



## Democratization

ISSN: 1351-0347 (Print) 1743-890X (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fdem20>

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To cite this article: Renske Doorenspleet & Petr Kopecký (2008) Against the Odds: Deviant Cases of Democratization, *Democratization*, 15:4, 697-713, DOI: [10.1080/13510340802191045](https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340802191045)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340802191045>



Published online: 21 Jul 2008.



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# Against the Odds: Deviant Cases of Democratization

RENSKE DOORENSPLEET and PETR KOPECKÝ

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Economic development and diffusion effects appear to exert substantial influence on the success of democratization. However, large-N quantitative studies also show that there are some 'outliers', or 'deviant' cases, which do not fit the general pattern and cannot be explained by existing theories and models. It appears that deviant cases of democratization include Costa Rica and India (since the 1940s), Botswana (since the 1960s) and Benin and Mongolia (since the 1990s). This introduction focuses on important conceptual, theoretical, and methodological problems involved when studying them. We first look at the highly contested concept of democracy and place 'deviant democracies' in the framework of a minimal definition of democracy and transition waves. We also provide a working definition for two other highly contested concepts – democratic transition and democratic consolidation. We then go on to briefly review existing general theories of democratization. By doing so, we lay the ground for specifying more precisely the level of 'deviancy' of our cases, and offer potential explanations for their unusually successful process of democratization. Finally, we outline the nested mixed method, the logic of which we follow in this special issue.

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Key words: economic development; diffusion; transition; consolidation; deviant cases; nested mixed method

## Introduction

Democracy has become the widely accepted norm within the international community. States seeking international legitimacy are increasingly forced to embrace democratic forms of governance, or else may face sanctions from the international community, including exclusion from international negotiations. The diplomatic row over the possible exclusion of Zimbabwe's embattled President Robert Mugabe from the European-African Union Summit in December 2007 is a good example of the current international climate. Democracy also features prominently on the foreign policy agenda of most western countries, including that of the United States under George W. Bush's two administrations. Yet, despite this recent global democratic spirit, the idea that democracy can take root in every soil is disputed: structural factors do matter.<sup>1</sup> Human beings – political leaders, activists, citizens, or foreign donors – act within a political, social and economic context that

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Democratization, Vol.15, No.4, August 2008, pp.697–713  
ISSN 1351-0347 print/1743-890X online  
DOI: 10.1080/13510340802191045 © 2008 Taylor & Francis

may be more or less favourable for democracy. There is strong evidence, for example, which shows that economic factors and the presence of democratic neighbours have substantially increased the probability of a regime becoming democratic.

However, there are important exceptions to this general pattern. These are what we call 'deviant democracies:' countries that have seemingly beaten the odds and democratized within an unfavourable structural setting. Within the so-called fourth wave of democratization, from 1989 onwards, Benin and Mongolia represent primary examples of deviant cases of democratization.<sup>2</sup> Prior to this time, other historical examples can be found: Costa Rica and India since the late 1940s, and Botswana since the 1960s. These political systems meet the minimal criteria for democracy<sup>3</sup> in that they have competitive elections and inclusive suffrage. They are 'deviant democracies,' however, because they lack the standard 'requisites' for democracy mentioned by the modernization perspective<sup>4</sup> and, at the same time, they have become democratic while neighbouring countries remained undemocratic.

Deviant democracies have democratized against the odds. The collection of articles in this special issue aims to provide a better understanding of the exceptional and anomalous nature of democratization in these countries. It is the first time that these special cases from different parts of the world and from different periods of time have been brought together under a single analytical framework in order to draw out similarities and differences in their unusual paths towards democratization. Ultimately, the aim of the collection is to contribute to existing theories of democratization by providing a more refined explanation for democratic regime change, one which puts structural explanations alongside a systematic focus on the role of leadership, civil society, and political institutions.

