Review Article

DEMOCRATIC CAREENING

By DAN SLATER*

Larry Diamond. 2008. *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World*. New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt, 448 pp.
Ethan B. Kapstein and Nathan Converse. 2008. *The Fate of Young Democracies*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 188 pp.
Mikael Mattlin. 2011. *Politicized Society: The Long Shadow of Taiwan's One-Party Legacy*. Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 303 pp.
Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker. 2009. *Thaksin*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm, 422 pp.

Introduction

DEMOCRACY in the developing world is generally outliving expectations, but not outperforming them. Nearly four decades after the "third wave of democratization"[1] began and more than two decades after the Cold War ended, there has not been any "third reverse wave" of authoritarianism, unlike the deadly reverse waves that crashed most dramatically over interwar Europe and postwar Asia and Latin America. Only an untenably teleological reading of history could countenance the claim that authoritarianism in developing world democracies has become a thing of the past. Yet even highly unpromising

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[1] Huntington 1991.

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democracies mostly appear to be remaining democracies. Democratic collapse has happily been a far rarer event thus far in the twenty-first century than it was in the twentieth.

By the same token, it does not exactly ring true to say that most developing country democracies are *consolidating*. Virtually everywhere, democracies exhibit the wobbly characteristics of fledglings, even after aging out of literal fledgling status. Even in cases where sufficient state capacity exists to stabilize governance[2] and where democracy has become, in the familiar parlance of democratic consolidation, "the only game in town," this by no means ensures that all sides perceive the democratic game in similar terms and are willing to play by the same rules. In cases ranging from Ecuador to Ukraine to South Africa, and from Indonesia to Argentina to South Korea, democracy seems to have become the only game in town—but what game is it, exactly? And how might we best make sense of instances when the democratic game changes in decisive ways even as democracy neither collapses nor more firmly consolidates in the process?

This review article ventures the claim that political scientists need to transcend their rightful concerns with how and why young democracies *collapse* or *consolidate,* and devote more attention to theorizing how and why they *careen*. "Careening" is proposed as a heuristic term encompassing a variety of unpredictable and alarming sudden movements, such as lurching, swerving, swaying, and threatening to tip over. It suggests a bandying back and forth from side to side, with no clear prospect for steadying in sight. It thus captures rather well the sense of endemic unsettledness and rapid ricocheting that characterizes democracies that are struggling but not collapsing. It also invites further analysis of why some democracies in the developing world (say, Paraguay and the Philippines) seem to be careening so much more frequently and severely than others (Brazil and India, for instance).

All careening democracies are, like Tolstoy's unhappy families, careening in their own distinctive ways. Yet there are patterns within the everyday chaos. At the broadest level, I argue that there exists an underappreciated tension between different types of democratic accountability—that is, vertical accountability versus horizontal accountability—and that this tension lies at the heart of democratic careening. When this tension is actively manifested in partisan conflict, it has destabilizing consequences, but not deadly consequences, for democracy.

[2] While wholeheartedly agreeing with Tilly 2007 that state-building is essential for substantive democratization, this review hopes to illuminate the dynamics of destabilization that arise from competitive democratic processes and not from underlying state weakness.

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To extend the metaphor, a careening democracy may be liable to "capsize," or tip over temporarily so that democracy ceases to function for a limited time—but not to vanish from the democratic ranks entirely through a restoration and consolidation of authoritarian rule.[3]

To be more specific, I define *democratic careening* as political instability sparked by intense conflict between partisan actors deploying competing visions of democratic accountability. It occurs when actors who argue that democracy requires substantial *inclusivity* of the entire populace (vertical accountability) clash with rivals who defend democracy for its *constraints* against excessive concentrations of unaccountable power, particularly in the political executive (horizontal accountability).[4] Since both sides plausibly claim to be on the side of the democratic angels, as it were, and to be engaging in combat against resolutely antidemocratic rivals, such conflicts tend to be particularly intractable and intense. Because neither party to the conflict seeks or endorses a full-blown restoration of authoritarian rule, the resultant regime dynamics are not well captured by the authoritarian/democratic distinction.[5] These dynamics are therefore often better portrayed as *careening between populist and oligarchic modes of politics* than as consolidating democracy or collapsing into authoritarianism.[6]

[3] Although capsizing might simply sound like the same process as collapsing, the critical difference lies in the relative difficulty of reversing or undoing them. It is far easier to right a capsized boat than to reconstruct a collapsed building. Plus a righted boat remains prone to recapsize, whereas there is no reason to expect a rebuilt edifice to recollapse.

[4] My understanding of horizontal accountability accords closely with existing literature, while my treatment of vertical accountability is more substantive than most other existing works, which tend to focus on elections. In seeing politicians as *acting* accountable *to* the populace, and not only as being *held* accountable *by* the populace, I embrace Jane Mansbridge's "selection model" (2009) of vertical accountability as well as the conventional "sanctions model." More than responsiveness (which even an inert Burkean delegate can accomplish) or representativeness (which even a condescending Burkean trustee can provide), vertical accountability entails ongoing engagement and the forging of common interests and perspectives between the electors and the elected. The classic work distinguishing vertical from horizontal accountability is O'Donnell 1994. On responsiveness versus representativeness, see Stokes 2001.

[5] To be sure, parties to these conflicts often endorse authoritarian *measures* such as military coups or unconstitutional removals of chief executives. Yet this does not mean they necessarily support the installation of a new authoritarian *regime*. To the contrary, such extreme measures are often genuinely and credibly portrayed as a necessary evil to install one side's preferred vision of democracy and to defeat a rival perceived as authoritarian. On "civil society coups," see Arugay 2012.

[6] Unlike Winters 2011, I do not conceive of "oligarchy" as reducible to the politics of wealth defense and as lacking in implications for regime type; rather, I conceive of it in the Aristotelian sense of "rule by the few." Though agreeing with Winters that oligarchy fuses quite easily with electoral democracy, I insist that a regime becomes less substantively democratic (particularly on the dimension of vertical accountability) as it becomes more oligarchic. As for "populism," I follow the entreaty of Jansen 2011 to study this concept "through a practice-based approach that is not beholden to pejorative common-sense understandings. This approach conceptualizes populism as a mode of political practice—as populist mobilization." Jansen usefully defines populist mobilization as "any *sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and*

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Like the concepts of populism and oligarchy themselves, the basic tension between democratic inclusivity and democratic constraints is not new. It can readily be traced back to the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, James Madison, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Carl Schmitt in political theory. Yet this intrinsic democratic tension is rarely acknowledged and remains inadequately theorized in comparative politics. The four books under review in this article provide abundant empirical examples of the friction between vertical and horizontal accountability—but very little guidance as to how to theorize it. Even the massive emerging literature on the "quality of democracy" (which I am unable to review here) has yet to specify in a reasonably parsimonious way the distinctive *dimensions* along which democracies can suffer from "low quality," much less apprehend the distinctive *dynamics* at work when democracies careen along these different dimensions.[7] In essence, this literature assesses democratic quality on the same kind of 0:1 scale as the collapse versus consolidation literature, telling us little about how and why democracies careen without collapsing or consolidating.

Leading works also tend to argue that vertical and horizontal accountability are mutually reinforcing rather than potentially conflicting.[8] To be sure, Rousseauian inclusivity and Madisonian constraints *can* go hand in hand, and often do. Rousseau himself was as committed as Madison to curtailing arbitrary authority in his vision of "a democratic government wisely tempered."[9] For instance, a robust free press and an independent national election commission constrain ruling executives and their surrogates from abusing their powers while helping strengthen popular inclusion in the democratic process. Yet there is also ample reason to believe that elected executives seeking to broaden substantive democratic inclusion might clash with elites who prize democracy's constraints on absolute power more than its promise to

contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people" (pp. 75, 82, emphasis in original).

[7] Morlino 2012 has improved this literature by attending to the (plural) "qualities of democracy," which he arrays along five dimensions, including interinstitutional (horizontal) accountability and electoral (vertical) accountability. Like the analysis here, Morlino argues that "accountability or, better, the two accountabilities are the key mechanisms that make the goal of popular sovereignty something other than largely illusory"; Morlino 2012, 224–25. Yet Morlino does not define these types of accountability capaciously enough to encompass his other three democratic qualities: rule of law, participation, and competition. In my view, rule of law is vital to horizontal accountability, participation is essential to any substantive conceptualization of vertical accountability, and competition is vital to both.

[8] The title of Plattner's 1998 essay in *Foreign Affairs* puts it quite clearly: "Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One without the Other." See also the central claim by Morlino, Dressel, and Pelizzo 2011, 491–92, that Morlino's five different dimensions of democracy improve in tandem through a "funnel of causality" in which "good things go together."

[9] Gourevitch 1997, 115.

