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CHAPTER FOUR

Waves and setbacks

Introduction

In 1991, Samuel Huntington published a book entitled *The Third Wave*, which described the development of democracy since the nineteenth century as a series of 'waves' that were characterized by the 'ebb' and 'flow' of democracy over time. A wave is defined as a group of transitions from non-democratic regimes to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during the same period. History has indeed shown that democracy has come and gone in many countries, but with the advent of Huntington's 'third wave' in 1974, it appears that democracy has become more 'sticky', with fewer democratic setbacks and new opportunities for democratic transformation. The developments in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 show that at least the appeal of democracy and the promise of greater rights protection have been a powerful force for change in the region. The prognosis for the successful installation of democratic regimes across the region, however, remains highly uncertain, as even in the early stages of transformation, great variation across the different countries is evident even though the impulse for change within them has been largely similar.

For Huntington, the first wave began with the advent of 'Jacksonian Democracy' in the United States when suffrage was extended to the majority of white males (clearly an issue that was subsequently challenged by the suffragette movement and the civil rights movement) and continued until 1922 when Mussolini took power in Italy. During this period, the total number of democracies peaked at 29 and then dropped to 12 by the end. The second wave began just after World War II and extended until 1962, with 36 democracies that then dropped to just 30 by 1972. The third wave began with the Portuguese transition to democracy in 1974, which was

then quickly followed by Spain and Greece and many countries in Latin America beginning with the 1978 transition in Peru and ending with the Chilean transition in 1989 (see Foweraker et al. 2003). In Asia, South Korea and Thailand joined these other countries in the third wave. Some have argued that the period that followed the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union and Communist countries of Eastern Europe constitutes a ‘fourth wave’ of democracy (Doorenspleet 2005), which according to Larry Diamond (2011) has seen signs of reversal across 18 countries ranging from Pakistan in 1999 through to Mozambique in 2009. Yet, at the time that Diamond’s list appeared in print, the popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa and the top-down reforms taking place in Burma have provided renewed signs of democracy’s resilience after this period of alleged decline.

This chapter puts these overall trends into perspective with respect to the arguments being advanced in this book. First, the chapter examines the spread of democracy through the various waves to illustrate the ebb and flow over time in the number and percentage of democracies. It also considers two international efforts to support democracy – the Community of Democracies and the six United Nations International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD1–ICNRD6). Second, the chapter examines the growing gap between **procedural** democracy and **liberal** democracy, where it appears that many new democracies (and a few old democracies) have had difficulty protecting certain sets of human rights, despite an overall positive relationship between democracy and human rights. Third, the chapter discusses the relationship between the timing of democratization and the protection of human **rights in principle** and **rights in practice** (Foweraker and Landman 1997; Landman 2005b; Landman and Carvalho 2009). As outlined in the previous chapter, human rights have been codified through international law and states ratify the various treaties, which commit the state to the protection of human rights **in principle**. But states are also obliged to respect, protect and fulfil human rights such that citizens and residents within the jurisdiction may exercise their rights **in practice**. We will see that the timing of democracy has an impact on both these understandings of human rights in significant ways that are worth our attention. Fourth, the chapter examines significant cases of democratic reversal (Ecuador, São Tome, Fiji, Cote d’Ivoire), attempted reversal (Guatemala) and democratic erosion (Venezuela, Russia, Central Asia) as an illustration of the precariousness of democracy of the kind with which Diamond has become concerned. The chapter concludes with an assessment of these trends as a means to consider the democratic prospects for the countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

Democracy’s journey

The journey that democracy has taken from the nineteenth century until today has shown great variation across geographical space, over time, and

within democracies as the quality of democracy has changed and continues to change. Figure 4.1 takes the data used in Figure 1.1 and adds markers for Huntington's 'waves' to show the ebb and flow of democracy over time. Both the number of democracies and the number of countries vary over time and thus the **percentage** of democracies is a better indicator for the growth in democracy. Huntington's waves are quite clear from these data where the peaks and troughs roughly map onto his different time periods for the waves. Table 4.1 breaks down these waves into the regions and countries from them that comprise the wave. As is clear from the table, the first wave

FIGURE 4.1 *Waves of democracy.*

Source: Polity IV.

