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# REGIME TYPES AND DEMOCRATIC SEQUENCING

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Are Bulgaria, Chile, Malaysia, Moldova, Nicaragua, Senegal, and Taiwan all democracies? If so, are they different *kinds* of democracies? More generally, how many countries can be considered democratic today, and how do such democracies differ from one another? Finally, what do these differences tell us about the question of “sequencing”—or in other words, the order in which such key attributes of democracy as free elections, civil and political liberties, and the rule of law are adopted and institutionalized?

For students of democracy, these are fundamental questions that have become particularly prominent due to the surge of democratizations after the end of the Cold War. As recently as the early 1980s, democracy was restricted mainly to developed Western countries that had established civil liberties and the rule of law even before the introduction of competitive elections based on inclusive suffrage. In the 1990s and 2000s, democracy began spreading to regions very different both from the West and from each other, resulting in a growing democratic diversity. Among the new democracies, many are democratic only in the electoral sense; some also exhibit high levels of respect for the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association; and a few are further characterized by an effective implementation of the rule of law.

These differences have rekindled debates about both how to define democracy and how to bring about its deepening so that it becomes more than just a matter of elections. The scholarly literature on democratization is filled with fierce disagreements about what distinguishes democracies from autocracies, and how to distinguish different kinds of democracies from one another. To go with their clashes over clas-

sification, scholars offer varying advice about how best to “sequence” democratic attributes: Start with the rule of law, say some, while others insist that competitive elections should be the first step toward building democracy. In order to address both debates, we have arranged a series of influential definitions of democracy into a typology that captures the most important aspects of contemporary democratic diversity. We then show that the present-day empirical variation in democratic regimes matches our conceptual hierarchy: In short, countries tend to score at least as well on electoral rights as on civil liberties, and at least as well on civil liberties as on the rule of law. Based on this observation, we argue that electoral competition is the most frequent and plausible first step in contemporary democratizations.

Among scholars of comparative democratization, there is widespread consensus about the merits of restricted and realistic, but not necessarily minimalist, definitions of democracy.<sup>1</sup> Such definitions offer two main advantages: First, the realistic and restricted criteria are generally more amenable to measurement across countries and over time. Second, such definitions do not include factors such as economic equality, and thereby avoid conflating democracy with some of its potential causes and consequences.<sup>2</sup>

This consensus does not mean that scholars who embrace such realistic definitions agree about the particular defining attributes of democracy. Some, such as Joseph A. Schumpeter, argue simply that democracy means competition for political power via free elections.<sup>3</sup> This definition is often expanded with the addition of such criteria as equal and universal suffrage and high levels of electoral integrity.<sup>4</sup> Following Robert A. Dahl, other scholars venture beyond the electoral realm, arguing that civil liberties such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association must be part of the mix.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Guillermo O’Donnell and others have added the rule of law as a defining attribute of democracy.<sup>6</sup> Like democracy, “rule of law” is a contested concept. In this essay, we hold the rule of law to mean that effective equality before the law is in place and subjects all public and private agents to appropriate, legally established controls over the lawfulness of their acts. Crucially, the rule of law implies that laws—besides being general, public, prospective (that is, non-*ex post facto*), and certain—are equally applied regardless of a citizen’s political allegiance, socioeconomic status, ethnic or religious affiliation, and so on. Our definition is therefore more demanding than historical notions of rule by law, which merely imply that power is generally exercised via positive law rather than, say, personal decree.<sup>7</sup>

There have been numerous attempts to make sense of these definitional disagreements, yet they have tended to ignore the reality that a simple hierarchy characterizes the relationship between the listed definitions: The electoral qualification of equal and universal suffrage and

TABLE 1—A TYPOLOGY OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL REGIMES

	Competitive Elections	Inclusive Elections with High Integrity	Civil Liberties	Rule of Law
Minimalist Democracy	+			
Electoral Democracy	+	+		
Polyarchy	+	+	+	
Liberal Democracy	+	+	+	+

electoral integrity obviously also *includes* electoral competition for leadership in Schumpeter's more limited sense. Likewise, Dahl's definition of polyarchy embraces both electoral contestation and inclusion but adds a number of civil liberties. Finally, O'Donnell expressly accepts Dahl's criteria for polyarchy but then adds the rule of law to the definition. Thus the four definitions can be situated in a simple hierarchical typology, as illustrated in Table 1.

