

## From Southern to Southeastern Europe: Any Lessons for Democratisation Theory?

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### *ABSTRACT*

This paper considers the transferability of democratisation models: to what degree are insights extracted from the study of one region applicable to the democratisation experience of another region? The merits and pitfalls of interregional comparison of democratisation have been extensively debated in academic circles, but Southeastern Europe – broadly defined – has rarely appeared at one end of these comparisons. In this paper, I compare the democratisation process in Southeastern Europe with that of Southern Europe, arguably the most systematically examined set of democratisation cases, and ask to what extent can theoretical “lessons” drawn from the “South” be profitably applied to the “Southeast”. I conclude that an “interactive,” mid-range theory of democratisation is best suited for interregional comparisons of this sort.

As the post-communist era dawned in 1989, the so-called third wave of democratisation suddenly became a tsunami.<sup>1</sup> One esteemed scholar observes that “[t]wo decades ago, less than 30 percent of the countries in the world were democratic; now more than 60 percent have governments produced by some form of open, fair, and competitive elections”.<sup>2</sup> The third wave of democratisation was set in motion with the ousting of the military junta in Portugal in 1974 and it swiftly spread to Greece and Spain. That Southern Europe – a region that includes these three states plus Italy – is a success story of democratisation is no longer disputed.

By the mid to late 1980s, all four political systems of Southern Europe had completed not only a full transition to democracy (Gunther et al 1995: 6), but they had also managed to “successfully” consolidate it (Ibid.: 18; Diamandouros et al 1995: 389). To underscore this success, the term “new Southern Europe” is sometimes employed to refer to a qualitatively different set of both socio-economic and political relations wrought by the rapid and thorough democratisation in the region (Diamandouros and Gunther 2001: 1). In fact, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish this “new” Southern Europe from the “old” Western Europe (Ibid.).

The success of Southern Europe led to suggestions that its democratisation model and its “lessons” could be exported to post-communist Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> Spain in particular became a poster child for

democratisation and a repository of “lessons” (see, e.g., Maxwell 1991). But, as always, there were those who disagreed and the debate on the merits and pitfalls of comparing democratisation in post-communist Eastern Europe to that which took place in Southern Europe ensued (see, e.g., Terry 1993; Schmitter and Karl 1994; Bunce 1995a, 1995b; Karl and Schmitter 1995). While it may have abated in recent years, the debate is far from settled. The reason is obvious. Interregional comparison of democratisation is a “means of ensuring that the insights derived from the study of [one] cluster of cases could be validated, modified, or negated by lessons drawn from the study of similar developments in other regions” (Gunther et al 1995: xiv; also 2, 32). And when it comes to the issues of validation or modification, academic debates tend to go on in perpetuity. To be sure, it should not be any other way when something as important as democratic theory is at stake.

I engage this debate by asking whether we can find and *use* any theoretical “lessons” from Southern Europe to help us study the democratisation processes in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this article is twofold. First, I intend to contribute to our understanding of democratisation in a peninsula where the splash of the tsunami of democracy was not overwhelming to say the least. Second, I wish to more fully explore these “lessons”: to what extent can we use the same concepts, assumptions and hypotheses to make South-to-Southeast comparisons? After briefly reviewing the main foundations and building blocks of democratisation theory, I use existing descriptive and analytical material to broadly but systematically compare democratisation paths in these two regions. I then offer some thoughts on the “transferability” of democratisation models as well as on the ways in which democratisation theory can be improved.

#### *What is Democratisation?*

In the Linz-Stepan (1996) social-scientific schema, democratisation can be broken down into two dependent variables: transition and consolidation.<sup>5</sup> A democratic transition – a move from a non-democratic regime to a democratic one – encompasses the creation of new rules regarding political participation, which, in turn, are not subject to a review by a non-democratic group or an institution. A consolidation of democracy, which connotes a longer and a more complex process, entails the “legitimation” of these new rules, that is, a moment when “all politically significant groups...adhere to democratic rules of the game” (Gunther et al 1995: 7; Linz et al 1995: 78).

A democratic regime is “sufficiently consolidated” when it is able to “survive and remain stable in the face of such serious challenges as major economic and international crises” (Gunther et al 1995: 8). Regime sustainability, as the ultimate result of consolidation, can be measured by considering the perseverance of the rule of law, the workability and usability of state structures, and the strength of three “societies” – civil, political, and economic, all of which, in turn, can be “scientifically” measured not just by structural dimensions, but also, as the definition implies, through the behaviour and attitudes of the participants (Linz et al 1995: 79; Linz and

Stepan 1996: 6-7). Democratic *persistence*, in turn, can be seen as the next, third dependent variable in this theory.

Unlike transition, consolidation “requires full conformity with all the criteria inherent in a demanding, multifaceted procedural definition of democracy” (Gunther et al 1995: 3). It is important to note that, while conceptually distinct, these two dependent variables “may temporarily overlap or sometimes even coincide” (Ibid.; also see xii-xiii). This means, among other things, that democratic transition can serve as both a dependent variable and an independent variable. As students of “new institutionalism” will quickly point out, democratisation is subject to path-dependence (Ibid.: xvi).

In order to avoid tautology (i.e. democracy survived; therefore, it must have consolidated), at least two behavioural indicators of consolidation can be employed: the absence of anti-system political parties or social movements and/or of politically significant semi-loyal elements.<sup>6</sup> I say “at least” because the mass-public support for democracy arguably remains an important indicator of democratic consolidation, which is why it is important to employ attitudinal measures of consolidation as well.

There is another important qualifier to be added about democratic transitions. Unlike consolidations, which can be studied by considering both the ingenuity of their leaders *and* the long-term structural conditions that democratically elected regimes inherit, transitions are highly contingent events and may be triggered by a nearly random set of events. Some have suggested, for example, that mass protests against Milošević on October 5, 2000 would never have become a successful “democratic revolution”, had it not been for the madly brave driver of a sand-digger who was able to use his machine to overpower the defences of Milošević’s police in front of the parliament and the state television in Serbia’s capital. Singular events such as this one are under-determined by structural conditions. Expressed in the language of positivist social science, the randomness of democratic transitions implies a high error term, which deeply problematises hypothesis-testing on this aspect of democratisation.

What factors are germane to measuring democratic consolidation? In the Linz-Stepan schema, seven “independent variables” are considered determinative.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 offers an illustrative summary of their indicators, where they are not obvious, and their hypothesised relationships. All of them are discussed below in more detail.

