2. Transitology and consolidology. The era of the positivist paradigms

By Claudio Foliti
Basic concepts

• Transition
• Democratization
• Consolidation
• Positivism
• Teleology
• Ethnocentrism
Two paradigms

- The claim of these embryonic subdisciplines (or proto-sciences) is that by applying a universalistic set of assumptions, concepts and hypotheses, they together can explain and hopefully help to guide the way from an autocratic to a democratic regime.

- The initial "tentative conclusions" of transitology were limited to a small number of cases within a relatively homogenous cultural area: southern Europe and Latin America.

- With the subsequent expansion in the number of transitions and the extension of democratization to other cultural areas, the founders of these two subdisciplines and their acolytes have had to confront the issue of "conceptual stretching," i.e., of the applicability of their propositions and assumptions to peoples and places never imagined initially.
Transitology: when the term appeared

- From this perspective we become circumspect about the notion of "transition" itself alert to the possibility that behind such a seemingly descriptive term are teleological concepts driven by hypothesized end states.
- Presentist history finds its counterpart here in futurist transitology that replicates the errors of modernization theory in assuming preordained destinations.
- Thus, in place of transition we analyze transformations, in which the introduction of new elements most typically combines with adaptations, rearrangements, permutations, and reconfigurations of existing organizational forms.
Critics


Main sources

RUSTOW
THE PROTO-TRANSITOLOGIST
A genetic theory

• A genetic theory will have to be explicit about distinguishing correlate from cause.

• Any genetic theory of democracy would do well to assume a two-way flow of causality, or some form of circular interaction, between politics on the one hand and economic and social conditions on the other. Wherever social or economic background conditions enter the theory, it must seek to specify the mechanisms, presumably in part political, by which these penetrate to the democratic foreground.
Beliefs and actions

• In explaining the origins of democracy we need not assume—as does much of the current survey research literature—that beliefs unilaterally influence actions.

• Rather, we may recognize with Leon Festinger and other social psychologists of the "cognitive dissonance" school that there are reciprocal influences between beliefs and actions.

• Many of the current theories about democracy seem to imply that to promote democracy you must first foster democrats—perhaps by preaching, propaganda, education, or perhaps as an automatic byproduct of growing prosperity.

• Instead, we should allow for the possibility that circumstances may force, trick, lure, or cajole non-democrats into democratic behavior and that their beliefs may adjust in due course by some process of rationalization or adaptation
• We need not assume that the transition to democracy is a world-wide uniform process that it always involves the same social classes, the same types of political issues, or even the same methods of solution.

• A wide variety of social conflicts and of political contents can be combined with democracy

• Nor does a model of transition need to maintain that democratic evolution is a steady process that is homogeneous over time (continuity vs. discontinuity)

• Different groups (citizens or rulers, conservative or forces of change), may furnish the crucial impulse toward democracy
  – It may be useful to single out certain circumstances as background factors and to proceed step-by-step to other factors that may become crucial in the preparation, decision, and consolidation phases of the process
Democracy as a procedure

• This is, of course, in line with the general recognition that democracy is a matter primarily of procedure rather than of substance. It also implies that, as among various countries that have made the transition, there may be many roads to democracy.
The Rustow’s decalogue

• 1. The factors that keep a democracy stable may not be the ones that brought it into existence: explanations of democracy must distinguish between function and genesis.

• 2. Correlation is not the same as causation: a genetic theory must concentrate on the latter.

• 3. Not all causal links run from social and economic to political factors.

• 4. Not all causal links run from beliefs and attitudes to actions.

• 5. The genesis of democracy need not be geographically uniform: there may be many roads to democracy.

• 6. The genesis of democracy need not be temporally uniform: different factors may become crucial during successive phases.

