

## Chapter 21: Democratization

### Introduction

Introduction box **Cuba v USA**

#### **Which is the democracy?**

In 2000 Cuban Communist dictator Fidel Castro responded to confusion that surrounded the US Presidential elections by offering to send a team of 'electoral advisors' to teach the Americans about democracy. George Bush had defeated Al Gore despite polling fewer votes across the country, since he had won in a majority of states. However, in the state of Florida, upon which the result ultimately rested, Bush's victory was disputed by many due to polling irregularities.

There is a long history of antipathy between the US and its island neighbour dating back to the 1950s when Castro had masterminded a left wing revolution on the island and overthrown a US-backed dictatorship. In 1961 the US responded by backing an ultimately unsuccessful invasion to overthrow Castro and have imposed economic sanctions on the regime ever since.

In the light of this backstory Castro was, of course, opportunistically riling his old foe but the episode did serve to highlight the ambiguous and contested nature of democracy. Could Cuba actually claim to be more democratic than the US? Why is democracy 'claimed' by states with such differing political systems? Why is democracy used in international relations by states seeking to defend themselves from criticism or in order to criticize others?

In this chapter you will explore:

- what a democratic political system is and the different forms they take.
- how and why the idea of democracy has spread internationally through the process of *democratization*.
- different views on why democracy sometimes fails to take hold in states and yet, in other cases, becomes (apparently) permanent.
- the debate on whether democracy can be imposed by force in a process of ‘nation building’.
- why some see democratization as crucial for justice, human rights and world peace but others dispute this.

### **What is Democracy?**

Democracy is an old idea, originating in Ancient Greece, yet today its precise meaning is still contested and the best means of putting it into practise is not agreed upon. The word means ‘rule by the people’ combining the ancient Greek words *demos* (the people) and a derivation of *kratos* (rule by). In Ancient Greece *Athenian Democracy* sought to put this into practise by initiating mass meetings of all eligible citizens to make political decisions. Opinion at the time was divided as to the appropriateness of this method of decision making. The leading statesman of his day, Pericles, was a key architect of the system and drew praise from the likes of the renowned historian Thucydides for his stewardship of a government constrained by

regular popular votes. The Philosophers Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, however, were more sceptical of this democratic experiment, fearing that 'mob rule' might not be in the best interests of society. This debate persists today and is revisited later in this chapter.

There is no agreed understanding of what 'rule by the people' actually means but a good starting point is the oft-quoted phrase used by US President Abraham Lincoln in his famous 'Gettysburg address' of 1863; "government of the people, by the people, for the people". This phrase is useful for reminding us that there is more to democracy than voting as it has increasingly come to be portrayed. Democracy was pretty much forgotten for several centuries after Ancient Greece as monarchical rule dominated most of the world. It re-emerged in its modern form with the rise of Liberal political thought in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and, whilst it is debateable whether modern democracies are more democratic than Pericles' Athens, the 'of the people' element has certainly advanced since the time of Lincoln. Only around 40,000 of the 250,000 or so Ancient Athenians were actually citizens and thus entitled to vote. In particular, women and the large slave population were not involved in the political process. By contemporary standards this seems 'undemocratic' since the extension of the franchise (i.e. the right to vote) through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century generally saw women and all adult 'citizens' (usually bar prisoners) given the vote in modern 'democracies'. Ancient Athens, however, can lay claim to be more democratic than most contemporary democracies in that its government was more clearly 'by the people' since over one sixth of them were effectively in the government. This could be said to have empowered people more than in the contemporary US where less than half of

those who voted got the President they wanted in 2000 and only 51% of the eligible adult citizens voted at all.

In recent history balancing the 'of the people' and 'by the people' dimensions of democracy has become the key difficulty in applying the concept. *Liberal Democracy* from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century has focussed more on the former and come to see legitimate government as being not so much by the masses but by the *consent* of the masses, demonstrated through elections. Hence Liberal Democracy is usually distinguished from the *Classic Democracy* of Ancient Athens in that it is more about having a government accountable to the people than one which is directly 'of them' (which, with population growth, could also be argued to have become impractical).

Within contemporary Liberal Democracies, however, there is still a balance to be established on how much 'by the people' you can or would want to have. At one end of the contemporary spectrum is 'participatory' or 'popular' democracy in which all citizens have a regular, direct input in decision-making in a kind of modern version of Athenian Democracy. In Switzerland, either as a whole or within its constituent Cantons, most significant political decisions are subject to a referendum of all eligible citizens. There is a central Swiss government but it has limited powers compared to most state executives. At the other end of the Liberal Democratic spectrum is *Representative Democracy* where the emphasis is more on elections than referenda or any other means of directly involving the public in decision-making. In this form of Liberal Democracy the justification for limiting the 'by the people' element is 'Burke's principle' - named after the conservative Irish / British politician and thinker - that too much popular democracy undermines the role of elections and elected

officials. According to this principle politicians should be trusted to act on behalf of their citizens once they have been elected and be more than just delegates of them. They should look after their constituents interests but be prepared to act according to their conscience and expertise and not simply articulate the opinion of the majority of the people they represent. In this view we should elect politicians to run the country on our behalf accepting that we have voted them in because they are better equipped than us to evaluate the political complexities and priorities of the day. All Liberal Democracies lie somewhere on a continuum between Representative and Popular democracy with none entirely one or the other. The UK, where referenda are rare, is a good example of a state towards the former end of the scale.

