

Asymmetrical Constraints on Democratic Regime Types: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

A number of scholars have recently argued that many political systems characterized by high levels of electoral competition fail to meet more demanding standards of democracy. On the basis of an elaborate typology distinguishing between different types of democracies, we propose that this gap is rooted in an asymmetrical relationship between structural factors and different types of democracy. More precisely, the importance of key conditions on the level of democracy is smaller when democracy is conceived in a relatively ‘thin’ (minimalistic) way than when it is understood in a relatively ‘thick’ (maximalistic) way. We anchor this proposition in considerations about a demand-side and a supply-side of democratization, primarily represented by socio-economic development and bureaucratic quality, respectively. Using a series of OLS-regressions, we demonstrate that structural factors do indeed have different effects on thin and thick types of democracy and that this asymmetrical pattern was also present during in the early decades of the third wave of democratization, before the end of the Cold War. What this goes to show is that empirical relationships often differ as a function of the employed definition of democracy – an analytical point which is important but has all too often been ignored.

Asymmetrical Constraints on Democratic Regime Types: A Comparative Study

Within the study of regime change, different definitions of democracy have proliferated in recent decades (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Møller & Skaaning, 2010a). Some scholars only include Schumpeter's emphasis on electoral competition for office (e.g. Przeworski, 1986). Others emphasize that this competition must be anchored in inclusive and flawless elections, respect for political liberties, and/or the rule of law (e.g. Dahl, 1989; Paxton, 2000; O'Donnell, 2001). In spite of this disagreement about the proper definition of democracy, scholars tend to agree that many countries performing quite well on the criterion of electoral competition fall short when it comes to more demanding exacting conceptions of democracy such as liberal democracy (Carothers, 2002; Diamond, 1999; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; O'Donnell, 2010; Levitsky & Way, 2010). However, this widespread consensus is so far largely based on hunches or, at best, descriptive overviews (Zakaria, 1997; Diamond, 1999). Indeed, the causes of this pattern have merely been hinted at (e.g. Fukuyama 2006; Carothers, 2002), and systematic attempts to examine the roots of the gap between thin and thick democracies are missing.

In this paper, we order some of the most prevalent concepts of democracy into a typology that distinguishes between minimalist democracy, electoral democracy, polyarchy, and liberal democracy. Based on these distinctions we argue that the differences across countries as regards democratic performance are caused by the asymmetrical effects of structural factors on different types of democracy, meaning that the level of democracy is less affected by these conditions when employing a minimalist definition than more demanding definitions. More particularly, we propose that the asymmetry follows from differences across countries in the societal demand for democracy on the one hand and the state apparatus's ability to supply efficient administration on the other. In countries with low levels of socio-economic development, the distribution of assets tends to be very unequal (Boix, 2003; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992), and emancipative values do not flourish in the population (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). In such settings, the ordinary citizens are not able to continuously keep the government and its agents on a tight leash. To the contrary, in societies characterized by high levels of socio-economic development the inverse power balance tend to exist, meaning that a higher degree of fulfillment of the standards associated with thicker versions of democracy is more likely. What may be termed the supply-side of democracy further reinforces the pattern. The quality of the bureaucracy intensifies the asymmetrical pattern because, even if well-intentioned, governments are often unable to prevent

violations of democratic rights as they have only little control over the state agents that, moreover, do not possess adequate skills. In such cases, elections will be characterized by significant shortcomings and the de facto respect for civil liberties and especially the rule of law will generally be low and very unevenly distributed (Englehart, 2009; O'Donnell, 2007, 2010).

To test our expectations, we run a number of simple cross-sectional OLS-regressions of between 139 and 176 countries in 2007, using the disaggregated scores of Freedom House's *Freedom in the World Survey* to operationalize the dependent variable, i.e., the four types of democracy. Regarding the independent variables, i.e., socio-economic development, ethnic fractionalization, bureaucratic quality, and oil rents (the latter primarily introduced for purposes of control) we employ a number of readily-available measures. Subsequently, we use the Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices provided by Freedom House to construct a relatively thin and a relatively thick measure of democracy in order to crudely assess if the patterns have changed during the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991). Doing so, we distinguish between two periods demarcated by the end of the Cold War to assess whether the advent of a post-Cold War 'Western liberal hegemony' in the international system (Levitsky & Way, 2002) has increased the gap between minimalist and liberal democracies. We conclude that our theoretical expectations find strong empirical support and discuss the potential implications for empirical democratic theory.

