Democratic Challenges in the Contemporary World

Paper Prepared to be presented at the First Coordination Meeting of the Non-Governmental Process for the Community of Democracies

David Altman
daltman@puc.cl

Instituto de Ciencia Política – Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Campus San Joaquín, Av. Vicuña Mackenna 4860
Macul – Santiago, Chile
Democratic Challenges in the Contemporary World*

1) Introduction

This paper argues from the very beginning that the conceptualization and the promotion of democracy is an extremely difficult and controversial task. Due to the great variety of countries and realities around the world it is impossible to find a magic formula for achieving democracy, improving the rule of law, expanding citizens’ participation, and mounting civil rights and political freedoms. These broad thematic subjects could be hardly addressed in a comprehensive manner in this paper. Moreover, as Diamond suggests: 

It is impossible to offer a general strategy or sequence of political reforms to fit such widely varying cases. That is why careful assessment must be done of the current state of democracy and governance in each country. There is no one sector that provides the key to fostering democracy and good governance. There is no one “answer.” And there are no shortcuts. In most countries that lack stable and effective governance today, we must be prepared to work on a number of fronts over a prolonged period of time (Diamond 2003).

Nonetheless, this paper shows that there is a relatively large consensus that Robert Dahl’s definition of polyarchy provides a good starting point to differentiate democratic from non-democratic regimes. However, his definition is far less useful to make distinctions among democracies. This is why this paper makes an effort to expand Dahl’s definition in order to assess democratic quality cross-nationally. Rather than considering the two main dimensions of democracy--contestation and participation--solely as basic rights, it also considers them as key indicators for the quality of democracy. In other words, to evaluate democratic quality this paper assesses effective levels of competition and participation, assuming that high quality democracies are competitive and participatory regimes.

Empirically, data show that during the past decades there has been a sustained improvement of democracy throughout the world and that among democratic regimes competition and participation have also increased. However these advances have been far from pervasive, particularly in the developing world. This new scenario reflects mostly a marked trend of democratization in Latin America and Eastern Europe, which has been less homogeneous in other regions of the world.

Additionally, this paper also argues that democracy is clearly associated with some key aspects that affect human welfare, such as modernization, economic, and human development. This point is crucial in that it provides a solid ground to defend the argument

*I thank Rossana Castiglioni for her ideas, comments, and suggestions. All caveats apply.
that fostering democratic consolidation is necessary not only for the sake of granting civil and political rights but also to improve the chances of individuals to live dignified lives. Yet, democracy can also be defended in normative terms. As Sen explains,

the value of democracy includes its intrinsic importance in human life, its instrumental role in generating political incentives, and its constructive function in the formation of values (and in understanding the force and feasibility of claims of needs, rights, and duties). These merits are not regional in character. Nor is the advocacy of discipline or order. Heterogeneity of values seems to characterize most, perhaps all, major cultures (Sen 1999).

Despite the advances described above, we still have a long way to go to make the world more democratic. Following Linz and Stepan (1996), in order to promote and consolidate democracies we need to go beyond electoral politics. As important as being able to grant citizens the right to vote freely and fairly is to build strong economic and civil societies. Economically, it is crucial to narrow the gap not only between rich and poor nations, but also to reduce existing inequalities within countries. Yet, no democracy can flourish without a lively civil society.

Although there are plenty of mechanisms that could strengthen civil society, direct democracy devices from below may constitute a potential tool to empower citizens in the decision-making process. Besides, the new context of information technologies provides increasing opportunities to invigorate civil society. In this vein, a good example of how this new scenario can help to foster stronger civil societies is e-government, which may help reduce information costs, develop new accountability mechanisms, and prompt civil society participation.

This paper is organized as follows. After this introduction, it offers an analysis of the main conceptual issues touching upon democracy. It then examines the quality of democracy and the outlook of democratization worldwide. Next, it discusses some key outputs of democracy, paying special attention to modernization, economic and human development. Finally, it deals with the main challenges for consolidating democracies and explores some alternative ways of addressing them.
2) On the Concept of Democracy

In the past six decades, few concepts in political science have been at the center of scientific research as democracy. An enormous amount of energy in comparative politics has been devoted to conceptualize, define and measure the concept of democracy (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Despite all these efforts, "democracy is probably the most complex concept in political science. It has not been and may never be measured in all its many-faceted, multidimensional glory" (Coppedge 2002). Nonetheless, it is possible to trace a clear path in the development of the concept of democracy, which has evolved from minimum electoral or procedural definitions to much broader conceptualizations.

Perhaps Schumpeter (1950) offered the first attempt to provide a working definition that challenged the classical, more normative, doctrine of democracy. In his view, democracy is not an end in itself, it is a “political method, that is to say, a certain institutional arrangement for arriving at political—legislative and administrative—decisions... in which individual acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (1950:269). Schumpeter does not believe in the existence of a common good, since for every individual or group what is considered good or bad has different meanings, and even if individuals could agree on what is good for them the ways in which the common good should be attained will be deemed different. What democracy can achieve is only the will of the majority. Schumpeter’s main contribution was to introduce a minimalist definition of democracy that allowed to compare existing regimes and to differentiate democratic and non-democratic regimes at a very basic level. However, he was severely criticized for the elitist character of his definition, since for him the elite has a paramount role in politics and citizens’ only role is to elect governments.

