

*“Fortunately, we have no obligation to choose right now;
we can wait for results of a productive rivalry,
perhaps even a synthesis from these contentions.”*

Charles Tilly, “To Explain Political Processes”

INTRODUCTION

A Theoretical Understanding of the Transition to Democracy

This study seeks to explain the emergence of democracy in Slovenia after the unanticipated demise of Communist rule in Eastern and Central Europe and within the global context of the third wave of democratization (1974–90) that has propelled more than sixty countries throughout the world from authoritarian rule toward some form of democratic government (Diamond 1999, chap. 2). The study’s primary objectives are, on the one hand, to improve our understanding of democratization and our ability to influence and forecast sociologically relevant outcomes in this particular case, and on the other, to test and, one hopes, enrich the available theoretical literature in this sensitive area of research. Our research is informed by various theoretical orientations, but since none of these, on its own, can claim explanatory universality or self-sufficiency with respect to the plurality of the transition cases, it will avoid their strict and ideologically biased approach and instead plead for an open and rather eclectic one.¹ However, to pay due respect to the conceptual clarity and convincing coherence of our work, we will in each instance acknowledge those broader theoretical approaches that inform this concrete research.

Defining the Problem and the Concepts

The problem of examining the fragile processes of democratization in post-Communist countries is rooted in the phenomenon's complex and elusive nature, with attempts to understand it characterized by various scholars as trying to hit a "moving target" (Tarrow 1991), "rebuilding the ship at sea" (Elster et al. 1998), and "flying blind" (Szoboszlai, ed. 1992). Moreover, sociologists, political scientists, and historians are far from agreed about the exact nature of the political events of 1989 that led to the breakdown of the Communist regimes. While some argued that they were revolutions, others emphatically disagreed.² One of the roots of this seemingly difficult problem for researchers lies in the following historical novelty: while in other countries, capitalism preceded democracy, in Eastern and Central Europe it was the transition to (proto)democracy that launched the transition to capitalism (Przeworski 1995, 67). For the purpose of my research objectives, I will stick to the concept of transition. Slovenia's pattern of democratic transition resembles that of Hungary; that is, it is an evolutionary one.³ Other countries' patterns include a negotiated pattern (Poland), the implosion or collapse of a system (East Germany and Czechoslovakia), a violent pattern (Romania), and a palace coup (Bulgaria).

The uniqueness of the Eastern and Central European post-Communist trajectory is further accentuated in the case of Slovenia, which is experiencing a quadruple transition: it has to effect political, economic, and social transitions (just like most of the other former one-party states), but, being newly independent, it also has to build a nation-state from scratch. Although the subject of this study is the problems of transition and consolidation of democracy in Slovenia, that country's pattern of democratization is certainly not unique. It is rather surprising that while sociological literature on the issue of transitions abounds, Slovenia is often ignored or treated as a mere footnote. Slovenia's small size and the absence of major problems (at least as seen from the outside) seem to make it an unattractive subject for many scholars.

The purpose of this case study is to advance the sociological understanding of the complex democratization processes in Slovenia from their beginnings in the late 1980s to the present. It will attempt to concentrate on social-conditioning factors that either facilitate or hinder the transition to its ultimate end—achievement of a consolidated democracy. This kind of research—"transitology"—is often accused

of teleological bias.⁴ Although such an accusation may in some cases be justified, insisting on this particular claim would undoubtedly undermine the sociological discipline as such or condemn it to merely describing events. Rejecting that claim are Linz and Stepan (1996b, 31), who point out that structural factors—although they play an important role—do not in and of themselves lead to democratization and its consolidation. Actors in the social arena, and individual leaders in particular, must also act purposefully to effect a change of government that supports the development of democratic order. Another scholar (Ágh 1998, 50) from the region (Eastern and Central Europe) favors the term “transition” because he believes that in this part of the world one can speak about the general movement toward Europeanization as well as toward democratization and marketization.

