

Comparative Politics

Week 4

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Notices

- Email: jlzhou@nyu.edu
- Office hour: Thursday 14-15; 17-18, at Room 317, 19W4
 - Book my office hour here: <https://calendly.com/jlzhou/15min>
- One more recitation before midterm
- I will move office hour to Monday or Tuesday on the week of midterm (TBA).
- Midterm guide is on “additional resource”

Today

- Democratic transition
 - Bottom-up
 - Top-down
- Federal system
 - Federal system v.s. Unitary system
 - Federal system v.s. decentralization
 - Pros and Cons

Democratic transition

Democratic Transition

- What explains democratic transition?
 - For example, structure
 - Rational choice theory
- Why did we fail to predict democratic transition?
 - Kuran: preference falsification



Timur Kuran

Preference Falsification

- People have preference over the regime
- They also care about their payoff if they tell people their true preference
 - Example?

An example of preference sequence

- Society A = {0, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10}
- Society B = {0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10}
- Society C = {0, 1, 3, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10}

Take-away

- The distribution of protest thresholds in a society is crucial to whether collective action occurs.
- BUT a society's distribution of protest thresholds is not easily observed by outsiders or even the individuals in that society.
- So, a society can come to the brink of a revolution without anyone anticipating the revolution in advance.

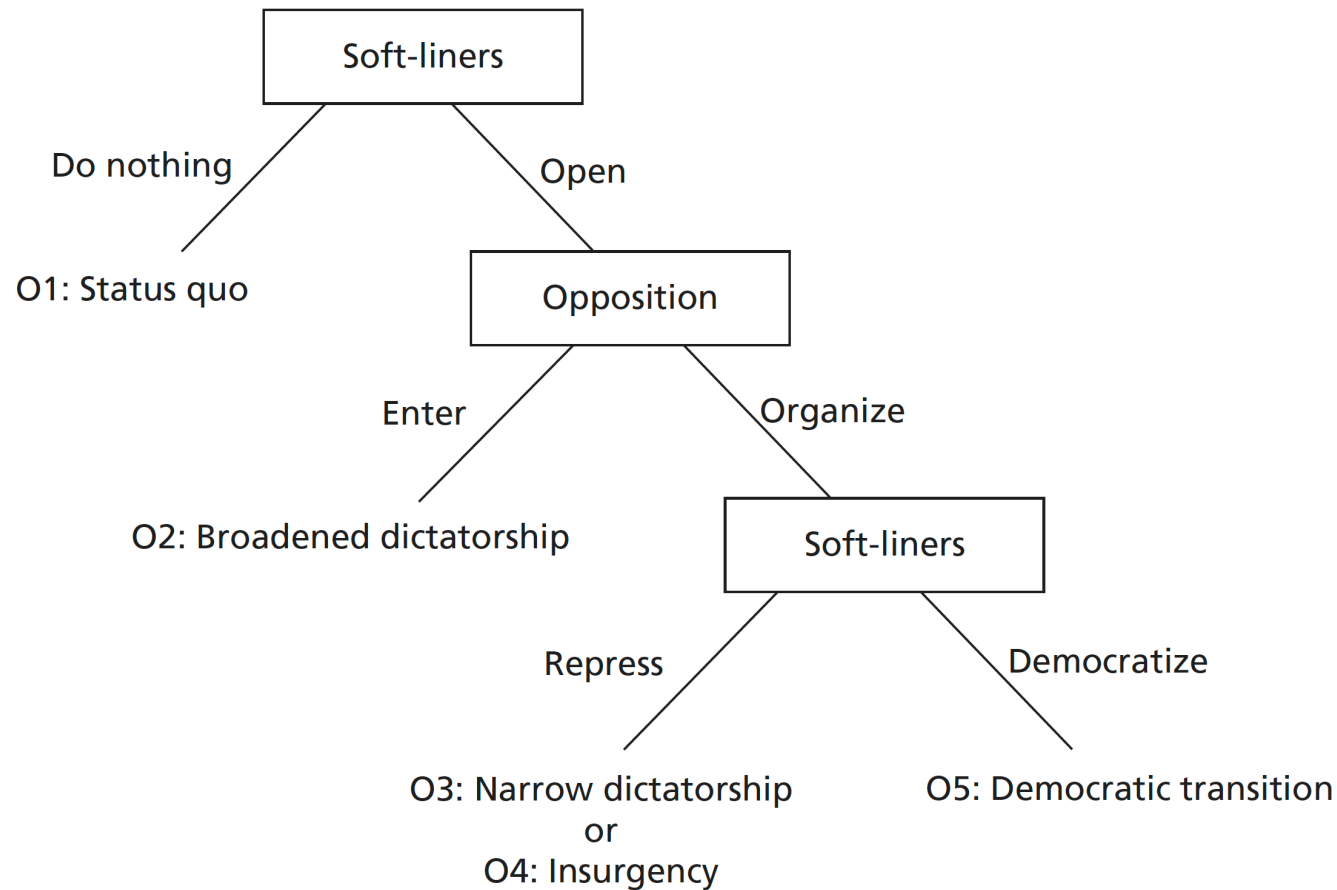
Why do democratic transitions often seem inevitable after they have happened?

