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Journal of Democracy 7.3 (1996) 20-37

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Is the Third Wave Over?

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Since the overthrow of Portugal's dictatorial regime in April 1974, the number of democracies in the world has multiplied dramatically. Before the start of this global trend toward democracy, there were roughly 40 countries that could be classified as more or less democratic. The number increased moderately through the late 1970s and early 1980s as a number of states experienced transitions from authoritarian (predominantly military) to democratic rule. In the mid-1980s, however, the pace of global democratic expansion accelerated markedly, and today there are between 76 and 117 democracies, depending on how one counts. *How* one counts is crucial, however, to thinking about *whether* democracy will continue to expand in the world, or even hold steady at its current level. In fact, it raises the fundamental question of what we mean by democracy.

In a seminal formulation, Samuel Huntington has dubbed this post-1974 period the "third wave" of global democratic expansion. He defines a "wave of democratization" simply as "a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period."¹ He identifies two previous waves of democratization: a long, slow wave from 1828 to 1926 and a second wave from 1943 to 1964. Significantly, each of these ended with what he calls a "reverse wave" of democratic breakdowns (the first lasting from 1922 to 1942, the second from 1961 to 1975), in which some of the newly established (or reestablished) democracies failed. Overall, each **[End Page 20]** reverse wave reduced the number of democracies in the world significantly but still left more democracies in place than had existed prior to the start of the preceding democratic wave. Reverse waves do great harm to political freedom, human rights, and peace. Thus, as I will argue, preventing a reverse wave should be paramount among the policy goals of democratic actors and institutions around the world.

Conceptualizing Democracy

Essential to tracking the progress of democracy and understanding both its causes and its consequences is a high degree of conceptual clarity about the term "democracy." Unfortunately, what prevails instead in the burgeoning empirical and theoretical literature on democracy is conceptual confusion and disarray so serious that David Collier and Steven Levitsky have identified more than 550 "subtypes" of democracy.² Some of these nominal subtypes merely identify specific institutional features or types of full democracy, but many denote "diminished" forms of democracy that overlap with one another in a variety of ways. Fortunately, most conceptions of democracy today (in contrast with the 1960s and 1970s, for example) do converge in defining democracy as a system of political authority, separate from any social and economic features. Where conceptions still diverge fundamentally (but not always very explicitly) is in the range and extent of political attributes

encompassed by democracy.

Minimalist definitions descend from Joseph Schumpeter, who defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."³ Huntington, among others, explicitly embraces Schumpeter's emphasis on electoral competition as the essence of democracy.⁴ Over time, however, Schumpeter's appealingly concise definition has required periodic elaboration (or what Collier and Levitsky call "precising") to avoid inclusion of cases that do not fit the implicit meaning. The most influential elaboration has been Robert Dahl's concept of "polyarchy," which requires not only extensive political competition and participation but also substantial levels of freedom (of speech, press, and the like) and pluralism that enable people to form and express their political preferences in a meaningful way.⁵

Contemporary minimalist conceptions of democracy--what I term here *electoral democracy*, as opposed to *liberal democracy*--commonly acknowledge the need for minimal levels of civil freedom in order for competition and participation to be meaningful. Typically, however, they do not devote much attention to the basic freedoms involved, nor do they attempt to incorporate them into actual measures of democracy. Such Schumpeterian conceptions--particularly common among Western policy makers who track and celebrate the expansion of democracy--risk **[End Page 21]** exemplifying what Terry Karl has called the "fallacy of electoralism." That mistake consists of privileging electoral contestation over other dimensions of democracy and ignoring the degree to which multiparty elections, even if genuinely competitive, may effectively deny significant sections of the population the opportunity to contest for power or advance and defend their interests, or may leave significant arenas of decision-making power beyond the reach or control of elected officials.⁶ As Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl emphasize, "However central to democracy, elections occur intermittently and only allow citizens to choose between the highly aggregated alternatives offered by political parties."⁷

As Collier and Levitsky note, minimalist definitions of democracy have been refined in recent years to exclude regimes with substantial "reserved domains" of military (or bureaucratic, or oligarchic) power that are not accountable to elected officials.⁸ On such grounds, Guatemala in particular has often been classified as a "pseudo" or "quasi" democracy. But such refined definitions of democracy can still fail to acknowledge political repression that marginalizes significant segments of the population--typically the poor or ethnic and regional minorities. While conceptual "precising" has been constructive, it has left behind a welter of what Collier and Levitsky term "expanded procedural" conceptions that occupy various intermediate locations on the continuum between electoral and liberal democracy.

