

**RESHAPING STATE-SOCIETY
RELATIONS: DEMOCRATIZATION
IN SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE**

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study attempts to analyze differences in populations' behavior during processes of transition from nondemocratic regimes to regimes democratic in intention. The central hypothesis is that the State—as reflected not only in its elites' preferences and strategies but also in its capacities—has to be considered if we are to understand mass behavior, whether transgressive or moderate, and even mass demobilization. The comparison includes two Southern European countries, Portugal and Spain during the mid-seventies, as points of reference and, as the main empirical cases, two Eastern European countries, Hungary and Romania, in which democratization began in 1989.

RESUMEN

Este estudio comparativo intenta analizar las diferencias en el comportamiento de las poblaciones durante los procesos de transición desde regímenes no democráticos hacia regímenes que intentan ser democráticos. La hipótesis central es que el estado—tal como se refleja no sólo en las preferencias y estrategias de las elites sino también en sus capacidades—tiene que ser tomado en cuenta para entender los comportamientos de masas, tanto los transgresores como los moderados, y aún la desmovilización de masas. La comparación incluye dos países de Europa del Sur como puntos de referencia, Portugal y España a mediados de los setentas, y dos países del Este Europeo en los que la democratización comenzó en 1989 como casos empíricos principales: Hungría y Rumania.

“The year of 1989 was the springtime of societies aspiring to be civil.”
—Timothy G. Ash, *The Magic Lantern*

By the end of 1956 Russian tanks had crushed the Hungarian revolution. The Soviets used considerable violence to stifle popular demands and the Nagy government’s aspirations for Hungary’s neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) as well as the restoration of multiparty democracy. It was Communist Party hegemony that Hungarians saw restored. The first secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party when the revolution came about, Imre Nagy, was deported to Romania, returned to Hungary, then hanged in 1958 by the Soviet Union. In December 1989 the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu was put up against a wall and shot as a result of a popular uprising twenty-four years after he was elected General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. It was the beginning of democratization in Romania.

The first event marked the beginning of the Brezhnev Doctrine, although this was not officially stated until Soviet tanks crushed the Prague Spring in 1968. As Partos has accurately summarized, “[n]o Eastern European country paid as heavy a price as Hungary did in 1956 for testing the limits of Moscow’s tolerance for independent action by one of its allies” (1992, 120). The Romanian event can be taken as the ultimate expression of the Sinatra Doctrine, as well as its most violent among the Eastern European countries.¹ A complex process, long-in-the-making, developed between these two events and ended in the overall collapse of state-socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Many actors and factors have played a role in this history. My paper will deal with one of the major protagonists: popular mobilizations.

¹ For the purposes of this article, Eastern Europe encompasses Poland, Hungary, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Czechoslovakia prior to its division into two separate states (the Czech and Slovak Republics), Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania. I exclude the war-torn post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav republics. A few of them have had very violent politics, with many elements of authoritarian leadership, for ethnic and national reasons that are not addressed in this paper.

This comparative study aims to analyze differences in populations' behavior during processes of transition from nondemocratic regimes to regimes democratic in intention. The central hypothesis is that the State—as reflected not only in its elites' preferences and strategies but also in its capacities—has to be considered if we are to understand mass behavior, whether transgressive or moderate. As I will try to argue, the two opposing sides of my dependent variable—transgression or radicalism versus moderation or demobilization—are to be explained by incorporating into the current analysis of democratization the State's capacity to accomplish its proper functions; that is, whether or not a power void is perceived by collective actors.²

The comparison includes two Southern European countries, Portugal and Spain during the mid-seventies (see Durán 2000), as points of reference and as the main object of the study two Eastern European countries, Hungary and Romania, in which democratization began in 1989. Portugal and Spain appear as two paradigmatic cases in the sense that they can be taken as models. The Hungarian case resembles to a large extent the Spanish experience of moderate popular mobilization and perceived State's capacity. The Romanian path was much more complex. Romania does not fall exactly in-between the two Iberian cases; rather, Romanians' collective behavior was sometimes closer to the Spanish, sometimes to the Portuguese, but always understandable in light of the perceived strength or weakness of the State.

Collective Action and Three Intertwined Actors: Ruling Elites, Regime, and State

A significant number of scholars working on regime change have put great emphasis upon intra-elite tensions and conflicts within the circle of power to explain every democratization from the Portuguese case onward. For analytical purposes they differentiate between soft-liners and hard-liners. As far as the transitions to post-

² Notice at this point that I take transgression, subversion, and radicalization to be synonymous. As will be developed in the next section, radicalization is not related here to goals but to means, i.e., to the forms of collective action. My thanks to Steve Levitsky for encouraging me to clarify this point.

communism are concerned, the literature distinguishes between ‘reformist’ and ‘conservative’ regimes on the basis of the leadership’s preeminent response to Gorbachev’s reforms (Pravda 1992a). The assumption, accordingly, is that while the reformist regimes encouraged change,³ the conservatives—by resisting any real reform moves—provoked mass revolutionary protest.⁴ Everything seems to rest upon the ruling elites’ choices. Even when elite-centered social scientists expand their focus of interest and look at society, they tend to concentrate on opposition as *challengers*, that is, on outside-elites, whether moderates or radicals.⁵ Although this line of analysis may be persuasive, it is only part of the story. It is an approach that dismisses or gives little scope to other intervening actors and factors, either institutional or social, either individual or collective, and either organized or not.

The terms of transitions are settled by elites, either new or old. But elites do not decide isolated from external pressures or considerations. As Nancy G. Bermeo (1997b) has argued, what she calls ‘nonelites’ are major protagonists of the drama of dictatorships and democratization.⁶ Societal pressures influence rulers’ behavior, and certainly the spontaneous, massive, effective, and almost entirely nonviolent popular movements were important actors both in ending Communist Party hegemony in many Eastern European cases and in shaping the process of new regime institutionalization (Glenn 1999; see also Friedheim 1993). But what accounts for remarkable differences in the character of mass behavior? Critics of the assumption of elites’ preferences highlight the epiphenomenal role to which collective actors have been assigned (Glenn 1999, 6).⁷ However, those

³ Poland and Hungary are the cases.

⁴ Pravda (1992a) refers to the former GDR and Czechoslovakia as well as Bulgaria and Romania. Albania is also to be included as a conservative regime, even if—as in Bulgaria—mobilizations were not subversive at all.

⁵ O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1989); Di Palma (1990); Przeworski (1991a); Higley and Gunther (1992).

⁶ See also Tarrow (1991) and the contributions of Bermeo (1997a), Haggard and Kaufman (1997), and Collier and Mahoney (1997) to the special issue of *Comparative Politics*, 29 (3) on *Transitions to Democracy: A Special Issue in Memory of Dankwart A. Rustow*.

⁷ This is, actually, one of Valerie Bunce’s criticisms of the prevailing elite-centered model (1995a, 123–24). According to her, it is one of the weaknesses of what she also calls ‘transitology’

scholars have not addressed the question either.⁸ To do so, I will try to examine how elites' attitudes, discourses, and decisions have an impact upon society during regime change. By assuming that the close interrelationship between authorities and masses is both dynamic and reciprocal, I will also argue that perceptions and calculations about opportunities and constraints matter, and almost on a day-by-day basis, not only regarding the domestic but also the regional and even the international situations.

I have a background as a historian. During my early years of academic schooling I was always confronted with political history emphasizing just dates, names, and sequences of events. That is not what I intend here. My argument, as I try to make explicit next, is that there is an indissoluble link between contingency and structure

throughout regime change, whether in Southern Europe or in Eastern Europe.⁹ Decisions are made according to constraints and opportunities, but they are not just related to contingent circumstances; constraints and opportunities also arise from structure. Thus, it is my aim to go beyond a voluntaristic understanding of social and political changing reality. As the cornerstone of my argument, I resort to Robert Fishman's enormously suggestive essay (1990a) and analytically distinguish between regime and State. This allows taking the State into account as a complex and heterogeneous actor—composed of elites and institutions—influencing both mass actions and, thus, the democratization path itself (see Durán 1999).

The regime is necessarily in crisis when democratization begins. But what about the State? Two arguments lead us to pose such a question.¹⁰ The first argument has to do

and, in turn, one of the reasons that makes comparing Eastern Europe with Southern Europe and Latin America problematic (see below).

⁸ Ekiert and Kubik's comparative study of collective protest in the former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia during the 1989–93 period (1998) is somewhat of an exception. They distinguish nondisruptive from disruptive or radical from violent protest events.

⁹ I exclude Latin America because of my lack of knowledge of the region thus far.

¹⁰ As will be apparent, my conception of the State is drawn from Weber (1978; see Skocpol, 1987). I do not reject other definitions and theories about the State. However, I consider the

with the definition of ‘regime’ itself, along with how social mobilizations during transition have been mostly explained (see figure 1). Very schematically, by ‘regime’ I understand the rules of the game that determine how the rulers come to political power and how this power is exercised; that is, how those who are in power deal with those who are not. To be sure, it is the organization that constructs and shapes State-society relations.¹¹ As to the popular protests and pressures during liberalization and/or democratization, specialists on the third wave of transitions to democracy usually refer to them as a ‘resurrection of civil society’.¹² They explain such a mobilization during liberalization, as well as their demobilization throughout democratization, as a function of both the regime crisis and the regime change. If a regime is in crisis, uncertainty arises. Tolerance and openness on the part of political elites may lead to a call for general elections. Uncertainty and openness, their reasoning goes, give room to new and increasing expectations, aspirations, and impatience on the part of society. Finally, civil society ‘resurrects’.

Thus, we have three actors—the political regime, the society, and the State—and a relationship between the first two has been established in the literature. However, a set of questions arises regarding the third—can the State itself face a crisis during regime change, even if temporary? Does the State continue to fulfill its structural functions throughout the process? Doesn’t the State play any role in determining collective behavior? To put it differently, may scholars better assess the difference between moderate and transgressive mass contention by focusing on the State? Elite-centered analysts have observed how, in some cases and at particular moments of the transition, a

Weberian one to be the best for understanding why and how the State is an actor determining the nature of collective behavior.

¹¹ I draw my definition from a number of authors: Foweraker (1989, 232), Garretón (1989, 45, and 1994, 63–64), and Fishman (1990a, 428).

¹² That these scholars are aware of the existence of such pressures from below does not imply that they emphasize their role and impact upon transition *vis-à-vis* elite dispositions, calculations, and pacts (see O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, ch. 5). In accounting for the East European experiences, Arato has referred to the *resurrection* as the ‘reconstruction of civil society’ (1992, 127), while Ash prefers to express it as the ‘springtime of citizens’ (1990, 149).

resurrected civil society coalesces into a ‘popular upsurge’.¹³ According to them, the shorter and the more unexpected the regime change, the greater the likelihood of popular upsurge.¹⁴ My argument is that, while both the regime crisis and the regime change are helpful in explaining the resurrection of civil society, the nature of social groups’ behavior—whether the upsurge takes place—is necessarily, even if not sufficiently, to be grasped by analytically considering the State.

It is not Linz and Stepan’s ‘stateness problem’ or Bunce’s ‘state collapse’ *vis-à-vis* ‘state continuity’ that it will be at issue.¹⁵ I will not analyze the territorial dimension of the State authority. I understand here the State to be the more permanent structure of domination, aimed at imposing authority, upholding the law, and maintaining the established order by coercive methods and institutions. By the same token, it is worth clarifying that it is not decisive whether the State changes or not as a result of the democratization path. Each transition to multiparty democracy involves the State transformation into an *Estado de Derecho* or *Rechtsstaat* via the enactment of a Constitution.¹⁶ And, in the case of such a paradigmatic case as Spain, the change even

¹³ The popular upsurge is defined as a “euphoric moment when a vast majority of the population feel bound together on equal terms, struggling for the common goal of creating not merely a new polity but a new social order” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 54).

