

# **Liberalization, Transition and Consolidation: Measuring the Components of Democratization**

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This article measures the process of democratization by subdividing it into three components: the liberalization of autocracy, the mode of transition and the consolidation of democracy. The 30 or so countries included in the study are situated in different world regions, mainly southern and eastern Europe, south and central America and the former Soviet Union – all of which have experienced regime transitions since 1974. The study also includes a sample of countries from the Middle East and northern Africa that are, at best, only in an embryonic stage of liberalization. Measured by scalograms, the data provide comparative indicators of the progress each country has achieved over the period 1974–2000. The study tests this time series for ‘patterns’, guided by the hypothesis that the multiple dimensions of liberalization, transition and consolidation are consistently related to each other, both temporally and spatially. The findings indicate a single underlying dimensional structure to the data. This allows separate scales for liberalization and consolidation to be created and combined into a general indicator of democratization. Contrary to expectations in the literature, most central and eastern European countries perform comparatively better than the southern European and Latin American cases. Not only do they reach the same high levels of liberalization and consolidation, but they also do so in a much shorter time span. Furthermore, there is compelling evidence in the Middle Eastern and North African data that the liberalization of autocratic regimes does not always play a democratization triggering role.

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Key words: democratic transition; consolidation; measurement; southern Europe; eastern Europe; North Africa; Latin America

## **Introduction**

When the contemporary wave of democratization began in 1974, no one seriously considered the possibility of measuring it quantitatively. Each of the initial instances in southern Europe and Latin America looked quite peculiar in socio-economic context and mode of transition. Moreover, the

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limited number of cases made it unproductive to bring to bear the power of probabilistic social statistics.<sup>1</sup> Now, after almost 30 years of political experience and innumerable academic controversies, we have plenty of raw materials for measuring the changes that have occurred at the macro-level of national political regimes. By developing indicators to measure the processes of *liberalization of autocracy* (LoA), *mode of transition* (MoT), and the *consolidation of democracy* (CoD), we may even be able to resolve some of the disputes that have arisen concerning whether it is correct to use the same concepts, hypotheses, and assumptions for such a wide range of cultural, political and economic settings. Presumably, if these different points of departure do require a unique theory of democratization, our standard items for measuring its components will not reveal significant and common patterns of association. Least of all will they produce consistent scalar relations over time.

### **Conceptualizing Liberalization and Consolidation**

Neither the process of liberalization nor that of consolidation has been consistently conceptualized, much less operationalized, in the literature on democratization. They have been used quite often (and controversially), but almost invariably in an erratic fashion – even by the same author in the same work. Moreover, the empirical indicator that has been most frequently employed in quantitative analyses, the Freedom House Index, is seriously deficient and distorted, especially when used to measure variation across regions or over time in the same country. What makes our task especially challenging is the need to operationalize these ‘processes of regime change’ in such a way that the measurements are apposite, accurate, and comparable for countries around the world that have entered into some degree of regime change. And we need to do so in a manner that is sensitive to quite discrete changes over time and, hence, that can capture the dynamics of timing and sequence between liberalization, transition and consolidation.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Liberalization of Autocracy*

Liberalization is a commonly used and well-accepted term in both political and scholarly discourse. However, since it seems to most people to be a desirable state of affairs, it has been appropriated for a wide range of purposes – not all of which are appropriate from the perspective of this research. Strictly speaking, we are exclusively concerned with *political* liberalization. Elsewhere, this has been defined as ‘the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties’.<sup>3</sup> Needless to say, there can be a considerable range of dispute over what these civic/political rights

should be, but there does exist a widespread consensus on some of them. At the level of individuals, these guarantees include the classic elements of the liberal tradition: *habeas corpus*; sanctity of private home and correspondence; protection against torture and inhuman treatment by authorities; the right to be defended in a fair trial according to pre-established laws; freedoms of movement, of speech, petition, religious conviction and so forth. For social or political groups, these rights have historically covered such things as freedom from punishment for collective expressions of dissent from government policy, freedom from censorship of the means of communication, and freedom to associate voluntarily and peacefully with other persons.<sup>4</sup>

More controversially given the ideology that currently surrounds the topic of democratization, we have not included an unconditional ‘right to private property’ or any of the other ‘freedoms’ currently being advocated by economic liberals: abolition of tariffs and quantitative restrictions on international trade; privatization of state-owned enterprises; removal of price controls or currency restrictions; lowering of tax burdens; decentralization of collective bargaining or its replacement with individual labour contracts; abolition of state subsidies to producers, and so on.

What is essential for the purpose of this research is for us to grasp conceptually and then measure empirically *political liberalization in strict sense*. At a minimum, this involves a passive and voluntary connection between individuals and groups who are permitted (but not compelled) by authorities to engage in certain forms of ‘free’ behaviour and a reliable and permanent commitment by authorities not to engage in certain forms of ‘coercive’ behaviour. The shorthand term for this in much of the relevant literature is ‘exercising and respecting the rule of law’ – even if this conjures up a much wider range of connections and commitments, and even if many laws actually in the books are hardly ‘liberal’ in their economic or social content.

What liberalization alone does *not* connote is the right for citizens acting equally and collectively to hold their rulers accountable, up to and including the possibility that these citizens can remove their rulers from power by a pre-established procedure, such as by defeating them in elections. That process of inserting accountability to citizens into the political process is what we mean by democracy and its consolidation.

### *Consolidation of Democracy*

Consolidation of Democracy (CoD) is a more controversial term. It can be defined most generically as the process or, better, the processes that make mutual trust and reassurance among the relevant actors more likely. That, in turn, makes regular, uncertain yet circumscribed competition for office and influence possible. It institutionalizes the practice of ‘contingent consent’, namely, the willingness of actors to compete according to pre-established

rules and, if they lose, to consent to the winners the right to govern – contingent upon the right of the losers to compete fairly and win honestly in the future. In other words, CoD seeks to institutionalize certainty in one subset of political roles and policy arenas, while institutionalizing uncertainty in others. And the challenge for democracy consolidators is to find a set of institutions that embodies contingent consent among politicians and is capable of producing the eventual assent of citizens.

It should be noted that politicians and citizens do not necessarily have to agree upon a set of substantive goals or policies that command widespread consensus, but they do have to agree on a common set of rules. This ‘democratic bargain’, to use Robert Dahl’s felicitous expression,<sup>5</sup> can vary a good deal from one society to another, depending on objective inequalities and cleavage patterns, as well as subjective factors such as the extent of mutual trust, the prevailing standards of fairness, the willingness to compromise and the legitimacy attached to different decision rules in the past. Once it is struck, the bargain may even be compatible with a great deal of dissent on specific substantive issues.

We are now prepared for a formal definition of the consolidation of democracy: *Regime consolidation consists in transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions that have emerged during the uncertain struggles of the transition into institutions, that is, into relationships that are reliably known, regularly practiced and normatively accepted by those persons or collectivities defined as the participants/citizens/subjects of such institutions; and in such a way that the ensuing channels of access, patterns of inclusion, resources for action, and norms about decision making conform to one overriding standard: that of citizenship.*<sup>6</sup>

One of the points stressed in some literature devoted to this topic is that modern democracy should be conceptualized, not as ‘a single regime’, but as a composite of ‘partial regimes’.<sup>7</sup> As CoD progresses, each of these partial regimes becomes institutionalized in a particular sequence, according to distinctive principles, and around different sites – all, however, having to do with the representation of social groups and the resolution of their ensuing conflicts. Parties, associations, movements, localities, and a variety of other clientèle compete and coalesce around these different sites in efforts to capture office and influence policy. Where this is successful, it will have the effect of channelling conflicts towards the public arena, thereby diminishing recourse to such private means as settling disputes by violence or simply imposing one’s will by authoritarian fiat. Authorities with different functions and at different levels of aggregation interact with these representatives of interests and passions, base their legitimacy upon their accountability to different citizen interests (and feelings), and reproduce that special form of legitimate power that stems from exercising an effective

monopoly over the use of violence. Notice that even the most detailed of constitutions (and they are becoming more detailed) is unlikely to tell us much about how parties, associations, and movements will interact to influence policies. Or about how capital and labour will bargain over income shares under the new meta-rules. Or about how civilian authorities will exert control over the military. For it is precisely in the interstices between different types of representatives that constitutional norms are most vague and least prescriptive.<sup>8</sup>

The major implication of the preceding discussion is that *no single set of institutions/rules (and, least of all, no single institution or rule) defines political democracy*. Not even such prominent candidates as majority rule, territorial representation, competitive elections, parliamentary sovereignty, a popularly elected executive or a 'responsible party system' can be taken as its distinctive hallmark. Needless to say, this is a serious weakness when it comes to measuring CoD. One cannot just seize on some key 'meta-relation', such as the manner of forming executive power, trace its transformation into a valued institution, and assume that all the others, the party system, the decision-rules and so on will co-vary with it or fall into line once a presidential, parliamentary or semi-presidential regime has been established and crossed some critical threshold of mutual acceptance. What must be analyzed is an emerging network of relationships involving multiple processes and sites.

