

Accountability and legitimacy: towards a new proposal of typology of the autocratic and democratic systems

Óliver Soto Sainz

Universidad Complutense de Madrid (ICCA)

osoto@ucm.es



Translated by Jorge González García

ENG Abstract. In this article we intend to introduce the concept of political system as the basis for the development of an empirically useful tool to divide the political systems in categories that allow us to draw conclusions. The concept of system incorporates the framework of objectives, rules and structures in which actors perform in order to respond to the demands (inputs) of the population, incorporating both the regulatory framework, as the interaction of the actors with goals, rules and structures and the feedback process. In this study, we identified within the systemic approach two moments: the system as demands processing (inputs) and the system as producing results (results). We focus on this article in the systems as input processing in order to create our typology, based on two basic concepts for Political Science, accountability and legitimacy. Focusing our analysis on how claims are processed we applied three classification criteria: the actual number of actors and groups of articulation of demands beyond which the system is held accountable, the principle of legitimacy and civilian or military nature of the system leadership. Finally in this article we proceed to apply the categories resulting in all countries between 1960 and 2006, concentrating more in the comparative analysis with other large-scale classifications.

Keywords: Accountability, legitimacy democracy, autocracy, comparative political systems

Summary: 1. Introduction 2. Theoretical framework: from the concept of political regime to that of political system 2.1. The concept of political regime 2.2. The concept of political system in relation to that of political regime 3. Methodological framework 3.1. Study design: systemic approach 3.2. Criteria for a typology of political systems 3.3. Operationalization of the classification variables 3.4. Spatial and time framework 4. Classification of political systems in comparative perspective 4.1. Results of the application of the categories of analysis 4.2. Comparison of the typology with those developed by other authors 5. Conclusions 6. Bibliography

How to cite: Soto Sainz, O. (2020): Rendición de cuentas y legitimidad: una propuesta de tipología de los sistemas políticos autocráticos y democráticos, en Cuadernos de Gobierno y Administración Pública 7-1, 27-39.

1. Introduction

In Political Science, the use of the concepts of political system and political regime is widespread, but there is a lack of a shared basis or a widely accepted benchmark definition as it may happen in other occasions, which leads to both concepts being confused or used interchangeably. Their use varies from author to author, albeit this is often based on methodological or epistemological implications rather than on explicit references in the texts themselves. Moreover, we may encounter the paradox that authors use precisely the same term when in fact they are referring to quite different realities. Furthermore, the concepts of political system and political regime are commonly used not only in Social Sciences, but also in non-scientific language, so what different people understand is not only very dissimilar, but it is also subject to changes in social perceptions. The shared use of the terms has also led to semantic shifts over time. Thus, political regime, which in a certain way appears in modern vocabulary as a categorization and opposition to the Ancien Régime (Paniagua, 1990: 201), has been associated with the definition of non-democratic political organizations, so the term authoritarian regime seems more common than the term democratic regime. These phenomena can lead to confusion, so we intend to clarify in this article the aspects regarding the designation of regime and system to see what each of them contributes.

Besides, this problem regarding designations is even more noticeable when it comes to typologies, where there are many alternatives developed by the authors who have dealt with the subject, sometimes coincident in certain aspects and sometimes completely divergent. In this article we explore the different typologies of political systems in order to better understand how they are structured and to elaborate our own typology of political systems.

In order to undertake the above, first of all, in the theoretical framework we will compare the concepts of political system and political regime, looking into how they have gradually been mixed together, what makes them similar and what differentiates them. Secondly, in the methodological section we will elaborate on how we have developed our own classification of political systems that best suits the needs of this research. Thirdly, we will compare our research with those conducted by other authors and apply it to the universe of cases between 1960 and 2006. Lastly, we will present a brief summary of the results.

2. Theoretical framework: from the concept of political regime to that of political system

Within Political Science, the worry about the definition and classification of the human political organization has always been at its core and has been the reason for its development. The foundation itself as a discipline has its roots in the theoretical and empirical elaborations of authors as far back as Plato and Aristotle, who were already engaged in the task of theoretically defining and empirically cataloguing the political regimes of their time. If we wanted to deal with this subject at length, it would merit a separate study of greater importance, which is beyond the scope and objectives of this article. Even so, and precisely because of the profound importance of this topic in the development of Political Science, and especially in the field of Comparative Politics, it is convenient to show a general overview of the definitions that modern authors offer on the subject in order to better illustrate our approach and categorization.

A review of the most modern bibliography related to the classification of political units frequently shows us two concepts, political regime, and political system, which are often used interchangeably and, on other occasions, in a differentiated manner. The divergence and convergence of the two terms stems largely from their different origins (Vargas, 1998: 176). While the concept of political regime is part of the French tradition of thought and, in general, of continental thought, the concept of political system has a more Anglo-Saxon inspiration, appearing between the thirties and the sixties and developed mainly in the United States with the contributions of Easton (1953) and Almond (1966). They also differ in etymology. The term regime comes from the Latin (*regimen*), which means direction, and shares its root with the word *rex* (king), generated from the verb *rego*, (-is, -ere, *regi*, *rectum*), which means to rule, to direct, to govern. Meanwhile, the term system comes from the Greek (*σύστημα*), which means to bring together in an orderly manner. In order to achieve greater terminological precision and avoid confusion derived from the indistinct shared use among the various authors, we will proceed to delimit each one of them and offer the particular scope that we attribute to each concept.¹

2.1 The concept of political regime

According to Skaaning (2006), three different types of definitions of the regime concept can be distinguished, with several subtypes within each of them. The first of these focuses exclusively on the role played by political actors. The second definition focuses on institutions. The third definition considers that there is a *continuum* in political regimes from the most open democracies to the most closed autocracies. We will now go on to describe each of the types and subtypes.

The first type of definitions pays special attention to the actors and, in particular, to the dominant coalition. One of the earliest and most representative expressions of this type of definition can be found in the Communist Manifesto. There, Engels and Marx point out that the government of the State is nothing more than the board that administers the common business of the bourgeois class². In line with this we find several similar formulations, depending on whether the emphasis is on actors or structures. Michael Mann (1993: 18) considers that a political regime is “an

¹ Notwithstanding this clarification, the terminology used by the author has been respected in those sections in which we mention the contribution of a specific author. Although this may lead to some confusion, it is no less true that in this area of Comparative Politics there is no single majority pattern.

