Measuring Political Democracy in Latin America: A Discussion of the Fitzgibbon-Johnson Image-Index

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Introduction

From a regional point of view, a dramatic political change has taken place in Latin America during the last ten years. The most visible manifestation of this change is that, while in July 1979 only three of the Latin American mainland countries were ruled by elected civilian governments, by the end of 1989, fifteen out of the seventeen nations had elected civilian governments. Only Chile and Panama are, at the time of writing (October 1989), directly ruled by non-elected military regimes, although Panama has a civilian marionette as president.

In the academic literature this political phenomenon is given different names. While some analysts speak quite dramatically of the breakdown of military authoritarianism (Richards, 1986) or the democratization of Latin America (Drake & Silva, 1986), others are more cautios and call it a transition from authoritarian rule (O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986) or a retreat of the generals (O'Brien & Cammack, 1985). Scholars who study the phenomenon from a historical perspective often emphasize the cyclical political shifts between democracy and dictatorship in Latin American political history. The contemporary change, they suggest, fits within a historical pattern and should, consequently, be called a redemocratization of the region (Remmer, 1985; Lopez & Stohl, 1987).

One main reason why analysts do not agree on what to call the political change in the 1980s is, of course, disagreement about the definition of democracy. Nef (1986), for example, rejects the concept of democratization altogether and prefers to define the contemporary phenomenon as "the modernization of the status quo". Consequently, for Nef, the formal elections and civil governments have nothing to do with real democracy, but are only means used by the Latin American power-holders to contain explosive social tensions.

This essay is an attempt to find an operationalization which is simple and useful for the systematic comparative research that is necessary in order to decide to what degree it is justified to speak about Latin American democratization, redemocratization and authoritarianization. More precisely, the purpose of the article is to analyse the usefulness for empirical research of the Fitzgibbon-Johnson quinquennial measurement of Latin American political democracy. This analysis will be made by comparing the F-J index with other measurements of Latin American political regimes, and by checking the sensitivity of the index to important political events and changes in Latin America during the period under study. The motive for the study is the conviction that the F-J index is the most elaborate effort at quantification of Latin American political change, and, consequently, that it should be thoroughly scrutinized and tested by scholars who search for a good operationalization of their dependent variable when they analyse political trends in Latin America.

The Fitzgibbon-Johnson Image-Index: A Presentation

The Motive

In 1945 Russell Fitzgibbon undertook, for the first time, a survey among U.S. specialists in order to "establish a system to measure roughly the democratic attainment of the twenty Latin American states" (Fitzgibbon, 1951: 517). The underlying objectives were to "secure a detached and presumably impartial opinion" and to reduce "political phenomena to their essential components in order to make assessment valid and, in-

deed, possible" (ibid: 517). Obviously, the survey was an attempt by Fitzgibbon to spread the use of statistical tools which he believed could "profitably be applied" in political science (Fitzgibbon, 1956: 607), and which he thought would give "a means of refining and confirming subjective and intuitive conclusions which must otherwise by their subjectivity and intuitiveness remain partially unsatisfactory" (Fitzgibbon & Johnson, 1965: 129).

There is no doubt that one motive of the early surveys was to search for an objective measurement of the state of democracy and the political trends in the Latin American nations. However, after much criticism had been raised against the limitations of the index because of, among other things, its inherent subjectivity (Cutright, 1963: 253; Kling, 1964: 186–87) Fitzgibbon's collaborator, Kenneth Johnson, seems to have changed the primary purpose:

> ... if we cannot readily measure the state of democracy with the longitudinal Fitzgibbon-Johnson Index, at least we can better understand the scholarly views that have helped to influence public opinion and policy (in the U.S.) as well as to shape intellectual outlooks. (Johnson, 1976A:356).

From 1975 onwards, Kenneth Johnson emphasizes that he is measuring the scholarly images or reputational status of political democracy in Latin America, instead of "democracy as such" (Johnson, 1976B: 133; Johnson, 1982: 197; Johnson & Kelly, 1986: 20). The following discussion, however, will deal with the question of the possibility of using the F-J index as a measurement of political democracy per se in Latin America.