Scholars must pay more attention to the meaning of the concepts that they employ. The consequence of this professional malaise is the illusion that everyone who uses a certain concept is engaged in a common theoretical discourse. In their analysis of more than 150 recent studies on the problems of democracy and democratization, Collier and Levitsky (Diamond 1999, 72) identified 550 “subtypes” of the concept of democracy alone. Many scholars waste time looking for a new concept or term and thus add to the vocabulary without adding to the substance. In order to avoid becoming a prisoner (semantically speaking) of “homonymity,” I will proceed with a more disciplined method of defining the two concepts crucial to our research: democratic transition and democratic consolidation. At the same time I will try to be alert to the fact that elaborating on the fundamental social changes will not be limited to only a few conceptual corrections but will also require a process of rethinking the entire conceptual apparatus in this field of research.

By “democratic transition” I refer to the overall process of governmental change from start to completion, that is, from the end of the previous authoritarian or totalitarian regime to a situation when, with a new constitution in place, democratic structures begin to enter the political arena, and the political elite adjust their behavior to liberal democratic practices (Pridham and Lewis, eds. 1996, 2). During this transition the rules of the political game are not yet defined; they are in constant flux and fiercely contested, and democracy is not guaranteed. Politicians struggle not just to satisfy their immediate interests (and those of their supposed constituents) but also to define rules and

procedures whose configuration will determine likely winners and losers in the future (O'Donnell and Schmitter, eds. 1986, 6). A sociologically more illuminating view defines this macropolitical trajectory as a leap from “uncertain procedures and certain results” in the old undemocratic regime to a democratic state of “certain procedures and uncertain outcomes” (Bunce in Szoboszlai 1991, 156). Transition thus refers to a sociologically fluid and confused state in which the new democratic structures have only begun to emerge (a “democracy without democrats,” as someone once lamented), while some characteristic behavioral and structural residues of the old regime remain intact.

While democratic transition is primarily concerned with undermining authoritarian institutions and replacing them with pro-democratic ones, democratic consolidation entails a broader and more complex process associated with the institutionalization of a new democratic set of rules for political life (Munck 1994, 356). According to Lipset (1994, 7), new democracies must be institutionalized, consolidated, and legitimized. Consolidation is therefore a lengthier and much more demanding process than transition. Establishing democratic electoral arrangements is one thing; sustaining them is quite another. According to Dahl's (1991, 11) count, sixty-one cases of democratic transition in this century were ultimately reversed. This is also the point of Huntington's metaphor of the democratic “wave”: namely, that each new historical wave of initiated democratization leaves some countries on the beach when it retreats. Democratic consolidation is the process by which the essential characteristics of the various democratic structures and norms are established and adapted so as to make them immune to the threat of authoritarian regression in the long run. Time may certainly bring crises, breakdowns, and profound changes, but if the new establishment stands the test of these challenges and, moreover, if it eventually learns to cope with them, then we are looking at a consolidated democracy.

Theoretical Background and Explanations

There has, on the one hand, been the appearance of abundant and convincing literature on the subject of democratization in the world, but on the other hand, there is a consensus among scholars that no such great theoretical systems have so far emerged. Nevertheless, Dahl warned about excessive theorizing: “A theory sometimes becomes a sort

of bed of Procrustes into which everything is forced to fit, no matter if the poor victim is fatally damaged in the process” (Dahl 1996, 86). Some of the more optimistically inclined are nonetheless still awaiting the (unlikely) discovery of “a narrative grammar of post-Communist developments” (Wnuk-Lipinsky 1995, 15). I will try to be more modest in identifying the extant theoretical repertoire that shaped the study of democratization in political sociology and informed my research on democratic transition and consolidation in Slovenia. It hardly needs to be mentioned that the theoretical approaches depicted here represent ideals, but this fact cannot hide the considerable overlap between seemingly different and competing theories or erase the fact that scholars (at least the best ones) rarely follow a particular approach exclusively, although it may dominate their work. In spite of this overlapping, there exists a more or less visible conflict between defenders of modernization, transition, and structural approaches that reflect divergent and largely irresolvable conceptions about underlying patterns of social causality (Remmer 1995, 40). The classification that serves my purpose is, of course, only one among many and therefore cannot exhaust the entirety of accumulated knowledge in this field.⁵

Existing explanations of democratization fall into three major theoretical schools: the modernization, transition, and structural approaches. The most general and succinct characterization of these three approaches is that the first centers around social and economic requisites that are either associated with existing liberal democracies or are necessary for successful democratization; the second focuses on the political processes and elite initiatives and the choices that account for the moves from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy; and the third primarily considers the changing and complex power structures favorable to democratization.

