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Latin America's New Crisis of Democracy

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"Latin America's New Crisis of Democracy"

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Abstract:

Why have some countries in Latin America experienced democratic crises while others enjoyed stability? Recent scholarship suggests a number of explanations for Latin America's ongoing instability, including economic decline, lack of development, poverty, inequality, social fragmentation, a crisis of political representation, and weaknesses in the rule of law. To assess these competing hypotheses, I conduct a qualitative comparative analysis of democratic crises in Latin America from 1990-2007. My research lends support to the argument that political-institutional conditions, specifically the nature of the political party system and the rule of law, have a determinate impact in explaining regime stability in contemporary Latin America. To promote democratic stability, the international community should therefore develop effective strategies to strengthen countries' legislative and judicial institutions.

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Democracy in Latin America today is alive but not well. In a recent survey of threats to democracy in the region, Jennifer McCoy (2006: 763) identified nearly fifty different episodes of democratic crisis in Latin America for the period 1990-2005, the majority of which occurred after 2000. Furthermore, since 1985, more than a dozen elected presidents have failed to finish their terms in office.[2] Thus, although Latin America has made impressive democratic gains over the last several decades, democratic stability remains elusive. This investigation seeks to answer a number of key questions regarding democratic instability in contemporary Latin America. First, what are the underlying conditions that appear to be at the root of recent democratic crises in Latin America? Second, what types of measures should international actors take to defend democracy against such threats? In short, I seek to understand why Latin America is experiencing continuing political instability today and what the international community can do (if anything) to ameliorate the situation.

These questions have both a theoretical and practical significance. The critical theoretical puzzle I seek to explain is why some countries in Latin America have experienced repeated democratic crises while others in the region—Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay, for instance—have enjoyed relative stability. Indeed, scholars have yet to arrive at a satisfactory explanation for why, in recent years, democracy has been especially precarious in Guatemala, Haiti and the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. This study seeks to unravel this puzzle. It also aims to add to a growing body of literature that analyzes democratic crises from a comparative and regional perspective. In addition to increasing the scope of generalization beyond single case studies, such a perspective highlights the increased (and ever-changing) influence of international and transnational actors in processes of democratization in the Americas

2 On the phenomenon of interrupted presidencies, presidential falls, and presidential crises, see Valenzuela 2004, Hochstetler 2006, Negretto 2006, Pérez-Liñán 2007 and Hochstetler and Edwards 2009.

(see, e.g., Legler et al. 2007). Moreover, this research is of obvious practical importance as it will help to inform recent policy debates regarding how the inter-American community can best defend and promote democracy.

My analysis is organized into three main sections. In the first section, I develop an inventory of recent democratic crises in Latin America and the Caribbean focusing on the nineteen countries of the region with a population of two million or more.[3] I identify all of the democratic regressions which have occurred in Latin America since the end of the Cold War (1990-2007), a time period deliberately chosen to highlight a new regional context marked by a growing normative commitment to democracy in the Western Hemisphere and in the Organization of American States (Boniface 2002).[4]

In the second section, I review and analyze the underlying conditions, both economic and political-institutional, that appear to be at the root of recent democratic crises. I focus on five leading explanations for the new democratic instability in Latin America: (1) socio-economic conditions, including poverty and inequality; (2) societal fragmentation; (3) presidentialism and multipartism; (4) party system institutionalization and the crisis of political representation; and (5) weaknesses in the rule of law. To assess these competing hypotheses, I construct a new dataset on democratic crises in Latin America and conduct a qualitative comparative analysis utilizing the fuzzy-set methods developed by Charles Ragin (2000; 2008), methods that are particularly well-suited to the study of causal relationships among a relatively small set of cases. My findings lend support to the argument that there are no prerequisites

3 Following a common (and frequently disputed) convention, I use the term Latin America to encompass the Spanish- and French-speaking countries of the Caribbean. The nineteen countries include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. As it has not yet undergone a democratic transition, the country of Cuba is excluded.

4 The new posture of the OAS (and other multilateral organizations) in the early 1990s was one of many shifts in the regional context that (favorably) accompanied the third wave of democratization in Latin America (1978-present); shifts in the ideological context, the Catholic Church, U.S. foreign policy, and political attitudes, were also significant (see Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005).

(or necessary conditions) to achieving democratic stability in Latin America. Countries can achieve various levels of regime stability regardless of a number of socioeconomic and political-institutional conditions. At the same time, there are multiple pathways (or sufficient conditions) to achieving democratic stability. In particular, the absence of multipartism, the presence of an institutionalized party system and the rule of law are each usually sufficient for achieving a degree of democratic stability. Furthermore, relatively low levels of multipartism usually act as a bulwark against high levels of democratic *instability* (that is, they are a usually necessary condition). Surprisingly, causal factors such as economic performance, the level of economic development, and the degree of social fragmentation were not found to be salient in explaining democratic stability and instability in contemporary Latin America.

In the third and final section, I summarize my main findings and conclude with a discussion of avenues for future research as well as policy recommendations. My research lends support to the argument that political-institutional conditions, specifically the nature of the political party system and the rule of law, have a determinate impact in explaining regime stability in contemporary Latin America. To promote democratic stability, the international community should therefore develop effective strategies to strengthen countries' legislative and judicial institutions.

I. Democratic Crises in Latin America, 1990-2007: An Empirical Inventory

Defining Democracy and Democratic Crisis. In order to study the dynamics of democratic stability and instability, one must first define democracy and then establish the criteria for determining what constitutes a democratic crisis. Having established this conceptual baseline, one can then undertake the equally if not more challenging task of identifying, empirically, all of the instances of democratic crisis which have occurred in

Latin America since the end of the Cold War. A rough consensus has emerged among regime scholars as to how the concept of democracy should be defined and operationalized. Analysts typically begin their discussion of the meaning of democracy with Joseph Schumpeter's (1942) celebrated observations about the shortcomings of the classical definition of democracy understood as 'the will of the people.' Schumpeter's key insight was that democracy should be defined by its procedures, especially competitive elections, rather than its intended and often idealistic outcomes (which, after all, are seldom realized in practice). Schumpeter's view was subsequently refined by democratic theorist Robert Dahl (1982, cited in Schmitter and Karl 1991: 81) who emphasized the following seven minimum procedures of democracy (what he labeled "polyarchy"):

1. Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.
2. Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
3. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
4. Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government.
5. Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined.
6. Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law.
7. Citizens also have the right to form relatively independent association or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.

Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl (1991: 81), recognizing the historic influence of the military and external powers in Latin American politics, furthermore stress that for a political system to be democratic elected officials must "be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding (albeit informal) opposition from unelected officials" and that the polity "be able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system."

To simplify these criteria somewhat, Dahl's procedures can be collapsed into three broader elements: rights of political participation (i.e., the right to vote and stand for office), free and fair elections, and guarantees of basic civil liberties such as freedom of speech, information, and association. Similarly, Schmitter and Karl's criteria can be summarized as civilian rule or autonomy. Modern democracy, then, is typically defined in terms of four minimal procedural criteria: (1) rights of political participation, (2) free and fair elections, (3) civil liberties, and (4) civilian rule or autonomy.

The term "democratic crisis" has many meanings. For purposes of this study, the term is used to denote a situation in which a competitive (i.e., democratic or semi-democratic) regime suffers a decline in one or more of the four aforementioned sub-components of democracy. It is used, therefore, to denote a crisis of democracy itself, rather than simply threats to political or institutional stability (for example, violent protests or inter-branch conflicts) that endanger but do not actually impair the regime.[5] For example, in 1992, Venezuela endured two destabilizing coup attempts, but the military uprisings failed and the country's democratic regime remained in tact.[6] Similarly, several countries in the region (notably Brazil and Venezuela) have witnessed destabilizing impeachment processes but, in most cases, the constitution was followed and the democratic regime endured. My definition, in short, implies that a significant breach of the constitutional order has occurred, what in the parlance of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS 2001) is described as "an unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order or an unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the

5 Of course, such threats to democracy are interesting in their own right. For an ambitious analysis of inter-branch crises in Latin America see Helmke 2007; for a comprehensive analysis of presidential crises (including impeachment episodes), see Pérez-Liñán 2007; and for a broad inventory of recent threats to democracy, see McCoy 2006.

6 Venezuela was not alone in the post-Cold War period. Paraguay also experienced a failed coup attempt in 2000 as did Haiti in 2001.

democratic order." At the same time, it is also important to emphasize that the term democratic crisis, as used here, need not imply that a breakdown of democracy to authoritarianism has occurred. In fact, breakdowns to authoritarian rule are today quite rare in Latin America.[7]

Before turning to how these definitions of democracy and democratic crisis might be operationalized and measured empirically, an important qualification is in order as the procedural minimal definition of democracy is not without its critics. To begin, the definition is narrow and thus omits broader aspects of democratic citizenship. Guillermo O'Donnell (2005: 13) has noted, for example, that many democracies in Latin America suffer from a "low-intensity citizenship" wherein "individuals are citizens with respect to political rights but not in terms of civil rights." Similarly, by placing emphasis on the methods of democracy, rather than its practical results, the procedural definition neglects issues of substance that are of vital importance to citizens. In Latin America, for example, a prevalent strain of democratic thought emphasizes substantive values and outcomes such as popular empowerment, communal solidarity and socio-economic justice and equality far more than specific electoral procedures which, in turn, are often derided as pertaining to "formal" but not "real" democracy.[8] Thus, although for practical reasons this study employs a procedural minimal definition of democracy, it is important to acknowledge the contested nature of this concept.

