DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: SOME BROAD COMPARISONS AND SWEEPING ARGUMENTS

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In the 1970s, the vast majority of the world's nations could hardly be called "democratic." In at least 60 percent of them, political parties were proscribed *de jure* or *de facto* and where they existed, their freedom of action was severely restricted. Yet, it was precisely in this same decade that a new wave of democratization began in Portugal, Greece and Spain, then crossed the Atlantic Ocean into Latin America, where most of the military dictatorships collapsed or withdrew. In the late 1980s, almost over-night, the communist regimes of Eastern Europe gave way to a massive expression of popular will for free elections. The developments in the Philippines, South Korea, and to some extent Taiwan, signalled progress for democratic reforms in East Asia. Finally, with the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, there was also a basis for a sense of renewed optimism concerning democratic development throughout the African continent. Throughout this period there was also an unprecedented growth of international concern for human rights, especially the right to choose democratically the government underneath which one lives and to express and organize around one's political views. In the early nineties, the number of democratic political systems doubled, from 44 to 107.[1] Collectively, this development had come to be

[1] *The Economist*, "Democracy and Growth: Why Voting is Good For You", (August 27th-Sept. 2, 1994), pp. 15-17.

referred as to what Samuel Huntington called the "third-wave" of democratization.[2] These and similar occurrences led to a renewed intellectual concern with the conditions and the processes of establishing, or re-establishing, democratic order and generated probably more literature than any other area of substantive interest in the realm of comparative politics. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the study of transitions to democracy or regime change, was at one time a veritable growth industry.[3]

[2] Huntington, S. P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).Leaving disagreement with his enterprise aside—it is obvious that he views Madisonian democracy par excellence—Huntington provides us with a heuristic scheme for framing the debate surrounding transition literature. According to him, the first wave of democratization refers to the period 1820-1920 when democracy spread from the United States to northern and Western Europe, a few British dominions, and a few countries in Latin America. There followed a "reverse wave" (1920-42) when "democratic trends" were terminated in Germany, Italy, Austria, Poland, the Baltic States, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Argentina, Brazil, and Japan. The second wave refers to the period between 1945-1962, when democracy expanded, as it were, to West Germany, Austria, Italy, Japan and South Korea, and a process of decolonization led many independent countries to adopt the type of political regimes of their former imperial powers. Also the second wave was followed by a "reverse wave" (1962-1975), during which military coups and revolutionary movements reduced the number of democracies from thirty-six to thirty. Finally, the "third wave" of democratic expansion which refers to the period from 1974 to the present.

[3] One only need to consider the rapid increase in the number of publications and studies emanating out of professional conferences on the subject. Throughout the last two decades, and especially in the 1980s there have been notable contributions to the understanding of the so-called "third wave" of democratization. Among the more comprehensive pieces of work are: O'Donnell, G., Philippe C. Schmitter and L. Whitehead eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Diamond, L., J. J. Linz, and S. M. Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries: Persistence, Failure, and Renewal*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Baloyra, E. A., ed., *Comparing New Democracies: Transition and Consolidation in Mediterranean Europe and the Southern Cone*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987); Przeworski, A., *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Mainwaring, S., G. O'Donnell, and J. S. Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*. (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); and Huntington, S. P., *The Third Wave*. Chull Shin, D., "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research", *World Politics*, 47 (October, 1994), has identified seventeen professional journals that have devoted one or more issues to the topic of democratization (See his footnote #9). For instance, the *Journal of Democracy and Democratization*, and some other periodicals are entirely devoted to the subject of democratization .

