Review Article

The Missing Variable

Institutions and the Study of Regime Change

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Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of the Soviet Union*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.

Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Institutions have taken center stage in comparative politics. Scholars studying such varied topics as nationalism, public policy, and economic performance have increasingly cast institutional factors in a leading explanatory role.[1] This surge of interest in institutional analysis has been especially notable in the comparative study of political regimes. In their efforts to explain the varied dynamics and performance of new democratic regimes resulting from the "third wave" of democratization, scholars have focused extensively on political institutions, such as electoral laws, constitutional rules, and party systems.[2]

Although institutional factors command great interest among those studying the performance of new democracies, they have curiously played a far less significant role in explaining these regimes' origins.[3] The study of transitions to democracy during the last decade has been dominated by voluntarist analyses that focus on contingent leadership choice. Such analyses view transitions as open-ended processes of strategic interaction and tend to overlook how political institutions shape these processes.[4] A similar deemphasis of institutions characterized earlier work on the origins of authoritarian regimes. Those analyses focused mainly on socioeconomic structural variables, either ignoring institutions altogether or treating them as epiphenomenal manifestations of macrostructural forces.[5] Institutions have thus been a missing variable in theories of regime change.

This omission is puzzling because regime change fundamentally involves institutional transformation. Regimes are the formal and informal institutions that structure political interaction, and a change of regime occurs when actors reconfigure these institutions. We should expect regime institutions to have an important impact on the capacities and behavior of incumbents who seek to defend them. Similarly, we should expect

regime institutions to influence the strategies of challengers who seek to transform them. Hence a focus on institutional factors might offer valuable insight in understanding, not just how regimes perform, but also why they change.

This article assesses how institutional variables could enrich theories of regime change. It examines two recent studies of regime transformation that self-consciously focus on institutional factors, Philip G. Roeder's *Red Sunset* and Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle's *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, and compares them to Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan's *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*.[6] These works form an appropriate comparison not only because they share a focus on institutional variables, but also because they exemplify distinct perspectives on how institutions can be incorporated into the study of regime change.

These three studies show that institutional analysis offers significant leverage in addressing a core problem of regime change. Why do incumbents, who have vested interests in a regime's survival, fail to preserve it? The issue of incumbent failure has not been satisfactorily analyzed in previous studies, which often explain incumbent behavior in terms of skill or luck or as a consequence of underlying structural forces. By contrast, the books under review highlight how incumbents act in varied institutional contexts that shape and constrain their behavior in characteristic ways. Analysis of the contexts of incumbent decision making helps explain why incumbents fail to save "their" regime and in some instances actually take steps that undermine it.

A focus on institutional variables also helps account for the success of challengers in transforming regimes. These books illustrate how the strengths and strategies of opposition groups are shaped in crucial ways by the very regime institutions they seek to transform. Furthermore, they show how the effects of old regime institutions on opposition behavior can carry over to the posttransition period, thereby influencing prospects of consolidating new regimes.

The shift to institutional variables marks an important departure from the voluntarist and structural approaches that have long dominated the study of regime change. However, noninstitutional variables associated with earlier approaches should not be abandoned. Rather, a focus on institutions offers new opportunities to integrate voluntarist and structural perspectives.

The Rules of Regime Change

Red Sunset illustrates how institutions help explain incumbents' failure to defend their grip on power. Roeder seeks to account for the demise of the Soviet Union by showing how informal political rules—what he calls the "constitution of Bolshevism"—inhibited policy innovation and institutional adaptation. Although these rules initially helped stabilize the Soviet regime, they later contributed to its breakdown by preventing leaders from implementing reforms in the face of mounting pressures for change.

Roeder makes a valuable contribution by illuminating how old regime institutions constrain reformist incumbents. His analysis focuses on a common strategic dilemma faced by reformers. They are often bound by the very rules they seek to change, and these rules are enforced by antireform incumbents privileged by the status quo. To succeed, reformers must find a way to use the rules of the status quo to subvert it, which involves the difficult task of "inducing political actors empowered by an existing constitutional order to change the rules of the game" (p. 233).

Incumbent cleavages over the question of reform have been a familiar theme in studies of democratization.[7] However, the voluntarist underpinnings of most previous analyses resulted in a tendency to treat incumbent cleavages as rifts that emerged and unfolded in a fluid, institution-free context of extreme contingency. Roeder's study breaks new ground by situating such cleavages and the strategic interactions that result from them in the context of constraints imposed by old regime rules. He shows how analysis of these constraints offers fresh insights into the varied forms taken by intraregime cleavages and helps explain why they so often can not be resolved in ways that avert regime breakdown. Hence *Red Sunset* makes an important contribution by showing that a crucial stage of regime change, the failure of reformers, is not necessarily the fortuitous result of contingent choices. This pivotal event may instead be a predictable outcome of rule-governed behavior induced by old regime institutions.

Institutional Foundations of the Old Regime To explain the Soviet leadership's inability to achieve reform, Roeder focuses on informal rules that structured leadership accountability and elite recruitment. Three core institutions—reciprocal accountability, job slot rules of elite recruitment, and balanced leadership—contributed to regime breakdown by posing barriers to reform.[8] Rules of reciprocal accountability governed the relationship between the Soviet leadership and what Roeder calls the "selectorate" (state bureaucrats and party cadres responsible for selecting leaders); each had the power to appoint and remove the other. Roeder (pp. 42–58) traces the roots of reciprocal accountability to the Bolsheviks' policy of "colonizing" key bureaucratic agencies by coopting their cadres into the central committee of the party. Reciprocal accountability became increasingly institutionalized after Stalin's death in 1953 and formed the basis of a two tier political structure that promoted stability by providing checks against arbitrary, discretionary leadership. To survive in office, leaders in the first tier had to build and maintain support coalitions among bureaucrats in the second tier.