This paper aims to embed the five country case studies in a broader comparative context by focusing on important conceptual, definitional, and theoretical problems in the study of 'deviant cases of democratization'. We first look at the highly contested concept of democracy, and place 'deviant democracies' in the framework of a minimal definition of democracy and transition waves. We provide a working definition for two other highly contested concepts, democratic transition and democratic consolidation, which are used as the starting point of the empirical analysis in all the country case studies. We then go on briefly to examine existing theories of democratization. This, in turn, will enable us both to specify more precisely the level of 'deviancy' of our cases, and to offer potential explanations for their unusually successful processes of democratization. Finally, we summarize the nested mixed method, the logic of which we follow in this special issue. By outlining the generic theoretical, conceptual, and methodological basis of this project on deviant democracies, we aim to provide a general analytical framework for the subsequent articles on specific deviant cases.

## **Democracy, Transition, Consolidation, and the Waves of Democratization**

### *Defining Democracy*

Democracy is a highly contested concept. T. S. Eliot once wrote that 'when a term has become so universally sanctified as "democracy" now is, I begin to wonder whether it

means anything, in meaning too many things'.<sup>5</sup> There is undoubtedly a lack of consensus on the meaning of democracy. Illustrative of this conceptual chaos are the results of a comprehensive literature review conducted by David Collier and Steven Levitsky, in which they identify more than 550 subtypes of democracy in about 150 different studies.<sup>6</sup> In common with many other studies of democratization, and as a starting point for classifying our deviant cases as democracies, we have opted for a minimal definition of democracy in this collection, as originally outlined by Joseph Schumpeter. According to this minimalist, procedural notion, democracy is a system of government in which citizens choose their political leaders in periodic elections, thereby giving their leaders the right to rule after the elections.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Schumpeter's procedural definition has significantly affected the conceptualizations of minimal democracy, especially in the field of quantitative research on democracy and democratization. Robert Dahl developed one of the first cross-national classifications of democratic regimes, relying heavily on Schumpeter's ideas. Dahl regarded government responsiveness to the preferences of its citizens, who are considered as political equals, as a key characteristic of democracy. Such responsiveness requires citizens to have opportunities to formulate their preferences, to express these preferences to their fellow citizens and to the government by individual and collective action, and to have them weighed equally in the conduct of the government, that is to say, weighed with no discrimination because of content or source of preference.<sup>8</sup>

Dahl presents a theoretical scale which allows for different political regimes to be ranked. He contends that, upon closer examination, there are two main theoretical dimensions of democracy: competition and inclusive suffrage. Focusing on the competition dimension, Dahl explains that regimes have varied in the extent to which various guarantees of competition are openly available, publicly employed, and fully guaranteed to some members of the political system. Regimes may differ according to the extent of permissible opposition, public contestation, or political competition. Since a regime might permit opposition to a very small proportion of the population, Dahl argues that a second dimension, reflecting the right to participate in public contestation, or inclusive suffrage, is needed in order to classify a regime as democratic. He emphasizes that there is no country in which these conditions are perfectly met; therefore, he prefers the term 'polyarchies' for political systems in which the conditions are sufficiently met, and retains the term 'democracy' for the ideal type.

Based on Dahl's ideas, democracy is defined in this collection of essays as a type of political regime in which there exists: 1) *competition*; i.e. institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies at the national level, as well as institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power by the executive; 2) *inclusive suffrage*; i.e. the right to participate in the selection of national leaders and policies. Conversely, non-democratic regimes are defined as political regimes that fail to meet either the first requirement of competition and/or the second requirement of inclusiveness.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the recent global resurgence of 'polyarchies', we are of course far from subscribing to the 'end of history', as suggested by Francis Fukuyama.<sup>10</sup> Indeed,