• 7. The genesis of democracy need not be socially uniform: even in the same place and time the attitudes that promote it may not be the same for politicians and for common citizens.
The Rustow’s decalogue/2

• 8. Empirical data in support of a genetic theory must cover, for any given country, a time period from just before until just after the advent of democracy.
• 9. To examine the logic of transformation within political systems, we may leave aside countries where a major impetus came from abroad.
• 10. A model or ideal type of the transition may be derived from a close examination of two or three empirical cases and tested by application to the rest.
What should we consider?

- Such a theory, moreover, must be based on cases where the process is **substantially complete**.
- Although control data on non-democracies and on abortive and incipient cases may become important at a later stage of theorizing, it is more convenient to start out by studying a phenomenon where it actually has come into existence.
At least one generation

- The "advent" of democracy must not, of course, be understood as occurring in a single year.
- Since the emergence of new social groups and the formation of new habits are involved, one generation is probably the minimum period of transition.
- In countries that had no earlier models to emulate, the transition is likely to have come even more slowly.
Research restrictions

• For an initial set of hypotheses, however, it may be best to turn to countries where the process occurred relatively rapidly

• For a first attempt at a general theory it may be preferable to stick to countries where the transition occurred mainly within a single system (major impulses within the system)
One background condition, three phases

- Background condition: national unity
- Preparation phase: the struggle
- Decision phase: the compromise
- Habituation phase: the consolidation
Background condition

• It simply means that the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to.
• This excludes situations of latent secession
• National unity is listed as a background condition in the sense that it must precede all the other phases of democratization but that otherwise its timing is irrelevant
• The background condition, however, is best fulfilled when national unity is accepted unthinkingly, is silently taken for granted.
National unity: the unique precondition

• To single out national unity as the sole background condition implies that no minimal level of economic development or social differentiation is necessary as a prerequisite to democracy.

• Those social and economic indicators that authors are fond of citing as "background conditions" seem somewhat implausible at any rate. There are always nondemocracies that rank suspiciously high.

• The model thus deliberately leaves open the possibility of democracies (properly so called) in premodern, prenationalist times and at low levels of economic development.
Preparatory phase

• The dynamic process of democratization itself is set off by a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle.
• Such a struggle is likely to begin as the result of the emergence of a new elite that arouses a depressed and previously leaderless social group into concerted action.
• Yet the particular social composition of the contending forces, both leaders and followers, and the specific nature of the issues will vary widely from one country to the next and in the same country from period to period.
• The serious and prolonged nature of the struggle is likely to force the protagonists to rally around two banners. Hence polarization, rather than pluralism, is the hallmark of this preparatory phase.
The uncertainty

• Yet there are limitations implicit in the requirement of national unity - which, of course, must not only preexist but also continue.
• If the division is on sharply regional lines, secession rather than democracy is likely to result.
• This delicate combination implies, of course, that many things can go wrong during the preparatory phase. The fight may go on and on till the protagonists weary and the issues fade away without the emergence of any democratic solution along the way.
• Or one group may find a way of crushing the opponents after all.
• In these and other ways an apparent evolution toward democracy may be deflected, and at no time more easily than during the preparatory phase.
Decision phase

• What concludes the preparatory phase is a deliberate decision on the part of political leaders to accept the existence of diversity in unity and, to that end, to institutionalize some crucial aspect of democratic procedure.

• Great Compromise (Sweden 1907)

• Instalment plan (Great Britain 1688 [principle of the limited government] – 1832 [suffrage reform])
The role of the (moderate) leaders

• Since precise terms must be negotiated and heavy risks with regard to the future taken, a small circle of leaders is likely to play a disproportionate role.

• Among the negotiating groups and their leaders may be the protagonists of the preparatory struggle. Other participants may include groups that split off from one or the other side or new arrivals on the political stage.