In the following sections, I reflect on the recent democratisation process in the Balkans and then make a broad interregional comparison by looking at the seven variables above. Because “every case is different”, these variables provide the basis for a systematic comparison both within and across regions. Admittedly, some cross-country comparisons are inevitably less “systematic” than others.<sup>8</sup>

Variable (e.g. of value)	Indicator(s) and/or specific proposition	Hypothesised Relationships
Identity of process-initiators (provisional governments)	Civil uprising, armed revolution, or a non-hierarchically-led military coup leads to provisional governments which slow down consolidation	-
simultaneity with other reforms (present)	Economic, social, legal, bureaucratic reforms	-
“stateness” (not disputed)	The degree of national homogeneity; absence of separatist movements	+
The nature of the military (hierarchical)	The intervention by hierarchical militaries during transition impedes consolidation	-
prior regime type (e.g. sultanistic)	Sultanism is least conducive to consolidation, followed by early post-totalitarianism	-
The nature of international influences (helpful)	When membership in international bodies is seen as a goal by relevant domestic actors, consolidation faster	+
constitution-making environment (consensual)	The presence of all relevant political parties and movements at the creation	+

*Table 1. Operationalisation of hypotheses on democratic consolidation*

### *Democracy in the Balkans*

In the literature on democratisation, little ink has been spilled on the Balkans. Compared to the rest of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, especially its so-called “Western” part (the countries of the former Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia, plus Albania), have received minimal attention. In this region, the buzzword has been “balkanisation”, not democratisation. These two can be seen as opposites: while democratisation can be regarded as a move towards stable, centripetal political systems that allow for peaceful alteration in government, “balkanisation” often refers to violent, petty-minded fragmentation and polarisation.<sup>11</sup> Let me then attempt to take stock of the democratisation vs. “balkanisation” balance in the Balkans today.

Comparative studies that consider the entire Balkan region are particularly rare.<sup>12</sup> Were it not for the edited volumes by Dawisha and Parrott (1997) and by Pridham and Gallagher (2000), the literature on democratisation would face a huge blank spot when it comes to the Balkans. Exactly how much democracy is there in the Balkans? According to the above volumes, the first round of transitions between 1989 and 1992 did not lead to immediate democratic engagements; the second round, which began in 1996-7, initially appeared far more promising. Yet at the time of writing, the end of transition is nowhere in sight for some Balkan political systems.

What about consolidation? In its last report, Freedom House, an American think-tank, codes Slovenia and Bulgaria as consolidated democracies.<sup>13</sup> The definition used by Freedom House is not explicit, but is certainly less stringent than mine. Following my criteria, I suggest that only Slovenian democracy should be seen as fully consolidated. Slovenia boasts an institutionalised party system, a strong and unfragmented civil society, and widespread public support for democracy (Cerar 2001). In addition, in terms of the GDP per capita, Slovenia is the richest country of Eastern Europe and, using the year of the accession to the European Union as a reference point, comparatively richer than its Southern European counterparts.<sup>14</sup> This country, to be sure, is no longer considered “Balkan” – which itself may be seen as evidence of its success.<sup>15</sup> The rest of the region only shows evidence of partial consolidation.

Bulgaria and Romania have received a solid amount of attention in the literature on democratisation (Linz and Stepan 1996; Linz et al 1995). The two neighbours have largely managed to escape the ethnic and international conflict that at some point or another engulfed all five successor states of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, or an outright state collapse like the one that occurred in Albania in 1997.

Bulgaria has been more successful than Romania. Given its weak economy, underdeveloped civil society, and lack of a substantial middle class, Bulgaria’s initial democratic engagement surprised even its long-time observers (Bell 1997: 353). Since January 1997, when a major economic crisis was averted, Bulgaria’s democratisation has been steady in comparison with the rest of the region (today Bulgaria boasts the region’s only “functioning market economy”, save for Slovenia’s). Bulgaria has witnessed more peaceful changes in governmental incumbency and more systemic loyalty among its democratic competitors than any other Balkan state. This comparatively high regime stability has led some to call it the “most democratically developed of all Balkan countries” (Krastev 2002: 41; again, this only holds when Slovenia is discounted). It is probably safe to place Bulgaria at a later stage of democratic consolidation.

According to Vladimir Tismaneanu, prior to the “revolutionary” parliamentary and presidential elections of November 1996 Romania’s post-communist political system was a hybrid of authoritarianism and paternalism (1997: 420). Others also maintain that the elections in 1996 mark the beginning of democratic consolidation, which was certainly concurrent with the ongoing democratic transition at the time (Chiriac 2001; Craiutu 2000). Granted, Romania’s democratisation has generally been rather slow and modest, especially considering its early start and “abrupt break with the old order” (Tismaneanu 1997: 403; also see Nelson 2002: 448). Partly because of the comparatively strong and consistent support for Corneliu Vadim Tudor’s anti-systemic Romania Mare party (and for Tudor himself) since the 2000 elections, Romania is still at an “early to mid-stage” of consolidation.

The youngest member of the “in consolidation” club is Croatia. The parliamentary elections in November 2003 represent the first transfer of power since the so-called “second transition” in 2000 (Ottaway and Maltz 2001; Ottaway 2003: 122-3). Indeed, as one would be hard-pressed to call the Tudjman regime democratic (Cohen 1997: 111; Vejvoda 2000: 226; Lalović

2000: 59), Tudjman's death in December 1999 and the subsequent electoral victory of the regime's opposition in January 2000 should be seen as Croatia's real transition to democracy (but see Čular 2000). The winter of 2003-4, then, marks a middle stage of democratic consolidation.

I make this claim about Croatia's progress on multiple grounds. Particularly significant was the fact that political representatives of the Serb minority, including some with ties to the armed rebellion in 1991-1995, expressed their willingness to enter into a coalition government headed by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). It was Tudjman's HDZ who ran Croatia in 1995, when insurgent and irredentist Serbs were defeated and mostly "cleansed" out of the country (Croatia achieved sovereign authority over its present-day territory in 1998). For its part, the HDZ moved to shake off the Tudjman legacy in several ways. Its leader Ivo Sanader promised a complete "refugee return" by the end of 2004. Further, HDZ's expansionist policy toward Bosnia (Lalović 2000: 57-9) was clearly revoked, which immediately improved the party's democratic appeal and, in turn, Croatia's democratic credentials. Finally, prior to the election, the extreme right-wing Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), a likely and only relevant candidate for an anti-system party in 2003, significantly democratised its program and thus transformed itself into a loyal competitor in Croatia's political system.<sup>16</sup> It can thus be argued that Croatia has now joined Bulgaria and Romania in leading the consolidation process in the Balkans.<sup>17</sup>

But, as always, consolidation should not be regarded as a linear process. Consolidation tends to swing back and forth, such that not only stagnation but also temporary reversal, "deconsolidation, reequilibrium, and breakdown" is possible (Gunther et al 1995: xiii). In 1996-7, for example, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania made advances in their democratisation processes; in contrast, Croatia backtracked (the Zagreb crisis). Therefore, it is certainly premature to announce a triumph of democracy in this part of the Balkans. Save for Slovenia, *all* Balkan states continue to suffer deeply from a lack of the rule of law, rampant corruption, threats of civil unrest, and widespread public mistrust (Krastev 2003). In short, Balkan states can be seen as weak and some can safely be regarded as failing or even failed.<sup>18</sup>

To be sure, Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro have all made some kind of transition to democracy. This means that, in theory, the political preferences in the entire Balkan region are now formed through free competition and by non-violent and non-exclusionary means. Compared to a decade ago, the situation in these four countries is much, *much* improved. But when it comes to consolidation, the political systems in the Western Balkans still lag far, *far* behind its neighbours.

