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The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?

Philippe C. Schmitter with Terry Lynn Karl

The wave of democratization that began so unexpectedly in Portugal has not merely increased the number of attempted regime changes since 1974, it has distributed them over a much wider surface of the globe. No continent or geo-cultural area—no matter how “peculiar” or “backward” or “remote”—seems completely immune from its effects.

This “sea-change” in political life has been accompanied (somewhat belatedly) by the gradual and unobtrusive development of two proto-sciences: transitology and consolidology. The claim of these embryonic subdisciplines is that by applying a universalistic set of assumptions, concepts and hypotheses, they together can explain and hopefully help to guide the way from an autocratic to a democratic regime. The initial “tentative conclusions” of transitology were limited to a small number of cases within a relatively homogenous cultural area: southern Europe and Latin America.¹ With the subsequent ex-

This paper is a pastiche of material drawn from several sources: notes from an oral presentation given at the panel on “Transitions to and from Democracy: Liberalism and Nationalism Compared,” American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies National Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii, 19–22 November 1993 and segments from two articles written with Terry Karl: “The Types of Democracy Emerging in Southern and Eastern Europe and South and Central America,” in Peter Volten, ed., *Bound to Change: Consolidating Democracy in Central Europe* (New York: IEWSS, 1992), 42–68 and “Democratization around the Globe: Opportunities and Risks,” in Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thomas, eds., *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, 2nd edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 43–62. In this version, I alone am responsible for all errors and omissions—although I must confess that many of the ideas contained in it are the result of suggestions and criticisms from Terry Lynn Karl.

That part of my talk in Honolulu which dealt with the maxims and propositions of transitology and consolidology will appear in the last chapter of the book that I am currently completing, *Consolidation of Democracies*.

1. The most blatant examples of “early transitology” were Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (April 1970): 337–63; and Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). The latter was based on southern European and Latin American case studies. For an even earlier compilation exploiting these same countries which, however, did not attempt to draw any conclusions or interpretations, see Julian Santamaria, ed., *Transición a la democracia en el sur de Europa y América Latina* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1982).

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pansion in the number of transitions and the extension of democratization to other cultural areas, the founders of these two subdisciplines and their acolytes have had to confront the issue of “conceptual stretching,” i.e., of the applicability of their propositions and assumptions to peoples and places never imagined initially.² Nowhere has the resistance to their pseudoscientific pretensions been greater than among North American specialists in the politics of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe; hence, the subtitle of this article which invites reflection on whether it is safe to travel eastward with these allegedly universal and scientific concepts.

The founder and patron saint of transitology, if it were to choose one, would be Niccoló Machiavelli. For the “wily Florentine” was the first great political theorist, not only to treat political outcomes as the artifactual and contingent product of human collective action, but also to recognize the specific problematics and dynamics of regime change. He, of course, was preoccupied with change in the inverse direction—from republican to “princely” regimes—but his basic insights remain valid.³

Machiavelli gave to transitology its fundamental principle, uncertainty, and its first and most important maxim:

There is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than to introduce a new system of things: for he who introduces it has all those who profit from the old system as his enemies and he has only lukewarm allies in all those who might profit from the new system.

Niccoló Machiavelli,
The Prince, VI.

Furthermore, he warned that the potential contribution of the discipline would always be modest. According to his estimate, “in female times,” i.e., during periods when actors behaved capriciously, immorally and without benefit of shared rules, only 50 percent of political events were understandable. The other half was due to unpredictable events of *fortuna*.

Hence, transitology was born (and promptly forgotten) with limited scientific pretensions and marked practical concerns. At best, it was doomed to become a complex mixture of rules of invariant political

2. The locus classicus for this discussion is Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 64 (1971): 1033–53. For a recent updating and extension, see David Collier and James E. Mahon, “Conceptual ‘Stretching’ Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 4 (December 1993): 845–55.

