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Transition from Democracy. Loss of Quality, Hybridisation and Breakdown of Democracy

Gero Erdmann

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Abstract

The paper points out that there is hardly any research for the reverse transition, the transition from democracy to non-democratic regimes for more than 30 years. For heuristical purposes, it provides basic data of the decline of democracy, which refers to loss of democratic quality, changes from liberal democracy to hybrid and to authoritarian regimes, during the third wave of democratisation (1974-2008). The stocktaking shows that most of the cases of decline refer to the change in and from young democracies established during the third wave, especially after 1989. Loss of democratic quality and hybridization are the most frequent cases of decline, while the breakdown of democracy has been very rare. Young democracies and poorer countries are more prone to decline than the older and richer cases – aside from a few remarkable exceptions. Finally, the overview argues that the research on the decline of democracy can benefit from the richness of the approaches of transitology, but should also avoid its methodological traps and failures, concluding with a number of suggestions for the future research agenda.

Keywords: authoritarian regimes, breakdown of democracy, hybrid regimes, quality of democracy, transition from democracy

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Transition from Democracy. Loss of Quality, Hybridisation and Breakdown of Democracy

Gero Erdmann

Article Outline

1 Introduction[1]

For more than two decades, transitions from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracies preoccupied politics as well as political science research. The ebb of the third wave of democratisation, the persistence of hybrid and authoritarian regimes, and even the resurgence of the latter have not only posed a new political challenge, but have also provided a new research agenda. The "end of the transition paradigm" (Carothers 2002) and the "backlash against democracy promotion" (Carothers 2006) indicate not only a turn towards international democracy promoters, but apparently also a significant factual trend in regime development signalled by titles such as "The Democratic Rollback" (Diamond 2008), "Freedom in

[1] I would like to thank Jan Sändig (University of Potsdam), a former intern at the GIGA Institute of African Affairs, for the compilation of the data that were the basis for this article, and three reviewers for their very helpful comments.

Retreat" (Puddington 2008) and "The Erosion Accelerates" (Puddington 2010). This poses the question of whether we are already experiencing a "reverse wave" (and to what degree), like we experienced after the first and second waves of democratisation (Huntington 1993: 290). Despite the pessimistic tone of the titles quoted above, the evidence is not quite as clear as is claimed. Other authors believe the "third wave of democratisation" expired in the late 1990s, hence the "stagnation" in the spread of democracy, but no stagnation in a reverse wave or a resurgence of dictatorships (Merkel 2010). In fact, the number of democracies remained stable while some "partly free" regimes became "not free" (Freedom House 2010).[2]

This vague "trend" notwithstanding, political scientists re-discovered the phenomenon of authoritarian rule some years earlier.[3] Hybrid regimes have attracted the attention of political scientists in a similar way.[4] While the research on non-democratic regimes mainly deals with the status and the self-reinforcing mechanisms of these regimes and why they last, researchers have neglected the way they came into being. For more than twenty years, the research agenda on regime change was shaped by a specific perspective that dealt with the transition from authoritarian rule with its particular set of research questions and issues. However, the converse process – the transition from democracy – was hardly addressed, and this perspective might raise its own issues and specific questions. While the former research question was "Why have some countries had democratic transitions while others have not?" (Munck 2004: 69), the new question will be "Why have some democracies experienced declines while others have not?"

Given the scarcity of research on this question, the aim of this article is twofold: First, it will address the question of whether this is a research topic worthy of study at all by taking stock of the various cases of decline of democracy and their regional and socio-economic contexts. Second, it will provide an overview of the current state of research, the various research issues involved, and the various approaches, and sketch out the possible routes of future research. Hence, the overall purpose is to find out whether the conditions for and the processes leading to the emergence of democracy are different from the conditions and processes that cause the decline of democracy, and to detail these conditions appropriately.

Before taking stock of the cases, I shall give a short overview of the literature that relates indirectly and directly to the transition from democracy.

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[2] The conclusion on the "retreat of freedom" is largely based on developments (decline) in non-democratic regimes ("partly free" and "not free" according to Freedom House). Overall, the number of countries classified as "not free" (2009 = 47) is still lower than in 1993 (= 55), although it increased from 2008 (= 42); five "partly free" countries were subsequently put into the "not free" category. The 89 "free" countries of 2009 continued to be the second-highest number ever recorded, topped only by 90 "free" countries in 2006.

[3] For an overview, see Köllner 2008. He makes reference to Brownlee 2007; Brooker 2000; Hadenius and Teorell 2007; Schedler 2006; Levitsky and Way 2002; 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Snyder 2006; Diamond 2008; Magaloni 2008; 2007; Wintrobe 2007; Lewis 2006; Bogaards 2009.

[4] Karl 1995; Bendel, Croissant and Rüb 2002; Diamond 2002; *Journal of Democracy*, 4, 2002.

The research problem and the literature

There is a vast amount of literature which deals indirectly with this issue – namely, the research that enquires about the conditions or prerequisites for democractic as well as non-democratic regimes. Most of these studies have a developmental perspective, which might be misleading: They try to find favourable and unfavourable conditions for the *emergence* of democracy. This scholarship, a large amount of which is based on macro-quantitative research (which in turn is based on rational choice models), provides substantial – albeit sometimes methodologically questionable – results as to what is more favourable and less favourable for democracy.[5] From this, we can learn about the conditions or circumstances under which a democracy is more likely to survive and perhaps even become consolidated – or those under which a democracy may remain instable and be prone to declining back into a non-democratic regime.

At the same time, there are also a number of sociological and political institution studies in the tradition of the Barrington Moore Research Programme that search for systematic historical explanations based on qualitative comparisons (Mahoney 2003). More recently, new approaches, such as the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) based on Boolean algebra, have contributed an additional methodological dimension to this field (see Ragin 1987 and 2000; Schneider and Wagemann 2007; Rihoux and Ragin 2009). While the number of configurational factors has been enlarged in these studies, going beyond socio-economic factors, such as the Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell project (Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell 2000; 2002), these approaches remain in the structuralist camp (see Skaaning in this issue as well).

While the research has been vastly enriched on favourable and less favourable conditions for democracy and what makes a democracy endure, we still know very little about the specific constellations of actors and actual process that make a democracy reverse.[6] As suggested above, during the third wave of democratisation, a number of young democracies declined into hybrid and authoritarian regimes. We do not know exactly how many of the young democracies were affected, though, or whether they merely declined into a hybrid state or continued to reverse into an authoritarian regime, nor do we know how often democracies have collapsed and directly turned into autocracies.

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[5] For a short overview up to 1992, see Diamond (1992), which covers the following studies: Lipset 1963; Cutright 1963; Olsen 1968; Cutright and Wiley 1969; Jackman 1973; Bollen 1979; 1983; Bollen and Jackman 1985; Thomas and Ramirez and Meyer and Gobalet 1979, Hanon and Carroll 1981, Diamond et al. 1987. See also Lipset and Seong and Torres 1993 and the standard work by Przeworski et al. (1996; 1997; 2000); also Epstein et al. (2006). One fundamental problem particularly with the earlier works is that correlations at a point in time are translated into a development path without any explanation.

[6] One of the few experts who have explicitly addressed the issue of democratic decline is M. Steven Fish (2001), who deals with democratic erosion in post-communist countries. Based on simple bivariate regressions, he concludes that "the normal causes or the usual suspects" do not help to explain the democratic reversal.

So far, research on the decline of democracy whose focus is the *process* of decline has hardly moved beyond Linz's seminal study on the breakdown of democracy (Linz 1978). Because of the focus on the process, there is an actor or agent orientation. His attempt to systematically describe and conceptually capture the breakdown process addressed cases from the inter-war period in 20th-century Western Europe, and in Latin America after World War II. Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe were not included (although Linz did make occasional references to the latter in his overview). Building upon an older research tradition on military coups and military regimes (Feiner 1988; Nordlinger 1977), Paul Brooker (2000: 59 ff.) suggested an analytical framework for the establishment of military regimes and one-party regimes only, with a focus on motives and opportunity structures of authoritarian-minded actors.

A more recent study takes up – as a rare case – our issue of the "authoritarian reversal" (Svolik 2007), but relates it to the question of democratic consolidation. The same perspective, which factors might "help insure new democracies against backsliding", is applied by Epstein et al. (2006: 557) and addressed in Przeworski et al. (2000); all three studies are macro-quantitative analyses. They all give some valuable hints about possible prerequisites for the decline of democracy, but do not really help us understand the process of decline.

