

The end of the third wave and the global future of democracy

Diamond, Larry

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**Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien
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No. 45

**The End of the Third Wave
and the Global Future of Democracy**

Larry Diamond

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Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Political Science Series No. 45

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Prof. Dr. Larry Diamond
Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace
Stanford University Stanford, California 94305-6010 USA
e-mail: diamond@Hoover.Stanford.EDU

and
International Forum for Democratic Studies
National Endowment for Democracy
1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 802
Washington, DC 20005 USA
T 001/202/293-0300
F 001/202/293-0258

**Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien
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Abstract

The “Third Wave” of global democratization, which began in 1974, now appears to be drawing to a close. While the number of “electoral democracies” has tripled since 1974, the rate of increase has slowed every year since 1991 (when the number jumped by almost 20 percent) and is now near zero. Moreover, if we examine the more demanding standard of “liberal democracy” – in which there is substantial individual and associational freedom, civic pluralism, civilian supremacy over the military, a secure rule of law, and “horizontal accountability” of office-holders to one another – we observe today the same proportion of liberal democracies in the world as existed in 1991. If a “third reverse wave” of democratic erosion or breakdowns is to be avoided, the new democracies of the third wave will need to become consolidated. Elites and citizens of every major party, interest, and ethnicity must accept the legitimacy of democracy and of the specific constitutional rules and practices in place in their country. In many new democracies, this requires a sweeping agenda of institutional reform to widen citizen access to power, control corruption, and improve the depth and quality of democracy. Elsewhere – as in China and Indonesia – rapid economic development and the gradual emergence of stronger, more autonomous civil associations and legal and representative institutions may be laying the foundations for a “fourth wave” of democratization at some point in the early twenty-first century.

Larry Diamond is Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, and co-director of the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies. An earlier and much condensed version of this essay was published in the *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (July 1997). Portions of this essay will appear in his forthcoming book, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Since the early 1980s, the most significant trend in world politics has been the steady growth in the number of democratic regimes in the world, and the consequent decline in the prevalence of various forms of authoritarian rule. The trend actually began with the overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship in April of 1974, and then the democratization of Greece and Spain as well in the following two years, but it did not really become global until it reached Latin America in the late 1970s and early 80s, and then several parts of Asia in the mid- to late 1980s. By the time it brought down European communist regimes at the end of the 1980s, the world was in a state of democratic euphoria, and in the subsequent several years democratic change swept through the Soviet Union and sub-Saharan Africa as well.

In a seminal formulation, Samuel Huntington has dubbed this post-1974 trend the “third wave” of global democratic expansion, and has shown the central importance to it of regional and international demonstration effects.¹ So powerful has this wave been that it has by one count doubled and another count tripled the number of democracies in the world. By the more demanding count, there were 79 democracies at the beginning of 1997; by the more expansive count, 118.

As I will argue below, *how* one counts encompasses profound conceptual – and by extension, normative, philosophical, and policy – issues in contemporary comparative politics. It raises one of the most important questions we can ask in this, history’s most vigorous wave of democratization: what is democracy? And this in turn is essential to understanding the underlying trajectory of this wave, and to assessing whether it will continue – whether, in fact, it has not already effectively come to an end.

Huntington defines a “wave of democratization” simply as “a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period.”² He identifies two previous waves of democratization (a long slow wave from 1828 to 1926 and a second post-WWII wave, from 1943–1964). Significantly, each of the first two waves ended with what he calls a “reverse wave” of democratic breakdowns (1922–42, 1961–75). In each of these two previous reverse waves, some but not all of the newly established (or reestablished) democracies broke down. Overall, in each reverse wave, the number of democracies in the world decreased significantly but left more democracies in place than had existed prior to the start of the previous democratic wave.

¹ States are listed in order of their average freedom house score at the end of 1996. For the scores, see *Freedom Review* 28, no. 1 (January-February 1997), pp. 15–16. All “free states” are listed here as liberal democracies. A listing of all electoral democracies is obtained from Freedom House. Classification of the remaining countries into “pseudodemocracies” and “authoritarian regimes” is by the judgement of the author

² Huntington, Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press. 1991): p. 15.

The first two waves lasted for no more than fifteen to twenty years. It has been 23 years since the third wave began. Will it continue? Is it over? Is a third reverse wave on the horizon – or at some point inevitable? Few questions are more important to the study of world politics – and to the future not only of political freedom and human rights, but, very probably, of international peace as well.³

1. Conceptualizing Democracy

Much of the contemporary confusion and debate about the number of democracies in the world, the classification of specific regimes, the conditions for making and consolidating democracy, and the consequences of democratic regimes for peace and development, stems from a lack of consensus about just what we mean by “democracy.” So serious is the conceptual confusion in the literature that David Collier and Steven Levitsky have identified more than 550 “subtypes” of democracy in their review of some 150 (mostly recent) studies.⁴ Some of these nominal subtypes merely identify specific institutional features or types of full democracy, but many denote “diminished” forms of democracy.

³ There is a vast and rapidly growing literature on the “democratic peace.” It, too, depends on how one conceptualizes democracy. If we eliminate dubious historical cases of “democracy” (such as Britain in 1812 or the Kaiser’s Germany in World War I), I believe the evidence shows convincingly that, at a minimum, modern democracies (and especially liberal democracies, as I define the term below) have not gone to war with one another, and for compelling theoretical reasons, are extremely unlikely to do so in the future. For a recent overview and assessment, see James Lee Ray, “The Democratic Path to Peace,” *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (April 1997): 49–64, and *Democracy and International Conflict: An Evaluation of the Democratic Peace Proposition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995). For a particularly important, influential (and succinct) theoretical and empirical investigation, see Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton University Press, 1993). A seminal earlier treatment, building on Immanuel Kant’s thesis of republics as the basis of perpetual peace, is Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs, Part I” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (Summer 1983): 205–235, and Part II, *ibid.*, pp. 323–353. For a more wide-ranging analysis, which exhaustively reviews the existing literature and departs from much of it in suggesting that democracies are intrinsically less inclined toward aggressive violence, see the many works by Rudolph J. Rummel, including his forthcoming *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence*; *Understanding Conflict and War: Vol. 4: War, Power, and Peace* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976) and *Understanding Conflict and War: Vol. 5: The Just Peace* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981). For his most recent evidence showing that democracies are generally “less warlike” (and totalitarian regimes the most so), as indicated by their mean battle dead in war, see R. J. Rummel, “Democracies ARE Less Warlike than Other Regimes,” *European Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 4 (December 1995), pp. 547–479. Evidence that transitional regimes (moving from autocracy or a mixed regime toward democracy) are more inclined toward interstate war than stable democracies or autocracies is presented in Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and War,” *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 3 (May/June 1995), pp. 79–97, and “Democratization and the Danger of War,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 5–38. They place heavy emphasis on the “mass nationalist sentiment” that is often unleashed or stimulated and exploited by ruling elites in the shift to electoral politics with universal suffrage. Nevertheless, they conclude that “the cure is probably more democracy, not less,” and that in critical cases where transitions toward democracy brought war, “the arrival of full democracy has produced more pacific policies” (“Democratization and War,” p. 95).

⁴ David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy ‘With Adjectives’: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research.” Unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, April 8, 1996. This is a revised version of their paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, September 1–4, 1994.

Where conceptions of democracy diverge fundamentally (but not always very explicitly) today is on the range and extent of political properties encompassed by democracy. Minimalist definitions descend from Joseph Schumpeter, who defined democracy as a system “for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”⁵ Huntington, among others, explicitly embraces Schumpeter’s emphasis on competitive elections for effective power as the essence of democracy.⁶ Over time, however, Schumpeter’s appealingly concise expression has required periodic elaboration (or what Collier and Levitsky call “precising”) to avoid inclusion of cases that do not fit the implicit meaning.

The seminal elaboration has been Robert Dahl’s conception of “polyarchy,” which requires not only freedom to vote and contest for office, but freedom to speak and publish dissenting views, freedom to form and join organizations, and alternative sources of information – in other words, not just the political pluralism of multiple parties and candidates, but a broader societal pluralism that makes political opposition and participation truly meaningful.⁷

Minimalist conceptions of democracy, particularly more recent ones, usually acknowledge the need for minimum levels of freedom (of speech, press, organization, and assembly) in order for competition and participation to be meaningful. But typically, they do not devote much attention to them, nor do they attempt to incorporate them into actual measures of

⁵ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 269. For a useful explication of Schumpeter’s thinking about democracy in this classic work, see David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). For Schumpeter, Held explains, “the democratic citizen’s lot was, quite straightforwardly, the right periodically to choose and authorize governments to act on their behalf” (*Models of Democracy*, p. 165). Schumpeter was clearly uneasy with direct political action by citizens, warning “the electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede,” (p. 283 of *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*). Thus, his “case for democracy can support, at best, only minimum political involvement: that involvement which could be considered sufficient to legitimate the right of competing elites to rule” (*Models of Democracy*, p. 168). This is, indeed, as spare a notion of democracy as one could posit without draining the term of meaning.

⁶ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp. 5–13, especially p. 6, and “The Modest Meaning of Democracy,” in Robert A. Pastor, *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989), p. 15. For similar conceptions of democracy as based on competitive elections, see for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 27 and Lipset, “The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited,” *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (February 1994): 1; Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 5–6; J. Roland Pennock, *Democratic Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 7–15; G. Bingham Powell, *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 3; Tatu Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980–88* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), pp. 17–18; Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 16; Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 10–11.

⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 2–3. Dahl uses the term polyarchy in order to distinguish these systems from a more ideal form of democracy, “one of the characteristics of which is the quality of being completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens” (p. 2). For a perspective that rejects “whole-system” logic altogether and emphasizes both the democratic shortcomings of the established, industrialized constitutional polities and the democratic fragments in many autocratic polities, see Richard L. Sklar, “Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy,” in Adrian Leftwich, ed., *Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 25–44.

democracy. Thus (consistent with most other efforts to classify or measure regimes), one of the most recent and important quantitative analyses, by Adam Przeworski and his colleagues, defines democracy simply as “a regime in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections” (with the proviso that real contestation requires an opposition with some nontrivial chance of winning office, and that the chief executive office and legislative seats are filled by contested elections).⁸ Such Schumpeterian conceptions — particularly common among Western policymakers tracking and celebrating the expansion of

⁸ Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, “What Makes Democracies Endure?” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (January 1996): 50–51. See also Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, “Modernization: Theories and Facts,” *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (January 1997): 155–183). Their methodology is more comprehensively explained in Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, and Adam Przeworski, “Classifying Political Regimes for the ACLP Data Set,” Working Paper Number 4, Chicago Center on Democracy, University of Chicago, December 6, 1994. Many other approaches to conceiving and measuring democracy in quantitative, cross-national analyses have also tended to rely on indicators of competition and participation (whether dichotomous, categorical or continuous), but some of these were gravely flawed by their incorporation of substantively inappropriate indicators, such as voter turnout or political stability. (On this and other conceptual and methodological problems, see Kenneth A. Bollen, “Political Democracy: Conceptual and Measurement Traps,” in Inkeles, *Measuring Democracy*, pp. 3–20).

As an alternative approach that explicitly includes the behavioral, non-institutional dimensions of democracy, the combined Freedom House scales of political rights and civil liberties, described below, are increasingly being used in quantitative analysis. Moreover, several efforts have been made to construct scales of democracy that measure all three dimensions: electoral competition, participation (universal suffrage), and essential civil liberties. See in particular, Coppedge and Reinecke, “Measuring Polyarchy,” and Axel Hadenius, *Democracy and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and “Assessing Democratic Progress in Africa,” in Hadenius, ed., *Democracy’s Victory and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, forthcoming). The problem with these complex indices is that, in their faithfulness to the more liberal conception of democracy, they generate demands for data on multiple indicators that require subjective judgements and thus are very difficult and costly to gather and code (especially retrospectively) for every year over a long time period. Thus, they tend to be produced for one or two time points.

While the Freedom House data is available annually, it goes back in time only to 1972, and the criteria for scoring have become stricter over time (particularly in the 1990s), creating problems for interpreting changes in scores over time. The appeal of a simple dichotomous measure such as that used by Przeworski and his colleagues is precisely the relative simplification of data collection and regime classification, and the ability to conduct a straightforward “event history” analysis that analyzes changes to and away from democratic regime forms, or put differently, “hazard rates” of democratic life expectancy. Certainly, there is value in multiple methodological approaches; our knowledge of the determinants of democracy is likely to become more reliable and robust to the extent that different indicators and methodologies point to similar findings. Encouragingly, the Freedom House ratings and other measures of democracy appear generally highly correlated with one another (Alex Inkeles, “Introduction,” in *Measuring Democracy*, p. 4; and Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr, “Tracking Democracy’s Third Wave with the Polity III Data,” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 4 (1995), Table III, p. 475. Also, Hadenius finds that his measures of electoral competition and participation are generally highly correlated with political freedoms. In fact, Przeworski et al. report that the Freedom House combined ratings for 1972 to 1990 predict 93 percent of their regime classifications during this period (“What Makes Democracies Endure?” p. 52).

Still, both a methodological and a political concern remain. As the evidence below indicates, there appears to be a recent growing divergence since 1990 between the formal properties and the liberal substance of democracy. Thus the substantive validity of measures which focus mainly on formal competition may be particularly suspect after 1990 (which, interestingly, is the current endpoint of the Przeworski et al. data set). Moreover, it is likely (particularly when a dichotomous indicator of democracy is in question) that the divergence with other (more continuous and civil-liberties-based) scales is clustered precisely among “marginal” regimes that have real electoral competition but weak protection for individual and group rights. So long as the intercorrelations among different democracy scales remain high, this problem (in and of itself) will probably not be large enough to call into question the validity of these studies’ findings concerning the causes and consequences of democracy (especially when different democracy measures yield similar findings). But the dichotomous conception is intrinsically prone to neglect the quality of democracy, especially the state of civil liberties, and this has major policy implications.

democracy – risk committing what Terry Karl has called the “fallacy of electoralism” – of privileging electoral over other dimensions of democracy and ignoring the degree to which multiparty elections, even if competitive and uncertain in their outcome, may exclude significant sections of the population from the effective capacity to contest for power or advance and defend their interests, and/or may leave significant arenas of decision-making power beyond the reach or control of elected officials.⁹ As Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl emphasize: “However central to democracy, elections occur intermittently and only allow citizens to choose between the highly aggregated alternatives offered by political parties, which can, especially in the early stages of a democratic transition, proliferate in a bewildering variety.”¹⁰

As Collier and Levitsky note, minimalist, procedural definitions of democracy have expanded in recent years to rule out the latter element of ambiguity or misclassification; many are now more precise in excluding from classification as democracies regimes which suffer substantial “reserved domains” of military (or bureaucratic, or oligarchical) power that are not accountable to elected officials.¹¹ On such grounds, Guatemala in particular has often been dismissed as a “pseudo” or “quasi” democracy. But still such formulations can fail to give due weight to levels of political repression and marginalization that may exclude significant segments of the population – typically the poor or ethnic and regional minorities – from exercising their democratic rights of opposition and participation. One of the most rigorously constructed and widely used measures of democracy in cross-national, quantitative research (that used in the Polity datasets of Ted R. Gurr and his colleagues) acknowledges civil liberties as a major conceptual component of democracy, but, because of the paucity of data (especially going back in time), does not incorporate them explicitly into the empirical scale of democracy.¹²

⁹ Terry Lynn Karl, “Imposing Consent? Electoralism versus Democratization in El Salvador,” in *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980–1985*, Paul Drake and Eduardo Silva, eds. (San Diego: Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, Center for US/Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1986), pp. 9–36, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America,” *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 1 (October 1990), pp. 14–15, and “The Hybrid Regimes of Central America,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (July 1995), pp. 72–86.

¹⁰ Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy Is... And is Not,” *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 78.

¹¹ A seminal discussion of reserved domains appears in J. Samuel Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process and Facilitating Conditions,” in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 64–66. See also Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 10; Schmitter and Karl, “What Democracy Is... And Is Not,” p. 81; Guillermo O’Donnell, “Illusions about Consolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996), pp. 34–51; and Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), ch. 1, where they insist that a democratic transition is completed only when the freely elected government “*de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.” (Quoted from the manuscript version).

¹² On the new, Polity III dataset, see Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr, “Tracking Democracy’s Third Wave with the Polity III Data,” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 4 (1995), pp. 469–482. On the earlier, Polity II data (from which about half of the annual country scores for 1946–86 have been (mostly slightly) corrected, and all updated to

Freedom represents a continuum of variation; whereas competitive elections tend to be more clearly present or not, individual and group rights of expression, organization, and assembly may vary to many degrees across countries that all have regular, genuinely competitive, multiparty elections in which votes are (more or less) honestly counted and the winning candidates exercise (most of the) effective power in the country. For example, how large and overtly repressed or marginalized must a minority be before for the political system to be disqualified as a polyarchy, or in my terms, a *liberal* democracy?¹³ Is Turkey disqualified because of the indiscriminate violence it has used to suppress a ruthless Kurdish insurgency, and its historical constraints (recently relaxed) on the peaceful expression of Kurdish political

1994, in Polity III), see Ted Robert Gurr, Keith Jagers, and Will H. Moore, "The Transformation of the Western State: The Growth of Democracy, Autocracy, and State Power since 1800," in Inkeles, ed., *Measuring Democracy*, pp. 69–104. Although it does not measure civil liberties, the democracy measure of the polity datasets does not stop at measuring the openness and competitiveness of elections (including specifically executive recruitment). Significantly, it also measures (with increased sensitivity in Polity III) institutional constraints on the exercise of executive power (which captures to a considerable degree the existence of "horizontal accountability"). This is a significant step beyond measures that focus exclusively on competitive elections. Jagers and Gurr argue in their 1995 article that even though they do not measure civil liberties and the rule of law directly, their measures of formal institutional structure more or less capture this behavioral dimension, and that their scale therefore correlates highly (in the years and countries for which it overlaps) with others that do measure civil liberties directly (with subjective scorings). Empirically, this claim is substantially true, although, as one would expect, their democracy measure correlates slightly more highly with Freedom House's political rights scale (.92) than with its civil liberties scale (.87). By contrast, the Coppedge and Reinecke polyarchy scale correlates .93 with *both* Freedom House scales, and these two scales together constitute the best indicator of what I term below "liberal democracy." Whenever alternative scales rest on subjective scoring, correlations above .80 or so must be regarded as impressive evidence of the empirical validity of the measures. Still, to repeat our point in the note above, in the variation that remains (and the different strategies for aggregating regimes with diverse scores into a few types) may cluster critical cases of divergent coding that bear important theoretical and policy implications. For example, Jagers and Gurr decompose regimes in 1994 into "coherent" and "incoherent" democracies and autocracies. "Incoherent democracies denote those political systems with primarily democratic elements that also place substantial limits on participation, competition, and/or civil liberties" (p. 478). Their 19 incoherent democracies in 1994 include a few regimes (such as Senegal, Cambodia, and Belarus) where the level of ruling party dominance and intolerance is such that even the minimal Schumpeterian criteria for electoral democracy are lacking. More significantly for the purposes of this discussion, their list of "incoherent democracies" excludes (and counts as "coherent democracies") some civilian, electoral regimes that suffer very substantial abridgements of human rights and the rule of law, such as India, Turkey, Russia, and Ukraine. (For their list, see note 16, p. 481. In a private communication based on my inquiry, Gurr has indicated that Sri Lanka and probably Pakistan should have been included in their list of incoherent democracies for the early 1990s. For evidence of these abridgements, see the relevant country reports in the annual volumes of Freedom House and Human Rights Watch, cited below).

