Review: Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy
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MORE than ten years have passed since democracy returned to the last of the Western European countries that had been ruled by one form or another of authoritarian political system during much of the twentieth century. The historical clustering of distinct national processes of redemocratization in Portugal, Greece, and Spain—all occurring in the mid-1970s—rapidly transformed the political map of non-Communist Europe and eliminated the last nondemocratic model of political rule (except in Turkey, which experienced a period of authoritarian rule after the transitions discussed in this essay). This historical clustering of three instances of regime change encourages one to search for common causes and trajectories. In comparative discussions of the transitions, much emphasis has been directed to the effort to uncover common patterns of and explanations for the developments in Southern Europe.1 The literature

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1 See, for example, the discussion by Geoffrey Pridham, “Comparative Perspectives on the New Mediterranean Democracies: A Model of Regime Transition?” in West European Politics 7 (April 1984).
has not been very helpful, however, in conceptualizing differences among the three countries. I will argue that a comparative understanding of the transitions requires the use of analytical distinctions—such as the difference between state and regime—which will allow us to perceive the widely divergent paths of the Southern European cases along several dimensions.

A number of important scholarly works on the return of democracy to Portugal, Greece, and Spain have been published in addition to those devoted to the many countries in other parts of the world that have recently returned to democratic rule. Most analysts have shied away from broad comparative generalizations, however; with few exceptions, the most important contributions have come from country-specific studies, many of them emphasizing the distinctiveness of their national cases.\(^2\) The great exception to the general absence of significant comparative and theoretical work on the redemocratizations is Transitions from Authoritarian Rule (one volume in hardback and four separate volumes in paper), edited by O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead. In his introductory essay to the volume on Southern Europe, Schmitter notes that the contributors to the project concluded that “transitions from authoritarian rule and immediate prospects for democracy were largely to be explained in terms of national forces and calculations” (p. 3) rather than of international dynamics, although the international context of the Southern European cases rendered successful redemocratization more likely there than in Latin America. The excellent country chapters, which cover Italy\(^3\) and Turkey in addition to the three cases under discussion, tend to emphasize specifically political actions and paths—including significant contributions to regime change by some of the very forces that held, or helped to exercise, authoritarian political power. Earlier narrowly class-based and internationally oriented theories of the

\(^2\) Unfortunately, the insightful work of Juan Linz on transitions to democracy is not yet available in one volume. His essays on the topic include “Il fattore tempo nei mutamenti di regime” [The time factor in regime change], in Teoría Política 2, No. 1 (1986); “Liderança inovadora na transição para a democracia: o caso da Espanha” [Innovative leadership in the transition to democracy and in a new democracy: The case of Spain], in Gilberto Dupas, ed., A transição que deu certo: O exemplo da democracia espanhola [The transition that worked out: The Spanish case] (Sao Paulo: Trajetória Cultural, 1989), and “The Transitions from Authoritarian Regimes to Democratic Political Systems and the Problems of Consolidation of Political Democracy” (paper presented at the IPSA Roundtable, Tokyo, March 29-April 1, 1982).

\(^3\) Excellent complementary essays on Italy’s return to democracy after Fascism include Gianfranco Pasquinio’s chapter in the Transitions volume and an earlier chapter by Giuseppe Di Palma, “Italy: Is There a Legacy and Is It Fascist?” in John H. Herz, ed., From Dictatorship to Democracy (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).
Southern European transitions, already significantly contradicted by empirical work, find little resonance in the interpretive essays of this volume.

The major attempt in the *Transitions* volume on Southern Europe to account for the rough political parallelism—that is, the historical simultaneity of roughly similar political developments across national boundaries—long noted by many analysts of this region is the broadly posed and subtle analysis of sociologist Salvador Giner. In a contribution that encompasses nineteenth- and twentieth-century political development, Giner emphasizes the “unevenness” of Southern European societies and political forces—their heterogeneity and contradictions—rather than focusing on any specific and immutable configuration of sociopolitical forces. He maintains that

the inner contradictions of each one of these basic components—limited parliamentarianism, restricted and divided liberalism, stunted reformism, and utopian imperialism—irrevocably led these societies toward a specific form of class despotism, namely Fascist or fascistsant dictatorship . . . (p. 23).

What remains somewhat unclear is how such a complex and subtly described syndrome of unevenness and contradiction can “irrevocably” lead to a “specific form of class despotism.” Enormous differences among the four cases (Giner includes Italy in his analysis) in the timing of political changes, the longevity of nondemocratic regimes, and the political forms taken by nondemocratic rule make it difficult to sustain the strong assertion of an irrevocable tendency toward equivalence in the political development of these countries.

