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## **Delegative Democracy**

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

## **Delegative Democracy**

*Guillermo O'Donnell (bio)*

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Here I depict a "new species," a type of existing democracies that has yet to be theorized. As often happens, it has many similarities with other, already recognized species, with cases shading off between the former

and some variety of the latter. Still, I believe that the differences are significant enough to warrant an attempt at such a depiction. The drawing of neater boundaries between these types of democracy depends on empirical research, as well as more refined analytical work that I am now undertaking. But if I really have found a new species (and not a member of an already recognized family, or a form too evanescent to merit conceptualization), it may be worth exploring its main features.

Scholars who have worked on democratic transitions and consolidation have repeatedly said that, since it would be wrong to assume that these processes all culminate in the same result, we need a typology of democracies. Some interesting efforts have been made, focused on the consequences, in terms of types of democracy and policy patterns, of various paths to democratization.<sup>1</sup> My own ongoing research suggests, however, that the more decisive factors for generating various kinds of democracy are not related to the characteristics of the preceding authoritarian regime or to the process of transition. Instead, I believe that we must focus upon various long-term historical factors, as well as the degree of severity of the socioeconomic problems that newly installed democratic governments inherit.

Let me briefly state the main points of my argument: 1) Existing **[End Page 55]** theories and typologies of democracy refer to *representative* democracy as it exists, with all its variations and subtypes, in highly developed capitalist countries. 2) Some newly installed democracies (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Philippines, Korea, and many postcommunist countries) *are* democracies, in the sense that they meet Robert Dahl's criteria for the definition of polyarchy.<sup>2</sup> 3) Yet these democracies are not—and do not seem to be on the path toward becoming—representative democracies; they present characteristics that prompt me to call them *delegative* democracies (DD). 4) DDs are not consolidated (i.e., institutionalized) democracies, but they may be *enduring*. In many cases, there is no sign either of any imminent threat of an authoritarian regression, or of advances toward representative democracy. 5) There is an important interaction effect: the deep social

and economic crisis that most of these countries inherited from their authoritarian predecessors reinforces certain practices and conceptions about the proper exercise of political authority that lead in the direction of delegative, not representative democracy.

The following considerations underlie the argument presented above:<sup>3</sup>

- A. The installation of a democratically elected government opens the way for a "second transition," often longer and more complex than the initial transition from authoritarian rule.
- B. This second transition is supposed to be from a democratically elected *government* to an institutionalized, consolidated democratic *regime*.
- C. Nothing guarantees, however, that this second transition will occur. New democracies may regress to authoritarian rule, or they may stall in a feeble, uncertain situation. This situation may endure without opening avenues for institutionalized forms of democracy.
- D. The crucial element determining the success of the second transition is the building of a set of institutions that become important decisional points in the flow of political power.
- E. For such a successful outcome to occur, governmental policies and the political strategies of various agents must embody the recognition of a paramount shared interest in democratic institution building. The successful cases have featured a decisive coalition of broadly supported political leaders who take great care in creating and strengthening democratic political institutions. These institutions, in turn, have made it easier to cope with the social and economic problems inherited from the authoritarian regime. This was the case in Spain, Portugal (although not immediately after democratic installation), Uruguay, and Chile.
- F. In contrast, the cases of delegative democracy mentioned earlier have achieved neither institutional progress nor much governmental effectiveness in dealing with their respective social and economic crises.

Before elaborating these themes in greater detail, I must make a brief **[End Page 56]** excursus to explain more precisely what I mean by...



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