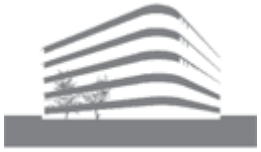

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STATE DYNAMISM AND MULTIDIMENSIONALITY: SOCIAL PROTESTS DURING REGIME CHANGES

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Introduction[1]

> *E' principali fondamenti che abbino tutti li stati, così nuovi come vecchi o misti, sono le buone legge e le buone arme: e perché non può essere buone legge dove non sono buone arme, e dove sono buone arme conviene sieno buone legge, io lascerò indrieto el ragionare delle legge e parlerò delle arme.*
>
> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, cap.XII

> *Dovete, adunque, sapere come sono dua generazioni di combattere: l'uno con le leggi, l'altro con la forza: quel primo è proprio dello uomo, quel secondo è delle bestie: ma perché el primo molte volte non basta, conviene ricorrere al secondo. Pertanto, a uno principe è necessario sapere bene usare la bestia e l'uomo.*
>
> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il principe*, cap.XVIII

The theoretical concern at the centre of this paper is the analysis of the State as a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional coercive actor that shapes, whether by promoting or hindering, collective action during regime change. In *States and collective action*, Pierre Birnbaum analyzed the influence that the State had on the emergence and development of social mobilisations in Europe from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1980s. According to Birnbaum, the different types – or logics – of the State help to explain the different forms of collective action carried out by civil society actors. Although this paper is inspired by the same intellectual concerns, its aim is inevitably much more modest: to consider how far the State as *Leviathan* can be considered a determinant actor – an independent or explanatory variable – in certain historical situations and, more specifically, during transitions from dictatorial to democratic regimes. I focus in particular on the State's capacity to condition the character of collective action, and particularly that of industrial workers. The Spanish and Portuguese transitions in the 1970s are the empirical references for the arguments developed here.

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[1] I would like to expresss my gratitude to my friends and colleagues at the *Center for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences*, Juan March Institute, for all the advice and comments they gave me during the course of my doctoral research. I am particularly indebted to Robert Fishman. I would also like to thank Justin Byrne and Andrew

The principal theoretical proposition in this paper is that the character of collective behaviour during regime change is dependent on the perception that the social groups responsible for such action have of the State, which, in a Weberian sense, is dynamic and multidimensional. I maintain that both the discourse and the actual behaviour of state authorities shape workers' perceptions of what they can and cannot do, and this, in turn, affects what they actually do. I also argue that workers rapidly perceived the existence of opportunities in Portugal, and of constraints in Spain, and that these perceptions had a fundamental influence on the character of workers' collective action in the two countries.

Social mobilisation and regime change

Research on transitions to democracy constitutes a meeting point for social scientists from different disciplines. Above all in the English language literature, political scientists, sociologists, and historians have all studied these processes. The multi-disciplinary character of research on transitions has been matched by the existence of numerous different approaches to the subject. Until the early 1990s at least, most scholars emphasised the role political elites have played in these processes, and the contingent character of (their) decisions, while paying virtually no attention to other explanatory factors. Since then, however, there has been a considerable upsurge in other lines of research on transitions to democracy. Extensive research has now been carried out on the role of institutions such as the army, the importance of other factors, such as the economic situation, as well as the influence of determinants such as political learning, collective memory, and what is often labelled *pressure from below*.

Studies that focus on the importance of "pressure from below" are particularly relevant to the arguments presented in this paper. Two points should be noted in this respect: first, the way in which these studies demonstrate the significance of social pressure for change and,

Richards for their invaluable help with the English version of this paper.

second, how this body of literature relates to the arguments developed in this paper on the character of social protests and mobilisations. In terms of the first point, as Nancy G. Bermeo (1997b) and Larry Diamond (1997) have recently argued, civil society –what Bermeo calls "non-elites"– and particularly mobilised groups of workers, are major protagonists of the drama of dictatorships and democratisation.[2] Indeed, my own research on the cases of Chile (Durán, 1997b), Portugal and Spain (Durán, 1997d) suggests that popular mobilisations can in face shape the course and outcome of transition processes.

However, and this is the second point, I also believe that these studies paid far too little attention to analysis of the factors that help explain the character, rather than the consequences, of popular mobilisations. Given that this paper is illustrated by reference to the Spanish and Portuguese transitions, it should be noted that while there are a number of important quantitative studies of collective labour protest in both countries, and particularly in Spain, qualitative analyses are notable mainly for their absence. Despite the evident interest of a comparison of the two Iberian cases, there are no substantial comparative studies of the qualitative development of labour protest in the two countries, or indeed, in either of them.

In this paper, therefore, I seek to fill this empirical void in the literature. I first trace the transformation in the character of workers' collective action during the Portuguese democratisation process, and contrast this with the continuity seen during the same phase of regime change in Spain. Then I examine the reasons why industrial workers involved in labour disputes, and social groups in general, tend either to moderate their forms of action and protest, or even demobilise at the outset of democratisation, or, in similar situations, why these same actors become more active and radical. Indeed, in some cases, workers' collective mobilisation threatened not just the stability, but the very survival, of the established social and economic order.