Hypothetically, the reverse process might start with a loss of democratic quality,[7] which is not confined to young democracies, but may affect old ones, too. Loss of quality describes a deterioration of quality in one of the two central dimensions of democracy – freedom and equality – and in an additional one, i.e. the (horizontal) control of power; it describes a negative variation within the democratic regime type. Democracies can decline in quality and change into one of three different regime types: a hybrid regime, an authoritarian regime, or a totalitarian regime.[8] The process can be slow and gradual, moving from quality loss to a hybrid regime, which I call "hybridisation", and then possibly evolving into other non-democratic regimes. A hybrid regime is understood to be a regime type of its own located between democracy and autocracy and not a diminished subtype of one of the other regimes (Morlino 2009: 276).[9] The decline process can also be fast and short, accelerated through the

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[7] The quality of democracy is a controversial concept; usually it refers to the fact that democracies differ from each other and that they have different qualities or degrees of democracy ("high"- and "low"-quality democracies). The move from low to high quality signifies a "deepening" of democracy. For example, an electoral democracy is of lower quality than a liberal democracy. For a discussion of the problem and a detailed conceptualisation of the quality of democracy see Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Coppedge 2002; Bühlmann, Merkel and Wessels 2008.

[8] Another possible variant of a decline of democracy would be the reversal from a failed transition from an authoritarian regime; this, however, might be viewed as a regime-type change within the authoritarian camp, a possible change between authoritarian subcategories.

[9] Unlike Morlino's definition, a hybrid regime must not arise from only an authoritarian regime (ibid.: 281); it can also arise from a democracy. This point rests on the simple observation that democracies can also transition into other types of regimes, not just authoritarian ones.

various phases ending in an authoritarian or totalitarian regime without passing through a hybrid stage at all. I call this process a "breakdown of democracy". The overall process starting with quality loss is termed "decline of democracy". The process of decline does not necessarily follow the sequence of steps described. In fact, the decline can stop at any point and remain there, perhaps at a lower level of democratic quality, as a defective or electoral democracy or as a hybrid regime of one of the "competitive authoritarianism" types. One sequence of the process can be skipped, of course: The decline of quality can be finalised by a coup d'état that establishes an autocratic regime. In this context, one fundamental question is whether a consolidated democracy can possibly experience a decline at all that goes beyond a quality decline toward a hybrid or authoritarian regime. Some concepts of democratic consolidation exclude this possibility by definition (Schedler 1998: 91, 103; Svolik 2008).

Taking stock of the situation

Since there is little knowledge about the statistics of democratic decline, I shall attempt to take stock of the various cases of democratic decline that have occurred during the third wave of democratisation (since 1974), and especially those since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, which gave the third wave an additional push. Apart from taking stock of the number of cases and the types of decline (loss of democratic quality, hybridisation or breakdown of democracy), two other questions will also be addressed: First, an institutional question: What kind of democracies have experienced the decline, young ones or old ones? Second, the classic structuralist question: What kind of countries are affected by a decline in democracy in terms of their socio-economic development?

Such a survey requires well-defined concepts and delineations between the various types and subtypes of regimes, which are not sufficiently provided by previous research (Bogaards 2009).[10] However, for the purpose of this heuristic survey, no detailed discussion of the difficult delineations and thresholds between regime types is required at this stage. Instead, a simple analytical instrument based on the threefold typology of democratic, hybrid and authoritarian regimes linked to data from the Freedom House Index (FHI) will be applied. The FHI category "free" (with a value of 1.0 to 2.5) can be translated into a liberal democracy; "partly free" (3.0 to 5.0) into a hybrid regime; and "not free" (5.5 to 7.0) into an authoritarian regime or dictatorship.[11] The index not only allows a distinction to be made between different types of regimes, but since the categories are scaled, the variation in value can be taken to indicate partial variations in the quality of each regime type. In the quality of

[10] The problem mainly relates to the creation of subtypes and how they are delineated from other root concepts of either democracy or autocracy. See the discussion about defective democracy and hybrid regimes, for example (Krennerich 2002; Rüb 2002).

[11] Until 2003, countries with a value of 3.0 to 5.5 were categorised as "partly free", while those with values between 5.5 and 7.0 were deemed "not free".

democracy, for example, 1.0 indicates a "higher" quality of democracy than 1.5 or 2.5 – more freedom, in other words.[12] Since the index only has two values with which to capture differences in the quality of democracy, the changes in the FHI data are only a very crude indicator of quality changes.[13]

Frequency of decline

In order to establish the number of declines in the quality of democracy based on the Freedom House data, I considered the value changes from 1 to 2 and from 2 to 3 in both dimensions, i.e. political rights and civil liberties. Countries with a value of 2 in one and 3 in the other category (which adds up to an average value of 2.5) were still classified as "free" or democratic. For the third wave, from 1974 to 2008, the data provide 88 cases of negative changes in the quality of democracy in 53 countries worldwide. The number was clearly higher from 1989 to 2008 (58 cases in 43 countries) than for the period before that (see Table 1); some of these countries experienced quality changes several times (see Appendix 1).

As regards the total number of losses in democratic quality in the different regions, Africa was less affected than Europe, followed by Asia and Latin America. The reason why the number is smaller for Africa than for Europe, for example, is very simply due to the small number of democracies in Africa (see Table 1).

The data provide 52 cases of regime change for the third wave, either from democracy to a hybrid form (hybridisation) or to an authoritarian regime (breakdown). The count only includes cases that were classified as "free" or democratic for at least two years before the hybridisation or breakdown occurred. This requirement should exclude cases with very short spells of democracy after a democratic transition that is viewed as an extended transition conflict (not as an established type of democratic regime).

Significantly, among these 52 cases there were only five cases of a clear breakdown of democracy or a direct transition from democracy to an authoritarian regime, and interestingly, four of those breakdowns happened before 1989. All the other cases were hybridisations, i.e. changes from democracy to hybrid regimes (see Appendix 2).

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[12] A note is required here regarding the relationship between the Freedom House Index and the various regime types, especially the concept of democracy. The FHI research questions related to political rights and civil liberties comprise essential elements which are part of all liberal concepts of democracy. The basic questions of the index are very similar to other measurements of democracy; they cover the three dimensions of democracy mentioned above: a) electoral process (three questions), b) political pluralism and participation (four questions), and c) functioning of government (three questions), d) freedom of expression and belief (four questions), e) associational and organisational rights (three questions), f) rule of law (four questions), and g) personal autonomy and individual fights (four questions). The question in sections a to c cover political rights, although the function of government is not "right", while the other four are related to civil liberties. See http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&anapage= 342&year= 2008; see also Lauth's critical view in Lauth 2004: 269 ff.

[13] For a much more refined measurement of qualities of democracy, see the democracy barometer project (Bühlmann, Merkel and Wessels 2008), for example.

The 52 regime changes from democracy to non-democratic regimes took place in 40 countries, 9 of which were affected by hybridisation twice and 1 of which underwent hybridisation and then a breakdown more than a decade later. This means these ten countries were re-democratised in between.

Table 1: Frequencies of Decline of Democracy, 1974–2008

	1974–1988 Cases / Countries	1989–2008 Cases / Countries	Total Cases / Countries
A. Decline of quality			
Africa	2 / 2	10 / 7	12 / 7
Asia	4 / 4	14 / 10	18 / 12
Latin America	15 / 12	22 / 16	37 / 21
Europe	9 / 6	12 / 10	21 / 13
B. Change to hybrid regime			
Africa	4 / 4	4/ 4	8 / 8
Asia	9 / 8	10 / 7	19 / 12
Latin America	4 / 4	14 / 10	18 / 14
Europe	1 / 1	1 / 1	2 / 2
C. Change to dictatorship			
Africa	2 / 2	1 / 1	3 / 3
Asia	2 / 2	- / -	2 / 2
Latin America	- / -	- / -	- / -
Europe	- / -	- / -	- / -
D. All regime changes (B and C)			
Africa	6 / 6	5 / 5	11 / 10
Asia	11 / 9	10 / 7	21 / 14
Latin America	4 / 4	14 / 10	18 / 14
Europe	1 / 1	1 / 1	2 / 2

Source: see Appendix 1.

A few observations should be noted at this point. The first one is the high number of declines of democracies, i.e. the transformation from democratic to non-democratic regimes. The second interesting point is the high degree of regime instability in Latin America indicated by the high number of changes in the quality of democracy combined with the high number of regime changes from democratic to hybrid regimes. This, however, also implies renewed improvements in the quality of democracy and re-democratisation after a hybrid period. Despite the fact that Latin American countries were among the first and most successful during the third wave of democratisation up to the point that there was hardly any authoritarian regime left in the region, this still suggests a lasting high degree of institutional instability, which might provide the basis for future authoritarian reversals. Finally, compared

with Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa stand for regime stability, although for opposite types of regimes: Europe stands for stable democracies, while Africa and Asia stand for the stability of non-democratic regimes. Surprisingly, however, there have been only a few declines in democracy in Africa since the "wind from the East [shook] the coconut trees" (Omar Bongo, *West Africa*, 9 April 1990) in 1989.

