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Democratization

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3. Democracy Studies: Agendas, Findings, Challenges¹

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Scholarly interest in the wave of democratization that began in southern Europe in 1974 resulted in a large amount of theoretical and empirical research. These studies took the nation state as the unit of analysis and focused on democracy as the outcome or dependent variable. Beyond this common overarching interest, however, different researchers have emphasized a broad range of aspects of the politics of democratizing countries, drawn upon various theoretical traditions, and used a diverse set of methods. As the literature has grown and evolved, the need for an assessment and synthesis of this literature has become imperative. Indeed, as with any research program, such periodic assessments and syntheses play a critical role, in ascertaining whether knowledge has been generated, and in identifying the challenges that remain to be tackled and the lines of research that are most likely to be productive.

This chapter responds to this need, offering a comprehensive evaluation of the body of literature on democracy that has been produced over the past 25 years.² To organize the discussion, I distinguish among three agendas, which are identified by three concepts that define their primary explanatory concern: democratic transition, democratic stability, and democratic quality. For each agenda, I discuss the ways in which the subject matter has been or can be delimited and justified, and the main research findings. I also discuss challenges in three areas—the measurement of the dependent variables, the development and integration of causal theories, and the assessment of causal theories—and offer suggestions for tackling these challenges.

The challenges facing scholars currently active in the research program on democracy studies are considerable. My emphasis on these challenges, how-

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2 This chapter does not discuss the extensive literature in comparative politics and international relations that focuses on democracy as an independent variable. Neither does this chapter address the growing literature on notions of citizenship that reach beyond and beneath the national state.

ever, is not meant to suggest that this research program faces insuperable hurdles. Rather, the point of this discussion is to use this assessment of the current state of the literature to identify the most productive avenues for future research. Indeed, my assessment is positive with regard to the achievements already made in the field of democracy studies and is also optimistic concerning the likely payoffs of future efforts to advance this research program.

3.1. Democratic Transitions

3.1.1. The Subject Matter

Research on democratic transitions is a part of the broader field of democratic theory that gains its distinctiveness from a sharply defined focus on elections or, more specifically, on the critical step in the history of democracy when a country passes a threshold marked by the introduction of competitive elections with mass suffrage for the main political offices in the land. In other words, the status of democratic transitions as a distinctive field of research is given by an undeniably Schumpeterian approach to democracy, which emphasizes some key aspects of the procedures that regulate access to political power. This delimitation of the subject matter did little to spur interest at the time university-based research was expanding dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only did the realities of world politics appear to devalue this line of research. In addition, the Schumpeterian conception of democracy was widely out of favor. Even though some landmark studies on democratic transitions were published as early as 1960 (Lipset 1960, Rustow 1970), interest in democratic transitions took a back seat to other, more pressing and/or more valued concerns.

The status of research on democratic transitions, however, changed quite considerably thereafter. First and most important, the wave of democratization beginning in 1974 made the subject matter immediately relevant. Second, the change in values, especially among the left in both the South and the East (Barros 1986, Heller and Feher 1987), did much to place the Schumpeterian approach to democracy in a positive light.³ Finally, the seminal work of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) did much to set the initial terms of the debate and hence to crystallize a field of research on democratic transitions.⁴ With the boom of research in the 1980s and 1990s, by the turn of the century research on democratic transitions had attained the status of an established field, justified on political and analytic grounds.

3 Probably the most careful defense of a Schumpeterian approach to democracy is offered by Przeworski (1999).

4 On the landmark status of O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986) work, see Karl (2006).

First, the real-world significance of democratic transitions is undeniable. It has affected the lives of people all over the globe since approximately 1870, a rough landmark for the beginning of mass democracy (Finer 1997: 30). It emerged as a critical issue relatively early in a number of English-speaking countries: Great Britain, the United States of America, New Zealand, and Australia. For Western Europe as a whole, however, democracy remained a key issue on the political agenda from the late 19th century through to the end of World War II. And for yet an even larger number of countries, it was a dominant issue in the last quarter of the 20th century, as a wave of democratization that started in southern Europe in 1974 swept through Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, the communist-dominated countries that were part of the Soviet bloc during the Cold War, and parts of Africa.

The continued significance of democratic transitions, moreover, should not be underestimated. To be sure, when a democratic threshold is passed, the challenge of a democratic transition fades into the past and other issues begin to dominate the agenda. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the problem of democratic transitions will cease to be of importance to the lives of tens of millions and even billions of people. On the one hand, the challenge of a democratic transition remains one of vital importance to a large number of countries. Depending upon the precise way in which the crossing of the threshold between authoritarianism and democracy is measured, in the year 2000 a full 40 to 60 percent of the countries in the world, including cases as significant as China and practically entire regions such as the Middle East, have never achieved democracy (Huntington 1991: 26, Diamond 1999: 25-28, Diamond 2003). And the “electoral revolutions“ in post-Soviet countries (Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004, Kyrgyzstan 2005), among other political events, showed that the push for democratic transitions continued into the new century. On the other hand, countries that have passed the democratic threshold always face the possibility of a democratic breakdown. Indeed, even in the middle of the democratic wave of the last quarter of the 20th century, numerous countries experienced breakdowns. And there are grounds to think that many of the newly minted democracies are unlikely to endure as the 21st century unfolds. In sum, a concern with democratic transitions has had, and is likely to continue to have, great relevance.

This delimitation of a field of research focused on democratic transitions is also justified on analytic grounds. The conceptualization of democratic transitions in terms of a threshold marked by the introduction of competitive elections with mass suffrage for the main political offices excludes a large number of issues that are a concern of democratic theory. For example, it is set off from such fundamental issues as the variable ways in which public policy is formulated and implemented in democratic countries; the extent to which the rule of law is respected; and the increasingly important concern

about the extension of democratic rule, traditionally a principle applied to the nation-state, to a range of other units, both of different territorial scope and with different functional aims. What may appear to be an unwarranted narrowing of concerns, however, is analytically justifiable.

The decision to focus on democratic transitions is driven by two insights. First, it is based on the understanding that the introduction of competitive elections is an event that is fundamental enough to alter a country's political dynamics and that calls, therefore, for its own explanation (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: Ch. 6, Shain and Linz 1995: 76-78). Second, this decision is justified on the ground that a transition to democracy is a process that is distinct enough, compared with the other concerns raised in democratic theory, to suggest that it is caused by factors that probably do not affect other aspects of democracy and that it is most fruitfully theorized on its own terms (Rustow 1970, see also Mazzuca 2007).

