Defending Levitsky, Collier and Way’s Critique of Illiberal Democracy:
Authoritarianism by Any Other Name
Is Still Not a Democracy

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Abstract

Until the end of the Cold War, democracy literature was dichotomous, classifying a regime as either a dictatorship or a democracy. The shades of gray in between came to the attention of scholars in the late 1990s, as many transitioning countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the former Soviet Union had stalled in regimes that held competitive elections but abused civil liberties on a massive scale. These countries were termed ‘illiberal democracies’ by Fareed Zakaria. This ignited a discussion amongst scholars if and how democracy should be diminished with adjectives, and how hybrid regimes should be classified. The most prolific responses to Zakaria’s concept were formulated by Steven Levitsky along with David Collier and Lucan A. Way. This review essay highlights the theoretical importance and implications of Levitsky, Collier, and Way’s work in light of scholars having no agreed upon definition of democracy. It also touches upon the importance of recognizing the issues of the transition and consolidation paradigms in the twenty-first century.

“This is the way a democracy works: you get what you can, try to keep that and add to it if possible.

This is the way a dictatorship works too.”

-Charles Bukowski, Trashcan Lives

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For decades the debate surrounding democracy was black and white; either a country was democratic or
dictatorial. The Cold War only served to emphasize this dichotomous classification further with two hegemons
trying to secure their influence in the world through manipulating regimes to fit this paradigm. Western
scholars eager to understand how and why countries transformed into democracy created a new field within
political science dedicated to the study of democratic transition and consolidation. Founded and expanded
upon seminal works by Barrington Moore, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Samuel Huntington, academia began
exploring this confounding concept, which tended to create more disagreement than a clear theoretical model.

With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, democracy scholars assumed these
former authoritarian states would naturally make the transition to a more democratic regime. We had reached
*The End of History* as Francis Fukuyama had postulated. But then around the turn of the century, something
odd had happened. Some scholars had begun to realize that the ‘third wave’ of democratization had not given
former authoritarian states the momentum they needed to become fledgling democracies, but rather, these
countries were stuck, stalled in a place somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism with no signs
of moving in either direction. Popularly termed ‘illiberal democracies’ by Fareed Zakaria, numerous scholars
from Larry Diamond to Steven Levitsky to Thomas Carothers debated how best to define and classify these
unique regimes.

Though the debate is ongoing, it has never been clearer in light of recent events, that understanding these
hybrid regimes is essential to democracy studies and world politics. This review essay aims to highlight the
efforts made by scholars thus far to identify and classify hybrid regimes, and what their effect has been on
democratization theory. Section one seeks to layout the different definitions of democracy, and how they affect
the dialogue surrounding transition and consolidation. Next a more in depth look at the discovery of stalled
transitions, or ‘illiberal democracies,’ through Zakaria’s famous article will be taken. Criticisms of Zakaria’s
coined terminology for these regimes and their detrimental effect on democracy will be analyzed in section
three with an emphasis on the work by Steven Levitsky with David Collier and Lucan A. Way. Responses
to Zakaria and Levitsky from Diamond, Carothers, and others considering different cases will allow a more
concrete understanding of how we should approach classifying hybrid regimes and the democratization
process. Lastly, this review will analyze how understanding hybrid regimes is essential in the post-September
11th world, and how the field of democracy studies should move forward and modernize to more accurately
describe democratic trends.
Democracy: Definition, Transition, and Consolidation

In order to understand why using diminished definitions of democracy to describe hybrid regimes is detrimental to our understanding of what a democracy is, we need to define the term. This is more complicated than it seems, for as Larry Diamond points out, “we are still far from consensus on what constitutes ‘democracy.’” Though scholars have presented numerous definitions, most can be narrowed down to either a thin or thick description. Those who prefer a thin definition of democracy, base their description on the ideas set forth by Joseph Schumpeter. In his book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter lays out a thin procedural definition by defining democracy as an arrangement where individuals come to power "by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote;" or in more simplified terms, democracy is a "free competition for a free vote." Though this seems to indicate that democracy is more than just elections, Schumpeter emphasizes that "democracy will not mean increased personal freedom" or the civil liberties that have become so intertwined with liberal democracies of the West.

