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## Introduction

### REGIME CHANGE DURING THE THIRD WAVE: FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY AND BACK

DURING THE PAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, Huntington's metaphor of a "Third Wave" of democratization captured what appeared to be a steady worldwide movement toward more liberal political rule.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s, the wave spread to major Latin American and Asian countries in the 1980s: Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Turkey, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, and Thailand. The trend accelerated dramatically in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and not only in Eastern Europe but in the poorer nations of the African continent as well. Even more recently, the "color revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Lebanon and the Arab Spring evoked hope that the former Soviet Union and the Middle East would more fully participate in the worldwide trend.

By the late-2000s, however, the net increase in the number of democracies slowed and the tide of democratization appeared to crest. This slowdown should not be altogether surprising; as the number of democracies increased, the remaining authoritarian regimes by definition constituted tougher cases. Mass mobilization against these remaining dictatorships often failed to produce successful democratic transitions, as the Arab Spring showed most clearly.<sup>2</sup> But other developments were somewhat more surprising. First the number of intermediate regimes—variously labeled illiberal democracies, semiauthoritarian, electoral authoritarian, or competitive authoritarian regimes<sup>3</sup>—held surprisingly constant. Some of these regimes arose in the wake of transitions from "harder" authoritarian rule, most notably in the former Soviet Union and parts of Africa. Yet others reflected the failure of new democracies to consolidate. Military coups have become less common over time, but we have seen an increase in what we call "backsliding" from democracy: actions on the part of nominally democratic incumbents that exploit the benefits of office—including economically—to

<sup>1</sup>Huntington 1991.

<sup>2</sup>Bellin 2012.

<sup>3</sup>On illiberal democracies, see Zakaria 1997, 2003; Diamond 2009. On semiauthoritarian regimes, see Ottaway 2003. On electoral authoritarian regimes, see Schedler 2002, 2009. On competitive authoritarian regimes, see Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010.

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restrict political contestation and civil and political liberties. Prominent examples of such backsliding include Russia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Nigeria, Kenya, and, more recently, Turkey, Hungary, and Pakistan.

With this new pessimism has come a revival of structural theories of democratic transition and consolidation. During the Third Wave, modernization theory was cast into doubt by the spread of democracy to low-income countries, giving rise to an emphasis on elite negotiations and even outright contingency.<sup>4</sup> But the failure of many of these new democracies to consolidate has revived the focus on factors such as economic development and social structure. Attention initially focused on whether Lipset's observation of a cross-sectional correlation between level of development and democracy could be extended to the analysis of transitions to democratic rule.<sup>5</sup> Przeworski et al. argued that it didn't, reflecting in part his focus on the postwar period when transitions spread across the developing world.<sup>6</sup> But they were subsequently challenged by Boix and Stokes, who argued that a longer-term perspective—incorporating the early European transitions—in fact confirmed the relationship between level of development and the collapse of authoritarian rule.<sup>7</sup>

There was a much stronger consensus, however, that development is associated with the consolidation of democratic rule. Przeworski et al. famously showed that no democracy has ever reverted above a per capita GDP of \$6,055, Argentina's level of development in 1975.<sup>8</sup> Przeworski followed with an important formal contribution, arguing that level of development influences the stability of democratic rule through class dynamics as well.<sup>9</sup> At higher levels of income, both richer and poorer classes develop vested interests in the democratic status quo and a generalized aversion to the uncertainties of authoritarian rule. Boix showed that this result was even stronger in the post-Cold War period when the international system was dominated—at least for a time—by a liberal hegemon, reducing the “drag” on these long-run structural factors from geostrategic and ideological rivalries.<sup>10</sup> It followed directly from such analysis that democracies are much more likely to fail in the poorer countries that transitioned during the second half of the Third Wave.

Growing concern about the adverse political effect of high inequality has played an important role in these structural arguments. The link

<sup>4</sup>O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Di Palma 1990.

<sup>5</sup>Lipset 1959, 1960.

<sup>6</sup>Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000.

<sup>7</sup>Boix and Stokes 2003. See also Epstein et al. 2006; Kennedy 2010.

<sup>8</sup>Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000.

<sup>9</sup>Przeworski 2005.

<sup>10</sup>Boix 2011.

between class conflicts over the distribution of wealth and regime change has had a long pedigree in the modernization literature. Arguments of these sorts were influential in analyses of transitions to democracy in Europe,<sup>11</sup> and have been revived to consider the potentially adverse effects of the concentration of wealth and income on political accountability, participation, and polarization in the United States and Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Class conflict models of regime change have also been deployed in comparative historical work on democratization and its reversal in developing countries.<sup>13</sup> Recently, these insights have been formalized in influential models of regime change rooted in the divergent preferences of elites and masses, not only over the distribution of income but over the political institutions that sustain or redress social inequalities.<sup>14</sup> A key finding of this literature is that high inequality constitutes a barrier to democratic rule, blocking transitions and increasing the risks of reversion.<sup>15</sup>

The central purpose of this book is to critically assess this new structural turn both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, we seek to steer the discussion about transitions to and from democratic rule away from structural explanations emphasizing level of economic development and social inequality back toward more political accounts, rooted in factors such as the nature of authoritarian and democratic institutions, regime performance, and capacities for collective action on the part of civil society.

Empirically, our analysis seeks to exploit not only cross-national regression designs but a systematic attention to the entire population of cases as well. The book is based on 78 discrete democratic transitions and 25 reversions that occurred between 1980 and 2008 as coded in two widely used datasets. We show that structural factors have mixed effects on transitions to and reversions from democratic rule. This is particularly the case with inequality. Distributive conflict is evident in about half of the transitions in our sample, and in a smaller share of reversions. But even where democratic transitions do appear to emerge from distributive conflict, those cases do not seem to be driven by the level of inequality one way or the other. Rather, democratization driven by mass mobilization appears to hinge on political factors: how exclusionary or co-optive authoritarian regimes are and the extent to which publics are capable of

<sup>11</sup>Marshall 1950; Lipset 1960; Moore 1966.

<sup>12</sup>Mahler 2002; Phillips 2003; Jacobs et al. 2004; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Solt 2008; Bartels 2008; Piketty 2013.

<sup>13</sup>O'Donnell 1973; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Bermeo 2003.

<sup>14</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson 2000, 2001, 2006; Acemoglu et al. 2013; Boix 2003, 2008, 2013; Przeworski 2005, 2009.

<sup>15</sup>See however Ansell and Samuels 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014.

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mobilizing grievances into the political arena. Where class conflict does not appear as even a proximate cause of regime change, we need to look elsewhere for explanations, including to the role international forces have played and to elite calculations and intra-elite conflicts.

