

1

THE ORIGINS AND DURABILITY OF DEMOCRACY¹

Gerardo L. Munck

The option between democracy and its alternatives has been a central axis of political conflicts in Latin America since the early twentieth century. A prelude to these conflicts was the process of state formation, which occupied the center stage of political life in the wake of the attainment of independence by Latin American countries roughly 200 years ago. But, inasmuch as the process of state formation resulted in a recognized center of political power and hence a semblance of political order, the struggle between forces in favor and opposed to subjecting political power to democratic control moved to the fore.

The history of the struggle over democracy in Latin America is relatively long and varied. The most vivid manifestations of this struggle were the waves of democratization and de-democratization, that is, fluctuations toward and away from democracy, that swept the region after World War II, and that involved a long period of harsh authoritarian rule in the 1960s and 1970s and the transitions to democracy of the 1980s and 1990s. Thereafter, a new, extremely positive phase was opened. Fears of a return to authoritarianism proved to be unwarranted and democracy gradually assumed the status of a regional norm. Indeed, an unequivocal fact of Latin American political life in the twenty-first century is that never before have so many countries in the region been democratic for so long.

It would be a mistake, nonetheless, to assume that the struggle over democracy can be taken as a settled matter. Analyses of Latin American politics in the twenty-first century can legitimately address the functioning of democracy, as has been standard in the study of the established democracies in wealthy countries. But current politics in Latin America cannot be reduced to conflicts that occur entirely *within* the institutional rules of democracy, as though conflicts *about* such rules had ceased to be relevant. Rather, as keen observers of current Latin American politics insist, the struggle over democracy continues to simmer beneath the surface and occasionally erupts into overt political conflict. In other words, the history of democracy continues to unfold.

This chapter offers an overview of the scholarship that has addressed the struggle over democracy in Latin America. The first section locates the study of Latin American politics within the broader disciplinary field of comparative politics, traces the origins of a research agenda centrally concerned with political regimes and democracy in Latin America, and identifies the key characteristics of this agenda. The second and the longest section focuses on the main explanatory theories and debates about the origins and demise of democracy

understood as a type of political regime, discusses theoretical ideas and critiques, and summarizes the findings of empirical research. Finally, the third section turns to the frontiers of current research on democracy in Latin America and identifies some challenges concerning old questions tied to a minimalist definition of democracy and new questions that address other aspects of democracy.

1. A Research Agenda on Regimes and Democracy in Latin America

Latin American politics was rarely studied in comparative politics, the academic field within political science dedicated to the study of politics around the world, during the foundational period of this field in the early part of the twentieth century.² This can be seen clearly in the classic works on comparative politics of the 1920s and 1930s, such as James Bryce's *Modern Democracies* (1921), Herman Finer's *Theory and Practice of Modern Government* (1932) and Carl Friedrich's *Constitutional Government and Politics* (1937). These texts invariably focused on the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, in some cases with side-glances to Canada and Australasia and an occasional reference to Russia. In contrast, even in the work of Bryce, one of the few established authors who had actually traveled to South America, the twenty countries of Latin America entered into the analysis briefly—receiving attention for twenty-one pages of a massive 1,117 page work (Bryce 1921: Vol. 1, Ch. 17)—and essentially as contrast cases, that is, as cases where the conditions for democracy found in the better known cases were lacking (Bryce 1921: Vol. 1, 188). Before World War II, comparative politics was a relatively parochial affair.

The status of the study of Latin American politics, and the empirical scope of comparative politics, changed considerably as a result of the new literature on modernization and dependency in the 1950s and 1960s. The modernization literature brought in Latin America, as well as Asia and Africa, to mainstream debates in comparative politics. And, in an even more significant break with prior patterns, thinking about Latin America during this period began to be shaped by authors who were based in the region—these authors were mainly sociologists, as political science was practically nonexistent in Latin America at the time³—who had a closer knowledge about Latin American politics than their U.S. counterparts, and who offered an alternative to the perspective on Latin American politics offered by the modernization literature.

The differences between modernization theory and its alternatives were quite notable.⁴ Much of the modernization literature on Latin America consisted of applications of the structural-functional framework developed by Gabriel Almond (Almond and Coleman 1960) with no prior knowledge of Latin America, or analyses that uncritically assumed, along with Seymour Lipset (1959a), a scholar who was knowledgeable about Latin America, that economic modernization unfolded in the same way, and had the same political consequences, around the world. In contrast, Gino Germani (1962) offered a conceptualization that drew attention to the specific model of politics that was associated with the process of economic development undergone by Latin American societies. And dependency theorists such as Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1969) stressed how the different location within the international economic system of Latin American countries, compared to the United States and Western Europe, led to a different pattern of development in Latin America and how this different pattern of development was associated with a different politics. In short, during the 1950s and 1960s an interesting debate took place, as Latin American authors challenged the orthodoxy of modernization theory and offered their own conceptualizations and theorizations. And this debate did much both to transform comparative

politics in the United States from a parochial affair to an enterprise of global scope and to boost the study of Latin American politics.

