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An Analysis of Lech Walesa's  
Transition to Constituted Leadership**

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*The test of leadership in all its forms is the realization of purpose  
measured by popular needs manifested in social and human values.*

James MacGregor Burns<sup>1</sup>

The story of Lech Walesa, Solidarity activist turned president of Poland, offers an interesting case study for leadership analysis. The 1983 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize who became Poland's first popularly elected president in 1990 with over 70 percent of the vote, Walesa lost reelection in 1995 to Communist candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski and received less than 1 percent of the vote when he campaigned for the presidency in 2000. While many critics are quick to dismiss Walesa's poor performance in the presidency as a reflection of a deficient skill set, a closer look at Walesa's leadership demonstrates that an equally significant factor was the differing set of resources and constraints Walesa encountered in transitioning from a position of non-constituted to constituted leadership.

### **NON-CONSTITUTED VS. CONSTITUTED LEADERSHIP**

In the analysis and evaluation of leadership, a distinction is made between constituted leaders, who exercise leadership from a position of formal authority, such as the head of a state or institution, and non-constituted leaders, whose power is built upon the informal authority<sup>2</sup> garnered through credible appeals to a receptive audience, such as social movement and intellectual leaders. This distinction between constituted and non-constituted leaders is central to the study of leadership as these two forms require distinct skills for the exercise of leadership and are carried out in dissimilar environments, thereby imposing different constraints. In any evaluation of leadership, the differing contexts and constraints for constituted and non-constituted leaders must be taken into consideration.

By definition, constituted leaders are responsible for an entity that has authority in its own right, whether it is a state, office, corporation, school, etc. The constituted leader is entrusted with the management of the formal authority of this entity and is expected to use this authority to achieve certain goals for it, what James MacGregor Burns would call the "realization of purpose." In contrast, non-consti-

tuted leaders do not have explicitly defined management portfolios. Rather, their distinction as leaders is defined by virtue of the fact that they have acquired some collective unit of followers, whether through an organized mass movement like Solidarity or through a movement in beliefs or ideas such as the revolution Albert Einstein inspired in quantum physics. Therefore, the authority that a non-constituted leader has—like the influence Einstein had on physicists—is built on persuasion of followers and sustained by continued appeals to them, and is thus informal in nature. Constituted leaders must also rely on this kind of informal authority in order to achieve the goals of their organizations, but unlike non-constituted leaders, they have access to the resources and legitimacy of the entity that they have been entrusted to manage.

The formal authority granted to constituted leaders generally provides them with a wider array of resources than those at the disposal of non-constituted leaders. Greater resources, however, are almost always accompanied by a larger set of constraints on their use. Resources are provided to bearers of formal authority for the purpose of attaining particular results for those conferring the authority. Constituted leaders are typically expected to be accountable to their constituents, and as a result their work is more closely scrutinized and subject to greater transparency than that of non-constituted leaders. In addition, opportunities for broadcasting both successes and failures of constituted leaders are greater due to the focus that a formal office allows for in establishing and assessing expectations of leadership. Therefore, the criteria for evaluating a constituted leader's results are both broader and stricter than those of a non-constituted leader, since resources are expended with expectations of an appropriate return on investment for the office or entity for which the leader is responsible.

In contrast, the environment in which non-constituted leaders operate is not structured by an entity of formal authority. The work of non-constituted leaders does not, therefore, attract the same close attention as the work of constituted leaders. Consequently, for non-constituted leaders successes must be much greater in order to draw the interest of others. Failures, however, are also less likely to be detected. While a constituted leader is evaluated in part for his ability to meet expectations consonant with those conferring formal authority, it is the non-constituted leader's ability to build informal authority and mobilize this resource that constitutes the primary criterion for evaluation. The failures of constituted

leaders are often more visible to those who confer authority, while failures of non-constituted leaders—because these leaders are acting from a position of informal authority—usually fall below the visibility of the full set of followers these leaders are trying to lead. Nevertheless, these failures can influence a non-constituted leader’s ability to maintain or extend his informal authority and his opportunities for exercising leadership. Additionally, non-constituted leaders, by virtue of the fact that their resources are primarily self-generated rather than granted with formal authority, are not constrained by the same accountability that comes with formal authority. Thus, while evaluations of constituted leaders generally take the form of a success-failure ratio, the evaluation of non-constituted leaders places emphasis on the net worth of the successes and not on their ratio to failures.

The varying resources and constraints for exercising constituted and non-constituted leadership suggest that these two leadership forms are not interchangeable, but rather require different approaches for successful application. This difference extends beyond simple variations in personal traits, biography, and education level, and is concentrated more on the particular set of skills one must employ to lead effectively in constituted or non-constituted contexts, as well as on the constraints these environments impose. For this reason, cases in which a leader moves from one form of leadership to another are of specific analytical interest. Based on historical experience, transition from non-constituted to constituted leadership is much more likely than the reverse. Investigation of such cases can help answer several questions, including: How must a non-constituted leader adapt his leadership to be successful in a position of formal authority? What, if anything, makes leaders who succeed both as non-constituted and constituted leaders different from those who achieve success in only one domain?

A case study of the first popularly elected president of Poland, Lech Walesa, is thus particularly useful for illuminating the distinction between non-constituted and constituted leadership and for analyzing the ability of an individual to transfer from one form of leadership to another. Walesa, who worked as an electrician in the shipyards of the Baltic Sea city of Gdansk in the 1960s and 1970s, employed exceptional skill in building informal authority and becoming head of the first independent trade union of Communist Poland, Solidarity, in 1980. He led Solidarity over the next decade as it grew from a workers’ union into a mighty social opposition force that ultimately brought down the Communist

government. Solidarity is considered one of the most successful social movements in recent history, and Walesa has been revered as the father of the Polish anti-Communist revolution.

In December 1990, Walesa won Poland's first popular presidential election and moved into a position of formal authority. Despite the mass appeal Solidarity gained in toppling the Communist regime, however, Walesa's informal authority had begun to erode even before his election to the presidency. In sharp contrast to his success in building and mobilizing Solidarity, Walesa's presidency was marked by a lack of vision, poor decision-making, and missed opportunities. In evaluating his success as a president, the Polish public decided that Walesa was a net failure, replacing him with Communist candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski in 1995.

While most observers and scholars of contemporary Poland view Walesa's failure as a president simply as the result of an insufficient skill set for executive politics, this perspective is inadequate in several respects. First, it typically includes a presumption that a certain level of formal education and diplomatic *savoir faire* are required for an individual to succeed as head of state. History provides many examples countering this assumption, such as Abraham Lincoln. Second, it fails to account for the leftist resurgence that has been observed throughout post-Communist Europe. The re-popularization of reformed communist parties is not unique to Poland, which suggests that Kwasniewski's 1995 victory over Walesa was not simply a vote against Walesa's leadership, but rather reflected other shifts that post-communist societies as a whole were experiencing.<sup>3</sup> Third, Walesa's experience in transitioning from a non-constituted leader to a constituted leader in many ways parallels the stories of several other social movement leaders from broad and diverse backgrounds, including Boris Yeltsin and Kim Dae-Jung, thus suggesting that something more than just deficiencies in Walesa's skill set contributed to his poor presidential leadership.<sup>4</sup>

To better understand why Lech Walesa's role as a leader declined once he changed from a non-constituted to a constituted leader, this paper will compare Walesa's leadership as head of Solidarity and as president of Poland. The analysis will examine the resources and skills Walesa employed to achieve successes in both leadership roles and examine the factors that contributed to his failures in the presidency. In addition to examining Walesa's leadership at critical junctions within the Solidarity



movement and during his term as Polish president, this study will also investigate how the constraints under which Walesa was exercising leadership were altered as his operational context changed from a non-constituted to a constituted one.