It may not be difficult to agree on what Robert Dahl has called 'the procedural minimum', without which no democracy could be said to exist (secret balloting, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, associational freedom, executive accountability). However, underlying these accomplishments and flowing from them are much more subtle and complex relations that define both the substance and form of nascent democratic regimes. It is important that elections be held, that parties compete with varying chances of winning, that voter preferences be secretly recorded and honestly counted, that governments be formed by some pre-established process, that associations be free to form, recruit members and exercise influence, that citizens be allowed to contest the policies of their government and hold leaders responsible for their actions. The longer these structures and rules of the 'procedural minimum' exist, the greater is the likelihood they will persist.

### **Measuring the Key Concepts in the Democratization Literature**

The concepts of liberalization and consolidation that we have just defined are obviously each composed of a bundle of theoretically related, but not always empirically co-variant conditions. No single observation is likely to be

adequate to measure such complex outcomes, least of all across polities in such diverse social, economic and cultural circumstances. The best that one can hope for is to bring to bear several potential indicators and try to find out what their underlying structure consists of, if there is one. At one extreme, they might prove to be so closely correlated that one of them could simply be used as a proxy for the others. At the other extreme, they might vary so independently from each other that the very notion of liberalization or consolidation would have to be rejected. In between, there is a considerable range of possible ways for measuring the outcomes that we would like to predict.

### *The Liberalization of Autocracy Items*

Figure 1 lists the seven items that were chosen to constitute the LoA scale.<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted in passing, however, that none of the seven items imply that rulers are actually held accountable to citizens through the competition and co-operation of their representatives/politicians – which is our definition of democracy. Nor are they related to each other strictly by definition. Having an opposition party in parliament does not mean that this party has any power or that the parliament itself has the capacity to overturn actions taken by the executive, much less to change its composition. It also does not imply that elections that placed that opposition in parliament were ‘free and fair’. A polity can make human rights ‘concessions’ and still keep its opponents in jail. While there may be a strong likelihood that more than one party must be legally recognized before an opposition party can gain access to parliament, the inverse is certainly not necessary. That is to say, more than one independent party can be recognized but not win (or be allowed to win) enough votes to be represented in parliament. Many liberalized autocracies continue to

FIGURE 1  
THE SEVEN ITEMS OF THE LOA SCALE

L-1	The regime makes significant public concessions at the level of human rights
L-2	The regime has no (or almost no) political prisoners
L-3	The regime demonstrates increased tolerance for dissidence/public opposition by social groups or formal/informal organizations (e.g., parties, associations or movements)
L-4	There exists more than one legally recognized independent political party
L-5	There exists at least one recognized opposition party in parliament or constituent assembly
L-6	There exist trade unions or professional associations that are not controlled by state agencies or governing parties
L-7	There is an independent press and access to alternative means of information that are tolerated by the government

imprison some categories of political opponents while allowing others to form political parties and sit in parliament. Finally, even in otherwise thoroughly liberalized regimes, agents of repression in the military and the police can continue violating the human rights of citizens with impunity.

### *The Mode of Transition Items*

According to the ‘natural’ model used by practitioners<sup>10</sup> and the ‘theoretical’ model developed by academics,<sup>11</sup> liberalization and democratization are not related to each other in a linear or inevitable fashion. Between the two ‘phases’, with their different actors and processes, lies the *transition*. Virtually all observers of regime change agree that this involves a more or less lengthy period of exceptional politics whose outcome is more or less uncertain. They also agree that there is no one way by which the transition from one regime to another is accomplished – if it is accomplished at all. Actors with newly acquired identities and ill-defined followers interact without being constrained by ‘customary’ rules or legal norms and they will have been (at least, partially) empowered to do so by the process of liberalization itself. Their behaviours are difficult to predict. This is not just because they are bound to be relatively inexperienced and not very well informed. It is because many of the pre-political social and cultural categories they pretend to represent are likely to be internally divided over the preferred outcome or even over the merits of regime change itself.

Where these observers disagree is over the longer-term significance of differences in the mode of transition. For orthodox structuralists and rationalists, the interim period is merely ‘noise’. The outcome will be determined by one of two things. Either by such relatively fixed conditions as the level of development, the rate of economic growth, the proximity to western culture, the incentives provided by ‘the world system’, and so on. Or by the strategic choice of elites, who will inexorably select that particular set of rules which will minimize transaction costs and maximize the most rational distribution of benefits among them.

‘Transitologists’ argue that the pacts and improvised measures that hurried, imperfectly informed and largely inexperienced politicians make during this period of exceptional uncertainty reflect highly unstable relations of power. Yet they say these initiatives can produce relatively enduring rules that will guide the subsequent regime – determining not so much whether it will be democratic or not, but what type of democracy it will be.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 2 displays the items selected to measure MoT. Since it is beyond the intentions of this particular piece of research to analyze these data extensively, just a few comments are in order. First, if the literature on modes of transition is correct, there is *no* expectation that the eight items will form a scale or be tightly correlated. What we should find (or better: be able to

FIGURE 2  
THE EIGHT ITEMS OF THE MOT SCALE

M-1	Social/political movements opposing the existing regime enter into public negotiations with it
M-2	There exist open conflicts within the administrative apparatus of the state over public policies and these are acknowledged by the government
M-3	Formal legal changes are introduced that are intended to limit arbitrary use of powers by regime
M-4	Constitutional or legal changes are introduced that eliminate the role of non-accountable powers of veto-groups
M-5	A constitution has been drafted and ratified that guarantees equal political rights and civil freedoms to all citizens
M-6	Founding elections have been held
M-7	The founding elections have been free and fair
M-8	The results of the founding elections have been widely accepted

generate) is a set of nominal categories that cannot be reduced to a single underlying dimension. Second, the ‘transitological’ hypothesis would be that countries scored in this nominal fashion as having qualitatively different modes of transition should exhibit significant quantitative differences in their subsequent consolidation of democracy, that is, in our CoD scale. Third and slightly modifying the first point above, the last three items are all dealing with the calling and holding of initial elections. Hence, they are very likely to prove to be significantly correlated with each other – so much so that it may be more useful to blend them into a single indicator. Finally, in retrospect, it seems desirable to extend the items in MoT to include two more items: one for the presence or absence of violence; another for the level of mass mobilization, since both of these factors have been emphasized in the theoretical literature.<sup>13</sup>

Both practitioners and theorists seem to understand that the consolidation of democracy is not guaranteed even by the most successful liberalization – unless something ‘intervenes’ to push the process of regime change beyond the initially limited intentions of autocratic incumbents and/or the initially limited powers of their opponents. And that is what we have tried (imperfectly) to capture with the MoT scale. What are the intermediate actions – formal and informal – that can bring about a significant and predictable change in the distribution of the power to govern and in the accountability of those who do govern to the citizenry as a whole? No doubt, the calling of ‘founding elections’ and the drafting/ratifying of a new or revised constitution are the two most salient events that tend to punctuate the transition. But less visible processes of ‘pacting’ between incumbents and opponents and more tumultuous events involving the ‘resurrection’ of civil society also can play a key role.



*The Consolidation of Democracy Items*

The transitional period is over when virtually all of those who are active in politics agree that a regression either to the *status quo ante* or to any other form of autocracy is highly improbable. In other words, when politicians stop looking over their shoulder for forces that might remove them from government or opposition by force, they can finally get down to 'normal politics', which means wheeling and dealing with each other. Having reached this putative point of no return, however, does not guarantee that the country has found some appropriate type of democracy and has been able to consolidate it.

Given the controversial – even essentially contested – nature of the concept itself, it should come as no surprise that observers differ considerably on which indicator(s) should be applied to determine when a democratic regime can be reliably described as 'consolidated'. Some of this disagreement can be traced all the way back to different conceptions of democracy, but some of it is related to more immediate political concerns. Both practitioners and academics seem very reluctant to commit themselves to making any such unambiguous declaration. For the former, this may mean that he or she cannot any longer claim exceptional status for actions supposedly taken in order to 'preserve the prospect of democracy'. What is more, once there is a widespread public recognition that democracy has indeed been consolidated and these 'real-existing' institutions are it, a sense of *desencanto* (disenchantment) is bound to emerge. Whatever these institutions are they are very likely to be less and do less than the public expected during the heady days of the transition. As for the academic aspect, signing such a certificate and, in so doing, implying that the regime is likely to persist in more or less its present configuration for the foreseeable future, could place them in the uncomfortable position of being potentially and blatantly disowned by subsequent developments. Moreover, for critical intellectuals, it seems somehow complacent to admit that these neo-democracies have arrived – especially when most of them are not of such high quality.

