Democratic Consolidation in Contemporary Political Regimes:
The Case of Latin America.

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ABSTRACT

Democratic consolidation is no longer understood simply as regime durability: new investigations, bringing back classical political science concerns, currently focus on defining democratic contents, measuring the degree to which basic rights are respected and comparing democratic performance across countries. In addressing these issues, this article seeks to explore a few aspects of democratic consolidation in Latin America, making an allowance for two key dimensions, durability and democratic quality. To deal with the variety of geographic, historical and social conditions affecting this process, I make use of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), an analytical technique that allows to reduce within acceptable limits the complexity of systematic qualitative comparisons, while taking into consideration the uniqueness of the cases under investigation. The findings suggest that each level of consolidation is the result of particular causal configurations, of specific and exclusive clusters of facilitating conditions. Yet, strong and cohesive party systems are fundamental in explaining the instauration of “full“ democracies, both in earlier and later democratic waves, and the weakness of “restricted” ones. But structured political participation is not sufficient to ensure consolidation: even when key institutional arrangements are in place, a divided and conflictive political elite may prevent democratic opening and consolidation. Thus, political pacts entered during transition play an essential role in building more robust democracies. More generally, preceding political traditions, both democratic and authoritarian, have a powerful impact on the process.
In the last twenty years the number of democratic governments in the world has more than doubled.\(^1\) If attention had initially been directed to the process of transition, a relatively rapid political development, the institutional and economic problems that materialized over time shifted scholarly interest towards the study of more permanent and complex conditions, that were thought to determine the survival and stability of the new democratic regimes.\(^2\) More recently the focus of research has again adjusted: the survival in time of hybrid regimes, where basic democratic institutions and practices coexisted with weak political accountability and civil and political rights violations across classes, genders and territorial units, motivated investigators to address the issue of democratic contents. Thus, democratic consolidation is no longer understood simply as regime durability: new investigations, bringing back classical political science concerns, focus nowadays on defining democratic contents, measuring the degree to which basic rights are respected and comparing democratic performance across countries.\(^3\)

In addressing these issues, this article seeks to explore a few aspects of democratic consolidation in Latin America, making an allowance for two key dimensions, durability and democratic quality. To deal with the great variety of geographic, historical and social conditions affecting democratization and democratic strengthening in Latin America, I made use of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), an analytical technique that allows to reduce within acceptable limits the complexity of a systematic qualitative comparison, while respecting the uniqueness and originality of the cases under investigation. After expounding some of the main conjectures submitted to explain democratic consolidation in the region, I tested the major factors that appear to have facilitated this outcome.

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1. The number of democratic governments at a given time depends on the definition of democracy one employs. In 1996, their figure varies from 76 to 117, depending on acceptance of a broad definition, which includes the main political and civil liberties, or a restricted one, that considers only the essential electoral requisites. L. Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over?,” in *Journal of Democracy*, 7, July 1996, 20-37.


The data show that democratic consolidation is far from being fully accomplished and its fulfillment varies from country to country. Our findings suggest that each level of democratic consolidation is the result of particular causal configurations, of specific and exclusive clusters of facilitating conditions. Strong and cohesive party systems are fundamental in explaining the instauration of “full” democracies, both in earlier and later democratic waves, and the weakness of “restricted” ones. But structured political representation is not sufficient to ensure consolidation: even when a cohesive and well established party system is in place, a divided and conflictive political elite may prevent democratic opening and strengthening. Thus, political pacts entered during transition play an essential role in building a more robust democracy; more generally, the preceding political record, both democratic and authoritarian, has a powerful impact on the process.

The facilitating conditions.

The hypotheses on the process of democratic consolidation may be divided into three main categories: a first group is related to political participation and institutions, another deals with economic aspects and a third refers to the political culture and legitimacy of the new regime. Political culture and the system's legitimacy in turn depend crucially on previous political experiences, both authoritarian and democratic. A prior democratic experience, when characterized by relevant intermediate structures and democratic routines, may facilitate the re-enactment of previous alliances among parties and factions and the return on the political scene of interest groups, unions and other social and political organizations. Such experience helps the majority of citizens believe that any further decisions may, and shall, emerge only in accordance with the parameters of a democratic procedure. In a few instances the transition to democracy takes place after a "tabula rasa" of previous institutions, in others these are upheld even during the authoritarian period (although their functions may be distorted). In the second situation the outlook for consolidation is better: this case emphasizes the advantage of a country that was already a democratic in a not so remote past over those in which democracy is introduced for the first time.

In addition, most students of Latin-American politics believe that the nature of the outgoing non-democratic regime plays an important role in defining the survival chances of new democracies. For Linz, Stepan and Gunther this is the single most important explanatory variable in recent democratic transitions and consolidations in Southern Europe, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The use of drastic political repression, the participation in wars and a negative economic performance, all contribute to erode or to knock down the legitimacy of non-democratic

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governments. Thus, democratic leaders often use an “inverse legitimation”, validating the new regime simply pointing at the faults of the previous one. In addition, when democracy returns, a harsh authoritarian experience facilitates the signing of political and social pacts and stimulates the formation of a more vigorous civil society. In sum, democratic consolidation seems to be favored by widespread highly negative experiences of society with repression and economic failure under the authoritarian regime. The awareness of the high price to pay, in the event of a new political crisis, leads democratic and authoritarian leaders to favor accommodation among different political forces.

Another legitimacy-related aspect refers to the signing of political pacts during democratic transition. Some scholars believe that only transitions that involve negotiations and deals between the outgoing elite and the new democratic representatives promote consolidation. Yet, the price paid for this stability is often a series of guarantees secured by the old ruling class, striving to protect and maintain its privileges and impatient to escape judgment for the crimes it has committed. Thus, these agreements may lead to limited but stable democracies or directly to consolidated ones. For instance, Linz and Stepan maintain that the constitutional compact that defines the new regime’s main laws, procedures and institutions favors consolidation and constitutes a necessary condition for the pacific solution of social conflicts. Accordingly, the absence of pacts may act as an impediment to the emergence of a climate of moderation and compromise and as an indicator of a potentially more contested and problematic consolidation.