This conceptual disorder is not surprising given that scholars are trying to impose categories on a phenomenon--political freedom--that in fact varies only by degree. Whereas the presence or absence of competitive elections is relatively clear-cut, individual and group rights of expression, organization, and assembly can vary considerably even across countries that meet the criteria for electoral democracy.

How large and overtly repressed or marginalized must a minority be for the political system to be disqualified as a polyarchy, or, in my terms, a liberal democracy?⁹ Is Turkey disqualified by the indiscriminate violence it has used to suppress a ruthless Kurdish insurgency, and its historical constraints (recently relaxed) on the peaceful expression of Kurdish political and cultural identity? Is India disqualified by the human rights violations its security forces have committed in secessionist Kashmir; or Sri Lanka by the brutal excesses on both sides in the secessionist war of Tamil guerrillas; or Russia by its savage war against Chechen secessionists; or Colombia by its internal war against drug traffickers and left-wing guerrillas, and its exceptionally high rates of political assassination and other human rights abuses? Do these polities not have a right to defend themselves against violent insurgency and secessionist terror? Or does democracy fall short--despite the presence in all five countries of highly competitive elections that in recent years have produced party alternation in power? As indicated below, this **[End Page 22]** problem affects a growing group of countries that are commonly considered "democracies" today.

By a minimalist, electoral definition, all five of the above-mentioned countries qualify as democracies.

But by a stricter conception of liberal democracy, all fall short. All suffer sufficiently serious abridgments of political rights and civil liberties that they failed to attain a rating of "free" in the most recent "Comparative Survey of Freedom," the annual global survey of political rights and civil liberties conducted by Freedom House. This gap between electoral democracy and liberal democracy, which has become one of the most striking features of the "third wave," has serious consequences for theory, policy, and comparative analysis.

Liberal Democracy and Pseudodemocracy

How does *liberal* democracy extend beyond the minimalist (or formal) and intermediate conceptions of democracy described above? In addition to regular, free, and fair electoral competition and universal suffrage, it requires the absence of "reserved domains" of power for the military or other social and political forces that are not either directly or indirectly accountable to the electorate. Second, in addition to the "vertical" accountability of rulers to the ruled (which is secured most reliably through regular, free, and fair elections), it requires "horizontal" accountability of officeholders to one another; this constrains executive power and so helps protect constitutionalism, the rule of law, and the deliberative process.¹⁰ Third, it encompasses extensive provisions for political and civic pluralism, as well as for individual and group freedoms. Specifically, liberal democracy has the following features:

- 1) Real power lies--in fact as well as in constitutional theory--with elected officials and their appointees, rather than with unaccountable internal actors (e.g., the military) or foreign powers.
- 2) Executive power is constrained constitutionally and held accountable by other government institutions (such as an independent judiciary, parliament, ombudsman, and auditor general).
- 3) Not only are electoral outcomes uncertain, with a significant opposition vote and the presumption of party alternation in government over time, but no group that adheres to constitutional principles is denied the right to form a party and contest elections (even if electoral thresholds and other rules prevent smaller parties from winning representation in parliament).
- 4) Cultural, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups, as well as traditionally disadvantaged or unempowered majorities, are not prohibited (legally or in practice) from expressing their interests in the political process, and from using their language and culture.
- 5) Beyond parties and intermittent elections, citizens have multiple, ongoing channels and means for the expression and representation of **[End Page 23]** their interests and values, including a diverse array of autonomous associations, movements, and groups that they are free to form and join.
- 6) In addition to associational freedom and pluralism, there exist alternative sources of information, including independent media, to which citizens have (politically) unfettered access.
- 7) Individuals have substantial freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition.
- 8) Citizens are politically equal under the law (even though they are invariably unequal in their political resources), and the above-mentioned individual and group liberties are effectively protected by an independent, impartial judiciary whose decisions are enforced and respected by other centers of power.
- 9) The rule of law protects citizens from unjustified detention, exile, terror, torture, and undue interference in their personal lives not only by the state but also by organized antistate forces.