There are many more items in Figure 3 than in the previous two figures and that is a reflection of the diversity of opinion surrounding the concept of CoD. Our objective has not been to focus on the indicators that we consider most appropriate, but to test for the empirical correlates of a wide range of conditions that different authors have proposed. The 12 sets of items represent political accomplishments of a different order of magnitude and facility of measurement.

It is important to point out that all make reference to the behaviour of the (political) actors. Hence, we exclude attitudes from our concept and measure of CoD. While this exclusive reference to observable behaviour might not

FIGURE 3  
THE TWELVE ITEMS OF THE COD SCALE

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C-1	No significant political party advocates major changes in the existing constitution
C-2	Regular elections are held and their outcomes are respected by those in positions of public authority and major opposition parties
C-3	Elections have been free and fair
C-4	No significant parties or groups reject previous electoral conditions
C-5	Electoral volatility has diminished significantly
C-6	Elected officials and representatives are not constrained in their behaviour by non-elected veto groups within the country
C-7	A first rotation-in-power or significant shift in alliances of parties in power has occurred within the rules already established
C-8	A second rotation-in-power or significant shift in alliances of parties in power has occurred within the rules already established
C-9	Agreement, formal and informal, has been reached on the rules governing the association formation and behaviour
C-10	Agreement, formal and informal, has been reached on the rules governing the executive format
C-11	Agreement, formal and informal, has been reached on the rules governing the territorial division of competencies
C-12	Agreement, formal and informal, has been reached on the rules governing the rules of ownership and access to mass media

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be clear from the brief items in the text reported above, it has been made clear by the more specific coding rules and the oral instructions given to the country coders. Inevitably, they have an ‘electoralist’ bias. In other words, it is presumed that if elections of some uncertain outcome are held fairly and regularly between competing parties, then social and other conflicts will be channelled through that form of representation, elected officials will be able to act legitimately in resolving those conflicts, and citizens will be in a position to hold these persons and parties accountable by voting for their opponents. To the best of our knowledge, no one has been able to come up with a vision of a consolidated (‘modern, liberal, political’) democracy that does not reflect this set of assumptions.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, item 6 and especially items 9, 10, 11 and 12 all refer to other mechanisms of representation that citizens can potentially use to hold their rulers accountable. Hence, our measure might have an electoral bias but unlike most other approaches to CoD, it goes well beyond a purely electoral focus by including measures of other partial regimes.

### Some Information on the Coding Process

Assigning scores to cases is an integral part of the research process that relates concept formation to measurement.<sup>15</sup> In the democracy measurement

business, however, it has not been given enough attention – despite the fact that precise information on how country scores are produced is essential in assessing the quality of the data and interpreting the results of the analysis.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of the scalogram, roughly 30 different coders – all of them PhD students at the European University Institute – were encouraged to make a dichotomous assessment of each item at the end of each year. That said, they were also allowed to choose an intermediate point between 0 = No (no accomplishment or appreciable effort with regard to this item) and 1 = Yes (this item has been accomplished or satisfied).<sup>17</sup> After two coders independently assessed the scores for one country,<sup>18</sup> the person supervising the data generation process first detected the discrepancies which then were discussed and settled in a meeting between the two coders and the supervisor.<sup>19</sup>

To the best of our knowledge, this coding process differs significantly from other democracy measurement efforts. This technique could be labelled as a ‘hierarchical coding procedure’ in which country experts responsible for only one or a few cases assign their scores under the supervision of a third person. This coding approach allows for in-depth knowledge of specific cases and a control for overall quality. Alternative democracy measures advanced by others seem to be based on an ‘everybody scores everything’ followed by a ‘someone puts it all together’ approach. The drawback of such a coding procedure is that it involves an inverse relationship between the number of cases included and the depth of knowledge upon which specific scores are based. Hence, one finds either large N, but shallow indices of democracy (as in the Freedom House or the Polity data set) or small N, more accurate indices that are limited to one world region.<sup>20</sup>

### **Testing for the Dimensionality of the Data**

The multi-dimensionality of theoretical concepts and their empirical indicators are a persistent issue in the social sciences, in general, and in the measurement of democracy, in particular. By aggregating different measures to a ‘bounded whole’ one runs the risk of committing a ‘reification error’ – combining items that bear no empirical relation to each other.<sup>21</sup> As a consequence, countries with an identical score on some compound index can have completely different scores on individual items. ‘The worst tactic for coping with multidimensionality is to assume blindly that all the components are uni-dimensional and barrel on, adding or averaging these apples and orange.’<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, this seems to have been especially the case with the measurement of democracy.<sup>23</sup>

One statistical technique for testing whether one is dealing with apples and oranges, that is whether the data are uni-dimensional, is reliability analysis.<sup>24</sup> The coefficient used is Cronbach's alpha and it varies from 0 to 1. The higher the value, the closer the data come to being one-dimensional. In general, a value above 0.7 is considered sufficient to validate the assumption of uni-dimensionality,<sup>25</sup> so they can be reliably aggregated into a single scalar indicator without fear of committing the reification error.

In Table 1, we have displayed the results of various reliability tests. Concerning the LoA and CoD items<sup>26</sup> measured over the time period 1974–99, all values for Cronbach's alpha easily exceed the 0.7 benchmark. This critical test for uni-dimensionality even holds up when we split our data into each of the six sub-regions. These results can be taken as a first (and strong) hint that our data capture a single underlying dimension for each of the two concepts of regime change. However, these impressive results may be contested by pointing out that the analysis was based on time-series data. In other words, the different data points for one and the same variable, measured in different years, are not independent from each other and, consequently, are very likely to correlate highly with each other. Seen from this perspective, the high values for Cronbach's alpha would be a mere artefact of the serial correlation in our time-series data. In order to control for this, we re-calculated Cronbach's alpha at different points in time. Even if we take a static look at our data at different points in time, again all values are higher than 0.7.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, based on these empirical findings, we assume that the data on LoA and CoD has a single underlying dimensional structure.<sup>28</sup> This allows us to aggregate the scores obtained by each country in one year and over time. We are convinced that when ranking countries and regions according to their acquisition of these items over time, we are measuring progress and regress in the key dimensions of democratization. This, in turn, allows us the possibility for reliably comparing countries and regions in terms of their degree of LoA and CoD.

TABLE 1  
CRONBACH'S ALPHA (1974–2000)

	N	LoA	CoD
All countries	772	0.9807	0.9571
Southern Europe	81	0.9317	0.8882
South America	162	0.9725	0.9361
Central America	81	0.9719	0.9476
Central & eastern Europe	183	0.9906	0.9689
Former Soviet republic	108	0.9759	0.9117
Middle East & northern Africa	157	0.9344	0.8777

### Item Difficulty

One of our major ‘operational’ assumptions has been that the items themselves are universally applicable and collectively scalable. This does not mean that their frequencies and, hence, the implied difficulty of successfully completing them will be the same in each region.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, we will now examine which items are most frequently achieved and which are most difficult to achieve in each region. From this analysis, we can obtain a region-specific ranking of the internal process of democratization. If they were all the same in relative difficulty, then, arguments about the significance of different points of departure would be difficult to sustain.

#### *Difficulty of LoA Items*

In Table 2, we have displayed the seven LoA items in terms of the relative frequency with which they were attained (and sustained) in our six regions. The mean is taken over the whole period of measurement (1974–99/2000). Hence, a mean of 1 means that this respective item scored 1 for all years and all countries in the respective region. Given that not only countries but entire regions start their actual process of LoA at different points in time, the means cannot be compared cross-regionally. Instead, what can be compared across regions is the ranking of difficulty among items.

In central and eastern Europe (CEE), the easiest aspects of political liberalization to accomplish seem to have been that of increasing tolerance for opposition and expression of dissidence (L3), independent press and alternative means of mass communication (L7), and independent trade unions and associations (L6). Next were the absence of political prisoners (L2) and the presence of at least one independent party (L4). Finally, there were significant and public concessions of human rights (L1) and the presence of an opposition

TABLE 2  
RANK ORDER OF LOA ITEMS BASED ON THEIR FREQUENCY IN EACH REGION

Rank	Southern Europe		South America		Central and eastern Europe		Central America		Former Soviet republics		Middle East and North Africa	
	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean
1	L2	0.97	L4	0.8	L7	0.49	L4	0.75	L3	0.4	L4	0.58
2	L4	0.96	L6	0.69	L3	0.48	L6	0.72	L4	0.39	L5	0.44
3	L3	0.96	L5	0.64	L6	0.47	L3	0.62	L5	0.37	L7	0.24
4	L5	0.95	L3	0.63	L2	0.45	L5	0.6	L2	0.36	L6	0.21
5	L1	0.91	L7	0.55	L4	0.44	L2	0.48	L6	0.31	L3	0.17
6	L6	0.88	L2	0.45	L1	0.41	L7	0.31	L1	0.30	L1	0.16
7	L7	0.88	L1	0.43	L5	0.4	L1	0.29	L7	0.30	L2	0.08

party in parliament (L5). However, what is particularly striking is the relatively tight clustering of all of these items and, as we shall see, their accomplishment within a short period of time.

