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Taking Uncertainty Seriously: The Blurred Boundaries of Democratic Transition and Consolidation

ANDREAS SCHEDLER

The temporal boundaries of democratization are often fuzzy and controversial. Yet students of regime change have paid little systematic attention to issues of temporal delimitation, despite their profound methodological as well as political implications. Scholars routinely define, but almost never study, processes of democratic transition and consolidation in terms of institutional uncertainty. This article, by contrast, proposes to take uncertainty seriously. Concerned with the operational implications of uncertainty, it critically revises the 'inner boundary' of democratization (the threshold between transition and consolidation) as well as its 'outer boundaries' (the onset of transition and the closure of consolidation). It concludes that the latter are structurally indeterminate unless incisive 'focal events' make actor expectations converge at either high or low levels of institutional uncertainty.

When do democratic transitions begin? When do they end? And when are processes of democratic consolidation over? Students of political democratization have barely thought about the first question, taken for granted the second one, and torn their hair over the third. All three temporal boundaries, however, are less than clear-cut. Often it is difficult to tell at what point a transition initiates. Sometimes it is hard to know when it ends. And usually it is impossible to tell when consolidation processes reach closure. Yet their blurred boundaries put into question long-standing efforts to analyze the occurrence, the trajectories, the outcomes and the consequences of regime change. If we fail to clearly delimit our objects of research we may fail to clearly communicate our results of research. If we fail to translate our common terminology of transition and consolidation into common standards of operationalization and observation, we may fail to understand how our descriptive and explanatory inferences on transition and consolidation relate to each other. Fuzzy operational boundaries may generate fuzzy empirical findings. Yet, as the present article argues, the blurred boundaries of democratic transition and consolidation are not a problem of conceptual incompetence but a problem of political reality. They

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are not primarily attributable to students of democratization but to the empirical nature of democratization. It is not fuzzy thinking but the fuzziness of institutional change that blurs the boundaries of democratization. It is structural not subjective ambivalence we have to cope with.

Students of democratization commonly define transition as well as consolidation processes in terms of uncertainty. A democratic transition starts when democratizing actors manage to break the relative certainty of authoritarian continuity, whipping up expectations of democratic change. The consolidation of democracy concludes when democratic actors manage to establish reasonable certainty about the continuity of the new democratic regime, abating expectations of authoritarian regression. In this perspective, uncertainty about the fundamental rules of the political game is the hallmark of both processes. The emergence of uncertainty marks the beginning of regime change, and the fading away of uncertainty marks the successful culmination of consolidation.¹ However, even when conceptualizing phases of democratization in terms of institutional uncertainty, scholars tend to set aside issues of uncertainty the moment they turn to concrete empirical research. Rather than analyzing actor perceptions they study the factual outcomes of regime change.

The present article, by contrast, sets out to take uncertainty seriously.² After distinguishing more systematically between 'prospective' approaches that take uncertainty into account and 'retrospective' approaches that reconstruct factual developments, it first revises the 'inner boundary' of democratization, the threshold between transition and consolidation. It then goes on to explain the main obstacle we face when trying to trace temporal boundaries on the soft ground of actor perceptions: the varying empirical trajectories of social expectations. If the institutional uncertainty of a political regime oscillates, evolves gradually, or stagnates at low levels, the 'outer boundaries' of democratization – the onset of transition and the closure of consolidation – are indeterminate. Clear temporal discontinuities exist only when incisive 'focal events' make social expectations converge at extreme levels of institutional uncertainty.

Contrasting Perspectives

When studying processes of democratization, scholars may either adopt an 'external' observer perspective that is unconcerned with inter-subjective expectations. Or they may adopt an 'internal' participant perspective that takes actors' subjective perceptions into account. Table 1 sums up some central features that distinguish 'external' from 'internal' views on transition and consolidation. The former approach adopts the viewpoint of

TABLE 1:
METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND
CONSOLIDATION

Dimensions	External perspective	Internal perspective
Temporal perspective	Backward looking	Forward looking
Observational perspective	External observer	Internal participant
Level of observation	Political institutions	Political actors
Object of observation	Facts: Regime change and stability	Cognitions: Expectations of regime change and stability
Dependent variable	Degrees of regime stability	Degrees of uncertainty
Mode of explanation	Causal	Intentional

an outside observer who looks at factual records of regime change and stability. Concerned with institutional patterns its natural mode of explanation is causal. Based on the logic of covariation, antecedent structural factors explain regime outcomes. The latter approach reconstructs the viewpoints of inside participants who hold cognitive expectations of regime change and stability. Concerned with actor perceptions its inevitable mode of explanation is intentional. Based on the logic of reasoning, the cognitive rationality of actors explains prevalent degrees of uncertainty.³

Introducing the notion of uncertainty into the study of regime change has been one of the lasting contributions Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter made in their seminal *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (1986). In the very opening paragraph of their essay, they eloquently insisted on the openness of change. Regime transitions, they wrote, do not lead inevitably to democratic government. They represent risky journeys from authoritarianism 'toward an uncertain "something else"'. They are periods of 'extraordinary uncertainty' in which 'unexpected events (*fortuna*), insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity, and even indefiniteness of political identities, as well as the talents of specific individuals (*virtù*), are frequently decisive in determining the outcomes'. As the authors asserted, in such 'rapidly changing situations' characterized by a 'high indeterminacy of interactions, strategies, and outcomes', 'the unexpected and the possible are as important as the usual and the probable'.⁴ In the later literature, the close empirical association of transition and uncertainty has developed into a close definitional association. Among students of democratization it has become commonplace to conceive a democratic transition as 'an interval of intense political uncertainty'.⁵

Much of the later literature on the post-transitional phase of democratic consolidation has kept the focus on uncertainty. During consolidation,

uncertainty persists, although with a different empirical referent. It is not authoritarian continuity any more but democratic continuity that is put into question. The *telos* of consolidation is to reduce that uncertainty to a point where all major actors 'expect [the regime] to last well into the foreseeable future'.⁶ While the task of transition is to push open the window of uncertainty and create opportunities for democratic change, the challenge of consolidation is to close the window of uncertainty and preclude possibilities of authoritarian regression. Transitions create hopes of democratic change, processes of consolidation confidence into democratic stability.⁷

From the prospective viewpoint of participants – and contrary to the 'established intellectual consensus' about their contrasting and even incompatible nature⁸ – the twin concepts of democratic transition and consolidation thus rest upon identical theoretical foundations: institutional uncertainty, social expectations about the fate of the existing political regime. During a transition it is uncertain whether democratic rules will be established, during consolidation it is uncertain whether democratic rules will last. While a transition takes off when expectations of authoritarian continuity are broken, consolidation comes to a close as expectations of democratic continuity are taking root.

