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engendering transitions

Women's Mobilization, Institutions,
and Gender Outcomes

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Georgina Waylen

❖ **Engendering Transitions**

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Institutions, and Gender Outcomes**

Georgina Waylen

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Gender and Politics represents the most recent scholarship in the areas of women, gender, and politics, and is explicitly cross-national in its organization and orientation. Recognizing the contribution of women's studies to gendered political analysis, the goal of *Gender and Politics* is to develop, and to publish, frontier analysis, the empirical research exemplary of the intersection between political studies and women's studies.

The series is edited by Professor Karen Beckwith at the Department of Political Science, Case Western Reserve University and Professor Joni Lovenduski, Department of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College.

❖ Preface

The purpose of this book is to engender the study of one of the most important political phenomena of the late twentieth century—namely democratization. It examines transitions from a range of non-democratic regimes that have different transition paths and outcomes that differ in the quality of their subsequent democracy. An understanding of the role of women in these different transitions and the impact of those transitions on gender relations has been missing from much of the democratization literature to date. Just as many democratization theorists analyse transitions to democracy from a position sympathetic to the desired outcome—liberal democracy—underlying this endeavour is a normative concern with improving levels of gender equality. I believe that positive gender outcomes—measured in terms of women's descriptive and substantive representation—should be a central part of transitions to democracy. As such, this book is unashamedly informed by feminist thought and scholarship as well as by some of the more dominant approaches in comparative politics and political science and it seeks to understand how positive gender outcomes can come about as a part of democratization.

But so often transitions to democracy have been seen as failing women as their outcomes do not live up to the expectations that had been generated. The questions have to be asked: Why this is the case? And under what circumstances can transitions to democracy result in positive gender outcomes? The study attempts to answer these questions in four stages. The first part of the book develops the theoretical framework through which the questions might be answered. In the subsequent three parts, that framework is applied to different aspects of the relationship between gender outcomes and democratization. The format is both thematic and comparative, using a range of case studies drawn from a number of regions. Part II looks at women's organizing. Part III examines the electoral arena. Part IV considers women's substantive representation and the state and policy outcomes of different transitions. It includes an analysis of the economic and social restructuring that has so often accompanied political transitions, but the significance of which is often ignored.

It is clear that many transitions to democracy have enhanced most women's civil and political rights. But positive gender outcomes have been easier to achieve in

some areas than others. In most cases, levels of women's descriptive representation have increased over time. However, the large variations that occur between the different cases have to be accounted for. Although women's descriptive representation has increased overall, gains in women's substantive representation are often ambiguous. For example state women's machineries have been widely established, but again they vary considerably in their effectiveness. Policy change in some areas, domestic violence for example, seems easier to achieve than in others such as reproductive rights. And for many women, gains in the civil and political sphere are frequently undermined by a lack of access to social and economic rights. Social and economic rights themselves have often been undermined by the social and economic restructuring that has accompanied many transitions to democracy.

How can we explain these patterns? There are no simple answers. Causality is complex and no one factor is determining. However, it is possible to identify certain trends which allow an overarching picture to emerge. Even in cases where there have been positive gender outcomes—measured in terms of both descriptive and substantive representation—it is clear that women's mobilization on its own is no guarantee of success. Other factors—a favourable political opportunity structure and strategic organizing by key actors—are also crucial. One of the tasks of this book is to explore and assess the relative importance and interaction of these factors.

A comparative approach is therefore essential. The study uses eight countries as case studies, each of which vary in the types of transitions and democratic outcomes, the levels and types of women's organizing, and the different political opportunity structures. In all of the case studies the transitions ended with democratic outcomes, but the quality of the democracy varies considerably between countries. All the transitions took place as part of the so-called 'third wave' of democratization, and includes transitions from authoritarian rule in Latin America and from state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. Gender outcomes were also affected by changes in the global context, including the construction of international norms about women's rights, largely as a result of the activities of global women's movements; and these were also reflected in the actions of some international and regional organizations.

Most of the case studies are drawn from two regions. The bulk of the case studies of transitions from authoritarianism come from Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador) and the case studies of transitions from state socialism are drawn from Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland), with one other country—South Africa providing an example of an insurgent transition from authoritarianism—included to increase the variation on the dependent variable (with El Salvador as its matched pair). I also make reference to two other countries—Peru and Russia—as comparator cases, as their transitions are seemingly in the 'grey zone' of those hybrid regimes that are neither fully authoritarian nor fully democratic polities.