3. Evidence of my fascination with Machiavelli as a proto-transitologist can be found in my “Speculations about the Prospective Demise of Authoritarian Regimes and Its Possible Consequences,” *Working Paper* no. 60, The Woodrow Wilson Center, Latin American Program (1980). This paper was later revised and published as European University Institute *Working Paper* no. 85/165 (May 1985), and in two parts in *Revista de Ciência Política* (Lisbon) 1, no. 1 (1985): 83–102 and 2, no. 2 (1985): 125–44.

behavior and maxims for prudential political choice—when it was revived almost 480 years later.

Consolidology has no such obvious a patron saint. It reflects a much more consistent preoccupation among students of politics with the conditions underlying regime stability. At least since Plato and Aristotle, theorists have sought to explain why—under the kaleidoscopic surface of events—stable patterns of authority and privilege manage to survive. While they have rarely devoted much explicit attention to the choices and processes that brought about such institutions in the first place—this would be, strictly speaking, the substantive domain of consolidology—they and their empirical acolytes have amassed veritable libraries on the subject of how polities succeed in reproducing themselves over extended periods of time. It does not seem excessive to claim that American political science since World War II has been obsessed with the issue of “democratic stability” in the face of class conflict, ideological polarization, Communist aggression, north-south tensions, and so forth.

The consolidologist, therefore, has a lot of “orthodox” theoretical assumptions and “well established” empirical material to draw upon. However, if he or she has previously been practicing transitology, it will be necessary to make some major, personal and professional, adjustments. The consolidation of democracy poses distinctive problems to political actors and, hence, to those who seek to understand (usually retrospectively) what they are doing. It is not just a prolongation of the transition from authoritarian rule. Consolidation engages different actors, behaviors, processes, values and resources. This is not to say that everything changes when a polity “shifts” toward it. Many of the persons and collectivities will be the same but they will be facing different problems, making different calculations and (hopefully) behaving in different ways.

This suggests possible contradictions between stages of the regime-change process and the pseudosciences seeking to explain them. The “enabling conditions” that were most conducive to reducing and mastering the uncertainty of the transition may turn into “confining conditions” that can make consolidation more difficult.⁴ The shift in the substance of politics tends to reduce the significance of actors who previously played a central role in the demise of autocracy and to enhance the role of others who by prudence or impotence were marginal to the demise of autocracy or the earlier phases of transition.

The transitologist who becomes a consolidologist must personally make an epistemological shift in order to follow the behavioral changes that the actors themselves are undergoing. During the early stage of regime transformation, an exaggerated form of “political causality” tends to predominate in a situation of rapid change, high risk, shifting

4. The idea and phraseology has been taken from the seminal article by Otto Kirchheimer, “Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthroughs,” *American Political Science Review* 59 (1965): 964–74.

interests and indeterminate strategic reactions. Actors believe that they are engaged in a “war of movement” where dramatic options are available and the outcome depends critically on their choices. They find it difficult to specify *ex ante* which classes, sectors, institutions or groups will support their efforts—indeed, most of these collectivities are likely to be divided or hesitant about what to do. Once this heady and dangerous moment has passed, some of the actors begin to “settle into the trenches.” Hopefully they will be compelled to organize their internal structures more predictably, consult their constituencies more regularly, mobilize their resource bases more reliably and consider the long-term consequences of their actions more seriously. In so doing, they will inevitably experience the constraints imposed by deeply rooted material deficiencies and normative habits—most of which have not changed with the fall of the ancien régime.⁵

The consolidologist must shift from thinking in terms of a particularly exciting form of “political causality,” in which unpredictable and often courageous individuals take singular risks and make unprecedented choices, and adjust to analyzing a much more settled form of “bounded rationality” that is both conditioned by capitalist class relations, long-standing cultural and ethnic cleavages, persistent status conflicts and international antagonisms, and staffed by increasingly professional politicians filling more predictable and less risky roles. From the heady excitement and *underdetermination* of the transition from autocracy, he or she must adjust to the prosaic routine and *overdetermination* of consolidated democracy.

