

**AP[®] Comparative
Government
and Politics**
Democratization
Briefing Paper

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Democratization: A Briefing Paper for AP Comparative Government and Politics

G. Bingham Powell, Jr., and Eleanor N. Powell

The introduction of democratic regimes in many countries that were previously ruled by military governments, one-party states, and personal dictatorships has been one of the most dramatic political trends of the last 30 years. By a **democratic regime**, we mean a set of institutions that allow the citizens to choose the makers of public policy in free, competitive elections. For such elections to be free and competitive implies that prospective voters enjoy fair choices between contending candidates and political parties. In addition, all adults in the country must be eligible and able to vote regardless of race, gender, poverty, ethnicity, or other discriminating characteristic.

Countries with free and fair elections for the real policymakers and eligibility of all adults meet the minimum requirements for a **procedural democracy**. It is important to be aware that the presence of elections, even elections allowing several parties to run candidates, is not sufficient to qualify a country as a democracy. In some countries, the military council, dominant party, or strong-man ruler makes the real decisions behind the scenes, with an elected legislature as a facade. In other countries, the opposition parties are so disadvantaged in what they can say, or how freely they can organize, or how fairly their votes are counted that they have no real chance. Their organizers and supporters may be threatened or murdered. Although sometimes such countries are called by such names as “guarded democracy” or “illiberal democracy,” we consider them forms of electoral authoritarianism, not democracies at all.¹

In addition to the requisite free and fair competitive elections of a procedural democracy, many more political rights and civil liberties are necessary for a country to be deemed a **substantive democracy**. Freedom of the press, freedom of organization, independence of the courts, and equal treatment of minorities are just a few examples of the qualities that may be minimally present in a procedural democracy, but whose fuller realization is vital to a substantive democracy. In a substantive democracy, citizens have access to multiple sources of information. They can use political and civil rights to enable themselves to learn about politics and to try to influence the choices of others. They can form interest groups, trade unions, and political parties. Citizens are generally free from abuses of their personal integrity through repressive governmental threats, political murders, and disappearances, imprisonment, or torture for nonviolent political activity. Corruption is sufficiently controlled that the elected officials can meaningfully carry out public policies that the citizens desire. Sometimes we refer to achievements of substantive democracy as a “deepening” of democracy or an improvement in its democratic quality.² No nation has perfectly achieved all the elements of substantive democracy, but some have progressed much further than others. All substantive democracies are, by definition, also procedural democracies, but the reverse is not necessarily true. The presence of a procedural democracy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of substantive democracy.

Democratization, then, refers to the transformation process from a nondemocratic regime to a procedural democracy to a substantive democracy, either as the first government in a newly independent country or by replacing an

authoritarian system in an older one. It is important to note that a country may stagnate or stop altogether at some intermediate step in the democratization process and that the transformation to a substantive democracy may take years, decades, or never be completed.

Historically, only a handful of countries had introduced institutions of democracy before 1900. But the twentieth century saw what Samuel Huntington has called **three “waves” of democratization**.³ The first of these waves had its origins in the late nineteenth century. It grew slowly under demands from increasingly educated and urbanized citizens. By the late 1920s, there were over 20 democracies among about 65 independent nations of the world, using very loose, procedural definitions. A number of these democracies collapsed, especially under the economic turmoil of the Great Depression of the early 1930s, or were overrun by aggressive Nazi Germany. The proportion of democracies declined, partially reversing the first wave.

The victory of the Allies in World War II and the breakup of the European colonial empires in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean introduced a second wave of newly democratic states. Some older democracies deepened the quality of their democratic institutions by extending full civil and political rights to women and minorities. However, a number of the new democracies failed soon after their introduction, while the 1960s and 1970s saw the overthrow of others, reversing the second wave.

Then, the late 1970s saw the beginning of a “third wave” of democratization, which started in Southern Europe, spread through Latin America and Asia, and accelerated with the collapse of the Soviet Union’s control of Eastern Europe in

1989. In 1991 the Soviet Union itself broke up into new states, many of which began as democracies. Electoral competition replaced various forms of authoritarian rule in many African states in the early 1990s. (The timing of democratization in different parts of the world can be compared by examining the lines for “region” in Graphs 1–6 below.) The beginning of the new millennium found somewhat competitive electoral institutions in nearly two-thirds of the world’s 190 states, although only two-thirds of these (around 44 percent of the total) provided their citizens with sufficient substantive democracy to be called fully “free.”⁴

Preconditions of Democratization

Strictly speaking, there are no preconditions for introducing democracy. Any political system can adopt elections as the means for choosing policymakers and allow the civil and political rights that encourage meaningful participation and competition. Each new democracy emerges from a unique setting. The emergence reflects the particular commitments and concerns of its leaders and the citizens who support them, as well as the specific issues at stake in the society. However, two features of the setting in which the choice of regime is made greatly influence the likelihood that the outcome will be democratization: the **level of economic development** and the **international environment of democracy**.

Level of Economic Development

In traditional economies, such as Nigeria, the majority of the working population was and is employed in relatively inefficient agriculture, producing little more than enough to sustain a peasant life. Education and even literacy are

confined to the fortunate few. Primitive transportation and communication isolate most people in their own villages. Exploiting natural resources may provide extra income for the producers or rulers; a few cities dominate limited commercial life. As economies modernize, both agricultural and industrial production become far more efficient. The economies in developed countries such as Britain produce more than 10 times the yearly income per capita of the economies in undeveloped countries such as Nigeria.

Moreover, successful economic development causes, but also requires, great social as well as economic changes. These processes are sometimes called modernization. People move off the land and into cities. Better roads and railroads facilitate travel; radio, newspapers, and television begin to reach even small villages. New organizations, such as labor unions and professional associations, emerge to express citizens' interests. Industry and, eventually, services come to dominate employment. Mass education is needed to sustain technological efficiency. With better living standards and public health conditions, people live much longer, and the age composition of the society changes. New problems of preserving the environment and supporting the elderly come to the fore.

Higher levels of economic development and modernization are associated with greater demands for democracy and a greater capacity to sustain it, if it is introduced.⁵ Larger segments of the society are educated and aware of national and international politics; they value the ability to shape public policies and can more easily be mobilized to press for the rights of influence. A far more efficient economy produces income to meet citizen's welfare needs without confiscating all the possessions of the better-off, easing political conflict.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pressures from the growing urban working classes and middle class allies promoted democratization in newly economically developing Europe and its former colonies. Later, these forces continued encouraging the introduction of democracy as more countries developed. But it also became clear that, however introduced, democracy could more easily be supported in hard economic times in more educated and economically developed societies.⁶ It is important to distinguish between short-term economic ups and downs and the underlying nature of the economy and society. Economic downturns, such as severe unemployment, can create some loss of support for democracy, but seldom threaten its continuation in a modernized, economically developed society. For these reasons, most economically developed societies today are democracies, while authoritarian governments are more likely in less developed societies.

