



**ANOTHER INSTITUTIONALIZATION:
LATIN AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE**

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ABSTRACT

The paper expresses skepticism about concepts current in the contemporary literature on democratization, such as 'democratic consolidation' and/or the 'lack of institutionalization' from which most of the new democracies supposedly suffer. The further claim is made that these democracies—or 'polyarchies', to use the term preferred here—have, in fact, two very important institutions, elections and particularism/clientelism, which are not generally recognized as such due to the narrow way in which political scientists usually conceptualize institutions. Finally, the paper traces some correlates and elective affinities resulting from what it labels 'informal institutionalization.' The main argument is that, in order to contribute to improving the quality of many of the new polyarchies, analysts must describe their main features realistically, which requires moving well beyond merely negative characterizations limited to what these countries seem to lack in comparison with older polyarchies.

RESUMEN

El texto expresa escepticismo en relación con conceptos, corrientes en la literatura contemporánea sobre democratización, tales como "consolidación de la democracia" y/o la aparente "falta de institucionalización que aparentemente padecen muchas de las nuevas democracias. El texto argumenta, además, que estas democracias—o poliarquías—tienen dos instituciones sumamente importante, las elecciones y un difundido particularismo/clientelismo. El problema es que estas instituciones no suelen ser reconocidas como tales, debido a la estrecha manera con que la ciencia política suele conceptualizar las instituciones. Finalmente, el texto traza algunas correlaciones y afinidades electivas resultantes de lo que llama la "institucionalización informal" de esas poliarquías. El principal argumento es que, para contribuir a mejorar la calidad de muchas de esas poliarquías, es necesario comenzar por describir realísticamente sus principales características. Esto requiere superar caracterizaciones puramente negativas, basadas en los atributos de que aquellas parecen carecer cuando comparadas con las viejas poliarquías.

Introduction

Democracies used to be few in number, and most were located in the northwestern quarter of the world. Over the last two decades, however, many countries rid themselves of authoritarian regimes. There are many variations among these countries. Some of them have reverted to new brands of authoritarianism (even if from time to time they hold elections), and a few others have clearly embraced democracy. Still many others seem to inhabit a grey area; they bear a family resemblance to the old-established democracies but they either lack or only precariously possess some key attributes of the latter. The bulk of the contemporary literature tells us that these somehow 'incomplete' democracies are failing to become consolidated or institutionalized.

This poses two tasks. One is to establish a cutoff point that separates all democracies from nondemocracies. This point's location depends on the questions we ask, and so is always arbitrary. Many definitions of democracy have been offered.ⁱ The one I find especially useful is Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy. Once a reasonably well-delimited set of democracies is obtained, the second task is to examine the criteria that a given stream of the scholarly literature uses for comparing casesⁱⁱ within this set. If the criteria are found wanting, the next step is to propose alternative concepts for these comparisons. This is what I attempt here, albeit in preliminary and schematic fashion.

Contemporary Latin America is my empirical referent, although my discussion probably also applies to various newly democratized countries in other parts of the world. I do not survey in any detail the present situation of newly democratized, or redemocratized, Latin American countries; recent studies have done this very well.ⁱⁱⁱ My main argument in this paper is that,

ⁱ Reflecting the lack of clearly established criteria in the literature, David Collier and Steven Levitsky have inventoried and interestingly discussed the more than one hundred qualifiers attached to the term 'democracy,' many of them intended to indicate that the respective cases are in some sense lacking the full attributes of democracy as defined by each author; see their "Democracy 'with Adjectives': Finding Conceptual Order in Recent Comparative Research," University of California, Berkeley, Department of Political Science, multicopied.

ⁱⁱ More precisely, groups of cases, or subtypes, within this set.

ⁱⁱⁱ For excellent general surveys, see Larry Diamond, "Democracy in Latin America: Degrees, Illusions, and Directions for Consolidation," in Tom Farer, ed., *Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), and the 1994 proceedings of a conference held at the University of Notre Dame as part of "Project Latin America 2000" of the Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies: Catherine Conaghan, "Democracy that Matters: The Search for Authenticity, Legitimacy, and Civic Competence in the Andes," Kellogg Institute, Project Latin America 2000 series Working Paper

contrary to what most of current scholarship holds, the problem with many new polyarchies is not that they lack institutionalization. Rather, the way in which political scientists usually conceptualize some institutions prevents us from recognizing that these polyarchies actually have two extremely important institutions. One is highly formalized but intermittent: elections. The other is informal, permanent, and pervasive: particularism (or clientelism, broadly defined). An important fact is that, in contrast to previous periods of authoritarian rule, particularism now exists in uneasy tension with the formal rules and institutions of what I call the 'full institutional package' of polyarchy. These arguments open up a series of issues that in future publications I will analyze with the detail and nuance they deserve. My purpose at present is to furnish some elements for what I believe are needed revisions in the conceptual and comparative agenda for the study of all existing polyarchies, especially those that are *informally institutionalized*.^{iv}

Polyarchy, as defined by Dahl,^v has seven attributes:

1. elected officials;
2. free and fair elections;
3. inclusive suffrage;
4. right to run for office;
5. freedom of expression;
6. alternative information;
7. associational autonomy.

Attributes 1 to 4 tell us that a basic aspect of polyarchy is that elections are inclusive, fair, and competitive. Attributes 5 to 7 refer to political and social freedoms that are minimally necessary not only during but also between elections as a condition for elections to be fair and competitive. According to these criteria, some countries of Latin America currently are not polyarchies: The

#1; Scott Mainwaring, "Democracy in Brazil and the Southern Cone: Achievements and Problems," Working Paper #2; Laurence Whitehead, "The Peculiarities of 'Transition' *a la mexicana*," Working Paper #4; and Terry L. Karl, "Central America in the Twenty-First Century: The Prospects for a Democratic Region," Working Paper #5 (these papers are available upon request from the Kellogg Institute, Notre Dame, IN 46566-5677). See also Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

^{iv} I have tried unsuccessfully to find terms appropriate to what the literature refers as highly vs. noninstitutionalized (or poorly institutionalized) or as consolidated vs. unconsolidated democracies, with most of the old polyarchies belonging to the first terms of these pairs and most of the new ones to the second. For reasons that will be clear below, I have opted for labelling the first group 'formally institutionalized' and the second 'informally institutionalized,' but not without misgivings: in the first set of countries many things happen outside formally prescribed institutional rules, while the second set includes one highly formalized institution, elections.

