

**An Analysis of Transition to Democracy:
An Integrative Approach****Jing-Yun Hsu *****Abstract**

The global expansion of democracy poses a fascinating challenge for social scientists and policymakers. Research on democratization has become increasingly sophisticated during the last two decades. This article reviews several of the most prominent theoretical approaches of democratization and briefly considers the evidence supporting and challenging them. Through theoretical arguments and dialogue between different approaches, this paper proposes “funnel of causality” as a synthesis of prevailing theories of democratization. Finally, the essay tries to adapt game theory to outline the interplay between framing the transition context and the reflexive structuration through the funnel, as well as to shape the choices, behaviors, and decisions of political leaders and groups according to strategies in games.

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* Jing-Yun Hsu is an assistant professor in the Graduate Institute of Russian Studies, National Cheng-Chi University.

Causality, Game Theory

At this moment in history, democracy will be furthered not by efforts to extend it to societies where social and economic conditions are still unfavorable, but rather to the deepening of democracy in societies where it has been recently introduced.

-Samuel Huntington 1994¹

The success of democratization depends a great deal on the kind of a democracy that is adopted at the outset.

-Arend Lijphart 1991²

Whether democracy succeeds or fails continues to depend significantly on the choices, behaviors, and decisions of political leaders and groups.

-Seymour Martin Lipset 1994³

Between 1974 and 1990, over 30 countries in southern Europe, Latin America, some parts of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa made transitions to democracy, nearly doubling the number of democratic governments in the world. Samuel Huntington described this global shift as “Democracy’s Third Wave” in an article published in 1991, which was later developed in a book

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “Democratic Development in the Post-Cold War,” Keynote speech at the International Political Science Association Roundtable, Kyoto, 1994.

² Arend Lijphart, “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 72-84

³ Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no.1 (February 1994): 1-22.

titled “The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century.”⁴

The global expansion of democracy poses a fascinating challenge for social scientists and policymakers. Research on democratization has become increasingly sophisticated during the last two decades. Social scientists are called upon to examine the forces propelling this wave of democratization and to reexamine the established theories emphasizing the importance of socioeconomic and cultural factors in democratic development. With the completion and sharing of new datasets and the ratcheting up of training in statistics and modeling, approaches to studying democratization have changed greatly since the mid-1990s.

What has been learned about the dynamics of democratization itself? What kinds of strategies and tactics have been prescribed for consolidating democratic gains around the world and encouraging democratic reforms in those countries that remain nondemocratic? These are the central questions addressed in this article, which seeks to offer a comprehensive assessment of the theoretical and empirical literature on democratization. Through theoretical arguments and dialogue between different approaches, this paper proposes “funnel of causality” as a

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, “Democracy’s third wave,” *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 12–34; Samuel P. Huntington, *The third wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

synthesis of prevailing theories of democratization.

This article first reviews several of the most prominent theoretical approaches of democratization and briefly considers the evidence supporting and challenging them. Theoretical issues are essential for identifying and comparing the dominant and distinctive forces shaping the current wave of democratization. It then suggests that different kinds of authoritarianism break down in characteristically different ways and sketches the theoretical underpinnings for this difference. Secondly, borrowed from *American Voter* (1960), the classic work by the D. Campbell and his colleagues, the “funnel of causality” is presented as a synthesis for an integrative theory and as an attempt to identify the integral logic of the transition to democracy. Finally, the essay tries to adapt game theory to outline the interplay between framing the transition context and the reflexive structuration through the funnel, and to shape the choices, behaviors, and decisions of political leaders and groups according to strategies in games.

Thus, the paper will proceed by first discussing paths to democracy, then introduce the “funnel of causality” as a means to illustrate how paths lead to specific decisions, and, finally, outline how the use of game solutions can serve as a way of retrospective mapping of concrete paths.

General Review of the Studies of Democratization

The history of democratization presents no "irresistible" and linear cause of development. Rather, historical examples tend to be a very unpredictable and turbulent one. However, the normative concept of democracy may have a more stable character as a distant goal to be achieved: a government controlled by the people, where the concepts of "control" and the "people" have strong ethical anchors in civil societies and are therefore felt intuitively as fundamental when questioned.

Rules, institutions and rights are necessary parts of a democratic political system, but the history of the 20th century's totalitarianism and the analysis of the "politics of backwardness" both disclose how legal reforms did not function as had been assumed when the contexts surrounding them were contradictory to the ideals behind the formal structures. On the whole, the legal, or institutional, analysis, was not seen as adequate to explain why democracy comes about. However, normative, legal structures are important components for devising efficient forms of institutional set-ups which will be more or less relevant to changing conditions.⁵

There are a number of theories of transition for authoritarian

⁵ The perhaps most explicit recommendation on how to improve the institutional architecture of democracy was the book by F. Hermes "Europe Between Democracy and Anarchy", 1951, where he advocated "a political Marshall Plan" which should forever ensure democracy in the West: avoid Proportional Representation and institute a Majority Election system to achieve democratic stability (pp. 247-255)

states changing to democracy. The ambiguous explanation of the political development of authoritarian states is largely associated with different approaches to its understanding and analysis. In transitology, there are two main approaches that explain the processes of democratization: a structural approach and a procedural approach. They represent competitive methodologies in the study of political development and democratization of undemocratic political regimes and, therefore, have long been opposed to one another.

