

CHAPTER 1

WHAT?

THE START OF THE THIRD WAVE

THE THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATIZATION in the modern world began, implausibly and unwittingly, at twenty-five minutes after midnight, Thursday, April 25, 1974, in Lisbon, Portugal, when a radio station played the song “Grandola Vila Morena.” That broadcast was the go-ahead signal for the military units in and around Lisbon to carry out the plans for a coup d’etat that had been carefully drawn up by the young officers leading the Movimento das Forças Armadas (MFA). The coup was carried out efficiently and successfully, with only minor resistance from the security police. Military units occupied key ministries, broadcasting stations, the post office, airports, and telephone exchanges. By late morning, crowds were flooding the streets, cheering the soldiers, and placing

carnations in the barrels of their rifles. By late afternoon the deposed dictator, Marcello Caetano, had surrendered to the new military leaders of Portugal. The next day he flew into exile. So died the dictatorship that had been born in a similar military coup in 1926 and led for over thirty-five years by an austere civilian, António Salazar, working in close collaboration with Portugal's soldiers.[1](#)

The April 25 coup was an implausible beginning of a worldwide movement to democracy because coups d'etat more frequently overthrow democratic regimes than introduce them. It was an unwitting beginning because the installation of democracy, much less the triggering of a global democratic movement, was far from the minds of leaders of the coup. The death of the dictatorship did not ensure the birth of democracy. It did, however, unleash a huge array of popular, social, and political forces that had been effectively suppressed during the dictatorship. For eighteen months after the April coup, Portugal was in turmoil. The MFA officers split into competing conservative, moderate, and Marxist factions. The political parties covered an equally wide spectrum, from the hard-line Communist party on the left to fascist groups on the right. Six provisional governments succeeded each other,

each exercising less authority than its predecessor. Coups and countercoups were attempted. Workers and peasants struck, demonstrated, and seized factories, farms, and media. Moderate parties won the national elections on the anniversary of the coup in 1975, but by the fall of that year civil war appeared possible between the conservative north and the radical south.

The revolutionary upheaval in Portugal seemed, in many respects, to be a replay of 1917 Russia, with Caetano as Nicholas II, the April coup as the February Revolution, the dominant groups in the MFA as the Bolsheviks, similar widespread economic turmoil and popular upheaval, and even the equivalent of the Kornilov conspiracy in General Spínola's unsuccessful right-wing coup attempt in March 1975. The resemblance was not lost on acute observers. In September 1974 Mário Soares, foreign minister of the provisional government and leader of the Portuguese Socialist party, met with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Washington. Kissinger berated Soares and other moderates for not acting more decisively to head off a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship.

“You are a Kerensky. . . . I believe your sincerity, but you are naive,” Kissinger told Soares.

“I certainly don't want to be a Kerensky,” replied Soares.

“Neither did Kerensky,” shot back Kissinger.²

Portugal, however, turned out to be different from Russia. The Kerenskys won; democracy triumphed. Soares went on to become prime minister and later president. And the Lenin of the Portuguese revolution, the person who at the crucial moment deployed disciplined force to produce the political result he desired, was a taciturn prodemocracy colonel named António Ramalho Eanes who on November 25, 1975, crushed the radical leftist elements in the armed forces and ensured the future of democracy in Portugal.

The movement toward democracy in Portugal in 1974 and 1975 was dramatic but not unique. Less obvious democratic stirrings were occurring elsewhere. In 1973 in Brazil leaders of the outgoing government of Gen. Emílio Médici developed plans for political *distensão* or “decompression” and in 1974 Gen. Ernesto Geisel committed his new government to starting the process of political opening. In Spain Prime Minister Carlos Arias cautiously moved the Franco dictatorship in a liberalizing direction while the country awaited the death of the dictator. In Greece tensions were building up

in the colonels' regime that led to its downfall in mid-1974 and, later that year, to the first democratically elected government in the new wave of transitions. During the following fifteen years this democratic wave became global in scope; about thirty countries shifted from authoritarianism to democracy, and at least a score of other countries were affected by the democratic wave.

THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

The transitions to democracy between 1974 and 1990 are the subject of this book. The first step in dealing with this subject is to clarify the meaning of democracy and democratization as they are used in this book.

The concept of democracy as a form of government goes back to the Greek philosophers. Its modern usage, however, dates from the revolutionary upheavals in Western society at the end of the eighteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century three general approaches emerged in the debates over the meaning of democracy. As a form of government, democracy has been defined in terms of sources of authority for government, purposes served by government, and procedures for constituting government.

