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PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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Prepared by: Melissa Wong

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. The Democratic Pluralism Initiative (DPI)

The Bureau for Asia, the Near East and Europe (ANE) has devoted considerable resources to the promotion of open markets through an emphasis on economic growth led by the private sector. Recognizing the close relationship between economic development and democracy, the ANE Bureau more recently embarked on a new initiative, the Democratic Pluralism Initiative (DPI), in an effort to expand its open markets mandate to include support for open societies as well.

The linkage between economic development and democracy has been a central theme of the literature on democracy and is a core topic of this literature review. Scholars have long debated the question of which comes first -- open markets or open societies -- and have offered a variety of opinions on the nature of the relationship between economic growth and democratic development.

The Democratic Pluralism Initiative, however, also recognizes that democracy is a valuable "end" as well as a valuable "means" and that promoting democracy is an important objective of U.S. foreign assistance regardless of the exact nature of the relationship between open markets and open societies. Thus, this paper also surveys the literature on the requisite conditions for the emergence and preservation of democratic polities.

B. Overview of the Literature

Scholarly works on the conditions and correlates of democracy date back to the classical Greek thinkers. Aristotle was the first to argue that a large middle class may be conducive to democracy. Later, Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu propounded the importance of restraining state power with checks and balances. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville argued that socio-economic equality and decentralization of state power are important requisites of democracy. De Tocqueville also predicted that countries around the world would follow a natural and inevitable trend toward democracy. In fact, the next century witnessed the emergence of democratic governments in Northern and Western Europe, and in a few countries in Latin America.

Beginning in the early 1920's, however, the seeming trend toward democracy began to reverse. Democratic movements in Western Europe, Latin America, and Japan were replaced by fascism, populist autocracies, and other forms of dictatorship. The victory of the Allied powers in World War II changed the tide once again. Democracy was imposed and took root in Japan, West Germany, Austria, and Italy. That period also marked the beginning of decolonization. The tendency of the newly independent countries to adopt the political system of their former imperial

country resulted in the creation of new democracies in Israel, India, and the Philippines.

The resurgence of democracy persisted through the mid-1960's. The rising optimism about the prospects of democracy generated a wave of new work in democratic theory, beginning with an influential article by Seymour Martin Lipset in 1959. One of Lipset's major themes, that the wealthier a nation, the greater its chances of successfully democratizing, was subsequently debated and refined by multiple scholars. Although support for this viewpoint is still fairly strong, the basic theory has been modified to incorporate the factors that contributed to the breakdown of democracy in Latin America in the mid to late 1960's. The publication of **Polyarchy** by Robert Dahl in 1971 marked the end of a prolific decade of literature on democracy. In his study, Dahl analyzed the historical, economic, social, and cultural aspects of a society that enhance or inhibit the development of democracy.

The next decade was dominated by studies on economic dependency and on how this dependency affected the prospects for democracy. Dependency theorists argued that dependent economic development led to political repression and to the demise of democratic systems. The emergence of bureaucratic-authoritarianism regimes in South America fueled arguments that democracy was not compatible with economic stability and growth.

Towards the end of the 1970's however, the emergence of democracy in southern Europe and the breakdown of several Latin American dictatorships rekindled interest in the causes of and preconditions for democracy. A more recent surge of literature has focused on democratic institutions, transitions to and breakdowns of democracy, and the democratic framework as a means of dealing with ethnic cleavages, to name a few. The current trend towards political liberalization in Eastern Europe and in a number of developing countries has fueled further optimism and interest promoting research on the relationship between open markets and open societies, and on the requisites for democracy.

C. Purpose and Organization of the Report

This paper provides an overview of recent literature on democracy. It is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide some background on major themes and findings in recent literature.

The paper was prepared by Ernst & Young under a contract with the Agency for International Development (Private Enterprise Development Support Project II, No. 940-2028.03), at the request of the Bureau for Asia, the Near East and Europe (ANE). It is part of a larger effort by the ANE Bureau to more firmly establish the conceptual foundations of its Democratic Pluralism Initiative.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first deals with the nature of the relationship between economic development and democracy. The second section,

somewhat related to the first, looks at the requisites to democracy. It explores the key factors that have been found to contribute to or to obstruct the development of stable democratic systems. The third section examines the literature on sequences and transitions to democracy, and on the causes for breakdowns. The final section provides a summary of the literature on measurement of democracy.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. Introduction

Many scholars of democracy have conceded that there is a relationship between the level of economic development and democracy. In his influential article on requisites of democracy, Seymour Martin Lipset wrote that: "From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that only in a wealthy society in which relatively few citizens lived in real poverty could a situation exist in which the mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics. . . ." ¹ The rationale for this relationship is that higher levels of national income enable a country to foster institutions that are conducive to democracy, through their support of education, literacy and mass media. Additionally, some scholars have argued that, due to the complexity of economic systems in advanced industrial economies, decision-making, and thus power, is dispersed. Data on democracy and national income also suggest that there is a link. For example, in 1981 a comparison of countries in terms of level of economic development and degree of freedom indicated that two of thirty-six low income countries, fourteen of sixty middle income and eighteen of twenty four high income countries could be classified as free. ²

B. Overview of Principle Perspectives

Some of the principal works that have dealt with this relationship between economic development and democracy are described below.

1. Lipset

Seymour Martin Lipset explored the link between economic development and democracy by comparing the levels of wealth, industrialization, urbanization and education of more and less democratic or dictatorial countries. European and English-speaking nations were classified as either stable democracies, unstable democracies or dictatorships. A European country qualified as a democracy if it had "an uninterrupted continuation of political democracy since World War I, and

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- 1 Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 75.
 - 2 World Bank, *World Development Report 1981* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 134-135, and *Freedom at Issue*, no. 64 (1982) 8-9.

the absence over the past 25 years of a major political movement opposed to the democratic 'rules of the game'.³ Latin American countries were classified as democratic if they had had more or less free elections during the post-World War I period.

Lipset found that for every index of wealth he used-- including per capita income, number of persons per motor vehicle and per physician, and number of radios, telephones, and newspapers per thousand persons--there was a marked difference between the more and less democratic countries. For instance, the average per capita income in 1949 for the more democratic European countries was \$695, while it was \$308 for the less democratic countries. The corresponding figures for Latin America were \$171 and \$119.

The two measures of industrialization used in Lipset's study were the percentage of employed males in agriculture and the per capita use of commercially produced energy. Here, too, Lipset found sharp differences--21% of employed males were working in agriculture in more democratic European countries, while 41% were in less democratic countries. In Latin America, the former measure was 52% in less dictatorial countries and the latter measure was 67% for more dictatorial countries.

Many theorists have also linked urbanization to the level of democracy. Lipset, using the percentages of the population in places of 20,000 and over, in communities of 100,000 and over, and residing in metropolitan areas, found that more democratic countries had higher degrees of urbanization than less democratic countries.

Lipset's fourth index of economic development was the level of education. The rationale behind this link is that education increases people's capacity to make rational decisions, broadens their outlooks, increases their appreciation for the need for tolerance, and restrains them from adopting extremist or monistic doctrines. Additionally, other scholars have found that the higher a person's education, the more likely he/she is to engender democratic values. Using indices of literacy and educational enrollment at three different levels, Lipset concluded that there is definitely a link between education and democracy. According to his results, the more democratic countries of Europe and the less dictatorial countries of Latin America were considerably more literate (96% and 74%) than their less democratic and more dictatorial counterparts (85% and 46%, respectively).

Although Lipset's index of democracy has been criticized by some as unrefined and crude, and his correlations as not statistically rigorous, many scholars nonetheless concur with him that there is a correlation between economic develop-

3 Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," pg. 73.

ment and the level of democracy. At the time his article was published, democratic systems of government were experiencing a world-wide resurgence. However, from the early 1950's on, the success of democracies has been mixed and a straight-forward correlation between economic development and democracy has been disputed by many. In particular, during the 1960's and 1970's, scholars focused on the experience of the East Asian newly industrializing countries which had the highest growth rates in the world in the absence of a democratic polity. Similarly, in Latin America high growth countries tended to be governed by authoritarian regimes.

2. O'Donnell

During the 1960's, a significant consensus emerged in support of Lipset's basic theory that higher levels of economic development enhanced the prospects for democracy.⁴ The basis for this support was the high correlation between democracy and national income found in a number of studies. In the early 1970's, however, Guillermo O'Donnell called into question the nature of the relationship between political democracy and socio-economic development established in Lipset's and others' studies, and endeavored to flesh out this relationship in his book, **Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics.**⁵

In that book, O'Donnell argued that the studies supporting Lipset's findings bolstered his hypothesis because they all employed the same basic paradigm, which equated social progress with an increase in the likelihood of political democracy. By employing that paradigm, what O'Donnell called the "optimistic equation," numerous studies added factors to the socio-economic development side of the equation. Scholars who correlated per capita gross national product with the level of democracy for South American countries in 1966 found that the pattern fit the basic paradigm; the wealthier countries tended to be more democratic and the poorest countries were clearly not democratic.