This examination of the resources, skills, and constraints of the Walesa case will thus engage three core questions: (1) Are the skill sets that non-constituted and constituted leaders require different? (2) Do the differing constraints on non-constituted and constituted leaders impair a constituted leader from maintaining the informal authority he built as a non-constituted leader? (3) How can we evaluate Lech Walesa's leadership in the non-constituted and constituted context?

### **IDENTIFYING THE LEADER AND CONSTRAINTS: LECH WALESZA'S POLAND**

To provide sufficient context for understanding Walesa's ability to serve as an agent of leadership, his biography, and the environment that put him in a position to take advantage of opportunities to exercise leadership in Communist Poland merit some attention.

Walesa's biography lends itself well to several folk hero images: the self-made man, the revolutionary, and embodiment of the proletariat—all of which clearly contributed to his appeal to large segments of the Polish population, both as a dissident and an aspiring politician. He was born in the village of Popowo, Poland in 1943. His father, who had participated in the Polish resistance during World War II, died when Lech was only eighteen months old. Following the death of his father, Walesa's mother remarried her late husband's older brother, Stanislaw, whom Lech and his elder siblings grew to despise. The tension between the first and second Walesa families was extreme, causing a divide into two irreconcilable camps.<sup>5</sup> Walesa's biography shares characteristics that leadership scholars have noted are unusually common among leaders: the loss of one's father at an early age and contrasting relationships with two parents, in which the future leader had a positive relationship with one parent and a negative one with the other. In offering an explanation of the correlation between loss of father and future leadership, Howard Gardner posits that children who have lost a parent are stimulated to formulate their own practices in social and moral domains, and that this self-dependence “may

place them in a favorable opinion for directing the behavior of others.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Gardner suggests that contrasting relationships with different parents fosters feelings of ambivalence, and that “the impulse to wield power represents an attempt to resolve this anxiety-producing conflict.”<sup>7</sup> Roger Boyes noted the impact of this dynamic on Walesa: “His brittle relationship with his stepfather had two clear effects: it gave him an ambiguous relationship to authority, part rebel, part conformist.”<sup>8</sup>

Life in the Polish countryside was bleak with limited opportunities for social advancement. In addition to working on the family farm, Walesa attended classes at the village school and mass at the local Catholic parish. He never cared much for school and showed little promise as a student. He did feel a strong affinity, however, with the church and developed a deep sense of Catholic faith, which he believed contributed significantly to Polish identity. The three core facets of Walesa’s upbringing—a capacity for hard work, disdain for book knowledge, and reverence for Catholic faith and institutions—shaped Walesa’s private and public opinions, attitudes, and leadership approaches, both during the Solidarity years and as president.<sup>9</sup>

Aspects of Walesa’s personality that featured prominently in his leadership were already visible in his childhood and sharpened further in his late adolescence, notably his defiance of authority (aimed mostly at his stepfather) and his penchant for risk-taking. These two characteristics are among those frequently cited by leadership scholars as particularly prevalent among future leaders. Gardner notes that the capacity to take risks demonstrates self-confidence that can lead to success and that insubordination reflects a willingness to rely on oneself instead of adhering to the confines put in place by others.<sup>10</sup>

At the age of sixteen, Walesa enrolled in a vocational school in Lipno, where he was trained as an electrician. After working as a farm-machinery mechanic, he served for two years in the army and in 1967 took a job at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, thus completing his transition from the peasantry to the proletariat. There is no evidence to suggest that Walesa had given any thought to politics, history, or democracy prior to his arrival in Gdansk. His interest in the trade union movement was not part of an orchestrated plan to dismantle communism in favor of an open society and market economy, but rather developed directly out of his own personal experience as a worker and from his dissatisfaction with his own material conditions and those of his fellow workers. Walesa participated in the 1970 worker

protests against increased food prices and was elected to the shipyard strike committee, thus beginning his long career as a strike negotiator. In 1976, he was fired from his job in Gdansk after criticizing Communist regime leader Edward Gierek's performance in meeting the demands agreed upon in negotiations following the protests of 1970. This sealed Walesa's fate as a dissident, and by the second half of the 1970s he was recognized as a leader in the growing independent trade union movement.

Several features of the structure of Communist Poland were conducive to creating an environment in which it was possible for Walesa to exercise leadership. First, Poland's geopolitical situation as a Soviet satellite state placed constraints on the range of policies that the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) could adopt.<sup>11</sup> Poland's specific history as a target of Russian conquest caused the Communist leadership in Poland to take particular care in ensuring that it never gave Moscow grounds to deploy the 50,000 Soviet troops stationed on Polish soil. Concern about provoking Kremlin disapproval was not restricted to the Communist Politburo in Warsaw but was shared by most Poles, who remained bitter about the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland and resented the continued presence of a foreign military force. It was therefore popularly (if silently) understood that the PZPR was to a certain extent a mouthpiece for Soviet Communism and not representative of the Polish people. In fact, Solidarity attracted a significant number of supporters from the PZPR. In what Anna Grzymala-Busse has called "both a historical irony and evidence of the party's laxity," over 35 percent of PZPR members joined Solidarity, while 45 percent expressed pro-Solidarity sentiment in public opinion surveys.<sup>12</sup> Even if it was impossible for party members in the ruling elite to come out publicly in support of Solidarity initiatives, this stratum included many silent sympathizers as well. As a result, an environment for negotiation between government reformers and the opposition had been slowly developing throughout the 1980s as the distance between PZPR and Solidarity positions decreased.

Second, as the historical victims of domination and partition, Poles' sense of national consciousness was particularly salient. A strong sense of national identity rooted in Polish language, culture, and religious devotion was evident among Poles and existed alongside the official communist doctrine. Walesa and Solidarity succeeded in building informal authority through the use of symbols that evoked Polish national identity, including the use of Roman Catholic iconography and emphasis on Poland's

short-lived period of independent statehood in 1918-1939.

Third, Poland's economy was not comprised purely of centralized institutions. In particular, collectivization of farms was abandoned in the 1950s, leaving the agricultural sector largely in the hands of private farmers. This provided farmers some leverage in relation to the PZPR. Additionally, a significant proportion of the population migrated from agrarian to industrial occupations, thus creating a large, new working class. Collectively, the peasantry and the working class constituted a sizeable counterweight to the central Communist apparatus. In comparison to the other Communist states in Eastern Europe, public displays of resistance in Poland took place with greater frequency—in 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976, there were large-scale anti-regime demonstrations in Poland that featured confrontation between the population and security forces. Thus, David Walsh, Paul Best, and Kul Rai have described Poland as “the most turbulent of the Soviet satellites during the Soviet Empire’s existence.”<sup>13</sup> This level of social turbulence was conducive to the development of a large-scale social movement like Solidarity, in terms of helping Solidarity garner popular support as well as ensuring that an environment existed for opposition to take an active role. Compared to its Soviet and satellite neighbors, Communist Poland was simply not as good at suppressing social unrest.

Lastly, though communist ideology officially demanded atheism, Catholicism's deep roots in Poland made complete subordination of the church impossible. Many historians have echoed Roger Boyes' observation that “the mere survival of the church as an institution during the long periods when Poland had been deprived of its independence—between 1794 and 1919, and again under the Nazi occupation—had helped to create a specific blend of Catholicism and Polish patriotism”<sup>14</sup> that even the Communist regime could not break. Although formally the role of the Catholic Church in Polish life was marginalized, Poles—95 percent of whom are Catholic—openly practiced their religion, thus allowing Poles' Catholic identity to persist.