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[2] See the contributions of Bermeo (1997a), Haggard and Kaufman (1997), and Collier and Mahoney (1997) to the special issue of *Comparative Politics*, 29:3 on *Transitions to democracy: A special issue in memory of Dankwart A. Rustow*.

This, in fact, is what happened during the transition in Portugal. In 545 out of the 958 urban labour conflicts recorded in Portugal between April/May 1974 and November 1975 (see Durán, 1997d), Portuguese workers pressed their demands through a combination of established forms of collective action (the only type that would be seen in Spain during the transition) with new, more radical, and even revolutionary types of action. In fact, radical, transgressive actions of this type became the dominant form of protest. In at least 57% of recorded conflicts, Portuguese workers illegally occupied private companies, temporarily or permanently assuming control of the business, selling the product of their labour and taking over the management of factories. On other occasions, sacked workers and their colleagues refused to accept dismissals, and remained at their posts, organising protective pickets at the factory gates and/or internal vigilance committees. Other workers refused to sell tickets for public transport, even though service was maintained, ejected or purged management, and/or prevented managers from entering the workplace (and sometimes from leaving it, in what employers called *kidnappings*).

The State as explanation

The transitions of the 1970s and 1980s in Southern Europe and Latin America saw a major and quantitatively important change in the behaviour of civil society, that is, of Bermeo's "non-elites". Most authors explain this by pointing to the existence, during transitions, of uncertainty surrounding both the future and the rules of the game in the present. Equally, they also highlight the fact that during transition processes, the political authorities tend to be more tolerant of the behaviour of the various social actors. As authors as different as O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986; see Linz and Stepan, 1996) and Sidney Tarrow (1995) have noted, Spain constitutes a prime example of this quantitative increase in protest. However, the Portuguese case shows that a quantitative change in the level of protest can be matched by a qualitative shift in the form of collective action. As a result, the explanations usually put forward, and valid *a priori*, for the evolution of social protest in the Spanish tend to breakdown when we adopt a comparative perspective and incorporate Portugal into the analysis.

Consider the following reflection: if we understand a political regime as a formal and informal organisation that constructs and shapes State-civil society relations (Foweraker, 1989, 232; Fishman, 1990, 428), that is, as "a system of mediations between the State and civil society" (Garretón, 1989, 45; see also *ibid.*, 1994, 63-64), any analysis of the changes in the behaviour of civil society requires an understanding of the character and evolution of the State. Of course, it is impossible to understand the character of collective behaviour or action without taking into account the type of regime change (particularly, how the transition begins), the political culture of the different social groups, and, more specifically insofar as labour conflict is concerned, the motivations and demands of mobilized workers, the level of institutionalisation of resources for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, or the role of formal organisations and the positions of the elites.[3] This much can be inferred from most analyses of transitions, regardless of their specific focus. Nonetheless, I believe that the answer to the question "what about the State?" is an essential element of any explanation for the way in which the nature of collective protests varies significantly in different transitions. And I believe that the answer to this question enables us to better understand why collective action and mobilisation during democratisation processes become radical in some cases, while remaining moderate in others.

[3] In *Acciones colectivas y transiciones a la democracia* I also consider the importance of the geographical location, size and sector of activity of the companies involved in disputes as possible explanatory variables for the nature of collective action (Durán, 1997d, Ch.1).

The State in the literature

Between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s, the *State* as a concept virtually disappeared from the professional vocabulary of most social scientists working in English (see Krasner, 1984; Alford and Friedland, 1985). Nonetheless, above all in the wake of the seminal work *Bringing the State Back In* edited by Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol (1986b), social scientists have paid increasing attention to the State as an institution and a social actor.[4] It was not by chance, for example, that the 1985 Congress of the International Political Science Association in Paris was devoted to analysis of the State. As Remmer (1997) has noted, the State as a concept acquired similar prominence in social science research in the 1980s as "modernisation" had enjoyed in the 1950s, "development" in the 1960s, and "dependency" in the 1970s. Today, the analysis of the State remains a core area of research in political science, and in political economy in particular.

Most scholars have focused on the question of the level of State autonomy or dependency with respect to interest groups, or even the dominant classes, and the State's capacity to achieve certain goals. This approach has been labelled "new institutionalism" (see Koelble, 1995; Remmer, 1997; *cf.* Friedland and Alford, 1993). Institutionalists' analysis of stabilisation and adjustment programmes is particularly relevant to this paper. For these authors tend to argue that the greater the autonomy, the internal coherence, and the centralisation of the decision-making process of the economic authorities, and the greater the resources at their disposal, the more efficient and effective they will be when adopting and implementing their decisions.[5]

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[4] By highlighting *Bringing the State Back In* I do not wish to downplay the importance of earlier works that also take the State as an important explanatory variable in the social sciences. In this sense, I can merely acknowledge my own intellectual debt to *From Mobilization to Revolution* by Tilly (1978; and 1975) or *States and Social Revolutions* by Theda Skocpol (1987 [1979]). Evans (1997) considers that the analytical attention now being paid to the State implies that we should recognise that Nettl (1968) was right when he criticised its absence from debates in the social sciences.