¹³ I use the term "liberal," of course to refer not to an economic regime with a limited state and an open economy, but to a form of political democracy in which individual and group liberties are particularly strong and well protected. There is obviously some affinity between economic and political liberty in these senses, but there are tensions and complexities as well that are well beyond the scope of this discussion. The term "liberal" should also be construed here very broadly, even in the political sense. It requires sufficient civil liberties and pluralism to allow for free and meaningful competition of interests and a rule of law between elections as well as in them. But this still leaves very substantial scope for variation in the balance a society places on individual rights vs. responsibilities, or to put it another way, on the emphasis on the individual vs. the community. Requiring by definition that the individual be free to organize and speak, and protected from arbitrary arrest and torture, does not mean that a society must embrace a *libertarian* (as opposed to communitarian) notion of the proper political and social order. In this sense, I believe the thesis that "liberal democracy" is inappropriate for and unworkable in Confucian and other East Asian societies is wrong theoretically, and it is certainly being proven wrong empirically in South Korea and Taiwan. See my "Some Democratic Lessons in The 'Asian Vaules Debate,'" paper presented to the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Honolulu, April, 1996.

and cultural identity? Is India disqualified because of alarming human rights violations by its security forces in secessionist Kashmir; or Sri Lanka because of the brutal excesses by both sides in the secessionist war of Tamil guerillas; or Russia when it waged a savage war against Chechen secessionists; or Colombia because of its internal war against drug-traffickers and left-wing guerillas, and its exceptionally high levels of political assassination and other human rights abuses? Do all these polities not have a right to defend themselves against violent insurgency and secessionist terror? Or does democracy fall short – despite highly competitive elections in each of these five countries, which have witnessed some degree of party alternation in each case in recent years – because of high levels of political violence, lawlessness, and corruption, by both state and non-state actors?¹⁴ As I indicate below, the problem is not limited to these countries, but increasingly characterizes a distinctive and growing group of countries that are commonly considered “democracies” today.

By a minimalist definition, all five of the above countries qualify as democracies. But by a stricter conception of “liberal democracy,” all fall short. All suffer sufficiently serious abridgements of political rights and civil liberties that they fail to qualify as “free” in the annual ratings by Freedom House. Moreover, this gap between minimal, formal, or what I will henceforth term “electoral” democracy and liberal democracy has serious consequences for theory, policy, and comparative analysis. These consequences derive not only from the question raised of the relationship between “democracy” and human rights, but also, as I will also show, from the dramatic growth in the gap between electoral and liberal democracy – one of the third wave’s most significant and little-noticed features.

The formal conception – *electoral democracy* – defines democracy as a civilian, constitutional system in which the legislative and chief executive offices are filled through regular, competitive, multiparty elections. As we have seen, this conception remains highly salient for both scholarship and policy, but it has been amplified or “precised” to various degrees by different scholars and theorists. This exercise has been constructive, but unfortunately it has left behind a plethora of what Collier and Levitsky term “expanded procedural” conceptions, which do not clearly relate to one another and occupy various intermediate locations in the continuum between electoral and liberal democracy.¹⁵

¹⁴ See the relevant country reports in Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1995), and its reports of preceding years; Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch, November 1995); Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1994–1995* (New York: Freedom House, 1995), and the forthcoming and preceding annual Freedom House reports.

¹⁵ Among the expanded procedural definitions that appear to bear a strong affinity to the conception of liberal democracy articulated here, but which are somewhat cryptic or ambiguous about the weight given to civil liberties, are Karl, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America,” p. 2, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, pp. 43–44 and 46.

How does *liberal* democracy extend beyond these formal and intermediate conceptions? In addition to regular, free, and fair electoral competition, and universal suffrage, it requires the absence of “reserved domains” of power for the military or other social and political forces that are not accountable to the electorate, directly or indirectly. Second, in addition to the “vertical” accountability of rulers to the ruled (which is secured most reliably through regular, free and fair, competitive elections), it requires “horizontal” accountability of office-holders to one another; this constrains executive power and so helps protect constitutionalism, the rule of the law, and the deliberative process.¹⁶ Third, it encompasses extensive provisions for political and civic pluralism, as well as for individual and group freedoms, so that contending interests and values may be expressed and compete through various, ongoing processes of articulation and representation, beyond periodic elections.¹⁷ Specifically, liberal democracy has the following components:

1. Control of the state and its key decisions and allocations lies, in fact as well as in constitutional theory, with elected officials (and not democratically unaccountable actors or foreign powers); in particular, the military is subordinate to the authority of elected civilian officials.
2. Executive power is constrained, constitutionally and in fact, by the autonomous power of other government institutions (such as an independent judiciary, parliament, and other mechanisms of horizontal accountability).

¹⁶ Obviously, the independent power of the legislature to “check and balance” executive power will differ markedly between presidential and parliamentary regimes. However, even in parliamentary regimes, democratic vigor requires striking a balance between disciplined parliamentary support for the governing party and independent capacity to scrutinize and question the actions of cabinet ministers and executive agencies. For the political quality of democracy, the most important additional mechanism of horizontal accountability is an autonomous judiciary, but crucial as well are institutionalized means (often in a separate, autonomous agency) to monitor, investigate, and punish government corruption at all levels. On the concept of “lateral” or “horizontal” accountability and its importance, see Richard L. Sklar, “Developmental Democracy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 4 (1987), pp. 686–714, and “Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy,” pp. 26–27; and Guillermo O’Donnell, “Delegative Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (January 1994), pp. 60–62. Sklar terms the lateral form “constitutional democracy” and emphasizes its mutually reinforcing relationship to vertical accountability.

¹⁷ This emphasis on the non-electoral dimensions of democracy, in the continuing play of interests in politics, figures especially prominently in the work of Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl. See, for example, their “What Democracy Is... and Is Not.” They list pluralism as a dimension on which regimes may simply be “*differently* democratic,” in that democratic corporatist arrangements may grant certain peak associations monopoly rights of representation, with obligatory membership within the interest sector and close linkages to the state. However, such corporatist arrangements are typically found within the limited functional arenas of capital and labor, and where they exist in democracies are supplemented by a pluralistic array of other organizations for representing other interests. Were all of associational and expressive life organized in this vertical, monopolistic way, I believe it might raise serious questions about the degree of democracy. In any case, fully corporatist regimes of interest representation are fading rather than flourishing in established democracies, and to the extent that new democracies adopt them, they tend to manifest more limited features of “policy concertation.” On the distinction and trends as they relate to post-communist Eastern Europe, see Jonathan Terra, “Policy Concertation, Interest Representation, and Democratic Consolidation in Postcommunist East Central Europe.” Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, Winter 1996. On the greatly limited character of neocorporatist forms of interest representation in the new democracies of Southern Europe, see Philippe C. Schmitter, “Organized Interests and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe,” in Gunther, Diamandouris, and Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation*, pp. 284–314.

3. Not only are electoral outcomes uncertain, with a significant opposition vote and the presumption of party alternation in government over time, but no group which adheres to constitutional principles is denied the right to form a party and contest elections (even if electoral thresholds and other rules exclude smaller parties from winning representation in parliament).
4. Cultural, ethnic, religious and other minority groups (as well as traditionally disadvantaged or disempowered majorities) are not prohibited (legally or in practice) from expressing their interests in the political process, and from using their language and culture.
5. Beyond parties and intermittent elections, citizens have multiple, ongoing channels and means for the expression and representation of their interests and values, including a diverse array of autonomous associations, movements, and groupings which they have the freedom to form and join.¹⁸
6. In addition to associational freedom and pluralism, there exist alternative sources of information (including independent media) to which citizens have (politically) unfettered access.
7. Individuals also have substantial freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition.
8. Individual citizens are politically equal under the law and in their rights to participate in the political process (even though they are invariably unequal in their political resources).
9. Individual and group liberties are effectively protected by an independent, nondiscriminatory judiciary whose decisions are enforced and respected by other centers of power.
10. The rule of law protects citizens from unjustified detention, exile, terror, torture or undue interference in their personal lives not only by the state but by organized anti-state forces as well.¹⁹

¹⁸ This is a particular emphasis of Schmitter and Karl, "What Democracy Is... And Is Not," pp. 78–80, but it has long figured prominently in the work and thought of democratic pluralists such as Robert A. Dahl. In addition to his *Polyarchy*, see for example, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), and *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

¹⁹ I suspect there would be very substantial overlap between the list of regimes identified by these criteria and those regimes indicated by the two simpler and less formal standards proposed by Laurence Whitehead: "How does a purportedly democratic regime treat those held in its prisons? Would we describe the regime as sufficiently democratic to qualify as a leading western democracy?" A key point of my long conceptual discussion here is

These ten elements of liberal democracy comprise most of the criteria by which Freedom House annually rates political rights (of contestation, opposition, and participation) and civil liberties in every country of the world. Political rights and civil liberties are each measured on a seven-point scale, with a rating of 1 indicating the most free and 7 the least free. Combining the two scales (as a number of recent quantitative analyses of the determinants of democracy have done), produces a total score ranging from 2 to 14, or an average score from 1 to 7. Countries averaging 2.5 or lower are considered “free” by Freedom House; those scoring 3 to 5 are “partly free”; and those from 5.5 to 7 are “not free.”²⁰

The “free” rating in the Freedom House survey is the best, most sensitive and objective empirical indicator available of “liberal democracy.” Of course, with any multi-point scale, there is inevitably some arbitrariness in where one draws the line to establish the threshold for a concept. However, there are real differences even between the 2.5 and 3.0 average rating, which is the cutting point of the threshold. In the 1996–97 Freedom House survey, all eleven countries with the lowest “free” score of 2.5 rate a 2 on political rights and a 3 on civil liberties (and this has been true for some number of years now in the annual freedom surveys). The difference between a 2 and a 3 on political rights is very real, typically indicating significantly more military influence in politics, electoral and political violence, and/or electoral irregularities, and thus political contestation that is appreciably less, free, fair, inclusive, and meaningful. This is the case, for example, in El Salvador and Honduras (both rated 3 on political rights and 3 on civil liberties); in Venezuela, where military autonomy and impunity and political intimidation have eroded the quality of democracy in recent years, but then abated to bring the country back to free status in 1996; and in Thailand, where dubious electoral practices (including widespread vote-buying) and the autonomous political power of the military (though significantly reduced since 1992) continue to place the country just below the “free” threshold.²¹ The difference between 2 and 3 on civil

precisely Whitehead's: “It would be a grave disservice to the cause of democratic consolidation to misapply the term to regimes that fall short of a well-anchored standard.” “The Consolidation of Fragile Democracies: A Discussion with Illustrations,” in Pastor, *Democracy in the Americas*, p. 77.

²⁰ For a full explanation of the survey methodology, see Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1994–1995* (New York: Freedom House, 1995), pp. 672–677, or *Freedom Review* (January–February 1997), pp. 192–202. The two freedom scores derive from raw point scores. These are constructed by assigning 0 to 4 points to each country on each of 13 checklist items for civil liberties and each of eight check list items for political rights. The 1994 political rights scores included a ninth checklist item – decentralization of political power – that was appropriately dropped from the most recent survey, since it is better viewed as a measure of differences in the type rather than degree of liberal democracy. This is reflective of subtle (and in some years) significant changes in survey methodology that have occurred from time to time and that do, admittedly, complicate interpretation of changes in country scores over time (especially going back more than five or six years). Until 1995, the dividing line between “partly free” and “not free” was along the raw point score for the 5.5 average freedom score. In the most recent survey, for 1996, all countries with an average score of 5.5 or lower are rated “not free.”

²¹ See, for example, the country reports on these countries in the recent annual volumes of *Freedom in the World* and the State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. Thailand's King has formal and especially informal power somewhat greater than in the pure constitutional monarchies, but this power has been exercised in recent years more to preserve or restore constitutional democracy than to constrain it.

liberties is also significant, as the lower-rated countries have at least one area – such as freedom of speech or the press, personal security from terror and arbitrary arrest, and associational freedom and autonomy – where liberty is significantly constrained. Still, political rights are strong enough to render the system generally “free” (if just barely). When a country (such as Brazil) with a 2 on political rights scores a 4 on civil liberties, however, human rights violations are so serious and widespread, the military and police are so immune to accountability for them, the judicial system is so ineffectual and corrupt, and/or the poor and landless are so systematically victimized by wealthy elites, that the political system cannot be considered liberal and free, even though it is democratic in the strictly political arena of elections and party politics.²² Now that India is now rated a “2” on political rights, it is the most prominent example of this somewhat unusual combination, featuring a vigorously competitive (indeed, increasingly fragmented) multiparty electoral system, and a robust civil society, but widespread abuses by police and security forces and state harassment of activists from various popular organizations (concerned with the environment, social justice, indigenous peoples, and human rights). For this reason, Human Rights Watch has called India “one of the most dangerous places in the world for human rights activists.”²³

It is precisely in the categorization of specific countries at specific times that the differences between conceptual approaches becomes most apparent. But as I have noted above, conceptual approaches are no longer easily dichotomized into “electoral” and “liberal” approaches. There is a class of conceptions of democracy that fall somewhere in between, explicitly incorporating basic civil freedoms of expression and association, and trying to take serious empirical account of them, yet still allowing for sharp constrictions of citizenship rights and a porous, insecure rule of law. The crucial distinction turns on whether political and civil freedoms are seen as relevant mainly to the extent that they ensure meaningful *electoral* competition and participation, or are instead viewed as necessary to ensure a wider range of democratic functions.

A particularly clear example of the mid-range conception may be found in Juan Linz’s definition of democracies as “political systems that allow the free formulation of political preferences through the use of basic freedoms of association, information and communication for the purpose of a free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals, by nonviolent means, the claim to rule without excluding any office of national

²² Ibid, pp. 152–155. Similar problems of human rights violations (by insurgents as well as the state), judicial weakness and corruption, and oligarchical violence against the powerless give the Philippines the same 2 and 4 rating in 1996.

²³ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch Annual Report 1997* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1996), 158. Of course, it is precisely the constitutional freedom to organize and the multiplicity of human rights groups in India that makes possible the widespread contestation over human rights violations (and thus the danger to the lives of human rights activists). China, Cuba, Syria, and Iran are far more inhospitable places for human rights activists, but are so much more repressive that such groups are quashed before they can organize.

decision-making from that competition.”²⁴ Here, a Schumpeterian conception of democracy as political competition between alternative leaders has been expanded to rule out reserved domains of power and to require that electoral competition be underpinned by basic political freedoms. But this leaves open the extent to which civil liberties will otherwise be protected. Thus, the scope of human rights or civil rights in democracies might vary considerably depending on the wishes of the majority, as long as basic freedoms to contest politically remain unquestioned and the rights guaranteed in the a constitution are not restricted.²⁵ Although this conception encompasses the right to advocate alternatives, it could allow a democracy, by a constitutional process, to constrain civil liberties and minority rights more severely than would be consistent with the principle of *liberal* democracy. As Linz makes clear, democracies are the form of government least likely to violate human rights, but may do so when under stress or confronted with terrorist or anti-system challenges. Yet, when democratic states turn to extensive human rights violations in order to defend themselves, they lose their liberal character (as has happened in Turkey and Sri Lanka, and in certain Indian states such as Kashmir). This is why violent antidemocratic or secessionist movements are a particular problem for liberal democracy, and why liberal democracies need to act early and creatively to meet potential challenges if they are to preserve their liberal character.²⁶ It is also why Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, embracing greater conceptual precision, have in their latest theoretical work more explicitly stressed the rule of law as a fundamental requirement of democracy: “If freely elected executives... infringe the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of a state of law, their regimes are not democracies.”²⁷

The mid-range conception is also articulated by Guillermo O’Donnell in his latest theoretical reflection on democracy.²⁸ O’Donnell carefully rules out the fallacy of electoralism and the inclusion of “reserved domains” by adopting Dahl’s concept of polyarchy, with its requirement of basic civil freedoms, and then adding on further procedural requirements that elected officials have meaningful power. On the basis of these criteria, he thus properly excludes from his list of polyarchies in Latin America a number of quasi-democracies, such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, Paraguay (and probably Peru, El Salvador and Honduras). This brings his classification close to my own listing of “liberal democracies” in Latin America (below). However, the “cutting point” in his articulation of “polyarchy” is focused on the institutionalization of elections, rather than the rule of law more broadly.

²⁴ Juan J. Linz, “Types of Political Regimes and Respect for Human Rights: Historical and Cross-national Perspectives,” in Asbjørn Eide and Bernt Hagtvet, eds., *Conditions for Civilized Politics: Political Regimes and Compliance with Human Rights* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), p. 186; see also p. 183.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁶ Thus Linz concludes that “[d]emocracies can fail in relation to human rights more by inaction than by action,” in neglecting acute social and economic problems and the violations of public order by antisystem groups. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²⁷ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 15.

²⁸ “Illusions about Consolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 34–51.

Indeed, the central point of his essay is to argue that many of the democracies of the third wave are polyarchies, and apparently *enduring* polyarchies, even though clientelism and particularism abound, undermining horizontal accountability and adherence to formal rules.²⁹ The institutionalization of elections requires surrounding conditions of freedom, but the cutting point appears to be their relevance for ensuring democratic *electoral* competition. Thus, he concedes:

*In many of the new polyarchies, individuals are citizens only in relation to the one institution that functions in a manner close to what its formal rules prescribe – elections. As for full citizenship, only the members of a privileged minority enjoy it.... Informally institutionalized polyarchies are democratic in the sense just defined.... But their liberal and republican components are extremely weak.*³⁰

The question of how extensive liberty must be before a political system can be termed a “liberal democracy” is a deeply normative and philosophical one. The key distinction involves the extent to which we define the political process as centering around elections or encompassing a much broader and more continuous play of interest articulation, representation, and contestation. If we view the latter as an *essential* component of democracy, then there must be adequate political and civil freedoms surrounding that broader process as well, and, to use O’Donnell’s language, individuals must be able to exercise their rights of citizenship not only in elections but in obtaining the “fair access to

²⁹ Ibid, p. 36. As O’Donnell concedes, “the definition of polyarchy is silent about important but elusive themes,” such as the degree of government accountability to citizens between elections, and “the degree to which the rule of law extends over the country’s geographic and social terrain.” While O’Donnell is sympathetic to the conception articulated here of “liberal democracy,” and sees a strong affinity with the way he has defined “polyarchy,” differences do derive from where one draws the “cutting point” on the continuum of civil and political freedom. Like many substantial conceptual approaches, O’Donnell’s cutting point is the combination of “inclusive, fair, and competitive elections” and “basic accompanying freedoms,” which can be read (although O’Donnell may not mean it to be read so restrictively) as freedoms to facilitate “inclusive, fair and competitive elections.” Ibid, p. 36.