A focus on democratic transitions, thus, does not deny that countries vary along other dimensions or that these other dimensions may be as important as those highlighted by a Schumpeterian approach. Indeed, as current scholarship shows, a range of issues not encompassed by Schumpeterian definitions of democracy are likely to have great relevance in countries where democracy is firmly established (O'Donnell 1999: Part IV). Therefore, the delimitation of democratic transitions as a distinct area for scholarship is not based on a judgment about the importance of a Schumpeterian approach compared with any other approach but is rather a conceptual decision, which helps to distinguish dimensions of concern within democratic theory that most likely vary independently from each other. That is, the point is not to argue that one or another issue is more important but to provide a basis for an analytic approach by breaking down democratic theory into a series of distinct and hence manageable explanatory challenges.

3.1.2. Findings

The sharp delimitation of the subject matter of democratic transitions and hence the formulation of a fairly clear question—why have some countries had democratic transitions while others have not?—had an important benefit. By providing researchers with a pointed and widely shared agenda, it allowed for the rapid generation of an impressive basis of knowledge through a succession of studies that eventually came to encompass most cases of democratic transition in world history.

Following in the wake of a key study of transitions in southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and early 1980s (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986), major cross-regional analyses were conducted comparing Latin America with East and Southeast Asia (Haggard and Kaufman 1995), and southern Europe and Latin America with Eastern Europe and the former

Soviet Union (Linz and Stepan 1996). Excellent region-based studies were produced, focusing on Africa (Bratton and van de Walle 1997), Eastern Europe and the USSR/Russia (Beyme 1996, Offe 1996, Bunce 1999), post-Soviet Eurasia (Hale 2005, Collins 2006), as well as the three major regions of the developing world (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Huntington 1991). In addition, impressive efforts were made to put the transitions of the last quarter of the 20th century in historical perspective through cross-regional analyses of Europe and Latin America ranging across the 19th and 20th centuries (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992, Collier 1999) and, along similar lines, analyses focused on the older European cases of transitions were offered (Boix 2003, Tilly 2004).⁵ Finally, a number of statistical studies contributed to the debate.⁶

The richness of this literature is undeniable. It offers a wealth of ideas on the causes of transitions, a great amount of nuanced information on complex processes, and some fruitful comparative analyses that have generated a number of important and surprising findings. This literature has challenged the longstanding modernization argument that level of economic development is a good predictor of transitions to democracy (Przeworski and Limongi 1997).⁷ It has shown, again contrary to what was posited by modernization theory, that democratic transitions do not occur through a single process but rather through multiple paths defined by factors such as the power and strategies of elites and masses and the top-down or bottom-up impetus for political reform (Dahl 1971: Ch. 3, Stepan 1986, Dix 1994, Collier 1999, Tilly 2004).

The codification of these distinct paths of democratic transition has led to other important findings. First, it has allowed analysts to establish that the path toward democracy that a country follows is strongly influenced by its type of prior, non-democratic regime, and that the very likelihood of a transition to democracy is affected by the type of actors that oppose authoritarian

5 See also Janoski (1998: Chs. 6 and 7), who carries out a useful test of influential theories against European history from 1200 to 1990, and Halperin (1997), who studies Europe in the period 1789–1945 and draws some comparisons between Europe's and Latin America's experience.

6 Gasiorowski (1995), Przeworski and Limongi (1997), Coppedge (1997), Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000), Boix (2003), Boix and Stokes (2003), Brinks and Coppedge (2006).

7 See also Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000: Ch. 2), Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2003), and Gleditsch and Ward (2006: 925-26). Relatedly, a new literature considers how these resources are politically used and that wealth does not necessarily lead to democratization (Ross 2001, Bellin 2004, Jensen and Wantchekon 2004, Snyder 2006). However, the extent to which level of economic development is or is not a good predictor of democratic transitions continues to be debated and various authors have contested Przeworski and Limongi's (1997) argument (Geddes 1999, Boix and Stokes 2003, Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O'Halloran 2006).

rule (Linz and Stepan 1996, Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 9-14, Munck 1998: 17-22, Ch. 7, Leff 1999). More pointedly, because pacts may be a necessary condition for a successful transition to democracy in the context of certain types of regime, the prospects of democracy are enhanced when opposition demands are amenable to negotiated resolution. This is most likely, in turn, when the supporters and opponents of authoritarianism are economically interdependent—that is, class actors—than when opposition to authoritarianism is led by a nationalist or fundamentalist religious movement (Arfi 1998, Roeder 1999, Wood 2000, Hamladji 2002).

With regard to specific classes, though much research has been conducted to ascertain whether the bourgeoisie (Moore 1966), the middle class (Lipset 1960) or labor (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992) is the prime agent of democratization, and whether the landed elites are an inherently undemocratic force (Moore 1966), the literature is mostly inconclusive. Indeed, probably the only clear finding about the social origins of democracy is that landed elites that depend on labor-repressive practices have a negative effect on the installation of a democratic regime (Mahoney 2003: 137-45, Bernhard 2005, see also Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003: 1046-50).⁸

Research has also shown that democratic transitions are closely linked with matters of the state, conceived in Weberian terms. As shown, processes of regime change that lead to state decay or state collapse reduce the prospects of democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996: 17-19). Thus, a key finding is the principle: “no state, no democracy.”⁹ And a growing body of literature offers considerable evidence that international factors have an influence on democratic transitions. The scholarship that considers the broad historical sweep of

8 To anticipate partially some of the suggestions offered below, there are two significant problems with the literature on the class origins of democracy. On the one hand, efforts to theorize and test hypotheses about the role of different classes have operated with an aggregate dependent variable. The role of different classes may have a strong impact at different stages in the process of democratization, but this impact may not be discerned or may become diluted when democratization is viewed as an aggregate process. Relatedly, inasmuch as there are various paths to democracy, one would expect that different classes would play a more prominent role in certain paths (Collier 1999), a finding that again gets lost when the dependent variable is studied at an aggregate level. On the other hand, this literature has tended to focus on the impact of each class viewed in isolation of other classes and other explanatory factors, and to conceive of the impact of classes in linear terms. Yet it seems quite obvious that theorizing requires attention to interaction and threshold effects. For example, the strength of the masses may induce elites to extend the right to vote, as a way to foster moderation. But if the masses are very strong relative to the elites, democracy may be forestalled by a successful revolution from below or a retreat from a commitment to reform by elites fearful of the redistributive consequences of mass democracy. Similarly, the disposition of middle classes to fight for democracy has oscillated in response to shifts in the relative power of other actors (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992: 272). Inasmuch as these issues are tackled, it is quite possible that this important line of research will yield clearer findings than it currently offers.