The typology is based on a taxonomic hierarchy—that is, the more demanding definitions subsume the less demanding ones. For example, all polyarchies are also electoral democracies and minimalist democracies (but not liberal democracies). This does not mean that the end point of democratic theory is the notion of liberal democracy. Rather, the typology simply indicates that liberal democracy is the most expansive definition that is regularly employed in empirical research on democratization by scholars who can be situated in the realistic tradition.

In naming the different types of democracy, we have used well-established terms. To the extent possible, these terms are meant to signal the crucial distinctions between the different definitions. Hence, the Schumpeterian definition is called *minimalist democracy* because it is the “thinnest” definition within the realistic tradition; *electoral democracy* signifies a maximization of the electoral criterion but nothing else; *polyarchy* is the inescapable term for Dahl's definition; and *liberal democracy* denotes a combination of inclusive elections, civil liberties, and the rule of law.<sup>8</sup>

The hierarchical logic underlying the typology is impeccable. Yet there are two potential objections to our typology that we must counter. First, does *minimalist democracy* actually qualify as democracy? And second, can elections truly be competitive in the absence of civil liberties and the rule of law?

Our typology's main goal is to capture and systematize the most influential realistic definitions of democracy found in the literature. Hence, the first thing to note is that *minimalist democracy* is meant to describe the essence of Schumpeter's famous definition of democracy as the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of

a competitive struggle for the people's vote." Schumpeter insists on no requirement beyond this electoral criterion—indeed, he emphasizes that “the democratic method does not necessarily guarantee a greater amount of individual freedom than another political method would permit in similar circumstances.”<sup>9</sup> Two important specifications about the extent of the “free competition for a free vote” are often ignored, however. First, Schumpeter stresses that equal and universal suffrage is not part of his definition, arguing that “if persons below the age limit are not allowed to vote, we cannot call a nation undemocratic that for the same or analogous reasons excludes other people as well.”<sup>10</sup>

Second, Schumpeter would categorize a given country as what we call a “minimalist democracy” even where competition was “unfair” (though only to a certain extent, after which the “fraudulent” competition disqualifies a country from being a democracy).<sup>11</sup> In a nutshell, Schumpeter's only hard and fast criterion is that the selection of who governs must be based on a competitive vote. Adam Przeworski and his coauthors specify this definition with three electoral criteria: *ex ante* uncertainty (the real possibility that incumbents can lose), *ex post* irreversibility (the winners assume office), and repeatability—no more, no less.<sup>12</sup>

Our notion of minimalist democracy matches Schumpeter's formula, which neither stipulates equal and universal suffrage nor demands high levels of electoral integrity. Many scholars, finding Schumpeter's definition to be insufficient for democracy, have expanded his definition, and these arguments need to be briefly considered. Needless to say, in the absence of equal and universal suffrage, we are dealing with a truly minimalist form of democracy. Yet the Schumpeterian formulation reflects the very core of any definition of democracy—namely, sovereignty of the people based on the rule of the many. Competition for leadership via the ballot box is simply the *sine qua non* of any definition of (modern) democracy.

It makes sense to use this criterion to separate democracies from autocracies. The different kinds of democracies can then be defined by adding criteria, thereby moving from thinner to thicker types within our typology. In other words, the presence of the Schumpeterian baseline enables us to disaggregate most of what is sometimes called the “gray zone” between liberal democracy and autocracy,<sup>13</sup> based on some of the most important distinctions within democratic theory. Here, it is important to note that our hierarchical distinctions do not imply that countries have historically tended to descend the levels of our typology from top to bottom. Our point is simply that, according to democratic theory, competitive elections are the logical starting point for any attempt to hierarchically order the realistic definitions presently employed by scholars doing empirical research.