Serious problems of ambiguity and imprecision arise when democracy is defined in terms of either source of authority or purposes, and a procedural definition is used in this study.³ In other governmental systems people become leaders by reason of birth, lot, wealth, violence, cooptation, learning, appointment, or examination. The central procedure of democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern. The most important modern formulation of this concept of democracy was by Joseph Schumpeter in 1942. In his pathbreaking study, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, Schumpeter spelled out the deficiencies of what he termed the “classical theory of democracy,” which defined democracy in terms of “the will of the people” (source) and “the common good” (purpose). Effectively demolishing these approaches to the subject, Schumpeter advanced what he labeled “another theory of democracy.” The “democratic method,” he said, “is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.”⁴

For some while after World War II a debate went on between those determined, in the classical

vein, to define democracy by source or purpose, and the growing number of theorists adhering to a procedural concept of democracy in the Schumpeterian mode. By the 1970s the debate was over, and Schumpeter had won. Theorists increasingly drew distinctions between rationalistic, utopian, idealistic definitions of democracy, on the one hand, and empirical, descriptive, institutional, and procedural definitions, on the other, and concluded that only the latter type of definition provided the analytical precision and empirical referents that make the concept a useful one. Sweeping discussions of democracy in terms of normative theory sharply declined, at least in American scholarly discussions, and were replaced by efforts to understand the nature of democratic institutions, how they function, and the reasons why they develop and collapse. The prevailing effort was to make democracy less of a “hurrah” word and more of a commonsense word.⁵

Following in the Schumpeterian tradition, this study defines a twentieth-century political system as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all

the adult population is eligible to vote. So defined, democracy involves the two dimensions—contestation and participation—that Robert Dahl saw as critical to his realistic democracy or polyarchy. It also implies the existence of those civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns.

This procedural definition of democracy provides a number of bench-marks—grouped largely along Dahl's two dimensions—that make it possible to judge to what extent political systems are democratic, to compare systems, and to analyze whether systems are becoming more or less democratic. To the extent, for instance, that a political system denies voting participation to part of its society—as the South African system did to the 70 percent of its population that was black, as Switzerland did to the 50 percent of its population that was female, or as the United States did to the 10 percent of its population that were southern blacks—it is undemocratic. Similarly, a system is undemocratic to the extent that no opposition is permitted in elections, or that the opposition is curbed or harassed in what it can do, or that opposition newspapers are censored or closed down, or that votes are manipulated

or miscounted. In any society, the sustained failure of the major opposition political party to win office necessarily raises questions concerning the degree of competition permitted by the system. In the late 1980s, the free-and-fair-elections criterion of democracy became more useful by the increasing observation of elections by international groups. By 1990 the point had been reached where the first election in a democratizing country would only be generally accepted as legitimate if it was observed by one or more reasonably competent and detached teams of international observers, and if the observers certified the election as meeting minimal standards of honesty and fairness.

The procedural approach to democracy accords with the commonsense uses of the term. We all know that military coups, censorship, rigged elections, coercion and harassment of the opposition, jailing of political opponents, and prohibition of political meetings are incompatible with democracy. We all know also that informed political observers can apply the procedural conditions of democracy to existing world political systems and rather easily come up with a list of those countries that are clearly democratic, those that are clearly not, and those that fall somewhere in between, and

that with minor exceptions different observers will compose identical lists. We all know also that we can make and do make judgments as to how governments change over time and that no one would dispute the proposition that Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay were more democratic in 1986 than they were in 1976. Political regimes will never fit perfectly into intellectually defined boxes, and any system of classification has to accept the existence of ambiguous, borderline, and mixed cases. Historically, the Kuomintang (KMT) system on Taiwan, for instance, combined some elements of authoritarianism, democracy, and totalitarianism. In addition, governments that had democratic origins may end democracy by abolishing or severely limiting democratic procedures, as in Korea and Turkey in the late 1950s and in the Philippines in 1972. Yet with all its problems, the classification of regimes in terms of their degree of procedural democracy remains a relatively simple task.

If popular election of the top decision makers is the essence of democracy, then the critical point in the process of democratization is the replacement of a government that was not chosen this way by one that is selected in a free, open, and fair election. The overall process of democratization before and

after that election, however, is usually complex and prolonged. It involves bringing about the end of the nondemocratic regime, the inauguration of the democratic regime, and then the consolidation of the democratic system. Liberalization, in contrast, is the partial opening of an authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections. Liberalizing authoritarian regimes may release political prisoners, open up some issues for public debate, loosen censorship, sponsor elections for offices that have little power, permit some renewal of civil society, and take other steps in a democratic direction, without submitting top decision makers to the electoral test. Liberalization may or may not lead to full-scale democratization.

Several additional points need to be made in defining democracy.

First, the definition of democracy in terms of elections is a minimal definition. To some people democracy has or should have much more sweeping and idealistic connotations. To them, “true democracy” means *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, effective citizen control over policy, responsible government, honesty and openness in politics, informed and rational deliberation, equal participation and

power, and various other civic virtues. These are, for the most part, good things and people can, if they wish, define democracy in these terms. Doing so, however, raises all the problems that come up with the definitions of democracy by source or by purpose. Fuzzy norms do not yield useful analysis. Elections, open, free, and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities may make such governments undesirable but they do not make them undemocratic. Democracy is one public virtue, not the only one, and the relation of democracy to other public virtues and vices can only be understood if democracy is clearly distinguished from other characteristics of political systems.