^v This list is from Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 221; the reader may want to examine further details of these attributes, discussed by Dahl in this book. An interesting attempt at operationalizing polyarchy in a comparative perspective is Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke, "Measuring Polyarchy," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 25, #1 (Spring 1990) 51–72.

Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico have recently held elections, but they have been marred by serious irregularities before, during, and after voting.

Other attributes need to be added to Dahl's list. One is that elected (and some appointed) officials should not be arbitrarily terminated before the end of their constitutionally dictated terms.^{vi} A second addition is that the elected authorities should not be subject to severe constraints, or vetoes, or exclusion from certain policy domains by other, nonelected actors, especially the armed forces.^{vii} In this sense, Guatemala and Paraguay, as well as probably El Salvador and Honduras, do not qualify as polyarchies.^{viii} Chile is an odd case, where restrictions of this sort are part of the constitution inherited from the authoritarian regime. But Chile clearly meets Dahl's seven criteria of polyarchy. Peru is another doubtful case, since the 1995 presidential elections were not untarnished and the armed forces retain tutelary powers over various policy areas. Third, there should be an uncontested national territory that clearly defines the voting population.^{ix} Finally, an appropriate definition of polyarchy should also include an intertemporal dimension: the generalized expectation that a fair electoral process and its surrounding freedoms will continue into an indefinite future.

These criteria leave us with the three polyarchies—Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela—whose origins date from before the wave of democratization that began in the mid-1970s, and with nine others that resulted from this wave: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay and, with the caveats noted, Chile and Peru. But only in the oldest Latin American polyarchy, Costa Rica, and in two cases of redemocratization, Chile and Uruguay,

^{vi} This and the following additions to the concept of polyarchy show that some of the assumptions or omissions of theories of democracy need to be made explicit if these theories are to aptly travel outside of the Northwestern quadrant of the world. Fujimori and Yeltsin may have been elected in fair elections, but they abolished polyarchy when they forcefully closed congress and fired the supreme court.

^{vii} See, especially, J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, op. cit. (n. 3); and Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is...and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2, #3 (Summer 1991) 75–88. Another necessary addition to Dahl's criterion about elected officials, less significant for my purposes, is the caveat obviously needed with respect to some important officials who in most polyarchies are not elected: judges of the supreme and other courts.

^{viii} See Terry L. Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America," *Journal of Democracy* 6, #3 (July 1995) 73–86, and "Imposing Consent? Electoralism vs. Democratization in El Salvador," in Paul Drake and Eduardo Silva, eds., *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980–85* (San Diego: Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies: 1986) 9–36.

^{ix} See, especially, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Postcommunist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming); and Philippe Schmitter, "Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, #2 (April 1994) 57–74.

do the executive branch, congress, parties, and the judiciary function in a manner that is reasonably close to their formal institutional rules, making them effective institutional knots in the flow of political power and policy.^X Colombia and Venezuela used to function like this but do so no longer.^{xi} These two countries, jointly with Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru—a set that includes a large majority of the Latin American population and GNP—function in ways that current democratic theory has ill prepared us to understand.

We must go back to the definition of polyarchy. This definition, precise in regard to elections (attributes 1 to 4) and rather generic (attributes 5 to 7) about contextual freedoms, is mute with respect to institutional features such as parliamentarism or presidentialism, centralism or federalism, majoritarianism or consensualism, and the existence or not of a written constitution and judicial review. Also, the definition of polyarchy is silent about important but elusive themes such as if, how, and to what degree governments are responsive and/or accountable to citizens between elections, and the degree to which the rule of law extends over the country's geographical and social terrain.^{xii} These silences are appropriate: the definition of polyarchy, let us recall, establishes a crucial cutting point—one that separates cases where there exist inclusive, fair, and competitive elections and basic accompanying freedoms from all others, including not only unabashed authoritarian regimes but also countries that hold elections but lack some of the characteristics that jointly define polyarchy.

Among polyarchies, however, there are many variations. These differences are empirical, but they can also be normatively evaluated and their likely effect on the survival prospects of each polyarchy may be eventually assessed. These are important issues that merit conceptual clarification.

By definition, all the Latin American cases that I have labeled polyarchies are such because of a simple but crucial fact: elections are institutionalized. By an institution I mean a regularized pattern of interaction that is known, practiced, and accepted (if not necessarily approved) by actors who expect to continue interacting under the rules sanctioned and backed

^X But we should note that in Uruguay and in Chile there exist severe constraints on the application of the law to armed forces' personnel. This is an important gap in the universalization of the rule of law which, in Latin America, only Costa Rica has bridged.

^{xi} For recent analyses of these countries, see Catherine Conaghan, "Democracy that Matters," *op. cit.* (n. 3); Michael Coppedge, "Venezuela's Vulnerable Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 3, #4 (October 1992) 32–44; and Michael Gold-Biss, "Colombia: Understanding Recent Democratic Transformations in a Violent Polity," *Latin American Research Review* 28, #1 (1993) 215–34.

^{xii} For a useful listing of these institutional variations, see Schmitter and Karl, "What Democracy Is...and Is Not," *op. cit.* (n. 7).

by that pattern.^{xiii} As sociological views stress,^{xiv} institutions are taken for granted, in their existence and continuity, by the actors who interact with and through them. Institutions “are there,” regulating expectations and behavior that usually do not question their socially given existence. Sometimes institutions become complex organizations: they are supposed to operate under highly formalized and explicit rules and materialize in buildings, rituals, and officials. These are the institutions on which both “prebehavioral” and most of contemporary neoinstitutionalist political science focus. An unusual characteristic of elections *qua* institutions is that they are highly formalized by very detailed and explicit rules but function intermittently and do not always have a permanent organizational embodiment.