Other authors attempted to go beyond purely electoralist definitions of democracy, by taking into consideration the institutional requirements needed for a democracy to transpire. In this vein, Robert Dahl (1956; 1971; 1989) coined the concept of polyarchy in an attempt to distinguish it from the notion of democracy, which he viewed as an ideal rather than a reality. The concept of polyarchy was originally developed to refer to actually existing democracies. In this view, polyarchies are characterized by the fact that the government is able to continuously address the demands of the citizens without any form of political discrimination against them. In order to reach this goal, two requirements must be met: citizens should be able to publicly voice their preferences, and participation in the political system should be as inclusive as possible. Therefore competition or contestation and participation are the key components of a polyarchy.
Therefore, Dahl defines a polyarchy as a regime which elect its leaders through free and fair elections in which most of its adult population has the right to vote and also to run for public office. Dahl conceived this as a multifaceted concept composed by eight different institutional requirements: freedom of organization and expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, and institutions linking public preferences to policy outcomes (Dahl 1971: 3). Since polyarchy is a concept originally framed in terms of institutional requirements (free and fair elections, and so on) more than in terms of effective behavior, it is appropriate to measure it through indicators of rights. Coppedge and Reinicke (1990) developed a battery of indicators to measure civil and political rights leading to polyarchy. In this way they showed that when all requirements are met (that is, when countries go beyond a certain threshold in all dimensions) polyarchy becomes a fact and democracy becomes a possibility.

There is no doubt that this approach is sensible for distinguishing between polyarchies and non-polyarchies, but it does not allow to make differentiations among polyarchic regimes. In other words, although it makes it possible to distinguish a democratic from a non-democratic regime, once we cluster the universe of democracies we can say very little about their nuances and main characteristics. This limitation has become particularly obvious in light of the third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991). In this context, students of comparative politics have noticed, not without satisfaction, a decreasing range of variance in their favorite dependent variable: the political regime. Explaining the conditions for the emergence, breakdown, or survival of different types of political regimes has been the bread and butter of comparative studies. Political regimes have tended to remain democratic in many countries, which means that the dependent variable shows no significant variance any more. This situation has led scholars to new and subtler questions about preconditions for democratic consolidation and to more detailed analyses of institutional features in new democracies. Moreover, it is sparking a growing interest in the prospects of consolidation and the quality of democratic life, factors that clearly vary from country to country and even within the same country.

As Collier and Levitsky (1997) have shown, this democratization wave has prompted scholars to pursue two main goals: to develop a differentiated conceptualization of democracy that captures the diverse experiences of these countries and to extend the analysis to the broad range without stretching the concept of democracy. These goals resulted in a series of conceptual innovations that led to the “adjetivization” of democracy. In other words, the main way that scholars could reflect the empirical diversity within the universe of democracies was to attach an adjective to this concept (i.e. neopatrimonial,
authoritarian, delegative democracy, and the like). Although they identify five types of definitions for democracy, a substantial consensus emerged around a procedural minimum or expanded procedural minimum definition of democracy such as the one elaborated by Dahl.¹

Other authors have also attempted to characterize these third wave democracies by paying attention to the process of democratic consolidation. In their seminal work, Linz and Stepan (1996) consider three main preconditions for democratic consolidation to occur: (1) a state must exist, (2) the transition process has to be completed, and (3) rulers have to govern democratically. They also claim that a necessary but not sufficient condition is that elections fulfilling Dahl’s polyarchy criteria must be held. Only when these preconditions are met the political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives can become “the only game in town.” Yet, for a democracy to become consolidated three dimensions should be in place: behaviorally no significant actor should attempt to overthrow the democratic regime or to promote domestic or international violence in order secede from the State; attitudinally a strong majority of public opinion must hold the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life; and constitutionally conflicts should be solved within the bounds of the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.

Perhaps the most promising, yet embryonic, way to address the challenges of new and old democracies has to do with their evaluation in terms of quality. This new interest is related to the fact that nowadays, we face two contradictory scenarios. On the one hand, never more than before so many people around the globe were free to elect their leaders in a democratic way. On the other, more often than not, democratic performance seems to be challenged by the emergence of public disaffection, weak rule of law, corruption of elected officials, an increasing gap between rich and poor citizens within countries, lack of accountability and transparency, the continuous marginalization of important groups of our societies, and the like. Although the future may look promising, it is clear that changes must be introduced in order for democracy to become institutionalized and consolidated and to bring about high quality democracies. The following section is devoted to address these issues.

¹ These five definitions are: (1) Electoralist - reasonably competitive elections, devoid of massive fraud and broad suffrage; (2) Procedural Minimum - basic civil rights are present; (3) Expanded Procedural Minimum - elected governments have effective power to govern; (4) Prototypical Conception of Established Industrialized Democracies; (5) Maximalist Definition Collier, David and Steve Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Finding Conceptual Order in Recent Comparative Research". World Politics 49 (3): 430-51..
3) Quality of Democracy

Recent studies of democratization have increasingly dealt with the problem of the quality of democracy (QD). In some cases, as previously said, students have focused on marginal cases that, despite being close to the basic standards of polyarchy, are harmed by substantive flaws that negatively affect democratic life in the country (i.e. Valenzuela 1992). To deal with these cases they have developed a whole array of “diminishing types” of democracy (see Collier and Levitsky 1997). In other cases, political scientists have attempted to rank democracies according to some particular criterion. The idea underlying this approach is that even countries that share the “procedural minimum” differ in their internal degrees of democratization. In other words, it is assumed that even within the set of polyarchies some regimes are better than others (O'Donnell 1996). This is certainly not at odds with the Dahlian concept of polyarchy, originally conceived as a minimum threshold of democratization—a threshold desired to be surpassed as a result of institutional development (Dahl 1971).

Unfortunately, the very idea of QD is vague enough to call for a whole array of different indicators. In fact, democracies can “improve” along a large number of aspects, and it is arguable that each of these is a valid dimension of the concept. Comparativists have faced this problem in two ways. While some have considered the idea of QD as a mere extension of the idea of democracy, others have emphasized particular aspects that are related to, but not necessary corollaries of, democratic politics. Scholars in the first group have consistently asked: what countries are more democratic?, while students in the second cluster have wondered: what democracies are better democracies? Despite their apparent similarities, both questions have opened different avenues for research.

