Landman, Todd. "Hopes and challenges." *Human Rights and Democracy: The Precarious Triumph of Ideals*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 145–158. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544643.ch-010>>.

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CHAPTER TEN

Hopes and challenges

A tale of three women

I began this book with a series of passages about travelling to ‘new’ democracies, and it thus seems fitting to conclude the book with another anecdote from travel to another new democracy in the world: Mozambique. The story of Mozambique is a familiar one in many regards. It was colonized by the Portuguese and was part of the struggle for independence and process of decolonization in Africa that took place from the 1960s onwards. It gained its independence in 1975 and was embroiled in civil war until 1992, when a United Nations negotiated settlement was achieved between the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) and the main rebel group Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo). Frelimo has held power since 1992 through a variety of presidents, but most commentators agree that the country has made a good start in its transition to democracy while at the same time continuing to address its remaining challenges (see EISA 2005; AfriMap 2009). I had the good fortune of spending time in Maputo, the Capital city, in late summer 2012 to engage with civil society organizations working on educational reform and seeking to engage with parliament more effectively as part of a larger DFID-funded project on parliamentary strengthening in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The reason I mention Mozambique, apart from highlighting yet another case in which the appeal of democracy has triumphed, is that I was particularly struck by one thing that one of my Mozambican colleagues said on the last day in the capital:

People in Mozambique like to get together, have a few beers, a chat and be able to discuss anything they want. It is nice to know that we can move about freely and meet with people and talk without fear of being stopped by the police or watched by the government.

Such an observation seems remarkably simple and even obvious, but for so many people in the world for so long, the simple pleasure of sitting with friends unhindered by the possibility of repression or suspicion from the state and being able to have free and lively discussions on any topic has simply not been possible. Ordinary citizens in the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe were not able to do this. Those in 1970s in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay were not able to do it. Those in South Africa were not able to do it. Those in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia were not able to do it. Or those in Burma/Myanmar were not able to do it. The simple idea of not being able to walk about unhindered by a fear of the state or a non-state entity infringing one's rights is connected to the kinds of dramatic scenes that the world witnessed in late 2010 and 2011 with the advent of the Arab Spring. This simple notion of the **repressed individual** brings to mind a passage from Georg Groddeck's (1961) *Book of the It*:

What is repressed does not vanish, it only loses its place. It is pushed into some corner or other where it has no right to be, where it is squeezed and hurt. Then it always stands on tiptoe, pressing from time to time with all its strength towards where it belongs, and as soon as it sees a gap in the wall in front of it, it tries to squeeze itself through. Perhaps it may succeed in so doing, but when it has got to the front it has used up all its strength, and the next good push from some masterful force hurls it back again. It is a most disagreeable situation, and when anything is so repressed, crushed and battered, at length wins freedom you can imagine what leaps and bounds it will be taking (Groddeck 1961: 47).

The events of 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa certainly showed what 'leaps and bounds' can really look like as popular mobilizations toppled the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya while dissident and opposition forces continue to struggle against authoritarianism in Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The repressed individual in these cases was not alone and the political opportunities that made possible collective action of the repressed showed that real change is possible. The period since the end of the Cold War and most recently has seen three remarkable individuals, who themselves were repressed under authoritarian rule, rise to political prominence in their own countries. It is also telling that all three of them are women: Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Dilma Rousseff in Brazil and Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. Michelle Bachelet was elected the first female president of Chile from 2006 to 2010. In 1974, she was taken by the Chilean internal security police (known as the DINA) to the now infamous Villa Grimaldi detention facility in Santiago, where she was tortured as part of Augusto Pinochet's campaign against the political left (her father was a General who served under former president Salvador Allende). She spent many years in East Germany before returning to Chile and serving under President Ricardo Lagos before being elected president (see Politzer 2011). Dilma Rousseff was a victim of the Brazilian

military regime which held power between 1964 and 1985 and became the first female President of Brazil in 2010. In the early 1970s, she was part of the radical left in Brazil and was in the Tiradentes Prison in São Paulo between 1970 and 1972, where she was tortured by the regime. Found guilty by the regime for subversion, Rousseff resurrected her political career and had many different political positions before being elected President in 2010 (see Roett 2011). Like Bachelet and Rousseff, Aung San Suu Kyi was also an 'enemy of the regime' and had spent many years under house arrest since the 1990s as the leader of the National League for Democracy and was only released in November 2010 and then won a seat in the national parliament in 2012.