But, of course, for many students of democratization actor expectations are not relevant data. Instead of tracing inter-subjective cognitions they are looking at the factual outcomes of regime change. On the side of transitions, a prominent recent example is Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi's statistical examination of democracy and economic development in 135 countries. In their ambitious study of the structural conditions of political regime change and stability, the pressing uncertainties that surround processes of regime transition and consolidation turn irrelevant. Their extensive database of political regimes between 1950 and 1990 only registers given regime types per year. The term 'transition' designates no more than a change in classification from one regime type to another. In the cross-national accounts book of transitions, actor perceptions do not count.⁹ On the side of consolidation, it has been, above all, in the statistical study of historical records that authors have used the notion of democratic consolidation as 'practically synonymous with the older concept of democratic stability'.¹⁰

In part, the choice between an 'internal' or 'external' perspective on democratization has been a matter of historical context. Scholars who study (and perhaps live in) transitional regimes are more likely to take actor perceptions seriously than those who study (and perhaps live in) post-transitional regimes. Adopting the perspective of participants who struggle under conditions of uncertainty has come naturally to scholars wishing to

make sense of ongoing experiences of regime change. Later, in the 'third wave' of global democratization,¹¹ scholars found it easier to switch their analytical perspective from an inside view on inter-subjective perceptions to an outside view on historical facts. As the uncertainties of regime change and stability withered away, it became legitimate (in political terms) as well as feasible (in terms of research) to shift attention from collective anxieties to empirical records of regime change and survival.

In this sense, the methodological change from a prospective to a retrospective viewpoint reflected changes in political realities in which devising future scenarios became less relevant than explaining historical outcomes. In addition, changing analytical perspectives have been symptomatic of changing research practices. The case basket of comparative democratization has expanded from the pioneering countries of the 'third wave' of global democratization to cover basically all modern regimes world-wide, since the invention of democracy. This extension of both historical and comparative scope made it seem impractical, inappropriate, and unnecessary to take actor perceptions into account. In large-*N* research, analyzing levels of uncertainty looks impractical due to a pervasive lack of public opinion data. It seems inappropriate due to the nature of explanatory factors typically privileged by statistical research; long-term structural explanations cannot explain short-term fluctuations of actors' beliefs about the future. Finally, the comforting benefits of hindsight make it seem unnecessary. In retrospect, the dies of democratization are cast. The course of history has dissipated the uncertainty of regime change.

Changing objects of research thus have opened the door for changing purposes and perspectives of research. Basic conceptual tools, however, have not been adapted accordingly. As a result, studies of democratization have come to live in a state of divorce between the common conceptualization of transition and consolidation and their common operationalization in comparative and statistical research. Conceptually, most scholars seem to accept uncertainty as a defining feature of transition and consolidation processes. But operationally, except in case studies that adopt a close focus on actors and patterns of interaction, uncertainty does not play any role in most empirical treatments of comparative democratization. Neither of the two perspectives is intrinsically superior to the other. In principle, both are entirely legitimate. Whether we better look at actor expectations or institutional outcomes depends on our research purpose, our theoretical frame, and our access to data. Yet, it should be clear where we stand and why. We should avoid 'blind' combinations in which our conceptual coordinates (grounded in uncertainty) are incompatible with our operational decisions (oblivious of uncertainty). And we should

explicate whether our methodological viewpoint derives from theoretical, methodological, or pragmatic considerations.

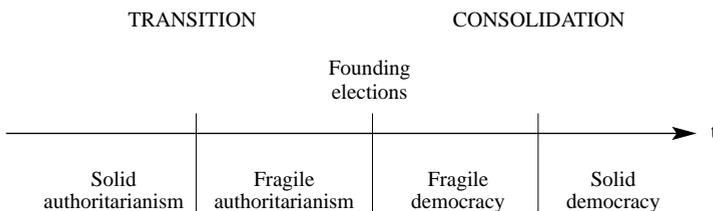
Convinced of the potential fruitfulness of both approaches, the present article does not pretend to arbitrate between them. Embracing the internal perspective, it takes uncertainty seriously to examine its operational implications for drawing the temporal boundaries of democratic transition and consolidation. As it will argue, a reliance on institutional uncertainty explains why the boundaries of democratization are often so contentious among political practitioners as well as political scientists. The plural and fluid nature of social expectations tends to subvert the pretension of drawing clear demarcation lines between historical phases defined in terms of political uncertainty.¹²

The Common Boundary

If both transition and consolidation are characterized by institutional uncertainty, a simple sequence of phases emerges (see Figure 1). First, with the irruption of critical uncertainty, 'solid authoritarianism' gives way to 'fragile authoritarianism'. Later, with the dissipation of uncertainty, 'fragile democracy' gives way to 'solid democracy'. Transition takes place under conditions of authoritarian fragility, consolidation under conditions of democratic fragility. As will be argued below, conceptualizing democratization in terms of critical uncertainty creates systematic difficulties for delineating its outer boundaries (the start of transition and the end of consolidation). Yet, the inner boundary of democratization, the dividing line that separates transition from consolidation, is not always as radiant and sharp either as we may think it is.