• Sweden 1890’s: Conservative (Industrialists) vs. Radicals (Intellectuals)

• Sweden 1907: moderate conservatives and moderate liberals
• Just as there can be different types of sponsors and different contents of the decision, so the motives from which it is proposed and accepted will vary from case to case.
• Specious reasons: The forces of conservatism may yield from fear that continued resistance may lose them even more ground in the end
• Reasons of strategy: The radicals may accept the compromise as a first installment, confident that time is on their side and that future installments are bound to follow.
• Reasons of coherence: The conservatives may belatedly wish to live up to principles long proclaimed
• Contingent reasons: Both conservatives and radicals may feel exhausted from a long struggle or fearful of a civil war.
Four considerations

1. The democratic content of the decision may be incidental to other substantive issues.
2. Second, in so far as it is a genuine compromise it will seem second-best to all major parties involved, it certainly will not represent any agreement on fundamentals.
3. Third, even on procedures there are likely to be continuing differences of preference (e.g. parliamentary vs. presidential system). What matters at the decision stage is not what values the leaders hold dear in the abstract, but what concrete steps they are willing to take.
4. Fourth, the agreement worked out by the leaders is far from universal. It must be transmitted to the professional politicians and to the citizenry at large. These are two aspects of the final, or habituation, phase of the model.
Habituation phase

- A distasteful decision, once made, is likely to seem more palatable as one is forced to live with it (Leon Festinger’s “cognitive dissonance”).
- Democracy is by definition a competitive process, and this competition gives an edge to those who can rationalize their commitment to it, and an even greater edge to those who sincerely believe in it.
The principle of competition

• The transformation of the Swedish Conservative Party from 1918 to 1936 vividly illustrates the point. After two decades those leaders who had grudgingly put up with democracy or pragmatically accepted it retired or died and were replaced by others who sincerely believed in it.

• Similarly, in Turkey there is a remarkable change from the leadership of Ismet İnönü, who promoted democracy out of a sense of duty, and Adnan Menderes, who saw in it an unprecedented vehicle for his ambition, to younger leaders in each of their parties who understand democracy more fully and embrace it more wholeheartedly.

• In short, the very process of democracy institutes a double process of Darwinian selectivity in favor of convinced democrats: one among parties in general elections and the other among politicians vying for leadership within these parties.
The principle of conciliation

- Politics is a process for resolving conflicts within human groups.
- With its basic practice of multilateral debate, democracy in particular involves a process of trial and error, a joint learning experience.
- The first grand compromise that establishes democracy, if it proves at all viable, is in itself a proof of the efficacy of the principle of conciliation and accommodation.
- The first success, therefore, may encourage contending political forces and their leaders to submit other major questions to resolution by democratic procedures.
Social and economic issues vs. issues of community

- Surveying the evolution of political debate and conflict in the Western democracies over the last century, it is striking to observe the difference between:
  - social and economic issues, which democracies handled with comparative ease,
  - and issues of community, which have proved far more troublesome.
• Democracy has proved most effective in resolving political questions where the major divisions have been social and economic, as in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries

• It has been the fight among religious, national, and racial groups, instead, that has proved most tenacious and has caused recurrent bitterness, as in Belgium, Holland, Canada, and the United States

• The difficulty that democracy finds in resolving issues of community emphasizes the importance of national unity as the background condition of the democratization process. The hardest struggles in a democracy are those against the birth defects of the political community
Three processes

• First, both politicians and citizens learn from the successful resolution of some issues to place their faith in the new rules and to apply them to new issues.
• Second, as we just saw, experience with democratic techniques and competitive recruitment will confirm the politicians in their democratic practices and beliefs.
• Third, the population at large will become firmly fitted into the new structure by the forging of effective links of party organization that connect the politicians in the capital with the mass electorate throughout the country.
Conclusions. Three broad assertions

- Certain ingredients are indispensable to the genesis of democracy.
  - National unity
  - Conflict
  - Conscious adoption of democratic rules
  - Politicians and electorate must be habituated to these rules
Three broad assertions/2

• Secondly, the model asserts that these ingredients must be assembled one at a time. Each task has its own logic and each has its natural protagonists
  1. a network of administrators or a group of nationalist literati for the task of unification,
  2. a mass movement of the lower class, perhaps led by upper class dissidents, for the task of preparatory struggle,
  3. a small circle of political leaders skilled at negotiation and compromise for the formulation of democratic rules,
  4. and a variety of organization men and their organizations for the task of habituation.