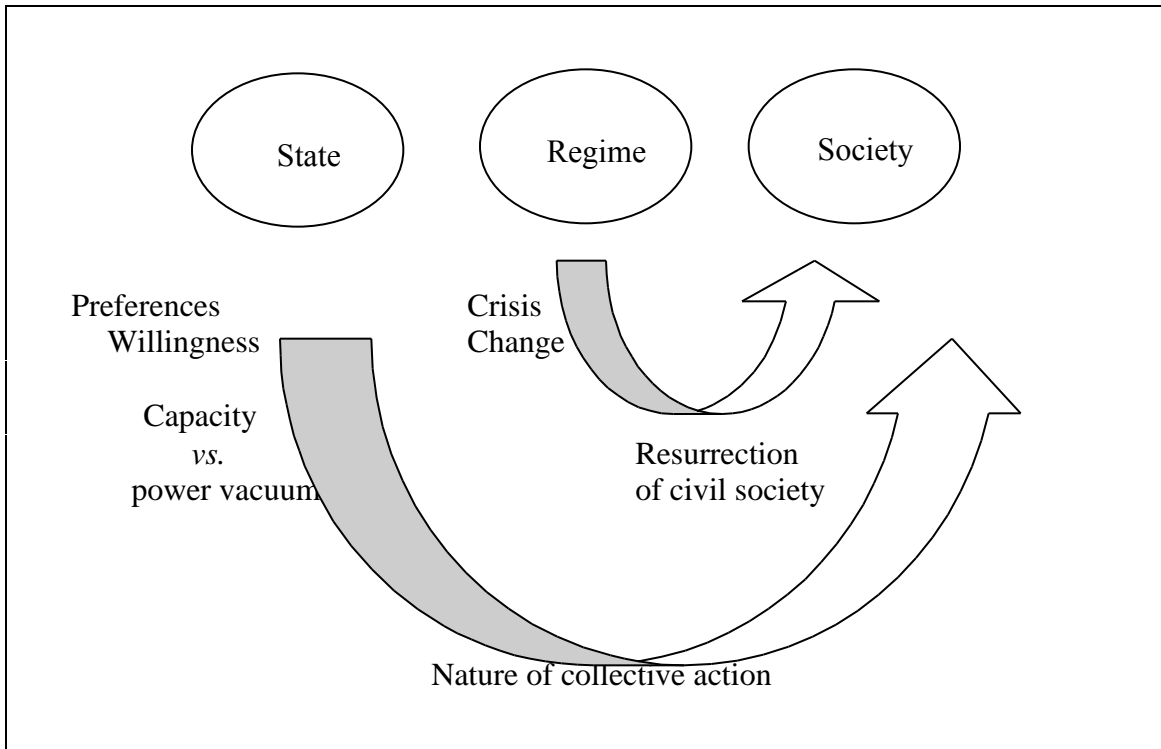
¹⁴ I lack space to refute this reasoning. See Durán (1997) for the role that the sense of *libertação* (liberation) that workers, students, and other social groups initially felt after the unexpected rupture with the authoritarian regime played in the Portuguese transition.

¹⁵ Such a ‘problem’ alludes to the complex and overlapping relationship among State, nation(s), nationalism, and democratization. The premise is that the existence of a sovereign State is a prerequisite for democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; see also Rustow 1970). Certainly, what Bunce labels the ‘virtual state argument’ appear to be relevant to the post-socialist experience (1999a, 760; see also Bunce 1999b). A good indicator is that only five of the twenty-seven post-socialist states existed in their present form during the Cold War era (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania). All the rest experienced a process of ‘national liberation’ (Bunce 1995a, 120), whether that was a consequence of the end of the Soviet bloc or the end of an internal empire, as with the federal states of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. In the case of the former East Germany, where reunification replaced dismemberment, the State also collapsed. Even though further work remains to be done on this regard, Ekiert and Kubik have contended that “there is no correlation between the nature of power transfer, the extent of state continuity, and the type of economic reforms, on the one hand, and the magnitude of protest, on the other” (1998, 565).

¹⁶ My thanks to Julia López in this regard.

involved a redefinition of the political relationship between center and periphery.¹⁷ What is decisive in accounting for the nature of collective behavior is whether the State can carry out its structural functions, that is to say, whether it exercises power or gives way to a power void.

Figure 1



The second argument is as follows. Ruling elites, regime, and State are, certainly, closely intertwined realities. However, they are not one single reality. I find it methodologically convenient to establish an analytical differentiation among them. If we refer to the State simply as synonymous with regime, or as no more than the ^{arena} in which social, economic, and political conflicts are resolved, and if we over-emphasize the role of power holders, we are leaving aside many important intervening factors and actors,

¹⁷ Through the 1978 Constitution and the following *Estatutos de Autonomía*, the traditional unitary state organization has become quasi-federal. On the *Estado de las Autonomías*, see Fernández (1985), Linz (1997), Pérez Calvo (1997), Requejo (1997), and Colomer (1998).

such as public institutions. The crucial elites include politicians with state *potestas* (mostly, the government and the Head of State) but also leaders within the police and the military. Additionally, the police and the military are more than their officers.

The importance of ruling elites is apparent. They are those who (have to) make decisions. But decisions are neither made simply according to singular individuals' preferences nor implemented only when their willingness is present. There must exist capacity both to make decisions and to implement them. And this capacity also has a lot to do with State institutions, such as the army and the police, which are expected to respect the established decision-making hierarchy and obey commands. In trying to grasp the reasons why masses behave collectively as they do, either moderately or radically, during both regime crisis and regime change, scholars have to consider not only authorities' preferences and willingness to act. They also have to account for authorities' capacity to implement their own decisions, and this has to do with the State of which the coercive staff forms a part. As this paper will argue, mass perceptions regarding State's capacity help explain mass behavior during transition to multiparty democracy. Protestors interpret the State's willingness and capacity in terms of opportunities *versus* constraints to rebel.

Irrespective of the type of nondemocratic regime from which the transition takes place, irrespective of the phase of the transition process in which the regime is engaged (whether liberalization or democratization), and irrespective of the path whereby regime change takes place, power-holders and State institutions are assumed to be the guarantors of State structural functions. My hypothesis is that, while masses make the most of the opening of the dictatorship to protest (the alleged resurrection of the civil society), their mobilization remains moderate in nature when the State's willingness and/or capacity to impose authority, uphold the law, and maintain the established order is perceived to be strong. That was the case, for instance, in Spain and Hungary. Quite to the contrary, as I will try to argue by taking Portugal and Romania as instances, the triggering of contention becomes radicalized when the State's willingness and/or capacity is perceived to be weakened, that is, when a power void is perceived by demanding collectives. To put it

differently, a State will experience a crisis—if only temporary—when, despite maintaining its fundamental structures intact, its constituent parts lack the will and/or the capacity for *effective action*.¹⁸

Both the discourse and the actual behavior of State authorities and institutions shape the perceptions of masses regarding two related questions: whether and how to act. As a result, this affects what they actually do. The following pairs of factors determine the State's capacity or incapacity to enforce its authority and, in turn, shape people's perceptions of what opportunities or constraints, respectively, are available to protest for their grievances and/or to mobilize in pursue of their demands: a) cohesion and unity *versus* divisions, and coordination *versus* lack of coordination, within and among the different institutions of State power; b) sense *versus* confusion as to the hierarchical organization of the different State institutions (i.e., as to which body has the power to decide in case of disagreement); c) internal discipline *versus* indiscipline on the part of those who have to implement given orders, especially orders to repress; and d) authorities' inclination *versus* reluctance to resort to the use of coercive State forces to impose law and order.¹⁹ While the first in each pair strengthens perceptions of State's capacity, if the second predominates, tolerance becomes powerlessness.²⁰ In turn, while the first in each pair restrains

¹⁸ By 'effective action' I mean dissuading, preventing, and sanctioning action against those who subvert the established order and challenge the authority of the State.

¹⁹ Authorities can view the recourse to security forces with suspicion because their image is closely identified with the dictatorship, which relates to the delegitimation of the regime to be changed; out of fear that they would intervene too severely, which relates to the extent to which commands are obeyed by institutions as given by elites; and because authorities consider mobilized groups so strong that repression could in fact be the most costly alternative.

²⁰ As I have noted elsewhere (Durán 1999, 11–12), there may be internal divisions or disagreements within the State as to objectives and political strategies. Actually, tensions within the institutional structures and authorities of authoritarian regimes are one of the main causes of political crises and hence of the onset of transition processes. This reasoning does not contradict my own argument. I consider that mobilized collectives' perceptions of divisions within the State contribute to both the uncertainty and the increased expectations that are characteristic features of situations of regime change. In this sense, however, there is little to distinguish the phase of political crisis from the subsequent and overlapping phases of liberalization and democratization. That is, confirmation of the existence of such dissension within the State does not help us to understand the contingent radicalization of mobilizations by certain social groups. The decisive factor, over and above the tolerance that workers and other social groups perceive with respect to the level of

mobilization and enhances moderation, the second allows and even stimulates radicalization.

Some final words have to be said regarding my dependent variable: the nature of collective action. I define as 'moderate' forms of pressure and protest those types of collective action that occur within the zone of tolerance that the central empowered authority establishes so as to guarantee the order, not mainly the public order but either the socioeconomic order, the political order, or both. As to the political order, it is mostly related to the imposition of political authorities' *potestas* or sovereignty. The boundaries of this 'zone' are defined by the legality in force but also by the degree of lenience shown by the government authorities (an indication of their commitment to democratizing). Social pressure itself, exerted both prior to and during the transition, also defines the framework for social mobilization. That is, protesters push and try to expand the limits of the zone of tolerance. But they do not go beyond the line where the costs exceed the benefits of mobilizing. This is clear enough to protesters despite the uncertainty surrounding the moment. As I try to argue in the next section, that was the case in both Spain and Hungary during their respective transitions.

Transgression is not synonymous with unrest and disruption. It is not even a question of violence. Violence may be absent while transgression occurs. 'Transgressive' forms of collective action are those types of social mobilization that, consistently and for a meaningful period of time, question either the employers' and managers' authority (i.e., subversion of the socioeconomic order) or the power-holders' authority (i.e., subversion of the political order). In both dimensions of transgression mobilized collective actors challenge the order of which State authorities are assumed to be the guarantors; even more, the order of which they declare themselves the guarantors. Instead of pressing the authorities for the satisfaction of their demands, as before, protesters impose such satisfaction both by defying authorities' *potestas* or sovereignty and by actually assuming

mobilization, is whether or not they observe disparity in the criteria regarding the character and intensity of permitted and permissible collective actions.

their functions. Any reference to the zone of tolerance becomes meaningless by that time. So it happened both in Portugal and Romania throughout their respective regime changes.

The Comparison and the Cases of the Study

The Method and the East-South Comparison

In this study I use the comparative method. My assumption is that controlled comparisons among a limited number of cases can be a powerful tool for uncovering causal relationships. My approach consists of choosing cases on the basis of seemingly similar contexts that produce divergent outcomes, that is, variance in the dependent variable. In the context of transition from nondemocratic regimes to electoral democracy, the State appears to be the crucial factor that produces divergent outcomes in the nature of collective action. A regime crisis is not necessarily the same thing as a State crisis. It is in the latter that mobilized groups see an opportunity for satisfying their demands by transgressive means. Succinctly, that is the conclusion I drew from my research on the same topic in analyzing the Iberian processes of regime change in the mid-seventies (Durán 1999 and 2000). In turn, that is the conclusion and the theoretical framework I want to test here in incorporating into the comparison two Eastern European countries. To put it differently, bearing Portugal and Spain in mind, that is the hypothesis I aim to test by looking, across space and over time, at Romania and Hungary.

Let me state four clarifying points: With regard to Eastern Europe, my arguments will be based more on logical reasoning and secondary sources than on extensive empirical evidence. Second, I have neither the aim nor the capacity to determine how much variance in protest nature my independent variable explains. Third, I would like to note that I do not deny the validity of other analyses and theoretical frameworks. Rather, I propose my argument as one that overlaps others, such as the insightful, persuasive, and stimulating *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Linz and Stepan 1996), *Power in Movement* (Tarrow 1998), and *Subversive Institutions* (Bunce 1999b).

Finally, resting mostly upon my findings in comparing Portugal and Spain, I assume a) that it is impossible to fully understand the character of collective behavior without taking into account factors such as the historical legacy, the type of regime (related to the institutional legacy), the political culture of the different social groups, how the transition begins, the motivations and demands of mobilized groups, the level of institutionalization of resources for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, or the role of civil and political organizations. Of course, I am not trying to say that my argument captures

the whole process determining the nature of collective action during regime change. Nonetheless, by arguing along the lines of the approach John Stuart Mill called the 'method of difference', and by considering Hungary, Spain, Portugal, and Romania, I hypothesize that b) while those factors are similar in some or all of the different experiences, regardless of the nature of collective action, c) the State appears as the one crucial difference that enables us to understand why popular mobilization during regime change processes become subversive in some cases while remaining moderate in others.²¹

²¹ Skocpol has summarized Mill's argument while offering instances of relevant studies where the method have been applied, either alone or combined with the 'method of agreement' (Skocpol 1986 and Skocpol and Somers 1995, 78–82).

