

Comparative studies of democratization have produced two types of generalizations: those having nearly universal application and those applying to a range of countries within a region. In the first category are such arguments as the role of high levels of economic development in guaranteeing democratic sustainability, the centrality of political elites in establishing and terminating democracy, and deficits in rule of law and state capacity as the primary challenge to the quality and survival of new democracies. In the second category are contrasts between recent democratization in post-Socialist Europe versus Latin America and southern Europe—for example, in the relationship between democratization and economic reform and in the costs and benefits for democratic consolidation of breaking quickly versus slowly with the authoritarian past. The two sets of conclusions have important methodological implications for how comparativists understand generalizability and the emphasis placed on historical versus proximate causation.

## COMPARATIVE DEMOCRATIZATION Big and Bounded Generalizations

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**O**ver the past two decades, the study of democracy and democratization has come to occupy center stage in the field of comparative politics. The focus of these investigations has been diverse, ranging from such questions as the origins and design of democracy to its overall quality and sustainability. The geographical and temporal sites of study have also varied significantly. This is a field that has as much to say, for example, about the newest members of the democratic club as about the founders of that club and all those countries that lie in between these two extremes, such as the new democracies that emerged from the rubble of the First and Second World Wars.

Why has democracy received so much attention—not just in comparative politics but also in international relations (e.g., see Barzilai, 1999; Doyle, 1983; Evangelista, 1999; Mansfield & Snyder, 1995; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Russett, 1993; Thomas, 1997)? As is so often the case, the answer lies in the

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *My thanks to Stephen Hanson, Hyeok Kwon, Kathleen O'Neill, Sidney Tarrow, and Hector Schamis for their comments on earlier versions of this article.*

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, Vol. 33 No. 6/7, August/September 2000 703-734  
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intersection between intellectual currents and real-world developments. With respect to the former, one can point to the appearance from the end of the 1950s through the early 1970s of some new and provocative arguments about democracy—for example, by Lipset (1959, 1960, 1963), Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Moore (1966), Dahl (1971), and Rustow (1970). These writings appeared, however, at a time when democratic forms of government were the exception, not the rule—as the political landscapes of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the eastern half of Europe during this era remind us.

However, beginning in the mid-1970s with the death of Franco in Spain and the collapse of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal, one authoritarian regime after another began to give way to democratic orders. By the 1990s, this wave of democratization had engulfed even those countries that had virtually no history of democratic rule—as was largely the case in Africa and the countries that had once made up the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Many of the new democracies that have arisen since the mid-1970s are, of course, flawed, fragile, and in some instances, fleeting. However, this does not detract from one noncontroversial conclusion. Because of the sheer reach of this most recent wave of democratization, mass publics today have a higher probability than they have ever had of living in a democratic system.

There were powerful theoretical and empirical reasons, therefore, to place democratization at the top of the comparative politics research agenda. The purpose of this article is to take stock of what we have learned.<sup>1</sup> I do so in three ways. One is to identify areas of theoretical convergence. Here, the interest is in those arguments that seem to span cases, regions, and even time. Democratization, in short, seems to exhibit certain commonalities. Another is to highlight those arguments that make sense of democratization across a wide range of cases but with those cases limited in number. Although they are robust, these generalizations are constrained in both their geographical and temporal reach. Therefore, they fall in between the extremes of universal versus idiosyncratic political dynamics.

The final concern is methodological. In the course of laying out these generalizations, big and bounded, we necessarily confront some issues of interest

1. No survey of comparative democratization, of course, can do justice to such a large field of study. Thus, in my comments I will privilege certain bodies of work, while slighting others. In practice, this means concentrating far more on elites, governmental institutions, and economics than on, for example, mass publics, political parties, and political culture (for these issues, see Dalton, 2000 [this issue] and Kitschelt, 2000 [this issue]). The geographical and temporal reach of this review will also be limited. I will deal primarily with the new democracies of Latin America, southern Europe, and the post-Socialist region and with the interwar democratic experiments in Europe. Less attention will be devoted to, for example, the new democracies of Asia and Africa (and older ones, such as India) and to the rise of the first democracies in northwest Europe.

to all comparativists, irrespective of substantive interests—for example, the use and abuse of concepts, the causal power of historical versus proximate influences, the logic and consequences of case selection, and the transportability of arguments over time and across space. Although all of these methodological concerns are addressed, it is the final one—or generalizability—that receives the most attention. This is because the two categories of generalizations about democratization developed in this article speak directly to this question—a question that is foundational, we must remember, to comparative inquiry in general and to some recent debates in the field about the role of comparative theory versus areal expertise.

### GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT DEMOCRATIZATION

What do we know about democratization? The sheer size and diversity of this literature would seem to hint at one of two likely answers: We have established either a large number of generalizations or, conversely, very few. Dahl (1998) favors the latter interpretation. As he has argued,

Democracy has been discussed off and on for about twenty-five hundred years, enough time to provide a tidy set of ideas about democracy on which everyone, or nearly everyone, could agree. For better or for worse, this is not the case. (pp. 2-3)

A similar but more nuanced observation has been made by Geddes (1999) in her helpful review of the literature on recent democratization in Latin America (also see Remmer, 1991). Although she identifies a few secure conclusions, she notes the improbability of lengthening the list. This is primarily because there appear to be, from her reading, many paths to democratic government.

It is certainly true that this literature is replete with disagreements. For example, just as analysts diverge in their accounts of the origins, the quality, and the sustainability of new democracies (e.g., see Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Diamond, Hartlyn, & Linz, 1999; Edles, 1998; Fishman, 1990; Gasiorowski & Power, 1998; Geddes, 1999; Haggard & Kaufman, 1995; Higley & Gunther, 1992; Kitschelt, 1992; Linz & Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986; Remmer, 1996), so they divide on precisely the same questions when analyzing the oldest democratic orders and the variable survival rate of interwar European democracies (e.g., see Berman, 1997, 1998; Bermeo, 1994, 1998; Collier & Mahoney, 1996; Downing, 1992; Ermakoff, 1997; Ertman, 1998; Linz & Stepan, 1978; Luebbert, 1991; Moore, 1966;

Putnam, 1993; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, & Stephens, 1992; Szucs, 1983; Tilton, 1974). Amid this welter of competing interpretations, however, are some islands of consensus. It is to these arguments that I now turn. As we will discover, analysts of democratization do agree with each other—albeit more on relationships between variables than on interpretations of their causal meaning.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

