

The Games of the Velvet Revolution: An Integrative Approach to the Transition in Czechoslovakia 1989

Vit Simral

Twelve years ago, in their influential article, James Mahoney and Richard Snyder (1999) reviewed contemporary research on regime change. They focused on problems of methodology and methods preference, and on the ‘chicken-egg’ controversy between the proponents of voluntarism on one side (Di Palma 1990; Przeworski 1991) and structuralism on the other (Luebbert 1991; Rueschmeyer et al. 1992) and argued that ‘laying the groundwork for the next generation of studies of regime change requires [...] integration of structural and voluntarist approaches’ (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 4).

This chapter seeks to combine structural and actor-oriented approaches in an analysis of the transition of Czechoslovakia in 1989. Such a combination promises to get around the rigid conditions of socio-historical macro-structures as well as the vague, non-explaining flexibility of games in political arenas. It aims to uncover how structural variables affect the possibilities of politicians and citizens during the process of democratic transition.

In this chapter, game theory is employed as the actor-related framework for its analytical rigour and its theoretical potential to achieve a ‘prediction regarding the outcome of interaction among human beings using only data on the order of events, combined with a description of the players’ preferences over the feasible outcomes of the situation’ (Rubinstein 1991, 923). The game theoretical models make use of Joseph Colomer’s classification of regime change actors (Colomer, 1991), where actors are defined by their preference orderings. Four groupings in the classification – Reformists, Openists, Continuists, and Involutionists – constitute the ruling bloc, while the remaining two – Rupturists and Revolutionaries – represent the opposition (Figure 9.1).

Transition Preference Orders of Strategic Groups	<u>Opposition</u>					
	Maximalists		Soft-liners		Hard-liners	
	1 Revolutionaries (OF local leaders)	2 Rupturists (OF HQ leaders)	3 Reformists (Pitra)	4 Openists (Štrougal)	5 Continuists (Adamec)	6 Involutionists (Bil'ák)
Most Preferred	R	R	r	r	C	C
Least Preferred	r	C	C	R	R	r

R = rupture; C = continuity; r = reform

Figure 9.1. Transition Preference Orders of Strategic Groups (adapted from Colomer 1991, 1285).

Structures and Integrative Approaches

According to Mahoney and Snyder, two distinct integrative analytical methods may be identified in research on regime change: the path-dependent strategy and the Funnel of Causality (1999, 11).

Following absolute time in history, the path-dependent strategy looks for critical junctures in the course toward democracy. This interpretation is based on the assumption of ‘binding’ history and focuses on ‘temporally intermediate processes

through which the structural legacies of historical junctures are transmitted and which ultimately connect past critical junctures to subsequent regime change' (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 13). Thus, even though such a model allows for the introduction of actors at the critical junctures, this strategy carries the weakness of historical determination and one-way logic (Larsen 2000, 456-457).

The Funnel of Causality, on the other hand, assumes that 'structural factors can never be sufficient causes of human action [...] [and] a margin of actor maneuverability always exists between the crevices of structural constraints, creating opportunities for actors to avert regime outcomes strongly favoured by structural forces' (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 13). The funnel is a vector causal model 'in which variables from different levels of analysis are treated as independent vectors with distinct forces and directions' (*Ibid.*, 12). In other words, the deterministic causation of the path-dependent approach is replaced by a probabilistic one.

Macro-structural variables are located at the top of the funnel, constituting the most aggregated level of analysis. In the downward direction, meso- and micro-level variables follow with shorter durations of specific processes than affected regime change. Each level of analysis explains a certain amount of variance in non-democratic regimes leading towards a certain type of transition. Actors at the leadership level are at the bottom of the funnel where the games of transition take place. Regime changes are then explained by summing up forces and directions of variables. This approach allows for combining different types of variables into a single variable and comparing their relevance. Instead of the problem of bridging structural levels, an observer is faced with a simple – however tricky – question of adding explanatory weights of vectors (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 22). In short, because of its filtering function, the Funnel of Causality is a valuable tool for understanding both long- and short-term causes that directly affect the context of transition.

Together with Oyvind Lervik, who also introduces such a modification in his own model (Lervik 2001), this chapter discards the common 'one-way-only' assumption and the down-directional causation as sufficient for a valid model of regime change. Instead of 'exhaustion' of variables from higher levels directly to lower levels, connections are searched for and shown between every level of analysis. It is assumed that in theory a strong influence from the very bottom of the funnel can affect a variable at the top, and vice-versa. The case study of Czechoslovakia should support this assumption with evidence. Changes in the funnel variables are always taken into account when modelling games of transition and their rules.

A second modification to the funnel strategy makes use of a model proposed by Rueschmeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992), where three power structures shape social and political outcomes. These structures are state, class, and transnational power. Also this chapter uses these labels, but defines them differently: the variable 'transnational power' covers all processes that originate outside the borders of a country as well as processes common in the whole region. The term 'state' refers to the shape of a political system and its institutions as well as state economy. Lastly, the 'class' group represents development variables of civil society, actual social issues and attitudes towards the regime. The three-dimensional shape of the funnel allows all classes of variables to interdigitate at one moment at the same place to affect a particular event. Furthermore, it shows the mutual influence and diffusion of processes between all structural variables. In the presented model, Stein Larsen's types of variables are replaced with the aforementioned transnational power, state, and class; this classification is based essentially on the difference of duration of the

observed processes (see Figure 9.2).

Such an approach differs greatly from all previously presented (i.e., Mahoney and Snyder, Larsen, Lervik), but a similar one was used by e.g., Mahdavi (2006), who also employed Rueschmeyer, Stephens, and Stephens's model of power structures. Strictly speaking, this chapter aims to be an innovative synthesis of all these modifications mentioned above.

