



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**Boekbespreking van: The Fourth Wave of Democratization - Identification and Explanation**  
Berg-Schlosser, D.

**Citation**

Berg-Schlosser, D. (2002). Boekbespreking van: The Fourth Wave of Democratization - Identification and Explanation. *Acta Politica*, 37: 2002(4), 428-431. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450909>

Version: Publisher's Version  
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)  
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450909>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Book Reviews

Renske Doorenspleet, *The Fourth Wave of Democratization – Identification and Explanation*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden, 2001. (Summary in Dutch.)

Ever since the publication of Samuel Huntington's important book 'The Third Wave' (1991) the term has been adopted by most political scientists when discussing processes and forms of democratization in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Renske Doorenspleet, however, explicitly speaks of the 'Fourth Wave' when she describes and analyses democratic transitions on a global scale in the years after 1989/90. She gives some good reasons for her choice. First of all, as she convincingly shows, Huntington lumped together a longer period including the fall of the authoritarian regime in Portugal in 1974 and events in Southern Europe and Latin America, which did not necessarily have much to do with the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union at a later stage. Secondly, she employs much stricter definitions and more stringent macro-quantitative methods in her account. Furthermore, she raises some doubt about the appropriateness of the metaphor 'wave' itself, which seems to imply, as in Huntington's book, a 'reverse wave' running back from the shore, and which, however, need not necessarily be the case. Instead, she prefers to speak of certain 'steps' or stages of democratization (p. 55). Nevertheless, she retains the term 'wave' in the title of her study.

This work exhibits many of the strengths and some of the weaknesses of a (good!) dissertation, for which she received the 2001 Dissertation Award of the Dutch Political Science Association (and which she had to share with Anna van der Vleuten whose dissertation is also reviewed in this issue). The strengths undoubtedly lie in the clear conceptual outline and the skilful systematic, but sufficiently self-aware and critical, use of quantitative data and methods. Thus, she first defines contemporary democracies following Dahl (1971), according to two basic dimensions, the effective *competitiveness* of the political system and the widespread *inclusion* of its citizens in selecting national leaders and policies (chapters 2 and 3). Implicit in this definition is a third (normative) dimension concerning basic civil liberties and political rights such as the freedom of expression, information, organization, etc., which, however, she tends to neglect in her further analysis. The main reason for doing so is her use of the 'Polity III' data compiled by Ted Gurr and his associates as the major source for her

study, together with some more general encyclopedic resources like Keesing's *Record of World Events*. Even though she (rightly) raises some criticisms concerning the conceptualization and coding procedures used by Gurr, she sticks to this source, with some modifications, for pragmatic reasons regarding it as the only genuinely longitudinal dataset, dismissing others such as those by Vanhanen (1997) and Freedom House (since 1973) as even more unsatisfactory. She also, importantly, considers the presence or absence of 'democraticness' to be a distinct qualitative characteristic of a political system above a certain threshold of competitiveness and inclusiveness and rejects the notion of 'degrees' of democraticness of clearly authoritarian regimes such as absolutist monarchies, military dictatorships, communist and other one-party systems, etc., as propagated, for example, by Bollen (1993).

From here, she proceeds by discussing the major theoretical approaches and specific hypotheses derived from them concerning processes of democratization in recent decades (chapter 4). These are what she calls the 'classical' and 'new' modernization theories, the dependency and world-system approaches, again with some modifications, historical-structural and actor-oriented approaches. Some of these she combines in the end for her own overall structural model. In subsequent chapters (5-7), these approaches and the respective hypotheses are carefully tested on the basis of the available datasets employing familiar statistical procedures such as correlations, linear and logistic regressions, factor analysis, etc. In addition to the major structural approaches discussed so far, she looks at the possibility of democratic 'diffusion' across cases as was evident, in particular, in the chain reactions in Eastern Europe in 1989 (chapter 8) and she critically examines the concept of 'civil society' as an additional possible explanation, but rejects it as too 'normative' and too 'foggy' (chapter 9).

All this is done in a very clear and straightforward manner justifying her choices and decisions explicitly at each stage and not shying away from pronounced criticism of some 'grand old men' (hardly any women so far) like Lipset, Huntington and others. Her results mostly strongly support some of the modified modernization hypotheses such as a general positive relationship between the level of socio-economic development (measured by GDP per capita or the Human Development Index) and the existence of a democratic regime, but this does not mean that in the period considered by her a transition to democracy was more likely in the more well-to-do countries. On the contrary, many poorer ones, as in Sub-Saharan Africa, experienced a transition. There, apparently, diffusion factors (as after the La Baule conference in 1990 initiated by Mitterand) and external pressures of 'political conditionality' exercised by the IMF, the World Bank and other 'donors' were also at work. By contrast, the dependency, world system and social structural hypotheses were not supported by her analysis or, at best, only in an indirect way in the sense that the poorer countries also tend to be the more dependent ones in the periphery of the world system.

