

2011

Democratization As Discursive Transformation

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Honors Project

Macalester College

Spring 2011

Title: Democratization As Discursive
Transformation

Author: Vera Sildova

DEMOCRATIZATION AS DISCURSIVE TRANSFORMATION:
Recovering Vaclav Havel's Vision for Czechoslovakia's Transition to
Democracy

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May 2011

ABSTRACT

The current literature has conceptualized democratization as a linear process of structural transformation whereby a state transitions from a repressive regime to a democracy. This thesis asserts that democratization cannot be reduced to a process of systems change. Through a rhetorical analysis of Vaclav Havel's speeches in the aftermath of the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, I demonstrate that the experience of democratization is rooted in historical and cultural resources and that local actors can offer valuable alternative perspectives on democracy. Embracing such alternative political imaginations is a way to democratize the concept of democratization itself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Macalester Professor and my fabulous thesis advisor Prof. Zornitsa Keremidchieva for her support throughout the entire research and writing process. Not only were her insights, feedback, patience, and sharp sense of humor at times of greatest need crucial in the development and completion of my project, but they extended the project's research beyond the realm of academics – into the realm of personal reflection.

This project opened a new window into Czech and Slovak history for me. I am deeply indebted to my parents Vera and Petr Sidlovi for sharing their views and experiences as well as allowing me the space to explore and investigate this complex time period of their lives through an academic lens.

My gratitude belongs to my friends, and many of Macalester Staff and Faculty. I would particularly like to highlight Eva Beal, Andrew Korb, Ariana Sankbianchi, and Dominika Seblova for their unconditional support, willingness to engage with Havel's ideas, and courage to challenge my interpretation. Their questions and thoughts allowed me to truly grow through the writing process.

Since the very first days of Macalester, my host family - Jim Hoppe and Mike Weckesser and their sons Grant and Cole – cared deeply about my college experience. Their generosity escalated during the final stages of this project, and made its completion possible.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Prof. Julie Dolan and fellow members of the Political Science Honors Colloquium for their timely feedback and a strong sense of community.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

In the spring months of 2011, we witnessed the spectacle of revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa. The media representations of the civil unrests show striking similarities to the ways in which democratization theories conceptualize democratic transition. Scholarly literature as well as the mainstream media tend to frame democratic transitions as a matter of success or failure. As a recent New York Times article stated, “This is a moment of great promise — and great risk — in the Arab world. Success is not assured.”¹ The polarized response, with its accompanying notion that there could be only two outcomes of transition, masks our ability to see these instances of civil resistance as opportunities to cultivate new visions and imaginations of what freedom and democracy might look like.

As the issue of democratization keeps coming up in our dynamic world, it seems like the more we learn about democratization and the more democratization finds its place in everyday language, the more mystified and uncontested our understanding of democracy becomes. It is as if each time we hear that a country ought to democratize or express joy that it is indeed democratizing, we affirm and reinforce models of democracy that are already in place. In doing so, we make a cultural assumption that one system — democracy — is a flawless way to organize society and political power. Democratizing

1 “Egypt’s Unfinished Revolution,” New York Times, March 24, 2011;

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/25/opinion/25fri2.html?_r=1&scp=6&sq=arab%20promise%20revolution&st=cse (accessed March 31, 2011).

countries share a crucial similarity with existing democracies, that is the desire for free public life. However, the understanding of how freedom ought to be institutionalized and lived out, is by no means universal. The decisions and ideas of what ought to constitute a new political environment following a repressive regime are grounded in culture, history, memory, and experience, and are thus unlikely to produce the same vision as those of already existing systems.

Yet, democratization theorists have to a large extent reproduced the cultural assumptions of Western-style liberal democracy, and subsequently characterize the democratization process as a linear progression from point A – a repressive regime, to point B – a Western-style democracy. Our scholarly and media eyes look for familiarity around the world, hoping to recognize Western-style institutions and modes of thought. Furthermore, as my literature review will demonstrate, the available democratization theories are largely void of the voices of those involved in the transitions. Yet, to study democratization in an open-ended manner should admit the imperfection of existing democratic systems, and embrace the opportunity to learn from societies that are forming systems based in freedom. In other words, we need to investigate and challenge the cultural and social biases democracy carries when exported or studied in a foreign context.

My thesis aims to connect democratization theory with the lived experiences of transition. Attention to the discursive constitution of the democratization process should reveal a culturally-grounded understanding of freedom and enrich our understanding of what it takes for a society to move forward from a repressive regime. A discursive

approach constitutes not only a more contextualized view of democratization in any given place at a particular time, but also serves as a critique of the dominant models of democratization and creates space for an alternative understanding of the substance of democracy and democratic life. In other words, it allows us to recover and take seriously the voices, and therefore, political and theoretical agency of those on the ground and at the helm of democratic transitions.

In this project, I am motivated by the desire to explore how democratization and democracy have been envisioned, experienced, and understood by societies undertaking this political transformation. More specifically, my study responds to the research question: "What ideas and insights can be gained from Havel's rhetoric in the early stages of Czechoslovakia's transition to democracy that may enrich and/or modify the way our currently scholarly literature understands the process of democratization?" In order to answer my research question, I turn to a set of selected speeches delivered by former Czechoslovak president Vaclav Havel during his first year in Office. I approach the speeches less as examples of strategic political communication, and more so as artifacts of living political theory. In doing so I heed the call of rhetorical scholar James Arnt Aune who suggests that scholars should "view public address documents for what they really are: concrete instances of political judgment, embodiments of political philosophy."² At the dawn of a new era for Czechoslovakia, Havel, along with the rest of the country, had to consider the basic questions of political philosophy: what is a state, what is a democracy, and what does it take to turn the idea of a democratic state into a

2 James Arnt Aune, "Public Address and Rhetorical Theory," in *Texts in Context: Critical Dialogues on Significant Episodes in American Political Rhetoric*, ed. Michael C. Leff and Fred J. Kauffeld (Davis, CA: Hermagoras, 1989): 49.

reality. My project accounts for this moment of profound political discernment. I aim to contribute to the current literature on democratization by taking stock of the ideas that emerged during this period of transition. By taking these ideas seriously, I believe, we can enrich not only our understanding of what democratization is or how it happens, but also our political imagination about what it could be or needs to be.

In my study, I find three key ways in which Havel challenges some major theoretical postulations of the available socio-scientific and theoretical literature on democratization. First, in contrast to the dominant models of democratization, Havel does not understand transition as a temporally-bound linear process. Instead, he posits a dynamic, continuous process of social renewal. Second, the space of transition is not defined by the territorial and legal boundaries of the state as the literature suggests; instead for Havel transition occurs in the psycho-social and cultural layers of public life. Third, Havel's rhetoric challenges the literature's assumption that democratization is a script that needs to be adopted from outside. By utilizing mythic narratives, Havel instead illustrates that Czechoslovak society possesses collective agency for the transition, and its historical experiences with political transformations endow it with relevant cultural resources. Together, the speeches reveal that democratization is not simply a process of changing systems and institutions; rather it requires greater societal transformation.

1.1. Czechoslovakia as a Site of Transition

Why turn our attention to Czechoslovakia and Havel's ideas for the sake of furthering our understanding of democratization? The answer may seem simple: in the context of Central and East Europeans' struggles to overcome the legacies of communism, Havel emerged as a unique and clear voice with a unique and clear vision. His rhetoric, however, cannot and should not be disconnected from the discursive terrain of Czechoslovak society. Therefore, a brief recount of the historical and geopolitical context in which Havel spoke about the meaning and purpose of democratization is warranted.

Czechoslovak identity as a state and a nation had always been tenuous. Czechoslovakia first gained statehood in 1918 when it separated from the Habsburg empire. The first democracy, the so-called First Republic, lasted from 1918 until the Nazi invasion of 1938. The first president, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, is often credited with the establishment of the state and referred to as "Taticek Masaryk" (Daddy Masaryk). Unlike what his glorified status may suggest, Masaryk's focus on morals and civic democratic culture did not sufficiently address Slovak concerns within the bi-national state. While Czechs admired Masaryk, Slovaks perceived him as an embodiment of Czech superiority and insufficient integration of Slovaks in decision-making processes.^{3 4} Hence, Czechoslovakia's democratic heritage, although marked by pluralist society and elections, carried a cultural heritage of ethnic disputes.

3 Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1974), 120.

4 Misha Glenny, *The Rebirth of History: Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 27.

Czechoslovakia did not exist as a state during World War II. Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) were subsumed by Hitler's forces into a Protectorate of Nazi Germany, whereas a portion of Slovak territory enjoyed relative autonomy. The end of World War II. marked the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia, as Soviet-led forces liberated the country. During the "Victorious February" of 1948, the Communist Party gained power, and aligned itself with Soviet Russia, and is often cited as the start of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. The communist regime grew in power until the 1960s when the government attempted to liberalize its social policy under the slogan of "socialism with a human face". The policy was soon met with disapproval in Moscow, leading to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968. The following period, dubbed as the period of "Normalization" brought about increasing repression and persecution of dissidents. In this context, underground civil society groups began to form a resistance movement leading to the Velvet revolution on November 17, 1989 when students and artists went on strike and took to the streets effectively bringing down the communist regime.

What was the meaning of the Velvet Revolution? How could it be construed in light of Czechoslovakia's tenuous history? What was new and what was old about this event? Arguably Czechoslovakia has had many experiences of transition and transformation and like any other culture, it has made sense of and pushed through those periods with the help of historical narratives and mythology. Anthropologist Ladislav Holy argues that there are two dominant narratives of Czech history circulating in the culture, and that both emphasize different traditions in addressing national crises. Agency, the question of what drives and enables the society to move forward, has been

the primary difference between these two ways of framing Czech history.⁵ One side of the story posits Czechoslovakia as subject of history; the other one treats the nation as the object of history. While Czechs do not simply believe in one interpretation or the other, they associate each interpretation with certain characters from Czech history and with specific self-perception of agency. Thus the national imagination has long oscillated between a narrative of ownership and agency on the one hand, and a narrative of victimhood on the other. Which of these narratives would come forward could potentially determine the direction of transition.

The two different images of history could offer two distinct interpretations of the Velvet Revolution. In the first approach, the Revolution could be interpreted as a successful outcome of an open revolt by students, dissidents and organized citizens. The second approach could see the revolution as a product of favorable conditions in international politics, or more cynically as the triumph of western propaganda.

Indeed, many among the media, scholars, and the general public in the West saw the fall of the Berlin Wall as signifying the triumph of Western-style liberal democracy, and putting the final dent into the East-West Cold War competition. However, now that the Cold War divisions have faded, though not disappeared, we are better equipped to recover the voices of post-communist experience. Havel was one the most distinguished among those voices. Hence, the study of Havel's speeches and writings is not an instance of desperate nostalgia for the exhilaration of the Velvet Revolution; rather it is a journey

5 Ladislav Holy, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Transformation of Society*, (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127.

to recover the moments of 1989 as ones of culturally grounded experience as opposed to passive acceptance of Western triumph.

1.2. Vaclav Havel's Role in Czechoslovakia's Post-Communist Transition

Still, the contemporary response to Havel painfully mirrors the Cold War divide between the East and West. Many in the Western world praise and admire Havel for his leadership qualities, inspirational philosophy and a concerned outlook toward the world. In former Czechoslovakia, however, Havel's fame slowly dissipated as the populace became increasingly more disillusioned with the hardships of transition. In part, Havel's stern rhetoric of truth and morals lost its appeal in the face of long-term domestic political struggles, and hence today, domestic views on Havel fall nowhere near the Western admiration. Twenty years after the Velvet Revolution, Havel finds himself at an intersection of unpopularity at home and eternal glorification abroad. One of Havel's most crucial characteristics and contributions gets lost amidst these disagreements over his persona – the strength and theoretical originality of a local voice for freedom.

Havel contributed to the resistance movement in former Czechoslovakia in a variety of ways. In the 1960s, he was an editor of a small radical magazine and the chief spokesman for the non-communist faction of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union.⁶ In the 1970s, Havel orchestrated two written manifestos – *Several Sentences* and the much larger and controversial *Charter 77* - calling for the return to fundamental civic

6 Paul R. Wilson, "Vaclav Havel in Word and Deed," in *Critical Essays on Vaclav Havel*, ed. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz and Carey Phyllis (New York: Twayne, 1999), 23.

freedoms.⁷ After founding the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted in 1978, Havel was imprisoned for four years for “subversion.” In the 1980s, Havel got involved in the Civic Forum, a non-communist opposition group, pressing for a regime change. Evidently, Havel was by no means perceived as a neutral figure. On the contrary, he was perceived as the leading character of the opposition movement and enjoyed popular support especially in the weeks following November 17th, 1989, as Czechs took to the streets to commemorate protesters beaten by the police. In my thesis, I turn to Havel, for his voice incorporates resistance as well as vision.

As the voice of the Velvet Revolution and its aftermath, Havel faced multiple rhetorical challenges. At the point of the Velvet Revolution, Havel's audience posed two key constraints on what he could talk about or say.⁸ First, the Revolution was primarily led by students who organized public demonstrations in the late 1980s. As Sharon Wolchik suggests, “[Those born after the Soviet invasion in] 1968 felt a strong sense of alienation from the communist regime.”⁹ Young people provided the energy and fuel for the transition; yet their drive and imagination for the future had to be reconciled with the expectations of the rest of the population. Any instance of a revolution poses many challenges to a society, for it is abruptly faced with the unknown. To mitigate the fear of transitioning into the unfamiliar, Havel would have to portray the revolution as coming from the roots, and as an innate desire of the nation. He would have to activate the

7 Vaclav Havel, Karel Hvizdala, and Paul R. Wilson, *To the Castle and Back* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 53.

8 Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14.

9 Sharon Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society* (London; New York: Pinter, 1991), 212.

nation's cultural resources through which the future could be made sense of and embraced.