In southern Europe (SE), five of the seven LoA items seem to have had roughly the same level of difficulty, as indicated by similar mean values. The exceptions are items L7 (independent press and access to alternative means of information) and L6 (independent trade unions and associations) that appear to have been the most difficult ones to accomplish during the liberalization processes in Spain, Greece and Portugal. It was relatively easy for these three countries to have acquired at least one recognized independent party (L4) that was represented in parliament (L5). In addition, items L2 (almost no political prisoners) and L3 (increased tolerance for dissidence) were achieved easily and irrevocably.

The frequency distribution of the LoA items in our five South American (SA) countries differs rather dramatically from the one in SE. The most difficult traits to acquire in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Peru and Bolivia were L1 (significant public concession at the level of human rights) and L2 (almost no political prisoners). This probably reflects the fact that liberalization processes in this region of the world started from military dictatorships of particular severity. In the light of this, having trade unions and professional organizations not controlled by the state (L6) was relatively easier in SA than in SE. In both SA and SE, L4 (more than one legally recognized independent political party) was the most frequently, easily, and irrevocably achieved item.

As can be seen from Table 2, the frequency rankings for our three Central American (CA) countries were quite similar to that of the SA countries. Items L4 and L6 were much easier and earlier to satisfy than items L1 and L2. However, the variance in scores in CA is much higher than in SA and in SE, indicating that this region is less homogenous than SA in terms of their liberalization processes. Not surprisingly, both the frequency and ranking of LoA items in the former Soviet republics (FSR) differ markedly from those in SA and CA.

Nothing could be more different than the frequency distribution of the seven LoA items in CEE and in our seven Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. What was relatively easy for the CEE countries – almost no political prisoners (L2) – was, or better, is still the most difficult liberalization trait to achieve in MENA. And two of the most frequent items of liberalization in CEE – tolerance of opposition and dissent (L3) and absence of political prisoners (L2) – were the least frequent in MENA! The ‘middle’ items of a free press, independent unions and human rights concessions scored within the same range, but again not in the same order. Only subsequent research will tell us more, but these findings do suggest

that the underlying causal structure of interdependence between these (allegedly) common aspects of political liberalization varies within the same timeframe from one set of countries to another.

The most likely hypothesis at this point would be that the difference in process is due to a major difference in point of departure, namely, the type of previous autocratic regime. The CEE countries may not have been 'totalitarian' by the time the change occurred, but they all were governed by an omnipresent single party with its accompanying *nomenklatura*. The MENA countries certainly had (and all still have) their narrowly circumscribed ruling oligarchies, but the dominant party has played a much less significant role in controlling access to positions of power. Hence, in the latter case, it was relatively easy to tolerate an independent (if tame) opposition party in parliament, but much more difficult to allow open dissent in the population and to release all political prisoners.

In sum, comparing these LoA frequency ratings reveals that none of the six regions shows exactly the same pattern of difficulty, but at the same time, certain regions are similar to each other.

#### *Difficulty of MoT Items*

A difference between MoT and our two main dependent variables, LoA and CoD, is that we have much less reason to expect that items describing it will form a single reproducible scale. What the literature stresses are distinctive, that is to say, nominal *situations* rather than generic *processes*. These contexts may or may not alter the probability of different outcomes, but they are unlikely to affect them in some linear or incremental fashion. In other words, LoA and CoD involve coming up with *standardized* and often *imitative* responses in some sequential fashion; MoT, on the other hand, supposedly involves discovering *customized* and *improvised* solutions to fleeting issues. Keeping these conceptual thoughts in mind, let us have a look separately at how the eight individual items performed in our six regions.

The first and most striking finding is that each region displays an almost completely different rank ordering of items (Table 3). Among the LoA items, we did find some strong resemblance between selected regions, but not here. None of the MoT items has the same relative difficulty across the six regions. Moreover, some items, such as M7 (degree of fairness of the founding elections) and M8 (acceptance of the results of the founding elections), were among the easiest to attain in one region (SE) and the most difficult in others (CA and CEE).

In SE, by far the most difficult item to accomplish was M1 (opposition movements enter into negotiations with the autocratic regime). This is due to the fact that during neither the Greek nor the Portuguese transitions did

TABLE 3  
RANK ORDER OF MOT ITEMS BASED ON THEIR FREQUENCY IN EACH REGION

Rank	Southern Europe		South America		Central and eastern Europe		Central America		Former Soviet republics	
	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean
1	M6	0.95	M2	0.6	M2	0.45	M5	0.7	M2	0.4
2	M7	0.95	M6	0.59	M3	0.42	M2	0.57	M6	0.34
3	M8	0.95	M8	0.59	M4	0.39	M3	0.57	M3	0.33
4	M5	0.91	M7	0.54	M6	0.39	M1	0.52	M4	0.31
5	M4	0.83	M3	0.53	M1	0.36	M4	0.52	M8	0.3
6	M2	0.62	M5	0.49	M7	0.33	M6	0.37	M5	0.28
7	M3	0.62	M4	0.39	M5	0.33	M7	0.30	M1	0.26
8	M1	0.31	M1	0.31	M8	0.31	M8	0.30	M7	0.24

such negotiations take place. In Spain, not only did they take place, they made this country into the archetype of a *transición pactada*.

In SA, the most difficult traits to attain were M1 and M4 (constitutional changes eliminating the role of non-accountable powers and veto groups). This is not surprising since that regional subset includes some of the most prominent cases of persistent ‘authoritarian enclaves’.<sup>30</sup> That refers to special arrangements whereby out-going military rulers sought to secure their institutional privileges and political influence beyond their exit from executive office and well into the subsequent democratic regime. First and foremost, this applies to Chile but also to Peru, an interesting, if less visible example of formalizing the role of non-accountable powers within a nascent democracy.

For the CEE countries we again find a relatively compact set of scores. The mean score for the MoT items varied between 0.31 and 0.49. Open and publicly acknowledged conflict within the state apparatus (M2) was the most frequently attained item, followed by formal legal changes to limit arbitrary powers (M3) – presumably before the drafting and ratification of a constitution (M5) which ranked further down. Constitutional and legal changes introduced (M4) was the third most frequent event. Contrary to our earlier expressed fears that the convocation of a ‘founding election’ (M6) would almost automatically involve their ‘free and fair’ conduct (M7) and their incontestability (M8), there seems to have been some variation in the occurrence of these events.

Getting rid of non-accountable veto groups (M4) was (and still is) difficult in CA as well. In addition, these countries display greater difficulty in holding founding elections under free and fair conditions (M7) and with widely accepted outcomes (M8). This has been *the* crucial issue during the



long-lasting transition process in Mexico. It held national elections on a regular basis over several decades – none of which, however, qualified as free, fair and widely accepted. Only very recently was Mexico able to achieve these traits unequivocally. The easiest MoT item for the CA countries was the drafting and ratifying of a ‘democratic’ constitution (M5).

This, in contrast, was one of the most difficult traits in the former Soviet Union (FSU). One reason for this seems to have been that most of these countries kept on using a modified version of the constitution of the FSU without feeling the immediate necessity for designing a new one of their own. In other FSU cases, the new democratic forces decided to draft a new constitution but took an unusually long amount of time to get it ratified. For example, Ukraine started the drafting process already in 1991, but did not ratify its new constitution until five years later in 1996. They lost the opportunity to profit from a unique ‘constitutional moment’, which might have helped the country to advance more rapidly on the course to regime consolidation.<sup>31</sup> In sum, as was unexpectedly the case with LoA, the items in MoT do *not* scale in the same fashion across our six regions, as was expected.

