

Are there hybrid regimes? Or are they just an optical illusion?

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In recent years there has been growing interest and a related literature on hybrid regimes. Is there a good definition of such an institutional arrangement? Are there actually sets of stabilized, political institutions that can be labelled in this way? Is it possible that within the widespread process of democracy diffusion these are only 'transitional' regimes and the most suitable distinction is still the old one, suggested by Linz and traditionally accepted, between democracy and authoritarianism? This article addresses and responds to these questions by pinpointing the pertinent analytic dimensions, starting with definitions of 'regime', 'authoritarianism', and 'democracy'; by defining what a 'hybrid regime' is; by trying to answer the key question posed in the title; by disentangling the cases of proper hybrid regimes from the cases of transitional phases; and by proposing a typology of hybrid regimes. Some of the main findings and conclusions refer to the lack of institutions capable of performing their functions as well as the key elements for achieving possible changes towards democracy.

Keywords: regime; democracy; authoritarianism; hybrid regime; classification of regimes

Introduction

The diffusion of democratization and the enormous development of related research in different areas of the world (Morlino, 2008) has recently aroused great interest in the more specific theme of the spread of hybrid regimes. As a consequence, the view of Croissant and Merkel (2004: 1) that '...the conceptual issue of diminished sub-type of democracy...have begun the new predominant trend in democratic theory and democratization studies', comes as no surprise. Nor is the assertion by Epstein *et al.* (2006: 556, 564, 565) that 'partial democracies' 'account for an increasing portion of current regimes and the lion's share of regime transitions', adding, however, that there is little available information about 'what prevents full democracies from sliding back to partial democracies or autocracies, and what prevents partial democracies from sliding back to autocracy' and that 'the determinants of the behaviour of the partial democracies elude our understanding'. Nor, finally, is it surprising that a variety of labels have

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been coined for these regimes by different authors: 'façade democracies' and 'quasi-democracies' (Finer, 1970), *dictablandas* and *democraduras* (Rouquié, 1975; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986), 'exclusionary democracy' (Remmer, 1985–1986), 'semi-democracies' (Diamond *et al.*, 1989), 'electoral democracies' (Diamond, 1999 and Freedom House), 'illiberal democracies' (Zakaria, 1997), 'competitive authoritarianisms' (Levitsky and Way, 2002), 'semi-authoritarianisms' (Ottaway, 2003), 'defective democracies' (Merkel, 2004), 'partial democracies' (Epstein *et al.*, 2006), and 'mixed regimes' (Bunce and Wolchik, 2008), to mention just some of the expressions and some of the scholars who have investigated what is denoted here by the broader term of *hybrid regimes* (see, in particular, Karl, 1995; Diamond, 2002; Wigell, 2008).¹

In trying to gain a better understanding of the reasons for such attention it is worth bearing in mind that complex phenomena such as democratization are never linear, and cases of a return to more ambiguous situations have by no means been exceptional in recent years. Moreover, cases of democracies, even if minimal, going 'all' the way back to stable authoritarian regimes have been much less frequent:² it is more difficult, though not impossible, to recreate conditions of stable coercion once the majority of a given society has been involved and become politically active in the course of transition. If nothing else, as Dahl (1971) noted many years ago, greater coercive resources would be required. Furthermore, in periods of democratization, even if only as a result of an imitation effect, authoritarian crises and the resulting initial phases of change should be more frequent. Consequently, there are several reasons for the greater frequency of regimes characterized by uncertainty and transition. Moreover, if the ultimate goal is to examine and explain how regimes move towards democracy, it is fully justified, indeed opportune, to focus on those phases of uncertainty and change. But here we have a relevant aspect that – this time surprisingly – the literature has failed to address and solve: when considering those phases of uncertainty and ambiguity, are we dealing with an institutional arrangement with some, perhaps minimal, degree of stabilization, namely a regime in a proper sense, or are we actually analysing transitional phases from some kind of authoritarianism (or traditional regime) to democracy, or vice versa?

In addressing this key issue, this article will pinpoint the pertinent analytic dimensions, starting with definitions of the terms 'regime', 'authoritarianism', and 'democracy'; discuss and clarify the reasons for the proposed definition of hybrid regime; try to answer the key question posed in the title, which, as will become clear, is closely bound up with the prospects for change in the nations that have such ambiguous forms of political organization and, more in general, with the spread of democratization; propose a typology of hybrid regimes; and, in the last section, will reach a number of salient conclusions.

¹ See also Collier and Levitsky (1997: 440), where there is an exhaustive list of all 'diminished subtypes', that is hybrid regimes, that are present in the literature on the topic.

² See below for more on the meaning of the terms as used here.

A widespread phenomenon?

The simplest and most immediate way of understanding the nature of the phenomenon under scrutiny is to refer to the principal sets of macro-political data that exist in literature. Data has been gathered by international bodies like the World Bank, the OECD and the United Nations; by private foundations, such as the IDEA and Bertelsman Stiftung; by individual scholars or research groups, like Polity IV, originally conceived by Ted Gurr, or the project on human rights protection undertaken by Todd Landman (2005), who formulated indicators of democracy and good governance, and also produced an effective survey (Landman, 2003) of various initiatives in this field; and even by prominent magazines like the *Economist*, whose Intelligence Unit has drawn up a well-designed index of democracy. But it is not necessary to survey these here. Despite all the limitations and problems, which have been widely discussed,³ for the purposes of this article, the data provided by Freedom House have the insuperable advantage of enabling a longitudinal analysis. In fact, they have been collected since the beginning of the 1970s and regularly updated on an annual basis. These data can, therefore, be used to gain a better grasp of the phenomenon.⁴

In 2008, the Freedom House data feature 60 out of 193 formally independent countries (in 2007 there were 58), which have 30% of the world's population and are political arrangements that can be defined as partially free, the concrete term closest to the notion of hybrid regimes.⁵ 'Partially free' regimes have an overall rating ranging from three to five.⁶ They are present in every continent: five in Europe (four of which are in the Balkans), 24 in Africa, 18 in Asia (six are in the Middle East), nine in the Americas (five in South America and four in Central America), and four in Oceania. There are also 43 non-free regimes, which might be defined as stable authoritarianisms and correspond to 23% of the population,⁷ and 90 democracies, amounting to 47% of the world's population. Overall, then, the partially free regimes exceed the non-free ones both in number and in terms of

³ The main criticisms regarded the right-wing liberal bias of the Institute itself and consequently the compiling of unfair ratings for the assessed countries. Although basically appropriate at the beginning, these criticisms have been overcome and neutralized by the subsequent developments characterized by more reliable empirical results. This relevant conclusion is strongly supported by the high number of quotations and attention that Freedom House data have received in recent years. Even a quick look on the Internet will vividly show all this.

⁴ Even some of the most interesting data, such as those of the *Index of failed states* (see http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3865) or of *Polity IV* (see <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>) were discarded in favour of Freedom House data for the reasons mentioned in the text.