I use the qualifier "some kind" to describe Western Balkan transitions for two reasons. First, the democratic process in at least two Balkan political systems continues to be reviewed by institutions and actors that are not democratically accountable. In Bosnia and Kosovo (the latter is in theory a province of Serbia; in practice, it is an international protectorate), representatives of the international community have the final word: they can make decisions (because most executives are semi-paralysed), pass new laws (because legislatures are mostly "talking shops"), and, most important, dismiss democratically elected officials. The international community – a

nebulous term that refers to a combination of states and international institutions interested in the Balkans – sometimes promotes democracy in ways that are no doubt authoritarian. Similarly, if to significantly lower degree, the Serbo-Montenegrin union and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be significantly conditioned by the will of the international community.

Second, even if we suspend the above observation that selected Balkan governments share power with international actors, there remains the problem of sovereignty. As I show below, the absence of sovereignty and state legitimacy may well be the chief problem in the democratisation process. The central government of Serbia-Montenegro simply does not have the sovereign authority to formulate and implement major policies over large parts of its territory. Macedonia, arguably the “best among the rest”, continues to face contested sovereignty issues.

In fact, every Western Balkan system contains at least one politically significant group or institution that does not adhere to democratic rules of the game. Anti-system and semi-loyal elements are pervasive, even in an ethnolinguistically homogenous Albania (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 54).

This uncertainty leads to the above caveat about the interaction between transition and consolidation. In many Balkan countries, the two processes evidently overlap and coincide. The transition to democracy in the five political systems of the Western Balkans (six if Kosovo is included) has been tremendously ambivalent. Even though some elements of democratic consolidation are present (e.g. relatively stable regimes), not all of the requirements for democratic transitions have been fulfilled. This is not unusual. That transition and consolidation “are not necessarily separate and temporally sequential processes” is evident in the case of Portugal, where until 1982 an undemocratic institution – the Council of the Revolution – kept an eye on the otherwise widely supported democracy (Linz et al 1995: 106-7).

Thus far, I have examined the structural and behavioural dimensions of democratisation - but what about attitudinal aspects?

While there have not been any explicit attempts to replace democratic forms of governance, voters in Southeastern Europe generally dislike the individuals who represent democracy in their countries. A rare cross-national public survey conducted by a team of researchers under Ivan Krastev found that Balkan parliaments never receive more than 20 percent approval ratings, that all Balkan publics are pessimistic about their future (save for Albania), and all feel deeply insecure (2002: 40-2). Indeed, about one half of respondents in Bulgaria thought that the situation in 1989 was better (Ibid.: 40). While this is a common and generally anticipated response in the many parts of the former Yugoslavia, it is definitely surprising coming from the Balkans’ “most democratised state”. If the level of public trust in democracy in Southeast Europe is lower than most scholars realise, as Krastev argues,<sup>19</sup> why is this the case? The reasons are myriad: the lack of democratic culture, the absence of the rule of law, the “state capture” level of corruption, and the general unaccountability of public officials. The issue therefore is not curtailed transition, but a complete crisis of democracy as such:

The biggest danger for democracy today is not sudden but rather slow death, meaning a gradual process of erosion and delegitimation that destroys democratic regimes even as their surface institutions remain in place, much as termites eat the foundations of a house without visibly disturbing its outer walls (Ibid.: 44).

In light of such observations made by area experts, the classifications made by Freedom House seem premature and overly optimistic. New constitutions may be written, elections may be held, parties may develop, but the emergence and even persistence of formal democratic institutions alone will not necessarily lead to more “democratic” political outcomes. As I will show below, there is absolutely no doubt that the Balkan countries continue to be overwhelmed by historic, economic, and social issues that give democracy precious little breathing space.

In the next section, I make a broader interregional comparison by “testing” the Linz-Stepan propositions on democratisation. My tests are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive, as it is impossible to trace all changes and continuities in political participation in the entire region. My hope is that, by the end of the paper, the reader will feel at least moderately informed about the utility and pitfalls of comparing Southern to Southeastern Europe.

### *1. Identity of Process-Initiators*

The path that transition follows, and the shape that the early stage of democratic consolidation takes, depend on who gets the ball rolling. The usual suspects include elements within the non-democratic regime itself, such as the actors in the military hierarchy. Spain, for example, stands as a famous case of a transition-by-transaction, where the political elites within the regime negotiated a non-violent and elegant move to democracy with elites outside the regime. Greece’s transition, in contrast, was initiated by a hierarchically-led military coup against a non-hierarchical military regime, which installed a caretaker pro-democratic government.<sup>21</sup>

Other initiators include civil uprisings, non-hierarchically led military coups, and armed revolutions. In the Linz-Stepan model, a transition to democracy is likely to be jeopardised if “other” elements decide to establish a provisional government, which in turn takes over the democratisation process. In Southern Europe, Portugal fits into this category, where a coup by a non-hierarchical military (followed by a civil revolution) set up a series of weak provisional governments between 1974 and 1976, all of which caused a near-collapse of the state. Portugal was thus the last country in the region to complete its transition to and consolidation of democracy.

The post-communist transitions in the Balkans were usually initiated by elements within the regime, but this fact did not accelerate the pace of democratisation. The term “two-step transition” is often used to describe Balkan engagement with democracy, whereby the first step marks the fall of one-party regimes and the second step refers to the moment when “transformed” communist elites are replaced (see, e.g., Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 48-9). The term “second” transition refers to a move from a

semi-authoritarian post-communist regime; “two-step” and “second transition” are often used interchangeably in the literature. On the surface, the Balkan experience bears out the “regime insider” hypothesis as originally conceptualised, at least with respect to the first or the first-step transition. Yet it seems that Southern and Southeastern European experiences are markedly different regarding this variable.

Diamandouros and Larrabee make an interregional comparison of leadership, or, in their formulation, the presence of Machiavelli’s *virtu* – a “sense of vision, judgement and tactical acumen” (2000: 45). They find that two Balkan leaders – Slovenia’s Milan Kučan and Bulgaria’s Zhelju Zhelev – measure up to Spain’s Adolfo Suarez, Portugal’s Mario Soares, and even Greece’s Constantine Karamanlis (Ibid.: 46. I would add Croatia’s Stjepan Mesić, in his post-1994 phase at least, to these two). Diamandouros and Larrabee claim that

[t]he failure of democratic leadership in South-Eastern Europe, observable in the early transition period, has its roots in the debility of political institutions and the weak organizational density of civil society in the countries of the region (Ibid.: 47).

Human agency, regarded as *virtu*, was effectively curbed by extant political and social structure. While this claim requires empirical support, it is clear that the policy-initiator variable can be modified. A more appropriate hypothesis may be that the initiation of transition by ex-communists is likely to prolong the democratisation process.

## 2. *International Influences*

In Southern Europe, international influences on the democratisation process, while overall supportive, were a critical factor only in the case of Portugal. While probably not as influential as the question of the process initiator, the support of the West for democracy was consistent, multifaceted and unequivocal (Linz et al 1995: 108, 99).