Thinner and thicker types of democracy

To make the general proposition amenable to an empirical appraisal, a systematical conceptual distinction between thinner and thicker conceptions of democracy is required. In a recent attempt to provide a systematic overview and ordering of the 'realist' (or procedural) tradition of defining democracy, Møller & Skaaning (2010a, 2011) flesh out four such types:

- *Minimalist democracy*: defined by the presence of meaningful competition for political leadership by means of regular elections characterized by 'ex ante uncertainty' (i.e., positive possibility that government can lose election) and 'ex post irreversibility' (i.e., electoral winners assume office) (see Przeworski, 1986; Przeworski et al. 2000: 16-18).
- *Electoral democracy*: defined by the presence of meaningful and extensive competition for decisive political leadership by means of regular, inclusive, and flawless (high quality) elections (cf. Vanhanen, 1984: 11; Diamond, 1999: 10; Paxton, 2000: 93).

- *Polyarchy*: defined by the presence of meaningful and extensive competition for decisive political leadership by means of regular, inclusive, and flawless elections combined with full respect for certain political liberties (freedom of speech and association) (Dahl, 1971, 1989).
- *Liberal democracy*: defined by the presence of defined by the presence of meaningful and extensive competition for decisive political leadership by means of regular, inclusive, and flawless elections combined with full respect for certain political liberties (freedom of speech and association) and the rule of law (O'Donnell, 2007; 2010; Merkel, 2004; Diamond. 1999: 11-12).

As these definitions indicate, these four types can be placed along the ladder of abstraction/generality (Sartori, 1970) as illustrated in Table 1, meaning that thicker categories subsume their thinner counterparts and that the defining attributes of each type are treated as individually necessary and jointly sufficient.

Table 1 about here

Theorizing the asymmetrical pattern

This typology of types of democracy provides the conceptual edifice on which we base the test of whether the postulated asymmetrical pattern is in existence empirically. But why would key structural factors condition democracy less when based on a thin definition than when using thicker definitions? To answer this, we need to spell out what kind of explanatory factors we are addressing. By structural factors, we mean factors relatively stable and outside the manipulative reach of current actors and which – if they do operate as important causes of the political regime – tend to produce patterned outcomes via the way they shape the identity, values, and choices of actors (see Kitschelt, 2003; Schneider & Wagemann, 2006; Møller & Skaaning, 2009; Møller, forthcoming). How can we make a theoretical case for the existence of an asymmetrical pattern in the extent to which such structures explain the variation in thinner and thicker types of democracy?

First, ordinary citizens always have an interest in holding rulers accountable. Therefore they not only tend to demand free elections but also a cumulative ‘thickening’ of democracy in the form of respect to civil liberties and the rule of law. The societal elites, meanwhile, all else equal have an interest in avoiding any such concessions (Weingast, 1997; Holmes, 2003; Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). They will thus fight such concessions at every step, only gradually giving in. As

Tilly (1998: 55) has pointed out, rights are “historical products, outcomes of struggle.” They do not come into existence simply because the majority wishes them to do so but because they are able to either conquer them or force the elites to grant them (Przeworski, 2009). To illustrate this, we can briefly review the historical pattern of suffrage-extensions. In the nineteenth century, conservative and liberal elites fought extending the suffrage – and making it more equal – at almost every step of the way toward equal and universal suffrage. When the elites gave in with respect to a particular extension, they normally held it out as a necessary evil to avoid rebellion – a “reform to preserve” – and also often construed it as the last concession needed to preserve the *status quo* (Dunn, 2005; Przeworski, 2009). This stepwise logic of elite-concessions can be extended to our more general distinction between thinner and thicker types of democracy.¹ Employing a simple conflict perspective which pits masses against elites, what we have termed the demand-side of democracy would thus entail that the likelihood of democratic progress falls as a function of the ‘thickening’ of the definition. It simply takes more collectively coordinated, stronger and more continuous pressure from below to achieve the full package of liberal democracy.