⁵ See below for a necessary and more specific definition.

⁶ It should be remembered that Freedom House adopts a reverse points system: a score of one corresponds to the greatest degree of democracy in terms of political rights and civil liberties, while seven corresponds to the most repressive forms of authoritarianism as regards rights and freedom. The electoral democracies need to be distinguished amongst these. For more on the definition thereof, see below.

⁷ As is known, about half of this population lives in a single nation, China.

percentage of population. One further observation is that, with a few exceptions like Turkey,⁸ most of the nations that fall within the ‘partially free’ category are medium-small or small. Finally, from a European point of view, despite the intense efforts of the European Union, other international organizations, and specific European governments, almost none of the Balkan nations have embraced democracy: apart from Slovenia and Croatia; Serbia is on the borderline while Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia (which has even applied to join the European Union), and Montenegro are partially free regimes. The other European nation in the same situation is Moldova, which borders onto Romania and Ukraine. However, before proceeding any further with the empirical analysis, it is necessary to define some terms, which will hopefully help to give greater precision to the current rather fuzzy terminology.

Definition and analytic dimensions

Before proceeding with our analysis, it is worth stating that we prefer the term ‘hybrid regime’ to all the others present in the literature (see above) as this is the broadest notion, whereas most of the others (e.g. ‘exclusionary democracy’, ‘partial democracies’, ‘electoral democracies’, ‘illiberal democracies’, ‘competitive authoritarianisms’, ‘defective democracies’, and ‘semi-authoritarianisms’) seem to refer to more specific models, mainly diminished forms of democracy. And it seems appropriate to come up with a precise definition of the broadest notion before going ahead and mapping out the diversified realities inside it.⁹ In short, we are looking here for the ‘*genus*’ that comes before the ‘*species*’.

Moreover, an adequate conceptualization of the ‘hybrid regime’ must start with a definition of both the noun and the adjective ‘trapped’ between a non-democratic (above all, traditional, authoritarian, and post-totalitarian) and a democratic set-up. As regards the term ‘regime’, consideration will be given here to ‘the set of government institutions and of norms that are either formalized or are informally recognized as existing in a given territory and with respect to a given population’.¹⁰ Emphasis will be placed on the institutions, even if they are not formal, that exist in

⁸ The inclusion of Turkey in this group of countries has already prompted debate, and other analysts, especially Turkish scholars, place it amongst the minimal democracies, stressing the great and now long-standing fairness of the electoral procedure, for which Freedom House does not award the maximum rating.

⁹ Other terms, such as ‘mixed regimes’, are also very broad, but ultimately ‘hybrid’ was preferred to ‘mixed’ as the former term gives more precisely the gist of the phenomenon where new and old aspects change each other, that is, it is not just a problem of ‘mixing’ (see below for the definition and classification).

¹⁰ A more complex definition is offered by O’Donnell (2004: 15), who suggests considering the patterns, explicit or otherwise, that determine the channels of access to the main government positions, the characteristics of the actors who are admitted or excluded from such access, and the resources or strategies that they can use to gain access. An empirically simpler line is adopted here, which is based on the old definition by Easton (1965). But see also Fishman (1990).

a given moment in a given nation. While they no longer configure some form of non-democracy and do not yet configure a complete democracy, such institutions still bear traces of the previous political reality. In addition, in order to have something that may be labelled as a regime we need an at least minimal stabilization. Fishman (1990: 428) recalls that regimes 'are more permanent forms of political organization'.¹¹ Otherwise, we 'pick up fireflies for lanterns' by confusing a temporary changing situation with a more stabilized one, whatever the reasons might be. Obviously, the consequences of making such a distinction are very significant. In any case, we will totally misunderstand the entire situation if we fail to assess if there is or has been stabilization or not. This will be a key element of our definition, one that differentiates it from those existing in the literature, even the most prominent ones (see above).

The second point that can be stressed is that a regime does not fulfil the minimum requirements of a democracy, in other words it does not meet all the more immediately controllable and empirically essential conditions that make it possible to establish a *threshold* below which a regime cannot be considered democratic. In this perspective for a minimal definition of democracy, we need at the same time: (a) universal suffrage, both male and female, (b) free, competitive, recurrent, and fair elections, (c) more than one party, and (d) different and alternative media sources. To better understand this definition, it is worth stressing that a regime of this kind must provide real guarantees of civil and political rights that enable the actual implementation of those four aspects. That is, such rights are assumed to exist if there is authentic universal suffrage, the supreme expression of political rights, that is the whole adult *demos* has the right to vote; if there are free, fair, and recurrent elections as an expression of the effective existence of freedom of speech and thought as well; if there is more than one effectively competing party, demonstrating the existence of genuine and practiced rights of assembly and association; and if there are different media sources belonging to different proprietors, proof of the existence of the liberties of expression and thought. One important aspect of this definition is that in the absence of just one of the requirements, or if at some point one of them is no longer met, there is no longer a democratic regime but some other political and institutional set-up, possibly an intermediate one marked by varying degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Finally, it is worth stressing that this minimal definition focuses on the institutions that characterize democracy: elections, competing parties (at least potentially so), and media pluralism. It can be added that it is also important, according to Schmitter and Karl (1993: 45, 46), that these institutions and rights should not be subject to, or conditioned by, 'non-elected actors' or exponents of other external regimes. The former refers to the armed forces, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, a hegemonic party, or even a monarch with pretensions to influencing decision-making

¹¹ He also adds that a state is a 'more permanent structure of domination and coordination' than a regime (Fishman 1990: 428). But on this see below.

processes, or at any rate the overall functioning of a democracy. In the second case, a regime might be conditioned by an external power that deprives the democracy in question of its independence and sovereignty by pursuing non-democratic policies.

To avoid terminological confusion it should be pointed out that the 'electoral democracies' defined by Diamond (1999: 10), solely with regard to 'constitutional systems in which parliament and executive are the result of regular, competitive, multi-party elections with universal suffrage', are not minimal liberal democracies, in which there is no additional room for 'reserved domains' of actors who are not electorally responsible, directly or indirectly; there is inter-institutional accountability, that is the responsibility of one organ towards another as laid down by the constitution; and finally, there are effectively applied norms to sustain and preserve pluralism and individual and group freedoms (Diamond, 1999: 10, 11).¹² The term 'electoral democracies' is also used by Freedom House with a similar meaning: an electoral democracy is understood as a multi-party, competitive system with universal suffrage, fair and competitive elections with the guarantee of a secret ballot and voter safety, access to the media on the part of the principal parties, and open electoral campaigns. In the application of the term by Freedom House, all democracies are 'electoral democracies' but not all are liberal. Therefore, even those regimes that do not have a maximum score in the indicators for elections continue to be considered electoral democracies. More specifically, a score equal to or above seven, out of a maximum of 12, is sufficient for partially free nations to be classified as electoral democracies.¹³ Thus, in both uses of the term, an 'electoral democracy' could only be a specific model of a hybrid regime, but not a minimal democracy.