The positive role of a consolidated party system is given emphasis again by Linz and Stepan, for whom it is crucial the presence of a strong and independent “political society”, identified by the interaction among political actors, who compete to legitimately exercise the right to control power and the state apparatus. For Morlino, parties are the key to consolidation, especially when a pervasive legitimacy has not prevailed during the process of democratization. The more rapidly the party spectrum forms during transition, the more likely democratic consolidation becomes. In inchoate party systems voters tend to respond to personalistic appeals rather than party affiliation, favoring populist leaders who govern without attempting to establish more solid institutions. When party systems are more institutionalized, parties are typically oriented


8. A. Stepan and J. Linz Towards Consolidated Democracies, 16.
towards winning elections and coming to power through peaceful means. Thus, institutionalizing a party system matters a great deal and institutionalized party systems are more likely to sustain democracy and to promote effective governance.\textsuperscript{9}

More debated are the effects of a presidential or parliamentary form of government on democratic consolidation. For Przeworski, who rewords Linz’s famous thesis, representative institutions of the parliamentary type guarantee better chances of democratic maintenance. Presidentialism, he argues, often leads to legislative paralyses, especially when the legislature is controlled by a majority hostile to the President, but not numerous enough to systematically overcome his vetoes. When the party system is fragmented this outcome is even more likely and often lethal for the new democratic regime.\textsuperscript{10}

More recently new interpretations have fine-tuned this view. Mainwaring himself has observed that presidentialism may offer advantages that counter its weaknesses: thus, it is necessary to distinguish more precisely the different institutional combinations and the constitutional design of both presidentialism and parliamentarism, each yielding different results on the stability of democratic bodies. Under some conditions the perils of presidentialism can be attenuated, a point that Linz underplays. Mainwaring and Shugart, however, reiterate that party fragmentation, when coupled with a presidential form of government, leads to severe difficulties in effective government because it intensifies the likelihood of executive-legislative deadlocks. With multipartitism a President must rely on a coalition for support, but under presidentialism interparty coalitions tend to be particularly fragile.\textsuperscript{11}

Finally, there are the economic factors. A country’s wealth is paramount, for Przeworski: he believes that wealth and economic growth may decisively ease the permanence in time of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} S. Mainwaring and M. Shugart Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 465-67. More radical is Power and Gasiorowski’s criticism (“Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation in the Third World” in Comparative Political Study 30, 2, 1997, 123-55). They believe that the relationship between Presidentialism and multipartitism is not as “perilous” as Linz has put it and argue that no evidence supports Linz’s hypothesis for 56 Third World transitions to democracy between 1930 and 1995. Their conclusions hold true for Latin America (Table 1-2-3, 138-43). Yet, when their most solid measure of democratic consolidation is taken into account (a 12 years duration), the cases explained by Linz’s hypothesis are still 8 out of 14. In addition, two of the consolidated democracies with multiparty systems (Brazil 1958 and Chile 1963) would fall to military regimes within a few years, while Costa Rica, consolidated in 1961, cannot be seriously regarded as a multiparty system, although in the election of 1958, the one taken into account by the authors, for the first and only time between 1953 and 1990 the number of parties slightly exceeded three.
\end{itemize}
democratic institutions, especially in developing countries. Once democracy is established, its survival chances are higher if the country is richer. Yet, even current wealth is not decisive: if they succeed in generating development, democracies can survive even in the poorest nations. Resuming growth at stable and moderate levels of inflation is the key criterion to evaluate the success of economic reforms, undertaken by new democracies and to sustain the democratic regimes in the long run. Thus, consolidation hinges to some extent on the capacity to implement sustainable growth-oriented policies. Economic expansion reduces the conflicts resulting from inequality or other social cleavages and, accordingly, mutes the tendency to political alienation, polarization and destabilizing social violence. Likewise, observers have assumed that economic decline poses a severe threat to the survival of democracy. The prolonged failure of elected governments to address effectively growth and equity challenges are likely to undermine the depth and stability of support.

A second economic factor that facilitates democratic consolidation is the existence and proper functioning of a “developed” system of social welfare, one that covers a significant amount of population and provides substantial benefits. Przeworski claims that the maintenance of an adequate system of public assistance has a positive influence on consolidation: it both reduces the inequalities among different social groups (a factor that promotes democratic collapse) and curbs social unrest caused by the measures of economic stabilization, common in the most recent cases of transition. In fact Linz, Stepan and Gunther show that increasing welfare expenditures played a central part in the recent process of democratic consolidation in Spain, Portugal and Greece: in


these countries the state strengthened by increasing tax revenues, that were used to improve social citizenship and expand social policies. In transitions characterized by economic crises, like those in Latin America, without a social policy that protects at least those whose subsistence is threatened by the necessary reforms, the political conditions for the continuation of the new democratic regime are likely to become eroded.14

A final key element is the international one. Democratization may be decisively influenced by the actions of governments and institutions external to a country. For Dahl, democratic transition and consolidation necessarily require that no foreign hegemonic power, hostile to the democratic process, interfere in the political life of a democratic country to subvert its political system. Yet, for Whitehead the influence of international actors is only secondary: in all recent peacetime cases internal forces were of primary importance in determining the course and outcome of the transition attempt. Huntington also believes that foreign actors may simply hasten or retard the effects of economic and social development on democratization. Foreign influences may lead to democratization efforts before countries reach an economic and social level that favors democratization, or they may retard or prevent democratization in countries which have reached that level of development.15

Yet, there is a better reason to believe that this variable is of limited use in explaining democratic consolidation in Latin America. The United States are the key international actor in the area: they have consistently consented to, and sometimes actively supported, the processes of democratization occurring in Latin America, during both the “Second” and “Third” democratic waves. In Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia it was especially the anti-Communist bent of the new democratic governments that ensured U.S. backing. More recently, it has been the evolution of U.S. foreign policy to secure support for the new regimes: from 1973 on, stretching from President Carter’s human rights policy and including President Reagan’s shift to promoting democracy in both Communist and non-Communist dictatorships, this new course has eventually culminated in the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy. In sum, the role recently played by the U.S. in promoting democratization in Latin America, showing no considerable variation in the cases under investigation, does not contribute to an explanation of the process and it has been omitted from the analysis.16

The survey of these theoretical perspectives yields a series of hypotheses. A previous democratic rule and the modes of transition from the authoritarian regime, in particular the negotiations and the agreement between political elites for a gradual and peaceful transition to democracy, appear especially important for a subsequent democratic consolidation. Other political


16.S.P. Huntington The Third Wave 91-100.
factors are relevant. First, the character of the previous non-democratic government and especially its use of political repression. Then, the institutionalization of a strong and sufficiently representative political system, able to ensure broad political participation, but at the same time apt to channel and regulate social demands. Finally, a presidential regime confronting a relatively unified and ideologically depolarized party system. High levels of repression during the previous authoritarian regimes and strong and cohesive party systems favor the strengthening of democracy. Some economic factors have a similar effect: growth, or at least the absence of economic decline, and “developed” systems of public welfare. Both enlarge the basis of popular support.  

The indicators.