It is also important to highlight a crucial distinction between the concepts of *democracy* and *quality of democracy*. The term *quality of democracy* moves beyond

7 Notwithstanding developments in 2008, 2009 and 2010, there is a rough consensus that Haiti (1991-1994 and 1999) and Peru (1992) are the only two countries in the post-Cold War period that achieved a competitive regime (in both of these cases a form of semi-democracy) and then reverted to authoritarianism (see, e.g., Mainwaring et al. 2007 and Kapstein and Converse 2008: 163).

8 See, e.g., the discussion by Carlos de la Torre, "Democracy: The View from the Andes,": http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ondemand/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.play&mediaid=368BA024-9B3D-2D48-BF31CE759D7715D3

considerations of regime type (i.e., whether a regime is a democracy or not) to regime performance or "the extent to which any given polyarchy actualizes its potential as a political regime" (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002: 86). Beyond simply guaranteeing the minimal aspects of democracy, then, a high quality democracy is one which actually provides citizens with "a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control over public policies and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions" (Diamond and Morlino 2005: xi). This is a critical distinction to make because the stability and quality of a democracy need not correlate to one another. In particular, a democracy may exhibit stability as a regime but have low quality (the converse would also be true but for the fact that Diamond and Morlino stipulate that high quality democracies should exhibit "stable institutions"). In fact, many of Latin America's stable democracies have large deficits in the quality of democracy. What is more the low quality of certain democracies may even help to explain their stability (see, e.g., Weyland 2005). Similarly, discrete episodes of regime instability can enhance the quality of democracy as was arguably the case, to name one example, in the failed autogolpe in Guatemala in 1993 (see, e.g., Villagrán de León 1993). Thus although this study focuses primarily on the stability of democracy, we shall have cause to consider whether or not regime stability is ultimately associated with a high quality of democracy in Latin America.

Measuring Democracy. Having settled upon a minimal procedural definition of democracy (viz., basic rights of political participation, free and fair elections, civil liberties, and civilian rule), we now turn to the tasks of operationalization and measurement of democracy. Two recent attempts to measure democracy and classify political regimes in Latin America are particularly noteworthy and will be used to guide my classification of democratic crises in the post-Cold War period. The first, based on

the work of Gerardo L. Munck, is the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) and includes information on eighteen Latin American countries for the time period 1990-2005.[9] The second, based on the work of Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, includes information on twenty Latin American countries (including two Caribbean countries, Cuba and Haiti, not included in the EDI) for the time period 1900-2007.[10] While no dataset is perfect, these two avoid some of the pitfalls of conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation that have plagued the most commonly used indicators of democracy (Munck and Verkuilen 2002).[11]

The Electoral Democracy Index. The Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) defines democracy in terms of four essential components of democracy: (1) the right to vote, (2) clean elections, (3) free elections, and (4) elected public offices (i.e., elections as a means of gaining access to public office). Each of the four components is independently measured and then aggregated into a single index with a value of zero to one, with a score of one indicating the presence of electoral democracy.[12] The EDI, it is worth emphasizing, mirrors the minimal procedural definition of democracy established above in all respects but one: it does not include a consideration of civil liberties.

One of the critical strengths of the EDI as an indicator is that it enables precise comparisons of countries across the four component dimensions, including an estimation of their relative severity. With respect to the first component, the right to vote, all eighteen countries in the sample, received a perfect score for the period 1990-2005. Yet the same cannot be said for the remaining three components. Using the EDI

9 See Munck 2009; see also UNDP 2004a.
10 See Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán (2001 and 2007) and Mainwaring and Brinks (n/d).
11 For other attempts to catalog recent democratic crises in the region, see Boniface 2007, McCoy 2006, Helmke 2007, and Pérez-Liñán 2007.
12 The EDI, it must be stressed, is narrow in the sense that it assesses only "the extent to which the state guarantees citizenship rights regarding the political regime" and leaves aside considerations such as civil and social rights (UNDP 2004b: 28). Thus, while "any irregularity detected by the EDI should be considered an important restriction of citizens' political rights," it is "by no means a broad measure of democracy" (UNDP 2004b: 33).

as a guide, we can distinguish among several groups of countries. The first group, including Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, and Uruguay, exhibit a perfect record of electoral democracy for the entire period 1990-2005. A second group of countries, including Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, and Mexico exhibit certain imperfections in electoral democracy, but do not register any regressions in their scores (and in the cases of El Salvador and Mexico, exhibit a pattern of gradual improvement in the early 1990s).[13] The remaining nine countries in the dataset have all exhibited some form of democratic crisis in the last two decades, including Argentina (2001), Bolivia (2003-2005), the Dominican Republic (1994-1995), Ecuador (1997, 2000-2002 and 2005), Guatemala (1993 and 2004-2005), Nicaragua (2001-2004 and 2005), Paraguay (1999), Peru (1992-1999 and 2000) and Venezuela (2002 and 2004-2005).[14]

Two of these episodes, the Dominican Republic (1994-1995) and Peru (2000) represent major election irregularities that, importantly, had a determinative impact on the outcome of the election results.[15] Three other episodes, Guatemala (2004-2005), Nicaragua (2001-2004), and Venezuela (2004-2005) involved more subtle deterioration in the quality of elections.[16] The remaining episodes involved irregularities with respect to elected offices such as the autogolpe in Guatemala (1993) and coups in Ecuador

13 The country of Chile, rightly regarded as a paragon of democratic stability in Latin America, preserved a number of unelected parliamentary offices during this time period and thus received a less than perfect score. Colombia's regime was marred by consistent problems in its electoral practices.

14 This list includes *any* instance in which there was a decline in the EDI from the previous year for a given country (i.e., regardless of whether or not the starting point was a perfect score of one). In several instances, Bolivia (2003-2005), the Dominican Republic (1994-1995), Ecuador (2000-2002), Guatemala (2004-2005), Nicaragua (2001-2005), Peru (1992-2000) and Venezuela (2004-2005), more than one year elapsed before the country registered a score equal to or better than its score before the crisis episode. In two cases, Nicaragua and Peru, the countries exhibited further deterioration after the initial episode of decline (i.e., a two-step decline).

15 According to the EDI, and specifically component II (clean elections), these are the only two cases for the 1990-2005 period in which significant electoral irregularities occurred which had a determinative impact on the outcome of the election. They differ, then, from less severe irregularities (in terms of cleanness) observed in Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Venezuela.

16 See, for example, Carter Center 2003 (on Guatemala) and Dye and McConnell 2002 (on Nicaragua). In Venezuela, the Carter Center (2004) reported that the presidential recall election "suffered from some irregularities, delays, politicization, and intimidation," but nevertheless reflected "the will of the Venezuelan electorate."

(2000) and Venezuela (2002). The autogolpe in Peru (1992) stands as the most severe democratic crisis and inaugurated deterioration in both elected offices and the conduct of elections. For summary purposes, we can sort these fifteen different episodes of democratic crisis according to their nature (whether the crisis involved declines in electoral conduct or elected offices) and severity (i.e., the extent of decline in the aggregate index) as indicated in Table 1.1 below. In short, the EDI provides an excellent foundation for an inventory of the major democratic crises since 1990. However, because of the partially limited spatial and temporal coverage of the EDI and its inattention to issues of civil liberties and human rights (other than as they pertain to the four subcomponents of electoral democracy), it is also useful to complement this analysis with a consideration of other data.

Table 1.1: ***Episodes of Democratic Crisis in Latin America, 1990-2005***	**Decline in Components II and/or III: Clean and Free Elections**	**Decline in Component IV: Elected Public Offices**
Minor Deterioration (EDI decline: < 0.1)	Nicaragua (2001-2004)	Argentina (2001) Nicaragua (2005)
Significant Deterioration (EDI decline: 0.1 > 0.3)	Guatemala (2004-2005) Venezuela (2004-2005)	Bolivia (2003-2005) Ecuador (1997) Ecuador (2000-2002) Ecuador (2005) Guatemala (1993)
Severe Deterioration (EDI decline: > 0.3)	Dom. Rep. (1994-1995) Peru (1992-1999) Peru (2000)	Paraguay (1999) Peru (1992-1999) Venezuela (2002)

Latin American Political Regimes. A second dataset that can be consulted in an attempt to identify recent democratic crises comes from the work of Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. In contrast to most measures of freedom and democracy, the authors advocate the use of an ordinal, categorical and trichotomous

(democratic, semi-democratic, and authoritarian) classification of regimes. Democracy as they define it requires four things: (1) free and fair competitive elections for the legislature and executive; (2) inclusive adult citizenship; (3) guarantees of civil liberties; and (4) civilian control of the military.[17] Democracies, the authors insist, are only as strong as their weakest link. Therefore a country exhibiting a partial violation of any of the individual components (but no major violations) is classified as semi-democratic whereas a country exhibiting a major violation of any of the individual components is classified as authoritarian. Only those countries exhibiting all four components are classified as democracies.