For the most part, the study of transitions from authoritarianism presents us with an intriguing case of continuity and change. Ever since developmentalism and modernization theories emerged in the early 1960s, the predominant discourse in Western political analysis has been between classical pluralist and democratic tradition of Cold War liberals, and neo-authoritarian and corporatist critique centred on the teleology of order.[4] Notions such as 'breakdown of democracy,' 'new military' and 'transition to bureaucratic-authoritarianism' were the trademarks of the dominant theoretical strain of the 1970s. As a result of the

[4] O'Brien, D.C., "Modernization, Order and the Erosion of a Democratic Ideal: American Political Science 1960-1970", *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 8, No.4 (July, 1972).

democratic 'thaw' of the 1980s, many studies on transitions from bureaucratic-authoritarian rule emerged. For the most part these studies originated from the United States and U.S. sponsored research centreers. These conceptual frameworks largely reflected the understanding of the "official intelligentsia" in the U.S. with its clear neo-liberal and normative preference.[5] 'Normalization,' 'governability,' 'pact of élites,' 'consociationalism' and the like became buzz words to construct much of the new political reality for many of these "new democracies." This perspective dominated analyses to the point that some particularly relevant structural characteristics of the situation at hand, the transition itself, were excluded by force of theoretical reductionism. The regimes that emerged in the wake of the dictatorships signaled the end of one period of struggle but initiated a new round of political conflict. In this new conflict, a significant part of the battle has been ideological and centers on the questions of how to interpret the process by which these new "democratic" regimes came into being. This paper will first place the study of democratic transitions in its historical context. I will then survey some of the key theorists of the literature, and address their methodologies and approaches. In particular, I will argue that the implicit and explicit analytical framework of the transition literature is still excessively constrained by its conceptual predecessor, the bureaucratic-authoritarian model. I will conclude that mainstream transition literature has circumvented fundamental theoretical and practical questions in the debate

[5] Nef, J., "The Trend Towards Democratization and Redemocratization in Latin America: Shadow and Substance", *Latin America Research Review*, Vol 23, No. 3 (Fall, 1988), pp. 131-53.

on democratization. In particular, it has downplayed two important considerations in regime change: the continuities and discontinuities extant both in the political economy of transition and the corporate interests of power-holders.

What sets this renewed interest in democratic development apart from the previous studies of democratization? To answer this question we must place these new studies within the history of studies dealing with democratic development. The tradition of literature on transitions to and from democracy goes as far back as classical Greek thinkers. For instance, Aristotle argued that polis was more likely to occur where the middle strata was large, and oligarchy and tyranny where the population was poor. The American founding fathers were heavily influenced by the writing of Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu and their emphasis on the restraint of state powers through the institutionalization of checks and balances. Alexis de Tocqueville, in his analysis of the new American republic and the development of its democracy, emphasized the impact of voluntary associations, the division of powers in a federal system and the relative socio-economic equality that fostered political participation. Adam Smith emphasized laissez-faire principles in the construction of democracy, and Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg emphasized the role of the middle class in fostering liberty and liberal democracy.

In the early 20th century, as republican forms of government began slowly to take root in parts of Europe, North America, and parts of South America, the levels of political and social mobilization that accompanied these projects threatened established interests such as the

aristocracy, the landed elite, the church, and the military. As a result, these groups formed reactionary coalitions which that culminated in the establishment of fascist regimes throughout Europe and military dictatorships in parts of Latin America. This process was reversed with the victory of the Allied powers in World War II and the imposition of democracy throughout much of Western Europe. Not long afterwards, a host of new nations in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East that had been colonies of the Western democracies, were granted independence and adopted political regimes modelled on those of the former colonial rulers. As a result, a wave of excitement and optimism about the prospects for democracy and rapid development in these newly independent nations spawned a new wave of scholarly thinking and research.

More extensively than ever before, theory and empirical research in political development examined the world outside the West. Case studies of emerging political systems in the new nations as well as comparative studies proliferated. Social science analysis became more sophisticated by examining quantitatively the relationship between socio-economic variables and democracy (ie modernization theory and political development) more broadly across nations throughout the developed and developing world.[6] Moreover, these carried with them a significant Western bias.[7]

[6] Lipset, S. M., "Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review*, 53 (March, 1959): 69-105. Almond, G., and J. S. Coleman, eds., *The Politic of Developing Areas*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). Almond, G., and S. Verba eds., *The Civic Culture*,