Students of political democratization commonly conceptualize democratic transition and consolidation as subsequent phases of regime change. In the standard chronology of democratization, as in Figure 1, first comes transition, then consolidation. The latter takes off the moment the

FIGURE 1
THE PHASES OF DEMOCRATIZATION



former comes to a close.¹³ In general terms, the task of identifying the threshold between transition and consolidation is neither very complex nor very controversial. Modern democracy possesses a concrete institutional core: free, clean, inclusive and competitive elections. Most people would agree that liberal democracy is more than elections, but cannot be less. Elections as a constitutive feature of democracy provide transitions with a clear-cut institutional threshold: the holding of 'founding elections' that meet democratic minimum standards. There is some indeterminacy about the precise date to pick – the day citizens ratify a new democratic constitution, the day democratic elections are held, the day the elected head of government is sworn in, and so on. But democratization studies can usually take it for granted that we dispose of unambiguous institutional dates to objectively ascertain when a democratic transition has come to its end (if it has come to an end at all). For example, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan are able to give precise days (usually the dates of the first democratic election) that demarcate the termination of transition for each of the third wave democracies they study (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania).¹⁴ Yet, despite the neatness of those boundaries, some caveats are called for.

First, our ability to establish clear and uncontroversial endpoints of transition depends on certain normative and empirical assumptions. In *normative* terms, shared perceptions of boundaries presuppose shared conceptions of democracy. Unless we entertain converging conceptions about necessary and sufficient features of democracy, we will set diverging endpoints to a process that is supposed to lead to democracy.¹⁵ In *empirical* terms, our ability to identify clear historical divides between authoritarian rule and democratic successor regimes is dependent on political reality conforming to our conceptual dichotomy of authoritarianism versus democracy. Some elections do not have founding but only transitional character. If elections fall below democratic minimum standards and end up confirming authoritarian rulers in power, they do not appear as 'breakthrough elections'.¹⁶ Rather, their structural ambiguity tends to prolong the transition and to blur its finishing line. The endpoint of democratization is as ambivalent as the political regime it leads to.¹⁷

Secondly, defining transitions as times of uncertainty is not always compatible with defining their endpoints in electoral-institutional terms. The uncertainty of transition may wither away long before first elections are held. For instance, an interim government that 'announces the certainty of its own demise'¹⁸ by calling elections in which it does not run itself may largely dispel the uncertainty of transition (under the condition that actors hold the announcement to be credible). In such cases, it seems plausible to conceive of crisis and uncertainty as only the opening stage of transition.¹⁹

The Evolution of Uncertainty

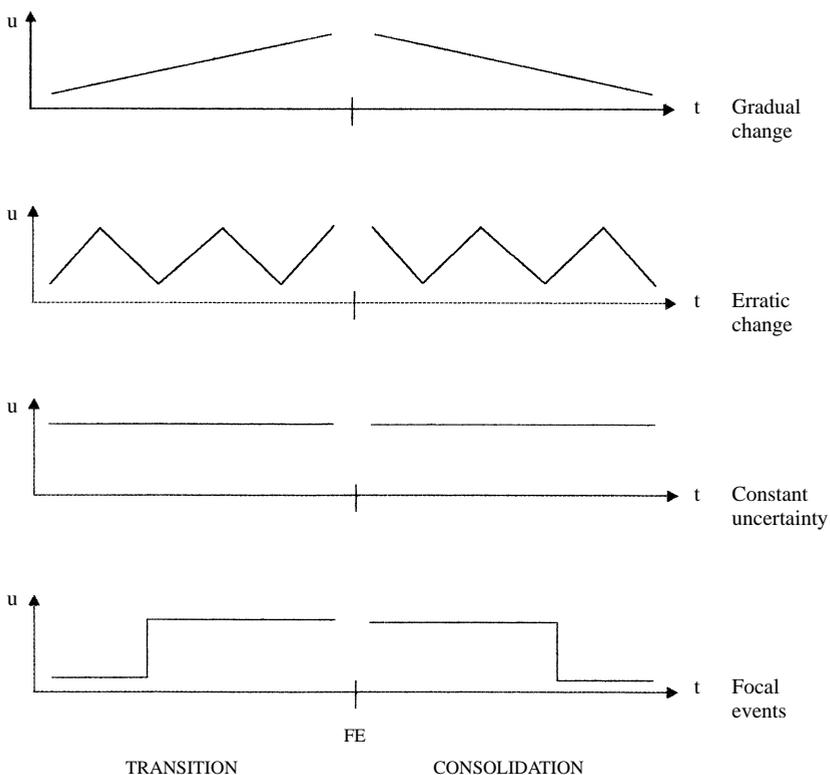
If transitions start with the uncertainty of authoritarian crises erupting, while consolidation processes end with the uncertainty of democratic crises withering away, how can we determine when exactly (or just approximately) that will be the case? To draw temporal boundaries on the soft ground of actor expectations is no trivial assignment. Quite to the contrary, delimiting phases of regime change on the basis of social perceptions of uncertainty raises daunting practical, methodological and empirical problems. In *practical* terms, the major problem lies in the scarcity of systematic data on political actors' beliefs about the future of their political regime. In *methodological* terms, the natural plurality of social expectations poses considerable challenges to aggregating perceptions of uncertainty. For instance, political elites and citizens, government and opposition parties, civil and military actors, national and international observers as well as practitioners and scholars may all sustain diverging beliefs about the future of a given regime. Whom should we ask? The more that actor expectations conflict, the more questionable it is to aggregate and dichotomize them into 'high' and 'low' levels of institutional uncertainty.²⁰

In *empirical* terms, social perceptions of uncertainty may evolve in ways that undermine any pretension to demarcate clear outer boundaries of democratization (even if individual expectations happen to converge at some level of political uncertainty). As Figure 2 illustrates, in transitions from authoritarian rule, levels of political uncertainty may vary along four ideal typical trajectories.

(a) *Gradual change*: Sociologists tend to describe processes of institutionalization as gradual and decentralized changes of expectations over time. Scholars who conceptualize democratic consolidation as a process of 'habituation' or 'institutionalization' rely on a similar evolutionary image of incremental transformation. But not only the construction of institutions, their deconstruction, too, may follow a gradual path. Rather than collapsing, authoritarian regimes may erode over time.²¹

(b) *Oscillation*: Societal expectations are malleable and often volatile. Accordingly, expectations of regime change may evolve in non-linear ways, subject to waves of upsurge and depression. Authoritarian regimes may go through cycles of protest, repression and 'erratic reform'²² in which moments of democratic hope alternate with times of despair. Democratic regimes, too, may look secure and self-confident one day, only to plunge into an acute crisis the other day, and return to normality the week after.