A second important challenge for Havel was that the majority of his audience had no extant memory of living in a democratic system. Many of them were born during the period of Normalization that is arguably the most oppressive period in the history of the totalitarian regime. Havel had to find a way to portray democratic values as innate to Czechs and Slovaks. He would have to recognize the fear of the unknown present amidst the audience and draw on the cultural resources and images of Czech and Slovak history to foster a sense of courage and to further the idea that democracy was a core Czech and Slovak value. The Velvet Revolution would have to be owned by everyone and the future's promise would have to be embraced by everyone. In other words, if from the outside the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia looks like a part of a larger series of events in Central and Eastern Europe, post-communism and the transitions it unleashed would be experienced with intense communal intimacy and would have to be driven by local cultural and social understandings.

Havel's rhetorical feat in navigating the transition and the breadth of his political imagination, however, can only be fully appreciated when juxtaposed with the now dominant models and understandings of democratization. For this reason, this thesis proceeds in three main steps. In chapter 2 I offer a literature review that examines in more detail the models and theories that currently dominate the scholarly literature on democratization. I point to particular questions and areas for research that a study of Havel's rhetoric can speak to. Next, in Chapter 3 I lay out my objects of study and

provide a justification for my methodological approach. In Chapter 4 I present my analysis of Havel's theory of democratization. I conclude by highlighting Havel's contributions to our understanding of democratic transition and point to their continuing and crucial relevance in a global political environment where democratization remains an urgent and critical issue.

CHAPTER 2. Literature Review: For Whom Democratization Tolls?

How do societies transition from one mode of governance to another? And more specifically, how does a transition from a non-democratic regime to a democratic system occur? These are the questions driving the scholarship on democratization within the field of political science. Emerging predominantly from the sub-field of comparative politics, the study of democratization has generally followed a social scientific script in which the development of a sophisticated, multi-dimensional model of democratic transition becomes the goal. In other words, the socio-scientific imagination guiding the study of democratic transition is focused less on understanding the local conditions of any specific case of democratization but more so on creating a complex and coherent theory of democratization that accounts for as many variables as possible for the sake of creating a recipe to guide future cases.

We have to ask the question, then, who is democratization theory meant to serve? As the following literature review will reveal, the study of democratization is often conducted by outsiders, by scholars who have little personal affiliation with the transitional societies they study. This aspect of democratization theory is consistent with its socio-scientific roots which value presumed objectivity. Similarly, the consumers of democratization theory are predominantly Western institutions of expertise such as Western academia, think-tanks, and policy institutes, which too are not the primary agents of democratization but are outside observers or agents of influence.

Democratization theory, therefore, has to be understood as an exercise in modeling, in

constructing an image of transition that can then be applied prescriptively from outside to new political situations as they arise. Democratization theory, as it has emerged in the field of political science, in other words is not democratic—it neither represents, nor does it listen to, the voices of those who experience and imagine the transitions of their own societies.

Yet, like any other study, my project can only find relevance in a conversation that has already begun. My own interest in Havel's understanding and vision for Czechoslovakia's transition is both motivated by and aims to add to the ongoing study of democratization theory. So in this literature review, I explore the key insights and assumptions of democratization theory and consider their relevance for the case of Czechoslovakia's transition. I then locate the areas where democratization falls short and the questions which democratization studies have been less equipped to address due to their methodological limitations. Those areas of study and theoretical questions open the space for my own project. Specifically, I point out the areas of democratization theory that can be enriched and modified by a consideration of Havel's politico-theoretical imagination and his vision of democratic transition. I also make a case for approaching democratization as a grounded, discursive process that requires close attention to the local rhetorical construction of the transition.

2.1. Social Scientific Approaches to Democratization: Modeling Democratic Transition

The literature on democratization has been growing; however, it remains a fragmented field of study.¹⁰ The theoretical study of democratization has largely originated in the field of comparative politics, where regional “waves” of transitions such as those in Latin America, Southern Europe, and Eastern Europe have been studied. The primary objective of cross-regional and intra-regional comparative studies has been to identify variables that might play a role in a transition. These variables are then added to aggregate models of democratization which aim to represent the process of moving from a repressive regime to a democratic one.

The post-communist transitions in Central and Eastern Europe have not been a primary object of study, though they have been used to enrich the available socio-scientific models of transitional democracy. As long as modeling is the object of democratization theory, each new case of regime change can yield new dimensions and determinants to be considered. So why would the particularities of Central and East European matter for the democratization literature? Could they be of interest because, as Pridham and Vanhanen point out, the fall of communism in the region sparked a dual transition as the states' efforts to build a democratic system of governance were simultaneously accompanied by a transition from a centrally controlled economy to a market-driven model?¹¹ Pridham seems to suggest that those cases matter less for

10 Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen, “Introduction,” in *Democratization in Eastern Europe: Domestic and International Perspectives*, ed. Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

11 Pridham and Vanhanen, “Introduction,” in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*,

disturbing or enriching the political imagination of democratization theory. Rather, the study of these cases has made a more mundane contribution, that of bringing the field of democratization theory together.¹²

It is important, therefore, to consider what are the key insights of democratization theory so far and to identify the central questions guiding the field. So what does it take for a society to move toward a democratic system of government? A survey of the literature reveals that there are two ways of approaching this question. These two threads in the literature, though related, seem to ask slightly different questions. The first thread features structural models of democratization. Scholarship within this area has been concerned primarily with identifying and describing the institutions, regulations, and governing practices essential for the creation of a democratic system. The second thread is somewhat less concerned with the institutional infrastructure of a democratic system and more interested in the way the system is inhabited. Such scholarship focuses on the role of civil society in democratization and it aims to develop models for political participation in transition. The following sections provide some more detail on these threads in the democratization literature.

2.1.1. Structural Models of Democratization

There seems to be a strong presumption in the democratization literature that states and not societies per se undergo transitions. Structural models of democratization

4.

¹² Pridham, "Democratic Transitions in Theory and Practice," in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 16.

often position the state as the primary terrain and tool of political transformation. For them democracy is essentially a state system. For example, in their large volume on democratic transition and consolidation, Linz and Stepan assert that a state presents an essential pre-condition for a democracy. For them,

Democracy is a form of governance of life in a polis in which citizens have rights that are guaranteed and protected. 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.¹³

In this perspective, democracy is a dynamic of state formation. It is marked by the development of structures and procedures that define the roles, privileges, and duties of citizens. Democracy, is in essence, treated as a system of government, a network of institutions and regulated practices.

So what should a democratic state system look like? This question is the subject of much debate in the democratization literature and it betrays a key assumption of such scholarship, namely, the assumption that democratization is a linear process of transition toward a fixed, identifiable, singular model of government. Some scholars are more alert than others as to the political philosophy underwriting their models of democratic systems. For example, Rengger identifies two types of democracy that have been posited as the end-goals of transitions: Standard Liberal Democracy (SLD) and Expansive

¹³ Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 10-11.

Democracy (ED). Unlike Kaldora and Vejvoda who draw the line between these two models on the sphere in which democratic activity is grounded (institutionalization vs. civil society), Rengger explores the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the democratic system that is being advocated for. For him, Standard Liberal Democracy situates the individual self as a pre-political subject the interests of whom are mediated through the democratic process in order to cope with the clashes occurring between individual interests.¹⁴ Expansive democracy positions the individual's interests as malleable and negotiable with communitarian interests in mind.

Although the presence of ED in certain contexts has been acknowledged, the literature does not offer a transitional understanding on how a particular experience of a repressive regime would lead to yielding an alternative to SLD. In other words, neither one of these models of democracy - Standard Liberal Democracy or Expansive Democracy - can be linked to the experiences or imaginations of any one transitional society. Rather, they appear in the literature as the result of the institutional practices of the democratization scholarship itself - the detachment of its theoretical roots from the experiences and voices of transitional societies and the institutionalized hegemony of western liberal understandings of democracy.

Consequently, calls have been made for the creation of more nuanced understandings of the structural and dynamic features of a democratic system. For example, Kaldor and Vejvoda suggest that democratic systems can be divided into

14 N. J. Rengger, "Towards a Culture of Democracy: Democratic Theory and Democratization in Eastern and Central Europe," in *Building Democracy?: The International Dimension of Democratization in Eastern Europe*, ed. Geoffrey Pridham, Eric Herring and George Sanford (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 61.

formative and substantial. A formative democracy is comprised of rules and procedures for government. By contrast, substantive democracy constitutes “a process that has to be continually reproduced, a way of regulating power relations in such a way as to maximize the opportunities for individuals to influence the conditions in which they live, to participate in and influence debates about the key decisions that affect society.”¹⁵ The definitional approach of Kaldor and Vejvoda’s model, however, tells us very little about what it takes for a society to bring into action one form of democracy or the other.

An example of a more constitutively dynamic structural model of democracy can be found in the work of Pridham. Pridham proposes a state-society model of democratization. Although constructing a liberal democracy remains to be the end goal of democratization, Pridham's approach offers a more dynamic theoretical lens through which transitions can be understood. For him, three components figure as important variables in a democratic transition – state-level institutions and procedures, societal actors and their involvement in the process, and inter-group relations that includes relationships between different actors (e.g., political elites, military, etc.).¹⁶ It is the interaction between these variables that allows for a transition to a democratic system. Pridham analyzes the Southern European transitions through the state-society model, and assesses the degree to which the variables in his model could be applicable to Eastern European transitions. However, at the time of his work, many Eastern European transitions were still in their beginnings, hence drawing firm ties about the nature of

15 Mary Kaldor and Ivan Vejvoda, *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe* (London; New York: Pinter, 1999), 4.

16 Pridham, “Democratic Transitions in Theory and Practice,” in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 20.

transitions vis-a-vis their outcomes would have been premature. Still, it is important to note that Pridham's model provides space and a role to societal actors and groups. Thus, the model is potentially more open-ended and seems more attuned to local cultural and social conditions.

The utility of modeling as a tool of democratization theory, however, is not without limits, especially if prediction is the goal. However, instead of abandoning modeling as a methodological choice, the literature seems to have only further intensified the search for variables and structural preconditions to determine the trajectory and outcome of a transition. Tatu Vanhanen's evolutionary theory of democratization is an example of this type of predictive modeling. Vanhanen created several variables – such as the Index of Power Resources or Index of Democratization – to assess a country's level of democratization. Vanhanen's model represents a Darwinian notion of politics, in so far as it assumes that political actors compete for power in order to secure scarce resources. Democratization occurs when the power has been distributed among so many actors that no single group maintains a monopoly over resources.¹⁷ It ought to be noted, however, that none of these variables account for historical or cultural variation, since Vanhanen's evolutionary theory presumes that the struggle for resources constitutes an essential characteristic of human nature.

Driven by a similar desire to identify and operationalize the key determinants of a democratic system, Vanhanen and Kimber's provide an evolving quantitative framework for illuminating the relationship between various socio-economic factors and level of

¹⁷ Vanhanen and Kimber, "Predicting and Explaining Democratization in Eastern Europe," in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 63.

democratization. Different statistical incarnations of their model yielded slightly conflicting results and a re-structuring of the variables allowed for better prediction of the 1989 transitions. Their findings show that while democratization cannot be predicted solely on the basis of socio-economic conditions, those conditions limit and constrain the democratization process.¹⁸

Efforts to grasp the nature of democratic transitions through attention to the structural elements of state systems invariably fall short. They do so despite their exhaustive attention to structural details and despite the sophistication of their modeling techniques. Rather, they fall short because by its very nature, as some of the scholars in this area themselves admit, democratization is a dynamic process contingent on the actions of those who inhabit the transitional state system. The attention, therefore, has turned to the models of participation that can drive a transition toward democratic government.

2.1.2. Participatory Models of Democratization

The second important thread of research on democratization has focused on the role that local participants can play in a transition. Such studies aim to evaluate the significance and differentiate between different types of political actions. Most of the studies in this thread locate the participatory dimension of democratization within the concept of civil society. Civil society is the link that political theorists posit between the structures and subjects of a democratic system.

¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

Civil society matters not only for putting democratization in practice, but also for legitimizing it both internally and externally. By tracing civil society developments in Poland and former Czechoslovakia from 1970s until the early 1990s, for example, Glenn introduces the “civil society master frame” model through which we can access domestic and international context simultaneously. For him, civil society navigates the potential and constraints of domestic and international political opportunities. It does not constitute a measurable dimension of democratization, rather it constitutes a fluid body of political mobilization that articulates broad concerns regarding regime change.¹⁹ Civil societies deploy “frames” - a set of claims responding to key political opportunities facing them – that in turn influence their pathway to democracy.

Unfortunately, Glenn is one of the very few democratization scholars to credit local actors for their creative power, for their ability to create culturally specific modes of understanding and implementing a democratic transition. The majority of studies focus instead on charting the rules, types, and modes for participation necessary for a democratic transition. Thus, they see participation only functionally, as yet another tool necessary to put some preconceived structural conditions in place so that an externally conceived and recognizable democratic system might ensue.

For example, a volume co-edited by Dawisha and Parrott offers a series of country-specific studies examining the role of political participation in achieving democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe. Collectively, the works of this volume highlight the premise that elite and mass political participation constitutes a key

¹⁹ John K. Glenn, *Framing Democracy: Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 50.

dimension through which the level of democratic consolidation can be assessed.

However, these studies share a minimalist definition of democracy: "Democracy is a political system in which [the] leaders of the government are chosen within regular intervals through elections [...] and other procedures, such as freedom of the press and assembly, that ensure real opportunities for electoral competition."²⁰ In such studies, participation is limited to electoral democratic politics. By investigating topics such as public attitudes, pluralistic party systems, electoral systems, and political culture, authors approach political participation in each case study in mid-1990s against the idea of a consolidated democracy. In other words, each study is not attuned to local conditions, structures, or understandings of democracy but it evaluates political participation against an ideal model of democracy. Thus, this co-edited volume represents a functionalist approach dominant in academic debates on democratization in that it relies on milestones and measures to assess overall progress and frames democratization as successful or unsuccessful.