Table 4.1 Waves of democracy: regions and countries

Wave	Europe	Regions
1828–1926	Western Europe	North America: United States and Canada
1934–1962	Western Europe	Latin America: Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia South Asia: India
1974–1989	Southern Europe	Latin America: Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Guatemala
1990 onwards	Eastern Europe	Latin America: Chile, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico Africa: Benin, Mali, Lesotho, Niger, South Africa, Malawi Asia: Taiwan, Mongolia, Cambodia

was largely confined to Western Europe and the United States. The second wave also featured countries in Western Europe, but added countries in Latin America, as well as India. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia crafted elite agreements to end periods of violence and promulgate democratic regimes that were a key feature of second-wave democratization. After partition in 1947, India went on to become the world's most populous democracy and is now an emerging power owing to its high rates of economic growth. The third wave involved countries in Southern Europe and Latin America, with democratic transitions in Portugal, Greece and Spain, followed by Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Guatemala. The fourth wave was more geographically diverse with its origins in Eastern Europe, and then Latin America (Chile, Nicaragua, Panama and Mexico), Africa (Benin, Mali, Lesotho, Niger, Malawi and South Africa) and Asia (Taiwan, Mongolia, Thailand and Cambodia). As we shall see in greater depth in the next chapter, one of the popular explanations for the development of democracy focuses on what is called geographical or 'spatial' diffusion, and certainly the regional trends depicted in this table illustrate that many processes of democratization have taken place among adjacent countries. The diversity of the fourth wave challenges this notion of adjacent diffusion, but the events in the Middle East and North Africa once again lend support to this idea, which has featured in many policy discussions.¹

It is important to observe that throughout the four waves, there has been a distinctive European influence as the first two waves featured Western Europe, the Third Wave featured Southern Europe and the Fourth Wave featured Eastern Europe. It is of course well known that democracy was first conceived in Ancient Greece, but it did not start to flourish until the nineteenth century in the United States and Western Europe. The two world wars interrupted the growth of democracy but also convinced many states that democracy was the best form of government for avoiding violence and inter-state war. The rebuilding of Europe after World War II had an underlying democratic logic, as countries embraced democracy and constructed supranational institutions to 'lock in' future generations of leaders in ways that have sought to avoid democratic breakdown (see Moravcsik 2000). The Council of Europe (COE) was the first set of supranational institutions and was in part fortified by the European Convention on Human Rights (see the Chapter 3), but the evolution of the European Union, originally established to build and protect Europe's energy markets, has in many ways superseded the COE and now has political criteria relating to democracy and human rights for those states wishing to become members. It also has its own monitoring agency in the form of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) based in Vienna.

The story of democracy in Europe is often underappreciated and in many ways has not yet been told. Interestingly, the social history of democracy in the region involves a long and somewhat bloody transformation from feudal states

to nation states to empires and wars to democratization and enlargement. And this political transformation was accompanied by an economic transformation from agrarian production to industrialization to post-industrial welfarism to economic integration. These twin processes of transformation have indeed created a strong union of relatively stable and peaceful democracies. Such a story of democracy in Europe does set an example for what can be achieved in the short space of time, particularly if one focuses on that period of time since the mass atrocities and casualties committed during World War II. But to see Europe as the centre of gravity for democracy would be mistaken, as democratic traditions have developed elsewhere such that any talk of democratic diffusion ought to consider the lessons of democracy flowing **to** as much as **from** Europe. Indeed, in *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, Edward Cleary (2007) makes a very strong case of a long history of rights traditions in Latin America that have had a profound impact on democratic and authoritarian periods of rule. Many third- and fourth-wave democracies in Europe and the European neighbourhood looked to Latin America for suitable institutional arrangements and variously adopted presidential and semi-presidential systems that are distinctly non-European in character. Experiences with 'truth commissions' in Latin America in the 1980s served as early models for transitional justice and 'lustration' that then featured in such processes of transition seen in South Africa, Eastern Europe, East Timor and Sierra Leone (see Chapter 7 in this volume and Hayner 2010).