[5] Note, in particular Haggard (1990), Haggard and Kaufman (1992), Williamson (1994), and Evans (1995).

However, with a number of notable exceptions (March and Olsen, 1989), most researchers in this field have not considered the other dimension of State-civil society relations, that is, the way in which the State influences the behaviour of social groups. Curiously, this is also true of those studies that do emphasize the important role that popular pressures play in processes of regime change. For their part, specialists on transitions adopting the dominant approach to the subject, exemplified by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), tend to treat the State as the arena in which the conflicts between the internal and external elites – internal and external to the regime, that is – are resolved. However, they pay scant attention to the mechanisms and implications of the society-State relationship. A similar point has been made in recent reviews of the large and ever-expanding political science literature on democratisation.[6] Lisa Anderson , for example, has noted that "further work needs to be done on the role of the character of the state –from the patterns of insertion of individual states into the international state system to their varied capacities for domestic extraction and maintenance of law and order– in shaping regimes and the prospects for democratic transitions" (Anderson, 1997, 260). In this context, mention should be made of two recent works by Juan J. Linz, *Between States*, written with Yossi Shain (Shain and Linz, 1995), and *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation*, which Linz co-authored with Alfred Stepan (1996).[7]

In *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation*, Linz and Stepan examine the conditions and processes that allow transitions to democracy to take place, and more specifically, new democracies to become consolidated. Even though they pose different intellectual questions to those that I am interested in here, Linz and Stepan nonetheless develop arguments that complement and confirm my own line of reasoning. Hence, it is perhaps useful to outline their arguments, or at least those that are most relevant to this paper.

As Linz and Stepan note, with the exception of Shain and Linz (1995), studies of regime change have rarely treated the State as an explanatory variable in their analyses. Yet, as Linz and Stepan also argue, the State is one of the principal factors that *condition –and in some cases*

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[6] I am referring specifically to the special number of *Comparative Politics* cited in note 2.

[7] I refer to the most significant contributions of *Between States* for my study in a book review in *Revista*

preclude– (1996, xiv) a successful transition to, and consolidation of, democracy. This springs firstly, from the fact that the problems posed by the complex relationship between State, nation(s), and democratisation implies that the existence of a sovereign State is a prerequisite for democracy. Linz and Stepan refer to this as the question of "stateness". The State is crucial, secondly, because of the role it plays in four of the five "arenas" which, in interaction with each other, facilitate or thwart democratisation: civil society, political society, economic society, and the State bureaucracy.[8]

With respect to civil society, Linz and Stepan show that, in Dahlian terms, activity in this arena – that is social mobilisation against the authoritarian regime – forces the political authorities to establish a new equilibrium between tolerance and repression. Linz and Stepan's approach to the political society – the arena in which the polity specifically exercises legitimate control over public power and the state apparatus – is that of the new institutionalists, in that they emphasise the need for a certain degree of autonomy from external pressures. Thirdly, they maintain that citizens' political representatives (that is, democratic leaders) must have a usable bureaucracy:

> "To protect the rights of its citizens and to deliver the other basic services that citizens demand, a democratic government needs to be able to exercise effectively its claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of force in the territory. Even if the state had no other functions than these, it would have to tax compulsorily in order to pay for police, judges, and basic services. Modern democracy, therefore, needs the effective capacity to command, regulate, and extract. For this it needs a functioning state and a state bureaucracy considered usable by the new democratic government" (*ibid.,* 11).

Finally, in terms of economic society (a broader concept than that of *market economy*), Linz and Stepan consider that "democratic consolidation requires the institutionalisation of a socially and politically regulated market" (*ibid.*, 13). And, they go to on argue, "this requires an

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Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (81, January-March 1998).

[8] The fifth arena is the rule of law, which is necessary to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life (Linz and Stepan, 1996, 7).

economic society, which in turn requires an effective state" (*ibid.*), that is, a strong state (in terms of its capacity to act).

An interpretative framework for collective action: the State and perceptions of the State

Before considering how the State affects the behaviour of society as a whole, and of mobilised social groups during processes of regime change in particular, it is perhaps necessary to clarify what is meant by the term *State*. Given the complexity of the problem, even the decision to opt for one of the classic sociological definitions of the concept would really require greater justification than that which space permits here; in this respect, I would also like to emphasise at this point that my choice is solely determined by the object of this particular study. For the purposes of this paper, and the arguments I will defend below, I consider that the most useful (operative) and accurate conceptualisation is Max Weber's institutionalist – and in Michael Mann's (1991)[9] opinion, functionalist – vision of the State.