Until recently, the definition I have used with my colleagues, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, was largely identical to O’Donnell’s in this respect. In our twenty-six country study, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988 and 1989), we defined democracy essentially in Dahl’s terms of competition, participation, and freedom, with the third dimension requiring “civil and political liberties... sufficient to ensure the integrity of competition and participation” (see the preface to any of the regional volumes, p. xvi). This can be read in more or less precisely the same terms as O’Donnell’s definition: freedom sufficient to make *electoral* competition and participation meaningful, free, and fair. In our most recent conceptual treatment, we have tried to correct for this problem by specifying conditions closer to the conception of liberal democracy articulated here, namely: “A level of civil and political liberties... secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens (acting individually and through various associations) can develop and advocate their views and interests and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously.” Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p. 7.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 13. For a similar, mid-range conception of democracy that also builds on Dahl’s polyarchy, see Jonathan Hartlyn and Arturo Valenzuela, “Democracy in Latin America since 1930,” in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Cambridge History of Latin America*, Volume VI, Part II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 100–101. Their conception also emphasizes the procedures of contestation and participation, with adequate protection for freedoms of expression and association, but adds a third dimension, “constitutionalism,” which, in limiting the hegemony of electoral majorities and the powers of governmental authorities, overlaps with the “executive constraints” element of the Jagers and Gurr democracy scale.

public agencies and courts” which is often denied in his informally institutionalized polyarchies.

The distinction between political and civil freedom, on the one hand, and cultural freedom (or license) on the other is often confused in the debate over whether democracy is inappropriate for Asia (or East Asia, or Confucian Asia, or simply Singapore) because of incompatible values. Liberal democracy does not require the comprehensively exalted status of individual rights that obtains in Western Europe and especially the United States. Thus, one may accept many of the cultural objections of advocates of the “Asian values” perspective – that “Western” democracies have shifted the balance too much in favor of individual rights and social entitlements over rights of the community and social obligations of the individual to the community – and still embrace the political and civic fundamentals of liberal democracy as articulated above.³¹

An appreciation of the dynamics of regime change and the evolution of democracy must allow for a third class of regimes that are less than even minimally democratic but distinct from the more conventional no-party or one-party authoritarian regimes. This requires a second “cutting point” between electoral democracies, which allow for free and fair elections between multiple political parties, and other electoral regimes that have multiple parties, and often many of the other constitutional features of electoral democracy, but which lack at least one basic requirement: a sufficiently fair arena of contestation so that the ruling party may be turned out of power. Juan Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset and I have termed these regimes *pseudodemocracies*, “because the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks (often in part to legitimate) the reality of authoritarian domination.”³²

As I use the term here, there is wide variation among pseudodemocracies. They include what Linz, Lipset, and I termed “semidemocracies,” which more nearly approach electoral democracies in their pluralism and competitiveness, as well as what Giovanni Sartori has termed “hegemonic party systems,” in which a relatively institutionalized ruling party makes extensive use of coercion, patronage, media control, and other features to deny formally

³¹ For a perspective that does just this, see Joseph Chan, “Hong Kong, Singapore, and Asian Values: An Alternative View,” *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (April 1997), pp. 35–48. Sexual freedom, the freedom to distribute pornography, and the freedom of a woman to choose whether or not to abort her fetus may all be considered elements of a liberal society, but these issues involve value choices and beliefs that go well beyond the choice of a system of government. One can have a political system that clearly meets the ten criteria of liberal democracy I have outlined but which is culturally conservative or restrictive in some of the policies it sets. The key test is whether those who disagree with these policies have full civic and political freedom to mobilize to change them.

³² Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, “What Makes for Democracy,” in Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p. 8. See also Diamond, Linz and Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988 and 1989), p. xviii of the preface to each volume. Burton, Gunther, and Higley (“Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes, pp. 6–7) also identify a class of electoral pseudodemocracies, but their usage differs from mine in including statutory one-party states.

legal opposition parties a fair and authentic chance to compete for power.³³ Another characteristic feature of such hegemonic party systems is that the ruling party regularly wins massively and controls the overwhelming bulk of legislative seats, and most governments at the regional and local levels. Mexico (until 1988), Senegal, and Singapore are classic examples of such a system. Here pseudodemocracy extends beyond such hegemonic party regimes, to encompass as well multiparty electoral systems in which the undemocratic dominance of the ruling party may be weak and contested (as in Kenya), or highly personalistic and poorly institutionalized (as in Kazakhstan), or in the process of decomposing into a more competitive system (as in Mexico).

What distinguishes pseudodemocracies from other nondemocracies is that they tolerate the existence of at least some (and at least somewhat independent) opposition parties. Typically, this also is accompanied by more space for organizational pluralism and dissident activity in civil society than is tolerated in the most repressive authoritarian regimes. Thus, as the Appendix shows, pseudodemocracies tend to have somewhat higher levels of freedom than other “authoritarian” regimes.³⁴ Invariably, pseudodemocracies fall well below the standard of liberal democracy, but they vary significantly in their repressiveness, and in their proximity to the threshold of electoral democracy. In its December 1996 national elections, Ghana crossed this crucial threshold with a process that was much more competitive (in large measure due to impartial administration and effective citizen monitoring).³⁵ With recent reforms to increase the autonomy of its electoral administration and growing assertiveness and organization among independent organizations (including election monitoring groups) in civil society, Mexico as well could cross this threshold in the presidential elections of the year 2000.

³³ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976): 230–238.

³⁴ If we take seriously Collier’s and Levitsky’s appeal to work to clear away the mounting conceptual clutter in comparative democratic studies, it is useful for any effort at a typology of regimes to orient itself to other concepts, particularly “diminished subtypes” of democracy. Those subtypes which are missing the attribute of free elections or relatively fair multiparty contestation clearly fall into my category of “pseudodemocracies.” Those which have real and fair multiparty competition, but with limited suffrage, are not neatly placed in this framework, and would seem to constitute a separate type of “exclusionary,” “oligarchic,” or “limited suffrage” democracy. While this is a distinct regime type, it is not relevant to an analysis of regime variation in the third wave, because almost invariably, electoral regimes since the mid-1970s have been based on universal suffrage. Those regimes which are diminished by the absence of adequate civil liberties or civilian control of the military may nevertheless be electoral democracies; this is the case with what Terry Karl refers to as the “hybrid” regimes of Central America (see her article of that title, especially pp. 80–81). See in particular Collier and Levitsky’s figure 4, which classifies different categories of diminished subtypes. Careful attention is needed to empirical application of concepts, however. For example, Donald Emmerson’s category of “illiberal democracy” would seem to be coincident with “electoral democracy” in my framework, and indeed it could be said that a principal reason why these regimes are merely “electoral” democracies is because they are illiberal. However, as he applies the concept to Southeast Asia, and especially to the two regimes he classifies as “one-party democracy,” Singapore and Malaysia, the convergence with my own framework breaks down. Civil and political freedoms are so constrained in these two countries that the minimum criterion of electoral democracy – a sufficiently level electoral playing field to give opposition parties a chance at victory – is not met. See Donald K. Emmerson, “Region and Recalcitrance: Rethinking Democracy through Southeast Asia,” *The Pacific Review* 8, no. 2 (1995), pp. 223–248.

³⁵ See the articles on Ghana by E. Gyimah-Boadi and Terrence Lyons in the *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 2 (April 1997).

The distinction between the two types of nondemocratic regimes is important theoretically. If we view democracy in *developmental* terms, as emerging in fragments or parts, by no fixed sequence or timetable, then the presence of legal opposition parties that may compete for power and win some seats in parliament, and of the greater space for civil society that tends to prevail in such systems, constitute important foundations for future democratic development.³⁶ Not only in Mexico and Ghana, but in Jordan, Morocco, and several other African states where former one-party dictators or military rulers engineered their reelection under pseudodemocratic conditions, these democratic fragments tend to press out the boundaries of what is politically possible. And this increases the prospects for a breakthrough to electoral democracy. In a similar vein (in an earlier era), elite-dominated, restricted democracies in Chile, Venezuela, and Costa Rica gradually became more democratic as civil society organizations and capable, middle-class parties forged effective linkages with one another.³⁷

This framework leaves, then, a fourth, residual category, which I term simply “authoritarian regimes.” Such regimes vary in their levels of freedom (see again the Appendix), and may even hold fairly somewhat competitive elections, as in Uganda (and previously several other one-party African regimes).³⁸ They may have some modest civil society and judicial autonomy. Or they may be extremely closed and repressive, even totalitarian. But all of them lack a crucial building block of democracy: formally legal and independent opposition parties. Significantly, all of the most repressive regimes in the world, as measured by Freedom House, fall in this category.

It should be emphasized that this four-fold typology is a system for classifying national political regimes, but political reality on the ground does not admit so neatly of such classifications. The level of democracy may vary significantly across sectors and institutional arenas (as would be expected if democracy emerges “in parts”). It may also vary considerably across territory within the national state. Thus, some states in India manifest not only generally better, more efficient and accountable governance, but also better protection for civil liberties and lower levels of electoral and political violence, than other states. The states of Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, and West Bengal might thus properly be considered more *liberally* democratic than the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and

³⁶ Both the term “developmental” and my emphasis on the continuous and open-ended nature of change in the character, degree, and depth of democratic institutions owe heavily to the work of Richard L. Sklar: “Developmental Democracy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 4 (1987) pp. 686–714, and “Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy.” Readers will nevertheless note important differences in our perspectives.

³⁷ Terry Lynn Karl, “The Hybrid Regimes of Central America,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (July 1995), pp. 82–83.

³⁸ In fact, a comprehensive typology would have to distinguish the one-party or no-party electoral regime as a different type of pseudodemocracy, where elections do not just ratify the nominations of the ruling party but have some potential to defeat incumbent legislators (at least) and to offer some means of vertical accountability to voters. Although this model was once common in Africa, however, today it is only practiced in Uganda. Everywhere else, the corruption and decadence that followed from the absence of opposition parties forced authoritarian regimes to liberalize at least to this cosmetic degree.

Bihar, for example.³⁹ In many Latin American countries as well, the worst abuses of human rights occur in the countryside, where local *caciques* may still be entrenched in their de facto power and guerilla forces and narcotraffickers have their main bases of support (or even, a state within a state). The treatment of African-Americans in the southern states prior to 1965 is another case in point. Particularly with respect to large countries, it may be necessary to disaggregate to form a more sensitive picture of the quality and extent of democracy.

2. Democracy in “Developmental” Perspective

As the above discussion makes clear, even “liberal” democracies fall short of democratic ideals. At the less liberal end of the group, they may still have some serious flaws in their guarantees of personal and associational freedom. And certainly any casual acquaintance with the news from Italy, Japan, Belgium, France, the United States and most other industrialized democracies will underscore that even long-established and well institutionalized democracies with the most liberal average freedom scores of 1 or 1.5 are afflicted with serious problems of corruption, favoritism, and unequal access to political power, not to mention voter apathy, cynicism, and disengagement.⁴⁰

There is not now and has never been in the modern world of nation-states a perfect democracy – where all citizens have roughly equal political resources, and government is completely or almost completely responsive to all citizens. This is why Dahl used the term “polyarchy” to characterize the more limited form of democracy that is realistically possible (to date) in the modern state.⁴¹ An important intellectual trend of democracy’s third wave has been the increased “valorization” of (even limited) political democracy as an end in itself, and the growing tendency of scholars and intellectuals (even many of those who had once been on the Marxist and rejectionist left) to agree on the need for realism in what can be expected of democracy. Certainly, democracy does not produce all good things. As Juan Linz observed two decades ago, “political democracy does not necessarily assure even a reasonable approximation of what we would call a democratic *society*, a society with considerable equality of opportunity in all spheres.”⁴² As Schmitter and Karl have argued,

³⁹ I am grateful to Sunita Parikh for emphasizing this point to me.

⁴⁰ A problem with the Freedom House survey of “freedom in the world” is that the twin seven-point ratings of political rights and civil liberties are not able adequately to convey variation (across countries and over time within countries) at the extreme endpoints of the scales. Thus, some countries within the most free rating of 1,1 no doubt have better, more comprehensive protection for civil liberties, and a more generally liberal civil and political climate, than others. Denmark might compare favorably to Austria and the United States in this regard. At the most repressive end of the scale (7,7), variation between countries and over time is also masked. There is growing evidence, briefly addressed in my conclusion, that state power is somewhat more constrained and open to competition, particularly at local levels, in China today as compared to ten or twenty years ago, and there is certainly more societal pluralism and openness in China today than in North Korea, which has the same 7,7 rating.

⁴¹ Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 2.

⁴² Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 97. Emphasis is mine.

democracies are not necessarily more economically or administratively efficient, or more orderly and governable, than autocratic regimes.⁴³ But in allowing for civil and political freedom, and for the real possibility of selecting alternative governments and policies, and especially in the scope they provide for disadvantaged and disempowered groups to organize and mobilize politically, liberal democracies in particular provide over the long run better prospects for reducing social injustices and correcting mistaken policies and corrupt practices.

It is important, then, not to interpret the achievement of democracy – even liberal democracy – as a terminal point in political evolution. Democracy should be viewed as a developmental phenomenon. Even where it exists, where a country is above the threshold of formal (or even liberal) democracy, democratic institutions can be improved and deepened, and may need to be consolidated (see below); political competition can be made fairer and more open; participation can become more inclusive and vigorous; citizens' knowledge, resources, and competence can grow; elected (and appointed) officials can be made more responsive and accountable; civil liberties can be better protected and the rule of law become more efficient and secure.⁴⁴ Viewed in this way, continued democratic development is a challenge for all countries, including the U.S., and all democracies, new and established, could become more democratic than they now are. Obviously, the improvement and invigoration of democracy will not solve all social and economic problems societies face. But in widening the scope of public deliberation, empowering traditionally marginalized and alienated groups, and generally increasing citizen competence and government responsiveness, reforms that deepen and extend democracy may also increase the sophistication of mass publics and the legitimacy – and hence governing capacity – of elected officials.⁴⁵ Beyond this, increasing citizen competence and participation in the political process will have spillover effects into other arenas of social life (and vice versa). The general increase in civic engagement – of direct, active participation in all sorts of voluntary associations and community networks – in turn generates norms of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation that further reduce cynicism,

⁴³ Schmitter and Karl, "What Democracy Is... And Is Not," pp. 85–87.

⁴⁴ On the problem of civic competence and the challenges to improving it in contemporary, large-scale, complex, media-intensive, and information-saturated societies, see Robert A. Dahl, "The Problem of Civic Competence," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 4 (October 1992), pp. 45–59.

⁴⁵ In their comparative study of the restructuring of property relations in postsocialist Eastern Europe, *Postsocialist Pathways* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), Laszlo Bruszt and David Stark argue that policy coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability are fostered where executives are constrained and reform policies are negotiated between governments and "deliberative associations." As evidence they cite in particular the different trajectories of economic reform and performance in the (more deliberative and successful) Czech Republic and (the more delegative and economically unstable) Hungary. This finding is particularly significant given the conventional view in the literature (and especially in international policy circles) that if painful economic restructuring is to be achieved under democracy, power must be "delegated" to technocratic elites in the executive branch who are then "insulated" from popular pressures and horizontal accountability. By contrast, Stark and Bruszt argue that the "extended accountability" emanating from broad consultation and deliberation generates a societal consensus that contributes not only to democracy but to policy effectiveness. See their forthcoming book, The notion of "extended accountability" was articulated by Stark in his presentation to the Stanford Seminar on Democratization, February 15, 1996. This view has an important kinship with Guillermo O'Donnell's analysis of the problems of "delegative democracy" (in his article of that title).

encourage participation, and facilitate economic development, democratic stability, and the resolution of social problems. Increasingly, social scientists are emphasizing that such “social capital” is a critical resource for dealing with the seemingly intractable problems of poverty, alienation, and crime in the United States and other industrialized democracies. In the absence of such social capital, “mutual distrust and defection, vertical dependence and exploitation, isolation and disorder, criminality and backwardness [reinforce] one another in ... interminable vicious circles.”⁴⁶

Viewed from a developmental perspective, the fate of democracy is open-ended. Democracy generally emerges in different “parts” or stages through many different paths and degrees in different countries, and electoral democracy is only one element of full political democracy.⁴⁷ Moreover, democratic development may move both ways. Just as electoral democracies can become more democratic – more liberal, more constitutional, more competitive, more accountable, more inclusive, and more vigorously participatory – so they can also become more illiberal, abusive, corrupt, exclusive, narrow, unresponsive and unaccountable – i.e., less democratic. And liberal democracies, too, may either improve or decline over time in their levels of political accountability, accessibility, competitiveness, and responsiveness. There is no guarantee that democratic development will be only in one direction, and much to suggest that all political systems (including democracies, liberal or otherwise) tend to become rigid, corrupt, and unresponsive over time in the absence of periodic reform and renewal.⁴⁸ Indeed, democracy may not only become diminished in its political quality over time, it may even effectively *disappear*, not merely through the breakdown or overthrow of formal democratic institutions (e.g. by military or executive coup) but through more insidious processes of decay. This is a phenomenon – what may be termed the progressive “hollowing

⁴⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 181; see also Putnam’s, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995), pp. 65–78. On the reciprocity between a vigorous civil society and an effective democratic state, see also Larry Diamond, “Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July 1994), pp. 4–17.

⁴⁷ Sklar, “Developmental Democracy.” Although Sklar’s approach is very different than that of the “transitions” school, as exemplified (with important variations) by the work of such people as Juan Linz, Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Terry Karl, and Samuel Huntington, even this school acknowledges that “democratization” of authoritarian regimes is typically preceded by “liberalization,” in which (to use Sklar’s language) important parts or “fragments” of democracy may emerge, and press forward for further democratization. Sklar’s view is quite distinctive, however, in viewing democratic development as a continuous process, rather than the crossing of a threshold of regime type. See also his “Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy.”

