

OXFORD STUDIES IN DEMOCRATIZATION

**REGIMES AND
DEMOCRACY IN
LATIN AMERICA:**

THEORIES AND METHODS

Edited by GERARDO L. MUNCK

OXFORD STUDIES IN DEMOCRATIZATION

Series editor: Laurence Whitehead

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Theories and Methods

Edited by

GERARDO L. MUNCK

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*To Wendy Prentice,
a friend for life*

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Preface

This volume brings together works by scholars trained and working within academia in the United States who share an interest in Latin America. It focuses on democracy in Latin America, and both assesses the state of current knowledge on the topic and identifies new research frontiers in the study of Latin American politics. First, it provides an overview of research agendas and strategies used in the literature over the past four decades. It tackles a series of central questions—What is democracy? Is democracy an absolute value? Are current conceptualizations of democracy adequate? How and why does democracy work or fail in Latin America?—and spells out the implications of answers to these questions for current research agendas. Next, it distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative approaches to the conceptualization and measurement of democracy, and presents a data-set on political regimes and democracy that illustrates how the differences between these two standard approaches might be overcome. Finally, it evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of conventional methods used to generate and test theories about the causes and consequences of democracy, and proposes alternative ways to advance ongoing substantive debates given the current state of theory and data.

This volume completes a project that can be traced back to a meeting I had with David Collier and Guillermo O'Donnell at the Kellogg Institute of the University of Notre Dame in December 1996. Following that meeting, some early versions of papers were presented at a panel of the International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), held in Guadalajara, Mexico in April 1997, and at a small conference held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in August 1999. That phase of the project resulted in a special issue of *Studies in Comparative International Development* (SCID), which I coedited with David Collier and was published in the Spring 2001. That issue of SCID includes articles by James Mahoney; Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (included in an updated version in this book); Guillermo O'Donnell; Andreas Schedler; and Richard Snyder. As a direct outgrowth of the same project, that journal issue constitutes a companion to this volume.

The project continued to move forward and evolved with a panel of the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA), held in Chicago in April 2002, and fruitful discussions during my stay as a visiting

faculty fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies of the University of Notre Dame in the fall of 2002. Subsequently, a set of new papers was commissioned. With my move to the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California in January 2003, the last stage in the project was coordinated from Los Angeles.

Along the way, many people and institutions made contributions to this project. This volume started as a collaboration with David Collier, and its current structure and content owes much to David's input. Frances Hagopian, Robert Kaufman, and Kurt Weyland contributed through their active participation at the conference held at the University of Illinois in 1999. Herbert Kitschelt offered useful comments on the papers presented at the MPSA panel in 2002. The 1999 conference at Illinois was graciously sponsored by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and the Department of Political Science, both of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies of the University of Notre Dame. Brenda Stamm, of the Illinois political science department, helped out with various aspects of the organization of this conference. Two graduate students at the time, Dexter Boniface and Jay Verkuilen, served as rapporteurs for the conference. Carla Koop, then managing editor at *SCID*, provided important editorial assistance in the preparation of the 2001 special issue of that journal. Finally, this volume would not have been possible were it not for the effort of all the chapter authors. My thanks to all of them.

*Santa Monica,
California
July 10, 2006*

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Introduction: Research Agendas and Strategies in the Study of Latin American Politics

Gerardo L. Munck

Research on Latin American politics over the past four decades has made many important contributions to comparative politics, the field of political science dedicated to the generation of knowledge about politics around the world. This research has played a critical role in expanding the scope of comparative politics from its pre-World War II focus on the United States and large Western European countries. Indeed, the first attempts to generate theories about politics in ‘developing’ countries based on a close knowledge of such countries were due to work on Latin America. And the first systematic empirical studies of politics in developing countries were analyses of Latin American cases. Moreover, the study of Latin America, probably more so than any other major region of the world, has drawn on and spurred a cross-fertilization of ideas from various regions, linking thinking about ‘developed’ and developing countries and also about developing countries from different regions. In short, research on Latin American politics has been a key site for generating and testing theories about politics and, hence, a vital part of comparative politics.¹

The reason why the study of Latin American politics has had this role in comparative politics is hard to pin down. But two points are worth considering. One concerns the relatively distinctive political experience of Brazil and the set of Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas christened as ‘Latin America’ by Chilean politician Francisco Bilbao Barquín, in a conference in Paris in 1856. This region may be characterized, setting aside all the caveats

¹ For a discussion of the evolution of comparative politics in the United States, see Eckstein (1963) and Munck (2007). For overviews of the study of Latin America within political science, see Kling (1964), Valenzuela (1988), Smith (1995), and Drake and Hilbink (2003). On research about Latin American politics within Latin America, see Altman (2005) and Trindade (2005).

required in light of internal differences, in terms of the combination of a number of traits that make it simultaneously a part of many worlds. Latin America is part of the West, but it is not wealthy. It achieved independence nearly two centuries ago, but remained dependent on outside powers. It has a past of failed democracies and authoritarianism, but also avoided totalitarianism. It has recently attained democracy, but lacks the rule of law. It is capitalist, but reinvestigates social justice. Indeed, Latin America might be seen as located at the center of the world, analytically speaking, as French sociologist Alain Touraine (1989: 16–17) suggests, and hence offers a special vantage point from which to think about politics, helping to bridge and connect research based on the experience of different continents.

Another reason why the study of Latin American politics has made significant contributions to comparative politics concerns the scholars whom have shaped thinking about Latin America. Key in this regard is that Latin America has been a region endowed with a research infrastructure, which enables self-reflection, and capable intellectuals and social scientists, who have given voice to a Latin American perspective on Latin America. But also essential is that thinking about the region has been influenced by a dialogue between Latin Americans and outsiders, mainly US and European scholars, some of whom might be labeled as Latin Americanists—scholars who have focused their research largely on Latin America—and others who are best seen as non-Latin Americanists who have nonetheless taken a keen interest in Latin America.² The nature of this community of scholars, and of the debates they have fostered, have certainly been important determinants of why research on Latin America has been an important source of insight about politics.

This chapter introduces this volume by focusing on past and current research on Latin American politics. First, it offers an overview of research agendas in the study of Latin American politics, placing an emphasis on the development of a comparative politics of Latin America. Second, it turns from the substantive question about what issues are addressed to the methodological question about how knowledge on Latin American politics is produced, and provides an assessment of research strategies used in the literature. Third, this chapter previews the contributions to this volume, summarizing their content and situating them within the context of the broader literature. To conclude, attention is drawn to the importance of fostering research that

² A short list of non-Latin Americanists who have been important points of reference in thinking about Latin America includes Albert Hirschman, Seymour Lipset, Alain Touraine, Juan Linz, Philippe Schmitter, and Adam Przeworski. For examples of collaborative interaction between US and Latin American scholars, see the discussion of the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies (JCLAS) of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) in Hilbink and Drake (2000).

embraces innovation, yet builds on the considerable tradition of scholarship on Latin American politics.

0.1. THE COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA: AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AGENDAS

The origins of a comparative politics of Latin America can be traced to the late 1950s and 1960s, a time when researchers sought to come to terms with the process of vast economic and political change experienced by Latin American societies since the 1930s and, more specifically, the passing on an oligarchic order and the rise of mass politics. To a large extent, the terms of debate were set by US academics working within modernization theory, the then dominant theory in comparative politics as a whole.³ But during this period some of the more lasting contributions were works by Latin Americans who sought to identify the distinctiveness of Latin American societies in comparison with the richer countries of the North.

One strand of work sought to characterize politics in Latin America in terms of the concept of populism, a line of analysis fruitfully developed by Gino Germani (1962) and others (Di Tella 1965; Weffort 1970).⁴ Another strand of research saw the distinctiveness of Latin America in terms of the region's dependent position vis-à-vis the world economy. And though this research was largely concerned with economic development, it was also linked to the analysis of populism. Indeed, probably the key work of this period, Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1979, originally published in 1969), offered a sweeping overview of the transition from an oligarchic order to national populism that placed great weight on the region's relationship with the outside world.

Following these early works, the study of Latin American politics underwent some significant changes. One change took place within the largely sociological tradition that this early literature was part of and that has remained

³ A key formulation of modernization theory in comparative politics was Almond and Coleman's *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (1960). However, this variant of modernization theory presented a highly abstract structural functional framework that, inasmuch as it drew on the experience of developing societies, reflected the experience of the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa rather than of Latin America. In contrast, Lipset's *Political Man* (1960) offered theories that talked more directly to Latin American realities, and even drew explicitly on the literature on Latin America. Thus, Lipset's work had greater resonance among students of Latin America.

⁴ Germani, Italian by birth, went into exile in Argentina in 1934 at the age of 23 after spending a year in prison in Italy due to his antifascist activities. He eventually left Argentina after the 1966 coup to teach at Harvard.

until the present a vibrant tradition within Latin America. Specifically, this sociological tradition gradually reframed its main categories of analysis, heavily dependent on Marxism and class analysis through the 1970s (Benítez Zenteno 1973, 1977), and began to focus on social movements and culture (Touraine 1988). The most ambitious recent statement coming out of this tradition is Alain Touraine's *Latin America* (1989), a work that presents a broad sociopolitical reading of Latin America during the twentieth century until the early 1980s and that shows how the region's political experiences can be seen as fitting or diverging from a modal national-popular model, understood as a mode of political action in which social actors are subordinated to political power, and the state is not clearly differentiated from the political system.⁵

Another shift was introduced by a series of works published in the 1970s, including Philippe Schmitter's book (1971) on corporatism (see also Malloy 1977; Stepan 1978), Alfred Stepan's book (1971) on the military (see also Lowenthal 1976), Guillermo O'Donnell's *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism* (1973) and the discussion it triggered (Kaufman 1977; Collier 1979a; Remmer and Merckx 1982), and Juan Linz and Stepan's *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (1978). These works reflected, as the earlier literature in the 1960s, a dialogue between US-based academics and scholars in Latin America. But the impetus for this research came primarily from scholars, whether US born or not, who had been trained in US universities and who were working within the discipline of political science, which was largely underdeveloped in Latin America at the time. In other words, this change was associated with a growing influence of both US universities and political science in the production of knowledge about Latin American politics.

In terms of ideas, these works brought about an even more radical departure vis-à-vis the literature of the 1960s than occurred within the sociological tradition. This new literature clearly differentiated itself from the sociology of politics, which had been the prevailing approach to the study of politics until then, and brought about what is best characterized as a break with the sociological tradition.⁶ Most fundamentally, by providing an analysis of political processes focused on the actors who directly make and implement legally binding decisions, this literature treated politics as a driving force in itself

⁵ Touraine's analysis is extended and refined in the work of Garretón and others, who focus on the changes in the relationship among the state, political society, and social actors brought about in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1980s (Garretón 1995; Garretón et al. 2003).

⁶ This break corresponds to a similar turn in the field of comparative politics as a whole that Sartori (1969: 87–94) traces to the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). An early work focusing squarely on politics in Latin America is Anderson (1967).

rather than as an outcome determined by sociological or economic factors. Without disregarding or entirely dropping references to 'social forces', politics was appreciated as a distinct and consequential activity. Relatedly, though political actors were seen as conditioned, if to variable degrees, by structural features, this analysis placed attention on real actors as opposed to abstract collectivities or entities such as classes or the State, and this led to a gradual recognition of the importance of choice and uncertainty.⁷

This turn to politics has had a great impact on scholarly research. As a result of a collective effort, relatively large bodies of work were gradually formed, taking as their point of departure the politics of different periods in recent Latin American history. One line of inquiry, which started with the analysis of democratic breakdowns of the 1960s and 1970s, evolved into the broader agenda of accounting for the variable types of regimes and their stability during the three post-World War II decades. This led scholars to deepen their inquiry into the impact of the process of capitalist development (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992) and to pursue a line of research, opened up by Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier's *Shaping the Political Arena* (1991), regarding the historical origins of the dynamics of political regimes in Latin America. Thus, various works sought to show how the basic patterns of politics leading up to the 1960s and 1970s were shaped in large part by the manner in which the transition from oligarchic to mass politics took place during the 1920–40s.⁸ But other works have gone back further in time, seeing the roots of politics in the 1960s and 1970s as being set during the period of liberal reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Mahoney 2001) or even during the wars of independence and the state making process of the nineteenth century (López-Alves 2000; Centeno 2002).⁹

A second line of inquiry, closely tied to ongoing events, addressed the transitions from authoritarian rule that occurred in Latin America mainly in the 1980s but that continued into the 1990s. This research, largely inspired by O'Donnell and Schmitter's *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986),¹⁰ focused initially on the actual process of transition. But it increasingly sought to trace the beginning, and the different modalities, of transitions to the dynamics of the authoritarian regimes from which transitions constitute a

⁷ The influence of Hirschman (1963, 1971), an economist, on the acknowledgment on choices is noteworthy.

⁸ These works include Collier and Collier (1991), Scully (1992), Yashar (1997), and Munck (2002).

⁹ At the same time, further research was conducted on more proximate processes. See Cohen (1994) and Bermeo (2003).

¹⁰ See also O'Donnell's earlier works (1979, 1982) and Przeworski (1991).

departure. This research was advanced through numerous case studies of Southern Cone countries,¹¹ attempts to characterize fairly distinctive regimes such as the Mexican regime under the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) (Middlebrook 1995), and efforts to extend the insights derived mainly from the South American cases to Central America (Kaufman 1986; Maira 1986) and to connect the literature on transitions to research on revolutions (Goodwin 2001), civil war and conflict resolution (Wood 2000), and neopatrimonial or sultanistic regimes (Snyder 1992; Chehabi and Linz 1998a). It was also fleshed out by comparative works that focused on certain actors, such as the military (Rouquié 1987), the labor movement (Drake 1996), or external actors (Whitehead 1996). Finally, this research was further developed by studies that offered a broad historical and cross-regional perspective and sought to link the study of transitions to questions of class (Collier 1999) and political economy (Haggard and Kaufman 1995), or to provide synthetic attempt at theory building (Linz and Stepan 1996).¹²

Finally, a third line of inquiry, also closely tied to ongoing events, has focused on the democracies of the 1990s and 2000s. This research has evolved considerably. A first concern of scholars was the consolidation or, more clearly, the stability, of the democracies that emerged in the wake of transitions (Pastor 1989; Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela 1992; Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005). This outcome was seen as affected by factors such as the modality of transition from authoritarian rule (Karl 1990), political institutions (Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Jones 1995), and economic factors (Przeworski et al. 2000). However, as fears of a regression to authoritarian rule diminished, these democracies were increasingly seen as working democracies and attention began to center on the intricacies of their actual functioning. Thus, focusing largely on formal democratic institutions, scholars produced a literature on elections, political parties, and party systems;¹³ executive-legislative relations;¹⁴ specialized oversight bodies;¹⁵ and federalism.¹⁶ Moreover, motivated by the perceived deficiencies of democracies, a parallel body of research has raised questions about the quality of democracy

¹¹ On Argentina, see O'Donnell (1988) and Munck (1998); on Brazil, see Stepan (1989); on Chile, see Garretón (1987, 1989), Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1986), Remmer (1989), Drake and Jaksic (1991), and Huneus (2000); and on Uruguay, see Gillespie (1992).

¹² Also important were several collective works, including O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986) and Dogan and Higley (1998).

¹³ Mainwaring and Scully (1995), Coppedge (1998a), Nohlen, Picado, and Zovatto (1998), Roberts (2002), Cavarozzi and Abal Medina (2002), Alcántara and Freidenberg (2003), Carrillo et al. (2003), and Griner and Zovatto (2004).

¹⁴ Shugart and Carey (1992), Mainwaring and Shugart (1997), Lanzaro (2001), Morgenstern and Nacif (2002), Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh (2004), and Pérez-Liñán (2005).

¹⁵ Schedler, Diamond, and Plattner (1999), and Mainwaring and Welna (2003).

¹⁶ Gibson (2004), Montero and Samuels (2004), Eaton (2004), and O'Neil (2005).

(O'Donnell 1999a: Part IV, 2001; O'Donnell, Vargas Cullel, and Iazzetta 2004).¹⁷

In sum, the comparative politics of Latin America has undergone significant changes and made great strides since its beginnings in the 1950s. Scholars working within, or drawing heavily on, a sociological tradition primarily penned the initial works. But since the 1970s, even though work within this sociological tradition continued, research about Latin American politics became more and more based in political science and, relatedly, influenced by US universities. As Section 0.2 discusses, this literature has methodological strengths and weaknesses, which have had important implications for the kind of results this body of research has produced. Nonetheless, as this succinct overview of research agendas has sought to show, a strong case can be made that the sustained collective effort over the last four decades has contributed to an interesting and lively debate on core, pressing questions about Latin American politics.

0.2. KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION ON LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS: AN ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH STRATEGIES

The literature on Latin American politics has endeavored to produce knowledge by using a wide range of methods, and it is hard to summarize these methods in a manner that captures their diversity and nuances. But it is possible to identify a few commonly used research strategies, consisting of families of methods, and to pinpoint the respective strengths and weaknesses of these strategies. Moreover, such an exercise is useful. To be sure, methods are a means and as such cannot substitute for substantive inquiry. But a focus on methods is necessary, in that the failure to adequately address methodological issues directly affects the knowledge claims about substantive issues that legitimately can be made. Therefore, turning from substantive to methodological issues, this section provides an assessment of strategies used in research on Latin American politics, organizing the discussion around two broad and fundamental aspects of the research process: theory generation and empirical analysis.¹⁸

¹⁷ Some works also provide a broad historical perspective that encompasses questions addressed in these three distinct lines of inquiry (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989; Smith 2005) and engage in synthetic attempts at theory building (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995).

¹⁸ The following discussion draws on and extends the analysis offered in some of my previous works (Munck 2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2004b; Munck and Snyder 2007a). For other assessments of the literature, see the largely positive assessments of this literature offered by Migdal (1983), Whitehead (2002: esp. 57–64, ch. 8, 266–70), and Mahoney (2003), and the more critical perspective articulated by Packenham (1992) and Geddes (1991, 1999, 2002, 2003).

0.2.1. Theory Generation

The framing of agendas, the starting point in the research process, has usually been provided by scholars, deeply interested in and engaged with Latin America, who have combined information about cases and current political events in the region with insights from a well-established corpus of political and social theory. These scholars have proposed new concepts or amended old concepts that, jointly with some preliminary sense of the empirical variation across cases, have served to offer initial statements of substantive problems.¹⁹

Taking these statements of substantive problems as a point of reference, most of the subsequent theorizing might be labeled as ‘mid-range’ theorizing, focused on some dimension of politics or part of a broader political process.²⁰ This theorizing has proceeded largely in an inductive manner, refining ideas through on ongoing, iterative effort to understand the political process in cases in the region, though frequently also drawing on the added perspective of cases from other regions.²¹ And the method of theorizing has been largely informal; indeed, even deductive theorizing has relied on informal as opposed to mathematical forms of deduction (Figure 0.1).²²

¹⁹ Guillermo O’Donnell, an Argentine political scientist and Latin Americanist, has played a unique role as agenda setter in the study of Latin American politics over the past three decades. For O’Donnell’s own account of the evolution of the field and his own work, see O’Donnell (1999a: ix–xxi, 2003) and Munck and Snyder (2007b).

²⁰ A mid-range theory is defined, following sociologist Merton (1968: 39–73), as a theory with a more limited scope than what he called grand theory. Merton also argued that, in contrast to general theory, mid-range theories have fewer concepts and variables within their structure, are presented in a more testable form, and have a stronger relationship with research and practice.

²¹ Though one essential strategy in the literature on Latin American politics had been to develop theory by building on case studies and drawing on intra-region comparisons (Collier and Collier 1991; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Eaton 2004), it has frequently gone beyond the region’s boundaries and played off the experience of other regions. The most common external point of reference has been Western Europe (Germani 1978; Linz and Stepan 1978; Kurth 1979; O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; Higley and Gunther 1992; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Drake 1996; Collier 1999; Centeno 2002; Bermeo 2003), but comparisons have been made to the United States (Lipset and Lakin 2004: Part III; Morgenstern 2004) and regions such as Eastern Europe (Schmitter 1974; Karl and Schmitter 1991; Przeworski 1991; Geddes 1996; Linz and Stepan 1996), East and Southeast Asia (Haggard and Kaufman. 1995; Goodwin 2001), and Africa (Snyder 1992; Wood 2000; Lieberman 2003). This propensity to break out of regional boundaries is arguably stronger among students of Latin America than other regions of the world; e.g. though Europeanists successfully expanded the scope of their comparisons by going beyond the better known big cases and including lesser known smaller cases in their analyses, their critique of ‘large-nation bias’ (Rokkan et al. 1970: 49) led them to push as far as the outer borders of Western Europe but not further. And, even though some Europeanists have recently extended their analyses to postcommunist Europe, it is probably fair to state that the Latin American literature has the strongest tradition in comparative politics of bridging regions and bringing the experience of other regions to bear on their analyses.

²² A review of articles published in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics* during 1989–2004 shows that 89 percent of articles on Latin America use an

Aspect of the research process	Prevailing research strategies	Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>Theory generation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framing of agendas through the elaboration of concepts, formed in light of a well established corpus of political and social theory as well as information about cases and current events • Inductive, informal, mid-range theorizing grounded in an understanding of the political process in the region, and the experience of other regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal of concepts (e.g. democratic transition, democratic consolidation, democratic institution, and quality of democracy) as overarching frames for collective efforts to address pressing, normatively important questions about politics • The formulation of complex theories, sensitive to the role of actors, the historical dimension of politics, and the interactions among variables (including variables at multiple levels of analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity and consensus regarding the definition of key concepts: unclear link among partial agendas and hence a weak basis for integrating theories about different parts of the overall political process • Lack of explicitly formulated measurement models • Tendency to address anomalies by simply adding new variables, frequently in an ad hoc manner (e.g. the invocation of context), or via domain restrictions, which preclude the development of general theory and preempt their analysis as empirical questions • Lack of explicitly formulated causal models
<i>Empirical analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative analysis, as dominant strategy; quantitative analysis, as secondary strategy • Qualitative analysis • Quantitative analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance of multiple, potentially complementary methods • Generation of rich information about political processes and actors needed to assess theories cast in terms of causal mechanisms and temporal categories • Increased efforts to systematically assess causal arguments, challenging premature generalizations of existing theories, and occasionally making comparisons with cases from other regions • Increased generation of large-N data sets • Systematic assessments of patterns of association and the generalizability of hypotheses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of integration of research using qualitative and quantitative analysis • Lack of a systematic approach to data generation • Inherent difficulty to assess generalizability and establish control, due to the enduring 'many variables, small-N' problem • Lack of data that measure the concepts used in many key theories and long time series • Lack of tests of complex theories, failure to address certain methodological issues, and unstable results

Figure 0.1 Knowledge production on Latin American politics: an assessment of research strategies

The virtues of this research strategy have been significant. The key concepts used in agenda setting statements have provided overarching frames that anchor research by a community of scholars, make explicit the normative content and stakes of research problems, and offer a stimulus to the theoretical imagination. In turn, efforts at mid-range theorizing have been remarkably fertile and produced complex, creative theories that break with standard and quite simplistic ways of thinking about politics. That is, they tend to be sensitive to the role of actors and the choices made by actors, the historical dimension of politics, and the interactions among variables, frequently focusing on the thorny issue of theorizing the interaction among variables at multiple levels of analysis.²³ Without a doubt, this literature has included some of the finer pieces of political analysis in the field of comparative politics,²⁴ and proposed important and suggestive theories that provide an essential contribution to theory building.

At the same time, these strengths have been offset by some weaknesses. One shortcoming has been the lack of clarity and consensus regarding the definition of broad and abstract concepts such as democratic transition, democratic consolidation, democratic institution, and quality of democracy. To be sure, research that places important questions firmly at the center of the agenda has a unique value and, since the crafting of such agenda framing concepts is the product of choices made in light of as yet incipient and largely intuitive theorizing, it is only fair to assess such concepts as preliminary efforts to offer direction to the research process. Moreover, efforts to analyze these concepts have sought to bring clarity and order to the way these concepts are understood and how they relate to each other.²⁵ Nonetheless, research on Latin American politics largely proceeds without the benefit of a strong degree of consensus regarding how some of its key concepts are understood or even

inductive method of theorizing. In turn, though 43 percent of these articles use a deductive method of theorizing, only 3 percent of articles use formal as opposed to semiformal or informal methods. The totals exceed 100 percent because an article can use more than one method. The data are drawn from the Munck-Snyder Comparative Politics Articles Data Set. $N = 35$. For an example of recent work on Latin American politics using formal methods, see Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh (2004).

²³ On theories proposed in this literature that bridge system and actor levels of analysis, see Mahoney and Snyder (1999).

²⁴ Outstanding examples include Linz's study (1978) of democratic breakdowns and O'Donnell and Schmitter's work (1986) on democratic transitions.

²⁵ For a survey of definitions of political regime and democracy, and an attempt to bring some order to the conceptual discussion, see Munck (1996) and Collier and Levitsky (1997). For some suggestions about how to distinguish the concepts of democratic transition, democratic consolidation and democratic quality, see Munck (2001b: 123–30, 2004b: 66–9, 80–4, 91–3). For some hints regarding overlapping concerns in the study of democratic quality and democratic institutions, see Munck (2004a: 450–6).

clarity regarding divergent conceptions. And, as a consequence, this research has proceeded without a clear sense of how different agendas connect to each other and, hence, how theories about different parts of the overall political process might be integrated.²⁶

A second, related weakness is the failure to formalize the process of theorizing about complex relationships among conceptual attributes and to provide explicit measurement models. Such models are essential to the goal of offering descriptions, which are valuable in themselves and also constitute an essential building block in causal analysis. Indeed, the role of a good description in offering analysts a firm grounding as they enter the thorny terrain of causal theorizing is hard to overestimate.²⁷ Yet, though the aim of much research on Latin American politics is to offer descriptions,²⁸ the need to formally summarize the results of such theorizing frequently goes unrecognized, and thus the subsequent task of empirical analysis is commonly tackled in the absence of clear theoretical guidance.

A third shortcoming in theorizing about Latin American politics concerns the tendency to amend theories, so as to address anomalies, in ways that weaken the theory. One form of this problem is the standard practice of dealing with anomalies by simply adding new variables, often in an ad hoc manner—as in the frequent appeals to context—and with little effort to address how the new variables connect to existing theories. Another form of this problem is the common invocation of domain restrictions, which precludes the development of general theory and the treatment of certain key assumptions as empirical questions. These are serious and widespread problems that run counter to a rigorous approach to theory building and that preempt testing.

Finally, a related weakness is the failure to explicitly and correctly formulate causal models. Indeed, to a large extent, the fruit of a lot of theorizing is not formally summarized in a clearly specified causal model, making it unclear

²⁶ A symptom of the lack of theoretical integration is the false debates that run through the literature (Munck 2004b: 77).

²⁷ On the value of a good description, see Abbott (2001: 121–2). On the lack of a stark divide between descriptive and causal thinking, see Kaplan (1964: 52–4) on the paradox of conceptualization and Bollen and Lennox (1991) on ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ indicators of a concept and the implication of this distinction for the construction of indices.

²⁸ Forty-four percent of articles on Latin America published in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics* during 1989–2004 primarily aim to offer descriptions. The rest of the articles primarily offer causal analyses. The data are drawn from the Munck–Snyder Comparative Politics Articles Data Set. $N = 75$. On some of the core issues that must be addressed in formulating measurement models, see Bollen (2001).

what hypotheses need to be tested.²⁹ Alternatively, scholars do present the results of their theorizing in formal terms, but they do so by relying on standard default models, such as linear, additive, unifinal, and recursive models, that frequently misrepresent their theories.³⁰

0.2.2. Empirical Analysis

Empirical analyses of Latin American politics have relied on two core strategies, a traditional and largely dominant qualitative strategy and a secondary though increasingly significant quantitative strategy.³¹ Both these strategies have sought to contribute to empirical analysis through the generation and the analysis of data. Thus, in principle, one of the potential strengths of empirical analyses of Latin American politics is the combination of multiple, complementary methods. Yet, in practice, most of the research on Latin American politics is best characterized as following multiple tracks rather than effectively combining multiple methods and integrating research using qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis.³² Hence, an evaluation of empirical analysis is

²⁹ Only 26 percent of articles on Latin America published in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics* during 1989–2004 offer testable hypotheses, i.e. hypotheses that explicitly specify the variables and the relationship among the variables used in a causal model. The data are drawn from the Munck–Snyder Comparative Politics Articles Data Set. N = 35.

³⁰ A linear cause is generally assumed to be constant at different levels of a causal variable, symmetric in the sense of being the same whether the change on the independent variable is in one direction or the other, and proportional in the sense that the magnitude of the effect is commensurate to the change in the independent variable. Additivity refers to the assumption that each independent variable operates in isolation of each other and hence does not envision the interaction among independent variables. Unifinality refers to the assumption of a one-to-one relationship between independent and dependent variable, that does not allow for causal heterogeneity, as when multiple paths to the same outcome is posited. Finally, recursivity means that an independent variable has an effect on a dependent variable and that this dependent variable does not affect, in turn, the independent variable.

³¹ The methods of empirical analysis of 43 percent of articles on Latin America published in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, and *World Politics* during 1989–2004 is qualitative, and another 21 percent of such articles use mixed methods but rely primarily on qualitative methods. Another 12 percent used mixed methods but are primarily quantitative, and the remaining 24 percent use quantitative methods. In turn, none of the articles use simulations or experimental data. The data are drawn from the Munck–Snyder Comparative Politics Articles Data Set. N = 75. Some of the new quantitative literature focuses exclusively on Latin America (Przeworski and Limongi 1994; Remmer 1996; Seligson 2004), but much of it considers Latin American cases in a broader, even global perspective (Coppedge 1997a; Landman 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003, 2005; Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004).

³² On the supplementary strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods, and hence the rationale for combining these methods, see Munck and Verkuilen (2005). On the

a matter of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of research using qualitative methods, on the one hand, and quantitative methods, on the other hand (see Figure 0.1).

Qualitative research has displayed some distinct and considerable strengths. Most notably, it has generated most of the available information we have on Latin American political actors and processes. The value of this information is considerable. It has the fundamental virtue of corresponding closely to the causal mechanisms and temporal categories used in much theorizing; thus, it has been the source of the bulk of current descriptions about how political processes vary across time and space. In addition, qualitative researchers have increasingly sought to provide causal assessments and have quite successfully challenged existing theories through comparisons to cases outside of Latin America. Yet these strengths are limited by associated weaknesses. The capacity to offer good descriptions has been undermined frequently by the lack of a systematic approach to data generation. And the aspiration to assess causal hypotheses has been frustrated by the inherent difficulty to assess generalizability and establish control in light of the enduring ‘many variables, small-N’ problem.

Quantitative research, in contrast, has the potential of offering systematic assessments of patterns of association and the generalizability of hypotheses. Moreover, quantitative researchers have invested a considerable amount of energy in generating the large-N data-sets required to realize this potential. Nonetheless, some serious problems continue to hamper quantitative research. Data limitations impose considerable restrictions. Thus, the data used by quantitative researchers tends to be annual measures of structural, institutional, and outcome variables, which do not capture the tempo of political process and the behavior of actors. Relatedly, quantitative research tends to offer tests of relatively simple causal models, frequently fails to address basic methodological issues, and has produced results that have been quite unstable.³³

0.2.3. A Recapitulation

In sum, research on Latin American politics has many methodological strengths but also many methodological weaknesses that undermine the possibility of producing knowledge. Key strengths of this literature include

ways in which a multitrack strategy may be advisable as an interim strategy, given the state of knowledge, see Munck (2004b: 79–80, 89–91, 96).

³³ On some methodological issues that quantitative researchers are grappling with, see Munck (2004a: 445–50). On the lack of robust results, see Casper and Tufis (2002) and Kriekhaus (2004).

(a) the framing of agendas around pressing, normatively important questions; (b) complex mid-range theorizing which seeks to capture actual political process; (c) the collection of information attuned to the concepts used in theories; and (d) systematic data analysis oriented to both descriptive and causal inference. But, as the above assessment of research strategies also pinpointed, the literature on Latin American politics also has some significant methodological weaknesses. These include (a) a lack of efforts to integrate mid-range theories; (b) a tendency to theorize in an ad hoc manner and to preempt empirical questions; (c) a lack of formalization in the presentation of the results of theorizing; and (d) a failure to capitalize on the complementary strengths of qualitative and quantitative forms of empirical analysis.

It is important to highlight these weaknesses, for they affect the ability of researchers to produce robust findings, let alone to cumulate knowledge. Yet the spirit in which these points are raised deserves clarification. These criticisms do not imply that only the study of Latin American politics is affected by these weaknesses. After all, a comparison of the methodological standards in different bodies of literature in comparative politics exceeds the scope of this chapter. Moreover, the challenges prefigured by these weaknesses are actively being addressed by a growing number of scholars dedicated to understanding Latin American politics. Indeed, as Section 0.3 seeks to show, the contributions to this volume take some important steps to respond to these methodological challenges and offer examples of the continued vitality of research on Latin American politics.

0.3. THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS VOLUME: AN OUTLINE OF RESEARCH FRONTIERS

Part I, on research agendas, consists of three chapters. In Chapter 1, I address two basic questions: What is democracy? And, What are the implications of other political values beyond democracy for democracy? Taking Robert Dahl's work on democracy and, in particular, his critique of Joseph Schumpeter's views as the point of departure, I argue that a theory of democracy offers justification for conceiving democracy as a set of rules of the game regarding the political process—which extends from forming a government through public decision-making all the way to the implementation of binding decisions—that reflects the principle that voter preferences should be weighed equally. I also argue that democracy is a relative value, that is, one value among others regarding politics, and that the normative justification for promoting democracy thus requires an empirical analysis of the potential trade-offs among competing political values. More broadly, I suggest that a theoretical

justification for a definition of democracy and a normative justification for the promotion of democracy are essential touchstones, which help researchers make decisions that ensure that they are proceeding along the right track, especially as they tackle complex theoretical and methodological issues.

In Chapter 2, Sebastián Mazzuca considers the research agenda that has developed around the concept of the quality of democracy and challenges what he sees as its key analytical device, an expanded definition of democracy that goes beyond the standards articulated by Dahl. The problem, in Mazzuca's view, is that the agenda on the quality of democracy has been framed in such a way that the politics of democratic quality is interpreted as an extension of the politics of democratization studied under the rubrics of transitions to, and consolidation of, democracy. To respond to this conceptual shortcoming, Mazzuca proposes an alternative framework that introduces the distinction between access to power and exercise of power as a way to reconceptualize democratization as understood in the quality of democracy agenda. In Mazzuca's view, research will benefit from framing practices such as corruption, clientelism, and ineffective checks and balances not as issues of democratization but of bureaucratization.

In Chapter 3, Royce Carroll and Matthew Shugart address the question, How and why does democracy work or fail in Latin America? That is, rather than asking *what?* questions, as the two previous chapters, they focus squarely on the political institutions that are central to functioning democracies and seek to uncover the conditions under which democracies operate well. They begin by proposing a framework to study constitutional structures and party systems that highlights the manner in which institutions channel political ambition—a theme emphasized by James Madison—and also draws on recent developments in principal–agent and collective action theory—hence the label ‘neo-Madisonian’. They argue that this framework can account for the way democracies work and also can shed light on normative concerns, such as the failure of institutions to ensure accountability or of government to provide public goods.

Subsequently, Carroll and Shugart use this framework to review and synthesize a broad literature on Latin American institutions. They place emphasis on the impact of electoral rules on relationships among and within parties and hence on the fragmentation–concentration of authority; and, in turn, they consider how these patterns of authority affect whether the relationships between the executive and the legislature will be transactional or hierarchical in nature. Moreover, they ground their arguments through a discussion of various countries and explore the possibility of a dynamic theory of institutions. Finally, Carroll and Shugart suggest future steps for institutional research using a neo-Madisonian approach.

Part II, on concepts, data, and description, consists of two chapters. In Chapter 4, Michael Coppedge introduces the distinction between two conventional approaches in comparative politics—a ‘thick’ approach based on small-N comparisons, including case studies; and a ‘thin’ approach based on large-N comparisons—and then considers how matters of conceptualization and measurement are tackled within both approaches. Coppedge argues that each approach has distinctive strengths and weaknesses. Most fundamentally, while a thick approach relies on concepts that are multifaceted, multidimensional, and imbued with theory; a thin approach uses concepts that tend to be simple, unidimensional, and more theoretically adaptable. Thus, inasmuch as comparativists choose one or another approach, they face trade-offs. But, as Coppedge emphasizes, the trade-off between generality and specificity, though rooted in standard practices, is not inherent to research and can be overcome inasmuch as scholars make a concerted effort to create large-N data-sets that offer measures of thick concepts. Indeed, fleshing out this new approach, and using the concept of democracy as an example, Coppedge makes pointed suggestions about how concepts could be thickened and how such thick concepts could be measured.

In Chapter 5, Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán offer a detailed discussion of their effort to devise a methodology to improve on existing measures of political regimes and democracy, and of the data-set they generated applying this methodology to Latin America in the 1945–2004 period. Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán make a case for certain key methodological choices: a definition of democracy that goes beyond elections, the use of a measurement scale that moves beyond dichotomies, and the coding of cases on the basis of both explicit coding rules and in-depth knowledge of cases. Thus, they illustrate how the differences that set case study and small-N research apart from large-N research might be bridged and add further clues as to how the trade-offs discussed by Coppedge might be overcome.

Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán also vividly demonstrate the stakes of the methodological choices that underpin measures of regimes and democracy. Thus, rather than following the common practice of comparing their data-set to alternative data-sets and interpreting high correlations among multiple data-sets as evidence that methodological differences, ironically, do not have a significant effect on the data that are generated, they delve further into the matter. They carefully compare their methodology and their measures to other methodologies and measures, tease out the implications of different methodological practices, and show how different data-sets support different substantive conclusions about the evolution of democracy in Latin America.

Good data on political regimes and democracy in Latin America are essential to the analysis of politics in the region. Thus, the recent reinvigoration

of the tradition of constructing quantitative indices to assess democracy in Latin America inaugurated by Russell Fitzgibbon in 1945, through efforts by many scholars with close knowledge of the region, is a salutary development.³⁴ As the chapters by Coppedge and Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán show, the production of valid and reliable measures is a complicated and challenging task. But the discussions about data have spurred a learning process, based on a trial and error experience, which is resulting in an increased focus on methodological standards that provide the basis for distinguishing between good and poor measures; a gradual refinement of the methodologies used in measuring regimes and democracy; the generation of more and better data; and, finally, production of the more systematic descriptions of Latin American politics.

Part III, on causal theorizing and testing, includes four chapters. In Chapter 6, Coppedge extends the discussion of thick and thin approaches he offers in Chapter 4 by turning from issues of conceptualization and measurement to matters of causal theorizing and testing. A thick approach, understood as entailing case studies and small-N comparisons, is seen as making a key contribution to causal theory generation, especially due to its tendency to reflect the complexity of the world. A thick approach is also seen as playing a role in the testing of theories, most notably through comparisons within cases. But Coppedge argues that the limitations of such an approach for testing hypotheses are serious. Thus, when it comes to hypothesis testing, he considers a thin approach, based on large-N comparisons, to be indispensable.

At the same time, Coppedge is upfront about the challenges faced in large-N research. In his discussion of the literature on Latin America and the large-N research on democratization, he stresses that even though the quantitative literature has progressed considerably in recent times, it still offers tests of theories and uses measures of concepts that are relative thin and that do not capture the richness of the theorizing on, and conceptualizations of, Latin American politics. Moreover, he warns that making the challenge more manageable by focusing exclusively on a Latin American sample may not be a workably strategy. Indeed, as Coppedge notes, even if we are not interested in

³⁴ The Fitzgibbon index was started in 1945 and subsequently updated by Kenneth Johnson and Philip Kelly. For the entire series, which runs from 1945 to 2000 at five-year intervals, see Kelly (2002). Beyond the work of Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán included in this volume, other noteworthy recent works include Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo (2003), Bowman, Lehoucq, and Mahoney (2005), Smith (2005: 347–53) and the Electoral Democracy Index I constructed for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report *Democracy in Latin America* (UNDP 2005: 21–33 of statistical compendium)—four data-sets focused exclusively on Latin America—Schneider and Schmitter's multiregional data-set (2004), and Coppedge (2005) and Przeworski et al. (2000: ch. 1), as updated by Cheibub and Gandhi (2004)—two global data-sets created by scholars with a Latin American expertise.

generalizing beyond the region, to detect relationships it may be necessary to use cross-regional samples. In sum, Coppedge suggests that researchers should acknowledge the value of both thick and thin approaches, but also recognize limitations and confront challenges and, moving beyond a notion of a divide among approaches, think creatively about how to integrate research by scholars drawn to one or another of these standard approaches in comparative politics.

In Chapter 7, Jason Seawright probes further into the question of causal assessment and the challenges faced by statistical researchers. He addresses the large-N literature on the impact of democracy on economic growth, focusing on its inability to produce robust findings. And he shows how quantitative research using different control variables generate radically different results, indeed contradictory findings,³⁵ and also that one possible way out of this problem—the identification of natural experiments—has not proved to be a fruitful strategy.³⁶ In short, Seawright shows how difficult it is to make knowledge claims about causation even when using powerful statistical techniques, because the hardest hurdles concern the state of theory and the nature of the data, and thus are not amenable to statistical fixes.

Seawright's sobering message regarding the limits of standard quantitative research does not lead him to give up hope and abandon the pursuit of scientific knowledge, however.³⁷ Rather Seawright makes two constructive recommendations. One recommendation concerns the question of standards, and calls on researchers to explicitly explain why their findings differ from previous findings and to justify why their causal model and analysis should be preferred over existing alternatives. In this way, scholars will have a basis for assessing different knowledge claims as opposed to giving equal credibility to all sorts of disparate findings. A second suggestion is that, in light of the difficulties

³⁵ Other reasons for unstable findings in the literature on democracy and economic development are the use of different data-sets and the analysis of different time periods (Casper and Tufis 2002; Krieckhaus 2004).

³⁶ A natural experiment is an observational study where the assignment of cases to treatment or control groups is treated as though it were randomized by nature. On natural experiments, see Freedman (2005: 6–9). Natural experiment offer a way around the problem of specifying the correct set of controls because they constitute a way to identify instrumental variables—variables that do not belong in the regression, that are correlated with the explanatory variable of interest, and that are uncorrelated with the error term—which can be used to produce unbiased inferences about the effect of a variables on a dependent variable, even if there are important excluded variables that would otherwise cause inferential problems. On natural experiments as a way to identify instrumental variables and on the analysis of such variables, see Angrist and Krueger (2001).

³⁷ For similar messages regarding the limits of standard quantitative research, see Sørensen (1998) and Freedman (2005). The classic statement on the virtual impossibility of cross-national comparative analysis is MacIntyre (1971); for a recent revisiting of the issue, with a less skeptical message, see Przeworski (forthcoming).

of making valid causal inferences, it would be productive to focus on a more modest goal, the study of causal mechanisms, and to use case-based knowledge to identify small-scale, local natural experiments.³⁸ In a nutshell, reinforcing the arguments made by Coppedge in Chapter 6, Seawright emphasizes the need to always connect statistical analysis to issues of theory and data, and draws attention to the potential value of case studies.

Chapter 8, by Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, addresses the common practice within comparative politics of focusing on a single world region and spells out a rationale for studying regions. They argue that political processes are many times region-specific and hence that research on regions is less likely than global scale comparisons to violate the methodological assumption of causal homogeneity. Moreover, they posit that international influences are particularly strong within regions, creating what they label 'regional diffusion effects', so that region-focused analyses would be more attuned to this potential causal factor. These claims are supported through a statistical study of the determinants of democracy that shows that the impact of the level of development on democracy varies by region and that trends within the region where a country is located have an impact on that country's status as a democracy. Thus, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán suggest, efforts to pin down regional specificities avoid some of the pitfalls of global studies and case studies, and are likely to be a fruitful strategy for causal theorizing and testing.

Finally, in Chapter 9, Andrew Gould and Andrew Magglio focus on a key question left unresolved by studies of democracy, Why does development have a stronger effect on the prospects of democratic breakdown than on transitions to democracy? First, Gould and Magglio propose a model that captures the distinct options and risks faced by key actors that operate within the framework of democracies and dictatorships and thus systematize some key insights from the comparative politics literature. Thereafter, they depart from conventional analyses, which study political decision-making only in terms of probabilities and the relative values of various outcomes and, drawing on prospect theory, develop hypotheses that put an accent on the framing of choices as gains or losses and on the level of the stakes. Hence, they begin by presenting a theoretically innovative analysis of the effect of economic development of political regimes.

But Gould and Magglio also break new ground by bringing experimental methods to bear on the old question of the relationship between development and democracy, which has been one of the preferred topics of both small-N and large-N comparative research. As Gould and Magglio state, an experiment

³⁸ A similar recommendation regarding causal mechanisms has been made by Elster (1999: ch. 1) and Goldthorpe (2000).

tests only some elements of a model. Yet experimental methods have many advantages over more commonly used methods, including their ability to produce data that are quite directly related to the mechanisms posited in theory and that can be used to make causal inferences with a high degree of validity. Thus, Gould and Maggio's finding that the framing of choices and the level of stakes accounts for the stronger effect of development on the prospects of democratic breakdown than on transitions to democracy is an important contribution to the substantive debate about development and democracy. Moreover, Gould and Maggio's study constitutes an exemplar that is rich in implications about how prospect theory might be better applied in the study of politics and, more broadly, about how experimental methods might be used alongside the standard repertoire of methods in comparative politics that rely on observational data.³⁹

0.4. CONCLUSION: BUILDING ON TRADITION AND EMBRACING INNOVATION

Starting with research conducted in the late 1950s, but especially since the shift from a sociology of politics to the explicitly political analyses in the 1970s, a body of literature that deserves the label of a comparative politics of Latin America has taken shape. The research agendas addressed in this literature have spanned democratic breakdowns; transitions from authoritarian rule; and the consolidation, functioning, and quality of democracies.

An overall evaluation of this research must recognize its indisputable accomplishments. Over the last four decades, it has contributed to the steady growth of an important literature on Latin American politics and, more broadly, on comparative politics. As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, these successes might be partially due to the special vantage point from which to think about politics afforded by Latin America and to the way in which thinking about the region has been influenced by a dialogue between Latin Americans and outsiders to the region. But the production of knowledge is also affected by the research strategies—families of methods—that are employed in studying substantive issues. And, hence, this chapter has placed—as the book as a whole does—a heavy emphasis on research strategies, broadly conceived.

Students of Latin American politics have developed a strong methodological tradition that puts a premium on research that is keenly attuned to the

³⁹ For an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of experiments, see Munck and Verkuilen (2005: 388–91). On the importance of bringing experimental research to bear on the study of politics, see Green and Gerber (2002), and for some attempts to use an experimental approach in comparative politics, see Wantchekon (2003) and Habyarimana et al. (2004).

evolution of political events in the region, that resonates with classic themes in social and political theory, and that takes a sense of political processes as a key source of insight. This tradition has generated a wealth of knowledge about politics in the region. Thus, radical proposals that assert that research must start from scratch deserve to be treated with skepticism. Indeed, in our haste to learn new things, we should beware of the natural tendency to forget things we, as a research community, once knew. Yet a sober view of the knowledge that has been produced and the deficiencies of the current state of knowledge is certainly called for. Indeed, just as there are good reasons to build on tradition, so too are there good reasons to embrace methodological innovation. Thus, this volume seeks to foster the advancement of knowledge about Latin American politics by shedding light on key substantive agendas through a balance between old and new methods, that is, remembering how the things we know were learned and remaining open to new ways of learning.

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Part I

Research Agendas

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The Study of Politics and Democracy: Touchstones of a Research Agenda

Gerardo L. Munck

Latin American politics experienced a far-reaching process of democratization during the 1980s and 1990s. Dictators in South America were replaced by elected leaders starting in 1978 and, with the displacements of General Stroessner in Paraguay in 1989 and General Pinochet in Chile in 1990, a long and dark period of authoritarian and military rule in South America drew to a close. In Central America, democratization was initiated with the holding of elections in the early 1980s, and the process continued with the resolution of armed conflicts through the signing of peace accords, and the transformation of guerrilla organizations into political parties, during the late 1980s until the mid-1990s. Finally, Mexico's distinctive brand of civilian authoritarianism and its drawn-out process of liberalization gave way to a democratic regime, with the alternation in power produced by the landmark 2000 election. With the exception of Cuba, the region as a whole underwent a remarkable political change.

The changes initiated in the 1980s have proved to be enduring. Most countries that had been democracies prior to the 1980s have, by now, experienced the longest period of democracy in their histories. And new democracies have remained in place. But this does not mean that issues of change have ceased to be relevant. The institutionalization of democratic politics is not assured, the erosion of democracy is a real concern, and the possibility of democratic breakdowns cannot be discarded. Moreover, many actors pursue further democratic changes, seeking to ensure not only that citizens' rights regarding the electoral process are guaranteed but, more ambitiously, that citizens can exercise fuller democratic control over their states. The struggle for democracy continued to lie at the center of Latin American politics.

Research on these political developments has largely been framed—much as the two previous paragraphs—in terms of the concept of democracy and

its derivatives. The concept of democratic transition was the first to galvanize attention. Subsequently democratic consolidation became the call of the day. And currently, political analyses rely on a number of concepts: democratic institutions, democratic governability, democratic governance, and democratic quality. Indeed, the bulk of research on Latin American politics over the last twenty-five years can, in one way or another, be connected to the concept of democracy.

The status of democracy as a master concept in the study of Latin American politics has helped to keep research focused on big, normatively pressing questions. In addition, it has served to identify a community of scholars who share a common research interest. Yet, more and more, further progress on this research agenda seems to hinge on a resolution of two nagging questions. The first is the disarmingly simple conceptual question, What is democracy? The second is the empirical question, What are the implications of other political values beyond democracy for democracy?

This chapter addresses these two questions. It takes as its point of departure Robert Dahl's work on democracy and, in particular, his critique of Joseph Schumpeter's views. Next it seeks to establish the conceptual boundaries of the concept of democracy by considering the relationship between democracy and two proximate concepts: rule of law and human development. In Section 1.3, it draws conclusions regarding the definition of democracy and discusses the implications of acknowledging that democracy is a relative value, that is, one value among others regarding politics. Finally, some parting comments are offered.

1.1. TOWARD A ROBUST PROCEDURAL CONCEPTION: DAHL ON SCHUMPETERIAN DEMOCRACY

Dahl's contribution to democratic theory, especially in his most elaborate and refined statement in *Democracy and Its Critics* (Dahl 1989), offers a good starting point for a discussion of democracy in relation to the modern state.¹ In particular, Dahl's explicit and implicit critique of Schumpeter's views raise some key issues that must be confronted in an attempt to define democracy. The merit of Schumpeter is that he offered a strictly processual definition—'democracy is a political *method*'—formulated in memorable terms: 'the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by

¹ Though the concept of democracy can be applied to a variety of units, the following discussion focuses on democracy in relation to the modern state, which is considered to be the main public decision-making center.

means of a competitive struggle for people's vote' (Schumpeter 1942: 242, 269). And this procedural and parsimonious definition, commonly referred to as a Schumpeterian conception of democracy,² has been influential. But, as Dahl shows, substantial amendments of Schumpeter's definition are required. Indeed, Schumpeter's definition even fails to serve as a valid basis for his ostensible main goal: to offer criteria for empirically distinguishing democracies from nondemocracies (Schumpeter 1942: 269–70).

Dahl, as Schumpeter, adopts a procedural conception of democracy. That is, for Dahl democracy is about the political process and not the outcomes of the political process. But he departs from Schumpeter both in terms of *why* a democratic political process should be valued and *what* a democratic political process encompasses. First, though Schumpeter (1942: 242) states that the 'democratic method' is 'incapable of being an end in itself', Dahl breaks with the familiar contrast between procedural and substantive views of democracy, and makes a case that a democratic political process should be valued as a substantive good (Dahl 1989: ch. 12; see also Dahl 1971: ch. 2, 1998: ch. 5).³ Countering the view commonly invoked in arguments dismissive of democracy, and ironically sanctioned by Schumpeter, that if democracy is understood as a process it is merely a means, Dahl argues that democracy should be valued not just as a means but also as an end in itself.

Second, while Schumpeter's approach to democracy is elitist, in the sense that he sees voters as lacking in rationality and information and hence considers that it is best to limit voter participation and leave most choices to professional politicians (Schumpeter 1942: 256–64, 269, 282–3), Dahl places the assumptions that all citizens have equal intrinsic worth and that ordinary people are capable of governing themselves at the heart of his theory of democracy (Dahl 1989: chs. 6 and 7). Hence, though Schumpeter sees democracy as just a means to ensure a circulation among elites, Dahl sees democracy as giving all individuals who are legally bound to abide by public decisions the right to participate equally in the entire process that generates these decisions. And this difference leads Dahl to propose a major revision of Schumpeter's definition of democracy as consisting only of competitive elections among leaders.

To begin, Dahl contests one of Schumpeter's main claims: that his definition establishes an empirically verifiable threshold below which cases are

² Though rights of authorship are usually assigned to Schumpeter, Weber is an important precursor of this approach. On Weber's and Schumpeter's contributions to the development of the new model of competitive elitism, see Held (1996: ch. 5).

³ For a defense of a procedural conception of democracy that also highlights its intrinsic value but is less expansive than Dahl's defense, see Przeworski (1999).

unequivocally nondemocracies. Schumpeter (1942: ch. 21, 269–70) criticizes the view that regimes that claim to realize the common good should be labeled as ‘democratic’, arguing that such a claim is unverifiable. And his identification of competitive elections, which open the possibility of alternation in power, is undoubtedly a key criterion to distinguish democracies from nondemocratic government by guardians, who may claim to speak in the name of the people but do not allow for a process of public debate about government decisions and citizen choice on alternatives. Yet Schumpeter’s full definition is not consistent with this critique of guardianship. Indeed, Schumpeter’s argument (1942: 244–5) that the right to vote is a contingent matter, to be decided case by case according to the standard of each society, opens the door for the elites of each society to decide who they want to exclude from the political process, a decision that could fully exclude popular preferences from the process of competition. Thus, as Dahl (1989: ch. 9) argues, responding directly to Schumpeter, a definition of democracy can only serve as the basis for a distinction between democracies and nondemocracies if it includes a universal standard that reflects the principle of political equality.⁴

In addition to making this point about measurement, Dahl’s work raises two basic questions about what might be labeled the conceptual limitations of Schumpeter’s definition. One limitation concerns the ultimate stakes of democratic politics. Schumpeter’s definition can be seen as starting with voters, running through elections and ending, unambiguously, with the public offices to be filled by election winners. That is, Schumpeter (1942: 269, 273, 291–3) sees the formation of government as the end point of the democratic process and is deliberately silent on the range of decisions a democratic government should be entitled to make. What government authorities do is not a matter of concern for Schumpeter’s democratic theory. But Dahl (1989: 112–4) argues that such a view of the democratic process is too limited and hence that the concept of democracy extends beyond the constitution of government. Thus, a first conceptual question triggered by Dahl’s work on democracy is, How far does the democratic political process extend beyond the formation of government?

Dahl’s writings also raise the question whether Schumpeter’s definition adequately captures, to put it in spatial terms, how deep the rights entailed

⁴ There is still some question about what this universal standard should be. Thus, Dahl (1989: 129) argues for a highly inclusive criterion, that only excludes children, transients, and the mentally defective. But the threshold used to distinguish democratic from nondemocratic levels of voting rights could be specified in a range of ways that would be consistent with another consideration expressed by Dahl, ‘that a satisfactory definition has to respect the history of the term’ (Munck and Snyder 2007c). On various operationalizations of the right to vote and how a criterion to distinguish democratic from nondemocratic levels of voting rights might be specified, see Munck (2006).

by democracy go as opposed to how far they extend. Schumpeter (1942: 272) hints that freedom of the press is implied by his definition of democracy. But he neither gives serious thought to the right to a free press in a democratic political process, nor does he suggest that this right or any other right that goes beyond the rights traditionally understood as political rights—such as the right to vote and the right to run for office—should be explicitly included in a definition of democracy. Again, Dahl goes considerably beyond Schumpeter. Thus, he considers not only a range of rights conventionally labeled as ‘civil rights’, but also how equal opportunities to participate in the political process are affected by the distribution of economic resources (Dahl 1989: 114–15, 178–9). Moreover, even though Dahl is consistent in stating that he uses the concept of democracy as a way to characterize the political process, he explicitly includes freedom of the press and also freedom of assembly and expression in his definition of democracy (Dahl 1989: 220–2, 1998: ch. 8). Thus, a second conceptual question prompted by Dahl’s work on democracy is, Are there rights beyond those traditionally understood as ‘political’ rights that are constitutive of democracy and, if so, what are they?⁵

The core message of Dahl’s work is obvious: democracy is about more than the process for forming governments through the free competition among politicians for votes. Even if Schumpeter’s definition is amended so as to include a justifiable standard of who is entitled to the right to vote, such a definition would be a partial definition of democracy, a definition of electoral democracy rather than of the broader concept of democracy. Yet the difficulties faced in formulating the alternative Dahl favors—a procedural but more robust definition of democracy—are considerable. Indeed, proposals to replace Schumpeter’s minimalist definition with broader definitions, including those advanced in the recent literature on the quality of democracy, have been quite weak, giving credibility to the argument that, conceptual shortcomings notwithstanding, a minimalist definition of democracy is preferable because its parsimony makes it analytically clearer than its alternatives and hence more suitable for purposes of empirical analysis.⁶ The formulation of a theoretically informed and analytically useful alternative to Schumpeter remains an important challenge.

⁵ All right are political, inasmuch as they all refer to the state. But this is not the point being made here.

⁶ In this regard, it is noteworthy that Dahl himself retreats considerably from his broad concept of democracy when he suggests ways to operationalize democracy. Ironically, the list of institutional features he has proposed to measure democracy is strikingly Schumpeterian, stopping at the point in the political process when public officials are elected (Dahl 1971: 3, 1989: 221, 1998: 37–8).

1.2. NEW PERSPECTIVES: RULE OF LAW, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, AND DEMOCRACY

To tackle the challenge of moving toward a robust procedural definition of democracy, it is instructive to consider the relationship between democracy and two proximate concepts: rule of law and human development. These two concepts are closely related to democracy, yet have been articulated primarily by legal scholars and economists who do not always share the training in democratic theory that is common among political scientists. Thus, considering their relationship to democracy is a particularly apt way to address in a fresh way the two conceptual questions raised by Dahl's work: (a) How far does the democratic political process extend beyond the formation of government? (b) Are there rights beyond those traditionally understood as 'political' rights that are constitutive of democracy and, if so, what are they? Identifying what is constitutive of democracy is a complex task. But, as the following discussion seeks to show, by consistently fleshing out the implications of the democratic principle that all individuals who are legally bound to abide by public decisions have the right to participate equally in the entire process that generates these decisions, it is possible to arrive at some solid conclusions regarding what should be included in, and excluded from, a definition of democracy.

1.2.1. Rule of Law and Democracy: A Process to Empower the Demos

The relationship between the rule of law and democracy has direct implications for the question about how far the democratic political process extends beyond the formation of government. The concepts of rule of law and democracy are closely linked, and the distinctiveness of each concept is hard to specify.⁷ Indeed, there is even some overlap between these concepts, in that both refer to the political process, and both emphasize rule-bound behavior and the principle of equality. But the core elements of these two concepts are actually quite different. On the one hand, the key normative concern embedded in the concept of rule of law—drawn from the tradition of constitutional liberalism—is the potential abuse of state power. Hence, the rule of law is first and foremost about guaranteeing outcomes by putting certain values—equality, but also freedom—beyond or above the political process. On the other hand, the critical normative concern of the concept of democracy is that

⁷ On the relationship between rule of law and democracy, see Habermas (1996, 2001), Maravall and Przeworski (2003), and O'Donnell (2004b).

people should have a say in the making of state decisions they must abide by. Thus, democracy is all about guaranteeing a political process in which no outcomes are placed beyond the reach of the people.