The Method

The original F-J index is based on fifteen criteria for democratic achievement, which Fitzgibbon considered to be "somewhat tailored to meet the particular circumstances of ... Latin America" (Fitzgibbon, 1956: 608). All of the components do not measure political democracy directly, but rather economic or social democracy. According to Fitzgibbon, however, "they all seemed to contribute to the determination of the total picture of political democracy, whether directly or only indirectly" (ibid: 608). The fifteen criteria are as follows:

1. An educational level sufficient to give the political process some substance and vitality.
2. A fairly adequate standard of living and reasonable well-balanced economic life.
3. A sense of internal unity and national cohesion.
4. Belief by the people in their political dignity and maturity.
5. Absence of foreign domination.
6. Freedom of the press, speech, assembly, radio, etc.
7. Free elections – honestly counted votes.
8. Freedom of party organization; genuine and effective party opposition in the legislature; legislative scrutiny of the executive branch.
9. An independent judiciary – respect for its decisions.
10. Public awareness of the collection and expenditure of governmental funds.
11. Intelligent attitude toward social legislation – the vitality of such legislation as applied.
12. Civilian supremacy over the military.
13. Reasonable freedom of political life from the impact of ecclesiastical controls.
14. Attitude toward and development of technical and scientific governmental administration.
15. Intelligent and sympathetic administration of whatever local self-government prevails. (Johnson, 1976A:362–364)

The participants in the quinquennial surveys rank the twenty states by marking excellent, good, average, poor and insignificant achievement on each point. Each rating is then evaluated from five (excellent) to one point (insignificant) and the results are presented as a numerical index of democratic achievement in Latin America every five years.

In 1945 and 1950 ten U.S. social scientists with a major interest in Latin American politics and governments were selected to participate in the surveys. The number of participants was doubled in 1955 and doubled once again in 1960. Since then the number of respondents has varied.

In the 1970 and 1975 polls, a panel of Latin American scholars and journalists participated. However, when several participants were seriously threatended by right-wing death squads as well as extreme left-wing groups, and when United States espionage activity was disclosed, Johnson decided to rely solely on experts from the U.S. in the following surveys (Johnson, 1977: 90). The 1970 results published by Johnson, and presented in this paper, include the Latin American respondents.

The Revised Index

Since considerable criticism of the validity of this complex 15-component index of democracy has been raised (Lipset, 1964:48; Needler, 1968:889; see also Vanhanen, 1984: 25), Johnson has established a set of five select criteria in order to provide a more accurate measurement of political democracy (Johnson, 1976 A: 133). The critics suggested that the original index did not represent a purely political dimension as it included economic and social variables, and, accordingly, that its usefulness as a measure of democracy was limited. However, no such criticism should be levelled against the revised index which includes the following components:

6. Freedom of press, speech etc;
7. Free elections;
8. Free party organization;
9. Independent judiciary;
12. Civilian supremacy over the military.

According to Johnson, the first four criteria are soundly rooted in political theory, while the issue of civilian supremacy causes some debate (Johnson, 1976 A: 356; 1976 B: 311). Doubtlessly, free elections, party competition, and civil liberties, are the most common criteria for measuring political democracy, whereas the civilian supremacy component is used very rarely in empirical studies (1). However, the existence of an independent judiciary also seems to be a rarely used indicator of political democracy (2).

When Johnson seeks arguments for including the component of civilian supremacy, he uses the suggestion of Hannah Arendt that violence, when used in connection, with power, can be justifiable but never legitimate. Therefore, the military with their monopoly of violence may govern to foster social democracy but never political democracy.

> In Latin America, power exercised through violence is common. If legitimate power is replaced by violence . . . then the inevitable result is terror, i. e. 'the form of government that comes into being when violence, having destroyed all power, does not abdicate but, on the contrary, remains in full control'. Thus, violence has become a way of political 'life' in certain Latin American countries, and this cannot help but influence the scholarly image of democracy, depending upon one's degree of familiarity with the given country. (Johnson, 1976 B: 131)

There is no doubt that the revision of the F-J index has made it more useful for analyses of "pure" political phenomena. The revised index may be compared with other more or less well-known measures of political democracy in order to check its validity and to estimate its advantages and disadvantages. Before that, however, some relevant results from the nine image-index surveys will be presented.

The Results of the Revised Index

The standard definition of Latin America encompasses precisely those twenty nations included in the Fitzgibbon-Johnson index (Wilkie et al, 1988: X). For practical reasons, however, this article has been limited to political trends only in the seventeen mainland states of Latin America. Hence, the Caribbean states of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti are not dealt with in the following discussion.

To make comparison between the different surveys possible, the results are presented as equalized raw scores, i. e. data that account for the different numbers of respondents each year. This means that the 1955 scores are divided by two (20 respondents), the 1960 scores by four (40 respondents), and so on, in order to make them comparable with the results of the first two surveys. The minimum equalized point-score for each country each year is 50 (5 points × 10 respondents) while the maximum point-score is 250 (25 points × 10 respondents).