In our cross-national quantitative models, we find that a low level of development does play a role in reversions to authoritarian rule. But a closer examination of cases reveals a myriad of anomalies: low-income countries that survive and a handful of middle-income countries that revert. Moreover, as with transitions, we find that inequality does not have a significant effect on reversions and that there is a noticeable disjuncture between the postulated mechanisms in distributive conflict models and how reversions actually transpired. Third Wave democracies were only rarely destabilized by right-wing elites defending their income and assets. Failure was much more commonly attributable to what we have termed a “weak democracy syndrome”: a complex of political and economic factors including histories of praetorianism, weak institutionalization, and poor economic performance, itself partly a function of poor governance.

In the remainder of this Introduction, we begin by defining core terms and justifying our focus on the Third Wave. We then preview the empirical findings of the book, which are grouped into two major sections: the discussion of democratic transitions (Chapters 1–4) and a chapter on the effects of these transitions paths (Chapter 5); and a section on reversions (Chapters 6–8). We close the Introduction with a note on method. Throughout, our purposes are not only substantive; our work also includes an effort to bridge two methodological cultures: that of quantitative analysis rooted in a focus on average treatment effects and qualitative, causal process observation, with its emphasis on uncovering causal mechanisms.

#### DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND REVERSION: STUDYING THE THIRD WAVE

As is common in the political science literature, we define “democracy” in procedural terms. Democracies are political regimes in which all adult citizens are entitled to choose chief executives and legislatures through competitive elections, with expectations that the results of those elections will be honestly counted and honored through turnover in government. To meet these conditions, however, it is also necessary for citizens to be protected by a range of civil and political liberties, including the ability to organize and assemble, freedom of speech, and access to competing sources of information. The guarantee of rights and liberties opens the door to wider, more substantive definitions of democracy, based on the

idea of citizens as agents.<sup>16</sup> For our purposes, however, we view rights and liberties through their crucial—if more limited—role in sustaining open political contestation.

Of course, no regime satisfies all of these criteria perfectly,<sup>17</sup> and this poses critical problems in the analysis and measurement of transitions to and from democratic rule. In principle, the benchmark for regime change would be decisive movement toward or away from the “rules of the game” outlined above. O’Donnell and Schmitter, for example, suggest that “the first free election” marks the point at which transitions end and a new regime is installed.<sup>18</sup> And in some instances, particularly via the coup d’état, the reversion to dictatorship is unambiguous as well.

But two problems arise in identifying and coding regime change. First, moves to and from democracy need not be decisive, given that the major components of our definition could all pertain to different degrees. Where elections occur, they may be more or less competitive. Rights and liberties, similarly, may be more or less guaranteed. Both the competitiveness of the political system and the protection of political rights are ultimately continuous variables. This raises a second problem of temporality: that changes of regimes may not be sharply marked, but constitute more incremental processes occurring over time.<sup>19</sup> As we will see, more temporally elongated causal processes pose daunting problems for standard econometric methods, opening the space for complementary qualitative analysis.

These problems immediately raise issues of measurement. How much political freedom do we need to see before we say a democratic transition has occurred? How egregious do incumbents’ arrogation of powers or abuses of political rights need to be before they constitute a reversion? These are crucial questions given the competitive authoritarian regimes that have emerged within the gray zone between full-blown democratic and autocratic rule.

Our approach to these problems is pragmatic. For some comparative purposes, particularly in our quantitative analysis, we treat transitions dichotomously while recognizing that this is an analytic artifice. At the same time, however, we emphasize throughout the importance of qualitative causal process observation that permits a more nuanced assessment of transition processes and the extent to which regimes satisfy democratic criteria.

To engage existing quantitative literature and to probe the comparability and replicability of its findings, we rely primarily on two panel datasets: the

<sup>16</sup>O’Donnell 2004.

<sup>17</sup>Dahl 1973.

<sup>18</sup>O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 59–64.

<sup>19</sup>Pierson 2004.

coding scheme developed by Przeworski et al. and extended by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (subsequently the CGV dataset) and Polity IV; to ensure consistency with existing work, we only recode or discard cases in extraordinary circumstances where we can find little support for the coding in question.<sup>20</sup> We supplement these codings with reference to three other datasets when pursuing several related questions: the Freedom House dataset, which measures political rights and civil liberties more explicitly, and particularly nuanced coding schemes on the variety of authoritarian rule by Hadenius, Teorell, and Wahman and Svulik.<sup>21</sup>

The choice of the CGV and Polity datasets is appropriate not only because they are widely used. They are also grounded in different conceptualization and measurement strategies, providing the opportunity to check the robustness of findings to competing conceptions of democratic rule. CGV provides a dichotomous measure of regime change that hinges on the staging of free elections and evidence of subsequent turnover that vindicates the competitiveness of the transitional electoral process.<sup>22</sup> The CGV codings thus reflect a more minimalist conception of democratization but as a result are well-suited to capture sharp reversions to authoritarian rule in which elected executives are deposed and legislatures shuttered.

The Polity score is a continuous metric (–10 to +10) that takes into account the broader political framework, including the regulation, competitiveness, and openness of chief executive recruitment, checks on executive discretion—including through the judiciary or legislature—and the competitiveness of participation; this last component implies some indirect consideration of the protection of political liberties.<sup>23</sup> Although we exploit the continuous nature of the Polity data, we also follow the

<sup>20</sup>Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010.

<sup>21</sup>Hadenius, Teorell, and Wahman 2012; Svulik 2012.

<sup>22</sup>More precisely, the definition of democracy hinges on four coding rules: the chief executive is elected in popular elections; the lower house in the legislature is popularly elected; there is more than one party; and there is turnover. With respect to the last desideratum, countries are coded authoritarian if “the incumbents will have or already have held office continuously by virtue of elections for more than two terms or have held office without being elected for any duration of their current tenure in office, and until today or until the time when they were overthrown they had not lost an election” (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000: 23; see also 19–20 and 28).

<sup>23</sup>Again more precisely the Polity “dem-auth” scale is based on the following component variables: the regulation of chief executive recruitment (XRREG), competitiveness of executive recruitment (XRCOMP), openness of executive recruitment and the independence of executive authority (XROPEN), executive constraints, political competition, and opposition (XCONST), and the regulation (PARREG) and competitiveness (PARCOMP) of participation. The last variable captures the protection of political and civil liberties and thus constitutes one of the more important differences from the CGV dataset, which relies on the existence of an opposition party alone.

convention in the discipline and in the Polity dataset itself of using a cutoff of 6 to indicate the dividing line between authoritarian and democratic systems.

The differences between the two datasets are evident in the fact that only 55.4 percent of the CGV transitions are also Polity cases. Conversely, 34 of the 78 cases coded as CGV transitions—43.6 percent—had Polity scores of less than 6. In some instances, CGV transitions might appropriately be seen as transitions to what Levitsky and Way call competitive authoritarianism rather than full democracy.<sup>24</sup> As a result of these differences, we do not pool the data but rather run all statistical tests on each dataset separately. Nonetheless, both datasets are clearly capturing important political changes and provide the opportunity to consider the robustness of our findings to the definition of regime change.