However, as Robert Dahl points out in Polyarchy, it is difficult to have a competitive election with peoples' free choice if there are not certain freedoms in place to ensure these conditions. Dahl's thicker definition of democracy also revolves around a procedural description, but incorporates eight necessary institutional guarantees, which focus primarily on the dimensions of "public contestation and the right to participate." According to Dahl, a regime can only be considered a democracy when the following institutional guarantees are extended to all citizens:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to vote
4. Eligibility for public office
5. Right of political leaders to compete for support
   a. Right of political leaders to compete for votes
6. Alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference

This thicker definition acknowledges that an election cannot be competitive if the government tries to repress opposition opinions through restricting freedoms of assembly, press, expression, or the ability of citizens to run for office/vote. Therefore, at least basic civil liberties cannot be excluded from the definition of a democracy when using a thick description. Both Schumpeter and Dahl leave unanswered what exactly can be considered a ‘competitive’ or ‘free and fair’ election, which conceptually hinders our ability to determine what a democracy is using either definition. This becomes more apparent in cases where the democraticness of an election is murky.

Both definitions have been used to identify and classify the democratization or transition process. Dahl himself noted how authoritarian regimes could transition to democracy through greater public contestation and participation. A transformation of this magnitude occurs when the costs of suppressing opposition exceed the costs of toleration. However, the origins of transition theory are best traced to the pivotal work of Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Unlike others before him, Moore uses a variety of case studies to try to pinpoint what leads some countries on a path towards democracy and others towards dictatorship. Although his famous conclusion that a strong “bourgeois revolution” is necessary for the development of democracy has been criticized for its Marxist overtones, Moore's fascination with the democratization process inspired many scholars to use his framework, which emphasized the middle class, to take a further look at what causes the transition process.
In line with Moore’s assumptions of the importance of capitalism in the democratization of England, political scientists began to emphasize modernization theory as an explanation for transition. Seymour Martin Lipset outlines certain social requisites he noted as being “linked” to democracy including: industrialization, urbanization, education, and a growing middle class. Lipset’s conclusions were drawn from his analysis of European and Latin American regimes (both stable and unstable democracies and dictatorships). However, his research fails to consider democracies that emerge in countries with low levels of literacy and great poverty, such as India. An even greater debate is why Lipset chooses to use the term requisites instead of prerequisites. It begs the question if the conditions he describes must be present in order for a country to democratize, occur during the process of democratization, or are the result of democracy (or some combination of all three).

The literature trying to prove or disprove Lipset’s social requisites is vast, but a more notable work is that of Adam Przeworski, who with a team of three others, sought to expand upon the idea of economic development driving democratization. Przeworski shockingly concludes that the “deaths of democracies follow a clear pattern” based on the economic health of a country (something that seems to have little effect on dictatorships). The income at which a democracy could survive and consolidate was determined to be $6,055, but even then other factors were seen as critical to the transition and consolidation process including relatively low income inequality (a GINI below 33), “shared values,” and a lack of “past regime instability.” The importance of economic development on democratization and consolidation was further expanded upon by Carles Boix, who confirmed Przeworski’s work, noting that between $3,000-$6,000 per capita income, democratization grows at an accelerated rate. However, Boix also found that between $6,000-$10,000 this rate slows down, and above $10,000 “the impact of development on democracy flattens out,” or is no longer substantial. This seems to suggest that income is more essential to driving democratic transition than consolidation.