Each of these women embodies the notion of the repressed individual. Bachelet and Aung San Suu Kyi had not committed crimes that led to their detention and ill treatment, but at the time of her arrest and detention, Rousseff was part of the armed revolutionary left and was carrying a weapon, neither of which justify the prolonged torture that she endured, but do make her a slightly different case than either of the other two women. All three have suffered state repression for long periods of time, and all three have since risen to occupy positions of political leadership and power. Bachelet and Rousseff despite (or in spite of) their pasts, have become the first female presidents of their countries; a remarkable achievement given the continued prevalence of gender bias in politics across the world, while Aung San Suu Kyi has symbolized freedom through her quiet determination to challenge the Burmese military. At a deeper and more resonant level with the themes that run through this present volume, these three women symbolize what is possible and how even the most repressed individuals can under the proper circumstances achieve remarkable and unforeseen success in politics. They have triumphed over adversity and have entered the political spotlight. Moreover, they represent new symbols for the politically repressed of today and join the ranks of inspirational political leaders such as Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

How does the liberation and ascendancy of these three women connect to the larger themes of this book? We have seen large-scale and sweeping changes across the world and across many different dimensions of democracy and human rights. In order to bring our discussions to a close, I would like to assess the contribution that has been made by each chapter with respect to the hopes and challenges that now present themselves to the world. The 'thematic couplets' that frame each chapter have been helpful signposts for understanding my own notion 'precarious triumph'. At this point in the twenty-first century, it would have been impossible to imagine 30 years ago that people like Bachelet, Rousseff and Aung San Suu Kyi would (a) be able to survive their incarceration and ill-treatment, (b) rise to prominence within a typically male-dominated opposition and (c) achieve positions of power in transitional countries, two of which now have consolidated democracy. But it is crucial to the premise of this whole book that we

understand the basic point that their liberation and ascendancy were not inevitable. Rather, they took part in complex and highly contingent political processes that have unfolded in dynamic contexts where larger structural, institutional and socio-economic changes have taken place. They remained steadfast in their determination, but that determination necessarily interacts and is constrained by these dynamic contextual conditions. Such changing contextual conditions have been outlined and examined throughout this book and are now discussed in turn.

Abundance and freedom

There is and there will continue to be a natural affinity between democracy and economic well-being. We saw throughout the book that wealthier societies, on average, are also more likely to be more democratic and to be able to protect human rights better. We also saw that countries that make a transition to democracy under conditions of relative wealth are highly unlikely to reverse their democratic achievements. This is a comforting and often reinforced narrative about the world that creates a certain set of expectations among people who live in countries without democracy, wealth and/or good records of human rights protection. The coupling of economic abundance and individual freedom has repeatedly raised expectations in the post-war boom period of economic development, the period of decolonization, the third wave of democratization, end of the Cold War and during the prolonged Arab Spring since 2011. On the one hand, expectations have been raised that periods of successful economic development will naturally lead to democracy and better human rights protection. On the other hand, expectations have been raised that periods of democratic transition will naturally lead to better economic development and human well-being. The problem with the general finding of a strong relationship between economic abundance and individual freedom is that there will always be exceptions. A telling contrast can be seen between the 2012 US Elections and the 18th Chinese Communist Party Congress. One country is extremely wealthy with a faltering economy and relatively high levels of individual freedom, and one country is becoming wealthier with a rapidly growing economy and relatively low levels of individual freedom. Expectations in both countries are high for their new leadership as both populations desire economic abundance and its many associated benefits. But President Obama himself admitted after the election that democracy is 'messy', while many commentators on Chinese political affairs argue that the regime will struggle to control the desire for freedom as it continues to enrich larger proportions of its society.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the economic critique was coupled with a political critique, which led to regime change and call across many groups and many countries for democracy. But what if the newly constituted