As with the EDI, the Latin American Political Regimes dataset can be used to distinguish among several groups of countries. To begin, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay exhibit an unblemished record of stable democracy for the entire period 1990-2007. A second group of countries, including Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama exhibit partial violations of certain democratic components, but do not register any regressions in their classifications and in every case but Colombia exhibit a pattern of gradual improvement over the course of the 1990s. Leaving aside Cuba (classified as authoritarian for the entire time period under consideration), the remaining seven cases—the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela—all exhibited some form of regime deterioration. Regime decay came in several forms. In some cases, democratic regimes regressed to semi-democracy (i.e., "erosions") as in the Dominican Republic (1994-1995), Ecuador (2000 and 2004-2007), Guatemala (2002-2007), and Venezuela (1999 and 2002-2007). In two other cases, Haiti (1999-2005) and Peru (1992-1994), semi-

17 Civil liberties, as defined by the authors, encompass concerns with human rights violations and censorship as well as the freedom of parties and candidates to organize. This concept is thus similar but not equivalent to the free elections component in the EDI. Similarly, the concept of civilian control is analogous to the elected public offices component in the EDI.

democratic regimes regressed to authoritarian rule (i.e., "breakdowns").[18] Both of these cases underwent a subsequent transition to democracy (Peru 2001-) or semi-democracy (Haiti 2006-), but in Haiti the resultant regime exhibited new deficiencies in civil liberties. In the remaining cases, semi-democratic regimes registered a decline in an individual component of democracy but otherwise remained semi-democratic, including Guatemala (1993), Haiti (1998)[19], Paraguay (1993-1995 and 1998-1999) and Peru (2000). For summary purposes, we can sort these thirteen different episodes of democratic crisis according to their nature (whether the crisis involved violations relating to electoral conduct or civil liberties and/or civilian power) and degree as indicated in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: ***Episodes of Democratic Crisis in Latin America, 1990-2007***	**Decline in Clean and/or Free Elections**	**Decline in Civil Liberties and/or Civilian Power**
Erosion from Democracy to Semi-Democracy	Dom. Rep. (1994-1995) Venezuela (1999)	Ecuador (2000) Ecuador (2004-2007) Guatemala (2002-2007) Venezuela (2002-2007)
Decay within Semi-Democracy	Guatemala (1993) Peru (2000)	Haiti (1998) Paraguay (1993-1995) Paraguay (1998-1999)
Breakdown from Semi-Democracy to Authoritarian Rule	Haiti (1999-2007) Peru (1992-1994)	

18 The military coup in Haiti (1991) does not register as a crisis of democracy, as defined here, since the country never achieved classification as a competitive regime until after the restoration of Aristide in 1995. This is because the coding procedures in Mainwaring et al.'s dataset are based on a year-end snapshot.

19 In 1998, Haiti registered a partial violation of civilian control, defined by Mainwaring et al. (2007: 136) as a situation in which "military leaders or the military as an institution are able to veto important policies in a few areas not related to the armed forces." In regards to the Haitian case, this classification is somewhat difficult to interpret in light of the fact that the Haitian military was disbanded by President Aristide in 1995. Still 1998 witnessed a number of worrisome developments as regards security forces more generally. For one, United Nations peacekeeping forces were scaled back, leaving security in the hands of the inexperienced, ill-equipped and arguably corrupt Haitian National Police (HNP). In late 1998, moreover, the police arrested several former military officers accused of plotting to destabilize the government (BBC 1998). Two other worrying security developments in this period were the rise of pro-government paramilitary gangs (the so-called *chimères*) and the increasing politicization of the HNP, though these developments took on greater force in 1999 and 2000 (ICG 2004: 7).

While these two datasets use slightly different conceptualizations of democracy and employ different measurement and aggregation principles, they nevertheless reveal striking consistencies.[20] To begin, there is a strong consensus that three countries, Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay, have enjoyed uninterrupted democracy during the post-Cold War period. Moreover, a second set of countries have exhibited either a stable form of semi-democracy (Colombia and, more contentiously, Chile) or underwent a process of democratization sometime in the 1990s—i.e., El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama. Similarly, there is rough consensus regarding which countries underwent a reversal of democratic fortunes and when: the Dominican Republic (1994-1995), Ecuador (2000 and 2004-), Guatemala (1993 and 2002-), Paraguay (1993- and 1998-1999), Peru (1992-, 2000), and Venezuela (2002-).[21] Furthermore, although Haiti is not included in the EDI dataset, there is little doubt that its semi-democratic regime was in a near perpetual state of crisis. Finally, there are five cases, Argentina (2001), Bolivia (2003-2005), Ecuador (1997), Nicaragua (2001-2005) and Venezuela (1999), whose classification is disputed, at least to the extent that the authors' definitions of electoral democracy and democracy can be considered comparable. Of course, these five cases are fascinating in their own right and the dispute over how they should be classified reveals much about contemporary debates over the very meaning of democracy and democratic crisis. Indeed, these five cases were among the most subtle forms of democratic regression in the post-Cold War period, involving nebulous disputes over issues of constitutionality more than blatant violations of democratic rule. Furthermore, in an age in which the international community increasingly scrutinizes the democratic practices of sovereign states, subtle violations of democracy such as

20 For an explicit comparison of the two datasets, see Mainwaring et al. 2007: 153-54 and Munck 2009: 60-76.

21 Not surprisingly (again), there is some dispute as to the onset of certain democratic setbacks and their duration. For example, it is a contentious exercise to determine to what extent elections in Peru in 1993 and 1995 served to repair the damage done to Peru's regime by the autogolpe in 1992.

these may be an attempt by undemocratic actors seek to shield themselves from international criticism and potential sanction (Boniface 2009: 186).[22]

In summary, having reviewed the two most important attempts to classify recent changes in Latin American political regimes, we have identified no fewer than eighteen episodes of democratic regression (of varying degrees of severity) in ten different countries (for a short description of each episode, see Appendix 1).[23] At the same time, we have identified nine other countries in the region that were seemingly immune to democratic instability (at the regime level, anyway) in the post-Cold War period (see Table 1.3 below).

Table 1.3: ***A Dichotomous Classification of Latin American Regimes, 1990-2007***

Stable-Democratic, Stable-Semi-Democratic or Transitioned to Democracy	Unstable Democratic or Unstable Semi-Democratic (crisis episodes)
Brazil Chile Colombia Costa Rica El Salvador Honduras Mexico Panama Uruguay	Argentina (2001) Bolivia (2003-2005) Dominican Republic (1994-1995) Ecuador (1997, 2000, 2004-2007) Guatemala (1993, 2002-2007) Haiti (1998, 1999-2007) Nicaragua (2001-2004, 2005) Paraguay (1993-1995, 1998-1999) Peru (1992-1999, 2000) Venezuela (1999, 2002-2007)

22 Similar arguments animate the literature on competitive-, electoral-, and semi-authoritarian regimes (see Levitsky and Way 2002, Ottaway 2003, and Schedler 2006).

23 In an analogous survey of "presidential crises" from 1950-2004, Pérez-Liñán (2007: 44-46) identified twenty-one crises in the post-Cold War period. Excepting cases of impeachment, attempted impeachment, and constitutional-legislative dissolution (which, in my analysis, do not necessarily constitute a crisis of democracy), the list of crisis episodes he identifies is nearly identical to mine in spite of the rather different methodologies employed, lending some measure of validity to the data.

II. Theories of Democratic Stability (and Instability) in Latin America

In the previous section we identified all of the democratic crises which have occurred in Latin America since the end of the Cold War. The goal of this section is to try to determine why some countries in Latin America have exhibited democratic stability while others have not. In particular, I review and analyze the underlying conditions, both socioeconomic and political-institutional, that appear to lead to democratic instability in Latin America. I focus on a number of competing explanations for the new democratic instability in Latin America: (1) socio-economic conditions, including poverty and inequality; (2) societal fragmentation; (3) presidentialism and multipartism; (4) party system institutionalization and the crisis of political representation; and (5) weaknesses in the rule of law.

Few questions in political science (and particularly in the field of comparative politics) have attracted as much scholarly attention as the question of what conditions give rise to and sustain democratic regimes. In what follows, I review this literature particularly as it pertains to contemporary Latin America. There are several compelling reasons for limiting the study of democratic stability to a specific sub-group or region of the world. Kapstein and Converse (2008: 2-5) argue, for instance, that young democracies (i.e., those countries that democratized after 1960) confront special challenges (poor socio-economic foundations, low legitimacy, weak institutions, higher volatility, and greater international pressures) and merit consideration as a distinct sub-group. Furthermore, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2003) found that democratization in Latin America exhibits distinctive regional dynamics that make it exceptional when compared to the rest of the world. Furthermore, to the extent that countries' susceptibility to Western democratizing influences varies distinctly across regions (Levitsky and Way 2005), limiting the analysis to a single region helps control, however

imperfectly, for this effect. With these points in mind, I now turn to a consideration of five prominent explanations for democratic instability in contemporary Latin America.