International Environment of Democracy

The second great factor that shapes the choice of regime in a democratic direction is the **international environment of democracy**. When a new state forms its constitution or new leaders take control after a nondemocratic regime is replaced, the decision about democracy is influenced by other states. This influence can take place in three ways. First, powerful states may **prohibit** democracy or **impose** it. After World War II when new democracies began in many parts of the world, the states of Eastern Europe were dominated by the Soviet Union, which enforced local Communist Party dictatorships until the late 1980s. The USSR intervened with troops in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 when local

leaders moved toward democratization. On the other hand, the victorious forces of Britain and the United States imposed new democratic governments in Germany and Japan, which had previously forced authoritarian control on the states they had overrun.

More recent attempts by the United States and Britain to impose democracy have been undertaken in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the successes of these attempts are still very much uncertain, their examples provide excellent insight into the challenges and necessary conditions for the implementation of democracy. The physical task of the first nationwide voter registration in a large country provided a major challenge in Afghanistan. Further, in both Afghanistan and Iraq security concerns and terrorist bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations of political officials threaten the very existence of free and fair elections. Security concerns also hamper the presence of international monitors to validate the election. These problems emphasize the importance of some **rule of law** necessary to achieve even a procedural democracy.

Second, the **prestige** of democracy in the world has waxed and waned over time, encouraged by outcomes of World War I and World War II and depressed by the brutal accomplishments of fascist dictatorships in the 1930s. With the apparent Soviet growth in the 1950s and 1960s, and the success of some military dictatorships in the 1970s, regimes other than democracy seemed to promise faster routes to prosperity. In the 1980s and 1990s, many nondemocratic regimes became discredited, their political and economic models seemingly less successful. After the fall of the Soviet Union, democracy became the only widely accepted symbol of commitment to popular welfare; even most dictators claim it as an eventual goal,

although democratic institutions may remain only an ideal or be subverted by manipulation and corruption.

The number of democracies in the region of the world in which a country is located can also have substantial influence on whether new rulers choose democratization. Partially, this is a matter of receiving permission and emulating democracy's prestige. But other democratic states also offer **incentives**. Economic alliances such as the European Union have made it clear that trade and, especially, membership is contingent on adopting a democratic regime. This incentive encouraged democratization in Spain, Portugal, and Greece earlier and now in Eastern Europe. With the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, even before its disintegration in 1991, ceased supporting one-party states in Latin America and Africa. The United States, on the other hand, now more often moves toward encouraging democracy with aid and trade.

Processes of Transition to Democracy

There are many paths to democracy. A new country, or an old country newly free from foreign domination, may be forming its first independent regime. Or, an established military government or personal dictatorship may break down, creating the opportunity for a democracy to emerge. But not all transitions result in democratization.

First Independence

Sometimes, independence follows a long struggle against the country that has dominated it. In these cases, much depends on the values, skills, and organization of those who have led the independence struggle. George Washington refused to become a king after American independence. Nehru used the electoral experience and organizational alliances of the Congress Party to set India on a remarkable democratic journey. Other national heroes have not been so restrained, distrusting potential opponents and turning their independence movement into a one-party state or their guerrilla army into a military dictatorship.

At other times, the collapse or defeat in war of international empires has turned independence over to unprepared successor states, whose new leaders have little organizing experience. The weakening of the British, French, and Belgian empires after World War II encouraged and strengthened independence movements, which succeeded in introducing democratic institutions in many new African and Asian states. But stabilizing these economically underdeveloped and ethnically divided societies proved very difficult. After 10 years, few remained democracies. Nigeria is one example; freedom in 1960 was followed by intense conflict, and the First Republic was overthrown by a military coup in 1966. Most of Eastern Europe states newly freed from Soviet domination in 1989 swept new democratic movements to power, later encouraged by the prospect of membership in the European Union. The fragments of the Soviet Union freed in 1991 have found the democratic path far less certain.

Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes

Many democracies emerge from established nondemocratic regimes. Poor economic performance and leadership struggles are common sources of **authoritarian breakdown**. But the processes of democratic transition take a variety of forms. Electoral competition and political freedoms may be introduced by the current rulers, sometimes gradually, as in Mexico in the 1990s. This process is often called “**democratization from above**” or “top-down” democratization. It may involve elaborate negotiation between rulers and political opponents or between “hard line” and “reform” factions within the authoritarian government.⁷ In other countries, democratic reforms have been pressed rapidly by mass demonstrations from democratically inclined citizens, as in Eastern Europe after the Soviet Union withdrew control in 1989. This process is often called “**democratization from below**” or “bottom-up” democratization. Some democratic transitions involve elements from both “above” and “below.”

The sources of authoritarian breakdowns depend in part on the nature of the authoritarian regime, with military governments, personalistic regimes, and one-party states having somewhat different vulnerabilities.⁸ **Military dictatorships**, whose domination of society is held in place by the unified strength of armed soldiers, are difficult to resist, yet often fragile. Military institutions do not wish to become involved in deadly civil war against their own units. When a military defeat or poor economic performance causes the commanders to split, prodemocratic factions may negotiate a return to the barracks. Such transitions have often involved pacts between the military leadership and the new civilian authorities, promising military officers immunity from prosecution for their abuses of power.

The possibility of a professional role in the new democracy facilitates such pacts, but eradicating long-term influence over policy, and thus fully achieving substantive democracy, may be a difficult problem.

Severe economic problems, which can cause the authoritarian leadership to lose confidence and unity, are also a cause of failure of **personalistic authoritarian regimes**, held together by the personality and alliances of the individual leader and his family, sometimes his tribe or clan. There are usually enough resources to reward a narrow group of supporters in an economically underdeveloped society. But the inability to pay soldiers and bureaucrats will undermine the foundations of an authoritarian regime, making it vulnerable to a combination of external pressure and opposition movements, as in Africa in the 1990s.⁹

A significant source of instability in personalistic regimes is the death of the founder, who is typically unwilling to organize for an orderly succession. In such cases, a democratization opportunity opens up. It will be affected by the underlying economic development and international conditions mentioned above, but the outcome often depends on negotiation between forces of reaction and reform. It may be easier to bring about a democratic outcome in more prosperous, homogenous societies, with greater equality of income.