As regards the definition of non-democratic regimes, reference must be made at least to traditional and authoritarian regimes. The former are 'based on the personal power of the sovereign, who binds his underlings in a relationship of fear and reward; they are typically *legibus soluti* regimes, where the sovereign's arbitrary decisions are not limited by norms and do not need to be justified ideologically. Power is thus used in particularistic forms and for essentially private ends. In these regimes, the armed forces and police play a central role, while there is an evident lack of any form of developed ideology and any structure of mass mobilization, as a single party usually is. Basically, then, the political set-up is dominated by traditional elites and institutions' (Morlino, 2003: 80).

As for the authoritarian regimes, the definition advanced by Linz (1964: 255) is still the most useful one: a 'political system with limited, non-responsible political pluralism; without an elaborated and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities; without either extensive or intense political mobilization, except at

¹² The other specific components of liberal democracies are delineated by Diamond (1999: 11, 12).

¹³ The three indicators pertaining to the electoral process are: (i) head of government and principal posts elected with free and fair elections; (ii) parliaments elected with free and fair elections; and (iii) electoral laws and other significant norms, applied correctly (see the site of Freedom House).

some points in their development, and in which a leader, or, occasionally, a small group, exercises power from within formally ill-defined, but actually quite predictable, limits'. However, with respect to such a definition, which identifies five significant dimensions – limited pluralism, distinctive values,¹⁴ low political mobilization, a small leading group, ill-defined, but predictable limits to citizens' rights – for our purpose we need to stress the constraints imposed on political pluralism within a society that has no recognized autonomy or independence as well as no effective political participation of the people, with the consequent exercise of various forms of state suppression. A further, neglected, but nonetheless important dimension should also be added – the *institutions* that characterize authoritarian regimes, which are invariably of marked importance in many transitional cases. Once created and having become stabilized over a certain number of years, institutions often leave a significant legacy for a new regime, even when it has become firmly democratic.

In addition to Morlino (2003), other authors stress this aspect. For example, it is worth recalling the whole debate on 'electoral authoritarianisms' (Schedler, 2006). In fact, with this term Schedler (2006: 5) refers to specific models of authoritarianism – not to a hybrid regime – specifically characterized by electoral institutions and practices; in this instance, hybrid regimes are the result of changes that begin within these types of authoritarianism. Moreover, the attention given to authoritarian institutions is relevant for other important reasons. Firstly, the existence of efficient repressive apparatuses capable of implementing the above-mentioned demobilization policies, for instance security services, which may be autonomous or part of the military structure. Secondly, the partial weakness or the absence of mobilization structures, such as the single party or unions which may be vertical ones admitting both workers and employers, or other similar state institutions, that is, structures capable of simultaneously generating and controlling participation. There could be distinct forms of parliamentary assembly, possibly based on the functional and corporative representation of interests (see below); distinctive electoral systems, military juntas, *ad hoc* constitutional organs, or other specific organs different from those that existed in the previous regime.¹⁵ Obviously, there is also another implicit aspect that it is worth stressing: the absence of real guarantees regarding the various political and civil rights.

Limited, non-responsible pluralism, which may range from monism to a certain number of important and active actors in the regime, is a key aspect to recall.

¹⁴ These values include notions like homeland, nation, order, hierarchy, authority and such like, where both traditional and modernizing positions can, and sometimes have, found common ground. In any case, the regime is not supported by any complex, articulated ideological elaboration. In other regimes, like the traditional ones, the only effective justification of the regime is personal in nature, that is, to serve a certain leader, who may, in the case of a monarch who has acceded to power on a hereditary basis, be backed by tradition.

¹⁵ For another more recent analysis of non-democratic regimes, especially authoritarian ones, see Brooker (2000).

For every non-democratic regime, then, it is important above all to pinpoint the significant actors, for whom a distinction can be made between institutional actors and politically active social actors. Examples of the former are the army, the bureaucratic system or a part thereof and, where applicable, a single party; the latter include the Church, industrial or financial groups, landowners, and in some cases even unions or transnational economic structures with major interests in the nation concerned. Such actors are not politically responsible according to the typical mechanism of liberal democracies, that is, through free, competitive, and fair elections. If there is 'responsibility', it is exercised at the level of 'invisible politics' in the real relations between, for instance, military leaders and economic groups or landowners. Furthermore, elections or the other forms of electoral participation that may exist, for instance direct consultations through plebiscites, have no democratic significance and, above all, are not the expression of rights, freedom, and the genuine competition to be found in democratic regimes. They have a mainly symbolic, legitimating significance, an expression of consensus and support for the regime on the part of a controlled, non-autonomous civil society.

Having proposed definitions for minimal democracy, traditional regime, and authoritarianism, it is now possible to start delineating *hybrid regimes*. They are more than just 'mixed regimes', which, as defined by Bunce and Wolchik (2008: 6), 'fall in the sprawling middle of a political continuum anchored by democracy on one end...and dictatorship on the other end'. As suggested by Karl (1995: 80) in relation to some Latin American countries, they may be characterized by 'uneven acquisition of procedural requisites of democracy', without a 'civilian control over the military', with sectors of the population that 'remain politically and economically disenfranchised', and with a 'weak judiciary'. But again this definition only refers to authoritarianisms that partially lose some of their key characteristics, retain some authoritarian or traditional features and at the same time acquire some of the characteristic institutions and procedures of democracy, but not others. A hybrid regime, on the other hand, may also have a set of institutions where, going down the inverse path, some key elements of democracy have been lost and authoritarian characteristics acquired. Thus, it has to be adequately completed, for example, by including some of the aspects mentioned by Levitsky and Way (2002: 52–58) in their analysis of a specific model of hybrid regime (competitive authoritarianism), such as the existence of 'incumbents (who) routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition adequate media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, and in some case manipulate electoral results'.

This discussion, however, prompts reflection about two elements. First, a hybrid regime is always a set of ambiguous institutions that maintain aspects of the past. In other words, and this is the second point, it is a 'corruption' of the preceding regime, lacking as it does one or more essential characteristics of that regime but also failing to acquire other characteristics that would make it fully democratic or authoritarian (see definitions above). Consequently, to define hybrid regimes more precisely it seems appropriate to take a different line from the one suggested in the

literature and to explicitly include the past of such regimes in the definition itself. The term 'hybrid' can thus be applied to all those regimes preceded by a period of authoritarian or traditional rule, followed by the beginnings of greater tolerance, liberalization, and a partial relaxation of the restrictions on pluralism; or, all those regimes which, following a period of minimal democracy in the sense indicated above, are subject to the intervention of non-elected bodies – the military, above all – that place restrictions on competitive pluralism without, however, creating a more or less stable authoritarian regime. There are, then, three possible hypotheses behind a definition taking account of the context of origin, which can be better explicated as follows: the regime arises out of one of the different types of authoritarianism that have existed in recent decades, or even earlier; the regime arises out of a traditional regime, a monarchy or sultanism; or the regime arises out of the crisis of a previous democracy. To these must be added a fourth, which is an important specification of the second: the regime is the result of decolonialization that has never been followed by either authoritarian or democratic stabilization.