Representative democracy, then, limits the 'by the people' element of the concept in the hope that this better serves the third element of Lincoln's maxim and leads to decisions taken that are better 'for the people'. Plato's 'mob rule' argument is revived through concerns that 'the people' may take decisions not in the interest of 'the people'. Nineteenth Century Liberals, like Alexis De Toqueville and John Stewart Mill revived this concern with the 'tyranny of the majority' argument that a popular vote should not be allowed to undermine individual liberty. Popular support for imprisoning or slaughtering people for their beliefs could not make such policies legitimate and truly 'democratic'.

The 'for the people' element of democracy is, of course, more subjective than other two and can lead to the concept being stretched well beyond the confines of Liberal Democracy. Unelected Communist governments have frequently claimed to be 'people's democracies' in that they represent and act on behalf of 'the people', rather

than the minority elite interests catered for in previous monarchical or dictatorial regimes. Liberal Democracies may be accepted by Marxists to be an advance on such systems but can they really claim to be 'for the people' when, as Lenin observed of Britain, they are 'a democracy for one second every five years' (i.e. when casting a General Election vote)?. Mao went as far as describing his one party authoritarian Chinese government as a 'people's democratic dictatorship'. Whilst it is probably fair to say that much policy produced in Marxist / Maoist regimes, such as full employment and universal health and education, was 'for the people', the fact that Mao, Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot and others slaughtered millions of their own people makes it hard to rank such characters alongside Pericles, Lincoln, Mill and Nelson Mandela in the ranks of history's notable democrats.

Democracy is more than just free and fair elections, something dismissed by critics as mere 'electoralism' (Karl 1995). It is now widely accepted that full or 'substantive democracy' (Grugel 2002: 65-6) also necessitates elements of *pluralism* or what US political scientist Robert Dahl has referred to as 'polyarchy' (rule by many), in which ordinary citizens can influence the political process in a variety of ways other than through elections (see box 21.1). This notion of 'active citizenship' is, however, difficult to measure with any exactitude and free and fair elections remain the most straightforward and unambiguous indicator of democracy in today's world, if not an entirely satisfactory one.

*Book box 21.1 Dahl's 7 criteria for a democracy*

1. Control over politicians after election.
2. Free and fair elections
3. Universal adult suffrage
4. Right to run for public office
5. Freedom of expression
6. Access to non-governmental sources of information
7. Freedom of association

### **The Three Waves of Democratization**

As introduced in Chapter One, US academic Samuel Huntington popularised the idea of democratization as having occurred in three broad waves over the last three centuries, interspersed by two counter-waves when anti-democratic authoritarianism has resurged (Huntington 1991). Critics have opined that Huntington's definition of democracy is limited by electoralism and reflects a Western and, in particular, a US bias (Grugel 2002: 34-5, Pettiford 2004: 37-8) but the notion of ebbs and flows within the general progression of global democratization is widely accepted as a broadly accurate analysis of the phenomenon. Box 21.2 bears this out.

*box 21.2 timeline of democratization- percentage of democratic states since 1870*

(figures derived from Colomer (2007), Polity IV & Freedom House)

### *The First Wave*

The influential French political writer Alexis De Tocqueville, whilst conducting research on the US political system in 1835, prophesized that the embryonic American democracy he had come to admire would soon be copied throughout the world in a global revolution (see box 21.3). Though the idea of democracy has developed and spread since then, it has proved more evolutionary than revolutionary. A 'long wave' of progress from the birth of Liberalism grew when many Western European and North American states underwent industrialization. The governments of these states were then compelled to respond to the demands of a new working class and initiated reforms that empowered the masses. However, the first of what were to be three interregnums in global democratization came sometime in the 1920s and 30s. Both the starting and ending points of this first wave of democratisation are debateable. Huntington suggests it began in the US in the time of De Tocqueville in the late 1820s. Dahl considers that it can be traced back further to the birth of liberalism and republicanism (the abandonment of monarchical rule) in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Dahl 1971). Grugel, however, contends that it is more appropriate to see the starting point of democratization as in the 1870s, by when the expansion of the franchise had come to include most of the 'demos', or adult citizenship, in some European countries, North America and British colonial states (Grugel 2002: 37).

*box 21.3 Alexis De Tocqueville Democracy in America*

Published in two volumes, in 1835 and 1840, after De Tocqueville had been despatched by the French government to study the penal system in the United States, *Democracy in America* is revered on both sides of the Atlantic both as a classic social and political history of the age and as a prophetic treatise on the future of democracy and democratization. De Tocqueville was so taken by the US that his research expanded well beyond studying the prison system and he produced a wide, comparative study of the political system, economy and society he felt was a model for France and for the world. A strong independent judiciary, checks on government power, a free press and involving people in public affairs (such as through jury service and local government) were highlighted as both essential to the establishment of democracy and for avoiding purely self-serving individualism from undermining democratic rule through 'the tyranny of the majority'. With such institutions in place De Tocqueville prophesized that democracy would soon spread around the world in a process that would be 'irresistible and universal'.

