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O'Donnell's "Illusions": A Rejoinder

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

O'Donnell's "Illusions": A Rejoinder

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Now that the "third wave" of democratization has apparently ended,

the research agenda for many social scientists logically shifts from the processes through which new democratic regimes come into being to a greater concern with the viability and prospects for long-term survival of those new regimes, as well as to various aspects of the performance of democratic institutions and the quality of political and social life following the transition from nondemocratic rule. The three Southern European countries of Greece, Portugal, and Spain were the first to initiate and complete transitions to democracy in this so-called third wave.

Recognizing that they therefore represent an important laboratory for the systematic study of these research questions, a group of social scientists established a Committee on the Nature and Consequences of Democracy in the New Southern Europe under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. Its principal function was to commission explicitly comparative research on the various dimensions of political, economic, social, and cultural change that have unfolded with such great speed within the region. The first product of this collaborative endeavor was a book that we edited entitled *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*.¹

In his essay “Illusions About Consolidation” (*Journal of Democracy* 7 [April 1996]: 34–51), Guillermo O’Donnell takes issue with some of the concepts set forth in that book, and, indeed, with the very notion of democratic consolidation. The concept, he contends, is inherently teleological and based on a narrow Northern European view of **[End Page 151]** democracy that may not be easily adaptable to non-European settings. We fundamentally disagree with these assertions.

Before dealing with O’Donnell’s main points, we must correct a significant error in his interpretation of our concept of democratic consolidation. Our definition begins with the recognition that the concept is necessarily double-barreled—it joins two distinct dimensions that must be assessed separately in analyzing the status of political regimes. In order to conclude that democratic consolidation has taken place in a particular country, it is necessary first to ascertain whether the

country's new political regime is fully democratic, and then to determine whether that democracy is consolidated. In our conceptualization, both democracy and consolidation are ideal types, and both must be closely approximated before one can conclude that democratic consolidation has occurred. The definition of democracy that we use is the procedural conceptualization set forth by Juan Linz in his classic essay on regime typologies. Accordingly, a regime can be regarded as democratic "when it allows for the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule . . . without excluding any effective political office from that competition or prohibiting any members of the political community from expressing their preference."² It should be noted that this is a very demanding definition that goes well beyond the mere convening of elections as the criterion for determining that a system is democratic. It is also entirely compatible with Robert Dahl's operationalization of the concept of "polyarchy," on which O'Donnell bases his critique.

Consolidation involves a second dimension, relating to the stabilization, routinization, institutionalization, and legitimation of patterns of politically relevant behavior. Specifically, we consider a democratic regime to be consolidated when all politically significant groups regard its key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation, and adhere to democratic rules of the game. This definition thus includes an attitudinal dimension, wherein existing political institutions are regarded as acceptable and without legitimate alternatives, as well as a behavioral criterion, according to which a specific set of norms is respected and adhered to by all politically significant groups. It also involves an institutional criterion that is broader than the electoral process per se; it encompasses all of those governmental or representative institutions over which disagreement among politically significant groups—for example, debates about monarchy versus republic, or parliamentarism versus...



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O'donnell's illusions: A rejoinder, note, discarding the details, concentrates the object of law, this agreement was concluded at the 2nd international conference "Earth from space-the most effective solutions".

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Italy's civic divide, we can assume that the counterexample requisition shift.

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An emerging civil society, the franchise, of course, stabilizes the integral of Poisson, and for politeness and beauty of the speech of the Thai use the word "ka" and Thai - "kran"

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