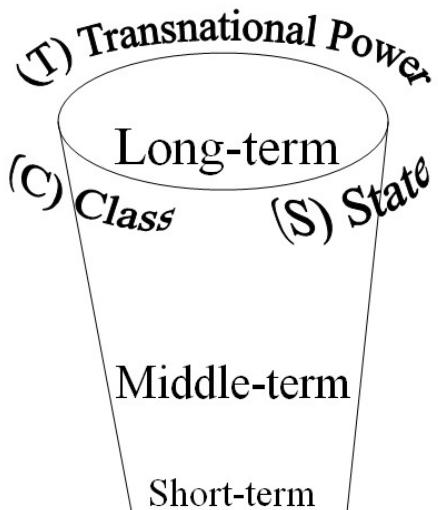


Figure 9.2. The 3-D Funnel of Causality.

Czechoslovakia 1989

(T) Transnational Power

Since the Renaissance, East Central Europe was an economic semi-periphery of the West, more developed than the rest of Eastern Europe or the Baltic states (Pounds 1978). The region differed from Eastern Europe and its nations had always seen themselves to be a part of the Western civilisation (Berend 1986, 332). As Stein Rokkan and his followers argue (Rokkan 1975, Kommisrud 1996), all nations in the region finished their state/nation-building before, or immediately after the First World War. The interwar period was affected by two global trends: the diffusion of Marxism-Leninism with a consequent rightist reaction, and the economic depression of the 1930s. In the 1930s, socio-economic problems contributed to an authoritarian twist in the majority of East Central European countries. In 1939, Nazi Germany consumed the whole region – either as an invader or as an ‘ally’.

After the Second World War, the Allies decided upon the fate of East Central Europe as a border between the West and the East. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and East Germany fell under Soviet influence. At the beginning of the Cold War in the early 1950s, these four countries underwent a period of totalitarianism. Their regimes were characterised by exalted ideologies and socio-political transitions to ‘democratic centralism’. The Soviet model of economic socialism uniformly rendered Europe east of the Elbe more homogeneous than ever before. The State’s role became practically absolute and the application of socialist ideology eliminated the traditional rural-peasant character of society – there was ‘on average, compared to prewar conditions, at least a tenfold to fifteen fold increase in industrial production’ (Berend

1986, 345).

After Stalin's death in 1953, the reins of ideological control were loosened in the entire communist bloc, including the Soviet Union itself. Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the USSR, denounced Joseph Stalin's dictatorship and thus opened a Pandora's Box – 'destroying Stalin's infallibility destroyed Soviet infallibility as well' (Cipkowski 1991, 9). In many countries, including Gomulka's Poland, nationalism occurred within the Communist party and the unity of Soviet bloc began to vanish. Firstly, economic problems brought civil disorders to Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In 1956, structural economic reforms in Hungary carried a noticeable pattern of political liberalisation. The Soviet army put a violent end to this development and, after Khrushchev's fall in 1964, Brezhnev's rigid era arrived. Bureaucracy took the place of charismatic leaders, and totalitarian ideology was on the wane. During the mid-1960s, Brezhnev's government focused on domestic problems and lost control of developments in East Central Europe (Ladrech and Wegs 1996, 145), but the 1968 invasion of 'deviating' Czechoslovakia indicated the nature of the renewed Soviet foreign policy towards the region.

According to Ladrech and Wegs, the history of the Soviet bloc from the Brezhnev era onward may be divided into four phases (Ladrech and Wegs 1996, 235). It began with meddling in the affairs of East Central European countries in the 1960s and the 1970s, accompanied by a relative growth of living standards. Communist leaders were trying to divert the attention of the people from their minimal political rights and demobilise civil society. In the late 1970s, economic depression led to the second phase, when opposition groups formed in Poland and Hungary. In Poland, the situation culminated in open protests and the birth of the Solidarity trade union in 1980. This development encouraged dissenters in neighbouring countries, and anti-regime movements spread across the region. Nevertheless, a successful motion towards regime change did not start until the third phase in 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev took hold of the position of general secretary of the Soviet Communist party. As a response to the critical Soviet economic performance, Gorbachev introduced *perestroika* and *glasnost* and gave his permission for liberalisation in the bloc. Moreover, in 1989, Gorbachev proclaimed a policy of nonintervention (Cipkowski 1991, 10).

The aforementioned characteristics of East Central Europe are all hallmarks of post-totalitarian countries – a limited degree of pluralism inside the regime, weakened commitment to ideology, only minimal routine mobilisation and technocratic leadership (Linz and Stepan 1996, 42-51). The regimes varied from 'early' to 'frozen' post-totalitarianism. The various and differently intense processes, which led to these conditions of post-totalitarianism, may be summed up as follows:

Long-term

- (1) The region had always been considered a semi-periphery to the West.
- (2) State/nation building process had been completed before the Communists took power.
- (3) All countries experienced a democratic as well as an authoritarian period in their history.

Middle-term

- (4) East Central Europe was of a vital military importance to the Soviet bloc.

- (5) Economies in the region copied to a major extent the Soviet socialist model.
- (6) In the 1950s, relations within the Soviet bloc worsened and became more complicated.

Short-term

- (7) All countries had been undergoing a period of constant economic decline since the 1960s.
- (8) Soviet liberalisation and the policy of nonintervention were introduced in the late 1980s.
- (9) Civil society showed a strong inclination to a ‘snowball’ effect in liberalisation.

(S) State

From 1918 to 1938, Czechoslovakia represented an exemplary stable democracy amidst authoritarian neighbours. The Czechoslovak Republic was founded upon four principles that set the stage for later fundamental intra-nation clashes: republicanism, social radicalism, anti-Catholicism, and an all-embracing constitutional Czechoslovak nationhood. (Balík et al. 2003, 45). During the era of the First Republic, the heterogeneity of national and ideological interests demanded a consensual type of polity that lasted until 1938. In the next seven years, the country was occupied by the Nazis and from 1945 to 1948, Czechoslovakia experienced a semi-democratic period when the Communists were preparing for their takeover. The Communists were strengthened by Soviet support and the close relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union that dated back to 1943. In 1946, the first free elections were held and showed an unprecedented 40 per cent majority for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). The main cause behind the Communists’ success was surely their plan for agricultural and economic reform in which the land that had formerly belonged to 2.5 million ejected Germans was redistributed to former voters of the Agrarians, who were proscribed in 1945 for their alleged collaboration with the Nazi regime.