Why limit our study to the Third Wave? Our focus on the period between 1980 and 2008 arguably biases results from what might emerge from a study of transitions over a longer time frame. Indeed, precisely in the interests of avoiding such biases, a number of studies have argued that a consideration of democracy as a long-run socioeconomic equilibrium requires considering the entire life span of the political form, beginning with late 19th-century franchise extensions that marked the breakthrough.<sup>25</sup>

However, there are theoretical, empirical, and substantive reasons to consider more contemporary processes on their own terms. We are interested in the determinants not only of democracy in general but of democratization in our time. Both modernization and distributive or class conflict theories were inspired by the 19th- and early 20th-century experience of Europe.<sup>26</sup> Early work by Acemoglu and Robinson is explicit in considering how working-class pressures served to widen the franchise.<sup>27</sup> The sociological work of Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens also views working-class challenges as the key driver of democratization in Western Europe and seeks to extend those findings to Latin America.<sup>28</sup> Taking a somewhat different tack, Ansell and Samuels have relied heavily on illustrations from 19th-century Britain to advance their argument that it is the conflict between landed interests and rising commercial classes that drove democratization.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Levitsky and Way 2010.

<sup>25</sup>Boix 2003, 2008, 2013; Boix and Stokes 2003; Przeworski 2009; Ansell and Samuels 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014.

<sup>26</sup>It should be noted that these class conflict models have been challenged. Collier (1999) shows that in many early European cases, the impetus for democracy came from “insiders” already operating within narrowly based oligarchic systems.

<sup>27</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson 2001. See also Przeworski 2009.

<sup>28</sup>Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992.

<sup>29</sup>Ansell and Samuels 2010, 2014.



However, it is not clear that these theories are appropriate to the very different political, economic, and social structures that characterize the contemporary developing and postsocialist worlds. In the earlier period, almost all transitions occurred from regimes that allowed some competition, but that limited franchises to propertied classes. The fight for democracy was thus equivalent to franchise extension. In the late 20th century, the overwhelming share of postwar autocracies have been military, one-party, and competitive authoritarian regimes, which exhibit quite different political dynamics because of the identity of political incumbents. Moreover, although economic development still implies a fundamental transition from rural agrarian to more urban and industrial economies, the economic and social structures of developing countries are vastly different from the early European democratizers, with a much larger role of foreign economic actors, a more ambiguous impact of manufacturing on growth, and the emergence of large informal and service sectors. Such differences impact class identifications, opportunities for collective action, and the political relations among competing economic sectors.

Long-run historical approaches also pose their own problems of sample heterogeneity. Standards for what constitutes democracy have shifted considerably over time. In the 19th century, for example, a country that excluded women and minorities from suffrage might still have been classified as democratic; by the mid-20th century, it definitely would not. Such a long-run approach also requires the causal factors at work to be defined in exceedingly general terms. To undertake analysis over a long period, inequality and class conflict have to be defined to encompass highly diverse social structures, a challenge even within the Third Wave period. Gains in generality and parsimony by “going long” are matched by equal if not greater losses in comparability of setting and context.

The international context of democratization is also quite different from earlier historical periods, in terms of both geopolitical configurations and international norms and ideas. An example of a quite significant change in context in the period of interest to us is the decline of East-West conflict and great-power patronage for client dictators and the rapid international diffusion of democratic norms and expectations. The importance of this changed international environment is captured by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, who show that transitions to new authoritarian regimes were between two and three times more likely than transitions to democracy in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>30</sup> During the 1980s—the beginning of the end of the Cold War—the odds that regime change would result in a democratic, rather than autocratic transition, were only slightly less than even. By the

<sup>30</sup>Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014.



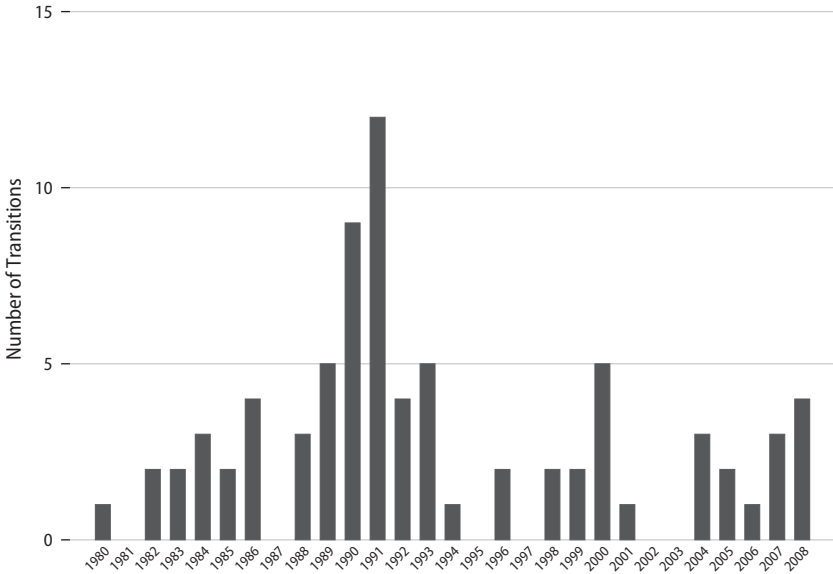


Figure 0.1 CGV Transitions during the Third Wave (1980–2008)

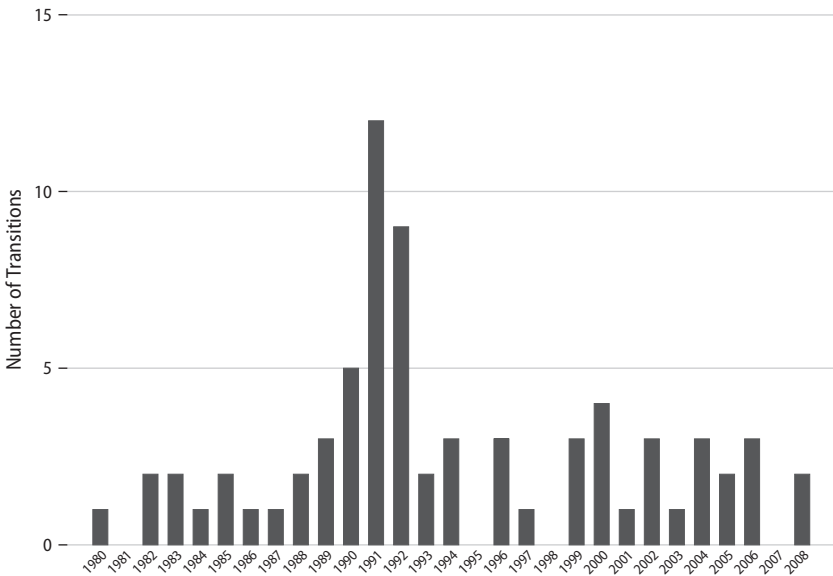


Figure 0.2 Polity Transitions during the Third Wave (1980–2008)

1990s and 2000s, democratic transitions outnumbered autocratic transitions by a ratio of more than two to one.