In the Balkans, like in the rest of Eastern Europe, international factors are decisive in setting the democratisation agenda (Zielonka and Pravda 2001). In fact, Jan Zielonka at one point guardedly concludes, “it appears that democracy in East Europe is to a significant extent foreign made” (2001: 511). Sweeping generalisations of this kind are devilishly hard to defend. “International factors” encompass a variety of foreign governments, international organisations, institutions, and transnational actors, whose missions and mandates are diverse, overlapping and often conflicting. Sorting through these is a daunting challenge; deciding on the relative influence of international vs. domestic factors is practically impossible at this level of theoretical aggregation. Both the motivations and effects of international actors are multifaceted. The promotion of democracy is often at loggerheads with either the promotion of trade and investment or stability and security. Let me briefly consider the role of the European Union (EU) as an illustration of a “decisive” international influence.

The foreign policy orientations of all Balkans states are overwhelmingly focused on joining the EU. The extensive association and

accession criteria and the rigor with which the conditionality principle is applied are probably the two most powerful instruments for initiating and cultivating a range of democratic practices and represent the main thrust of all international influences in the region (Krastev 2003: 44-5). One should be careful in equating the degree of democratisation with the degree of association with the EU, but a high correlation exists (Agh 1998: 18). Slovenia is a full-fledged member (May 2004), Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia are official “candidates” (i.e. signatories of “Europe Agreements”) and the rests of the region is at various stages of the so-called Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP, which precedes the Europe Agreements).<sup>22</sup>

In addition to EU conditionality (Pridham 2001; Spendzharova 2003), foreign aid plays a direct and complex role in the democratisation trajectory (Drezov 2000; Stan 2000). Regardless of the degree of association with the EU, “Europeanisation” – a process in which ideas, values, norms, rules, and procedures developed in the EU policy process become incorporated in the domestic identities, institutions, and policies – is profoundly changing Balkan states, generally in the direction of democratic consolidation.<sup>23</sup>

It should be clear that international influences do not just come from the West. Pridham observes that the Balkans were subject to the “snowball effects” of a democratisation process that had begun in the north of the peninsula: Albania, for example, was hit hard by a democratisation-snowball from the revolution in Romania (2000: 10). Also, when it comes to international influences, democratisation is only one dependent variable. In the next set of discussions, I return repeatedly to the question of international factors and show how “international influence” must be seen as at least an intervening variable in every one of them.

### *3. Simultaneity With Other Reforms*

In Southern Europe, politics, not economics, acted as a moving force behind the transition and consolidation (Linz et al 1995: 89, 109, 112). While the democratic reforms in Portugal, Spain, and Greece all included some reforms in the legal and judicial system, the state of bureaucracy, and even the economy, the main reforms were undeniably political. Linz et al note that

[u]nlike many of the recent East European transitions, the only task that had to be confronted immediately following Franco’s death in November 1975 was the creation of new democratic political institutions with autonomy and support (1995: 89).

The contrast with Eastern Europe in general and the Balkans in particular could not be starker. The problems associated with the “dual” transition are recognised in the Linz-Stepan model (1996: 435-53). In terms of economic transition, the Balkan countries embarked on economic reform policies in the mid to late 1990s, that is, later than most of Eastern Europe. The neoliberal agenda of economic reform exacerbated old social problems and created new ones, particularly in the Western Balkans. Wim van Meurs summarises the main issues well:

By the time...the first Europe Agreements were signed in the mid-1990s, most macroeconomic indicators in east-central Europe were already pointing upwards again, towards sustainable development. In the western Balkans today, unemployment, inflation and de-industrialisation have reached levels never ever witnessed in Estonia, Slovakia and Poland (2003: 13).

Geoffrey Pridham is even more direct. According to him, what we have witnessed in the Balkans is the “deterioration of living standards on a scale not seen in Europe since the Great Depression” (2000: 16). Pridham does not exaggerate. In the Balkans only two countries have returned to or surpassed their GDP levels of 1989. Slovenia, of course, greatly surpassed it; Albania’s “success”, in contrast, should be measured against the utter collapse of its Stalinist central economy in the 1980s. Also, unlike Southern Europe, which managed to “overcome” its social and economic inequalities by the 1970s (Gunther 1995: xv), the first transition decade in the Balkans saw the gap between rich and poor grow. Then there is the third transition – state-building – to which I turn below. The continuous failure of the economy to deliver enormously complicates the transition to democracy and, in fact, endangers not only the legitimacy of the regime, but also the legitimacy of the state.

Southern Europe largely escaped the simultaneity problem, as economic reforms were postponed until after democratic reforms had been completed (Diamandourous et al 1995: 397). Democratisation in Southern Europe was a success story partly because the state was given a chance to deal with its reforms sequentially, not simultaneously. Of course, neoliberal “shock therapy” must be counted among “international influences”. In Eastern Europe in general, international economic influence turned out to be *as* critical as political influence, if not more so (Pravda 2001: 20; provided that there is a conceptual distinction between the two).

Economic aid helped many countries to achieve a degree of stabilisation necessary for other reforms and, as I said, for fulfilment of the greatly touted EU association and accession criteria. But there is no doubt that international influence also had adverse effects on economic reforms.<sup>24</sup> The reform policies of economic stabilisation, liberalisation, and privatisation have resulted in all the problems van Meurs notes, as well as the enormous problem of “physical and social displacement”, that is, of social destabilisation and fragmentation. In Krastev’s words: “Now that the post-communist “farewell” state has replaced the communist welfare state, the new democratic regimes naturally suffer from a legitimacy deficit” (Krastev 2002: 47). Simultaneity with other reforms is clearly an important factor that can “make or break” the democratisation process.

#### *4. Role of the Military*

Military regimes can be regarded as either hierarchical or non-hierarchical. In the former case, the ruling high-ranking officers see themselves as a part of the state, not as a government, caretaker or otherwise (Linz et al 1995: 85). The latter, in contrast, are populated with the lower-

ranking officers who tend to perceive themselves as a regime rather than a part of the state apparatus (e.g. Greek colonels, 1967-1974). This observation leads to one of the more original hypotheses in the Linz-Stepan model: hierarchically-led militaries are likely to withhold reserve powers under the new regimes (Ibid.: 86).

This variable holds little theoretical weight in the Balkans. Militaries *qua* institutions did not play a central role in Balkan democratisations, except in Romania (and also perhaps Serbia's "second transition") when the military's non-role proved pivotal for the success of the respective revolutions. And it is probably safe to say that an intervention in the democratic process by the members of the army is unlikely. Bruce Parrott correctly observes, "one-party systems have proven less susceptible to military coups than have other forms of authoritarianism" (1997: 7; also see Diamandourous and Larrabee 2000: 44-5). No Balkan military holds an important political position, but a variation in the military's influence is present. For this reason, civil-military relations in the Balkans require a different theoretical focus. Daniel Nelson proposes that the position of the defence establishment in the prior regime determines its political strength in democracy: if the army was not a prominent actor under communists, it is likely to be susceptible to civilian influence and manipulation in democracy (2002: 428-9; also see Bunce 2003: 175).