I have measured democratic consolidation using an index formed by a value that refers to democratic levels and another that quantifies democratic durability. Democratic levels are a function of political and civil rights and are measured separately on a scale, whose values range from a maximum of 1 to a minimum of 7. In this study a country is “fully” or “completely” democratic when, for a given year, the average scores for civil and political rights are equal to, or less than, 2. I will consider “restricted” or “incomplete” the democracies with average values falling between 2 and 3.5, and un-free those that score above 3.5. Following this classification Costa Rica (1949-68), Uruguay, Venezuela (1959-78), Chile, Argentina and Colombia (1958-77) exemplify cases of “full” democracy; Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia are instances of “restricted.”

17. The causal factors I have not considered belong to two groups. Some are relatively unimportant in the Latin American context, or still excessively difficult to operationalize, such as ethnic heterogeneity, the gap between formal and informal democratic rules and bureaucratic efficiency. Others, such as the system’s political legitimacy and the impact of interest groups, are more relevant. They do not add much, however, to the model: political tradition and the mode of transition comprehensively express the dimension of legitimacy, both at the rank-and-file and at the elite level. Legitimacy plays a central role in the process of institutionalization of the party system: in fact, one of the four dimensions of the variable, as measured by Mainwaring and Scully and used here, is the conviction that parties and elections constitute the privileged means to win power. The institutionalization of political parties, in a similar way, often coincides with dynamics that lead to the formation of strong organized groups, that interact systematically with the former. See S. Mainwaring and T. Scully, Building Democratic Institutions.

18. To measure consolidation Power and Gasiorowski adopt three indicators. First the presence of a post-founding election, i.e. a second election for the national executive, that follows the election that inaugurated the polyarchy. Then an alternation in executive power, defined as an unambiguous change in the partisan composition of the executive branch, and finally a durational measure, empirically determined at 12 years. The democratic countries in my sample fit all of Power and Gasioroski’s requirements, with the exception of Chile, which fails the alternation in power and the duration tests. See T. Power and M. Gasiorowski, "Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation in the Third World", 1997, 123-155.


20. L. Diamond, "Is the Third Wave Over?" These values are different, and stricter, than those employed to identify the different levels of democracy in the Freedom House Report.
democracy; Perù, Paraguay and Mexico are regarded as non-democratic, or un-free, regimes.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition, I distinguish two varieties of consolidation: a "steady" consolidation, one that lasts for at least 20 years from the moment of transition and an "initial" consolidation, which must endure for a minimum of 8 years. An "initial" consolidation corresponds to the period that some deem necessary to establish and strengthen, at least in its essential features, the structures, norms and routines of democracy.\textsuperscript{22} The experience of a few recent transitions in Southern Europe, particularly the Spanish one, supports the plausibility of this operationalization. In Latin America, only Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia, whose transitions to democracy date back to the 1940s and 1950s and more recently Ecuador, which redemocratized in 1979, may be considered "steadily" consolidated.\textsuperscript{23} Within a more limited temporal horizon, consolidation may be said to be initially accomplished in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia and Brazil. Mexico and Paraguay have not yet succeeded in establishing a sufficiently democratic government and Peru has relapsed into authoritarianism after the presidential "autogolpe" of 1992.\textsuperscript{24} Of these countries, Costa Rica (1949-68), Venezuela (1959-78) and Colombia (1958-77) will be considered consolidated full democracies. In Ecuador a “restricted” democracy has somehow strengthened, surviving for over 20 years. Among recent cases of re-democratization Uruguay, Chile and Argentina (“full” democracies) and Bolivia and Brazil (“restricted” ones) have experienced an initial consolidation (see Table 1).

\textsuperscript{21}Democratic levels for Costa Rica (1949-68); Colombia (1959-67) and Venezuela (1959-78) are derived from J.W. Wilkie, \textit{Statistical Abstract of Latin America}, Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publication, Table 1005.

\textsuperscript{22}L. Morlino "Consolidamento democratico: definizioni e modelli" in \textit{Rivista Italiana di Scienza della Politica}, XVI, August 1986, 197-236.

\textsuperscript{23}The case of Colombia is the least convincing of the three. Its internal wars against drug traffickers and guerrillas and the high rate of political assassinations and human rights abuses cast a doubt on its current fully democratic status. Diamond, "Is the Third Wave Over?," 22.

\textsuperscript{24}The sample comprises all of the most important Southern American countries. Mexico has been included as the largest and most relevant Central American state, while Costa Rica maintains the longest democratic tradition in the region.
To measure democratic tradition I assess each country's democratic experience, from 1930 to the last democratic transition. A significant democratic tradition exists when democratic governments have been in power most of the time.\textsuperscript{25} Levels of repression associated with authoritarian rule are based on a qualitative assessment of the prevailing violence, including political assassinations and the use of torture and on a judgment of political and civil rights violations, derived from specific case studies.\textsuperscript{26} Political repression is particularly problematic to measure, given the multidimensional nature and lack of uniformity, both with respect to time and to potential targets, that characterize its application. Nevertheless, it appears that this variable accounts for some variation in levels of democracy. Four out of five “full” democracies, but only one out of four “restricted” ones, have experienced high level of political repression in previous authoritarian regimes. Finally, definitions and empirical data for political pacts are derived from O’Donnell, 25.

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\textsuperscript{25}J. Hartlyn and A. Valenzuela, "La democracia en América Latina desde 1930," in Este País, Folios, 46, (January 1995), 35; D. Rueschemeyer, E. Huber and D.J. Stephens, Capitalist Development and Democracy, 160-162. To capture, as widely as possible, the influence of democratic heritage in Latin American history I have used a rather inclusive definition of democracy, which encompasses, following Hartlyn and Valenzuela's typology, democratic, semi-democratic and hybrid regimes.

Schmitter and Whitehead, Bertzen, Mainwaring and Scully, and Karl. 27 Their classification is encompassing: I have included all cases in which more or less visible and formal compromises, between the previous authoritarian elites and the new democratic leaders, or among the latter, have played a crucial role.

The extent of political parties institutionalization is derived from an index developed by Mainwaring and Scully, whose values range from 1 (low) to 3 (high). 28 A party system is institutionalized when the patterns of party competition manifest regularity; the major parties have somewhat stable roots in society; the major political actors accord legitimacy to the electoral process and to parties; and party organizations matter. A final composite measure summarizes the results. I have regarded as institutionalized party systems with a score greater than, or equal to, 8.5 (out of 12) and non institutionalized those with a lower rating. The biparty or multiparty character of the political systems (whose form of government is presidential), is measured by the number of parties in each country. I have treated party systems with a minimum of two and a maximum of three parties as essentially bipolar, and party systems with more than three parties as essentially multipolar.