Although Giner’s essay is enormously suggestive, it fails to resolve adequately the large question of (imperfect) political parallelism and historical clustering. Strong causal claims prove difficult to advance unless the differences as well as the similarities among the cases are systematically incorporated into the analysis; in order to do that, we need conceptual distinctions that allow us to delineate crucial differences. Unless one acknowledges and makes sense out of the variations among the coun-

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4 The most influential example is Nicos Poulantzas, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships* (London: New Left Books, 1976). Although few empirical data are supplied by Poulantzas or others in support of his interpretation, some important insights may be found in this work. For more recent essays stressing international political economic arguments and class arguments, see Giovanni Arrighi, ed., *Semiperipheral Development: The Politics of Southern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985).

5 See, for example, the important study of Spanish business and political change by Robert Martinez, “Business Elites in Democratic Spain” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1984).
tries, one is left with too many exceptions to any comparative assertion, whether it concerns the political role of the military, the place of a single party in nondemocratic rule, or the character of the crisis leading to the demise of authoritarian rule.

In accounting for the recent return to democracy, Giner emphasizes the erosion of legitimacy for the authoritarian systems, the consequences of economic development, and the contribution to democratization by some of the political forces inside the structure of authoritarian political power. In his emphasis on the delegitimation of authoritarian regimes as well as in his discussion of the role of forces to be found within the circle of power, Giner touches upon themes widely emphasized by analysts of the transitions. It is precisely on these two questions—the sources of the delegitimation of authoritarian rule and the location of the impetus toward democratic change within the circles of political power—that an analysis of the differences among the Southern European cases yields significant insights.

Despite the differences among the cases and the absence of any strong evidence for a parsimonious, largely class-based or internationally focused macro-level explanation, the historical clustering of the experiences of Spain, Portugal, and Greece remains an intriguing fact. There is a sense in which authoritarian rule was ‘exhausted’ in all three societies at about the same time—unable to resolve the basic political challenges of legitimation and institutionalization at a time when crisis, to one degree or another, prevented the regimes from continuing on effortlessly through the sheer force of inertia. But the fact that the exhaustion of authoritarian rule set in at about the same time in the three societies in no sense guarantees that the causes of this exhaustion were the same, or that the path of redemocratization would be similar.

The contributors to the Transitions volume have largely chosen to focus on political forces, choices, and dynamics, following the earlier emphasis of Juan Linz and others in their work on the breakdown of democratic regimes. Indeed, the emphasis on strictly political factors is so strongly drawn in many of the contributions—above all in Schmitter and O'Donnell's concluding theoretical volume, Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies—that (with the exception of a few of the country

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6 This is not to argue that class forces or the international context are irrelevant; rather, the point is that these forces are not the sole determinants of political developments and actions.

7 See Juan Linz, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown & Reequilibration, and the other three volumes included in Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
chapters) the importance of social forces in undermining authoritarian rule is almost certainly somewhat understated. Nevertheless, the political focus of the Transitions volume, including the attention directed to the issue of legitimation—or delegitimation—and the emphasis on the political orientation of forces located within the circle of political power, appears consistently useful in analyzing the Southern European cases.

The Location within the Circles of Power of the Impetus toward Political Change: State or Regime?

The earliest major theoretical statement, in the context of the recent transitions, on the tendency of the impetus for change to emerge from within the structure of political power is “Liberation by Golpe,” Philippe Schmitter’s strongly argued analysis of the events in Portugal. In this article, written in the aftermath of the revolutionary coup of April 25, 1974, Schmitter asserts that the principal weak point in authoritarian rule—and thus the best hope for the restoration of democracy—is to be found not so much in the relations between state and civil society as within the structure of authoritarian rule itself. Specifically, he asserts that “the sources of contradiction, necessary if not sufficient for the overthrow of authoritarian rule, lie within the regime itself, within the apparatus of the state, not outside it in its relations with civil society.”

Thus, Schmitter explicitly focuses on both the authoritarian regime and

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Strong arguments for the central role of social forces in undermining authoritarian rule may be found in two recent articles by Joseph Poweraker: “The Role of Labor Organizations in the Transition to Democracy in Spain,” in Robert Clark and Michael Haltzel, eds., Spain in the 1980s (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987), and “ Corporatist Strategies and the Transition to Democracy in Spain,” Comparative Politics 20 (October 1987). This view contrasts sharply with the position of Donald Share, The Making of Spanish Democracy (New York: Praeger, 1986), and Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi, Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), both of whom stress the internal evolution of the Franco regime itself. Other analysts, such as José María Maravall, in La política de la transición [The politics of the transition] (Madrid: Taurus, 1981), adopt an intermediate position stressing both the pressure “from below” and the reform “from above.” In Working Class Organization and the Return to Democracy in Spain (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1990), I analyze the role of labor in the larger political transformation. However, this is not the place to focus on the role of social forces such as labor, despite their importance, or to attempt to draw a compelling balance between social and political determinants.