In all polyarchies, old and new, elections are institutionalized, both in themselves and in the reasonable^{xv} effectiveness of the surrounding conditions of freedom of expression, access to alternative information, and associational autonomy. Leaders and voters take for granted that in the future inclusive, fair, and competitive elections will take place as legally scheduled, voters will be properly registered and free from physical coercion, and their votes will be counted fairly. It is also taken for granted that the winners will take office and will not have their terms arbitrarily terminated. Furthermore, for this electoral process to exist, freedom of opinion and of association (including forming political parties) and an uncensored media must also exist. Countries where elections do not have these characteristics do not qualify as polyarchies.^{xvi}

Most students of democratization agree that many of the new polyarchies are at best poorly institutionalized. Few of them seem to have institutionalized anything aside from elections, at least in terms of what one would expect from looking at some^{xvii} of the old polyarchies. But appearances can be misleading, since other institutions may exist, even though they may not be the ones most of us would prefer or easily recognize.

^{xiii} For a more detailed discussion of institutions, see my “Delegative Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 5, #1 (January 1994) 56–69.

^{xiv} See, especially, Ronald L. Jepperson, “Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism,” in Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 143–63.

^{xv} The term ‘reasonable’ is admittedly ambiguous. Nowhere are these freedoms completely uncurtailed, if nothing else by the political consequences of social inequality. By ‘reasonable’ I mean that there are no *de jure* prohibitions on these freedoms nor systematic and usually successful efforts by the government or private actors to annul them.

^{xvi} On the other hand, elections can be made more authentically competitive by, say, measures that diminish the advantages of incumbents or of economically powerful parties. These are, of course, important issues. But the point I want to make at the moment is that these differences obtain among countries that already qualify as polyarchies.

^{xvii} The caveat implied by the term ‘some’ will be clarified below.

Doubts about 'Consolidation'

When elections and their surrounding freedoms are institutionalized, it might be said that polyarchy (or political democracy) is 'consolidated,' i.e., likely to endure. This, jointly with the proviso of absence of veto powers over elected authorities, is the influential definition of 'democratic consolidation' offered by Juan Linz, who calls it a state of affairs "in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and...no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers... To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the 'only game in town'."^{xviii} This minimalist definition has important advantages. Still, I do not see much analytical gain in attaching the term 'consolidated' to something that will probably though not certainly endure—'democracy' and 'consolidation' are terms too polysemous to make a good pair.

Other authors offer more expanded definitions of democratic consolidation, many of them centered on the achievement of a high degree of 'institutionalization.'^{xix} Usually these definitions do not see elections as an institution.^{xx} They focus on complex organizations, basically the executive, parties and congress, and sometimes the judiciary. Several valuable studies have been conducted from this point of view. However, by the very logic of their assessment of many new polyarchies as noninstitutionalized, these studies presuppose, as their comparative yardstick, a generic and somewhat idealized view of the old polyarchies. To begin with, I declare my perplexity about what this yardstick really means: it is unclear whether it is something like an average of characteristics observed within the set of old polyarchies, or an ideal

^{xviii} Juan Linz, "Transitions to Democracy," *Washington Quarterly* 13, #3 (1990) 156; the assertion about "the only game in town" entails some ambiguities that I discuss below.

^{xix} Even though most definitions of democratic consolidation are centered around 'institutionalization' (whether explicitly or implicitly, by asserting acceptance and/or approval of democratic institutions and their formal rules), they offer a wide variety of additional criteria. My own count in a recent review of the literature is twelve; see Doh Chull Sin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47 (October 1994) 135–70. Some of these criteria are quite demanding, such as the achievement of "substantial, principled consensus" about democracy among leaders, or "elite consensus on procedures coupled with extensive mass participation in elections and other institutional processes," or democracy becoming "broadly and profoundly legitimate," or when "acceptance of a given set of constitutional rules becomes increasingly widespread, valued, and routinized," or when a democratic political culture emerges (see Sin, *op. cit.*, 144 ff., and the sources cited therein).

^{xx} An exception is the definition of democratic consolidation offered by J. Samuel Valenzuela, which is centered on what I call here the institutionalization of elections and the absence of veto powers; see, by this author, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings," *op. cit.* (n. 7), 69.

type generated from some of these characteristics, or a generalization of the characteristics of some of its members to the whole set, or a normative statement of preferred traits. Furthermore, this mode of reasoning carries a strong teleological flavor. Cases that have not 'arrived' at full institutionalization, or that do not seem to be moving in this direction, are seen as stunted,^{xxi} frozen, protractedly unconsolidated, and the like. Such a view presupposes that there are, or should be, factors operating in the direction of increasing consolidation or institutionalization, but that countervailing 'obstacles' stymie a process of change that otherwise would operate unfettered.^{xxii} That some of these polyarchies have been in a state of 'protracted unconsolidation'^{xxiii} already for some twenty years suggests that there is something extremely odd with this kind of thinking.

A recently published book on democratic consolidation in Southern Europe is a case in point.^{xxiv} This is the first of a series of five volumes, resulting from an eight-year project that involved, as coauthors and discussants, many of the most active and distinguished students of democratization. As stated in the Introduction to this volume, the purpose of this project is "(1) To engage in a systematic study of the nature of democratic consolidation in Greece, Portugal, Spain, and postfascist Italy...and (2) To use the insights derived from this regional case study to contribute to the emergent, more general, theoretical debate concerning the properties of, and the processes involved in, the consolidation of democracy." The "Introduction" (1–32) and the "Conclusions" (389–413) by the coeditors and codirectors of the project offer an impressively learned distillation of these extensive scholarly exchanges. These texts are also paradigmatic of the views I am criticizing. The editors use the concept of "*trajectories* of democratic transitions and

^{xxi} It is high time for self-criticism. The term 'stunted' I used jointly with Scott Mainwaring and Samuel Valenzuela in the "Introduction" to our *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, op. cit. (n. 3), 11. Furthermore, in my chapter in this volume (17–56), I offer a nonminimalist definition of democratic consolidation and propose the concept of a "second transition," from a democratically elected government to a consolidated democratic regime. These concepts partake of the teleology I criticize here.

^{xxii} This teleological view is homologous to the one used by many modernization studies in the 1950s and 1960s; it was abundantly, but evidently not decisively, criticized at the time. For a critique of the concept of 'democratic consolidation' that is convergent with mine, see Ben Ross Schneider, "Democratic Consolidations: Some Broad Comparisons and Sweeping Arguments," *Latin American Research Review* 30, #2 (1995) 215–34, in which he concludes (231) by warning against "the fallacy of excessive universalism."

^{xxiii} Philippe Schmitter with Terry Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?" *Slavic Review* 63 (spring 1994) 173–85.