These elements of liberal democracy constitute most of the criteria used by Freedom House in its annual survey of freedom around the world. Two dimensions of freedom--political rights (of contestation, opposition, and participation) and civil liberties--are measured on a seven-point scale, with a rating of 1 indicating the most free and 7 the least free. Countries whose two scores average 2.5 or below are considered "free"; those scoring 3 to 5.5, "partly free"; and those scoring 5.5 and

above, "not free," with the determination for countries with the borderline score of 5.5 made on the basis of a more discriminating raw-point score. ¹¹

The "free" rating in the Freedom House survey is the best available empirical indicator of "liberal democracy." Of course, as with any multipoint scale, there is inevitably an element of arbitrariness in the thresholds used for each category. Yet there is a significant difference even between average scores of 2.5 and 3. In the 1995-96 survey, all nine countries with a score of 2.5--the highest score a country could attain and still be rated "free"--received a rating of 2 on political rights and 3 on civil liberties. The difference between a 2 and a 3 on political rights is substantial, with the latter typically indicating significantly more military influence in politics, electoral and political violence, or electoral irregularities, and thus political contestation that is appreciably less free, fair, inclusive, and meaningful. For example, El Salvador and Honduras each scored 3 on political rights and 3 on civil liberties, as did Venezuela, where military autonomy and impunity and political intimidation have eroded the quality of democracy in recent years. The difference between a 2 and a 3 on civil liberties is also significant, with the higher-scoring countries having at least one area--such as freedom of speech or the press, personal security from terror and arbitrary arrest, or associational freedom and autonomy--where liberty is significantly constrained. **[End Page 24]**

The intermediate conceptions of democracy, which fall somewhere in between "electoral" and "liberal" democracy, explicitly incorporate basic civil freedoms of expression and association, yet still allow for considerable restriction of citizenship rights. The crucial distinction turns on whether political and civil freedoms are seen as relevant mainly to the extent that they ensure meaningful *electoral* competition and participation, or are instead viewed as necessary to ensure a wider range of democratic functions.

To appreciate the dynamics of regime change and the evolution of democracy, we must also allow for a third class of regimes that are less than even minimally democratic but still distinct from purely authoritarian regimes. Such regimes--which I call here *pseudodemocracies*--have legal opposition parties and perhaps many other constitutional features of electoral democracy, but fail to meet one of its crucial requirements: a sufficiently fair arena of contestation to allow the ruling party to be turned out of power.

There is wide variation among pseudodemocracies as I use the term here. They include "semidemocracies," which approach electoral democracies in their pluralism, competitiveness, and civil liberties, as well as "hegemonic party systems," such as Mexico before 1988, in which an institutionalized ruling party makes extensive use of coercion, patronage, media control, and other tools to reduce opposition parties to decidedly "second-class" status. ¹² But they also encompass multiparty electoral systems in which the undemocratic dominance of the ruling party may be weak and contested (as in Kenya), or in the process of decomposing into a more competitive system (as in Mexico today), or highly personalistic and poorly institutionalized (as in Kazakhstan).

What distinguishes pseudodemocracies from the residual category of "authoritarian" regimes is that they tolerate the existence of independent opposition parties. This distinction is important theoretically. If we view democracy in *developmental* terms, as emerging in fragments or parts, by no fixed sequence or timetable, then the presence of legal opposition parties that may compete for power and win some seats in parliament, and of the greater space for civil society that tends to exist in such systems, provides important foundations for future democratic development. ¹³ In Mexico, Jordan, Morocco, and a number of states in sub-Saharan Africa where former one-party dictators engineered their reelection under pseudodemocratic conditions, these democratic fragments are pressing out the boundaries of what is politically possible, and may eventually generate breakthroughs to electoral democracy.