Socio-economic Conditions. Proponents of a first set of hypotheses argue that the underlying socio-economic realities in the region are to blame for the region's seemingly perpetual democratic instability. Terry Lynn Karl (2000: 156), for instance, argues that "excessive concentrations of wealth and poverty, in the context of a particularly volatile and speculative international economic environment, are a formula for political trouble." In Latin America, an estimated 43.9% of the population lives in poverty while 19.4% live in extreme poverty (UNDP 2004a). At the same time, Latin America is by many estimates the most unequal region in the world (IADB 1999). Furthermore, the advent of neoliberal economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s has done little to ameliorate poverty and inequality in the region (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2000). In fact, evidence from Latin America suggests that recent neoliberal reforms have generated political instability.[24] Governments that pursue neoliberal policies appear to be particularly vulnerable to instability when their policies fail to generate concrete gains (Hagopian 2005: 341-343; Stokes 2001: 122-153), a finding consistent with Przeworski et al.'s (2000) claims that strong economic performance enhances democratic stability. An examination of socio-economic issues, in short, remains central to analyzing the new political instability in Latin America.

Societal Fragmentation. Proponents of a second hypothesis attribute democratic instability to social cleavages such as sharp ethno-linguistic differences. A report by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB 2000: 188) notes, for example, that societal fragmentation "can greatly reduce the governability of society" since "fragmented societies face the daunting task of reconciling too many diverse and often opposing

24 Hochstetler (2006: 406), for example, finds that South American presidents that followed neoliberal economic policies were far more likely to face calls for their resignation, and fall from power, than presidents that eschewed neoliberal policies.

interests in order to obtain an elusive common good."[25] In support of this hypothesis, Kapstein and Converse (2008: 47-48) found that democratic reversals were more common among countries with higher levels of ethnic fragmentation than those with lower levels. Furthermore, although Latin America's level of ethno-linguistic fragmentation is relatively low when compared to Africa and Asia, it is substantial in a number of countries such as Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru (IDB 2000: 188).

Political Institutions: Presidentialism and Multipartism. Proponents of a third hypothesis argue that Latin America's democratic instability can largely be attributed to the fragility of presidential systems, particularly when they intersect with multi-party legislatures (see, e.g., Mainwaring 1993, Linz and Valenzuela 1994, and Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; for a critical evaluation, see Cheibub 2007). Historically speaking, multipartism has indeed contributed to democratic collapse; in a survey of Latin American regime change in the second half of the twentieth century, it was found that multiparty systems "were more prone to breakdown than democracies with fewer than 3.0 effective parties" (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005: 35). Moreover, even though regime breakdowns are today relatively rare in Latin America, recent scholarship emphasizes that presidentialism continues to have destabilizing consequences though often at the level of government rather than regime. In one of the more recent contributions to the literature, for example, Arturo Valenzuela (2004) argues that the rash of "interrupted presidents" (i.e., presidents failing to finish their constitutional terms) in Latin America can be attributed, in part, to presidentialism. He argues, in particular, that there is a serious gap between the high expectations Latin American citizens have of their presidents and the weak capacity executives actually enjoy. This weak capacity is the result of the fact that many presidents lack congressional support,

25 Recent evidence (Birnir and Van Cott 2007) also suggests that ethnic cleavages contribute to party system fragmentation, a potentially destabilizing condition in its own right (as discussed below).

often because of political fragmentation (multipartism) and weak party discipline in the legislature.[26] The end result is often confrontation between the executive and legislative branches, gridlock, and political crisis. In short, attention to party systems (in the context of presidentialism) remains crucial to understanding political stability in Latin America.

Political Representation. A fourth hypothesis traces Latin America's recent political stability to a long-term decay in traditional forms of interest intermediation. This approach emphasizes the potentially destabilizing impact of the collapse of corporatism and especially the decline of established political parties in Latin America (Domínguez 1997; Hagopian 1998; Mainwaring 2006). When traditional forms of interest mediation collapse, it is argued, citizens that lack representation (and face pressing issues of poverty and social exclusion) will take to the streets and seek change outside of the democratic institutional process or vote for political outsiders with dubious democratic credentials to overhaul the system from within.[27] In his study of Venezuela's "civil society coup" in April of 2002, for example, Omar Encarnación (2002: 39), attributes the crisis to "the institutional decay and eventual collapse of the political system (especially political parties)" and "the rise of an antiparty, antiestablishment leader … whose commitment to democracy is at best suspect."[28]

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26 The weak legislative support of Latin American presidents is, of course, exacerbated by several other features of Latin American politics. First, the direct election of executives in presidential systems opens the way to political outsiders who may have no political party background. Second, the widespread use of proportional representation systems in the context of extreme societal fragmentation has given rise, in Latin America, to the highest levels of multipartism (and gridlock) in the developing world (IADB 2000: 184-188). Valenzuela argues, furthermore, that the risks of presidentialism appear to be most salient in the case of minority presidents. In a careful study of ten South American countries, Hochstetler (2006: 408) found confirmation for this argument, noting that, "overall, presidents whose parties held a minority of congressional seats were more likely to be challenged by civilian actors and to fall." This finding is further refined (and to some extent challenged) by Negretto (2006) who argues that the susceptibility of minority governments to premature termination is conditioned by the extent of cabinet coalitions and the relative position of the president's party compared to the median and veto parties in the legislature.

27 Machado, Scartascini and Tommasi (2009) provide empirical support for the claim that protest participation is indeed higher in Latin American countries with weaker political institutions.

28 In this context, Encarnación notes, "civil society, especially an invigorated one, can become a source of instability, disorder, and even violence" (p. 38). Indeed, civil society does appear to be having a destabilizing impact in recent Latin American politics. In a study of South American presidents from 1978-2003, Hochstetler found that street protests accompanied all nine cases of fallen presidents (i.e.,

The Rule of Law. A fifth and final hypothesis argues that much of the recent political instability in Latin America can be explained by the weak rule of law that exists in the region, especially when coupled with the vulnerabilities of presidentialism already noted. Cameron, Blanaru and Burns (2005) argue, for example, that, under presidentialism, there are often weak incentives for opposing sides to cooperate when executive-legislative tensions develop. Moreover, where the rule of law is weak, there are strong incentives to use extra-constitutional procedures (quasi-legal impeachments, court stacking, and/or bribery to build coalitions) to resolve intergovernmental conflicts. In other words, the combination of presidentialism and weakness in the rule of law is a recipe for democratic crisis. Conversely, where the rule of law is strong, they find that "the type of constitution [presidential or parliamentary] does not matter a great deal to political stability" (p. 6). Rather than focus on parliamentarism (an unrealistic goal in Latin America), democracy advocates should try to strengthen the rule of law.[29]

2.1: Methodology and Data Sources

To assess these competing hypotheses, I develop a new dataset on democratic stability and instability in contemporary Latin America and conduct a qualitative comparative analysis utilizing the fuzzy-set methods proposed by Charles Ragin (2000; 2008). One of the main values of the "diversity-oriented" approach developed by Ragin

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early resignations) whereas presidential challenges not involving societal protests failed. She concludes that, "street protests by civil society actors, with or without parallel legislative action, appear to be the *poder moderador*, or moderating power, of the new civilian regimes" (2006: 403). While acknowledging the vulnerabilities of minority presidents in presidentialism systems, Hochstetler is thus critical of an overemphasis on purely institutional explanations of Latin America's recent instability; she calls instead for greater attention to be paid to state-society relations (see also Hochstetler and Edwards 2009).

29 As a corollary to focusing on a state's propensity to uphold the law, many scholars draw attention to the damaging impacts of corruption on democratic stability. Hochstetler (2006: 406-408), for example, finds that presidents facing credible allegations of corruption were far more likely to face calls for their resignation and to succumb to early withdrawal than presidents not associated with such wrongdoing. On the other hand, Hagopian (2005: 350-353) cautions that the links between corruption and democracy remain understudied and that the impact of corruption may be mitigated by such factors as economic performance, the scale of corruption, and public attitudes.

is that it represents a middle road between case-oriented research and variable-oriented research, the former focusing on the interpretation and explanation of significant and complex historical cases and the latter focusing on theory-testing and generalization. The synthetic approach developed by Ragin enables researchers to be both sensitive to historical context and complex forms of causation (e.g., multiple and conjunctural causation), analyze a large number of cases, and address competing explanations in a relatively parsimonious fashion (see Ragin 1987: 82-84, 121-23 and 2000: 21-42).

Ragin's fuzzy-set research method involves multiple steps. First, investigators must carefully define a population of comparable cases, in this case contemporary Latin American democracies (including semi-democracies). Second, outcomes and causal factors (or dependent and independent variables) are defined and operationalized. Measurements are based on an individual case's degree of membership in a given qualitative state, a coding process requiring significant substantive knowledge about each case under consideration.[30] Finally, competing explanations of the outcome are tested. Unlike conventional statistical analysis (which rely on a linear and additive notion of causation and generally assume causal homogeneity), fuzzy-set tests assume a distinct causal logic based on necessary and sufficient causation.

