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## **The Role of the Transitional Leader: A Comparative Analysis of Adolfo Suárez and Boris Yeltsin**

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The role of leadership in transitional regimes is an issue that requires closer examination, given the ability of the leader to shape and determine the direction of the regime. This paper seeks to delineate some common features of leadership during such regimes and factors influencing the ability of leaders to manipulate and shift the direction of the process. To illustrate, the paper adopts a comparative analysis of the leadership of Adolfo Suárez (Spain) and Boris Yeltsin (Russia). It will be shown that, despite the different outcomes of these cases, there are clear similarities that point to the existence of a form of transitional leadership. Central to the paper is an adoption of the notion of structure and agency to determine the extent actors in this position can affect change within constraints faced.

**Keywords:** transition, Suárez, Yeltsin, agency, structuration, transitional leadership

The transitional period is one of instability and uncertainty, as actors seek to define the rules of the game and their position therein. Formal structures are seen as essential in providing a framework within which democratisation can take place, by generating certainty and stability.<sup>i</sup> This viewpoint, however, risks downplaying the importance of individual leaders in shaping the transition process by making democratisation appear formulaic. While these structures may constrain actors compared to the previous regime, their new and evolving nature gives actors greater scope for action than exists within a fully democratic system.

During this period it is likely that a leader will emerge to shape the process, although not necessarily to a predetermined endpoint. The ability of such actors to shape the

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emerging regime is enhanced by the changing character of the period; this makes it important to understand how such actors operate under such conditions. This paper identifies some of the key attributes of the transitional leader. The position put forward is that although Adolfo Suárez and Boris Yeltsin operated under different administrative systems, there are similarities that may allow for the development of a model of transitional leadership. These factors illustrate features that may be characteristic of this form of leadership, contributing to the further development of existing classification systems.

Spain under Suárez and Russia under Yeltsin were selected as case studies based on the fact that both experienced lengthy periods of non-democratic rule, and the respective leaders emerged from successful careers in the preceding regime. Spain emerged from an authoritarian regime and established a parliamentary system and Russia emerged from a communist regime to implement a semi-presidential system, it will be shown below these differences do not invalidate the comparison and indeed strengthen argument for consideration of the actions of the leader.

The paper is divided into three sections. First, it seeks to capture the core notions of leadership, transitions and the structure/agency debate. This will lay the ground for the idea of transitional leadership by locating it within a wider theoretical framework. It then moves to examine the actions of Suárez and Yeltsin respectively, identifying how they individually shaped the transition and structural features that may have limited their ability to act. Finally, the paper brings together the findings from each case to identify common features that may signify a specific form of transitional leadership distinct from more traditional forms.

### **Building the Framework and Locating the Transitional Leader.**

The study of leadership is complicated by the need to examine the actions of varied individuals within differing social and institutional settings. Despite this there have been attempts made to create classifications of leaders based on common behavioural characteristics. The division of leadership styles into transactional and

transformative by Burns (1978) is particularly useful in this sense. This distinction sees leadership either as a means of exchange or to “shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers” (Burns, 1978: 425). Leadership in both senses is more than simply power; it requires a sense of purpose and motivation to reach desired goals. While there are differing types of leadership, including charismatic, heroic, revolutionary, innovative, personal and individual among others (Elgie, 1995) the division between transactional and transforming is central to understanding transitional leadership.

The division between transactional and transformative leadership styles has subsequently been argued to be more complex than Burns originally set out. It has been claimed that a leader may exhibit just one, both or neither of transactional and/or transformative qualities (Sashkin and Rosenbach, 1993). The ability or desire of a leader to exhibit a transactional or transformative style of leadership may also change over time as situations change. Reasons for such change are varied, but may result from the loss of faith in the ability of the leader to effectively lead in the case of the transformative leader. The core component of transformative leadership is seen to be charisma, as the leader inspires trust and respect, which are used to encourage desired behaviours. The possession of charisma may provide a temptation to use it for self-serving ends, moving towards a form of transactional leadership. Alternately failure of the stated higher goal may lead to a loss of charisma and as result legitimacy in the eyes of his/her followers.