The structural approach involves explaining the political transformation of non-democratic systems by highlighting certain variables (or prerequisites) in its structure, such as socio-economic prerequisites, stratification of society, political struggle within the elite, the influence of the international environment, etc. The result of the transformation is justified through these variables. That is, “structural analysis” generally studies preconditions for democracy. The “structural school” is often interchangeably labeled as the “modernization school”, since modernity may often be seen as the development of social structures of greater complexity than traditional societies. One of the main authors in the tradition, S. M. Lipset, has been regarded as the most dominating figure since his publication of the important volume *Political Man*, setting off a wide range of research and criticism on how well structural factors can explain

the introduction of democracy and the breakdown of democracy.⁶ In an impressive demonstration, using synchronized data, Lipset found a very high correlation between economic well-being and stable democracy vs. poor economic performance and stable dictatorships.

The structural approach is a reflection of the traditional paradigm of research on the political transformation of authoritarian systems. This approach was most popular in the early stages of the development of transitology, since the examples of the first and to a lesser extent, the second wave of democratization demonstrated the presence of a number of its premises.

The “structural school” came under heavy critique for several reasons, among which, perhaps most importantly, was its

⁶ Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1959); “Economic Development and Democracy” was first published in *American Political Science Review*(APSR), 53 (1959), p. 69-105, and contains the main outline of the “structural” theory. In the “expanded edition” of *Political Man*, 1983 Lipset added a ch. 14 “Second thoughts and new findings” where he elaborates over structural perspectives and the debates over it in the section: “The Social Requisites for Democracy” pp. 469-76. Before appearance of the APSR article he had published *Union Democracy, What Makes Democracy Work in Labor Unions and Other Organisations*, N.Y. (1956), where the importance of structural factors like social cleavages and organizational forms were used to explain the competitive two-party system within the ITU, giving the organization a democratic way of functioning. In eds. G. Marks and L. Diamond *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in the Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset*, 1994, Diamond sums up much of the essence of Lipset’s argument and the main lines of critics against him in the chapter: “Economic Development and Democracy” pp. 93-139.

economic determinism, but its non-diachronic character was also notable. The Lipsetian theory does not really state how democracies came about, but it points to the conditions of democratic stability, once established. It is more in his later writings that he extends his view on why democracies come into being, by incorporating alternative variables emphasizing the diachronic, historical and institutional perspectives as well as "leadership skill". However, the main theoretical argument against the "structural school" was the absence of political craftsmanship, or the lack of "political variables" in it.⁷

The procedural approach, or the "actor school", then entered the scene, not as replacing the structural perspective, but to place it in a wider, contextual setting. This approach proceeds from the models of democratization of Latin American and South European authoritarian military regimes, analyzing the process of political transformation of undemocratic regimes by differentiating individual phases of transition. This perspective has different names and may interchangeably be called decision-path analysis or voluntarism, but eventually, it was labeled as "transitology". In order to visually understand the dynamics of transition and highlight the general trends of political development, the procedural approach takes into account the relationship between the interests of the ruling elite, the interests

⁷ This expression was used by Giuseppe Di Palma in his *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

of the state and the opposition during the process of transition of undemocratic regimes to democracy.

Its recent beginning may be conveniently located in the immediate aftermath of the revolts of 1968, happening in the most developed democracies in the West, and where the basic questions of “real” democracy were raised in a fresh, new way. In his book *After the Revolution. Authority in a Good Society* (1969), R. Dahl responded as to how and why democracy shall be crafted, giving meaning to the role of the politicians in the process. This is also elaborated in greater detail in his next book *Polyarchy* (1971), where he outlines the first path-analysis of how the given choices of politicians determine the evolution of the regime. The year before, Rustow had published the article on Sweden's peaceful transition to democracy, which came to be known as the “root” of transitology - four years before the transition to democracy took place in the three countries of Southern Europe.⁸ With O'Donnell/Schmitter's publication (1986) of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* and before that (1978) the Stephan/Linz

⁸ Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transition to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (April 1970): 333; See also the commemorative and specialized volume of *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (1997), where Rustow's early introduction of transitological thinking is evaluated (L. Anderson, “Introduction,” pp.253-61); The early anticipation of insight in the processes of regime change is given to the German political scientist O. Kirchheimer, particularly in his two essays in the volume edited by Burin and Shell *Politics, Law and Social Change: Selected Essays of Otto Kirchheimer*, edited by Frederic S. Burin and Kurt L. Shell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969): “Changes in the Structure of Political Compromise,” pp. 31-59 and “Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthrough,” pp. 395-407.

volumes *The Breakdown of Democratic Regime*, plus a fast-growing literature on similar subjects, the stage was definitely set for the “reintroduction of politics” in the analysis of regime change and the role of actors, decisions, events and “voluntariness”.

Another Integrative Perspective of Approaches?

The “schools” described above provide important foundations for our understanding of some essential factors in the birth of democracy, but there is still need for a broader model where emphasis on political “crafting” comes to the forefront. In O’Dorinell/Schmitter’s volume, they were reluctant in proposing hypotheses which could have the character of a “theory” — and left the reader with impressions of a “floating game” with “open ends” as the best prediction. The political actor was important, but by being a human with essential “free will” it was difficult to foresee her/his frameworks of choice.

In the following, the article will outline a suggestive framework for how one may imagine an integrative project may look. The idea was built on the framework, which Mahoney and Snyder have forwarded in their article, “Rethinking agency and structure in the study of regime change.”⁹ In addition, catching the ideas of Colomer/Pascual and Tvedt, the article will explain

⁹ James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, “Rethinking agency and structure in the study of regime change,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 34, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 3-32.

the continuing argument of how to make the transition decisions explicit — the games played by the political actors.