Additionally, the Catholic Church, both domestically and internationally, played an important supporting role for the dissident movement in Poland. Domestically, this often took the form of organizational support, with parishes and priests providing safe cover for meetings and transferring information, while internationally the church shored up support for dissident movements and strengthened their

informal authority in the eyes of ordinary Poles and of the regime. Catholicism, which was both institutionally and ideologically opposed to communism, thus provided Poles with a form of state and social organization that was both authoritative and separate from the PZPR. Solidarity's incorporation of Catholic values and symbols strengthened Poles' identification with the movement, increasing Walesa's informal authority as the movement's leader. Additionally, the international attention that the Roman Catholic Church and Pope John Paul II cast on Solidarity's plight increased Walesa's informal authority both abroad and within Poland.

The opposition potential inherent in the peasantry, working class, and church acted as both a resource and a constraint on Walesa. When he attempted to mobilize this potential during his leadership of Solidarity, the peasantry, working class, and church served as key resources. He built informal authority through them and subsequently managed to reduce the informal authority of the PZPR elite. Once Walesa became president, however, his failure to manage these resources would cause them to become constraints on his ability to exercise formal authority.

### **BUILDING SOLIDARITY: 1980-1981**

The Solidarity movement was first formed in response to strikes at Walesa's former place of employment—the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk—in August 1980. Walesa jumped over the shipyard wall, joined the workers, chaired the strike committee, and ultimately negotiated the famous Gdansk Accords, whose twenty-one points permitted the organization of independent trade unions, and thus opening up the closed Polish political system in a manner that was unprecedented among communist regimes. Solidarity enjoyed a sixteen-month period of activity and expansion until martial law was declared in December 1981, as Warsaw responded to the threat that Solidarity's strength presented to the maintenance of a failing communist system.

The foundation of Solidarity's success as a social movement, and Walesa's success as its leader, was the movement's mobilization of resources, particularly human capital. Walesa and other labor leaders drew on Poland's rich history of worker organization and protest to gain support from the

working class. Solidarity's organization as a social movement had its roots in the sit-down strike, the development of the inter-factory committee, and the creation of a national structure. These labor mobilization dynamics created the basis for a strong social movement organization.<sup>15</sup>

Solidarity distinguished itself from other labor movements, however, through its symbiotic relationship with dissidents from the intelligentsia. Alongside worker protests of the 1960s and 1970s were student demonstrations against the regime. The 1976 founding of the Committee to Defend Workers (KOR) group among the intelligentsia led to a further identification of joint interests between workers and students. According to Voytek Zubek, KOR's activities, which included fundraising and legal assistance for workers, "triggered a ripple effect" within the broader intelligentsia. This led to a pattern of cooperation between workers, intellectuals, and students that was mobilized for the creation of Solidarity.<sup>16</sup> The formal alignment of these groups in 1980 was particularly successful because it overcame the "divide and conquer" strategies Communist regimes had consistently and effectively employed to keep resistance movements separate and manageable. The diverse groups within Solidarity, though fraught with tension, complemented each other, making the movement a potent opposition capable of forcing systemic change.

As mentioned earlier, a second significant resource that Walesa and Solidarity skillfully mobilized was the support of the Catholic Church and Poles' strong Catholic identity. The use of Catholic symbolism was present from the beginning of the 1980 strike in Gdansk. One of the first things the Gdansk workers did in 1980 was to affix a cross, an image of the Virgin Mary, and a portrait of Pope John Paul II to the gates of the shipyard. Catholic priests ministered to the striking workers, offering mass and listening to confessions. The close relationship between Catholic and Solidarity leadership strengthened Solidarity's and Walesa's informal authority in the eyes of workers. Pope John Paul II met with Walesa several times in the Vatican and in Poland, lending further support to Walesa's credibility as a leader whom Poles could trust.

In mobilizing resources to build informal authority, Walesa brought several skills to the task of non-constituted leadership. Walesa was a charismatic speaker before working-class crowds. He was good at sensing a crowd's mood and gave impromptu speeches with considerable finesse. Walesa's

ability to calm and control a crowd contributed to his reputation as a preferred strike negotiator and increased public support for his leadership in Solidarity.

Like many successful opposition leaders, Walesa was a skillful risk-taker. For example, he took considerable risks in participating in worker protests in the 1970s, joining the Gdansk strike in 1980 and making the strike an act of worker solidarity. He was not, however, a reckless risk-taker. There were many instances in which Walesa persuaded disgruntled workers against striking or taking more radical action because he sensed that conditions were unfavorable.<sup>17</sup>

In determining which risks to take, Walesa relied on what many observers have hailed as his excellent political intuition. As an opposition leader, Walesa possessed a vision that initially focused on the need for independent trade unions to improve the Polish economy and the plight of workers. As Roger Boyes explains:

Walesa understood that a strike was more than a straightforward transaction along the lines of: workers demand money, management refuses, strike hurts factory budget, bargaining and finally a settlement is reached, everybody goes home. Strikes express a sense of frustration and are thus part of a psychological process; the workers demand attention, reassurance and credible promises of continuing interest; taking these elements into account was more important than the level of the wage rise in ending a strike.<sup>18</sup>

Walesa also understood that the regime depended on worker productivity for its survival, and he had a keen sense of the political weight of workers and how to use this resource for bargaining potential. In his detailed analysis of Solidarity's leadership in 1980-1981, Robert Biezenski recalls that, "Several members of the Gdansk commission have related that the intellectuals had grave doubts about the feasibility of forming independent trade unions, and that it was the workers who not only originated this idea but insisted on its implementation in spite of all state opposition."<sup>19</sup> Thus Walesa had a better sense of the worker-regime dynamic than did the dissident intelligentsia.

Solidarity's working class leaders, including Walesa, consistently refused to mount a political challenge to the PZPR in 1980 and 1981.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the PZPR did not initially view the workers' union as a direct threat to its legitimacy. This enabled Walesa to mobilize the workers in such a way that

Solidarity ultimately presented a genuine opposition force to the sustainability of the communist regime, even though this had not been the original intent of worker solidarity.

### **WALESA'S SYMBOLIC LEADERSHIP: 1982-1989**

Although martial law was formally lifted in Poland in 1983, strict civil laws prevented Solidarity from undertaking formal activity until 1989. Following his taste for risk-taking, Walesa continued to operate under the conditions of martial law—including openly criticizing the government.

An important resource that Walesa harnessed to build informal authority in this period was the media, particularly the Western media, which helped keep Solidarity on the international stage in spite of legal restrictions on its activity. As the most visible and outspoken of Solidarity's leaders, Walesa became a media magnet as the West zeroed in on the first openly accepted challenge to Communist power. In 1981, *Time Magazine* named Walesa "Man of the Year," and in 1983 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, further elevating his reputation abroad. Walesa's success at building informal authority abroad contributed to his ability to build authority within Poland. As Voytek Zubek has noted, "Paradoxically, it was such Western images of Walesa's leadership that helped to convince many of Poland's middle-class skeptics to embrace him as well."<sup>21</sup> Zubek further argues that fascination with Walesa's story caused him to "symbolize the whole movement" for the West, which helps account for his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>22</sup>

The informal authority Walesa acquired from the Western media created opportunities for Walesa to meet with several Western leaders visiting Poland, including Vice President George Bush. Through their meetings with the visible symbol of Polish resistance, these leaders sought to send Polish Communists a direct message about whom they preferred. For the West, Walesa became the authoritative voice on Poland, a symbolic role that was reinforced by the West's hope for Poland and by Poland's hope for deeper integration westward. By November 1989, Walesa's informal authority had reached such high levels abroad that he became only the second non-U.S. citizen without high political office to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress.<sup>23</sup>



Although Walesa acquired informal authority through his skillful mobilization of resources, there is some truth to Zubek's assertion that Walesa was primarily a "symbolic leader" of Solidarity during much of the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> Solidarity's survival as a cohesive underground social movement from 1982-1989 was a consequence not so much of Walesa's active leadership but of the efforts of the movement's intelligentsia. Solidarity, whose purpose and activities were primarily oriented to the public sphere, was essentially constrained during this period due to the close surveillance of Walesa and other labor leaders, as well as the intimidation of rank-and-file members. While Walesa kept Solidarity in public view, the intelligentsia maintained a tightly organized underground movement. In particular, the intellectual leaders of Solidarity orchestrated a successful *samizdat* publication effort, which provided a resource for transmitting ideas and encouraged the workers to persevere.<sup>25</sup>

### **WALESA MOVES TOWARD CONCILIATION: 1989-1990**

At each critical juncture of Solidarity's history, Walesa rose to the challenge at hand and took the accompanying risks, even when this meant going against the wishes of other members of the Solidarity leadership or the movement's followers. Walesa met sharp criticism when his decisions were unpopular within Solidarity. This was particularly evident in Walesa's acceptance of the offer for Round Table negotiations with the PZPR in 1988.