10 Ibid., 20.
the state apparatus without drawing a distinction between the two. This emphasis on forces within the structure of authoritarian power appears to fit the Portuguese case, and it has proved highly stimulating to analysts of the other Southern European transitions. Given the fact that the remnants (or successors) of the Franco regime helped orchestrate the reform-oriented process of change in Spain, and that the Greek military extricated itself from political power, Schmitter’s perspective appears to be useful for all three cases; indeed, it has helped to orient the work of many country-specific analysts.

I shall attempt to show, however, that this broad focus on sources of change located within the structure of political power masks important differences relating to where the impetus for change is to be found. The crucial move toward democracy—to the extent that it does emerge from within the authoritarian power system itself—may be located within the regime or within the state; the results differ decidedly. In the case of Spain, it is clear that the reformist sectors were located within the remnants of the Franco regime; from this position, they helped to launch and channel the return to democracy (under pressure from the opposition). In the case of Portugal, by contrast, the regime proved incapable or unwilling to reform itself fundamentally even after 1968, when Caetano replaced Salazar; the impetus for change emerged instead from within the armed forces. The Greek case is somewhat more difficult to place in this scheme, given the problem of distinguishing between regime and state when the military itself rules; in some respects, it falls analytically between the Spanish and Portuguese cases. These differences suggest the existence of divergent causal processes—processes that have, in fact, led to rather different outcomes.

The distinction I emphasize here between state and regime is not a new one; it rests on broadly shared understandings of these two much-used concepts. On occasion, this distinction has been explicitly drawn,13


13 See, for example, the useful essay by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “On the Characterization of Authoritarian Regimes in Latin America,” in David Collier, ed., The New Authoritarianism in Latin America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Despite Cardoso’s insights, the essay is somewhat marred by its unresolved ambivalence between a Marxist and Weberian conception of the state, thereby limiting its ability to clarify the issue.
but it is not consistently maintained even in many works by the best analysts of these systems. Thus, it has not been adequately developed in recent analyses of the transitions\textsuperscript{14} despite the many theoretical works on regimes\textsuperscript{15} and on the state.\textsuperscript{16}

A regime may be thought of as the formal and informal organization of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are in power deal with those who are not. The distinction between democracy, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism thus deals with the question of regime type. (However, full penetration of the state by the regime might be thought of as one of the defining characteristics of pure totalitarianism; in a different sense, in cases of personal rulership or "sultanism," state and regime may be thoroughly entangled with one another, both closely identified with the ruler.) Regimes are more permanent forms of political organization than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state, by contrast, is a (normally) more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it.

Although the two concepts are analytically distinct, the empirical realities to which they refer may be more or less tightly interwoven in some political formations. In many instances, however, the empirical realities are distinguishable from one another. A state may remain in place even when regimes come and go, as has happened at many points in the history of Spain and numerous other countries. Somewhat less frequently, and only for rather brief periods of time, a regime may remain relatively

\textsuperscript{14} To some extent, the distinction is suggested by Alfred Stepan in "Paths to Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," in O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, eds., Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). In that essay and in his recent book, Rethinking Military Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), Stepan differentiates three forms of what he calls "redemocratization from within the authoritarian regime": transition initiated by a civilian political leadership, by the military as government, and by the military as an institution. However, Stepan's insightful discussion still fails to emphasize the major analytical distinction between state and regime, and ends up placing in the same category (transition initiated by the military as institution) two quite different cases: Portugal and Greece.


\textsuperscript{16} My own understanding of the state is clearly Weberian, and follows the rich discussion in Economy and Society (American ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) and "Politics as a Vocation," in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946) as well as the strongly argued thesis on the state in Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and in her other writings.
cohesive and determined to remain in power even as the state on which it relies crumbles away and loses its ability or resolve to coerce, administer, and extract resources. Where a state does not disintegrate in the context of a political transition, it may (or may not) serve a new democratic regime as well as it served an earlier authoritarian one. The ability of new regimes to restructure or "purge" the state, moreover, varies significantly from case to case. Indeed, the state/ regime distinction may prove analytically useful even for cases in which it does not correspond to easily differentiated empirical entities.

More concretely, the individuals and collectivities that fill the central roles in states are not always the same as those who do so in regimes. The military, a central institution in any state, is quite marginal in some authoritarian regimes. Without question, official parties in authoritarian systems are part of the regime, but it is not at all clear that they should be viewed as part of the state. Intellectuals, policy advisers, and journalists, as well as former government officials—including well-known former ministers—all may be part of the political community in an authoritarian regime even if they hold no state office or duty. Such "regime figures," or regime actors, may play a significant part in authoritarian systems both in normal times and during moments of systemic transformation. Their role is not limited to the objective of legitimation (or de-legitimation), but encompasses matters of political strategy and intrigue that may prove central to the political trajectory followed by a regime. By contrast, many centrally important state actors—for example, the judiciary and the civil service as well as the military—play little or no role in regime politics in nonmilitary authoritarian regimes such as Franco Spain. But their capacity to disrupt the regime, should they choose to ignore their traditional marginalization from politics, is clear to all and could be decisive in crucial moments, especially during a transition or attempted transition.