One area of agreement involves an old question that has been newly reformulated: the relationship between economic development and democracy. The level of economic development seems to have considerable impact not so much on whether democracy exists (as was originally proposed, see Cutwright, 1963; Lipset, 1959) as on its sustainability over time (see Gasiorowski & Power, 1998; Londregan & Poole, 1996; Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 1996; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997). What this means is that although democracy can be introduced in poor as well as rich countries, its prospects for enduring increase substantially at high levels of economic development—although other factors also come into play, such as economic performance, relative socioeconomic equality, and parliamentary as opposed to presidential systems. The data used by Przeworski and his collaborators, however, end in 1990 and do not, as a result, take many of the new democracies into account—for example, the post-Socialist region with its extraordinarily diverse economic and political profiles (Bunce, 1999c). Although there is in practice a correlation between income per capita and democratization in the 30 or so post-Socialist countries, the best predictor of democratization in that context (after eliminating a range of economic, political, and cultural variables) seems to be economic reform (Fish, 1998a, 1998b; cf. Kopstein & Reilly, 1999). Thus, those countries that score higher on economic reform (as indicated by the private sector share of the economic product along with trade and price liberalization) also score higher on measures of democratization (in this instance, Freedom House measures of political liberties and civil rights).

This finding, however, does not detract in any way from the claims about economic development and democratic sustainability. Just as the richest post-Socialist countries dominate the group of consolidated democracies, the poorest post-Socialist countries are overrepresented in those cases of either compromised democracy or authoritarian rule. Moreover, at least some of the poorest countries in the region that jumped to democracy in the first years of post-Socialism—in particular, Albania and Kyrgyzstan—have been sliding away from democracy in more recent years. However, there are some inter-

esting exceptions to these generalizations. Croatia and Slovakia, both in the upper economic tier of the region, feature democratic deficits (although this is changing, given recent electoral shifts), whereas Mongolia, located at the other end of the economic spectrum, scores relatively high on democratic attributes.

As yet, there is little agreement on why high income per capita (with only Slovenia in the post-Socialist context actually meeting this standard) virtually guarantees that democracy will remain in place. A range of arguments has been offered or implied. For example, it has been suggested that sustained growth weakens the power base of authoritarian forces while expanding the density of civil society and, therefore, its capacity to check monopolistic government (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992); that a sizeable middle class anchors the democratic project (Lipset, 1959, 1963; but see the doubts expressed by Jones, 1998, on Pacific Asia and Rueschemeyer et al., 1992, on Western Europe and Latin America); and that economic development produces an educated, attentive, and expectant public that demands inclusion and accountability (on the Russian case, see Lewin, 1988). Still others have observed that mature capitalist economies both facilitate and, for their successful functioning, require a democratic compromise between the working class and capitalists (see Przeworski & Wallerstein, 1982). A final line of argument is that the size of the economy on a per capita basis might be less a causal force in its own right than a surrogate measure for historical trajectories that have had several separate consequences, including robust capitalism and robust conditions for democratic politics. Here one can note the felicitous combination in some European cases of considerable predemocratic endowments with a secure geopolitical location (Downing, 1992)—two factors that enabled the early rise of both democracy and capitalism and that enhanced, as a result, their durability and performance over time.

#### **ELITES AND THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY**

There is also widespread agreement that political elites play a central role in democratization. In particular, whether there is a transition from dictatorship to democracy seems to depend heavily on the interests, values, and actions of political leaders, whether ensconced, downwardly mobile, or at least potentially, upwardly mobile (see DiPalma, 1990; Higley & Gunther, 1992; O'Donnell et al., 1986; for political-cultural perspectives on this question, see Kullberg & Zimmerman, 1999; Rivera, 1999). What is remarkable about this generalization is that it seems to apply to all three waves of democratization. Indeed, one can even develop a succinct summary of how elites shape democratization. Following some insights of Moore (1966), when

elites divide, the probability of democratic outcomes increases substantially. To borrow from Huntington (1991), divided elites move authoritarian regimes into a zone of expanded political choice.

Before we congratulate ourselves on having produced a transportable generalization, however, several caveats are in order. One is that the argument about the centrality of elites rests in part on when the democratic chapter is understood to begin and how influence is defined. For example, in the recent transitions to democracy in Spain and Poland, the behavior of political incumbents and leaders of the opposition forces was critical, nearly by definition, in these transitions through pacting. However, the willingness and capacity of these two sets of elites, one in power and the other seeking power, to negotiate with each other were strongly influenced by the behavior of mass publics—both before the transition formally began, when mass mobilization had been in evidence for some time and had duly registered widespread dissatisfaction with the regime, and during the transition itself, when demobilization, at least in the short term, assuaged the fears of authoritarians and thereby facilitated a smooth exit from authoritarian rule (see Bermeo, 1997; Bunce, 1999b; Ekiert, 1996; Ekiert & Kubik, 1998; Fishman, 1990; Tarrow, 1995b, 1996b). Through contestation and cooperation, then, Polish and Spanish publics played pivotal roles in the transition to democratic rule.

The other caveat is conceptual in nature. Underneath the seeming convergence around the importance of elites in democratization lies a divergent understanding of how democracies come into being and how elites shape that process. For some scholars, democracy is understood to be a by-product of elite actions, which are understood in turn to be a by-product of larger social forces. From this perspective, elites are seen as summarizers of long-term developments and as well-positioned representatives of larger social forces. For other analysts, elite action in the here and now—and deliberate action in highly contingent circumstances at that—is what is understood to matter in the rise of democracy. Thus, although the noun *elites* is the same in these two sagas, the meaning of that noun—and its linkage to historical forces versus immediate influences—is quite different.

This divide is a familiar one in political science, and it reflects varying sensitivities to competing theoretical trade-offs (see Kitschelt, 1992). Thus, some researchers prefer tidy explanations, worry about significant temporal gaps between causes and effects because such gaps complicate the attribution of causality, and thereby focus their investigations on more immediate influences. Other researchers worry more about the complex origins of these tidy causes, question whether some consequences might be masquerading as causes when temporal parameters are tight, and as a result, begin their studies further back in time.