Regional Trends

The often emphasized cyclical political development of Latin America (Blakemore, 1985; Huntington, 1984; Martz, 1987; Remmer, 1985; Rouquié, 1986; Lopez & Stohl, 1987; Seligson, 1987) is strikingly evident when the point-scores of the seventeen states under study are added and presented as a graph (Figure 1). The scholarly image of Latin America during the second half of the 1950s and the early 1980s is a region which moves towards democracy, whereas the image of the 1960s and early 1970s is that of a continent on its way towards dictatorship. Thus, if the F-J index is treated as an interval scale it follows that the political change during the 1980s can be described as a redemocratization of Latin America.

Figure 1 Latin American political trends 1945–1985: the sum totals of the F-J equalized raw scores for 17 Latin American states.

A country-by-country analysis of the quinquennial changes in scores shows that the within-region variations are considerable. However, the three conspicuous political trends, i.e. the democratization of the late 1950s, the movement toward dictatorship between 1965 and 1975, and the redemocratization of the early 1980s, seem to have had an impact on almost every Latin American republic.

Within the five year period 1955–1960 all of the countries except Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay became more democratic, according to the F-J index. At least five out of these fourteen republics experienced great progress in terms of democratic achievement: Argentina which improved by 116 points, Venezuela by 104 points, Peru by 94, Colombia by 69, and Guatemala by 41 poinst.

The country-by-country analysis of the F-J index also gives a fairly clear-cut picture of the setback to democracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the 1970 survey, thirteen out of the seventeen countries got a lower score than five years earlier, whereas three of them increased their points slightly (Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay), and one got the same point-score (Honduras). The tendency remained in 1975 although Argentina, once again, had made a jump towards political democracy (+49) and Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia had made some further progress towards greater democracy.

The most unambiguous regional political trend is the redemocratization in the first half of the 1980s. Between 1980 and 1985 every Latin American state under study improved its point-score in the F-J image-index. At first glance it may seem as if the range of this regional political change was limited, since nine of the countries increased their scores by less than 20 points. A closer examination of the point changes of these countries, however, reveals that the democratization trend

Table 1 The Revised Fitzgibbon-Johnson Image-Index: equalized raw scores for seventeen Latin American states, 1945–1985

Country	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985
Argentina	155	106	93	209	190	113	162	90	204
Bolivia	92	115	114	139	118	116	91	84	140
Brazil	120	184	200	200	165	102	90	115	173
Chile	221	228	225	232	239	214	77	76	79
Colombia	221	174	136	205	205	188	204	200	213
Costa Rica	231	219	232	237	240	212	232	237	250
Ecuador	120	170	159	184	139	153	109	163	187
El Salvador	112	109	139	148	149	137	124	92	115
Guatemala	128	142	113	154	128	137	111	93	94
Honduras	84	166	133	142	123	123	101	119	142
Mexico	159	161	190	195	199	178	182	184	195
Nicaragua	93	83	78	93	116	109	89	141	149
Panama	172	143	150	165	173	113	107	125	168
Paraguay	83	81	83	67	79	88	74	71	80
Peru	158	106	88	182	179	127	97	178	189
Uruguay	233	240	248	241	239	209	127	89	178
Venezuela	154	118	89	193	207	200	221	224	238

Sources: Johnson, 1976 A: 360; Johnson, 1976 B: 137; Johnson, 1982: 199; Johnson & Kelly, 1986: 21

encompassed almost the whole region. Two of these nine states, Nicaragua and Peru, had experienced their democratic "booms" just before the 1980 survey, whereas four countries continued to take small steps towards the maximum points (Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico). This leaves Guatemala (+1), Paraguay (+9), and Chile (+3) as the only states outside the group of democratising states during the first half of the 1980s.

The Problems of Interpreting the F-J Index

According to Johnson, the F-J index does not involve precise interval data and, therefore, the raw scores do not tell exactly whether, for example, Mexico was more democratic in 1985 than in 1980, although the country had improved its score (Johnson, 1976 B: 135; Johnson, 1977: 87). If this statement is true, the description of political trends made above loses much of its value as the applicability of the F-J index index would then be limited to comparisons of rank order positions of the states.