On the whole, these results, as she herself realizes (p. 120), are not so surprising. The overall variance of the occurrence of democracy explained is in an order of magnitude of about 70 per cent, which is approximately in line with, for example,

Vanhanen's findings, using different conceptualizations and datasets. Her own more complex 'overall model' (chapter 10) similarly does not contribute much more in a statistical sense, somewhat to her disappointment (pp. 216 ff.), but she successfully replicates some earlier findings and adds a number of important differentiations and observations concerning this most recent 'wave'.

On the more critical side, some weaknesses must also be noted. Some of these are basic and linked to the overall approach. She attempts to find a 'universal' theory to explain processes of democratization and thereby neglects, for example, more time- and space-bound factors such as specific historical, regional and cultural influences. These could have been tested relatively simply by regional breakdowns of her data over a longer period of time leading to more 'variation-finding' and 'path-dependent' patterns for the recent transitions in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa, for example, in contrast to the 'immuneness' to democratic developments so far in most of the Middle East and larger parts of Asia. On this basis, certain 'sub-types' of democracy with some peculiar characteristics and possible deficiencies in O'Donnell's (1996) sense, when he speaks of forms of 'delegative democracy' in Latin America, could also have been detected. Similarly, by excluding an explicit normative dimension concerning basic human rights and the rule of law from her definition, certain forms of 'illiberal democracies' (see, for example, Diamond 1999) escape her attention. This overall perspective is also related to the purely 'macro-quantitative' statistical procedures employed by her, whereas supplementary 'macro-qualitative' analyses could have provided a richer and more differentiated picture. She seems to have realized this, at least in retrospect, as she points to more 'case-oriented' studies and period-bound investigations in her (somewhat resigned) concluding remarks (pp. 216 ff.).

More specifically, the discussion of some of the approaches discussed by her in greater detail is not entirely convincing. This applies to the concept and measurement of class structures (chapter 7), for example, but also the described diffusion effects. Some of these shortcomings she (rightly) attributes to the lack of appropriate data, but she could have been a bit more convincing if she had taken Rueschemeyer and Stephen's (1992) propositions more seriously, for example. Thus, to use, for example, the number of trade unions in a country as an indicator of working class strength or an element of civil society (p. 203) instead of the percentage of the labour force organized in (independent!) unions is not very revealing. Similarly, her analysis of diffusion effects is largely restricted to geographical vicinity, and of the non-geographical ones she only considers diplomatic relations (p. 174), where (not surprisingly) she does not find any significant effects. Again, certain former colonial/historical ties, regional or religious factors, etc., could have been considered.

Her chapter on 'civil society', which she rejects as a concept for her purposes, is, in my view, the weakest of the study. Even though some of her criticisms of certain authors are well made and again there are problems of meaningful comparable data, the role that some civic groups played in the transition processes in Eastern Europe, and also, to some extent, in Africa and elsewhere cannot be dismissed off-hand so

easily. In this chapter she herself, surprisingly, becomes somewhat confused when she states that 'civil society organizations are expected to *oppose* the state' (p. 201, her emphasis), irrespective of the fact whether this concerns a democratic or an authoritarian one. Here she clearly confuses the broader notion of 'state' with a particular (authoritarian) type of political system.

In addition, there are a number of minor errors and mistakes. For example, she speaks of a military coup in Estonia in the interwar period when, in fact, President Päts, in a kind of 'autogolpe' (a term later employed for Fujimori's Peru), dismissed parliament and established an authoritarian regime. These, together with a number of remaining typing and printing errors (the first lines of p. 48 are missing, for example), may be eliminated in a somewhat revised book version. There are also some redundancies and repetitions in the theoretical (chapter 4) and empirical parts (chapters 5-7). Some copy editing of the English style by a native speaker may be advisable. On the whole, however, it is a well-argued and well-written contribution to the literature on democratic transitions, which deserves the attention of a wider readership.

Dirk Berg-Schlösser

L. F. Goldstein, *Constituting Federal Sovereignty: The European Union in Comparative Context*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, ISBN 0-8018-6663-4, \$34.95.

Why do the member states of the European Union accept the decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) when it rules against them? Why is there not more defiance of central authority? What does the passivity of European Union member states tell us about their 'sovereignty'? Such questions resonate in the abstract. However, they become even more salient when compared with federations in which the centre is putatively 'sovereign' and decentralized authority is more explicitly subordinate than in the European Union. During the first seven decades of the United States, state refusal to accept the decisions of the Supreme Court was endemic. During the first two centuries of the Dutch republic, provincial rejection of policies made at the centre was not only frequent but also violent. And during the first five decades of the modern Swiss confederation, cantonal resistance was commonplace. How then are we to explain the acquiescence of European member states?

Professor Goldstein's recent book analyses the absence of member state resistance to ECJ authority within the context of three other examples of central-subordinate interaction: the United States from 1789 to 1860; the United Provinces of the Netherlands from 1579 to 1795; and the Swiss confederation from 1848 to approximately 1900. In part the book is an exploration of the contemporary relevance of 'sovereignty' as an attribute reserved absolutely to the modern state. However, to a much greater extent the book is an attempt to establish the relevance of comparative