Why do democratic transitions often seem inevitable after they have happened?

...preference falsification works both ways!

- As a revolutionary cascade starts to snowball, supporters of the authoritarian regime may feel obliged to join the pro-democracy protests.
- Thus, just as pro-democracy supporters falsify their preferences under dictatorship to avoid punishment, pro-dictatorship supporters may falsify their preferences under democracy to avoid social sanctions.

Top-down Transition



Assume:

For soft-liners:

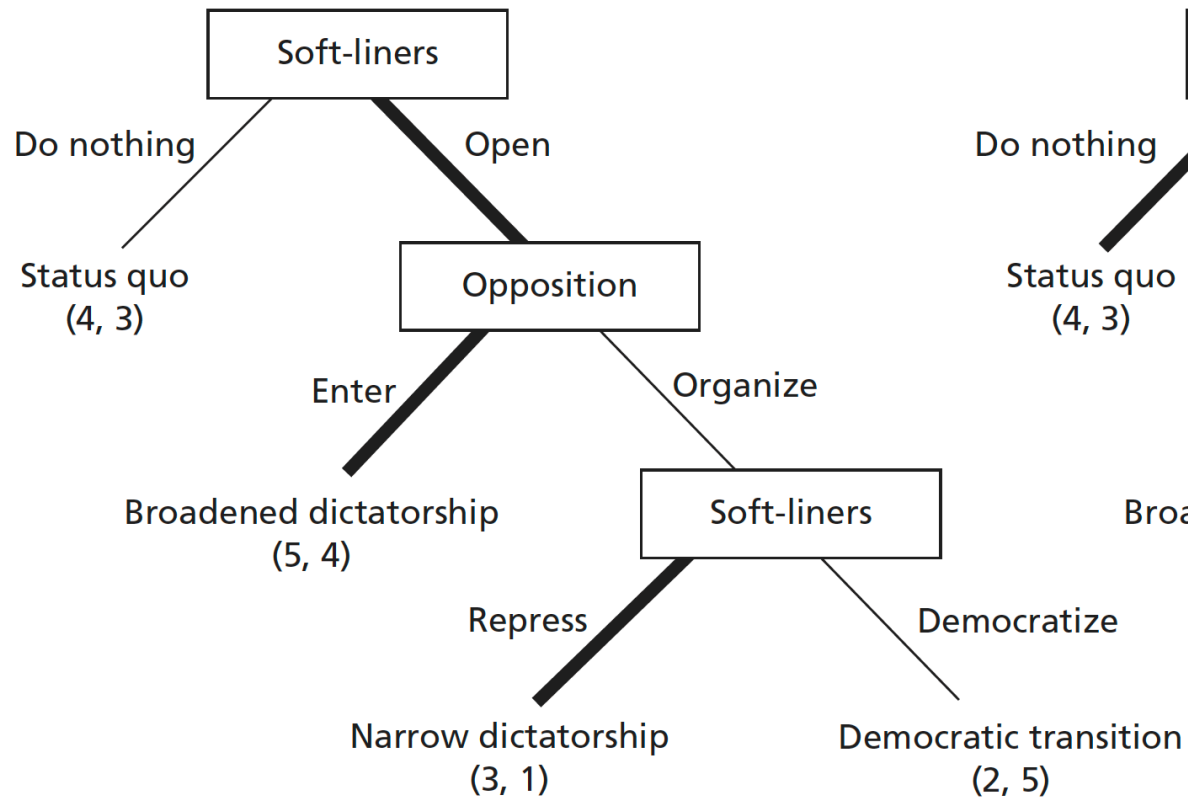
Broadened dictatorship > Status quo >
Narrow dictatorship > Democratic
transition > Insurgency