Although they helped stabilize the Soviet regime after Stalin's death, checks on leadership discretion imposed by the rules of reciprocal accountability also created rigid barriers to institutional reform. In order to achieve their policy goals reformist leaders had to build support coalitions in the selectorate. However, the composition of the selectorate, which was determined mainly by a job slot recruitment rule guaranteeing positions to occupants of specific bureaucratic offices, made it extremely difficult for reform-oriented leaders to find allies (p. 56).

The job slot norm of recruitment privileged bureaucrats with especially strong preferences for defending the status quo: employees of so-called "iron triangle" agencies of early industrialization and state building (the party, economic ministries, and coercive apparatus). Although the leadership exerted some influence over appointments to the selectorate, the pool of candidates from which they could choose was restricted to these iron triangle agencies. Hence the institution of reciprocal accountability cemented the leadership's dependence on antireform bureaucrats. According to Roeder, "the continuing constraint of the iron triangle limited the leader's opportunities to shift policy priorities" (p. 236).

The institution of balanced leadership further constrained attempts to reform the political system. After Stalin's death new rules were established to solve the problem of cycling between individual and collective leadership by reinforcing the latter. These rules included clear demarcation and specification of the general secretary's powers, mutual checking to limit the power of each member of the leadership, especially the general secretary, and "proceduralism" to reinforce collective responsibility through stable norms for interaction among leaders and provision of "early warning signals" of threats to collective governance (p. 98). The rules of balanced leadership prevented a general secretary from staffing the politburo with a loyal team of followers. Like the vertical checks against leadership discretion imposed by reciprocal accountability, the horizontal checks of balanced leadership constrained opportunities for policy innovation and political reform. Taken together, these informal rules of the Soviet regime resulted in "institutionalized stagnation" (pp. 119–43).

Regime Institutions and Failure of Reform A focus on regime institutions helps predict the tasks confronting reformers. Roeder shows how reformers in contexts defined by reciprocal accountability face two characteristic challenges: expanding the selectorate and transforming reciprocal into hierarchical accountability. Hence he explains that reforms launched by Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s focused on widening the selectorate to undercut the monopoly control of iron triangle bureaucrats. Roeder also explains why Gorbachev sought to strengthen the expanded selectorate's unilateral control over antireformist leaders: to change reciprocal into hierarchical accountability.

Old regime institutions also help account for the failure of incumbents to achieve reform. Roeder shows how efforts to enlarge the selectorate and restructure leadership accountability required reformers to build a coalition that simultaneously maintained support among old guard elites in the selectorate and expanded the political process to bring in new groups. Sustaining such a coalition "placed a premium on the general secretary [Gorbachev] holding the center position in the coalition space" (pp. 228–29). Yet, as the coalition grew to include newly enfranchised groups, this center position changed. The institutional setting in which Gorbachev carried out his reform initiatives thus defined a difficult strategic context: successful reform depended on holding together a growing coalition that, because of its shifting center and heterogeneous composi-

tion, faced the constant threat of defection of one wing or both. The constraints imposed on Gorbachev by the rules of balanced leadership further hindered his ability to manage the dilemma of coalition maintenance. The coalition ultimately fell apart after a "double defection" by both the iron triangle right and reformist left (pp. 239–44). According to Roeder, this failure of reform sealed the old regime's fate.

Limitations of Intraregime Analysis While Roeder's analysis shows how old regime institutions prevented the Soviet leadership from achieving reform, it is less successful in explaining why leaders had to implement reforms in the first place. It sheds little light on the social transformations (such as the rise of a new diversified intelligentsia) that created pressures for reform. Yet, according to Roeder, these pressures, in the guise of what he vaguely calls "new social forces" (p. 211), play a key role in his explanation, because they ultimately forced Soviet leaders to face the choice of constitutional change or regime collapse. Although the failure of incumbents to achieve reform was a decisive event in the fall of the Soviet regime, this failure was just one episode in a larger process involving other actors and dynamics not analyzed by Roeder.

This limitation in the analysis stems from the kinds of institutions on which Roeder focuses. He explicitly restricted his study to "institutional dynamics within the authoritarian state" and excluded institutions that mediate relations between state and society (p. 251). Roeder's study shows how analysis of rules that govern leadership accountability and elite recruitment tells a lot about the behavior of regime incumbents and their capacities to implement reforms. However, a focus on the institutional constraints under which regime incumbents labor may not help explain the behavior of extraregime actors, such as opposition groups, because they are not necessarily bound by those constraints. Admittedly, opposition groups played an insignificant role in the Soviet case. Yet, because Roeder (pp. 8–13, 250–53) boldly claims to offer a "new institutionalism of authoritarianism" that could be employed "around the globe," this idiosyncratic feature of the Soviet case does not justify his neglect of how regime institutions affect extraregime actors.

Institutional analysis offers students of regime change powerful tools in explaining the strengths and strategies of extraregime actors. However, it is necessary to look beyond internal regime rules to institutions that connect incumbents to social actors.