If, to gain a closer empirical understanding of a hybrid regime, one develops at least the first and second of these hypotheses a little further – though the majority of cases in recent decades would seem to fall into the first category – it can be seen that alongside the old actors of the previous authoritarian or traditional regime, a number of opposition groups have clearly taken root, thanks also to some partial, relative respect of civil rights. These groups are allowed to participate in the political process, but have little substantial possibility of governing. There are, then, a number of parties, of which one may remain hegemonic-dominant in semi-competitive elections; at the same time there is already some form of real competition amongst the candidates of that party. The other parties are fairly unorganized, of recent creation or re-creation, and have only a small following. There is some degree of real participation, but it is minimal and usually limited to the election period. Often, a powerfully distorting electoral system allows the hegemonic-dominant party to maintain an enormous advantage in the distribution of seats; in many cases the party in question is a bureaucratic structure rife with patronage favours and intent on surviving the on-going transformation. This means that there is no longer any justification for the regime, not even merely on the basis of all-encompassing and ambiguous values. Other forms of participation during the authoritarian period, if there have ever been any, are just a memory of the past. Evident forms of police repression are also absent, and so the role of the relative apparatuses is not prominent, while the position of the armed forces is even more low-key. Overall, there is little institutionalization and, above all, organization of the 'State', if not a full-blown process of deinstitutionalization. The armed forces may, however, maintain an evident political role, though it is still less explicit and direct.¹⁶

¹⁶ Despite her empirical focus on Central America the analysis by Karl (1995) is also useful to better understand the conditions and perspectives of hybrid regimes in other areas.

Moreover, hybrid regimes often stem from the attempt, at least temporarily successful, by moderate governmental actors in the previous authoritarian or traditional regime to resist internal or external pressures on the dominant regime, to continue to maintain order and the previous distributive set-up, and to partially satisfy – or at least appear to do so – the demand for greater democratization on the part of other actors, the participation of whom is also contained within limits. Consequently, there are potentially as many different variants of transitional regimes as there are types of authoritarian and traditional models. Many cases could be fitted into this model, which says a good deal about their potential significance.¹⁷

In disentangling empirical realities that fit the previously formulated definition of the hybrid regime from different transitional situations, we should add that there has been some sort of stabilization or duration, at least – we submit – for a decade, of those ambiguous uncertain institutional set-ups. Consequently, to avoid a misleading analysis of democratization processes we can define a hybrid regime as *a set of institutions that have been persistent, be they stable or unstable, for about a decade, have been preceded by an authoritarianism, a traditional regime (possibly with colonial characteristics), or even a minimal democracy and are characterized by the break-up of limited pluralism and forms of independent, autonomous participation, but the absence of at least one of the four aspects of a minimal democracy.*

As a way of stressing the differences with the existing literature (see above) and of making sense of the definition above, it is useful to emphasize the reasons that justify it: to better understand what hybrid regimes are, it is necessary to disentangle cases of transitional phases from hybrid regimes *stricto sensu*, where the extent of achieved stabilization has to be taken into account. At the same time, it is important to grasp the ambiguities and the fuzziness of regimes in which features of both democracy and authoritarianism coexist, and in this vein, to consider the institutional past that is so important to them. But if this is the case, two key questions need to be addressed: Are there actually cases of hybrid regimes, or does reality just throw up transitional cases, as might sound more reasonable? If there actually are hybrid regimes and transitional phases as well, what characterizes one and the other? In other words, is it possible to elaborate a

¹⁷ As mentioned above, many years ago Finer (1970: 441–531) seemed to have detected the existence of hybrid regimes when he analysed ‘façade democracies’ and ‘quasi-democracies’. Looking more closely at these two models, however, it is clear that the former can be tied in with the category of traditional regimes, while the latter falls within the broader authoritarian *genus*. In fact, typical examples of ‘quasi-democracies’ are considered to be Mexico, obviously prior to 1976, and certain African nations with a one-party system. A third notion, that of the ‘pseudo-democracy’, refers not to a hybrid regime, but to instances of authoritarian regimes with certain exterior forms of the democratic regime, such as constitutions claiming to guarantee rights and free elections but which do not reflect an even partially democratic state of affairs. There is, then, no genuine respect for civil and political rights, and consequently no form of political competition either.

good typology of hybrid regimes and single out the recurrent characteristics of transitional phases? The remaining sections of the article will be devoted to answering these questions.

Empirical cases of hybrid regimes, or sheer fantasy?

A key element that runs against the effective existence of hybrid regime, that is, institutional set-ups that are neither democracy, nor authoritarianism, nor traditionalism is the expected low probability of duration. In fact, once some degree of freedom and competition exists and is implemented in various ways, it seems inevitable that the process will continue, even though the direction it will actually take is unknown. It might lead to the establishment of a democracy, but it could also move backwards, with the restoration of the previous authoritarian or other type of regime, or the establishment of a different authoritarian or non-democratic regime. Is this constitutive short duration or high instability confirmed by the Freedom House data?

If we assume that we are facing a transitional period when the ‘partially free’ assessment is assigned for more than two years but less than a decade and there is a regime in the proper sense when the same/similar political set-up has been lasted for 10 years or more, and we consider all countries that were ‘partially free’ between 1989 and 2007, we can immediately detect and differentiate the 46 cases of transition from the hybrid regimes. Among the transitional cases (see Table 1),

Table 1. Transitional cases: towards democracy, authoritarianism, or uncertainty (1989–2007)

Transitions to democracy	Transition to authoritarianism	Uncertainty in a democratic context	Uncertainty in an authoritarian context
Brazil (9)	Afghanistan (3)	Bolivia (5)	Burundi (5)
Croatia (9)	Algeria (3)	Ecuador (8)	Congo (Brazzaville) (6 + 6)
Dominican Republic (5)	Azerbaijan (6)	East Timor (9)	Cote d’Ivoire (4 + 3)
El Salvador (8)	Bahrain (6)	Honduras (9)	Djibouti (9)
Ghana (8)	Belarus (6)	Malawi (9)	Gambia (7)
Guyana (4)	Bhutan (3)	Papua New Guinea (5 + 5)	Haiti (6 + 2)
India (7)	Egypt (4)	Philippines (6 + 3)	Kenya (6)
Indonesia (7)	Eritrea (4)	Solomon Islands (8)	Kyrgyzstan (9 + 3)
Romania (5)	Kazakhstan (3)	Venezuela (4 + 9)	Lebanon (4 + 3)
South Africa (5)	Swaziland (4)		Liberia (5 + 4)
Taiwan (7)	Thailand (7 + 1)		Mauritania (3)
	Togo (3)		Niger (5 + 9)
	Tunisia (4)		Yemen (4 + 5)

Note: The number in parenthesis refers to the years the country was assessed as partially free. When there is a plus (+), it means an interruption in the continuity of assessment.

