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**The Impact of Collective Actors
upon Democratization**

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Abstract:

Despite criticism of the elite-centered model of “transitions to democracy,” the mechanism by which collective actors influence paths of democratization remains unspecified. In this paper I argue that demands by collective actors mobilizing popular support can introduce issues and limit the range of outcomes considered at elite negotiations. In cases of democratization “from above” when elites initiate political reforms, the agenda for change can be limited by the need of elites to secure the conditional support of the groups they represent. Secondly, in cases of democratization “from below,” revolutionary movements mobilizing mass support are emboldened to challenge the agenda of elites by introducing new demands. To develop this argument, I contrast the impact of collective actors in the pacted path of democratization in Poland with the capitulation by the Leninist state in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

I. Introduction:

Despite criticism of the elite-centered model of “transitions to democracy,” the mechanism by which collective actors influence paths of democratization remains unspecified. In this paper I argue that demands by collective actors mobilizing popular support can introduce issues and limit the range of outcomes considered at elite negotiations. In cases of democratization “from above” when elites initiate political reforms, the agenda for change can be limited by the need of elites to secure the conditional support of the groups they represent. Secondly, in cases of democratization “from below,” revolutionary movements mobilizing mass support are emboldened to challenge the agenda of elites by introducing new demands. To develop this argument, I contrast the impact of collective actors in the pacted path of democratization in Poland with the capitulation by the Leninist state in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

II. Collective actors and paths of democratization

In the wake of the fall of Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the “transitions to democracy” literature was given new life and elaborated as a model of the process by which elites negotiate and craft democratic institutions.² Sustainable democracy, according to Przeworski, is the result of agreement between reformers within the state and moderates among challengers who craft political institutions generating self-interested compliance of all relevant political forces.³ Criticism of this approach’s emphasis on elites has taken two forms: (1) questioning the model’s assumption of elite

preferences and (2) challenging the epiphenomenal role which collective actors are assigned in the process.

The round table negotiations in Eastern Europe took place in conditions that were, in the words of Jon Elster, "unique, novel and urgent" and entailed complex, strategic interaction with state authorities.⁴ In such situations, Elster argues, both costs and benefits of action are uncertain, and "rational choice theory or game theory has little prescriptive or predictive power."⁵ Haggard and Kaufman argue that since "these models are disconnected from economic conditions and social forces, they miss important determinants of bargaining power as well as substantive concerns that drive parties to seek or oppose democratization in the first place."⁶ As Jowitt notes, the exclusive focus on elites suffers from excessive voluntarism.⁷ With the possible exception of Poland, the challengers in Eastern Europe had emerged too recently and were too underdeveloped to fit into the model's two by two categorization of negotiators as hardliners and softliners within the regime, moderates and radicals among the challengers. In his critique of Przeworski, Kitschelt observes, "the conventional game-theoretical approach, without sophisticated assumptions about actors' belief systems, is insufficient to arrive at substantive predictions of outcomes."⁸

Criticism of the assumption of elite preferences highlights the epiphenomenal role to which collective actors have been assigned. For instance, while O'Donnell and Schmitter are not inattentive to what they refer to as the "resurrection of civil society," they argue that "regardless of its intensity and of the background from which it emerges...popular upsurge is always ephemeral."⁹ Similarly, while Linz and Stepan observe that the transition to democracy in Spain took place in a "context of heightened

societal pressure for, and expectations of, change,” their framework lacks the analytic tools to explain the influence of collective actors upon the elite negotiations that drive their analysis.¹⁰ What is needed is to situate elite negotiations within the constraints created by their need to secure the conditional support of the collective actors they claim to represent. Although mass protest rarely defines new political institutions, the impact of collective action may be long-lasting when actors are admitted to the political arena as a result of protest and new demands are articulated that shape the range of outcomes considered in negotiations. Many scholars have argued for the influence of particular collective actors upon democratization. For example, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens insist that the possibilities for democracy rest upon “the structure of class coalitions as well as the relative power of different classes.”¹¹ Collier and Mahoney observe that labor unions in South America and Southern Europe were “not limited to an indirect role, in which protest around workplace demands was answered through cooptive inclusion in the electoral arena. Rather, the labor movement was one of the major actors in the political opposition, explicitly demanding a democratic regime.”¹² Further, Bermeo argues that transitions to democracy must include the influence of political parties responsive to the voting public.¹³

Despite the above criticisms, however, the mechanism by which collective actors influence democratization remains unspecified. In this paper I argue that demands by collective actors mobilizing public support can introduce new issues and limit the range of outcomes considered in elite negotiations. I contrast the impact of collective actors across two ideal type paths varying in terms of the impetus for change: in cases of democratization “from above” when elites initiate political reforms without widespread

public mobilization, the agenda for change can be limited by their need to secure the conditional support of groups they represent. Second, in cases of democratization “from below,” revolutionary movements mobilizing mass support are emboldened to challenge the agenda of elites by introducing new demands. These categories are not exhaustive, but the aim of this paper is not to survey the paths by which democratization occurs nor to explain why particular paths occur in given historical instances.¹⁴ Rather, I contrast two broad processes of democratization to specify the mechanisms by which collective actors can alter elite negotiations. This argument directs attention to agenda setting or “the process by which demands of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for the serious attention of public officials.”¹⁵ Bachrach and Baratz argue that the ability of a group to place an issue on the agenda or keep it off of a government's agenda is an often overlooked form of power.¹⁶ Thus, agendas for democratization can not be simply derived from elite interests or interactions but reflect demands by collective actors and appeals for support on behalf of particular paths of change.