The first and strongest tradition conceived QD as a continuum ranging from perfectly totalitarian regimes to perfectly democratic ones. A good deal of research has been done in order to measure levels of democracy in several ways (Bollen 1980; Bollen 1993; Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Cutright 1963; Gastil 1991; Hadenius 1992; Vanhanen 1984). This view was well suited to fit the classic focus on regime change, assuming that cases would move along a continuum from non-democratic to democratic. We can call this perspective

---

the unidimensional approach since it reduced the idea of QD to one single factor. This does not mean that democracy itself was defined according to one single dimension—indeed, several measures of democracy are multidimensional—but democracy and QD have been seen as a single factor.

Unfortunately, the sensitivity of most measures of democracy to subtle variations in QD among polyarchies tends to be poor. This may be due to instrument design—indices have been elaborated to measure gross variations in regime change—but also because marginal improvements in political rights and liberties may be not the key to the quality of democratic life. Although some seminal research has yielded interesting results under the assumption of unidimensionality (Coppedge 1997; Diamond 1996), other scholars have chosen an alternative path.

Authors in the second field have identified QD with a set of social and political conditions that are related to, but yet independent of, the institutional conditions for polyarchy. According to this perspective, a “full polyarchy” may lack some of the key attributes that would make it a “good polyarchy.” This perspective can be described as a multidimensional approach because it intuitively distinguishes between levels and the quality of democracy. This tradition has emphasized factors like “horizontal accountability” (O'Donnell, 1992), the quality of citizenship at the regional level (O'Donnell 1993), or institutional performance, the latter understood as some objective measure of governmental responsiveness and output levels (Putnam 1993). It is worth noting that many of such positive conditions could be found at “lower” levels of democracy (for instance, in competitive oligarchies; see Dahl, 1971). Some other works have emphasized several dimensions at the same time. In his study of democracy at the state level in the US, Hill (1994) defined QD according to levels of political rights, electoral participation and inter-party competition. The usual assumption underlying this view is that polyarchy is a necessary, yet not sufficient condition, for a high quality of democracy. Although most of these authors explicitly recognize the polyarchy threshold as the conceptual boundary between democratic and non-democratic cases, the relationship between the Dahlian concept and their measures of democratic quality is not always clear.

By effective polyarchy, then, this paper means a regime where participation and contestation are not just allowed, but institutionalized in regular patterns of behavior.

In terms of participation, Dahl (1971) claimed that a political regime is more representative the largest the number of citizens that enjoy the right to vote. Thus he considered the right to participate as one of the two relevant axes defining polyarchy. However, he did not focus on the problem of how many people effectively took advantage
of this right. This paper argues that effective participation is one of the major attributes of the quality of democracy.

The quality of democracy is related to electoral participation in several ways. On the one hand, participation can be seen as a value in itself, as “participatory” theorists of democracy have argued (Pateman 1970). But even an “elitist” view of democracy may see higher participation as a factor improving democratic life. High rates of turnout mean more voters using their resources to control politicians, thus making elites more accountable to a larger portion of the citizenship. Teixeira has summarized this argument in the American context:

Somehow the system has developed in such a way that more citizens every election fail to politically participate in the easiest and most elementary form: by voting. This failure to participate means that the proportion of the population to which political elites must respond declines over time. This, in turn, allows narrower interest groups to assert their priorities, since proportionally fewer votes are necessary to influence an election, and gives political elites more freedom to do what they want (Texeira 1987:4).

It has been also noticed that high participation is not the cause, but the consequence of a good democratic life. The health of a democratic regime is particularly weak when some citizens are effectively disenfranchised as a consequence of poverty, lack of basic education or sheer apathy. Some analysts contend that low participation may reflect high satisfaction with the political regime. This paper disputes this idea based on the fact that most studies have shown that the less educated people (the ones with fewest opportunities in the system) are the less inclined to vote (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). In his study of Brazil, Brasil de Lima, Jr. argued that “... electoral participation rates are a function of both the degree of satisfaction with the political regime, as well as with the party system, and a function of a widespread feeling that voting is meaningful, in the sense that it might change the political situation” (1983: 65).

In addition, participation is related to the quality of democracy since it reflects what is at stake in politics. If political agendas do not represent the citizens' priorities, then there is a lower incentive to join political life. Commenting on the high rates of abstention in the US, Schattschneider noticed that the nature of the political agenda is itself closely associated with participation rates:

The segment of the population which is least involved (in politics) or most convinced that the system is loaded against it is the most likely point of subversion. This is the sickness of democracy. (...) Abstention reflects the suppression of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the nonparticipants. It is not necessarily true that the people with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively. Whoever decides what the game is about decides also who can get into the game (Schattschneider 1960: 102).
Since all modern democracies are organized on the basis of regular elections as the way to select governments, it turns out that voting at the national level is the basic common feature of all polyarchies. It is undeniable that participation may adopt many other forms, but such forms are significant only if they are able to affect the probability of incumbents remaining in power. Moreover, alternative forms of participation are highly dependent on the specific political context, which makes comparisons highly difficult. In contrast, voter turnout rates are theoretically consistent indicators of effective participation across nations.

It can be certainly argued that some institutional arrangements foster turnout rates over others. For instance, flexible registration procedures or compulsory election laws may push participation rates upwards. In our view, such institutional conditions are clearly improving the quality of democratic life. By encouraging citizens to participate in politics, such mechanisms force parties and policy makers to take their preferences into consideration. The words of former President of the American Political Science Association Arend Lijphart are extremely compelling in this regard. In his view, participation problems can be solved by institutional mechanisms that maximize turnout. One option is the combination of voter-friendly registration rules, proportional representation, infrequent elections, weekend voting, and holding less salient elections concurrently with the most important national elections. The other option, which can maximize turnout by itself, is compulsory voting. Its advantages far outweigh the normative and practical objections to it (Lijphart 1997: 1).

The second dimension in Dahl's concept of polyarchy is contestation. The idea underlying the concept of contestation is that democratic challenges to the ruling elite can emerge only if certain basic preconditions are met. Only when free and fair elections take place in an environment of civil and political rights, and alternative sources of information are available, it is possible for the opposition to contest the power of the ruling party.

