4. The failure of consolidation and the disenchantment era

By Claudio Foliti
Linz and Stepan (1996) Democratic consolidation
Consolidation: conditions and definition

1. The existence of a well functioning state (no state, no democracy)
2. Free and fair elections + the government has the effective power to govern
3. The rule of law

• Essentially, by a "consolidated democracy" we mean a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, "the only game in town."
Three dimensions

• **Behaviorally**, a democratic regime in a territory is consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or by seceding from the state.

• **Attitudinally**, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion, even in the midst of major economic problems and deep dissatisfaction with incumbents, holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life, and when support for antisystem alternatives is quite small or more-or-less isolated from prodemocratic forces.

• **Constitutionally**, a democratic regime is consolidated when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike become subject to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the bounds of the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.
Two caveats

• First, when we say a regime is a consolidated democracy, we do not preclude the possibility that at some future time it could break down.

• Our second caveat is that we do not want to imply that there is only one type of consolidated democracy (from low-quality to high-quality democracies).
Beyond a functioning state: 5 conditions

1. Free and lively **civil society**
2. Relatively autonomous **political society**
3. Political actors (especially the government and the state apparatus) must be effectively subjected to a **rule of law** that protects individual freedoms and associational life.
4. A **state bureaucracy** that is usable by the new democratic government.
5. An institutionalized **economic society** (norms, regulations, and institution that mediate between the state and the market)
Rule of law and constitutionalism

- The rule of law must be animated by a spirit of constitutionalism.
- Constitutionalism, which should not be confused with majoritarianism, entails a relatively strong consensus regarding the constitution, and especially a commitment to "self-binding" procedures of governance that can be altered only by exceptional majorities.
- It also requires a clear hierarchy of laws, interpreted by an independent judicial system and supported by a strong legal culture in civil society.
Andreas Schedler (1998)
Democratic consolidation
The original meaning

- Originally, the term "democratic consolidation" was meant to describe:
  - the challenge of making new democracies secure,
  - of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term,
  - of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression,
  - of building dams against eventual "reverse waves."
The only game in town

• To this original mission of rendering democracy "the only game in town," countless other tasks have been added.

• As a result, the list of "problems of democratic consolidation" (as well as the corresponding list of "conditions of democratic consolidation") has expanded beyond all recognition.
New tasks

- It has come to include such divergent items as
  - popular legitimation,
  - the diffusion of democratic values,
  - the neutralization of antisystem actors
  - civilian supremacy over the military,
  - the elimination of authoritarian enclaves,
  - party building,
  - the organization of functional interests,
  - the stabilization of electoral rules,
  - the routinization of politics,
  - the decentralization of state power,
  - the introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy,
  - judicial reform,
  - the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization.
Democracies vs. non-democracies

- First distinction: non-democracies (authoritarianism) vs. democracies
- The most widely accepted criteria for identifying a country as democratic have been put forward by Robert Dahl - civil and political rights plus fair, competitive, and inclusive elections.
- Dahl calls countries that meet these criteria "polyarchies," but they are more commonly referred to as "liberal democracies."
Democracies

- Democracies vs. electoral democracies (any kind of diminished subtype)
- Democracies vs. advanced democracies (possess some positive traits over and above the minimal defining criteria of liberal democracy, and therefore rank higher in terms of democratic quality than many new democracies)
Empirical referents and horizons

• The two middle categories, electoral and liberal democracy, represent the empirical referents of all debate on democratic consolidation.

• In normative terms, authoritarianism forms the outer negative horizon that democrats in both these kinds of regimes try to avoid,

• and advanced democracy forms the outer positive horizon that they try to approach.

• In addition, electoral democracy and liberal democracy constitute normative horizons for each other. While electoral democracy appears as liberal democracy’s proximate horizon of avoidance, liberal democracy appears as electoral democracy’s proximate horizon of attainment.
Consolidation means...

- Those scholars who look (fearfully) from electoral or liberal democracy to authoritarianism equate democratic consolidation with avoiding an authoritarian regression, a "quick death" of democracy.

- Those who look (hopefully) from electoral or liberal democracy to advanced democracy equate democratic consolidation with democratic deepening, with advances in the quality of democracy.

- Those who look (with concern) from liberal democracy to electoral democracy equate democratic consolidation with avoiding a "slow death" of democracy, the erosion of certain fundamental democratic features.