However, it has been suggested by some scholars, such as Christian Houle, that the opposite is true. Houle points to poor democracies such as Costa Rica and India as evidence that economic development is not essential to the transition process. Instead, he focuses on the consolidation process, or ability to “preserve democracy,” being linked to income inequality. Therefore, poor countries can be stable democracies if their income distribution is relatively equal. It is when a country has a high level of inequality that there is an increased “probability of a democracy backsliding to dictatorship.” Houle’s conclusions offer an explanation of why there is a trend for transitioned democracies to become unstable regimes. Though income inequality alone does not explain democratic recessions, it can help to identify fragile from stable democracies.

The trend of democratic recession does not concern political scientists who subscribe to Samuel Huntington’s waves of democratization. As Huntington points out, after each wave of democratization, there has been a “reverse wave” reverting fledgling democracies back to nondemocratic rule. Although some countries do not survive the consolidation process, Huntington still insists that each wave has left the world with more democratic countries than the last. This continuing trend of backsliding is therefore normal, as the process of democratization is “complex and prolonged,” but that does not mean that a country has not transitioned and is just struggling to consolidate.

However, this highlights the problem with democratization theory’s categorization of transitioning and consolidating democracies. Based on having different definitions of democracy, scholars also have different definitions of what categorizes a transitioning from a consolidating democracy. The implications of such disagreement have caused many to call for a universal definition, which Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan attempt to answer. According to Linz and Stepan, it is more important to recognize if a country has completed a transition to democracy as often countries that begin the democratization process do not complete it, but instead just introduce a few “liberalizing changes” or hold elections. Therefore, only fully transitioned countries that are in consolidation are democracies. Consolidation is reached when “democracy becomes the only game in town” through “routinization.”
This stricter and more cautious definition of a consolidated democracy has also been promoted by Andreas Schedler. Schedler argues that scholars have muddled the importance and meaning of consolidation through trying to explain case studies to their liking. In doing so, “the conceptual fog that veils the term has only become thicker and thicker” preventing any cohesive clarity on what democratic consolidation actually is.20 In order to solve this ambiguity and stretching of the concept, Schedler calls for a return to the original, parsimonious meaning of consolidation. To him, consolidation is about “democratic survival,” specifically “avoiding democratic breakdown and avoiding democratic erosion.”21 Therefore, Schedler’s concept of consolidation means “no democracy will ever be ‘fully consolidated’, ” as avoiding breakdown and erosion is a constant process that must continue indefinitely.22 However, academia has not widely accepted this idea. The discrepancy of when to classify a country as a democracy, during transition or consolidation, has led to even greater problems within the field. Specifically, how should we classify the regimes that do not complete transitions and/or are part of a reverse wave?
Zakaria’s Solution: ‘Illiberal Democracies’

Inspired by Huntington’s work, yet recognizing the inability of The Third Wave to reflect Post-Cold War regimes, Fareed Zakaria predicted the world was in the “next wave” of democratization; one that comes without “constitutional liberalism.” This concept had never before been considered. Though scholars often disagreed upon definitions of democracy and democratization, some concepts were amicable. Linz and Stepan agreed with Huntington that liberalization does not always lead to democratization. What most political scientists failed to consider though is that democratization does not always lead to liberalization. Even Schumpeter concedes that there is a “relation [sic] between democracy and individual freedom;” democracy needs some freedoms in order to hold competitive elections. Therefore, Zakaria’s claim was a shocking evolution of thought. Zakaria still emphasizes the procedural definition of democracy by Schumpeter, Huntington, and others to explain his new concept of illiberal democracy, but he argues that freedoms are non-essential to the description of the regime.

As western democracies have become synonymous with civil liberties, it is difficult to imagine the two separated. However, Zakaria points out that democracy is a political regime and does not describe the political system in practice. Therefore, “rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties” are ideas that coincided with the development of democracy, but are not intrinsically part of democracy. Instead, these are part of constitutional liberalism. When joined together, liberal democracies flourish, but the concepts can be separated. Regimes elected democratically can therefore also “ignore constitutional limits on their power and deprive their citizens of basic rights and freedoms.” Due to the lack of constitutional liberalism despite free and fair elections, these regimes can be best described as ‘illiberal’ democracies.

