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CHAPTER FIVE

Evidence and explanations

Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter that the experience of democracy, democratization and the advancement of human rights are both vast and highly variegated. Many countries and regions have made great progress in establishing democracy and protecting human rights during the course of the twentieth century and early years of the twenty-first century, while other countries have seen setbacks or continued forms of authoritarian rule where democracy continues to be elusive and human rights continue to be violated. For analysts of global politics, these trends across time and space are referred to as ‘variation’, and as we shall see in this chapter, such **variation** is in need of **explanation**. The social sciences have developed and continue to develop theories and methods that help us understand how, why and under what conditions are the advance of democracy and human rights possible. This combination of theories and methods seeks to reduce the complexity of what we observe in the world and look for common sets of factors that account for the kinds of changes that were discussed in the previous chapter.

The different theories involve concentrating either separately or in an integrated fashion on (1) broad sets of **social and economic conditions**; (2) different kinds of **choices and strategies** made by leaders, followers and opposition groups; and (3) a host of **international factors** that both hinder and help the advance of democracy and human rights. Methods for testing these theories and providing explanations for the variation in democracy and human rights that is observed involve **statistical analysis of a large number of countries** over time and space; **comparative historical analysis** of a smaller subset of countries within and between regions; and **case studies** that map out the processes and pathways that particular countries have

taken on the road to greater democracy and a fuller protection of human rights. Throughout these analyses, the focus is on identifying a series of generalizations that can be made about why and under what conditions democracy comes about and how the protection of human rights can be improved.

This chapter thus discusses these different sets of explanations to show how analysts have sought to explain the trends in democracy and human rights. The discussion examines the underlying assumptions of the explanations, the factors upon which they focus and the methods that they have used to support their arguments. There are many debates surrounding these different explanations since they have significant implications for the ways in which we understand the current state of global politics and what we think we can do to make a positive difference. You will see how different explanations have had an influence on policymakers and practitioners that are working to bring about and support the advance of democracy and human rights. The explanations considered here include (1) the so-called modernization perspective (both in its original and revised forms); (2) comparative history and ‘macro-historical’ change; (3) rational choice and ‘games of transition’; (4) democratic transformation and transnational advocacy; and (5) international dimensions and diffusion. The chapter does not settle on any one of these explanations as superior, but examines their strengths and weaknesses while identifying in what ways they can be (or have been) linked to international policy and practice.

Modernization

As we saw in Chapter 2, attention to the trade-offs between ‘abundance’ and ‘freedom’ is based on a basic assumption that high levels of economic development are related to higher levels of democracy and, by extension, better protection of human rights. This assumption has been a bedrock of the ‘modernization’ perspective, which posits that as countries undergo large processes of socio-economic development, they experience a series of changes that also encourage the development of democratic institutions. This theory began in part with a book entitled *Political Man* published by Seymour Martin Lipset in 1960 and in part with a book entitled *The Stages of Economic Growth* published in 1961 by Dankwart Rustow, which both see a (a) direct link between economy and politics and (b) a natural process of development through ‘stages’ that are increasingly progressive. Modernization theory claims that as countries save and invest at appropriate levels (usually 20% of gross domestic product is taken as a good proportion of national savings) that help enhance their infrastructure and social institutions, liberal democratic institutions will flourish. The stages of development lead to higher levels of education, improve social and spatial mobility and promote the political culture that supports liberal

democratic institutions. In this way, the theory assumes that the process of socio-economic development is 'a progressive accumulation of changes that ready a society to its culmination, democratization' (Przeworski and Limongi 1997).

The theory has been hugely popular and hugely influential and in many ways 'rediscovered' or given a new impetus with the end of the Cold War, where the defeat of Communist ideologies led to a certain triumphalism for Western ideals relating to democracy and human rights. Indeed in *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama (1992) argues that the Western model was not only successful, but the only possible set of ideas for the world, and that it was only a matter of time, that the rest of the world would arrive at state of well-developed capitalist democracy. In an article in 1997, Max Singer summarized the optimism of the modernization perspective as follows:

Because some societies learned to increase productivity, presently about 1/7th of the world's population lives in wealthy, democratic, and peaceful countries – unlike anything seen in history. The process that changed them is still continuing, probably accelerating, and there is every reason to believe that it will continue until by the end of the coming century, or the one after, essentially all the world will be wealthy, democratic, and peaceful as North America and Western Europe are now (Singer 1997: 28).