The institutional or age dimension

Besides asking about the actual number of declines that have taken place, the other crucial questions are: What type of democracies decline? Is the number of losses of democratic quality and/or the hybridisation higher among young democracies than among older ones because they lack institutionalisation or consolidation – as is suggested in the democratic transition literature?[14] For the purpose of this heuristic overview, no elaborated concept of institutionalisation or consolidation is required – apart from the fact that both concepts are controversial and difficult to operationalise. In the definitions of both concepts, time either explicitly or implicitly plays a crucial role (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996; Merkel 1996; Huntington 1993; Schedler 1998; Schneider and Schmitter 2004).[15] The durability of democracy is used here as a proxy for "institutionalisation" or "consolidation" as in macro-statistical studies, although it is quite clear that age is an insufficient indicator of both institutionalisation and consolidation of democracy.

From this institutional perspective, the survey reveals that most of the changes to hybrid regimes took place in young democracies that were established during the third wave of democratisation and especially after 1989. Interestingly, there were only very few cases of hybridisation and breakdown before 1989, a circumstance which can partly be attributed to the smaller number of democracies. During this period, more than two-thirds of the democracies were not affected by a regime change. With the increasing number of democracies after 1989, the democratic stability slightly declined to 63 per cent (see Table 2). However, some older democracies that were established long before 1989 and even before the beginning of the third wave were affected as well. The overall observation for the time under consideration is that the longer a democratic regime endures, the less likely it is to decline into a hybrid regime.

A direct transition (breakdown) from a democracy to an authoritarian regime is even less likely; it has occurred in only five cases (see Appendix 2). If we include "extended" declines to authoritarian regimes through a "hybrid-regime stage" of more than one year, the number of cases increases to nine. Interestingly, in two cases a reversal took place after more than 20 years of democratic rule. These latter cases can hardly be regarded as young democracies.

The balance corroborates the assumption about a close correlation between the durability and the consolidation or institutionalisation of democratic regimes. It also suggests the

[14] For different conceptualisations see Merkel 1996; Huntington 1993: 266 f.; Schneider and Schmitter 2004: 62.

[15] See also the debate in the *Journal of Democracy*, 1996, 7, 2 and 4.

operation of a self-reinforcing mechanism that, in the end, contributes to the consolidation of democracy. At the same time, the balance supports the view that most of these democratic regimes were not consolidated because young democracies and countries with a history of varied regime types were mostly affected by hybridisation or the breakdown of democracy.

Table 2: Frequencies of Regime Changes, 1974–2008

Democratic years	Transition from democratic to hybrid/authoritarian regimes, no. of cases*				
	1974–1988		1989–2008		1974–2008
	Cases of decline	Average no. of democracies	Cases of decline	Average no. of democracies	Total cases of decline
2–5	5		13		18
6–10	4		7		11
11–15	-		4		4
16–20	[4]		3		[7]
More than 20	[3]		3		[6]
Total	16	50	30	69	46
* In a number of cases, the democratic period extended before Freedom House started up in 1972. This is indicated by square brackets. Additional information such as Polity IV Project is used for the assessment. The 16-to-20-year-old democracies were in Columbia, the Fiji Islands, Gambia and Malta.					

Source: see Appendix 2.

Since there are a number of democracies that were forced into becoming non-democratic regimes, even after more than 20 years of democratic rule, this raises the issue of consolidation of democracy.[16] Moreover, there were a number of other democracies that collapsed before the start of the third wave after more than 20 years, such as Chile, Uruguay and the Philippines (Huntington 1993: 271). As noted above, age is not a sufficient way of explaining consolidation.[17]

Some of the cases mentioned above are of major interest with respect to the question of whether an authoritarian regression from a consolidated democracy is possible or not. One crucial observation related to this issue is that most of the transitions from democracy occurred outside Europe, i.e. in Asia and Latin America. This means that no high-income countries were affected, and it brings structural factors into the analysis, which will be briefly considered in the next chapter.

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[16] These were India, Lebanon and Sri Lanka before the start of the Freedom House assessment for 1972, and later Venezuela, the Solomon Islands and Trinidad and Tobago.

[17] The answer to the problem possibly depends on the definition of consolidation. In some definitions, a regression to a non-democratic regime is excluded; consolidated democracies are regarded as "immune" to an authoritarian menace by "securing achieved levels of democratic rule against authoritarian regression" (Schedler 1998: 91, 103; Svolik 2007). Others do not foreclose a possible breakdown or a tendency for de-consolidation (Linz and Stepan 1996: 6; Merkel 1999: 146), which makes their concept somewhat ambiguous.

At the same time, it is obvious that since the end of the Cold War, older, established democracies in industrialised countries experienced declines in the quality of democracy, but no hybridisation or breakdown. The crucial observation for the period, however, is that direct regressions to authoritarian regimes are rare, and they only took place in countries with a short experience of democracy (see above and Appendix 2).

Macro-quantitative studies come up with conflicting results on the relationship between the volatility and age of democracies. Przeworski et al. (1996; 1997; 2000), whose work is regarded as a standard in this kind of analysis, found out that new democracies break down more frequently, but if controlled for economic factors, the difference with respect to old democracies disappears. These results are basically confirmed by Epstein et al. (2006), who used a different variable and data set.[18] A different analysis by Svolik based on a new research strategy contradicts the previous surveys and is more in line with the observations above that a democracy's age is associated with greater chances of survival and that young democracies are more volatile than older ones (Svolik 2007).

It is difficult to explain the differences in the research results. Apart from the different research strategies, the studies are all based on different time sets. Przeworski et al. (1996; 1997; 2000) covered the period from 1950 to 1990, Epstein et al. (2006), the period from 1960 to 2000, while Svolik extended the coverage from 1789 to 2001. My observations are confined to the third wave (1974–2008), the latter period of which has been missed out in all other recent studies. In addition, Przeworski et al. applied a dichotomous regime typology, while I used a trichotomous typology that can easily turn out different results, as illustrated by Epstein et al., although not for the question that concerns us here, where the results are in line with Przeworski et al., except as regards the relevance of economic factors. Since all these analyses provide information about the correlation between various factors in terms of likelihoods, we can conclude that the age of a democracy and its economic well-being are crucial to an understanding of their proneness to decline.

Some relevant information related to the time factor and whether democracies are more volatile during different stages of their development is provided by the study conducted by Bernhard et al. (2003). Their study suggests that after a short honeymoon period of about two years, during which young democracies survive economic crisis, they become more vulnerable to poor economic performance before their third parliamentary elections.

The economic conditions

For a preliminary survey about the socio-economic conditions under which the various declines of democracy occurred, I used the country group data from the World Bank's *World Development Reports* (WDRs) and UNDP's *Human Development Report* (HDR). The WDR

[18] Przeworski et al. (1996; 2000) cover the period from 1950 to 1990, Epstein et al. (2006), the period from 1960 to 2000. Epstein et al. use a trichotomous regime variable (democracy, partial democracy, autocracy), whereas Przeworski et al. use the classical dichotomy of democracy and autocracy.

groups the world's countries into four categories: low-income countries (LIC), lower-middle-income countries (LMC), upper-middle-income countries (UMC) and high-income countries (HIC),[19] while the HDR only uses three groups: low human development (LHD), medium human development (MHD) and high human development (HHD). The reason that the data from the HDR are included here is because the HDR considers not only an economic factor (per capita income), but also a number of other social factors (such as social equality/inequality, degree of education, etc.) which are assumed to contribute positively to the development and stability of democracies.

Based on these data, democratic quality losses between 1989 and 2008 occurred in 87 per cent of all cases under conditions of high and medium human development or high and medium income (see Table 3).[20] This result is not very surprising since most democracies can be found in these two country groups. Neither the WDR nor the HDR classification show any significant differences; only the more differentiated WDR classification allows for the observation that democracies with lower-medium incomes are more frequently affected by quality losses than countries in higher income groups. Losses of democratic quality occurred slightly more frequently in middle-income countries than in high-income countries, the latter being the income group with the highest numbers of democracies anyway. However, if the number of cases is related to the number of countries in each income group, countries with high human development were more often affected than countries with medium human development. The least frequently affected democracies were those of industrialised countries in Western Europe and Asia (see Appendix 3 and 4).

As regards the hybridisation of democracies, about 80 per cent of the regime changes took place in countries with a medium or low level of human development and also in low- and lower-middle-income countries; none took place in a high-income country (see Table 4). The single case of a breakdown of democracy occurred in a very poor country (LIC/LHD).