Before proceeding into the justification of the choice of cases, a few words have to be said regarding the East-South comparison. I tend to think that the debate between those scholars who favor such a cross-regional comparison (see Schmitter and Karl 1994; Karl and Schmitter 1995) and those who are suspicious of it, and even question its validity (see Bunce 1995a, 1995b, and 1998), is not going to be over in the near future. However, putting aside the debate and some reciprocal misunderstandings, the studies carried out by both sides are not exclusive but complementary—and this essay could be a proof. This stated, my position is that the processes of regime change that occurred in Eastern Europe can be treated conceptually and theoretically as part of the same wave of democratization that began in Portugal in 1974.

Thus we can try to explain Eastern European mass mobilizations according to the same concepts, variables, and hypotheses that succeed in explaining collective action in Southern Europe. The cross-regional comparison that I undertake here should establish whether my theoretical proposition is to be restricted to the Iberian cases alone, given a wider applicability, or abandoned altogether. By the same token, even if “we must be very cautious” (Bunce 1995a, 121) when comparing democratization East and South, the addition of Eastern Europe to comparative studies of democratization has one major benefit—“It introduces serious questions about the reigning paradigm of democratization” (ibid., 125).²²

²² Schmitter and Karl point out that systematic comparison may encourage scholars “to pay more attention to variables that have either been previously taken for granted...or that have been examined and rejected as less important” (1994, 178).

Portugal, Spain, Hungary, and Romania in Comparative Perspective

I will account here for a cluster of four European cases of regime transition from dictatorship to democracy.²³ They experienced two different kinds of social mobilization throughout the process: moderate in the case of Spain and Hungary and radical, transgressive, or subversive in Portugal and Romania. Both Spain and Hungary are assumed to be instances of elite-negotiated transitions combined with mass pressure and protests.²⁴ Collective action, while it was important in determining the path of the transition, was always characterized by moderation. In Spain more workers (the major protagonists in social mobilizations) in more firms and in larger conflicts than before did mobilize during 1976, the first year of democratization.²⁵ There were strikes, meetings, demonstrations, and sit-ins. But mobilized collectives, workers or not, did not expand the repertoire of collective action that they had developed under and against the authoritarian regime.

Ekiert and Kubik's (1998) study of East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia establishes that collective action in Hungary had the lowest magnitude of the four countries from 1989 to 1993.²⁶ Even when the Hungarian protest magnitude peaked in 1989, the

²³ Analytical and descriptive accounts of Iberian transitions, some of them within a general framework of explanation dealing with the third wave of democratizations, can be found in Schmitter (1986); Fishman (1990a and 1990b); Maravall and Santamaría (1989); Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle (1995); Linz and Stepan (1996, chs. 6 and 7); and Maxwell (1996). On Hungary and Romania, see, for instance, Verdery and Kligman (1992); Bruszt and Stark (1992); González (1993); Tökés (1996 and 1997); Linz and Stepan (1996, chs. 17 and 18); Carothers (1996); Tismaneanu (1997); and Hollis (1999).

²⁴ Many of the basic concepts and arguments used to analyze the Spanish transition are also used to describe the Hungarian transition (see González 1993). As for Latin America, Linz and Stepan (1996, 296) have indicated the Uruguayan transition as the most suitable for describing the Hungarian dynamics. Nonetheless, they contend the Spanish model of *reforma pactada–ruptura pactada* was also available for emulation or reflection for government and opposition elites alike in Brazil (*ibid.*, 117).

²⁵ On the increasing number of strikers strikes and strike working hours, see De la Villa Gil (1977); Sagardoy and León Blanco (1982); Maravall (1982, ch. 1); Balfour (1989); Sastre (1997); and Molinero and Ysás (1998).

²⁶ The protest magnitude for each year takes into account number, size, and duration of protest events.

number of protest events that year, as throughout the five-year period, was lower than the Polish and German figures: 38.8 percent of such events in Poland and 54.9 percent of those in East Germany.²⁷ On the nature of collective action, their data show that in Hungary 67.5 percent of the strategies used by protesting groups were nondisruptive (the most frequent being open protest letters and statements) and 30.8 percent disruptive (strike alerts, strikes, demonstrations, marches, and so on). As in Spain, protesters resorted to a higher degree to their most familiar repertoire of collective action, in the Hungarian case street demonstrations.

By contrast, Portugal and Romania are two cases of regime overthrow where mobilizations were transgressive in nature.²⁸ Although the respective nondemocratic regimes were quite different,²⁹ protesters subverted the law and the order of which power-holders and state institutions are assumed to be, and said to be, guarantors. Protesters challenged their authority and moved from putting pressure on power-holders to trying to impose their demands.³⁰ In Portugal in 545 out of the 958 urban labor conflicts recorded between April/May 1974 and November 1975 (see Durán 1997) workers pursued their demands through a combination of established forms of collective action (the only type

²⁷ This is the only item Ekiert and Kubik break down by year. They do not offer the data for Slovakia.

²⁸ The regime was not overthrown by the same actors. Whereas the dictatorship fell in Romania as a result of a popular upsurge, the Portuguese transition was initiated by State actors (see Fishman 1990a). On 25 April 1974 the military, organized in the Armed Forces ^{Mov}ement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*, MFA), put an end to the Portuguese dictatorship through a coup d'état. The '25 de Abril' marked the beginning of democratization. The Greek case was similar. However, as I note elsewhere (Durán 2000), neither the overthrow nor the role the military played as initiator led to transgression on the part of masses in Greece. Mobilizations, if any, remained moderate.

²⁹ The Salazar regime in Portugal is characterized as a consolidated authoritarian regime (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986) or, in other words, a civilianized authoritarian regime with a weak party (Linz and Stepan 1996) like the Franco dictatorship in Spain. Ceaucescu's regime, on the other hand, was a case of socialist patrimonialism (Linden 1986), the only regime in the region that combined totalitarian and sultanistic tendencies (Linz and Stepan 1996; see also Tismaneanu 1999). Linz and Stepan (1996) label the Hungarian regime mature post-totalitarianism.

³⁰ O'Donnell and Schmitter have argued that Argentina, Venezuela, and Peru are Latin American cases that have experienced moments of popular upsurge (1986, 54–55). They could be countries to consider in future enlarged cross-regional comparison.

that would be seen in Spain during the transition) and new, more radical, even revolutionary types of action.³¹

In Romania the dictatorship was overthrown by a genuine popular upheaval. Tens of thousands of Romanians spontaneously took to the streets in Timisoara (16–18 December 1989) and later in Bucharest (21–25 December). They cut the communist symbols out of their flags and shouted ‘We are the People!’ The uprising became violent and bloody. Romanians clashed with the Romanian Secret Police (the *Securitate*) and abruptly imposed the end of the dictatorship. At least two thousand people were killed in the overthrow of the regime. The dictator and his wife, Elena Ceauzescu, fled by helicopter from the Central Committee building in Bucharest when it was stormed by the crowd, and they were captured, judged, and summarily executed on Catholic Christmas day. Instead of pressing power-holders toward democratization, protests led to the imposition of a provisional government, challenging and even replacing legal institutions and official authority³²

Discontent with political dynamics and transgressive mobilization coalesced again a few months later. At the end of April 1990 for nearly two months—before and after the founding elections were held—thousands of antigovernment students, workers, intellectuals, and later Gypsies occupied and camped in the University Square in

³¹ Thus, radical or transgressive actions of this type became the dominant form of protest. In at least 57% of recorded conflicts Portuguese workers illegally occupied private companies, temporarily or permanently taking over the management of factories and selling the product of their labor. On other occasions sacked workers and their colleagues refused to accept dismissals and remained at their posts, organizing protective pickets at the factory gates and/or internal vigilance committees. Other workers refused to sell tickets for public transport (even though service was maintained), ejected or purged management, and/or prevented managers from entering the workplace (and sometimes from leaving it, in what employers called ‘kidnappings’).

³² Violence was not a feature of the other two abrupt regime demises by popular upsurges (Czechoslovakia and the former East Germany). However, it is worth noting for future comparisons that the process of regime change reached a “peak of ungovernability” in the GDR (Friedheim 1995, 169) “when the government and Round Table opposition groups risked ceding control of the transition to masses in the streets” (ibid.). The “peak of mass action,” when many *Stasi* buildings (those of the GDR secret police) were occupied by protesters, made both the Modrow government and opposition fear a “revolutionary situation” (ibid.). As for the Albanian experience, while the events of 1989–90 were not on the whole violent, they became so beginning in 1991 (Bunce 1999b, 171, fn.7).

Bucharest. Organized mainly by the Students' League, the 'December 21' Association, and the Independent Group for Democracy, the sit-in and around-the-clock demonstration (also known as the 'Commune of Bucharest') were joined by hundreds of other informal initiatives from the growing Romanian civil society. By imposing a 'Communist-free zone' in the city center, the demonstrators demanded that former members of the state apparatus be barred from political and police power positions, as well as from campaigning (even for the presidential office).

The Portuguese path from the '25 de Abril' to the '25 de Novembro' was both politically and socioeconomically revolutionary.³³ It affected issues of State, polity, and economy.³⁴ The Portuguese path's revolutionary character is important in trying to account for the comparability of the regions because of the argument that an outstanding difference exists between *democratization* in Southern Europe—as in Latin America—and *revolution* in Eastern Europe (Bunce 1999a). A second point reinforces comparability in this regard: to a large extent I drew my theoretical framework for explaining transitions in Southern Europe—why collective action became revolutionary or remained moderate—from Skocpol (1987), who is explaining social revolutions.

No less important in assessing the comparability of our cases, we must be sure for comparing transitions to democracy that *democracy* is the common end of the processes

³³ Skocpol distinguishes between 'political revolutions' and 'social revolutions'. These are rapid and basic transformations of a society's state and class structures occurring together in a mutually reinforcing fashion. During social revolutions, societal structural change and class upheaval also coincide. As for political revolutions, Skocpol contends that they transform basic political structures but not social structures (1987, 4–5). According to Bermeo, every transition to democracy, as the Portuguese and Eastern European were, is a political revolution. It is a process that affects the distribution of formal political rights, while property relations remain fundamentally unchanged (1986, 38). Thus, the Spanish transition is to be considered a case of political revolution too.

In Portugal on 25 November 1975 paratroopers rose in a left-wing putsch against the sixth provisional government. The moderate faction of the army put down the attempted coup, which took Portugal dangerously close to civil war. The success of the counter-coup was the beginning of an institutional reaction in favor of a process of political change leading to parliamentary democracy in a free market economy.

³⁴ I paraphrase the sentence from Bunce (1999a, 791). In Portugal the new authorities made major modifications in the definition of property rights and the distribution of the social product. Beginning in March 1975 extensive nationalizations of industry, banks, and insurance companies as well as expropriations of the great landed estates took place (see Maxwell 1996).

compared, as much between regional clusters as within them. Scholars were convinced from the very beginning of democratization in Spain that the regime change was to Western-style democracy. That was also the case in Portugal, once the revolutionary path turned back to the original aim of the MFA, and Spínola, by November 1975.³⁵ If we agree that democracy is, at least, about open contestation for power via elections and the oversight and control of state power by the representatives of the people, Hungary and Romania are to be considered democratic polities. They have held free and fair elections, and they rely on open, competitive elections as the basis of government.³⁶ Hungary and Romania, like the whole Eastern Europe, share the common, and specific, problem of constructing a post-Communist regime after generations of totalitarian and post-totalitarian rule. And, at least, they are two cases of transition to a regime with democratic aspirations or proclaiming a democratic commitment—albeit in quite varying degrees—to the construction of liberal economic and political orders. It is a fact that, while in 1985 none of them was classified as free,³⁷ Freedom House considers both of them to be currently ‘free’ (1997 and 1998). Thus, Hungary and Romania share a common end,³⁸ and differences are just of degree.³⁹

³⁵ General António de Spínola was the first President of the new Republic. He resigned from the presidency on 30 September 1974, when the second provisional government was in office. He failed in his attempt to surpass the power void by a popular appeal for support of the *maioria silenciosa* (silent majority) (see Durán 2000, ch. 7.2.a).