The temporal distribution of CGV and Polity transitions shown in Figures 0.1 and 0.2 provides an even more direct indication of the importance of changes in the structure of the international system. In both datasets, a large share of transitions—and what we classify as both distributive and elite-led cases—peaked with the collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991. Some of these changes occurred in secessionist Soviet republics, such as the Baltic states and Ukraine, while others occurred in formally independent communist states of Eastern Europe. But the breakup of the Soviet Union also had repercussions among many client states in Africa and created a more benign environment for transitions outside of the Soviet sphere in Central America and Asia as well.

A second feature of the Third Wave that makes it distinctive is the spread of democratic practices to low-income countries with little experience with democracy and few expectations that they could become democratic at all. In an important article, Carles Boix shows that the impact of economic development on democracy grows stronger when a democratic hegemon dominates the international system, as was true in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>31</sup> The end of the Cold War freed workers and the middle classes to mobilize in favor of democracy, a pattern consistent with regime changes in middle-income Eastern European and Latin American countries. However, it is striking that transitions also occurred in some of the poorest countries and most inhospitable environments, both regional and domestic.

Seeking to nest political change in this highly diverse set of countries in the still-more heterogeneous history of contemporary democracy since its late 19th-century origins has value; there may well be more generalized statements we can make by “going long.” But it does not diminish more temporally localized findings of how developing countries democratized or returned to authoritarian rule during the Third Wave, particularly if we find that those processes don’t correspond with theories motivated by earlier democratic experiences.

## HOW AND WHY DOES DEMOCRACY EMERGE? INEQUALITY, DISTRIBUTIVE CONFLICT, AND ELITE-LED TRANSITIONS

Both modernization and distributive conflict theories see democracy emerging out of fundamental shifts in class structure and conflicting preferences over institutions across classes. How do struggles over the distri-

<sup>31</sup>Boix 2011.

bution of income and wealth affect transitions to democracy? And to what extent are these struggles related to differences in the degree of inequality? As we show in Chapter 1, formal theories developed by Boix, Acemoglu, Robinson, and others provide a useful theoretical point of departure.<sup>32</sup> These theories build on an important set of models of redistribution under democratic rule to give this analysis of regime change micro-foundations.<sup>33</sup> Their rationality assumptions are not typically shared by those with a more sociological perspective. But both sociological and rational choice models engage modernization theory with explicit predictions about how levels of inequality affect the prospects for both transitions to democratic rule and the stability of democracy once it is established.

As already noted, however, demand-driven theories of democracy are hardly new. Aristotle (*Politics*, Book 5, 1301a) states that “a system of government can be changed into a democracy when the size of the multitude of the poor increases.” But he warns as well that “it is best for citizens in a city-state to possess a moderate amount of wealth because where some have a lot and some have none the result is the ultimate democracy or un-mixed oligarchy. Tyranny can result from both these extremes. It is much less likely to spring from moderate systems of government.”<sup>34</sup> Almost two millennia later, we find similar views expressed in the writings of Jefferson, who espoused the importance of family farms to democratic rule, and of de Tocqueville, whose warnings echoed those of Aristotle: “Almost all of the revolutions which have changed the aspect of nations have been made to consolidate or destroy social inequality. Remove the secondary causes which have produced the great convulsions of the world, and you will almost always find the principle of inequality at the bottom.”<sup>35</sup>

More contemporary variants of these insights, similarly, converge around the core observation that the expansion of democratic rights provides groups excluded from political power with opportunities to reduce the inequalities of “conditions,” including not only social and political conditions, but economic ones as well.<sup>36</sup> Both modernization and neo-Marxist theorists focused on the emerging middle classes as the crucial agent of political change, and these theories have been revisited in important work by Ansell and Samuels.<sup>37</sup> By the 19th century, however, mass democracy became a battle cry of the expanding European working classes, which challenged “bourgeois liberals” as well as the landed remnants of the old

<sup>32</sup>Acemoglu and Robinson 2000, 2001, 2006; Acemoglu et al. 2013; Boix 2003, 2008, 2013; Przeworski 2005, 2009; Ansell and Samuels 2010, 2014.

<sup>33</sup>Romer 1975; Roberts 1977; and particularly Meltzer and Richard 1981.

<sup>34</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, book 5, 1301a; book 4, 1295a.

<sup>35</sup>De Tocqueville 1835: 302.

<sup>36</sup>Marshall 1950.

<sup>37</sup>Ansell and Samuels 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014.

social order. The idea that democratization in Europe was a function of the changing balance of class power has been seriously contested,<sup>38</sup> but it has remained an important component of the academic research agenda. Studies of franchise extension show that it was typically won through political protest rather than bestowed from above.<sup>39</sup> Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens claim—more broadly still—that working-class mobilization was the driving force behind the “democratic breakthroughs” of late 19th- and early 20th-century Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Narrowing differences in income and wealth were not universally viewed as the only objective of these challenges, nor were they clearly linked to objective measures of inequality. Nevertheless, it is by no means coincidental that liberal bourgeoisies as well as conservatives often viewed movements for democracy as threats to property and economic privilege. This assumption underlies Bismarck’s attempt to co-opt the threat by extending social insurance to the most “dangerous” segments of the union movement. And the centrality of working-class economic demands in the transition to democracy is given greater credibility by the expansion of social programs and the reduction of inequality that followed democratic transitions.<sup>41</sup>

The corollary of such explanations for democratization is that extreme concentrations of income and assets, including landed wealth,<sup>42</sup> are major barriers to both regime transitions and the stability of democratic rule. Whether focused on the conflict between landed and middle classes—Moore’s dictum of “no bourgeoisie, no democracy”<sup>43</sup>—or rising working classes, inequality is the enemy of democracy and democratization. In unequal authoritarian settings, elites have strong incentives to repress political challenges that would also have redistributive effects. In unequal democracies, economic elites pose an ongoing political risk, as they have the power to undermine democratic rule or overthrow it altogether.

The models we outline in Chapter 1 articulate these views more sharply and link them to explicit predictions about the likelihood of democratization at different levels of inequality. Even though democratization is ultimately driven by pressures from below, such challenges are likely to emerge and succeed only at low or moderate levels of inequality, when masses have the means and incentives to mobilize in favor of redistribution and elites prefer moderate concessions to incurring the cost of repression. At high levels of inequality, conversely, such challenges are unlikely to succeed.

<sup>38</sup> Collier 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Lizzeri and Persico 2004; Przeworski 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Lindert 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Ansell and Samuels 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Moore 1966: 418.