• Thirdly, the model does suggest one such sequence from national unity as background, through struggle, compromise, and habituation, to democracy.
No preconditions

- The model rejects what are sometimes proposed as preconditions of democracy, e.g., high levels of economic and social development or a prior consensus either on fundamentals or on the rules.
  - Economic growth may be one of the circumstances that produces the tensions essential to the preparatory or conflict phase
  - Mass education and social welfare services are more likely to be the result of democratization.
  - Consensus on fundamentals is an implausible precondition.
  - And the acceptance of those rules is logically a part of the transition process rather than its prerequisite.
TRANSITOLOGISTS AND CONSOLIDOLOGISTS
Waves of democratization

- A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time.

- A wave also usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic.
First Wave (1828-1926)
- 33 countries: e.g. United States, Switzerland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Argentina, Ireland

First Reverse Wave (1922-1942)
- 22 countries: e.g. Italy, Poland, Baltic States, Germany, Austria, Brasil, Argentina

Second Wave (1943-1962)
- 41 countries: e.g. West Germany, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Brasil, Uruguay, Nigeria

Second Reverse Wave (1958-1972)
- 22 countries: e.g. Perù, Brasil, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Pakistan, Philippines, Greece, Turkey, Malta, Barbados, Nigeria

Third Wave (1974-?)
- 36 countries: e.g. Portugal, Greece, Spain, Argentina, Brasil, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Poland, South Corea, East Germany, South Africa, Soviet Union, Jugoslavia
Three phases

1. Preparatory phase (R)
   - Opening of the authoritarian regime (O’D&S)
   - End of the authoritarian regime (H)

2. Decision phase (R)
   - Instauration (O’D&S)
   - Instaurazion (H)

3. Habituation (R)
   - Consolidation (O’D&S)
   - Consolidation (H)
Five changes/1

• The deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian regimes in a world where democratic values were widely accepted, the consequent dependence of these regimes on successful performance, and their inability to maintain "performance legitimacy" due to economic (and sometimes military) failure.

• The unprecedented global economic growth of the 1960s, which raised living standards, increased education, and greatly expanded the urban middle class in many countries.
Five changes/2

- A striking shift in the doctrine and activities of the Catholic Church, manifested in the Second Vatican Council of 1963-65 and the transformation of national Catholic churches from defenders of the status quo to opponents of authoritarianism.

- Changes in the policies of external actors, most notably the European Community, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

- "Snowballing," or the demonstration effect of transitions earlier in the third wave in stimulating and providing models for subsequent efforts at democratization.
Problems of legitimacy

• Legitimacy declining and performance dilemma
• Dispensability
• Failure and success
No preconditions

• O’Donnell and Schmitter: *virtù* and *fortuna* (pp. 3-5)
• Huntington (1991, p.38):
  – No single factor is sufficient to explain the development of democracy in all countries or in a single country
  – No single factor is necessary to the development of democracy in all countries
  – Democratization in each country is the result of a combination of causes
  – The combination of causes producing democracy varies from country to country
  – The combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from that responsible for other waves
  – The causes responsible for the initial regime changes in a democratization wave are likely to differ from those responsible for later regime changes in that wave
Actors

- Try to resist to the reformist action
- Try to overthrow the authoritarian regime
- Try to push for the liberalization
- Try to reform the system from within

- Hard-liners
  - Standpatters
- Soft-liners
  - Reformers (democratizers and liberals)
- Radical Extremists
  - (Socialists and Nationalists)
- Democratic moderates
Interactions

- Government and opposition
- Reformers andスタンパター in the governing coalition
- Moderates and extremist in the opposition
Transition processes

Transfer of power Transformation

- O&S: In which incumbents hand over control of the state to some faction of their supporters (p. 11)
- H: Those in power in the authoritarian regime take the lead and play the decisive role in ending that regime and changing it into a democracies system (p. 121 et seq.)