### *Difficulty of CoD Items*

An initial glance at the relative difficulties revealed by our CoD items across five regions displayed in Table 4 provides us with the following observation. The 12 CoD traits display almost exactly the same pattern of difficulty in all six regions of the world – a strong confirmation both of our theoretical

TABLE 4  
RANK ORDER OF COD ITEMS BASED ON THEIR FREQUENCY IN EACH REGION

Rank	Southern Europe		South America		Central and eastern Europe		Central America		Former Soviet republics	
	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean
1	C2	0.94	C2	0.59	C2	0.39	C10	0.44	C2	0.31
2	C3	0.94	C3	0.56	C9	0.38	C1	0.43	C3	0.25
3	C4	0.91	C9	0.56	C3	0.37	C9	0.41	C9	0.24
4	C9	0.87	C10	0.5	C6	0.37	C11	0.36	C4	0.2
5	C10	0.83	C12	0.45	C4	0.36	C6	0.36	C11	0.19
6	C11	0.8	C11	0.42	C10	0.35	C12	0.33	C6	0.17
7	C6	0.78	C7	0.37	C12	0.26	C2	0.3	C12	0.16
8	C12	0.77	C4	0.36	C11	0.25	C3	0.3	C10	0.14
9	C7	0.75	C6	0.34	C7	0.23	C4	0.3	C7	0.13
10	C1	0.59	C1	0.32	C1	0.20	C7	0.25	C1	0.08
11	C5	0.52	C8	0.19	C5	0.10	C5	0	C8	0.03
12	C8	0.41	C5	0.09	C8	0.09	C8	0	C5	0.01

assumption and its operationalization. This resembles what we have already found in examining the LoA data, but is quite different from the associations we found in the MoT data set. Look, for instance, at the bottom of each of the frequency ratings. Among the three last items, we find – without exception – the items C5 (electoral volatility has diminished significantly) and C8 (second rotation in power). To this we could add item C1 (no significant political party advocates changes in the existing constitution), with the notable exception of Central America, where this item belongs among the easiest ones to achieve. A glance at the top quarter of the frequency rankings reveals that item C9 (agreement on association formation and behaviour) belongs to the easiest items to attain in all our regions.

In CEE, six out of the 12 CoD items stand out in Table 4 as having been attained relatively early on and persisting without change. The first – regular elections are held and their outcomes respected by public authority and major opposition parties (C2), the third – elections have been free and fair (C3), and the fifth – no significant parties or groups reject previous electoral conditions (C4), all belong to the basic requirements for CoD. Their high ranking is not too surprising. The second item, however, namely agreement on the rules concerning the formation of interest associations and social movements (C9), is a bit more puzzling since these have been subject to considerable attention within the region and their resolution could presumably have generated considerable conflict. The other three items measuring the agreement on partial regimes – executive format (C10) and, especially, territorial division of competencies (C11) and ownership and access to media (C12) – rank considerably lower. What seems to be a typical feature of CEE countries is the relative success in achieving item C6, elected official and representatives not constrained in their behaviour by non-elected veto group within countries. Especially in Latin America, this belongs to one of the most difficult CoD items. Finally, two items were unambiguously the most difficult for the CEE countries to accomplish: the diminishment of electoral volatility (C5) and the production of a second rotation-in-power (C8). Now, since the last one is just an artefact of the impossibility of having a second rotation until after the polity has had a first one, what definitely emerges as the winner/loser from this subset is the problematic institutionalization of a stable party system.

In southern Europe, no problems at all exist in fulfilling the basic standards of the democratic electoral procedure: regular elections are held and their outcomes are widely respected (C2), the elections are free and fair (C3), and no parties or groups reject the previous electoral outcomes (C4). In addition to this, Spain, Greece and Portugal perform relatively well in reaching agreements on the four major partial regimes: the formation and behaviour of associations (C9); the executive format (C10); the territorial

division of competencies (C11); and on the rules of ownership and access to the media (C12). Surprisingly, item C1 (no significant political party advocates changes in the existing constitution) turned out to be more difficult to achieve. The disaggregated country scores reveals that this is partly caused by the case of Spain, where several regional political forces are pushing for constitutional changes, most prominently the Basque country, but also Catalonia and other Spanish regions.

In contrast, Central America has considerable difficulty in attaining and sustaining even such fundamental features of a minimal definition of an electoral democracy as: the holding of elections that are free and fair (C3) and whose results are widely respected (C4). These basic electoral items rank astonishingly low, just above the first and second turnover (items C7 and C8) and the electoral volatility indicator (C5). The former republics of the Soviet Union seem to have relatively fewer problems in completing items C2, C3 and C4. However, it is the only region in which agreement on the executive format (C10) – the question whether the democracy should be presidential, parliamentary or some kind of mixture – seems to be relatively difficult to achieve and where political parties advocate changes in the existing constitution (C1). The latter might partly be the consequence of the fact that in hardly any countries of the FSU has a new democratic constitution been drafted and approved so far (see above).

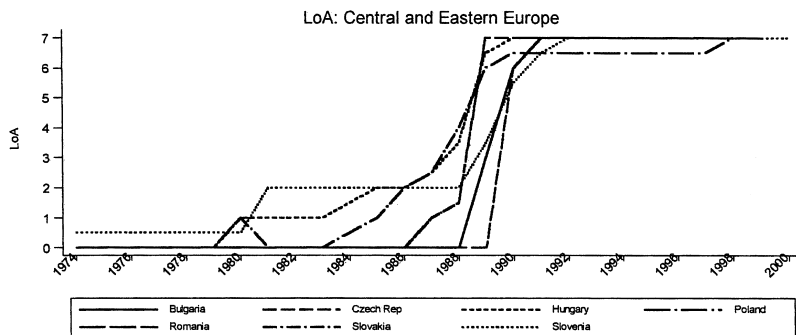
### **Liberalizing Autocrats**

Based on the democratization literature, we would expect those regimes that moved consistently upwards on the LoA scale to enter into a regime transition and to hold founding elections within about a year – presumably driven to do so by an ensuing mobilization of civil society.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, we should not anticipate that autocratic regimes would be able to sustain political liberalization over extensive time periods. Yet, this is precisely what we found in our sample of MENA countries.

Let us first look at our seven CEE cases to provide a dramatic contrast. Here, in Figure 4, there are no surprises. Hungary and Slovenia had already begun their respective processes of political liberalization before 1980 and advanced in a monotonic fashion until the early 1990s when they received a full score of 7, which they have subsequently sustained. Poland also started to liberalize well before Gorbachev became secretary-general of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. At the same time, it is the only case in CEE that showed some regression in terms of LoA when in 1981 a military coup removed its two previous liberal accomplishments: its 0.5 score on tolerance of dissidents (L3) and its 0.5 score on independence of some trade unions (L6). The Czech Republic and Slovakia (then a single country) started its/their

FIGURE 4  
DEVELOPMENT OF LOA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, 1974–2000

Q1



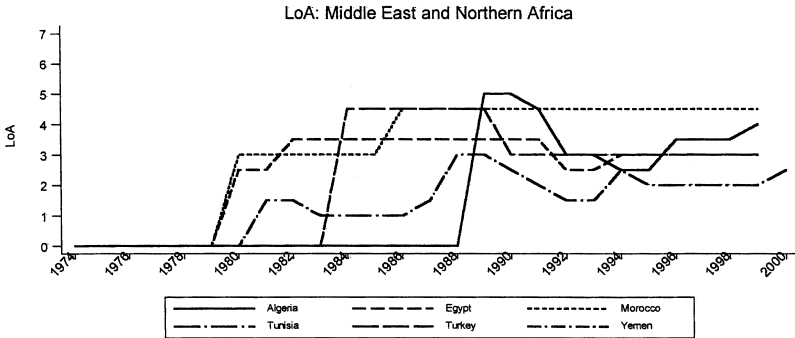
liberalization in 1987, shortly before the collapse of the communist regime in 1989. Bulgaria and Romania came in last with little or no evidence of liberalization prior to this dramatic moment. In both cases, however, once the process started, the countries very quickly attained a full score of 7 that has persisted ever since. By the end of the period, all of the CEE countries had converged upon the same highest possible score.<sup>33</sup> By and large then, all CEE countries conformed to the expectations derived from democratization theory.

If we look at the MENA countries in Figure 5, the first puzzling finding is the low score for Turkey during the entire decade of the 1990s – despite the fact that it had already achieved a score of 4.5 from 1984 to 1990. Considering that Turkey is presently a candidate for full EU membership, its liberalization score is far below the ones of candidate EU member states from CEE. Up to the year 2000, Turkey continues to score 0 on items L1 (human rights), L2 (political prisoners) and L3 (lack of tolerance for dissent) – all related to its on-going effort to suppress the political aspirations of its Kurdish minority.<sup>34</sup> Compared to the other MENA countries, Morocco performs relatively well, having begun the LoA period with three points – having more than one legally recognized party (L4), at least one opposition party in parliament (L5), a few trade unions not controlled by the state (L6) and a semi-independent press (L7). In 1986, it improved its score to a modest, but non-negligible level of 4.5 and it sustained that score until 1999.