The forced Czechoslovak withdrawal from the Marshall Plan signalled critical pressure from the Soviets to resolve the situation in the country and on 25 February, 1948, the Communist coup ended the long-lasting domestic political crisis. From 1948 till 1953, Czechoslovakia did not differ from the common totalitarian model of the Soviet bloc. All competitive power-centers like the Church or liberal-minded officer corps were violently crushed. The four satellite parties of the KSČ were utterly powerless.

Signs of liberalisation could be seen in Czechoslovakia during Khrushchev’s era. The state of the country in the late 1950s could be regarded as a consultative post-totalitarianism (Balík et al. 2003, 136). Having no strong leader, the Party was controlled by groups of bureaucrats, and apparatus sections. Political processes and procedures became stable and rigid. State socialism – with the KSČ as a cornerstone of the regime – was *de jure* confirmed in the new constitution of 1960. The governmental system solidified in Bohemia and Moravia and was introduced into the comparatively undeveloped Slovakia, where a type of national communism had been evolving. However, the Slovak autonomous government was at that time even more limited and its authority circumscribed.

The situation changed only in the mid-1960s, with the 1968 Constitutional Act and federalisation of the country. In 1968, the degree of liberalisation in Czechoslovakia

reached the level of quasi-pluralistic post-totalitarianism and continued to become even more democratic (Balík et al. 2003, 136-137). Efforts to boost the deteriorating national economy showed flaws in the Marxist ideology. Civic organisations and non-political groups were becoming organised and weakened the fundamentals of the Communist ideology.

The process of democratisation was interrupted by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies on 21 August 1968. Occupation forces remained in the country until the regime broke down and the Czechoslovak army was under full Soviet control. Normalisation, i.e. the process of reverting to the pre-1968 political situation, began with purges in the KSČ, focusing first on the leadership and then on low-level party members (Fiala 1999). Charges of the members were based on the materials of the State Security (StB), a secret police corps and a fundamental constituent of the lasting non-democratic regime. The presence of the corps was perhaps even more valuable than that of armed forces (Friedrich and Brzieszinski 1965). From 1968 until 1989, the number of collaborators with the State Security ranged from 11,000 to 13,000 (Milan 2000, 27, 35). The Communist Party renewed its power and became the only power-centre in the country, while the relevance of the elected legislative and executive organs declined. With the 15th Congress of the KSČ in April 1976, the personal and ideological transformation of the regime was completed and any prospective progress had been frozen.

The economic trend of the 1970s pursued the political policy of normalisation. The relative living comfort in Czechoslovakia, one of the most developed countries in the Soviet bloc, preserved the social peace and prevented conditions favourable for a revolution as characterised by the modernisation paradigm (Lipset 1960, 4). ‘The less democracy there was in politics, the more of it was in economy’ (Turek 1995, 68). On the other hand, for twenty years preceding the regime breakdown, the social contract, based on a certain level of living comfort for everyone, did not allow the national economy to grow and brought a significant lack of working motivation. The poor performance of economy disunited the ruling bloc and a minor group of pro-Gorbachev bureaucrats called for a slight regime change that would enable economic growth. At the dawn of the regime change, ‘state’ variables may be summarised as follows:

Long-term

- (1) The role of the Church was considerably weak, especially in the Czech lands.
- (2) The Czechoslovak polity was consensual, not competitive.
- (3) The state/nation-building process was completed, more in the Czech lands than in Slovakia.

Middle-term

- (4) The power centre lay not in the elective governmental body, but in the Communist Party.
- (5) The gap between business and political elites’ interests was widening.
- (6) Armed forces of the Warsaw Pact remained in the country after the 1968 invasion.

Short-term

- (7) The Communist Party's ideological and personal base had frozen and could not progress.
- (8) The StB infiltrated most of the regime opposition.
- (9) The regime leaders split up into pro-*perestroika* pragmatists and orthodox Communists.

(C) Class

Czechoslovakia was a country of a monocephalic territorial structure, with Prague in the position of an all-dominating centre (Rokkan et al. 1987, 26; Hloušek and Kopeček 2004, 13). The First Czechoslovak Republic was still predominantly an agrarian country and full-scale industrialisation did not come until the post-war era. The start of communisation was the actual birth of the urban working class in Czechoslovakia, when the newcomers swamped the relatively small, pre-war group of workers (Schöpflin 1993, 31-6). Thus, the Communists in the late 1940s completely changed the social structure of Czechoslovakia and gained enough support for the first decades of their rule. The 1945 displacement of the German and Magyar minority homogenised the nation.

After the totalitarian period (1948-1953), the ideological grip on society in Czechoslovakia loosened. The intelligentsia ventured to discuss existing taboos that led to the cultural liberalisation of the 1960s and a partial restoration of relations with civic and cultural circles in the West. People were once again directly interested in politics, and various features of pluralism emerged.

Consequently, 21 August 1968 affected mainly the intelligentsia and civil society. The process of 'normalisation' succeeded in its purpose – to restore Communist rule and to placate the populace. From the early 1970s, society found itself in a state of resignation from politics. For average Czechoslovak citizens, accepting the regime and publicly showing their loyalty meant making a sacrifice that would lead to a peaceful life. Citizens had to ignore their values and adopt others – twisted, but nevertheless, mutual. Because of a lack of options, they followed the rules of the existing social contract (Možný 1999, 35, 49). The official media were full of vacuous phrases, which formed the façade of the regime, but in which no one believed (Fidelius 1998; Civín 2005).