FIGURE 2
THE EVOLUTION OF UNCERTAINTY



u = Uncertainty
t = Time
FE = Founding elections

(c) *Continual fragility*: Episodes of regime change, rather than leading from stable authoritarianism to stable democracy, may lead from a fragile authoritarian regime to an equally fragile democratic regime. With both the predecessor and the successor regime displaying low institutionalization, the uncertainty of regime change is indistinguishable from the uncertainty of the regime in place. A sort of permanent transition (with no clear starting point) leads to a sort of permanent consolidation (with no clear point of closure).

(d) *Sudden change*: Only sudden changes of societal perceptions provide phases of regime change with clear-cut outer boundaries. It is only the occurrence of incisive 'focal events' that may induce a societal 'revolution of expectations' – a sudden redefinition of collective perceptions of regime uncertainty. Only such dramatic events that break societal expectations in a lasting way (rather than transforming them gradually or changing them temporarily) establish unambiguous temporal discontinuities. The beginning of a transition is clear-cut only when the authoritarian regime *suddenly* starts looking vulnerable (and keeps up that appearance until the installation of democracy). The endpoint of consolidation is clear-cut only when the democratic regime *suddenly* starts looking invincible (and keeps up that appearance indefinitely).

The four trajectories do not exhaust all logical possibilities. Above all, they do not include the possibility that regimes may change 'by stealth',²³ as the result of purely factual changes that take place without accompanying changes in societal expectations. Regimes may collapse without anybody expecting it and they may erode without anybody noticing it. Strictly speaking, in such cases, regimes change without transition. Only after the fact, after the regime's 'sudden death' or its accumulative 'slow death',²⁴ actors realize with puzzlement, as in L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*: We are not in Kansas anymore. Still, our four career-paths do represent the major patterns of change in perceived regime uncertainty during processes of transition and consolidation. In principle, the first two do not present major conceptual problems. Analyzing incremental as well as cyclical patterns of change has for long been the empirical stuff of democratization studies, even if the implications these patterns bear for the delimitation of democratization has not received systematic attention. By comparison, the transition from fragile authoritarianism to fragile democracy as well as the idea of disruptive 'focal events' deserve some additional explication.

Fragile Regimes

The idea that democratic transitions start with the introduction of uncertainty presupposes that the preceding authoritarian regime has acquired some minimum degree of institutionalization and thus, certainty. If authoritarian rulers do not preside over a consolidated 'regime' but rather a fluid 'situation' – as Juan Linz described the Brazilian post-1964 military government²⁵ – uncertainty is the hallmark of politics, not of transitional politics only. In such cases, political transitions, leading from one uncertain regime to another, do not introduce uncertainty; they prolong uncertainty. In South America, Bolivia, between 1978 and 1982, with 'a tumultuous round of coups, countercoups, and failed elections',²⁶ and perhaps Ecuador since

independence, with its 17 constitutions from 1835 to 1978 and only 12 of 35 presidents completing their terms regularly,²⁷ came close to such a picture of permanent crisis and thus, permanent transition.

In their 1986 essay, O'Donnell and Schmitter circumvent this conceptual problem by stipulating that political regimes are institutionalized by definition. The very idea of a regime, they write, 'necessarily involves institutionalization'.²⁸ To deserve its name, a regime must be effective. Its constitutive rules must be 'habitually known, practiced, and accepted' and its 'real or potential dissents' must be so weak as to be 'unlikely to threaten' it.²⁹ Accordingly, they conceptualize a transition as 'the interval between one regime and another'.³⁰ The current neo-institutional literature tends to conceive of institutions in a similar way. Institutions are rules, we are often told, but not any kind of rules. Only those rules that are 'widely known and generally accepted' and thus 'effective'³¹ qualify as institutions. But circumscribing the concept of institutions to secure and effective arrangements imposes radical limits on the scope of institutional research. By expelling uncertainty from the reign of social institutions, it limits analyses to norms and rules whose effectiveness we take for granted. The old question of whether institutions matter or not is resolved by definition. Weak, fragile, and contested institutions are no institutions at all. Times of institutional change, transitional times, are times of institutional voids.

Taking 'institutionalization' as a constitutive feature of political regimes involves similar restrictions. If weak, fragile and contested regimes do not qualify as regimes, the scope of regime analysis shrinks drastically. First, if a regime ceases to be a regime the moment it begins to look shaky, the onset of a transition coincides with the end of the *ancien régime*. But is this the way we conceive of democratic transitions? For instance, did Spain's authoritarian regime end with Franco's death? Or did Mexican authoritarianism end with the upsurge of uncertainty in the eve of the 1988 presidential elections? In most cases, we will argue that the end of authoritarianism coincides with the end, not the beginning, of the democratic transition.

Secondly, if a regime is no regime unless it is consolidated, we should not be allowed to speak of political 'regimes' with respect to the new 'uncertain democracies' O'Donnell and Schmitter analyze in their 1986 essay. Alternatively, we might stop worrying about their 'consolidation' which we may assume to be accomplished by definition. In later writings, Guillermo O'Donnell embraced this conclusion. Reaffirming the idea that we should include the criterion of (expected) stability into the very concept of a political regime, he stipulates that an 'appropriate definition of polyarchy should also include an intertemporal dimension: the generalized expectation that [it] will continue into an indefinite future'.³² Consequently, he sees 'little analytic gain' in talking about 'democratic consolidation'.³³

Thirdly, to expel 'uncertain regimes' from the conceptual territory of regime analysis creates theoretical complications. But it does offer one distinct advantage. It eliminates the problem of how to treat transitions from weakly institutionalized regimes 'to somewhere else'. It simply withdraws such experiences of change from the agenda of democratization studies. Since 'changing situations' do not qualify as political 'transitions' they fall under the purview of sub-disciplines other than democratization studies. No regime, no regime change.