Walesa's political intuition had sharpened during his numerous experiences in strike negotiations, both during the Gdansk Accords and throughout the 1980s. His understanding of the relationship between the regime and the workers deepened, and over time Walesa came to realize that the possibilities for economic improvement were constrained under a command economy. Some members of Solidarity's intelligentsia shared this belief, but their distance from the workers' movement limited their understanding of the precise relationship between the workers and the state. While they were not enthusiastic about supporting the Round Table negotiations Walesa agreed to in 1988, Walesa's intuition steered him well, as this biggest risk became Solidarity's greatest success.

The Round Table negotiations were offered to Walesa following a second series of strikes at the

Gdansk shipyards in August 1988. Having spent the better part of a decade trying to marginalize Solidarity and Walesa, the PZPR could no longer contend with the informal authority Walesa had amassed among the Polish population. Like many of Solidarity's intellectual leaders, the striking coal miners and shipyard workers were initially opposed to the Round Table negotiations. During the Round Table negotiations, which ultimately began in February 1989 after several months of stalling, the PZPR and Solidarity spent fifty-nine days developing a framework for the beginning of Polish democratization. Walesa built a solid team from Solidarity's intellectuals to represent the movement and let the "small table" leaders—Witold Trzeciakowski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Bronislaw Geremek—negotiate the details, while he delivered a number of speeches in support of the negotiations.

The Round Table negotiations, in terms of their initiation, process, and results, are arguably the greatest example of Walesa's success as either a non-constituted or constituted leader. Walesa's interpersonal leadership success in building support among skeptical Solidarity members for the Round Table and convincingly selling Solidarity reforms to the government is an example of what Ronald Heifetz terms "doing adaptive work" to mobilize people for tackling tough problems. Walesa's mobilization skills leading up to and throughout the Round Table negotiations are a clear example of accomplishing goals through the successful use of influence and authority.

As a result of the Round Table agreement, Solidarity was once again given legal status within Poland. The movement was allowed to run candidates in free elections for a limited number of seats in the Polish parliament. In June 1989, Solidarity won its full quota of 35 percent in the lower chamber of the Polish legislature (Sejm) and ninety-nine out of one hundred seats in the freely elected upper chamber (Senat). The success of Solidarity candidates in the election for the Sejm and Senat was due in part to Walesa's symbolic leadership in lending his image to the campaign posters of all candidates running under the Solidarity banner.<sup>26</sup> Solidarity built its brand name in politics by sending the cue to the public that it should vote for the candidate standing next to Walesa. While this proved an extraordinarily successful campaign tactic, Walesa came to believe that these parliamentarians owed their victories (and formal authority) to him.

During the process of the Round Table negotiations, Walesa had come to recognize that there

were gains to be made by working together with the government, even though this meant making concessions. Unlike a decade before, the Polish political leadership had moved closer to Solidarity's position, making it more possible for the opposition and the government to find some common ground. At the formal announcement concluding the Round Table discussions, Walesa sought to persuade Solidarity followers of this reasoning, stating, "We realized that the Round Table negotiations have not lived up to every expectation. But for the first time, we have talked among ourselves using the force of arguments and not the arguments of force."<sup>27</sup>

The Round Table agreements represented a negotiated government transition. According to both Samuel Huntington and Ian Shapiro, there are two necessary conditions for such transitions: (1) the dominant groups in both government and opposition must bargain with each other while also recognizing that neither group is capable of determining the future on its own; and (2) at critical junctures, reformers must appear to be the strongest force within the government and moderates must be in control of the opposition.<sup>28</sup> Both of these conditions were present in the Round Table negotiations. The PZPR invited Walesa and Solidarity to the Round Table because it recognized that bringing the opposition on board was the only way out of Poland's social and economic malaise. Similarly, momentum in the Round Table could only be achieved when government reformers were at the head of the table and when Walesa and his associates advocated for moderate gains.

Shapiro further writes that, "Elites who negotiate transitions are thus subject to constraints that arise both out of the negotiations and out of their relations with their own grass roots constituencies."<sup>29</sup> This description captures Walesa's position vis-à-vis Solidarity in the context of the Round Table negotiations and their aftermath. In this negotiated transition, Walesa lost some of the resources of informal authority that he had relied on as a non-constituted leader by backing down from his firm opposition against the government, which subsequently affected his ability to maintain mass public support. For some of the more radical and younger members of Solidarity, the concessions made in the Round Table agreement were unacceptable, and there was a sense of betrayal, particularly because the outcome of the negotiations yielded substantial results for political reforms but did relatively little to address union-specific goals.

In the eyes of many observers, Walesa's leadership in the Round Table discussions marked his transition from a worker to a politician (for better or worse). In this process, he moved from being a leader of the union opposition who was unwilling to make concessions to management and who sought the upper hand in a bargaining situation to an equal member at the negotiating table who was open to compromise. As Shapiro notes, "The mere fact of participating in negotiations cannot sustain legitimacy if there is no perception of progress,"<sup>30</sup> which adequately describes the view of the more radical Solidarity followers in their assessment of Walesa's Round Table negotiations.

In August 1989, one of Solidarity's original leaders from the intelligentsia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was selected as prime minister and began a series of reforms for Poland's transition to a market economy. After the formation of the Mazowiecki government, Walesa continued to play a very public role in support of democratic reform, both in Poland and abroad. He made numerous trips to the West (including his November 1989 address to the U.S. Congress), which were useful in building up Western financial and political support for Polish economic reforms. As a non-constituted leader who was formally outside of the government but supported its goals, Walesa could speak directly and without constraints.

Walesa initially opted not to run for office or consider a cabinet appointment because he felt none of the available roles were suitable for someone of his public stature. He came to resent his lack of decision-making power within the Sejm and the Mazowiecki administration, however, particularly since the Mazowiecki government did not reach out to him and took for granted the rewards in public support that his image could generate. Meanwhile, the informal authority that Walesa enjoyed as head of the Solidarity labor union had begun to erode. As Boyes has noted, "Walesa's magic with angry crowds had been tarnished by his association, however uneasy, with the government. He could not simultaneously be with 'them'—the authorities—and with the workers."<sup>31</sup> Other scholars have observed that while Walesa and the labor leaders of Solidarity had seen the foundations of their informal authority decline by the end of the 1980s, the intellectual core of Solidarity had managed to acquire formal authority.<sup>32</sup> The in-group tensions that resurfaced among the different leaders of Solidarity were exacerbated by this uneven distribution of authority and power.