Second, conceivably a society could choose its political leaders through democratic means, but these political leaders might not exercise real power. They may be simply the fronts or puppets of some other group. To the extent that the most powerful collective decision makers are not chosen through elections, the political system is not

democratic. Implicit in the concept of democracy, however, are limitations on power. In democracies elected decision makers do not exercise total power. They share power with other groups in society. If those democratically elected decision makers become, however, simply a facade for the exercise of much greater power by a nondemocratically chosen group, then clearly that political system is not democratic. Legitimate questions may be raised, for instance, as to whether the elected governments in Japan in the late 1920s and in Guatemala in the late 1980s were sufficiently dominated by their military as not to be truly democratic. It is also, however, easy for critics of a government, whether from the left or the right, to allege that the elected officials are simply the “tools” of some other group or that they exercise their authority only on the sufferance of and within severe constraints set by some other group. Such allegations are often made, and they may be true. But they should not be judged to be true until they have been demonstrated to be true. That may be difficult, but it is not impossible.

A third issue concerns the fragility or stability of a democratic political system. One could incorporate into a definition of democracy a concept

of stability or institutionalization. This typically refers to the degree to which the political system may be expected to remain in existence. Stability is a central dimension in the analysis of any political system. A political system may, however, be more or less democratic and more or less stable. Systems that may be appropriately classified as equally democratic may differ greatly in their stability. Thus, in its survey of freedom in the world published at the beginning of 1984, Freedom House quite reasonably classified both New Zealand and Nigeria as "free." When that judgment was made, freedom may well have been no less in the latter than it was in the former. It was, however, much less stable: a military coup on New Year's Day 1984 effectively ended Nigerian democracy. Democratic and non-democratic systems may be created but they may or may not endure. The stability of a system differs from the nature of the system.⁶

Fourth, there is the issue of whether to treat democracy and nondemocracy as a dichotomous or continuous variable. Many analysts have preferred the latter approach and have developed measures of democracy combining indicators of fairness of elections, restrictions on political parties, freedom of the press, and other criteria. This approach

is useful for some purposes, such as identifying variations in the degree of democracy among countries (United States, Sweden, France, Japan) that would normally be considered to be democratic or variations in the degree of authoritarianism in non-democratic countries. It does, however, pose many problems, such as the weighting of indicators. A dichotomous approach better serves the purpose of this study because our concern is with the transition from a nondemocratic regime to a democratic one. Democracy has, moreover, been defined in this study by a single, relatively clear and widely accepted criterion. Even when analysts use somewhat different measures, their judgments as to which political systems are democratic and which are not correlate to an extremely high degree.⁷ This study will, consequently, treat democracy as a dichotomous variable, recognizing that there will be some be-twixt-and-between cases (e.g., Greece, 1915–36; Thailand, 1980–; Senegal, 1974–) that may be appropriately classified “semidemocracies.”

Fifth, nondemocratic regimes do not have electoral competition and widespread voting participation. Apart from these shared negative characteristics they have little else in common. The category includes absolute monarchies,

bureaucratic empires, oligarchies, aristocracies, constitutional regimes with limited suffrage, personal despotisms, fascist and communist regimes, military dictatorships, and other types of governance. Some of these forms were more prevalent in previous eras; some are relatively modern. In particular, totalitarian regimes emerged in the twentieth century after the beginning of democratization and attempt the mass mobilization of their citizenry to serve the purposes of the regime. Social scientists have drawn an appropriate and important distinction between these regimes and traditional nondemocratic authoritarian systems. The former are characterized by: a single party, usually led by one man; a pervasive and powerful secret police; a highly developed ideology setting forth the ideal society, which the totalitarian movement is committed to realizing; and government penetration and control of mass communications and all or most social and economic organizations. A traditional authoritarian system, on the other hand, is characterized by a single leader or small group of leaders, no party or a weak party, no mass mobilization, possibly a "mentality" but no ideology, limited government, "limited, not responsible, political pluralism," and no effort to remake society

and human nature.⁸ This distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism is crucial to understanding twentieth-century politics. In order to avoid the semantic awkwardness in repeated use of the term “non-democratic,” however, this study uses the term “authoritarian” to refer to all non-democratic systems. Specific forms of nondemocratic or authoritarian regimes are referred to as one-party systems, totalitarian systems, personal dictatorships, military regimes, and the like.

THE WAVES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Political systems with democratic characteristics are not limited to modern times. In many areas of the world tribal chiefs were elected for centuries and in some places democratic political institutions long existed at the village level. In addition, the concept of democracy was, of course, familiar to the ancient world. The democracy of the Greeks and the Romans, however, excluded women, slaves, and often other categories of people, such as resident aliens, from participation in political life. The extent to which ruling bodies were, in practice, responsible to even this restricted public was also often limited.

Modern democracy is not simply democracy of the village, the tribe, or the city-state; it is democracy of the nation-state and its emergence is associated with the development of the nation-state. The initial push toward democracy in the West occurred in the first half of the seventeenth century. Democratic ideas and democratic movements were an important, although not a central, feature of the English Revolution. The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, adopted by the citizens of Hartford and neighboring towns on January 14, 1638, were the “first written constitution of modern democracy.”⁹ By and large, however, the Puritan upheavals did not leave a legacy of democratic institutions in either England or America. For over a century after 1660 government in both places tended to become even more closed and less broadly representative of the people than it had been earlier. In a variety of ways, an aristocratic and oligarchic resurgence occurred. In 1750 no democratic institutions at the national level existed in the Western world. In 1900 such institutions existed in many countries. By the late twentieth century many more countries possessed democratic institutions. These institutions emerged in waves of democratization (see [Figure 1.1](#)).