I have measured economic growth as change in average per capita GDP. Four countries in the sample show a deterioration of per capita income during the consolidation phase of their democratic regimes (Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru), eight experience some forms of growth. The data have been divided correspondingly. 29 The “development” of social welfare has been estimated by way of an index that measures average per capita levels of social security and welfare expenditures by the central government and the proportion of the economically active population covered by social security. 30 I have considered “developed” the welfare system when both values were above, or equal to, the sample median. 31

The technique.
To analyze the data I have used a Boolean method that allows systematic qualitative

28. S. Mainwaring and T. Scully Building Democratic Institutions, 4-6 and Table 1.7, 30.
29. ECLAC Statistical Yearbook of Latin America (New York: The United Nations, 1995) 71, Table 54. To improve reliability I have verified other statistical series, such as J.W. Wilkie, ed., Statistical Abstract of Latin America, Part IV, Table 3423.
31. Whereas the figures on welfare expenditures are fragmented and difficult to compare, the classification I have obtained is consistent with authoritative qualitative assessments on the relevance of welfare systems in the area (C. Mesa-Lago Changing Social Security in Latin America, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers,1994; E. Huber, C. Ragin and J.D. Stephens Comparative Welfare States Data Set, Northwestern University and University of Northern Carolina, 1997).
comparisons. The procedure, elaborated by Charles Ragin,\(^{32}\) relies on a specific software, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), that facilitates the necessary computing.\(^{33}\) QCA maximizes the potential of Boolean logic and permits its application to algorithms used to compare different cases.\(^{34}\)

The data are initially represented in a binary form, with a series of 0 and 1, which signify the absence (or insignificance) and the presence (or relevance), of the corresponding variables. In general, Boolean analysis specifies the conditions of absence and presence of the variables that are associated to certain events. In the data matrix each horizontal line, which represents the value taken by the various independent variables for a specific case, is completed by a final score for the event, or effect, that follows from these. The matrix is later organized in a "truth table", that summarizes the possible logical combinations among different variables. The number of cases in a truth table depends on the number of independent variables used in the analysis, on the total number, that is, of possible logical combinations.

Through a series of logical operations, based on combinatorial techniques and on the principles of the experimental design, it is possible to simplify the "truth table" and reduce it to a minimized expression, characterized by combinations of causal conditions for which a certain effect is true. With each further simplification, expressions become increasingly general. The method aims at simplification, starting from the acknowledgment of the greatest complexity (each possible combination of values is contemplated) and proceeding with serial reductions that approximate the ideal procedure of a scientific experiment. Unlike the majority of statistical analyses, the results of Boolean analysis can be easily interpreted in terms of necessary and sufficient causation. In addition, this method allows for multiple conjunctural causation: causes may interact in different ways to lead to similar outcomes.

There are different ways of dealing with logical combinations of causal conditions that lack empirical instances, the so called "hypothetical combinations". A first approach is to assume that causal combinations that do not exist would not have produced the expected outcome. This hypothesis can be operationalized by assigning a zero value to the outcomes corresponding to purely logical combinations. A second way is to assign the value "don't care" to these combinations.

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Software algorithms determine the proper value of the row: if a value 0 allows for a logically simpler solution of the truth table, then the algorithm assigns that value to the row. If the simplified solution is achieved by assigning the row a value 1, this will be the final choice. The disadvantage of this approach is its difficult theoretical interpretation. In particular, when the number of purely logical cases is considerable, the number of the conditions introduced to simplify the original expression may be too large to permit a clear and unambiguous reading.

There is, finally, a third and more sophisticated way to address the question: to exercise a theoretically informed control over the simplifying conditions employed in the analysis. In the appendix I give a detailed explanation of this procedure, which I have ultimately applied.  

Explaining Democratic Consolidation.

The hypothesis outlined earlier is represented, in QCA notation, by the following expression: \( \text{TRAD} \times \text{PACS} \times \text{AUTH} \times \text{PART} \times \text{BIPR} \times \text{GROW} \times \text{WELF} = \text{CONS} \) . I hypothesize that the simultaneous presence of these variables produces both “full” and “steady” democracies, while their absence facilitates the emergence of “restricted” democracies (or the maintenance of undemocratic regimes) and limits their survival in time. My main purpose in introducing this dichotomy is to investigate the conditions that lead to mature democracy in the region. Such regime is not only ethically desirable in itself, but its relative rarity warrants, in my opinion, an extraordinary effort at analytical accuracy: we need to know more, and more adequately, about the emergence of “full” democracies in Latin America.

In doing so, I do not imply that “restricted” democracies are equivalent to undemocratic regimes, as the dramatic circumstances of human rights violations by military governments so cogently demonstrate. I do agree, however, with an increasing number of scholars, that today’s “restricted” democracies are in a number of ways becoming increasingly similar to non-democratic political systems. While in authoritarian countries political repression has recently been kept within bounds, the new “limited” democracies restrain their citizens civil and political rights, especially in peripheral regions, feeding an incomplete systems of political representation, based on particularistic interests and power agreements. These democracies are no longer “representative”: for their new characteristics they have been more appropriately labeled “delegative”. Whoever wins the election to the presidency is entitled to govern, restrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term in office. The policies of his government bear no resemblance to campaign promises: once elected the president governs as he thinks best. Others underline that the common use of political violence, the lack of impartial elections and the exclusion of some groups from political participation may blur the distinctions between authoritarian and newly democratized governments. In conclusion, the changes under way call for a rigorous analysis, to recognize whether Latin American “limited” democratic regimes are evolving towards new organizational and institutional forms, new species or subtypes of existing

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35. I must thank Charles Ragin for introducing me to these arguments and for teaching me the techniques that make the informed choice of simplifying assumptions possible (personal communications).

36. Capital letters denote the presence of a given variable, lower-case ones their absence. The multiplication symbol (*) indicates the logical value AND, the addition symbol (+) the logical value OR.
democracies that have yet to be theorized.\textsuperscript{37} The minimization of the original hypothesis for the cases of “full” democracy (Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina), yields the results shown in Table 2 (Equations 1A to 2B).

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>MINIMIZED EQUATIONS</th>
<th>TRAD</th>
<th>PACS</th>
<th>AUTH</th>
<th>PART</th>
<th>BIPRT</th>
<th>GROW</th>
<th>WELF</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Stable Democracy</td>
<td>1A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Initial Democracy</td>
<td>2A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Democracy</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of Democracy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Countries covered by configurations:

1a: Venezuela;
1b: Costa Rica, Colombia;
2a: Argentina, Uruguay;
2b: Chile, Uruguay;
3a: Bolivia, Ecuador;
3b: Brazil, Ecuador;
4: Peru, Mexico, Paraguay.