More precisely, we have situated different conceptions of democra-

cy within a landscape where elections for political leaders are competitive. Only if elections are absent or not competitive do we categorize countries as autocracies. On this basis, we argue that a term such as “competitive authoritarianism”<sup>14</sup> is problematic. If authoritarians are forced to allow real competition—if they feel they must hold elections that might actually turn them out of power—then they have given in to democracy, at least in a minimal sense. And this remains so even if they use state resources to tilt the playing field. On the other hand, if the contest is so manipulated that the incumbents face no genuine risk of losing, we are stretching the concept of authoritarianism by using the adjective “competitive.”

But does it really make sense to talk about competitive elections unless citizens enjoy liberal freedoms safeguarded by the rule of law? Yes, according to Schumpeter. Even O’Donnell, who advocates a more robust definition, acknowledges that in many developing countries “the democratic, participatory rights of polyarchy are respected. But the liberal component of democracy is systematically violated.”<sup>15</sup> If valid, O’Donnell’s observation demonstrates that democratic competition can occur despite shortcomings in civil liberties and the rule of law. His Latin American and postcommunist examples, in which citizens are not subjected to direct coercion when voting, votes are counted fairly, and voters ultimately decide who assumes government office, show that it is indeed possible for electoral rights to be broadly respected despite more general transgressions of liberal freedoms and the rule of law.

More generally, the very reason that so many scholars in recent decades have proposed concepts such as electoral democracy, illiberal democracy, delegative democracy, and even competitive authoritarianism is that they see a need to define empirical instances in which genuine electoral competition occurs in the absence of other constitutive elements of liberal democracy. This supports the notion that there can be competitive elections even when civil liberties are violated and the rule of law barely exists. In a number of countries, including Bangladesh, Guatemala, Malawi, Thailand, and Ukraine, officeholders regularly abuse state power to suppress civil liberties, and the rule of law remains a far-off ideal. Nonetheless, incumbents face the real danger of being ousted in elections. The notion of minimalist democracy therefore does have empirical resonance.

### **The Distribution of Countries in 2011**

Can the distinctions between liberal democracy, polyarchy, electoral democracy, minimalist democracy, and autocracy be measured systematically? If so, what patterns emerge? Capturing the distinctions reported in Table 1 requires assessments of the attributes of electoral

rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law. We use the yearly *Freedom in the World* survey by Freedom House (FH) for this purpose. The FH data are not without shortcomings, but among readily available measures, FH's is the best known, covers the widest range of countries, and offers indicators that match the attributes of our typology fairly well.

In order to achieve a high correspondence between concepts and empirical indicators, we get "under the hood" of the FH survey. That is to say, we use the disaggregated data that are publicly available beginning in 2005 rather than the broader Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices that FH offers as its topline findings.<sup>16</sup> We use the subcomponent scores of the indicator "electoral process" to measure the attribute of electoral rights—and thus minimalist democracy and electoral democracy. This scale ranges from 0 to 12. In our operationalization, a country is a minimalist democracy if it earns a score of 7 or higher and an electoral democracy if it scores at least 11.

In order to measure civil liberties, we use the subcomponent scores found under the indicators "associational and organizational rights" and "freedom of expression and belief." To qualify as a polyarchy, a country must score at least 11 (on a scale of 0 to 12) on the former indicator and at least 14 (on a scale of 0 to 16) on the latter, while scoring at least 11 on the electoral-process indicator. Finally, in addition to the polyarchy criteria, a country must score at least 14 (on a scale of 0 to 16) on the rule-of-law indicator in order to qualify as a liberal democracy.

The thresholds of 11 and 14 on the electoral-process and rule-of-law scores, respectively, delimit the point at which performance is virtually flawless. An electoral-process score of 7, which marks the boundary between autocracy and minimalist democracy, is similar to the threshold that FH uses to compile its list of "electoral democracies."<sup>17</sup> When we refer to deficiencies or shortcomings in civil liberties or the rule of law, it means that a country's scores fall below the high thresholds. With regard to electoral process, countries that score from 7 to 10 (the two thresholds used to operationalize the different achievements on this attribute) are classified as having "moderate" deficiencies or shortcomings, while those scoring below 7 are considered to have severe shortcomings.