Political leadership entails the leader occupying a formal position and being able to affect the direction of events (Kellerman, 1984). Further to this it has been argued that political leadership is a form of leadership that implies the ability “to make others do a number of things (positively or negatively) that they would not or at least might not have done” (Blondel, 1987: 2-3). Central to these understandings is the ability of the leader to achieve change through the influence exercised over followers. This in turn requires that the leader possess legitimacy in the form of public confidence; without this he/she is unlikely to be able to introduce significant

change. The ability of a leader to act and the impact of decisions taken are also shaped by the operating environment. Environmental constraints range from custom and previous practice through to the administrative structure (Blondel, 1987), which can introduce constraints and provide opportunities. Agency of the leader is also limited by the agency of others, although this is determined by the relative strength of the actors involved (Dietz and Burns, 1992). Also important are the formal structures that the leader operates in, such as the issue of executive-legislative relations and the strength of the underlying bureaucratic structure. These structures can play either constraining or enabling roles, dependent on the relationship between goals being pursued and how these fit with the structures.

A successful transition to democracy is seen to consist of three key phases, each of varying length, describing the shift from non-democratic regime to functioning democracy (see for example: Haggard and Kauffman, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). First is the liberalisation phase where the regime opens the public sphere and lessens the use of repressive techniques. The next step is the actual transition, where the incumbent regime relinquishes (or is forced from) power and begins the introduction of democratic institutions. Finally, the transition is thought to be completed with the consolidation phase, the (re)introduced institutions and procedures become habituated and accepted by all participants securing the new system. However, the transition process is not guaranteed and it is possible for the transition to stall, go backwards or consolidate in a non-democratic form (McFaul, 2002a). Central to this process are the actions and decisions of leaders, as these set the priorities and direction of the transition process.

The transitional period is by its very nature a time of fluidity, the rules and structures of the preceding regime are removed and new ones are developed and implemented in their place. In addition, the transitional period can see a redefinition of agency, with actors seeking positions within the changing political landscape. Adeney and Wyatt (2004: 7) argue that the ability of leaders to guide change through periods of 'critical juncture' can explain the emergence of different outcomes. It has also been

noted that the success or otherwise of a leader must also be judged in the light of the decisions made and how these impact on the outcome of the transition (Pasquino, 1990). For these reasons it is important to understand the role of structure and agency in the transitional situation, if the interrelationship can be more clearly identified the process may be more stable and lead to more desirable outcomes.

The notion of structuration is useful in this context, as it sees structures as being internal to the actor, consisting of “some kind of ‘patterning’ of social relations or social phenomena” (Giddens, 1984, 16). While it is acknowledged that individuals are “knowledgeable agents”, it also notes that they act “within historically specific bounds of unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of their actions” (Giddens, 1995, 265). While there are external factors that place limits on the ability of the leader to act,<sup>ii</sup> much of the agency is determined by the actions of the individual leader. In terms of power relations, relations of autonomy and dependence, Giddens notes that an agent cannot be completely autonomous or dependent, with even the most dependent actor retaining some autonomy (1979). This points to the fact that no leader is free from constraints, while the nature of these constraints (and how they evolve) is to a large extent determined by the actions taken. Considering the effect of actions taken is particularly significant in the transitional situation, the scope for change is greater and the predictability of outcomes is greatly reduced. For this reason it is necessary to consider closely the actions of the transitional leader, to determine what effect these have on his/her ability to shape the transition while maintaining control in the face of opposition.

Drawing the connection between structuration and the transition process clarifies the issues leaders face during this time. As noted above, the very nature of the transition process means that there is a reduction in the strength of formal institutional structures, as these are altered and reshaped to meet the new situation. At the same time there is also an increased possibility of conflict, with participants seeing the uncertain future outcome as an opportunity to establish a better position.

In such circumstances the ability of the leader to establish clear rules and procedures, would seem to stabilise and enhance his/her ability to exercise agency. While this may limit the ability of the leader to act in the short-term, it can provide safeguards and certainty over the longer term, provided the boundaries are clear. Linking this back to structuration, it seems to confirm the notion that the leader is able to influence and shape his/her position in relation to both the structures and the outcomes that are achieved.

The core of the dilemma that faces the transitional leader is the need to simultaneously destroy and create. There are parallels in this process with the notion of creative destruction posited by Schumpeter in relation to capitalist development, “incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one” (1976, 83). This is exacerbated in the transitional situation, as the change required is far more extensive. The structures and institutions that characterised the previous system are removed and are replaced by new ‘democratic’ equivalents. The success of the leader (from the point of view of transition theory) is based on the ability to effectively introduce such changes, while ensuring that they are stable. This is where the notion of transformative leadership comes into the picture; the role of the leader is to introduce change that will effectively ensure a smooth transition in the operation of the system.