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World. Country Ratings 1972–2007*, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Table 2. Hybrid regimes (1989–2007)

More persisting hybrid regimes	Less persisting hybrid regimes	Hybrid regime + transition to democracy	Hybrid regime + transition to authoritarianism
Albania (17)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (12)	Antigua & Barbuda (13)	Pakistan (10)
Armenia (17)	Central African Republic (12 + 3)	Lesotho (11)	Russia (13)
Bangladesh (15)	Ethiopia (12)	Mexico (11)	Zimbabwe (12)
Burkina Faso (16)	Mozambique (14)	Peru (12)	
Colombia (19)	Nepal (12 + 2)	Senegal (13)	
Comoros (18)	Nigeria (4 + 10)	Suriname (11)	
Fiji (18)	Sierra Leone (10)	Ukraine (14)	
Gabon (18)	Tanzania (13)		
Georgia (16)	Uganda (14)		
Guatemala (19)			
Guinea-Bissau (17)			
Jordan (19)			
Kuwait (16)			
Macedonia (16)			
Madagascar (19)			
Malaysia (19)			
Moldova (17)			
Morocco (19)			
Nicaragua (19)			
Paraguay (19)			
Seychelles (16)			
Singapore (19)			
Sri Lanka (19)			
Tonga (19)			
Turkey (19)			
Zambia (2 + 15)			

Note: See Table 1.

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World. Country Ratings 1972–2007*, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

we can find four different situations. There are countries that after years of uncertainty became democracies, such as Brazil, Croatia, and El Salvador, which had long transitional periods, and countries with shorter transitions, such as Guyana, Romania, and South Africa; countries where transition led to authoritarian regimes, such as Algeria, Belarus, Thailand; countries where there is great uncertainty because a decade has not yet elapsed, but which have a democratic legacy, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela; and countries where there was also non-stabilization, but which have an authoritarian past.

Table 2 surprisingly confirms that not only can hybrid regimes stabilize as such, but they are half (45) of the entire group (91). Here, if we distinguish between more stabilized hybrid regimes, that is regimes that have been ‘partially free’ for 15 years or more, we have 26 cases where at least there has been a continual

stand-off between veto players and democratic elites resulting in a stalemate, where all the main actors, especially the elites, might even find satisfactory solutions for their concerns, perhaps not ideal but nonetheless viewed pragmatically as the best ones currently available; or because a dominant power or even a coalition keeps the regime in an intermediate limbo; or, finally, due to the lack of any central, governing institution. Moreover, we can immediately distinguish a second category of nine slightly less stabilized countries, at least in terms of duration until 2007. But we also have two smaller categories of hybrid regimes on the grounds of our assumptions: regimes that after a long period became democracies, such as Mexico or Peru, and regimes that became authoritarianisms, like Russia or Zimbabwe.

Let us, however, consider the possibility that our assumptions (less than 10 years is to be considered a transitional phase; a decade or more to be regarded as a hybrid regime and more than 15 years as a more stabilized hybrid), as reasonable or practical as they might sound, are not accepted: Is one year's difference (from nine to ten) enough to call the first one a case of transition and the second one a hybrid regime?¹⁸ However, even if we do not make those assumptions, two basic findings have to be accepted and are worth singling out and emphasizing strongly: hybrid regimes do exist, as the first column of Table 2 shows beyond any doubt; the cases of hybrid regimes (according to our definition) that turn into democracies or authoritarianisms are very few *vis-à-vis* the other ones: 10 out of 45. In other words, at least the traditional, recurrent hypothesis that once some seed of competition is installed then it is difficult to stop it and some sort of democratic arrangement will come out is heavily undermined. On the contrary, uncertainty and constraints on competition (and rights) can last for decades: in the first column of Table 2 there 14 cases out of 26 where the hybrid regime has been in place for almost two decades. At this point, to try to understand the reasons that might explain all this, we need to look more closely at those regimes. The first important step in this direction is to develop a classification of the 35 regimes present in the first two columns of Table 2.

What kind of classification?

On the basis of the previous definition, then, a crucial aspect of hybrid regimes is the break-up of the limited pluralism or the introduction of limitations on an open, competitive pluralism where previously there had been at least a minimal democracy; or the prolonging of a situation of uncertainty when the country in question gains independence but does not have, or is unable to establish, its own autonomous institutions (authoritarian or democratic), and cannot revert to

¹⁸ On the whole, we still think that those hypotheses are reasonable and practical for our purposes. Above all, they are obligatory when trying to make better sense of the set of cases with which we are dealing.

traditional institutions, which have either disappeared or have been completely delegitimated. In all these hypotheses, there may be (or there may emerge) veto players, that is, individual or collective actors who are influential or decisive in maintaining the regime in its characteristic state of ambiguity and uncertainty. These actors may be: an external, foreign power that interferes in the politics of the nation, a monarch or authoritarian ruler who has come to power with more or less violent means, the armed forces, a hegemonic party run by a small group or a single leader, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, other powerful groups, or a mixture of such actors, who, however, are either unable or unwilling to eliminate other pro-democratic actors, assuming that in the majority of current hybrid regimes the alternative is between democracy and non-democracy.¹⁹

In the face of this variety in the origin and ambiguity of internal structures, four possible directions can be taken to understand what effectively distinguishes these regimes: the drawing up of a classification based on the legacy of the previous regime; scrutiny of the processes of change undergone by the nations in question and the consequences for the institutional set-up that emerges; a third line which, rather more 'simply', considers the result, that is, the distinguishing characteristics at a given point in time – for example, in 2007 – of those nations that fall within the genus of hybrid regimes; and a fourth possibility, where the key classificatory criterion is given by the constraints that prevented a country from becoming at least a minimal democracy. The objectives of the first possible classification would be more explicitly explanatory, focusing on the resistance of institutions to change; the second, though this too would have explicative ends, would be more attentive to how modes of change themselves help to define what kind of hybrid regime one is up against; the third would be chiefly descriptive, and would start from the results, that is, from the characteristic traits of the regime; the fourth, which has explicative goals, would focus on the reasons that prevent the transformation toward a democracy. But before going any further, it is essential to consider how the issue has been tackled by other authors in the past.