The dominance of this approach, however, is not without its critics. Parrot identifies a limitation in functionalist approaches when he states that,

Care is also required in applying the notion of democratic transitions. ... It may be true that liberal democracy has become the prevailing model of modern politics in much of the world. But both historical experience and a priori reasoning suggest that a spectrum of possible post-communist outcomes still exists. This

20 Bruce Parrott, "Perspectives on Post-Communist Democratization," in *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

spectrum includes variants of democracy, variants of authoritarianism, and some hybrids in between.²¹

Although Dawisha and Parrott do not explicitly call democratization theory into question, the in-depth case studies featured in their volume highlight individual differences in pathways toward consolidation in each country. Many of these differences can be attributed to the creative and constitutive power of local actors.

Local actors, their actions, and not the least, their imaginations, need to be given more space in democratization theory. The rejection of a uniform democratization trajectory is further pursued by Glenn challenges the idea of an Eastern European “wave” of democratization more explicitly by positing that the idea of a “democratization wave” overemphasizes the importance of the external context (collapse of communism), and does not sufficiently consider the domestic political movements involved in democratization. Furthermore, his work addresses the assumption that the outcome of democratization processes is a “cookie-cutter” democratic system. Glenn argues that “differences across countries in Eastern Europe had consequences for the founding of democratic states that are otherwise obscured, most notably differences in the patterns of negotiation and mobilization that led to the creation of new political institutions.”²² This approach situates transition/reconstruction of the state at the intersection of the domestic context of each country and the greater international context of the end of the Cold War.

Glenn’s argument is important for this thesis because it disputes two ideas that often appear in democratization studies of post-communist transitions. These also happen

21 Ibid., 5.

22 Glenn, *Framing Democracy*, 15.

to be ideas that this thesis aims to challenge as well, though for reasons different from Glenn's. The first idea is that Eastern European countries began to build democracy from scratch. The significance of this notion is profound. It justifies the democratization literature's unassuming adoption of western liberal models of democracy as the only possible end-goals of a tradition and leaves little space for the creative power of local communities. Furthermore, it implicitly seems to suggest that for non-western societies democracy is somehow alien, and only an intensive intervention from outside could set them on the "right" track. The second idea that Glenn rejects is the notion that there is, can be, and should be a "pre-ordained path for democratization."²³ Like Glenn, I find this idea as simply undemocratic, because it once again leaves no creative agency to the subjects of transition. Unlike Glenn, however, I attribute the predominance of this idea to the methodological bias of the democratization literature. The socio-scientific approach to the study of transition with its reductive treatment of empirical evidence and its over-reliance on prescriptive modeling effectively de-populates the emergent democracies. Little local knowledge or desire is meaningful or necessary for a transition. Thus, the point of democratization studies, inadvertently perhaps, shifts from "how do societies transition to democracy" to "how can a democracy be imposed on a society." These fundamental critiques of the literature on democratization deserve a closer look.

23 Ibid., 192.

2.2. Shortcomings of the Socio-scientific Approach to Democratization

In sum, the democratization literature seems to have clustered around three key concepts – democratic transition, democratic consolidation, and democracy. *Democratic transition* refers to a process of regime change that occurs between the fall of the non-democratic regime and a state of affairs

when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative, and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies de jure.”²⁴

Transition is hence understood as a process of systems-change whereby the power previously located within a dictatorship or totalitarian regime has been distributed amongst the citizens through the adoption of rules and procedures.

Studies devoted to *democratic consolidation* are primarily interested in the way a democracy takes shape and takes hold in a society. The term “democratic consolidation” extends beyond the initial installation of procedures. Democratic consolidation is associated with a level of stability, as it refers to “the gradual removal of the uncertainties that invariably surround transition and ... the full institutionalization of the new democracy, the internalization of its rules and procedures and the dissemination of

24 Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 3.

democratic values.”²⁵ Therefore, democratic consolidation is the outcome of democratic transition.

The concept that is most fundamental to the democratization literature, however, is *democracy*. Yet this is also the concept that seems to be the least attended to. The democratization literature seems to simply presume that (a) there is such a thing as a democracy, (b) that a democracy can be created where it didn't exist before, and (c) that a transition to a democracy can be a rational, disciplined, linear process. Underlying these presumptions is an unreflexive allegiance of Western models of liberal democracy. These assumptions are fundamental limitations and drawbacks in theoretical approaches to transitions. Collectively, I would fault them primarily for not providing a lens through which alternative conceptions of democracy can be captured and analyzed.

In this section, I will elaborate on two critiques of the assumptions of democratization theories that this thesis seeks to address by turning to Vaclav Havel's conception of democratization. First, democratization theories apply a temporal framework to transition, identifying a clear starting point and a pre-determined outcome. In doing so, they approach democratization as an ahistorical process. Second, the democratization literature has conceptualized history and culture as static concepts that can be used only in order to make predictions about the success or failure of democratization. As a result the democratization theory seems ill equipped and even reluctant to take into account the cultural and historical legacies and discursive resources that make transitions dynamic, lived, and ultimately, democratic, processes.

25 Pridham and Vanhanen, "Introduction," in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 2.

2.2.1. Transition as a Linear Process

As suggested above, most research on democratization theory operationalizes the process of democratization as temporally confined by the end of a repressive regime and the installment of democratic rule. In order to recognize when the objective of democratization has been reached, Pridham and Vanhanen outline criteria that can be used to classify a democratic transition as completed,

Transition tasks involve, above all, negotiating the constitutional settlement and settling the rules of procedure for political competition, but also dismantling authoritarian agencies and abolishing laws unsuitable for democratic life.²⁶

In short, stable institutions and systems that ensure power distribution in society indicate the completion of the transition project.

Elaborating on the temporal aspects of democratization, Pridham argues for a linear framework that compartmentalizes transition into three phases – the inaugural phase, the constituent phase, and the completion phase. An assumption of Western-style liberal democracy and democratization as a strictly system-driven change remains palpable throughout Pridham's framework. The initial phase entails a commitment to redistributing power in a democratic manner including “at least, a [reasonably clear] strategic decision to opt for a liberal democratic type of system.”²⁷ The constituent phase consists of institutionalization of democratic procedures such as the constitution. A state

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Geoffrey Pridham, “International Dimension of Democratization” in Pridham, Herring and Sanford, *Building Democracy?*, 15.

enters the completion phase when the institutional and procedural aspects of democracy have been fully implemented and widely accepted by the citizenry.

By complying with a linear framework, such studies tend to articulate a dichotomy of success and failure, in which a country is either successful in fulfilling the democratic criteria, or it reverts back to authoritarian rule. Glenn argues that

[We] should not be studying “democracy” as a dichotomous variable (either present or absent) but rather democratization as a continuous variable (as processes by which the relationship between the state and its citizens changes through the holding of free elections, the creation of accountable political institutions, and the guaranteeing of freedom of association and the protection of civil rights).²⁸

This approach disrupts the linear understanding of democratization, but does not sufficiently challenge the time-bound aspect of democratization theory.

Although a linear understanding of democratization may initially appear intuitive, the insistence on democratization as a fulfillment of criteria does not permit us to ask the question, “What does a society –given its historical and cultural context- expect after the fall of a non-democratic regime? What do they *imagine* ought to replace the repressive rule?” Instead, democratization theory *constructs* the key objectives of democratization and neglects examining these objectives within the context of the societal experience of transition. In a review essay on Eastern European transitions, Ghia Nodia notes a reluctance to engage the language of transition on the part of some authors. Instead, some

²⁸ Glenn, *Framing Democracy*, 10.

scholars have adopted the term “transformation” in order to emphasize the unknown outcome of the abrupt political changes in 1989.²⁹ A transformation approach lifts the pressure of “democratic expectations” and extends the metaphorical field of theory beyond functionalism and the genetic approach. Similarly, Ramet's definition of transition circumvents the assumption of establishing specific democratic institutions, for she conceptualizes transition as “processes that span the period of instability between the breakdown of a once stable political pattern and the attainment of a new equilibrium, a new stability.”³⁰ An alternative approach to the temporal dynamics of transition would pay attention to the way time is managed rhetorically. Consequently, one of the key elements I will seek to discover in Havel’s speeches is how he manages the time and timing of transition, how he makes meaning of the present, reins in the past, and makes the future seem possible.

2.2.2. The Problem of History and Culture

My turn to the rhetoric of Vaclav Havel also responds to a second problem with the available democratization literature. Democratization theory divorces the process of transition from the historical and cultural setting in which it occurs. The assertion that the primary goal of democratization is simply the installation of a new system renders the process ahistorical. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe manifested the potency of history at times of uncertainty in a number of ways - the rise of nationalist discourses,

29 Ghia Nodia, “Chasing the Meaning of “Post-Communism”: A Transitional Phenomenon or Something to Stay?” *Contemporary European History* 9, no. 2 (2000), 270.

30 Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Whose Democracy?: Nationalism, Religion, the Doctrine of Collective Rights in Post-1989 Eastern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 19.

appeals to democratic systems from the interwar period, and a call for a geopolitical as well as historical “return to Europe.”³¹ However, democratization theory has failed to incorporate these powerful manifestations of historical and cultural legacies and allow them to challenge its basic premises. Given that the dominant theoretical approaches to democratization stress the importance of prediction, historical aspects of transition fall victim to the larger socio-scientific framework, “The historical dimension is important in so far as it brings into play functionalist concerns while providing a necessary context to the transition itself.”³² In other words, the dominant democratization approach seeks to operationalize historical experiences into variables in order to strengthen the predictive power of functionalist methods and in the process, those experiences are fixed, externalized, and ultimately sterile.

By reducing key historical events to variables, the socio-scientific approach to democratization loses the capacity to engage with the ideas that those specific historical periods gave rise to. As a result, historical analysis becomes devoid of socio-cultural understanding of politics and governance, for it is viewed for correlational and causal links between specific structures. For example, scholars argue that countries that experienced democratic rule prior to the onset of totalitarianism are more likely to consolidate faster.^{33 34} These studies conceptualize “democratic experience” as the presence of interwar democracy and pluralistic party systems. In doing so, they treat this

31 George Sanford, “Communism’s Weakest Link – Democratic Capitalism’s Greatest Challenge,” in Pridham, Herring and Sanford, *Building Democracy?*, 202.

32 Pridham, “Democratic Transitions in Theory and Practice,” in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 17.

33 Andrew A. Michta, “Democratic Consolidation in Poland 1989,” in Dawisha and Parrott, *The Consolidation of Democracy in Eastern Europe*, 68.

34 Maurizio Cotta, “Building Party Systems after Dictatorship,” in Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*, 107.

experience as a static predictor, rather than a dynamic historical resource from which societies can draw during the transition.

Another example of the limitations of democratization theory's static conception of communal experience can be found in Michta who suggests that the presence of interwar democracy provides "historical legitimation" for the new democratic systems that began emerging in 1989. Michta's argument assumes a notion of history as a self-evident determinant of future events. Subsequently, such approach pays insufficient attention to how history is understood by the leaders of the emerging democracies and the citizenry at large. In other words, Michta's study does not provide an account of how historical legitimation occurs, and it is based in the assumption that past experience of pluralistic systems have inherent bearing on the forming of new democratic institutions.

The democratization literature thus does not treat history as a socially constructed phenomenon. For a richer understanding of the lived quality of historical discourse and its significance for political transitions, we need to look elsewhere. Nationalism scholars shed light on the relationship between experiences with past systems and democratization efforts by discussing the concept of political memory. In *Fantasies of Salvation*, Vladimir Tismaneanu pursues a project on the emergence and impact of political myth in the aftermath of communism in Eastern Europe. Tismaneanu's project departs from studying political actors and defined indicators of political progress, and focuses on the "spiritual reactions to the discomfitures of the transition."³⁵ Political rhetorics constitute a spiritual response to the abrupt political change. Discourses about the past, present, and future

35 Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 14.

derive their power from providing clear answers in circumstances of chaos and uncertainty, and as such are not inherently negative. In referencing myths as a particular discursive mode for addressing cultural identity, Tismaneanu points to the role of rhetoric in structuring collective experiences and political orientations. He states, “. . . myth [is not] a necessarily mendacious vision of reality but . . . a narrative that is able to inspire collective loyalties, affinities, passions, and actions.”³⁶ Therefore, attention to political rhetoric can be seen as a means to taking seriously how communal memories, historical tradition, and most importantly, political imaginations fill a political and ideological vacuum following the Revolutions of 1989.

Tismaneanu’s project points the way to an alternative approach to the politics and processes of democratization. It points to the dynamic, discursive underpinnings of political transitions. It is with this perspective in mind that I turn to the next section of my thesis in which I explain and justify my decision to explore democratization as a discursive process.

³⁶ Ibid., 15.

CHAPTER 3. Methodological Orientation and Object of Study

To address my research question, namely, what insights about the character of democratization can be gained from the rhetoric of local leaders, I analyze two speeches delivered by Vaclav Havel, the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia, during his first year in Office. Even though the period of transition can be operationalized and de-contextualized through the methodological approaches of comparative politics, the societies themselves do not treat transition as an abstract and purely structural phenomenon. To these societies, the transition was a lived experience characterized by much uncertainty and large-scale changes. Thus, the experience of political change became a part of public discourse and was narrated through existing resources. Whitehead suggests that “pre-existing democratic “memories” and traditions may well persist and retain the power to affect the course and content of an eventual re-democratization.”³⁷ Historical experience in and of itself does not serve as a legitimating factor for a new democratic order, but a thorough study of the way discourse constitutes the democratic system can expand the study of democratization beyond the notion of minimal democracy and the help us appreciate the process of transition beyond its linear conceptualization in the literature.

³⁷ Laurence Whitehead, “East-Central Europe in Comparative Perspective,” in Pridham, Herring, and Sanford, *Building Democracy?*, 34.

3.1. Methodological Orientation: The Discursive Approach

Together, the temporal conceptualization and lack of integration of historical experiences into democratization theory conceal the imagination of democracy and the democratization process on a society's own terms. I argue that these methodological limitations can be overcome by adopting a discursive approach to the study of transitions. In other words, if we wish to study the *idea* of democracy, how it is constituted, circulated, and reconstructed in a social milieu, we ought to adopt a method of study that allows us to access, investigate, and evaluate ideas. In this section, I will outline the discursive approach and discuss its potential contributions to democratization theory.