A New Focus on Regime Type

A distinguishing feature of comparative regime analysis has been its taxonomic sophistication. Starting with efforts during the 1950s to conceptualize totalitarian systems, scholars have elaborated a complex set of categories for classifying regime types and subtypes.[9] Because of the dominance of structural and voluntarist

approaches, however, work on regime change has tended to neglect these categories as explanatory variables. Consequently, regime type has played a minor role in explaining regime change.

As students of regime transformation increasingly focus on the institutional contexts in which incumbents and challengers interact, they encounter new opportunities to harness regime categories as an explanatory variable. *Democratic Experiments in Africa* illustrates the analytic leverage regime typologies offer in explaining cross-national variations in transitions to democracy.[10] Bratton and van de Walle highlight three important ways that the type of nondemocratic regime shapes democratization processes. First, broad differences in old regime institutions distinguish the modal path of regime change in Africa from paths in other regions. Second, regime institutions help define the roles challengers play in initiating and pushing forward transitions. Finally, old regime institutions critically influence incumbents' strategies of crisis management.

Neopatrimonialism and Africa's Modal Path of Regime Change Bratton and van de Walle argue that differences in old regime type lead to distinct stages and processes in democratization. Specifically, core institutions of neopatrimonialism, the hallmark *ancien régime* of the more than forty sub-Saharan African countries analyzed in their book, led to a different modal path of democratization than in regions dominated by highly bureaucratized regimes, such as Latin America and southern Europe.

Neopatrimonial regimes are characterized by concentration of power in the hands of an individual ruler who maintains control mainly by distributing patronage to a network of clients.[11] Although formal institutions and the rule of impersonal law are notoriously weak in neopatrimonial regimes, Bratton and van de Walle argue that "informal, partially hidden, and extralegal institutions" structure political life and thus create predictable patterns of transition (p. 274). These institutional attributes of neopatrimonialism explain the distinctive modal path of regime change that, according to Bratton and van de Walle, differentiates Africa from most developing countries in other regions.

The paradigmatic voluntarist account portrays democratization as a process launched by splits among regime incumbents.[12] From this perspective regime transition is understood as a strategic game between regime softliners and hardliners. Political liberalization occurs after softliners gain the upper hand, and elite pacts and compromises pave the way to democratization. Bratton and van de Walle make a valuable contribution by showing that, although this paradigmatic account may accurately describe transitions from bureaucratized, authoritarian regimes in Latin America and southern Europe, it does not fit the neopatrimonial cases of Africa.[13]

First, transitions from neopatrimonialism were typically initiated by popular protest, not by splits among regime incumbents or liberalizing reforms by softliners.

Neopatrimonial dictators rarely undertook political liberalization in the absence of popular protest. In contrast to leaders of more bureaucratized regimes, neopatrimonial rulers typically lacked institutionalized ties to social groups and thus could not accurately assess popular sentiments or judge the need for preemptive political liberalization (p. 84). In the absence of institutionalized channels of interest representation, popular protest was often the only way citizens could express grievances and voice demands. Moreover, the exclusionary patronage system and economic stagnation associated with neopatrimonial regimes tended to foster such grievances. In short, "personal rulers were unlikely to initiate political liberalization or relinquish power without a struggle; they had to be forced out" (p. 84).

Second, in contrast to incumbents in bureaucratized, authoritarian regimes in Latin America and southern Europe, who usually split over the question of political liberalization, neopatrimonial elites divided over access to patronage (pp. 85–86). Neopatrimonial rulers rotated officeholders frequently, and elites forced from office lost their access to spoils. In an effort to regain control of the spoils of office, disenfranchised elites often joined or organized opposition movements. Hence, instead of a division between hardliners and softliners over the issue of political liberalization, the African modal path was characterized by elite divisions rooted in a struggle for state-controlled patronage.

Finally, the low levels of political institutionalization in neopatrimonial regimes reduced the possibility that enduring elite compromises and pacts could be forged during regime transitions. In contrast to their counterparts in Latin America and Europe, nondemocratic elites in Africa's neopatrimonial regimes often did not belong to cohesive, well-organized groups. Because these African elites typically "represented no more than a tiny coterie of clients," they had difficulty in forging consensus around intraelite agreements (p. 87).

Regime Type and Challenger Strategies In contrast to Roeder, who limits his study to institutional dynamics inside the authoritarian state, Bratton and van de Walle analyze how institutions mediate the state's relationship with society. By constructing a typology of neopatrimonial regimes that highlights varied patterns of state-society relations, they show how institutional factors condition the likelihood and level of popular protest. Because Bratton and van de Walle combine their focus on challengers with a focus on incumbents, they can explain more components of the process of regime change than Roeder, who, as noted earlier, focuses only on incumbents and their capacities to achieve reform.

Building on the work of Robert Dahl, Bratton and van de Walle distinguish four types of neopatrimonial regimes according to varied levels of "participation" (the extent to which the state permits social mobilization) and "competition" (the extent to which the state tolerates autonomous political associations): military oligarchies (low participation, low competition), multiparty systems (medium to high participa-

tion, medium to high competition), plebiscitary one party systems (medium participation, low competition), and competitive one party systems (medium participation, medium competition).[14] Although scholars often use these same four categories to describe political regimes quite distinct from neopatrimonialism, Bratton and van de Walle understand them as "variants on a neopatrimonial theme" that capture important differences among African cases that all "featured 'big man' rule" (p. 77).