The classification schemes used in the WDR and HDR provide similar results for this analysis. The difference can clearly be attributed to the finer classification of the WDR. The cases of the middle- and low-income groups of the WDR correspond to the low and medium human development level of the HDR. And an examination of cases in relation to the country groups confirms that hybridisation and breakdown of democracy is predominantly a problem for low- and middle-income countries or countries with low to medium human development (see Table 4).[21]

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[19] Classification based on 2005 according to the following figures: low income, $905 or less; middle income, $906 to $11,115; high income, $11,116 and above. A further division at GNI per capita $3,595 is made between lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies. The benchmarks were lower for previous periods, for example for 2001: low income, $745 or less; middle income, $746 to $9,205; high income, $9,206 and above. A further division at GNI per capita $2,975 is made between lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies (World Bank 2009; 2003).

[20] I have confined this part of the analysis to the period after 1989 because the available data for the countries for the period from 1974 to 1989 are sketchy; the categories of country-income groups were not available for the whole period, or they were different.

[21] There were only three cases that showed a consecutive loss of quality and a transition to a non-democratic regime within a short period of two to three years: two regressed to a hybrid state and one to an authoritarian

Table 3: Frequency of Loss of Democratic Quality According to Country Groups, 1989–2008

	Cases	Countries	Average no. of countries in each group*
Low-income country (LIC)	7	5	52
Lower-middle-income country (LMC)	22	19	55
Upper-middle-income country (UMC)	14	11	36
High-income country (HIC)	11	7	39
Total number	54	42	182
Low human development (LHD)	7	5	41
Medium human development (MHD)	23	20	71
High human development (HHD)	25	19	64
Total number	55	44	176
* Based on classification in 1992, 2000/1, 2010; independent countries only.			

Source: see Appendix 3, 4.

Table 4: Frequency of Hybridisation and Breakdown of Democracies According to Country Groupings, 1989–2008

Country groups	Frequency of hybridisation, no. of cases, in () no. of countries		
	Hybridisation F – PF	Breakdown F – NF	Average no. of countries in each group
Low-income country (LIC)	8	1	52
Lower-middle-income country (LMC)	17 (11)	-	55
Upper-middle-income country (UMC)	7	-	36
High-income country (HIC)	-	-	39
Total	32	1	182
Low human development (LHD)	7	1	41
Medium human development (MHD)	19 (13)	-	71
High human development (HHD)	6	-	64
Total	32	1	176
* Based on classification in 1992, 2000/1, 2010; independent countries only.			

Source: see Appendix 5,6.

The short overview of the decline of democracies corroborates more general findings in macro-quantitative analyses concerning the relationship between democracy and economic development. According to these studies, democracies can emerge under different economic

regime that might be viewed as one process. Two of the countries belong to the group of middle-income or medium human development countries and one of them to the low-income group (see Appendix 1, 2).

conditions or at different levels of development, and, once installed, these democracies have a better chance of survival in wealthier societies than in poor ones, and are almost certain to survive beyond a certain level of per capita income (Przeworski et al. 2000: 137, 269 f., 273). In even stronger terms, the "probability of a democratic breakdown declines steeply with income" (Boix and Stokes 2003: 525). Strictly speaking, though, these findings provide no explanation about the decline of democracies, but are merely observations of correlations. Nevertheless, the frequency of the quality of the same results strongly suggests a causal relationship as well, and these are "only" average probabilities.

One issue not yet examined here is the relationship between economic performance and the decline of democracy. The world economic crisis of the late 1920s was a major reason for the breakdown of democracies in Europe (see Linz 1978, for example). For developing countries, this view was basically repeated by Linz and Diamond (1989), who identified economic crisis as one of the "most common threats to democracy". Macro-quantitative analyses confirmed this general wisdom (Przeworski et al. 1996: 42; Epstein et al. 2006: 564 f.). The evidence is refined by Bernhard et al. (2003), who found that although young democracies can survive economic crisis for a short period immediately after transition, they become more vulnerable to poor economic performance after this "honeymoon". All these findings suggest that younger democracies with poor economic growth or economic decline tend to be more prone to regression than democracies with higher rates of economic growth.

All in all, a number of observations are worth recording for the period of the third wave of democratisation, some of which may not seem very surprising:

1. A decline of democracy – as a loss of quality and hybridisation – can occur under all sorts of different economic conditions or levels of development. However, a complete breakdown of democracy becomes less likely the wealthier a country is – in fact, no breakdown has ever happened in a high-income democracy.
2. A loss of democratic quality can affect young and old democracies as well as poor and rich ones.
3. The loss of democratic quality does not inevitably lead to a breakdown of democracy ending in a hybrid or authoritarian regime.
4. The decline of democracy to a hybrid regime is one possibility that not only affects young democracies, but older democracies as well, as in the case of India and Venezuela.
5. In addition, no hybridisation or breakdown of democracy has occurred in a high-income country – the decline of democracy in such countries is confined to the loss of democratic quality.
6. The latter two observations reopen the conceptual issue of a consolidated democracy, i.e. whether it can be reversed and not only lose democratic quality, but also deteriorate into a

hybrid or authoritarian regime. The empirical evidence for the third wave is very clear: No high-income democracy was affected by hybridisation or breakdown.

An initial conclusion that can be derived from this overview is that the major challenge for the research on the decline of democracy – at least in quantitative terms – is the analysis of the loss in quality of democracy and the transition from democracies into hybrid regimes. The decline of democracy is often a gradual one without a coup d'état or any other significant event such as the cancellation of elections, the prohibition of political parties, the declaration of a state of emergency, the suspension of fundamental political rights, the changing of the constitution, or a major revolt. The absence of such dramatic events makes it difficult to capture and analyse the process of decline and the resulting regime. In fact, after applying a trichotomous regime classification in their macro-quantitative analysis, Epstein et al. (2006: 564 f.) came to the conclusion that the determinants of transitions to "partial democracies" (hybrid regimes) "elude" their understanding. Generally, it should be noted that apart from the latter study, the quantitative analyses are usually based on a dichotomous regime classification and therefore fail to capture

a) changes in the quality of democracy and

b) regime changes that turn them into hybrid regimes. The only phenomenon captured is the breakdown of democracies into dictatorships.

Case-oriented approaches

Przeworski and Limongi have argued that democracies can come into being in many different ways and for many different reasons (1997: 158). The argument can also be reversed: Democracies can decline, lose democratic quality, become hybrid regimes or break down in many different ways and for many different reasons. It is a common view among social scientists that no single variable or factor can entirely explain the transition to or the development of democracy in a country and that democratisation is the result of a combination of causes. The same is true for the decline of democratic quality, the transition from a democracy to a hybrid regime, or the breakdown of a democracy and its transformation into an autocracy. Moreover, the factors that may be responsible for the reverse wave of democratisation may be different from those responsible for a previous wave. Democratic decline in the inter-war period is likely to be different from that during the Cold War and is also different from the cases that have occurred since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Not only has the international environment changed (the international environment being less conducive to democracy during the interwar period than the period following the fall of the Iron Curtain, for example), but the internal factors, the constellation of social forces and the articulation of political ideas and ideologies have changed as well. In the 21st century, the societal groups in

favour of democracy will be different from those of the early 19th century or early 20th century, when "post-feudal" groups still played a crucial political role.

Structurally biased approaches

Various qualitative, case-oriented studies have tried to address some of the issues just mentioned. Largely different from macro-quantitative, variable-oriented approaches, institutionalist and/or structuralist comparative historical studies – many of which are in the Barrington Moore research tradition – are characterised far more by diversity, but they also pose different problems. The historical periods, the cases, the number of cases, the regions and the various political, social and economic factors selected vary considerably. They often cover Western Europe from the 19th to the 20th century, while others cover Western Europe and some non-European cases (US, Japan and China) or examine Latin American cases from the early and late 20th century. Some analyse several distinct historical periods, e.g. first-wave and third-wave democracies as well as different regions in one study. Some focus their explanation on a specific period and region (e.g. inter-war Europe), while others try to make a general argument. These studies also differ in their focus, some of them concentrating on "classes" and "class alliances", others on political parties and government elites as representatives of "classes" and on various factions among these elites. They disagree about the role of the bourgeoisie and the labour movement – for example, about which class alliance was important and about the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis the dominant classes, and see the relationship between state and civil society in different ways as well (Moore 1966; Collier and Collier 1991; Luebbert 1991; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Ertmann 1998; Collier 1999; Mahoney 2001). At the same time, there are a number of critical methodological issues involved that range from case selection and the stringency of the comparative method employed to the historical plausibility of some of the arguments. It should be noted that these studies are confined to Western Europe and Latin America, omitting Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia (apart from Moore). Apart from Collier (1999), they do not deal with the possible decline of third-wave democracies. Hence, they all end up with different results for their particular cases and comparisons, so no generalisation seems to be possible. Although they have improved the analyses by combining quantitative with qualitative methods, by enlarging the scope of factors involved, even including some agency-related elements, they finished by making repeated calls for further refined analyses with more "variables" to be considered (e.g. Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 281 ff.; Collier 1999: 197).