Concurring with the claims of other democratization theorists who have undertaken this type of comparative analysis, I argue that an overarching analysis of this kind is useful for a number of reasons. An exposition that considers commonality and diversity in a range of contexts need not sacrifice empirical richness. A single (or perhaps jointly) authored study can explore major differences and similarities between cases more easily than edited collections, which tend to use separate case studies written by country specialists. It can also go beyond the sorts of analyses undertaken by monographs devoted to a single country.¹

The empirical material for this study is drawn from both primary and secondary sources accumulated during fifteen years of research on these themes. The primary material was collected during periods of in-depth research in Chile, Argentina, Peru, and South Africa as well as during short research visits to Hungary and the Czech Republic undertaken from 1991 onwards. As will become clear in the succeeding parts, this book has also benefited hugely from the ever-growing body of work on democratization. I have drawn extensively on the valuable work on gender and transitions that has been influenced by both the gender and politics and the democratization literatures. The majority of the gender and transitions literature produced to date can be categorized as falling within two of the four streams of the comparative politics research cycle (Mazur 2002: 16). Both these—theoretically driven single country case studies and thematic edited collections that examine case studies from one or two regions—predominate (Alvarez 1990a; Jaquette 1991 and 1994; Funk and Mueller 1993; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998b; Sperling 1999; Friedman 2000; Gal and Kligman 2000; Rai 2000; Hassim 2005). Some articles also appear in gender and area studies journals and a few are found in mainstream comparative politics journals (Einhorn 1991; Gal 1994; Friedman 1998; Gaber 1999; Franceschet 2001 and 2002; Jaquette 2001; Baldez 2003). Indeed because of the interdisciplinary nature of many gendered analyses, some influential work—often focusing on the nature and identity of particular women's movements—is more closely allied with a social movement perspective (Schild 1998).

This book aims to go beyond this existing literature and contribute to the small but growing body of work that falls into a third stream of the research cycle: hypothesis testing using two or more cases and the comparative method (Macaulay 1996, 2006; Baldez 2003; Htun 2003). It will therefore help us to discern any broad patterns that might contribute to the fourth stream of the research cycle that leads to theory building. Inevitably many of the ideas and arguments expounded here are the result of analysis and reflection I have undertaken over a long period and their development can be traced through my writings on various aspects of this topic (Waylen 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2007). But the analysis expounded here does represent a significant extension and as well as a consolidation of this thought and research.

Two methodological assumptions therefore underpin this endeavour. First, it is possible to develop a comparative framework for the gendered analysis of transitions that is clearly situated within the discipline of comparative politics. Second, the concepts and approaches developed both within the mainstream and the gender and politics literatures can both be used in such an analysis. In this, my approach concurs with other feminist political scientists who argue that, within certain well-defined limits, gendered comparisons are not only possible but also desirable (Beckwith 2000; Mazur 2002; Baldez 2003).

As this book was completed only ten years or so after the high watermark of the third wave of democratization, it cannot be a conclusive exploration of all the major factors that should be taken into account in any study of gender and transitions. Because it focuses on eight transitions that took place before the third wave's peak and are recognized to have made the transition to some form of democracy—however imperfect—there are areas that the book does not consider. It does not explore the recent (often apparently ill-fated) attempts to establish democracy in (post) conflict situations such as Afghanistan and Iraq that result from externally imposed regime change. Nor does the book provide an extensive analysis of the 'grey zone' of hybrid regimes or electoral authoritarianism except in its use of two comparator cases: Russia and Peru. It also does not examine the 'colours' revolutions that have taken place in parts of the ex-Soviet Union. Nonetheless, while it does not address these events and cases directly, I would argue strongly that the themes and issues explored in this book are relevant to their analysis. I take up some of the wider issues pertinent to all these cases in the conclusion. Although it cannot provide definitive answers to all the questions that it poses, I intend this book to be useful to other scholars engaged in examining similar issues in these and other contexts. It is my hope that it will provoke further debate and the continuing refinement of the literature on gender and transitions.

♦ NOTE

1 I am thinking here of the work of scholars like Larry Diamond (1999) and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996).

♦ PREFACE

❖ Acknowledgements

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GW

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Part I ❖ Analysing Gender and Transitions

The 'third wave' of transitions from non-democratic rule has been one of the most important global political developments to take place since the 1970s. Beginning in Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, and Greece), continuing in Latin America in the late 1970s and 1980s, and climaxing in the dramatic collapse of state socialism in East Central Europe in 1989 before continuing in parts of Africa and Asia, transitions have transformed the political landscape (Huntington 1991). Therefore while there were only 39 electoral democracies in 1974, by 1998 the figure had reached 117 and had only increased to 119 in 2005 as most transitions took place in the late 1980s/early 1990s (Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org). Some of the triumphalism evident at the height of the third wave in early 1990s has dissipated as many democracies are of a low quality and a number of states have either suffered 'reversals' or outcomes in a 'grey zone' often more akin to electoral authoritarianism than democracy. And at the same time political transitions have not brought an end to underlying social and economic problems. However despite some disillusionment with these outcomes a decade after the age of transitions was largely over, there is no denying the importance of many of these changes (Plattner 2005: 5). Inevitably the range of different transition paths and their varied outcomes has also spawned a large and diverse academic literature that has dominated the study of comparative politics for nearly thirty years.