Later, in the 1970s, the study of democratization, or more specifically the field of comparative political development, became dominated by issues relating to economic autonomy and theories of international dependency. These studies which were based on Marxist analyses, criticized the political development studies of the 1960s for being ahistorical, ethnocentric and reflective of U.S. imperialism.[8] To the extent that these criticisms dealt with politics explicitly, theories of dependency maintained that political exclusion and repression of popular mobilization were inevitable outcomes of dependent economic development and peripheral status in the world division of labour.[9] Around the same time, popular challenges to status quo throughout the underdeveloped and developed world began to mount. The reaction to this surge in popular mobilization

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). Moore, B., *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship: Lord Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Huntington, S., P., *Political Order in Changing Societies.* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968); Dahl, R., *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*,(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[7] Gabriel Almond who was the Chairman of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a ten-man Committee on Comparative Politics between the years of 1954-63, clearly expressed this sentiment when he declared that: "the political scientist who wishes to study political modernization in the non-western areas will have to master the model of the modern, which in turn can only be derived from the most careful empirical and formal analysis of the functions of modern Western polities" (quoted in O'Brien, D.C., "Modernization, Order and the Erosion of a Democratic Ideal", p. 353).

[8] Frank, André Gunder, *Capitalism and Unemployment in Latin America*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

[9] Evans, P., *Dependent Development.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 25-54.

was expressed with scepticism and disdain about political democracy.[10] This reaction was reflected and deepened by a new cycle of democratic breakdowns in Latin America into particularly harsh, bureaucratic-authoritarian dictatorships.[11] This development was interpreted as a consequence of the inherent strain and pressures of economic dependence at a particular stage of development.[12]

The bureaucratic-authoritarian concept was intended to define a specific and historically determined type of state and/or regime that evolved in the more economically and politically advanced countries in Latin America beginning in the 1960s. For O'Donnell, with whom the development of the notion of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state is most closely associated,[13] the problematic was only "Latin American" in a secondary sense, in that the relevant historical context was provided by the political economy of

[10] Huntington, S., M. Crozier and J. Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*, Triangle Papers, No. 8, (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

[11] Linz, J., and A. Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[12] O'Donnell, G., *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1973).

[13] O'Donnell, G., *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*; "Corporatism and the Question of the State" in James Malloy, ed., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*. (Pittsburgh, 1977); "Reflections on the Patterns of Change in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State", *Latin American Research Review*, 12,1 (1978); "Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy", in Collier, D., ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

nations that were originally exporters of primary materials and were industrialized late, but extensively in a position of dependency upon the great centres of world capitalism.[14] Given this formulation it was a wonder that little attention was paid to countries outside Latin America.

In essence, O'Donnell's formulation suggested that ample importance be attached to the process of industrialization and its associated political forms for the region considered—Brazil and Argentina in the period after 1930. At the heart of his argument was that delayed, dependent industrialization was carried forward initially by populist or reformist coalitions. However, by the early 1960s, further progress was becoming virtually impossible as a result of faltering economic growth as the phase of industrialization associated with the domestic production of consumer goods neared exhaustion. This in turn provoked the working and lower middle class elements attached to the ruling coalition to 'overload' the state-system with their intransigent demands. The path of further development required the 'deepening' of industrialization through the domestic manufacture of intermediate and capital goods. Yet the measures needed to achieve it, the adoption of strictly orthodox economic policies and the creation of an environment favourable to activities of transnational corporations and hence to direct foreign investment, could only be accomplished if the popular sectors were defeated and demobilized. This condition could only be resolved by the establishment of a repressive bureaucratic-authoritarian state-system based upon a coalition of military and civilian technocrats.

[14] O'Donnell, G., "Corporatism and the Question of the State", p. 54.

According to O'Donnell[15] the principal characteristics of the type of state produced were as follows:

1. Its social base was drawn from the upper fractions of a highly oligopolized and transnational bourgeoisie.
2. It corresponded to and promoted an increasing transnationalization of the structure of production.
3. Its institutions comprised of organizations in which specialists in coercion as well as those whose aim it was to achieve the 'normalization' of the economy have demonstrative weight.
4. It endeavoured to depoliticize social issues by dealing with them in terms of the apparently neutral and objective criteria of technical rationality.
5. It excluded the previously active popular sectors from both political and economic participation
6. It suppressed the institutions of popular democracy, and closed democratic channels to access to government

This model became the scholarly orthodoxy on military rule in Latin America despite becoming the object of considerable criticism.[16] One particularly poignant criticism

[15] "Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy", pp. 292-93.