### *5. Constitution-Making Environment*

The formula by which the new constitution is adopted can have direct repercussions for democratisation. Two broad formulas can be pursued: majoritarian or consensual. An imposition of a constitution by a provisional government is generally a majoritarian practice. Conversely, submitting a constitution for approval by a referendum and consulting other significant political parties, civic groups, and social movements can be seen as consensual. The post-Franco Spain is probably the paradigmatic case of consensual constitution-making. In contrast, the 1976 Portuguese constitution was designed in a profoundly majoritarian way, which contributed to a number of non-democratic features (Linz et al 1995: 106).

The new constitutions of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania gave birth to radically new institutional structures and, to a varying degree, initially reflected profound majoritarian characteristics.<sup>25</sup> The constitution-making process in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro turned out to be much more arduous, to the point where direct international intervention was required to complete the job. The end result was a set of constitutions – the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, Ohrid Peace Agreement in 2001, and the Belgrade Agreement in 2002 – in which international actors insisted on "consensual" decision-making among national actors. State-building in these countries, in other words, was largely a function of EU and American foreign policy, not of an autochthonous search for a political consensus.

This observation may lead to new testable hypotheses on the linkage between international influences and the constitution-making environment. As for democratisation, there is no evidence to suggest that such foreign-made consensual constitution-making has had a positive impact. Thus a

relationship between the constitution-making environment and democratisation does not obtain in the Balkans, at least not in the originally hypothesised direction.

#### 6. "Stateness"

For democratisation in homogenous nation-states, this variable is largely irrelevant. In Southern Europe, "stateness" was pertinent only in the Spanish case. There, at least two groups of people often regard themselves as "non-Spanish": the Catalans and the Basques. Many members of both groups have indeed supported anti-system and semi-loyal parties and movements and denied the legitimacy of the Spanish state.

That disputed "stateness" may act as a bane to efforts for democratisation is no longer in question (Linz and Stepan 1996: 16-38; Bunce 2003: 171). It has been estimated that 19 of the 27 cases of democratisation in Eastern Europe face open issues of "stateness" (22 of them can be seen as "new sovereign entities"; Parrott 1997: 9). In the Balkans, only Slovenia, due to an uncommonly high degree of ethno-national homogeneity by any measure, enjoys full sovereign authority and state legitimacy. In different ways Bulgaria, Romania, and, as of late, Croatia have also moved towards greater sovereign authority and state legitimacy. But as I suggested in my diagnosis of Balkan democratic transitions, the rest of the peninsula has not been able to adequately address issues of "stateness". In the Balkans as a whole, in Krastev's words, "[t]oday the problem is that there are more democracies than sovereign states in the region" (2002: 39). In other words, in much of the Balkans, the question of "stateness" simply overshadows everything else.

Krastev's observation may imply that, among other things, democracy precedes state-building in the Balkans or that some Balkan states are simply better able to supply democracy than maintain sovereignty. Be that as it may, Krastev's point leads to an important fact of Balkan political life: the existence of a state as an undisputed territorial unit cannot be presupposed. The break-up of the former Yugoslavia led not only to minority issues, but also more fundamental controversies over the national identity of the successor political systems. In terms of basic structural conditions for the democratic process, such as the existence of a legitimate state and historically stable borders, Southern and Southeastern Europe are clearly not comparable. Diamandouros and Larrabee note that challenges to the legitimacy of the state issue from profound social, political and cultural divisions linked to ethnic and national minorities, established within the boundaries of these states and potentially, if not actually, contesting their territorial integrity (2000: 25).

As I hinted earlier, the problem of "stateness" is thus the third simultaneous transformation (in addition to politics and economics) that the political systems in the Balkans face (for this reason, Klaus Offe uses the term "triple transformation" in Pridham 2000: 6). Again, of the four cases in Southern Europe, only Spanish democracy had sovereignty issues. Its primary lesson concerns the timing of elections. In Spain, a series of state-wide elections preceded regional elections, which prevented regional, that is Catalan and

Basque, elites to “play ethnic politics” (Gunther et al 1995: 90). The reverse sequence of elections took place in the former Yugoslavia and, indeed, the “ethnic identity card” was played early. Even though it is debatable whether the Spanish sequence of election was constitutionally possible in the more decentralised Yugoslavia (Hayden 1992), this lesson was generally lost on international actors who were trying to influence the constitution-making environment in the eve of Yugoslavia’s demise.

Again, even when it comes to “stateness”, international factors are critical. For the international community, the problems of post-communism were second in importance to those of state-building (i.e. ethnic conflict). Bosnia can be seen as the paradigmatic case. The international community has not only sponsored constitution-making, but according to many, post-Dayton Bosnia is “a state by international design and of international design” (Bose 2002: 60; see also Ćurak 2002). And even though this “international design” might be seen as democratic, it is evident that there are trade-offs between promoting security and stability on the one hand, and democracy on the other.

In Bosnia, an argument is often made that insistence on early elections adversely affected state-building efforts (Bose 2001: 90; Chandler 1999). At the same time, the results of democratic elections were nullified by the international community every time they were thought to threaten security. While the international community never intended to topple the democratically-elected regimes, many officials were sacked from their jobs upon elections. The relationship between security and democracy is probably an uneasy one in any society, but it is desirable to hold the final arbiters of this trade-off democratically accountable. This is certainly not the case with the representatives of the international community in Bosnia. The undemocratic behaviour of these important domestic players almost certainly violates ideal-typical definitions of democracy. It is therefore not surprising to learn that Bosnia is commonly seen as “an example of failed democratisation” (Burg 1997: 122; Chandler 1999). For the Balkans overall, “stateness” is probably *the* most pertinent conditioning variable for explaining the degree of democratisation.

### *7. Prior Regime Type*

The nature of the prior non-democratic regime greatly affects the prospects of democratisation. According to Linz’s widely adopted taxonomy, non-democratic regimes can be divided into four categories: totalitarian (itself differentiated into early, frozen, and mature stages), authoritarian, sultanist, and post-totalitarian (Linz et al 1995: 82; Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 38-9; but see Bunce 1999: chapters 2 and 3). For the purposes of this discussion, the most germane distinction is that between post-totalitarianism and authoritarianism. The latter, the argument goes, allows limited political and economic pluralism and does not have highly institutionalised ideology; the former tolerates only “parallel cultures” or “niche societies” and celebrates an ideological legacy. The main hypothesis is that the less pluralistic the prior regime was, the longer the democratisation process will be.

The Balkan democracies do not share the same “typological” origins with those in Southern Europe. Like the rest of Eastern Europe, it was the breakdown of post-totalitarian regimes that initiated democratic transitions in the Balkans. Only Romania experienced a transition directly from sultanism (Linz et al 1995: 83; Diamandouros and Larrabee see it as a hybrid, 2000: 39). “Second transitions”, like the one that took place in Croatia in 2000, are perhaps more comparable to the Southern European experience. Be that as it may, judging from a broad interregional comparison, it appears that, *other things being equal*, the transitions from authoritarianism are likely to produce greater and more rapid democratic outcomes than the transitions from post-totalitarian regimes. Unlike authoritarianism, post-totalitarianism debilitates the social and political forces which are critical in developing methods and mechanisms for dealing with the challenges of democratisation. This hypothesis is again confirmed if we accept that Poland in the 1980s was an authoritarian state (see, e.g. Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 40) and that today it is a consolidated democracy.