³⁶ The accountability of governors to the populace has been confirmed as governments have taken office and subsequently left office peacefully on the basis of election outcomes and votes in parliament.

³⁷ The Hungarian average score for civil and political liberties was 4.5, before any other communist regime. The Romanian score was 6.5, only before the former USSR. They differed only in the degree to which they were undemocratic. None of them approximated the score of 2.5 that marks the minimum for a country to be considered free according to the rank on Freedom House scale (1998; see Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998, figure 4.2).

³⁸ By ‘end’ I refer to the general and minimal institutional context of multiparty or electoral democracy. Of course, it does not mean that Hungary and Romania are fully comparable to the countries scoring 1.0 according to Freedom House, for instance, Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland (1998). From that point of view, I assume that the process is still ongoing, which implies both speaking about ‘polyarchies’ (Dahl 1971; see also O’Donnell 2000) and considering democratization a never-ending process.

Arend Lijphart (1968 and 1984) pioneered the effort of categorizing democracies according to relevant dimensions. Guillermo O’Donnell (1994a and 1994b) has added the ‘delegative

At least one last remark should be addressed regarding the selection of the two Eastern European countries. Like Spain and Portugal, both of them are countries where the State has remained intact as regards its territorial entity. As noted above, Hungary has been selected among the countries where the transition path was not abrupt (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania) because of its resemblance to the Spanish experience. As far as Romania is concerned, it belongs to that set of countries in which the regime fell abruptly (including Czechoslovakia and East Germany). However—unlike Czechoslovakia and the GDR but like Hungary, Portugal, and Spain—Romania is a case where the collapse of communism has not entailed the termination of the State, neither through dismemberment nor through unification (see Bunce 1999b).

From *Brezhnev* to *Sinatra*: State and Suprastate Will and Capacity as Determinants of Collective Behavior

One of the differences scholars point out between the transitions in Eastern Europe and those in Southern Europe and Latin America is the role played by international relations. As Schmitter and Karl have noted, “[w]ithout 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” (1994, 182). Alex Pravda has referred to such a shift as a ‘foreign policy revolution’ (1992b; see also Pridham and

democracy’ type as different from institutionalized (or, equivalently, consolidated or representative or liberal) democracies. As argued by Stark and Bruszt, Eastern European democracies have come closer to a ‘delegative democracy’ than to a “politically robust and adaptive version of embedded autonomy” (1998, esp. 188–92 and 248).

³⁹ As seen by the 1997 Freedom House rankings (1997), Romania has improved its score in civil rights and political liberties. Freedom has increased up to the point that Romania is classified as a free country. Scoring 2.5 points, it has come, together with Hungary (1.5), reasonably close to the standards of well-established democratic orders (see Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998, table 1.1 and figure 4.2). According to the New Democracies Barometer-III (ibid.), while Hungary belongs to the cluster of ‘leading countries’ (those that, alongside the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia, have moved further in the direction of becoming complete democracies), Romania is part of the second group (the ‘lagging countries’), together with Slovakia and Bulgaria. Although I am not pretending that Hungary and Romania are equal, let me note that the NDB-III survey commenced in autumn 1993 and concluded in early winter 1994. For the NDB-I and NDB-II, see, respectively, Rose and Haerpfer (1992 and 1993).

Vanhannen 1994; Pridham, Herring, and Sandford 1997). In my view, and insofar as this paper is concerned with mass behavior, we should think of the relations within the

Soviet bloc in terms of ‘suprastateness’: ‘supra’ because these relations existed as a matter of fact beyond each country’s borders; and ‘state’ according to my Weberian reading of the State. In that sense, as I will try to argue, the shift in the foreign and security policies of the Soviet Union was perceived by angry and demanding societies, first, as a lack of will on the part of the Moscow leadership to resort to coercion to impose law and order when subverted; and second, as a lack of will and/or capacity on the part of national authorities to impose law and order effectively in each country.⁴⁰ With regard to the last point, insofar as the ‘Gorbachev effect’ ran parallel with the ‘domino effect’, it also affected—and effected—countries such as Romania and Albania.⁴¹

The Soviet bloc was a hierarchical regional system dominated by the Soviet Union, tightly integrated along economic and political-military lines, and structured through the WTO and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).⁴² The area, in which the Soviet Union acted as the dominant power, was formed and sustained “by consent when possible and by force when necessary” (Triska 1986, 2).⁴³ Consent related above all to the implicit social contract by which societies in Eastern Europe agreed to the regime’s demand for political acquiescence and stability in exchange for job security, a well-developed social security net, price stability, improvements in the standard of

⁴⁰ ‘Effectively’, because it is the perception of the weakening capacity of the State *vis-à-vis* the strengthening of the society that determines to a large extent whether masses mobilize and, mostly, the nature of their mobilizations. The Romanian case illustrates this argument (see below).

⁴¹ Romania was not fully integrated into the Soviet bloc and Albania, together with Yugoslavia, was not a member of it.

⁴² See Bunce (1999b, ch. 3) for a summary account of the argument and for references.

⁴³ See Triska (1986) for similarities and differences between the United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

living, increased access to consumer goods, and the like.⁴⁴ As to force, the sovereignty of the satellites was limited to a permanent supranational collective socialist cause. Military coercion, as draconian as supposedly needed, was the threat and the actual response that these societies faced when behaving undisciplinedly. To put it differently, repression was officially argued to be legitimated whenever the authority of the hegemony—that is, suprastate authority—was challenged or subverted. Such reasoning was labeled the ‘Brezhnev Doctrine’ from the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 onward.⁴⁵

The suprastate logic was applied in the Soviet suppression of the East German uprising in 1953 and the revolution in Hungary in 1956, in the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in the indirect Soviet attempt to suppress the rising Solidarity movement in Poland through the domestic imposition of martial law in 1981. Repression was not only a Red Army issue—national security forces intervened in these and other more minor events. That was the case, for instance, in Romania in November 1987 when thousands of workers and other citizens, driven by severe pay cuts and the prospect of a third consecutive winter of food and energy shortages,⁴⁶ engaged in contention in the industrial city of Brasov, the country’s second largest city. And it was the case in Hungary when the police violently broke up a small opposition demonstration in Budapest in 1988 that aimed to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Nagy’s execution.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See Bunce (1999b, ch. 2) for a summary account of the reasons, features, and consequences of this short-term strategy, labeled ‘social contract’ and ‘social compact’ by Gitelman (1970), Bunce (1981), and Pravda (1981).

⁴⁵ To quote Pravda: “in talks with Czechoslovak leaders in 1968 Brezhnev took the line, ‘What we have, we hold’. Holding Eastern Europe was a ‘given’ of Soviet foreign policy... It was almost an extension of the Soviet domestic order since the integrity of the inner empire of union republics was seen as closely related to that of the outer empire of Eastern Europe” (1992b, ix).

⁴⁶ See “Rumanians riot over pay cut and shortages.” *The New York Times*, 22 November 1987, page 9; “10,000 target Romania leader in rally for more food, heat.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1987, page 2. The army occupied the city for more than a week. Eleven days after the uprising a regional Communist Party chief in Romania was reported to have been sacked along with other officials for “grave strayings from party discipline” (“Romania purges regional leader after uprising.” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 November 1987, page 39).

⁴⁷ Prime Minister Károly Grósz, the First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party since he replaced Kádár in May that year, affirmed in a speech delivered the day before the peaceful march that “all kinds of demonstrations against the system and atrocities and provocations against the

The Eastern countries were treated more like ‘dependent junior allies’ (Pravda 1992a, 8). They lacked sovereignty, but Mikhail Gorbachev broke with the status quo. To put it according to my theoretical framework, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union renounced his suprapstate legitimacy to determine the future developments of each country in Eastern Europe. He asserted that all communist parties—that is, all European communist regimes—were ‘completely’ independent and ‘unconditionally’ equal.⁴⁸ Subsequently, throughout 1988, he fully and publicly rejected in a number of visits, summits, and so on any use or threat of using force, especially military force, and any direct or indirect interference in the domestic affairs of other socialist states under any circumstances, both by every country—the USSR included—and by the WTO. In December 1988 Gorbachev announced publicly to the United Nations his unilateral decision to substantially withdraw the Soviet military presence from Eastern Europe. The Brezhnev Doctrine was thus replaced or superseded by the Sinatra Doctrine, which allowed every country to decide ‘which road to take’.⁴⁹

Charles Gati has accurately stated that “Gorbachev put the region’s Communist leaders on notice that Soviet tanks would no longer protect their rule” (1990, 166). Whatever the aim of Gorbachev and the reformers close to him in avoiding coercive intervention as a means of dealing with crises in Eastern Europe—and no matter whether based upon misreading of the situations and miscalculations—it did not take long for people of Eastern Europe to understand that their leaders were therefore ‘vulnerable’ (ibid.).⁵⁰ The unexpected outcomes were the revolutions of late 1989. The East European

representatives of power” would be firmly rejected (“Hungary seen as tougher on dissent.” *The New York Times*, 24 June 1988, page 7).

⁴⁸ See *Pravda*, 11 April 1987 (in *Pravda* 1992a, 16).

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 26 October 1989, citing a comment made by Gerasimov, a Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, on US television (in *Pravda* 1992a, 23).

⁵⁰ Gorbachev himself has stated, in referring to the last days of the Berlin Wall, that “the people there knew that my policy of *freedom of choice* was not just a propaganda slogan. They knew there would be no repeat of the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, and that Warsaw Pact tanks would not intervene” (passage of *On My Country and the World*, in *Newsweek*, 8 November 1999, page 45). In Ash’s words, “the people at last derived some benefit from their ruling élites’ chronic dependency on the Soviet Union, for, deprived of the Soviet Kalashnikov-crutch, those élites did not have another leg to stand on” (1990, 141; see also Triska 1986, Introduction, esp. 2–3).

change became uncontrolled. Soviet and East European leadership failed to anticipate its form, depth, and pace. Political opening and economic reform, *glasnost* and *perestroika*, became democratization because of the pressures exerted by masses elsewhere. In 1989 masses imposed ‘the springtime of citizens’ (Ash 1990)—to a large extent, masses forced ruling elites in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania to strategically liberalize their repressive and exclusive regimes in order to remain in office and then, unavoidably, to democratize them; masses caused the collapse of the Czechoslovak and East German regimes; and masses, finally, overthrew the Romanian dictatorship.

We cannot account for this processes just by referring to the ‘resurrection of civil society’ as a result of the opening of the regimes or to the ‘expansion of the political opportunity structure’ (Tarrow 1991, 1994, and 1998; Bunce 1999b). The problem is that such arguments help equally to explain, for instance, the protests in the GDR the year Stalin died, 1953, and both the Hungarian revolution of 1956, fostered by de-Stalinization, and the popular movement of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, stimulated by the uncertain context of the Khrushchev succession.⁵¹ Further, the argument has been used in dealing with the increasing wave of labor strikes and demonstrations that pushed the Francoist leadership in the democratizing direction and that peaked just in the first year of democratization (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 26–8 and ch. 5; Linz and Stepan 1996; Tarrow 1995; cf. Durán 1998).

I agree with Valerie Bunce (1999b) that regime collapse in the world of socialist dictatorships, as elsewhere, was a product of both short-term crises and long-term developments, with the latter including economic decline, divisions within the party, and the growth of civil and political society. Complementarily, I think scholars should incorporate the analytical distinction between regime and State if we are to understand why masses persisted in rebelling until the end of the dictatorships in Eastern Europe, instead of retreating (even in the face of repressive responses in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania); also, if we are to understand why masses

⁵¹ Bunce accurately contends that there existed “a robust correlation between instances of intraparty conflict and outbursts of public protests” (1999b, 27).

behaved differently in each case. We can analytically distinguish between regime and State, but we can hardly measure how much expanded the political opportunity has to be in order to force the demise of a regime or to radicalize mass contention. I develop my argument next by focusing on Hungary and Romania.