In the case of Spain, the objective of returning to democracy eventually came to be assumed by significant sectors within the regime. Following the death of Franco, and under pressure from the opposition, these sectors began the difficult but ultimately successful process of transition by negotiated reform. The initiative for reform, however, should not be viewed as the clear policy of a united government; some governmental figures, such as Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro did not cooperate

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17 This seems to have been the case in the waning days or months of the Shah's regime in Iran when first government bureaucrats and ultimately the army itself refused to carry out state functions. Such a configuration, if sustained for any significant period of time, is likely to lead to the type of crisis that, according to Skocpol (fn. 16), underpins social revolution.
fully and nevertheless remained in office until summer 1976. On the other hand, many ‘regime figures’—including some who held no formal governmental responsibilities—did play a fundamentally important role. By contrast, state actors (with the extremely important exception of King Juan Carlos who, in some sense, represented both state and regime) never moved to advance the cause of redemocratization; to the extent that they have been a factor at all, they have appeared to threaten the political opening at various points. The most dramatic incident occurred on February 23, 1981, when an attempted military coup by a minority within the armed forces seriously endangered the new democratic system. Indeed, reformist Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez (named to that post in July 1976) found it necessary to override significant pressure from the military in order to implement democratic reforms such as the legalization of the Communist party in April 1977; frequent rumors of pro-coup conspiracies within the military punctuated the transition.

This specific location of the impetus for change helped produce a new political system in which the authoritarian regime was never totally rejected symbolically even though it was fully superseded and transformed. Moreover, regime actors from the old Franco system have been able to play central roles in the new democratic system to the extent that they accept the political change. Adolfo Suarez, the founding prime minister of the new democracy and a political veteran of the Movimiento, the old regime party, is only the most obvious example of this broader pattern. By helping to initiate and guide the transition, the reformist sector of the old regime participated in the shaping of the new one. And the marginality in the transition of the state, as such, left its structures intact. The Spanish transition was the only one in Southern Europe in which no purge of the state was possible; moreover, the fear of a military intervention against democracy helped to restrain the more radical instincts of some political actors.

In Portugal, on the other hand, the regime proved incapable of reforming itself to any significant degree even after Salazar passed from the scene. Thus, political actors from the old regime lost the ability to shape the new democracy or the transition period. Instead, the impetus for change came from within the state in the form of a middle-level

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18 Good sources in English include Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London: Methuen, 1986); Carr and Fusi (fn. 8); and Share (fn. 8).

19 For an analysis of the role of Juan Carlos in the transition to democracy, see Joel Podolny, *The Role of Juan Carlos, the King of Spain, in the Consolidation of the Spanish Parliamentary Monarchy* (Social Studies Honors Thesis, Harvard College, Spring 1986).

20 For an especially good discussion in English of the coup attempt and its political antecedents, see Preston (fn. 18).
officers' revolt in the military. The regime was overthrown—something that never happened in Spain—because it had failed to initiate or channel the process of political change. Moreover, the location of the revolt within the military—specifically at the captains' level—seriously undermined the structure of hierarchy in that institution. With the ensuing politicization and division of the military, the stage was set for revolutionary mobilizations that have left an enduring mark on Portugal. Unlike in Spain, where the military remained a cohesive force and a potential threat to a moderate and reformist process of democratization, the military in Portugal helped initiate leftist popular mobilizations and quickly lost the cohesion and discipline necessary to serve as an effective and predictable instrument of state coercion. The ensuing revolutionary mobilizations—in part a result of the shifting balance of power and strategies within the state—transformed the ownership of land in large areas of the country and led to numerous expropriations in urban centers as well, including the entire banking sector. Significant numbers of those involved in the old authoritarian structure of power, including the secret police, were purged.

At a certain level of abstraction, it may be valid to argue that the transitions in both Spain and Portugal were initiated or led by forces within the circle of political power or domination; but the causes and the consequences of the two transitions, as well as the actors and the processes, differ enormously. It is in no sense sufficient to summarize the entire difference with the common dichotomy reforma/ruptura.