By suggesting that either the need to secure the support of collective actors or demands made by collective actors themselves can influence agendas for democratization, I am not arguing that outcomes simply reflect the symbolic content of appeals for support but that these appeals filtered the perception of choices considered in negotiations. Mobilization by collective actors can generate uncertainty and alter elite behavior in at least three ways: by demonstrating that new political actors exist whose future actions might affect elite interests (such as participation in future elections or publicizing human rights abuses in the international arena), by threatening attacks upon elite resources or alliances that undergird previously stable patterns of elite authority (such as strikes at state

enterprises, withholding of taxes, or appeals to the military for support) and (3) by threatening direct attacks on elites themselves (such as terrorist attacks or hostage-taking).¹⁷ Mobilization strengthens the ability of collective actors to make claims upon states yet also constrains them by limiting the range of acceptable outcomes because of the conditional nature of popular support.¹⁸ The authority of elites in turn rests in part upon their ability to secure support from the groups they represent, including the military forces, political parties, the working class, revolutionary movements, or the voting public.

Claims that elite negotiators are constrained by demands from collective actors or the conditional nature of their support can not be simply accepted at face value. They must be examined in light of the frequency of such claims, the likelihood of threat being carried out, and the impact of such constraints upon the decisions taken. Agenda setting effects are not equally probable in every situation nor for every issue. Saideman argues that agenda-setting matters most when leaders do not have clearly defined preferences, when there are no clear ways to achieve a preferred outcome, and when popular opinion is neither strongly divided nor strongly in favor or against a particular issue.¹⁹ This directs attention to the congruency between appeals to supporters and demands at the bargaining table, as well as to mechanisms by which actors can be held accountable to their members and broader constituencies. Even if direct public involvement in negotiations is low, elite choices may be constrained by public attention to their actions.

By examining the influence of collective actors across paths of democratization, this paper explains variation in outcomes in terms of the interactions between elite negotiators and collective actors in conditions of uncertainty and conditional public support. This argument could be falsified if it could be demonstrated that stable support

for particular actors or paths of change preceded democratization or that elites imposed an agreement, such as by means of force. Further, agenda-setting would be less relevant if the same information or metaphors always arose around democratization, if there was a single, dominant attitude about paths of change, or if people's attitudes about it were integrated into a single measure. Such conditions seem unlikely given the uncertainty surrounding democratization when new actors may emerge to challenge non-democratic states under extraconstitutional terms, nor to be the basis for generalizable theory.²⁰ Rather, variation in the popular support for elites, mobilization by collective actors, and consensus surrounding paths of change seems a more promising set of assumptions which structure the arguments in this paper.

To develop this argument, I contrast the impact of collective actors upon paths of democratization in Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1989, cases which scholars have generally taken to represent the two major paths by which communism fell in Eastern Europe (excepting the violence in Romania): negotiated pacts for elections in Poland and Hungary, and popular upsurge leading to the fall of the Leninist regimes in East Germany and Czechoslovakia.²¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to account for the many similarities and differences between Poland and Czechoslovakia, but by contrasting these two broad paths of democratization I demonstrate not only that collective actors influenced the agendas for change in both instances, but that the mechanism by which they did so varied in consequential ways for the founding of democratic states.

III. Contrasting paths of democratization in Poland and Czechoslovakia

1. Democratization "from above" in Poland:

Despite the long history of political struggle in Poland after the second world war, the negotiated agreement for partially-free elections in early 1989 has been widely perceived in the scholarly literature as an instance of a pacted transition whereby elite negotiations led to an agreement in which the old regime retained significant positions of power.²² In the late 1980s, in light of a failed referendum proposed by the state in 1987 and failed strikes by Solidarity in April, 1988, a political impasse had been reached whereby neither the state nor Solidarity could unilaterally mobilize sufficient popular support to resolve Poland's increasing economic problems. In the public statements of both sides, the notion of an "anti-crisis pact" emerged in which the impasse would be resolved by a limited opening: the Solidarity trade union would be legalized in exchange for support for the government's proposed economic reforms and limited participation in the government.²³ By ending unplanned strikes in the name of an honorable compromise in August, 1988, Solidarity leaders set limits to the political agenda for an agreement with the state; further, by excluding from the round table negotiations the possibility that the Leninist state could lose elections, Solidarity transformed the outcome from cooptation into limited competition.

Central to the negotiations between representatives of Solidarity and the state was competition over their purpose. For Solidarity, the negotiations were a compromise, but one which had to be perceived as honorable. The very notion of compromise was tainted by previous history of geopolitical occupation of Poland. The opposition emphasized that this was a one-time, limited compromise based on respect for legal means of change. The emphasis on non-violence and legal methods of change drew on the history of Solidarity. As Adam Michnik observed, "Taught by history, we suspect that by using force to storm the existing Bastilles we shall unwittingly build new ones."²⁴ For some critics of Solidarity the notion of "compromise" was viewed with mistrust, as a sign of weakness. Michnik insisted:

My vision of compromise certainly adopts realism as the starting point. The geopolitical reality is that we are not strong enough to drive the Red Army out of Poland. But my vision of compromise has another starting point. It is based on my conviction that pluralist democracy necessitates compromises in the face of complex realities.²⁵

In contrast to the more abstract pronouncements of Solidarity's intellectual leaders, Walesa declared that it "must be a constructive kind of a compromise, provided it is not a cheap deception trick but covers all aspects of real life and puts everything in good balance."²⁶ This would remain a delicate balance throughout the Round Table, leading to several extremely subtle distinctions which the opposition sought to maintain. At a meeting the week before the round table, future prime minister Mazowiecki insisted to his negotiators that "the entry of the opposition into parliament does not mean the entry into the government."²⁷

By contrast, for the party the round table negotiations were not a path to revolution but an attempt to create a "Polish humane and democratic model of socialism."²⁸ It was based fundamentally on the perception that the party was strong enough to maintain control over limited democratization. The party proposed that the opposition would participate in "competitive" but "non-confrontational" elections. This was to be a controlled opening, not an opportunity for open competition as an internal document produced by the Secretariat of the Central Committee explained: participants in the elections would abstain from any kind of attack on the basic political institutions (including the leading role of the Communist Party and unity with the USSR) or on the origins of the People's Republic of Poland, from discussion concerning responsibility for mistakes of the past, responsibility for the 1981 conflict and martial law, or calling for a negation of the previous forty years. By contrast, there was to be a declaration of the "understanding of Poles acting in their higher interests and in the aims of the entire nation."²⁹