Equations 1A and 1B relate to the case of “full” and “steady” democracies, which includes Venezuela, Colombia and Costa Rica; equations 2A and 2B to “full” initially consolidated ones, that is to Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. Both sets of equations may be further reduced to simpler expressions and precisely:

First set (Eq. 1A and 1B): PACS*PART*BIPART*GROW (AUTH + TRAD)
Second set (Eq. 2A and 2B): TRAD*AUTH*PART*WELF (BIPART + PACS*GROW)

As it can be seen, no factor alone represents a sufficient cause of “full” democratization in contemporary Latin America: some contribute, in various combinations, towards producing this outcome in different cases. One factor, however, stands out as a necessary condition: the presence of a solid party system. For both early democratizers (Costa Rica, Colombia and Venezuela) and latecomers (Argentina, Uruguay and Chile), the pattern of political competition shows regularity from one election to the other and parties have relatively stable roots in society, with sufficiently defined and consistent identities. In short, parties represent key actors in the electoral process and in the choice of government: they still are the most important vehicle for the practice of fundamental

political rights. Accordingly, the absence of a strong party system constitutes a necessary condition for the development of “restricted” democracies.

The contrasting cases of Uruguay and Peru, representing a “full” democracy and an authoritarian regime respectively, corroborate this argument. In Uruguay electoral volatility, the measure of the stability in the rules and nature of inter-party competition, has been one of the lowest in the region, averaging only 9.1 percent between 1971 and 1989. The difference in party preference between presidential and lower chamber concurrent elections, which shows how attached are citizens to parties, has been negligible, less than 1 percent over the same period. Uruguayan parties have encapsulated major social organizations and accepted the electoral process as a way to determine the legitimate political ruler. In 1993, the three most important parties, Colorado, Blanco and Broad Front, were among the oldest such organization in the region, averaging 112 years since their founding. By way of contrast in Peru, where democracy collapsed in 1991, between 1978 and 1990 electoral volatility has exceeded 50 percent; the difference between presidential and lower chamber vote has hovered at above 12 percent, well beyond regional averages; links between parties and social organizations have considerably eroded during the 1980s; the number of parties has been close to six and the most important of them averaged just 33 years of age.

The equations in Table 2 also point out some interesting differences between “early” and “late” fully democratized Latin American regimes. The more recent cases of “full” democratization have been characterized by a considerable relevance of past political experience, political pacts and welfare conditions. Some other aspects, on the other hand, such as bipolarism, or at least the absence of significant party fragmentation, have played a minor role. This latter finding, which is decisively shaped by the Chilean experience, may be explained in at least two ways: by the crisis of Marxist ideologies and the disappearance of the Soviet Bloc and by previous political experiences. The convergence of political programs and a wider acceptance of the main tenets of democracy by major political actors, both domestic and international, have facilitated the lessening of political confrontations. Radical antidemocratic alternatives have been ruled out, while the economic policies of both Left and Right have shifted towards the Center of the political spectrum, to win the support of moderate voters. While making the representation of marginalized social groups more problematic, these choices have improved parties’ chances to win elections and have been adopted throughout the region.

In addition, the circumstances of the transition and previous authoritarian experiences have favored an alliance among the main political forces, which have organized into two coalitions: one that openly opposes the previous non-democratic regime and its policies and another, less critical, that identifies with some of the social and especially economic policies enacted by the authoritarian Pinochet government. These alliances have somehow lessened the problems that party fragmentation has historically triggered in Chile. Both the participation in previous democratic

38. The role of political parties was already crucial in earlier periods of democracy: they protected elite interests and thus induced elites to tolerate democracy once installed for the first time (D. Rueschmeyer, E. Hueber and J.D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 168 ff.).

governments and the heavy repression suffered under the last military regime distinguished firm
democratic supporters from their counterpart. These experiences, and their related memories, have
solidified political participation into the two blocs that characterize Chilean contemporary politics.

The objective and subjective components of past political experience are a necessary
element in all recent cases of “full” democratization. The former provide the building blocks of the
new regimes, the effective institutions and congenial practices implanted during earlier democratic
periods and more or less restructured throughout the authoritarian interlude. The latter, the
collective memories that provide “direct” or “inverse” legitimacy to the new democratic regime,
have been used by politicians to bring together political parties and coalitions on the bases of
common experiences and to pursue innovative and multipartisan political deals.40

In two of the cases under investigation, Chile and Uruguay, past political experience has
been integrated by broad agreements entered by the political elites. In each case, although with
different constraints, great care has been exercised by a winning coalition to create and strengthen
democratic political institutions, that in turn have ensured a reasonable success in dealing with the
social and economic problems inherited from the authoritarian predecessor. In fact, pacts imply
bargains among the parties and the creation of rules and institution to solve their present and future
disagreements. Where they have not been endorsed, as in Argentina, pacts have been replace by a
fluid and less structured form of political representation, one based on a more uncertain political
space, where institutions play a lesser role and mutual rights and obligations do not shape public
debate nor facilitate meaningful participation. In this sense Argentina shares with “restricted”
democracies some of their “delegative” attributes, which will be discussed later in more detail. For
the moment we may notice that without pacted rules the new regimes become more unpredictable:
when electoral promises are vague and elusive, there is no anticipated relation with actual policies,
politicians act above parties, and they escape accountability to political institutions and
constituencies.

By contrast, pacts have been crucial in establishing “early” Latin American democracies and
in helping to define their objectives and institutions. Although restricting participation in a few
cases, they nevertheless provided a minimum of behavioral and institutional make-up in new and
fragile regimes, without significant democratic traditions. The case of Venezuela persuasively
exemplifies these features. In 1958, following the overthrow of General Pérez Jimenez, a series of
agreements was entered by the country’s main political (and social) forces. Among them there was
a political pact, the so-called Pacto de Punto Fijo: Venezuelan political leaders agreed to exclude
Communists from participation and decided to support a common candidate and a joint electoral
platform. The accord represents one of the main features of recent Venezuelan politics: it has
allowed at least nine presidential elections to be held and no fewer than six passages of power to
opposition parties, a feature still unequaled in Latin America. Likewise, the military and trade
unions have taken part to the concertation process. In exchange for the promise of not being tried

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40. Democratic tradition implies stronger political parties and social organizations, which can more
quickly be reactivated and a more firmly established political culture of moderation and dialogue, that
facilitates political alliances. Yet some have observed that previous democratic traditions also imply the
overthrowing of an earlier democratic regime, with uncertain overall effects on the process of consolid-
a tion (A. Przeworski, Democracy and the Market).
for the crimes committed during the authoritarian regime, military leaders have accepted subordination to civilian control, have gained better economic conditions and secured more modern equipment. To receive favorable employment measures and organizational strengthening, the unions have ensured wage moderation and low workers militancy and gained a virtual monopoly in workers’ representation.\footnote{41T. Karl, "Petroleum and Political Pacts: the Transition to Democracy in Venezuela," in O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule}. 212-213.}

Our findings also suggest that the presence of a relatively developed welfare system is equally crucial. Social public expenditures help to decrease the conflicts caused by the multiplication of social and economic demands, that follow democratization and the processes of economic reform. If these social costs were not minimized, the new economies could fail and precipitate the country in economic and political chaos.\footnote{42A. Przeworski, \textit{Democracy and the Market}. The history of non Latin American countries that have recently experienced a passage to democracy supports these conclusions. Where an effective social protection policy was absent, as in Poland, a strong political opposition has often developed, weakening the new regime. A. Przeworski, "Economic Reforms, Public Opinion, and Political Institutions: Poland in the Eastern European Perspective." A. Przeworski, C. Bresser Pereira and J.M. Maravall, \textit{Economic Reforms in New Democracies}, 207.} On the other hand, these measures positively influence the further evolution of political and civil rights, strengthening the sense of social citizenship and fostering confidence in the future.