many of the new democratic regimes, which emerged during the last two decades, can be characterized by inclusive suffrage and competition but, at the same time, by insufficient protection of civil and political liberties.<sup>11</sup> In addition, as O'Donnell pointed out in an influential essay, many of the long enduring polyarchies also feature clientelism, particularism, and executive dominance, all of which severely undermine both the horizontal accountability among the institutions and the adherence to the formal rules of the democratic game.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Linz and Stepan have argued that one of the more interesting subfields of contemporary democratization studies is the focus on the rich variety of new polyarchies; i.e. regimes that fall within the bounds of a minimal definition of democracy, but that differ in the level of practical compliance with democratic rules.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, minimal democracy or electoral democracy<sup>14</sup> may be deepened into a democratic regime which is not only competitive and inclusive, but also displays no major violations of civil and political liberties, has little or no endemic corruption that undermines state institutions, and ensures the rule of law for all citizens. Minimal or electoral democracies can overcome some of the deficiencies that frequently plague them, and may eventually develop into fully-fledged liberal democracies. But it is, of course, equally possible that no progress from an electoral towards a liberal democracy is made or, worse, that an electoral democracy sinks back into some form of authoritarianism. The cases in this collection have all been minimal democracies, although not all have necessarily developed into liberal democracies. In other words, despite being located on different continents, having different levels of economic and social development, and having different sizes of population, all the countries in this collection share a successful *transition* to a minimal democracy. Arguably, most have also succeeded in the process of democratic *consolidation*.

### *Transition and Consolidation*

At this point it is necessary to introduce the distinction between transition to democracy and consolidation of democracy, and clarify both terms for the purposes of empirical analysis. This is all the more important given that we have included three historical cases of democratization, namely Costa Rica, India, and Botswana, in this collection of articles. None of these cases have been analysed, certainly not at the time they democratized, with the use of the same two analytical concepts. Indeed, it is the literature on the third wave of democratization (see below) that sees the emergence and subsequent frequent usage of these two analytical concepts, through the pioneering work of Rustow and, later, of O'Donnell and Schmitter.<sup>15</sup> In most of the contemporary democratization literature, the terms refer to different phases of the process of democratization, though there is a huge debate about their exact meaning and their empirical indicators and measures.<sup>16</sup>

In accordance with the original literature, we understand transition as the interval between the dissolution of the old regime and the installation of a new regime.<sup>17</sup> Transitions are processes involving often inconclusive and uncertain struggles about the fundamental direction of regime change. These processes are delimited on both ends by different (types of) regimes: if *successful*, this came to mean an authoritarian regime on the one end, and a democratic regime on the other.<sup>18</sup>

Transition to democracy is considered to be completed when an agreement on democratic rules is reached successfully.<sup>19</sup> Empirically, this usually, but does not necessarily always have to, includes the adoption of a new constitution and the successful organization of the first free elections.

It is important to note that the study of transition, i.e. 'transitology' proper, is not supposed to indicate exactly what kind of democracy is to emerge, or how deeply rooted or stable it will be, even though some scholars will argue that a particular mode of transition will have an effect on the subsequent process of consolidation.<sup>20</sup> Transition studies are less concerned with the persistence or quality of democracy, and more with the struggle over the fundamental direction of political change, where the main fault lines lie between democracy and autocracy. Studies of transition thus provide insights into the political dynamics in the initial stages of political change and gauge the outcomes of this process in broad generic terms. Since we adopt a minimal definition of democracy in this collection, it is then to this minimal or electoral democracy that the notion of transition should analytically be linked.

In contrast to transition, the essence of consolidation is generally agreed to be defining and fixing the core rules of democratic competition,<sup>21</sup> in other words, transforming the set of democratic rules and institutions agreed upon in the transition phase into regular, acceptable, and predictable patterns.<sup>22</sup> In terms of outcomes, the process of democratic consolidation is delimited on both ends by different types of democracies: non-institutionalized and unstable democracies versus institutionalized and stable democracies. Studies of democratic consolidation are thus concerned only with different (sub-)types of *democracies*, rather than with different types of political *regimes*. Moreover, by definition, processes of democratic consolidation can only start after transition to democracy has been successfully completed, even though in practice these processes may be partly overlapping. This means that any outcome of political change that is not a minimal democracy in the first place, i.e. partial or derailed transitions, should fall under the bounds of transition studies and not consolidation studies.