As in the case of participation, of course, the preconditions for contestation do not guarantee that effective competition will take place. Even if all polyarchies share the minimum conditions for contestation, it is well known that in many polyarchies some parties

---


Participatory channels can adopt extremely diverse forms: from the participatory budget in a city as Porto Alegre (Brazil) to the possibility of choosing how to spend taxes as in some Scandinavian countries.
are able to remain in power unchallenged. Sartori (1976) called such regimes “predominant party systems.” With such a low probability of rotation in power, citizens have fewer incentives to get involved in politics since electoral outcomes are easily expected, political elites have fewer incentives to be responsive to the demands of the electorate (since they enjoy a safer position), and a weak opposition is less able to control the ruling party. Following Sartori, this paper claims that the more competitive a system is, the more sensitive it becomes to the preferences of the electorate.

Measuring the effectiveness of contestation is not an easy task because of the multidimensionality of the original concept. Of course, one could try to develop an index reflecting all possible forms of contestation within a given society (including speeches and news coverage challenging the government, popular mobilization against public policy, and so on and so forth). However, all such forms of contestation would be in principle ineffective unless they translate into some political force being able to affect policy outcomes and able to challenge the monopoly of power by the predominant party. Effective contestation, then, is manifested in the access that parties in the opposition have to the policymaking process and in the extent to which they are able to represent an alternative to the ruling coalition.

An indicator of competition useful for our purposes must fulfill three requirements. First it should reflect the opposition’s access to the legislative process, rather than mere electoral outcomes (which can be distorted through disproportionality or fraud). Second it should punish the excessive dominance of the ruling party in policymaking, but, third, without rewarding excessive dominance of the opposition (which may create serious problems of governability). For an expansion on these topics and elaboration of a competition index see: Altman and Pérez-Liñán (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 1999; Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002)). The next section of the paper shows some evidence taking into account these components of a polyarchic regime: freedoms and rights, participation, and competition.

---

4 This paper measures the opposition’s access to power as a weighted difference between the share of the seats of the government and the opposition parties in the lower chamber. Since it is important to penalize fragmentation, this paper designed a measure to find the “typical party” in the opposition by weighting the shares of seats in favor of the largest parties:

\[ O = \frac{\sum o_i^2}{\sum o_i} \]

\( O \) is an indicator of the leverage of the opposition, where \( o_i \) is the share of seats for the i-th opposition party. We followed the same procedure to estimate the size of the “typical party in government” in the case of electoral coalitions winning office:
4) Democratization Throughout the World

After a “full polyarchy” level is reached, improvements in “formal” rights are just marginally relevant for the overall quality of democracy. Once the basic requirements are met, however, it is still an open question whether the regime is an “effective polyarchy.” That is, it is necessary to know the extent of respect for civil and political rights as well as the extent to which participation and contestation have transcended the mere condition of possibilities and have become actualities. Because these dimensions were derived from Dahl’s concept of polyarchy, this approach is particularly useful for the purpose of cross-national comparison.

While political scientists currently use several different measures of regimes, we will use two databases with a fairly long series for the world. These are Freedom House (2002) and Polity IV (2001) that, by the way, are highly correlated (Ward 2002). For our universe of analysis the Pearson correlation between Freedom House and Polity IV is .841 significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). In this paper I rely on Freedom House because it offers the more updated information up to 2003. To make Freedom House scores more "user-friendly" I decided to normalize them.5

As we see in Figure 1, since 1973 it is possible to observe an almost linear increasing value of the normalized Freedom House scores. Nonetheless, it presents deflections in several points of the continuum. The positive changes are associated with “waves” such as the Latin American transition to democracy (late 1970’s and early 1980’s) and the one that took place after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. For the negative changes it is harder to talk about “waves,” albeit it is clear that some regions saw their freedoms fade away more than others. For instance, in 1994 Sub-

\[ G = \sum \frac{g_i^2}{\sum g_i} \]

Based on our previous assessment of the size of the “typical parties” in government and in opposition, we developed and index of competitiveness:

\[ C = 1 - \left| \frac{G - O}{100} \right| \]

The value of C tends to zero whenever the government (or the opposition) controls the whole legislature, and to one if there is balance between government and opposition.

5 Normalization of Freedom House scores is done using the following formulae: NFH=(14-(CR+PF))/12, where CR means civil rights scores and PF means political freedom scores. The resulting score varies from 0 to 1, being 1 equivalent to a 1-1 Freedom House scores (i.e. perfectly free), and 0 equivalent to a 7/7 Freedom House scores, i.e. not free at all.
Saharan Africa (Burundi, Nigeria, Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Congo, Kenya, Senegal, Zambia) and South Central Asia (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) were the regions with the sharpest decrease in freedoms, according to Freedom House. A year earlier, 1993, the change was more diverse in its geographic scope and was led by Tajikistan, Algeria, and Peru.
Also, by way of a series of box plots we can grasp the degree of democraticness at each of the eight regions (see Annex) in which Freedom House divided the world. Each box shows the median, quartiles, and extreme values within a category of regime (outliers were deleted for graphical purposes). This graphical way of expressing the data has the advantage of capturing inter and intra-regional differences (see Figure 2).

One interesting aspect of Figure 2 is that it allows identifying a cluster of democratic regions comprised by Latin America and the Caribbean, Easter Europe, Western Europe and North America, and Oceania. Within each region, differences are significant as well. While Western Europe and North America show an almost perfectly homogeneous average in their normalized FH scores (only Greece and Monaco rank below 1, at 0.92), other regions present variations that cover almost the whole range of scores, such as South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Within South East Asia, Myanmar and North Korea have a normalized FH of 0, and China, Laos and Vietnam of 0.08. At the same time, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea lead the region in terms of civil rights and political freedoms.
Eastern Europe and Oceania are, after Western Europe and North America, the regions that rank higher in terms of their regional averages. Nonetheless, dispersion of cases in Eastern Europe is significant. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ukraine are located at the bottom (Belarus is an outlier), and Slovenia leads the region followed immediately by the Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. Oceania is the second most democratic region of the world, where several countries have a score of 1, and the weakest performers are Fiji and Tonga.