The focus of this paper is on the actions of the leader once in power, rather than on the events that led to the regime change. There is a need to consider the ability of individual leaders to shift the transition towards or away from consolidation through their actions. The challenge that faces the transitional leader is complicated, both externally, in the form of potential rivals and competing bodies, and internally, in the desire to exercise control over the political system and do away with potential challengers. Further to this, it has also been noted that institutions cannot and do not play a decisive role in democratic consolidation, they are more subject to revision than they appear (Alexander, 2001). The role of transitional leader is by its

very nature transformative, as it involves moving from one regime type to another, through the reforming of social and structural relations.<sup>iii</sup>

A key issue that arises through the paper, is to what extent a transitional leader can maintain a transformative stance. In particular, once the key features of the new political structure have been established there is a need for further change, as the leader must move from guiding the political system introducing new structures to working within those structures. Whether such a change is possible, or whether the leader instead becomes obsolete is an open question; if the leader continues to pursue a strategy of attempting to dominate the political system the outcome is likely to be less than satisfactory. This is the issue at hand with regard to the transitional leader: the necessity to fulfil the role of charismatic leader fostering and guiding change to that of leader in times of ordinary politics.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Adolfo Suárez and the Spanish Transition.**

Adolfo Suárez was clearly a transitional leader, as he oversaw and guided the transformation of the Spanish political system from a Francoist authoritarian structure to the beginning of a stable democracy. While the consolidation of democracy in Spain proceeded relatively smoothly, the outcome was far from predetermined. Much of Suárez' success, can be attributed to his construction of and support for formal institutional structures. In order to determine to what extent the change can be attributed to Suárez, it is necessary to examine his leadership style and the constraints he faced during his time in power. This section will briefly outline the core components of Suárez' rise to power and how he operated once there to effect change.

The appointment of Suárez in July 1976 followed a period of instability and uncertainty, his predecessor (Carlos Arias Navarro) had sought to liberalise while at the same time maintaining the core elements of the Francoist regime. Central to the failure of this attempt at reform, was the inability to deal with the conflicting demands of social forces and regime hardliners (Preston, 1986). In order to deal with



the tension, King Juan Carlos appointed a technocrat who was acceptable to those seeking continuation, yet was open to the necessity for reform. During the first phase of his leadership (prior to the 1977 elections) Suárez was charged with fulfilling the program of Juan Carlos (under advisement of Torcuato Fernández Miranda), aimed at moving away from the Francoist system (Preston, 2005). This relied on Suárez using the legitimacy bestowed on him, through the support of Juan Carlos, to shift the regime while not antagonising those seeking continuity.

During this initial period, Suárez began to reshape the political institutions and prepare the ground for the democratic regime. In order to ensure the legitimacy of the emerging political regime and his own leadership, he held talks with opposition leaders (including Santiago Carillo of the banned Communist Party) to show his intention to democratise (Hopkin, 2005). At the same time, he also sought to placate the hardliners within the regime, by working within the Francoist legal system. This period also saw introduction of a Law for Political Reform (December 1976), which reformed the appointed parliament (*Los Cortes Generales*) into a bicameral body with free elections (Pierson, 1999). The *Cortes* voted in favour of the reform, following modification of the aims of the legislation and the addition of guarantees regarding future employment (Maravall and Santamaría, 1986). That Suárez was able to introduce these reforms while satisfying both sides, would seem to indicate his political skill.

The other key change during this period, was the dissolution of both the political wing of the Franco regime (*Movimiento*) and the core feature of the corporatist structure (*Sindicatos Verticales*) (Maravall and Santamaría, 1986). Taken together, these actions signified a willingness on the part of Suárez to abandon the political structures that had raised him to the position he occupied, while introducing free and open competition within the altered political rules. His ability to do so has been linked to four specific assets: knowledge of bureaucratic structures; support of Juan Carlos; control over state resources; ability to exploit opposition divisions (Medhurst, 1984). Together these assets provided Suárez with the tools necessary to begin the

reform, while at the same time protecting him from challenges (with the King effectively controlling dissent within the military). The other asset Suárez possessed was his ideological malleability, which meant that he was not tied to the Francoist structures and was willing to search for the best option available (Heywood, 1996).