However, to judge when a country has achieved full democratic consolidation remains a complex issue. Many authors working on Latin America and Southern Europe used to speak of consolidated democracy when all politically significant groups adhered to democratic rules of the game.<sup>23</sup> Consolidated democracy was thus understood primarily in terms of the political actors' behavioural compliance with the minimal procedural requirements of democracy. Others have later introduced a more substantive definition of democratic consolidation, and of democracy, insisting that not only must the main political actors *comply* with democratic rules of the game, but these rules must also be seen as *legitimate* by the actors themselves and by a large section of the public.<sup>24</sup> Yet others have added specific rules and organizations and their particular features, for example, a vibrant civil society or institutionalized political parties and party systems, as a precondition of democratic consolidation,<sup>25</sup> creating very complex definitions and corresponding empirical measurements.

Indeed, as Schedler has argued, many of the more recent notions of democratic consolidation extend the definition to include the *completing*, *deepening*, and *organizing* of democracy, rather than referring only to *regime continuity*, in other

words, avoiding democratic breakdown and avoiding democratic erosion, as in most classical meanings.<sup>26</sup> This has not only created a huge conceptual confusion, but has also resulted in consolidation becoming a 'garbage can' concept lacking a core meaning. We agree with Schedler that democratic consolidation should not be defined with excessive expectations, by including everything that we might like to see in a new democracy. Consolidation should not be linked to the deepening or organizing of democracy, but rather, should be restricted to avoiding democratic breakdown and erosion. Importantly, consolidation should be linked to the same (minimal) definition of democracy that allowed the country to be classified as having completed the transition phase successfully. Consequently, 'consolidated democracy' in our understanding denotes a minimal or electoral democracy that has already lasted for some period of time, and that can be expected to last into the future.

This said, it is important to realize that consolidation does not guarantee that a democracy will be immune to political crises, ethnic tensions, and other sorts of potentially destabilizing events. It is equally important to realize, however, that a crisis of the state is not necessarily the same as a crisis of democracy. Many established democracies have come to face enormous difficulties in recent years, in the form of ethnic tensions, civilian unrest, declining levels of political participation, erosion of trust in the political class, or increasing levels of corruption. Because of the use of (excessively) demanding definitions, countless similar tribulations of democracy are collapsed under the problems of consolidation in the new democracies or, even worse, are interpreted as signs of non-consolidation of these democracies. But if we expect a new democracy to last into the future, these problems might as well be interpreted as pressures for further change, and as signs of the major successes in creating open democratic societies. In other words, these problems should be part of the broader study of the functioning or quality of democracy, rather than the more narrow study of the consolidation of democracy.

### *Waves of Transitions*

The transitions among our 'deviant cases of democratization' took place during several periods in history. Especially since the publication of Samuel Huntington's influential study of democratization, scholars have come to take for granted the notion that the spread of democracy has come in waves, with bursts of progress being succeeded by quite substantial reversals, and with the pattern of flow and ebb marking a less than optimistic two-step forwards, one-step backwards pattern.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that there has been a significant wave of democratization since 1974, and an explosion of democratization since 1989. Previous study showed, however, that, with the exception of the first wave of transition to democracy (until 1924), Huntington's other waves could not be distinguished clearly.<sup>28</sup> The first reverse wave, between 1924 and 1944, and the second wave of democratization, during the mid-1940s and 1950s, are neither significant nor convincing. Moreover, there is no clear second reverse wave of democratization which, according to Huntington, should have been apparent between 1957 and 1973. In fact, this period is better described as one of trendless fluctuation, in which there are waves of both



authoritarianism and democracy.<sup>29</sup> In comparison with previous 'waves,' the third wave of democratization, from 1974 until 1989, has been more global and more impressive than earlier ones. Finally, the fourth wave, from 1989 onwards, has been the most impressive. No earlier wave has contained such a large number of democratic transitions.<sup>30</sup>

The five cases in the present collection are interesting because they represent transitions towards democracy during different periods in history. First, Costa Rica's change of regime occurred during the second wave of democratization, in the late 1940s. This short wave began with the Allied victory in World War II, and continued until approximately 1960. Allied occupation promoted the installation of democratic institutions in West Germany, Japan, and Finland. Second, India's transition to democracy also occurred at this time, specifically, in the late 1940s. Furthermore, after an interruption and transition period, Austria and Italy became democratic. The competitive systems of Belgium and France allowed women to vote after the war, resulting in democracies; Turkey, too, became a democracy at this time. Czechoslovakia was a democracy before the war, experienced an interruption period during the war, and became a non-democracy following the coup orchestrated under Soviet pressure in 1948.