Egypt also acquired some of LoA traits already in the 1980s. However, this was compiled at the expense of a great deal of back-and-forth fluctuation during the entire time period and it ends with a total of only 3 (it began with 2.5) which places it towards the bottom of the pack. Predictably, Algeria is on the bottom of the aggregate ranking, although it had a brief spurt of liberalization in 1989–90, when its score of 5 was the highest attained

FIGURE 5  
DEVELOPMENT OF LOA IN MENA, 1974–2000

Q2



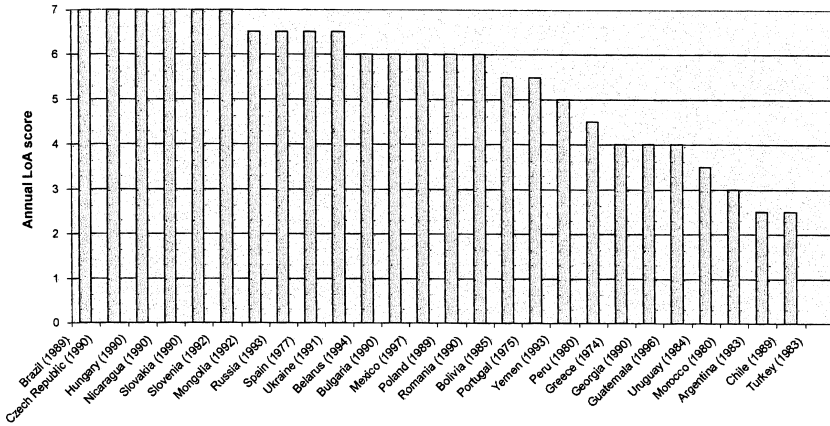
by any of the MENA countries. After the unification of its northern and southern parts, Yemen started with a relatively high LoA score. Subsequently, however, it constantly lost LoA scores and in 1999 scored only 2 on the LoA scale. By the end of the 1990s, none of the MENA cases is even close to a perfect score of 7 and there was evidence of steady monotonic progress in only one country: Morocco.

The patterns of LoA development in most of the MENA countries stand in sharp contrast not only to the majority of cases from other world regions, but also to our expectations based on the transition paradigm. That paradigm tends to interpret initial moves towards greater individual liberties as a kiss of death for autocratic rulers. In the majority of cases, autocratic incumbents might have started the LoA process with the intention to keep the rising pressure towards more freedom under control and possibly also to retract the rights conceded later on. Subsequently, however, these tactical concessions of rights seem to have misfired and autocratic rulers lost control over the events much more radically and more quickly than everybody expected. Not so in the MENA countries. Here, autocratic rulers seem to have retained the capacity to control the political outcome even after having made some initial moves towards liberalization. This was true even for the only MENA case in which democracy has been installed: Turkey. Why MENA is different in this respect is an interesting and important issue, which we cannot deal with at this point.<sup>35</sup>

**Illiberal Democratizers**

Figure 6 displays the annual LoA score each country achieved in the year in which the founding elections took place. We see that only a

FIGURE 6  
LOA VALUE IN THE YEAR OF FOUNDING ELECTIONS



minority of political regimes (six out of 23 cases) was fully liberalized by the time they enter the transition period. Even if we interpret a LoA score above 5 as reasonably well liberalized, only 17 of the 27 cases pass this threshold, leaving behind such relatively successful democratic consolidators as Uruguay and Chile. The case of Turkey, however, presents the most obvious violation of the widely shared assumption among transitologists that liberalization precedes (and may even trigger) transition and eventual democratization. Turkey enters its (semi-)democratic period in 1983 with virtually no prior movement towards liberalization.

In addition to this, problematic cases in terms of CoD such as Nicaragua, Russia and Belarus enter their respective transitions with relatively high LoA scores. Hence, from these inter-regional comparisons, it seems difficult to sustain a systematic and causal relationship between prior achievements in the LoA and the probability for a successful CoD. Nevertheless, more refined and focused research could reveal more complex connections between these two key concepts.

In sum, the evidence provided here both supports and questions the role of liberalization within the broader process of democratization as hypothesized by the transition paradigm. While the majority of cases observed did liberalize prior to the advent of democracy, there are two different types of deviation from this pattern. These are *illiberal democratizers*, most prominently Turkey, and *liberalizing autocracies*, mainly in the rest of the Middle East and North Africa.

### **A Dynamic Description of the Process of CoD**

The internal content of CoD has been relatively uniform across individual cases and world regions, but its temporal pattern of accomplishment has not. Countries took very different time to complete it and some have yet to make it. In southern Europe, Greece acquired its first traits quite rapidly – already in 1974 when its transition began. However, it took more than 20 years until it attained the maximum CoD score of 12 (1996) and, even then, it only sustained that level for one year. By our account, Spain has never reached the maximum score. Since the mid 1980s, it has always come close to it with a score higher than 10. The main reason for this deficiency is the fact that Spain has failed to completely accomplish items C1, C5 and C11. That is to say, there are significant political parties that advocate major constitutional changes, electoral volatility has risen from the national elections of 1996 onwards, and consensus on the territorial division of competencies has been difficult to sustain. Portugal, in contrast, had achieved the maximum score of 12 by the mid 1990s, after a period of two decades. In general, all three southern European countries show rather similar patterns in their aggregate CoD scores. They are all close to the regional mean and have taken 20 years or so to reach the higher levels of the scale.

In South America, the CoD picture looks much more heterogeneous. The clearest case of success has been Uruguay, displaying constant improvement and locking in the highest possible score in the early 1990s – within less than ten years. Brazil also achieved high CoD scores at about the same time, but it had begun its transition earlier. Argentina is the third success story in South America, having developed quickly during the early 1980s, but then stagnating throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. Only after the Menem presidency, during which the country demonstrated some backsliding, has it resumed its steady progress towards more CoD and by 2000 almost achieved the same level as Uruguay and Brazil. Bolivia and Peru, in contrast, have been much more problematic cases – especially the latter. Peru shows only modest improvement around a modest level of CoD. Bolivia seems to be stuck at a somewhat higher level, without showing a clear trend towards further improvement throughout the 1990s. Chile is a rather special case. Not long after the referendum was lost by Pinochet in 1988, Chile moved rapidly up the scale, reaching the same score as Bolivia in only five years. Subsequently, however, its progress has stagnated and it still remains below the regional mean in 2000. This seems counterintuitive since this country is often cited as one of the successful cases of regime change in the region – together with Uruguay and more than Brazil or Argentina. However, let us not forget that Chile is still struggling to overcome several ‘authoritarian enclaves’ implanted by its previous autocracy. First and foremost, there is a

lack of consensus among key political actors on the existing constitution – dictated by General Pinochet. To all this should be added the constraints imposed on elected representatives by non-elected veto groups, mainly the military. All of these involve key aspects of our CoD scale and explain the *bien-fondée* of Chile's persistently low ranking.

At first glance, the countries in Central America look more homogeneous and successful than their southern neighbours. All CA cases move uniformly upward on the CoD scale and there are no measurable regressions. However, leaving Peru aside, the highest score achieved by any country in CA is equal to the lowest score of any country in SA at the same point in time. Ergo, regime consolidation in CA has developed consistently but at a lower level than in SA. The data stop in 2000 and, therefore, only capture a glimpse of the decisive progress made by Mexico since then, most importantly, the loss of elections by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and that party's willingness to hand over power peacefully after more than seven decades of single-party rule.

As was the case with LoA, the countries of central and eastern Europe display rapid, indeed astonishingly consistent progress in terms of CoD. By the end of the 1990s, all seven cases achieve high scores, though none of them has yet reached the maximum score of 12. Bulgaria stands out in the sense that this country shows some oscillation in the first and the second half of the 1990s. Among this set of quickly consolidating countries, Slovenia is the fastest – despite its supposedly disadvantaged starting position as a member of the former Yugoslavia and with countries at war on its southern borders in the mid-1990s.

Among the republics of the former Soviet Union, Belarus is by far the worst performer. Somewhat surprisingly, given the press attention devoted to its foibles, Ukraine performs relatively well – while Russia and Georgia come out in the middle of this subset. The clearest and most surprising success story is Mongolia, which, although not a republic of the former Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR), was its close ally and satellite. No country undergoing recent regime change (except perhaps for Albania) has less of the supposed theoretical requisites for being able to consolidate democratic institutions.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, according to our CoD scale, it has made steady progress and attained astonishingly high scores by the year 2000.

The euphoria surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall was quickly superseded by growing concerns about the future of democracy in the former communist countries. It was argued that the double transition both of the political and the economic regime would overburden the fledgling eastern European democracies. It was further argued that the legacy of 40 to 70 years of communist rule had left these countries without virtually any of the supposed cultural preconditions for democracy. In short, area

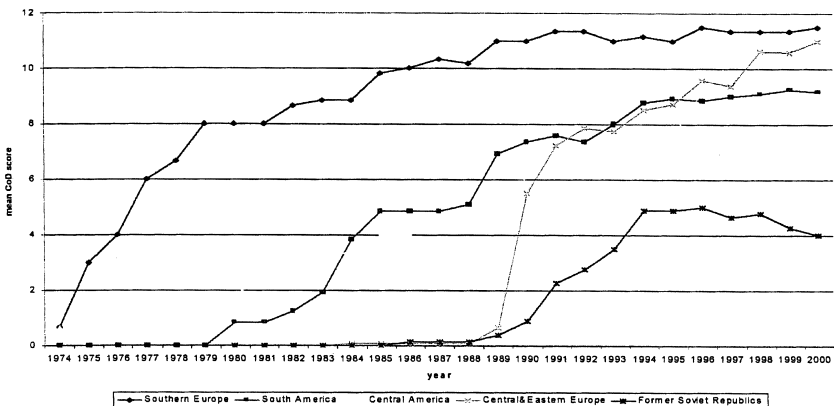


specialists uniformly predicted that CoD would be much more difficult – if not impossible – in this unfortunate part of the world than in southern Europe and Latin America, where only reforms in political institutions seemed to be at stake.