9 I am indebted to Richard Snyder for his suggestion of this phrase.

democratization makes a strong case for the role of conquest and colonization (Therborn 1977, 1992, Tilly 2004). Furthermore, recent statistical research has found that contiguous neighbors and regional contexts are associated with a diffusion effect and, specifically, that the likelihood that a country will undergo a democratic transition increases when neighboring countries and a country's region are more democratic.¹⁰ Likewise, belonging to international organizations with high membership of democratic states increases the probability of a transition to democracy (Pevehouse 2005: Ch. 4).

It is important not to exaggerate the confidence placed in these findings. There are many exceptions. Indeed, numerous works on the USSR and post-Soviet countries strongly question the extension of generalizations based on democratic transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America to cases where communism held sway in the post-World War II decades (Bunce 2000, 2003, McFaul 2002, Gelman 2003). Moreover, the results of much statistical research are neither very robust nor based on strong research designs (Robinson 2006: 504, 517-25). Nonetheless, with this caveat, it is important to have a clear sense of the current state of knowledge and to build on this knowledge as research continues and as new challenges are tackled.

3.1.3. Challenges

The challenges faced by students of democratic transitions concern many basic research tasks. The way in which the outcome of interest has been measured is open to improvement. The need for greater integration of causal theories is increasingly apparent. And the assessment of causal theories that combine qualitative and quantitative forms of research is emerging as yet another important challenge. Indeed, the future development of the research agenda on democratic transitions is likely to hinge on the ability of scholars to tackle some broad and fundamental challenges.

Measuring the Dependent Variable

A first challenge concerns the dependent variable of research on democratic transitions. As stated, this research has focused on a sharply defined subject matter. But the common practice of using an event—the holding of free and fair elections that lead to the installation of authorities with democratic legitimacy—as an indicator that justifies changing the way an entire country is scored on the outcome of interest is problematic.

To be sure, this way of coding cases, which draws on the notion of a “founding election” (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 61), has some validity when applied to transitions in the post-1974 period. The reason is that a

¹⁰ Kopstein and Reilly (2000), Brinks and Coppedge (2006), Gleditsch and Ward (2006), Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2007).

common elite strategy in the late-19th and early-20th centuries—the gradual extension of voting rights, first to propertied males, then to all males, and subsequently to women—was probably not viable and thus not used in late-20th century transitions. Thus, to a certain extent, it is appropriate to view recent democratic transitions as unfolding in a non-incremental fashion and along the various dimensions of democracy all at once. But even when applied to recent transitions, the limitations of this approach to measuring democracy are significant.

For example, though some researchers use this approach to code Chile as a democracy from 1990 onward (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000: 64), it is obvious that even though Chile became fully democratic along some dimensions of democracy, it did not do so along others. Specifically, the fact that a sizable portion of the Senate was not popularly elected meant that it suffered from an important democratic deficit concerning the range of offices filled through elections. Moreover, as this example illustrates, the use of a dichotomous measure does little to capture the incremental nature of Chile's democratic transition and hence the distinctive nature of Chile's politics in the 1990s: the gradual and incomplete nature of its transition to democracy. What is needed is a measure of democratic transitions that clearly distinguishes among multiple dimensions and can capture the possibility of gradual change.

Some efforts have been made to address this problem. A recent literature on hybrid regimes has drawn attention to a key insight: that a considerable number of countries seem to be neither fully democratic nor blatantly authoritarian and thus are best characterized with intermediate categories (Diamond 2002, Schedler 2002, 2006). And a well-developed literature on quantitative measurement offers several examples of multi-dimensional measures that do not use dichotomous scales (Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O'Halloran 2006, Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán 2007). But these efforts fall short of solving the problem. The discussion of hybrid regimes is characterized by the proposal of an unwieldy number of dimensions and has still not been linked with any efforts to develop systematic data. And efforts to develop quantitative measures are still grappling with the problem of establishing thresholds that correspond to the concept of a democratic transition. Thus, they still are not able to clearly distinguish changes *of* regime, that is, from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, from changes *within* a regime. In short, much remains to be done before the study of democratic transitions can rely on good data.¹¹

11 For more on these issues, see Munck and Verkuilen (2002), and Munck (2006).

Integrating Causal Theories

A second challenge concerns the need for greater integration of causal theories. The evolution of the literature on democratic transitions has been characterized by the frequent introduction of new causal factors considered critical to an explanation of why democratic transitions occur. These new explanatory variables sometimes reflect the experience of new cases of transition to democracy, which have brought to light factors that had not seemed important in the cases until then considered. In other instances, the focus on new variables has been driven more by an effort to rescue insights from older bodies of literature. Over time, then, the number of explanatory variables has multiplied, pointing to an important trade-off in this literature between theoretical fertility and orderly theory building.

As challenging as the task of theoretical organization and integration is likely to be, it is facilitated somewhat because theoretical debates have evolved around a number of central axes. One main axis contrasts short-term factors and the choices made by actors (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Przeworski 1991) with medium-term factors, such as the characteristics of the old regime (Linz and Stepan 1996, Chehabi and Linz 1998) and long-term, more structural factors, such as the mode of production or the model of development (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992, Castells 1998). Another axis of debate contrasts elite-centered explanations (Dogan and Higley 1998) with mass-centered explanations, which focus either on class actors (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, Collier 1999, Bellin 2000), social movements (Foweraker 1995: Ch. 5, Tilly 2004), or ethnic groups (Offe 1997: Ch. 4). Yet another axis contrasts political with economic determinants of transitions (Haggard and Kaufman 1995, Przeworski and Limongi 1997). And one more critical axis of debate opposes domestic factors to international factors (Whitehead 1996, Levitsky and Way 2006), an axis along which one might also locate explanations centered on stateness and "intermestic" nationality issues (Linz and Stepan 1996).

This way of organizing the literature has merit and helps to introduce some order into the debate. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, as the literature on democratic transitions grew and introduced new explanatory variables, scholars sought to impose some organization on theorizing, either by pulling together the range of explanatory variables (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1995) or by attempting to synthesize a range of these explanatory factors (Kitschelt 1995: 452-55, Mahoney and Snyder 1999). However, the challenge of integrating and synthesizing the diverse set of explanatory factors proposed in this literature and the generation of a more parsimonious theory remains to be adequately tackled.

In this regard, the potential gains associated with efforts to build rational choice-theoretic and game-theoretic models of democratic transitions should

be noted. This literature is distinctive in that it employs a common theory, which facilitates theoretical cumulation. Moreover, inasmuch as it employs a formal methodology, it also brings to bear the power of deductive logic, which has the advantage of demonstrating what implications follow from a given set of assumptions. These advantages notwithstanding, it is worth highlighting that, to a large extent, the rational choice literature on democratic transitions has reproduced the problems of the broader literature.