The 1977 elections saw a shift in the character of the regime and required a similar shift in Suárez' own approach. Leading the Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD - *Unión del Centro Democrático*), Suárez was able to gain a plurality, but not a majority in the *Cortes*. The core element of this period was the development of a Constitution to replace the Franco-era document. While the UCD maintained control over much of the drafting of the Constitution, it was still required to negotiate with the opposition parties to get the final draft approved. In cases of conflict between parties, much of the negotiations were conducted in informal meetings where leaders negotiated agreements and solutions to sticking points (Medhurst, 1984). In this way the Suárez government was able to develop a Constitution that fostered a sense of consensus, with only the right wing Popular Alliance (AP – *Alianza Popular*) and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV - *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*) refusing to ratify the final draft (Hopkin, 2005). This consensual style of leadership characterised the initial period, as the constituent groups worked together rather than risk polarisation.

Before moving on it is necessary to examine the political system within which Suárez operated, as this was a significant constraining factor on his ability to act. Having legalised political parties in 1976, he had opened the way for opposition parties to emerge and participate in the political system. As noted above, Suárez was required to operate in a consensus model and cooperate with the opposition parties. While the Spanish Communist Party (PCE – *Partido Comunista de España*) under the leadership of Santiago Carillo was willing to support his reform program (due to its precarious position and a desire not to upset regime hardliners), the other major parties were less constrained. Both Felipe González and Manuel Fraga, leaders of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE – *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) and the AP

respectively, were in a position to operate more freely in opposition to Suárez. This was seen in the negotiations over the Constitution, where González was able to negotiate concessions and Fraga used his position to refuse to give the support of his party (Hopkin, 2005). Although Suárez was able to negotiate with these actors, his position was weakened by the ad hoc nature of the UCD. Despite this, he was able to push through the reform program, relying on his authority to call on the support of the population (moving beyond the strictly political arena), although this was tempered over time as he struggled to deal with economic and security issues (in the form of terrorism) (Fusi, 1982).

Although Suárez was largely able to deal with constraints on his ability to act during the initial stages through negotiation and the development of consensual agreements, this changed following the 1979 election. This election saw support for the UCD fall, as the opposition parties began to establish a more stable presence. The fall can also be seen as the beginning of consolidation of the emerging democratic system, the associated norms were becoming accepted and embedded. The decline in the performance of the UCD has also been linked to Suárez' specific style, restricting the UCD to "the party of Suárez" (Fusi, 1982). Following the 1979 elections, parties of the right (AP) and the left (PSOE) sought to capitalise on the weakened position of the UCD and capture votes by moving towards the centre, signalling a shift from consensual to competitive politics (Hopkin, 2005). Faced with increasing pressure and reduced ability to act, Suárez moved towards a more transactional form of leadership, making deals in order to get his programme through.

The decline of Suárez, ultimately resulting in his resignation in January 1981, was largely the result of his inability to make the change from transformative to transactional leader. While he was able to function from a position of strength, where he negotiated terms with a divided opposition, he was unable to effectively operate within a normal political environment (Fusi, 1982). As the concerns of the population shifted away from the extraordinary politics that had characterised the

transition, to everyday concerns such as economic performance, Suárez became increasingly unable to perform and responded by becoming increasingly isolated. In this way, Suárez can be seen as characteristic of the archetypal transitional leader, emerging to shepherd the process but fading when the task was complete.

### **Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Transition.**

The role of Boris Yeltsin in the creation of the Russian Federation, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union was important. Although he did not remove the communist regime, he was responsible for reforming the institutions that had characterised it and introducing changes to move the country in the direction of democracy. His rise signalled a shift in the character of Russian politics, allowing the emergence of a strong actor under new rules. It also brought to power someone who was willing to use the means at his disposal, to gain control of and then shape the political system. This section seeks to outline the core elements of Yeltsin's tenure, focusing on the initial transitional period that ended with the introduction of a new Constitution in 1993.