Differences in intellectual tastes are, of course, virtually impossible to adjudicate. However, there is one interesting pattern (although imperfect) in how these analytical preferences are distributed within comparative studies of democratization. Those who analyze the origins of brand-new democracies, whether in northwest Europe centuries ago or more recently in the eastern half of Europe or Africa, tend to fall disproportionately into the long-term camp (see Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997; Bunce, 1998, 1999a; Downing, 1992; Ekiert, 1996, 1998; Fatton, 1999; Grzymala-Busse, 2000; Moore, 1966). By contrast, the study of redemocratization—which is primarily the preserve of those concentrating on recent democratization in Latin America and southern Europe—tends to be dominated by short-termers (DiPalma, 1990; O'Donnell et al., 1986). On reflection, this makes some sense. In the first instance, the democratic project seems to grow out of fundamental changes that are often hard to identify without historical mapping; in the second, the devil lies more in the details. Thus, long-term considerations and larger social forces may be in fact more important for analyzing the rise and course of new democracies than for making sense of redemocratization. Divergent intellectual tastes, in short, may rest on differences in empirical referents.

#### ELITES AND THE COURSE OF DEMOCRATIZATION

If political leaders, for various reasons, are understood to be the founders of democracy, then they also often function, after that initial breakthrough, as its sustainers or its underminers. Thus, for example, they design political institutions (which affect the quality and, perhaps, the very survival of democracy); they decide to be more or less constrained by the rules of the democratic game (which affects quality and sustainability; e.g., see O'Donnell, 1994, 1996); and in periods of political and/or economic difficulties, they can use their power to either protect democracy or destroy it.

However, there is nonetheless a recognition that, once founded, the course of democracy depends on a complex array of factors, only one of which involves elites, their attitudes, and their behavior. For example, for those who focus on the issue of democratic breakdown, the list of facilitating factors is extraordinarily long (e.g., see Bermeo, 1998; Ertman, 1998; Fish, 1998c; Hanson & Kopstein, 1997; Linz & Stepan, 1978, 1996; Putnam, 1993). Included on this list are such long-term considerations as the socioeconomic, institutional, and cultural legacies of authoritarianism and the extent to which the introduction of democracy disturbs, destroys, or more gradually undermines these legacies (e.g., see Baker, Dalton, & Hildebrandt, 1981; Berman, 1997; Bermeo, 1998; Dahrendorf, 1967; Ertman, 1998; Hanson & Kopstein,

1997; Loveman, 1994; Putnam, 1993; Seligson, 1999). In addition, there are a number of medium-term factors, such as economic performance; the forms and density of civil society and social capital; the degree to which public opinion is polarized or, conversely, insufficiently differentiated (see Ahl, 1999); and a host of institutional considerations, including parliamentary versus presidential government, the design of electoral systems, and the programmatic development of political parties coupled with their ideological dispersion (Berman, 1998; cf. Bunce & Csanadi, 1993; Hanson & Kopstein, 1997; Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, & Toka, 1999).

Finally, there are varieties of proximate factors that have been used to explain democratic breakdown. On one side are some international influences—for instance, powerful pressures exerted by the international economy that unravel domestic coalitions upholding democracy or support by major international actors for leaders of new democracies who, claiming that they are merely saving democracy, do so by violating some democratic rules of the game (Fish, 1998c; Hanson & Kopstein, 1997). On the other side is one domestic factor in particular that returns us to our original observation. In times of crisis, do political leaders—sometimes even against their own political interests, sometimes without much public support, and sometimes even through a constitutional process—decide to break with democratic practices (see Bermeo, 1998; Ermakoff, 1997)?

In view of all these arguments, it might be suggested that the story of democratic breakdown is hardly an elite-centric one. However, there is another way to interpret this discussion. Although difficulties in democratic consolidation are affected by a wide range of factors, the actual termination of democracy is very much a matter of what elites choose to do and not do. Put simply, then, the importance of elites is clear once we distinguish between two issues that are all too often merged: the quality of democracy, which calls forth an array of considerations, and its survival, which narrows the discussion to the actions of political and military leaders.

#### **INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN**

As the discussion above suggests, there is another area in which conclusions, based on a diverse set of cases, have tended to converge. This is in the area of institutional design and the powerful effects of institutional choices on political dynamics (see Carey, 2000 [this issue]; on federalism in particular, see O'Neill, 1999; Stepan, 1999). In the study of democratization, the dominant conclusion has been that parliamentary systems are superior to presi-



dential systems in the consolidation if not the very survival of democratic governance (see Bernhard, 1999; Easter, 1997; Frye, 1997; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997; Przeworski et al., 1996; Stepan & Skach, 1993; cf. Shugart & Carey, 1992). What is striking is that this conclusion—but sometimes with important amendments (see Bernhard, 1999)—seems to apply to virtually all the new democracies. Simply put, the probability of continuing and deepening democratic governance increases when the form of government is parliamentary. Moreover, this argument is helpful but not definitive in accounting for patterns of democratic survival and breakdown in interwar Europe (Berman, 1997; Bernhard, 1999; Linz & Stepan, 1978, 1996).

The only area of serious disagreement is how this variable is to be understood—as Carey (2000) elaborates in his contribution to this issue. For some analysts, the key point is the actual design of these institutions and the impact of that, in turn, on levels of political conflict between politicians and institutions on the width of the ideological spectrum and the support enjoyed by the extremes and on the incentives and capacity of chief executives to ignore, circumvent, or suspend the democratic rules of the game. However, there are other approaches to this question that conceive of institutional design in very different ways and that return us to the earlier discussions about interpretations of causality. One is as a developmental sequence, wherein the real causal variable is the authoritarian past and its impact on the relative power of authoritarians versus democrats at the time of institutional selection. This distribution of power then determines constitutional arrangements, which in turn shape democratic trajectories (Bunce, 1997; Easter, 1997). Another approach is to see the key problem as the interaction between leadership type and institutional design. Thus, new democracies, at least in the post-Socialist world, seem to be most threatened when they are led by a figure who is widely viewed as the liberator and leader of the nation and, therefore, as the builder of the state (Fish, 1998c). When that leader has the additional resource of presidentialism (having often been instrumental, for self-interested reasons, in the very process of selecting that type of system), then the likelihood of dedemocratization increases considerably.

#### THE NATION AND THE STATE

In 1970, Rustow argued that two necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for successful democratization are settled borders and a popular consensus supporting an inclusive definition of the nation. The post-Socialist and Afri-

can cases have provided powerful tests of this proposition, and the resulting verdict is clear. Rustow was right. At the very least, contestation over the nation and over the borders of the state complicate the course of democratization. At the most, they either block a transition to democracy or lead to its breakdown.