Without making any claim to being exhaustive, one might start by citing the simplest solution, proposed by Freedom House, which took the third approach mentioned above. Using its own data, it broke down the ensemble of nations defined as 'partially free' into semi-consolidated democracies, transitional or hybrid regimes in the strict sense, and semi-consolidated authoritarian regimes. The first type comprises regimes with an average rating between 3.00 and 3.99, the second has an average total between 4.00 and 4.99 while the third is between 5.00 and 5.99 (see Table 1). Merkel (2004) also proposes an interesting classification of 'defective democracies'. This category can be divided into 'exclusive democracies', which offer only limited guarantees with regard to political rights; 'domain democracies', in which powerful groups condition and limit the autonomy

¹⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of veto players in hybrid regimes and in the democratization process, see Morlino and Magen (2009a, b).

of elected leaders, and ‘illiberal democracies’, which only provide partial civil rights guarantees. Finally, Diamond (2002), who starts from the more general notion of the hybrid regime as has been done here,²⁰ proposes four categories on the basis of the degree of existing competition: hegemonic electoral authoritarian, competitive authoritarian, electoral democracy (see above), and a residual category of ambiguous regimes. The regimes in three out of these four categories fail to provide the minimum guarantee of civil rights that would qualify them to be classified as an electoral democracy.²¹ Starting from the elementary fact that hybrid regimes no longer have some of the essential aspects of the non-democratic genus, but still do not have all the characteristics required to meet the minimum definition of democracy, Morlino (2003: 45) formulated another classification of hybrid regimes. First and foremost, if limits are placed by specific actors on people’s effective freedom to vote or even on the admission of dissent and opposition, and on the correct handling of the elections themselves, one can talk of a *protected democracy*. By this term it is understood that inside the regime being analysed – defined by Merkel (2004: 49) as a ‘domain democracy’ – there are powerful veto players, such as the army, strong economic oligarchies, traditional powers like the monarch, or even forces external to the country, which heavily condition the regime. Moreover, there is a *limited democracy* when there is universal suffrage, a formally correct electoral procedure, elective posts occupied on the basis of elections and a multi-party system, but civil rights are constrained by the police or other effective forms of suppression. Consequently, there is no effective political opposition and, above all, the media are compromised by a situation of monopoly to the point that part of the population is effectively prevented from exercising their rights. The notion of the ‘illiberal democracy’ advanced by Merkel (2004) coincides with that of the limited democracy as presented here. The notion of ‘limited democracy’ is also well developed by Wigell (2008) within a typology which still includes the ‘electoral democracy’ and the ‘constitutional democracy’ as sub-types of democracy, complemented by the ‘liberal democracy’ as the type of fully fledged democratic set-up.²² The main

²⁰ Such a regime combines ‘democratic and authoritarian elements’ (Diamond, 2002: 23).

²¹ It should be noted that Diamond uses the term ‘electoral democracy’ with a different meaning to that of Freedom House, as has already been clarified above. For Diamond, ‘electoral democracy’ and ‘liberal democracy’ are two different categories, while for Freedom House all liberal democracies are also electoral, but not vice versa. So, for example, according to Freedom House a nation like the United Kingdom is a liberal democracy, but is also electoral, while for Diamond it is not.

²² To build his typology, Wigell (2008) develops the two well-known Dahlian criteria (participation and competition/opposition) (Dahl, 1971) into the notions of ‘electoralism’ and ‘constitutionalism’ seen at a limited and at effective stages. If there is a limited development then there are minimal electoral conditions, such as free, fair, competitive, inclusive elections; and/or minimal constitutional conditions, such as freedom of organization, expression, alternative information, and freedom from discrimination. If there is more effective development, then there are additional electoral conditions, such as electoral empowerment, electoral integrity, electoral sovereignty, electoral irreversibility, and/or additional constitutional conditions, such as executive accountability, legal accountability, bureaucratic integrity, local government accountability.

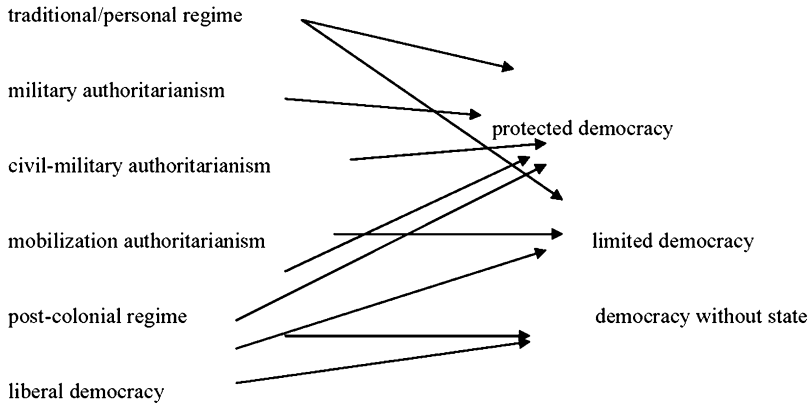


Figure 1 What kind of hybrid regime?

difference between the different proposals lies in the fact that, while also having explanatory objectives, the authors point to different factors as the crucial elements for explaining the real nature of these regimes.

Without going on to review the literature in detail, it is better to stop here and to take stock of the more convincing solutions. In this perspective a combination of the first direction, that is, focussing on the legacy of the previous regime, and the fourth one, that is, factors that restrained a country from becoming or being a minimal democracy, seems to provide a more effective typology. Thus, if the criterion of classification concerns the reasons that prevent the transformation toward a democracy and the first hypothesis of institutional inertia is assumed in its entirety, what was sustained above can be reformulated more clearly: the types of hybrid regimes that might come into being depend directly on the typologies of authoritarian regimes and democracies that have already been established by focusing on the factors that prevent democratic change. As evidenced in Figure 1, the core assumption of this possible typology is that traditional and democratic regimes can, by virtue of their characteristics, give rise to different results, while it is more likely that the survival of authoritarian veto players points towards a single solution, that of protected democracies. In any case, the elaboration of this classification or typology leads us to propose three possible classes: the *protected democracy* and the *limited democracy*, which have already been described above; and a third, logically necessary one in which it is hypothesized that there are no relevant legacies or powerful veto players, nor are there any forms of state suppression or non guarantee of rights, but simply a situation of widespread

The result is a four-cell matrix with liberal democracy in the case of effective electoralism and effective constitutionalism; limited democracy in the case of limited, minimal electoralism and limited, minimal constitutionalism; electoral democracy in the case of minimal constitutionalism and effective electoralism; and constitutional democracy in the case of limited electoralism and limited constitutionalism.

illegality in which the state is incapable of performing properly due to poorly functioning institutions. This third class can be defined as ‘democracy without law’ or rather, ‘*democracy without state*’, as the state can be conceived as a ‘government based on the primacy of the law’.