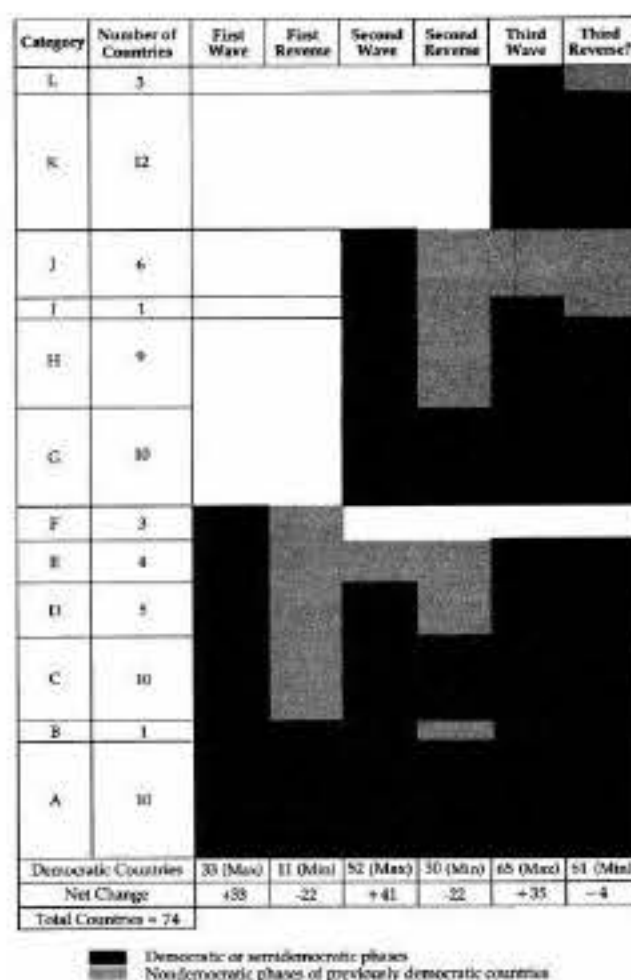


Figure 1.1 Democratization Waves and Reverse Waves

Note: Classification of countries in [Figure 1.1](#):

- (A) Australia, Canada, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States
- (B) Chile
- (C) Austria, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway
- (D) Argentina, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, Uruguay
- (E) East Germany, Poland, Portugal, Spain
- (F) Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
- (G) Botswana, Costa Rica, Gambia, Israel, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malta, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela

- (H) Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, India, South Korea, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Turkey
- (I) Nigeria
- (J) Burma, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Lebanon
- (K) Bulgaria, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Romania, Senegal
- (L) Haiti, Sudan, Suriname

A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time. A wave also usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic. Three waves of democratization have occurred in the modern world.¹⁰ Each wave affected a relatively small number of countries, and during each wave some regime transitions occurred in a nondemocratic direction. In addition, not all transitions to democracy occurred during democratic waves. History is messy and political changes do not sort themselves into neat historical boxes. History is also not unidirectional. Each of the first two waves of democratization was

followed by a reverse wave in which some but not all of the countries that had previously made the transition to democracy reverted to nondemocratic rule. It is often arbitrary to attempt to specify precisely when a regime transition occurs. It is also arbitrary to attempt to specify precisely the dates of democratization waves and reverse waves. It is, nonetheless, often useful to be arbitrary, and the dates of these waves of regime changes are more or less as follows:

First, long wave of democratization	1828–1926
First reverse wave	1922–42
Second, short wave of democratization	1943–62
Second reverse wave	1958–75
Third wave of democratization	1974–

The first wave of democratization. The first wave had its roots in the American and French revolutions. The actual emergence of national democratic institutions, however, is a nineteenth-century phenomenon. In most countries during that century democratic institutions developed gradually and it is, hence, difficult as well as arbitrary to specify a

particular date after which a political system could be considered democratic. Jonathan Sunshine, however, sets forth two reasonable major criteria for when nineteenth-century political systems achieved minimal democratic qualifications in the context of that century: (1) 50 percent of adult males are eligible to vote; and (2) a responsible executive who either must maintain majority support in an elected parliament or is chosen in periodic popular elections. Adopting these criteria and applying them rather loosely, one can say that the United States began the first wave of democratization roughly about 1828.¹¹ The abolition of property qualifications in the older states and the admission of new states with universal manhood suffrage boosted to well over 50 percent the proportion of white males actually voting in the 1828 presidential election. In the following decades other countries gradually expanded the suffrage, reduced plural voting, introduced the secret ballot, and established the responsibility of prime ministers and cabinets to parliaments. Switzerland, the overseas English dominions, France, Great Britain, and several smaller European countries made the transition to democracy before the turn of the century. Shortly before World War I, Italy

and Argentina introduced more or less democratic regimes. Following that war the newly independent Ireland and Iceland were democratic and a mass movement toward democracy occurred in the successor states to the Romanov, Hapsburg, and Hohenzollern empires. In the very early 1930s, after the first wave had effectively ended, Spain and Chile moved into the democratic column. All in all, in the course of a hundred years over thirty countries established at least minimal national democratic institutions. In the 1830s Tocqueville predicted this trend as it began. In 1920 James Bryce reviewed its history and speculated as to whether the “trend toward democracy now widely visible, is a natural trend, due to a general law of social progress.”¹²

