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Introduction: The Future of Democracy

In this article the special issue on the future of democracy is introduced with a discussion of the rationale and a brief overview of the contributions that follow. In addition the authors highlight four major themes that run through the special issue. These themes are: the measurement of democracy, the importance of time and context for understanding democracy, the importance of institutions in the process of democratization, and the differential role of government and opposition in democracy. The article finishes with a conclusion about the plural nature and possible futures for democracy.

LOOKING TO CELEBRATE A HALF-CENTURY MIGHT LEAD SOME TO LOOK back. At *Government and Opposition*, we felt the opportunity to look forward and to take into account some momentous world events was too good to miss. The journal has been at the forefront of looking comparatively at how politics and democratic governance are functioning across the globe, and our ambition was to bring a very broad range of regions and approaches together to focus on what the future holds for democracy. Political scientists are always influenced by the era in which they live and work, and we are no exception to that.

Economic hard times at the heart of the world economy have posed new challenges for states (see Moran and Payne 2014). In Europe, the great consolidations and enlargement of the integration project has given way to a profound economic crisis engendering a wider set of questions about the nature and wisdom of a wider project of integrating democratic states (see van Biezen and Wallace 2013). The initial democratic euphoria of the ‘Arab Spring’ in 2010–11 has been followed by democratic reversals and/or concerns about the type of democracy being expressed, with elections seeing many Islamic parties come to power and ethnic conflicts emerging. In Turkey, the power of the army

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has been challenged (Cengiz 2014), but President Erdogan has increasingly revealed himself to be an authoritarian leader. In countries such as Pakistan, where democracy has made greater strides in recent years, the increased participation of the youth has not necessarily been accompanied by a commitment to democratic values (however measured), as witnessed by the support given to Imran Khan and the extra-parliamentary activity in Islamabad in 2014. In addition, minority rights have been challenged by the election of populist political parties and Prime Minister Modi in India (Adeney 2015), and the immigration debate has become salient within European party systems in the last few years. Of course, how you measure support for democracy, and even how democratic a state is, is contested – a point taken up by Renske Doorenspleet, Jennifer Gandhi and Carolien van Ham and Staffan Lindberg in their contributions to this special issue.

The contributors to this special issue represent a deliberately heterogeneous regional and methodological set of leading scholars. We asked them to focus on the *future of democracy* and we allowed them to interpret the theme in their own ways. Although it is impossible to represent all regions of the world equally, in putting together this special issue we put emphasis on representing different regions to consider this question. We identified this as an appropriate topic to celebrate 50 years of *Government and Opposition*. We aimed for a bold, challenging and heterodox collection of articles.

Dirk Berg-Schlosser (2015, in this issue) takes a long-term perspective to the development of democracy. His analysis emphasizes the interplay of democracy and capitalism and the different forms that the democratic accommodation with capitalism has made in the contemporary world. He assesses contrary explanations behind the emergence of democracy, including modernization theory, structural, class-based approaches and those that focus on social cleavages and political culture. He contrasts these to actor-based explanations and reminds us that many scholars also place emphasis on international factors in explaining democratic outcomes (or otherwise). He stresses the strains in democracy, particularly the possibility for the emergence of conflicts that have been suppressed by previous regimes, a point relevant to the current conflicts in Libya and Ukraine. He notes the dangers in relying on ‘formal democratic majoritarian procedures’ to regulate conflicts in divided societies. He also notes the concerns made about de facto equality of opportunity and problems of quality of participation in societies with

wide socioeconomic divisions. He ends, however, on a positive note, arguing for the strength of democracy in providing pools of legitimacy, processes of succession, self-cleansing mechanisms for occurrences of corruption, decentralized solutions to everyday problems, means of redistributive politics and equality of opportunity.

In analysing democratic development in Latin America, Gerardo Munck (2015, in this issue) focuses on the different understandings of democracy advocated by different actors on the ideological spectrum in Latin America. He notes that, despite the transition to democracy in all the states in the region in the 1980s and the incorporation of political actors from the left and right into electoral politics, 'politics *within* democracy did not bring an end to politics *about* democracy'. In particular he notes that attitudes to democracy were determined by attitudes to neoliberalism: disputes emerged between supporters of liberal democracy (primarily the centre-right and centre-left) versus advocates of popular democracy (the left). Those on the right only reluctantly espoused liberal democracy (primarily as an opposing force to popular democracy) but strongly supported economic liberalism. The left strongly advocated popular democracy, concentrating power in the hands of the president (similar to those on the right) but with an agenda of correcting the excesses of neoliberalism. Munck argues that both the left and the right have put electoral democracy at risk, albeit with different agendas. In reference to the future of democracy, Munck argues that it is important to consider the 'political institutions of decision-making and the social environment of politics' as well as minimalist conceptions of democracy. But he contends that it is important that these aspects are not only considered from the liberal democratic model. He concludes by arguing that '*how* a political system democratizes determines *whether* it is and remains democratic'.