On the one hand, much as with any approach to theory generation, game-theoretic models are driven by insights about specific cases or regions. As a result of this inductive aspect of the modeling process, game-theoretic models propose explanatory factors that diverge widely in terms of their empirical scope. On the other hand, the explanatory variables themselves differ from model to model. Thus, some rational choice theorists seek to explain democratic transitions with tipping models, which focus on proximate factors and draw attention to the contingent nature of processes of democratic transition, specifically by highlighting the critical role of triggers or tippers (typically students, intellectuals or dissidents), and cognitive aspects, such as belief cascades (Kuran 1995, Petersen 2001). Others offer models that emphasize the explanatory role of the prior, non-democratic regime, seeking to show how actors within certain institutional settings engage in patterned forms of action (Geddes 1999). And yet others develop what might be labeled political economic models that focus on the long term and see action as driven by the interests of actors, which are conceived either in class terms or more broadly as elites and masses (Acemoglu and Robinson 2001, 2006, Boix 2003). In sum, much as the rest of the literature, rational choice theories of democratic transitions diverge in terms of their empirical scope and explanatory variables.

Even as the search for theoretical principles that would provide a basis for theoretical integration and synthesis thus continues, another approach to the task of theoretical integration that deserves emphasis is closely connected to the previous challenge of defining and measuring the dependent variable more carefully. This strategy has gone, for the most part, unrecognized. But it has the potential to yield important payoffs. Indeed, inasmuch as the concept of democratic transition is carefully disaggregated and measured in a nuanced way, such work can be used to break down the big question at the heart of research on democratic transitions—why have some countries had democratic transitions while others have not?—into smaller, more analytically tractable questions.

The disaggregation of the broad problem of democratic transitions into its constituent parts, and the use of measures that distinguish a variety of meaningful thresholds, is likely to assist in the identification of explanations by helping analysts distinguish and avoid the conflation of aspects of democracy that are likely to be driven by different processes. For example, because there

are good reasons to believe that the extension of the right of suffrage for men is driven by a different process than the extension of the right to vote for women, the disaggregation of the explanatory challenge in such a way as to explicitly capture this distinction is likely to help analysts uncover stronger associations. And, in turn, such an approach may help to show how arguments that are presented as competing may actually be complementary. Indeed, once a disaggregated approach to democracy is employed, there would be little reason to consider the theses advanced by Barrington Moore (1966) and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens and John Stephens (1992) as rival explanations. Rather, in that democracy is defined by Moore (1966: 414) in terms of the dimension of contestation, and by Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens (1992: 303-04) in terms of participation, it seems clear how their theories might be considered as partial contributions to a general theory of democratic transitions.

In short, it is important to focus on the challenge of theoretical integration. And to tackle this challenge it is worth considering the way in which theoretical debates have already been organized to a large extent along certain axes, to continue the search for theories that serve as unifying principles, and to recognize how analysts might integrate research findings regarding conceptually connected parts of a broad question.

Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Forms of Causal Assessment

Finally, a third challenge, concerning causal assessment, touches upon the as-yet barely addressed problem of how to combine qualitative and quantitative forms of research. Research on democratic transitions has been pioneered by researchers who have given primacy to small-N and medium-N comparisons. The reason for this strategy is obvious, in that the comparison of a small number of cases has been particularly well suited to the crafting of fertile concepts and has also provided a sufficient basis for introducing new ideas into the debate—and for doing so rapidly. Moreover, the use of qualitative forms of analysis has had the added benefit of being useful for the task of causal assessment, in particular because its intensive nature and its emphasis on process tracing makes it suited to address theories that highlight the role of actors and changing situations.

This strategy, however, has also had its problems. Qualitative researchers are limited in their ability to test the generalizability of their theories and to offer precise estimates of causal effect that take into consideration a variety of sources of bias. Moreover, they have not always been as systematic as they could be. For example, though this literature has generated a great amount of nuanced data, researchers have not always gathered data on all the explanatory variables for all the cases they analyze, nor have they always coded cases ex-

plicitly according to a set of clear criteria. Finally, small-N researchers have not given enough attention to issues of research design and have rarely conducted stringent tests of their theories. As a consequence, researchers' ability to test their theories and draw strong conclusions has been constrained.

Though the weaknesses of qualitative research on democratic transitions are not all inherent to the methods used and thus much progress can be made by improving qualitative research, they certainly point to the need to combine qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis. But, unfortunately, combining these two types of research is far from easy. Indeed, though quantitative research on the question of democratic transitions has been produced, the links between qualitative and quantitative research on democracy have been very weak. First, the measures of democracy used by quantitative scholars tend to differ significantly from those used by qualitative scholars. What these scholars think of as democratic transitions, thus, may be quite different things. Second, the causal theories quantitative scholars actually test are often caricatures of the theories discussed in the qualitative literature. In this regard, existing statistical tests have been very limited. Practically without exception, they have focused on a narrow range of independent variables, related primarily to social and economic questions, ignoring a variety of theories cast in terms of the role of actors and choices. Moreover, tests have tended to use additive models and also, for the most part, linear models that severely misrepresent the causal argument in the literature. Finally, large-N data sets have typically consisted of one observation per case per year. This restricts their sensitivity to issues of time and process, which rarely obey the cycle of calendar years. Indeed, it is important to recognize that there is a very steep trade-off in the level of richness of information and explanatory arguments discussed as one moves from the literature based on intensive but relatively narrow comparisons of a small set of cases to the statistical literature based on a large number of cases.¹²

The difficulties of using a genuine multi-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods suggest that future research should probably be based on a continuation of the multi-track approach used so far. The qualitative track is likely to yield significant dividends by extending the intensive analysis of a small to medium number of cases to some relatively unexplored questions. Some significant works offer a historical perspective on the democratic transitions that have been at the heart of the debate, those occurring in the last quarter of the 20th century (Rueschmeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992, Collier 1999). But much

12 Indeed, from this perspective, the most fruitful comparative studies, in that they use hard-to-collect data to test complex and dynamic theories, while retaining a broad enough basis to make claims about generalizability, have focused on a medium number of cases (that is, roughly 8 to 20 cases) (see, for example, Huntington 1991, Haggard and Kaufman 1995, Linz and Stepan 1996, Collier 1999).

remains to be learned by cross-time comparisons and a re-analysis, in light of new theories, of the older cases of transitions discussed by Barrington Moore (1966), Reinhard Bendix (1978), and Michael Mann (1987, 1993).