⁴⁸ Such a developmental perspective may help to inoculate democratic theory against the tendency toward teleological thinking that Guillermo O’Donnell discerns in the literature on democratic consolidation: that is, the underlying assumption that there is a particular natural path and end state of democratic development (“Another Institutionalization”). This inoculation is important not only because, as O’Donnell notes, the new democracies of the East and South may look very different than those of Europe and North America (even when they become institutionalized), but even more so, I would argue, because there is no endpoint of democratic development. Thus, as I will indicate below, while I differ from O’Donnell in believing that the concept of democratic “consolidation” is meaningful and useful, it is only so in denoting a threshold of political legitimacy and stability that is not irreversible. Moreover, even when it remains thoroughly consolidated, democracy can always become stronger or weaker, fuller or thinner. When it stagnates, and its citizens become politically apathetic and detached, it is likely to deteriorate. The price of liberty is indeed eternal vigilance.

out” of formal democracy – that is often neglected in contemporary discussions and is central to understanding the trajectory of democratic change in the world over the last few years, as the following review of empirical trends will show.

3. The Rise and Crest of the Third Wave

By any conception, democracy has expanded dramatically since the third wave began in 1974. If we take a minimalist or formal conception of democracy (in which governmental offices are filled through competitive, multi-party elections that place incumbents at real risk of defeat), both the number of democracies in the world and the proportion of the world’s regimes that are democratic have increased dramatically since the third wave began. In 1974, there were only 39 democracies total in the world, and only 28 with populations over one million (or so close to one million that they would exceed that mark by 1995).⁴⁹ Only about 23 percent of the countries over one million population and about 27 percent of all the world’s countries were formally democratic. The difference between these proportions raises an interesting relationship between size and democracy that has held continuously and become much more dramatic over the course of the third wave: very small countries (with populations of less than one million) are significantly more likely to be democratic (and free). Today, 57 percent of the 149 states with over one million population are electoral democracies, compared with 76 percent of the 42 smaller states; and among the (33) states with less than half a million population, 86 percent are democracies. Variation in the likelihood of liberal democracy is even more striking: about one-third of states with one

⁴⁹ Huntington counts 30 democracies in 1973 with populations over one million, but does not list the countries he classifies. Presumably he does not count as democracies the Chilean and Uruguayan regimes that broke down in 1973, so the discrepancy could be due to his classification of some ambiguous regimes (notably Malaysia) as democratic at the time. In classifying ambiguous regimes in 1974, I follow Przeworski’s principle that “(d)emocracy is a system in which parties lose elections” (*Democracy and the Market*, p. 10). In ambiguous cases, I have classified civilian, multiparty, electoral regimes as democratic only if the ruling party lost power in an election at some point, or clearly allowed itself to be at risk of electoral defeat. Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia (after 1969) and Senegal all failed this rule in 1974. For the 1990s, I simply accept Freedom House’s classification of regimes as formally democratic or not, but it also appears to follow this principle. In 1995, it classifies as nondemocracies a number of civilian, multiparty, electoral regimes; in addition to the above four (still), Ghana, Gabon, Cameroon, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Despite the presence of multiparty electoral competition, these countries are nondemocracies (even in the minimalist sense) because the ruling party in each case is so dominant (or in Giovanni Sartori’s classic framework, “hegemonic”) that it does not allow the opposition any kind of fair chance to defeat it electorally (or challenge it in between elections). This failure to qualify as formally democratic does not derive merely from the low civil liberties or average freedom scores of these countries; a number of the formal democracies in 1995 (such as Turkey, Moldova, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and such longtime democracies as India, Sri Lanka, and Colombia) have average freedom scores in 1995 of 4 to 5, no better than a number of the electoral nondemocracies above. The key distinction in these ratings of formal democracy is, then, as Przeworski and his colleagues frame it: “an opposition that has some chance of winning office as a consequence of elections” (“What Makes Democracies Endure?” p. 50). For a full listing of regimes, see the Appendix.

million population are liberal democracies, as compared with two-thirds of smaller states and almost 80% of states with less than half a million population.⁵⁰

By the beginning of 1997, the number of democracies in the world had increased to 118, and even though the number of independent states has steadily grown throughout the third wave (by more than a third), the proportion of countries that are formally democratic has more than doubled, to over 60 percent. More striking still is how much of this growth (both proportionally and in sheer number of democracies) has occurred in the 1990s, with the collapse of Soviet and East European communism and the diffusion of the third wave to sub-Saharan Africa. As Table 1 shows, the number and percentage of democracies in the world has increased *every year* since 1990. This can only be described as a democratic breakthrough without precedent in world history. As recently as 1990, when he was writing *The Third Wave*, Huntington found only 45 percent of the world's states (with populations over one million) to be democratic, a proportion virtually identical to that in 1922 at the peak of the first wave.⁵¹ Even if we similarly restrict our view to countries with populations over one million, the proportion of democracies in the world now stands at 57 percent.

⁵⁰ More precisely the proportions of countries rated "free" by freedom house for 1996 are: over one million population, 34.2%; under one million population 66.2%; and under 500,000 population, 78.8%. Unfortunately, space does not permit a systematic exploration of why this is so. Certainly, part of the relationship is probably an artifact of experience with British colonialism, which is more likely to have left behind democratic and legalistic traditions. Economic development may also account for some of the difference. However, as I argue elsewhere, I believe there is a real (inverse) relationship between size and democracy, and that very small countries do have certain advantages in making democracy work. For a classic exploration of this relationship, see Robert A. Dahl and Edward R. Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

⁵¹ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp. 25–26.

Table 1: Number of Electoral Democracies, 1974, 1990–96

Year	Number of Democracies	Number of Countries	Democracies as % of all Countries	Annual Rate of Increase in Democracies as %
1974	39	142	27.5	
1990	76	165	46.1	n.a.
1991	91	183	49.7	19.7
1992	99	186	53.2	8.1
1993	108	190	56.8	8.3
1994	114	191	59.7	5.3
1995	117	191	61.3	2.6
1996	118	191	61.8	0.9

Sources: Data from Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93, 1993–94, 1994–95 (New York: Freedom House, 1991 and years following); and *Freedom Review* 27 (January–February 1996).

Note: Figures for 1990–95 are for the end of the calendar year. Figures for 1974 reflect my estimate of the number of democracies in the world in April 1974, at the inception of the third wave.

What has been the trend with respect to *liberal* democracy? As one would expect, both the number of countries and the proportion of countries in the world rated “free” by Freedom House have also significantly increased, albeit not as dramatically. From the beginning of the Freedom House survey in 1972 until 1980, the number of free states increased by only ten (and the proportion of free states in the world rose only slightly, from 29 percent in 1972 to 32 percent in 1980). Moreover, change was not only in one direction. During the first six years of the third wave (to 1980) five states suffered breakdowns or erosions of democracy that cost them their free status by the end of the decade. In fact, although the overall trend of regime change during the third wave has been toward significantly more democracy and freedom in the world, fully 22 countries suffered democratic breakdowns or recessions from the “free” status between 1974 and 1991, and — as I will shortly indicate — further deterioration and oscillation has occurred since then.⁵²

In the latter half of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, freedom took its biggest jump during the third wave. As we see in Table 2, between 1985 and 1991 (a crucial time point, since it encompasses the demise of both East European and Soviet communism), the number of free states jumped from 56 to 76 and the proportion of free states in the world

⁵² Larry Diamond, “The Globalization of Democracy,” in Robert O. Slater, Barry R. Schutz, and Steven R. Dorr, eds., *Global Transformation and the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), Table 3.2, p. 41.

increased from a third to over 40 percent. Moreover, the proportion of blatantly authoritarian, “not free” states, declined to a historic low of 23 percent in 1991, falling further to just over 20 percent in 1992. By contrast, in 1972 almost half the independent states in the world were rated “not free.” Average levels of freedom in the world also experienced their biggest improvement in the period from 1985 to 1991. Although the third wave had been under way for a decade, by 1985 the mean overall freedom score (averaging political rights and civil liberties) was no different than it had been in 1974 – 5.0. And the average overall freedom score was only slightly better (and virtually no different from the 1980 average). From 1985 to 1991, the average overall freedom score improved by more than half a point on the seven-point scale (Table 3).

The 1991–1992 period appears to have been the high-water mark for freedom in the world. After 1991, the proportion of free states declined slightly, and even with the modest net increase of three free states during 1996, in proportional terms liberal democracies are no more common now than they were in 1991.⁵³ Moreover, since 1992, the proportion of “not free” states has jumped sharply, from 20 to almost 28 percent (Table 2). Gains in freedom have generally been offset by losses over the past five years. During 1993, 43 countries registered a decline in their freedom score, 18 a gain. In 1994, eight countries improved their freedom category (e.g., from partly free to free) and four declined in category, but overall, freedom scores increased in 22 countries while declining in 23.⁵⁴ During 1995, the trend was slightly more positive, with 29 increases in freedom scores and 11 declines. Yet the total number of free states did not change at all. With country gains in freedom outstripping setbacks in 1996 as well (31 to 13), 1996 might appear to signal the renewal of at least a modest expansionary trend for democracy. However, despite the continued (slight) increase in the number of electoral democracies, the overall level of freedom in the world in 1996 was virtually identical to what it had been in 1992 (Table 3). The incremental gains in the overall average freedom score since 1993 suggests the possibility of a renewed positive trend, but the total improvement has been slight (less than two-tenths of a point on the 7-point scale) and in all likelihood it will remain uneven and piecemeal – far short of the dramatic proportions of a “wave.”

⁵³ During 1996, five states crossed the threshold to “free” status – the Philippines, Taiwan, Romania, Bolivia, and Venezuela – while two slipped from it (Slovakia and Ecuador). The developments in Taiwan and Romania may be seen as especially significant since they marked the first time in history that either country had reached what could be termed liberal democracy. *Freedom Review* 28, no. 1 (January-February 1997), pp. 6–7.

⁵⁴ *Freedom in the World, 1994–1995*, pp. 5–7.

Table 2: Freedom Status of Independent States, 1972–96

Year	Free	%	Partly Free	%	Not Free	%	Total	%
1972	42	29.0	36	24.8	67	46.2	145	100
1980	52	31.9	52	31.9	59	36.2	163	100
1985	56	33.5	56	33.5	55	32.9	167	100
1990	65	39.4	50	30.3	50	30.3	165	100
1991	76	41.5	65	35.5	42	22.9	183	100
1992	75	40.3	73	39.2	38	20.4	186	100
1993	72	37.9	63	33.2	55	28.9	190	100
1994	76	39.8	61	31.9	54	28.3	191	100
1995	76	39.8	62	32.5	53	27.7	191	100
1996	79	41.4	59	31.1	53	27.7	191	100

Sources: For 1972, 1980, and 1985: Raymond D. Gastil, ed., *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1988–89* (New York: Freedom House, 1989). For 1991–95: See Table 1.

Note: Ratings refer to the status of the countries at the end of the calendar year. See text for an explanation of the basis of the ratings.

Table 3: Trends in Overall Freedom Levels, 1974–1996

Year	Number of Declining Freedom Scores	Number of Improving Freedom Scores	Median Freedom Score	Average Freedom Score
1974	16	16	5.0	4.47
1980	24	25	5.0	4.26
1985	12	9	5.0	4.29
1990	18	36	4.0	3.84
1991	17	41	3.5	3.68
1992	31	39	3.5	3.61
1993	43	18	3.5	3.72
1994	23	22	3.5	3.69
1995	11	29	3.5	3.63
1996	13	31	3.5	3.58

Sources: See Table 2.

Juxtaposing the two divergent trends of the 1990s – continued growth in electoral democracy, but relative stasis in the incidence of liberal democracy – shows the increasing shallowness of democratization in the late period of the third wave. During the first six years of this decade, the gap between formal and liberal democracy in the world steadily widened (and then slightly narrowed in 1996). As a proportion of all the world's democracies, free states declined from 85 percent in 1990 to 65 percent in 1995 and 67 percent in 1996. (Table 4).

Table 4: Formal and Liberal Democracies, 1990–96

Year	Number of Formal Democracies of all states	% of all states	Number of Free States – Liberal Democracies	% of all states	Number of Free States as a % of Formal Democr.	Total
1990	76	46.1	65	39.4	85.5	165
1991	91	49.7	76	41.5	83.5	183
1992	99	53.2	75	40.3	75.8	186
1993	108	56.8	72	37.9	66.7	190
1994	114	59.7	76	39.8	66.7	191
1995	117	61.3	76	39.8	65.0	191
1996	118	61.8	79	41.4	67.0	191

Sources: See Table 1.

During this period, the quality of democracy (as measured by the levels of political rights and civil liberties) has eroded in a number of the most important and influential new democracies of the third wave – Russia, Turkey, Brazil, and Pakistan – while an expected transition to democracy in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria imploded. At the same time, political freedom has deteriorated in several of the longest-surviving democracies in the developing world, including India, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Venezuela, although it has begun to improve again in India and Venezuela.

As Huntington has argued in the *The Third Wave*, the demonstration effects that are so important in the wavelike diffusion or recession of democracy emanate disproportionately from the more powerful countries within a region, and internationally. Table 5 shows the trends in average freedom scores for the past decade (from 1986 to 1996) for twelve countries that are electoral democracies today and that could be considered the most

powerful countries (in population and gross national product) within their regions.⁵⁵ The overall picture conveys the mixed and contradictory nature of global democratic trends in recent years. In two of these twelve countries – South Korea and Poland – freedom scores have been continuously good (“free”) since their transitions to democracy and have even improved in recent years (the trend is also positive in South Africa, but its democratic transition is too recent to draw many inferences yet). In each of the six countries that have been electoral democracies for all or most of the decade covered in the table, freedom levels have eroded. Most strikingly, India has gone from a longtime status of free to partly free.⁵⁶ Pakistan has declined, since its democratic transition in 1988, from nearly free to the edge of political chaos, with massive political corruption and heavy-handed presidential intervention forcing out one elected government after another. Brazil and the Philippines experienced deterioration in civil liberties that has put them just below the free category, although both then improved their freedom scores (with the Philippines rejoining the “free” category). Argentina remains free (with significant progress on economic reform), but its freedom scores have been edging steadily downward since 1990, which is about the time that a president with less apparent commitment to democratic procedures, Carlos Menem, succeeded Raul Alfonsin. Thailand has oscillated quite a bit due to military intervention, overt and more subtle, and only in 1996, as military influence continued to ebb, did it recover the nearly free rating it had held in the late 1980s. Turkey’s deterioration has been most striking of all, declining sharply since 1993 from the nearly free average score (3) it held for six years, reflecting growing military influence and what have been described as “widespread” and “appalling” human rights abuses.⁵⁷ Finally, in the more recent (and unstable) electoral

⁵⁵ Table 5 also includes Nigeria as a kind of parenthetical reference, because it appeared, for so much of this period to be moving toward democracy, and had constructed most of the architecture of electoral democracy until 1993, when the military annulled the results of a free and fair presidential election and then ultimately scrapped the whole emergent electoral system in a November coup. The drastic reduction in freedom in Nigeria since the June 1993 election annulment underscores my point about the significant recessionary trends of freedom in the world in recent years. And the demonstration effects of military rule in Nigeria should not be dismissed. They may well have contributed to the military overthrows of electoral democracy in Gambia in 1995 (where Nigeria had military advisors stationed) and in Niger (Nigeria’s principal northern neighbor) in January 1996. The poignancy and needlessness of Nigeria’s political tragedy emerges in particularly sharp relief when its trend in freedom scores is compared with South Africa’s. From the late 1980s, both of these countries began to experience a controlled political decompression, and their freedom scores improved step-wise in remarkably parallel fashion – until 1993, when the Nigerian military aborted democracy while the South African regime was preparing to inaugurate it.

⁵⁶ It must be conceded that Freedom House has become more sensitive in its scoring in recent years, and in the 1990s its ratings appear to reflect a greater tendency to downgrade freedom scores in electoral democracies for problems of human rights abuses, electoral violence, military influence, and generally poor and corrupt functioning of democratic institutions. The freedom score for India (4), which is no better than for nondemocratic Mexico, Jordan, and Ghana in 1995, strikes many observers (including myself) as particularly questionable and perhaps harsh in its underappreciation of the extent of electoral competitiveness and the vibrancy of Indian civil society. Nevertheless, I believe the overall implication of these scores, that levels of civil and political freedom have diminished since the mid-1980s in many prominent electoral democracies, is valid, and supported by other evidence and analysis (including the rising incidence of religious and secessionist violence and repressive state responses).

⁵⁷ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World, 1994–1995*, p. 567; Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1994* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1993), p. 243. See also the State Department’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994*, which frankly notes the persistence of torture and excessive use of force, despite the close security and economic ties between the U.S. and Turkey. The *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1995) indicates some improvement in Turkey’s human

democracies of Russia and Ukraine, freedom scores have declined slightly since the transition. The relative success of Russia's 1996 presidential elections was an important step toward institutionalizing electoral competition, but it may also be seen as more of an aversion of political disaster than a decisive gain for political freedom (as Russia's freedom score registered no change).

Table 5: Average Freedom Scores, 1986–1996 / 12 Influential Electoral Democracies

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
India	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	3
Pakistan	4.5	4.5	3 T	3	4	4.5	4.5↓	4	4	4↓	4.5
Brazil	2	2	2.5	2	2.5	2.5↓	2.5	3.5	3	3	3
Argentina	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2.5	2.5↓	2.5	2.5↓	2.5
Turkey	3.5	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	5	4.5
Philippines	3 T	2	2.5	2.5↓	3	3	3	3.5	3.5	3	2.5
South Korea	4.5	4	2.5 T	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	2
Thailand	3	3	3	2.5↑	2.5	5	3.5	4	4	3.5	3
Russia ⑤	7	6.5	5.5	5.5↑	4.5	3 T	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Ukraine ⑤	7	6.5	5.5	5.5↑	4.5	3 T	3	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
Poland	5.5	5	5	3.5	2 T	2	2	2	2	1.5	1.5
South Africa	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5↑	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	2.5 T	1.5	1.5
(Failed Transition)											
(Nigeria)	6	5.5	5	5.5	5	4.5	4.5	6	6.5	7	6.5

T – Indicates year of transition to electoral democracy

⑤ – Scores are for USSR until 1991

↑↓ – Denotes an upward or downward trend in the level of freedom, but without a change in score

rights situation in 1995, including the amendment of a repressive law, the release of scores of political prisoners, and some reduction in killings by “death squads,” due largely to international and especially European pressure. However, there persisted a pattern of abuse much more characteristic of authoritarian regimes than of even minimal, electoral democracies. “Free expression was still punished with arrests and imprisonment, torture was still employed as a routine instrument of police investigation, an abusive counterinsurgency campaign continued to empty Kurdish villages, and there were continued reports of disappearances” (p. 239). Both the radical separatist Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK, and Turkey’s state security forces have been responsible for extensive violence against innocent civilians in violation of international law. Human Rights Watch estimates that the civil war in Southeastern Turkey has claimed “over 19,000 deaths, including some 2,000 death-squad killings of suspected PKK sympathizers, two million displaced, and more than 2,200 villages destroyed, most of which were burned down by Turkish security forces.” Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch, November 1995), p. 1.