Hungary

By the beginning of 1989 Hungarian civil and political society counted about fifty organizations, circles, clubs, independent trade unions, and others, most of them with just a few dozen of members. Many more were starting to form, but the majority were organized by Budapest-based intellectuals, and their organizations did not extend beyond the capital and several larger provincial cities. There was neither a social movement remotely comparable to Solidarity in Poland nor relevant mass mobilizations. The two largest political organizations by that time were the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz). Their memberships were under 10,000 and 1,500, respectively. They acted to a large extent as the umbrella under which other movements and independent-minded citizens could work for reform.

Virtually all of these independent organizations avoided participating in the June 1988 demonstration to honor Imre Nagy. Only a small crowd of several hundred people joined a protest whose premise “directly challenged the legitimacy of the regime” (Bruszt and Stark 1992, 31). By the spring of 1989, by contrast, most oppositional organizations shifted toward popular mobilization, against both the political status quo at large and, in particular, against pre-eminent hard-liners. They even began to coordinate their common activities through a loose umbrella federation, named Opposition Round Table (EKA), from mid-March onward. On March 15, just before the EKA was constituted, twenty-four oppositional organizations coordinated a demonstration celebrating the anniversary of the Revolution of 1848; in competition with the Communist Party celebration, it was attended by more than 100,000 participants and overshadowed the official ceremonies. Almost the same occurred with the Labor Day celebrations on May 1. Permission for a public ceremony and reburial of Nagy was requested to honor the fallen heroes of the failed revolution of 1956 on the anniversary of the execution. Miklós Németh’s reformist

government granted it, despite the conservatives' refusal.⁵² On June 16 one-quarter of a million people filled Heroes Square in Budapest. Six days before, representatives of the Communist party and the EKA had signed an agreement to enter into negotiations to construct the new political institutions of liberal democracy, which began on June 13.

Masses, that is, ordinary citizens, matter. They are more than a recourse in organized opposition's hands to be strategically used. As empirical data on the Spanish case have shown, social collectives are autonomous with respect to formal organizations (see Durán 2000, ch. 3.2). In Hungary, as in Spain, masses exercised pressure upon power-holders toward democratization and also on the EKA itself. Organizations and masses coalesced in demonstrations because of their nature and because of the outlined demands.

In this sense, as Bruszt and Stark (1992, 41–42) have noted, neither the EKA nor the reformists were sure that Hungarian society would accept a result from negotiations that entailed a compromised or two-step transition in the same vein as the Polish experience.⁵³ Why did society perceived itself to be so strong? Three closely related and mutually reinforcing factors help to answer this question:

First, the new Soviet Union's leadership had opted for tolerance and reform, as much economic as political. Expectations increased as events developed in the Soviet Union, but also, secondly, in Poland. As never before in the history of the reform periods of the Soviet bloc, Moscow accompanied political openness with the rhetorical and actual neutralization of the coercive suprapstate threat. Certainly, the immediate and parallel

⁵² Németh was appointed Prime Minister in June 1989, when a four-man Presidium—consisting of Grósz and the reformers Pozsgay, Nyers, and himself—took over the government (see Tökés 1996, chs. 5–6).

⁵³ Bruszt and Stark have made an insightful effort to account for the Hungarian ruling bloc's perceptions and calculations regarding the capacity of the opposition to challenge and defeat them as power-holders. They conclude that, “[b]y ignoring the ways in which elites could modify their strategies on the basis of earlier experiences, by examining only the citizens (and discussing elites only in terms of their being supported or ditched by *Moscow*), and by neglecting the complex interactions between forces inside and outside the regime, contagion theories can only register the timing of *collapse* and not account for important differences in outcomes” (Bruszt and Stark 1992, 54; see also O’Neil 1996).

Polish experience helped to reinforce increasing expectations leading to mobilization: Gorbachev tolerated the outbreaks of protests beginning in the spring of 1988 and agreed to the pacts signed in April leading to competitive elections for the first time in a communist country and the subsequent legalization of Solidarity, as well as its favorable results in the elections held on 4 June 1989, twelve days before the reburial of Imre Nagy.⁵⁴ Lastly, it was publicly known that cohesion and unity among power-holders and within institutions had declined greatly. Concerns were voiced and even defections occurred within the party and the regime in favor of dealing with the masses' demands through a strategy of negotiation instead of confrontation.⁵⁵ From party members who were not officials in the party-state and office holders at the local level and members at the party's base to parliamentary representatives and high-ranking party officials and governmental bureaucrats and even to the government under Németh, reformists openly confronted the Secretary General of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Károly Grósz, and the hard-line approach. Power-holders felt themselves vulnerable *vis-à-vis* the masses, and the masses perceived them as such (see Bruszt and Stark 1992, 35 ff.).

To paraphrase the elite-centered approach, the opportunity to mobilize arose from rising tolerance and uncertainty leading to increasing expectations and impatience on the part of masses. However, if we are to understand the nature of collective action, bearing in mind experiences as distinct as those in Romania or in Southern European Portugal, we should have to go further and use a more refined approach to explain the Hungarian case. Some questions are not answered by appealing to the previous factors: Why didn't oppositional organizations and Hungarians at large burst into massive protests against the communist regime, as Czechoslovaks, East Germans, and Romanians did later? Why did

⁵⁴ Contrary to the plans of General Jaruzelski and the Communist party, and even of Solidarity, a Solidarity-led government was constituted in August that year.

⁵⁵ As many authors have emphasized, Hungary is not a case of transition initiated from above. It is another case of elites' strategic response to pressures from below by resorting to liberalization and then democratization as the only available way of ensuring political power. In Bruszt and Stark's terms, it is "the first example showing the possibility of using electoral competition to salvage Communist rule" (1992, 21). Regardless of the differences in the data accounting for social unrest, in both Spain and Hungary ruling elites' fears of larger-scale popular upheaval—and even of a new civil war in the Spanish case—were determinant in pushing power-holders toward regime change.

they constrain their mobilizations to the specific dates of the three anniversaries? Why, like the Spaniards and Poles, were Hungarians so moderate in threatening the continuity of the regime? Why, instead of trying to impose the democratic alternative, did the opposition, followed by society, demand popular sovereignty to be reestablished by the power-holders, even if through their own participation at a Round Table?

From my own research on Spanish social mobilizations I have drawn the conclusion that opportunities or incentives for radical action are not perceived (that is, there is no power vacuum) when mobilized groups believe that, even though the authorities of a nondemocratic regime are capable of using the physical violence of the State in order to preserve the regime, they nonetheless opt for tolerance, via democratization, in the belief that this will prove less costly than *continuismo* (see Dahl 1971). In turn, masses perceive and assume that authorities have willingness and capacity to opt consistently for repression and political reaction whenever, during the ^{transition}, contention threatens the officially assumed legitimate order. Soviet troops—who had put an end to the opposition in 1956—were still present on Hungarian soil,⁵⁶ and Gorbachev did not fully show his commitment to the Sinatra Doctrine until the first noncommunist government was allowed to begin its work in August. Coming from suprastate factors to state considerations, reformers would have been perceived by society as strong enough to opt consistently for repression and political reaction—in Hungary as in Spain—because they appeared as controlling the path of liberalization and democratization.⁵⁷

Besides, people realized that the Grósz-led central apparatus of the State and the party were not in favor of the large-scale political deregulation that both regime reformers and oppositional moderates were pursuing. The Central Committee had agreed on 1–2 November 1988 that the State's coercive resources would be concentrated in the General Secretary's hands (see Tökés 1996, 295). By the end of that month Grósz addressed a mass rally of the Budapest party organization and stated that the reform

⁵⁶ The fact was noted in the speeches delivered on 16 June 1989. The presence of the troops was argued to be an obstacle to the victory of freedom in Hungary (see Ash 1990, 50).

⁵⁷ That is not in contradiction with the fact that reformers acted strategically to ensure their control of political power in facing their own weakness *vis-à-vis* growing pressure from society.

process had got out of hand and that, because of the crowded political process, the threat of “anarchy, chaos...and a white terror” was looming on the horizon.⁵⁸ He even considered the imposition of a martial law regime. The State fosters or constrains mobilization as a function of its capacity to impose a zone of tolerance; namely a zone of tolerated collective actions. Besides, masses also develop their repertoire and scope of collective action in the light of the relation the State as a whole has with those personalities, groups, and even state institutions that threaten the incipient and fragile process of democratization, either by seeking the return of the dictatorship or, as in Spain, even by provoking a civil war. I have labeled this state feature its multidimensionality (see Durán 1999 and 2000, ch. 7).

It is precisely to the State—to the highest organs of government—that those sectors of society committed to a change of regime look to overcome the risk of involution. However, in Hungary as in Spain, even if reformists were leading the process, they were not perceived to be strong enough to effectively carry out such a neutralizing function. The *weakness* of the State, once again, derives from the perceived disunity, lack of coherence, and indiscipline within and among the different organs of State power. At this point, this has the opposite implications for the nature of collective action. The perceptions that mobilized groups have of the State reveal that, while it may be tolerant but strong with respect to them, a certain power vacuum may exist with respect to reactionary elements. This relationship is all the more important because those groups that threaten this political process justify their defense of authoritarianism with reference to the instability, disorder, and chaos that social mobilizations allegedly generate. In these circumstances, radicalization becomes too costly and risky insofar as it could reinforce reactionary tendencies. While this does not mean that masses will inevitably restrain their actions, it is understandable that they do so.

Fears on the part of the masses were not only related to the State but also to the suprapstate. Such fears mirrored the hopes of the most conservative faction that Gorbachev

⁵⁸ Quoted in O’Neil (1996, 592). See also Tökés (1996, 296–97).

would fall and a post-1968 Czechoslovak-like ‘normalization strategy’ would be imposed in Hungary. Memories of the past confirmed moderation as the best option. While the 1936 civil war was always present during the Spanish transition (see Bermeo 1992; Aguilar 1996, 1997, and 1998), in Arato’s words, “the key learning experiences of Hungarians was 1956, which seemed to teach that radical collective action leads to disaster” (1992, 136). Hungarians could be confident that Gorbachev would be consistent in his own discourse and action,⁵⁹ but they also knew that they could be confident only as long as Gorbachev was in power. As much their own experience as that of the whole region encouraged moderation: Eastern Europeans had learned “the hard way the costs of misreading Soviet succession struggles and the reform initiatives they invariably generated” (Bunce 1999b, 66).

Romania

Like hard-liners in Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Albania, Nicolae Ceauzescu hoped in vain for Gorbachev’s fall. And, like the repressive leaders of Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria (Milos Jakes, Erich Honecker, and Todor Zhivkov, respectively), the Romanian dictator resisted Moscow’s reforms,⁶⁰ and intensified repression. However, the perceived vulnerability of each communist regime—and its subsequent corroboration—became the opportunity for masses to mobilize and bring down not only the Polish and the Hungarian but even the former East German, the former Czechoslovak, and the Bulgarian unpopular and illegitimate regimes. As noted earlier, the Romanian dictatorship was the last in the WTO countries to fall, but it fell.

⁵⁹ In fact, even hard-liners’ hopes of Gorbachev’s fall were dashed when Yegor Ligachev lost his confrontation with Gorbachev at the meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU in October 1988.

⁶⁰ None of the four countries approved of *glasnost*, and *perestroika* won approval only in Bulgaria (Linz and Stepan 1996, 242).

Despite the extreme nationalism to which Ceaucescu resorted to legitimize his rule,⁶¹ his wholesale use of terror against all protest,⁶² and the low level of domestic dissidence and opposition activities,⁶³ nonetheless tens of thousands of Romanians spontaneously took to the streets in Timisoara and two days later in Bucharest in December 1989.⁶⁴ Sparked by advance disclosure of the impending arrest of the antiregime pastor Lászlo Tökés, the Romanian uprising ignited readily (see Socor 1990; Hollis 1999, 193 ff.). They immediately cut the communist symbols out of their flags—in a clear imitation of the example given by Hungarians in 1956 and again in 1989. By the same token, they also shouted ‘We are the People!’ (thereby echoing the East Germans’ most emotive slogan in 1989), ‘Down with Ceaucescu!’ ‘Democracy!’ ‘Freedom!’ and ‘Free elections!’ The regime response was massacre. Unarmed and peaceful masses were fired upon in the streets of Timisoara and Bucharest. But demonstrators, again “out of

⁶¹ Tismaneanu has noted how, ‘[u]sing the pretext of his opposition to Soviet hegemony, Ceaucescu constructed an original ideology of Romanian socialism, which mixed a Stalinist commitment to centrally planned economy and collective agriculture, with traditional themes of the extreme right (including the myth of the homogeneous nation...the xenophobic fixation on the alleged conspiracies fomented by foreigners, and anti-intellectualism)’ (1997, 412). This was also chauvinistic demagogy (‘the fatherland in danger’-style rhetoric) against Soviet attempts at systemic renewal. Employing and exploiting nationalism as a tool of self-legitimacy was a region commonality as a response to the decay of the communist ideas. Vachudová and Snyder have referred to it as ‘bureaucratic nationalism’ (1997, 6) and cite, among other works, that by Emil Lengyel entitled *Nationalism, the Last Stage of Communism* (1969).