² Interestingly, this phrase shows a lot of disparity in the translations depending on the edition used. Thus, we can also read: “The modern Government is nothing more than an administrative Committee for the business of the bourgeois class”

“Public power is purely and simply a council that governs the collective interests of the bourgeois class”

“The government of the modern State is nothing more than a board that administers the common business of the entire bourgeois class

alliance of dominant ideological, economic, military power actors coordinated by the rulers of the State.” Such definitions that focus on a ruling class also incorporate power structures, but always from the perspective of their service to said ruling class. Thus, institutional analysis is overshadowed by analysis of the behavior, interests, and strategies of the actors.

The second group of definitions focuses on institutions. Despite their common focus on institutions, there are several ways of understanding these and the scope of the concept of political regime (Vargas, 1998: 157). In a restricted sense, some authors liken them to the institutions belonging to the State and the way they relate to each other and to society. A more formal perspective defines and classifies political regimes exclusively in terms of the legal rules that support them. The political regime is thus identified with the rules that govern it and its highest expression is the Constitution. Secondly, as an evolution of the previous perspective, other types of definitions emphasize the formal element, but add the element of the values that inspire the regime. In this line, Lucio Levi (in Bobbio, Matteucci and Pasquino, 1997) defines the political regime as the set of institutions that regulate the fight for power and the exercise of power and values that animate the life of such institutions. Thirdly, we observe a perspective that, without neglecting the formal aspects, adds non-formal elements to these, making the boundaries with the formal aspects more perceptible. In this sense, Duverger (1981: 7) defines the political regime as the manner taken in a given social group by the essential distinction between the rulers and the ruled. For this author, the notion of political regime encompasses not only formal institutions but also political parties, public opinion, the electoral system, among others. This leads him to conclude that the expression of political regime is practically synonymous with that of political system (Duverger: 1970: 65).

The third group of definitions focuses on the existence of a continuity in political regimes from the most open democracies to the most closed autocracies. It is of no interest for these perspectives to define the regime since the objective is to see the variation in certain aspects of political regimes. For example, the *Polity* score distinguishes on the degree of liberalization of a system, ranging from -10, which would mean the highest autocracy, to 10, which would mean a full and consolidated democracy (Marshall and Jaggers, 2007). Meanwhile, the *Freedom House* index (2014) conducts an annual panel with several experts who are asked about aspects related to political, civil and press liberties with the aim of classifying countries as free, partially free, or not free. Along with the democracy index developed by *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (2014), we find other democracy indexes that follow similar lines (de Miguel and Martínez-Dordella, 2014).

2.2. The concept of political system in relation to that of political regime

The concept of political system is intertwined with the concept of political regime, with some authors identifying both as synonyms. Although there are also various definitions of what a political system is, in this case we do have clear formulations by Easton (1953) and Almond (1966), among others, always taking a similar approach. According to Easton (2006) a political system can be designated as those interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society; this is what distinguishes a political system from other systems that may be interpreted as lying in its environment. In this set of interactions, the political system is characterized by receiving a series of inputs that are visualized in the form of demands and/or support, which are then in charge of processing to produce binding results that in turn affect the demands and the support, generating a feedback process that feeds the system and restarts the process.

The first question that arises with respect to the concept of regime and system is clear. Being such adjacent concepts, are they mutually exclusive? Some authors (Badie et al., 1996; Chevalier, 1996) have explained that there is a separate scope for each of the concepts, one being more inclusive than the other. Thus, “the notion of political regime serves to account for the specific way in which public powers are organized, meaning their way of designation, their respective competences and the legal and political rules governing their relations” (Badie et al., 1996: 238). They consider that there should a distinction from the concept of political system, which they describe as “broader,” since it “includes not only the constitutional organization of the rulers, but also other actors and processes such as, for example, the party regime, the public liberties and the media, the mechanisms of political socialization of citizens, etc.” (Badie et al., 1996: 238). Hence, they are distinguishable concepts. It is therefore worth asking if there is a proper scope for the concept of regime from this systemic perspective. In this regard, both concepts can be connected in the following way according to Dennis and Easton (1967: 25):

In its broadest conception, a political system is a means through which the wants of the members of a society are converted into binding decisions. To sustain a conversion process of this sort a society must provide a relatively stable context for political interaction, a set of ground rules for participating in all parts of the political process. We may describe this context variously as a constitutional order, a set of fundamental rules, or customary procedures for settling differences. But however this context is defined, it usually includes three elements: some minimal constraints on the general goals of its members, rules or norms governing behavior, and structures of authority through which the members of the system act in making and implementing political outputs. To these goals, norms and structures we may give the traditional name “political regime” or constitutional order in the broadest, nonlegal sense of the phrase.

In this way, we observe that the political regime constitutes an important part of the political system and is expected to last if that system is to be permanent. It is the ensemble of global objectives, basic operating rules, and decision-making structures. Thus, it is a stable support for the conversion of demands into binding results, an essential element that characterizes the political system. In this sense, we can add that, although the regime refers especially to the

values and the structures and institutions of power, the political system also incorporates the actors and processes that operate in the political arena and interact with each other.

Unlike Easton, who distinguishes only two processes, Almond and Powell (1981) consider that “the systems theory divides the interaction processes into three phases: input, conversion and output.” Vallès (2013), for his part, makes this division correspond to three dimensions of politics: process, structure, and result. Each dimension corresponds to an aspect that is distinguishable in English using a different term, but that in Spanish does not have such an exact correlative. Hence, he differentiates politics as a process, which is when we observe first and foremost a sequence of individual and collective behaviors that are dynamically linked (Vallès, 2013: 45); polity as a structure, which is when we fix our attention on the stable way in which a given community organizes its political actions (Vallès, 2013: 45); and policy as a result, which is when the main focus is the responses that the combination of process and structure gives to each conflict (Vallès, 2013: 46).

3. Methodological framework

As mentioned in the introduction, the objective of this study is to elaborate a typology that classifies political systems, both democratic and autocratic, considering the debate within Comparative Politics regarding the dichotomy between political system and political regime. Gremy and Le Moan (1977: 15) point out that “elaborating a typology consists in distinguishing, within a set of units (be they individuals, groups of individuals, social facts, etc.), the groups that can be considered as homogeneous from a certain point of view.” According to these same authors, a typology must satisfy two conditions. On the one hand, it should be exhaustive, that is to say, each case of analysis should be able to be classified into one of the categories developed. On the other hand, the categories of the typology should be exclusive, i.e., each unit studied can only be grouped into one of the categories used for classification (Gremy and Le Moan, 1977: 15).

In this methodological section, we will first present the systemic approach that we will adopt to broach the classification of political systems that we aim for. Secondly, we will address the way in which the classification of political systems will be approached. Thirdly, we will operationalize the variables and define the categories of analysis. Finally, we will present our spatial and time framework.