Third, Botswana became a minimal democracy in the early 1960s. Huntington insisted that this period be best described as the second reverse wave in which many democracies became authoritarian: 'The global swing away from democracy in the 1960s and early 1970s was impressive', he states. There is, however, no solid evidence of a second reverse wave.<sup>31</sup> There is no clear group of transitions from democratic to non-democratic regimes that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction. It can better be described as an *intermezzo*, in which transitions to both non-democratic regimes and democracy occurred. In this period, Colombia and Venezuela became democracies, for example. The polarized Chilean democracy was overthrown by a military coup in 1973 led by General Augusto Pinochet, and 17 years of repressive rule by a rightist military regime followed. Another military coup ended democracy in Uruguay. And although the electoral victory of Peronism over the Radical Party in 1973 paved the way for a transition to civilian rule in Argentina, a military coup followed and toppled the government headed by Peron's widow. In Pakistan, in 1958, President Iskander Mirza dissolved the assemblies, abrogated the constitution, and declared martial law in the country, inviting General Ayub Khan to assist him as Chief Martial Law Administrator. Turkey's second attempt at democracy started in 1961, and was again interrupted by military intervention from 1971 until 1973. In short, the period in which Botswana democratized was very volatile, without a clear wave of democracy or non-democracy.

Finally, Benin and Mongolia democratized during the fourth wave, which started in the late 1980s. While many countries had already made a transition to democracy during the third wave, from the mid 1970s till the late 1980s, the fourth wave has been an even more impressive period of democratization. The movement towards democracy since 1989 was overwhelming and global. At the end of the 1980s, a wave swept through Eastern Europe and the first democratic elections in Hungary and Poland led to non-communist governments. Russia began to liberalize at the same



time, and the communist regimes in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania collapsed. The 1990s also saw a widespread and rapid collapse of non-democratic regimes in Africa, where more than a dozen democracies emerged. The end of the Cold War seems to have provided a 'window of opportunity' to democratize, not only in Europe, but also in Africa and Asia. Benin and Mongolia were among the numerous regimes that democratized during this period, with the former country at the forefront of democratization efforts on the African continent.

### **Theoretical Explanations of Democratization**

We have established working definitions of democracy, and of transition and consolidation of democracy. We also know in which historical contexts our country cases have made the transition to democracy. But what do we exactly mean by 'deviant democracies'? Before answering this question, we must briefly pay attention to some established theoretical explanations of why some countries make the transition to democracy, while others do not, and why some countries succeed in sustaining and developing their democracy, and others do not.

#### *Economic Development*

The initial impetus for the empirical quantitative studies of democratization was Lipset's 1959 article, which later turned out to be of crucial importance for the rise of studies on the relationship between economic development and democracy. Lipset argued that when the people of a country enjoy a higher level of economic development, they will be more inclined to believe in democratic values and will support a democratic system. Only in a relatively wealthy society can a situation exist in which

the mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics and could develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues. A society divided between a large impoverished mass and a small favored elite would result either in oligarchy . . . or in tyranny.<sup>32</sup>

This hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between economic development and democracy has been replicated many times,<sup>33</sup> and a positive correlation between economic development and democracy has been a persistent finding in such empirical quantitative studies. Indeed, even scholars belonging to the qualitative research tradition have acknowledged that:

the main finding of cross-national statistical work – a positive, though not perfect, correlation between capitalist development and democracy – must stand as an accepted result. There is no way of explaining this robust finding, replicated in many studies of different designs, as spurious effect of flawed methods. Any theory of democracy must come to terms with it.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, taking the positive relationship between economic development and democracy as a base line, many scholars, such as Inglehart, tend to conclude that the level of economic development also 'helps predict which countries are most

likely to *become* democratic'.<sup>35</sup> In a similar vein, Diamond argues that 'the more well-to-do the people of a country, on average, the more likely they will favour, *achieve*, and *maintain* a democratic system for their country'.<sup>36</sup>