Conceptualizing the Outcome Variable. Latin American countries exhibit a wide variation in terms of democratic stability. In measuring democratic regime stability as a fuzzy-set concept, I employ a seven-value set in which the score 1.00 represents fully stable, 0.83 mostly but not fully stable, 0.67 more or less stable, 0.50 neither stable nor unstable (the crossover point), 0.33 more or less unstable, 0.17 mostly unstable, and 0.00 fully unstable. Countries were assigned values based on the number

30 For example, a critical aspect of the coding process is determining the type of fuzzy set that is feasible for each concept (e.g., three-, five, seven-value or continuous) and then specifying the range of fuzzy membership scores and appropriate qualitative anchors defining full membership, full non-membership, and the crossover point (Ragin 2000: 168-69).

and duration (and, to some extent, the severity) of democratic crises they experienced in the period 1990-2007. As identified in section one, nine countries were characterized as being stable-democratic, stable-semi-democratic or transitioned to democracy in the period 1990-2007. Among these cases there is a strong consensus that three countries, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Uruguay, enjoyed full and uninterrupted democracy during the entire post-Cold War period and can be considered fully stable (score of 1.00). The remaining six countries either exhibited a stable form of semi-democracy (Colombia and, less obviously, Chile) or underwent a process of democratization sometime in the 1990s (i.e., El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Panama). These countries were classified as mostly stable.[31] Argentina, which experienced a short crisis of modest severity (see, e.g., Levitsky and Murillo 2003) was also classified as mostly stable (score of 0.83). Bolivia and the Dominican Republic, which each experienced relatively short episodes of democratic crisis, were classified as more or less stable (score of 0.67). The countries of Nicaragua and Paraguay define the crossover point as neither stable nor unstable (score of 0.50). The countries of Guatemala and Venezuela, which had longer and more severe episodes of democratic crisis than Nicaragua and Paraguay, were classified as more or less unstable (score of 0.33). The countries of Ecuador and Peru, which experienced still greater instability, were classified as mostly unstable (score of 0.17). Finally, Haiti, whose entire history of democracy has been largely crisis-ridden (Fatton 2002), was classified as fully unstable (score of 0.00). The raw scores for each country are summarized in column two of Table 2.1.

>>> TABLE 2.1 HERE <<<

31 One might object that Honduras' classification as a mostly stable democracy is contradicted by the recent political turmoil of 2009. However, a single episode of regime instability would not necessarily alter the classification of Honduras in a significant way.

Hypotheses: Conceptualizing the Causal Variables. I next constructed fuzzy-set measures for each of my five clusters of hypotheses. In evaluating socioeconomic conditions, I collected data on economic growth, development, poverty and inequality. For each of the four concepts, I developed seven-value fuzzy membership scores in which the score 1.00 represents fully in, 0.83 mostly in, 0.67 more or less in, 0.50 neither in nor out, 0.33 more or less out, 0.17 mostly out, and 0.00 fully out. With an average growth rate of nearly 4.5% between 1990 and 2007, Chile was fully in the group of countries with strong economic performance. In contrast, three countries (Haiti, Nicaragua and Paraguay) experienced negative growth during this time period and were classified as fully out. The remaining countries fell in between these two extremes.[32] Economic development measures were derived from an existing fuzzy dataset on fifteen Latin American countries (Katz et al. 2005) and scores for the remaining four countries (Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Panama) were created based on additional data from Heston et al. (2009) and the World Bank (2009). Finally, data on poverty (i.e., the percentage of the population living below the poverty line) and inequality (i.e., gini coefficient) in eighteen Latin American countries (circa 2002) was collected from the United National Development Program (UNDP 2004a and 2004b).[33] The poverty and inequality scores were inverted such that the most impoverished (i.e., Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua) and the most unequal (Bolivia and Brazil) were classified as fully out (score of 0.00) of the set of low poverty and low inequality countries.[34] The raw scores for these four fuzzy-set concepts are summarized in columns three, four, five and six of Table 2.1.

32 Average growth rates (real GDP per capita) were computed from the Penn World Table (Heston et al. 2009).
33 Poverty and income inequality data for Haiti is based on information from the CIA World Fact Book.
34 Because inequality levels are relatively high in all of Latin America, all countries were given scores of 0.5 or lower in the set of countries exhibiting the absence of income inequality.

In evaluating ethno-linguistic fragmentation, I relied on an index developed by La Porta et al. (1998) which measures the probability that two individuals taken at random do not belong to the same ethno-linguistic group (particularly whether they speak the same language).[35] Most countries in Latin America exhibit relatively low levels of ethno-linguistic fragmentation. However a handful – Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru – exhibit significant heterogeneity. As with the poverty and inequality measures, the scores were inverted so that countries with high raw scores were classified as having low membership in the set of countries exhibiting low social fragmentation. The raw scores are summarized in column seven of Table 2.1.

In assessing political institutions and representation, I reviewed data on two aspects of Latin American party systems: the effective number of parties and the degree of institutionalization of the political party system.[36] The calculation of effective number of parties was based on the UNDP's (2004b: 69) average (1990-2002) *index of effective number of parties II* and is based on the percentage of seats in parliament. Scores ranged from a high of 8.12 (Brazil) to a low of 2.21 (Honduras). Countries with scores of five or greater were considered fully in (score of 1.0) the set of countries exhibiting multipartism whereas those with less than three effective parties were given scores of 0.5 or lower as summarized in column eight of Table 2.1. Estimates of party system institutionalization are based on Jones' (2007) party institutionalization index which is derived from the four-point theoretical conception elaborated by Mainwaring and Scully (2005). The countries that Jones described as "intermediate cases" (Argentina, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Brazil) were given fuzzy-set scores of 0.5; those with "well institutionalized party systems" were given scores of

35 One drawback of this type of measure is that fails to take into account racial characteristics. For a discussion of the drawbacks of traditional measures of ethnic fragmentation and a consideration of alternative measures, see Brinir and Van Cott 2007.
36 Comparable data was not available for Haiti.

0.67 or higher (in correspondence with Jones' detailed measures); and countries with "weakly institutionalized party systems" were given scores of 0.33 or lower as summarized in column nine of Table 2.1.

Finally in assessing the rule of law, I employed World Bank governance measures. The World Bank defines the rule of law as, "the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence" (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2006: 4). Countries' raw scores for the rule of law were averaged for the years 1996, 1998 and 2000 and then rank-ordered. The highest performer, Chile, is considered fully in the set of countries with a strong rule of law while the worst performer, Haiti, is considered fully out; the remaining countries fall in between these two extremes as summarized in the tenth and final column of Table 2.1.

In summary, fuzzy-set scores were developed for the outcome of democratic stability and eight explanatory factors: economic growth performance, level of development, poverty, inequality, social fragmentation, multipartism, party system institutionalization, and the rule of law. I also evaluated each of the eight causal conditions in its negated form, a total of sixteen causal conditions.

2.2: Results and Discussion

Testing the Hypotheses (Democratic Stability). Following Ragin, I first tested to see if any of the explanatory factors could be considered necessary causes of democratic stability. In particular, based on the subset principle, I evaluated whether or not instances of the outcome, democratic stability, constitute a subset of instances of the

various causal conditions.[37] Applying probabilistic criteria (thus allowing for some disconfirming cases) I set a benchmark proportion of 0.65 or "usually" necessary. As summarized in column two of Table 2.2, only two causal conditions exceeded the 0.65 benchmark and neither was statistically significant at any conventional level. My findings suggest, in other words, that there are no necessary conditions to achieving democratic stability in contemporary Latin America (not even in the probabilistic sense of being "usually" necessary). Countries in Latin America can achieve any degree of democratic stability independent of a number of critical socioeconomic and political-institutional conditions, a finding consistent with the notion that there are no "prerequisites" to achieving democratic stability.

>>> TABLE 2.2 HERE <<<

An analysis of sufficient conditions, however, tells a different story. Based again on the subset principle, I evaluated whether or not instances of the sixteen causal conditions (the eight causes in positive and negated form) constitute a subset of instances of the outcome.[38] Applying probabilistic criteria, I again set a benchmark proportion of 0.65 or "usually" sufficient. As summarized in column three of Table 2.2, nine of the sixteen causal conditions exceeded the 0.65 benchmark but only three were statistically significant at the 0.10 level. The three causal conditions that proved to be "usually" sufficient for achieving democratic stability include the absence of multipartism, the presence of an institutionalized party system, and the rule of law.

37 That is, I evaluated whether or not causal membership scores were consistently greater than or equal to outcome scores across all cases with non-zero scores on the outcome. Eighteen of nineteen cases (all but Haiti) had a non-zero score on the outcome of democratic stability.

38 That is, I evaluated whether or not outcome membership scores were consistently greater than or equal to causal membership scores across all cases with non-zero scores on the various causal conditions. The number of non-zero cases (N) varied between 10 and 19.