This contrast between the rule of law and democracy helps to clarify what is distinctive about democracy and, in the process, offers a basis for specifying how far beyond the formation of government the concept of democracy reaches. Indeed, it suggests that the democratic process extends at the very least to the point when legally binding decisions are actually made, what Dahl (1989: 106–8) calls the ‘decisive stage’. And, inasmuch as the decision-making process might be considered to entail the enactment of laws and their implementation, as Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan (1950: 74–5, 196, 201) argue, this means that the concept of democracy extends beyond the legislative enactment of laws. Democracy, then, is not just a matter of the preferences of each citizen being treated equally in the process of forming a government. Rather, democracy is a process that empowers the demos to control the state under which they live and that calls for voter preferences to be weighed equally in the decision-making process.

This does not mean that there is no democratic limit to the power of the demos. Democracy refers to a process for making publicly binding decisions that envisions no restrictions on what issues are to be decided, that does not foreclose choices. In this sense, a process is not democratic if the outcomes have been predetermined. Yet democracy requires that in the self-referential instance of the reproduction of the democratic process outcome trumps process. That is, a democratic process is one that does not precommit citizens to any specific outcomes, except that outcomes of the democratic political process cannot erode or abolish the democratic process. Thus, the one and only outcome of the political process that can be democratically put out of the reach of the demos concerns the reproduction of democratic process.

The relationship between the rule of law and democracy is also instructive, for a different reason, in considering whether there are rights beyond those traditionally understood as ‘political’ rights that are constitutive of democracy. This is a distinct question—which is relevant whether the democratic process is seen as ending with the formation of a government or extending beyond that point—that gets at, as suggested, how deep the rights entailed by democracy go as opposed to how far they extend. And, again, the answer to this question points to an expansion, up to an explicit limit, of the definition of democracy.

The argument for defining democracy in terms that go beyond strictly defined political rights is that those political rights cannot be effectively exercised in the absence of some other rights. For example, freedom of the press is commonly seen as an intrinsic feature of the democratic process, because voters cannot make an informed choice about candidates and issues unless

they have access to alternative sources of information. Relatedly, the right to information is essential to democracy because citizens—whether in their condition as voters, candidates for office, or elected officials—are deprived of a key component of a meaningful choice if they do not have information about what state agents are doing. Likewise, citizens cannot organize and mobilize in support of different candidates and issues unless they enjoy the freedom of association, assembly, expression, and movement. Hence, a case can be made for including rights usually categorized as ‘civil’ rights in the definition of democracy.

At the same time, this argument includes an implicit limiting criterion in that the addition of rights to a definition of democracy is justified in light of their status as rights intrinsic to the operation of the political process according to the democratic principle of universal and equal participation. That is, the inclusion of attributes such as freedom of the press does not actually transgress the boundary between democracy and the rule of law and hence contradict the invocation of this boundary as a way to delimit the concept of democracy. Rather, the point is that, regardless of the labels conventionally used in referring to certain rights, rights such as freedom of the press are actually required by a democratic political process. Indeed, what legal scholars refer to as ‘civil’ rights are, as some democratic theorists have argued, actually ‘political’ rights (Dahl 1989: 170; O’Donnell 2004a: 17–20) or, to avoid the terminological problems associated with the conventional distinction between political and civil rights, simply democratic rights.

1.2.2. Human Development and Democracy: Giving Meaning to Equal Opportunity

A consideration of the relationship between human development and democracy helps to further specify what should be included in, and excluded from, a definition of democracy.⁸ The human development paradigm, as it is frequently called, departs from standard approaches to development within economics and provides a novel perspective on the much-discussed connection between economics and democracy. In particular, the work on human development offers a basis for addressing the thorny issue of opportunities in a way that has important implications for the definition of democracy.

The differentiation between economics and democracy is well established. Since democracy does not extend to outcomes of the political process, as

⁸ On human development, see Ul Haq (1995), Sen (1999), and Fukuda-Parr and Kumar (2003). On the relationship between human development and democracy, see Sen (1999: Introduction, chs. 1, 2, 6, and 7), UNDP (2002: ch. 2), and Fukuda-Parr (2003).

discussed above, it excludes any notion of substantive equality, on the one hand, or a market-based economic system, on the other hand. In addition, since the concept of democracy is distinct from its causes and/or effects, it also excludes economic factors as conventionally understood in the literature on the economic determinants of democracy inaugurated by Seymour Lipset's article (1959) as well as in the literature on the economic performance of democracy (Lijphart 1999: ch: 15; Przeworski et al. 2000).

This differentiation between economics and democracy notwithstanding, there is a way in which economic factors might be thought of as constitutive elements of democracy. Democracy is a process that puts the economically powerful and powerless on an equal footing. Hence, any translation of economic power into political power, whether through the exclusion of the poor—for example, by tying the right to vote to a property requirement—or the excessive weight of the preferences of the wealthy—for example, through the buying of political influence or the setting of the agenda via media ownership—is obviously inimical to democracy. Indeed, these are hardly disputed issues. But the principle of political equality at the heart of the concept of democracy also implies something else that is rarely acknowledged.

As argued by the proponents of the concept of human development and the capabilities approach such as Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000), a lack of the material resources that are indispensable for an adequate standard of living, access to health, and access to education, is associated with a reduction of human capabilities. And the differential attainment of human capabilities necessarily has ramifications for the political process and, specifically, for the exercise of civil and political rights (Sen 1999: 36–40; see also UNDP 1990: 10, 2002: 52–3). Thus, to avoid a strictly legalistic and overly formal conception of what is entailed by an equal opportunity to participate in the political process, what might be tentatively phrased as the attainment of social integration should be included as a defining feature of democracy.⁹

1.3. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS: DEMOCRACY AND OTHER POLITICAL VALUES

The above discussion leads to some conclusions regarding how to define democracy. Yet an upshot of the discussion about the rule of law is also

⁹ On the impossibility of entirely separating what he calls the process and opportunity aspects of freedom, and the need for an integrated view of rights, see Sen (2002: Part VI). Some other, relevant discussions about equal opportunities and the issue of economic factors by political scientists include Lindblom (1977: Part V), Dahl (1985, 1989: 114–15, 167, 176, 178), and Sartori (1987b: ch. 12).

that there are other normatively infused political concepts beyond democracy that merit attention. Thus, what follows presents these conclusions and some suggestions regarding the implications of other political values beyond democracy for democracy.

1.3.1. Conceptual Issues: Defining Democracy

A theory of democracy offers justification for conceiving democracy as a set of rules regarding the political process, extending from the formation of government through public decision-making all the way to the implementation of binding decisions, which reflects the principle that voter preferences are weighed equally. This robust procedural conception justifies the inclusion in a definition of democracy of standard political rights associated with the election of representatives, such as universal and equal voting rights, the right to run for office, the right to free and fair elections, and the right to regular elections. But it also justifies the inclusion of three other classes of rights in a definition of democracy.

One such class of rights refers to the process of decision-making and implementation. Such rights are still not well articulated and hence are hard to specify clearly, but would have to include the right that public officials work for the public interest and other rights that ensure that the preferences of citizens are not only reflected in public policy but also that the principle of equal weight of citizens' preferences is respected. A second class of rights are those rights conventionally labeled as 'civil rights' which directly impinge on the ability of citizens to participate in the political process, including the right to a free press and to information, and the freedom of association, assembly, expression, and movement. Finally, a third class of rights concerns the opportunity for equal participation in the political process. These rights are also not well articulated, and much depends on precisely how the notion of social integration is specified. Indeed, part of the challenge of defining democracy consists in deciding whether and how items such as the means of material subsistence, access to education and health care, and decent work, might be seen as aspects of social integration.

It bears emphasizing that currently there is little consensus among scholars regarding how to define democracy. Indeed, not only do researchers use a wide range of definitions in their work. Moreover, there is a tendency in the literature to argue that the concept of democracy is 'essential contestable' (Gallie 1956), meaning that there is not even a basis for distinguishing better from worse definitions. Yet this skepticism about the possibility of making progress toward a shared definition is unwarranted. There are criteria for the inclusion

of elements into a definition, the first and foremost being their justification in terms of a theory of the phenomena being conceptualized. And there is a well-developed theory of democracy that can serve as the basis for a definition of democracy. Thus, inasmuch as the debate is conducted according to some basic criteria, it is not unrealistic to expect that a considerable consensus can be established regarding how to define democracy.

1.3.2. Empirical Questions: Democracy as a Relative Value

Another key conclusion of the discussion about the conceptual boundaries of the concept of democracy in the previous section is that there are other political values beyond democracy, even when democracy is understood in terms of the robust procedural conception proposed here. For example, given the potential for abuses of state power, it might be wise to protect the rule of law by placing some issues out of reach of the demos. And similar arguments can be made with regards to many other issues.

The implications of this point for research that uses democracy as its master concept are vast. Once other political values are acknowledged, the normative valuation that lies at the heart of research on democracy—more democracy is always better—becomes a matter for discussion and has to be justified in relation to other political values. And this means that research on democracy cannot focus only on democracy but, rather, must consider the potential trade-offs between democracy and other values. Indeed, this is emerging as one of the central empirical issues in the study of democracy.

The crux of the issue can be stated as follows. If we either hold only one value or hold multiple values yet one of them is deemed to trump the others under any circumstance, ones' concerns are reduced to identifying the actions that advance ones' overriding value. But if we hold multiple values that cannot be ordered independently of the relative gains and losses across different valued goals, ones' concerns must extend to the way in which the pursuit of one value may be negatively associated with another value and to the simultaneous impact of alternative courses of action on all values. In such a case, whether more democracy is better is not only a matter of how much democracy is valued relative to other values, but also of the empirical relationship between democracy and other political values.

The world of politics could still be simple. That is, it may well be that the empirical relationship between democracy and other political values—such as rule of law, development, and human rights—is mutually reinforcing. In that case, all good things go together, and the need for making tough choices

is circumvented. Democracy can be promoted without any worries about possible negative side effects. But, a wealth of historical and current evidence indicates that many political values are not mutually reinforcing (Mann 1993; Ertman 1997; Zakaria 2003). Moreover, a key puzzle of current Latin American politics is precisely that, counter to widely held expectations, the significant gains with regard to electoral democracy over the past twenty-five years have not been accompanied by comparable positive changes with regard to other desired goals, such as the rule of law and economic equality (Munck 2003). Politics seems to involve inescapable choices that require weighing complex trade-offs.

The research agenda on democracy cannot be limited, hence, to democracy. Rather, it must also include other political concepts that are proximate but distinct from democracy, and analyze the empirical relationship between democracy and these concepts. Most critically, it should clarify what trade-offs, if any, exist among multiple political values and, if trade-offs are inevitable, identify courses of action that might at least soften these trade-offs and priority areas for political intervention. Indeed, it is imperative that students of democracy think through politically the implications of acknowledging that democracy, though a master concept in much research, is not an absolute political value.

1.4. CONCLUSION

The research agenda on democracy, which may be understood simply as the literature that uses democracy as a master concept, had been voluminous and fruitful. Yet it has not quite pinned down a satisfactory answer to two basic questions: What is democracy? And, What are the implications of other political values beyond democracy for democracy? Clear and widely accepted answers to these questions are essential. Indeed, a response to these questions serve as essential touchstones, which help researchers make decisions that ensure that they are proceeding along the right track, especially as they tackle complex theoretical and methodological issues.

This chapter has focused primarily on the matter of how to define democracy. Definitions are important, in that they are the point of reference for subsequent aspects of the research process. Moreover, though definitions are usually considered the starting point of the research process, they are actually one of the most essential results of theory. Hence, a theoretical justification for considering certain elements as constitutive of democracy was offered. And the possibility of making progress toward a shared definition was raised.

The other question addressed in this chapter concerned the normative valuation of democracy. The democratic principle that all individuals have an equal right to participate in the process that generates these decisions is widely shared. But it does not follow that more democracy is always better simply because democracy is considered a good thing. Rather, as was suggested, because democracy is not the only widely shared political value, the normative justification for promoting democracy requires an empirical analysis of the potential trade-offs among multiple political values.

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Reconceptualizing Democratization: Access to Power Versus Exercise of Power*

Sebastián L. Mazzuca

Most democracies are ‘low-quality democracies’. Such is the diagnosis commonly offered in the literature on the quality of democracy.¹ The most prominent symptoms of the alleged deficit in democratic quality are corruption, government by executive decree, clientelism, and ineffective checks and balances. And, according to this analysis, most democracies in Latin America display more than one of these symptoms, several democracies embody the full syndrome of symptoms, and democratic quality is confined to small countries like Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay. Indeed, the standard analysis goes something like this. Although most governments in Latin America are the product of free and inclusive elections, few of them resist the temptation of abusing the political power gained through the electoral process. Parties in power change. But corruption scandals continue, networks of political patronage grow larger and more resilient—involving complex exchanges of favors among national leaders, local politicians, economic potentates, poor constituencies, and sometimes even criminal organizations—and the public officials charged with monitoring abuses of power do not have the will or the capacity to sanction them. In a nutshell, the legacy of the third wave of global democratization in Latin America is a regional cluster of governments formed by democratic means, but also of presidents, governors, legislatures, and judges who foster or protect the semilegal exploitation of public office for private gain.

The widespread presence of symptoms such as corruption and clientelism is indisputable. Quantitative and qualitative data offer strong evidence to that

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¹ Some of the key contributions to this literature include Linz (1997), Kitschelt et al. (1999), Lijphart (1999), O'Donnell (1999a, 1999b, 2001), O'Donnell, Vargas Cullel, and Iazzetta (2004), and Diamond and Morlino (2005).

effect. But is the diagnosis of ‘low democratic quality’ useful? This chapter argues that current efforts to frame the study of Latin American politics in terms of the concept of the QoD are ill advised. More specifically, this chapter posits that the problem lies in the central premise of the diagnosis offered in the QoD literature, that the symptoms of low-quality democracies should be interpreted as deficiencies in the democratization process. The consequence of this misdiagnosis is significant. Though the QoD research agenda is relatively new, its failure to make progress in uncovering the causes underlying the symptoms of low quality can be attributed in part to this flawed diagnosis. Thus, our ability to learn about Latin American politics hinges on a reconceptualization of democratization as understood in the QoD agenda.

This chapter elaborates this assessment of the literature on Latin American politics and proposed a solution. Section 2.1 focuses initially on the key concepts used in the QoD literature and highlights how its framing of symptoms of low-quality democracies as deficiencies in the democratization process relies on an expanded definition of democracy. Section 2.2 presents a critique of the QoD agenda that addresses two shortcomings: the empirical focus on democracies and conceptual framing of the analysis in terms of an expanded definition of democracy. Section 2.3 introduces an alternative conceptual framework, based on the distinction between access to power and exercise of power, that includes separate sets of concepts for the characterization of the institutions of access to power—authoritarianism and democracy—and exercise of power—patrimonialism and bureaucracy. Section 2.4 compares this new framework to the one used in the QoD agenda, and highlights the benefits of proposed framework. The conclusion summarizes the chapter’s main arguments.

2.1. THE QUALITY-OF-DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The contributors to the literature on the QoD have not reached a consensus with regard to how, precisely, the concept of QoD might be defined. But this literature has grappled with a set of readily recognizable political problems. And it has some common characteristics beyond the use of the term ‘quality of democracy’ that justify talking about a QoD agenda.

The QoD scholarship generally has a common point of departure, the distinction between countries that have completed transitions to democracy from those that have not. Furthermore, to a large extent, scholars subscribe to Robert Dahl’s definition (1971: 2–4) of polyarchy, which includes free elections, universal suffrage, and the set of civil and political liberties required

to ensure fair competition for positions in government (e.g. free press and associational rights). Thus, a relatively common Dahlian standard is used to identify countries that are democracies.

Focusing on countries thus deemed to be democracies, authors discuss a range of deficiencies, such as the persistence or even growth of extraordinary levels of political corruption and clientelism, the uneven application across regions and social groups of basic constitutional principles, and the weakness of the organizations that should monitor the behavior of powerful politicians such as the head of government. The conceptualization of these phenomena varies from one study to the other, and authors engage in intense disputes as to what specific attributes should be highlighted. But all these authors actually resort to the same conceptual strategy: the addition of a few selected attributes to Dahl's definition of polyarchy.

Guillermo O'Donnell's pioneering conceptualization (1999a: Part IV, 1999b, 2001, 2004a) of current Latin American politics offers a clear example of this strategy. O'Donnell first proposes a definition of a democratic regime that is similar to Dahl's definition of polyarchy. Thereafter he introduces a new concept, of democratic state, that includes the attributes he uses to define a democratic regime plus two extra attributes: horizontal accountability—that refers to effective checks and balances in the tradition of Montesquieu and Madison—and formal institutionalization—that refers to the elimination of political practices (e.g. clientelism, nepotism, or corruption) that involve abuses of political power that result in the discriminatory treatment of people excluded from the networks of favors.² Thus, O'Donnell's concept of democratic state—which is central to his discussion of the QoD—relies on Dahl's definition to set a baseline and then adds further attributes that, in effect, raise the standard a country must meet to be considered fully democratic.

The proposal of expanded concepts of democracy is the feature that provides an analytical focus to the QoD research agenda. Indeed, regardless of what specific attributes beyond Dahl's are emphasized—and regardless of whether a 'high-quality democracy' is understood as an ideal model without explicit empirical references or is seen as exemplified by the advanced

² The term 'horizontal accountability' is meant to highlight a contrast with 'vertical accountability', the form of control over public authorities that is distinctive of a democratic regime, for it is exerted from below by the public when granted the ability to punish the government by choosing opposition candidates. Horizontal accountability is control exerted 'from the side' by other branches of government. In turn, O'Donnell's reference to 'informal' institutions is motivated by the fact that in general they are incompatible with the written constitution and other legal codes that proclaim universalistic standards. Another of O'Donnell's concepts, delegative democracy, refers to the combination of effective vertical accountability and weak horizontal accountability. For further comments on O'Donnell's work on the QoD, see Mazzuca (2004).

countries of Western Europe and North America—by subscribing to an expanded concept of democracy, a low-quality democracy is uniformly seen as a country that fulfills Dahl's baseline standard yet does not satisfy some other democratic criteria. Thus, conceptual differences aside, research on the QoD is seen as concerned fundamentally with a process of democratization, that is, the same macroprocess studied in the earlier literatures on 'transitions'—which focused on the end of dictatorships and the start of democratic regimes—and 'consolidation'—which centered on the probabilities of survival of democratic regimes. In short, the QoD is about the extension of democratization by means of the fulfillment of the requirements added to Dahl's standards through an expanded definition of democracy.

2.2. A CRITIQUE OF THE QUALITY-OF-DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The QoD agenda addresses some central questions in Latin American politics. But the formulation of this agenda itself introduces two basic shortcomings into the analysis. One, a methodological problem regarding the proper empirical scope of analysis can be remedied easily. Thus, a succinct discussion suffices. The other limitation, a conceptual problem associated with the expanded definitions of democracy, is more complicated. Thus, the problem is discussed here and the proposed solution and its merits are discussed in the next two sections.

2.2.1. Quality of Democracy as an Issue for Democracies?

The QoD literature asserts that the analysis of the QoD should be limited to countries already considered democracies according to Dahl's standard. Yet this decision is unjustified and costly. It is unjustified because we have no theory or data that suggests that problems such as corruption or clientelism are germane only to democracies. And it is costly because this truncation of the universe of cases severely hampers efforts at explanation.

It would be useful, for example, to study authoritarian regimes that experience a reduction of clientelism, or implement reforms that effectively curb corruption and other informal institutions involving manipulations of office for private gain. Such cases contain information about the conditions leading to the transformation of abuses of power that is as relevant as the information provided by the so-called high-quality democracies. Moreover, they provide the added advantage of being located in a variety of temporal

and geographic settings, such as the Spanish Empire under the Bourbon reforms (late eighteenth century), Prussia after the Stein-Hardenberg reforms under Frederick William III (early nineteenth century), Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868–1900), and South Korea under the Park regime (1961–79). Likewise, changes in the opposite direction within the set of authoritarian regimes, that is, cases of autocratic rule where levels of clientelism and corruption have increased, are possible sources of insight regarding the persistence or growth of informal institutions.

There is no reason why the QoD agenda should focus exclusively on democracies and ignore authoritarian cases that could be a source of valuable hypotheses. Hence, the standard argument that the QoD is a matter of relevance only to democracies should be rejected. And, more proactively, cases that are democratic or authoritarian should be included in the analysis.

2.2.2. Quality of Democracy as the Extension of Democratization?

The argument that the QoD agenda should include authoritarian cases points to another, terminological problem. Indeed, this argument implies that the term quality of democracy is inadequate and should be replaced. But this terminological problem is only the tip of the iceberg, the superficial manifestation of a deeper conceptual problem that follows from framing the QoD research agenda in terms of an expanded definition of democracy.

Definitions of concepts are not right or wrong. Ultimately, they are assessed in terms of their contribution to research goals such as the production of good descriptions and explanations. And such assessments rely on benchmarks about what might be adequate progress, an especially tricky matter when it comes to literatures that are still evolving, as is the case with the QoD agenda. However, the QoD agenda has a major conceptual shortcoming, which an alternative framework can resolve. As I will seek to show, a comparison of frameworks—as opposed to a comparison of the results of these frameworks—is sufficient to make a case for abandoning expanded definitions of democracy and adopting the new proposed framework.

The core problem with the conceptual framing of the QoD agenda is that its key conceptual innovation—an expanded definition of democracy—relies on the assumption that this agenda is concerned with an extension of the process of democratization. Yet existing data suggest that this assumption is not warranted. Information that runs counter to this assumption is provided by those authoritarian cases mentioned above that reduced the manipulations

of office for private gain. Those changes occurred even though a change toward polyarchy had not taken place.

In addition, even if researchers on the QoD overlook the evidence provided by these cases, other cases closer to hand offer an equally compelling refutation of this assumption. Indeed, a prominent fact in recent Latin American politics is that the champions of democratic transition and stability, which include political parties of various signs, as well as their core constituencies, have strong vested interests in the preservation of patronage networks, and the continuation of other symptoms of low institutional quality.

Put succinctly, there is no reason to presume that the forces that favor the development of Weberian administrations also favor democratization. Likewise, nothing suggests that forces that are usually seen as favoring the replacement of coups and frauds by free and inclusive elections (economic growth, strong bourgeoisie, and vibrant civil society) will also foster the end of clientelism and patronage, the development of Weberian administrations, and the strengthening of Madisonian checks and balances. Rather, the data insinuate that transitions to, and the consolidation of, democracy is a political phenomenon that is quite different from the QoD, and that the QoD agenda is not about an extension of the process of democratization. Hence, a solution to the conceptual shortcoming of the QoD agenda is a reconceptualization of democratization, as understood in the QoD literature.

2.3. ACCESS TO POWER VERSUS EXERCISE OF POWER

To propose a solution to the conceptual shortcoming of the QoD agenda, I take the notions of power and state and, in particular, the definition of the state as a monopolistic concentration of political power, as a starting point, and seek to derive a set of concepts from this theoretical basis. Most fundamentally, I suggest that the distinction between access to power and exercise of power serves to reconceptualize what the QoD literature sees as a single process of democratization. A set of subsidiary concepts, which owe much to the classic work of Max Weber (1978), provide more precise language for distinguishing democratization from a process of bureaucratization, which I argue is the crux of a research agenda that breaks with the standard concerns of the literature on democratic transition and consolidation.

The cornerstone of the alternative set of concepts is the distinction between the *access* to power and the *exercise* of power. This distinction is based on the classical concept of the modern state as the organization that monopolizes the

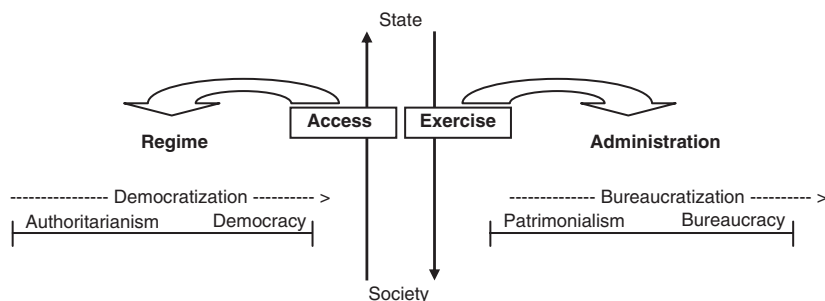


Figure 2.1. The access-exercise conceptual framework

means of violence within the territory defined by its boundaries—and that relies on such monopoly as the last-instance resource to obtain obedience from the population within the territory under its control. The access to political power and the exercise of political power are simply two analytically distinct aspects of the institutional structure of the modern territorial state. In all societies where the means of coercion are concentrated in the state, positions in the state become a key source of power. Relations between state and society can then be naturally grouped into two categories. One, going upward from the society to the state, involves the efforts of groups in society to gain control over state positions—the access side of politics. The other, going downward from the state to society, refers to the use of political power to align the behavior of social groups with the order created by the state—the exercise side (see Figure 2.1).

To further spell out this framework, the *political regime* can be defined as the prevailing form of access to political power. The regime has a qualitative component and a quantitative one. The qualitative component is the specific mechanism by which disputes to gain access to state positions are solved. Typical mechanisms are coups, threats of coup, co-optation, manipulated elections, and clean elections, but access could hypothetically be solved by procedures like alternation and lotteries. The quantitative variable of the regime is the portion of the population that participates in disputes for access. Although in principle any portion up to 100 percent is possible, in practice all regimes involve some restriction. *Democracy* is a type of regime: it consists of a mechanism of access, fair elections, and a participation level, the whole adult population. Forms of access that are either not based on fair elections or exclude any adult group from participation fall in the broad category of *authoritarian* regimes or autocracies. Finally, *democratization* refers to the movement from authoritarianism to democracy.

The exercise of political power, the opposite realm of state–society relations, has received less explicit attention in contemporary analysis of comparative institutions. However, to a great extent, *administration* is to exercise what regime is to access. If the concept of administration is taken in the Weberian sense of the patterns followed by rulers in the management of the resources under their control, it can play the key role of providing a distinct analytical domain to the topics that so far have been studied under the umbrella of the QoD concept. Like the regime, the administration has a quantitative component and a qualitative one, both of which can be identified in relation to the fact that the state is a concentrated pool of resources—in addition to the means of coercion, economic assets extracted via taxation. The quantitative component of the administration is the portion of state resources that is transformed into public goods as opposed to private ones. Public goods provided by the state include not only ‘goods’ but also services, like safety, justice, education, and health. The range of private goods spans from personal corruption, the rulers’ appropriation of state funds for private consumption, to the use of political influence and public resources for the purposes of entrenching the position of the ruling group, like covert funding of party campaigns and patronage. The qualitative component of the administration is the specific mechanism or set of mechanisms by which state resources are transformed into goods and distributed.

Within a given state, these mechanisms may vary across sections of the territory, social groups, and policy realms, but a key distinction is whether goods and services are provided following universal/general standards, like merit and need, or particularistic criteria, based on personal connections and the discretion of the rulers. Particularistic criteria are naturally associated to the portion of state resources that are appropriated by the rulers. However, in the case of appropriation, the distinction between the quantitative and qualitative components (the size and the form of corruption) is important because the same amount of appropriated resources can be managed in different forms (for instance, clientelism vs. nepotism, depending on whether the beneficiaries are political partners or relatives). Following Weber again, extreme forms of appropriation and particularism in the exercise of state power define the patrimonial type of administration, or *patrimonialism*. Bureaucratic rule or *bureaucracy* is the polar opposite, and as such is marked by what Weber called a ‘complete separation’ between the ruler and the ‘means of administration’, which simply means no private appropriation of public resources, and maximum adherence of rulers to impersonal rules. Finally, the movement from patrimonialism to bureaucracy might be labeled ‘*bureaucratization*’.

2.4. THE ACCESS–EXERCISE AND THE QUALITY-OF-DEMOCRACY FRAMEWORKS COMPARED

The development of the access–exercise (A–E) framework relies on what might be labeled a strategy of ‘conceptual separation’, as opposed to the strategy of ‘conceptual expansion’ used in shaping the QoD agenda. Confronted with the choice of how to deal with patterned abuses of power, the QoD approach has been to expand the concept of democracy by adding a series of attributes related to problems such as corruption and clientelism. In contrast, the A–E framework does not modify the original meaning of the term ‘democracy’, treating the new attributes rather as attributes of a new concept. The choice not to add certain new attributes of interest to the set of attributes used to define the concept of democracy is driven by a sense of the problems affecting the QoD agenda and the need to draw an analytical boundary between the concerns addressed in the transitions and consolidation literatures, on the one hand, and the QoD literature, on the other hand. In turn, the new framework, and its distinction between access to power and exercise of power is guided by a body of theory about macropolitical structures and transformations.

The strategy of conceptual separation adopted in this chapter has positive implications for the formulation of a research agenda. First, the A–E framework avoids the questionable assumption that issues of transition to, the consolidation of, and the quality of, democracy can all be understood as aspects of a single process of democratization. Second, this framework elaborates the concept of bureaucratization and contrasts it to democratization, thus delimiting with clarity the new question that should be theorized and removing any ambiguity about the extension of this research agenda to cases that are democratic and authoritarian. Finally, it introduces a set of terms that avoids the terminological confusion introduced by the QoD agenda and helps researchers communicate more effectively.

To be sure, the new agenda proposed in this chapter will have to be assessed in terms of the fruitfulness of the causal hypotheses it generates and the results it produces. But the immediate advantages to be derived from the adoption of the A–E framework are considerable. Its reconceptualization of democratization as understood in the QoD agenda solves the core conceptual shortcoming of the QoD agenda. Its concepts clue researchers into the relevant theoretical literature and empirical cases from which insights might be extracted. And its terminology offers the kind of language that is an essential tool of a research community.

2.5. CONCLUSION

The diagnosis of politics offered by scholars who frame their research in terms of the concept of the QoD follows from a central premise, that current deficiencies—much as was the case when the discussion focused on transitions to, and the consolidation of, democracy—revolve around democratization. The proposed alternative provides a set of concepts that serve to better analyze the distinctiveness of the political phenomena discussed in the literatures on transition and consolidation, on the one hand, and the QoD, on the other hand. It seeks, above all, to identify different aspects of what the QoD literature sees as one single macroprocess of democratization.

Whereas democratization in its original sense of transition and consolidation is seen as involving changes in the form of access to political power, practices such as clientelism and government by decree are seen as forms of exercise of power. In effect, transition is the replacement of one institutional form of access to power by another one (for instance, coups by elections, or manufactured elections by clean ones), and consolidation is the minimization of the risks of changes to a different form of access, especially the risk of reversal to the prior form. In contrast, clientelism, corruption, and other manipulations of political power for private gain are manifestations of patrimonialism, a form of exercise of power that can coexist in the same country with both authoritarian and democratic regimes of access to power.

We have reason to believe that changes in the structures of exercise of power are driven by a vector of forces that is different from the one that produces changes in the institutions of access to power. In fact, in most Latin American countries, the main defenders and beneficiaries of democratic transitions—mass parties and the ‘political class’—are in general inimical to changes in the form of exercise of power. Therefore, the search for causes of variations in the institutions of exercise of power is unlikely to yield useful hypotheses if it is carried out in the domain of the factors that have traditionally favored democratization. Such factors encourage changes along the access to power dimension, but they are not necessarily relevant for changes along the exercise of power dimension. Similarly, political actors struggling about the forms of exercise of power may differ from those engaged in conflicts around access to power. Indeed, if the dynamics of the institutions of access to power and the dynamics of the institutions of exercise of power require different explanatory logics, then it is probably more productive to conceptualize them as separate processes than to treat them as parts of the same macroprocess of democratization.

In sum, the A–E framework offers a different diagnosis of the symptoms commonly seen as signs of low-quality democracies. This framework reinterprets these symptoms as indicators of patrimonialism and hence deficient bureaucratization, and not of deficient democratization. And, by focusing attention on the distinctiveness of forms of exercise of power as opposed to forms of access to power, it opens up new explanatory possibilities, grounded in the causal processes and the incentives of political groups that are specific to the exercise of power.

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Neo-Madisonian Theory and Latin American Institutions*

Royce Carroll and Matthew Søberg Shugart

In recent years, theories of political institutions have become central to the literature on Latin American politics. The study of institutions has ranged considerably in method from detailed histories of institutional evolution to more discrete analyses of strategic action under the constraints of a given set of rules. Such work is often identified and critiqued as the ‘institutionalist tradition’ (Huber and Dion 2002) or as the study of behavior in ‘institutional contexts’ (Crisp and Escobar-Lemmon 2001) or, more specifically, ‘rational-choice institutionalism’ (e.g. Weyland 2002a). Gerardo Munck (2004a) recently distinguishes work with an institutional focus from other strands of the literature on Latin American politics, noting that there is much each perspective can learn from the others.

In this chapter, we develop a synthesis that derives insights from various forms of institutional analysis. First, we present a conceptual framework for analyzing constitutional structures and party systems—an approach that we brand *neo-Madisonian*. Using this framework and several examples from the region, we emphasize the interactive relationship between constitutional design, electoral systems, party systems, and structural factors. Second, we use this framework to synthesize segments of the literature on Latin American institutions, tying together a variety of works that consider both national context and broad patterns across the region while accounting for the dynamic relationship between institutions and actors. Work in this vein, we argue, integrates the study of formal constitutional and electoral structure with an understanding of the incentives facing the actors charged with working within that structure. The neo-Madisonian framework, in fragments, has already contributed to our understanding of the separation of

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powers, the logic of delegation in democratic representation, the capacity for collective action among political actors, and the interaction between these phenomena. In a final section, we review several important next steps for this literature.

3.1. STUDYING POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: A NEO-MADISONIAN APPROACH

Neo-Madisonian theory starts from the basic theoretical underpinning of the Federalists that the extent to which government ensures liberty or gives way to tyranny is directly related to the manner in which it channels political ambition. Like contemporary rational-choice approaches, James Madison took it as axiomatic that political actors are motivated by personal gain and, hence, that the good motives of leaders can never be taken for granted. He accepted selfish motivation as inevitable and therefore sought to harness it for the greater good. Doing so, he argued, entailed establishing a system of institutions that structure and checks that ambition.

Modern neo-Madisonian theory begins from a more explicit theoretical construct regarding the delegation of authority as solutions to the collective action problems that are inherent in the pursuit of group interests. Madison understood that representative democracy necessarily entails delegation, using that very term in defining *republic* as ‘the delegation of the government . . . to a small number of citizens elected by the rest’ (*Federalist Papers* No. 10). Further, Madison emphasized that any power delegated to representatives has the potential to be turned against the principal. Therefore, Madison argued, multiple *competing* agents of the citizenry must each be empowered and motivated to check the ambition of the others.

What is distinctive about a neo-Madisonian approach is that it explicitly draws on contemporary political-economy traditions developed outside the study of government. For instance, Mancur Olson’s modern classic, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), is concerned primarily with the formation of economic lobbying groups, not governmental institutions, yet his well-known theory provides a starting point for expanding Madison’s basic logic.¹ Principal–agent theory developed in economics, in part, to explain why and how firms emerge and organize hierarchically rather than anarchically like markets. Ronald Coase’s pioneering work (1937) posits that firms, or hierarchies, emerge in response to the inefficiencies associated with market

¹ Additional work on this topic includes Wagner (1966), Salisbury (1969), Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Young (1971), and Frohlich and Oppenheimer (1978).

transactions, replacing the market's 'invisible hand' with the very visible hand of a manager.² Elaborating these themes, Armen Alchian and Harold Demsetz's influential theory (1972) of the firm argues that the collective dilemma of individual shirking within groups can be overcome via delegation to a central agent, analogous to a political entrepreneur, with the authority and incentive to reward and punish group members.³ What these works have in common is that the difficulties of spontaneous group interaction and the tension between an individual interest and collective interests may both be resolved by delegating authority to monitor—and mete out rewards and punishments—to an agent with the incentive to accomplish this task. The development of a set of rules for empowering agents and structuring their incentives to work on behalf of the principal is the very essence of institutional design.

It is the marriage of theories distinguishing hierarchy from anarchy with the older tradition of designing 'good government' that marks the contribution of the neo-Madisonian perspective to political science. While contemporary research in this tradition is not generally normative, it is grounded in a broader enterprise seeking to elucidate why and how democracy 'works' and the sources of its failures and limitations. Rather than prescribing 'optimal' arrangements, a neo-Madisonian approach emphasizes that democratic institutions create incentives that interact to generate a series of democratic *trade-offs* regarding outcomes ranging from the stability or flexibility of policy to the extent of public goods provision.

3.1.1. Hierarchies and Transactions

Neo-Madisonian theory analyzes the organization of government in terms of what we will call *hierarchical* and *transactional* juxtaposition of institutions. In a hierarchy one institution is subordinated to another. Hierarchy is thus about vertical relationships, in that one actor is superior to another in terms of authority. Transactional relationships, on the other hand, are among coequals. Two institutions or actors in a transactional relationship each have independent sources of authority, and must cooperate to accomplish some task. Madison's call for ambition to check ambition is, in essence, a means to prevent the emergence of a hierarchical relationship between executives and

² Coase's research was developed by subsequent work on the theory of the firm. See e.g. Williamson (1975, 1979) and Milgrom and Roberts (1990).

³ See also Jensen and Meckling (1976), Fama (1980), Demsetz (1983), and Miller (1992). See Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) and Cox and McCubbins (1993) for brief reviews of this literature.

legislatures that he believed led to oppression, and instead ensure that the executive and legislature were coequals.⁴

In this tradition, a neo-Madisonian approach traces political ambition and organizational relationships, looking at the relative balance between hierarchical and transactional relationships within the governmental structure. Doing so means understanding how the component institutions of a political system work together: With whom must political actors transact? To whom are they subordinate? Patterns of democratic failure might emerge, for example, when a formally horizontal relationship between the executive and legislature—constitutionally prescribed as separate and coequal—has become *de facto* hierarchical. Rather than discarding an institutional explanation as inadequate because the expectations of formal institutions clearly seem to be violated, neo-Madisonian theory seeks to explain *why* it is rational for legislators to act contrary to their own organizational autonomy and sometimes subordinate themselves to some other entity. The answer, from a neo-Madisonian perspective, lies in how legislators are given incentives to behave in certain patterned ways, both with respect to one another (e.g. favoring a powerful central leadership within the legislature) and with respect to outside institutions (e.g. acceding to the dominance of the executive). Armed with these insights, then, we can better understand the more systematic limitations of democracy in a given case, and gain insight into the political reforms or electoral changes that would be necessary to bring about a more transactional relationship.

3.1.2. Key Ideas from the Federalists

One of the fundamental insights of Madison, from the *Federalist Papers* No. 51, is that the design of government ‘consists in giving to those who administer each department [i.e. branch] the necessary constitutional means *and personal motives* to resist encroachments of the others’ (emphasis ours). Here, as well as in his famous phrase alluded to above that ‘ambition must be made to counteract ambition’, Madison recognized that political actors were self-interested and that the key to successful institutional design lay in the creation of a set of

⁴ Of course, the hierarchical juxtaposition of formal institutions can also serve democracy. In the British model, only one party governs at a time, appointing its leader as chief executive in a clear hierarchy. There are no institutional checks, but the presence of ‘Opposition with a capital “O”’ (Helms 2004) provides the electorate with a monitor that serves to keep the governing party in check (Palmer 1995; Strøm 2000). In parliamentary coalitions, parties within the cabinet serve as checks on one another. Studies of coalition-based parliamentary systems using a framework similar to that we describe here include Thies (2001), Martin (2004), and Martin and Vanberg (2004). See also Shugart (2006).

incentives that would align their individual interests with the collective goal of generating good government by preventing one branch from dominating others. In other words, political actors at every stage consistently find themselves facing the tension between personal interest and a collective good, and pursue a course of action consistent with the incentives they face.

A further set of insights from Madison that informs neo-Madisonian work on political institutions comes from the *Federalist Papers* No. 10, where Madison grapples with the inherent conflict of interest that arises when legislators are advocates and parties to the very causes that they determine, through the legislation they produce. The solution, as Madison famously argued, was to prevent the emergence of 'majority faction' by dividing political authority not only into different branches, but also different levels (national, state, and local). Power in the Madisonian model is therefore divided and shared between the dual agents of the electorate in the national government—the president and the assembly—such that power delegated to one agent can be vetoed or blocked by another, thereby preventing agents from unilaterally pursuing actions against the principal's interest. Power is further divided between national and subnational interests, for instance by having representatives be delegates of their local communities and senators of their states,⁵ and by maintaining the separate authority of state governments over their own affairs.

If the objective of the US Constitution was to prevent one part of the government from dominating the others, the framers were largely successful. The United States remains the paradigmatic case of separation of powers, with the executive and the legislative branches closely balanced, and with one of the world's most active judiciaries. Because of the separate election of two national legislative bodies and the national executive, 'divided government' in which one or both houses of the legislature is controlled by a different political party than the executive is common.⁶ More importantly, the incentives derived from separate constituencies and fixed terms means that even when the executive and legislative majorities are of the same party, differences in policy priorities often result, and must be resolved by interbranch transactions.

If Madison and his colleagues were largely successful in preventing the subordination of the executive to the legislature and vice versa, it is nonetheless clear that tendencies toward 'majority faction' emerged *within* the legislature. Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins (1993) explain, for example, how the US House of Representatives has become organized in the interests of its majority

⁵ Though, until 1913, not directly of state electorates.

⁶ In a hierarchical political system—such as the British model—such divisions of executive and legislative authority cannot occur. See Palmer (1995) for a discussion.

as legislators solve a basic collective dilemma created by the individual incentives of the electoral system and their common electoral label. The label—its programmatic brand name and the reputation associated with it—is a classic public good in that there exists no inherent motivation to spontaneously work to maintain its value.⁷ The collective goal is facilitated and enforced by delegation to a central authority—in this case, party leadership—empowered to steer legislative outcomes in favor of the interests of that legislative majority.

The US example is instructive in demonstrating the interplay between collective and individual electoral incentives within the legislature. Madison argued that a majority faction could be controlled by preventing common interest among a majority or, failing that, by undermining the majority's capacity for collective action on those interests. Though neither goal may seem successful in Cox and McCubbins' account of the US House, even this 'Leviathan' does not dominate the entire policymaking process as a result of the system of institutional checks. In terms of interbranch relations, institutions that empower the legislative majority actually enhance checks and balances. As we argue below, establishing a capacity for collective action within a legislative chamber is an important condition for that chamber to act as an independent agent that transacts with, rather than subordinates itself to, the executive.

Moreover, the very existence of this collective dilemma—the divergence of individual interests that must be aligned—ensures that the House does not stray from Madison's goal of articulating multiple local interests. As a voluminous literature on the US House shows, members remain well attached to their districts and pursue a 'personal vote' based on their own service as agents of their community. Even with a form of 'majority faction' controlling the agenda of the House of Representatives, the US legislative process remains far less party-centered than those of many nations, especially West European parliamentary democracies, but also some Latin American countries. As we argue below, a fundamental factor shaping political systems in Latin America and elsewhere is in the *degree* to which legislators are motivated by national party goals, on the one hand, versus personal and local interests on the other.

Combining Madisonian insights with Olsonian logic, we can see the broad outlines of a contemporary neo-Madisonian approach to political institutions. The underlying task is to trace the sources of political ambition, and to uncover the ways in which the institutional structure provides—or fails to provide—incentives for the politicians who inhabit it to resist encroachments

⁷ In other words, in Olson's terms (1965), the rational individual will have an incentive to 'free ride' and the result will be 'underprovision' of the public good, to the detriment of all members of the party.

by other institutions. Just as importantly, the task centers on understanding the extent to which the majority has the incentives and capacity to organize to block minorities from gaining a share of political authority both within and across the institutions of government.

Most theoretical and empirical advances to date focus on the legislature, asking what incentives politicians have to rationally pursue policy, personal, or other goals. The simplifying assumption in the literature on the United States is almost invariably the reelection motivation. Although many studies of Latin America start from the same premise, much of the advance in understanding the divergence from the well-studied US case has come in forcing a notion of ambition that is both more precise and more generalizable: politicians seek to continue a political career more broadly, not necessarily to be reelected to their current post.⁸

In either form—legislative reelection or future-office career advancement—it is understanding this powerful assumption that allows for the analysis of how personal goals impel members toward either collective institutional development or other outcomes. The neo-Madisonian approach seeks to understand just what it is about variations in the sources of legislative incentives that explains patterns of interinstitutional relations in different Latin American countries. The source of that variation has been linked to questions of how legislators obtain office (electoral systems, party systems, and nomination practices) and what posts they seek afterwards and what actors control access to those (whether voters, the president, governors, or interest groups).

3.1.3. Neo-Madisonian Theory: An Overview

Neo-Madisonian theory aims to explain the logic of constitutional design with respect to the powers granted to agents and the incentives for using those powers. A given design of the formal separation of powers might render a president purely reactive in terms of legislative authority, unable to independently change the status quo. Conversely, the balance of positive legislative power might be skewed in the executive's favor, relegating the assembly to this reactive role. In either case, each agent is, to a varying extent, constrained by the powers delegated to the other within their transactional relationship. However, as we have already noted, the maintenance of a transactional

⁸ That is, rather than 'importing' the assumptions of American politics, many studies of Latin American institutions have sought to develop a generalized framework for institutional analysis with implications and applications that subsume the US case. Explicating the logic of political careers in Latin America dates back at least to the pathbreaking work of Smith (1974, 1979).

relationship depends on constitutional agents with countervailing interests. When the incentives of each agent are not counterposed, they may collude, weakening, or disabling the checks that shape their transactional relationship and potentially rendering the relationship effectively hierarchical. Further, a transactional relationship depends on the degree of overlapping focus in terms of the 'currency' of the transaction. That is, in order for multiple competing agents to form a meaningful structure that protects the interests of the principal, agents must to some extent compete in the same arena.

The neo-Madisonian approach emphasizes that the political ambition of democratic 'agents', a term we use to refer to different specific actors,⁹ follows from rules comprising the structure of delegation. In constitutional design terms, 'ambition' is shaped by a number of interacting *component institutions* within regimes that structure the chain of democratic accountability. They generate the electoral and career incentives faced by democratic representatives—that is, how and to whom they are ultimately held accountable. These incentives, in turn, shape the transactional relationship among constitutional agents. Furthermore, these incentives at each stage of the delegation chain structure not only legislative agents' goals, but also their own capacity for collective action both as agents and as collective *principals* in secondary delegation relationships between legislators and their leadership or with the executive branch, including not only the president, but also the bureaucracy.

Incentives facing presidents and assemblies can create divergent ambition in two orthogonally related ways: their political goals and in their policy orientation. An agent's political goals pertain to its political connectedness to other actors—for example, the extent to which a single party or coalition controls both the presidency and the legislative branch. An agent's policy orientation, however, pertains to the local or national focus of each agent—generally, each agent's interests in the provision of public goods or goods that are more targeted or private in nature. Each of these dimensions of agent incentives is influenced by the component institutions shaping the representation structure

⁹ Throughout this chapter, we make reference to legislatures as agents. This simplified concept of the legislature as a unitary agent can be disaggregated into several more precise concepts. The 'party system' is an agent of the electorate, a collective agent able to be characterized in the aggregate based on the parties in the legislature—e.g. as fragmented or 'personalistic'. A party (and sometimes, faction or coalition), as a subset of the party system, is a collective agent of a subset of the electorate and has its own unique characteristics, e.g. programmatic or clientelistic. An individual legislator is an agent of her constituency, a subset of the electorate, which may be geographically concentrated or dispersed, ideologically homogeneous or heterogeneous. In some cases, as we note, this 'constituency' may be solely within the party leadership. The extent to which one concept versus another is useful depends on both the circumstances of the case in question and the topic of concern.

within a separation of powers system. Each dimension, in Madison's terms, shapes the extent of 'majority faction' within the legislature or across branches in terms of political concentration and national focus.

Institutions can increase or decrease the likelihood that agents have similar political goals. Whether presidents typically command a legislative majority, as well as the 'size' of legislative parties more generally, varies greatly across cases and is related to the design of electoral institutions. We refer to the incentives influencing these circumstances as the *interparty dimension* of electoral institutions. For instance, electoral rules that entail a very low threshold for the representation of small political parties are much less likely to promote the rise of a single majority faction, and more likely to result in the sharing of power among multiple parties.

Second, independently of the political congruence between agents, component institutions influence whether a constitutional agent will tend to be focused on providing policy with a national, public focus or targeted toward narrow constituencies. Here, while presidents' national electoral constituency generally favors a national policy orientation,¹⁰ assemblies may be composed of deputies largely focused on targeted policy, depending on the electoral and career incentives they face. These incentives further influence the collective dilemmas faced by legislators and the resultant delegation choices—for example, to party leaders or to the president. The structural determinants of these incentives we call the *intraparty dimension* of electoral institutions. Some electoral rules generate a powerful incentive for legislators (and legislative candidates) to hew close to the party line, while others generate an incentive to articulate what they personally can offer their voters as individual representatives. Other things equal, more party-centered rules favor greater representation of national concerns, while more personalistic (or candidate-centered) rules favor greater focus on local interests.

In what follows, we demonstrate how neo-Madisonian theories of constitutional design, electoral systems, and executive–legislative relations have prompted a significant rethinking of Latin American institutions, and have sharpened our understanding of how Latin American countries' politics differ from the United States and countries in other parts of the world, as well as from one another. Several themes are emphasized in the cross-national research contributing to this literature, as well as in the Latin American case studies we highlight. The first is that of a disaggregative approach to the study of institutions. In keeping with the principles expounded above,

¹⁰ Relatively speaking, i.e. one does not have to believe that presidents are free of less exalted motives, such as enriching their place of origin or themselves, in order to believe that national public goods are relatively more important to their election and administration of the government than is the case for the typical legislator.

recent work has strived to move beyond broad characterizations of institutions toward emphasizing the variation within traditional typologies of regime and electoral system, as well as the interaction between these component institutions. The second theme of the neo-Madisonian literature is that of a largely deductive analysis of political actors within a strategic context shaped by institutions. These themes, we argue, are brought together explicitly or implicitly by the use of a delegation analogy in which the incentives facing democratic agents explains the nature of transactional or hierarchical relationships among those agents and, therefore, accountability to the electorate.

3.2. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

Juan Linz's work (1994) on the 'perils of presidentialism' provided much of the foundation for the study of democratic institutions in Latin America. This was so not because it was the first—other studies of executives and legislatures existed (as reviewed by Mainwaring 1990)—but because it elaborated a novel perspective on certain pathologies in the interactions of executives and legislators and their consequences for democracy itself. Linz argued that presidential systems were inherently prone to systemic failures, and his claims have been highly influential in interpreting Latin American democratic history. As such, its roots may be found in the wave of military coups in Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, which cried out for explanation. Linz (1994: 4) himself notes in his essay on presidentialism that the idea that interactions between legislatures and executives may threaten democracy came to him as he was working on the final drafts of what would become the chapters for *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Linz and Stepan 1978). Narratives by contributors on the political process in individual countries suggested to Linz that the competition between the separately elected presidents and legislatures in Latin America made more difficult the reconciliation of the deep social and political divisions that gripped much of the region in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹ This was the seed of Linz's now well-known argument that presidentialism is an inferior form of democracy because of its 'dual democratic legitimacies' (i.e. separate agency relations of executive and legislature to voters) and rigidity (i.e. absence of hierarchy between branches).

The question of the relationship of the presidential–parliamentary dichotomy to democratic regime stability has never been settled, and the

¹¹ For instance, the 'impossible game' of trying to reconcile Peronists and their opponents in Argentina (O'Donnell 1973) or the polarization between a minority socialist president (Salvador Allende) and the center-right dominated legislature in Chile (Valenzuela 1978).

debate continues.¹² The discussion of the wholesale ‘effects of presidentialism’ is fundamentally limited, though, with regard to research on Latin America, because presidentialism is present region-wide. As a result, a primary agenda for institutionalists since the early 1990s has been to disaggregate presidentialism, though not to look at component institutions in isolation in the vein of much pre-Linzian work. This agenda has instead focused on two central issues: first, precisely accounting for the structure of the separation of powers across Latin America and elsewhere; and, second, understanding what institutions *interact* with the separation of powers to drive political actors toward widely varying outcomes among presidential regimes. A generation of multicase works and case studies has drawn on the neo-Madisonian ideas we sketched above to explain why some presidential systems function like virtual dictatorships, while other presidents are regularly stymied in their efforts to change policy, and why still other presidential systems more closely approximate the balance of powers seen in the United States.

3.2.1. Constitutional Design

Presidentialism creates dual democratic agents with two basic features: separate origin (a directly elected chief executive) and separate survival (independent terms of office) (Shugart and Carey 1992). Each agent in a stylized presidential regime is vertically accountable to a collective principal—the electorate. Each institutional feature surrounding their political origins, along with each presidential and legislative prerogative, alters the transactional relationship between those agents by determining their goals and available strategies within interbranch relations. The crucial distinction is whether presidential powers are proactive and geared toward changing the status quo via decrees and legislative introduction, or reactive and geared toward maintaining the status quo through vetoes (Shugart and Mainwaring 1997).

From this starting point, understanding the *interaction* between constitutional agents from a neo-Madisonian perspective requires an accounting of incentives facing legislatures. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart (1997) emphasize the importance of the legislative party system in shaping the president’s de facto power. At the extreme, the party system can generate a hierarchical relationship between branches regardless of the formal powers of the president. Jeffrey Weldon (1997) shows through such analysis that even the ostensibly powerful executive in Mexico under the former hegemony of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) was largely dependent on the

¹² See Przeworski et al. (2000), Cheibub and Limongi (2002), and Cheibub (2002).

legislative party system. That is, Mexico's presidential influence depended not on the executive's authority over lawmaking—which, in fact, has long been sharply limited—but on the presence within the legislature of a disciplined majority, headed by the president. In this extreme case, the subservient legislators acted primarily as agents of the party leadership and, therefore, of the president (Casar 2002).¹³ Thus the formally transactional relationship between separately elected executive and legislative institutions was transformed into a *de facto* hierarchy, with the president, rather than intralegislative leaders, acting as the 'whip' who maintained unity among his party in congress. Few cases in Latin America have reached the extreme of presidential dominance over legislators as seen in the classical Mexican situation. However, there have been some parallels elsewhere, and we will discuss some of them below.

By contrast, similar analyses of presidents in Brazil and Colombia have emphasized that, while deriving significant legislative influence from their formidable constitutional powers, they face considerable difficulty in obtaining support on national policy from within the assembly (Archer and Shugart 1997; Mainwaring 1997). In these cases, antitheses to Mexico, legislatures have often blocked presidential policy initiatives, and forced presidents to transact with them, or encouraged them to bypass the congress and rule in an 'imperial' manner (Cox and Morgenstern 2002). By understanding the incentives facing legislators to submit to, bargain with, or obstruct presidents we can make sense of variations in executive power in the region.

One potential 'peril' of presidential democracy—executive decree authority—provides a useful example in the distinction between constitutional and delegated decree authority (Carey and Shugart 1998). The former relates to constitutional design, where provisions allowing presidents to make policy by decree interact with other constitutional features, notably the veto power, as well as with the partisan balance in the assembly—points further elaborated by Matthew Shugart (1998) and Gabriel Negretto (2004). Delegated decree authority, however, by which the legislature grants temporary or restricted authority to the president, may be tolerated or even preferred by assemblies seeking to overcome internal collective action problems. Decrees under such delegated authority, from this perspective, differ fundamentally from those arrogated in a truly unilateral fashion (e.g. Fujimori's 'calling out the tanks' in a coup against congress and the judiciary in 1992).

A given instance of interbranch transaction, Gary Cox and Scott Morgenstern (2001) argue, can be compared to a bilateral veto game. Even when legislatures are primarily reactive and face presidents with control of the legislative agenda, the anticipation of legislative reaction nevertheless mediates

¹³ One of the reasons for this, the lack of reelection incentive, is discussed later in this chapter.

policy outcomes. Presidents who have significant constitutional powers may choose unilateral actions, such as decrees, or 'integrative' powers like forcing 'urgent' consideration of legislation, or the appointment of partisan ministers who may command legislative support for the executive. The choice of strategy depends not only on formal powers but also on the political circumstances within the legislature—which vary across both time and space.¹⁴ Octavio Amorim Neto (2002a, 2006), for example, emphasizes Brazilian and other presidents' evolving use of an integrative power—the allocation of cabinet portfolios in coalition building—in achieving legislative goals. Benito Nacif (2002) explains how in Mexico, since the PRI lost its majority in 1997, the president has shifted toward a coalitional strategy.

The circumstances shaping presidential strategies and 'partisan powers' revolve around two crucial neo-Madisonian themes: (a) the extent to which the president's political supporters control the legislature, driven by what we call the *interparty dimension* of electoral institutions; and (b) the extent to which the legislature is characterized by parochial, versus national, concerns, driven by what we call the *intraparty dimension* of electoral institutions and party organization.¹⁵ These factors ultimately characterize the transactional relationship we have outlined: whether a president prefers to pursue a coalitional or imperial/unilateral strategy, dominates the legislature or is rendered ineffectual—each with far-reaching consequences for policy outcomes and democratic representation. Put another way, institutions connected to these factors determine the likely degree of 'separation of purpose' between the dual agents of the electorate (Cox and McCubbins 2001; Shugart and Haggard 2001; Samuels and Shugart 2003).

Understanding the manner in which institutional incentives promote an alignment or divergence of preferences between constitutional agents has therefore been central to the neo-Madisonian contribution to the study of Latin American politics. In the following sections, we review the state of the literature regarding both the interparty and intraparty dimensions of electoral institutions that shape the political goals, policy focus, and career ambitions of legislators. We then turn to an exploration of systems that are 'extreme' on one or both dimensions, including several of the largest and most-studied countries in Latin America. Finally, we discuss the possibility of a dynamic theory of institutions from the neo-Madisonian perspective.

¹⁴ Note that here we refer to the actual preferences of the legislature relative to the president in a given instance. As we review work dealing with the institutions shaping those preferences, we will refer to incentives that increase or decrease the *likelihood* of legislators with such preferences, as is the case with electoral and career incentives.

¹⁵ For an elaboration of the concepts of interparty and intraparty dimensions, see Shugart (2001, 2005).

3.2.2. Component Institutions 1: The Interparty Dimension

Undoubtedly, research on the effects of electoral systems on legislative parties and on partisan competition more generally has been one of the most fruitful explorations associated with the study of political institutions. Electoral systems for legislators vary significantly across democracies, including in Latin America. Rules for electing executives, on the other hand, vary much less. With, until recently, the exception of Bolivia, all Latin American presidents are directly elected,¹⁶ and because all presidencies in the region are currently unipersonal,¹⁷ the electoral methods are necessarily majoritarian (winner take all). There is variation in the determination of winners, however, with the principal variation being between plurality and majority-runoff methods.¹⁸ This variation has spawned a literature on its effects on party systems, the election of politicians who are ‘outsiders’ (i.e. not affiliated with an established party), and other factors (Shugart and Taagepera 1994; Jones 1995, 1999, 2004; Kenney 2003).