In Greece, as in Portugal, the military helped to initiate the political change. In the Greek case, however, it is difficult to locate this initiative squarely in the regime or the state, given the military character of the regime and the consequent overlapping of these two analytically distinct entities. In a sense, one can argue that, when removing itself from power, the military acted more as an institution of the state than of the regime. In the summer of 1974, in the wake of the military crisis with Turkey over Cyprus, the armed forces' highest leadership reinstituted military-institutional control over the political hierarchy of the junta and then quickly handed over power to civilian democratic politicians. Nikiforos

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31 For excellent discussions of the Portuguese transition, with the expected emphasis on the role of the military, see the chapters by Kenneth Maxwell in the Transitions volume, and in Herz (fn. 3). An outstanding analysis of the revolution in agrarian social relations is found in Nancy G. Bermeo, The Revolution within the Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

32 Bermeo, ibid., emphasizes this point.

Diamandouros, in his compelling analysis in the *Transitions* volume, states that "the Joint Chiefs, invoking the threat of war, reasserted the hierarchical lines of command within the armed forces and effectively neutralized ... the hard-liners" (p. 157). The change occurred rapidly and provided no opportunity for the military to shape the new democracy (as is possible in a regime-initiated transition). In view of the broad support for political intervention within the military, it would, however, be a mistake to completely counterpose the armed forces as a state institution against the junta as a military regime.  

In any event, the Greek military acted as an institution and preserved its discipline and hierarchy. By contrast, in the Portuguese case, the location of the coup at the captains’ level and the actual exercise of power by the military initiated a period of politicization and internal division within the armed forces. Although the cases of both Greece and Portugal can be seen as state-initiated transitions, the institutional integrity and quick withdrawal from political power of the Greek military explain why no revolutionary mobilization took place in Greece. In Greece, as in Portugal, however, a symbolic break occurred between regimes, and a purge of leaders from the authoritarian period was feasible, even if limited. In Spain, such a purge never took place; the loyalty of the military remained a troublesome question for democratic political leaders for several years. In some respects, the Greek case may thus be seen as lying between the other two.

The distinction between state and regime is important not only for identifying the source of the democratizing initiative, but also for understanding the subsequent trajectory of political change: the location of the impetus for political change within the circles of power has implications for the ability of the transitional political formation to carry out functions associated with state and regime. Thus, regime-initiated transitions like the Spanish one are better able to channel links between society and the center of political power and to determine who will have access to the latter. Regime reformists are able to help steer the transition and define the boundaries of the new democratic system. They may, however, be vulnerable to pressure or threats from within the state itself. By contrast, where state actors initiate the transition, they will probably not be able to participate to the same extent in defining the new political system, but they can at least guarantee the ability of the new civilian political lead-

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24 For data from an empirical study of the Greek military during the junta’s time in power, see George Andrew Kourvetaris, "Professional Self-Images and Political Perspectives in the Greek Military," *American Sociological Review* 36 (December 1971).
ership to administer and coerce effectively—so long as state institutions maintain their unity and internal discipline. Where state cohesion and institutional hierarchy are undermined by the transition, however, as in Portugal, some state functions may no longer be reliably carried out, and the stage is prepared—following Skocpol’s formulation—for social revolutionary mobilization, provided that revolutionary actors are available.25

Each type of transition suggests specific analytical inquiries. For regime-initiated redemocratizations where the state remains in place, perhaps the most important question concerns the relationship between state and regime in both political settings—under authoritarian rule and in the new democratic context.26 Was the state, under authoritarian rule, closely associated with the specific form of the regime, or was it seen as more or less politically neutral and bureaucratic (with the possible exception of certain highly specific and isolated state institutions that were strongly linked to repressive authoritarian policies)? Furthermore, are state institutions, under democracy, predictable and effective in carrying out state functions within the structure of democratic legality? Are state entities effectively subject to democratic political control?

Where state actors initiate the transition, the crucial question is whether they retain their internal discipline and unity (as in Greece), or lose those qualities (as in Portugal). If the state initiators of a transition undermine the existing hierarchy and cohesion of state institutions, the state is less able to fulfill its distinctive functions; the result may be more wide-ranging mobilization and transformation.

Where state and regime are closely intertwined, as in Greece, a distinctive question is whether the institutions or actors that initiate the transition behave, during the transition, as regime or as state. The Greek transition tended to take the latter form, initiated by what Stepan calls “the military as institution”; this helps to explain how so much could be changed so quickly by the new democratic political leadership—including the purging of some military elements strongly associated with repressive policies. Other factors are undoubtedly also important in accounting for the ability of Greece’s new democratic rulers to impose a decisive political opening quickly and to purge a significant number of military hard-liners within a year after the transition. In other parts of

25 See Skocpol (fn. 16).

26 A rich discussion of differing configurations of relations (under authoritarianism) between the coercive apparatus and the governmental institutions is presented by Stepan (fn. 14, 1988).
the world, some military-led transitions have given way to limited—or even facade—regimes of democracy that coexist with unaccountable centers of repression within the state apparatus.\(^{27}\)

This line of analysis suggests that democratic transition is more likely to be successful where state and regime can be distinguished from one another. Where the distinction is not easily drawn—because of "fusion" between the two in a military dictatorship, or totalitarian penetration of the state by the regime, or confusion between the two under personal rulership—special problems are likely to emerge in the process of democratization.