Yeltsin can clearly be seen as a transitional leader, he emerged and challenged the existing structures and attempted to move the regime towards a democratic end. His ability to achieve this aim, was compromised by his inability and unwillingness to effectively use the position he had to introduce stability. The structure of the political system in the Russian Federation retained many of the features of that which had existed previously, centred on a strong parliament (Biryukov and Sergeyev, 1997). This was altered, when the Congress of Peoples Deputies (CPD) granted the President extraordinary powers for a period of one year, for the purpose of introducing rapid economic reforms. This change introduced uncertainty into the system; the new powers did not clearly specify the nature of the executive-legislative relationship, thus leading to a case of dual power (Dunlop, 2001). By complicating the relationship, the CPD had lessened the structural constraints on the actions of the President.

A core component of the Yeltsin presidency was possession of charismatic authority, which had been gained during the failed August 1991 coup. Charisma is an essential component of transitional leadership, as the leader inspires followers to accept and support the reform direction. In Yeltsin's case, the extent of his charismatic authority allowed him a significant degree of freedom to operate within the formal political system. This degree of freedom meant that his personality and beliefs loomed large as factors determining what decisions were made at the time (Breslauer, 2002). This would seem to fit within the notion of transitional leadership (albeit at the stronger end), as the President was able to use the uncertainty of the period to introduce what he saw as necessary reforms, calling on his charismatic authority for support.

The formation of a presidential-vertical structure, that directly challenged the power and authority of formal institutions and actors, also complicated the picture. This structure allowed the President greater freedom to disregard and distance himself from unwanted views and advice (Robinson, 2000). It has been noted that this effectively constituted a parallel government under the control of the President (Huskey, 1995). While this structure insulated Yeltsin from the criticisms of the other elements of the political system, it reduced his ability to work with these groups when required. It has also been noted that Yeltsin's refusal to engage with the parliament was compounded by the absence of political discipline, through the lack of political parties and the internal division of the centrist coalition (Breslauer, 1993). Together these features led to a polarised zero-sum approach to politics being adopted by participants, with submission to the will of the opposition (or compromise) seen as unacceptable.

The reform of the political system required during the transition was a complicated one, and required sequencing. Faced with a number of significant challenges in reforming the existing structures, the administration chose to address Russian independence and economic reform, rather than reforming the political system. It has been argued that had the administration chosen to focus on reforming the political system first, the conflictual relationship that emerged between the

executive and legislative branches may have been prevented (Dunlop, 2001; McFaul, 2002b). Yeltsin's decision not to identify with a political party and claim to be above politics, meant that he had little stake in the parliament or its decisions (Barnes, 2001). By distancing himself from the parliament and government, he ultimately undermined his standing by preventing the emergence of a parliamentary group willing to support the executive. Dunlop further argues, that if persons of roughly compatible viewpoints had controlled the parliament and presidency, a compromise may have been possible (2001).

Following on from the uncooperative nature of the relations between parliament and the presidency, the conflict that ended the First Republic of the Russian Federation can be seen in a clearer light as a continuation and escalation of an existing pattern, rather than as a distinct change in direction. The conflict between branches developed to such a degree that there was a constitutional deadlock, the President refused to give up the extraordinary powers that had been granted, and the legislature refused to recognise his desire to enshrine these powers in a new constitution. Neither branch was willing to step down and give the impression that it had submitted to the other (Shevtsova, 1999). Faced with this deadlock, the President took the extra-constitutional step of dissolving the parliament and introducing new constitutional rules. This action and the subsequent shelling of the parliament buildings, showed the willingness of the President to maintain power at almost any cost.

While the President was able to exercise almost total control over the drafting of the Constitution, he was unable to determine the outcome when elections were held. The President had moved from a position of strength, where he possessed support of both the legislative branch and the wider population, to one where these groups were against him (Shevtsova, 1996). The new Constitution created a form of super-presidentialism, where the divisions that had led to the downfall of the First Republic (absence of clear separation of powers) were replicated, with the President holding the balance due to his new formal powers (Colton, 1995; Dunlop, 2001). The fact

that he was unable to generate support in the election, subsequently losing control of the political system, clearly illustrates the point noted by Burns, power does not on its own equal leadership (1978).

The changed position of the President, confirms the notion within structuration theory that structure and agency are not mutually exclusive. While Yeltsin was faced with constraints, in the form of an antagonistic parliament, his actions created constraints that eventually led to the closing of opportunities to exercise the power he did have. By antagonising his opponents, he encouraged them to consolidate and over time find ways to challenge and undermine his position, limiting the extent to which he was able to rely on formal institutions. His reduced ability to act was clearly illustrated under the new Constitution, with the emphasis on “consolidation of gains, rationalisation of administration within the new structural context, political isolation of anti-system forces, and popular adaptation to the system as constructed” (Breslauer, 2002: 184). This was a clear shift away from structural reforms, highlighting the weakened nature of his position.