The appeal of and the arguments that sustain the modernization perspective have been supported primarily by large-scale statistical analyses across many countries at different periods of time. The original analysis conducted by Seymour Martin Lipset used multiple indicators for economic modernization and categories of countries that included stable and unstable democracies and stable and unstable dictatorships. He found that, on average, stable democracies had higher values for his measures of economic modernization than any of the other categories of countries. He concluded from this that the 'more well to do a nation, the more likely it is to sustain democracy'; a claim that has then been subjected to increasingly sophisticated statistical analysis that continues to this day. Analyses have added more sophisticated measures of democracy and economic development, a greater coverage of time, and have controlled for a number of factors related to modernization. The result of these analyses, as outlined already in Chapter 2, is that there is a positive and significant relationship between economic development and democracy.

The assumptions of the modernization perspective and the methods for supporting it have also influenced analysis of the variation in the protection of human rights. Studies from the 1980s compared indicators on the protection of different kinds of civil and political rights and correlated them with measures of economic development. More sophisticated analyses

that followed, as in the research on democracy, added different measures of human rights and more time to their analysis, as well as additional sets of factors that help explain the variation in human rights protection. The results of these studies are very similar to the work on democracy: wealthy countries have better records at protecting these sets of human rights than poor countries, even after controlling for other key factors like democracy, war and the size of the population (see, e.g. Poe and Tate 1994; Landman 2005b). Additional measures on the quality of economic development also show that wealthy countries with better distributions of income have better records of protecting civil and political rights (Landman and Larizza 1999). The theorizing and discussion of these results make less of a straightforward appeal to modernization per se, but the assumptions and impulse behind such studies are very much in line with the modernization perspective. In this case, it is assumed that wealthy countries have more resources necessary to protect human rights, but the direct connection between economic **change** and **transformation** is not seen as such a critical factor as in the work on democracy. Indeed, one study found no relationship between economic change and the protection of human rights (see Poe and Tate 1994).

Despite the political interest and robust statistical support for the modernization perspective, there are continued worries about its limitations. It places too much emphasis on economic modernization and economic progress, effectively making a highly material and deterministic argument for political change. It tends to ignore historical processes, which are often highly contingent and where change occurs in less than uniform ways across different countries. It ignores the individuals either at the elite or popular level who have had a stake in the creation of democracy and the struggle for human rights. It ignores the timing of economic modernization, since the global powers of the today modernized in some cases more than 100 years before other countries, which has given them a 'head start' as well as a dominant position in the global political economy that may well prevent other countries from modernizing in the same way, or at all. Indeed, some studies have shown that the relative position of a country in the global political economy conditions the relationship between economic development and democracy (see Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Foweraker and Landman 2004).

Finally, from within the perspective itself there have been revisions to its basic premise. For example, in *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Samuel Huntington (1968) has argued that economic modernization leads to raised expectations within different social groups and that in the absence of proper institutions for channelling and representing these expectations, a country undergoing rapid modernization may actually become less politically stable. This view is of course a direct challenge to the optimism of the modernization perspective. It does not undermine it completely but adds these further dimensions of **institutions** and **order** that need to be taken into account. The main differences between modernization and

FIGURE 5.1 *Modernization and revised modernization.*

revised modernization are captured in Figure 5.1, where the automatic association between economic development and democracy is modified so that economic development could have a negative impact on political stability (read democracy) which can be tempered by the degree of political institutionalization.

Interestingly, many years later in the *Clash of Civilizations*, in addressing global challenges after the Cold War, Huntington (1996: 192) argues that ‘economic development is the major underlying factor’ generating democratic transitions, which shows that his position is more or less in line with the modernization perspective broadly understood. The attraction of the modernization perspective continues until today, and as Chapter 2 argued, many of its assumptions formed the basis for the neo-conservative view that political change could be accelerated through force (see Fukuyama 2006). And no doubt there will be a connection made between the relative wealth of the Middle East and China (or at least its rapid economic advance) and the process of political mobilization and liberalization that is apparent. There is a strong impulse for policymakers and practitioners to take the modernization perspective and its statistical findings as a basis for foreign and aid policy, which privileges economic development as a means to democratization, and it assumes that democratization itself is a sequential affair that necessarily moves from one stage to the next in linear fashion.