Empirical Trends During the Third Wave

By any measure, democracy has expanded dramatically since the beginning of the third wave. Using a minimalist or formal conception **[End Page 25]** of democracy that emphasizes electoral competition, both the number and the proportion of the world's democracies have risen sharply. In 1974 there were only 39 democracies in the world, 28 of which had populations over one million (or so close to one million that they would exceed that mark by 1995). Only about 23 percent of countries with populations

over one million and about 27 percent of all countries were formally democratic. The difference between these proportions illustrates an interesting relationship between country size and regime type that has held continuously throughout the third wave: very small countries (those with populations under one million) are significantly more likely than larger countries to be democracies (especially liberal democracies). In fact, two-thirds of states with populations under one million are liberal democracies today, compared with only about one-third of states with populations over one million.

By the beginning of 1996, the number of countries meeting at least the requirements for electoral democracy had increased to 117. Moreover, even though the number of independent states has steadily grown throughout the third wave (by more than a third), the proportion of countries that are at least formally democratic has more than doubled, to over 60 percent. More striking still is how much of this increase has occurred in the 1990s, with the collapse of Soviet and East European communism and the diffusion of the third wave to sub-Saharan Africa. As [Table 1](#) shows, the number and percentage of democracies in the world have increased *every year* since 1990. This can only be described as an unprecedented democratic breakthrough. As recently as 1990, when he was writing *The Third Wave*, Huntington found only 45 percent of **[End Page 26]** the world's states (with populations over one million) to be democratic, a proportion virtually identical to that in 1922 at the peak of the first wave. ¹⁴ Even if we similarly restrict our view to countries with populations over one million, the proportion of formal democracies in the world now stands at 57 percent.

What has been the trend with respect to *liberal* democracy? As one would expect, both the number of countries and the proportion of countries in the world rated "free" by Freedom House have also increased significantly, albeit not as dramatically. From the survey's inception in 1972 until 1980, the number of free states increased by only ten (and the proportion of free states in the world rose only slightly, from 29 to 32 percent). Moreover, change was not in one direction. During the first six years of the third wave, five states suffered breakdowns or erosions of democracy that cost them their free ratings. In fact, although the overall global trend of regime change during the third wave has been toward democracy and freedom, 22 countries suffered breakdowns of democracy between 1974 and 1991, and further deterioration has occurred since then.

During the third wave, freedom took its biggest jump in the latter half of the 1980s and the early 1990s. As [Table 2](#) shows, between 1985 and 1991 (a crucial year, which witnessed the demise of Soviet communism), the number of free states jumped from 56 to 76 and the proportion of free states in the world increased from a third to over 40 percent. Moreover, the proportion of blatantly authoritarian ("not free") states declined to a historic low of 23 percent in 1991, falling further to just over 20 percent in 1992. By contrast, in 1972 almost half the independent states in the world were rated "not free." **[End Page 27]**

The 1991-92 period seems to have been the high-water mark for freedom in the world. Since 1991, the proportion of free states has declined slightly, and since 1992, the proportion of "not free" states has jumped sharply. Despite the steady growth in the number of electoral democracies, the number of free states has stagnated in the first half of this decade, with gains in freedom offset by losses. In 1993, 43 countries registered a decline in their freedom score, while 18 posted a gain. In 1994, eight countries improved their freedom category (e.g., from partly free to free) and four declined in category; overall, however, freedom scores increased in 22 countries while declining in 23. ¹⁵ In 1995, the trend was slightly more positive, with four category upgrades and three downgrades and a total of 29 increases in freedom scores and 11 decreases. Yet the total number of free states did not change at all.