- And those who look (with impatience) from electoral democracy to liberal democracy equate democratic consolidation with completing democracy, with supplying its missing features.
Avoiding democratic breakdown

Authoritarian regime  
Outer negative horizon  
Electoral democracy  
Liberal democracy  
Advanced democracy  
Empirical referents of all debate on democratic consolidation  
Outer positive horizon

Avoiding democratic erosion

Authoritarian regime  
Outer negative horizon  
Electoral democracy  
Liberal democracy  
Advanced democracy  
Empirical referents of all debate on democratic consolidation  
Outer positive horizon
**Schedler: Empirical viewpoints and normative horizons/2**

**Completing democracy**
- Authoritarian regime
- Outer negative horizon
- Empirical referents of all debate on democratic consolidation
- Liberal democracy
- Advanced democracy
- Outer positive horizon

**Deepening democracy**
- Authoritarian regime
- Outer negative horizon
- Empirical referents of all debate on democratic consolidation
- Liberal democracy
- Advanced democracy
- Outer positive horizon
Schedler: Empirical viewpoints and normative horizons/3
Negative and positive ideas

• We might say that those who are concerned with democratic stability and try to avoid regressions to either nondemocratic or semidemocratic regimes support "negative" notions of democratic consolidation,

• while those who are concerned with democratic advances and try to attain progress toward either liberal or high-quality democracy sponsor "positive" notions of democratic consolidation
Neutral usage: organization of democracy

• This concept of consolidation turns its attention from the procedural minima that define democratic regimes to the concrete rules and organizations that define various forms of democracy.

• It switches the level of analysis from regimes to subsystems

• Consolidation = institution building

• The characteristic infrastructure of modern liberal democracies are: parties and party systems, legislative bodies, state bureaucracies, judicial systems, and systems of interest intermediation.

• This fifth notion of democratic consolidation is "self-referential" insofar as liberal democracy serves as its point of both departure and arrival. It looks, so to speak, from liberal democracy to nowhere else.
Carothers
The End of the Transition Paradigm
Consolidation and its illusions

- Diamond (1996) Is the Third Wave Over?
  - A period of stasis
  - Ideological (but superficial) hegemony of democracy
- O’Donnell (1996) Illusions about Consolidation
  - The importance of informal rules
  - Institutionalization vs. particularism
- Carothers (1997) Democracy without Illusions
  - From revolution to rentrenchment (91-92)
Five core assumption

1. Teleology
2. Three steps (opening, breakthrough, consolidation)
3. The crucial role of elections
4. No preconditions
5. Democracy-building rather than state-building
The crash of assumptions

1. The final outcome cannot be predetermined

2. A very long and gradual instauration, a never-ending constitutional building, a chaotic consolidation no predetermined pathways

3. The fallacy of electoralism (Terry Lynn Karl, 1988)

4. The importance of the structural factors
   - Relative economic wealth and past experience with political pluralism in Central Europe or Eastern Asia
   - Geopolitical instability in the Sub-Saharan Africa
   - The negative influence of the soviet legacy

5. The challenge of state-building in former Soviet Union, in former Yugoslavia, in many African countries
Huntington
A Third Reverse Wave?
The causes of the First and Second Reverse Waves

1. The weakness of democratic values among key elite groups and the general public;

2. Severe economic setbacks, which intensified social conflict and enhanced the popularity of remedies that could be imposed only by authoritarian governments;

3. Social and political polarization, often produced by leftist governments seeking the rapid introduction of major social and economic reforms;

4. The determination of conservative middle-class and upper-class groups to exclude populist and leftist movements and lower-class groups from political power;

5. The breakdown of law and order resulting from terrorism or insurgency;

6. Intervention or conquest by a nondemocratic foreign power;

7. "reverse snowballing" triggered by the collapse or overthrow of democratic systems in other countries.
Causes for a possible Third Reverse Wave?

1) **Systemic failures** of democratic regimes to operate effectively could undermine their legitimacy. Sustained inability to provide welfare, prosperity, equity, justice, domestic order, or external security could over time undermine the legitimacy even of democratic governments (performance legitimacy).

2) A shift to authoritarianism by any democratic or democratizing great power could trigger reverse snowballing (e.g. Russia or India). Also, shift to dictatorship by several smaller newly democratic countries that lack many of the usual preconditions for democracy could have ramifying effects even on other countries where those preconditions are strong.
Causes for a possible Third Reverse Wave?

3) If a nondemocratic state greatly increased its power and began to expand beyond its borders, this too could stimulate authoritarian movements in other countries. (e.g. China)

4) Various old and new forms of authoritarianism that seem appropriate to the needs of the times could emerge.
   - Authoritarian nationalism in the Third World or in Eastern Europe
   - Religious fundamentalism
   - Populist dictatorships (against democracy’s protection of various economic privileges)
   - Oligarchic dictatorships (against democracy’s leveling tendencies)
Three types of obstacle to democratization

Obstacles

- Political
- Cultural
- Economic
The political obstacles

• Virtual absence of experience with democracy
• Leaders who found authoritarian regimes or rule them for a long period tend to become particularly staunch opponents of democratization.
• Absence or weakness of real commitment to democratic values among political leaders in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. When they are out of power, political leaders have good reason to advocate democracy. The test of their democratic commitment comes once they are in office.
The antidemocratic culture

- A profoundly antidemocratic culture would impede the spread of democratic norms in the society, deny legitimacy to democratic institutions, and thus greatly complicate if not prevent the emergence and effective functioning of those institutions.
Cultural thesis: two versions

1. Only Western culture provides a suitable base for the development of democratic institutions and, consequently, that democracy is largely inappropriate for non-Western societies (George Kennan)

2. Certain non-Western cultures are peculiarly hostile to democracy. The two cultures most often cited in this regard are Confucianism and Islam.
Confucianism

• It emphasized the group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights. Confucian societies lacked a tradition of rights against the state; to the extent that individual rights did exist, they were created by the state.