^{xxiv} Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

consolidations” with which, even though they warn that it “should in no way be understood as implying a deterministic conceptual bias,” they intend to “capture and highlight the particular combination and interplay of freedom and constraint *at each successive stage of the democratization process*” (xvi, emphasis added). Further on they state that “We regard *continued movement towards the ideal type of democratic consolidation* as very significant” (9, emphasis added). Consistently with this view—in contrast to Southern European countries that the authors say became consolidated democracies in part because they have “leap-frogged” democratization and developmental *stages*—most of Latin America is seen as “*still struggling with transitional problems of varying, and often major, magnitude and intensity*” (xiv–xvi, emphasis added). An exception is Chile, where the transition is “*moving towards consolidation*” (19, emphasis added) and “seems to be *well on its way to successful completion*” (389, emphasis added). On their part, after achieving consolidation, the Southern European countries seem, according to these authors, to be entering into still another stage, that of “democratic persistence,” which is the “end product of a long democratization process” (xiii, *passim*).

One way or the other, polyarchies that are seen as unconsolidated, noninstitutionalized, or poorly institutionalized are defined negatively, for what they lack: the type and degree of institutionalization presumably achieved by old polyarchies. Yet negative definitions focus attention away from building typologies of polyarchies on the basis of the specific, positively described traits of each type.^{xxv} Such typologies are needed, among other purposes, for assessing each type’s likelihood of endurance, for exploring its patterns of change, and for clarifying the various dimensions on which issues of quality and performance of polyarchy may be discussed and researched.

There is no theory that would tell us why and how the new polyarchies that have institutionalized elections will ‘complete’ their institutional set or otherwise become ‘consolidated.’ All we can say at the present is that, as long as elections are institutionalized, polyarchies are likely to endure. We can add the hypothesis that this likelihood is greater for polyarchies that are formally institutionalized. But this proposition is not terribly interesting unless we take into

^{xxv} We should remember that several typologies have been proposed for formally institutionalized polyarchies; see, especially, Arend Lijphart, *Democracies. Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). This work has been extremely useful in advancing knowledge about these polyarchies, which underscores the need for similar efforts on the now greatly expanded whole set of polyarchies. For an attempt in this direction, see Carlos Acuña and William Smith, “Future Politico-Economic Scenarios for Latin America,” in William Smith, Carlos Acuña, and Eduardo Gamarra, eds., *Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 1993) 1–28.

account other factors that most likely have strong independent effects on the chances of survival of polyarchies.^{xxvi} Consequently, calling some polyarchies ‘consolidated’ or ‘highly institutionalized’ may be no more than saying that they are institutionalized in ways that one expects and approves. Without a theory of how and why this may happen, it is at best premature to expect that newer polyarchies will or should become ‘consolidated’ or ‘highly institutionalized.’ In any event, such a theory can only be elaborated on the basis of a positive description of the main traits of the pertinent cases.

Informal Rules

Polyarchy is the happy result of centuries-long processes, mostly in countries in the Northwest. In spite of many variations among these countries, polyarchy is embodied in an institutional package: a set of rules and institutions (many of them complex organizations) that is usually explicitly formalized in constitutions and auxiliary legislation. Rules are supposed to guide how individuals in institutions and individuals interacting with institutions behave. The extent to which behavior and expectations hew to or deviate from their formal rules is difficult to gauge empirically. But when the fit is reasonably close, formal rules simplify our task; they are good predictors of behavior and expectations. In this case one may conclude that all or most of the formal rules and institutions of polyarchy are fully, or close to fully, institutionalized.^{xxvii} When the fit is loose or practically nonexistent, we are confronted with the double task of describing actual behavior and of finding out the (usually informal) rules that behavior and expectations do follow. Actors are as rational in these settings as in highly formalized ones, but the contours of their rationality cannot be traced without knowing the actual rules, and the common knowledge of these rules, that they follow. One may define this situation negatively, solely in terms of the lack of

^{xxvi} Adam Przeworski and his collaborators found that higher economic development and a parliamentary regime increase the average survival rate of polyarchies. These are important findings, but the authors have not tested the impacts of socioeconomic inequality and of the kind of informal institutionalization I discuss below. Pending further research, it is impossible to assess the causal direction and weight of all these variables. I suspect that high socioeconomic inequality has a close relationship with informal institutionalization. But we do not know if either or both, directly or indirectly, affect the chances of survival of polyarchy, or if they might cancel the effect of economic development that Przeworski et al. found. See Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, “Modernization: Theories and Facts,” Chicago Center for Democracy, University of Chicago, Working Paper #4 (November 1994), multicopied; and Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, “What Makes Democracies Endure,” *Journal of Democracy* 7 (January 1996) 39–55.

^{xxvii} A topic that does not concern me here is the extent to which formal rules are institutionalized across various old polyarchies and, within them, across various issue areas, though the variations seem quite important on both counts.

fit between formal rules and observed behavior. As anthropologists have long known, however, this is no substitute for studying the actual rules that are being followed; nor does it authorize the assumption that somehow there is a tendency toward increasing compliance with formal rules. This is especially true when informal rules are widely shared and deeply rooted; in this case, it may be said that it is these rules that are highly institutionalized, not the formal ones.^{xxviii}

To some extent this also happens in the old polyarchies. The various laments, from all sides of the ideological spectrum, about the decay of democracy in these countries is largely a consequence of the visible and apparently increasing gap between formal rules and the behavior of all sorts of political actors. But the gap is even larger in many new polyarchies, where the formal rules about how political institutions are supposed to work are often poor guides to what actually happens.