regimes of the region are not able to address the question of economic development and the demands of their disproportionately youthful populations? And what happens to the promise of democracy and human rights if agents in the new regime are equally responsible for violating human rights as we have seen in the case of Libya? The vision, fortitude and achievement exemplified by Bachelet, Rouseff and Aung San Suu Kyi runs the risk of being stifled by the adverse and unpredictable events in this region and others undergoing complex processes of transition. President Obama is the first US President to visit Burma, which bodes well for the opposition movement and the National League for Democracy, but will the reforms implemented by the regime go far enough and fast enough to meet and fulfil popular expectations about democracy and human rights? Will a post-Assad regime in Syria be able to represent the different factions in Syrian society and how will the abuses of the regime, the war and the opposition be dealt with in ways that create hope for the next generations?

Beyond these cases and countries, there remain the multiple challenges associated with 'the bottom billion' for whom the type of regime under which they live arguably makes very little difference to their daily lives. Marginalization, social exclusion and global inequality have pushed just over one-seventh of the world's population into a level of poverty that limits their ability to take part meaningfully in their societies. Regimes come and go, but their daily struggle for subsistence remains. If commentators like Thomas Pogge and Paul Collier are correct, then the distribution of wealth has gotten worse not better over the last 30 years and that for this group of people, poverty has deepened. We saw that inequality interacts with power and under certain conditions is intimately related to the violation of civil and political rights as the 'haves' have incentives to use coercive means to exclude access to wealth for the 'have nots' (see Landman and Larizza 2009). For many, poverty and inequality on the scale evident within the bottom billion represent 'structural violations' of human rights in which access to the basic services of the state is extremely limited if not simply unavailable and satisfaction of people's basic needs is not being met. The problem with structural violations is that there are no 'perpetrators' just victims. Land tenure patterns, policies that exclude and lead to inequality and the power relations inherent in the global economic system make it difficult to find culpability and more importantly long-lasting solutions. The persistence of the bottom billion and its potential for expansion coupled with human rights violations present significant challenges for the growth of democracy in the world.

Democracy and human rights

Many commentators think that democracy and human rights are different sides of the same coin and that advance in one necessarily brings advance

in the other. Conceptually, the two share a commitment to well-being and a set of principles around accountability, representation, transparency, participation and inclusion. Empirically, analyses have indeed shown a positive and significant relationship between the two across large samples of countries and time. At both the conceptual and the empirical level, however, there are certain challenges to the naive view that ‘all good things go together’. Conceptually, democracy and human rights share certain features, while other features remain quite distinct. Where democracy offers political accommodation, spaces for deliberation and negotiation and the possibility for peaceful resolution of conflicts, human rights are grounded in a strong moral discourse and fortified through the rule of law, which has a particular judgemental and ‘adjudicative’ way of resolving disputes and finding particular actors and parties in **breach** of their legal obligations. This judgemental, adversarial and confrontational orientation of human rights, while motivated by a shared set of principles, can sometimes be at odds with democracy and its ability to find common ground between and among contending groups.

While there are many studies in political science and international relations that demonstrate the positive and significant relationship between democracy and human rights (Landman 2005a), it is vitally important to understand that such a relationship is very far from perfect. It was popular at the end of the last century to identify the problem of ‘illiberal democracy’ as a trend among transitional countries that had managed to establish basic democratic institutions, hold several free and fair elections and guarantee at least the chance that the opposition could win power while at the same time fail to provide protection for a wide range of different human rights (Diamond 1999; Zakaria 2003; Landman 2005a). This ‘human rights gap’ is a significant challenge not only for the new and restored democracies in the world but also for the old and established democracies. The nature of precariousness developed in this book is one that affects all societies, and defenders of human rights need to remain vigilant in all political contexts. Explanations for the gap include weak state institutions and the failure of a human rights culture to grip national consciousness in ways that inculcate human rights values throughout societies.