This does not mean, however, that national homogeneity guarantees democracy or that heterogeneity necessarily undermines it. For example, the most homogeneous countries in the post-Socialist region are Poland, Slovenia, Albania, and Armenia. The first two are consolidated democracies, and the second two have dedemocratized. To this list we can add Mauritius and Botswana, two nationally diverse but relatively stable democracies in Africa (see Miles, 1999). Perhaps the most important case, however, is India—a durable democracy of exceptional diversity and one that features the additional burdens (as the literature on secessionist movements reminds us) of having both a territorial concentration of national communities and an ethnofederal political structure (see Bunce, 1999c; Manor, 1998; Varshney, 1997, 1998).

It would also be misguided to conclude that new states are necessarily more prone to democratic breakdown (e.g., see Motyl, 1997). The post-Socialist experience again provides some insights. What seems to help new states support democracy are two conditions, one helpful and the other necessary. The helpful condition is prior statehood—as with the Baltic cases, but we must also remember Serbia. The necessary condition is that publics succeed in reaching a rough agreement on the composition of the nation and the boundaries of the state and that this rough consensus links the state project with a liberal regime project (e.g., as with Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Russia, but not with Belarus). Where the state lacks a lineal descendent, where the nation is a continuing source of contestation, and especially where statehood is disconnected from a liberal mission, therefore, is where democracy is least likely to materialize, and if materializing, to endure.

A final caveat involves nationalism. It has become commonplace to treat nationalism as a threat to democracy. This is a curious proposition given the historical centrality of nationalism to the rise of democracy in Western Europe. However, there are some more contemporary reasons to question the assumption that nationalism is an antidemocratic project. The post-Socialist experience is again instructive. If nationalism has undercut democratization in Croatia and rump Yugoslavia (or, as of this writing, Montenegro, Serbia, and its attached regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina), it has also contributed in powerful ways to the democratic development of Poland, the Baltic states,

and Slovenia (see Bunce, 1999c; Karklins, 1993; Kennedy, 1999)—and for many of the same reasons that it did in France so long ago. It was nationalism that provided the political resources necessary for a powerful and sustained challenge to authoritarian rule, it was nationalism that constructed citizenship, and it was nationalism that set the standard that government was to be responsive and responsible to its citizenry.

The key point here is that nationalism is wanton. It can couple with liberal and illiberal political missions and thereby shape quite variable regime trajectories. Nationalism demobilizes and mobilizes. The key question for regime paths is the distribution of liberal and illiberal political groupings between these two categories and the resources that mobilized versus demobilized groups command (see Gagnon, 1994).

#### FORMAL INSTITUTIONS, INFORMAL PRACTICES

The importance of the state to the democratic project leads to a final argument that seems to have general applicability. New democracies often exhibit a considerable gap between formal institutions, which meet democratic standards, and informal practices, which do not. This has produced a converging argument that the major impediment to full-scale democratization in Latin America, Africa, and the post-Socialist world is the absence, or unevenness, of rule of law (see Holmes, 1996; Krygier, 1997; O'Donnell, 1998, 1999; Sajo, 1998; on the contributions of Russia's weak state to democratization, see Shevtsova, 1999). In all three geographical contexts, for example, concerns have been raised about the elected official's control over the bureaucracy and the commitment of bureaucrats to democratic procedures; the degree to which political leaders, once elected, adhere to democratic practices and remain transparent and accountable in their behavior; the capacity of the regime and the state to translate electoral preferences into public policies that are then implemented; the power of nonelected but influential lobbies to influence policy makers, policy making, and policy implementation; the capacity of the regime to be fully coterminous with the state; and, more general, corruption (e.g., see Bratton, 1998; Diamond et al., 1999; Fatton, 1999; Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; O'Donnell, 1993, 1998, 1999; Treisman, 1998).

These discussions have produced two conclusions that seem to apply to the experiences of most new democracies. One is to reconfigure the definition of democracy such that the minimalist definition—or in Przeworski's phrasing, uncertain results—is understood to be a necessary but far from suf-

ficient condition for democratic governance. Whether the reconfiguration means speaking in terms of differences in the degree, quality, type, or very existence of democracy remains a matter of continuing debate. The second is that the study of new democracies must pay sufficient heed to the strength and capacity of regime and state institutions. In practice, this means, above all, concentrating on legal systems and legal cultures. Without rule of law, democracy cannot be fully realized.

A strong state, in short, is a guarantor of democracy—much as it is a guarantor of capitalism (see Hendley, 1997; Holmes, 1996; Kaufman, 1999; Schamis, 1994; Sharlet, 1998). This is one clear lesson that can be drawn from the experiences of the world's oldest and therefore most durable democracies—which were, because of their historical development, unusually and perhaps uniquely endowed with a capable state (albeit one that varied in its interventions), the culture and the practice of rule of law, and rational and politically accountable public administration. However, the importance of these assets has been all too often lost in studies of recent democratization and, for that matter, in discussions of more recent transitions to capitalism. This is because so much of the discourse on democratization (and on economic reform) emphasizes arguments that appear to support less, not more, state and thus the notion of state subtraction—for example, the goal in discussions of civil society of encouraging associational life independent of the state (although a key component of that process in both the older and new democracies has been and must be legal guarantees of freedom of association), the preoccupation with regime questions and with the need to reign in the state, and the facile conflation in some discussions of the very separate issues of the size, penetration, effectiveness, and despotism of the state (cf. Mann, 1986, 1993).

This suggests that we need to think of democracy as a two-part proposition, having uncertain results (or competition) but also having certain procedures. Indeed, it is precisely this combination of competition bounded by rules that makes democracy both responsive and effective—an observation that seems to apply to capitalism as well. This definition has the added advantage of sensitizing us to key components of regime variation. For example, state socialism was based on precisely the opposite principles—having certain results but also having uncertain procedures. However, another example is directly relevant to our concerns here. As is commonly observed, one of the problems facing many new democracies today is that they tend to be hybrid regimes, combining authoritarian elements with democratic elements. This is usually analyzed through long discussions of each of these political threads and their complex historical origins. However, the problem can be stated more succinctly. Many of these regimes combine the uncertain results of

democracy with the uncertain procedures of authoritarianism. They have deregulated politics but have not regularized the rules of the game.

#### **GENERALIZATIONS: BROAD AND BOUNDED**

The comparative study of democratization, therefore, has produced five generalizations that seem to be at the least applicable to new democracies and at the most applicable to virtually all democracies, whatever the timing of their appearance or, for that matter, their departure. These generalizations are that high levels of economic development function as a virtual guarantee of democratic continuity, political leaders are central to the founding and design of democracy and to its survival or collapse under conditions of crisis, parliamentary systems are a far better investment in the continuation of democratic governance than presidential systems, settlement of the national and state questions are crucial investments in the quality and survival of democracy, and old and well-established and new and fragile democracies have, as their common ground, uncertain results but, as their defining contrast, certain versus uncertain procedures.