Single-party authoritarian regimes, such as the Soviet Union, Mexico (through the period of PRI domination), and China proved quite durable across the lives of the founders and their successors. Their organization, penetration of the society, and a unifying set of beliefs made it possible to recruit ambitious and talented people into the party and to crush potential opponents before they could

become widely organized. The key to democratic transitions in this kind of authoritarian system seems to be the unity and self-confidence inside the ruling political party. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party had eventually lost its belief in either the long-term goals or the short-term economic efficacy of the controlling party; internal cleavages between “hard-liners” and “soft-liners” loosened control and eventually led to its breakup. The successor states, including Russia, have had diverse experiences with their new democracies. Critical roles in these countries have been played by the Communist Party members and top figures in the former economic bureaucracy. In Mexico, the PRI party controlled and coordinated political life through most of the twentieth century. A series of policy failures, including the painful devaluation of the peso, massive capital flight, and deep economic recession that began in 1994, combined with emerging discontent, eventually led the leaders to open the process to freedom and competition in the 1990s. In China, a democratization movement organized demonstrations in 1989, but after a brief hesitation the Communist Party unified around the hard-liners, forced out many reformers, and used the army against the peaceful demonstrators. The party reimposed central control of citizens and media. The democratization movement of 1989 failed.

Outcomes of Democratization

What are the consequences of democratization? One issue concerns democracy itself. Will it achieve **democratic consolidation**, creating a stable political system in which all the major actors seeking political influence accept democratic competition, citizen participation, and the rule of law? In a consolidated

democracy, the democratization process has penetrated deeply through the institutions of competitive political parties, independent judiciaries, subordinate military, and security bureaucracies. Democracy has also become less fragile, supported by the values of the citizens and the commitments of the seekers of power to play by the democratic rules.¹⁰ The second issue concerns the policy consequences of democratization. What does a democratic regime imply for citizens' welfare and security?

The most powerful factor shaping democratic consolidation is the level of economic development and modernization of the society. It is difficult to sustain democracies in very poor societies with low levels of education. Difficult does not mean impossible. India has been one of the world's poorest societies; even today nearly half of the citizens are illiterate. Yet, with a brief exception in the mid-1970s, India has sustained democracy at the national level (although not in some states) since it gained independence in 1947. Unfortunately, Nigeria is more typical, with democracy overthrown or aborted three times by the armed forces from 1966 through 1993, and the current democratization attempt facing serious difficulties. Such societies have few economic skills, limited institutional resources, weak civil societies, and many internal divisions. Too often, the armed forces or the remnants of the old regime's party or bureaucracy are the best organized elements in the new democracy, especially in the vulnerable early years of regime transition. Of course, in any democracy the political attitudes and values of the citizens, which are shaped by the general culture and by specific political experiences with democratic and authoritarian government, will be important for upholding democracy or allowing it to fail.

The institutions of democracy also play an important role in its performance. The relative successes of presidential systems and parliamentary systems, and of different election rules, have long been debated. Many political scientists have argued that presidential systems seem to have more difficulties in consolidating democracy.¹¹ Different constitutional rules often perform differently in different societies.

The failure to consolidate democracy may take various forms. Most dramatically, a fragile democracy may be threatened by violent intervention, as in the **military coups** in Nigeria in 1966 and 1983 and Pakistan in 1999 or the **executive coup** in Peru in 1992. In military coups, at least some of the officers use armed force to depose the elected civilian leadership. In executive coups, leading government officials, usually either a president or prime minister, declare a state of emergency and curtail democratic freedoms with at least implicit backing from the armed forces. These new regimes vary in their own repressiveness or stability, but democratic legislatures, free media, and electoral competition are prohibited, sometimes temporarily, often indefinitely. Even if an attempted coup by the military or the head of government is resisted, the threat of force diminishes the relevance of ordinary democratic processes.

On the other hand, initial democratization may more gradually fail to achieve its promise of deeper, more substantive democracy. Elected leaders may constrain freedom of the press, impose emergency rule on parts of the country, make policies by decree rather than through the legislature, limit electoral competition, press the judiciary to subvert the rule of law, and so forth. Minority groups may be abused or repressed. Widespread **corruption** may diminish the meaningfulness of electoral

competition as the shaper of public policy. Wealthy interests can buy the votes of legislators or the decisions of judges; small businesses purchase favorable regulatory permissions; parents must pay low-level bureaucrats for “free” immunization for their children. Public officials amass wealth in the midst of widespread poverty. These procedural democratic regimes are sometimes called “**illiberal**” or “**electoral**” or “**partial**” democracies to draw attention to authoritarian elements and distinguish these systems from free, substantive democracies.¹² About a quarter of the countries in the world could be described as “partial” or “illiberal” democracies. Russia is a country that in recent years has introduced substantial constraints on democratic freedoms, especially of the media, and been troubled by violence and corruption. Whether it is an example of “illiberal democracy” or of “electoral authoritarianism” is disputed.

If democracy is successfully consolidated, are there other policy consequences? The largest consequences are the most clearly documented. Democracies are somewhat less likely to experience war, and democracies almost never go to war with each other.¹³ Moreover, while procedural democracies can on occasion be cruel to minority groups, even partial democracies are much less likely to engage in mass murder of minorities or political opponents than are authoritarian regimes. Both China (1966–1975) and Iran (1981–1992) are identified as countries having encouraged or allowed mass killings of thousands of political opponents.¹⁴ Procedural democracies are more likely than authoritarian regimes to sustain rights to citizens’ personal integrity, although full respect for these rights is not guaranteed.¹⁵ (Also see the discussion in note 18 below about the relationship between political rights and civil liberties.)

Democracies also have some economic advantages. As the extreme example, no modern democracy seems to have experienced a mass famine.¹⁶ When a region is threatened by famine, a free press and an active political opposition raises alarms to the country and the world; in authoritarian regimes, mass policy failures are more typically concealed. On the other hand, both the best and worst examples of economic growth appear in dictatorships. While many works of scholarship are divided on the issue of average economic performance, recent studies seem to find little average difference in growth between the two kinds of regimes, especially in the poorest countries.¹⁷ Democracy may indirectly help economic growth by encouraging education, more secure property rights, and population control, but it does not guarantee economic success. Very poor countries find economic growth very difficult to attain regardless of the type of government.

A claim and a justification of democracy is that electoral competition and free participation induce governments to do what citizens want them to do. This claim of **democratic responsiveness** is complicated because of the many different things that citizens want and the many formidable obstacles that policies face. But there is good evidence that in countries attaining some level of economic development, substantive democracy is on average associated with higher levels of education, somewhat more equitable income distributions, and longer citizen life expectancies.

Democratization in Six Countries

The six countries covered in the AP Comparative Politics Exam provide excellent examples of wide-ranging democratization experience and success. Great Britain and Mexico have fully democratized and are relatively successful democratic regimes today. Russia and Nigeria, on the other hand, have struggled and are now only partially democratic states at best, lacking in many elements of substantive democracy. Lastly, Iran and China have not democratized and have had very different experiences with democratic movements.