The authors link these four types of neopatrimonial regimes to the strengths and strategies of opposition groups. They argue that "political protest was least likely in military regimes; it was somewhat more likely in multiparty systems; but it was most likely in [plebiscitary and competitive] one-party systems" (p. 144). To explain these patterns they explore how the distinctive institutional features of each type of regime shape the costs and benefits for social groups in organizing protests.

Although military regimes gave citizens powerful incentives for protest by denying them channels to influence public policy, their capacity to suppress opposition also raised the costs of such activity. The extremely low levels of political competition allowed by military regimes denied opposition groups opportunities to accumulate organizational experience, further increasing the costs of collective action. Hence "political protest rarely occurred in Africa's military regimes because the state elite's control of the apparatus of coercion and the absence of available channels for political expression made it too risky" (p. 144).

The costs of protest were lower in multiparty regimes. These regimes tolerated a significant degree of political opposition, and competing political parties provided institutional channels to voice discontent. Hence visible opposition occurred more frequently in multiparty than in military regimes.

One party regimes were the most likely to experience protest. On the one hand, like multiparty systems they had representative institutions and low levels of repression. On the other hand, they also provided many of the same incentives for protest found in military regimes. The monopoly control over interest mediation held by officially sanctioned organizations stifled autonomous citizen participation and blocked expression of grievances. The hegemony of state-controlled interest associations gave mobilized citizens little choice but to experiment with extralegal modes of participation outside official party or legislative channels.

In sum, Bratton and van de Walle explain challengers' behavior in two steps. They first establish correlations between distinct types of neopatrimonial regimes and likelihood of protest. They then explain these correlations by showing how the institutional characteristics of each regime type shaped the instrumental calculations of social actors in ways that either encouraged or inhibited protest.

Regime Type and Incumbent Strategies Whether triggered by protest "from below" or elite divisions "from above," changes of regime almost always involve political crises. A central issue in the analysis of regime change thus concerns the strategies

incumbents choose to defend their interests in contexts of crisis. Like Roeder, Bratton and van de Walle show how the constraints that old regime institutions impose on incumbents help explain their strategies

Because regime transitions in Africa typically began with opposition protest, incumbents (neopatrimonial dictators and their cronies) generally faced a mobilized group that sought to overthrow them.[15] In response to these challenges incumbents across Africa pursued three crisis management strategies: managed transition, transition through a national conference, and transition through rapid elections (pp. 169–77). In managed transitions incumbents initiated a tightly controlled reform process linked to a well-defined project to oversee and direct the transition. In national conference transitions incumbents brought national elites together to write new constitutional rules. In rapid election transitions, by contrast, incumbents first held elections and later convened a national assembly to draft a new constitution.

Leaders of military regimes usually pursued managed transitions. In military regimes the armed forces deeply penetrated polity and society, and military officers generally led the government. Consequently, military incumbents were well-positioned to control the transition. The armed forces' virtual monopoly over the means of coercion reinforced the capability of military incumbents to dominate the transition. Furthermore, a managed transition "flattered the military's idealized view of itself as a rational, orderly, and organized force trying to impose order on an inherently disorderly civilian political arena" (p. 171). Finally, a managed transition afforded the armed forces attractive opportunities to protect the military's institutional integrity and prevent reprisals under a successor regime.

Incumbents in one party plebiscitary regimes preferred national conferences. They were accustomed to plebiscitary protocols and thus were predisposed to hold national conferences to vindicate the government and restore political stability. They believed they could manipulate such conferences to their advantage, as they had often done in the past. Thus, "the national conference was a logical extension of the institutional configuration of the plebiscitary regime" (p. 175).

In competitive one party regimes, by contrast, incumbents favored elections without holding national assemblies beforehand. They calculated that they enjoyed sufficient legitimacy to win a competitive election, especially if the opposition had little time to prepare. In addition, their control over public funds, electoral machinery, and the press further bolstered their confidence about the prospects for victory. Elites in competitive one party regimes thus viewed rapid elections as mechanisms that would help them keep power.

Limitations of Typological Analysis Because Bratton and van de Walle link old regime type to the strategies of both incumbents and challengers, they offer a more robust explanatory framework than Roeder, who focuses only on incumbents. However, their approach to regime analysis, which relies heavily on broad cross-

national correlations between old regime types and actor strategies, tends to obscure the micro-level rules and incentives that define contexts of incumbent and challenger decision making. In contrast to Roeder, who carefully specifies the Soviet institutions that constrained reformers, Bratton and van de Walle often fail to pinpoint specific rules and incentives that explain correlations between types of African regimes and actor strategies.

Their limited success in identifying the causal mechanisms that explain cross-national patterns established through correlational analysis stems in part from their reliance on highly aggregated regime categories. Bratton and van de Walle define types of African regimes in terms of the broad, Dahlian dimensions of political competition and participation (p. 68). Yet these two dimensions do not capture important institutional factors the authors themselves argue shaped the strategic options of incumbents and challengers.

For example, the distinctive dynamics of transitions from military regimes, against which opposition groups rarely launched political protests, can not be adequately explained in terms of these regimes' characteristically low degrees of participation and competition. Civilian regimes with these same attributes might be expected to experience significant levels of protest, especially since the authors argue that political exclusion can create strong incentives for extralegal modes of participation (p. 145). Indeed, as Bratton and van de Walle acknowledge, the military's monopoly over coercive resources, not low degrees of participation and competition (pp. 144, 171), inhibited protest. Focusing on aggregate levels of participation and competition thus obscures important variations in who regulates and enforces these levels: military governments with guns or civilian governments that lack direct control over coercive resources.