Although a number of studies include the role of actors in certain "critical" circumstances – in particular when some try to explain the exceptionality of deviant cases – they leave the structural argument out and bring back in the crucial role of actors, strategic choice and contingency, but remain in the domain of structural arguments. It is only Mahoney (2001; 2003) who – without solving the problem – emphasises the importance of critical junctures and hence of focusing systematically on the process and the choices of actors at

particular points in time, i.e. critical junctures, within the framework of a path-dependent analysis.[22]

A Boolean analysis of nine well-known, major "theories" or hypotheses about the conditions of breakdown or survival of democracies, including a number of those mentioned above, revealed some of the fundamental deficiencies (Berg-Schlosser and De Meure 1994: 276, 274). One familiar conclusion was, again, the call "to go beyond the analysis of simple and very few factors" by incorporating a "broader range of elements". An answer to this challenge is provided by the Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell project (Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell 2000; 2002), which investigated the conditions of breakdown and survival of democracy during the inter-war period in 20th-century Western Europe. However, the "multi-methodological" coverage of eighteen country cases and 63 variables of different structural, institutional and actor-related dimensions, which were ultimately reduced to eight "supervariables", highlights the magnitude of the endeavour (Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 2002; Berg-Schlosser 2002: 315).[23] Although the research programme was confined to a particular region and to first-wave democracies, a few conclusions are to be mentioned here which could guide our further research:

The first one is that "none of the single factor approaches […] accounted for a great deal of variance" (ibid.: 319); the second is, "socio-economic development and "modernisation" alone explain relatively little. The "standard model […] of the conditions favouring democracy thus has to include basic elements of a secular and democratic political culture, an effective civil control of the military, and the absence of feudal structures" (ibid.: 322). The third one is, against "this 'structural' background the more specific political processes and actors and their dynamic interactions over time come into play" (ibid.). Although the Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell project went beyond the analysis of "classical" structural and institutional variables by taking dynamic factors into account, it still has a "structural bias" in that it investigates the "conditions" for breakdown or survival. Remarkably, the dynamic elements stem from one of the few process-oriented approaches to the breakdown of democracy, namely the seminal work of Juan J. Linz on the breakdown of democracy (1978).

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[22] Interestingly, O'Donnell (1973) in his early case study of the emergence of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state, which is explained structurally by "politico-economic relationships" (O'Donnell 1978: 6), was using historical institutional arguments linking path-dependent institutional developments with rational choice game theory (critical junctures) to explain the decline of the Argentine democracy between 1955 and 1966 (1973: 115-199) – however without using the concepts of or taking an approach from the historical-institutionalist tradition. He also used some of Linz's (1978) process-oriented concepts (see below).

[23] The "supervariables" are pre-war democracy, feudalism, economic development, social heterogeneity, democratic political culture, political unrest, the political role of the armed forces, and observance of civil and political rights.

Process-oriented approaches

I know of only two research approaches that deal explicitly with the process of democratic decline and that might provide a framework for the analysis of the decline of democracy (Linz 1978; Brooker 2000). Paul Brooker (2000) confines his approach to the emergence of military regimes and one-party dictatorships, which he views as the most important types of modern authoritarian regimes. Considering the number of military and one-party regimes that exist, this seems to be a questionable assumption, however. Brooker picks up the older scholarship on the role of the armed forces and their intervention in politics (Feiner 1988; Nordlinger 1977; Janowitz 1964) and focuses it on a model which is then applied to the emergence of one-party dictatorships. There are several shortcomings of this approach: One is the one-sided focus on autocratic actors and the removal of the civilian sphere and its actors. The second is the failure to explain what type of regime – a democracy, a hybrid regime or a (civilian) authoritarian regime – the armed forces are coming up against, and that the model is confined to transitions into two specific authoritarian regime types that have become rare.

Linz amplified the research agenda established at the time, which focused on either non-democratic actors and movements or on structural causes of democratic breakdowns by including the role of pro-democratic forces. He claimed that historical-institutional or socio-structural variables as used by approaches in the tradition of Barrington Moore (1974) hardly have any explanatory power with regard to the process of the breakdown of democracy. Hence, Linz's research programme had an explicit focus on agency. Unlike his later *Transition from Democracy* project (Linz and Stepan 1996), he negated the conceptual relevance of institutional and social-structure factors almost completely (Linz 1978: 24 ff.). Using a number of case studies, his aim was to inductively construct a "descriptive model" that would capture any recurrent patterns, sequences and crises involved in the process of a breakdown. Linz identified three core "elements" and five consecutive phases of the breakdown process.

The three core elements were the "legitimacy", "efficacy" (output) and "efficiency" (outcome) of democratic governments, the latter two having an impact on the first. The delegitimation of the democratic government is at the heart of the issue. Aside from analysing the democratic government, the model distinguishes between three groups of actors: the loyal ones, the semi-loyal ones and the disloyal opposition. Most crucial is not the behaviour of the disloyal opposition, but rather that of the semi-loyal, which is, however, difficult to determine and assess because its questionable "loyalty" only becomes obvious during the crisis. The role of the semi-loyal opposition becomes crucial because the disloyal opposition is not usually in a position to command the support of the majority and topple a democratic government on its own. Finally, the model identifies five consecutive phases of breakdown:
1) crisis, 2) loss of power, 3) breakdown, 4) takeover, and 5) the "re-equilibration" or reconstitution of the democratic regime shortly before or after the breakdown (Linz 1978: 38 ff., 87 ff.).

So far, Linz seems to provide a useful framework for a process-oriented analysis of the decline of democracy. However, a number of problematic issues need to be addressed.[24]

Linz's breakdown model of democracy has hardly been applied to a single case or a comparative study.[25] One reason for this might be that the model is too complex or too abstract to apply in empirical research. However, given the fate of O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986) phasing scheme regarding the transition from democracy, it is surprising that even Linz's phases of breakdown have not gained wider prominence. In fact, his central concepts of "legitimacy", "efficacy" and "efficiency" are difficult to operationalise, and it is hard to apply them to empirical research in a comparative research design spanning several cases. This problem applies to other important concepts in his framework as well (Schmitter 1980: 850).

In light of more recent studies that point out that economic recession is an important factor (Svolik 2007: 166; Bernhard et al. 2003; Przeworski et al. 1996: 42), it is obvious that Linz did not sufficiently recognise the relevance of a country's economic performance for the legitimacy of its democratic government, although he complained that this issue had not been conceptually addressed in the literature that was then available.

Acknowledging that a process-oriented approach is required for analysing declines of democracy, Linz's conceptualisation appears to be too complex to be really useful for comparative research.[26] However, at least his sequencing scheme of a breakdown could be a helpful guide for exploring such processes and, perhaps, a starting point to develop it further – just like the one suggested for the transition from authoritarian rule which paved the way for fruitful research.

The conceptual issue: Quality and more

Up to this point, the different approaches discussed have addressed the decline of democracy as a regime change, but not as a decline in the quality of democracy. The decline of quality poses a challenge of its own and raises a conceptual issue at the same time. In the case of quality changes, we are dealing with finer nuances or degrees of change than in the

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[24] Linz claimed that his model can be used for analysing the breakdown of "consolidated" democracies, and that the model for young democracies would be different (Linz 1978: 8 f.). Since Linz regarded the short-lived democracies of the inter-war period in Germany, Spain and Portugal as consolidated, it is obvious that his concept then was different from today's concept of consolidation (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996; Merkel 1996; Huntington 1993; Schedler 1998). According to the latter, all cases considered by Linz would be categorised as unconsolidated democracies.

[25] To my knowledge, only Giovanni Capoccia (2007) has adopted Linz's actor-oriented approach in his study on inter-war Europe without actually using his framework.

[26] Berg-Schlosser and De Meure (1994: 270) provide a different interpretation of Linz's work that is less critical. However, they concede that what they have extracted from his work "may not reflect exactly what he had in mind in all cases". They very successfully use Linz's work as a resource for identifying relevant variables concerning the breakdown of democracy.

case of regime changes. Therefore, an analysis of changes in the quality of democracy not only requires that fine-tuned "measures" or instruments be used, but also entails a refined conceptualisation of democracy in the first place. Minimal concepts of democracy such as Schumpeter's or Dahl's (Schumpeter 1950; Dahl 1971; Huntington 1993; Przeworski 1999; Munck 2009), which are conveniently used to analyse regime changes, help to distinguish between autocracy and (electoral) democracy, yet they are not very helpful in investigating different degrees of democratic quality.