Juxtaposing the two divergent trends of the 1990s--continued growth of electoral democracy, but stagnation of liberal democracy--demonstrates the increasing shallowness of democratization in the latter part of the third wave. During the 1990s, the gap between electoral and liberal democracy has steadily grown. As a proportion of all the world's democracies, free states (liberal democracies) have declined from 85 percent in 1990 to 65 percent today ([Table 3](#)). During this period, the quality of democracy (as measured by the extent of political rights and civil liberties) has eroded in many of the most important and influential new third-wave democracies--including Russia, Turkey, Brazil, and Pakistan--while an expected transition to democracy in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, imploded. At the same time, political freedom has deteriorated in several of the longest-surviving democracies in the developing world, including India, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Venezuela. In fact,

with a few notable exceptions (including South Korea, Poland, and South Africa), the overall trend of the past decade among regionally influential countries that are electoral democracies today has been toward a decline in freedom. This is particularly disturbing given that, as **[End Page 28]** Huntington has argued in *The Third Wave*, the "demonstration effects" that are so important in the wavelike diffusion or recession of democracy emanate disproportionately from the more powerful countries within a region and internationally.

The undertow in the third wave has been particularly striking in Latin America. Of the 22 countries below the Rio Grande with populations over one million, 10 have experienced significant declines in freedom since 1987, while 6 have seen increases. While five countries made transitions to formal democracy (Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, Panama, and Paraguay), only Chile became a free state, and six countries lost their free status. Even in some free states (such as Argentina, Ecuador, and Jamaica), Freedom House has observed a downward trend in recent years. Although it is commonly assumed that Latin America today is overwhelmingly democratic, only 8 of the 22 principal countries in the region were rated free at the end of 1995, compared with 13 in 1987. While blatantly authoritarian rule has receded in the hemisphere, so has liberal democracy, as the region has experienced a "convergence" toward "more mixed kinds of semi-democratic regimes." ¹⁶

Some consider it remarkable that Latin American democracies have survived at all considering the enormous stresses they have experienced over the past decade: dramatic economic downturns and increases in poverty (only recently reversed in some countries), the mushrooming drug trade, and the violence and corruption that have flourished in its wake. Since the redemocratization of Latin America began in the early 1980s, the response to severe adversity and political crisis--including scandals that have forced presidential resignations in several countries--has primarily been adherence to constitutional process and electoral alternation in office (although the military did nearly overthrow democracy in Venezuela in 1992, and has rattled its sabers loudly elsewhere). In the practice of "voting the bums out" rather than mobilizing against democracy itself, Latin American publics have given many observers cause to discern a normalization and maturation of democratic politics not seen in previous eras. Indeed, a number of democratic governments (in Southern and Eastern Europe as well as in Latin America) have been able to make considerable progress in economic reform during the third wave, and in one sizeable sample of such reform experiences, "the party that initiated cuts in working-class income has been defeated in less than half the cases." ¹⁷

This persistence of constitutional procedures gives grounds for hope about the future of democracy in Latin America, as do recent reforms that have decentralized power and opened up the electoral process in Venezuela and Colombia, instituted an independent electoral commission in Panama, and improved judicial functioning in several countries. But these positive steps have been outweighed by conditions that render electoral democracy in the region increasingly hollow, illiberal, **[End Page 29]** delegative, and afflicted. These trends, evident in the resurgence of authoritarian practices under elected civilian presidents in countries such as Peru and Venezuela, and in a general erosion of the rule of law under pressure from the drug trade, reflect the growing gap between electoral and liberal democracy in the region.

As mentioned above, the trends of increasing (or persisting) disorder, human rights violations, legislative and judicial inefficacy, corruption, and military impunity and prerogatives have been evident in other third-wave democracies around the world--not only major countries like Turkey and Pakistan but smaller ones such as Zambia and most of the electoral regimes of the former Soviet Union. Indeed, in the former Soviet Union, Africa, parts of Asia, and the Middle East, elections themselves are increasingly hollow and uncompetitive, a thin disguise for the authoritarian hegemony of despots and ruling parties: "As recognition grows of the right freely to elect one's governmental representatives, more governments [feel] compelled to hold elections in order to gain [international] legitimacy." ¹⁸ In 1995 these contests degenerated into "an electoral charade" in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (not to mention Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Algeria) because of intimidation, rigging, and constriction (or, in extreme cases, utter obliteration) of the right of opposition forces to organize and contest. Since the most recent wave of democratization began its sweep through Africa in early 1991, at least ten civilian regimes have held multiparty elections so flawed that they do not meet the minimal criteria for electoral democracy. ¹⁹ All of these regimes are "pseudodemocracies."