• Harmony and cooperation were preferred over disagreement and competition. The maintenance of order and respect for hierarchy were central values. The conflict of ideas, groups, and parties was viewed as dangerous and illegitimate. Most important, Confucianism merged society and the state and provided no legitimacy for autonomous social institutions at the national level.
Islam

• The "high culture form of Islam," Ernest Gellner has argued, is "endowed with a number of features -- unitarianism, a rule-ethic, individualism, scripturalism, puritanism, an egalitarian aversion to mediation and hierarchy, a fairly small load of magic -- that are congruent, presumably, with requirements of modernity or modernization." They are also generally congruent with the requirements of democracy.

• Islam, however, also rejects any distinction between the religious community and the political community. Hence there is no equipoise between Caesar and God, and political participation is linked to religious affiliation. Fundamentalist
The limits to cultural obstacles

- Similar cultural arguments have not held up in the past. (e.g. Catholic countries)
- Cultural traditions like Islam and Confucianism are highly complex bodies of ideas, beliefs, doctrines, assumptions, and behavior patterns. Any major culture, including Confucianism, has some elements that are compatible with democracy, just as both Protestantism and Catholicism have elements that are clearly undemocratic.
- Cultures historically are dynamic, not stagnant. They evolve. The dominant beliefs and attitudes in a society change. While maintaining elements of continuity, the prevailing culture of a society in one generation may differ significantly from what it was one or two generations earlier. (e.g. Spain)
The economic obstacles

• Most wealthy countries are democratic, and most democratic countries—India is the most dramatic exception—are wealthy.

• Correlation between wealth and democracy implies that transitions to democracy should occur primarily in countries at the mid-level of economic development. In poor countries democratization is unlikely; in rich countries it usually has already occurred.

• Poverty is a principal—probably the principal—obstacle to democratic development. The future of democracy depends on the future of economic development. Obstacles to economic development are obstacles to the expansion of democracy.

• Most poor societies will remain undemocratic so long as they remain poor. Poverty, however, is not inevitable.
In China, the obstacles to democratization are political, economic, and cultural;
in Africa they are overwhelmingly economic;
and in the rapidly developing countries of East Asia and in many Islamic countries, they are primarily cultural.
Economic development makes democracy possible; political leadership makes it real.
Democracy will spread to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and in individual countries want it to spread.
Unresolved problems, democracies in danger
Three types of problems

- Transition problems
- Contextual problems
- Systemic problems
Transition problems/1

- Establishing new constitutional and electoral system and modifying laws that are not suitable in a democracy

1. E.g. Post-communist countries: separation between party and government, between property, functions, and personnel
Transition problems/1

2. The torturer problem

-Prosecute and punish (only the responsible, not the whole institution): if the repression is too fresh and/or if it was too brutal
-Forgive and forget: if the repression was initially less brutal or extensive, or if it occurred a long time ago.
-Don’t prosecute, don’t punish, don’t forgive, don’t forget.

3. Military regimes: the praetorian problem

a. Gradual change in the military’s image of itself as a ultimate guardian of the national interest
b. Depoliticizing the military and replacing its top leadership
b. Shift from preoccupation with internal security to some more credible and orthodox role as defender of the country’s external security
d. Fewer soldiers, more professionalized
Contextual problems

1. Major insurgencies (Peru, Guatemala, Philippines)
2. Ethnic/communal conflicts (India, Nigeria, Turkey)
3. Extreme poverty (India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sudan)
4. Chronic inflation (Argentina, Brazil, Hungary)
5. Severe socioeconomic inequality (Brazil, India, Pakistan)
6. Substantial external debts (Argentina, Poland, Nigeria)
7. Terrorism (India, Pakistan)
8. Extensive state involvement in the economy (Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Turkey, post-communist countries)
Systemic problems

- **Authoritarian regime**
  - Concentrated decision-making
  - Deficient feedback (accountability, transparency)
  - Dependence on performance legitimacy
  - The problem of succession

- **Democratic regime**
  - Stalemate
  - Inability to reach decisions
  - Susceptibility to demagoguery
  - Domination by vested economic interests
The risk of failure

- Disillusionment and authoritarian nostalgia (O&S: the return to the “good old times”)
- After the euphoria, the disenchantment, the disillusionment
- Reinforced by unresolved contextual problems
- The struggle to create democracy: moral, dangerous and important
- The political struggle in democracy: amoral, routine and petty.
- The fragmentation of the democratic coalition that had produced the transition
- The decline in effectiveness of the initial leaders of the democratic governments
- Growing realization that the advent of democracy would not, in itself, produce solutions to the major economic and social problems
The leaders are guilty

- The intractability of problems, the constraints of the democratic process (uncertainty, conflict), the shortcomings of the political leaders - these become the order of the day
- The leaders of the new democracies often came to be viewed as arrogant, incompetent or corrupt, or some combination of all of three