Notwithstanding the impact of presidential-election methods on political outcomes of interest, the bulk of the literature focuses on legislative electoral systems and party systems. Much of the literature on institutional performance and democracy in Latin America has focused on party-system fragmentation and interparty competition. This literature has contributed not only to our understanding of regional variations in political incentives and outcomes, but also to general comparative theory. In one of the best examples of this work, Barbara Geddes’ now classic analysis (1994) of civil service reforms centers on the equal access to patronage generated by partisan parity in legislative representation and the collective action this enables. In part, then, hers is a theory of the interparty dimension of electoral incentives that can encourage or discourage legislative fragmentation, which in turn undermines or facilitates collective action.

A large literature in comparative politics has been devoted to the role of electoral systems in accounting for variations in the fragmentation of

¹⁶ In Bolivia, under the 1967 constitution, the president is directly elected only if one candidate has a large enough pre-election coalition to obtain a majority. In elections prior to 2005, an electoral majority was not achieved, triggering the constitution’s provision that congress selects the president from among the top vote-winners (from the top three prior to 1993 and from the top two since). See Mayorga (2001).

¹⁷ Uruguay, as recently as 1966, was the exception, with its elected executive council.

¹⁸ Shugart and Taagepera (1994) propose a hybrid of majority and plurality, aspects of which have been adopted in Argentina and Ecuador. See Shugart (2004, 2007) for a general overview of election methods for presidents in Latin America and elsewhere, and for an analysis of trends in favor of direct election and majority runoff.

national party systems.¹⁹ One particularly robust finding concerns the central role of district magnitude (the number of seats in an electoral district) in influencing the national number of parties and candidates (Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994) and electoral coordination at the district level (Cox 1997). In Latin America, these core conclusions of the electoral systems literature derived from established (usually parliamentary) democracies have had less explanatory value by themselves. Mark Jones (1993), for example, has confirmed the greater proportionality of higher district magnitudes in the region, yet the impact of the electoral system on the number of parties is limited. Generally, the variation across the relatively high district magnitudes of most Latin American systems explains only a small part of political parties' relative sizes. Studies specifically on party development in Latin America have therefore focused more on variations in social cleavage structures (e.g. Coppedge 1997*b*) or party–society relations (e.g. Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Research on the interparty dimension of Latin American institutions in the neo-Madisonian tradition has also looked beyond formula and district magnitude to explain how other institutions interact with the electoral system to affect the voter and party behavior driving the size and number of legislative parties, particularly the president's contingent.

The notion of 'electoral system' has been extended beyond formula and district magnitude to include a range of additional influences on behavior. Consider, for example, the electoral cycle and particularly on the impact of concurrent presidential and assembly elections. Shugart (1995) finds that the extent to which a legislature is both supportive of the president and nationally oriented depends to a large degree on the electoral cycle.²⁰ The later a congressional election is held during a president's term, the more likely the legislature will be dominated by opposition parties. A similar relationship is suggested by José Antonio Cheibub (2002) who shows that nonconcurrent elections are associated with presidents whose own party is a minority in the legislature. More generally, institutional configurations that increase fragmentation on the interparty dimension—including nonconcurrent elections—are associated with reduced legislative support for the president (Mainwaring 1993; Jones 1995; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Amorim Neto 2002*a*; Cheibub 2002).

¹⁹ This literature, representing some of the most influential work in comparative institutions, has its origins in the study of European politics and established democracies more generally.

²⁰ As well as localizing incentives in the electoral system, considered in the next section on intraparty institutions.

The interaction of national and subnational electoral institutions has also been critical to explaining differences on the interparty dimension across Latin American democracies, where regional politics contributes to the presence of larger numbers of parties in the national legislature than explained by district-level incentives alone—especially in federal systems.²¹ David Samuels (2000a) has shown for example that coattails associated with concurrent *gubernatorial* elections in Brazil contribute to variance in the number of parties competing in different states. As a result, while the effective number of parties (ENP) in Brazil at the district level is moderate, the *national* ‘effective’ number of parties²² is quite high.²³ Jones (1997), examining Argentina, similarly shows the concurrence of the gubernatorial and national legislative elections to be a strong influence on multipartism. Erika Moreno (2003) demonstrates the presence of this interaction with subnational institutions throughout the region, regardless of formal federalism. These studies show for Latin American systems with subnational elections the importance of the extent to which the party system is ‘politywide’ (Stepan 2001) and ‘integrated’ (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1997). The absence of a party system that coordinates both national and subnational elections produces significant fragmentation in the national legislature.

Malapportionment interacts with these factors to ‘manufacture’ legislative seat shares for parties by awarding larger numbers of seats per vote in some districts than in others within both upper and lower houses (Samuels and Snyder 2001). Often, many less populated rural districts receive disproportionate shares of seats in the legislature, which may exacerbate incongruence between the president’s political support and that of the legislature. A president can receive large number of votes from urban districts, while those same districts may have a relative disadvantage within the legislature due to malapportionment, as is the case in Brazil’s most populous districts (Snyder and Samuels 2001). Under other circumstances, malapportionment can also serve to enhance presidential support within the assembly. In the case of Argentina, Edward Gibson, Ernesto Calvo, and Tulia Falletti (2004) note that the Peronist

²¹ Consistent with what seems to be the scholarly consensus, we understand a federal system to be one in which subnational divisions of the country (e.g. states, provinces), have their own executive, legislative (and usually judicial) systems, as well as some sovereign authority guaranteed by the national constitution.

²² The effective number has become the standard measure of electoral or legislative fragmentation. It is simply a weighted index of the number of parties, where the weights are determined by each party’s own size. i.e. each party’s share of votes (or seats) is squared, the squares are summed. The reciprocal of this sum is the effective number (Laakso and Taagepera 1979).

²³ Brazil averaged 6.3 in its ENP during the 1945–62 and 1990–4 periods. However, the average at the district level across these periods was only 3.3 (Cox 1999). Hence, multipartism in Brazil derives less from its district magnitudes and low electoral threshold than might be assumed.

coalition in the early 1990s, built with spending transfers, commanded not only a supermajority of the Senate, but a near-majority in the Chamber of Deputies representing provinces that accounted for only about 30 percent of the population.

3.2.3. Component Institutions 2: The Intraparty Dimension

3.2.3.1. *The Personal Vote and Intraparty Competition*

It is impossible to characterize the incentives facing legislative parties considering only the interparty characteristics reviewed above. A legislative majority sharing the same party label as the president, for example, means little in the absence of some degree of internal party discipline or homogeneity, even if the president is the titular head of his own party.²⁴ Increasingly, institutional analysis has focused on the incentives facing individual legislators to cultivate a personal reputation with voters rather than exploiting their association with a party label (Katz 1986; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987). Bringing this *intraparty dimension* to the fore has been essential to the development of neo-Madisonian theory. John Carey and Matthew Shugart (1995) and Shugart (2001, 2005) present systematic evaluations of the individualizing incentives of various electoral systems based on: (a) whether party leaders control access to the party label; (b) whether a party's votes are pooled across multiple candidates running under the label; and (c) whether voters cast their votes for a list of candidates nominated by the party or for individual candidates. To the extent that parties control access to the label, votes are pooled, and voters vote only for party lists, the electoral system may be seen as party-centered, as in *closed-list* proportional representation (PR). To the extent that some or all of these conditions do not hold, the rules are more candidate-centered. Examples include *open-list* PR, where votes are pooled at the party level, but voters may vote for individual candidates, rather than have to accept the list as a whole, and single nontransferable vote, in which no votes are pooled, and candidates gain representation entirely based on their own votes (i.e. there is no party list).

²⁴ In presidential systems, even if the executive has a copartisan legislative majority, party discipline and the executive's role as party leader are distinct concepts. For instance the legislative party could be highly disciplined yet be under the leadership of a factional leader opposed to the president, or the president could hold a *de jure* or *de facto* leadership role in the party, but be unable to discipline the legislative caucus. Something approximating the former situation existed in Guatemala when Efraín Ríos Montt was legislative leader of the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco*, but a rival leader, Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, was president. The latter situation has typified many Colombian presidents' relations with their own majority party.

The incentives for candidates under these rules are made even more diverse given variations in district magnitude. Under closed lists, where voters have no opportunity to favor the election of some candidates over others, higher magnitude means more candidates who may be elected without being identifiable in any way to voters. Such politicians owe their election much more to party leaders than to voters. However, with intraparty competition, higher magnitude generates more competitors within the party seeking votes, implying a higher premium on the distinct qualities of the candidate.

Candidate-centered rules are often associated empirically and theoretically with less disciplined parties and politicians focused on targeted benefits for their constituents with which to enhance their personal electoral reputation. It would be a mistake, however, to read this literature as concluding that there is simply an inverse relationship between personal-vote incentives and normative notions of public goods provision or ‘proper’ party functioning. To be sure, all else equal, party-centered rules are often associated with parties that have a more national focus. But at the extreme, ‘hypercentralized’ rules may sacrifice accountability of individual politicians to voters by prompting legislators to ignore constituent interests in favor of party leadership. Under such rules—closed lists and relatively high magnitudes—parties may have a tendency to become very top-heavy, with real political competition being centered among factions that have little connection to the electorate, but rather vie for control of the big ‘prize’ of the powerful central party machinery.²⁵ Even more, extreme unity of purpose between a disciplined legislative majority and a copartisan president undermines the logic of the separation of powers and endowing agents with countervailing interests—as the Mexican case under PRI hegemony shows most clearly.

3.2.3.2. Theoretical Development of the Intraparty Dimension

We can conceptualize the two principal–agent relationships that are most relevant to the intraparty dimension as: (a) between voter-principals and legislators as agents; and (b) between legislators (as principals) and the extent to which they delegate to party leaders as their agents. Where the electoral rules are candidate-centered, voters would be more likely to demand information on specific candidates in order to be able to screen their potential agents of representation. On the other hand, where rules are party-centered, information on parties as collective agents of representation will be more valuable to

²⁵ This combination may contribute to what Coppedge (1994), writing on Venezuela’s largest party, *Acción Democrática*, referred to as ‘partyarchy.’ A similar phenomenon is described by Taylor (1996) in Honduras.

voters than information on candidates, whose election prospects voters cannot affect other than by which party (as a whole) they favor (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). From the standpoint of legislators, we would expect the extent of their delegation to party leaders to be closely related to the personal or partisan incentives that they face. Where they face incentives to cultivate a personal vote, they are likely to delegate less central authority because of their need to highlight ways in which they differ from other candidates and from the party as a whole. On the other hand, the more determinative of their election prospects is the voters' evaluation of the collective party reputation, the more politicians would have an incentive to delegate to leadership and reward that leadership for maintaining the public good of the party label.²⁶

Increasingly, research on Latin American politics has given attention to these institutions and testing their effects on legislative behavior and executive–legislative relations. Brian Crisp et al. (2004), studying six Latin American democracies,²⁷ show that bills providing 'targetable' benefits to a locality originate from deputies facing greater personal-vote incentives and that higher district magnitudes intensify these incentives.²⁸ Comparing across the region, Daniel Nielson (2003) finds personal-vote incentives to be associated with the maintenance of protectionist trade policy, while Mark Hallerberg and Putvik Marier (2004) find such an association with budget deficits. The connection between policy and intraparty factors has also been highlighted in case studies. Kent Eaton's account (2002) of policy change in Argentina, for example, suggests party-centered electoral rules in Argentina facilitated passage of Menem's economic reforms.

These studies intend to account for the overall tendency of legislatures with a more parochial policy focus relative to other nations—and, importantly, relative to the president. Throughout the region and elsewhere, presidential incentives are taken to be relatively more national and policy oriented (Shugart and Carey 1992; Geddes 1994; Moe and Caldwell 1994; Shugart 1999). The logic is simply that presidents have a single national constituency,

²⁶ This logic is thus a generalization of that put forth by Cox and McCubbins (1993) for US House parties. Additionally, legislators delegating the least power to party leaders tend to have, via constitutional provisions, 'delegated' proactive legislative power to the president. As a result, weak parties are usually associated with strong presidents (Shugart 1998).

²⁷ Closed-list systems in Argentina, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Venezuela, and more candidate-centered rules in Chile and Colombia.

²⁸ Although not considering Latin American cases, Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen (2005) show that attributes of legislators that signal commitment to serving local interests (e.g. birth-place, lower-level electoral experience) vary with magnitude differentially, according to whether party lists are open or closed.

and must win a broad plurality or majority.²⁹ Legislatures, on the other hand, vary in the breadth of their constituencies and their incentives, in the manner discussed in this section. As we note below, however, this variance does not range from 'good' to 'bad' incentives. Both intraparty extremes present distinct disadvantages.

3.2.3.3. *Variations Across Parties Under a Common Electoral System*

As these general conclusions of personal vote seeking incentives emerge from a cross-national perspective, case studies have sought to explain the within-system variation of actors' response to those incentives. In a given case, there are a number of factors mediating the connection between an electoral system's intraparty incentives and the strategy pursued by a given set of political actors. Hence, different parties equilibrate differently depending on the circumstances they face. In Brazil, a prominent example of intra-country variation in party organization has been the behavior of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), a party frequently noted as both programmatic and internally cohesive (Keck 1992; Mainwaring 1999) compared to other Brazilian parties despite facing the same electoral system. Samuels' cross-party study (1999) shows that variation within Brazil can be explained by examining parties' internal rules, electoral alliances, and access to patronage and to campaign finance. Just as the PT is organized in a fashion contrary to Brazil's systemic incentives for personalism, Crisp (1998) shows that in Venezuela the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) organized in a *decentralized* fashion notwithstanding the systemic incentives for highly concentrated party authority.

A basic conclusion of work on the intraparty dimension is that the incentive structure of electoral rules establishes an environment in which some strategic choices by politicians and their collective organizations, parties, are more favored than others. Nonetheless, any complete theory of the intraparty dimension must admit the existence of multiple equilibria in terms of organizational form, even under a constant institutional context. If the ultimate principal is conceived to be the electorate, variations in preference profiles among voters should be expected to result in variations of organizational forms to attract the votes of constituents. We return to these themes in our case sketches below.

²⁹ The possible variance in the extent of nationalizing incentives for presidents based on different electoral formulas, regionalization of the vote, closeness of the outcome, eligibility for reelection, or the use of primary elections (an intraparty variation) has not been analyzed extensively thus far.

3.2.4. Legislative Ambition

Understanding legislative ambition is a crucial piece of neo-Madisonian analysis, because it provides a key link between legislators' electoral incentives and their incentive to engage in transactional or hierarchical relationships with the executive. Put starkly, if legislators do not have the ambition to remain in the legislature, they are unlikely to have interest in institutionalizing the body such that it can develop a collective interest in policy outcomes, on which it transacts with (and thus checks) the executive. Moreover, legislators with little interest in, or no eligibility for, reelection are unlikely to function as agents of their voters. The neo-Madisonian insights explain why legislators have the ambition they have, and to whom they are accountable if not their current electorate, and what interests they have as legislators, if not to transact over policy with the executive.

The clearest incentive for democratic agents is for them to be encouraged to seek continuing occupation of the office they hold, such that the threat of removal is a meaningful one. Shaping an agent's ambition means, in part, shaping their time horizon.³⁰ The reelection motive or static ambition, a universal assumption in US legislative studies, is suggested by some as useful in Latin American politics (e.g. Ames 1987; Geddes 1994) and criticized as a misapplication by others (e.g. Weyland 2002a). From a neo-Madisonian perspective, career motives and their impact on time horizons are central questions in themselves.

A straightforward incentive for legislative agents to 'shirk' their apparent immediate principals derives from term limits. Carey's case studies (1996) of Costa Rican and Venezuelan legislative career paths in the 1990s demonstrate that removing the prospect of reelection merely shifts their focus toward those who control postlegislative careers.³¹ In terms of delegation and accountability, this end point imposed on legislative agents induces shirking against constituents, shifting their loyalties toward presidents or party leaders or other extralegislative actors capable of furthering their careers. Term-limited deputies in Costa Rica have good prospects for continuing their political careers via presidential appointments if their party wins the presidency, prompting them to pursue particularistic policy to promote their party's general electoral gain.³² In Venezuela, under similar electoral rules but without

³⁰ Longer time horizons—i.e. the possibility that faithful service will result in periodic renewal of the contract—provide an incentive for agents to respond to the threat of removal and, therefore, to be accountable to their immediate principals.

³¹ Thus, term limits do not necessarily favor public goods-oriented legislators (as sometimes argued by term-limits advocates in the United States).

³² A point also made by Taylor (1992).

term limits, the careers of deputies tend to focus on the national legislature and deputies did not pursue constituency service. Carey then applies these insights to the United States, demonstrating that even in the very context where the reelection assumption emerged, legislators aspiring to statewide office exhibit changes in voting patterns in accordance with those progressive goals.³³

More generally, an agent's incentive structure is always shaped by factors external to their immediate relationship to the principal, shifting their efforts toward other potential principals.³⁴ Even without term limits, legislators will consider opportunities available subsequent to their current office. Samuels (2003) examination of career paths in 1990s Brazil, suggests that Brazil's federal structure fundamentally alters both legislative career motivations and policy preferences. In a context where state actors, notably governors, wield considerable subnational power over resources and political fates, many deputies, he finds, leave after short national legislative careers to pursue state and local office. The effects of state-centric careers, by Samuel's account, extend to strategies of gubernatorial electoral alliances and pork-barreling designed to strengthen relationships with powerful state-level actors.³⁵

Features of legislative institutionalization such as committees and seniority rules vary with such factors as the extent of legislators' desire to advertise and claim credit for legislation in seeking reelection as well as parties' internal tools for rewards and sanctions (Mayhew 1974; Cox and McCubbins 1993). When the national legislature is not a career zenith or legislators are highly dependent on local party leaders, incentives for professionalizing and institutionalizing the national legislature may be quite limited. Such was the case in the United States prior to party centralization in the mid-nineteenth century (see e.g. Kernell 1977), and remains so in several Latin American assemblies where reelection rates range from somewhat lower than the present US House to zero (Morgenstern 2002). In Argentina, the provincial focus of party nominations, along with the president's decree power, has devalued the status of federal legislative careers, which in turn has worked against the institutionalization of the legislature (Jones et al. 2002). In Mexico the prohibition on consecutive terms similarly produces very little incentive to institutionalize the assembly (Weldon 2002). Conversely, Morgenstern (2002) explains that the Chilean

³³ Carey's study is a useful example of the two-way flow of theoretical and empirical insights between studies of the United States and Latin America. Carey adapts theories of legislative ambition to the different context of Costa Rica and Venezuela, generalizing the theory and testing inferences arising from his Latin American cases in the United States (see also Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000).

³⁴ An analogy in the theory of the firm can be made to agents who account for the labor market and weigh outside opportunities as they execute tasks delegated by their current principals.

³⁵ Other work examining the impact of subnational and bureaucratic career paths for legislators includes Jones (2002), O'Neill (2005), and Escobar-Lemmon and Moreno (2004).

legislature has more static ambition than others in the region and, accordingly, is one of the most institutionalized, with a leadership and committee system designed to serve members' reelection efforts. These studies suggest that the development of strong legislative institutions may be associated with legislator's incentive to pursue reelection independent of presidents and party leaders.

3.2.5. The Dimensions of Majority Faction: Extreme Systems

Either the existence of the same passion or interest in a majority at the same time must be prevented, or the majority, having such coexistent passion or interest, must be rendered, by their number and local situation, unable to concert and carry into effect schemes of oppression.

—Madison in *Federalist Papers* No. 10.

If a single party managed to obtain a legislative majority and provide its elected legislators no incentive to cater to local interests of constituents, the result would be precisely the 'majority faction' that Madison and his colleagues feared. If that majority also captured the executive, the transactional system of checks and balances would be effectively rendered meaningless. Alternatively, if the legislature was incapable of organizing itself for a collective nationally oriented purpose, it would not transact with the executive on a coequal basis. In either scenario, legislators have an incentive to abdicate the formal autonomy of their branch to the executive. Legislatures that lack interest in national policy will permit the executive to take the initiative—for example, by decrees—on programmatic matters while seeking ad hoc legislative support with narrow rewards such as patronage for deputies' regions and personal networks. In the remainder of this section, we use several examples to highlight 'extreme' patterns of representations that can hinder transactional relations.

Much of the insight into the incentives politicians within a given institution will have with respect to other institutions stems from the electoral connection (Mayhew 1974). The way in which executives and legislators are elected is crucial for the incentives of agents to cooperate or engage in conflict. It should be noted here that 'conflict' need not a bad thing, for the very idea of ambition counteracting ambition requires some degree of conflict. Not all conflict is deadlock, nor is all deadlock regime-threatening. Many conflicts are resolved via transactions between the agents, or by the voters themselves at the next election. Others are overcome via constitutional provisions for unilateral action (e.g. decrees, veto overrides). The neo-Madisonian framework offers insights into the conditions under which conflict can generate deadlock, which may threaten democracy itself.

As we noted in the previous sections, the incentives of legislators can be understood with respect to two dimensions of representation—interparty and intraparty. Here we extend the logic of the two dimensions to develop a notion of ‘extreme’ systems that can be theoretically expected to skew legislative incentives away from a desire to transact with the executive over national policymaking. Each dimension provides a continuum from highly fragmented to highly concentrated. On the interparty dimension, high fragmentation implies a very high effective number of political parties competing in elections and jockeying for influence in the national legislature. High concentration implies not only a majority party, but a relatively unassailable one, either because the opposition is fragmented or because the electoral system is biased in favor of the majority.

Moreover, in the case of presidential systems, high concentration of overall political authority is achieved in the interparty dimension if and only if the legislative majority also controls the presidency. On the intraparty dimension, high concentration occurs only if the president is the head of his own party. If either of these conditions is absent, high concentration may apply *within* the legislature, but not across branches. If the concentration of authority does not attain its apex on both dimensions in the presidency, then there still exists room for differences of ambition, and hence either transactions or deadlock, between president and assembly.

We follow the terminology introduced by Shugart (2001) and refer to the extreme fragmentation as *hyperrepresentative*, a term that refers to the relative ease with which minority parties may obtain legislative representation, aided by electoral system features such as high proportionality and low thresholds. Extreme concentration on the interparty dimension is a *pluralitarian* system, implying a high degree of concentration of authority in the largest minority.³⁶ A hyperrepresentative system implies that the emergence of any given majority is unlikely, due to high fragmentation. Politics in such a setting is likely to take the form of shifting ad hoc coalitions, rather than stable majority formation, and the president’s party is typically well short of a majority. A pluralitarian system implies that a single party holding the presidency is capable of ruling alone, especially when based on a minority of votes or when an alternative majority is unlikely. More moderate locations on the interparty continuum imply a more balanced competition, whereby multiple parties may coalesce behind a common national purpose, or the majority may shift from election to election.

³⁶ The term ‘pluralitarian’ indicates that the political force with concentrated authority may not actually require a majority of votes to maintain its control.

On the intraparty dimension, the continuum also runs from fragmented to concentrated, in terms of individual legislator's freedom to articulate their personal attachments to localities or blocs of voters, on the one hand, or are subordinated to national leadership of their parties, on the other hand. A high degree of intraparty fragmentation is *hyperpersonalistic*, implying that the personal reputations and entrepreneurial activities of specific politicians dominate the electoral and legislative process. At the extreme, parties, as such, may not exist, or may be empty shells that provide little meaningful coordination of legislators. The opposite end of the intraparty dimension is characterized by *hypercentralization* in the hands of national party leaders—including the president in the case of his own party—such that individual legislators have little scope to represent the specific interests of local constituents or to highlight personal attributes or policy views that set them apart from their party.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the interparty and intraparty dimensions, with the location of selected Latin American countries, plus the United States, indicated impressionistically.³⁷ Different indices could be developed to scale countries at any given time on these axes, although we shall not present or defend any particular quantitative expression for the placement of countries in this review.³⁸ The location of a country in Figure 3.1 should be thought of as being an estimate of the placement of its median legislator,³⁹ with respect to the theoretical extremes. Several Latin American countries have approximated one of the extremes in this two-dimensional space at some point in their recent histories. It is at the extremes that we expect the executive–legislative

³⁷ No simplified depiction of complex political systems, such as that shown in Figure 3.1, can take account of all relevant variables that affect legislative incentives. For instance, we do not take account of federalism, except to the extent that the regional differences of a federation are reflected in the number of parties (interparty dimension) or the relationship between national party leadership and individual legislators. The most important case that is not well represented by the scales of Figure 3.1 is Argentina. As shown by Jones (2002), Argentine legislators have little incentive to represent specific interests and are quite subservient to party leaders. However, those leaders are not generally national leaders, but rather provincial leaders. Thus, from the standpoint of a given province, representation approximates the situation depicted by the upper-right quadrant. However, when the various provincial delegations are brought together in the national legislature, the balance of local and national interests implies a more moderate scale position. Unlike in the United States—or even Brazil—that balance is not obtained through legislative constituencies that give members considerable independence from their party leaders, but rather by the existence of a transactional relationship between provincial party power-brokers.

³⁸ Shugart (2001) presents an index, but few of the cases considered there are Latin American.

³⁹ For simplicity, we do not differentiate here upper and lower houses. Our discussion will refer mainly to lower houses, with occasional references to different incentives in a given upper house. Of course, we recognize that upper houses should be taken more seriously than they are in much of the literature, as in most Latin American bicameral systems the two houses are roughly equal in authority.

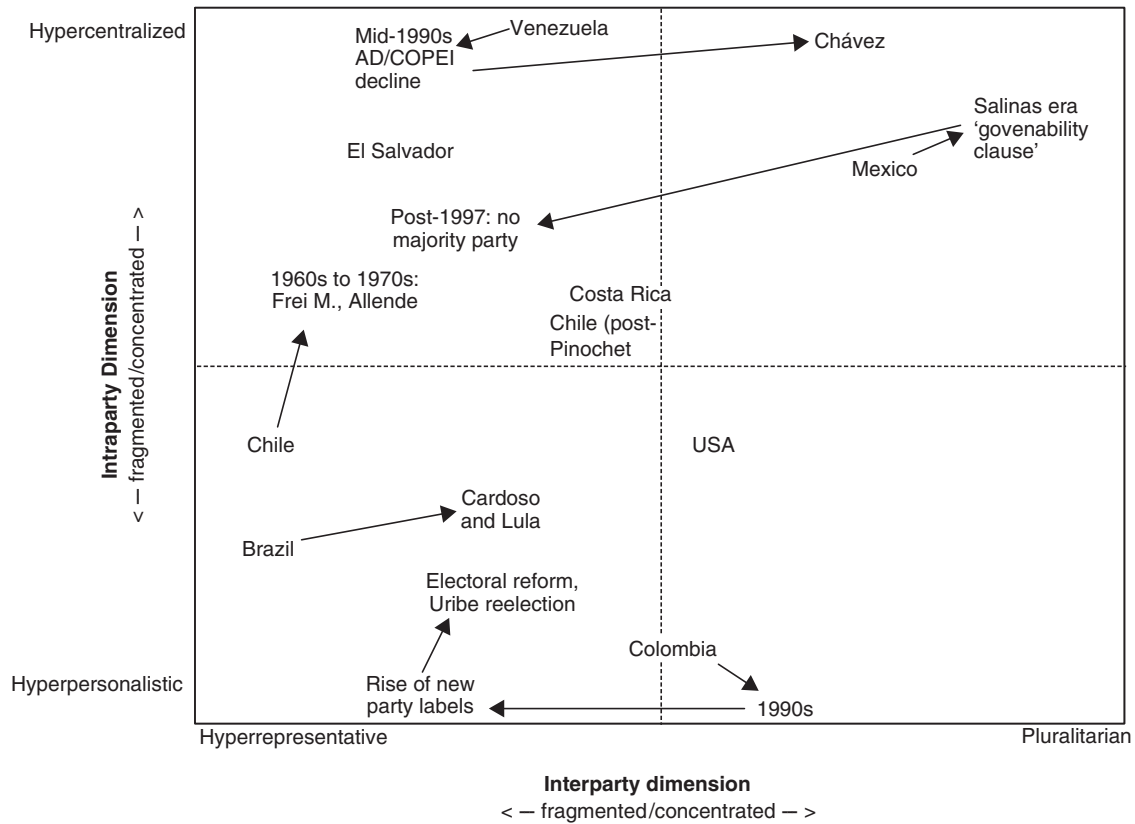


Figure 3.1. Concentration or fragmentation of authority in the party systems of the presidential democracies in the Americas

relationship to be most problematic, for one reason or another. As the arrows in the figure stemming from the country labels indicate, a country need not have a static location in this two-dimensional space. The dynamics of electoral competition may change the incentives of the median legislator by injecting new parties with distinct constituencies into the competitive mix or because some pressing national issue, that legislators cannot shirk, emerges. Changes in a country's location may also result from electoral or other institutional reform, although it should be noted that reform itself is typically a product of changes in issue salience or patterns of party competition—a point that we return to below.

We shall use one or more Latin American countries—and the literature on it that most represents the neo-Madisonian perspective—to illustrate each of the extremes and how the two dimensions of legislative representation affect the nature of executive–legislative politics. In each case, we will also consider how the dynamics of electoral competition and political reform result in changes in the position of a country in this two-dimensional space.

3.2.5.1. *Hyperrepresentative: Brazil*

We begin with Brazil in part because it is the Latin American case for which the largest literature on institutions and representation has developed. Brazil's fragmented multipartism places the country among those with the largest effective number of parties in the world. The Brazilian literature on institutional incentives, beginning with Mainwaring (1991), has also focused to a large degree on the personalistic nature of open-list PR, thus suggesting that the case also contains elements of our hyperpersonalistic extreme. Barry Ames' study (2001), perhaps the most focused on the open-list incentive in Brazil, shows that the resulting electoral strategies are manifest in concentrated support bases or efforts at dominance across several municipalities, which are then targeted in deputies' legislative efforts, which he conceptualizes as being highly individualistic and oriented toward reelection.

While not disputing the high degree of personalism in Brazil, we agree that studies that have emphasized personalism have downplayed the critical role that parties play in organizing the national legislature.⁴⁰ Thus, for illustrative purposes, the most noteworthy characteristic of representation in Brazil is not its personalism, but rather its multiparty and regionalized character, although both tendencies are clearly more prevalent than their opposite, as shown by our placement of Brazil in the lower-left quadrant of Figure 3.1. Personalism has been less extreme than in Colombia, for example, and recent scholarship

⁴⁰ Especially in comparison to the Brazil's 1945–64 democratic period (Lyne 2005).

ascribes greater importance to parties and party discipline than implied by earlier literature (e.g. Figueiredo and Limongi 2000; Amorim Neto 2002*b*).

We have just articulated the relatively static features of Brazilian electoral politics since the return to democracy. The open-list electoral system has remained unchanged, and the importance of state-level politics emphasized by Samuels (2003) and others⁴¹ remains. However, other features of electoral competition—and thus legislative organization and executive–legislative relations—have undergone changes. Amorim Neto, Cox, and McCubbins (2003) have shown that the characterization of Brazil as a fluid multiparty system was accurate for some presidential administrations, but the more structured interpretation of Argelina Figueiredo and Fernando Limongi (2000) has recently been more accurate. At its most fragmented, the Brazilian party system not only failed to produce a majority with a common collective purpose, but also permitted the election of an ‘outsider’ president, Fernando Collor de Mello. Collor, seeing bleak prospects for gaining legislative majorities for his policy preferences through the ordinary statutory process, embarked on an ‘imperial’ approach, emitting decrees, over which he negotiated with congressional party leaders only afterwards (Amorim Neto 2002*a*; Cox and Morgenstern 2002). In other cases, presidents have pursued a statutory strategy building sufficiently broad support from their own party in coalition with allied parties to and facilitate the passage of the agreed agenda (Amorim Neto, Cox, and McCubbins 2003).

The emergence of more centralized executive–legislative bargaining has been accompanied by changes in both the interparty and intraparty dimensions. After a series of nonconcurrent presidential and legislative elections in the decade after the end of military rule, in 1994 elections were concurrent. As expected in the literature on electoral cycles (Shugart 1995; Jones 1997; Samuels 2000*b*), concurrent elections helped build a majority in congress for the various parties aligned with incoming President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. During his term, congress passed a constitutional amendment to permit immediate reelection of the president—a change that was itself largely motivated by conservative politicians’ fears that they did not have a viable alternative to the leftist leader, Luis Ignacio ‘Lula’ da Silva, other than the incumbent Cardoso. A concomitant change in the presidential term from five years to four resulted in the entrenchment of concurrent elections. The national focus of a reelection bid by an incumbent president and the linking of the campaigns for the two branches are two factors that would be expected

⁴¹ Particularly in the pioneering work of Mainwaring (1995, 1997, 1999) and Ames (1995*a*, 1995*b*, 2001). See also Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (1997), Desposato (2004), Morgenstern (2004), and Carey and Reinhart (2004).

to increase concentration on both dimensions. Presidential ‘coattails’ would result in an increased representation for the president’s party, and legislators would be more likely to be held accountable for their support or opposition to the president. These changes appear to have taken place in Brazil since the beginning of the first Cardoso presidency,⁴² and thus we show Brazil as making modest moves toward a more moderate placement on both dimensions.

3.2.5.2. *Pluralitarian: Mexico Before 1997*

The Mexican case shows what happens when concentration on the interparty dimension becomes extreme. A single majority faction, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), dominated Mexican politics for decades, resulting in no effective competition. Moreover, the party was highly disciplined and the president was almost always the unchallenged leader of the party, rendering the legislature subservient (Cox and Morgenstern 2002).⁴³ In Figure 3.1 we show Mexico as well to the *concentrated* end of the interparty dimension, owing to the lack of a viable alternative to the PRI throughout most of its years of control. We also show Mexico in the *concentrated* half of the intraparty dimension, though less extreme than the Venezuelan case. The president as national party leader clearly dominated the behavioral calculus of majority-party legislators, but local PRI candidates were given more autonomy in their management of district-level campaigns and were more tied to their localities than often recognized (Langston 2001). Were it not for the ban on immediate congressional reelection, it is unlikely that party discipline would have been so high (Weldon 2002).

We show the Mexican system in the Salinas era moving in a more concentrated direction in both dimensions of Figure 3.1. The shift farther toward the pluralitarian extreme represents the electoral system provision that was in effect in 1991 and 1994 that effectively would have guaranteed the PRI a majority in congress even had it fallen well below 50 percent of the votes (Molinar and Weldon 2001), the very essence of pluralitarian outcomes. The

⁴² We discuss these changes in more detail below, in considering the possibility for endogenous evolution of extreme systems.

⁴³ It should be reiterated, however, that pluralitarian outcomes in legislative competition could alternatively promote an extreme divergence between executive and assembly political goals if the branches were controlled by opposing political forces. In Mexico, of course, PRI control of both branches produced extreme commonality of political goals. However, a similarly reactive president (in terms of constitutional powers) combined with a disciplined, opposition-dominated assembly could result in an irreconcilable conflict of goals, and result in genuine deadlock. A proactive president in the same scenario could produce even more destabilizing conflict, as both actors would have sharply diverging preferences and unilateral means to put them into effect, with no clear means for resolving differences (Linz’s dual democratic legitimacies problem).

upward shift represents the tighter alignment of the president with his party as Salinas exercised a sharply increased involvement in the affairs of the party.⁴⁴ However, since the PRI lost its majority in 1997, Mexico has moved sharply away from interparty concentration, as three-party competition has become established. Mexican congressional elections also appear to have undergone an increasing personalization, as more competitive elections have given parties the incentive to nominate candidates with attractive personal qualities and experience in the single-member districts (Diaz 2004). Moreover, central coordination over state-level parties has decreased somewhat with greater interparty competition (Langston 2003). Nonetheless, Mexican parties remain relatively centralized, and probably will remain so as long as immediate reelection for congress is banned and party leaders continue to control access to the most attractive postlegislative opportunities, such as nominations for other offices.

The Mexican case is especially instructive for the relationship of congress members' personal career incentives to the extent of hierarchical or transactional relations with the executive. As already noted, the pre-1997 era was the paradigmatic case of hierarchy, with the members of the PRI congressional majority bound to the national party leadership—personified in each *sexenio* by the president—through its control over nominations and the distribution of postlegislative patronage. However, the relationship of the executive and legislative branches changed dramatically once the PRI lost its majority in 1997, and then the presidency in 2000. In the absence of a majority, disciplined in support of the president as party leader, suddenly Mexico had the conditions for the classic countervailing ambitions theorized by the Federalists. Presidents found themselves having to negotiate with congress to enact a legislative program. Given the relatively national incentives of members of congress, the substance of these transactions is largely policy concessions, not patronage and pork.

3.2.5.3. *Hypercentralized: Venezuela*

The Venezuelan case is a nearly ideal-typical example of hypercentralized intraparty relations. Venezuelan legislators from 1958 to 1988 were elected from closed lists in relatively large multimember districts. The main party organizations themselves were highly centralized, with national party committees empowered through the party rules to substitute and rearrange candidates on the lists submitted by state-level party chapters. As a result of these

⁴⁴ For instance, intervening in intraparty disputes in various states, as described by Weldon (1997: 252–4).

features, there was minimal incentive for legislators to pay attention to local or state interests, or to be known and active among their constituents, as the literature on Venezuela noted (Martz 1992; Coppedge 1994; Crisp and Rey 2001).

The party system was nominally competitive, and most comparative analysts classified Venezuela as a two-party system. However, as various students of Venezuela (Levine 1973; Crisp 2000) have observed, the two main parties—AD and COPEI—were in fact more collusive than competitive.⁴⁵ Their first priority was to maintain the regime, defined not only as a system of regular elections but also as one in which party-affiliated interest groups were granted direct access to executive-branch decision-making through what Crisp (2000) calls consultative commissions. With individual legislators having the personal incentive to toe the party line, and with party leaders bent on maintaining the collusive and consultative features of the system, the legislature was mostly inactive. Indeed, it was another case of a subservient legislature, but of a different character than Mexico's. Whereas the Mexican congress under the hegemony of the PRI was active in passing statutes, albeit with minimal or no amendments to the president's proposals, the Venezuelan legislature regularly delegated decree authority to the executive or simply acquiesced in its being bypassed by the executive's consultative commissions.⁴⁶

As the party system imploded in the 1990s, Venezuela drifted toward a hyperrepresentative situation, with a rapid and extreme increase in the effective number of parties. Unlike the case of Brazil, however, these parties remained nationally focused, and with some exceptions, quite centralized. During this time, with a minority president and a fragmented legislature, executive-legislative relations were at their most combative in Venezuelan

⁴⁵ The term 'collusive' is applied to Venezuela by Norden (1998) in her comparative assessment of party-system configurations in the region.

⁴⁶ The different consequences of these distinctive manifestations of the dominant-subservient pattern have not received attention in the literature; however, we would expect that the Mexican variant allows for greater flexibility (or, if one prefers, arbitrariness). That is, the greater dependence of legislators on the president in Mexico, due to single-party majorities and the absence of congressional careerism, implies a lesser institutionalization of the procedures by which the president and party organization bypass the formal congressional check on the executive. In Venezuela, on the other hand, the largest party, AD, frequently was short of a majority and was riven by factions (Coppedge 1994). To manage this more complex political situation, the AD and COPEI maintained a delicate bipartisan and interest-group balance on the consultative commissions. We interpret Crisp (2000) as saying that these political transactions rendered the policymaking process *overinstitutionalized* and hence less able to adapt when confronted with the pressures that resulted from the exhaustion of the statist economic model and the drop in oil prices in the 1980s and after. The danger of overinstitutionalization is articulated in the context of the Soviet Union by Roeder (1993), who applies a neo-Madisonian perspective to authoritarianism—an authoritarian parallel that has been noted in previous works (e.g. Coppedge 1994).

history (see the review in Crisp 2000).⁴⁷ Around the same time, the electoral system was reformed, to allow about half of the lower house to be elected in single-member districts. This reform was explicitly justified as a means of decentralizing the parties, which were recognized in official discourse as too top-heavy (Crisp and Rey 2001).⁴⁸ However, we show the impact on the intraparty dimension as having been minimal, because, as Brian F. Crisp and Juan Carlos Rey (2001) explain, no changes were made to the centralized organizational structures of the main parties themselves. The failure of the Venezuelan system to respond to the intense popular discontent of the 1990s led to the rise of Hugo Chávez Frias, which we depict as having moved Venezuela back to a more concentrated position on both dimensions.

3.2.5.4. Hyperpersonalistic: Colombia

A paradigmatic example of personal vote seeking incentives in Latin America existed in the ‘personal-list’ system used for congressional elections in Colombia through 2002. Without vote pooling at the party level, this system operated in a fashion similar to the single nontransferable vote, once used in Japan (Cox and Shugart 1995). The two main parties that regularly elected multiple legislators in most districts—the Liberals and Conservatives—generally had each of their legislators elected from a separate list. Likewise, smaller parties’ lists generally failed to elect more than one member in any electoral district, even in the 100-seat senate district established in 1991. As a consequence, electoral lists in Colombia have been primarily vehicles for individual candidacies, creating a highly competitive environment *within* parties that reinforce weak legislative parties and the maintenance of clientelist networks to deliver support (Archer and Shugart 1997, Nielson and Shugart 1999, Crisp and Desposato 2004).⁴⁹

After the enactment of a new constitution in 1991, the trend was toward greater and greater intraparty fragmentation. The trend was also briefly in the direction of interparty concentration, as the Liberal party’s greater ability

⁴⁷ We borrow the term ‘combative’ from Norden (1998).

⁴⁸ Similarly, Mayorga (2001) describes Bolivia’s shift to a mixed system as also linked to a crisis of legitimacy among entrenched parties and an effort to enhance the weak electoral linkages associated with closed lists.

⁴⁹ The crucial difference when compared to Brazil’s open-list system is that candidates running under a common party label share votes in Brazil; votes for individual candidates are pooled for purposes of interparty allocation. They were not pooled in Colombia, resulting in no necessary relation between a party’s votes and its seats (Shugart, Moreno, and Fajardo 2007). Chile’s system, as discussed below, is also open list, but the unusual two-seat districts generate a rather different competitive logic.

to manage the division of its votes across its multiple lists allowed it to maintain congressional majorities even when it fell below 50 percent of the House vote in 1998. In March 2002, however, a stunning fractionalization of the congressional election followed, as many traditional and 'independent' politicians alike began to jettison the old party labels in favor of new ones, some of which allied with independent presidential candidate Alvaro Uribe. Thus we depict Colombia as of 2002 as significantly fragmented; however, it would not be correct to characterize the outcome as hyperrepresentative, because the congress inaugurated after Uribe's victory in May divided into two clearly opposed camps. This national policy cleavage, unusual in the context of a hyperpersonalistic system, facilitated the passage of a reform of the electoral system to a variant of party-list PR. The new system engendered some concentration on both dimensions in the 2006 election, as depicted in Figure 3.1.⁵⁰

3.2.5.5. *Nationally Oriented Multipartism*

Latin America has given us little experience with interparty fragmentation combined with intraparty concentration (the upper left of Figure 3.1). At its extreme, this would represent multiparty competition in the absence of stable coalitions among the parties (i.e. hyperrepresentative), with the major parties having very concentrated authority at the national level (i.e. hypercentralized). Such a combination is likely to be present only in the case of rather intense division along ideological grounds, given that, by definition, such a combination means that the multiple parties are not driven by primarily local or regional considerations. Thus this quadrant may represent one of the closest approximations to the nightmare scenarios of deadlock envisioned by Cheibub (2002) and dual democratic legitimacies, as famously articulated by Linz (1994). Indeed, Chile in the 1960s and early 1970s represent one of the prime examples to have been in this quadrant over a sustained period. For the decades prior to the 1960s, Arturo Valenzuela (1978) and Peter Siavelis (1999) indicate, Chile had an ideologically diverse party system, but conflict was tempered by the importance politicians attached to local constituency service, for which they often were willing to work across the partisan divide. Thus we depict Chile prior to the 1960s as moderate on the intraparty dimension, while quite extreme on the interparty dimension. In the 1960s and 1970s, on the other hand, partisan lines hardened and divisive national issues dominated congressional politics in their dealings with a president with significant

⁵⁰ For a detailed account of the process of electoral reform in Colombia and an analysis of the performance of the new system in the 2006 election, see Shugart, Moreno, and Fajardo (2007).

legislative authority. The effective number of parties actually declined, but the former moderation provided by local service also declined.⁵¹

As we noted previously, Venezuela had brief experience with a configuration represented by the upper left of Figure 3.1 in the 1990s, but it was never a sustained feature of that system.⁵² Shortly after the election of Chávez in 1998, Venezuelan politics came to be markedly dominated by a single political force, as depicted in Figure 3.1. Among current systems, El Salvador is the most extreme combination within this quadrant, with a multiparty system in which the two largest parties have tended each to have around a third of the vote and legislative seats. Indications are that the major parties are highly centralized (Wood 2005: 197), and while the conservative Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) has moderated its ideology since the end of the civil war, the leftist ex-guerrilla Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN) mostly has not (Ryan 1997). The result has been a rather polarized legislature, although it has remained ‘workable’ in Cox and Morgenstern’s sense (2002), presumably because all postwar presidents have also been from ARENA, and smaller conservative and centrist parties have been able to build coalitions with ARENA.⁵³ Thus the Salvadoran case is almost certainly the closest current approximation to the twin extremes of multipartism and centralization. As such, it suggests the promise of such a configuration to produce national policy-oriented transactions and to avoid the pitfalls of either legislative subservience to the executive or dominance of pork-barrel politics. However, it also embodies the ever-present danger of polarization, especially if an unreformed left were to win the presidency.⁵⁴

⁵¹ In fact, when measured by the number of lists presented, the effective number of representative agents—here, blocs of parties—declined to nearly two in the last election before the coup of 1973. Thus, it could be that it is not deadlocked multiparty competition over national issues that is most threatening to the survival of a presidential system, but deadlocked two-bloc competition and divided government when the opposition legislature is programmatic and nationally oriented. Such a scenario would arguably be the closest approximation of Linz’s dual democratic legitimacies, with clear, but opposed, ‘wills’ articulated by each branch (with the further proviso that the president, as well as congress, would have to have the constitutional means to push its agenda). However, this is not a matter we can resolve here, given the paucity of empirical experience with such configurations.

⁵² The Venezuelan party system was also quite fragmented, as measured by the effective number of parties, in the 1960s. However, this period was the height of AD–COPEI collusion, and thus the party system did not have the competitive dynamic of a hyperrepresentative system.

⁵³ On some occasions—notably, an attempt to forgive agrarian debt—the FMLN and other parties aside from ARENA have been willing to build coalitions (though facing the prospect of a presidential veto), so the legislature is not irretrievably polarized.

⁵⁴ The opposite corner of Figure 3.1, the lower right, represents the combination of pluralitarian and hyperpersonalistic representation. No Latin American system has approximated this combination, though Colombia briefly contained elements of it, as discussed above. Outside Latin America, Taiwan in the 1990s perhaps would be a closer approximation. See Haggard and Noble (2001).

3.2.5.6. *Moderate Systems: Post-Pinochet Chile, Post-1997 Mexico, and Costa Rica*

Near the center of Figure 3.1 we have systems that obtain moderate scale positions on both the interparty and intraparty dimensions. These are the systems that are most likely to deliver the mix of incentives that bring about a legislature interested in transacting with the executive over national policy. It is important to emphasize that we are not arguing that there is one configuration that is normatively ideal; indeed, as we shall see, the various systems that we identify as approximating the middle range differ in important respects from one another. Moreover, surely each has its own flaws. Nonetheless, the middle range positions exhibit many of the conditions that Madison and his colleagues spoke of in the *Federalist Papers*.

Before returning to the Latin American cases, let us recount the features of US institutions and legislative incentives that give it a middle positioning. On the intraparty dimension, the United States is obviously more personalistic than the closed-list PR systems with centralized parties, yet nevertheless depends to a larger degree on party reputation compared to systems with high degrees of intraparty competition. On the interparty dimension, the two parties are closely balanced in electoral support and congressional representation. Since around 1990, in most elections the largest party has had somewhat less than half of the votes for president, congress, or both (Shugart 2004: 645), and for this reason we depict the current position of the United States as being somewhat to the pluralitarian side on the interparty dimension. While the position of the United States is not static, it also probably varies less over time than many of the Latin American cases depicted.⁵⁵

Among the Latin American cases, it is no accident that the country often characterized as the most successful democracy in the region is one of the few to be found near the middle of Figure 3.1. Costa Rica has had two major and a few smaller parties represented in a congress that has been generally workable, as illustrated by the economic reforms in the 1990s (Wilson 1998). Sometimes the president's party has been short of a majority in the unicameral legislature, and even in the one case of fully divided government (i.e. an opposition majority) policymaking appears to have been relatively smooth. On the other hand, even when the president's party has been in the majority, the congress has seldom approximated the subservience that we saw in the Mexican case, or in Venezuela. Costa Rican legislators, like their Mexican counterparts, are constitutionally ineligible for immediate reelection. Yet the outcomes in terms

⁵⁵ Also, it is worth noting here that, in terms of presidential power over legislation, the reactive US presidency also has moderate legislative powers: relatively weak, particularly when compared to the proactive presidencies of Argentina, Colombia, or Brazil.

of executive–legislative relations have been very different from Mexico under PRI hegemony. Carey (1997) shows that members, unable to pursue ongoing careers in congress, look to the leader of their party for guidance. As in Mexico, this leader is external to the legislature, but unlike in Mexico, the leader is not always the incumbent president; it may be the party's candidate for the upcoming presidential election, selected in a competitive process. Thus the reelection ban for legislators that was seen to contribute to the concentration of authority in Mexico has contributed to interbranch transactional relations in Costa Rica—an important reminder that the effects of any one institution cannot be understood without considering the context of the others with which it interacts.

Chile after the end of the Pinochet regime is another example of balanced incentives, derived to a significant degree from the unusual electoral system. Chile has developed a high level of congressional careerism (Morgenstern 2002) and one of the most professionalized legislatures, measured by such indicators as committee specialization (Carey 2002). Chile's unique system of two-seat districts and open-list PR, engineered by the outgoing authoritarian government to provide an advantage for the rightist coalition, was presumed to promote centrism and two-party competition. At the district level, the system promotes candidate positioning on either side of the median voter (Magar, Rosenblum, and Samuels 1998). At the national level, legislative parties coordinate across districts by coalescing into two cohesive and broad multiparty alliances (Carey 2002). Because of the open-list system, candidates must cultivate ties to their constituencies. Yet, because the alliances centrally determine which of their component parties will contest which districts as well as who the candidates themselves will be, the personal-vote incentives are restrained. For this reason, we depict Chile's current system as quite close to the middle of the intraparty dimension. The result thus far has been a workable congress and coalitional presidents, though the presence of extraordinary constitutional powers and nonconcurrent elections looms as a potential source of conflict between these nationally oriented actors (Siavelis 2002).

Finally, Mexico since 1997—the year the PRI lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies—exhibits many of the conditions for a workable transactional relationship with the executive. As we noted above—and as Weldon (1997) predicted—the linchpin of presidential dominance in Mexico was the control of congress by a disciplined majority party of which the president was the head. The relationship between the president and the congressional party leadership was already weakening under the first three years of Zedillo's presidency (1994–7), but when the PRI lost its majority in the midterm elections, the relationship between the branches changed fundamentally (Nacif 2002), resulting in a president needing to negotiate with opposition parties. Because

the dominance of the president had depended on his partisan powers, not on constitutional powers, the president was suddenly placed in a markedly weaker position. Given that the substantially reduced majoritarianism of the post-1996 electoral system facilitates three-party competition, this pattern is likely to remain for sometime. However, given the continued absence of congressional reelection, parties remain considerably centralized, and the professionalization of congress lags (Nacif 2002).

3.2.6. Endogenous Evolution? Toward a Dynamic Theory

Our discussion of relatively extreme systems showed that the position of a country on the two dimensions of representation depicted in Figure 3.1 is not static. Here we will attempt to arrive at a synthesis that points the way toward theoretical extensions that could shed light on political dynamics. Extreme systems, Matthew Shugart and Martin Wattenberg (2001) argue, have an inherent tendency to generate *systemic failure*.⁵⁶ We can think of a systemic failure as a series of pathological outcomes resulting from the logic of political incentives in an extreme system. By 'pathological' we mean problems in the functioning of principal-agent relations of representation, perceived as such by a substantial enough portion of the electorate so as to generate pressures toward change, either endogenously or exogenously.

The source for endogenous change is often the emergence of what we call a *contrarian party*, defined as a party that bucks the dominant incentive of the existing system. Precisely because it does so, such parties can be expected to fail more often than they succeed. However, when there is a sufficient popular constituency for them, the logic of interparty electoral competition can generate incentives for established parties to respond. The result may be electoral or other institutional reform, or it may be changes to the organization of congress or simply to party strategy. The point is that a former equilibrium of an extreme situation is upset, generating the possible emergence of a new, less extreme, equilibrium. Of course, such endogenous evolution is not the only possible outcome. The old equilibrium may reassert itself, or the system may collapse and be replaced entirely, whether through presidential emergency powers, citizen-sponsored referendum, or military intervention. In this section we sketch some of the notions of endogenous evolution that have been offered consistent with neo-Madisonian themes.

In the case of Brazil, as we noted, Amorim Neto and Fabiano Santos (2003) find that the inefficient secret model (ISM, adapted from Shugart and Carey

⁵⁶ See Shugart, Moreno, and Fajardo (2007) for an application of the notion of systemic failure of extreme systems to the case of Colombia.

1992: ch. 9) accounts for the executive's leadership in areas of national policy, which leaves congress free to attend to its members' more parochial concerns. Thus, Amorim Neto and Santos find that pro-executive legislators rarely initiate legislation of national scope. However, in a manner not anticipated in the ISM, parties unaffiliated with the executive are quite active in initiating proposals of national scope. By doing so, they so contrast themselves with the dominant political forces, and their activities thus can be seen as the product of the competitive dynamic that they face; in other words, interparty competition may respond to latent demands from the ultimate principal, the voters, for new forms of representation and thus lead to the emergence of alternative agendas.

Foremost among the opposition in Brazil in the first two decades of civilian rule was the PT, a very clear example of a contrarian party. The PT was organized as a national party and on a programmatic basis. The other main parties have little national organization and are often the vehicles for the exercise of influence by state-level leaders; they allow their rank-and-file politicians great leeway in cultivating personal votes within the open-list PR system. However, unlike the personal-list system formerly used in Colombia, Brazil's systems of open party lists permits a party to engage in a contrary strategy of cultivating party votes as a means of differentiating itself from competitors. In Brazil, voters may cast either a party or a candidate vote, and the PT, uniquely among Brazil's major parties, emphasized the party vote (Samuels 1999).⁵⁷ Returning to the notion of multiple equilibria in organizational forms referenced above, we see in the example of the PT a party whose optimal approach to representation differs so fundamentally from the established patterns of Brazilian legislative politics that their ascendancy itself alters the system's competitive dynamic. A new emerging equilibrium may therefore favor not only more programmatic representation and competition, but eventually more congressional professionalization and nationally oriented executive-legislative transactions.⁵⁸

The political dynamic of Venezuela in the 1970s and 1980s bears a resemblance to the endogenous emergence of a contrarian party that we saw in Brazil. Whereas in Brazil's hyperrepresentative and personalistic party system the contrarian party was the programmatic PT, in Venezuela the contrarian party was a highly decentralized (albeit, like the PT, leftist) MAS. In a

⁵⁷ Party votes do not affect the order of election of candidates from the party's list, which actually means that for a party like the PT that obtains a larger percentage of party votes than most other Brazilian parties, its candidates are winning their seats based on smaller shares of personal votes. However, the more important distinction is that voters for the PT are overwhelmingly delegating to the party as a whole, whereas in other parties voters' primary agents of representation are the individual candidates to whom they give their preference votes.

⁵⁸ On the different possible equilibria connecting career incentives and intra-legislative organization, see Samuels (2003: 33).

neo-Madisonian theory of party organization that stresses the ultimate accountability of representative agents to their citizen-principals, we might expect that dissatisfaction with the performance of an extreme system would create 'political space' for an alternative message and organizational form. Indeed, the MAS, founded out of the remnants of 1960s guerrilla campaigns, grew electorally in the 1970s and 1980s. It developed a more decentralized nomination procedure than the other major parties and its members were more likely to sponsor locally targeted legislation and to break party discipline than those of the major parties, especially the AD (Crisp 1998). Why, then, did this contrarian party not generate an endogenous solution to Venezuela's systemic failure? This is a question worthy of further research. We suspect the answer lies in the extreme institutionalization of two-party collusion and consultative politics (Crisp 2000), which rendered the system relatively less adaptable than the more fluid Brazilian system. In any event, the system ultimately changed exogenously, through the election of populist Hugo Chávez Frias, who used emergency powers to overturn the existing constitutional order (having failed in 1992 to do so via a military coup). Chávez appears to be presiding over a 'party' every bit as centralized as (although far less institutionalized than) the AD that he has replaced.⁵⁹

Thus the Brazilian system has evolved endogenously from a hyperrepresentative system toward one that might be tentatively characterized by two broad blocs of parties, capable of organizing the legislature in support of the government, and toward a somewhat less personalistic position on the intraparty dimension.⁶⁰ In Venezuela endogenous evolution failed. The rise of Chávez, although partially explicable through the systemic failure of the former hypercentralized system,⁶¹ is a case of exogenous change, in that existing institutions were broken, with a political 'outsider' at the helm, in order to bring about political change. Similarly, in Colombia, our example

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the MAS was part of the electoral coalitions that elected both Rafael Caldera in 1993 and Chávez in 1998. However, in the absence of being able to present a viable candidate of its own, MAS failed to present a party-based alternative to the established party system and was left to back superpartisan populist candidacies.

⁶⁰ This is not to say that this sort of evolution that we describe can only continue to move in the same direction.

⁶¹ Chávez's own critique of the former system, given at the time of the failed military coup he led in 1992, sounds strikingly consistent with neo-Madisonian analysis, if discounted for its political rhetoric. It is worth quoting at length (from Naim 1993): 'In Venezuela there exists no separation between the branches of government, because political parties, in a deliberate breach of the role as intermediaries between state and society, conspired to usurp popular sovereignty and to have the executive seize all powers of the state... With this purpose, the presidential candidate and the top party leadership meet before the elections deliberately to turn the electoral process into a procedural farce... This leads to a legislative power which is hostage to the executive power.'

of the opposite extreme on the intraparty dimension, the recent changes in the electoral system toward reduced fragmentation in both dimensions were pushed by an exogenous factor, the election of Alvaro Uribe from outside the traditional two-party competitive pattern.⁶² Nonetheless, there were signs of endogenous evolution in Colombia as well, in the emergence in congressional elections after 1991 of new ‘movements’ that, contrary to the established parties, attempted to articulate national and reformist agendas. As expected in an electoral system that promotes extreme personalization, however, few of these could move beyond tight identity with their national leader and few could elect more than one senator, despite the single nationwide district (Shugart, Moreno, and Fajardo 2007), the large magnitude of which otherwise would favor the proportional representation of new parties.

3.2.7. Summary

We have reviewed the central features of neo-Madisonian theory and a set of works on individual or multiple Latin American democratic experiences that have contributed to its development. This work has built most of its insights around legislative ambition, and how this is shaped by electoral rules both on the inter- and intraparty dimensions, the interaction of national and subnational politics, and other factors. The insights derived from the analysis of legislative ambition allow for systematic comparison of the incentives of legislators to engage in policy-based transactions with the executive, or to abdicate the formal independence of their branch in favor of a more or less hierarchical relationship with the president. Several Latin American countries have demonstrated extreme patterns in the relationships between actors and institutions, and we have called attention to theoretical considerations regarding how these have contributed to systemic failures—sometimes leading to regime breakdown, other times to significant political change within democracy. We now turn to a consideration of several areas that we identify as research frontiers for the neo-Madisonian approach.