In the course of developing these generalizations, however, we have addressed some other issues of more general relevance to the analysis of democracy and democratization. One is the need to think more rigorously about the quality and sustainability of democracy and whether these two aspects of the democratizing experience necessarily go hand in hand. Another is whether there are several paths to democracy—one evolutionary in nature and the other designed, with the first suggesting historically sensitive modes of analysis and the other emphasizing more proximate influences. A third is the importance of distinguishing between the state and the regime and giving both realms of political activity their due when assessing the quality and durability of democratic governance.

Let us now turn to the second concern of this article. One line of argument that has emerged in comparative studies of recent democratization in Latin America, southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa is that some important patterns of democratization—simply put, some processes and their associated payoffs insofar as sustainable democracy is concerned—seem to register regional effects. In particular, the exit from authoritarian rule, approaches to democratization, factors that serve as the greatest threat to democracy, and the relationship between democratization and economic reform all seem to follow regionally specific patterns. Put differently, there are a series of generalizations about recent democratization that are robust but spatially defined. It is to these bounded generalizations that I now turn.

## TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY AS REGIONAL PROCESSES

The bulk of the comparative studies of new democracies has concentrated on developments within a single region—for example, within Latin America, southern Europe, the post-Socialist region, Africa, or Asia. This is not surprising. Intellectual capital, the temporally clustered character of these regional transitions, and the undeniable appeal of carrying out controlled, multiple case comparisons are all compelling and convenient reasons to compare Latin American countries with each other, post-Socialist countries with each other, and the like.

What has emerged in these studies and what has been reinforced by most of the studies that cross these regional divides (e.g., Kwon, 1999; Levitsky & Way, 1998; Linz & Stepan, 1996) is that democratization, although it very roughly follows the same outline in southern Europe, Latin America, and post-Socialist Europe, differs significantly in crucial details. Thus, all new democracies confront the same three issues: breaking with authoritarian rule, building democratic institutions, and devising ways to elicit the cooperation of the former authoritarian elite. How they do that and whether these strategies support or undermine democracy, however, seem to exhibit strong regional effects.

More specifically, we can draw the following conclusions. First, pacting between authoritarian elites and leaders of the opposition forces is the mode of transition that seems to maximize the prospects for quick and sustained democratization in Latin America and southern Europe—although Costa Rica and Portugal are clearly exceptional (see Gunther, 1992; Karl, 1990; cf. Edles, 1998). Pacting is understood to be preferable to, for example, mass protest as a mode of regime change because it increases the certainty in a situation that is inherently uncertain, elicits the cooperation of authoritarians and thereby gives them a stake in the emerging political order, and enhances the prospects for political stability, thereby calming the fears of authoritarians that democratization (as in the past) would be destabilizing. This can all be put simply. By using pacts as a way to bridge the old and new orders, authoritarian leaders and leaders of the opposition forces have both the incentives and the capacity to cooperate with each other.

In the post-Socialist context (and in Africa), however, pacting appears to be no more desirable than those transitions that involve substantial mass protest and/or a sudden collapse of the authoritarian regime (Bunce, 1995, 1998, 1999a; also see Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997). For example, Poland and Hungary, both pacted transitions, are neither more complete nor more secure as democracies today than, for example, the Czech Republic or Lithuania.

The post-Socialist experience—particularly Poland and Slovenia and then Czechoslovakia and Lithuania—also reinforces an observation made by some Latin Americanists that many of the transitional modes in their region are in fact hard to classify because they contain elements of pacting and elements of mass mobilization (e.g., see Elster, 1996; Hartlyn, 1998).

We can put aside the specific distinctions between pacting, mass mobilization, and regime collapse as mechanisms for regime change and pose instead a more fundamental contrast—between regime transitions that bridge authoritarian and democratic rule and those that involve a sharp break with the authoritarian past. When phrased this way, we find that the first approach has tended to be the most successful in producing full-scale and sustainable democracies in the south (although the Portuguese case gives pause), and the second approach the most successful strategy in the east. The best example for the south is Spain, where pacting, the composition of the interim government, and the outcome of the first competitive election all functioned as bridges between the authoritarian past and the democratic future. Put simply, the Spanish approach was to construct a series of halfway houses between democracy and dictatorship.

By contrast, the most successful democracies in the post-Socialist world—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and the Baltic states—share one commonality: a thoroughgoing political rejection of the Socialist past and Socialist elites in the founding years of democratic governance. More specifically, all these cases are distinguished by the quick construction of democratic institutions, a sweeping victory of the opposition forces in the first competitive elections, and following that, a rapid transition to capitalism.<sup>2</sup> In all three respects, the message was the same: the advantages of breaking, not bridging. Where bridging was in evidence, however, such as when the electoral strength of the communists versus the opposition forces was roughly equal or tilted to the advantage of the communists, the costs for both democracy and economic reform were high. In these cases, the dominant pattern in the region, the consequence was at best many detours on the road to democracy and at worst either dedemocratization or the continuation of authoritarian rule. A related cost was having either a compromised transition

2. The Hungarian case would appear at first glance to be an exception, given the victory of opposition forces in the March 1990 election and the comparatively slow pace of economic reform from 1990 to 1994. However, Hungary merely reinforces the point that this is an argument of degrees not dichotomies. In particular, Hungary lacked a popular front; the opposition was divided into several parties; and the coalition government that came to power enjoyed a thin seat majority, not overwhelming public support. Thus, although the opposition won and the excommunist party suffered a significant defeat, the size of the political mandate was limited and that in turn shaped the processes of economic reform.

to capitalism or continuity with the Socialist economic past. In either case, the economic performance compares unfavorably to those countries where the opposition forces won the first election handily.