The real takeoff in the study of Latin American politics, which firmly established it as part of comparative politics, occurred in the 1970s however, in large part spurred by the work of the Argentine and Yale-trained political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell (1973) on the breakdown of democracy in South America. O'Donnell's work triggered a lively exchange between U.S. authors who studied Latin America and Latin American authors (Collier 1979),⁵ setting an example of scholarly collaboration between North and South that transformed the way knowledge about Latin American politics was produced. Moreover, O'Donnell's work and the discussion about it was seminal in that it gave impetus to a new research agenda focused on Latin American political regimes and democracy that has been sustained over the past four decades.

This agenda of research has been wide ranging and has been fueled by the contributions of a large number of scholars. Thus, it is hard to characterize. But, as a point of entry into this research agenda, three features deserve highlighting.⁶ First, this research agenda has been firmly driven by a concern with understanding Latin American politics in its own terms and has been driven in large part by the desire to make sense of the evolving turns of Latin American politics. In broad strokes, this agenda has centered on the problem of the breakdown of democracy during the 1970s, the transition to democracy in the 1980s, the consolidation of democracy in the 1990s, and the quality of democracy in the 2000s. In other words, the central motivation for this research agenda has been the desire to understand Latin American political realities and the main forms that the democratic question has assumed in the past decades.

Second, even though scholars working on this agenda have shown an ongoing concern with matters of conceptualization and engaged in conceptual debates—these matters are particularly salient in current research on the quality of democracy—they have also managed to develop considerable agreement on many basic conceptual issues. Specifically, rather than take the macro dimensions of politics as a constant and focusing only on variations within a given political regime or within democracies, as in common in much research in the field of comparative politics, these scholars share an interest in variations at a macro level related to the political regimes and the democraticness of Latin American countries. Moreover, they have largely converged on a conceptualization of political regimes in terms of the procedures regulating access to the highest political offices in a country and of democracy as, at the very least, a type of regime characterized by mass suffrage and electoral contestation (Dahl 1971; Mazzuca 2007).

Third, this agenda has placed a heavy emphasis on explanatory theories and has sought to develop theory in an avowedly cosmopolitan fashion, that is, through a dialogue with existing theories on other regions of the world, especially the United States and Europe. Indeed, in this regard, it is important to recall that the community of scholars who have contributed to this agenda have been Latin Americanists from Latin America, the United States and Europe; but also broad comparativists who have worked more on other countries (e.g., the United States in the case of Lipset; European countries in the case of Alain Touraine, Juan Linz, and Philippe Schmitter) or who have addressed Latin America within the context of broad cross-national studies (e.g., Adam Przeworski). This has been a distinctive and very positive characteristic of this literature.

In sum, important steps have been taken in the study of Latin American politics over the past forty years. A real agenda of research on political regimes and democracy, shared by a distinguished set of scholars, has taken shape. The political realities of Latin America, or at

least some aspects of politics of great normative concern, have been studied in a systematic manner. And, as discussed next, a rich debate has flourished regarding how to explain the varied experience of Latin American countries with democracy and other political regimes.

2. Explanatory Theories and Debates

The main explanatory theories and debates in the literature on regimes and democracy in Latin America have focused on the two closely related yet distinct questions: (1) What are the conditions for a transition from some form of authoritarianism to democracy? and (2) What are the factors that account for the durability or endurance of democracy? And, it is important to note that real debates about these two questions have been enabled by the widely shared view that, even though the definition of democracy remains the subject of much discussion, democracy is at least a type of regime in which access to the highest political offices in a country is characterized by mass suffrage and electoral contestation. Indeed, the consensus developed about the basic concept of democracy has served the key purpose of providing the conceptual anchor for fertile debates about explanatory theories among a diverse range of authors.

It is no simple matter to offer a comprehensive evaluation of explanatory debates about democracy. Explanations vary in terms of their goal, some purporting to offer an answer to both the question of the origins and the endurance of democracy, others focusing on only one of these questions. Explanations vary in terms of their parsimony, some highlighting the impact of a single variable, while others invoke multiple variables; and in terms of their clarity, that is, whether hypotheses are specified with precision. Finally, the explanations vary in terms of extent to which they have been subject to rigorous testing. Nonetheless, this fairly wide ranging and somewhat disparate body of literature has advanced discernable lines of research and generated fruitful debates that can be summarized under five headings: (1) the economic modernization thesis, (2) the civic culture thesis, (3) theories of capitalist development and class, (4) critical juncture models, and (5) political-institutional theories.⁷

2.1. *The Economic Modernization Thesis*

A standard point of reference in research on regimes and democracy in Latin America has been the modernization thesis that economic development, understood as practically synonymous with an increase in a country's level of income, enhances both (1) the prospects of a transition to democracy and (2) the endurance of democracy (Lipset 1959a). Different reasons have been posited regarding why economic development was expected to have a positive effect on democracy (e.g., its impact on culture, class structure, etc.). And these reasons have been the subject of different debates, which are addressed later. To begin, however, the debate about the core claim of modernization theory—the Lipset thesis—is reviewed.

