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Inequality And Democratization: A Power-Centered Approach to Democratic Transitions

by

Alban Lauka

Under the Direction of Charles Hankla, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

## ABSTRACT

What are the conditions under which democratization is more likely to happen? After decades of research focused on the relationship between economic development and democratization, the more recent theories have identified economic inequality as the more specific variable of importance, but they disagree over what exactly its effects are. Here I present a new theory of power, inequality and democratization which conceptualizes democratization as a composite process made up of two distinct transformations: liberalization, which establishes greater government accountability along the horizontal dimension, in the form of powerful legislatures and courts; and electoralization, which makes the government more vertically accountable through universally free and fair elections. I hypothesize that changes along the two dimensions are determined by economic inequality within the wealthy elite, and between the wealthy and the rest of the population. Empirical support for these relationships is found in dynamic probit analyses of worldwide inequality and regime type data from 1821 to 1992 and in in-depth examinations of the democratization process in England and in South Korea. The evidence suggests that economic inequality is an important predictor of democratization, but the relationship is complex: low inequality within the wealthy elite increases the likelihood of liberalization, while low inequality between the rich and rest makes electoralization more probable.

INDEX WORDS: Democratization, Inequality, Power, Economic development, Transitions

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2023

Inequality And Democratization: A Power-Centered Approach to Democratic Transitions

by

Alban Lauka

Committee Chair: Charles Hankla

Committee: Michael Fix

Carrie Manning

Jennifer McCoy

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2023

**DEDICATION**

To my wife, Mona, my parents, Islam and Fatbardha, and my sisters, Drenica and Faina, who made this possible with their uninterrupted support.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

What causes democratization? Why do some countries become democracies, while others remain authoritarian? Which economic conditions favor democratization, and how do different socio-economic groups impact the process through their political and economic preferences and behavior?

Such questions have sparked scholarly investigation at least since the times of Aristotle, but they regularly come back to prominence from time to time, whenever the regional or global political landscapes are re-shaped. It is no wonder that intensified academic attention has been devoted to democratization since the 1950's, when the post-WWII world order was characterized by the ideological competition between liberal democratic regimes and more authoritarian alternatives. Similarly to how the observation that democratic countries almost never go to war against each-other led to the development of Democratic Peace Theory and a long literature associated with it in International Relations, democratization studies emerged primarily from the observed relationship between economic development and democracy, most notably established by Lipset in the late 1950's (1959). However, decades of research made little progress in establishing truths about democratization beyond the initial correlation with economic development. For example, while many authors have reinforced Lipset's initial thesis through more detailed empirical analyses (Geddes, 1999; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Epstein et al, 2006), some have instead concluded that economic development is a determinant of democratic consolidation rather than democratization (Cheibub, 1996; Przeworski et al, 1997; Przeworski et al, 2000; Houle, 2010). Furthermore, most publications focused on one aspect of the phenomenon, or one particular methodology, or a subset of cases, so no comprehensive explanatory framework emerged to serve as a foundation upon which more refined explanations

could be built. Such theories were finally developed in the last two decades focusing on economic inequality more specifically than simply level of development, however different theories reached diametrically opposite conclusions. Most prominently, while economic inequality was identified as a crucial determinant of democratization, authors disagreed on whether inequality inhibits (Boix, 2003) or catalyzes (Ansell & Samuel, 2010) democratization.

The fall of the Soviet Union ushered in the West a period of hope that ideological competition had become a thing of the past and western-type democracies would flourish all over the globe (ex: Fukuyama, 1989). In this new world where liberalism and democracy were almost inevitable natural processes, detailed studies of democratization would be redundant. Indeed, the third wave of democratization continued to increase the number of democracies worldwide well into the 1990's.

But it was only a temporary gain. Since 2000, strategically important countries like Turkey, Venezuela, and most importantly, Russia, have scored lower in democracy indices (Marshall, Jaggers & Gurr, 2020). The gradual end of the hegemonic power the US had enjoyed in the world stage in the 1990's, and the re-emergence of authoritarian powers on the world stage, such as Russia and China, have once again presented a viable ideological alternative to western-style democracy. After the sharp rise in the number of democracies during the third wave of democratization, the first decade of the new century saw the trend slowing down, until hitting virtually a standstill during the last decade (Desilver, 2019). In only two to three decades, the inevitability of a global liberal order has been all but forgotten, and questions such as the ones posed at the beginning of this chapter have once more acquired critical importance for this new and old political reality.

Despite the setbacks, survey data demonstrates that democracy has remained an important aspired political goal for people all around the world (Wike et al, 2017). Although commitment to democracy is stronger in wealthier and already democratic nations, the finding remains consistent countries in less developed regions of the world (Asunka, 2021), even in the Middle East where recent experiments with democracy have not exactly met the high expectations they set (Robbins, 2015).

Furthermore, various countries, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO-s), interest groups and people from all walks of life have been invested in promoting and establishing democratic governments, and such commitments have only proliferated in the years following the Cold War. Between 2010 and 2019, NGO yearly funding from OECD alone was around \$16-17 billion. Besides Emergency Responses and Humanitarian Assistance, Government and Civil Society NGO-s received the largest amount, between \$3 and \$3.6 billion (OECD, 2021). Democratization is one of the main mechanisms through which the US aims to establish peaceful relations among countries around the globe. From 1990 to 2003, USAID funds dedicated to democracy promotion increased more than fivefold, from \$128 million to \$817 million, while in other areas the budget remains virtually identical (Finkel, 2007). More direct American efforts in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq in the last two decades are well-known. At the same time, the EU remains committed to the establishment and consolidation of democracy through foreign policy and membership conditionality (European Parliament, 2021). And democratization has not only been sought after through funding or direct involvement or intervention, but also through sanctions, although the effectiveness of this pursuit has been widely criticized (Drury, 1998; Pape, 1998; Grauvogel, 2013).

At a time such as this, when the stable global demand for democracy is faced with democratic breakdown worldwide despite substantial efforts in democratizations from both governments and NGO-s, a deep and functional understanding of democratization is critical for the optimization of democratization efforts worldwide. But, notwithstanding the decades of research, the determinants of democratization and their effects on the process have not been agreed upon.

This dissertation has two ambitious goals: first, it aims to develop and find empirical support for a new theory of democratization, one that accounts for a greater degree of complexity and detail of democratic transitions; second, it aims to identify the reasons why the literature has been so sharply split and take an important step in flattening out differences and harmonizing the opposing perspectives into the new theory. I argue that democratizations are two-fold processes that establish horizontal and vertical accountability of government, determined by the economic inequality within the wealthy elite, and between the elite and the rest of the population. The lower the level of inequality in both cases, the more likely it is for a country to become democratic.

In Chapter 2, I provide a thorough analysis of previous research into democratization, focusing especially on the established and widely accepted truths and the “fought-over” disagreements. I argue that a more detailed understanding and operationalization of democratization demonstrates that the main existing theories are not mutually exclusive, each accurately capturing a distinct aspect of the process. The contractarian approach applies best to the process of liberalization, or the increase of horizontal accountability, while redistributive approaches better explain electoralization, the increase of vertical accountability. In Chapter 3, I lay out my own conceptualization of democracy and construct a general theory of

democratization. I start from the two simple assumptions that dictate that people are interested in political systems which allocate the maximum amount of political power to themselves.

However, due to the very practical constraints of wealth and power (and lack thereof), a small group of people can seek to be directly involved in political decision-making, thus demanding horizontal accountability of the executive, while the rest will only be able to seek indirect involvement through representatives, pushing for vertical accountability through elections instead. Relative economic inequality determines each group's ability to enforce its demands on the rest. Introducing distinct types of inequality as determinants of transitions, I construct a model that maintaining simplicity while aiming to expand upon current theories' explanatory and predictive capacities.

The theory is put to test in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4, I use a longitudinal dataset spanning from 1800 to 1992 to verify the effect of intra-elite and poor-rich income ratios to probabilities of both electoralization and liberalization. Utilizing dynamic probit models, I find evidence for a positive effect of intra-elite ratio on liberalization, and of poor-rich ratio on electoralization.

In Chapter 5, I look more closely at two case studies for democratization: England and South Korea. These two cases were chosen because democratization there occurred at very different times and in completely different manners. Thus, if the democratizing mechanisms detailed in my theory can be identified in both, it can be plausibly argued that they can be identified in diverse cases around the world. After examining both, I do find strong similarities in the behaviors of different socio-economic groups and in the relationship between these groups' effectiveness in pursuing demands for democratizations and the relative distribution of economic resources, which suggests common causal mechanisms for both processes. Furthermore,



differences in the two countries' paths to economic development associated with different levels of inequality between the socio-economic groups are manifested in the different paths to democracy.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I draw conclusions from the findings in the previous chapters. I also situate the findings in the context of modern challenges to democratization and discuss more in detail issues that have been raised in this introductory chapter.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I lay out some of the most prominent theoretical accounts of democratization from the comparative subfield of political science. Furthermore, I illustrate their disagreements and discuss some shortcomings to present the gaps I aim to fill further ahead.

### 2.1 Modernization Theory: Economic Development & Democratization

The relationship between economic development and democratization is arguably the most widely researched topic in comparative politics (Lipset 1959; Rostow, 1960; Jackman 1973; Moore 1966; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Inglehart & Welzel, 2009; Rueschemeyer et al 1992; Przeworski & Limongi 1997; Geddes, 1999; Cheibub, 1996; Epstein et al, 2006; Wucherpfennig & Deutsch, 2009; Houle, 2010; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003; Ansell & Samuels, 2014; Knutsen & Wegmann, 2015; Krieckhaus, 2014). Despite the scholarly attention, little consensus has been built beyond the mere observation of a strong correlation between democracy and economic development.

Lipset was the first scholar to put forward a comprehensive theory linking economic and social modernization to democracy and democratization (1959). He argued that unlike for authoritarian regimes, for democracies, legitimacy is a necessity. Economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, improvements in education and a relatively low economic disparity between the wealthy and the poor are some of the factors that may provide such legitimacy, appeasing the low classes and in turn, making elite-dominated dictatorships unnecessary for the rich. Lipset did not determine a causal relationship between development and democracy, nor the direction of a supposed such relationship. He did, however, find empirical

support of at least a correlational relationship, thus producing one of the first empirical studies in the subfield of Comparative Politics (1959).

Lipset's theory was broadly well-received as a first step towards exploring the relationship between economic development and democracy, however, it has also been criticized, mainly on grounds of lacking a more tangible and empirically supported micro-level argument, not specifying the directionality and not clarifying the possible causal relationship between the two main variables. These shortcomings would inspire the dozens of subsequent studies that turned democratization into one of the most researched topics within Comparative Politics.

Moore's account is generally favorable to Lipset's version of modernization. He took a more historically guided approach, expanding on different types of modernization as economic development, and the distinct transformations they bring about in political systems (1966). For Moore, the type of polity that emerges from the modernization process depends primarily on the existence of a capitalist class (bourgeoisie), as well as the relative power and wealth of each social and economic cleavages. Different combinations of such factors can lead to democratic systems, fascist or communist ones, while the main driving force behind these transformations were economic interests (Moore, 1966). In this regard, he departed from Rostow, who only saw democracy at the end of the modernization path (1960).

In retrospective, Moore's analysis offers a rich account of the transformations that some of the most important nations of the world underwent through the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, in a world filled with illiberal democracies, economically liberal authoritarian countries, partial democracies and many other types of hybrid regimes, Moore's choice of only allowing for three main outcome political systems can be considered outdated.

Theoretically plausible and persuasive in their broad generalizations, Lipset's and Moore's arguments needed more concise causal links. Inglehart attempted to fill this gap by introducing cultural factors as intermediate variables that link economic development with political change. Inglehart argued that as economic conditions improve, younger generations shift their attention from securing survival to securing rights and freedoms and expressing themselves (1997). Industrialization, urbanization, higher education levels and cultural changes produce a more politically involved and demanding middle class, which in turn, makes democracy more likely (Inglehart, 1997). In his highlighting of such economic and social modernization processes, he is in line with the argument of Rueschemeyer et al (1992), who suggest that it is organized labor classes that increase the likelihood of democracy, while the power and extent of the traditional landowning ones reduce it.

The decades Inglehart spent collecting data for his World Values Series surveys have provided plentiful empirical evidence to support the existence of a deep underlying cultural difference between economically developed societies and developing ones, and even temporal cultural changes within the same countries. In itself, this is already a substantial contribution to modernization literature, and to the understanding of the transformative processes that may produce democracy.

However, neither the link between economic development and cultural change, nor that between cultural change and the emergence of democracy have been empirically indisputable, especially in the last couple of decades. First, many of the countries with the highest economic growth rates of this century and the latter part of the past one, have not seen the cultural transformations that had changed western societies. The most well-known examples are Russia, Turkey and especially China, which even in the World Values Series surveys, shows little to no

signs of a cultural shift (Inglehart & Welzel, 2009). Second, between income level and demand for democratization there is no guaranteed connection: while income level seems to play an important part in enabling democratization, its role may be only a necessary requirement to it, rather than a sufficient one, or at least a catalyzing factor.

More importantly, Inglehart's theory still leaves modernization in need of a micro-level driving factor which could explain people's change in political and economic preferences. While it may very well be true that once survival is close to guaranteed people will seek non-material goals, this does not have to mean that material advancement will not be pursued. In fact, Inglehart & Welzel do admit that changes in material well-being, such as economic recessions, may even reverse the process of cultural change that, according to them, makes democratization more likely (2009). Thus, notwithstanding the tremendous enrichment Inglehart & co. have introduced into the research agenda by exploring a new facet of modernization, a rational-choice model is still required to account for material factors driving rational individual choices leading to regime transitions.

Throughout the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the constantly growing wealth of data available for analysis reinforced support for a relationship between economic development and democracy, but also brought more complex quantitative analyses. Attempting to explain the relationship in more detail, Przeworski et al (1997) argued that modernization does not bring democracy: it consolidates it. The logic was that in democracies that do well economically, the citizens will not be tempted by alternative forms of government. Similar theoretical counters to the Lipset's classic model were presented and empirically tested by Przeworski et al (1997, 2000) and Cheibub (1996), while a similar logic was employed later by Houle, who argued that it

is specifically economic inequality that affects democratic consolidation and longevity rather than democratization (2010).

However, the empirical analyses supporting Przeworski et al have been in turn criticized, by Geddes (1999), Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Epstein et al (2006), who conclude that correct data analysis would have demonstrated an important effect of development on probability of democratization. As a result, despite the challenges, the link between economic development and democracy was only more deeply enrooted and broadly accepted in the literature (Wucherpfennig & Deutsch, 2009).

## **2.2 Economic Inequality**

While initially, many authors focused mainly on broad figures of economic and social development, more recent literature, especially by the beginning of this century, has shifted their attention more narrowly upon the effects of economic inequality on democratization.

At its core, democracy is a pluralist concept. Ideally, it should offer the opportunity for each individual to participate in the political process, for each group of people to mobilize politically and confront other groups who may be of different identities, ideological leanings or economic interests. Thus, this concentration of the literature on income inequality is quite understandable, and one could say it manifested itself rather late, considering that Lipset had regarded inequality as one of the main contributing factors to premises of democratization in the first place (1959). After all, in non-democratic regimes, where one group of people dominates the rest, it is only natural for other groups to desire a more even distribution of power and/or resources.

Despite the very intuitive role that inequality may play in regime transitions, there is no academic consensus neither on how important that role is, nor how (negatively/positively) it impacts democratization. There are two main streams of literature disagree on whether economic inequality increases or decreases the probability of democratization, while also slightly differing on respective definitions and operationalizations of democracy.

### *2.2.1 The Redistributive Model*

One strand of literature, by now very well-established, built on Meltzer & Richard's model of rational government size (1981) to find the roots of autocratic regime change or stability in the income differences between the rich and the masses. Most notably, Boix (2003) argued that for the masses, democratization is an opportunity to establish majority-rule, which will allow them to use elections to soften income disparities through redistribution policies. In the face of this predisposition of the poor in favor of democracy, the elites may choose between tolerating or fighting democratization. The rich only allow democratization if they believe their incomes and assets will not be threatened by it. Boix mentions two possible ways in which the rich might be less vulnerable to redistribution. First, the more equal the income distribution, the less punitive redistribution is for the wealthy. Thus, at very low levels of inequality, the rich will not have much to lose from democracy. Second, if their assets are mobile, they might not fear heavy taxation since they could just move their businesses elsewhere. Even a mass-controlled government would not have enough leverage to maintain high taxes under such conditions. Boix concludes that, keeping asset mobility constant, inequality has a negative effect on the probability of democratization.

Acemoglu & Robinson (2006) start from very similar premises, but propose that this relationship, rather than being linear, has the shape of an inverted “U”. They too, trace democratization to redistribution demand and supply, respectively by the masses and the elites, but incentives change at different levels of inequality. If inequality is very high, the rich will have too much to lose from allowing democratization. On the other hand, the rich might be willing to allow democracy in extremely low levels of inequality, but the masses will not be incentivized to push for it.

Despite aiming to improve upon modernization theory’s note that democratization comes through economic development, redistributive models have also received criticisms on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Different studies find that democracies do not, in fact, redistribute more than non-democracies, challenging the notion that the masses seek democracy for redistribution (Mulligan et al 2004; Ansell & Samuels 2010). It could be argued that whether democracies redistribute more or not is irrelevant, because merely the perception that they do so is sufficient for different classes to seek it or fight it. However, Knutsen & Wegmann show that people living in democratic ex-communist countries do not consider redistribution one of democracy’s main features (2015). Furthermore, Krieckhaus et al find that people living in democracies with high inequality levels lose support for democracy, although this is less true for the poorest (2014). These empirical challenges to the underlying assumptions of the redistributive models suggest that the theoretical foundation for them, despite seeming philosophically sound and intuitive, might need reconsideration.



### ***2.2.1 The Contractarian Model***

The models proposed by Boix and Acemoglu & Robinson agree on what drives democratization: low classes' struggle for economic equality through political power and the reaction of the high classes to this struggle. A reemerging stream of literature, however, suggests that this view is not necessarily correct, at least not in every case. The contractarian model traces its philosophical roots back to social contract theorists such as Hobbes and Locke (Ansell & Samuels 2010; Ansell & Samuels 2014). Applied to democratization, this model's core difference with the redistributive models is that the driving force for democracy is not the desire to amend economic inequalities, but to establish safeguards against the state, most importantly to prevent expropriation. This explanation fits well with Olson's "stationary bandit" model (1993) as well as North's argument that non-democratic leaders cannot credibly commit to protect their citizens' rights (1990). Both authors highlight the fact that an unopposed enforcer of contracts has the ability to exploit its subjects through predatory behavior as well. The central conflict to determine the political balance, therefore, is not the one between masses and elites, but between the ruler and the ruled, and even more specifically, between the ruling class and a rising wealthy one. Ansell & Samuels place precisely this conflict at the center of democratization processes, which, according to them, are "struggle[s] on the part of disenfranchised groups—including a rising bourgeoisie—to obtain credible commitments against incumbent elites' expropriation of their income and assets" (2010, p. 1547).

In addition to the different theoretical construct of democratization, Ansell & Samuels also redefine what can be understood by rising inequality (2010). They state that increases in the GINI coefficient do not necessarily mean the rich and the rest are growing apart in income levels, as they could indicate an expansion of the upper class with a newly wealthy group

instead. In fact, they believe that it is this type of rising inequality that preceded the transformations that led to democracy in the West during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The mechanism is quite straightforward: poor people do not fear government predation because there is nothing for the government to expropriate. But when some of the poor and politically disenfranchised attain wealth, they need and will seek protection against such predation. So, increasing inequality produces incentives for democratization, a completely different conclusion from that of the redistributive models'. The only exception Ansell & Samuels make is regarding inequality in land, as even the poor will have something to protect from predation, however small the land they own. Thus, they predict that increases in non-land inequality increase the probability of democratization, while increases in land inequality decrease it (Ansell & Samuels 2010).