What, more concretely, determines the intensity of the societal demands? The strength of the civil society has persuasively been identified as essential (Putnam, 1993; Gellner, 1994; Oxhorn, 2003). This is where the structural factors enter the story. The viability of civil society is severely circumscribed by two interrelated structural conditions. Most important is the variable that has most frequently been highlighted as important for the level of democracy, namely socio-economic modernization. Lipset (1959: 75) originally stated that, “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy”. He mainly attributed this relationship to increases in equality, moderation, and tolerance. Rueschemeyer et al. (1992: 302) accept this positive association between socio-economic development and democracy, but they argue that modernization has mainly contributed to democratic development by changing “the balance of class power in favor of the subordinate interests”. Hence, the level of democracy basically reflects the degree to which the suppression of citizens’ demand for rights becomes more costly for the elite than conceding such rights. More recently, Inglehart & Welzel (2005) have emphasized that the citizens’ preference for democratic rights is not always high. But they argue that socio-economic development increases ordinary citizens’ action resources. This tendency leads to a growth in

¹ We are well aware that the historical sequencing of democratic attributes during the first wave of democratization differs fundamentally from that laid out in this paper (cf. Marshall, 1996[1949]; Rose & Shin, 2003). We leave this issue aside in this paper as we have pursued it elsewhere (Møller & Skaaning, 2010b).

emancipative values, meaning that people prioritize equality, tolerance, autonomy, and expression over patriarchy, conformity, authority, and security, and that their engagement in pro-democratic social movements increases significantly. In short, action resources and intrinsic preferences for democratic freedoms are translated into capability and willingness to initiate and sustain collective action in favor of democratic rights broadly understood. The bottom line is that the citizens' demand for democracy can rest on both material and more immaterial ('post-material') motives that influence the political regime type through mass pressure rooted in collective action – but, crucially, that both have been argued to follow from societal modernization processes.

Another of the variables often highlighted in discussions about the conditions of democracy, ethnic fractionalization, should work in the opposite direction as social diversity undermines the willingness and ability to form strong political coalitions that make the elite accountable to the masses. First, one group may benefit from taking advantage of others. Second, members of different groups are likely to share different values, making the achievement of consensus about fundamental rights more difficult and increasing the risk of conflict. Third, pacts implementing peaceful cooperation are often not a viable option even if all groups wish for an end to oppression (Weingast, 1997: 256-257). These problems are fed by the lack of trust across ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1985; Putnam, 2007). People are generally more willing to cooperate with co-ethnics than with others due to inherited norms about whom to count on for support (Habyarimana et al., 2007), and this means that mass mobilization will frequently follow ethnic cleavages and be chauvinistic. Hence, the formation and persistence of strong, pro-democratic social movements are less likely under the condition of ethnic diversity.

But the effects of pressure from below not only depend on modernization and social homogeneity. We argue that what may be termed the 'supply-side' further reinforces the described asymmetry. Several scholars have pointed out that the character and quality of democracy also depends on state capacity – or, more precisely, on the quality of the bureaucracy (Linz & Stepan, 1996: 17; O'Donnell 1999: 1358-1359; Rose & Shin 2001: 331; Grugel, 2002: 82-85; Carothers 2002: 9-10; Fukuyama, 2006). If state institutions are mistrusted by the population, open conflict is far more likely (Mansfield & Snyder, 2007). Even more important is the simple fact that a certain level of state capacity is necessary to enable the government to govern, including safeguarding the provision of effective citizenship to the masses (O'Donnell, 2007; 2010; Englehart, 2009). More generally, "the inability to police territory and to control agents of the state has a significant negative impact on human rights conditions. Weak states create conditions ripe for human rights

abuse because they cannot restrain powerful citizens and lose control over their own employees” (Engelhart, 2009: 164). In parts of some countries, weak administrative capacity even allows local ‘strongmen’ to take control and exercise authority as they see fit (Migdal, 1988; O’Donnell, 2007). The existence of a strong and effective state characterized by a meritocratic bureaucracy is especially important with respect to the rule of law, while electoral rights are less dependent on the quality of the civil society and the state apparatus (O’Donnell, 2007; Diamond, 1999; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). For this reason, the quality of the bureaucracy is arguably also more critical, the thicker the definition of democracy is.

Taken together, the strength and consistency of the push for democracy and the ability to implement democratic citizenship rights thus depend on the status on the explanatory factors discussed above. We therefore expect structural conditions in the form of socio-economic development, ethnic fractionalization, and bureaucratic quality to account for more variation in the level of democracy when democracy is understood in a thick rather than a thin way.