While such scholars are generally regarded as operating within the modernization paradigm, it is also important to point out that many have not made the distinction between transitions to democracy, on the one hand, and consolidation of democracy, on the other, as outlined above. For example, Inglehart has implied that economic development predicts transitions, while Diamond has positively linked economic development to both transition *and* consolidation.<sup>37</sup> It is arguable, however, that many factors, including the level of economic development, which might help in maintaining democracy (i.e. consolidation), are not necessarily the same as the factors that brought democracy into existence in the first place (i.e. transition).

Huntington was one of the first scholars working in the quantitative research tradition to deal with the impact of economic development specifically on democratic *transitions*. He argued that transitions to democracy are unlikely in poor countries, and that they had typically occurred in rich countries. The empirical results showed that during the so-called third wave of democratization, from 1974 till 1990, countries in the middle-income zone were most likely to make a transition to democracy: '[A]s countries develop economically and move into this zone, they become prospects for democratization'.<sup>38</sup> Gasiorowski made a similar claim, his findings supporting Lipset's argument that economic development increases the likelihood of democratic transitions from 1950 till 1990.<sup>39</sup>

These findings have not gone unchallenged, however. For example, a study by Przeworski and others has suggested that there is no significant relationship between economic development and transition to democracy at all, and that democracies are likely to emerge at any level of economic development.<sup>40</sup> The conventional wisdom about a straightforward relationship between economic development and political change has also been tested by the experiences of Eastern European countries, which began their transition from communist regimes to democracy amidst economic crisis and generally declining levels of economic development.<sup>41</sup>

Boix and Stokes, in turn, have reassessed Przeworski and Limongi's findings that economic development does not play a significant role in transitions away from autocracy.<sup>42</sup> Their study has convincingly challenged and criticized Przeworski and Limongi's results, and argues that economic development *does* substantially increase the probability that a country will make a transition to democracy. They also argue that development has a much bigger positive effect on the likelihood of maintaining a democratic regime. All in all, therefore, it is fair to accept on the basis of the abovementioned studies that economic development has a positive impact both on transitions to democracy and on democratic consolidation.

### *Democratic Region*

The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe since 1989 seem to show that countries are both dependent on each other and influence one another during the process of democratization. Once the non-communists came to power in Poland in August

1989, the breakdown of non-democratic communist regimes swept through Eastern Europe, reaching first Hungary in September 1989, then East Germany in October, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria in November, and Romania in December. The 'disease' of democracy seemed to spread contagiously. As one citizen of the former East Germany remarked: 'We saw what Poland and Hungary were doing. We heard Gorbachev. Everyone felt, why are we being left behind?'<sup>43</sup>

Why not us? Everyone knew from his or her neighbour's experience that transition to democracy was a possibility. Not only in Eastern Europe, but also in parts of Africa and Asia, a diffusion or demonstration effect seemed operative. These processes of diffusion and demonstration encouraged elites and civil society groups to press for change towards democracy. Hence, democratization occurs not only in temporal, but also in spatial clusters. Countries seem to affect each other; living in a democratic region in particular has a positive impact on the chance that your regime will make a transition to democracy.

Indeed, ever since the transitions during the third wave of democratization took place, many theorists have sought to include the influence of democratic clustering in their research.<sup>44</sup> Linz and Stepan, for example, emphasized this influence during democratization processes, positing that 'the more tightly coupled a group of countries are, the more a successful transition in any country in the group will tend to transform the range of perceived political alternatives for the rest of the group'. Indeed, they continued, 'international diffusion effects can change political expectations, crowd behaviour, and relations of power within the regime almost overnight'.<sup>45</sup> Lipset concluded that a 'diffusion, a contagion, or demonstration effect seems operative, as many have noted, one that encourages democracies to press for change and authoritarian rulers to give in'.<sup>46</sup>

Based on these theoretical ideas, cross-national empirical studies show indeed that there is a clear clustering of democratization around the world.<sup>47</sup> In his quantitative large-N study on the impact of economic crises on democracy, Gasiorowski also paid attention to the possible 'demonstration effects' of democratic neighbours.<sup>48</sup> He was one of the first political scientists who incorporated this variable in a multivariate model, and discovered that it was significant and strong; not only during the transition phase, but also for the consolidation of the new democracy. The findings that democratic neighbours facilitated both transition to and consolidation of democracy were quite novel, but unfortunately not many studies have followed to study this topic and to replicate this result.