The post-9/11 ‘war on terror’ demonstrated how quickly long-fought and long-held commitments to human rights can be undermined through appeal to external threat and the priorities of national security. Democratic publics are quick to rush in legislation that centralizes executive authority and provides legal means to subvert rights protections at national and international levels. The international community roundly condemned the Bush Administration’s rewriting (or reinterpreting) of international law in ways that justified the use of extraordinary rendition, the detention of ‘enemy combatants’ and the use of ‘intensive interrogation techniques’ such as waterboarding (Blakeley 2011). The election of Barack Obama in 2008 led many to expect a reversal of such policies, which by and large

has happened, but in their place, President Obama has increased the use of targeted assassination carried out primarily through drones and remote warfare, which many believe runs afoul of international law. In late 2011, President Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which codifies into law indefinite military detention without charge or trial. The provisions in the act authorize the president to order the military to pick up and imprison people who are captured anywhere in the world indefinitely. The use of such practices sends strong and contradictory signals to both allies and enemies of the United States in ways that continue to undermine human rights and limit the 'soft power' (Nye 2005) of the world's democracies.

Waves and setbacks

Analysts engage in 'pattern recognition', and one of the hallmarks of the last four decades has been the growth in democracy around the world. Where this growth can be characterized and catalogues in the different 'waves' or not does hide the fact that since 1974, both the number and percentage of countries that are democratic have grown significantly. Any observation of this nature, however, rests on a particular definition of democracy and such counting of democracy typically adopts a thin and 'procedural definition' that focuses on elections and the existence of basic democratic institutions. We can thus celebrate and be somewhat triumphant about the democratic achievements that have been made since 1974, as well as the democratic inspiration that they have spread to countries that have not yet experienced democratic transition. Indeed, now with the advent of new technologies, democratic diffusion not only takes place among contiguous countries, but the images and narratives associated with the struggle for democracy today can transcend barriers to information that in the past have been more fortified. Pro-democracy movements can observe, learn and absorb lessons from other political contexts and adapt them to their own circumstances in ways that challenge incumbent regimes and make possible democratic advance. The availability and use of social media are thus new factors to take into account in explaining the spread of democratic ideals and the potential for protest mobilization against non-democratic regimes.

Against the positive trends in democratization captured in the quantitative analysis and the hopes that such trends create, there is a wide range of remaining challenges to democratization to which we all must remain aware. The advance of democracy evident in the quantitative figures (see Figure 1.1) is of course for its most minimal features. Experience from a large number of democracy assessments that have taken place since 2000 suggests that there are 'easy' and 'difficult' features in any democratization process (IDEA 2008: 288). The easy achievements are those which occur

relatively soon after a democratic transition and key examples are as follows:

- Obtain a broadly agreed constitution with a bill of rights
- Establish some sort of office of ombudsmen and/or public defender
- Hold free elections and establish universal suffrage
- Support the revival of local government
- Ensure the protection of basic freedoms such as party association, press, speech and assembly

The more difficult challenges in democratization processes are as follows:

- The effective inclusion of minorities and women's participation
- Equal access to justice and protection of the right to life
- Meaningful intra-party democracy
- Control of executives
- A reduction in private influence and private interests in the public sphere
- A significant role for opposition parties

The experience of many new and restored democracies around the world has been one of either 'delegative democracy' (O'Donnell 1994) where executives disregard the constitutional limits on the exercise of their authority, or 'rollback' (Diamond 2011) of democracy where executives centralize their authority and undermine democratic values and institutions as well as human rights commitments, as in the case of Russia under Putin and the Central Asian republics of the Former Soviet Union since the mid-1990s. In addition to these challenges, there are long-term questions around elimination of so-called 'authoritarian legacies', access to justice, combating corruption, party finance, freedom of information laws and parliamentary oversight of executives, the security apparatus (military and police) and, in many countries, the extractive industries and foreign direct investment more generally (IDEA 2008: 300–2).