### **Transitional Leadership in Spain and Russia.**

Both Yeltsin and Suárez sought to accomplish both the destruction of the old system and the creation of a new one, although with very different degrees of success. Breslauer accurately notes, “[r]are is the leader who is able to succeed in both system destruction and system building” (2002: 263). This difficulty has been identified as the core of the dilemma facing the transitional leader, the need to simultaneously destroy and create. From the preceding analysis, it is clear that both leaders had an important role to play in shaping the transition to democracy. This section attempts to compare the impact each leader had on the transition process, as well as how this was enhanced/limited by the decisions they made during their time in power. The focus adopted seeks to illustrate how their actions identify a common form of transitional leadership.

The nature of the pre-transition regimes and the problems that arose from these are important determinants in the outcome of the transition process. However, these differences are not the sole reason for the outcome of the transition process. Both leaders assumed the leadership at a time when the transition was balanced between continuation of the preceding non-democratic regime (albeit in different form) and a move towards something new. The Spanish political system was emerging from a period of personalist authoritarian rule, with a strong desire for continuity among some elite groups. This acted as a constraining influence on Suárez, restricting his ability to introduce wholesale change. Yet, at the same time there was also pressure on him to introduce change, from both outside and within the regime. By contrast, Yeltsin operated with a greater degree of freedom; his role in the August coup had discredited opponents seeking continuation and granted him significant charismatic authority.

A key difference between the two leaders in the initial transition period, can be seen in their reaction to existing structures. By dismissing the structures out of hand, Yeltsin limited the opportunity for his challengers to use legal means, opening the way for extra-constitutional actions. The use of formal powers by the two leaders is an important point of difference at the core of the analysis. While it has been noted that Yeltsin faced a far more determined opposition than Suárez, it can be argued that this was a result of his actions (Heywood, 1996). Yeltsin relied on informal powers and sought to circumvent the formal structures, which presented the possibility that his actions may be restricted (Robinson, 2000). By relying on informal networks and charisma, Yeltsin undermined respect for the rule of law and limited the legitimacy that the regime was able to generate. This clearly contrasts with the Suárez regime, where the formal institutions and structures were respected and opposition groups were incorporated into the political system, although this was due to the presence of other actors with whom he was forced to negotiate. The significance of this difference is that Suárez' actions reduced the level of uncertainty and tensions, while those of Yeltsin exacerbated tensions in an already indeterminate phase.



Another feature that must be considered, in determining the ability of the leaders to shape the political system, was the form of the political institutions that each faced. Much has been made of the effect of presidential and parliamentary structures on the ability of a regime to move effectively to democracy (see for example: Linz, 1990; Linz and Valenzuela, 1994; Mainwaring, 1993; Shugart and Carey, 1992). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake a detailed analysis, it is necessary to consider the effect of different institutional settings. Suárez operated in a parliamentary system with a supportive head of state (Juan Carlos), he was also required to work with the legislature in order to get his reform program through. The effect of this was a more cooperative form of leadership, he was required to take into consideration the perceptions of other actors, their opposition would have reduced his ability to act. In Russia, the semi-presidential structure created a degree of ambiguity that Yeltsin was able to manipulate to his advantage. Although he was constitutionally subordinate to the CPD, amendments allowed him to gain a foothold and consolidate power, beyond the control of both the legislature and the government. This was formalised with the 1993 Constitution and encouraged actors to view the competition for power as a zero-sum relationship, with the strengthening of any group being seen as a loss by the other. In light of this, it is clear that the institutional structures determined (or at least provided the opportunity to determine) the nature of the relationship that developed. Each leader possessed significant power to shape the system; the difference was how they chose to use those powers in the relationship with the legislative branch.

Moving beyond the specifics of the cases and examining the underlying behaviour in terms of leadership, the picture becomes more complicated. While the two leaders possessed very different capacity to shape the system (with Yeltsin having far freer reign), there are some striking similarities that point to the possibility of a form of transitional leadership. Both leaders were able to generate a degree of charismatic authority from their position as Prime Minister and President respectively, they in turn used this to shape the emerging democratic system as they saw fit. While

Suárez operated within the structures that were being established and Yeltsin outside, their leadership paths appear to follow similar trajectories. Both leaders were able to introduce significant reforms in a short period of time, but as the transition progressed their ability to act became constrained by the context in which they operated. Suárez was restricted by the formal institutions, particularly the need to form coalitions to maintain power, while Yeltsin was restricted by the constant struggle for power.