This undertow in the third wave has been particularly significant (if not more widely acknowledged) within Latin America. Of the 22 countries below the Rio Grande with populations over one million, ten have substantively lower freedom scores in 1996 than they did in 1987, while eight have improved their scores.⁵⁸ During this decade, five countries made transitions to formal democracy (Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, Panama, and Paraguay), but only Chile and (more recently) Panama moved to “free” status. Seven countries fell out of the “free” status because of substantive deterioration in democratic conditions, although Bolivia and Venezuela moved back above the free threshold in 1996. Even in some currently free states (such as Argentina, Jamaica, and Venezuela) the overall freedom trend in recent years has been negative. Although it is commonly assumed that Latin America today is overwhelmingly democratic, only nine of the 22 principal countries in the region were rated as free at the end of 1996, compared with thirteen in 1987 (see Table 6).⁵⁹ While harsh and blatant authoritarian rule has receded in the hemisphere, so has liberal democracy, as the region has experienced a regression toward the mean, a “convergence” toward “more mixed kinds of semi-democratic regimes.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Again, it is difficult to compare scores within countries across this span of time because the standards of the freedom survey have risen somewhat in this period. Nevertheless, I am discounting here the declines of Costa Rica from an average score of 1.5 to 2 and of Honduras from 2.5 to 3 (which were explicitly identified by Freedom House as methodological changes); the decline of Guatemala from 3 to 3.5, since the latter score for 1996 denotes a marked improvement from recent years (and probably from what prevailed in 1987); and the decline of Cuba from 6 to 7, which would also seem to involve a shift in rating standards.

⁵⁹ This perspective on the troubled and partly illusory state of democracy in Latin America is assessed extensively in Larry Diamond, “Democracy in Latin America: Degrees, Illusion, and Directions for Consolidation,” in Tom Farer, ed., *Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 52–104. This assessment closely accords with that of Freedom House’s resident Latin Americanist, Douglas W. Payne, who warned in his 1995 annual survey, “Democracy is in the balance in Latin America and the Caribbean, but you would hardly know that from listening to the region’s political leaders.” “Latin America: Ballots, Neo-Strongmen, Narcos, and Impunity,” in *Freedom in the World, 1994–1995*, p. 17.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Hartlyn, “Democracies in Contemporary South America: Convergences and Diversities,” in Joseph Tulchin, ed., *Argentina: The Challenges of Modernization* (forthcoming), p. 14 of November 1995 draft manuscript.

Table 6: Democratic Status of Latin American Countries, 1987 and 1996

<i>Regime Type and Combined Freedom Score</i>	Countries & Freedom Scores (Political Rights, Civil Liberties)	
	1987	1996
<i>Liberal Democracies</i>		
Freedom Score 2	Costa Rica (1,1) Trinidad & Tobago (1,1) ↑	
Freedom Score, 3–4	Argentina (2,1) Uruguay (2,2) Jamaica (2,2) ↑ Dom Republic (1,3) Brazil (2,2) Venezuela (1,2)	Costa Rica (1,2)# Trinidad & Tobago (1,2) ↓ Uruguay (1,2) ↑ Chile (2,2)
Freedom Score 5	Bolivia (2,3) Colombia (2,3) Ecuador (2,3) Honduras (2,3) Peru (2,3)	Argentina (2,3) Bolivia (2,3) ↑ Jamaica (2,3) ↓ Panama (2,3) ↑ Venezuela (2,3) ↑
<i>Electoral Democracies (and pseudodemocracies)</i>		
Freedom Score, 6	Guatemala (3,3)	Brazil (2,4) ↑ Dom Republic (3,3) ↑ Ecuador (2,4) ↓ El Salvador (3,3) Honduras (3,3)# Nicaragua (3,3) ↑
Freedom Score, 7	El Salvador (3,4)	Guatemala (3,4) ↑ Mexico (4,3) ↑ Paraguay (4,3) ↓ Peru (4,3) ↑
Freedom Score, 8–9	Mexico (4,4)	Colombia (4,4) ↓ Haiti (4,5) ↑
<i>Authoritarian</i>		
Freedom Score, 10–11	Chile (6,5) Haiti (5,6) ↓ Nicaragua (5,5) ↑ Panama (5,5) ↓ Paraguay (5,6)	
Freedom score 12–14	Cuba (6,6)	Cuba (7,7)

Note: Excludes countries with less than 1 million population. Figures in parentheses are the Freedom House country scores (political rights and civil liberties, respectively). Each scale ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 being most free. # indicates rating was changed for purely methodological reasons. ↓ signifies the most recent trend of a shift downward and ↑ a shift upward in the freedom score in the previous three years. ↓ signifies a downward trend in the level of

democracy, but not significant enough to have changed the freedom rating. These symbols apply to the last year of change in the period 1993–1995. Sources: *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties 1987–88* (New York: Freedom House, 1988) and *Freedom Review*, Jan-Feb 1995, 1996, 1997.

Some consider it remarkable that Latin American democracies have survived at all under the enormous stresses Latin American democracies have suffered over the past decade – dramatic economic downturns and increases in poverty (only recently being reversed in some countries), the mushrooming drug trade, and the violence and corruption that flourish in its wake. Since the redemocratization of Latin America began in the early 1980s, the response to severe adversity and political crisis – including scandals that have forced presidential resignations in several countries – has primarily been adherence to constitutional process and electoral alternation in office (although the military did nearly overthrow democracy in Venezuela in 1992, and has rattled its sabres loudly elsewhere, as in Paraguay in 1996).⁶¹ In the practice of “voting the bums out” rather than mobilizing against democracy itself, Latin American publics have given many observers cause to discern a normalization and maturation of democratic politics unlike previous eras.⁶² Indeed, a number of democratic governments (in Southern and Eastern Europe as well as Latin America) have been able to make some considerable progress in economic reform during the third wave, and in one sizeable sample of such reform experiences, “the party that initiated cuts in working-class income has been defeated in less than half the cases.”⁶³ This resilience and persistence of constitutional procedures is cause for hope about the future of democracy in Latin America. So are recent reforms which have decentralized power and opened up the electoral process in Venezuela and Colombia, instituted an independent electoral commission in Panama, and improved judicial functioning in several countries. But these positive signs and steps have been counterbalanced and in many countries outweighed by conditions that render electoral democracy in the region increasingly hollow, illiberal, delegative, and afflicted. These trends, evident in the growth of authoritarian practices under elected civilian presidents in countries such as Peru and Venezuela, the persistence of human rights violations and judicial inefficacy, and the explosion of corruption and erosion of the rule of law under pressure from the drug trade, highlight the yawning gap between formal and liberal democracy. Even with their rather different political orientations, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House thus come to remarkably similar conclusions:

Periodic elections and transfers of power have not automatically led to an improvement in the quality of democracy experienced on a daily basis by the majority of citizens.

⁶¹ On “The Coup That Didn’t Happen” in Paraguay, see the article of that title by Arturo Valenzuela, *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 1 (January 1997), pp. 43–55.

⁶² See in particular Karen L. Remmer, “Democracy and Economic Crisis: The Latin American Experience,” *World Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 1990): 315–335; “The Political Impact of Economic Crisis in Latin America,” *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991), pp. 777–800, and “Democratization in Latin America,” in Robert O. Slater, Barry M. Schutz, and Steven R. Dorr, eds., *Global Transformation and the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp. 91–111.

⁶³ Barbara Geddes, “Challenging the Conventional Wisdom,” in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Economic Reform and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) p. 67.

Impunity for serious human rights violations committed by state agents is still appallingly pervasive; for the most part, military and police forces are accountable to courts and to civilian authorities on paper only. The courts fail miserably in providing citizens with a fair and impartial forum for the resolution of private disputes, and even more miserably in protecting them from abuse at the hands of the state, or in redressing those abuses.⁶⁴

The reality is that in the region today, rule is still based more on power than on law.... In a majority of countries the traditionally dominant sectors of society – political elites, the wealthy, armies, police – continue to enrich themselves at public expense, while the human rights of ordinary people are violated with impunity. Judicial systems are less about justice than providing protection for those who can pay for it and punishing those who cannot. Voters can chase presidents and legislators through the ballot box in most countries, but government remains a racket dominated by the powerful and the well-connected.⁶⁵

As I have already suggested, the trends of increasing (or persisting) disorder, human rights violations, legislative and judicial inefficacy, corruption, and military impunity and prerogatives have been evident in other third wave democracies around the world, not only major countries like Turkey and Pakistan but smaller ones such as Albania, Zambia and most of the electoral regimes of the former Soviet Union. Indeed, as one moves toward the former Soviet Union, Africa, parts of Asia, and the Middle East, elections themselves are increasingly hollow and uncompetitive, a thin disguise for the authoritarian hegemony of despots and ruling parties. “As recognition grows of the right freely to elect one’s governmental representatives, more governments [feel] compelled to hold elections in order to gain [international] legitimacy.”⁶⁶ However, in 1995 alone, these contests descended into “an electoral charade” in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (not to mention Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Algeria) because of intimidation, rigging, and constriction (or in the extreme, utter obliteration) of the right of opposition forces to organize and contest.⁶⁷ Since the recent wave of democratization began its sweep through Africa in early 1991, sixteen (formally) civilian regimes have held multiparty elections so flawed that they do not meet the minimal criteria for electoral democracy. In 1996 alone, fraud and intimidation

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1993* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1992), p. 69. Although this assessment is now three years old, the 1996 Report of Human Rights Watch indicates that change has been marginal at best. “More than a decade of civilian rule has allowed for a blossoming of civil society, yet the limits of political space were still defined by torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial executions in 1995.” Such repressive practices still remained to be criminalized by the penal codes of most countries. Judiciaries remained timid at best in guaranteeing due process and individual rights, and routinely accepted confessions obtained through torture. Military justice systems “continued to foster a climate of impunity for perpetrators of human rights.” *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996*, p. 63.

⁶⁵ Payne, “Latin America,” in *Freedom in the World 1994–1995*, p. 17.

⁶⁶ *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996*, p. xxv.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

negated the promise of electoral democracy in eleven of these countries, including Zambia, which lost its democratic status as a result.⁶⁸

We thus have two degrees of gap, between liberal democracy and electoral democracy, and more radically, between liberal democracy and its pale (and in many countries barely discernible) shadow of pseudodemocracy. Perhaps the most stunning feature of the third wave of democratization is how few regimes are left in the world (less than 20 percent) that do not fit into one of these three categories of civilian, multiparty, electoral regimes.⁶⁹ This growing contradiction – continued expansion of the form of electoral democracy (and even more widely, of multiparty elections) while levels of actual freedom within such regimes diminish – signals the ideological hegemony of “democracy” in the post-Cold War world system, but also the superficial nature of that hegemony. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States, and the international community more broadly, demand real electoral democracy, but are not too fussy about human rights and the rule of law. For Africa, a lower standard is set by the major Western powers: opposition parties that can contest for office, even if they are to be manipulated, hounded, and blatantly rigged into defeat at election time.

As the pace of democratic diffusion has quickened in recent years, we should perhaps not be surprised that the gap between democratic form and substance in the world has widened. The wealthy, established democracies, and the international institutions they dominate, expect other countries to have or move toward democratic institutions, but seem willing to accept a low standard of empirical adherence to democratic principles. Thus, an excessive emphasis is placed on “free and fair elections” as the key standard for democracy (or for Africa, simply “multipartyism”), and interest in democratic conditionality wanes after that electoral hurdle has been scaled. But even when chicanery is prevented on election day, how free, fair, and meaningful can elections be when the civil liberties of individuals and associations are routinely violated; when the legislatures that are elected have little or no power over public policy; when state power remains heavily centralized and people have virtually no control over policy and resources at the local level; when the judiciary is corrupt, ineffective, and unable to provide a rule of law; and when elites who are not accountable to any elected authority – the military, the bureaucracy, local political bosses – exercise substantial veto power or direct control over public policy? In these circumstances, elections – however much they freely and accurately reflect the preferences between given options of

⁶⁸ The countries are Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana (in 1992 but not 1996), Togo, Cameroon, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Mauritania, Niger, and Zambia. Particularly significant has been the recent trend toward subversion of the electoral process (in Chad, the Gambia, Niger, and prospectively Nigeria soon) “to clothe the army coup-makers in civilian legitimacy that places little restraint on repressive rule.” Thomas R. Lasner, “Africa: Between Failure and Opportunity,” *Freedom Review* 28, no. 1 (January-February 1997): 133.

⁶⁹ Although regimes can be difficult to classify (in the thinness of their tolerance for political opposition), I calculate that only about 35 regimes in the world did not (as of April 1997) allow at least one or more opposition parties to contest elections, at least superficially. This is only about 18 percent of the world's regimes.

those who turn out to vote on election day – cannot in themselves signal the presence of liberal democracy.

4. Is The Third Wave Over?

With the proportion of liberal democracies in the world now stagnating; with many third wave democracies deteriorating in their actual democratic performance; with human rights abuses persistent and even increasing in recent years in a number of less developed democracies; with the gap between the electoral form and liberal substance of democracy growing; with the percent of the world's population living in free states having actually delined sharply over the past decade (due largely to India's democratic recession, to be sure); and with the world's most populous, powerful, and influential authoritarian states – China, Indonesia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia – showing little or no prospect of democratization in the next few years, the question arises: Is the third wave over?

In two senses, the evidence in the affirmative appears to be mounting. As Table 1 shows, the rate of increase in the number of electoral democracies in the world has steadily declined each year since 1991 in asymptotic fashion, to the point where it is now near zero. While some countries – such as Mexico and Jordan – might complete incremental and fitful transitions to electoral democracy in the next few years, or return to democratic status (such as Peru), or make a more rapid democratic breakthrough (such as Yugoslavia or Zimbabwe), there is not an obvious cluster of candidates to continue to feed a “wave” of transitions. Of course, in 1987 (or even 1988) few foresaw the imminent regional waves of democratization that were about to sweep through Central and Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. But precisely because electoral democracy has spread rapidly to a majority of the world's states, many of these new regimes are highly fragile, and most of the remaining nondemocracies have objective conditions that do not augur well for imminent transitions. Instead, it is more likely that in the next five years democratic regressions (as in Zambia) or breakdowns (as in Niger and Gambia) will largely offset new breakthroughs to electoral democracy, and that some few transitions to democracy will be aborted (as in Nigeria) or otherwise largely drained of democratic content (as has happened through political violence, repression and fraud in Cambodia and many of the former Soviet states). In short, the unprecedented expansion in electoral democracy appears to be drawing to a halt, and new regime concessions to the global expectation of “democracy” seem likely to take the most hollow and ritualistic forms of some type and degree of pseudodemocracy.

If we look even more demandingly beyond the form of democracy – a form that is increasingly expected by world culture and organizations – we see erosion and stagnation offsetting liberalization and consolidation. Liberal democracy – and political freedom more generally – have also levelled off within a narrow range of variation in recent years. While it

is too early to assess whether the slight upward trend of the last three years will be sustained, oscillation along the border between the “free” and “partly free” categories seems more likely than a steady increase in the number of free states. Over the past decade at least twelve democracies that had attained a “free” rating slipped below that threshold at least temporarily.⁷⁰ Of the third-wave democracies from the postcommunist and developing worlds (with populations over one million) that are “free” in 1996, about half (ten of the 22) are clustered in the lowest rating (2.5) of the free category (see Appendix). (Another 14 states are just below the threshold at 3.0). If we take the liberal content of democracy seriously, we must pay close attention to what happens to these and other volatile electoral democracies.

When overall expansion in the number of democracies and the overall level of democraticness in the world halts for a sustained period (say, five to ten years), it seems reasonable to conclude that a democratic wave has come to an end. At least, this marks the end of a “short wave” of democratization. The second wave of democratization lasted about two decades. The third wave appears to have lasted not much longer.

Does this mean that a third reverse wave of democracy is inevitably approaching? This more dramatic change is not yet apparent and may well be avoidable. It is theoretically possible for a wave of democratic expansion to be followed not by a reverse wave but by a period of stagnation or stability, in which the number of democracies in the world overall neither increases or decreases significantly for some time, and in which gains for democracy are more or less offset by losses. It is precisely such a period of stasis we seem to have entered.

Many of the new democracies of the third wave are in serious trouble today, and there are grounds for arguing that the erosion of democratic substance could be a precursor to the actual suspension or overthrow of democracy, whether by executive or military coup. President Alberto Fujimori’s *autogolpe* was preceded by years of steady derioration in political rights and civil liberties. Historically, the path to military coups and other forms of democratic breakdown has been paved with the accumulation of unsolvable problems, the gross corruption and malfunctioning of democratic institutions, the gradual aggrandizement of executive power, and the broad popular disaffection with politics and politicians that are evident today in many third wave democracies (and a few of longer standing).

However, three things are different today, and have so far have prevented a new wave of democratic breakdowns:

1. Military establishments are acutely reluctant to seize power overtly, because of the lack of popular support for a coup (due in part to the discredit many militaries suffered

⁷⁰ These were India, the Philippines, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, the Gambia.

during their previous brutal and inept rule); because of their sharply diminished confidence in their ability to tackle formidable economic and social problems; because of the “disastrous effects on the coherence, efficiency, and discipline of the army” which they have perceived during previous periods of military rule;⁷¹ and, not least, because of the instant and powerful sanctions that the established democracies have shown an increasing resolve to impose against such democratic overthrows.⁷² Thus, even where “the government cannot maintain civil order” and has been returned to power with such a low turnout, and with such “widespread vote-rigging, that its legitimacy is in doubt,” as in Bangladesh this past February 15, the disgusted citizenry does not seem to want a coup, and the military surprises many observers by failing to seize power.⁷³ In addition, many of the democracies of the third wave have made significant progress toward establishing the conditions of “objective civilian control” that prevail in the industrialized democracies: high levels of military professionalism, constrained military role conceptions, subordination of the military to civilian decision makers, autonomy for the military in its limited area of professional competence, and thus “the minimization of military intervention in politics and of political intervention in the military.”⁷⁴ (In the more fragmented and illiberal postcommunist states, different dynamics also appear to have inhibited military coups).⁷⁵

⁷¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “Armed Forces and Democracy: Reforming Civil-Military Relations,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (October 1995), p. 13.