Many new polyarchies do not lack institutionalization, but a fixation on highly formalized and complex organizations prevents one from seeing an extremely influential, informal and sometimes concealed, institution: clientelism and, more generally, particularism. For brevity's sake, I will put details and nuances aside^{xxix} and use these terms to refer broadly to various sorts of nonuniversalistic relationships, ranging from hierarchical particularistic exchanges, patronage,

xxviii The lore of many countries is filled with jokes about the naive foreigner or the native sucker who get in trouble by following the formal rules of a given situation. I have explored some of these issues with reference to Brazil and Argentina in "Democracia en la Argentina: Micro y Macro," Working Paper, #2 (Notre Dame: Kellogg Institute, 1983); "Y a mí qué me importa? Notas sobre sociabilidad y política en Argentina y Brasil," Working Paper #9 (Notre Dame: Kellogg Institute, 1984); and "Micro-escenas de la privatización de lo público en São Paulo," Working Paper #121, with commentaries by Roberto DaMatta and J. Samuel Valenzuela (Notre Dame: Kellogg Institute, 1989).

xxix For the purposes of the generic argument I present in this essay, and not without hesitation because of its vagueness, from now on I will use from now on the term 'particularism' to refer to these phenomena. For recent studies of the contemporary relevance of clientelism, see Luis Roniger and Ayse Gunes-Ayata, eds., *Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994). For studies focused on Latin America that are particularly germane to my argument, see, especially, Roberto DaMatta, *A casa e a rua. Espaço, cidadania, mulher e morte no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1985); Jonathan Fox, "The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship," *World Politics* 46, #2 (January 1994) 151–84; Francis Hagopian, "The Compromised Transition: The Political Class in the Brazilian Transition" in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, op. cit. (n. 3), 243-93; and Scott Mainwaring, "Brazilian Party Underdevelopment in Comparative Perspective," *Political Science Quarterly* 107, #4 (Winter 1992–93), 677–707. These and other studies show that particularism and its concomitants are not ignored by good field researchers. But, attesting to the paradigmatic force of the prevalent views on democratization, in the literature I am discussing the rich data and findings emerging from such case studies are not conceptually processed as an intrinsic part of the *problématique* of democratization or are seen as just 'obstacles' interposed in the way of its presumed direction of change.

nepotism, and favors to actions that, under the formal rules of the institutional package of polyarchy, would be considered corrupt.^{xxx}

Particularism—like its counterpart, neopatrimonial^{xxx}i and delegative conceptions and practices of rule—is antagonistic to one of the main aspects of the full institutional package of polyarchy: the behavioral, legal, and normative distinction between a public and a private sphere. This distinction is an important aspect of the formal institutionalization of polyarchy. Individuals performing roles in political and, in general, state institutions are not supposed to be guided by particularistic motives but by universalistic orientations to some version of the public good. The boundaries between the public and the private are often blurred in the old polyarchies. But the very notion of the boundary is broadly accepted and, sometimes, vigorously asserted when it seems breached by public officials acting from particularistic motives. In cases where particularism is pervasive, this notion is weaker, less widely held, and seldom enforced.

But polyarchy matters, even in the institutional spheres that, against their formal rules, are dominated by particularism. There, in congress, the judiciary, and some actions of the executive, rituals and discourses are performed as if the formal rules were the main guides of behavior. The consequences are twofold. On one side, by paying tribute to the formal rules, these rituals and discourses facilitate social and political demands that these rules should be truly followed and that more public-oriented governmental behavior should prevail. On the other side, the blatant hypocrisy of many of these rituals and discourses breeds cynicism toward the institutions of polyarchy, their incumbents, and ‘politicians’ in general. As long as this second consequence is highly visible, particularism is taken for granted, and practiced, as the main way of access to and of exercise of political power. Particularism is an important component of the political regime these polyarchies are.^{xxx}ii Polyarchies are regimes, but not all polyarchies are the same kind of regime.

^{xxx} Perhaps it bears insisting that formally institutionalized polyarchies are not exempt from particularistic relationships. I am pointing out matters of degree that seem large enough to require conceptual recognition. One important indication of these differences is the extraordinary leniency with which, in informally institutionalized polyarchies, political leaders, most of public opinion, and even courts treat situations that in the other polyarchies would be considered as entailing very severe conflicts of interest.

^{xxx}i For a discussion of this topic, see my “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes” in Mainwaring et al., op. cit. (n. 3), 17–56. An interesting recent discussion of neopatrimonialism is Jonathan Hartlyn’s “Crisis-Ridden Elections (Again) in the Dominican Republic: Neopatrimonialism, Presidentialism, and Weak Electoral Oversight,” *Journal of Interamerican and World Affairs* 34, #4 (Winter 1994) 91–144.

^{xxx}ii By regime I mean “the set of effectively prevailing patterns (not necessarily legally formalized) that establish the modalities of recruitment and access to governmental roles, and the permissible resources that form the basis for expectations of access to such roles,” as defined in my *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966–1973, in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 6. Gerardo Munck “Political Regime, Transition, and

Here we see the ambiguity of the assertion made by Juan Linz, Adam Przeworski,^{xxxiii} and others, when they argue that consolidation occurs when “democracy becomes the only game in town.” It is clear that these authors are referring to the formal rules of polyarchy. More generally, even though they may not refer to ‘institutionalization,’ authors who limit themselves to the term ‘consolidation’ also assert, more or less implicitly, the same close fit between formal rules and actual behavior.^{xxxiv} For example, Przeworski argues that democratic consolidation occurs “when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions.” But this does not preclude the possibility that the games played ‘inside’ the democratic institutions are different from the ones dictated by their formal rules. Przeworski also states: “To put it somewhat more technically, democracy is consolidated when compliance—acting within the institutional framework—constitutes the equilibrium of the decentralized strategies of all the relevant forces.”^{xxxv} Clearly, Przeworski is assuming that there is only one equilibrium, the one generated by a close fit between formal rules and behavior. However, even though it is inferior in terms of performances and outcomes that we value, the situation I am describing may be an equilibrium, too.^{xxxvi}

A Theoretical Limbo

If more or less explicitly the main criterion for democratic consolidation or institutionalization is a reasonably close fit between formal rules and actual behavior, then what of

Consolidation: Conceptual Issues in Regime Analysis,” paper presented at the 1995 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, presents an interesting analysis of the concept of regime and its uses in comparative studies.

^{xxxiii} Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

^{xxxiv} See, among many others that could be cited, some of them transcribed in Sin, op. cit. (n. 19) and in Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, op. cit. (n. 24), the definition of democratic consolidation that the latter authors propose: “Consolidation...refers to the achievement of substantial attitudinal support for and behavioral compliance with the new democratic institutions and the rules which they establish” (3; a more expanded but equivalent definition is offered on 7).

^{xxxv} Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market*, op. cit. (n. 33), 26.