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empower the many. Such clashes constitute modern-day parallels to the collisions that Machiavelli chronicled in ancient Rome between defenders of an oligarchic *governo stretto* and proponents of a populist, plebiscitarian *governo largo*.[10] It is only when such collisions culminate in the imposition of authoritarian emergency rule—through dynamics most famously theorized by Schmitt—that democracy goes beyond merely careening and collapses by contemporary standards.[11]

The purpose of invoking these theorists is not to reinterpret their timeless works. Rather, it is to provide a sturdier theoretical foundation for systematic analysis of the complex and divergent accountability dynamics that we encounter across developing world democracies.[12] In the review that follows, Thailand will be explored as a paradigmatic case of democratic careening, despite its usual portrayal as a consummate case of democratic breakdown. This makes it an especially challenging and useful case with which to show the intrinsic limitations of the collapse versus consolidation approach. Similarly, Taiwan is exceedingly illuminating in that it is among the last young democracies where one would expect destabilizing processes of careening to unfold. Blessed with a strong state, a consolidated party system, and—as in Thailand—a gradualist mode of democratization and a model democratic constitution, Taiwan nevertheless witnessed intense and protracted partisan conflict over the very "rules of the game" during virtually the exact same period as Thailand. For all their substantial differences (including the difference between Taiwan's semipresidential and Thailand's parliamentary system), Thailand and Taiwan have both experienced serious national clashes between proponents of vertical accountability and defenders of horizontal accountability. Yet these clashes also assumed subtly distinctive forms, as I detail below, offering intriguing lessons for how we might theorize different varieties of democratic careening.

Notwithstanding its proposed correctives, this article also lavishes much praise on each of the four volumes being reviewed. Beyond their

[10] McCormick 2011.

[11] The parallels between Machiavelli and Schmitt on this front are admittedly close. Like Machiavelli in Rome, Schmitt perceived a collision between horizontal and vertical visions of democracy in interwar Europe, arguing that "parliament appears an artificial machinery" and that "dictatorial and Caesaristic methods not only can produce the acclamation of the people but can also be a direct expression of democratic substance and power" (Schmitt 1985 [1923]), 17). Given Schmitt's close association with the idea that emergency conditions justified dictatorial rule—not just in theory but, with the Nazis, in practice—I see his ideas as less conducive to robust popular sovereignty than Machiavelli's.

[12] More speculatively, the framework here might also offer insights into varieties of what Tilly 2007 would call "de-democratization" in contemporary Western democracies, such as the oligarchic effects of campaign-finance systems and the anti-Madisonian implications of executive rule by decree.

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impressive global empirical scope, the volumes on democratic collapse and consolidation by Diamond and by Kapstein and Converse deserve great credit for nudging empirical democratization scholars away from a minimalist, proceduralist, Schumpeterian notion of democracy and toward a much more maximalist and substantive vision. They do so by treating both effective constraints upon ruling elites *and* robust inclusion of the mass populace as essential features of a functioning democracy. Given their focus on the most "minimalist" concern of all—that is, mere democratic survival—these works' embrace of a substantive understanding of democracy suggests that the tired procedural-substantive debate has perhaps finally been laid to rest. (We all appear to be substantivists and maximalists now.)[13]

There is much to admire in the two Asian case studies as well. As with the Diamond and Kapstein and Converse volumes, I cannot do justice to Pasuk and Baker's and Mattlin's books as a whole, which cover far more terrain than accountability dynamics alone. Both are learned historical analyses of a significant Asian democratic case, drawing upon decades of scholarly expertise. Both provide rich examples and keen insights into the dynamics of distinct types of democratic accountability and the variety of ways in which they can clash. A primary challenge for this review article is to explore how the complex and distinctive accountability dynamics uncovered in these expert Asian case studies lend themselves to broader comparative analysis and causal explanation.[14]

From Democratic Survival to Democratic Substance

Considering the epic human tragedies that accompanied the collapse of democracy during the twentieth century, from Nazi Germany to New Order Indonesia, political scientists understandably remain obsessed with the specter of history repeating itself. Yet in the two best recent books on the subject, one is struck by the rarity of democratic breakdown during the contemporary era compared to epochs past. The works by Diamond and by Kapstein and Converse intriguingly reveal that the puzzle of democratic collapse has become, to some degree, an obsolescing puzzle. Although pitched as books about democratic *survival*, both also prove to be informative treatises on democratic *substance*. Transcending a classic Schumpeterian, proceduralist perspective,

[13] Even when scholars still hew to a procedural *definition* of democracy, they increasingly adopt a substantive *vision* of democracy. The focus of contemporary research has definitively turned toward considering how to build "a democracy of maximal quality"; Levine and Molina 2011, 7.

[14] For more on how Asian case studies can inform democratization theory, see Slater 2008.

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these authors portray both meaningful popular inclusivity and effective constraints against elite abuses of power as defining traits of functioning democracies. In other words, they similarly herald a substantive understanding of democracy as requiring both vertical and horizontal accountability. Yet since neither book clearly identifies the potential tension between inclusivity and constraints, both are ill-suited to capture the dynamics of cases (for example, Thailand and Venezuela) that have recently experienced democratic careening.

Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, and Kapstein and Converse, *The Fate of Young Democracies*

It is hardly novel or controversial to claim that democratic procedures do not always yield much democratic substance. The recent worldwide proliferation of "low-quality" or "illiberal" democracies (in tandem with their more patently undemocratic, "electoral authoritarian" counterparts) has made the gap between democratic procedures and substance keenly felt.[15] To hew to a narrowly proceduralist notion of democracy is effectively to disregard the abusive actions and the abject absence of public responsiveness exhibited by so many freely elected governments. Thankfully, the books under review here fully recognize the hollowness of democratic procedures lacking in democratic substance. Their inquiries into why democracies consolidate or collapse thus become studies of the substantive foundations of functioning democracies. "For democratic structures to endure—and to be worthy of endurance," Diamond argues, "they must be more than a shell" (p. 292).

The Kapstein and Converse volume makes an especially sharp turn from explaining democratic collapse to specifying democratic substance. In their preface, the authors note that their primary goal is to explain "the differences between those young democracies that manage to consolidate their regimes and those that backslide or revert to authoritarianism" (p. xv). The ambiguity is immediately apparent, however. Can a democracy "backslide" yet remain a democracy? A similar ambiguity emerges in Diamond's notion of a democratic "recession." Do democratic recession and backsliding mean regime collapse, or simply a decline in the quality of democracy?

[15] "Illiberal democracy" receives its most thorough treatment in Zakaria 2007. This review shares Zakaria's insistence that liberal constitutionalism and electoral democracy must be analytically distinguished, but argues that both constitutionalist constraints and popular inclusivity are constitutive features of democracy, substantively understood. Since most of Zakaria's cases lack both substantive popular inclusivity beyond elections and effective checks on executive abuses, they are better conceived as "electoral authoritarian" (Schedler 2006) than as democratic regimes, illiberal or otherwise.

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If the post–Cold War world were riddled with cases of democratic collapse, there would be no need to fumble for verbiage that implies declining democratic quality absent authoritarian takeover. Kapstein and Converse's global data set of democratizations for the period 1960–2004 shows a steeply declining propensity for democracies to collapse. "Democratizations that took place before 1980 appear to have faced a substantially larger chance of reversal than those in subsequent decades" (p. 64), their data show. "Only 11.5 percent of the democratizations in the 1960s were sustained, whereas 30 percent of those taking place in the 1970s were sustained. The success rate reached 76.5 percent in the 1980s and 73 percent in the 1990s" (p. 43).

More qualitatively, Kapstein and Converse strain to find cases where democracy has unambiguously collapsed since the end of the Cold War. "Recent power grabs by the leaders of such countries as Russia, Georgia, Venezuela, and Bolivia have all set back the cause of democracy in those nations" (p. xiv). Yet Russia and Georgia have convincingly been theorized as cases of uninterrupted "competitive authoritarianism" rather than democratic collapse,[16] while Venezuela and Bolivia have been portrayed by some area experts as undergoing "left turns"[17] *within* democracy or even undergoing nearly revolutionary experiments with "radical democracy,"[18] rather than exiting democracy. The point is not that Kapstein and Converse incorrectly code these borderline cases. It is that subsuming such borderline cases under the category of either "collapse" or "survival" is only minimally informative.

Kapstein and Converse's data show that democratic collapse is something of an obsolescing worry within cases as well as across world-historical time. Indeed, their primary rationale for analyzing "the fate of young democracies" is that these are the ones most at risk of collapse. "Our research shows that newly democratic states are especially at risk of reversal during their first five years of existence" (p. xviii). This helps explain why democratic collapse has become a receding worry in recent decades, and should recede further as democracies that avoided "infant mortality" persevere like their immediate predecessors. Yet here we see the greatest limitation of Kapstein and Converse's stress on the *fate* of young democracies. To die may be a fate, but to live is to keep one's fate unanswered. The big challenge for contemporary democratization studies is less to specify what conditions make democracies more or less

[16] Levitsky and Way 2010, chap. 5.
[17] Levitsky and Roberts 2011.
[18] Van Cott 2009.

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likely to collapse than to apprehend what is transpiring in those democracies that are neither clearly collapsing nor clearly consolidating.

Both books eventually adopt such an approach, if perhaps unexpectedly. For Diamond as for Kapstein and Converse, the threat of democratic collapse is receding in global terms, as "the overall number of democracies more or less stabilized after 1995" (p. 6). Ironically, however, Diamond argues that democracy itself is "receding" as well, as "the democratic boom has given way to democratic recession." Commencing with Pervez Musharraf's 1999 coup in Pakistan, "there have been setbacks to democracy in highly influential states such as Russia, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Thailand, and democracy is seriously deteriorating in other big, important countries like the Philippines and Bangladesh" (p. 12). While democracy is more often "backsliding" than collapsing for Kapstein and Converse, it is "deteriorating" and suffering "setbacks" for Diamond. This invites deeper investigation into why this wide array of countries might be experiencing similarly sharp yet divergent types of democratic shifts and setbacks, rather than democratic collapse per se.