The Meaning of Paths to Democracy

In the reasoning of factors explaining the transition to democracy, several authors emphasize how the founding of democracy was dependent on particular trajectories or “paths” followed by the individual countries. There are at least two apposite trends analyzing such paths. The first may be thought of as the long-term historical trajectory paths – “historical destiny”, and the second consists of the independent-dependent variable path ordering cause and effect.

The paths of historical trajectories. In his very famous treatise on “routes”, “patterns” and events “leading up to”, Barrington Moore sees three different regimes as “end stations” of paths: two types of authoritarian/totalitarian rule- the fascist and communist regimes- and the democratic regime. He develops the paths as “deterministic” routes dependent on the outcome of the commercialization of farming (destroying peasant communities) in the 17th century.¹⁰ In a sense, there is a game-theoretical analysis present: how outcomes are given as payoffs from different players.

¹⁰ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1966).

The paths of events suitable for democratic breakthrough.

Another type of path dependent strategy is developed by R. Dahl and D. Rustow. (A. Stepan in his works on Brazil has also outlined ideas on “paths”, but more in the form of selected “steps” or “stages” in the process).¹¹

The point made by path-theorists is to figure out how some unique events (“revolutions/junctures” in Rokkan's term) “pattern” the future developments within the political regime. In Rokkan's thinking, it was the Reformation, the National (French) revolution, the Industrial revolution and the Communist 1917 revolution. The outcomes of these consecutive “revolutions” determined the future paths to the party system in eight alternatives around 1920.¹² In B. Moore's path-theory the regime comes from a

¹¹ See Alfred C. Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies and Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Alfred C. Stepan, “Political leadership and regime breakdown: Brazil,” in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*, eds. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 110-137; Alfred C. Stepan, “Paths toward redemocratization: Theoretical and comparative considerations,” in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 64-84, where he makes a classification of transitions, not “paths” in the sense of “determined routes”.

¹² Stein Rokkan, “Methods and models in the comparative study of nation-building,” in *Citizens, elections, parties: Approaches to the comparative study of the processes of development*, eds. Stein Rokan et al. (New York: David McKay, 1970), 46–71; Stein Rokkan, “Dimensions of state formation and nation-building: a possible paradigm for research on variations within Europe,” in *The formation of national states in Western Europe*, edited by Charles Tilly and Gabriel Ardant (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 562–600.

differentiated set of alliance-options among the ruling elites.

The central logic within the path-analysis is that once a decision is taken it is non-reversible, and the development takes on a distinct “route”, dependent on the former decisions.

The path-theory of the Dahl/Rustow thinking outlines a “selection of paths” to be taken toward the same regime. Dahl indicates that a political system can become democratic (polyarchy) by following three paths: break up a hegemonic regime into a pluralist oligarchy, break it up by liberalization, and break it up by a sudden breakdown,¹³ the first path being the safest in order to arrive at a stable democracy.

Rustow’s path-theory is concerned about how the “atmospheres” must be ready before a new elite can take over, which is open to compromise and opposition. When new classes of people become aware of their political strength, they put sufficient pressure on the incumbent oligarchies to open the authoritarian regime by “accepting unity in diversity”.

One of the weaknesses -but also a strength- in historical path theory is its deterministic one-way logic. Since we know that countries even with former totalitarian dictatorships can become democracies, historical path-theory can only explain stages towards democracy, i.e. difficulties to overcome towards

¹³ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 34-40.

democracy, not “final” conditions for democracy, their generality for transitology is more limited.

For path-thinking to be directly relevant for transitology, it has to include ideas on how a given path given can be changed and transformed so that the deterministic one-event-trajectory can be avoided.

The Funnel of Causality as Model for an Integrative Theory

As mentioned by Mahoney and Snyder, the “funnel of causality” may serve as a means to integrate the various perspectives on conditions for regime change. The “funnel”, as first used by Campell et. al. in *The American Voter*, has two important characteristics: a) ordering of the independent variables along a time dimension and b) the reduction of variation (shrinking “funnel space”) of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. It is also implicitly understood that there is some sort of a co-variation between the variables which the two authors call “filtering” or “vectoring” of the effect of the independent variables on the final decision: the regime change (dependent variable).

In order to use the funnel strategy to integrate the structural/institutional approaches with the actor approach, the paper will give a broad, visual presentation of a funnel, which does contain the main, general variables to go into the explanation.

Figure 1 contains sets of “structural” variables and one unspecified “voluntaristic” variable which is called “structuration context.” The idea is to portray how the structural variables come “first” and how they are relevant in influencing the individuals during the transition; they are necessary in structuring the context in which the elites do make decisions of regime change. These decisions can be understood as transition-games and analyzed according to rules within game theory. (See Fig. 1. The funnel of Causality (Part 1)).

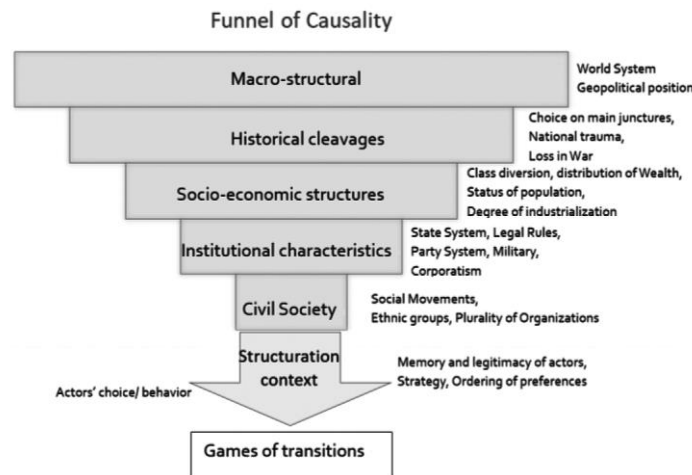


Figure 1: The Funnel of Causality (Part 1).