My own cautious optimism in this book about the appeal of democracy and human rights is not necessarily linked to economic development per se (although wealth in a country does provide more flexibility for governments), as many of the cases discussed in this book have achieved democracy and increased protection of human rights in the absence of large-scale economic modernization. And the Arab Spring does renew my optimism for political progress and transformation away from tyranny

and authoritarianism. It may be that Fukuyama's argument in *The End of History* is correct in his claim that democracy and human rights represent a set of ideas that are unrivalled in their appeal to and respect for human dignity and that such appeal motivates individuals and groups to push for change. But this motivation is not necessarily borne of their economic circumstances. Rather, the values associated with democracy and human rights have a natural appeal to those living under oppressive regimes. The Reith lectures from Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi on **liberty**¹ and **dissent**² illustrate the power of these ideas, particularly for those to whom they have been denied. A few excerpts from her lecture are apt for our consideration here:

The freedom to make contact with other human beings with whom you may wish to share your thoughts, your hopes, your laughter, and at times even your anger and indignation is a right that should never be violated.

...

If pressed to explain what the word means to them, they would most likely reel off a list of the concerns nearest to their hearts such as there won't be any more political prisoners, or there will be freedom of speech and information and association, or we can choose the kind of government we want, or simply, and sweepingly, we will be able to do what we want to do.

This may all sound naïve, perhaps dangerously naïve, but such statements reflect the sense of freedom as something concrete that has to be gained through practical work, not just as a concept to be captured through philosophical argument.

Macro-historical change

While the appeal of the modernization perspective is strong, much doubt remains about the 'mechanisms' that connect economic development to higher levels of democracy and/or better protection of human rights. For many, it is precisely the **unevenness** of economic development and the great variation of that process across countries in terms of factor endowments (i.e. land, labour and capital), timing of development (e.g. before or after the industrial revolution; before or after decolonization), the role of the state (command economy, state-led development, *laissez faire* modes of development), and the different models of development and the degree to which a country pursues so-called import-substitution (as in Latin America between the 1930s and 1960s) or export promotion (as in case of the East Asian 'tiger' economies in the 1970s and 1980s). This great variation, many have argued, will condition the probability that democracy will flourish

and whether the country embraces a 'rights-protective' culture in its legal framework and state institutions (see Donnelly 1999). Over-reliance on particular factor endowments (oil for example) can concentrate wealth and power in the hands of those who have no interest in democracy or rights. Rapid state-led development may encourage a mindset that thinks the repression of labour is essential in the short term for economic advance (see Geddes 1990). Market protections for primary exports may skew the distribution of wealth and power to landed elites who block any moves towards democracy.

Common to all these kinds of arguments about the establishment of democracy and rights, is a focus on groups of countries that are compared across periods of economic transformation as instances of macro-historical change and typically do not involve the use of statistical analysis. Rather, these arguments and explanations focus on broad sets of economic change, large social variables such as social classes and the alliances that form between them; state power at the domestic and international levels; the distribution of land, labour and capital; and models of development followed by particular sets of state elites. Countries are not seen as all on the same linear trajectory, but as discrete units that follow pathways of development that take them the traditional to the modern world. The key message from this kind of work is that democracy is not the inevitable outcome of economic modernization, that different routes to modernity might actually involve significant violence and conflict and non-democratic solutions to maintaining order such as communism and fascism and that routes followed by some countries (such as the United States and some European countries) are not available to those that undergo subsequent processes of economic development.

Three particularly notable studies are Barrington Moore (1966) *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) *Capitalist Development and Democracy* and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) *The Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. All three studies are motivated by a connection between economic development and democracy, but none of them see a necessary or direct connection between the two. Rather, they argue that processes of economic development unleash different sources of power for different groups of people in society, each of which will have different motivations to bring about (or not) democratization. The first two studies engage in various sets of comparisons across countries with similar pathways or routes to the modern world, while the latter study provides historical case examples that confirm more formal economic models of the incentive structures that are conducive to democratic and non-democratic systems.

The comparison of routes to modernity reveals that **democracy is but one outcome** alongside fascism (a so-called revolution from above) and communism (a revolution from below). Barrington Moore's (1966) comparisons of the so-called liberal route include a focus on the violent

nature of ‘bourgeois revolutions’ that are necessary for democracy, since they allow a country to break from its feudal past and pave the way for democratization. In comparing a larger number of countries than Moore (1966), Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) show that such violence may not be necessary and that the true agents of democratization are the **working classes**, whose success in obtaining political inclusion is tempered by the dominance of particular sets of elites. Thus, the type of economic modernization and who benefits from it, along with the ways in which subordinate groups such as the working class are included in the political system, determine whether a country achieves democratization. In both cases, the comparison of **pathways** and **processes**, and not simple measures of statistical association, provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of how democracy does or does not come about as a result of economic development.