The initial discussion of the Lipset (1959a) thesis occurred in the context of the wave of breakdowns of democracy in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s and centered on O'Donnell's (1973) direct challenge of the second part of the modernization thesis, concerning the prospects of democracy's durability. Drawing on ideas about Latin American economic development elaborated by Albert Hirschman (1968), O'Donnell posited that in settings such as South America the process of economic development had not replicated the process of the advanced economies and had led to an increased level of social conflict, and that these conflicts had been resolved in ways that undermined democracy. This modernization thesis was also questioned, in a different way, by Linz (1975: 182), who emphasized

the need to understand the political dynamics of different types of political regimes and drew attention to the political process itself and the choices of political actors within institutional settings (Linz 1978; see also Valenzuela 1978). That is, while O'Donnell did not dispute the emphasis on economic determinants in modernization theory but questioned the link between economic and political development posited by modernization theory, Linz questioned the more basic premise that economic factors should be highlighted at the expense of political factors.

The first part of the modernization thesis, concerning the prospects of transitions to democracy, was the focus of discussion in the context of research on the transitions to democracy in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s. And, again, even as some modernization theorists began to refer to a resurgence of modernization, the literature on Latin America was largely critical of the modernization thesis. Most notably, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 3–5, 18–19) suggested that, even if the endurance of democracy might be strongly influenced by structural economic factors, democratic transitions are more open and contingent processes. Thus, they argued, in a way that was reminiscent of Linz's (1978) analysis of the breakdown of democracy, that the strategic choices of political and social actors can override structural pre-requisites, including those identified in the Lipset thesis (see also Przeworski 1991: Ch. 2).

In addition to being a standard point of reference in debates about regimes and democracy in Latin America, the modernization thesis has probably been the most tested hypothesis in the quantitative literature. These tests have important limitations. They have used simple economic measures as GDP per capita, which neither captures the thicker sense of economic development conveyed by some of the literature nor distinguishes among various phases of development. They are further constrained due to the limited availability of data on other variables, altogether ignoring arguments about the strategic choices made by actors and the interaction between structure and agency. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that such tests offer some support for the critiques of the modernization thesis elaborated in studies on Latin America.

Research by Przeworski (Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Przeworski et al. 2000: Ch. 2; Przeworski 2009), which has included Latin American cases along with the rest of the world, has supported the view that higher levels of economic development are associated with a reduced risk of democratic breakdown (counter to O'Donnell 1973) but not with a greater propensity to a transition to democracy (in line with O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, and Przeworski 1991). And research by Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (2003, 2005: 25–38), focused exclusively on Latin America, goes even further in undermining the modernization thesis. Indeed, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's research reinforces Przeworski's finding concerning the lack of a link between economic development and democratic transitions. But they also find (in line with O'Donnell 1973) that, at least in Latin America, higher levels of economic development are associated with greater prospects of a breakdown of democracy and hence posit the possibility of Latin American exceptionalism (for a similar conclusion, see Landman 1999). The statistical research on the topic is ongoing.⁸ Nonetheless, over the past four decades Lipset's thesis about the political consequences of economic modernization has been weakened by research on Latin America.⁹

2.2. *The Civic Culture Thesis*

Another argument about the origins and endurance of democracy that can trace its pedigree to modernization theory and, more specifically, to the civic culture literature (Almond and

Verba 1963), holds that a country is likely to become and remain a democracy inasmuch as its inhabitants display democratic attitudes, that is, support a set of values that are seen as consistent with the workings of democracy, and hence see democratic regimes as legitimate and undemocratic regimes as illegitimate. This standard cultural argument, known as the civic culture thesis, is usually linked quite explicitly to the economic modernization thesis in that modernization theorists frequently posit that cultural change is an intervening micro level variable between economic modernization and democracy. Moreover, it is similar to the economic modernization thesis in that it identifies a factor outside of the political sphere to account for both the origins and endurance of democracy. At the same time, the civic culture thesis should be distinguished from other cultural arguments in that it focuses on the attitudes of the mass public as opposed to the attitudes of social classes (a line of inquiry addressed below), the attitudes of elites, or the interactive and constructed sense of meaning and identity.