Operationalizing dependent and independent variables

To test this proposition, both the types of democracy and the structural factors discussed above need to be operationalized. To measure the four democracy types described in Table 1, we employ the Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World Survey 2008* (FH) – covering 2007 – as this dataset allow us to measure all the attributes of democracy listed in Table 1 and, *ipso facto*, the four types of democracy (minimalist democracy, electoral democracy, polyarchy, and liberal democracy, respectively). The Freedom House data has been criticized for a number of shortcomings (see, e.g., Bollen & Paxton, 2000; Munck & Verkuilen, 2002). Partly as a response to this body of critique, the sub-component scores for 2005 and onwards are now publicly available. This means that we are able to operationalize the democratic attributes separately, thereby achieving a higher level of concept-measure consistency (cf. Goertz, 2005). We use the scores of the indicator *Electoral Process* to measure the attribute of competitive elections and thus minimalist democracy. To measure to what extent the additional feature linked to electoral democracies (high quality elections) is also fulfilled, we use the scores of the indicator *Political Pluralism and Participation*. The scores of the indicators *Freedom of Expression and Belief* and *Associational and Organizational Rights* are needed to measure the political liberties attribute linked to the concept of polyarchy. Finally, we use the *Rule of Law* scores to operationalize the rule of law attribute that together with the three other attributes capture the meaning of liberal democracies.

Regarding the aggregation procedure, the defining attributes are perceived as being noncompensatory and interactive. We treat the attributes as noncompensatory because a high score on one conceptual attribute cannot make up for a low score on another attribute. Moreover, they arguably stand in an interactive relationship. For instance, with regard to Dahl's concept of polyarchy, the meaningfulness of free, fair, and inclusive elections depends on the respect for political liberties (Munck, 2009: 48-49). The treatment of the attributes as noncompensatory and interactive speaks in favor of adopting a multiplication formula to aggregate them. Each of the types of democracy described above is thus measured by multiplying² the scores linked to the affiliated attributes after having recalibrated the scores to range from 0 to 1.

Turning toward the independent variables,³ socio-economic is operationalized using the index of socioeconomic modernization constructed by Teorell (2010).⁴ Ethnic fractionalization is operationalized using the ethnic fractionalization index constructed by Alesina et al. (2003). It ranges from 0 (low fractionalization) to 1 (high fractionalization) and reflects the "probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belonged to different groups" (Alesina et al. 2003: 5). Moreover, as proxy for the quality of the bureaucracy, we use the Bureaucratic quality indicator from the Political Risk Services' (PRS, 2007) *International Country Risk Guide*. The indicator is based on expert assessments, ranges from 0 to 4, and is described as follows: "high points are given to countries where the bureaucracy has the strength and expertise to govern without drastic changes in policy or interruptions in government services. In these low-risk countries, the bureaucracy tends to be somewhat autonomous from political pressure and to have an established mechanism for recruitment and training". The main advantage of the PRES-measure is that it excludes properties directly pertaining to the rule of law, meaning that it is not conceptually

² We have rerun all our analyses using an aggregation procedure based on the minimum rule as advocated by Goertz (2005: 110-115). This did not alter the general results substantively though the asymmetry between thinner and thicker types of democracy was somewhat less pronounced.

³ All the independent variables that vary over time have been lagged with one-year.

⁴ The index is based on eight indicators: 1) industrialization (output of non-agricultural sector/GDP), 2) education (gross secondary school enrollment ratio), 3) urbanization (urban percentage of total population), 4) life expectancy at birth (in years), 5) the inverse of infant mortality rate (per 1000 life births), 6) the log of GDP/cap. (current US dollars), 7) radios/cap., 8) televisions/cap., and 9) newspaper circulation/cap. The index is computed by taking the factor scores "and then using imputation on the regression line with all nine indicators as regressors" (Teorell, 2010: 164-165). Teorell's approach is thus more refined than that of those who only use GDP per capita to measure modernization, and – as such – much more in line with Lipset's (1959) original framework.

conflated with our measure of liberal democracy, which would be the case if we used indicators on, say, corruption or law and order.

Finally, we include a measure of oil wealth as a control on the demand-side because many studies have shown this factor to be important for the level of democracy (e.g. Barro, 1997; Ross, 2001; Epstein et al., 2006). According to Ross (2001), the ‘resource curse’ works through three mechanisms: oil money is used for patronage and to keep taxes low so the pro-democratic pressure is decreased, oil revenue provides finances that governments can use to repress social movements, and – most important for our analysis – economic growth based on oil wealth does not support social and cultural changes in support of democracy (cf. Inglehart & Welzel, 2005: 45, 160). To measure the variable oil rents we use the data on oil rents per capita (in 1000\$) collected by Ross (2008).