For Latin America and the Caribbean averages come immediately after Eastern Europe. The scores of Cuba and Haiti (0 and 0.17, respectively) lowered the regional average and these two countries constitute statistical outliers. The remaining two regions—South Central Asia and North Africa and the Middle East—lag behind in terms of their Freedom House ratings. South Central Asia is characterized by a broad dispersion in its scores: Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are located at the bottom of the region with scores of 0 and 0.08 respectively and India and Sri Lanka head the region with 0.75 and 0.58 respectively. According to Freedom House, North Africa and the Middle East are, on average, the least democratic regions, mainly because several countries (such as Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Sudan) have 0 in their scores.
Figure 2: Normalized Freedom House Scores for the Year 2003

So far we have dealt with the realm of civil rights and political freedoms, but we still need to examine democratic quality in empirical terms. Needless to say, that each region deserves a careful scrutiny in order to assess its main strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, due to time and data constraints, information for the two main dimensions utilized to evaluate democratic quality (participation and competition) is available only for the Latin American region. Table 1 below, shows the democratic quality indicators for all Latin American countries at two moments: from transition to democracy up to 1996 and during the first two years of the new century. The last column shows the average variation in terms of democratic quality for the periods under consideration.

Although every country presents some variation in terms of democratic quality, the magnitude of changes fluctuates greatly for country to country. Nonetheless, on average
Latin America shows 4.22% improvement. Special attention has to be paid to Mexico and Venezuela. Mexico made a transition to democracy in the late 1990’s, leading in 2000 to the end of the PRI’s rule, a party that was in power for more than seventy years. This alternation of power is reflected in Mexico’s dramatic improvement. Venezuela is the country where all democratic quality indicators deteriorated more rapidly (over 30%). Colombia represents a surprising case. Although it improved all its indicators, it still has extremely low civic participation at elections. In the same vein, Guatemala and El Salvador are paradigmatic cases of low civic participation where barely over one third of the population votes in national elections.

**Table 1: Changes in the Quality of Democracy in Latin America**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House</td>
<td>(%/VAP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.77</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.798</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Altman and Pérez-Liñán (2002)

The information presented in Table 1 is extremely useful to evaluate the outlook of democratic quality in Latin America. Future research should include other regions of the world to evaluate prospects of democratic quality worldwide. Although building a database
for the whole world is beyond the scope of this paper, in Annex 2 displays the same indicators for 58 countries circa 1985.

5) Democratic Outputs: Modernization, Economic and Human Development

Up to this point, we have examined the main conceptual and empirical issues touching upon democracy and the outlook of democratic quality and democratization worldwide. Yet, another crucial aspect that should be taken into consideration has to do with the outputs of democracy. Scholars and policymakers have devoted great attention to deem whether or not democracy has a positive impact on some key aspects that affect human welfare, such as modernization, economic and human development. Although it is not clear that democracies produce better results than non-democratic regimes along these variables, there is no doubt that a very strong correlation exists (see Figure 3). The next few pages tackle these issues and offer a review of the main arguments and evidence behind such correlation.

During the second half of the twentieth century, one of the most prolific discussions in political science was, and still is, the study of the relationship between economic development and democracy. Although many scholars such as Mills, Marx, and Tocqueville studied this relationship, it was not until the late 50’s -with Lerner (1958) and Lipset (1959)- that this focus of attention reached its momentum. It was at this time when Lipset wrote “the more well-to-do a country in economic terms, the greater the chances to sustain a democratic government,” a sentence that made history and that O’Donnell, twenty year later, called the “optimist equation” (1979). This “Optimist Equation” was based on the belief that modernization (i.e. economic development, the increase in communications, and better levels of education) tend to produce moderate tendencies in society; and consequently, more moderate lower and upper classes and a larger middle class. This context tends to produce a better ground to maintain democracy.
At the beginning of the 1960’s Phillips Cutright (1963) empirically examined Lipset’s ideas through multivariate statistical analysis. The correlation between communication, development, and democracy (or political development, to use the language of those years) was 0.81, while the correlation between economic development and democracy was 0.68. At this time, the problem that started to arise was essentially theoretical: in which direction does causation go? Is it that economic development affects democracy or is it the other way around?

Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) point out that from Lipset on, we can trace two main lines of research on the relationship between economic development and democracy. Both lines not only differ in the methods they use, but also in the conclusions they arrive to. On the one hand, are those who maintain the classic quantitative cross-national analysis--among those, we can underline Cutright (1963), Huntington (1968), Bollen (1979), Bollen and Jackman (1985; Bollen and Jackman 1995), Muller (1988; 1989; 1995). On the other, we find the comparative historical studies on those issues--such as those of Bendix (1964), Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979), O'Donnell (1979) and dependency theory scholars.

In general, those who studied from a quantitative cross-national perspective tended to agree with Lipset’s optimist equation. Using increasingly sophisticated analytical and statistical tools, these authors disagree about the shape of the association between economic development and democracy, albeit they do not question the relationship itself. Nonetheless using quantitative cross-national methods Huntington (1965; 1968) and Hannan and Carroll (1981) arrive at diametrically different conclusions.
In fact, it was Huntington in 1968 that made the first big ‘attack’ on modernization theory using classic modernization variables. His claim was that rapid modernization could lead to a ‘revolution of rising frustrations’ (using the words of Lerner, 1958) in which the state could not foster political stability and would thus produce political decay. Hannan and Carroll consider that economic growth and development serve to maintain and to strengthen any regime (despite its kind--democratic or not) that achieves modernization. At the end of the 1990’s Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi corroborate this idea (1997).