### *Distributive Conflict Transitions*

It is important to emphasize that modernization and particularly class conflict theories are not—and cannot—be simply structural. They must operate through strategic interactions between existing and rising classes, elites and masses, and ultimately political incumbents and oppositions. All of these interactions hinge on capacities for collective action on the part of oppositions and the willingness and ability to repress or offer concessions on the part of elites. As a result, we focus throughout on two related but ultimately separable tests of modernization and distributive conflict theories. The first is the relationship between structural factors—level of development and inequality—and regime change. For example, although the role of inequality varies somewhat across different theoretical models, they converge on the expectation noted above that high inequality is a barrier to democratization.

The second question is whether observed transition processes conform to the stipulated causal mechanisms in the theory. These mechanisms are more worked out in the game theoretic models of distributive conflict, and we thus focus on them here. Even if inequality were found to be a significant deterrent to democratic transitions, it may not be as a result of class conflict over economic grievances. Inequality might operate through different channels, for example, marginalizing rather than mobilizing mass publics. Rather than arising out of class conflict, democracy may also prove an outcome of largely intra-elite processes or emanate from international pressures.

In Chapters 1 and 2—using somewhat different methods and measures—we find that inequality is not a significant determinant of democratic transitions one way or the other. It could nonetheless be the case that class conflict drives transition processes even if those conflicts are not rooted in the objective level of social stratification. To pursue this question about short-run causal dynamics requires that we code transitions. To do so, we create a qualitative dataset of within-case causal process observations that distinguishes between distributive conflict transitions of the type specified in the theory and what we call “elite-led” cases in which the stipulated mechanisms are absent.<sup>44</sup>

Distributive conflict transitions are defined as those in which (1) mass mobilization constitutes a significant and immediate threat to the ruling elite, (2) grievances associated with socioeconomic inequalities constitute at least one of the motives for mobilization, and (3) elites acquiesce to democracy in part in response to these threats. Elite-led transitions are not characterized by this sequence of threats and response; they work instead

<sup>44</sup>Haggard, Kaufman, and Teo 2016.

through initiatives undertaken by incumbents or rival elite groups that we describe in more detail below. Simply put, distributive conflict transitions can be characterized as “bottom-up” transitions that correspond at least in part to distributive conflict models while the elite-led transitions—from the “top down”—do not conform even descriptively or in their proximate causes to the theory.

We show in Chapter 1 that about half of the transitions we examine are the result of the mobilized *de facto* power envisioned by both the sociological and rational choice distributive conflict theories cited above. There are no clear standards by which a theory can be rejected by the presentation of anomalous cases; few theories take a rigidly deterministic or “necessary and sufficient” form under which any single case or even group of cases would be disconfirming. However, we also show in Chapter 2 that inequality does not have any statistically significant effect on transitions in general or on those transitions we identify as driven by distributive conflict. In line with the null statistical findings, the distribution of cases shows numerous anomalies, including not only high-inequality cases that transition through distributive conflict but low- and medium-inequality cases that transition in the absence of the postulated class dynamics. When the econometric results on inequality are taken together with the distributions based on our coding of the cases, these findings cast significant doubt on the generality of class conflict models.

However, the findings also raise the interesting question of the conditions under which excluded groups *do* demonstrate, strike, protest, or even threaten revolution in order to win democratic reforms. If such processes are not driven by inequality, then what does account for them? We explore this issue in Chapter 2 using statistical analysis, and in Chapter 3 through a consideration of the distributive conflict cases. We point to the significance of three more standard political factors: the repressiveness of the authoritarian regime, capacities for collective action, and regime performance as measured by short-run economic conditions.

Our first claim concerns the nature of authoritarian institutions. By their own admission, both the new and older class conflict theories are often institutionally spare; the same can be said for modernization theories. In class conflict theories, authoritarian regimes are defined in relatively undifferentiated ways, largely in terms of their role in sustaining socioeconomic inequalities through repression. But just as the new class conflict theories were generating debate, an extensive literature on authoritarian regimes was exploring their heterogeneity, including with respect to their reliance on repression and co-optation for managing opposition.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Geddes 1999; Smith 2005; Lust-Okar 2006; Magaloni 2006; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Brownlee 2007; Hadenius and Teorell 2007; Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski

Paradoxically, we show in Chapters 2 and 3 that distributive conflict transitions are *less* likely in regimes that permit some space for political organization and representation than in more closed military and one-party regimes. From the perspective of the opposition, the principal challenge is to coordinate challenges to the regime. Regimes that allow limited pluralism and political opposition, however, not only repress but deploy resources to divide the opposition, co-opting some sectors and marginalizing others. Incumbents can manipulate cleavages, deflecting conflict away from class axes—along which oppositions have numerical advantages—and co-opting support through targeted patronage and clientelism.

By contrast, closed regimes that limit or eliminate channels of representation provide—virtually by definition—fewer opportunities for “*de jure*” influence or participation. Organized groups, such as unions and civil society associations, operate under tightly constrained circumstances or are driven underground entirely. Counterintuitively, such systems are more vulnerable to distributive conflict transitions.<sup>46</sup>

We do not test the relationship between repression, co-optation, and transitions through a consideration of institutions alone. We also find a strong relationship between a variety of indicators of repressiveness and the collapse of authoritarian rule via the distributive conflict route. In particular, we show that authoritarian regimes built around labor- or ethnically-repressive economic projects have an increased likelihood of leaving power in the face of distributive conflict. These findings are an important reminder that grievances in authoritarian regimes are by no means limited to inequality, but include wider injustices associated with the loss of freedoms.

A second major political lacuna in the modernization and new class conflict models centers on the role of collective action. Older, more sociological theories focused on the role that unions and working-class movements played in the extension of the franchise. Both modernization and newer class conflict approaches, however, largely sidestep the question of how excluded classes overcome—or fail to overcome—the disabilities associated with often-purposeful atomization imposed by autocratic rule.

Following the contentious politics literature,<sup>47</sup> we argue that the capacity for collective action depends not only on the opportunity structure

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2006, 2007; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Blaydes 2010; Levitsky and Way 2010; Teorell 2010; Malesky and Schuler 2010; Hadenius, Teorell, and Wahman 2012; Svobik 2012; Wright and Escibà Folch 2012; Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius 2012; Boix and Svobik 2013; Reuter and Robertson 2015.

<sup>46</sup>See also Svobik 2012: 111.

<sup>47</sup>Tilly 1986; Tarrow 1998; McAdam 1999; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001.



available to excluded groups—which can be highly repressive as we have seen—but also on their organizational resources and strategies, including those that are nonviolent.<sup>48</sup> Resources depend in part on the availability of “protest repertoires”—knowledge of symbols, relevant public spaces, tactical information—that can be marshaled and coordinated by decentralized networks of leaders. Relatively decentralized and spontaneous forms of mobilization have long been a component of protest activity, and its potential may be increasing with the spread of social media.