3.3. EXTENSIONS OF NEO-MADISONIAN THEORY

There are several areas where extensions of the neo-Madisonian framework have not been broadly applied or have only just begun to make significant

⁶² The Uribe candidacy, and new parties that sprang up to support it, indicate that the impetus toward change in an extreme system can come from the ideological right, as well as from the left (as in Brazil and Venezuela).

contributions. We identify four frontiers for this research: subnational government and the components of federalism; the 'output' side, understood as policymaking and accountability; the 'demand' side of voter preferences and interest groups; and the judiciary and other nonelected agents.

3.3.1. Disaggregating Federalism

As we have noted, one of the contributions of neo-Madisonian work on Latin America has been to highlight the important role that subnational elections and actors often play in national politics, especially how the party-system fragmentation follows a logic of electoral competition at the subnational level, where political careers may be centered. Other work has emphasized the importance of a local orientation in systems with intraparty competition versus the greater role of party leadership in relatively more centralized parties. These different types of systems have specific consequences in federal democracies—for instance, in Brazilian legislators' targeting pork-barrel amendments toward municipalities or the dominance of provincial leaders within national parties in Argentina. Nonetheless, the intensive study of the component institutions of federalism promises to enhance our evolving understanding of how national and subnational politics are intertwined in Latin America.

Madison, in the *Federalist Papers* No. 46, explained that 'the federal and state governments are in fact but different agents and trustees of the people, constituted with different powers, and designed for different purposes... the ultimate authority... resides in the people alone.' Federalism, in neo-Madisonian theory, is fundamentally another dimension of the separation of powers shaped by interaction with other constitutional features and partisan patterns. Figure 3.2 illustrates the stylized separation of powers as outlined in the above sections with the dimension of federalism included, where relations of hierarchy are shown by solid lines with arrows extending from principal to agent, while transactional relations are depicted with dotted lines having arrows at each end.

National and subnational governments are constitutional agents, which under federal and decentralized institutions are hierarchically accountable to the electorate. Whereas each state or provincial government is accountable to its own subnational electorate, the national government is accountable to an aggregation of all of them, constituting the *demos* in Alfred Stepan's conceptualization (2001) of federalism. In ideal-typical federalism these sovereign subnational governments exist in transactional relations with the national government. That is, what delineates federal from unitary systems is that

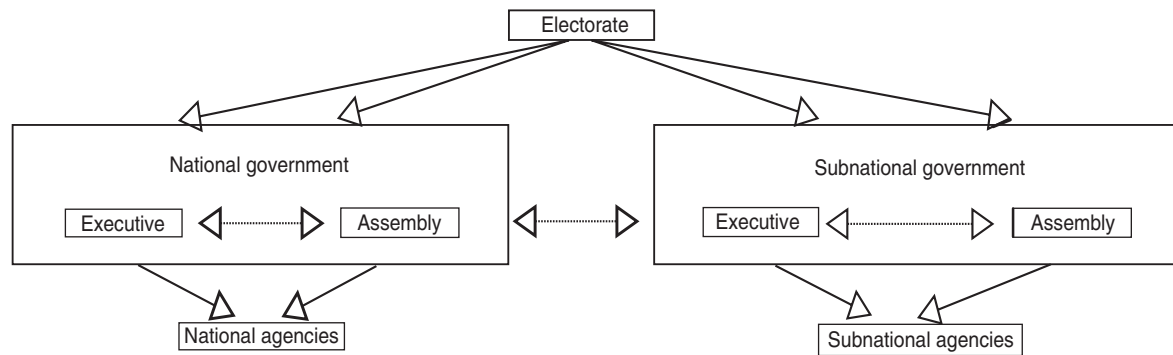


Figure 3.2. The separation of powers: stylized hierarchical and transactional relationships

unitary systems are hierarchical, with the subnational governments clearly subordinate to the national government. Just as either the president or the assembly may have the 'upper hand' in interbranch bargaining in a presidential system, according to the constitutional allocation of powers, so too constitutions vary in the extent of powers allocated to the national or subnational governments. A system is not formally federal, however, if it does not establish that subnational governments include their own executives, assemblies, subordinate agencies, and judiciaries, independent of national authority.⁶³

Federalism entails separate origin and separate survival among national and subnational agents, a division of powers among those agents (and, again, within each 'agent'), and a wide range of variation in the extent to which countervailing ambition is fostered between these agents. Just as a strong degree of convergent interests between presidents and assemblies negates the separation of powers, formally strong regional governments may be agents of the national government if the political careers of subnational legislators and governments make them accountable to the president or central party leaders. Conversely, actors within subnational governments may control the fates of national actors—for example, in the nomination process. While either of these scenarios tends toward hierarchical relations (of opposite character), a balanced transactional relationship includes incentives for subnational actors to resist or counteract efforts by the national government to encroach on provincial authority and for national actors to maintain independent political control over their delineated duties. Hence, just as the appearance of presidential dominance over a subservient legislature should not be taken as an indicator of a 'strong presidentialism', neither is apparent subnational dominance necessarily an indicator of 'robust federalism'. Given the importance of transactions to the Madisonian conceptions of both presidentialism and federalism, the 'strongest' or most 'robust' manifestation of either phenomenon is to be found when its component institutions are most balanced and transactional. The extent to which transactional relations prevail is shaped in both cases by the interparty and intraparty incentives facing actors in each branch and at each level.

The importance of subnational politics to the national political system in federal (and some nonfederal) countries has become widely studied in recent years (e.g. Gibson 2004), particularly with regard to the politics of decentralization (e.g. Montero and Samuels 2003; Eaton 2004). Nonetheless, there remains relatively little work that is devoted specifically to an analysis of politics at the state or provincial level. While existing literature has highlighted, for example, the extent to which governors are major players in national politics

⁶³ On these issues, see Cameron and Faletti (2005).

(Jones 1997, 2001; Samuels 2003), we know much less about the extent of transactional or hierarchical relations between governors and their state legislatures, and still less about how national and subnational bureaucracies and courts relate to one another. Some recent work has begun to highlight intra-country variation in subnational politics. For instance, Joy Langston (2003) considers variations in the ability of PRI state party organizations in different Mexican states to cope with electoral defeat. Scott Desposato (2000) analyzes how variations in voter demands in different states shape the legislative party organization across Brazil's state party systems. Future insights on subnational variations in federal systems promise to enrich our understanding of patterns of Latin American political systems.

3.3.2. The Output Side: Policy, Accountability, and Bureaucracies

Most of the neo-Madisonian literature, as we have noted, has focused on the strategies of politicians seeking election and their behavior within legislative and executive institutions. Relatively less attention has been placed on the 'output' side—that is, policy and the bureaucracies that implement it, and the extent to which voters hold politicians accountable for their policy choices.

3.3.2.1. The Characteristics of Policy

The question of how, and how well, democracy 'works' depends critically on the process by which policies are enacted, and whether voters have the capacity to hold politicians accountable. The analysis of specific policy outcomes, or patterns of outcomes, is in its relative infancy. We have already discussed how one of the neo-Madisonian insights is the extent to which different electoral systems—principally in their variations on the intraparty dimension—affect the balance between national and local policy. Several recent works have significantly advanced our understanding of the relative balance between national and local policy by classifying laws and bills according to their national, sectoral, or parochial scope (Taylor-Robinson and Diaz 1999; Amorim Neto and Santos 2003; Crisp et al. 2004).

In addition to the national–local policy balance, another trade-off exists between the stability and flexibility of policy (Tsebelis 1995, 2002; Cox and McCubbins 2001; Shugart and Haggard 2001). When bargaining on national policy, the interaction of presidential powers and divergent interests between presidents and assemblies can lead to highly stable policy, potentially sacrificing flexibility. Concentrating powers and political goals, meanwhile, can risk flexibility to the point of arbitrariness. Recent examples of such work

include that of Lisa Baldez and John Carey (1999), who provide the example of Chile where, until recently, budget stability was enforced by a rightist 'veto' on legislation enabled by appointed senators and Jones (2001), who highlights the budgetary indecisiveness in Argentina when presidents have faced an opposition legislature.

3.3.2.2. *Accountability for Policy*

If democracy, conceived as a chain of delegation, 'works', then it must be that the political system represents voters' policy preferences, and allows voters, as principals, to sanction their agents, rewarding or punishing them according to their performance.⁶⁴ Susan Stokes (1999, 2001) considers representation in which tentative citizen beliefs can be modified in the wake of successful policy outcomes, citing examples in Argentina and Peru in which presidents pursued unpopular economic policies they did not campaign on that constituents would ultimately support when seen as successful. Samuels and Shugart (2003) suggest institutional variations behind these circumstances, noting a likely trade-off among presidential configurations between representing mandates and accountability, in which strong presidents are held clearly accountable for their actions despite deviating from stated intentions.⁶⁵ Samuels (2004) provides some evidence that, as institutions promote divergence in the policy focus between the branches, legislative accountability for national economic policy is diminished relative to proactive presidents. Gregg Johnson and Brian Crisp (2003) argue that while party labels do not predict well the policies presidents pursue with respect to economic liberalization, the label of the legislative majority has served as a reliable predictor. However, they find that more interparty fragmentation or intraparty fragmentation seemed to hinder legislatures in promoting their partisan ideological positions on neoliberal reform.

3.3.2.3. *Bureaucratic Agents and Policymaking*

The proximate source of most actual policy outputs lies in the choices of bureaucrats, to whom politicians delegate specific decision-making and implementation authority. If politicians, as principals in the final link in the delegation chain of democracy (refer to Figure 3.2), cannot control the choices

⁶⁴ See Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro (2006) for an explicit development of this concept as applied to Latin American (specifically, Andean) politics.

⁶⁵ Further, a high degree of separation between the policy focus of the president and assembly may, whatever its inefficiencies, allow simultaneous accountability representation on both ends of the intraparty dimension: locally oriented *and* nationally oriented policy.

and actions of their bureaucratic agents, then it is unlikely that either representation or accountability can function. A neo-Madisonian theory of democratic policymaking treats the bureaucracy as, ideally, an agent of elected politicians; however, work applying this notion emphasizes the difficulties in enforcing political control over appointed agents.⁶⁶ Considerable advances have been made regarding how politicians structure the incentives of bureaucrats in the United States, notably the institutional enfranchisement of constituent interest groups.⁶⁷ Such insights are beginning to be applied to Latin America where, as we noted with respect to legislative ambition, it is possible to take as variables many features of the political landscape that Americanists consider to be constant.

For example, studying delegation to the bureaucracy in Argentina, Eaton (2003, see also Morgenstern and Manzetti 2003; Jones et al. 2002) argues that career-motivated legislators face party-centered electoral incentives that drive them toward their party leaders' (and the president's) position, favoring the delegation of greater authority to the executive (in contrast to the congressional control sought by more constituency-oriented US legislators). In the Chilean case, Siavelis (1999) suggests that the high concentration of policy agenda control in the executive branch, coupled with an authoritarian legacy that limited interest group formation, has rendered legislative oversight of the bureaucracy relatively ineffective. Such work suggests how neo-Madisonian logic can help scholars identify and explain variations in legislative oversight of the bureaucracy. Such oversight may be most likely, for example, when the political interests of the president and assembly overlap the least (i.e. divergence on the interparty dimension) and when legislators' fates are independent of party organizations (i.e. divergence on the intraparty dimension).

3.3.3. The Demand Side: Voter Preferences and Interest Groups

Like the output side, what we call the 'demand' side has also been relatively neglected by work emphasizing neo-Madisonian themes. The demand side concerns how the preferences of citizens, as the ultimate principal in a democracy, affect politicians' strategies and how interest groups are involved in the policymaking process. Variations in the ways in which societal demands are organized and incorporated into policymaking critically impacts the manner

⁶⁶ See Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991: ch. 2) and McCubbins (1999).

⁶⁷ On the electoral advantages of legislative oversight via 'fire alarms' (in essence, decentralized oversight via providing constituent groups access to the bureaucratic decision-making process) see McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) and McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast (1987, 1989).

in which citizen demands are aggregated (or suppressed), and by extension, the institutional functioning described in this chapter.

3.3.3.1. *Voter Preferences*

An emerging agenda integrates relatively neglected variations within a nation's social demand structure with neo-Madisonian ideas. Such variations in voter preferences across time or region shape elite competition patterns just as the incentives facing elites shape their response to these demands. Taylor-Robinson (2004) explores the interaction between formal and informal institutions in determining democratic agents' incentives for representing poorer versus wealthier voters as their principals. Michelle Taylor-Robinson uses factors discussed above—career path incentives, party nomination procedures, and access to patronage resources—to explain the logic of providing poor voter-principals with clientelistic private benefits or local public goods, as opposed to national public goods. Desposato's study (2000) comparing state-level party systems in Brazil explores how policy demands vary by state, noting that voters' priorities of public over local/private goods shape variations in electoral strategies. Thus, holding institutional incentives constant, Desposato finds a variation in degrees of cohesion across the nation's subnational legislative party systems. Mona Lyne (2004) endogenizes Brazil's national institutions to voters' own collective dilemma between clientelist and public goods exchange relationships. As this tension has been resolved in favor of the latter, party organizations have responded with internal practices that counteract individualizing electoral incentives.

3.3.3.2. *Interest Groups*

Among the few works that have studied interest groups within a neo-Madisonian thesis is Crisp's case study (2000) of the interplay between Venezuela's evolving society and once rigid political institutions. Crisp synthesizes the survival and effects of institutions and broadens the definitions of political concentration and diffusion beyond the now-traditional institutional variables emphasized above. As mentioned above, Crisp attributes the collapse of the party system, economic stagnation, and political corruption to an institutionally induced disincentive for elites to respond to social demands and adapt to crisis.⁶⁸ By Crisp's account, legislative accountability failed under Venezuela's centralized and collusive parties while unaccountable independent

⁶⁸ A thesis strikingly similar to that of Roeder (1993) applied to the Soviet collapse. Both accounts stand in contrast with Shirk's account (1993) of a less institutionalized, more flexible China, which may be comparable to Mexico's, ultimately flexible, dominant party period.

commissions and state enterprises allowed monopolistic peak interest associations to supplant elected officials' role in policy and stifle reform. Crisp suggests that centralization of business and labor participation interacts with presidential authority and electoral incentives to shape the overall trade-off between participation and governing efficiency—each factor potentially compensating for the others.⁶⁹

3.3.4. The Judiciary and Other Nonelected Agents of Accountability

In the *Federalist Papers* No. 51, where Madison justifies the importance of separate origin and survival—'members of each [branch] should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others'—he makes a critical exception to this principle for the judicial branch. He does so for two reasons. First, 'because peculiar qualifications being essential in the members, the primary consideration ought to be to select that mode of choice which best secures these qualifications.' Second, 'because the permanent tenure by which appointments are held in that department must soon destroy all sense of dependence on the authority conferring them.' Thus Madison recognized the need for special expertise for judges, and saw both the origin of judicial authority in appointments by elected institutions and life terms as critical to achieving that expertise. In Latin America, on the other hand, both the formal adherence to these principles and the actual practice have come up short of Madisonian ideals. The consequence has been limited accountability of politicians to the rule of law and serious shortcomings to liberty and democracy. An emerging literature on these themes is connected to the long-standing debate on democratic accountability in Latin America (see e.g. O'Donnell 1999a: ch. 8, 1999b; Mainwaring and Welna 2003).

Relationships with nonelected agents are shaped by the very same forces noted in other neo-Madisonian applications: the degree of independence of those agents and the source of their rewards and sanctions. Along these lines, Gretchen Helmke (2002), argues that judges with insecure tenure in Argentina served as agents of the executive (in defending presidential decrees) but shifted their rulings away from the government as they perceived their impending principals, holding future sanctioning power, would ultimately

⁶⁹ Crisp argues that Brazil and Colombia are generally decentralized, the tendency toward reducing governing efficiency being compensated by the proactive presidential powers. Meanwhile, Honduras and Uruguay, like Venezuela, represent the most centralized on each dimension within Latin America.

emerge opposed to the current regime. Beatriz Magaloni (2003) explains that the Mexican Supreme Court was traditionally subordinate to PRI presidents, as were legislators and the constitution itself. Despite formal life tenure, Magaloni shows that service on the Court was typically just a stepping-stone in a political career, violating Madisonian ideals of a specialized and independent judiciary. As the disciplined PRI majority within the Congress gave way to multiparty competition in the mid-nineties and hierarchical control faded, the Supreme Court was allowed independent authority to fill the role of coordinating constitutional disputes.⁷⁰

Moreno, Crisp, and Shugart (2003) focus on the empowerment of superintendence agencies (attorneys general, controllers-general, etc.), which, despite potentially providing performance information to the electorate, are imperfect substitutes for the type of citizen–legislature connection that fosters a transactional relationship between the elected branches. Moreno, Crisp, and Shugart note, as we have described above, extreme positions on the interparty or intraparty dimensions in Latin America have often undermined the transactional relationship. Without incentives to act independently and collectively, politicians are unlikely to permit the emergence of effective independent checks in the form of the judiciary or superintendence agencies, given that—as Madison suggested—the appointment of the members of these bodies is generally in the hands of elected politicians.⁷¹

3.4. CONCLUSION

Students of Latin American democracy have made significant progress in recent years by disaggregating the institutional arrangements that structure the political process. A clear lesson from neo-Madisonian theory is that no institution can be understood in isolation. The body of work that we have discussed here is rooted in the ideas articulated in the *Federalist Papers*, while integrating more recent economic theory, especially collective action and principal–agent relationships. Like Madison’s well-known arguments, the basic assumptions are grounded in the self-interest of politicians. In this manner, neo-Madisonian theories share a common thread with contemporary rational-choice institutionalist approaches. Nonetheless, the neo-Madisonian enterprise is broader theoretically in that it does not see

⁷⁰ See also Domingo (2000) and Finkel (2003, 2004, 2005).

⁷¹ In some cases, the appointment process is indirect, for instance passing through some sort of screening board. However, the members of the screening board are usually themselves selected by legislators or the president, at least in part.

institutions themselves principally as static constraints on strategic action. Like the so-called historical institutionalism (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985) that is often portrayed as a theoretical rival to rational-choice, neo-Madisonian theory takes into account how earlier generations of politicians created institutions that constrain present actors.⁷² It also explicitly seeks to understand how institutions shape the very preferences of actors—for instance, for national public versus locally targeted goods—and often takes a dynamic perspective, as our discussions of extreme systems and endogenous evolution of behavioral patterns within institutions showed.

Neo-Madisonian theory posits that political outcomes are a product of strategic politicians operating within a nested set of both principal-agent (i.e. vertical) and transactional (i.e. horizontal) relationships. Scholars employing neo-Madisonian concepts have tended to zero in on the strategic choices faced by individual presidents, legislators, judges, or other actors, while using this focus to draw broad implications about the collective outcome of these individual choices. Democracy under a separation of powers ‘works’ to the extent that the choices of political actors tend to enforce accountability by promoting independence and countervailing ambition between the agents of the electorate. Democracy can ‘fail’ to the extent that the institutional incentives inhibit the accountability of agents to their (supposed) constituencies by generating de facto hierarchies of agents that, according to constitutional design, should transact on public policy.

Among the empirical contributions of the perspective reviewed here is a greater understanding of the diversity of presidential powers in the region, including the extent to which presidential influence derives from formal powers or partisan factors, and the varying capacity of differently situated presidents to enact their national agendas. Another key contribution has been to highlight the interplay of subnational and national actors, and the role of electoral institutions in skewing outcomes in favor of narrow minorities versus national majorities. Other promising lines of research have begun to extend these insights on the concentration or fragmentation of political power to specific policy outcomes, assessing democratic accountability, and on the endogenous evolution of patterns of political competition.

As we have seen, many of the most promising conclusions of the literature have come from single-case studies. While these case studies have been informed by a general theoretical logic and by reference to other country

⁷² For a more detailed juxtaposition of these approaches and a statement of how they can be synthesized, see Crisp (2000: 3–10).

experiences, relatively few recent works have drawn conclusions and implications that synthesize across the region. Indeed, many of the authors whose works we have situated within this perspective have not necessarily framed their work as part of some broader 'enterprise'. Yet it is clear that a degree of cumulative knowledge has developed, built 'block by block, from the bottom up' (Smith 1995). Our hope is that by attempting to forge a theoretical synthesis among works published in a wide variety of outlets that we have pointed the way toward an overarching perspective that will inform further work on how and why democracy works or fails in Latin America.

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Part II

Concepts, Data, and Description

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Thickening Thin Concepts: Issues in Large-N Data Generation

Michael Coppedge

This chapter introduces the distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ approaches to data generation and spells out the trade-offs that are associated with these two conventional approaches in comparative politics. I discuss these two approaches as they relate to matters of conceptualization and measurement and identify trade-offs between generality and specificity, quantity and quality, and absolutes and matters of degree. I illustrate these principles with references to research on democracy.

The trade-offs I address recur frequently in the literature and thus scholars are by now familiar with them. Yet there is no reason inherent in either approach for such trade-offs to exist. The trade-offs have been imposed on political scientists by practical limitations, especially the scarcity of appropriate data. To be sure, it will take an enormous effort to collect more data, different data, and better data than we currently have. But the chasm between these approaches can and should be bridged.

4.1. CONCEPTUALIZATION

One fundamental difference between thick and thin approaches concerns their very building blocks: concepts. Thick concepts tend to be multifaceted, multidimensional, and imbued with theory. In contrast, thin concepts tend to be simple, unidimensional, and more theoretically adaptable. These differences have important implications. Indeed, some highly consequential trade-offs are associated with these differences.

Thick concepts have many facets; that is, they refer to many aspects of what we observe. Thin concepts have few facets: they focus attention on only one or a few observed aspects. Conceptual thickness is relative and can be understood as a matter of degree. Even a relatively thin version of democracy, one of the thickest concepts in political science, can refer to half a dozen characteristics.

Table 4.1. Elements of Held's model of democracy

Regular elections	Universal adult suffrage
Elections for many offices	Proportional representation
Secret ballot	Independent, professional bureaucracy
Public debates	Unbiased state
Jury service	State with interests of its own
Strong executive	Individualism
Strong leadership	Representation of corporate interests
Party politics	Private property
One person, one vote	Market economy
Multiple or different voting rights	Patriarchal family or society
Representation	Large nation-state
Constitutional limits to state power	Global state
Separation of powers/checks and balances	International competition
Participation in local government	Professional bureaucracy
Guarantees of civil liberties	Experiments with collective property
Guarantees of political rights	Industrial society
Competition for power	Nonindustrial society
Interest-group pluralism	Poorly informed or emotional voters
Autonomous civil society	Culture of toleration
Rule of law	Economic inequality
Free-market society	Procedural consensus
Workplace democracy	Consensus on legitimate scope of politics
Internal party democracy	Priority of economic interests
Openness to institutional reform	Moderate level of participation
Transparency	Exclusion of some from effective
Representation of the powerful	participation by economic inequalities
Mixed government	Pluralist, free-market international order
Direct participation	Unequal international order
in decision-making	Liberal leadership
Some appointments by lot	Limited bureaucracy
No distinction between citizens	Restriction of some interest groups
and officials	Redistribution of resources
Strict term-limits	Right to childcare
Payment for participation	Maintenance of religious worship
Public campaign finance	Intense societal conflict
Innovative feedback mechanisms	Minimization of unaccountable
Small community	power centers
Popular sovereignty	Demilitarization

Source: Author's compilation of elements discussed in Held (1996).

A thick version can refer to dozens. For example, David Held's *Models of Democracy* (1996) defines twelve different models of democracy, all of which, he argues, possess some claim to the democratic label. Between them, these twelve models refer to seventy-two different characteristics, which are listed in Table 4.1. I would not include all these items in even a thick definition of democracy, but at least one respected scholar considers them all relevant.

Definitions of regimes are typically thick. A good example is Juan Linz's definition (1975) of an authoritarian regime:

[Political systems without] free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule...¹ with limited, not responsible, political pluralism; without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities; without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development; and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.²

Compare this with one set of criteria for a threshold on a democracy–nondemocracy continuum that corresponds closely to authoritarianism. I have chosen the Polyarchy Scale for this purpose because its criteria are explicitly stated. (These coding criteria are reproduced in Table 4.2.) The first two components of each definition are nearly interchangeable even though the Polyarchy Scale is more explicit here about what 'limited pluralism' means in practice. (Obviously, Linz's legendary 237-page essay is far more elaborate than the brief definition quoted in Table 4.2.) The Polyarchy Scale, however, omits three additional components that are included in Linz's definition—the nature of the leaders' belief systems, the absence of active political mobilization by the regime, and some degree of institutionalization.

The second difference in concepts concerns their dimensionality. Thick concepts tend to be multidimensional, while thin concepts tend to be unidimensional. When a concept is unidimensional, its components vary together. Intuitively, this means that if component A is present to a high degree, then component B is present to a high degree as well, and vice versa. The higher the degree of association, the more reasonable it is to reduce the two components to one simple concept or a single dimension.

The Polyarchy Scale offers an example of such an empirical confirmation of unidimensionality (Coppedge and Reinicke 1990). It is composed of four components—indicators of fair elections, freedom of organization, freedom of expression, and pluralism in the media—which are all closely associated. For instance, it happens to be the case that almost all countries that have many alternatives to official information also have leaders chosen in fair elections and a high degree of freedom of organization and expression; while countries in which citizens are afraid to criticize the government even privately also tend not to have meaningful elections, do not permit opposition parties or other

¹ This element is implied by Linz's explicit statements that authoritarian regimes are by definition nondemocratic. The language comes from Linz's own definition (1975: 182–3) of a democratic political system.

² Linz (1975: 264), quoting the definition from his own 'An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain' (Linz 1964).

Table 4.2. Definitions of authoritarian regime and a low degree of polyarchy contrasted

Authoritarian regime (Linz 1975: 264):	Polyarchy Scale score 5 (Coppedge and Reinicke 1990: 53–4)
[Political systems without] free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule.*	[There are] no meaningful elections: elections without choice of candidates or parties, or no elections at all.
... political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism	<p>Some political parties are banned and trade unions or interest groups are harassed or banned, but membership in some alternatives to official organizations is permitted.</p> <p>Dissent is discouraged, whether by informal pressure or by systematic censorship, but control is incomplete. The extent of control may range from selective punishment of dissidents on a limited number of issues to a situation in which only determined critics manage to make themselves heard. There is some freedom of private discussion.</p> <p>Alternative sources of information are widely available but government versions are presented in preferential fashion. This may be the result of partiality in and greater availability of government-controlled media; selective closure, punishment, harassment, or censorship of dissident reporters, publishers, or broadcasters; or mild self-censorship resulting from any of these.</p>
<p>without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities</p> <p>without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development</p> <p>and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.</p>	

* This element is implied by Linz's explicit statements that authoritarian regimes are by definition non-democratic. The language comes from his own definition of a democratic political system (Linz 1975: 182–3).

organizations, and maintain tight official control over the media. Because of these empirical associations, it makes sense to treat these four components as reflections of a single underlying dimension, which can be called contestation.

When a concept is multidimensional, its components do not vary together in this way. Intuitively, it is easy to imagine low-high or high-low combinations of components that would not be rare exceptions. In a 2×2 table, cases are spread out among at least three of the four cells; in a scatterplot, they form no diagonal pattern. There is no way to represent such patterns faithfully without employing at least two dimensions; attempting to do so would be oversimplification, or reductionism. Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy again provides a good example, for contestation was only one of two dimensions in his concept. The other was participation (sometimes called inclusiveness), which he believed to vary independently of contestation. This supposition gave rise to his well-known diagram with closed hegemonies in one corner and polyarchies in the opposite corner, but also mixed regimes called competitive oligarchies and inclusive hegemonies in the other two corners (Dahl 1971: 7).

The third difference concerns the relation of concepts to theory. Thick concepts are often meaningful only when embedded in a well-defined theory; many of them contain elaborate theoretical assumptions as elements of their definitions. They are shorthand for theories or parts of theories. Thin concepts are more theoretically adaptable: they lend themselves more easily for use in diverse theories. Philosophers of science like to remind us that all concepts are theoretical, as all constructs require making assumptions about pieces of reality that we imagine to be especially relevant for certain descriptive or explanatory purposes (Lakatos 1978). But some concepts are more theoretically involved than others.

A good way to appreciate the difference is to think of theory in the social sciences as selective storytelling. As social scientists, we craft stylized accounts of events. The elements we emphasize are the elements of theater and fiction: who the relevant actors are, what the time and the place is (the setting), which instruments (props) can be used by the actors, the nature of their preferences or goals (motives), how they strategize to achieve their goals (plot), and a process (action) leading to a particular outcome (denouement). The thinnest concepts refer only to individual elements of a story; thick concepts tend to link together several elements. Thick concepts can be stories in themselves, sometimes complete with morals. 'Dependency' was one (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). Guillermo O'Donnell (1973, 1999a: ch. 8, 1999b) has formulated a series of others—bureaucratic-authoritarianism, delegative democracy, and horizontal accountability. The Colliers' 'mode of incorporation' is yet another (Collier and Collier 1991). Some thick concepts would qualify as 'conflicting imperatives,' Andrew Gould's term (1999) for complex concepts possessing a tension that can be used to generate hypotheses. All of these could be considered either very thick concepts or shorthand for theories.

One of the trade-offs between thick and thin concepts was spelled out long ago by Giovanni Sartori (1970).³ The more multifaceted a concept is (the broader its 'intension'), the smaller the number of objects to which it applies (the narrower its 'extension'). Although Sartori did not address the degree to which a concept is multidimensional and enmeshed in theory, these two qualities only reinforce his argument. The more baggage a concept must carry, the less widely it can travel. Kurt Weyland (2001) offers a fine example in his discussion of the concept of 'populism'. If the term is equated only with a style of discourse exalting 'the people', most Latin American politicians and many beyond the region would qualify as populists. But the more one adds on additional characteristics—spell-binding oratory from balconies, working-class support, neglect of party-building, redistributionist policies, military background, authoritarian proclivities—the fewer qualifying populists there are.

Thickness therefore adds meaning to a concept, but at the expense of wide applicability. Thin concepts have more general applicability, but tell us less about the objects they describe. Figure 4.1 illustrates this trade-off using Linz's definitions (1975) of the basic democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes. Linz contrasted each regime with reference to five characteristics: the selection of leaders through elections, the degree of pluralism, the nature of participation, the ideological mind-set of the leaders, and the degree to which the political system is institutionalized. The figure simplifies his scheme a bit by allowing each characteristic to have only two or three possible variations. This conceptual scheme tells us a great deal about the regimes that match these characteristics. But, at the same time, as the figure illustrates, the multiple requirements for each regime type limit the applicability of his definitions to just 3 of the 108 theoretically possible combinations. If these five characteristics are highly unidimensional, this is not a problem, because most of the cases will fall in these three white cells. But if these regime types are multidimensional, then the regime types in some of the other cells must also be labeled.⁴ To be more realistic about the severity of the problem, I have shaded the cells that are unlikely to contain any countries dark gray; the largest number of countries would fall in the white and light gray cells. This shading also helps illustrate the strength and weakness of thin concepts. A slightly thinner conceptual scheme that distinguished among

³ See Collier and Levitsky (1997) for variations on this theme.

⁴ Linz wrote hundreds of pages describing political systems that differed from these basic three. Some, such as 'authoritarian situations' (Linz 1973) could fit in Figure 4.1 without any revisions to the characteristics around which it is structured. Others, such as sultanistic regimes and post-totalitarian regimes (Linz and Stepan 1996: ch. 3; Chehabi and Linz 1998b), had defining characteristics that were not part of Figure 4.1 and therefore suggest that Linz's underlying classificatory scheme is still more complex.

Ideology of leaders	Participation	Institutionali- zation	Pluralism					
			Full pluralism		Limited pluralism		Monistic control	
			Elections	Not	Elections	Not	Elections	Not
Indeterminate ideology	Welcome but not forced	Yes	Democratic					
		No						
	Discouraged	Yes						
		No						
	Forced	Yes						
		No						
Distinctive mentality	Welcome but not forced	Yes						
		No						
	Discouraged	Yes				Authoritarian		
		No						
	Forced	Yes						
		No						
Elaborate and guiding ideology	Welcome but not forced	Yes						
		No						
	Discouraged	Yes						
		No						
	Forced	Yes						Totalitarian
		No						

Figure 4.1. Intension and extension of Linz's definitions of regime types

democracy, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism based simply on elections, pluralism, and participation would probably cover all the cases in the white or light gray cells. However, in order to do so, it would tell us nothing about the omitted characteristics—institutionalization and the leaders' ideological mind-set.

This complementarity suggests that thick concepts are appropriate for small-N research, for which rich description is valued more than generalization, and thin concepts are appropriate for large-N work, in which generalization trumps detail. Unfortunately, such a rigid division of conceptual labor condemns scholars to talk past one another: when small-N and large-N analysts say 'democratization', they mean different things. If theoretical knowledge is to accumulate, therefore, this conceptual chasm must be bridged. Doing so requires careful conceptual analysis: breaking down two concepts into their simplest common components to identify precisely how they overlap and how they differ. To do this, every element of a categorical definition can be reconceptualized as a threshold on a continuous dimension; these components can be measured separately, and then recombined to the extent that they are shown to be unidimensional. For example, if the Polyarchy Scale included all the components from Linz's definition of authoritarianism, then it would be a valid indicator of his concept, and it would have the additional advantage of defining and measuring greater and lesser degrees of authoritarianism.⁵ No information would be lost, and some would be added.

There is another methodological implication in thick and thin concepts that receives less attention. As noted above, concepts also differ in how ready-made they are for theory building. Because thick concepts contain more ambitious theory, they should be subjected to testing, just as theories are. Calling a theory a concept does not render it immune to testing. Thin concepts, in contrast, are less theoretically ambitious; they assume less (and say less), and therefore leave more to induction. The thinner the concept, the less testing is required to achieve a similar level of readiness for theory building.

4.2. THICKENING THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Attempts to redefine 'democracy' illustrate these trade-offs. Because more and more developing countries now satisfy the rather minimalist existing requirements for democracy, it is difficult not to notice that some of these

⁵ Technically, the Polyarchy Scale is not continuous, but a set of eleven ordered categories. However, the principle would be the same for truly continuous indicators even though it would be harder to identify the threshold; i.e. the closest equivalent to the categorical definition.

political systems have disturbing characteristics that seem intuitively inconsistent with democracy. Some scholars therefore remind us of components of democracy that have been dropped or taken for granted in the past fifty years and quite understandably call for them to be restored or made explicit. Thus Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl (1991) include institutionalization and a viable civil society ('cooperation and deliberation via autonomous group activity') among their criteria for 'what democracy is'. Similarly, others stress the centrality of the rule of law and an independent judiciary (Hartlyn and Valenzuela 1994; Diamond 1999: 111–12; O'Donnell 1999a: ch. 8). Samuel Valenzuela and others also argue that democracy requires elected officials to enjoy autonomy from unelected 'veto groups', whether they are economic conglomerates, international powers, or the military; and impartial respect for basic citizenship rights (Valenzuela 1992: 62–8; O'Donnell 1999a: ch. 7).

There is as yet no scholarly consensus on a thicker definition that convincingly incorporates components such as the rule of law, the autonomy of elected officials, decentralization, or national sovereignty. Progress toward consensus would be aided by empirical analysis of the number and nature of any dimensions that structure these concepts or components. Empirical analysis is crucial because the number and nature of dimensions in a thick concept is determined more by the real world than by our imaginations. In theory, every facet of a concept could lie on a separate dimension from every other facet. In theory, for example, there could be cases in every cell of Figure 4.1: even poorly institutionalized regimes with highly ideological leaders who welcome participation and permit fair elections, but practice monistic control. It is only in practice that such combinations become odd and rare and other combinations become more common. We do not always know the reason for this. They may cause each other, or they may have a common historical cause. In any case, the dimensions that structure a thick concept are best thought of as handy bundles of a larger number of potential dimensions. Such bundles probably hold together only for selected periods and places. The more diverse the sample, and the longer the expanse of time it covers, the more likely it is to resist reduction to a small number of dimensions.

I suspect that a thicker concept of democracy would possess five dimensions. The first two would be thick versions of Dahl's dimensions (1971) of polyarchy—contestation (or 'competition') and inclusiveness. There is probably more to contestation than becoming informed and making a simple choice among parties or candidates every few years. Contestation could also depend on the number and quality of choices presented on a ballot, democratic selection of candidates, certain kinds of public campaign financing, guaranteed

media access for all parties, and opportunities for opposition parties to gain a foothold at lower levels of government.

Similarly, inclusiveness—the proportion of the adult citizens who have effective opportunities to participate equally in the available opportunities for decision-making—need not be confined to voting for representatives and running for office. In reality there are, or could be, many other opportunities for citizens to participate equally in decision-making: in judicial proceedings, at public hearings, in primaries, in referendums and plebiscites, and in speaking through the media to place issues on the public agenda, for example. Some civil liberties fit into this dimension as well, as they involve individuals' equal right to determine their own beliefs and many other aspects of their personal lives. If the judicial system does not provide equal protection under the law, for example, the political system should be considered less inclusive. To complicate matters, inclusiveness itself may consist of two dimensions—the proportion of people possessing a right and the degree to which they possess it—which together would define a distribution of rights akin to a distribution of wealth.

To these three dimensions—contestation, breadth of inclusion, and fullness of inclusion—I would add two more: the division of powers and the scope of democratic authority. The division of powers corresponds to the unitary-federal dimension of Arend Lijphart's concept (1999: 243–50) of consensual democracy. Lijphart has established that federalism, regional autonomy, bicameralism, and local self-government cohere as one dimension and that this dimension is distinct from his 'executives-parties' dimension, which corresponds well to contestation. Whether one considers a division of powers more democratic or merely differently democratic than unitary government is a matter of opinion, but the separateness of this dimension is beyond dispute.

A fifth dimension—the scope of democratic authority—reflects the agenda of issues that the democratic government may decide without consulting unelected actors. This dimension reflects any constraints on governmental authority imposed by the military, business groups, religious authorities, foreign powers, or international organizations regarding issues of importance to them. A broad scope of democratic authority also requires that civil servants be willing and able to implement the policies made by elected officials, because it does not matter how a government was chosen if it has no power to carry out its decisions. The fewer the issues that are in practice 'off-limits' to final decision-making by relatively inclusive bodies, the broader the scope of democratic authority.

These five dimensions taken together redefine democracy as a regime in which a large proportion of the citizens have an equal and effective chance to

participate in making final decisions on a full range of issues at an appropriate level of government.⁶ Such a five-dimensional concept could help us make meaningful distinctions among countries that satisfy the current minimal requirements for democracy. Of course, testing either the theories assumed by concepts or theories masquerading as concepts requires measurement.

4.3. MEASUREMENT

Small-N research is conventionally associated with qualitative evidence and large-N with quantitative indicators. Small-N researchers are thought to be more concerned with differences in kind; they elaborately define types, which they combine into typologies. Large-N researchers are thought to be more concerned with differences of degree; they generate scores or values, which they combine into variables. However, this perceived distinction is an exaggerated stereotype. There are examples of large-N qualitative analysis, and small-N analysis can make use of quantitative data, as in voting behavior, survey research, and public policy or political economy. But because the stereotype is common, a comparison of the merits of qualitative and quantitative evidence is germane.

If both continuous and categorical indicators measured exactly the same concept, then we would prefer the continuous one on the grounds that it is more informative, more flexible, and better suited for sophisticated testing. For example, if the concept of interest was ‘breadth of the suffrage’ we might choose between two indicators: a qualitative indicator that divided countries into two categories: ‘universal adult suffrage’ or ‘suffrage with restrictions’; or a quantitative index of the percentage of the adult population that is eligible to vote. Of these two, we should prefer the quantitative indicator because it measures the concept with finer gradations, which give us more information. If one wanted a categorical measure, it could always be derived from the continuous one by identifying one or more thresholds that correspond to the categories desired, such as ‘at least 95 percent of adults are eligible to vote’. A dichotomized indicator would sort cases and interact with other variables the same way a dichotomy would—again, assuming that they measured exactly the same concept. The continuous indicator contains more information, which we could choose to ignore, but the reverse is not true: one cannot derive a continuous measure from a categorical one without adding new information about gradations.

⁶ For an even thicker definition of the quality of democracy that includes the satisfaction of basic human needs and respectful treatment of citizens by fellow citizens and the state, see Proyecto Estado de la Nación (2001) and O’Donnell (2004).

This argument has a flip side: if a qualitative and a quantitative indicator measured a concept with equally fine gradations, we would prefer the qualitative indicator on the grounds that it provided more information about the qualities that are being represented. Let us suppose that we have, on the one hand, a threefold typology dividing regimes into democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes; and on the other hand, a three-point scale of, say, 'degrees of accountability'. In this example, we could derive a quantitative indicator from the qualitative typology, but we could not derive the typology from the accountability indicator without adding qualitative information about regime qualities beyond 'accountability'.

Once again, it is tempting to conclude that different types of measurement are appropriate for different kinds of research and that there is no 'best' kind of measurement. And again, the problem with that view is that it impedes the cumulation of knowledge. Qualitative and quantitative researchers have no choice but to talk past each other as long as their evidence measures qualitatively different concepts. Therefore, there is a great need to overcome this division. Moreover, it can be done by developing quantitative indicators of thick concepts.

The idea may be offensive to those who are comfortable with fine qualitative distinctions and distrust numbers. Their attitude is reminiscent of skeptics who argued years ago that one could not reduce Beethoven, for example, to a string of numbers. Now it can be done, and is done, on compact disks. With enough technology, laboriously developed over a century at great expense, we can sample multiple frequencies thousands of times per second, convert it into digital code, and then reproduce the sound so well that it is virtually indistinguishable from 'Beethoven'.

In social science, we already do something like this with dichotomies. Any dichotomous concept can be perfectly operationalized as a dummy variable, which takes on values of 0 or 1. We can pile as many components as we like onto a dummy variable and still represent them with these two values without suffering any loss of information. The components do not even have to be unidimensional, because one cutpoint can be picked on each component and the dummy defined to equal '1' only when every component equals 1. This is the exact mathematical equivalent of a multifaceted, categorical distinction. Quantitative indicators do not strip away qualitative meaning; rather, they establish a *correspondence* between meaningful qualitative information and numbers.

In principle we should also be able to create polychotomous, ordinal, interval, or (in some cases) ratio-data indicators of thick concepts. The challenge is threefold. The first challenge is to ensure that every element that contributes to the definition of a thick concept is measured by a quantitative variable. The second challenge is to reconceptualize each of these elements as a matter of

degree, not as just as an either/or difference. The third challenge is to get the structure of the concept right. The first challenge has already been discussed; the latter two require further explanation.

There are those who insist that some concepts are inherently categorical, and others inherently continuous. I agree more with David Collier and Robert Adcock (1999), who argue that almost any concept can be thought of as either categorical or continuous. It is not strictly true, to counter the best-known example, that a woman cannot be half pregnant, for it depends on how one defines 'pregnant'. She can be 4.5 months pregnant, she can have delivered one of two twins, she can, for a brief moment during labor, have the baby half in and half out, she can be heading for a miscarriage or a stillbirth, and so on. If pregnancy can be a matter of degree, so can anything else. The real issue is not whether a concept is *a priori* categorical or continuous, but which level of measurement is most useful for the analysis one wishes to do.

The third challenge in bringing about the best of the qualitative and quantitative approaches is to preserve the structure of the qualitative concept. This requires grouping components into dimensions correctly and combining them into a single index for each dimension. First, the analyst breaks the 'mother' concept up into as many simple and relatively objective components as possible. Second, each of these components is measured separately. Third, the analyst examines the strength of association among the components to discover how many dimensions are represented among them and in the mother concept. Fourth, components that are very strongly associated with one another are treated as unidimensional, that is, as all measuring the same underlying dimension, and may be combined. Any other components or clusters of components are treated as indicators of different dimensions. If the mother concept turns out to be multidimensional, the analyst then has two or more unidimensional indicators that together can capture its complexity. If the mother concept turns out to be unidimensional, then the analyst has several closely associated component indicators that may be combined into a single indicator that captures all the aspects of that dimension better than any one component would.⁷

4.4. MEASURING DEMOCRACY

Existing indicators of democracy are just beginning to satisfy rigorous standards for measurement. Democratic theorists before 1776 first simplified the

⁷ It is sometimes possible to combine multidimensional components into a single indicator. Doing so, however, requires a theory that tells one how to combine them properly. In geometry, e.g. 'volume' is a single indicator of a multidimensional quality, but it cannot be calculated unless one knows the appropriate formula for the shape of the object in question.

task by progressively narrowing the concept, purging it of impractical components such as the appointment of administrators by lottery, and adapting it to the context of the large nation-state by accepting the idea of representation (Dahl 1989: 24–33). But from the French Revolution through Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, 'democracy' was still so multifaceted that it was not even clearly distinct from social equality. The 'elite theorists' during and after World War II then promoted an even narrower concept of democracy that was limited to political, rather than social or economic, components and did not require direct participation in policymaking, only in the selection of policymakers (Schumpeter 1942; Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Sartori 1962; Dahl 1971). By the time political scientists began trying to measure democracy, the concept had therefore been reduced to selected national political institutions and practices and some of their characteristics.

The first indicators of democracy had a few problems that required refinements. The early democracy indicators often confounded democracy with regime stability. In his classic 1959 article, for example, Seymour Lipset (1959) used the ordinal classifications 'stable democracies/unstable democracies/dictatorships' (for European and English-speaking countries) and 'democracies/unstable dictatorships/stable dictatorships' (for Latin American countries). Phillip Cutright's index (1963) of 'national political development' was the sum of a country's democracy scores over a twenty-one-year period, which made the number of years of democracy matter as much as the degree of democracy in each year. As Kenneth Bollen (1991: 10–12) has observed, this mistake has been repeated several times, even as late as 1988. This is not to say that it is illegitimate to be interested in stable democracy. However, measuring stable democracy with anything more precise than an either/or category requires at least two dimensions, as regime stability and democracy vary independently: there are stable democracies, unstable democracies, stable nondemocracies, and unstable nondemocracies.

Other attempts to measure democracy excluded stability, sometimes by reporting a score for one time-point, sometimes by reporting an annual series of scores. But some of them compromised validity by including components that had little or no theoretical justification. For example, Tatu Vanhanen (1990) included the percentage of the vote won by the governing party in his index of democracy, even though extremely fragmented party systems are not necessarily more democratic than two-party or moderate multiparty systems. Another example is the Freedom House survey. Its checklists take into consideration the autonomy of elected representatives from military control, a country's right of self-determination, citizens' freedom from domination by economic oligarchies, the autonomy of religious and ethnic minorities, gender equality, property rights, the freedom to choose family size, freedom

from dependency on union leaders and bureaucrats, and freedom from gross government corruption, among other requirements (Freedom House 1991). Some of these components probably should not be included in a measure of democracy; others could be if the definition of democracy were fairly rich but should not be lumped together in the same index because they are likely to be multidimensional. Freedom House appears to combine its components in a flexible way that somehow avoids the worst potential biases, but it has not reported systematically how the components are related, so it is impossible for outside observers to confirm their validity or reliability.

Despite these measurement problems and another not yet mentioned, we know that even the relatively thin versions of democracy consist of at least two dimensions. For one of those dimensions we already have several indicators that are adequate for various large-N comparisons. One of Dahl's major contributions in *Polyarchy* was to argue convincingly that polyarchy has the two dimensions of contestation and inclusiveness (Dahl 1971). He defined contestation as having several components, or institutional requirements—elected officials, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, associational autonomy, and the existence of alternative sources of information. Inclusiveness was defined solely in terms of the suffrage and widespread eligibility to run for public office. Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke (1988) later confirmed that the components of contestation are indeed unidimensional and may be legitimately combined into a single indicator, while the extent of the suffrage lies on a different dimension and should not be included as a component of contestation. Many of the existing quantitative indicators of 'democracy' are actually indicators of contestation. They are the Bollen (1980) index of Political Democracy, the Polity data on democracy and autocracy (Jagers and Gurr 1995), the Freedom House ratings of Political Rights and Civil Liberties (Piano and Puddington 2005), the Polyarchy Scale (Coppedge and Reinicke 1990), Axel Hadenius' (1992) Index of Democracy, and Bollen's Index of Liberal Democracy (1993). It has been demonstrated repeatedly that these indicators measure the same underlying dimension. Their intercorrelations, for example, usually exceed 0.83 (Inkeles 1990).⁸

The indicators we have are by no means perfect: Bollen (1993: 1218) has demonstrated, for example, that Freedom House ratings, at least for 1979–81, tended to underrate Eastern European countries and overrate Latin American countries by a small but statistically significant amount. His index for 1980, which corrects for these biases as well as anyone can at this point, is probably the most valid indicator available today. But Bollen's index is

⁸ For an excellent survey and evaluation of the existing indicators, see Munck and Verkuilen (2002).

a point measure; only a few are time series, and unfortunately, as Gerardo Munck and Jay Verkuilen (2002) observe, the indicators with the longest historical coverage tend to be the ones with the most worrisome methodological flaws. Nevertheless, if one needs time-series data, there is little reason to avoid using—with reasonable cautions—the Alvarez–Cheibub–Limongi–Przeworski (ACLP) data-set (Przeworski et al. 2000), the Freedom House indices or the Polity index. If a dichotomous indicator is appropriate for one's purposes, the ACLP data are currently the best time series. If a graded indicator is needed, despite violations of methodological canons during construction, the Freedom House and Polity data are good enough for large-scale comparative work involving a thin concept of democracy. According to Bollen's estimates (1993), the Freedom House Political Rights ratings for 1979–81 were 93 percent valid despite the regional bias. It also correlates at 0.938 with the Polyarchy Scale. These results suggest that we can expect very similar results from an analysis regardless of which of these indicators is used (Inkeles 1990: 5). Of course, as Munck and Verkuilen (2002) point out, intercorrelations are not entirely reassuring because all indicators may well be biased in the same way, and because correlations may reflect agreement at the extremes more than agreement about the more difficult intermediate cases.

However, I suspect that we are not likely to achieve much improvement in reliable and valid measurement until we begin working with a thicker, multidimensional concept of democracy. If democracy is multidimensional, then democracy indicators must be multidimensional as well; otherwise, measurements are compromised by measurement error or validity problems. The worst tactic for coping with multidimensionality is to assume blindly that all the components are unidimensional and barrel on, adding or averaging these apples and oranges. The fruit of such efforts may turn out to be reasonable at the extremes, but is likely to be a meaningless mess in the middle.

A more acceptable tactic is to tolerate a low level of measurement: interval rather than ratio data, ordinal rather than interval, a three-point scale rather than a ten-point scale, or a dichotomy rather than a scale. This tactic is available because unidimensionality is a matter of degree. Sometimes dimensions are distinct but parallel, or 'bundled'. The tighter the bundle, the less measurement error is created when they are combined simply into an allegedly unidimensional indicator. If one is content to produce an indicator of democracy at a low level of measurement—say, a three-point scale of democracies, semidemocracies, and nondemocracies—one can aggregate components that lie on different and fairly weakly correlated dimensions.

As noted above, dichotomies are the limiting case of this tactic. But dichotomizing is radical surgery. It amputates every dimension below the

cutoff and tosses all that information into a residual bin labeled 'nondemocracy'. If this information is truly not worth knowing, such radical surgery can be justified—for example, if it is the only way to salvage a viable indicator. But if there is serious doubt about where to cut, caution is advised (Collier and Adcock 1999; Elkins 2000).

There are two strategies besides dichotomizing for coping with multidimensionality. The easier of the two is simply to develop a different indicator for each dimension of democracy. This strategy has the advantage of avoiding any assumptions about how these dimensions might combine to determine a country's degree of democracy. The disadvantage is that this strategy stops short of producing a single summary indicator of democracy. Paradoxically, therefore, one way to measure democracy better is to stop measuring democracy and start measuring its component dimensions instead.

This disaggregated strategy would not amount to an admission of defeat. If we had separate indicators of different dimensions of democracy, we could explore empirically their interrelationships, which would open up a fascinating new avenue for research. Do elected officials enjoy greater autonomy vis-à-vis the military when they are backed by a broad electoral base of support? Does federalism really allow citizens to be better represented on certain issues? Does possession of the suffrage translate into effective possession of other civil and political rights? All of these are questions that should be addressed by empirical research. Such questions must be answered before any unified indicator of democracy can be developed, and it would be desirable for the answers to come from empirical research rather than mere assumptions.

The development of separate indicators is, in fact, a prerequisite for the second coping strategy: appropriate aggregation of components into a single indicator of democracy. We are not yet ready to do this for a multidimensional concept of democracy.⁹ Doing so requires a stronger theory about how dimensions of democracy combine, from which one might derive a mathematical formula. Munck and Verkuilen (2002) make some suggestive remarks about aggregation rules: correspondences between certain logical relationships and certain mathematical operations. But I suspect that a workable rule is likely to be more complex than addition and subtraction. If so, component indicators will have to be interval, if not ratio, data; otherwise, it would not be legitimate to subject them to multiplication or division, not to mention logging or exponentials (Stevens 1946). Most measurement of democracy now is ordinal, so if we wish to develop a single indicator of democracy in several dimensions, we

⁹ Two partial exceptions, which make a start by combining indicators of contestation and participation in an innovative and promising fashion, are Axel Hadenius (1992) and the Electoral Democracy Index that Gerardo Munck constructed for the UNDP report *Democracy in Latin America* (UNDP 2005: 21–33 of statistical compendium).

will have to find ways of measuring dimensions at the interval level or higher. One way to do this is to reformulate the attributes of democracy in terms of probabilities. This would entail measuring, for example, the probability that a citizen will be allowed to vote, that votes will be counted fairly, that a writer can criticize the government without being punished, and so on. These probabilities could be either estimated reasonably or calculated from actual practices. The rules for aggregating probability data are then relatively straightforward.

4.5. CONCLUSION

We are far from creating all the rich data that would be needed to measure any thick concept of democracy in a large sample. Indeed, comparative politics is scandalously data-poor, and the problem is not limited to democratization research. Correcting the situation would take an enormous investment in rigorous, systematic data collection on a large scale. Resources to make it possible may not be available now, but in order to obtain the resources it is first necessary to decide that such data are meaningful, desirable, and, in principle, feasible to create. In the meantime, it is useful to keep in mind even today that small- and large-N analysis, thick and thin, are parts of a whole, and that as data collection improves, we can expect them to converge rather than diverge into entirely separate camps.

Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America, 1945–2004*

Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán

This chapter has two objectives. First, we attempt to contribute to broader theoretical issues and methodological debates about classifying political regimes. Second, we hope to make an empirical contribution by presenting an original classification of Latin American regimes during the post-World War II period. We explain the methodology used to generate our classification and compare it to other existing data-sets.

We advance five general propositions about classifying regimes. First, if a regime classification is intended primarily to measure democracy, as is the case with ours and many others, it should be hinged on a definition of democracy. We define a democracy as a regime (a) that sponsors free and fair competitive elections for the legislature and executive; (b) that allows for inclusive adult citizenship; (c) that protects civil liberties and political rights; and (d) in which the elected governments really govern and the military is under civilian control. This minimalist procedural definition contrasts with nonprocedural definitions such as Kenneth Bollen's (1980, 1991) and with subminimal procedural definitions such as Joseph Schumpeter's (1942) and Adam Przeworski et al.'s (2000), which are limited to elections and leave out some elements that are essential to democracy. A conceptually sound measurement of democracy must build on the dimensions that characterize democracy.

Second, explicit coding and aggregation rules are important for classifying regimes. Without such rules, other researchers cannot understand the procedures used to classify the regimes, and the classification will be vulnerable

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to serious problems of reliability. Our regime classification is based on first disaggregating the concept of democracy into the four defining criteria discussed in the previous paragraph and then reaggregating to form an overall regime assessment. Many classifications of political regimes fall far short on both of these first two points (Munck and Verkuilen 2002).

Third, regime classification demands some subjective judgments about political regimes. Our viewpoint challenges Tatu Vanhanen (1990, 2000), who argues for purely objective measures of democracy based on electoral participation and results. By 'subjective' we do not mean arbitrary, but rather an informed judgment based on knowledge of the cases and guided by explicit coding rules. An assessment limited to elections leaves out some elements that are essential to a democracy, producing a subminimal definition.

Fourth, in agreement with Kirk Bowman, Fabrice Lehoucq, and James Mahoney (2005), regime classification demands reasonably good knowledge about the countries in question. Scholars must be able to assess whether elections were reasonably free and fair, whether protection of human rights and civil liberties was reasonably solid, and whether the democratically elected government was thwarted by nonelected actors in antidemocratic ways. Although most scholars would agree in principle with this position, some influential measures of democracy such as Freedom House in its early years made mistakes that suggest limited knowledge of these cases.

Finally, we argue that dichotomous classifications are insufficiently sensitive to regime variations because many regimes fall into an intermediate semidemocratic zone. An ordinal, trichotomous classification—democracy, semidemocracy, and nondemocracy or authoritarian—better captures the significant observable variation in regime types. Our trichotomous classification builds on all four dimensions of our definition of democracy. This trichotomy achieves greater differentiation than dichotomous classifications and yet reduces the massive amount of information that a fine-grained continuous measure would require.

Based on these general theoretical and methodological claims, we classify the political regimes in twenty Latin American countries from 1945 to 2004. Then, in Section 5.5 of the chapter, we compare our trichotomous measure with the three most widely used measures that provide annual ratings of democracy over a long period of time: Freedom House, Polity IV, and Przeworski et al. (2000). We point out some deficiencies of the existing measures and argue that our trichotomous classification is a useful alternative.

We undertake this classification because of a conviction that the existing ones that provide annual democracy measures over a long period of time have flaws that require more than piecemeal reform. Compared to the

existing measures, our classification yields different substantive results on several questions: how pervasively authoritarian Latin America was before 1978, how profound the change between earlier decades and the post-1978 wave of democratization has been, and whether the region suffered a minor democratic erosion in the 1990s.

Without careful regime classification, it is impossible to adequately study these and other important substantive issues related to political regimes. For example, any attempt to assess whether democracy in Latin America suffered a minor decline in the 1990s (Diamond 1996, 1999) must rest on careful regime measurement. Classifying regimes is a necessary step to asking important questions about the causes and consequences of different regimes and of transitions from one kind of regime to another. For decades, these have been leading questions in comparative politics and political sociology, and they are likely to remain at the center of intellectual debates for decades to come. If we cannot measure democracy, these enterprises are impossible. Hence, regime classification and the measurement of democracy are important scholarly endeavors.

5.1. A DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY

The first step in classifying political regimes should be defining them; it is impossible to classify whether a regime is a democracy, or how democratic it is, until we know what a democracy is. Much has been written on this subject, but definitions of democracy still vary widely. The challenge is to provide a definition that captures the attributes that must exist in a democracy without including attributes that are superfluous to democracy. Restated, the definition should be sufficient but minimal. We propose a definition of democracy that we argue is *minimal* and *complete*.

Following Giovanni Sartori (1976: 60–4), we advocate minimal definitions. ‘A definition is minimal when all the properties or characteristics of an entity that are not indispensable for its identification are set forth as variable, hypothetical properties—not as definitional properties. . . . (W)hatever falls beyond a minimal characterization is left to verification—not declared true by definition’ (Sartori 1976: 61). A definition of democracy should be minimal but not subminimal; it should include all essential features of democracy but not properties that are not necessary features of democracy.

Modern representative democracy has four defining properties. The first two involve the classic dimensions analyzed in Robert Dahl’s renowned work (1971) and in many other discussions. First, the head of government and the

legislature must be chosen through open and fair competitive elections.¹ Such elections are a core ingredient of modern representative democracy. Fraud and coercion may not determine the outcomes for democratic elections. Elections must offer the possibility of alternation in power even if, as occurred for decades in Japan, no actual alternation occurs for an extended time.