Although the eventual outcome appears to be different in the two cases, with Suárez resigning in 1981 and Yeltsin holding power until 1999, this also masks similarities. Suárez was forced to resign from power due to his inability to deal with increasing economic problems and a rise in terrorist activities by ETA. Yeltsin was able to hold on to power and introduce a Constitution heavily weighted in his favour, but became increasingly impotent in the face of constant challenges. This would seem to indicate the inability of each actor to cope with the move from radical transformational politics of the initial transitional period, to the more stable politics of normal government. In the case of Suárez, it would also seem to indicate the relatively delicate position he occupied, with the emerging problems and growing strength of opposition overwhelming his position. It is the contention of this paper that this pattern is likely to be repeated in other cases of transitional leadership, as the leader struggles to make the change to something more akin to transactional politics as the need for structural reform is reduced.

The preceding analysis shows that the actions of the respective leaders were significant in shaping the transition process. This section has also indicated that, although they faced different issues and structures they still possessed similar abilities to shape the political system. It is clear that the degree of agency varied significantly across time and issue, but was still possessed by the leaders. The difference between the two, comes when the pattern of their actions is considered, with Suárez choosing to rely on and utilise formal institutional structures, while Yeltsin sought to circumvent them and change relations between branches into a

zero-sum game. It has been argued, along these lines, that one of the most important contributions of the transitional leader is to respect the rules of the game and place “‘systemic’ considerations above and before ‘partisan’ motivations” (Pasquino, 1990: 127). The analysis also seems to indicate, that where a leader works within the ‘rules of the game’, his/her ability to act is enhanced through the stability and certainty generated by the structures in which they are participating.

### **Conclusion.**

From the preceding analysis, it is clear that both Suárez and Yeltsin had important roles to play in shaping their respective transitions. It is also clear that both leaders adopted a different approach when dealing with the issues faced, this in turn shaped the outcome of the transition in each case. Despite this, there are similarities in their style of leadership that point to a form of transitional leadership. Using Burns’ conception of transactional and transformative leadership (1978), it is clear that both leaders moved to a more transactional form of leadership, as their ability to call on their followers to support the reform program decreased.

An important component of the leadership in both cases, was the way in which they engaged with other actors and institutions in the transitional political system. This can be tied to the relative success of the transition; Suárez’ willingness to work within the structures strengthened them. By contrast, Yeltsin chose to circumvent these structures, leading to polarisation and instability. The effect of this on leadership can be seen, Yeltsin was less able to rely on these institutions, while Suárez was able to use them to ensure his leading role. These results illustrate the ability of individual leaders to strengthen (or weaken) their ability to operate, by shaping the environment within which they operate.

Transitional leadership is also significant, given the apparent failure of these leaders to adjust to the normalisation of politics. Where the transition moves to consolidation and the need for substantial reform is no longer necessary, there is a need for the leader to adjust. In both cases, the leader was unable to make the

change while maintaining a transformative leadership style and as a result withdrew to focus more on personal goals, becoming more transactional. It is necessary to conduct a more extensive review of transitional leadership to determine whether a similar pattern can be observed more generally.

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<sup>i</sup> See for example: O'Donnell, G. and P. Schmitter, (Eds) (1986) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Haggard, S. and R. Kaufman, (1995) *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Przeworski, A. (1991) *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reform in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Linz, J. and A. Stepan, (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Layder (1993) for example notes that structuration theory does not adequately address institutional constraints that lie beyond the direct control of the individual.

<sup>iii</sup> It has been pointed out that the leader may be little more than a figurehead in the transitional situation. While this is a valid observation the leader in this context is given greater freedom to operate due to the changing nature of the transition process.

<sup>iv</sup> The move from transformative leadership to something more normal is not an opposing binary relationship. The leader can remain a transformative leader or become something more akin to the transactional leader. However, the completion of the core tasks of the transition process means that the transitional leader must adapt to the changed situation and this seems to be the point at which problems occur. For a summary of the issue of binary choices in leadership see Collinson, 2005.

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