[16] For instance, a number of works, highlighting theoretical, historical and methodological flaws moved to invalidating the whole bureaucratic-authoritarian scheme. See Remmer, K. and Merckx, G., "Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism Revisited", *Latin American Research Review*, 17, 2 (1982); Serra, J., "Three Mistaken Theses regarding the Connection between Industrialization and Authoritarian Regimes", in Collier, D., ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*; O'Brien, P. and P.

argues that the bureaucratic authoritarian model does little to explain the authoritarian regime of the 1970s.[17] Although it retains value for the analyses of the military government of Argentina and Brazil in the 1960s and constitutes a seminal contribution to the more general study of the connection between regime change and capitalist development in Latin America, the model fails to truly grasp the 'second wave' of the authoritarianism of the 1970s. Both the character and the policy agenda of military rule departed significantly from the bureaucratic-authoritarian category. The corporatist mechanisms of control and policymaking that was so central to the bureaucratic-authoritarian order, was repudiated during this wave of authoritarianism. During the 1960s, labour, in a process based on the centrality of industry, was effectively encapsulated by the corporatist mechanisms set out by the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime of the 1960s. The bureaucratic-authoritarian regime never truly aimed at wiping out the popular sector's political and organizational capabilities altogether. The coercion of the 1960s amounted only to a sort of exclusionary process which never approached the strategic and systematic quality of repression prevalent in the 1970s.[18] In the 1970s, the incorperative

Cammack, *Generals in Retreat: The Crisis of Military Rule in Latin America*. (Manchester: Manchester Univesity Press, 1985).

[17] Schamis, H., "Reconceptualizing Latin America Authoritarianism in the 1970s: From Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism to Neoconservatism", *Comparative Politics*, 23 (January, 1991), pp. 201-221.

[18] In the southern cone the objective was to engineer a fundamental restructuring of their political institutions and life, aimed at "cleaning" impurities from the body politic while creating a new political order of committed and patriotic citizens, dedicated to modernizing the country. The military saw themselves as 'surgeons' that would operate on a 'sick

devices were simply abandoned. Moreover, because collective representation was illegal and corporatism became irreconcilable with the new social order—one regulated by mere market relations—there was no need to accommodate labour anymore. In short, without the dynamic of co-optation, naked repression became a much more attractive option.

However, much of the literature persists in resorting to the bureaucratic-authoritarian model as a conceptual point of reference. O'Donnell's contribution was influential in that it became the very point of departure for David Collier's edited volume on the new authoritarianism. In this volume, the contributors (O'Donnell being one himself) scrutinized the bureaucratic-authoritarian model and evaluated it either positively or negatively. In the end however, the regimes were simply recast in a linear context where the theoretical stage of authoritarianism of the seventies, was merely seen as the accentuation of the feature of bureaucratic-authoritarianism of Brazil and Argentina in the 1960s. In the words of O'Donnell himself, "the 'new' dictatorships of Uruguay, Chile and Argentina in the 1970s [simply]

society' and exorcise the 'cancer of subversion' that had, in their view, infected the very fabric of society. This cancer was later to be defined as the internal enemy and in 1976 the ideology of national security predominated. The official discourse argued that liberal democracy had failed to such an extent that a military regime was the only answer to the Marxist aggression confronting the region. For an understanding of this discourse, see Munck, R., *Latin America: The Transition to Democracy.* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, Ltd., 1989) pp. 61-72; and Garreton, M.A., "The Political evolution of the Chilean Military regime and Problems in the Transition to Democracy", in O'Donnell et al, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. Vol 2, p. 108.

occurred because various social actors believed that they were stepping into an abyss of the rupture of all social order".[19] The emerging formula then became a rather basic one—the deeper the threat, the deeper the response and repression. Instead of looking for a new form of military rule, the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the 1960s were simply seen as intensifying in the seventies. Instead of understanding what was truly different about the 'new' authoritarianism, the mainstream literature became trapped by the concept of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state. Rarely, if at all, did the authors in the Collier volume venture beyond the bureaucratic-authoritarian model.[20] This prevented any real understanding of the dynamic reality of the dictatorships of the southern cone.