The two dominant theories of democratization of the last two decades have converged in arguing that there is a relationship between income inequality and transitions, but not much else. What's more, redistributive theory claims the relationship is negative, while contractarians argue it is positive, which leaves the whole literature at a crossroads. I maintain that the core assumptions of both theories contain truths, but only for different aspects of democratization processes, while the apparently contrasting empirical tests derive from their failure to distinguish between components of democratic regimes, different types of income inequality, and the different social conflicts and transformations that constitute democratic transitions. In the next section, I develop a new theory of democratization that, building on just two core assumptions, distinguishes between two types of inequality, two types of social conflict and two different aspects of democratization processes. Based on these distinct operationalizations, I attempt to use a very simple model to explain democratization to a greater level of complexity and detail. In

doing so, I also aim to bridge the two streams of literature and integrate them into one more comprehensively explanatory theory.

### 3 A POWER-CENTERED THEORY OF DEMOCRATIZATION

I start from two simple assumptions:

*Assumption 1: People seek to establish and maintain a regime type that will allow them to protect and advance their interests.*

This assumption is quite straightforward. People would prefer a type of government that maximizes their chances to achieve their goals rather than one that doesn't, or even reduces such chances. Of course, the role that government plays is not only determined by regime type, but also by who is in power, so people's agency in politics is routinely influenced by choices over individual leaders or parties. However, the institutional arrangement and the legal framework a political system is built upon, also have an impact on the way government impacts people's lives, and people are aware of it and act on it. For example, an aristocratic government would be a much more popular idea among traditionally wealthy elites, such as landowners, than among the lower classes; a military junta is probably more acceptable to those in the military or with ties to it, etc.

*Assumption 2: The best guarantee that one's interests will be protected is the allocation of as much political power as possible into one's own hands.*

Critical importance here is placed on the word "best". Different governments and regimes over the centuries have found numerous ways to attain the acceptance of monopoly on political authority by the people. Both sticks and carrots can and have been used to retain power. Typically, the level of violence exercised in repressing opposition is adjusted according to the circumstances, to establish such authority. Alternatively, other methods of appeasements, such as

government handouts like free healthcare, education or public transportation, have been employed to varying degrees of success. These methods seek to place the citizen before two non-optimal choices: one in which they accept the existing regime (sometimes associated with rewards), and one, which the regime seeks to offer as a less appealing alternative, in which they reject the existing regime and face the consequences. Indeed, in some instances citizens may embrace this dichotomy and pick one of the two available options. However, none of these options provides the citizen a long-term guarantee that their interests will be protected. Even the citizens who embrace appeasement will only receive either promises or some type of reward for their choice, while the government retains the political power to subsequently renounce such rewards. Unequivocally, the best way for one's interests to be protected in the long-term, is for one's interests to be protected by themselves. Thus, it is in the best interest of each citizen to accumulate as much political power as they can into their own hands.

In terms of interests in regime transition or survival, these assumptions split the population in two groups: (1) those with no access to political power will seek a regime that grants it to them; (2) those already with access seek to either maintain the existing regime, or push for one that concentrates power into their hands even further. Here, groups with access to political power are meant to indicate the people who are in charge of political decision-making. This may include the monarch, dictator, party or any other group directly running the government, as well as the narrow economic and social elite with close ties to this group and which can influence the way government is run, such as their family members, business connections, etc.

On the other hand, groups without access to political power include people of various social and economic standing that neither hold important political offices nor can exert

substantial influence over those who do. To illustrate, in pre-revolutionary England, those with political power would be the royal dynasty, the traditionally titled aristocracy and their close personal and business circles.

I contend that success in establishing a favorable regime depends primarily on one's material capabilities vis-a-vis one's adversaries. Wealth is important as an instrument through which political power is attained, which in turn, can secure and promote long-term interests. Wealth may be used to such ends in different ways, from extending material support to rulers in exchange for concessions, to mounting a military challenge against them to force them into making such concessions.

If a certain group interested in a transition possesses far fewer resources than the ruling elites, transition is not very likely to happen. The most illustrative real-world examples may be the resource-rich non-democratic regimes of today: as resource curse theory posits (Wantchekon, 2002; Goldberg, Wibbels & Mvukiyehe, 2008; Papaioannou & Siourounis, 2008), governments that thrive on resources rather than taxation of their citizenry, need not be accountable to them, nor extend inclusion in political decision-making processes. Furthermore, the ruling classes of such countries possess sufficient wealth to overpower the rest of the population either by appeasing key groups or individuals through high reward compromises, or by importing additional firepower.

On the other hand, when the incumbent group lacks an important economic advantage, transition is more likely. This may or may not involve a military confrontation. A useful historical example to illustrate such a case is the English Civil War which, broadly speaking, pitted members of a commercially successful class against members of the traditional aristocracy and the crown still rooted in the old feudal system.

Thus, as it is each person's self-interest to maximize their own political power, in full autocracies, the population is split into two opposing camps: those within the narrow political and economic elite ruling the country seeking to retain this power, and those outside of it, looking to become part of the decision-making process.

However, access to political power may take two main forms. One can influence the political process either directly, through direct participation in political decision-making, or indirectly, by electing representatives capable of such participation. The first, for obvious reasons, and as the second assumption predicates, is preferable to the second. However, given the large populations of modern nations, achieving direct participation is only viable for a small fraction of the population. The type of government can directly affect this fraction in both quality and quantity. For example, in fascist governments supreme leaders hold absolute power at the highest level of decision-making, while a tiny part of the rest of the population may have less important political roles, so access to political power is very restricted. On the other hand, in parliamentary systems with decentralized local governments, the number of people with direct access to political power may be much larger, and their role in the political process more meaningful. In most contemporary countries with large populations, the size of the group of people with direct access to political power remains a small minority. Although ideas of more direct citizen involvement in politics through e-democracy have been gaining some attention in recent decades, the ever more specialized and competitive economies of today do not allow most citizens the luxury of a permanent political commitment alongside their careers. Thus, this distinction between those who can access political power directly (or through very close connections) and those who may only hope to do so through elected representatives is likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

While direct access to political power is restricted, indirect access through representatives does not have to be. Indeed, universal suffrage is considered today an essential pillar in most of the liberal democratic regimes in the West.

Because only a fraction of the population may hope to attain direct political participation, only the richest fraction of the non-ruling part of the population might push for such a privilege. For the rest of the population, the only possible way to access political power is through elected representatives.

Therefore, citizens who are not part of the ruling elite of a dictatorial regime can be divided in two groups, even though in principle, they are all interested in a transition to increase their own political power. The first group consists of those placed in a good position to potentially attain direct access to political power and benefit the most from liberalizing measures. Typically, this group includes newly wealthy classes, or otherwise wealthy individuals that are not directly associated with the government. Today, high-skill professionals and independent entrepreneurs can be part of this class, but the most famous historical examples of such wealthy groups are ones labelled as bourgeoisie in England and other western nations between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These groups acquired enough wealth independent of the crown to distinguish themselves from the masses and to be able to negotiate (forcefully or not) their political status with the traditional royal and aristocratic rulers. The second group consists of all the rest of the citizenry, who can only pursue participation through political representation. Both are interested in weakening the existing ruling class' hold on power, but to different extents, and through different regimes.



### 3.1 Elite Competition

The richest groups not at the top of the political hierarchy will strive for a regime that guarantees access to political power for them, but not necessarily for everyone. Still, they would prefer to expand the ruling circle, which would inescapably require a division of power. This is not only a functional necessity deriving from the larger number of people with direct influence on political decision-making, but also a bipolar balance of power solution. While the traditional upper class tied to the ruler may secure their socio-economic status by political means, others may do so through successful market competition. This second group is vulnerable to the first, as their precarious condition is that of being in possession of substantial wealth, but at the mercy of the rulers when it comes to deciding how that wealth is “governed”. Redistributive taxation, business nationalization, punitive seizure of assets, or the threat thereof, are possibilities that put rulers in a position of power in relation to the rest of the economic elite. Are these elites to accept a position of submissiveness? Much depends on material capabilities. If a small group suddenly grows wealthy and/or powerful enough, they may attempt to overthrow and replace the existing government, taking full control of political power as well as cementing their economic standing. However, for a larger group of wealthy citizens not dependent on the ruling elite, if they are not in such a powerful position, the preferred regime would be one which includes all the economic elite in the political establishment. This would not only secure them more political power through direct participation in decision-making, but also a way to oppose potentially harmful policies and even pursue beneficial ones in the future. In societies with low inequality within elite groups, no single small group of wealthy citizens would be able to impose themselves on the rest, thus the second solution is more likely.

Therefore, seeking a division and distribution of political power, if successful, a wider coalition of wealthy groups may challenge the narrow incumbent elite to introduce or enhance division of power and accountability along the horizontal dimension. This division of power does not have to be immediately drastic, as much depends on how serious the challenge to ruling circle is. Ideally, this group would establish a fully liberal regime to politically accommodate all the economic elite of the country, but intermediate solutions can be negotiated for less than fully successful transition efforts.

It has to be noted that, in addition to citizens previously not closely affiliated with the small ruling group, such as the newly wealthy groups, individuals from the traditional aristocracy who find ways of attaining or enhancing their socio-economic status independently from royally awarded titles can also become part of such a coalition.

Both the institutional foundation of horizontal accountability, as well as the freedoms and rights it typically establishes and/or protects, benefit first and foremost the contending elites. Constitutions and independent judiciaries and legislatures all constrain the power of autocratic rulers and invite a larger, independent group of citizens to partake in decision-making. While in many liberal democracies today, being a judge or being elected to parliament is not only available to the wealthy classes now, historically, access to similar institutions has been limited. In some cases, such as in the UK or Belgium, restrictions on property, education, profession, or even racial, ethnic or religious identity, made this new slice of political power available only to the wealthiest of the non-rulers. More traditionally, placements in institutions such as Councils, Parliament or Courts were reserved, at least partially, for members of the higher class. This was the case for several institutions of the Roman Republic, the British Empire, etc. Often these positions were even inherited. Even today, despite the more open electoral systems in many

western nations, it is easier for people with higher levels of income to be elected into office (Carnes & Lupu, 2016; Carnes & Lupu, 2017).

Similarly, the political and economic rights that these institutions usually uphold, such as freedom of speech, rights to property or the right to a fair trial are most easily taken advantage by the wealthiest groups of the non-rulers. For example, attaining freedom of speech may be of little relevance to a peasant with no personal political ambitions or no means of broadcasting his speech, but it may greatly benefit businessmen, journalists, academics, etc., the rights to property are most important to large property owners, and the right to fair trial is most beneficial to the ones who can afford the best legal teams. And beyond the utility of each specific freedom to certain elite groups, they constitute restrictions to executive power that require the establishment of institutions capable of punishing potential violations, further empowering parliaments and courts.

Thus, a newly wealthy group stands to greatly gain in political power from these changes, while having little to fear in terms of further bottom-up movements (or any associated ideas of redistribution) as the lower classes are far from ideally placed to take advantage of such freedoms. The fact that the UK did not establish vertical accountability for over two centuries after horizontal division of power is a testament to how liberalization benefits primarily the contending upper class groups.

It is important to note that the portion of the population that may benefit from such measures of horizontal accountability has broadened with time. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a relatively small group of newly wealthy people would seek direct access to political decision-making through a parliamentary system of government. Today, access to decision-making in most countries is available in different branches as well as different levels of government. Even

in a country with a huge population, such as the US, almost 15% of the workforce are public employees (Brock, 2001). Certainly, not every government employee has an authentic input into decision-making, but this figure is indicative of the tremendous expansion of government since the time when the first European countries started to liberalize.

On the other hand, elections represent an attractive option to control political power only if voting rights are restricted to a small part of the population. Once again, this can, and has been achieved through various means: property requirements for voting, polling tax, “literacy” tests, etc. However, if the majority, or even more so, all the citizenry participates, the wealthy non-rulers might find themselves less powerful than in a liberal autocracy. To a large wealthy class of a dictatorial regime ruled by few powerful individuals, the ideal transition would be to a liberal autocracy with higher horizontal division of power and accountability. Historical examples of regimes that best match the ideal case transition may be countries such as 1871-1918 Germany and the United Kingdom between the Glorious Revolution and the expansion of the franchise in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More recent cases include Imperial Japan until WWII, Turkey before the 1961 Constitution and apartheid South Africa.

### **3.2 The Masses**

The materially constrained masses, on the other hand, can only pursue indirect access to political power. Thus, they are left with the sole option of an electoral regime with universal or near-universal suffrage and opportunities to run for office. Of course, the poorest brackets within this group are the most interested in universal suffrage. After all, this would be the only way for them to have a say in political decision-making, while the median earners may attain such rights even in less inclusive regimes, such as ones with low property requirements for voting. However, in such cases, the median earners would find themselves outnumbered and outvoted by higher

earners: they may attain political participation, but this participation would hardly translate into real impact on policy. Indeed, following Meltzer and Richard (1981), universal suffrage would benefit the median earner too, by placing their preferences at the center of the voter preference spectrum. Thus, excluding the few who may strive for long-term direct participation in a regime with horizontal accountability and division of power, the masses are interested in establishing vertical accountability.

While interested in vertical accountability, non-wealthy non-rulers do not necessarily have much to gain from horizontal accountability. As mentioned above, institutions that constrain the concentrated power of the executive, such as Courts, Councils, Parliament, have been dominated by the higher classes. In fact, horizontal accountability in the form of not directly elected institutions such as the courts or certain legislative bodies has often impeded the full realization of electoral power. In the American Republic, the non-democratic nature of federal courts can be seen as a safeguard against the volatile force of day-to-day electoral politics. In the eyes of the people, however, this may more simply be considered as an obstacle to the implementation of their will. Of course, legislatures can be made vertically accountable through elections, so the predisposition of the masses towards horizontal accountability may be ambivalent and dependent on the extent to which the institutions are accountable to them. But regardless of whether there are horizontal constraints to the executive, it is elected leaders who the people see as the embodiment of their will and who they may hold responsible for failing to uphold it.

Thus, for the majority of the people, on the other hand, the ideal regime would be one where all citizens have the right to vote to elect decision-makers, as well as run for office. It is important to stress that dictatorial regimes that claim to endorse the cause of the lower classes,

such as communist ones do not fit these criteria. Communist governments, even ideal-type ones, offer the masses policies that are expected to produce economic equality and modernization, not the political power to determine those policies. This distinction, even more clearly visible in real-world cases of self-proclaimed implementations of Marxist and/or Leninist theory. Lenin's rationalization of the non-democratic nature of his communist rule through the concept of the "avantgarde party" which would pull the unemancipated masses towards enlightenment and modernization, is the perfect illustration of this distinction. The same distinction disqualifies communist political systems from being considered ideal-type regimes for the majority of the population, as it disagrees with Assumption 2, which postulates that one's ideal regime is that which allocates as much political power as possible into one's own hands. It is not surprising that the communists succeeded in persuading the masses of a disenfranchised and materially constrained peasantry to embrace their promise of favorable policies, while the more economically independent and better educated citizenry of western nations chose preferred to leverage their way to such policies through electoral political powers.

For most people then, electoral regimes, not communist ones, would be preferable. The more directly and effectively the will of the people can be projected on the government, the closer that regime is to the ideal one for the masses. In countries with governments dominated by the executive, the masses would benefit the most from a transition that allows them to freely elect the executive and run for executive office. The resulting regime would undoubtedly fit Zakaria's definition of an "illiberal democracy" (1997). Today, they can be observed in countries such as Venezuela or Turkey. In countries with pronounced horizontal accountability and division of power, such as the UK, direct election of Parliament members would be of paramount

interest to the majority. In these cases, transition to electoral institutions would produce the type of governments we commonly call liberal democracies.

### **3.3 From full autocracy to full democracy**

Starting from full autocracy, both groups outside the ruling circle are interested in establishing regimes that deliver them the greatest amount of political power. Although Levitsky & Way would probably classify all resulting systems besides full democracies as hybrid regimes (2010), and rightly so, they can be categorized into more specific sub-types.

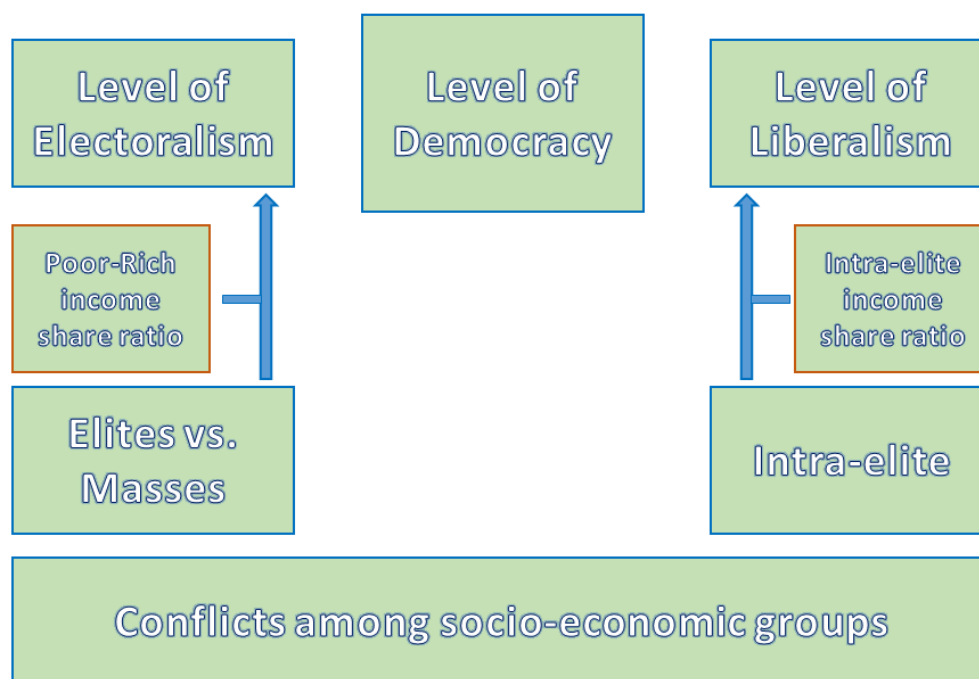
The path from autocracy to democracy involves at least two distinct processes: liberalization, which establishes horizontal accountability to the executive by expanding direct participation in decision-making, and electoralization, which establishes vertical accountability by extending voting rights to the citizenry. Any autocracy may go through one, none or both of these processes, which may occur simultaneously or not.

The country that exemplifies each of these transitions in the clearest way, and that has been most extensively studied, is the United Kingdom, which will be explored more in detail in Section V. The most profound institutional transformations in the UK occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Moore explains that starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the crown had successfully reestablished its control at the expense of the feudal nobility (1966). However, the Late Middle Ages brought increased profits from agricultural exports (Power, 1941), which created a new upper class whose wealth did not depend on the King. As they grew richer and more economically independent, this class began seeking political power, which pitted them against the crown, who they defeated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, forcing it to accept the institutionalization of the gradual erosion of its relative power. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Parliament had already assumed a leading role in British politics. Electoralization, on the other hand, happened

primarily during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half the 20<sup>th</sup>. Acemoglu & Robinson (2000), in agreement with Lee (1994) and Darvall (1934), argue that the fact that protests and demonstrations preceding each franchise expansion expressed threat of violence which induced franchise extension as a tool for appeasement, which suggests that the masses intentionally pushed for elections.