The validity of the basic paradigm rested on the assumption that the indices of socio-economic development that were used were accurate measures of their development. As O'Donnell pointed out, the most commonly used index of economic development (i.e. socio-economic development) is the gross national product, often due to lack of reliable data for other factors. However, per capita GNP does not necessarily yield an accurate picture of a country's level of development if, for example, the population is highly heterogeneous and incomes are very skewed.

4 See Daniel Lerner, **The Passing of Traditional Society.** (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958); Gerhard Lenski, **Power and Privilege.** (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

5 Guillermo A. O'Donnell, **Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism.** (Berkeley: University of California, Institute for International Studies, 1973).

In attempting to more accurately assess the level of socio-economic development in South American countries, O'Donnell developed a different measure of modernization. He perceived that a country's structure was divided into two sectors: the peripheral areas and the modern areas. He defined the former as an area in which the people have minimal participation in "the production, consumption, and transmission of the cultural and material items broadly associated with modernity." In contrast, in the modern areas, an overwhelming proportion of the people "count in the national political arena," and in that sense they comprise a kind of "center."⁶ In O'Donnell's opinion, the structural characteristics of the modern areas rather than the level of GNP are most important to the formation of political processes and institutions. The underlying assumption is that "the variance at the national political level can be explained by focusing on each South American *modern area* and, within it, particularly on *political demands* formulated by (*activated*) *political actors* and *incumbents of technocratic roles*."⁷

To illustrate his point, O'Donnell examined the emergence of what he called "bureaucratic-authoritarian" regimes in Brazil and Argentina in the 1960's. Both countries had followed strategies of import-substitution industrialization (ISI) and were also experiencing high levels of political mobilization. According to O'Donnell, both countries had also exhausted the "easy" horizontal phase of ISI and needed to attract domestic and foreign investment to move into the more capital intensive phase of ISI. This required adoption of economic stabilization measures that were clearly unacceptable to the rapidly mobilizing labor and popular sectors. The democratic governments were caught between pressures to adopt redistributive measures to maintain the political support of labor and populist coalitions and the pressures to stabilize the economy by adopting policies that would alienate these sectors. The bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes that emerged in both countries, on the other hand, were able to adopt domestically unpopular stabilization policies because they could use the necessary force to curtail the demands of the groups most hurt by these policies.

In summary, O'Donnell found that, in the cases of Argentina and Brazil, authoritarian political systems were better able to implement the stabilization policies required to further economic development. The argument that democratic political systems are unnecessary, and may in fact inhibit economic development, has become an important area of research, particularly in light of the experiences of Chile and of the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) in Asia.

6 O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, pg. 21.

7 O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, pg. 29.

3. Huntington

Samuel P. Huntington proposed a different relationship between economic development and democracy than those advanced by Lipset and O'Donnell.⁸ He posited that as countries develop economically, they enter a zone of transition which requires a new form of rule to manage the increasingly complex society. Thus, according to Huntington, "[E]conomic development compels the modification or abandonment of traditional political institutions; it does not determine what political system will replace them."⁹ The political institutions that do emerge will be shaped by non-economic and external influences. This hypothesis is based on Huntington's observation that middle income countries, including the East Asian NICs and four bureaucratic-authoritarian South American countries, have not moved in a democratic direction.

One of the examples Huntington cited was that of Cuba and Venezuela in the late 1950's. At that time, both countries had despotic political systems that were incompatible with the higher level of economic development and the increased complexity of their societies. As a result, both regimes collapsed but, even though Fidel Castro led Cuba into a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, Rómulo Betancourt chose to build a democratic political system.

The concept of a transition zone, which posits that economic development leads to a period of overhaul or abandonment of the current political system, provides a persuasive explanation of the link between economic development and democracy. The evidence presented by Huntington indicates that economic development does not necessarily promote democratic political systems. Indeed, as Huntington has noted, countries that have developed past the zone of transition have for the most part become either democracies or Communist dictatorships.

4. Haggard

In a recent paper, Stephan Haggard incorporated both Lipset's and Huntington's findings in his conclusions about the relationship between democracy and economic development.¹⁰ He found that in the long-run, there is strong evidence of a correlation, but only at the extreme ends of the income scale. The middle income countries, on the other hand, tend to refute the existence of such a relationship. Haggard's findings show that upper middle income countries tend to

8 Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 99, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 193-218.

9 Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" pg. 201.

10 Stephan Haggard, "Democracy and Economic Growth," paper presented at the U.S. Agency for International Development's Democratic Pluralism Seminar, Washington, D.C., 15 June 1990.

score lower on a scale of political rights and civil liberties than lower middle income countries. The evidence that the upper middle income group appears to be less democratic than the lower middle income group poses serious questions about the validity of establishing a positive, evolutionary relationship between economic development and democratic institutions.

In examining the cases of countries that moved away from authoritarian regimes during the 1980's, Haggard found that poor economic conditions proved to be more of a stimulus to democracy than favorable economic conditions. In five of six cases in Latin America and three of four in Asia, the period of transition to democracy was marked by relatively poor economic performance. This is not to say that poor economic conditions are a requisite for democracy, but rather that economic crises can destabilize and threaten the government, regardless of whether it is democratic or authoritarian.

C. Conclusion

The link between economic development and democracy is clearly not a simple positive correlation. Significant counter examples cast doubt on the assumption that economic development feeds democratic pressures, and conversely, that democracy requires a certain level of national income. With the exception of the middle income countries and a few anomalies, however, there does seem to be support for a positive relationship. In analyzing economic and noneconomic factors, Kenneth A. Bollen and Robert W. Jackman found that the level of economic development does appear to be the most significant determinant of democracy.¹¹ The role of other factors, examined in the next section, is significant and can account for some of the exceptional cases.

11 Kenneth A. Bollen and Robert W. Jackman, "Economic and Noneconomic Determinants of Political Democracy in the 1960's," in *Research in Political Sociology*, Volume 1, (1985): 27-48.

CHAPTER III

REQUISITES FOR DEMOCRACY

A. Introduction

It is clear from the literature that economic development as measured by the level of national income is not necessarily a solid predictor of the level of democracy. A more fruitful approach has been taken by many scholars who have examined how economic development affects the socio-economic structure of a country, and how that, in turn, impacts on political institutions and processes. There are several possibilities. For instance, as a country becomes wealthy, exposure to education, literacy and mass media increases. Such exposure is conducive to the development of a democratic culture. In addition, economic development may change the income distribution of a country and facilitate the entry into politics of new classes and groups. Scholars have also investigated other noneconomic variables as requisites for democracy, such as a country's culture and social structure. Finally, the impact of external factors can be crucial to the emergence of democracy. The following section provides an overview of these factors.

B. Overview of Key Factors

1. Socio-economic Development

Although Seymour Martin Lipset focused on economic development, he included the level of education, a measure of social development, in his index of wealth.¹² The link between education and democracy had been developed more fully by John Dewey.¹³ The logic is that education teaches citizens how to make rational decisions, decreases the likelihood that they will embrace monistic and/or extreme ideologies, and promotes tolerance. Using indices of literacy and levels of enrollment, Lipset found that more democratic European and less dictatorial Latin American countries had markedly higher levels of education than their counterpart groups. However, Lipset conceded that a high level of education is not a sufficient condition for democracy. Dewey posited that the character of the educational system is significant for democracy. Thus, a system that emphasizes individual personal development is more likely to foster democratic values than one that stresses obedience and discipline.

12 Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 69-105; and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. (London: Heinemann, 1960).

13 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. (New York, 1916).

Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Lipset in their recent volumes on democracy have concurred with that conception.¹⁴ In their comparative study of democracy in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, they found that the likelihood of democracy forming was enhanced to the extent that economic development led to broad improvements in the physical quality of life. Specifically, they looked at gains in life expectancy at age one, infant mortality and adult literacy. As an example, they cited the case of Costa Rica, a democracy that draws support from having "the lowest infant mortality and disease rates and the highest literacy, life expectancy and caloric intake of all Central American countries."¹⁵

2. Inequality

In thinking about the linkage between democracy and economic development, it is important to consider not only the level of national income but also the distribution of that income. As Lipset discussed in *Political Man*, higher national income effects income equality. That in turn affects the chances for democracy. According to Lipset, relative economic hardship is highly correlated with the strength of extremist political groups, which are detrimental to democratic processes. He asserted that stronger extremist political parties tended to develop in poorer countries due to the greater degree of income inequality rather than the actual level of income.

Lipset also posited that increased national income leads to more receptivity to democratic norms. In a poorer country, the wealthy class would tend to resist strongly any attempts at income redistribution because it has more to lose. On the other hand, if a country is wealthy enough so that a redistribution of wealth would not entail severe losses for the major power groups, then they would tend to accept democratic processes more easily. As Lipset remarked, nepotism, which hampers the bureaucratic efficiency necessary for a workable democracy, is more prevalent in poorer countries.