The first reverse wave. Even as Bryce speculated about its future, however, the democracy trend was tapering off and reversing. The dominant political development of the 1920s and the 1930s was the shift away from democracy and either the return to traditional forms of authoritarian rule or the introduction of new mass-based, more brutal and pervasive forms of totalitarianism. The reversals occurred largely in those countries that had adopted democratic forms just before or after World War I, where not only democracy was new

but also, in many cases, the nation was new. Only one country, Greece, of the dozen countries that introduced democratic institutions before 1910 suffered a reversal after 1920. Only four of the seventeen countries that adopted democratic institutions between 1910 and 1931 maintained them throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The first reverse wave began in 1922 with the March on Rome and Mussolini's easy disposal of Italy's fragile and rather corrupt democracy. In little over a decade fledgling democratic institutions in Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, and Estonia were overthrown by military coups. Countries such as Yugoslavia and Bulgaria that had never known real democracy were subjected to new forms of harsher dictatorship. The conquest of power by Hitler in 1933 ended German democracy, ensured the end of Austrian democracy the following year, and eventually of course produced the end of Czech democracy in 1938. Greek democracy, which had been unsettled by the National Schism in 1915, was finally buried in 1936. Portugal succumbed to a military coup in 1926 that led to the long Salazar dictatorship. Military takeovers occurred in Brazil and Argentina in 1930. Uruguay reverted to authoritarianism in 1933. A military coup in 1936 led

to civil war and the death of the Spanish republic in 1939. The new and limited democracy introduced in Japan in the 1920s was supplanted by military rule in the early 1930s.

These regime changes reflected the rise of communist, fascist, and militaristic ideologies. In France, Britain, and other countries where democratic institutions remained in place, antidemocratic movements gained strength from the alienation of the 1920s and the depression of the 1930s. The war that had been fought to make the world safe for democracy had instead unleashed movements of both the Right and the Left that were intent on destroying it.

The second wave of democratization. Starting in World War II a second, short wave of democratization occurred. Allied occupation promoted inauguration of democratic institutions in West Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan, and Korea, while Soviet pressure snuffed out incipient democracy in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In the late 1940s and early 1950s Turkey and Greece moved toward democracy. In Latin America Uruguay returned to democracy during the war and Brazil and Costa Rica shifted to democracy in the late 1940s. In four other Latin American countries—Argentina,

Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela—elections in 1945 and 1946 ushered in popularly chosen governments. In all four countries, however, democratic practices did not last and dictatorships were in place by the early 1950s. In the later 1950s Argentina and Peru moved back toward limited democracy which was, however, highly unstable as a result of the conflict between the military and the populist Aprista and Peronista movements. Also in the late 1950s, in contrast, the elites in both Colombia and Venezuela negotiated arrangements to end the military dictatorships in those countries and to introduce democratic institutions that were to last.

Meanwhile, the beginning of the end of Western colonial rule produced a number of new states. In many no real effort was made to introduce democratic institutions. In some democracy was tenuous: in Pakistan, for instance, democratic institutions never really took hold and were formally abrogated in 1958. Malaysia became independent in 1957 and maintained its “quasi-democracy” except for a brief period, 1969–71, of emergency rule. Indonesia had a confused form of parliamentary democracy from 1950 to 1957. In a few new states—India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Israel—democratic institutions were sustained for a decade

or more, and in 1960 Africa's largest state, Nigeria, began life as a democracy.

The second reverse wave. By the early 1960s the second wave of democratization had exhausted itself. By the late 1950s political development and regime transitions were taking on a heavily authoritarian cast.¹³ The change was most dramatic in Latin America. The shift toward authoritarianism began in Peru in 1962 when the military intervened to alter the results of an election. The following year a civilian acceptable to the military was elected president, but he was displaced by a military coup in 1968. In 1964 military coups overthrew civilian governments in Brazil and Bolivia. Argentina followed suit in 1966 and Ecuador in 1972. In 1973 military regimes took over in Uruguay and Chile. The military governments of Brazil, Argentina, and, more debatably, Chile and Uruguay were examples, according to one theory, of a new type of political system, “bureaucratic authoritarianism.”¹⁴

In Asia the military imposed a martial law regime in Pakistan in 1958. In the late 1950s Syngman Rhee began to undermine democratic procedures in Korea, and the democratic regime that succeeded him in 1960 was overthrown by a mil-

itary coup in 1961. This new “semiauthoritarian” regime was legitimated by elections in 1963 but turned into a full-scale highly authoritarian system in 1973. In 1957 Sukarno replaced parliamentary democracy with guided democracy in Indonesia, and in 1965 the Indonesian military ended guided democracy and took over the government of their country. In 1972 President Ferdinand Marcos instituted a martial law regime in the Philippines, and in 1975 Indira Gandhi suspended democratic practices and declared emergency rule in India. On Taiwan the nondemocratic KMT regime had tolerated liberal dissenters in the 1950s, but these were suppressed in the “dark age” of the 1960s and “any sort of political discourse” was silenced.¹⁵

In the Mediterranean area, Greek democracy went down before a “royal” coup d'etat in 1965 and a military coup in 1967. The Turkish military overthrew the civilian government of that country in 1960, returned authority to an elected government in 1961, intervened again in a “half coup” in 1971, allowed a return to an elected government in 1973, and then carried out a full-scale military takeover in 1980.