The likelihood that practitioners of this embryonic and possible pseudoscience can draw more confidently from previous scholarly work should be comforting, even if there remains a great deal of work still to do before we understand how the behavior of actors can become more predictable, how the rules of democracy can be made more mutually acceptable and how the interactions of power and influence can settle into more stable patterns. Apprentice consolidologists in the contemporary world also have two special problems:

- (1) they must sift through the experience of established liberal democracies in order to separate the idiosyncratic and contingent properties from the eventual outcomes;
- (2) they must decide to what extent lessons taken from these past experiences can be applied to the present dilemmas of neo-democracies.

The fallacies of “retrospective determinism”—assuming that what did happen is what had to happen—and of “presentism”—assuming that the motives and perceptions of the past are the same as those of the present—are all too tempting and could quite easily defeat the credibility of their efforts.

5. Which implies that national differences in consolidation are likely to be greater than national differences in transition.

The neophyte practitioners of transitology and consolidology have tended to regard the implosion of the Soviet Union and the regime changes in eastern Europe with “imperial intent.” These changes seem to offer a tempting opportunity to incorporate (at long last) the study of these countries within the general corpus of comparative analysis. Indeed, by adding post-communist regimes to their already greatly expanded case base, transitologists and consolidologists might even be able to bring the powerful instrumentarium of social statistics to bear on the study of contemporary democratization. For the first time, they could manipulate equations where the variables did not outnumber the cases and they could test their tentative conclusions in cultural and historical contexts quite different from those which generated them in the first place.

Specialists on the area, not surprisingly, have tended to react differently by stressing the cultural, ideological and national peculiarities of these cases—especially the distinctive historical legacy bequeathed by totalitarian as opposed to authoritarian anciens régimes. In their resistance to “acultural extrapolation,” some former Sovietologists would bar all practicing transitologists from reducing their countries (now more numerous, diverse and autonomous in their behavior) to mere pinpoints on a scatterplot or frequencies in a crosstabulation. The lessons or generalizations already drawn from previous transitions and now being made about the difficulties of regime consolidation should *ex hypothesi* be rejected. Presumably, some (as yet unspecified) “new science” of regime change must be invented and applied if one is to make any sense about the eventual political trajectory of ex-leninist or ex-stalinist systems.⁶

6. The above paragraph was largely inspired by a reading of some recent essays by Ken Jowitt who admittedly may not be representative of the whole clan of ex-Sovietologists. Moreover, his misunderstanding of the literature on democratization in southern Europe and Latin America—especially with regard to the (alleged) ease of transition and consolidation there—is such that many of the objections he raises simply do not hold. See his “Weber, Trotsky and Holmes on the Study of Leninist Regimes,” *Journal of International Affairs* (Summer 1991): 31–50 and “The Leninist Extinction” in D. Chirot, ed., *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 74–99.

For a more constructive attempt to suggest the “new analytical categories needed to account for the different dimensions of the current transition process (in East Central Europe),” see Grzegorz Ekiert, “Democratization Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration,” *British Journal of Political Science* (July 1991): 285–313. Ekiert, while noting the differences, is not so categorical about the need to reject all work on other areas. Also see Andrew C. Janos, “Social Science, Communism, and the Dynamics of Political Change,” *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1991): 81–112; and Russell Bova, “Political Dynamics of the Post-Communist Transition: A Comparative Perspective,” *World Politics* (October 1991): 113–38.

Incidentally, my impression from conversations and meetings with scholars from the post-communist societies is that they are much less inclined to reject the relevance of democratization experiences in southern Europe and Latin America than are North American area specialists. This does not obviate the possibility that their fascination with the Spanish or Chilean “model” may be misguided or misleading.