The second perspective, that is, the focus on processes of change undergone by a country and the consequences for the institutional set-up that emerges, may be complementary to the first one. If the context is one of regime change and there is a hybrid resulting from a process of transition during which the characteristics of the previous regime have disappeared (as mentioned above), starting with the break-up of limited pluralism (the hypothesis here is obviously that of a transition from authoritarianism) – it is necessary to see what process of change has started and how, in order to assess and predict its future course. The advantage of this classificatory perspective is that, given that the regimes in question are undergoing transformation, the direction and possible outcomes of such change can be seen more clearly. So, if there is *liberalization*, without or with little resort to violence, that is, a process of granting more political and civil rights from above, never very extensive or complete, but so as to enable the controlled organization of society at both the elite and mass level, what one has is an institutional hybrid that should permit an ‘opening up’ of the authoritarian regime, extending the social support base and at the same time saving the governing groups or leaders already in power. The most probable result, then, would be a hybrid that can be defined as a protected democracy, capable, moreover, of lasting for a considerable or very long time. In order to have some probability of persistence, such a political hybrid must be able to rely not only on the support of the institutional elites, both political and social, but also on the maintenance of a limited mass participation (in other words, on the governing elite’s capacity to repress or dissuade participation) and on the limited attraction of the democratic model in the political culture of the country, especially amongst the elites. Another possibility is the occurrence of a rupture of authoritarianism as a result of a grassroots mobilization of groups in society or of the armed forces, or due to foreign intervention. If it proves impossible to move towards a democratic situation, even if only slowly, due to the presence of antidemocratic veto players, then a more or less enduring situation characterized by a lack of the guarantees regarding order and basic rights to be found in a limited democracy becomes a concrete outcome. In this dynamic perspective, the third solution, that of the *democracy without state*, does not even entail liberalization or the break-up of limited pluralism as such, in that there is no previously existing stable regime or working state institutions.

However, these modes of classification are *a priori* and do not include an empirical survey of the countries defined as hybrid regimes. In this respect, they still fail to carry out one of the principal tasks of any good classification, which is to examine all the empirical phenomena associated with hybrid regimes and then arrive at some form of simplification that makes it possible to grasp the phenomenon as a whole as well as its internal differences. So do the three classificatory types outlined above hold up when empirical cases are considered? Looking at the

Freedom House data and assuming that the regimes regarded as ‘partially free’ coincide with the notion of the hybrid regime developed here, there seems to be a need for some revision and integration. Above all, it is worth examining in greater detail the ratings of the countries belonging to the category of hybrid regimes (Table 2) on the set of indicators relating to seven ambits that are important when analysing any political regime, democratic or otherwise: rule of law, electoral process, functioning of government, political pluralism and participation, freedom of expression and beliefs, freedom of association and organization, personal autonomy, and individual freedom.²³ If those ambits are matched with the elements that appear in the definition of the hybrid regime suggested above, the connections can be immediately grasped: all aspects of minimal democracy as well as the elements that are present in the definition of authoritarianism, such as limited pluralism and participation (to mention just the most salient ones), are *prima facie* closely related to all seven ambits. In his discussion of how to map political regimes, Wigell (2008: 237–241) also refers to the same or similar aspects.²⁴ Levitsky and Way (2002: 54–58) prefer to group the aspects around four arenas of contestation (electoral arena, legislative arena, judicial arena, and media). This, in fact, is correct, as

²³ The macroindicators for each ambit are, for the rule of law: (i) independent judiciary, (ii) application of civil and penal law and civilian control of the police, (iii) protection of personal freedom, including that of opponents, and absence of wars and revolts (civil order), and (iv) law equal for everyone, including the application thereof; for the electoral process: (i) head of government and principal posts elected with free and fair elections, (ii) parliaments elected with free and fair elections, and (iii) existence of electoral laws and other significant norms, applied correctly; for government functioning: (i) government policies decided by the head of the government and elected parliamentarians, (ii) government free from widespread corruption, and (iii) responsible government that acts openly; for political pluralism and participation: (i) right to organize different parties and the existence of a competitive party system, (ii) existence of an opposition and of the concrete possibility for the opposition to build support and win power through elections, (iii) freedom from the influence of the armed forces, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies or other powerful groups, and (iv) protection of cultural, ethnic, religious, and other minorities; for freedom of expression and beliefs: (i) free media and freedom of other forms of expression, (ii) religious freedom, (iii) freedom to teach and an educational system free from widespread indoctrination, and (iv) freedom of speech; for the freedom of association and organization: (i) guarantee of the rights of free speech, assembly and demonstration, (ii) freedom for non-governmental organizations, and (iii) freedom to form unions, conduct collective bargaining and form professional bodies; for personal autonomy and individual freedoms: (i) absence of state control on travel, residence, occupation and higher education, (ii) right to own property and freedom to establish businesses without improper conditioning by the government, security forces, parties, and criminal organizations, (iii) social freedom, such as gender equality, freedom to marry, and freedom regarding family size (government control of births), and (iv) freedom of opportunity and absence of economic exploitation (see the website of Freedom House). It should be borne in mind that the rating system here is the ‘obvious’ one, that is, a higher score corresponds to the higher presence of the aspect in question, up to 4 points per general indicator. The maximum score for the rule of law is 16, while for electoral process it is 12, and so on.

²⁴ More precisely, Wigell (2008: 237–241) includes in his list the minimal electoral conditions (free, fair, competitive, and inclusive elections), minimal constitutional conditions (freedom of organization, expression, right to alternative information, and freedom from discrimination), additional electoral conditions (electoral empowerment, integrity, sovereignty, and irreversibility) additional constitutional conditions (executive, legal, local government accountabilities, and bureaucratic integrity). But here, in the perspective of hybrid regimes only the minimal electoral and constitutional conditions are relevant.

Table 3. The three components of hybrid regimes

Variable	Components		
	1	2	3
Rule of law		0.856	
Electoral process	0.835		
Government functioning			0.818
Pluralism and participation	0.862		
Freedom of expression and beliefs	0.713		
Freedom of association and organization	0.865		
Personal autonomy and individual freedom		0.858	

Notes: Percentage of explained variance: 80.623%; Method of extraction: principal component analysis; Method of rotation: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Only factor loadings >0.5 are represented.

research on democratic transition has shown that these four arenas frequently prove to be the most important ones.²⁵ However, a more detailed and precise set of indicators, as those suggested by Freedom House, seems in this case to be more appropriate for analysing the various key aspects of hybrid regimes, where the opposite process (from democracy toward authoritarianism) has to be included, whether or not there is the stabilization stressed above.

On the basis of the profiles for the 35 cases of hybrid regimes, a great variety of situations emerge. Thus, when a first implementation of a fuzzy set analysis is applied, that is a QCA (qualitative comparative analysis) method as elaborated by Ragin (2000, 2008: esp. Ch. 4), the reduction of the truth table, built up from the seven different variables, leads to 17 different possible categories, with some of them including just one case. In other words, there are too many classes containing too few cases for meaningful classification.²⁶ One way of reducing the number of categories is to see if, when applied to the cases underneath the seven groups of indicators, some key conceptual elements emerge from the seven original variables. A factor analysis may help in singling out those elements. In fact, when applied to our 35 cases the result is very revealing. As displayed in Table 3, three components emerge with great clarity: a first component where electoral process, political pluralism and participation, freedom of expression and beliefs, freedom of association and organization are grouped together closely; a second component where rule of law and personal autonomy and individual freedoms are also strongly connected; and a third component, conceptually close to the second one, where state functioning stands alone. When considered in its entirety, the lack or the high weakness of the first component

²⁵ For example, as regards the salience of the judicial arena, see Morlino and Magen (2009b).