3.1. Study design: systemic approach

Based on the definitions we have seen in the theoretical framework; within the systemic approach we can detect three key moments in the development of the political system. The first is the processing of inputs, that is, what kind of support the system has and how the demands are channeled; the second is the production of results, meaning binding actions (or inactions) aimed at responding to the demands; the third is the feedback effect that re-inflates the process. Once these three elements have been detected, the relevant matter for this research is to see which are more useful for the operationalization of the concepts.

First, it is necessary to clarify whether the use of the concept of political regime or political system is more relevant for this research. Given the systemic perspective we employ, the political regime describes only a part of the political process and shows us the framework of objectives, rules, and structures in which the actors operate in order to respond to demands. But, as we have seen with other authors who defined political regime *lato sensu*, there are crucial elements of the political game that would be left out if we look exclusively at the normative framework (whether formal or informal), such as the interaction of actors with objectives, rules, and structures. Thus, in our case we will opt for the concept of political system in the least restrictive sense, that is, with all its complexity and abstract and consequently inclusive character.

Second, having adopted the perspective of the political system, we must determine how we are going to approach it within the three approximations (process, result, structure) that we have indicated. The objective, as has been pointed out from the beginning, is for these concepts to be useful to divide the political reality and, based on this division, generate verifiable categories of analysis that allow us to classify the reality of the cases. Dividing reality into multiple compartments will make it easier to make inferences. Therefore, we will consider the types of divisions that can be conducted based on these categories.

According to Easton, there are two elements that have been detected as the most relevant within the system: via inputs and via results and feedback. First, we have the processing of inputs. Within this perspective, emphasis could be placed on both the source of support for the system and the way in which demands will be processed. If we look at the source of support, it is a matter of seeing which social groups sustain the system with their support. This perspective implies emphasizing the social composition of the dominant coalitions. If we look at the demands, it is a matter of looking into how the demands are processed and in what way they can become results. This perspective implies highlighting the mechanisms for converting demands into results and to whom those who control the decision-making structures effectively respond.

Second, we are faced with the results of the political system and the feedback. In this regard, we find the policies that are implemented (and viewed the other way around, those that do not pass the filter) of the system. The focus here could be on multiple aspects. This can range from an analysis of the types of policies in terms of their redistributive nature to policies based on their degree of mobilization, ideological impregnation or baggage, degree of control of the population, among others. Of particular importance is the feedback from the political system. In this respect, we would pay attention to the degree of responsiveness of the political system to the demands that have

been presented before it. In this sense, the difference is, therefore, one of degree, of the measure in which the demands are processed.

Between these two perspectives, we consider it more appropriate to focus on the inputs to the system, and within these, on an analysis of the intermediation structures or the means by which the demands are channeled. This perspective will allow us to analyze political systems in terms of how they behave in their processing of demands and support, these being our input indicators.

Even assuming the caveat that we have made in this section that we will use the concept of political system instead of regime, however, we must not forget the development that both concepts have gone through and how useful the characterizations that have been made in terms of political regime can be, even more so when their authors identify it with the political system itself. In this sense, the concept of political system, because of its abstract nature, allows us to compare political realities that are different if we only look at the institutional elements. This is fundamental when dealing with autocratic systems that often lack institutionalized elements, operating with non-legally regulated power structures. Likewise, it includes actors into the analysis model, another of the key elements in this study since it deals fundamentally with the military not only as an institution but also as actors who occasionally intervene in the political arena. But, at the same time, by dealing so closely with the institutional elements that have traditionally been associated with the concept of regime, a concept such as that of system that differentiates the static elements from the more dynamic elements of the political system is important. Therefore, the concept of system is essential, but in a less abstract approach than that offered by Easton, to allow the classification of countries and, consequently, their comparison.

Hence, although the concept of political system offers us a great framework for generating a model of political relations and establishing a framework for comparison at the global level between realities that are often very different, this concept also has its limits, some of them imposed by its development, which is much more focused on abstract explanations and centered on internal issues within countries rather than between countries. In other words, it is a concept that has not been used as empirically for cross-country comparisons. Similarly, and in relation to the above, its use is widespread for the analysis of democracies³, and Easton's own examples are proof of this. This means that the model has not always been seen as of interest for the analysis of autocracies and that it has not always been very exhaustive in terms of classification.

3.2. Criteria for a typology of political systems

The systems theory is a dynamic way of understanding politics as a continuous process of demands and support (inputs) leading to decisions (results) that at the same time trigger feedback that results in new demands and support. However, the concept of political system has become so generalized that it is the main way to talk about political realities. Such dissemination of the concept of political system has caused it to lose its specific nature and has led to an association with the most widespread political reality that we analyze in Political Science, democracy. This type of macro perspective has meant that classifications of political systems from this approach have not been so frequent, and even less with such an empirical character as has occurred in the case of political regimes. In this regard, our application of the general system theory departs from the more conventional use it has had in the past.

In addition, if the perspective of the political system suffers from such a noticeable macro and abstract character, the approach of the authors who use the term political regime, on the contrary, have led to the development of typologies sometimes very anchored in the specific reality at the time without being able to discern a line of continuity or a certain exhaustiveness in the results. As we have already mentioned, in our case we will use a systemic approach to understand the process, but without making it so restricted that it prevents us from a specific approximation to political systems and their classification. More specifically, this means that we will avoid among the categories of the taxonomy a direct identification between cases and types, a shortcoming that some typologies have suffered from.

Of the whole process followed by the political system, we consider that the inputs are the ones that allow us to approach the classification in a more adequate way, thus this will be the criterion we use to classify political systems. An accountability system is a mechanism by which the actors judge *ex post facto* the political results and give or withhold their support based on how their demands have been met. In democratic political systems, rulers are accountable to the citizens, before whom they are accountable and from whom they find their source of support through elections, while in other systems the source of support is different, whether it be dynastic legitimacy, party structure, the charisma of the leader or the support of the military. By focusing the classification of political systems on Easton's notion of inputs, we can establish a *continuum* between political systems that are democratic and those that are not, considering not only how many people exercise power (or control it) as would be typical of an Aristotelian classification, but also what types of actors support the decision-makers and how the latter process the demands. This provides a general framework for classifying political systems and more consistent and deeper explanations, since we have a unifying criterion for the classification. Although the results of the political system are very diverse, by way of inputs we can limit this plurality to a reduced but reasonably detailed set of types.