But if the citizenry is always interested in elections, why did they only succeed at that moment in history? I agree with many authors who believe that, in these cases, success depends (not exclusively) on relative wealth. These authors, however, attempt to capture inequality through the GINI coefficient, which depends not only on the income disparities, but also on the number of people in each bracket. So, it can rise not only when the rich become richer, but also when the number of rich people grows. By this measure, we would find that inequality was rising rather than declining during the Industrial Revolution (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000; Ansell & Samuel, 2010). Looking at the wealth share of different income brackets, however, reveals that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the balance was shifting towards a more even distribution. By the end of the century, the ratio of poor income share over rich income share had reached 0.24, in comparison to the 0.20 ratio of the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bourguignon & Morrisson 2002). The enhanced economic standing relative to the wealthy enabled the poor to substantiate their violence threats with an improved ability to arm themselves and to pressure the political and economic elite. The wealthy classes preferred conceding indirect political power to the masses rather than facing an increasingly costly revolt as the balance of power tilted away towards the non-ruling majority.





*Figure 1 A Map of Democratizations*

Starting from two simple assumptions it can be clearly seen that depending on their regime preferences and material capacities, populations in full autocracies can be split into three groups: the wealthy rulers, the wealthy non-rulers or otherwise not associated with and independent from the regime, and the poorer masses. Each group is motivated by different incentives and has different regime preferences from the others. In full autocracy, the ruling class is interested in preserving the regime, and since any other arrangement would require power-sharing, thus constituting a loss of political power for them, this interest is a constant. On the other hand, elite groups outside the establishment would prefer a broader ruling group which they could be part of, while the masses would ideally establish an electoral regime. The ability of the incumbent elite to retain the existing regime depends on the relative abundance of resources available to them as a class. To prevent relative losses of political power, the rulers might need to

address challenges coming from the richest non-rulers, who want a share of their power, and the poorer majority of the non-rulers who want the rulers to establish elections. The outcome regime can be described as a regime that reflects the equilibrium points of the two conflicts. Thus, it is the struggle for political power that determines groups' regime preferences, while material inequality dictates which goals are viable. The two types of conflicts, influenced by the two sides' relative wealth, drive two distinct conflicts that determine two different aspects of democratization. This model of democratization is visualized in Figure 1. Considering both types of conflicts, both types of inequalities and the two processes, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: The more even the distribution of wealth within the elites is, the higher is the probability of the country establishing horizontal accountability, or liberalization.

H2: The more even the distribution of wealth between the elites and the masses is, the higher is the probability of the country establishing vertical accountability, or electoralization.

Both hypotheses predict that material capabilities determine the extent of change in accountability in either the horizontal or the vertical axis. In both cases, two opposing forces “negotiate” the change. Emerging elites are incentivized to broaden the ruling group through liberalization, while the incumbent elite prefers not sharing its political power. On the other axis, the masses are motivated to establish control of the government through elections, while the elite would rather rule unaccountable to them. Such conflicts may manifest in the form of protests, riots, revolutions, peaceful transitions, oppressions, etc. Transitions are expected to be more

likely when the relative wealth of the contending groups is higher (masses relative to elites, or the contending elite relative to the incumbent one).

### **3.4 Political power, inequality and transitions**

Boix (2003), Acemoglu & Robinson (2006) and Ansell & Samuels (2014), all see overall inequality as a motivational source for regime change. Boix and Acemoglu & Robinson believe that a high level of inequality incentivizes the rich to oppose democratization for fear of redistribution. Ansell & Samuels suggest that a high level of inequality indicates not a bigger gap between the rich and the poor, but a larger rich class that includes wealthy non-rulers who seek democratization to protect their wealth from the rulers. The model presented above, while confirming the core theoretical foundations of both perspectives, adds a new layer of complexity to their conceptualizations of both inequality and democracy.

The proponents of the redistributive model, for instance, assume that overall inequality levels reflect the relative wealth of the rich and the poor. However, inequality reflects both their relative wealth and size. For example, one of the consequences of the industrial revolution was that inequality levels rose due to the emergence of a new wealthy class rather than the further enrichment of the existing one. In addition, Boix (2003) operationalizes democracy as a regime where more than half of the adult males can vote. This might fit well with his independent variable of choice, but it is not the only difference between autocracies and democracies. More importantly, Boix ignores the different degrees and types of democratization. The lack of specification of the independent variable and the narrow definition of the dependent one has two main negative consequences. First, the applicability of his model is restricted to transitions into electoral regimes, so an increase in vertical accountability. Second, while he finds some support for the idea that low inequality makes democratization more likely, it is not clear whether this is

due to a relatively small wealth difference between the rich and the poor, or because the rich are so few that their disproportionate wealth does not significantly raise overall inequality levels.

Ansell & Samuels (2010 & 2014) do well to differentiate inequality between the rich and the poor from inequality between rulers and non-rulers, but instead of measuring them directly, they use proxies, such as sectorial inequality. Their argument is that because the rulers traditionally include land-based aristocrats while the newly wealthy classes of the industrial revolution emerged from industry and trade, high levels of land inequality reflect a great rich-poor divide, while high levels of industrial and intersectoral inequality points at a powerful bourgeoisie. This association might have often been true, but it is also possible for rulers to engage in industry or commerce, as it is for non-rulers to become powerful land owners. In fact, the emergence of a commercially successful class of land owners in England has been regarded as a key development for the democratic transformations that followed (Tawney, 1961; Moore, 1966). And despite their assumptions, the overall non-agricultural level of inequality reflects not only the degree to which a non-ruling wealthy class is present, but also the economic disparities between the rich and the rest.

More critical than the ambiguity of the measurement, however, are the different aspects of democratization, which remain unaccounted for. Ansell and Samuels (2014) do recognize that regimes are not dichotomous and conceptualize a regime category to represent partial democracies, but they focus on degrees rather than aspects of democratization. Thus, they consider democratization a unidimensional process determined primarily by the struggle of the wealthy non-rulers for guarantees against appropriation, rather than acknowledging that different democratizing transformations are the consequences of different conflicts. This view of democratization is similar to the one presented by Houle (2009), who speaks about transitions

either from above or from below, without distinguishing between the types of democratization they promote. As a result, even though Ansell & Samuel present the most detailed theory on democratization to date, their model suffers from two shortcomings. First, it is difficult to determine whether their independent variable, the Gini coefficient, reflects bourgeoisie size and wealth, the divide between rich and poor, or a combination of the two. And second, as a consequence, it is not possible to isolate the distinct impact of each one of the two conflicts on the different aspects of democratization.

Although my model assigns a central importance to the distribution of political power, it does not refute the main mechanisms proposed by the redistributive and contractarian perspectives. Attitudes towards potential redistribution in democracy might indeed drive the masses/elites conflict and the desire to protect their wealth from the rulers might be the reason why the non-ruling rich seek democratization. However, as North (1990) suggests, non-democratic regimes have a hard time providing credible commitments so neither redistribution nor property rights are safe unless the groups seeking them obtain the power to enforce them. Therefore, political power, rather than protection or acquisition of wealth, is the ultimate goal that can secure the other ones. While maintaining political power as the end individuals seek through regime transitions, the model presented here synchronizes the mechanisms of both the redistributive and the contractarian models to provide a more detailed and more comprehensive explanation of processes that lead to democratization.

Wealth, as noted above, increases the chances of a group to obtain or retain such power. The theoretical implications of the three models discussed here are displayed in Table 1.

*Table 1 Inequality and Democratization*

Model	Conflict over	Inequality and Democratization
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Redistributive	Redistribution	High GINI > Democratization unlikely
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Contractarian	Property protection	High GINI > Democratization likely
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Low rich/poor inequality > Electoralization likely

Political Power	Power allocation	
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Low elite inequality > Liberalization likely

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Operationalizing two clearly distinctive types of inequality, as well as two different forms of democratization, in the following section, I develop new, hopefully more detailed and comprehensive explanatory models of democratization.

Before verifying the new theory through empirical tests, it is important to outline its limitations and distinguish between what it can, and aims to explain, and what it cannot, and does not aim to. Here I aim to attain a better understanding of the economic and political forces within a country that determine, or at least strongly influence, the type of regime it will have. As befits a comprehensive theory of transitions, it is one of the aims of this dissertation to build as parsimonious a theory as possible, with few assumptions and variables to capture important aspects of democratizations worldwide. It is inevitable that these transitions, however, are not all identical to each-other, and there are many factors that operate at a local level that also play a role in determining how each case develops.

For instance, regime transitions are not only shaped by internal factors: increasingly so, they are also determined by external powers. The emergence of a global system of international

relations, ever more intensive contacts between countries, regions and continents, and the large disparities between countries in terms of power, wealth, population size, etc., have all contributed to an international scene which deeply affects domestic developments. This is especially true for smaller and weaker countries, which are more vulnerable to external interventions by other countries, but also to economic and social forces they cannot control. Obvious examples of transitions determined by outside interventions are the communist regimes established after WWII in Soviet-dominated countries in Eastern Europe, the democratic regimes established roughly at the same time in Germany and Japan, and more recently even the democratic transitions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even without a deliberate intervention by a foreign power, external events may influence regime outcomes. The post-WWI economic crisis and Great Depression had deeply affected many European countries that transitioned to fascist regimes in the 1920's and 1930's, the Soviet economic hardships of the late 1980's allowed the peoples of Eastern Europe the freedom to press for reforms, and public attitudes in many Middle Eastern and North African countries were affected by attitudes in neighboring nations during the Arab Spring.

While it is important to clarify that a theory on how income inequalities impact transitions cannot explain externally imposed transformations such as Afghanistan becoming a more democratic country, it is also crucial to understand that not all external influence is identical, and not all cases that have been influenced by external forces are outside the scope of this theory. Economic crises, for example, can certainly play an important role in transitions, even if they are "imported". However, the effect of an economic crisis is directly related to the variables accounted for here, such as GDP and income inequality. An economic crisis can, in fact, set in motion transformations that lead to one social group, ex: the rulers, becoming less

wealthy in comparison to a group of non-rulers, which in turn would trigger events that this theory predicts may lead to an increase in horizontal accountability (liberalization). Thus, while some straightforward cases of external imposition of transitions may fall out of the scope of this theory, for most transitions, despite them having been influenced by from forces outside domestic control, the theory remains a fittingly applicable explanatory framework.

Another factor can be the ethnic or religious composition of the country undergoing transition. In fact, it has been recently shown that inequality's effect on democratization and democratic consolidation is conditioned by how inequality relates to the ethnic composition in multi-ethnic societies: high inequality between ethnic groups can have a negative impact despite low overall inequality (Houle, 2010). Local political culture can be yet another factor in determining regime transition and longevity: Japan's traditional conservatism can be viewed as a consolidating force once democracy was established, while the French revolutionary tradition may have played a role in the relatively frequent regime changes in France.

Although some of these factors are explored in the case studies' section, in the interest of parsimony and generalizability, the theory presented here cannot account for every one of them. It is my hope that as scholars employ the theory to explain transitions in different parts of the globe, they may further develop the models used here with the additional appropriate variables on a case-by-case basis.



## 4 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Data and Methods

As noted in the theoretical section, two different processes of democratization can occur: one that extends political rights to the whole citizenry, and another that constrains the ruling elite in favor of rich non-rulers. Although these two processes can happen at the same time if favorable conditions are simultaneously present, they operate under different causal mechanisms, and thus need separate explanatory models.

Previous work on this topic, as mentioned above, has not theorized these two processes distinctively, and consequently, has not operationalized them as such. For example, Boix (2003) uses as the dependent variable for democracy, a measure that he and Rosato (2001) developed to note the countries and years with democratic elections, disregarding the importance of horizontal accountability. The same measure is also utilized by Ansell and Samuel (2010; 2014), in addition to more general measures of democracy in other models, such as the comprehensive Polity2 score (2004), even though the transitions they describe are more akin to what I have called here *liberalization* than to *electoralization*. Here, I attempt to disentangle the two processes by distinctively operationalizing them through different measures, which, thankfully, are already available and widely used.

### 4.2 DV1: Liberalism

As a measure of horizontal accountability, I use the *xconst* variable, from the POLITY V data set (Marshall et al., 2020). This variable notes the degree to which executive leaders are institutionally constrained, on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 stands for maximal constraints.

Here, a more detailed examination is possible and appropriate, since not all adjustments of the degree to which a regime is liberal are of drastic nature (from 0 to 7 or vice-versa). As

explained in Section 2, when challenging elites are not able to fully dominate the narrower establishment, partial liberalizations are possible. This is reflected in the dataset, as only 109 changes on the horizontal accountability scale are shifts into or from the fully liberal 7 score, while the total number of transitions between three categories of liberalism scores is 286. This number not only allows a more complex analysis of different transitions, but also adds to its statistical reliability. Furthermore, the most prominent work on the elite-competition model of democratizations, which most closely related to liberalizations examined here, also employs a trichotomous variable of democracy (Ansell & Samuels, 2014, p.140).

Thankfully, the POLITY codebook provides meaningful explanations for each category, which I utilize to match them with the theory. I recode the variable into three categories: 0- regimes without substantial limitations to executive authority, from “0” to “4” on the xconst measure; 1- regimes where executives face substantial institutional constraints but retain superior authority, from “5” to “6” on the xconst measure; 2- regimes where executives are on the same level, or even inferior to legislatures or judicial branches, “7” on the xconst measure.<sup>1</sup> This categorization will reveal if elites’ relative shares of income matter at each stage of transformation along the horizontal accountability dimension. However, as a certain degree of arbitrariness is unavoidably present when constructing such categorical variables, as a robustness

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<sup>1</sup> The PolityV dataset codebook (Marshall et al., 2020) specifies that the value (5) indicates: Substantial Limitations on Executive Authority: The executive has more effective authority than any accountability group but is subject to substantial constraints by them. Examples: i. A legislature or party council often modifies or defeats executive proposals for action. ii. A council or legislature sometimes refuses funds to the executive. iii. The accountability group makes important appointments to administrative posts. iv. The legislature refuses the executive permission to leave the country.

The value (6) represents an intermediate category, while, (7) indicates: (7) Executive Parity or Subordination: Accountability groups have effective authority equal to or greater than the executive in most areas of activity. Examples of evidence: i. A legislature, ruling party, or council of nobles initiates much or most important legislation. ii. The executive (president, premier, king, cabinet, council) is chosen by the accountability group and is dependent on its continued support to remain in office (as in most parliamentary systems). iii. In multi-party democracies, there is chronic "cabinet instability."

check, the empirical analysis in the next section also includes a test with a different coding of the three categories.

The variable spans from the year 1800 to 2020, the only exception being the United States, which has been coded since 1789. As horizontal accountability in the form of powerful legislatures and independent judiciaries began to take shape even earlier in modern history than electoral practices, this variable constitutes the most appropriate to capture early liberalization processes. Even so, it has to be noted, for the very first steps toward the liberal western regimes we know today, such as transformations in Great Britain starting with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, as well as the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789, data is lacking, thus these important events remain outside the scope of the statistical analysis presented below. On the other hand, all three revolutions represented only the initial stage of developments that continued to reshape their regimes throughout the following decades (or centuries, in the case of the UK), and these subsequent stages of transformation are indeed accounted for by the *xconst* variable. From here, I refer to this variable as *liberalism*.

### **4.3 DV2: Electoralism**

To indicate whether a regime is electoral, I use the dichotomous regime categorization developed by Boix & Rosato (2001). This variable is coded as “1” if a country-year fulfills three criteria of electoral contestation and participation: (1) that the executive is directly or indirectly elected through free and fair elections, and that it is accountable to the voters or a legislature; (2) that the legislature is elected in free and fair elections; (3) that the majority of adult men have the right to vote (Boix, Miller & Rosato, 2013). Country-years not fulfilling all three of these conditions are coded as “0”.

As all three conditions describe the degree to which a regime is electorally controlled, this measure is perfect to capture vertical accountability. However, the degree to which a legislature can control decision-making, a constitution restricts executive power, or courts sanction institutions overstepping their authority, all central components to modern liberal democracies, are not factored. Therefore, I employ this variable only in the analysis of transitions towards electoral regimes. From here on out, this variable is referred to as *electoralism*.

The variable provides data from the year 1800 to 2007, thus allowing a comprehensive review and analysis of almost all known cases of modern transitions into electoral political systems. The only important exception is the establishment of a (non-perfect) democratic political system in the United States in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a development which, in any case, did not fit the ideal case study for the theory presented here, as it involved not only a regime transition, but also a war for independence.

#### **4.4 Independent variables**

The two main independent variables, meant to capture the relative material capacities of the groups in conflict, are calculated from the income share data from Bourguignon & Morrisson (2002). To my knowledge, this is the only dataset which presents income and inequality data for a period starting from 1820, thus not restricting the analysis further, and capturing the important shifts towards liberal democracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, it comes with two main drawbacks. The first is that data is only available for certain years, with gaps of 10 to 30 years, averaging about 15 years between the entries. The second drawback of the dataset is that some countries, especially are grouped into regional entities with the same data, which poses the problem that it may not reflect perfectly accurate values of inequality levels of each country.

Yet there are good reasons why this dataset has been so frequently employed in Comparative Politics studies. The data gaps may not have a detrimental effect on the reliability of the analysis ahead. First, as Boix (2003) suggests, yearly measures of gross domestic product (GDP) and income brackets may present volatility which is not necessarily reflected in the more gradually evolving and transforming nature of political systems. As the data does reflect the general trends of economic performance and income inequality, any structural shifts with long-lasting impact on the political system should be captured.

Regarding accuracy, Bourguignon & Morrisson (BM) explicitly mention that country groupings are based on them having similar economic structures, thus being expected to have similar levels of income and wealth distribution (2002). Furthermore, Ansell & Samuel (2003), who calculated Gini coefficients using this dataset, found it to be highly correlated with the Gini coefficients from the Denninger & Squire dataset (1996), which in turn, does not include data from before 1955.