The decisive feature of the round table negotiations was the transformation of the agenda from a model of cooptation to one of competition. As Jon Elster observes, "the

Polish round table talks did not have a very ambitious aim at the outset."³⁰ At the opening of the round table, the state proposed that elections would be conducted like previous elections: voters would receive a single list of candidates to accept or reject, only this time there would be Solidarity candidates included on the list. Solidarity candidates would be included in the state's list of candidates as 35% of the seats in a single house of parliament, and parliamentary seats would be allocated on the basis of a plan specified beforehand. At the close, the terms were competitive: Solidarity candidates would compete on their own lists against state candidates for 35% of the seats in a lower house of parliament, as well as for 100% of the seats in a new upper house. In turn, the opposition agreed to the creation of a presidency whose six year term would outlast the four year term of the new parliament.

The outcome was premised upon the exclusion from the agenda of the possibility that the state could lose the elections. With the advantage of hindsight, it is worth observing that there were no provisions in the election laws for dividing the seats in the lower house of parliament (or Sejm, in Polish) among the coalition partners (who would later defect and join Solidarity to form a government) nor for the replacement of defeated candidates on the National List (several of the most notable of whom failed to gather the majority needed). No provisions were made for the replacement of the nomenklatura in key positions in government. The absence of such provisions suggests clearly that neither side anticipated the results nor the need to take precautions against a defeat of the government-coalition. The party maintained control over the media and its national network of local party structures. The Senate election ordinance consisted of 98 senators, two from each of the forty-nine voivodeships to be chosen in the same manner as the seats in the Sejm open for competition. This clearly gave disproportional advantage to the rural areas, where the party foresaw stronger support.

The transformation of the agenda reflects Solidarity's efforts to maintain the conditional support of its members. For the opposition, participation in the elections and

acceptance of its limited role in the state was a price to be paid for the legalization of Solidarity, not a benefit. They saw no chance for systemic change in such a role, rather only the legitimation of the leaders of the Leninist state who were guaranteed a majority in the new parliament. By ending the strike in August, 1988, Walesa demonstrated his authority to speak for Solidarity and strengthened his bargaining position with the state. This authority, however, was far from unconditional or secure. The gulf between the leaders of Solidarity from 1980-81 and the younger leaders of the 1988 strikes was not easily bridged. Walesa himself reported with surprise that he thought he had proved himself to be a trustworthy leader, but "the young people at the shipyard now do not think much of experienced people, and they simply ignore previous merits. All they want are palpable effects....They have their own visions, their own objectives, and they are determined to fight for them."³¹ Further, state public opinion polls in September, 1988 indicated that those who felt the political demands of the August strikes were "not just" was twice as high as those who felt the demands were "just."³² When asked if the activities of Lech Walesa and those around him were in the interests of society in August, 1988, only 7.4% said decidedly yes, while 24% said decidedly not. The largest percentage, 32.8%, reported that it was difficult to say.³³

The strategy which emerged was that they would accept participation in the elections on the principle that they would only run for seats in which there would be free competition. The principle constraint upon Solidarity was at the same time its main resource: the authority of its name to represent the legitimate voice of "society" against the state. Geremek described this as its "moral capital" which was controlled by the leaders of Solidarity 1980-81, but which could also be squandered if its identity as the opposition became blurred through the impression that it was becoming part of the establishment.³⁴ Rejecting the idea that "Poles would meet with Poles," opposition negotiators insisted on their identity distinct from and outside of the state, that they would not join the government but would only participate in it as outsiders. Indeed, if Solidarity

remained illegal prior to the convening of the round table, whom would the state be negotiating with? Geremek argued that the term "pact" "contains no notion of coming to an agreement. No -- this is a pact of two sides of divergent interests."³⁵

Solidarity leaders placed enormous weight on the open nature of the talks by which it would maintain and increase its public support as a legitimate political force. During the negotiations, Solidarity leaders often argued, consistent with the definition of the agenda as an honorable compromise, that any agreement must be acceptable to "society" or it would be worthless for both sides. As Solidarity leader Bujak argued at the round table, "If we agree to such a compromise, it will be useless for you...for if society does not accept the deal, you would sign a contract with a partner that has ceased to exist."³⁶ This strategy was entirely consistent with their mandate not to appear to become part of the establishment or risk the moral capital. As Solidarity negotiator Lech Kaczynski declared across the negotiating table, "Keep your controlling mandate and give the rest not to us, but to society."³⁷

Furthermore, the election agreement had to be explicitly stated to be a one-time arrangement and there should be a commitment that the next elections would be fully democratic. The actual division of the seats must be made public and openly. In Geremek's words: "otherwise we would have had to pretend that we suddenly fell in love with the communist party and of our own sincere will wanted to give it sixty-five percent of the seats in the Sejm."³⁸ There would be no common platform nor single ticket of candidates. Finally, Solidarity absolutely had to be legalized before the election campaign.

The Leninist state as well faced the constraints of its constituency, namely the nomenklatura bureaucracy. Despite Gorbachev's support for reform, the state feared economic and political ostracism in Eastern Europe, given the lack of enthusiasm which its main trading partners in the Eastern bloc had responded to Gorbachev's policies. The state feared a negative reaction from a threatened nomenklatura which could in the worst case lead to civil war. Government negotiator Kazimierz Cypryński warned Solidarity:

You often say that you have your social basis that you have to be accountable to...But we also have our basis, and it is not only the Party. I do not need to remind you about the things that are happening now. But you need to take into consideration our position. We have to concede, for otherwise there will be no agreement.³⁹

The voice of the nomenklatura was heard when newly-named prime minister Rakowski announced the decision to liquidate the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk as unprofitable, leading Bujak to proclaim that "the very idea of coming to an agreement...is politically and socially finished."⁴⁰ The state's principle constraint was its fear of chaos. In the words of Janusz Reykowski, the government's chief negotiator at the table on political reforms, "I thought that democracy can not be described and reduced to some simple event such as free elections."⁴¹ To satisfy its supporters in the nomenklatura, the government intended to create guarantees that nothing would happen too quickly.