Extreme income inequality also reduces the likelihood of the success of democracy by encouraging extremist political groups and facilitating the entrenchment of ruling power groups. However, there is evidence that stable poverty breeds more conservatism and extremism. Lipset accounts for this seeming paradox by explaining that it is not the poverty per se, but the perception that one's quality of life could be better that fuels discontent. Only groups that are isolated from modern communications and transportation can be totally unaware of the possibility of a better life.

14 Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries* 4 vols. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989).

15 John A. Booth, "Costa Rican Democracy," *Democracy Conference*, 1985, pp. 27-28.

Diamond, Linz, and Lipset confirmed the relationship, for example, between democracy and socioeconomic inequality in their case studies. Historically, gross socio-economic inequalities in Peru left the peasant laborers lacking in what Diamond et al. term a "democratic orientation," implying a low degree of political efficacy, trust, and democratic values. However, since the 1968 land reforms, a reduction in inequality has accompanied the emergence of a middle class and strong support for the return to democracy.

3. Middle Class

The importance of a middle class for the development of a democratic polity has long been asserted. Political philosophers dating back to Aristotle have found that non-hegemonic systems must contain a significant middle class of citizens not severely unequal in status, income, and wealth. Scholars have argued that a middle class is important because it espouses moderation and tolerance. As Lipset has remarked, in countries with extreme inequality, the upper class has a tendency to "treat the lower as vulgar, innately inferior,"¹⁶ and thus resists the emergence of democracy. In addition to reducing inequality, Lipset argued that increased national income modifies the shape of the class structure of a society. As income increases, the pyramid with a large lower class and small upper, is transformed into a more diamond-like structure as the middle class grows. Like reduced inequality, a substantial middle class would be conducive to democracy because it would most likely reward moderate and democratic parties while discouraging extremist ones.

4. Social Structure

In addition to the impact of economic growth and its effects on income distribution and on socio-economic development, there are significant noneconomic factors that contribute to a country's prospects for democracy. One of the most important of these pertains to social structure. The existence of different groups, voluntary or primordial (e.g., ethnic and linguistic), is relevant to the dispersion of power and the institutional capacity of a country to resolve conflicting interests.

Autonomous intermediate groups, for instance, based on occupation, region, and other interests, are beneficial to democracy when they counterbalance the power of the state. The theory of the "mass society" posits that a country with few independent organizations has a relatively higher possibility of dictatorship or revolution. According to Lipset, autonomous intermediate groups prevent the state or any other single entity from amassing all political resources, provide a source of new opinions, communicate ideas, encourage interest and participation in politics, and provide a training ground for future leaders. To support his hypothesis, Lipset presented evidence that members of voluntary organizations are more likely than

16 Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 51.

others to give the "democratic answer" to questions regarding tolerance, party systems, voting, and political participation. Furthermore, the more educated and wealthy an individual, the more likely he is to join a voluntary organization. Thus Lipset concluded that the propensity to form such groups was directly related to income, which is in turn related to education. Lipset also cited a study by Edward Banfield which described how destitute poverty reduced community organization in southern Italy.¹⁷

Samuel P. Huntington also asserted that intermediate groups have a useful effect on democracy because they provide the basis for the effective functioning of democratic political institutions.¹⁸ His emphasis, however, was more on the structure of society than on intermediate groups per se. The first hypothesis Huntington discussed was that traditional pluralism enhances the probability of building a stable democracy. For instance, several scholars have argued that highly developed feudal societies with an aristocracy capable of limiting state power have a good probability of developing into democracies. The evidence on this theory, however, is weak. As Huntington remarks, de Tocqueville and Hartz have argued that democracy developed in North America because it was not characterized by feudalism. Similarly, other scholars have explained the failure of democracy in South America by its history of having highly centralized feudalism.

Huntington, on the other hand, supported the proposition that an autonomous bourgeoisie, rather than a feudal aristocracy, enhances the probability for the success of democracy. This idea provides a compelling explanation for why democracy has faltered in much of the Third World. According to Huntington, in poor nations, state and multinational corporations tend to lead economic growth. As a result, the formation of an indigenous bourgeois class fails to accompany economic development. Huntington cited the example of Turkey in the 1940's, where the emergence of democracy and a class of independent businessmen coincided.

One important implication of Huntington's proposition is that smaller countries are disadvantaged in their prospects for democracy. The reasoning is that countries with small domestic markets will be less able to support a bourgeois class. Huntington suggested that the success of democracy in India and the decline of bureaucratic authoritarianism in Brazil may be due in part to the formation of autonomous bourgeoisies.

17 Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 67.

18 Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 99, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 193-218.

That the bourgeois class is necessary implies that the characteristics of a country's economic system are relevant to its chances for democracy. Charles Lindblom has remarked that all democracies have market-oriented economies.¹⁹ The converse, however, is not necessarily true, which indicates that a market economy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy. Huntington suggested two reasons why this is so. A market economy implies that economic power is dispersed and that alternative power centers exist which limit state control. Secondly, a market economy is more likely than a centralized economy to increase economic wealth, and thus to provide the "infrastructure of democracy."

A final autonomous intermediate group that Huntington discussed was labor unions. He noted that labor unions have historically been effective in inciting political change by acting as a source of social pressure. In Western Europe and the United States, labor unions have exerted pressure for more democratic processes. More recently, labor unions have opposed military rule in South America and the Communist dictatorship in Poland.

Diamond et al. argued that autonomous intermediate groups of all kinds, including those based on class, occupation, region, ethnicity, and religion, are beneficial to the emergence and stability of democracy. Not only do such groups provide countervailing power centers to the state, but they serve "as an important source of democratic vitality, leadership, and experience, a training ground for democratic competition and accountability, and a stimulus to participation in the formal political arena."²⁰ Diamond et al. found that the three countries which have had the most successful experiences with democracy all support many varied autonomous voluntary organizations. In Costa Rica, professional groups, unions, and self-help groups provide a channel for articulating demands and interests to the government. In India, trade unions, and business and student associations support, and thereby strengthen, political parties in addition to furthering their own interests. Diamond et al.'s final example, Venezuela, also boasts a strong network of voluntary organizations.

Autonomous groups not only support democracy but they also may serve to undermine a dictatorship. According to Diamond et al., the Catholic Church in particular, but also associations of professionals, students, and intellectuals played a key role in the fall of the Marcos regime in the Philippines. Diamond et al. have hypothesized that religious institutions have a special advantage. They maintain a degree of moral legitimacy that other groups do not. Similarly, religious institutions have the advantage that they are less politically self-interested than other groups. The importance of this quality is illustrated by the role played by the National Association for the Maintenance of Free Elections (NAMFREL) in the 1986 Philip-

19 Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets*. (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

20 Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries*, pg. 11.

pinas presidential elections that ended Marcos' regime. NAMFREL's credibility rested on its reputation for being objective and committed to democracy.

The degree of pluralism in a country is another relevant characteristic of its social structure. Pluralism and its effect on democracy have received substantial attention in the literature. Mostly, scholars have argued that ethnic, religious and linguistic pluralism have a negative impact on democracy. Ethnic, linguistic and religious affiliations often compete with national affiliations, thus inciting conflict and inhibiting tolerance and coalition-building. Such cleavages are deepened by their tendency to reinforce each other. That is, ethnic linguistic, regional, and other differences tend to occur along the same lines.

5. Political Structure

In addition to resolving conflicts, political institutions serve several important functions in democratic processes. They limit the power of the state, serve as a mechanism of accountability, and insure some degree of power for minority parties (which consequently, guards against dominance of the majority party).

A recurring theme that Diamond et al. encountered in their case studies is that a high degree of centralization is harmful to the prospects of democracy. Excessive centralization has several serious ramifications. First, decentralization can be effective in moderating ethnic and regional conflicts. More importantly, centralization of power almost by definition undermines democracy. For example, in Turkey, the strong central government has left the municipal and provincial administrations without power. Since substantial power exists within the central government, the struggle to control it tends to be more violent and intense.

On the other hand, a system with less concentrated power encourages democracy, and thus federalism is an important feature for the stability of a democracy. As previously mentioned, federalism is an effective mechanism for breaking up, i.e. cross-cutting, divisive and reinforcing cleavages. Further, federalism can guarantee the autonomy of subculturally divided groups in a consociational system.²¹ Federalism also inhibits the centralization of power and provides the party out of power with some control. Lipset was careful to note that federalism does not serve democracy if it divides a nation along ethnic, linguistic, or religious cleavages.

A nation's party system is also relevant. Scholars advocate a two-party system rather than a multi-party system because appealing to a broader range of interests requires a certain degree of compromise and tolerance. In contrast, narrow parties

21 See Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 41-44.

have less of a need to accommodate other's interests. Diamond et al. have found some evidence that fewer parties are more stabilizing for democracy. The five most stable democracies that they studied all tended to have fewer, broader parties. Venezuela and Costa Rica both have a two-party system, the ideal number according to Diamond et al. India and Botswana have a single, but broadly-based ethnically and socially, dominant party. Papua-New Guinea has a moderate multi-party system, but two parties are dominant.