In many ways, the Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) study is a natural outgrowth of these two earlier studies. They too are intrigued with the empirical reality that many countries in history underwent profound economic development, but did not achieve democracy. They too focus on the mixed set of incentives that occur whenever a country undergoes economic development. But they model these incentives using the tools of modern economics, and they focus on the allocation of political power and resources and how that allocation links to public preferences for democracy. They examine the costs and benefits associated with the use of

FIGURE 5.2 *Routes to the modern world.*

Source: Moore 1966 adapted from Landman 2008: 117.

FIGURE 5.3 *Pathways to initial democratization.*
Source: Ruschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992 and Landman 2008.

repression and show how the consolidation of democracy is the function of many different factors, including the strength of civil society (stronger civil society is good for democracy), the structure of political institutions (aggregating different interests is good for democracy), the nature of political and economic crises (severe crises are bad for democracy), the structure of the economy (over-reliance on a few industries is bad for democracy) and the level of economic inequality (high concentrations of wealth are bad for democracy).

These historical and somewhat ‘longer-term’ studies are helpful for us to understand the contingent nature of the establishment and maintenance of democracy and certainly shed light on such processes taking place today. It is clear that democracy is not an automatic outcome of economic development but one that relies on a set of **necessary** and **sufficient** conditions falling into place. Lower-class mobilization for inclusion that is met with some form of accommodation and balance of power and institutionalized through political party organizations that can compete under a system in which victory is possible provides a good set of conditions for the successful installation of democracy. Such an institutionalized system carries with it the need for basic rights protections, such as the right to vote, the right to exercise free speech and the rights to association and assembly. The contestation for power needs systems in which independent associations such as political parties can form, aggregate their interests, express their demands and grievances and seek political power through the electoral process. But as we saw in Chapter 3, democracy also requires the guarantee of social and economic rights as well as the protection of minority and cultural rights. The former set of rights provide avenues for the least well-off to participate in democracy, while the latter set of rights protect individuals from undue discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation and other social categories.

Games of transition

The broad attention to the economic ‘preconditions’ of democracy, whether seen as having necessary or contributing influences on the establishment of democracy, does not have much to say about the actual **individuals** involved in bringing about democracy. The economic accounts focus on large ‘macro’ variables such as classes, class relations and alliances, state power and underlying processes of economic change. These accounts do not give the actors that make democracy possible their full attention, and it is this dearth of attention to individuals that has spurred a lot of analysis that focuses precisely on ‘who did what, when, how, and why’. General Franco decided to legalize the Spanish Community party, Mikhail Gorbachev decided to pursue a policy of **glasnost** and **perestroika**, Augusto Pinochet decided to

have a plebiscite for his continued rule, F. W. De Klerk decided to release Nelson Mandela from prison, the Generals of Burma Myanmar decided to release Aung San Suu Kyi and the Egyptian military elite decided not to support Hosni Mubarak (and have proved reluctant to leave power). These and other intentional choices have had profound implications for democratization and the advance of human rights. But these choices can also be subjected to systematic and stylized analysis that moves beyond the narratives and delves into the motivations of leaders, the different calculations they make about preserving their power and their interactions with others at the moment of decision.

Any analysis that focuses on such choices typically uses the power of 'game theory' to explain the trade-offs leaders face in making such profound decisions, the likely response from their opponents and the structure of different outcomes that result from their strategic interaction with others. Based on the modelling of choice behaviour from the so-called prisoners dilemma' in which two criminal suspects are held in separate cells and presented with different choice scenarios, game theory applications in democratization focus on the choices that elites make and how such choices either lead to democracy or maintain authoritarianism. Such analyses assume that authoritarian leaders in power (government) want to remain in power and leaders out of power (opposition) want to win control over power. But each set of leaders – either in government or in opposition – can choose different strategies for obtaining power. So-called hardliners in government will want to use repression to hold onto their power and resist moves towards liberalization, such as the release of celebrated political dissidents. So-called softliners in government see partial liberalization (e.g. eliminating restrictions on the press, freeing political dissidents, allowing independent associations to form) as a way to appease the opposition and maintain their hold on power. In the opposition, two groups are also present who hold different views on their strategy for engaging with the authoritarian government. On the one hand, 'radicals' have no desire to negotiate with the regime and seek its overthrow, even if that requires violence to do so. On the other hand, 'moderates' are willing to negotiate with the government to move a reform agenda forward in the eventual hope of establishing democracy.