In addition, qualitative research can make contributions by broadening the variation on the dependent variable it seeks to explain. The existing literature has tended to focus on positive cases and has introduced variation longitudinally by studying the process whereby countries that were authoritarian become democratic, and through the concept of modes of transition (Mainwaring 1992: 317-26). Beyond this, some insightful work has been done comparing cases of transitions that led to democracy but also to other outcomes (Collier and Collier 1991, Yashar 1997, Snyder 1998, Mahoney 2001). But, overall, when it comes to events in recent decades, little attention has been given to the need to explain failed democratic transitions, that is, cases where transitions from authoritarian regimes did not occur or lead to new authoritarian regimes.¹³ Indeed, important questions that remain to be fully answered are: why did many countries that saw the collapse of authoritarian regimes during the last quarter of the 20th century experience transitions that did not lead to democracy? And, why have some countries not had transitions at all? Especially inasmuch as this research is explicitly connected to the existing literature and both draws upon its strengths and hones in on its lingering problems, the continued use of qualitative methods focused on these and other questions is likely to be highly rewarding.

The quantitative research track, in turn, is likely to contribute to the debate inasmuch as it addresses two tasks. One is the need for statistical research that is more keenly aware of problems of omitted variables and endogeneity, and hence that is more concerned with matters of research design and is more closely connected to theory. A second, related task concerns the collection of data. Not only should data collection focus on factors other than the standard economic and institutional ones, which are the staple of statistical analyses. Data collection should also be driven by the need for data that reflect the unfolding of events more closely than the standard practice of gathering one observation per case per year. Indeed, the full benefits of statistical tools are likely to be felt in the debate on democratic transitions only once data sets are generated with information on the actors involved in the process of democratic transitions, the choices these actors make, the sequence of events whereby democratic transitions unfold, and the institutional setting in which actors operate.

The tasks facing quantitative researchers are formidable but they promise important payoffs; thus, they are well worth pursuing. It is this sort of research that will finally bring the strengths of distinct research traditions to

13 See, however, the discussion of post-Soviet cases in McFaul (2002) and Collins (2006), of the Middle East in Bellin (2004) and Anderson (2006), and of China in Pei (1994, 2006).

bear on the same research question, rather than remain as two somewhat disconnected approaches that never quite talk to each other. Indeed, a multi-track approach, if properly implemented, could offer an important stepping-stone and gradually give way to a truly multi-method approach that would show how qualitative and quantitative research can be conducted in a complementary fashion.

3.2. Beyond Democratic Transitions

3.2.1. The Subject Matter

Research on the politics that follows the completion of democratic transitions is harder to assess than research on democratic transitions for the simple reason that there is a lack of consensus concerning the subject matter. Moreover, some ways of defining the subject matter do not offer a clearly delimited focus for research. Overall, the agenda put forth by what might be labeled regime analysts does share certain common elements. Thus, it can be contrasted as a whole with the voluminous research on narrower, institutional issues, which are standard in the study of advanced democracies and are increasingly a concern of students of new democracies.¹⁴ This commonality notwithstanding, regime analysts have conceptualized post-transitional politics in such diverse ways that the organization of the field of research around clearly defined questions has been hampered.

The core of the problem is as follows. Initially, one concept—democratic consolidation—was widely used as a way to identify the subject matter of interest. This concept was useful. It helped to identify issues that went beyond those discussed in the literature on democratic transitions. And it provided an overarching frame for theorizing (Schmitter 1995, Schedler 1998, Merkel 1998, Hartlyn 2002). However, over time this concept was used in such different ways that it ended up creating severe confusion. Then, as a way to clarify the agenda of research, scholars gradually introduced a new concept, the quality of democracy.¹⁵ But this new concept was itself defined in such a variety of different ways that it did little to solve the problems

14 Institutional issues are of obvious relevance to fundamental questions in regime analysis. This much is evident, for example, from the debate over the relative impact of consociational versus majoritarian arrangements, and presidentialism versus parliamentarism, on the durability of democracies. But institutionalists more frequently take the democratic nature of the regime for granted, while regime analysts are explicitly concerned with the ongoing salience of the democracy question.

15 Przeworski et al. (1995: 64), Linz and Stepan (1996: 137-38, 200), Linz (1997: 406, 417-23), Diamond (1999: 28, 132), Huber and Stephens (1999: 774), Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski and Toka (1999: 4-9), O'Donnell, Vargas Cullell and Iazzetta (2004), Diamond and Morlino (2005).

associated with the concept of democratic consolidation. Indeed, the concepts of democratic consolidation and the quality of democracy used by scholars have varied so much that research could simply not build around a clear set of shared questions.

To move forward, hence, some basic terminological and conceptual choices must be made. First, with regard to democratic consolidation, it is probably best, as some researchers have suggested, to simply jettison the term “democratic consolidation” (O’Donnell 1996) and focus instead on democratic stability, understood as involving nothing more than the sustainability or durability of the democracy defined in Schumpeterian terms, which result from successful democratic transitions. Second, with regard to the quality of democracy, it is necessary to make some theoretically based decisions concerning the concept that would serve to specify precisely how this agenda is distinct from those of democratic transitions and democratic stability. Indeed, these choices are essential to future progress in the field of democracy studies.

3.2.2. Democratic Stability

A focus on democratic stability, as opposed to democratic consolidation, helps to articulate a delimited yet still relevant subject matter. Indeed, research on democratic stability focuses on a clear question, why have some democracies been more stable than others? And the relevance of this question is hard to dispute. Very few countries have followed the path of Great Britain, which moved toward democracy without ever suffering any major reversal of its democratic gains. Thus, the potential breakdown of democracy has been an important concern of students of democracy.

In the context of Western Europe, the history of France offers dramatic evidence of the potential for democratic reversals. In turn, the interwar period not only gave us the paradigmatic case of breakdown, Weimar Germany, but also showed how the breakdown of democracy could become a widespread phenomenon (Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell 2000, 2002). And the collapse of democracy in Greece in 1967 showed that even post-World War II Europe was not immune to the forces that could lead to an authoritarian backlash.

Beyond Western Europe, the history of post-World War II Latin America is punctuated by frequent democratic breakdowns, including the dramatic replacement of democracies by harsh authoritarian regimes in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, the African continent witnessed the breakdown of numerous democracies in the early post-colonial period, and the history of important cases such as Nigeria is essentially one of the oscillation between democracy and authoritarianism. Even in Asia, where India provides a nota-

ble exception,¹⁶ cases such as Pakistan are a reminder of the lack of guarantees that the establishment of democracy does not always lead to democratic stability.