In the preceding authors we see the need to combine more formal elements with elements of system operation. The latter are the ones that will help us the most in the classification task. The classifications that we use by other

³ Almost all of David Easton's more empirical work is focused on case studies related to the United States. This makes his model very well adapted to democratic systems, but it has not been of much use among comparativists. He is, in this sense, indebted to a North American tradition that divides Comparative Politics and the rest of Political Science according to whether one wishes to investigate the United States or the rest of the world.

authors (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Morlino, 2009; Geddes, 1999; Hadenius and Teorell, 2007) are in line with this methodological perspective. From each of them we will draw elements that we consider relevant to inspire our general outline. By distinguishing according to who exercised power, how it is exercised and from where it originates, these classifications focus on the mechanism by which the political system functions rather than on the juridical forms that define it. Thus, regardless of the constitutional definition, these authors look at who wields power (a charismatic leader, a member of the military, a single party) and the different types of incentives involved in answering to an electorate, a party clique, a military board, or having no one to answer to. The rulers, in these different types of political systems, channel demands selectively, and it is this group to which they respond which will be useful for our classification.

3.3. Operationalization of the classification variables

As mentioned earlier, we will construct our typology according to the way in which the inputs are processed. Moreover, between the two elements that constitute the inputs, demands and support, we will focus on the channeling of demands. Based on the analysis we have made of the classifications of other authors, in order to dissect the way demands are processed we have identified three relevant axes that allow us to approach the classification according to unifying criteria. The first of them is the number of demanders to whom the system truly responds. In a certain way, it is a reconversion of the Aristotelian criterion of classification by the number of rulers but transferred to the actors that have political capacity, however small it may be. In this category we will distinguish between the systems that obey the judgement of one, a few, many, or all. While every political system potentially receives demands from the entire population of the political unit, autocratic political systems are characterized by suppressing or repressing demands, although not all of them to the same extent. Thus, as Linz (1970: 255) points out, authoritarianisms are characterized by a certain degree of political, economic, and social pluralism, as opposed to totalitarianisms where such pluralism is non-existent. This selective limitation of the pluralism of demands characterizes to a large extent, in our opinion, political systems, and allows us to establish a grading between systems.

The second axis that we have deemed relevant in order to construct our typology refers to the type of legitimacy. Using Weber's tripartite division between traditional legitimacy, charismatic legitimacy, and legal rational legitimacy, we can finally proceed to distinguish between systems that would otherwise be classified in the same way but which, in their specific functioning, have distinctive characteristics. Thus, unipersonal autocracies could lead to mark as the same phenomenon the quasi-absolutist monarchies that persist in the world and the dictatorships of political opportunists that have managed to seize power. The way tradition works in the case of the former makes their behavior quite different from the latter, in which other factors play a role in maintaining power. Likewise, some authoritarian systems have a figurehead, but who simply acts as a unifier of different interests that he moderates, which is not comparable to the control exercised by some leaders through whom all decisions are passed, and which correspond more to the personalist type of system as we will see later.

The third axis is the military or civilian nature of the decision-making structure. Despite the popularization of a line of continuity between war and politics⁴, the truth is that the two are governed by very different criteria and it is often misleading to assume that the same logic that applies to politicians applies to the military. As Geddes (1999: 125) points out, the type of motivations behind the military are largely of a professional nature over the purely political aspirations of access to power. Furthermore, the type of organization is completely different, with the military organization having a rigid structure characterized by hierarchy where the demand is channeled from the top down and the conflict can only be resolved by the superior. Meanwhile, politics allows other games, where there is no *a priori* hierarchy that subjugates the process or precisely politics can be the means to subvert it⁵. Thus, given the existence of such disparate rules of operation, it is convenient to use this axis of division.

Below is a list of the categories resulting from the combination of the three axes described above. First, we offer the name of the political system to which we refer and then in the parentheses we show how this system will appear in the graphs and tables that we will use and in the rest of the sections of this article.

1. Autocratic political system of traditional demand management (*traditional*): it is a political system in which all legislative and executive powers are exercised by an individual or small group whose legitimacy is based on their ancestry, lineage, or relationship with a religious foundation. It can be further divided between monarchical and oligarchical traditional political systems (in practice there are no traditional democratic systems today), but for our purposes of analysis we will consider both together since they maintain the principle of equal legitimacy and in practice it is difficult to discern whether the government is unipersonal or whether the monarch governs according to what his closest clique has to say.
2. Autocratic political system of demand management through a charismatic leader (*personalist*): it is a political system in which decision-making depends on a sole individual who holds the executive and legislative powers, without any counterweight from other elements and in which the political promotion hinges on the dispensation

⁴ According to Von Clausewitz (*On War*), war is a mere continuation of politics by other means. This consecutive exercise of war and politics has often led to confusing the two phenomena, which are not the same thing. Although Clausewitz makes it clear that war is the consequence of the failure of politics, the relationship has often been inverted and the war scenario has been brought into politics, when this implies precisely destroying the concept of politics, which is not characterized by the suppression of conflict, but by its channeling.

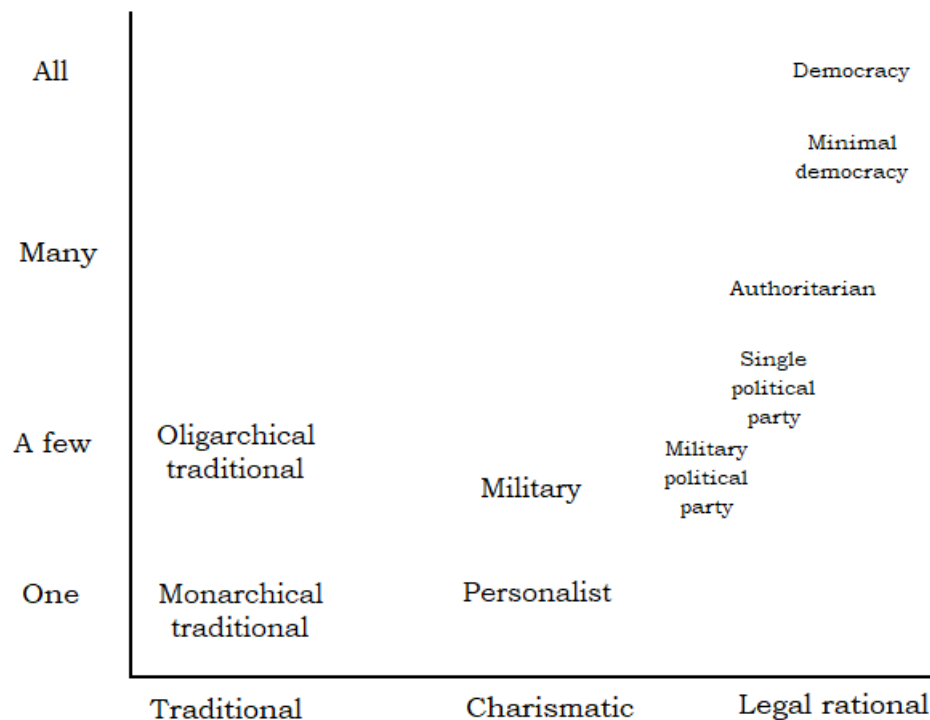
⁵ For example, coups d'état led by officers who did not occupy the highest rank and whose coup catapulted them not only politically but also professionally have been fairly common.

of favors by the charismatic leader, who oversees satisfying the different groups that support him in order to remain in power.