(De Tocqueville 1863)

World War One weakened many countries, both politically and economically, and this furthered with the onset of the Great Depression from 1929. Discontent with the Western economic and political model manifested itself in the rise to popularity of radical socialism, prompting the response of a right wing authoritarian backlash from

elites in many states. In the 1920s and 30s the political systems of Germany, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Italy moved in an authoritarian direction and, by the outbreak of the Second World War, Britain and the states of Benelux and Scandinavia were the only substantive democracies remaining in Europe (Switzerland is excluded from this categorization on the basis that the right to vote and stand in national elections was not extended to women until 1971). Even those beacons of democracy in France, Britain and the US experienced severe social discontent in the inter-war years as people began to feel disillusioned with capitalism and party politics and become attracted to authoritarian alternatives of both the right and left. In France a prolonged period of political crisis saw 36 different governments take office in the 21 inter-war years. With the rise in popularity of Fascism and Marxism the first wave of democratization receded and showed little sign of being succeeded by a second at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

### *The Second Wave*

The allied triumph over Nazism, Fascism and Japanese monarchical ultra-nationalism in World War Two boosted democracy (though also Communism) and prompted a second wave, but the clash that ensued between 'The West' and The Communist world ensured that this wave was far shorter in duration than the first. West Germany, Japan and Italy were democratized by force and, as decolonization redrew the world map, many newly independent countries, like India and Israel, embraced democracy at their birth. This proved to be a short wave, however, since the prioritisation of the West was resisting the spread of Communism rather than promoting Liberal Democracy and Cold War geopolitics saw right wing authoritarian governments hostile to Communism propped up by the US and her allies. It is pertinent to

remember that the Cold War was more of a struggle between Communism and Capitalism than between authoritarianism and democracy as it is sometimes painted in the West. The Western alliance were sometimes happy to undermine democracy in the cause of deterring Communism. An elected Iranian government was deposed by the British and Americans in 1953 after nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (a predecessor of British Petroleum) in order to ensure Western control of the Persian Gulf oilfields. Similarly, US support helped snuff out democracy in Guatemala in 1954 and Chile in 1973 when elections delivered leftist governments on their doorstep. Armed border disputes between newly-independent India and Pakistan saw the US backing the Pakistani dictatorship over the fledgling democracy who received the support of the Soviets.

Additionally, many of the democracies that emerged from the wave of decolonisation that swept large swathes of the world after 1945 proved to be weak and saw countries like Nigeria and Cameroon drift to authoritarianism as the key groups which had secured independence, and particularly the 'strongmen' who had assumed the Presidency, also sought to secure their long-term political dominance. Even the beacon of Third World democracy, India, briefly flirted with authoritarian rule when Indira Ghandi introduced emergency rule in 1975 in response to internal unrest following allegations of electoral corruption. In 1960 nine of the ten Latin South American states had competitive electoral systems but by 1973 only Venezuela and Colombia had not reverted to military government. Indeed, in 1971 there were only 25 democratic governments in the world, all of which were in Western Europe or former Western European colonies with the isolated exception of Japan. Hence the Second Wave of democratization had come to an end by the early 1970s.

### *The Third Wave*

A 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of democratization began to emerge in the mid 1970s when Spain and Portugal abandoned military dictatorship and a lessening of repression in the Soviet bloc sowed the seeds of post-Communist transition that occurred across most of Eastern Europe over a decade later. The ending of the Cold War between 1989 and 1991 served to accelerate the progress of democratization on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The 1989 revolutions which swept through the six 'Eastern Bloc' Soviet satellite states took the world by surprise and heralded a major retreat from Communism and a rejuvenation of Liberal Democracy as people 'voted with their feet' for a Western European model of rule. The USSR's subsequent transformation has been less complete, with states like Russia and Georgia only partly embracing democracy and others such as Belarus remaining firmly autocratic, but several successor states have also become fully-fledged democracies. Communist Yugoslavia broke up later in the 1990s in similar, though much bloodier, fashion and has gradually spawned five new democracies.

box 21.4 **Francis Fukuyama** *The End of History and the Last Man*

US academic Fukuyama epitomized the optimism of the New World Order in the early 1990s with his prophecy that the end of the Cold War marked the ‘end of history’. Fukuyama reasoned that the ideological triumph of Liberalism over Communism was an ultimate victory that had set the world on a course for a new future, in which Liberal Democracy had established itself as the final form of government. For sure the end of democratization had not yet come but no other serious challenges to the ascendancy of this form of government now existed and its full globalization was assured and with it world peace since democracies conduct their relations with each other in peace.

(Fukuyama 1992)

***The current state of play with democratization***

Despite three waves of democratization advancing the idea further than ever before a majority of the world’s countries still live under undemocratic political systems. Even amongst ‘transition states’, such as Russia, some question whether substantive democracy will be the end point of the process. It has been suggested that only around a fifth of the countries undergoing democratic transition in the twenty-first century were clearly set to stabilize as fully-fledged liberal democracies (Carothers 2002). It seems that the end of history is not yet with us. China, home to one sixth of the world’s people, has modernized and embraced global capitalism but shows little likelihood of abandoning its one party system. Similarly Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and Belarus are ruled in much the same way as they were during the Cold War. Absolutist monarchical rule remains in Saudi Arabia and Swaziland and military

dictatorships persist in Burma, Libya and Syria. Additionally, a number of African Third Wave 'democracies', such as Zimbabwe and Algeria have gone backwards and reverted to more authoritarian and elitist forms of governance in a similar fashion to the 1960s reversals elsewhere in the Continent. Governance of any sorts- let alone democracy- is elusive in 'failed states', like Sierra Leone, Congo, Sudan and Somalia which have emerged over the last two decades due to persistent civil wars and a lack of international interest (See Chapter 28).