It is a great assumption of western scholars to believe that democracy as it has been developed in the West would be the natural path for the rest of the world. This cultural propagation of a relatively new and modern regime ignores the illiberal aspects of western democracies, and attempts to turn “democracy into a badge of honor rather than a descriptive category.” Women were not enfranchised in Switzerland until the 1970s, the United States’ Patriot Act and actions of the NSA overrode basic civil liberties, and many European countries including England, Denmark, and Greece have official religions; yet these countries have been considered democracies, despite not embodying fully individual freedoms that scholars claim are essential to democracy.

Therefore, the varied forms of democracy with limited amounts of constitutional liberalism may be a natural path for some countries. Liberal democracy, as defined by the West, may not be the “final destination on the democratic road, but just one of many possible exits” according to Zakaria. Though he highlights that illiberal democracy may be the new path regimes head down, Zakaria is not satisfied with this, as it is an inadequate and dangerous regime in his view. Perhaps foreshadowing the state of world affairs nearly twenty years after his article, Zakaria notes the twentieth century was tasked to “make the world safe for democracy,” but the great challenge of the twenty-first century is to “make democracy safe for the world.” But so far, the international community has not gotten good marks on its report card.

In 2015, Dani Rodrik of Princeton University and Sharun Mukand of the University of Warwick revisited Zakaria’s article, calling it “prophetic,” as “illiberal democracies have become more the norm than the exception.” A telling sign of this trend is Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2016 report, which was just published at the beginning of this year. The title chosen to describe the trends of freedom in 2015, “Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies: Global Freedom under Pressure,” emphasizes the worrisome conclusion that the world is in its “10th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.” Though Freedom House does not use Zakaria’s terminology, it is clear that constitutional liberalism, and by proxy liberal democracy, is no longer flourishing as Zakaria predicted. This deflects the logic of Huntington’s waves that although we may see some reversals, the world will become ever more democratic. Though perhaps this decline in liberal democracy is not due solely to polities changing, but rather, can be traced to the miscategorization of regimes due to academia’s insistence on a dichotomous relationship between democracy and authoritarianism.
Levitsky, Collier and Way: Challenging Diminished Democracy and Categorizations

It has been argued earlier in this review that problems in democracy theory stem from disagreement over the definition of a democracy. This lack of cohesion then extends to other aspects of the discipline such as categorizing regimes that do not fully fit a definition. The new regimes witnessed in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Post-Soviet states started a frenzy for scholars to explain these hybrid regimes in their relation to democracy, such as illiberal democracy. This idea of “democracy with adjectives” worries David Collier and Steven Levitsky as to its effects on the concept of democracy and the study of these hybrid regimes comparatively. Collier and Levitsky acknowledge the “challenge of dealing conceptually with a great diversity of post-authoritarian regimes;” however, they also note that creating hundreds (they stopped counting at 550) of subtypes of democratic regimes is unnecessary and detrimental to any efforts to compare and better understand regime types and their relationships.

The most worrisome trend from this practice is creating “diminished subtypes” that are “less than complete instances of democracy.” A great example of this is Putin’s coinage of sovereign democracy to describe Russia, though no scholar would continue to consider the country a democracy after the events of the past few years regarding Ukraine. Using diminished forms of democracy though tends to imply that a country is democratizing or democratic, but perhaps not fully consolidated. The adjectives used describe the “extent of democratization” in a country, while also hinting at the attributes missing that are typical of a ‘full’ democracy. Collier and Levitsky identify five different missing attributes to organize diminished subtypes based on the two popular definitions of democracy, Schumpeter’s minimal definition and Dahl’s expanded definition.