Students of regimes and democracy in Latin America are quite divided about the civic culture thesis. Many are quite skeptical about such explanations and have criticized them largely on grounds laid out by Brian Barry (1978: 48–52). Some of these skeptical scholars have placed cultural arguments in the same bag as the economic modernization thesis and seen them as overlooking the key role played by elite interactions and political institutions (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). In contrast, they hold that it is possible to have “democracy without democrats,” and that a civic culture is “better thought of as a *product* and not a producer of democracy” (Schmitter and Karl 1991: 83; Schmitter 2009: 18).¹⁰

In turn, other authors have questioned the civic culture thesis as part of a broader rejection of an individual level concept of legitimacy, which is seen as failing to take note that regime change comes about only through the actions of organized political forces (Przeworski 1986: 50–53; 1991: 28, 54). Diverging from this culturalist explanation, they argue that, at least with regard to the durability of democracy, an explanation can be offered based on economic and institutional factors, and on interests in particular, and that there is no need to turn to culture (Przeworski, Cheibub and Limongi 2004; see also Przeworski 2006: 324–26).

But many scholars find the civic culture thesis theoretically appealing. Though focusing initially on Europe, Ronald Inglehart (1990) launched a defense of the civic culture thesis. And, relatedly, other highly regarded scholars and theorists of democracy declared the “centrality of political culture” and that “democracy requires a supportive culture” (Lipset 1994: 3); that democratization and the endurance of democracies hinges “largely on two factors,” one of them being culture (Huntington 1997: 4–5); and that “political culture—particularly beliefs about democratic legitimacy—[is] a central factor in the consolidation of democracy” (Diamond 1999: 162).¹¹

Rigorous tests of the civic culture thesis rely largely on survey data. And, both because the collection of survey data is a relatively recent development in the social sciences and because survey data is inherently suspect when collected in non-democratic contexts, cultural arguments about transitions to democracy have only been addressed indirectly. Nonetheless, this research has yielded interesting results. Part of the focus of this research has been on identifying the components of a civic culture, that is, the attitudes that are relevant to a civic culture. And, as that research has advanced, the link between civic culture and democracy has been addressed and some answers have been gaining increased credibility.

A few authors, most prominently Inglehart, have held steadfast to the view that democratization and the stability of democracy can be explained in terms of the attitudes of the mass public.¹² But a key study by Edward Muller and Mitchell Seligson (1994: 646–47), that

broke with the Euro-centric nature of survey research at the time by including six Central American countries, rejected “the thesis that civic culture attitudes are the principal or even a major cause of democracy” and held instead that key civic culture attitudes, such as interpersonal trust, are “a product of democracy rather than a cause of it.” Moreover, the results of Inglehart’s ongoing research have been increasingly questioned.¹³ Thus, even if some authors continue to argue for some sort of an updated version of the civic culture thesis, in the face of weak results other scholars who analyze culture have moved on. Indeed, the analysis by John Booth and Seligson (2009), using survey data on eight Latin American countries, takes the lack of effect of a civic culture—and hence of legitimacy—on the endurance of democracy as the starting point of research and, in a notable change of focus, sets out to “account for the puzzling absence of a legitimacy effect upon regimes” (Booth and Seligson 2009: 1, 237).

In short, even though survey researchers in particular have not given up in looking for the effects of a civic culture and searching for possible links with the stability of democracy,¹⁴ the empirical evidence has been mainly on the side of the critics of the civic culture thesis.¹⁵ The beliefs of the population at large about the legitimacy of democracy are not, in themselves, a key factor either in transitions to democracy or in the endurance of democracy.

2.3. Theories of Capitalist Development and Social Class

A third strand in the literature on regimes and democracy in Latin America, which has some links with the two previous lines of research, focuses on the nature of the process of economic development, traces the impact of economic development on the social structure, and then connects differences in the social structure to the prospects of attaining and retaining democracy. The core thesis in this literature, about which there is a large degree of agreement, is that a specific class of economic development, capitalist development, is associated with democracy because it fosters the strengthening of social classes that can offer a counterweight to the state and are likely to strive for political representation. In brief, capitalism is widely held to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of democracy. Nonetheless, there has been a debate about precisely what class configuration is more conducive to democracy.

Succinctly, regarding the class origin of democracy, the standard view of modernization theorists, advanced both in cross-regional analyses (Lipset 1959a: 83, 85) and work on Latin America (Johnson 1958), is that capitalist development fosters democracy because it creates a middle class, and the middle class is a key promoter of democracy. Moreover, modernization theorists have held that the working class is the class with the most extremist and authoritarian attitudes;¹⁶ thus, the modernization view is that democracy requires a strong middle class and a weak working class. But other arguments have also been proposed. Though Barrington Moore (1966: Ch. 7) did not include Latin America in his analysis, his argument that capitalist development leads to democracy inasmuch as it brings about a shift in power from the landed upper class to an urban bourgeoisie became a point of discussion in the literature on the social origins of democracy in Latin America. And Dietrich Rueschemeyer, John Stephens and Evelyne Huber Stephens (1992: 40–63; see also Therborn 1977) added a new perspective to the debate with their argument that democracy depends on a shift in power from the bourgeoisie to the working class.