Nevertheless, we show in Chapters 2 and 3 that longer-standing organizations are pivotal actors in turning people out in the streets and mounting sustained threats to authoritarian rule. These organizations can even play a triggering role if in abeyance under dictatorial rule.<sup>49</sup> A surprising finding given the spread of the Third Wave to lower income countries is the robust role played by unions not only in transitions in middle-income countries, but in lower-income countries as well. Organizational resources can also be provided by civil society groups and NGOs, as well as ethnic and religious groups. Indeed, in the absence of organizations, such challenges from below will not have the credibility to force political change; incumbents will wait them out.

Finally, building on earlier work,<sup>50</sup> we argue that regime change is associated not only with long-run economic growth—as in modernization theories—but shorter-run economic grievances that can be interpreted as measures of performance. The likelihood of a transition to democratic rule is inversely related to the economic performance of the incumbent authoritarian regime. A large number of transitions, and of all types, occurred in the context of severe economic difficulties, circumstances evident in the recurrent financial crises that coincided with the Third Wave: in Latin America and Africa in the 1980s, in the transitional economies in the first half of the 1990s, and again across a number of middle-income emerging markets from the mid-1990s into the early 2000s. Although economic crises sometimes exacerbated tensions between rich and poor, they were just as likely to have impaired the provision of rents to elites, military officers, and favored sectors of the public. As such they encouraged a defection of both elite supporters and appeared to have played a role in spurring mass mobilization as well.

<sup>48</sup>Sharp 1973; Helvey 2004; Zunes 1994; Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Zunes, Kurtz, and Asher 1999; Ackerman and DuVall 2000; Schock 2005; Roberts and Garton Ash 2009; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.

<sup>49</sup>Taylor 1989; Taylor and Crossley 2013.

<sup>50</sup>Haggard and Kaufman 1995.

### *Elite-Led Transitions*

What about the large number of transitions that did not appear to be driven by demands from below? Adam Przeworski poses the puzzle of such transitions in the clearest terms: “Why would people who monopolize political power ever decide to put their interests or values at risk by sharing it with others? Specifically, why would those who hold political rights in the form of suffrage decide to extend these rights to anyone else?”<sup>51</sup>

In Chapter 4, we start with a substantial body of theory and empirical work showing how international factors may influence transitions, from direct military pressures and even intervention to the effects of international institutions and diffusion.<sup>52</sup> We organize our discussion around Levitsky and Way’s distinction between leverage and linkage as sources of international influence. In four cases—Cyprus (1983), Grenada (1984), Panama (1989), and Haiti (1994)—outside intervention took a military form and directly displaced incumbents and/or established new democratic governments. Yet in all other cases, the political dynamics between outside actors and incumbents reflected more subtle tacit bargaining and what Putnam called two-level games.<sup>53</sup> Particularly in the wake of the end of the Cold War, the major powers became less tolerant of undemocratic regimes that appeared guilty of economic mismanagement and outright corruption. Threats or withdrawal of political and military support and economic aid—including from multilateral institutions—played an important role in motivating transitions in a group of low-income African countries in particular.

Except for cases of direct foreign displacement, however, these outside pressures always operate in conjunction with domestic political factors. Even in the absence of popular mobilization, intra-elite rivalries can constitute an important mechanism for spurring transitions. These rivalries may stem from competition among the political, military, and economic elites that constitute the authoritarian coalition—for example, when factions within the regime seek to displace incumbents—or from elite challenges from outside the regime altogether.<sup>54</sup> Some of these elite conflicts result in the replacement of one authoritarian leadership with another, a phenomenon we do not address. However, intra-elite conflicts can also generate transitions to democratic rule, particularly in the context of strong external inducements and constraints. Intra-elite conflicts often rotate

<sup>51</sup>Przeworski 2009: 291.

<sup>52</sup>Whitehead 1996; Pevehouse 2002; Levitsky and Way 2005, 2010; Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Wejner 2005; Boix 2011.

<sup>53</sup>Putnam 1988.

<sup>54</sup>Slater, Smith, and Nair 2014.

around differences over the costs and benefits of persisting with authoritarian rule. For example, while some military factions may favor a continued political role, others frequently see engagement in politics as carrying a variety of organizational costs, including to the core military mission. In about a third of all elite-led transitions, we found these conflicts central to transition processes.

Even when elites remain relatively unified, however, they may still acquiesce to—or even lead—democratizing reforms. This will occur if they believe they can retain leverage over the political process while reducing the costs of repression. Incumbent elites can do this in several ways, including through the design of political institutions that give them effective vetoes or through the organization of political parties that exploit other cleavages to dampen distributive conflicts. Dominant party systems—as opposed to true one-party systems—provide incumbent political elites with particular organizational advantages that can be redeployed in a more competitive context.

Note that each of the alternative domestic causal mechanisms we have sketched—*intra-elite conflict* or transitions led by incumbent elites seeking to retain office—may in fact be related precisely to the *weakness* of immediate threats from below. We find at least some indirect support for this claim in our statistical analysis in Chapter 2. While measures of the capacity for collective action are significant determinants of distributive conflict transitions, they play no role in elite-led cases. Where such threats are off the table or limited, elites are more likely to control the transition. Societies in which the poor are not mobilized through programmatic parties, unions, or other organizations may be especially prone to vote buying, patronage, and other forms of clientelistic control that would guarantee elite control of politics, even in nominally democratic settings.<sup>55</sup>

### *Transition Paths and the Stability of Democratic Rule*

Drawing the distinction between distributive conflict and elite-led transitions is necessary to test class conflict models, but it raises a big “so what?” question. Do these transition paths ultimately reflect equifinality, the existence of multiple routes to the same outcome? Or does democratization through one path rather than another have a more enduring effect? We take up this question in Chapter 5, also setting the stage for a discussion of cases that revert to authoritarian rule.

Theoretical priors on this question by no means reflect a well-developed consensus. Mass mobilization may subsequently overwhelm fragile democratic institutions through polarization and the precedent that violence

<sup>55</sup>Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2006.

“works.”<sup>56</sup> We argue, however, that mass mobilization may also constitute a check on government. It does so by raising the costs to both autocratic incumbents and their democratic successors of abusing executive power, derogating from the guarantee of human rights and civil liberties, and engaging in electoral fraud. Quantitative analysis provides some evidence that countries transitioning through the distributive conflict route appear more robust, and not only in the short run but as long as ten years after the transition. We also undertake paired comparisons between similarly situated distributive-conflict and elite-led transitions, showing the mechanisms through which this might occur. These cases provide additional evidence on how mass mobilization can increase the quality of transitional elections, reduce the capacity of hard-liners to resort to repression, and impede the scope of institutional “lock-ins” that give exiting elites veto power. More generally, mass mobilization that forces concessions from authoritarian rulers opens the political system to broader participation, a more competitive electoral and political system and more robust horizontal checks on executive power.