Second, today the franchise must include the great majority of the adult population. This means something approximating universal adult suffrage for citizens, but many countries have minor exclusions (the insane, convicts) that do not detract from their democratic credentials. If large parts of the population are excluded, the regime may be a competitive oligarchy, but in the past few decades, it could not be considered a democracy.

Although this criterion seems obvious for contemporary times, less clear is how rigidly one should apply it to the past. Especially with respect to the dimension of participation, a critical yet undertheorized issue in classifying democracies is whether scholars should use international standards for a given period (we call this a retrospective standard) or today's international standards. Most scholars (e.g. Gurr et al. 1991; Huntington 1991; Przeworski et al. 2000) implicitly use a retrospective standard; they view regimes based on nearly universal adult male suffrage as democratic. In a similar vein, Polity's regime codings do not take the expansion of citizenship into consideration and thus neglect one of the most important processes in the broadening of democracy. Pamela Paxton (2000) has persuasively argued that there is a contradiction between most definitions of democracy, which call for universal suffrage, and most operationalizations, which are based on adult male suffrage for earlier periods. She notes that regimes based on nearly universal adult suffrage are more democratic than those based on nearly universal adult male suffrage and calls for continuous measures of democracy to capture this qualitative difference.

With an ordinal classification such as ours, scholars can legitimately use either the retrospective or contemporary standards. But they should be clear about which they are using. Each mode of classification has an advantage and a disadvantage, and whether a regime was democratic by standards of the time and how democratic it is by contemporary standards are both legitimate questions. The retrospective standard fails to capture some changes over time; it is predicated on the idea that democracy is an ever-changing type of political regime. Using today's standards to judge earlier regimes makes it easier to capture changes in how democracy is perceived and practiced, but it imposes an anachronism. As democratic rights expand, each new generation would

¹ The election of the head of government is often indirect. This is true in all parliamentary systems and in presidential systems that have electoral colleges.

have doubts about classifying *all* earlier regimes as democratic because earlier generations of democrats had not institutionalized or even conceived of some rights and practices.

On the question of inclusion, we use a retrospective standard for earlier regimes to avoid the problems of anachronism.² Until shortly after World War II, we consider some countries democratic even if women had not yet gained the right to vote. In a similar vein, the nonenfranchisement of the illiterate did not automatically prevent us from coding a regime as democratic. Criteria for judging inclusiveness are to some degree historically contingent because democracy itself is ever changing (Markoff 1996)—although democracy also embodies a few core unchanging principles such as free and fair elections and respect for basic civil liberties. The breadth of the franchise does not filter out many regimes in the contemporary world, as standards for inclusion have become quite universal in modern democracies.

Third, democracies must protect political rights and civil liberties, such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom to organize, the right to habeas corpus, etc. Even if the government is chosen in free and fair elections with a broad suffrage, in the absence of an effective guarantee of civil liberties, it is not democratic as that word is understood in the modern world. El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s, among other cases in the contemporary world, illustrate the point. A liberal component—the protection of individual liberties—is a necessary element of contemporary democracy. Because the liberal dimension is a defining characteristic of contemporary democracy, Fareed Zakaria's (1997), Larry Diamond's (1999: 42–51), and Wolfgang Merkel's (2004) concept of 'illiberal democracy' is problematic; it suggests that regimes that do not protect civil liberties and political rights might still be called democracies (Plattner 1998).³ Illiberal regimes with competitive elections are semidemocratic at best and in some cases clearly authoritarian.

Fourth, the elected authorities must exercise real governing power, as opposed to a situation in which elected officials are overshadowed by the military or by a nonelected shadow figure (Valenzuela 1992). If elections are free and fair but produce a government that cannot control major policy arenas because the military or some other force does, then the government is not a democracy. By our stringent definition, some of the 'defective

² As noted, a retrospective standard fails to capture important changes in participation. This creates acute problems for the long time frame Polity covers (since 1800) because its codings do not acknowledge the massive expansion of citizenship. See Paxton (2000). The problem is less acute for our classification because of the shorter time span.

³ Historically, the notion of 'illiberal democracy' is not an oxymoron; it was at the core of Tocqueville's concern about majority tyranny in the United States, as well as a central concern of Madison's. In the contemporary context, however, we prefer nomenclature that indicates clearly that regimes that do not uphold traditional civil liberties are not democracies.

democracies' of which Merkel (2004) speaks are not merely defective; they are not democracies.

All four elements of our definition are necessary and must be included even if doing so requires making subjective judgments about regimes. This definition meets the test of being minimal but complete if (a) all four criteria are necessary components of democracy, without which a regime should not be considered democratic; and (b) no other discrete features are necessary to characterize a democracy. We believe that this definition meets both conditions, while some recent definitions fail the second by neglecting some essential characteristics of a democracy.

Our definition is focused on procedure but adds a concern for civil liberties and effective governing power. It is close to that proposed by many scholars (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989: xvi–xviii; Collier and Levitsky 1997; O'Donnell 2001). It diverges from nonprocedural definitions that do not explicitly refer to elections (e.g. Bollen 1980, 1991: 5) and from Schumpeter's classic definition and Przeworski et al.'s (2000) more recent one, both of which are subminimal.

Finally, following Przeworski et al. (2000), it is useful to make explicit two points that our definition does not include. First, it leaves out substantive results, such as social equality. We limit the definition of democracy to procedural issues and leave as an empirical question the relationship between democracy and equality. It muddles the picture to include social equality in the definition of democracy, even though high levels of inequality might well work against democracy. Second, again following Przeworski et al., our definition says nothing about accountability,⁴ defects in the rule of law except those that impinge on civil liberties and political rights, and instances of 'decretismo', that is, the use of decree powers by the executive. Adding such criteria that are not inherent in the nature of democracy leads to a nonminimal definition.

5.1.1. The Perils of a Subminimal Definition

Our definition bears one important similarity to Schumpeter's (1942) and to Przeworski et al.'s (2000): all three focus on procedures. In insisting on the second, third, and fourth dimensions of democracy, however, our definition differs from those used by Schumpeter and Przeworski et al. Both equate

⁴ Schmitter and Karl (1991: 40) make accountability central to their definition of democracy, but their definition is difficult to operationalize. In a similar vein, Jagers and Gurr (1995) include institutional constraints on executive power as one of their defining dimensions of democracy. Although democracies generally have far greater constraints on executive power than nondemocracies, among democracies, there is a wide variation in how constrained executive power is.

democracy with holding free and fair elections that allow for an alternation in power regardless of the lack of civil liberties or the presence of 'reserved domains' in public policy that are under the control of unelected figures (Valenzuela 1992).⁵

Przeworski et al. carefully articulate their criteria for coding and anchor their regime classifications in a definition of democracy. But they use a sub-minimal definition of democracy, which results in counting some authoritarian regimes as democracies. Their definition of democracy revolves exclusively around competition for office. 'Democracy... is a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections.' More specifically, in a democracy, the head of government and the legislature must be elected, and there must be more than one party (Przeworski et al. 2000: 15).

Przeworski et al. are not alone in defining democracy strictly in terms of competition for office. In his classic work, Schumpeter (1942: 269) also focused on electoral competition among political elites and parties: 'the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.' In the past two decades, however, most political scientists have used a more expansive and less parsimonious definition, more akin to the one we presented above.

Przeworski et al. represent an outlier in defining democracy so parsimoniously, but the prominence of the scholars and the project makes them an outlier to take seriously. They argue that classifications of political regimes should follow 'an exclusive reliance on observables rather than on subjective judgments' (Alvarez et al. 1996: 3). Yet this distinction between 'observables' and subjectivity is drawn too sharply; they understate the subjectivity involved in their own assessments of whether elections are free and fair. Regimes should be classified according to observables, but social scientists must make judgments about whether an infringement is sufficiently serious as to regard a regime as less than democratic. Moreover, relying on observables need not restrict a definition of democracy to the electoral sphere. The state of human rights and civil liberties, the breadth of participation, and the degree to which nondemocratic actors have veto power over government policy are all observables. It is often more difficult to get reliable data on the human

⁵ Przeworski et al. equivocate on this latter point. On the one hand, they note that 'In a democracy, the offices that are being filled by contested elections grant their occupants the authority to exercise governance free of the legal constraint of having to respond to a power not constituted as a result of the electoral process.' This criterion would seem to entail calling any regime in which the military overshadows elected officials as nondemocratic. On the other hand, they vigorously assert that they do not include civilian control over the military in their regime classification (Przeworski et al. 2000: 15, 35).

rights situation and on whether the elected government really has the power to govern than on the fairness of elections. It is a mistake, however, to classify political regimes without making judgments about these issues.

An exclusive focus on political competition leads to a subminimal definition and to errors in regime classification. As Terry Karl (1986) argued, 'electoralism'—the equating of competitive elections with democracy—misses fundamental aspects of democracy. Competitive elections without broad adult suffrage can exist in an oligarchic predemocratic regime or in a racially or ethnically exclusive regime that excludes the majority of the population (e.g. South Africa before the end of apartheid). But if a contemporary government is elected in contests that exclude most of the adult population, it violates the root meaning of democracy—rule by the people. However far the definition of representative democracy has strayed from this original root meaning, it is essential to preserve the idea that democratic governments are elected by the people. In practical terms, this second criterion is not very discriminating in the post-1974 wave of democratization because almost every country that has sponsored free and fair competitive elections has had a broadly inclusive franchise.

In their early work, Przeworski et al. explicitly rejected using subjective judgments about civil liberties in classifying regimes (Alvarez et al. 1996).⁶ Yet without respect for the core civil liberties traditionally associated with democracy, a regime is not democratic as we understand that word today. Without protection of civil liberties, the electoral process itself is vitiated. Elections are not free and fair if the opposition risks reprisals for criticizing the government, opposing points of view are not permitted any outlet or dissemination, political parties cannot form or meet, journalists cannot publish freely, candidates are not permitted to travel, and so on.

Przeworski et al. attempt to correct for this shortcoming in their definition by counting as democratic only those regimes in which there has been at least one alternation in power, thus evaluating the effectiveness of the electoral process in retrospect. 'Whenever a ruling party eventually suffered an electoral defeat and allowed the opposition to assume office, the regime is classified as democratic for the entire period this party was in power under the same rules' (Przeworski et al. 2000: 24). But this criterion is both over and under inclusive. The violations of civil liberties or political rights may be directed at one political viewpoint—even a dominant one—but still leave the electorate some choices, thus producing the required alternation in office without ever

⁶ In their later work, Przeworski et al. (2000: 34) are more equivocal about this point. They do not include protection of liberties in their definition of democracy, but they acknowledge that 'some degree of political freedom is a sine qua non condition for contestation.'

permitting free and fair elections. This occurred in Argentina between 1958 and 1966, when the Peronist party was proscribed, denying people the opportunity to vote for the party with broadest electoral support.

In addition, even if alternation in power showed that elections are free and fair at time t , it would hardly be an indicator of their fairness at $t - 1$. Consider, for instance, the case of Jamaica. Given the alternation in power in 1989, Przeworski et al. (2000: 63) coded Jamaica retroactively as a democracy for the whole 1962–90 period even though the ruling Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) manipulated the electoral calendar and ran virtually unopposed in the 1983 election. The JLP controlled all seats in parliament between 1984 and 1989. This problem is important in some Latin American countries as well. Under these coding rules, given the alternation in power in 2000, Mexico's elections would presumably be considered free and fair during the late twentieth century and perhaps even earlier. Yet the fact that the 2000 elections permitted an alternation in power says nothing about the fairness of previous elections.⁷

The rule sometimes generates the opposite problem by excluding from the democratic category countries in which the liberties that underlie free and fair elections are present, but the electorate is satisfied with the party in power. Japan was a democracy for decades before there was an alternation in power. But under the alternation rule, it is unclear whether Japan would have qualified as a democracy had Przeworski et al. coded this case a few years earlier. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) never left power between 1955 (when the party was born) and 1990 (the last year in the Przeworski et al. data-set). The presence of a dominant party that consistently wins elections for a few decades is not inherently incompatible with democracy.

Przeworski et al. claim that we should empirically investigate whether freedom from arbitrary violence is associated with democracy rather than include such a freedom in the definition. But one of the defining characteristics of modern representative democracy is its liberal dimension: limited government and adherence to some core values about the sanctity of the individual. Some competitively elected governments have seriously infringed on such rights. In the early Hitler years, the competitively elected government was already beginning its systematic campaign to deny basic rights to certain groups.

⁷ In order to minimize this problem, Cheibub and Gandhi (2004: 3) reformulated the alternation rule to require that for an incumbent to be coded democratic 'an alternation in power *under identical electoral rules* must have taken place.' Under the modified rule, the incumbent regime is retrospectively coded as democratic back to the point when major electoral rules ('who votes, how votes are counted, and who counts the votes') were altered. In the case of Mexico, because the ruling PRI relinquished control over the Federal Electoral Institute in 1996, the transition was dated in 2000 when the next election took place. This coding strategy requires a much more nuanced historical knowledge of the cases than the original alternation rule suggested.

Similarly, in parts of Colombia (1980s to the present) and Peru (1980s and early 1990s), governmental or paramilitary campaigns against guerrillas and drug trafficking have meant a less than democratic experience for peasants caught in the middle. When these conditions are generalized, affecting a large portion of the population, the country should not be labeled a democracy. In short, it is important to distinguish between illiberal elected governments and liberal democracies.

In addition, a government is not democratic unless the elected officials actually govern. Przeworski et al. explicitly reject this criterion and maintain that regime classifications should not be based on judgments about the actual exercise of power: 'In some democracies (Honduras and Thailand are prototypes) civilian rule is but a thin veneer over military power, exercised by defrocked generals. Yet as long as officeholders are elected in elections that someone else has some chance to win and as long as they do not use the incumbency to eliminate the opposition, the fact that the chief executive is a general or a lackey of generals does not add any relevant information' (Przeworski et al. 2000: 35).

We are skeptical about this argument when 'civilian rule is but a thin veneer over military power.' If the government elected by the people does not actually govern, it is not democratic. The contrary argument appears to be premised on the assumption that there is an option, that people can choose between the lackey of a general and someone who is not a lackey. But in some cases, all the candidates are not so much lackeys as hostages. In these cases, decision-making in fundamental areas is constrained by the threat of military intervention or by a lack of control over the military.

In Latin America, examples abound of freely elected governments constrained by a military 'guardianship'. In Argentina from 1955 to 1966, certain electoral outcomes were ruled out a priori because the military proscribed the party that enjoyed most popular support. Guatemala's military played a de facto guardian role in the 1980s and early 1990s. About two years after winning in the largely free and fair 1985 elections, President Cerezo admitted that when he took office, the military permitted him to exercise only an estimated 30 percent of his constitutional powers. He claimed that the situation improved thereafter, while another local observer estimated that the percentage of power he could exercise actually decreased to 10 percent or 15 percent by 1988.⁸ A similar situation prevailed in El Salvador from 1982 until shortly before the 1994 elections. The military and the paramilitary were beyond the control of the civilian government and ruthlessly killed tens of thousands of

⁸ Statements reported in the International Human Rights Law Group and Washington Office on Latin America (1988: 11–12 and n. 10).

leftists and purported leftist sympathizers. Electoral outcomes unacceptable to the military were ruled out.

Governments in these countries were chosen in elections that were reasonably though not completely free and fair. But the military and paramilitary controlled a wide range of policy choices, including the range of permissible political opinion (the military violently repressed the left), human rights policy, the means employed in fighting the civil war, important aspects of labor policy (labor unions were brutally repressed), agrarian policy, and many other policies. The governments chosen by the people did not effectively govern in important policy areas. In these policy areas, the ruler was the military and/or paramilitary, and none of the options on the ballot provided an alternative. To call such a government 'democratic' does not do justice to the word. If an elected government cannot govern because the military or some other actor dominates the political system, it is not democratic. The use of a subminimal definition of democracy leads Przeworski et al. (2000) to see many regimes as democratic despite practices that would lead most observers to a contrary judgment.

The criteria in our definition of democracy involve some discretionary coding—that is, subjective assessments. But we prefer a complete definition even if it requires such assessments to one that is subminimal. It is small comfort that a classification is based on objective data if it does not include enough criteria to distinguish between democracies and nondemocracies. Social scientists should not ignore major components of democracy simply because they are hard to measure. Informed judgment oriented by well-specified coding rules is better than no measurement at all.

5.2. THE RULES FOR CLASSIFYING REGIMES

In this section we present our rules for classifying political regimes. Explicit and sound coding and aggregation rules form an important building block of regime classifications (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Such rules promote evenness of assessments across cases and times. They reduce the subjectivity and measurement errors that affect regime classification (Bollen 1993; Bollen and Paxton 2000) unless one relies exclusively on strictly objective criteria, as Vanhanen (1990, 2000) does, but with considerable loss of conceptual soundness. They also make it easier for other scholars to assess criteria and actual classifications.⁹

⁹ One of the virtues of Bollen (1980), Coppedge and Reinicke (1990), and Przeworski et al. (2000) is the explicit coding and aggregation rules.

5.2.1. Coding Rules

One of the challenges in measuring democracy is ensuring that the measure is consistent with the definition. As Gerardo Munck and Jay Verkuilen (2002) have noted, some prominent regime classifications and measurements (e.g. Polity, Freedom House) have not fully lived up to this stricture. Our coding rules, on the other hand, build explicitly and directly on our definition of democracy. They assess to what extent the four defining criteria for democracy are violated. They typify possible violations of these democratic principles and rank them as major failures or partial ones. The coding scheme is as follows.

5.2.1.1. *Elections for the Legislature and the Executive*

Has the head of government (in Latin America, the president) been freely and fairly elected or is he/she a constitutionally designated replacement for a head of government who died, resigned, or was impeached? By ‘elected’ we mean, as did Przeworski et al. (2000), that he/she was chosen in fair direct elections or elected in a constitutional process by a body that was itself mostly chosen in direct elections. In a similar vein, is there a legislative body in which the vast majority of the members have been fairly elected? With very few exceptions, in the post-1945 period elections for the national congress have been direct, though on rare occasions, as in Argentina’s upper chamber until the 1994 constitutional reform, some members were elected indirectly in free and fair elections.

In a *democracy*, the head of government and the legislature are chosen in free and fair elections.

A *major violation* of this democratic principle occurs if:

- (a) the head of government or the legislature is not elected;
- (b) the government uses its resources (patronage, repression, or a combination of both) to ensure electoral victory—that is, there are systematic complaints about fraud or repression, and there is virtual certainty about the outcome of presidential elections (e.g. Mexico 1945–88, Argentina 1952–5, El Salvador 1952–63, Paraguay 1960–89);
or
- (c) through fraud, manipulation, or outright repression, the government makes it impossible for a wide gamut of parties to compete (or if they do compete, to take office).

A *partial violation* occurs if:

- (a) there are systematic complaints of rigged elections and/or harassment of the opposition but there is still uncertainty about electoral outcomes and the government fails to capture large majorities in the legislature; or
- (b) the military vetoed a few ‘unacceptable’ but important presidential candidates (e.g. Argentina 1958–66);¹⁰ fraud affected but did not thoroughly skew electoral results; or the elections were conducted under substantially unequal playing rules (e.g. Nicaragua in 1984 because the Sandinistas dominated the media and pressured opposition groups, El Salvador in the 1980s because the left faced massive repression).

5.2.1.2. *Franchise*

In a *democracy*, the franchise is broad compared to other countries in the same historical period, and disenfranchised social categories (e.g. children) are not seen as politically excluded groups with distinctive electoral preferences.

A *major violation* of this democratic principle occurs if a large part of the adult population is disenfranchised on ethnic, class, gender, or educational grounds in ways that:

- (a) likely prevent very different electoral outcomes (or so is widely believed);
- (b) are unusually exclusionary for that historical period; or
- (c) trigger mass social protests.

A *partial violation* occurs if disenfranchisement of some social groups occurs in ways that are not likely to significantly shape electoral outcomes.

These criteria for inclusion involve complex judgments, but the obvious and simple criterion—universal adult suffrage—is misleading and unrealistic if we use a retrospective standard for classifying regimes. Even today, few if any countries observe universal adult suffrage. Some countries that are widely seen as democracies exclude the insane, convicts, permanent residents, nonresident citizens, or members of the armed forces. In addition, we overlooked the

¹⁰ We did not automatically consider all proscriptions a partial violation. In the late 1940s and 1950s, many Latin American countries proscribed communist parties. Provided that a wide range of other electoral options existed, we did not code this proscription as a partial failure. Few of the communist parties proscribed in the 1940s and 1950s were electorally significant. Moreover, at that time many people regarded proscribing openly antisystem parties in Linz’s sense (1978) as consistent with and even necessary for democracy. The Peronist party is different because it was Argentina’s largest party, and it was not patently antisystem.

disenfranchisement of women and the illiterate for the early part of the time period under consideration. These earlier exclusions were cultural artifacts of a time past; this criterion of democracy has changed over time.

5.2.1.3. *Civil Liberties*

In a *democracy*, violations of human rights are uncommon, parties are free to organize, and the government respects constitutional guarantees.

A *major violation* of democratic principles occurs if:

- (a) gross human rights violations or censorship against opposition media occur systematically; or
- (b) political parties are not free to organize—that is, most major parties are banned, just a single party is allowed to exist, or a few parties are tightly controlled by the government (e.g. Panama 1968–80, Paraguay 1947–59, Brazil 1965–79).

A *partial violation* occurs if:

- (a) violations of human rights are less widespread but still affect the opposition's capacity to organize in some geographic areas or some social sectors; or
- (b) there is intermittent censorship of the media or regular prohibition of one major party or candidate.

5.2.1.4. *Civilian Control*

In a *democracy*, military leaders and the military as an institution have negligible or minor influence in policies other than military policy, and their preferences do not substantively affect the chances of presidential candidates.

A *major violation* of this democratic principle occurs if:

- (a) military leaders or the military as an institution openly dominate major policy areas not strictly related to the armed forces; or
- (b) if the elected head of government is a puppet, such that the electoral process does not really determine who governs.

A *partial violation* occurs if military leaders or the military as an institution are able to veto important policies in a few areas not related to the armed forces (e.g. Ecuador 1961–2).

5.2.2. Aggregation Rule

Munck and Verkuilen (2002) have pointed out the importance of explicit and sensible rules for moving from disaggregated dimensions of regimes to an aggregated regime classification. Our aggregation rule is simple. We used these four dimensions to construct a trichotomous measure of democracy in Latin America. We classify governments as democratic, semidemocratic, or authoritarian. When governments commit no violation of any of the four criteria, they are coded as democratic. They rank as authoritarian if they present one or more major violations or as semidemocratic if they display only partial failures in one or more categories.

Continuous scales of democracy have advantages. We could have constructed a more continuous scale through an additive aggregation principle by adding up points (from 0 to 2 for each dimension) on the four dimensions—thus producing a nine-point scale from 0 to 8. We have conceptual and practical reasons for preferring a trichotomy to a more differentiated scale constructed in this fashion. Conceptually, adding points along the four dimensions could produce distortions because it assumes that the four dimensions (*a*) can be measured at the interval level; (*b*) can be measured in the same units; and (*c*) have the same conceptual weight, such that a strong score on some dimensions can offset a weak score on others.

Our aggregation rule and hence our regime classification do not rest on such assumptions. Our four dimensions are coded along ordinal scales (major violation, partial violation, and no violation), and mathematical aggregation might be misleading because the distances between ordinal categories are not necessarily uniform. More important, an additive measure assumes that major violations along one dimension can be compensated by high scores on others. In our understanding, all four dimensions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for democracy. Egregious violations along one dimension cannot be compensated by adherence to democratic principles on the others. For example, if elections are fraudulent and the government engages in widespread intimidation that makes it impossible for opposition parties to compete, broadening the franchise will not make the regime more democratic.

Our method of aggregation also offers a modest practical advantage. An additive aggregation process would require careful evaluation of each dimension of democracy for every regime in every year. In contrast, our aggregation procedure allows us to limit data collection to cases in which there is no major violation at the electoral level. The electoral criterion filters governments that are overtly authoritarian, restricting the gathering of more costly and detailed information to democracies, semidemocracies, or disguised forms of

authoritarian rule. If a regime does not have reasonably free and fair elections, then we do not need to collect additional data. Since information for the first criterion is easier to obtain, this aggregation rule reduces information costs.

5.3. A CLASSIFICATION OF REGIMES IN LATIN AMERICA

Table 5.1 shows our classifications for twenty Latin American countries for the 1945–2004 period.¹¹ This trichotomous classification is ordinal; it moves from more to less democratic. It does not distinguish among different types of patently nondemocratic regimes. For some purposes, such distinctions are relevant (Linz 1975; Linz and Stepan 1996: 38–54; Levitsky and Way 2002). We are concerned primarily with the continuum from democratic to nondemocratic regimes; we use the term ‘authoritarian’ loosely, to embrace all clearly nondemocratic regimes. The semidemocratic category includes a variety of regimes that sponsor competitive elections but still fail to measure up to democracy. We could have classified semidemocracies into various subcategories, but in all of these cases reasonably fair and free competitive elections take place while other elements of democracy are impaired. In what follows, we explain why we have chosen a categorical scale instead of a continuous index, and why we construct a trichotomous rather than a dichotomous scale.

5.3.1. Categorical Versus Continuous Scales

The reason for choosing a categorical measure is twofold. First, notwithstanding the virtues of continuous measures for some research purposes,¹² for other purposes it remains useful to label political regimes. Both continuous and ordinal measures of regimes serve important research goals (Collier and Adcock 1999). Regime labels are essential for analyzing comparative historical processes and for describing regimes, and they are useful for studying regime breakdowns and transitions.

Second, given cost and time constraints, it would have been difficult to construct a more fine-grained measure for each country and each year since

¹¹ Table 5.3, in Appendix, displays the empirical coding of the four dimensions for the twenty Latin American countries. Although we have not changed the logic of our regime classification since the original publication in 2001, we have adjusted the coding of some of the four dimensions for specific regime-years, leading to a different regime classification in some cases. For example, we found instructive the regime codings of Bowman et al. (2005) for Central America, and in many cases we revised ours accordingly.

¹² See Dahl (1971), Bollen (1980), Bollen and Jackman (1989: 612), Coppedge and Reinicke (1990), Vanhanen (1990), Hadenius (1992: 36–71), Diamond (1999), and Elkins (2000).

Table 5.1. Classification of Latin American regimes, 1945–2004 (aggregate scores)

Country	From	To	Regime	Country	From	To	Regime	Country	From	To	Regime	Country	From	To	Regime
Argentina	1945	1945	A	Costa Rica	1945	1947	SD	Haiti	1945	1994	A	Paraguay	1985	1987	D
	1946	1950	SD		1948	1948	A		1995	1998	SD		1988	1991	SD
	1951	1957	A	1949	1957	SD	1999	2004	A	1992	1994		A		
	1958	1961	SD	1958	2004	D	Honduras	1945	1956	A	1995		1999	SD	
	1962	1962	A	Cuba	1945	1951		SD	1957	1962	SD		2000	2000	A
	1963	1965	SD		1952	2004	A	1963	1970	A	2001		2004	D	
	1966	1972	A	Dominican Republic	1945	1965	A	1971	1971	SD	1945		1988	A	
	1973	1974	D		1966	1973	SD	1972	1981	A	1989		2004	SD	
	1975	1975	SD	1974	1977	A	1982	1998	SD	Uruguay	1945		1972	D	
	1976	1982	A	1978	1993	D	1999	2004	D		1973		1984	A	
1983	2004	D	1994	1995	SD	Mexico	1945	1987	A	1985	2004	D			
Bolivia	1945	1955	A	1996	2004		D	1988	1999	SD	Venezuela	1945	1945	A	
	1956	1963	SD	Ecuador	1945	1947	A	2000	2004	D		1946	1946	SD	
	1964	1978	A		1948	1960	D	Nicaragua	1945	1983		A	1947	1947	D
	1979	1979	SD	1961	1962	SD	1984		1995	SD		1948	1957	A	
	1980	1981	A	1963	1967	A	1996	2004	D	1958		1998	D		
Brazil	1982	2004	D	1968	1969	SD	Panama	1945	1947	SD	1999	1999	SD		
	1945	1945	A	1970	1978	A		1948	1955	A	2000	2001	D		
	1946	1953	D	1979	1999	D	1956	1963	D	2002	2004	SD			
	1954	1955	SD	2000	2000	SD	1964	1967	SD	Peru	1945	1947	SD		
	1956	1963	D	2001	2003	D	1968	1989	A		1948	1955	A		
1964	1984	A	2004	2004	SD	1990	1993	SD	1956		1961	SD			
1985	2004	D	El Salvador	1945	1983	A	1994	2004	D		1962	1962	A		
1945	1972	D		1984	1993	SD	1945	1947	SD		1963	1967	D		
Chile	1973	1989	A	1994	2004	D	1948	1955	A	Colombia	1968	1979	A		
	1990	2004	D	Guatemala	1945	1953	SD	1956	1961		SD	1980	1982	D	
Colombia	1945	1948	SD		1954	1985	A	1962	1962		A	1983	1984	SD	
	1949	1957	A	1986	1999	SD	1963	1967	D						
	1958	1973	SD	2000	2001	D	1968	1979	A						
	1974	1989	D	2002	2004	SD	1980	1982	D						
	1990	2004	SD				1983	1984	SD						

Note: D = Democracy; SD = Semidemocracy; A = Authoritarian = Nondemocracy. See Appendix for a coding of the component dimensions.

1945. We may not know whether a country should be scored as a 6 or a 7 on Freedom House's interval scale, but we can be confident it is a semidemocracy. By constructing a trichotomous scale with a modest information demand, we can significantly reduce the number of coding errors and thus achieve greater reliability than would be possible under a more demanding classification scheme. Our scheme has enough categories to avoid forcing cases into classes that violate common sense understanding, yet has few enough that we do not need to draw fine distinctions among regimes.¹³

Because this coding is qualitative and historical, it involves some degree of subjective judgment. But with explicit coding rules, the four dimensions that are being judged are uniform and the general parameters for making those judgments clear. The fact that the secondary data generated by country experts are available to many, in combination with explicit and relatively simple coding standards, makes it easier for other scholars to access our coding of cases.

Of course, even with explicit coding rules, some cases present difficult borderline judgments. Should Brazil 1946–63 be coded as a semidemocracy because of the restrictions on participation and competition, or as a democracy because competition at the national level was vigorous and participation fairly broad? A reasonable case can be made either way.

In sum, our ordinal trichotomous classification summarizes a lot of information, is descriptively and conceptually richer than quantitative codings, and permits us to map actual regimes onto the continuous scale of political practices in a way that matches an intuitive understanding of the nature of regimes and regime change. Our categories are readily comprehensible in ordinary social science parlance. This trichotomy allows for a meaningful range of variance without losing parsimony in the construction of regime types. Finally, our ordinal, trichotomous approach is consistent with the continuous nature of democratic practice. It imposes theoretically driven cutpoints on a more continuous range of practices.¹⁴

5.3.2. Trichotomous Versus Dichotomous Measures of Democracy

Our trichotomy has advantages over the simple democratic–nondemocratic distinction advocated by Sartori (1987a: 182–5, 1991) and Przeworski et al. (2000: 57–9). They argued that a regime is either democratic or it is

¹³ Although continuous measures in principle have significant advantages, in practice, measures such as Freedom House do not provide clear guidelines as to what criteria lead to what score. Where numerical scores are subjective approximations that are not rooted in clear coding rules, they are likely to be fraught with shortcomings (Bollen and Paxton 2000).

¹⁴ Our assumption that these ordered categories map intervals of a continuous, latent variable is an accepted assumption in logistic regression analysis (Long 1997: 116–22).

not and hence that democracy should be conceived as a dichotomous phenomenon.

Przeworski et al. coded as democracies countries in which the president and the legislature are elected, more than one party exists, and alternation in power proves (in retrospect) to be possible. There is no middle ground; all other countries are dictatorships. Less authoritarian may be a good thing but it is not, in this conception, more democratic. Sartori (1987a) also argues that regimes must first be classified as democracies before it makes sense to explore the degree to which they are democratic. Sartori and Przeworski et al. acknowledge that there are gradations among democracies: some are more democratic than others. Their argument is that there is a 'natural zero point' for democracies. Regimes above a certain point are democratic and can be so to differing degrees, while all others are not and are qualitatively different.

Part of this argument is compelling: it is sometimes useful to go beyond a continuous measure of regimes and assign them a qualitative label. Many regimes are unabashedly nondemocratic, and it makes sense to label them as such. Moreover, regime labels are useful for analyzing abrupt changes in regimes. Interval measures can capture such events, but it is useful to establish cutpoints that indicate that a regime change has taken place. Also, a regime that is clearly democratic should be labeled as such. Przeworski et al. and Sartori thus keep intact a necessary distinction between democracy and nondemocracy; we should not abandon all efforts to categorize regimes and simply give them a quantitative score. But Przeworski et al. and Sartori are excessively parsimonious in dichotomizing between nondemocracy and democracy. Even if one recognizes the value of labeling regimes in a qualitative manner, in much of the contemporary world a simple dichotomy does not suffice. A trichotomous classification, that distinguishes among democracy, semidemocracy, and nondemocracy, is more useful.

Przeworski et al. (2000: 57–8) explicitly reject the idea that there are borderline regimes between democracy and dictatorship, but this argument ignores the realities of many regimes in the contemporary world, especially outside the Western industrialized countries. A dichotomy is too parsimonious; it loses too much information about regimes. Many competitively elected regimes fall well short of democracy, yet to call them authoritarian is also misleading. This problem is acute with respect to many post-1978 regimes in Latin America. As J. Samuel Valenzuela (1992), Terry Karl (1995), Larry Diamond (1996, 1999), Jonathan Hartlyn (1998), Guillermo O'Donnell (1999a: ch. 8, 2001), and Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2002) have argued, many contemporary regimes satisfy the requirements of fair competitive elections but on other important dimensions fall short of being democratic.

These regimes do not clearly approximate the ideal types of either democracy or authoritarianism and thus do not fit well in either camp. Attributes of both authoritarianism and democracy coexist in many regimes that fall between the two poles. These regimes are in a 'gray area', an intermediate category in the space of properties between democracy and authoritarianism. A dichotomy requires very sharp distinctions among regimes when the reality may not justify them. Dichotomous classifications force the large number of intermediate cases into one of two categories, both of which may be misfits.

We prefer a trichotomous coding because of these problems with dichotomies. The presence of authoritarian elements in competitively elected regimes is well established (Valenzuela 1992; Karl 1995; Diamond 1996; O'Donnell 1999a: chs. 7 and 8, 2001); the existence of electoral institutions does not preclude the presence of authoritarian restraints on the use of those institutions. These regimes are what David Collier and Steven Levitsky (1997) call 'diminished subtypes' of democracy. In Latin America and elsewhere, many competitively elected governments have failed to respect the civil and political liberties that enable free and fair elections to take place. Moreover, the holding of free and fair elections is no guarantee of the other three defining criteria of democracy; neither does the absence or malfunction of these institutions make all cases equally authoritarian. Elements of authoritarianism are present to varying degrees in many regimes based on reasonably free and fair elections, without completely destroying their effectiveness in expressing popular choice. This fact justifies an intermediate category of 'semidemocracies'.

The concept of semidemocracy allows us to identify the many regimes in which imperfections in democratic practice impair but do not completely destroy the effectiveness of electoral institutions. By incorporating the category of semidemocracies, our scale gains in discrimination (presumably reducing measurement error), but still allows us to think of regimes in conceptually rich, categorical terms.

5.4. A COMPARISON OF MEASURES OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

In this section we compare the three existing measures of democracy that provide annual democracy scores over a wide time with ours and assess their validity and reliability for Latin America: Freedom House (Gastil 1991; Piano and Puddington 2005), Polity (Gurr, Jagers, and Moore 1991; Jagers and Gurr 1995, 1996; Marshall, Jagers, and Gurr 2005), and Przeworski et al.

Table 5.2. Correlation matrix for measures of democracy in Latin America

	MBP (1945–2004)	Polity IV (1945–2003)	Freedom House (1972–2004)	ACLP (1950–90)
MBP (1945–2004)	1			
N	(1200)			
Polity IV (1945–2003)	0.850	1		
N	(1179)	(1179)		
Freedom House (1972–2004)	0.822	0.844	1	
N	(660)	(639)	(660)	
ACLP (1950–90)	0.844*	0.783	0.787	1
N	(779)	(779)	(361)	(779)

Note: MBP = Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán; ACLP = Alvarez–Cheibub–Limongi–Przeworski. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Spearman's ρ (Pearson's r otherwise).

(2000: 13–77).¹⁵ We focus mainly on these three data-sets because coding every country for every year enables scholars to track when regime transitions occur and hence ultimately to explain such transitions. Yearly coding facilitates tracing region-wide trends; we know when waves of democracy and reverse waves began. Finally, this type of coding allows us to examine the causes and consequences of different kinds of regimes, as Przeworski et al. (2000) illustrated in their pathbreaking study.

As Table 5.2 shows, the four measures of democracy are highly correlated.¹⁶ But such high correlations do not mean that no significant differences exist among these measures. Despite these correlations, the different measures produce different substantive conclusions about key issues—for example, about how dramatic a change the post-1978 wave of democratization represents relative to the past, and whether the 1990s marked a slight democratic erosion, as Diamond (1996, 1999) asserts on the basis of Freedom House scores. In what follows, we provide information on the extent of disagreements between our data-set and these three data-sets, and show how differences in the codings offered by our data-set and the ACLP, Freedom House, and Polity data-sets are linked to differences in conceptualization and methodology.

¹⁵ The latter is sometimes referred to as the ACLP data-set, as a result of its initial presentation in an article by Michael Alvarez et al. (1996).

¹⁶ In this section, for the sake of simplicity in presenting results, we assume interval properties for our trichotomous measure (e.g. when we run Pearson correlations with other measures, estimate means, and so on). For ease of comparison with other measures, we combined the two Freedom House scores and inverted the measure by subtracting it from 15 so that it runs from 1 (least democratic) to 13 (most democratic).

5.4.1. Przeworski et al.

Previously we discussed two problems of the Przeworski et al. (2000) classification: the use of a subminimal definition of democracy and the decision to dichotomize democracy. Those choices lead to many coding differences with our classification. Spearman's ρ between the two measures is quite high—0.84—but the association is considerably weaker for the set of democracies than for the authoritarian regimes. While 96 percent of the cases (395/413) coded as dictatorships in the Przeworski et al.'s database are authoritarian according to our classification, only 62 percent of the cases (226/366) coded as democratic are also democracies in our classification. Though they state that when in doubt they prefer to err on the side of counting a regime as nondemocratic, their subminimal definition leads them to include numerous cases as democratic that we regard as semidemocratic. Przeworski et al. classify 85 percent (100/117) of our semidemocracies as democratic regimes and even classify as democratic some cases that we code as authoritarian. This divergence underscores that their operational definition of democracy is more lenient than ours.

Some examples illustrate the differences in coding cases. Przeworski et al. consider Brazil during the waning years of military rule (1979–84) a democracy. Yet the president from 1979 to March 1985 was chosen by the military and ratified by an electoral college designed to ensure subservience to the military's choice, governors were not democratically elected until 1982, and the leftist opposition and rural social movements were still subjected to frequent repression. They regard even the late stage of the first Peronist government in Argentina (1952–5) as democratic, though by then Perón had suppressed opposing viewpoints and was silencing dissent and persecuting the opposition. They label Guatemala after the 1954 military intervention and from 1966 to 1981 a democracy, even though gross violations of civil and political liberties and the proscription of the left made these elections unfree at best, if not a total sham. During this time, the army and paramilitary carried out widespread killings of possible leftists, labor leaders, and Indians suspected of harboring or sympathizing with leftists. Most elections were attended by waves of state-sponsored terrorism and tainted by massive fraud. With the sole exception of civilian Julio César Méndez Montenegro (1966–70), who ruled in the shadow of the military, the long period from 1954 to 1985 witnessed a succession of military presidents, none of whom were elected in free and fair elections. None of these cases should be called democracies, but the presence of elections and the prior or eventual alternation in office lead Przeworski et al. to misclassify them as such.

5.4.2. Freedom House

Beginning in 1972, every year Freedom House has ranked all independent countries from 1 (the best score) to 7 on both civil liberties and political rights (Gastil 1991).¹⁷ Freedom House evaluations have been used as measures of political regimes by combining the two scores to provide an assessment of how democratic a regime is (Diamond 1996, 1999: 24–34). Its scores provide a reasonably differentiated measure of democracy and offer comprehensive scope over more than three decades. They implicitly incorporate at least three of our four dimensions of democracy: free and fair competition, broad participation, and civil liberties and human rights.

Freedom House's evaluations have two shortcomings for measuring democracy. First, until the last few years, Freedom House did not provide publicly available coding rules. This made it impossible to know what criteria are used in assessing regimes, leading to potentially serious problems of reliability and validity.

Second, its measurements contain two systematic biases: scores for leftist governments were tainted by political considerations, and changes in scores are sometimes driven by changes in their criteria rather than changes in real conditions. The first of these shortcomings is manifest in the harsh treatment of Nicaragua under Sandinista rule (1979–90) as compared to El Salvador for the same period. Freedom House scores suggest a more democratic government in El Salvador (a combined inverted score of 7 in the 1–13 scale) than in Nicaragua (a combined inverted score of 5) in 1984. Yet in 1984, the military in El Salvador was carrying out widespread political and labor repression and was violently suppressing the leftist opposition. In Nicaragua, three parties to the right and three to the left of the ruling Sandinista regime participated in elections in the same year, and these elections were certified by most European observers as fair and free of outright fraud and manipulation. Political violence outside the area of Sandinista–Contra conflict was limited. Despite occasional harassment of political opponents, the Sandinista regime did not murder, imprison, or torture large numbers of opposition leaders. Most observers agree that these elections and their surrounding circumstances were more democratic than those in El Salvador. This misclassification is not an isolated incident. Bollen and Paxton (2000: 77) show that Freedom House has a systematic bias against leftist governments.

In addition, many scores of the 1970s and early 1980s are too lenient compared to scores in the 1990s. For example, Mexico's scores ranged from

¹⁷ Freedom House scores are labeled with two consecutive years—1972–3, 1973–4, and so on. We use a single year as the label; we identified the Freedom House scores with the first year of the pair, which most closely reflects the year for which the conditions are reported.

7 to 8 throughout the authoritarian 1970s and 1980s. During this time, political competition was very restricted. The PRI won every single gubernatorial and senate seat from the 1930s until the late 1980s; there was absolutely no chance of an alternation in power at the national or even the state level; and the opposition was harassed. Colombia also received an 11 in the early seventies when competition was still quite restricted (1972–4). The National Front agreement of 1958 established that regardless of election results, congressional seats would be equally divided between Liberals and Conservatives, and the traditional parties colluded to alternate in power with every presidential election. The Dominican Republic (1972–3) and El Salvador (1972–5) were coded 10 during semidemocratic and authoritarian periods, respectively. And the aggregate scores for Guatemala were 10 in 1972 and 11 in 1973 during an authoritarian regime.

Freedom House scoring became more stringent in the 1990s and does not reflect the improvements that took place since the 1980s. For example, Mexico's political system was more democratic after 1988 than it had been previously. The 1988 presidential election, though vitiated by fraud, was easily the most competitive Mexico had experienced since the foundation of the PRI/state regime in the 1929. By 1990, the opposition had become a serious political contender in many states. Yet Freedom House's 1980 (inverted) combined score (8) is slightly more democratic than the 1990 score (7). Likewise, political rights improved substantially in Brazil between 1984, when the military was still in power, and the early 1990s, but Freedom House scores indicate the opposite. In 1984, the last of the military presidents was still in office; citizens in state capitals and scores of other cities were not able to elect their own mayor; one third of the federal senate had been elected indirectly in rules designed to guarantee majorities for the military government; communist parties were outlawed; and the left still faced sporadic repression. By 1990, these vestiges of authoritarian rule had been eliminated.

In El Salvador, the human rights situation improved substantially between the grizzly mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, but Freedom House scores reflect no change. A large UN-sponsored mission monitored a peace process and guaranteed human rights, the military scaled back its repressive activity, and the paramilitaries were brought more or less under control. The left began to speak out without violent reprisals, and new political parties started to come out into the open. By 1994, the formerly insurrectional FMLN, the object of brutal repression throughout the 1980s, felt secure enough to participate in the electoral process, and it won a substantial portion of the vote. None of this would have been possible ten years earlier, and a scoring of democratic practice should reflect this improvement.

These biases in Freedom House scores are systematic rather than random. If the flaws were simply the result of random disagreements on particular cases, the differences would have less substantive impact. Freedom House might fare better in some of its judgments than we do; this would offset cases where our judgments are better. Random errors might create some noise in the analysis without necessarily skewing the conclusions. But a systematic bias in measurement can lead to mistaken conclusions that are immune from correction through statistical means. Consequently, one must exercise caution in using Freedom House scores, especially to compare over time. Some conclusions based on Freedom House scores are misleading because of its systematic biases, and the reliability and validity of its scores are subject to question because of the lack of explicit coding rules.

As a result of these methodological differences and of some very questionable Freedom House codings in the 1970s, there are some significant differences between our measure and the Freedom House scores. For the 1972–2004 period, of 660 cases (20 countries \times 33 years), 102 Freedom House scores (15.5%) diverged from our assessments.¹⁸ Most of these divergences (54) resulted from cases we coded as authoritarian but that had inverted Freedom House scores of 7 or more (e.g. Brazil 1978–84, Dominican Republic 1974–7, El Salvador 1972–7, Guatemala 1972–8, Honduras 1980–1, Mexico 1973–5, 1979–84).

5.4.3. Polity IV

The Polity IV data-set provides a second continuous measure of democracy (Gurr, Jagers, and Moore 1991; Jagers and Gurr 1995). The 2005 release covered 187 countries for the period 1800–2003 (Marshall, Jagers, and Gurr 2005). For Latin America, Polity IV appears to have fewer systematic problems than Freedom House. Polity IV provides explicit coding and aggregation rules, although they are abstruse and difficult to follow (Marshall and Jagers 2002).

Following a procedural conception, Keith Jagers and Ted Gurr (1995: 471) argue that democracy has three defining features: (a) ‘the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative political policies and leaders. This is accomplished through the establishment of regular and meaningful competition among individuals

¹⁸ A divergence occurred if a regime we coded as a democracy had a combined inverted Freedom House score of 8 or less; if a regime we coded as a semidemocracy had a combined Freedom House of more than 9 or less than 7; or if a regime we coded as authoritarian had a Freedom House score of 7 or more. The intentional overlap of the democratic and semidemocratic categories makes this a lenient test for divergence.

and organized groups, an inclusive degree of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, and a level of political liberties sufficient to ensure the integrity of democracy participation, procedures, and institutions... (b) the existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of executive power... and (c)... the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens.' The first of these dimensions in fact aggregates three issues that are better treated as discrete (elections to determine who governs, inclusiveness, and the protection of political liberties). The third aspect (political liberties) of this first dimension overlaps substantially with their third dimension (civil liberties).

Gurr and his collaborators created eight ordinal scales with thirty-five categories in order to typify patterns of participation, constraints on executive power, the recruitment of the chief executive, and the complexity of power structures in different societies (Gurr et al. 1990; Jagers and Gurr 1996). Noting that some categories reflected traits of a democratic polity while others reflected autocracy, they selected twenty-one categories that correspond to five dimensions, weighed them, and integrated them in two scales (*institutionalized democracy* and *institutionalized autocracy*) ranging from 0 to 10.

The democracy scale assumes a 'zero point' (it is a ratio scale) and is continuous. It reflects the degree of competitiveness in political participation and in the selection of the chief executive, the openness of the executive recruitment process, and the political and constitutional constraints on the executive. The autocracy index reflects the extent to which participation is suppressed or regulated, the degree of competitiveness or restrictions in the executive recruitment process, and the absence of checks and balances to executive powers. Following Jagers and Gurr (1996), we subtracted the autocracy score from the democracy score, building an interval scale of democracy that ranges between -10 and 10.

Despite its merits, the Polity scale has some disadvantages. First, the relationship between their definition of democracy and their operationalization is muddled. Jagers and Gurr (1995: 471-2) initially discuss the three components or dimensions of democracy noted earlier, but when they construct their indicators, they have five broad categories that do not correspond to the three dimensions: competitiveness of political participation, regulation of political participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the chief executive. They do not present a detailed justification for selecting these five categories, which omit some of the dimensions included in their discussion of democracy. In particular, their operationalization omits the protection of civil and political liberties and the inclusiveness of political participation, both of which are fundamental to most definitions of democracy, including their own. Because they fail to include the

inclusiveness of citizenship in their measure of democracy, they neglect one of the most important features of democratization over a wide historical sweep—the huge expansion of citizenship.

Second, compared with several measures of democracy, especially to Przeworski et al. (2000), their coding and operationalization rules are cumbersome and are not sufficiently clear. Some of their dimensions operate at a high level of abstraction. It is hard to infer violations of human rights or the presence of reserved domains from broader concepts such as ‘regulation of participation’ or ‘constraints on the chief executive’. Third, some categories shaping the Polity coding are of little relevance for studying modern politics. For example, one dimension reflects whether the chief executive is ‘determined by hereditary succession’ (Gurr et al. 1990: 81–2). Fourth, although the initial coding is based on rich, ordinal categories, the final measure is a continuous index for which values have no substantive meaning.

Finally, the authors do not provide a rationale for their aggregation rules, which weight some of their dimensions inordinately while neglecting others completely. Kristian Gleditsch and Michael Ward (1997) noted that just two dimensions (constraints on the chief executive and, to a lesser extent, competitiveness of executive recruitment) account for most of the variance in the democracy and the autocracy scales. The dimensions related to participation have little leverage on the Polity measure: ‘The extent and character of popular participation in selection of leaders is either totally absent or relatively unimportant in determining the degree of democracy’ (Gleditsch and Ward 1997: 376). This creates a problem of validity since democracy includes some elements (protection of human rights and civil liberties and the breadth of enfranchisement) that Polity does not measure.

As is the case with Freedom House scores, disagreements between our trichotomous classification and the Polity measure emerge mainly from cases that Polity codes as democratic but we believe should be coded as semidemocratic or authoritarian. Of the 321 Polity IV cases ranging between –10 and –6, 98 percent (316) were classified as authoritarian regimes in our scale. In contrast to this near unanimity about the authoritarian cases, there is substantially more disagreement about the democracies. Polity scores between 6 and 10 (448 cases) we mostly coded as democracies (74%), but we coded more than one quarter of these cases as semidemocracies (24%) or authoritarian regimes (2%). In sum, though Polity does not provide a subminimal definition, as Przeworski et al. do, and appears to have fewer systematic problems than Freedom House in coding the Latin American cases, their methodology is still open to question, and their data are weakened by problems of validity.

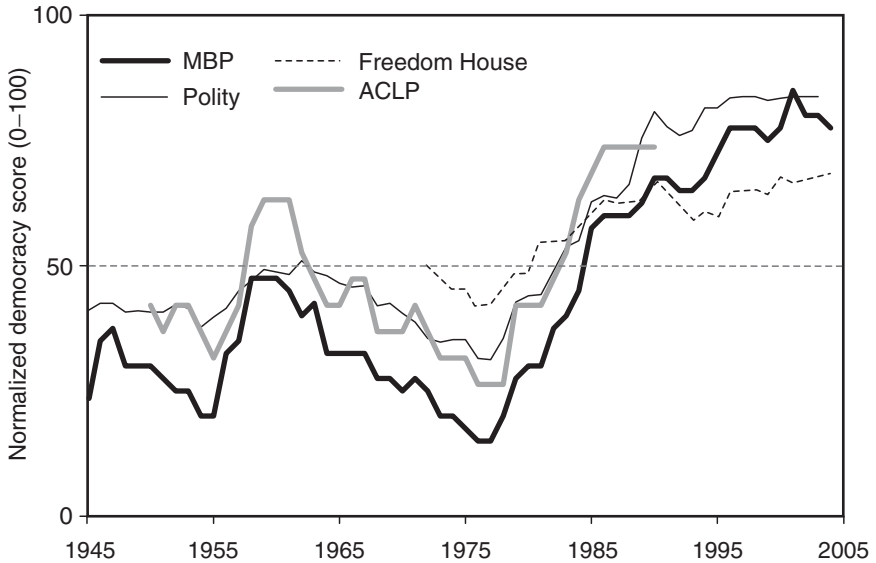


Figure 5.1. The evolution of democracy in Latin America, 1945–2004

Note: The graph shows the annual mean scores for the region for the four measures of democracy under discussion. MBP = Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán; ACLP = Alvarez–Cheibub–Limongi–Przeworski. For comparability, the values were normalized, so that all the scores run from 0 to 1, and where necessary inverted, so that higher scores always denote greater democracy.

5.4.4. Alternative Views of the Evolution of Democracy

The substantive implications of methodological differences can further be seen by the way in which each data-set portrays the evolution of democracy in Latin America. Figure 5.1 graphs the annual mean scores for the region for the four measures of democracy under discussion. For comparability, we normalized the values so all the scores run from 0 to 1, and inverted where necessary so that higher scores denote greater democracy. All four measures show a dramatic process of democratization in the region between 1978 and 1989. Despite this convergence, the four measures produce different perceptions about the process of democratization in Latin America, with Freedom House being the outlier.

Our measure registers a lower level of democracy than the others for the pre-1978 period, and it suggests a sharper contrast between the more democratic 1990s and the authoritarian past than the other measures. Both our measure and Freedom House scores show the region's worst years to be 1976–7. From then until 1990, both measures show a marked improvement in levels

of democracy. But Freedom House begins with a higher estimation of the level of democracy in the region than the other measures and ends with a lower one, so the slope of the line is flatter than it should be. As a result of tightened coding standards over time, the Freedom House mean line gradually approaches our evaluation (and the other two), crossing our line in 1989 and ending below all the other estimates by the mid-nineties. In short, Freedom House scores suggest a less dramatic improvement in democracy than the others.

The different data-sets suggest different conclusions about the evolution of democracy. Our measure shows levels of democracy improving in the 1990s and declining slightly only in the early 2000s. In contrast, according to Freedom House, levels of democracy peaked in 1990. By Freedom House's measure, region-wide levels of democracy were slightly worse in 1991–6 than in 1985–9. In fact, however, some conclusions that derive from Freedom House scores, and that have been used to provide empirical support for arguments about a decline in Latin American democracy in the 1990s (Diamond 1996, 1999: 24–34), lack a solid basis.

In the second half of the 1980s, Central America was still extricating itself from civil wars. Guatemala in 1985 was not a democracy by any measure, though things improved in 1986. El Salvador was still bogged down in a horrific civil war with massive human rights violations, and Panama was ruled by Noriega. South America also showed pockets of authoritarianism in the 1980s that were gone after 1990. Chile was governed by Pinochet, Brazil was under military rule until 1985, and Paraguay had a dictatorship until 1989. Finally, Mexico was more firmly in the grip of one-party rule in the 1980s than in the 1990s. The only countries where the outlook for democracy was worse in the 1990s were Peru after Fujimori's 1992 *autogolpe*; Colombia, where paramilitary and guerrilla violence increasingly constrained democratic practice beginning in the 1980s; and Venezuela.

In a similar vein, our data, along with Przeworski et al.'s, strongly register a brief period of democratization in the late 1950s and early 1960. In contrast, the Polity index misses this earlier 'mini-wave' of democratization. Thus, despite the high correlations among the four measures of democracy, the choices of regime classification have important implications for the substantive understanding of politics.

5.4.5. Other Continuous Measures

The Polity and Freedom House indicators are not the only interval measures of democracy available, but they have advantages in terms of historical

coverage. Some thoughtful continuous measures of democracy exist, but they are available for only a few years. Kenneth Bollen (1980), Kenneth Bollen and Pamela Paxton (2000), Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke (1990; Coppedge 2005), and Axel Hadenius (1992: 36–71) constructed valuable multidimensional indicators of democracy. But their indicators require substantial qualitative information that is costly to collect on an annual basis for a long time span and large number of countries. Not coincidentally, they restricted their measure to a single year (1988 for Hadenius), two time-points (1985 and 2000 for Coppedge and Reinicke) or three time-points (1960, 1965, and 1980 for Bollen). In theory, these interval measures could be extended to cover longer time periods, but the cost of doing so would be enormous, especially for earlier decades.

Some continuous measures that use less burdensome information present insurmountable problems of validity. Tatu Vanhanen (1990, 2000) measured democracy using two dimensions of elections: competition and electoral turnout. His measures involve objective quantitative information that is available for a long historical period, but they are conceptually flawed. He measured competition by subtracting the largest parties' share of the vote from 100 and participation by taking the percentage of the total population that voted. He then multiplied these two indicators to derive an index of democracy.

Although this index correlates moderately well with other measures (Pearson's r is 0.76 for our index, 0.72 for Polity, and 0.75 for Freedom House), the measure of competition is flawed because it essentially measures party-system fragmentation. The key issue for democracy is that elections are free and fair; it is not what share of the vote the largest party wins. Contrary to what the index suggests, a system in which the largest party wins 50 percent is not necessarily less democratic than one in which the largest wins 35 percent, and a system in which the largest party wins 25 percent is not necessarily twice as democratic as one in which it wins 50 percent. The measure of participation—voter turnout—is also flawed. Voter turnout depends on the age structure of the society; it discriminates against countries with youthful populations in which a large share of the population has not yet reached voting age. Higher rates of electoral participation may reflect compulsory voting laws rather than a more participatory environment. For democracy, the crucial point is that legal barriers, civil rights, and political conditions *allow* the adult population to participate; a lower turnout does not necessarily imply less democracy. Equally important, Vanhanen's measure fails to incorporate any assessment of civil liberties and political rights.

5.4.6. Recent Measures of Democracy in Latin America

Perhaps as a result of growing dissatisfaction with the Polity and Freedom House measures of democracy, in the past few years three new works have provided new regime codings for Latin America. All three are somewhat similar to ours.

Peter Smith (2005: 347–53) presents a measure of ‘electoral democracy’ that has much in common with the one produced by Przeworski et al. (2000) in its focus on elections, but it is more akin to ours in establishing more qualitative gradations than the authoritarian/democratic dichotomy Przeworski et al. employ. It covers all Latin American countries (except Cuba) since 1900, and places countries into one of four categories: democratic ‘when national leaders acquired or held office as a result of free and fair elections’; ‘semi-democratic, under leaders who came to power through elections that were free but not fair’; ‘oligarchic, when electoral competition was essentially fair but not free’; and nondemocratic, which includes all other regimes, including military coups (Smith 2005: 23).¹⁹ Smith’s categories focus on elections and do not include any consideration of civil liberties except insofar as they produce unfair elections. The Spearman’s ρ between our measure and Smith’s is 0.89 ($p < .01$), slightly higher than the one between Przeworski et al.’s and ours (0.84).

Still, in 17 percent of the cases we both classify, there is a discrepancy between the two classifications. The differences derive principally from Smith’s focus on elections: it appears that any election earns a country at least a semidemocratic classification, whereas we find major violations of the electoral requirement in some countries that held elections. The bulk of the discrepancies are regime-years Smith codes as democracies but we consider semidemocratic because of repression and civil liberties violations. Smith (2005: 347) seems conscious of this distinction, saying his is a classification of *electoral* regimes, and speaking usually of *electoral* democracy.