⁶² Ceaucescu remained convinced until his own death that the use of violence would guarantee the unchanged continuity of his regime. The secret police established a huge network of informers and ‘collaborators’ whose task was to prevent the rise of any critical current. When critique, calls to action, unrest and/or protest of any kind appeared, the draconian effectiveness of their control mechanisms were apparent: principal organizers and dissidents were arrested, internally exiled, or expelled, if not disappeared. Massacres also occurred, as the events in Brasov illustrate.

⁶³ In all of the Eastern European countries, particularly in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, but not in Romania, some space for organized democratic opposition already existed before the transitions began. Unlike all the other cases (excluding Albania, but including even Bulgaria, which in many aspects is similar), Romanian opposition and public dissidence were not simply weak when the dictator fell; they were almost nonexistent.

⁶⁴ That is not to deny the commonalities between Bulgaria and Romania as instances, in Bruszt and Stark’s terms, “where one part of the elite orchestrates a coup against the oldest guard” (1992, fn.10). See, for the theory of the plot and the complot, Shafir (1990b), Verdery and Kligman (1992, 121 ff.), Linz and Stepan (1996, ch. 18), and Hollis (1999, 2.4.6).

desperation” (Eyal 1992, 200), again in a raging temper,⁶⁵ and aware that “Ceaucescu would never accept peaceful change,”⁶⁶ perceived this to be *the* moment, their exceptional opportunity for rebelling, for driving the dictator from power. In turn, the masses arose in an upheaval and persevered until they were successful; the masses resisted repression, and they overthrew the dictatorship.

We cannot resort to suprastateness for explaining such revolutionary behavior. Bucharest had confirmed its autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Kremlin for more than two decades.⁶⁷ Consequently, the move to the Sinatra Doctrine could not have any direct effect upon masses’ perceptions and calculations. The Red Army had not been a constraint, so it was not going to be an incentive. Indirectly, however, the implications for the whole region of the Soviet removal of the ultimate sanction definitely affected the perceptions that Romanians had of their own strength *vis-à-vis* that of their State. The diffusion or ‘snowballing’ effect (Huntington 1993) also had an impact on Romania. Upheavals and revolutionary changes in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and even Bulgaria encouraged Romanians.⁶⁸ In other words, notwithstanding the dictator’s willingness to repress subversion in order to preserve the status quo, the demonstration

⁶⁵ Ken Jowitt’s has labeled these Eastern European demonstrations ‘movements of rage’ (in Linz and Stepan 1996, 362). All observers agree that the revolutions of 1989 followed the volcanic model, whereby they erupted from the bottom, under the pressure of accumulated grievances, discontent, and frustrations, and were carried out by the masses.

⁶⁶ Interview with the poet Ion Bogdan Lefter, 27 August 1992, Bucharest (Linz and Stepan 1996, 358, fn.40).

⁶⁷ As stated in footnote 41, Romania was not fully integrated in the Soviet bloc. The Romanian regime was relieved of Soviet military occupation in 1958, and it asserted its autonomy in many matters of economics and foreign and military policy from the USSR in 1963. For instance, it refused to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. At the same time, while it participated in WTO staff exercises, it refused Pact maneuvers on its territory and insisted that its armed forces would be subjected only to Romanian command. As a result, domestic repression was a domestic issue. Ash has rightly asserted that, subsequently, “[i]t is no accident that it was precisely in the State for so long most independent of Moscow that the resistance of the security arm of the powers-that-were was most fierce, bloody and prolonged” (1990, 141).

⁶⁸ Timisoara, the most Western town in Romania, is near the border with Yugoslavia and Hungary, while Bucharest is near Romania’s border with Bulgaria. Romanians throughout the country widely followed what was happening in the rest of the bloc by listening to foreign radio posts (mostly Radio Free Europe) and watching Hungarian, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Soviet television for months.

effect came to reinforce the perception by society at large that the State had weakened enough to be incapacitated to face final challenges to Communist rule. Of course, demonstrators do not differentiate between regime and State—they only think in terms of power-holders—but scholars must do so in order to allow the comparison no matter the region and the time of the transition.

The chiefs of the *Securitate* were profoundly aware of the all-pervasive discontent and thus of the prospects for a new popular explosion, like that in Brasov in 1987. But popular mobilizations were *successful* only two years later. In the chain of triggering events from the demonstration of 16 December 1989 until the execution (see Tismaneanu 1997), it was relevant for demonstrators and still unmobilized people that Communist regimes were *capable* of losing their monopoly of power, and that they actually did lose it. And it was relevant, secondly, that Ceaucescu's power was seen to be fragile, that is, the Romanian dictator also seemed to be losing control. Romanians felt this when watching Ceaucescu's stupefaction and confusion when tens of thousands of them interrupted and booed him in the Palace Square in front of the Central Committee building on December 21.⁶⁹ Such an image reinforced Romanians' perception of opportunity. In contrast to the situation in Tiananmen, large-scale police brutality, 'prophylactic repression' (Karklins and Petersen 1993), was as ineffective in Romania as it was in East Germany on October 7 and 8 and in Czechoslovakia on 17 November 1989.

A third argument helps to understand how the perception of opportunity was built and reinforced: mobilized Romanians came to see the Army as *their ally* and so as *their hero* (Verdery and Kligman 1992, 118). Such an important state institution, substantial in preserving order and guaranteeing continuity, eventually switched to the side of the people, fraternized with demonstrators, and even reportedly played the lead in ferocious exchanges occurring with the *Securitate*, long regarded by the population as "the

⁶⁹ Ceaucescu had ordered a mass rally to endorse his intransigent opposition to reforms. This rally was broadcasted live throughout Romania.

incarnation of the evil” (ibid. 122).⁷⁰ Even more, the bulk of the Secret Police itself switched sides and abandoned Ceaucescu between the early hours of December 22 and the moment when the sight of Ceaucescu’s televised cadaver persuaded them to renounce their mission. Whether because of strategical considerations,⁷¹ because of loss of faith in the legitimacy of the repressive orders, rules and rulers,⁷² or whatever additional reason we may find to explain the behavior of the Romanian Army by that time, coercive state institutions’ indiscipline caused the context to be perceived as one of political vulnerability, in other words, a power vacuum.

Mobilization, and even radicalization, was an easily understandable result, despite the ‘proverbial patience’ of the Romanians (Tismaneanu 1997, 415). The ‘patience’ of the Portuguese was also broadly assumed to be ‘proverbial’. So it was until 25 April 1974. And, likewise, their collective behavior became paradoxical—whether we refer to urban and rural workers, students, neighbors, or homeless mobilizations. Even if these collectives did not behave violently in Portugal, their actions—which under the dictatorship had been as moderate in character as in Spain—acquired what I call a transgressive character. It was not just a matter of social disorder. Mobilized groups threatened the stability and even the very survival of the established social and economic

⁷⁰ Irritated by *perestroika* and *glasnost*, Ceaucescu was completely dependent on his secret police during the 1985–1989 period, probably as never before. Concerning the relationship between the military and the *Securitate*, insofar as the dictator built the latter up as his own personal elite force, it became a source of resentment and irritation for the neglected officer corps (see Diamandouros and Larrabee 1999, 29–30; Hollis 1999, 192).

⁷¹ The privileged position of the *Securitate* under Ceaucescu was deeply resented by most top military officers (see Diamandouros and Larrabee 1999, 29–30). They could have made the most of that opportunity—if not planned it (see Shafir 1990b, 24–27)—to improve their position within the State as an institution. Actually, there was a close symbiosis between the military and the interim government that held power during the transition period leading up to the May 1990 elections. Two military officers occupied important positions; one of them, the National Security portfolio. Military officers were also members of the first elected government.

⁷² In accounting for this possible explanation I am thinking of Di Palma’s argument about the ‘identity vacuum’ (1993; see also Ash 1990, 141–42; Zielinski 1995, 596 ff.; and Bunce 1999b, 25–30). According to Di Palma, Romania and Albania were the only exceptions in the region to the ‘almost total collapse of moral confidence and political will’ that characterized the neighboring communist rulers (1993, 260). In my opinion, that argument can be applied to the dictator but probably not to a state institution such as the Army, built upon officers and rank-and-file. I think that the hypothesis is worth analyzing.

order, which was actually subverted. The Portuguese took to the streets happy to see themselves liberalized from the illegitimate and unpopular dictatorship. Quite in contrast to Spain, they were also backed by an Army whose military officers perceived that continued military support of an increasingly despised regime would be inimical to the interest of the institution itself (Stepan 1993, 63); an Army that faced the Secret Police (the PIDE/DGS) and other police forces and stopped their repressive response—in search of fulfilling their commitment to maintaining law and order—from the very beginning (see Durán 1997).

State and (De)mobilization during Regime Change

It is widely assumed that demobilization is the ‘predictable’ development of mobilization during the transition process (Sztompka 1991, 307). As is alleged to have happened in Eastern Europe, “soon after the revolution *the people* have to abdicate, relinquish their immediate power, and put it in the hands of the representatives” (ibid.; italics in the original). Scholars commonly contend that, parallel to the political transition, there was a transition from social movements to political parties and even that civil society was demobilized and marginalized by consolidating political society (see Ágh 1991; Bozóki and Sükösd 1993, esp. 230). Hungary is used as a paradigmatic case of what Mszlivetz has labeled “the anti-civil society attitude of the new political elite” (1997; see also Bruszt and Stark 1992, esp. Conclusion; Linz and Stepan 1996, 314). The same occurs with Spain in Southern Europe (see Maravall 1982, ch. 1; Sastre 1997; cf. Fishman 1990b; Durán 2000).

Demobilization should not necessarily be understood as no-mobilization. It can mean less mobilization than before in quantitative terms. Our concern here is mainly with variation in the nature of mobilization. According to Ekiert and Kubik (1998), variation in both the magnitude of protest and protest repertoires among countries is explained by considering the following variables: 1) access to policy-making through other channels (for example, neocorporatist bargaining), 2) interorganizational competition, 3) traditions and previous experiences of protest and, last but not least, 4) the availability of material and organizational resources to the challenging groups. Their argument is very well reasoned

and build upon a detailed database of all the forms and incidents of collective protest in the former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, for the years 1989–94.

Their analysis of Hungary establishes that collective action there had the lowest magnitude of the four countries (even though Hungarians dissatisfaction with the post-1989 changes was higher than that of Poles or East Germans), peaking in 1989.⁷³ As stated above, 67.5% of the strategies used by protesting groups between 1989 and 1994 were ‘nondisruptive’ (open protest letters and statements being the most frequent) and 30.8% ‘disruptive’ (strike alerts, strikes, demonstrations, marches, and so on). Most of these and other features are explained by considering the institutionalization of neocorporatist bargaining, alongside the existence of a strong social democratic party and a centralized trade union sector. Additionally, the well-established tradition of street demonstrations and struggles (1956 in particular) would explain the ratio of street demonstrations to strikes, only higher in the GDR, while the magnitude would be explained mostly by looking at the relatively low supply of protest-facilitating resources.