The Modernization Explanation

Modernization theory relies on two basic premises: first, that there are marked stages in history, which progresses toward an end goal, and second, that there is some correlation between socioeconomic development and the type of political system that a country has. Part of this argument is that, at a certain stage and level of economic and social development, systems need to move toward liberal democracy, and liberal democracy is ultimately compatible with only one broadly

defined economic system: a predominantly market-driven and privatized—that is, capitalist—one (Holmes 1997, 38).

In his chapter titled “Economic Development and Democracy,” Seymour Martin Lipset (1960) identified a set of ideas that has been used to inform the explanation of democratization.⁶ Democracy, argued Lipset, is a good indicator of a country’s socioeconomic development or level of modernization. His research findings confirmed that more democratic countries had consistently higher mean levels of socioeconomic development than more authoritarian ones. This finding led him to further conclude that “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy.” His procedure consisted of establishing a significant correlation between a number of discrete socioeconomic variables, each of which is associated with a democracy variable. It is important to note, however, that his explanation established correlations, not actual causal mechanisms. While Lipset was aware that establishing a correlation between socioeconomic variables and democracy variables is not the same thing as establishing that democracy is caused by socioeconomic development, he spent considerable time discussing various causal mechanisms that might link the two. He argued, for example, that the “lower the absolute standard of living of the lower classes, the greater the pressure on the upper strata to treat the lower as vulgar, innately inferior and hence unworthy of political rights and democracy.” In another example, he contends that socioeconomic development in a country can strengthen the middle class, which is good for democracy because it “tempers conflict by rewarding moderate and democratic parties and penalizing extremist groups.”

Instead of introducing a causal account, Lipset chose to talk about “requisites for democracy” and not “prerequisites.” Lipset’s formula on the relationship between socioeconomic modernization and democracy was therefore never extremely simple or straightforward. In a more recent statement, he argued that “sociological correlations are merely associational, and do not necessarily indicate cause.” He and others in his wake later developed even more refined explanations of political democracy in terms of correlates, conditions, historical paths, complex configurations of power, and so on. Lipset has further widened the list of social variables conducive to successful democratic consolidation to include international and institutional factors, the appropriateness of the initial electoral and other political institutions

to the ethnic and other structural cleavages of the given country, the current state of the economy, and the abilities and tactics of the major political players. Moreover, Lipset comes closer to transition theorists by arguing, “Whether democracy succeeds or fails continues to depend significantly on the choices, behaviors and decisions of political leaders and groups” (Lipset 1994, 16–20).

In his seminal work *The Third Wave*, Samuel P. Huntington incorporated analysis of the most recent wave of democratization. He insisted that his work has primarily explanatory and not theoretical aims. Huntington pointed out that it was during the first wave of democratization (1828–1926) that the modernization dynamic was at its strongest, with a burst of economic development, the start of industrialization, the spread of urbanization, the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the middle class, the development of a working class and its early organizations, and the gradual decrease in economic inequality, all of which contributed to the movement toward democratization (1991, xiii and 39). The pattern of the third wave (1974–90) seemed to Huntington more complex, although one factor from the old modernization repertoire was still present: unprecedented global economic growth (this time in the 1960s), “which raised living standards, increased education, and greatly expanded the urban middle class in many countries.” Besides this independent variable that produced the dependent variable of democratization, Huntington mentions four others: the deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian systems, the striking changes in the doctrine and activities of the Catholic Church, the changes in the policies of external actors (expansion of the European Union, U.S. policies favoring global human rights, and Gorbachev’s policy of abandoning Soviet imperial power), and last but not least, the demonstration effects of the first transitions to democracy in the third wave (Huntington 1991, 45–46).