Thus, a country which exhibits a strong rule of law, the absence of severe multipartism *or* the presence of an institutionalized party system *usually* exhibits a certain degree of democratic stability. For example, as Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate, countries' values for membership in the set of stable democracies are usually equal to or greater than their values for the presence of an institutionalized party system and the rule of law.[39] My findings reveal, in other words, that there are multiple pathways to (usually) achieving democratic stability. Surprisingly, causal factors such as economic performance, level of development, and social fragmentation were found not to be sufficient causes of democratic stability in contemporary Latin America.[40]

39 Regarding the rule of law, the three exceptions are Chile, Ecuador and Peru. While Ecuador and Peru are clear deviations from the general pattern (they have high levels of political stability in spite of middling scores on the rule of law), an argument could be made for re-classifying Chile as either *fully* in the set of stable countries or *mostly* in the set of countries with a strong rule of law; reclassifying Chile in this manner would further strengthen the causal impact of the rule of law on democratic stability.

40 By force of magnitude, it was not feasible to test all 6,560 of the conceivable *jointly sufficient* expressions (the number of such expressions is given by the formula 3^k-1 where k is the number of causal conditions; in this case k=8 since none of the causal conditions were found to be necessary). Still, a close inspection of the data reveals that several combinations would certainly pass sufficiency tests, lending further support to the notion that there are multiple pathways to achieving democratic stability.

Figure 1: Party System Inst. as a Usually Sufficient Cause of Dem. Stability

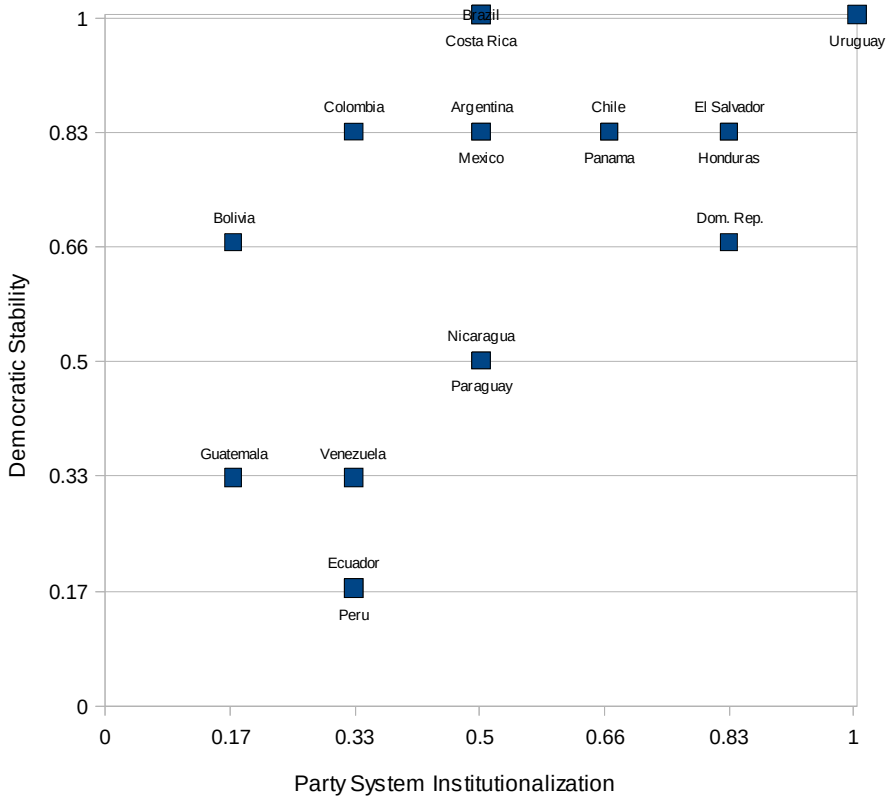
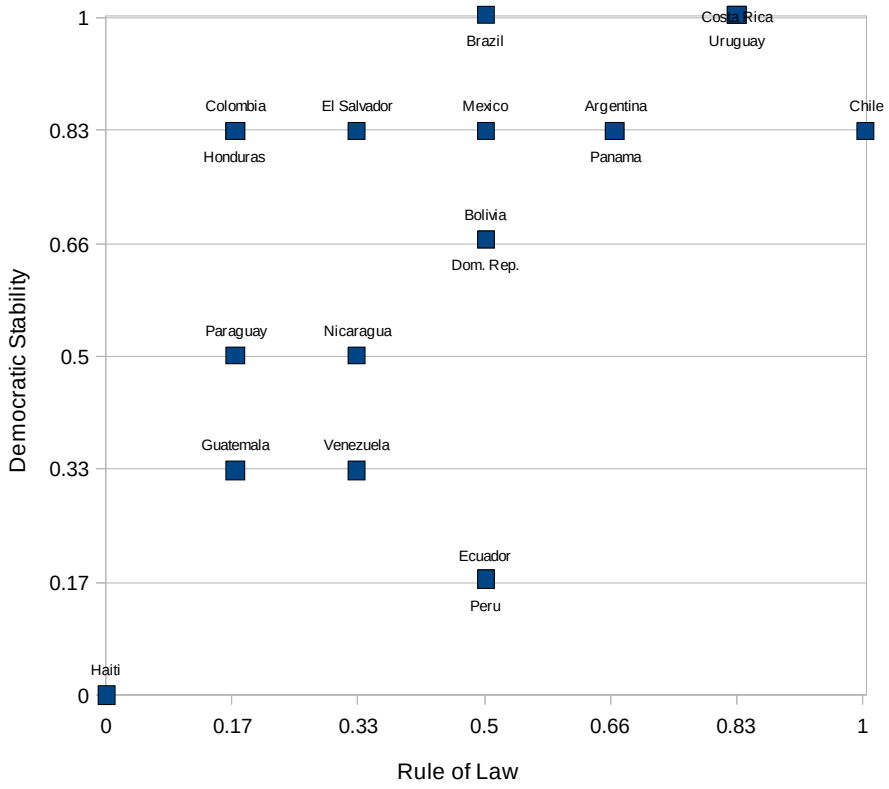


Figure 2: Rule of Law as a Usually Sufficient Cause of Democratic Stability



Considering that three causal conditions were shown to be individually sufficient causes of democratic stability (i.e., equifinality), can we conclude that each cause is equally relevant? Not necessarily. Ragin (2008: Chapter 3) outlines several techniques for gauging the consistency and empirical relevance (or coverage) of competing explanations. Among the causal factors found to be usually sufficient for achieving democratic stability, we find (not surprisingly) that all have high consistency levels: 93% with respect to the absence of multipartism, 95% with respect to the presence of an institutionalized party system, and 90% in the case of the rule of law.[41] However, when considering the set-theoretic coverage (or relative importance) of each causal factor, we find wider variations in the raw percentage of cases "accounted for" by each causal pathway: 51% in the case of the absence of multipartism, 74% in the case of the presence of an institutionalized party system, and 65% with respect to the rule of law.[42] In short, the presence of an institutionalized party system is the most consistent and empirically relevant cause of democratic stability. Still, in partitioning the coverage, it was found that most cases (85%) are covered by the conjunction of all three causal conditions.[43] Hence the *unique* coverage for each causal factor is relatively low: 7% for the presence of an institutionalized party system and 3% for both the absence of multipartism and the rule of law.

Testing the Hypotheses (Democratic Instability). In addition to examining democratic stability, I also inverted the outcome in order to examine the relationship of the causal variables to democratic *instability*. Following the same procedures, I first

41 Consistency gauges "how closely a perfect subset relation is approximated" (Ragin 2008: 44). This is accomplished by giving greater weight to cases with strong membership in the causal condition (see Ragin 2008: 45-54). Thus, although a greater raw proportion of cases are consistent in the case of the absence of multipartism (13 of 15) than in the case of an institutionalized party system (15 of 18), the latter relationship is more consistent when cases are weighted according to their theoretical relevance. Using this more nuanced measure, a low poverty rate (the socio-economic factor that came closest to achieving significance based on raw proportions) also demonstrated a high consistency level (92.1%).

42 On the concept and measurement of set-theoretic coverage, see Ragin 2008: 54-68.

43 In other words, the cases accounted for by one of the causal pathways are generally the same ones accounted for by the other ones.

tested to see if any of the explanatory factors could be considered necessary causes of democratic instability.[44] Applying probabilistic criteria, I again set a benchmark proportion of 0.65 or "usually" necessary. As summarized in column four of Table 2.2, many causal conditions exceeded the 0.65 benchmark but only one, multipartism, was statistically significant.[45] In short, my findings suggest that severe multipartism is a "usually" necessary condition of democratic instability.[46]

These findings of necessary causation merit elaboration. As Ragin explains, necessary conditions have "an enabling character" (2000: 274). Specifically, a necessary condition sets a ceiling on a particular case's degree of membership in the outcome (or in this case *usually* sets such a ceiling). In other words, countries in contemporary Latin America are (usually) no more characterized by extreme levels of political instability than they are characterized by multipartism. Thus, countries with relatively few effective political parties, such as Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Mexico exhibit relatively low levels of regime instability.[47] In contrast, countries with high rates of multipartism, such as Chile and Ecuador, exhibit varying degrees of instability (see Figure 3 below). My findings reveal, in other words, that relatively low levels of multipartism usually act as a bulwark against high levels of democratic instability.[48] Moreover, the impact of multipartism appears to be more salient than socioeconomic factors such as growth, development, inequality, and social

44 That is, I evaluated whether or not causal membership scores were consistently greater than or equal to outcome scores across all cases with non-zero scores on the outcome. Sixteen of nineteen cases (all but the most stable, Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay) had a non-zero score on the outcome of democratic instability.