Furthermore, as the authors suggest, variations in the structure of patronage, such as the degree to which the ruler's clientelist network penetrates state and social organizations and the different kinds of benefits distributed through such networks, also have an important impact on the strategies of opposition and incumbent groups (pp. 85–86). The dimensions of participation and competition that anchor Bratton and van de Walle's regime typology, however, do not discriminate among cases of neopatrimonialism in terms of their varied patronage institutions.[16] A more nuanced typological framework that exposed such core micro-institutions of neopatrimonial regimes would have strengthened the analysis.

The Constitutive Effects of Institutions

The ability of institutional variables to help explain regime change in contexts as different as the Soviet Union and sub-Saharan Africa suggests that political institutions play important roles in processes of regime transformation across a very broad range

of cases. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan's *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* confirms this expectation. This landmark study shows that old regime institutions help account for regime change across a remarkably heterogeneous set of countries with varied types of nondemocratic systems. Linz and Stepan analyze democratic transition and consolidation in fourteen countries from three regions: southern Europe, the southern cone of South America, and postcommunist Europe. The old regimes in these cases span virtually the entire spectrum of modern nondemocratic systems: authoritarianism, totalitarianism, posttotalitarianism, and sultanism.[17] Linz and Stepan's work thus provides a strong basis for inferring that institutions can help explain regime change across the full set of "third wave" democracies.

Like Bratton and van de Walle, Linz and Stepan correlate regime type with the strategies of incumbents and challengers. However, they rely on different assumptions about how institutions affect actors' behavior. For Bratton and van de Walle, institutions shape the strategic calculations of actors assumed to have relatively fixed interests. From this perspective regime type correlates with actors' behavior because political institutions define strategic contexts that constrain the self-interested behavior of incumbents and challengers. Linz and Stepan acknowledge that old regime institutions can influence behavior in this way. However, they also focus on how institutions define identities and interests, showing that regime institutions can mold the self-images, goals, and preferences of incumbents and challengers. Linz and Stepan's study thus exemplifies the constitutive approach to regime change. This approach explains political behavior during regime transitions by exploring how institutions constitute the interests and identities of actors. By endogenizing interest and identity formation, it moves beyond perspectives that treat institutions as incentive structures that merely define strategic opportunities for actors understood to have stable preferences and orientations.[18]

The Institutional Origins of Incumbents and Challengers Voluntarist analyses conceptualize regime transitions as games of strategic interaction between various incumbent and opposition factions. These factions are usually defined by their preferences about liberalization and democratization. Thus, many scholars regard regime hardliners and softliners and opposition maximalists and moderates as the core actors in transitions to democracy.[19] Such distinctions have proven useful, and it is now widely accepted that the relative strengths of these incumbent and opposition factions help explain varied transition paths, or "modes of transition."[20]

Students of regime change, however, have had less success in explaining the origins of these factions. Many studies simply assume that hardliners, softliners, maximalists, and moderates exist, without specifying the conditions under which such groups organize or fail to organize. As illustrated by Linz and Stepan's analysis of how old regime institutions shaped the formation of incumbent and opposition groups, focusing on the constitutive properties of institutions can help overcome this limitation.

Linz and Stepan show that the paradigmatic model of a four player transition game, based on the democratization of Spain's authoritarian regime in the late 1970s, does not fit transitions from other types of nondemocratic regimes. Old regime institutions can narrow the cast of actors. For example, the characteristically high degree of penetration into state and society by the patronage networks of sultanistic regimes and the mobilizational parties of totalitarian regimes minimizes possibilities for groups with reformist or moderate identities to organize. Softline incumbents and moderate challengers are typically absent in such regimes, resulting either in stable one player equilibria (just hardliners) or volatile two player games (hardliners opposed by maximalist, usually armed oppositions, as often occurs with sultanistic regimes). Linz and Stepan highlight the constitutive effects of regime institutions by describing the violent overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu's hybrid sultanistic/totalitarian regime in Romania as a case of "missing players for a 'pacted transition.'" (p. 356). Their analysis shows how the absence of softline incumbents and moderate challengers foreclosed the possibility of a nonviolent negotiated transition in Romania.

Old regime institutions also affect the capabilities of incumbent and opposition factions. For example, Linz and Stepan show how the distinctive features of Poland's "authoritarian communist" regime help account for the far greater strength of maximalist opposition groups in Poland than in East European countries that were ruled by full-blown totalitarian regimes. The party-state in Poland did not penetrate civil society as fully as party-states elsewhere in eastern Europe (pp. 255–69). This limited penetration provided a comparatively favorable context for forging opposition identities; social groups had the space to experiment with noncommunist modes of self-identification. Once these identities were forged, the relatively circumscribed reach of the Polish state facilitated an extraordinary degree of "self-organization" and anticommunist mobilization by civil society (p. 262). Hence the distinctive institutions of the old regime contributed to the emergence of a powerful opposition, which in turn helps explain why Poland experienced a pacted transition in which incumbents negotiated the terms of their extrication with the opposition.

Opposition Identities and Protest Repertoires Incumbent and opposition groups often have broader identities. These group identities warrant our attention because they can lead to important cleavages among actors with similar preferences about democratization. For example, ethnic differences can cause divisions within moderate or maximalist camps, despite shared preferences about democracy that may help unite each group.