Contemporary Russia has properly structured general elections and a range of political parties but is considered by many not to be a democracy since its electoral process is manipulated by a small elite (for example by only ever allowing government election broadcasts to be televised) who often appear to run the country more for the convenience of a handful of oligarchs (powerful businessmen) than 'the people'. More charitably Russia could be described as a 'semi-democracy' as could the political systems of Malaysia, Singapore, Egypt and Tunisia where regular elections are held but the same party inevitable wins through stifling opposition voices. It is worth noting, however, that Vladimir Putin's authoritarianism, whilst criticized by some, is not altogether unpopular with the Russian demos who have no popular collective memory of democracy and many instead observe how their lives and their country's influence in the world have diminished in the period since elections and a party system were introduced. Russians, after all, have more political freedom than they and their parents had under the Communists but they also have less job security and can barely conceive that their country was once ahead of the US in the 'space race'.

Many have come to contend that, for from coming to an end, history is repeating itself with another anti-democratic tide emerging against the third wave of democratization. This may even be something of a coordinated response with countries irritated at their marginalization and interference in their affairs from democratic states finding common ground and banding together in diplomatic and economic coalitions. Russia and China, whose relations were frosty even whilst on the same side of the Cold War- owing to their differing interpretations of Marxist doctrine- have increasingly turned to each other for economic and diplomatic support since 1991. The two have developed cooperative strategies through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and also sought the support of international pariah states like Iran, Belarus and Zimbabwe. (Diamond 2008: 86)

### **What can make democracy permanent?**

Democracy, then, can unravel and it is far from certain that a country which has introduced competitive elections will continue on this path. Explanations for how democracy can become entrenched as a political system are varied, and differ from case to case, but a number of key factors are most frequently cited:

- *military defeat*

Military defeat is likely to undermine a military-based government since the armed forces will have been weakened as will any legitimacy they may have with the general public as guarantors of their security. Greece's defeat by Turkey over Cyprus in 1974 and Argentina's by the UK over the Falklands eight years later marked the beginning

of the end of military rule in those countries and a return to democracy which has, thus far, been sustained. The inability of Portugal's Salazar regime to suppress colonial uprisings in Angola, Mozambique and Equatorial Guinea similarly undermined that system's 'strong man' credibility and made democracy unstoppable.

- *consensus on the need for a new start*

Democracy can unravel if, when the going gets tough, people's faith in the system weakens and they either desire a return to the certainties of the old order or, at least, are not inclined to do much to prevent the old elites from assuming control again. The commitment of ordinary Russians to Liberal Democracy has been less than many of their Slavic neighbours and, whilst a return to the old Communist order has been resisted by the elites, the country has reverted to a more authoritarian form of rule. In contrast, the 1989 anti-Communist revolutions in East Europe set six countries (Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria) with little liberal tradition on what now seems an irreversible democratic path because there was such widespread support for change that, even when change made life more difficult for many as transition produced higher levels of unemployment and poverty, there was insufficient support for a return to a centrally-planned economy and one party rule.

- *a good standard of living*

A number of works on democratization have emphasized a correlation between economic development and the stabilization of democratic rule. Industrialization brings greater wealth to a country and with it social change as a large proportion of the population abandon peasantry or subsistence farming for work in new industries

vital to the government and national economy (Lipset 1959, Przeworski et al 2000). This link is, to some extent, indisputable. Most developed states are democracies and most non-democracies are relatively poor states. Democratization did accompany the industrial revolution in many states during the first wave as a working class emerged to fuel industrialization and then become empowered as a result. Over time, however, the correlation between economic growth and democracy has become less clear. Germany and Italy did not follow the examples of the US, UK and France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and evolve into substantive democracies whilst, later, India democratized well before it industrialized. The Soviet Union achieved an economic miracle under brutal authoritarian rule and China later followed suit by embracing capitalism but not democracy. Oil rich Gulf states, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, have similarly seen their people enriched but not significantly empowered.

Whilst it is evident that a good standard of living does seem to help facilitate democracy, modern industrialized living may even serve to undermine democratic rule. Some analysts and political voices have come to suggest that the lobbying power of big business can create a new elite that distorts the link between the demos and the government and undermining the notion of polyarchy discussed earlier. Prominent US government adviser Robert Reich has even gone as far as to assert that ‘capitalism is killing democracy’ (Reich 2007).

- *a diverse economy*

A significant exception to the norm of democracy accompanying industrialization can be seen with states whose authoritarian rule is actually strengthened with economic growth due to the ‘resource curse theory’. Economic development based on

a particular, abundant natural resource can inhibit democracy since control over this sector of the economy becomes more important to the elites for maintaining control than popular support (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006). Hence a number of major oil exporters, such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and Equatorial Guinea, have continued to grow economically in recent decades without any commensurate empowerment of their populaces. Similarly, in a more complex manner, Russian political elites have needed to pay more attention to keeping the support of the handful of ‘oligarchs’ who bought up control of state industries that were rapidly privatized in the 1990s, than the general public.

- *civil society*

Some analysts of democracy take a more sociological approach to explaining the establishment of this form of rule. As discussed earlier, there is more to democracy than elections and it is increasingly acknowledged that involving a significant proportion of society in public life through polyarchy is integral to permanent democratization. De Tocqueville, early in the history of Liberal Democracy, noted the importance of individuals cooperating in ‘associations’ in sustaining American democracy. Central to polyarchy is the notion of a civil society defined by British democracy specialist David Held as;

“areas of social life- the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities and political interaction- which are organized by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside of the direct control of the state”

(Held, 1987: 281).