However, if we accept that regimes may vary along the dimension of resilience versus fragility, transitions from 'authoritarian situations' do not differ fundamentally from 'normal' transitions. But they do heighten the difficulty of identifying historical turning points that signal the onset of regime change. Transitions from unconsolidated regimes are 'out of focus' and their triggering points are fuzzy to a degree uncommon in transitions from strong, consolidated authoritarianism. The weaker the authoritarian regime, the more ambiguous are the boundaries of its transition period. Dramatic events such as personnel changes in government, economic crises and mass protest are unlikely to mark clear discontinuities. Rather, a tense atmosphere of permanent crisis continually generates, frustrates and regenerates expectations of change. In this sense, transitions from 'weakly institutionalized' regimes dramatize the indeterminacy of the transition's starting point.³⁴

The Focal Events of Transition

Neither the gradual evolution, nor an erratic oscillation, nor permanent heights of institutional uncertainty establish clear discontinuities between authoritarian certainties and transitional uncertainties. It is only through incisive 'focal events' that transitions set off at some clearly recognizable point in time. The notion of 'focal events' is meant to describe extraordinary events that are able to create converging expectations among large numbers of dispersed actors. The idea borrows from Thomas Schelling's concept of 'focal points'. Focal points are salient features of the physical or social environment that offer a 'natural solution' around which actors' mutual expectations tend to settle down even in the absence of communication. For example, two people lost in a foreign city may find each other again by returning to the parking lot where they left their car. Focal points are coordinating devices, symbolic keys that make expectations intuitively converge around the prominent solution they offer.³⁵

The 'focal events' of democratization processes fulfil the same role of coordinating expectations. They do not provide information about possible solutions to games, however, but information about possible games. When

opening up democratic transitions, they reveal that the rules of the authoritarian game are not reliable any more, that the 'structure of choice' has become fluid and susceptible to 'endogenous' change. They are signals of uncertainty that convince both incumbents and opposition actors that authoritarianism is not 'the only game in town' any more. When closing processes of democratic consolidation, focal events reveal that democratic rules have turned into a reliable framework of interaction. They are signals of confidence that convince both democratic and authoritarian actors that democracy has become 'the only game in town'. Such points of crystallization are relatively common at the beginning of transitions, but rare at the end of consolidation. A brief list of four common starting points of transition may illustrate the idea.

(a) *Liberalizing reforms*: Following the standard account of regime change, democratic transitions start with authoritarian rulers introducing liberalizing measures. 'The typical sign that the transition has begun comes when [the] authoritarian incumbents, for whatever reason, begin to modify their own rules in the direction of providing more secure guarantees for the rights of individuals and groups'.³⁶ The relaxation of restrictions on civil liberties usually provokes a conflict between 'hardliners' and 'softliners' within the authoritarian regime. At the same time, experiments of political opening tend to give rise to a symmetrical split in the opposition ranks – between 'moderates' who are willing to enter the game and negotiate with the devil and 'radicals' who refuse to do so – thus opening 'the classic four-player game of transition'.³⁷ Incumbents usually conceive liberalizing steps as pre-emptive stabilizing measures. Yet 'a controlled opening of the political space'³⁸ tends to get out of hand and follow its own self-reinforcing logic.³⁹

(b) *Liberalizing reformers*: Against the common idea that transitions start with liberalizing reforms, they often do not begin that way. Often they start with liberalizing reformers. Acts of liberalization are normally preceded by the accession to power of political figures who are recognizable as reformers (or at least as potential reformers). Sometimes the 'softliners' come to occupy the commanding heights of the state through institutional means, as in authoritarian Brazil, with the election of president Ernesto Geisel in 1974, in Spain after Franco, with the election of Adolfo Suárez as head of government in 1976, or in the late Soviet Union, with the election of president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.⁴⁰ At other times, they have to stage 'internal coups' to oust the ruling 'hardliners'. Such non-institutional changes of government may take the form of 'liberalizing' military coups, such as in Portugal in 1974, in Peru in 1975, in El Salvador in 1979, in Guatemala in 1982, and in Paraguay in 1989. In communist one-party

regimes, they may come about as internal party coups, such as in Bulgaria and Romania in 1989 (overthrowing Todor Zhivkov and Nicolae Ceausescu, respectively). In general, crises of succession open up 'natural' windows of opportunity for regime change. In highly personalized forms of authoritarianism, the death of the dictator introduces highflying expectations of change. In Spain, for instance, Francisco Franco's death in November 1975 pushed open the door for the country's negotiated transition, even if the ageing General had done his best to leave everything 'tied up and well tied up' (*'atado y bien atado'*).

(c) *Popular pressure*: Most democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and Africa did not originate in acts of liberalization or visible splits between so-called 'standpatterns' and 'reformers'. Rather than elite-driven transformations, they were largely processes of change 'from below', triggered and propelled by popular mobilization. In these cases, popular discontent brought into public daylight through massive protest was 'the main reason old regime elites agreed to begin negotiation'.⁴¹ But a lack of popular legitimacy may also express itself at the polls. Authoritarian regimes that try to legitimate themselves through the occasional use of acclamatory referenda, may suffer defeat at referenda or elections (provided they are confident enough to permit a sufficiently clean organization of the process). The popular rejection of the new constitution proposed by the military government in the 1980 referendum in Uruguay as well as the Chilean 'no' to a prolongation of General Augusto Pinochet's personal dictatorship in 1988, constituted deeply damaging revelations of authoritarian weakness. In processes of democratization by elections, even deeply manipulated elections may lead to surprising opposition victories. Even tightly controlled elections tend to strengthen opposition parties and generate pressure for further reform.⁴²

(d) *External shocks*: Some regimes are structurally vulnerable to contingent 'exogenous shocks'. For instance, externally dependent neo-patrimonial regimes are sensitive to the withdrawal of support by their foreign patrons,⁴³ while military regimes are particularly vulnerable to external defeat in war, as the Greek colonels learned with the Cyprus crisis in July 1974 and Argentina's military junta with the Malvinas defeat in June 1982.

The four categories of events sketched above may all work as 'focal events' that break societal expectations of authoritarian continuity, introducing the requisite uncertainty of democratic transition. They may all provide clear temporal markers of discontinuity. As far as they represent incisive singular events they may induce actors to suddenly and radically change their

perceptions of prevailing constraints and opportunities. Apparently, students of democratic transitions have been able to ignore the problem of delimiting the onset of transition because the Southern European avant-garde of third-wave transitions were all blessed with relatively unambiguous starting points – the ‘revolution of the carnations’ in Portugal, the Cyprus crisis in Greece and Franco’s death in Spain.