Table 2 Correlations between B&M and WDI income brackets indicators

		<i>WDI indicators</i>			
		N=105	Top 10%	Middle 20%	Bottom 10%
<i>B&amp;M data</i>	Top10%		0.8073 <i>p&lt;0.0000</i>		
	Middle20%			0.7682 <i>p&lt;0.0000</i>	
	Bottom10%				0.7099 <i>p&lt;0.0000</i>

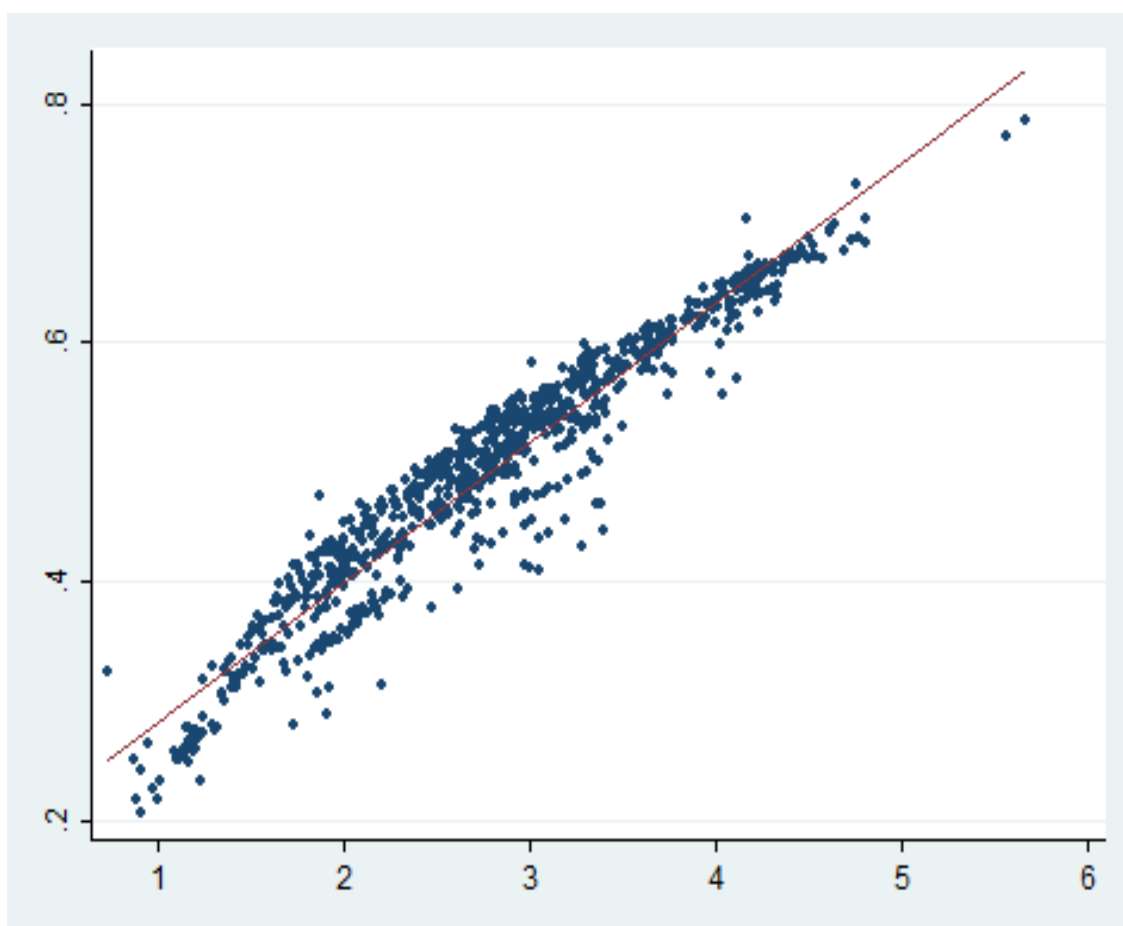
To further assess the reliability of the dataset, I correlate three of the variables measuring the income share of the bottom 10%, the middle 20%, and the top 10% income brackets (interpolated) with the same variables from the World Development Indicators database covering countries from 1967 onwards. As will be evident below, these three measures are the core indicators from which I construct the main independent variables. Despite the only 105 observations, all three pairs are highly correlated (with  $p < 0.0000$ ), as Table 2 shows.

#### ***4.4.1 IV1: Intra-elite ratio***

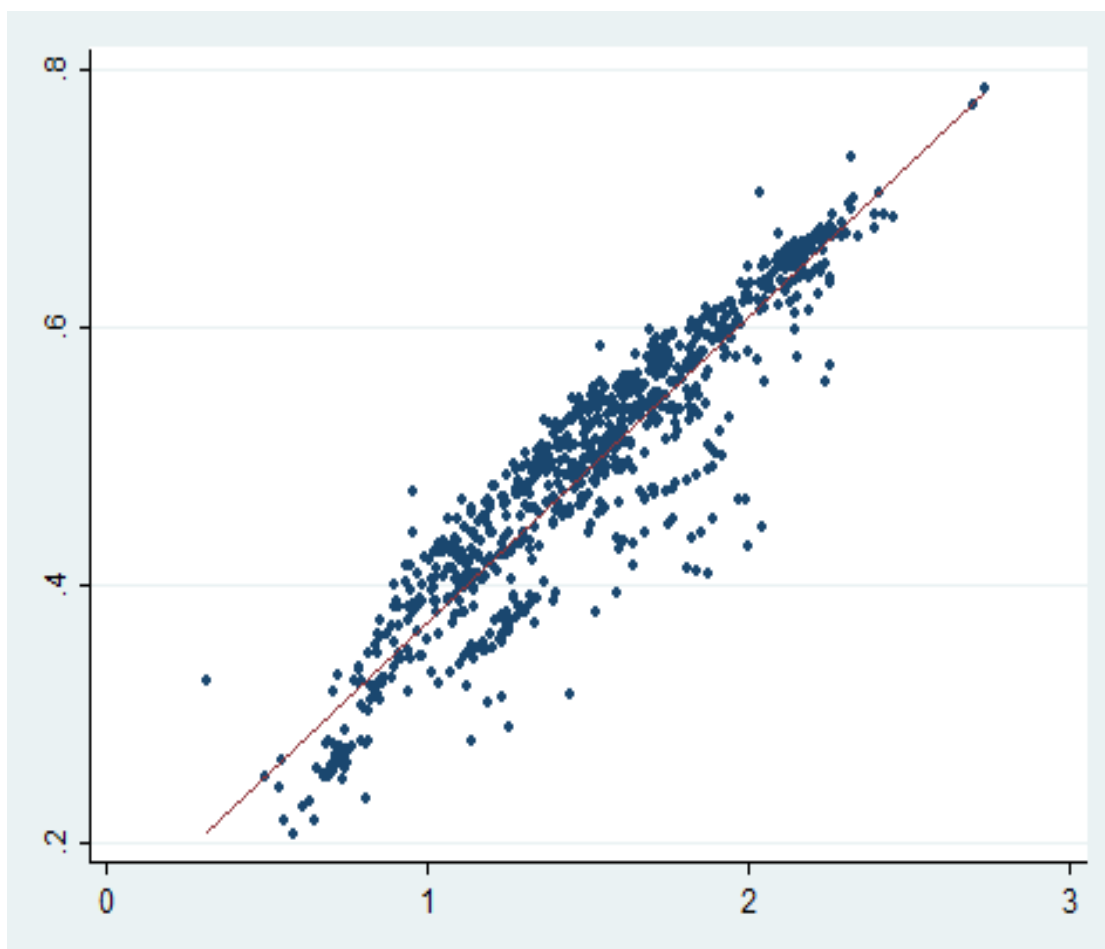
The first variable I construct from the BM dataset, named *Intra-elite ratio*, is a ratio of the income share of the second richest 5% bracket over the richest 5% bracket. The two income shares are meant to represent economic inequality within the elite, which should impact regime type and changes thereof. Ideally, income shares for smaller brackets would have been available as the ruling elites are likely narrower than 5% of the total population, while the proportion of the citizenry who may hope to attain public office is lower than 10%. Ansell and Samuels effectively demonstrate the small size of the very rich social class in several countries from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards (2014).

But two points have to be made here. First, economic conditions have changed dramatically since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Economic growth after WWI and especially WWII has created larger middle classes that can afford not only basic living conditions, but also previously rare commodities such as education (see Chapter V for an example of middle class growth in South Korea). Developed economies have diversified workforces away from the ones dominated by peasants and factory workers. Thus, elite groups like white-collar workers, public employees and business owners are now much larger than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second, even for historical cases with thinner elite groups, the variable does capture inequality between elites because since

the top 1% is usually where the income shares sharply increase, this part of the bracket will be more detrimental to the ratio. That means a ratio of the income of the richest 5% of the population and the next richest 5%, must be similar to the ratio of the income of the richest 1% and the next richest 4%, or the ratio of the income of the richest 1% and the next richest 9%. To verify this expected similarity, I correlate the ratios using the World Inequality Database, which provides data for any income brackets of choice.



*Figure 2 Correlation of the Intra-elite ratio variable used here and the ratio of income share for bracket 90-99 over 99-100*



*Figure 3 Correlation between the Intra-elite ratio variable used here with the ratio of income share for brackets 95-99 over 99-100.*

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the correlation between the ratio used here (income share of the second richest 5% over income share of richest 5%) and ratios of income shares for narrower brackets. Figure 2 correlates it with the ratio of the income share of percentiles 90-99 over the income share of percentiles 99-100, while Figure 3 the ratio of the income share of percentiles 95-99 over the income share of percentiles 99-100. These scatterplots demonstrate how similar the ratio of incomes I use in the analysis is to ratios of narrow income brackets, which validates the usage of the former. The correlations are, respectively, 0.9615 and 0.9305, with  $p < 0.0000$  in both cases. The high correlations indicate that our ratio is applicable in countries with very



narrow elite groups (top 1%). For obvious reasons, it is even more so in countries with a wider wealthy class (flatter income distribution). Finally, as mentioned, this is the only data set that provides income shares for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and these are the narrowest brackets available. I expect high values of *Intra-elite ratio* to increase the probability of liberalization.

#### **4.4.2 IV2: Poor-Rich ratio**

The other main independent variable is *Poor-Rich ratio*. It is meant to reflect how rich the masses are in comparison to the elite. It is measured by the ratio of the income share of the lowest bracket, the poorest 10% of the population, and the income share of the highest bracket, the richest 5%. A high value of *Poor-Rich ratio* is expected to increase the probability of electoralization.

The bottom 10% was chosen because the poorest bracket is the one most interested in a maximally inclusive franchise extension, while either the top 5% or top 10% may be chosen for the upper bracket. The richest 5% bracket is used here as more appropriate overall, since the richest part of the population is the group that has the most to lose from a potentially electoral regime, and also because they are in a similar position regardless of whether the starting regime is liberal or non-liberal. Furthermore, in the older transition cases, it may be a better fit for the narrower political and economic elite groups. The richest 10% may only have the advantage of better capturing masses vs. elites dynamics in liberal and non-electoral regimes.

The correlation between *Intra-elite ratio* and *Poor-Rich ratio* using the 5% top bracket is 0.73, which is to be expected from their operationalizations. Despite this, as will be demonstrated below, they still capture two very different aspects of democratization, and appear with opposing signs in most models. As a robustness test, I also ran the models operationalizing *Poor-Rich*

*ratio* as the ratio of the poorest 10% over that of the richest 10% instead, in which case the two independent variables are correlated at 0.64. The results remain virtually identical.

#### **4.4.3 Other independent variables**

Five more variables are included to account for important factors identified by the literature. First, *Economic Development* is the GDP per capita from BM (2003), divided by 1000, as a measure of the level of economic development, which a wide range of authors, starting with Lipset (1959), have identified as an important determinant of regime transitions or regime stability. From this variable, I also construct *Economic growth*, to account for changes in income levels, which both Lipset (1959) and Przeworski & Limongi (1997), among others, discuss at length in relation to regime transitions and survival.

The last three independent variables all come from the Vanhanen Measures of Democracy dataset (2003). Data here is also provided periodically, but for every 10 years. For the same reasons as for the variables from the BM dataset, this is the best source for historical data on specific aspects of inequality. *Land Inequality*, following Answell and Samuels (2010), is created from the variables Family Farms and Urban Population. Family Farms measures the proportion of total cultivated land owned by families, rather than large companies, where family farms are considered those where fewer than five people work (Vanhanen, 2003). Whether the farm indeed belongs to a family or not is of little relevance here, but the data offer valuable insight on historical economic disparities in agriculture. Boix (2003), who utilizes this variable for the same reason, as well as a measure of capital mobility in agriculture, reinforces the variable's validity by demonstrating its correlation with a similar measure from Deininger and Squire (1996) with data from 1950 onwards, especially for non-socialist economies. On the other

hand, Ansell and Samuels (2010; 2014) combine it with the Urban Population variable to create a new measure of rural inequality. The reason for this is that it is possible for some families to own most of the agricultural land, while most families do not live on such farms, thus the measure may be misrepresenting some cases. Following the same logic, I calculate the same variable they had, using data from Vanhanen (2019). *Land inequality* is equal to  $(1 - \text{percentage of farms used by families})(1 - \text{percentage of urban population})$ . *Knowledge Inequality*, from Vanhanen's variable Index of Knowledge Distribution, is the average of the percentage of literate adults and the number of students per 100000 inhabitants expressed as a percentage. *Occupational Diversity* is also taken straight from Vanhanen's dataset, is the average of the percentage of nonagricultural population and that of the urban population, and is used here to approximate the diversification of the economy.

All the three measures from the Vanhanen dataset (2003) are used by Boix (2003) for his historical analysis, while Ansell and Samuels (2010; 2014) only use *Land Inequality*.

Considering these two as representatives of two competing streams of literature, I tailor my model for vertical accountability spectrum according to the model used by the former, and the model for the horizontal accountability spectrum according to the ones used by latter. On the other hand, as will be explained below, various robustness checks have been performed to extend applicability and compatibility of each one of the models relative to each relevant stream of literature.

#### **4.5 Data preparation**

As noted above, all the data utilized here comes from four source datasets: PolityV, the Boix-Rosato dataset, the BM dataset, and the Vanhanen one. PolityV and the Boix-Rosato ones were downloaded already in a format suitable for the statistical analysis below. The BM dataset,

received by an email from the authors, and the Vanhanen dataset, downloaded from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (2019), were in CSV/Excel formats and data layouts that needed modification. I manually transformed the data into the county-year type of layout which permits a time-series analysis and merged them with the other two dataset files as well. Following Boix (2003) and Ansell & Samuel (2010; 2014), I interpolated all variables from the BM and the Vanhanen datasets to obtain approximate data for all years between original data points.

In accordance with my theory predicting economic factors influencing political outcomes, I lag all independent variables by one year, and create lagged versions of the dependent variables<sup>2</sup>. This also serves as a partial measure against autocorrelation – more such measures are discussed below. Table 3 gives an overview of all the main variables, with amounts rounded to the second decimal place.

*Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of all Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Years
Liberalism	21057	0.95	0.94	0	2	1776-2020
Electoralism	18155	0.33	0.47	0	1	1800-2015
Intra-elite ratio	6528	0.40	0.14	0.22	0.82	1821-1998
Poor-rich ratio	6528	0.08	0.05	0.02	0.30	1821-1998
Economic development	6528	3.36	3.57	0.44	21.56	1821-1998
Economic growth	6479	0.02	0.04	-0.23	1.29	1821-1992
Land inequality	9560	0.50	0.25	0	0.96	1859-2000
Knowledge inequality	9560	0.33	0.23	0.01	1	1859-2000

<sup>2</sup> As a further robustness check, lagging by 3 or 5 years instead of 1 produced very similar results.

Occupational diversity	9560	0.35	0.22	0.03	1	1859-2000
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#### 4.6 Models and Empirical Analyses

To assess the effects of the two types of inequality on two separate transition processes, I run two main probit models. Then, I estimate the effect that moving from minimum to maximum levels of *classes' ratio* and *elites' ratio* has on probability of transition.

I utilize several precautionary measures against possible autocorrelation issues, that are commonly used in time-series data analyses, and I test the hypotheses in slightly modified versions of the models for robustness checks. As mentioned, I lag all independent variables and include the lagged dependent variable in each model. Given the periodical nature of the original dataset, I cluster the errors by country, however I also run alternative models using only unspecified robust errors.

Following Przeworski et al (2000), Boix (2003) and Ansell and Samuels (2010; 2014), interaction terms for each independent variable with the lagged version of the dependent variable are also included in the models. For trichotomous independent variables, this is done by constructing two lagged dichotomous versions of the dependent variable (for example, one noting non-liberal regimes as “1” and the rest as “0”, the other noting non-liberal and partly liberal regimes as “1”, and the rest as “0”). Whenever the lagged dichotomous variable is “0” the interactive terms are also “0”, while when the lagged variable is 1, the interactive term will equal the respective independent variable component. For the purpose of calculating probabilities this allows specifications for transitions from one regime category to the next. For simplicity, interactive terms are not included in the tables.

Finally, the establishment and survival of communist regimes in the Cold War period soviet sphere of influence, must also be accounted for, as due to the hegemony of the Red Army after WWII, this endogenous factor trumped the internal dynamics of economic inequality and regime transition. Its impact is logically far more detrimental on the *Electoralism* models because soviet-dominated nations typically have the “unnatural” combination of very high scores on *Poor-Rich ratios*<sup>3</sup> with very low ones on *Electoralism*.

Below, I present the main models and their findings, first for *Liberalism* and then for *Electoralism*, following with a discussion of the results and implications for the theory and future research.

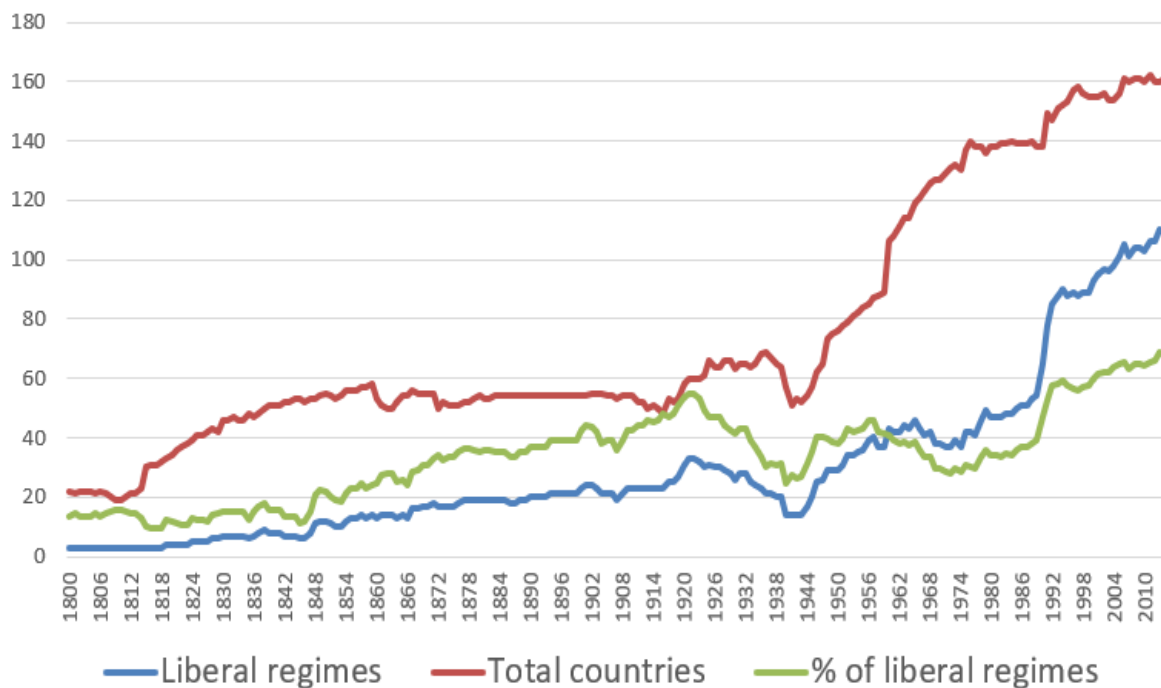
#### ***4.6.1 Results: Liberalism***

This analysis starts with the year 1859, when data is available for 24 countries, and ends with 42 countries from the year 1992. During this time, the number of liberal regimes across the globe has increased from 14 to 85.

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<sup>3</sup> The average *Poor-Rich ratio* for the 272 soviet dominated country-years is 0.174 while the average for the rest of the country years is 0.076.

## Liberal Regimes 1800-2015



*Figure 4 Liberal Regimes 1800-2015*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a gradual increase from the only three liberal regimes in 1800, to over 20 by the 1890's. The sharpest increases occurred following WWI, WWII and the collapse of the communist governments in the late 1980's, while the sharpest decline happened during WWII and a smaller one in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, this data is not very well-representative of the trends of transitions, as the number of independent nations has been steadily increasing too. Therefore, it makes more sense to look at the percentage of liberal regimes rather than at the absolute number. In percentage, the trend remains generally upward, and the two world wars and the end of the Cold War present spikes, but these are far less dramatic. Overall, liberal governments constituted close to 70% of all governments by 2010.