Huntington’s second important contribution was to explain how transitions advance. His discovery of a heretofore hidden pattern linking the prior regime and the mode of transition is particularly relevant to our own research. While other researchers focused on the link between transitional processes and the problems of democratic consolidation, Huntington alone considered the potential effect of the preceding type of authoritarian regime on the transition process. He looks beyond the strategic choices of leaders for other potential explanations of how transitions occur. For analytical purposes, Huntington found

it useful to group transition cases into three broad types of processes: transformation, replacement, and transplacement. “Transformation” occurs when the power elite initiate democratic changes. “Replacement” happens when opposition groups initiate democracy and the authoritarian regime collapses or is overthrown. “Transplacement” is largely the result of joint action by government and the opposition (Huntington 1991, 114). By analyzing thirty-five cases of transitions that occurred between 1974 and 1990, Huntington concluded that transformation and transplacement are the most common forms of transition from both military regimes and one-party systems, while transitions through replacement are rather rare.

The Transition Explanation

While the modernization explanation focuses on the complex conditions required for the democratization process to survive, the transition explanation challenges what it depicts as modernization’s enchantment with the “present tense” and “functional curiosity” as far as topical research is concerned. Transition theorists are primarily interested in politics that arise from prior conditions and in a sharper micropolitical focus, so they pay attention to the compromises, choices, and negotiations of elites in conflict. A democratic outcome is thus the end product of the initiatives of human agency. At each of the three levels (economy, sociopolitical structure, and concrete human agency), the role and extent of external factors vary in form and intensity (Potter et al. 1997, 523).

In his influential article “Transitions to Democracy,” Dankwart Rustow emphasizes the role of a historical political process marked by social conflict and raises quite a different question from the ones we have heard thus far, that is, he asks “how a democracy comes into being in the first place” (Rustow 1970, 340). In answering this question, he provides an analytical apparatus that considers four main phases. During the first phase, national political unity is established in the sense that the majority of the people participate in the budding democracy. The second phase, a preparatory stage, sees a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle in achieving democratic order. Each country goes through a different struggle, from which democracy unfolds. At this point democracy is still very fragile: the struggle can tear the nation apart or end with one group becoming so powerful that it engulfs the opposition and blocks the road to democracy. The third

phase—a real “historical moment,” according to Rustow—is in fact the first transition, called the “decision” phase, when political elites decide to compromise and adopt democratic rules that give each some share in the polity. The fourth phase, or the second transition, is called the “habituation” phase, when the accepted rules become a habit. It can now be properly said that a democratic form of government has been firmly established (Rustow 1970, 350–61).

Further conceptualizations of democratic transitions were discussed by O’Donnell and Schmitter in their well-known work on transitions in which they compared the experiences of Southern European and Latin American democracies (O’Donnell and Schmitter, eds. 1986). Although speaking specifically of Latin countries, this theory established the “common language of transitology” (Ágh 1998, 15–16). Like Rustow, the authors insist on distinguishing between the initial transition from authoritarian rule or preliminary political liberalization and the consolidation of liberal democracy. One of the defining features of democratic transitions is that there are moments of “plasticity” in which one is confronted with “elements of accident and unpredictability,” with “very inadequate information, of actors facing irresolvable ethical dilemmas and ideological confusions, of dramatic turning points reached and passed without an understanding of their future significance” (O’Donnell and Schmitter, eds. 1986, 3–4). In contrast to periods of normal and routine politics, during democratic transitions leaders appear to face an unusual opportunity to shape the course of events. Such times have given rise to a number of prominent politicians, including Lech Wałęsa, Václav Havel, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Boris Yeltsin, which only justifies those transition theorists who focus their research in this regard on the role of personal factor. At critical junctures, “constitutional choices” have played a role in defining a particular path of (re)democratization for a given country. These choices also help establish institutions that may prove conducive to democratic consolidation.

In this context, O’Donnell and Schmitter viewed the easing of repression and the establishing of a certain number of civil liberties as the first signs of political liberalization within an authoritarian regime. Once liberalization is underway, however, various political leaders begin to get involved in the historical interplay between the regime and opposition forces. In this context the authors analyzed the relationships between two coalitions typically present in such regimes:

“hard-liners” and “soft-liners” within the authoritarian coalition, and “opportunists,” “moderates,” and “extremists” within the opposition. Examining various Latin American countries, the authors suggested that the coalition most likely to succeed consisted of “soft-liners” and “moderates.” (O’Donnell and Schmitter, eds. 1986, chap. 3).