In the context of a UNDP project to evaluate democracy in Latin America, Munck produced a coding of electoral democracy that is similar to ours conceptually (UNDP 2005: 21–33 of statistical compendium). It aggregates measures of voting rights, clean elections, free elections, and whether elections determine the occupancy of all important national offices. The product of the scores for these four elements is normalized, producing a relatively continuous Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) that ranges from

¹⁹ For purposes of comparison, we collapse Smith’s oligarchy and semidemocracy categories since they both would fall in our semidemocracy category, for a partial violation of the franchise requirement in the first case, and any one of the other three requirements in the latter case.

0 (no democracy) to 1 (full democracy). Intermediate values denote greater or lesser degrees of democraticness. The series includes values for 1960, 1977, 1985, and 1990–2002. The inclusion of more continuous values for the underlying components allows for some fine-grained differentiations that our measure obscures. Notably, for example, Chile since the 1990 transition earns a 0.75, reflecting the presence of significant unelected national-level offices.

This index tracks ours closely. If we convert ours to run from 0 (authoritarian) to 0.5 (semidemocracy) to 1 (democracy), only 18 percent of the codings differ by more than 0.25.²⁰ Many of these differences reflect the use of different cutoff points. We used a snapshot of the country as of the end of the year regardless of what else happened that year, while Munck used different rules depending on whether an event occurred early or late in the year, or whether more than one regime change took place in a single country-year. Most of the differences seem attributable to our assignment of a greater weight to civil rights as an independent element. Nearly half of the differences (twenty-five out of fifty-two) come from Central American countries for regime-years we rated as semidemocratic due to continuing civil rights violations, whereas the UNDP scoring is closer to full democracy. Munck's index allows for a more fine-grained measure than ours, but it covers a much shorter time period.

Finally, Bowman, Lehoucq, and Mahoney (2005) provide a careful coding of Central America for the twentieth century. Conceptually, their measure is very similar to ours. They used the same four disaggregated dimensions of democracy and one new one (national sovereignty) to produce the same trichotomous classification. Empirically, they set a high standard for regime classifications. Their work emphasizes the need to use historical sources carefully and to document historiographic decisions as part of the replication procedure. It also shows that regime classifications are potentially dynamic; as debates about regime classification unfold, our assessment of political regimes may need to be adjusted.

5.5. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we present an alternative categorization of political regimes in Latin America since 1945. Our attempt to construct a new classification pushed us to rethink five broader issues regarding regime classification. First,

²⁰ We use 0.25 as the cutoff point because that is the point at which the UNDP scoring comes closer to another of our categories than to the one we assigned.

regime classification should rest on sound concepts and definitions. A classification of the extent to which regimes are democratic should be based on a procedural, minimalist but not subminimal definition of democracy. Our definition falls squarely within the contemporary debate, yet it is more stringent than many, leading to different perceptions about how democratic Latin America was before 1978. In addition, the measurement of democracy should rest on the same dimensions as those included in the definition, contrary to what Jagers and Gurr (1995) do. Among the three previous measures of democracy that we discussed at length, only Przeworski et al. (2000) hinge their measure on their definition.

Second, regime classification should be based on explicit and sensible coding and aggregation rules (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Explicit rules enable other scholars to more easily evaluate classifications and also promote evenness of judgments. Przeworski et al. (2000) do a particularly good job of laying out their coding rules; conversely, Freedom House fails to indicate how it assesses cases.

Third, although social science should when possible rely on objective and clearly measurable concepts, a hard and fast distinction between ‘observables’ and subjective judgments is not useful for classifying political regimes. Regime classification must rest on empirically observable phenomena, but judgments about whether a violation of a particular dimension of democracy warrants classifying a certain regime as less than democratic are inevitably partly subjective. All four dimensions of our measure of regimes and democracy require an evaluation of observable phenomena, though the civil rights component, for example, is often harder to assess than the presence of competitive elections. Subjective judgments are unavoidable if we are to retain a conceptually valid definition of democracy. We rely on informed judgment and knowledge of the cases to make the coding decisions reliable while retaining essential aspects of the definition of democracy to make them valid.

Fourth, although continuous measures of democracy offer advantages, we agree with Przeworski et al. (2000) and Sartori (1987a, 1991) that categorical classifications also serve useful purposes. The traditional discourse on political regimes is categorical. Our trichotomous measure efficiently captures conceptual distinctions that are important to comparative social scientists. In addition, continuous measures usually fail to convey the rich theoretical implications that more conceptually grounded categories do. They also demand a level of information that may not be available or may be very costly to develop.

Fifth, we advocate a trichotomy rather than a dichotomy for classifying regimes. Dichotomous measures fail to capture intermediate regime types, obscuring variation that is essential for studying many political regimes in

what Samuel Huntington (1991) called the ‘third wave of democratization’. Our trichotomous ordinal scale acknowledges the trade-off between using meaningful regime labels and fine measurement. The idea of semidemocracy allows us to conceptualize historical regimes that do not fit neatly in a dichotomous classification, such the first Perón administration in Argentina (1946–51), the MNR (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement) government in Bolivia after the 1952 revolution (in particular for 1956–64), the *Frente Nacional* period in Colombia (1958–74), and the Arévalo and Arbenz administrations in Guatemala (1945–54). It also describes the many incomplete processes of democratization during the third wave—for example, Mexico until the July 2000 presidential election, Nicaragua, and Paraguay—and cases of democratic erosion in the 1990s (e.g. Colombia).

Our trichotomous measure is based on a more stringent definition of democracy than Schumpeter’s and Przeworski et al.’s, and yet is designed to minimize information costs and ensure reliability. It attempts to strike a balance between the inadequate differentiation of dichotomous measures and the huge information demands of continuous measures. It is based on enough knowledge of the twenty countries we cover to make reasoned judgments about the less easily observable dimensions of the regimes in question. Its combination of a thick conceptual grounding and a parsimonious coding demand is well suited for a medium-sized N study in which a research team can make informed judgments about cases.

We hope that our regime classification contributes to comparative scholarship on democracy and on Latin America. Much of the comparative research into the causes and consequences of democracy rests on regime classifications. If, as we argue, the main existing classifications are flawed due to political biases, subminimal definitions, invalid measures, or other sources of systematic bias, conclusions about political regimes may be affected.

Despite the attractiveness of continuous measures of democracy, the available continuous measures for Latin America pose validity and reliability problems. In fact, it was dissatisfaction with the existing measures that provide annual ratings, a recognition of the large advantages of annual classifications, and the enormous difficulty of reproducing the good interval measures (Bollen 1980, 1993; Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Hadenius 1992) for every year from 1945 to 2004 that prompted our decision to build our own classification. Although our trichotomous classification should not supersede efforts to construct more fine-grained measures, we are confident that it has fewer serious coding errors than the two widely used interval scales (Freedom House and Polity) that are available for a long historical period.

APPENDIX

Table 5.3. Classification of Latin American political regimes, 1945–2004 (aggregate and disaggregate scores)

Country	From	To*	Regime	Elections for legislature and executive	Franchise	Civil liberties	Civilian control
Argentina	1945	1945	A	MV	—	—	—
	1946	1950	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1951	1954	A	PV	NV	MV	NV
	1955	1957	A	MV	—	—	—
	1958	1961	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1962	1962	A	PV	NV	MV	MV
	1963	1965	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1966	1972	A	MV	—	—	—
	1973	1974	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1975	1975	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1976	1982	A	MV	—	—	—
	1983	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Bolivia	1945	1946	A	MV	—	—	—
	1947	1950	A	PV	PV	MV	NV
	1951	1955	A	MV	—	—	—
	1956	1963	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1964	1965	A	MV	—	—	—
	1966	1968	A	PV	PV	MV	NV
	1969	1978	A	MV	—	—	—
	1979	1979	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1980	1981	A	MV	—	—	—
	1982	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1945	A	MV	—	—	—
	1946	1953	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Brazil	1954	1955	SD	NV	NV	NV	PV
	1956	1963	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1964	1984	A	MV	—	—	—
	1985	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1972	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Chile	1973	1989	A	MV	—	—	—
	1990	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1945	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
Colombia	1946	1948	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1949	1957	A	MV	—	—	—
	1958	1962	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1963	1973	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1974	1989	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1990	2004	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV

(cont.)

Table 5.3. *Continued*

Country	From	To*	Regime	Elections for legislature and executive	Franchise	Civil liberties	Civilian control
Costa Rica	1945	1947	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1948	1948	A	MV	NV	PV	NV
	1949	1950	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1951	1957	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1958	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Cuba	1945	1951	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1952	2004	A	MV	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	1945	1961	A	MV	—	—	—
	1962	1962	A	NV	NV	PV	MV
	1963	1965	A	MV	—	—	—
	1966	1973	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1974	1977	A	MV	NV	NV	NV
Ecuador	1978	1993	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1994	1995	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1996	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1947	A	MV	—	—	—
	1948	1960	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1961	1962	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1963	1965	A	MV	—	—	—
	1966	1967	A	MV	NV	NV	NV
	1968	1969	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1970	1978	A	MV	—	—	—
	1979	1999	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	2000	2000	SD	NV	NV	NV	PV
	2001	2003	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	2004	2004	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
El Salvador	1945	1949	A	MV	—	—	—
	1950	1959	A	MV	NV	MV	PV
	1960	1966	A	MV	—	—	—
	1967	1971	A	PV	NV	MV	PV
	1972	1981	A	MV	—	—	—
	1982	1983	A	PV	NV	MV	PV
	1984	1993	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1994	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Guatemala	1945	1945	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1946	1949	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1950	1953	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1954	1965	A	MV	—	—	—
	1966	1969	A	PV	NV	MV	MV
	1970	1985	A	MV	—	—	—
	1986	1992	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1993	1993	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1994	1997	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV

Table 5.3. *Continued*

Country	From	To*	Regime	Elections for legislature and executive	Franchise	Civil liberties	Civilian control
Haiti	1998	1999	SD	NV	NV	NV	PV
	2000	2001	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	2002	2004	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1945	1994	A	MV	—	—	—
	1995	1997	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
Honduras	1998	1998	SD	PV	NV	NV	PV
	1999	2004	A	MV	—	—	—
	1945	1956	A	MV	—	—	—
	1957	1962	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1963	1970	A	MV	—	—	—
Mexico	1971	1971	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1972	1981	A	MV	—	—	—
	1982	1985	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1986	1989	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1990	1990	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV
	1991	1998	SD	NV	NV	NV	PV
	1999	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1987	A	MV	—	—	—
	1988	1993	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1994	1999	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
Nicaragua	2000	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1983	A	MV	—	—	—
	1984	1989	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
Panama	1990	1995	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1996	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1947	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1948	1955	A	MV	—	—	—
	1956	1963	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Paraguay	1964	1967	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1968	1989	A	MV	—	—	—
	1990	1990	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1991	1993	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1994	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1945	1988	A	MV	—	—	—
	1989	1992	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1993	1995	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
	1996	1997	SD	PV	NV	PV	NV
	1998	1999	SD	PV	NV	PV	PV
Peru	2000	2004	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1945	1947	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1948	1955	A	MV	—	—	—
	1956	1961	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1962	1962	A	MV	—	—	—

(cont.)

Table 5.3. *Continued*

Country	From	To*	Regime	Elections for legislature and executive	Franchise	Civil liberties	Civilian control
	1963	1967	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1968	1979	A	MV	—	—	—
	1980	1982	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1983	1984	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1985	1987	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1988	1991	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	1992	1994	A	MV	—	—	—
	1995	1999	SD	NV	NV	PV	NV
	2000	2000	A	MV	—	—	—
	2001	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Uruguay	1945	1972	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1973	1984	A	MV	—	—	—
	1985	2004	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
Venezuela	1945	1945	A	MV	—	—	—
	1946	1946	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	1947	1947	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1948	1957	A	MV	—	—	—
	1958	1998	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	1999	1999	SD	PV	NV	NV	NV
	2000	2001	D	NV	NV	NV	NV
	2002	2004	SD	NV	NV	PV	PV

Note: D = Democracy; SD = Semidemocracy; A = Authoritarian = Nondemocracy; NV = No violation; PV = Partial violation; MV = Major violation; — = Not coded. In light of our aggregation rule and so as to reduce the costs of gathering information, when there was a major violation of the dimension Elections for the Legislature and the Executive, we did not code regimes on the other attributes.

* The year of a regime transition is coded as belonging to the new regime. For example, although the Argentine military dictatorship lasted from 1976 to 1983, we coded 1983 as democratic because the new regime was inaugurated in December of that year. This data-set is available online at <http://www.pitt.edu/~asp27/>

Part III

Causal Theorizing and Testing

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Theory Building and Hypothesis Testing: Large-N Versus Small-N Research on Democratization

Michael Coppedge

Two general approaches have been commonly used in the study of comparative politics: a ‘thick’ approach based on small-N comparisons, including case studies, and a ‘thin’ approach based on large-N comparisons. In Chapter 4, I introduced this distinction between thick and thin approaches and, focusing on issues of conceptualization and measurement, I identified some trade-offs associated with these approaches. Here I extend the discussion by addressing issues of theory and testing. As I will seek to show, both approaches make significant contributions. Moreover, even though their primary contributions focus on different aspects of the overall research process—small-N comparisons are invaluable with regard to theory generation and large-N comparisons are indispensable for hypothesis testing—I also argue that small-N researchers have a role to play, alongside large-N researchers, in the testing of theories.

The analysis draws on examples from the literature on regime change and democratization. Regime change is one of the oldest topics in political science. Even Aristotle, in the sixth century BC, analyzed transitions among democracy, aristocracy, and tyranny. And, because democratization has been studied for such a long time and by so many scholars, it has been subjected to every approach or methodology imaginable. For the small-N examples, I will rely heavily on Latin American research because it is most familiar to me. Fortunately, this area has launched several of the most engaging themes into the broader comparative democratization debate. Thus, this literature on regimes, democratization and Latin America provides a suitable point of reference for the analysis of thick and thin approaches to comparative politics.

6.1. THEORY GENERATION: COMPLEXITY AND SMALL-N COMPARISONS

Every theoretical model in the social sciences has five parameters. First, every model pertains to a certain level of analysis—individual, group, national, world-systemic, or some intermediate gradation between these. Second, it has one or more dependent variables. Third, it has one or more explanatory variables. Fourth, it applies to a certain relevant universe of cases. And fifth, it applies to events or processes that take place during a certain period of time. We can refer to the definitions of each of these five parameters as possessing zero-order complexity because no relationships among parameters are involved. In the study of democratization, however, even at the zero order there is great leeway for defining what democracy is, how to measure it and any explanatory factors, which sample of countries is relevant for testing any given set of explanations, and the period of time to which such explanations apply. And this is just at the national level of analysis; with smaller or larger units of analysis, one would use completely different variables, cases, and time frames.

First-order complexity involves any causal relationship between any of these parameters and itself. These relationships include:

1. Causation bridging levels of analysis or (dis)aggregation;
2. Causal relationships among dependent variables, or endogeneity;
3. Interactions among independent variables;
4. Impacts of one time period on another, called lagged effects or temporal autocorrelation; and
5. The impact of one case on another, called diffusion or spatial autocorrelation.

Second-order complexity involves causal relationships between two *different* parameters. All hypotheses about an independent variable causing democracy (or democracy causing something else) are of this order; but so are various complications that could be introduced into a model. If the meaning of democracy varies over time or the best way to operationalize an independent variable depends on the world region, then one is dealing with this degree of complexity. Third-order complexity comes into play when there are plausible hypotheses relating *three* parameters. Most common among these are hypotheses that the relationship between the dependent variables and an independent variable is partly a function of time or place. A good example is the hypothesis that the impact of economic development on democratization depends on a country's world-system position (O'Donnell 1973; Bollen 1983;

Hadenius 1992; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994). With fourth-order complexity, a causal relationship could be a function of both time *and* place (or level of analysis). This may sound far-fetched, but in small-N comparison such relationships are fairly commonly asserted—for example, the notion that increasing wealth has not favored democracy in the Arab oil-producing states since World War II (Karl 1997); or the claim that the United States has become more sincerely interested in promoting democracy in the Caribbean Basin since the end of the Cold War (Huntington 1991).

Orders of complexity can increase only so far. Eventually, one arrives at the extremely inelegant ‘saturated’ model that explains each outcome perfectly by providing different and unique explanations for each case. Laypersons who have not been socialized into social science know that the saturated model is the truth: every country *is* unique, history never repeats itself *exactly*, and every event is the product of a long and densely tangled chain of causation stretching back to the beginning of time. We political scientists know on some level that a true and complete explanation for the things that fascinate us would be impossibly complex. But we willfully ignore this disturbing fact and persist in our research. We are a community of eccentrics who share the delusion that politics is simpler than it appears. This is why our relatives roll their eyes when we get excited about our theories. Although I would be as delighted as any other political scientist to discover simple, elegant, and powerful explanations, I think the common sense of the layperson is correct: we must presume that politics is extremely complex, and the burden of proof rests on those who claim that it is not. The ideal approach to theory generation would therefore reflect the complexity of the world.

When assessed according to this key criterion, the strength of theorizing based on small-N comparisons is readily apparent. Indeed, if a small-N approach to theorizing is compared to a suitable alternative such as rational choice theorizing—it bears clarifying that a large-N approach is not primarily a method for *generating* theory but instead a method for *testing* theory—small-N comparisons are clearly superior in generating hypotheses that faithfully reflect the complexity of the real world. In the case-based Latin American literature, the conventional wisdom presumes that each wave of democratization is different, that each country has derived different lessons from its distinct political and economic history, that corporate actors vary greatly in power and tactics from country to country, and that both individual politicians and international actors can have a decisive impact on the outcome. This is the stuff of thick theory, and comparative politics as a whole benefits when a regional specialization generates such rich possibilities.

The superiority is especially great in bridging levels of analysis, because rational-choice theory is anchored at the individual level. That is, rational choice theorizing aspires to make predictions about larger groups, but only within very restrictive assumptions about the rules of the game and the preferences of the players. And, as a result, it is difficult to extrapolate from these small settings to macrophenomena like regime change. Indeed, Barbara Geddes (1997) has called on scholars to stop trying to theorize about ‘big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons’, such as democratization, for the time being. In contrast, region-specific, small-N comparison has powerfully influenced the democratization research agenda for decades.

Examples abound. Juan Linz’s theorizing (1978) about the breakdown of democratic regimes described a detailed sequence of events—crisis, growing belief in the ineffectiveness of the democratic regime, overpromising by semi-loyal leaders, polarization of public opinion, irresponsible behavior by democratic elites, culminating in either breakdown or reequilibration. He saw each step as necessary but not sufficient for the next, and described various options available to elites at each stage, as well as structural and historical conditions that made certain options more or less likely. This was a theory that assumed endogeneity, aggregation across levels of analysis, and conditional interactions among causal factors. In turn, Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) bridged levels of analysis when they theorized about democratization at the national level as the outcome of strategic maneuvering among elites at the group or individual level; they contemplated endogeneity or path dependence when they asserted that political liberalization was a prerequisite for regime transition.

Ruth Collier and David Collier’s *Shaping the Political Arena* (1991) identified four similar processes or periods—reform, incorporation, aftermath, and heritage—in eight cases but allowed them to start and end at different times in each country. It was particularly exacting in describing the nature of oligarchic states, organized labor, and political parties and in specifying how they interacted with one another, and with many other aspects of their political contexts in the twentieth century, to affect the course of democratization. Finally, case studies of democratization, such as those collected in the Larry Diamond et al. (1999) project, and dozens of country monographs, weave together social, economic, cultural, institutional, and often transnational causes into coherent, case-specific narratives. In sum, the hypotheses generated by this small-N, case-based literature constitute significant contributions by reflecting high-order, complex theorizing.

Other desiderata of theory include (a) universal scope; (b) clear, simple, and explicit assumptions; and (c) the potential to generate testable hypotheses derived from theory. And when assessed by these criteria, rational choice has

a clear advantage over small-N comparisons with regard to scope. That is, rational-choice theory aspires to universal scope by refraining from limiting its applicability to certain times and places: what is true for one committee is assumed to be true for all committees as long as the assumptions of the model are met. In contrast, small-N comparisons typically generate theory about certain times and places rather than the universe. Indeed, small-N assumptions may be so specific that they are difficult to apply to other cases without wrestling with difficult issues of cross-national comparability.

But when the other criteria are considered, the small-N methods do quite well. Rational-choice theory makes its assumptions simple and explicit, which makes it easy for other scholars to follow the logic of the theory and derive the consequences of modifying some assumptions. And due to its deductive method, it lends itself to the generation of lots of hypotheses, especially about eventual, stable patterns of collective behavior. Yet, in a different way, small-N comparisons deliver similar benefits. Because the assumptions in small-N theorizing are well tailored to the cases at hand, they can be exceptionally clear and explicit. Moreover, the thick concepts used in such theorizing makes it possible to spin off many hypotheses about the causes and consequences of specific events.

In conclusion, the contributions of small-N comparisons, and to a lesser extent of rational choice, to the generation of theory should be recognized. In contrast, large-N comparisons are largely irrelevant to this task. Yet when it comes to theory, this is only one side of the equation. Indeed, it is one thing to develop a theory and quite another to develop a theory that is true. Whether the theory comes from deductive reasoning or extrapolating from inductive learning, it amounts to little if it does not conform to the evidence. This is what testing is about and this is where large-N comparisons become relevant again.

6.2. HYPOTHESIS TESTING: ASSESSING AND GENERALIZING ABOUT COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS

If one accepts that the job of social scientists is to disconfirm all plausible alternative hypotheses, which are myriad, then one must also accept that all approaches yield only a partial and conditional glimpse of the truth. Nevertheless, all approaches have some value because, as it is often said, the truth lies at the confluence of independent streams of evidence. Any method that helps us identify some of the many possible plausible hypotheses is useful, as is any method that combines theory and evidence to help us judge how plausible these hypotheses are. But this perspective also suggests a practical and realistic

standard for evaluating the utility of competing methodologies. For methods that are primarily concerned with empirical assessments, it is not enough for a method to document isolated empirical associations or regularities; and it is asking too much to expect incontrovertible proof of anything. The question that should be asked is, rather, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach in helping us render certain kinds of alternative hypotheses more plausible or less?

6.2.1. Strengths and Limitations of Small-N Comparisons

On first thought, one might say that complex hypotheses cannot be tested using small-N methods because of the ‘many variables, small-N’ dilemma. The more complex the hypothesis, the more variables are involved; therefore a case study or paired comparison seems to provide too few degrees of freedom to mount a respectable test. This cynicism is not fair, however, because in a case study or small-N comparison the units of analysis are not necessarily whole countries. Hypotheses about democratization do not have to be tested by examining associations between structural causes and macro-outcomes. In Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba’s terminology (1994: 24), we increase confidence in our tests by maximizing the number of observable implications of the hypothesis: we brainstorm about things that must be true if our hypothesis is true, and systematically confirm or disconfirm them.

The rich variety of information available to comparativists with an area specialization makes this strategy ideal for them. In fact, it is what these scholars do best. For example, a scholar who suspects that Salvador Allende was overthrown in large part because he was a socialist can gather evidence to show that Allende claimed to be a socialist, that he proposed socialist policies, that these policies became law, that these laws adversely affected the economic interests of certain powerful actors, that some of these actors moved into opposition immediately after certain quintessentially socialist policies were announced or enacted, that Allende’s rhetoric disturbed other actors, that these actors issued explicit public and private complaints about the socialist government and its policies, that representatives of some of these actors conspired together to overthrow the government, that actors who shared the president’s socialist orientation did not participate in the conspiracy, that the opponents publicly and privately cheered the defeat of socialism after the overthrow, and so on. Much of this evidence could also disconfirm alternative hypotheses, such as the idea that Allende was overthrown because of US pressure despite strong domestic support. If it turns out that all of these observable implications are true, then the scholar could be quite confident of the hypothesis. In fact,

she would be justified in remaining confident of the hypothesis even if a macrocomparison showed that most elected socialist governments have not been overthrown, because she has already gathered superior evidence that failed to disconfirm the hypothesis in this case.

The longitudinal case study is simply the best research design available for testing hypotheses about the causes of specific events. In addition to maximizing opportunities to disconfirm observable implications, it does the best job of documenting the sequence of events, which is crucial for establishing the direction of causal influence. Moreover, it is unsurpassed in providing quasi-experimental control, because conditions that do not change from time 1 to time 2 are held constant, and every case is always far more similar to itself at a different time than it is to any other case. A longitudinal case study is the ultimate 'most similar systems' design. The closer together the time periods are, the tighter the control. In a study of a single case that examines change from month to month, week to week, or day to day, almost everything is held constant and scholars can often have great confidence in inferring causation between the small number of conditions that do change around the same time. Of course, any method can be applied poorly or well, so this method is no guarantee of a solid result. But *competent* small-N comparativists have every reason to be skeptical of conclusions from macrocomparisons that are inconsistent with their more solid understanding of a case.

These comparisons within cases are the true strength of small-N methods. The benefit of doing comparisons across a small number of cases has been greatly exaggerated, because it is in such comparisons that the 'many variables, small-N' trap snaps shut with a vengeance. Small-N comparisons that are purely cross-national simply afford too little control to rule out the very large number of plausible alternative hypotheses, with the result that such studies end up being suggestive at best, or inconclusive at worst. Fortunately, scholars carrying out small-N comparisons, consciously or not, usually rely on within-case comparisons for their important evidence, and this is why they remain convincing.

This approach has two severe limitations, however. First, it is extremely difficult to use it to generalize to other cases. Every additional case requires a repetition of the same meticulous process-tracing and data collection. To complicate matters further, the researcher usually becomes aware of other conditions that were taken for granted in the first case and now must be examined systematically in it and all additional cases. Generalization therefore introduces new complexity and increases the data demands almost exponentially, making comparative case studies unwieldy.

The second limitation of the case study is that it does not provide the leverage necessary to test hypotheses of the third order of complexity and beyond.

Such hypotheses usually involve hypotheticals, for which a single case can supply little data (beyond interviews in which actors speculate about what they would have done under other conditions). For example, would the Chilean military have intervened if Allende had been elected in 1993 rather than 1970? If a different Socialist leader had been president? If he was in Thailand rather than Chile? If Chile had a parliamentary system? Such hypotheses cannot be tested without some variation in these added explanatory factors, variation that one case often cannot provide.

Harry Eckstein's advocacy (1975) of 'crucial case studies' sustained hope that some generalizations could be based on a single case. He argued that there are sometimes cases in which a hypothesis *must* be true if the theory is true; if the hypothesis is false in such a case, then it is generally false. But this claim would hold only in a simple monocausal world in which the impact of one factor did not depend on any other factor. Such a situation must be demonstrated, not assumed. In a world of complex contingent causality, we must presume that there are no absolutely crucial cases, only suggestive ones: cases that would be crucial if there were no unspecified preconditions or intervening variables. 'Crucial' cases may therefore be quite useful for wounding the general plausibility of a hypothesis, but they cannot deliver a death blow.

In turn, Douglas Dion's argument (1998) that small-N studies can be quite useful for identifying or ruling out necessary conditions is mathematically sound but probably not very practical. First, it does not help at all with sufficient conditions (or combinations of conditions), which we cannot afford to neglect. Second, it applies only when one already knows that the condition of interest probably is necessary and that any alternative explanations are probably not true. Given the complexity and diversity of the world, few conditions can be close to necessary, and the chances that *some* alternative explanation is true are very high. Therefore, such an approach is not likely to tell us anything we do not know already, and it is most likely that it will tell us nothing at all.

To sum up, though small-N comparisons have some strengths not only with regard to theory generation, as discussed in Section 6.1, but also theory testing, it has serious limitations when it comes to hypothesis testing. Indeed, given that focusing on 'few variables' would run against the theoretical inclinations of small-N researchers and amount to burying our heads in the sand, the only real solution to the 'many variables, small-N' problem is 'many variables, large N'. Thus, large-N comparisons, which provide the degrees of freedom necessary to handle many variables and complex relationships, provide a more suitable means for assessing, and generalizing about, complex relationships.

6.2.2. Promises and Challenges of Large-N Comparisons

Large-N comparisons need not be quantitative, as the qualitative Boolean analysis recommended by Charles Ragin (1987) has many of the same strengths. However, Boolean analysis forces one to dichotomize all the variables, which sacrifices useful information and introduces arbitrary placement of classification cutpoints that can influence conclusions (Elkins 2000). It also dispenses with probability and tests of statistical significance, which are very useful for ruling out weak hypotheses and essential for excluding the possibility that some findings are due to chance. Another weakness of Boolean analysis is that it greatly increases the risk of chance associations, which exacerbate its tendency to turn up many equally well-fitting explanations for any outcome and no good way to choose among them (see e.g. Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 1994).

Moreover, quantitative methods are available that can easily handle categorical or ordinal data alongside continuous variables, and complex interactions as well, so there would be little reason to prefer qualitative methods if quantitative data were available and sound. This is a conclusion with which Ragin should agree, as his principal argument against statistical approximation of Boolean analysis is that ‘most data-sets used by comparativists place serious constraints on statistical sophistication’ (Ragin 1987: 67). He is correct to point out that regression estimates might not be possible or meaningful if one were to specify all the permutations of interaction terms, as Boolean analysis does (Ragin 1987: 64–7). However, it is not clear that being able to obtain many rough answers, an unknown number of which are produced by chance, is an improvement over admitting that no answer is obtainable. Besides, social scientists should not be testing every possible interaction in the first place; they should only test those that seem plausible in the light of theory. ‘Testing’ them all without theoretical guidance is the definition of capitalizing on chance. Many large-N studies today have enough observations to handle dozens of variables and interactions with ease. The only truly satisfactory solution is to improve the quality and quantity of data across the board.

Of course, not everyone seeks general knowledge. This is partly a matter of taste. Sir Isaiah Berlin (1953) once suggested that people are either foxes, who know many small things, or hedgehogs, who know one big thing. I think a better analogy for my purposes would contrast whales and octopuses. Both are renowned for their intelligence, but they use their intelligence in different ways. Whales come to know great swaths of the earth in their tours of the globe; they lack limbs that would allow them to experience objects first-hand; and their eyesight is too poor to perceive fine detail. They acquire a surface

knowledge of general things. Octopuses, in contrast, dwell in one place and use their fine eyesight and eight infinitely flexible arms to gain an intimate knowledge of local, specific things. (To buttress the analogy, there is the additional, although not apropos, parallel that octopuses are well equipped to blend into their surroundings, while whales are as conspicuous as creatures can be. However, I ask readers not to overinterpret the octopus' tendency to spread clouds of ink when threatened.) I do not wish to suggest that scholars who emulate the octopus should emulate the whale instead, or vice versa. Rather, my point is that each kind of knowledge is limited in its own way and that the most complete kind of knowledge would result from pooling both kinds.

Limiting a sample to Latin America, for example, is not purely a question of taste; it also limits and biases what one can learn. Within-region comparison is often defended as a way of 'controlling' for factors that the countries of the region have in common, but this practice deserves a closer look. Such 'controls' would be effective if there were zero variation on these factors. But in many cases there is in reality quite significant variation on these factors within the region. Latin American countries, for example, were penetrated by colonial powers to different degrees, they were settled in different ways, their standards of living vary by a factor of ten, their social structures are quite distinct, many aspects of their political culture are unique, their relations with the United States and their neighbors are very different, they have evolved a great diversity of party systems, and there is a wide range in the strength of secondary associations and the rule of law. Bolivia and Guatemala should not be assumed to be comparable in each of these respects to Chile and Uruguay; yet this is exactly the assumption that the defenders of within-region comparisons make if they do not control directly for all of these differences. Therefore, limiting a sample to Latin America does not really control for these allegedly common factors very well.

Another problem is that there may not be enough variation in any of these factors to make controlling for them feasible in a regional sample. Although there is variation, it is often variation within a smaller range than what could be found in a global sample, and this may make it impossible to detect relationships. That is, in a truncated range variance is higher, which makes significance levels lower. Some important relationships with democracy are probably only observable over a global range. Indeed, as I have shown elsewhere (Coppedge 1997a: 190), though a relationship between socioeconomic modernization and democracy can definitely be perceived on a global scale, such a relationship would not necessarily hold up within the narrower range of variation found in Latin America or, for that matter, in Western Europe or Sub-Saharan Africa.

The inability to control adequately for certain variables makes it difficult to draw correct inferences. Donna Lee Van Cott (2000) turned up a fine example when she observed that party-system institutionalization is strikingly lower in countries with large indigenous populations than it is in most other Latin American countries. Statistically, institutionalization is negatively correlated with the size of the indigenous population; but it is also associated with other variables that correlate with indigenous population, such as income inequality, and which suggest a very different causal process. This creates a dilemma: one can either omit one variable and attribute all the influence to the other or include both and report that, due to the small sample and minimal variation in indigenous population and inequality over time, it is impossible to determine which matters or how much.¹ Yet an obvious cost is unavoidable: limiting the sample to a region makes it impossible to draw inferences outside the region. Any conclusions drawn from a Latin American sample implicitly carry the small print, 'This applies to Latin America. Relationships corresponding to other regions of the world are unknown.'

For both reasons, a cross-regional sample would always be preferable if other things—conceptualization, measurement, model specification—were equal. In practice, they rarely are equal: concepts, operationalizations, and theories are usually thinner in large-N studies. However, this thinness is a practical problem, not one inherent in the approach. The chief obstacle to large-N comparison is the scarcity of appropriate data: indicators of a great variety of thick concepts corresponding to large numbers of countries, at several levels of analysis, over a long period of time, sampled at frequent intervals. If such data were easily available, there would be no reason to avoid large-N, cross-regional comparisons.

The fact that little high-quality quantitative data are available for large samples is the main reason that the potential for large-N comparisons to explain democratization has not been realized more fully. For decades, large-scale testing of hypotheses about democratization lagged behind the sophistication of theories of democratization. Even very early theories of democratization—Alexis de Tocqueville's, for example—contemplated a multifaceted process of change. But it was not until the 1980s that scholars possessed the data required for multivariate, time-series analyses of democratization.

In the meantime, they did the best they could with the data that were available. There was quite a bit of exploration of thin versions of a variety of hypotheses. The central hypothesis in the 1960s was that democracy is a product of 'modernization', which was measured by a long, familiar, and

¹ Van Cott overcame this dilemma through within-case comparisons over time, but it remains a good example of the dilemmas encountered in within-region, cross-national comparisons.

occasionally lampooned set of indicators—per capita energy consumption, literacy, school enrollments, urbanization, life expectancy, infant mortality, size of industrial workforce, newspaper circulation, and radio and television ownership. The principal conclusion of these analyses was that democracy is consistently associated with per capita energy consumption or (in later studies) per capita GNP or GDP, although the reasons for this association remain open for discussion (Jackman 1973; Rueschemeyer 1991; Diamond 1992). Large-N studies also explored associations between democracy and income inequality (Bollen and Jackman 1985a; Muller 1988; Przeworski et al. 1996), religion and language (Hannan and Carroll 1981; Lipset, Seong, and Torres 1993; Muller 1995), region or world-system position (Bollen 1983; Gonick and Rosh 1988; Muller 1995; Coppedge 1997a), state size (Brunk, Caldeira, and Lewis-Beck 1987), presidentialism, parliamentarism and party systems (Mainwaring 1993; Stepan and Skach 1993), and economic performance (Remmer 1996).

This research also steadily forged ahead into higher orders of complexity. The first studies consisted of cross-tabulations, correlations, and bivariate regressions, taking one independent variable at a time. The first multivariate analysis was Phillips Cutright's in 1963 (Cutright 1963), but nearly a decade passed before it became the norm to estimate the partial impact of several independent variables using multiple regression. In the early 1980s some researchers began exploring interactions between independent variables and fixed effects such as world-system, a third-order hypothesis (Bollen 1983). However, these models were simpler than those being entertained by Latin Americanists of the time. O'Donnell's model (1973) of bureaucratic authoritarianism, for example, was nonlinear, sensitive to cross-national variations and the historical-structural moment, and defined the nature of links between the national and international levels of analysis (see also Collier 1979b). One major advance in the quantitative literature came in 1988, when Edward Muller (1988: 59–61) made a distinction between factors that cause transitions to democracy and factors that help already-democratic regimes survive. But this distinction was anticipated in the meetings of the Wilson Center group, held between 1979 and 1981, that led to *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986).

However, all of these studies were cross-sectional due to the lack of a time-series indicator of democracy. It was only in the 1980s that Freedom House and Polity data became available for a sufficiently large number of years to permit annual time-series analysis. These indicators are increasingly used to model change within large numbers of countries, rather than assuming that cross-national differences were equivalent to change (Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Przeworski et al. 1996; Power and Gasiorowski 1997;

Brinks and Coppedge 2006). Time series represent a great step forward in control, because they make it possible to hold constant, even if crudely, all the unmeasured conditions in each country that do not change from one year to the next. They therefore give one more confidence in inferences about causation.

Today large-N analysis does not uniformly lag behind the sophistication of theories generated by small-N research. In some respects, the testing is, aside from its conceptual thinness, on par with the theory. The state of the art in quantitative research on democratization now involves statistical corrections for errors correlated across time and space—so-called panel-corrected standard errors using time-series data (Beck and Katz 1995).² In lay terms, this means that analysts adjust their standards for ‘significant’ effects for each country (or sometimes region) in the sample, and also take into account the high likelihood that every country’s present level of democracy depends in part on its past levels of democracy. These are, in effect, statistical techniques for modeling functional equivalence and path dependence. These corrections are, in my opinion, inferior to explicit specification of whatever it is that causes country-specific deviations and inertia, but so are most theoretical musings on the topic.

In other respects, quantitative analysis has inspired scholars to take theory into unexplored territory. For example, Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi (1997) were the first to develop in a systematic way the argument that transitions to democracy and democratic breakdowns were fundamentally different processes. They also contributed the concept of ‘regime life expectancy’, which has fired the imagination of scholars on both sides of the qualitative–quantitative divide. Another group of scholars has begun to explore the notion of democratic diffusion. Although Dankwart Rustow (1970) and Samuel Huntington (1991) wrote about various possible types of transnational influences on democratization, quantitative scholars have found that ‘democratic diffusion’ can refer to a tremendous variety of causal paths (Starr 1991; O’Loughlin et al. 1998; Brinks and Coppedge 2006). In the course of testing for them, they have had to refine the theory in order to distinguish among neighbor effects, regional effects, and superpower effects; impacts on the probability of change, change versus stasis, the direction of change, and the magnitude of change; and change influenced by ideas, trade, investment, population movement, military pressure, and national reputations, many of which were not contemplated in smaller-N or qualitative research.

² For applications of this and similar methods, see Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994), Londregan and Poole (1996), Przeworski et al. (1996), and Power and Gasiorowski (1997).

However, the large-N literature still lags behind the theory in at least three important respects. First, the concepts employed and measured remain thin, and their thinness lessens the value of all of this literature. Second, none of the large-N literature really addresses theories that are cast at a subnational level of analysis, such as the very influential O'Donnell–Schmitter–Whitehead (1986) project. Large-N testing concerns the national, and occasionally international, levels of analysis, and it will continue to do so until subnational data are collected systematically—an enterprise that has barely begun. Finally, there are quite a few hypotheses about causes of democratization that have not yet been addressed in large-N research. Among them are US support for democracy or authoritarian governments (Blasier 1985; Lowenthal 1991), relations between the party in power and elite interests (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992), the mode of incorporation of the working class (Collier and Collier 1991), interactions with different historical periods, US military training (Stepan 1971; Loveman 1994), and elite strategies in response to crisis (Linz and Stepan 1978; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

6.3. CONCLUSION: IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS OF EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

We are far from creating all the rich data that would be needed to combine the best of the small-N and large-N approaches. But even if this synthesis is a far-off dream, it is useful to keep in mind even today that these two approaches are parts of a whole and that, as data collection improves, we can expect them to converge rather than diverge into entirely separate camps. In the meantime, it is essential to maintain the bridges between small-N and large-N research. If scholars in both camps communicated better, we could achieve a more efficient division of labor that would accelerate social scientific progress. Large-N researchers should specialize in explaining the large, most obvious variations found in big samples. These explanations would define the normal expected relationships, which would serve as a standard for identifying the smaller but more intriguing deviations from the norm—the outliers. These outliers are the most appropriate domain for case studies and small-N comparisons, as they require a specialized, labor-intensive, sifting of qualitative evidence that is feasible only in small samples.

This is merely a call for each approach to do what it does best—large-N to sketch the big picture, small-N to fill in the details; some to look through all the jigsaw puzzle pieces searching for corner and sidepieces for the frame, others to fit together the pieces with similar colors and patterns. Neither camp needs to demean the work of the other; both make useful contributions to the

big picture. Those who specialize in small-N studies should not take offense at a division of labor that assigns them the outliers. This is in part because the outliers are the most interesting and challenging pieces, the ones with the greatest potential to innovate and challenge old ways of thinking. But another reason for not taking offense is that we already choose outliers as case studies. The rule of thumb is to choose cases where the unexpected has happened—‘the unexpected’ being defined with reference to general, large-N knowledge. At present, such selections are often done without systematic prior research. It would be an improvement to select cases for close study guided by more rigorous and systematic research.

Perhaps a ‘division of labor’ is an unfortunate metaphor, because if large-N and small-N scholars are truly divided, we cannot learn from each other. Instead of a division of labor, what we need is ‘overlapping labors,’ which requires some scholars to do research of both types and hence act as bridges. More broadly, in addition, we must communicate across the divide by reading work and attending conference panels outside our areas, always keeping an open mind and treating each other with respect, and never giving up hope that we can actually straddle it, individually or collectively.

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Democracy and Growth: A Case Study in Failed Causal Inference

Jason Seawright

Political scientists have seen the relationship between democracy and socio-economic development as a key analytic puzzle at least since the publication of Seymour Lipset's classic study (1959) of the social prerequisites of democracy. In recent decades, many analysts in this literature have studied the question of whether democracy has a causal effect on economic growth. As discussed below, the literature on this research question is both lively and voluminous. Yet this literature raises important concerns because researchers have been unable to even approximate a consensus on the central question of whether democracy causes economic growth. I will examine the state of the debate on whether democracy affects economic growth, with the specific goal of discovering the reasons why this literature has not produced successful causal inference. This discussion also serves as a more general case study of failed causal inference. Thus, most of the issues that I identify below apply to a wide range of literatures, as will my critiques and suggestions.

The literature on democracy and growth is notorious for producing inconsistent findings (Sirowy and Inkeles 1990; Przeworski and Limongi 1993). Some scholars find a positive overall relationship between democracy and economic growth (Leblang 1997; Minier 1998; Nelson and Singh 1998; Kurzman, Werum, Burkhart 2002; Shen 2002). Thus, David Leblang argues that 'the newest evidence allows us to conclude that democracy is a more important cause of economic growth than previously believed' (1997: 352). Others still find a negative direct linear relationship (Feng 1997; Gasiorowski 2000). For example, Mark Gasiorowski (2000: 342) states that, 'We can therefore conclude that more-democratic regimes have slower growth than less-democratic regimes.' And yet others, indeed a growing number of scholars, suggest that there is no relationship at all between democracy and economic growth (Przeworski and Limongi 1993; De Haan and Siermann 1995; Alesina et al. 1996; Brunetti 1997; Durham 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Glaeser et al. 2004).

According to Adam Przeworski et al. (2000: 179), 'total output grows at the same rate under the two regimes [democracy and authoritarianism], both in poor countries and in wealthier countries.'

These three counterposed findings would seem to logically exhaust the universe of possibilities. Democracy may cause economic growth, may prevent economic growth, or may be irrelevant for economic growth. However, other options have been posited. Robert Barro (1997: 58) adds a new dimension of disagreement in the debate on democracy and economic growth with his finding of a curvilinear relationship, in which regimes that are partially democratic grow more quickly than regimes that are either fully democratic or fully undemocratic. And other findings suggest that democracy has a mixed effect on economic growth, with positive and negative causal pathways, or positive and negative time periods (Helliwell 1994; Baum and Lake 2003; Krieckhaus 2004; Pinto and Timmons 2005).

In the face of such divergent findings, some may ask why scholars continue contributing to this literature at all. I believe there are two primary and completely justifiable reasons. First, among the many research questions explored by political scientists and economists, few are as compelling and relevant to the world of practical politics as is the study of the relationship between political regime type and economic growth. Authoritarian leaders often justify their regimes with the claim that they produce superior economic performance (Haggard and Kaufman 1995: 45–108). By contrast, others have argued that 'the two freedoms'—economic and political—are by nature inseparable (Friedman 1962); political democracy and economic growth naturally accompany one another, so authoritarianism is inherently inimical to economic growth. Adjudicating among these claims has relevance to real-world political debates, as well as to theoretical concerns.

Second, scholars may continue to contribute to the literature because the very divergence of its findings inspires intellectual curiosity. While at first glance, the fact of divergence may seem a compelling argument against further research on this question, it has in fact served as a powerful motivation for continued inquiry. An analyst may consider the previous range of published findings and wonder what would happen if one or two different methodological assumptions were adopted. The evident instability in scholarly findings about the relationship between democracy and economic growth virtually guarantees that, as long as the assumptions that the researcher selects is somewhat different from those selected by previous prominent analyses of the question, the research will result in a novel finding. Hence, it is relatively easy for a researcher to make an individual contribution to the literature by exploring the inferential consequences of a somewhat modified set of statistical assumptions.

The fact that individual contributions to this debate have not yet aggregated into a coherent and convincing body of findings, and the sense that ‘anything is possible’ is problematic. Indeed, a strong case can be made that, in light of this situation, the value of additional cross-national statistical analyses of democracy and economic growth is dubious, and that rather than produce yet one more study on the impact of democracy on growth, scholars should seek to understand the methodological problems that have produced the current state of confusion and use research strategies that offer a prospect of moving this research beyond its current impasse.

This chapter argues that there are two main underlying reasons for the lack of robust results in the research on democracy and growth.¹ First, researchers are unable to definitively select a set of control variables that would allow their analyses to meet basic statistical assumptions. Second, scholars have been unable to find variance in democracy that is exogenous to the process of socioeconomic development. Without such variation, researchers cannot adequately control for confounding causes of economic growth or eliminate problems of endogeneity. Until these two problems are resolved, causal inferences about the effects of democracy on economic growth will be untrustworthy. Thus, the chapter suggests that researchers should pay more attention to the way in which all statistical inferences are conditional on analytic assumptions, present compelling justifications of the assumptions that they make in their own research, and show in mathematical detail how and why their own findings should be taken more seriously than competing findings in prior research. In addition, I argue that, for literatures that are unable either to meet statistical assumptions or to find sources of exogenous variation, more delimited inferences about causal mechanisms, or inferences based on more rigorously defended small-scale natural experiments, are an appropriate intermediate goal.

This chapter is organized as follows. It first shows why robust inferences in research on democracy and growth are elusive. Next it considers alternative strategies for specifying control variables. In Section 7.3, it turns to the problem of endogeneity and addresses the use of natural experiments. Finally, in Section 7.4, it considers scholars’ responses to the failure to produce robust findings and then proposes two solutions to the current impasse in the literature: the testing of causal mechanisms and the identification of small-scale natural experiments.

¹ Some of the variation in findings may result from differences in the data sources or time periods that analysts consider (Krieckhaus 2004). However, in this chapter, I seek to focus on the issues of model specification in causal inference. Descriptive issues of data availability and measurement quality are important. Yet, even if they are adequately resolved, the causal issues considered here will still require solution.

Table 7.1. Correlations between democracy measures and economic growth

Przeworski et al. (2000) democracy and economic growth	Freedom House democracy (Gastil 1991) and economic growth	Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2001) democracy and economic growth
−0.052 (0.004)	−0.019 (0.279)	−0.062 (0.000)

7.1. A FIRST LOOK AT THE PROBLEM OF ELUSIVE ROBUSTNESS

It is useful to begin this discussion by looking at some simple descriptions of the key relationships in question. Table 7.1 reports the bivariate correlations between the annual growth rates of all country-years between 1960 and 1990 reported in the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* (1998), on the one hand, and the yearly democracy measures created by Przeworski et al. (2000: ch. 1), the Freedom House indices originally generated by Raymond Gastil (1991, Piano and Puddington 2005), and the Polity data-set conceived by Ted Gurr (Marshall and Jaggers 2001), on the other hand. These figures are an overall representation of the direct relationship between democracy and economic growth, without any statistical controls, as indicated by each of the measures of democracy.

For present purposes, two facts reported in this table are particularly important. First, using either the Przeworski et al. (2000) measure or the Polity measure results in a small but noticeable negative correlation between democracy and economic growth. Thus, democratic country-years during the last several decades have also been country-years of slightly below average economic growth. Second, the correlation between the Freedom House measure and economic growth is reasonably different from the other two, which are more similar. This suggests that the Freedom House measure captures aspects of democracy that are meaningfully differentiated from those captured by the other two measures, at least for present purposes. This could be true for several reasons. The Freedom House measure may include different kinds of evidence than the other two measures. It could use a different weighting of the various elements of democracy that it includes. Or the Freedom House measure could simply have a different pattern of systematic measurement error than the other two measures. Any of these explanations would be sufficient to account for the differences in this key relationship across measures.

However, arbitrating among these explanations is beyond the scope of the present discussion. To simplify analysis of the key points of causal inference, I will focus on the measure of democracy developed by Przeworski et al. (2000),

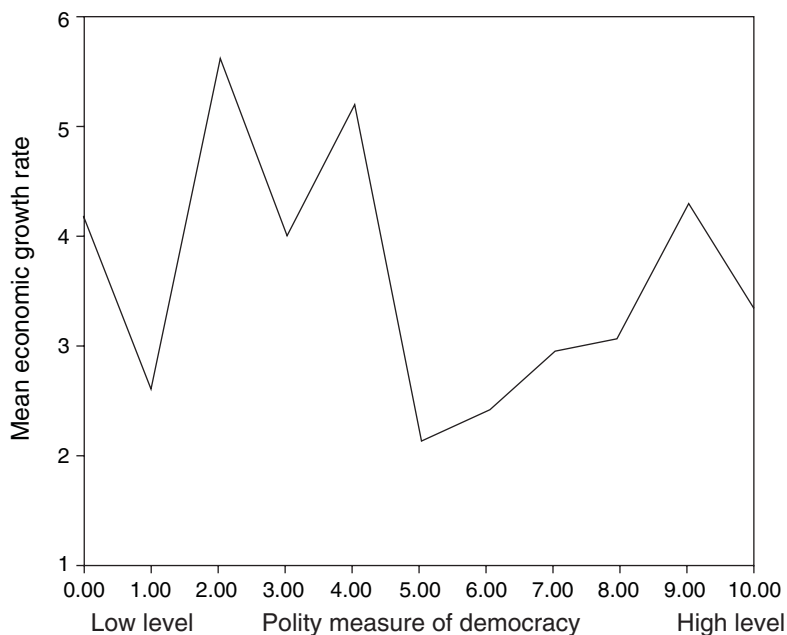


Figure 7.1. Mean growth rates by level of democracy, 1960–90

with occasional reference to the Polity measure when a graded measure of democracy is preferable.

Figure 7.1 is a graphic representation of the bivariate relationship between the Polity measure of democracy and economic growth between 1960 and 1990. The horizontal axis reports the different categories of democracy from the Polity measure, while the vertical axis reports the mean growth rate within each category. As this figure shows, the bivariate relationship between democracy and economic growth is noisy, to say the least. Some increases in democracy are associated with increases in economic growth, while other increases in democracy are associated with reductions in economic growth.

Yet, on the basis of the information represented here, it is not impossible to believe that there *could* be a relationship. The overall slope, after all, is nonzero, and a bivariate regression would suggest a slight negative effect of democracy on economic growth. The various spikes and troughs in the graph could, perhaps, be the product of omitted variables, and not evidence that there is no relationship between democracy and economic growth. Therefore, given the overwhelming substantive interest driving research on this question, it is

reasonable to proceed to consider potential omitted variables, or confounding factors.

In statistical language, an omitted variable, or a confounder, is a variable that belongs in a causal model but is not included in that model, and that distorts the conclusions drawn about the relative importance of the variables that *are* included in the model. Confounders may be heuristically thought of as excluded variables that cause both the dependent variable and one or more of the included independent variables, although this condition is technically neither necessary nor sufficient for a particular variable to be a confounder.² A common approach to correcting for confounders is to add control variables to a regression equation.

In the wide set of possible confounding factors, those referred to collectively as socioeconomic development are particularly salient. For instance, one plausible confounder variable is a country-year's income level, or GDP per capita.³ Macroeconomic theory argues that, other things being equal, a country with a higher income level will tend to grow more slowly than a country with a lower income level. The logic is as follows: other factors, such as capital stock and labor supply, determine a country's 'target level' of income, or the level at which the country will be in an economic steady state (barring, of course, change in other factors). After controlling for the factors that determine the economy's steady state, a wealthier country is one that has less growth to go before reaching the steady state, and therefore will tend to grow more slowly than a similar country with a lower income level (see e.g. Barro and Sala-i-Martin 1995: 26–37). Thus, a country's income level may be a cause of its growth rate, and it has certainly been hypothesized to be a cause of democracy (see discussion in Section 7.2). In other words, it has the classic characteristics of a confounder variable.

Table 7.2 reports the results of a regression of income growth rate on lagged income level as reported in the *World Development Indicators* and the Polity democracy variable. What is particularly noteworthy here is that, after controlling for lagged income level, the hypothesized relationship between democracy and economic growth is almost completely wiped out. The reason is that per capita GDP is indeed highly correlated with democracy, with a coefficient of 0.565 that is statistically significant (at a level smaller than 0.001), and its

² For further discussion, and a more precise but somewhat more difficult definition, see Pratt and Schlaifer (1984).

³ A country's level of GDP per capita is, in a sense, a derivative of its economic growth rate, in that it is equal to the prior year's per capita GDP multiplied by 100 percent plus the prior year's growth rate. However, a country's growth in a given year is usually much smaller than the overall size of its economy, and growth rates differ a great deal from year to year. Therefore, level of per capita GDP and economic growth rate are in fact quite different variables.

Table 7.2. Economic growth regressed on democracy and lagged income level

OLS regression results	
Constant	4.661 (0.145)
Democracy	−0.00151 (0.029)
Lagged GDP	−0.000132 (0.000)
R ²	0.009
N	3,138

zero-order correlation with growth in incomes is noticeable—a coefficient of -0.074 with a significance level smaller than 0.001 —although certainly far from overwhelming. In other words, the analysis reported in Table 7.2 suggests that income level, or level of per capita GDP, is indeed a confounder for the relationship between democracy and economic growth. This simple finding provides the basic logic behind most research that reports no relationship between democracy and economic growth.

Yet this finding is clearly not definitive. First, this result may suffer from major problems of confounding. The control variable in this analysis taps only one of the factors involved in economic development: overall level of production in the economy. A more complete test would include such additional control variables as education level, labor costs, investment rates, urbanization rates, and so forth, all of which may affect both democracy and economic growth. Adding some or all of these additional controls may certainly change the findings reported above.

Second, there may be serious issues of endogeneity. That is, many of these variables are hypothesized to have complex causal interrelationships with democracy. For example, investment rates, average education levels, and labor costs may be seen as causes, consequences, or both causes and consequences, of democracy (Feng and Zak 1999; Rodrik 1999; Bourguignon and Verdier 2000; Mariscal and Sokoloff 2000). Thus, though failing to control for one of these variables exposes the analyst to the risk that the true relationship between democracy and growth rate will be confounded by the absent variable, misspecifying the way in which the variable should be included in a model may induce bias.

To show that there is genuine cause for concern about these issues, in Table 7.3 I present the results of another regression. Here, I add to the variables from the regression in Table 7.2 a measure of primary school attainment, drawn from the Robert Barro and Jong-Wha Lee (1996) data-set. This measure of the overall level of education in a society taps another important dimension of socioeconomic development, and therefore produces a model

Table 7.3. Economic growth regressed on democracy, lagged income level, and primary educational attainment

	OLS regression results
Constant	4.240 (0.253)
Democracy	0.04371 (0.030)
Lagged GDP	−0.000196 (0.000)
Primary school attainment	0.01349 (0.006)
R ²	0.019
N	2,415

that may more thoroughly account for confounders. In Table 7.3, we see that adding this additional control variable changes the estimated effect of democracy on economic growth substantially. After controlling for education and lagged income level, democracy is now estimated to have a moderate positive effect on economic growth. The result does not reach standard levels of statistical significance, but the change from the estimate in Table 7.2 is remarkable.

In other words, it is of critical importance to decide whether including a measure of educational attainment in the growth regression improves or harms the estimate of the effect of democracy on economic growth. This, in turn, requires deciding whether education causes democracy, and whether either democracy or economic growth causes education. If any of these are true, the regression reported in Table 7.3 may not, in fact, provide a better estimate of the effect of democracy on economic growth than the regression reported in Table 7.2. For example, if democracy causes education, then the regression in Table 7.3 is biased because it neglects the effects of democracy on economic growth through education.

Unfortunately, the empirical evidence provides very little leverage for answering these crucial questions. All the evidence gives us is the correlations among democracy, education, and economic growth; however, the data do not tell us how to decompose these correlations into causal relations. For example, democracy and education may be correlated because democracy causes education, because education causes democracy, because a third variable causes both of them, or some mix of these causal explanations. In other words, statistical forms of evidence, and any regressions that we can perform with that evidence, simply do not give us enough information to choose between the correlation in Table 7.1, the regression in Table 7.2, and the regression in Table 7.3.

The analyses presented up to this point are clearly quite elementary. They all consist of standard regression analyses with only a few control variables. Yet it is worth noting that these simple analyses have already produced results that span the three categories of possible linear relationships between democracy and economic growth. The first analysis, a simple bivariate correlation, showed democracy lowering economic growth rates. The second, which controls for level of per capita GDP, showed democracy as having no effect on economic growth. Finally, the third analysis, which added a measure of educational attainment, found a positive relationship between democracy and economic growth.

In this sense, the far more complex models employed in most published studies of democracy and economic growth are extensions of the three analyses presented in this section. Until we can decide on the basis of theory which of these three relatively simple analyses is best, it may make relatively little sense to expend further energy developing elaborate statistical models of the relationship between democracy and economic growth. While these models would certainly provide us with a range of different findings, they would, in fact, bring us no closer to understanding the true relationship between democracy and economic growth. Thus, in what follows, I consider how scholars have confronted the two basic issues stressed here: the problem of confounding causes and the problem of endogeneity.

7.2. CONFOUNDING CAUSES AND THE SPECIFICATION OF CONTROL VARIABLES

Researchers have usually tackled the challenge of choosing control variables, and balancing the goals of including inappropriate control variables and excluding needed ones, by including a reasonably broad set of control variables. Indeed, though Przeworski et al. (2000) only include controls for capital stock and labor productivity,⁴ most scholars have included a reasonably broad set of control variables in their models (see Table 7.4). Some analysts

⁴ These variables capture the basic causes of growth as identified in Robert Solow's classic growth model, (1956) so there is some theoretical justification for this sparse set of control variables. But Przeworski et al. (2000) present little explanation for why they choose to disregard several other factors, identified by analysts in the decades since the publication of Solow's model, that may affect economic growth, including the hypotheses related to socioeconomic development discussed above. And when they do address this issues, they offer somewhat contradictory arguments, e.g. Przeworski et al. (2000: 180, 196) initially defend their decision to disregard prior income level as a causal variable, but then state that 'It is by now generally accepted that among the developed countries the rate of growth tends to decline in per capita income.' Moreover, it should be noted that it is in fact difficult to determine precisely which control variables Przeworski et al. include in their growth regressions. Only in one table do they report

Table 7.4. Alternative sets of control variables

	Barro (1997)	Feng (1997)	Durham (1999)	Gasiorowski (2000)	Przeworski et al. (2000)	Kurzman et al. (2002)	Baum and Lake (2003)
Capital stock					X		
Education/literacy	X	X	X	X		X	X
GDP	X	X	X	X		X	X
Government consumption	X		X			X	
Inflation	X	X		X			
Investment		X	X	X		X	X
Labor supply				X	X		X
Life expectancy	X					X	X
Money supply growth				X			
Peaceful unrest				X			
Population growth	X		X			X	
Population size							X
Regime change		X					
Region dummies	X		X				
Rule of law	X						
Terms of trade	X						
Trade		X	X				
Violent unrest				X		X	
Wage growth				X			

include political control variables, such as variables reflecting regime changes that do not cross the boundary between democracy and authoritarianism or the occurrence of political protest episodes. Others exclude these variables, preferring to focus more narrowly on factors related directly to socioeconomic development. Thus, the use of sets of control variables that are neither equivalent nor cumulative raises the question, how are we to evaluate competing sets of control variables?