The primary model here is a dynamic ordinal probit. In addition to the main dependent and independent variables, here I also use *Economic Development*, *Economic Growth* and *Land Inequality* as they have been used in the relevant empirical analysis in Ansell & Samuels *Elite-Competition Approach* (2014).<sup>4</sup>

This model, presented in Table 4, includes 4729 country-years. For simplicity, interacted variables are not shown.

*Table 4 Liberalism*

n=4279	Coef.	Robust Std. Error	P> z
<i>Intra-Elite ratio</i>	4.02	1.95	0.039
<i>Poor-Rich ratio</i>	-8.46	3.75	0.024
<i>Economic development</i>	0.19	0.09	0.037
<i>Economic growth</i>	6.93	6.89	0.314
<i>Land inequality</i>	-0.34	0.83	0.683

Table 5 shows the effects of each independent variable on the likelihood of transitioning towards a partially liberal regime, starting from a non-liberal one. Contrary to expectation, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected for the effect of *Intra-elite ratio* on the probability of transition, even at 90% confidence intervals. Of course, there are historical examples where financially non-ruling wealthy classes have managed to leverage their economic capability for political benefits, transforming the regime into a partially liberal one. The United Kingdom

<sup>4</sup> Although the description of the *xconst* variable dictates that this is the categorization that best fits the theory here, as a robustness check, I also performed the analysis coding scores above 5 as liberal, 4 and 5 as partly liberal, and scores below 4 as non-liberal. The effect of *Intra-elite ratio* on the probability of liberalization remains positive (between 30 and 50%), and the null hypothesis can be rejected at both 90% and 95% level of confidence.



famously went through a very gradual transformation process, starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (although some of the initial liberalizing developments, such as Magna Carta, go back all the way to the 13<sup>th</sup> century) and continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Table 5 Probability of transitions from non-liberal to partly liberal regimes<sup>5</sup>*

<i>From non-liberal to partly liberal</i>	<i>Probability change</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>90% CI</i>
<i>Intra-elite ratio</i>	-20.5%	-61.8 – 39.6%	-58.9 – 31.1%
<i>Poor-rich ratio</i>	-40.5%	-62.4 – -7.2%	-60.4 – -14.4%
<i>Economic Development</i>	1.3%	-34.9 – 48.2%	-29.7 – 43.8%
<i>Economic growth</i>	25.4%	-37.4 – 59.5%	-19.2 – 56.9%
<i>Land Inequality</i>	-10.4%	-44.4 – 23.1%	-38.7 – 19.8%

However, this is not always the case, as rulers often manage to either outright suppress rebellions, or appease newly wealthy groups without conceding political power. As the results other models below will show, this type of liberalization is the only one where the effect of *Intra-elite ratio* does not seem to be influential. One possible explanation may be that for such a transition to happen, the relative wealth and capabilities of the competing elite groups has to be in such a balance that neither side can achieve complete victory over the other, because otherwise, the result would be either full liberalization, or absolutist regime survival. Such a wealth distribution may be less frequent in the simpler instances where one side can overwhelm

<sup>5</sup> Estimated change in probability of transitions if each independent variable changes from minimum to maximum, while other variables stay at their means.

the other, and this rarity may explain the result. It has to be noted that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected only in transitions from non-liberal to partly liberal regimes for *Economic Development* too. Further inquiry focusing specifically on transitions from non-liberal to partly liberal regimes could provide more definitive answers and verify whether this type of transition possesses any meaningfully distinctive features.

*Table 6 Probability of transitions from non-liberal to liberal regimes<sup>6</sup>*

<i>From non-liberal to liberal</i>	<i>Probability change</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>90% CI</i>
<i>Intra-elite ratio</i>	57.9%	1.2 – 93.9%	4.6 – 92.0%
<i>Poor-rich ratio</i>	-9.8%	-38.4 – -0.3%	-30.5 – -0.8%
<i>Economic Development</i>	73.1%	0.3 – 99.9%	0.3 – 99.8%
<i>Economic growth</i>	22.7%	-8.9 – 87.7%	-4.5 – 79.6%
<i>Land Inequality</i>	0.4%	-10.2 – 27.8%	-8.3 – 15.5%

*Table 7 Probability of transitions from partly liberal to liberal regimes<sup>7</sup>*

<i>From partly liberal to liberal</i>	<i>Probability change</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>90% CI</i>
<i>Intra-elite ratio</i>	39.7%	5.5 – 70.1%	12.9 – 65.2%
<i>Poor-rich ratio</i>	-47.7%	-88.9 – -6.3%	-84.9 – -11.2%

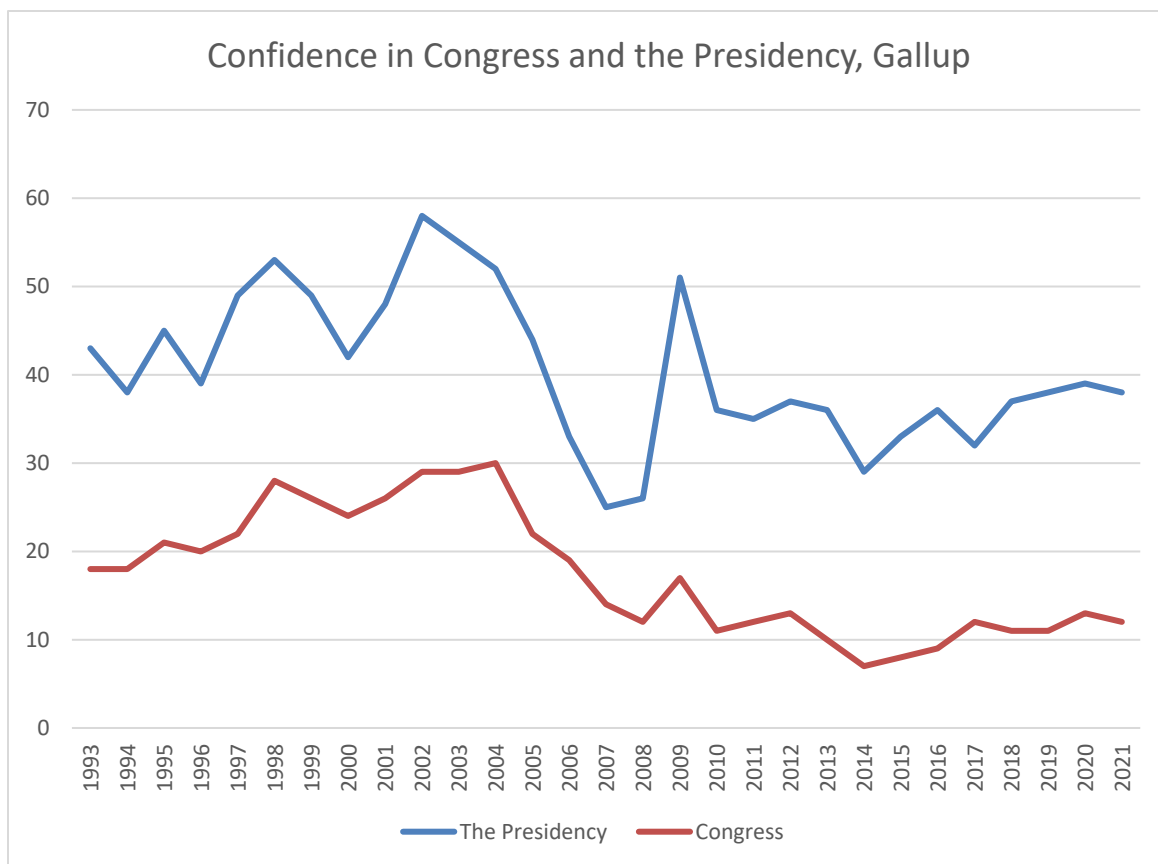
<sup>6</sup> Estimated change in probability of transitions if each independent variable changes from minimum to maximum, while other variables stay at their means.

<sup>7</sup> Estimated change in probability of transitions if each independent variable changes from minimum to maximum, while other variables stay at their means.

<i>Economic Development</i>	74.8%	2.1 – 98.1%	17.9 – 97.3%
<i>Economic growth</i>	45.9%	-48.9 – 98.3%	-25.3 – 96.4%
<i>Land Inequality</i>	-9.0%	-51.2 – 42.2%	-44.9 – 34.6%

The results of the models estimating probabilities of other types of liberalizing transitions are in line with the theoretical framework outlines in Chapter 2 and support its hypotheses. Tables 6 and 7 present the results of two probit models predicting changes in probability for transitions from non-liberal to liberal regimes, and from partly liberal to liberal ones. As expected, moving from the lowest value of *Intra-elite ratio* to the highest, while keeping all other variables at the mean, increases the likelihood of transition to liberal regimes. There is a clear association between higher *Intra-elite ratio* values with a higher probability for the country to transition to a liberal regime. This is understandable, as more resources for the lower income brackets of the elites, relative to the upper brackets, empower them to pursue political objectives. Thus, these two models support HYPOTHESIS 1, which states that the more evenly wealthy the elites are, the more likely it is for the political system to shift towards liberalism. The effects are almost equally powerful in both models: in both cases, going from minimal to maximal values of *elites' ratio* is associated with 55-60% greater likelihood of transition to liberal government.

*Poor-rich ratio* also has an important, though negative effect on probability of liberalization, in exact opposition to that of *Intra-elite ratio*. Keeping other things equal, the wealthier the lower classes are, the less likely it is for the country to transition toward liberalism. The fundamental conflict between the political goals of the lower classes and the lower income brackets of the elites, as explained in Chapter 2, leads to the former seeking Electoralism while the latter prefer Liberalism.



*Figure 5 Confidence in Congress and the Presidency 1993-2021*

For the lower classes, a more even division of power among the elites complicates their own control of the political leadership. To the general public, a powerful executive who is accountable to the populace through general elections may appear less difficult to control. On the other hand, courts, legislatures and the bureaucracy are by their more technical and plural nature less responsive to popular impulses, and they also restrict the more efficiently hierarchical power of executives. The easier (at least in popular perception) control on directly elected executives than parliaments or courts is clearly visible in countries like the US, where data from regularly taken polls show the Presidency consistently enjoys far higher confidence level than Congress (see Figure 5) (Gallup).

Overall, the models predicting the probability of liberalization support the hypotheses that such transitions are more likely when elites are more equally wealthy, apart from transitions from non-liberal to partly liberal regimes.

#### **4.6.2 Results: Electoralism**

From 1800 to 2010, the number of electoral regimes in the world has sharply increased, from under 25, to close to 200. Despite varying degrees of elective competitiveness, fairness and transparency, elections have become a staple of regime legitimacy all around the globe. When looking at percentage of total regimes electoral ones constituted over half of all regimes in 2010. The percentage has steadily increased until the 1920's, then it rose again in the 1940's and once more following the end of the Cold War. The pattern is similar, though not identical to that of liberal regimes. For example, the percentage of liberal regimes during World War II fell to levels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the dip for electoral regimes was noticeably softer. Overall, the electoral regime trend is more stable, a distinction whose explanation may prove valuable to democratization research in the future. One very suggestive possibility for this is that the inequality ratio between rich and poor also changes more gradually than that between elites. Despite the more gradual changes, as will be seen below, the effects of *Poor-rich ratio* on electoralization are far from trivial.

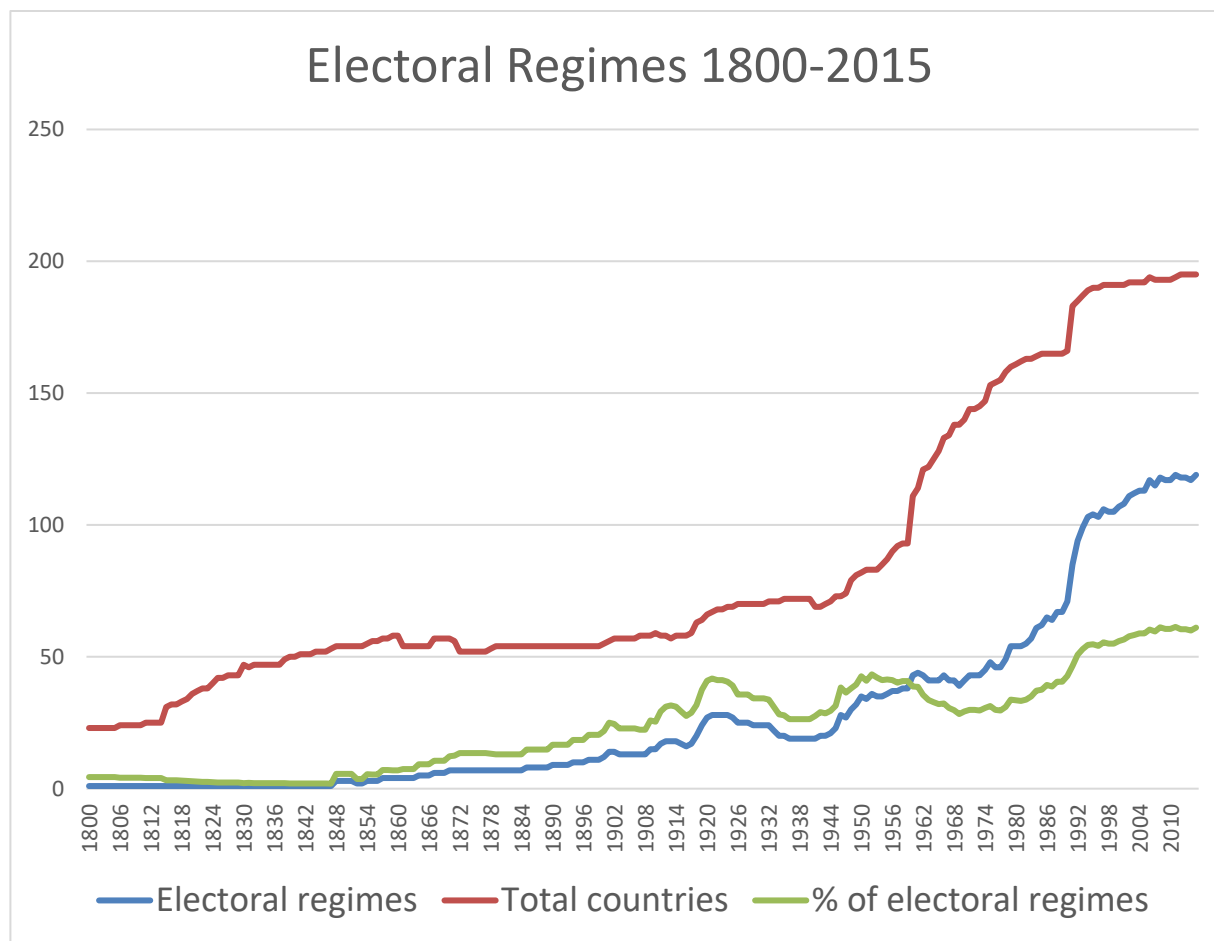


Figure 6 Electoral Regimes 1800-2015

The model used in this analysis is also a dynamic probit, similar to the one used to *Liberalizations*. The main independent variables are the same, but here I employ additional variables used by Boix (2003) in his Redistributive Model, such as *Knowledge Inequality* and *Occupation Diversity*.

Table 8 Electoralism

n=4459	Coef.	Robust Std. Error	P> z
Intra-Elite ratio	-2.44	0.81	0.002

Poor-Rich ratio	6.84	2.27	0.003
Economic development	0.13	0.06	0.027
Economic growth	-1.24	3.63	0.732
Land inequality	-0.46	0.43	0.285
Knowledge inequality	0.60	0.61	0.322
Occupational diversity	0.79	0.83	0.343

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*Land Inequality* is used as per Answell and Samuel (2014), since they made an improvement to the variable. Nonetheless, as a robustness check, I performed the same analysis with the Boix version of the variable, obtaining very similar results.

*Table 9 Country-years excluded from the analysis*

Country	Years
Bulgaria	1945-1989
Czechoslovakia	1947-1989
Germany East	1949-1989
Hungary	1945-1989
Poland	1945-1988
Romania	1945-1989
Russia	1918-1922
USSR	1922-1991
Yugoslavia	1945-1989

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Once again following Boix, I exclude communist regimes from the analysis, as they constitute clear cases of external regime imposition (think Red Army after WWII). Furthermore,

due to the nature of communist governments, inequality between the rich and the poor is artificially minimized, while theoretically non-existent elites practically control all political and economic decision-making, a combination which is detrimental to the accuracy of the data used here. Overall, the analysis includes 4459 remaining country-years.

Table 10 shows how the probability of electoralization changes as independent variables move from minimum to maximum values, keeping all else at the mean. For *Poor-rich ratio*, a substantial effect is estimated at around 23%. This finding agrees with the theoretical expectations laid out in Chapter 2, supporting Hypothesis 2. The null hypothesis can be rejected at both 90% and 95% level of confidence.

*Table 10 Probability of transitions from non-electoral to electoral regimes<sup>8</sup>*

<i>From non-electoral to electoral</i>	<i>Probability change</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>90% CI</i>
<i>Intra-elite ratio</i>	-9.3%	-32.3 – -0.5%	-26.3 – 1.0%
<i>Poor-rich ratio</i>	36.7%	4.1 – 80.5%	6.9 – 73.9%
<i>Economic Development</i>	58.7%	2.9 – 98.4%	6.9 – 97.1%
<i>Economic growth</i>	-0.1%	-11.9 – 19.3%	-43.0 – 29.2%
<i>Land Inequality</i>	-4.5%	-22.7 – 1.4%	-17.8 – 0.8%
<i>Knowledge Inequality</i>	7.1%	-4.2 – 35.4%	-2.4 – 26.3%
<i>Occupational Diversity</i>	7.8	-6.7 – 39.7%	-3.9 – 31.3%

<sup>8</sup>Estimated change in probability of transitions if each independent variable changes from minimum to maximum, while other variables stay at their means.



On the other hand, *Intra-elite ratio* has a negative effect on the probability of electoralization. This is also an expected outcome, since for the lower income brackets within the elites, the political system which maximizes their political power would be a form of oligarchy, aristocracy or parliamentary rule in which they could directly share into the decision-making without being accountable to the lower classes. Once again, the effect of the primary independent variable, *Poor-rich ratio*, is stronger than that of the secondary one, in this case *Intra-elite ratio*.

In addition to the two main variables, *Economic Development* also has a strong positive effect, in agreement with previous findings from Geddes (1999), Epstein et al (2006), etc. As this is a flat broad development indicator (GDP per capita divided by 1000), it is possible that it is capturing to some extent the change in political behavior that Inglehart (1997) theorizes, once the masses move beyond a simple sustenance economy. A closer future exploration of Inglehart's causal mechanisms in relation to electoralization and liberalization could reveal further complexity to this distinction.

The other independent variables, for which the null hypothesis could not be rejected in any of the models, seem to have "suffered" the inclusion of the two main variables, which may capture similar effect in a more direct manner. For example, Occupational Diversity is indicative of wealth disparities within the elites, as a diverse economy is more likely to host a larger number of successful business owners and highly sought-after executives and other employees, who may be part of the lower income brackets within the elites.

The analysis of different aspects of democratization through the light of detailed inequality data, therefore, has produced results that point to meticulous insights on the way countries go through democratizing transitions. Overall, the empirical data gathered and presented here supports the main hypotheses of the theory that a more equally wealth distribution

among the elites leads to liberalizations while a more equal distribution between the rich and the poor leads to electoralization.

## 5 CASE STUDIES

As the theory section laid out, the path from autocracy involves at least two distinct processes: liberalization, which establishes horizontal accountability of the executive by expanding direct participation in decision-making, and electoralization, which establishes vertical accountability by extending voting rights to the citizenry. Any autocracy may go through one, none or both of these processes, which may occur simultaneously or not.