Evidence and explanations

There is still a predominant view that economic modernization is the prime driver for processes of democratization. The theory of 'endogenous democratization' sees socio-economic development as unleashing a wide range of social and political changes that are conducive to democracy and the main

propositions of this theory are supported by large-scale statistical analysis. But as argued above, any generalization from such analyses will always carry with it a number of significant outliers and exceptions that make us pause about putting too much emphasis on so-called economic determinism. There are many cases of countries embracing democracy that are not particularly well-developed economically. I began this book with a stylized portrayal of the case of Mongolia, which at the time of its transition had remarkably low levels of national income, and the world has witnessed other such cases where democracy has emerged under conditions of economic scarcity. Indeed, the theory of 'exogenous democratization' posits that the process of economic modernization has very little direct relationship with democracy other than helping it sustain itself once it has been established. Countries that embrace democracy and that are poor are posited to have a lower probability of survival than rich countries that embrace democracy (Przeworski et al. 2000). Thus the case of Mongolia is **improbable** but not **impossible**.

Cases such as Mongolia, among others, have forced us to look for alternative perspectives that account for democratization, and among these, there has been a focus on domestic elites, national opposition groups and social movements and significant international factors, such as coercion, contagion, diffusion and democracy promotion. A moment of transition presents elites in the incumbent regime opportunities to gamble on the future on whether they tolerate and make agreements with opposition forces that pave the way to democracy (e.g. Burma) or maintain authoritarianism and risk international condemnation (e.g. China). Opposition leaders gamble on allying with their more radical counterparts in challenging the incumbent regime and risking violence and civil war, or they can seek engagement with reformist elements in regime and reach some form of accommodation or elite 'pact' (see Przeworski 1991; Higley and Gunther 1994). In this elite-centred account, there are multiple outcomes for democracy (with and without guarantees), continued authoritarianism or conflict, where individual calculations about risk and probability of success are weighed against the desire for maintaining or increasing political power. The outcomes themselves are highly contingent on the strategic interaction between elites in the regime and within the opposition. It is never entirely clear in which direction elites will go and what kinds of choices they will make. This contingency of outcomes and the precariousness of the interactions themselves are important lessons to bear in mind when examining processes of democratization. There is a tendency to assume that particular outcomes were inevitable, while in reality, the outcome that is obtained (i.e. democracy) is one of many.

Agents and advocates

The narrative about elites and 'deal making', which may or may not lead to democracy often ignores the role for popular agency. In this book, I

advanced a 'transformational' perspective on the making of democracy that gives fuller weight to social movements, popular mobilization and civil society organizations in the process of democratization. These groups and forms of collective action articulate a wide range of demands and come together in waves of protest that minimize the difference between groups within the opposition and maximize the difference between the opposition and the regime. Popular movements were a key feature in the transitions to democracy in Latin America (see Foweraker 1995; Foweraker and Landman 1997; Foweraker et al. 2003) and Eastern Europe (see Linz and Stepan 1996), while the Arab Spring featured remarkable waves of protest that resulted in regime change in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt. But like the elite accounts of democratization, it is not inevitable that such challenges to incumbent regimes will be successful in (a) toppling leaders and (b) fomenting democratization. Indeed, the case of China and Tiananmen Square is a case of failure to topple leaders or bring about democracy, and the case of the Arab Spring countries has shown that regime change is possible in some countries, but it not clear that democracy will be established. Thus, popular mobilization carries with it a great risk of failure that is contingent on other significant factors.