During the 1960s several non-African British colonies became independent and instituted demo-

cratic regimes that lasted for significant periods of time. These included Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, Malta in 1964, Barbados in 1966, and Mauritius in 1968. The vast bulk of the new countries that became independent in the 1960s, however, were in Africa. The most important of these countries, Nigeria, started out as a democracy but succumbed to a military coup in 1966. The only African country consistently to maintain democratic practices was Botswana. Thirty-three other African countries that became independent between 1956 and 1970 became authoritarian with independence or very shortly after independence. The decolonization of Africa led to the largest multiplication of independent authoritarian governments in history.

The global swing away from democracy in the 1960s and early 1970s was impressive. In 1962, by one count, thirteen governments in the world were the product of coups d'etat; by 1975, thirty-eight were. By another estimate one-third of 32 working democracies in the world in 1958 had become authoritarian by the mid-1970s.¹⁶ In 1960 nine of ten South American countries of Iberian heritage had democratically elected governments; by 1973, only two, Venezuela and Colombia, did. This wave

of transitions away from democracy was even more striking because it involved several countries, such as Chile, Uruguay (“the Switzerland of South America”), India, and the Philippines, that had sustained democratic regimes for a quarter century or more. These regime transitions not only stimulated the theory of bureaucratic-authoritarianism to explain the Latin American changes. They also produced a much broader pessimism about the applicability of democracy in developing countries and they contributed to concern about the viability and workability of democracy among the developed countries where it had existed for years.¹⁷

The third wave of democratization. Once again, however, the dialectic of history upended the theories of social science. In the fifteen years following the end of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974, democratic regimes replaced authoritarian ones in approximately thirty countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. In other countries, considerable liberalization occurred in authoritarian regimes. In still others, movements promoting democracy gained strength and legitimacy. Although obviously there were resistance and setbacks, as in China in 1989, the movement toward democracy seemed to take on the character of an almost irre-

sistible global tide moving on from one triumph to the next.

This democratic tide manifested itself first in southern Europe. Three months after the Portuguese coup, the military regime that had governed Greece since 1967 collapsed and a civilian government took over under the leadership of Constantine Karamanlis. In November 1974, the Greek people gave Karamanlis and his party a decisive majority in a hotly contested election and the following month they overwhelmingly voted not to restore the monarchy. On November 20, 1975, just five days before Eanes's defeat of the Marxist-Leninists in Portugal, the death of Gen. Francisco Franco ended his thirty-six-year rule of Spain. During the following eighteen months, the new king, Juan Carlos, assisted by his prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, secured parliamentary and popular approval of a political reform law that led to the election of a new assembly. The assembly drafted a new constitution, which was ratified by a referendum in December 1978 and under which parliamentary elections occurred in March 1979.

In the late 1970s the democratic wave moved on to Latin America. In 1977 the military leaders in Ecuador announced their desire to withdraw from

politics; a new constitution was drafted in 1978; and elections in 1979 produced a civilian government. A similar process of military withdrawal in Peru led to the election of a constituent assembly in 1978, a new constitution in 1979, and the election of a civilian president in 1980. In Bolivia, military withdrawal produced four confusing years of coups and aborted elections beginning in 1978, but the eventual election of a civilian president in 1982. That same year defeat in the war with Great Britain undermined the Argentine military government and produced the election in 1983 of a civilian president and government. Negotiations between military and political leaders in Uruguay led to the election of a civilian president in November 1984. Two months later, the long process of *abertura*, or opening, that had begun in Brazil in 1974 reached a decisive point with the selection of that country's first civilian president since 1964. Meanwhile, the military was also withdrawing from office in Central America. Honduras installed a civilian president in January 1982; Salvadoran voters chose José Napoleon Duarte as president in a hotly contested election in May 1984; and Guatemala elected a constituent assembly in 1984 and a civilian president in 1985.

The democratic movement also had its manifestations in Asia. Early in 1977, the premier democracy of the Third World, India, which for one and a half years had been under emergency rule, returned to the democratic path. In 1980 responding to violence and terrorism, the Turkish military for the third time took over the government of that country. In 1983, however, they withdrew and elections produced a civilian government. In the same year, the assassination of Benigno Aquino set in motion the train of events that led in February 1986 to the end of the Marcos dictatorship and the restoration of democracy in the Philippines. In 1987 the military government in Korea submitted its candidate for president to a highly contested electoral campaign and a relatively fair election, which he won. The following year the opposition secured control of the Korean parliament. In 1987 and 1988, the government on Taiwan significantly loosened the restrictions on political activity in that country and committed itself to the creation of a democratic political system. In 1988 military rule in Pakistan came to an end, and the opposition, led by a woman, won an electoral victory and took control of the government.