Adam Przeworski offers—though not always consistently—an explanation of regime change that is based on leaders’ making rational choices. His work (1991 and 1995) is often characterized as an example of forceful theoretical elegance and clarity but criticized for lacking references to empirical evidence. He strongly argues that the elites make their choices based on their individual calculations of the potential benefit and harm of those choices. In this vein they can either support or withhold their support from authoritarian regimes. By giving priority to a process analysis of democratic transition over a structural comparison of preconditions and outcomes, and to leaders’ rational calculations over compliance with pre-established norms, Przeworski reduces the importance of the role of historical legacies, as may be traced either to the preceding nondemocratic regime or to the mode of transition. It should be noted, however, that regarding the impact of modes of transition, he acknowledges variations in the transitional process but does not distinguish between a transition in which “extrication” is fairly automatic because of the regime’s collapse, and a transition in which the withdrawal of the military or the Communist Party must be negotiated (Munck 1994, 368).

The Structural Explanation

Unlike the transition explanation, the structural explanation approaches democratization processes not by focusing on the agency of political elites but by considering long-term processes of historical change, especially the question of how structures and social players (such as socioeconomic classes and organizations that represent them) interact to produce confrontations that cause social change. The structural approach to democratization places explanatory primacy on the various interrelationships of certain power structures (economic, social, political) during their gradual change as they constrain or offer opportunities that drive political elites and others along a historical trajectory toward liberal democracy. The lives of individuals are therefore shaped by structures inherited from the past, which, although endur-

ing, gradually change over time as individuals “appropriate” them in practice and as each structure is influenced by those structures and by events (Potter et al. 1997, 19).

Barrington Moore’s (1966) classic argument revolves around the question of why, during the gradual transformation to modern industrial society, the eight countries that he analyzed and compared took different political paths to reach their final political destination. Instead of relying on pattern variables or elite initiatives, Moore directs his attention to the changed interrelationships between four changing power structures. Three belonged to social classes (the peasantry, the landed upper class, and the urban bourgeoisie) while the fourth one was the state. In his conclusion, Moore suggested a common pattern of changing relations between peasants, lords, the urban bourgeoisie, and the state, as well as their different attitudes toward the political form of liberal democracy. His five conditions for democratic development are: (1) the development of a balance to avoid too strong a state or too independent a landed aristocracy, (2) a turn toward an appropriate form of commercial agriculture, (3) the weakening of the landed aristocracy, (4) the prevention of an aristocratic-bourgeois coalition against the peasants and workers, and (5) a revolutionary break from the past led by the bourgeoisie (Moore 1966, 430–31).

On the other hand, fascism emerged when the urban bourgeoisie was comparatively weak and relied on the dominant upper classes to sponsor the commercialization of agriculture through the domination of the state, which enforced labor discipline among the peasantry. Communist revolutions occurred when the urban bourgeoisie was dominated by the state, the link between the landlords and the peasantry was weak, the landlords failed to commercialize agriculture, and the peasantry was cohesive and found allies with organizational skills.

Stokes (1987, 31–32 and 72) notes that Moore’s analysis does not discuss the historical trajectories of small states because, as Moore argued, “the fact that smaller countries depend economically and politically on big and powerful ones means that the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries.”⁷ In the same vein, Moore paid no attention to the contributions of (charismatic) individuals who had played such an outstanding role in the political struggles and outcomes in their respective countries.⁸

Later, Dietrich Rueschemeyer et al. (eds. 1992) moved beyond Moore by developing an explanatory framework anchored in state

structures and transnational power structures. Rueschemeyer et al. and Moore never the less share the core belief that a comparative political economy provides the explanatory paradigm that shows why, when, and how economic development translates into democracy (Kitschelt 1992a, 1030). Like Moore, Rueschemeyer et al. are pessimistic about the chances for democratization in Eastern Europe, conclusions that they base on the presumed *nomenclatura's* attempt to represent the functional equivalent of the landlord class and on the large autonomous groups operating within these weak civil societies. It should be stressed that Rueschemeyer et al. added discussion of an important dimension that is missing in Moore's work, that is, the role of international and transnational relationships.⁹