Linz and Stepan show how a focus on institutional factors provides valuable leverage in understanding the formation and reproduction of opposition identities. Their study highlights how engaging and seeking to modify political institutions can alter actors' self-understandings and goals. [21] Hence the "practice" of opposing a regime may redefine a group's identity and conception of appropriate behavior.

Linz and Stepan address the linkage between opposition practice and identity in their analysis of the East European and post-Soviet cases, where the "flattened" political landscapes left by totalitarian regimes provide an excellent opportunity to explore issues of group formation (p. 269). Poland offers a vivid example. The Polish opposition forged an identity of "antipolitics" in the process of challenging the old regime. As noted above, Linz and Stepan show how authoritarian Communist institutions provided a favorable context for crafting opposition identities. They also analyze the complex process through which these identities were constructed. Repeated accumulated interactions between opposition groups and the incumbent regime yielded a disdain by the former for routinized institutions and compromise. Between 1976 and 1989 the opposition developed a language, self-definition, and set of tactics oriented toward spontaneity and informality. Taken together, these elements formed a coherent "ethics of oppositional behavior" that was in many ways the mirror image of the bureaucratized regime institutions the opposition sought to transform. According to Linz and Stepan, the opposition was "so eager to avoid becoming captured in the routines and symbols of the party-state that they elevated the situational ethics of oppositional behavior into a general principle of the 'politics of anti-politics'" (p. 271).

Although its "antipolitical" identity helps explain the Polish opposition's remarkable ability to sustain itself for nearly two decades, this quasi-anarchist conception of opposition politics as the antithesis of old regime practices created important barriers to the subsequent consolidation of democracy. Not surprisingly, after years of domination by a single party, political parties became a dirty word for the opposition. Hence the old regime left a legacy of strong ambivalence about core democratic political institutions such as political parties and hindered the consolidation of democracy.

Opposition identities forged during the transition to democracy in Brazil had a similar constraining effect on democratic consolidation. In Brazil a powerful military organization led the authoritarian regime and tightly controlled the pace of political liberalization. Consequently, Brazil witnessed a "long, constrained transition" in which the opposition struggled against the regime for more than a decade (p. 166). Like their Polish counterparts, the Brazilian opposition developed an "antipolitical" identity during this struggle. In both Brazil and Poland the long, slow struggle against a bureaucratic, highly routinized regime "engendered values and patterns of action in the arena of civil society that impeded the construction of a democratically effective political society" (pp. 232–33). Since completing the democratic transition, Brazilians have been strikingly ambivalent about the value of democracy, especially when compared to citizens of other South American democracies.[22]

These similarities between Poland and Brazil raise intriguing questions for future research on how constitutive properties of old regime institutions influence prospects for democratic consolidation. Do slow transitions from highly bureaucratized

regimes systematically yield the kinds of problems for democratic consolidation observed in Poland and Brazil? How do "antipolitical" opposition identities forged in challenging nondemocratic regimes interact with other mechanisms, such as elite pacts, that scholars have also argued hinder consolidation of democracy?[23] What are the constitutive effects of regime institutions in cases of rapid transition from highly bureaucratized regimes where opposition groups may have little time to develop antipolitical identities?

Old Regime Legacies and Democratic Consolidation In contrast to most recent work on democratic transitions, studies of democratic consolidation have relied considerably on structural variables, often analyzing factors that temporally precede the old regime's breakdown.[24] Despite these important efforts to link antecedent structural factors to subsequent consolidation dynamics, however, old regime institutions have not played a central explanatory role in the study of democratic consolidation.

Linz and Stepan make a major contribution by showing how old regime institutions help explain the tasks of democratic consolidation faced by incumbents in new democracies. They specify these tasks by constructing a new typology that classifies nondemocratic regimes according to their varied institutional components. This typology identifies "five interrelated arenas" of a consolidated democracy: a robust civil society, a free political society, the rule of law, a state bureaucracy based on rational-legal norms, and an economy with market autonomy and ownership diversity (pp. 7–15). Linz and Stepan convert each of these arenas into a typological dimension and then score (high, medium, low) different kinds of nondemocratic regimes across the five dimensions. Varied types of nondemocratic regimes are thus arrayed in a typological space according to their "distance" from consolidated democracy. Sultanism and totalitarianism are the most distant, and authoritarianism the least distant (p. 56). Scores on each of the five dimensions indicate the difficulty of the tasks democratizers face in consolidating democracy.

This typology helps the authors deduce the prospects of democratization from old regime institutions. For example, in the case of sultanistic regimes, which score low across all five dimensions, their "typology direct[s] attention to the fact that the immediate implications of a sultanistic regime for democracy-crafters (as in Haiti) are that they will have to begin the construction of civil society, constitutionalism and a rule of law, professional norms of the bureaucracy, economic society, and political institutions from a very low base" (p. 56). When compared to authoritarian regimes, which score higher on most dimensions, sultanistic regimes pose much more formidable tasks of democratization. Indeed, as with totalitarian regimes, "the failure of democratic consolidation is almost overdetermined" (p. 233).

Linz and Stepan thus show how old regime institutions affect the dynamics of consolidation by defining the specific tasks facing incumbents of new democratic regimes. Future research might take the further step of exploring the impact of old

regime institutions on nondemocratic opposition groups. Their effects on democratic incumbents and nondemocratic challengers could yield powerful insights about democratic consolidation.