But other things are never equal. For example, Poland, like the countries of Southern Europe, had accumulated greater “prior democratic learning” than the countries of Southeastern Europe. Bruce Parrott observes that unlike Southern European (or Latin American) states, Balkans regimes did not historically include both non-democracy and democracy, but generally stayed on the non-democratic side (1997: 11). Democratic capital in the Balkans, Diamandouros and Larrabee correctly conclude, is low because it entails nothing but a “negative legitimation of democracy” that is “partial and in many ways conditional” (2000: 40-1). Considering *all* prior regimes seems to be as important as looking at the immediate non-democratic predecessor.

Again, Linz-Stepan’s seven-variable schema is a probabilistic model of political change, which considers both structures *and* the factors of leadership and human agency. Even though socio-economic structural variables such as international influences or simultaneity are rather capacious, they do not entail seemingly “non-political” structural factors such as longer-term historical legacies, which indicate the embeddedness of the state in society and socio-economic development or degree of “modernity”.

Diamandouros and Larrabee argue that three longer-term historical legacies in particular continue to have repercussions on the democratisation in the Balkans (2000: 29-5). First, in the Ottoman period,<sup>26</sup> not only did civil society fail to develop on a level comparable to that of the rest of Europe, it also created and cultivated patterns of paternalism. Second, the importation of the idea of nationalism from Europe meant that solidaristic bonds cultivated by the Ottoman’s millet system fell completely apart, never to recover. Third, the peasant societies of the Balkans, like elsewhere, developed strong collectivist attitudes, which included antipathy towards political conflict, institutionalised or otherwise. In Southern Europe only the last legacy appears to be salient. However, some of the effects are similar: instead of paternalism and collectivism as such, Southern Europe offers plenty of evidence of local-level clientelism and factionalism (Diamandouros et al 1995: 394). These premodern features of Southern European politics are commonly attributed to low levels of socio-economic development.

In general, socio-economic development is positively associated with democratisation. Spain in the 1970s and the 1980s was a profoundly modernised state – a factor that accelerated the transition to and the consolidation of democracy. Latin America and even Italy of the 1940s did not enjoy such an advantage (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 36). The Balkans reveal a more mixed modernisation record at the moment of democratic transition. Under communism, societies underwent a profound and intense change, which included numerous experiments based on the logic of central planning. Some states and regions fared better than the others. On the economic development continuum, Albania and Romania anchored the lower end, while the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia stood as Eastern Europe's richest place. These “non-political” structural variables, too, seem pertinent to South-to-Southeast comparison. But what is usually missing in such analysis is a causal mechanism that would link the Ottomans to communists and post-communists.

As I said, the trajectory a transition takes can be counted among the independent variables explaining democratic consolidation. Returning to our discussion of the Linz-Stepan model, transitions in Southeastern Europe are different from Southern Europe in several important respects: the post-totalitarian nature of the prior regime; the high degree of simultaneity with economic reforms; belated or incomplete state-building; and, related to all of the above, the complex effects of international factors. The first three factors clearly prolonged transitions and the international community's focus on security over democracy perhaps also made a contribution. Gunther et al (1995: 3-4) contend that consolidation depends on the transition path. This South-to-Southeast comparison suggests that a prolonged transition usually means a prolonged consolidation.

We can also say that the mode of expiration of the prior regime affects the transition and, hence, democratic consolidation. Linz and Stepan hypothesise that peaceful transfers of power from non-democratic to democratic regimes facilitate democratisation (1996: 55-60). In the Balkans, this proposition can be expanded to say that any kind of large-scale political violence – civil, regional or international – is more likely to delay democratic transition. This proposition is banal, but nevertheless not explicitly stated in democratisation frameworks, as they habitually presuppose a peaceful domestic, regional and international environment.

But instead of considering possible independent variables *ad infinitum* (the world is *always* more complex than our models), let us reflect on the main purpose of the exercise – to test the Linz-Stepan (1996) model on a comparison of the regions of Southern and Southeastern Europe. Table 2 summarises their democratisation experiences.

*Independent variables*

1) Identity of process-initiators: 1 if civil uprising, armed revolutions, non-hierarchically led military coup;

2 if hierarchical military coup, 3 if elements within regimes, 4 if ex-communists.

2) International influences: +++ supportive; + indifferent; – adverse or mixed; P – protectorate democracy

3) Simultaneity with other reforms. 1 if with economic and others, 0 if with other reforms only (1, 0)

4) Military (N – non-hierarchical; H – hierarchical)

5) Constitution-making environment (C-consensual; M-majoritarian)

6) “Stateness” (+++ homogenous; + moderately heterogeneous; – highly heterogeneous)

7) Prior regime type (A-authoritarianism; E-early, F-frozen, M-mature post-(T)otalitarianism; S-sultanism;

taken from Diamandourous and Larrabee 2000; I would code post-Tito Yugoslavia as authoritarian)

*Dependent variables*

8) Transitions or “second” transition completed (year; if not completed: ?)

9) Consolidation completed (year); Note that transitions are generally *not* amenable to hypothesis-testing.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Southern Europe</i>									
Greece	2	++ +	0	H	M	++ +	A	1974	1981
Italy	1	++ +	0	N	M	++ +	A	1945	1970s
Spain	3	++ +	0	N	C	+	A	1975	1981-2
Portugal	1	++ +	0	N	M	++ +	A	1974	1989
<i>Southeastern Europe (incl. Kosovo)</i>									
Albania	4	+,	1	N/A	M	+	T	?	N/A
Bosnia	4	- (P)	1	N/A	C	-	M	?	N/A
Bulgaria	4	+, -	1	N/A	M	+	E	1997	N/A
Croatia	4	-, +	1	N/A	M	+	M	2000	N/A
Kosovo	4	- (P)	1	N/A	N/A	+++	M	N/A	N/A
Macedonia	4	- (P?)	1	N/A	C	-	M	?	N/A
Serbia-Montenegro	4	- (P?)	1	N/A	C	+	M	?	N/A

Romania	4	-, +	4	N/ A	M	+	S/T	1996	N/A
Slovenia	4	+++	4	N/ A	C	+++	M	1994	2002

*Table 2. A summary of the features of the democratisation process in Southern and Southeastern Europe using very basic coding rules according to the Linz-Stepan model (1996)*

### *Conclusions*

The theoretical insights derived from the study of the Southern European model are exportable, but the transaction costs are rather high. My illustrative and perhaps impressionistic test of the Linz-Stepan's seven-variable schema suggests that four variables are pertinent to the Balkans – international influences, simultaneity, “stateness”, and the nature of the prior regime (numbers 2, 3, 6, and 7 in Table 2). The first three proved to be a non-factor in Southern Europe, save for “stateness” in the case of Spain. For the prior regime variable, an entirely different set of causal mechanisms is at play in the Balkans.