⁷² It is always hard to explain non-events – coups that did not happen. However, Valenzuela’s account of Paraguay’s 1996 crisis is particularly significant for its documentation of the international diplomatic mobilization against the looming threat of military intervention. The threat of international sanctions, inherent in the prevailing international climate and the resolutions of bodies like the EU and the OAS, and explicitly conveyed through messages from individual democracies like the U.S. and communities like the above two, appear to have played a role in deterring military intervention in Guatemala in 1993 and in Turkey since the coming to power of an Islamic-led government in July 1996. Unfortunately, the inhibitions against renewed military intervention appear to be considerably weaker in Africa than in other regions, because most African militaries have far less corporate professionalism and sense of mission, and are riven with ethnic, factional and personalistic divisions and motivations. And to repeat, the persistence of military rule in Nigeria, in the face of rhetorically strident but effectively mild international pressure, appears to have had its own demonstration effects, encouraging militaries in West Africa in particular to seize power (as in Gambia and Niger).

⁷³ “Bangladesh’s Reluctant Army,” *The Economist*, February 24, 1996, pp. 35–36.

⁷⁴ Huntington, “Reforming Civil-Military Relations,” pp. 9–12. I do not think the trends in civil-military relations in third wave (or pre-existing Third World) democracies are as broadly encouraging as Huntington portrays them, however. Undeniable progress in a number of cases, such as South Korea, the Philippines, and Poland, is counterbalanced by stagnation or regression in some others, as discussed below. In particular, as Jonathan Hartlyn observes, the state of civil-military relations in Latin America “remains decidedly mixed for the fundamental reason that it is not obvious what an appropriate role for [the military] should be that would facilitate their removal from active involvement in domestic politics.” Hartlyn, “Democracies in Contemporary South America,” p. 17. Like many other students of Latin America, Hartlyn believes that the militarization of the drug war (supported by the U.S.) has impeded the transition to a more democratically responsible and professionally constrained military.

⁷⁵ The absence of military regimes in the postcommunist states of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia – where state authority is weak and fragmented and civilian, multiparty regimes take the form of pseudodemocracy (or a very illiberal electoral democracy) – may owe to the radically antipolitical atmosphere, “the near total flight from the public world as such.” This, Charles Fairbanks speculates, produces leaders of militias and irregular armies “driven by the desire for money or raw power or by pointless grudges rather than by the ambition that builds states.” (“The Postcommunist Wars,” pp. 28 and 30). In Russia, a major reason why the military has not seized power, in Huntington’s view, is that it is no longer capable of doing so, given the dramatic declines in its

2. Even where, as in Turkey, the Philippines, Brazil, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, progress toward democratic consolidation has been partial and slow, and the quality of democracy has deteriorated in some respects, publics have shown no appetite for a return to authoritarian rule of any kind; culturally, democracy remains a valued goal.⁷⁶
3. Finally, and related to the above, no antidemocratic ideology with global appeal has emerged to challenge the continued global ideological hegemony of democracy as a principle and formal structure of government.

As a result, political, social, and economic stresses that induced the breakdown of democracy during the first and second reverse waves have brought its diminution during the waning years of the third wave. Instead of expiring altogether, democracy has gradually been “hollowed out” in many countries, leaving a shell of multiparty electoralism, often with genuine competitiveness and uncertainty over outcomes, adequate to obtain international legitimacy and rewards (such as Turkey’s admission to the European Customs Union, French military and economic assistance to authoritarian rulers in its former African colonies, and continued U.S. security assistance to many illiberal Latin American regimes). Rather than topple or mobilize against the constitutional system, political leaders and groups that have no use for democracy, or are what Juan Linz calls, in his classic study of democratic breakdowns, “semiloyal” to the system, are more likely to choose and condone oblique and partial assaults on democracy, such as repressing particularly troublesome oppositions and minorities. Instead of seizing power through a coup, the military may gradually reclaim more operational autonomy and control over matters of internal security and anti-insurgency, as they have done in Colombia, Pakistan, Turkey, and to some degree India and Sri Lanka (as well as Guatemala and Nicaragua for a considerable period).⁷⁷ Or they may

coherence, organization, professionalism, and morale since the break-up of the Soviet Union. (“Reforming Civil-Military Relations,” p. 14).

⁷⁶ Observers may discern contrary trends in the resounding reelection, in April 1995, of the personalistic, autocratic President Alberto Fujimori in Peru, and in the strong showing of communists and extreme nationalists in Russia’s December 1995 parliamentary elections. However, even with all the advantages of his emergency authoritarian control, Fujimori barely won the October 1993 constitutional referendum greatly strengthening and centralizing executive power, and his margin of reelection victory was greatly aided by “preelection machinations” and fragmentation among opposition forces. (David Scott Palmer, “Fujipopulism’ and Peru’s Progress,” *Current History* 95, no. 598 (February 1996), pp. 70–75). As for Russia, close analysis of the parliamentary voting for both the party lists and the single-mandate seats suggests that the overall balance in the electorate between pro-reform and reactionary (communist or nationalist) forces may not have shifted much; or at least that voters are beginning to vote their “interests” and do not appear to be searching for “a man on a white horse.” For these interpretations, respectively, see the articles by Michael McFaul and Steven Fish in the April 1996 *Journal of Democracy*, forthcoming. Nevertheless, Russia appears to be the major third wave democracy most likely to fall soon even from the minimal standards of electoral democracy, given the likelihood of either a communist victory (and subsequent crackdown on opposition forces) or massive rigging by the pro-Yeltsin state forces in the June 1996 presidential elections.

⁷⁷ For a trenchant analysis linking Colombia’s democratic regression to murderous violence, wholesale impunity of state security forces for human rights abuses, and “a reassertion of military authority and autonomy,” despite a succession of sophisticated reformist presidents, see Marc W. Chernick, “Colombia’s Fault Lines,” *Current History* 95, no. 598 (February 1996), pp. 76–81. With the military’s open defiance in 1995 of an agreement between the

“constitutionalize” their rule through the facade of rigged elections – as they have done in Niger, the Gambia, and Chad. Instead of terminating multiparty electoral competition and declaring a one-party (or no-party) dictatorship as they did during the first and second reverse waves, frustrated chief executives (like Alberto Fujimori in Peru) will temporarily suspend the constitution, dismiss and reorganize the legislature, and reshape to their advantage a constitutional system that will subsequently retain the formal structure or appearance of democracy. Or they will engage in a cat-and-mouse game with international donors, liberalizing politically in response to pressure and repressing as much as they believe they need to and can get away with in order to hang on to power – as the former one-party regimes of Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, Omar Bongo in Gabon, and Paul Biya in Cameroon have done in Africa.

5. The Imperative of Consolidation

If the historical pattern is to be defied and a third reverse wave avoided, the overriding imperative in the coming years is to consolidate those democracies that have come into being during the Third Wave. In essence, consolidation is the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine.⁷⁸ As Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, along with others, have stressed, this legitimacy must be more than a commitment to democracy in the abstract; it must also involve a shared normative and behavioral commitment to the specific rules and practices of the country’s constitutional system – what

government and a guerilla force to demilitarize a particular area, and of a recommendation to retire a top general found guilty of a political murder, “it seemed that 10 years of carefully establishing an institutional framework for civilian control over the military had collapsed like a house of cards.” (p. 80).

⁷⁸ Three widely influential definitions of legitimacy along these lines are found in Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 64, Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, pp. 16–18, and Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 129–131. One value to this conceptual approach is that it enables us to apply the notion of consolidation, and its relationship to regime persistence and stability, to nondemocratic (or semi-democratic) as well as democratic regimes. Although the contribution of legitimacy to regime persistence becomes murkier in non-democratic regimes, precisely because they rely much more extensively than democracies on coercion and intimidation rather than voluntary compliance, we are at risk of sloppy and normatively biased thinking if we assume that nondemocratic regimes cannot develop substantial legitimacy, and bases of persistence that rely more heavily on consent than coercion. Thus, we can speak of the consolidation of nondemocratic, pseudodemocratic, and partially democratic regimes, as in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Mexico, and we can also speak of their deconsolidation, when their legitimacy becomes contested and strained, hopefully paving the way (as in Mexico) to a democratic transition. For elaboration of this broader conception of legitimacy, and application to the (mainly less-than-democratic) regimes of Southeast Asia, see Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Because democratic institutions have greater capacity for adaptation and self-correction, and are less dependent for their legitimation on personalities and immediate economic performance, I believe that democracies are capable of more enduring legitimation than nondemocracies, and hence of managing political strains and institutional crises without experiencing deconsolidation. But this by no means guarantees that any particular democracy will achieve such lasting legitimation/consolidation, and the hypothesis raises a host of issues beyond the scope of this analysis.

Linz earlier called “loyalty” to the democratic regime.⁷⁹ At the elite level, all significant political competitors or potential competitors (not only parties but interest groups and movements) must come to regard democracy – and the laws, procedures, and institutions it specifies – as “the only game in town,” the only viable framework for governing the society and advancing their own interests. At the mass level, there must be a broad normative and behavioral consensus – cutting across class, ethnic, nationality, and other cleavages – on the legitimacy of the constitutional system, however poor or unsatisfying its performance may be at any point in time.⁸⁰ It is the deep, unquestioned, routinized commitment to democracy and its procedures at the elite and mass levels that produces a crucial element of consolidation, a reduction in the uncertainty of democracy, regarding not so much the outcomes as the rules and methods of political competition. As consolidation advances, “there is a widening of the range of political actors who come to assume democratic conduct [and democratic loyalty] on the part of their adversaries,” a transition from “instrumental” to “principled” commitments to the democratic framework, a growth in trust and cooperation among political competitors, and a socialization of the general population (through both deliberate efforts and the practice of democracy in politics and civil society).⁸¹ Although many contemporary theorists are strangely determined to avoid the term, I believe that these elements of the consolidation process can only be fully understood as encompassing a shift in *political culture*.⁸²

Consolidation involves not just agreement on the rules for competing for power, but fundamental and self-enforcing restraints on the exercise of power. This, in turn, requires a mutual commitment among elites, through the “coordinating” mechanism of a constitution, related political institutions, and often an elite pact or settlement as well, to enforce limits on state authority, no matter which party or faction may control the state at any given time. Only when this commitment is powerfully credible, because it is broadly shared among key alternative power groups, does a ruling party, president, or “sovereign” develop a clear *self-interest* in adhering to the rules of the game, which then makes those constitutional rules “self-enforcing.” This in turn involves not just tactical calculations but again, a normative shift

⁷⁹ Linz, “The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes,” pp. 16, 29–31, 36–37.

⁸⁰ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming), chapter 2, and “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 14–33. For other conceptualizations of consolidation that are similar to or at least not inconsistent with this emphasis, see for example Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market*, pp. 26–34; and Richard Gunther, Hans-Jürgen Puhle, and P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, “Introduction,” in Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 7–10.

⁸¹ Whitehead, “The Consolidation of Fragile Democracies,” p. 79; on the contributions of civil society in this process, see Diamond, “Toward Democratic Consolidation.” In a seminal formulation, Danwart Rustow has given the name “habituation” to this process, in which contingent and instrumental elite commitments to democracy become rooted in values and beliefs at both the elite and mass levels, through the continuous, successful practice of democracy. “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2 (April 1970), p. 357.

⁸² See the essays in Larry Diamond, ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), and in particular, Diamond, “Conclusion: Causes and Effects,” pp. 425–428.

as well. “To survive, a constitution must have more than philosophical or logical appeal; it must be viewed by most citizens as worth defending.”⁸³

Democratic consolidation is fostered by a number of institutional, policy, and behavioral changes. Many of these improve governance directly by strengthening state capacity, liberalizing and rationalizing economic structures, securing social and political order while maintaining basic freedoms, improving horizontal accountability and the rule of law, and controlling corruption in particular. Others improve the representative functions of democratic governance by strengthening political parties and their linkages to social groups, reducing fragmentation in the party system, strengthening the autonomous capacity and public accountability of legislatures and local governments, and invigorating civil society. Most new democracies need these types of institutional reform and strengthening. Some also require a steady program of innovations to reduce military involvement in nonmilitary issues and subject the military and intelligence establishments to elected civilian control and oversight. And some require legal and institutional innovations to foster accommodation and mutual security among different ethnic and nationality groups.

Underlying all of these specific challenges, however, is an intimate connection between the deepening of democracy and its consolidation. Most third-wave democracies have not become consolidated, and those that show the clearest evidence of progress toward consolidation are liberal democracies. Significantly, none of the “nonliberal” electoral democracies that have emerged during the third wave has yet achieved consolidation.⁸⁴ And those electoral democracies that predate the third wave and that have declined from liberal to nonliberal status during it (India, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Colombia, Fiji) have shown signs of deconsolidation.

Survey data on popular support for democracy and commitment provide a revealing measure of progress toward democratic consolidation. And surveys show what analysis of elite political behavior confirms: Spain, Greece, and Portugal were not only the first third-

⁸³ Barry R. Weingast, “The Political Foundations of Democracy and The Rule of Law,” forthcoming in the *American Political Science Review*. The quotation is from the December 1996 unpublished manuscript, Stanford University, p. 12. Weingast, too, emphasizes that while elites construct the institutional frameworks to limit the exercise of state power, credible commitment to the rules, sufficient to make them self-enforcing, must exist at the mass level as well. Thus stable democracy requires a very broad societal consensus defining “the boundaries of government action.” p. 14. While this approach is distinctive in conceiving the restraint of state power as involving a coordination problem among citizens, it has important affinities with Rustow’s transition model and Dahl’s discussion of “mutual security.”

⁸⁴ See the list of electoral, nonliberal democracies that have emerged during the third wave. Of those that have come into being since 1974 (which is most in this group) I know of not a single one that country and regional experts generally regard as consolidated by the terms employed here. Some pseudodemocracies – Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, today, Mexico and Senegal in the past – could be considered as consolidated in a sense, but this sense is different than democratic consolidation, in that the stability it produces rests more on coercion and ruling party hegemony, and less on the voluntary belief in legitimacy (although that is far from unimportant in these cases). Thus, as Linz and Stepan, and Gunther, Diamandouros and Puhle, as well as others have noted, the consolidation of democracies has characteristics that are quite distinctive in comparison with other regime types.

wave democracies, but the first to become consolidated.⁸⁵ The 1996 “Latinobarometro” survey found that 81 percent of the Spanish public agree that “democracy is preferable to any other form of government,” and 76 percent say they would defend democracy if it were under threat. Democratic legitimacy is similarly widespread in long-consolidated (pre-third wave) Costa Rica (80%, 85%).⁸⁶ Among Latin American third wave democracies, however, only Uruguay shows levels of public support for democracy (80%, 78%) so unambiguously high. Although Argentina and Panama approach these levels, their publics show significantly lower levels of satisfaction with “the way democracy works” in their country. Only in Costa Rica and Uruguay do levels of satisfaction with democracy reach (as in Spain) above 50 percent. Levels of democratic commitment on the above three dimensions (support, defense, and satisfaction) appear closely associated with levels of democracy. If we average the three dimensions of democratic commitment into an overall scale, the three countries that rank clearly highest – and are consolidated democracies – Costa Rica, Spain, and Uruguay, also have the most liberal average freedom scores in 1996

Levels of democratic support and overall commitment tend to decline with lower freedom scores, and (with two exceptions) the lowest democratic support levels tend to be in the least democratic countries, Mexico and Guatemala (both of which had lower freedom scores prior to 1996).

⁸⁵ For evidence of high levels of diffuse support for democracy as early as 1985, see Leonardo Morlino and José Ramon Montero, “Legitimacy and Democracy in Southern Europe,” in Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation*, pp. 235–239.

⁸⁶ More generally, the preference for democracy topped 75 percent in most EU countries in 1992 survey, and averaged 78 percent. Generally, the preference for authoritarian rule was less than 10 percent. *Ibid*, Table 7.2, p. 238.

Table 7: Democratic Commitment and Levels of Democracy in Latin America, 1996

Country	Support Democracy	Satisfaction on Democracy	Defend Democracy	Avg Democracy Commitment	Perceive Full Democracy	Freedom Score
Spain	81	57	76	71.3	29	1.5
Costa Rica	80	51	85	72.0	23	1.5
Uruguay	80	52	78	70.0	34	1.5
Argentina	71	34	73	59.3	12	2.5
Panama	75	28	75	59.3	13	2.5
Bolivia	64	25	84	57.7	13	2.5
Venezuela	62	30	74	55.3	16	2.5
Ecuador	52	34	80	55.3	20	3.0
Peru	63	28	75	55.3	14	3.5
Nicaragua	59	23	72	51.3	7	3.0
Colombia	60	16	74	50.0	7	4.0
El Salvador	56	26	60	47.3	10	3.0
Honduras	42	20	80	47.3	13	3.0
Paraguay	59	22	59	46.7	9	3.5
Brazil	50	20	69	46.3	4	3.0
Chile	54	27	53	44.7	10	2.0
Mexico	53	11	66	43.3	10	3.5
Guatemala	51	16	56	41.0	6	3.5

Source: Marta Lagos, essay forthcoming in the *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 3, 1997. I am grateful to Dr. Lagos for permission to use this data here.

Note: Support is the percentage agreeing that “democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.” Satisfaction is “with the way democracy works in [nation].” Defend democracy is willingness “to defend democracy if it was under threat.” Commitment averages these three percentages. Perceive democracy is the percentage who “think that democracy is fully established in [nation]” rather than “it is not fully established and there are still things to be done for there to be a full democracy.” Freedom Score is the average combined Freedom House rating on political rights and civil liberties for 1996.

The two exceptions are telling. Colombia shows middling levels of democratic support, which may be due to the presence of formal democracy in the country for four decades, but also the second lowest level of satisfaction with “the way democracy works” (second only to Mexico, which is still not an electoral democracy). And most strikingly, Chile is near the bottom in democratic support and overall commitment, despite the fact that it has the second most liberal freedom score. As Marta Lagos explains in her discussion of this data, this

skepticism seems to derive from two factors: the steady persistence of a pro-authoritarian segment of public opinion who view with favor the past military rule and accomplishments of General Augusto Pinochet and support his continued institutional role in politics; and broader popular frustration with the “authoritarian institutional lags” – including General Pinochet’s continued command of the Army and the military’s constitutional role in government seven years after the transition to democracy.⁸⁷ In fact, as Linz and Stepan argue, the interlocking system of prerogatives for the military and its civilian appointees, embedded in the 1980 constitution that General Pinochet left to the new civilian regime, so constrains the authority of elected governments and so insulates the military from democratic control that, until it “is removed or greatly diminished, the Chilean transition cannot be completed, and, by definition, Chilean democracy cannot be consolidated.”⁸⁸ Chile’s freedom score thus understates an institutional problem with its democracy that is deeply felt by its citizens, and that continues to divide the society.