By using Freedom House's country ratings of political rights and civil liberties, we can compare the countries as they are today and as they have changed over the past 30 years.¹⁸ These scores can be found at www.freedomhouse.org, along with details about their components. Briefly, the political rights score includes "the right to vote and compete for public office and to elect representatives who have a decisive vote on public policies." Civil liberties include "the freedom to develop opinions, institutions, and personal autonomy without interference from the state." We have combined these scores to produce a rating from 1 to 13, where 1 is a completely undemocratic country with neither political rights nor civil liberties, and 13 is a country with substantive democracy, where the citizens possess extensive rights and liberties. In general, countries with scores under 5 are not even procedural democracies, while countries scoring 10 or above have made great progress toward substantive democracy. Scores in the middle range from 5 through 9 reflect a range of limitations in substantive democracy.

In addition to examining the scores of these countries, it is helpful to put their experiences in both a global and regional context of democratization. These

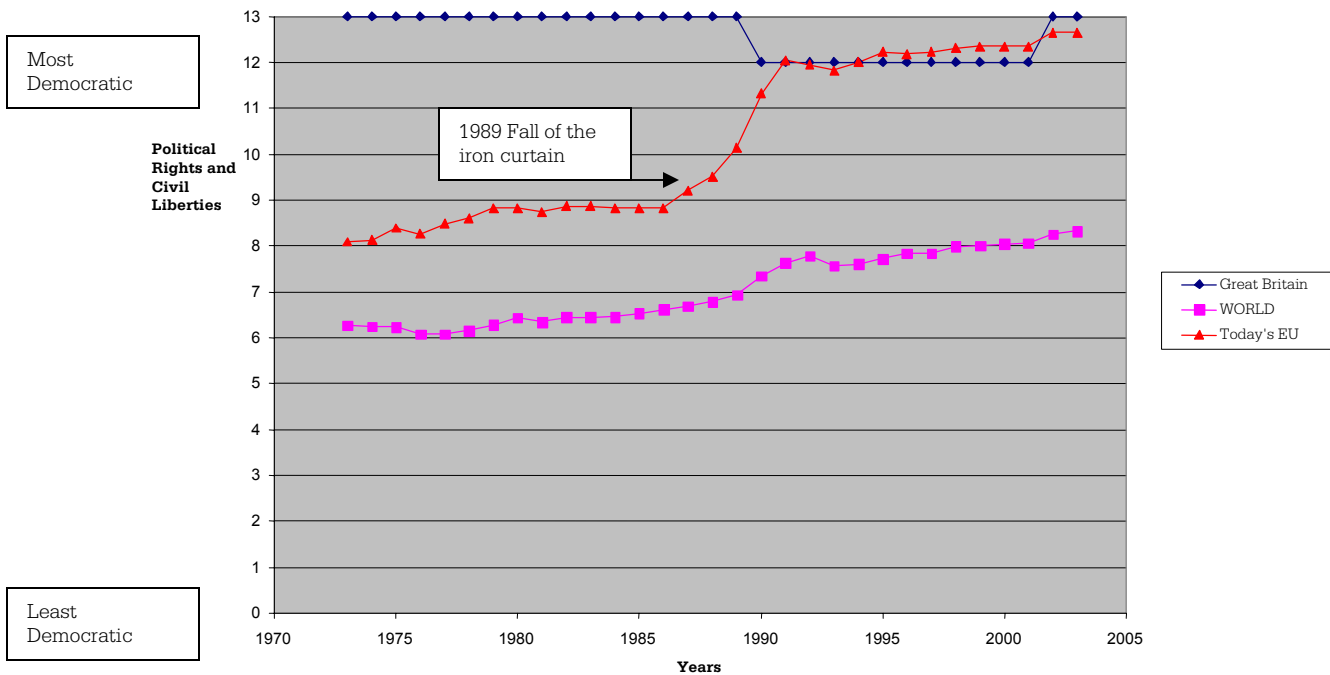
contexts can inhibit democratization or encourage democratic consolidation.

Therefore, we have created graphs that compare the scores of each country to that of its region and the world.

Fully Democratized: Great Britain and Mexico

Great Britain is indisputably the most successful consolidated, substantive democracy of any of the six countries. Graph 1 below compares Great Britain to the average score in the other countries that are now in the European Union (including the new Eastern European member states) and the world generally. Over the past 30 years, Great Britain has consistently received the top (13) or nearly top (12) scores of both civil liberties and political rights.¹⁹ The world average today rates about 8.5, which marks great improvement since its score just over 6 in the 1970s, reflecting the “third wave” of democratization. Graph 1 also shows that the European Union countries have historically been more democratic than the rest of the world. In the 1970s, the countries that are today members of the European Union were almost halfway between the scores Great Britain received and those received by the world as a whole. As Europe democratized, particularly Eastern Europe in the 1989 to 1991 period, the European Union line joins that of Great Britain as an almost fully democratized region.