Civil society provides crucial links between government and the demos and can keep a check on the executive, ensuring that it is not allowed to slide back towards authoritarianism. Pressure groups in Turkey advanced democracy in that country by exposing the failings of the democratically elected government in acting 'for the people' in their lack of preparation for the devastating earthquakes of 1999. Turkey had not reverted to military rule since 1983 but was not a substantive democracy since civilians had little connection with public life and the military remained the dominant influence on government. In the wake of the earthquakes, however, several small voluntary groups stepped in to provide relief and, in doing so, were empowered by being able to expose government weakness and convince ordinary Turks of their entitlement to safeguards from earthquake damage of the sort enjoyed in other countries (Keyman & Icduygu 2003).

Civil Society depends on communication so this, too, is a key driver of democratization. Closed societies can inhibit democratic challenges to governing elites. The paranoid Ceacescu regime in 1970s and 1980s Romania went as far as banning photocopiers since this seemingly innocent form of office technology is a key means of producing protest leaflets. Such methods of restricting protest, allied to far more heavy handed forms of suppression, appeared to have successfully stifled any opposition to Ceacescu but, in late December of 1989, his regime was quickly toppled in line with the revolutions in the neighbouring Eastern bloc states. The unfolding of these nearby revolutions was not reported in the Romanian media but many Romanians had learned of the events by accessing relatively free uncensored broadcasts from Yugoslavia. These broadcasts were also able to reveal to Romanians

the full horrors of a recent government massacre of peaceful protestors and, consequently, many were moved to action.

In a similar vein, the 1992 Thai 'cell phone revolution' occurred when pro-democracy activists were able to respond to the military government's attempt to suppress a popular uprising by cutting down telephone lines by using their mobile phones instead. After 17 coups in 60 years the military's grip on the reins of power in Thailand was significantly weakened (though not removed altogether). Another example of communications technology advancing democracy can be seen in the 1998 overthrow of the Suharto regime in Indonesia after 32 years of sometimes brutal rule which, in the main, was achieved through a peaceful democratic revolution focused on the internet and other forms of mass media (Hill & Sen 2000). In 2009 the world witnessed the latest variant of IT-based political revolt when the- ultimately unsuccessful- 'Twitter Revolution' challenged the authenticity of President Ahmadinejad's electoral victory in Iran. Iranian authorities had acted to suppress opposition expressed on web sites and more traditional media but the multi-faceted nature of the online blogging system (accessible via emails or phones and constructed in a way to withstand hacking) made it much harder to contain. Hence messages calling on Iranians to march in opposition to the government and informing the rest of the world of their struggle proved impossible to contain.

Social activism can bring down governments but also needs to be evident after a democratic revolution if democracy is to be sustained, which is not always the case. British political scientist Richard Rose considers that a key factor behind many '3<sup>rd</sup> wave democracies' failing to complete the process is that they have 'democratized

backwards' compared to 'first wave democracies'. In establishing competitive elections before other democratic norms which check the power of government, such as a constitution, and permitting private non-governmental organizations to flourish, countries like Russia have not followed the model of most of the world's mature democracies which became modern states with an active citizenship before the full extension of the franchise. (Rose & Shin 2001)

- *force of example*

The democratic waves metaphor is supported by the tendency for neighbouring states to often follow suit in undergoing democratic revolution or reform in a process referred to by Huntington as 'snowballing' (Huntington 1991: 100-106). Spain and Portugal moved from Right Wing Dictatorships to democracy almost simultaneously between 1974 and 1977. Ten Latin American states democratized in the six years which followed the 1979 revolution in Ecuador. Even more dramatically, democracy was ushered in in East Germany, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania within the space of the latter six months of 1989. Pro-democracy activists can be inspired by successes from like-minded groups in neighbouring countries and, equally, authoritarian governments can be persuaded that the 'game is up' by observing similar regimes lose legitimacy and topple. The Czechoslovak 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 was so named as it proved to be a bloodless transition to democracy in which the ruling Communist Party simply stood aside in the face of mass public protest and the recent fall of the Communist parties in Poland and Hungary.

- *help from established democracies*

Long standing members of the democratic club of nations can play a key role in ensuring that new entrants remain within their ranks by providing incentives to both join and stay in the club. With the end of the Cold War US foreign policy in the 1990s shifted from the ‘Truman Doctrine’ of supporting any anti-communist regime to the ‘Clinton Doctrine’ of encouraging democratic change in some Global South countries through gentle diplomatic pressure and by linking this to the amount of development aid being allocated. This shift was actually a furthering of a similar, short-lived initiative in the late 1970s in the aftermath of the 1975 Helsinki Accords (see Chapter 22) when propping up Right Wing dictatorships came to appear hypocritical in the context of pushing for human rights reform in the Communist world. For example, the Carter administration in 1977 initiated the annual production of a state department report on the state of human rights in all countries of the world and approved the creation of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (see Chapter 22). **Realpolitik** returned to US foreign policy in the 1980s, however, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cold War took shape and again in the aftermath of the September 11 2001 attacks when dictators suppressing Islamic fundamentalism, such as former Soviet Communist Karimov of Uzbekistan, came to be viewed in a similar perspective to those suppressing Marxist revolutionaries in the 1950s and 60s.