There are other important features of the party system in addition to the number of parties. For instance, the relative strength of the parties is significant. The stronger the parties and party system, the more entrenched the parties' power is, and thus the harder it is for an authoritarian regime to uproot them. The type of electoral system also affects the dispersion of power. According to Diamond et al., in a single-member, plurality district system, a majority party can amass a disproportionate amount of power. Furthermore, they have found that this power tends to be "turned to antidemocratic ends."²² On the other hand, a proportional representation system keeps the dispersion of power more in line with the popular vote, and enables minority parties to garner some power.

Finally, Diamond et al. discussed the need for a strong and independent judiciary in a democratic system. As Richard L. Sklar remarked, "In modern democracies, courts and judges back up the institutions of electoral representation as a second line of defense against the dangers of despotic government."²³ In Diamond et al.'s view, the role of the judiciary is to demand that the rulers remain accountable to the ruled, and to defend the integrity and legitimacy of a democratic constitution.

6. Cultural Requisites

Regardless of a country's economic and political condition, the most fundamental precondition for democracy is the general acceptance of democratic beliefs, that is, a democratic culture. According to Sidney Verba, political culture is

22 Diamond, Linz, and Lipset; "Building and Sustaining Democratic Government in Developing Countries: Some Tentative Findings," p. 14.

23 Richard L. Sklar, "Developmental Democracy," paper delivered at 1985 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, p. 14.

"the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place."²⁴ How receptive a society is to democracy depends on its particular political culture.

According to Diamond et al., in order for democracy to work, a society must value political participation and awareness, and engender tolerance and compromise. If political freedom and competition are not accompanied by tolerance and willingness to compromise, then conflicts will undermine the democratic system. Many scholars assert that an element of trust must exist between rival groups.²⁵

Diamond et al. found that the citizens of more stable democracies did indeed express more democratic values than those living elsewhere. For example, in Costa Rica, both the elite and the masses evince strong support for compromise and consensus, and exhibit exceptionally high levels of political activity and awareness.²⁶ Another example is India, where the democratic values of tolerance and reconciliation have been fostered since the inception of the Indian National Congress a century ago.²⁷ A deeply ingrained commitment to democratic values not only enhances the possibility of democracy, but it also impedes the ability of an authoritarian regime to establish power. Diamond et al. have attributed part of the instability of the dictatorships in Ghana and Nigeria to the strong democratic values the citizens of these countries embrace.

The fact that most countries with a Protestant majority have democratic systems has prompted many scholars to assert a strong relationship between democracy and Protestantism.²⁸ Max Weber argued that Protestantism facilitates the emergence of democracy.²⁹ The critical link is that Protestantism enhances capitalist

24 Lucien W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., **Political Culture and Political Development**. (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1965) p. 513.

25 See Lipset, **Political Man**; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, **The Civic Culture**. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1963); Dahl, **Polyarchy**.

26 John A. Booth, "Costa Rican Democracy," Democracy Conference, 1985, pp. 34-41.

27 Jyotirindra Das Gupta, "Democratic Becoming and Planned Development: Pursuit of Combined Development in India," Democracy Conference, 1985, p. 25.

28 Joseph A. Schumpeter, **Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy**. (New York: Harper & Row, 1950); Michael Walzer, **The Revolution of Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics**, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965; Gerhard Lenski and Jean Lenski, **Human Societies**. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

29 Max Weber, **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**. (New York: Scribner's, 1958).

economic development which in turn leads to the creation of a burgher class. A significant burgher class is a necessary condition as well as a catalyst for democracy. Furthermore, democratic and Protestant values both emphasize individual responsibility. Another possible explanation for the high correlation has been proposed by Lipset. He noted that Protestant countries have a greater tendency to separate the Church and State. State religion typically foments polarization rather than compromise. Thus when there is separation of the Church and State, a significant source of conflict is removed from the political sphere.

David Apter accounted for the different effects of various religions by dividing them into two groups, consummatory and instrumental.³⁰ Consummatory religions are those that make no distinction between intermediate and ultimate ends, while instrumental religions do. For example, in Islam, there is no division between the religious and political, and the secular and spiritual spheres. Evidence that Islam has not encouraged democracy can be seen in the 1984 Survey of Freedom.³¹ In that year, Freedom House classified twenty-one Moslem countries as "not free" and fifteen as "partially free." Similarly, Confucianism and Buddhism have been conducive to authoritarian rule in Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, all places where the economic conditions were favorable to democracy. As Huntington writes: "As a whole, consummatory culture is thus more resistant to change, and when change comes in one significant element of the culture, the entire culture is thrown into question or is displaced and destroyed."³²

In a recent article, Bollen and Jackman presented empirical evidence for the relationship between democracy and Protestantism.³³ However, they were hesitant to support the relationship because of the possibility that Protestantism serves as a proxy for another variable. For example, they cited Almond and Verba who argued that a secular political culture, most prevalent in nations with a Protestant majority, is necessary for the development of democracy.³⁴ If this is so, then despite its high correlation with democracy, Protestantism per se is not a crucial determinant.

On the whole, the evidence for the cultural determinants of democracy is fragmented and difficult to obtain. Not only are data on political culture difficult to express empirically, but they must be interpreted carefully. Indeed, Huntington cautioned that a correlation between democracy and another cultural variable does not

30 David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

31 Raymond D. Gastil, *Freedom in the World*. (New York: Freedom House, 1984).

32 Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" p. 209.

33 Kenneth A. Bollen and Robert W. Jackman, "Economic and Noneconomic Determinants of Political Democracy in the 1960's," *Research in Political Sociology* vol. 1 (1985): 27-48.

34 Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

verify a causal relationship. Not only is it conceivable that a variable can act as a proxy for another, as Almond and Verba suggested, but a society's values and beliefs may evolve simultaneously with its democratic institutions.

7. External Environment

The influence of the external environment on a country's prospects for democracy is also relevant to the above discussion on cultural values. Huntington observed that democracies in the non-Western world are mostly products of Anglo-American influences by settlement, colonial rule, defeat in war, or direct intervention. Western influence serves to transmit democratic values and ideology and, in some instances, institutions. Some scholars, including Irving Leonard Markovitz and Ruth Berins Collier, have argued that democracies were formed in colonies with the express purpose of furthering metropolitan economic interests.³⁵ Consequently, democratic values were instilled in the elites and the political leaders through the education system. The significance of external influence is evidenced by the fact that, as Huntington observed, the formation of democratic institutions in thirty-three of the fifty-two "free" countries (according to 1984 Freedom House classifications) can be partly attributed to Anglo-American influence.

Huntington asserted that Western colonialism has had the most impact on democracy of all external factors. However, not all colonial powers have had the same effect. Many scholars, including Myron Weiner, have stressed that former British colonies have achieved more success in maintaining a democratic system.³⁶ Even so, in the majority of former British colonies democracy has not flourished. Since countries that were colonized in the eighteenth century had more success with democracy than countries that were colonized in the nineteenth, Huntington suggested that the duration of British rule may be the critical factor.

A pattern Diamond et al. found in their case studies is that both "a lack of experience with modern democratic institutions prior to independence, and the failure of the new constitutions to articulate with and build upon indigenous political tradi-

35 Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Power and Class in Africa*. (Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977); Ruth Berins Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa: Changing Forms of Supremacy*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

36 Myron Weiner, "Empirical Democratic Theory," in Myron Weiner and Ergun Ozbudun, eds., *Comparative Elections in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, manuscript, 26).

tions and structures"³⁷ contributed to the breakdown of democracy in former colonies subsequent to independence. The lesson learned from these conclusions is that democratic values and behaviors will be more deeply ingrained if they are initiated gradually. For example, in Sri Lanka three general elections and a reform of the constitution preceded its independence.

Another possible factor effecting democracy in the world is the relative influence of the most powerful democracies. Such countries have an impact on democracy in the world both by direct intervention and by providing a successful model to emulate. Huntington argued that the extension of democracy after World War II and the decline of democracy, especially in Latin America and East Asia, was a reflection of the relative level of influence and power of the U.S. vis-a-vis the rest of the world.³⁸

C. Conclusion

That factors in addition to economic development are important to the prospects of democracy is apparent in most of the literature. Although the general consensus supports some correlation between economic development and democracy, there are many opponents who point to counter examples. Non-economic variables, to some degree, help explain the anomalies, such as the case of India. Some of the most problematic cases, however, involve the upper middle income countries, including the Asian NICs and the bureaucratic-authoritarian Latin American countries. Some scholars, like Haggard and O'Donnell, have explained these cases by emphasizing that, in some situations, a democratic regime is less effective than an authoritarian one in implementing unpopular but necessary economic reforms. This explanation casts doubt over the assumption that democracy is good for economic development. The one general finding which scholars tend to agree on, however, is that in extremely poor countries the prospects for democracy are dim. There is also little disagreement that promoting democracy is a complex and difficult process.