Theories of capitalist development and social class have not been subjected to the same degree of scrutiny through quantitative analyses as the modernization thesis about the level

of economic development or the modernization argument about culture. But empirical research on Latin America does shed some light on the validity of these theories. The general thesis about the link between capitalism and democracy has received support in Touraine's (1989) study of Latin America during the 1930–80 years. Indeed, drawing on a line of analysis that can be traced to a classic of dependency theory (Cardoso and Faletto 1969), Touraine shows that even though economic development was capitalist in nature in the dependent societies of Latin America, it was not led by a domestic bourgeoisie. And, as would be expected, social classes were less independent of the state, the push to democracy was weaker, and the democracies that did emerge were better characterized as mass democracies than as representative democracies.¹⁷

With regard to the more specific arguments about social classes, the current picture has not yielded any overall generalization. As Peter Smith (2005: 55–62; see also Drake 2009: 10–13) summarizes a broad literature,¹⁸ during “1900–39, democratization was adopted by traditional elites,” that is, the land owning oligarchy; during “1940–77, middle classes made effective demands for democratic change”; and during 1978–2000, organized labor and the middle classes were key forces in the move toward democracy. Complicating matters further, there is evidence that the landed upper class as well as the urban bourgeoisie both supported authoritarian regimes and backed military coups regularly, that the middle class supported military coups as well, and that the working class supported authoritarian regimes.¹⁹ Indeed, it is fair to say that none of the theories that see a single class as the key carrier of democracy or the key obstacle to democracy receives strong empirical support.

One reason for the lack of support for class theories of democracy is, as Samuel Valenzuela (2001) argues, a basic theoretical shortcoming of class analysis (see also Valenzuela and Valenzuela 1983: 27–29, 36). As Samuel Valenzuela shows, the historical record of Chile not only runs counter to Moore's claim about the anti-democratic stance of the landed elites, in that the reforms that put Chile on a democratic path early in the late nineteenth century were driven by conservative elites linked with the traditional landed interests. More importantly, as Valenzuela points out, the impetus behind these reforms was the desire of the conservative political elites to gain an advantage over liberal elites. In short, though research on Latin America supports the broad argument that capitalism is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy, it has not supported any generalization about specific classes and has yielded an important theoretical critique of class analyses: their failure to address the role of political elites and the possible divisions and competition among these elites.

In sum, the research on Latin America supports the general argument that capitalism is a necessary but not sufficient condition of democracy. But it has not validated the multiple hypotheses about specific classes. And it has generated an important critique of class analysis, the lack of attention to the role of political elites.

2.4. Critical Juncture Models

A fourth body of literature that theorized regimes and democracy in Latin America has relied on a critical juncture model and has presented a family of arguments that rely on a critical juncture model. One distinctive feature of these models is that they explain political developments in terms of the legacies of events that occurred many decades in the past as opposed to positing causes and effects that are close in time, as is more standard in the theories discussed previously. Another key feature is that critical juncture models, though invoking economic and social variables, usually incorporate political variables as explanatory factors quite centrally and thus propose theories of regimes and democracy that system-

atically recognize the autonomy of politics. Thus, though the literature on critical junctures is quite diverse, it introduces a significant break with the previous three lines of research and offers alternatives to the societal theories discussed thus far through its emphasis on historical and political explanations.

The first analysis of critical junctures in Latin America was Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier's (1991) *Shaping the Political Arena*.²⁰ This book argued that the breakdown of democracies in the 1960s and 1970s could be attributed to the dynamics of the party systems that was shaped by events roughly in the 1920s and 1930s, when political decisions—determined in turn by the power of the oligarchy relative to middle-class reformers—were made regarding the incorporation of labor into the national political arena. This book remains, twenty years after its publication, the best and most carefully argued analysis of critical junctures in Latin America. But this book also opened a discussion that is ongoing.

The debate within the critical juncture literature largely hinges on what key event shaped Latin America's regimes during the second half of the twentieth century and how far back one must go to find the roots of these regimes.²¹ Indeed, while many authors place an emphasis on the incorporation of labor or more broadly the political response to the social question roughly during the second quarter of the twentieth century,²² as do Collier and Collier (1991), others point to a range of earlier landmark events. For example, some authors suggest that the origins of regimes in Latin America during the twentieth century are to be found in the liberal reforms carried out in the late nineteenth century (Mahoney 2001). But others see the process of state formation during the nineteenth century as the key formative events (López-Alves 2000). And yet others posit that the prospects of democracy in twentieth century Latin America were largely shaped by the colonial experience and in particular by the Iberian culture Spain and Portugal brought to the Americas and transferred to Latin American elites (Lipset and Lakin 2004: Chs. 10 and 11).²³

This is a rich, broad ranging and suggestive literature. But its conclusions remain unclear. On the one hand, the various arguments that have been advanced in this literature have not always been clearly linked to regime outcomes, that is, the origins and durability of democracy. On the other hand, these arguments have not been subjected to systematic empirical tests. Indeed, arguments about critical junctures have typically been developed inductively and have not been tested on new cases. Moreover, we lack tests of different arguments that rely on a critical juncture model and of critical juncture models in comparison with other standard arguments in the literature on regimes and democracy. Thus, it is important to recognize that we still cannot adjudicate among the various competing arguments and assess the validity of the theoretical challenge introduced by critical juncture models.