The study of ideas in political science has been problematic, as scholars often classified the role of ideas as supplementary to existing fields of research. According to Finlayson, ideas have been filtered out of political science as “statistical noise,” or used as additional evidence for instrumentalist arguments aimed at explaining political behavior.³⁸ Hence a thorough study of ideas has eluded the field, leaving it with over-reliance on models of political behavior, shielding away from fully understanding the structure, meaning and origin of arguments.

Determining the directionality between ideas and political events constitutes a chicken-and-an-egg problem in political science methods. Political science traditionally understands ideas as products of the environment and political events. Rhetoricians challenge this succession by arguing that the concepts embodied by ideas affect the subsequent political realities,

38 Alan Finlayson, “Political Science, Political Ideas, and Rhetoric,” *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (November 2004): 530.

In politics, ideas and concepts are not social scientific in nature: they are political. Their function is not necessarily to be accurate or even adequate descriptions of the world. A concept such as globalization, when employed by political actors, is a political tool of use in persuading others of the virtue or necessity of a particular political course of action. It helps make certain things thinkable in certain ways and can contribute to the construction of broad coalitions of support (a rather different way of describing 'collective co-ordination').³⁹

The rhetorical approach hence reveals the dynamic nature of concepts and the ways in which they shape political realities and structures. In the context of post-communist Europe, such approach can drastically reverse our understanding of democratization. Rather than seeing democratic ideas and concepts as products of increasing institutionalization, the type of institutions and the process of implementing regime change can be seen as stemming from the discourse on democracy present in society.

The discursive lens, in particular, addresses the issue of transition as a temporal phenomenon, for it does not presuppose a goal or standard against which success or failure is measured, instead it poses open-ended questions regarding the internal logic of the idea, the expectations it projects, and the rhetor's relationship with the audience. By broadening the scope of analytical questions and simultaneously inquiring into the context in which ideas emerge, the rhetorical analysis provides us with tools to capture new ideation. As Finlayson suggests,

³⁹ Ibid., 536.

[R]hetorical political analysis is interested in expansion as well as limits; affirmation as well as critique; *in the possibility of constructing something new*. And this focus on creativity may turn out to have normative and critical effects achieved not through the daring revelation of falsehoods or the dramatic exposure of a hidden interest but by helping us see how things can be done differently: through the encouragement of a proper appreciation of political rhetoric that not only helps us think and argue better but gives us a better idea of political action against which we might judge our politics.”⁴⁰

Therefore, accessing democratization through discourse addresses issues the problem of history and culture in transition studies, as any analysis of discourse requires a close attention to the historical and cultural context of the society in question. This is of particular importance in Eastern Europe, for the socio-cultural experience of communism has been studied primarily for its constraints on democratization, rather than a potential source of new forms of societal and political organization. However, coming from the field of cultural studies, Kennedy draws a link between culture, history, and the building of democracy when he states that, “the culture landscape matters in the construction of communism's successor, and that the formation of ideologies and identities is more complicated than most discourses of transition allow.”⁴¹ Rengger further elaborates on the problem of democracy in democratization studies, “Minimal definitions of democracy, however convenient, however “rigorous” they may appear to be, and however preferable to non-democratic alternatives, are actually normative choices

40 Ibid., 542.

41 Michael D. Kennedy, *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1.

working in defense of the status quo.”⁴²The methodological ability to recover alternative understandings of democracy allows us to uncover the normative assumptions of existing democratic notions, and challenge those notions through alternative models present in political imagination arising from transitions.

3.2. Object of Study

My primary objects of study are two speeches delivered by Havel within the first two years following the Velvet Revolution. The first speech is his New Year Address delivered on January 1st, 1990. This speech is of particular importance for it was the first presidential address after the fall of Communism. The Velvet Revolution erupted on November 17th 1989. The subsequent negotiations with the Communist leadership resulted in the Civic Forum taking power. The Civic Forum, led by Vaclav Havel, consisted of various dissident groups such as former clergymen, actors, etc. On December 28th, 1989, Vaclav Havel was officially declared president of Czechoslovakia. The first address was thus delivered only a few days after his naming into Office.

The second speech that I focus on was delivered exactly a year later, on January 1st, 1991. It was also a New Year’s Address. Like the first one, it was delivered as part of a long tradition of public address in Czechoslovakia. The annual New Year addresses are similar to the State of the Union addresses in the United States, as they aim to communicate the government’s accomplishments from the previous year and lay out an

42 Rengger, “Towards a Culture of Democracy,” in Pridham, Herring, and Sanford, *Building Democracy?*, 78.

agenda for the months to come. A New Year's Address has been a tradition in the Czech Republic and former Czechoslovakia since 1949.⁴³ A New Year's Address is evaluative and diagnostic in nature; intended to provide a reflection on the past year, and a vision for the following one. As the process of democratization continued, the goal of defining democracy becomes less of a central focus of presidential addresses.

I will now share the rationale for selecting the two speeches that act as primary objects of analysis for my thesis. This thesis aims to explore the imagination and expectations of democracy that emerged from the experiences of communism. Havel delivered several public addresses a year. The first speech – the New Year's Address of 1990 – was selected because it is the very first presidential address given after the regime change. Including the first-ever post-communist address is of particular importance in this period because of the assumption that speech constitutes a particularly powerful means of governance in democratic societies. Hence, the 1990 Address offers us a “snapshot” of Havel's initial vision for the transition and marked his difference from the Communist regime that had just disintegrated. By contrast, the 1991 Address was delivered in a political environment that lacked the revolutionary euphoria of 1990. Still, this address continued to reflect the challenges of “creating a democracy from scratch” and laid out an original vision of democratic transition that did not follow the blueprint of liberal democratic theory.

43 Ladislav Dvorak, “Christmas and New Year's Address Tradition Founded under Tomas Garrigue Masaryk,” *Cesky Rozhlas*, January 1, 2010, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/rubrika/udalosti/tradici-prezidentskych-projevu-k-vanocum-a-novemu-roku-zalozil-tgm> (accessed November 12th, 2010).

I suggest that viewing the two speeches together can allow us to identify content and tone that may be attributed to a very specific moment (such as the euphoria of the Velvet Revolution). They also mark the birth of a new democratic vision. Furthermore, focusing on speeches from the first years of post-communism as opposed to a longer period provides us with a way to share the experiential, lived quality of the transition during its most fragile initial moment. The primary purpose of both of these speeches was to communicate the essence and substance of democracy to society. Therefore, the contain narratives, metaphors, and other rhetorical resources that they utilize that can be used to answer my research question about how democratization was envisioned, understood, discursively created.

3.3. Analytical Technique

To extract Havel's theory of democratization, I performed a close textual analysis of his speeches. My engagement with the texts took several steps. I began by writing paragraph-by-paragraph analysis: For each paragraph of each of the speeches, I wrote a paragraph of analysis. I asked questions such as: What is the purpose of this paragraph? How does (through what means) Havel achieve the purpose? And what does it reveal about how he views the country's transformation to democracy? The purpose of this step was to experience closely the flow and tone of the speeches.

As a second step, I identified the extended metaphors and narrative themes that spanned each speech as a whole. I looked particularly for clusters of metaphors that referenced a similar idea. Next, I compared the narratives and themes in the two speeches paying close attention to what changed and what stayed consistent in Havel's approach to

the issue of democratization. I approached the texts with the following questions: What do the similarities tell us about democratic imagination? Is there a keystone of Havel's democratic philosophy that cannot be easily "shaken up" by the unstable politics of democratic transitions? What do differences in imagination tell us about the course of the transition and the goal toward which Havel sees the country moving?

Finally, I isolated the themes that addressed most directly the questions behind the study of democratization as defined in the scholarly literature. The themes and issues I cover in Chapter 4 are those that most explicitly challenge and, therefore, enrich the available scholarly conceptualization of democratic transition. In other words, Chapter 4 does not aim to capture all the various ideas and insights that Havel has developed on the topic of democratization. Rather, my analysis is focused on identifying Havel's ideas that can respond to the shortcomings of the available literature as I identified them in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4. Analysis: Havel's Vision of Democratization as Discursive Transformation

Despite the excitement and euphoria of the Velvet Revolution, at the time of Havel's first presidential address, the public was in the grips of a profound sense of uncertainty. What just happened? What was going on? What would happen from then on? People in Czechoslovakia had few discursive frames through which to fully make sense of the new realities they were facing and to express their hopes and imaginations about their future. The fall of communism was also a collapse of ideological discursive frames that had up to the moment of the Velvet revolution been structuring the nation's collective narrative of identity and purpose in the world. From within the ruins of the old narrative regime, and to some extent from the materials left from it, the blueprint of the new society would have to be created. In addressing the nation, Havel acknowledged the role of favorable conditions in the sphere of international politics. Indeed, from the outside at least the Czechoslovak revolution was just one more piece moving in the domino-like collapse of communism as an international regime. For the people in the midst of that event, however, the turn toward democracy felt profoundly intimate. As Havel emphasized, the revolution came from within and was motivated by the citizens' inner calling for democracy.

What would this democracy look like? For many in Havel's audience the notion of democracy was derived from images of shiny Western product packages and full store shelves, from images of conspicuous consumption in Western films and glossy magazine covers, from novels and other literary texts that figured subjects free to roam the world

and explore their social settings. Was that what democracy was all about? What would it take for Czechoslovak society to move closer to a democratic future? Those were among the many questions that abounded in the aftermath of the revolution. In this sense, I suggest that the immediate aftermath of the Velvet revolution was a profoundly theoretical moment, an intense opportunity for competing imaginations to take form and come together.

In this context Vaclav Havel emerged as a distinctive voice that not only responded to the ambiguities of the occasion but also put together a coherent vision for what democracy could mean and do for the Czechoslovak people and what it would take for them to bring democracy about. Havel was certainly not speaking in a vacuum. Democracy was not a concept that he invented. Democracy was indeed a foreign word, one whose roots could be traced to the core Western liberal philosophies. Yet, bringing democracy to Czechoslovakia was not a simple matter of translation. As this chapter aims to demonstrate, Havel articulated an original understanding and blueprint of democratization, one that deviated in significant ways from the dominant western models of transition. In my analysis of Havel's speeches, therefore, I do not attempt to offer a comprehensive reconstruction of his rhetorical response to the challenges of the transition. My task is more narrow. It is to recover and highlight those aspects of his democratization theory that challenge, and therefore should enrich, our intellectual imagination about what is a democracy and how it comes about. Specifically, I focus on how Havel approaches three aspects of democratization: the time of transition, the space of transition, and the agency of transition. In my analysis, I reference the speeches by paragraph number as identified in the Appendix.

4.2. Constructing the Time of Transition

As my literature revealed, current academic models present transition as a time-bound, linear process. This construction carries a simplistic notion of time—time is somehow outside of us, independent and unyielding. Rhetorical scholars, however, have long pointed to the lived, experiential qualities of time. Time makes sense through narrative and mythic structures in discourse. At the core of these competing conceptualizations of time lies a more profound issue, namely a philosophical difference over the role of human culture in creating and constituting a reality. My attention to Havel's rhetorical management of time, I suggest, should yield important clues for the democratization theorists as it would reveal the role that cultural resources such as myths and narratives play in moving society along toward a political transformation. Before I turn our attention to the way Havel's speeches manage time, let me elaborate on why I am attracted to a discursive approach to time instead of the linear model currently dominating the democratization literature.

4.1.1. Myths and Narratives as Temporal Resources for Transition

The study of mythic narratives highlights that political communities and realities materialize through discourse. As such, the study of myth in political communication treats historical and cultural ideas as inherently tied to political processes, such as transition. Like many theoretical terms, the word myth has been hard to define. Ivan Strenski captures the plethora of contested and misused definitions when he states that “[T]here is no such ‘thing’ as myth. There may be the word ‘myth’, but the word names

numerous and conflicting “objects” of inquiry... .”⁴⁴ Although Strenski is right to point out the inconsistency in the use of the term, rhetorical scholars have identified several definitions of myth in the context of public discourse. Waldo Braden suggests that , “Myth draws on shared memory and imagination, [it] results from a collective experience over a considerable period of time, [it] represents an oversimplification of events, persons and relationships, [its] substance is more emotional than logical, and it combines reality and fiction.”⁴⁵

In a less formal definition, Rushing and Frenz state that, “Myths are long-enduring stories ... that dramatize a culture’s deepest beliefs and dilemmas.”⁴⁶ Both definitions suggest that myth is a type of narrative that combines real and fictional elements. In myths in political speeches, certain aspects of history are accentuated while others are left unaddressed with the objective of creating a coherent narrative. Public narratives and myths help to connect the past, present, and future: “In order to govern the present and future, one also has to govern the past – the ways that preceding regimes, processes and events are remembered, interpreted and assessed.”⁴⁷ Moreover, by actively structuring their sense of time, myths and narratives help consolidate communities. The rhetorical construction of time, in other words, is a means by which national identity is formed and contextualized. For example, following the 1940 Soviet coup-d’etat of

44 Ivan Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Levi-Strauss, and Malinowski* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press), 1.

45 Waldo W. Braden, “Myths in a Rhetorical Context,” *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, no. 40 (1975): 116.

46 Janice H. Rushing and Tom S. Frenz, “The Mythic Perspective,” in *The Art of Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Jim A. Kuypers (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2004), 241.

47 Tiiu Kreegipuu and Epp Lauk, “The 1940 Soviet Coup-d’Etat in the Estonian Communist Press: Constructing History to Reshape Collective Memory,” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 4, no. 4 (2007): 42.

Estonia, the Soviet Union sought to legitimize their power by creating official historical accounts of the occupied nation.⁴⁸ As a part of this agenda, the so-called June Myth emerged, providing a rhetorical justification of the Soviet occupation. One of the most fascinating features of the June Myth was its formation of an imagined historical continuity. The June Myth treated the events of 1940 as a natural historical progression.