In Table 2 below, we have distributed the 195 countries included in the *Freedom in the World* survey for 2011 (the latest one available at the time of this writing in late 2012) according to the distinctions between different kinds of democracies that emerge when we apply the method described above. There are 121 democracies. Forty of these—including countries such as Ecuador, Malawi, and the Philippines—are only minimalist democracies; another 41—including Norway, Slovenia, and Uruguay—fulfill all the criteria for liberal democracy. In between are

TABLE 2—THE GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL REGIMES, 2011

Electoral Rights	Civil Liberties (Deficiencies)		Civil Liberties (No Deficiencies)	
	Rule of Law (Deficiencies) <i>Autocracies</i>	Rule of Law (No Deficiencies) <i>Autocracies</i>	Rule of Law (Deficiencies) <i>Autocracies</i>	Rule of Law (No Deficiencies) <i>Autocracies</i>
<b>Severe Deficiencies</b>	Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Congo (Rep.), DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, UAE, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zimbabwe	<i>Minimalist Democracies</i>	<i>Minimalist Democracies</i>	<i>Minimalist Democracies</i>
<b>Moderate Deficiencies</b>	Albania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Central African Rep., Dominican Rep., Colombia, Comoros, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Lesotho, Liberia, Macedonia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mexico, Montenegro, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Peru, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, Zambia	<i>Electoral Democracies</i>	<i>Electoral Democracies</i>	<i>Minimalist Democracies</i> Benin, Mongolia, Namibia, Vanuatu
<b>No Deficiencies</b>	Antigua & Barbuda, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Moldova, Paraguay, São Tomé & Príncipe, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey	<i>Electoral Democracies</i>	<i>Electoral Democracies</i> Japan	<i>Liberal Democracies</i> Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Rep., Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tuvalu, UK, Uruguay, USA

Note: Countries within the shaded blocks conform to the normal hierarchy of democratic attributes.

17 electoral democracies that are deficient in civil liberties (and, in most cases, the rule of law as well) and 23 polyarchies lacking in the rule of law. Among the electoral democracies are countries such as Brazil, Indonesia, and Moldova. Among the polyarchies are countries such as Croatia, Ghana, and South Korea.

Returning to the questions posed at the outset of this essay, we can now—based on our conceptual framework and the FH data—declare Malaysia and Nicaragua nondemocracies. Bulgaria, Chile, India, Moldova, Senegal, and Taiwan, by contrast, are all democracies. But they are different kinds of democracies. At one end of the spectrum, we find the minimalist democracies of Moldova and Senegal, where only the competitiveness of the elections is ensured. At the other end are Chile and Taiwan, where high-quality elections, civil liberties, and the rule of law combine. In between are India's electoral democracy, where electoral rights are respected but deficiencies exist with regard both to civil liberties and the rule of law, and Bulgaria's polyarchy, where only the effective implementation of the rule of law is absent from the full liberal-democratic package. Finally, all these cases differ from autocracies such as Burundi, Russia, and Kuwait—and the aforementioned Malaysia and Nicaragua—where there is not even genuine electoral competition for leadership.

This exercise shows the empirical power of a comprehensive typology that cuts down on complexity by grouping countries into relatively homogenous categories based on established distinctions within democratic theory. The particular scoring of the countries is, of course, no more convincing than the employed dataset, and some readers might dispute the categorization of specific countries. If we focus on the general patterns, however, an interesting question emerges: To what extent does the hierarchical logic of our distinctions, illustrated in Table 1, fit the empirical relationship indicated by the distribution of countries in Table 2? More concretely, do citizens in countries where the rule of law is functioning also enjoy full respect for their civil liberties and electoral rights? And are there few countries with electoral shortcomings but full respect for civil liberties? In this way, our conceptual typology is testable by the extent to which the empirical variation in Table 2 corroborates the hierarchy of democracies.

Table 2 shows that the empirical reality in 2011 closely resembles the conceptual hierarchy. Among the countries with effective implementation of the rule of law, only Japan has shortcomings on civil liberties<sup>18</sup> and only Monaco has shortcomings on electoral rights. Moreover, only Benin, Monaco, Mongolia, Namibia, and Vanuatu are characterized by moderate shortcomings in electoral rights but high scores on political liberties. Thus, although exceptions exist, they are few in number. Indeed, based on the operationalizations reported above, 189 of 195 countries—97 percent—fit the hierarchical logic.<sup>19</sup>

For the most part, countries perform at least as well on electoral rights as on civil liberties, and at least as well on civil liberties as on the rule of law.