Surrender of power Transplacement

- O&S: Where the incumbents negotiate the transition with some of their non-maximalist opponents
- H: Democratization results largely from joint action by government and opposition group

Overthrow of power Replacement

- O&S: Where implacable antagonists overthrow the authoritarian regime
- H: The opposition gain strength and the government lose strength until the government collapses or is overthrown (p. 142 et seq.)
Transformations: 5 phases

- Emergence of reformers
- Acquire power
- Failure of liberalization
- Backward legitimacy: subduing the standpatters (continuity with the past)
- Coopting the opposition
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Replacements

- The struggle to produce the fall
- The fall
- The struggle after the fall
Transformations and transplacements: the importance of the pacts

- Huntington: moderation-participation trade-off
- O’Donnell and Schmitter: the cycle of mobilization
The mass (people) plays a marginal role
- Three moments
  - military moment,
  - political moment(s)
  - economic moment
The military moment

• Empirical referents: mainly, the military regimes
• First liberalization (dictablanda pactada)
• In exchange for restoring basic individual rights and tolerating some civic contestation over policy, the leader obtains from notables and/or moderate opponents that they will neither resort to disrupt or violence, nor press too insistently or immediately their claim to govern, nor seek sanctions against military officers for "exceeses" committed under the aegis of the authoritarian regime
• Hard-liners are marginalized
First political moment: *democradura*

- Such a pact involves a package deal among the leaders of a spectrum of electorally competitive parties to:
  1. Limit the agenda of policy choice
  2. Share proportionately in the distribution of benefits
  3. Restrict the participation of outsiders in decision-making.
- They agree to forgo appeals to military intervention and efforts at mass mobilization
- Grand coalition or rotational scheme
Other political moments, toward the poliarchy: a sequence of piecemeal reforms

- Changes in electoral code and and party finance statutes
- More effective voter registration
- More equal legislative apportionment
- More transparent public information acts
- Greater administrative decentralization
- Lower barriers to party formation and parliamentary representation
- Dissolution of corporatist monopoles and obligatory associations
- Easing of citizenship requirements
- Also some social and economic reforms
Contingent consent

• Contemporary theories on democracy place the burden of consent upon party elites and professional politicians (sporadically subject to electoral approval) who agree among themselves, not on ethical or substantive grounds, but on procedural norms of contingency.
Contingent consent

- These actors agree to compete in such a way that:
  1. Who win greater electoral support will exercise their temporary political superiority in such a way as not to impede those who may win greater support in the future from taking office;
  2. Those who lose in the present agree to respect the contingent authority of the winners to make binding decisions, in exchange for being allowed to take office and make decisions in the future
  3. Citizens will presumably accept a democracy based on such a competition, provided its outcome remains contingent upon their collective preferences as expressed through fair and regular elections of uncertain outcome
Rules that embody the contingent consent

1. The actors must decide: which parties can play the game; the thresholds for the representation of minor parties and certain social groups (minorities).

2. Voting or electoral system (majority, plurality, proportional, mixed): *workable majorities* or *accurate representation*?

3. System of government: *parliamentarism*, *presidentialism* or *semipresidentialism*?
The economic moment

• This type of pacts must:
  – reassure the bourgeoisie that its property rights will not be jeopardized
  – satisfy the workers’ demands for compensation and social justice
  – institutionalize the representation rights and bargaining mechanisms to enhance the role of the intermediaries
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Elections

• The heart of the democracy
• Founding elections (O&S)
  – An heroic moment
  – Authoritarian regime provokes the parties: to steer and divide the people; parties are not only or not so much agents of mobilization as instruments of social and political control
  – A magnanimous gesture that could be appreciated
• Stunning elections (H)
  – The leaders convoke elections to buttress their legitimacy
Three types of problems

1. Transition problems
2. Contextual problems
3. Systemic problems
Transition problems

Establishing new constitutional and electoral system and modifying laws that are not suitable in a democracy

I. E.g. Post-communist country: separation party and government property functions and personnel

II. The torturer problem
   I. Prosecute and punish (only the responsible, not the whole institution): if the repression is too fresh and/or if it was too brutal
   II. Forgive and forget: if the repression was initially less brutal or extensive, or if it occurred a long time ago.
   III. Huntington: Don’t prosecute, don’t punish, don’t forgive, don’t forget.