Nevertheless, Johnson in his 1976 resumé of the techniques and results of the surveys, compares the total raw scores of the original index and concludes:

> In the 1970 survey, the raw score fell to 8,696. If there was a considerable jump in total raw scores beginning in 1960, attributed to the demise of a number of dictatorships during the preceding quinquennium, the decline of 1970 may be likewise attributed to the establishment or reestablishment of a considerable number of dictatorships. Thus, the raw score totals lay a trend that seems to correspond with more subjectively perceived reality. (Johnson, 1976 A: 350–51).

Johnson shows here that he is ready to follow Fitzgibbon and interpret the raw score fluctuations as "a rough indication of shifts in the democratic weathervane over the years" (Fitzgibbon, 1967: 139). Fitzgibbon also developed a measurement that showed the percent changes of point-scores by states for successive quinquennia. The purpose of this operation was to find a measurement "representing democratic achievement and, when the (different) years are compared, progress and regression" (Fitzgibbon, 1951: 520). These figures have not been published since the 1965 survey which, perhaps, should be seen as an indication of the more cuatious use of the index after the retirement of Fitzgibbon. The question remains, however, of how to interpret the F-J index. Could the raw scores be treated as measures of the degree of democracy, or do they only show the rank order of the Latin American states in terms of democratic achievement? How valid is the index? Does it produce a good picture of the state of democracy in Latin America?

Answers to these questions can be reached by comparing the results of the F-J Surveys with other, non-reputational, measures of democracy. Unfortunately, since many of these measures are based on data which are aggregated over a long time period, no meaningful comparison can be made with the results of the revised F-J index, which is a measure of the current reputational status of democracy at the time of each survey. Thus, the measures which will be compared with the F-J index are Bollen's index of 1960 and 1965, Dahl's classification of circa 1969, Gastil's annual indices of political and civil rights 1972–1987, and Anderson's 1987 ranking of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The Bollen index for 113 states in 1960 and 123 states in 1965 involves sex indicators of political democracy – press freedom, freedom of group opposition, government sanctions, fairness of elections, executive selection and legislative selection (Bollen, 1980). As in most quantitative measures of democracy, the data are from different sources and are mostly based on judgements rather than "hard" figures. Accordingly, Robert Dahl's "word of caution regarding" his own classification of political regimes, is true of most indices of democracy, including Bollen's:

> Judgements of this kind may be biased by many things, including the simple fact that a great deal more is known about some countries than others. (Dahl, 1971: 243)

Nevertheless, Bollen has shown that the correlation between his own scores of the twenty Latin American countries and the raw scores of the revised F-J index for 1960 and 1965 is about .90 (Pearson's r) for both time points (.86 and .85 for the seventeen countries under study). Regarding the F-J index he then concludes.

> This specialization in Latin America, combined with its long history (since 1945) suggests that it is one of the best avialable measures for a region of developing countries. (Bollen, 1980: 381)

Unlike Bollen, Seligson (1987) follows the advice of Johnson and treats the F-J index as an ordinal scale. Correlating the rankings of the F-J index and the Bollen index rankings for the twenty Latin American countries for 1965, he gets a Spearman's Rho of .90 (Seligson, 1987: 171). When Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, are excluded the correlation decreases slightly but remains very high (.75 for 1960 and .80 for 1965). The conclusion from these comparisons is that the "objective" Bollen index, which is "generally regarded as the best one yet devised" (Seligson, 1987: 170), and the subjective F-J index produce very similar results with regard to point-scores as well as rank orders (Table 2).

Only in the cases of Argentina and Colombia, and Nicaragua in 1965, do the two indices yield substantially different rankings. The good reputational status of the Frondizi (1958–62) and Illía (1963–66) governments of Argentina (rank 4 and 7 in the F-J index), as well as the "oligarchical democracy" under the National Front in Colombia (rank 5 and 5), does not correspond to the "hard" facts about these regimes (rank 12 and 9, 13 and 12 in the Bollen index). It is difficult to judge which index is the best reflection of "reality" in these cases, but it must be hard for Bollen to justify why the military regime in Guatemala and the indirectly elected civilian regime i Honduras gained higher scores than Argentina and Colombia in 1960. Likewise, it must be hard to justify why Argentina under Illía was considered less democratic than Brazil under the post-1964 military government or Nicaragua under the rule of the Somozas (although a non-Somoza was elected president). Finally, it must be difficult to justify why El Salvador under a one-party congress and a military president who was elected unopposed gained a higher score in 1965 than both Argentina and Colombia.