The distinction between state and regime is a useful starting point for the comparative analysis of transitions, but it is only a starting point. Major differences between the Portuguese and Greek cases underscore the importance of moving beyond this distinction in order to incorporate other significant factors within any causal analysis. No matter where we choose to locate the actors analytically, their political perspective(s), their internal cohesion or division, and the political mechanisms available to them, all help to determine the role assumed by the initiators of a transition.

If the consequences and the broad outlines of different patterns of political transition are sharply divergent, their causes may be quite dissimilar as well, despite the historical clustering of the processes. It is certainly reasonable to inquire whether the types of factors that help to push a regime toward transition differ from those that induce pressure for political change from sectors of the state largely outside the regime. It is not possible here to provide a complete inventory of relevant factors, but at least one centrally important political component of transitions should be considered: the delegitimation of the old regime and the legitimation of new forms of political rule.

**The Delegitimation of Authoritarian Rule: New Crises or Historical Obsolescence?**

Despite the emphasis placed on the issue of legitimacy by analysts of the transitions, the problem is rarely posed in terms of the *original* legitimation formula for authoritarian rule and the means available for its

\(^{27}\) This is most clearly the case in some Central American countries; see Jennifer Schirmer, "Oficiales de la Montaña: Based on an Exclusive Interview with the Guatemalan Golpistas of May 11, 1988," *Human Rights Internet Reporter* 13 (Spring 1989), 13-16. In the case of Brazil, analysts have questioned the fully democratic character of the political formation; see Frances Hagopian, "'Democracy by Undemocratic Means?': Elites, Political Facts, and Regime Transition in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies* (forthcoming), and Stepan (fn. 14).
undoing. Authoritarian rule frequently legitimates itself through reference to a founding crisis, an event, or a series of occurrences that the regime asserts it is uniquely able to overcome. It follows that the delegitimation of such a regime may occur through the appearance of a new crisis that it manifestly fails to handle adequately; alternatively, relevant political sectors may seek to demonstrate that the founding crisis of authoritarian rule has been historically superseded, and that therefore the regime is obsolete. We may think of these two alternatives for delegitimizing authoritarianism as crises of failure and crises of historical obsolescence. The delegitimation of the Portuguese and Greek regimes took the form of crises of failure—in both instances of a military nature. In the Spanish context, the forces of democracy were not blessed with any equivalent glaring failure of the regime. In this setting, the delegitimation of authoritarian rule required that the relevant political sectors (in the opposition and within the reformist wing of the regime) demonstrate repeatedly that the founding crisis of authoritarian rule had been historically overcome, and that the country was no longer divided into two opposed camps. Authoritarian rule—and most specifically its claim to legitimacy—was thus faced with a crisis of historical obsolescence. The effort of regime reformists and the opposition to delegitimize authoritarianism pushed both political sectors toward accommodation and moderation, thus further tending to preclude any purge of the state.

The character and depth of the foundational crisis of authoritarian regimes—and the coherence of the associated legitimation claims—help to account for the form taken by subsequent transitions. The Greek regime of 1967-1974 emerged from a much less overwhelming crisis than did those of the other two countries. Indeed, Diamandouros maintains

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*This distinction is to some extent suggested by the formulation of Adam Przeworski in his essay, “Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy,” in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (fn. 14). Synthesizing the arguments of others, Przeworski proposes that, to the extent that legitimation is a significant factor, a regime may lose its legitimacy when “it has realized the functional needs that led to its establishment” or for other reasons (p. 50). This suggests that we might counterpose crises of failure and of success. However, I prefer to think in terms of historical obsolescence rather than success since regimes may be overtaken by historical developments that are in no sense their own successes. Moreover, the notion of historical obsolescence suggests more forcefully the need of central political actors to argue that the regime is obsolete, and to support this assertion with their actions and rhetoric. Political arguments (albeit with material referents) rather than objective conditions such as ‘the realization of functional needs’ are, after all, the essence of legitimation or delegitimation.*

that the junta never enjoyed the same legitimacy with its potential socio-political base on the right as did its Iberian counterparts; thus, "the regime's ideological legitimation strategy assigned a preeminent role to the eventual return to democratic institutions and competitive politics" (p. 148). The weakness of the regime's initial claim to legitimacy and its associated inability to institutionalize itself in any serious fashion, as much as the ultimate crisis of failure and the state-led character of the transition, may account for the significant political room for maneuver enjoyed by Greece's new democratic regime. The changes rapidly instituted under the new democracy should not be underestimated: in addition to the purge of some pro-authoritarian sectors within the state apparatus, these changes included the legalization of the Communist party (which had been banned since the civil war) and the end of the monarchy.