It is perhaps the greatest shared strength of these volumes that both respond to the invitation to consider what makes some democracies substantively stronger than others. Here they echo the "quality of democracy" literature in exploring the gap between democratic procedures and substance. Yet by doing so in books that are centrally concerned with democratic collapse and consolidation, Diamond and Kapstein and Converse make the questions of democratic survival and substance effectively inseparable. In short, if a democracy lacks substance, how useful is it to obsess over whether it has survived?

The line between substance and survival becomes especially blurry—albeit in productive ways—for Kapstein and Converse. Substance begets survival, they argue, and substance lies in both horizontal accountability among elites and those elites' vertical accountability to the populace at large. "[W]hen *political arrangements encourage politicians to concentrate power, or induce them to target specific groups at the expense of broader social welfare, then democracy is less likely to take root*" (p. 36, emphasis in original). Although the bulk of Kapstein and Converse's analysis centers on the importance of building Madisonian institutions of executive constraint for sustaining democracy, they also insist in a more Rousseauian, egalitarian vein that "[a]s with political power, economic power also needs to be redistributed if democracy is to consolidate" (p. xvi). Unlike political economists who see the primary threat to democratic consolidation as lying in antiredistributive wealthy elites,

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Kapstein and Converse see greater peril in denying the multitude any material stake in democratic survival.[19] "If large segments of the population do not share in the nation's wealth, they may view the political order, even if 'democratic' in institutional form, as being unresponsive or even detrimental to their interests" (p. 47).

Kapstein and Converse thus see both Rousseauian vertical inclusivity and Madisonian horizontal constraints as fundamental to democratic survival. Placing quotation marks around "democratic" reveals their substantive rather than procedural standard for democratic politics. Yet from the kind of substantive democratic perspective offered in both of these volumes, inclusivity and constraints do not simply *sustain* democracy; they *define* it. Instead of arguing that "the absence of effective checks and balances is among the most powerful *predictors* of democratic failure" (p. 4, emphasis added), then, one could argue that shriveling executive constraints are among the most powerful *signals* that a kind of "democratic failure" has already occurred.

Diamond goes even further than Kapstein and Converse in embracing a substantive notion of democracy grounded in vertical and horizontal accountability. He similarly suggests that the questions of substance and survival are ultimately inseparable. "Democratic structures will be mere facades unless people come to value the essential principles of democracy: popular sovereignty, accountability of rulers, freedom, and the rule of law," Diamond argues. "And without those essential principles in place, those seeming democracies will eventually give way to tyranny, whether in civilian or military guise" (p. 20). Once again, it could be argued that a lack of substantive inclusivity and constraints itself constitutes democracy "giving way," long before a Musharraf comes along to conjure up a Schmitt-style national emergency to justify putting Schumpeterian democracy out of its misery.

Neither Diamond nor Kapstein and Converse manage to convey, in a digestible theoretical framework, the variety of ways that democracies might decline in their substantive quality. In line with the "quality of democracy" literature, these authors lay out a plethora of maladies from which democracies may suffer and imply that the presence of any single malady moves a country further from 1 (democracy) and closer to 0 (authoritarianism). I lack the space here to detail the variety of ways in which these authors (quite rightly and with admirable thoroughness) see democracies potentially going wrong. Suffice it to say that all of these maladies can ultimately be treated as weaknesses of either popular inclusivity (vertical accountability) or constraints on power holders

[19] See especially Boix 2003; and Acemoglu and Robinson 2006.

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(horizontal accountability), yet neither book captures how these two distinct types of accountability might come into direct conflict.

As a result, even as these books offer a refreshingly multifaceted vision of democratic politics as requiring both vertical and horizontal accountability, the "collapse versus consolidation" paradigm compresses variation into a single, 0:1 dimension. Figure 1 visually represents these two types of accountability, the democratic-authoritarian divide, and the collapse-consolidation axis as treated in the works by Diamond and by Kapstein and Converse specifically and in the "quality of democracy" literature more generally.

The claim here is not that regimes never slide back and forth between democracy and authoritarianism or that categorical distinctions between democratic and authoritarian regimes are not worth making. It is that the collapse-consolidation axis captures only one theoretical dimension along which regimes change—and it is a decreasingly relevant axis of change, at that. What the collapse-consolidation axis cannot capture theoretically, it naturally cannot capture empirically. While both books offer informative treatments of cases where democracy has taken root——most notably Diamond's spirited case study of

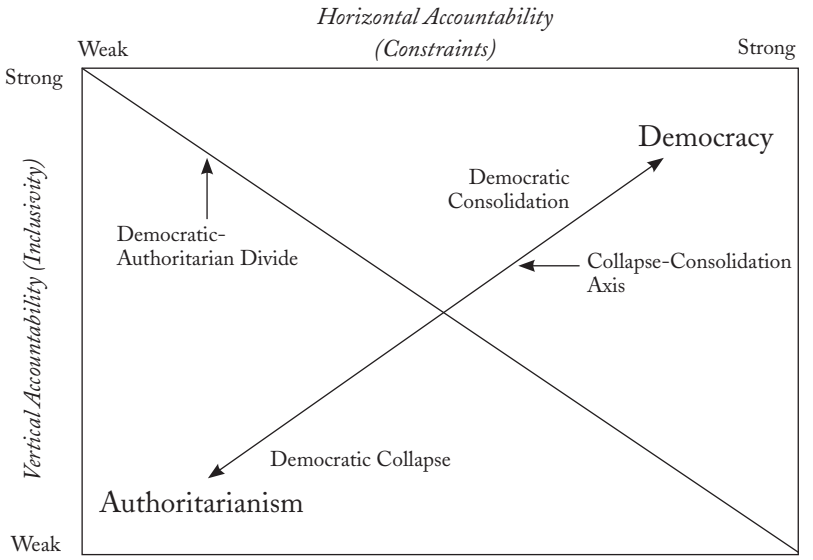


FIGURE 1
ACCOUNTABILITY TYPES, THE DEMOCRATIC-AUTHORITARIAN DIVIDE, AND THE COLLAPSE-CONSOLIDATION AXIS

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India (chap. 7, "What Sustains Democracy")—both struggle to convey the dynamics of cases where democracy is radically changing course or even manifestly experiencing decline, but not disappearing. This is especially true in cases where democracy has been careening between oligarchic and populist modes of politics, mimicking the Machiavellian struggles between popular sovereignty and its rivals in republican Rome. Figure 2 visually represents the core corrective that I have in mind.[20]

In short, democracies might careen between populist domineering on the one hand and oligarchic assertion on the other, without becoming clearly more or less democratic. Rather, what they become is

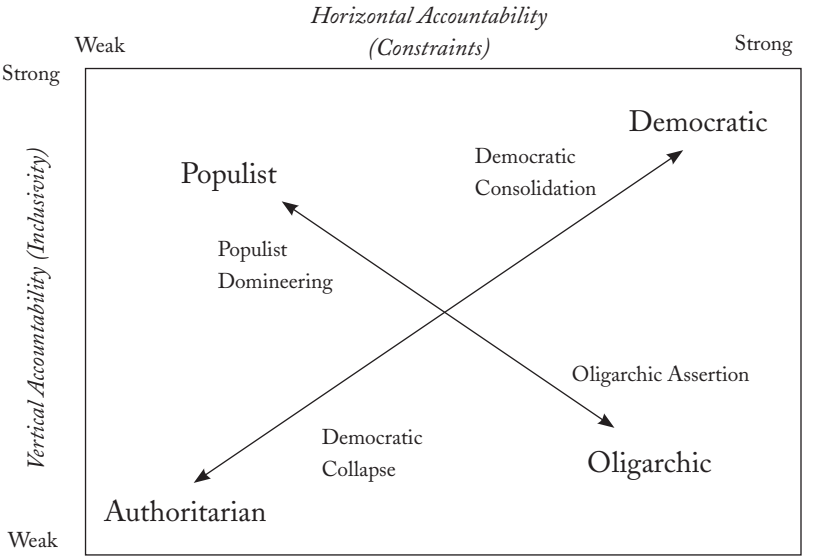


FIGURE 2
DEMOCRATIC COLLAPSE AND CONSOLIDATION VS. CAREENING BETWEEN OLIGARCHY AND POPULISM

[20] Like Dahl's (1971, 7) classic framework for "polyarchy," this framework balances parsimony and multidimensionality by positing two distinct dimensions along which democracies vary. Also like Dahl's, my framework seeks not to pinpoint regimes in static spots but to capture how regimes shift through struggles between competing political actors. It is also noteworthy that both of Dahl's dimensions—participation and competition—capture elements of what I am terming vertical accountability, or inclusivity. No Madisonian, Dahl sidelined the horizontal, constraining dimension of democracy in his model of polyarchy. Embracing the centrality of "the rule of law" in contemporary democratic theorizing, my framework represents an effort to capture the dynamics of both vertical and horizontal accountability in a single, Dahl-like two-dimensional framework.

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differently insufficiently democratic. I will argue in the next section that this notion of Machiavellian careening makes far better sense of recent regime dynamics in Thailand than the collapse versus consolidation paradigm. For now, consider how Diamond and Kapstein and Converse struggle to systematically describe, much less theorize, what is afoot in cases of democratic careening such as Thailand, Venezuela, and Bolivia.