Graph 1: Great Britain

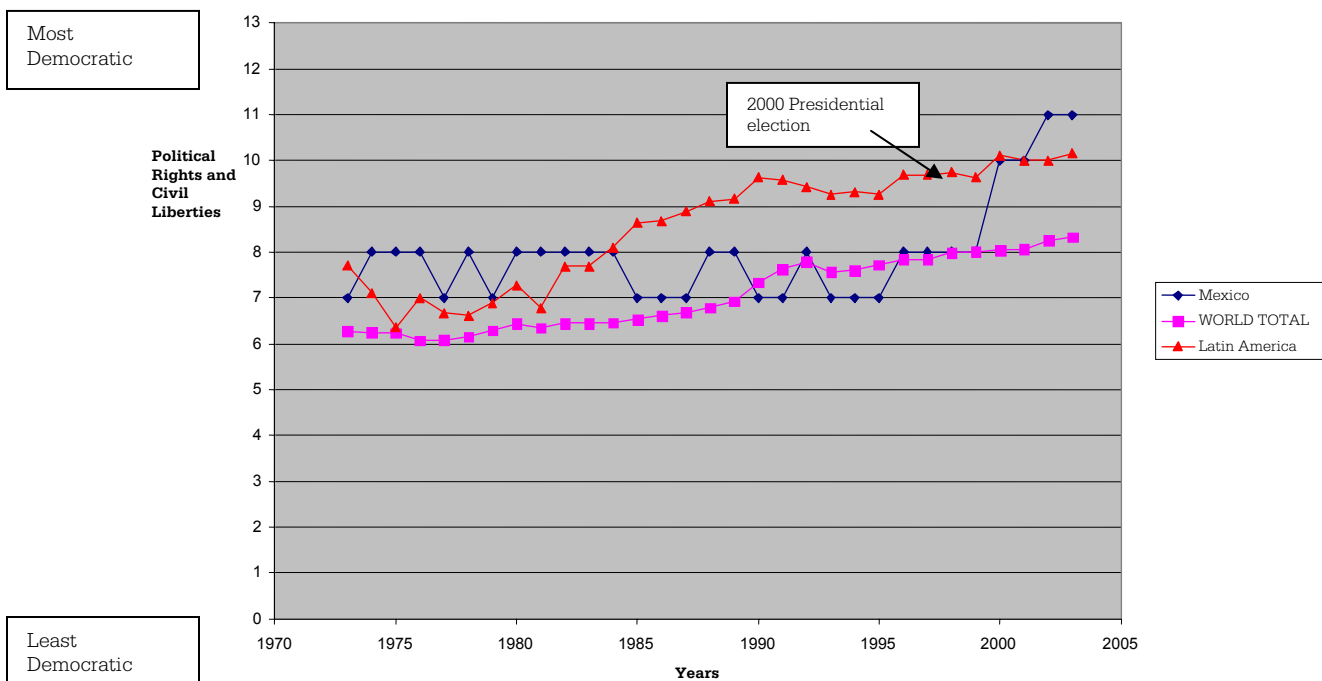


In contrast to Great Britain, Mexico is a country that began the 1970s as only partially democratized with limited political rights and civil liberties. Elections were consistently held during this period, but one party was always victorious: the PRI, which controlled and manipulated the election process. The PRI first allowed an opposition party to win a state election in 1989 and finally lost its majority in the national legislature in 1997. It was not until the landmark election of 2000 in which Vicente Fox was elected president that the PRI's 71-year monopoly over presidential power ended.

An examination of Graph 2 below shows the dramatic democratic improvement that has taken place in Mexico over the past five years. Graph 2 also shows the experience of the rest of Latin America, which was clearly a part of Samuel Huntington's "third wave" of democratization. From the mid-1970s to the

present, Latin America improved from a low score of about 6.5 to a high of just over 10. Mexico's democratization took place noticeably later than that of the rest of the Latin American region, and today Mexico is slightly more democratic than the Latin American average and much more democratic than the world as a whole. It is perhaps too soon to be confident that Mexican democracy is fully consolidated and will not experience reversals, but its achievement is impressive.

Graph 2: Mexico



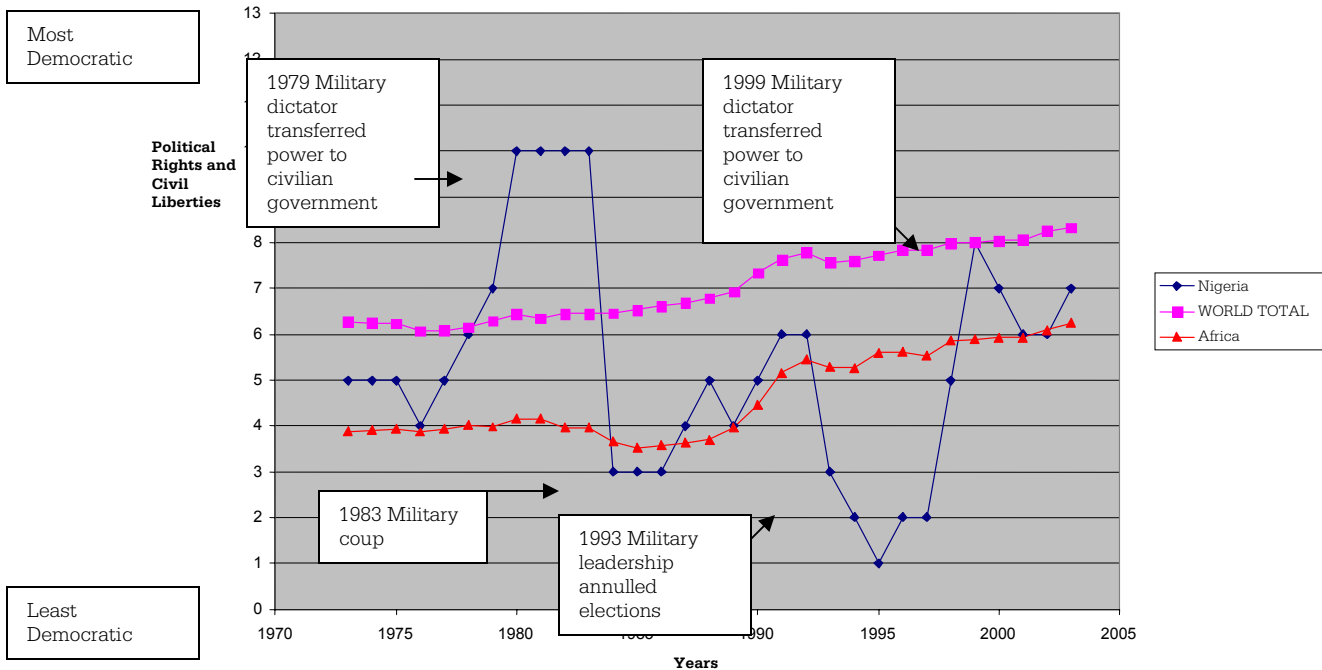
Partially Democratized: Russia and Nigeria

The citizens of Nigeria have seen wild swings in their civil liberties and political rights as attempts at civilian government and democracy (as well as some military governments) have been interrupted by military coups. Graph 3 below provides a clear visual illustration of this pattern. The late 1970s show the softening of the military dictatorship, and that power was eventually handed over to a civilian government in 1979. However, this brief attempt at democracy was abruptly ended

by a military coup in 1983. A succession of military dictatorships and coups followed. In 1993 the military leadership annulled a presidential election (just as the votes were being counted) and also abolished newly elected regional offices. This can be seen dramatically in Graph 3 as Nigeria hits the lowest possible score of 1. The dictatorship again softened and in 2000 handed power over to a civilian government. The partial, procedural democracy has survived thus far, although limited by very extensive corruption. In recent years, it has also suffered from severe religious conflict; between 1999 and 2003, about 10,000 people were killed in religious strife.²⁰

Another important aspect of Graph 3 is the democratic status of the African region. Unlike Latin America and the European Union countries, which were consistently more democratic than the rest of the world, Africa is consistently less democratic than the rest of the world. It should be noted, however, that Africa as a region has made important democratic progress since the late 1980s, raising its average country score from a discouraging 4 to a partially democratic 6.4. In fact, by 2003 the scores of Nigeria and Africa had almost converged, making today's Nigeria very representative of the political rights and civil liberties of other countries in the region, while still noticeably below that of the world as a whole.