Whether or not a society moves toward liberal democracy depends fundamentally on "the balance of class power" or, more concretely, on the dynamics of "the struggle between the dominant and subordinated classes over their right to rule" (Rueschemeyer et al. eds. 1992, 47). In addition, the state's strength plays an important role: democratization is more likely assured in the middle ground between "not enough" state power and "too much." The development of capitalism has historically led to the emergence of a denser civil society and to the growth of political parties as counterweights to state power. As for the parties, dominant classes are more likely to accommodate democracy when the party system includes a strong party on the right; where such a party is lacking or no longer able to protect its interests, such classes have been readier to appeal to the military to end democratic rule.¹⁰

The three approaches discussed surely meet Holmes's (1997, 61) criteria, that is, they provide insights and new perspectives that a mere recitation of "the facts" would be unlikely to do. More recent scholarship on democratization has shown substantial progress toward theoretical convergence, which results from awareness that one theoretical approach alone cannot completely capture and explain the complexity and multifaceted character of democratization.¹¹ It is worth noting that the founders of the theoretical approaches discussed above, with the probable exception of Lipset, were not interested in theoretical convergence as such. In 1966 Moore made no reference to Lipset, while in 1970 Rustow frequently referred to Lipset's work of 1960 but made only one marginal reference to Moore. Lipset, in the second revised edition of his *Political Man* (1981), briefly dismissed Rustow's analysis and made no reference to Moore.¹²

That these scholars hardly took notice of each other's work is symptomatic of their radically differing explanatory focuses and research strategies. It is a good sign for the sociological profession that later scholars, while using different explanations, have engaged critically with each other more than was the case with the founders. This has resulted in a number of improvements on the ideas of the founders that we have dealt with in this section. Lipset's original formulations have been further elaborated on and developed by a number of scholars (Marks and Diamond, eds. 1992) who were influenced by his theoretical path, and even by Lipset (1994) himself. Mainwaring et al. (eds. 1992), Shain and Linz (eds. 1995), and several others greatly expanded Rustow's original theoretical paradigm. As far as the transition explanation is concerned, it had to accommodate the structural theorists, that is, it had to incorporate "the simple yet theoretically complex notion that leaders make choices but not in circumstances of their own choosing" (Munck 1994, 371).¹³

Thomas Carothers (2002, 17) has recently charged that the transition paradigm has several shortcomings: (1) it simplistically, incorrectly, and almost automatically assumes that any country moving away from dictatorship is "in transition to democracy"; (2) its use of the unhelpful and too-general label and concept "transitional country" and, moreover, its assumption that the unfolding of democratization is defied in practice; (3) the assumption that regular genuine elections confer a democratic legacy even when political participation beyond voting is weak; (4) underestimating the evident and strong role of "specific institutional legacies from predecessor regimes [that] strongly affect the outcomes of attempted transitions"; and (5) its lack of attention to state building, which was a much larger and more problematic undertaking than the transition paradigm initially anticipated. This critique of the transition paradigm, while noting several important shortcomings, nevertheless itself suffers for examining it from a much too narrow perspective and ignoring the paradigm's initial positive contributions.

Following Munck's lead, above, it can be argued that his explanations do not directly compete with any others but instead focus on different objects of explanation. According to Kitschelt (1992a, 1028), the structural explanation, which prefers systematic macroquantitative or conceptually disciplined qualitative comparison, with countries as units of analysis, tends to explain "too much," whereas process

explanation, which revolves around descriptive diachronic reconstructions of individual cases of regime transition with very little systematic comparison across a wide spectrum of countries, tends to explain “too little.” From a more general perspective, however, it should be stressed that the approaches discussed show quite a bit of sensitivity to at least two other important explanatory considerations: first, that the historical uniqueness and contingency (chance events), and hence the timing and context of democratization in each individual country, are of considerable importance, and, second, that all the approaches recognize how the pace and form of democratization in each society are influenced by international economic and political factors (Potter et al. 1997, 522).