A clearer and more consistent case of democratic promotion has come from the European integration process since the 1950s. The EC / EU has greatly advanced European democratization in two localized waves by opening its doors firstly to the military dictatorships of Spain, Portugal and Greece in the 1980s and then, secondly in the first decade of the twenty-first century, to ten former Communist states. These countries have seen their living standards improve by a combination of being part of

the world's biggest and richest trading bloc and by being in receipt of redistributed funds from the richer members. NATO have followed suit since the end of the Cold War in opening their doors only to states with impeccable democratic and human rights credentials. This had not been a precondition in earlier times when Greece, Turkey and Portugal had been recruited whilst under military rule.

Some consider that the successes of the EU / NATO model of democratization demonstrates that the carrot is better than the stick and the longer game of establishing 'linkages' with new democracies is a more fruitful policy than the 'leverage' of relying on diplomatic pressure or intervention to create permanent change (Levitsky & Way 2005). The use of the 'big stick' of full scale military intervention has of late been employed to promote democracy and is assessed in the next section.

### **Democratization by force- 'nation building'**

A core contemporary debate on how democracy can be made permanent has emerged in light of the post-Cold War UN operations in Bosnia and Kosovo and US-led interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan and, more particularly, the processes of supervised 'nation building' which have followed the initial military campaigns. Although often viewed as a contemporary phenomenon, some strong historical precedence for attempts at democratization by force can be seen with the post-world War Two allied occupations of Germany, Italy and Japan. As the Iraqi and Afghan occupations have unfolded, attempts have been made to see what can be learned from

these past successes and applied to their contemporary equivalents (see Case Study box).

Case Study box *Can you build a democratic nation?*

The prominent US international affairs think tank, the RAND Corporation, have been at the forefront of research on nation building and, drawing on historical precedent for such ventures, have reached the following conclusions.

- Prior democratic experience, economic development and national homogeneity facilitate nation-building but the crucial factor is the level of effort given to the process.
- Multilateral nation-building is more complex than unilateral but more realistic in terms of sharing the burden and cost.
- Multilateral nation-building is more likely to produce lasting change and regional reconciliation than unilateral.
- The more troops that are committed the fewer the casualties that will be suffered.
- The support of neighbouring states is important and should be sought.
- Providing reconciliation for past injustices is important but may be too difficult to achieve.
- Nation-building takes a long time- at least five years.

Dobbins *et al* (2003)

RAND have built up a strong body of research on this theme of externally enforced nation building as the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan have evolved and become more contentious (Dobbins *et al* 2007). Whilst accepting that such endeavours must inevitably be costly and long-term, they nonetheless remain positive and reason that it is possible to democratize by force. Many others have come to disagree and consider that the quagmires faced by the US and their allies in occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, after initial military successes, is testimony to the fact that democratization by force can perhaps only be possible in exceptional circumstances. Additionally, it could be argued that imposing a particular form of political system on another country is fundamentally undemocratic.

**Reflective Question- How will history judge the Occupation of Iraq?**

The occupation of Iraq has proved to be extremely controversial and, some would say, even counter-productive since it has intensified radical Islamist groups opposition to Western imperialism around the world. Some defenders of the occupation, however, have suggested that history may come to view the 'nation-building' exercise in a more positive light. In, say, 50 years time if Iraq is a stable Liberal Democracy with cordial relations with its neighbouring states and a strong economy built on oil exports, might the turmoil, expense and bloodshed of the past decade actually be viewed as having been worth it in the long run?

What do you think of this proposition?

The scale of the breakdown of governance in Afghanistan and Iraq was not anticipated in advance of the conflicts. In particular, the collapse of law and order has posed a particularly acute problem for the occupiers, most notably with the vacuum created with the dismantling of Saddam's police force. The successes of the post-World War Two nation building exercises stand in stark contrast to their post-Cold War equivalents. RAND acknowledge that West Germany, Italy and Japan, as developed states with some experience of democratic reform, were more easily 'built' than Iraq and Afghanistan. It could be added that the World War Two axis powers had also been more clearly militarily defeated and pacified. It is still worth noting, however, that colossal time, expense and effort were expended by the US and their allies in the nation building exercises in Germany, Japan and Italy. In relative terms the US was far richer in 1945 than in 2001 and also driven by a fear of Communism that was far greater, even, than the fear of terrorism produced by the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 strikes (at least in the government) prompting an unparalleled level of finance for the foreign policy aims of the **Truman Doctrine**. Troop deployments, sometimes topping one and a half million in Germany and over a third of a million in Japan, were stationed for several generations. Many- particularly of the latter deployment- are still there today.

Set against this the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been comparatively small-scale and yet, at the same time, trying to build a nation from a more divided and hostile population lacking any of the democracy-enabling characteristics listed in the previous section. To make more contemporary comparisons, UN-led nation building in the post-Yugoslav states of Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina and in facilitating East Timor's secession from Indonesia have also been smoother since a majority (or

at least a large proportion in Bosnia) see the occupiers as liberators and have welcomed democratic change. Even in these ‘successes’, however, the process has been far from straightforward and, possibly, not yet completed. Law and order has deteriorated during the occupations in Bosnia and particularly Kosovo, with organized crime flourishing and spilling over into the rest of Europe. An exit strategy for the West is still problematic since Serb nationalism and Russian power politics see independent and Western-oriented Bosnian and Kosovan states as counter to their own national interests. The full handover of power to the local population has proved more difficult than anticipated with critics suggesting that these states, instead of independent democracies, had become European Raj’s (as with Indian regions under British colonial rule) ruled as Western puppet states with only trappings of local empowerment (Knaus & Martin 2003).

