cases in the region. There are many boxes in the three-by-three matrix in Figure 1 that should be empty but are not. Other factors must be introduced into the equation. First, the failure to meet Rustow's requisite of defined borders for the polity can impede democratic emergence indefinitely. Powerful challengers to the ancien régime may fail to establish democratic institutions if there are lingering border issues. Second, over time geographic location can

override the causal influence of the initial mode of transition by offering neighboring states incentives to join the norm of the region.

DISPUTED BORDERS

The greatest number of cases defying the analytic framework outlined in this article are countries where the distribution of power was firmly in favor of the challengers yet the regime that emerged 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. Anti-Soviet sentiment in Georgia fused with militant nationalism to produce Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In May 1991 he became Georgia's first democratically elected president, winning 85 percent of the vote. But 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. 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 has also produced an alternative elite within the armed forces to challenge that of the embattled republic. This new 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, it forced Ter Pet-

rosian to resign in February 1998. Since the palace coup and Kocharian's election as president in 1998 in a rigged vote, Armenia's regime has become increasingly authoritarian. Many factors have contributed to political crisis in Armenia, but the territorial dispute has been especially destabilizing.⁷¹

THE "WEST"

Democratic overachievers comprise a second category of cases anomalous to the general model outlined above, a category that includes Romania and Bulgaria, two countries that started the transition from communism with very powerful leaders from the ancien régime. In Romania anticommunist societal mobilization destroyed the ancien régime but did not take the next step of filling the void with new societal leaders and organizations. In December 1989, after only two weeks of popular revolt, the Romanian dictatorship—the most totalitarian in the region—collapsed. Nicolae Ceaușescu, the Romanian leader, was killed and the Romanian Communist Party banned. There were no pacts, no negotiations, no compromises. After the Ceaușescu regime perished, however, a phantom political organization, the National Salvation Front (NSF), rushed in to fill the political vacuum. Quasi dissidents, poets, and societal leaders initially allied with the NSF, but it gradually became clear that this front had been created by former communist officials 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. The break with the ancien régime was less dramatic in Bulgaria, but the resilience of the old guard was comparable. In the early 1990s the prospects for Bulgarian and Romanian democracy were grim. Yet a decade later, both countries have made progress toward consolidating liberal democracy.

Democratic consolidation in both countries has benefited from proximity to the West. Indeed, throughout the postcommunist world, there is a positive correlation between distance from the West and regime type.⁷² Closeness to the West certainly does not explain regime type at the moment of transition. Before the fall of Milosevic, Serbia's dictatorship was

⁷¹ Imagine the counterfactual. If Armenia were 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 area for 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.

⁷² See Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly, "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Postcommunist World," *World Politics* 53 (October 2000).

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. It is location—and not Christianity, education, or economic development—that provides the causal push toward democracy. Initially uncertain regimes in Bulgaria and Romania have become increasingly more democratic over time, as these countries have aggressively 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 even Croatian and Serbian democracy now seems poised to benefit from European integration.

V. CONCLUSION

This article has outlined an actorcentric theory of transition that challenges many of the principal assumptions of the earlier actorcentric 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 types so varied that the postcommunist experience may be better captured by a different theory and a separate label—the fourth wave of *regime change*. (Why, after all, should the emergence of *dictatorship* in Uzbekistan be subsumed under the third wave of *democratization*?)

Furthermore, the approach outlined and the cases discussed in this article 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, there is a tradition of democratic revolutions that includes 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.⁷³ In

⁷³ Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Transformations*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). To be sure, negotiations between liberal and antiliberal (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 régime.

several respects, France's violent, uncertain, and decades-long "transition" from autocratic rule looks more like Russia's ongoing transformation than like 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 and the second wave.⁷⁴ In the long stretch of history, the successful transitions from communism to democracy may look more like the norm, while the pacted transitions and transitions from above in Latin America and Southern Europe may look more like the aberration.

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 transition. 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 should therefore 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 régime at the time of transition. Ideological polarization between the democratic United States and the 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 in democratization that many had predicted.⁷⁵ The true causal significance of the transition moment can be fully understood only when the deeper causes of these modes are fully specified. This article has argued that the balance of power and ideologies at the time of transition had path-dependent consequences for subsequent regime emergence. Yet the

⁷⁴ Huntington (fn. 2), 112.

⁷⁵ Przeworski (fn. 3, 1991); 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.

importance of these contingent variables can be determined only if their causal weight can be measured independently of deeper factors that cause and impede democracy.⁷⁶ While 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.⁷⁷

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 from those that predominate in France. This article'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 for a general theory of democratization *and* autocratization will be a long one.

⁷⁶ Every independent variable can become the dependent variable of another study. In journal articles especially, as Michael Taylor argues, the "explanatory buck has to stop somewhere"; Taylor, "Structure, Culture and Action in the Explanation of Social Change," *Politics and Society* 17 (1989), 199. To avoid tautology and claim causal significance of more proximate variables, however, requires the researcher to demonstrate that the independent variables selected are not endogenous to more important prior variables but rather that they have some *independent* causal impact.

⁷⁷ Recent studies that have pushed the causal arrow back one step prior include Wood (fn. 22); 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); 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 (fn. 41).