As further evidence in support of my theory, Chapter 5 concentrates in a more in-depth qualitative analysis of two countries and their transitions. One of these is the United Kingdom, chosen because it exemplifies each of these transitions in the clearest way, and it has been most extensively studied. Furthermore, England and later the United Kingdom, by virtue of being one of the most powerful, and at times the most powerful country in the world, by being an island (or in the case of England, by far the most powerful country in the island) and not having been successfully occupied by foreign armies since 1066, constitutes an ideal case for the study of internal dynamics leading to the emergence of a democratic society. Having undergone several stages of transformation, the United Kingdom also presents an important snapshots of a country on its path towards democracy, which facilitates the understanding of the processes at work.

The second country is South Korea. South Korea is today classified as a liberal democracy, but its government was strongly autocratic until the late 1980's. The economic and political transformations that shaped South Korea's political system have also been at the focus of numerous studies, therefore the analysis can be built upon sound foundations of historical accuracy. South Korea's political arena has not been quite as isolated from the international influences as 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century UK's, but as will be shown, internal factors played a crucial role in its economic development and the subsequent political change. While the UK will serve as an

ideal-type case study, South Korea will illustrate how modern societies may trigger changes and transition even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **5.1 The United Kingdom**

The history of England and the United Kingdom has been widely studied, each important event having inspired volumes in historical research. This comes with the advantage of near-complete factual accuracy, but it also presents an added difficulty in interpreting the events, as widely diverging views, often politically inspired, are in opposition over a very contested political history. In this part of the chapter, therefore, I restrict the historical input to only facts of crucial importance to the theory, attempting to sideline subjective interpretations of history as much as possible.

Recent scholarship studying democratization and inequality has paid special attention to England, but most of it has been devoted to the transformations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is understandable for a conceptualization of democracy as simply a political system where regular, free and fair elections take place. The fact that scholars focusing on redistribution, seeing democracy as the product of the interaction between the poor and the rich, have not paid much attention to pre-1850 Britain is understandable. It is more surprising that even Ansell & Samuels (2010; 2014), who discuss constitutional and other institutional restrictions to executive power, as well as the effect that agricultural inequality has on these restrictions, mostly focus their UK case study on the Reform Acts of the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially because it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the agricultural sector of the UK radically transformed, and a liberal political order was established. In fact, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, government in the UK was already liberal, scoring a full “7” on the PolityV scale (Marshall, Jagers & Gurr, 2020). On

the other hand, electoralization was in its earliest stages, only progressing further during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and completing after WWI.

### ***5.1.1 Liberalization in the UK***

The process of *Liberalization* in the United Kingdom may trace its beginning to the signing of the Magna Carta in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Magna Carta itself is one of the most contested topics in English history, and recent scholarship has demonstrated that through the centuries, it has been understood in diverging ways, and utilized towards different political goals (Fryde, 2001; Turner, 2003). The evolution of the understanding of Magna Carta revolved mainly around the motives of the barons and the King, as well as its significance to the political orders of that time and the ones that followed. On the other hand, there isn't much controversy around the broad economic and political setting of late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> century England. In a time of financial hardship for the crown, English barons sought enhanced political standing, constraining the King into important concessions. The initial success of the barons was made possible by their healthy financial standing relative to the King. According to Stubbs, English monarchs accepted controls by their legislatures in exchange for financial relief (Stubbs, 1896). This is merely an early, and certainly under-elaborated example of establishment of horizontal check on executive power, but it is indicative of changes that were to come in the following centuries.

#### ***5.1.1.1 Economic change***

The more profoundly liberalizing transformations came with the events of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, of which, the most immediately important ones were the English Civil War of (1642-1651) the Glorious Revolution (1688). However, by that time, the deeper economic factors shaping these political changes had been at work for at least two centuries.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, England went through drastic changes that transformed its economy and politics. The first three centuries of this period were characterized by rising inequality between the poor and the rich, and importantly, by the rise to economic prominence of a class that did not owe its wealth to a royal mandate.

Moore explains that starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the crown had successfully reestablished its control at the expense of the feudal nobility (Moore, 1966). However, the Late Middle Ages brought important changes to the economic structure of England, which would have profound political implications. Following the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century plague, population in England significantly decreased, limiting labor supply. On the other hand, external demand for pastoral products (most importantly wool) increased (Moore, 1966). Thus, less labor-intensive uses of land for pastoral purposes became relatively more profitable than traditionally agricultural (a mix of cultivation and herding) uses, causing a gradual, but massive shift not only in land use, but also in land ownership in England. As land became more profitable, demand for land increased, as did land prices and rents. The more commercially minded landowners, as well as some farmers and members of the gentry could absorb these changes through the higher profits driven by foreign markets, and thus were interested in land acquisitions. As a consequence, lands previously belonging to the commons started becoming enclosed for commercial use, especially for the production of wool, which would then be exported to continental Europe. Peasants were often left unable to provide for themselves, and even outright evictions were not uncommon. Such transformations in land use and ownership had been well under way by the time of the Civil War, but they continued even more intensively after it (Tawney, 1961, 130-132).

These shifts were associated with greater profits and commercialization of the agricultural sector, benefiting a wide array of social groups from some landowners who embraced commercialization, to members of lower gentry, city dwellers who benefited from the enhanced commerce, etc. On the other hand, many peasants found themselves working more expensive lands, or even without any lands to work at all. Thus, the UK should have seen rising inequality, especially between the poor and the wealthy. Economic data for this period, despite its paucity, agrees with this, as Lindert and Williamson (1982, 1983, 1985) find a rise in inequality before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while O'Rourke and Williamson (2002) and Williamson (1985) argue there was an increase in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier data, is, unfortunately, impossible to find, however, because the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries only continued trends which had appeared since before the Glorious Revolution, it can be presumed that inequality had been on the rise for a long time.

#### *5.1.1.2 The peasantry*

For the peasantry, the situation was becoming particularly dire. Traditionally, peasants' rents were fixed or increased slower than inflation, and they had security of tenure for the lands they worked. Security of tenure gradually eroded with enclosures, while rising inflation and rents favored only commercially successful farmers. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, annual land rents quickly rose to about a third of what their price had been in the late 16<sup>th</sup> (Hexter, 1963, p.133). Those farmers (and landlords) that managed to adapt became richer, but disadvantaged poor peasants became even poorer (Manning, 1975, p.133-134). Some farming peasants did manage to successfully adapt to market changes and thus become part of a new wealthy class together with merchants, artisans, landlords, etc. Most of the peasantry, however, suffered an economic decline.

Peasantry's troubles naturally translated into political attitudes and even action. Their grievances surfaced regularly during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the form of protests and violent revolts or rebellions: the Pilgrimage of Grace, Wyatt's Rebellion, the revolts of 1549 and 1569, were only some of peasant movements of the period that historians have ascribed either fully, or in part, to structural changes in agriculture, especially enclosures (Pollard, 1900; Gay 1904). But as economic growth became more concentrated in higher income brackets, peasants became weaker and less able to mount meaningful threats to the continuing movement towards agricultural commercialization. Peasant movements became less threatening, and even alternative forms of passive resistance, such as the Diggers' movement, began to emerge. By the time of the English Civil War, rising inequality even among peasants had split them into economically successful ones, who were mostly in favor of enclosures, and the peasant masses, who suffered from them (Manning, 1975). Especially after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the new wealthy class acquired the necessary political powers to further intensify agrarian (and other) reforms, the English lower classes do not appear to have played a significant role in political events until the early, and especially the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *5.1.1.3 The new wealthy class*

Ansell & Samuel (2014) very strongly argue that such an increase in inequality can be a consequence of a new wealthy class which rises away from the average income level, to then seek political rights as guarantees against government predation (2014), and their argument fits well with the developments of 16<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century England.

Indeed, there was a new wealthy class rising while the poor and the part of the incumbent elite which did not adapt to the new economic conditions quickly found themselves outpaced. Although this diverse group of commercially successful citizens has often been labelled as the



*middle class*, this term can only correct if meant in the sense that it was neither the old aristocracy nor peasantry, but something in between, distinct from either of them while including elements of both. It should not be understood, however, as a group which includes the median earner or even a large percentage of the masses.

Some in this group were, in fact, members of the land-owning aristocracy who had embraced a more commercial use of the land. Here it is important to note that, despite being members of the incumbent elite, much of their new wealth was not derived from the traditional yield of royally awarded estates, but from economic forces independent from the crown, such as trade, due to external market demand growth.

Others were merchants and professionals in urban centers, either directly involved in profitable commerce or benefiting from the associated overall economic rise in the towns. According to Stone, the number of lawyers rose around 40% between the 1590's and the 1630s, and important increases likely occurred for administration jobs (since the 17<sup>th</sup> century these became even less dependent on the crown), secretaries, business agents, and as the cities grew rapidly, probably also for merchants and shopkeepers (1966, p.25-26).

Others yet, maybe the most numerous, were the part of the lower gentry and some of the wealthier peasants, who took advantage of the opportunity for profit in agriculture. It is important to emphasize that many among these groups did not hold royally awarded titles, while among the ones who did there were many from the lower ranks of nobility. For such groups the opportunity cost of moving to a more commercial use of land was lower than for the upper aristocracy, and understandably, the pull of new economic opportunities stronger. Furthermore, while the old landowning upper class was still restricted, business-wise, by more lavish expenses and their traditional commitments both to the crown and their peasants, commercially-minded

peasants and members of the lower gentry were ideally placed to take advantage of the new economic opportunities.

In time, the economic independence brought by increased profits from agricultural exports (Power, 1941) had greatly enriched some members of the lower classes (meaning not within the elite), but also shifted the source of wealth for some existing members of the elite, thus creating a new wealthy class whose wealth did not depend on the King. Ansell & Samuels (2014) correctly point out that higher inequality in agriculture, meaning a less even distribution of land ownership, results in a lower probability for democratization, as a more cohesive and powerful group of large landowners, largely reliant on labor, would strongly and effectively oppose it. However, using the very contractarian logic they develop, horizontal, rather than vertical accountability, would protect this group from predation from incumbent elites, as well as not expose it to the risks of redistribution possibly associated with full electoral rights for all citizens. Thus, the newly wealthy class, independent from the crown, was incentivized to push not for democracy as we know it today, but specifically for liberalization.

As more wealth was being generated outside direct royal control, a confrontation with the King and feudal aristocracy was only a matter of time. Extrapolating from democratization theories covering later developments, it could be argued that the need for more political power was an attempt to replace the old incumbent elite, or an attempt to avoid predation by it. Regardless of the economic goals, political change, as the key to the implementation of subsequent reforms, was crucial. The Civil War and the Revolution revealed that by the middle and late 17<sup>th</sup> century the balance of power had tipped in favor of these pre-industrial “capitalists”, and the crown was forced to accept the institutionalization of the gradual erosion of its relative power. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Parliament had already fully assumed the

leading role in British politics, and courts were independent. At this point, the British political system was an ideal-type case of liberal autocracy.

It is important to clarify that the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution did not bring the overthrow of the old ruling class and its complete replacement with a new one, but rather the empowerment of a wide elite group at the expense of both the crown and the peasantry. In fact, most of the landed aristocracy retained political power, but now freer of royal control. Moore emphasizes that the civil war did not bring any massive property shifts or other agrarian reforms, and most aristocrats remained at the center of the new, parliamentary political system (1996, p.18-19). What the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution did produce, is a political system which permitted individuals from outside the traditional upper class to utilize it advance their own interests while not discarding the aristocrats who adapted to the new conditions. Within the aristocracy, the 17<sup>th</sup> century transformations shifted their source of socio-economic status from the crown to the market, favoring those families that adapted to the change, while although gradually rather than abruptly, economically successful individuals and families from outside the traditional aristocracy did succeed in penetrating the aristocratic hold on political power.

The empowerment of the commercially powerful elite can be most clearly observed in parliamentary enclosures of the following two centuries. Enclosures were already widespread before 1688, but the new parliament increased the pace of the process. It is estimated that around 22% of land was enclosed by Parliament after 1750 (Clark & Clark, 2001, p.1), while according to the parliament over a fifth of the total area of England was enclosed through parliamentary Acts (UK Parliament, 2022).

At the same time, the fact that around 15% of parliamentary seats in 1878 belonged to members of families that had been represented in parliament for over two centuries (Tawney,

1941, p.2), points to both the emergence of new prominent families, as well as to the continuity of the old ones. As Zagorin explains, “the aristocratic order survived, but in a new shape, for money more than birth was now its basis” (1998, p.38).

Thus, in England and the United Kingdom, liberalization was preceded by a period of overall rising economic inequality that created a new group of wealthy citizens and removed some of the aristocracy from their feudal dependency to the crown. This group successfully widened the distribution of political power by militarily challenging the old establishment and gradually engrained itself into the new, more liberal political system.

### ***5.1.2 Electoralization in the UK***

*Electoralization*, especially the extension of the franchise to the lower classes, happened primarily during the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half the 20<sup>th</sup>. The legislative acts that moved England from a liberal autocracy to a liberal democracy were the First Reform Act of 1832, the Second Reform Act of 1867, the Representation of the People Act of 1884, the Representative Act of 1818 and the Equal Franchise Act of 1928. The Representation of the People Act of 1884, also known as the Third Reform Act, together with the subsequent Redistribution Act of 1885, is the key reform here, as this is when the majority of men gained the right to vote. This is also when the UK moves from “0” to “1” in the *Electoralism* scale of Section 4, same as in the Democracy measure of Boix & Rosato (2013).

#### ***5.1.2.1 Economic and political transformation***

In contrast to the preceding centuries, the period during which such political changes occurred was marked by a steady decline of inequality, including inequality between the poor and the wealthy. Despite covering different decades of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the UK, Bourguignon & Morrisson (2002), Lindert and Williamson (1982, 1983), and Williamson

(1985) all present declining GINI coefficients. Furthermore, the Bourguignon & Morrisson (2002) dataset also brings more detailed data on income brackets, which can be used to assess inequality between different socio-economic groups.

*Table 11 Share of wealth for different income brackets in the UK (1850-1929)*

	Bottom 50%	Bottom 90%	Top 10%
1850	0.172	0.509	0.491
1870	0.182	0.53	0.47
1890	0.194	0.558	0.442
1910	0.194	0.558	0.442
1929	0.223	0.655	0.345

These shifts in relative wealth correspond well with the important political changes regularly expanding the right to vote and run in elections, until all adult men won the right to vote after WWI, and all adult women from 1928.

*Table 12 Share of adult men who could vote in the UK (1850-1929)*

1832	14.5%
1867	26.8%
1884	52%
1918	100%
1928	All adult men and women

With relative gains in material capabilities, grassroots movements to pressure the political establishment into ever more inclusive reforms became more impactful.

### 5.1.2.2 *Sources of political pressure*

Many historians and social scientists consider these reforms to be the results of widespread popular discontent and either the threat, or the exertion of violence. Lee (1994) and Darvall (1934), for example, see the fact that protests and demonstrations preceding each franchise expansion expressed threat of violence which induced franchise extension as a tool for appeasement, as do Acemoglu and Robinson (2000). Lang (2005) argues that fear of revolution is what drove the Whigs to a limited electoral concession in 1832, as a way to prevent a worst-case scenario while largely retaining aristocratic economic and political advantages. Preceding it, turmoil had been a common occurrence, as evidenced by the Luddite Riots, the Spa Fields Riots, the Peterloo Massacre, which all occurred in the 1810's, and closer to the reform, the Swing Riots of 1830 (Darvall 1934, Stevenson 1979). In agreement with Ansell & Samuels (2014), industrial classes, both labor and the bourgeoisie, played a crucial role in most cases. The Peterloo Massacre of 1819, for example, occurred during a peaceful protest in Manchester, one centers of industrialization and urbanization in 19<sup>th</sup> century northern England. According to Robert Poole, author of an excellent book dedicated to this particular massacre, wages and labor conditions were among the contributing factors of discontent leading up to the protests, but the primary goal was gaining political rights (2019, p.9). Before the Reform Act of 1867, the National Reform Union had been founded in 1864 and the Reform League in 1865. Once again, turmoil such as the Hyde Park Riots of 1866 were the most threatening materialization of popular discontent pushing Parliament for further concessions (Harrison, 1965; Trevelyan, 1974; Searle, 1993).

Even in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industry was not alone in its expression of discontent, as pressure also came from the groups who perceived themselves as losing from

industrialization. This was most clearly manifested in a series of movements against machine replacement of human labor, as both unemployment and lower wages spread. The 1830 Swing Riots were motivated primarily by issues that rapid agricultural commercialization and later automation had introduced into rural areas, a process that had started before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Harrison, 1985). Anger was expressed into the destruction of threshing machines in different areas where the riots spread, but significantly, southern rural areas were far more affected than the industrial urban centers (Armstrong, 1988, p.75). Obviously, such movements were not in favor of industry interests, especially those of the bourgeoisie driving the Industrial Revolution. Farmers and agricultural workers also rose in Wales during the Rebecca Riots, protesting for more favorable taxation rates, a clear expression of redistributive impulses.

After the 1867 Reform Act, the voting population share was about 3-4 times larger than it had been before 1832, but it was still only around 26% (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006), thus it was only expected for the non-voting part of the citizenry to demand further expansions. According to Hayes (1982) and Lang (2005), turmoil posed a credible threat before the 1884 Reform Act as well. After 1884, over half of the adult males had the right to vote (Boix & Rosato, 2013). The expansion continued through the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, first granting all adult men the right to vote in 1918 and finally doing so for all women in 1928. The 1918 extension was the finalization of negotiations that took place during WWI, when the relative position of the poor was strong, not only due the decade-long decrease in inequality, but most importantly because of their essential role in the war. Even in this situation, Gerrard believes threat of revolution, such as the one that took Russia out of the same war, was one of the factors behind the concession (2002).

Ansell and Samuel (2014) dedicate the better part of a chapter of their book to the argument that rather than pressure from below, it was demands from the new upper classes (the bourgeoisie and labor), that in their self-interest, pushed for the expansion of the franchise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They make valid points, demonstrating that, for the most part, laborers were above-average earners (p.49-52), and would therefore mobilize for labor-specific benefits (such as laws regulating workplace safety, working hours, minimum wages, favorable taxes for industry, etc.) rather than simple wealthy-to-poor redistribution, that the organizations leading the demonstrations prior to the Reform Acts were sponsored by capitalists (p.56), and that because British lower classes were conservative they would not use their votes to push for top-down redistribution. It is indeed the case that many of the protests of the mid- and late-19<sup>th</sup> century in England were led by organizations sponsored by members of the bourgeoisie, and especially for the first two Reform Acts (1832 and 1867), it is true that the “victors” were the new industrialists and labor. As such, in the history of political transformations that turned the UK from an absolutist monarchy to a liberal democracy, these can be considered as a transitional phase of reforms, concluding the political empowerment of the royally-independent wealthy classes, and in the meantime commencing the expansion that eventually integrated the rest of the citizenry.

However, Ansell and Samuels (2014) focus their analysis on the Acts of 1832 and 1867, which, while significantly increasing the number of people who could vote, still excluded the overwhelming majority of adult men and women from the political franchise. While logically sound and empirically backed, such analysis does not deal with the core issue at hand: the extension of the franchise to all citizens, which occurred only through the reform Acts of 1884, 1918 and 1928. For around a quarter of adult men who had already obtained the right to vote by 1867 (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006), including many workers and their employers, seeking



universal suffrage as a mean towards work-related laws would make little sense. On the contrary, considering Ansell & Samuel's argument that labor and the bourgeoisie represented income brackets right beneath the incumbent elites, they should have been in direct opposition to universal suffrage. Even if we accept the argument that the lower classes would be conservative and not demand redistribution, thus lowering or removing the risk the universal vote to labor and the bourgeoisie, the latter would still lack a good reason to be actively involved in the suffrage movement.