The first missing attribute is full suffrage, which can lead to subtypes such as “limited democracy” or “male democracy;” the second is full contestation, which describes “controlled democracy” or “restrictive democracy;” the third is civil liberties, which popular terms such as “electoral democracy” and “illiberal democracy” fall under. These three missing attributes apply to both definitions as even Schumpeter acknowledges the need for basic civil liberties for competitive elections; however, the fourth possible missing attribute, “elected government has effective power to govern,” only applies to the expanded procedural definition of a democracy. Examples of this include “guarded democracy” and “tutelary democracy.” The last possible missing attribute is that of democracy itself. This is seen in “dismissive subtypes” in which the “adjective essentially cancels the democratic character of the subtype.” Collier and Levitsky identify “façade democracy” as a prime example of this. Another great example in my opinion would be Russia’s “sovereign democracy,” which dismisses the concept of the people voting who to put in power.

Even within the categories of the five missing attributes identified by Collier and Levitsky, it is clear that there is overlap as to how these diminished subtypes could be categorized into different hybrid regimes. However, an even greater problem arises as describing these regimes as missing attributes of democracy confirms that none of them are full democracies according to even a minimal definition. This causes Collier and Levitsky to pose the question of “whether these regimes should in fact be treated as subtypes of democracy, rather than subtypes of authoritarianism or some other concept.” Levitsky explores this further with Lucan A. Way to define and analyze one particular type of hybrid regime that he felt was constantly being miscategorized with a diminished form of democracy.

Noticing that some Post-Cold War regimes stopped moving towards democracy, many reverting back in an authoritarian direction, Levitsky and Way seek a more accurate way to describe these regimes that would allow for better analysis of their political system. Dismissing notions that diminished forms of democracy should be used, Levitsky and Way instead build off of the work of Juan Linz, believing instead that a diminished form of authoritarianism should describe these regimes. Competitive authoritarianism uses “formal democratic institutions” for “obtaining and exercising political authority,” yet it violates the basic criteria of the definition of democracy “frequent enough and serious enough to create an uneven playing field” favoring those in power.
Examples of such a hybrid are not concentrated in one region, but can be found throughout Latin America, Africa, Eurasia and Asia. Though these regimes fall short of being full democracies, Levitsky and Way stress that they also are not full authoritarian regimes.

Instead, competitive authoritarian regimes follow a murkier path. Democratic rules still exist, and though they are manipulated to create an unequal playing field, these rules are never eliminated or reduced to hold no meaning. Furthermore, competitive authoritarian regimes manipulate the field for their gains using more discretionary behavior, such as “bribery, co-optation, and more subtle forms of persecution… to ‘legally’ harass, persecute, or extort cooperative behavior.” Such manipulations exhibited through ‘legal’ means are common in Vladimir Putin’s Russia to repress opposition, such as the Foreign Agent Law of 2012 to diminish the activities of non-governmental organizations in the country. In Haiti, elections have been delayed under the pretenses of public safety, though many have recognized these actions as attempts by former President Michel Martelly to keep power in the hands of his allies. A common behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes of bribing and threatening the media has been so rampant in Zambia in light of elections this year that the Catholic Church has issued a formal statement condemning such acts.

Although competitive authoritarian regimes have been increasing in numbers, the conflicting nature of a regime that combines both “democratic rules and autocratic methods” lends it to “an inherent source of instability.” This means incumbents must find a careful balance of allowing democratic practices but not losing power. According to Levitsky and Way, leaders were able to create a “strikingly robust” competitive authoritarian regime with relatively long lifespans (15 years or more) through following one of three paths. These paths were conceptualized by studying the lifespan and habits of 35 Post-Cold War competitive authoritarian regimes from 1990-2008. The first path, traditional in the transition paradigm, is democratization. Essentially, incumbents did not fight or continue to manipulate democratic rules to a level that would maintain their power. This occurred in 15 of the 35 case studies; though it should be noted that only nine have continued on this path according to Freedom House’s latest report. The second path is unstable authoritarianism, where incumbents lose elections, but the new government is not democratic. Ten cases belonged in this category. And lastly, countries may be on a path of stable authoritarianism, where incumbents or their handpicked successors remain in power. The remaining ten cases fell in this category.