3. Autocratic political system of demand management through a military collegiate body (*military*): it is a political system in which either the executive and legislative power is vested collegially in a corps of army officers, or the corps exercises a close monitoring over the executive and legislative powers through established institutions that are responsible for processing demands on the system.
4. Autocratic political system of demand management through a civilian hegemonic apparatus (*single political party*): it is a political system in which decision-making relies in a single collective body, be it a single party organized as such or an organized and structured group which is responsible for controlling the political promotion of its members and channeling the demands of society through the party apparatus, which is superimposed on other legal structures.
5. Autocratic political system of demand management through a hegemonic civilian-military apparatus (*military political party*): it is a political system in which the decisions are taken by a political-military bureaucratic apparatus that controls the government and directs political and military promotion and succession in the government leadership, channeling demands through the mechanisms available to this bureaucratic apparatus. Unlike military systems where military structures prevail over civilian ones, there is a symbiosis between party and military, where promotion in one and the other is related. While civilian structures may exist, the final decision is made by an officer corps. In this system, the Armed Forces, through their internal selection processes, nourish with leading cadres of political decision-makers.
6. Autocratic political system of vague demand management (*authoritarian*): it is a political system characterized by a limited pluralism in which elections may occur sporadically as a mechanism of legitimization of the ruling elite, but which lacks guarantees of freedom for the political opposition and has no real mechanisms of alternation in power. It can be a transitory phase in the evolution towards a democracy or in its deterioration towards authoritarian political systems of another sign. It is characterized by a broad coalition of factions that exclude certain actors from the political game, where there is neither a centralized mechanism for channeling demands nor a leader with sufficient authority to control the management of the requests of the different groups that support the system by granting favors and controlling access.
7. Flawed democratic political system (*minimal democracy*): it is a political system in which decisions are taken by the majority principle, which holds regular elections, but which presents problems in respecting the exercise of their rights by minorities, notably because of the preeminence in government of certain groups or because of the selective channeling and alienation of certain groups, excluded from both political and, on occasion, electoral participation. In certain cases, it may simply be the peremptory step during the transition to a democratic political system or the emergence of acute conflicts that lead to the deterioration towards autocratic forms.
8. Democratic political system (*democracy*): it is a political system in which decisions are taken by the majority principle respecting the minority through free, regular, and competitive elections that decide executive and legislative decisions and allow the promotion of all demands while respecting that the minority may in the future become the majority by peaceful means. In this system, all members have the possibility of carrying out an audit task on the decisions of the elected representatives, there being a structure of accountability that goes not only through elections, but also through societal control mechanisms. Likewise, the configuration of the structure of the system sets in motion complete control mechanisms between the different powers. It differs from the flawed democratic political system in that it has completed the development of all these mechanisms and does not exclude participation of any kind.
9. No effective or failed government: it is a failed political system in which, due to foreign invasions, fragmentation of power or civil war, there is no single authority exercising control over a large part of the territory. It serves as a residual category for political systems in internal crises generated by violence and where it cannot be said that there is a single political system or that the parties have sufficient autonomy to be considered separate political systems.

⁶ For practical purposes, there is no difference between a monarchical and an oligarchical traditional political system. In fact, it is not unusual for a monarchy to actually protect a small oligarchy living under its aegis. Nevertheless, we separate them here for the sake of clarity and in anticipation of the possibility that the two may be distinct, although this is not the situation in the cases analyzed.

Figure 1. Classification of political systems according to the processing of inputs



Source: prepared by the author

Figure 1 shows the classification detailed above, considering the axes of number and legitimacy. The third axis, constituted by the military character, would result from separating the military and the military political party systems from the rest of the systems presented here. In this way we can observe that as the type of legitimacy drifts towards models with a rational legal criterion, there is an increase in the number of people to whom the political system is directly accountable. This growth is exponential in nature, i.e., as the system shifts towards formulas in which the legitimacy criteria are more based on terms that coincide with the legality and rationality of the system, the number of people to whom the rulers are accountable does not grow linearly, but in exponential multiples. Thus, as they become more open to demands, systems must develop greater inclusiveness.

3.4. Spatial and time framework

In the previous section we have explained the criteria we have used as a basis to elaborate a typology of political systems. As a result of applying the three filters we have chosen (number, legitimacy and civilian or military character) we have obtained nine resulting categories. In order to make these categories operational, it is necessary to specify them both in space and in time. With this exercise we can show that this typology covers the different political realities of all the countries of the world.

Therefore, when determining our spatial framework, we have decided to apply our typology to the possible universe of cases, that is, all the countries of the world. This allows us to test the validity of the use of the typology to see if it meets the criterion of exhaustiveness that we had set for this study. In doing so, we test the typology against a varied spectrum of political systems.

Moreover, for our time framework we have set the period between 1960 and 2006. We have chosen this time framework because 1960 is the earliest date from which more reliable data are available after the fall of the great colonial empires and the beginning of the African and Asian independence processes, so that we have a larger universe of cases and there are fewer disturbances due to the change of borders. 2006 offered us a date with consolidated data so that we could work more comfortably with a decade's margin.

When making our calculations, we have set the unit of measurement at country-year. This allows us to individualize the cases and put them on the same level to avoid more unstable countries being counted more often than more stable countries. Since our time framework spans from 1960 to 2006, if a country is a democracy for forty-six years, it will appear computed forty-six times. This results in all countries appearing the same number of times, which would not be the case if we were computing different types of political systems⁷.