Any consideration of the international dimensions of democracy must also address the large role that the United States has played in shaping the course of democracy since the end of World War II. The Marshall Plan itself was a large economic and political intervention from the United States into Europe that helped rebuild countries, strengthen nascent democratic institutions and encourage democracy across continental Europe. The Portuguese, Spanish and Greek transitions during the Third Wave fit within larger logics of the Cold War initially and then European enlargement, while post-Cold War democratization has been accompanied by significant economic, military and technical assistance from the United States through such agencies as the National Endowment for Democracy and USAID to support the development of political parties, media, non-governmental organizations and militaries. In security terms, the United States has maintained significant military bases throughout Europe and NATO has been a mainstay feature of Cold War politics and is now engaged in new interventions such as the one in Libya as a result of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973.

Any attempt to map the growth of democracy worldwide, however, necessarily relies on definitions of democracy and ways of turning such definitions into threshold conditions for counting democracies. For example, in order to count the number of democracies in the nineteenth century, one has to adopt a fairly narrow definition of democracy that does not include universal suffrage. Many countries had established competitive elections and

had reasonably well-developed political parties, but the parties were dominated by elites, and votes were limited to property-owning white men, effectively disenfranchising large segments of the population. Indeed, in *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) argue that the United States was not really democratic until the 1964 voting rights act, which gave African Americans the right to vote. Moreover, the struggle led by women's movements around the world has achieved at different periods suffrage for women. As women make up more than 50 per cent of the population in most countries, since women tend to have higher rates of longevity than men, denial of this fundamental right undermines the notion of democracy. Most people find it surprising that Switzerland, a so-called old democracy (i.e. one that achieved democracy before the third wave) did not extend the right to vote to women until as late as 1971.

It is thus clear that any discussion of the growth of democracy must include a consideration of human rights in the ways that were outlined in Chapter 3. From the trends in democratization discussed in this chapter thus far, we have seen a number of countries where basic democratic thresholds have been achieved, but closer examination of rights protections suggests that many democracies still have a gap between the procedural-institutional dimensions of democracy and the fuller rights dimensions. There are some clear trends in the data on different measures of rights and their relationship to democracy. Analysis of the ratification of human rights treaties has shown two major trends. First, older democracies tend to ratify fewer human rights treaties than newer democracies. Second, when ratifying these treaties, older democracies file more 'reservations' to these treaties than newer democracies (see Landman 2005a). Reservations are formal exceptions to the content of a treaty to which a state may have a particular objection, given its own legal culture or legal system. For example, the United States lodged a reservation about the death penalty when it signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, since under the US Constitution, the jurisdiction over the use of the death penalty is left to the individual states in the US Federal system. While reservations do not necessarily invalidate treaties, there are degrees to which such reservations undermine a treaty's true 'object and purpose'. What is interesting here is that well-established democracies ratify fewer treaties with more reservations than newer democracies. One popular explanation argues that older democracies have more established legal systems and constitutional protections in place and that they take their treaty obligations more seriously than newer democracies. Another popular explanation argues that many new democracies ratified all the human rights treaties with little to no reservations because they wanted to attract international economic and technical assistance.

But what about the actual protection of human rights? Figure 3.2 in the previous chapter showed the general positive relationship between the level of democracy and a combined measure of civil and political rights. The overall relationship is not perfect as is evident from the scatter of countries in the figure, and there are many democracies on the right hand

FIGURE 4.2 *Mean democracy scores by region.*

Source: Polity IV 2010.

bottom area of the figure that have high levels of democracy, but relatively low levels of human rights protection (and compare the regional charts in Figure 4.2 and 4.3). For the purposes of our discussion here, these lower levels of rights protection are among the newer democracies. We can thus conclude that older democracies are better at protecting civil and political rights than newer democracies, even though these democracies ratify fewer treaties with more reservations. The higher ratification rates from the new democracies with the associated poorer performance in rights protection have led some to argue that many new democracies made ‘insincere commitments’ to the international law of human rights (see Smith-Cannoy 2012).