Empirical analyses

Bivariate associations

We first report the bivariate correlations between the four structural factors (measured in 2006) and the four types of democracy (measured in 2007). Table 2 shows that the results fit well with our theoretical discussion of the three main independent variables. In agreement with our expectations, they are consistently positive in the case of socio-economic development and the quality of bureaucracy and consistently negative with respect to ethnic fractionalization. Moreover, in all three cases the correlations consistently increase as thinner types of democracy are substituted for thicker types.

[Table 2 about here]

Not so with oil rents, however, the correlations of which, though negative (as expected), actually consistently decrease. One reason could be that oil-wealth is not very inauspicious – or maybe even partly supportive – for achieving a relatively high degree of order, which is one aspect that is captured by the applied rule of law measure. Furthermore, it is important to understand what is up for grabs in these countries. It would obviously be much more costly for ruling elites to lose political power at competitive elections when such power equals control over oil money. Fearing redistribution of the oil wealth, any incumbent elite is therefore likely to furiously resist even

electoral democratization in this setting, indeed possibly resists competitive elections more than the introduction of other liberties and aspects of the rule of law. If this reasoning is correct, this would tend to suppress the general hierarchy which we expect to find.

Regression analyses

In the next step we report the result of a series of standard OLS-regression analysis, first only including the independent variables pertaining to the demand- and supply-side, respectively, subsequently including all variables in one general model. The results of the two first regression analyses using the democracy data for 2007 are reported in Tables 3 and 4.

[Table 3 about here]

[Table 4 about here]

The findings presented in Tables 3 and 4 show that the structural factors included in the models explain the variation in measures based on thick conceptions of democracy differently than in measures based on their thinner equivalents. More precisely, in both cases the models – in a completely stringent manner – explain a still larger part of the variation as thinner conceptions are substituted for their thinner equivalents. The adjusted R^2 thus increases by 21.7 percentage points in Table 3 and by 26.8 percentage points in Table 4 when interchanging the measure of minimalist democracy with that of liberal democracy – electoral democracy and polyarchy being situated in-between. In other words, the asymmetrical pattern hypothesized is present both on the demand- and the supply-side, just as we expected. Interestingly, the highest jump in the variance accounted for occurs as we move from minimalist to electoral democracy, indicating that the establishment of high quality elections is quite difficult to achieve. Regarding the coefficients, they all show the expected direction. They are thus positive for modernization and bureaucratic quality and negative for oil rents and ethnic fractionalization.

The significance levels also present few surprises: all explanatory variables but ethnic fractionalization are consistently and highly significant. Concerning the theoretical point of departure, it is of course somewhat surprising that ethnic fractionalization seem to matter little statistically. It does turn significant (at the .1-level) when employing the measure of liberal democracy as dependent variable but in all other models it is consistently insignificant. Possibly this

lack of direct explanatory leverage reflects that the variable only has an indirect impact by constraining the level of modernization. Prior studies have thus shown that ethnic fractionalization hampers economic development (Mauro, 1995; Easterly & Levine, 1997; Alesina et al. 2003).

In Table 5, all the independent variables are included in one and the same regression analysis in order to assess if the general pattern remains the same or if the demand-side and supply-side explanations cancel out one another – for instance because they might be highly correlated. Theoretically, one could both hypothesize that increases in modernization facilitate increases in state capacity via increases in material and immaterial resources (see above) and that increases in state capacity facilitate increases in economic development (Evans & Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2005). Likewise, ethnic fractionalization might stifle bureaucratic quality via the way it works to patrimonialize the state apparatus.

[Table 5 about here]

So, what do the results tell us? We do see some indications that the demand- and supply-side weakens the effect of each other. The coefficients of the three main variables thus decrease, ethnic fractionalization is in no instance statistically significant, and the significance level of modernization drops for thinner types of democracy. That said, modernization retains statistical significance for three out of four types of democracy whereas bureaucratic quality is consistently significant at the .001-level. What is more, the findings presented in Table 5 further corroborate the general findings as the R^2 now increases with 27.5 percentage points when substituting minimalist democracy for liberal democracy. That modernization only turn statistically significant in the analyses employing thicker conceptions in fact only underscores that structural factors constrain democratization more when thickening the concept of democracy. Notice, finally, that the results indicate that the increasingly positive impact of particularly modernization and bureaucratic quality generally trumps the decreasing impact of oil rents when the definition of democracy is augmented.