Malik Mufti (2015, in this issue) focuses his article on what the experience of Turkey can tell us about the wider processes of democratization in the Middle East in general. He points to the particular circumstances and consequences of the emergence of Kemalism as a political force in Turkey, its significant autonomy from external intervention and the absence of significant internal opposition. The ability of Atatürk to implement his secular modernist nationalism project with little hindrance meant that when pressures for democratization emerged after the Second World War, the leadership was relatively relaxed about it, convinced of their likely

success. Although the opposition won the elections, the Kemalist establishment remained intact, preventing democratic consolidation. Mufti argues that the Turkish experience in 2002 was one of the undemocratic forces of both opposition (the Islamic political parties) and establishment (secular Kemalist military) forcing each other onto a democratic path as a result of their inability to overtake the other in the face of a relatively unified electorate, attached to religious values but rejecting authoritarian rule. Comparing this with other cases of democratization in the Middle East, Mufti shows how the context in these states is very different. Arab secular nationalists did not have the same levels of autonomy or internal support and hence were less likely to admit electoral competition. The societies were much more polarized. However, the attempted Islamist uprisings during the 1990s in many Middle Eastern countries were militarily defeated and as a result many Islamic political movements sought to emulate the Turkish path – appealing directly to the people. Mufti notes that the shifting balance of power in Middle Eastern states (the reduced power of the ‘authoritarian secular nationalist establishment’ and the greater popular grounding of the Islamicist opposition) may provide the means by which these countries can follow the Turkish path, although he cautions that much will depend on the agency of individual leaders and the ability to reform the military and the judiciary.

Steven Wilkinson’s article (2015, in this issue) is concerned to challenge the concept that declining party organization is a sign of democratic weakness. Using the example of India, he argues that a strong democracy is possible without strong parties and a stable party system. The decline of the Congress and proliferation of smaller, often dynastic and personalistic parties, together with the existence of clientelistic rather than programmatic politics has not been associated with a decline in democracy. He argues that the weakness of individual parties should not be conflated with the weakness of the party system as a whole, and that that the weakness of political parties has not affected the participation of Indian voters (from all sections of society), the ability of parties to contact voters, nor the electorate’s faith in democracy. Although there are weaknesses in service delivery and levels of growth in areas of India, Wilkinson questions whether this has been caused by ‘personalized and deinstitutionalized party systems and worse outcomes’ as Chhibber et al. (2014) argue. In terms of his wider conclusions, he notes that the clientelistic rather

than programmatic nature of Indian parties may provide more stability and legitimacy to the system than conventional measures of party systems constructed around ideological differences would indicate. He claims that India's 'patronage democracy' (Chandra 2004) increases incentives for (multiple) parties to remain within a governing coalition. He also argues that mobile phone technology can help compensate for a party's organizational weakness, not only through contacting potential voters but also in reporting incidents of voter intimidation. He concludes by noting that 'the importance of large stable parties and party systems seem, from the vantage point of 2014, to be very much the product of a particular time and a particular place'.

Jennifer Gandhi (2015, in this issue) analyses under what conditions elections, even those held under autocratic conditions, can facilitate democratization. She notes how the use of partisan elections in autocratic regimes since the end of the Cold War have become increasingly frequent and of heightened interest to political scientists. However, in a similar manner to van Ham and Lindberg (2015, in this issue) she argues that elections by themselves are insufficient mechanisms to classify regimes, pointing to the fact that 'elections in what are formally called "democracies" and "non-democracies" sometimes bear uncomfortably large degrees of resemblance'. Through an analysis of Kenya, particularly between 1990 and 2002, she argues for the importance of taking into account the 'rich historical details' of each case, noting both international and domestic pressures for change. She argues that while 'competitive elections may mark the beginning of a democratic regime, they usually are part of a larger sequence of events' that must be appreciated. In particular she shows how opposition forces can play a role in determining the process of democratization and transition. This, in turn, means we need to consider and use measurement instruments that take into account the context of, and processes leading to, elections. She calls for less emphasis on classifying regimes, and for 'more detailed information on the actors, behaviour and events surrounding elections for as many contemporary and historical cases as possible'. She argues that this would allow empirical testing of causal processes across large-N case studies – for example, the ability of the opposition to unify or the involvement of external actors.