⁷ If the counting criteria were systems, then some countries would be counted more times than others. For example, countries like Denmark, which have been democracies the whole period, would be counted once, while countries like Afghanistan, which have undergone multiple changes, would be counted multiple times. There is not really a substantial difference between the two methods as far as we are concerned here, but it has to be considered when judging the tables

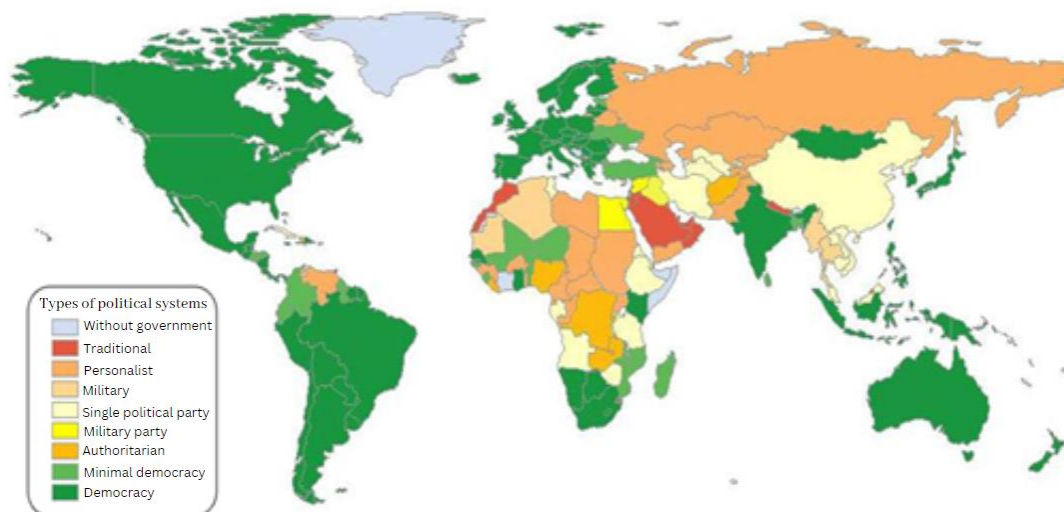
4. Classification of political systems in comparative perspective

In this section we will present both the result of applying our categories of analysis and a comparison with the work done by other authors to classify political systems. We will first show how our own typology is reflected and then proceed to a comparative analysis with other typologies that perform a large-scale analysis.

4.1. Results of the application of the categories of analysis

In this article, we have proceeded to classify each of the political systems year by year, assigning one of the preceding nine categories to each case, with no exceptions or special *ad hoc* categories. All the documentation relating to this classification can be consulted in the annexes, as well as an annual detail of how each of the cases under study has been classified. To simplify the presentation, and to illustrate the results without the need to consult the annexes, a map showing the results of our classification for 2006 is presented below.

Figure 1: Map of political systems according to the processing of inputs



Source: prepared by the author

in section 4.2. If we disagree with other authors in cases whose systems are very long-lasting over time versus other systems that last barely a year, the degree of discrepancy will be numerically greater, even though it is only a single discrepancy in both cases.

4.2. Comparison of the typology with those developed by other authors

In this section we will evaluate the application of this classification, focusing on the divergences that we find in comparison with other authors. We consider that a divergence is relevant when we classify a system as democratic and for other author it is considered a dictatorship. Divergences are also relevant when we point out that the system has a civilian character and is not classified as such by other authors.

In this way we can better fit the classification that we have adapted within the framework of other studies that have a similar or identical approach to ours, that is, that cover every country of the world within the time framework⁸ we have chosen. Therefore, in the reference authors we will employ those who distinguish not only between democracies and autocracies, but also between autocracies themselves. We find two classifications with a similar approach, Cheibub et al. (2009) and Geddes et al. (2014)⁹.

The following table shows the result of comparing our classification with that of Cheibub et al. (2009). In their case, this classification starts from the original idea of a world divided between democracies and non-democracies. Democracies are then classified according to the way in which the executive is elected and its relationship with the legislature, leaving us with the division between parliamentary, mixed, and presidential democracies. As for the non-democratic regimes, these authors include them under the denomination of dictatorship, distinguishing between the character of the civilian, military, or royal ruler.

Table 1 shows this comparison in detail. The base unit of observation is the country-year, which means that each case reflected is a country in a given year. In the rows we have placed our classification, while in the columns we find the classification elaborated by Cheibub et al. (2009). This table can be read both from left to right and from top to bottom. In the first way we can see, for example, of all the countries that we classify as having a traditional political system, which are classified by these authors as parliamentary, mixed, and presidential democracies or civilian, military, or royal dictatorships. Conversely, reading by columns, for example, of the cases classified by Cheibub et al. (2009) as parliamentary democracies, we will see which are, according to our classification, failed, traditional, personalist, military, single political party, military political party, authoritarian, minimal democracies, or democracies.

Table 1: Comparison with Cheibub et al., (2009) classification

	Political regime (Cheibub et al., 2009)					
	Parliamentary democracy	Mixed democracy	Presidential democracy	Civilian dictatorship	Military dictatorship	Royal dictatorship
Failed	1	0	5	106	14	1
Traditional	0	0	0	8	1	507
Personalist	20	26	27	349	583	0
Military	26	1	20	25	281	0
Single political party	26	3	10	1302	156	0
Military political party	0	1	0	6	351	0
Authoritarian	31	2	46	81	15	5
Minimal democracy	134	110	264	90	9	0
Democracy	1174	406	457	142	1	0

Source: prepared by the author based on Cheibub et al., (2009)

⁸ The time framework means that we have to exclude from our comparison the work of Hadenius and Teorell (2007) which, although it also conducts an exhaustive analysis of all the countries distinguishing within the political regimes, does not have a time framework equal to ours, since its analysis begins in 1974. However, when it has been necessary to compare our classification with that of other authors, we have occasionally resorted to Hadenius and Teorell as a reference.

⁹ In Geddes (1999) we can find a first approximation to the classification of political regimes. Geddes' second classification is more extensive in the number of cases it deals with, but it is also a revision of his original classification. In order to guide our own decisions, we have tried to consider both of them, especially in their divergences.

Our study universe is composed by 6,823 cases, that is, 6,823 observations of countries¹⁰ in a given year. Of these, we found significant divergences in 483 cases, a 7 % of discrepancies over the total universe of cases. Of these 438 cases, the majority, 232 cases, stem from the difference between systems that we classify as democratic (either minimal or full democracy) and those that Cheibub et al. classify as civilian dictatorships. These cases are eminently those related to countries where there is a dominant party (usually a pre-electoral coalition) that has won successive elections since the country's independence. Cheibub et al. start from the concept that in order to be classified as a democracy it is necessary that a change in the ownership of power takes place or has taken place, a characteristic that we do not share. Specifically, for Cheibub et al. countries such as Botswana or Namibia should be considered dictatorships despite the fact that, according to all international standards and election observers, these electoral processes have been considered clean and transparent. Apart from this, other sources, such as *Freedom House*, classify these countries as respectful of civil and political liberties. Moreover, a strict application of this criterion could mean that countries such as South Africa, where the same political culture of pre-electoral coalitions prevails, should be classified as civilian dictatorships also if we take into account only the post-apartheid democratic constitutional period, the only one that should really count according to the Cheibub et al. rule, where the African National Congress has systematically won all the elections, without any alternation having taken place. However, for reasons that are not reflected, South Africa is classified as a democracy, which is not the case for its northern neighbors.