Yet, even in the seemingly clear-cut cases in Southern Europe, societal expectations of change did not fall from heaven. Both the Greek and the Spanish transitions were preceded by waves of protest and failed liberalization attempts. And classifying the Portuguese colonels’ ‘liberation coup’ – which initially set free a turbulent ‘revolutionary process’ of uncertain fate⁴⁴ – as the onset of democratization is a radical simplification *ex posteriori*. In fact, whether certain political events actually work as ‘focal events’ very much depends on contextual and situational factors as well as on the final outcome of conflictual interaction. Sometimes such events pass unnoticed, only to create false expectations at other times.

For instance, protest-driven transitions often do not involve sudden ruptures of expectation. As Bratton and van de Walle write, massive popular protest ‘signals to the incumbent leaders that the regime faces a crisis of legitimacy’.⁴⁵ But as long as the state maintains its capacity to suppress protesters by force, citizen mobilization may not provoke major changes. Since popular protest often proceeds in (upward or downward) spirals of protest, repression and concession, ‘transitions from below’ usually do not provide any ‘logical place to start the chronology’.⁴⁶

Something similar happens where democratic transitions are driven by elections. An ‘electoral earthquake’ that gives opposition forces an unexpected victory may shake up ingrained expectations. From one day to another, once invincible incumbents may lose their aura of legitimacy, while once marginal opposition parties may discover their majoritarian support. But even such watershed elections are commonly preceded by other events that provide alternative starting points for historical narratives of regime change. For instance, in Poland, the perhaps most dramatic case of ‘democratization by elections’, the decisive June 1989 elections could build upon considerable antecedents: the Committee for the Defense of Workers and the Solidarity movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s; Mikhail Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union; regular papal visits in 1979, 1983, and 1987;⁴⁷ the knock-out victory of Lech Walesa in a televised debate with a member of the Politburo in late 1988;⁴⁸ and of course, last but not least, the roundtable negotiations that set the (restrictive) parameters for the electoral contest.⁴⁹

In sum, the starting points of transition processes are less than clear-cut unless ‘focal events’ make societal expectations suddenly and

unequivocally converge at high levels of uncertainty. Yet, even transitions ignited by focal events often unfold within a larger framework of oscillation or incremental transformation. No wonder, then, that the issue of when and how 'a genuine democratic transition'⁵⁰ set in has been controversial in many countries, among both political actors and academic observers. As one observer noted, the starting point of Mexico's transition, for instance, may be regarded 'the perhaps most complex issue' students of Mexican politics confront.⁵¹ When exactly did the critical uncertainty of the country's transition arise? With the *annus horribilis* of 1994? With the electoral earthquake of 1988? With the post-electoral conflicts of the mid-1980s? Or with the economic crisis of 1982?⁵²

The Focal Events of Consolidation

Democratic transitions take off with the question: When do authoritarians start to worry? Processes of consolidation conclude with the question: 'At what point ... can democrats relax?'.⁵³ In general, giving an answer to the first question seems to be easier than to the second. Somehow, it seems to be easier to brake societal expectations of continuity than to establish them. De-institutionalizing social relations by introducing uncertainty seems to be less demanding than institutionalizing them by providing certainty. Decisive focal events may persuade people that change is possible (signalling the beginning of a transition) but rarely that change has become improbable (indicating the end of consolidation). Accordingly, the endpoints of democratic consolidation are usually more indeterminate and fuzzy than the starting points of transitions.

None of the existing approaches to democratic consolidation is built upon an explicit theoretical account of the formation of political expectations. They are all theories of action and attitudes whose link with expectations remains implicit. They all define some behavioural, attitudinal, or structural conditions of 'sustainable' democracy, assuming (or permitting us to assume) that they translate into corresponding *expectations* of democratic sustainability.⁵⁴ In fact, among the many indirect indicators scholars use to trace trajectories of democratic consolidation, only one may act as a 'focal event' that establishes a clear before and after of consolidation: the occurrence of 'stabilizing crises'.

Whenever a fledgling democracy plunges into a serious crisis, we may observe three possible outcomes: (a) democracy breaks down; (b) the democratic regime slips into a debilitating pattern of recurrent crises that create a situation of permanent fragility; or (c) democratic actors manage to weather the crisis successfully and establish a lasting precedent of democratic resilience. In other words, crises may be terminal, debilitating,

or stabilizing. By definition, regime crises provoke sharp drops of confidence in the sustainability of democracy. But if democratic actors manage to get out of their troubles as clear victors, they may be able to transform anti-democratic threats into evidence of democratic strength. If they manage to defuse the crisis, they may set valuable precedents. By making clear that anti-democratic action is expensive as well as futile they may generate the generalized conviction that democracy is here to stay. Both continual and occasional challenges may end up strengthening democracy, rather than subverting it. Failed coups may help to prevent future coup attempts. Threats of violence may reinforce norms of peaceful conflict resolution. The emergence of disloyal actors may deepen the unity of the democratic coalition. The failed 1981 coup attempt in Spain represents the classic instance of a consolidating 'precedent setting conflict'⁵⁵ that opened up a brief parenthesis of dramatic uncertainty but, in the end, as key actors (especially King Juan Carlos) aligned against the military uprising and put a swift end to it, effectively extinguished lingering fears about the future of Spanish democracy.

Yet, for all the attention the 24 February 1981 coup attempt in Spain received in the comparative literature, we should not overlook that 'stabilizing crises' are extremely infrequent. As a rule, crises do not have paradoxical but predictable consequences. They are debilitating not stabilizing.⁵⁶ It is only exceptionally that processes of democratic consolidation reach conclusion with a critical 'focal event' that makes social expectations converge towards democratic certainty. Usually they evolve along the three alternative paths – the oscillation, gradual formation, or permanent depression of institutional certainties. The ensuing difficulties of reliably operationalizing the endpoints of consolidation have profoundly discredited the concept. Most prominently, Guillermo O'Donnell has harshly criticized students of democratization tending to observe and measure degrees of regime consolidation in 'confusing' and 'inconsistent' ways, on the basis of 'unwarranted generalizations', 'casually drawn' and 'empirically untraceable' measurement categories, and unreliable indicators of 'extreme ambiguity'.⁵⁷ Yet, even if scholars may carry part of the blame of ambiguity, the empirical structure of social perceptions is bound to frustrate, anyway, most attempts at dating the achievement of democratic consolidation with precision.