For the most part, both books treat these unstable cases as instances of democratic collapse or decline. By making Thailand the first case they mention, Kapstein and Converse imply that they see it as an especially obvious instance of a young democracy suffering a deadly fate. "[T]he democratically elected regime of Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand was overthrown by a military coup in September 2006 (representing the *fourth* time that democracy had collapsed there)" (p. xiii, emphasis in original). This interpretation is ironic, considering that these authors stress Madisonian constraints on executive abuses of power as the most important substantive feature of a functioning democracy. Thaksin's wanton disregard for such constraints would be a vital ingredient in the coup that toppled him.

Kapstein and Converse see such constraints as the best insurance against democratic collapse. Yet even by their own account, this argument accords badly with events in Thailand, where "constitutional reforms initiated in the wake of the 1997 economic crisis provided for a much more vigorous set of checks and balances while strengthening the country's party system. But Thailand's young democracy was not yet consolidated and remained threatened by those elites who sought to capture state institutions for personal gain" (p. 110). Kapstein and Converse thus flirt with the tautological claim that Thai democracy collapsed because it was not consolidated. As we will see below, Thaksin could as easily be portrayed as the "elite who sought to capture state institutions for personal gain" as those who overthrew him.

Perhaps the most determined and experienced scholar of democratization writing today, Diamond knows the Thai case in greater depth than Kapstein and Converse. He adroitly captures Thaksin's strides toward embracing the rural masses with populist economic appeals as well as the way he made mincemeat of Thailand's newly promulgated institutional constraints (pp. 79–83). Yet like Kapstein and Converse, Diamond places greater stress on Madisonian constraints than on Rousseauian inclusivity in his analyses of democratic substance and survival. This prompts him to set aside Thaksin's vertical virtues in his summary assessment of Thailand's democratic collapse. When

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the Thai Constitutional Court acquitted newly elected Prime Minister Thaksin of falsely declaring assets in 2001, Diamond calls it "a huge blow to accountability" (p. 309). But the court's decision could also be interpreted as defending or at least deferring to *vertical* accountability —the expressed will of Thai voters, who had just anointed Thaksin in the country's greatest landslide ever. What we see here is not democracy advancing or receding, but one type of democratic accountability coming into conflict with another.

In assessing the implications of the anti-Thaksin coup of 2006, Diamond argues that vertical and horizontal accountability must work in tandem for democracy to survive. This has devilishly unclear implications for who—the coup makers or the power abusers—should get the bad rap for Thailand's putative democratic collapse. "The Thai experience shows that even elaborate and well-designed accountability institutions are at risk of being conquered or subverted unless society has the will, the organization, and the resources to defend its institutions," Diamond insists. "Horizontal accountability needs to be stimulated and reinforced by vertical pressures from civil society" (p. 310). Yet as we shall see below, this is precisely what Thailand's "Yellow Shirts" did in opposition to Thaksin's shocking abuses of power. The result was not democratic consolidation but a military coup. Or, in the language of Figure 2, it was an instance of oligarchic assertion against populist domineering, with muddier implications for democracy than can be captured by the collapse-consolidation continuum.

Similar problems bedevil these books' assessment of Venezuela and Bolivia. Like Thaksin, Presidents Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia force these authors to prioritize either vertical or horizontal accountability if they wish to place these regimes along a collapse-consolidation continuum. Kapstein and Converse lose sight of their theoretical commitment to popular inclusivity in their critical appraisals of both. Chavez is equated with Vladimir Putin—whose regime no area expert would classify as even minimally democratic—and viewed as a leader who "sought to increase executive power at the expense of institutional arrangements" (p. 27). They portray populism's gain as democracy's loss, with Bolivia and Venezuela representing the clearest Latin American cases where democracy "remains malleable, prone to backsliding if not outright reversal" (pp. 77–78). Kapstein and Converse place the blame for this squarely on the populists rather than on the backbreaking inequality that makes populism so appealing. "Frustration at the lack of widespread improvement in living standards

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in Latin America . . . has served to generate substantial popular support for efforts by presidents of all stripes to sweep aside institutional constraints on executive power, purportedly to give them the policy space to tackle pressing problems," they argue. "We believe that such efforts put democracy at risk in the region" (p. 81). It might be more illuminating to posit that democracy's lack of vertical inclusivity has invited attacks against its horizontal constraints.

Diamond clings more tightly to his balanced theoretical emphasis on both vertical and horizontal accountability in making democracy work. On the one hand, the late Hugo Chavez is portrayed as beyond the pale.[21] His presidency saw him "subvert democracy" (p. 25) and assert extraconstitutional powers through "his authoritarian lurch" (p. 68). On the other hand, Diamond recognizes that Chavez's populism has not simply undermined Venezuela's preexisting democracy, but its long-standing *oligarchy*. "Venezuela's long sad political descent had its seeds in the early period of domination by two powerful, factionalized parties that constrained political competition and divided up the oil income," Diamond notes. "The rapidly growing and increasingly impoverished underclass became fed up with its exclusion, and the country tired of the stranglehold on power held by the two dominant political parties" (p. 67). As Diamond pithily argues later, pre-Chavez elitist parties were a consummate example of parties that "collude but do not include" (pp. 300–301). It was this elitist, oligarchic exclusion that allowed Chavez to win power in 1998 on his "radical populist platform" (p. 68). Popular sovereignty was not advanced through a consensually expanding democratic social contract à la Rousseau, but through aggressive plebiscitarian attacks on Venezuela's version of an oligarchic *governo stretto* à la Machiavelli.

Rather than seeing the battle royale between Chavez and Venezuela's traditional parties as one between oligarchy and populism, Diamond shoehorns it into the democratic-authoritarian continuum. "After a long period of democratic decline," he concludes, "Venezuela has descended into authoritarian strongman rule" (p. 176). Chavez is thus said to be acting in the spirit of Schmitt, not Machiavelli. While a defensible claim, it makes Diamond struggle to understand how Venezuelans might support Chavez while continuing to believe in democracy,

[21] A more cynical reader than this author might conclude that Diamond's distaste for Chavez results from his deep professional involvement in American democracy-promotion initiatives. Yet for particularly clear evidence that Diamond is willing to level harsh criticism against American foreign policy whenever he considers it misguided, see Diamond 2005.

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as survey data suggest they do. "The results are paradoxical, because while they seem to suggest public tolerance for Venezuela's democratic regression, they also show comparatively high levels of support for democracy" (p. 83).

This paradox is unraveled by recognizing the tension between vertical and horizontal understandings of democracy, as well as the tendency for sustained periods of oligarchy to make citizens value democracy's promise of popular sovereignty more than its constraints against executive, majoritarian abuses of power. Severe inequality under an unresponsive oligarchy invites voters to pursue the Rousseauian ends of increased inclusion through Machiavellian means. Chavez's supporters do not see his rule as a time of "democratic regression" at all, and with good reason—he appears to them more like a Machiavellian democrat than a Schmittian dictator. Though Diamond later acknowledges that many ordinary Venezuelans might back Chavez because of "his populist mobilization and massive social spending" (p. 178), he does not tie this insight to his theoretical point that democracy requires substantive inclusivity as well as constraints. The analytical confusion only deepens when Diamond praises Bolivia for its "election to the presidency of Evo Morales, a member of the country's long-marginalized indigenous majority" (p. 179). While virtually any Latin Americanist would portray Chavez's Venezuela and Morales's Bolivia as cases shifting in the *same* (populist) direction, Diamond portrays them as moving in *opposite* directions: Bolivia toward a more inclusive democracy and Venezuela toward outright democratic collapse.

When all is said and done, both Diamond and Kapstein and Converse offer state-of-the-art analyses of democratic consolidation and collapse in the wake of democratization's third wave. Due to the recent rarity of democratic breakdown, however, their attentions to democratic survival evolve into questions of democratic substance. They call for an appreciation of the importance of both vertical inclusivity and horizontal constraints in making democracy "worthy of endurance," although their case studies ring somewhat more Madisonian than Rousseauian. More importantly, their works struggle mightily to position cases experiencing severe instability along the collapse-consolidation axis. *This requires greater attentiveness to the potential for democratic politics to careen in ways most clearly envisaged by Machiavelli, and not just to consolidate* à *la Madison or Rousseau or to collapse altogether* à *la Schmitt*. (See Figure 3.) The following case studies demonstrate that a framework centering on the tension between horizontal and vertical

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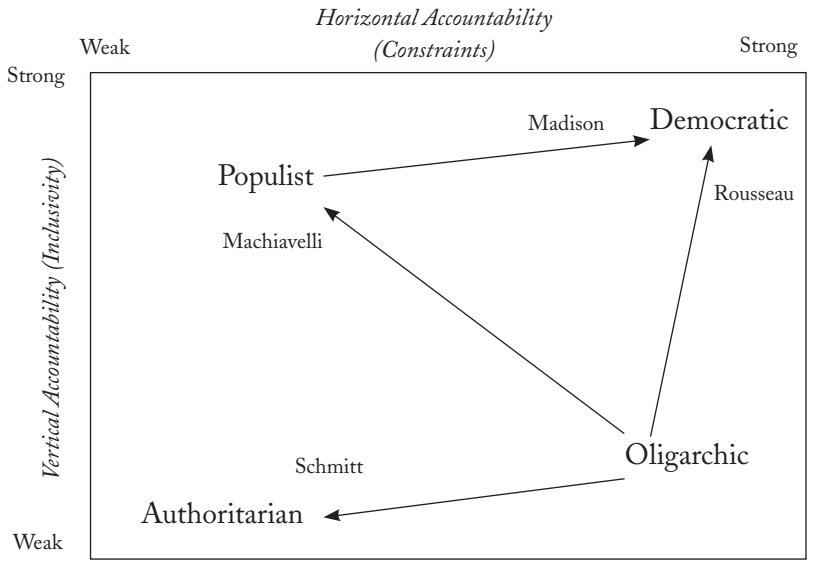