## The Road to Democratic Deepening

If the democratic diversity illustrated in Table 2 has breathed new life into the sequencing debate, the empirical hierarchy shown in Table 1 offers a guide for exploring the disagreement. Discussion revolves around two questions: Which attributes of liberal democracy *have in fact* tended to come first in the democratization processes, and which attributes *should* come first in order best to facilitate democratic deepening? The first issue is descriptive, whereas the second is prescriptive.

More specifically, the debate has focused on the sequencing of state-building, liberal constitutionalism, and mass participation in elections. The most common point of departure is the observation that the original sequence leading to democracy in Western Europe and its settler colonies (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States) was one in which state-building and the rise of liberal constitutionalism preceded large-scale electoral democratization. T.H. Marshall famously described this sequence, noting that the development of civil rights (including the rule of law and civil liberties) preceded the introduction of political citizenship in the form of inclusive suffrage.<sup>20</sup> Fareed Zakaria and others have taken this history and used it to make the prescriptive argument that the rule of law and civil liberties should precede electoral democratization in order to enhance democratic deepening.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, based on analyses indicating that electoral democratization in the context of weak state institutions increases the risk of open conflict, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder have recommended that external powers should not support what they term “out-of-sequence” transitions.<sup>22</sup>

These prescriptions have drawn sharp criticism. As Thomas Carothers has argued, autocrats generally have poor incentives (and therefore bad records) when it comes to both state-building and fostering the rule of law, whereas no such inherent tension exists in democracies. Indeed, vertical accountability via elections is likely to facilitate certain aspects of both state-building and the rule of law. Furthermore, Carothers observes that it is, in any case, impossible to wait for years on end for elections, because elections are today universally demanded.<sup>23</sup> Looking to history, Sheri Berman points out that the original Western democratizations, riddled as they were with repeated violence, destabilization, and democratic setbacks, were far from harmonious yet eventually succeeded anyway.<sup>24</sup>

One should always keep in mind the established rule of logic which

holds that descriptive observations alone cannot sustain a prescriptive conclusion. A particular sequence may be absent not because it is impossible or ill-advised, but simply because it has not been consistently tried yet. Still, the descriptive patterns are important to the sequencing debate for at least two reasons. First, all participants in the debate seem to agree that outsiders can do little to “re-engineer a country’s political institutions.”<sup>25</sup> Second, there seems to be an increasing recognition that a country’s structural conditions (such as its level of socioeconomic development) can place serious constraints on the ability of domestic actors to construct efficient institutions, particularly with respect to state-building and the rule of law.

If we accept these premises, it follows that the descriptive patterns tell us a lot about what is possible with respect to sequencing. The effects imposed by structural obstacles to democratic deepening, so the argument goes, will be reflected in the current sequencing. We have already demonstrated a particular hierarchy of types of democracy. This hierarchy shows that, in today’s world, countries tend to do at least as well on electoral rights as on civil liberties, and at least as well on civil liberties as on the rule of law. This sequencing can be examined in more detail by tracing the movements of countries within our typology between 2005 and 2011. During these years, there were 72 instances of countries moving from one category to another. Only 6 of these shifts were out of line with the hierarchy—that is, the country strayed from the common order of acquiring democratic attributes.<sup>26</sup> One such exception was Mongolia. It had displayed moderate shortcomings with regard to electoral rights, as well as deficiencies with regard to both civil liberties and the rule of law. Yet in 2009, observers of the country saw respect for civil liberties improve at a rate that outpaced any improvement in respect for electoral rights. Another example is the Dominican Republic, which from 2009 to 2010 witnessed a deterioration from no shortcomings to moderate shortcomings in electoral rights while maintaining a high level of respect for civil liberties.