In part because the foundations of Solidarity's coalition proved very fragile in a post-communist context, and in part because Walesa had neglected the leadership responsibilities conferred to him by those who had granted him informal authority, Walesa was losing the support of the very organization he led. According to Zubek, "In the quest to overthrow the reign of communism in Poland, Walesa's skills and style of leadership were needed by the intelligentsia in order to mobilize the workers. Yet, in a post-communist democracy in which the populace had divided into several potential voting factions, the intellectual leaders of Solidarity came to view Walesa as a political liability.<sup>33</sup> Walesa's bruised sense of self-importance and the damage to his credibility among the workers contributed to his decision to publicly criticize aspects of Mazowiecki's program, thus precipitating the formal fracturing of the Solidarity movement. Mazowiecki's supporters formed the Citizens' Movement for Democratic Action, while Walesa's supporters joined the Center Alliance. The two camps put forward alternative candidates in Poland's first direct presidential election in 1990.

Regardless of the role that Walesa played in elevating tensions within Solidarity, the movement's fragmentation was important for Poland's democratic health. Solidarity had become so large and powerful that it ran the risk of simply replacing the more or less defunct PZPR, leaving an oppositional vacuum. As many democratic theorists have asserted, a functioning political opposition is essential to democracy. Shapiro provides three reasons why this is the case: (1) the peaceful turnover of power by governments who lose elections; (2) the legitimacy of the democratic order; and (3) ensuring the presence of healthy debate.<sup>34</sup> The splintering of Solidarity ensured that all three conditions would be met in post-Communist Poland.

The story of Walesa's victory as Poland's first popularly elected president is perhaps less a narrative about employing a successful leadership strategy to win the support of those conferring authority and more a tale of largely accidental or circumstantial conditions that thrust Walesa into power. Peggy Simpson notes that though Walesa was "considered a genuine hero for his shipyard activities, there had not been an overwhelming grass roots demand for his elevation as president by either workers, or intellectuals."<sup>35</sup> However, when the Mazowiecki campaign framed its attacks against Walesa's presidential candidacy in terms of the personal attributes necessary to the job that Walesa supposedly

lacked, it was guilty of highlighting class prejudices and of insulting many working-class and peasant voters.<sup>36</sup>

Walesa was a formidable campaign opponent, yet had the mysterious Polish-Canadian Stanislaw Tyminski<sup>37</sup> not entered the scene, the 1990 runoff vote would most certainly have been between Walesa and Mazowiecki, and Mazowiecki might have emerged victorious. Instead, Mazowiecki did not make the runoff election, which pitted Walesa against Tyminski. Even though Walesa ran a well-organized campaign, the 74.2 percent of the vote that ushered him into office reflected not his popularity, but rather the sober reaction of newly enfranchised Poles to the particularities of electoral politics. Recognizing that Walesa was the lesser of two evils, Mazowiecki's camp threw its full support behind him in the second round, more than doubling the number of votes Walesa received in the first round.

As a non-constituted leader of the Solidarity movement, Walesa exhibited substantial skill at mobilizing resources to build informal authority. Employing his skills as a charismatic speaker able to communicate his vision to the workers, his calculated risk-taking, and his astute political intuition, Walesa succeeded at establishing one of the most successful opposition social movements in recent history. The experience of Solidarity was unique among communist states in Eastern Europe. No other state had a multi-million member anti-communist social movement. The Solidarity union became a vehicle for anti-communism, accessible to most Poles through the public networks at their places of employment or study. Although conflicting figures are presented for the size of Solidarity's membership, one scholar speculates that at its height of activity, half of all Polish adults were connected to Solidarity.<sup>38</sup>

Walesa accomplished this success by the effective use of interpersonal leadership to build coalitions, by taking advantage of media attention to promote an agenda and build credibility, and by employing symbols that resonated with supporters at home and abroad. Due in part to changing constraints and a failure to continue employing his skills for resource mobilization, Walesa's informal authority declined in 1989 and 1990, just as he was transitioning to the Polish presidency, where he would be required to play the role of constituted leader.

## WALESA AS PRESIDENT, 1990-1995

The story of Walesa as president is largely a story of a ruler wielding power rather than a leader exercising formal authority in the context of state-building. While Walesa was skillful at mobilizing resources to build informal authority as a non-constituted leader, this aptitude was largely absent in Walesa's management of the resources within his grasp as the Polish president.

First, in initiating the "war at the top" that officially split the Solidarity movement into multiple successor parties, Walesa lost a great deal of the informal authority he had accumulated as head of a unified Solidarity. Walesa's credibility among the Solidarity union, which had begun to weaken during and after the Round Table negotiations, continued to decline over the course of his presidency. Nevertheless, Walesa's personal history as a labor leader continued to have some resonance among segments of the Polish working class and served as a slight buffer against overwhelming popular unrest during the economic upheaval of post-communist transition. Walesa's vocal endorsement of shock therapy reforms was arguably a major factor in maintaining workers' support for reforms that resulted in immediate negative socioeconomic consequences for many. In spite of forecasts of substantial labor protests, there were few significant strikes in the first five years of reform.<sup>39</sup> The workers might not have been willing to support (or, rather, not directly oppose) these reforms had they been advocated by a president whose identity did not reflect a clear, personal understanding of the challenges confronting industrial workers.

Walesa's symbolic leadership for Polish workers had its limits, however. By mid-1993, the Solidarity worker union had become anti-reformist, no longer supporting the initiatives pursued by Walesa's government. As Boyes pointed out, "It had been assumed that there was still a Solidarity ethos, a code of political behavior that loosely connected all those with dissident roots, including Walesa. Suddenly Poles realized that the ethos too had gone. There was no longer any reason not to vote for Communists again."<sup>40</sup> This was evidenced by the Solidarity union's no-confidence vote against the Hanna Suchocka government in 1993, after which Walesa dismissed the parliament and called for new elections that ultimately turned parliamentary power over to the reformed communist party—the Social Democracy of Poland.

The fracturing of Solidarity affected not only Walesa's popularity rating among the public but also his ability to build coalitions within the government and the parliament, where previous allies from Solidarity found each other on opposing sides. Wojciech Maziarski observed that, "If Walesa's moral authority grew through 1991, his political authority declined, ironically as a result of the parliamentary elections for which he had campaigned, which invested other political players with legitimacy apart from himself."<sup>41</sup> While the political fracturing of Solidarity in an open political environment was predictable, it was more significant that Walesa failed to broker a centrist political coalition that could provide consistent support for democratization.

In this respect, Walesa failed to draw on the skills and tactics he had employed successfully in Solidarity's past to bring together different interested parties for the accomplishment of a shared goal. Supporters of a democratic Poland were not in short supply, but rather than building a team to create and implement this vision, Walesa isolated himself and retained only those aides who would be deferential to his positions. Some critics have argued that Walesa lowered the caliber of political discourse and discouraged political participation in Poland.<sup>42</sup> Simpson noted that during the early 1990s, "Walesa broke rather than built political alliances, making it even more complicated to find a cohesive bloc of people in public life interested in pulling in the same direction."<sup>43</sup>

Examples of Walesa's disregard for democratic procedure are numerous. As president, Walesa took several actions that inhibited the work of representative institutions, including moves to strengthen the role of executive power and to stall necessary legislation, frustrating Sejm colleagues who shared the goal of a democratic Poland. In addition to dismissing the parliament in 1993, Walesa forced the resignation of two of the six prime ministers who held office during his presidency. The actions Walesa took to unseat prime ministers often exceeded his formal authority.<sup>44</sup> This was particularly true after the 1993 parliamentary elections. As Francis Millard explained:

After 1993 Walesa faced a majority coalition with a strong parliamentary majority. Now more than ever a system-building contribution required skills of negotiation and compromise. Walesa, however, moved increasingly to a strategy of confrontation. His positive influence on the constitutional drafting process was effectively nil.<sup>45</sup>



Walesa's behavior in all of these instances further undermined his credibility as a democratic reformer and opened up political space for the communist opposition to rebuild their informal and formal authority.