III. Military regimes: the praetorian problem
   a. Gradual change in the military’s image of itself as a ultimate guardian of the national interest
   b. Depoliticizing the military and replacing its top leadership
   c. Shift from preoccupation with internal security to some more credible and orthodox role as defender of the country’s external security
   d. Fewer soldiers, more professionalized
Contextual problems

- Major insurgencies (Peru, Guatemala, Philippines)
- Ethnic/communal conflicts (India, Nigeria, Turkey)
- Extreme poverty (India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sudan)
- Chronic inflation (Argentina, Brazil, Hungary)
- Severe socioeconomic inequality (Brazil, India, Pakistan)
- Substantial external debts (Argentina, Poland, Nigeria)
- Extensive state involvement in the economy (Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Turkey, post-communist countries)
Systemic problems

• Authoritarian regime:
  – Concentrated decision-making
  – Deficient feedback
  – Dependence on performance legitimacy

• Democratic regime:
  – Stalemate
  – Inability to reach decisions
  – Susceptibility to demagoguery
  – Domination by vested economic interests
The risk of the failure

- Disillusionment and authoritarian nostalgia (O&S: the return to the “good old times”)
- After the euphoria, the disenchantment, the disillusionment
- Reinforced by unresolved contextual problems
- The struggle to create democracy: moral, dangerous and important
- The political struggle in democracy: amoral, routine and petty (H: p. 255).
- The fragmentation of the democratic coalition that had produced the transition
- The decline in effectiveness of the initial leaders of the democratic governments
- Growing realization that the advent of democracy would not, in itself, produce solutions to the major economic and social problems
The leaders are guilty

- The intractability of problems, the constraints of the democratic process (uncertainty, conflict), the shortcomings of the political leaders – these become the order of the day
- The leaders of the new democracies often came to be viewed as arrogant, incompetent or corrupt, or some combination of all of three
Responses to the crisis

- Resignation, cynicism, withdrawal (not dangerous)
- Anti-incumbent reaction
- Anti-establishment response (populist choice)
- New authoritarian regime
Consolidation/1: An attitudinal test
Developing the democratic political culture

- Elites work together to cope problems
- Citizens distinguish between the rulers and the system.
- The legitimacy of the rulers depends on the extent to which they meet the expectations of the key groups of voters, that is, on their performance.
- The legitimacy of the system depends on procedures, on the ability of the voters to choose their rulers through elections. If the rulers fail to perform, they lose legitimacy, they are defected in elections, and a different set of rulers takes over.
- The loss of performance legitimacy by the rulers leads to the reaffirmation of the procedural legitimacy of the system.
- Ruler or performance legitimacy vs. regime or procedural legitimacy
- Authoritarian regimes: this distinction is impossible
Consolidation/2: A behavioural test
Institutionalizing Democratic Political Behaviour

• Two-turnover test: A democracy is consolidated if the party group that takes the power in the initial election at the time of the transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election.

• Selecting rulers through elections is the heart of democracy, and democracy is real only if rulers are willing to give up power as a result of elections

• First electoral turnover: symbolic significance

• The second turnover show two things
  – Two major groups of political leaders in the society are sufficiently committed to democracy to surrender office and power after losing an election.
  – Both elites and public are operating within the democratic system. If something go wrong, you change the rulers, not the regime.
Transititology and consolidology

- Transition: uncertainty, underdetermination, heady excitement
- Consolidation: certainty, overdetermination, routine, bounded rationality
- Are we sure?
- Principles of competition and conciliation