One common answer to this question is to turn to statistical measures of goodness of fit, and, in particular, to the R^2 statistics for each of the regressions. Researchers could compare the R^2 statistics and accept the answer about the relationship between democracy and growth that comes from the regression with the highest R^2 . However, it is by no means clear that this approach would lead researchers to accept a model that actually captured the true relationship between democracy and economic growth over another model that either included too many control variables, or one that did not include enough

anything like standard regression results (Przeworski et al. 2000: 154–5), but even here important information is missing, and it is unclear that all results were included for this analysis.

control variables (Kennedy 1998: 81–3). This problem is particularly severe in the current research context because democracy and variables involved in socioeconomic development are known to be highly correlated, a situation that exacerbates the weaknesses of the R^2 as a test for correct specification.

In addition, we have no clear, strong basis for accepting any particular set of control variables as better than the other attempts to eliminate confounders. Any of the published models could be close representations of the actual causal relationships underlying economic growth, or, perhaps more likely, none of them capture the true relationships.

In sum, adding control variables to simple regression analyses has not been a fruitful strategy for discovering whether there is a causal connection between democracy and economic growth. The remarkable diversity of approaches to introducing control variables represented in Table 7.4 and throughout this literature more broadly helps to explain the divergence in findings about democracy and growth. Indeed, the fact that analysts persistently use incomparable sets of control variables is clearly one reason that they disagree about the economic effects of democracy. Yet we currently lack, as a scholarly community, a sufficiently developed theory to determine how to select control variables appropriately.

7.3. ENDOGENEITY AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL EXPERIMENTS

Acknowledging, at least implicitly, the difficulty of appropriately selecting control variables, researchers have turned to natural experiments and two-stage least squares data analysis, which is a particularly promising strategy to deal with the problems in research on democracy and growth because it allows researchers to make unbiased inferences about the effects of a specific set of variables on a dependent variable, even if there are important excluded variables that would otherwise cause inferential problems (see e.g. Kennedy 1998: 165; Greene 2000: 682–4). A natural experiment is a situation in which a particular independent variable acquires its value through social and political processes that are clearly unrelated to the outcome of interest. For example, researchers have used military draft lotteries as natural experiments because, under a draft lottery, assignment to military service is literally random. Two-stage least squares data analysis is a statistical technique that takes advantage of natural experiments to make more reliable conclusions about other causal relationships. For example, military service in the United States is known to be a cause of higher education levels, because of the G. I. Bill. Therefore, assignment to military service through the draft lottery can predict education.

The variance in education predicted by the draft lottery is exogenous to economic and political variables because the draft lottery itself is random or, in statistical language, the draft lottery is an *instrument* for education. Hence, two-stage least squares analysis allows researchers to use the exogenous variation in an independent variable identified by an instrument to test relationships between that independent variable and some dependent variable of interest.

To take advantage of this strategy, it bears emphasizing, researchers must essentially find a way around the problem of endogeneity. Two-stage least squares relies on instruments that can find exogenous variation in the independent variable. Thus, analysts must be able to identify a portion of the variance in each relevant independent variable that is exogenous to the processes that produce the dependent variable—in other words, they must be able to identify genuine natural experiments. What this means, in terms of research on democracy and growth, is that researchers must find a source of variation in democracy that is completely separate from the knot of economic and social factors that we broadly label as development. And this is a rather stringent condition.

The analysts discussed above have taken the important step of trying to seek and use exogenous variation in democracy in their inferences about economic growth. Przeworski et al. (2000: 148, 150, 152, 157) present ‘selection-corrected’ results that depend on two-stage least squares and other, related tools. While this is certainly a productive step, it is only as useful as the natural experiment that Przeworski et al. exploit to find exogenous variation in democracy. Evaluating the proposed natural experiment employed by Przeworski et al. is, unfortunately, not a possibility because it remains unidentified.⁵

Other analysts are more emphatic in identifying the proposed natural experiments that they seek to exploit. One useful attempt to find exogenous variation in the independent variables is that of Barro (1997: 14), who uses lagged values of the independent variables as instruments to try to find variation in the current values of the independent variables that is exogenous from current economic processes. While this is in many circumstances a promising approach, it is at least somewhat problematic in the current research context.

⁵ Rather than identifying the instrument in use, the authors report that ‘the factors that enter on the right-hand side of the performance equation are not statistically significant in the selection equation. Hence, throughout the book, we treat selection as exogenous’ (Przeworski et al. 2000: 285). If selection were in fact exogenous, then correcting for it would have no effect, because all of the variation on the independent variables would already be exogenous (Heckman 1988: 7). However, the selection-corrected results that Przeworski et al. present are always at least subtly different from their standard regression results, so selection, or, more generally, endogeneity, is not necessarily unproblematic.

After all, the economic processes of development, which, broadly speaking, are the most important hypothesized confounding variable in this relationship, tend to happen over the long term, such that simply lagging measures of them for one period may not do too much to find exogenous variation in democracy.

Yi Feng's attempt (1997) to find exogenous variation in democracy is more substantively innovative. Positing that cultural differences across countries produce differences in level of democracy that are not tightly bound up with socioeconomic development, Feng (1997: 404–7) uses dummy variables for countries where Islamic or Confucian culture has been influential as a predictor of exogenous variation in level of democracy. These particular variables may well be problematic, in that they may act as long-run causes of socioeconomic development as well as of democracy (Huntington 1991, 1996), so they may not adequately pinpoint exogenous variation in level of democracy. However, the general instinct here is clearly correct: analysts should seek causes of democracy that are drawn from theoretical domains distant from economics, causes that can reasonably be hypothesized to be exogenous from socioeconomic development.

Unfortunately, it is as yet unclear what those causes could be. The most widely accepted possible causes of democracy are economic variables such as level of socioeconomic development and economic crisis (e.g. Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Geddes 1999). It would be difficult indeed to argue that either of these variables is in some way exogenous from the economic processes underlying growth, so these widely accepted economic causes of democracy are useless as instruments.

Feng's effort builds from the supposition that cultural and leadership-based hypotheses about democracy may contribute useful instruments. Unfortunately, there is not a large stock of widely accepted cultural or leadership-based arguments about the causes of democracy. Moreover, some elements of leadership and culture may even contribute to the problem at hand of distinguishing between the effects of democracy and socioeconomic development. Development may, for example, increase the probability that a country will have leaders who have an education in economics and political science, which may, in turn, make the leaders more likely to behave democratically and to facilitate good economic outcomes.⁶ Thus, at least as yet, variables from this

⁶ Obviously, this hypothetical example adopts an optimistic view of the effects of education in the fields of economics and political science. It may well be the case that such an education enables leaders to be more effective at repression and corruption, in which case, it may *inhibit* democracy and economic growth. Ironically, the statistical point is equally valid in either case. For a slightly different discussion of possible inferential problems related to leadership, see Przeworski et al. (2000: 286).

domain do not offer a solid solution to the problem of finding exogenous variation in democracy.

Whether any of these approaches eventually contribute variables that allow us to find variation in democracy that is exogenous to socioeconomic development or not, the larger point remains. Until analysts can find such variance in democracy, they will probably be unable to make meaningful further progress in determining whether democracy, in general, is a cause of income growth.

Moreover, researchers must realize that their inferences are only as good as the natural experiments that they use to make their statistical analyses work. Thus, it is crucial that analysts explicitly and centrally defend the variables that they use as instruments in techniques based on two-stage least squares. Too often, these issues are not discussed at all, and when they are, they tend to be relegated to footnotes or technical appendices. Instead, analysts should treat discussions of their instrumental variables as what they really are: the linchpin of any argument about the overall relationship between democracy and economic growth.

7.4. RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM OF ELUSIVE ROBUSTNESS

The proliferation of contradictory findings that result from the difficulty of adequately specifying control variables and identifying natural experiments raises the question of standards used to evaluate different studies. Indeed, though some scholars have interpreted contradictory findings as a finding of sorts, such a position does not acknowledge how different studies produce varying findings because *some* studies are theoretically or methodologically flawed. For example, in their review of a series of studies on the impact of regimes on growth that produce divergent results, Przeworski and Fernando Limongi (1993: 65) state, 'our own hunch is that politics does matter, but 'regimes' do not capture the relevant differences', suggesting in effect that the inconsistency of empirical results is a weak form of positive evidence for the claim that there is no relationship between democracy and economic growth. But, as other analysts note, various studies have produced diverse and inconsistent conclusions because some or all of them were designed incorrectly.⁷ Hence, the truth may be that there is no relationship between

⁷ For example, Gasiorowski (2000: 323–5) lists several methodological problems that may afflict studies of the hypothesized relationship between democracy and economic growth, including purely cross-sectional research designs, poor model specification, endogeneity, heteroskedasticity (which occurs in regression analysis when the variance of the error term is not constant across cases), and causal heterogeneity. He then states that: 'all of the studies of which

democracy and economic growth, as Przeworski and Limongi (1993) believe, or it may be that there is either a positive or a negative relationship between the two. And we will only *know* the truth once we figure out the right set of assumptions to make.

Indeed, statistical analyses would yield stable, trustworthy results regarding the relationship between regime type and economic growth if scholars employ statistical models that are theoretically well justified, and that meet the standard that econometricians and methodologists in political science have called the ‘assumption of correct specification’ or the ‘specification assumption’.⁸ This assumption is basically equivalent to the claim that the major causes of the dependent variable are included in the analysis, and that any endogeneity—understood here to refer to any correlation between any included independent variable and the theoretical error term of the equation—in the independent variables is addressed through an appropriate statistical technique. If, for a particular statistical model, these two conditions are met, then the key causal inferences will, on average, be correct. Otherwise, these parameter estimates will suffer bias, generally of unknown direction and magnitude. In what follows, thus, I seek to find a way out of the current impasse in the literature on democracy and growth by considering first what is involved in meeting the specification assumption and then proposing some viable and productive strategies for moving the debate forward.

7.4.1. Meeting the Specification Assumption

Meeting the specification assumption is a demanding standard and it bears noting, at the outset, that it is not a matter of simply including measures of every conceivable factor in each analysis—for example, using all of the variables in Table 7.4 as controls. This kind of ‘kitchen sink’ approach would have the virtue of accurately representing the extreme uncertainty that analysts face in choosing a particular subset of control variables for inclusion in an analysis. Moreover, it may even be the case that such an analysis would get us closer to an unbiased inference than the more measured approach that most analysts adopt. However, in spite of these important virtues, the kitchen sink approach to choosing control variables faces serious problems.

I am aware that examine how democracy affects growth or inflation suffer from one or more of these methodological problems. Although this does not necessarily invalidate these studies, it raises doubts about their findings and suggests that greater care must be taken in designing analyses of democratic performance’ (Gasirowski 2000: 324).

⁸ Hanushek and Jackson (1977: 79–86), Achen (1982: ch. 5), Leamer (1978), Darnell (1994: 369–73), Kennedy (1998: ch. 5), Greene (2000: 332–8), and Collier, Brady, and Seawright (2004: 240–4).

Setting aside the obvious objection on the basis of parsimony, there are three key problems with this kitchen sink approach. First, it may fail because analysts are not yet aware of some important variables or because measures of some critical factors are of low quality or, if they are difficult or expensive to measure systematically, simply unavailable. Second, issues of multicollinearity will almost certainly arise: different aspects of economic development will probably be correlated with each other to some degree and, as the number of variables included rises, these correlations will quickly lead researchers to a problem of a small effective *N*. Finally, and most critical, including certain kinds of variables may actually bias estimates of the total causal effect of level of democracy on economic growth. If some included variables are both consequences of democracy and causes of economic growth or, in other words, if they are intervening variables, then the part of the effect of democracy on economic growth that is channeled through these variables will be subtracted from the estimate of the total effect of democracy on economic growth (Pratt and Schleifer 1984). And subtracting these indirect effects will bias estimates of the total effect in any direction: if an indirect effect is positive, controlling for it will bias the estimate of the total effect in a negative direction, and vice versa.

Thus, rather than relying on the apparently attractive kitchen sink approach, to meet the specification assumption researchers must present a detailed defense—drawing on existing theory and prior findings—of every decision and assumption leading to the statistical model that they employ. More pointedly, the specification assumption requires researchers to include *all* of the necessary control variables, so a convincing argument is required for every variable not included in the model. Yet the problems of poor or nonexistent measures, multicollinearity, and endogeneity mean that there are often serious obstacles to including variables in an analysis, and a convincing argument is needed that each variable added to the model does not create more problems than it solves. Thus, researchers would have to explicitly justify *both* the set of variables that they choose to include in the model *and* the reasons that this set of variables should be seen as sufficient.

This is a demanding standard. Indeed, in most research contexts, meeting this standard is practically impossible in principle and in practice. In principle, the problem is that some variables may be both causes of and consequences of the key independent variables,⁹ and the standard presented above would,

⁹ This claim does not require analysts to accept an idea of simultaneous reciprocal causation, although such an idea is one way to reach a situation in which one variable acts as both a cause and a consequence of another. Other routes to this situation include one variable being a cause of another and also being caused by a third variable which is caused by the second variable, or sequential causation between one variable and another.

problematically, require that such variables simultaneously be *excluded* from the analysis and *included* in it. In practice, analysts do not have the theoretical knowledge necessary to make such a rigorous defense, a point that has been widely debated (see e.g. Leamer 1983; Bartels 1997; Freedman 1999).

Moreover, even after developing a causal model that manages to meet these complex and sometimes mutually contradictory criteria, analysts have the additional responsibility of showing that the improvements they have developed in the statistical model are responsible for the differences between their findings and those published previously. This task, which David Hendry (2000: 460–83) refers to as ‘encompassing’, can be accomplished by showing that prior findings are replicated when the specific improvements on existing models introduced in the new model are eliminated. And such an encompassing of prior finding is critical because it offers proof that differences in results are due to specific changes in methodological assumptions. Indeed, without this proof, readers often cannot be sure which of the several (often minor) changes in model specification or methodology in a particular study are responsible for the major changes in results and hence assess the degree to which the new results are a product of (presumably) carefully defended new methodological assumptions, as opposed to coincidence or other potentially unwise statistical decisions.¹⁰

In sum, researchers interested in the relationship between democracy and economic growth appear to face a quandary. On the one hand, the approaches that have been used thus far have produced unstable results. On the other hand, the standards that would have to be met to produce stable, trustworthy results appear, at least for the near future, to be out of reach. Yet, as I will seek to show next, the adoption of new research strategies can make this line of research fruitful. These strategies involve a scaling down of researchers’ inferential goals. But they are defensible in light of the current state of knowledge.

7.4.2. Scaling Down

One approach would be to scale down theoretically by following (2000) John Goldthorpe’s recommendation to test ‘generative’, or causal, mechanisms. There is a moderately large theoretical literature on the relationship between democracy and economic growth (Przeworski and Limongi 1993: 51–60; Gasiorowski 2000: 320–3). And this theoretical literature has a collection of

¹⁰ While the standard of encompassing is certainly fairly high, it is in fact met by some quantitative research in political science (e.g. Lewis and King 2000; Londregan 2000), I am aware of no study of the effects of democracy on economic growth that has systematically shown in any detail how its specification causes its results to differ from those of previous studies.

plausible hypotheses about *why* democracy would cause growth in a particular way. Mancur Olson (1982) has hypothesized that democracy is harmful for growth, because it encourages more interest groups to seek inefficient rents from the state, reducing the efficiency of the economy as a whole. In turn, Olson (1993) has also proposed that democracy may be good for growth, in that it encourages the leader of the country to consider the economic well-being of a wider array of people and therefore to choose more efficient policies and tax rates. Finally, a plausible causal mechanism for the hypothesis that democracy makes no difference in economic growth could depend on the assumption that all political leaders, whether democratic or authoritarian, are fairly likely to lose office during economic crises. If this is true, then *all* leaders will have a strong motivation to pursue the best possible economic policy, and regime type may make no difference whatsoever in economic growth.

Thus, there are a wide range of plausible mechanisms for any conceivable version of the relationship between democracy and economic growth, and each of these mechanisms involves testable claims about relationships *other than* the overall relationship between democracy and growth. For example, with reference to Olson's theories, is it true that a greater number of interest groups seek rents under democracy than under other regimes? Is it true that an increase in the number of rent-seeking interest groups causes an increase in the overall volume of rents dispensed by the state? Is it true that an increase in the number of rent-seeking interest groups causes a decline in overall economic efficiency? Is it true that dictators care less about pursuing good economic policy than democratic leaders? Indeed, each of these arguments couched in terms of mechanisms is amenable to empirical exploration and, potentially, any of them may be confirmed—and the confirmation may prove to be robust to changes in statistical assumptions.¹¹

Unfortunately, this research faces major inferential challenges of its own. The first problem is simply that this research, like the research on the direct relationship between democracy and economic growth, is based on observational studies. The results of such studies are, of course, based on untested assumptions, and it is to be expected that at least some of these assumptions also make a difference for the conclusions. We may hope that inferences about causal mechanisms will prove to be more robust than the overall inferences discussed above; nevertheless, it is likely that even more delimited inferences will require a certain suspension of disbelief.

¹¹ Some recent work has begun to move in this direction, such as Baum and Lake's valuable analysis (2003) of the effects of democracy on economic growth through increased life expectancy and secondary education (see also Kurzman, Werum, and Burkhart 2002).

A second difficulty is that a statistical confirmation of a set of linkage mechanisms would not aggregate in any straightforward way into an overall answer to the question, 'Does democracy cause growth?' In fact, as Przeworski and Limongi (1993: 60) suggest, any number of arguments about linkages may be *simultaneously* true. Thus, while confirming the particular linkages entailed by a theory provides important evidence in favor of the validity of that theory, it does not necessarily confirm the theory's overall conclusions about the relationship between democracy and economic growth. Hence, researchers may do well to adopt a second strategy for scaling down their inferential goals: seeking small-scale, local natural experiments.

Natural experiments are extremely hard to identify. As discussed above, such experiments require researchers to find sets of cases that are known to be similar on all relevant alternative explanations, but which differ on the key explanatory variable. And such a requirement has been difficult to satisfy in research focused at the nation-state level. But researchers might be more successful at identifying natural experiments if they scale down and consider economically and socially similar neighboring regions in different countries, one of which underwent a recent regime transition while the other remained stable. If the two regions are in fact similar on all relevant missing variables, comparing their subsequent economic trajectories will allow researchers to make reliable inferences about the economic effects of political regimes, at least under circumstances like those of the regions in question.

The great strength of this approach as compared to the approach of seeking natural experiments at the national level is that researchers can actually become familiar with the regions in question and make a convincing argument in favor of their similarity. Indeed, because such case-based knowledge is possible at a more local level, researchers may be able to justify their comparison as a meaningful natural experiment, thereby succeeding in making a causal inference. Thus, this underutilized strategy might yield some important findings and is well worth pursuing.

7.5. CONCLUSION

Our knowledge about the economic effects of democracy, as on other important questions, is precarious: research has not yielded robust results. Moreover, standard strategies have not solved the problems at hand. Theory is often too weak to guide researchers all the way through the process of specifying which variables should be included in a model and which should be excluded. Moreover, natural experiments are often difficult to discover in the social

sciences, especially at the level of the nation-state. Hence scholars have produced findings that fluctuate from study to study.

How should we proceed with statistical analysis in these difficult domains? First, researchers should realize the real difficulty of causal inference in the face of these problems and acknowledge how their assumptions affect their substantive conclusions. Second, they should frankly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies that they have chosen to address inferential problems. Finally, they should look carefully at potential routes toward scaling down their analyses, either by examining the causal mechanisms implied by the theories they seek to test or by finding small-scale natural experiments. These strategies offer the possibility of making some progress toward determining whether democracy has any effect on growth. Hence, if David Lindauer and Pant Pritchett's summary (2002: 18–24) of the inconsistencies of cross-country growth regressions is an 'obituary for cross-country growth regressions', the current discussion may be seen as in part a postmortem and in part a call for a carefully considered resuscitation.

Why Regions of the World Are Important: Regional Specificities and Region-Wide Diffusion of Democracy*

Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán

For decades, the subfield of comparative politics has primarily been organized around regions of the world. The job market is still structured primarily around regions, although less so today than was the case in the 1970s or 1980s. About 70 percent of the articles published in the top three comparative journals over the last fifteen years have dealt exclusively with one geographic region (Munck and Snyder 2007a: 14).¹ Some respected political science journals are organized around regions.² Curiously in light of the traditional organization of comparative politics along regional lines, however, there has been almost no explicit defense of why regions are important. Criticism of organizing comparative politics along regional lines has drawn more attention than defenses of why regions are important. For example, Robert Bates's criticisms (1996, 1997) of area studies could be taken as a critique of organizing comparative politics along regional lines.³

In this chapter, we build an explicit defense of the importance of regions in comparative politics and world politics.⁴ We do not claim that regions

* Valerie Bunce, Michael Coppedge, Frances Hagopian, Mala Htun, Wendy Hunter, Gerardo Munck, Susan Stokes, Kurt Weyland, and seminar participants at the Pompeu Fabra University and Princeton gave us valuable criticisms on earlier drafts of this chapter.

¹ Munck and Snyder coded all 319 articles published in *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *World Politics* between 1989 and 2004. Western Europe received the greatest attention (22% of the articles), followed by Latin America (16%). Three-quarters of the articles dealt with five countries or less (Munck and Snyder 2007a).

² For example, the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, and *West European Politics*.

³ We agree with Bates that traditional area studies work that focuses on one country or region without addressing broader theories and literatures has serious limitations.

⁴ This chapter is part of an ongoing project on regional trends in democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America since 1945. In this chapter, we ask a methodological question germane to the project as a whole: Why focus on a region of the world?

should be the primary unit of analysis in comparative politics or that analysis of regions is superior to other research designs. We do assert that regions are substantively important and that the reasons for this importance have been underarticulated in political science. For some research objectives, it is substantively useful to examine regions.

We present two reasons to take regions of the world seriously in comparative politics. First, regions have particular dynamics and political processes that are specific to those regions. Social science generalizations that are based on large-N, cross-regional, or worldwide units of analysis must be attentive to these regional specificities. Otherwise, social scientists will generalize where they should not. Of course, there are some exceptions (or outliers) to most generalizations. Our argument is not that generalizations should be avoided because of occasional exceptions, but rather that different regions may present distinctive and *systematic* causal patterns that an assumption of worldwide causal homogeneity would obscure. The effect is more substantial, and hence the need for caution greater when entire regions of the world, rather than simply a few countries, are exceptions to a generalization.

Second, as many scholars have argued in recent years, political developments in one country can have a strong impact on policies and political regimes in other countries in the same region.⁵ These international influences are especially important within regions. If we always treat countries as the unit of analysis and fail to pay attention to regional effects and dynamics, we will miss these regional effects and as a result will fail to understand causal processes.

Both of these facts mean that regions should be important units of analysis in comparative politics. Yet little work in political science has examined regional specialties and regional diffusion effects.

Empirically, we demonstrate the importance of regions through the literature on democratization. We argue that there are important regional specificities in the causal impact of the level of development on democracy. Causal inferences based on a worldwide sample would lead to a misleading understanding of what factors promote democratization in some regions. We also show that it is impossible to understand democratic transitions and

⁵ Brinks and Coppedge (2006), Brown (2000), Gleditsch (2002), Gleditsch and Ward (2006), Huntington (1991: 100–6), Kopstein and Reilly (2000), Levitsky and Way (2006), Lowenthal (1991), O’Laughlin et al. (1998), Pevehouse (2002a, 2002b, 2005), Pridham (1991), Pridham, Herring, and Sanford (1994), Starr (1991), Starr and Lindborg (2003), Whitehead (1986, 1991, 1996). The literature on dissemination and diffusion is more developed than the scant literature on regional specificities. International (Gasiorowski and Power 1998; Boix and Stokes 2003; Przeworski et al. 2000) as well as regional (Starr 1991; Gasiorowski 1995; Gasiorowski and Power 1998; Pevehouse 2002a; Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2003) diffusion effects are increasingly included as control variables in democratization models.

breakdowns without emphasizing region-wide factors. Analyses that failed to consider the regional influences would overstate the importance of domestic factors, conclude that regime changes and stability are highly idiosyncratic processes, or perhaps commit both mistakes.

Before we get into details, we should briefly clarify what we mean by 'region of the world'. We use this concept as it is understood in common parlance, to refer to geographically bounded parts of the world that are commonly viewed as occupying the same large part of the world. In this understanding, Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia are regions of the world. This is not an exhaustive list nor a historically permanent one. Like 'nations' (Brubaker 1996), regions of the world are symbolic constructions, and there is some change over time in what is viewed as a region. However, more than is the case with nations, the symbolic construction of 'regions' is not subject to constant changes; once created, a sense of 'region' can endure for centuries. The idea that Latin America or Europe are regions, for example, has existed for centuries, even if the boundaries of what is considered Europe are contested and are undergoing change in the post-1989 period.

8.1. REGIONS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Almost no work in comparative politics has explicitly articulated reasons for undertaking region-based work. In contrast, several authors have advocated other research strategies in comparative politics and have articulated reasons for following them—for example, case studies, intermediate N, and large-N quantitative work. There have been sophisticated justifications of case studies (Eckstein 1975; George 1979; George and Bennett 2005), large-N analysis (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994), intracountry comparisons (Linz and de Miguel 1966; Putnam 1993; Snyder 2001*a*, 2001*b*), and cross-regional comparisons (Huber 2003). There is no comparably sophisticated argument for studying a region of the world. Thus there is a strange disjuncture between the traditional organization of comparative politics along regional lines and a near vacuum in theorizing about why regions are important (for an exception, see Gleditsch 2002).

Of the thirty books that were most widely used in Ph.D. field seminars and reading lists for comprehensive exams in comparative politics according to one recent survey (España-Najera, Márquez, and Vasquez 2003), only one looked at a region—Latin America—in a sustained manner that took into account regional specificities (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). Although it is common to include controls for colonial heritage or peripheral world status

in statistical models, a concern with regional specificities is rare even in the simple form of regional dummy variables.⁶

In recent years, the most prominent advocate of paying attention to regional specificities in comparative politics has been Valerie Bunce (1995, 1998, 2000), who argued that there are regional differences in democratization, comparing the post-communist and Latin American cases.⁷ Another exception—not in vogue in recent years—is work that focuses on regional specificities stemming from political culture—for example, Howard Wiarda’s work (2001) on Iberian Catholic political culture. Wiarda’s work and most work in this genre suffer from flaws, including the inability to explain important cross-national differences within a given region.⁸ If Iberian Catholic political culture was the prime explanatory factor in politics, there would be no obvious reason why the Iberian countries, Spain and Portugal, should be less affected than Latin American countries. Yet in terms of political regimes, social outcomes, and level of economic development, Spain today is very different from Bolivia, Honduras, or Nicaragua, to take three poor Latin American countries.

Some work in comparative politics has examined many countries within the same region of the world—for example, Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier (1991) on Latin America or Herbert Kitschelt (1994) on Western Europe. Yet these works do not reach any of our three standards of taking regions seriously. First, they do not examine regional specificities. For example, although Kitschelt included only Western European countries in his analysis of Social Democratic parties, he made no claim to regional specificities for Western Europe. Second, they did not analyze regional effects such as dissemination or diffusion. Third, they did not articulate any explicit reason for choosing a region of the world to demarcate the counties in their analysis.

These observations are not criticisms of these prominent works, but rather a means of clarifying the claim that regions have not been adequately theorized

⁶ In the large-N literature cited in this chapter, only Coppedge (1997a), Gasiorowski and Power (1998), and Ross (2001) used regional dummies in their analysis.

⁷ For arguments similar to Bunce’s, see Howard (2003), Kwon (2004), Linz and Stepan (1996), and McFaul (2002). Notwithstanding important convergences between Bunce’s arguments and ours, there are differences in our approaches. Whereas Bunce made her argument on the basis of qualitative cross-regional comparisons, we make ours on the basis of quantitative data. It is possible through either quantitative or qualitative approaches to come to the central argument of this chapter: that regions are important in politics. More important, Bunce looks mainly at the regime legacies of postcommunist rule and only secondarily at regional influences and specificities in a geographic sense; we focus on region as a geographic construct. If the type of authoritarian regime that existed prior to a democratic transition is the key independent variable that explains different outcomes, then region is merely a proxy for this antecedent regime type, i.e. the effect of regions would be spurious.

⁸ For a more nuanced cultural approach to regional specificities, see Inglehart and Carballo (1997), who are more attuned to intra-regional differences than many culturalists.

in comparative politics. If the reason for case selection is similarity in dependent or independent variables, then cases from outside a region could be added with no difficulty except that of learning about additional countries. The practical demands of turning a region-based study into a cross-regional study might be considerable, but there is no theoretical reason not to add such cases. Under these circumstances, there are justifications for delimiting the case selection to countries within a particular region, but these reasons (efficiency, prior knowledge, familiarity with languages, etc.) are not theoretical.

8.2. DEMOCRACY, REGIONAL HETEROGENEITY, AND DIFFUSION: AN EMPIRICAL MODEL

We hypothesize that regions are substantively important for two reasons as relates to processes of democratization. First, the causal processes driving democratization differs across regions. Second, region-wide trends affect the propensity of neighboring countries for democratic outcomes. In this section we analyze worldwide trends in democratization based on the first hypothesis.

Our examination of causal heterogeneity looks at the relationship between the level of development and democracy, a classic issue in political science and political sociology. Almost every large-N study on this issue has shown that the level of economic development, usually operationalized by per capita income, is a powerful predictor of democracy.⁹ Most of this literature has assumed a regionally uniform impact of the level of development on democracy. In statistical terms, it has assumed causal homogeneity at the global level; the impact of the level of development on democracy is presumed to be roughly similar across regions (differences across regions should not be statistically significant).

A few scholars, however, have argued that the global finding may not apply to Latin America, which might have region-specific effects (O'Donnell 1973; Collier 1975; Landman 1999). Elsewhere we argued that the relation between development and democracy in Latin America is not linear, but rather N-shaped. At a very low level of development and at a high level of income (within Latin America), greater per capita income is associated with higher

⁹ Boix (2003), Boix and Stokes (2003), Bollen (1980), Bollen and Jackman (1985*b*), Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994), Coppedge (1997*a*), Dahl (1971: 62–80), Diamond (1992), Hadenius (1992), Huntington (1984), Jackman (1973), Lipset, Seong, and Torres (1993), Londregan and Poole (1996), Przeworski and Limongi (1997), Przeworski et al. (2000), and Ross (2001). A partial exception to this consensus is Acemoglu et al. (2005), who used fixed effects models. Controlling for unspecified country-specific factors, the level of development did not help account for *changes* in the level of democracy.

democracy scores. In contrast, at an intermediate level of income and for a quite expansive range in the level of development, a higher level of development was associated with lower democracy scores (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003).

Whether there are region-specific effects in this relationship has important implications in comparative politics. Yet scholars have infrequently tested for region-specific effects in the relationship between the level of development and democracy and have only rarely made much of findings about regional specificity.¹⁰ If the level of development has a uniform impact on democracy across the globe, some claims for the virtues of focusing on regions would suffer.

In order to answer these questions, we collected information for 156 countries between 1950 and 2003. Due to the entry of countries in the sample at different points in time, and missing data, the total number of observations was 5,745. Table 8.4, in the Appendix, lists the countries and the number of years (observations) analyzed for each case. We measured the dependent variable (level of democracy) using the Polity IV score, which ranges from -10 (extremely authoritarian) to +10 (highly democratic). To minimize the number of missing values, we employed the revised version of Polity IV, which treats years of transition as a linear progression between the starting point and the end point of the transition (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2005).¹¹

8.2.1. Independent Variables

We include five independent variables that change over time and nine time-invariant independent variables. The first group of predictors varies across countries and over time (yearly). It includes a measure of modernization (per capita GDP) and two related control variables (economic performance and population size), plus a measure of regional diffusion (the percentage of countries that are democratic in the region in any given year) and a related

¹⁰ Landman (1999) and Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2003) tested for and found regional specificities for Latin America. Ross (2001) argued that there are regional specificities for the Middle East. Coppedge (1997a) tested for regional specificities and argued that they do not exist.

¹¹ The Polity score is computed by subtracting the autocracy (0–10) score from the democracy (0–10) score. These scores reflect the competitiveness and openness of executive recruitment, the competitiveness and regulation of political participation, and the constraints on the chief executive. Revised Polity scores recode missing values to conventional scores in the (-10, 10) range. Regime transitions (coded as -88 in the original data-set) are linearly prorated across the span of the transition; cases of foreign intervention (-66) are treated as system missing; and cases of 'interregnum' or anarchy (-77) are converted to a 'neutral' score of 0 (Marshall and Jaggers 2002: 15–16).

control variable (the percentage of countries that are democratic worldwide). Time-invariant predictors vary across countries but not over time within countries. We discuss them in greater detail below. They include measures of ethnic and religious heterogeneity, British colonial legacies, and regional location.

8.2.1.1. Modernization

Our per capita GDP data came from the World Development Indicators for 1960–2003. For years between 1950 and 1959, not covered by the World Development Indicators but covered by the Penn World Tables (PWT), we estimated GDP per capita using the rate of growth reported by PWT according to the formula $GDP_{it-1} = GDP_{it}/1 + G_{it}$, where GDP_{it} corresponds to GDP per capita as reported by the World Bank for country i at time t (generally 1960), and G is the rate of growth as reported by PWT. We applied the formula retrospectively back to 1950 in order to impute the missing values for 1950–9. Data for two countries excluded from the World Development Indicators come from the PWT (Cuba for ten available years and Taiwan for forty-six years). For those cases, figures were measured as per capita GDP (Laspeyres estimates) in constant 1996 dollars.

Because per capita income is not expected to have a linear impact on democracy, we modeled its effect as a quadratic function of per capita GDP. For this reason, we include two terms in the equation: per capita GDP and per capita GDP². Conventional modernization theory would expect the coefficient for the first term to be positive and significant (the level of democracy should increase as per capita GDP increases up to a certain point), and the coefficient for the second term to be negative but small, indicating diminishing returns on per capita income (Jackman 1973).¹²

8.2.1.2. Economic Growth

Several studies have argued that economic performance affects democratic durability.¹³ Growth rates were estimated as the average of the per capita GDP growth rates reported by the World Bank (in constant 1995 dollars) and by the PWT (Laspeyres and Chain estimates). To reduce potential problems of

¹² Elsewhere we modeled this nonlinear function using a cubic and a fourth-degree polynomial (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003). Problems of collinearity prevented this strategy in the present analysis.

¹³ Diamond (1999: 77–93), Diamond and Linz (1989: 44–6), Gasiorowski (1995), Geddes (1999), Haggard and Kaufman (1995), Lipset, Seong, and Torres (1993), and Przeworski et al. (2000).

endogeneity (e.g. if democracies promote greater growth) we used the lagged value of growth, G_{it-1} , in all models.

8.2.1.3. Population

Population serves as a control variable to reflect the argument that democracy is more viable in smaller, homogeneous societies. Because the causal impact of population is usually not linear (an increase in population from one million to eleven million is presumably more relevant than an increase from one hundred million to one hundred and ten million), we used the natural logarithm of population measured in thousands. Data comes from the Banks Cross-national Time-Series Dataset (Banks 2005), the PWT (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2002), and the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2005). Unfortunately, the Polity data-set excludes microstates with less than half-million inhabitants, so the coefficients for this variable may be artificially depressed.

8.2.1.4. Worldwide Democratic Trends

In order to estimate the influence of worldwide democratization trends ('waves' and 'counter-waves' of democracy), we calculated the percentage of countries that are democratic (excluding the country in question) in any given year at the global level. Countries were counted as democratic when they had a Polity score greater than 5.

8.2.1.5. Regional Democratic Diffusion

Similarly, to estimate the effects of regional democratic diffusion we computed the percentage of countries that were democratic (excluding the country in question) in any given year at the regional level. We classified countries into seven world regions described below. An alternative classification based on a larger number of regional clusters (16) did not alter the conclusions about regional diffusion.

In addition, we included some independent variables that vary across countries but not over time within countries. Every year a given country received the same score on these variables. Two factors explain this lack of variance for these independent variables: (a) some properties do not change over time (e.g. the country's geographic location, whether a country was once a British colony); and (b) in some instances, information is available on general properties of a country, but not on the marginal year-to-year fluctuations for that variable (e.g. ethnic fractionalization).

8.2.1.6. *Former British Colonies*

This dichotomous variable indicates whether the country was a British colony prior to the mid-twentieth century. We coded the information based on several sources, but did not discriminate British ‘settler’ colonies from the rest (Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2004; Hadenius and Teorell 2004). The countries in this category in our sample were Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Canada, Cyprus, Egypt, Eritrea, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

8.2.1.7. *Ethnic and Religious Fractionalization*

Two variables measure ethnic and religious fractionalization, respectively, by averaging the scores developed by Anthony Annett (2001) and James Fearon (2003; Fearon and Laitin 2003). These authors computed the same two scores using the same formula: $1 - \sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2$, where p_i denotes the population share for each of the n social groups (ethnolinguistic groups or religious denominations) in the country. Values approaching 0 indicate ethnic or religious homogeneity, while values approaching 1 indicate extreme fractionalization. Although Annett tabulated figures by decade and Fearon presented yearly time series for 1945–99, in both cases they used static sources and their figures displayed no variance over time. Both authors used similar sources and their scores were practically identical.¹⁴

8.2.1.8. *Regions*

We created dummy variables for each world region with the exception of Western and Southern Europe, our baseline category. In order to limit the number of independent variables, we classified countries into seven regions: Sub-Saharan Africa (fourty-four countries), the Middle East and North Africa (eighteen countries), Western and Southern Europe (seventeen countries), Russia and Eastern Europe (eighteen countries), Latin America (twenty countries), the British Caribbean and North America (five countries), and Asia

¹⁴ Information on British colonial past and social fractionalization was originally collected for the project ‘The Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building’ with support of USAID (Finkel et al. 2006).

(thirty-four countries in South Asia, East Asia, and Oceania). Western and Southern Europe were used as the baseline category in all models. The Appendix lists the regional classification for each country.

8.2.2. Estimation

Consider a simple model of modernization and regional diffusion in which properties of each country (i) at a particular year in time (t) are expected to shape the level of democracy Y_{it} . Equation (1) presents the basic structure of the model, where

$$Y_{it} = b_{00} + b_1(\text{GDP}_{it}) + b_2(\text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_3(G_{it-1}) + b_4(\text{Population}_{it}) \\ + b_5(\text{Diffusion World}_{it}) + b_6(\text{Diffusion Region}_{it}) + U_i + e_{it}. \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), *GDP* accounts for per capita GDP and *Diffusion Region* for the percentage of democratic countries in the region. Modernization theory would anticipate a positive value for b_1 , reflecting the initial increase in the level of democracy as per capita GDP increases and a small negative value for b_2 reflecting the later leveling off of Polity scores as per capita GDP increases beyond a certain point. Strong regional effects would create a positive and significant value for b_6 . Three control variables are also included in the model: G is the annual rate of economic growth, *Population* is the natural logarithm of the population (measured in thousands), and *Diffusion World* is the percentage of democratic countries in the world. Because countries enter the sample with different levels of democracy at t_0 , the model allows each country to deviate from the baseline intercept (b_{00}). If we assume that those deviations follow a normal distribution and they are uncorrelated with the predictors, unit effects can be treated as a component (U_i) of the error term, creating a random effects model in which each country has a unique intercept, $b_{0i} = b_{00} + U_i$. Thus, Equation (1) can be represented with new notation:

$$Y_{it} = b_{0i} + b_1(\text{GDP}_{it}) + b_2(\text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_3(G_{it-1}) + b_4(\text{Population}_{it}) \\ + b_5(\text{Diffusion World}_{it}) + b_6(\text{Diffusion Region}_{it}) + e_{it}. \quad (2a)$$

It is very likely that the initial level of democracy for each country does not follow a random distribution but rather reflects underlying characteristics of each case. For instance, fractionalized societies may have been less able to build democratic institutions; British colonies may have had some advantage in creating democracy; or countries in different regions may have confronted different historical conditions. If this is the case, we can model the

country-specific intercept b_{0i} as the product of a country-level equation:

$$\begin{aligned} b_{0i} = & b_{00} + b_{01}(\text{Africa}_i) + b_{02}(\text{North America}_i) + b_{03}(\text{Latin America}_i) \\ & + b_{04}(\text{Middle East}_i) + b_{05}(\text{Asia}_i) + b_{06}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i) \\ & + b_{07}(\text{Religious fractionalization}_i) + b_{08}(\text{Ethnic fractionalization}_i) \\ & + b_{09}(\text{Former British Colony}_i) + U_i, \end{aligned} \quad (2b)$$

where U_i represents the residual variation in the country intercepts.

By substituting Equation (2b) into Equation (2a), we obtain a mixed model with a complex disturbance term:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{it} = & b_{00} + b_1(\text{GDP}_{it}) + b_2(\text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_3(G_{it-1}) + b_4(\text{Population}_{it}) \\ & + b_5(\text{Diffusion World}_{it}) + b_6(\text{Diffusion Region}_{it}) + b_{01}(\text{Africa}_i) \\ & + b_{02}(\text{North America}_i) + b_{03}(\text{Latin America}_i) + b_{04}(\text{Middle East}_i) \\ & + b_{05}(\text{Asia}_i) + b_{06}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i) \\ & + b_{07}(\text{Religious fractionalization}_i) + b_{08}(\text{Ethnic fractionalization}_i) \\ & + b_{09}(\text{Former British Colony}_i) + U_i + e_{it}. \end{aligned} \quad (2c)$$

In contrast to Equation (1), Equation (2c) captures not only the short-term effects of time-varying covariates on democratization but also the long-term effects of country characteristics and regional location on the overall level of democracy for each country. However, Equation (2c) fails to address the critical issue of causal heterogeneity.

If causal heterogeneity affects the relation between economic development and democracy, the size of coefficients b_1 and b_2 may vary from country to country. Moreover, if our argument about regional specificities is correct, the size of those coefficients may vary systematically across regions. Equation (3a) allows country-level variation not only in the intercept (b_{0i}), but also in the coefficients for per capita GDP (b_{1i} and b_{2i}):

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{it} = & b_{0i} + b_{1i}(\text{GDP}_{it}) + b_{2i}(\text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_3(G_{it-1}) + b_4(\text{Population}_{it}) \\ & + b_5(\text{Diffusion World}_{it}) + b_6(\text{Diffusion Region}_{it}) + e_{it}. \end{aligned} \quad (3a)$$

Variance in the intercepts may be modeled according to Equation (2b) above, while variance in the coefficients may be captured by two country-level equations in which b_{1i} and b_{2i} vary by region. For instance:

$$\begin{aligned} b_{1i} = & b_{10} + b_{11}(\text{Africa}_i) + b_{12}(\text{North America}_i) + b_{13}(\text{Latin America}_i) \\ & + b_{14}(\text{Middle East}_i) + b_{15}(\text{Asia}_i) + b_{16}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i). \end{aligned} \quad (3b)$$

An equivalent equation may be applied to model b_{2i} . By substitution, the mixed model becomes:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y_{it} = & b_{00} + b_{10}(\text{GDP}_{it}) + b_{20}(\text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_3(\text{G}_{it-1}) + b_4(\text{Population}_{it}) \\
 & + b_5(\text{Diffusion World}_{it}) + b_6(\text{Diffusion Region}_{it}) + b_{01}(\text{Africa}_i) \\
 & + b_{02}(\text{North America}_i) + b_{03}(\text{Latin America}_i) + b_{04}(\text{Middle East}_i) \\
 & + b_{05}(\text{Asia}_i) + b_{06}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i) \\
 & + b_{07}(\text{Religious fractionalization}_i) + b_{08}(\text{Ethnic fractionalization}_i) \\
 & + b_{09}(\text{Former British Colony}_i) + b_{11}(\text{Africa}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) \\
 & + b_{12}(\text{North America}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) + b_{13}(\text{Latin America}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) \\
 & + b_{14}(\text{Middle East}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) + b_{15}(\text{Asia}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) \\
 & + b_{16}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}) + b_{21}(\text{Africa}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) \\
 & + b_{22}(\text{North America}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_{23}(\text{Latin America}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) \\
 & + b_{24}(\text{Middle East}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) + b_{25}(\text{Asia}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) \\
 & + b_{26}(\text{USSR-Eastern Europe}_i \times \text{GDP}_{it}^2) + U_i + e_{it}.
 \end{aligned} \tag{3c}$$

Equation (3c) is a hierarchical model in which time-varying covariates operate at the country-year level (level 1), while stable predictors shape the intercept and region mediates the effect of GDP at the country level (level 2). For simplicity, the effect of all other time-varying covariates (growth, population, and diffusion) is treated as ‘fixed’ (i.e. as constant across countries).

Table 8.1 presents the result of the analysis based on Equations (1) (random intercepts model) and (3c) (causal heterogeneity). Consistent with a large body of literature, the first model indicates that per capita GDP has a positive and significant (yet nonlinear) impact on democracy. It shows that there are both regional and global effects, consistent with the burgeoning literature on diffusion. Finally, it shows that countries have significantly different intercepts, meaning that their own unique histories affect how democratic they are. This simple model provides preliminary support for the importance of regional and international influences on democratization.

Model 3c shows that regional characteristics explain part of the variance in the intercepts and the coefficient for GDP. The impact of economic development on democracy is very different for Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East compared to Western Europe (the baseline category). For the Middle East, the negative coefficient b_{14} cancels the positive baseline effects of higher per capita income on democracy (b_{10}), indicating a rather flat (in fact, slightly negative) slope. Countries in this region are slightly less

Table 8.1. Models of regional causal heterogeneity

		Equation (1)		Equation (3c)		Equation (4)	
	Parameter	Estimate	Std. error	Estimate	Std. error	Estimate	Std. error
Intercept							
Baseline	b ₀₀	−9.27	(1.47)	−8.96	(2.09)	−1.06	(2.92)
Sub-Saharan Africa	b ₀₁			−3.85	(1.83)	−8.28	(2.38)
North America and British Caribbean	b ₀₂			−4.22	(3.08)	−3.03	(3.71)
Latin America	b ₀₃			0.80	(1.87)	−4.83	(2.57)
Middle East and North Africa	b ₀₄			−6.90	(1.90)	−10.58	(2.39)
Asia (including Oceania)	b ₀₅			−4.43	(1.63)	−6.77	(2.26)
Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	b ₀₆			−5.71	(2.16)	−3.88	(2.88)
Religious fractionalization	b ₀₇			1.67	(2.41)	1.00	(2.17)
Ethnic fractionalization	b ₀₈			−1.63	(2.02)	−1.02	(1.82)
Former British colony	b ₀₉			3.62	(1.04)	3.52	(0.92)
GDP							
Baseline	b ₁₀	0.42	(0.04)	0.46	(0.06)	0.24	(0.19)
Sub-Saharan Africa	b ₁₁			−2.03	(0.54)	0.62	(0.77)
North America and British Caribbean	b ₁₂			0.53	(0.28)	0.23	(0.52)
Latin America	b ₁₃			−2.30	(0.46)	0.14	(0.85)
Middle East and North Africa	b ₁₄			−0.59	(0.13)	−0.34	(0.26)
Asia (including Oceania)	b ₁₅			0.06	(0.09)	0.32	(0.27)
Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	b ₁₆			0.68	(0.60)	−0.03	(0.82)
GDP ²							
Baseline	b ₂₀	−0.01	(0.00)	−0.01	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Sub-Saharan Africa	b ₂₁			0.16	(0.08)	−0.06	(0.08)
North America and British Caribbean	b ₂₂			−0.01	(0.01)	−0.01	(0.01)
Latin America	b ₂₃			0.17	(0.06)	0.04	(0.09)
Middle East and North Africa	b ₂₄			0.02	(0.00)	0.01	(0.01)
Asia (including Oceania)	b ₂₅			0.00	(0.00)	−0.01	(0.01)
Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	b ₂₆			−0.04	(0.05)	0.02	(0.07)
Other Predictors							
Growth ($t - 1$)	b ₃	−0.97	(0.74)	−0.89	(0.74)	−0.43	(0.32)
Population (ln, thousands)	b ₄	0.03	(0.17)	0.36	(0.18)	0.20	(0.24)
Diffusion (worldwide)	b ₅	0.16	(0.01)	0.16	(0.01)	0.10	(0.02)
Diffusion (regional)	b ₆	0.10	(0.00)	0.11	(0.00)	0.04	(0.01)
Covariance Parameters							
Variance of level 1 residual	e _{it}	12.36	(0.23)	12.13	(0.23)	25.03	(2.86)
Variance of the intercept	U _i	26.16	(3.06)	22.73	(2.79)	6.50	(2.95)
Rho	ρ					0.93	(0.01)
R ² (predicted, Polity)		0.790		0.794		0.664	
Proportional reduction in error (level 1)		0.325		0.389		0.424	
Proportional reduction in error (level 2)		0.332		0.420		0.379	
N = 5,745							

Notes: Dependent variable is Polity IV scale. **Bold** indicates that coefficients are significant at the .05 level. The reported R² is the square of the correlation between the predicted values of each model and the observed values for the dependent variable.

democratic as per capita income increases. For Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, the much stronger, negative interactive effects (b₁₁ and b₁₃) invert the direction of the baseline coefficient. The negative signs of b₁₁ and b₁₃, combined with the positive signs of b₂₁ and b₂₃, indicate a U-shaped pattern.

In these two regions, countries are on average somewhat more democratic at low levels of development. They become less democratic at intermediate levels of per capita income, and finally democracy scores tend to improve as countries cross a certain income threshold. The impact of increases in per capita GDP on the level of democracy is different in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa compared to Eastern Europe and Asia, which show no significant difference with respect to the Western European pattern.

In both models, regional diffusion effects are positive and significant even after controlling for worldwide trends. In order to verify this finding, we developed a more stringent model presented in the last two columns. This test assumes an autoregressive causal structure in which the error term at time t is correlated with the error term in the previous year ($t - 1$), so that

$$e_{it} = \rho e_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it}. \quad (4)$$

In this model, most other predictors lose their statistical significance. The only exceptions are the diffusion terms. Although the absolute size of the diffusion coefficients is depressed compared to models 1 and 3, regional and global effects remain positive and significant. The fact that these variables are significant even with the lagged dependent variable as an explanatory variable shows that international factors significantly alter the odds for or against democratization. This finding is consistent with Daniel Brinks and Michael Coppedge (2006) and Kristian Gleditsch (2002).

In order to illustrate the substantive implications of these findings, we ran simulations based on Model 3c. Figure 8.1 presents the predicted Polity scores for four hypothetical countries located in three regions (the Middle East, Western Europe, and Latin America) at different levels of income per capita. The simulation assumes that those countries were not British colonies and that they have a population size equivalent to the average country in each region. It also assumes that the coefficients for economic growth, ethnic, and religious fractionalization are indistinguishable from zero (this assumption is consistent with the results in Table 8.1), and that half of the countries in the world are democracies. For the sake of comparison, the proportion of democratic countries for Western Europe and the Middle East (i.e. the regional environment) is set at 30 percent. Given this setup, the predicted level of democracy for Western European countries starts relatively high (5.2 points in the Polity scale) and increases monotonically with per capita income, reaching a predicted score of 9.1 at \$ 20,000. In contrast, the expected level of democracy for the Middle East starts out relatively low (-1.5) and actually decreases slightly with greater per capita income (at \$ 20,000, the predicted value is -2.5). Coupled with the sharp differences in the baseline level of

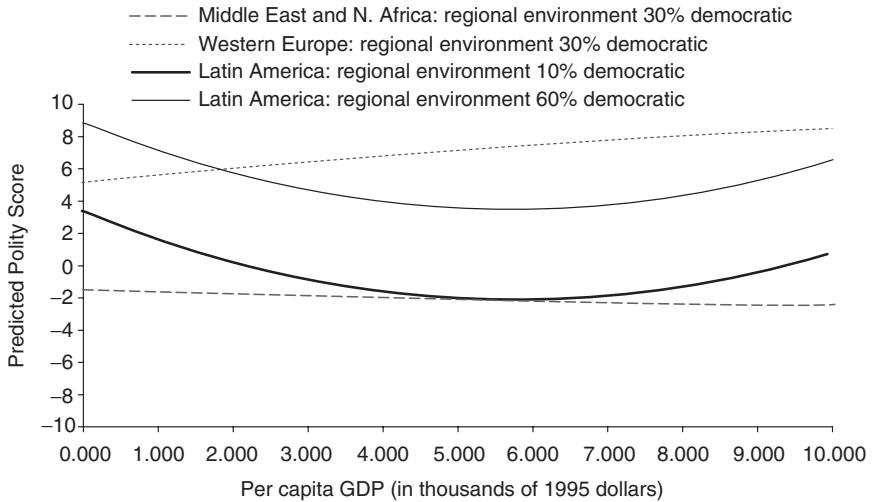


Figure 8.1. Regional heterogeneity: four hypothetical cases

democracy and in the coefficients of the GDP and GDP² variables across regions, Figure 8.1 demonstrates a remarkably different casual impact of per capita GDP on predicted Polity scores. It is plausible that the regional differences would diminish if we added other independent variables, but it seems very unlikely that they would disappear.

In sum, there are important regional differences in the impact of the level of development on democracy. Yet in the quantitative work on modernization and democracy, except for the oil-rich countries, little attention has been given to distinctive regional effects. The fact that there are distinctive regional effects means that it is important to take seriously regional specificities.

Charles Ragin (2000) claims that quantitative analyses are usually oblivious to causal heterogeneity, that is, to the idea that a causal factor could have one impact in one setting but a different impact elsewhere. He is right that many quantitative analyses are not sufficiently attentive to such differences, but quantitative methods can often test for causal heterogeneity more precisely and clearly than qualitative methods.¹⁵

To assess the substantive relevance of regional diffusion effects, we compare two Latin American scenarios in Figure 8.1. In the first one, only 10 percent of the countries in the region are democratic; in the second one, 60 percent of them are. In both scenarios, the Latin American cases display a distinctive

¹⁵ See Bartels (1996) for a discussion of how quantitative social science can pursue awareness of causal heterogeneity.

'bureaucratic authoritarian' pattern (marked by a clear decline in the expected levels of democracy at intermediate levels of development). The markedly more favorable regional political environment produces a positive change of 5.6 points in the Polity scale. Consistent with other recent work, this finding shows powerful regional influences in democratization. In a later section, we take up this point in more detail. First, however, we analyze the implications of the cross-regional differences in the impact of the level of development on democracy.

8.3. CAUSAL HETEROGENEITY AND REGIONAL SPECIFICITIES

Many political scientists believe that regional specificities and other contextual factors are not important. Paul Pierson (2004: 167) noted that context 'has become, for many in the social sciences, a bad word—a synonym for thick description, and an obstacle for social-scientific analysis. Indeed, over the last few decades, much of the social sciences has undergone what could rightly be called a de-contextual revolution'.

In a provocative universalizing claim, Gary King (1996: 160) argued that 'the professional goal of all scientists should be to attempt to demonstrate that context makes no difference whatsoever'.¹⁶ We disagree with this assertion; our position is that context (such as region) is sometimes very important and that political scientists should try to understand in what ways it matters. Sensitivity to context allows researchers to detect specific subpopulations governed by distinctive causal processes. In the case of regional specificities, the point is not merely that one region of the world differs from others in terms of the values on some independent variables (e.g. high income inequalities). Rather, and this is the point that is problematic for King's argument, causal processes (i.e. the underlying structural model explaining the outcome of interest) are different in different regions.

We agree that it is desirable to understand what specific factors account for causal heterogeneity according to context. In this sense, we share with King the

¹⁶ Along similar lines, Bates (1997: 166) argued that 'social scientists seek to identify lawful regularities, which... must not be context bound'. Another prominent example of a sweeping universalizing claim at odds with the importance of contextual specificity (or causal heterogeneity) is King, Keohane, and Verba (1994: 93): 'The notion of unit homogeneity (or the less demanding assumption of constant causal effects) lies at the base of all scientific research'. Contrary to their assertion, considerable quantitative research, by using interaction terms and exponential terms, demonstrates that scientific research does *not* depend on unit homogeneity or on constant causal effects. For a fourth prominent claim that social science should rest on universal arguments, see Ferejohn and Satz (1995).

viewpoint that it would be desirable to statistically eliminate the significance of contextual variables such as region and replace them with variables with a clearer substantive content. However, explaining *why* context matters diverges from King's claim that it does *not* matter.

King posits the example of two 'conservative, poor white men who identify with the Republican Party, prefer more defense spending, and insist that the federal government balance the budget immediately. They are each afraid that someone will take their guns away, hope to end welfare as anyone knows it, and think Rush Limbaugh should be president'. In King's example, given these attributes of two voters, it does not matter whether they live in a liberal bastion or a conservative stronghold; both will vote in the same way. But his assertion misses the point that the effects of race, class, and sex on voting behavior are mediated by the voters' environment. The neighborhood where two voters with similar demographic characteristics (e.g. poor white men) live affects their social and political values (in King's example, the likelihood that they would be conservative, identify with the Republican Party, prefer more defense spending, etc.), which in turn influence their vote. In this way, context has an impact on values, voting, and other political behavior. A poor white male who lives in the rural south is more likely to have conservative values and ultimately to vote Republican in a presidential election than a poor white male who lives in San Francisco or New York. The political opinions that are affected by context help explain *why* context is important; they should not be taken as an indication that context does not make a difference in politics.¹⁷

As social scientists, we would like to know not only that there are regional specificities that challenge assumptions of universality and of causal homogeneity, but also what causes such regional specificities. In this sense, this chapter opens up an important new research question that we cannot resolve here, namely, why some regions are distinctive. As King (1996) argues, if it were possible to quantify all explanatory variables in a valid and reliable manner, the ultimate goal should be to eliminate statistically significant differences across regions (see also Przeworski and Teune 1970).¹⁸ Then we could fully explain what produces regional specificities. In this chapter, we do not explain

¹⁷ In other words, where a voter lives has indirect (i.e. mediated through the impact on values) as well as direct effects on voting. See Shanks and Miller (1990) for a convincing argument that social scientists should be attentive to the indirect effects and should avoid collapsing direct and indirect effects into the same equation (as King implicitly does) to conclude that a demographic variable (such as class, sex, or domicile) has no impact.

¹⁸ This is an ideal, but not one that can be easily achieved. Even if ideally we might be able to identify all sources of regional specificity and treat them as nomothetic variables, in practice, the factors that make Latin America different from other regions are too path-dependent to fully disentangle. See Hall (2003) for a discussion of how path dependence challenges conventional assumptions of causality.

what specific factors make some regions different;¹⁹ our contribution here is rather taking stock of this specificity and indicating the need for further research on why different regions have different dynamics. Even if we cannot fully explain regional specificities, identifying them has important implications for social science.