During the 1970’s and 1980’s modernization theory became widely discredited because of the wave of authoritarian regimes in many parts of the worlds, especially in Latin America. Many scholars accused it of being ethnocentric and too optimist (Coleman 1971), especially those writing from the World-system and dependentist perspectives, such as Wallerstein (1974) and Cardozo and Faletto (1979). Also, analyzing the U.S. and Switzerland at the beginning of the 19th century, Rustow (1970) goes against modernization theory. He concludes that there is no particular level of economic development that is a pre-requisite for democracy. What truly matters is a strong sense of national unity and some kind of elite commitment to a democratic transition.

For those who use comparative historical analysis, the relationship between modernization and democracy is much more complex. Moore’s influential Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (1966) points out three main paths that modernization could take in different contexts. Each of these paths leads to a different outcome: democracy, communist dictatorship, and fascist regime. Making a complex comparative research he concludes that the consequences of modernization are established by the historical constellation of early capitalism (which is not necessarily likely to be repeated). In his model, the crucial explanatory factor is the agrarian strata (which could be labor-repressive or market dominated).

O’Donnell’s book Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism is another exponent of a comparative historical study. In his opinion, in Latin America, low and high levels of modernization are associated with non-democratic political systems and democracy is viable in medium levels of modernization (the ‘N’ curve). Although O’Donnell uses the classic variables of modernization theory (GNP per capita, students in universities, and so on), he offers a strong criticism of how modernization theorists used these variables. For example: the growing wealth of some segments of the population affects national averages strongly but nothing changes for the majority of citizens. Moreover, O’Donnell’s main critique of modernization theory, and of those who make quantitative cross-national studies, lies on the fact that the direction of this causal relationship could be hardly established. In sum, both perspectives (quantitative cross-national and comparative historical studies) not
only differ in the methods they use, but also in the conclusions they reach (Rueschemeyer 1991).

At the edge of what we can call the fourth wave of democratization—referring to those transitions associated with the end of the Cold War—many voices, like Diamond’s, claim that modernization theory and its optimistic equation hold. As he explains: “the more well-to-do the people of a country, on average, the more likely they will favor, achieve, and maintain a democratic system for their country” (Diamond 1992: 468).

In a very similar way, the debates about the connection between democracy and human development arrived at contrasting, and sometimes contradictory, conclusions. In reviewing this literature, Zweifel and Navia (2000) argue that some scholars claim that democracies are better at addressing the needs of their citizens because they are more accountable to their populations than dictatorships. Conversely, others remark that the “unintended consequences of a premature democracy slow development and that the decisive and pervasive state intervention required for development is unduly fettered by democracy” (Zweifel and Navia 2000: 101). Still others have challenged the idea that there is a (positive or negative) relationship between democracy and human development (Zweifel and Navia 2000: 100-101).

Figure 4 below displays a scatter plot of normalized Freedom House scores and the Human Development Index elaborated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).6 It confirms that, similarly to what occurs in the realm of economic development, there is a clear association between democracy and human development, albeit this table tells us very little about the direction of this causal association.

---

6 This paper follows the conceptualization and measurement of UNDP regarding human development. For UNDP, human development is the process of enlarging people’s choices to lead a long and healthy life, acquire knowledge, and have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the level of human development through longevity (measured by life expectancy at birth); education (measured by a combination of adult literacy (two-thirds weight) and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolment ratios); and income (measured by purchasing power parity).
Despite debates, several scholars have strong theoretical and empirical grounds to show that democracy favors human development. Among them, research has often focused on assessing the impact of democracy on a single policy area, such as infant mortality or food security (see for example Dreze and Sen 1989; Jenkins and Scanlan 2001; McGuire 2002; Zweifel and Navia 2000) or on the physical quality of living in developing nations (London and Williams 1990; Moon 1991; Wickrama and Muldorf 1996). Similarly, in the literature on social policy development in advanced industrial nations, scholars from the power resources perspective have claimed that democratic politics allow workers and diverse interest groups to shape and to push for redistributive social policy. This occurs because in democratic politics, “the principal power resources are the right to vote and the right to organize for collective action” (Korpi 1989: 312). Thus, in this view political and civil rights are essential for social policy development.

Perhaps T.H. Marshall elaborated the most seminal contribution to our knowledge of the connection among civil, political and, social rights. In his study of citizenship in Western European countries, Marshall argued that the expansion of civil rights first and then political rights, facilitated the ensuing extension of social rights. The formative period of civil rights was the 18th century and they included individual freedoms such as speech, thought and faith, property rights and the right to justice. Political rights, in turn, expanded in the 19th century and included the right to participate in the exercise of political power, by running and voting for office. Finally, social rights developed in the 20th century and included “a

---

modicum of economic welfare and security, to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall 1992: 8).

The crucial aspect of Marshall’s contribution (at least for the purposes of this paper) is that civil and political rights are considered critical for the extension of social rights, as they allow those actors who favor redistributive social policy, to organize and to push for new or better benefits. As he remarks,

Civil rights became, for the workers, an instrument for rising their social and economic status, that is to say for establishing the claim that they, as citizens, were entitled to certain social rights. But the normal method of establishing social rights is by the exercise of political power, for social rights imply an absolute right to a certain standard of civilization which is conditional only on the discharge of the general duties of citizenship (Marshall 1992: 26).

This is not to say, however, that social rights, and the concomitant promotion of human development, are introduced solely after a reasonable expansion of civil and political rights has occurred. In fact, for a variety of reasons, there are several examples of the introduction of social rights by authoritarian governments. In Europe, for instance, Germany’s Chancellor Bismarck, extended social rights to avoid granting political rights as well as to consolidate divisions among wage-earners and to instill loyalty to the State authority (Esping-Anderson 1990: 24; Rimlinger 1971: 112). In the same vein, some of the authoritarian governments of the East Asian “dragons” introduced minimum social rights to boost productivity and economic growth as well as to gain political legitimization (Holliday 2000: 708; Moon and Yang 2002: 151). And in Latin America, several countries followed a “populist pattern” though which some rather limited social rights were granted, before political and civil rights were acquired (O’Donnell 2001: 603).