FIGURE 3
ACCOUNTABILITY DYNAMICS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEMOCRATIC THEORY

accountability proves more analytically accurate and useful than a collapse versus consolidation or even a "quality of democracy" approach.[22]

ACCOUNTABILITY DYNAMICS IN ASIA

How democracies careen depends on what kind of democracy they become upon escaping authoritarianism. Recalling the dual (and at times dueling) dimensions of Figures 2 and 3, a newborn democracy may look primarily *oligarchic*, as competitive elections hand power to a relatively narrow and clientelistic elite; *populist*, after a mass movement topples authoritarian rule but lacks mechanisms for constraining its leader's majoritarian and plebiscitarian impulses; or more fully *democratic*, exhibiting both strong institutions for horizontal constraint (such as courts, parliaments, anticorruption and election commissions, and political parties with collective rather than purely charismatic lead-

[22] The arrows in this diagram are not exhaustive but represent the key accountability dynamics being analyzed in this review. The unidirectionality of the arrows is meant to capture the dynamics most closely associated with the listed theorists, not to imply that regimes can move in only that one direction.

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ership), as well as policies, practices, and institutions encouraging the substantive inclusion of the broader population in national political life (such as widespread provision of public goods, citizen protections against electoral intimidation, and a cross-class, nationally encompassing, and programmatic party system). Since such political features are never shaped overnight, these starting points necessarily depend, in turn, on the kind of authoritarianism that preceded the initial democratic transition. Fortunately, both volumes to be reviewed fully recognize the heavy weight of the authoritarian past in these Asian countries' democratic present.

Varieties of Democratic Careening: Thailand and Taiwan

Pasuk and Baker, *Thaksin*

The roots of Thailand's twenty-first-century democratic careening lie in the oligarchic character of all of its twentieth-century regimes, whether soldiers or elected civilians were manning the helm. Unlike many oligarchies, however, the Thai version never had its foundations in the kind of highly concentrated landholdings that permit enduring coercive and clientelistic control over captive peasantries (as in Pakistan and the Philippines, for example). Rather, the Thai elite has historically been centered around an alliance of bureaucratic and military power, which toppled but did not dismantle the absolutist monarchy in the bloodless coup of 1932. It is impossible to understand Thai politics without recognizing the bureaucratic-military-monarchical power elite that has long commanded its upper reaches.

Pasuk and Baker do not offer a chronicle of this old and familiar elite, but of the upstart elite that has come to challenge and threaten its dominance. Although *Thaksin* is, as its title indicates, a biographical work, its subject's rise to wealth and power is situated within a broader trend that commenced in the 1960s and has accelerated ever since: "the rise of business" (pp. 9–12). As Thailand democratized its politics in fits and starts from the 1970s through the 1990s, business elites joined the old oligarchic triumvirate. Urban capitalists bankrolled public officials in exchange for juicy concessions, and provincial businessmen funded the clientelistic vote banks necessary to secure electoral victory in the countryside. As Pasuk and Baker summarize the oligarchic and exclusivist character of Thai electoral politics before the rise of Thaksin:

> . . . popular interests and causes played virtually no role in the new electoral politics. Instead, Thailand evolved a parliamentary system that represented money rather than people. Elections were fought through vote buying, patronage, pork

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> barrel, and professional violence. Parties were ideologically neutral, undifferentiated coalitions of business interests maneuvering for access to power. This pattern delivered the political system into the hands of business. (p. 13)

New activist social forces were emerging in urban and rural areas alike by the early 1990s (pp. 18–19); but Thai political parties almost completely ignored such pressures for increased cross-class political inclusion, and the Thai state pursued no redistributive policies of note. With power shared by elitist party coalitions, and the prime minister typically being a weak figure hemmed in by the demands of patronage-seeking "buffet cabinets," Thai democracy suffered the dysfunctions of oligarchy, not populism.

The year 1997 would be a bellwether, both economically and politically. "Thaksin's rise to power was framed by the 1997 economic crisis and by the new 1997 constitution," Pasuk and Baker note. "In different ways, these two factors rang [sic] down the curtain on the political system that had developed over the past two decades. The crisis wrecked the Democrat Party, the most successful party of the 1990s, and thus created a vacuum that Thaksin was able to fill" (p. 62). The constitution was heralded for its promise to advance both vertical and horizontal accountability. In vertical terms, the constitution greatly strengthened the position of the prime minister, aiming to reduce the executive's dependence on the corruption-ridden elite and enhance its responsiveness to voters. Even more sweeping reforms were introduced on the horizontal dimension. "The constitution of 1997 attacked 'money politics' by setting up a range of new independent bodies to monitor and constrain the politicians," such as "the Election Commission (ECT), which had the power to invalidate elections on grounds of malpractice; the National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC), which investigated corruption charges and oversaw ministers' declaration of assets; and the Constitutional Court, which ruled on any issue relating to the constitution including whether malpractice justified a ban from politics" (pp. 172, 173).

If vertical and horizontal accountability always advanced in tandem, the 1997 constitution should have fostered a Rousseauian deepening of Thai democracy in terms of both inclusivity and constraints. Yet the result would look like a Machiavellian collision between red-clad populist proponents of a *governo largo* and yellow-clad oligarchic defenders of a *governo stretto*.[23] The problem was not that the virtuous

[23] The colors chosen symbolize these political proclivities quite clearly. Yellow in Thailand represents the monarchy, and red represents the people.

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formal democratic institutions in the Thai constitution failed to gain traction because they clashed with the informal iniquities of Thai politics; *it was that institutions for both vertical and horizontal accountability gained ample traction but proved competing rather than complementary*. Thaksin's meteoric rise from "concession hunter" (p. 63) businessman in the 1990s to prime minister in the 2000s would pit emergent populist forces against entrenched oligarchic foes, setting Thai democracy careening in the process.

A Machiavellian challenge to oligarchic rule was by no means preordained by Thaksin's ideological proclivities, however. Ironically, Pasuk and Baker's careful treatment of Thaksin's political beliefs shows how little they mattered for Thailand's populist turn. "The thread running through Thaksin's many incarnations is an opposition to the deadweight of bureaucracy," not any consistent embrace of popular politics (p. 354). Far from riding to power on a leftist-socialist tide, Thaksin first won national elections in January 2001 by pitching his campaign as one of "entrepreneur vs. bureaucrat" (p. 77). With the Democrats discredited by the Asian financial crisis and their subsequent complicity in IMF-imposed reforms, Thaksin recruited leading businessmen-politicians to his new Thai Rak Thai (TRT, Thais Love Thais) party with promises of super-sized patronage and nationalist protection for Thai industry. His landslide 2001 win thus seemed to complete the decades-long "rise of business," cementing its political position within the old ruling oligarchy of monarchy, bureaucracy, and military.

Yet even as "the deployment of money and influence was similar to previous polls, and about half of Thaksin's victorious party consisted of old-fashioned elements in Thai politics" (p. 82), the Thaksin campaign was not simply more of the same. "Business support was not enough. The majority of the Thai electorate still lived in the villages," so "Thaksin made a direct appeal to the rural voter with a policy platform. No previous political leader had done anything similar" (p. 80). Vertical accountability was thus advanced through Thaksin's electoral campaign; but the substance of this advance and its role in the conflict that followed should not be overstated. The TRT's policy proposals were modest in their redistributive intent, centering on "three points: agrarian debt moratorium; revolving fund of 1 million baht for every village; and a 30 baht-per-visit scheme of health care" (p. 82). Such mild redistributive policies cannot account for the viciousness of Thaksin's eventual conflict with old oligarchic forces. In fact, rural redistribution quickly became a source of cross-partisan consensus rather than partisan strife. "The impact of the TRT rural program and particularly

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of the three-point posters was so strong that other parties scrambled to produce their own rural platforms" (p. 84).

The main source of conflict during Thaksin's first term (2001–5) did not arise from any dramatic increase in popular inclusivity; rather, it arose from controversial executive attacks on institutions of horizontal constraint. After narrowly escaping a ban from office on corruption charges in August 2001, Thaksin was unapologetic. "It's strange that the leader who was voted by 11 million people had to bow to the ruling of the NCCC and the verdict of the Constitutional Court, two organizations composed of only appointed commissioners and judges, whom people do not have a chance to choose" (p. 2). Pasuk and Baker painstakingly detail how Thailand's richest and most powerful man then packed Madisonian institutions of constraint with loyalists to become far richer and more powerful as his first term progressed. Thaksin "sabotaged the checks and balances" featured in the 1997 constitution (p. 195), but without losing sight of his deepest source of democratic power. "The minority is the minority," he stated in September 2001. "It is the majority we have to listen to" (p. 191).