^{xxxvi} In another influential discussion, Philippe Schmitter, although he does not use this language, expresses a similar view of democratic consolidation; see “Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy,” op. cit. (n. 9). Schmitter begins by asserting that “In South America, Eastern Europe, and Asia the specter haunting the transition is...nonconsolidation... These countries are ‘doomed’ to remain democratic almost by default.” He acknowledges that the attributes of polyarchy may hold in these countries—but these “patterns never quite crystallize” (60–61). To say that democracy exists “almost by default” (i.e., is negatively defined) and is not “crystallized” (i.e., not formally institutionalized) is another way of stating the generalized view that I am discussing.

countries such as Italy, Japan, and India? These are long-enduring polyarchies where, by all indications, various forms of particularism are rampant. Yet these cases are not seen as problematic by the literature I am discussing. That they are listed as 'consolidated' (or, at least, not listed as 'unconsolidated') suggests the strength—and the inconsistency—of this view. It attaches the label 'consolidated' to cases that clearly do not fit its arguments but that have endured for a significantly longer period than the new polyarchies have so far. This is a typical paradigmatic anomaly. It deals with these cases by relegating them to a theoretical limbo,^{xxxvii} as if, because they are somehow considered to be 'consolidated,' their big gaps between formal rules and behavior were irrelevant. This is a pity, because theoretically and empirically important variations for the study of the whole set of existing polyarchies are thereby obscured.

Another confusing issue is who should adhere to the formal rules, and to what extent, for democracy to consolidate—the requirement of 'legitimacy' that some definitions add. Here the literature oscillates between holding that only certain leaders need adhere to democratic principles and arguing that most of the country's people should be democrats, and between requiring normative acceptance of these principles and resting content with a mere perception that there is no feasible alternative to democracy. The scope of this adherence is also problematic: is it enough that it refers to the formal institutions of the regime, or should it extend to other areas, such as a broadly shared democratic political culture?

Given these conceptual quandaries, it is not surprising that it is impossible to clearly specify when a democracy has become 'consolidated.' To illustrate this point, consider the 'tests' of democratic consolidation that Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle propose. These tests supposedly help them to differentiate the consolidated Southern European cases from the unconsolidated Latin American, as well as East European and Asian, ones. The indicators that "may constitute evidence that a regime is consolidated" are: 1) "alternation in power between former rivals"^{xxxviii}; 2) "continued widespread support and stability during times of extreme

^{xxxvii} An exception is Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, *op. cit.* (n. 24), where Italy is one of the four cases studied. But the way they deal with recent events in Italy is exemplary of the conceptual problems I am discussing. They assert that in Italy "...several important partial regimes...were challenged, became deconsolidated, and entered into a significant process of restructuring beginning in 1991" (19). On the same page the reader learns that these partial regimes include nothing less than "the electoral system, the party system, and the structure of the state itself." (Added to this list later on is "the basic nature of executive-legislative relations" [394]). Yet the "Italian democracy remains strong and resilient"—after practically almost every important aspect of its regime, and even of the state, have become 'deconsolidated' (412). If the authors mean that, in spite of a severe crisis, the Italian polyarchy is likely to endure, I agree.

^{xxxviii} Actually, these authors are ambiguous about this first 'test.' On the same page of the text I have just transcribed (12) they assert that they "reject [peaceful alternation in government

economic hardship”; 3) “successful defeat and punishment of a handful of strategically placed rebels”; 4) “regime stability in the face of a radical restructuring of the party system”; and 5) “the absence of a politically significant antisystem party or social movement” (12–13).

With respect to Latin America, it bears commenting in relation to each of these points that: 1) alternations in power (i.e., in government) through peaceful electoral processes have occurred in Latin America as frequently as in Southern Europe; 2) in the former, support for regime stability has persisted—in Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, among other countries—even in the face of far more acute recessions than Southern Europe has seen, and in the midst of quadruple-digit inflation; 3) the record of punishment is poor, albeit with important exceptions, in both regions; 4) even when thinking about Italy today, it is hard to imagine party-system restructurings more radical than the ones that occurred in Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador; and 5) ‘antisystem’ political parties are as absent from the Latin American as from the Southern European polyarchies. The indicators of democratic consolidation invoked by these authors (and shared by many others) suffer from extreme ambiguity.^{xxxix} Pushing their argument to its *reductio ad absurdum* one could argue that the Latin American polyarchies are ‘more consolidated’ because they have endured more ‘severe tests’ (12) than the Southern European ones...

Polyarchies, Particularism, and Accountability

It goes almost without saying that all actual cases exhibit various combinations of universalism and particularism across various relevant dimensions. This observation, however, should not lead to the Procrustean solution of lumping all cases together; differences in the degree to which each case approximates either pole may justify their separate classification and analysis. Of course, one may for various reasons prefer a political process that adheres quite closely to the formal rules of the full institutional package of polyarchy. However, there exist polyarchies—some of them as old as Italy, India, and Japan and, in Latin America, Colombia and Venezuela—that endure even though they do not function as their formal rules dictate. To

between parties that were once bitter rivals] as a *prerequisite* for regarding a regime as consolidated...” (emphasis added).

^{xxxix} For example, in this volume we are given three different dates for when Greece became a consolidated democracy, in addition to the—for me, at least—highly counterintuitive assertion that the Greek democracy became almost instantaneously consolidated, while Italy took about three decades to achieve such a fortunate state; *ibid.*, 22 and 412. In this text the problem is further compounded by the use of categories such as “partial consolidation” and “sufficient consolidation” that, in some of the southern European cases according to these authors, preceded “full consolidation,” as well as a stage of “democratic persistence” that is supposed to follow after the achievement of “full [democratic] consolidation.”

understand these cases we need to know which are the games actually played and under what rules.

In many countries, East and South, there is an old and deep split between the *pays réel* and the *pays légal*. This split has obsessed many generations of intellectuals, beginning in France and then spreading into most of the world together with capitalism and modernity.^{xl} Today, with many of these countries claiming to be democracies and adopting a constitutional framework, the persistence and high visibility of this split may not threaten the survival of their polyarchies—but neither does it facilitate overcoming the split. Institutions are resilient, especially when they have deep historical roots; particularism is no exception. Particularism is a permanent feature of human society; only recently, and only in some places and institutional sites, has it been tempered by universalistic norms and rules. In many new polyarchies particularism vigorously inhabits most formal political institutions, yet the incumbency of top governmental posts is decided by the universalistic process of fairly counting each vote as one vote. This may sound paradoxical but it is not; it means that these are polyarchies, but they are neither the ones that the theory of democracy had in mind when it grew as a reflection on the political regimes of the Northwest nor what many studies of democratization assume a democracy should be or become.