Finally, even the most recent wave of democratization did not end the continued relevance of concerns about democratic stability. In Russia, the closing and bombing of the parliament in 1993, the serious doubts about whether elections were going to be held in 1996, and the lack of basic freedoms during the Putin years, helped drive this point home. Developments in Belarus under Lukashenka, added further weight to worries about the erosion of democracy in post-communist countries. Even more unambiguously, democratic breakdowns in several cases in Latin America (Haiti 1991 and 2004, Peru 1992, Ecuador 2000), Africa (Nigeria 1983, Sudan 1989, Niger 1996, Sierra Leone 1997, Ivory Coast 1999, Central African Republic 2003, Guinea-Bissau 2003) and Asia (Thailand 1991 and 2006, Pakistan 1999) raised concerns about the potential of significant democratic losses. In short, democratic stability offers a more tractable object of analysis and one that has been and continues to be of great relevance.

Findings

A focus on the more delimited subject matter of democratic stability also greatly aids the task of sorting through the large relevant literature and uncovering findings.¹⁷ Much of this research, and especially the qualitative research, relies on the concept of democratic consolidation. But it is usually possible to separate out a narrower understanding of consolidation as stability. And it is also possible to identify some surprising and some not so surprising findings on this delimited subject matter.

It is worth highlighting at the outset that a set of factors that were considered as potential determinants of the durability of democracy have been

16 But even this exception is somewhat tainted by the restrictions placed on Indian democracy during the 1975–77 years.

17 The research on democratic stability, much as that on democratic transitions, draws on various approaches. It includes important regional studies, on Latin America (Karl 1990, Mainwaring, O'Donnell and Valenzuela 1992), Southern Europe (Gunther, Diamandouros and Puhle 1995, Morlino 1998), Eastern Europe (Elster, Offe and Preuss 1998, Tismaneanu 1999, Janos 2000), and Africa (Joseph 1997, Wiseman 1999, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005, Lindberg 2006). Noteworthy works also offer cross-regional analyses, comparing southern Europe and Latin America (Higley and Gunther 1992), Latin America with East and Southeast Asia (Haggard and Kaufman 1995: Part III), southern Europe and Eastern Europe (Maravall 1997), southern Europe and Latin America with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Linz and Stepan 1996, Przeworski et al. 1995, Diamond 1999), and Asia with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Shin and Lee 2003). Moreover, thinking about democratic stability has been influenced by statistical studies to a greater extent than has research on democratic transitions (Remmer 1990, 1991, 1996, Diamond 1992, Przeworski and Limongi 1997, Power and Gasiorowski 1997, Gasiorowski and Power 1998, Mainwaring 2000, Hadenius and Teorell 2005).

shown not to have much explanatory power. This applies to various propositions about the impact of the old regime and the modality of transition to democracy (Karl 1990, Karl and Schmitter 1991),¹⁸ sequencing of economic and political reforms (Haggard and Kaufman 1992, Przeworski 1991: 180-87), economic performance and crises (Przeworski 1991: 32, 188), the strength of civil society and political parties (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992: 6, 49-50, 156, Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 1-2, 21-28), and the presidential or parliamentary form of democracy (Linz 1994).¹⁹ In brief, countries that became democratic since 1974 display a tremendous amount of variation with regard to these explanatory factors, yet they have had a fairly common outcome: a durable democracy. Moreover, even departures from this trend toward democratic stability do not appear to be strongly correlated to these factors.

This research has also produced some positive findings about the conditions of democratic stability. To a considerable extent, the evidence confirms Dankwart Rustow's (1970) broad proposition that the causes of the origins of democracy are likely to be different from those that account for the stability of democracy (see also O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 65-66). Most notably, this proposition is supported by the finding that even if economic development is not a determinant of democratic transitions, the part of Seymour Lipset's (1959, 1960) old hypothesis that states that there is an association between the level of economic development and the stability of democracy does hold (Przeworski and Limongi 1997).²⁰

But Rustow's proposition should not be pushed too far. Indeed, another old hypothesis that has received empirical support concerns the argument that

18 See also Valenzuela (1992: 73-78), Linz and Stepan (1996: Ch. 4), and Munck and Leff (1997).

19 Concerning Linz's (1994) hypotheses that parliamentary democracies are more stable than presidential democracies, some tests indicate strong support for the argument that parliamentary forms of government better promote democratic stability (Linz and Valenzuela 1994a, 1994b, Stepan and Skach 1993, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 1996), but others purport to show equally strong support for the argument that presidential forms of government also promote democratic stability (Shugart and Carey 1992, Mainwaring 1993, Mainwaring and Shugart 1997a, 1997b, Power and Gasiorowski 1997). As various authors have stated, more plausible hypotheses would have to focus on variations within the broad choice between parliamentary and presidential forms of government, as well as consider the link between the power of presidents and the other institutional features such as the fragmentation of the party system and party discipline (Shugart and Carey 1992, Mainwaring 1993, Mainwaring and Shugart 1997a, 1997b). It is unclear, however, whether such hypotheses would refer to the likelihood of the survival of democracy as opposed to the variable workings of stable democracies.

20 See also Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000: Ch. 2), Diamond (1992), Geddes (1999), and Mainwaring (2000). For a theory and empirical test that shows why economic development can have a different impact on democratic transitions and democratic breakdowns, see Gould and Maggio (2007). However, for a skeptical view of the argument that economic development accounts for democratic stability, see Robinson (2006: 519-24).

democratic stability is less likely in plural societies or multinational states (Dahl 1971: 108-11, Powell 1982: 40-53, Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1995: 42-43), even if, as Arend Lijphart (1977, 1984) stresses, this negative factor is mediated and potentially ameliorated by elite choices and power sharing arrangements (see also Dahl 1989: 254-60, Linz 1997: 414-14).²¹ Thus, what might be labeled as the national question seems to affect, in broadly the same manner, the prospects of democratic transition and democratic stability.

Another finding is that, much as there are multiple paths to democracy, so too are there multiple equilibria that can sustain democracy. This basic thesis is best established in research on the orientation of class actors in more equal and less equal countries. In more equal countries, as research on post-World War II Western Europe shows, a class compromise underpins the stability of democracy (Przeworski 1985, Boix 2003). In this scenario, democratic stability was premised on a political exchange, whereby the moderation of the demands of labor and the left—a key goal of elites—is exchanged for redistributive policies, which is a core demand of mass actors. Both elites and masses, thus, have an incentive to accept democracy. In less equal countries, in contrast, a class compromise does not represent an equilibrium. As evidence from Latin America during the 1950s to 1970s shows, the redistributive consequences of democracy threatened elite interests and thus weakened the commitment of elites to democracy (O'Donnell 1973, 1999: Ch. 1). Thus, democratic stability in less equal countries rests on a different basis: the breaking, rather than the establishment, of any link between democracy and redistribution.