Unfortunately, there are no available data of that kind for the Romanian experience. Nonetheless, such explanations relate to aggregate data. In turn, we cannot account for, or disregard, a possible evolution from radical to moderate forms of collective action from 1989 onward. And we can hardly explain extraordinary events. Besides, Ekiert and Kubik contend to be studying protest during postcommunist democratic consolidation. This can make a big difference in trying to explain the nature of social protests. But which one? Can we deduce from their data and assertions, for instance, that consolidation makes it difficult for protesters to contend violently?⁷⁴ We cannot. First, because they regard 1990 and even

⁷³ According to the New Democracies Barometer (NDB) I (see Rose and Haerpfer 1992, figure IV.1 and table VI.4; Mishler and Rose 1993), the present political system was evaluated positively by 67% of the Hungarian representative nationwide sample, above the Poles’ answer (57%), and below that of Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the arithmetical mean (71%). The NDB I survey was conducted between November 1991 and January 1992. The NDB II survey was undertaken from November 1992 to March 1993. It showed (see Rose and Haerpfer 1993, tables 13 and 22) that, the mean being 53%, only 43% of Hungarians approved the current regime, compared with the more favorable attitude of the Poles (56%).

⁷⁴ ‘Violent’ protest strategies amounted to 5.0%, 1.7%, 2.0%, and 13.2%, respectively, in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the GDR during the 1989–1993 period (Ekiert and Kubik 1998, table 3).

1989 as years of consolidation, and they were not.⁷⁵ Second, because the sample, focused on Central Europe, does not include contrasting cases in this respect. In my view, by referring to the period as one of consolidation, they are tacitly taking for granted that, during the process of changing and consolidating the new regime, the balance of power between society and the State has been reached and authority firmly imposed, if not legitimated. That is to say, there was no power void. Nonetheless, State fulfillment of State proper functions is not always and everywhere guaranteed during the transition period or, less narrowly, while democracy is still unconsolidated. Unlike Spain and Hungary, Portugal and Romania are cases in point.

Scholars could probably explain protest in Spain during the transition of the mid-seventies by applying Ekiert and Kubik's reasoning. But we cannot do the same with the Portuguese experience. For instance, the trade union sector was neither diversified, nor politically divided, nor decentralized, but, nonetheless, contention arose and radicalized, and did so, moreover, in spite of the moderating efforts by the Intersindical.⁷⁶ Contention arose and radicalized, as it did not in Spain, because of the perceived and confirmed weakness of the Portuguese State. In turn, contention came down and moderated—even if left-wing formal organizations were pushing for revolution—when the State was reinforced *vis-à-vis* mobilized collectives. By November 1975 State authorities and institutions constrained collective action by imposing a zone of tolerance that excluded and punished transgressive forms of protest. I think this argument is helpful in trying to

explain why there was not demobilization but radicalization in Romania until June 1990. I use it in the next subsection to explain why Romania—unlike Hungary in Eastern Europe and Spain in Southern Europe—experienced the Commune of Bucharest, that is, escalating protest activities that constituted a significant threat to the newly established political institutions from April to June 1990.

⁷⁵ Founding elections were held in 1990 in the four cases of their study. As to the adoption of a constitution, the Hungarian was the earliest, on 31 December 1990.

⁷⁶ A coordinating organization of more than 90 corporatist unions, the mostly communist-influenced Comissão Intersindical was formed in 1970. Once the '25 de Abril' came about, it was renamed Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores-Intersindical (CGT-IN). It resembled to a large extent the Spanish union Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.).

An additional meaning of demobilization is offered by Béla Greskovits (1998). According to him, Eastern Europeans have shifted from the 1989 mobilizations to the 1990s noncontentious and indirect repertoire of social responses. He observes that, in contrast to the riots that swept over Latin America and other parts of the Third World from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, social responses to economic hardship during the entire transformation period in Hungary as well as in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltics have not been either violent or subversive. Quite to the contrary, ‘patience’ has prevailed. Thus, he contends, “[i]t is certainly not accidental that in 1992, one of the worst years of the transformation recession, there were altogether only a handful of strikes in Hungary involving a few thousand participants. The picture was not much different in other countries of Eastern Europe” (ibid., 90). By borrowing Hirschman’s terminology (1970), Greskovits has concluded that, “[r]ather than voice, it has been exit that has dominated the pattern of social responses to economic stress in the East, and it is partly to this that political stability is due” (87). By ‘voice’ he means contentious options for protest and by ‘exit’ he refers to another form of mobilization—often labeled ‘demobilization’—which includes protest voting and other democratic initiatives such as protest by abstention and mobilizing for referenda.

In his view, that has been so because of a number of factors which can be enumerated as follows (ibid., ch. 5):⁷⁷ lack of a strong civil society and, consequently, of the organizational vehicles for collective action; inherited egalitarian income-distribution patterns; still-limited extent of poverty; low degree of urbanization; no impoverished masses concentrated in metropolitan shantytowns; overall level of education; absence of recent violent experiences with coups and riots; lack of union credibility alongside competition among unions and rapidly growing unemployment. The argument succeeds when dealing with the general comparison between Latin America and the Eastern European selected countries. However, again we have problems understanding the Romanian developments in light of such statements. First of all, because the April–June

⁷⁷ It has to be taken into account that all these factors are cited in relation to their features in Latin America.

1990 period was not one of *patience* but of direct *threats* posed to politicians. Second, because those protests were not based upon economic discontent but upon political demands. And third, because some factors cause irresolvable paradoxes to arise: for instance, Hungarian civil society was undoubtedly stronger than Romanian civil society, and Romania was not only less urbanized than Hungary but the least urbanized of the whole set of Latin American and Eastern European countries considered by Greskovits (ibid., table 5.1).

Again, I tend to think that we would better understand the radicalization of protests in Romania during 1990 by looking at the State as a variable that constrains or fosters subversive forms of collective action. That is not to deny the value of Greskovits's analysis in assessing the nature of collective action. Quite to the contrary, I will introduce the 'exit' option into my theoretical framework of analysis in accounting for collective behavior in Romania once the Commune of Bucharest was over. From that time on, certainly, collective behavior, like that in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, has remained largely moderate.

Romania

By the evening of December 22 the so-called National Salvation Front (NSF) assumed the role of interim authority and publicly committed to democratic principles in its first statement, promising free, multiparty elections (see Ionescu 1990). The NSF was headed by Ion Iliescu.⁷⁸ Just about six months after the dictatorship's downfall, on 20 May 1990, Romanians elected Iliescu president with 85 percent of the vote, giving the NSF, among eighty-three competing parties, a substantial victory in the formation of the bicameral Constituent Assembly.⁷⁹ With a turnout of more than 86 percent of the eligible voters, the interim government was ratified and democratically legitimated by the population in the first free, largely fair elections in forty-five years. Why, then, did discontent arise so radically between April and June 1990 in Bucharest? Why did those

⁷⁸ Member of the *nomenklatura*, he had been a Ceaucescu protégé since the early 1960s but became increasingly marginal as a result of his reservations about the post-1971 neo-Stalinist course of the Romanian regime.

⁷⁹ The NSF won 66 percent of the vote in the Assembly of Deputies and 67 percent in the Senate.

groups of students, workers, intellectuals, and later Gypsies rebel? Why did they challenge the political authority of power-holders?⁸⁰ Certainly, because of their demands, their disgust with the still repressive and exclusive Romanian politics, and their full commitment to the establishment of a liberal democracy and the elimination of the former *apparatchiks* from key control positions.⁸¹ But also, it is my argument, because of the strengthening of the State; more accurately, because of the unfinished (and not simply rejected) rebalancing of relations between State and society. There were social groups with demands, and they perceived an opportunity to subversively mobilize for them.

Whatever the outcome, whether polyarchy is reached or not, the transition is a period of great uncertainty—as well as growing impatience—during which neither masses nor elites are sure about their own limits on their actions. Everything is to be done. The relationship between State and society is being reshaped; it has to be reshaped. The regime is being changed. Perceptions matter by that time. A new balance of force has to be achieved, and it is achieved dynamically through interaction. Actors calculate and recalculate their strategies and actions, and of course they may or not miscalculate them. Regarding the Romanian episode at hand, and with the Iberian experiences in mind, at least two points should be considered: one relates to elites' internal cohesion and coherence when adopting and implementing decisions; the other to the role of the police—mostly to whether demonstrators perceived it, or any other state organism, as acting repressively and according to hierarchy or not.

a) As to the elites, neither unity nor coherence characterized the Romanian State institutions, from the National Salvation Front, the government, and the Council of

⁸⁰ The events can be followed throughout the various issues of *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, 1990.

⁸¹ The demonstrators drew up the 'Proclamation of Timisoara'. Signed on 11 March 1990, the document articulated the political expectations and the values of those who started the breakdown of the dictatorship (see Tismaneanu 1997, 429–31; it is reprinted in full in *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 14, 6 April 1990, pages 41–45). Thus, by imposing what the demonstrators also called a 'Communist-free zone' in the city center, they demanded that former members of the apparatus be barred from political and police power positions, as well as from campaigning (even for the presidential office), and insisted on the establishment of an independent television station. Their aim was to dialogue about these and other related concerns with Iliescu himself in a televised meeting that never arose.

State to the Army and the police, including the secret police as a different corp. The power struggle at the center of each one, and among them, obstructed the Front's ability to govern, despite its electoral landslide. Iliescu must have been immobilized as a result of such a power struggle.⁸² Complementarily, it has to be taken into account how the political confusion and internal conflicts that Ceauzescu's abrupt departure produced were perceived by the growing civil society in Romania as an opportunity to pressure and protest. The vulnerability of the new regime was exposed.

⁸² According to Verdery and Kligman, when these forces—the different groups and constantly changing coalitions—“locked, canceling one another out, he [Iliescu] was immobilized as a result” (1992, 139).

In that respect, further research should be carried out to determine to what extent Romanians were aware of—or could perceive—such internal conflicts. Concretely, January and February 1990, just before the Proclamation of Timisoara, were months of growing polarization of the country’s political life and of clashes between the newly formed democratic (pro-Western) movements and parties and the NSF-controlled government (see Tismaneanu 1997). And they were months of clashes within the latter as well: while the government announced the decision to ban the Romanian Communist Party under the pressure of a demonstration that took place on January 12 in Bucharest, Dumitru Mazilu, one of the four most visible members of the NSF’s leadership and the principal author of the NSF’s first statement to the country, was forced to resign after engaging “in a dialogue with the demonstrators that seemed to be an attempt to undermine Iliescu’s authority” (ibid., 419).⁸³ By the same token, it is worth noting that the NSF split in two in August 1991: one faction, directly associated with the President, the another with the first prime minister, the reformist Petre Roman (ibid., 437–78).

b) As for the imposition of order, because of the government’s and/or Iliescu’s unwillingness (to order effective, i.e., unpopular, police intervention before the founding elections, or because of authorities’ calculus in terms of uncertain results),⁸⁴ and/or because of the State’s incapacity (resulting from internal disagreements and conflicts among the political authorities as to what decisions to make and which commands to give, uncertainty as to which corporation was to maintain order in public spaces,⁸⁵ and/or indiscipline within the forces of repression),⁸⁶ opponents perceived, and confirmed over several weeks, that neither the police nor any other state corporation was impeding—or

⁸³ Former dissidents also left the Front. All of them complained about its lack of commitment to democratization and transformation.

⁸⁴ Romanian new authorities could have learned not only from their own country’s experience but also from that of Czechoslovakia and East Germany that the logic of ‘prophylactic repression’ (Karklins and Petersen 1993, 602) is wrong. Thus, better avoid it.

⁸⁵ See the interview with Defense Minister Victor Stanculescu, in Da Costa (1990–91, esp. 260–61, and in Verdery and Kligman 1992, 138).

⁸⁶ Persons with whom Verdery and Kligman spoke suggested that some of the police forces sent in to maintain order were indeed scrambling to avoid being labeled ‘villains’ and to pin such labels on other repressive institutions (1992, 138).

going to impede—their protest. Certainly, the government sent police troops to disband them, but they did not intervene.

A last factor interrelates a) and b) and fosters protest and even radicalization. Serious discord between the government and large sections of the military led to the presentation of a 13-point program to the NSF leadership by a large delegation of officers with the support of General Staff officers in January 1990.⁸⁷ The military clearly escalated its campaign for reform: besides social and professional demands, they asked for depolitization of the army and for placing in reserve status the Minister of National Defense, Nicolae Militaru, and Minister of Internal Affairs, Mihai Chitac, “because of his direct involvement in repressing the demonstrations in Timisoara” in December 1989.⁸⁸ Before and after, a number of military demonstrations, with civilian participation, were held in Bucharest and Timisoara, while the press published letters by representatives of the armed forces and even a warning by the General Staff to the government. Besides popular support, the military received the support of the police and other uniformed personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁸⁹ Finally, in February, four commissions were established to examine and offer solutions to some of the demands, Militaru was released as Minister, and a group of generals and officers recalled to active service after the revolution were transferred to the army reserve (see Gafton 1990). On June 4 civil protesters were even supported in their demands by nine military officers in the Committee for Democratization of the Army. They issued a statement backing ‘the legitimate request of the masses’ and requesting once more the dismissal of the Minister of Internal Affairs.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ The text is reprinted in full in *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 14, 6 April 1990, page 38. It was published by *România Libera* and broadcast by Romanian television on February 12.