Perhaps the most stunning feature of the third wave is how few regimes are left in the world (only slightly over 20 percent) that do not exhibit some degree of multiparty competition, whether that level corresponds with liberal democracy, electoral democracy, or pseudodemocracy. This broad diffusion signals the ideological hegemony of "democracy" in the post-Cold War world, but also the superficial nature of that hegemony. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States and the international community demand electoral democracy in exchange for recognition and economic rewards, but are not too insistent about human rights and the rule of law. For Africa, a lower standard is set by the major Western powers: there, all that is required is the presence of opposition parties that can contest for office, even if they are manipulated, hounded, and robbed of victory at election time.

A Period of Stasis

With the number of liberal democracies now stagnating, with the quality of many third-wave and Third World democracies sharply deteriorating, and with the world's most powerful and influential authoritarian states--China, Indonesia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia--showing **[End Page 30]** little or no prospect of democratization in the near term, the question arises: Is the third wave over?

The evidence in the affirmative appears to be mounting. If we look beyond the form of democracy--a form that is increasingly expected by world culture and organizations--we see erosion and stagnation offsetting liberalization and consolidation. *Liberal* democracy has stopped expanding in the world, and so has political freedom more generally. If we take the liberal content of democracy seriously, it seems that the third wave of democratic expansion has come to a halt, and probably to an end. We may or may not see in the coming years the emergence of a few new electoral democracies, but a further sizeable increase seems unlikely, given that democratization has already occurred in the countries where conditions are most favorable. Movement to electoral democracy also seems likely to be offset by movement away from it, as some fledgling electoral democracies in Africa and elsewhere are either blatantly overthrown (as in Gambia and Niger), squelched just before birth (as in Nigeria) or strangled by deterioration in the fairness of contestation and the toleration of opposition (as in Peru, Cambodia, and some of the former communist states). In these circumstances, more and more countries may seek to satisfy the expectation of "democracy" with its most hollow form, pseudodemocracy.

Does this mean that we are on the edge of a third "reverse wave" of democracy? This more frightening prospect is not yet apparent; indeed, a reverse wave may well be avoidable. It is theoretically possible for a wave of democratic expansion to be followed for some time not by a reverse wave but rather by equilibrium, in which the overall number of democracies in the world neither increases nor decreases significantly. It is precisely such a period of stasis that we seem to have entered.

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

Yet three things are different today:

- 1) Military establishments are extremely reluctant to seize power overtly, for several reasons: the lack of popular support for a coup (due in part to the discredit many militaries suffered during their previous **[End Page 31]** periods of brutal and inept rule); their sharply diminished confidence in their ability to tackle formidable economic and social problems; the "disastrous effects on the coherence, efficiency, and discipline of the army" that they have perceived during previous periods of military rule; ²⁰ and, not least, the instant and powerful sanctions that the established democracies have shown an increasing resolve to impose against such democratic overthrows. In addition, many third-wave democracies have made great progress toward establishing the conditions of "objective civilian control" that prevail in the industrialized democracies: high levels of military professionalism, constrained military roles, subordination of the military to civilian decision makers, autonomy for the military in its limited area of

professional competence, and thus "the minimization of military intervention in politics and of political intervention in the military."²¹

2) Even where, as in Turkey, the Philippines, Brazil, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, progress toward democratic consolidation has been partial and slow, and the quality of democracy has deteriorated in some respects, publics have shown no appetite for a return to authoritarian rule of any kind; culturally, democracy remains a valued goal.

3) Finally, no antidemocratic ideology with global appeal has emerged to challenge the continued global ideological hegemony of democracy as a principle and a formal structure of government.