This brief essay is not the place to debate thoroughly such a contentious issue. My initial working assumption is that, provided the events or processes satisfy certain definitional requirements,⁷ their occurrence in eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union should be considered, at least initially, analogous to events or processes happening elsewhere. More than that, they should be treated as part of the same “wave of democratization” that began in 1974 in Portugal and has yet to dissipate its energy completely or to ebb back to autocracy.⁸ Hence, all these cases of regime change—regardless of their geopolitical location or cultural context—should (at least hypothetically) be regarded as parts of a common process of diffusion and causal interaction. Only *after* (and not *before*) this effort at incorporation, mapping and analysis has been made, will it become possible to conclude whether concepts and hypotheses generated from the experiences of early comers should be regarded as “overstretched” or “underverified” when applied to late comers. Only then will we know whether the basins containing different world regions are really so interconnected and moved by such similar forces. The particularity of any one region’s cultural, historical or institutional matrix—if it is relevant to understanding the outcome of regime change—should emerge from systematic comparison, rather than be used as an excuse for not applying it.

This is not to say that one should deliberately ignore possible sources of variation across world regions. To the contrary, sensitivity to what is different about eastern Europe⁹ may provide a useful corrective to the contemporary literature which is centered on southern Europe and Latin America. Most importantly, it may encourage comparativists to pay more attention to variables that have either been previously taken for granted, e.g. the existence of relatively established national identities or of relatively well functioning market mechanisms, or that have been examined and rejected as less important, e.g. the intromission of external powers. For the record, I propose to list without further elaboration the parametric conditions that seem most likely to affect differentially the outcome of regime change in the east

7. For example, in some cases such as Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, it was at first unclear as to whether the ancien régime had indeed been deposed and whether the ensuing elections were conducted under fair enough conditions to consider that the winners were attempting to establish a different form of political domination. Subsequent events, especially in the process of government formation, have made it clear that a genuine regime change has taken place.

8. Several authors seem to have independently picked up this notion of “waves.” I explored it in “The Consolidation of Democracy and the Choice of Institutions,” presented at the East-South Systems Transformation (ESST) Conference, 4–7 January 1992, Toledo, Spain. See also Sidney Tarrow, “‘Aiming at a Moving Target’: Social Science and the Recent Rebellions in Eastern Europe,” *PS* (March 1991): 12–20; and Samuel B. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

9. The case of the ex-German Democratic Republic should be excluded from this universe. It was, however, equivalent, but only to the point at which the dynamics of reunification with the Federal Republic took over.

as opposed to the south. They will, no doubt, disappoint area specialists since they focus on generic/structural, not particular/cultural or ideational properties.¹⁰

Condensing and simplifying, four contrasts stand out: in the point of departure, in the extent of collapse of the ancien régime, in the role of external actors, and in the sequence of transformative processes. Needless to say, these are all somewhat interconnected and could well be assembled under other rubrics.

1. Here the primary issue is not the “classical” one of differences in level of development, literacy, urbanization and so forth. Nor, strictly speaking, is it the type of autocracy, i.e., totalitarian, “leninist” or “stalinist,” that has collapsed. On the first grounds, the eastern European countries and most of the republics of the ex-Soviet Union seem to overlap considerably with the previous cases in southern Europe and Latin America—certainly as far as human skills, social mobilization and productive capacity are concerned.¹¹ On the second, most of these political systems had degenerated already into some form of “partialitarian” or authoritarian regime, not entirely removed from the ways in which their southern brethren were governed. Romania and Albania were obvious exceptions, although their high degree of personalization of power suggests a possible analogy with such cases of “sultanism” as Somoza’s Nicaragua, Trujillo’s Dominican Republic and Stroessner’s Paraguay. Nonetheless, we would readily concede that the peculiar monopolistic fusion of political and economic power into a party-state apparatus remained a distinctive attribute of the east.