I have discussed elsewhere why bridging was the more successful strategy in the south and breaking was the more successful strategy in the east (Bunce, 1998). Suffice it to note that what seemed to influence variations by region in the costs and benefits of these two strategies were two interrelated factors: the desire and the capacity of opposition forces to move quickly. In the most successful southern cases, desire was moderate and capacity was low, given such considerations as the absence, in many instances, of widespread public mobilization against authoritarian rule, historical memories associated with democratic breakdown, the continuing power of the military, and the highly uncertain nature of these transitions (largely because they began before democracy had shown itself to be on a global roll). By contrast, the most successful eastern cases combined high desire and high capacity. This reflected such considerations as the regionwide character of the collapse of state socialism and the many precedents of successful transition elsewhere, the absence in many cases of democratic breakdowns in the past (and, by implication, democracy itself), the long institutionalized distancing of the military from politics, and the clear message, given mass protests and the outcome of the first election, that citizens were quite supportive of democracy (in part because it was state socialism's other). Equally important was the widespread belief that the failure to break with state socialism and take advantage of the political honeymoon would necessarily compromise both the democratic and the capitalist project. Put straightforwardly, then, the contexts of the two sets of transitions were different; these differences produced different calculations about both the capacity to change and the necessity of doing so; the resulting actions produced in turn different patterns of costs and benefits. Thus, the south had one path to success and the east quite another, and this reflected differences in authoritarian legacies and transitional timing.

#### **DEMOCRATIZATION AND ECONOMIC REFORM**

The importance of context also shows up in two other issues. One is the relationship between democratization and economic reform. Analysts of recent democratization in the south tend to see economic reform as a process that can undermine the democratic project, and vice versa (an observation that is also common among those who analyze Africa; see Bienen & Herbst, 1996; Widener, 1994). Thus, just as new democracies might be destabilized



by the stresses of economic reform, economic reform would also seem to be more difficult in a context, as with new democracy, in which power is deconcentrated, institutions new, and politicians fearful of public anger and limited in their temporal horizons. As a result, some argue that economic reform should be put off until democracy is consolidated—an argument that is particularly well represented among those who analyze Spain (see Haggard & Kaufman, 1995; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Maravall, 1993; Przeworski, 1991, 1995; for a more complex view, see Weyland, 1998).

Not surprisingly, at the beginning of the transitions in the east, similar fears and similar prescriptions were voiced. Indeed, the case, if anything, would seem to have been stronger in the post-Socialist context, given how new democratic institutions were and the weakness of civil and political society, public expectations about socioeconomic equality and becoming Europeans in name and prosperity overnight, and the necessarily high costs and unknown payoffs of the historically unprecedented transition from socialism to capitalism. Over the past decade, however, experience has suggested otherwise. Democratization and economic reform seem to be highly correlated in the post-Socialist context (Bunce, 1994, 1999a; Fish, 1998a, 1998b; for suggestive similarities to several east Asian and several central American cases, respectively, see Choi, 1992, and Yashar, 1997). Indeed, all of the consolidated democracies in this region feature capitalist economies. The more uncertain democracies have made less progress in this regard, and economic reform is virtually absent from those regimes that have remained authoritarian.

Why has this happened? There are many reasons. The most important ones, in my view, are the following: (a) the linkage between capitalism and democracy in the minds of the public and the opposition forces in those countries where a consensus emerged to leave state socialism; (b) the degree to which the transition to capitalism provided a mechanism by which authoritarian elites could trade in their political capital for its economic equivalent; (c) the ways in which the transition to capitalism disorganized interests, especially those who were the losers, while giving the immediate winners a quick and expanding stake in the new system; and (d) the tremendous advantages of a national consensus—indeed nationalism—in giving leaders in these liberal and liberating circumstances a political honeymoon. The last point can be put succinctly: Nationalism can lengthen time horizons. Under some circumstances, this can mean the prolonged tolerance of the economic costs of transition (see Abdelal, 1999).

### THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

As noted earlier, Latin America and post-Socialist Europe share one important threat to democracy: the weakness of rule of law. However, beyond that similarity is a variety of differences with respect to the question of democratic sustainability. One reason why it is very hard to draw firm conclusions about what compromises, if not terminates, the democratic experiment is that there are simply different constraints and different strengths in different places (on multiple causal paths, see Ragin, 1998). For example, the post-Socialist region is advantaged by the state Socialist legacies of a highly educated population, a tradition of civilian control over the military, and relative socioeconomic equality (which has tended to endure in central and Eastern Europe over the past decade, but not in the former Soviet Union). However, this region is disadvantaged by other legacies of the state Socialist past, such as the weakness of civil and political society, the inefficiencies of Socialist economies (which had produced in most cases a decade of decay before the transition), the extremes of either highly polarized publics or publics lacking ideological definition and differentiation, the spatial weakness of the state, and the continuing ideological contestation over the nation (for helpful elaborations of some of these points, see Ahl, 1999; Nodia, 1999). Here, it is important to remember that 22 of the 27 states that made up the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the Cold War era are new.

By contrast, the new democracies in Latin America have been advantaged by state age, long experiences with democracy (although there are exceptions) and its helpful institutional residues, the well-ensconced culture and practice of capitalism (but with the burdens of import substitution; cf. Schamis, 1999), and in many cases, relatively high levels of economic development. However, the quality and the future of democracy in that region are both challenged by the continuing and even in some cases the constitutionally sanctioned role of the military in politics (a residue of the experiences of national liberation and state building), large socioeconomic inequalities, maverick chief executives, rightist parties having limited institutional development, and especially relevant in times of neoliberal reforms, the history of populism (see Diamond et al., 1999; Gibson, 1996; Knight, 1998; Loveman, 1994; Roberts, 1995). These arguments about regional effects, which reflect in large measure variations in the nature of the authoritarian past, can be carried to other places and other times. Here I can only be suggestive. In Asia, a common observation is that democracy is undercut by popular discomfort with conflict and by an illiberal middle class (Jones, 1998). In Africa, common laments are state weakness (with its partner corruption) and the poor fit between political forms and socioeconomic and institutional realities

(Bratton, 1998; Joseph, 1997). Finally, a great deal of work has addressed the question of what made northwestern Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia so different from the rest of the world. Answers, not surprisingly, vary, including the benefits of private property, rule of law, rational administration, geopolitical security, divided elites, an independent bourgeoisie, and the like. Nonetheless, a consensus remains that the primary reason, common to this region and absent in other places, was the presence of a virtuous circle composed of capitalism, civil society, democracy, and a strong state (see Krygier, 1997).

### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF REGION

There are good reasons to be skeptical about the regional properties of recent democratization. First, most comparativists have spent their academic lives working on one area. Given the invested amount of intellectual capital, shifting to another area is very costly. Moreover, regional studies tend to develop their own concepts and their own research agendas. Both considerations carry one implication: Regional differences can arise, not because of empirical validity but because few studies cross regional divides and the divides themselves may very well manufacture interregional contrasts. This is an areal version of an old problem, that is, case selection determining the conclusions drawn (see Geddes, 1990; cf. Dion, 1998).