The party appeared to understand and agree with the opposition's need to prevent the impression that it was becoming part of the establishment. In an earlier meeting of the Joint Council of the government and Episcopate on January 23, 1989, Archbishop Stroba referred to talks in which the state indicated it understood that an independent church was better than a subordinate one because it could do more for the common good. Stroba continued, "if [the opposition] have greater autonomy, they would also be more real." Asked if he understood, the state government representative replied, "Absolutely."⁴² On the other hand, the state did not want to create a parliament in which opposition deputies were democratically elected, while party deputies were not. To this end, it proposed at the second meeting of the table on political reforms that there be competition even for the seats guaranteed to the government, so that multiple candidates could run for each seat, provided that each was a party member. This appeared to be an opportunity for the party to gain public support by demonstrating its commitment to democracy and its conviction to transform itself into a genuine political party.

The impasse created by the state's proposal for a presidency with broad powers illustrates the contestation over the extent of the "honorable compromise" which Solidarity

could accept, as well as the guarantees which the state demanded to reassure its nomenklatura base. As part of the guarantee of its position after the elections, the government-coalition side presented at the February 18 meeting a proposal for the re-establishment of the office of the President which had been abolished in 1952. This meant that the existing head of state, the chair of the Council of State, would be replaced by a position with more authority in matters of the military, internal security, and foreign affairs. It was to serve as the guarantor of constitutional order and, in this way, was essential to reassure conservative elements within the state who feared that the elections might set off social instability. For the party, in the words of Janusz Reykowski, its chair of the table on political reforms, "the next step towards democracy [must] not be a step towards destabilization."⁴³ The eventual proposal was for a president with a six year term, which would ensure his continuity beyond the new parliament to be elected for a four year term. Initially this new office was seen as far too high a price to pay for participation in the elections, and the opposition rejected the proposal at the same meeting it was proposed, declining even to set up a working group to consider the question. Geremek threatened to withdraw Solidarity's support for earlier agreements about the seats in parliament:

If we cannot reach an agreement and you are unable to make concessions, then we will probably have to return to another way of thinking about political reforms...We may need to begin the reform of the state with a contract about the distribution of the seats in the Sejm, and to leave the other two elements, i.e. the presidency and the Senate, for constitutional changes that are to be introduced in 1991.⁴⁴

Geremek's threat and the postponement of debate by the leader of the state team of negotiators illustrate the limits to the agreement Solidarity perceived it could accept in exchange for relegalization of the union.

Faced with the impasse over the presidency, Walesa and General Kiszczak (who had until this point remained outside the negotiations) met on March 2 to discuss a

resolution to the problem. At this meeting, Kiszczak proposed the re-establishment of the Senate who would be filled by the president and would serve consultative functions, a proposal rejected by Geremek as a third price for the re-legalization of Solidarity. According to the published notes by the secretary of the regime, after eight hours of discussion, the meeting appeared to be at an impasse until suddenly one of the regime negotiators asked what the opposition would say if the second chamber was chosen by free elections.⁴⁵ Walesa and Geremek quickly both said that this might make an acceptable political package. This introduction of a new arena of political competition in the face of an intransigent Solidarity highlights the influence collective actors can have upon agendas by the need to secure the support of the groups they represent. The creation of the freely elected Senate was later called by Walesa "our greatest success."⁴⁶

The final package designated a president with strong executive powers, clearly designed for General Jaruzelski to reassure the interests of the nomenklatura. It would be elected by an absolute combined majority of the Sejm and Senate (based on the 65% of the seats guaranteed to the government coalition in the Sejm). The president would be chairman of the Committee on National Defense and commander-in-chief of the military. The president could veto legislation produced by either house, although this veto could be overruled by a 2/3 majority in the Sejm. Further, the president was empowered to dissolve parliament if it was unable to form a government within a three month period, unable to pass a budget or encroached upon presidential authority. Finally, the president could declare a state of emergency for up to three months, although this could only be extended with approval from the Sejm and Senate. On the other hand, the newly re-established Senate was given the mandate to "control the activities of the state."⁴⁷ It could introduce legislation and would have veto power over the Sejm, although like the presidential veto, could be overruled by a 2/3 majority of the Sejm.

In this paper, I have argued that collective actors influence the path of democratization "from above" by altering the range of outcomes considered by elites

needing to maintain the support of the groups they represent. In the late 1980s Solidarity did not seek to disrupt the political order through strikes, but rather to demonstrate its trustworthiness in negotiations concerning democratization in Poland. This made certain outcomes more likely (such as the agreement that all seats for which Solidarity could run would be contested competitively) while excluding others from consideration (such as the initial proposal of a strong presidency and Senate to be filled by the old regime).

Solidarity leaders insisted upon an agenda which would not compromise its conditional support or its "moral capital" but would lead to an "honorable compromise." Analysis of the outcome of the table on political reforms demonstrates how collective actors enabled and constrained the alternatives considered by Solidarity and state negotiators, producing an electoral agreement in which it could demonstrate public support rather than the effort at cooptation intended by the Leninist state. The consequences of this agreement were immediately evident. With the agreement at the round table, Solidarity entered into the eight week election campaign which culminated, to the surprise of observers and participants alike, in Solidarity's success in all of the seats for which they competed in the Sejm and 99 out of 100 seats in the Senate.