Renske Doorenspleet's (2015, in this issue) contribution critiques existing measures of democracy. She argues that the focus has been too heavily on the institutional aspects of democracy, which she

criticizes as being too elitist and limited. She posits that this has been at the expense of the consideration of the people. Taking aim primarily at the widely used Polity IV and Freedom House measures, she argues that different understandings of democracy among different demoi mean that it is vital to measure democracy in a way that is sensitive to how it is understood and therefore what it means in different contexts. She argues that a reliance on expert judgement or a narrow set of indicators conceals how people in different states view democracy, and that both Polity and Freedom House are political and ideological constructs, which affects their measurements. She argues that there is a disconnect 'between how quantitative academics define democracy, and how people view democracy'. She constructs an argument for new measures that might incorporate either or both public opinion or expert surveys on the meaning of democracy, to create a people-centred approach and illustrates these measures in relation to South Africa. She then suggests that these measures can be used comparatively and will raise some new questions when we look across cases.

The focus of Georgina Waylen's article (2015, in this issue) is on the gender dynamics of the perceived 'crisis of democracy'. She argues that there is something of a paradox in the crisis of democracy: that democracy privileges 'white, elite, heterosexual men' when on the other hand 'there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of women participating in democratic institutions'. She questions whether the 'crisis of democracy' will provide the opportunity to enhance women's participation further. She argues that existing democracies are still persistently gendered in their politics and shows this in relation to European and Latin American cases. She argues that the embedded liberal nature of these democracies – while allowing greater potential descriptive representation for women and minorities – remain incapable of full representation unless we are prepared to rethink liberal concepts of representation and participation and to be ready to reform institutions and informal forms of politics. She argues that, although 'women's numerical presence in electoral institutions' has increased, this is a 'mixed picture' and that political parties act as gatekeepers. She reminds us of the important difference between descriptive and substantive representation, while noting that the concept of 'women's interests' is contested. She explores solutions such as quotas and gender mainstreaming but in the end concludes that the crisis of democracy provides as many

challenges as opportunities for women and advocates a more fundamental recasting of politics in terms of institutions, norms, rules, values and practices.

Carolien van Ham and Staffan Lindberg (2015, in this issue) argue for the importance of understanding the context of elections and particularly of the strategies of government and opposition actors. Their focus is on African elections that took place between 1986 and 2012. They discuss the different possible strategies of electoral manipulation, from the intimidation of the opposition to the buying of votes and violence. They argue that the choice of which strategy to follow is determined by the resources available to actors and the potential costs of the different strategies (which in turn are shaped by the political context of each election). They show how elections in Africa have increased in frequency and quality since 1986 and they seek to explain how different types of manipulation continue and under what conditions they occur. The article sets out a number of hypotheses and examines them, making use of the Varieties of Democracy survey data. Their focus is on how, as rules become more entrenched, electoral manipulation becomes less viable and so vote-buying increases. Their results show that vote buying increases as countries at the lower levels of democracy democratize, but that when countries are classified as 'free' in relation to civil liberties on the Freedom House scale, vote buying no longer increases. They also show that, as we might expect, civil war plays a key role in determining the levels of election violence.

There are several themes that cut across this special issue. These are themes that have emerged and that were by no means pre-ordained in our structuring of the special issue.

The first issue is that of measurement. In one sense, this can be seen to be more about the past than the present – how political scientists have understood and measured democracy. But Doorenspleet's article clearly makes a case that how we have measured democracy to date should not be the way we measure it in the future. Her argument for more people-centred measures would not only change the way we see democracy now but would also alter the understanding of its future development. Wilkinson draws attention to the need to problematize concepts such as party strength, organization and institutionalization more carefully, and he demonstrates this through analysing the world's largest democracy, India, where high levels of support for democracy

are not matched by levels of 'strength' of political parties. Gandhi also addresses measurement questions, arguing that the measurement of elections needs to offer a heightened sensitivity to iterative interactions and additional processes of government and opposition dynamics. She makes the case for the possibility of large-N studies and for reaching back historically to grow the available data by looking at elections in autocratic as well as democratic regimes. And van Ham and Lindberg show that by using measures of democracy that take into account the context of elections we can see how processes of democratization can lead to the growth of vote-buying before democracy is fully entrenched. This finds echoes in Berg-Schlusser's argument that, in considering the wave of democratization in Europe, we need to pay attention to other longer-term countervailing forces and continuing sources of conflicts.