Together, these factors have so far prevented a new wave of democratic breakdowns. Instead of expiring altogether, democracy has gradually been "hollowed out" in many countries, leaving a shell of multiparty electoralism--often with genuine competition and uncertainty over outcomes--adequate for the attainment of international legitimacy and economic rewards. Rather than mobilize against the constitutional system, political leaders and groups that have no use for democracy, or are (to use Juan Linz's term) "semiloyal" to the system, are more likely to choose and condone oblique and partial assaults on democracy, such as the repression of particularly troublesome oppositions and minorities. Instead of seizing power through a coup, the military may gradually reclaim more operational autonomy and control over matters of internal security and counterinsurgency, as they have done in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Pakistan, Turkey, and probably India and Sri Lanka. Instead of terminating multiparty electoral competition and declaring a one-party (or no-party) dictatorship, as they did during the first and second reverse waves, frustrated chief executives (like Alberto Fujimori in Peru) may temporarily suspend the constitution, dismiss and reorganize the legislature, and reshape to their advantage a constitutional system that will subsequently retain the formal structure or appearance of democracy. Or they may engage in a cat-and-mouse game with international donors, liberalizing politically in response to pressure while repressing as much as they can get away with in order to hang on to **[End Page 32]** power--as the former one-party regimes of Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, Omar Bongo in Gabon, and Paul Biya in Cameroon have done in Africa.

Is this, then, the way the third wave of democratization ends: death by a thousand subtractions?

The Imperative of Consolidation

If the historical pattern is to be defied and a third reverse wave avoided, the overriding imperative in the coming years is to consolidate those democracies that have come into being during the third wave. In essence, consolidation is the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. As Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, among others, have stressed, this legitimation must be more than a commitment to democracy in the abstract; it must also involve a shared normative and behavioral commitment to the specific rules and practices of the country's constitutional system.²² It is this unquestioning embrace of democratic procedures that produces a crucial element of consolidation: a reduction in the uncertainty of democracy, regarding not so much the outcomes as the rules and methods of political competition. As consolidation advances, "there is a widening of the range of political actors who come to assume democratic conduct [and democratic loyalty] on the part of their adversaries," a transition from "instrumental" to "principled" commitments to the democratic framework, a growth in trust and cooperation among political competitors, and a socialization of the general population (through both deliberate efforts and the practice of democracy in politics and civil society).²³ Although many contemporary theorists are strangely determined to avoid the term, I believe that these elements of the consolidation process encompass a shift in *political culture*.

Democratic consolidation is fostered by a number of institutional, policy, and behavioral changes. Many of these changes improve governance directly by strengthening state capacity, liberalizing and rationalizing economic structures, securing social and political order while maintaining basic freedoms, improving horizontal accountability and the rule of law, and controlling corruption. Others improve the representative functions of democratic governance by strengthening political parties and their linkages to social groups, reducing fragmentation in the party system, strengthening the autonomous capacity

and public accountability of legislatures and local governments, and invigorating civil society. Most new democracies need these types of institutional reform and strengthening. Some also require a steady program of reforms to reduce military involvement in nonmilitary issues [End Page 33] and subject the military and intelligence establishments to oversight and control by elected civilian leaders. And some require legal and institutional innovations to foster accommodation and mutual security among different ethnic and national groups.

Underlying all of these specific challenges, however, is an intimate connection between the deepening of democracy and its consolidation. Some new democracies have become consolidated during the third wave, but none of the "nonliberal" electoral democracies that have emerged during the third wave has yet achieved consolidation. And those electoral democracies that predate the third wave and that have declined from liberal to nonliberal status during it (India, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Colombia, Fiji) have become less stable and consolidated.

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

Holding Democratic Ground

None of this should be seen as ruling out the possibility of democratic progress in the world's autocratic and pseudodemocratic states. Indeed, a developmental perspective should sensitize us to the real scope for partial gains and sudden breakthroughs that no theory of the "preconditions for democracy" could anticipate. However, if we think strategically about democracy's future, the key question must be, to borrow Huntington's analogy to a military campaign, how the democratic idea can hold the vast new territory it has conquered. ²⁴ [End Page 34]

The overriding imperative for the long-term global advance of democracy is to prevent its near-term recession into a new reverse wave. That encompasses three challenges. First, the new liberal democracies of the third wave must become consolidated (only a few of them have so far). Since consolidation is partly a process of habituation, time is on their side, but only if they can avoid major crises, sink institutional roots, and provide some degree of effective governance. Second, the merely electoral democracies must be deepened and liberalized politically so that their institutions will become more broadly and intrinsically valued by their populations.