Another type of divergence is those in which, in our opinion, the judgement of Cheibub et al. has classified as democracy systems that are not, generally because they are in a situation of conflict, because the democratic deterioration occurred before the change was formal or because, although formally democratic rules are in place, they are not respected. In terms of situations of conflict, for example, countries such as Sierra Leone are classified as a democracy during the period of civil war in the late nineties, whereas in these cases we have chosen to consider it as a failed system. On other occasions, political systems that formally begin as democracies drift towards authoritarian exercises of power, to the point that there are complaints from the opposition about the transparency of elections and the political process. This is the case, for example, of Uruguay in the early seventies, which would end up drifting into a military dictatorship, a gradual authoritarian drift that these authors do not recognize as such. Sometimes a situation of conflict is accompanied by a personalist leadership, as is the case of Croatia during the nineties, immersed in the midst of war, under an omnipresent leadership such as that of Tudjman, described as a democracy according to Cheibub et al., with which we disagree. Finally, there are a number of specific countries where we disagree with their criteria, considering in our case certain non-democratic characteristics where these authors do not detect it as such. These discrepancies can be seen in the annexes.

In the following table we can see the comparison of our classification with that made by Geddes et al. (2014). In the case of this classification, it is based on the original one by Geddes (1999), which divides authoritarian regimes into personalist, single party and military regimes according to the different types of incentives they face in the processes of democratic opening. These regimes, in turn, allow us to see hybridizations in all possible logical combinations. In addition to this original study, which was designed for a set of countries that did not cover all the countries in the world, later studies add new categories that complete it, such as monarchical and oligarchical regimes. Since the focus of these authors is on the regimes they call authoritarian, the rest of the categories thus become residual categories. This means that democracies, regimes in a situation of war, conflict or simply failed systems fall into the same category. Moreover, there are certain "microstates" that are excluded from the database but which we do include. As in the previous case, this table can be read both from left to right and from top to bottom.

¹⁰ As mentioned above, each country can be repeated up to a total of forty-six times given that our time framework spans from 1960 to 2006. Some countries are repeated less often, either because they are created later or because they disappear as such, as in the case of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, South Vietnam, among others.

Table 2 Comparison between classification by political system and by regime (Geddes et al., 2014).

	Political regime (Geddes et al., 2014)											
	Dem.	Milit. indirect	Mil.	Mil. – pers.	Monarch.	Pers.	Olig.	Single party	Party - military	Pers. party	Party – pers. - military	Not covered
W/o gov.	0	0	1	1	1	19	0	2	1	1	0	86
Trad.	0	0	0	0	377	0	0	4	0	0	0	132
Pers.	11	0	18	80	11	823	0	1	0	0	0	44
Milit.	0	7	225	55	0	26	0	0	2	1	0	13
Single party	8	0	1	0	1	11	29	1053	0	293	0	94
Military party	0	1	0	64	2	16	0	0	112	11	149	0
Authorit.	14	14	4	7	4	22	0	28	1	2	3	50
Min. dem.	510	11	10	2	2	6	3	36	0	0	3	24
Dem.	2027	0	6	2	0	1	2	99	0	0	0	43

Source: prepared by the author based on Geddes et al. (2014)

Of the 6,823 cases in our database, our classification and that of these authors fully coincide in 5,366 instances. To these instances must be added another 486 cases that we include in our study and that are not directly present in theirs. These cases are mixed with the residual category of democracy for this study, which includes both democratic and failed political systems. In total, about 85 % of the cases coincide between the two classifications. To these cases we should add another one hundred cases that correspond to situations of conflict or civil war and failed states that these authors do not classify either. This leaves 871 discrepancies, representing 12 % of the total cases.

The main difference between the two classifications corresponds to hybrid regimes. As we have mentioned previously, we consider that hybridization is not the mere addition of characteristics, and that the new element has its own distinctive characteristics beyond the sum of the parts. In this sense, the characteristics established by Geddes et al. as single party, personalist and military regimes or other combinations of these elements have been treated differently. We consider that there is no such thing as a combination between a single party system and a personalist system, but that it is necessary to judge in each case whether we are dealing with a personalist or a single party system. In every system there is a leadership, however weak or formal it may be, and in the single party system this is no different, indeed quite the opposite. This has led us in many cases to classify the systems as exclusively single party, despite the elements of personalism, because of the persistence of the party to its leaders and its ability to articulate successions beyond the wishes of the specific leader. In this regard, in cases like Cuba, classified as a personalist and single party regime, we have emphasized the protagonist role of the party. Something similar has happened to us when dealing with single party, personalist, and military regimes, which have ended up subsumed in military political party or other systems depending on the circumstances. In this category of military political party, we have included systems such as Nasser's Egypt, where the military has served as a transmission chain of power, acting in the promotion of new leaders who required their acquiescence. The stable nature of the relationship differentiates them from boards, which have an ephemeral life and have no social impact whatsoever.

Another factor in which both classifications diverge, as we have already seen in the case of Cheibub, is the treatment of dominant party cases. We have already seen that, if the democratic rules are respected, we have classified such countries as democracies. For Geddes et al. (2009) cases such as Namibia or Botswana deserve to be treated as "party-based" regimes. While they do not go as far as to call them dictatorships as Cheibub et al., they do not consider them as democracies either.

Another key difference comes from our category of authoritarian systems, which has no concrete match in Geddes et al. (2014). In said category, according to the definition we have provided previously, we have classified autocratic systems that have a certain pluralism but in which there is neither a personalist leader nor a military board that controls the political sphere. Likewise, in times of transition, we have chosen this denomination for systems in the process of democratization but that do not yet meet the requirements to be democracies. Lastly, there is a high number of isolated discrepancies due to the way in which the years have been coded, resulting in occasional deviations in the Geddes et al. database, not only with respect to our database but also to that of other authors we have consulted.

5. Conclusions

Firstly, in this article we have compared the concepts of political regime and political system and we have viewed the different approximations that have been made thereon. We have opted for a systemic approach, since the concept

of political regime only describes a part of the political process (or is directly confused with the concept of political system, as we have seen, according to certain authors). The concept of political system shows us the framework of objectives, rules and structures in which the actors operate to respond to demands, but, as we have seen in other authors who defined political regime *lato sensu*, there are important elements of the political game that would be left out if we look exclusively at the normative framework (whether formal or informal), such as the interaction of the actors with objectives, rules and structures, and of these in turn with the demands.