But what is most striking are the differences in point of departure in socio-occupational structure as the result of many years of policy measures designed to compress class and sectoral distinctions, equalize material rewards and, of course, eliminate the diversity of property relations. Except where a “second economy” had emerged earlier and prospered commercially (i.e., Hungary), eastern social systems seem very “amorphous” in their structures and it is difficult to imagine how the parties and interest associations that are characteristic of all types of “western” democracy could emerge, stabilize their respective publics

10. It should also be noted that these parametric conditions do not radically juxtapose the eastern and southern cases, but overlap to some degree. For example, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are not alone in having problems of national identity and borders that complicate the democratization process. Spain and, to a much lesser extent, Portugal had to deal with demands for greater regional autonomy, even secession. Similarly, countries in Latin America have had to cope with over-bloated state apparatuses and unproductive public enterprises, even if the issue did not approach the magnitude of the problem of privatization in ex-command economies. The Central American cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador, in particular, may have more in common generically with those of eastern Europe than with their regional brethren to the south.

11. Although I would agree that there are important qualitative differences in the pattern and scale of development, especially with regard to production and distribution systems, that may make it much more difficult for the eastern countries to exploit these aggregate assets in a more open context of political or economic competition.

and contribute to the general consolidation of the regimes. At least until the twin shocks of marketization and privatization produce more substantial and more stable class and sectoral differences, the politics of these neodemocracies are likely to be driven by other, much less tractable, cleavages (i.e., ethnicity, locality, personality).¹²

2. In the extent of collapse of the previous regime, too, the contrast is striking. Not only were the regime changes less “pre-announced” and the opposition forces less “pre-prepared” to rule than in the south,¹³ but once new governments were formed the role of previous power holders declined precipitously and significantly. There were a few exceptions where rebaptized (and possibly reformed) communists managed to do well in the initial “founding elections” and to hold on as a group to key executive positions, but even then they often proved incapable of governing effectively and were displaced in relatively short order, *vide* Albania, Bulgaria and Estonia. By my calculation, only in Romania, Mongolia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Serbia are previous communists continuing to play a significant role either as a party governing alone or in alliance with others.¹⁴ This contrasts with southern Europe and Latin America where neodemocracies were often governed initially by centrist or rightist parties which had important elements (and persons) from the previous regime in their ranks, and where *de facto* powers such as the armed forces, the police or the state apparatus retained very significant power to intervene in policy making and affect the choice of institutions. Spain, Brazil and Chile may be the most extreme cases, but almost everywhere (except Portugal and perhaps Argentina) the transition takes place in the shadow—if not under the auspices—of the *ancien régime*. Given the virtual abdication of their

12. My thinking on this matter has been influenced by the work of David Ost. See his “Shaping the New Politics in Poland,” presented at the conference on “Dilemmas of Transition from State Socialism in East Central Europe,” Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 15–17 March 1991 and “Labor in Post-Communist Transformations,” *Working Paper 5.17*, Center for German and European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, July 1993.

13. Although it is hard to beat the initial Portuguese case for sheer surprise and unpreparedness to rule. Elsewhere in southern Europe and Latin America—except, most notably, in Nicaragua—opposition groups had much more time to anticipate coming to power and even to prepare elaborate contingency arrangements.

On the unexpectedness of the eastern European transitions, see Timur Kuran, “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics* (October 1991): 7–48.

14. No doubt, this generalization overlooks the possibility, even the likelihood, that forces from the *ancien régime* are still well entrenched in local units of governance and production and can, therefore, pose much more of an obstacle to democratic consolidation than would be apparent from the parties and persons governing at the national level. I am indebted to Steve Fish for this point. See his “The Emergence of Independent Associations and the Transformation of Russian Political Society,” *Journal of Communist Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1991): 299–334 and his forthcoming *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution*.

previous rulers, eastern Europeans could harbor the (momentary) illusion of a tabula rasa upon which to build new rules and practices.¹⁵