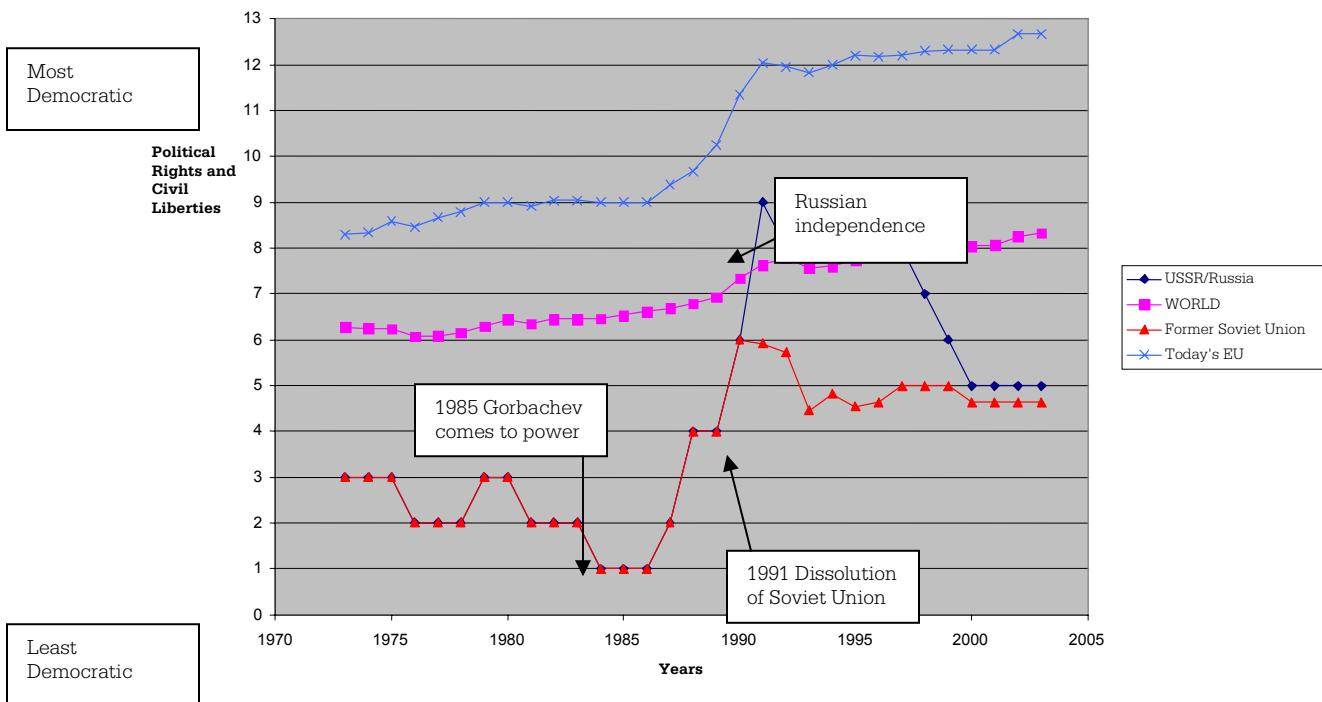
Graph 3: Nigeria



Russia's experience with democratization was very different from that of Nigeria. Life in the Communist USSR was largely without civil liberties and political rights. Major change began in the USSR when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and began his programs of glasnost and perestroika. Gorbachev came to power in what can be seen from Graph 4 below as the low point in recent rights and liberties in the USSR. Almost immediately there was a dramatic increase in openness and freedom, which eventually led to the fall of the Berlin Wall, lifting of the iron curtain, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the lines representing Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union diverge. There is an immediate positive spike in Russian democracy shortly after the split, while average rights and liberties in the other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union actually fell.²¹ In the decade following the split, the rest of the countries of the former Soviet Union made only modest democratic progress, while

Russia began losing rights and liberties in the late 1990s under Yeltsin. Journalists were harassed, independent television networks were suppressed, and reporting on the military conflict in Chechnya was severely limited. Since the transfer of power to President Putin, Russia has remained stagnant at a score of 5, suggesting that while elections are still taking place, Russia is not a consolidated, substantive democracy. It is interesting to note that despite the initial divergence in democracy between Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, since 2000 their averages are nearly identical. While the experience of Russia today is similar to that of the rest of the former Soviet Union, it is less democratic than the world as a whole, and far less democratic than the European Union countries, which are shown at the top of Graph 4.

