

Sharon Goldberg  
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### **Democratic Conditionality and Western Integration: A regional comparison**

The goal of my research is to explain why international influences play such an extensive role in the democratization process in East Central Europe and in fact why the former Soviet satellite states of East Central Europe are so vulnerable to external influences in the democratization process. It is my assertion that democracy is being crafted from outside in East Central Europe, through the use of democratic conditionality, and that the force of this conditionality is more extensive than in Southern European transitions due to the conditions of post-Communism<sup>1</sup> as well as increased international interdependence. The puzzle here is that despite the loosening of Soviet control and the opportunity for the states of East Central Europe to become fully sovereign and independent, these states have submitted to the international influences of the West, specifically through the European Union, and in doing so have submitted themselves to another 'non-democratic' supranational institution.

This question is important to research because the changing international context, through 'globalization', creates more avenues for international actors to influence the domestic political, economic, and social context of both democratic and non-democratic states. Whereas this expansion of international resources to reach even the grassroots level of politics is fascinating, it is also important to understand the specific characteristics of the domestic context that would lead these international influences, even altruistic ones, to overshadow domestic actors and influences on policy making, and state building. The dominance of international actors in the domestic arena is important to understand, as even when these actors are promoting democratization and liberalization of the economy and social sectors, their dominance could undermine democratic legitimacy as these actors are not accountable to the people. It is important to understand what

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<sup>1</sup> These conditions can be summarized as the need to develop democratic constitutions and political institutions, the need to develop a market economy which involves liberalization and the reallocation of resources towards the private sector, as well as the underdevelopment of civil society and social institutions due to the dominance of the state sector under Communism.

characteristics determine this vulnerability. Schmitter hypothesizes that the extent of this influence is determined by size, geo-strategic location and vulnerability to external flows, specifically indebtedness payments, critical energy or raw material imports, and the substitutability of imports. This general hypothesis provides a starting point but it doesn't fully explain the intricacies of historical memory, or social context, which is also important. Wade Jacoby hits on this in his explanations of imitation of Western policies. He believes that the importance of bringing in policy successfully is the ability of domestic actors to be strong enough in their interpretation of Western conditions to apply them with flexibility, in full understanding of the domestic context. This concept enlightens us not only to the importance of strong domestic elites but also brings to bear the importance of political stability, and social conditions to the already mentioned issues of economic and security vulnerability. It is these additional criteria that help us fully understand the vulnerability of this region. Additionally, this theory holds that external influence is more powerful during democratic consolidation, and this process is somewhat exacerbated for post-Communist states because of a need to redistribute wealth and resources to the private sector, whereas in transition from other authoritarian regimes such redistribution is not a step in the liberalizing period. After all, in East Central Europe there is a need to liberalize, stabilize, privatize, and restructure as part of the democratization process.

The predominant view of democratization is put forth by O'Donnell and Schmitter, and asserts that 'domestic factors play a predominant role.'<sup>2</sup> In writing about democratic transition and consolidation it has been determined by scholars, including Schmitter himself, that this is not entirely adequate in today's international context, especially when considering what Huntington calls the '4<sup>th</sup> Wave' transitions.<sup>3</sup> It has been taken for granted that international influence, and specifically conditionality, the linking of incentives to conditions, in this case democratic, is important in building stable democracies. However most of the focus has been on the changing international context

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<sup>2</sup> O'Donnell, Guillermo and Schmitter, Philippe C. *Part IV: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* page 19

<sup>3</sup> Schmitter, Philippe C. *The Influence of the International Context upon the Choice of National Institutions and Policies in Neo-Democracies* in *The International Dimensions of Democratization* page 27

and non-coercive methods of influence. Now that the East Central European states are in negotiations with the EU there is the opportunity to investigate this conditionality across regions as a means of understanding whether or not this can be deemed what Whitehead calls democratization by convergence, or whether the specific vulnerabilities of East Central European states to outside influences makes this more a case of democratization by incorporation in the West.<sup>4</sup>

This examination of international influence and democratization is also important in the debate between the political crafting school, most frequently associated with DiPalma, and the prerequisites school, most frequently associated with Huntington. Whereas I generally expect that democratization in East Central Europe is an elite led process, dominated by international influence on elite political behavior, I believe that the argument of the prerequisite school, that democracy is the natural outcome of social and economic development, is important in understanding the vulnerability of East Central Europe to international influences, in that the synchronous need to establish political, social, and economic institutions, most importantly the market economy, and the therefore embryonic state of these institutions promote the exalted need for international aid, advice, and acceptance.