Defining what a myth or public narrative is, however, is less important than acknowledging what it can do for a community, particularly for a community on the verge of profound change. In the context of public communication, scholars have agreed that the general purpose of public narratives and mythic references is to provide a problem-solving mechanism to address problems that cannot be solved solely on a rational basis.⁴⁹ Rushing adds that oftentimes, myths even identify and construct the problem or crisis facing the audience.⁵⁰ In this sense, myth can create a crisis and justify an intervention, or portray the current events as natural and suggest that no intervention is the best course of action.

A more concrete and narrow function of mythic narratives is that they serve as models for social action. In that, a myth determines what constitutes a legitimate course of action. This encompasses many aspects of myth. Braden identifies a moral dimension of myth when he claims that the themes in myth construct virtues and vices, as to suggest what the audience ought to behave like.⁵¹ Rowland builds on the notion of a moralized

48 Ibid.

49 Robert C. Rowland, "On a Limited Approach to Mythic Criticism – Rowland's Rejoinder," *Communication Studies* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1990a): 153.

50 Janice H. Rushing, "On Saving Mythic Criticism – A Reply to Rowland," *Communication Studies* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 138-139.

51 Braden, "Myth in a Rhetorical Context," 125.

discourse when he claims that in order to serve as a recommendation for future direction of society, the myth seeks to legitimize certain positions, and discard others.⁵² The notion of a good society thus lies at the core of myth. Consequently, myth contains both implicit and explicit directions regarding acceptable and unacceptable courses of action in response to the exigency of the rhetorical situation. As Bennett suggests, "The capacity of myth to structure political processes is demonstrated not only in the production of acceptable policy alternatives, but also in the generation of intolerance for political options that fall outside the range of myth-sanctioned choice."⁵³

Consequently, myth creates a space of plausible courses of action, and regards all other alternatives as impossible or unacceptable. The stigmatization of alternatives situated outside "the myth-sanctioned choice," does not have to be expressed in the text or speech itself. On the contrary, the power of the myth lies in the implicit connections and the symbols it carries. As such, it radically decreases the opportunity for opposition to attack the message of a mythic narrative with a rational argument.⁵⁴ Furthermore, due to its roots in commonly held beliefs, myth presents the preferred course of action as one that is familiar, and surrounds other political alternatives with the fear of the unknown. Public narratives and myths are essentially time management tools; they are means by which communities make sense of their past, present, and future. I now turn to my analysis of the way Havel mobilizes time for the sake of moving the Czechoslovak community toward democratization.

52 Robert C. Rowland, "On Mythic Criticism," *Communication Studies* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1990b): 102.

53 Lance W. Bennett, "Myth, Ritual, and Political Control," *Journal of Communication* 30, (Autumn 1980): 171.

54 Ibid.

4.1.2. Havel's Timing of Democratic Transition

Both the 1990 and 1991 speeches by Havel reveal a reluctance to frame the transition as a linear process. Instead Havel utilized two different temporal frameworks to construct the present as a moment of intervention. In the 1990 Address, Havel refrained from applying a temporal framework to the future. Rather, he framed Czechoslovak history as discontinuous in order to construct the present moment – the end of the communist rule – as an open-ended opportunity for the society to come together and engage in creating a new political system and society. In contrast, the 1991 Address featured a narrative of a “delayed transition,” as Havel claimed that the transition had not yet started. Overall, I argue that Havel's reluctance to engage in linear understandings of time served the purpose of maintaining the momentum of civil society engagement in political life. In other words, it was a way of mobilizing the community to make their own time. In the span of the two speeches, he achieved this result primarily by utilizing a triadic narrative which mobilized three distinct myths: a myth of a glorious past, a myth of a decline toward a degraded present, and a myth of regeneration through return to the glorious past.^{55 56}

Havel's 1990 speech clearly compartmentalized Czech history into a glorious period before the totalitarian regime, a dark age during the four decades of the regime, and the hopeful present, providing Czechs and Slovaks with an opportunity to create a

55 Matthew Levinger and Paula Franklin Lytle, “Myth and Mobilization: The Triadic Structure of Nationalist Rhetoric,” *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no.2, (2001): 176.

56 Anthony D Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63-69.

grandiose future. In order to utilize the exigency of the recent Velvet Revolution to prepare a common ground on which the society can begin to build a democracy, Havel dramatized Czech history. In the speech, he divided Czech history into three distinct portions and attributes radically different characteristics to each of them. This is evident in the very beginning of the speech when Havel says,

For forty years you heard from my predecessors on this day different variations on the same theme: how our country was flourishing . . . how happy we all were . . . I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you. Our country is not flourishing. The enormous creative and spiritual potential of our nations is not being used sensibly.⁵⁷

Havel thus compartmentalized history into an era before the regime, in which many of the society's cultural resources were rooted, a period of the communist regime, where the society was told it was “flourishing” while it was in fact deteriorating and the present, which is articulated as an opportunity for significant political change.

The 1990 Address narrated Czechoslovak history as one that has suffered a loss of moral purity. When offering an explanation for why the nation has found itself in a state of degradation, Havel clearly identifies the main cause of decline, “[A]ll this is still not the main problem. The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment.”⁵⁸ Morality and civic virtues were thus identified as the means by which the

⁵⁷ Vaclav Havel, “1990 New Year's Address to the Nation,” (Prague Castle - Archive: Office of the President – Selected Speeches and Writings, n.d.),

http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1990/0101_uk.html (accessed August 1, 2010), para. 1-3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

society can successfully transition into a democracy. Additionally, the narrative implied that while the morality of the nation had been harmed by the regime, it had not been ruined completely. This argument was carried particularly by metaphors of “slumber” and “awakening,” suggesting that the nation possessed the potential to successfully overcome the challenges ahead. For example, early in the 1990 address, Havel suggested that “The recent period – and in particular the last six weeks of our peaceful revolution – has shown the enormous human, moral and spiritual potential, and the civic culture that slumbered in our society under the enforced mask of apathy.”⁵⁹ Revolutions sparking dramatic regime changes are often characterized by a great degree of societal fragmentation and an omnipresent fear of the unfamiliar. Establishing that the culture possessed innate cultural resources that could be utilized in order to move to a better future mediated the fear of the unknown.

Havel's narrative culminated in a plea for redemption associated with a prescribed idea of a utopian future. Having identified the manifestation of the loss of autonomy to be morality and civic virtue, Havel clearly articulated that the state the society had found itself in was reversible and could be undone, “We have to accept this legacy as a sin we committed against ourselves. If we accept it as such, we will understand that it is up to us all, and up to us alone, to do something about it.”⁶⁰ Havel also tasked the audience with the goal of embarking on this redemptive process by providing a notion of a utopian future that the nation ought to aspire to.

I dream of a republic independent, free, and democratic, of a republic

⁵⁹ Ibid., para. 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 8.

economically prosperous and yet socially just; in short, of a humane republic that serves the individual and that therefore holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn. Of a republic of well-rounded people, because without such people it is impossible to solve any of our problems . . .⁶¹

Hence, Havel created a notion of a shared future and a common goal to work towards, while emphasizing that the nation possessed sufficient cultural potential to achieve those goals. By equating the quest for a democratic society with a journey towards moral purity, it began to be apparent what constitutes a legitimate as opposed to an illegitimate outcome of this process. In other words, by moralizing the mythic narrative, by imposing moral qualities to time itself, Havel implied that the means by which a transition was to be achieved had intrinsic value and ought to be managed with care and responsibility. In doing so he constrained the understanding of democratic transition as an end that could be achieved by just any means. As a result, Havel begins to outline that there are limitations in the process of moving forward, and that the process possesses a moral dimension, a dimension that would be expressed in the way he managed the timeframe of the transition.

Havel's understanding of democratization as driven by the attainment of specific moral values rather than a focus on systems-change poses a challenge to existing democratization theory. He identified the source of legitimacy of the new system in socio-cultural values, of the community's understanding of its past and present, rather than in the validity of new institutional structures. Havel's approach and the socio-

⁶¹ Ibid., para. 31.

scientific approach to democratization are not mutually exclusive, for it is evident that he understood the necessity for re-structuring the political system after the fall of communism. However, his speeches illuminated that a society in transition did not perceive itself as either succeeding or failing against a strict set of system-driven criteria such as the rule of law or the adoption of a new constitution. Instead, the society in transition assessed the legitimacy and authenticity of the process by using psychological and spiritual indicators of content, rooted in socio-cultural ideas of what ought to constitute an alternative to communism.

Furthermore, the focus on an open-ended future challenges the assumption that democratization literature makes regarding the presence of a pre-determined notion of democracy and a set of linear steps. In the 1990 New Year's Address, the temporal framework is applied to the society's past rather than its future. By grounding the present moment in historical terms, the transition was constructed not as an abstract process imposed from above or outside, but as a task that stemmed from within society and its cultural resources. The focus on understanding the present moment through a specific historical narrative allowed Havel to generate momentum and engagement on the side of civil society, rather than exacerbate the fears of the unknown.

The 1991 New Year's speech addressed the issue of timeline on the transition process and time-bound expectations for future political developments. The temporal framework used in this speech had two characteristics. First, Havel's narrative placed the beginning of the transition not in the moment of the Velvet Revolution, but a year later – to the present moment of his 1991 speech. Second, Havel used the notion of

democratization as a linear succession of concrete systems-driven tasks, and abandoned the moral determinants but refrains from identifying a concrete end-point for the process. I suggest that this rhetorical strategy legitimized the quest for freedom and secured the democratization process in the eyes of the citizens.

The 1991 New Year's Address discussed the concept of time with respect to the future of the transition. In this Address, Havel surprisingly constructs the upcoming year as the start of the actual transition (as opposed to the Revolution itself), “[T]he conditions for a new environment have been created.”⁶² The idea of the first year as a devoid of governance confirms that there is no immediate ideological or structural trajectory for the country to follow.

The timeline of transition departed from Western theoretical understanding of democratization. Havel framed the first year of post-communism as a diagnostic experience through which the society learned of the full effects of the communist regime. Only upon such understanding could it begin to re-build itself. “We are proceeding from the plans to the work of reconstruction itself.”⁶³ Havel announced that the society would only now begin to enact its idea of democracy. The idea of a “postponed transition” helped to maintain momentum and spark positive attitudes on the side of the citizenry. The first year of transition was very difficult for the country, and when striving to create a societal commitment to democracy, it would have been unwise for Havel to frame

62 Vaclav Havel, “1991 New Year's Address to the Nation,” (Prague Castle - Archive: Office of the President – Selected Speeches and Writings, n.d.) http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1991/0101_uk.html (accessed August 1, 2010), para. 22.

63 Ibid., para. 24.

democracy as a regime of problems and disgruntlement. By insisting that building democracy would begin in 1991, Havel opened the door to a democracy to be a more positive experience and a space of agency for the citizens.

In the course of the 1991 speech, Havel acknowledged that democratization required some specific system-driven tasks, “We shall actually begin building our new and democratic state and setting up its new economic system on the foundation of all these preconditions.”⁶⁴ Similar to the 1990 Address, Havel refrained from outlining a concrete systems-oriented vision as the objective of transition, “The old system collapsed, and a new one so far has not been built. Our social life is marked by a subliminal uncertainty over what kind of system we are going to build, how to build it, and whether we are able to build it at all.”⁶⁵ Although Havel moved away from framing the construction of democracy as a strictly moral task, he still did not treat the transition as a linear pre-determined process.

Both speeches shared a positive outlook on the future. While the 1990 Address promised glorious future via the return to the golden age of the First Republic, the 1991 Address presented a more sobering prediction of transition. Havel warned against a state of euphoria, and considered the building of a democracy to be a trial-and-error process. Therefore, 1991 was expected to be “a year of great trials.”⁶⁶ The progress of democratization could be assessed not merely through external measures such as evaluating the quality of rule of law, rather by the level of civil society investment in the process and their attitudes toward the changes. This is evident when Havel states,

64 Ibid., para. 23.

65 Ibid., para. 9.

66 Ibid., para. 25.

I am convinced that in my next address, the pleasant surprises will outnumber the unpleasant. I believe I will be able to announce that the reconstruction of our house has been successfully undertaken, and that its foundations are firmly laid in this land and its best traditions.⁶⁷

Havel thus concluded with a temporal expectation that the transition would produce more positive experiences of democratization, while emphasizing that a democratic tradition ought to not be seen or adopted as alien.

4.2. Constructing the Space of Transition

A second line of thought in Havel's speeches that I believe should enrich the available theoretical conceptualizations of democratization consists of the way in which he constructed the discursive space of the transition. Through both of his speeches, Havel identified the space in which transition from communism to democracy would occur. Traditionally, democratization literature suggests that transition occurs at the site of a geographically defined state through a re-structuring of institutions for the purposes of power distribution. However, according to Havel, democratization happens in the socio-cultural realm. Four decades of communist rule left deep traces in the spiritual landscape of the society at large, and hence any effort at an alternative political environment has to address the psycho-social condition of the society. This model of democratization as a socio-cultural process implies that the re-negotiation of human

⁶⁷ Ibid., para. 49.

interactions and relationships within society constitutes a key component of political transformation.

In the 1991 Address, Havel repeatedly referred to a house-themed metaphor in order to illustrate the nature of democratic transition. During the weeks following the Velvet Revolution, the fall of communism sparked a country-wide euphoria that allowed little space for assessing the scope of the communist legacy and its impact on establishing an alternative. Havel captured the societal feeling of disillusionment experienced in the first year after the fall of the Iron Curtain,

We knew that the house we inherited was not in good shape. The stucco was falling off in places, the roof looked rather dubious, and we had doubts about some other things as well. After a year of examination, we have discovered to our distress that all the piping is rusted, the beams are rotten, the wiring is badly damaged.⁶⁸

The house metaphor highlighted two dimensions of democratic transition – an exterior and an interior dimension. On the one hand, the exterior dimension referred to easily identifiable flaws of the repressive regime. For example, in the context of Czechoslovakia, it referenced the communist regime's suppression of the freedom of speech. The more self-evident injustices of the regime gave rise to resistance movements, such as for example the signing of Charter 77 that called for basic human rights in Czechoslovakia at the time. On the other hand, the interior dimension described aspects of a political environment that could not be easily defined in terms of legal violations or

⁶⁸ Ibid., para. 5.

grossly inequitable power distribution. The interior dimension includes psychological, social, and cultural values and beliefs that had been cultivated in a particular political environment. In the aftermath of communism, the effects of longstanding totalitarianism on the above mentioned spheres of society began to come to light.