For pro-democracy movement:

Democratic transition > Broadened
dictatorship > Status quo > Insurgency >
Narrow dictatorship

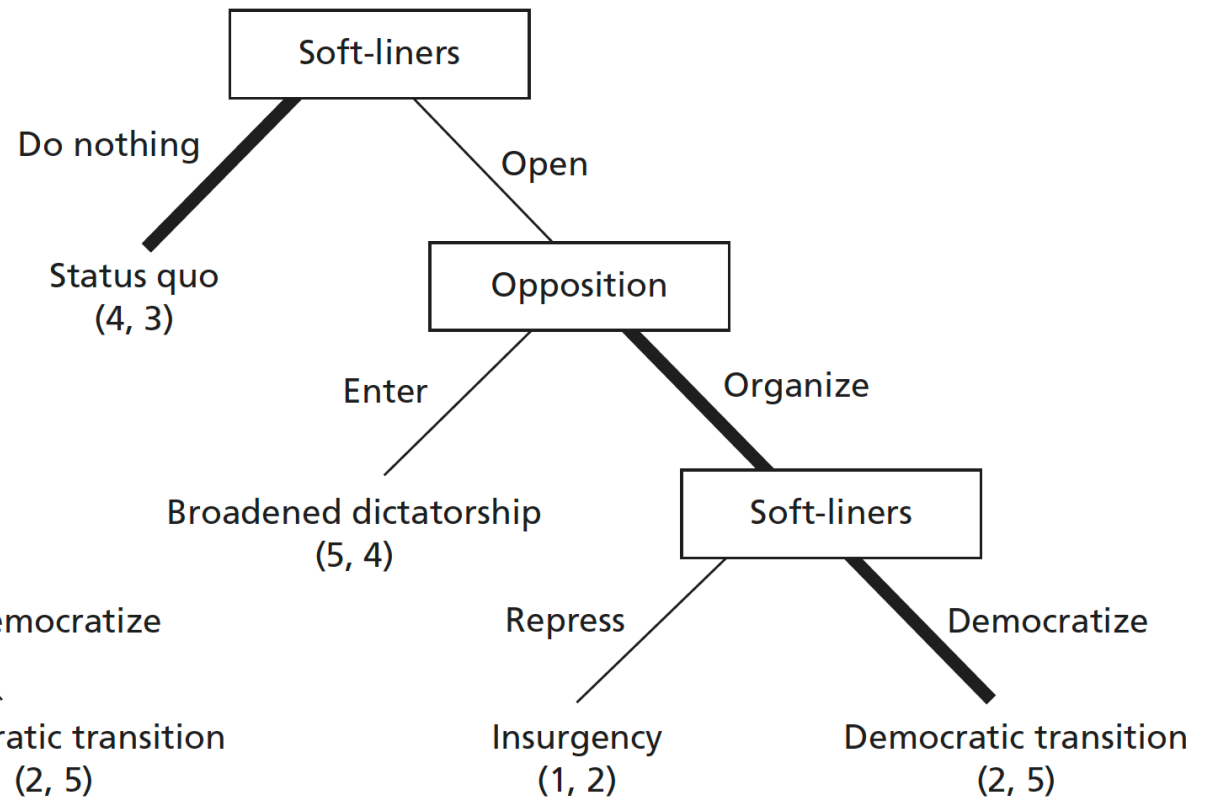
Top-down Transition

a. Weak Opposition



The subgame perfect equilibrium is (Open, Repress; Enter).

b. Strong Opposition



The subgame perfect equilibrium is (Do nothing, Democratize; Organize)

Which game are we in?