The stability of the democracies that emerged in less equal countries in the post-1974 period can then be related to two sets of factors. The potential destabilization of democracy due to the polarization of politics has been reduced due to the weakening of popular sector actors and labor as a result of recent experiences with authoritarian rule (Drake 1996, Munck 1998: Ch. 7) and the conscious lowering of expectations and self-restraint, especially among the left, which is a result of a learning process begun in the context of repressive, authoritarian regimes (McCoy 1999, Mainwaring 2000). Yet, more broadly, democratic stability is also the result of the widespread adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s. Put in different words, because democracy in these countries is currently not associated with redistribution, business elites, who previously felt threatened by democracy and

21 One institutional proposal that has been the focus of much discussion is federalism. Some authors argue that federalism is a particularly apt institutional choice for multinational societies (Stepan 2004). However, others show that at least under certain circumstances ethno-federalism can be destabilizing and lead to the breakup of the state (Hale 2004).

frequently sought to undermine democracy, have come to accept democracy (Payne and Bartell 1995, Huber and Stephens 1999: 775-80).²²

Finally, research has also shown that democratic stability is influenced by international factors. Much as transitions to democracy, the stability of democracy is aided when neighboring countries, a country's region and the global context are more democratic (Gleditsch and Ward 2006, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2007). In addition, joining international organizations with high membership of democratic states increases the probability that democracies will endure (Pevehouse 2005: Ch. 6).

Challenges

The accomplishments of this literature notwithstanding, scholars of democratic stability face a series of challenges that are quite similar to those discussed in the context of research on democratic transitions. With regard to the manner in which democratic stability, the dependent variable in this research, is measured, the problem and the solution are largely the same as in the literature on democratic transitions. Indeed, though discussions of the erosion, in contrast to the breakdown, of democracy introduce nuance in the discussion of democratic stability, there is still a need for explicit criteria for distinguishing changes *of* regime, that is, from a democratic to an authoritarian regime, from changes *within* democracy. This challenge, it bears noting, is simply the flip side of the challenge of measuring democratic transitions. Thus, it does not constitute a new challenge in the context of the broader study of democracy.

A second challenge concerns the pressing need for integration of causal theories. Some scholars have proposed causal factors that are structural in nature and focus primarily on economic aspects (Lipset 1959, 1960, O'Donnell 1973, Przeworski and Limongi 1997). Others have emphasized the explanatory significance of a range of institutional arrangements (Shugart and Carey 1992). And yet others advance theories that stress the importance of choice (Linz 1978) and strategic issues (Przeworski 1991: Ch. 1, O'Donnell 1992). As scholars have argued, each of these types of factors

22 This basic point can be fleshed out further. As Boix (2003: 38-44) argues, democratic stability is affected by the types of assets owned by elites and, specifically, is positively correlated with factor mobility (see also Rogowski 1998 and Wood 2000). In this argument, then, the turn to neoliberalism has a positive effect on democratic stability in that it has increased the credibility of the threat of capital flight, which induces moderation among the poor and reduces the likelihood that electoral majorities would even propose redistributive policies, and hence makes democracy acceptable to elites. This argument has some distinct implications. First, it suggests that the moderation of labor and the left can be induced by globalization as much as by harsh authoritarian rule. Second, and relatedly, it points to the possibility that the rare and happy coincidence of democracy and prosperity that was the trademark of post-World War II Europe may become rarer as neoliberalism takes root.

seems to have some explanatory power; hence, a theory that ignored any of these types of factors would be incomplete. The problem, however, is that with a few exceptions (Lijphart 1977, Collier and Collier 1991), this literature has treated these variables in isolation even though processes affecting the stability of democracy unfold simultaneously at the various levels of analysis tapped by these variables. Thus, further progress on research on democratic stability is likely to require efforts to connect different types of explanatory factors and generate a more parsimonious and powerful theory that integrates the long list of explanatory factors highlighted by existing causal theory.²³

A third challenge that scholars of democratic stability face concerns causal assessment. Statistical analysis has been more common in the study of democratic stability than that of democratic transition. Thus, the need to find ways to combine literatures using different methods is a prime concern. As with the literature on democratic transition, however, future research on democratic stability would still benefit from a multi-track approach. Specifically, qualitative researchers are likely to derive important payoffs from efforts to extend their comparative analyses beyond the current successes and failures to secure stable democracies. This might include comparisons with older positive experiences, especially the successful post-World War II record of Western Europe (Przeworski 1985, Maier 1987: Ch. 4).²⁴ Moreover, it might address older cases of democratic breakdown, either by revisiting the well-researched cases of interwar Europe (Linz and Stepan 1978, Luebbert 1991, Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992: Ch. 4²⁵) and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s (O'Donnell 1973, Collier 1979, Collier and Collier 1991, Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992: Ch. 5), or analyzing the failure to establish stable democracies in Africa and Asia in the early post-colonial period (Collier 1982, Young 1988).²⁶

The tasks faced by researchers who use statistical methods are much the same as those they face in the context of the study of democratic transition. Indeed, a key problem is that quantitative research on democratic stability has assessed only a limited number of independent variables. Virtually all studies

23 Weingast (1997) offers a noteworthy effort from a game-theoretic perspective to the task of integration and synthesis. He interestingly frames the issue as a problem of credible commitment and stresses how democratic stability may be threatened by those who are in power. But his model fails to acknowledge that democracy can also be threatened from above or below. Yet another line of research is implied by Schmitter's (1995) suggestion that scholars might focus on "partial regimes," a proposal which would focus on the challenge of integration by considering the interaction among various sites of politics rather than levels of analysis. See also Mahoney and Snyder (1999).

24 For a study that begins to address this comparison, see Alexander (2001).

25 See also Kurth (1979), Zimmermann (1988), Zimmermann and Saalfeld (1988), Linz (1992), Berg-Schlosser and De Meur (1994), and Ertman (1998).

26 For examples that revisit European and Latin American cases, see Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell (2000, 2002), Bermeo (2003), and Capoccia (2005).

concerned with democratic stability still consider the favorite factor of modernization theorists: level of socio-economic modernization. To this factor, others have been added. These include other facets of economic and social life, such as economic performance (Gasiorowski 1995, Gasiorowski and Power 1998), inequality (Midlarsky 1997) and political culture (Inglehart 1997). And, in what are probably the most significant departures, the quantitative literature has begun to consider political institutions (Stepan and Skach 1993, Mainwaring 1993, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 1996, Power and Gasiorowski 1997) and the international environment (Pevehouse 2005, Gleditsch and Ward 2006, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2007). In short, this literature is richer than the quantitative literature of the 1960s and 1970s.