A basic examination of the political economy of the southern cone military regimes of the 1970s will display significant differences from that of the 1960s,. Very early on the military governments of the 1970s displaced the previous policy packages, reversing a long history of developmentalism.[21] In particular, these regimes sought to roll back the developmentalist heritage by imposing polices of orthodox liberalism: market economy over state intervention, laissez-faire over planning and monetarism over Keynesianism. In favouring these options the military

[19] O'Donnell, G., "Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy".
[20] Cammack, P., "The Political Economy of Contemporary Military Regimes in Latin America: From Bureaucratic Authoritarianism to Restructuring", in O'Brien and Cammack, eds., *Generals in Retreat: The Crisis of Military Rule in Latin America.*
[21] Schamis, H., "Reconceptualizing Latin America Authoritarianism in the 1970s"; Munck, R., *Latin America.*

technocrats of these regimes paved the way for a new break in the historical relationship between state and society in Latin America. In so doing, they created a new and distinctive political product: a military, authoritarian version of neo-conservative economics or, alternatively, a neo-conservative, monetarist version of military politics.[22] In either case, this phenomenon can hardly be linked to bureaucratic-authoritarianism, much less be characterised by the concept. Moreover, and more importantly, the "potential" of these regimes, particularly Chile, became instructive to other parts of the world as Asia's "little tigers", especially Indonesia and Singapore, were held up as Third World showcases of governability, limited democratization, export-led growth and international credit-worthiness.[23]

As with modernization or dependency theories (each of which influenced the bureaucratic-authoritarian construct in a specific way), the theory of bureaucratic-authoritarianism tended to enhance the relevance of certain factors while fading out that of others. Enter the debate concerning the transition from authoritarian rule. Given that much of the literature has viewed democratization and re-democratization as forms of crisis management entailing adequate solutions emphasis on coalition building a la mainstream pluralist studies, the transition literature seems constrained by the bureaucratic-authoritarian model. The

[22] Silva, P., "Technocrats and Politics in Chile: From the Chicago Boys to the CIEPLAN Monks", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 23 (May, 1991), pp. 385-410.

[23] Nef, J., and N. Galleguillos, N., "Democracy and Development in Chile: An Assessment" in Close, D., ed., *Legislatures and Democratic Transformation in Latin American*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

more expansive pieces, the four volumes edited by O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, and the other four volumes edited by Diamond, Linz, and Lipset constitute variations on the aforementioned form of democratization. Despite different titles, all the pieces in these eight volumes deal with the same theme, and there is significant over-lap in contributors. Both collections resulted from conferences of leading experts in the respective fields and areas held in the mid-1980s. Nonetheless, it is worth repeating, the most striking similarity is their thematic unity. This similarity is not surprising given the considerable degree of cross-pollination and collaboration among the individual scholars involved. Of the two sets of volumes, it is the O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead collection that is the most significant in terms of its scope and its attempt to search for theory. Although the Diamond et al volumes proceed from a rather different set of theoretical assumptions, they arrive at roughly similar conclusions regarding the prospects for democratic consolidation. That is the prospects of consolidation depend on the nature of the coalitions built, pacts that are formed and the type and mode of the transition

However, the question of consolidation aside, Volume 4 of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* is an attempt by the editors to summarize a number of theoretical and tentative conclusions about what they call "uncertain democracies." By virtue of this, they stress political democracy in purely normative terms. Political democracy is seen as a desirable goal and the transition is seen as a form of change from a certain authoritarian regime toward an "uncertain something else." The editors of this volume also attempt to define key concepts such as transition, liberalization, and

democratization. O'Donnell et al describe liberalization as encompassing the opening of an authoritarian regime largely under the initiative of the rulers (a schism between hard-liners and soft-liners in the junta) leading to a form of "limited authoritarianism' ("dictablanda" as opposed to *dictadura*).[24] Democratization on the other hand, might contain restrictions on actors and agendas leading to a "limited democracy' (*democradura*). It becomes apparent early on that the editors accept that a path of non-violence as the best way to achieve political democracy.[25] Popular democracy is something that becomes conspicuously absent.