Source: Compiled by Author.

The original intention behind the funnel-design was to understand the voting- decisions in U.S. presidential elections,

which the authors outlined as a method where "the complex events in the funnel occur as a result of multiple prior causes". Each such event is, in its turn, responsible for multiple effects as well. We progressively eliminate those effects that do not continue to have relevance on the political act. Since we are forced to take all partial causes as relevant at any juncture, relevant effects are therefore much fewer in number than relevant causes. The result is a "convergence effect".¹⁴

In transition theory we will be concerned with how the actual decision to "open" and to "rupture" is done, i.e. the transition phase leading to the crucial pacts/acts which change the regime. At the very stem of the funnel we will therefore locate the final decision and just before —that of the transition context/phase. Then the task is to identify and order the successive independent variables which produce the "relevant effects".

Time-ordering involves explicit listing of variables along two parallel time concepts: absolute time and relative time (relative time is "distance" from the event we want to explain/predict). When placing variables on the time dimension in the funnel we have to take into account what comes first, second, etc. Thus we place geopolitical position at the top of the funnel model, then historical cleavages, structural socio-economic

¹⁴ Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 24-25. The authors do not construct the "funnel" themselves, but only indirectly refer to it in the book, particularly when they discuss the role of party identification as a predictor variable to the left in the funnel.

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variables, institutional characteristics, social group characteristics/elites and finally transition context. It will thus be in the transition context that voluntarism plays its role preparing the agents preferences for change/continuity.

This way of organizing the funnel in terms of explaining transition to democracy has mostly an illustrative character. We presume that all transitions have occurred through such a “funnel” but that the relative time has been shorter or longer, depending on different “confining” conditions. At each interval, including the final games played, exogenous impact will have to be accounted for.

Mahoney and Snyder describe the whole process as “a causal model in which variables from different levels of analysis are treated as independent vectors with distinct forces and distinct directions”, “directions” being “tendency to favor certain regime outcomes over others” and “forces” are the “intensity with which they favor the outcomes”. They also describe how to “exhaust” the explanatory value of moving towards the “stem”, one variable after the other, when the “range of possible outcomes decreases”.¹⁵

The main point in the funnel-thinking is that effects of multiple independent variables are “filtered” through sets of dependent variables which again produce multiple effects to be

¹⁵ Mahoney and Snyder, “Rethinking agency and structure,” 12-13.

“filtered”.

Inherent in the funnel of causality lies the idea of “convergences” and “reduction”/ exhaustion. In order to give meaning to this process one has to imagine that a society “hangs together” and certain events happening do concern only a limited number of people at a time, but the people concerned are part of the overall community and society where the events take place. In the same manner, we have to understand the funnel as a way of figuring out how in the actual transition context, only a few people take part and only a few issues are raised as important for the ordering of their preferences and actions. But they act in a context of totality of space and time.

The funnel does also “run into” another funnel, or a multitude of funnels, in a nation’s development. When a transition is completed or has failed, this event is transplanted into the nation’s “memory” as a structural condition for future effects on the polity.

The funnel-thinking thus urges us to elaborate on how an “event” is understood as a multitude of effects coming from a long range of influences, but where few are important for the actual context-making. By using the funnel, we will try to locate the pieces of “filtered” multivariable effects which can be detected when scrutinizing the actual decision situation.

We shall touch on two points: firstly, the actual structuration

process, i.e. how the decision context is configured by the agents and, secondly, how we can “map” the preference pattern “backwards/inverse prediction” from analyzing the actual game outcomes.

“Structuration” as Basis for Action

In Mahoney and Snyder’s researches, they have recommended “structuration” as a method to avoid a one-sided integrative approach where action is always deduced from structure. The idea is to develop more realism in the understanding of the interplay between agency and structure, and the inspiration comes from A. Giddens. He has developed a concept of “duality of structure” based on agency understood as a process of “reflexive monitoring of action” where the “agent” behaves under the impact of structures in civil society, while at the same time acts, making her/his impact (“unintended consequences”) on the surrounding civil society.¹⁶ Even if this

¹⁶ Anthony Giddens has developed these ideas in several works. In *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), Giddens makes some of the ideas of “structuration” more explicit (pp. 5-8, 16-25, 28). See also his earlier *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979 [new ed. 1995]), particularly chapter 2: “Agency, Structure,” 49-95, where lie under the sub-heading “The Theory of Structuration” underlines the importance of “mutual dependence of structure and agency,” and “rejects any differentiation of synchron and diachrone or statics and dynamics” (p. 69). Later on, he stresses the “reflexivity” and “reciprocity” between actors and between actors and collectives (p. 77), thus aiming at theoretical conceptualization of the interdependence of agency and structure.

definition of agency is very important, it is a great challenge to operationalize it for transitology research. W. Sewell has pointed to the correspondence between Giddens' duality of structure and Bourdieu's ideas of "habitus" by acting according to accepted "schemas", underlining how adapting to structures and reproducing them though influence helps explain both elite and individual behavior.¹⁷ Among other critics, Wendt and Dessler argue about the necessity of trying to make structuration less abstract, particularly in terms of understanding how decision making in international relations may be more relevant and closer to reality. Both point to how the actor is located in a structure where he/she makes decisions and while doing so reproduces and/or changes structures.¹⁸

As a way to come to grips with some of the abstractions within structuration, the purpose of this article is to conceptualize the agency in transitology as a process of context-framing. Then, we have to think of how the agents before and during the transition process try to defend their actions while referring to legitimacy.¹⁹

¹⁷ William H. Sewell, "Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (July 1992): 1-29. Sewell's reference to P.13. Bourdieu is to his: *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977) and to *Homo Academicus* (Stanford, 1988).