More complex democracy concepts are required that allow different qualities of democracy to be captured (Coppedge 2002).[27] Solutions for this challenge are provided by Merkel's "embedded democracy" (Merkel 2004; Merkel et al. 2003) and – viewed at a critical distance – Lauth's "democracy matrix" (2004: 327 ff.). Both use a three-dimensional concept of democracy, which comprises freedom, equality and control (checks and balances). Merkel's concept of "embedded democracy" differentiates these dimensions systematically into five "partial regimes" of democracy (see also Schmitter 1997: 243):

a) an electoral regime as the core regime,

b) political rights,

c) civil rights,

d) horizontal accountability and

e) effective power of government.[28]

This "root concept" also provides the analytical framework for the "Democracy Barometer" of the Swiss NCCR Democracy 21 project (Bühlmann et al. 2008), which is confined to "established democracies of the OECD world". The Barometer provides a highly differentiated set of components, which have to fulfil nine democratic functions (subcomponents) and a number of variables and indicators for measuring democracy (ibid.: 49 ff.). However, the Barometer still needs to prove its empirical usefulness, although its root concept is already regularly used for the Status Index of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI).[29]

The "embedded democracy" concept has been used for the analysis of the status as well as for the transition process to democracy (Merkel et al. 2006), but not for the transition from democracy. However, the concept is not only useful for capturing the status and changes in the quality of democracy at different points in time, but can also provide a framework for identifying and analysing the decline of democracies into hybrid and authoritarian regimes (and not only defective democracies). As applied in Merkel et al. (2006), the

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[27] To overcome the conceptual limitations of a minimalist concept of democracy see O'Donnell 2004; Schmitter 2004; Beetham 2004; Rueschemeyer 2004; Powell 2004; Plattner 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005.

[28] Lauth's concept has not been applied yet, while Merkel and his collaborators (2006) have used the concept in empirical analysis; see also Bühlmann et al. 2008. For a discussion of the two concepts, see Bogaards 2009.

[29] http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/

concept has been combined with a causal analysis, although the latter is mainly concerned with socio-economic factors, institutional structures and "structural contexts and conditions". What is still missing is the application of the embedded democracy concept to the decline of democracy in conjunction with a process- and actor-oriented analytical framework.

The international dimension

The international dimension of the breakdown of democracy has been largely absent in the discussion up to this point. It was not accounted for in either Linz's or Brooker's model, nor did it play a major role in any of the structural-oriented approaches. The research agenda for the *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* project started in a similar way, but had to be changed later (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Whitehead 1986; 1996a; Pridham 1991; Kneuer 2009). It is possible that external factors might not have been of much relevance during the 1920s and 1930s. However, since the third wave of democratisation and especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the international dimension of regime changes could not be neglected anymore (see Kneuer 2009 for an overview).

The result of the third-wave stocktaking of decline cases might be significant: While there were five cases of a complete breakdown of democracy for the third wave, there has only been one since 1989 when the Cold War ended (or possibly two extended cases).[30] Although the frequency of hybridisation did not decline, but actually increased slightly, both observations suggest that the international environment might have changed and, indeed, might have become more resistant to the decline of democracy. The change in the international environment after 1989 and its assumed impact on democratic decline is highlighted if we compare the third wave with previous waves of democratisation and reversals. Huntington (1993: 290) claimed that far more breakdowns occurred during the first wave and the second "reverse wave". For an example from the first reverse wave, only 4 of the 17 countries that democratised between 1910 and 1931 maintained democratic institutions throughout the 1920s and 1930s (ibid.: 17; Boix and Stokes 2003: 530). As for the second reverse wave, a third of the 32 democracies in 1958 had turned authoritarian by the mid-1970s (ibid.: 21; also Boix and Stokes 2003: 529). This short overview clearly suggests that the international dimension mattered increasingly in a reverse way – *disfavouring* the decline of democracy.

I do not mean to claim that external factors are the cause of regime changes (or that they hinder decline). But if the process of change is the research topic, the analysis has to

[30] Namely, in Gambia. Two other cases, Nepal and Thailand, could be considered here as well since they passed through a hybrid stage. It should be noted that all other transitions to authoritarian regimes were forced upon hybrid regimes, and coups d'état occurred not only in hybrid, but also in authoritarian regimes – rarely in democracies. However, one caveat needs to be reiterated here: The hybrid category used in the Freedom House Index ("partly free") encompasses a wide spectrum of different regimes, among them "electoral democracies" and regimes up to the value of 5.5, which is the benchmark for authoritarianism. However, none of the regimes considered here to be hybrid is close to that benchmark.

consider the role of external actors, which might have been the factors that tipped the scales at one point during the struggle between autocratic and democratic camps. Although the challenge of analysing the complexity of the impact of external factors has been acknowledged, it cannot be a reason for ignoring this dimension (Kneuer 2009; Erdmann and Kneuer 2009; Burnell 2008). The "return" of authoritarian superpowers such as China and Russia to world politics (Gat 2007) along with the economic expansion of the PRC might become the paragon for other countries – not so much in Europe, but in Africa, Asia and possibly even in Latin America – and hence might have a "tipping" impact on democratic regimes that struggle for survival in a similar way in democratisation processes.

The problem is how the international dimension can be conceptualised for the analysis of the decline of democracy. It can be considered in two ways: as a structural factor or as a process factor. The international dimension as a structural factor would be what Whitehead (1996b) has termed "contagion" or "diffusion" of democracy (Schmitter 1996: 37) or Huntington's (1993: 31–34) "snowballing" effect. These concepts basically refer to the worldwide formal and informal spread and acceptance of democratic values and attitudes by various means (Rogers 2003; Lauth and Pickel 2009). On the other hand, democracy promotion or assistance can be both,[31] a structural factor or an agency if the external actor intervenes directly, for example with political and economic sanctions or through particular positive measures in support of internal actors.

Unlike many democracies, which often actively promote democratic developments abroad, in the post-Cold War era authoritarian regimes usually do not have an explicit dictatorship export strategy – apart from the previously communist big powers. However, in the case of democratisation conflict in neighbouring countries, they might intervene by supporting non-democratic actors in various ways, as Russia did, in the name of stability (e. g. Bader et al. 2010). The "contagion" of the Chinese authoritarian success story might be supported directly and even protected by the alternative economic and financial bids and influence provided by China as an alternative to the democracy conditionality of Western donors. Yet, as Peter Burnell (2008) points out, we do not know how we can analyse it or how effectively the international dimension works.

Conclusion and desiderata

Systematic and comparative research on the decline of democracy is just beginning. Hence there is not yet a ready-made model or framework available for analysing the various forms of the decline of democracy. The traditional question of whether a structure- or an actor-theory approach is more applicable is hardly an issue anymore. The richness of the transitology

[31] For a discussion of the different terms see Burnell 2000. He distinguishes between democracy promotion in a wider sense that includes all manners of development (even economic and social) assistance, which is viewed as beneficial for the conditions of democracy, and democracy assistance in a narrow understanding that directly impacts "democracy's political variables" (p. 12).

research agenda of the last 25 years provides evidence of a rather "eclectic" theoretical approach that brings "structure" and "contingency" together. The multiplicity and refined combination of structuralist, functionalist, institutionalist, historical-institutionalist and actor-oriented approaches have provided fruitful results, as highlighted by Gerardo Munck (2004). Some of the research findings about the prerequisites of democracy and on the transition from authoritarian rule will be indirectly helpful.

An attempt to take stock of the decline of democracy, (covering loss of quality, hybridisation and breakdown of democracy since the beginning of the third wave in 1974), reveals a substantial number of empirical cases that deserve scholarly attention. Based on the relatively crude measure of the Freedom House Index, the heuristic survey nevertheless provides some highly interesting results:

1. This topic appears to be particularly rewarding simply because of the frequency of the loss of democratic quality. It not only matters for younger democracies of the third wave, but also for old and established democracies in industrialised countries.

2. A decline of democracy into hybrid regimes occurred less frequently than a decline in quality, but it still occurred in a substantial number of cases. The hybridisation of democratic regimes took place most frequently in young democracies with a medium level of income. Established (or consolidated) democracies in industrialised countries in Europe were spared by hybridisation during the period of the third wave. However, a few democracies outside Europe that endured for more than 20 years, some of which were counted among the established democracies, experienced a democratic decline, regressing to hybrid regimes. This observation raises the topic of the concept of democratic consolidation once again.

3. Surprisingly – especially for transition and democracy sceptics – direct breakdowns of democracy as we know them from the past are rather exceptional cases even outside Europe and there are only a few more cases of breakdowns that made a "detour" via a hybrid regime.

4. The socio-economic conditions that favour successful democratisation seem to be clearly the same that work against a hybridisation and particularly against a breakdown of democracy: In very general terms, the higher the national income level, the less likely an authoritarian reversal. A similar observation can be made for the impact of the international environment. The more "democratic" conditions of the post-1989 era have not only favoured democratisation, but also seem to mitigate a reverse wave (although this judgement might be too early): Higher numbers of democracies make authoritarian reversals more difficult.