At the end of the decade, the democratic wave engulfed the communist world. In 1988 Hungary began the transition to a multiparty system. In 1989 elections for a national congress in the Soviet Union produced the defeat of several senior Communist party leaders and an increasingly assertive national parliament. In early 1990, multiparty systems were developing in the Baltic republics and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) abandoned its guiding role. In 1989, in Poland Solidarity swept the elections for a national parliament and a noncommunist government came into existence. In 1990 the leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa, was elected president, replacing the Communist Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski. In the last months of 1989, the communist regimes in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania collapsed, and competitive elections in these countries were held in 1990. In Bulgaria the communist regime also began to liberalize, and popular movements for democracy appeared in Mongolia. In 1990 what appear to be reasonably fair elections occurred in both these countries.

Meanwhile, back in the Western hemisphere, the Mexican ruling party, for the first time, only narrowly won a presidential election in 1988 and

lost, for the first time, a state governorship in 1989. The Chilean public in 1988 voted in a referendum to end Gen. Augusto Pinochet's extended grip on power and the following year elected a civilian president. U.S. military intervention ended a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in Grenada in 1983 and Gen. Manuel Noriega's military dictatorship in Panama in 1989. In February 1990 the Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua went down to electoral defeat, and in December 1990 a democratic government was elected in Haiti.

The 1970s and early 1980s also witnessed the final phase of European decolonization. The end of the Portuguese empire produced five nondemocratic governments. In 1975, however, Papua New Guinea became independent with a democratic political system. The liquidation of the remnants, mostly islands, of the British empire produced a dozen minuscule new nations, almost all of which maintained democratic institutions, although in Grenada these institutions had to be restored by outside military intervention. In 1990 Namibia became independent with a government chosen in an internationally supervised election.

In Africa and the Middle East movement to democracy in the 1980s was limited. Nigeria

shifted back from military rule to a democratically elected government in 1979 but this in turn was overthrown by a military coup at the beginning of 1984. By 1990 some liberalization had occurred in Senegal, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan. In 1978 the South African government began a slow process of reducing apartheid and expanding political participation for nonwhite minorities but not for the overwhelming black majority in that country. After a pause and then the election of F. W. de Klerk as president, the process was resumed in 1990 with negotiations between the government and the African National Congress. By 1990 democratic rumblings were occurring in Nepal, Albania, and other countries whose previous experience with democracy had been modest or nonexistent.

Overall, the movement toward democracy was a global one. In fifteen years the democratic wave moved across southern Europe, swept through Latin America, moved on to Asia, and decimated dictatorship in the Soviet bloc. In 1974 eight of ten South American countries had nondemocratic governments. In 1990 nine had democratically chosen governments. In 1973, according to Freedom House estimates, 32 percent of the world's population lived in free countries; in 1976, as a result of emer-

gency rule in India, less than 20 percent of the world's population did. By 1990, in contrast, close to 39 percent of humankind lived in free societies.

In one sense, the democratization waves and the reverse waves suggest a two-step-forward, one-step-backward pattern. To date each reverse wave has eliminated some but not all of the transitions to democracy of the previous democratization wave. The final column in [Table 1.1](#), however, suggests a less optimistic prognosis for democracy. States come in many shapes and sizes, and in the post-World War II decades the number of independent states doubled. Yet the proportions of democratic states in the world show a considerable regularity. At the troughs of the two reverse waves 19.7 percent and 24.6 percent of the countries in the world were democratic. At the peaks of the two democratization waves, 45.3 percent and 32.4 percent of the countries in the world were democratic. In 1990 roughly 45.4 percent of the independent countries of the world had democratic systems, the same percentage as in 1922. Obviously whether Grenada is democratic has less impact than whether China is democratic, and ratios of democratic to total states are not all that significant. In addition, between 1973 and 1990 the absolute number of authoritar-

ian states decreased for the first time, yet as of 1990 the third wave of democratization still had not increased the proportion of democratic states in the world above its previous peak sixty-eight years earlier.

TABLE 1.1
Democratisation in the Modern World

Year	Democratic States	Non-democratic States	Total States	Percentage Democratic of Total States
1922	29	35	64	45.3
1942	12	49	61	19.7
1962	36	75	111	32.4
1973	30	92	122	24.6
1990	59	71	130	45.4

Note: This estimate of regime numbers omits countries with a population of less than one million.

THE ISSUES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The Supreme Court follows the election returns; social scientists forever try to catch up with history, elaborating theories explaining why what has happened had to happen. They attempted to explain the swing away from democracy in the 1960s and 1970s by pointing to the inappropriateness of democracy in poor countries, the advantages of authoritarianism for political order and economic growth, and the reasons why economic development itself tended to produce a new and more

enduring form of bureaucratic-authoritarianism. The transition of countries back toward democracy began even as these theories were elaborated. Following hard on that change, social scientists shifted gears and began to produce a substantial literature on the preconditions for democratization, the processes by which it occurs, and, in due course, the consolidation problems of new democratic regimes. These studies greatly enlarged available knowledge of democratizing processes and general understanding of those processes.¹⁸

By the mid-1980s the democratic transitions also produced a wave of optimism about the prospects for democracy. Communism was, quite accurately, seen as “the grand failure,” in Zbigniew Brzezinski's phrase. Others went further to argue that the “exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives” meant the “unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.” “Democracy's won!” was the claim of another. Optimism about democracy, said a third, is “better founded than the pessimism that reigned in 1975.”¹⁹ Certainly the contrasts in outlook between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s on the future of democracy could hardly have been more dramatic.