Weber understands the State to be a continuously active *political association* whose specialised and centralised administrative staff (successfully) claim a *legitimate monopoly* of the means of physical coercion in order to maintain the established order in a given territory.[10] I believe, however, that this part of the definition is rather ambiguous, since it is possible to infer that the State only exists when its monopoly of physical violence is legitimate. As I understand it, it is the monopoly of violence itself (that is, effective exercise of this monopoly), rather than its legitimacy, which is the essential condition for the existence of the State, regardless of the

[9] I do not reject the validity of other theories. But I consider that marxist and post-marxist analyses, among others, contribute little to our understanding of the issue being analyzed here. Authors such as Skocpol (1987 and 1995) and Downs (1989) have shown this clearly. In this respect, see also Maravall's critique of Poulantzas (1975) in *La política de la transición* (1985, 19 ff.).

[10] My interpretation is derived from the Weberian concept of the State as an *association of domination*, that is, an association in which submission and obedience to authority by the dominated may be achieved for reasons unconnected with belief in the legitimacy of the authority's rule (see 1992, 43-4 and 170-3).

political authorities' aspiration to legitimise their monopoly and exercise of violence. Accordingly, the stability of the State ultimately depends on its coercive strength, that is, on the capacity of its forces of repression (the police and military) and of other state institutions – the government, of course, but also the judiciary and the administration– to maintain the established socio-economic order, social and political peace, and control over its territories (see Weber, 1988, 83-5, and 1992, 43-5).[11] State authorities, and particularly government, rightly consider themselves to be the guarantors of all these things. This is the case irrespective of the type of regime, its degree of consolidation, or the phase of the transition process –liberalisation or democratisation – in which the regime is engaged (see O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986).

In other words, and most importantly for this paper, the greater the cohesion, unity and internal discipline of the distinct actors and institutions within the State, the stronger, or at least less weak, the State.[12] Hence, the greater the various state actors' and institutions' capacity to channel and resolve social conflicts via agreements with the conflicting parties, and/or to impose their authority, uphold the law, and maintain the established order by repressive or coercive methods – whether physical, judicial or of any others type – the stronger the State. In the same way, a State will be in a position of *weakness* or will experience a *temporary crisis* when, despite maintaining its fundamental structures intact, its constituent parts are incapable of effective action in these two spheres, and above all, when they are unable to uphold the authority of the State and the established order by coercive means.[13]

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[11] According to Weber, "in political associations [in the modern State], physical coercion is neither the only, nor the normal means of administration. Their leaders use all means possible to achieve their aims. However the threat and eventual use of coercion is indeed their *particular* means, and in any event everywhere, the *final rationale* when the other means fail" (1992, 44).

[12] In this way, I interpret the *strength* and *weakness* of the State in a different sense to that of Alexis de Tocqueville (1982 and 1985; see Tarrow, 1994a; 1994b, Chs.4 and 5; 1996). The illustrious nineteenth century author used both adjectives to refer, respectively, to the centralised or decentralised character of state actions and their responsibilities (see Birnbaum, 1988, esp.4-8 and Chs.1 and 5). On the other hand, I do not understand both concepts to be synonymous with the autonomy versus dependency of state institutions with regard to civil society, as Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol criticised the "neo-Weberian circles" of doing so in the mid-1980s (1986a). Santos Juliá has incorporated this argument as one of the bases of his interpretation of the Spanish transition by noting the "strength of the State as administration and as the public sector" (1988, 38). In order to avoid possible confusion and ambiguity, I introduce these concepts, and particularly that of *weakness*, with others that help clarify my own interpretation.

[13] Similar arguments have been put forward by Bermeo (1986, I), Stepan (1986), Migdal (1988), Downs

Of course, action first requires decisions. The capacity to take decisions, like the willingness to act, is an attribute of individuals (in this case, of elites). Yet, along with the unity, cohesion, and referred to above, another factor affects the strength of the State in relation to mobilized social groups – the resources that the particular authorities have at their disposal to implement their decisions. That is the extent to which state resources, bodies, or institutions respect the established decision-making hierarchy and obey commands. This implies that we not only have to consider the elites' preferences, but also have to take into account their readiness and capacity to agree on and implement decisions. And this means not just looking at individuals, but also the State of which they form a part.