The crucial aspect of this kind of explanation for democracy is what the softliners in the government choose to do and what the moderates in the opposition choose to do. These two groups of leaders represent the 'democratic potential' for a country about to undergo a transition. If the softliners truly have more power vis a vis the hardliners, then it is in their interest to liberalize the authoritarian regime and seek a deal with the moderates in the opposition. If the moderates in the opposition truly have more power than the radicals, then it is in their interest to seek some kind of negotiated settlement with the softliners in government. However, such

‘Softliners’ in the authoritarian regime	
Break from authoritarian regime and liberalize (Cooperate)	Do not break from authoritarian regime (Defects)
Break from their radicals (Cooperate)	S, T Authoritarian regime remains with some concessions
Do not break from their radicals (Defects)	P, P Authoritarian regime survives, polarization continues
Moderates in the opposition	
R, R Democracy with guaranteees, elite pact in the centre	
T, S Democracy, but with no guaranteees, always a threat from the radicals	

Note: T = temptation to defect, R = reward, P = punishment, S = sucker’s payoff; these are listed in order of preference such that T>R>P>S

FIGURE 5.4 *Democratic transformation: A revised ‘Dynamic Model’.*
Source: Adapted from Przeworski (1991: 69); Cohen (1994: 67–68); Landman (2006: 42).

a formulation leaves open the possibility that the softliners do not seek to liberalize and that moderates do not seek a settlement. Such a state of affairs means that the strategic interaction between softliners and moderates can lead to four different outcomes in which democracy is but one possible outcome. Figure 5.4 summarizes the game theoretic approach to democratization where it is clear that softliners in government can liberalize (i.e. 'cooperate' with the moderates) or maintain the authoritarian regime (i.e. 'defect' from the moderates), and where moderates can negotiate (i.e. 'cooperate' with the softliners) or reject any negotiation and seek violent overthrow of the regime (i.e. 'defect' from the softliners). The figure also shows that there are four ordered 'payoffs' associated with these different choices:

- 1 The temptation to defect (T) is the most preferred
- 2 Reward for cooperation (R) is the next preferred
- 3 Punishment for defecting (P) is the next preferred
- 4 The so-called sucker's payoff for choosing the losing strategy (S) is least preferred

Only when the softliners and the moderates cooperate with each other is democracy possible and both sets of actors are rewarded (R, R). Otherwise, the three other outcomes are obtained, which include maintenance of the authoritarian regime with some concessions (e.g. release of prisoners and relaxation of press censorship), democracy with no real guarantees (highly unstable) and survival of the authoritarian regime.

Such an approach reveals the precariousness of democracy and its reliance, at least in the early years, on deal making, assurances and the balance of power within the previous authoritarian regime and within the new democracy. On this view, democracy is not the automatic outcome of social processes, but the **contingent outcome** of political choices. For example, in Poland, game theory can explain both the continued authoritarianism of the Jaruzelski government during the period of martial law in the 1980s and the transition to democracy in 1989. In the early 1980s, several 'moves' in the game between the Solidarity Movement and the government resulted in stalemate, open confrontation and the declaration of martial law. The changing political environment in Moscow under Gorbachev led the Polish government to change its preferences and issue a series of reforms that included the legalization of Solidarity and at least nominal representation in the Polish Parliament (see Colomer and Pascual 1994). A similar analysis can explain democratic transition in Chile. In a very careful analysis of over 40,000 internal documents of the Chilean military, Darren Hawkins (2002) shows that a 'rule-oriented' faction within the military regime of Augusto Pinochet had become increasingly worried about international criticism of the regime for its violation of human rights. This faction gained influence

within the regime and was behind many of the concessions that were made and that culminated in holding a plebiscite on Pinochet's continued rule in 1988. In the event, Pinochet lost the plebiscite and Chile underwent a transition to democracy during 1989 and 1990. In both cases, the changing calculations of softliners in the government led to different outcomes from their interactions with moderates in the opposition and to transitions to democracy.

For the contemporary period during the Arab Spring, hardliners in the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia were not strong enough to counter the rise of popular protest, and the regime fell relatively quickly. New elections were held in October 2011, just 10 months after the uprising. In Egypt, the military opted not to repress the opponents of Mubarak (although some exceptions did occur) and it became increasingly clear that his resignation was imminent. Like Tunisia, Egypt held elections in a relatively short period after the fall of the regime given how long it had been in power. In Libya, the situation was different. Moammar Gaddafi had strong support from loyal followers and calculated that he could survive the rebel advances. The changing external environment from the NATO intervention gave more advantage to the rebels who ultimately captured and then killed Gaddafi in October 2011. Across these three cases, it is possible to focus on the decisions and calculations made by elites in the regime and in the opposition to compare and contrast the different outcomes that were obtained. As in the theoretical range of possibilities, these cases show variation in outcomes that differ in terms of the timing of regime change and the potential for democratic transition. Tunisia and Egypt have embarked on the first steps to democracy with their elections, but the subsequent period of consolidation will require tolerance of and accommodation between different political forces in these countries.