3. One of the more confident generalizations of the previous lit-

15. In his "Party Formation after Revolutionary Transitions: The Russian Case" in Alexander Dallin, ed., *Political Parties in Russia* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1991), 7–28, Michael McFaul has made a related criticism of the transitological literature. He argued eloquently and cogently that contemporary Russia is in the throes of a revolution and, because of that, its process of regime change differs fundamentally from the more evolutionary transitions that have occurred since 1974 in southern Europe and Latin America. Although at times he seems to claim that the Russian case is unique, his generic definition of revolution as "a sweeping, fundamental change in political organization, social structure, economic property control and the predominant myth of social order" (adopted from Sigmund Neumann) would seem to fit all the countries in eastern Europe, as well as all the newly independent former republics of the USSR. If true, his theoretical claim could have considerable practical significance since it would rule out any relevance for the concepts, suppositions and hypotheses derived from earlier cases of democratization in southern Europe and Latin America (not to mention the few cases in Asia and Africa). The post-Soviet revolutions would be "on their own" and badly in need of an alternative framework for understanding and, hopefully, guiding their revolutionary transformations—which is precisely the task to which McFaul has devoted his impressive analytical talents.

While McFaul's thesis has the virtue of being much more conceptually explicit and empirically falsifiable than the usual protestations by area specialists that "political culture," "historical legacy" or "national character" renders their case or cases incomparable, it does not convince me. I disagree with his basic premise in categorizing the former USSR as uniquely revolutionary and, hence, am unwilling to rule out *ex hypothesi* that its logic of transformation, its constellation of political and social forces and even its eventual outcome will not differ fundamentally from what has happened in other regime transitions. At some level of abstraction, each case of transition has its unique properties—and Russia is certainly no exception in this regard—but to place it "beyond the pale" on a completely different path to an admittedly uncertain future seems (to us) to go too far.

Transitologists have consistently emphasized the variety of ways in which countries can move from autocracy to some other form of political domination. Pacts are seen as desirable because they can facilitate the eventual consolidation of democracy, but never necessary or especially frequent. Transitology has even attempted to deal with revolutionary situations, although it defines them in a more orthodox fashion—as situations in which regime change is characterized by pervasive violence and mass mobilization from below. Since neither have occurred in Russia—indeed, its transition has been astonishingly non-violent and persistently dominated by elites—Terry Karl and I did not hesitate to classify it generically as a case of "imposition" along with such others as Turkey, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bulgaria and Taiwan. Moreover, far from being rapid, the Russian transition from autocracy seems destined to be one of the most protracted on record, although it is still far from beating the record of fifteen years set by Brazil (Terry Karl and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe," *International Social Science Journal* 128 [May 1991]: 269–84).

Incidentally, our conclusions there were quite similar to those of McFaul: "Revolutions are less ambiguous (in their impact than reformist transitions); they may produce relatively enduring patterns of domination . . . but they have rarely evolved into patterns of fair competition, unrestricted contestation, tolerance for rotation in power and free associability" (280).

erature emphasized the much greater importance of domestic forces and calculations as opposed to foreign influences and intrusions in determining the nature and timing of regime transition—hinting, however, at the likelihood that the latter would play a more significant role subsequently in the consolidation phase.¹⁶ There seems to be virtual unanimity that this does not fit eastern Europe or Central America. Without a previously announced and credible shift in the foreign and security policies of the Soviet Union, neither the timing nor the occurrence of regime change would be explicable. In a few cases, e.g. Romania and the GDR, even active intrusion by Gorbachev seems to have been necessary. Moreover, there is much more evidence of “contagion” within the region, i.e., of events in one country triggering and accelerating a response in its neighbors. Unlike southern Europe and Latin America where democratization did not substantially alter long-standing commercial relations or international alliances,¹⁷ the regime changes in eastern Europe triggered a major collapse in intraregional trade and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Into this vacuum moved an extraordinary variety of western advisors and promoters—bilateral and multilateral. To a far greater extent than elsewhere, these external actors have imposed political “conditionality” upon the process of consolidation, linking specific rewards explicitly to the meeting of specific norms or even to the selection of specific institutions.¹⁸

16. For the initial observation, see Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *op.cit.*, 17–21. It should be noted that the cases upon which this generalization was based did not include those of Central America. In that subregion, external influence and intrusion have been (and continue to be) much more significant.

For a criticism with regard to southern Europe, see Geoffrey Pridham, ed., *Encouraging Democracy: The International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).