The State, therefore, is not only the arena in which the conflict is resolved. Moreover, independently of its strength or weakness, nor is the State an animate bloc, or homogeneous. In other words, there may be internal divisions or disagreements within the State as to objectives and political strategies. To deny this would be to ignore, for instance, the research on transitions that suggests that tensions within the institutional structures and authorities of authoritarian regimes can be one of the main causes of the political crises of regimes, and hence of the onset of transition processes. This reasoning does not contradict my own argument. I consider that mobilized workers' perceptions' of divisions within the State contribute to both the uncertainty and the increased expectations that are characteristic features of situations of regime change. In this sense, however, there is little to distinguish the phase of political crisis from the subsequent phases of liberalisation and democratisation. That is, confirmation of the existence of such dissension within the State does not help us to understand the contingent radicalisation of mobilisations by certain social groups. The decisive factor, over and above the tolerance that workers and other social groups perceive with respect to the level of mobilisation, is whether they observe – or not – disparity in the criteria regarding the character and intensity of permitted and permissible collective actions. In other words, the factor determining the nature of collective actions is whether or not the authorities responsible for employing the State's coercive resources

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(1989, Chs.1 and 6) and O'Donnell (1991 and 1994). This is also the case of some scholars of collective action, particularly those adopting the structure of political opportunities approach (see Tarrow, 1994b; McAdam *et al.*, 1996). Finally, any attempt to go into this topic in any depth must consider the contributions of sociology (see Melossi, 1990).

are seen as being united, consistent, and disciplined. In the Spanish case they were, while in the Portuguese they were not.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the concept of the *weakness* or *strength* of the State refers to the perception that collectively mobilized people have of it. That is, it is not an assessment of the real situation of the State (see Aya, 1997, esp. Ch.13). Nor does it refer to the conscious reflections of social groups on the existence or otherwise of an institutional vacuum in such situations. There can be no doubt that civil society actors – particularly urban workers – did have perceptions of how the state authorities and institutions had acted at the national-, local- and firm-level[14] until then. Or that these perceptions and impressions were drawn from their direct and indirect, individual and collective, experiences. Their impression was based on experience, and confirmed by it. From the very beginning of democratisation, the second phase of the transition, workers' perceptions of how the state authorities would respond to particular types of action contributed to radicalise or moderate the character their actions. In other words, the existence of different forms of mobilisation cannot be understood without taking into account the perceptions of the protagonists as to the existence of opportunities for, and/or constraints on, collective action, and especially those opportunities and constraints created by the attitude of the state authorities. Hence the analytical centrality of the State in the study of collective action in transitions.

In the analysis of the way workers' perceptions of the State determines the character of their collective action, two crucial points should be highlighted: firstly, the dynamic character of the strength/weakness of the State: second, the multidimensional character of the State itself. The State's capacity to radicalise or restrain mobilisations during democratisation derives from these two complementary and interrelated factors.

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[14] The emphasis put on the importance of the firm level is far from insignificant. It is here that the collective identities of the groups we are dealing with are forged. This analysis is not of the *working class*. The protagonists of the mobilisations studied here were groups of people whose common identity derived from their membership of the same company – or the same productive sector – during labour disputes, when the employer is converted into the external *adversary* of the group..

The dynamic character of the State

The strength/weakness of the State is a dynamic factor in that it can change in a short space of time. That is, the State, just like the regime from which the transition takes place, may pass through periods of – if only temporary – weakness or crisis during the democratisation phase. In these circumstances, pressure and protests may become transgressive in character. In certain conditions, the protagonists of collective action may feel that the change of regime has generated a situation, on the one hand, of a regime crisis (regardless of the type of transition) and on the other, of an at least temporary vacuum of power. As a result, those individuals and groups which mobilize for demands which they consider just, and which they may well have held under the previous authoritarian regime, may come to believe that they are no longer threatened by the state repression that had previously inhibited or restrained action. Whether as a result of the incapacity or the tacit support of the political authorities, and the disappearance or weakening of the constraints that had previously existed, this situation presents an opportunity for the radicalisation of collective action and protest. The perception of a power vacuum, that is, of a breakdown in the chain of power[15], enables mobilised social groups to realize that it is possible to adopt much more radical forms of pressure and protest than those tolerated until then. Previously, the authorities ensured that the strength of the State was quite evident to all. But in periods of crisis or instability, the uncertainty surrounding the costs of breaking the law may give rise to the perception that opportunities exists to satisfy demands by illegal actions. In other words, social groups do not switch to more radical forms of action because their preferences change, but because they perceive that they have the chance to do so.

[15] Tarrow alludes to the same idea in his expression the "breakdown of state control" (1994b, 104) when referring to sectarian violence and ethnic tensions following the collapse of the former Soviet Union and its dependent states in Eastern Europe after 1989. In their studies of the Portuguese experience, some authors have also expressed the same idea, if only in passing, using the same or similar words: Maxwell talks about the "paralysis of the state apparatus", the "collapse of state authority" and of a "power vacuum" (1991, 124; 1996); Manuel de Lucena, of "state fragility" (1982, 907); Graham, of a *weak State* (1993, xii) and an "institutional vacuum" (*ibid*, 84); Linz and Stepan, finally, refer to a "a near disintegrating State" (1996, 119).