The remaining three variables – the identity of policy-initiators, the role of the military, and the constitution-making environment (numbers 1, 4, 5) were of limited use in discussing Balkan democratisations, as important modifications were required and new hypotheses needed to be introduced. Incidentally, these three variables received the most theoretical mileage in tracking transitions and consolidations in Southern Europe. It seems that the concepts and measurements developed for 1970s Southern Europe are generally inappropriate or irrelevant for the contemporary Balkans.

In other words, the useful lessons that the South has to offer to the Southeast are minimal. The conclusion of this exercise is intuitive and thus rather mundane: certain explanations dominate in a particular region or for a particular period. I twice used the word “seems” in the preceding paragraph because my macro-level survey is insufficiently deep empirically for the kinds of theoretical claims made by democratisation theory. The Linz-Stepan framework attempts to explain a wide range of political outcomes using relatively few principles. It provides a starting point for looking at empirical evidence, nothing more. Only a careful look at the impact of the four “pertinent” variables on democratisation in a carefully selected set of Balkan cases (ostensibly using more sophisticated structural, behavioural, and attitudinal indicators) would allow for more confident and convincing assertions.

On the surface, therefore, my findings seem to corroborate what students of post-communism have been saying for more than a decade: only selected lessons, and only in a most general form, can be used in South-to-Southeast comparisons of democratisation. Geoffrey Pridham, like many others, finds democratisation theory to be deficient and largely blind to contextual considerations, especially regarding the Balkan region (2000: 2, 9). He accuses the extant theory to be area-bound to Southern Europe in general and to the “Spanish model” in particular (Ibid.: 7). But should this

lead us to scrap the contributions made by the Linz-Stepan model and its applications and start from scratch? Thomas Carothers (2002), for one, thinks that the “transition paradigm” has run its course and should be retired. Pridham does not go this far; instead, he asks for the development of new theoretical “avenues” (2000: 9).

Pridham’s approach is more sensible. Democratisation theory constantly evolves and interregional comparison is critical for this evolution for it serves to locate and propose correctives to area-bound concepts, assumptions and hypotheses. For Gunther et al, interregional comparison is a “means of ensuring that the insights derived from the study of [one] cluster of cases could be validated, modified, or negated by lessons drawn from the study of similar developments in other regions” (Gunther et al 1995: xiv). Comparison, interregional and otherwise, selects things to examine and aims to capture both common patterns and variation across clusters of cases. In doing so, it serves to inform, evaluate, and revise the extant theories and induce the new conceptualisations of factors and relationships. Theoretical ideas, like those embedded in the Linz-Stepan framework, are general and imprecise, but they are also dynamic and malleable. They change over time, in reaction to historical and social experience. When existing ideas cannot explain a case, they serve as starting point to revise existing theory (Little 1998). Comparison, then, is meant to advance research and encourage new theoretical thinking.

What would some new theoretical avenues look like? One central approach could be called the “avenue of interaction effects”. Pridham calls for a move away from functionalist, transnational, and genetic theories of democratisation towards a more “interactive” approach (2000: 3-8). The Linz-Stepan model, arguably, combines all four to varying degrees, but clearly prefers the last one. The interactive approach is attractive because it makes two large promises. First, its proponents claim that it is well equipped to deal with the proliferation of variables pertinent to democratisation. Particularly well-accommodated in this framework, says Pridham, are “non-political” structural variables such as longer-term legacies and socio-economic development (Ibid.: 6, 11). Of course, the critical question is not whether these seven to ten variables matter for the democratisation process, but *when*, *why*, and *how* they matter.

This is where the interactive approach makes its second large promise. According to Pridham, this approach is able to capture interaction effects and the issues of simultaneity and sequencing, that is, to answer the question about which factors work in combination with one another to influence democratisation. As I said, democratisation theory is probabilistic, which means that its causal variables should be seen as having permissive causal value, i.e. that they enable and constrain human agents in the course of their action and interaction (i.e. political elites during democratisation). All of these variables are important, but in specific contexts, some are more important than others.

Because it promises to be context-traversing, the interactive approach is able, at least in principle, to “weight” the relative importance of causal factors. For example, if we decide to take historical legacies and socio-economic development in a deterministic manner, we might be surprised to

learn that Greece, which suffered from the same confining conditions as its Balkan neighbours, nevertheless managed to become a consolidated democracy. The critical task of theory is to account for the variation in opportunities and constraints, to explain why Greece is the only consolidated democracy in the southeastern corner of Europe.

The answer lies in the interaction effects and trade-offs, such as those between international influences and socio-economic development. The interactive approach is clearly useful because it withdraws the *ceteris paribus* assumption and looks at the “interplay between top-down dictates and bottom-up pressures” (Ibid.: 6). Again, I use the word “promise” when referring to the interactive approach because I have yet to see it deliver a set of testable hypotheses that derive from this approach and, consequently, some empirical tests, statistical and otherwise. The adjective “large” is added to express my understanding of the challenges of the task.<sup>27</sup>

One way to come closer to a set of interaction-based hypotheses regarding democratisation is to disaggregate its dependent variables. Instead of looking at various indicators of consolidation and then hypothesising about the variation in consolidation patterns, it is perhaps more useful to distil an explicit (e.g. one of the “basic freedoms”) or implicit (e.g. the rule of law) aspect of the consolidation process and then search for factors that facilitate or impede its salience. Descending on the conceptual “ladder of abstraction” to categories that are more closely connected to actual events can be quite profitable analytically. While it is likely that the explanatory power of such theory would be greatly reduced, it is also likely that such theory would “travel” better and better withstand empirical scrutiny. In other words, I suspect that a mid-range theory of democratisation would better serve a rather stretched South-to-Southeast route.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Goldie Shabad, Amanda Rosen, Katja Michalak, and two anonymous reviewers for written comments and criticisms as well as to Tim Frye and, especially, Richard Gunther for helpful conversations and suggestions. All errors are my own.
- <sup>2</sup> Huntington (1997: 3). A widely used definition by Juan Linz sees democracy as the “free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information, and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by non-violent means their claim to rule...without excluding any effective political office from that competition or prohibiting any members of the political community from expressing their preferences”. This definition values procedure over substance. See Gunther et al (1995: 5-6, Linz and Stepan 1996: 3). More generally, see the different treatments of democracy in Lane and Ersson (2003) and Grugel (2002).
- <sup>3</sup> Suggestions came out of both theoretical and policy consideration. Linz and Stepan, two fixtures in democratisation theory, demand that post-communism studies be brought closer to comparative politics (1996: xvii, 232; also see Schmitter and Karl, 1994: 184). Gunther et al offer Southern European “lessons” to “policy makers attempting to navigate the uncharted and unpredictable waters

of democratisation in their own countries” (1995: ix). It should be clear that this paper is interested in theoretical lessons.