While many of the countries on the path to democratization have since regressed towards unstable/stable authoritarian paths, very few countries have made the opposite transition with the exception of Senegal. This only proves Levitsky and Way’s conclusion that competitive authoritarian regimes are resilient. After 25 years, scholars can no longer assume hybrid regimes are destined to move in a “democratic direction” or a “distinctly authoritarian direction.” Hybrid regimes are clearly here to stay, and will move in any direction or multiple directions. Terminology needs to reflect this reality, instead of continuing to insinuate an optimistic transition to a full democracy is predestined.
A New Thinking on Regimes and Transitions

The ideas of Levitsky and Way have been supported by top democracy theorists. Thomas Carothers has called for “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” agreeing that the transformation of a regime consists of “chaotic processes of change that go backwards and sideways as much as forward, and do not do so in any regular manner.”49 The trend to call for an end of the unilateral transition paradigm, which assumes all nondictatorial regimes are moving towards democracy, became popular after September 11th. The events and regimes of the new millennium made it clear that democratization theory was no longer explaining what the world was experiencing. The Journal of Democracy spent much of 2002 publishing articles debating hybrid regimes, transition theory, and the future of democracy.

Although he acknowledges the work of Collier, Levitsky, Way and Carothers, Larry Diamond refers to countries in between democracy and authoritarianism as pseudodemocracies. He justifies using a diminished form of democracy as “even the world’s most liberal democracies exhibit the pervasive imperfections of responsiveness” and has room to become “more democratic.”50 He disagrees in the need to dismiss concepts such as transition, arguing “every step toward political liberalization matters,” even if it is only part of a façade or a hollow promise.51 Schedler rebuts this claim, repeating the warning of Collier and Levitsky, that in categorizing and analyzing hybrid regimes, scholars need “to abandon misleading labels and to take their nondemocratic nature seriously.”52 Calling a country such as Russia or Cambodia a diminished form of democracy, only serves to weaken our understanding of what constitutes a democracy. It is not simply “less democratic than democracies, but plainly undemocratic,” and must be recognized for what it is, an authoritarian regime.53

The “foggy zone” of hybrid regimes is demystified by Schedler, who organizes regimes into four distinct categories: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral authoritarianism, and closed authoritarianism.54 In doing so, he attempts to separate from Levitsky and Way’s competitive authoritarianism those countries, which hold free and fair elections, but do not adopt other vital aspects of democracy such as rule of law. While many other scholars have expressed the need for free and fair elections, Schedler actually defines what this means through his “chain of democratic choice.” The seven links that create the chain of democratic choice are: empowerment- citizens have the power of choice; free supply- opposition parties that are not created or manipulated by the government; free demand- “free formation of voter preferences,” which relies on equal access for all parties to media and the public; inclusion- universal suffrage; insulation- citizens can freely express their electoral preferences; integrity- election commissions must be neutral and count all votes in an honest fashion; irreversibility- power is passed to the winners, who rule according to the constitution.56 If incumbents attempt to add or break any links in the chain, then the election is not free nor fair, and therefore, it is not democratic.

While Schedler’s categorizations more accurately reflect regime types, they may also be useful in understanding the democratization process and the likelihood for democracies to form. In order to better understand the lack of democracy in hybrid regimes, Jason Brownlee tests 158 countries over 30 years to grasp any correlations between types of hybrid regimes and ability to democratize. He found that in countries where the opposition can “perform strongly,” there is a “significantly increased [sic] likelihood a successor government would be an electoral democracy.”57 Therefore, focusing democracy theory and promotion around strengthening legitimate opposition could be essential to the “new frameworks, new debates, and [sic] new paradigm of political change” that Carothers calls for.58

Thinking of regime change and ways to support democracy differently could provide the optimism that some scholars have criticized as lacking in democracy literature as of late. Bruce Gilley argues that since the 1990s there has been an overwhelming bias towards pessimism with themes revolving around “authoritarian resurgence” and democracy as a “broad but shallow phenomenon.”59 Larry Diamond argues in 1996 that liberal democracy and political freedom had “stopped expanding in the world,” leaving a “hollowed out” “shell” of democracy in transitioning countries.60 However, such observations do not mean that Diamond is
a pessimist. In fact, Diamond, Carothers, Levitsky, and other critics of democratization, are also the biggest supporters of democracy. Though he points out hybrid regimes are not full democracies, Diamond still insists there is “potential for democratic progress in the world” as “democratic values and aspirations are becoming universal.”