As the reader may have noted, there is an affinity between crises of obsolescence and regime-led transition on the one hand, and crises of failure and state-led transitions on the other. It is not likely, however, that the type of crisis alone determines whether state or regime will initiate a transition. Among the factors that shape the way in which states and regimes respond to crises are the political perspectives within them, their internal unity or division, and the mechanisms available to them to influence political life. Thus, neither all states nor all regimes would respond in equivalent ways to similar crises. The Portuguese regime did, in a sense, face a crisis of obsolescence—given the great historical distance of its founding justification—but it was unable to reform itself. One might speculate also that the Spanish state—or, more specifically, the military—even if faced with a severe crisis of failure, would have been slower than the Greek or Portuguese army to call an end to authoritarian rule.

Despite the considerable attention that analysts of transitions have given to the dynamics of legitimation or delegitimation, the explanatory value of legitimacy has been challenged by Przeworski and others. In response to such criticisms, it is worth noting that the concept of legitimacy refers to phenomena that are much more specific than certain types of political behavior—such as obedience, diffuse ill-defined support, or political preference—with which it is sometimes confused. Legitimacy

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30 These features of the Greek case obviously raise the question whether it should be seen as an "authoritarian situation" in the terms of Juan Linz's formulation of the Brazilian case. See Linz, "The Future of an Authoritarian Situation or the Institutionalization of an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Brazil" in Alfred Stepan, ed., Authoritarian Brazil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
31 See Przeworski (fn. 28).
in the Weberian sense involves the issuing of a rather specific claim by those in power to justify their position of domination and affirm their right to issue binding commands; full legitimacy also entails that staff and subjects accept that claim as valid. It is of course possible to obey, and perhaps even accept as relatively benign, an authoritarian regime without actually supporting its claim to legitimacy. Authoritarian regimes would certainly like to be considered legitimate by all or most citizens; but to survive, they require legitimacy only within the fairly specific circles of their own political supporters and the state. Democracy, on the other hand, probably requires a more broad-based legitimacy if it is to be stable. Thus, a successful transition requires not only the legitimation of authoritarian rule for some of its former supporters, but also the legitimation of the new democratic regime.

Researchers using both inferential and direct measures have studied the legitimacy of the new democracy more thoroughly in the Spanish case than in the other two.\textsuperscript{33} The legitimacy of democracy—and, more importantly, of the state under democracy—has been widely accepted in Spain, which has helped to assure the success of the transition.\textsuperscript{33} This legitimacy would probably have been far more tenuous if the state as a whole (rather than only certain limited components of it) had been tightly identified with the Franco regime. Of course, some elements of the state—most dramatically during the attempted coup of February 23, 1981—have identified with the authoritarian past. Their sentiments, and the widespread concern over the potential disloyalty of others, helped to restrain governmental and political action. But ultimately, the pockets of disloyalty within the state were isolated and deactivated. At this time, Spain’s democracy rests not just on a regime of competition among more or less mutually secure parties,\textsuperscript{34} but also on the existence of state structures of coercion and administration which are legitimate for most Spaniards and loyal to the democratically elected authorities. The behavior of state institutions may at times be a source of frustration to Spaniards; but


\textsuperscript{33} I attempt an operationalization of the Weberian conception of legitimacy in Working Class Organization and the Return to Democracy in Spain (fn. 8). My research findings show the legitimacy of the state under democracy to be a remarkably good ‘predictor’ of workplace union leaders’ support for nationally negotiated wage restraints. See esp. chaps. 5 and 7.

\textsuperscript{34} Robert Dahl, in Polyarchy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), stresses the fundamental importance of mutual security for democracy to survive.
ultimately, civilian political actors have been free to design a solid new democratic regime on their own.

**Distinct Political Trajectories: National Case Studies**

The national case studies and monographic investigations of the various transitions represent an important scholarly achievement. These studies are at their best—and are most useful for comparative analysis—when they focus on the most salient, and in many cases distinctive, features of each national case. Indeed, there are important differences among the cases, which must be explored empirically, analyzed, and explained. Distinctive to the Spanish case—in addition to the absence of any purge of state institutions—was the “politics of consensus” encompassing all significant political actors (except for some sectors within the Basque Country). The pervasive moderation (with notable but isolated exceptions on the far right, the far left, and among regional nationalists) and the political forces’ joint consultations on major matters have made possible the establishment of a new democratic regime that is accepted by a wide spectrum of adversaries who only four decades earlier were engaged in a bitter civil war.