2. Democratization "from below" in Czechoslovakia:

The abrupt resignation of the Leninist regime faced with mass protest in Czechoslovakia in 1989 leads me to characterize it as an instance of "democratization from below."⁴⁸ After decades of repression of public dissent, the Czechoslovak state found itself isolated with the fall of neighboring Leninist regimes in the late 1980s. Following the police break-up of a student demonstration on November 17, 1989, new civic movements emerged claiming to represent a united "society" and to pressure the state to make political reforms. A successful general strike led by the civic movements bolstered an initially modest set of demands into calls for a new government; yet when the Leninist state unexpectedly resigned, the movements requested on December 10 that a

communist minister form a “government of national understanding,” called as such because it contained representatives of both the old regime and the civic movements.

Initially the civic movements (called Civic Forum in the Czech Republic and Public Against Violence in Slovakia) did not make wide-ranging demands upon the agenda for negotiations with the state. In its founding proclamation, Civic Forum declared itself "competent to negotiate immediately with the state leadership concerning the critical situation in our country, to express the present demands of the public, and to seek ways to their solution." In so doing, it presented four demands:

1. resignation of members of the Communist Party involved in "normalization" after 1968,
2. resignation of those responsible for repression of demonstrations,
3. establishment of a commission to look into these events, on which Civic Forum must be represented,
4. release of all prisoners of conscience

These demands are notable for their modesty. Despite the fall of the Leninist states in neighboring countries, the founding proclamation did not call for fundamental changes in the system, but almost a reformist spirit calling for the redress of human rights abuses.

At the first meeting between the state and Civic Forum, the state declared the main item on the agenda to be a "political solution" to the current situation,⁴⁹ which accepted that violence would not be used but did not define the content of the solution. Prime minister Adamec made the first presentation, in which he attempted to define the aims of the negotiations by explaining that it was not possible to make sudden, radical changes, even though they would try to reach the greatest possible agreement. In turn, Havel, speaking as "empowered by Civic Forum," presented four demands similar to those in the founding proclamation: the resignation of compromised individuals as per the proclamation of Civic Forum, the formation of a parliamentary commission to investigate the November 17th massacre, the release of political prisoners, and respect for freedom of the press and information. Created six days earlier, Civic Forum claimed not to seek political power but rather to be seeking for the state to change itself. When Adamec insisted that Civic Forum not pressure him to do anything which was beyond his

competence as prime minister, Havel responded that Civic Forum was not pressuring him to do anything: "we are only stating that it is in the interests of the nation to speed up a little work on all structures."⁵⁰

The turning point came with the successful general strike on November 27, 1989. The size and form of the strike reflect Civic Forum's emphasis on orderly, non-violent protest and its disavowal of political ambitions. Although it is impossible to measure precisely how many people participated in the general strike, it has been estimated that three-quarters of the population were active in some form or another.⁵¹ In a demonstration of orderliness, the strike excluded the health, public transportation, and service industries which Civic Forum called upon to manifest "the strike in a suitable way."⁵² The strike was not directed by the center in Prague but, consistent with Civic Forum's informal structure, manifested as local strike committees wished. Although the strike began at noon everywhere in the country, its duration could vary according to the decision of the local strike committee so long as it concluded by two pm. The National Strike Coordinating Committee of Civic Forum merely asked to be informed of the preparations, launch and course of the strike. Finally, if a strike committee had not been founded in a particular institution, "the employees can join the strike in the way they themselves choose."⁵³

The initial framework for negotiations began to strain as Civic Forum was emboldened by this display of public support to introduce new demands onto the agenda. At a meeting on November 28th, Adamec began by arguing that he had fulfilled the original demands of Civic Forum: the resignation of certain individuals, the formation of a parliamentary commission into the events of November 17th, he had spoken to President Husak about the release of political prisoners, and promised sixty minutes of time on television, having named a new director of national television who is present at the meeting. Havel, in turn, altered the agenda by presenting new demands which reflected the changing perceptions of Civic Forum's authority after the general strike. Noting the

"horrible" working conditions of Civic Forum in the Magic Lantern theater Havel requested a building with more phone lines. He called for President Husak to resign, for the deletion of Article 4 from the Constitution which guaranteed the leading role of the Communist Party in political life, and for the formation of a new government which would meet the demands of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence.

Throughout negotiations Civic Forum disavowed self-interested political aims, claiming to pressure the state to undertake political reforms. The limits of this claim were clear on November 28 when Adamec demanded to know who Havel recommended for a new government to be formed by the following Sunday. He asked whether they were an independent political party and not just independent citizens, since he had eighteen independent political groups who wished to negotiate with him. His challenge was met by Petr Miller, a worker from the CKD plant in Prague on the Civic Forum side, who responded that they were the most correct spokespersons because they had everyone, workers, even communists. When the exasperated Adamec demanded to know why Civic Forum would not make recommendations for the new government, Miller answered that Civic Forum was a meeting of broad opinions and to be otherwise would be to act as a political party. Havel rejected Adamec's challenge in the name of Civic Forum's fragile public support, declaring that it was not an organized party and that the public "would say they are there somehow above and conspired with the government."⁵⁴

Representatives of the Leninist state also invoked the constraints of their supporters to resist demands made by the civic movements. The success of the state's claims illustrates the overestimation of the strength of the Leninist state by the participants in the negotiations, a perception which would prove crucial to the outcome. The challenge to Civic Forum's ability to speak for the public was repeated in meetings with General Secretary of the Communist Party and the Minister of Defense. At a December 6th meeting with General Secretary Urbanek, Havel began by telling him that Civic Forum felt themselves to be a speaker for the general will, and that they were only acting as such

so that the government would have some sort of partner for discussion because it would be difficult for them to meet in the public squares. In response Urbanek replied that the problem was that the regional party secretaries didn't understand, they thought that they had the support of the people. He told Havel that when he recommended to one that he resign, the secretary answered that he had 140 letters from basic organizations of the party telling him not to do so.⁵⁵ Similarly, Minister of Defense Vacek, in an otherwise courteous meeting on December 7th, warned Civic Forum, "don't think you have united support on everything, people are beginning not to like a certain pressure which they are not fans of."⁵⁶ In both cases, Civic Forum was led to strike a more conciliatory tone and explained that they did not intend to threaten public order.