The few that have, however, tell the same story. The study by O'Loughlin and his co-authors provides strong and consistent evidence that there is a spatial clustering of regime types.<sup>49</sup> Democracies are likely to be found in regions with other democracies, while non-democratic regimes also form a strong spatial constellation. In addition, Kopstein and Reilly have shown that democratic diffusion mattered, and especially that the geographical distance from the west seemed to have played a role in the diffusion and transformation of the post-communist world.<sup>50</sup> They claimed that their statistical analyses even showed that 'location matters more than domestic politics itself'<sup>51</sup> in determining outcomes such as establishing or consolidating a democratic regime. Finally, Doorenspleet has shown that democratic

neighbours do indeed have a strong and positive influence on the likelihood that a country undertakes a democratic transition, especially during the fourth wave since 1989.<sup>52</sup>

However, while the evidence of this correlation is convincing, the mechanisms are not so clear. Not much has been written yet about *why* clustering of types of political regimes might occur. Elkins and Simmons suggest three explanations.<sup>53</sup> First, countries respond similarly, though independently, to similar domestic conditions. This explanation is dominant in comparative politics and international political economy, and states that countries democratize because of political and economic pressures within their countries, and that these pressures exist simultaneously for leaders in other countries. A second explanation for the clustering is that regime change and consolidation are coordinated by a group of nations, a hegemonic power, or an international organization.<sup>54</sup> Examples of this type might include voluntary international cooperation, or coercion by donor countries or international financial organizations. A third explanation of the clustering of regime types is that there is uncoordinated interdependence between the countries, what Elkins and Simmons explicitly call 'diffusion'.<sup>55</sup> The actions and choices of one country affect another, but not through direct cooperation or imposition. Instead, the kind of interdependence is uncoordinated. Examples of this type are not only adaptation to altered conditions, but also diffusion via the exchange of information or learning.

More research needs to be done in order to find out whether these three explanations of clustering can be supported by empirical evidence, and whether we can get more insights into the specific mechanisms that lie behind the strong finding that there is spatial clustering of democratic regimes. It seems widely accepted, though, that a non-democratic regime that is surrounded by democratic neighbours will be more likely to collapse and make a transition to democracy and *vice versa*. Whether the presence or absence of democratic neighbours also encourages or hinders the process of democratic consolidation remains underinvestigated, although preliminary research does indicate a strong impact on democratic consolidation as well.<sup>56</sup> In other words, empirical evidence shows that there is a clear spatial clustering of democratization around the world. Non-democratic countries that are surrounded by democracies are much more likely to make a transition and to consolidate than non-democratic countries in a non-democratic region.

#### *Other Explanations of Democratization*

Both modernization theory and ideas concerning the diffusion of democracy belong to the group of structural accounts of democratization. Modernization theory in particular came under sustained attack during the 1970s and 1980s with the emergence of a new agency-based theoretical school which focused on the role of political elites in triggering the downfall of non-democratic regimes. Although Rustow is considered to be the pioneer of this theoretical school, it was not until the book by O'Donnell and Schmitter in 1986, portraying transitions to democracy as a range of contingencies within a setting of regime uncertainty,<sup>57</sup> that this school of thought has become more salient. In contrast to the overly deterministic accounts of modernization theory, therefore, actor-based perspectives emphasize the role of agents (principally

of political elites), relatively unconstrained by the structural environment in which they operate.