The rest of the volume centres on various strategies and game-type patterns of interaction that include dealing with social mobilization, settling past accounts without upsetting the present, defusing but not disarming the military and most importantly, that the only route to political democracy is a peaceful and negotiated one, based upon a process of liberalization, which ends with the construction of a hybrid regime. The process of democratization is then said to proceed along with an introduction of institutions of electoral competition, interest representation, and executive accountability, with all the trappings that a "period of indeterminacy" entails.[26] Within, this rationale, the editors envision incrementalism, negotiating and renegotiating pacts, as a way to resurrect civil society and as the fundamental devices for bringing about a "'controlled' election. Elections in this view must be formal and keep a

[24] O'Donnell, G., et., al., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*. Vol. 4, pp. 11-14.
[25] Ibid., p. 11.
[26] Ibid., p. 34.

balance in which the ... parties of the Left-Centre and Left should not win by an overwhelming majority".[27] In the end, the Transition volumes boil down to two crucial declarations: "the property rights of the bourgeoisie are inviolable" and the armed forces are to serve as the prime protector of "the rights and privileges of those covered by the first restriction ... [and] their institutional existence, assets and hierarchy cannot be eliminated or even seriously threatened".[28]

Where the editors of *Transitions* expressly intercede with Diamond, Linz and Lipset is on the emphasis placed upon the choices political elites. Specifically, the role of leadership during a period where there is "a high degree of indeterminacy." In this scenario indeterminacy is "...embedded in situations where unexpected events (*fortuna*), insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity, and even in the definition of political identities, as well as the talents of specific individuals (*virtu*), are frequently decisive in determining the outcomes".[29] The rise of leaders such as Alfonsin, Aylwyn, Frei and later with perhaps personalities such as Walesa, Mandela, De Klerk, Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Havel and Bhutto can be considered as examples marking these periods.[30] The transition or democratization process is thus seen more as a product of strategic interactions and arrangements. Variables such as leadership or "elite dispositions" are given a commanding

[27] Ibid., p. 62.
[28] Ibid., pp. 69, 62.
[29] Ibid., p. 5.
[30] Ibid., p. 18.

role in moving transitions along and consolidating new democracies.[31] Leaders in this scheme are seen as performing the crucial function of convincing people of the value and possibility of changing governments peacefully, and, at the same time, conveying the impossibility of overcoming, in the short-run, the dismal legacy of some non-democratic rules and the accumulated mistakes that have led or contributed to their present crisis. However, the choices that actors make are only efficacious to the extent that structural determinants will allow them to be. For instance, structural adjustment policies and debt loads are relevant in that they determine the limits of what is "possible" and "realistic" for the democratizing country. In short, these conclusions add up to fix the limits of democracy or democratization as rooted in stalemate.[32]

Finally for the specific institutional method for dealing with problems of governance and citizenship, or the standing of the people with respect to the state, there must exist a national political system characterized by free and open elections, choice between competing slates of leaders, genuine competition, protection of civil liberties, and relatively low barriers to participation. Essentially we are dealing with a Schumpeterian version of democracy.[33] Political consensus or agreement on fundamentals is achieved as a function of increasing equalization of material

[31] Ibid., pp. 19, 48; Diamond, L., J., Linz, J., and Lipset, S. M., eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries*. Vol. 1, pp. 17-18.
[32] Nef, J., "The Trend Towards Democratization and Redemocratization in Latin America".
[33] Schumpeter, J., *Capitalism, Socialism an Democracy*. (New York: Harper Bros., 1950) p. 269.

living standards. Nevertheless, this conceptualization becomes refined by including the following "institutional requirements": 1) freedom to form and join organizations; 2) freedom of expression; 3) right to vote; 4) eligibility for public office; 5) right of political leaders to compete for support (and vote); 6) alternative sources of information; 7) free and fair elections; 8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expression of preference.[34]

Beginning with Schumpeter, the editors of *Democracy in Developing Countries* end up having their definition of democracy coalescing around Dahl's Polyarchy. In particular, considerable importance is given to procedures such as, secret balloting, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, access, and executive accountability. It is a procedural minimal conception of democracy. Yet, does this conception include notions of equal opportunity and the incorporation of disenfranchised groups into social life (i.e. native aboriginal people)? Does the definition of democracy established by O'Donnell et al and Diamond et al clash with another equally and perhaps more substantial definition where democracy is seen as a set of ideal images associated with deep social change? The short answer is that it doesn't. Essentially what these works do is generate a considerable amount of confusion about the specific nature of the process of transition between non-democratic and democratic regimes.