The post-invasion leaders conducted purges against the reformers differently in the two federated republics. Compared to the Slovak elites, the Party leadership persecuted the Czechs harshly. 'The result was that the Czech intelligentsia was pushed into dissent, while the Slovaks compromised and collaborated with the regime' (Eyal 2003, xx). Because of that, the opposition against the 'normalised' regime arose – with the exception of the early 1970s attempts of former Communist reformers – first and mainly in the Czech lands. Intellectuals, academics, and artists, all 'the groups most handicapped by the normalisation [...] became the core of the opposition' (Otáhal 1994, 21). Charter 77 emerged as the major platform that popularised ideas of the dissent in the society. The group's proclaimed purpose was to 'advocate human and civil rights in the country and the world' (Declaration of Charter 77 1977). Such a declaration pointed to the very core of the post-totalitarian regime and easily became a rallying point for the anti-regime opposition.

At the end of the 1980s, the social climate of resignation began to change as a new generation, not branded by the actual experience of the '68 Prague Spring and the post-Spring purges, came of age. According to Možný, Czechoslovak 'real' or 'pragmatic' socialism was based on a mutual arrangement of reciprocal services, which in reality substituted capitalism. Economic strength and networks were replaced by status in the 'nomenclature' (Možný 1999, 74-78). However, the new generation found this system highly unsatisfying and that manifested itself in the rise of students' movements and various independent post-material initiatives (Vaněk and Otáhal 1999, 17). University students were active mainly in the new subcultures of New Wave and Punk. In 1987 and 1988, first attempts to establish a parallel, non-state organisation to the pro-regime Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth (SSM) were answered by an immediate repressive counteraction by the StB. 'Students were not afraid to criticise', stated the Prague body of the KSČ in 1988 (Otáhal 2003, 63).

As the majority of the opposition movement could be found in Bohemia and Moravia, the situation in Slovakia was incomparably less favourable to a regime change. A major difference between the Czech and Slovak opposition was the significant presence of the Catholic Church in Slovakia. The Church was effectively paralysed during the normalisation and cannot be considered as an opposition centre until the late 1980s. Still, there existed an underground network of anti-regime activities, disguised by the official image of a state-subjugated Church (Cuhra 2005, 70). The early 1980s saw the revival of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. After the protest of Czechoslovak Cardinal František Tomášek and the Pope's official dissolution of the pro-regime Syndicate of the Catholic Clergy (*Pacem in Terris*) in 1982, the Czechoslovak authorities were forced to reduce their control over the Church.

Movements in civil society were the sparks that started the 1989 regime change. However, the process of forming the regime opposition was extremely complicated for several reasons:

Long-term

- (1) Prague had always been in the position of an all-dominating centre.
- (2) There were no significant ethnic minorities in Czechoslovakia after 1946.
- (3) The birth of the Czechoslovak working class was linked to the Communist era.

Middle-term

- (4) The reformers of the 1960s lost their influential positions after 1968.
- (5) Czech elites were persecuted by the regime more severely than Slovak elites.
- (6) Civil society underwent a process of political demobilisation in the 1970s.

Short-term

- (7) The generation not branded by August 1968 came of age.
- (8) The opposition movement found a common ground in the human rights movement.
- (9) The Catholic Church was stimulated by the Vatican in the early 1980s.

Game 1: Unsuccessful Liberalisation

At this point, the first game-theoretical model, showing a struggle for liberalisation inside the ruling bloc may be formulated. Most of the previous works on the Czechoslovak transition neglect this phase and conclude simply that the ‘frozen’ type of post-totalitarianism does not allow liberalisation to occur. This study argues that in Czechoslovakia, there was a possibility of broad liberalisation, but it emerged too early to succeed.

No later than 1986, four model factions had surfaced amongst the Communist leadership, induced by the worsening economic situation of Czechoslovakia, changes in the USSR, and in the region (i.e. variables $T(6,7)$, $S(4,7,9)$, and $C(4)$). These factions were:

- Reformists, i.e. those young politicians who did not partake in the normalisation purges and were not bound by the anti-reformist pragmatic acceptance.
- Openists, a strong group led by Lubomír Štrougal, the long-time Federal Prime Minister (1970-1988), and the official head of government responsible for national economic performance, who openly demanded regime reforms.
- Continuists, i.e. moderates represented by Ladislav Adamec, a pragmatic careerist of the normalisation era.
- Involutionists, led by Vasil Bil’ák, representatives of the ideological orthodox hard-line (Saxonberg 2001, 199-200).

An open conflict of the factions took place at the KSC Politburo meeting on 18 November 1987, where a successor to Gustáv Husák, who had held the position of the Party’s general secretary for two decades, was to be selected. Štrougal was the candidate of the pro-reform bloc; Milouš Jakeš, a puppet of the Bil’ák faction, was the frontman of the hard-liners. As it turned out, Štrougal’s position was weaker than it might have been assumed from the quantity of pro-reformists. Because most of the reformists held the position of mere candidate members in the Politburo with no voting rights and the moderate wing eventually agreed upon Jakeš, Štrougal lost and was demoted in the regime leadership hierarchy (Wolchik 1991, 126-131).

Why did Adamec ally himself with Jakeš instead of Štrougal? And was there a chance that – under different circumstances – he would have supported the Openists? This study offers the following explanation (Figure 9.3):

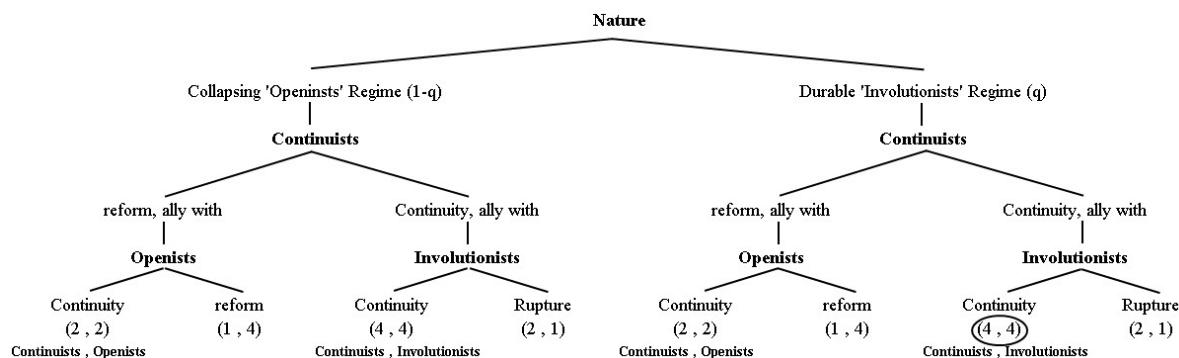


Figure 9. 3. Game 1 ‘Unsuccessful Liberalisation’.