Ultimately, however, comparisons between the post 1945 and post 2001 nation-building exercises are misleading since the *nations* in Germany, Japan and Italy were already built. In these situations these were actually cases of ‘*state-building*’; a reconstruction of political institutions and the economy in a Western, democratic manner. Though they have come to frequently be used interchangeably, the terms *nation* and *state* are not the same thing and the significance of this is beyond a matter of academic semantics. Whilst a state is a legally-definable concept- a territory with people, ruled by a single government- a nation defies such an objective definition. A nation is a subjective and social construct; a group of people sharing common social characteristics they feel distinguish themselves from other groups of people (see Chapter 20). Despite periods of brutal rule, the vast majority of the native populations in the allied occupied territories after 1945 were Germans, Japanese and Italians

unified by language, ethnicity and cultural norms which distinguished them from other nations. The same is broadly true of Kosovans and East Timorians (though not of the more divided Bosnians). Iraq and Afghanistan, in contrast, are not, never have been and probably never will be 'nations'. Iraq was artificially carved out of the Turkish Ottoman Empire by Western powers at the end of the First World War and was always an uneasy hotch-potch of Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs and Kurds held together only by repressive government. Afghanistan, similarly, is an artificial relic of the British Empire; an ethnically-diverse land only ever united historically in resisting foreign occupations. Whilst there are precedents for externally-supervised state reconstruction and democratisation, there are none for doing this in addition to 'nation-building'.

### **Is Democratization Important for international relations?**

Even amongst democrats opinion on whether the active promotion of democratization should form part of a state's foreign policy is divided. Is democracy something that should be promoted diplomatically or, even forcibly? What significance do liberal democratic political systems have for international relations?

- ***Liberals***

Liberalism as an ideology is most closely associated with democracy and Liberal approaches to IR tend to view the active promotion of liberal democracy as making sense both in moral and security terms. Democracy enhances *human security* since democratically accountable governments are compelled to respond to people's needs

and demands when they may have reason not to do so out of a sense of duty and responsibility. Human rights can be enshrined in constitutional systems limiting the power of government over their citizens and avoiding the tyranny of the majority dilemma. Governments can also be held to account by democracy in terms of delivering basic entitlements to their people, such as food and welfare (see entitlements thesis, chapter 18).

Liberals also see the promotion of democracy as a basis for achieving peaceful and ordered international relations through the firmly held conviction that ‘democracies do not go to war with each other’. This proposition is well-supported empirically, so the fact that more and more states in the world have embraced democracy in recent years has given scope for optimism in the realization of Kant’s vision, expressed in *Perpetual Peace* in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Kant, in fact, proposed that it was the trinity of democracy, trade and international cooperation were the basis for a peaceful world and these three factors are all more prominent today than at any point previously in history. Over two centuries after its promulgation, the Kantian peace proposition has been rigorously tested by Liberal Pluralists for its applicability to the contemporary global political system. Russett and Oneal’s ‘Triangulating Peace’, for example, draws on over a decade of statistical analysis with each of these three corners of the ‘peace triangle’ examined in turn to show how they mutually reinforce each other over time in ‘virtuous circles’ (Russett & Oneal 2001). Democracies trade with each other more and form common organizations more, both of which are phenomena also demonstrably contributing to pacific relations. Democracies in dealing with other democracies more easily find non-military means to resolve inevitable clashes of interest that arise in their relations and increasingly realize that their interests are not

served by violent confrontations. Democratic peace is a political theory with uncharacteristically solid empirical foundations if we consider that: '(e)stablished democracies fought no wars against each other during the entire twentieth century' (Russett & Starr 1996: 173). If we also consider that number of democratic states in the world has increased in recent years the future prospects for perpetual peace look good also. Both of these sets of figures are challengeable, but the overall trends they indicate are not. This democratic peace thesis is explored in more detail in chapter 27.

**Box 21.5 The 'Neo-Cons' and democratization**

It is possible to see democratization by force as a manifestation of Liberal foreign policy even though much Liberal political opinion was opposed to the Iraq War and occupation. Liberalism in IR is not always synonymous with liberalism as an ideology. The 'Neo-Conservative' thinkers, who were the key advocates of the US nation-building exercises in Iraq and Afghanistan are, as their name implies, located on the right of the US politics but their belief in forcibly planting seeds of democracy in the Middle East is not conventionally Realist in that it is a morally-driven foreign policy and as such *Idealist* (see chapter 7).

- **(Classical) Realists**

Realists are likely to be democrats since it is a school of thought closely associated with conservative politics in the Western world but IR traditionalists- in contrast to Neo-Conservatives- tend to see democracy as largely irrelevant to the achievement of peace. From a Realist perspective, conflicts of national interest inevitably occur in

relations between countries, be they democratic or not, and the best means of managing this is to pay respect to the balance of power and not the promotion of ideas and ideals (the term *Idealism* was coined by Realists intending to denigrate Liberalism in international relations as unrealistic). Imposing values on others is only likely to fuel resentment. Sovereignty should be respected and it should be left up to others to decide if they want to have a democratic political system or not.