Yet, a more realistic look reveals that in Latin America social expenditures and services are often unevenly developed and allocated. Governments distribute resources, especially to powerful groups, to benefit their particular interests. For instance, in Argentina the welfare state is a plot of bilateral bargains struck by the political power and corporative groups, which endeavor to establish a direct and privileged access to crucial decision-making centers in the executive. The government and interest groups legitimate each other mainly by exchanging favors and privileges, which allows the most powerful organizations to obtain particular public policies and the government to exercise an effective social control.\footnote{43R. Lo Vuolo and A. Barbeito \textit{La nueva obscuridad de la política social. Del estado populista al neoconservador}. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores.} Thus, the welfare system contributes to weaken the contents of political representation, unveiling its nature of influence-peddling association among institutions and citizens, especially those who are organized in the “formal” sector of the economy. While assuring much needed political support, such welfare systems are likely to undermine more “complete” democratic strengthening in the long run.

The equations in Table 2 also show that economic growth, a necessary component of early models of “full” democratization, does not play the same role in later ones. To be sure, growth remains important in both Uruguay and Chile. In the latter economic stabilization, fiscal adjustment and trade liberalization were already initiated by an authoritarian regime that counted on the political support of the middle class and capital. Besides lowering inflation and unemployment, these policies ensured high rates of growth: between 1985 and 1994, per head GDP increased by over 6 percent annually. In 1995 alone, domestic product grew by a staggering 8.5 percent. The
high levels of social expenditures provided for by the authoritarian government have been maintained by its democratic successor: during the initial years of the new regime real wages have increased and poverty has been alleviated, while income distribution has probably improved.\textsuperscript{44}

By contrast, Argentina has been able to achieve “full” democratic status despite a severe economic recession during the eighties. Even taking into account the significant income expansion experienced during Menem’s two presidential mandates (1989-2000), the case of Argentina is noteworthy and deserves a brief illustration. After redemocratization, economic reforms were unable to ameliorate unemployment and to revitalize a precarious job market. Many, whose employment used to guarantee membership in the middle class in the seventies, had to be satisfied with more uncertain jobs. Structural poverty decreased, but pauperization increasingly affected public employees and those in retirement.\textsuperscript{45} Income and status losses caused the desire for a nostalgic return to an idealized past, politically represented by reactionary parties and movements.\textsuperscript{46} Political participation took at times the form of unpredictable and spontaneous social explosions, revolts, riots, and supermarket plundering. Both conducts (the explosion of social violence and the strengthening of reactionary political movements) clearly involve serious risks for the consolidation and the development of democratic practice and institutions.

Although these developments did not imply restrictions of civil and political rights, the economic crisis had an adverse effect on the social fabric of the country: if they persist, they may jeopardize its democratic texture, as well. In any case, Argentina’s poor economic performance has been compensated, bearing in mind the limits discussed above, by a relatively developed welfare organization and by a cohesive party system. The chances of democratic consolidation increase when income distribution becomes more egalitarian and party fragmentation is avoided.

More generally, we may notice that neoliberist measures economically, socially and politically penalize broad sectors of civil society. This situation represents a formidable challenge to the new democratic leaders, attempting to retain and consolidate broad popular consent in a situation characterized by high social costs and by weak and still emerging democratic institutions. We saw that in more mature democracies they have been helped by strong party systems, established during earlier democratic regimes, and to a lesser extent by relatively developed welfare schemes. The stronger institutional texture of these democracies proves advantageous, as well. For instance, because of constitutional restrictions and historically embedded practices, the Uruguayan president does not have the power to unilaterally decree “economic stabilization packages” such as

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\textsuperscript{45} Structural poverty involves exclusion from certain services, such as housing, water, power, health and education. Pauperization is characterized by the passing of a poverty threshold in relation to a minimum consumption basket.

those introduced by neighboring countries. Going to congress means having to negotiate these policies with parties, legislators and organized interests. The economic policies of the Uruguayan government were incremental and limited in scope, but avoided the mostly negative consequences of similar reform packages adopted elsewhere. In “complete” Latin American democracies legitimacy conditions have also provided politicians with an effective and flexible instrument to deal with the apparently hopeless dilemma of democratic consolidation in times of economic crisis and have helped ensure social cohesiveness and political support. Political leaders used collective political experiences, as in Chile, to mobilize their constituencies and shape new political alliances and these, in turn, have facilitated democratic consolidation.

Explaining Democratic Failure.

The equations that explain the inauguration of “restricted” democracies and the absence of democratization in Latin America are shown in Table 2 (Equations 3A-3B and 4). Equations 3A and 3B, that refer to “restricted” democracies, may be further simplified to get:

\[ \text{trad} \times \text{part} \times \text{bipart} \times (\text{auth} + \text{pacs} \times \text{grow} \times \text{welf}) \]

This expression identifies the conditions that led to the “incomplete” democratization of Ecuador, Bolivia and Brazil. First, notice that in Ecuador democracy, although incomplete, has survived for over 20 years leading to a “restricted” but “steady” regime: as previously remarked, the simple passing of time does not, by itself, ensure democratic consolidation. The existence of “incomplete” lasting democracies is puzzling and leads us back to the problem of democratic subtypes in need of a theoretical explanation. Second, the lack of a strong party system, the only necessary condition leading to “fully” democratic regimes, both recently and in the past, results in weaker and “incomplete” democracies. I wish to emphasize that this finding is not trivial: because we are dealing with different cases and because in QCA the nature of causal analysis is "directionalized", the absence of factors that contribute to “full” democratic consolidation do not necessarily imply a “negative” outcome.