In order to display how inaccurate these predictions turned out to be it is interesting to compare the differences in the pace of CoD across world regions. If we take SE – the region that is commonly seen as the most successful – and compare it to CEE – the region for which many analysts predicted great difficulty – the data reveals a clear, if counterintuitive, pattern. Not only have the CEE countries achieved high CoD scores, but also most of them did so in much less time than their SE counterparts. If we establish a benchmark at a score higher than 10, it took Spain ten, Greece 14 and Portugal 15 years to achieve this. For the CEE countries, the respective figures are much lower, sometimes less than the half the time: Slovenia three, Bulgaria six, and the remaining countries nine years.

This difference in speed with which the CEE region succeeded in consolidating democracy is nicely demonstrated in Figure 7.<sup>37</sup> Southern Europe (SE) started first with the process of CoD and ranks at the top in any given year since 1974. One has to notice, however, the steep rise of central and eastern European countries after 1990. It took these countries roughly eight years to achieve a mean score higher than ten. In comparison, the southern European success-stories, needed almost twice as long (approx. 14 years). This good performance of CEE countries is one of the major descriptive findings and contradicts an abundant literature on the unlikelihood of successful democratization in these countries. The pessimists were right,

FIGURE 7  
DEVELOPMENT OF COD IN FIVE WORLD REGIONS, 1974–2000



however, with respect to the communist republics of the former Soviet Union. Their annual average scores have remained low and are the only ones with a consistently downward trend in recent years.

### A Cumulative Comparison of the Process of CoD

If one were less interested in the individual trajectory of countries over time and more in a comparison of them at specific moments or over periods in time, then there are various ways of aggregating the annual scores into a single overarching CoD scale. The scores displayed in Table 5 are generated by using the following formula:

$$CoD = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^t x_i}{t},$$

TABLE 5  
INDEX OF CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY  
(1974–99/2000)

	CoD	Cluster No.
Uruguay	83.58	
Spain	82.29	
Slovenia	79.92	1
Portugal	78.85	
Greece	78.55	
Czech Rep	71.25	
Poland	70.45	
Argentina	70.14	2
Bulgaria	69.17	
Slovakia	68.33	
Mongolia	66.67	
Hungary	65.91	
Romania	65.42	3
Chile	62.50	
Nicaragua	54.66	
Brazil <sup>a</sup>	54.17	4
Bolivia	49.34	
Ukraine	48.96	
Peru	43.45	5
Turkey	39.46	
Guatemala	33.58	
Mexico <sup>a</sup>	31.48	
Russia	26.39	6
Georgia	26.14	
Belarus	14.58	7

*Note:* <sup>a</sup>Countries particularly 'disadvantaged' by the aggregation formulas used for producing the CoD index.

where  $x_t$  is the annual sum of CoD scores and  $t$  is the number of years that have past since the first item was acquired until the year 2000, our last year of measurement in the data set. This approach presumes that the extent of consolidation is positively related to the amount of time that democratic institutions have been in place. In other words, there is some driving force behind CoD that operates over a relatively long time period.<sup>38</sup>

First, let us take a look at the cumulative frequency distribution for the entire time period. The range of possible values in both cases runs from 0 per cent to 100 per cent, although the maximum is purely theoretical, since it could only be achieved by ‘instant consolidation’ – a country that met all 12 items within the first year of its regime change. This is impossible because some of the items require the passing of a certain amount of time, or better, the holding of more than one election. Nevertheless, one nice property of the CoD scale is that those countries that are consistently able to fulfil its criteria for a long time asymptotically approach the theoretical endpoint. This allows us to confirm one of the well-established assumptions in the literature – namely that the sheer ‘longevity’ of a democracy contributes to the extent of its consolidation.<sup>39</sup>

Our cases are spread across almost the full range of variation, i.e., from about 10 per cent to approx. 85 per cent. Furthermore, they do so in a fairly even fashion. Nevertheless, some clusters can be identified. In the highest of the seven clusters, we find the anticipated cases from southern Europe (Spain, Portugal and Greece), plus Uruguay and Slovenia. The high ranking of Slovenia may only be surprising to those who confuse the country with Slovakia or have never paid much attention to it. In fact, one of the main reasons most people know so little about this small country is that there is not much to call it to the public’s attention. Its politics have quickly become so predictable and quiet – in the midst of the other former republics of Yugoslavia that have been anything but predictable and quiet – that one forgets those dire predictions about the fate of ‘post-communist’ regimes.

The next cluster is led by the Czech Republic. It contains most of the CEE cases, plus Argentina. A similar mixture of cases from CEE and SA can be found in the third highest cluster, which is led by Mongolia – another neglected success story, we have argued – and followed by Hungary, Romania and Chile.

Clusters four and five seem to be a sort of ‘catchment basin’ for varied experiences with regime change. In it are those countries that perform either worse (Bolivia and Peru, in the case of SA), or better (Turkey, in the case of MENA, Ukraine for the FSU) than their regional neighbours. From CA, Nicaragua and Guatemala fall into these categories, but not Mexico.

At the very bottom of the cumulative CoD scale we find just the former republics of the USSR and Mexico. The latter may seem counter-intuitive

and very few observers would place Mexico in the same basket with, say, Georgia. One should note that such a low ranking might reflect the existence or the combination of two factors: (1) the country may not fulfil many of the items; and (2) it may have taken a relatively long time to get where it is. Mexico combines both of these factors and, thus, ranks near the very bottom of the CoD index. Nevertheless, this country has shown a clear trend towards consolidation in the last few years, mainly, by holding free and fair elections (C3) that brought an end to the PRI dominance. More importantly, the electoral conditions and its outcome have been accepted by all major political parties (C4), including the losing ones. In short, just because Mexico ranks at the bottom does not imply that it is failing to move towards consolidation or is in danger of regressing to autocracy.

Another country worth mentioning is Brazil. On the CoD index it falls into the middle category. However, if we used the number of years since the democracy is in place as our standardization criteria,<sup>40</sup> it would be in the second highest cluster together with most CEE countries, Argentina and Chile. The reason for this is that, according to our data, Brazil started its process of consolidation almost a decade before the founding elections took place in 1989 by reaching an agreement on association formation and behaviour (C9) in 1980.

Summing up the cumulative findings on progress towards the consolidation of democracy, both the overall ranking of individual countries and the ranking of regions do not contradict expectations based upon either common sense or previous observations in the scholarly literature. This is comforting, but not necessarily proof that the CoD index is accurate and reliable.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this article, we have presented an exploratory analysis of a new data set measuring the performance of some 30 neo-democracies or liberalizing autocracies from 1974 to 2000. The discrete measurement items were chosen for their conformity to important observations in the literature on democratization and clustered into scales intended to operationalize the key concepts of liberalization of autocracy, mode of transition and consolidation of democracy. One of our main findings has been that both the seven items measuring liberalization and the 12 items measuring consolidation do form a single dimension – no matter in which world region and no matter in which period of time. The order of facility with which the specific items were acquired did somewhat differently, however, according to region. We have interpreted this to mean that both of the processes involved in democratization have an internal logic composed of interdependent conditions generic to the process of regime

transformation, but that the difficulty of successfully dealing with these conditions varies according to differences in regional points of departure.