This returns us to the relationship between democratic deepening and democracy. Given wide disenchantment with corruption and “money politics” around the world, most citizens of most new democracies would not be inclined to think they have attained “full democracy.” As we see in Table 7, the percentages who believe their country has achieved “full democracy” are generally low, but they are higher in those countries with higher levels of democratic legitimacy (especially the three consolidated democracies). Again it is telling that Chile ranks so low here (at only ten percent) – the same as Mexico and El Salvador – and that Brazil has the lowest proportion of all.

A similar relationship between regime legitimacy and level of democracy is apparent from the fourth New Democracies Barometer, administered in 1995 to 10 postcommunist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁹ Although the survey items are not strictly comparable to those of the Latinobarometer, people who live in liberal democracies (states rated as “free”) are more likely to reject all authoritarian alternatives and to approve the current regime while disapproving the previous communist one.

⁸⁷ See her essay on trends in support for democracy in Latin America, forthcoming in the *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 3, July 1997, and also her “The Latinobarometro: Media and Political Attitudes in South America.” Paper presented to the 1996 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29–September 1, San Francisco.

⁸⁸ *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 210. For their conceptual treatment of the problem, see pp. 3–5 and also pp. 207–211.

⁸⁹ Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer, “New Democracies Barometer IV: A 10–Nation Survey,” *Studies in Public Policy* 262, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1996.

Table 8: Democratic Commitment and Levels of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, 1995

Country	Rejection of all Authoritarian Alternatives	Approve Current Regime minus Approve Old Regime	Representative Democrats	1995 Freedom Score
Czech Republic	80%	49%	75%	1.5
Slovakia	71%	9%	69%	2.5
Hungary	69%	12%	65%	1.5
Slovenia	68%	39%	69%	2.5
Poland	63%	51%	51%	1.5
Romania	61%	32%	66%	3.5
Bulgaria	55%	8%	65%	2.0
Belarus	31%	– 42%	36%	5.0
Ukraine	23%	– 42%	22%	3.5
Russia	n.a.	– 31%	n.a.	3.5

Source: Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer, “New Democracies Barometer IV: A 10–Nation Survey,” *Studies in Public Policy* 262, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1996.

Note: Rejection is of all three authoritarian alternatives: army rule, a return to Communist rule, and “to get rid of Parliament and elections in favor of a strong leader who can quickly decide everything.” Relative approval is the percent approving of the current regime minus the percent approving of the previous communist regime. “Representative democrats” (as Rose and Haerpfer term them) prefer parliamentary democracy to a “strong leader” and disapprove the suspension of parliament and abolishment of parties.

The most democratically committed country by these various dimensions is also the one generally regarded as furthest along toward consolidation – the Czech Republic – but these data confirm more generally the perception of rapid progress toward the entrenchment of democratic legitimacy and the consolidation of democracy in the six states of the former Warsaw Pact (as well as Slovenia). Particularly striking is the distinction between the six liberal democracies of Central Europe and the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Citizens of these latter states are significantly more likely to favor at least one authoritarian alternative to democracy and to approve of the old regime while disapproving of the new one.⁹⁰

Romania appears as an anomaly, in that its levels of democratic commitment ranked it much higher among the postcommunist countries than would be predicted by its 1995 freedom score – which may help to explain its embrace of a more democratic alternative in the 1996

⁹⁰ In addition to Table 8, for more specific data on Russia and the other two states, see *ibid.*, Table 3.1, p. 41.

presidential elections, and its movement during that year into the free category (with a 2.5 average freedom score). This properly raises the question of the direction of causality: whether it is not the underlying political culture that presses a country toward a certain degree of democracy, as much as the objective conditions of democracy generating levels of appreciation for democracy that then become embedded in the political culture. Until the rise of the “transitions school” of democracy, with the work of Dankwart Rustow, and later Philippe Schmitter, Guillermo O’Donnell, Terry Karl, the former view was in fact the more common one, and even if what Rustow called “habituation” does play a key role in adapting political values to the institutional practice of democracy, underlying cultural dispositions frequently appear to slow or accelerate the consolidation of democracy. Thus, both Marta Lagos and Richard Rose have posed the generally low levels of trust in both Latin American countries (as a result of deep cultural roots) and in post-communist countries (as a result of the atomizing structures and politically alienating experiences of communism) as problems for democratic consolidation, though in both regions political and economic performance also affects levels of trust in institutions, and in postcommunist Europe the perception that freedoms have “a substantial and positive effect on trust in postcommunist institutions” (both political and market).⁹¹

As Linz and Stepan have forcefully argued, first with regard to Spain and now with respect to other third wave democracies, citizens of a new democracy are able to distinguish between the political and economic dimensions of regime performance, and may come to value democracy for the political goods it produces even when its economic performance is perceived to be poor and costly in the short term. Part of this owes to the fact that citizens of postcommunist Europe have proven to be more patient and realistic in their time horizons for economic improvement than many observers expected. But much of it owes as well to the real improvements they perceive in what Linz and Stepan call the “political basket of goods” during the first few years of democracy. By early 1993, proportions ranging from 60 to 98 percent of all citizens in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania responded that the current political system was better than the previous one in giving people freedom to join any organization they want, to say what they think, to travel and live wherever they want, to “live without fear of unlawful arrest,” to “decide whether to take an interest in politics,” and to choose whether or not to practice a religion. On these six dimensions of freedom, across the six national samples, the percentage recognizing a better political life was often 85 to 90 percent, and the mean percentage seeing the current political system as better was 84 percent. Only in Bulgaria (on freedom of speech) did as many as 10 percent perceive the situation worse, and overall the mean percentage saying

⁹¹ See Lagos in the *Journal of Democracy*, forthcoming, Richard Rose, “Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust,” *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July 1994): 18–30; and William Mishler and Richard Rose, “Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Society,” revised version of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Tampa, Florida, November 1995. The quotation is from Mishler and Rose, p. 19.

political conditions were worse was 2.5 percent.⁹² Support for democracy is thus related to the “sense of freedom from state oppression [that] is felt throughout the postcommunist societies of Central and Eastern Europe. People may be dissatisfied with their current living standards or fearful of losing their jobs, but they have not forgotten the great gains made in freedom from fear and censorship.”⁹³ By comparison, Russian perceptions (in mid-1993) of greater freedom on these six dimensions were positive but less overwhelming, ranging from 36 to 71 percent, with a mean of 60 percent, and only 51 percent felt there was more freedom to live without fear of unlawful arrest.⁹⁴

The above data support a developmental perspective on democracy. The less respectful of political rights, civil liberties, and constitutional constraints on state power are the behaviors of key state, incumbent party, and other political actors, the weaker will be the procedural consensus underpinning democracy. Consolidation is then obstructed, by definition. Furthermore, the more shallow, exclusive, unaccountable, and abusive of individual and group rights is the electoral regime, the more difficult it will be for that regime to become deeply legitimated at the mass level (or to retain such legitimacy), and thus the lower will be the perceived costs for the elected president or the military to overthrow the system (or to reduce it to pseudodemocracy). Consolidation is then obstructed or destroyed causally, by the effects of institutional shallowness and decay. To become consolidated, therefore, electoral democracies must become deeper and more liberal. This requires greater executive (and military) accountability to both the law and the scrutiny of other branches of the government, as well as the public; reduction of barriers to political participation and mobilization by marginalized groups; and more effective protection for the political and civil rights of all citizens.

Beyond (but partially overlapping with) deepening, two other general processes foster consolidation. One is movement toward routinized, recurrent and predictable patterns of political behavior. This involves the settled convergence around (and internalization of) common rules and procedures of political competition and action. And this, broadly, is what “institutionalization” is all about. The third process involves regime performance. Over time and a succession of specific governments, if not in the short run, the democratic regime must produce sufficiently positive policy outputs to build broad political legitimacy, or at least to avoid the crystallization of substantial pockets of resistance to the regime’s legitimacy. The content of these policy outputs, and the judgement of what constitutes “sufficiently positive” outcomes, will vary across countries; the greater the cultural predisposition of the society to value democracy intrinsically, the less positive these policy outputs will need to be.

⁹² For the raw data, drawn from the New Democracies Barometer III of Rose and Haerpfer, see Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Table 21.3, p. 443.

⁹³ Rose, “Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust,” p. 25.

⁹⁴ Rose, “Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust,” p. 24.

6. A Fourth Wave?

Precisely because democracy emerges incrementally, in parts, and often unpredictably, analysts and policymakers should be cautious in writing off the prospects for democratic development of any country. In several of the most repressive countries in the world, particularly Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea, and Cuba, even modest political liberalization will probably require the death or overthrow of the long-ruling tyrant or clique. Aside from Kuwait, the oil-rich monarchies of the Persian Gulf, led by Saudi Arabia, have so far shown little appetite for any kind of political opening. But rigidity in the face of social change and frustration can make a regime more vulnerable to breakdown (all too often, as in Iran, into another very different kind of authoritarianism). No calculus of regime futures should dismiss the possibility for surprise. Few foresaw the collapse of Soviet and East European communist regimes, and several of the most repressive regimes in the world are brittle and unstable. Under challenge from violent insurgencies, the authoritarian regimes in Sudan and Zaire are particularly vulnerable. Indeed, by mid-April 1997, the 30-year reign of Mobutu Sese Seko was palpably crumbling, albeit with no guarantee that the rebel forces of Laurent Kabila would provide significantly more democratic government. Burma and Nigeria have articulate democratic movements with passionate support in their societies, and some combination of domestic mobilization, internal divisions in the regime, and international pressure could trigger democratic change. This is true as well for a number of repressive multiparty regimes in Africa, such as Kenya and Cameroon, that were thrown on the defensive by domestic and international pressure in the early 1990s and could be again (particularly if ethnically fragmented oppositions unite in the next elections).

For most of the 53 “not free” states, the prospects for democratization appear poor in the near term. As Freedom House noted in its report on 1994, 49 of these states share one or more of the following three characteristics:

- they have a majority Muslim population and often strong Islamic fundamentalist pressures;
- they have deep ethnic divisions without a single, dominant ethnic group (that has over two-thirds of the population);
- they have neo-Communist or post-communist regimes with a strong hangover of diffuse, one-party domination.⁹⁵

Many of these countries have two (and even a few, three) of these characteristics. In addition, the “not free” states are disproportionately poor (20 of them are classified as low-income by the World Bank). Poverty in itself does not preclude democratic development, but

⁹⁵ Freedom in the World, 1994–1995, p. 6.

it does significantly shorten the average life expectancy of a democracy, especially in the absence of sustained economic growth.⁹⁶ When it is combined with one or more of the other conditions above, it significantly diminishes the democratic prospect.

This does not render pointless the continuation of democracy promotion efforts on the part of the established democracies. International pressure for democracy will not be effective unless it has some consistency in its rhetoric and expectations, and since we cannot confidently predict where a combination of regime divisions, civil society mobilization, and unforeseen events might spawn a democratic breakthrough, there is a logic to broadly distributed efforts. Who would have predicted a democratic transition in Sierra Leone in 1996 – or for that matter in Russia in 1991?

Nevertheless, most such efforts will at best till the soil for longer term political change. If this analysis is right, the number of democracies will not soon increase much, and the most effective efforts will take a very long-term time perspective, seeking gradually to help lay the foundations for market economies, constrained centers of power, rules of law, more resourceful civil societies, and the incremental emergence of competitive electoral processes beginning (as in Taiwan and elsewhere) at the local level. For countries where economic growth is likely to create better educated, more informed, pluralistic, and autonomously organized societies in the coming generation – China, Vietnam, Indonesia, – what Minxin Pei has termed for China “creeping democratization” seems a more realistic prospect, and a compelling rationale for a long-term strategy of engagement by the established, wealthy democracies.⁹⁷

Most significantly, the “long term” is probably not that far away. Given the likelihood that they will sustain relatively high growth rates in per capita income (averaging 4.5 percent annually), Henry Rowen projects that by 2020 China and Indonesia would have per capita incomes (in 1990 dollars, expressed in “purchasing power parity”) of \$6,600 and \$8,800 respectively.⁹⁸ These income levels lie in the middle to upper-middle reaches of economic development which Huntington has identified as the characteristic “zone” for democratic transitions in the third wave.⁹⁹ “Not only Taiwan and South Korea, but Spain, Portugal, Chile, and Argentina all made the democratic transition in this range” of \$5,000 to \$7,000 in per

⁹⁶ This is a central finding of Przeworski, et al., “What Makes Democracies Endure?”

⁹⁷ Minxin Pei, “‘Creeping Democratization’ in China,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (October 1995), pp. 65–79.

⁹⁸ “World Wealth Expanding: Why a Rich, Democratic, and (Perhaps) Peaceful Era is Ahead,” in Ralph Landau, Timothy Taylor, and Gavin Wright, eds., *The Mosaic of Economic Growth* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 112. Although an economic downturn or implosion in China is certainly conceivable, resulting from some kind of deep political, environmental, or financial-system crisis, the assumption of another generation of 4.5 average annual growth in real per capita income in China seems quite attainable. Since 1979, China has averaged 5 percent annual growth in per capita income, and it has been higher in recent years. Henry S. Rowen, “The Short March: China’s Road to Democracy,” *The National Interest*, Fall 1996, p. 61.

⁹⁹ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 61.

capita income,¹⁰⁰ and \$7,000 (in 1990 U.S. dollars, expressed in purchasing power parity) is roughly equivalent to the threshold at which, Adam Przeworski and his colleagues argue (based on the 1950–1990 experience of regime change) “democracies are impregnable and can be expected to live forever.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Henry S. Rowen, “Why a Rich, Democratic and (Perhaps) Peaceful Era, with More Advanced Weapons in More Hands, Is Ahead.” Paper presented to the 1996 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 1996, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ Przeworski, et al., “What Makes Democracies Endure?” p. 41. The strong relationship that they find between economic development and democracy is, they argue, attributable entirely to the steadily increasing life expectancy of democratic regimes as per capita income levels rise. Finding no relationship between income level and the probability of a democratic transition, they conclude that the genetic or “endogenous” assumption of “modernization” theory – that democracy results from development under authoritarianism – is untenable. Rising income (modernization) does not make a democratic transition more likely, it just makes democracy more likely to endure if it comes into being for other reasons. For a more extended presentation of the evidence and argument, see Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, “Modernization: Theory and Facts,” *World Politics* 49 (January 1997), pp. 155–183. The findings of Przeworski and Limongi may be seen as especially challenging to the interpretations of Huntington and Rowen (of a “zone of transition”), and to the speculations I am advancing here. For they argue that while “transitions are increasingly likely as per capita income of dictatorships” rise to a level of about \$6,000 (in 1985 purchasing power parity dollars, which is roughly equivalent to the \$7,000 level Rowen uses for 1990), after that “dictatorships become more stable as countries become more affluent.” The problem with their interpretation is that their determination of life expectancies for authoritarian regimes is heavily distorted by the prevalence in their sample of rich dictatorships of: 1) Soviet puppet states in Eastern Europe; 2) oil states such as Iraq, Iran, and Gabon; and 3) more generally, cases where democratization did eventually occur, but only after the persistence of authoritarian rule for some time at moderate or relatively high levels of development. In fact, 18 of their 25 cases of “highest levels of per capita income under which dictatorships survived” in their 40-year time period (Table 3) ultimately made transitions to democracy! Taiwan did so a few years after the 1990 cut-off of their sample. To weigh the Przeworski and Limongi argument, we should exclude the Soviet puppet states, which could not democratize because of Soviet military domination, and thus had no possibility for “endogenous” democratization until that domination was lifted (after which democratization occurred fairly quickly). We should further exclude or discount oil states, which invariably rank lower in key dimensions of human development (such as education) than on per capita income, and in which the state dominates the economy and society because of its control over the bulk of national income, oil rents; as a result of which development does not generate the intervening variables of civil society growth and political culture change to the extent it does in more “normal” (market-oriented, non-oil-rent) states. (For this argument, see Larry Diamond, “Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered,” in Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds., *Rethinking Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992). If we reassess their data in light of these three qualifications, only three serious exceptions are left standing: Singapore, Malaysia, and Mexico. Singapore is the outstanding exception to the Lipset thesis. Malaysia, which closely aligns with the Singaporean arguments about “Asian values” in global human rights forums, has been catapulted by rapid economic growth into the upper reaches of the “zone of transition” (about as rich as Chile and Argentina today), and thus increasingly constitutes a second stubborn exception to the theory. Mexico, however, is clearly experiencing growing pressures for democratization, which many observers believe owe in part to the growing strength of private business and the growing autonomy and vigor of associational life as a result of economic development. In the paradigmatic cases of Taiwan and South Korea, which are no less likely to be harbingers of China’s political evolution than Singapore, there is widespread scholarly consensus that economic development made an important contribution to political liberalization and then democratization, by creating a more functionally complex, better educated, more socially mobilized and organized society, with more independent centers of power that could not be controlled by the state. For evidence and analysis that supports this interpretation while not neglecting the crucial political dimensions of the transition game, see Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democratization in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992); Tun-jen Cheng, “Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan,” *World Politics* 42 (July 1989): 471–499; Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1989); David Steinberg, “The Republic of Korea: Pluralizing Politics,” in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), pp. 369–416; and Michael Hsiao and Hagen Koo, “The Middle Class and Democratization in East Asian NICs,” in Larry

More significantly still, if we think of democracy as not merely present or absent but typically emerging in fragments and degrees, the fragments are beginning to emerge in China as it crosses the threshold of \$2500 per capita income.¹⁰² This was the same income level at which political opening and pluralization began to gather momentum in Taiwan in the early 1970s.¹⁰³ And as in Taiwan then, a key early element of political change lies in the increasing autonomy of local-level authority and the introduction of at least partially competitive and free elections for local governing bodies. This process is still nascent or experimental in China, but it has led to the defeat of Chinese Communist party candidates in more than a trivial share of the elections, and it is coinciding with a wide array of other changes in the nature of governance in China: the cumulation of economic and political decentralizing trends into “a nascent federalist structure;” the emergence of a “system of law” that at least begins to constrain the autonomy of public officials and the potential for arbitrary exercise and abuse of power; the recent rapid growth of court suits by citizens and groups challenging the administrative decisions of various government authorities at the local level (with challenges winning some redress more than a third of the time); the institutional maturation and growing autonomy of the National People’s Congress and various provincial and local People’s Congresses; the increasing pluralism of the mass media and of access to information in general; and the rapid growth of semi-official and private (as opposed to state or party-controlled) associations – such as those of lawyers, private entrepreneurs, consumers, and environmentalists – that are “civic” in their concerns to articulate interests and affect public policy, as well as in their creation of social capital through the horizontal organization of individuals as self-motivated citizens.¹⁰⁴

As in Taiwan and Korea, and before that most classically in Spain, economic development is creating a more complex and pluralistic society in China that cannot be managed with the old patterns of monolithic and highly repressive and arbitrary state domination. With communist ideology largely spent in its potential to legitimate Communist Party rule, the regime increasingly recognizes, Pei and others argue, that it must provide institutional mechanisms

Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, forthcoming).