Havel's 1991 speech suggested that the interior and exterior dimensions of political transformation cannot be separated. The first post-communist year revealed the events that have occurred in the interior dimension, "We have discovered that what a year ago seemed to be a neglected house is essentially a ruin."⁶⁹ The four decades of totalitarian rule had thoroughly damaged the interior core of society. Hence, a process of democratic transition could not be understood purely as a systems-change. In order to transform from a repressive regime, the connection between systems and society ought to be recognized. Building democracy was not just a matter of strengthening the rule of law, fostering an environment of individual rights, and ensuring free elections. Rather, democratization could be seen as a process of societal transformation, whereby systemic changes were certainly necessary, but the substance of the transformation occurred in the psycho-social realm of the citizenry. Havel's house analogy powerfully argued that the project of transition required specific system-building tasks, but that the ultimate task of building a democratic society remained much greater. Although connected, structural procedures could not fully account for the psychological, social, and cultural dynamics of society. Havel allows us to understand democratization as a process of building a new psycho-social space, metaphorically as a process of building a home.

69 Ibid., para. 6.

A sense of ownership transforms a house into a home. In other words, a societal engagement with the democratization process presented itself as a vehicle for transition, for society represented the embodiment of the psycho-social space that Havel's metaphor illustrated. The emphasis on building a relationship and ownership of the state becomes evident: "I appeal to all of you, Czechs and Slovaks, as well as members of other ethnic groups, to respect our new state, to treat it as one that is genuinely our own, and to bear in mind its general welfare."⁷⁰ Havel aimed to inspire a certain type of civic culture, in which citizens would not treat the state primarily as a safeguard of rights but rather as a space through which a community of citizens could materialize.

In addition, Havel insisted that a reconstruction of the metaphorical house must be holistic. The socio-cultural space of transition was intimately tied to systemic issues, "[R]egardless of how badly the house was damaged during the long years of [communist] rule, the house now belongs to us, and it is entirely up to us how we rebuild it."⁷¹ This view suggests that democratization occurred through societal transformation, and such transformation can only be effective in so far as citizens take ownership of the process. It is important, therefore, to take a closer look at Havel's theory of agency.

4.3 Constructing the Agents of Transition

As mentioned in the literature review, Eastern European transitions challenged comparative scholars to incorporate notions of civil society as one of the predicting factors of a successful democratization process. Through Havel's speeches, we learn of

⁷⁰ Ibid., para. 22.

⁷¹ Ibid., para. 39.

two types of agency - collective agency, which can be defined as a society's ability to engage in political transformation, and the agency of individual citizens within a democratic society.

4.3.1. Constructing Collective Agency

At the brink of regime change, in his 1990 Address, Havel utilized a nation-centered narrative in order to highlight the societal capacity to take on the task of massive political transformation. General narratives of Czech history feature several periods that are identified with strife and glory. Havel filled his triadic mythic narrative with characters from these transitional periods in order to produce a cultural image of the capacity and agency from within society. Furthermore, this rhetoric portrayed transitions as not novel and unfamiliar, but rather as processes that had occurred throughout history. In light of identifying the collective agency in the transitional project as a whole, Havel defined what constituted the subjects and agents of transitions.

One of Havel's tasks was to inspire citizens to embrace the notion of civil society. The national sense of separation from the government was largely embedded in an interpretation of history that treated Czechoslovakia as the object of global power politics. In order to counter the view of the nation as the object of international politics, as a community devoid of agency, Havel stated, "The enormous creative and spiritual potential of our nations is not being used sensibly."⁷² Further on in the 1991 speech, Havel downplayed the importance of international context in the Velvet Revolution when

⁷² Havel, "New Year's Address - 1990", para. 4.

he stated, "The fact that we enjoyed optimal international conditions does not mean that anyone else has directly helped us during the recent weeks. In fact, after hundreds of years, both our nations have raised their heads high of their own initiative without relying on the help of stronger nations or powers."⁷³ Hence, to encourage a sense of collective empowerment, Havel embarked on a search for inspirational precedents within the country's historical narratives.

Cultural narratives deploy prescriptive messages of what ought to be done and who ought to act and national heroes often embody such messages. The rhetorical use of heroic characters demarcates the field of agency. Current scholarly work provides a prescriptive definition of a hero. Smith describes heroes as those who "[P]rovide models for virtuous conduct, their deeds of valor inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants."⁷⁴ Thus the literature seems to conclude that heroes in myths are courageous, possess physical strength, and are successful at conquests. Rowland establishes the presence of heroes as an essential component of myth, "[T]he main characters in myth must be heroic [...]. Characters of less stature could not solve the problems [...]. Only a great hero can conquer evil."⁷⁵ As described above, the purpose of a myth is to identify and resolve a societal problem. However, mythic criticism provides us with a heroic notion that relies on military and physical power. If mythic heroes can only consist of successful military leaders, can myths only be effective in rhetorical situations that advocate for the use of power? By analyzing Havel's 1990 speech, we discover that the role of heroes in a mythic narrative is rather formulaic. In other words,

73 Ibid., para. 14.

74 Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 65.

75 Rowland, "On Mythic Criticism", 102.

the characteristics possessed by the heroes act as models for the audience and the political positions they ought to adopt.

Havel used references to non-violent characters from transitional periods of Czech history in order to illustrate a cultural capacity to undergo difficult socio-political transformations. In the 1990 Address, Havel made references to three characters from Czech history – Petr Chelčický, Jan Ámos Komenský, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk - all of whom were perceived as spiritual leaders, great educators, or persons with high moral values. All three of them were powerful actors when the Czech nation was undergoing dramatic transitions or resistance to ideology. Petr Chelcicky was a spiritual leader that promoted non-violence and community values during the Hussite Wars in the 15th century. The Hussite troops declared a violent revolt against Catholic ideology and injustice after Jan Hus, a leading Protestant figure, was burnt at the stake for his beliefs. Jan Amos Komensky, also called the “Teacher of Nations” constitutes a cultural symbol of literacy, progress, and national consciousness. Komensky lived during the suppression of the Prague Estates Rebellion and the Battle of White Mountain that resulted into the strengthening of Hapsburg Imperial rule over Czech lands. He, too, fought against the stifling ideology of the Catholic Church. Komensky pursued resistance (both in the Czech lands and later in Dutch exile) through writing pedagogical theory, and first illustrated textbooks. The third heroic character, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, symbolized a transition that parallels that of 1989.⁷⁶

76 Ramet, *Whose Democracy?*, 18.

Together, these three spiritual and non-violent historical characters project an image of non-violent agency. They share a moral approach to politics and thus embody virtue. As Havel cast their legacy, “Our first president wrote: ‘Jesus, not Caesar.’ In this he followed our philosophers Chelcicky and Komensky.”⁷⁷ Chelcicky specifically has been described as a proponent of non-violence, and appraised in presidential writings during the era of the so-called First Republic (1918-1938) which followed Czechoslovakia's peaceful secession from Austro-Hungarian empire. In *The Meaning of Czech History*, Masaryk writes, “I am fond of Žižka . . . yet I must agree with Chelčický that the violence which Žižka used should be avoided. My model is Chelčický, a man as energetic as Žižka, but free of violence.”⁷⁸

Masaryk contrasts Žižka, a military leader during the time of the Protestant Reformation, with Chelčický, clearly delineating that famous historical characters can hold the same beliefs but achieve them by non-violent means. By selecting references to non-violent characters from troubling historical periods, Havel made it possible to the audience to accept the feasibility of non-violence even at the times of greatest struggle.

The three heroes mentioned throughout Havel's 1990 address had long been a part of Czech nationalist discourse, and thus their re-appearance in Havel's speech reinforced the triadic narrative of glorious past, and a renegade present to be followed by a future reinstatement of the glorious past. It is important note that Chelčický and Komenský were used as symbolically-laden references by Masaryk, the first president of independent

77 Havel, “New Year's Address – 1990,” para. 17.

78 Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, trans. Rene Wellek (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 13.

Czechoslovakia. Masaryk situates these historical figures into a heroic narrative, and lays the groundwork for understanding transition as a cultural phenomenon, “[F]ree thinking in Bohemia naturally had its roots in the Czech reformation. . . . As soon as the small group of Brethren . . . was granted tolerance, Komenský's *Labyrint světa* (The Labyrinth of the World) was amongst the first books to be published.”⁷⁹

Chelčický and Komenský are thus strongly associated with the beginnings of Czech national revival. Both of them symbolize national revival through education, literacy, and spirituality. The fact that Masaryk has mentioned them in his writings and speeches, and the two characters are now invoked by Havel along with Masaryk, forms the idea that virtuous leadership and citizenship have existed in Czech and Slovak cultures for centuries and are to be inherited by the current generation.

Havel's construction of heroes in times of transition or oppressive ideology serves to familiarize the experience of social and political transformation. By establishing that transitions were not a novel phenomenon for Czechoslovakia and by emphasizing personified examples of non-violent resistance, Havel created a sense of confidence, agency, and manageability of the otherwise unfamiliar events following the fall of communism in 1989. Havel's reach into the discursive resources of the community helped construct the people of Czechoslovakia as a resilient culture of transition.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 21.

4.3.2. Constructing Individual Agency

Traditionally, democratization theory emphasizes the restoration of the state as the provider and safeguard of individual rights. Democratization theory projects a strong notion of the individual citizen and their rights and responsibilities within the legal framework of the state. In contrast, Havel's 1991 Address offered a definition of what constituted a citizen as an agent within a socio-cultural space of transition rather than a strictly systems-oriented one.

Havel identified the state not as a mere safeguard of rights and an environment for civic competition,

Let us teach ourselves and others that politics should be an expression of a desire to contribute to the happiness of the community rather than of a need to cheat or rape the community. Let us teach ourselves and others that politics can be not simply the art of the possible, especially if this means the art of speculation, calculation, intrigue, secret deals and pragmatic maneuvering, but that it can also be the art of the impossible, that is, the art of improving ourselves and the world.⁸⁰

For Havel the realm of transition extended into the social, spiritual, and cultural layers of society. Thus, the idea of the state as a space that does not serve only as a platform for competitive interests, but rather an environment for community to abide by moral codes, informs his notion of who constitutes a citizen.

⁸⁰ Havel, "New Year's Address - 1990", para 18.

Havel's definition of a citizen resonated with the idea of a moral state. According to Havel, a citizen ought to live in solidarity with other citizens, and make decisions not on the basis of the maximum profit that the current economic and legal circumstances allowed, but with a society's best interests in mind. "[M]any of us [...] [forget] that the welfare of individuals or groups is possible only against the background of the general welfare."⁸¹ This further builds on Havel's idea that democratization is a process that happens in the psycho-social space of a community, and not simply in the realm of systems, institutions, and procedures. Havel defended a conception of the citizen as one who is motivated to act in solidarity with others to transform many aspects of public life. Havel suggested that it ought to inform the type of work people engage in, "I appeal to all those who ... create things of value for the entire society. ... I urge all of you who quickly succeed in finding your place within the new economic system to sympathize with those who are not, initially, as lucky, and to help them as much as possible."⁸² Hence, for Havel the citizens' agency was not limited by the state, but negotiated through the social sphere by adopting community-oriented cultural values. Havel endorsed types of citizen action that benefitted others rather than those strictly motivated by individual gain. Thus, he departed from traditional models of liberal democracy that give primacy to individualism, and instead envisioned the populace as a group of citizens interconnected through concern for each other and the general welfare.

My attention to Havel's construction of the time, space, and agents of democratization reveal a dynamic and culturally grounded conception of what it takes to

81 Havel, "New Year's Address - 1991", para. 9.

82 Ibid., para. 26.

move a society through a process of transition. Havel defies key postulations of the socio-scientific models of transition. Attention to the role of public discourse in the course of democratization allows us to discover plenty of valuable tools for approaching other cases. More importantly, though, I believe that it demonstrates that culture is a powerful engine, but also a powerful limit to social transformation. Thus, my case study of Havel's rhetorical approach to Czechoslovakia's transition should also stand as a warning to the current socio-scientific literature that no model of democratization which is devoid of attention to a society's rhetorical and cultural resources could work as a "fit one, fit all" script for transition toward a democracy.

CHAPTER 5. Conclusion

There is much at stake during a transition from a non-democratic to a democratic regime – people's physical safety, regional security, economic stability, and not the least, people's collective sense of identity and emotional well-being. How do the subjects of transition navigate and make sense of it all? Although democratization has been studied widely across a range of academic disciplines, little research has been conducted to examine the ideation of democracy and the socio-cultural resources available to societies experiencing a revolutionary period. In order to understand how societies themselves can be resilient in the face of major political change, this thesis insists that scholars ought to pay attention to how societies in transition understand and what they expect from democratic rule and the democratization processes.

In this thesis, I approached former Czechoslovakia as a case study to examine discourses of democracy and democratization. The Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the following transition from a totalitarian regime are often cited as an example of peaceful transition. Yet, the rhetorical response to those challenges had been understudied and underappreciated. The challenges that President Havel faced at that moment were manifold – reconciling a troubling past of an oppressive regime, introducing democratic ideas, and establishing a sense of certainty, at perhaps one of the most uncertain times in Czechoslovak history. In response, Havel offered a sweeping and original line of thought on what it takes and what it means for a society to democratize. Thus, by recovering Havel's theory of democratization, this thesis aimed to recover the lived experience of transition and assess its implications for academic democratization models.