2.5. Political-Institutional Theories

The fifth and final line of research on regimes and democracy in Latin America considered here places attention squarely on the actual agents of politics, that is, the actors that engage in political activity and make political decisions, and the political institutions that are crafted by political actors and that, in turn, enable and constrain routinized political actions. This research, like the critical juncture literature, breaks with theories that see the roots of regimes and democracy solely in societal factors—a common thread in the modernization hypotheses about economic development, civic culture and class—and acknowledges the autonomy of politics. But political-institutional theories usually go further than the critical juncture literature in putting an accent on features of the political elites and the dynamics of the political sphere proper.

This line of research initially focused on the impact on democratic transition of non-democratic rulers and institutions. The most ambitious theorizing was carried out by Linz (1975; Linz and Stepan 1996: Chs. 3–4, 66–71), who developed a typology of all twentieth century regimes and hypothesized that the political dynamics of each regime affect the prospects of a transition to democracy. Relatedly, the political process models of democratic transitions developed by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) emphasizes that, given a certain type of non-democratic regime, democratic transitions were likely to occur only if actors made certain strategic choices, such as agreeing to a pact on some fundamental political issues. And developing this line of analysis, more focused research theorized about the prospects of democratization in the broad range of non-democratic regimes found in Latin America during the twentieth century, regimes characterized as bureaucratic authoritarian (O'Donnell 1979, 1988; Rouquié 1987: Chs. 8–9; Munck 1998), sultanistic (Chehabi and Linz 1998; Snyder 1998), dominant party (Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007) and mobilization authoritarian (Pérez-Stable 1998).

A second line of research has addressed the prospects of endurance of democracies. One hypothesis that was the subject of discussion as countries in Latin America moved to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s was that the mode of transition from authoritarian rule affected the prospects of the consolidation of democracy and that negotiated transitions were the most propitious mode of transition (Karl 1990: 8–17; Munck and Leff 1997). But more attention was given to the political institutions chosen in the course of a transition to democracy. Once more, Linz framed much of the discussion. Expanding on a point introduced in the political process model of democratic breakdowns he had formulated in the 1970s (Linz 1978: 71–74), Linz developed the thesis that presidential democracies were less likely to endure than parliamentary democracies (Linz 1994; Linz and Valenzuela 1994). And supplementing this thesis, others argued that the choice of presidentialism was especially problematic when presidentialism was associated with a fragmented, multiparty system (Mainwaring 1993; Hartlyn and Valenzuela 1994: 114).

The hypotheses in the political-institutional literature have received different degrees of support. Various tests have addressed the durability of different types of non-democratic regimes. Barbara Geddes (2003: 69–85) has shown that single-party regimes are the most durable, military regimes the least durable, with personalist regimes constituting an intermediary type. A study of the survival of individual leaders as opposed to regime durability shows that non-democratic rulers endure longer when they succeed in incorporating somewhat autonomous parties within a legislature (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007: 1290–91; Gandhi 2008: Ch. 6). And tests have also shown that the reason why single-party dominant systems endure as much as they do is because of resource asymmetry, that is, the incumbents use of public resources for partisan purposes (Greene 2010: 817–20). Thus, the overarching hypothesis that non-democratic rulers and institutions affect the prospects of democratic transitions has received some backing.

Turning to the hypotheses about the endurance of democracy, an admittedly preliminary test, using data on Europe and Latin America during the 1974–2000 period, does not offer strong support for the argument that modes of transition, and especially pacted transitions, have an impact on the consolidation of democracy (Schneider 2009: Ch. 7). But a more extensive empirical analysis, encompassing all democratic transitions in roughly 150 countries since 1900, does buttress the view that transitions through cooperative pacts are associated with the greater durability of democracy (Stradiotto 2009). In turn, as José Antonio Cheibub (2007: 2) shows, the record of all democratic regimes in the world between 1946 and 2002 confirms that presidential democracies have not lasted as long as parlia-

mentary democracies. But, as Cheibub (2007: Ch. 6) goes on to argue, an analysis of the data also shows that this is so not because of the institutional features of presidentialism but rather because presidential democracies have emerged in countries with a higher propensity toward military intervention, a particularly Latin American phenomenon. Moreover, though minority presidents are frequent in presidential democracies, as feared by those who see presidentialism and fragmented multipartism as a particularly pernicious combination, the occurrence of minority governments has been shown to have no impact whatsoever on the survival of presidential democracies (Cheibub 2002: 294–302; 2007: 95–98).

In brief, the distinctive perspective on regimes and democracy in Latin America offered by political-institutional theories has been elaborated in a large literature. And this literature has the indisputable merit of focusing on the political sphere proper and of searching for political determinants of political outcomes. However, though the thoroughness of the empirical tests has varied considerably, these tests reveal mixed support for political-institutional theories.