¹⁰² China’s per capita gross national product in 1994 was estimated at \$2510 in purchasing power parity (1994 U.S. dollars). World Bank, *World Development Report* (New York: Oxford University press, 1996), Table 1, p. 188.

¹⁰³ Rowen, “The Short March: China’s Road to Democracy,” p. 67.

¹⁰⁴ See Minxin Pei, “Creeping Democratization in China,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (October 1995): 65–79, “The Growth of Civil Society in China,” paper presented to the Conference on “China as a Global Economic Power,” co-sponsored by the Cato Institute and Fudan University, Shanghai, June 15–18, 1997, “Citizens vs. Mandarins: Administrative Litigation in China,” paper presented to the Institute for International Studies Seminar on Democratization, Stanford University, April 17, 1997, and *From Reform to Revolution: The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), chapter 5. See also Rowen, “The Short March.” Two elements of the trend in administrative litigation in China are further stressed by Pei: first, not only has the number of administrative suits steadily increased since the law empowering them was implemented in 1990, but the rate of growth of such suits has also been growing in recent years, and is now at about 50 percent annual growth; and secondly, while citizens win only about 15% of their suits, another 22 percent are withdrawn in favor of an out-of-court settlement (often mediated by the judge) which gives the plaintiff at least some significant redress.

to limit corruption and abuse of power, and to enable citizens to express their interests and concerns and to protest and challenge state actions. Without this adaptation and normalization of state-society relations, regime legitimacy could evaporate completely, protest could spin out of control, and economic dynamism or the regime itself could be swept away. Thus, China is now embarked on a slow, incremental course of political liberalization that regime leaders view (no doubt to varying degrees by various factions) as necessary to their own survival. As the new institutions are practiced with growing scope and sophistication around the country, they generate norms and expectations that will make their reversal increasingly costly and dangerous, and that will generate a demand for further expansion of democratic practices and procedures over time. In this way, continued economic development and social change could well bring a long period of rising political pluralism and civil freedom in China. Chinese history, and many other regime transitions, suggest that the process is not likely to be smooth, continuous, and free of conflict. Gradual movement toward democracy could disintegrate into chaos due to demographic pressures, ecological decay, and fiscal disarray.¹⁰⁵ Such a regime collapse could plunge the country into destabilizing protest, violence, and repression, or propel it forward urgently into some kind of democratic framework. But the early signs of predicted doom – a crippling power struggle and reversal of economic reforms following the death of Deng Xiaoping – have so far not surfaced. More likely, even with factional struggle, unanticipated crises, and temporary reversals, the pressure from below will continue pushing China toward “creeping democratization,” as Chinese leaders run “a race against time” to establish new, more participatory, decentralized, and law-based institutions before the old ones give way to “a crisis of governability.”¹⁰⁶ Whether or not these trends produce an electoral democracy by Rowen’s statistically projected year of 2015, they seem likely to create a much *more* democratic system, to at least move China to semi-democracy (and almost certainly with less effective central control than now prevails in the tiny city-state of Singapore).

Should China undergo such substantial political liberalization in the next two decades, raising its average freedom score, to, say, 4, and even more so if it should cross a threshold to truly competitive electoral democracy at the national level, the diffusion effects throughout East Asia and the world would be enormously powerful – powerful enough to launch a fourth wave of democratization. Even more modest continued political opening in China will likely co-exist with similar, and in some cases, more rapid or decisive democratizing trends in other East Asian countries. Indonesia, which may well be as rich (or more so, or nearly so) in 2020 as South Korea was in 1990, is already facing growing pressures from organized labor and the middle classes for democratic change. As personal income and educational levels rise rapidly and interest groups accumulate much more power (in resources, ideas, and will) to act independently of the state, Indonesia will become a prime candidate to make the kind of

¹⁰⁵ For analysis along these lines, see Jack A. Goldstone, “The Coming Chinese Collapse,” *Foreign Policy* no. 99 (Summer 1995): 35–52.

¹⁰⁶ Pei, “Creeping Democratization,” p. 77.

democratic transition, driven substantially by civil society mobilization from below, that occurred in Korea and Taiwan.¹⁰⁷ If Rowen's estimates prove more or less reasonable, Thailand will have by 2020 a per capita income of \$17,000 (in 1990 PPP dollars) – roughly equivalent to Italy or the UK in 1990. Thailand is already a robust (if also roguish) electoral democracy; in another generation, the levels of broadly distributed income and education that would have been produced by such growth would make much more difficult the levels of neopatrimonial relations, raw vote-buying, and military influence that constrain the quality of democracy in Thailand today. At such a level of development, a military coup would be unthinkable – something that no country with even half that level of per capita wealth has experienced.

The same assumption of high growth (averaging 4.5% annually) would lift Vietnam to \$2,600 per capita income in 2020, at the level of China today. But Vietnam is likely to be much more democratic in 2020 than China is today, given the evolution it has already undergone (similar to China in many respects) to expand the role of the National Assembly, to separate the party bureaucracy from the operation of government, to decentralize political administration, to subject government to constraints of law, to implement a market economy and attract foreign investment, and to redefine its legitimacy on bases other than Marxist ideology. Indeed, Vietnam's historic competition with China and increasing exposure to the forces of international (primarily Western) capitalism may accelerate the pace of political transition. Thus Frederick Z. Brown concludes, "Many within the VCP (Vietnamese Communist Party) recognize that Marxist-Leninist ideology is succumbing to the forces of science, education, cultural exchange, and the marketplace. These facts of modern life would appear to make 'peaceful evolution' in Vietnam inevitable, leading initially to a softer authoritarianism and perhaps later to a more sophisticated participatory system of governance."¹⁰⁸

Some time in the next decade or two, Singapore's uniquely anomalous status as the world's richest non-democracy (the one true exception to the "threshold" thesis of development and democracy) also seems likely to yield to changing realities. The maturation of a new generation, socialized into affluence with more "postmaterialist" values, can be expected to produce broader resentment of rigid, hierarchical state control, paternalistic dictation from the ruling party, and lack of the accountability that comes from real political competition. Already, the popular vote for the ruling People's Action Party has declined from its 70 percent-plus levels of the late 1968–1980 period to the low 60-percent range since 1984 – and this with virtually no effective opposition party. Moreover, the passing from the scene of the grand architect of the system, Lee Kuan Yew, could aggravate tensions within the regime over

¹⁰⁷ Indonesia is also advantaged relative to China in its democratic prospects because it does not have the tremendous burden of decrepit communist ideology and bureaucracy, and all the anxieties and hypernationalist temptations that will go with emergent superpower status in China's case. For cautious assessments of the prospects, see R. William Liddle, "Indonesia: Suharto's Tightening Grip," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 4 (October 1996): 58–72, and "Indonesia's Threefold Crisis," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 4 (October 1992), pp. 60–74; and Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 264–307.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Z. Brown, "Vietnam's Tentative Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 4 (October 1994): 86.

leadership succession. Finally, there is much to suggest that the stability of pseudodemocracy in Singapore has derived not from nondemocratic and deeply rooted “Asian values” but from a pragmatic bargain, in which the regime produced dynamic material progress and the people offered political compliance and quiescence in exchange – but only for those policies and institutions that could be rationalized as necessary for continuing the economic miracle.¹⁰⁹ If the miracle fades, if economic growth declines from the 7 percent annual rate that Singapore averaged in the 1980s and early 90s to the muddling 2 to 3 percent growth rates more characteristic of advanced industrial societies (not to mention the possibility of stagnation or a prolonged recession), the historic bargain of “pragmatic materialism” will fray and quite possibly unravel. China’s ambition to make Shanghai the preeminent financial center in the region may put increasing economic pressure on Singapore. For various reasons then, pressure for a more competitive, democratic political system can be expected to rise, although a transition to democracy is by no means inevitable.¹¹⁰

In the Islamic Middle East as well, democracy seems least implausible in the long run. Culturally and historically, this has been the most difficult terrain in the world for political freedom and democracy. But Islamists, increasingly, do not speak with one voice, and democratic pluralists currents are emerging. A “growing group of Islamic reformers” is struggling with “the question of how to modernize and democratize political and economic systems in an Islamic context.”¹¹¹ Moreover, democratic reforms have already progressed significantly in Jordan, which now has the highest average freedom score (4.0) of any Arab country. Most of all in Jordan, evolution toward constitutional monarchy and electoral democracy is apparent. A competitive and pluralistic regime could potentially develop in the Palestinian authority in the West Bank and Gaza, if peace with Israel could somehow be achieved, and if the strong urge for democratic participation evidenced in the January 1996 elections is not crushed by intolerance and repression by the ruling elite.

In the predominantly Muslim states of the Arab world, if democratization is to be sustainable (or even feasible), it will probably need to unfold in what Bernard Lewis calls “gradual and unforced change” that proceeds “in slow stages” through reforming autocracy to more open

¹⁰⁹ Solomon Lefler, “Singapore’s ‘Pragmatic Materialism’: Why Non-Liberal Government Persists,” Stanford University, Department of Political Science, December, 1996. See also Cong Ching Liang, “Authoritarianism as Expediency: The Group-Oriented Singaporeans and Their Social Choices.” Master’s Thesis, University of Oregon, 1995.

¹¹⁰ Chua Beng-Huat, “Arrested Development: Democratisation in Singapore,” *Third World Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1994), pp. 668. In the framework of Chua’s more skeptical analysis, I am suggesting that the growth of civil society and a greater propensity to risk-taking by individuals in it will break the vicious cycle of apathy that has led to a resigned (as Chua emphasizes, by no means enthusiastic) acceptance of restricted liberty and PAP hegemony.

¹¹¹ Robin Wright, “Islam and Liberal Democracy: Two Visions of Reformation,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 64–75. Alternative perspectives on her interpretation are offered by Abdou Filali-Ansary, Mahamed Elhachmi Hamdi, and Laith Kubba in the collection on “Islam and Liberal Democracy,” in the same issues, pp. 76–89.

and competitive political systems.¹¹² An abrupt democratic opening could trigger a neo-authoritarian reaction from a faction of the ruling elite, or a breakthrough to an Islamic fundamentalist regime that would have no use for democracy or liberalism. Yet even incremental democracy must give an increasingly wide berth to social criticism, political dissent, and independent associations and parties. Except for Jordan, Lewis's other two examples of "modernizing autocracies" that are "moving toward greater freedom" – Morocco and Egypt – in fact offer little or no scope for the people to change their government or to mobilize peacefully for fundamental reform. The time to begin a process of real political liberalization in these and other Middle Eastern countries is long overdue, and the costs of further delay could be considerable. Most of the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East are highly corrupt and are experiencing growing challenges to their legitimacy. Continued decadent and repressive rule enables Islamic fundamentalist movements, which take refuge in the mosque and build alternative networks of support and exchange in the economy, to establish themselves as the principle alternative to increasingly unpopular regimes that permit no other avenue of change. Ignoring these trends could be costly for the global cause of democracy.

In the near term, there are clearly other serious challenges and potential dangers. Many Asian political leaders and intellectuals will continue to challenge "Western" notions of what constitutes good government, and to advance models of "democracy" that vary from illiberal to entirely illusory. In the midst of prolonged economic stagnation, inequality, corruption, and massive crime, democracy in Russia could still give way to some kind of nationalist or neocommunist dictatorship, with demonstration effects and reintegrationist pressures reverberating through the region. Blocked by the military from democratizing, Nigeria could drift from military dictatorship to anarchy or even civil war, dragging down the prospects for democratic development throughout West Africa.

Still, the possibility of a fourth wave of democratization in the world rests most pivotally on the future of China. Factional political leadership struggles in China could interrupt or reverse political liberalization, producing an increasingly repressive, hostile, and nationalistic China that intimidates democracies (and potential democracies) throughout the region. The long shadow of Chinese hostility to democracy will, in the short term, hang over Hong Kong and Taiwan in any case. But if the West in general and the United States in particular assume that China seeks an authoritarian and expansionist regional hegemony, and if they pursue overt policies to "contain" the presumed Chinese "threat," they are much more likely to turn the regime away from internal reform and external accommodation. Peaceful engagement with China, and separation of trade relations from human rights and security concerns, does not require that the West abandon its principled commitments to human rights – and its steady work to get China to live up to its own commitments in this regard.

¹¹² Bernard Lewis, "Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 62–63.

Unless the established democracies fumble into a “new cold war” along civilizational lines with China, greater China, or Islamic Middle Eastern states, most of the above potential setbacks to freedom are likely to be temporary or limited in scope. If more and more countries continue to liberalize and open their economies in ways that create secure property rights and expanded trade and investment, there could well be, as Henry Rowen predicts, an extraordinary period of “world wealth expanding” ahead, in which much of the developing and postcommunist world experiences dramatic gains in per capita income within a generation. In addition, it is almost certain, as Rowen shows, that educational levels will steadily rise in developing countries. Together, these two forces are going to generate, as Rowen argues and much other evidence suggests, highly propitious conditions for democracy. This will particularly be so in the part of the world where growth will be most rapid and socially transformative – East Asia.¹¹³ Within a generation, East Asia’s richest economies – most of all, Taiwan and South Korea, possibly Thailand as well – will likely be not just electoral democracies but consolidated liberal democracies. And several of today’s Asian autocracies will be moving toward democracy.

In the long run, the expansion of world wealth and education figures to be the most powerful structural factor facilitating the expansion and deepening of democracy. But as I have tried to emphasize throughout, democratic development is probabilistic, open-ended and reversible. Economic and social development will help, but ultimately political leadership, choice, and action at many levels will make the difference. This imposes strong obligations not only on government officials, political parties, interest groups, and civic organizations in developing democracies, but on organizations and governments in rich, established ones. What the latter do (or do not do) to offer technical, financial, and political support for improving and institutionalizing fragile democracies can make much more of a difference than was once supposed.

In the near to medium term, if some of the third wave democracies achieve real consolidation in the coming decade; if many of the electoral democracies find their way forward, or back, to a deeper, more liberal political order, where the rule of law is institutionalized; and if the world’s richest and most powerful democracies sustain the pressure for global movement toward democracy (albeit at different paces), the prospect for democracy in the early twenty-first century appears quite positive. A third reverse wave will have been preempted – even if some fledgling democracies break down – and the foundations for a fourth wave of democratic expansion will be laid.

¹¹³ Henry S. Rowen, “The Tide Underneath the ‘Third Wave,’” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995), pp. 52–64, and “World Wealth Expanding.”

Appendix

Classification of States by Regime at End of 1996¹¹⁴

Liberal Democracies	<u>1.5</u>	<u>2.0</u>	(Nonliberal) Electoral Democracies
<u>1.0</u>	Bahamas		
	Belgium	Benin	<u>3.0</u>
Andorra	Cape Verde	Botswana	Bangladesh
Australia	Costa Rica	Chile	Brazil
Austria	Czech Republic	Greece	Dom Republic
Barbados	Estonia	Guyana	Ecuador
Belize	France	Israel	El Salvador
Canada	Germany	Korea, South	Honduras
Cyprus	Grenada	Latvia	India
Denmark	Hungary	Mali	Madagascar
Dominica	Italy	Nauru	Nicaragua
Finland	Japan	Taiwan	Papua New Guinea
Iceland	Lithuania	Vanuatu	Seychelles
Ireland	Mauritius	Western Samoa	Slovakia
Kiribati	Monaco		Suriname
Liechtenstein	Palau	<u>2.5</u>	Thailand
Luxembourg	Poland	Argentina	
Malta	St. Kitts & Nevis	Bolivia	<u>3.5</u>
Marshall Islands	St. Lucia	Bulgaria	Fiji
Miconesia	St. Vincent &	Jamaica	Ghana
Netherlands	Grenadines	Malawi	Guatemala
New Zealand	Sao Tome &	Mongolia	Guinea-Bissau
Norway	Principe	Namibia	Macedonia
Portugal	Slovenia	Panama	Moldova
San Marino	Solomon Islands	Romania	Mozambique
Sweden	South Africa	Philippines	Nepal
Switzerland	Spain	Venezuela	Paraguay
Tuvalu	Trinidad &		Russia
United States	Tobago		Ukraine
	United Kingdom		
	Uruguay		

¹¹⁴ States are listed in order of their average freedom house score at the end of 1996. For the scores, see *Freedom Review* 28, no. 1 (January-February 1997), pp. 15-16. All "free states" are listed here as liberal democracies. A listing of all electoral democracies is obtained from Freedom House. Classification of the remaining countries into "pseudodemocracies" and "authoritarian regimes" is by the judgement of the author.

(Nonliberal) Electoral Democracies Continued	<u>4.5</u>	<u>6.5</u>	
	Armenia	The Gambia	
	Burkina-Faso	Kenya	
	Ethiopia		
<u>4.0</u>	Gabon	Authoritarian Regimes (One- party or No-party)	
Albania	Malaysia		
Central African Republic	Singapore		
Colombia	Zambia		
Congo		<u>4.0</u>	<u>7.0</u>
Croatia	<u>5.0</u>	Uganda	Afghanistan
Georgia	Morocco		Bhutan
Kyrgyz Republic	Tanzania		Burma
Lesotho	Zimbabwe	<u>5.0</u>	Burundi
Sri Lanka		Eritrea	China
	<u>5.5</u>	Kuwait	Cuba
<u>4.5</u>	Azerbaijan		Equatorial Guinea
Haiti	Chad	<u>5.5</u>	Iraq
Pakistan	Cote d'Ivoire		Korea, North
Sierra Leone	Guinea	Djibouti	Libya
Turkey	Kazakhstan	Swaziland	Saudi Arabia
	Lebanon	United Arab Emirates	Somalia
<u>5.0</u>	Togo		Sudan
Bosnia- Herzegovina	Tunisia	<u>6.0</u>	Syria
	Yemen	Brunei	Tajikistan
Pseudo- democracies	<u>6.0</u>	Maldives	Turkmenistan
	Algeria	Oman	Vietnam
	Angola		
<u>3.5</u>	Belarus	<u>6.5</u>	
Antigua & Barbuda	Cambodia	Bahrain	
Mexico	Cameroon	Iran	
Peru	Egypt	Laos	
	Indonesia	Liberia	
<u>4.0</u>	Mauritania	Nigeria	
Comoros	Niger	Qatar	
Jordan	Yugoslavia	Rwanda	
Senegal		Uzbekistan	
Tonga		Zaire	