As a result, one can hardly claim that the civil and political rights associated with democracy are a precondition for the development of social rights. Yet, civil and, particularly, political rights offer citizens the unique opportunity to organize, mobilize, and push for better living conditions. As O’Donnell has emphasized, political rights can be “used as a space of freedom from which to conquer other rights. ... This possibility, which originates in the availability of political rights, is denied by all kinds of authoritarian rule. ... It is a possibility uniquely offered by democracy, through the political rights it enacts, to those who suffer truncated social and civil rights” (O’Donnell 2001: 605).

By the same token, Przeworski et al (2000) show that dictatorships restrict the opportunities for citizen’s dissent and have a negative impact on some critical social variables, such as life expectancy and infant mortality. They emphasize that
Although democracies are far from perfect, lives under dictatorship are grim and short. Dictatorships are regimes in which political rulers accede to power and maintain themselves in power by force. They use force to prevent people from expressing their opposition and to repress workers. Because they rule by force, they are highly vulnerable to any visible sign of dissent. ... Thus, whereas scarcity makes lives destitute, regimes do make some difference, not only for political liberty but also for material well-being (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi 2000).

Recent studies underline the relation between human development and democracy as a positive one. Using Latin America as a springboard for their analysis, Altman and Castiglioni (2003) show not only that democracies are better than non-democracies in fostering human development controlling for wealth (GDP per capita), but also that differences in degree of democracy have a significant impact on human development in terms of infant mortality, illiteracy, and life expectancy. In other words, the more democratic a regime is along the continuum full authoritarianism to full democracy, the better it will perform in terms of human development. As a result, their research shows that there is a direct, positive relationship between democratic quality and human development.

These findings for Latin America are consistent with the conclusions of previous cross-national research on developing countries about the connection between regime type and human development. Under democratic regimes, individuals tend to live longer and better lives than under non-democratic regimes. But in contrast to other studies, Altman and Castiglioni also show that democratic quality makes a difference in terms of human development. Those democracies that actualize civil and political rights to their fullest potential, have better chances of expanding human development than “restricted democracies” or “electoral democracies,” to use Diamond’s words (Diamond 2003).

Besides telling us something we democrats, want to believe, this finding is relevant in terms of policymaking and not trivial at all. It does make a difference to have a democratic regime, but more important, it does make a big difference to have a “good” democratic regime. Nowadays, several countries have reached the minimum electoral and procedural requirements for being considered democracies. Many of these countries, however, still fall far away from a democracy of high quality. As a result, the elimination of the significant restrictions on participation, competition, and civil liberties mentioned by Mainwaring (1999) seems crucial for the promotion of human development.

6) Challenges for Consolidating Democracy: Politics, the Economy, and Civil Society
There is no doubt that a key challenge worldwide is to consolidate and strengthen democratic regimes and that for this to occur we need not only to strengthen political institutions but also to develop strong civil and economic societies. Nonetheless, before examining alternative ways of addressing this challenge it is crucial to have a clearly defined concept of democratic consolidation. This has been an elusive task, since more often than not, the concept has been used in imprecise and even contrasting ways. Unless we find a common use of the concept confusion will reign.

As Schedler points out “with people using the concept any way they like, nobody can be sure what it means to others, but all maintain the illusion of speaking to one another in some comprehensive way … [T]he study of democratic consolidation, at its current state of conceptual confusion, is condemned to stagnation” (Schedler 1998). Also O'Donnell alerts us that many definitions deem legitimacy as a requirement for consolidation, without providing any guidance for the evaluation of different degrees of legitimacy. As the author asks, “Who must accept formal democratic rules, and how deep must this acceptance run? … There is no theory that would tell us why and how the new polyarchies that have institutionalized elections will ‘complete’ their institutional set, or otherwise become ‘consolidated.’” (O'Donnell 1996).

Perhaps Linz and Stepan offer a crucial starting point to examine these challenges. For these authors, democratic consolidation takes root when the political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives can become “the only game in town” (1996: 15). As they claim there are a series of interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions necessary for the consolidation of democracy.

At the institutional and political realms, it is key to count with an autonomous political society comprised by political actors that compete for the control of public power and the State apparatus. The presence of strong and transparent political parties, legislatures, electoral processes and rules are essential for a democracy to flourish. But we also need to make sure that the State and government are subject to the rule of law. This requires a sound consensus regarding the legitimacy of the Constitution, a strong and independent judiciary, and a widespread support for the rules of the game. Finally, in order to perform its more key tasks, a democratic government needs to count on an efficient state bureaucracy (Linz and Stepan 1996).

Additionally, as we discussed earlier, political participation and competition are crucial for democratic quality. Building competitive polities where alternation in power and the fair expectation that anyone could win an election are a reality brings about not only
democratic consolidation but also democratic quality. The same is true for participation. Even if we clearly acknowledge that citizen’s participation cannot be solely limited to the ballot box, fostering electoral participation is a necessary condition for democracy to thrive. Also, as O’Donnell (1994) reminds us, political institutions provide a crucial level of mediation and aggregation between structural factors, individuals and society. Political institutions have, thus, an important impact on the patterns of organization of society. As a result, a key challenge for democracies worldwide is to build strong political institutions that bridge the gap between the government and the citizens.

It is critical to realize that many of the countries where democracy is needed the most are those governed by leaders who profit, enjoy and desire to preserve their privileges untouched. For this reason, as Rustow (1970) claims, some kind of elite commitment to a democratic transition is needed for achieving democracy. “Even when non-democratic leaders come into power with a manifest and sincere commitment to reform, the absence of any institutional mechanisms to restrain and monitor the exercise of power eventually degrades the quality and legitimacy of governance” (Diamond 2003: 9).

But elite commitment is not an either/or phenomenon. Governments are complex nets of institutions and it is not surprising that in some institutional settings some would be fond of democratic reforms while at the same time others would not. If this is the case, one way to proceed is identifying those prone to democratic reforms and strengthen their position within the state. Another way, as Diamond explains, “(...) is to strengthen constituencies for reform in civil society, including NGOs, interest groups, think tanks, and the mass media” (Diamond P.13).