Finally, the established, industrialized democracies must show their own continued capacity for democratic vitality, reform, and good governance. The ideological hegemony of democracy in the world has flourished on two foundations: the clear moral and practical superiority of the political systems of the established democracies; and their increasing use of pressure and conditional assistance to promote democratic development around the world. If the world's wealthy, established democracies have the wisdom and energy to preserve those two foundations, more democracies will become "established" in the coming decade, even if the overall expansion of (electoral) democracy draws to a halt. As the universe of stable liberal democracies expands, new points of democratic diffusion, pressure, and assistance will emerge, and cultural arguments that liberal democracy is a Western, ethnocentric concept will become increasingly perverse and untenable.

At some point in the first two decades of the twenty-first century--as economic development transforms the societies of East Asia in particular--the world will then be poised for a "fourth wave" of democratization, and quite possibly a boon to international peace and security far more profound and enduring than we have seen with the end of the Cold War.

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Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 15.
2. David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy 'With Adjectives': Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research" (unpubl. ms., Department of Political Science, University of California at Berkeley, 8 April 1996).
3. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper, 1947), 269.
4. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 5-13.
5. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 3.
6. See Terry Lynn Karl, "Imposing Consent? Electoralism versus Democratization in El Salvador," in Paul Drake and Eduardo Silva, eds., *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980-1985* (San Diego: Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies and Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1986), 9-36; "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (October 1990): 14-15; and "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (July 1995): 72-86.
7. Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Summer 1991): 78.
8. An important discussion of reserved domains appears in J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process and Facilitating Conditions," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 64-66.
9. I use the term "liberal" to refer not to an economic regime featuring a limited state and an open economy but to a political regime in which individual and group liberties are particularly strong and well protected. There is obviously some affinity between economic and political liberty in these senses, but there are tensions and complexities as well that are beyond the scope of this discussion. Moreover, the term "liberal" should be construed here very broadly, even in the political sense. It requires sufficient civil liberties and pluralism to allow for free and meaningful competition of interests and the rule of law between elections as well as during them. But this still leaves substantial scope for variation in the balance a society places on individual rights versus responsibilities--or, to put it another way, in the emphasis on the individual versus the community.
10. Richard L. Sklar, "Developmental Democracy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (October 1987): 686-714, and "Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy," in Adrian Leftwich, ed., *Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1996), 26-27; and Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (January 1994): 60-

62. Sklar terms the lateral form "constitutional democracy" and emphasizes its mutually reinforcing relationship to vertical accountability.

11. Raw-point scores are determined by assigning from 0 to 4 points to each country on each of 8 checklist items for political rights and each of 13 checklist items for civil liberties. For a full explanation of the survey methodology, see Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1994-1995* (New York: Freedom House, 1995), 672-77, or *Freedom Review* 27 (January-February 1996): 11-15.

12. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 230-38.

13. Both my use of the term "developmental" and my emphasis on the continuous and open-ended nature of change in the character, degree, and depth of democratic institutions owe much to the work of Richard L. Sklar ("Developmental Democracy" and "Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy"). Readers will nevertheless note important differences in our perspectives.

14. Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 25-26.

15. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 1994-1995*, 5-7.

16. Jonathan Hartlyn, "Democracies in Contemporary South America: Convergences and Diversities," in Joseph Tulchin, ed., *Argentina: The Challenges of Modernization* (forthcoming). Quotations are from page 14 of a draft manuscript written in November 1995.

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

18. Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995), xxv.

19. These ten are Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

20. Samuel P. Huntington, "Armed Forces and Democracy: Reforming Civil-Military Relations," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (October 1995): 13.

21. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

22. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming), ch. 2, and "Toward Consolidated Democracies," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (April 1996): 14-33; and Richard Gunther, Hans-Jürgen Puhle, and P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, "Introduction," in Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 7-10.

23. Laurence Whitehead, "The Consolidation of Fragile Democracies: A Discussion with Illustrations," in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 79.

24. Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy for the Long Haul," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (April 1996): 5.