⁸⁸ Points one and two demanded, respectively, “acknowledging the truth about the army’s role in the revolution” and “the removal of army staff in the Ministry of National Defense who, beginning on December 16, compromised themselves and the army by being direct accomplices in Ceauzescu’s dictatorship; and the retirement of all generals reactivated during the revolution.”

⁸⁹ They joined the military’s initiative and demanded the removal from active duty of all police staff who had participated in the repression of the population during the uprising. The staff also asked to join the committee in its further talks with the government.

⁹⁰ *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 24, 15 June 1990, page 54.

In Spain popular protests and mobilizations forced the democratization path. Linz and Stepan have pointed out, for example, how they were larger in scale than those witnessed in Czechoslovakia in December 1989 (1996, 327–28). However, collectives engaged in contention did not perceive any change in either the State's willingness or capacity to maintain social control during the government of the democratization led by Adolfo Suárez—just as they had not perceived it during the previous ones. Consequently, the Spaniards did not see any opportunity to satisfy their demands other than through forms of action that the *ancien régime* had already tolerated. As in other transition situations, there were certainly disagreements within the State in Spain, essentially between moderates and hard-liners. Nonetheless, in terms of their assessment of, and reaction to, the nature of collective actions, the power-holders were rightly seen as united and coordinated. And they actively, and coercively, intervened to restrain and prevent unacceptable forms of collective action. To be more precise, they continued to do as they had done during the authoritarian regime.

In contrast to that situation, no State authority was capable of refuting or curbing the sense of *libertação* (liberation) that the Portuguese initially felt after the unexpected rupture with the authoritarian regime. And neither at that point nor subsequently was any State body capable of sanctioning or imposing limits on the radical actions of workers, students, and other social groups. By ignoring the calls for moderation from the State institutions, as well as the political parties and trade unions, and despite the fact that the government was explicitly committed to maintaining law and order, mobilized social groups perceived that the State was unable to fulfil this commitment, or at least that the political-military authorities in practice did not use the State's coercive resources to this end. The government's inaction gave them an opportunity to act radically. As to Romania, it is not that, after decades of repression and discontent, the population showed itself relatively and temporarily 'ungovernable' (Verdery and Kligman 1992, 138 and 142). Actually, there was nothing similar in Romania to the Portuguese *libertação*. But, as in Portugal, opponents perceived, and confirmed over several weeks, that they had the chance to behave collectively, so they did.

In the early hours of June 13, however, more than six weeks later and after the elections had been held, police violently arrested and took the demonstrators to headquarters for questioning. Then, the square was barricaded with buses and police vans. Violence escalated on the part of the citizens. By the late afternoon, the same day, the State's forces of civic order had totally retreated. Maintaining internal order is not the role of the army; nonetheless, disorder became transgression and violence, and the army was still to be seen. Order was finally restored by well-organized miners. President Iliescu made a televised speech calling upon 'all democratic forces of the country', and in the early hours of June 14 thousands of miners began to arrive in the capital carrying with them iron crowbars and other instruments. They devastated the headquarters of the Liberal and Peasant parties as well as some university buildings; they ransacked the office of the independent paper *România Libera*; and they brutally attacked the people—whether demonstrators or bystanders—who were once again filling the square. The police were reported to have simply intervened by arresting beaten demonstrators or firing on the Gypsies who organized to protest the violence they were also suffering. The miners were escorted out of Bucharest by a convoy on June 15. They previously and publicly, in a televised speech, received the President's thanks for 'helping to restore democracy' to Romania (see Shafir 1990b; Verdery and Kligman 1992).⁹¹

It is hard for me to analyze thoroughly the many implications of the miners' intervention for the democratization process. To be sure, it weakened democracy both analytically and empirically. Anyway, and directly related to my argument here, antigovernment protesters and the opposition at large became aware then, first, that even if by illegal means, the Head of the State was able to (re)establish and impose *his* order. Thus, even without resort to legitimate state repressive institutions, there was no more chance of any temporary power void (or power struggle) becoming an opportunity to press and protest. No noteworthy antigovernment mobilizations of that kind have been

⁹¹ Iliescu's speech is reprinted in full in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report, Eastern Europe*, 18 June 1990, pages 67–70.

reported thereafter.⁹² Open opponents to the political process, still few and above all weak, probably concluded that extra-institutional collective action was not a suitable way of making demands in the time to come. As in Portugal from November 1975 onward, mobilized groups did not impose self-restraint on their mobilizations out of their own volition or because their preferences changed but rather because of the existence and imposition of constraints.

Second, demonstrators feared ‘a return to the past’. As in Spain and Hungary, the State’s multidimensional capacity was perceived by them to be weakened—its institutions and authorities incapable or unwilling to face undemocratic threats. Even more, the Head of the State himself was supposed to be guaranteeing in Romania “a simple revamping of the Communist system” (Tismaneanu 1997, 430). The June 1990 events, with their six deaths, showed, certainly, that order would be imposed, even if by *vigilante* miners. But they also showed that the disorder they produced entailed a risk: it could translate into more exclusion and more repression. After all, Iliescu said to the miners, in seeing them off at the station: “We know that we can rely on you. We should ask for your help whenever it seems necessary!” Beyond authoritarianism, another alternative was opened: civil war.⁹³ Thus, better moderation, restraint, and patience on the part of opponents; even better extra-institutional demobilization.

It makes sense to think that, in view of the relative weakness of the opposition *vis-à-vis* the constraining capacities of the State and despite civil society’s growing

⁹² The miners violent mobilizations of August 1991 and January 1999 are a very specific phenomenon, directly related to the June 1990 events, which I will not deal with in this paper. Nonetheless, I think they can also be explained by considering learning processes and perceived opportunities as relevant factors.

⁹³ After a film clip was aired that showed the *mêlée* resulting from the miners’ intervention in June 1990, Verdery and Kligman claim that one of them heard many peasants comment: “Iliescu is worse than Ceaucescu! Not even Ceaucescu turned Romanians against each other. Miners beating Romanian students? This is the verge of civil war!” (1992, 129). A precedent of civil war in a country’s past fosters moderation (Bermeo 1992; Aguilar 1996). Nonetheless, it is not the precedent but the risk of civil war actually happening—again or for the first time—that mainly becomes a restraining argument, as the Southern European experiences show, especially the Portuguese by 25 November 1975 (see Durán 2000, ch. 7).

evolution, demonstrators and potential demonstrators would have found electing candidates to office—whether by joining a party or not—the cheapest and most effective way, if not the only one, of protesting and pressing for reforms. It would have been time for ‘exit’ to replace ‘voice’. As in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltics, contentious mobilization would have turned into mobilization of protest votes. In fact, the opposition won mayoral office in many of Romania’s cities (including Bucharest) as a result of the February 1992 and summer 1996 local elections. And finally, the November 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections resulted in Iliescu’s defeat and a major victory for his opponents—the alliance between the coalition of parties called the Democratic Convention and Petre Roman’s Democratic Party (supported by the alliance called the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania). Emil Constantinescu was elected president with 54.4 percent of the vote.

Conclusions

Some readers of this paper could possibly draw the conclusion that my argument conceals a tautology. To put it simply, in their view I would be contending that *revolutionary actors carry out revolutionary actions*. Or that *State crisis fosters transgression because the State is incapable of constraining transgression*. A bit more elaborated, it could be stated that contentious mobilization is susceptible of becoming transgressive in nature whenever the State is perceived to fail in avoiding and sanctioning transgressive collective action. The first sentence, which may be considered a tautology, cannot be deduced from my reasoning; the second, which may be drawn from this text (although as an oversimplification), is not a tautology at all.⁹⁴

Regarding the first sentence, one of my tested hypotheses has been that popular collectives do not mobilize, either moderately or transgressively, because of preferences and demands but, respectively, because of perceived constraints or opportunities. Hence, collective actors behaving transgressively during transitions are not necessarily

⁹⁴ My thanks to Steve Levitsky and Robert Fishman for making me think further about this aspect of my study.

revolutionary actors—at least, not in intent. Protesters in Portugal and Romania were not revolutionaries, any more than the protesters in Spain and Hungary were, but in the former two countries protest behavior became transgressive and in the latter it did not. Demands and goals were not substantially different in Portugal and Spain before and during democratization (see Durán 2000, ch. 3.3), and they were not different in Romania and

Hungary. However, the forms of collective action were. Transgressing is not necessarily people's aim. Their aim is satisfying their demands. In trying to satisfy their demands, they behave as they think they can. Thus, transgression that was not previously scheduled can arise. There is a discovering process from the very beginning of collective action through which, in testing both the limits of authorities' tolerance and the limits of uncertainty, protestors may find that there are no limits for the time being. That is so when the State crisis runs parallel with regime crisis and regime change.

That leads us to the second sentence. The proposition is neither trivial nor empty of cognitive import. First, because the statement is not so framed that it cannot be denied without inconsistency. To be sure, I am not contending here that whenever a State crisis appears transgressive mobilizations follow. It must be taken into account, for example, that the 'profound crisis of the State' in countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Peru, according to O'Donnell (1994a and 1994b), has not produced popular outbursts but rather the increasing consolidation of autonomous, territorially based spheres of power, which he labels 'brown areas'. In turn, neither am I holding that there is no state crisis in such cases because there are no transgressive mobilizations.

Second, my hypothesis is not known *a priori* but only *a posteriori*; an investigation was needed to confirm the causality. Actually, it rejects or qualifies the reasons stated in the specialized literature. As argued throughout this paper, it is the State's capacity to accomplish state structural functions that appears to be critical in understanding the nature of collective action. That is, the State's capacity emerges from the research as the necessary—though not sufficient—variable that determines whether collectives mobilize transgressively or moderately and even helps to explain whether they

demobilize. Notwithstanding the importance of other intervening factors—such as the kind of nondemocratic regime to be changed and the way by which the democratization begins, alongside historical memories and legacies, besides the current situation of the economy and the *strength* of civil and political society—as much the intra- as the inter-regional comparison weakens their explanatory power. A clear-cut line of causality cannot be drawn from them to either moderation or transgression.

In considering ‘the State’ I have conceptualized my dependent variable as perceived, complex, dynamic, and multidimensional. And, in referring to ‘the State crisis’ I have offered a detailed account of how, when, and why such a crisis, weakness, or power vacuum becomes apparent. Dealing with the State implies, for instance, accounting for institutional mechanisms to verify the validity of laws and rights and to rule on disputes. The legal system may be also considered as a part of the State (O’Donnell 2000, 19). Another aspect of the State is related to how political power is exercised; Mazzuca distinguishes two major trends—patrimonialistic and bureaucratic—regarding whether clientelistic practices, nepotism, corruption, linkages between the police and criminal bands, *et cetera* are at work (1999; see also O’Donnell 1994a and 1994b). I agree with Mazzuca that all those features help to explain the issue of the quality of democracy; that is, they are related to the consolidation process and, mostly, to consolidated polyarchy.

However, the point has been here how angry and demanding people collectively behave during the previous process leading to and surrounding the constitutionalization of a new, democratic regime and why they behave that way. State coercive function arises as the answer to the question posed. Such a function is structural, that is, proper to the State, and it cannot be presumed. Regime concessions together with discontent foster contention and the resurrection of civil society. But opportunities for radicalization only arise when the State is perceived to be weak in terms of its willingness and/or capacity to maintain and impose law and order. To be sure, when a regime is being changed or it has been overthrown (much more in the latter case), the political void is to be filled either by the State, as in Spain and Hungary, or by society, as in Portugal between ‘25 de Abril’

and '25 de Novembro'. Romania has appeared as exceptional and paradigmatic insofar as it has been a case moving from one side of the independent variable (relative State weakness) to the other (relative State strength) and thus from one side of the dependent variable (transgressive mobilizations) to the other (moderate collective actions, and even demobilization).

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