37 Diamond, Linz, and Lipset; "Building and Sustaining Democratic Government in Developing Countries: Some Tentative Findings," p. 7.

38 Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 246-259.

CHAPTER IV
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS AND BREAKDOWNS

A. Introduction

The issue of building democratic institutions has received substantial attention in the literature. Certain conditions, such as a high level of economic development and a rich, associational life, form a critical basis for democracy. However, even with favorable conditions, the transition to democracy may fail. This section examines what sequences are most likely to result in a stable democracy and what strategies will best facilitate the transition. Once a stable democracy is inaugurated, there is no guarantee that a reversal may not occur. The reasons for democratic breakdowns are also reviewed in this section.

B. Overview of Key Perspectives

1. Lerner

The sequence of political development is relevant in that a solid foundation of democratic institutions and values are critical to support a working democracy. Scholars have approached the question of what sequence and timing are preferable from several angles. Daniel Lerner developed a four-step sequence that stresses modernization.³⁹ The first step of his sequence is urbanization. In urbanizing, a society acquires the skills and resources that an advanced industrial society requires. The next two steps are literacy and media growth. These enable citizens to be informed, promote moderation and tolerance, and facilitate accountability of government actions. The final phase focuses on political participation. For participation to be effective, the first three phases must precede it because they integrate the different classes of a society by reducing inequality (as a result of the first phase) and increasing each classes' exposure to each other and their ideas.

Lerner's sequence relies on the premise that socio-economic development is a requisite to democracy. Other sequences tend to have a more political emphasis. For instance, Eric Nordlinger argued that a non-violent transition to a stable democracy is most likely when a country first defines its national development, then

39 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*. (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958).

develops effective institutions of authority, and then introduces political participation.⁴⁰ Nordlinger's sequence is somewhat similar to Robert A. Dahl's transition to polyarchy, presented in his book, **Polyarchy Participation and Opposition**.⁴¹

2. Dahl

Dahl defined democracy as a political system which is "completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens."⁴² Because he found that no country had achieved full democracy, he applied the term "polyarchy" to those that approximated the ideal. Dahl's polyarchies are characterized by a set of institutional guarantees that include:

- Freedom of organization
- Freedom of expression
- The right to vote
- Eligibility for public office
- The right of political leaders to compete for support
- Sources of alternative (i.e. to the state) information
- Free and fair elections
- Institutions for making government policies dependent on voters' preferences

In his book, Dahl examined three different paths to polyarchy, where he defined liberalization as the degree of political competition or public contestation, and inclusiveness as the degree to which some members of society can oppose the government. They are as follows:

- a) Liberalization precedes inclusiveness;
- b) Inclusiveness precedes liberalization; and
- c) Inclusiveness and liberalization occur simultaneously.

He found that the older, stable democracies have tended to follow the first path. When competition precedes inclusiveness, the rules and practices of competi-

40 Eric A. Nordlinger, "Political Development: Time Sequences and Rates of Change," *World Politics* 20 (1960) 494-530.

41 Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

42 Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pg. 2.

tive politics are developed first among a small group of elites. This implies that the conflicts of the difficult transition are tempered by the fact that the ruling groups share relatively similar ideologies, interests, and sometimes friendships and family relationships. Such ties facilitate the transition to democracy. Once this system of competition is in place, other strata of society are introduced to the already established rules and norms.

If the second path is taken, the development of the rules of the system is complicated by the diversity of the interests of the people involved. Dahl has argued that tolerance and mutual security (this refers to the trust that all the contenders for power have respect for the rule of democratic governance,) are more likely to emerge when developed by a small elite as opposed to a broad and heterogeneous group. Furthermore, without a system of rules governing competition, each party is uncertain that it can tolerate opposing parties. Thus, each party is more inclined to suppress opposition, which can result in a complete retreat into hegemony.

The third path is riskier than the second in that it allows little time to work out the complex system of mutual guarantees necessary to govern competition. Dahl has argued that very few, if any, countries have unambiguously followed this path. The cases of Italy, Germany and Japan after World War II remain ambiguous. In all of these countries competitive politics existed prior to the installation of dictatorial rule. Furthermore, the military defeat, not internal pressures, removed the dictatorship from power. Such cases of abrupt transitions from hegemony to stable polyarchy may occur, but the circumstances in which they work may be historically unique.

Not only is the path to polyarchy relevant to the chances of success, but how the new regime is inaugurated is also important. Dahl defined inauguration as "the application of power, influence, or authority to introduce and to legitimize a regime."⁴³ Thus, the inauguration lies between the path to and the maintenance of polyarchy. Dahl examined five possible "inaugural" paths:

Inauguration in an already independent state by:

- a) Evolutionary processes
- b) Collapse or revolutionary displacement
- c) Military conquest

43 Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pg. 40.

Inauguration in a subject state by:

- d) Evolutionary processes
- e) National independence struggle

Dahl noted that a disproportionately high number of stable polyarchies have been inaugurated in the first and fourth paths, that is, by evolutionary processes both in independent and subject states. Countries that inaugurated polyarchy in the first way include Britain, Costa Rica, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland. Subject states that employed an evolutionary inauguration of polyarchy include Australia, Canada and New Zealand. It is logical that an evolutionary change would be the most favorable path to a stable polyarchy because a peaceful transition imbues not only the new regime, but also the process of change, with a sense of legitimacy.

Inauguration by the second process is infrequent and tends to result in an unstable regime. Dahl's explanation is that it is likely that a regime that comes to power by revolution will be contested. Not only will it lack legitimacy but it must contend with loyalties to the old regime. Furthermore, the fact that the new regime did not come to power by peaceful evolution legitimates the process of revolution. In three of the examples that Dahl cited, the French Revolution, Weimar Germany and the Spanish Republic, the unstable regimes following the revolutions regressed into hegemonies.

According to Dahl's reasoning, inauguration by military contest, the third path, would be unlikely to lead to stable polyarchy. However, all of the examples of countries following this path in recent history, Austria, the German Federal Republic, Italy, and Japan, occurred after World War II. Dahl found, however, that these cases are ambiguous and may be historically unique.

In the fifth process, the emergence of democracy is accompanied by the struggle for national independence. According to Dahl, "the ideology of democracy was reinforced by the ideology of nationalism: to attack representative democracy was to attack the nation."⁴⁴ In successful movements to national independence, the supporters of the old regime either returned to the home country or moved to another country. This process is unlikely to be followed in the future for several reasons. First, it has been argued that a sense of nationhood is weak in many new states. In those cases, nationalism would be used to justify any threats to the precarious existence of the state, rather than tolerance and democratic pluralism. The second factor that makes this process unlikely to occur is the disappearance of colonial empires.

44 Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pg. 43.

The disappearance of colonial empires means that both the fourth and fifth processes are unlikely to occur. If inauguration by military conquest is also unlikely, then only the first two processes remain as probable options. Thus, the two most likely processes are inauguration by either gradual evolution or revolution in an independent state. Of those two, the first has the best prospects of leading to stable polyarchy. Dahl concluded by remarking that although most of the stable polyarchies in the world evolved extremely slowly, the formation of new polyarchies will not necessarily be as slow. Emerging polyarchies now have models to emulate and lessons from the past which may facilitate the transition from hegemony.

3. Diamond

In a recent article Larry Diamond also explored the characteristics of transitions to democracy.⁴⁵ He remarked that democratic systems, because of their open and competitive nature, tend to be fragile. This is evidenced by the number of breakdowns of democracies. Diamond noted that the proportion of democratic states in the world remained fairly static from 1973 to the time of his article in 1989, according to data provided in Raymond Gastil's *Comparative Survey of Freedom*.⁴⁶ In examining what makes a transition to democracy successful, Diamond first looked at factors that facilitate a transition. He then proposed several strategies.

To begin with, Diamond reviewed some economic, social, and historical factors that serve as sources and facilitators of democracy. According to Diamond, the first step in the path from authoritarianism or totalitarianism to democracy is to develop what Robert A. Dahl calls a "system of mutual security."⁴⁷ As Diamond noted, historically, mutual security has started in a small and restricted circle of political elites. Then it has been slowly extended to the general population. In the past, the evolution of a system of mutual security has been most successful when the process occurred over several years. A gradual approach is more likely to lead to a stable system because it allows political actors the opportunity to learn the responsibilities and skills associated with democratic elections and governance within a restricted situation. For example, a gradual transition might involve introducing political competition at the local levels first and then later at the national level. This affords political parties the chance to learn the rules of the game over time.

45 Larry Diamond, "Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Strategies for Democratization," *The Washington Quarterly*. (Winter 1989) 141-163.

46 Raymond D. Gastil, *Freedom in the World*. (New York: Freedom House, 1989).

47 Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pg. 36.

Diamond cited as support a study of transitions to democracy by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, who found that "a sequence of piecemeal reforms"⁴⁸ was the path most likely to lead to a stable regime.