*Spain after Franco*, the outstanding book by Richard Gunther, Giacomo Sani, and Goldie Shabad, provides an extraordinarily thorough and compelling analysis of the forging and the practice of this “politics of consensus,” and of its impact on the emergence of a new party system. Thanks to an exhaustive program of research, including extensive qualitative interviewing at the elite level and a large sample survey of public opinion at the mass level, the rich work presents many original findings. Moreover, in addition to providing survey data and political science concepts, the work serves as an excellent history of the period; it details little-known facts, especially in the area of elite strategies and of negotiations concerning the constitution and regional policy. At the same time, the authors present a broad and compelling interpretive overview of the foundation of a new democratic system, focusing on the emergence of the party system. They explore the historical foundations—in the memories of the civil war, the transformation of Spanish society, and the dynamics of the transition itself—of the politics of consensus that characterized the early years of democracy. The authors argue convincingly that this consensus rested on a complex interplay between mass-level predispositions and elite-level political initiatives.

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35 On the complexities and internal divisions of Basque politics, see Juan Linz, *Conflicto en Euskadi* [Conflict in the Basque Country] (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1986).
The forging of political parties and of a competitive political arena that permitted veterans of the Franco regime and opposition forces to coexist democratically is shown to have been a difficult process requiring favorable conditions as well as political skill and good will. Clearly, the shape of the new democracy and its chances for survival were powerfully influenced both by the participation in the transition of regime reformers like Adolfo Suarez and the mechanisms used by all democratic forces for 'delegitimating' or undercutting the case for authoritarianism. In Spain after Franco, the distinctive contours of Spanish democracy are richly analyzed; far from representing mere idiographic description, the volume provides the basis for comparative analysis and for the explanation of why this case is "so and not otherwise."36

The Portuguese case, by contrast, was characterized not only by a purge of state institutions, but also by dramatic political conflicts and revolutionary mobilizations (including the seizing of much property) during the years of regime transition. Most of the recent scholarship on postauthoritarian Portugal has focused on the explanations and consequences of the revolutionary surge. An exception to the general tendency in recent work on Portugal is Walter Opello's Portugal's Political Development: A Comparative Approach. Although the book represents much effort and conveys a good deal of interesting information, it avoids or even denies much of what is distinctive about the Portuguese case. The author is so eager to place Portugal within a Western European framework of analysis that he tends to pose only those questions that have been asked before, about rather different cases, by students of political development. Even the survey data deal largely with the most general questions that might be posed in any political system. Opello actually argues strongly against the dominant interpretation of the transition period as a revolutionary (or partially revolutionary) episode. Emphasizing that the end of authoritarianism was precipitated by military initiative rather than popular rebellion, he argues that the dominant interpretation of the period tends "to confuse the rhetoric of revolution with the reality of events that were actually taking place" (p. 65). Opello attributes little importance to the frequently bitter conflicts over control and power in the economy and the state—conflicts that involved mass mobilizations and engendered, at a minimum, highly anxious observation by international powers. The book's argument reflects a limited conception of revolution and a failure to appreciate the particular configuration of state and regime forces that shaped this decisive period of political change in

36 This is, in Max Weber's phrase, a fundamental objective of the social sciences.
Portugal. It is, after all, not sufficient to observe that the crucial initiative came "from above"; the distinctive contours of that initiative in Portugal set the case apart from Southern Europe's other two instances of regime- or state-led transition and contribute powerfully to explaining the (ultimately arrested) social revolution of postauthoritarian Portugal. Without some attention to what is distinctive and salient, a case such as that of Portugal cannot be effectively placed in a broader comparative perspective.

To sum up: despite the historical convergence in the mid-1970s of the redemocratization of Spain, Portugal, and Greece, the political processes in these three cases have been remarkably different along several dimensions. The causes of political transition, the identity of the central actors, the paths followed by the political changes, and the broad outlines of the political outcomes are sharply divergent. In Spain, state actors remained uninvolved in the transition process and stood as a potential impediment to change while regime reformists helped to initiate and guide the transition; the result is a polity that is in many respects moderate and restrained. In Portugal, regime actors failed to initiate the move to democracy; a coup of the politicized middle ranks of the military set the stage for a partially successful social revolution, ultimately halted in part by the democratically expressed preferences of the people. In Greece, the military hierarchy, acting as a state institution, took power away from the junta and transferred it to democratic civilian leaders who (after the failure of a coup attempt several months later) were able to carry out a purge of military officers implicated in the abuses of authoritarian rule.

Although international and cross-national historical contexts undoubtedly contributed somewhat to each of the transitions, the three cases do not follow a unified logic. When comparative analysis focuses on differences as well as on similarities, one must be prepared to find that some instances of historical convergence may owe as much to accidents in timing as to any overarching causal configuration.

To emphasize the distinctiveness of specific cases in no sense implies that the comparative enterprise has been abandoned. It simply avoids the false assertion that there is one comprehensive causal constellation accounting for significantly different outcomes and processes. Comparative analysis must delineate and account for differences as well as similarities; it requires the use of concepts that discriminate in useful ways among partially similar and partially different cases. It is to that end that the distinctions drawn in this essay are advanced.