The making of democracy

The game theoretic approaches have value in moving the explanation of democratization beyond the focus on structural conditions such as economic modernization and showing the array of different political outcomes that can be obtained from the strategic interaction of elites. But both the structural and rational explanations for democratization tend to leave out any sense of other forms of agency, such as those from popular protest, social movements and civil society organizations. In popular accounts of democratic transition during the third wave of democratization (e.g. O'Donnell et al. 1986), there is a passing reference to the 'resurrection of civil society' that coincides with elite pact making, where some role for social mobilization is acknowledged. However, history has shown that the making of democracy is also about mobilization from below, and it is clear that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Arab Spring

have had a large role for popular forces for change. Ordinary people gathered together in public spaces to contest the power of incumbent regimes. It is here that the idea of human rights has a significant role to play. The history of the struggle for rights is one in which popular groups mobilize for the extension of rights protections from the state, and if such protections are not forthcoming, continued struggle can lead to regime change, followed by a process of democratization that carries with it an improvement in rights protections (Foweraker and Landman 1997). Cross-national and quantitative research has shown that even during the first year after a democratic transition, rights conditions can improve dramatically (Zanger 2000). But the differences across categories of human rights matter as well. Popular mobilization can often take the form of a critique of the absence of protection of social and economic rights. Such mobilization and organization of protest can in turn provoke a repressive reaction from the state. If the crackdown and limitation on freedom are significant, then the demands and language of rights articulated by popular movements can shift to demands for the protection of civil and political rights, as well as a call for regime change.

In a study on social mobilization and citizenship rights in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Spain, popular movements arose initially through a critique of the socio-economic problems of authoritarian regimes and their impact on the lower classes of society. Group formation and mobilization, however, led to crackdowns and a shift in demand to civil and political rights, which over time led to regime change and transitions to democracy in three of the four cases (Brazil, Chile and Spain) (Foweraker and Landman 1997). The transition in Mexico arguably took place in 2000 with the victory of the National Action Party over the PRI (see the Introduction in this volume) and has been seen by many as the culmination of long and multiple waves of social mobilization (see Haber et al. 2008). More recently, the so-called occupy movements that have sprung up in cities in the United States, United Kingdom and Spain, for example, much of the critique and demands have been articulated in terms of economic problems. The construction of '1% versus 99%' is a direct critique of income inequality, corporate greed and dysfunctional systems of governance and regulation. Repressive responses from city police forces, for example, in Oakland, California, in November 2011, can expand the critique beyond economics to one of civil and political rights and the proportionality of state response. In similar fashion, many of the initial demands from the protests in the Arab Spring focused on the inability for the authoritarian regimes in the region to deliver economic prosperity to those that are less well-off. The critique quickly shifted to a broader call for regime change that involved demands for civil and political rights. In addition, the alternative use of new technology and social media has illustrated the ability for common people to find new avenues for expressing their voice. Thus freedom of speech and assembly

become topics of contention as these various movements have sought to have their message heard.

The emphasis on the struggle for rights from below and variations in state response from above suggests that democratic transformation involves what Dankwart Rustow (1970) called a 'long period of inclusive struggle'. Social mobilization around rights helps build the popular foundations for democracy, but as in some of the explanatory frameworks outlined in this chapter, there are no guarantees that such mobilization will lead to democracy. Rather, at a crucial 'decision phase', states can make concessions and maintain the bulk of their authoritarian institutions. States may crack down and seek to quash an emerging movement (as in Tiananmen Square in 1989 or the Monk's protest in Burma in 2007), but such a move always brings with it the memory of the event and a long-term desire within the populace for regime change and justice (see Chapter 7 in this volume). This interaction between society and the state suggests a much longer view on political change that involves both the macro-variables of economic modernization and the micro-variables of choice and strategy. Democratic transformation (see Figure 5.5) takes place through several key phases, none of which are inevitable and none of which are irreversible.

International dimensions

The final set of explanations focus on what can be broadly understood as the international dimensions. Countries are not isolated units in 'autarky' but part of a larger system of interaction and inter-dependence. What goes on in one part of the world can have an impact on what happens in another part of the world, but how this happens can vary across different international dimensions. The dimensions of most interest that help us understand the advance of democracy and human rights include direct state-to-state (i.e. bilateral) interactions, multilateral interactions involving institutions such as the United Nations or the World Bank, transnational engagement from international non-governmental organizations and 'agentless' processes of diffusion brought about by the increase in the flow of information and value sets from one part of the world to another. Various described as 'contagion', 'diffusion' and 'globalization', these processes that spread democracy and human rights through both intentional and unintentional means, and it often difficult to disentangle the two when seeking to explain the international dimensions of democracy and human rights.