A gradual transition, however, may be an impossible option. The opportunity for democratization may be short-lived, or the country may be unwilling to wait out a long-term shift to democracy. Diamond proposed several steps to lessen the severity of the problems associated with a slow transition. The first is to introduce institutions of accountability and restraints of power, such as the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and autonomous monitoring bodies. Another somewhat related step is to foster liberalization. As Schmitter and O'Donnell noted, a certain degree of individual and group liberties can exist within an authoritarian structure. Diamond advocated focusing on liberalization initially because it is less threatening to those in power than democratization, and it "often involves the termination of the most repugnant and appalling aspects of authoritarian rule."⁴⁹ Also, in some circumstances liberalization allows opposition leaders to amass popular support.

Two additional principles which can make a long transition more palatable are the rotation of leadership and the decentralization of power. According to Diamond, rotating leaders, even in authoritarian regimes, tends to reduce abuse, corruption, and the personalization associated with lengthy authoritarian rules. Decentralization of power can increase the acceptance of a long transition by granting more control of institutions and resources to more people. Additionally, decentralization increases political legitimacy and creates the opportunity for local level government officials to gain experience with democracy.

The preceding principles suggest that, in Diamond's words: "Semidemocracy can serve as a way station on the road to the full democratization of power at every level of government."⁵⁰ The sequence of reforms that emerges begins with the establishment or strengthening of the rule of law and the expansion of civil liberties. Early steps can also include creating effective, elected local government structures. Subsequent steps would then involve extending elective power to the state and regional level.

48 Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies," *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 43.

49 Diamond, "Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism," pg. 146.

50 Diamond, "Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism," pg. 147.

4. Stepan and Linz

After a successful transition to democracy, a regime must cope with the problem of maintaining that system. Many scholars have analyzed the conditions that lead to the breakdown of democratic regimes. One of the major books in this area is **The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes** edited by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan.⁵¹

Linz and Stepan begin their volume by isolating three primary prerequisites for the establishment and maintenance of a stable democracy: legitimacy, efficacy, and effectiveness.

- **Legitimacy:** Stepan and Linz define a legitimate government as one that has the right to command obedience. In other words, a majority of the voting citizens and of those in positions of power must consider it the best form of government, relative to alternatives. Democracies are said to be unique because their stability depends on the consent of the majority of those governed.
- **Efficacy:** Efficacy is the capacity of a regime to find publicly satisfactory solutions to the basic problems facing the political system. A populace accepts a regime insofar as it believes the regime can meet its material and ideal interests better than any alternative. A high degree of efficacy in turn strengthens the legitimacy of a government and, conversely, a low degree weakens the regime.
- **Effectiveness:** Effectiveness is the capacity of the regime to implement the policies it formulates. Ineffectiveness weakens the authority of the state, which in turn weakens the regime's legitimacy. New democratic regimes often struggle with achieving and maintaining legitimacy due to the difficulties they face in public perceptions of efficacy and effectiveness.

The key elements in the breakdown of democracy identified in Linz and Stepan's volume are: the role of party systems, the nature of the political opposition to the democratic regime, and the actions and reactions of the ruling elite.

a) Role of Party Systems

Party systems play an important role in creating a democracy. While party systems are the result of various structural and institutional factors (e.g., electoral laws, the actions of political and social elites, the diffusion of ideologies), the number of parties within a political system also seems to play a significant role in determining the prospects for democracy. There appears to be a positive correlation be-

51 Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, **The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes**. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

tween the lesser number of political parties (but no less than two) and political stability. Within a system of polarized pluralism, i.e., five or more relevant parties, it is the dynamic characteristics such as "polarization, the centrifugal drives, and the tendency toward irresponsibility and outbidding" that account for the potential for breakdown in these systems. Stepan and Linz conclude that while extreme multipartism alone does not determine the breakdown of democracy, it does increase its probability.

b) Political Opposition

Another critical element in the breakdown of democracy is the nature of the political opposition to the regime. Stepan and Linz analyzed the role of disloyal, semiloyal, and loyal oppositions. All democratic systems contain partisan competition, conflicts, and attempts to discredit. What distinguishes loyal and disloyal oppositions is the style, intensity, and fairness in conducting these actions. No democratic regime is without a disloyal opposition. When one or more disloyal oppositions act in such a way as to question the existence of the regime and attempt to change it, the legitimacy of the regime is challenged. When legitimacy is transferred from one set of political institutions to another, changes in regime occur. Whereas the loyal opposition demonstrates high moral support and compliance to the political system, and thus contributes to the legitimacy of the regime, the disloyal opposition, through low support and compliance, seeks to undermine the regime. Stepan and Linz contend, however, that the conditions that lead to the semiloyalty of parties are almost as important in the process of breakdown as the role of disloyal oppositions.

c) Actions and Reactions of the Ruling Elite

New democratic regimes face numerous difficulties in attaining and consolidating power, and in establishing legitimacy, which becomes the primary goal of democratic leadership. This task is made more difficult when the ruling elite attempts to address all unsolved problems of society simultaneously, blaming the previous regime for them, instead of realizing that many are rooted in the social realities of the country. There is also a tendency on the part of the ruling elites to waste energy in politics against persons and institutions identified with the old order. Such actions incur deep-seated bitterness, alienation, and hostility which often serve as roots for the disloyal opposition.

Another key problem arises when governing elites set unrealistic political goals without the means of implementing them, and are unwilling to abandon those goals once it becomes apparent that they are unattainable. This is particularly true of political leaders with strong ideological commitments or with specific social interests. When the regime leadership does nothing or offers ambivalent solutions to complex problems, the disloyal opposition is given the opportunity to attack the legitimacy of the regime and to demand the power to implement simple solutions.

In summary, Stepan and Linz conclude that the breakdown of democratic regimes is the result of the regime's inability to solve effectively problems for which disloyal oppositions offer themselves as a solution. This inability occurs when loyal or semiloyal opposition parties fail to compromise on an issue and one or more of them offers a solution in conjunction with a disloyal opposition. This tends to polarize other semiloyal opposition parties and helps to undermine the regime's legitimacy in the minds of the populace. This crisis of legitimacy precipitates the regime's loss of power and ultimately leads to the transfer of power to a disloyal opposition, or to the polarization of society and civil war.

C. Conclusion

The prospects for a successful transition to democracy are best when the transition is gradual and peaceful, and when the introduction of competition precedes participation. The role of foreign assistance is limited by the underlying social and cultural conditions of any country. Nonetheless, foreign assistance can facilitate democratization by fostering a more favorable climate through support of liberalization and economic development efforts. Economic assistance can help democracies consolidate their power and avoid crises of legitimacy that can lead to the breakdown of the newly established democracy.

CHAPTER V

MEASUREMENT

A. Introduction

This section provides an overview of measures of democracy. A substantial volume of research has been devoted to studying the relationship of various macro-political and economic variables to the level of democracy. Empirical democratic theorists have posed correlational questions, such as, what is the relationship of economic development, income inequality or population growth to the level of democracy? Others have compared the performance of democracy to the performance of other political systems. The goal of another important area of research has been to specify the main determinants of democracy.

A prerequisite for all empirical work in this area is to establish a reliable measure of democracy. Measuring democracy, however, is highly problematic. The first step in the research process, according to Ted Robert Gurr, is problemation.⁵² This step involves formulating the question to be investigated.

The difficulties of measuring democracy arise in the second and third stages of the research process, variable specification and operationalization. Variable specification entails clarifying exactly what is meant by the term democracy; a difficult task considering that there is no consensus on precisely what democracy is. Indeed, Kenneth Bollen has remarked that a surprising number of researchers fail to enumerate a definition of democracy before attempting to measure it. Gurr posited two approaches to the definitional problem. The first is to derive an operational definition from a conceptual one. The second is to define the concept in operational terms. Both of these approaches will be represented in the overview of measures of democracy below.

Operationalization of the definition is another key difficulty. This step entails formulating a definition which can be tested, observed or measured. The abstract and conceptual language used in democratic theory does not lend itself easily to being operationalized. In addition, democracy is often referred to as a theoretical goal, thus it has no real-life counterpart, or empirical referent. Measuring democracy, therefore, entails choosing an empirical referent as an indirect indicator of democracy. At best, an indirect indicator can serve as a close approximation of democracy. Disagreement over the most effective way of addressing the disparity between the concept of democracy and what is actually being measured is the primary source of dispute among theorists.

52 Ted Robert Gurr, *Polltimetrics*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972).

B. Conceptual and Operational Problems

1. Viewing Democracy as a Dichotomous Variable

Due in part to problems with the availability of good data, the earliest measures of democracy were rather crude. Seymour Martin Lipset was one of the first theorists to attempt to measure democracy.⁵³ He defined democratic countries as those that had demonstrated "an uninterrupted continuation of political democracy since World War I, **and** the absence over the past twenty-five years of a major political movement opposed to the democratic 'rules of the game'." With this definition, he devised a binary classification scheme.