In the case of Nicaragua, in 1965, the scholarly image was much more negative than the Bollen scores warrant (rank 16 and 11 respectively). According to Seligson (1987), this can be explained by "the personal antipathy of many scholars toward the Somoza regime" (p. 171). However, the difference between the two measures may also be interpreted the other way around. Bollen may have taken a too roseate view of Nicaragua under president René Schick (1963–66) who was handpicked by the Somozas. To be sure, Schick was elected by 90 percent of the voters and the opposition-held-one-third-of-the-legislative-seats. The election, however, was only one more sign of "the impossibility of anyone ruling without Somoza", whereas the one-third representation was a built-in stipulation that in fact produced a majority-type system and maintained "the myth of an opposition" (McDonald, 1971: 227). Guaranteeing the opposition one-third of the seats destroyed

Table 2 The F-J revised index and Bollen's political democracy index for 1960 and 1965, 17 Latin American countries

Country	1960				1965			
	F-J index		Bollen*		F-J index		Bollen	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Uruguay	241	1	99,8	1	239	2	99,6	1
Costa Rica	237	2	91,3	3	240	1	90,1	3
Chile	232	3	99,7	2	239	2	97,0	2
Argentina	209	4	62,7	13	190	7	52,6	12
Colombia	205	5	69,7	12	205	5	71,4	9
Brazil	200	6	90,5	4	165	10	60,9	10
Mexico	195	7	80,1	7	199	6	74,5	6
Venezuela	193	8	72,5	9	207	4	73,4	7
Ecuador	184	9	84,3	5	139	12	44,6	15
Peru	182	10	83,4	6	179	8	87,0	4
Panama	165	11	75,4	8	173	9	76,9	5
Guatemala	154	12	69,8	11	128	13	39,5	16
El Salvador	148	13	53,5	15	149	11	72,1	8
Honduras	142	14	70,1	10	123	14	50,0	13
Bolivia	139	15	59,8	14	118	15	36,2	17
Nicaragua	93	16	48,7	16	116	16	55,4	11
Paraguay	67	17	39,1	17	79	17	44,7	14

* The range of the scale is 0 to 100
Sources: Bollen, 1980: 387; Johnson, 1976 A: 360

the incentive to work hard during the campaign and appeased international critics (ibid: 237). Thus, electoral results were a foregone conclusion in Nicaragua during the Somoza "dynasty" and, consequently, did not have much to do with democracy. Seligson's alleged "personal antipathy of many scholars" perhaps is nothing but a more realistic judgement of the state of democracy in Nicaragua in the mid 1970s than the one made by Bollen.

The F-J index also produces almost the same results as the 1969 classification of 114 regimes made by Dahl (Dahl, 1971). When Dahl operationalizes his two-dimensional concept of democracy (or polyarchy) he uses the percentage of adult citizens eligible to vote as the sole indicator of participation, while ten variables represent opportunity for public opposition. A correlation coefficient (Spearman's Rho) of .84 for the seventeen mainland Latin American states is yielded when Dahl's two-dimensional classifications transformed into a rank-order scale and correlated with the 1970 F-J ranking. Only the ranking of Peru differs considerably between the two indices which, perhaps, reflects the difficulties the experts had in judging a military but reformist regime in terms of democratic achievement (the Velasco Alvarado regime).

Table 3 Rank orderings of 17 Latin American states: the F-J index 1970, and Dahl's classification circa 1969

Country	F-J index	Dahl
Chile	1	1
Costa Rice	2	3
Uruguay	3	2
Venezuela	4	4
Colombia	5	4
Mexico	6	10
Ecuador	7	6
Guatemala	8	7
El Salvador	8	11
Peru	10	15
Honduras	11	7
Bolivia	12	9
Argentina	13	16
Panama	13	17
Nicaragua	15	12
Brazil	16	13
Paraguay	17	14

Sources: Dahl, 1971: Appendix A, pp. 232–234; Johnson, 1976A: 360

A more crude measure of political regimes is Gastil's annual indices of political and civil rights for all independent states, as well as related territories, covering the period from 1972 onwards. Gastil also summarizes the two seven-point ratings of the civil and political rights in terms of an overall three-point assessment of the status of freedom in each country. Since Gastil equates freedom with liberal democracy (Gastil, 1987: 4 and 25), this measurement will be compared with the results of the F-J surveys.

The Gastil indices are as judgemental as either Bollen's index and Dahl's classification, since the ratings on the two seven-point scales are based on the author's own interpretation of different (unspecified) qualitative and quantitative data. In contrast to the other two indices, however, the Gastil "survey of freedom" includes aspects of democracy such as political decentralization, regional and local self-determination, freedom from foreign control, and freedom from gross socioeconomic inequality. Thus, taken together the Gastil indices are, in fact, more comprehensive measures of political regimes than the Bollen and Dahl measures as well as the revised Fitzgibbon-Johnson index.