Conclusions

If we accept institutional uncertainty as a defining feature of democratization, we have to recognize that the temporal boundaries of democratic transition and consolidation are often blurred and inevitably so.

Paraphrasing W.B. Gallie,⁵⁸ we may conclude that both concepts are 'essentially fuzzy' concepts. If political actors or academic observers find their boundaries to be indeterminate and controversial, it is not they who are to blame, but political reality. More often than not, the empirical dynamics of regime change do not produce incisive 'focal events' that make collective perceptions of uncertainty shift in a sudden and dramatic way. If nothing else, recognizing the structural fuzziness of transition and consolidation helps us to comprehend why political as well as academic debates on the temporal boundaries of democratization are often as passionate and inconclusive as they are. But what implications for research derive from the recognition of 'essentially contested' boundaries?

One may well conclude that students of democratization should abandon prospective participant perspectives in favour of retrospective observer perspectives. They should stop studying actors' current beliefs about future scenarios in ongoing cases of democratization or reconstructing their 'past futures'⁵⁹ in historical cases of democratization. Instead, they should stay with the 'hard facts' of empirical records of regime change. Conceptualizing regime change in factual terms, without taking recourse to perceptions of uncertainty, may not eliminate the ambiguity of temporal boundaries. But it nicely circumvents the particular problems of temporal delimitation that arise from the plural and fluid nature of social expectations.

However, if we hold institutional uncertainty to be a relevant datum of democratization, we have to bridge the existing gulf between conceptualization and empirical research. We have to rethink the building blocs of our research praxis – from operationalization and data gathering to theory building and theory testing. If we continue to conceptualize processes of transition and consolidation in one way (stressing uncertainty) but measure them in another way (ignoring uncertainty), our indicators and theories will be, strictly speaking, invalid indicators and theories that lie outside our basic conceptual coordinates.

Finally, how should we cope with the fact that the temporal boundaries of transition and consolidation are indeterminate unless empirical reality conforms to the conceptual premise that social expectations converge at either high or low levels of institutional uncertainty? As we have argued, more often than not, empirical trajectories of uncertainty frustrate the expectation of sharp and enduring discontinuities. We may respond to this mismatch between conceptual assumptions and empirical trends by reconceptualizing democratic transition and consolidation as continuous rather than dichotomous concepts. If we take uncertainty seriously, it seems, then we have to stop treating regime transition and consolidation as discrete stages with neat starting points and endpoints. Rather, we have to conceive

of them as vague periods of institutional fluidity whose outer boundaries are indeterminate. Unless dramatic 'focal events' make social expectations converge at extreme levels of uncertainty, no amount of political deliberation or methodological sophistication can determine the opening or closure of democratization with precision. Paraphrasing Guillermo O'Donnell,⁶⁰ the true 'illusions' of transition and consolidation may well lie in the conceptual prejudice that processes of regime change go through discrete stages delimited by clear boundaries.

NOTES

1. In academic and political debate, the term 'democratic consolidation' has been used in many different ways. When talking about 'consolidation', the present essay only refers to its 'classical' narrow meaning that takes the prevention of authoritarian regression as its main goal. For an effort of making sense of (and bringing order into) the term's multiplicity of meanings, see Andreas Schedler, 'What Is Democratic Consolidation?', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.9, No.2 (April 1998), pp.91–107.
2. Note that it is institutional uncertainty (the uncertainty of the rules of the game), not substantive uncertainty (the uncertainty of the outcomes of the game) we are focusing on. The latter constitutes an essential trait of, the former a profound danger to liberal democracy. See also Shaheen Mozaffar and Andreas Schedler, 'Introduction: The Comparative Study of Electoral Governance', *International Political Science Review*, Vol.23, No.1 (Jan. 2002), forthcoming.
3. On causal versus intentional explanations, see, for example, Jon Elster, 'Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory: The Case for Methodological Individualism', *Theory and Society*, Vol.11 (1982), pp.453–82.
4. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.3–5.
5. Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.10.
6. J. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p.70.
7. Andreas Schedler, 'How Should We Study Democratic Consolidation?', *Democratization*, Vol.5, No.4 (Winter 1998), pp.3–5.
8. Bratton and van de Walle, op. cit., p.47. As the authors write, 'scholars favour contingent explanations for regime transitions and structural explanations for regime consolidation' (emphases removed).
9. Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Still, Przeworski and his co-authors do develop something like a prospective conception of regime consolidation which they call 'expected hazards to regime' (pp.200–11).
10. Gerardo L. Munck, 'Democratic Consolidation', in Paul Barry Clarke and Joe Foweraker (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2001). For an example, see Timothy J. Power and Mark J. Gasiorowski, 'Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation in the Third World', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.30, No.2 (1997), pp.123–55.

11. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
12. This is not to say that retrospective approaches have fewer difficulties in establishing temporal boundaries. They face the problem of tracing chains of causation from an (either accomplished or only anticipated) endpoint of democratization (be it regime change or regime stability) to some triggering point in the authoritarian past. Yet, diverging explanatory theories and historical accounts are likely to give us diverging temporal markers. As Gerardo Munck aptly puts it, among the 'many questions concerning recent democratic transitions that remain unanswered' are 'the sources of the initial momentum for a transition'. For an insightful discussion of 'causal depth' versus 'shallowness' in comparative explanations of regime change, see Herbert Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Outcomes of Post-Communist Regime Change: Causal Depth or Shallowness in Rival Explanations', 95th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA), Atlanta, 2-5 Sept. 1999.
13. See, for example, Gretchen Casper and Michelle M. Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).
14. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
15. On normative differences as one motive that has been producing and reproducing empirical controversies about the end of the Mexican transition, see Andreas Schedler, 'Common Sense without Common Ground: The Concept of Democratic Transition in Mexican Politics', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol.16, No.2 (2000), pp.321-41.
16. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 'Lessons Learned and Challenges Facing International Election Monitoring' (Washington, DC: NDI, 1999), (www.ndi.org/programs/electionprocesses/publications/electionlessons.htm), p.3.
17. On the structural ambiguity of processes of democratization by elections, see Andreas Schedler, 'The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections', *International Political Science Review*, Vol.23, No.1 (Jan. 2002), forthcoming.
18. James W. McGuire, 'Interim government and democratic consolidation: Argentina in comparative perspective', in Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz (eds.), *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.180.
19. See Casper and Taylor, op. cit., pp.22-4.
20. On the methodological difficulties of measuring the uncertainties of consolidation, see Schedler, 'How Should We Study'.
21. For the original formulation of democratic consolidation as a process of habituation, see Dankwart Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics*, Vol.2, No.3 (1970), pp.337-63.
22. Antony Oberschall, 'Social Movements and the Transition to Democracy', *Democratization*, Vol.7, No.3 (2000), p.30.
23. Laurence Whitehead, 'An Elusive Transition: The Slow Motion Demise of Authoritarian Dominant Party Rule in Mexico', *Democratization*, Vol.2, No.3 (1995), pp.246-69.
24. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp.17-56.
25. Juan J. Linz, 'The Future of an Authoritarian Situation or the Institutionalization of an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Brazil', in Alfred Stepan (ed.), *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1973), pp.233-54.
26. Eduardo A. Gamarra and James M. Malloy, 'The Patrimonial Dynamics of Party Politics in Bolivia', in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (eds.), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.409.
27. See Catherine M. Conaghan, 'Loose Parties, "Floating" Politicians, and Institutional Stress: Presidentialism in Ecuador, 1979-1988', in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.), *The*

- Failure of Presidential Democracy: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp.255–6.
28. O'Donnell and Schmitter, op. cit., p.73.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Ibid., p.6.
 31. Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, *The Choices Justices Make* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998), p.115.
 32. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Illusions about Consolidation', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.7, No.2 (1996), pp.35–6.
 33. Ibid., p.37. We may note, however, that O'Donnell is nevertheless ambivalent about the conceptual status and theoretical relevance of 'democratic consolidation'. Along with his recommendation to get rid of the concept of consolidation, he justifies his emphasis on informal rules because it is 'needed, among other purposes, for assessing [the] likelihood of endurance' (p.39) of different types of democracy. That is, the prevalence of informal rules has an impact on democratic consolidation, according to the definition he himself accepts (see p.37).
 34. Granted, at some point of institutional fluidity, it stops making sense talking of the existence of a political 'regime'. Both autocracy and democracy presuppose a minimum of 'political order', as expressed in Samuel Huntington's famous dictum: 'The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government'. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p.1.
 35. See Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp.53–80 and 111–13.
 36. O'Donnell and Schmitter, p.6.
 37. Linz and Stepan, p.265.
 38. Adam Przeworski, 'Democracy as a contingent outcome of conflicts', in Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad (eds.), *Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.61.
 39. See Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.54–66.
 40. According to Linz and Stepan (op. cit., p.167), the inauguration of General Geisel as president on 15 March 1974 marked the beginning of Brazil's long and tortuous transition to democracy. If we accept this date (rather than plausible alternatives, such as the Congressional elections in November 1974), we would have to change the date of the beginning of the 'third wave' of democratization, which is usually understood to have started with Portugal's 'revolution of the carnations' one month later, on 25 April 1974.
 41. Barbara Geddes, 'What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?' *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.2 (1999), p.120.
 42. See Schedler, 'The Nested Game'.
 43. Richard Snyder, 'Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives', in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz (eds.), *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp.58–62.
 44. Kenneth Maxwell, 'Regime Overthrow and the Prospects for Democratic Transition in Portugal', in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.109–37.
 45. Bratton and van de Walle, op. cit., p.128.
 46. Ibid., p.101. The authors themselves are ambiguous about the demarcation of transitions by popular protest (p.117). Even if they assert that a majority of African transitions began with popular protest they adopt a more restrictive view when stipulating that 'protests have sparked the onset of a political transition' only 'if unrest prompts incumbent leaders to make concessions' (p.128).
 47. As Samuel Huntington ironically observed, 'John Paul II seemed to have a way of showing up in full pontifical majesty at critical points in democratization processes' (op. cit., p.83).

48. 'As Poland watched, Walesa outargued, outwitted, and outcharmed [his adversary]. The spell cast in 1981 on Polish society by the state of war was lifted'. Jan T. Gross, 'Poland: From Civil Society to Political Nation', in Ivo Banac (ed.), *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p.57.
49. See Wiktor Osiatynski, 'The Roundtable Talks in Poland', in John Elster (ed.), *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.21–68.
50. Susanne Jonas, 'Democratization Through Peace: The Difficult Case of Guatemala', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol.42, No.4 (2000), p.9.
51. Alonso Lujambio, 'El dilema de Christlieb Ibarrola: Cuatro cartas a Gustavo Díaz Ordaz', *Estudios*, No.38 (1994), p.49.
52. In the absence of compelling thresholds, the act of boundary drawing often takes on political connotations. For instance, for a critique of 'amnesiac' historical narratives that set the starting line of the Mexican transition at the year 1988 – and thus understate the prior protagonist role of the right-wing National Action Party – see Soledad Loaeza, 'Desmemoria mexicana', *Nexos*, Vol.21, No.241 (Jan. 1998), pp.67–9.
53. Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p.141.
54. Andreas Schedler, 'Measuring Democratic Consolidation', *Studies in International and Comparative Development*, Vol.36, No.1 (Spring 2001), pp.61–87.
55. Valenzuela, op. cit., p.71.
56. See Schedler, 'Measuring Democratic Consolidation', op. cit., pp.77–80.
57. O'Donnell, 'Illusions about Consolidation' and Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Illusions and Conceptual Flaws', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.7, No.4 (Oct. 1996), pp.160–8.
58. W.B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1956), pp.167–98.
59. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).
60. O'Donnell, 'Illusions about Consolidation'.