17. Greece's (temporary) withdrawal from NATO is a minor exception—counterbalanced by Spain's (contested) entry into NATO. The decision by all of the southern European countries to become full members of the EC did not so much alter existing patterns of economic dependence as intensify them.

For an assessment of the impact of democratization upon regional security, cooperation and integration in the southern cone of Latin America, see Philippe C. Schmitter, “Change in Regime Type and Progress in International Relations” in E. Adler and B. Crawford, eds., *Progress in Postwar International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 89–127.

18. This issue is discussed at greater length in Philippe C. Schmitter, “The International Context for Contemporary Democratization,” *Stanford Journal of International Affairs* II, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1993): 1–34. To the above general observations about the external context in eastern Europe, one could add another, more specific, condition: the sheer fact that it is located in such close geographic proximity to centers in western Europe of much greater prosperity and security. This makes the “exit option,” especially for relatively skilled persons, much easier. On the one hand, this threatens to deprive these emergent democracies of some of their most highly motivated actors and to leave their consolidation in the hands of less talented ones; on the other hand, the very prospect of such a mass exodus increases the prospects for their extracting external resources intended precisely to prevent that from happening.

4. All of the above differences pale before the significance of the sequence of transformations, in my opinion. In none of the southern European or Latin American cases did the regime change from autocracy to democracy occur alone, in complete isolation from other needed social, economic, military and administrative transformations. However, except for Central America, it was usually possible to deal with these variegated demands sequentially. In some specially favored cases, major structural changes were accomplished under previous regimes. For example, most of these transitions “inherited” acceptable national identities and boundaries—even if the degree of local or regional autonomy remained contested. In a few, the military had already been largely subordinated to civilian control or the economy had undergone substantial restructuring to make it more internationally competitive.

In eastern Europe not only are such major transformations all on the agenda for collective action and choice, but very little authoritative capacity exists for asserting priorities among them. There is a great deal more to do than in the south, and it seems as if it must be done at once. The codewords are *simultaneity* and *asynchrony*. Many decisions have to be made in the same time frame and their uncontrolled interactions tend to produce unanticipated (and usually unwanted) effects. Even within a given issue area, the absence of historical precedents makes it difficult to assert theoretically what should come first: holding elections or forming a provisional government? drafting a national constitution or encouraging local autonomy? releasing prices or controlling budget deficits? privatizing state industries or allowing collective bargaining? creating a capital market or sustaining a realistic exchange rate? and the list could continue ad nauseam. Even if “transition theory” can offer a few generic insights strictly within the political domain, these risk being quite irrelevant given simultaneous—rather than sequential—demands for changes in major economic, social, cultural/national, military institutions. For example, one knows in the abstract that the formation of provisional governments can be a bad thing, especially before the configuration of national party systems is evident, but what if (as seems to have been the case in Czechoslovakia) it is necessary to head off a polarized conflict among nationalities? In retrospect, it seems to have been a crucial error for Gorbachev to have convoked (or tolerated) elections at the level of republics *before* holding a national election that would have legitimated his own position and,

Again, the parallel with Central America emerges. Here, too, the indirect influence and direct intromission of foreign agents has been of considerable importance, both in determining the timing and nature of their transitions from authoritarian rule and in “conditioning” the consolidation of their respective democracies. These actions by the United States, in particular, are not unrelated to the region’s geographical location and the threat that sizable flows of refugees could pose to its security. The present case of Haiti well illustrates the problem—and the difficulty of bringing effective external power to bear on an issue as complex and uncertain as regime change.

with it, the all-union framework of territorial authority, but presumably this reflected a correlation of forces within the CPSU and the military at the time.

One thing is becoming abundantly clear—and this was observed already in the classic article of Dankwart Rustow that lies at the origin of much of today's work on transition¹⁹—that without some prior consensus on overarching national identity and boundaries little or nothing can be accomplished to move the system out of the protracted uncertainty of transition into the relative calm (and boredom) of consolidation. This places the ex-Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in radically different sequences and it is not inconceivable that all of their “inheritor republics” will be paralyzed by a similar imperative.