My attention to the discursive constitution of democratization aimed to challenge the currently uncontested meanings of democracy in the democratization scholarship. A close textual analysis of Vaclav Havel's visionary speeches in the initial year of democracy in former Czechoslovakia reveals that democratization theory has much to gain from voices like Havel's, voices that emerge from and speak to those undergoing a period of transition. My study shows that Havel's narrative departs from democratization theory in three major ways: in the way it conceives the time of transition, the space of transition, and the agents of transition.

First, Havel's temporal understanding of transition contradicts the linear temporal framework present throughout democratization scholarship. The 1990 Address positions the Velvet Revolution within a historical narrative which portrays democracy as a natural development and totalitarianism as an historical aberration. By refusing to posit a specific goal for what a democracy should look like, the 1991 Address defended an open-ended approach to democratization. He allowed democratization to unfold more organically through the interplay of local imaginations, desires, and needs.

Second, most scholars situate transition within the realm of the state and its bureaucratic and institutional systems. In contrast, Havel locates democratization within society itself. Using a house metaphor, Havel identifies the psycho-social and cultural sphere of society as the key environment in which democracy can be conceived and nurtured. Transition activities would become legitimate only when society took ownership of this environment and guarded and cared for it as their own.

Third, Havel understands democratic society not merely as a collection of citizens that exercise their institutionalized rights and organize in the realm of civil society.

Building a new democracy includes the task of constructing new forms of civic agency. Should such civic agency be imagined through the prism of individual rights as western liberal models seem to suggest? For Havel the answer is no. Societies possess cultural resources through which they can understand themselves as collective agents of transition. Hence his vision contains a powerful message of democratic culture as an environment of general welfare where individualist concerns should be mediated by concerns for the society at large.

These findings illuminate the price we pay for methodological blind spots in democratization theory. The scholarly focus on rationality and predictability has prevented us from accessing the most powerful (and ironically the least predictable) aspect of democratization – its human dimension. This study excavated the cultural and historical resources utilized during political transformation. Thus it challenged the secondary role of cultural context in many comparative and socio-scientific studies of democratization. Transitional theorists have been fascinated with constructing models of systems-change in hopes of extracting “lessons learned” for newly emerging democracies. However, these theories, primarily originating in Western scholarship, contain a hint of hypocrisy. They aim to discover “lessons learned” for other countries, and in doing so disregard the potential challenge, critiques, and ideas each instance of democratization poses to Western liberal democratic thought.

By recovering one of many voices that emerged from the experience of communism, this project brings a lived dimension into the study of democratization. Subsequently, it aims to create a new line for scholarly dialogue and debate on democratization issues by freeing itself from social scientific models, and focusing

closely on discourse as a point of entry into socio-cultural experiences. Attending to the discursive dimensions of democratization allows us to abandon polarized understandings of countries either succeeding or failing at democratization. For example, we can refuse to treat Northern African and Middle Eastern revolutions as an opportunity for them to grow by learning to institutionally and socially resemble the West. Instead, their newly acquired freedom forms a point of conversation between previously separated experiences and voices; it creates a platform through which new ideas may come to light.

For some scholars, post-communist countries constitute a closed case. Indeed, from a system-oriented perspective, the contemporary democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe resemble their Western counterparts. However, I argue that we should not close our eyes when a country's system reaches our cognitive expectations. Instead, we ought to ask ourselves, "How is their journey toward freedom and living out freedom different from ours and what can we learn from them?" By posing this question, we build an environment of reciprocal scholarship, where democratization is not studied for the sake of transition, but for the sake of multiplying and enriching our opportunities to make the world more free, more just, more equitable, and more intimate.

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APENDIX A.

Vaclav Havel's New Year's Address to the NationJanuary 1st, 1990, Prague

1. My dear fellow citizens, For forty years you heard from my predecessors on this day different variations on the same theme: how our country was flourishing, how many million tons of steel we produced, how happy we all were, how we trusted our government, and what bright perspectives were unfolding in front of us.
2. I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you.
3. Our country is not flourishing. The enormous creative and spiritual potential of our nations is not being used sensibly. Entire branches of industry are producing goods that are of no interest to anyone, while we are lacking the things we need. A state which calls itself a workers' state humiliates and exploits workers. Our obsolete economy is wasting the little energy we have available. A country that once could be proud of the educational level of its citizens spends so little on education that it ranks today as seventy-second in the world. We have polluted the soil, rivers and forests bequeathed to us by our ancestors, and we have today the most contaminated environment in Europe. Adults in our country die earlier than in most other European countries.
4. Allow me a small personal observation. When I flew recently to Bratislava, I found some time during discussions to look out of the plane window. I saw the industrial complex of Slovnaft chemical factory and the giant Petr'alka housing estate right behind it. The view was enough for me to understand that for decades our statesmen and political

leaders did not look or did not want to look out of the windows of their planes. No study of statistics available to me would enable me to understand faster and better the situation in which we find ourselves.

5. But all this is still not the main problem. The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in anything, to ignore one another, to care only about ourselves. Concepts such as love, friendship, compassion, humility or forgiveness lost their depth and dimension, and for many of us they represented only psychological peculiarities, or they resembled gone-astray greetings from ancient times, a little ridiculous in the era of computers and spaceships. Only a few of us were able to cry out loudly that the powers that be should not be all-powerful and that the special farms, which produced ecologically pure and top-quality food just for them, should send their produce to schools, children's homes and hospitals if our agriculture was unable to offer them to all.

6. The previous regime - armed with its arrogant and intolerant ideology - reduced man to a force of production, and nature to a tool of production. In this it attacked both their very substance and their mutual relationship. It reduced gifted and autonomous people, skillfully working in their own country, to the nuts and bolts of some monstrously huge, noisy and stinking machine, whose real meaning was not clear to anyone. It could not do more than slowly but inexorably wear out itself and all its nuts and bolts.

7. When I talk about the contaminated moral atmosphere, I am not talking just about the gentlemen who eat organic vegetables and do not look out of the plane windows. I am

talking about all of us. We had all become used to the totalitarian system and accepted it as an unchangeable fact and thus helped to perpetuate it. In other words, we are all - though naturally to differing extents - responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery. None of us is just its victim. We are all also its co-creators.

8. Why do I say this? It would be very unreasonable to understand the sad legacy of the last forty years as something alien, which some distant relative bequeathed to us. On the contrary, we have to accept this legacy as a sin we committed against ourselves. If we accept it as such, we will understand that it is up to us all, and up to us alone to do something about it. We cannot blame the previous rulers for everything, not only because it would be untrue, but also because it would blunt the duty that each of us faces today: namely, the obligation to act independently, freely, reasonably and quickly. Let us not be mistaken: the best government in the world, the best parliament and the best president, cannot achieve much on their own. And it would be wrong to expect a general remedy from them alone. Freedom and democracy include participation and therefore responsibility from us all.

9. If we realize this, then all the horrors that the new Czechoslovak democracy inherited will cease to appear so terrible. If we realize this, hope will return to our hearts.

10. In the effort to rectify matters of common concern, we have something to lean on. The recent period - and in particular the last six weeks of our peaceful revolution - has shown the enormous human, moral and spiritual potential, and the civic culture that slumbered in our society under the enforced mask of apathy. Whenever someone categorically claimed that we were this or that, I always objected that society is a very

mysterious creature and that it is unwise to trust only the face it presents to you. I am happy that I was not mistaken. Everywhere in the world people wonder where those meek, humiliated, skeptical and seemingly cynical citizens of Czechoslovakia found the marvelous strength to shake the totalitarian yoke from their shoulders in several weeks, and in a decent and peaceful way. And let us ask: Where did the young people who never knew another system get their desire for truth, their love of free thought, their political ideas, their civic courage and civic prudence? How did it happen that their parents -- the very generation that had been considered lost -- joined them? How is it that so many people immediately knew what to do and none needed any advice or instruction?

11. I think there are two main reasons for the hopeful face of our present situation. First of all, people are never just a product of the external world; they are also able to relate themselves to something superior, however systematically the external world tries to kill that ability in them. Secondly, the humanistic and democratic traditions, about which there had been so much idle talk, did after all slumber in the unconsciousness of our nations and ethnic minorities, and were inconspicuously passed from one generation to another, so that each of us could discover them at the right time and transform them into deeds.

12. We had to pay, however, for our present freedom. Many citizens perished in jails in the 1950s, many were executed, thousands of human lives were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of talented people were forced to leave the country. Those who defended the honor of our nations during the Second World War, those who rebelled against totalitarian rule and those who simply managed to remain themselves and think freely, were all persecuted. We should not forget any of those who paid for our present freedom

in one way or another. Independent courts should impartially consider the possible guilt of those who were responsible for the persecutions, so that the truth about our recent past might be fully revealed.

13. We must also bear in mind that other nations have paid even more dearly for their present freedom, and that indirectly they have also paid for ours. The rivers of blood that have flowed in Hungary, Poland, Germany and recently in such a horrific manner in Romania, as well as the sea of blood shed by the nations of the Soviet Union, must not be forgotten. First of all because all human suffering concerns every other human being. But more than this, they must also not be forgotten because it is these great sacrifices that form the tragic background of today's freedom or the gradual emancipation of the nations of the Soviet Bloc, and thus the background of our own newfound freedom. Without the changes in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic, what has happened in our country would have scarcely happened. And if it did, it certainly would not have followed such a peaceful course.

14. The fact that we enjoyed optimal international conditions does not mean that anyone else has directly helped us during the recent weeks. In fact, after hundreds of years, both our nations have raised their heads high of their own initiative without relying on the help of stronger nations or powers. It seems to me that this constitutes the great moral asset of the present moment. This moment holds within itself the hope that in the future we will no longer suffer from the complex of those who must always express their gratitude to somebody. It now depends only on us whether this hope will be realized and whether our civic, national, and political self-confidence will be awakened in a historically new way.

15. Self-confidence is not pride. Just the contrary: only a person or a nation that is self-confident, in the best sense of the word, is capable of listening to others, accepting them as equals, forgiving its enemies and regretting its own guilt. Let us try to introduce this kind of self-confidence into the life of our community and, as nations, into our behavior on the international stage. Only thus can we restore our self-respect and our respect for one another as well as the respect of other nations.

16. Our state should never again be an appendage or a poor relative of anyone else. It is true that we must accept and learn many things from others, but we must do this in the future as their equal partners, who also have something to offer.

17. Our first president wrote: "Jesus, not Caesar." In this he followed our philosophers Chelcicky and Komensky. I dare to say that we may even have an opportunity to spread this idea further and introduce a new element into European and global politics. Our country, if that is what we want, can now permanently radiate love, understanding, the power of the spirit and of ideas. It is precisely this glow that we can offer as our specific contribution to international politics.

18. Masaryk based his politics on morality. Let us try, in a new time and in a new way, to restore this concept of politics. Let us teach ourselves and others that politics should be an expression of a desire to contribute to the happiness of the community rather than of a need to cheat or rape the community. Let us teach ourselves and others that politics can be not simply the art of the possible, especially if this means the art of speculation, calculation, intrigue, secret deals and pragmatic maneuvering, but that it can also be the art of the impossible, that is, the art of improving ourselves and the world.

19. We are a small country, yet at one time we were the spiritual crossroads of Europe. Is there a reason why we could not again become one? Would it not be another asset with which to repay the help of others that we are going to need?
20. Our homegrown Mafia, those who do not look out of the plane windows and who eat specially fed pigs, may still be around and at times may muddy the waters, but they are no longer our main enemy. Even less so is our main enemy any kind of international Mafia. Our main enemy today is our own bad traits: indifference to the common good, vanity, personal ambition, selfishness, and rivalry. The main struggle will have to be fought on this field.
21. There are free elections and an election campaign ahead of us. Let us not allow this struggle to dirty the so-far clean face of our gentle revolution. Let us not allow the sympathies of the world, which we have won so fast, to be equally rapidly lost through our becoming entangled in the jungle of skirmishes for power. Let us not allow the desire to serve oneself to bloom once again under the stately garb of the desire to serve the common good. It is not really important now which party, club or group prevails in the elections. The important thing is that the winners will be the best of us, in the moral, civic, political and professional sense, regardless of their political affiliations. The future policies and prestige of our state will depend on the personalities we select, and later, elect to our representative bodies.
22. My dear fellow citizens!

23. Three days ago I became the president of the republic as a consequence of your will, expressed through the deputies of the Federal Assembly. You have a right to expect me to mention the tasks I see before me as president.

24. The first of these is to use all my power and influence to ensure that we soon step up to the ballot boxes in a free election, and that our path toward this historic milestone will be dignified and peaceful.

25. My second task is to guarantee that we approach these elections as two self-governing nations who respect each other's interests, national identity, religious traditions, and symbols. As a Czech who has given his presidential oath to an important Slovak who is personally close to him, I feel a special obligation -- after the bitter experiences that Slovaks had in the past -- to see that all the interests of the Slovak nation are respected and that no state office, including the highest one, will ever be barred to it in the future.

26. My third task is to support everything that will lead to better circumstances for our children, the elderly, women, the sick, the hardworking laborers, the national minorities and all citizens who are for any reason worse off than others. High-quality food or hospitals must no longer be a prerogative of the powerful; they must be available to those who need them the most.

27. As supreme commander of the armed forces I want to guarantee that the defensive capability of our country will no longer be used as a pretext for anyone to stand in the way of courageous peace initiatives, the reduction of military service, the establishment of alternative military service and the overall humanization of military life.

28. In our country there are many prisoners who, though they may have committed serious crimes and have been punished for them, have had to submit -- despite the goodwill of some investigators, judges and above all defense lawyers -- to a debased judiciary process that curtailed their rights. They now have to live in prisons that do not strive to awaken the better qualities contained in every person, but rather humiliate them and destroy them physically and mentally. In a view of this fact, I have decided to declare a relatively extensive amnesty. At the same time I call on the prisoners to understand that forty years of unjust investigations, trials and imprisonments cannot be put right overnight, and to understand that the changes that are being speedily prepared still require time to implement. By rebelling, the prisoners would help neither society nor themselves. I also call on the public not to fear the prisoners once they are released, not to make their lives difficult, to help them, in the Christian spirit, after their return among us to find within themselves that which jails could not find in them: the capacity to repent and the desire to live a respectable life.

