
ABSTRACTS

LAURENCE WHITEHEAD

THE DRAMA OF DEMOCRATIZATION

This paper proposes an interpretative framework for the comparative analysis of democratic transitions. It argues that the complex dynamics, shifting agendas, and multiple interactions that characterise all such processes can be integrated and brought into focus by reference to a theatrical analogy. Every democratic transition obeys the logic of a public dramatic performance. This is not the only possible analogy, of course. Multiple chess games have been proposed as another interpretative framework, for example. alternative metaphors include "elite pacts", "crafting institutional design", and even the flow of ocean waves. All these images have been proposed as ways of ordering the confusing and contingent multiplicity of events and initiatives that seem to concatenate without much apparent structure during the compressed interval between the disintegration of an authoritarian system of rule and the emergence of a democratic alternative. The comparative study of democratic transitions focuses on this limited period of chronological time, during which an apparently almost unlimited range of experiments may be attempted by an indeterminate variety of often hitherto unknown or marginal political actors. One possible research strategy is, of course, to try to observe and evaluate all of these fragmentary and atomised processes, in the expectation that a picture of the whole transition can be constructed by somehow adding together all these component parts. But this method requires absorbing an impossible amount of detail, most of which can be seen with hindsight to have been irrelevant. Even where the analyst successfully identifies in advance the most strategic actors and the most promising strategies, the high level of contingency and unpredictability which characterises most democratic transitions means that the partial insights thus gained are incapable of accounting for the total process. This is why holistic metaphors, analogies, and models have been invoked, usually post hoc, to provide structure and perspective to processes that seem almost impossible to read while they are underway, even though after they are over they may become retrospectively quite intelligible.

Theatrical dramas, like chess games, and also like many democratic transitions, begin at a clearly defined point, condense a great deal of complex and often unexpected narrative into a limited chronological space, and then achieve a moment of resolution which is supposed to crystallize the significance of what went before. The drama ends, the game is won or lost, the democratic institutions are launched into operation. So at least we have some kind of an analogy. But do we have an interpretative framework worthy of the effort? In Section I of this paper I sketch some criteria for judging whether the theatrical analogy is worth pursuing as a way of improving our understanding of contemporary democratizations. Note that since all reasoning by analogy is treacherous, I never claim that this perspective trumps alternative approaches, and can be relied upon to do the whole job of explanation. But I do conclude that it might offer a productive supplement/alternative to the other currently available perspectives. Then section II pursues the analogy. Section III broadens the discussion to consider the dramatic component in all forms of government, and the question of the historical linkage between theatre and the emergence of classical democracy in the ancient world. In the concluding section I set out a provisional balance sheet of the advantages to be derived from using this technique, together with some observations about its limitations and potential pitfalls. Although the whole paper focuses on democratic transitions, I have used the broader term "democratization" in the title, because I consider that the moral and interpretative influences of a good democratic work can live on long after the final curtain, and that similar effects can be observed on the political stage.

TÓKES RUDOLF

INSTITUTION BUILDING IN HUNGARY

The study seeks to lay the methodological foundations and empirical evidence for a reassessment of the institutional, political, and ideological dynamics of a series of key events which led to the change of the political regime in Hungary in 1989-1990. The author's case rests on the reinterpretation of the documentary evidence, by the utilization of analytical categories and substantive propositions, which may be derived from the „historical-institutionalist" approach to the study of political change. The case is presented in chronological-topical sequence, to wit: First, the respective positions, including the shared beliefs, of the regime's reformist supporters (the „incumbents") and that of their critics (the „insurgent") is summarized. Next, the specific scenarios of Roundtable discussions in Warsaw, Prague, and Bratislava are discussed, compared and contrasted with developments in Hungary. The third part seeks to sort out the similarities and differences between the „incumbents" and the „insurgents" strategic policy preferences for

systemic change. The fourth part focuses on the evolution, between 1988 and 1990, of political options for institutional change by proposing five constitutional models. Each model implies different kinds of institutional architecture, extent of personal liberty, scope of political participation, and degree of national sovereignty. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the specific political properties of the „reform socialist”, the „transitional” and the „democratic” constitutional-institutional models. The essential conclusion is that Hungary’s postcommunist institutional architecture rests on a hybrid, approximately in a 75:25 ratio, of reform socialist and liberal democratic foundations – neither of which is anchored in the bedrock of public perceptions of economic fairness, social justice, and moral approval of the institutional products of the elite pacts of 1989–1990.

ATTILA AGH

SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN THE HUNGARIAN
DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS:
LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE EU ADJUSTMENT

In Hungary, a particular type of “fragmented democracy” has emerged, since Hungary has “imported” a large variety of institutions from the West without adjusting them completely. This is quite salient with the local and territorial self-governments that have received extended competencies but the borderline between state administration and the local self-governments has not been fully elaborated, first of all in the field of finance management. This paper overviews the EU regulations in respect to the local and regional self-governments and analyses the corresponding Hungarian legislation in detail. The description of workings of local self-governments and legislation leads to the study of the emergence of local and national political class which by and large came to an end by the third free and fair parliamentary and municipal elections in 1998.

Hungary is a small and unitary country, and obviously it will not become a federal state. This paper argues, however, that territorial interests also need an institution at the national level and as a policy paper presents some institutional designs for the second chamber of parliament and/or for a smaller chamber called Council of Republic. Beyond the needs of the local and territorial interests, there are some other reasons for this institutional reform. The national minorities in Hungary have their own local and national organizations but no parliamentary representation so far. Since there are many, about ten, smaller and three larger minorities, their parliamentary representation cannot be solved in the present institutional framework, only in some kind of an Upper House. The paper suggests some detailed solutions for

the local, regional and minority representation in a second chamber that would be also a partial solution for the problems of fragmented democracy.

JANOS SIMON

TWO PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

(What does the left-right distinction serve?)

In the first part of the study we deal with the etymology and history of the political left and right. In the second part we analyze the dataset of our attitudinal survey research done among the Members of the Hungarian Parliament. We used 4 approaches: 1. the acceptance of the validity of left and right, 2. the self-placement on the left-right scale, 3. the ability to verbalize the literal meaning of the left and right, 4. the connection of the left and right with values. We have found, that the meaning of left and right is different from those, who are leftist by self-placement and those, who are rightist by self-placement on the left-right scale. We have isolated the values, in respect of which there is a consensus on both sides. Thus two dimensions can be separated, on the left side there is the social dimension (social network, equality, social justice), on the right side there is the national dimension (defending the interests of Hungarian minorities living in the neighbouring countries, patriotism, defense of national interest). The two dimensions are complementary of each another.

CONTENTS

PAPERS

<i>Laurence Whitehead: The Drama of Democratization</i>	5
<i>Rudolf Tókécs: Institution-building in Hungary</i>	31
<i>Auila Agh: Self-governments in the Hungarian Democratization Process:</i> <i>Local Self-governments in the Context of the EU-Adjustment</i>	65
<i>János Simon: Two Pillars of Democracy</i> <i>(What Does the Left-Right Distinction Serve?)</i>	95

DISCUSSION

<i>Tibor Mándli: Anglo-Saxon Conservatism in Hungary?</i>	117
<i>Gábor Tórok: Brain, but not Trust</i>	121
<i>Tibor Desevffy: Political Scientists and Brain Trusts</i>	125

ORIENTATION

<i>István Balogh: Political Science in Hungary in the 90s</i>	131
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REVIEW

<i>Ervin Csizmadin: Discourse as a Political Struggle</i>	143
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NEWS	159
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INFORMATION	167
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ABSTRACTS	183
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