Finally, besides fragmented party systems, the other necessary condition of “incomplete” democracies is lack of robust democratic traditions. When these are absent, democracy suffers from a fragile democratic culture, and it may be more difficult to create or reenact democratic institutions and actors. Equally central, the shortage of an important instrument of “positive” political

47. Besides collective memories, other themes and political identities were at work: the relationship between leaders, political parties, ideologies, party programs and more or less organized political groups is complex and ever changing. Yet, I wish to emphasize that collective memories of past political experiences have played an important role in the processes of democratic settlement and strengthening in the region and that the topic deserves a more thorough investigation. Contrary to the hypothesized effect of authoritarian rule on civil society, some scholars have argued that besides providing a compelling “negative legitimacy” tool, previous authoritarian repression has facilitated the (politically unrestrained) coexistence of democracy and liberalism by limiting the capacity of specific interest groups in society to express their interests. Coercion would have been applied to undermine the strength of civil society, feeding a perverse “vicious circle”: political repression under the authoritarian regime makes interest groups more vulnerable and less able to participate in a democratic context and defend their vital interests. Economic reforms, in turn, further undermine these groups’ organizational strength, aggravating the participatory crisis of democracy.
legitimation, as the memories associated to previous democratic experiences, considerably weakens the new democratic regime. This weakness is compounded by the absence of political pacts (in Bolivia and Ecuador) and of a “negative” source of legitimacy, as the harsh repression suffered under the authoritarian regime (in Brazil and Ecuador). For instance, in Ecuador there are at least six major parties, one of the highest numbers in Latin America and the party system is, with those of Brazil, Bolivia and Peru one of the least institutionalized. The role played by the Ecuadorian armed forces in the recent constitutional crises, involving the ousting of Presidents Bucaram and Mahuad, illustrate the precarious democratic status of the country and the continuing crucial relevance played by non-democratic actors in its political life. Thus, civil society has challenged democratic rulers and appealed to the military for the solution of dramatic economic problems. The lack of a pact among the major political antagonists at the moment of transition (1979) and thereafter; the absence of significant previous democratic traditions; and even the relatively “mild” repression experienced during the most recent military regime (that of General Rodriguez Lara) have combined to make appeals to democratic rules and behaviors less attractive and effective.49

“Restricted” democracies have much in common with “delegative” regimes, characterized by inchoate and fragmented party systems, and with “neopopulist” governments. This variety of populism is different from previous ones, which privileged expansionist economic policies and inclusive forms of political participation, culminated in the recognition of trade unions, the creation of political parties representing blue-collars workers and the passing of a series of laws protecting their rights. By contrast, the “new populist” democracies coexist with neoliberalist policies and pursue privatizations, liberist pension and unemployment reform schemes, and a broad deregulation of the economy, which implies an expansion of the informal sector where precarious working conditions are most common. Weakly institutionalized and scarcely legitimate, these regimes have weak civil society and the social sectors most adversely affected by economic reforms do not usually organize in self-defense. The uneven and erratic institutionalization of political

48. While these findings are in line with the existing literature, they are more parsimonious. Most analyses detail a variety of factors that appear to frustrate democratic consolidation. L. Diamond and J. Linz, Politics in Developing Countries. Bolder: Lynne Rienner, 1995.

49. Finally, equations 3A and 3B suggest that, when democratic traditions are missing and the party system is weak and fragmented, the lack of harsh authoritarian experiences (the case of Brazil) is functionally equivalent to the absence of political pacts, economic growth and an adequate welfare system (the case of Bolivia). This finding again calls attention to the importance of the legitimacy dimension in explaining democratic performance.

50. The same model applies to countries where a populist party already exists, or is revived, but remains a personal vehicle in the hands of political leaders, as in Venezuela with Acción Democrática, controlled by president Pérez (1988-93) or in Argentina, a case of more “mature” democracy, where the Peronist party, led by Menem, had a similar connotation.

representation channels provide little space for popular influence and levels of governmental accountability to their citizenry are particularly low.

Finally, the absence of democracy in Paraguay, Mexico and Peru has been caused by the absence of three legitimacy conditions (lack of democratic traditions and of political pacts and lower levels of repression exercised by the authoritarian government) and by rudimentary welfare systems (see Equation 4, Table 2). Paraguay and especially Mexico represent an interesting political anomaly: they are characterized by relatively strong, or at least cohesive, party systems. These basic democratic institutions, however, operate in authoritarian contexts, where political leaders are unable or unwilling to guarantee the main political and civil rights. Thus, it is not to unstructured political participation that we must look to explain the absence of democracy in these settings. It is rather the lack of previous experiences with democracy and relatively “tolerant” non-democratic regimes that matter. When legitimating a democratic regime, either by pointing at the freedoms enjoyed in the past or at the violations of civil and political rights perpetrated by authoritarian governments, is impossible the chances to control electoral and social mobilization and to favor a passage to democracy decrease, especially if political leaders are unable to provide for the most basic needs of their citizens through a developed and reasonably fair welfare system.

Nor do the elites show any desire or ability to cooperate and reach an agreement on installing a more open and participatory regime, where the civil and political rights of the citizens be truly respected. Recent political events, such as the prolonged attempts at electoral reform, begun in the second half of the seventies and still unachieved, document the lack of unity among Mexican leaders. The confrontation between President Zedillo and the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), the difficulties that periodically punctuate the attempts at concertation and the internal struggles among the heirs of the ruling PRI, illustrate the ongoing divisions.

Conclusions.

In Latin America “full” democracy has been favored by robust party systems. Where electoral volatility has been high and where citizens and civil society had no more than a superficial attachment to parties, only “restricted” forms of democracy have been established. In addition, we have seen that political pacts and previous democratic and authoritarian conditions have been crucial in establishing the most recent “full” democracies, shaping some of their fundamental features. By contrast, “restricted” democracies have been impaired by unstructured political participation and by the absence of previous democratic traditions. Finally, while in the former democratic wave economic growth played a major role, recently established “full” democracies have availed themselves of reasonably developed welfare systems, that softened the impact of economic reforms on their weakest socioeconomic classes, but were also used to support clientelistic economic schemes and particularistic varieties of political representation.

In evaluating the chances of consolidation in the region, these democratic models offer a few reasons for cautious pessimism. To start with, a good number of new democracies suffer from a crisis of political representation and accountability: this is most evident in “restricted” democratic governments, but the case of Argentina demonstrates that similar problems may materialize even where basic democratic levels are upheld. Besides, as the new democratic regimes complete their second decade of existence the move towards democracy, although impressive in its own right, is likely to exhaust its propulsive thrust. New economic problems and social tensions are on the rise in
the entire region: for instance, unemployment and urban violence inevitably question their capacity to satisfy every-day fundamental needs, such as those for new jobs and personal security. Will the new democratic regimes be able to meet these challenging demands?