In regard to any future research on democracy decline, I have a number of suggestions. First, research should avoid the selection bias of the democratic-transition research that mainly

focused on positive or successful cases (Munck 2004: 79) – apart from a few exceptions (e.g. Bratton and Walle 1997; Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell 2002; Berg-Schlosser 2008) – right from the beginning. Second, as already pointed out above, the international dimension, which has been ignored in transitology for so long, needs to be included from the outset. Although it is methodologically difficult to provide causal evidence for the effects of a more or less benign international environment for particular regime types, it is highly plausible that the inter-war period in Europe or the Cold War period in general were more benign to autocracies than the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Third, the research on the relationship between social inequality and the broader social heterogeneity (which addresses cultural, ethnic, religious differences, *inter alia*) on the one side and democracy on the other is inconclusive or even contradictory (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006: 61–62; Horowitz 1993; Fish and Brooks 2004; Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006). Some studies cannot find a relationship between the two (e.g. Przeworski et al. 2000; Bollen and Jackman 1985), and others claim inequality makes dictatorships more stable (Muller 1985; 1995) or that democracy is not compatible with high inequality (Dahl 1971; Huntington 1991). Apart from the numerous methodological problems involved in these studies, the fragility of democracies in Africa, Asia and particularly in Latin America, which includes cases of hybridisation even after very long periods of democratic rule, suggests that it might be worthwhile to have a closer look at social inequality and heterogeneity. Many of these studies cover only particular periods and are therefore biased toward democracies of industrialised countries, which, for example, excludes the fragile inter-war period in Europe (e.g. Przeworski et al. 2000). It can be assumed that in a different specific historical context and at a "medium" level of development, social inequality and societal heterogeneity might matter much more than at a higher income level.

Fourth, also related to the history problem is another "explanatory variable", namely the different historical sequencing of competition and participation as Robert H. Dix (1994) pointed out. Perhaps all those countries that did not follow the "preferred trajectory" to democracy, in which competition preceded participation during the first wave, might be more prone to democracy decline (hybridisation or loss of quality) than others. At the same time, the question about historical sequences can be extended to other institutional arrangements: for example, the control dimension (the efficacy of the rule of law) in relation to competition and participation, or more generally, the historical sequencing of the effective institutionalisation of the five partial regimes of democracy. A deeper comparative-historical survey could identify "critical junctures" and perhaps path-dependent developments that might help to explain the fragility of democratic regimes (Cappoccia and Kelemen 2007; Pierson 2004; Mahoney 2003: 137).

Fifth, the economic crisis needs to be considered more thoroughly, and scholars should focus on how and under which conditions an economic crisis can be turned into a political

crisis that will ultimately endanger a democratic regime (because it is not the case that every economic crisis automatically turns into a political crisis for the regime in question).

Finally, it is evident that none of these "factors" or "variables" – this is by no means an exhaustive list – is sufficient to explain declines of democracy; the status of the various factors and variables may be that of an intervening variable, or more generally, they might matter in different ways under different structural and historical conditions. In the end, they provide the lining for the actor analysis in the decline process.

On the conceptual level, the research agenda can hardly rely on a dichotomous regime classification of democracy and dictatorship. Instead, it can make use of the concept differentiation of diminished subtypes developed in the context of research on democratic transition. This also requires that the boundaries between the subtypes of democracy and autocracy based on different "root concepts" be determined, and that different degrees of quality regarding democracy be established. Moreover, the analysis of different qualities of democracy may require a concept of democracy that extends beyond competition and participation but that includes the control dimension.

As the research on democratic transition started with small-N comparisons generating new concepts and new ideas for causal assessments based on process-tracing (Munck 2004: 77 f.), a similar research strategy ought to be fertile for crafting hypotheses on the decline of democracy. To overcome the challenge of combining quantitative and qualitative methods as indicated for democratic-transition research, a complex methodological mixture based on a QCA application might prove most useful here as exemplified by the Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell project for inter-war Europe. The result suggests similar intra-regional comparisons for other regions such as Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe with their own configurations of conditions and of time-specific contexts.

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Appendix 1: Loss of democratic quality* by region, 1974–2008

	Africa	*Asia*	*Latin America*	*Europe*
1974–1988				
PR 1-2				
			Bahamas 1980–81 Belize 1983–84	Greece 1984–85 Italy 1975–76 Malta 1976–77 Sweden 1974–75
PR 2-3				
			Bahamas 1986–87	
CL 1-2				
			Argentina 1988–89 Barbados 1983–84 Belize 1987–88 Dominican Republic 1978–79 Dominican Republic 1983–84 Grenada 1988–89 St. Kitts and Nevis 1986–87	West Germany 1976–77 Italy 1976–77 Malta 1975–76
CL 2-3				
	Botswana 1979–80 Gambia 1979–8	India 1979–80 Papua New Guinea 1987–88 Solomon Islands 1983–84 Sri Lanka 1977–78	Brazil 1987–88 Colombia 1974–75 Ecuador 1984–85 Jamaica 1975–76 Venezuela 1988–89	Malta 1978–79 Spain 1979–80
PR and CL 1-2 PR and CL 2-3	–	–	–	–
No. of cases/ countries 1974-1989	2 / 2	4 / 4	15 / 12	9 / 6
1989–2007				
PR 1–2	Botswana 1992–93 Gambia 1992–93 Mauritius 1991–92 São Tomé and Príncipe 2002–03	Japan 1992–93 Taiwan 2001–02 Vanuatu 2002–03 Taiwan 2005–06	Argentina 1991–92 Bolivia 2001–02 Peru 2001–02 St. Vincent and Grenadines 1993–94 Suriname 2004–05 Trinidad and Tobago 1999–2000 Uruguay 1992–93	Belgium 1995–96 Lithuania 2003–04 Latvia 2006–07
PR 2–3				
	Benin 2000–01	Mongolia 1991–92	Argentina 1997–98 Chile 1997–98 Dominican Republic 2002–03	Romania 2003–04
CL 1–2				
	Mauritius 2005–06	Japan 1990–91 Micronesia 1996–97 Solomon Islands 1992–93	Argentina 1989–90 Belize 2000–01 Costa Rica 1992–93 Dominican Republic 1989–90 Trinidad and Tobago 1993–94	Ireland 1992–93 Italy 1991–92 Spain 1992–93 United Kingdom 1989–90

	Africa	*Asia*	*Latin America*	*Europe*
CL 2–3				
	Benin 1998–99 Mali 2005–06 Namibia 1992–93	Israel 1992–93 Israel 1999–2000 Nauru 1992–93 Papua New Guinea 1989–90 Samoa 1997–98 Vanuatu 1993–94	Brazil 1989–90 Ecuador 1990–91 Jamaica 1992–93 Jamaica 2000–01 Mexico 2005–06	Bulgaria 1995–96 Greece 1992–93 Italy 1992–93 Italy 2007–08
PR and CL 1–2				
			Dominican Republic 2003–04 St. Kitts and Nevis 1993–94	
PR and CL 2–3				
	Mali 1996–97			
No. of cases / countries 1989–2008	10 / 7	14 / 10	22 / 16	12 / 10
Totals: cases/ countries	**12 / 7**	**18 / 12**	**37 / 21**	**21 / 13**

* Change of quality 1–2, 2–3 (1–3 none), PR = political rights; CL = civil liberties.
** Years indicate the change of evaluation in Freedom House.

Source: Freedom House 2009.

Appendix 2: Regime changes from democracy to hybrid and authoritarian regimes, 1974–2008*

	Africa	*Asia*	*Latin America*	*Europe*
1974–1988				
F–PF = hybrid	Burkina Faso 1979–80 Gambia 1980–81 Mauritius 1977–78 Seychelles 1976–77	Fiji 1986–87 India 1974–75 Lebanon 1974–75 Maldives 1974–75 Sri Lanka 1974–75, 1980–81 Suriname 1988–89 Turkey 1979–80 Vanuatu 1981–82	Colombia 1988–89 El Salvador 1975–76 Grenada 1978–79 Peru 1988–89	Malta 1980–1981/82
F–NF = authoritarian	Ghana 1980–1981 Nigeria 1982–83	Suriname 1979–80 Thailand 1975–76		
(F)–PF–NF	Burkina F. 1980–81		Grenada 1980–81	
No. of cases/ countries	**6 / 6**	**11 / 9**	**4 / 4**	**1 / 1**
1989–2008				
F–PF = hybrid	Malawi 1998–99 Mali 1993–94 Zambia 1992–93 Senegal 2007–08	Bangladesh 1992–93 India 1990–91 Nepal 1992–93 Papua New Guinea 1992–93, 2002–03 Philippines 1989–90, 2004–05 Solomon Islands 1999–2000 Thailand 1990–91, 2004–05	Antigua and Barbuda 1990–91 Argentina 2000–01 Bolivia 1994–95, 2002–03 Brazil 1992–93 Dominican Republic 1992–93 Ecuador 1995–96, 1999–2000 Guyana 2004–05 Honduras 1992–93, 1998–99 Trinidad and Tobago 2000–01 Venezuela 1992–93, 1998–99	Estonia 1991–92** Latvia 1991–92** Slovakia 1995–96
F–NF = authoritarian	Gambia 1993–94			
(F)–PF–NF		Nepal 2004–05 Thailand 2005–06		
No. of cases/ countries	**5 / 5**	**10 / 7**	**14 / 10**	**1 / 1**
Total	**11 /10**	**21 / 14**	**18 / 14**	**2 / 2**

* Years indicate the change of evaluation in Freedom House.
** After independence 1 year F, then a) 1 year or 2 years PF, afterwards F (hence not considered for Table 1).
F = free (liberal democracy); PF = partly free (hybrid regime); NF = not free (authoritarian regime).