Although measures of democracy have evolved considerably during the past thirty years, some theorists continue to implement dichotomous classifications. According to Edward N. Muller, the inauguration of democracy occurs when a country has held at least two consecutive free and fair elections for the executive, a majority of the population has the right to vote, and the freedoms of speech and assembly are respected.⁵⁴ Only countries satisfying these criteria are classified as democracies.

Dividing countries into either democracies or non-democracies is highly problematic. The first problem is that the theoretical concept of democracy is not binary and, therefore, the index should not be. Second, the dividing line is an arbitrary one. For example, Muller accepted the inception of universal male suffrage as the date when a majority of the population was able to vote. As Kenneth A. Bollen and Robert W. Jackman pointed out, however, if the date of the installation of universal suffrage is used, then the results change dramatically.⁵⁵

2. Confounding Democracy with Other Concepts

Another problem with Lipset's definition is that it incorporates political stability in the definition of democracy. Both Bollen and Jackman have criticized this approach because political stability is distinctly different, although still important, from the concept of democracy. In a later article, Phillips Cutright constructed a scale of political development which was subsequently used by other theorists as a

53 Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959).

54 Edward N. Muller, "Democracy, Economic Development, and Income Inequality," *American Sociological Review* 53 (1988) 50-68.

55 Kenneth A. Bollen and Robert W. Jackman, "Democracy, Stability, and Dichotomies," *American Sociological Review* 54 (August 1989) 612-621.

measure of democracy.⁵⁶ Cutright's scale of political development is an improvement over Lipset's in that it treats democracy as a continuum. However, he too incorporated political stability into his measurement. In Cutright's index, governments are given a rating based on the degree of complexity and specialization of their political organization. For each year between 1940 and 1960 Cutright assigned all countries a score based on the performance of the legislative and executive branches of government. Legislative bodies earning the highest rating are those with parliaments containing representatives of two or more political parties with the minority holding at least thirty percent of the seats. The highest rating for the executive branch of government is given to those countries in which the chief executive was elected in an open election or by a legislature meeting the criteria listed above. In Cutright's index, countries are penalized for political instability because it represents "backsliding." Similarly, countries are rewarded for maintaining or increasing their level of political complexity from year to year.

Both Bollen and Deane E. Neubauer have noted flaws in Cutright's index.⁵⁷ On a conceptual level, Bollen criticizes the use of stability and Neubauer criticizes the use of political complexity as a good indicator of the level of democracy. Thus, the results of Cutright's assessments of the relationships between democracy and other socio-economic variables are not well-grounded. The causal links that he asserted may indeed be due to political stability and not democracy; it is impossible to discern between the effects of the two. Bollen's second criticism of Cutright's index is that accumulating scores over many years has the effect of averaging out important changes. Therefore it is possible for a country ruled by both very democratic and very un-democratic regimes to achieve the same score as a country ruled by a moderately democratic regime over the entire period.

The level of voter participation is another commonly used indicator of the level of democracy. For example, Daniel Lerner used voter participation to measure the level of democracy.⁵⁸ Jackman used participation as well as competitiveness of the party-voting system, freeness and fairness of elections, and freedom of

56 Phillips Cutright, "National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963) 253-264.

57 Deane E. Neubauer, "Some Conditions of Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 61 (1967) 1002-1009; and Kenneth A. Bollen, "Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 45 (June 1980) 370-390.

58 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*. (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1958).

the press.⁵⁹ The rationale for choosing this indicator is that high voter participation will result in an accurately representative government. The percentage of the population that votes also reveals the extent of national suffrage and thus the degree to which the citizens play an active role in the political process.

Although intuitively appealing, the level of voter participation is not a good indicator of the level of political democracy. As Samuel P. Huntington pointed out, popular participation is not necessarily equivalent to popular control.⁶⁰ In fact, in some countries voting is mandatory. Rather than signifying popular sovereignty, mandatory voting may imply a high concentration of power of the political elite. Indeed, Lipset has argued that low levels of voter participation may indicate satisfaction with the status quo.

Bollen demonstrated empirically the implausibility of using voter participation as an accurate indicator.⁶¹ He found that voter turnout and other measures of political democracy are not significantly correlated.⁶²

3. Constructing a Working Definition

Many definitions of democracy focus on political inclusiveness. For instance, Robert A. Dahl defined democracy as a political system having the characteristics of being completely or almost completely responsive to its citizens.⁶³ According to Juan J. Linz, a democracy exists where citizens have the right to form political par-

59 Robert W. Jackman, "On the Relation of Economic Development to Democratic Performance," *American Journal of Political Science* 17 (1973) 611-621.

60 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

61 Bollen, "Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy," p. 375.

62 See Ralph L. Lowenstein, "World Press Freedom, 1966," *Freedom of Information Center Report No. 201*, (School of Journalism, University of Missouri at Columbia, [1967]); Charles L. Taylor and Michael C. Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators II*. (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, [1971]); Charles L. Taylor and Michael C. Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, 2nd edition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972; J.S. Coleman, "Conclusion: the political systems of the developing area," in *The Politics of Developing Areas*, eds. G.A. Almond and J.S. Coleman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

63 Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

ties, and there are relatively frequent and fully accountable elections.⁶⁴ Similarly, Lipset emphasized elections, and thus, the characteristic that citizens are endowed with the right to choose their governing officials and influence political decision-making. It follows logically that freeness and fairness of elections would be an appropriate indicator of democracy.

As mentioned in that last section, Muller measured a country's democratic experience by the number of years it had held free and fair elections. An examination of his democracy index illustrates the difficulty of constructing an intelligible operational definition. As Bollen noted, one of the problems with Muller's index is that he did not make explicit what he meant by free and fair elections. Is the criterion satisfied if votes are not equally weighted, the ballot is not secret, or there are discriminatory voter registration requirements? Employing such a loose definition involves a significant amount of randomness and personal bias. As a consequence, the results are neither replicable nor empirically sound.

C. Review of Principal Democracy Measures

1. Bollen's POLDEM Scale

Bollen proposed a scale for measuring democracy that overcomes some common limitations of other measures.⁶⁵ First, his scale reflects the continuous nature of democracy, thus it is not dichotomous. Furthermore, his operational definition of democracy is more congruous with the theoretical definition.

As previously, discussed, Bollen has objected to the use of voter participation and stability as indirect indicators of democracy. He began by defining democracy as "the extent to which the political power of the elite is minimized and that of the non-elite is maximized." He found that because free and fair elections and the existence of political liberties are the institutions most conducive to popular sovereignty, they serve well as indirect indicators of democracy. Elections insure that the nonelite have a mechanism to express their interests and needs, and an opportunity to participate in the political decision-making process. Political rights consist of liberties to prevent the elite from increasing their power, such as freedom of organization, press, and speech.

Bollen's revised, operational definition of democracy focuses on the degree of political liberties and popular sovereignty. These dimensions are measured by six fairly empirically demonstrable variables. The three indicators of political liberties

64 Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

65 Kenneth A. Bollen, "Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 45 (June 1980) 370-390.

are freedoms of the press and group opposition, and the extent of government sanctions aimed at curtailing political activities. The first variable, freedom of the press, was scored by ascertaining the degree of control any official agency typically exercised over the activities of the press. The second variable was scored on a four point scale ranging from the highest score for excluding no parties to the lowest score for excluding all but the dominant party. The third variable scored countries according to the number of political sanctions imposed, such as curfews, the banning of opposition groups and censorship.

The three indicators of popular sovereignty considered by Bollen are the fairness of elections, and the methods of executive and legislative selection. Elections are scored on a four point scale. Countries with no elections receive the lowest score and countries with freer and more competitive elections score higher on the scale. The executive selection variable is either classified as elective or non-elective. The score for legislative selection combines the method of selection as well as the relative power of the legislature.

Bollen assigned values to each variable so the highest score attainable was 100. However, he cautioned that the scale is somewhat arbitrary and imprecise. This means that a score of 100 does not necessarily correspond to pure democracy. Similarly, the non-elite in a country scoring zero may possess some political power. Since the scale consists of an indirect measure of democracy, the scores are approximations. Thus, small differences in scores should not be over-interpreted. Larger differences in scores signify a greater probability that the levels of democracy differ between two countries.

Bollen's POLDEM scale is an improvement over other measures for several reasons. First, his operational definition is clearly stated at the outset and is conceptually similar to the theoretical definition of democracy. Empirically his scale is more sound because he relies on several variables and multiple sources. Finally, he provides an estimate of the measurement error.

2. Coppedge/Reinicke Polyarchy Scale

Another method of resolving the measurement problem is to redefine what is to be measured. Robert Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom recognized early on that trying to measure democracy was intrinsically problematic since they regarded democracy as a theoretical ideal rather than an actual system of institutions and freedoms.⁶⁶ Their solution was to formulate a different, more quantifiable concept. Thus, they coined the term polyarchy, defined as the set of social processes that enable non-leaders to exercise control over leaders.