Walesa's failure to transfer his Solidarity bargaining abilities to mobilize resources during his presidency was not exclusively a consequence of his interpersonal skills; it was also related to changes in the context in which he was operating. Throughout the 1980s there was little recourse other Solidarity members could take to reprimand Walesa when he overstepped his boundaries or took risks that went against the preferences of other parts of the movement (for example, agreeing to the Round Table negotiations in 1988). Other Solidarity leaders understood that their strength depended on presenting a united front against the opposition, and thus Walesa's taste for risk-taking was not held in check. As the head of the Solidarity labor movement in the 1980s, Walesa was artful at achieving a balance between the solid confrontation that was necessary to lead a strike and the sound reasoning required to sit at the negotiation table with management.

As president, however, he never seemed to know when it was time to sit down and negotiate, or what the demands of the negotiation should be. As Millard observed, "Walesa [as president] lacked appreciation of the need for political bargaining and compromise and failed to build a political base. He continued his pre-1989 strategy of confrontation, both with parliament and with government."<sup>46</sup> Yet, unlike his position as Solidarity's leader, in his position as a constituted leader Walesa was not exercising formal authority independent of other institutions. The Sejm had the ability to override presidential vetoes and block Walesa's initiatives. Therefore, there were ways to curb Walesa's power and constrain his ability to exercise formal authority, even though the resources provided by presidential authority exceeded those available to Walesa as a non-constituted leader.

A second resource Walesa called upon as president was the international reputation he had built in his pre-presidential days as leader of Solidarity, which he could utilize in constructing Poland's identity as a capitalist democracy and in attracting foreign assistance to help bring Poland into Western economic and political structures. In the early part of his presidency, the informal authority that Walesa accrued internationally was transferred into an effective foreign policy resource for Polish economic

reform. This position of international credibility gave outside investors confidence in Poland, which Walesa mobilized to arrange a substantial reduction of Poland's \$88 billion in debts to Western banks and governments.<sup>47</sup> Walesa's international reputation also gave him an audience for advancing the possibility of Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union. Even before becoming president, Walesa had spoken in favor of Poland's inclusion in these institutions—goals that seemed out of reach in the late 1980s. Although Walesa's diplomatic approaches in pursuing these goals were considered heavy-handed and not always constructive, NATO and EU accession were accomplished less than a decade after the conclusion of Walesa's presidency.

Although Walesa did manage to mobilize the resource of his international credibility into some tangible benefits for Poland, the use of this resource was constrained by his poor abilities as a statesman. The very characteristics that made Walesa charismatic to Polish workers in the 1980s were viewed as incompatible with the qualities that a head of state should possess—fluent, grammatically correct, and coherent language; genteel manners; and a firm intellectual grounding. The stories of Walesa's diplomatic faux pas are numerous and usually involve him conducting a one-sided conversation with a head of state about some minor issue or combatively asserting Poland's importance in the world.<sup>48</sup> Many observers suggest that the Western benefits Poland received in the early 1990s were despite of Walesa's reputation abroad rather than because of it. For example, even though the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it took until the end of 1993 for the withdrawal of all Russian military forces in Poland to be completed—a task that probably could have been completed at an earlier date if proper diplomatic attention had been allocated to this issue.

Finally, Walesa's skill at mobilizing the resources of the Catholic Church during his leadership of Solidarity became a liability during his tenure as president. In the post-communist political environment, the church looked to the Solidarity dissidents it had supported through the 1970s and 1980s to use their new positions of formal political authority to further the church's objectives. Former Solidarity members, however, had differing opinions about the role of the church, some believing that non-secularism was incompatible with democracy and others viewing Catholicism as a key component of Polish national identity. Walesa clearly favored an increased political role for the church, which ultimately led to a

loss of support from other segments of the population that did not share his enthusiasm for mandatory Catholic religious education classes in public schools or strict legal limitations on abortion.<sup>49</sup> With public opinion polls showing that two-thirds of the population opposed these measures, it is less surprising that the Catholic-friendly Solidarity parties were voted out of the 1993 parliament in favor of the secular Communist party.<sup>50</sup>

The political intuition that had served Walesa well as leader of Solidarity did not transfer into the context of presidential leadership. In leading Solidarity, Walesa was propelled by a vision of workers' rights and a voice for workers at the economic bargaining table. While the intellectual core of Solidarity cast the union movement as part of a comprehensive vision for Polish democracy and clearly recognized the importance of securing workers' support for that vision, Walesa's political intuition and inspiration were manifest only in union mobilization and not in achieving broader political aims. Thus, it did little to help him navigate the procedures of a democratic state.

Nevertheless, Walesa's innate sense of the balance of powers did provide him with opportunities to strengthen his formal authority. With the previous regime dismantled and new institutions not yet constructed, Walesa was thrust into a governing environment with unclear rules for exercising formal executive authority. In some instances, the undefined boundaries of his and others' authority prevented Walesa from taking necessary steps to build a democratic state. In other instances, the democratization process was delayed as it appeared that Walesa was overstepping these unclear boundaries. By exploiting the weaknesses and divisions among his opponents, Walesa put himself in the center of power and prevented opponents from gaining the upper hand. In this regard, Walesa was an example of William Riker's "heresthetic"—"structuring the world so you can win,"<sup>51</sup> although the results had only a short-term impact and actually contributed to Walesa's ultimate demise.

Even though Walesa's personality traits were often considered liabilities to effective executive leadership, Walesa did possess some of the political skills necessary for effective reform leadership. In his discussion of reform leadership, Burns notes that "pragmatic, transactional leadership requires a shrewd eye for opportunity, a good hand at bargaining, persuading, [and] reciprocating,"<sup>52</sup> skills that

Walesa exemplified in leading Solidarity. Curiously, however, Walesa rarely exercised these skills during his presidency.

In considering Walesa's case within the framework of Burns' concept of "reform leadership," two of Walesa's inconsistencies are readily visible. First, Burns points out that reform leaders must contend with endless divisions within their own ranks. The ugly manner in which Walesa handled Solidarity's splintering in 1990 and its further disintegration in 1992-1993 demonstrated his inability to handle such divisions constructively. This pattern continued throughout Walesa's presidency. Second, the moral leadership that accompanies reformism places a particular constraint on leaders, requiring that they not employ immoral means to achieve moral ends.<sup>53</sup> Walesa's consistent disrespect for democratic norms and abuse of power to achieve the aims of political stability and (purportedly) democratic state-building undermined his democratic credentials.

Walesa's presidency can be characterized as largely one of missed opportunities. It was not, however, without some noteworthy successes. One of Walesa's most significant contributions to Polish marketization was his adherence to the shock therapy economic reforms initiated under the Mazowiecki government. Walesa never abandoned these reforms, even when public support for the programs was low, particularly among Walesa's core base of support—the workers who bore the brunt of shock therapy's negative immediate consequences. The short-term impact of shock therapy undoubtedly cost Walesa some informal authority, yet his persistent support for rapid marketization was clearly an important contribution to the success of Poland's economic transition. Second, although the process was one of fits and starts with the Sejm, the adoption of the "Little Constitution" in 1992 was significant as it formalized Poland's democratic structure and provided a framework for building the institutions necessary for Poland to function as a healthy democratic state.

Nevertheless, in his constituted leadership role as president, Walesa failed to articulate and enact a vision for Polish democracy. As Simpson criticized, "[President Walesa] reacted rather than initiated."<sup>54</sup> While reaction may be sufficient to manage the tasks of executive power in an established democracy, state-building is hardly a task that can be accomplished without vision and initiative. Instead of employing the mobilization skills that served him well as Solidarity's leader, Walesa retreated to

bullying, a tactic that proved less successful when he held formal authority than when he was opposing it. Whereas refusing to end a solidarity strike in the 1980s and thus threatening Poland's fragile economy could force management to the bargaining table, refusal to budge on the details of legislative reform initiatives as president served only to prolong political struggles and exacerbate the problems such legislation was aimed to address.