The tremendous change in the ability of the civic movements to alter the agenda for change was demonstrated by the response to the new government (composed of fifteen members of the Communist Party and five non-party members and hence known as the 15:5 government) proposed by prime minister Adamec on December 3. The proportions by which non-party members hold one third of the government is strikingly parallel to the electoral agreement in Poland. Unlike in Poland, however, the international isolation of the Czechoslovak state after the fall of neighboring Leninist states and removal of the threat of repression limited the state's ability to enforce its decisions. Adamec's government was immediately dismissed as "a mockery of our demands" by the students, who threatened to hold another general strike on December 11.⁵⁷ Civic Forum and Public Against Violence expressed their dismay in the selection of communists for the ministers of defense and interior, declaring "the federal government which was created today is not a new government."⁵⁸

After the rejection of his government, prime minister Adamec announced on December 5 to a stunned Civic Forum that he would resign. His resignation dramatically altered the opportunities for change and created great uncertainty surrounding the agenda

for negotiations. The subsequent prime minister in the government of national understanding later observed that when Adamec resigned:

the situation all at once lost its clear contours which until that point it had...this meant the loss of the concept of negotiation. The opposition simply had a strategy of pressure, but now they had nothing to apply it to....But now? The 15:5 government had been refused, the opposition sat in Laterna Magika, Parliament in parliament, the Central Committee on the bank. How to transfer power? Come by car to drive the office holders out of the building and sit down in their offices? Suddenly there was no mechanism at hand for the transfer of power. It wasn't possible to attack the Winter Palace. Therefore the opposition asked me to begin again a situation in which they would have a partner for negotiation.⁵⁹

The puzzle is that the civic movements did not simply assume power as might be expected with the resignation of the old regime. The movements were not forced to accept the state's agenda for negotiations, yet they requested that a member of the former politburo resurrect the side of the state in the negotiating process and form a new government which conceded guarantees to the old regime. In the words of Ernest Gellner, "Why so much velvet? Why try to reassure the old apparat by choosing one of their number for the first free Prime Minister? Why so much concern with the technical continuity of government?"⁶⁰

The emphasis on legality and continuity in the reconstruction of the state should be explained not by strategic power-seeking behavior of the civic movements but by the conditional nature of support for Civic Forum's claim to be pressuring the government to make necessary changes. Uncertainty surrounding democratization in Czechoslovakia may seem naive in retrospect. At the time, however, the new civic movements were aware of their tenuous authority, lacking a prior history and democratic expression of popular support. This is confirmed by public opinion polls at the time which indicate that although Civic Forum and Public Against Violence together had the confidence of 47% of respondents, another 33% declared that the civic movements merely wanted power for themselves.⁶¹

After Adamec's resignation, three possible strategies were identified at a meeting of the Civic Forum action group dated December 7: (1) to continue in the politics and tactics of obstruction, (2) the opposite -- to pass the decision to form a government to someone with a mandate, and (3) compromise -- to secure closer relations to the government.⁶² The participants in the meeting concluded that the first two scenarios had been rejected by the public and that Civic Forum should adopt the third. This compromise would only be acceptable if Civic Forum perceived itself able to maintain its public support based in its identity as a broad movement distinct from the state which sought not power but orderly, democratic change.

The need to establish or agree upon a new agenda for negotiations was the first order of business at the meeting after Adamec's resignation on December 8th. Havel opened the meeting by suggesting that the participants somehow agree upon a "self-identification" of the meeting. Kucera, the speaker of the National Front, suggested it should be seen as a meeting to create a "government of national understanding." Rather than use the opportunity to form a new government, Civic Forum requested that Adamec's candidate for prime minister, Marian Calfa, propose a new temporary government which would serve until free elections the following year. Despite agreement on both sides that Civic Forum was considered the most representative expression of the will of the broadest layer of citizens, half of the members of the new government would be nominated by Civic Forum and half would be from the parties of the National Front.

The ability of the civic movements to bolster their claims by threatening to strike again was starkly obvious in negotiations with the objection to the nomination of a non-Public Against Violence candidate for the Ministry of Information:

The clear spokespersons for the public in Slovakia is Public Against Violence. Public Against Violence is capable of organizing demonstrations, simply because Public Against Violence has 100,000 Slovak citizens who are willing to go into the square and express their opinions, but some group, perhaps nonparty, from the radio who recommends Mr. Roth probably does not have these 100,000 willing to go into the square. Maybe it seems cynical but it's the reality.⁶³

Stressing democratic means and legality which was part of Civic Forum's identity, Havel insisted that "none of us wishes to create a constitutional crisis."⁶⁴ He emphasized that the president should resign with the formation of the new government, "from the point of view of further peaceful development, from the point of view of stability of state power and its continuity, from the point of view of calm in society."⁶⁵ Later at the meeting, a member of the Communist Party asked what would happen if they didn't succeed to form a new government. Havel's response highlighted the threat of public disruption: "we will announce to the public that unfortunately we did not succeed. What else can we do?"⁶⁶ To this implicit threat of chaos, the questioner hastily added that he was just asking from a practical point of view and withdrew his question.

In this paper, I have argued that in cases of "democratization from below," collective actors are emboldened to challenge the agenda of elites by introducing new demands. In November, 1989 the new civic movements in Czechoslovakia sought to disrupt the political order by mobilizing the nation on behalf of a general strike and thereby to alter the ability of the old regime to control the conditions under which it would leave power. Analysis of the formation of the government of national understanding highlights the process by which successful mobilization emboldened the civic movements to go beyond initially modest demands to calls for broader political change. With the international isolation of the Czechoslovak state due to the fall of neighboring Leninist regimes, the demonstration that new political actors existed with the ability to disrupt routine patterns of state authority through strikes altered the previously rigid pattern of state repression. The somewhat puzzling outcome whereby communists retained half the seats in the new government can be explained by the constraints of conditional support for the civic movements which claimed not to be seeking power for themselves.