Democratic setbacks

Beyond these general trends in democratization and the relationship between democracy and human rights, both in principle and in practice, there have been a significant number of democratic ‘setbacks’ that are worth

FIGURE 4.3 *Mean human rights score by region.*

Source: Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI), 2010, physical integrity rights index.

considering in any overall assessment of democratization in the world. In the preceding sections, we have seen a fairly positive story about the growth and proliferation of democracy in the world, which in many ways accelerated from 1974 onwards with the advent of the third wave. This process means that more countries in the world are democratic than non-democratic and that the final region in the world that has seemed impervious to democratic transformation has begun to experience cracks in the edifice of authoritarianism. The world was surprised at the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Eastern European transitions, the release of Mandela and the South African transition and has once again been taken by surprise by the rapid set of transformations in the Middle East and North Africa. But to focus only on these positive developments ignores the notion of precariousness developed throughout this book. There are stories of democratic setback, but like the stories of democratic advance, they exhibit great variation in the nature and extent to which they have come about in individual countries. We will now consider notable examples of **failed democratic reversal** in Spain (1981), Argentina (1986, 1987, 1988 and 1990) and Guatemala (1993); **successful**

democratic reversal in Peru (1992), Pakistan (1999), Ecuador (2000), São Tome (2003), Fiji (2006), Honduras (2009) and the Ivory Coast (2011); and **democratic rollback** in Venezuela, Russia and Central Asia.

On 23 February 1981, Antonio Tejero led a group of 200 armed officers from the Guardia Civil in an attempted coup in the Spanish Congress during the elections for the Prime Minister Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo. The group held the congress hostage for 18 hours, but the King of Spain Juan Carlos I broadcast a televised address in which he denounced the coup and asked for the maintenance of law and order and the continuance of the democratically elected government. Even the coup attempt had been preceded by a period of increasing political tension and popular disaffection with the government, democracy prevailed and Spain has not experienced any further such attempts since. In similar fashion, a band of army mutineers known as the '**carapintadas**' (painted faces) staged a series of uprisings against Argentina's new democratic government of Raúl Alfonsín between 1986 and 1988 and against the successor government of Carlos Menem in 1990. These uprisings were carried largely in response to the continued investigations into military atrocities committed during the now infamous 'dirty war', which was reputedly responsible for the death and disappearance of approximately 30,000 people. Like in Spain and Argentina, disgruntled military personnel made two coup attempts during the Cerezo Presidency in 1988 and 1989, but on 25 May 1993, successor President Serrano dissolved congress in an attempted '**autogolpe**' (or self-coup). A combination of popular protests and the denunciation from the Court of Constitutionality with the support of the military meant that Serrano did not have the necessary political support to succeed.

Across these three examples, democratic institutions, though weak and popular support for democracy, though young, led to the failure of such coup attempts in these countries. The figure of the King in Spain, Presidents Alfonsín and Menem in Argentina and the court in Guatemala were such that these attempted coups simply did not garner enough popular support to succeed. The resilience of nascent democratic institutions and popular support for democracy in these cases led to the failed reversals. But in other cases, coup attempts have been successful and ushered in periods of authoritarianism even though the countries had just recently undergone prolonged processes of democratic transition. In 1992, just 2 years after being elected on a broad populist platform for reform, President Alberto Fujimori of Peru succeeded in bringing about an **autogolpe**, dissolved congress and oversaw a period of authoritarianism that would last until his infamous exile from the country in 2000 (see Chapter 7 in this volume). On 21 January 2000, a coalition of an indigenous people's organization and junior military officers fomented a coup against President Jamil Mahuad in Ecuador and sought to establish a populist democracy based on the ideas of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (see below). While the president was exiled and the coup enjoyed a certain amount of popular support, it was soon reversed by senior military officers

and a new President was installed. The final and most notable case of a coup against democracy took place in Pakistan on 12 October 1999 when the Chief of the Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf overthrew Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In this case, the judiciary held that the coup was legal and justified, and after a period of emergency rule, Musharraf won a popular referendum in 2002 and stayed in power for another five years.