These swings in informed opinion once again raised basic issues concerning the relation between political democracy and historical development. The big issues concern democracy's extent and permanence. Is there a fundamentally irreversible, long-term, global trend, as Tocqueville and Bryce suggested, toward the extension of democratic political systems throughout the world? Or is political democracy a form of government limited, with a few exceptions, to that minority of the world's societies that are wealthy and/or Western? Or is political democracy for a substantial number of countries a sometime thing, a form of government that alternates with various forms of authoritarian rule?

Are these important issues?

Some may argue that they are not, on the grounds that it does not make much difference to a people or to its neighbors whether a country is governed democratically or non-democratically. A substantial scholarly literature, for instance, suggests that much public policy is shaped more by a country's level of economic development than by the nature of its regime. Corruption, inefficiency, incompetence, domination by a few special interests are found in all societies no matter what their

form of government. One widely read book on comparative politics even begins with the claim that “The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government.”²⁰

There is truth in these arguments. Its form of government is not the only important thing about a country, nor even probably the most important thing. The distinction between order and anarchy is more fundamental than the distinction between democracy and dictatorship. Yet that distinction is also crucial for several reasons.

First, political democracy is closely associated with freedom of the individual. Democracies can and have abused individual rights and liberties, and a well-regulated authoritarian state may provide a high degree of security and order for its citizens. Overall, however, the correlation between the existence of democracy and the existence of individual liberty is extremely high. Indeed, some measure of the latter is an essential component of the former. Conversely, the long-term effect of the operation of democratic politics is probably to broaden and deepen individual liberty. Liberty is, in a sense, the peculiar virtue of democracy. If one is concerned

with liberty as an ultimate social value, one should also be concerned with the fate of democracy.

Second, political stability and form of government are, as was pointed out, two different variables. Yet they are also interrelated. Democracies are often unruly, but they are not often politically violent. In the modern world democratic systems tend to be less subject to civil violence than are non-democratic systems. Democratic governments use far less violence against their citizens than do authoritarian ones. Democracies also provide accepted channels for the expression of dissent and opposition within the system. Both government and opposition thus have fewer incentives to use violence against each other. Democracy also contributes to stability by providing regular opportunities for changing political leaders and changing public policies. In democracies, change rarely occurs dramatically overnight; it is almost always moderate and incremental. Democratic systems are much more immune to major revolutionary upheaval than authoritarian ones. Revolution, as Che Guevara once said, cannot succeed against a government that “has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and

maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality.”[21](#)

Third, the spread of democracy has implications for international relations. Historically, democracies have fought wars as often as authoritarian countries. Authoritarian countries have fought democratic countries and have fought each other. From the early nineteenth century down to 1990, however, democracies did not, with only trivial or formal exceptions, fight other democracies.[22](#) So long as this phenomenon continues, the spread of democracy in the world means the expansion of a zone of peace in the world. On the basis of past experience, an overwhelmingly democratic world is likely to be a world relatively free of international violence. If, in particular, the Soviet Union and China become democracies like the other major powers, the probability of major interstate violence will be greatly reduced.

A permanently divided world, on the other hand, is likely to be a violent world. Developments in communications and economics are intensifying the interactions among countries. In 1858 Abraham Lincoln argued that “a house divided against itself cannot stand. This government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free.” The

world at the end of the twentieth century is not a single house, but it is becoming more and more closely integrated. Interdependence is the trend of the times. How long can an increasingly interdependent world survive part-democratic and part-authoritarian?

Finally, and more parochially, the future of democracy in the world is of special importance to Americans. The United States is the premier democratic country of the modern world, and its identity as a nation is inseparable from its commitment to liberal and democratic values. Other nations may fundamentally change their political systems and continue their existence as nations. The United States does not have that option. Hence Americans have a special interest in the development of a global environment congenial to democracy.

The futures of liberty, stability, peace, and the United States thus depend, in some measure, on the future of democracy. This study does not attempt to predict that future. It does attempt to shed light on it by analyzing the wave of democratization that began in 1974. It attempts to explore the causes of this series of transitions ([chapter 2](#)), the processes by which the transitions occurred and the strategies of the supporters and opponents of

democracy ([chapters 3 and 4](#)), and the problems confronting the new democracies ([chapter 5](#)). It ends with some speculations on the prospects for the further expansion of democratic regimes in the world ([chapter 6](#)).

In dealing with these topics, use is made of existing social science theories and generalizations in an effort to see which ones may help explain the recent transitions. This book, however, is not an effort to develop a general theory of the preconditions of democracy or the processes of democratization. It is not an attempt to explain why some countries have been democracies for over a century while others have been enduring dictatorships. Its purpose is the more modest one of attempting to explain why, how, and with what consequences a group of roughly contemporaneous transitions to democracy occurred in the 1970s and 1980s and to understand what these transitions may suggest about the future of democracy in the world.