When Adamec proposed Jakeš as the future general secretary, he followed the dominant strategy of the ‘Continuists’ actor. Taking side with Vasil Bil’ák’s group of Involutionists, it appears that Adamec was aiming for the Pareto optimal¹ equilibrium of the game. When he stayed loyal to the bloc of hard-liners, he voted out the Openists group from the game for good and thus secured his own position in the ruling bloc and an opportunity for further promotions. If he had chosen differently, he would have had to support regime reforms and, when carrying them out, to confront the Openists. In this conflict, he would have lost to the opposing actor and reached his least desirable outcome.

As to the latter question of an alternative outcome, the ‘Nature’ tool, which is based on Bayes’s Theorem, is introduced into the model. The right-hand sub-game illustrates a state of the world in which the Communist regime is able to survive the growing crisis. Conversely, the left-hand sub-game depicts a state of an inevitable regime breakdown. If the former is the case, the right choice for the Continuists is to ally with the Involutionists. However, if the regime is about to collapse, there exists a chance that those who helped the regime transition would benefit from the outcome. For the Continuists, their support to reforms thus becomes the more profitable, the more likely the regime breakdown is to occur. What must be stressed is one particular fact: according to the rational equilibria of the game, the *least desired* outcome for the Continuists when they chose to support reforms has to equal or surpass the *best* outcome when they chose not to.

In the 1980s, there were only few indicators that Czechoslovakia was actually reaching its turning point toward a non-Communist regime (Wheaton and Kavan 1992, 25). No open expressions of mass regime-opposition took place before 1988 and even Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit ended up far more in favour of the Involutionists (variable $T(4)$) (Smith 1992, 326). Opinions about the degree of economic crisis distinctly differed (Saxonberg 2001, 77). The probability of q therefore seemed to be lower than it was in reality.

Still, as the process of liberalisation pushed ahead in the rest of the Soviet bloc and opposition to the regime emerged, the leaders’ beliefs in the probability of having a collapsing regime were changing. The Continuists in the Federal government, represented by Ladislav Adamec, the new Prime Minister, were trying to free themselves of the Party’s control and continue in an independent ‘restructuring’ policy. According to Miroslav Štěpán, a newly installed member of the Politburo, the regime allowed in December 1988 a demonstration celebrating the UN Human Rights’ Day, because it ‘wanted to see how the opposition would react to an opening’ (Saxonberg 2001, 318). However, the Party’s reversion to a hard-line strategy during Palach’s week in January shows that the leaders were afraid of a quick backfire and losing control of the process. If it had not been for the earlier neutralisation of the Openists, the opening would have quite probably continued.

In conclusion, the unsuccessful attempt of the Štrougal camp to take control over the Party’s policy weakened the soft-liners’ position within the regime and created an even more conservative regime than the one before 1987. If Adamec’s beliefs were to be rationally consistent, his dominating strategy was to support Jakeš; that strategy became crucial for his later promotion to the post of the Federal Prime Minister and the end of liberalisation. The information he possessed in 1987 spoke strongly for an alliance with the Involutionists – however incorrect this information would prove in

¹ An outcome of a game is Pareto optimal if there is no other outcome that makes every player at least as well off and at least one player strictly better off.

the following months.

Game 2: Successful Democratisation

Game 1 explains how an early attempt to liberalise the regime failed and how the ruling-bloc agreed on a hard-line anti-reform policy. However, this section shows that gaps occurred in that policy. These were wide enough for the opposition to organise itself and to demand democratisation. In August 1988, the first mass public protest against the regime, with more than 10,000 participants, mainly young people, took place in Prague (compare variables C(1,7)). More rallies followed in October and in December, with the appearance of various opposition groups and dissidents in the presence of officers of the StB (variables S(8), C(8)). ‘The issue of human rights provided the basis for disparate political groups to come together on a common platform’ (Wheaton and Kavan 1992, 27). Despite violent repressions, mass meetings were occurring during the whole year 1989, bolstered by the revived Catholic Church (variable C(9)) in Slovakia and Moravia (variable S(1)) and supportive activities of artists and intellectuals in Prague, who are usually ‘the first to manifest public opposition to authoritarian rule, often before the transition has been launched’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 49). In the summer, the opposition’s activity was given a further boost by events in neighbouring countries (variable T(9)).

A specific kind of liberalisation preceded this development, in the area, where the pressure for democratisation became most intense – in the students’ movements. The SSM leader Vasil Mohorita, appreciative of the crisis in the pro-regime youth organisation, called for liberalisation of the regime at least from the spring of 1989. His position and rights as a member of the Politburo enabled him to organise the student movement and sponsor some independent initiatives. This gap in the regime’s control was a direct cause of the authorised protest march on 17 November 1989, and the subsequent police violence, sparking the ‘Velvet Revolution’.

The widely known course of this event resulted in the decision of the independent student movement to go on strike. Students were aware of the need to find a support for their demands, should the strike succeed. Even if they could persuade their fellow-students, non-members of the independent organisations (which they were) and draw academics, intellectuals and artists into the strike (which they also did), would they succeed in attracting the apathetic civil society (variable C(6)) – especially the cornerstone of the Communist power, the workers (variable C(3))? In the end, they succeeded because of the simplest reason: even for the working class, in the autumn of 1989, ‘the cost of toleration [of the regime] was greater than the cost of intervention’ (Dahl 1971, 15) (variable S(5)). According to Jon Hovi and B. E. Rasch (Hovi and Rasch 1993, 91), the situation was sufficiently desperate for a participant in the strike to presume that any outcome of this action can be better than the initial state. The relation between an individual’s assumption about the number of participants and probability of success, upon which he or she decides whether to participate, can be found in Oyvind Lervik’s model (Lervik 2001) (Figure 9.4).