It is clear that while both the poor and labor were eager to push for voting rights expansions towards them, by the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, only the poor stood to directly gain from further political concessions. In fact, most of the about 2.5 million people who gained voting rights from the 1884 Franchise Act were not urban working-class citizens, but rural laborers and craftsmen (Whitfield, 2001).

### *5.1.2.3 Reform from below*

In truth, rather being elite-driven, there is good reason to conclude that this reform was primarily a consequence grassroots pressure from different groups of citizens that had no voting rights until then.

One of these groups was the still disenfranchised part of the industrial working class. Many workers did gain the right to vote with the Reform Act of 1867. However, the working class had expanded continuously in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the end of it, it was not merely a thin layer of higher-than-average earners below the upper class. Previous reforms had extended voting rights to owners of property and finally in 1867 even renters in boroughs were allowed to vote. However, part of the working class still did not own property or rent in the boroughs, and some lived in the counties, where no such rights had been established. Of these, the most

prominent and well-organized group was that of the miners. Spread throughout the country, but with a concentration in the Northeast, many of the miners lived in counties, while many in the boroughs did not pay rent. Following the 1867 Act which left them disenfranchised, the Miners' Union intensified its political activity, and in coalition with other disenfranchised groups, eventually pulled the Liberal Party into a more leftist stance supportive of further electoral reform (Hayes, 1982, p.24-25).

A second, crucially important group was the agricultural laborers. Here we may return to the state of the peasantry, which had so greatly suffered since the late Middle Ages. Moore correctly assesses that commercialization of agriculture and the rise of industry had destroyed the English peasantry, effectively removing it from the political scene (1966, p.28). The two centuries following the Glorious Revolution had seen mass migration into the cities, as well as to overseas colonies and former colonies.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with a lower population percentage in rural areas, with overall inequalities declining and more abundant opportunities both in towns and outside, citizens from the English countryside re-emerge into political movements of their own. The Swing Riots in the first half of the century were only the first sign of the changing balance. In 1872, agricultural workers in different parts of England began organizing themselves into trade unions and expressing themselves in politically. The movement, labelled "The Revolt of the Fields", first sought better conditions through trade unions and organized demonstrations, but eventually pursued broader political goals. By the late 1870's, the leaders of the movement had decisively pushed the Liberal Party into adapting electoral reform as one of its main objectives.

To our inquiry, the Revolt of the Fields is important in three main ways. First, as mentioned, being a movement of the agricultural laborers, it demonstrates that important sections

of the population that were not part of industry were pushing for political rights in England after 1867. According to Grooves, around 150,000 people were members of the movement (1949, p.68).

Second, the movement followed a period of economic re-emergence of the agricultural workers brought by lower labor supply due to migration and by an overall growing economy. From 1830 to 1870, agricultural wages in England and Wales had increased around 21% (Mitchell, 1962, p.349-350), probably more so in England. Consequently, agricultural workers in the 1870's were far better equipped to pose a challenge to the political establishment than the ones who had participated in the Swing Riots 40 years earlier. For instance, while the Swing Riot participants in one part of England may have only heard about events occurring elsewhere, the leaders of the Revolt of the Fields could even print their own newspaper, the *Laborer's Union Chronicle*. Growing literacy rates enabled them to encourage members to read it, and the newspaper reached a circulation of 35000 (Dunbabin, 1963, p.72). In part due to a less restrictive economic foundation (among other reasons), the local agricultural sparks of the early 1870's successfully transformed into a consciously driven national movement.

Third, and most importantly, it was an ideal-case organic grassroots movement born of domestic economic conditions. Organization into unions began simultaneously in the early 1870's in different parts of England. Central coordination was gradually established only over the two years following the establishment of the first local trade unions. The whole movement was so sudden and not incited from any elite groups, that it took many observers by surprise (Dunbabin, 1963, p.70-72). On the other hand, the economic incentives of the agricultural laborers were so tangible that it only took them less than a decade to organize themselves nationally, present their economic demands, shift to political goals and decisively push one of the

main political parties into supporting their agenda. And it is crucial to note that their agenda had not been initially supported by the establishment of the Liberal Party which had negotiated the 1867 Reform Act. Frustrated by the resistance of the Liberal Party, two of the leaders of the movement, Joseph Arch and George Mitchell, even created a new separate group called “Adult Suffrage and Equal Representation Movement”. Only in the late 1870’s did the establishment of the Liberal Party finally bend to popular pressure and embrace the aims of the agricultural laborer’s movement, finally shifting the party to the left and moving towards more inclusive electoral reform (Hayes, 1982, p.27-31).

Lastly, it is important to note that these different groups were not entirely isolated from each other. At this point, labor in the UK was less specialized and qualified than today. There was not much to guarantee a worker that they would not find themselves on the streets the next day, and there was not much stopping a peasant from hoping to move to a city and find employment in industry, as many did. Each individual could find himself in the other’s shoes with a quick change of circumstances. Thus, the alliance between agricultural laborers and miners, for example, was not only a practical matter, but also one of principle. And indeed, leaders of the agricultural laborers’ movement such as George Mitchell would categorize their group as part of the working classes, together with industry workers but juxtaposed to both the conservative and liberal leadership groups of the political parties which had decided the limited extension of voting rights by the 1867 Reform Act (Hayes, 1982, p.31).

Considering all the steps through which the franchise was expanded and the forces that pushed for it, the English movement from a liberal autocracy to a liberal democracy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century can be attributed to pressure from masses. This process initially included the new industrial elites, but later on, as lower-class groups such as agricultural laborers and

disenfranchised workers in industry, gained a more powerful economic position, they were able to force the political elite into conceding full electoral rights to all citizens.

## **5.2 South Korea**

Democratization in South Korea occurred much more recently and in a thoroughly different manner than it did in the UK. At first sight, democratizations in England and in South Korea may appear to be completely different, and that is one of the reasons why these two countries have been chosen as case studies here. In England, liberalization and electoralization were two clearly distinct processes that happened at different times; in South Korea, they occurred virtually simultaneously. The ruling class in England consisted primarily of large landowners, who ceased to exist as such in South Korea following the agrarian reform. And while a new wealthy class rose to challenge the existing aristocratic rule in England, big corporations in South Korea worked in tandem with, and under the control of the state apparatus. Despite the differences, in economic and social structure, it can be demonstrated that similar economic developments led to similar social and political outcomes in both cases. Similar processes in two such different cases can produce valuable insights for a diverse range of other transitions, thus broadening the generalizability of the theory of democratization developed here.

South Korea may not seem the ideal study case for internal democratization dynamics, due to the powerful exogenous factors that shaped its politics and statehood after the Korean War. South Korea remained an internationally isolated country, sometimes even considered a client state of the US, throughout the 1960's and 1970s. Its main benefactor, the US, was its primary source of security, economic and political stability. In 1960, 60% of the defense budget came from American donations, while 20% of the GDP was directly linked to American donations and investment. Even domestic political affairs were influenced by South Korea's

reliance on the US, as it was American pressure that established a more civil regime in 1963.

Thus, American influence can be considered the most important factor in the establishment and consolidation of the South Korean state after the Korean War.

Starting with Park's government in 1961, South Korea's leaders sought to speed up economic development, and eventually attain a more independent political stature, both at home and abroad. The government-led program was highly successful, guiding Korea's economy from its underdeveloped state, to its modern, industrially and technologically advanced one. This growth was of course made possible, not only by the regime's tight and competent grip on economic affairs, but also by American military and economic support.

Democratization, however, took place primarily in the 1980's and continued through the early 1990's. By this time, American contribution to the economy had been declining for decades. The country had opened up internationally, establishing diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, China and Japan. Economically, South Korea had become a first world country with income levels and GDP nearing top world countries, and a more integral part of international trade, importantly, having established powerful connections (while competing) with Japan. US assistance was crucial in consolidating South Korean statehood and keeping its economy afloat until the 1960's, but as the country's economy began developing, its politics became ever more independent, while from the 1970's American geo-political interests were not as intensely focused on South Korea, as long as it remained firmly in the anti-communist camp. Acting as a shield to external political and military threats, rather than hindering, the US allowed an organic process of political transformation to develop in an era when domestic politics were typically subdued to international forces, thus providing a valuable case study for research on endogenous determinants of democratization.

As this section will demonstrate, South Korea's transition was set in motion by domestic forces, such as structural economic reforms, successful economic development with declining inequality levels, rising education levels, etc. These forces only became fully operational when South Korea's domestic affairs were not directly influenced by the US or any other international powers. It is at this time that the country finally transitioned from an autocratic republic to a liberal democracy, after several unsuccessful attempts to democratize in the previous decades.

### *5.2.1 Economic Developments*

South Korea's state-driven economic growth and modernization is the main factor which established conditions that led to its subsequent democratization. The Korean economy had been historically dominated by agriculture, largely controlled by *Yangban* aristocrats until World War II. This started to change during the Korean War and in the following years under the Rhee government (1953-1960). At this time, both the war and the agrarian reform by the government radically transformed the structure of Korean economy in two main ways whose implications would magnify with time. First, the economic desolation during and following the war pushed many to move from rural areas to urban centers, a process which would intensify even further with subsequent economic development. Urbanization and industrialization quickly increased the proportion of the population who were workers in urban areas rather than rural farmers. Such changes would lower inequality between the rich and the poor and enable the latter to more easily organize themselves politically.

Second, the agrarian reform moved land ownership from the hands of few prominent families, into those of the peasant masses. Right after World War II, most Koreans still lived in the countryside and worked in agriculture, but agricultural reforms and urbanization transformed this state of affairs in a matter of years. Many of the prominent families, did not entirely lose

their economic and political privileges, “relocating” to other sectors as business owners in close partnership with, or even part of, the political elite. Nonetheless, the agrarian reform drastically changed the land ownership structure in South Korea, eradicating inequality and turning rural workers into small landowners (Amsden, 1992, p.38; Lie, 2000, p.38; Jeon & Kim, 2000, p.266). Ansell & Samuels correctly point out that this reform, likely undertaken to counter the attraction of the North Korean reform for peasants in the South (Seth, 2019), did away with the socio-economic class that would have been a natural ally for the autocratic regimes of the 1970’s and 1980’s: the landed aristocracy (2014, p.64). The newly landowning farmers were initially conservative, but being part of the lower classes seeking more political power, their support for the government would gradually decline.

At this point South Korea was still among the poorest countries in the world, still heavily reliant on US aid and military protection (US aid accounted for 50% of the national budget – page 317). The pace of economic growth quickly picked up during the 1960s under the Park government, hitting double digit GDP growth in the late 1960’s and averaging 9.7% between 1963 and 1996 (World Bank, 2022). In the three decades from the late 1950’s to 1987, South Korea’s traditionally agricultural and deeply hierarchical economy developed light, followed by heavy industry and finally commercially successful sectors of technological advancement. These dramatic economic changes were followed by just as radically transforming social ones. By the 1980’s, the booming industrial sector had pulled the overwhelming majority of the population to the cities, where many became part of a growing, and gradually changing labor force. Initially, the largest corporations were found in the light industry sector, especially in textiles and food industry. As South Korea shifted towards heavy industry and technology, the labor force adapted into a more qualified, better-educated body. Thus, in one generation’s time, the South Korean



populace had turned from a traditional, peasant-dominated one, into an economically diverse group which included landowning peasants, students, small businessowners and a growing class of well-educated professionals.

### ***5.2.2 Political Developments***

Economic and social development was subsequently followed by political transition, however this was a far more frivolous and not even a unidirectional process. Throughout most of the Cold War, South Korean regimes were generally authoritarian, permitting economic freedoms and limited political ones, while still preventing truly free and fair political contestation and competition. Between the Korean War and 1987, on two separate occasions, South Korea experienced regime transitions which failed to establish liberal democracy, until the economic conditions that favor such political transformation were finally in place.

The first regime change that failed to bring a more democratic and liberal system was that of 1960-1961. Although, on paper, the political system was not fully authoritarian, the Rhee government (1948-1960) violated political freedoms, for example with its multiple arrests of political opponents. This restriction of the opposition, coupled with meddling with election results, ensured it remained politically not competitive in practice.

But the government was merely thwarting opponents, not a push or even a desire for democracy, which at that time, simply was not present. In fact, the leaders who were responsible for this lack of respect for political freedoms typically had the support of most, or at least a substantial part of the population. The Rhee government had relied on the backing of the traditionally agricultural part of society, which was still more conservative by nature, more respectful of authority and order and less drawn to dissidence. Dissidence came primarily from the still infant urban classes, mostly students and labor, but even this was not necessarily aimed

at establishing a democratic regime yet. Thus, when the student revolt of 1960 succeeded in disposing the government, the political circumstances were not favorable for the parliamentary republic they founded. In fact, even among the students who had been opposed to Rhee's rule, 86% were not supportive of liberal democracy for their country (Lynn, 2007, p.29). As a consequence, the military coup which established authoritarian rule only one year later was welcomed by much of the population, and not having a substantial opposing faction to contend with, did not cause widespread turmoil or bloodshed.

Initially, under strong US pressure, the new Park government conceded political freedoms and held relatively fair elections, although it would later become plainly obvious that this had merely been a case of external imposition of a democratic facade without substance beneath. Due to the electoral system however, plurality sufficed for the government to remain in power and proceed with the implementation of its long-term development program. Ironically, it would be the economic success of the authoritarian-inclined South Korean government, rather than the pressure of the democratic American one, that would gradually pave the way to liberal democracy in South Korea.

Throughout the 1960's, Park managed to secure sufficient support, despite some first signs that South Korean society was undergoing important transformations. One base of support for the government remained the countryside, where farmers still voted in favor of more traditional and authoritarian leaders, although this was speedily changing (Lie, 2000, p.117). Another important source of support consisted in the successful business class that the government had been promoting. By the late 1960's, the first signs of economic rise were clear to see, and, as discussed above, much of this growth had occurred fully under governmental

control, in private sectors that the government had decidedly supported and prepared for successful exports.

However, economic success introduced both rapid urbanization, which together with the consequences of the agrarian reform, gradually eroded agricultural support for government, and better and more widespread education, which increased political mobilization and broadened the traditionally opposing student class. These changes were expressed politically in the election of 1971, when the opposition achieved its best result, although still losing.

By this time, US commitment in Asia seemed less firm as they withdrew thousands of troops from South Korea, started diplomatic efforts to establish closer ties with China, and were under strong domestic pressure to pull out of Vietnam. At the same time, the Americans had been asking South Korea to limit their textile exports to the US. Facing growing opposition at home, Park felt free enough to remove the veil of democracy which he had kept over his essentially authoritarian rule, proclaiming martial law and suspending the Constitution in 1972, thus ushering in the “Yushin Era” of autocracy. Power was further concentrated in the hands of the President, whose election was delegated to the National Council for Unification, which was headed by, and whose members were appointed by the President himself. Following these political developments, the Park government became more aggressive in pursuit and neutralization of perceived political opponents, be that at home or abroad. Park declared that South Korea would pursue a policy of heavy and chemical industrialization to emerge from the cheap labor reliant consumer goods exportation model into a more complex and industrialized one, as well as to build a strong military capable of defending the country. Being in control of the military and intelligence services and enjoying the support of big business (Seth, 2019), Park was able to suppress the opposition, but not completely eliminate it.

The alliance between government and industry that Park had developed to spearhead economic growth, had both created a larger middle class and left it dissatisfied with its comparably insignificant economic benefits and the inability to participate in political decision-making. Thus, in the waves of arrests following the suspension of the Constitution, many dissidents were taken by the government, but opposition persisted especially among some social groups concentrated in urban areas, such as a larger and politically re-mobilized and re-organized labor class and the large body of students and intellectuals. These two social groups, blue-collar workers and the educated citizenry, would continue to offer organized resistance to Park's government and its big business partners.

As such grievances only became more pronounced during the 1970's, it is no coincidence that one of the incidents that would spark the demonstrations leading to the fall of the Park government came from the suppression of a demonstration of female textile workers in 1979 (Seth, 2019). Student and labor protests became further widespread later that year and demonstrations became uncontrollable in the industrialized Masan-Pusan area, where a large part of the population were workers. Judging the situation untenable, the head of the Korean secret service eliminated President Park, while Choi Kyu Hah became acting President.

At this point, it was clear that a new regime was imminent, and considering the forces which had opposed Park throughout the 1970's, there was a real possibility for a more open and representative political system. However, as factions within political parties competed for dominance, a group of generals led by Chun Doo Hwan violently took control of the army and subsequently the secret service as well. As it became clear that Chun was intent on seizing power and re-establishing authoritarian rule, student and civil society organized massive protests demanding a democratic constitution (Seth, 2019). Thus, workers and students on one side,

sought an opening of the political system and participation in decision-making; on the other side, the army, secret service, state bureaucracy and big businesses wanted to maintain an authoritarian system built upon the state-corporations partnership. The confrontation deteriorated into a violent collision between demonstrators and the army when the latter moved to seize the city of Gwangju. Protestors had taken complete control of the city, even collecting weapons in preparation of a violent assault, but they attempted to negotiate with the government. The army, which had intended for the protestors to challenge them in the first place, dismissed any negotiations and proceeded to crush the demonstration (Im, 2020, p.80-81), killing hundreds (officially) or thousands (rumored) in the process (Seth, 2019). By August 1980, Chun had Choi resign and the National Council for Unification elect him President, thus extending authoritarian rule.

The Chun regime had supporters mostly within the elites created by Park: the military, large business owners and the administration. Chun maintained the ties between the state and the industrial complex. In fact, his government, even his family, was subject to many scandals involving corruptive deals with large businesses. For their part, large businesses were content to keep the Chu government in power as it continued to provide favorable economic conditions, therefore they kept the ruling Democratic Justice Party well-funded during this period (Seth, 2019).

The opposition, meanwhile, suffered the persecution of the state apparatus as dissidents were arrested and civil societies, labor unions and student associations were either disbanded or overtaken and state-controlled. Nonetheless, underground organizations persisted especially among the students, while other discontent survived among Christian groups. Starting in 1984, as the Chun regime wanted to ease its repressive policy into a more stable governance, it sought

increased legitimacy by opening up civil spaces such as student associations or civil societies. The goal was to strengthen the limited opposition that had been allowed to exist, detaching it from the larger underground one that persisted in student, intellectual and labor circles (Im, 2020, p.82-88). Other seemingly liberalizing measures included the end of the curfew for certain areas, easing of school uniform requirements, etc. This change of policy had the opposite of the desired effect (Im, 2020, p.82-88). As soon as official organizations became competitive, student unions and labor syndicates became overrun by members of the underground networks that had been operating in hiding until then. In the National Assembly elections of 1985, a new party created only three weeks earlier collected most of the opposition vote and became by far the main opposition party. The older parties of institutionalized opposition quickly collapsed, and the regime found itself facing a united front before the expected transition of power from Chu to Roh Tae-Woo.

Despite stronger opposition and overall expectations of democratization, close to the end of his 7-year rule, in April of 1987, Chu announced that the next President would also be elected by the National Council for Unification. Since the members of this Council were appointed by the President, this meant that Chu had decided to select his own successor. This decision promptly unified leaders within the opposition party, who had been competing amongst themselves for party leadership. The united opposition organized massive protests where students, labor and even white-collar workers participated in large numbers (Seth, 2019; Im, 2020). Following the fatal torture of a student in custody, the government had lost legitimacy in its use of violence and a growing reformist faction was ready to take matters into their own hands and negotiate with the protestors. With pressure mounting on all sides, Roh Tae-Woo, the

favorite to become President, conceded direct Presidential elections in June 1987, thus starting South Korea's transition to a liberal democratic government.

