

Democratic Transitions

Political Science 225
North Dakota State University

Democratic Transitions

- Bottom-up transitions
- Top-down transitions

Bottom Up Transition

Definition

A transition which people rise up to overthrow an authoritarian regime in popular revolution

Examples:

Bottom Up Transition

Definition

A transition which people rise up to overthrow an authoritarian regime in popular revolution

Examples:

- East Germany
- Romania

Bottom Up Transition: Puzzles

- Why are BU transitions rare?
- Why are BU transitions surprising, unpredictable?

Collective Action Problems

Definition

Collective action is the pursuit of some objective by a group of people. Often, this is the provision of some public good.

GOODS

Provision

Excludable

Non-Excludable

*C
o
n
s
u
m
p
t
i
o
n*

Rivalrous

Private Goods

Commons

Non-Rivalrous

Toll Goods

Public Goods

The Free Rider Problem

- Society of N people
- K people needed to provide public good
- Participation is costly
- Probability of decisiveness often low

Participants:	$< K - 1$	$K - 1$	$> K$
Participate	Cost	Benefit - Cost	Benefit - Cost
Stay Home	0	0	Benefit

Overcoming the Free Rider Problem

When is free riding less likely?

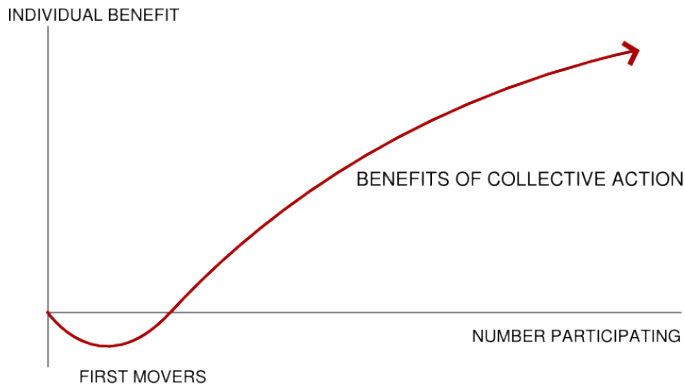
Overcoming the Free Rider Problem

When is free riding less likely?

- When N and K are close, people are more likely to be crucial
- Small N makes monitoring, punishment easier

Tipping Point Models

The collective action problem explains why revolts are rare. Why might they be so surprising, unpredictable?



A Simple Tipping Point Model

- Everyone has a revolutionary threshold
- Safety in numbers
- Some are brave enough to revolt first
- Most are only willing to join a large herd

Examples:

- $A = (0, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8)$ — Stable
- $B = (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)$ — Cascade
- $C = (0, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 10)$ — Tinderbox

Tipping Over

- Preference falsification
- Incomplete information
- Shocks can alter thresholds
- Hard to know if we are in a tinderbox or stable situation

Top Down Transitions

Split between authoritarian rulers:

Top Down Transitions

Split between authoritarian rulers:

- Hard-liners vs soft-liners
- Hard-liners want status quo
- Soft-liners want limited opening
- Opposition is not involved initially

Soft-Liners

What do they want?

Soft-Liners

What do they want?

- Liberalization
- Broadened dictatorship
- Co-opt opposition
- Not democracy

Democratic Opposition

Soft-liners play a dangerous game:

Democratic Opposition

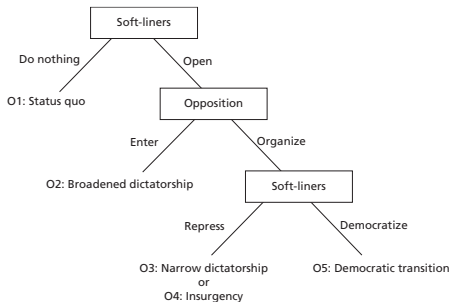
Soft-liners play a dangerous game:

- Opposition can take advantage of opening
- Liberalization can get out of control
- Tipping over
- Revolt forces capitulation or repression

Top-Down Transition Game

FIGURE 8.2

Transition Game without Payoffs

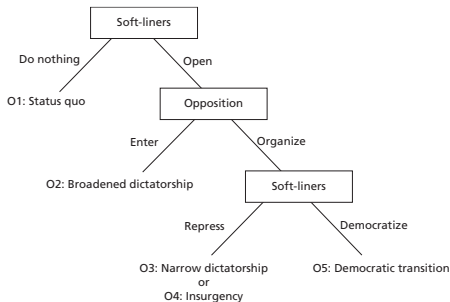


- Preference orderings?

Top-Down Transition Game

FIGURE 8.2

Transition Game without Payoffs

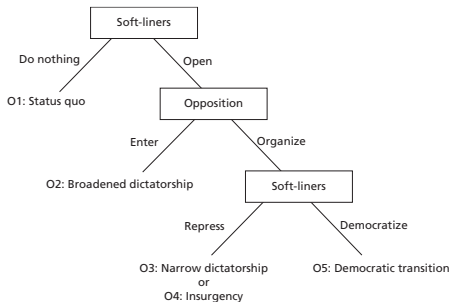


- Preference orderings?
 - Soft liners: $O2 > O1 > O3 > O5 > O4$

Top-Down Transition Game

FIGURE 8.2

Transition Game without Payoffs



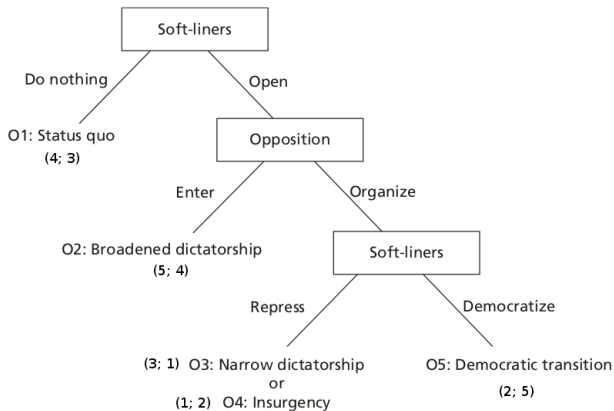
- Preference orderings?

- Soft liners: $O2 > O1 > O3 > O5 > O4$
- Opposition: $O5 > O2 > O1 > O4 > O3$

Top-Down Transition Game

FIGURE 8.2

Transition Game without Payoffs

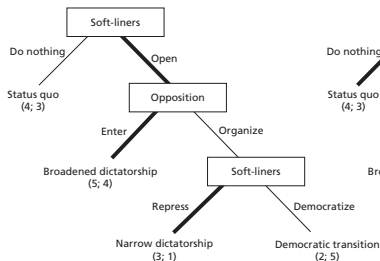


Top-Down Transition Game

FIGURE 8.3

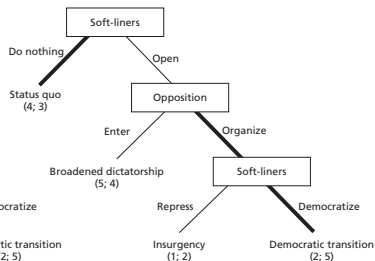
Transition Game with Payoffs

a. Weak Opposition



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

b. Strong Opposition



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

Top-Down Transition Game

Implications:

Top-Down Transition Game

Implications:

- Strong opposition leads to status quo
- Weak opposition is co-opted
- No democracy under complete information
- Transitions are caused by mistakes

Why Do We See Top-Down Democratization?