IV. Conclusion

By examining how collective actors can introduce issues and limit the range of outcomes considered at elite negotiations, this paper specifies the mechanism by which collective actors influence paths of democratization. This argument offers several advantages to the existing literature. First, it goes beyond assertions that particular collective actors are important to democratization by specifying *how* such actors can influence elite negotiations. This provides an analytic foundation from which evidence can be marshalled to evaluate alternative explanations for the dynamic process of democratization in which collective actors can alter elite agendas for change by introducing new issues and limiting the outcomes considered. Although both paths contrasted in this paper have aspects of elite reform and popular pressure, this approach specifies the nature of the interaction between elites seeking to control political change and collective actors articulating demands.

Second, by focusing on variation in the process by which collective actors influence elite negotiations, this paper emphasizes comparative analysis. It stakes an analytic middle-range, avoiding both over-generalized models of change and an emphasis on the unique characteristics of particular cases.⁶⁷ I compare my cases not in terms of universal laws but rather as historical concatenations of common causal processes.⁶⁸ In choosing to compare two countries, I risk disappointing both quantitatively-oriented scholars who might wish to see a larger sample size and East European specialists who might stress the particularities of countries that make comparison difficult. What such a comparison might give up in terms of hypothesis-testing or historical elaboration, I believe it gains in terms of the ability to develop and elaborate the analytic link between collective actors and democratization.

Third, it directs attention to an underexamined arena of political contestation, the process of agenda setting. Comparison of Poland and Czechoslovakia illuminates my argument that collective actors mobilizing popular support can challenge elite agendas and limit the range of outcomes considered at negotiations. As Schattschneider has argued,

the definition of alternatives in political conflict can be "the supreme instrument of power."⁶⁹ This paper suggests that, in the absence of formal channels by which collective actors can gain institutional legitimacy, democratization may proceed slowly because of the conditional nature of popular support and uncertainty surrounding outcomes. In Poland the expectation that the state would maintain control over the government was critical to the favorable electoral agreement at the round table. At the opening of the Polish round table, the international context and especially the risk of isolation within the Warsaw bloc appeared to support the Leninist state as the guarantor of change. Negotiator for the Leninist state (and subsequent post-communist president of Poland) Aleksander Kwasniewski later declared:

This illusion saved us from the Romanian experience. If the Party leadership realized how weak it was, there would never have been the roundtable talks and peaceful change.⁷⁰

As argued, the election package agreed upon by both sides suggests that neither side predicted Solidarity's sweep of the election. The absence of provisions for the division of seats in parliament among the government coalition partners nor for the replacement of defeated candidates on the National List suggests that neither side anticipated the need to take precautions against a defeat of the Leninist state. This would prove critical, since the Solidarity government formed in August, 1989 relied upon the unforeseen defection of the satellite parties in the government coalition in addition to the nomination of Jaruzelski for president as previously agreed. With the fall of Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe, this agreement quickly became obsolete and led to the subsequent splintering of Solidarity and Polish parliamentary politics initiated by Lech Walesa's presidential challenge in 1990.

Similarly, Milos Calda has argued that Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in Czechoslovakia overestimated the party's power and as a result, "acceded to a far greater number of Communists in the Calfa government than was warranted by the Party's real power."⁷¹ Even after prime minister Adamec had resigned and thereby removed the constraints upon talks, the round table negotiations remained focused on replacing

personnel in the state rather than broader or systemic political changes (with the exception of the demand to eliminate the constitutional clause guaranteeing the leading role of the communist party). The records of the negotiations suggest that if prime minister Adamec had not resigned, he might have become Civic Forum's candidate for the new president. Like General Jaruzelski in Poland, he could have served as a means of continuity with the Leninist state and a protector of the interests of the nomenklatura. An exclusive emphasis on mass protest might emphasize the ability of the movements to overwhelm illegitimate states. The twenty days that passed between the founding of the Government of National Understanding and the naming of a new Minister of Interior, however, suggests that the movements were not so powerful, nor the state so overwhelmed. Some have argued that this lapse gave the secret service the chance to destroy or alter incriminating files or information.⁷²

The arguments in the paper suggest areas for research which might further elaborate the causal mechanisms by which collective actors influence patterns of democratization. Research into differences in public support for elites as well as the presence of multiple challengers might specify the range of competition over agendas. When are elites and new collective actors more likely to garner or lose public support for particular paths of democratization? Are collective actors more likely to influence elite agendas when they are united? The case of Hungary, where multiple challengers had emerged and begun to compete for public support prior to the round table negotiations, suggests that competition over the agenda is not merely a matter between elites and challengers but also between multiple, competing challengers.⁷³

Further elaboration of the relationship between the form of mobilization and democratization might suggest limitations to the ability of challengers to influence negotiations. For example, is peaceful protest more likely than violence to strengthen the authority of challengers? Are challengers articulating ethnic or class-based claims more or less likely to succeed in mobilizing support and influencing the agenda than the civic

claims in the cases studies in this paper? Attention to the dissolution of the former-Yugoslavia and former-Soviet Union could suggest answers to these questions.⁷⁴ One might also examine cases in which mobilization failed to influence elite agendas. Under what conditions is repression more likely, such as in China in 1989?

Finally, comparison of different types of states would offer valuable insight into the institutional mechanisms by which challengers gain access to negotiations. In this instance, the recent transformation in South Africa might provide a meaningful contrast. Can the approach presented in this paper provide insight into stable parliamentary democracies when challengers seek to influence the state to become more democratic (by granting voting rights or ensuring the protection of human rights)? Such research would enable the development of a fuller understanding of the causal processes by which collective actors may influence outcomes by altering elite agendas for democratization.

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³ Przeworski, 1991.

⁴ Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society: A study in social order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 35.

⁵ Jon Elster, ed. *The Roundtable talks and the breakdown of communism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8.