45 The fact that (a lack of) the rule of law (narrowly) fails the significance test as a usually necessary condition of democratic instability may be an artifact of the classification of Chile as explained above.

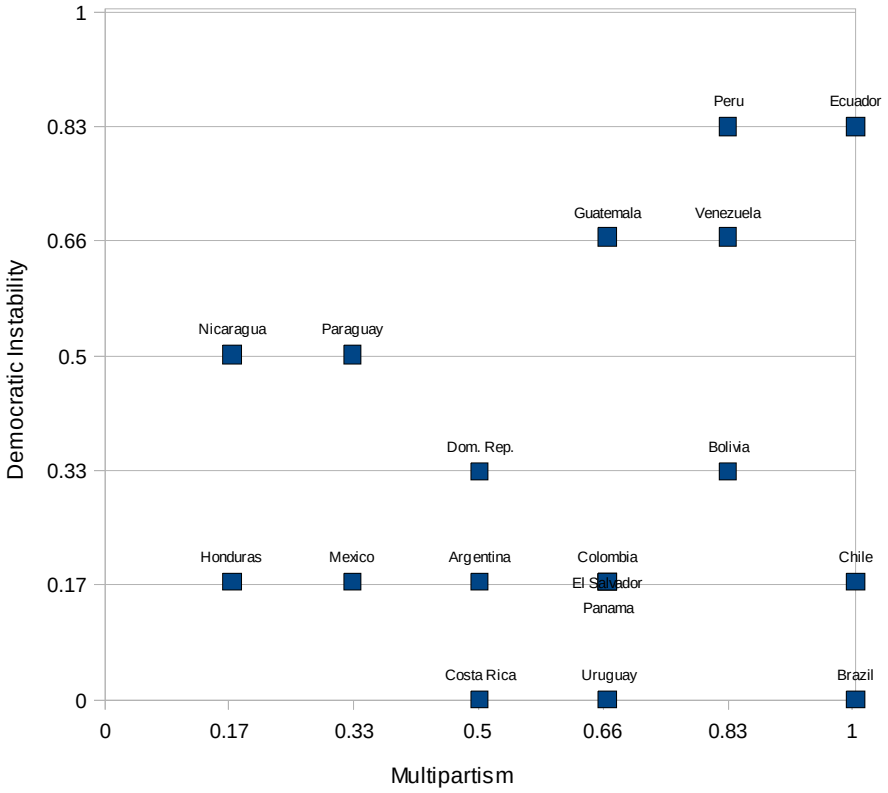
46 The high set-theoretic coverage (0.56) for multipartism furthermore suggests that is an empirically relevant (i.e., non-trivial) necessary condition (see Ragin 2008: 60-62).

47 This relationship is true for 87% of the relevant cases; the only two cases for which it breaks down are Nicaragua and Paraguay (these cases are discussed further in the conclusion).

48 However it should not be inferred that the absence of multipartism is a "prerequisite" of democratic stability. Rather, as Ragin emphasizes, necessary causes should be thought of as "enabling" outcomes when present. A high level of stability can still be achieved in the presence of multipartism as the case of Chile demonstrates.

fragmentation. Finally, as summarized in the fifth column of Table 2.2, an analysis of sufficient conditions of democratic instability revealed that no individual condition was usually sufficient; that is, none of the sixteen causal conditions constitute a subset of the outcome.[49]

Figure 3: Multipartism as a Usually Necessary Cause of Democratic Instability



49 Following Ragin's (2000: 254) recommendation that all necessary conditions, "should be made a component of every causal expression that the researcher examines subsequently in the analysis of sufficiency," I re-ran the sufficiency tests using Ragin's principles of incorporation; however, this did not alter my substantive findings. An analysis of the 2186 conceivable *jointly sufficient* causes was not feasible owing to the large number of causal factors (seven) that were found not to be necessary. Still, a careful inspection of the data suggests that few, if any, causal combinations would achieve significance. In particular, since three of the cases (Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay) have a zero score on democratic instability, it is unlikely that *any* combination of the remaining conditions would pass a significance test.

III. Conclusions and Policy Implications

My findings support the argument that there are no necessary conditions to achieving democratic stability in contemporary Latin America. Rather, there are multiple pathways (or sufficient conditions) that enable regime stability. In particular, the absence of extreme multipartism, the presence of an institutionalized party system and the rule of law are each *usually* sufficient for achieving democratic stability. Furthermore, multipartism is a usually necessary condition of democratic *instability*. In short, my study suggests that political-institutional conditions, specifically the nature of the political party system and the rule of law, have a significant impact in explaining regime stability in contemporary Latin America. In contrast, socio-economic factors such as economic performance and the level of economic development were not found to be sufficient conditions of democratic stability (nor was their absence a necessary condition of democratic instability). My qualitatively-based findings are thus consistent with recent quantitative research that has found that socio-economic tensions are mediated in significant ways by attitudes and political institutions (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005; Kapstein and Converse 2008).

One of the more provocative findings of my qualitative analysis is that multipartism is a usually necessary condition of democratic instability. In other words, relatively low levels of multipartism usually inhibit high levels of democratic instability. Domestic political reforms designed to reduce extreme levels of legislative multipartism therefore offer one practical avenue for potentially advancing democratic stability in contemporary Latin America. Still, the cases of Nicaragua and Paraguay (the only two cases in the region whose level of political instability exceed their level of multipartism) demonstrate that the stabilizing benefits of lower levels of multipartism must be weighed against the potential costs of reduced political competition. In

Nicaragua, for example, a reform of the election law in 2000 unfairly favored the country's two largest parties, reduced the scope of contestation and provided the immediate context for the country's recent political turmoil.[50] Similarly, like Mexico under the rule of the PRI, the Colorado Party of Paraguay has provided a measure of political stability but at the expense of genuine political competition.[51]

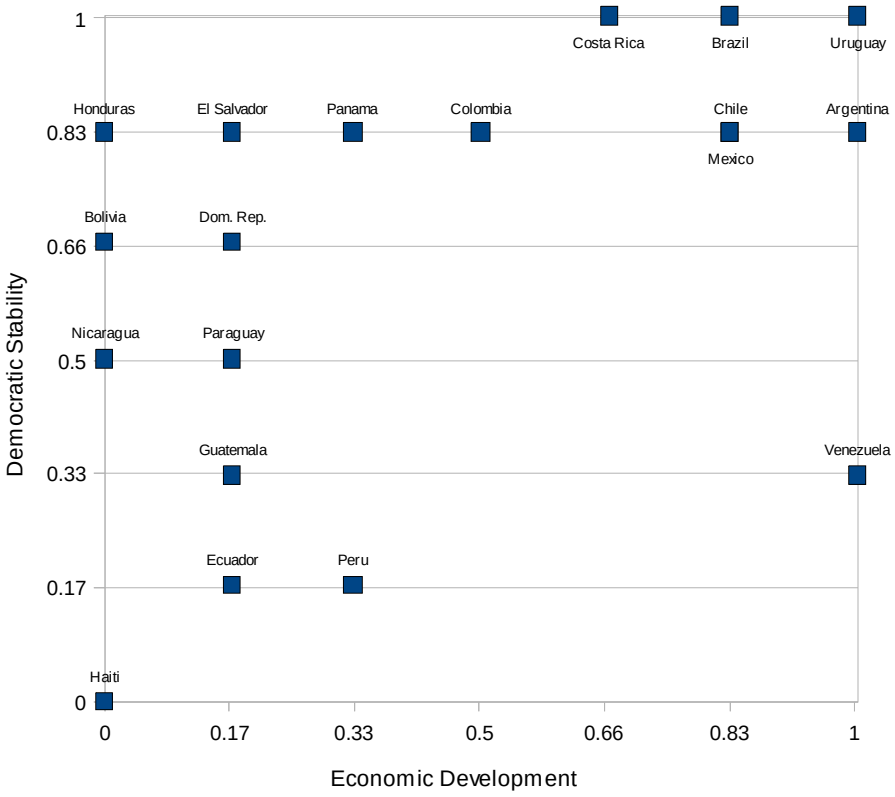
Of course, these are fairly broad generalizations about structural conditions in contemporary Latin America. Further comparative and case study analysis will be needed to explore the causal mechanisms and actors linking particular causes to the outcomes of democratic stability and instability.[52] Indeed, a critical emphasis of qualitative comparative analysis is the interplay between theory and evidence drawn from extensive case knowledge (Mahoney 2010: 135-36). For example, it would be worthwhile to analyze why some countries exhibiting high levels of multipartism exhibit political stability while others do not. Furthermore, a careful inspection of the data and results reveals a few cases of particular interest. For example, several causal conditions such as the level of development and especially the extent of poverty fail to gain significance only because of the particularly high levels of democratic instability in the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Venezuela, for example, is the region's clearest outlier when examining the relationship between level of development and democratic stability (see Figure 4 below). Ecuador and Peru, moreover, are outliers with respect to several causal variables (see Figures 1 and 2 above).

50 On the Nicaraguan electoral reforms and 2001 election, see Dye 2000, Dye and McConnell 2002 and Stahler-Sholk 2003; on the subsequent crisis, see Freedom House 2006.