Limitations of Constitutive Analysis Linz and Stepan's efforts to make actors' interests and identities endogenous to institutional analysis have several limitations. Because they treat institutions as both consequences and causes of group identities, their argument lacks the parsimony of analyses that exogenize identity formation and do not explore constitutive effects of institutions. Furthermore, in their case studies they do not always specify clearly the causal links between old regime institutions, actors' identities and behavior, and regime transformation. The reader is thus often given the difficult task of disentangling the complex, interactive causal relationships among these variables.

Endogenizing interest and identity formation also tends to restrict the generality of Linz and Stepan's arguments. Indeed, several of their findings apply to just one country. For example, they highlight quite different institutional factors to explain the formation of group identities especially favorable to democracy in Chile, Spain, and Uruguay. In Chile a nationwide referendum fostered a prodemocratic civic identity. In Spain rules governing the sequencing of national and subnational elections during the transition contributed to group identities that favored democracy. Finally, in Uruguay institutions allowing controlled participation by traditional political parties weakened the military's antidemocratic attitudes. While intriguing, these idiosyncratic findings about the impact of electoral rules and other regime institutions on group preferences toward democracy do not add up to a generalizable explanation. Rather, they suggest that quite different institutional factors account for prodemocratic identities across the three cases.

Linking political institutions to the constitution of actors' identities and interests represents an important, promising innovation in the study of regime change. However, steps should be taken to manage the problems of lost parsimony and weak generalizability.

Directions for Future Research

Although many subfields of comparative politics have recently turned to institutions, most work on regime change pays little attention to institutional variables. The dominance of structural and voluntarist approaches has focused attention instead on socioeconomic structures and contingent elite choices. Consequently, students of regime change started to incorporate institutional variables significantly later than their colleagues in other areas of comparative politics.

This delay is unfortunate because institutional analysis offers significant leverage

in explaining regime change. Roeder shows how the formal and informal rules under which incumbents strive to maintain power can explain the failure of reformers to solve problems of regime maintenance. Bratton and van de Walle demonstrate how broad cross-national variations in regime institutions define the strategic options of both incumbents who defend the old regime and challengers who undermine it. Linz and Stepan, in addition to underscoring the impact of institutional factors on actors' strategies, highlight how the constitutive properties of institutions shape group identities, interests, and goals.

In their shared recognition that regime change can be a rule-governed process, all three analyses unequivocally retreat from the extreme voluntarism that characterized most previous studies inspired by the third wave of democratization. However, none of these works seeks to revive the old structuralism, which privileged macro-level socioeconomic or cultural variables to the neglect of human agency. By focusing instead on the institutional contexts of choice and decision making, they achieve a high degree of sensitivity to agency and political action. Through this linkage of institutional constraints to the shaping of actor's choice, these studies stake out a long-awaited middle ground between the voluntarist and structural extremes that dominated earlier work on regime change.[25]

Future research should take several directions to fortify this emerging middle ground. First, important conceptual work needs to be done. In the past regime categories served mainly to describe and classify different political systems, entering into explanation primarily as dependent variables. As regime categories are increasingly employed as explanatory variables, however, scholars need to modify existing conceptual frameworks. For example, Linz and Stepan (pp. 39–40) show that the standard tripartite distinction among democracy, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism is inadequate in explaining regime transitions because it fails to discriminate among the more than ninety percent of modern nondemocratic regimes that share the same typological space, authoritarianism. To achieve a conceptual framework with greater discriminating power Linz and Stepan expand the existing tripartite typology by adding two new categories, posttotalitarianism and sultanism.[26] Likewise, the need for more finely grained typologies is evident in the limitations of Bratton and van de Walle's highly aggregated categories of neopatrimonial regimes. An important priority in future research thus involves crafting nuanced concepts that expose the institutional logics of nondemocratic regimes by pinpointing the core rules that constrain incumbents and social actors.

Second, scholars who wish to explore how institutions constitute actors' interests and identities should strive for greater methodological rigor and sophistication. They should avoid the temptation to conflate independent and dependent variables and should carefully specify when institutional factors are causes of actors' identities and interests and when actors are causers of institutional outcomes.[27] In addition to adhering closely to standard methodological guidelines for causal assessment, stu-

dents of regime change who study constitutive properties of political institutions need to specify better the causal mechanisms that connect institutions to actors' identities and preferences. A stronger understanding of these mechanisms should help solve the difficult problems of reciprocal causation created by endogenizing interest and identity formation.

Finally, students of regime change should guard against overestimating the power of institutional variables. While important, institutions do not explain everything. Roeder's book illustrates the limits of institutional analysis. Although its focus on intraregime institutions of elite recruitment and leadership accountability helps explain a crucial link in the causal chain connecting the Soviet and post-Soviet regimes—the failure of reformers—, this link did not by itself add up to regime change. As Roeder admits, socioeconomic transformations that created pressures for reform were also a necessary condition for the Soviet regime's demise.

Recent comparative historical work on long-term patterns of regime evolution also alerts us to the risks of ignoring the noninstitutional dimensions of institutional change. It shows how major instances of institutional transformation often result from extrainstitutional factors, such as changes in the global economy and demographic shifts, that reconfigure actors' interests and power.[28] Acknowledgment that institutions have been a missing variable in the study of regime change thus should not imply that they are the only variable that warrants analysis. Indeed, although we have focused on the analytic primacy of institutional factors, Bratton and van de Walle and Linz and Stepan also devote considerable attention to noninstitutional variables, such as socioeconomic and cultural structures.