¹⁸ Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 335-370; David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?," *International Organization* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 441-73.

¹⁹ See J. Linz's discussion "On the danger of an inverted legitimacy pyramid"

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While the need for stabilizing or changing the regime may come from different sources, each “player” has to argue for her/his position in the situation by referring to sources of legitimacy. Thus he/she will take a position of “reflexive formulation” of why the situation has to be changed/maintained, by referring to the variables in the funnel. This can also be seen as a way of agenda-setting where the agents put different priorities on how to handle the situation, and their language and behavior are “colored” by elements obtained from the funnel, consciously or not. Agency may thus be reformulated as “context structuring”, designing the agenda to be decided within that construction according to the options available from it. The reflexive reciprocity is thus taken care of by indicating how agents behave by “monitoring” the available arguments, judging whether they are of relevance for taking actions. By defining legitimacy from funnel-variables, their decisions make new structures by transitioning to a new regime or by reinforcing the former

where he argues how many problems in post-communist systems come from unrealistic expectations of simultaneous growth of political democracy and economic democracy (market). People, and actors, have given legitimacy in the “wrong” order thus believing that the market (and capitalist actors) will bring political democracy when introduced simultaneously, or even when privatization did happen at a higher speed than political reforms, in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 435-39. The issue of legitimacy is also a major theme in Upset’s *Political Man* (1960), particularly ch. 4: “Social Conflict. Legitimacy and Democracy,” pp. 64-86, where the author sticks to the thesis that modernization (and economic development) in general breeds legitimacy and tolerance (p. 79).

authoritarian one with perhaps new legitimacy. Thus the aspect of “voluntarism” is taken care of by the actors’ choice to interpret the weight of the variables in the funnel for their own platform of legitimate behavior. These are very much the same ideas as Kirchheimer refers to when he points to “the capacity of revolutionary groups to transcend the confining conditions which surrounded their coming to power”.²⁰ But how do we outline the interplay between the framing of the transition context and the reflexive structuration through the funnel?

Game Theory and the “Mapping” of Preference Structuration

Game theory is a method of analyzing choice, given the context and the preferences among the players and notions of rational behavior. This is also why we utilize game theory as a means to uncover the actual “event” when a transition was decided, and the way it was done. In the volumes of O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, the label of “poker game” was used to describe the “uncertainty/unpredictability” of the transition process, but I use the notion of “game” in rather the opposite way: an explicit method to uncover the decisions taken and the motives behind them.²¹

²⁰ In: Burin and Shell (eds.), *Politics, Law, and Social Change*, 397.

²¹ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transition from Authority Rule: Tentative conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), “Playing coup poker” is the subtitle to one of the first sections (pp. 24-25), while under the section “Concluding with a metaphors” they do begin to think in terms of “real games” in the tradition

J. Colomer and M. Pascual were the first to introduce game theory to the analysis of transitions. As they write in “The Polish Games of Transition”(1994), game theory is important because it emphasizes “strategic thinking” among the actors and has the advantage of “clarity and parsimony”. They also mention that in transitions where “traditionally stated ‘structural preconditions’ for democratization” were non-existent, it has led to more intensive studies of the “interactions of actors”, i.e. (in connection with our idea of the funnel) of the games at the “stem” of the funnel.²² Our line of reasoning may be explained as follows: when there are contesting elites/groups each of them having their own strategy, the outcome of their joint competition —the decision— can be classified in a series of known games, and therefrom we may list the individual preferences by a retrospective induction. From the preference list of the individual actors/groups, we may reconstruct the “path” through the funnel from where the actors deduced their arguments for legitimate behavior in the given event. By cross-case comparisons, we may then arrive at a more general theory of how “structuration” of transition contexts occurs.²³

In the example outlined by Colomer/Pascual, they locate a

we intend to follow but without committing themselves to the more formal reasoning within game-theory (pp. 66-72).

²² Josep M. Colomer and Margot Pascual, “The Polish Games of Transition,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 27, no. 3 (1994): 275-294.

²³ Josep Colomer, *Strategic Transitions: Game Theory and Democratization* (Baltimore, MD and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Prisoner's Dilemma game as the game played in the first effort of a Polish transition in 1981. The game discloses that the players did not reach to an optimal result in accordance with their second and in the context most preferred alternatives.²⁴ (See Colomer/Pascual's first game. Appendix 1.)

Another example is offered by Tvedt in "The East German transition game", where he analyzes the game between the Reform movement in the G.D.R. and the new Krenz government. The equilibrium in the game (RC), if it had been the final outcome of the confrontation, would have resulted in a bloody violence and perhaps a solution towards continuing the authoritarian regime (C). In this situation, however, the players were able to communicate and thus avoided the confrontation. (See Tvedt's game. Appendix 2)

The Prisoner's Dilemma game is therefore a very good formal illustration of how the actors in the transition context may confine themselves in decisions, according to their strategies, where they will end up in situations which are non-profitable for democratic regime change. The game illustrates the situation of non-cooperative actions where both parties would have profited from cooperating in order to arrive at the optimal alternative.