The idea of contagion refers mostly to the influence of processes among a set of contiguous or nearly contiguous countries. Thus, the democratic transitions in Southern Europe all happened in the space of a few years between 1974 and 1977, while in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin

FIGURE 5.5 *Democratic transformation.*
Source: Rustow (1970).

Wall and subsequent transitions in Eastern Europe were geographically and temporally close to one another. In Latin America, contagion processes began in 1978 and were more or less completed at least in South America by 1990 when Chile elected its first democratic president since 1970. One could argue that contagion processes have been at play during the Arab Spring, as events that began in Tunisia quickly spread to Egypt (not entirely contiguous but very close), Yemen, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and beyond. While proximity and time are fascinating to see as the call for democracy and rights spread, the concept of 'contagion' remains largely descriptive in that some sort of change is 'caught' by neighbouring countries, but it begs the question as to why a country is susceptible to catching the new ideas and how groups within the receiving country pick up those ideas and try them in their own systems.

Contagion is part of the idea of diffusion, which is understood both as a process and an outcome of political change. In my own view, diffusion should be seen more as a process than an outcome. Diffusion effects (also called neighbourhood effects, demonstration effects and social 'bandwagoning') manifest themselves in the spread of norms, ideas and practices not only among neighbouring states, but between states that can be quite far away from one another. Indeed, the protesters at the Occupy Wall Street site in New York were selling badges that said 'Fight Like an Egyptian', making direct reference to the occupation of Tahrir square in Cairo. Here, a popular 'repertoire of contention' (see McAdam et al. 1997) was diffused from protests in Egypt to those in New York (and as it happens in other cities). Diffusion as a process means that it is a mechanism through which a set of norms, ideas and practices gets transferred between states. It is time-dependent and exhibits a temporal causal flow in ways that can be tracked and explained using empirical methods. It has both intentional and unintentional dimensions, which is to say, the flow of norms, ideas and practices can proceed in an **uncoordinated fashion**, but equally there are occasions in which certain **intentional behaviours** from state and non-state actors can accelerate the process of diffusion.

Intentional dimensions of diffusion include coercive and non-coercive agencies. Military intervention such as the coalition invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 to ostensibly bring about democracy are the most salient recent examples of coercive intervention. The NATO operation in Libya is another example of coercive imposition. Even though the intervention was ostensibly to protect civilians who were vulnerable from attack by the Gaddafi regime, it certainly contributed to the efforts of the rebels seeking to overthrow of the regime. The Marshall Plan in Europe and the rebuilding of Japan by the West after World War II are also good examples of intentional intervention that was made possible after the recipient country had been defeated in war. But a lot of diffusion takes place through the exercise of 'soft power' (Nye 2009), diplomacy and transnational advocacy networks

(TANs) comprised of large and influential international non-governmental organizations (see Keck and Sikkink 1998). In the latter case, international non-governmental organizations communicate with domestic NGOs and in conjunction with inter-governmental organizations put pressure on states to bring about political transformation. The most notable examples of these kinds of diffusion have been presented in Risse, Ropp and Sikkink's (1999) *Power of Human Rights*, which shows that pressure and activity from transnational advocacy networks on authoritarian states in many cases led to regime change and the development of an institutionalized human rights culture. Activism from the international arena complements and supports the mobilization phase of democratic transformation outlined above (see Figure 5.5). But again, such activism from above does not guarantee such a transformation if intransigent elites seek to hold onto to power, as was the case in Libya under Gaddafi, or as is the case in China with respect to Tibet, or Cuba under Fidel Castro.

The spread of ideas is not just some ephemeral phenomenon, but also has a material base that is important to understand. Increased levels of trade, labour mobility and technology transfers (i.e. material processes and exchanges) bring with them associated values, norms and practices and thus act as a social 'transmission belt' for diffusion. The economics of trade and comparative advantage shows that as countries specialize in economic activity for which they have comparative advantage (i.e. capital intensive or labour intensive production), the increased exchange of goods and services bring countries and their cultures closer together. The search for new markets (including cheap labour markets) brings not only a transfer of technology but also ideas and tastes, which in the long run can have an impact on the demand for democracy and human rights. These material and non-material bases for diffusion are clearly different but not mutually exclusive. Moreover, with the spread of information and communications technology (ICTs) along with the democratization of that technology, ideas and practices in one part of the world can easily be captured and assimilated into another part of the world. Diffusion thus has intentional and unintentional as well as material and non-material dimensions, which complement one another in ways that help explain an increase in demand for democracy and human rights.