### **WALESA AS NON-CONSTITUTED VS. CONSTITUTED LEADER**

In considering Walesa's leadership as head of Solidarity and president of Poland, three factors emerge as explanations for his failed transition from a position of non-constituted to constituted leadership.

First, the two positions required skill sets that varied in some important ways. While Walesa was well suited to be a visionary opposition leader of a social movement, he lacked an operational vision for state-building and failed to grasp the management skills necessary to exercise formal authority as the Polish president. The work of opposing a regime and building a state are distinctly different challenges, and Walesa was best suited for the former. As Millard observed:

Leadership is an elusive quality, and it is clearly contextually related. System-destruction, system-building and system maintenance demand different characteristics and different skills. Neither positive political vision nor managerial talent is a particular requirement for mobilizing opposition to an authoritarian regime. The ability to circumvent bureaucratic inertia or punch through 'iron triangles' of vested interests may be paramount for system-management but is less obviously relevant in the circumstances of political and economic dislocation characteristic of post-communist system building.<sup>55</sup>

Walesa's risk-taking and confrontational tendencies made him a successful leader for system-destruction. Yet, in applying these skills to the system-building environment, Walesa failed to grasp the nuances of the changed context in Poland and thus contributed to the sense of political and economic dislocation.

Second, to the extent that Walesa did have skills applicable to both leadership roles, he failed to transfer these skills to the presidency. Most noticeably absent were Walesa's coalition-building and

negotiation skills, as well as his political intuition for seizing opportunities to exercise leadership at critical junctures. While his political intuition served him well in employing the resource of a striking work force, Walesa seemed to have no political intuition for state-building as his presidency was plagued with (and perhaps characterized by) missed opportunities. By exploiting divisions to strengthen his formal authority or weaken the authority of his adversaries, Walesa alienated potential supporters, causing the erosion of the substantial informal authority he had built as leader of Solidarity.

Lastly, changing constraints created obstacles for Walesa's transition from non-constituted to constituted leadership. As a non-constituted leader, Walesa's vision was to form an opposition to the ruling elites. This vision was goal-specific and had mass appeal, and steps toward its achievement were clearly identifiable as successes or failures. Because the ability to exercise leadership in Solidarity required conferral of informal authority, it was necessary for Walesa to build a base of support within Solidarity's inner circle. Once Walesa had acquired the formal authority of the presidency, he no longer needed to rely on such a support base to wield power—only to sustain it.

Additionally, as a non-constituted leader, Walesa was not under constant public scrutiny. With the exception of individuals in the Solidarity leadership, the public was generally sheltered from Walesa's failures or unsuccessful attempts at leadership, as well as from the less refined aspects of his personality. As an underground movement, Solidarity presented a united front in its *samizdat* media. A free press in Poland, however, invited scrutiny of all Walesa's actions and criticism from all sides. In this environment, Walesa quickly fell from his heroic pedestal.

Yet this fall was difficult for Walesa, who enjoyed the celebrity he received as the public figurehead of Solidarity and grew accustomed to the attention and power it afforded him. It was his taste for power and frustration at his marginalization from the center of public focus that fueled Walesa's presidential aspirations. Because Walesa lacked a clear vision for Poland, opinion on the types of institutions Poland should create, or even an understanding of the components of state-building and the exercise of executive power, his quest for the presidency appears to have been motivated primarily by concern over his historical importance. For example, Walesa possessed an envious disdain for the popularity of Czech dissident leader Václav Havel. One of Walesa's close advisors, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, was certain

that a feeling of rivalry with Havel propelled Walesa toward the presidency because Walesa only began speaking directly about running for president after Havel had been elected in Prague.<sup>56</sup> Filled with immense pride over Poland's leadership in bringing down communism in Eastern Europe and setting the precedent for democratization and marketization, Walesa was vexed that Czechoslovakia had beaten Poland in the race for democratic presidential elections. Fearing that his own historical legacy was at risk, Walesa felt compelled to affirm the importance of his role by becoming Poland's first democratically-elected president.

Walesa's wielding of power, however, did not result in effective leadership. Rather, Walesa's presidency was marked by political crises resulting from his poor political choices, causing him to lose credibility, which in turn led to a loss of followers. Most crises related to Walesa's butting heads with the Sejm over approving prime ministers and drafting legislation. Walesa had a reputation for introducing his own versions of bills that the Sejm had spent months negotiating only days before the final vote was to take place. This would happen even after Walesa had been consulted and included in the earlier stages of drafting. He had a particular knack for inconsistency and changing his mind about how the form of Poland's democratic institutions should take shape.<sup>57</sup> In response to a sense of his eroding informal authority and credibility, Walesa resorted to tactics unbecoming of a democratic leader, such as mudslinging attacks to criticize his opponents and anti-Semitic rhetoric.<sup>58</sup>

Walesa's hunger for the presidency and the power it afforded him makes it possible to argue that Walesa fits Ronald Aminadze's depiction of the self-aggrandizing leader.<sup>59</sup> Walesa's appetite for presidential power is discussed in nearly every account of his presidency. Zubek writes that the Polish public "had begun to conclude that there were no other reasons for this behavior but [Walesa's] own egotistical political interests;"<sup>60</sup> according to Boyes, Walesa "remained a vain man bearing grudges, a man of conflict...it was plain that Walesa did not stand for anything very palpable;"<sup>61</sup> and Millard asserts that "Walesa's presidency displayed characteristics of capricious, individualized action."<sup>62</sup>

In contrasting Walesa's tenures as the head of Solidarity and as the president of Poland, Sidney Hook's distinction of "eventful" versus "event-making" leaders offers a useful framework.<sup>63</sup> Hook makes a distinction between individuals who are "eventful"—those who make a historical difference by

virtue of being at the right place at the right time, and individuals who are “event-making”—those whose involvement made all the difference in a historical outcome due to their outstanding traits and character in leadership. As leader of Solidarity throughout the 1980s, Walesa was event-making and indispensable to the movement’s successful seizure of formal political power from the PZPR. As president, however, Walesa did not easily fall into the event-making category.

As we have seen, Walesa’s greatest contributions to building a democratic Poland occurred before he received the formal authority of the Polish presidency. Walesa’s presidential term was largely uneventful in terms of state-building or democratic consolidation, and had Mazowiecki or another Solidarity intellectual won Poland’s first presidential election, Poland circa 1995 would probably have looked similar to how it did after Walesa’s rule. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to label Walesa as only an “eventful” president, since not just anyone could have replaced him as Poland’s head of state.

## CONCLUSION

The challenges Walesa encountered in transitioning from a non-constituted to a constituted leader are not unique. All non-constituted leaders who acquire formal authority must contend with harmonizing diverse skill sets and adapting to the constraints of accountability inherent in positions of formal authority. While Walesa was incapable or unwilling to adjust his skill set and employ the resources of formal authority for successful leadership, his case does not define the standard for a transition from non-constituted to constituted leadership, but merely provides one example. An opposition leader could indeed become a state-builder if he or she possessed the right set of skills and applied them capably.