66 Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1953).

The principal characteristics that define a polyarchy are:

- Nearly universal suffrage;
- The right to run for office;
- The right of political leaders to compete for support;
- Free and fair elections;
- Alternate sources of information;
- Freedom to organize and oppose;
- Freedom of expression; and
- Responsiveness of the government to elections.

Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke constructed a scale to measure polyarchy as defined by Dahl and Lindblom.⁶⁷ Coppedge and Reinicke condensed the eight characteristics listed above into five variables, each with a range of three or four values, as follows.

- **Free and fair elections:** This category ranges from "Elections without significant or routine fraud or coercion" to "No meaningful election." In addition to the freedom and fairness of elections, the evaluation is based on the extent to which political institutions are dependent on citizen preferences and whether political leaders have the right to compete for support.
- **Freedom of organization:** In the freest category there are no restrictions on purely political organizations although some groups may be banned or harassed. At the lower end of the scale, no independent organizations are allowed.
- **Freedom of expression:** Categories range from countries where citizens express their opinions without fear of punishment to countries where dissent is forbidden and suppressed.
- **Access to and availability of alternative sources of information:** If a country's law protects alternative sources of information and if its government-owned media are controlled by independent or multi-party bodies, then it is assigned to the first category. At the other extreme, the fourth category, there is no public alternative to official information.

Originally, Coppedge and Reinicke included a fifth variable to measure the extent of suffrage. Universal adult suffrage corresponded to the highest degree of polyarchy and no suffrage to the lowest. They found, however, that in 1985, eighty-

67 Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang Reinicke, "Measuring Polyarchy." (1989).

five percent of all countries had universal suffrage. Thus, they decided that this was not a meaningful variable for the polyarchy scale.

The Polyarchy Scale highlights the important questions to ask to ascertain the level of polyarchy in a country. They are as follows:

- Are elections held that offer voters a meaningful choice of parties or candidate?
- Are the election outcomes affected by significant fraud or coercion?
- Are all, some, or no political organizations banned?
- If all political organizations are banned, are some or no non-political organizations allowed to function?
- What is the extent of freedom of expression?
- Are the media pluralistic or government-dominated?
- If the media are pluralistic, do official views receive preferential or balanced treatment?
- If the media are government-dominated, is control complete or incomplete?

Like Bollen, Coppedge and Reinicke have improved upon earlier scales. Conceptually the scale is well-grounded because the difficulties of measuring the theoretical concept of democracy was resolved by substituting the concept of polyarchy. In contrast to democracy, the conceptual and operational definitions of polyarchy are identical.

3. Gastil's Comparative Survey of Freedom

The purpose of Raymond D. Gastil's "Comparative Survey of Freedom" is to give a general picture of the state of political and civil freedoms in the world.⁶⁸ Created in 1972, the survey is frequently used as an annual monitor of democracy throughout the world.

The freedom ratings are comprised of two dimensions. Political rights are indicated by the existence of institutions that insure that citizens have the right to participate meaningfully in the political process. Civil liberties include the freedoms of expression, organization and demonstration; and the personal rights of freedom of religion, education and travel. Both dimensions are presented on a seven point scale. A score of seven denotes the least free and one the most free. One important aspect of the scale is that it is relative. Consequently, Gastil does not define in absolute terms precisely what it means to be rated any particular score.

68 Raymond D. Gastil, *Freedom in the World*. (New York: Freedom House, 1989).

Gastil's checklist of political rights reveals how much electoral choice citizens possess. Therefore, it shows the degree to which they are allowed to participate in the political process. The first two items of the checklist evaluate how meaningful the executive and legislative election processes are. In the most democratic systems, there is open choice among multiple candidates. At the other extreme, an election is not meaningful if there is no popular process or if there are no alternatives. The third item measures how fair the elections are, in the election laws, the opportunity to campaign, and the polling and tabulation methods. Free and fair elections are useless, however, unless the elected hold significant power. Gastil has found that, in most countries, the existence of multiple parties is necessary to provide alternatives to the ruling party. Thus, the fifth item asks if there is open competition among parties.

Several items on the political rights checklist pertain to the opposition of the dominant party. Although not a prerequisite, Gastil found that the absence of a recent shift in power could be detrimental to democracy by reinforcing the power of the ruling government. Additionally, the size of the opposition vote suggests the extent of democratic rights in a country. For example, an extremely small percentage of votes for the opposition indicates that opposing the system is highly restricted. The third item concerned with the opposition evaluates how accommodating the government is to the interests of others in the political decision-making process. The remaining items on the political rights checklist determine whether the country is free of military or foreign control, and how decentralized political power is.

The survey's checklist for civil liberties attempts to show an overall picture of patterns of activities, not a list of human rights violations. For example, Gastil would consider one incident of government interference in the media in a small country a more serious offense than many such incidents in a much bigger country where there are more channels of information.

One group of items in the checklist determines the degree of freedom of expression and organization in a country. The first item is concerned with whether media facilities are independent or government-owned, and whether there are alternate sources of information. The less democratic a country, the greater the tendency is to impose censorship and to punish those who criticize the government. In a democracy, one should be free of the fear of reprisal in public or private discussions; thus the second item evaluates the freedom of public discussion. The third and fourth items ask whether individuals are permitted to join political or quasi-political organizations, and to organize demonstrations or assemblies. Since it is important in a democratic system to maintain countervailing power centers, freedom of organization must also include the right to organize trade unions, businesses and cooperatives. Similarly, freedom of religion allows an organization to protect the expression of opposition and promotes freedom in a broader sense. The fifth item on the checklist determines whether those who voice opposition to the government are protected from unjustified political terror or imprisonment or not.

The remaining items on the checklist pertain to personal liberties, and institutional and social requisites for democracy. Personal liberties include the freedom to own property, to travel, and to lead an independent family life. Two items determine the degree to which people are free to live and think independently by ascertaining how dependent citizens are on landlords, employers and others who possess some sort of power or authority over them. It follows that a society must be free of gross socio-economic inequalities to be democratic. In such a situation, a small elite could easily restrict the freedoms of the poor, dependent masses. The purpose of the next item is to ascertain the fairness of the legal system necessary to preserve civil liberties. The final item asks whether the government is extremely corrupt or indifferent to the people. It is an underlying assumption of a democratic system that the people have control over the political system and that power can be retracted from indifferent leaders.

A country's final rating in the survey equals the sum of its scores for political rights and civil liberties. The most free countries score 2 and the least free countries score 14. By convention, countries achieving a score of 5 or less are considered democratic.

In past surveys, countries were classified into three categories: free, partly free and not free. Gastil stopped employing these categories because he felt that the dividing lines between them were arbitrary and readers were weighing them too heavily. He has emphasized that the survey is not so precise that small differences are important.

Although Gastil uses the Survey of Comparative Freedom as an indicator of democracy, its focus is different from other measures. Gastil places a bigger emphasis on human rights and freedom in general than other researchers. He has cautioned that one must examine what liberties citizens possess, otherwise formal institutional processes like elections are meaningless. The idea that basic political and civil freedoms must accompany the formal institutions of democracy is supported by the fact that Gastil's list of free states is similar to Dahl's list of polyarchies and near polyarchies.

D. Conclusion

The fundamental difficulty in measuring a theoretical concept is finding the indicator which best represents it. The scales reviewed here are more successful than others because they use operational definitions of democracy that are conceptually congruous with widely accepted definitions. From these works, some important lessons can be learned.

A common characteristic of the strongest scales is that they are conceptually similar to some well accepted definition of democracy. There is a general consensus that there are degrees of democracy. A reliable scale should reflect that; thus, it should be continuous rather than dichotomous. Since democracy is not empirically

grounded, it cannot be measured precisely. As Gastil has pointed out, it is meaningless to say that one percent more or less of the world's population live in tyranny this year compared to last. Moreover, as Bollen has cautioned, the indicator a theorist chooses must be conceptually similar to a generally agreed upon definition of democracy. This implies that such concepts as voter turnout and level of stability are weak indicators. Since different theorists emphasize different characteristics and institutions as requirements for the existence of democracy, it follows that multiple indicators can more effectively represent the concept of democracy.

While there are varying definitions of democracy represented in the literature, they overlap significantly. Several institutions and social characteristics have emerged repeatedly in the indicators reviewed here. A recurrent theme in the literature on measurement is that democracies are marked by political institutions that insure popular sovereignty, and significant political and civil freedoms. Popular sovereignty is evidenced by genuinely free and fair elections. For instance, elections are free and fair when they are open to competition, they are unbiased by fraud and coercion, and those elected obtain significant political power. A democratic society also requires a high level of individual freedoms, both personal and political. Several scholars, including Dahl and Gastil, have asserted that freedom of expression and the existence of alternative sources of information are essential for participation in a democratic system. Additionally, political and non political groups must have the right to organize and be free of government sanctions and coercion to express their needs and preferences.

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