Are these findings robust? We have tested this in three ways. First, they hold up strongly when using the FH-numbers for 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009. Second, they do not change substantively when including additional control variables, such as the percentage of Muslims in a country or status as former British colony. Third, we have expanded the examined period as explained below.

An artifact of Western liberal hegemony?

One might object that the asymmetrical pattern is solely a phenomenon of the post-Cold War period. Levitsky & Way (2010) have thus forcefully argued that it is the advent of the post-1989 ‘Western liberal hegemony’ which has produced the gap on which our asymmetrical relationship rests. To quote their argument at some length:

... if the post-Cold War international environment undermined autocracies and encouraged the diffusion of multiparty elections, it did not necessarily bring democracy ... In much of the world, Western democracy promotion was “electoralist” in that it focused almost exclusively on multiparty elections while often ignoring dimensions such as civil liberties and a level playing field ... Governments “learned that they did not have to democratize” to maintain their international standing. Partial liberalization – usually in the form of holding passable elections – was often “sufficient to deflect international pressures for more complete political opening”. In short, the post-Cold War international environment raised the minimum standard for regime acceptability, but the new standard was multiparty elections, not democracy ... Even in the post-Cold War international environment, therefore, full democratization often required a strong domestic “push” (Levitsky & Way, 2010: 19).⁵

We take this assertion to mean that the asymmetrical pattern should only be in existence after the 1989-91 breaking point – or, at the very least, that it should have increased saliently following the end of superpower rivalry between the USA and the USSR. This would imply that the asymmetrical pattern is not primarily anchored in the demand- and supply-side of democracy, as we have argued, but first and foremost in the change of the structure of the international system. Does this cross-temporal proposition find empirical support?

⁵ As indicated in the quotation, Levitsky and Way (2010: 3-19) do not see this as a gap between thinner and thicker types of democracy. Due to their more maximalist definition of democracy, they expect the proliferation of hybrid regimes, in particular the species competitive authoritarianism, at the expense of ‘full democracy’. In our typology, we have parted ways with Levitsky and Way by characterizing political systems with genuine electoral competition for leadership as democratic, although possibly only in a minimalistic sense. However, as their notion of full democracy broadly corresponds to our thicker concepts of democracy, they are really referring to the same asymmetry, only construed as a gap between democracy and hybrid regimes due to their quite demanding understanding of democracy.

To test this, we retain the structural model presented above but retest it in the period 1973-2008. Unfortunately, we are here forced to resort to measures of thin and thick conceptions of democracy that are characterized by lower levels of concept-measure consistency than in the main analysis above. Such is the case because the disaggregated indicators necessary to measure all of the attributes combined in the typology are only available for the period 2005-2010. To bring out the difference between thinner and thicker conceptions, we instead employ Freedom House's measure of Political Rights to capture a thinner, electoralist conception and contrast this with a thicker measure – created by multiplying⁶ Freedom House's Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores – which can be understood as a proxy of liberal democracy because it adds civil liberties and the rule of law. Doing so, we are able to measure both the dependent and the independent variables in the period 1973-2007. Unsurprisingly, it turns out that the results of panel regressions for the two periods are seriously infected by autocorrelation. For this reason, we have simply taken the average score for each variable type across the periods 1973-1988 and 1992-2007, respectively, and used this to carry out two cross-sectional regression analyses. The results are reported in Table 6.

[Table 6 about here]

Table 6 shows that the asymmetry was present in both periods. Moreover, it has only increased slightly and only due to a jump in the variation explained with respect to the thick measure of democracy. Indeed, the model actually explains more of the variation in the thin measure in the post-1991 period than in the pre-1989 period, which fits poorly with the notion that electoral competition is today generally less conditioned by domestic factors due to the advent of Western liberal hegemony. Using a set of thin and thick measures based on the Polity IV indicators,⁷ the

⁶ The argument for multiplying the scores follows analogously from the prior operationalization of the democracy types.