We therefore caution against substituting institutional determinism for the structural determinism and voluntarist indeterminism of earlier work. The study of regime change has been handicapped by its tendency to advance "one variable at a time," from fixation with macro structure to fixation with contingent elite choice.[29] Rather than shift fully to institutional analysis, students of regime change should instead strive to develop integrative research strategies that combine human agency, political institutions, and macro structures.[30] Such multivariate integrative thinking will provide a firm basis for bringing institutional factors into the study of regime change without denying the potential importance of noninstitutional variables.

NOTES

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1. Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, 44 (1996), 936–57; Karen L. Remmer, "Theoretical Decay and Theoretical Development: The Resurgence of Institutional Analysis," *World Politics*, 50 (October 1997), 34–61;

Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Robert H. Bates, *Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy of the World Coffee Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2. Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman, eds., *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder: Westview, 1996); Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Scott Mainwaring and Mattthew Soberg Shugart, eds., *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

3. Two notable exceptions are Karen L. Remmer, *Military Rule in Latin America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), esp. ch. 7; and Huntington.

4. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), esp. *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*; James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987); Enrique Baloyra, ed., *Comparing New Democracies: Transition and Consolidation in Mediterranean Europe and the Southern Cone* (Boulder: Westview, 1987); Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Although they focused on the collapse of democratic regimes and emphasized mainly political leadership, the contributors to Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), esp. Arturo Valenzuela, also considered structural and institutional variables.

5. See, for example, Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1973); Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?," *The Review of Politics*, 36 (1974), 85–131; Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy? Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

6. Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

7. For example, O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusion*, focus on the split between hardliners who oppose reform and softliners who support it.

8. Roeder, p. 11, writes of "informal and unwritten rules hidden by formal, but less significant window dressing."

9. For example, Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956); Juan J. Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, 3 (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975); David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, 49 (April 1997), 430–51.

10. Both Remmer, *Military Rule*, and Huntington have argued that the outcomes of political transitions tend to covary with old regime type, beyond the highly aggregated categories of authoritarianism and democracy.

11. See Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics*, 24 (July 1992), 379–99.

12. O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions*.

13. Ruth Berins Collier and James Mahoney, "Adding Collective Actors to Collective Outcomes: Labor and Recent Democratization in South America and Southern Europe," *Comparative Politics*, 29 (April 1997), 285–303, have questioned whether the paradigmatic voluntarist account accurately describes democratic transitions in Latin America and southern Europe.

14. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

15. As noted above, the likelihood of protest varied across regime type. However, the majority of countries (twenty-nine out of forty-seven) analyzed by Bratton and van de Walle were one party systems, the regime type that correlates most strongly with opposition protest. By contrast, only eleven countries were military oligarchies, the regime type that correlates most weakly with protest. Hence protest characterized most of the cases.

16. Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships."

17. These regime types are defined along the dimensions of pluralism, ideology, mobilization, and leadership. Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes."

18. Such perspectives characterize most rational choice analyses. On the differences between rational choice and constitutive approaches to institutional analysis, see Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, eds., *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Hall and Taylor.

19. For example, Guillermo O'Donnell, "Transitions to Democracy: Some Navigational Instruments," in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *Democracy in the Americas* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1989).

20. For example, Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, 23 (October 1990), 1–21; Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe," *International Social Science Journal*, 128 (May 1991), 269–84; Gerardo L. Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, 29 (April 1997), 343–62.

21. As Linz and Stepan, p. 366, argue, "political identities are less primordial and fixed than contingent and changing. They are amenable to being constructed or eroded by political institutions."

22. This ambivalence about democracy in Brazil was probably exacerbated by two enduring institutional factors that preceded the authoritarian regime: weak political parties and a strong federal design that tended to fragment the national political arena. Indeed, according to Linz and Stepan, p. 166, Brazil has had the most difficulty in consolidating a democratic regime among the South American and southern European cases they analyze.

23. See Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization."

24. Brazil has had an especially important influence in redirecting attention to structural factors. See Frances Hagopian, *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Guillermo O'Donnell, "Challenges to Democratization in Brazil," *World Policy Journal*, 5 (Spring 1988), 281–300; Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992). Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics*, 49 (January 1997), 155–83, argue that, although transitions to democracy should be viewed as contingent events, economic constraints have a major impact on the stability of

democratic regimes once they are established.

25. Since the late 1980s numerous scholars have called for research strategies that integrate structural factors and human agency in explaining regime change. See Daniel H. Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics*, 40 (1988), 177–94; Nancy Bermeo, "Rethinking Regime Change," *Comparative Politics*, 22 (1990), 273–92; Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization"; Karen L. Remmer, "New Wine or Old Bottlenecks? The Study of Latin American Democracy," *Comparative Politics*, 23 (1991), 479–93; Herbert Kitschelt, "Political Regime Change: Structure and Process-Driven Explanations?," *American Political Science Review*, 86 (December 1992), 1028–34; Gerardo L. Munck, "Democratic Transitions in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, 26 (1994), 355–75.

26. See H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

27. See Huntington, p. 107.

28. See, for example, Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Dietrich Rueschemeyer, John D. Stephens, and Evelyne Huber Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

29. See Bermeo; Remmer, "New Wine or Old Bottlenecks."

30. See Richard Snyder, "Paths Out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," in H. E. Chehabi and Linz, eds.; James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development* (forthcoming).