The consensus among members of the United Nations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and now the Sustainable Development Goals, has only confirmed the world’s commitment to freedoms, liberties, and rights intrinsically linked to liberal democracy.

Even amid Freedom House’s startling report, we have seen advances in democracy around the world. The decision of the Brazilian Supreme Court to effectively strip former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of legal protection reserved for high-ranking officials will prevent him from avoiding a corruption investigation. Myanmar shocked the world when it held relatively free and fair elections last year, signaling an opening of the country to democratic practices. However, this does not mean that we can turn a blind eye to the current trend of the decay of democratic practices. While the actions of Putin in Russia, Hun Sen in Cambodia, and Jacob Zuma in South Africa among other competitive authoritarian leaders are worrisome for the prospect of democracy in third wave countries, the breakdown of democratic practices noted in the most advanced democracies is serious cause for concern.

The actions of European governments including closing borders due to rising xenophobia and attacks towards refugees amid the growing migrant crisis questions the ability of the EU to manage the situation following democratic values. Freedom House has also marked the United States on a downward trend after “flaws in the electoral system, a disturbing increase in the role of private money in election campaigns and the legislative process, legislative gridlock, the failure of the Obama administration to fulfill promises of enhanced government openness, and fresh evidence of racial discrimination and other dysfunctions in the criminal justice system” have impacted the country over the past year. It is clear that although scholarly pessimism should be discouraged, we cannot continue to talk about democratization and consolidation as if it is inevitable and permanent. The actions of advanced democracies to address global and national crises resonate with Schedler’s premonition that “the new global agenda after 11 September 2001, which clearly gives priority to security over liberty” favors authoritarianism over democracy.
Conclusion

This review essay has shown the intellectual divides in democracy studies, and the possible solutions some scholars have proposed. It has also highlighted that terminology and concepts previously popular, no longer reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. I agree with Collier and Levitsky that scholars need “to be more careful in their definition and use of concepts.”64 Diminished forms of democracy such as Zakaria’s ‘illiberal democracy’ are dangerous as they weaken and stretch the definition of a democracy to avoid acknowledging what type of regime is actually present in a country. Authoritarianism by any other name is still not a democracy, and in order to understand hybrid regimes, their existence, and potential to liberalize, we must recognize them for what they are, not what we wish they were.

The first step in revitalizing democracy studies is to agree on a clear and parsimonious definition. While many like Huntington have argued that Schumpeter’s minimal procedural definition of democracy should suffice, this article has demonstrated that civil liberties are an essential part of even an electoral definition, in order to ensure competitive or free and fair elections. Accepting that constitutional liberalism is actually a part of democracy will help to clarify other division lines in the literature including how to classify hybrid regimes that do not have all the characteristics of a liberal democracy. Although it is easy to identify hundreds of types of regimes, Schedler’s classification, which is reminiscent of Dahl’s approach, provides a well-defined heuristic device for harmonizing research on the issue. The categories of liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral authoritarianism, and closed authoritarianism incorporate Collier and Levitsky’s caution towards adjectives, Levitsky and Way’s idea of competitive authoritarianism, and Carothers’ call to end a dichotomous transition paradigm.

Although it has been nearly 15 years since Carothers’ article, transition is still a concept widely used and taught. It has been repeated, however, that countries do not move unilaterally anymore away from dictatorship toward democracy, but rather follow their own multidirectional path in a “political gray zone.”65 Even though the transition paradigm is ending, the consolidation paradigm is still a useful tool if utilized properly. As described by Linz and Stepan, as well as Schedler, consolidation should be used sparingly and not diminished with adjectives such as fully or partially consolidated. The concept should only refer to established liberal democracies that are actively working to prevent any democratic breakdown or decay. Consolidation should never be applied to transforming regimes.