⁷ In our operationalization, we use the scores assigned to three indicators, viz. *competitiveness of participation*, *competitiveness of executive recruitment*, and *openness of executive recruitment*, weighted as suggested by Goertz (2005: 97). In practice this means that the scores for *competitiveness of participation* have been changed from the original in the following way: 1 to 0, 2 to .2, 3 to .6, 4 to .8, and 5 to 1; the scores for *competitiveness of executive recruitment* from 1 to 0, 2 to .6, and 3 to 1; and the scores for *openness of executive recruitment* from 1 to 0, 2 to 0, 3 to .6, and 4 to 1. The scores are then aggregated by taking the maximum value of the two latter (highly overlapping) indicators in a single competition dimension (as also suggested by Goertz, 2005) which is then (as recommended by Munck, 2009) multiplied with the score of the first indicator that covers the dimension of participation. To construct a thicker measure of democracy, we take the product of the thin measure and the weighted scores for the indicator

picture is somewhat different as the explanatory power tends to decrease for both the thin and thick measure after the Cold War. Nonetheless, even here the asymmetry is pronounced in both periods. Thus, our findings do not corroborate Levitsky and Way's (2010: 34-35) assertion that, "the generalizability of theories based on analyses" of either the Cold War or Post-Cold War period is limited. On the contrary, the asymmetrical pattern described in this paper seems to characterize both the late part of the Cold War period and the post-Cold War period.

Conclusions

Today, the world of democracy is inherently lopsided. Cross-spatially, we find an asymmetrical pattern in that structural factors explain a larger amount of the variation in the level of respect for democratic rights when employing thick rather than thin conceptualizations and measures of democracy. This is the most important, and clear-cut, finding of our study. The empirical reality of regime types thus goes a long way toward corroborating that there are deeply-rooted gaps between the performance with regard to electoral competition, on the one hand, and with regard to more demanding combinations of liberal-democratic rights, on the other. We have attempted to explain the existence of such an asymmetrical pattern in terms of a demand- and supply-side of democracy. It turns out that the asymmetrical pattern is evident with variables pertaining to both of these dimensions. Our findings thus strongly indicate that the often observed gap between minimalist and liberal democracy is rooted in differences between countries with regard to socio-economic development and bureaucratic quality. As these factors are difficult to achieve (cf. Weber, 2003[1927]; Huntington, 1968; Migdal, 1988; Ertman, 1997; Fukuyama, 2011) – and well nigh impossible to improve significantly in the short run – this conclusion should damp the most blue-eyed optimism with respect to the leverage of external democracy promotion (cf. Burnell, 2011; Welzel, 2009), constitutional engineering, and, more generally, the prospects for achieving a liberal democratic world (cf. Carothers, 2002). Nevertheless, the relationships that we have identified are far from perfect. Democratic 'overachievers' do exist, and one should not neglect the importance of the general gains in the level of democracy that has been the result of the third wave of democratization.

More analytically, our analyses underscore what is a deceptively simple but often neglected point: that empirical relationships might differ systematically as a function of using

executive constraints. The scores for *executive constraints* have been changed from the original in the following way: 1 to 0, 2 to .2, 3 to .4, 4 to .6, 5 to .8, 6 to .9, and 7 to 1.

different definitions of democracy. This has been expressly recognized in descriptive overviews of the most prominent waves of democratization (e.g. Doorenspleet, 2000; Paxton, 2000). Both the timing, spread-out and the character of Huntington's (1991) waves of democratization thus depend on whether minimalistic or maximalistic definitions are employed (most importantly whether universal suffrage is made a criterion for democracy). A similar point has been conveyed in a number of comparative historical analyses of the causes of democracy (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992; Paxton, 2000). To elaborate, whether it is the bourgeoisie or the working class that appears to be the main driving force behind democracy seemingly depends on the conception democracy (cf. Moore, 1991[1966]; Therborn, 1977; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992). More precisely, if we use a definition close to what we have termed minimalist democracy, the middle class/bourgeoisie was often the driving force in European processes of democratization. If, instead, we seek to explain the final drive in the direction of electoral democracy characterized by the introduction of universal suffrage, the working class played a more dominant role. Some of the classical disagreements about the causes of democratization and democratic stability thus seem to follow from the use of different conceptions of democracy. We have demonstrated in this paper that a similar logic characterizes the relationship between structural factors and democracy during the third wave. Apart from providing a fine-grained analytical device for a descriptive analysis of regime developments, our typology of democracy thus presents a pivot for investigating if empirical relationships are different when minimalist and maximalist definitions of democracy, respectively, are employed.

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Table 1: Thinner and thicker types of democracy

	Competitive elections	High quality elections	Political liberties	Rule of law
Minimalist democracy	+			
Electoral democracy	+	+		
Polyarchy	+	+	+	
Liberal democracy	+	+	+	+

Note: the presence of an attribute is indicated by '+'.