Having considered these four clusters and recognized that some of them do suggest significant “inter-regional” differences, I would still argue that, as transitologists and consolidologists move from their more familiar haunts in the south to stranger (and, probably, less hospitable) ones in the east, they should stick to their initial operating assumptions.²⁰ These latter cases of regime change can be—at least initially—treated as conceptually and theoretically equivalent to those that preceded them.²¹ Furthermore, it can be expected that they face the same

19. “Transitions to Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 2 (1970): 337–63.

20. Since writing the above comments, we have read Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, “Thinking about Post-communist Transitions: How Different Are They?” *Slavic Review* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 333–37. While two of the points she raises concord easily with mine: the “dual-track nature” of their transitions (my “simultaneity”), the “potential influence of the international environment” (my “enhanced role of external actors”), on other grounds I would differ. For example, I would contest that all the earlier transitions took place at a lower level of socio-economic development and argue that the two sub-samples in fact overlap considerably—while conceding that certain qualitative aspects are significantly different. It may, in fact, be more difficult to dismantle an uncompetitive industrial apparatus *ex post* than to create one *ex ante*, but that ignores the major effort that many capitalist neodemocracies have had to make in deregulation, privatization and industrial restructuring. On the issue of civil society, Guillermo O'Donnell and I argued not for their “resilience” in southern Europe and Latin America, as she claims, but for their “resurrection”—in most cases *after*, not *before* the transition. The unruliness, cacophony, political paralysis and demagoguery she sees are by no means confined to post-communist civil societies. The only issue which does strike me as apposite is greater ethnic complexity. Several of the neodemocracies are exceedingly complex from any objective ethnic perspective—Brazil and Peru, for example—but the subjective political consequences of this diversity seem less compelling. Spain successfully confronted the assertion of regional and linguistic demands during its transition—even if, I would admit, conflicts over national identity and national purpose played little or no role in the initial versions of transitology.

21. The one thing that *cannot* be done is to take refuge in *empirie*—in the diligent collection of facts without any guidance from theories and models. Given the sheer volume of data, not to mention their frequently contradictory referents, without some sense of priorities and categories for classification no analyst is likely to be able to make much sense of what is going on—much less within a time frame that might be of some use to the actors themselves. Former Sovietologists converted to the new tasks of explaining transition and consolidation would be better advised to spend more effort on conceptualization—even an alternative conceptualization—than on diligent

range of possible outcomes—even if the probabilities of their attaining any particular one may vary considerably from their more fortunate predecessors.

My hunch is that the eastern cases may be lodged in the following paradox: *their transitions have been (astonishingly) rapid, non-violent and definitive*, i.e., new actors have come to power without using physical force to eject their predecessors and effectively eliminated the prospect of a return to the *statu quo ante*, in a relatively short period of time,²² *but their consolidations promise to be lengthy, conflictual and inconclusive*. Compared to most (but not all) of the regime changes in southern Europe and Latin America, they will have more difficulty in selecting and settling into an “appropriate” type of democracy. While it is by no means foreclosed that some of these countries will revert to some other form of autocracy than was previously practiced or that they will attempt to establish hybrid forms of *dictablanda* and *democradura*, the most probable outcome would seem to be protractedly “unconsolidated democracy”—if only because some degree of obedience to the procedural minimum will be imposed by their dependence upon the European Community and other western countries.

data gathering. Sarah Meiklejohn Terry’s suggestion that former Soviet area specialists wait for ten to fifteen years before making their (presumptively) original contribution to transitology or consolidology strikes me as ill advised. Fortunately, there are those such as Laszlo Bruzst, David Stark, Grzegorz Ekiert, Andrew Janos, Russell Bova, Steve Fish, David Ost and Michael McFaul who have already begun such an effort.

22. Romania and, more recently, Georgia are obvious exceptions to the generalization about non-violence, the (ex-)Soviet Union and (ex-)Yugoslavia to the relatively short transitional period.