We are at conflicting crossroads; while democracy is “the only broadly legitimate form of government in the world,” there are more hybrid/authoritarian regimes than democracies.66 Freedom has been deteriorating for a decade now, and with various global crises showing no signs of alleviating, this trend is at risk of continuing and perhaps even escalating. Though it is easy to fall trap to scholarly pessimism, I disagree with Rodrik and Mukand that it is a “puzzle… that liberal democracy can ever emerge.”67 As Peter Burnell points out, “the progress of democracy always has faced and doubtless always will face challenges.”68 It is evident though that the challenges facing democracy are more complicated than ever due to globalization and rapid technological advances.

However, it is clear from the Arab Spring, Color Revolutions, Power People Revolution, Hong Kong protests, Brazilian protests, and other protests around the world in authoritarian and democratic countries that the spirit of democracy cannot be exorcised or killed. It may lie dormant, but it will reappear when the time is ripe. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that democracy literature modernizes to reflect the realities of the challenges to democracy, including hybrid regimes, and researches what transformations create the ripest situations for democracy to flourish and not fall prey to backsliding, especially in light of security taking precedence over liberty in the Post-September 11th world.
This excerpt from *Trashcan Lives* by Charles Bukowski summarizes perfectly the main debate in democracy studies and the concept of this paper: it is dangerous to view democracy in a dichotomous manner. Though democracies seek to consolidate into a stable system and constantly strive to improve in order to survive challenges that could lead to regime breakdown, authoritarian regimes behave in the exact same way. It is therefore not such a leap in thinking to recognize there are many states that operate in between democracy and dictatorship in order to consume and preserve more power. That is the nature of any regime, which makes it vital to accurately distinguish the nuances of the spectrum between democracy and dictatorship, in order to modernize and refine the field of democracy studies and its application to reality.

3. Ibid., 302.
5. Ibid., 3.
6. Ibid., 15.
10. Ibid., 120, 125, 128.
13. Ibid., 606.
14. Ibid., 103.
15. Houle's experiment did not look at the likelihood of advanced democracies to backslide due to high income inequality. Such research would be valuable to understanding if current trends are dangerous in countries like the United States, which are consolidated democracies, yet have levels of income inequality equal to or higher than authoritarian countries.
17. Ibid., 9.
19. Ibid., 5, 10.
21. Ibid., 103.
22. Ibid., 105.
24. Huntington, 9.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 430.
35 Ibid., 437.
36 Ibid., 438.
37 Ibid., 442.
38 Ibid., 440.
39 Ibid., 442.
40 Ibid., 450.
42 Ibid., 53.
43 Ibid., 59.
45 The 15 countries Levitsky and Way categorize as on the path of democratization by 2008 are: Benin, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guyana, Macedonia, Mali, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Taiwan, and Ukraine. Considering political situations and crises, the following countries I categorize as regressing towards authoritarianism supported by Freedom House scores: Dominican Republic, Macedonia, Mali, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Ukraine.
46 The ten countries that followed a path of unstable authoritarianism are: Albania, Belarus, Georgia, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Senegal, and Zambia.
47 The ten countries that are categorized as stable authoritarianism as of 2008 are: Armenia, Botswana, Cambodia, Cameroon, Gabon, Malaysia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Russia, and Zimbabwe.
50 Diamond, "Thinking about Hybrid Regimes," 33-34.
51 Ibid., 33.
53 Ibid., 37.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 39.
56 Ibid., 40-41.
58 Carothers, 20.
62 Puddington and Roylance, 19.
63 Schedler, “The Menu of Manipulation,” 49.
64 Collier and Levitsky, 432.
65 Carothers, 9.
67 Rodrik and Mukand.
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