In empirical terms, our major finding was the relative success of the central and eastern European countries in both liberalization and consolidation. Not only did they achieve the same or an even higher level as earlier cases from southern Europe and Latin America, but they also did so in a much shorter time. This suggests that the predictions that dominated the literature on these post-communist countries when they began their respective transitions in 1989–91 were excessively pessimistic about their outcome, although we have also observed that the republics of the former USSR have indeed performed worse in terms of both liberalization and consolidation. Furthermore, we have presented empirical evidence that there are cases that democratize without (hardly) any prior liberalization and, even more important, cases that periodically are (de-)liberalizing but, nevertheless, remain stable autocracies. Both findings, ‘illiberal democratizers’ and ‘liberalizing but stable autocracies’, challenge several aspects of the ‘classical’ democratization approach, namely the supposition that the liberalization of autocracy triggers the democratization process.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

1. Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (eds), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule. Some Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
2. Our approach to measurement is also radically different from that of Adam Przeworski and his associates who insist on dichotomizing the data on political regimes into ‘democracies’ and ‘non-democracies’: Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Ferdinando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Material Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Seen from the perspective of regime change as a complex process, this simplification seems to be inappropriate. Regimes do not simply shift in their basic nature from one type to another, and many regimes get stuck somewhere in the middle as hybrids or stalemated outcomes. Our measurement device is precisely designed to capture in depth these indeterminate trajectories – and then to analyze the forces that can probabilistically account for such a diversity of outcomes.
3. O’Donnell and Schmitter (note 1)
4. *Nota bene* what has *not* been included in this conceptualization of liberalization. There is no doubt that in the course of political struggle in well-entrenched democracies the content and coverage of rights have expanded over time and, at least in the case of Europe and North

- America, have tended to converge towards a shared set of norms. Nevertheless, items such as 'freedom of access to public documents', 'freedom of sexual expression', 'right to free legal counsel', or '*le droit à la différence*' extended to foreign language instruction, are still quite unequally distributed and respected across these countries and they are even less likely to find widespread acceptance in 'non-Western' cultures.
5. Robert A. Dahl, *After the Revolution: Authority in Good Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970).
  6. Citizenship involves both the *right* to be treated by fellow human beings as equal with respect to the making of collective choices and the *obligation* of those implementing such choices to be equally accountable and accessible to all members of the polity. Inversely, this principle imposes the *obligation* on the ruled to respect the legitimacy of choices made by negotiation/deliberation among equals (or their representatives), and the *right* for the rulers to act with authority (and, therefore, to apply coercion when necessary) in order to promote the effectiveness of such choices and to protect the regime from threats to its persistence: O'Donnell and Schmitter (note 1); Philippe C. Schmitter, *Democratic Theory and Neocorporatist Practice*, Working Paper No.74 (Florence: European University, 1983).
  7. Philippe C. Schmitter, 'The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups', *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol.35, Nos 4/5 (1992), pp.422–49.
  8. For a fascinating argument that it is often the 'silences' and 'abeyances' of constitutions – their unwritten components – that are most significant, see Michael Foley, *The Silence of Constitutions. Gaps, 'Abeyance' and Political Temperament in the Maintenance of Government* (London: Routledge, 1989).
  9. There is one liberalization item missing from our list that has recently received a lot of attention in the literature, namely, 'protection of minority rights'. As awareness grew that regime change could exacerbate ethno-linguistic and religious conflicts, observers began to conclude that constitutional/legal provisions guaranteeing the autonomous status and resources of minority groups might be called for. Leaving aside the persistent tension, in principle, between the traditional liberal emphasis on individualistic and universal rights and the claims by specific groups for collective rights and exemptions, the fact that in practice the polities that concern us have very different social compositions and sensitivities to this issue led us not to include this item.
  10. Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, No.1 (2002), pp.5–21.
  11. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
  12. Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol.128, No.2 (1991), pp.267–82; Valerie Bunce, 'The Political Economy of Postsocialism', *Slavic Review*, Vol.58, No.4 (1999), pp.756–93; Michael McFaul, 'The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship. Non-cooperative Transitions in the Post-communist World', *World Politics*, Vol.54, No.1 (2002), pp.212–44.
  13. Karl and Schmitter (note 12).
  14. This single-minded reliance on parties and elections has not gone unchallenged and has been labelled as the 'electoralist fallacy': Terry Lynn Karl, 'Imposing Consent? Electoralism Versus Democratization in El Salvador', in Paul W. Drake and Eduardo Silva (eds), *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980–1985* (San Diego, CA: Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, University of California 1986), pp.9–36. See Adam Przeworski, 'Minimalist Conceptions of Democracy: a Defense', in Ian Shapiro and Casiona Hacker-Cordón (eds), *Democracy's Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.23–55 for the logic behind a minimalist conception of democracy. For some sceptical (but not dismissive) comments on the exaggerated role that is usually attributed to political parties in this process of consolidation, see Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Parties Are Not What They Used to Be', in Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (eds), *Political Parties and Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp.67–89.

15. Robert Adcock and David Collier, 'Measurement Validity: a Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.95, No.3 (2000), pp.529–46.
16. Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen, 'Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.35, No.1 (2002), pp.5–33.
17. The authors can be contacted for more detailed information on the coding rules.
18. The coders are instructed to gather information for their judgements from multiple sources. In this way, we attempted to avoid one of the criticisms made on almost all large N democracy measures, namely their common exclusive usage of the same few sources like Keesing's World Archive and Banks.
19. Thus, in this data generation design, the supervisor's role was crucial in this process since he was responsible for both the intra-country and the inter-country reliability of the data.
20. For Latin America, for example, Scott Mainwaring *et al.*, *Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America, 1945–1999*, Working Paper Series 280 (Notre Dame, IN: Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 2000). For Africa, for example Robert Bates, Karen Ferree, A.J. Robinson, Smita Singh and Anne Wren, *Towards the Systematic Study of Transitions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1996).
21. David Collier and Robert Adcock, 'Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices About Concepts', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.2 (1999), pp.537–65, esp. p.544.
22. Michael Coppedge, 'Democracy and Dimensions. Comments on Munck and Verkuilen', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.35, No.1 (2002), pp.35–9, esp. p.37.
23. Munck and Verkuilen (note 22).
24. John Mciver and Edward G. Carmines, *Unidimensional Scaling* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1991); Paul Pennings, Keman Hans and Jan Kleinnijenhuis, *Doing Research in Political Science. An Introduction to Comparative Methods and Statistics* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1999).
25. J. Reynaldo A. Santos, 'Cronbach's Alpha: a Tool for Assessing the Reliability of Scales', *Journal of Extension*, Vol. 37, No.2 (1999), pp.1–4.
26. The mode of transition is a concept that is nominal in nature. Hence, all attempts to create a one-dimensional index of MoT adding up the items are conceptually unjustifiable, regardless of whether empirically these items turn out to form a one-dimensional space or not.
27. At almost any point in time between 1974 and 2000, Cronbach's alpha for the LoA scale and the CoD scale is higher than 0.9.
28. We also tested the dimensionality of our data with the relatively new technique of categorical principal component analysis (CatPCA); see Jacqueline J. Meulman and Willem J. Heiser, *SPSS Categories 10.0* (Chicago, IL: SPSS, 1999). Roughly speaking, this is the equivalent of factor analysis for categorical data. The results (not reported here) provide further evidence that each of our item sets forms a one-dimensional space.
29. Notice that the finding of a one-dimensional space do not contradict the possibility of different item difficulty, that is to say the question of the dimensionality of the data is different from how frequently items which all lie on one dimension are achieved.
30. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp.57–104.
31. Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Foundations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).
32. O'Donnell and Schmitter (note 1).
33. The reader is reminded that this 'perfect liberalization' is only based on the seven generic items/tasks that we selected. It is quite possible that on other criteria – for example, minority rights or toleration of sexual freedom – these countries could still differ considerably.
34. Improvements in the way the Turkish government is dealing with the Kurdish question that have occurred after 2000 are not captured by the scalogram data.

35. See Daniel Brumberg, 'The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, No.4 (2002), pp.56–68 and Daniel Brumberg, *Liberalization Versus Democratization. Understanding Arab Political Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003) for some insights into how liberal autocracies in the Middle East and Northern Africa manage to survive, the consequences for attempts to democratize, and implications for external democracy promotion.
36. M. Steven Fish, 'Mongolia: Democracy Without Prerequisites', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.9, No.3 (1998), pp.127–41; Verena Fritz, 'Mongolia: Dependent Democratization', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.18, No.4 (2002), pp.75–200.
37. Of course, there is some intra-regional heterogeneity in terms of when single countries started and how well they perform in terms of CoD. Hence, using the regional mean as an indicator for CoD developments in entire regions implies a considerable loss of information. However, in most cases the regional consistency is surprisingly high.
38. One way of easing this assumption consists in introducing a discount factor into the aggregation formula. The farther back in time we go, the less important is the respective annual CoD score and, hence, the less weight should be attributed to it. The formula for the weighted overall CoD score would look like this:  $CoD = (\sum_{i=1}^l (x_i \times age_i)/t)$ , where  $age_i$  is the number of years past since the first CoD trait has been achieved until the  $i$ th year.
39. Put differently, it makes a difference whether a country has accomplished many CoD traits over the last three or the last 13 years and we are able to display these differences with the way we construct our CoD indices.
40. The respective formula is,  $CoD = (\sum_{i=1}^l x_i)/d$ , where  $d$  is the number of years since the founding elections took place until the year 2000. In substance, replacing the denominator  $t$  with the denominator  $d$  replaces the bias against long democratizers with one in favour of long democratizers.

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