Often the Prisoner's Dilemma might be the "initial confrontation" which does not necessarily lead to breakdown, but

²⁴ The same situation is discussed and formulated in: Steven J. Brams, *Theory of Moves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 148-54.

to a situation where the actors may avoid confrontation and rearrange their preferences in order to arrive at a solution less dramatic.

In general, there are several game solutions to the decisions within the “transition context”, some more favorable for a transition to succeed with no violence at all and some unfavorable with no chance of success. But as shown by Tvedt, the transition often takes place through successive “nested” games. Often one game “played” will not provide a “solution”, or the outcome may look unacceptable to both actors. Therefore, they will change strategies and rearrange their preferences. When the players become aware of the strategies and the preferences of the opposite player, one or both may alter their original preferences. The strategies chosen will depend on the transition context, as Tvedt describes when the “temperature” rose among people in the streets of the G.D.R. and the exogenous impulses went against the authoritarian regime.²⁵ In Colome/Pascual’s paper, his analysis of the 1989-game in Poland demonstrates how strategy by the Communist soft-liners shifts from a line of confrontation (RC) to a line of reform (rr), a decision made possible by reflecting over the original outcome of the game with very low pay-off and in terms of the potential re-entry of hard-liners in the regime.²⁶ (See Colomer/Pascual’s second game. Appendix 3)

²⁵ Kurt-Henning Tvedt, “The East German Transition Game,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20, no. 2 (2004): 73-97.

²⁶ Colomer and Pascual, “The Polish Games of Transition,” 275-294.

Thus one may delineate in an explicit way how the actors were thinking and how they behaved within what have been called “the transition context”. Figure 2 illustrates this analytic scheme, where the matrices indicate the games played at the “stem” of the funnel. (See Fig. 2 with game matrices at the end of the funnel; +/- indication positive or negative causes/effects)

Now, with the detailed description of the actual events during the transitions in any of the known cases where authoritarian regimes are displaced by democracy, or when efforts have failed, the case can be examined according to strategies in games. It is likely that Prisoner's Dilemmas do have similar “paths” in terms of how the configuration of preferences are made. Similarly, Assurance games and Chicken games are outcomes of such “mapping of exhausted variables combinations” as described according to the integrative idea of the funnel. It is also important to “nest” the games, locating how “dilemmas” in the first place were resolved through iterating the game or changing the preferences to introduce a new game with a higher propensity for transition.

So, using game theory in transition thinking, one may (1) understand how actors legitimate their actions when analyzing the way games are set up, and (2) see how they play the games by changing preferences and altering their strategies. The idea of integrative theory is to link an explicitly formulated game to the indirect, inverse deduction backwards in the funnel. The game is

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often played within a short time-interval and with incomplete information, but the actors' moves are made by "structuration" of the simultaneously interpreted weight of the variables.

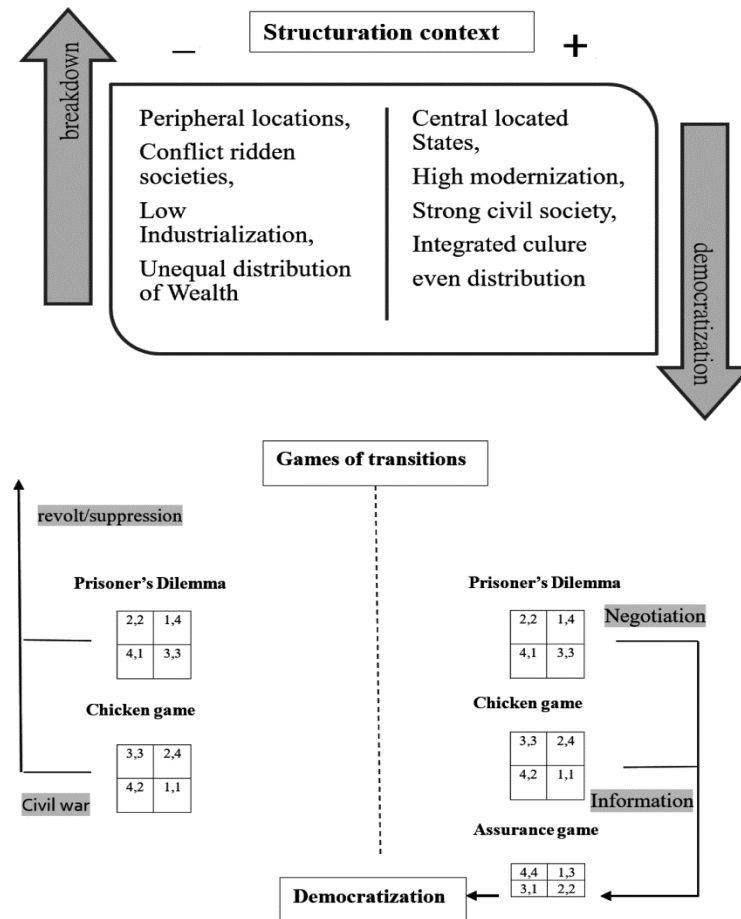


Figure 2: The Funnel of Causality with game matrices (Part 2).

Source: Compiled by Author.