3. Research Frontiers

Research on regimes and democracy in Latin America has addressed a key political issue and made important strides. It has contributed to theoretical debates, sometimes through critiques of theories developed outside the region, other times by proposing new theories. And it has contributed to the empirical testing of theories, sometimes through the study of Latin American countries by themselves, other times through the analysis of Latin American countries along with countries from other regions. Indeed, since the 1970s the research agenda on regimes and democracy in Latin America has offered a Latin American perspective—as opposed to a mere point of contrast for ideas spelled out in the context of rich societies—on mainstream discussions within comparative politics and has helped to make comparative politics a genuinely global enterprise.

At the same time, some big challenges remain to be tackled in the study of regimes and democracy in Latin America. It is critical to explicitly formulate and directly tackle these challenges. After all, a research agenda makes progress only inasmuch as it addresses the new challenges that emerge in the course of research. Thus, by way of conclusion, I present my vision about the frontiers of current research on democracy in Latin America.

A first set of challenges pertains to the old questions of the origins and the endurance of democracy, defined in minimalist terms, which have been addressed in this chapter. With regard to theorizing, further work is needed to formulate theories more clearly, both in the sense of specifying whether they seek to account for the origins and/or the endurance of democracy, and of specifying whether theories are complementary or competing. Relatedly, further work is needed to develop theories that are formulated not simply in terms of this or that variable, an approach to theorizing that is leading to the positing of an increasingly large number of potential hypotheses,²⁴ but that instead explicitly address how different variables form causal chains and interact.

The organization of the literature under five headings that this chapter proposes offers a point of departure for a discussion about the similarities and differences among multiple explanations that have been advanced. But, as the reader has surely noted, the theoretical status of the arguments presented under these five headings are somewhat uncertain, because they are in part alternative arguments and in part complementary arguments. Therefore, the development of clearer and stronger theories requires more work both of disaggregation and analysis as well as theoretical integration and synthesis.²⁵

In turn, with regard to empirical testing, it is important to overcome several basic weaknesses of existing tests. The most rigorous tests, conducted with statistical techniques, have mirrored theories somewhat loosely, both inasmuch as they rely on data that are poor measures of the concepts used in theories and inasmuch as they have followed the convention of testing the impact of one variable at a time even when theories suggest they operate otherwise. Even more seriously, though tests have focused largely on hypotheses related to modernization theory, and increasingly on institutional arguments, we lack tests of some central hypotheses—for example, we do not have a rigorous empirical study of the class base of democracy—and we do not have tests that compare the full range of current theories—for example, no one has carried out a study comparing arguments based on the critical juncture model to the various arguments derived from modernization theory. Thus, it is important to recognize that in general terms the literature on regimes and democracy in Latin America has put greater emphasis on constructing new theories than in testing these theories and, given that theory building and theory testing are two sides of the same coin, that it is necessary to dedicate more attention to the testing of theories about the origins and durability of democracy.

A second set of challenges pertain to the study of aspects of democracy that go beyond the features used in minimalist definitions of democracy, that is, the selection of national leaders in free and fair elections. Research on democracy broadly understood, or what has been frequently referred to as the quality of democracy (O'Donnell, Vargas Cullell and Iazzetta 2004; O'Donnell 2010), was not addressed in this chapter due to space constraints. But it is pertinent to conclude this chapter with some brief comments on the matter.

The reason for addressing issues relevant to the quality of democracy in a research agenda on democracy is that democracy is not just a matter of how high-level government offices are accessed (Munck 2007c). Politics is, at its core, a struggle over the direction of society, and democracy is thus a system in which the people have a say, through political institutions, in the decisions about who should occupy high-level government offices but also about where their societies are headed. Thus, though it is always important to highlight the value of democracy understood in minimalist terms—which, to avoid confusion, should be called electoral democracy—it is also imperative not to reduce the study of democracy to electoral democracy.

Another reason to think about democracy in broad terms is that the current political debate in Latin America has placed the issue on the agenda (Munck 2010). As mentioned previously, even though some of the most dramatic struggles in the process of democratization in Latin America occurred during the twentieth century, it would be a mistake to assume that the struggle over democracy can be taken as a settled matter. Indeed, the transformation of the democracies Latin Americans currently have into fuller democracies, that is, democracies in which political power matters and in which political power is subjected to democratic control, is emerging as the next big political challenge in the region.

Thus, along with a revisiting of old questions, anchored in a minimalist conception of democracy, research on regimes and democracy in Latin America should also address other aspects of democracy, which open up a whole set of new questions that call for conceptual, theoretical and empirical work. In other words, continuing a tradition that has come to characterize research on Latin American politics, researchers interested in current Latin American politics should seek to understand the democratic question in the twenty-first century and to produce knowledge that in some measure contributes to the new challenge of democratizing democracy.