For instance, open elections and opposition rights are considered fine institution, but to define political democracy in terms of these institutions alone, is to ignore the

[34] Dahl, R., *Polyarchy*, p. 3.

connections between political life and the social economic foundations of power. Open elections and oppositional rights in themselves provide a very limited basis for popular rule when socio-economic progress and political democracy are not seen as mutually reinforcing but rather in conflict with each other. As important as democratic rules and procedures are, they by themselves cannot be taken as an end. They do not provide a proper definition of democracy. In this view democratization is pushed towards an ideal, well-structured and comprehensive institutional system that even long established democracies have been unable to meet.[35] Thus, we see how the eight volumes under review admittedly base democracy on a narrow notion of citizenship and formal legal political equality, rather than on a more comprehensive conception of equality. In the end, their definition sets up a rather tautological classification according to how one distinguishes between democratic and authoritarian regimes.

Reinforcing this notion is John Saul. In his examination of the dilemmas of liberal and popular democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, Saul is quick to point out that "...the

[35] For instance, if we were to employ the literal western sense of democracy—"rule or power of the people"—to the real world of contemporary regimes, then we do not have any democracies at all. In most regimes which are now commonly described as democracies, the people rule no more or less than do minorities of power holders, or elites, in other regimes Etzioni-Haley, E., *Fragile Democracy: The Use and Abuse of Power in Western Societies.* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989) p. x. Also, most long established democracies whose status as democratic is not at issue, carry with them many problems. They range from low levels of participation, the influence of funding hidden from public scrutiny in electoral coffers, the growing sophistication of misleading political marketing as the key strategy for capturing the vote, legislatures that are insufficiently influential, and so on.

political science of democratization must not be allowed to displace the political economy of democratisation".[36] In other words, the trade off between democracy and socio-economic change implied by the editors of *Transitions* and *Democracy and Developing Countries* should not simply be a process of establishing the rules and procedure of political life and avoiding socio-economic progress for another day. Saul's apprehension is because the volumes under review here strengthen the status quo—a neo-liberal order that is responsible for much of the turmoil in the developing or under-developed world. What these eight volumes in essence do, is accept what Saul calls the "painful truth" about social and economic transformation. That is that we must be "realistic" about the prospects for social and economic change.[37] Saul, however warns us that accepting this "truth" might invite us to ... "to trivialize other concerns that drive the debate about democratization".[38] Though he is speaking formally about the African context, the other concerns that he speaks of: "abusive authority, creating fresh space for individual and collective self-expression, the need to institutionalize the possible means of reconciling communal (ethnic and racial) differences" and "economic crises"[39] readily occur throughout all the regions discussed in these volumes.

[36] Saul, J., "Fore Fear of Being Condemned as Old Fashioned: Liberal Democracy vs. Popular Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa," in Daddieh, C., and Mengisteab, K., ed., *State Building and Democracy in Africa.* (Westport, CT : Praeger, 1999), p. 29.
[37] Ibid., p. 29.
[38] Ibid., p. 29.
[39] Ibid., p. 29.