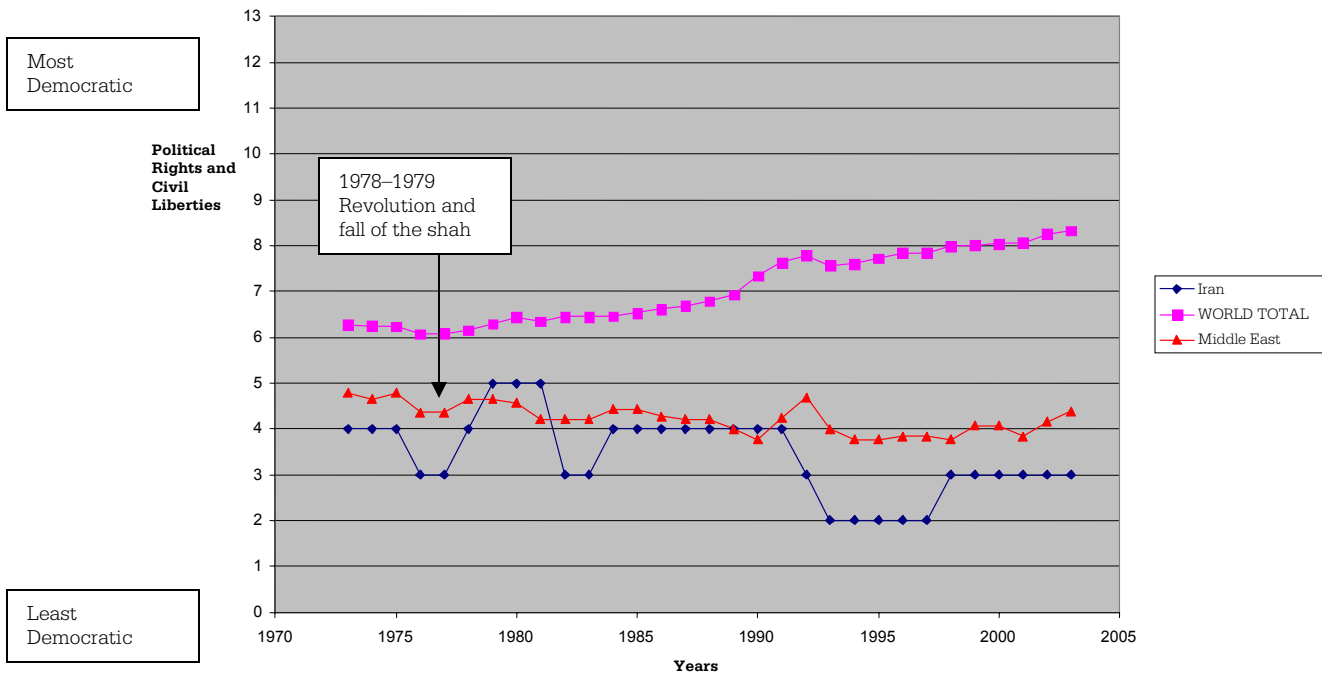
Graph 4: Russia



Undemocratic: Iran and China

Unlike the other countries studied in the AP Comparative Government curriculum, Iran and China have had limited experience with democracy. Both countries have been consistently repressive and authoritarian. In Iran, the 1978–1979 revolution brought about the fall of the shah and the end of that repressive regime. It was at this point that Iran’s political rights and civil liberties peaked with a score of 5, as can be seen in Graph 5. That brief moment of relative freedom ended quickly. Radical Islamic leaders gained control and forcefully crushed political opposition. Ultimate political authority was given to religious leaders, and radical policies were put in place that included replacing secular courts with religious ones, limiting the rights of women, and media control. Recently there has been some easing of political censorship and even temporary electoral successes of reformers, as seen in the slight improvement in the graph in 1997, when a moderate candidate, Mohammed Khatami, won the presidential election. But the clerical rulers have sustained firm authoritarian controls over Iran’s politics and society.²² Graph 5 also makes clear the disparity between rights and liberties in the Middle East and the world as a whole. The Middle East is far less democratic and has remained consistently so. While the world as a whole has become more democratic, the Middle East has remained stagnant, thus increasing the gap between the two.

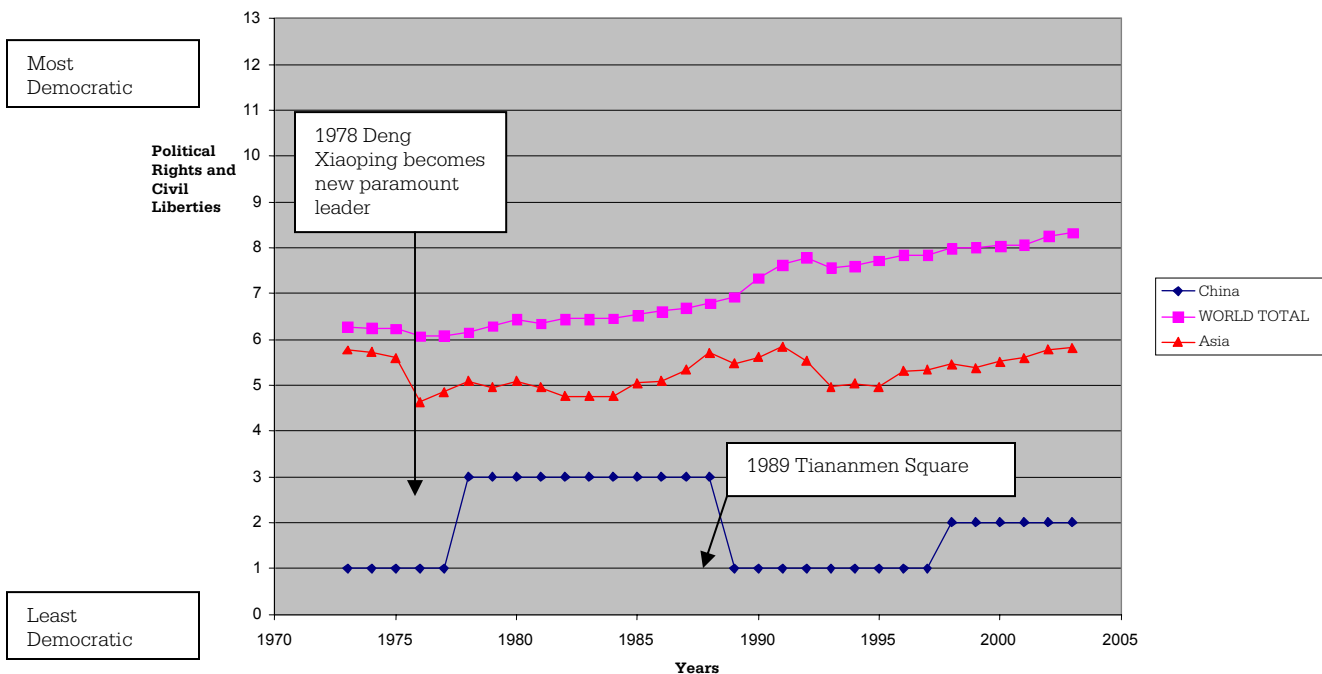
Graph 5: Iran



Over the past 30 years, China has also been generally repressive and undemocratic. As clearly shown in Graph 6, China's score has ranged from the lowest possible score of 1 to a high point of just 3. After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, economic reformers gained control of the Communist Party. The rise of Deng Xiaoping, one of the most prominent of these reformers, brought about a slightly less repressive period in China's recent history. Deng actually approved and implemented many of the demands by the protesters that were written on the Democracy Wall. During the period from 1978 to 1989, there were three waves of protests, which were all illegal, but were also linked to reformers and reform movements within the government. Popularly elected village committees were introduced in 1987 and continue today, providing Chinese citizens some experience with political competition, although the degree of local democracy seems to vary

greatly.²³ Political liberalization at the national level ended abruptly in 1989 when protesters in Tiananmen Square were brutally massacred by a government fearing for its survival. It was at this point that many moderate reformers within the government were forced out, and the pace of political reform was dramatically reduced. The Asian region, shown in the middle of Graph 6, contains a great variety of regimes, including authoritarian regimes such as Pakistan and North Korea and substantive democratic regimes such as Japan and, recently, South Korea. Its average has consistently been below that of the world total, but China has consistently remained among the least democratic Asian systems.

Graph 6: China



Conclusion: Democratization and Its Prospects

The twentieth century was a century of democratization. Before 1900, only a handful of countries, at most, had introduced democratic regimes. By the century's end, nearly half of the countries in the world were somewhat substantive democracies (despite some imperfections), and another quarter had introduced some degree of electoral competition. The democratization trend of the twentieth century had gained new momentum in the "third wave" from the late 1970s through the middle 1990s. The democratization trend brought many benefits to the citizens whose nations experienced it. While all democratic regimes have flaws, democratization in general has improved citizens' security and welfare, as well as given them a more equitable role in making public policies.