The situation in Portugal between *25 de Abril*[16] and *25 de Novembro*[17] illustrates this point well. By ignoring the calls for moderation from the state institutions, as well as the political parties and trade unions, and despite the fact that the government was explicitly committed to maintaining law and order, mobilised social groups perceived that the State was unable to fulfil this commitment, or at least that the political-military authorities in practice did not use the State's coercive resources to this end. I argued above that the greater the cohesion, unity and discipline of and among the different state actors (primarily the government, administration, judiciary, army and police), the stronger the State. In Portugal democratisation began with a clear rupture or break with the authoritarian regime. But, over and above the initial surprise at this unexpected rupture with the authoritarian regime, mobilised groups of workers saw that the government's inaction gave them an opportunity to act radically.

The State's incapacity to act stemmed from a series of different factors: a) divisions within and between the different institutions of state power; b) confusion as to the hierarchical organisation of the different state institutions (in the final analysis, as to which body had the power to decide in cases of disagreement); and c) the new authorities' reluctance to resort to the use of repressive state forces to impose law and order, which, as I noted above, was effectively being subverted at the time. The new authorities in fact viewed the security forces with suspicion; in part because their image was closely identified with the dictatorship, in part out of fear that they would intervene too severely. In this sense, and more generally, it is also possible that d) the new Portuguese authorities could have considered that the mobilised groups were so strong that repression would have in fact have been the most costly alternative.

In contrast to the situation in Spain, as well as Portugal during the dictatorship, no state authority (which, according to Weber, are those with the exclusive and legitimate capacity to do

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[16] On 25 April 1974 the military organised in the Armed Forces Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas,* MFA) put an end to the Portuguese dictatorship through a *coup d'état*. This marked the beginning of democratisation.

[17] On 25 November 1975, paratroopers –inside and outside the MFA– rose in a left-wing putsch against the *moderate* sixth provisional government of Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo. The moderate faction of the army, commanded by Colonel Ramalho Eanes, put down the attempted coup, which took Portugal dangerously close to civil war. The success of the counter-coup was the beginning of an institutional reaction in favour of a process of

so) was capable of refuting or curbing the sense of *libertação* (liberation) that workers, students, and other social groups initially felt after the unexpected rupture with the authoritarian regime. And neither at that point, nor subsequently, was any state body capable of sanctioning, or imposing limits on, the radical actions of these groups. As Lima has put it, the state machine was paralysed, governments were unstable and powerless (1991, 165; see Lima *et al.*, 1977). The vulnerability of the State provided the *guarda-chuva* (umbrella) for the unprecedented level, and forms, of collective action.[18]

In the case of labour disputes, events in different firms and sectors did not follow established practises, nor was the existing legislation observed, for example, in collective bargaining or work stoppages, not to mention when workers engaged in other, a- or illegal forms of struggle. On the other hand, the forces of law and order did not intervene as a coercive force protecting employers and their interests. Employers themselves felt, and repeatedly complained, that they were unprotected in the face of the impunity with which their employees acted. My analysis of all the collective actions in which workers were involved between *25 de Abril* and *25 de Novembro* has revealed evidence of intervention by the state security forces in just 25 cases. In 15 of these, the police or military intervention was such that, far from being repressive, it might even have given workers the impression that their actions constituted just one more form of protest (and one which was particularly effective and no more costly than other more moderate forms). Thus, coercive intervention of the type that predominated in Spain at a similar phase of the regime change occurred in just 10 conflicts, that is, scarcely 1% of the 958 conflicts registered in that period, and in less than 2% of the 545 conflicts which saw radical or revolutionary forms of actions (of a type almost entirely absent in Spain) (see Durán, 1997c).

Bearing in mind Dahl's axiom on the costs of repression and tolerance (1971; see Bermeo, 1997b), it can be suggested that, on the contrary, there is no power vacuum (that is, opportunities or incentives for radical action are not perceived) when mobilised groups believe

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political change leading to parliamentary democracy in a free market economy.

[18] Fátima Patriarca used the term *guarda-chuva* (*guarda-chuva do Estado* [the State as umbrella]) in an informal academic discussion with the author in Lisbon (see Patriarca, 1977 and 1978).

that, even though the authorities of a non-democratic regime are capable of using the physical violence of the State in order to preserve the regime, they nonetheless opt for tolerance, via democratisation, in the belief that this will prove less costly than *continuismo*. However, the reverse is true when during the transition, there is a threat to, for instance, prevailing property relations (see O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, 27). According to this hypothesis, a mobilized social group's perception of this capacity to use force (as well as their perception that the authorities have the capacity to act consistently – that is, the cohesion, unity and internal discipline of the distinct actors within the State remain substantially unaltered) would make it extremely unlikely that their moderate actions acquire a transgressive character. Mobilized groups do not impose self-restraint on their mobilisations of their own volition, but rather because of the existence of constraints.