The Integrative Approach: Games, Contexts, Structural Vectors

This article has now outlined some of the building blocks for the integrative perspective which essentially is based on a retrospective interpretation of transition outcomes. The assumption is that similar games arise in similar contexts, which, again, are produced by similar forces (vectors) in the funnel. In a sense, the last part of this perspective is much the same as was utilized by Dahl in his famous *Polyarchy* (1971) book, to an extent repeated but with new content in Huntington's *The Third Wave* (1991) and in a systematic way elaborated by Linz and Stepan in their joint book *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (1996). They all discuss favorable conditions for the breakthrough of democracy and, particularly Dahl and Linz/Stepan, introduce “paths” and “context” as independent variables “conditioning” the different types of transitions. Dahl's “profiles”, favoring polyarchies to be established, contain much of the similar logic, and the Linz/Stephan volume goes well into outlining how various factors contribute to the legitimacy needed among the actors to frame their preferences for change and how various contexts are more or less favorable for transitions and consolidations.

The main distinction of our approach as compared to the ones just mentioned, is the effort to systematize the connections between the explicit games and the context-shaping forces behind them. This emphasis does not break with either the explanations

based on long established correlations between well-being and propensity for democracy, or with the combination of early industrialization, protestant religion, geographical location —and early introduction of what was to become a stable democracy. These observations have now become more or less “accepted truths” and have entered our disciplines as undisputed facts. But such “truisms” may not relax us from penetrating into problems of how structural (and cultural-structural) variables of different kinds brought democracy to different countries at different periods, different levels of socioeconomic-economic well-being, and different historical backgrounds. Even if democracies came in waves, i.e.: under similar global stimuli, the transition processes happened under different strains, many of them bringing about a mere “formal” introduction of democratic constitutions rather than real polyarchies.

The basic questions to be asked are: which games were played in which contexts? So, once again: the assumption is that similar games arise from similar transition contexts which are “structured” in the same way. All nations have different histories and structural configurations, and none are identical to any other. But when the event of transition is coming up, they will structure the transition context in similar manners as resulting from the effects produced by the funnel variables. Thus, one will have Prisoner’s Dilemma prone transition contexts, Assurance contexts, Chicken contexts, etc.; depending on the structuration or whether

the games will be play-stop games or “nested” games.

Now, in this article, a short list of scenarios as a tentative illustration, based on the papers mentioned, for funnel-paths leading to some of the most well-known transition games.

- I. *Prisoner's Dilemma games (with suboptimal outcomes)* will result in non-transition as a result. In this case the structuration context has developed from the multi-effects within the funnel, disclosing a society where geopolitical position, historical cleavages, socio-economic inequality, institutional framework and civic groups and elite recruitment all tend to reinforce a tendency (the vectors have the same direction and are increasing in strength) where the actors are hostile to negotiating, to compromise, to equal share of power.
- II. *Prisoner's Dilemma games* may result in change of strategies and provide opportunities for cooperative games as *nested games*. This structuration will be found in societies where the vectors resulting from geopolitical position, historical cleavages etc., have different directions and thus do not uniformly lead to hostile positions of the actors to the transition contexts. This scenario does perhaps fit in with many of the communist transitions in Europe.
- III. *The Chicken games* may disclose a situation where the structuration of the context may lead the actors towards a

disaster by absolute confrontation, but if the game is played in extensive form and the strength of the players is uneven, the game may lead to a nested game favorable for the transition. This structuration will be found in societies where power prevails over wealth, where institutional rulings and elite recruitment coincide, and where the situation is characterized by sudden collapse of the economy or rapid change. Nested solutions are only viable if the fear of civil war, or perceived complete disorder prevents the players from "risking" the full consequences of the strategy.

- IV. Where *Assurance games* take place, the transition will be swift and quiet and most of the framing of future democracy will be decided on the first game. Such games will be the game most often found either as the final or the only game in the early Western transitions, where the vectors in the funnel have produced positive effects on the structuration context. These societies will have a low level of traumatic historical cleavages, small proportions of the population under the poverty line, stable and non-clientelist institutions, long traditions of organizations in civil society and relatively open elite recruitment competition. This type of structuration therefore fits in well with the "modernization theory": the political outcome of economic growth and distribution of the wealth (increasing middle class) creates moderation and willingness to compromise. The regime only needs a "shock" to set the transition process in motion.

- V. Where the transition is “logical” within an occupied society, regaining freedom through the enemy’s collapse in war, the games played will be *non-conflictual*. One may find different games, but all of them with payoffs acceptable for both players with their highest preference.

From these few and very brief examples, the logic of the overall perspective may be clear. The task will be to examine most of the successful transitions and the attempted transitions (often difficult to disclose since they may have happened in silence/non-documented “inside” the nomenklatura/elite) and classify the games played in order to “map” out the inverse paths through the funnels. This does not mean to “write the history of the transitions in game language”, but to try to force a bit more formal logic on the otherwise attempted analysis in transitology. What to be found in this article is that one does not have to end up in very complicated game-theoretical algorithms, since the main forms of actor agency will document themselves by clear alternative choices of strategies and preferences. Thus, one may catch the “voluntaristic” aspects in transitology in a better comparative framework and not leave the entire understanding up in the air of speculation.