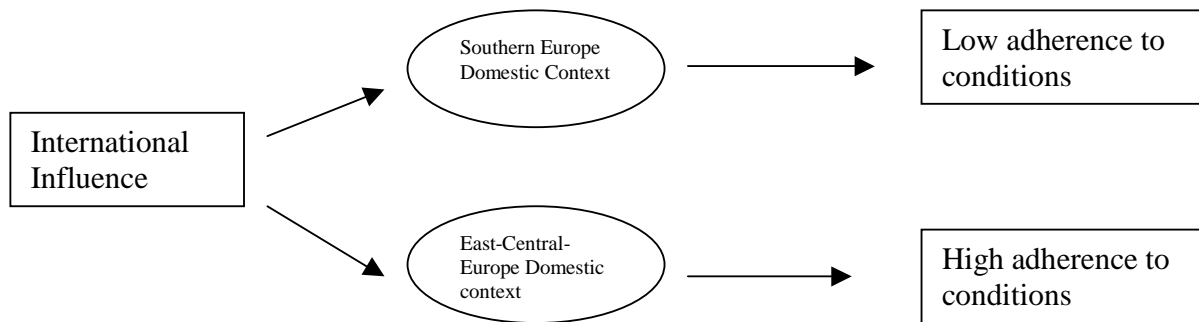
This study is concerned with ‘causes’ in terms of what conditions in East Central Europe lead to more international influences infiltrating the domestic political arena. Only once these causes are established can the consequences of ‘democracy by convergence’ be considered. This process seems to be a stabilizing force in the region, but if incentives are not awarded for adherence to democratic conditions, the process of democratization could be undermined. This process involves a tradeoff between national sovereignty, democratic legitimacy and accountability for democratic stability and international incentives. Only through understanding the underlying domestic context and the reasons

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<sup>4</sup> Whitehead, Laurence *Democracy by Convergence: Southern Europe* in *The International Dimensions of Democratization* p266. Democratization through convergence is here defined as an ‘international route to democratization via the enlargement of a pre-existing democratic community of sovereign states’ while incorporation requires that the ‘state’ be incorporated into a larger national entity. I am questioning here whether the level of dependence on EU conditionality and the promise of membership, and the questionable amount of sovereignty this involves can be seen as incorporation into ‘the European national entity.’

for this type of democratization can the consequences of this tradeoff be examined and therefore understood.

As a means of examining this question, I intend to do a cross regional comparison between Southern Europe and East Central Europe. I have not yet decided whether or not a full regional comparison is feasible or whether I will pick two case countries, one from each region. This regional comparison is a similar case study in that both regions underwent transition to democracy while being on the periphery of the EC or EU, and both regions experienced 'conditionality' from the EC or EU in order to be accepted as members. Whereas the democratic conditions faced by Greece, Portugal and Spain were less comprehensive than those in East Central Europe I would also argue that the incentives of membership were not as great as these states were already considered to a certain extent part of the West.



International influence is the independent variable and is limited here to democratic conditionality exerted by the European Union<sup>5</sup> on states in the democratization process with aims of becoming member states. Conditionality is the coercive means of effecting policy without the use of force. This coercion is provided by attaching conditions to incentives. The EU used democratic conditionality by tying the incentive of acceptance, membership in the EU, (this is multifaceted as it involves security, psychological, economic, political, and social incentives), to a variety of economic and political conditions, including democratic performance. These incentives and conditions affect both regions in this comparison, but as stated earlier variations due to different levels of development of the EU and EU conditionality will be considered.

This influence is filtered through different domestic contexts in the different regions during transition. It is the characteristics of these domestic contexts, or social and economic conditions, (democratic requisites) that I believe leads East Central Europe to be more vulnerable to outside influence. I believe that the preexistence of economic society and social and political structures in Southern Europe gave that region an advantage relative to East Central Europe it terms of dealing with the EU over accession issues, maintaining legitimacy, and in building national institutions and policy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The term European Union is used here in the definition but for consideration of the Southern European transition the term European Community should be substituted.

<sup>6</sup> This is not meant to indicate a lack of adherence to conditions, but only a greater likelihood to assert national institutions and negotiate over conditions. This also represents less need for outside incentives to provide stability as these internal institutions exist.

This theory will be examined by tracing the policy-making process in three policy areas across regions in the post-transition phase. (consolidation) The policy areas to be considered will include: one economic, most likely fiscal policy, one social, most likely minority policy, one political, most likely involving the evolution of political institutions. In measuring the effects of international conditions on the evolution, or changes in these policy areas, it will be important to discern between international and domestic sources of change. This will be potentially difficult, which is why I believe it is important to focus on policy areas that are traditionally under domestic control, with little or no influence. Then measuring will consider how international influences filter through the domestic context to result in policy formulation.

<b>The strength of international incentives and conditions</b>	<b>Domestic policy and influences</b>	<b>Policy formulation and implementation</b>
What conditions in that policy area are set by the EU or other organizations?	What was the status of the policy prior to the imposition of conditions? Were changes previously indicated?	How is the policy formulated? Does it follow exact criteria, or is domestic interpretation required?
How is progress in this policy area monitored at the international level?	What are domestic incentives for change? Do they run counter to international incentive structure?	Does the form the policy take resemble that of nation-states within the EU? Is there considerable difference for existing policies in EU member states?
To what extent are incentives, and what amount of the incentive structure rely on adherence to those international conditions?		

Hopefully, this study through showing how the domestic context is more active in determining policy formulation in Southern Europe will shed light on why East Central Europe is more vulnerable to international influence in democratization than Southern Europe was. I believe that this is due to more than just increased interdependence and the result of the history of the region, a history of international interference, compromised sovereignty, and post-Communism that make becoming part of the West and the EU more important than any conditions. Even if those conditions compromise sovereignty and democratic accountability.

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