Less-well-known cases include those of São Tome in 2003, Fiji in 2006, Honduras in 2009 and the Ivory Coast in 2010. The 16 July 2003 coup São Tome was short-lived and another attempt in 2009 was thwarted. Both insurrections led by the military were ostensibly driven by concerns over economic inequality and corruption and in particular, the relationship of these two issues to the promise of billions from auctioning rights to the country's oil supply. Fiji has long been subjected to military coups, with four such events during the 1980s and 1990s. The 2006 coup took place in early December after a period of rising tensions between the military and civilian leaders over the 2000 coup, while the coup itself received endorsements from courts and the Fiji Human Rights Commission, and the new military government of Frank Bainimarama positioned itself as 'clean-up' operation, effectively ridding the system of corruption, electoral irregularities and over-dependence on ethnic divisions. Bainimarama restored the presidency to Josefa Iloilo in 2007, and after a court ruling that the government was not legitimate, Epeli Nailatikau was put in power and new elections scheduled for 2014. As a consequence of these developments, Fiji has been suspended from the Commonwealth.

The cases of Honduras and Ivory Coast involved constitutional and electoral issues. In 2009, a dispute over proposed constitutional reforms in Honduras culminated in a coup against President Manuel Zelaya. Instigated by the Supreme Court, which saw Zelaya's proposed reforms as a veiled attempt to bring a Chavez style government to Honduras², the military removed him from office and exiled him to Costa Rica. International reaction from the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the European Union and the United States³ objected to this ousting, and a final resolution of the crisis involved the installation of a new president Profirio Lobo with elections on 27 January 2010. Ivory Coast has had many tensions and disputes relating to its democracy, and it has had a history of military intervention since its independence in 1960, while the most recent events involved a post-election dispute over the results. On 2 December 2010, Mr Alassane Outtara was declared the winner of the presidential elections with 54.1 per cent of the popular vote compared to 45.9 per cent for the incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo. A standoff with increasing violence from both sides ensued, ushering in a foreign intervention from UN and French military forces (i.e. the former colonial power) and threats of an intervention from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) forces was made. By April 2011, Gbagbo had surrendered and power was restored to Mr Outtara.

In this case, the integrity of an electoral result was contested by the sitting president but defended by external forces and power was restored to the winner of the election.

These cases were all examples of overt challenges to democratic rule, where the sitting president is ousted, the congress is sidelined or the incoming president is prevented from assuming power. But there are cases in which democratically elected leaders use the office of the executive to concentrate their base of personal power, marginalize opposition forces and undermine the quality of democracy itself. In such cases, democracy is not overthrown but eroded, and so-called strong men (and it really is men) seek to remain in office indefinitely through the manipulation of popular opinion and concentration of power. The most notable cases in which this has occurred are Venezuela under Hugo Chavez, Russia under Vladimir Putin and The Central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan.⁴

Venezuela has been a democracy for over 50 years when in 1958 a new 'elite settlement' ended a prolonged period of conflict and ushered in democracy. The Pact of Punto Fijo provided a framework for democracy that included a power-sharing arrangement between the forces on the left (represented by the Democratic Action party, *Acción Democrática* or AD) and the on the right (represented by the COPEI – Social Christian Party of Venezuela. *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente* – *Partido Social Cristiano de Venezuela*).⁵

Democracy in Venezuela from this settlement until the late 1980s proceeded along a path of 'taking it in turns' where power would alternate between these two parties; however, the confined nature of the system led to calls for reform and popular unrest in the early 1990s, and an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1992 led by Hugo Chavez, a career military officer who had founded Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement. After his release from prison, he founded the Fifth Republic Movement and was elected president in 1998. Upon assuming the presidency, Chavez steadily increased power into the office of the executive and ruled over Venezuela in highly personalistic fashion, while at the same time holding periodic elections for his continued rule across three consecutive terms (1999–2000, 2000–06, 2006 to the present) and surviving a popular referendum for his removal in 2004. Long-time scholar of Venezuelan politics Daniel Levine argues that throughout his time in office, Chavez had been 'chipping away' at democracy, and that more recently his use of emergency powers and 'enabling laws' gave him unprecedented power over Venezuela that has transformed his 'erosion' of democracy into an 'avalanche' (see Levine 2011). These powers included more state control over the media and the internet, more constraints on civil society and NGOs, blocking international funding for organizations that promote political rights, undermining judicial independence and constraining opposition parties in the National Assembly. Coupled with this erosion of democratic institutions, the Chavez regime was accused

of having one of the worst records for corruption in the whole region of Latin America, according to research conducted by the NGO Transparency International.