- ***(Neo) Realists***

A key reason for the metamorphosis of most Realist thought to Neo-Realism from the 1970s was the belief that the international political system was no longer entirely anarchic but becoming a ‘society of states’ in which values could and should play some role. Neo-Realists remain far more protective of sovereignty than Liberals and continue to see peace as being more about maintaining the balance of power than democratic peace but those of the ‘English School’ variant see a society of mature democratic states as the best means of advancing human rights and governance in the human interest (Dunne & Wheeler 2002). Democratization represents the best way of ensuring that politics in a globalizing world is ‘for the people’, rather than moving towards forms of global governance advocated by Liberals which Neo-Realists see as undermining both sovereignty and democracy (see chapter 33).

- ***Marxists***

As referred to earlier in the chapter, Marxists consider themselves to be democrats but, for them, the achievement of global peace and justice is not about Liberal Democracy. For Marxists a ‘people’s democratization’ of the world could only be achieved through global structural change; the abandonment of capitalism.

- *Social Constructivists*

Social Constructivism is less associated with any particular ideology than the other IR approaches so does not have such a clear position on whether promoting democracy is a good idea or not. However, this school of thought's particular emphasis on the importance of culture in the conduct of international relations does lead many of its advocates to be sceptical of democratic peace since the culture of democratic promotion, rather than pacifying the world, can push some countries into war. Hence in this view, the post Cold War nation building exercises have been the result of cultural clashes with 'warlike democracies' feeling righteously driven to confront non-believers in a modern form of crusade (Risse 1995). From this perspective, then, democratisation could actually be a source of conflict rather than peace.

## **Conclusions**

The meaning of democracy and its significance in international relations is disputed and the progress of democratization is also open to different interpretations. Two decades on from the end of the Cold War we are still not at the 'end of history' but Liberal Democracy does appear to be the world's most popular form of government. In spite of notable reversals, the general long term trend is for countries to continue on a democratic trajectory. Perhaps, as Churchill famously opined; 'democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time' (Churchill 1947).

A reversion to authoritarianism for the world's established democracies seems unlikely in the contemporary climate and, whilst it may take a long time to become established, democracy tends not to go away completely in countries where it has been tried but then abandoned. "Attempts at democratization, even when they fail or only partially succeed, form part of the collective memory of communities" (Grugel 2002: 247). However, whilst a democratizing trend is apparent, it is also far from inevitable that this will globalize and that current authoritarian regimes will democratize. Countries like China and Saudi Arabia have no collective memory of democracy, have achieved economic growth without democracy and are sufficiently influential in the world to be subjected to only gentle external pressure to reform through fear of causing offence.

Nevertheless, even in some of the world's least open societies, where democracy has never been tried out, people are slowly becoming more aware of what they have not got. The Chinese government crushed the pro-democracy protests of 1989 but democracy's proliferation elsewhere that year and the global exposure of this tyranny ensures that the movement for democracy in China lives on. A movement demanding greater rights for women has emerged in Saudi Arabia over the last decade despite profound difficulties in accessing or voicing feminist ideas in such a highly patriarchal and censorial country. In a move which epitomized the democratising potential of globalization and information technology, activists in 2008 posted a video on the internet of a Saudi woman driving a car, a practise illegal in the country. The idea of democracy has globalized beyond its practise and, in an era of increasingly global mass communication, this makes it harder and harder for authoritarian governments to resist its waves.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Describe and explain the phenomenon of democratization.
2. “History shows us that it is possible to successfully democratize countries through foreign occupation” Do you agree or disagree with this assertion in the light of the Afghan and Iraqi occupations since 2001?
3. Why do IR theories differ in terms of the level of significance they attach to democratization?

**REFLECTIVE QUESTION- Are you a representative or popular democrat (if a democrat at all)?**

*List any issues which in your country you imagine could command popular support in a referendum but which you personally would not support (for example- on whether or not to have the death penalty for murder). Would you ; a) accept these decisions being implemented for your country despite them being against your own views or b) consider that some issues cannot be accepted as legitimate, even if they do have popular support because they are not in the interests of ‘the people’.*

*If you have answered a) you appear to support popular democracy. If you have answered b) you appear to prefer representative forms of democracy (or, possibly, do not support democracy at all).*

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

**L. Diamond (2008) *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*. New York: Times Books.**

*A comprehensive analysis of democratization using case studies of countries that have recently slid back from democracy to puncture the optimism of Fukuyama's 'End of History' thesis. Ultimately, however, this is not a pessimistic dismissal of liberal support for democratization but the views of a more cautionary proponent of democratic promotion who sees the process as being more complex and long-term than most other analysts.*

**J. Grugel (2002) *Democratization. A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke, UK : Palgrave.**

*In an impressive academic critique of the democratization literature, which is broad and often incoherent, Grugel thinks clearly about what democracy actually is and about how democratization can occur.*

***The Journal of Democracy***

*This pre-eminent journal is an invaluable source for research in this area, having published many seminal articles on case studies and the theory of democratization.*

## **WEBSITES**

### **Freedom House**

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

*Well-known US pressure group who produce an annual 'Freedom in the World' report which gives a democratic rating and assessment for all countries.*

### **Polity IV**

<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

*An extensive academic database containing widely-cited statistics, graphs and analysis on democratization and other related aspects of international politics.*

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