51 The historical dominance of the Colorado Party in Paraguayan politics is well documented (see, e.g., Sondrol 2007). For a recent contribution on the demise of one-party rule in Paraguay, with explicit comparison to the Mexican case, see Abente-Brun 2009.

52 For a preliminary attempt to identify the actors associated with recent episodes of democratic crisis in Latin America, see, e.g., Boniface 2009, Hochstetler 2006, and McCoy 2006.

Figure 4: Wealth and Stability - The Peculiar Case of Venezuela



At the same time, it is also worth reemphasizing that regime stability is not necessarily an end in and of itself. For example, a democracy may exhibit stability as a regime but have low quality in terms of providing public accountability and political equality, among other virtues. Indeed, many of Latin America's most stable democracies, such as Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador and Mexico, have large deficits in the quality of democracy (see, e.g., Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002 and Foweraker and Krznaric 2002). Moreover, the low quality of democracy may even contribute to regime stability, as Weyland (2005) argues is the case in Brazil. A critical agenda for future research, then, involves investigating the relationships between the quality and stability of democracy in Latin America and elsewhere.

In conclusion, what types of measures should the international community take to aid in the consolidation of democracy in Latin America? My analysis suggests that the United States, the Organization of American States and other regional actors need to develop effective strategies to strengthen countries' legislative and judicial institutions. This will not be an easy task. With respect to strengthening political parties, for example, Thomas Carothers (2006: 219) cautions that the effects of international party assistance "will be modest at best and unlikely in and of themselves to lead to any fundamental changes in the troubled state of the particular institutions with which they work." Similarly, in a recent survey of U.S. democracy promotion strategies, Stephen Collins (2009) concludes that institutional aid to legislatures and judiciaries has been among the least effective strategies in promoting democracy, in spite of comprising the largest component of American democracy assistance. Indeed, it is difficult to see how international actors can ameliorate the severe challenges facing legislative and judicial systems in the region's more troubled areas like Guatemala, Haiti and the Andean region. Creative ideas are desperately needed for strengthening Latin America's political party systems and the rule of law.

Appendix 1: A Summary of Democratic Crises in Latin America, 1990-2007

Country	Year	President(s)	Summary of Crisis
Argentina	2001	Fernando de la Rúa; Adolfo Rodríguez Saá	A severe economic crisis leads to a political crisis marked by massive street protests and multiple presidential resignations.
Bolivia	2003-2005	Sánchez de Lozada; Carlos Mesa	Street protests trigger the resignation of President Sanchez de Lozada (2003) and his successor Carlos Mesa (2005).
Dominican Republic	1994-1995	Joaquín Balaguer	Lack of free and fair elections (1994).
Ecuador	1997	Abdalá Bucaram	Non-constitutional removal of the president by Congress.
Ecuador	2000	Jamil Mahuad	Short-lived military-civilian coup overthrows president.
Ecuador	2004-2007	Lucio Gutiérrez	Court-stacking by President Gutiérrez and his congressional allies (2004); non-constitutional removal of the president by Congress (2005); deterioration in civil liberties (2004-2007).
Guatemala	1993	Jorge Serrano	Failed autogolpe by President Serrano.
Guatemala	2002-2007	Alfonso Portillo; Óscar Berger	Deterioration in civil liberties including significant human rights abuses (2002-2007); elections in November 2003 were marred by vote-buying and political violence and, thus, neither free nor fair.
Haiti	1998	René Préval	Deterioration in civilian power. Furthermore, a political crisis (legislative-executive stalemate) stemming from the flawed elections of 1997 remained unresolved.
Haiti	1999-2007	René Préval; Jean-Bertrand Aristide; Boniface Alexandre; René Préval	Failure to hold regular, free and fair elections (1998-2005); widespread attacks on the political opposition; an armed rebellion forces President Aristide to flee from office (2004); deterioration in civil liberties and continued concerns over civilian control of security forces (2006-2007).

Nicaragua	2001-2004	Enrique Bolaños	The 2001 elections were less than completely free as reforms of the election law in 2000 and politicization of the electoral council favored the country's two largest parties.
Nicaragua	2005	Enrique Bolaños	A protracted inter-branch conflict between Congress and President Bolaños escalated after Congress passed new laws in late 2004 that significantly reduced the president's powers.
Paraguay	1993-1995	Carlos Wasmosy	Civil-military conflict between President Wasmosy and Army General Lino Oviedo (leading to a failed military rebellion against the president in 1996 which reestablished civilian authority).
Paraguay	1998-1999	Raúl Cubas	Renewed institutional conflict as President Cubas defies the Supreme Court (in relation to Oviedo's sentence for insubordination); the crisis deepens with the assassination of Vice-President Argaña (1999) which contributed to the eventual resignation of President Cubas.
Peru	1992-1999	Alberto Fujimori	Autogolpe (1992) and subsequent authoritarian backsliding by President Fujimori.
Peru	2000	Alberto Fujimori	Lack of free and fair elections (2000).
Venezuela	1999	Hugo Chávez	The National Constituent Assembly and *Congresillo* usurp constitutional powers.
Venezuela	2002-2007	Hugo Chávez	Short-lived coup overthrows president (2002); subsequent authoritarian backsliding by President Chávez including deterioration in the quality of elections, civil liberties and civilian power (2002-2007).

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Table 2.1: Fuzzy-Membership Values

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Country	**StableDem**	**HighGrowth**	**EconDev**	**LowPoverty**	**LowUnequal**	**LowSocFrag**	**LowMultiPrty**	**InstPartySys**	**RuleLaw**
Argentina	0.83	0.67	1	0.5	0.17	0.67	0.5	0.5	0.67
Bolivia	0.67	0.5	0	0.17	0	0	0.17	0.17	0.5
Brazil	1	0.33	0.83	0.67	0	1	0	0.5	0.5
Chile	0.83	1	0.83	0.83	0.33	1	0	0.67	1
Colombia	0.83	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.17	1	0.33	0.33	0.17
Costa Rica	1	0.67	0.67	0.83	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0.83
Dom. Rep.	0.67	0.83	0.17	0.5	0.33	1	0.5	0.83	0.5
Ecuador	0.17	0.33	0.17	0.5	0.33	0.5	0	0.33	0.5
El Salvador	0.83	0.5	0.17	0.5	0.33	1	0.33	0.83	0.33
Guatemala	0.33	0.33	0.17	0.17	0.33	0.17	0.33	0.17	0.17
Haiti	0	0	0	0	0.17	1	N/A	N/A	0
Honduras	0.83	0.17	0	0	0.17	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.17
Mexico	0.83	0.5	0.83	0.67	0.33	0.67	0.67	0.5	0.5
Nicaragua	0.5	0	0	0	0.17	0.83	0.83	0.5	0.33
Panama	0.83	0.83	0.33	0.67	0.33	0.67	0.33	0.67	0.67
Paraguay	0.5	0	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.33	0.67	0.5	0.17
Peru	0.17	0.67	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.17	0.33	0.5
Uruguay	1	0.67	1	0.83	0.5	1	0.33	1	0.83
Venezuela	0.33	0.33	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.17	0.33	0.33

Table 2.2: Analysis of Necessary and Sufficient Causes of Democratic Stability and Instability in Latin America, 1990-2007

Causal Factor	*Tests of Necessity* Proportion of Cases: Cause ≥ Stable Democracy	*Tests of Sufficiency* Proportion of Cases: Cause ≤ Stable Democracy	*Tests of Necessity* Proportion of Cases: Cause ≥ Unstable Democracy	*Tests of Sufficiency* Proportion of Cases: Cause ≤ Unstable Democracy
High Growth	0.39	0.75 (.29)	0.38	0.31
~High Growth	0.39	0.61	0.75 (.29)	0.39
Econ. Developed	0.39	0.80 (.17)	0.44	0.40
~Econ. Developed	0.50	0.44	0.81 (.13)	0.31
Low Poverty	0.22	0.81 (.13)	0.44	0.38
~Low Poverty	0.44	0.53	0.81 (.13)	0.26
Low Inequality	0.22	0.76 (.23)	0.50	0.65 (.62)
~Low Inequality	0.67 (.55)	0.58	0.75 (.29)	0.26
Low Soc. Fragmentation	0.67 (.55)	0.50	0.69 (.49)	0.28
~Low Soc. Fragmentation	0.28	0.50	0.44	0.40
Low Multipartism	0.28	0.87 (.06)* [0.51]	0.60	0.27
~Low Multipartism	0.39	0.67 (.55)	0.87 (.06)* [0.56]	0.28
Inst. Party System	0.50	0.83 (.08)* [0.74]	0.67 (.56)	0.39
~Inst. Party System	0.39	0.71 (.42)	0.80 (.17)	0.41
Rule of Law	0.22	0.83 (.08)* [0.65]	0.38	0.44
~Rule of Law	0.44	0.61	0.81 (.13)	0.22

Negated conditions are denoted with a tilde. For proportions of 0.65 or above, the level of statistical significance, based on a binomial probability test, is indicated in parentheses; an asterisk indicates statistical significance at the 0.10 level; for statically significant causal expressions, the raw coverage is indicated in brackets.