- If the opposition is strong: stick with the status quo.
- If the opposition is weak: broadened dictatorship.

Which game are we in?

- If the opposition is strong: stick with the status quo.
- If the opposition is weak: broadened dictatorship.
- Political liberalization is most likely when softliners are sufficiently confident that the opposition is relatively weak.
- An implication is “top-down” transitions to full democracy happen when softliners misjudge the strength of the pro-democracy movement.

South Korea Case

- After the [assassination of Park Chung-hee](#), Prime Minister [Choi Kyu-hah](#) took the president's role only to be usurped 6 days later by Major General [Chun Doo-hwan](#)'s 1979 [Coup d'état of December Twelfth](#).^[71] In May of the following year, a vocal civil society composed primarily of university students and labour unions led strong protests against authoritarian rule all over the country. Chun Doo-hwan declared martial law on May 17, 1980, and protests escalated. Political opponents [Kim Dae-jung](#) and [Kim Jong-pil](#) were arrested, and [Kim Young-sam](#) was confined to house arrest.
- On May 18, 1980, a confrontation broke out in the city of [Gwangju](#) between protesting students of [Chonnam National University](#) and the armed forces dispatched by the Martial Law Command. The incident turned into a citywide protest that lasted nine days until May 27 and resulted in the [Gwangju massacre](#).



South Korea Case

- The [Gwangju massacre](#) was never forgotten and in January 1987, when a protesting [Seoul National University](#) student died under police interrogation, public fury was immense. In April 1987, President Chun made a declaration that measures would be taken to protect the current constitution, instead of reforming it to allow for the direct election of the president. This announcement consolidated and strengthened the opposition; in June 1987, more than a million students and citizens participated in the nationwide anti-government protests of the [June Democracy Movement](#).
- On June 29, 1987, the government's presidential nominee [Roh Tae-woo](#) gave in to the demands and announced the [June 29 Declaration](#), which called for the holding of direct presidential elections and restoration of civil rights. In October 1987 a revised Constitution was approved by a national referendum and direct elections for a new president were held in December, bringing the Fifth Republic to a close



Roh Tae-woo

Discussion

- Is it a bottom-up or top-down?
- If you are a dictator, what will you do?

Federal Constitutions

Federal system

- A federal constitution distinguishes between national and subnational tiers of government, and then gives each tier specified areas of autonomy.
- Thus, two requirements for a constitution to be federal:
 - It specifies at least two levels of government.
 - Each level has at least one area of action over which it has autonomous authority formally guaranteed in the constitution.

Unitary system

- A unitary constitution can distinguish between national and subnational tiers of government but, unlike a federal constitution, defines the national government as sovereign over all its territorial units in all areas of law/policy.

That is,

- In instances of disagreement between the tiers, the national government wins; executive decisions and laws passed by the national legislature can never be overruled by lower units.

Decentralization

- What's the difference between federal system and decentralization?

Decentralization

- What's the difference between federal system and decentralization?
- Decentralization = How much responsibility (not autonomy) is delegated to subnational tiers
- Note: you can have decentralization under both federal and unitary constitutions
- Forms of decentralization are in lecture notes.

Examples

- U.S.
 - Federal- state
 - Elected executive and legislative body in all tiers



Examples

- China
 - Central government – provincial government – city government
 - Each level government has its own power (political, economy) over its territory
 - Lower-level government leader is appointed by higher level government
 - The National People's congress is the highest organ of state power.



Why do we choose federal system?

- Please think about the pros (and cons) of federal system and unitary system
- And give me a related example of your point

Optional: pros and cons of centralization

- Please think about the pros (and cons) of centralization and decentralization
- And give me a related example of your point

Discussion

- Imagine you are consultant for the leaders of a new democracy: should the country adopt a federal constitution or unitary constitution?
- Please think this hypothetical country as India: large territory, large population, multiple nations.

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- Imagine you are consultant for the leaders of a new democracy: should the country adopt a federal constitution or unitary constitution?
- Please think this hypothetical country as India: large territory, large population, multiple nations.
- Optional: think about Singapore (small territory, city state)

Final question

- What they would want to know about that country in order to decide whether a federal or unitary constitution would be more appropriate