In Search of a Good Explanatory Theory

I will argue that studying democratic transition and consolidation imposes quite a different method on a researcher than does studying a “normal” and democratically stabilized governmental system. Because of the high level of uncertainty and the indeterminacy of these processes, the conceptual and research frameworks constantly deal with changing realities where, according to Lipset and Bence (1994, 170–71), a chain of events in case of crisis considerably magnifies small changes. Other scholars (Mainwaring et al. 1992, 332) have pointed out that if “normal” political processes, on the one hand, involve less choice, leadership, international context, and so on, and on the other, see themselves determined more by structural factors, it is quite the opposite for countries undergoing profound transitions. The abnormality of post-Communist politics is best exemplified by politics that are dictated by values alone, and not by interests. This problem is further complicated by the fact that there is not just one post-Communist path, but many. It would be unrealistic to expect that a one-size-fits-all theory could apply to twenty-eight countries (one-fifth of the globe, with roughly 400 million people), ranging from Czechoslovakia to Uzbekistan, that are presently struggling with their authoritarian legacies.

In our search for a good explanatory theory, we will avoid theories that hold that social science relying on generalizations can fully explain the foundations for a successful democratic consolidation, and we will instead turn to probabilistic claims (Kitschelt 1993, 424).¹⁴ Both this

problem and the complexity of the many post-Communist democratization patterns justify our claim that one theoretical system alone cannot explain the dynamic sociological experiment that is democracy. We hope that this theoretical choice, although not without its own shortcomings, will help explain the phenomena studied better than the available alternatives. Additionally, we will attempt to avoid two pitfalls: “retrospective determinism,” that is, assuming that what did happen is what had to happen, and so-called “presentism,” which considers that the motives and perceptions of the past are the same as those of the present (Schmitter in Tulchin and Romero, eds. 1995, 14).

In order to place the process of democratic transition and consolidation within the recognizable, although composite (eclectic) framework of a theory, I will identify those many explanatory factors and processes that are crucial to determining a country’s overall degree of success or failure in consolidating democracy.¹⁵ I will argue that specific national trajectories require that the particular balance of factors unique to each country be precisely examined. As these factors are anchored in different social and chronological settings with unequal and shifting “weights,” I suggest staying open and cautious in determining their crucial linkages with either socioeconomic and structural or human agencies. We could take, for example, two seemingly incoherent explanations: the first refers to the apparent correlation of democratic outcomes to levels of socioeconomic development and suggests a close link with modernization theories, and the second is an elite perspective that transition theorists argue is a surer guide to the processes involved in the critical move from authoritarian rule toward the introduction of democratic practices. This leads us further to the conclusion that the relationship, for example, between structures and (political) institutions is in most cases shaped by the actions and choices of political leaders. However, the more constraining and unfavorable the structural circumstances, the more determined, skillful, innovative, courageous, and democratically committed the political leadership must be for democracy to survive (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset eds. 1990, 15).

Factors and processes do not unfold in a vacuum. Their present contents and directions have been shaped by a number of past developments, all of which need to be acknowledged. It is thus quite important to reconsider particular countries’ specific experiences and to identify those countries’ critical historical junctures that have a bearing on the

character of later democratic transformations and without which we cannot grasp the meaning of democratic transition and consolidation processes (Ekiert 1996, xi). To this end, I will examine in particular the nature of the undemocratic regime that preceded the democracy, because it has a role in determining the vicissitudes along the trajectory toward democratization. It is superfluous to add that the type of democracy that issues from the ancien régime depends considerably on the extent of pluralism observable in that regime and, consequently, that the type of democracy established similarly depends to a greater extent on the mode of transition from autocracy (Schmitter in Tulchin and Romero eds. 1995, 18). The most visible (turning) points in these processes are important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, mainly along the fluctuating boundary between “hard-liners” and “soft-liners.” Huntington has widely elaborated on this point, which justifies our choice of his hypothesis that consensual, less violent transformations provide a better basis for consolidation of democracy than do conflict and violence.¹⁶

In addition to the historical dimension, we will pay particular attention to the role of international factors in influencing democratic outcomes. It should be noted, however, that state socialism, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, was itself (in)directly created in 1945 at Yalta for “geopolitical reasons” and was abandoned in the late 1980s, again partly for international reasons (globalization of the marketplace, communications, and so on). While Moore, as already noted, stressed the decisive influence of international factors on the actions of small states, it is also necessary to pay attention to other factors. Here I will rely on Szporluk, who pointed out that “a nation-in-the-making seeks to define itself in a broader international framework extending beyond the confines of the entity from which it is seceding” and who further interpreted the international factor as a drive “to participate directly in the affairs of the world,” something that requires political independence (Szporluk 1997, 86). These two important ideas undoubtedly helped establish a sociologically viable paradigm implying a proper understanding of the relative weight and interplay of relevant domestic and international factors.¹⁷ Additionally, by emphasizing the role of the international factor (in a narrower sense, “foreign influences” or “major impulses from outside,” as Rustow would have it), we seek to correct the field’s excessively reliance on elite choices and human agency to interpret events.