This interpretation is not so persuasive when applied to the analysis of new democracies. Many studies (including this one) have in fact crossed regional divides but nonetheless discovered regional contrasts (Kwon, 1999; Levitsky & Way, 1998; Linz & Stepan, 1996; cf. Greskovits & Schamis, 1999). Moreover, the hegemony of transitology has produced a common pool of theories, concepts, and queries. Regional differences, therefore, are less likely to be artifacts. Finally, the comparison above was based on posing precisely the same questions about exits from authoritarianism, outcomes of the first elections, the relationship between democratization and economic reform, and threats to democratic survival. Region, therefore, appears to be a meaningful distinction.

However, what does *region* mean? As King (1996) has argued, region or any spatial construct, such as urban versus rural, merely serves as a convenient summary term for other factors at work. Put simply, region, in the strictest sense, cannot be a cause. Region is problematic on another ground. It leads us away from the goal, central to the study of comparative politics, of developing causal arguments that substitute variables for places (Przeworski & Teune, 1970).

What, then, do we mean when we speak of regional effects in democratization? At the most general level, region is a summary term for spatially distinctive but generalizable historical experiences that shape economic structures and development and the character and continuity of political, social, and cultural institutions. These historical legacies affect in turn when (and if) democracy and capitalism arise, the forms that each of these regimes take, the coalitions anchoring and challenging them, the resources available to these coalitions, and at least some of the factors shaping regime durability and performance. Like so many explanatory variables in the social sciences (such as class and gender), region is an encapsulation of a host of specifics that can be combined under the rubric of a single term. Region happens to be spatial in form rather than, for example, sectoral or temporal, but it can function nonetheless as a causal influence. That posited, one must also recognize another property common to region and, more generally, to most explanatory variables: discrete effects. In the case of democratization, region is useful for answering some questions but not for answering others as the contrasts between the big and bounded generalizations of democratization testify.

The boundaries of region, unfortunately, are relatively elastic, depending primarily, as again with so many other explanatory variables, on the question under investigation. Thus, just as Putnam (1993; cf. Tarrow, 1996a) addresses regional differences in social capital within Italy, so specialists in contemporary east-central Europe draw a regional distinction between states in the northern tier, where democracy and capitalism were enabled by the Socialist past, and states in the south, where historical evolution has proven to be more burdensome for democratization and the transition to capitalism (Pusic, 1997). Further complicating the idea of region is the Russian case, where, arguably, politics and economics are best analyzed within the 89 regions that make up that quasi-state (e.g., see Shenfield, 1998; Stoner-Weiss, 1997). All of these variable conceptions of region, moreover, exist alongside counterregional claims. Thus the Indian and even the Russian federal states set certain parameters on internal variation between subunits; Germany, another federal state, is a member of the European Union, a regional construct with important effects; Russia was once a part of the Soviet Union, and this creates certain spatial commonalities (including 25 million Russians outside the Russian Federation) that span the post-Soviet space; and most of the countries of east-central Europe, including the northern and southern tiers, share a similar regional history as both state Socialist dictatorships and members of the Soviet bloc.

Region, therefore, lacks the specificity we value as social scientists. Among other things, it tends to be too variable in what it means—over time and across research endeavors. It is also easily misunderstood and all too

often underspecified. However, none of these problems detract from two important points. First, in comparative studies of recent democratization, the meaning of region has been in fact relatively stable—particularly in terms of geographical contours and also with respect to substantive contrasts in the design and penetration of authoritarian rule. Second, the impact of regional considerations on the rise and course of democracy appears to be quite variable. Although region is irrelevant to some aspects of democratization, it appears to be critical for others. Put differently, democratization evidences a number of commonalities—some verging on the universal and some regional in form.

### METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

It would be tedious to list again the generalizations that have emerged in comparative studies of democratization. Instead, by way of conclusion, let me highlight some methodological messages that have surfaced in this discussion. They fall into three categories familiar to all comparativists: concepts, case selection, and causality.

Like all areas of study within comparative politics, the study of democratization suffers from the problem of fuzzy concepts. As Collier and Levitsky (1997) have argued, concepts can be understood as containers. Their utility to analysts is inversely proportional to their propensity to leak from the bottom or to spill over from the top. As this article has suggested, in comparative studies of democratization, the dominant conceptual problem is the latter. Put simply, many of the core concepts incorporate too much. They are insufficiently discriminating. Thus, democratic consolidation sits atop an unruly sprawl of empirical indicators (Becker, 1999; Schedler, 1998), and democratic breakdown is too often conflated with other issues such as the quality of democracy and the rise of fascism. A final example is the term *democratization* itself. Because of its normative appeals, its presumed global reach, and its rich theoretical traditions, democratization has become a label too quickly applied to every case in which authoritarian rule seems to be challenged, liberalized, or more generally, changing. In fact, the dominant tendency among new democracies seems to be neither democracy nor dictatorship but rather hybrid regimes (Becker, 1999; Bratton, 1998; Karl, 1995; McFaul, 1999; O'Donnell, 1996). In the Manichaeic world of democracy versus dictatorship, these regimes manage to be neither here nor there.

The overflow problem has several consequences. One is to reduce explanatory power given, for example, false positives, as in the case of democratization, and given the proliferation of explanatory variables if not divergent families of explanation, as in the cases of democratic consolidation and the

unfortunate fusion of the issues of the quality of democracy, its breakdown, and successor regime forms. Thus, indiscriminate concepts confuse consequences while multiplying causes—analytical consequences diametrically opposed to the goals of comparative inquiry.

A related cost is the misreading of data. For example, as Roeder (1994, 1998) has observed, if the frequency of regime type is a consideration, then comparisons of political dynamics in the post-Soviet space should focus on dictatorship and not democracy. Democracy, however, is the preferred comparative standard. Another example is whether it makes sense to keep qualifying democracy with adjectives (Collier & Levitsky, 1997) or to accumulate more and more examples of dedemocratization or democratic breakdown when the real point might be more simple—the absence of democracy as revealed by a less generous definition of that regime type.