When comparing the Status of Freedom ratings with the F-J index rankings for 1975, 1980 and 1985, the two measures produce some different results (Table 4). The most conspicuous Gastil ratings, seen in comparison with the F-J rankings, are those of El Salvador as a "free" country in 1975, and of Mexico and Paraguay as "partly free" counries. It is also interesting to note that the regional democratization in the 1980s is indicated in the 1985 Gastil survey by a large increase in the number of "free" countries and the disappearance altogether of "not free" states.

In the case of El Salvador it is obvious that Gastil has overestimated the degree of freedom, and consequently the degree of democracy. Between 1972 and 1977, the country was ruled by a military government which had come to power through a fraudulent election in which parties identified as communist were not allowed to participate (Keesing's 25135, 1972). Moreover, during 1974 and 1975, the government was criticized by the Catholic Church for severe repression of peasants and students and lack of respect for fundamental human rights, as well as neglect of the enormous socioeconomic inequalities (Keesing's 27938, 1976). In the light of this political and social situation it is difficult to agree with Gastil's inclusion for 1975 of El Salvador in "the list of operating democracies (which) is made up of those countries given the summary status of

Table 4 F-J country rank orderings and Gastil Status of Freedom, 17 Latin American countries, 1975, 1980, 1985.

1975		1980		1985	
F-J Rank	Status	F-J Rank	Status	F-J Rank	Status
1. Costa Rica	F	1. Costa Rica	F	1. Costa Rica	F
2. Venezuela	F	2. Venezuela	F	2. Venezuela	F
3. Colombia	F	3. Colombia	F	3. Colombia	F
4. Mexico	PF	4. Mexico	PF	4. Argentina	F
5. Argentina	PF	5. Peru	PF	5. Mexico	PF
6. Uruguay	PF	6. Ecuador	F	6. Peru	F
7. El Salvador	F	7. Nicaragua	PF	7. Ecuador	F
8. Guatemala	PF	8. Panama	PF	8. Uruguay	F
9. Ecuador	NF	9. Honduras	PF	9. Brazil	F
10. Panama	NF	10. Brazil	PF	10. Panama	PF
11. Honduras	PF	11. Guatemala	PF	11. Nicaragua	PF
12. Peru	NF	12. El Salvador	PF	12. Honduras	F
13. Boliia	NF	13. Argentina	NF	13. Bolivia	F
14. Brazil	PF	14. Uruguay	NF	14. El Salvador	PF
15. Nicaragua	PF	15. Bolivia	PF	15. Guatemala	PF
16. Chile	NF	16. Chile	PF	16. Paraguay	PF
17. Paraguay	PF	17. Paraguay	PF	17. Chile	PF

Sources: Gastil, 1987: 54–65 (table 6); Johnson, 1976 B: 137; Johnson, 1982: 199; Johnson & Kelly, 1986: 21

'free'" (Gastil, 1987: 25). In the 1975 revised F-J index, El Salvador gets 124 points, which is more than 100 points less than Costa Rica and almost 100 points less than Venezuela. This seems to be a more appropriate judgement of El Salvador in terms of political democracy in the middle of the 1970s.

The categorization of Paraguay as a "partly free" state is also an overestimation when compared with the rankings and scores of the revised F-J index. Although it is not easy to rank dictatorships, it is difficult to find the motivation as to why Paraguay under Stroessner is classified as freer than Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Bolivia and Chile in 1975; freer than Argentina and Uruguay in 1980; and as free as Nicaragua in 1985. Perhaps the regularly held presidential elections between 1954 and 1988 in which Stroessner won 80 to 90 percent of the votes have had a positive effect on the Gastil political rights score.

Mexico, on the other hand, is classified as a "partly free" country in the Survey of Freedom but gains high point-scores and a high ranking throughout the F-J surveys. To be sure, it is problematic to judge and define the Mexican political regime, but it seems as if the experts in the F-J surveys tend to view Mexico through rose-tinted glasses and to overrate the state of democracy. Broad state controls on labour and peasant organizations, the political domination by a single party and extensive use of electoral fraud (Middlebrook, 1986) call into question the rating of Mexico as, for example, a more democratic state than Peru or Ecuador in 1985, and, instead, seem to warrant Gastil's classification.

A recent measurement of "the democratic revolution" in Latin America and the Caribbean is produced by Anderson (1987). His six-category classification, which is based on a dozen indicators of political and individual rights, applies for conditions in March 1987 and, thus, may be compared with the results of the 1985 F-J survey (Table 5).