Commentators have made comparisons between Venezuela and Russia, where similar moves to concentrate executive power have taken place. Indeed 20 years after newly democratized Russia survived a coup attempt to reverse Gorbachev's reforms and oust newly elected President Boris Yeltsin, the world has watched as Prime Minister (and Former President) Vladimir Putin continues to undermine democratic institutions. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union were some of the most momentous occasions of the twentieth century, and many previously authoritarian countries in Eastern Europe embraced democracy. Hopes were high for Russia as Gorbachev initiated reforms that led to new democratic elections in 1991, but Russia has in many ways followed a political course that marked it out as significantly different from other post-Communist states, many of which have now become EU member states (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Russia and, as we shall see, the post-Soviet republics in Central Asia, have consolidated power in the executive and limited the power of other political institutions, undermined the protection of human rights (most notably in the conflict with Chechnya) and stalled democratic progress to the degree that now commentators see Russia as increasingly authoritarian (see Hassner 2008; Shvetsova 2010).

Across Russia and Central Asia, we have seen an increasing concentration of executive power and a deepening suspicion and consequent repression of civil society and many civil and political rights. The war in Chechnya and the Russian 'war on terror' have led to widespread abuse of human rights (FIDH 2002), including arbitrary detention, disappearances and extra-judicial killings. Vladimir Putin has for the medium term and despite widespread demonstrations, consolidated power in Russia, while the presidents in the Central Asian republics have proved resistant to regular democratic alternation of power, despite the optimism with which their countries were greeted after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2012, Russia passed a new law that requires internationally funded domestic NGOs to register with the government as 'foreign agents', which in effect limits their ability to provide a basis for political dissent (failure to comply with the law carries fines and possible imprisonment).⁶ Alongside this new law, the drama of the 'Pussy Riot' trial, sentencing and release of one musician have raised significant concerns about the protection of freedom of expression in Russia. The Central Asian republics showed a remarkable formal commitment to the human rights agenda through ratification of all the major international human rights instruments in the early 1990s and yet have had dismal records in the actual protection of human rights across the region (Landman 2005a; Smith-Cannoy 2012).

Summary: The fifth wave?

The waves and setbacks documented here should demonstrate why any assessment of the prospects for democracy in the world should remain cautiously optimistic. On the one hand, the world has seen a proliferation of democracies from 1974 onwards that has really exhibited a ‘wave like’ pattern. The rapid pace in and spread of democratization in the world has been truly unprecedented and has been a remarkable historical development that should not be under appreciated. The appeal of democracy has stretched across the world and now includes struggles in the final region long thought to be impervious to such change. On the other hand, many of the newest of these democracies have struggled with a large number of challenges. In the case of the former Communist countries, governments have had to oversee the dual transition from a command economy to a market economy alongside the development of democratic institutions, the holding of elections and the open competition of nascent and transformed political party organizations. In capitalist countries, governments have had to grapple with transitions from long periods of authoritarian rule, and in the case of Latin America, economic contractions relating to dependent capitalist development and the debt crisis of the 1980s. African countries that have embraced democracy have had similar challenges relating to patterns of dependent development and the persistence of patrimonial politics (Bratton and van der Walle 1997; Lindberg 2006), while those in Asia have had to democratize powerful state structures responsible for successful export-led growth strategies. Throughout the second, third and fourth waves of democratization, countries such as Colombia, Venezuela and India have struggled to maintain democracy in the face of income inequalities and heightened levels of violence.

In addition to the economic and political challenges associated with transitions to democracy, the new democracies have also had to contend with a growing gap between the formal institutional dimensions of democracy and the human rights dimensions (see Diamond 1999; Zakaria 2003). Cases such as Brazil and Mexico, which are now economically successful, have had a series of relatively free and fair elections with healthy competition between political parties and yet, have worrying records with respect to the violation of civil and political rights and a general struggle to fulfil economic and social rights despite such high rates of economic growth. During the presidential term of Felipe Calderón (2006–12), the Mexican government has been struggling against organized criminal organizations associated with trade in illegal drugs, which has been characterized by an unprecedented increase in extra-judicial killings (Philip and Berruecos 2012). During this period, there have been 48,000 reported killings that are associated with the struggle against organized crime, while it remains unclear about the unreported killings and the main perpetrators responsible for the killings.