What roles have women played within this diverse phenomenon and what has been the impact of transitions on gender relations? Although women's movements were not prominent actors in all transitions, in a significant number of cases, women organized as women did play an important part in the activities that helped to bring an end to non-democratic rule. And many women activists were keen to ensure that women's claims were taken seriously in the post-transition phase. Yet disillusionment has frequently resulted. In a number of instances, it was felt that the promise of the earlier phases was not fulfilled. There is an apparent paradox. Why is it that some of the most active women's movements were unable to translate the importance of their pre-transition activism into greater gains in the immediate post-transition period?

For example in the oft-quoted Chilean case, women organized as women played an important role in the broad movement that opposed the Pinochet regime. They were active in human rights organizations, feminist groups, and shanty-town organizations. Women, many of whom were feminists and on the left, also organized prior to the 1989 elections to ensure that their demands were included in the manifesto of the winning centre-left coalition. Hopes were high when the new government took office and a women's ministry had been established. However for the first decade after the transition, change proved more difficult to achieve than had been anticipated by many activists and commentators. Legislation legalizing divorce only passed in 2004. Indeed some feminists have been sceptical about the significance of the election of Chile's first women president in 2005, seeing it as the result of prevailing political conditions rather than as a triumph for feminism. Michelle Bachelet's candidature allowed the ruling Concertación to appear to be offering something fresh and new—a woman President—without fundamentally altering its programme or organization (Franceschet 2005, 2006; Rios 2006).¹ What were the multiplicity of factors that contributed to these difficulties and how did they interact together?

Ten years after the high-water mark of the third wave, is a good point to stand back and reflect on these questions. This book tries to explain this apparent paradox and to understand the relationship between gender and transitions to democracy more generally. Central to the argument is the notion that it is not correct just to glibly assert that transitions are bad for women. Reality is much more complicated. Transitions can provide some opportunities. But if we want to understand these opportunities and under what circumstances some women can take advantage of them, we need to broaden our horizons. To explain complex outcomes, wide-ranging analyses of transitions to democracy that do more than examine women's movements and their interaction with institutions, are necessary. This book does more than simply 'put women back in' as a corrective to the absences in the conventional transitions literature. It also shows how gender is profoundly implicated in the processes associated with transitions to democracy.

Therefore the aim of the book is not just to understand why and under what conditions women mobilize as women during various stages of transitions to democracy, a theme that has been explored extensively in much of the gender and transitions literature to date.² Nor is it just to explore the relatively more neglected area of the relationships of those movements with institutions such as political parties and the state during the various stages of transition. But it is also to analyse the varying nature of gender outcomes in the post-transition period. This entails looking at the ways in which the politics and policies instituted in the post-transition phase of democratization are gendered (measured for example in terms of the numbers of women in representative institutions, gender policies, the role of women activists, and political parties); and whether these are linked to factors such as the nature of the non-democratic regime and the transition path.

♦ ANALYSING GENDER AND TRANSITIONS

This book therefore moves beyond the analysis of one key variable—the role played by women's movements which is a necessary but insufficient focus for any gendered analysis of transitions—to consider a broader range of themes, actors, and institutions. This first part of the book sets up a framework with which to analyse and explain the diverse outcomes of different gendered transition paths. These outcomes will be formulated in terms of women's descriptive and substantive representation together with certain key gender policies. Descriptive representation denotes the presence of elected women in parliaments and assemblies in numerical terms and the more abstract concept of substantive representation is the expression of women's interests, particularly in policymaking both by women in elected bodies and perhaps more significantly within other institutional mechanisms and structures (Mackay 2004: 101). The rest of the book is organized thematically into three further parts that cover both the processes and outcomes of transitions looking in some detail at women's mobilizations, the conventional political arena and policy outcomes.

Because of this broad focus, we will necessarily draw our analytical tools from a range of sources. We need to isolate those elements of the mainstream literature on transitions to democracy that can ground our analysis in a thorough understanding of how and why transitions take place and with what results. But given that, in common with most political science, this literature takes very little account of gender, we will also need to draw extensively on the burgeoning scholarship on gender and politics as well as the work that specifically addresses gender and transitions. Then we can outline the frame of reference, the concepts and hypotheses that we will use to examine transitions to democracy. The rest of this first part of the book addresses these issues beginning with a discussion of the gender and politics literature focusing primarily on the scholarship that has examined the national arena.

♦ GENDER AND POLITICS

Even if the majority of the mainstream political science literature has not taken their insights on board, feminist political scientists have made enormous strides in reformulating the basic concepts and theories as well as providing new analyses that are useful for our analysis of transitions to democracy. More than thirty years ago, feminist critiques of political science began to expose the gender-blind and inadequate nature of the discipline, both theoretically and empirically (Bourque and Grossholtz 1974; Randall 1987). They demonstrated that it rested on the gender-blind assumption that it was dealing with individuals but implicitly considered only the experience of men (Carroll and Zerilli 1993). This analytical exclusion helped to establish male political behaviour as the norm and to collude with the virtual exclusion of women from the public sphere. Feminists have long argued that as a result women's political roles have often been missed,