Yet through his assaults on civil society, the media, and the bureaucracy, as well as his sophisticated self-enrichment schemes, Thaksin turned many of his original elite supporters into enemies. "Thaksin's base of support, and his meaning as a politician, were changing dramatically," Pasuk and Baker argue. "In the late 1990s, Thaksin had presented himself as a reformer, an agent of change, a defender of domestic capital, and a nationalist. Many of the most fervent supporters of this mission had fallen away, with all the rancor of those disappointed in love. These desertions, and Thaksin's tilt toward populism, made 2004 an axial year" (p. 227).

Thaksin's axial shift was toward Machiavellian populism. Rhetorically, "the modernist 'Think new, act new' slogan of 2001 was replaced by the intensely populist, 'The heart of TRT is the people'" in Thaksin's 2005 campaign. Institutionally, Thaksin "suggested to his audience that the bundle of liberal democracy—rule of law, freedom of criticism, human rights, oversight by parliamentary opposition, checks and balances on the executive—had done little for them in the past. . . . 'We want politics which have something for the people, don't we?'" (p. 232). Substantively, the mild distributive schemes of 2001 became more generous.

> Like many populists in other parts of the world, Thaksin was setting himself up as an opponent of an old establishment of bureaucrats, intellectuals, Democrat

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> politicians, and old-status families who dominated public life and reserved the benefits for themselves. He offered himself as a leader, borne by the direct support of the people, who would defy this elite and spread benefits more widely. He wanted power untrammeled by democratic trimmings in order to deliver on that mission. (p. 234)

Yet the circumstances of Thaksin's conversion from technocrat to populist more accurately suggest the inverse formulation: he needed a populist mission to gain himself power untrammeled. The fact that Thaksin gained such traction with his populist turn was intimately connected to the oligarchic character of the party system, especially its lack of rootedness in the highly populous and ethnically distinctive Northeast. "Thaksin's anti-establishment stance had appeal in a region which had a tradition of cultural and political truculence. The northeasterners, mostly of Lao or Khmer origins, resented being looked down upon as somehow inferior to the 'real Thai'" (pp. 235–36). While the rural Northeast was the epicenter of Thailand's Rousseauian upsurge, the capital city of Bangkok was the heart of its Madisonian backlash. Its initial leader was one of the few Thai businessmen with wealth and connections to rival Thaksin's: Sondhi Limthongkul, who by 2005 "was presenting himself as a defender of 'middle-class' interests threatened by Thaksin's lurch toward populism" (p. 252), arguing that "most people outside the middle class lack sufficient knowledge to understand . . . how populist politicians can abuse power" (p. 253). Such condescension would be abundant in the clash between Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts that followed. While Madisonian Yellows decried their rural counterparts' lack of democratic sophistication, Rousseauian Reds condemned their rivals' antidemocratic proclivities in response.

The primary source of tension was not anyone's antidemocratic practices or attitudes, however. It was the intrinsic tension between democratic inclusivity and constraints, becoming manifest through intense partisan conflict. This conflict erupted not when Thaksin made new redistributive appeals on behalf of the poor, but when he brazenly sold his family's holdings in Shin Corporation, tax free, to the Singaporean government (thus ironically redistributing wealth from ordinary Thai taxpayers into the hands of the richest man in Thailand, namely, himself). It was thus Thaksin's abuse of power, and not his use of power to advance democratic inclusivity, that fanned the embers of partisan conflict into a conflagration. In the electoral and street battles that followed, both sides credibly claimed the mantle of democratic virtue while credibly denying it to their rivals. It was by no means hypocritical or paradoxical that the Yellow Shirts would dub them-

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selves the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), while the Red Shirts styled themselves the United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD). *Since democracy aggregates two such divergent meanings (inclusivity and constraints), such clashes and confusions are a permanent structural possibility written into the very logic of democracy itself.*

Consider the accountability dynamics that preceded and prompted the anti-Thaksin coup of September 2006. After Thaksin's reelection in early 2005, corruption investigations by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the press swelled. "Criticism was directed not only at corruption but the government's attempts to protect itself from investigation" (p. 247), through the packing of constraining institutions with Thaksin loyalists. This left Thaksin's rivals grasping for strategies to combat his anti-Madisonian actions through constitutional means. "PAD proposed to impeach Thaksin over the Shin Corp sale but the Constitutional Court, still packed with Thaksin's men, refused to accept the suit" (p. 268). Thaksin's call in February 2006 for fresh elections could not break the deadlock, since "[t]he ECT was widely seen as being in Thaksin's pocket," and the opposition boycotted the polls (p. 271). In a Rousseauian sense, Thaksin could reasonably claim: "I'm the symbol of democracy" (p. 277). But when he was overthrown, the official coup statement could just as reasonably assert that Thaksin was guilty of "widespread corruption and malfeasance in government administration" and of making "independent institutions subject to such political domination that they are unable to fulfill their intended constitutional role" (p. 285).

This suggests the need for a new interpretation of Thailand's "democratic collapse." To be sure, a freely elected government was toppled by force, and the coup was followed by a year-long period of martial law marked by increased military repression in the Northeast, aimed at ripping up Thaksin's deepest sources of grassroots support (pp. 299–304). Yet "democratic collapse" exaggerates both the degree to which democracy was functionally operative at the time of the coup and the authoritarian intentions and effects of the coup makers themselves. Even the militarization of the December 2007 election is open to competing interpretations, as junta leader Sonthi Boonyaratklin "visited the election commissioners and ordered them to be strict about enforcing election laws and preventing vote-buying" (p. 309). In the language of this article, democracy had been careening throughout Thaksin's time in office (especially from 2004 to 2006) and then capsized with the September coup. The most decisive shifts were never between democracy and authoritarianism; they were between populism and oligarchy.

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The "restoration" of democracy with the December 2007 elections by no means ended Thailand's era of democratic careening. Horizontal and vertical accountability remained in active conflict. "In mid 2007, the judicial onslaught on Thaksin and TRT began" (p. 296) and gathered steam upon Thaksin's return to Bangkok in February 2008. "It soon became clear" that the new pro-Thaksin government aimed "to block the judicial onslaught on Thaksin by the Assets Examination Committee (AEC). Several key officials in the judicial proceedings were removed" (p. 317). The Yellow Shirt movement emerged in the train of these perceived abuses of power, as "PAD announced that it would restart its protests to counter interference with the AEC and the courts" (p. 320). This sparked the birth of the UDD-linked Red Shirts, dressed accordingly because red "is the color representing the people in the Thai tricolor national flag" (p. 337). The Constitutional Court banned the TRT's successor party in December 2008, paving the way for the Democrats' return to power, at which point the Red Shirts mobilized to overthrow the Democrats just as the Yellow Shirts had done with Thaksin. At Red Shirt rallies, "people talked with passion about injustice, double standards, the weight of the bureaucratic polity, the distorting effect of 'influence' (*sen*) in Thai society, and the chance for 'full democracy'" (p. 348). Only brutal crackdowns on the Red Shirts in April 2009 and in April–May 2010 could empty the streets, if not exactly calm them. By 2011 a settlement would finally be reached whereby elections would be restored and a pro-Thaksin government allowed to regain office under the watchful eyes of the military, the monarchy, and the increasingly activist court system.

How one assesses the Thai regime today inevitably remains a question of interpretation. At the heart of this interpretive battle lies the monarchy. Whereas the forces of Yellow see the king as Thailand's "Supreme Ombudsman" (p. 359)—that is, as the country's supreme expression of horizontal accountability—Red forces increasingly perceive the monarchy as the embodiment of feudalistic authoritarianism. The king evidently sees the greatest hope for preserving "the Democratic System with the King as Head of State" in an expanded role for the conservative Thai courts. Yet this merely shifts the old tension between horizontal and vertical accountability to a new institutional setting, as "skeptics fear . . . that judicial activism will join coups, backstairs intrigue, and intimidation as weapons of those who fear the unfettered workings of democracy" (p. 367). Regardless of one's interpretation, the most dramatic recent movement in the Thai regime has been between oligarchy and populism, and not any deepening consolidation or decisive collapse of democratic politics.

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MATTLIN, *POLITICIZED SOCIETY*

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed democratic careening in Taiwan as well as in Thailand. The colors were different—Blue scuffling with Green rather than Red battling Yellow—but the atmospherics of polarization and interinstitutional combat were at least superficially very much alike. "Taiwan has been described as a best-case democratization in which most of the conventional prerequisites for successful democratization . . . were in place at the onset of political reform" (p. 14), yet this has not inoculated it from democratic careening. This section argues that, while Thailand was experiencing Machiavellian careening between populism and oligarchy, Taiwan's careening was of a Madisonian variety. The forces of Taiwanese populism were not pitted against an exclusivist oligarchy, but instead confronted a long-ruling elite that had built deep cross-class support of its own under authoritarian rule. The clash centered on which democratic institutions should possess the lion's share of political power, and not on which social forces had a leading rightful role in Taiwanese democracy. This has given Taiwan better raw material than Thailand for escaping its era of careening.