A great deal of attention in political science has been given to the impossibility of generalizing from very small samples (King, Keohane, and Verba et al. 1994: 208–30). Less attention has been given to the need for caution in moving from generalizations based on global samples to even fairly large samples (such as regions) drawn from the global population. Such caution is sometimes in order. This cautionary note is not a call for endlessly smaller units of analysis or for avoiding all generalizations. These positions are at odds with our understanding of the social scientific enterprise. Yet contextual specificity (Adcock and Collier 2001), causal heterogeneity (Ragin 1987, 2000), and ‘bounded generalizations’ (Bunce 2000) and domain restrictions are important parts of the toolkit of social science methodology.

An emphasis on the importance of regions does not entail a position against large-N generalizations in social science research. We adopt an intermediate position: generalizations are important, but there are few truly universal findings in the social sciences.²⁰ Most generalizations in social science are bounded by geographic or historical contexts.²¹ Regional specificities are not the only way to bound generalizations in social science, but because regions are large parts of the world with distinctive dynamics and intra-regional influences, delimiting some generalizations by regions is useful.

A claim that a region has specific dynamics inevitably entails comparison with other regions or with the rest of the world. It is neither a call for the kind of cross-regional work that is most common in comparative politics (comparing one or a few countries in one region with one or a few in another, e.g. Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Marx 1998), nor a call for intra-regional comparison. Without comparing across regions, it is impossible to establish regional distinctiveness (Karl and Schmitter 1994). Examining regional specificities therefore does not imply focusing exclusively on one area of the world. To the contrary, good work on regional specificities must compare across

¹⁹ One obvious reason for Latin American specificities is the impact of the United States on the region. Latin America has other specificities that could help account for the distinctive dynamics underscored in this chapter, including greater inequalities than any other region of the world.

²⁰ Universal findings hold for most representative samples of the same population (i.e. the relevant set of cases). But the definition of the population is itself an analytical task (Ragin 2000: 43–63). For instance, ‘universal’ may simply mean all US voters in the second half of the twentieth century.

²¹ For a good example of how presumably universal findings may be historically bounded, see Boix and Stokes (2003).

regions and take broader theoretical issues and literatures into account. The domain restriction becomes clear only by comparing countries in one region to broader sets of cases.

8.4. DISSEMINATION AND DIFFUSION OF DEMOCRACY

Our second argument on behalf of the importance of regions of the world focuses on regional demonstration and diffusion effects, once again related to democracy. A favorable regional environment can enhance chances for democracy, while an unpropitious regional political environment might work against it.

To further explore the impact of the regional political environment on democracy, we undertake an analysis of regime changes to and from democracy in 19 Latin American countries for 1946–99.²² The dependent variable for all authoritarian regimes is whether the regime changes to a democracy or semidemocracy in a given year. The dependent variable for all democratic and semidemocratic regimes is whether it breaks down into authoritarianism in a given year. We use the trichotomous scale of democracy developed by Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán in Chapter 5 of this volume. This measure classifies regimes as democratic, semidemocratic, or authoritarian. We combine the democratic and semidemocratic cases into one category of competitively elected regimes and analyze what factors help explain transitions from authoritarianism to competitively elected regimes and what factors help explain breakdowns of competitively elected regimes.

We use two independent variables to examine regional effects in regime changes. One variable ('region') assesses the impact of Latin America's regional political context on the likelihood of regime durability and change. We measured the regional political environment through the number of strictly democratic countries in the region every year, excluding the country in question if it was democratic. The coding for this independent variable was based on our trichotomous measure of democracy. The value of this variable theoretically ranges from 0, if none of the other 19 countries in the region (including Cuba) were democratic in a given year, to 19 if all 20 countries were democratic in that year. We exclude the country in question to avoid problems of endogeneity. We expected a more democratic regional environment to encourage democracy.

The other regional variable is US foreign policy. As a hegemonic power in the Americas, the United States can affect the likelihood of transitions to

²² For more details, see Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2005).

competitive regimes and of regime breakdowns. We code a 0 for years in which US foreign policy subordinated democracy to other issues (1945–76, 1981–4) and 1 for years in which democracy was a priority.

As control variables, we use the level of economic development, class structure, economic performance, party-system fragmentation, and party-system polarization. We measure the level of development using per capita GDP in 1995 US dollars, following the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2005). We use the percentage of the labor force in manufacturing as a gross indicator of the numerical leverage of the working class. Two variables measure a regime's economic performance: change in per capita income (i.e. the rate of economic growth) and the consumer price index (inflation). For both growth and inflation, we use a short-term measure (the previous year) and a medium-term measure (average growth or inflation of a given regime since its inception, for up to ten years).²³ To assess whether presidential regimes with fragmented party systems are more prone to breakdown, we created a dichotomous variable coded as 1 if the effective number of parties (ENP) in the lower (or only) chamber was equal or greater than 3.0 in a given year. The ENP is a mathematical calculation that weights parties according to their size and indicates the level of party-system fragmentation; an effective number of 3.0 or more parties clearly indicates multipartism.²⁴ We employ a dichotomous indicator for theoretical reasons and because of missing information on the precise number of parties for Ecuador in the 1950s and Peru in the mid-1940s.²⁵ To measure party-system polarization for democratic and semidemocratic regimes, we used Michael Coppedge's index of party systems (1998b: 556–7) in 11 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela). His index adopts values between 0 (when all votes in an election are located at the center of the political spectrum) and 100 (when all the votes are equally split between extreme left and extreme right parties). Unfortunately, scores for the remaining eight countries in our sample are not available.²⁶

²³ The impact of inflation on regime changes should be nonlinear, given the existence of many episodes of 3 and 4 digit inflation rates in our Latin American sample (Gasirowski 1995, 1998). For this reason, we used the natural logarithm of the inflation rate. The actual formula employed was $\ln[1 + i(t - 1)]$ for any case of $i \geq 0$ and $-\ln[1 + |i(t - 1)|]$ for $i < 0$ (i.e. deflation), where i is the annual percentage change in the consumer price index (Gasirowski 2000: 326).

²⁴ The formula for the ENP is $1/\text{sum}(p^2)$, where p is the proportion of seats obtained by each party (Laakso and Taagepera 1979).

²⁵ A threshold of 3.0 is a stronger indicator of multipartism than a lower number, but a 2.5 threshold did not alter the overall results.

²⁶ For operational reasons, we assumed that ideological polarization could change at each election but remained constant between elections.

Our data-set covers a total of 19 countries over 54 years (1946–99), providing data for 1,026 country-years. We model regime change using rare event logistic regression (RELogit), a statistical technique designed for dependent variables in which the distribution of the dichotomous outcome is very uneven. This is the situation with regime changes. In our data-set with 1,026 regime-years, there are 53 regime changes (32 transitions to democracy or semidemocracy and 21 breakdowns).

Notwithstanding burgeoning interest in international diffusion and dissemination effects on democracy, our work on this issue has two distinctive features. This is one of the first attempts to examine regional diffusion and dissemination effects in terms of the conventional regions of the world (see also Hadenius and Teorell 2004). Brinks and Coppedge (2006) and Gleditsch (2002) looked at regional effects, but they measured region in terms of the geographic proximity of one country to the next. This is a reasonable proxy for measuring region, but our approach, looking at regions as more conventionally (though less precisely) understood, is also worthwhile. Second, most of this recent work has focused on the diffusion and dissemination of democracy (for an exception, see Sanchez 2003); we do this but also look at the diffusion and dissemination of authoritarianism.

8.4.1. Transitions to Democracy and Semidemocracy

Between 1946 and 1999, 32 transitions from authoritarianism took place in the region. Table 8.2 presents two statistical models based on rare events logistic regression of transitions from authoritarian rule into democracy or semidemocracy for 1946–99. Years are coded 1 if a transition took place, 0 otherwise. The first model includes structural and macroeconomic predictors of democracy and the regional political variable. The region variable is highly significant and has the expected positive coefficient; a larger number of democracies in the region in a given year enhanced the likelihood that any particular authoritarian regime would undergo a transition. It is the only statistically significant variable; other independent variables that other scholars have found to be important in explaining regime transitions, such as regime economic performance, had no effect. Model 2.2 treats US foreign policy separately from other regional environmental effects. The results are very similar to those obtained in Model 2.1; region remains the only significant variable.

Regional effects thus help explain the wave of democratization that spread throughout Latin America from the late 1970s until the early 1990s. Based on the results presented in Model 2.1, we estimated the expected probability of a transition from authoritarian rule in two historical periods: 1946–77

Table 8.2. Predictors of democratic transitions in Latin America, 1946–99

Variable	Model 2.1	Model 2.2
Per capita GDP ($t - 1$)	–0.052 (0.214)	–0.047 (0.216)
Labor force in industry (%)	0.104 (0.068)	0.104 (0.068)
Growth ($t - 1$)	0.052 (0.057)	0.049 (0.057)
Inflation (ln, $t - 1$)	0.025 (0.206)	0.010 (0.211)
Growth (last 10 years)	–0.169 (0.097)	–0.177 (0.097)
Inflation (ln, last 10 years)	–0.075 (0.277)	–0.096 (0.289)
Region	0.255*** (0.079)	0.198** (0.098)
US policy		0.438 (0.503)
Constant	–5.603*** (1.080)	–5.314*** (1.124)
N	452	452
Pseudo R ²	0.0913	0.0944

Notes: Entries are rare event logistic regression coefficients (robust standard errors adjusted for clustering by country). Pseudo R² corresponds to standard logistic model with equivalent specification.

* Significant at .1 level; ** at .05 level; *** at .01 level.

and 1978–99. Assuming that all independent variables except for the regional context stayed at their historical means (i.e. for 1946–99), the expected probability of facing a transition for the typical authoritarian regime would be 4.5 percent in 1946–77 (when the average number of democracies surrounding authoritarian enclaves was 4.4) and would rise to 8.7 percent in 1978–99 (when the average number of democracies was 7.1).

More than any other variable we quantified, a more favorable regional political environment helped boost the rate of transitions to competitive regimes after 1977. International factors only occasionally are the driving force behind a transition to democracy; in our large data-set, Panama in 1990, with the US invasion that deposed an authoritarian regime and installed a democratically elected president, was the only unequivocal example. But international factors can significantly alter the odds for or against transitions. This finding is consistent with Brinks and Coppedge's (2006) and Gleditsch's (2002) conclusions based on larger samples of countries.

Because of our interest in regional specificities in this chapter, it is notable that many previous analyses have argued that economic performance affects regime durability.²⁷ We find no such effect for the durability of authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Thus, on this issue, too, it appears that Latin America has distinctive political dynamics.

8.4.2. Democratic Breakdowns and Durability

We are also interested in the impact of the regional political environment on regime change in the opposite direction, from democracy to authoritarianism. Our data-set contains 525 regime-years of democracy and semidemocracy between 1946 and 1999. We have information covering all the independent variables discussed above for 517 cases (344 cases if we include the index of party-system polarization, which is available for only 11 countries). During these 517 regime-years of democracy and semidemocracy, there were 21 regime breakdowns.

Table 8.3 shows the results of a rare events logistic regression predicting a change from democracy or semidemocracy to authoritarianism in any particular regime-year for the entire 1946–99 period. In Model 3.1, as anticipated, a more democratic regional environment reduces the chances of breakdown ($p < .001$). Model 3.2 includes Coppedge's index of ideological polarization (available for 11 countries) (1998*b*). The regional political environment remains important in explaining the likelihood of democratic breakdowns. Model 3.3 distinguishes US foreign policy from other effects of the regional political environment. Whereas the region variable was significant for explaining transitions even when US foreign policy is treated separately, for breakdowns, the US policy variable is more important, a result consistent with Peter Sanchez (2003).

Changes in the regional context help explain the vastly greater stability of democratic and semidemocratic regimes after 1978. The regional context changed from an average of 4.2 democracies surrounding competitive regimes in 1946–77 to 9.2 in 1978–99. Taking Model 3.2 as the reference, and assuming that all other variables remained at their 1946–99 means while the region variable shifted from 4.2 to 9.2, the predicted probability that a given democracy or semidemocracy would break down in a particular year would have plummeted from 5.6 percent to 0.4 percent. No other variable has an impact that is nearly as great in explaining the increased stability of democratic regimes after 1978.

²⁷ See the sources cited in n. 13.

Table 8.3. Predictors of democratic breakdown, Latin America, 1946–99

Variable	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Per capita GDP ($t - 1$)	0.317** (0.136)	0.394** (0.158)	0.298** (0.142)
Labor force industry (%)	−0.075 (0.051)	−0.103* (0.053)	−0.087* (0.050)
Growth ($t - 1$)	0.051 (0.043)	−0.002 (0.061)	0.045 (0.042)
Inflation (ln, $t - 1$)	0.118 (0.212)	−0.221 (0.170)	0.209 (0.291)
Growth (last 10 years)	−0.121** (0.055)	−0.137* (0.076)	−0.091* (0.052)
Inflation (ln, last 10 years)	0.349 (0.229)	0.559*** (0.143)	0.466* (0.278)
Region	−0.601*** (0.109)	−0.561*** (0.161)	−0.233 (0.220)
Multipartism	1.210*** (0.434)	1.721*** (0.617)	1.082** (0.439)
Semidemocracy	2.546*** (0.382)	3.105*** (0.546)	2.161*** (0.374)
IP (Polarization Index)		0.014 (0.009)	
US policy			−2.861** (1.449)
Constant	−1.884*** (0.723)	−1.966** (0.860)	−3.312*** (0.933)
N	517	344	517
Pseudo R ²	0.3028	0.3256	0.3277

Note: RELogit coefficients (standard errors adjusted for clustering by country).

Pseudo R² corresponds to standard logistic model with equivalent specification.

* Significant at .1 level; ** at .05 level; *** at .01 level.

A more favorable regional political environment is (measured through either the region or the US policy variables) a key to understanding the sharp post-1978 reduction in the breakdown rate. Changes in the levels of the other independent variables did not have much effect on the predicted probability of a democratic breakdown. Once again, the regional political environment stands out as a central explanatory variable. One implication is that domestic and international influences jointly shape regime outcomes; comparative political scientists who work on regimes must take the regional political context into consideration.

Table 8.3 also indicates a regional specificity. Adam Przeworski et al. (2000) showed that at a global level, democratic governments are more likely to

endure at a higher per capita income level. Their finding was consistent with a much larger literature that argued that more developed countries were more likely to be democracies. A higher level of development, however, had no immunizing impact for democracy in Latin America. Democratic and semi-democratic regimes were vulnerable to breakdown at even fairly high levels of development. This finding is consistent with Guillermo O'Donnell's argument (1973) that the more developed countries of South America were especially prone to bureaucratic authoritarianism in the 1960s and 1970s and also with our finding (see above) that in a wide income band, Latin American countries with a higher level of development were less likely to be democratic (see also Landman 1999).

8.5. WHY ARE THERE REGIONAL DISSEMINATION AND DIFFUSION EFFECTS?

A growing body of literature has recognized the importance of dissemination and diffusion effects on political regimes (Gleditsch 2002; Gleditsch and Ward 2006) and of regional political influences in policymaking (Meseguer 2002; Weyland 2004). But what are the mechanisms through which regional dissemination and diffusion occurs? The statistical analysis above does not answer this question. Covadonga Meseguer (2002) and Kurt Weyland (2004) have addressed this issue in relation to economic policy ideas, Jon Pevehouse (2002*a*, 2002*b*, 2005) has examined how membership in regional organizations shapes diffusion of democracy; and Gleditsch (2002) and Gleditsch and Michael Ward (2006) have analyzed regional influences on democratization. Here we briefly mention three regional causal mechanisms in relation to waves of democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America: the dissemination of norms and ideas; the presence of transnational actors; and the policies of regional hegemons and international organizations. These mechanisms do not exhaust all possible explanations for region-wide trends, but they provide a theoretical foundation for the regional diffusion patterns found in Section 8.4.

First, the dissemination of norms and ideas affects the way domestic actors perceive their political interests and can thereby affect their regime preference and their political behavior. For example, the region-wide dissemination of anticommunist ideologies during the Cold War reinforced the willingness of some actors to support military coups in Latin America. The broad dissemination of pro-democratic norms in recent decades has raised the costs of coups. The cross-national dissemination of norms has also inspired human

rights activists to fight for restoring democracy where it does not exist (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Htun 2003). This dissemination of norms and ideas frames the way political actors perceive political regimes and their own interests and political preferences. The dissemination of norms can legitimize and empower some domestic groups at the expense of others.

Many channels of international dissemination and communication about politics are more powerful within than across regions. Some actors that have an important effect on political regimes (e.g. the Organization of American States (OAS)) function mainly or exclusively in a given region (Pevehouse 2002a, 2002b, 2005). In a region such as Latin America, a language common to most countries facilitates cross-national communication and helps explain why regional communication and dissemination of ideas is powerful, independently of cross-regional communication and dissemination.

A second mechanism through which diffusion occurs is that some international actors operate in many or all countries in the same region. Although these organizations have different impacts in different countries, their change in orientation over time can affect political regimes in different countries. For example, in Latin America, changes in the Catholic Church in many countries positively affected the regional political environment for democracy. The Church has traditionally been an actor of political import in most Latin American countries, and until the 1960s, it frequently sided with authoritarians. Since the 1970s, the Catholic Church has usually supported democratization (Huntington 1991: 74–85). Under the sway of the Second Vatican Council of 1962–5, the Church came to accept and promote democracy in most of the region.²⁸ In Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Peru, and Nicaragua, the Church strengthened the coalition of forces that worked for a transition to democracy. Change in the Catholic Church affected prospects for democracy in other regions, but Latin America is the only overwhelmingly Catholic region of the world, hence change in the Church affected Latin America more than other regions.²⁹ Moreover, although the Catholic Church is global in scope, it has regional specificities that stem from a combination of responding to some regionally specific opportunities and challenges, a regional leadership organization (the Latin American Bishops'

²⁸ There were some ignominious exceptions to this generalization; e.g. the Church in Argentina and Guatemala supported repressive authoritarian regimes in the 1970s and early 1980s.

²⁹ If the Catholic Church were the only such actor that had an impact across several Latin American countries and if it had an equal impact in countries outside Latin America, it would be more appropriate to think of this as a Church rather than a regional impact. In reality, several important actors had a cross-national impact within Latin America.

Conference), and regional communication among theologians, priests, religious, and bishops.

A third mechanism of diffusion is that powerful external actors such as the United States can affect the likelihood of coups and democratic transitions in a range of ways: (a) moral suasion that changes the attitudes and behavior of domestic actors; (b) symbolic statements that embolden some actors, strengthen their position, and weaken other actors; (c) sanctions against governments; (d) conspiracies against governments; and (e) military actions that overthrow the regime and install a new one. In the first three kinds of influence, external actors shape regime change by influencing domestic actors; in the final one, external actors directly determine regime change. This final possibility has been the rare exception in Latin America, but external actors, especially the US government and since 1990, the OAS, have frequently shaped the logic, costs, and benefits of domestic actors through the first three kinds of influence. By doing so, the United States and OAS have significantly affected the regional political environment.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States supported several coups and helped create an ideological environment in which conservative actors in Latin America believed that the United States would not object if they fostered coups (Robinson 1996; Sanchez 2003). During most of the post-1977 period, the United States has supported transitions to competitive regimes and has opposed breakdowns of such regimes. Its positions have raised the costs of coups to potential coup players. Under such circumstances, some players that would otherwise have probably supported coups have not done so. The threat of sanctions by the United States and the OAS makes the expected benefit–cost ratio of supporting a coup unfavorable. The United States exerts much more influence in Latin America than in other regions of the world; its influence in Latin America is another reason for the existence of important regional influences in democratization.

Multilateral organizations such as the OAS can also exert a region-wide influence on political regimes (Pevehouse 2002a, 2002b, 2005). Of course, this does not mean that their influence is homogeneous across all countries of the region.

Since 1991, the OAS has significantly influenced several political regime outcomes in Latin America. In 1991, the OAS passed Resolution 1080, which called for a meeting of the foreign ministers of the western hemisphere countries within the first few days of a democratic breakdown and legitimated OAS intervention in such cases. Resolution 1080 prompted OAS interventions in Haiti (1991), Peru (1992), Guatemala (1993), and Paraguay (1996). In the aftermath of approving Resolution 1080, in December 1992, the OAS approved the Washington Protocol, which enables the OAS General

Assembly to approve suspending the membership of any member country that experiences a coup (Burrell and Shifter 2000; Perina 2000). Resolution 1080 raised the costs of a coup and in several crisis moments altered the calculations and behavior of domestic political actors. In Latin America, the threat of international sanctions against coup players was clear when coup mongers in Paraguay (1996) and Guatemala (1993) backed off when confronted with the likelihood of sanctions, and when Fujimori (Peru 1992) responded to international pressures by restoring elections (Pevehouse 2005).

Democratic governments in Latin America have supported efforts to encourage democracy and to impose sanctions against authoritarian regimes. Collectively, NGOs, multilateral agencies, and the governments of Latin America, Western Europe, and North America have created a norm of disapproval of authoritarianism and support—ideological, if not material—for democracy. These norms are coupled with sanctions that can hurt coup players' interests.

Other subregional organizations also help to explain why diffusion occurs. In July 1996, the presidents of the Mercosur countries—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile—signed an agreement stating that any member nation would be expelled if democracy broke down. Pressure from neighboring Mercosur nations helped avert a coup in Paraguay in April 1996. In an age of growing international economic integration, authoritarian governments now faced the possibility of economic sanctions such as those that crippled the economies of Panama under Noriega and Haiti after the military deposed Aristide. Together, the United States, OAS, and Mercosur have raised the costs of coups and of retaining authoritarian rule.

8.6. CONCLUSION: REGIONS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Notwithstanding the traditional organization of comparative politics along regional lines, very little work has built a case for why regions are substantively important. In an excellent book, Gleditsch (2002) argued that regions are important in understanding world politics, especially international relations. We have extended this argument to comparative politics. Regions of the world are important in understanding such important political phenomena as the level of democracy and changes in political regimes.

Empirically, we have made this argument by looking at two different kinds of evidence. First, regional specificities are important in understanding political processes across regions (see also Bunce 1995, 1998, 2000). The impact of the level of development on democracy is different across regions. In the

oil-exporting countries of the Middle East, autocracies rule despite high levels of per capita income. In Latin America, per capita income has a distinctive nonmonotonic impact on the level of democracy.

Second, regional dynamics are important in shaping prospects for democracy (Gleditsch 2002). Hence, it is impossible to understand regime change by focusing only on individual countries or only on global trends. Political regimes were traditionally a subject matter for comparative political scientists who focused on domestic processes, but regime dynamics are not exclusively domestically driven. Both because of regional specificities and because of regional influences, social scientists and historians must be attentive to the importance of regions in politics.

While advocating the importance of regions in comparative politics, we argue for some approaches to studying regions and against others. We reject the assumption that regions are relatively homogeneous, and we reject gross generalizations about regions as a whole unless there is empirical evidence to support them. Our approach looks at regional specificities and diffusion mechanisms, but it nevertheless treats the countries within the region as distinct. We treated each country differently by virtue of assigning each one a different score for every independent and dependent variable. For a region as heterogeneous as Latin America, an assumption of homogeneity hinders understanding. It is possible (though in social science research it has been uncommon) to acknowledge profound heterogeneity within a region of the world and to simultaneously treat regions as important. Equally important, the only way to verify whether a region has specific dynamics is to compare it with other regions or with some broader set of cases.

Methodologically, our work on regional specificities lies between two extreme positions in political science. On the one hand, our emphasis on regional specificities removes us from universalizing approaches to political science that deny the importance of context. Generalizations are important, but political scientists also should be attentive to causal heterogeneity (Ragin 2000: 88–119; Hall 2003) and contextual differences (Adcock and Collier 2001; Bunce 1998, 2000).³⁰ Some universalistic approaches to social science claim

³⁰ The search for universal theory can sometimes hinder understanding in the social sciences (Green and Shapiro 1994). Downs (1957) implicitly presented his theory of party motivation (winning votes) and behavior (adopting ideological positions that enhance the capacity to win votes) in a universalistic way. Subsequent innovations improved on his work in countless ways but most subsequent work in spatial modeling of party competition retained the idea that all parties focus on winning votes or seats; they maximize their utility in an electoral game. However, in contexts of unstable democracy where some actors might prefer authoritarian rule, parties might sacrifice votes and seats so as to maximize their preferred outcome in a regime game—either to preserve democracy or thwart it. In these contexts, it is impossible to understand parties' objectives and behavior through analysis focused exclusively on electoral competition

to be more scientific than other approaches (Ferejohn and Satz 1995; Bates 1997), but an awareness of causal heterogeneity is fully consistent with rigor and can be superior to universalistic claims in advancing understanding of key issues (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Beck and Katz 2004; Luke 2004). If a casual mechanism holds in some circumstances but not others, social scientists best be aware of this fact.

On the other hand, an examination of regions also separates us from individualizing approaches, which pursue a detailed understanding of every case. By treating (through the quantitative analysis) each country in a given year as having different attributes, in one respect we share with individualizing approaches an awareness of the importance of national differences. But our interest in trends beyond a single country and in cross-regional differences signals a profound departure from individualizing social science research.³¹

Social science should be built on a diversity of research strategies, some stressing generalization above specificities (though such work must also be attentive to some specificities), others paying greater attention to specificities while working within an understanding of broader comparative and theoretical conceptions (Fishman 2005). Different units of analysis in social science contribute to the larger picture of how politics and society function. Just as large-N global analysis and case studies help understand this larger picture, so, for some research questions, does a focus on regions. Indeed, it is impossible to grasp some important political dynamics without awareness of regional specificities and influences.

Within this conception of social science, one of the least developed strategies in studies on political regimes (and in other fields as well) is an intermediate N strategy. Region-wide studies of democratization that are sensitive to intraregional differences are uncommon (for an exception, see Bratton and van de Walle 1997).³² Both the intermediate N strategy and the regional research design, which in principle are discrete but in our case are combined, are useful compliments to the large-N and small-N studies that overwhelmingly dominate democratization studies.

(Mainwaring 2003). The original universalistic theory could conceivably be revised in a more comprehensive manner, but it would have to be a more context-dependent universalistic theory.

³¹ Case studies can make valuable contributions to social science. For arguments about contextual specificity and how to balance it with some generalization, see Adcock and Collier (2001: 534–6) and Verba (1967). Fishman (2005) persuasively argues that at the core of Max Weber's approach to social science was a balance between the effort to build general theories and a keen awareness of the specificities of different cases—a position we fully endorse.

³² Many works focus on differences across a few cases in a given region, but few simultaneously take a region as a whole and evince a strong interest in intraregional differences.

APPENDIX

Table 8.4. List of countries and regions, 1950–2003

Region	Country (N = Years in sample)
Asia (including Oceania)*	Afghanistan (20), Armenia (12), Australia (52), Azerbaijan (10), Bangladesh (32), Bhutan (22), Cambodia (9), China (50), Fiji (33), Georgia (12), India (52), Indonesia (42), Japan (52), Kazakhstan (12), Korea, Republic of (49), Kyrgyzstan (12), Laos (18), Malaysia (45), Mongolia (21), Nepal (42), New Zealand (52), Pakistan (52), Papua New Guinea (28), Philippines (52), Singapore (38), Solomon Islands (21), Sri Lanka (52), Taiwan (46), Tajikistan (12), Thailand (52), Timor Leste (1), Turkmenistan (12), Uzbekistan (12), Vietnam (18)
Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	Albania (22), Belarus (12), Bulgaria (22), Croatia (12), Czech Republic (10), Estonia (12), Hungary (42), Latvia (12), Lithuania (12), Macedonia (12), Moldova (12), Poland (32), Romania (42), Russian Federation (13), Serbia and Montenegro (6), Slovakia (10), Slovenia (11), Ukraine (12)
Latin America	Argentina (52), Bolivia (52), Brazil (52), Chile (51), Colombia (52), Costa Rica (52), Cuba (10), Dominican Republic (51), Ecuador (51), El Salvador (52), Guatemala (52), Haiti (42), Honduras (52), Mexico (52), Nicaragua (52), Panama (52), Paraguay (51), Peru (51), Uruguay (52), Venezuela (52)
Middle East and North Africa	Algeria (41), Bahrain (21), Egypt (52), Iran (47), Iraq (29), Israel (52), Jordan (48), Kuwait (35), Libya (26), Morocco (46), Oman (41), Saudi Arabia (33), Sudan (42), Syria (42), Tunisia (41), Turkey (52), United Arab Emirates (28), Yemen (12)
North America and the British Caribbean	Canada (52), Guyana (37), Jamaica (43), Trinidad and Tobago (41), United States of America (52)
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola (27), Benin (42), Botswana (37), Burkina Faso (42), Burundi (39), Cameroon (42), Central African Republic (42), Chad (42), Comoros (27), Congo, D.R. (Zaire) (41), Republic of the Congo (42), Côte d'Ivoire (42), Djibouti (15), Equatorial Guinea (34), Eritrea (10), Ethiopia (52), Gabon (42), Gambia (37), Ghana (44), Guinea (43), Guinea-Bissau (29), Kenya (40), Lesotho (37), Liberia (41), Madagascar (42), Malawi (39), Mali (42), Mauritania (42), Mauritius (34), Mozambique (27), Namibia (14), Niger (42), Nigeria (42), Rwanda (42), Senegal (42), Sierra Leone (42), Somalia (29), South Africa (52), Swaziland (32), Tanzania (41), Togo (42), Uganda (39), Zambia (39), Zimbabwe (33)
Western and Southern Europe	Austria (52), Belgium (52), Cyprus (42), Denmark (52), Finland (52), France (52), Germany (32), Greece (51), Ireland (52), Italy (52), Netherlands (52), Norway (52), Portugal (52), Spain (52), Sweden (51), Switzerland (52), United Kingdom (52)

* We also use an alternative classification of the countries in this category, placing them into four different groups: (a) Australia and New Zealand; (b) Melanesia (Fiji and the Solomon Islands); (c) Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were included with the other former republics of the USSR; and (d) Asia (the remaining countries in the group). A reestimation of the Model 3b (Table 8.1) using this classification produced no change in the substantive results.

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Democracy, Dictatorship, and Economic Development: A Model of Reference-Dependent Choices with Experimental Data*

Andrew C. Gould and Andrew J. Maggio

The impact of economic development on political democracy is perhaps the most studied topic in modern comparative politics, at least since Seymour Lipset (1959). But scholars still contest the basic facts and explanations. As for the facts, scholars have yet to enunciate a consensus over the effects of economic development on the likelihood of transitions to democracy and on the likelihood of the survival of existing democracies. Nor do we have a satisfactory analysis of the explanatory mechanisms. Even as researchers explore myriad possible connections between economic factors and political regimes, they rely almost exclusively on expected utility assumptions that fail to explain adequately the outcomes of interest. In this chapter we offer a new way to take the literature forward.

With regard to the basic empirical trends that call for explanation, we take as our point of departure the fact that economic development improves the odds for the survival of democracy far more than it improves the odds for a transition to democracy. We do not suggest that this view is held by all scholars. In a recent finding both heralded and critiqued by other scholars, Adam Przeworski et al. assert that development has *no* effect on the likelihood

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of a transition to democracy. 'It is not that democracies are more likely to emerge when countries develop under authoritarianism', they write, 'but that, however they do emerge, they are more likely to survive in countries that are already developed' (Przeworski et al. 2000: 88–106; see also Przeworski and Limongi 1997: 167; Przeworski 2003). Yet Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (2003: 525) contend that economic development does positively increase the probability that a country will undergo a transition to democracy and Boix (2003: 43) reiterates the critique that development indeed improves the odds for a transition. Thus, even though David Laitin (2002: 658) considers Przeworski's finding to be an accepted truth, indeed to be one of the few main accomplishments of comparative political science, we suggest that this finding is not indisputable.

Indeed, we are convinced that there is empirical support for the view that economic development has an effect on both democratic transitions and the stability of democracy, but that development has protected democracies far more than it has undermined dictatorships. One can calculate the effects of development on the survival rates of dictatorships and democracies by using coefficients from two prominent analyses.¹ At \$3,000 per capita GDP (1985 international prices), calculating from Przeworski et al.'s coefficients (2000: 124), the life expectancy of a dictatorship (until transition to democracy) is 18 years and the life expectancy of a democracy (until breakdown) is just 1 year. At \$8,500, both would last 12 years. At \$10,000, the life expectancy of the dictatorship diminishes marginally to 11 years, while the life expectancy of the democracy grows to 69 years. At \$20,000, the life expectancy of the dictatorship is only cut to 6 years, but the life expectancy of the democracy is now virtually infinite. According to Boix's coefficients (2003: 79–81), at \$3,000 per capita GDP, a dictatorship is expected to last 14 years and a democracy less than 1 year. At \$5,000, a dictatorship would last a decade, and a democracy over 3 centuries. At \$7,000, the dictatorship would still be expected to persist for 8 years, while the lifespan of the democracy would be almost limitless. The details of the duration analyses differ because of different specifications in the underlying models, but the bottom-line message remains: development marginally decreases the expected lifespan of a dictatorship and greatly increases the lifespan of a democracy.

¹ For the most complete model in Przeworski et al. (2000: 124), we use calculations by Michael Coppedge; the simulation assumes that variables besides GDP per capita take these reasonable values: GLAG 0, TLAG 0.25, RELDIF 2, CATH 0.5, PROT 0.5, MOSLEM 0, NEWC 0, BRITCOL 0, STRA 1, and ODWP 0.35. See also Coppedge (2003). For Boix's favored model (2003: 75–88), we use our own calculations assuming moderate equality (Gini 0.30) and all other variables set at their median values.

In turn, with regard to the causal mechanisms that can account for this relationship, we believe that we can offer a better explanation than the current literature does for why economic development has a stronger effect on the survival of democracies than on transitions to democracy. Many political scientists working in the tradition of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) believe that processes of transition to democracy are just too complex and contingent to be explained by structural factors. For example, Przeworski (2005: 254) develops theoretical mechanisms that focus only on why democracies endure and not on why transitions take place. 'I say nothing about the mechanisms that give rise to democracy', he writes, 'I believe that we do not know enough to model them—but only ask what makes democracies survive once they are established.' And others, such as Boix (2003), do not explain differences in the likelihood of the two outcomes. Thus, rather than having a theory about how the same mechanisms accounts for the two sides of the development-democracy question—the issue of democratic transitions and democratic stability—we are left with largely ad hoc reasoning to explain differences in the two processes.

In this chapter we seek to develop a systematic account of why development improves the odds for an existing democracy more than it improves the odds for a transition to democracy in two ways. First, we develop a model of political choice that accommodates both the dynamics of transition to democracy and the processes of democratic survival, and that integrates findings in comparative politics with key insights about how people make choices that have economic consequences. The model of reference dependence we propose explains how an existing political regime provides a context within which people make decisions. The model explicitly highlights two explanatory mechanisms that are distinctive, simple, and realistic. First, people are more likely to take a risk that could help them prevent a loss than they are to take a risk that could help them achieve a similar gain. Second, risk seeking in preventing losses is comparatively resilient to increased stakes, whereas risk aversion with respect to gains increases as the stakes increase. These mechanisms rest on a strong set of findings in experimental psychology and behavioral economics.

Thereafter, we evaluate these insights with new data. In particular, we test the underlying mechanisms of the model through laboratory experimentation. That is, rather than assuming how people make choices, as is done in much of the literature, our experiments provide new data on how people choose in situations that are analogous to those posited in the model. Indeed, to test our hypotheses, we designed simple scenarios that are analogous to the situations in our model of regime reference dependence; the scenarios involve choices, risks, opportunities for gain and loss, various levels of stakes, and real economic incentives as well as hypothetical payoffs. We recruited 325 subjects,

assigned them randomly to the various scenarios, presented them with the choices, and recorded their actions. We analyze the data to determine if people are more likely to accept risks that could help them avoid losses than those that promise a possible gain and if the gap in risk-taking propensities increases as the level of stakes increases.

Our theory and our methods are innovative for comparative politics. Yet we build on a robust tradition in experimental psychology and behavioral economics that has had surprisingly little impact in empirical political science and that deserves greater attention. Laboratory research uncovers persistent violations of expected utility assumptions and provides the elements for a more accurate description of choice behavior summarized as prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, 2000a; Tversky and Kahneman 1981, 1986). Some of the laboratory research involves political scenarios (Quattrone and Tversky 1988). Pioneering attempts to apply laboratory results in empirical political science focus on foreign policy decision-making (Farnham 1992, 1997; Jervis 1992; McDermott 1992, 1998; McNerney 1992; Levy 1997), although there are some examples developed in American domestic politics and law as well (Levy 2003). One scholar employs prospect theory in comparative politics to explain major episodes of economic restructuring in several Latin American democracies (Weyland 1996, 2002b). The place for prospect theory in future political science explanations remains an open question. For our purposes now, prospect theory is particularly useful because it focuses attention on microfoundations in causal explanations, especially the critical details of decision-making. Moreover, in light of the contradictory and inconclusive results yielded by research on democracy and development using conventional methods, the use of experiments to spur new advances is a promising strategy (McDermott 2002). Indeed, we believe that this laboratory research points the way toward a more complete understanding of how decision-making is influenced by the vantage point from which the outcomes of political choices are assessed.

9.1. REFERENCE-DEPENDENT CHOICES IN POLITICAL REGIMES

The model we build in this section highlights how dictatorships and democracies influence the reference values of key actors who must make basic decisions about whether to change an existing regime. Almost all of our assumptions are now conventional in the formal and econometric literature that builds on a median-voter based model (Meltzer and Richard 1981) and incorporates key features of regime dynamics (Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Rosendorf

2001; Boix and Stokes 2003; Boix 2003); our model differs mainly by drawing attention to starting points and risks. We begin with the assumption that a political regime is in place and that this regime is either a democracy or an authoritarian dictatorship. Under either type of regime, actors choose whether to attempt to keep or to alter the regime. As in the literature cited above, we simplify problems of collective action, agency, and organization by considering just two key groups constituted by their underlying assets in income: the poor in the bottom half of the income distribution and elites at the top.

9.1.1. Actors, Options, and Risks

The elite's possible decisions are modeled in Table 9.1. We define the economic elite to be the individuals with above-median income. In a democracy, the elite must choose between maintaining the existing democracy and initiating a coup. In a dictatorship, the elite must choose between democratizing and seeking to maintain the dictatorship. We are assuming that democratizing involves extending the franchise, permitting competitive elections, and having an elected government with the policy preferences of the median voter; in turn, maintaining a dictatorship is a decision to keep the current decision-maker and resist pressure from nonelites. We assume that elites receive a higher income under dictatorship than under democracy ($Y_a > Y_d$). There are several reasons why the economic payoff is higher. A major factor is that public policy in a democracy follows the preferences of the median voter and is thus more redistributive than in a dictatorship. There are also outcomes

Table 9.1. Economic consequences of political choices

Actor	Existing regime	Current income	Options	Expected income
Elite	<i>Democracy</i>	Y_d	Maintain democracy Install dictatorship	Y_d $p \times Y_a + (1 - p) \times Y_f$
	<i>Authoritarianism</i>	Y_a	Permit transition Support dictatorship	Y_d $q \times Y_a + (1 - q) \times Y_f$
Non-Elite	<i>Democracy</i>	P_d	No resistance to coup Resist coup	P_a $p \times P_d + (1 - p) \times P_f$
	<i>Authoritarianism</i>	P_a	Acquiesce Revolt	P_a $q \times P_d + (1 - q) \times P_f$

$Y_a > Y_d > Y_f$; $P_d > P_a > P_f$; $0 < p < 1$; $0 < q < 1$.

that are worse than democracy for elites, such as the revolutionary overthrow of a dictatorship ($Y_d > Y_r$). Under these conditions, elites suffer retribution. A non-elite democratic movement that topples an elite dictatorship causes economic losses to elites that are greater than what they would have suffered under a pacted, peaceful transition to democracy. Elites prefer more income to less, and thus prefer dictatorship to democracy, and both to a failed dictatorship, all other things equal.

We make an equally important assumption about risk that allows us to distinguish between the level of income under a regime and the risk that income will change. We assume that a decision to initiate a coup or support a dictator puts elite income at risk, whereas democratizing or supporting a democratic regime involves less risk. Our reasoning behind this assumption is as follows: In a dictatorship there is some risk that non-elite, pro-democratic forces will challenge the regime, while such groups will not do so under a democracy. Democracy is always a stable option for elites, because the main threat to democracy comes from elites themselves, a threat that they control. We label the probability of a successful subversion of a democratic order as p (and the probability of failed subversion as $1 - p$). We label the probability of successful maintenance of dictatorship as q (and the probability of unsuccessful dictatorship as $1 - q$). In sum, democratizing or supporting an existing democracy imposes costs but no risks, whereas supporting a coup or a dictator involves possible benefits as well as risks.

Knowing that elites receive a lower income under democracy is not sufficient for predicting their political preferences over regimes; we also need a theory of how risk enters preference formation. Elites in both democracy and dictatorship face a choice between an option that offers a stable payoff and an option that offers a risky payoff. The framing of the elites' choice depends on the initial regime. Under democracy, the status quo income is also the income of the less risky choice. The risky option for elites in a democracy is a lottery between incomes that are better and worse than what they currently have. Conversely, when the initial regime is a dictatorship, the status quo income is already the highest possible outcome and it can be maintained only through success in a lottery between that high level and the lowest payoff. The less risky choice under dictatorship involves a sure loss of income. In sum, maintaining the status quo under dictatorship (a high income) involves the risk of a worse outcome, whereas maintaining the status quo under democracy (a moderate income) involves no risk. Analogous assumptions about income to the armed forces under each regime give the military similar options. In a democracy, the elite and military can take a risk to achieve a gain, whereas in a dictatorship the elite and military can take a risk to avoid a loss.

A parallel analysis of nonelite choices also reveals that preferences over actions involve not just final outcomes but also assumptions about attitudes toward risk (see Table 9.1). Non-elites have income at or below the median income. We assume that non-elite income is higher under democracy than under dictatorship because of greater redistribution under democracy ($P_d > P_a$). We also assume that unsuccessful resistance to a coup or an unsuccessful revolution involves costs that make these outcomes worse than a dictatorship ($P_a > P_f$). In either regime (democracy or dictatorship), non-elites face two distinct political options, one risky and one stable. As with elites, the risks vary with the regime currently in place. Under democracy, resisting a coup is a risky way to avoid a loss, while offering no resistance to a coup involves a loss for sure. Under dictatorship, revolting is a risky way to achieve a gain, whereas acquiescence involves no change to the status quo.

How do people incorporate risk into their assessments of costs and benefits? If expected utility was the only way to describe how risk influences preferences, then we could adopt conventional assumptions. We could assume that (a) people choose actions according to their preferences over possible final outcomes; (b) people have risk-averse (concave) or risk-neutral (linear) utility functions that apply over the entire range of possible outcomes; and (c) preferences over outcomes are independent of alternative paths to those outcomes. But we prefer to construct an alternative and more realistic theory of how people evaluate possible actions, how they form preferences over regimes, and how they make decisions that involve risks and economic consequences.

9.1.2. Prospect Theory, Loss Aversion, and Mixed Prospects

We propose that a particularly relevant formulation of how people make decisions builds on elements of prospect theory (reviewed in Rabin 1998; McFadden 1999; Shafir and LeBoeuf 2002). A key tenet of prospect theory is that absolute levels of wealth are not reliable indicators of value; rather, in choice situations people assign values to possible future outcomes by comparing outcomes to a reference point (which is in many instances strongly influenced by their current situation). Prospect theory further states that people consider deviations from a reference point differently depending on whether a loss or a gain is involved. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky summarize these ideas in their frequently reproduced ‘s-shaped’ value function (e.g. Kahneman and Tversky 1979: 279, 2000b: 3; Tversky and Kahneman 1981: 454). According to the value function in prospect theory, people are risk averse over positive changes from the reference value. The curve is concave over positive values. But people are risk acceptant over negative changes from

the reference value. Over these values the curve is convex, *contra* expected utility. As a consequence of these key ideas, in prospect theory a person's preference ordering over outcomes is related to the reference value from which changes are assessed. Indeed, the leading applications of prospect theory to politics focus on risk acceptance in losses and the implication that leaders will undertake risky actions when faced with crises (e.g. McDermott 1998; Weyland 2002*b*; the works cited in O'Neill 2001: 617).

We focus here on a feature of prospect theory that has thus far been overlooked in the applications in politics: people are averse to losses. Loss aversion means that people are substantially more reluctant to accept losses relative to their reference point than they are attracted to gains. It is summarized by the much greater steepness of the value curve over negative outcomes than over positive outcomes. The absolute value of the decision utility of a given negative change is estimated to be about twice (or perhaps 2.5 times) the absolute value of the decision utility of a similar positive change. Loss aversion is the element of prospect theory 'that has the richest implications beyond its narrow domain' (Kahneman 2000: xiii).² Moreover, loss aversion appears to be more robust in the face of critical experimental results than does risk acceptance over losses (Rabin 2000; Levy and Levy 2002: 1076). Thus, we focus on loss aversion as a way to highlight how democratic and authoritarian regimes provide alternative reference points for people who must choose between pro-democratic and antidemocratic political actions.

Now, as many scholars have observed, the application of prospect theory to politics faces some serious obstacles and challenges (Kahneman 2000: xi; O'Neill 2001; Levy 1992, 1997, 2003).³ Most critically, prospect theory research typically involves pure prospects, that is, the prospects are either all negative or all positive, yet empirical studies in political science frequently involve scenarios that blend positive and negative prospects. For example, in Kurt Weyland's analysis (2002*b*: 5), the drastic economic restructuring programs that Latin American presidents and publics had to contemplate in the late 1980s and 1990s 'held the uncertain promise of ending the crisis and turning the country around, but they also risked further disorganizing the economy, unleashing a full-scale collapse of production and consumption, and triggering social unrest and political turmoil.' Similarly, in Rose McDermott's

² For the purposes of this chapter, we set aside prospect theory's decision weight function, which involves a nonlinear transformation of probabilities and gives added prominence to low probabilities and reduced influence to moderate and high probabilities. The stated probabilities in the experiments reported in this chapter are 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, or 1.00.

³ For example, Kahneman (2000: xi) writes that although 'the concepts of loss aversion and pseudocertainty are useful tools for understanding strategic decisions... it is surely futile to "test" prospect theory against utility theory in the domain of international relations.'

work (1998: 65), the attempted military rescue of the US citizens held hostage in Iran in April 1980 ‘presented the most extreme positive as well as the most extreme negative payoff possibilities of the options [President Carter] considered’, ranging from a clear demonstration of American prowess and increased popularity for Carter to an exposure of military weakness and losses in the upcoming election.

This is an important distinction. Though nonmixed gambles elicit the reflection effect in the curvature of the value function, although not loss aversion (Kahneman 2000: x),⁴ when a single choice involves both positive and negative prospects, as is the case in many political decisions, choice behavior is influenced not only by the convexity–concavity of the value function, but also by the relative steepness of the function over the domain of negative and positive prospects. And it is hard to recreate the kind of mixed prospects situations that are standard in political choices in a laboratory setting, so as to test experimentally hypotheses about the relationship between development and democracy based on prospect theory. Yet, as we discuss in the Section 9.2, we were able to design an experiment that realistically probes how actors make choices regarding broad regime options—democracy or dictatorship—in the context of mixed prospects scenarios, that is, that combine positive and negative prospects.

9.2. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND RESULTS

An experiment tests elements of the model. Our first hypothesis predicts that when subjects face choices analogous to those in our model of political decision-making, the proportion of subjects who choose to take a risk will be greater in the realm of losses than in the realm of gains (H1). Our second hypothesis predicts greater differences between the risk-taking behavior of subjects facing losses and those facing gains as stakes increase (H2). We recruited 325 subjects to answer a core question with real economic incentives. We addressed some threats to validity by posing additional types of questions (with hypothetical payoffs and varied formats) to subgroups of the subjects.

Most of the subjects registered via sign-up sheets in political science, economics, psychology, and chemistry classes at a large, private university. Sign-up sheets stated that subjects would receive monetary compensation for participation in a political science experiment. Some subjects registered through sign-up sheets posted on campus bulletin boards. The experiment was conducted over three consecutive nights, about 2½ hours per night. We

⁴ Such gambles appear, for instance, in problems 1–8, 3′, 4′, 7′, 8′, 10–14, 13′, and 14′ in Kahneman and Tversky (1979) and problems 1–6 and 10–12 in Tversky and Kahneman (1986).

scheduled fifteen-minute blocks of time to approximately twenty-five subjects each. An assistant registered subjects, accepting only those with appointments. Subjects completed a consent form.

The experiment has two components. In the Real Money portion of the experiment, a computer program randomly assigned each subject to a treatment group, presented the appropriate scenario, and recorded the subject's responses. The responses (and chance) determined the subject's payment for the experiment. If the subject chose a risky option, the computer fairly calculated the outcome. The computer also asked for a mailing address and other identifying information so that we could send payment checks. In a second, written portion of the experiment, 257 subjects received packets with Concurrent Decisions. Random assignment was assured by physically shuffling the packets prior to the arrival of subjects and then by distributing packets to subjects in arrival order. A subject typically spent fifteen to twenty minutes from signing in to submitting a completed packet. We coded responses in the written packets and added them to the database of computer-recorded responses.⁵

9.2.1. Real Money Questions

In the Real Money portion of the experiment, all subjects faced a choice with monetary consequences to provide a plausible analogy to the incentives implied in our model of political decision-making. Our computer program assigned each subject at random to 1 of 6 different treatment groups (three possible expected values—\$5, \$10, or \$20; two frames—gains or losses). Each subject received one question, making this portion of the experiment a between-subjects design. Figure 9.1 shows the questions for the \$20 level in both framings. Note that all options for a given level have the same expected value; the choice is between a stable payoff and a risky payoff. A decision-maker perceives a gains framing when facing a choice between a no-variance, nonnegative outcome and a risky way to do better. A decision-maker perceives a loss framing when facing a choice between a no-variance loss and a risky way to avoid the loss.

The results are in line with H1, that is, the hypothesis that the proportion of subjects who choose to take a risk will be greater in the realm of losses than in the realm of gains. The key statistic is the percentage of subjects in each treatment group who chose the risky option (see Table 9.2). The first

⁵ Most of the data were analyzed with Stata 7 in a regression format and t-tests. Some of the data were analyzed in Excel for differences in proportions and Z-tests. For additional experimental questions and results not reported here, see Gould and Maggio (2003).

Gains framing	Losses framing
We are giving you \$20 for this game. You will have to choose between two options.	We are giving you \$30 for this game. You will have to choose between two options.
<i>Option 1:</i> If you choose this option, you maintain your \$20 payoff.	<i>Option 1:</i> If you choose this option, you lose \$10.
<i>Option 2:</i> If you choose this option, there is a 50% chance that you will gain an additional \$10 and there is a 50% chance that you will lose \$10.	<i>Option 2:</i> If you choose this option, there is a 50% chance that you will lose nothing and there is a 50% chance that you will lose \$20.

Figure 9.1. Real Money questions at \$20 expected value

hypothesis is supported at the \$20 level of expected value. The percentage of risk takers in the losses group proved to be 22 percent points higher ($t = 2.64$) than the percentage of risk takers in the gains framing group. There were no significant differences in risk-taking across gains and losses at the \$5 and \$10 levels. Our interpretation is that, for our subject pool, the difference between losses and gains with small incentives was not sufficient to influence behavior. Once the difference in possible outcomes did become sufficient (between the \$10 and \$20 level and at the \$20 level), our hypotheses receive strong support.

The data also support H2, that is, the hypothesis that predicts greater differences between the risk-taking behavior of subjects facing losses and those facing gains as stakes increase. Risk-taking dropped in the gains realm as stakes increased, but not in the loss realm. As stakes increased from \$10 to \$20 expected value in the gains framing, risk-taking decreased substantially and significantly from 77 percent to 54 percent (a 23% point drop; $t = -2.66$).

Table 9.2. Real Monetary questions: experimental results

Percentage of subjects taking risk with real monetary payoffs (N = 324)				
Real expected value (\$)	Gains (N)	Losses (N)	Losses-gains	
			% Difference	<i>t</i> -score
5	80% (40)	72% (46)	-8%	(-0.88)
10	77% (60)	80% (54)	3%	(-0.38)
20	54% (61)	76% (63)	22%**	(-2.64)

Notes: We are missing Real Money data for one of the 325 subjects in the overall pool.

** $p < .005$ one-tail. A one-tail test is appropriate for hypotheses such as H1 and H2 with a clear directional prediction (Blalock 1979: 163).

Imagine that you face the following pair of concurrent decisions. First examine both decisions, then indicate the options you prefer. Circle 1 option for each decision (I and II).

Decision (I) choose between:

- A. A sure gain of \$2.40
- B. 25% chance to gain \$10 and a 75% chance to gain nothing

Decision (II) choose between:

- C. A sure loss of \$7.50
- D. 75% chance to lose \$10 and 25% chance to lose nothing

Figure 9.2. Concurrent Decisions text

Yet in the loss framing, there was no significant change (a 4% point drop; $t = -0.44$). In a regression model with an interaction term, the substantial drop in the gains realm differed significantly from the small change in the loss realm ($t = 1.66$; $p < .05$). Other comparisons (5 vs. 20; 5 together with 10 vs. 20) similarly confirm H2.

9.2.2. Concurrent Decisions

In the Concurrent Decisions scenario, we achieve a within-subjects design across loss–gain realms. We asked 257 of our subjects to make two simultaneous decisions (see Figure 9.2), employing a scenario in Tversky and Kahneman (1986: 255) at four levels of expected value. Decision I is a choice between a sure gain and a risky way to gain more. Decision II offers a sure loss or a risky way to avoid losing anything. There were four treatment groups, one receiving the scenario at the low (\$10 or less) expected values in Figure 9.2 and three at higher expected values.

The data overwhelmingly support both hypotheses (see Table 9.3). As H1 predicts, subjects were more likely to take risks in the losses decision than in the gains decision. The percentage differences were small and insignificant in the first level, but dramatic and significant at the three higher levels. As H2 predicts, the gap in risk-taking across the two decisions widened as the stakes increased. In the first two levels of the gains decision, 61 percent of respondents took risks, whereas in the third and fourth levels, only 31 percent did so (a significant 30% point drop, $Z = 4.83$). For the losses decision, however, there was virtually no change in risk-taking as levels increased. Seventy-eight percent of respondents took risks in levels 1 and 2 and 73 percent did so in levels 3 and 4 (an insignificant 5% point difference, $Z = 0.81$).

Table 9.3. Concurrent Decisions: experimental results

Percentage of subjects taking risk in Concurrent Decisions (N = 257)					
Hypothetical expected outcome (\$)	Gains decision (%)	Losses decision (%)	Losses-gains		N
			Difference (%)	Z-score	
10	70	75	5	-0.61	63
100	53	80	17***	-3.28	66
1,000	37	69	32****	-3.69	66
10,000	24	78	54****	-5.93	62

p < .001, *p < .000

9.3. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The data support our predictions. As H1 predicts, subjects in our scenarios are more risk acceptant when facing losses than they are when facing gains. In addition, as stakes increase, subjects' risk acceptance is more resilient in losses than in gains, as H2 predicts. Differences in risk-taking across losses and gains are small and insignificant at low levels of stakes, but large and significant at higher levels of stakes. Our findings are based on research designs that present subjects real, as in Real Money questions, and that allow within-subject comparisons, as in the Concurrent Decisions portion of the experiment.

We conclude that the risk aversion or risk acceptance of a decision-maker is not fixed. Instead, risk-propensity varies with the decision-maker's framing of a decision. Risk aversion emerges in opportunities to achieve gains over a reference value, while risk acceptance develops in opportunities to avoid losses from a reference value. Moreover, the effects of framing become more dramatic as the stakes increase. People pursue risks in loss avoidance decisions at roughly the same rate regardless of the stakes, but they become increasingly prone to playing it safe in gains-seeking decisions as the stakes go up. With these findings in place, we can now more confidently rely on our insights about how risk influences political decision-making in the processes of democratic transition and survival.

The implications for democratic transitions and survival are that we should expect political decision-makers to be influenced not only by probabilities and the relative values of various outcomes, as is conventionally assumed, but also by risks and reference values. By H1 (and all else equal), the elite are more willing to take risks to protect an existing dictatorship than to overthrow a democracy. Also by H1, the non-elite are more willing to take risks to oppose a coup than to take risks to overthrow a dictatorship. By H2, as an economy

grows (and all else equal), the elites' willingness to run risks and protect a dictatorship should be resilient, while their willingness to run risks and overthrow a democracy should decline. Similarly by H2, as an economy grows, non-elites' willingness to accept risks associated with opposing a coup should stay strong, while their willingness to accept risks and overthrow a dictatorship should decrease.

Our research also contributes to scholarship in prospect theory and its applications more generally as well. It is important that we find risk-propensity patterns in scenarios in which a gains decision involves a choice between a nonnegative outcome and a risky lottery between a positive outcome and a negative outcome, as in the Real Money questions. A gains framing such as the ones we employ, in which some outcomes are negative, has not been employed in the experimental literature. But it is most analogous to many real-world decisions, including political decisions involved in the dynamics of regime transition and stability. In addition, our finding of consistent stakes effects suggests that applications of prospect theory in politics, as in other fields, can identify and investigate powerful regularities induced by loss aversion.

We are proposing to advance the understanding of how people bring economic considerations into their political decisions. We find that people are more likely to accept risks that can prevent losses than they are to seek gains at the risk of some losses. We also find that differences in risk-propensities between preventing losses and seeking gains are larger when more resources are involved. These findings add to the research on prospect theory in politics by introducing choices that are structurally similar to political choices where the prospects are mixed; they provide a secure basis for broader applications of prospect theory within political science. Both findings contrast with the ways that most political scientists assume that people form preferences. Most formal and econometric models employ, but do not verify, the demanding assumptions of expected utility; and most informal work adopts similar views of how people form preferences over the economic consequences of regimes. An alternative and realistic set of assumptions is that there is more risk acceptance over losses than over gains and that decision-makers are generally loss averse.

Finally, this chapter shows how experimentation can advance research in political science. At the genesis of this project, we sought to build systematic and replicable information about the impact of development on democracy. We used the prospect of an experiment to provoke the question, 'If the components of modernization theories are valid, what implications should we observe in an experimental setting?' An experiment such as ours heeds and indeed goes beyond the call for explicit and logically consistent mechanisms.

Our experiment provides independent evidence that the mechanisms can be observed empirically. In our case, there is more than one plausible set of mechanisms connecting economic development and democracy; we use the experiment to elaborate and adjudicate among several possibilities. Finally, a properly conducted experiment minimizes opportunities for using a single body of data both to induce hypotheses and to test them; our use of an experiment to test our model should increase confidence in the findings we advance.

Democracies redistribute income, as standard models now agree. But in our view only transitions realign reference values and redefine how key actors perceive their available actions. When facing the prospect of regime change, people evaluate outcomes with respect to their reference value at the time. Elites in a dictatorship perceive resisting democratization as a risky way to protect what they have, but in a democracy they perceive an antidemocratic coup as a risky way to achieve gains. Non-elites in a democracy perceive resisting a coup as a risky way to protect what they have, but in a dictatorship they perceive a pro-democratic revolt as a risky way to achieve gains. We can use these ideas to highlight key differences in the processes of democratic transition and survival. Most importantly, the two processes involve different combinations of reference values and risks for the main political actors. A transition to democracy involves the elites taking losses from reference values and lowering their exposure to risk, while non-elites achieve gains and increase their risk. In contrast, the survival of a democracy involves elites forgoing risks and opportunities for gains, while non-elites accept risks to prevent losses. We hope that our attention to mechanisms such as these, which vary with economic development and political regime, will improve political scientists' ability to explain more completely why an existing regime conditions the effects of economic development on the likelihood of democracy.

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