Table 2: Bivariate correlations (Pearson's r), 2007

	Minimalist democracy	Electoral democracy	Polyarchy	Liberal democracy
Modernization index	.385 (185)	.503 (185)	.585 (185)	.617 (185)
Oil rents/cap.	-.226 (176)	-.193 (176)	-.149 (176)	-.115 (176)
Ethnic fractionalization index	-.273 (184)	-.356 (184)	-.384 (184)	-.423 (184)
Bureaucratic quality	.509 (141)	.619 (141)	.688 (141)	.725 (141)

Note: N in parentheses.

Table 3: OLS- regression results of modernization, oil rents, and ethnic fractionalization on thin and thick conceptions of democracy, 2007 (FH)

	Minimalist democracy	Electoral democracy	Polyarchy	Liberal democracy
Modernization index	.176*** (.030)	.225*** (.028)	.258*** (.026)	.233*** (.024)
Oil rents/cap.	-.028*** (.007)	-.029*** (.007)	-.027*** (.006)	-.021*** (.005)
Ethnic fractionalization index	-.066 (.118)	-.132 (.112)	-.129 (.104)	-.176* (.093)
Constant	.592*** (.067)	.467*** (.063)	.342*** (.058)	.279*** (.052)
Adjusted R ²	.254	.367	.442	.471
N	176	176	176	176

Note: *P<.05, **P<.01 ***P<.001. Unstandardized betacoefficients with (heteroscedasticity-consistent) robust standard errors in parentheses. One-sided significance test.

Table 4: OLS- regression results of the effect of bureaucratic quality on thin and thick conceptions of democracy, 2007 (FH)

	Minimalist democracy	Electoral democracy	Polyarchy	Liberal democracy
Bureaucratic quality	.162*** (.020)	.207*** (.019)	.233*** (.018)	.225*** (.017)
Constant	.300*** (.056)	.078*** (.049)	-.082*** (.042)	-.160*** (.036)
Adjusted R ²	.254	.383	.469	.522
N	141	141	141	141

Note: *P<.05, **P<.01***P<.001. Unstandardized betacoefficients with (heteroscedasticity-consistent) robust standard errors in parentheses. One-sided significance test.

Table 5: OLS- regression results of the effect of structural conditions on thick and thin conceptions of democracy, 2007 (FH)

	Minimalist democracy	Electoral democracy	Polyarchy	Liberal democracy
Modernization index	.052 (.047)	.095* (.042)	.132*** (.036)	.119*** (.030)
Oil rents/cap.	-.023** (.007)	-.024*** (.007)	-.023*** (.007)	-.018** (.006)
Ethnic fractionalization index	.014 (.133)	-.001 (.121)	.017 (.106)	-.047 (.091)
Bureaucratic quality	.137*** (.032)	.156*** (.029)	.163*** (.025)	.154*** (.021)
Constant	.342*** (.099)	.152* (.089)	-.002 (.076)	-.048 (.066)
Adjusted R ²	.316	.450	.544	.591
N	139	139	139	139

Note: *P<.05, **P<.01 ***P<.001. Unstandardized betacoefficients with (heteroscedasticity-consistent) robust standard errors in parentheses. One-sided significance test.

Table 6: OLS-regression results of the effect of structural factors on thin and thick conceptions of democracy, 1973-1988 and 1992-2007

	Political Rights (pre-1989)	Political Rights & Civil Liberties (pre-1989)	Political Rights (post-1991)	Political Rights & Civil Liberties (post-1991)
Modernization index	.145*** (.040)	.181*** (.034)	.074* (.040)	.117*** (.033)
Oil rents/cap.	-.015** (.005)	-.018*** (.004)	-.053*** (.015)	-.052*** (.014)
Ethnic fractionalization index	-.071 (.103)	-.043 (.099)	-.017 (.105)	-.022 (.087)
Bureaucratic quality	.092*** (.023)	.091*** (.020)	.157*** (.029)	.161*** (.025)
Constant	.340*** (.069)	.199** (.061)	.248** (.079)	.069 (.067)
Adjusted R ²	.473	.563	.500	.622
N	121	121	138	138

Note: *P<.05, **P<.01***P<.001. Unstandardized betacoefficients with (heteroscedasticity-consistent) robust standard errors in parentheses. One-sided significance test.