Notes

- 1 I thank Mariano Bertucci, Sebastián Mazzuca, Richard Snyder and Deborah Yashar for many useful suggestions.
- 2 For overviews of the field of comparative politics, see Eckstein (1963) and Munck (2007a); on the study of Latin American politics, see Valenzuela (1988) and Drake and Hilbink (2003).
- 3 On the late institutionalization of political science in Latin America, see Altman (2006) and Huneus (2006).
- 4 For an overview of the modernization and dependency literature on Latin America, see Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1978).
- 5 On the importance of this book by O'Donnell and the decisive character of the debate it generated, see Touraine (1987: 4–12).
- 6 For a more detailed characterization of this research agenda, see Munck (2007b: 1–14).
- 7 These lines of research are not unrelated to each other, and scholars working on one line of research frequently borrow from other lines of research. However, as the following discussion seeks to show, it is useful to organize a review of the literature under these five headings.
- 8 See, especially, Boix and Stokes (2003) and Acemoglu et al. (2008).
- 9 Another strand of this debate has been the discussion about resource curses in Latin America, which is relevant to the modernization thesis because it focuses not just on an aggregate level of economic development but on the composition of economic activities and the sectors of the economy that gain prominence (Karl 1997; Dunning 2008). This literature articulates the political consequence of economic factors in a more direct fashion than is standard in modernization theory and offers a bridge with the literature on capitalist development discussed below.
- 10 This line of analysis is similar to Lijphart's (1968), who argued, against Almond (1956), that democracy was possible in culturally divided societies, like the Netherlands, if political elites could agree on certain political institutions.
- 11 Linz and Stepan (1996: 6) take a step further and argue that, by definition, a democracy is not consolidated unless "a strong majority of public opinion holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life in a society."
- 12 Indeed, Inglehart (1990) argued early on that civic culture attitudes increase the likelihood that democracy will endure and has continued to subscribe to a strong culturalist explanation of both the origins and endurance of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 9, Ch. 8).
- 13 For critiques of Inglehart's recent work, see Hadenius and Teorell (2005), Teorell and Hadenius (2006), Booth and Seligson (2009: 11), and Fails and Pierce (2010).
- 14 After carefully disentangling what they mean by legitimacy and proposing a multidimensional measure of legitimacy, Booth and Seligson (2009) consider the impact of legitimacy on citizen attitudes and behaviors. Though they do not focus on actual events directly associated with the breakdown of democracy, they make a case that a lack of legitimacy could provide fertile ground for elites to undermine democracy and, interestingly, suggest that, on the basis of the analysis of the eight countries they studied using 2004 data, they are most concerned about the prospects of democracy surviving in Honduras—Guatemala is also singled out (Booth and Seligson 2009: 150, 220, 241–57). Given that Booth and Seligson's book was published in February 2009 and that the elected President Zelaya of Honduras was displaced from power in June 2009, there may well be something to their argument about the importance of the beliefs of the mass public.
- 15 A related literature has focused on religion. For example, Lipset (1959a: 65, 92–93) argued that while Protestantism is conducive to the development of democratic values, Catholicism does not have a similar effect. However, an admittedly preliminary test, based on a simple distinction between Protestant, Catholic and Muslim countries, finds no impact of the culture thus understood on either the likelihood of a transition to democracy or the endurance of democracy (Przeworski, Cheibub and Limongi 2004). For further empirical evidence against cultural theories, see Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1983: 15–22).
- 16 Much of the modernization literature on the class basis of democracy is linked with a culturalist theory. For example, Lipset (1959a: 83, 89, 1959b: 482) held that the strengthening of a middle class was conducive to democracy because members of the middle class held a moderate political outlook that counteracted the extremist and authoritarian values of the working class.
- 17 For an updating of this line of analysis, see Garretón et al. (2003).

- 18 See Therborn (1979), Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), Huber and Safford (1995), Drake (1996), and Collier (1999).
- 19 See Nun (1967), O'Donnell (1978), Baloyra-Herp (1983), Bartell and Payne (1995), Paige (1997), Middlebrook (2000), and Levitsky and Mainwaring (2006).
- 20 Though the broader literature on critical juncture in comparative politics was largely initiated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Collier and Collier's (1991: Ch. 1) explicit formalization of this kind of explanation also helped spur a larger discussion about the critical juncture model.
- 21 Another question that has been discussed recently is whether the neoliberal reforms implemented in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s constitute a new critical juncture. See, among others, Collier and Handlin (2009) and Tanaka (2009).
- 22 Mouzelis (1986), Waisman (1987), Scully (1992), Yashar (1997), Munck (2002).
- 23 See also Morse (1964), Véliz (1980), and Wiarda (2001).
- 24 The problem of theorizing that leads to a quite unwieldy list of independent variables and hypotheses is illustrated by Diamond, Hartlyn and Linz (1999).
- 25 For attempts at synthesis, see Mahoney and Snyder (1999) and Mazzuca (2010).

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The Origins and Durability of Democracy

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