We cannot yet tell what will be the story of democratization in the twenty-first century. In the last five years, the proportion of full democracies in the world has been fairly stable, with new democratization in countries such as Mexico and Nigeria countered by the overthrow of democracy in countries such as Pakistan and the erosion of democratic conditions in countries such as Russia. Some ebbs and flows are inevitable. Even countries such as India, where values and institutions seem strongly supportive of democracy, are rendered fragile by low levels of education, economies with huge traditional sectors, corruption, and deep religious cleavages. Nigeria seems even more fragile, because of its record of military intervention and intense strife. On the other hand, while China has stubbornly suppressed most democratization efforts thus far, economic and social development has been proceeding rapidly, creating new pressures for democratization and greatly improving its prospects for survival if it is introduced.

If the past is any guide, much will depend on worldwide economic and international conditions. Continuing advances in education and economic development would help consolidate democracy in Latin America, Central Europe, and Asia. Such development gains are desperately needed to encourage and consolidate democracy in Africa and the former Soviet Union countries. The fate of internationally and regionally powerful countries will have an additional effect on democratization or democratic consolidation of their neighbors. For this reason, the outcomes of democratization in Russia, China, Nigeria, and Iran have implications outside their own borders. Moreover, the new worldwide trends in international security and trade affect many nations. It is more difficult to sustain democratic liberties when confronted by international terror. Other unforeseen threats will no doubt emerge. Against these it will be up to citizens and leaders in current democratic regimes to discover responses that protect their security and prosperity without threatening democracy itself. Because democratic regimes are founded on the principle of responsiveness to citizens, those citizens bear responsibility for defending their freedoms.

Critical Terms for Understanding Democratization

Authoritarian breakdown	Illiberal democracy
Authoritarian regime	International environment of democracy
Corruption	Military coup
Democratic consolidation	Military authoritarian regime
Democratic regime	Personalistic authoritarian regime
Democratic responsiveness	Procedural democracy
Democratization from “above” and “below”	Rule of law
Economic development level	Single-party authoritarian regime
Executive coup	Substantive democracy
	Waves of democratization (three)

¹ For a discussion of the conceptual issues, see David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49 (1997): 430–451. For specific classifications and discussions of the dividing line between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism, see Larry Diamond, Andreas Schedler, Steven Levitsky and Lucian Way, and Nicolas Van de Walle, "Elections Without Democracy?" in *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2002): 21–80.

² Some scholars also include any greater economic equality, increased education, or expansive welfare policies in their conception of substantive democracy. Here we attempt to limit our conception of substantive democracy to rights and freedoms that can directly create more equal political relations between citizens and with their governments. However, extreme social and economic inequalities in a society can limit the quality of democracy. See the articles in *Journal of Democracy* 15 (October 2004) discussing various elements in the "Quality of Democracy."

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁴ Adrian Karatnycky, "The 1999 Freedom House Survey: A Century of Progress," *Journal of Democracy* 11 (January 2000): 187–200.

⁵ However, sometimes the greater economic resources may at least for a time help sustain a dictatorial regime against such demands.

⁶ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): ch. 2; Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55 (July 2003).

⁷ Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 4 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Gretchen Casper and Michelle M. Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

⁸ Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (June 1999): 115–144.

⁹ Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Larry Diamond et al., eds., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997).

¹¹ Among many examples are Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1990): 51–69; Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Przeworski, *Democracy and Development* (2000): ch. 2.

¹² As explained above, analysts are somewhat divided in their use of these terms and their application to incomplete, procedural democracies or to authoritarian systems with some competitive elements. Sometimes political systems with some democratic elements and severe flaws are called "hybrid" regimes.

¹³ The political science literature showing that democracies do not fight each other is very large. See, for example, Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Barbara Harff, "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder Since 1955," *American Political Science Review* 97 (February 2003): 57–74.

¹⁵ Steven C. Poe, C. Neal Tate, and Linda Camp Keith, "Repression of the Human Right to Personal Integrity Revisited: A Global Cross-National Study Covering the Years 1976–1993," *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1999): 291–313.

¹⁶ Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Przeworski, *Democracy and Development* (2000): chs. 3, 5; on indirect effects, Yi Feng, *Democracy, Governance, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

¹⁸ The Freedom House political rights and civil liberties scores are estimated by a team of 30 writers/analysts and senior-level academic advisors, in consultation with regional experts. The political rights score is based on a checklist of 10 items spread across three categories, each of which is evaluated on a scale from 0 to 4. The categories on the political rights checklist are electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government. Items on the checklist include: "Is the head of state and/or head of government or other chief authority elected through free and fair elections? Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency? Do cultural, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups have reasonable self-determination, self-government, autonomy, or participation through informal consensus in the decision-making process?" In a practical sense, it would be almost impossible to receive a mediocre score on political rights without at least a procedural democracy and impossible to receive a perfect score without a substantive democracy. The ratings on political rights and civil liberties are closely related, and the scores rarely diverge by more than a few points. By examining the items on the civil liberties checklist, the reason for the similarity in scores becomes readily apparent. The civil liberties checklist includes 15 questions spread across four categories; again, each item is rated from 0 to 4. The four categories on the civil liberties checklist are freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. Some of the items on the civil liberties checklist include: "Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion? Is there an independent judiciary? Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression? Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?" The categories and items included in the civil liberties checklist are vital for a substantive democracy. Without rule of law, freedom of the press, and the other vital freedoms it includes, it would be impossible to hold free and fair elections. The Freedom House Organization then uses the scores on these checklists to establish ratings from 1 to 7 on political rights and from 1 to 7 on civil rights, so that possible total scores range from 2 to 14. Under their system, the lower scores represent the highest levels of freedom. For the sake of clarity in this paper, we have reversed the scores, so that the combined scores range from 1 to 13, with high scores representing the greatest level of freedom and democracy. It is worth noting that in the middle range, what appear to be identical scores in two different countries can, in reality, mean the availability of a very different range of rights available to its citizens. The independence of the media and absence of an independent judiciary in one country and a fully independent judiciary and state-controlled media in another might appear identical in these combined scores. Further, it should be noted that there have been minor methodological changes in the score calculations over the more than 30 years since its creation. It is because of these minor methodological changes that there appear to be minor variations in scores, where no actual changes in rights and freedoms on the ground have taken place.

¹⁹ The scores are for Great Britain only and explicitly exclude Northern Ireland, which Freedom House rates separately, although both are part of the country called the United Kingdom. According to Freedom House, the one point decline after 1989 reflects only a methodological adjustment.

²⁰ Robert Mundt and Oladimeji Aborisade, "Nigeria," in Gabriel Almond et al., *Comparative Politics Today* (New York: Longman, 2003): 712.

²¹ There are great differences in democratic achievement from country to country among these new nations. The three Baltic countries, which have now become part of the European Union, are counted in this graph in the European Union average, not in the former Soviet Union average.

²² Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

²³ Melanie Manion, "The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside," *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996): 736–48.