- <sup>4</sup> The arguments on regional membership, like all “who belongs” arguments, can be seen as essentially contested. In this paper, Southern Europe consists of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain and the Balkans or Southeastern Europe encompasses Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and the successor countries of the former Yugoslavia. I realise that other definitions of these regions are possible and I ask the reader to suspend Greece’s Balkan identity (see, e.g., Malefakis 1995: 44-6). I also realise that the idea of regions may be even more problematic with respect to “shared” democratisation dynamics. In Southern Europe, Italy belongs to a separate category as its transition to democracy, like Japan’s or Germany’s, began as fascism was defeated in the World War II. In contrast, Portugal, Greece, and Spain turned to democracy only in the 1970s, when their authoritarian cliques were forced out of office. Nevertheless, region-talk is a standard in the study of democratisation and there are solid grounds to talk about “Southeastern” and “Southern” Europe as a “distinct set of cases” (Malefakis 1995; Pridham and Gallagher 2000). I also make implicit and explicit comparisons to democratisation in the rest of post-communist Eastern Europe.
- <sup>5</sup> An important qualifier: in this paper, the Linz-Stepan model is my reference point among general theories. I fully realise that ‘democratisation theory’ is a broad and diverse intellectual enterprise and that no single theory of transition and consolidation has been universally recognised (see, e.g., Grugel 2002). Yet it can be argued that the encyclopaedic attempt by Linz and Stepan established a framework that is implicitly or explicitly followed by many. Their emphasis on the mode of extrication, elites, institutional design, and post-transition trajectories has stood as a cornerstone of sorts in the democratisation literature over the last decade, if not longer (Bunce 1999: 158-9; 2003: 170-1).
- <sup>6</sup> Examples include the programmatic attempt of the Portuguese Communist Party to preserve the nationalisations of 1974-6 which squarely qualified it as an anti-system party until 1987, when it decided to dramatically “democratise” its program. The proclamations made in 1974-7 by Greek PASOK led some observers to describe it as semi-loyal (Gunther et al 1995: 28-9, 30).
- <sup>7</sup> See Linz and Stepan (1996), Linz et al (1995: 81-7), and Gunther et al (1995: xxii).
- <sup>8</sup> Selectivity is not only a function of extant knowledge. “Regions” are constructed to be theoretically useful, but are clearly more theoretically useful to some variables than others, which is why some sections of this paper exclude some national cases or make only cursory reference to them. See note 4 above.
- <sup>11</sup> “Balkanisation” and its cognate terms can be said to belong to “Balkanism” – an elaborate “Otherising” discourse, which emanates from the West’s inability to comprehend the extreme ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the peninsula. Simply put, because it regards homogenised nation-states as the most feasible political units, the West sees this heterogeneity as a clear sign of premodernity (Todorova: 1997). The possible implications of Otherising discourses for interregional comparisons of democratisation are not entertained in this paper.
- <sup>12</sup> Diamandouros and Larrabee list the reasons behind this neglect: the “troubled, protracted and uncertain democratisation experiences” in the region, the low place for Balkan democracy on international political agendas, and, last but not least, the prevalence of the Balkanist discourse (2000: 60, fn. 4). See Bunce’s point on “Yugoslav exceptionalism” as well (1995a: 987).
- <sup>13</sup> Freedom House has published annual reports of state freedom since 1972. Its *Nations in Transit* is particularly influential. World Audit, which brings together

statistics from Freedom House, Transparency International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others, sees Slovenia, in its most recent World Democracy Audit, as the most democratic of all former communist nations (19<sup>th</sup> overall). See Lindley (2003: 1).

<sup>14</sup> For a recent overview of Balkan economies, see Jeffries (2002) and World Bank (2000).

<sup>15</sup> Again, a reference to Todorova (1997) is a necessary corrective here.

<sup>16</sup> A cynic would point out that the HSP website offers the translation of its documents in German, but not in other foreign languages. On a different note, not all far right parties in Southeastern Europe can be categorised as semi-loyal. See contributions in Ramet ed. (1999).

<sup>17</sup> According to the most recent World Democracy Audit, Croatia (48<sup>th</sup>) has overtaken Romania (60<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was short-lived (1993-2002). Its successor, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro can be safely characterised as a failing state. Krastev shows why most Balkan states can be regarded as weak (2003: 49-50). Writing from a different perspective, Kavalski argues that Bulgaria, that “most democratised” Balkan state, can be seen as a state of “institutionalised chaos” (2003: 70). Because democratisation is reversible, it makes sense to talk about re-democratisation.

<sup>19</sup> Can democracy really be consolidated without popular belief and participation in democratic politics? Questions about the meaning of participation and its relationship to democratisation drive at the heart of the debate on procedural vs. substantive definitions of democracy (Gunther et al 1995: 18, xiii).

<sup>21</sup> Linz et al 1995: 111. The hierarchical military is usually understood as a part of the state, not as a regime itself (Ibid.: 85; see later sections of the paper).

<sup>22</sup> Wim van Meurs call Bulgaria and Romania “the laggards of eastern enlargement”, which is certainly true with respect to the EU accession of eight post-communist states in May 2004. But in the Balkans, they still lead the pack. In June 2004 (the time of the last revision of this paper), Croatia officially “graduated” to the candidate rank.

<sup>23</sup> The EU’s *acqui* is deeply democratic, yet some trade-offs are inevitable. The promotion of minority rights is one priority of “Europeanisation” in the Balkans. Defined as the prohibition of discrimination and the protection and promotion of the separate identity of ethnic minorities, the provision of minority rights is correctly seen as critical in the Balkans because their knock-off effects such as unresolved border issues, separatism, and irredentism have been employed as an issue for nationalistic political mobilisation which led to ethnic and international war in the former Yugoslavia. One way to accommodate minority rights is through consociational practices. However, consociationalism can be undemocratic as it reifies ethno-national identities and builds antagonistic enclaves based on these identities (Bose 2002: 247- 251). For a more general critique of the conditionality principle applied to the Balkans, see Krastev (2002: 45).

<sup>24</sup> This is an immense topic. For an overview of main issues, see Zwass (2002), Nello (2001), and Stiglitz (2003).

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Hayden 1992. On an interregional comparison of constitutional designs, see Morlino (2001). On constitutional formulas and their impact on democratisation in general, see Linz and Stepan (1996: 74-85).

<sup>26</sup> In 1973, Najdan Pašić diagnosed state-building processes in the Balkans as a “transition between the way nations were formed in Europe at the beginning of the present era and the nation-building now going on in the developing

countries” (1973: 118). In the Balkans, much of the “present era” was dominated by the Ottoman Empire. As for socio-economic development, Balkan societies belong, in Gerschenkron’s terminology, to the group of “late, late developers” (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000: 36). There is a latent Balkanism to beware of in these assessments and categorisations.

- <sup>27</sup> Some argue the problems of multicausality, interaction effects, collinearity, omitted variables, unit heterogeneity, diffusion effects, endogeneity, and “timing” can be dealt with only if one drops the task of identifying independent variables and instead pursues explicitly *case-oriented* approaches to causation. Compare, e.g., Ragin (2000) with Bunce (2003).

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