Costa Rica is the only Latin American state in the first category, which means that in this country "all elements of individual rights are specified by law and presently are extended to all inhabitants without restrictions" (Anderson, 1987: 61). When compared with the F-J index this classification is adequate.

The most spectacular classification, when compared with the F-J index, is the placement of Nicaragua in category IV together with Chile and Paraguay. Moreover, placement in category V was considered, which would have meant that Nicaragua, in spite of the 1984 general elections, was categorized as a country "where none of the elements of individual rights is available due to law, custom, or arbitrary authority, but where effective political organization provides social and economic stability" (ibid: 61).

The judgement of Nicaragua is probably conditioned by Anderson's liberalistic view of democracy and, thus, reveals the main deficiency of this measure. Private ownership of the press and the prosperity of private enterprise in Chile and Paraguay are seen as extenuating circumstances in these countries, while the "pluralistic features" of the Nicaraguan regime are considered to be overshadowed by the Marxist-Leninist ideology of

Table 5 The Anderson Ranking of 17 Latin American Countries by Civil and Political Liberties as of 1 March 1987

Categories					
I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Costa Rica*	Argentina	Bolivia	Chile*		
	Colombia*	Brazil	Nicaragua*		
	Uruguay*	*Ecuador	Paraguay		
	Venezuela	El Salvador			
		Guatemala			
		Honduras			
		Mexico			
		Panama			
		Peru			

* Indicates that placement in adjacent category was considered
Source: T Anderson, 1987: 63

(some of) the Sandinist leaders (ibid: 66–67). Fortunately, the F-J index seems to lack such evident ideological bias.

The F-J Index in a Comparative Perspective

Concerning the Bollen index of democracy, Peeler (1985) has commented:

> The utility of the index depends on the willingness of readers to accept the judgments of the author and his scources. Further, even if these judgments are accepted, one must be careful not to generalize beyond the particular time span covered by the study. (Peeler, 1985: 18)

It goes without saying that this statement is true for all comparative measures of political democracy. In the case of the F-J index the crucial question is whether the reader accepts the combined judgements of experts as an accurate measure. The above comparisons with various non-reputational measures, which have shown that the image-index produces results that are very similar to measures based on "library research", will, perhaps, make it easier for readers to accept the F-J index.

The correspondence with the non-reputational measures indicates that the problem of subjectivity is not as serious a problem as some scholars claim (Cutright, 1963; Vanhanen, 1984). Cutright (1963) questions the validity of both the F-J index and Lipset's classification (Lipset, 1964), and goes on to wonder whether there is any expert who "can be in intimate contact with the political histories of all the nations of the world and also be willing or able to order them on simple scales, let alone multiple dimensions" (p. 253). This is a good point since the participants in the F-J surveys themselves disclaim competence to judge all Latin American countries on all points, and since the judgements necessarily must be "subjective in large measure " (Fitzgibbon, 1956: 617). On the other hand, the experts do not need to order all nations of the world, but rather twenty nations of one particular region of the world. Although the familiarity with respect to each state varies between the respondents, it is fairly evident that "the overall assessments made by specialists are likely to introduce desirable nuances and balances which are impossible in the use of cold statistical information, even of the most accurate sort" (Fitzgibbon, 1967: 135).

The Cutright index is a case in point. Cutright (1963) tries to produce a quantitative and purely "objective" index of democracy based on cumulative data from 1940 to 1960, using as one out of two indicators the share of the legislative seats for the opposition. Since he chooses 30 percent as the minimum representation for a full score on this indicator, Nicaragua under Somoza, with its guaranteed representation of the opposition parties mentioned above, receives the same number of points as Finland and Austria, more points than Italy, and is placed fifth among the Latin American countries (Needler, 1968: 890). Obviously, the statistical information has led Cutright astray in this case. More "intimate contact" with the political history of Nicaragua had probably resulted in a more plausible scoring of this country.

Another clear example of the insensitivity of cold statistical measures is Vanhanen's cumulative index of democracy for 119 states, 1850–1985, which is based on decennial means of the share of the total population voting in national elections and the share of the votes for the opposition parties (Vanhanen, 1984). The index yields some sensational results among which are the crossing of the threshold of democracy for El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1970s, and the ranking of Paraguay under Stroessner as a more democratic country than Colombia and Mexico in the 1960s. A closer examination of the conditions for electoral competition and participation in El Salvador, Guatemala and Paraguay would probably have made Vanhanen less prone to rely solely on statistics. Perhaps Vanhanen, and also Cutright, should have taken a look at the F-J index to find the "nuances and balances" which are necessary in order to produce what they call "objective" measures of democracy.