29. My honorable task is to strengthen the authority of our country in the world. I would be glad if other states respected us for showing understanding, tolerance and love for peace. I would be happy if Pope John Paul II and the Dalai Lama of Tibet could visit our country before the elections, if only for a day. I would be happy if our friendly relations with all nations were strengthened. I would be happy if we succeeded before the elections in establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican and Israel. I would also like to contribute to peace by briefly visiting our close neighbors, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. Neither shall I forget our other neighbors -- fraternal Poland and the ever-closer countries of Hungary and Austria.

30. In conclusion, I would like to say that I want to be a president who will speak less and work more. To be a president who will not only look out of the windows of his airplane but who, first and foremost, will always be present among his fellow citizens and listen to them well.

31. You may ask what kind of republic I dream of. Let me reply: I dream of a republic independent, free, and democratic, of a republic economically prosperous and yet socially just; in short, of a humane republic that serves the individual and that therefore holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn. Of a republic of well-rounded people, because without such people it is impossible to solve any of our problems -- human, economic, ecological, social, or political.

32. The most distinguished of my predecessors opened his first speech with a quotation from the great Czech educator Komensky. Allow me to conclude my first speech with my own paraphrase of the same statement:

33. People, your government has returned to you!

APENDIX B.

Vaclav Havel's New Year's Address to the NationJanuary 1st, 1991, Prague

1. Dear fellow citizens, There used to be a time when this country's president could have delivered the same New Year's Address he had given a year before, and nobody would have noticed.

Fortunately, that time has passed.

2. Time and history have reentered our lives. The bleak skies of dullness and paralyzing inaction have cleared up. And we cannot help but be astonished at the range of possibilities emerging in a truly free political climate, and how it can always produce fresh surprises for us, in the good as well as the bad sense of the word.

3. Allow me to mention first all the unpleasant surprises the past year has brought us.

4. Primarily, it has become clear that the legacy of the past decades we have to cope with is even worse than we anticipated or could anticipate in the joyful atmosphere of those first weeks of freedom. New problems are emerging day by day, and we can see how interconnected they are, how long it takes to solve them, and how difficult it is to establish priorities.

5. We knew that the house we had inherited was not in good shape. The stucco was falling off in places, the roof looked rather dubious, and we had doubts about some other things as well. After a year of examination, we have discovered to our distress that all the

piping is rusted, the beams are rotten, the wiring is badly damaged. We know that the reconstruction already planned and anticipated, will take much longer and be much more expensive than we originally believed.

6. We have discovered that what a year ago seemed to be a neglected house is essentially a ruin.

7. This is not a pleasant fact, and it is not surprising that all of us are rather annoyed and disappointed about it. Many citizens ask themselves why it is so difficult to come to terms with our past, to rehabilitate its victims, to remedy wrongdoing and bring in a just verdict against all those who are guilty. Many people wonder why the rulers of the past regime who have grown rich at the expense of society are still on top, and why they are so successful at making themselves at home under the new conditions. Many citizens wonder why the wide-ranging transformation of the entire Czechoslovak economy is still only being spoken about, and why, in their everyday lives, they can see no changes for the better. People are nervous because the only thing the planned reform has brought them so far are higher prices and the danger of losing their social security, and their jobs. We all are uneasy about the significant increase in crime. Hope for a better future is ever more obviously intermingled with the opposite feeling: fear of the future.

8. In an atmosphere of general impatience, nervousness, disappointment and doubt, elements of malice, suspicion, mistrust and mutual accusation are insinuating themselves into public life. Surprisingly, freedom has given vent to a number of bad feelings and shown the depth of moral decline in our souls. We have defeated the monolithic, visible and obvious enemy and now -- driven by our dissatisfaction and by the need to find a

living culprit -- we are searching for enemies in each other. We feel disappointed or even that we are letting each other down.

9. A year ago, we all were united in the joy over having broken free of totalitarianism. Today we all are made somewhat nervous by the burden of freedom. Our society is still in a state of shock. This shock could have been expected, but none of us expected it to be so profound. The old system collapsed, and a new one so far has not been built. Our social life is marked by a subliminal uncertainty over what kind of system we are going to build, how to build it, and whether we are able to build it at all. The feeling that the horizon of the new order is distant, dim and indefinite means that many of us cling to partial and substitute horizons, forgetting that the welfare of individuals or groups is possible only against the background of the general welfare.

10. The unpleasant surprise of 1990 is thus the rather embarrassed, if not suffocating atmosphere we felt at the close of that year.

11. Because of this atmosphere, we all are inclined to forget the several great and positive surprises of the first year following our rebellion against the totalitarian regime. I think that it is my duty today to remind you as well of the good things that have happened, accomplishments that a year ago we could scarcely have imagined.

12. 1) The last units of the Soviet Army, which occupied our country twenty-two years ago, are leaving Czechoslovakia.

13. 2) We have successfully held the first free elections in forty- two years and elected representatives to legislative bodies at all levels.

14. 3) Our parliaments have enacted dozens of new bills, which create the first foundations of a truly legal, democratic and decentralized state.
15. 4) We have gained the respect of the whole world again, after long decades, as an independent and democratic state. Our country is taken seriously and is visited by the most prominent world statesmen, who highly appreciate its foreign policy initiatives, aimed at building a new and peaceful Europe.
16. 5) Full freedom of speech and expression prevails in our country, and freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed.
17. 6) We have torn down the barbed wire that had surrounded our republic and made it one big concentration camp. Anyone can travel anywhere, and anyone can come to this country.
18. 7) Religious life has resumed. Bishops have been appointed in all the Catholic episcopates. The Pope has visited our country, and we have established diplomatic relations with the Vatican.
19. 8) After difficult discussions, we have managed to work out a plan of economic reform and to adopt some significant economic laws, which will form the legal framework for this reform. Today, our reform is being launched.
20. 9) We have begun to form a true and viable federation. The first and probably most dramatic stage of this formation culminated in a recently adopted constitutional law, which divides executive powers between the two constituent republics and the federation.

21. Clearly, much more has been accomplished in a single year than was done over the past forty-two years.

22. I know we have still done very little, and that the main tasks still lie ahead of us. I would say that we have just completed a year of preparation in which the conditions for a new environment have been created.

23. In the year that begins today, we shall start filling this environment with new substance. We shall actually begin building our new and democratic state and setting up its new economic system on the foundation of all these preconditions.

24. We are proceeding from the plans to the work of reconstruction itself.

25. I will not conceal from you that 1991 will be a year of great trials. We shall start implementing what we prepared last year. We shall begin to see whether it works and whether we are really capable of making the sacrifices we have so far spoken about only theoretically, but without which the large-scale transformations we have decided to make cannot be brought about.

26. None of the new representatives of our state are calling for these sacrifices because they wish their fellow citizens to suffer. All of them are thinking of ways to reduce these sacrifices to an unavoidable minimum. We all know, however, that sacrifices are necessary, and that there is no other alternative. The former system has collapsed not only in our country but in the whole former Soviet Bloc, and along with it, the system of our foreign economic relations is also collapsing. Even if we wanted to keep the former unsuccessful centralized economic system going, we could not do so,

simply because the environment in which that system could survive and of which it was an integral part has itself disappeared.

27. Let me now try to sum up and give an approximate time schedule for the main tasks facing us this year.

28. 1) By the end of the year at the latest, our parliaments should have adopted three new constitutions -- two for the constituent republics and one for the federal state. These constitutions should form a logical triangle, which would become a solid and durable basis for our entire new legal order. If the legislatures are successful in doing this, they will have fulfilled the main task that you, the voters, entrusted them with for their two-year term in office. These constitutions should also give the final shape to our constitutional arrangements. In my opinion, until they are enacted, some provisional laws must be adopted to provide a constitutional method of settling the crises that might occur during this difficult period of time.

29. 2) Under the small-business privatization law, auctions are ready to be launched this month. Small-business privatization, like the restitution of confiscated property, could, in my estimate, also be completed in the coming year. Large, inflexible and bureaucratic organizations in the trade and service sector, as well as smaller production units, should be dismantled and replaced by a wide network of private and fully independent businesses.

30. 3) Along with small-business privatization, the privatization of large factories and plants is to begin. This will apparently require several years to complete. At the end of this process, all property ownership, including that of land, other real estate and the

means of production, should have been devolved to particular, clearly defined and fully independent owners.

31. 4) As you know, a comparatively free price-setting process is beginning today, one of the conditions of a true marketplace. Price liberalization will probably bring about a rapid rise in prices. According to expert projections, price levels are expected to stabilize in the second half of the year. Price deregulation also involves the domestic, or partial, convertibility of the crown, the first step on the long and difficult path toward true and full convertibility. Despite anti-inflationary measures, inflation is also expected to grow in the first half of the year. This, too, is one of the costs of our reform process. In my opinion, in the first half of the year, it will be necessary to further clarify the legislative conditions to promote enterprise so that foreign investors will not lose interest in doing business in this country. So far, they have been impeded both by unspecified property ownership and by the vague legal framework that exists for foreign enterprise in our country.

32. 5) Along with these initial steps, a clear strategic conception should emerge at the government level in two areas; first in the social sector, where it is necessary to create promptly, in cooperation with trade unions, a safety net of legislative and administrative measures to forestall the unjust and inhumane consequences of economic reform; and secondly, in the structure and orientation of energy production and large-scale industries. In this matter, no clear-cut decisions have been taken so far and, under the present circumstances, we cannot rely on the emerging marketplace to solve all the government's tasks. Such a conception also must take into account the major environmental requirements.

33. 6) I firmly believe that in 1991 the Federal Assembly will discuss and adopt good and just laws that will clarify the future situation of farmers, and of agriculture in general.

34. 7) In a year, our country will gradually start preparing for new parliamentary elections. I am convinced that within this year the spectrum of political forces in our country will stabilize. I hope that in the next elections we shall elect our representatives, with a better electoral law, to smaller and more practical legislative bodies due to be defined in the new constitutions.

35. 8) As far as foreign policy is concerned, we should try to maintain the initiative. I consider it important for the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee to meet as soon as possible, perhaps even this January, and dismantle all its military structures, including the Joint Command, as has already been preliminarily agreed upon by the member states. In the spirit of the Paris Charter, we intend to bring a new quality into the Helsinki process. We could be well inspired by the fact that the CSCE Permanent Secretariat has been located in Prague. As we become integrated into the existing and emerging European structures, we intend, in all aspects, to coordinate our progress, primarily with Poland and Hungary, our closest neighbors. We believe that Czechoslovakia will be accepted as a fully fledged member of the Council of Europe as early as January or February of this year. At the same time, we hope that during this year we shall succeed in establishing a beneficial association treaty with the European Community. We make no secret of the fact that in the future we would like to join on the basis of equal membership. We are also seeking closer cooperation with NATO, though we do not intend, for the time being, to join it.

36. Fellow citizens,

37. It is surely no news to you if I announce that difficult times await us, and the most difficult of all will probably be the year beginning today. In the trials to come, however hard they may be, the most important thing is to not abandon hope. If we did, these trials would lose any meaning they have for us. They would no longer be trials, but merely suffering and deprivation. I firmly believe that we shall stand up well in these trials, and I hope we do as well as we possibly can. And that will depend on the degree of hope we are able to nurture in our spirits.

38. Therefore, I am asking you to nurture this hope in yourselves and all around you as though it were the most vital thing you possess.

39. Please be aware that we have already gotten rid of the evil landlord. And regardless of how badly the house was damaged during the long years of his rule, the house now belongs to us, and it is entirely up to us how we rebuild it. Therefore, I appeal to all of you, Czechs and Slovaks, as well as members of other ethnic groups, to respect our new state, to treat it as one that is genuinely our own, and to bear in mind its general welfare. The first major test of national coexistence in this state is over, and the Czechs and Slovaks have passed it.

40. I wish all Slovaks success in building their autonomous and economically independent republic. I believe that this will be a republic of love and pride for all of its citizens.

41. I wish the same to the Czechs. I hope that their republic will be a republic of wisdom and tolerance for all of its citizens.

42. I wish all the best to all fellow countrymen, the Czechs and Slovaks living abroad. The time of diaspora has ended. Whether they come back home or stay in their new homelands, they will be welcome in our country, along with their immensely valuable experience and entrepreneurial spirit.

43. I appeal to all those who, in their work, create things of value for the entire society. At long last, the wealth you create will be for you and your next of kin, not for your bailiffs or for an abstract utopian ideology. I urge all of you who quickly succeed in finding your place within the new economic system to sympathize with those who are not, initially, as lucky, and to help them as much as possible.

44. I appeal to all who toil on the land and wish you much success in one of the oldest human activities. I hope that you will quickly regain your farmers' pride in the work done by the sweat of your brow. Our satisfaction and our well-being will depend on the success of your efforts.

45. I appeal to all who have decided to take the as yet unpaved path of private enterprise and wish you much success in your work. I ask you not to forget that profits are not an end in themselves, but a means to further enhance society and its wealth, and to create conditions for a truly dignified and full human life.

46. I appeal to all pupils, students and young people, asking you to focus on the horizons that are opening up for you, and which you could only dream of a year ago. Our future will depend on your desire for education and moral values as well as on your entrepreneurial spirit.

47. I also appeal to those who have already done most of their work for society. I hope that the changes you awaited or worked for so long will bring joy and satisfaction into your lives. We need your experience, your wisdom and your love.

48. Dear citizens, Friends,

49. The time of the New Year's addresses that were all alike is finally over. I am convinced that in my next address, the pleasant surprises will outnumber the unpleasant. I believe I will be able to announce that the reconstruction of our house has been successfully undertaken, and that its foundations are firmly laid in this land and its best traditions.

50. A year ago I ended my New Year's Address by paraphrasing a well-known quotation from Jan Amos Komenský: "People, your government has returned to you." Today I would go on to say: "It is up to you, people, to show that the return of the government into your own hands was not in vain."

51. Happy New Year!