One key factor that can contribute to the success of popular mobilization for democracy is the degree to which it enjoys support from the international community. Domestic groups often face stiff opposition and harsh repressive crackdowns from the incumbent regime, but if they are successful in forming alliances with 'transnational advocacy networks' (see Risse et al. 1999) and/or powerful pro-democracy states in the international system, then the costs for the regime of resisting the opposition increase considerably. The number of international non-governmental organizations working on human rights issues, campaigning for the release of political prisoners, documenting human rights abuses and advocating for human rights progress has increased dramatically during the third and fourth waves of democratization. The existence of this dense network of agents and advocates provides additional possibilities for challenging unsavoury regimes around the world. In addition, the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States and the European Endowment for Democracy in Brussels are governmental and non-governmental institutions that provide assistance, advice and networks for pro-democracy movements seeking to bring about regime change, while the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an inter-governmental organisation that has expanded its regional presence and offers knowledge and advice on democracy building. The international environment for democracy support is this becoming more robust as governments and popular organizations engage more seriously with the pro-democracy agenda. The key challenge for any of these agencies and organizations is to respect the diversity of democratic forms emerging around the world and to encourage without prescribing pathways to greater democratization.

Truth and justice

It is telling that Dilma Rousseff is one the key actors who brought about the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission in Brazil. As a former prisoner of the regime and president of the country, she sits with a particular moral authority in bringing about this development. The military regime in Brazil left power after 21 years in 1985. In that year, the military selected the next civilian president and it was not until 1989 that Fernando Collor de Mello became the first democratically elected President of Brazil since 1961. Since 1989, Brazil has consolidated democracy, enjoyed the peaceful transfer of power between competing political parties survived the 'perils' of presidentialism in a multi-party democracy (see Linz and Valenzuela 1994), but throughout the post-authoritarian regime, Brazil has used amnesties for perpetrators of past atrocities until the establishment of the truth and reconciliation commission. Alongside Brazil, other countries such as Ireland and Spain are still considering whether they should adopt some kind of truth and justice mechanism to deal with the 'past wrongs' that have been committed. A formal reckoning with the past, public acknowledgement of wrongdoing and some form of redress (e.g. imprisonment of perpetrators, reparations to victims, etc.) can bring new hope and a positive outlook for the future as countries move beyond their own past histories.

The fundamental challenge for any truth and justice process if it is adopted, however, involves the degree to which a punitive and retributive approach is used as opposed to one that is more forgiving and restorative. Justice and punishment, while laudable from a legal and moral justice view, can carry with them certain risks of stirring past resentment, failing to achieve real justice and having selective application by focusing on the primary actors involved in committing atrocities. Retribution has the potential for undermining the hard work required in any democratization process. Restorative processes have the advantage of seeking understanding and healing deep wounds within a society, but run the risk of being too 'soft' on perpetrators and may well be perceived as an inappropriate means to address the problem of past wrongs. No doubt, these kinds of debates will take place in a post-authoritarian Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, among others.

Threats and pitfalls

The precariousness of democracy and human rights stems from a wide range of internal and external threats that are both direct and indirect. Democracies must defend themselves from overt challenges that involve violence, subversion and terrorist methods. Police, security forces and military all exist within democracies and have the responsibility to protect innocent civilians from such overt challenges. These forces in

democracies are subjected to civilian control and the rule of law, which is a larger reflection of the constitutional order. That constitutional order across many democracies is further complemented by international legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Democracies struggle with a perceived trade-off between security and liberty in ways that have compromised rights commitments and obligations. There are rights-based approaches to combating terrorism (see OHCHR 2012) and other threats where it is precisely the ability for democracies to uphold the rule of law and treat terrorism in a criminal justice rather than 'war' framing that can preserve the values upon which democracy is based (Landman 2007). On this precise point, former FBI agent Michael German (2005: 14) argues,

By treating terrorists like criminals, we stigmatize them in their community, while simultaneously validating our own authority. Open and public trials allow the community to see the terrorist for the criminal he [or she] is, and successful prosecutions give them faith the government is protecting them. Judicial review ensures that the methods used are in accordance with the law, and juries enforce community standards of fairness. The adversarial process exposes improper or ineffective law enforcement techniques so they can be corrected. Checks and balances on government power and public accountability promote efficiency by ensuring that only the guilty are punished.