Moreover, efforts by the Mexican state have brought allegations of serious violation of human rights (see Landman 2012).

Against this backdrop of cautious optimism, the Arab Spring presents an analogous set of questions about the prospects for democracy in the region, including the geographical proximity of the countries undergoing transitions, their relative levels of economic development, their 'prior regime' types and the variation in political outcomes that have thus far been obtained. Arguably the most dramatic set of changes took place in Tunisia and Egypt, which, according to World Bank development indicators, have lower average per capita incomes than Libya. Change thus was initiated in countries that were not necessarily the wealthiest in the region (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 in this volume on modernization and democracy) and which have had underlying economic discontent behind much of their initial mobilizations. The leaders in Tunisia and Egypt were toppled relatively quickly, but there are serious questions as to whether the rest of the state apparatus is being transformed more towards democracy. In the run-up to the new elections, the Egyptians opted to put former president Hosni Mubarak on trial, much like was done in Iraq with Saddam Hussein. But it is not at all clear that the trial and elections and new government of Morsi provide a meaningful opening for the establishment of long-term democracy in the country. The uprisings in Libya and Syria (and to some degree in Bahrain and Yemen) have been met with a fierce response from the incumbent regimes, while the international community responded to the situation in Libya with NATO air strikes and some support for the rebels, who ultimately overthrew Gaddafi. Despite the horrific reports of violent repression of dissidents and deadly conflict in Syria, there has not been a similar intervention.

It is tempting for commentators and policy analysts to compare the Arab Spring to earlier waves of democratization and 'project' a particular model of democratization with a particular set of 'sequences' on the region. Such a view is both optimistic and inappropriate. It is **optimistic** since it assumes that regime change in the region necessarily converts into democratization, it is **inappropriate** since it assumes that there is a standard sequence through which transitional countries proceed. It is clear from the developments in the region that protest mobilization was largely initiated as an economic critique based on rising expectations primarily among young people coupled with a real decline in economic opportunity. When met with government repression, efforts at mobilization focused on regime change framed politically as the primary objective to address the economic crisis. It is not clear that democracy and democratization were central in the framing of the protests. Rather, much mobilization focused on the incumbent regime and regime change itself. The protests in Tunisia began in rural areas that are remote from the capital Tunis and became nationalized and generalized over time in the face of repression and an unyielding incumbent regime, which in the end was overthrown (see Anderson 2011; Breuer et al. 2012). The protesters in Egypt were more based in Cairo initially, while in Libya,

the rebels were more organized along tribal lines (Anderson 2011: 2). Out of three cases that have undergone regime change, Tunisia and Egypt have had elections, but while elections are an important feature of democracy, they do not mean that democracy has been achieved. Moreover, the countries in the region need to reconcile over issues around Islam, secular law, legal frameworks for democracy and the competition between political parties, some of which are not popular and may not share value orientations that resonate favourably with Western governments.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Diamond, Larry (2011) *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*. Henry Holt and Company.
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Notes

- 1 On 27 September 2012, the representation to the European Union of the State of North Rhine Westphalia along with the German Development Institute hosted a policy event in Brussels on democratic diffusion, the Arab Spring and EU democracy promotion, where precisely these kinds of issues were raised with the respect the dramatic development across the Middle East and North Africa.
- 2 Such a characterization refers to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who sought to bring about his Bolivarian Revolution through populist means.
- 3 President Obama condemned Zelaya's removal as 'illegal'; see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8125292.stm>; last accessed 22 July 2011.
- 4 I exclude Turkmenistan, since after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it never engaged in what could be described as an electoral process and the death of its leader President Saparmurat Niyazov (the Turkmenbashi) in December 2006 led to his successor Kurbanguly Berdymuhamedov maintaining the authoritarian regime, who has reduced the more cultish aspects for which Niyazov was famous.
- 5 For thorough analyses of this period, see Levine (1989) and Peeler (1992).
- 6 The law was passed in July 2012 and threatens the work of such NGOs as Amnesty International and Transparency International. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18938165>; last accessed 24 October 2012.