## WHY DO DEMOCRACIES COLLAPSE?

Inequality and distributive conflict play a somewhat different theoretical role in authoritarian reversions than they do in democratization. High inequality is a barrier to democratization in distributive conflict theories. However among those countries that do transition to democracy, the logic is precisely reversed: highly unequal distributions of income are likely to trigger redistributive challenges to elites and tempt them to undermine or overthrow democratic rule. Mass mobilization also plays a somewhat different role in the logic of reversion. The exercise of “de facto” power is a central feature of distributive conflict transitions, but need not play a central role in what we call elite-reaction reversions, which can be triggered by the redistributive policies of governments even in the absence of mass protest.

The elite reaction model of reversion from democratic rule is highly plausible, and has a substantial pedigree. In the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the Southern Cone of Latin America, for example, militaries did appear to intervene in the face of populist democratic challenges; Pinochet’s overthrow of the Allende government in Chile is paradigmatic.

As with our discussion of transitions, our consideration of reversions in Chapters 6 through 8 begins with econometric tests of modernization

<sup>56</sup>Huntington 1968.

and class conflict models, with particular attention to the role of inequality. We then resort to causal process observation in Chapters 7 and 8 to see the extent to which reversions conform descriptively to the model. In addition to elite-reaction reversions and those in which class conflict is absent, we also code for a third reversion path: cases in which authoritarian rule emanates not from the right, but from populist disaffection with the performance of incumbent democratic regimes.

We find very little evidence that the Third Wave reversions conform to the elite reaction model and again in two senses. First, we find no evidence in cross-national panel models that inequality matters either for reversions in general or for elite-reaction reversions in particular. Moreover, there is even less evidence that reversions during the Third Wave conformed to the proximate causal processes identified in distributive conflict models. The share of elite-reaction reversions constitutes less than a third of reversions in both datasets, and that number includes a number of reversions that proved extremely short-lived. In only a very small handful of cases did such reversions result in the sort of enduring authoritarian rule visible in earlier authoritarian waves such as in the Southern Cone or the developmental states of East Asia.

Rather than a strong causal role for inequality and distributive conflict, we highlight a complex of three political and institutional factors, a “weak democracy syndrome” that makes democracies vulnerable to authoritarian installations: a history of praetorianism and weak civilian control over the military; weak institutionalization more generally; and poor economic performance, manifest not only in low average growth but in recurrent economic crises as well. Particularly significant in this regard is the concept of weak institutionalization, which refers not to any particular constitutional arrangements but to the absence of *any* significant and durable political institutions capable of constraining the political ambitions of incumbents and oppositions. In weakly institutionalized systems, not only are militaries more likely to intervene in politics but incumbents are more likely to treat politics as a “winner-take-all” game and abuse office with the purpose of permanently marginalizing oppositions.

We do find statistical support for modernization theory in Chapter 6. Reversions to authoritarian rule are indeed more likely to take place in poorer countries. In Chapter 7 we consider an array of low-income “reverters” drawn from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the postsocialist world. However, even controlling for level of development, we find that the political factors we highlight—particularly praetorianism and weak institutionalization—continue to have explanatory weight. The cases reviewed in Chapter 7 provide strong evidence of these political factors in explaining the incentives of political elites to limit the scope of democratic rule.

The cases also show a more significant role for short-run economic factors than is visible in the regression analysis.

A closer consideration of cases also reveals a substantial number of anomalies with respect to modernization theory. We focus on two. First, even among low-income democracies that we expect to be particularly fragile, we find an ample number of cases that beat the odds. In Chapter 8, we explore these cases in more detail, showing how taming the military, incremental institutional innovations, and robust economic performance explain how these “survivors” built democracy in low-income settings. A second set of anomalies is composed of middle-income countries that would appear to have structural advantages with respect to democratization, but nonetheless revert. Typical of these cases is a process we call backsliding: the arrogation of powers on the part of incumbents and the abuse of that power to marginalize oppositions. There are multiple causes of such backsliding, with oil producers providing prominent examples. However we show how the weak democracy syndrome is implicated in these cases as well. Praetorianism, deinstitutionalization, and economic crises set the stage for the entry of outsiders into political office. Exploiting majoritarianism and the absence of robust party and civil society oppositions, elites are able to arrogate powers, weaken horizontal checks, subvert elections, and undermine the protection of civil and political liberties.

#### A NOTE ON METHOD, HEDGEHOGS, AND FOXES

In addition to our theoretical and empirical interests, this book also has a methodological purpose. Since the publication of King, Keohane, and Verba’s important methodological manifesto *Designing Social Inquiry*, there has been a growing debate over the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods in contributing to the goal of causal inference.<sup>57</sup> The authors made a strong case that if qualitative methods were to succeed, they essentially needed to mirror the rulebook of quantitative analysis.

Yet there has been a sustained countercurrent of disaffection with this reductionist claim, culminating with Gary Goertz and James Mahoney’s important *A Tale of Two Cultures*.<sup>58</sup> Goertz and Mahoney come to the conclusion that the underlying approaches of quantitative and qualitative methods are fundamentally different. The former is grounded in a

<sup>57</sup>King, Keohane, and Verba 1994.

<sup>58</sup>Goertz and Mahoney 2012.

conception of cause as the revelation of average treatment effects, and the latter ultimately rooted in set theory, the analysis of necessary and sufficient conditions, and a mechanisms approach to causation.<sup>59</sup>

How these two approaches to the object of study (populations vs. cases) and even of underlying conceptions of cause can be bridged is by no means obvious.<sup>60</sup> As with other nested analysis,<sup>61</sup> we frame our analysis with cross-national panel designs. Technically, we treat most of our regression analysis as largely correlational, although we deploy a variety of widely used specifications in the literature on democratization and reversions from democratic rule including both multilevel models and the country fixed effects approach favored by economists.

But we are particularly intent on showing how causal inference can be improved by complementing statistical analysis with causal process observation. The concept of causal process observation that we employ grew out of an earlier stream of methodological work on process tracing initiated by Alexander George and subsequently joined by work on the empirical testing of formal models, including through “analytic narratives.”<sup>62</sup> Although Collier, Brady, and Seawright distinguish between causal process observation and process tracing, we see them as essentially the same. We prefer the term “causal process observation” because it underscores the link to theory testing. The causal process that we seek to observe does not reflect naïve epistemological realism and is not a search for “causes in the world,” so to speak. Rather, it reflects the effort to test whether there is empirical evidence for the causal processes stipulated in the chosen theory under test. It is through such observation that causal process tracing can complement statistical analysis, generate new data, and advance the objective of causal inference.