That some polyarchies are informally institutionalized has important consequences. Here I want to stress one that is closely related to the blurring of the boundary between the private and the public spheres: accountability, a crucial aspect of formally institutionalized polyarchy, is seriously hindered. To be sure, the institutionalization of elections means that retrospective electoral accountability exists,^{xli} and a reasonably free press and various active segments of society see to it that some egregiously unlawful acts of governments are exposed (if seldom punished). Polyarchy, even if not formally institutionalized, marks a huge improvement over authoritarian regimes of all kinds. However, what is largely lacking is another dimension of accountability that I call 'horizontal.' By this I mean the controls that state agencies are supposed to exercise over other state agencies. Whether they are parliamentary or presidentialist, unitary or federalist, and whether or not they have a constitutional division of powers, all formally institutionalized polyarchies include various agencies endowed with legally defined authority to sanction unlawful or otherwise inappropriate actions by other state agents. This is an often-overlooked expression of the rule of law in one of the areas where it is hardest to implant, i.e., over

^{xl} Many libraries could be filled with these often passionate discussions. Among Anglo-Saxon political scientists arguably the classic piece is Douglas A. Chalmers, "The Politicized State in Latin America," in James Malloy, ed., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1977) 23–46.

^{xli} And functions, judging by the high turnover of parties in office in many of these polyarchies.

state agents, especially high-rankings officials. The basic idea is that formal institutions have well-defined, legally established boundaries that delimit the proper exercise of their authority, and that there are state agencies empowered to control and redress trespasses of these boundaries by any official or agency.^{xlii} These boundaries are closely related to the private-public boundary, in that those who perform roles in the latter sphere are supposed to follow universalistic and public-oriented rules, rather than their particular interests. Even though its actual functioning is far from perfect, this network of boundaries and accountabilities is an important component of the formal institutionalization of the full package of polyarchy.^{xliii}

By contrast, little horizontal accountability exists in most new polyarchies. Furthermore, in many of the latter the executive makes strenuous, and often successful, efforts to erode whatever horizontal accountability does exist. The combination of institutionalized elections, particularism as a dominant political institution, and a big gap between the formal rules and the way most political institutions actually work makes for a strong affinity with delegative, not representative, notions of political authority. By this I mean a caesaristic, plebiscitarian executive that, once elected, sees itself as empowered to govern the country as it deems fit. Reinforced by the urgencies of severe socioeconomic crises and consonant with old *völkisch*, nonindividualistic conceptions of politics, delegative practices strive headlong against formal political institutionalization; congress, the judiciary, and various state agencies of control are seen as hindrances placed in the way of the proper discharge of the tasks that the voters have delegated to the executive. The executive's efforts to weaken these institutions, invade their legal authority, and lower their prestige are a logical corollary of this view.^{xliv} On the other hand, as Max Weber

xlii This is not just a one-to-one relationship between a controlling and a controlled agency. It is an overall characteristic of the legal system as applied to the functioning of the state, regime, and government. This is another topic that I will elaborate in future publications.

xliii I may have sounded naive in my earlier comments about how individuals performing public roles are supposed to be guided by universalistic orientations to some version of the public good. Now I can add that, as the authors of the *Federalist Papers* well knew, this is not only, or even mostly, a matter of the autonomous subjective orientations of these individuals. It is to a large extent contingent on institutional arrangements of control and accountability, and on expectations built around these arrangements, which furnish incentives (including the threat of severe sanctions and public discredit) for that kind of behavior. That these incentives are often insufficient should not blur the difference from cases where the institutional arrangements are nonexistent or ineffective; these situations freely invite the huge temptations that always come with holding political power. I thank Adam Przeworski and Michael Coppedge for raising this point in private communications.

xliv The reader has surely noticed that I am referring to countries that have presidentialist regimes and that, consequently, I am glossing over the arguments, initiated by Juan Linz and followed up by a number of scholars, about the advantages of parliamentarism over the presidentialist regimes that characterize Latin America. Although these arguments convince me in the abstract, because

warned, institutions deprived of real power and responsibility tend to act in ways that seem to confirm the reasons adduced for this deprivation. In the cases that concern us here, particularism becomes even more rampant in congress and parties, courts conspicuously fail to administer justice, and agencies of control are eliminated or reduced to passivity. This context encourages further erosion of legally established authority, makes even more tenuous the public-private boundary, and creates huge temptations for corruption.

In this sea of particularism and blurred boundaries, why does the universalistic process of fair and competitive elections survive? Governments willing to tamper with laws are hardly solid guarantors of the integrity of electoral processes. Part of the answer, at least with respect to elections to top national positions, is close international attention and wide reporting abroad of electoral irregularities. Fair elections are the main, if not the only, characteristic that certifies countries as democratic before other governments and international opinion. Nowadays this certification has important advantages for countries and for those who govern them.^{xlv} Within the country, elections are a moment when something similar to horizontal accountability operates: parties other than the one in government are present at the polling places, sharing an interest in preventing fraud. Elections create a sharp focus on political matters and on the symbols and rituals that surround the act of voting. At this moment, the citizens' sense of basic fairness probably manifests itself with special intensity. Violations are likely to be immediately reported. Faced with the protests that might ensue and their repercussions in the international media, and considering the further damage that would come from trying to impose obviously tainted results, most governments are willing to run the risks inherent in fair and competitive elections.

Pervasive particularism, delegative rule, and weak horizontal accountability have at least two negative consequences worth mentioning. The first is that the generalized lack of controls licenses old authoritarian practices to reassert themselves.^{xlvi} The second is that, in countries

of the very characteristics I am depicting I am skeptical about the practical consequences of attempting to implant parliamentarism in these countries.

^{xlv} As seen, for example, in the condonation, by most major powers, of the coups perpetrated by democratically elected presidents Yeltsin and Fujimori. There were, to be sure, important reasons of *real politik* behind this condonation, especially in relation to Russia. But this only underlines the decisiveness of this purely electoral criterion for certifying, *vis-à-vis* powerful actors in the international arena, not only the existence but also the continuation of polyarchy, even when other of its attributes have been blatantly suppressed.