For these reasons, secondly, we have proceeded to describe the theoretical developments made from the studies that have taken the political regime as their basis. This was extremely useful to us, since it enhances with their experience the type of analysis that we can conduct in this study. With the concept of regime in a broad sense and the studies of other authors as the basis, we add categories whose use has already been empirically verified through case studies, as well as comparative and statistical studies.

Thirdly, within the systemic approach we have identified two moments: the system as a processor of demands and the system as a producer of results and the subsequent feedback process. Dividing the system into these two moments allows us to identify in which of them we can focus our classification of systems so as not to multiply the typologies, which would end up removing any generalizing power to this classification exercise. Finally, we have determined that we will use the political system from the perspective of processor of demands as the focus of our classificatory exercise, given that the results of the political system can be many and varied. Thus, we can pay attention to the type of redistributive policies that are produced, the type of mobilization that the system generates, the degree of pluralism that its results welcome, among other factors. Therefore, while the results are remarkably diverse, we can narrow down the way in which the demands are processed to a much more limited set of factors.

After focusing on the way in which demands are processed, fourthly, we have applied three classification criteria to the political system, which we understand to be a constant flow of interaction. The first one is the effective number of actors and groups for the intermediation and articulation of demands to which the system responds. The second one is the legitimacy principle relative to the support of the system. Based on these axes, we have drawn up a table of categories resulting from the application of the dimensions just mentioned, which resulted in the following types of systems: *traditional, personalist, military, single political party, military political party, authoritarian, minimal democracy, democracy* and *failed*. We have observed how there is a line of continuity between them according to the number and the type of legitimacy that upholds them. In order to verify these data, we have tested our analytic categories and have proceeded to apply them to every country of the world between 1960 and 2006, so as to obtain a detailed table of how the application of this typology would turn out. Said table has been compared with the ones offered by other authors and the divergences found have been explained.

6. Bibliography

- ALMOND, Gabriel (1966). "Political Theory and Political Science" in *American Political Science Review*. vol. 60. No. 4 December. 869-879X.
- ALMOND, Gabriel; POWEL, George Bingham (1981). *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. Brown: Boston.
- BADIE, Bertrand; BIRNBAUM, Pierre; BRAUD, Philippe; HERMET, Guy (1996). *Dictionnaire de la science politique et des institutions politiques*. Armand Colin. Paris.
- BOBBIO, Norberto; MATTEUCI, Nicola; PASQUINO, Gianfranco (2011). *Diccionario de política*. Siglo XXI. Mexico.
- CHEIBUB, José Antonio; GANDHI, J.; VREELAND, J. R. (2009). "Democracy and dictatorship revisited". in *Public Choice*. 143(1-2): 67-101.
- CHEVALIER, Jacques (1996). *Institutions politiques*. L.G.D.J. Paris.
- CLAUSEWITZ, Carl von (2010). *De la guerra*. Tecnos. Madrid.
- DUVERGER, Maurice (1970). *Instituciones políticas y Derecho Constitucional*. Ariel. Barcelona.
- DUVERGER, Maurice (1981). *Instituciones políticas y Derecho Constitucional*. Ariel. Barcelona.
- EASTON, David (1953). *The Political System. An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. Alfred A. Knopf. Nueva York.
- EASTON, D. and DENNIS, J. (1967). "The child's acquisition of regime norms: Political efficacy" in *American Political Science Review*, No. 61(1), pp. 25-38.
- EASTON, David (2006). *Esquema para el análisis político*. Amorrortu editores. Buenos Aires.
- ENGELS, Federico; MARX, Carlos (2014). *El Manifiesto Comunista*. Alianza. Madrid.
- FREEDOM HOUSE (2016). *Freedom in the World*. Accessed in 25/10/2019. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org>
- ECONOMISTS, The (2016). *Democracy Index 2015*. Available at http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex2015 Accessed in 25/10/2019.
- GEDDES, Barbara (1999). "What Do We Know about Democratization after twenty years?" in *Annual Review of Political Science*. vol. 2: 115-144.
- GEDDES, Barbara; WRIGHT, Joseph; FRANTZ, Erica (2014). "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions" in *Perspectives on Politics*. 12 (2). June 2014. pp 313-331.
- GREMY, Jean-Pierre and LE MOAN, Marie-Joëlle (1977). "Analyse de la démarche de construction de typologies dans les sciences sociales." *Informatique et sciences humaines*. No. 35, pp. 3-77.

- HADENIUS, Aleks; TEORELL, Jan (2007). "Pathways from Authoritarianism" in *Journal of Democracy*. vol. 18. No. 1. January. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore.
- LINZ, Juan José (1970). "An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain" in ALLARDT, E. and ROKKAN, S. (eds.): *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*. Free Press: New York.
- LINZ, Juan José; STEPAN, Alfred (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe. South America. and Post-Communist Europe*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore.
- MANN, Michael (1993): *States. War and Capitalism*. Blackwell. Cambridge.
- MARSHALL, Monty G. and JAGGERS, Keith (2007). "POLITY IV PROJECT. Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions. 1800-2007" Accessed 10 June 2012 in <http://www.systemicpeace.org/>
- MIGUEL, Jesús M. de; MARTÍNEZ-DORDELLA, Santiago (2014). "Nuevo índice de democracia" in *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*. No. 146. pp. 93-140.
- MORLINO, Leonardo (1988). "Las democracias" in PASQUINO. Gianfranco (comp.): *Manual de Ciencia Política*. Alianza Universidad. Madrid.
- MORLINO, Leonardo (2009). *Democracias y democratizaciones*. CIS. Madrid.
- PANIAGUA, José Luis (1990). "Los regímenes políticos y la organización del Estado" in COTARELO and PANIAGUA (comps.): *Introducción a la Ciencia Política*. UNED. Madrid.
- SKAANING, J. David (2006). "Political Regimes and Their Changes: A Conceptual Framework" in *Center on Democracy. Development. and The Rule of Law Working Papers*. number 55. May 2016.
- VARGAS, Alejo (1998). "Notas sobre los conceptos de sistema y régimen político" en *Estudios Políticos* No. 13. July -December 1998. pp. 157-180. Medellín.

Author's Biography

Oliver Soto Sainz, Complutense University of Madrid: Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Administration (UCM). PhD in Political Science and Public Administration (UCM). Master's degree in Constitutional Law (CEPC). Bachelor's degrees in Journalism (UC3M) and in Political Science and Public Administration (UCM). President of the Union of Europeanists and Federalists of Madrid. He has carried out work for the Centre for Sociological Research, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, among others.