Linz and Stepan (1996) also suggest that an institutionalized economic society—defined as the socio-politically crafted and accepted norms, institutions, and regulations that mediate between the State and the market-- must exist for democracy to became consolidated. Democracy cannot flourish within what they call a “command economy,” because some degree of ownership and market autonomy is necessary for the emergence of an independent and lively civil society. Similarly, a pure market economy is incompatible with a consolidated democracy, because the performance of basic economic functions (i.e. enforcing contracts, protection of property rights, issuance of money), require some degree of State intervention (1996: 21-22).

It is also crucial to acknowledge the existing relation between democracy and economic development. Even if we are uncertain about the direction of this relation, we could speculate that economic and human development and democracy are mutually reinforcing. In other words, economic and human development provide a fertile soil for democracy, which, in turn has a positive impact on development. But for developing
countries the concurrent strengthening of democracy, the market, and human welfare is a difficult task—to say the least—that can be hardly accomplished without the support of international cooperation. As several leaders in the developing world have pleaded, industrialized countries should ease the strong protective mechanisms and barriers that restrict the entrance of imported products. There is no doubt that both parties are needed to accomplish these difficult tasks. Moreover, as Diamond (2003) suggests,

If governments want help in developing their economies, they must get serious about development. If political leaders want the world to help their publics, they must themselves demonstrate commitment to the public good. Governments that show a commitment to the institutions that govern responsibly and promote growth—by controlling corruption and implementing democracy, freedom, and the rule of law—should be helped generously, not only with increased development assistance but also with debt relief, trade liberalization, and investment promotion (Diamond 2003).

Finally, Linz and Stepan claim that a free and lively civil society (i.e. different social movements, such as unions, business or professional associations, as well as religious, intellectual, or neighbors groups) is critical for democratic consolidation to occur (1996: 17). To strengthen civil society has been a new gospel of the International Assistance for promoting democracy as Nederveen Pieterse claims (2001: 409). No doubt that civil society is extremely relevant and critical for democratization, but strong NGOs or advocacy networks are not the only actors needed for democratization and democracy: political institutions should also enter the picture. Even if we must prioritize and differentiate between the sine-qua-non elements of a democracy and those that are important, it is crucial to acknowledge, as Linz and Stepan (1996) do, that civil and political society must be complementary and that for developing autonomous civil and political societies the rule of law is crucial.

As Tarrow (1998) showed, civil society acts in response to political opportunity structures, which are dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure, and create new ones by way of collective action. But for these political opportunities to expand, governments need to secure transparency and accountability. Accountability might be improved by developing instances in which citizens can participate in public debates and in the decision-making process beyond the election of government representatives every four or five years, which, as Przeworski et al assert, “constitute[s] a weak tool of popular control” (1999). In this vein, direct democracy mechanisms “from below” offer unique opportunities to challenge the status quo and to check the government and its elected officials.
Direct democracy from below, i.e. referendums, recalls, and popular initiatives, is one of the multiple solutions to this “accountability problem” inasmuch as it may allow the inclusion of civil society in the governing process not only as a veto player but also as a proactive member of decision-making. An organized group of citizens may place before the whole citizenry an alteration of the political status quo, addressing an already adopted law, proposing a new legislative measure, or revoking the mandate of an elected official. These type of institutions of direct democracy from below falls within the realm of social accountability. This concept, coined by Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, is defined as "a mechanism of vertical accountability, non-electoral, of the political authorities based on the actions of an ample range of associations and citizen movements, as well as media actions [...] It is activated 'on demand' and can be centered on the control of specific issues, particular policies or civil employees" (2002: 32-33). Direct democracy from below not only has as a virtue its egalitarian aspect (one citizen-one vote) but also the elasticity that characterizes the institutions of social accountability.

Although popular consultations may increase the control or social accountability over governments, “we must examine the dangers that they might produce for the coherence of public policies and individual rights,” as Przeworski argues (2002: 82). For this reason, the use of direct democracy has been criticized because some scholars and policy makers believe that citizens lack all the information needed to make decisions concerning complex political issues.

E-Government could be used as an extremely powerful tool to minimize these information costs and, in turn, to develop new accountability mechanisms and to prompt civil society participation beyond electoral politics. Defined broadly, “e-government is the use of ICT-information and communication technologies-to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens” (Working Group on E-Government in the Developing World 2002: 1).

8 National elections are considered the vertical mechanism of accountability par-excellence. The "non-electoral" component of the definition of social accountability separates the national elections of representatives with other accountability mechanisms used once representatives are elected.


10 Backus differentiates between e-government and e-democracy. For him: "e-democracy refers to the processes and structures that encompass all forms of electronic interaction between Government (elected) and the Citizen (electorate)." On the other hand, "e-government is a form of e-business in governance and refers to the processes and structures pertinent to the delivery of electronic services
Granting access to information and services, e-government allows citizens to be more acquainted with and control more the governing process. While it is certainly important to analyze the role of the government as a key provider of information to the citizens, it is critical to assess how the citizenship could use such information to strengthen accountability. Before evaluating whether it is possible to use e-government mechanisms to address these issues, we need to ensure that the minimum conditions necessary for achieving this goal, such as computer and Internet access and literacy rates, are met. Failing to do so might prevent us from acknowledging that e-government could simply be an additional resource for perpetuating the power of the already powerful people or, more specifically, increasing the digital gap.

ANNEX 1

Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

Eastern Europe: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia

Latin America: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela.

North Africa and Middle East: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.


South Central Asia: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Georgia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

South-East Asia: Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, North, Korea, South, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam


Western Europe and North-America: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.
### ANNEX 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Competitiveness</th>
<th>Turnout (%/VAP)</th>
<th>Normalized FH.</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts &amp; Nevis</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vinc. Grenadines</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