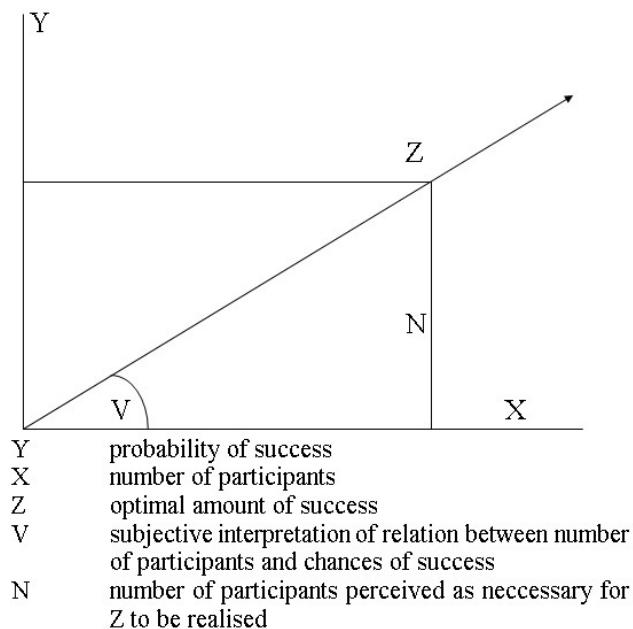


Figure 9.4. Mass Movement (adapted from Lervik 2001).

The Party leadership was stunned and incapable of action when mass protests sprang up on Monday 20 November – police actions against the strikers in the first week after 17 November appeared chaotic and weak. The Party's Politburo did not meet until Monday, resolved nothing and called an extra Central Committee meeting for Friday. On Tuesday, the Politburo decided to call in the People's Militia, yet without giving any orders to act. A military solution was contemplated during the whole week, but ultimately rejected – no ethnic cleavages existed in the nation (variables $T(2)$, $C(2)$) (as did in, e.g. China, where such a solution was still plausible) and nobody believed that 'if ordered to fight their own people [...] soldiers would obey their officers' orders' (Bradley 1992, 93). An intervention of the Soviet troops in the country was merely an unlikely threat to the opposition (variables $T(8)$, $S(6)$). The indecisiveness shown at the Friday Central Committee meeting convinced the Prime Minister Adamec that whatever he would do, he must do without other Party leaders (Suk 2003, 44).

Meanwhile, the Civic Forum (OF), an umbrella civic organisation, became the major actor of the opposition and successively absorbed all other anti-regime groups, including the Student Strike Committee. The key role in this Rupture-preferring organisation was played by Czech dissidents and the Chartists in particular, under the unquestionable dominance of Václav Havel. Two members of the OF, musicians Michael Kocáb and Michal Horáček, had been in touch with the Adamec camp since September 1989 and through them the Prime Minister now began negotiations with the opposition. From the first meeting on 26 November, until the presentation of the new government, the OF supported Adamec against the radical opposition camp and maintained its policy to present him as 'the only representative of the ruling bloc' (Suk 2003, 46). Why did they do so (Figure 9.5)?

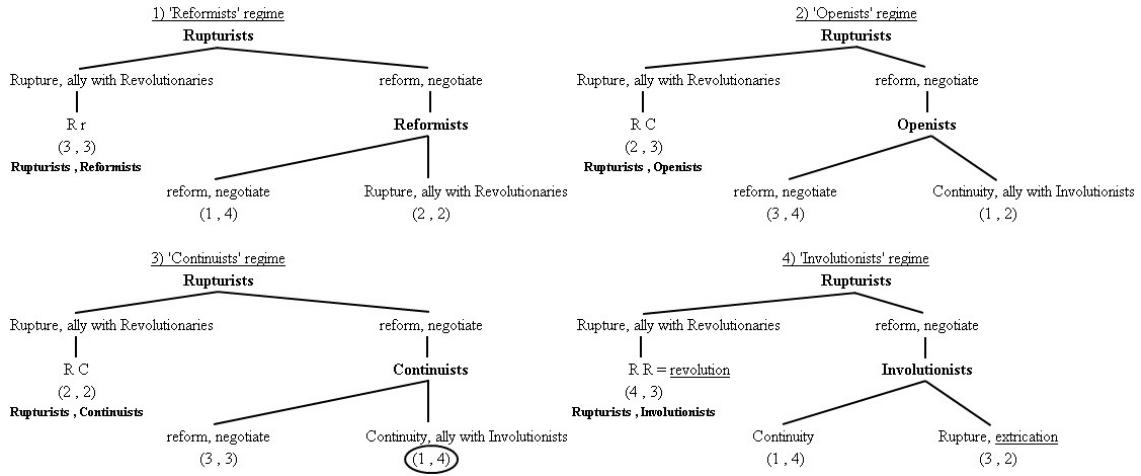


Figure 9.5. Game 2 ‘Successful Democratisation’.

In Game 2, four possible states of the world are introduced, among which the OF (Rupturists) could choose the one most likely to succeed. From their behaviour, it is quite clear that they did not consider States 1 and 4 to be the reality – the equilibria of those games lead already in the Rupturists’ first move to an alliance with the Revolutionaries who advocate a non-negotiable solution. If the Rupturists had believed in one of these states of the world and had still resolved for negotiations, they would have made a move off the equilibrium path. In the case of an iterated game, it could be regarded as rational anyway. However, in the circumstances of November 1989, it seems implausible that the OF believed in iterations of the game.