The second theme is the importance of time and context for understanding democracy. This theme strongly links Berg-Schlusser and Gandhi. Van Ham and Lindberg also suggest that the democratization process may, at different stages, lead to different costs and incentives for manipulation but their results show that electoral violence in African states is linked to the levels of government intimidation rather than to the process of democratization. Mufti explicitly calls for a long-term perspective for a necessary understanding of the process of democratization by showing that what may seem short-term trends are in fact symptomatic of much longer-term processes. His argument is less about the changing nature of time but more about the need to look across time to see the longer continuities.

The third issue is institutions and democratization. Many of the articles speak to the issue of how countries have transitioned from electoral democracy to more developed forms of democracy, particularly Munck in relation to Latin America, looking at the different types of institutions that have been adopted to give effect to democracy. In analysing the case of India, Wilkinson reminds us that a country can be robustly democratic despite performing 'weakly' on many measures such as party institutionalization, and that there is a need to update our understandings of the institutions within democracy in the twenty-first century. He also draws attention to the role that new technologies can play in enabling opposition and representation, despite weak organization. Waylen and Berg-Schlusser refer variously to problems of democracy, in reference to the representation or exclusion of particular groups, and the need to ensure their effective representation and participation. Waylen argues for the consideration of democracy to go

beyond the formal rules and institutions of politics and to consider informal practices, and only then will we fully uncover the gendered nature of liberal forms of democracy.

As Gandhi's article reminds us, many regimes are neither democratic nor autocratic. Mufti, Munck and van Ham and Lindberg similarly note that the process of democratization may not be smooth, with democratic reversals. Many of our contributors draw attention to the interplay between internal and external dimensions in explaining democratization and subsequent stagnation, consolidation or reversal. It is important to note that democratization is not a linear process. In addition, there may be different models of democracy, as Munck examines. Finally, whether a country is democratic or not (or somewhere in between) may tell us little about the quality of life for citizens of that country, particularly those from minority communities (variously defined) or at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. This is where a focus on institutions (as Munck advises) and people's perceptions of their regime (as Doorenspleet suggests) may be more productive in examining lived experiences of democratic regimes.

A final theme that emerges from this special issue to focus on the future of democracy is, appropriately enough for the journal, the differential role of government and opposition. Mufti clearly demonstrates that it was the particular relationship between government and opposition that laid the basis for Turkey's democratization, and that means that we should be cautious about seeing it as a model for other Arab states. Van Ham and Lindberg demonstrate how different cost-benefit calculations and incentive structures apply to governments and oppositions in their choice of tools of electoral manipulation at different stages of democratization. Gandhi shows that the opposition unity in Kenya in 2002 was crucial in understanding the success of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) and more broadly argues that democratization in Kenya was determined by patterns of external pressure and long-standing internal opposition efforts and regime coherence and weakness. Wilkinson in turn notes that the patronage democracy of India constrains the willingness of political parties that are part of governing coalitions to defect.

Putting these themes together and looking ahead to the future of democracy, what can we see? As political scientists we clearly have to grapple with both conceptual and measurement issues in terms of what we understand by democracy and its variants. But we also need to wrestle with the plurality of democracy. What seems clear is that

democracy is more of a plural term and we need to consider some very different patterns of how it functions and how it develops. We also need to be sensitive to an over-eager optimism about the necessary transition to democracy. The Arab Spring is both a source of optimism for democrats but also a sanguine lesson in the dangers of early optimism. Patterns of transition come in very different forms and, as some of our contributors suggest, we need to look closely at the *contexts* of transitions. It may come as no surprise that we, as editors of a comparative politics journal, think that the future study of democracy needs to be broad, inclusive and comparative. But it also seems clear, from a number of contributions, that the breadth of comparison should not occlude being sensitive to the particular context of elections in any one location. There are different futures for democracy. Some of these different futures can be seen being played out in different parts of the world in 2015.

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