A final example involves democratic breakdown. Studies of the termination of democracy often presume, given the literature they cite and the explanations they consider, that there is a high correlation between the quality of democracy and its sustainability. However, what the Russian and Ukrainian cases suggest (and perhaps some cases in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; for a discussion on Mexico, see Rubio, 1997) is another possibility—one that demands a severing of these two issues. It may be that the sustainability of some new democracies depends on their failure to be fully realized. Complete democracy might break up those peculiar but durable coalitions that simultaneously tolerate and limit democracy. This is an argument that draws on some recent work by Hellman (1998) dealing with the same problem but with reference to the Russian transition to capitalism. Just as rent seekers prevent consolidation, so they at the same time block exit. What they want—and get—is a hybrid regime (also see Greskovits, 1998a; Schamis, 1999).

Another set of methodological issues that arose in this review and that is central to debates in comparative politics in general is case selection. Comparative studies of democratization provide ample support for the argument that the cases analyzed shape the conclusions drawn (see Dion, 1998; Geddes, 1999). As this review has indicated, the addition of the post-Socialist world to this field of study has been beneficial in a number of ways. Just as studies of this region have made analysts even more certain about some commonalities of democratization (especially recent democratization), so these studies have also alerted analysts to the regional forms that these commonalities sometimes take. Moreover, precisely because the post-Socialist world adds some new considerations, such as the impact of nation and state building and the transition to capitalism and democracy as a brand new regime form, while providing a large number of cases; some historical controls; and unusual variability in socioeconomic profiles, institutional design, and political

outcomes, this region provides a needed addition to a field of study long dominated, if not defined, by the Latin American and southern European experiences.

This is not simply a matter of either adding new factors or enhancing capacity to assess generalizability. It is also a matter of transferring one regional study's discourse to another regional study's discussions. As examples of this transplantation process, we can cite the growing interest among Latin American specialists in that most Eastern European of topics, national minorities (see Yashar, 1999), or the growing interest among analysts of the post-Socialist experience in topics that are more typically the preserve of Latin American specialists—for instance, the historical and, more recently, constitutionally defined role of the military in politics and the impact of the working class on democratization in difficult economic times (see Bunce, 1999c; Christensen, 1999; Crowley, 1997). Implied in all of these observations, of course, is a call for the incorporation of even more regions of study. We have everything to gain by looking to African and Asian cases as well (e.g., see Jones, 1998; Joseph, 1997; Lijphart, 1996; Miles, 1999). To these implications about case selection can be added several more, all growing out of our earlier discussions about regional effects. First and most obviously, we need to worry a good deal more about what region means, particularly about its defining characteristics, boundaries, and causal dynamics. This is an easier proposition with respect to the post-Socialist world. State socialism was a distinctive domestic and international political-economic system. At the same time, it was recently in place, relatively long lived, unusually invasive, clearly demarcated in spatial terms, and relatively consistent over time and across country in its institutional design (Bunce, 1999a, 1999c; Greskovits, 1998a, 1998b; Hanson, 1995). All of these characteristics legitimate and simplify the task of defining regional effects in the post-Socialist world.

By contrast, although southern Europe and Latin America share certain characteristics because of their imperial relationship, this relationship ended long ago and was variable in form and functioning, even when it was in place. Therefore, region is harder to define for these countries than for the post-Socialist world, and as a result, region may not be as meaningful for Latin America and southern Europe. It may not be accidental, then, that the correlation between democratization and economic reform is much higher in the post-Socialist world than in Latin America and southern Europe (where it is also positive but only slightly so; see Kwon, 1999). Thus, state socialism might have left a more patterned legacy—or what could be termed more regionally defined residues—than, for example, bureaucratic authoritarianism (see O'Donnell, 1979).

We can also push the regional argument further in two other ways. One is by engaging in more cross-regional studies, whether through large or small sample size comparisons (see Greskovits & Schamis, 1999; Levitsky & Way, 1998; Muller & Seligson, 1994; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997). Another is to shift our focus from a similar systems design, which has tended to dominate this field of study, to a different systems design, which is more likely to produce generalizations that can span both space and time (Tarrow, 1999; see Scharpf, 2000 [this issue]). For example, the emergence of improbable similarities can help move us from superficial and mistitled causes to causes that are more fundamental and, as a result, more easily transportable to other settings.

This leads to a related point. The gulf separating the work on the older versus the newest democracies needs to be bridged. A conversation between these two families of research might produce some unexpected parallels, which might, among other things, further complicate the contrast between distal versus proximate styles of explanation. For example, arguments about the positive affinities between democratization and economic reform in the post-Socialist world (Bunce, 1999a; Fish, 1998a, 1998b; Kwon, 1999) are similar to arguments presented by Yashar (1997) in her historical account of why Costa Rica was so much more successful than Guatemala in consolidating democratic rule. Let me provide a second example. It has been argued that many elites in new democracies are less committed to democracy than interested in using this regime for other purposes—for example, to neutralize conflict, co-opt opposition forces, stabilize the system, and thereby maximize their political power (Fatton, 1999). Although this interpretation goes against the transitological emphasis on opposition elites as committed democrats, it conforms closely to many accounts of the rise of the first democracies in northwest Europe. In countries such as Britain and France, it was the short-term power needs of elites and, more generally, their far from democratic motivations that produced certain political by-products that led over time to democratic politics.

The final methodological issue, causality, is one that has been the subject of recent and spirited debates in comparative politics. At issue here is the generalizability of causal relationships. Is each case unique, or are political patterns relating causes to effects generalizable across space and time (e.g., see Bates, 1996, 1997; Bernhard, in press; Bunce, 1995; Hall & Tarrow, 1998; Schmitter & Karl, 1994)? The answer that emerged in this discussion is one that avoids these extremes and, with that, their unwelcome propensity at times to oversimplify and polarize positions. First, although receiving scant attention in this review, there are no doubt some distinctive aspects to each country's experiences with democratization—and, where relevant,



dedemocratization as well. Second, there are at the same time some nearly universal characteristics of democratization, particularly if we restrict our attention to patterns within waves. Finally, there are important processes of democratization that fall in between these two extremes. In some of its aspects, democratization follows consistent patterns within regions that nonetheless differ across them. What emerges in this study of comparative democratization, therefore, is a middle—not a middling—position on the universality of political dynamics. There are generalizations, but their width varies according to the question at hand.

This in turn carries a lesson that most comparativists have already learned— notwithstanding the debates over the value and validity of area studies versus comparative theory. Knowing cases and using theories to make sense of them (and using cases to generate theory) are strategies that, given well-crafted research designs, produce valuable work. At the same time, this review introduces a new—and practical—consideration. Sensitivity to theory and to empirics allows us to hedge our explanatory bets.

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