Source: Freedom House 2009

Appendix 3: Loss of democratic quality by country income groups, 1989–2008

	Low–income, LIC	Lower–middle–income, LMC	Upper–middle–income, UMC	High income, HIC
1.	Benin 1998–99 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Benin 2000–01 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Belize 2000–01 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Argentina 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2 Argentina 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 2 Argentina 1997–98 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Belgium 1995–96 PR: 1 to PR: 2
2.	Gambia 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Bolivia 2001–02 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Chile 1997–98 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Israel 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Israel 1999–00 CL: 2 to CL: 3
3.	Mali 1996–97 PR + CL: 2 to 3 Mali 2005–06 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Botswana 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Greece 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Ireland 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2
4.	Papua New Guinea 1989–90 C: 2 to CL: 3	Brazil 1989–90 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Latvia 2006–07 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Italy 1991–92 CL: 1 to CL: 2 Italy 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Italy 2007–08 CL: 1 to CL: 2
5.	São Tomé and Príncipe 2002–03 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Bulgaria 1995–96 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Lithuania 2003–04 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Japan 1990–91 CL: 1 to CL: 2, Japan 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2
6.		Costa Rica 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Mauritius 2005–06 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Spain 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2
7.		Dominican Rep. 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2, Dominican Rep. 2003–04 CL + PR: 1 to 2	Mexico 2005–06 CL: 2 to CL: 3	United Kingdom 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2
8.		Ecuador 1990–91 CL: 2 to CL: 3	St. Kitts and Nevis 1993–94 CL + PR: 1 to 2	
9.		Jamaica 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Jamaica 2000–01 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Trinidad and Tobago 1993–94 CL: 1 to CL: 2 Trinidad and Tobago 1999–00 PR: 1 to PR: 2	
10.		Mauritius 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Uruguay 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2	
11.		Mongolia 1991–92 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Venezuela 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 3	
12.		Namibia 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3		
13.		Peru 2001–02 PR: 1 to PR: 2		
14.		Romania 2003–04 PR: 2 to PR: 3		
15.		Samoa 1997–98 CL:2 to CL: 3		
16.		Solomon Islands 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2		
17.		St. Vincent and Grenadines 1993–94 PR: 1 to PR: 2		
18.		Suriname 2004–05 PR: 1 to PR: 2		
19.		Vanuatu 1993–94 CL: 2 to CL: 3, Vanuatu 2002–03 PR: 1 to PR: 2		

Source: Freedom House 2009; World Bank 1992; 2001, 2010; UNDP 1993, 2002, 2010.

Appendix 4: Loss of democratic quality by level of human development, 1989–2008

	Low	Medium	High
1.	Benin 1998–99 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Benin 2000–01 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Belize 2000–01 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Argentina 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2 Argentina 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 2 Argentina 1997–98 PR: 2 to PR: 3
2.	Gambia 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Bolivia 2001–02 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Belgium 1995–96 PR: 1 to PR: 2
3.	Mali 1996–97 PR + CL: 2 to 3 Mali 2005–06 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Botswana 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Chile 1997–98 PR: 2 to PR: 3
4.	Mongolia 1991–92 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Brazil 1989–90 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Costa Rica 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2
5.	São Tomé & Príncipe 2002–03 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Bulgaria 1995–96 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Greece 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3
6.		Dominican Rep. 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2, Dominican Rep. 2003–04 CL + PR: 1 to 2	Israel 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Israel 1999–00 CL: 2 to CL: 3
7.		Ecuador 1990–91 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Ireland 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2
8.		Jamaica 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Jamaica 2000–01 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Italy 1991–92 CL: 1 to CL: 2 Italy 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3 Italy 2007–08 CL: 1 to CL: 2
9.		Mauritius 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 2,	Latvia 2006–07 PR: 1 to PR: 2
10.		Micronesia 1996–97 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Lithuania 2003–04 PR: 1 to PR: 2
11.		Namibia 1992–93 CL: 2 to CL: 3	Mauritius 2005–06 CL: 1 to CL: 2
12.		Papua New Guinea 1989–90 C: 2 to CL: 3	Mexico 2005–06 CL: 2 to CL: 3
13.		Peru 2001–02 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Japan 1990–91 CL: 1 to CL: 2, Japan 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2
14.		Romania 2003–04 PR: 2 to PR: 3	Spain 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2
15.		Samoa 1997–98 CL:2 to CL: 3	St. Kitts & Nevis 1993–94 CL + PR: 1 to 2
16.		Solomon Islands 1992–93 CL: 1 to CL: 2	Trinidad & Tobago 1993–94 CL: 1 to CL: 2
17.		St. Vincent & Grenadines 1993–94 PR: 1 to PR: 2	United Kingdom 1989–90 CL: 1 to CL: 2
18.		Suriname 2004–05 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Uruguay 1992–93 PR: 1 to PR: 2
19.		Trinidad & Tobago 1999–2000 PR: 1 to PR: 2	Venezuela 1991–92 PR: 1 to PR: 3
20.		Vanuatu 1993–94 CL: 2 to CL: 3, Vanuatu 2002–03 PR: 1 to PR: 2	

Source: Freedom House 2009; World Bank 1992; 2001, 2010; UNDP 1993, 2002, 2010.

Appendix 5: Change from democratic to hybrid regime by country income groups, 1989–2008

	Low-income, LIC	Lower-middle-income, LMC	Upper-middle-income, UMC	High-income, HIC
	F – PF:			
1.	Bangladesh 1992–93	Bolivia 1994–95, Bolivia 2002–03	Antigua and Barbuda 1990–91	
2.	India 1990–91	Dominican Rep. 1992–93	Argentina 2000–01	
3.	Malawi 1998–99	Ecuador 1995–96, Ecuador 1999–00	Brazil 1992–93	
4.	Mali 1993–94	Fiji 1999–2000	Estonia 1991–1992	
5.	Nepal 1992–93	Guyana 2004–05	Trinidad and Tobago 2000–01	
6.	Senegal 2007–08	Honduras 1992–93, Honduras 1998–99	Venezuela 1992–93, Venezuela 1998–99	
7.	Solomon Islands 1999–2000	Latvia 1991–92		
8.	Zambia 1992–93	Papua New Guinea 1992–93, Papua New Guinea 2002–03		
9.		Philippines 1989–90, Philippines 2004–05		
10.		Slovakia 1995–96		
11.		Thailand 1990–91, Thailand 2004–05		
	F–NF:			
1.	Gambia 1993–94			

Source: Freedom House 2009; World Bank 1992; 2001, 2010; UNDP 1993, 2002, 2010.

Appendix 6: Change from democratic to hybrid regime by level of human development, 1989–2008

	Low	Medium	High
	F – PF:		
1.	Bangladesh 1992–93	Bolivia 1994–95, Bolivia 2002–03	Antigua and Barbuda 1990–91
2.	India 1990–91	Dominican Rep. 1992–93	Argentina 2000–01
3.	Malawi 1998–99	Ecuador 1995–96, Ecuador 1999–2000	Brazil 1992–93
4.	Mali 1993–94	Fiji 1999–2000	Estonia 1991–1992
5.	Nepal 1992–93	Guyana 2004–05	Slovakia 1995–96
6.	Senegal 2007–08	Honduras 1992–93, Honduras 1998–99	Venezuela 1992–93
7.	Zambia 1992–93	Latvia 1991–92	
8.		Papua New Guinea 1992–93, Papua New Guinea 2002–03	
9.		Philippines 1989–90, Philippines 2004–05	
10.		**Solomon Islands 1999–2000**	
11.		Thailand 1990–91, Thailand 2004–05	
12.		Trinidad and Tobago 2000–01	
13.		Venezuela 1998–99	
	F–NF:		
1.	Gambia 1993–94		

Source: Freedom House 2009; World Bank 1992; 2001, 2010; UNDP 1993, 2002, 2010.

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