In addition, to these trivialities are others: the role of the military bureaucracy as a relatively autonomous, yet—in most cases—internationally dependent component of the state and the accompanying linkages between the domestic and international milieu. This is especially important given the complex interplay between various key actors: the military, financial and technocratic-intellectual cadres and the dominant imperial power. Gills and Rocamora using the cases of Argentina, Guatemala, the Philippines and South Korea correctly assert that to a large degree the weakness of Third World governments resides with their connection with international capitalism or more specifically with the intervention of governments of advanced capitalist countries, especially the US.[40] Accordingly, international capitalism prevents the consolidation of Third World bourgeois ruling classes and also fractionalises these classes. Due to balance of payment problems and debt repayment crises, badly needed government financial resources are diverted away from creating a stable civil society and to militaries, which in turn are trained by foreign constabularies and often become instruments of foreign intervention.[41] Cummings strengthens this position by also using the South Korean case. Resting also on the proposition of the US's post-war hegemony, Cumming's concludes that the wave of democratization of the 1980s was more a result of national class restructuring brought about by the international economic crises of the time. The root was US policies of "austerity" and "efficiency" under Paul Volcker's direction-

[40] Gills, B., and Rocamora, J., "Low Intensity Democracy", *Third World Quarterly*, 13, 3 (1991), p. 520.
[41] Ibid., p. 520.

the central banker for the United States during the Reagan administration.[42]

In these schemes we see a re-assertion of dependency theory, where actors are not seen as spurring the transition from authoritarianism but rather international economic marginality and dependent economic development and the resulting popular mobilization. In particular, military withdrawal is seen as a full-blown crisis of domination—or a crisis of authoritarian capitalism as it were. The combined impact of economic crises, a weakening of internal control, growing ungovernability and a subdued—or even ambivalent—US agenda towards "certain" military governments, we begin to see the retreat of the military in a new and proper light. Given the military, insofar as it can manage the process of the transition is driven by a desire to restrict change to the political realm or rules and procedures and thus we see an effort to manage a counter-revolutionary status quo by means of regluarized institutional and electoral procedures, whose intellectual software, transition literature or "transitology",[43] is fundamentally skewed to guaranteeing what is "possible" and "realistic", thus in turn guaranteeing elite privilege. Not surprisingly, this was a proposition spelled out by Nicos Poulantzas 25 years ago.[44] Poulantzas's neo-Marxist analysis concentrates on class formations and contradictions within the bourgeois capitalist state leading to

[42] Cummings, B., "The Abortive Abertura: South Korea in the Light of the Latin American Experience", *The New Left Review*, 173 (Jan-Feb., 1989), p. 28.
[43] Nef, J., "The Trend Towards Democratization and Redemocratization in Latin America".
[44] Poulantzas, N., *The Crisis of the Dictatorships: Portugal, Greece, Spain*. (London: New Left Books, 1976).

a restructuring of authority. What is needed is a sharper focus of the extent to which military regimes altered the societal bases for political association and participation, the relationship of political parties to their constituents, the networks of mediation and the institutional framework for political competition. In short, mainstream transition scholars have studied democratic breakdowns and moved to studying democratic transitions without seriously analyzing the authoritarian phase that came in between.

Democracy without people is a clever and deliberate attempt to deconstruct and to substitute liberalism for democracy, disguising the close identification between economic liberalism and authoritarianism. With this in mind it becomes easy to see how the O'Donnell and Diamond collections, view democracy—or in their case a pluralist political democracy—as market economics (liberal capitalism) constituting the base upon which a democratic superstructure—market politics or political liberalism can be constructed. The retreat of the military regimes of the 1970s followed by the "democratic transitions" of the 1980s, is then put forward as evidence of the consolidation of pluralistic regimes throughout the world. The fact is that this triumphalist discourse is reflected only in the real distance between rhetoric and reality.

Finally to the discerning student of comparative politics, I suggest a rather unconventional way of viewing the literature presented here. Often when reading the literature investigating the political economy of democratic transitions, a linear relationship between liberal democracy and capitalist development is assumed. This approach stresses contrast more than real comparisons between the

"normal" western democracies of the North with and the "exceptional" democracies of the South. Rather than finding ideological sources or political inspiration from the experiences of either the southern cone countries or South Korea, one should be using these experiences as important points of reference and comparison with Western democracies. The policies of the military regimes of the 1970s display a striking similarity to the neo-conservative projects of some advanced industrial countries. Issues such as "demand overload," "ungovernability," and "crisis of the state" were part of these experiences before the "conservative revolutions" of Thatcher and Reagan took place.