The response to terrorism since 9/11 within the world's democracies carries with it a double threat: (1) the permanent threat of attacks from terrorist groups that are 'home-grown' or foreign-sponsored and (2) the threat from a policy and legislative response that is based on the assumption that human rights commitments must be compromised in some way in order to combat terrorism itself.

Beyond the overt and direct threats to democracy stemming from violent groups and terrorist organizations, there are indirect and less obvious threats to democracy and human rights. Persistent, and in many countries, rising patterns of inequality threaten the social fabric of democracy. Unregulated market capitalism cannot provide the kind of social protections required to alleviate the worst outcomes of market failure. The development of the welfare state in post-war democracies went a long way to establishing what Jack Donnelly (1999) has called 'rights-protective' regimes. The neo-liberal revolution stemming from the 1980s, which is based on the assumption that the market mechanism is the best way to allocate good and services in an economy, has undermined the social safety net. The wave of austerity measures that have been implemented in response to the financial crisis in the United States and the Eurozone have laid bare many of the contradictions associated with free market economics, tax regimes that provide loopholes for the more well-off in society (including such multinational companies as

Amazon Apple and Starbucks) and government spending commitments that are simply unsustainable.

Benefits and outcomes

Our final thematic couplet in this book is based on the premise that the natural appeal of democracy and the full protection of human rights are their promise of the good life, a life without threat, without basic need and without fear. There are benefits inherent to democracy that are difficult to measure and quantify, but that are nonetheless very real for those individuals who live under democratic rule. The freedom and agency that come with democracy for ordinary citizens bring a number of intangible benefits that are embodied in such values as participation, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and representation. Citizens in democracies can be left alone or can choose to become actively involved at the local and national levels of politics. They do not fear the arbitrary abuse of state power and know that when they have an encounter with the state, laws are in place to protect them from unnecessary intrusion by the state and due process throughout that engagement. Their participation takes place formally and institutionally through the electoral processes, or informally and less institutionally through civil society organizations and social movement activities. Moreover, they enjoy the freedoms to speak out, criticize and make demands on government without fear of repressive reprisals.

The basic framework of participation and accountability provided by democracy and a well-developed rights regime is seen as ultimately beneficial for outcomes not necessarily related to democracy. Alongside its more intangible benefits, we have seen that democracies are better at overseeing equitable forms of human development that take into account key macro-economic indicators beyond simply measures of per capital national income. Democracies, on balance, have higher levels of human development (income, literacy and longevity) and higher levels of caloric consumption than non-democracies. Among wealthy countries in the world, democracies have a better record at protecting the environment. In terms of peace and conflict, democracies have particular sets of ‘pacific’ benefits at the international and domestic levels, as they are less likely to engage in inter-state conflict and less likely to use harsh repression when facing domestic conflict (Russett and O’Neal 2001; Davenport 2007).

A precarious triumph

As we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, there is much to celebrate. Fascism and communist totalitarianism have been defeated in Europe, authoritarianism has receded in Southern Europe, South America,

Eastern Europe and parts of Africa and Asia. This decade began with momentous changes in the Middle East and North Africa, the final outcome of which remains unknown but the origins and contours of the challenge to incumbents have been framed in terms of economic justice and political freedom. Any developments such as these at the national and regional levels are naturally embedded in larger power relations at the international level, where the geostrategic interests of the United States, the European Union, Russia and China lead to a wide range of double standards and contradictions with respect to democracy and human rights. The achievements that have been made in the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century must be celebrated and protected at the same time. Forces within states and between states can unravel these otherwise remarkable achievements. In the end, I am most deeply moved by the individuals who have the courage to stand up to oppression in all its forms and to take a stand against injustice. The events and developments that have formed the basis of our discussions in this book have featured a cast of characters that is by now well known. But much of the drama of the past decades has really been made possible by the ordinary people who simply want to have more say in the way that they live their lives. Let us hope that the answers to this simple quest continue to flourish.