The answer lies, by and large, in their capacity to increase the levels of democratic support. This implies both to achieve and maintain a sustainable growth and to reform the welfare systems, to transform them into more equitable and effective instruments of income redistribution. Whereas in the last decade the macroeconomic regional outlook has improved, the new wealth has been distributed very unevenly and sudden and devastating crises have periodically erupted. Recent attempts at welfare reform have produced mixed results. If in Chile the prospects appear somewhat encouraging, in Argentina the restructuring has caused a massive increase in the number of those who are no longer covered by any form of social security. When coupled with the recent substantial rise in poverty levels, these measures spell social and political disaster.

Furthermore, democratic approval hinges most crucially on a broader and more complete political participation. Neoliberist economic policies, on the other hand, emphasize executive decision-making, technical expertise and rapid implementation, marginalizing the role of public debate, of parliaments and political parties. The advent of TV politics and the widespread use of mass media in electoral campaigning, by establishing direct links between political leaders and their electorate, also reduces the role traditionally played by parties. By strengthening executive power and downplaying their relation to organized interests and parties, democratic leaders avoid massive unrest in reaction to harsh economic policies, but create a crisis of political representation and responsiveness that ultimately endangers a broader democratic consolidation.

Yet, direct involvement in politics not only boosts individual dignity and self-esteem, but also offers a concrete instrument to protect individual interests, both ideal and material. More and better political participation is likely to enhance support for democracy. Some parties and party coalitions have recently attempted to represent the popular sectors and groups and individuals marginalized by the neoliberist revolution. Some of them (the Alianza in Argentina and Concertation for Democracy in Chile) eventually gained power. However, while pledging to redefine and ameliorate the opportunities and forms of political participation, strengthening institutional avenues inside and outside political parties, their economic policies do not seem to address the substantial problems that plague contemporary Latin American democracies. Providing more structured occasions of political participation and defining clearer party programs are likely to increase the contents and scope of democratic politics: whether new political forces will facilitate the economic and social reintegration of the social groups excluded by economic reforms remains to be seen.

To conclude, it is worth recalling some of the weaknesses and strengths of the method employed. The inclusion of additional independent variables, the use of other measurement strategies and of alternative equation specifications may significantly alter our findings. In particular, the categorization of quantitative variables into nominal ones is crucial and QCA has shown to be sensitive to precise cut-off points. These limits, however, do not appear to be substantially different from problems routinely encountered in statistical analysis. Additivity, equation specification and causal homogeneity require similar decisions, as techniques such as log-linear analysis, that demand categorization of continuous variables. Multicollinearity and degrees-of-freedom problems may also require the use of indexes to summarize cases.
In this respect QCA offers some critical advantages. First, it helps to make more explicit the decisions that the researcher has typically to make and allows a more accurate knowledge of the empirical information used in the analysis. Second, the “case-oriented” approach implied by QCA, allowing for causal heterogeneity, poses the problem of “theoretical generality” vs. “case particularity”. Cases that do not fit the explicative model must be further examined through specific studies. The new findings may as a consequence be incorporated into the general theory to make it richer and more culturally and historically specific.52

APPENDIX

Selecting QCA simplifying assumptions according to strict theoretical criteria

The point of the procedure I introduce in this paper is that, in using QCA, the investigator should use theory to control the process of creating simplifying assumptions, instead of abdicating to mechanical or artificial devices. Simplifying assumptions involve making assumptions about combinations of conditions that one has no evidence on, the "hypothetical combinations", in order to produce a more parsimonious statement on the key differences between positive and negative cases (e.g. factors that help versus factors that hinder democratic consolidation). The gist of the operation consists in creating hypothetical combinations which can be used as simplifying assumptions from a dialogue between theory and empirical combinations. The researcher uses theory to specify contributing factors (e.g. for democratic consolidation, among others the presence of political pacts and strong and unified party systems) and then uses contrasts between theory and empirical combinations to generate relevant hypothetical combinations. In the case of empirical combinations displaying the outcome, the researcher assumes that any contributing factor that is absent would contribute to the outcome if it were present, and thus creates the relevant hypothetical combination. In the case of empirical combinations not displaying the outcome, the researcher assumes that any contributing factor that is present in the combination can be removed, and thus creates additional hypothetical combinations.

Thus our hypothesis must specify the causes that we think will contribute to the occurrence of the dependent variable or to its absence. For this operation we may rely on previous research or informed guesses: the critical point is that this theoretical model should guide our following simplifying procedure. When a theoretically expected cause is missing in the observed data, we will add it if the outcome occurs, or remove it if it is absent. Contributing factors are added and removed until all possible logical combinations of causes for a specific outcome are covered. One must therefore check first that this is indeed the case. The new terms must, finally, be checked for possible contradictions with the original data (a contradiction develops when the same causal configuration relates to both the presence and the absence of the outcome) and added manually to the truth table.

An example may help to clarify the procedure. Let's assume one has two causes (A, B), that are expected to contribute to the outcome when they are present; one (C), that should contribute only when it is absent and another (D), that could go either way. Thus the initial theory is:

\[ ABc? \rightarrow Y \]


23
and
abc? ----> y
(upper case letters indicate the presence of a condition or outcome and lower case letters its absence).
Let's further assume the following data set (the outcome appears after the comma):

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1011,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1100,1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1001,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0101,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0011,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1000,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be reasonable, at this point, to add the following hypothetical assumptions (including redundant ones), using the theory, sketched above, as a guide:
For case
#1: 1111,1
    1101,1
#2: none to add; can't make assumptions about D (no clear guidance from theory).
#3: 1101,1
#4: 0001,0
    0111,0
    0011,0
#5: none to add
#6: 0000,0
    1010,0
    0010,0

In the study of democratic consolidation, for instance, it is possible to formulate the general hypothesis that six of the seven specified causes contribute to the effect of consolidation: all, that is, except military presence in political life. As it will be recalled the main hypothesis was:

\[ \text{TRAD*PACS*AUTH*PART*BIPR*GROW*WELF = CONS.} \]

Whenever these causes are present, consolidation follows. When democratic consolidation is observed, therefore, and empirical contributing factors are missing, one must replace them with expected ones to generate the relevant hypothetical combinations. In practice, in the present case, 0 values have been changed to 1 in all instances. This operation allows, in a sense, to make the expected outcome, democratic consolidation, even more certain. This is the essential feature of the hypothetical combinations generated by these procedures. Conversely, following the theoretical expectations defined in our model, one must remove contributing factors in the empirical cases that have not experienced consolidation, again substituting to original values the expected ones, making their absence even more explicit.

53. If a cause can go either way (it assumes a "don't care" value, in QCA jargon), then there is no way to use it to create simplifying assumptions.