A central problem in all qualitative analysis, however, centers on case selection.<sup>63</sup> Beach and Pedersen go so far as to identify the approach with the consideration of individual cases.<sup>64</sup> Yet selection of individual cases always runs the risk of not only selection bias but also charges of cherry-picking conforming examples. This problem is not necessarily alleviated by simply expanding the number of cases through medium-*N* designs; the selection of those cases may be motivated as well.

<sup>59</sup>Falleti and Lynch 2010; Gerring 2007b, 2010; Hedstrom and Ylikoski 2010.

<sup>60</sup>Mahoney 2008; Crasnow and Haggard 2015.

<sup>61</sup>Lieberman 2005, 2015.

<sup>62</sup>On causal process observation, see Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2010; Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennett and Checkel 2015. On process tracing, see George and Bennett 2005; George and McKeown 1985. On “analytic narratives,” see Bates et al. 1998; Kuehn 2012.

<sup>63</sup>Gerring 2007a, 2012; Seawright and Gerring 2008; Goertz and Mahoney 2012.

<sup>64</sup>Beach and Pedersen 2013.



We therefore propose a somewhat novel approach to causal process observation of relatively rare events such as democratic transitions and reversions: to select *all* of the cases in the corresponding cross-national panel models for closer qualitative scrutiny. In addition to regime change, the subject of this book, such an approach is also relevant to many other types of rare events of interest to political scientists: wars, civil wars, state failure, genocides, financial crises, and pandemics.<sup>65</sup> Its advantages begin with the nature of the theories that are likely to be on offer. A scan of the list above immediately reveals that any explanation of a rare event is likely to be complex. Even relatively stylized models are likely to invoke both structural and institutional factors as well as strategic interactions among contending players, typically modeled formally or informally in game-theoretic terms.

This complexity has important implications for the testing of theory. These models may appear spare, but in fact rest on highly complex causal chains. In our case, these include inequality, distributive conflict, and strategic interactions between incumbents and oppositions over the nature of political institutions. Moreover, these processes unfold in variable temporal time frames and in different sequences that do not necessarily lend themselves to efficient econometric tests. In a quantitative model, the effects of either structural variables, such as inequality, or behavioral ones, such as protest, are estimated across a heterogeneous set of cases, some of which transition as a result of the stipulated causal mechanism and some of which do not. The focus on average treatment effects masks the heterogeneity of actual transition paths; the variable in question may be significant or not significant across a population, but this does not necessarily provide useful information on the outcomes in particular cases. By contrast, causal process observations do not ask whether the variable in question is significant across a population, but whether the cases conform with the causal process stipulated in the theoretical model, a causes of effects versus an effects of causes approach.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to their advantages in more closely testing the actual mechanisms specified in causal models, causal process observations also address a second important problem in standard quantitative panel designs: the mismatch between the temporal framework of a stipulated causal process and the constraints of country-year coding of cases. In cross-national panels, each country-year is coded as a transition or nontransition year; these codings constitute the dependent variable. The causal covariates are similarly either contemporaneous or antecedent with some lag structure. Yet the causal sequence of actor choices associated with transitions and

<sup>65</sup>The following draws on Crasnow and Haggard 2015.

<sup>66</sup>Mahoney 2008; Goertz and Mahoney 2012.

reversions is blurred when data are aggregated up to the country-year level. In fact, the panel year design may hide mismatches between antecedent conditions and subsequent events; they could, for example, be altogether reversed and nonetheless receive the same coding. Processes may also be more compressed or extended, not constant across cases, and thus similarly not well captured by the artifact of the country-year coding constraint. As we see later, many cases that are coded as transitions prove to be dubious when a more extended but variable temporal context is taken into account, a point emphasized more generally in the work of Pierson.<sup>67</sup>

In principle, multistage models can be constructed that work from structural causes through intervening behaviors to institutional effects.<sup>68</sup> Some critics of the mechanisms approach have argued that mechanisms may be nothing more than such chains of intervening variables.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the temporal problems we note might be handled by higher-frequency data that would reduce sequencing problems. Although possible in principle, the continued reliance on reduced-form specification suggests that these strategies are both practically difficult to implement, in part because of the labor intensity of recoding existing datasets to conform more precisely with the theory being tested, and potentially not solvable in principle.

The approach proposed here raises its own challenges, including the well-known trade-off between breadth and depth that comes from a consideration of a large number of cases. However this is offset by the advantages gained by a sharp focus on the presence or absence of the complex—and often configurative—set of causes outlined in the underlying theoretical model under consideration. We illustrate the approach in more detail in Chapter 1, but it begins with a clear coding rule with respect to the causal mechanisms in the theory and a focused discussion of the extent to which each case conforms with the theory; these discussions constitute the qualitative dataset that undergirds the analysis throughout the book.<sup>70</sup>

In principle it is possible that all cases might conform with the theory, and a consideration of the distribution of all cases has occasionally been used in this way.<sup>71</sup> But it is more likely that we would find cases that do and do not conform with the model, or put differently, alternative causal pathways. In this case, we can probe these two different populations in more detail through both quantitative and second-round causal process observation that considers alternative hypothesis. We engage the modernization and distributive conflict theories in this fashion throughout the

<sup>67</sup>Pierson 2004.

<sup>68</sup>King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 85–87.

<sup>69</sup>Beck 2006, 2010; Gerring 2007b, 2010; Hafner-Burton and Ron 2009.

<sup>70</sup>Haggard, Kaufman, and Teo 2016.

<sup>71</sup>Fortin 2010.

book, probing their implications through both quantitative analysis and causal process observation and proposing alternatives.

Despite our methodological ambitions, we should note that this book is indebted to Huntington and early theorists of the Third Wave for more than simply the metaphor. Our identification of multiple routes to and from democracy also reflects his skepticism that “the search for a common, universally present independent variable that might play a significant role in explaining (democracy) in such different countries is almost certain to be unsuccessful. . . . The causes of democratization differ substantially from one place to another and from one time to another.”<sup>72</sup> It follows, he argues, that democratization is likely to result from highly endogenous combinations of causes, an approach we take in outlining the “weak democracy” syndrome.

To draw on Isaiah Berlin’s well-known parable, the urge to be a “hedgehog” who knows “one big thing” is strong in social science. Theories of regime change rooted in inequality and class conflict are reflective of that urge. But given the complexity of the changes being analyzed, it is more appropriate to cast a wide empirical net but to move like a “fox” who knows many things. Being a fox does not imply a retreat into ideographic accounts where “everything matters.”<sup>73</sup> Rather, we aim at a disciplined causal account that avoids, as Fukuyama puts it, both “the pitfalls of excessive abstraction (the vice of economists) and excessive particularism (the problem of many historians and anthropologists).”<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Huntington 1991: 38.

<sup>73</sup>Berlin 1953.

<sup>74</sup>Fukuyama 2011: 25.