²⁶ Please note that while the main purpose of such a method is explanatory, it is used here to provide a better classification of my cases. It is worth recalling, however, the existing connection between explanation and a good classification, although this cannot be discussed here.

Table 4. Classification and cases of hybrid regimes (2007)

Categories	Quasi-democracies	Limited democracies	Democracies without state
Countries	Albania	Bangladesh	Armenia
	Bosnia Herzegovina	Comoros	Burkina Faso
	Colombia	Fiji	Central African Republic
	Georgia	Guatemala	Ethiopia
	Macedonia	Guinea-Bissau	Gabon
	Madagascar	Jordan	Kuwait
	Malaysia	Nicaragua	Morocco
	Moldova	Paraguay	Nepal
	Mozambique	Sierra Leone	Nigeria
	Seychelles	Tonga	Uganda
	Singapore		
	Sri Lanka		
	Tanzania		
	Turkey		
	Zambia		

can be considered a key aspect of *limited democracies* while the lack of weakness of the second component can be regarded as a key element of *democracies without law*. The lack or weakness of the third component is the result of inefficient democracy.²⁷ If we consider that the second and third components are conceptually contiguous (see above), we can group them in just one category that could be labelled as *democracies without state*. But whether this is a good step to take or not must be decided by the empirical control.

With these fairly precise indications we can go back to the QCA method. In particular, profiting from the strong correlations that emerged from our previous principal component analysis, we can build a truth table where: the lack or high weakness (0) of a new component with the four sets of indicators, that is absence/weakness of electoral process and/or political pluralism and participation and/or freedom of expression and beliefs and/or freedom of association and organization, shape a *limited democracy*; the lack or high weakness (0) of a new component with the two sets of indicators, that is absence/weakness of rule of law and/or personal autonomy and individual freedoms, depicts a *democracy without law*; and the lack or high weakness (0) of a component with one set of indicators, that is absence/weakness of state functioning, depicts an *inefficient democracy*.²⁸ When the related truth table is applied,²⁹ the results are very meaningful and empirically relevant (see Table 4). First of all, there are several cases with at least

²⁷ For details of the indicators, see footnote 23.

²⁸ All the truth tables are available upon request.

²⁹ Please note that because of the strong correlations, the specific group of variables (i.e. electoral process + political pluralism and participation + freedom of expression and beliefs + freedom of association and organization, and rule of law and personal autonomy and individual freedoms) have been combined on the basis of the rule of sufficiency, that is, the existence of one component is sufficient to represent the class.

a weak presence of all three components or characteristics. Evidently, in the light of these new results a new category or class is required, which can be labelled *quasi-democracies*. Out of the 15 cases of quasi-democracies, six are European, five African, and only three Asian, with one additional case in Latin America (Colombia). There is also a sizeable group of *limited democracies*, as expected, and half of them are African. Third, because of the conceptual contiguity and limited presence of real cases (only Armenia and Morocco), the class of inefficient democracies can be merged with the democracy without law into a new more effective *democracies without state* with 10 cases; most of these (seven) are from Africa.

Concluding remarks

In general, the analysis above has ended up moving in a different direction to the one considered in recent literature, a direction that is more consistent with that taken in an older, more traditional literature that appeared in the 1950s where the stress was on instability. The debate on democratization has led to neglect of this aspect, even though it is highly evident at an empirical level: the most significant problem in terms of specific cases is to ensure the existence of institutions more or less capable of performing their functions. One of the most relevant results of our analysis is that there are countries where a strengthening of the state and an effective guarantee of rights would transform several regimes into democracies. As far as the problem of state functioning and the rule of law are concerned, this theme has already been discussed by other authors, for instance Fukuyama (2004), and is still a central issue that deserves attention.

Moreover, there are a number of more specific conclusions. First, although literature to date has failed to be precise on this and there are only a few case studies, some comparative analyses and good insights, on the grounds of our analysis we can conclude that hybrid regimes are a substantial reality and can be considered an autonomous model of regime *vis-à-vis* democracy, authoritarianism, and the traditional regime. Second, a good adequate definition of that regime was still required. In the proposal made in this article, the semantic field, that is the notions of democracy, authoritarianism, and traditional regime, was fully considered, the relevant analytic dimensions emerged clearly and we made a proposal which takes account of that semantic field. We hope it will be widely accepted. Third, once we went from an *a priori* classification, grounded on the criterion of the constraints to an effective minimal democracy, to an empirical one, a few changes and adaptations proved necessary. On the whole, even if different trajectories are theoretically relevant (see also Figure 1), all the cases that might be considered as hybrid regimes have either an authoritarian past or a traditional one. In other words, although they should by no means be discarded theoretically, the possibility of democracies reverting to some form of hybridism is not empirically supported by the existing cases.

For obvious reasons, namely the sort of data we had, the class of *protected democracies* did not emerge. However, for example, in cases such as Jordan and Morocco, which we would have unquestionably labelled as such because of the strong political role of a traditional power like that of the monarchy, our empirical analysis suggests that the inefficiency of the state (Morocco) or the limited guarantee of rights (Jordan) is more relevant. As regards this, the data and a different theoretical emphasis account for an unexpected result. However, the data clearly suggest is that what counts in hybrid regimes is not so much the existence of a legacy or of veto players, but a lack of state or the effective guarantee of basic rights in the case of a working non-democratic state.

The *quasi-democracies* are a more relevant class than expected, with 15 cases, and this perhaps forms a ground for optimism in terms of the future possibility of change towards democracy. In particular, in an international context characterized by cooperation rather than high conflict, a stronger role of international actors or of democratic governments is possible and seems to have some chance of success in a democratic perspective.³⁰

Limited democracies and *democracies without state* are confirmed as empirically relevant classes for which different, contrasting elements need to be stressed: on the one hand, the lack of an effective guarantee of rights despite the presence of state institutions and, on the other hand, the lack of the rule of law and of a functioning state, with laws that are not applied because the judiciary has no effective independence, there is widespread corruption and the bureaucracy is flawed and inefficient. In these cases too, governments and international organizations have a potentially strong role to play in helping to strengthen the respect of rights and building state institutions, prior even to establishing democracies, in countries that have manifested a strong incapacity in this respect over the years.

As a final remark, the present analysis suggests that the proposed classification has some explanatory potential and in this perspective seem more meaningful. However, as usually happens in this field of studies, in order to pursue this line of research, we need to return to the analysis of specific cases, either in the form of single case studies or a small-n comparative strategy.

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³⁰ On this point, see also the results of research on the role of international actors in the democratization processes of a number of Europe's neighbour nations (Morlino and Magen, 2009b).

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