In sum, the problem of subjectivity, which is inherent in all measures of democracy, even the cold statistical indices, is not a major shortcoming of the revised F-J index. On the contrary, a measurement that is based on the combined subjective judgements of many specialists seems to include less spectacular ratings and classifications than its "objective" counterparts. For cross-sectional analyses of Latin American politics, therefore, the F-J index offers a good operationalization of the political democracy variable.

As already mentioned, both Fitzgibbon and Johnson interpret the raw scores as rough measures of the degree of democracy in each state and, hence, political trends and changes may be

described by the scores. Moreover, statistical tests show that the association is close between Bollen's scales and the F-J raw scores for both 1960 and 1965. Since the Bollen index is comparable between the two years this is an indication that F-J point-score improvements and decreases from one year to another reflect real democratic achievements and set-backs, at least to some extent.

The usefulness for longitudinal analyses is questionable, however, since the problem of the comparability of two separate polls remains. Did the ten respondents in 1945 view the five criteria of political democracy in the same way as the 72 respondents in the 1985 survey? Does a score of five points for "free elections" in 1945 mean the same as a five-point score in 1985? Do the 231 points in 1945 and the 232 points in 1975 mean that political democracy in Costa Rica did not make any progress during these 30 years? Similarly, do the 184 points for Ecuador in 1960 and the 187 points in 1985 mean that the fourth Velasco Ibarra regime was as democratic as the Febres Cordero regime?

Although most of the respondents have participated in several polls, the answer to all these questions are no. The cases of Costa Rica and Ecuador are two examples which prove that comparisons between two separate surveys must be made with great caution. In both countries, large numbers of the national population were long eliminated from voting since suffrage was limited to men in Costa Rica until 1953, and to literates in Ecuador until 1978. As these highly undemocratic features do not seem to be taken into consideration by the participants, with regard to, for example, Costa Rica in the 1945 and Ecuador in the 1960 poll, the point-scores of later "democratic" regimes do not improve. In other words, the F-J index fails to register such a crucial aspect of democratic achievement as the introduction of universal suffrage. This major shortcoming of the index limits its usefulness considerably, and renders questionable any but the broadest conclusions with regard to political change and political development.

Conclusions

The revised F-J index of democracy is a unique source for studies of Latin American post-war politics. The long time-span covered and the non-cumulative nature of the index make it superior to most of the other indices and classifications presented in this article. Moreover, the store of sound knowledge which forms the "data-bank" of the index minimizes the risk of spectacular country ratings and rankings. The index also provides a good measure of such non-statistical aspects of political democracy as civilian supremacy over the military and the independence of the judiciary.

However, the index lends itself to cross-sectional rather than longitudinal analyses, because of the limited comparability of the raw scores of two separate surveys. It means that the raw score fluctuations can only be viewed as rough indications of political change over the fourty year period. Consequently, the graph in Figure 1 shows the democratic and undemocratic trends in Latin America since 1945, although it does not show whether, in absolute terms, the region was more democratic in 1960 than in 1985.

A good quantitative and time-series index of political democracy, of course, must include measures which are comparable between the time-points. In this article it has been shown that it would be foolhardy to try to produce such a time-series measure of Latin American political regimes without first consulting the F-J index. Systematic empirical research of bygone days could not possibly compensate for the collected snapshorts of specialists who actually lived during the time in question. Therefore, it is argued here that the best quantitative measure of Latin American political change would be a modification of the Fitzgibbon-Johnson Image-Index.

Notes

[1] Indicators of free elections are included in the measures of democracy by Anderson, 1987; Arat, 1988; Bollen, 1980; Cutright, 1963; Dahl, 1971; Gastil, 1988; Jackman, 1973; Lane & Ersosn, 1989; Needler, 1968; Neubauer, 1967; Smith, 1969; and Vanhanen, 1984, whereas indicators of free party organization, or party competition, are included in all the above measures, except Needler, 1968. Civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, the press, etc., are not included as indicators of political democracy in Cutright, 1963 and Vanhanen, 1984. Only Smith, 1969, Gastil, 1987 and Lane & Ersson, 1989 include civilian supremacy as an indicator of democracy ("political participation by the military", "free of military control" and "role of military" respectively).

[2] Anderson, 1987, Dahl, 1971, and Gastil, 1987, include the independence of the judiciary as a criterion of political democracy.

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