One might argue that Tadeusz Mazowiecki, unlike Walesa, made a more successful transition from a dissident to the role of prime minister. As prime minister from 1989 to 1991, Mazowiecki launched several of Poland’s key economic and democratic reforms. Although Mazowiecki lost his position of formal authority in his failed presidential bid against Walesa, this failure was more a reflection of his poor campaigning skills than a resounding disapproval of his state-building accomplishments. Another example of a successful transition from opposition leader to state-builder is Václav Havel, who



served two terms as the first president of the post-communist Czech Republic. Like Mazowiecki, Havel possessed several of the primary skills for successful state-building. Yet he was also more adroit than Walesa at applying the skills he demonstrated in his non-constituted leadership as a dissident to the context of the Czech presidency. Additionally, Havel encountered different constraints in his presidency than those experienced by Walesa. Havel's informal authority was founded not in the labor movement but in the intelligentsia—a group that benefited from democratization in the Czech Republic more than workers in Poland benefited from an analogous democratization process in their country. In addition, Havel, unlike Walesa, did not have to contend with the presence of thousands of armed Soviet soldiers in his country and therefore could take positions that were more firmly oriented toward the West.

Coping with the differing constraints of a new operational environment is often the greatest challenge for an individual transitioning from non-constituted to constituted leadership. One of the most significant constraints comes from the expectations of those conferring authority on the person in a constituted leadership role. While all holders of formal authority are expected to perform with a certain degree of success to maintain the informal authority that enabled them to ascend to a position of constituted leadership, individuals who have acquired formal authority from a position of disenfranchised exclusion vis-à-vis the power structure encounter a particular challenge. They must address the claims of the disenfranchised supporters who helped put them in positions of formal authority, but they must also operate within the limits of the structures and resources inherited from the outgoing ruling elites. These structures may be seriously flawed, and a leader's resources may be insufficient to redress the defects. Ushered into a constituted role on the promise that they could do better than the previous officeholder, the new leaders must now prove their mettle while under intense scrutiny from those who supported their cause when they were in a position of non-constituted leadership.

This constraint is particularly salient for democratically elected presidents. Research in American political behavior, for example, has demonstrated that the president, as the government's central and most visible actor, bears the brunt of the public's dissatisfaction with Washington on a range of issues over which he has incomplete control.<sup>64</sup> As scholarship of post-communist transitions has observed, the process of state-building in the political vacuum left by communism proved very difficult, and involved

perhaps greater social and economic changes than populations were prepared to handle. Public expectations were high and were poorly met with the economic upheaval of marketization.

In the context of post-communist Poland, a dissident better endowed than Walesa with state-building skills might have accomplished a deeper institutionalization of democracy (and prevented numerous disruptions along the way). Yet it was unlikely that anyone could have fulfilled all of the hopes and expectations of Solidarity's followers. The aspirations exhibited by Solidarity workers, farmers, intellectuals, and religious supporters were broad and, when translated into concrete policies, came into conflict. Anyone ascending to the Polish presidency in 1990 would have faced an economy undergoing large-scale transition, a political vacuum following one of the most dynamic periods of political activity ever witnessed in Poland, and the foreboding presence of Soviet troops on Polish territory—troops representing the very nation that had spent the better part of modern history conquering and partitioning Poland. Operating in this context, even the most skilled state-builder would have found leadership a grave challenge.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Heifetz articulates a distinction between “formal” and “informal” authority in the book *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). Heifetz defines authority as “conferred power to perform a service” (p. 57). Formal authority is conferred by the status of official power, and informal authority is conferred by the trust of followers. Heifetz asserts that, “authority, formal and informal, is a key component of the holding environment—the containing vessel—for the stresses of change” (p. 128).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed and well-researched analysis of this phenomenon, see Anna M. Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of Boris Yeltsin’s leadership, see George Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Roger Boyes, *The Naked President* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1994), ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Gardner, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Gardner, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Boyes, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> For greater detail about Walesa’s early biography, see Boyes, *The Naked President* and Lech Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph: An Autobiography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Gardner, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> The official title of the Communist Party organization in Poland.

<sup>12</sup> Grzymala-Busse, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> David F. Walsh, Paul J. Best, and Kul B. Rai, *Governing Through Turbulence: Leadership and Change in the Late Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1995), p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> Boyes, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> Voytek Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” *Soviet Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4 (1992), p. 582.

<sup>17</sup> See Boyes, pp. 159-165.

<sup>18</sup> Boyes, p. 236.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Biezenski, “The Struggle for Solidarity 1980-81: Two Waves of Leadership in Conflict,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1996), p. 267.

<sup>20</sup> Biezenski, p. 265.

<sup>21</sup> Voytek Zubek, “Walesa’s Leadership,” *Problems of Communism*, vol. XL, issue 1-2 (January-April 1991), p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 583.

<sup>23</sup> Lech Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph: An Autobiography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1991), pp. 231-232. The first non-U.S. citizen was the marquis de Lafayette in 1824.

<sup>24</sup> Voytek Zubek calls Walesa a “symbolic leader,” arguing that the true leaders of Solidarity came from the movement’s intellectual milieu, which developed a constructive relationship with “dynamic labor leaders” capable of mobilizing the workers. See Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 583.

<sup>25</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 582.

<sup>26</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 584.

<sup>27</sup> Walesa, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 113-14, 124, 152 and Ian Shapiro, *Democracy’s Place* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> Shapiro, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> Shapiro, p. 191.

<sup>31</sup> Boyes, p. 224.

<sup>32</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 585, and Paul G. Lewis, “Political Institutionalisation and Party Development in Post-Communist Poland,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 46, no. 5 (1994), p. 788.

<sup>33</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” pp. 588-9.

<sup>34</sup> Shapiro, pp. 179-180.

<sup>35</sup> Peggy Simpson, “The Troubled Reign of Lech Walesa in Poland,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, issue 2 (1996), p. 322.

<sup>36</sup> Zubek, “The Rise and Fall of Rule by Poland’s Best and Brightest,” p. 596.

<sup>37</sup> Tyminski appeared as a dark horse candidate in the final weeks of the campaign, successfully capturing a following among people who did not identify with Solidarity.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson, p. 318.

<sup>39</sup> Simpson, p. 317, 323.

<sup>40</sup> Boyes, p. 320.

<sup>41</sup> Wojciech Maziarski, “The Powerlessness of the Powerful: Walesa Now,” *East European Reporter*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January-February 1992), p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Simpson, pp. 323-4.

<sup>43</sup> Simpson, p. 323.

<sup>44</sup> Simpson, pp. 321-2.

<sup>45</sup> Frances Millard, “Presidents and Democratization in Poland: The Roles of Lech Walesa and Aleksander Kwasniewski in Building a New Polity,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 16, no. 3 (September 2000), p. 50.

- <sup>46</sup> Millard, p. 39.
- <sup>47</sup> Simpson, p. 317.
- <sup>48</sup> See, for example, the description of Walesa's first meeting with President Bill Clinton in Simpson, p. 323.
- <sup>49</sup> Simpson, pp. 329-34.
- <sup>50</sup> Simpson, p. 333.
- <sup>51</sup> William Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. ix.
- <sup>52</sup> Burns, p. 169.
- <sup>53</sup> Burns, pp. 169-70.
- <sup>54</sup> Simpson, p. 323.
- <sup>55</sup> Millard, p. 40.
- <sup>56</sup> Boyes, p. 232.
- <sup>57</sup> For detailed discussion of Walesa's relationship to the Sejm, see Millard, pp. 46-52.
- <sup>58</sup> Boyes, p. 284.
- <sup>59</sup> Ronald Aminzade, Jack Goldstone, and Elizabeth Perry, "Leadership Dynamics and Dynamics of Contention," in ed. Aminzade, et al, *Silence and Voice in Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 5.
- <sup>60</sup> Voytek Zubek, "The Eclipse of Walesa's Political Career," *Europe Asia Studies*, vol. 49, issue 1 (January 1997), p. 107.
- <sup>61</sup> Boyes, p. 319.
- <sup>62</sup> Millard, p. 58.
- <sup>63</sup> Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943).
- <sup>64</sup> Marc J. Hetherington, "The Effect of Political Trust on the Presidential Vote, 1968-96," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 93, no. 2 (June 1999), p. 312.

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