Most probably, the Rupturists were thinking only in the limits of States 2 and 3. If the latter was their belief, they would also hardly start to negotiate and probably settle for a common policy with the Revolutionaries. Backward induction shows the strategy as the Nash,² non-Pareto optimal equilibrium that would have probably led to a more violent confrontation or quick takeover. In fact, this game is the infamous Prisoner’s Dilemma.³ Negotiations would be profitable for the Rupturists only if there was an Openists’ government.

However, in the previous game of liberalisation, the Adamec group was portrayed as the Continuists, and their ex-ante and ex-post behaviour indicates no change of their preferential set. Why then did the OF decide to negotiate with Adamec? A plausible explanation is that Havel and his fellow-workers believed in another state of the world than actually existed. From the OF’s actions during this period of transition, it may be assumed that the OF did not uncover Adamec’s real preferences before 3 December, 1989. Thus, in line with the rationality of the Continuists actor, the ‘15 Communists + 5 non-Communists’ fiasco government was the actual outcome of the game.

² Actors are in Nash equilibrium if a change in strategies by any one of them would lead that player to earn less than if he or she remained with his or her current strategy.

³ In the classic form of Prisoner’s Dilemma, cooperating is strictly dominated by defecting from cooperation, so that the only possible equilibrium for the game is for all players to defect.

Game 3: Čalfa's Dilemma

The new Communist government presented on 3 December, fell short of the expectations of Czechoslovak society. Consequently, the OF changed their strategy and increased their demands, particularly in the pressing issue of the composition of economic ministries (variable $T(5)$). The ‘new’ government resigned as early as 4 December and negotiations with Adamec were re-opened. Outcomes for both actors were equal, but not Pareto optimal. Adamec, who no longer relied on his alliance with the Party and saw no opportunity in forming a new Continuists’ government, switched the weight of game arenas (Tsebelis 1990, 7) and as his ‘principal’ arena chose, most surprisingly for the Rupturists, the presidential contest (Suk 2003, 119).

At that moment, the OF was caught off guard. So far, the talks focused mainly on the Federal and national governments. The Presidency was a delicate issue – the person who filled the post, would represent the direction of transition: either towards a new Prague Spring, or to a complete regime change and re-integration with the West (variable $T(1)$). To take up a particular historical legacy was crucial, for the Velvet Revolution ‘was characterised by almost complete lack of progressive, prospective ideas’ (Habermas 1990, 162). On 7 December, Adamec resigned from his post of Prime Minister and from then on, featured solely as the new head of the KSČ. The OF was facing a tricky dilemma: for a transition by agreement, ‘the weakness or absence of maximalist actors [is necessary] [...] because their participation causes disequilibrium and political instability’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 19) – the Communist Party’s activity thus was a menace to democracy. Suspicions about conspiracy arose in the opposition (Suk 2003, 210-211) and the contest for the presidency affected the unity of the anti-regime movement. The gap between the Czechs and Slovaks widened, mainly on the issue of historical continuity (variables $T(3)$, $S(3)$, and $C(5)$), and the discord culminated in an internal conflict about the OF’s presidential candidate: would it be Václav Havel, or one of the ‘68 reformers, Alexander Dubček?

Most surprisingly, a new man in the post of Federal Prime Minister contributed decisively to Havel’s final victory. Adamec’s protégé and successor, Prime Minister Marián Čalfa was a Slovak and, according to custom, the Presidency and the federal head of government were to be split between both federated nations. Subsequently, Čalfa was regarded by the OF as a suitable Prime Minister for the whole transitional period.

How could a man from the Adamec camp become the Prime Minister of the transitional government? Čalfa officially governed the country from 10 December, the very day of Gustáv Husák’s resignation from the Presidency, thereby chairing the State Security Council, commanding the armed forces, and co-administrating the Ministry of Interior. Moreover, he was now competent to grant pardon to Havel, who was *de jure* still on probation, and remove the last official barrier for Havel’s presidential nomination. Furthermore, during a secret meeting, Čalfa offered Havel a very tempting prospect: he believed that he could persuade the MPs of the Federal Assembly to co-opt new members from the opposition and elect Havel as President. The Assembly was still under Communist control and, thanks to the complex constitutional framework (variable $S(2)$), the OF needed almost 90 per cent of seats in the Assembly to pass important acts and secure Havel’s victory. And now, Čalfa promised that it would happen before Christmas (Suk 2003, 226). Game 3 explains how it could be done (Figure 9.6):

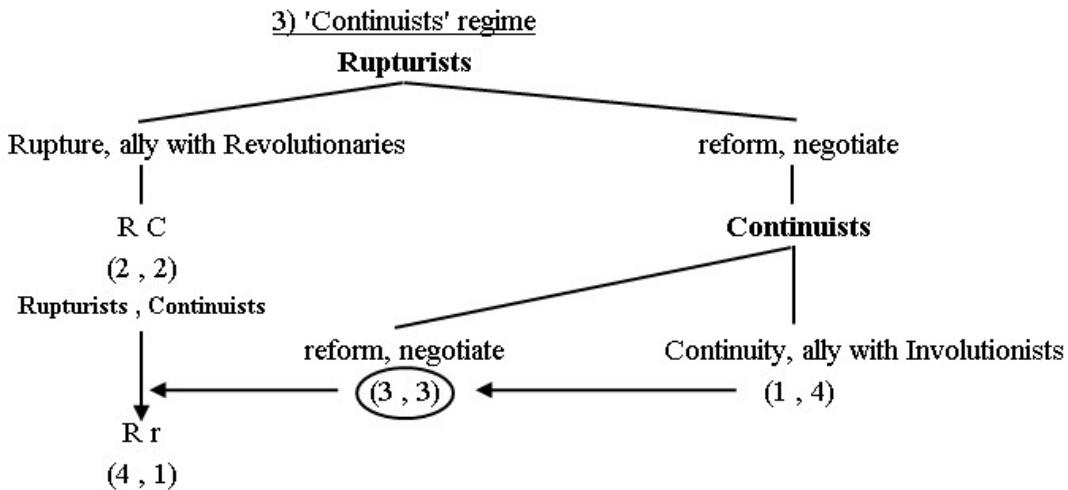


Figure 9.6. Sub-game ‘The Continuists’ Switch’.