Politicized Society is a learned chronicle of this tumultuous era in Taiwanese politics. Pitching his arguments more comparatively and theoretically than Pasuk and Baker, Mattlin frets that Taiwan is one of many "transitional societies where politics seems to be permanently turbulent" (p. 6), comparable to cases such as Thailand, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Venezuela. Similar to this article, *Politicized Society* argues that the "democratic breakdown" paradigm cannot apprehend these dynamics. "The danger of an outright relapse into authoritarianism or breakdown of the democratic system does not seem great this time around" (p. 16), in Taiwan or elsewhere. In part this is because it is democracy's own institutions and practices that appear to be roiling democracy itself. "An increasingly common phenomenon is the undermining of democratic systems from within the system itself by the very processes that are supposed to support the system" (p. 2), Mattlin astutely notes. What needs to be better theorized are the phenomena of "populism, polarization, politicization and political instability," he contends. "Our grasp of what causes this systemic instability and of the nature of the new post-authoritarian states is still inadequate" (p. 16).

In a promising move, Mattlin delves deeply into authoritarian legacies to explain Taiwan's "structural politicization" (p. 2), in which partisan conflict between backers of the old ruling Kuomintang (KMT, or

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"pan-blues") and the ascendant Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, or "pan-greens") suffuses society and takes on a zero-sum, intolerant feel. These authoritarian legacies cannot be reduced to any single variable for Mattlin (see p. 236); but in the broadest terms, the destructive intensity of partisan conflict has its roots in the *sharp and ethnicized regime cleavage* that characterized the KMT's fifty-year reign. This "clear and venomous political cleavage" (p. 238) was first violently carved during the "2/28 Incident" in 1947, when the mainlander KMT government crushed local Taiwanese resistance and established its firm grip over its island of exile. "The perception among many native Taiwanese is that the KMT government systematically wiped out the local political and intellectual elite during this time" (p. 36). The KMT thus consolidated power throughout the 1950s and 1960s, not only as a Leninist party and developmental state whose sinews reached into every corner of Taiwanese society, but also as an ethnicized expression of alien rule. "During the first decades of KMT rule, there was a relatively clear ethnic division of political power," Mattlin summarizes. "The mainlanders dominated the central administration and the institutions of national political power," while only "[l]ocal politicians were primarily native Taiwanese" (pp. 44–45).

Yet the KMT also took critical steps to temper the oligarchic and exclusionary character of single-party authoritarianism, making Taiwan less prone to Machiavellian careening upon democratization than Thailand. Of utmost importance during the KMT's early years in power was land reform. "Prior to the land reform, the land ownership structure had been quite stable, and relatively concentrated in the hands of a small minority of large landholders," Mattlin notes. "Politically, the land reform was successful in terms of removing local gentry from the land, their source of wealth and power, and in creating a political vacuum then filled by local factions" (p. 36). There would thus be no consolidated landholding elite, à la the Philippines or Venezuela, to serve as the ready-made target for a plebiscitarian populist à la Joseph Estrada or Hugo Chavez when KMT hegemony began to fray in the 1980s and 1990s. The Taiwanese countryside would become an abode of party power, not feudal power, since "almost all local faction politicians were running as KMT candidates" (p. 48).

Important as it was that the KMT party-state extended its tentacles into the countryside, it was of even greater long-term significance that the KMT itself became "indigenized" or "Taiwanized" over time. "A localization policy was launched by former president Chiang Ching-kuo in the 1970s" (p. 45) and gained momentum throughout his term in

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office (1978–88). This allowed native Taiwanese to percolate up from their majority status in the lower ranks and local branches of the KMT to the point where Lee Teng-hui, a native-born Taiwanese, could succeed Chiang as president of the KMT and the republic itself by 1988. The upshot was that "the KMT gradually developed a mass-party character, actively recruiting members of diverse social strata," Mattlin writes. "By the 1990s, the KMT indeed had achieved a relatively broad and balanced mix of supporters among various social sectors" (p. 44). Having initially consolidated power as a mainlander-dominated *governo stretto*, the KMT evolved into a *governo largo* in which ordinary native Taiwanese had expanding access to political resources. When Taiwan's *dangwai* (or "outside the party") movement emerged in the late 1970s and evolved into the DPP by the mid-1980s, there were relatively limited social forces "outside the party" to mobilize against authoritarian rule, due to "the KMT's extraordinarily broad social foundation" (p. 17).

Taiwan thus underwent a radically different experience with authoritarian ruling-party development than Thailand. When Thaksin rose to power, even his mildly populist appeals spread like wildfire across the countryside, particularly among previously demobilized ethnic-minority populations in the impoverished Northeast. Against the backdrop of an exclusivist, elitist ruling oligarchy housed in the bureaucracy, military, and monarchy, Thaksin's TRT faced little old-guard pushback from the party system, with the important exception of the royalist Democrats with their historic strength in Bangkok and the South. When the DPP unexpectedly captured the presidency behind Chen Shui-bian in 2000, it confronted a rival in the KMT that had no Thai parallel.

The KMT remained a deeply rooted and entrenched party colossus even after losing the presidency—not only in society but also within the governing apparatus. The KMT had been well positioned to dictate processes of constitutional reform from a position of strength throughout the 1990s. With its dominance in the executive and legislative branches alike, the KMT gradually crafted a new democratic constitution that invested substantial powers in both parliament and the presidency. "Just as significant as the expanding scope of elections was the increased powers of the presidency, and the enhanced role of the Legislative Yuan" (p. 57). Although Taiwan would democratize with a different electoral system than Thailand (semipresidential versus pure parliamentary), its constitution would similarly promise to advance vertical accountability through a strengthened chief executive, as well as horizontal accountability through more powerful constraining institutions.

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Once again, if vertical and horizontal accountability always advanced in tandem, Taiwan would have been perfectly positioned for democratic deepening and consolidation in the 2000s. Yet the coexistence of a powerful presidency and parliament meant, instead, that "the stage was set for a showdown between these two institutions once they were in the hands of separate political camps" (p. 61).

These authoritarian legacies would profoundly shape the dynamics of democratic careening. Since the KMT had made great strides in mobilizing a cross-class, cross-region, and cross-ethnic membership, the DPP's presidential win brought an entirely new *political party*, but not entirely new *social groups*, into power. In terms of Rousseauian inclusivity, Taiwan's democratic transition had been more substantively democratic than Thailand's transition to a business-dominated electoral oligarchy in the 1980s and 1990s. This meant that new president Chen's populist appeals would necessarily be targeted more at the powerful institutions of horizontal constraint that the KMT still controlled than toward the kind of exclusivist ruling oligarchy targeted by Thaksin. As graphically depicted in Figure 3, careening in Taiwan would be more Madisonian than Machiavellian.

Mattlin devotes chapter 4 of *Politicized Society* to deep case studies of four particularly intense partisan disputes during the Chen Shui-bian years (2000–2008). Although the issues at stake were diverse, the common terrain of battle in each instance was the very meaning of democratic politics: would decisions be made through the invocation of popular will, or through observing the sanctity of constitutional process? What Mattlin calls "first blood" (p. 129) was drawn in a dispute over whether to complete construction of a nuclear plant that the KMT had commenced but the DPP had long opposed. DPP supporters viewed the issue in Rousseauian terms, as "it symbolizes the old one-party state way of making big policy decisions: heavy-handedly, catering to business interests and oblivious of local residents' concerns" (p. 130). Having been "formed under the slogan 'a government for all the people,'" the DPP-led administration portrayed the stoppage of construction as a litmus test for whether it would "be able to make good on its promises of being different from its predecessor by . . . truly representing the public will" (p. 131).

As in Thailand, rising populist forces in Taiwan were pitching their agenda as an expression of rising democracy against fading oligarchy. Also as in Thailand, they met firm resistance from Madisonian institutions of horizontal constraint bolstered by recent constitutional reforms. "According to the constitution, the project could legally only be

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terminated after a motion initiated by the Executive Yuan had been approved by the Legislative Yuan" (p. 136). When the DPP government announced a suspension of construction, the KMT struck back. "Opposition lawmakers had first threatened to stall the passing of the 2001 annual budget if construction was stopped," Mattlin reports. "Only a day after the decision had been passed, they upped the ante by threatening to launch a motion to recall the president and vice-president, or alternatively vote for a reshuffle of the cabinet" (p. 137). After Taiwan's supreme court criticized the DPP's handling of the issue, and the KMT-led parliament insisted that construction be resumed, "the cabinet backed off and decided to resume construction on the plant. However, in announcing the decision, the premier simultaneously resolved to make the passage of a referendum law the government's top priority, in order to enable resolution of political disputes in the future by directly asking the public's opinion" (p. 138). Mattlin goes so far as to equate the DPP's populist referenda with the practices of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez (pp. 161–62). Even if Chen was less Machiavellian than Chavez, the nuclear controversy would "set the tone for the entire period of DPP rule" (p. 139), with the DPP's populism directly confronting the KMT's proceduralism. "While now in power, the ruling party continued also to 'fight in the streets' with political tactics more common to populist opposition parties," Mattlin notes. Horizontal constraints accelerated such populist adventurism, as "the more opposition obstruction the DPP president and cabinets encountered, the more the party reverted to its old opposition tactics" (p. 135).