Such outliers must of course be recognized, and if we could extend the analysis further back in time, more exceptions would come to light. But far more prevalent in the period under investigation in this article (2005 to 2011) are changes that fit the conceptual ordering of democratic attributes, such as when the Czech Republic in 2006 qualified for the set of liberal democracies through improvements in the rule of law, or when Honduras, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Venezuela in 2009 slid from being minimalist democracies to being autocracies as their electoral-rights scores grew worse while (as expected) their scores for political liberties and the rule of law failed to show any offsetting improvement. Cases such as these tend to further corroborate the existence of an empirical hierarchy in the order according to which liberal democracy’s attributes are acquired. The “autocratic pathway” to liberal

democracy, which privileges the rule of law over electoral rights, almost never occurs in today's world.

### The Historical Shift in Sequencing

We have already mentioned that the historical path leading to liberal democracy in Western Europe and the West European settler colonies was dramatically different from the contemporary one that we have described here. Why has the sequence changed? First of all, the original Western sequence was—as Francis Fukuyama has recently argued<sup>27</sup>—based on a unique process of state-formation in which constitutionalism preceded electoral democratization by centuries. A whole literature revolves around this process, and the general conclusion seems to be that Western development was based on a unique combination of factors not present elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Other areas of the world do not have a long legacy of constitutionalism, including representative institutions and the rule of law, to fortify their efforts to democratize.

Moreover, the decades since the fall of Soviet communism have been characterized by the ideological victory of democracy. This democratic *Zeitgeist* means that any political opening is associated with popular demands for competitive elections.<sup>29</sup> Yet as structural conditions—for example economic development, identity-based divisions, and experience with democracy—still constrain state-building and the effectiveness of the rule of law, countries tend to take electoral steps before having civil liberties and the rule of law in place, as we have just witnessed in Tunisia and Egypt following the “Arab Spring.” Developing civil liberties and, particularly, the rule of law simply depends more heavily on structural factors than is the case as regards competitive elections, which often become the focal point of attention for citizens and external donors during political openings.

For these reasons, it is hard to envisage an alternative sequence prevailing over that of our hierarchy. This does not mean that we believe the movement from thinner to thicker types of democracy is easy or predestined. Given the structural obstacles to effective state-building and the development of rule of law, there is reason to be skeptical about the ability of many developing countries to progress much beyond the electoral starting point, at least in the short to medium term.

Getting at the heart of the sequencing debate, as Marc Plattner once wrote in these pages, “The real issue is whether the nineteenth-century sequence of first liberalism, then democracy, can work today, when the progress of liberal ideas has undermined traditional nondemocratic claims to political legitimacy.”<sup>30</sup> Our findings coupled with the theoretical insights about the uniqueness of the original Western sequence and the current democratic *Zeitgeist* strongly indicate that the answer to Plattner's question is “No, that original sequence cannot

work today.” This conclusion is reflected in the contemporary empirical sequence in which electoral rights are respected at least as much as political liberties, which are respected at least as much as the rule of law. This empirical sequence demonstrates the salience of our typology of democratic regime types. Not only does this typology present a systematic way to capture the most influential definitions used in empirical research on democratization, its hierarchical logic is also in line with contemporary empirical realities.

Our conceptual distinctions allow us to solve two problems that have plagued the literature on democratization. First, rather than searching for the one “best” definition of democracy, we have shown that it makes sense to bring together the definitions of Schumpeter, Dahl, and O’Donnell, among others, in a typology. Second, the manner in which countries distribute themselves across this typology shows that today electoral rights tend to be respected no less than—and indeed often more than—civil liberties and the rule of law are respected. This finding, along with theoretical arguments about the universal call for elections and the way in which unpropitious structures constrain the development of other democratic attributes, exposes the autocratic pathway to liberal democracy as unrealistic for most developing countries. Today, there is only one plausible first step on the pathway to democracy, and that step is competitive elections.

## NOTES

1. For a more elaborate discussion of the subtle distinctions between realistic, procedural, and substantive definitions of democracy, see Guillermo O’Donnell, *Dissonances: Democratic Critique of Democracy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, *Requisites of Democracy: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Explanation* (London: Routledge, 2011).

2. Terry L. Karl, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America.” *Comparative Politics* 23 (October 1990): 2; Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2000 [1975]), 57–58; Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), ch. 1. See also Guillermo O’Donnell, *Dissonances*; David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics* 49 (April 1997): 430–51.

3. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Unwin University Books, 1974 [1942]). See also Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16–18.

4. Pamela Paxton, “Women’s Suffrage in the Measurement of Democracy: Problems of Operationalization,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (Fall 2000): 92–111; Diamond, *Developing Democracy*, 8–10; Jørgen Elklit and Palle Svensson, “What Makes Elections Free and Fair,” *Journal of Democracy* 8 (July 1997): 32–46.

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

6. O'Donnell, *Dissonances*. See also Diamond, *Developing Democracy*, 10–13; Wolfgang Merkel, “Embedded and Defective Democracies,” *Democratization* 11 (December 2004): 33–58.

7. Møller and Skaaning, *Requisites of Democracy*. For a systematic overview of alternative definitions of rule of law and their relationship to each other, see Møller and Skaaning, “Systematizing Thin and Thick Conceptions of the Rule of Law,” *Justice System Journal* 33 (Fall 2012), and Brian Tamanaha, *On the Rule of Law: History, Politics, Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

8. Guillermo O'Donnell, “Why the Rule of Law Matters,” *Journal of Democracy* 15 (October 2004), 33.

9. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 269, 271. See also 243, note 9.

10. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 244.

11. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 270–71.

12. Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*, 16–18.

13. See Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002): 5–21.

14. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002): 51–65.

15. Guillermo O'Donnell, “On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Postcommunist Countries,” *World Development* 21 (August 1993): 1361. See also O'Donnell, *Dissonances*.

16. See [www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-aggregate-and-subcategory-scores](http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-aggregate-and-subcategory-scores).

17. All thresholds are based on our knowledge of particular countries and on comparisons with the country distribution derived when employing the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) to operationalize the three attributes. See Møller and Skaaning, *Requisites of Democracy*. Compared to the FH indicators, the BTI indicators have the advantage that the score levels are linked to qualitative descriptions, meaning that determining thresholds is less arbitrary.

18. Japan just missed the thresholds on both the freedom of expression indicator (scoring a 13) and the freedom of association indicator (scoring a 10).

19. Had we instead introduced more fine-grained distinctions, for example by distinguishing between three levels on all attributes (rather than only on electoral rights), the empirical fit would be lower, but still impressive. The additional thresholds used for this exercise are a score of (at least) 7 for the “freedom of expression and belief” indicator, and a score of (at least) 9 for the indicators on associational and organizational rights and rule of law. Using this further breakdown, 15 countries score in a way that is not in accord with the empirical hierarchy between the attributes. If the criterion is made even stricter by demanding a perfect cumulative (step-wise) logic between the three-level attributes, the number increases to 24 countries, meaning that 88 percent of all countries still match the conceptual hierarchy. Moreover, the clear patterns in the distribution of countries are virtually identical for the other years for which we have access to the disaggregated Freedom House scores (2005–10). The precise distribution of countries for each year is available in an appendix that is available at [www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/supplemental-material](http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/supplemental-material).

20. T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto, 1996 [1949]). See also O'Donnell, *Dissonances*.

21. Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (November–December 1997): 22–43, and *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2003).

22. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Exchange: The Sequencing 'Fallacy,'" *Journal of Democracy* 18 (July 2007): 7.

23. Thomas Carothers, "How Democracies Emerge: The 'Sequencing' Fallacy," *Journal of Democracy* 18 (January 2007): 12–27.

24. Sheri Berman, "How Democracies Emerge: Lessons from Europe," *Journal of Democracy* 18 (January 2007): 28–41.

25. Mansfield and Snyder, "Exchange: The Sequencing 'Fallacy,'" 6; Carothers, "How Democracies Emerge: The 'Sequencing' Fallacy," 20–23.

26. If we trichotomize all three attributes, 97 movements in the typology emerge, out of which only 16 were not in accord with the conceptual hierarchy between the attributes.

27. Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2011).

28. Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

29. Carothers, "How Democracies Emerge: The 'Sequencing' Fallacy"; Marc F. Plattner, "From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 10 (July 1999): 121–34.

30. Plattner, "From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy," 132.