State coercion, therefore, defines the framework for social mobilisation, that is, the *zone of tolerance* encompassing those forms of pressure and protest whose costs do not exceed the benefits. The boundaries of this *zone* are defined by the legality in force, but also by the degree of lenience shown by the government authorities (an indication of their commitment to democratizing) as well as by social pressure itself, exerted both prior to and during the transition. The selection of the forms of action included or excluded from this zone of tolerance – the latter being those that can be repressed – does not depend on the nature of the action, but also on how, when, by how many, why and by whom it is carried out .

In Spain, in contrast to Portugal, workers involved in labour conflict did not perceive any change in either the State's willingness or capacity to maintain social control during the second post-authoritarian government, led by Adolfo Suárez – just as they had not done during the earlier governments of Arias Navarro.[19] Consequently, workers did not see any opportunity to satisfy their demands at factory-level other than through forms of action that the political authorities had already tolerated during the last years of the Francoist regime (see Durán, 1998).

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[19] Arias Navarro became president of the government after Carrero Blanco was assassinated by the terrorist organisation ETA in 1973. After Franco's death in November 1975 and King Juan Carlos had been proclaimed head of State, Arias Navarro was ratified in his post. That first government of the monarchy coincided with the phase of liberalisation. Democratisation began with the appointment of Adolfo Suárez as president of the Government in July 1976.

At this point the reader should remember my earlier comments on the homogeneity of state actors and institutions. As in other transition situations, there were certainly disagreements within the State in Spain, essentially between moderates and hard-liners. However, in terms of their assessment of, and reaction to, the nature of collective actions, the authorities (particularly the president of the government, the ministers of the Interior and the civil governors) were rightly seen as united and coordinated. [20]

In contrast to the opportunity that the Portuguese State created through its *in*action or passivity, in Spain the authorities actively intervened to restrain and prevent unacceptable forms of collective action. Or to be more precise, they continued to do as they had done during the authoritarian regime. Along with government and judicial sanctions of workers, physical repression was also often employed. Mobilised workers in Spain frequently saw their demonstrations physically broken up, experienced arrests and detentions, the use of smoke grenades, hoses, rubber bullets, rifle butts, tear gas, baton charges, and gun shots, both in warning and meant to hit. All this, with workers treated for asphyxia, more or less serious bruises and injuries (including those from firearms), hospitalised and even killed, were all realities in the Spain of the transition. And all this, which was similar to the repression carried out under the Arias Navarro governments, defined at any given moment the scope of labour protest and demands, that is, the *zone of tolerance*.

In Spain, workers perceived that the state authorities' discourse in favour of democracy did provide an opportunity to mobilize. And more of them, in more firms, and in larger conflicts, did mobilise than before. They pushed the limits of the *zone of tolerance*, because they thought that they could satisfy their demands in this way, in other words, they considered that the cost-benefit relation made it worthwhile for them to do so. There were meetings, demonstrations and sit-ins, forms of protest both within and outside the zone. But mobilized workers in Spain did not expand the repertoire of collective action that they had developed under the authoritarian regime. In contrast to the situation in Portugal, in Spain forms of protest that challenged the power of business (let alone the power of the State) did not fall within this

[20] Civil governors were the representatives of government in each province. They exercised the state functions

zone. Workers in conflict were convinced that the forces of public order would intervene. This perception increased the costs, and diminished the benefits, of protest to such an extent that in some cases, workers restrained their own mobilisations – either abandoning protests early, cancelling them, or even not calling them – independently of actual intervention by the police. It should be noted, finally, that employers themselves and their managers became indirect agents of state deterrence insofar as both the existing legislation and behaviour of the government guaranteed their power to sanction workers. In this respect therefore, the regime change did not affect this particular function of the State in Spain. In other words, the dynamic character of the State was not in evidence.

The multidimensional character of the State

Social groups that mobilise during processes of regime change do not only develop their repertoire of collective action in accordance with their direct (and immediate) relations with the complex actor termed here the State. Rather, they also define their repertoire in the light of the relation the State has with those groups – either within or outside of the State – that threaten the incipient and fragile process of democratisation, either by seeking the return of the dictatorship or even provoking a civil war. This relationship is all the more important because those groups, the *true saviours of the motherland*, which threaten this political change process justify their defence of authoritarianism with reference to the instability, disorder, or chaos that social mobilisations allegedly generate. The State is again decisive here. Firstly, because the hopes of reactionary groupings are usually placed on a rebellion by state institutions – the forces of law and order, and particularly the army. Secondly, because these groupings often include figures who themselves are important members of these and other state institutions. And finally because it is precisely to the State – to the highest organs of government – that those sectors of society committed to a change of regime look to neutralise threats of involution and to punish any illegal action.

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of control and coordination of the administration, and were directly in charge of the security forces.