### *5.2.3 Inequality, electoralization and liberalization*

Clearly, between from WWII until the mid-1980's, inequality in South Korea was dramatically reduced. To take one example, the number of South Korean middle and high school students 1980 was five times higher than in 1960, while the number of university students in 1990 was 10 times higher than in 1960 (Oh, 1999, p.68). By 1987, most South Koreans regarded themselves as member of the middle class (Seoul National University, 1987, p.27). The agrarian reform and rapid overall economic development played key roles in this transformation, while widespread education was both a consequence and a cause for further inequality decline.

Concrete inequality data for South Korea is not abundant, however recently published income tax data allows comparisons of inequality levels for 1940 and 1985. From 1940 to 1985, the income share of the top 0.1% of the earners fell from 7.42% to 1.91%, that of the top 1% of the earner from 17.02% to 7.16%, and that of the top 5% from 29.55% to 19.40% (Kim, N.N. & Kim, J., 2015). It should be noted that 1940 figures apply to all of Korea, while 1985 ones only to South Korea. However, to my best knowledge, there is no reason to believe that north-south differences, if any, may have been anywhere near as large as the change in inequality. Indeed, the temporal differences are demonstrative of the decrease of wealth share for the top earners relative to the rest of the population, but they also show that the decline was primarily concentrated at the very top brackets: the 10% decline in income share for the top 5% earners was almost entirely concentrated within the top 1%. Thus, not only did the elites become less wealthy relative to the masses, but they were also more evenly wealthy among themselves.

Mirroring changes in inequality both between the elite and the masses and within the elite, South Korean democratization established constitutional changes pertaining to both vertical and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability, or electoralization, was implemented with the restoration of direct elections for the President, thus allowing the citizenry to choose their most powerful political representative. Following the transition, electoralization materialized through free and fair elections for both the President and the Assembly took place in 1987 and 1988. Horizontal accountability, or liberalization, was first featured prominently in Rho's 1987 speech where he first conceded to opposition demands, and then officially institutionalized with the 1988 constitutional amendments which decreased the powers of the Presidency, expanded those of the Assembly, empowered the Judiciary to oversee the other two branches of government, and recognized basic political rights for each citizen (Oh, 1999, p. 98-101).

So, it is evidently clear that decreases in two types of inequality were followed by electoralization and liberalization in South Korea. But in the case of South Korea more so than in England, it is necessary to analyze the political preferences and behavior of different groups to see both mechanisms of democratization at work.

#### ***5.2.4 Masses and Elites***

Electoralization and liberalization took place roughly at the same time in South Korea, and members of groups as diverse as students, labor unions, religious groups, etc., all participated jointly in the 1987 democratization movement. But under the surface, two different though intertwined processes can be observed. On the one hand, the relatively less wealthy elite class was interested in democratization, especially liberalization, at least as long as it did not interfere with economic development. This group was more dependent on the government, thus



more willing to negotiate a peaceful resolution to progress the democratic cause through a reform of the existing institutional framework. On the other hand, the masses aspired to achieve democratization, especially electoralization, and by the 1980's they desired this even if to the detriment of economic growth. Below I examine this distinction in terms of the two groups' political goals and political activity, their preferred leaders and their careers, as well as what this meant for democratization in South Korea.

The position of both the elites and the masses in South Korea was crucially different than that of the English classes before democratization. While the English bourgeoisie developed mostly independently, eventually even in opposition to the traditional aristocracy and the crown, the largest South Korean companies became successful primarily due to governmental support. Park's regime, especially, turned the traditional chaebols into large conglomerates with diverse economic interests who successfully competed in the global exports market. This meant that much of the economic growth was being managed and controlled by the government. This, logically, lowers the likelihood of potential challengers appearing, as the economic elites depend on the government for their social and economic status. However, only a small minority of the elite, namely the chaebol families and top army, police and bureaucracy officials, had direct ties to the government. Smaller business owners and high-skilled professionals were somewhat less dependent. But even though they were freer to oppose the government, especially as their relative wealth increased, many worked for the chaebol corporations, and even the ones that didn't, were part of an economy heavily influenced by them. Thus, this "second-tier" elite class was not ready to challenge authoritarian rule and negotiate liberalization, at least not alone.

On the other hand, most of the population in South Korea had a decisively more favorable position than English peasants did in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As mentioned above,

starting with the agrarian reform meant to deal with the potential peasant attraction to North Korean, inequality had decreased, and with rapid economic development, many South Korean families were in a position to have their children attend high schools and then university. The increase in well-being enabled the average South Korean to be politically literate and even afford political action, such as joining protests. Naturally, in a politically repressive environment with a well-educated citizenry, massive protests occurred. And as predicted in the theory section, because the only way for most citizens to influence government is through representatives, protests focused on establishing the direct election of the President.

People from both groups, the masses having already become politically well-organized threatening the government, and the lower elite who were opposed to the government but could not present a serious challenge to it on their own, participated in the democratic movement of 1987. However, their political preferences and decisions were not identical.

In 1982, the first wave of the World Values Survey asked South Koreans to choose a political goal for the country. The choices were “Maintaining order in the nation”, “Give people more say”, “Fighting rising prices” and “Protecting freedom of speech” (Inglehart et al, 2014). As respondents were categorized into income brackets, two important observations can be made regarding political preferences. First, the top 10% earners respondents prioritized maintaining order more often than the bottom 90% earners (52.3% to 44.7%). One thing to note is that the oppressive political climate may have inflated this number for both groups. Second, the ratio of “Give people more say” over “Protecting freedom of speech” is higher the lower the income bracket of the respondents. The top 10% earners even selected “Protecting freedom of speech” more often than they did “Give people more say” (14% to 11.6%) while the reverse is true for the bottom 90% (13.4% to 19.5%), and even more so for the bottom 50% (13.5% to 7.8%).

The differences highlight two distinctions between the masses and the elites: not only were the elites more inclined to choose political stability than democratization, but even among the ones within the elite who desired democratization, a higher percentage prioritized protecting freedom of speech, a liberalizing measure, than giving people more say, an electoralizing one. This in line with elites being quite dependent on the government in South Korea (therefore many chose political stability), while the individuals who did want to oppose it, preferred to do so through horizontal rather than vertical accountability. Of course, this is expected as lower elite groups such as independent businessmen, academics and other professionals, are more likely to be able to take advantage of freedom of speech than peasants or low-skilled workers. This is not the only evidence for a distinction between the two groups, as more practically observable evidence comes from their political activity.

As mentioned above, there was no power struggle between two elite groups in South Korea as the government and its affiliated corporations dominated the economy. Members of the elite who were not directly tied to the government were still weak and economically dependent on it, which determined their political position between the rulers and the masses, in favor of democracy, but not ready to sacrifice order and economic growth for it. As they grew wealthier, they did also grow bolder in pursuit of political goals, a change which manifested in their political behavior.

Mirroring their level of dependence on the government-corporations tandem, white-collar workers were initially apathetic but then increasingly supportive and finally fully active towards the struggle for democracy. Before the late 1970's, dissenting political action, such as protests or even the 1960 April Revolution, was mostly organized and led by students while white collar workers did not wish to cause turmoil. Things started to gradually change in the 1970's, when

labor unions became increasingly active, and finally white-collar workers, independent entrepreneurs and even bureaucrats started becoming more involved with opposition political parties. These groups would eventually join the pro-democracy protests of 1987, even physically on the streets, finally converging their cause to that of the masses (Oh, 1999, p.90; Rahman, 1999, p.33). But even then, they were still concerned with the well-going of the economy (including the chaebols) and political stability. When students erupted in protests in 1991, white-collar workers, satisfied with the progress and concerned with economic growth, once again elected order and did not join in large numbers (Oh, 1999, p.115).

The most representative politician of this group was Kim Young-Sam. Kim was born into a merchant family, and eventually married a woman from the same background. He was from the southeastern part of the country, which had become heavily industrialized and more economically developed in the decades of economic growth. As the youngest member of the National Assembly, his political career had consisted of very persistent dissent, but mostly institutional and within constitutional limits. He was more popular with labor, especially in the industrial southeast, than with students or peasants. After teaming-up with Kim Dae-Jung for the 1987 and 1988 elections, it was he who entered negotiations and formed a coalition with Roh, the political successor of the authoritarian Chun, a very significant move in relation to the social groups he represents.

On the other hand, the masses, led by students and various intellectuals not associated with the government, had been resisting the government since the Park era. Contrary to the more conciliatory and institutional approach of the above group, student groups especially, were ready to even resort to violence, and had done so on several occasions (ex: 1960, 1979). They envisioned the struggle for democracy as a conflict between the oppressive rulers (both

government and chaebols) and the oppressed masses, the *minjung*. The “Five Bandits” poem of Kim Chi-ha captured the spirit of dissidence of the time, one of mass resistance not only to the oppression by the executive and the military, but also to the whole political establishment and the large corporations dominating the economy.

This was the group that most persistently desired and pushed for the restoration of electoral rights as a way for the people take control of their government. Masses of students and workers took the lead in protesting on the streets, while peasants, especially in the Southeast, gradually shifted from being conservative to decidedly liberal and repeatedly voted opposition political leaders and parties. As opposers of the redistributivist model, Ansell & Samuel (2014, p.64), are right in identifying the lack of a landed aristocracy as a crucial weakening element for the pro-authoritarian forces in South Korea, which facilitated the eventual triumph of democracy. Had there been a strong group of large landowners who would have had much to lose from a democratic transition, the government would have likely found itself backed by more supporters with important resources when facing students and labor. But this does not negate the primary driving force behind the push for electoralization. Even Ansell & Samuel admit that middle class groups, such as students, labor unions, private and public sector professionals played a crucial role in the democratic transition (2014, p.64).

Central to the struggle of the masses was Kim Dae-Jung, a political dissident born into absolute poverty in a family from the southwest, which had remained mostly agricultural and had seen the southeastern region surpass it in economic development. Kim Dae-Jung dedicated his life to opposing authoritarian rule in South Korea, often in extra-institutional ways. His more confrontational style led to the government attempting to eliminate him on several occasions, only succeeding in repeatedly confining him. After Kim Young-Sam allied with Roh, Kim-Dae-

Jung and his supporters viewed this coalition as treason for the cause of democratization, as they had struggled to remove the old authoritarian ruling class. Kim Dae-Jung continued to be the main opposition to the new government, until he finally came to power after his 1997 election victory.

Thus, electoralization and liberalization occurred at the same time in South Korea, but they were set in motion by two different sets of economic conditions – inequality within the elite and between the elite and the masses – and aspired and promoted by two different groups of citizens that converged in their goal for democratization.

Contrary to the relatively swift formal transition of 1987, the economic and political conditions which set South Korea on the path towards a liberal democratic system developed gradually during the three preceding decades. Two failed attempts at transition occurred during that time, while successful democratization happened only once demands for political inclusion were expressed by a wide range of politically disenfranchised social groups, including students, intellectuals, labor unions, church groups, farmers, urban professionals, independent businessmen and even public sector bureaucrats.

Students, labor and other groups had also protested in the 1970's and 1980's, their demands being primarily political rather than economic at that time too: they wanted a liberal democratic regime which would include them in political decision-making (Choi, 1993, p.25). As these groups, entirely powerless in the 1950's, gradually became wealthier, better educated and better equipped to set up organized political opposition, they mounted ever more serious challenges to autocratic rule. At the same time, elite groups not entirely dependent on government support emerged, such as urban professionals, independent entrepreneurs, and low-ranking bureaucrats. As both masses and lower elites, the first more interested in electoralization,

the second in liberalization, pushed for transition, the government-corporation ruling class conceded to their demands.

We may conclude that democratization in South Korea took place as a consequence of demands for inclusion by the politically disenfranchised groups, both of low and higher income brackets, empowered by their enhanced economic capabilities relative to the rulers. The contractarian-model logic is observable in the interest of the more independent (and less wealthy) elite groups in liberalization, their support for the more institutionalized opposition forces, their participation in protests leading to the transition and lack thereof when they felt their economic interests were at stake, as well as in the lack of an obstacle to transition due to the destruction of landed aristocracy in the 1950's. The redistributionist-model logic is observable in the constant, decades-long opposition to government and the whole political-industrial establishment by lower income groups including especially students, low-skilled labor and eventually the peasantry.

Thus, declining inequality within the elite as well as between the elite and the masses is at the root of the political changes that transformed the South Korean government from an autocracy into a democracy. One interesting academic phenomenon is that similarly to the dualism that exists between the redistributivist and contractarian approaches in democratization studies, two contradicting ways to understand democratization in South Korea either as a revolution from below (Kim, 2006; Cotton, 1989) or as a process of elite settlement (Burton & Ruy, 1997) have emerged in the literature. As the theory presented here asserts that both democratization streams have captured different aspects of democratization, so the evidence brought forward in this chapter suggests that both mechanisms were at work simultaneously in South Korea.

### 5.3 Conclusions for the United Kingdom and South Korea

In this chapter, I have presented evidence that while democratization happened in very different ways in England and in South Korea, they do share important independent variables which have directed their political development into similar end-forms. In both countries, declining inequality between the wealthy and the masses, as well as between different wealthy groups, was followed by both electoralization and democratization.

In England the processes are more clearly visible, first, because they happened at different times, second, because both the bourgeoisie and later the masses were at very strong negotiating positions relative the rulers. In South Korea, the masses grew more powerful, but the part of the elite that was not directly dependent on the government was never in a position to challenge incumbent groups. Therefore, it is no coincidence that electoralization and liberalization were simultaneous in South Korea.

In finding that both types of inequalities preceded the two transition processes and likely promoted their success in both countries, this chapter reinforces the results of the quantitative analysis in Chapter 3. Furthermore, because England and South Korea democratized in such different manners, the relationship between inequalities and transition explored here, should be observable in other cases of democratic transitions.



## 6 CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have introduced and developed a new theory of democratizations focusing on political power and economic inequality, as well as found empirical evidence in favor of a positive relationship between intra-elite equality with horizontal accountability (liberalism) on one hand, and rich-poor equality with vertical accountability (electoralism) on the other.

Starting from two simple assumptions, I divided the people into three groups – the incumbent elite, a competing elite, and the rest – and explored how balances of material capacity among them determine the outcome of their conflicts. The main theoretical contributions, supported by the empirical analysis, are: (1) democratizations are compound, multi-dimensional processes including at least process of liberalization and one of electoralization; (2) these two processes are driven by different conflicts: the first, between the elite groups, while the latter, between the elites and the masses; (3) the level of inequality between the two sides in each conflict is an important determinant of its outcome.

With regard to previous literature, unpacking the concept of democracy into two balancing dimensions to political power, allows for a more detailed exploration of the links between inequality and democratization, which has been thoroughly studied at its broadest level. The distinction between liberalization and electoralization reveals that seemingly contradictory finds from well-known authors in the subfield are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they describe two different aspects of democratization: redistributive theories are best utilized in relation to the electoralization aspect of democratizations, while contractarian ones fit well with liberalization. While maintaining such theories' rational-choice perspective, I also reintroduce political incentives into a predominantly economic centered research agenda. It is my hope that this can

be a first step towards a more integrated as well as more detailed approach to the study of democratization, which can produce more reliable predictions for future transitions.

The two empirical chapters have presented evidence in favor of the main theses of the theory, but they also revealed additional insights and opened paths for new research. The two main independent variables, *Intra-elite ratio* and *Poor-Rich ratio* are each found to have a positive effect on the probability of one democratizing process, respectively liberalization and electoralization. Furthermore, both variables negatively affect the probability of the other process, although to a smaller scale. Thus, there is evidence to conclude that inequality levels between rich and poor as well as within the rich have been important historical determinants of democratization processes.

Evidence for the role that two types of inequality play in democratic transitions was also found in the more in-depth analysis of political change in the UK and in South Korea. These countries went through the process at entirely different periods and in deeply different ways. Yet they had both been experiencing declining inequality for decades by the time of transition. They both had a massive movement in favor of electoralization, as well as a more well-off class seeking accountability and inclusion in the political process. Such similarities point to the same underlying factors pushing social groups towards political change. On the other hand, differences between the two cases reveal how certain key factors can impact the process of democratization. The bourgeoisie in the UK was much better positioned to challenge the traditional aristocracy, while South Korean citizens were able to organize faster and more efficiently. These differences were reflected in the manner of transition: in the UK, liberalization happened first, and the masses had to fight for through a century-long process of franchise extension; in South Korea,

both processes occurred simultaneously as the relative weakness of the newly wealthy class meant it could not stand against the establishment, at least not alone.

The conclusions of this dissertation find relevance beyond the theoretical debate, as they can be applied to the practical challenges of transitions today. Billions of US dollars are being spent on democratization efforts only through NGO-s, many of which focus on raising awareness on certain issues or promoting democratic values. The theory and evidence presented here suggest that decreasing economic inequalities increases likelihoods of domestic democratization, therefore, funding development programs which promote economic growth independent from the respective government may be wise investments for promoters of democracy. As the establishment's relative wealth decreases, it will grow more vulnerable to challenges demanding more vertical and horizontal accountability. Thus, promoting economic equality can produce an organic democratic impetus which ultimately also pushes for democratic values currently being promoted by numerous NGO-s. As the worldwide democratization rates have come down in the last decades, the US and the EU may find it more efficient to invest more in economic growth in sectors outside the control of autocratic governments, rather than in the socio-cultural sphere. The EU is especially well-positioned for this endeavor as economic conditions for growth and lower inequality can be feasibly promoted through its accession conditionality steps.

Similarly, sanctioning non-democratic countries aiming to induce a transition, a practice which has been widely deemed as inefficient (Drury, 1998; Pape, 1998; Grauvogel, 2013), may not achieve the desired result if the sanctioned regime can direct the expected economic losses elsewhere in its society. For example, economic sanctions that cause widespread famine only strengthens the regime relative to its subjects, thus they could even lower the probability of democratization. Sanctions that primarily affect the government and the economic establishment

without necessarily putting a large portion of the citizenry below the poverty line may have a higher chance of success. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues, figuring out which type of sanctions have the most positive effect on probability of democratization may be of utmost importance for US and European foreign policy strategy towards Russia, and possibly other similar regimes.

Although the theory aims to explain internal dynamics of all democratizations, and the empirical analysis was conducted on a global data set, there is one important limitation in scope. External factors are not accounted for, so these conclusions are best applied to domestic dynamics of regime transition. Therefore, they should always be placed in the appropriate context. In countries heavily subjected to international factors, the causal relationships discussed above may be trumped by the outside military or financial domination. For example, inequality levels in the communist countries of Eastern Europe were not relevant to their regime types, as the Soviet army was ready to squash any democratic movements. On the other hand, the republican government of Afghanistan was held in power by the constant support of the US army. But international influences can frequently change, while domestic forces are deeper-rooted and even though they can be temporarily suppressed, if core economic variables remain unchanged, they re-emerge into prominence. What will happen if American support for the Iraqi regime disappeared? How would Belarus look like without Putin's support for Lukashenko? Would the Western Balkans countries have democratic regimes without the EU and US sticks and carrots? The American withdrawal from Afghanistan was the clearest demonstration that an externally held regime cannot survive once the support is removed. Thus, even for externally dominated countries, it is crucial to understand how domestic factors impact regime preferences and outcomes, and outside forces looking to establish long lasting regimes have to put in place

the right conditions for its organic establishment. Nonetheless, theories from other subfields might prove useful complements. Beyond this limitation, the model can be employed to understand how domestic factors influence virtually all transitions.

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