However, statistical research on democratic stability has remained focused on easily measurable variables and has tended to ignore the role of actors and choices stressed by process-oriented theorists.²⁷ And, as a result, this research is unable to address the actor-centered theories that have been increasingly appreciated and theorized by qualitative researchers. Hence, the collection of data needed to assess the range of explanatory factors in the broader literature is an important task for quantitative scholars and one that would do much to foster a fruitful dialogue among quantitative and qualitative researchers about the causes of democratic stability.

3.2.3. The Quality of Democracy

The stability of democracy does not exhaust the post-transitions agenda of research. Rather, as numerous countries that democratized in the 1970s and 1980s faced no immediate threat of breakdown, scholars of democracy gradually began to suggest that other issues deserve attention. Essentially, even though more and more countries had made transitions to democracy and even though more and more countries remained democratic, these scholars sensed that they differed in quite fundamental ways and that these differences were not being captured by research on democratic transition and democratic stability. Thus, the need for a new agenda, on the quality of democracy, was recognized.²⁸

This new agenda is at an early stage in its development compared with the well-established agendas of democratic transition and democratic stability. Thus, there is not much in terms of research and findings to report. Indeed,

27 A few attempts aside (see, for example, Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 1994: 270-74), most quantitative researchers have proceeded as though it were unfeasible to collect data on process-oriented factors (Gasiorowski and Power 1998: 742, 745).

28 A more extensive discussion of the points that follow is provided in Munck (2004: 450-56, 2007).

one of the most pressing challenges faced by scholars concerned with this line of thinking concerns the delimitation of the subject matter of research. This step in the research process is critical, in that the initial definition of the agenda charts out the boundaries of subsequent research, and demanding, in that it requires making complex conceptual choices in light of both theory and empirical information. Yet, some important clues regarding how to define this agenda are emerging and the steps needed to advance this agenda are also becoming clearer.

A key point of departure in the definition of a research agenda on the quality of democracy is that it addresses matters that go beyond a Schumpeterian conception of democracy. In other words, it differs from research on democratic transitions and stability, which focuses on the concept of electoral democracy, in that it seeks to address aspects of democracy that extend beyond the constitution of government and the question whether rulers gain access to office through free and fair elections. On this point, there is broad agreement: few dispute the need to broaden research so as to encompass more than electoral democracy. Moreover, even though differences remain concerning how far beyond electoral democracy this new agenda should go, current theory offers a basis for making such choices.

The work of Robert Dahl (1989) in particular offers a theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of democracy as involving governments constituted through free and fair elections, but also a process of public decision-making and the implementation of binding decisions that reflects the principle that voter preferences are weighed equally. Indeed, Dahl's concept of democracy, though procedural, is much broader than usually assumed and provides a theoretical basis for a research agenda that goes well beyond Schumpeterian-rooted agendas. And the question it gives rise to—why do the actions of states reflect the preferences of voters more or less equally?—is of utmost current political relevance. Thus, even as various conceptual questions are addressed, it is probably advisable that scholars start focusing on steps needed to empirically address this new question.

To this end, one key challenge concerns the production of data. Indeed, though a learning process regarding the measurement of electoral democracy is beginning to bear fruits, students of democracy have still to develop the measurement methodologies and measures needed to advance this agenda. Efforts to measure different aspects of democratic governance, including corruption, do offer some leads (Munck 2005). Thus, this work does not have to start from scratch. But the work to develop adequate measures to address this question has barely begun.

The other key challenge is the development of causal theory. Here again there are several useful leads in various literatures, and particularly those on corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1999, Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002, Johnston 2005) and clientelism (Eisenstadt and Lemarchand 1981, Piattoni,

2001, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Moreover, the application of the principal-agent framework to the problem of democratic representation and accountability has yielded some valuable insights (Przeworski 2003, Shugart, Moreno and Crisp 2003). Yet some key issues remain to be tackled and hence further theorizing is called for. Most urgently, the interplay between politicians' preferences and their capacity to make and implement policies is a fundamental and complex issue that remains to be adequately treated.

But it is also important to note that this agenda is not only broader than the previous agendas on democratic transitions and stability but also subsumes these agendas. Thus, theorizing should build on and incorporate the explanatory factors that research on democratic transitions and stability has shown to be relevant. And theorizing should distinguish between questions of transition and stability, or change and order. Indeed, the goal of this new agenda should be to build a theory of democratization and democracy, much as the literature on democratic transitions and stability has done, but to anchor this theory in a broader concept of democracy, one that goes beyond democracy's electoral dimension.

3.3. Conclusion

The literature discussed in this chapter makes many valuable contributions to the study of politics around the world. It has addressed many normatively pressing problems and has produced many important findings. Even though it has not always focused on clearly articulated questions, as shown, it is possible to articulate its three core agendas in analytically tractable ways. Yet future progress in the field of democracy studies hinges on analysts' ability to face up to three closely interrelated challenges.

One challenge is the need to better measure the outcomes of interest. More pointedly, more disaggregated and more nuanced measures of dependent variables are needed. A second challenge is the development and especially the integration of causal theories. With regard to the study of the quality of democracy, developing theory is a key concern. But the study of democratic transitions and stability faces a different problem: the unwieldy proliferation of explanatory factors. Hence, the need for greater theoretical integration was stressed and three suggestions were offered: to rely on the lines along which theoretical debates have already been organized, to continue the search for theories that serve as unifying principles, and to recognize how analysts might integrate research findings regarding conceptually connected parts of a broad question.

Turning to the third challenge, concerning causal assessment, the ideal to be pursued in this field of studies is a multi-method approach that considers the trade-offs associated with small-N and large-N methods and taps into the

strengths of small-N methods (the generation of rich data, the sensitivity to the unfolding of processes over time, the focus on causal mechanisms) and of large-N methods (the emphasis on systematic cross-case and over-time comparison, the concern with generalizability, the formulation of precise estimates of causal effect and statistical significance). There are good reasons, however, why such a multi-method approach is hard to use in practice. Thus, the need for large-N data sets on key, processual variables, and for statistical analysis based on stronger research designs, was discussed. And some suggestions concerning small-N research projects that are most likely to yield important benefits were presented. Finally, the hope that a multi-track approach would give way to a genuine multi-method approach was expressed.

In sum, the field of democracy has made significant strides but still faces important challenges. In this sense, it constitutes an exciting research agenda. Researchers on democracy have opened up and continue to open up new substantive agendas and have generated some important findings. Moreover, the issues addressed by this field of study put it in dialogue with some of the main debates about theory and methods in comparative politics. Students of democracy focus consistently on core issues of modern politics, the conflict over how the power of the state is accessed and used. In turn, the study of democracy is a site of important methodological innovations and a substantive field where a range of methodological issues have come into sharp focus. In short, the study of democracy is a vibrant research program.