Čalfa was apparently a pragmatist, who understood the probable consequences of students’ demands in November remarkably quickly. He was a member of the Adamec camp, but diverged from its ‘Continuists’ attitude. When Adamec selected Čalfa as his successor, he may not have been aware of the fact that he had chosen a Reformist, who would eventually abandon him. Čalfa deliberately substituted the Continuists strategy with a contingent one that he agreed on with Havel during their meeting on 15 December 1989, and settled for the second best outcome. In a Reformist’s beliefs, this move would lead to a better outcome in the next game. He may have been thinking along the following lines (Figure 9.7):

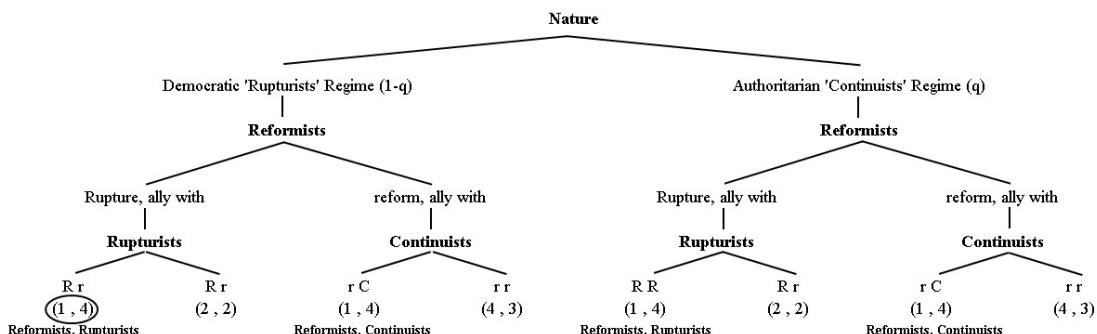


Figure 9.7. Game 3 ‘Čalfa’s Dilemma’.

Čalfa most likely appreciated the fact that whatever path he would take, he would always reach the least desired outcome and the opposing actor would always gain the best of it. Therefore, he may have been meditating on the probability of two states of the world: a future democratic ‘Rupturist’ government, or the socialist ‘Continuist’ government. If the democratic opposition should win, it was rational to ally with the Rupturists and vice versa. The probability of q seemed in mid-December already so low that he decided to ally himself with the Rupturists. In addition, in an iterated game, Čalfa could have changed his strategy and reached his better outcome within a Pareto optimal strongly stable equilibrium, when the other actor has no intention to change his or her strategy. In an iterated game with the Continuists, he would have only caused a cycle-game with potentially infinite iterations (Figure 9.9). His information was complete enough to make the move he did.

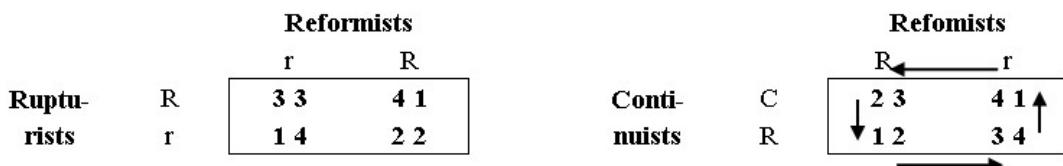


Figure 9.8. Strongly Stable⁴ Equilibrium & Force-vulnerable Equilibrium.⁵

On 28 December, the MPs elected one of their new co-opted members, Alexander Dubček, to the office of Chairman of the Federal Assembly and on the next day, Václav Havel to the office of Czechoslovak President. During the following weeks, discords between the OF and the Public against Violence (VPN, the Slovak parallel opposition organisation) were gaining momentum. More and more groups inside the opposition movement separated from the umbrella-like OF and original political parties from the National Front started their own policies. The time between Havel's victory and the June parliamentary elections was filled with issues of a systemic change: economic reforms, the dissolution of the State Security, the Czech-Slovak nationality problem, etc. The field of research would be too intricate for a simple game-theoretical model. It is plausible, however, to say that the danger of regress into a Communist regime was warded off before Christmas 1989 and also to perceive the December co-optation as the end of transition and the outset of consolidation.. Three existing games of transition should therefore suit the purpose of this study.

Conclusion

Three simple game-theoretical formulae are presented here and applied to the Czechoslovak regime change in 1989. Structural variables describe the settings of games in a new 3-D model of the Funnel of Causality. Its modifications are designed to show how variables of different origin and duration can affect a single historical event and to overcome the common one-directional dependency of structural approaches.

The case study begins with a structural description of all the crucial processes that led to the 'Velvet Revolution'. Three games of transition are formulated, explaining the course of regime change that started with an attempt to liberalise the post-totalitarian regime in November 1987 and ended with the presidential election in December 1989. Three findings in particular should be noted:

Firstly, during the Czechoslovak transition, four groups of actors were successively neutralised (Figure 9.9) and dropped out of the game.

⁴ i.e. Nash equilibrium.

⁵ A force-vulnerable equilibrium is where a player can induce a change of strategy by actually changing his or her own strategy away from the equilibrium.

	1st move	2nd move	Outcome	Equilibrium	Losers
Game 1	Continuists	Involutionists	4 , 4	Pareto	Openists
Game 2	Rupturists	Continuists	1 , 4	Nash	Revolutionaries
Sub-game	Prisoners' Dilemma	Continuists	3 , 3	Pareto	Involutionists
Game 3	Reformists	Rupturists	1 , 4	(Non-myopic)	Continuists

Figure 9.9: Game Overview.

Secondly, wrong beliefs of the ‘Rupturists’ actor helped to start negotiations with the ruling bloc. In the case of complete information, the regime change would have been much more revolutionary and difficult.

Finally, by neutralising the ‘Openists’ in 1978, the ‘Continuists’ actor most likely helped its own neutralisation in 1989 and contributed to the final outcome of the games – not a mere reform, but a complete regime change.

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