This third and final factor – the role assigned to the State by pro-change forces – is vital to understanding the repertoire of workers' collective action. The existence of intransigent and prominent supporters of authoritarianism did not surprise contemporaries, just as it has not surprised later researchers: resistance was only to be expected. Hence, a more decisive factor to understanding the forms of collective action which social groups opt for during a change of regime is how the protagonists of such actions perceive or interpret the attitude and behaviour of the state authorities. By this stage, and without changing the meaning of the concepts of *weakness* and *strength*, the consequences of this for collective action should be obvious: reactionary elements may act as a constraint or a spur for collective action. Everything depends on the weakness or strength the authorities display in response to their provocation or threats. Or more precisely, on the perception that mobilised groups have of the state institutions' willingness and capacity to overcome the risk of involution, and even of civil war. The risk of civil war fosters moderation to an even greater extent, when a precedent exists in the country's past (see Bermeo, 1992; Aguilar, 1996): This is what elsewhere I have termed the *fear of a return to the past* (Durán, 1997d, Ch. 6).

The *weakness* of the State, once again, derives from the perceived disunity, lack of coherence, and indiscipline within and among the different organs of state power. This has the opposite implications for the nature of collective action. The impression that the state authorities are passive can be interpreted as implying that they are unable to act, that the government lacks control over some state actors, most importantly the military and police. In these circumstances, mobilised social groups, fearing a return to the past, may well criticise the government for unjustly abandoning its duty to maintain law and order in the face of reactionary attempts to subvert it. Moreover, the perceptions which the mobilised groups have of the State reveal its multidimensionality, which means that while it may be strong with respect to them, a certain power vacuum may exist with respect to reactionary elements. In these circumstances, radicalisation becomes too costly and risky in so far as it could reinforce reactionary tendencies. While this does not mean that workers' will inevitably restrain their actions, it is understandable that they should do so.

The Portuguese experience, again in the period running from *25 de Abril* to *25 de Novembro*, exemplifies the opposite scenario (see Durán, 1997d, Ch.6.2). In Portugal, the dynamic nature of the State generated a power vacuum that contributed to the radicalisation of social mobilisations. At the same time, however, the State did not display a similar lack of authority in its dealings with reactionary groupings and institutions. The multidimensional nature of the State created opportunities to transgress the established social and economic order. So workers did. But the state authorities, which were resolutely committed to the democratisation process, were much more severe in their repression of attempts to subvert this process, and in fact speeded up the pace of regime changes in response to involutionary incidents and pressure. In my view, workers in the city – like those in the countryside or people who occupied empty houses– were not constrained by the fear of a future return to the past. Moreover, their perception that an opportunity existed was reinforced by the neutralisation of the potentially restraining effects of the demonstration of the *maioria silenciosa* (silent majority) on 28 September 1974[21], the attempted *coup d'état* on 11 March 1975[22], or the extreme right-wing violence during the *verão quente* (hot summer) later that year. The *strength* of the Portuguese State in the face of reactionary groups guaranteed both the benefits of radicalisation and the continuity of the ongoing political process of political change.

Conclusion

I believe that the argument presented here should be taken into account when attempting to understand and explain the nature of popular mobilisations during transition processes, especially after the moment when governments, from the legality and the institutional

[21] The demonstration was meant to show the support of the "silent majority" in the country as a whole for the first President of the Republic, General António de Spínola. According to the organisers of the demonstration, the *maioria silenciosa* opposed the way the democratization process had been developing. According to their opponents –most political parties and trade unions, as well as the majority of political and military authorities– the demonstrators were effectively inciting an insurrection.

[22] 11 March 1975 was the date of a failed counter-revolutionary putsch led by General Spínola, who had

machinery of the authoritarian regime, commit themselves to holding free legislative elections under the rules of representative democracy. The arguments developed in this paper do not just have implications for the analysis of forms or repertoires of collective action, but also for the whole context of social pressures, in other words, the juncture of change. The emphasis placed on the State does not challenge the importance of other variables, but rather complements them. This is the case of analysis of how democratisation begins and, with regard to mobilised social groups, the reasons for their mobilisation, and the institutional and organisational resources they can use to channel their protest. In this respect, it is worth noting, finally, the wrongly praised virtues (or failings in their absence) of allegedly *mature* peoples.

Societies and social phenomena are highly complex, and require equally complex explanations. The arguments developed are not meant to be categorical, but hopefully are convincing. However, there is a need for further comparative research of more cases and other geographic areas. Few social scientists, politicians or journalists predicted the course of the Portuguese transition. Likewise, many expected an uncertain future for Spain after Franco's death. Moderate Spain and revolutionary or semi-revolutionary Portugal, unpredictable as they were, are two paradoxical and paradigmatic cases. However, the arguments presented in this paper are neither closed nor definitive. My theoretical proposition has to be validated or qualified; further research would show whether it is to be restricted to the Iberian cases alone, is more widely applicable, or should be abandoned altogether. Eastern Europe provides fertile terrain for research designed to add to our understanding of collective action and regime change. Not least because no one predicted any of the events witnessed in these countries after 1989, and particularly between 1989 and 1991.

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mistakenly been persuaded that an anti-Communist putsch could succeed.

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