^{xlvi} For analyses of some of these situations, see Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, "The Legacy of Authoritarianism in Democratic Brazil," in Stuart S. Nagel, ed., *Latin American Development and Public Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1995) 237-53; and Martha K. Huggins, ed., *Vigilantism and the State in Modern Latin America. Essays on Extralegal Violence* (New York: Praeger, 1991). See also the worrisome analysis that, based on data from Freedom House, Diamond presents in "Democracy in Latin America," *op. cit.* (n. 2); in recent years more Latin American countries have regressed than advanced in the freedom indexes presented by that source and elaborated by

that inaugurated their polyarchies under conditions of sharp and increasing inequality, the making and implementation of policy becomes further biased in favor of highly organized and economically powerful interests.

In the countries that occupy us here, the more properly political, *democratic* freedoms are effective: uncoerced voting, freedom of opinion, movement, and association, and others already listed. But for large sections of the population, basic *liberal* freedoms are denied or recurrently trampled. The rights of battered women to sue their husbands and of peasants to obtain a fair trial against their landlords, the inviolability of domiciles in poor neighborhoods, and in general the right of the poor and various minorities to decent treatment and fair access to public agencies and courts are often denied. The effectiveness of the whole ensemble of rights, democratic and liberal, makes for full civil and political citizenship. In many of the new polyarchies, individuals are citizens in relation to the only institution that functions close to what its formal rules prescribe: elections. As for full citizenship, only the members of a privileged minority enjoy it.^{xlvii} Formally institutionalized polyarchies exhibit various mixes of democracy, liberalism, and republicanism (understood as a view that concurs with liberalism in tracing a public-private distinction but that adds an ennobling and personally demanding conception of the incumbency of roles in the public sphere). Informally institutionalized polyarchies are democratic, in the sense just defined; when they add, as they often do, the plebiscitarian component of delegative rule, they are also strongly majoritarian. But their liberal and republican components are extremely weak.

Freeing Ourselves from Some Illusions

I have rapidly covered a complicated terrain.^{xlviii} Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me insist that I, too, prefer situations that get close to real observance of the formal rules of

Diamond. I discuss various aspects of the resulting obliteration of the rule of law and weakened citizenship in "On the State, Democratization, and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries," *World Development* 21, #8 (1993) 1355–69.

^{xlvii} There is a huge adjacent theme that I will not discuss here: the interrelations of these problems with widespread poverty and, even more, with deep inequalities of various sorts.

^{xlviii} Obviously, we need analyses more nuanced, comprehensive, and dynamic than the one I have undertaken here. My own list of topics meriting much further study includes: the opportunities that may be entailed by demands for more universalistic and public-oriented governmental behavior; the odd coexistence of pervasive particularism with highly technocratic modes of decision-making in economic policy; the effects of international demands (especially regarding corruption and uncertainty in lawmaking and adjudication) that the behavior of public officials should conform more closely to the formal rules; and the disaggregation of various kinds and institutional sites of clientelism and particularism. Another major issue that I cannot discuss here, raised to me by Larry Diamond in a personal communication, is locating the point at which

polyarchy, a citizenry that firmly approves democratic procedures and values, fair application of the law in all social and geographical locations, and low inequality. Precisely because of this preference I have argued for the need to improve our conceptual tools in the complex task of studying and comparing the whole set of existing polyarchies. It is through a nonteleological and, indeed, nonethnocentric, positive analysis of the main traits of these polyarchies that we scholars can contribute to their much needed improvement. This is especially true of the polyarchies that are institutionalized in ways we dislike and often overlook—even if they do not, and some of them may never, closely resemble the ‘consolidated democracies’ of the Northwest.

For this purpose, I believe that we must begin by freeing ourselves from some illusions. As an author who has committed most of the mistakes I criticize here, I suspect that we students of democratization are still swayed by the mood of times that many countries have more or less recently passed through. We believe that democracy, even in the rather modest guise of political democracy or polyarchy, is vastly preferable to the assortment of authoritarian regimes that it has replaced. We shared in the joy when those regimes gave way, and some of us participated in these historic events. These were moments of huge enthusiasm and hope. Multitudes demanded democracy, and international opinion supported them. The demand for democracy had many meanings, but in all cases it had a powerful common denominator: “Never Again!”^{xlix} Whatever confused, utopian, or limited ideas each one held concerning democracy, it was clear that it meant getting rid of the despots once and for all. DEMOCRACY, even if or perhaps because it had so many different meanings attached to it, was the central mobilizing demand of what had to be achieved and preserved forever. Somehow, it was felt, soon this democracy would resemble the democracies of the admired countries of the Northwest—admired for their long-enduring regimes and for their wealth, and because both things seemed to go together. As in these countries, after the transition democracy was to be stabilized, or consolidated; the Northwest was seen as the end-point of a trajectory that would be largely traversed by getting rid of the authoritarian rulers. This illusion was extremely useful during the hard and uncertain times

violations of liberal rights should be construed as cancelling, or making ineffective, the political freedoms surrounding elections. Finally, Philippe Schmitter makes an argument worth exploring when he urges that polyarchies should be disaggregated into various “partial regimes”; most of these would surely look quite different when comparing formally vs. informally institutionalized cases. See Schmitter, “The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 35, #4 & 5 (March/June 1992) 422–49.

^{xlix} This is the title of the reports of the commissions that investigated human rights violations in Argentina and Brazil. For further discussion of what I call a dominant antiauthoritarian mood in the transitions, see my “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes,” *op. cit.* (ns. 3 and 31); and Nancy Bermeo, “Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship,” *Comparative Politics*, 24 (April 1992) 273–91.

of the transition. Its residues are still strong enough to make of democracy and consolidation powerful, and consequently pragmatically valid, terms of political discourse.¹ Their analytical cogency is another matter.

On the other hand, because the values that inspired the demands for democracy are as important as ever, the present text is an effort toward opening more disciplined avenues for the study of a topic—and a concern—I share with most of the authors I have discussed: the quality, in some cases rather dismal, of the social life that is interwoven with the workings of various types of polyarchy. How this quality might be improved depends in part on how realistically we understand the past and present situation of each case.

¹ Symptomatically illustrating the residues of the language and the hopes of the transition as well as the mutual influences between political and academic discourses, on several occasions the governments of the countries I know more closely (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) triumphantly proclaimed that their democracies had ‘consolidated.’