Appendix 1: Colomer/Pascual's first game

Focusing now on the interaction of 1980, we can observe that the two actors have opposite preferences in their first and last places, but it is possible to assume that they coincide in their intermediate orderings. Especially on account of the danger of a Soviet invasion which could bring about violent civil confrontation, also in coherence with our previous formal assumptions at defining generic transition actors, and in view of their revealed positions and real behavior, we interpret that both actors preferred the moderate consensus and civil peace of the outcome *rr* to the radical conflict of *CR*. According to a widespread definition, Solidarity led a 'self-limiting revolution', trying to cram a radical wave of protest and class war into a trade union.

According to the above presented preference orders, the interaction between the two as players can be formalized as shown below.

Prisoner's Dilemma game between the Polish Party and Solidarity, 1980-81

		Continuist Party	
		C	r
Rupturist Solidarity	R	2,2	4,1
	r	1,4	3,3

Note: R: Rupture; r reform; C: Continuity

This game is the celebrated Prisoner's Dilemma. In this game each actor has a dominant strategy, that is, a strategy that gives him a higher payoff whatever the strategy the other player chooses. The dominant strategies C for the Party and R for Solidarity produce an equilibrium outcome with values 2-2, located at the upper-left cell of the matrix, but this is also an inefficient outcome as compared to the more efficient outcome, with values 3-3, located at the lower-right cell of the matrix. In this case, the inefficient equilibrium is identified with the choices of strategy Continuity by the Party and strategy Rupture by Solidarity, that is, an outcome of open conflict, revolt and repression, while the more efficient outcome would mean an agreement on reform.

Appendix 2: Tvedt's game

Strategies within the Prisoner's Dilemma

These brief reflections enable us to model the game played between the two main groups of actors during the period from October 18 until December 7, 1989. Assuming they did choose between their two most preferred alternatives: rupture (R) and reform (r) for the Reform Movements, and continuity (C) and reform (r) for the SED-regime, we obtain four possible outcomes produced by pairs of actors' strategies: $Cr > rr > CR > rR$. The corresponding matrix is presented below.

Pact-making Prisoner's Dilemma game.

		Continuist SED-regime	
		C	r
Rupturist <i>Reform Movements</i>	R	2,2	4,1
	r	1,4	3,3

Note: R: Rupture; r reform; C: Continuity

Observe that the game matrix reflects the infamous "Prisoner's Dilemma" in which both players have dominant strategies. Independent of the regime's strategy, it is rational for the Reform Movements to choose rupture (R). Conversely, in any hypothesis of the Reform Movements' choice, the SED-regime will be best off adopting continuity (C). In combination, these two dominant strategies produce a stable Nash equilibrium outcome in

the upper left hand cell, with the values 2, 2. Note that none of the players is interested in a unilateral change of strategy, seeing that this would only generate a less favorable outcome. If the Reform Movements opt for reform instead of rupture, it will produce the worst outcome for them (1), given that the SED-regime holds on to continuity. This is also the case for the latter player. A one-sided change of strategy will reduce their payoff from 2 to only 1. Although this outcome is formally stable, it is still sub-optimal since both players would be better off in another position. Obviously in the lower right-hand cell, the values 3, 3 represent mutually-improved payoffs compared to the values 2, 2 in the equilibrium outcome. In fact, the Prisoner's Dilemma paradox occurs, meaning behavior based upon the unilateral adoption of the best strategy according to the players own interests produces a worse result than the one obtainable if both pursue alternative strategies.

The equilibrium outcome (RC) symbolizes confrontation between the two players most preferred strategies and gives a quite credible reflection of the political situation immediately after Krenz took over the party leadership. The Reform Movements acted as vanguards of mass mobilization and tried to overthrow regime power. On the other hand, the SED tried to preserve the core of Communist hegemony, the key to prolonging their policies of "real socialism". Translated into real politics this stable equilibrium outcome intuitively forecasts a violent confrontation.

Appendix 3: Colomer/Pascual's second game

We assume, thus, that the Solidarity player maintained, in 1988-89, the same preference order on the four possible outcomes above presented in 1980-81: $rR > rr > CR > Cr$ (the first strategy being the choice of the Party and the second that of Solidarity). This ordering of outcomes corresponds to the logical criteria of a formal Rupturist opposition player who prefers alternatives from their greater to lesser degree of change: $R > r > C$.

On the other hand, the Party player, previously presented as 'Continuists' or hard-liners, that is, a player with an opposite ordering of the basis alternatives to the 'Rupturist', $C > r > R$, adopted a new ordering in which reform was put in the first place: $r > C > r$. In analogy to previous schemes, and regarding outcomes produced by pairs of actors' strategies, we can interpret that the new soft-liner player prefers: $rr > CR > Cr > rR$.

The corresponding interaction between the two players is presented below:

Negotiation game between the Polish Party and Solidarity at the Round Table 1989

Openist Communist leaders

		C	r
Rupturist Solidarity	R	2,3	4,1
	r	1,2	3,4

Note: R: Rupture; r reform; C: Continuity

This structure reflects a possibility of mutual cooperation, politically interpreted as an opportunity for transition by agreement. It implies an initiative role of Openist soft-liners and adaptation of Rupturist opposition.

As in the first game presented above, in this game a deficient outcome would be achieved in the upper left cell of the matrix, with values 2-3, if the players chose their strategies ‘myopically’, that is, simultaneously and without information on the choice of the other player. Again, in this game, as in the former Prisoner’s Dilemma, both players have incentives to transfer the outcome to the lower—right cell, that is, to reform by agreement, where both would obtain higher values, in this case 3-4. Yet to go there, and this is a crucial difference from the previous game, the initiative of one of the players is sufficient, whatever the initial state is.

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