

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: Processes and Causes in Different Settings

Theory/ Model

Since 1974, many countries from different regions over the world have abolished their authoritarian regimes and introduced a democratic political system. Social Scientist the same as political practitioners discuss whether these young democracies will fall back into their authoritarian pasts and what kind of conditions might foster their struggle for democratic survival. The overall label for this wide topic is the of ‘Consolidation of Democracies (CoD)’. Inserting myself into this broad debate, my central *research questions* are as follows:

- What factors account for CoD? Are any of these factors universal and which of them are specific to a world region or a certain kind of country?

In order to answer this empirical questions, some theoretical and conceptual questions also have to be answered. These are:

- What does a consolidated democracy look like? (conceptualising the dependent variable)
- What theories of CoD exist in the literature and is there a theoretical way of synthesising them? (investigating the independent variables)

The *scientific relevance* of my research derives from several conceptual, theoretical, and empirical shortcomings in the existing CoD literature: There are already many valuable CoD studies on single countries and specific regions like Latin America and Eastern Europe. However, only a few of these compare in a systematic way a more extended range than the countries located in one specific region and hardly any analysis includes the whole post-1974 population (or a representative sample of it). Additionally, the problem with the few already existing medium-to-large-N CoD studies is not only that they conceptualise the dependent variable CoD in a ‘thin’ way (M. Coppedge 1999), but that they also often rely on simplistic, uni-dimensional, and methodologically questionable indicators such as the Freedom House index. Furthermore, even though many different (groups of) hypotheses have been generated and many explanatory variables have been tested, few attempts have been made to include them all in one study in order to simultaneously test their impact empirically.

Hence, my research questions and the structure of my thesis derive from these shortcomings:

- Dealing with my dependent variable, I conceptualise CoD in a ‘thick’ way, i.e., I measure CoD with more than one indicator and I recognise its multidimensionality.¹ My Multilevel

¹ It should be underlined that, despite this complexity, the CoD concept can be applied to my different cases without causing ‘conceptual stretching’ (G. Sartori 1970). This is so, because my CoD concept is not classical but radial. It formulating the maximum requirements for consolidation. Cases that fulfil all criteria may or may not exist and they

Model of a Consolidated Democracy consists of a behavioural and an attitudinal level, the former being subdivided into mass behaviour and elite behaviour.

- On the independent variables side, I include all groups of relevant factors mentioned in the literature. I try to synthesis different factors and then to empirically test this conjunctural theory. The relevant hypotheses can be grouped together into cultural tradition factors (e.g. region, religion, colonial legacies), history of transition (e.g. type of previous regime, mode of transition), socio-economic factors (e.g. GDP, urbanisation, possibilities of communication, standard of living), political culture factors (e.g. social capital, life satisfaction, liberty aspirations, association memberships), cleavage structures (e.g. ethnic-linguistic, social class, income inequality), institutional factors (e.g. federal vs. unitarian state, presidentialism vs. parliamentarism, proportional representation vs. first-past-the-post system), international factors (e.g. effects of democratic neighbourhood, international organisations, diffusion).

Even though my research is more focused on variables than on cases, it might reveal some relevant *insights for policy makers*. Some of the independent variables included in my study are at least partly open to deliberate change through suitable policies driven by politicians within the young democracies, as, for instance, the electoral system or the level of income inequality. In addition, my project tries to map the process and actual level of CoD in countries from all over the world. Hence, this work might be useful for those political actors in the developed countries and in international organisations that are engaged in the task of promoting and protecting democracy in the world.

Methodology

Multi-variate analysis

In general terms, my research is located in the medium-to-large N studies (around 35 cases), working with quantitative data and applying different statistical techniques like cluster analysis, factor analysis, and (logit and probit) regression. In addition to these common techniques, I apply the QCA approach, based on Boolean algebra and the use of qualitative data.

The application of these different kinds of techniques is justified by my research aims; regression analysis helps identify universal factors for CoD, indicating the impact of each single variable by assuming that it has the same effect in all countries, regardless of the context in which it is observed. On the contrary, the application of QCA helps find the different causal pattern for the same outcome CoD.

Sample

The universe of relevant cases for my study has a *temporal* rather than a *spatial limitation*. I am interested in those countries which experienced a democratic transition after 1974 regardless of their geographical position. Due to problems of limited data I might, however, be forced to drop some cases. I will try to avoid tapping into the selection bias trap which consists in dropping cases in a systematic way without mentioning the impact of this case selection on the scope of inference.

The selected cases will show a great variety in terms of their scoring on the different independent variables. In addition, they also differ on the dependent variable, i.e. level of CoD/ types of CoD. Such a method can be labelled as the concomitant variation method.

Data

The data for measuring my dependent variable will be produced in the context of a larger project run by Prof. Schmitter at the European University Institute. Several scholars code the relevant countries on a yearly basis on a scalogram with 38 items.

Given the diversity of my independent variables, the data will be drawn from different sources like Keesing's World Record, election data, constitutional texts, World Bank reports, to mention just a few.

Literature

Collier, David/ Mahon, James E. Jr. (1993): Conceptual "Stretching" Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis. In: American Political Science Review 87 (4): 845-855

Coppedge, Michael (1999): Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories. Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics. In: Comparative Politics 31 (4): 465-476

Sartori, Giovanni (1970): Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics. In: American Political Science Review 64 (4): 1033-1053