⁶ Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions." *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1997), 263.

⁷ Ken Jowitt, "Weber, Trotsky and Holmes on the Study of Leninist Regimes," *Journal of International Affairs*. Vol. 45, No. 1 (1991): 31-49.

⁸ Herbert P. Kitschelt, "Comparative historical research and rational choice theory: The case of transitions to democracy." *Theory and Society* 22/3 (1993), 420.

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- ¹⁰ Juan 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), 88.
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- ¹³ Nancy Bermeo, "Rethinking Regime Change," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1990): 359-377.
- ¹⁴ A survey of the literature on democratization reveals no consensus surrounding criteria and categories of change. For example, Samuel Huntington describes transplacement, replacement and intervention in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Karl and Schmitter refer to pact, imposition, reform, and revolution (1991); and Linz and Stepan distinguish reforma and ruptura (1996).
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- ¹⁹ Stephen M. Saideman, "International organizations and secessionist crises: The relevance of agenda setting," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 17 (1994): 275-291.
- ²⁰ Prior sociological and political science research concerned with agenda-setting, primarily in the field of industrial relations and public policy, has limited application to democratization due to its assumption of interests and the institutional framework in which bargaining takes places. See for example, Samuel B. Bacharach and Edward J. Lawler, *Bargaining: Power, Tactics, and Outcomes* (San Francisco and London: Jossey-Bass, 1981); John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).
- ²¹ For example, Linz and Stepan contrast the "pacted transition" in Poland with the "collapse" in Czechoslovakia (1996). Similarly, Lazlo Bruszt and David Stark analyze the paths of democratization in Poland as "compromise" and Czechoslovakia as an instance of "capitulation" in "Remaking the political field in Hungary: From the politics of confrontation to the politics of competition," in *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, Ivo Banac, ed., (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1992):13-55. Exceptions can be found in early analyses which stressed presumed similarities in outcomes to the fall of communism without attention to the different paths whereby change took place. See, for example, Huntington's categorization of both countries as instances of transplacement (1991:276) and Karl and Schmitter's discussion of them as cases of reform (1991).
- ²² See Jadwiga Staniszkis's discussion of the negotiated transition in *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe: The Polish Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For a contrary view which emphasizes public protest, see Grzegorz Ekiert, "Rebellious Poles: Political crises and popular protest under state socialism," *East European Politics and Societies* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1997):299-338.
- ²³ See Bronislaw Geremek's statements quoted in *Uncaptive Minds*, June-July-August, 1988:7-8.
- ²⁴ Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 86.
- ²⁵ "Towards a new democratic compromise: An interview with Adam Michnik." *East European Reporter*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1988):27.

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- ²⁸ Czyrek in *Uncensored Poland News Bulletin*, No. 15/88, 18 August 1988:18.
- ²⁹ In Perzkowski, 1994:289.
- ³⁰ Elster, 1996:11.
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- ³⁴ Bronislaw Geremek, *Rok 1990: Geremek Opowiada, Zakowski Pyta* [The year 1990: Geremek responds, Zakowski asks] (Warsaw: Plejada Press, 1990), 34.
- ³⁵ In *Poland Uncensored News Bulletin*, No. 16+17/88, 10 September 1988:24.
- ³⁶ Quoted in Wiktor Osiatynski, "The Roundtable Talks in Poland," in *The Roundtable talks and the breakdown of communism*, Jon Elster, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 49.
- ³⁷ Krzysztof Dubinski, *Magdalenka Transakcja epoki: Notatki z poufnych spotkan Kiszczak-Walesa* [Magdalenka, the transaction of an epoch: Notes from the secret meetings of Kiszczak and Walesa] (Warsaw: Sylwa Press, 1990), 54.
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- ³⁹ Quoted in Osiatynski, 1996:50.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 123.
- ⁴¹ Interview with author, 10/10/94.
- ⁴² In *Tajne Dokumenty Państwo - Kościół 1980-1989* [Secret Documents of the State and Church 1980-1989] (London: Aneks Publishers, 1993), 561.
- ⁴³ Quoted in Lech Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc, 1992), 178.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Osiatynski, 1996:50.
- ⁴⁵ Dubinski, 1990:76-77.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted in Stokes, 1993:125.
- ⁴⁷ Osiatynski, 1996:57.
- ⁴⁸ See Bernard Wheaton and Zdenek Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-91* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1992).
- ⁴⁹ Kucera in his opening speech of the first meeting on November, 26, 1989 in Vladimir Hanzel, *Zrychleny tep dejin: Realne drama o deseti jednanich* [The quickened pulse of history: The real drama of ten meetings] (Prague: OK CENTRUM, 1991), 13.
- ⁵⁰ Hanzel, 1991:27.
- ⁵¹ Wheaton and Kavan report that 38% stopped work for the full two hours, 9% for a shorter period, and 24% showed support in ways recommended by Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. They add that participation was higher in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia. In Wheaton and Kavan, 1992: 95.
- ⁵² Wheaton and Kavan, 1992:204.
- ⁵³ Wheaton and Kavan, 1992:204.
- ⁵⁴ Hanzel, 1991:53.
- ⁵⁵ Hanzel, 1991:220.
- ⁵⁶ Hanzel, 1991:271.
- ⁵⁷ Wheaton and Kavan, 1992:104.
- ⁵⁸ Informacni Servis #17, December 3, 1989.
- ⁵⁹ Marian Calfa, "Byl jsem muz 10. prosince [I was a man of the 10th of December]," *Rude Pravo*, November 17, 1994:1

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- ⁶³ Hanzel, 1991:443.
- ⁶⁴ Hanzel, 1991:316.
- ⁶⁵ Hanzel, 1991:323.
- ⁶⁶ Hanzel, 1991:368.
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- ⁷¹ Milos Calda, "The roundtable talks in Czechoslovakia," in *The Roundtable talks and the breakdown of communism*, in Jon Elster, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 163.
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