Finally, it is important to point out that the process of diffusion for democracy may be different than for human rights. The discourse and advocacy for human rights since the Universal Declaration in 1948 have increasingly become reliant on the international law of human rights and its associated institutions and agencies at the international and regional level. The international law of human rights provides a certain amount of jurisprudence about the content of human rights and establishes state obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. These obligations carry with them the obligations to report to the various bodies that monitor

compliance with UN human rights treaties. While deeply flawed and seen by many as nothing more than a paper tiger, the process of filing reports and receiving comments from the treaty bodies places human rights discussions firmly in the public domain and as such provides international and national non-governmental organizations with significant leverage to call states to account over serious human rights abuses; leverage which may well serve to bring about regime change in the long run. Treaty ratification has been shown to have a positive and significant influence on state practice, but an influence that is conditioned by other factors, such as levels of economic development, domestic mobilization and international linkages (see Landman 2005; Simmons 2009).

The international architecture for human rights has grown in depth and breadth, as more and more rights become enumerated for protection, more states ratify international treaties and more regions establish their own mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. In contrast, no such equivalent mechanisms, jurisprudence or content (at least derived from an international set of legal standards) exists for democracy. On the one hand, this means that there is no standard against which to make appeals and no set of institutions with which to engage such as the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or the Treaty Bodies. On the other hand, the absence of such institutions for the promotion of democracy means that it is less well-defined and democracy advocates can remain flexible in how they define it, how they establish it and how they build it over time. As I argued in Chapter 3, democracy is less contentious and 'absolutist' in discursive terms and thus offers more room for manoeuvre for those seeking to bring it about.

Summary

This chapter has considered a variety of explanations and the kind of evidence used to support them for the spread of democracy and human rights. It has shown how earlier attention focused on the so-called structural conditions or the macro-social variables relating to the large-scale processes of economic modernization. Studies since the 1950s have shown a positive and significant relationship between levels of economic development and democracy, but the precise relationship between the two is still open to debate, even though there is a general consensus that development is certainly good for democracy. From a purely economically rational perspective, a wider economic base allows a democratic government to deliver benefits to key constituents and thus 'buy' loyalty to democracy itself. But when attention is focused on the changes unleashed by socio-economic modernization, the direct association with democracy is thrown into question, as the nature of development, classes, class alliances and state power all have contingent effects on the probability of democracy taking root and surviving in the long

run. And even if the macro-conditions are favourable, analysis of the micro-conditions suggests that strategic interactions at the ‘moment of decision’ can lead to outcomes that are not democratic, while subsequent ‘games of transition’ may eventually lead to democracy.

The ‘transformational’ perspective advanced in this chapter recognizes the starting conditions for democracy, as well as the contingent nature of its arrival, but it also focuses on the role for popular agency in the struggle for democracy and how that struggle can be both long and inconclusive. This perspective challenges the patience of policymakers, particularly those working in the business of ‘democracy promotion’ who are often dependent themselves on the electoral cycle at home to ‘deliver’ on their foreign policy objectives. The chapter has shown that any attention to democratic transformation must take into account the international dimension in terms of contagion and diffusion and the (un)intentional aspects of democratization. It has also argued that in many ways the struggle for rights and the ‘right to have rights’ has been an important catalyst for processes of democratic transformation, where demands for economic and social rights shift to demands for civil and political rights. This struggle for rights has had further support with the advent and subsequent development of the international human rights regime that began formally with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, the ‘architecture’ for human rights makes their international diffusion easier in many ways as popular groups can use the language of rights as leverage for regime change within their own countries.

While it is difficult to present an entirely coherent assessment of the different findings from the different kinds of explanations available that account for the growth in democracy and human rights, there are some common lines of agreement and perhaps even a consensus. The installation of democracy and the development of institutions that guarantee the protection of human rights are precarious. The interaction between and among regime strength, power, individual and collective rationality and the incentives that structure that rationality all have an impact in the degree to which democracy and human rights can develop in any one country. Democracy is one outcome of many, which is contingent on a variety of different factors falling into place, but history has shown that it is an outcome that continues to be obtained.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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- Ruschemeyer, Dietrich, Stephens, Evelyne Huber and Stephens, John D. (1992) *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simmons, Beth (2009) *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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Notes

- 1 See http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/2011_reith1.pdf
- 2 http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/2011_reith2.pdf