The KMT had more than "obstructionist gunpowder" in its arsenal, however (p. 206). With popular backing that rivaled or surpassed the DPP's, the KMT possessed imposing strengths that were vertical as well as horizontal. KMT leaders were therefore confident that they could recapture the presidency in 2004. The circumstances of their failure to do so would only worsen Taiwan's democratic careening, as the KMT-led pan-blues "accused the DPP of 'stealing' by allegedly staging a shooting of the president and vice-president on the eve of the election." The DPP's Rousseauian righteousness was thus pitted against KMT accusations that the DPP had committed the original Madisonian sin: abuse of executive power. "The election marked an important political milestone," Mattlin argues. "During the second Chen term, the pan-blues engaged in an all-out political war to block most major government initiatives and to bring down Chen, one way or another. The period between the run-up to the 2004 election and the 2006 effort to recall the president can be regarded as the high point of Taiwan's politicization" (p. 145).

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Yet the forces of Taiwan's ancien régime were not as relegated as their Thai counterparts to toppling their populist rivals "one way or another." They had multiple tools for parrying the DPP challenge that were democratic in letter and spirit, especially in its Madisonian sense. First, the KMT used its legislative majority to prevent President Chen from packing institutions of horizontal constraint with his own loyalists. "Some of the biggest political battles have been waged over three politically appointed organs, the Control Yuan, the Central Election Commission and the National Communications Commission" (p. 146). Perhaps the "overarching theme of Chen Shui-bian's time in power was his difficulty in getting things done" (p. 167). Second, the pan-blues could back up their horizontal blocking strength with street power of their own, as seen in the recurrent color-splashed mobilization-countermobilization cycles that roiled Chen's second term. This countermobilizing potential was most dramatically witnessed when the DPP commemorated the anniversary of the 2/28 Incident by mobilizing an estimated two million pan-greens into a human chain "that ran 486 kilometers from the island's northernmost point to its southernmost cape." Yet "the pan-blue camp managed to pull its ranks together and countered two weeks later with an equally massive mobilization in the 13 March rally, also bringing an estimated two million people to the streets" (p. 214).

This street strength foreshadowed the KMT's third and most important strength: its electoral might. The pan-blues first flexed their mass muscles in the multiple popular referenda that the DPP called "to harness the popular will in order to bypass the representative institutions that were not working in its favor" (p. 162). Rather than rejecting referenda entirely, the KMT used its parliamentary majority to constrain potential excesses in the referendum bill. "Pan-green supporters . . . call[ed] it a piece of 'birdcage legislation' given the many restrictions it imposed on referenda" (p. 164). Ultimately the KMT even learned to play the referendum game itself, in the service of its core institutional aim: imposing horizontal accountability on DPP populism. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, "the KMT . . . launched a competing drive to hold a referendum to counter the DPP referendum. The topic? Leadership corruption" (p. 169). Hence in response to the DPP's Rousseauian referenda, "the old rulers and their loyal supporters also took up the gauntlet and waged an equally heroic fight—in their eyes" (p. 217). This fight can credibly be claimed to be "heroic," because it can credibly be pitched as protecting the Madisonian side of Taiwanese democracy and not only as restoring KMT domination.

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The KMT's electoral prowess would be witnessed in the 2008 elections that returned it to unchecked national power. It is here where the parallels between Taiwan and Thailand most obviously break down. As in Thailand, emergent populists used street power to battle an old guard that remained entrenched in state institutions even after full democratization. Neither side in either case could ever unambiguously be positioned as the sole party of democratic principle in these "color conflicts." The populist side in both Thailand and Taiwan consistently pursued policies and tactics that favored the expansion of executive powers through plebiscitarian appeals, while ancien régime forces became outspoken (if not perfectly principled) defenders of the Madisonian institutions that could check their rivals. Vertical and horizontal accountability thus came into conflict as surely in Taiwan as in Thailand. Yet democracy never collapsed or even briefly "capsized." With the exception of one 2007 speech when Chen Shui-bian "left people with the impression that he was contemplating even martial law to resolve the standoff" between pan-blue and pan-green (p. 171), neither side flirted with the kind of emergency actions that restore outright authoritarianism in a Schmittian sense.

If any single factor explains why Taiwanese democracy (unlike Thai democracy) ceased careening without capsizing, it is that the KMT was able to defend itself in the electoral realm in a manner that no old-guard force in Thailand could rival. Even after its razor-thin loss in the 2004 presidential election, the KMT bided its time, undermining Chen's DPP administration in every imaginable (yet constitutional) manner while waiting for its next shot at the presidency. Its historically established cross-cutting constituencies proved too much for the DPP to withstand. Since the DPP's populism was expressed as much through undermining horizontal accountability as through advancing vertical accountability, the KMT simply needed to recapture the presidency to bring the era of interinstitutional combat to an end. With its landslide victories in 2008 and 2012, the KMT escaped Taiwan's era of democratic careening through winning freely competitive national elections: a route back to power that old-guard oligarchic Thai elites can currently only dream of traveling themselves.

Further Research: Explaining Careening and Its Absence

Any democracy can careen, but not all democracies do. The cases of Thailand and Taiwan are extremely helpful for establishing the first point, as well as for exploring subtle variation in how different democracies

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careen. Economically speaking, both are middle- to upper-income countries with impressive histories of economic growth and reduction of extreme poverty. Politically speaking, both underwent very gradual processes of democratization culminating in model constitutions that balanced powers across various democratic institutions. Neither is remotely close to being a "failed state." Hence if Thailand and Taiwan can careen, what young democracy cannot?

These two cases also careened in informatively distinctive ways. Populist swings commenced careening dynamics in both cases, yet only in Thailand did this entail an attempted decisive transformation from what Machiavelli called a *governo stretto* into a *governo largo*. Since the KMT had done far more than Thailand's long line of military and technocratic rulers to expand substantive mass inclusion, it was less vulnerable to populist attacks than Thailand's old guard after surrendering elective office. Careening entailed a partisan fight over which democratic institutions would wield the power to make authoritative decisions and constrain the power of other elites. It would not devolve into a Thai-style fight over the very value and practice of popular sovereignty itself.

These two Asian cases are somewhat less useful, however, for explaining why some democracies careen while others do not. Space considerations unfortunately prevent me from including a "negative case"—that is, a noncareening case—in this review. This is clearly a subject for further and broader comparative research. Even here, however, Taiwan remains informative in that it ceased careening after 2008, offering lessons as to the factors that might mitigate if not preclude the possibility for democratic careening. Of particular importance, it would appear, are two factors. The first is *the electoral strength of the old guard* that confronts a new populist challenge. In intriguingly parallel fashion to nineteenth-century and interwar Europe, old-guard parties in Asia have embraced rather than resisted a gradual shift toward genuine popular sovereignty when they enjoyed enough cross-class support to thrive under more democratic conditions.[24] Democratic stability rests upon the readiness of oligarchies to expand substantive access to the political system, not simply upon the willingness of rising opposition to "work within the system."

A second comparative lesson is the importance of *nation-building for overcoming categorical inequalities*. Wherever entire groups perceive themselves as excluded from political access and influence, whether

[24] Ziblatt forthcoming. See also Slater and Wong 2013.

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under fully authoritarian or more oligarchic but competitively electoral conditions, they become ideal social tinder for populist wildfires. Class-based exclusion alone might suffice to spawn Machiavellian careening in some instances; but its combination with exclusion on more ascriptive bases—ethnicity, religion, race, or even region—appears to predispose polities most strongly toward populist upsurges. It is no coincidence that the strongest expressions of populism in post–Cold War Latin America have taken the form of "ethnopopulism" in cases such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.[25] Contrarily, the relative success of nation-building and relative manageability of ethnic animosities might help explain why populism has gained so little traction in a highly unequal setting such as the Philippines, and why Thailand's old guard has managed to craft at least an unsteady modus operandi with Thaksin's popularly elected proxies, if not with Thaksin himself.

In the essential search for informative negative cases, researchers might well begin with the three largest democracies in the developing world: Brazil, India, and Indonesia. All three are stricken with enormous impoverished populations, yet democratic inclusion has generally advanced thus far without destabilizing populist attacks upon Madisonian democratic constraints—if hardly without variation across subnational units and across time.[26] The inclusive legacies of nationalist revolutions in India and Indonesia may have proved especially important in making those countries less substantively oligarchic than they otherwise would have been.[27] It has seemingly taken an extraordinarily well organized labor party and civil society in Brazil to accomplish even more impressive Rousseauian gains. Perhaps the sheer scale of these cases has also helped, as territorial scope and demographic diversity complicate the rise of any majoritarian populist challenger.

Regardless of what best explains the apparent relative avoidance of democratic careening in contemporary Brazil, India, and Indonesia, the cases of Thailand and Taiwan strongly suggest that any notion of definitive "democratic consolidation" remains something of a misnomer. Especially when democracies are either born with deeply oligarchic and exclusivist traits or drift in decisively oligarchic and exclusivist

[25] Madrid 2008; Van Cott 2009.

[26] Indira Gandhi is the most obvious historical example of an Indian leader whose populist domineering during the Emergency period made democracy careen and briefly capsize. Contemporary chief ministers such as Modi in Gujarat and Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh might also be considered to have unleashed distinctive types of careening dynamics at the state level. In Indonesia the strongest specter of destabilizing populism currently emanates from the Gerindra (Great Indonesia Movement) Party fronted by retired general Prabowo Subianto, the once-disgraced son-in-law of ex-dictator Suharto; Slater and Simmons 2013.

[27] Tudor and Slater 2013.

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directions, they become highly vulnerable to the kind of populist upsurges that can make democracies careen and capsize, if rarely collapse entirely.

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