The Research Targets

Thus far I have depicted a number of theoretical assumptions that will continuously guide my research. The primary objective of this work is, however, to identify, link, and thoroughly examine those salient factors and processes that were and/or are crucial in determining the two phases of democratic transformation in Slovenia: transition (initiation) and consolidation (habituation). Here we will rely, as stated, on Lipset's (1994, 17) sound advice in the sense that while factors shape probabilities, they do not by themselves determine outcomes. As is obvious, this research represents a case-oriented study—a detailed study of one country—and although it aims at a less generalized explanation, it will attempt in the last part to compare the established pattern of democratization in Slovenia with democratization patterns elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe to discover both the commonalties and differences. Through comparison, we hope to accomplish two things. First, to contribute to an awareness of the diversity of democratization attempts in the post-Communist “laboratory.” And second, to test how far one can go with accumulated general theoretical knowledge and concepts in suggesting new ways to approach problems (Stokes 1987, 74). In this vein, I will focus my research on the following major factors and processes that were/are affecting Slovenia's distinct prospects for transition: socioeconomic background, international context, dynamics of the internal political players, civil society, political culture, intelligentsia and intellectuals, and the role of religion. Although the factors of state and market are not specifically emphasized, they will nevertheless be continuously present and elaborated upon whenever the specific explanation and coherence of our theoretical argument so requires. In addition, since our analysis covers almost two decades and also includes a country—Yugoslavia—that no longer exists as such, our examination will need to be supplemented from time to time by historical and other relevant narrative.

My data comes from a number of different sources. One source is my own ample archive of personal involvement (participant observation) in different civic and civil-society activities in Yugoslavia and Slovenia, particularly those activities of my late friend—former Tito biographer and later dissident Vladimir Dedijer (the only Yugoslav intellectual and member of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party to openly support Milovan Djilas's call for political pluralism as early as

1954).¹⁸ Other sources include statements and public proclamations by both the former ruling party and dissident movements (in early and late civil society), interviews with participants in the most critical events, fifteen years of public-opinion surveys, and the secondary literature on democratization in Slovenia and Eastern and Central Europe by both Slovene and international writers.

After this theoretical introduction I will discuss the role of the various factors, both domestic and international, that led to the breakup of the Yugoslav state and its Communist system and will offer an explanation for the emergence of an independent Slovenia in chapter 1. In chapter 2, I will examine the centrality of civil society in undermining the political viability and legitimacy of the party-state, its crucial role in introducing political pluralism and parliamentary democracy in Slovenia, and its demobilization after it had met its initial goals. In addition, I will examine the emergence of political parties as the institutional basis of democracy and will consider their often-winding path toward establishing the minimal conditions of a consolidated democracy. Chapter 3 examines the different roles that intellectuals played in the authoritarian political realm: in light of the highly intellectual character of communism, many intellectuals at the beginning legitimated it, but they were among the first to rebel against political despotism and later turned into professional politicians. Today, they have been marginalized or have become adversaries because some of them still defend liberal political values, while another influential part of the intellectual elite preaches populism. In chapter 4, I will discuss the difficult relationships between the Church and state, the Church and society, and Catholicism and democracy, respectively. Although Catholicism contributed significantly to the third wave of democratization elsewhere in the world in the 1970s and 1980s, it did not support democratization in Slovenia, where the Church is tempted to see, in the demise of Communist power, an opportunity to undo the secularization of Slovene society and the constitutionally guaranteed separation of Church and state. Chapter 5 will examine the most immediate threats to the newly established democracy, which come from the various extremist political factions, and will attempt to identify their social profile and international context. Finally, in chapter 6, I will present the major findings of the study, locate the Slovene pattern of democratization within the Eastern and Central European and third-wave contexts, and illuminate new research challenges.