Many other accounts in this theoretical tradition have subsequently refined and tested numerous propositions, specifically concerning the role of different political actors (e.g. regime elites and opposition counter-elites) in both the transition to and the consolidation of democracy.<sup>58</sup> This theorizing also includes propositions linking the mode of transitions (e.g. pacts, reforms and ruptures) with the subsequent problems of democratic consolidation.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the agency-based school also inspired influential thinking relating the type of non-democratic regime (e.g. the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes) to the mode transition,<sup>60</sup> opening up a whole new field of so-called 'path dependent' explanations of democratization.<sup>61</sup>

Although it is clear that 'path dependencies' are no longer strictly non-structural theories of political change, the role of political agency still features much more prominently in these accounts than in either modernization theory or the theory of value (democratic) diffusion. One partial exception to these trends of emphasizing the role of agency are the writings on institutional design, most notably the debates about the relative merits of presidential and parliamentary systems and of different electoral systems, which are quite prominent within the consolidation literature.<sup>62</sup> Institutions are structures by definition and they often evolve in piecemeal, 'path dependent' fashion. However, it is interesting to note that much of the literature on institutional choices in new democracies is as much concerned with the constraining and distributive effects of institutions as it is with the role, perceptions and expectations of those who design these institutions. In this latter respect, the role of agents again becomes crucial in understanding the process of democratization.

All in all, therefore, it should be clear from this cursory overview that the democratization literature generally tends to gravitate between the relative explanatory weight assigned to structures (socio-economic, cultural or institutional) and agents (elites, parties, counter-elites, civil society etc.), often resulting in problems of causal inference. This is true for both the transition literature and the consolidation literature, though arguably, and in sharp contrast to the original democratization literature, it is now the literature on consolidation that tends to emphasize the role of structural factors in determining outcomes. In any case, if we are right about the nature of 'deviant cases of democratization', then logically non-structural explanations should carry more weight in shedding light on these successful cases of transition to and consolidation of democracy. However, like most contemporary scholars of democratization, we are sceptical about singular explanations. Indeed, if nothing else, we hope that our collection helps to achieve a better integration of structure- and agency-based explanations into a single explanatory framework.<sup>63</sup>

### **Methodological Path: The Mixing of Methods**

It is our view that an important strength of this special issue is the methodological approach that has been employed. We follow the logic of one of the most promising recent methodological developments in comparative politics and international

studies, that is, mixed methods in research designs.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, there is a specific type of mixed methods that is particularly interesting for political science, namely the nested design as advocated by Lieberman and by Brady, Collier, and Seawright.<sup>65</sup>

The research process of nested analysis, which is defined by Lieberman as a research design that involves the structured combination of statistical and case study methods, involves two crucial steps.<sup>66</sup> The first step of nested analysis is, formally, a quantitative analysis or a large-N analysis. The preliminary quantitative analyses provide insights into various plausible factors that might explain the phenomenon of interest, and guides the further execution of the small-N analysis. The second step involves the intensive analysis of one or more cases, the small-N analysis. One of the possibilities is thus to study outliers (or deviant cases) in order to discover new explanatory variables. So, if the results of the large-N studies are not entirely satisfactory, then the goal of the case study approach is to build a better explanatory model. The purpose of case studies is, hence, to increase the explanatory power and the robustness of the results of large-N quantitative studies.

An important advantage of the nested mixed method is that it may contribute to theory development. Lieberman argues that small-N analysis can strengthen statistical analysis in two ways: by a stronger test of the statistical model and by contributing to model-building. The promise of the nested research design is that small-N and large-N analyses can inform each other in such a way that 'the analytic payoff is greater than the sum of the parts'.<sup>67</sup>

Although this method shows a lot of potential to increase our understanding of core topics in political science, unfortunately there is a lack of studies that have applied this method.<sup>68</sup> This special issue follows an innovative path by mixing findings from both quantitative and qualitative research in a way similar to the approach employed by Rueschemeyer et al. in their influential book on democratization.<sup>69</sup> First, although we do not perform our own large-N analysis, we rely on various pre-existing quantitative studies and identify the general pattern, as has been done in this introductory article. On the basis of such quantitative research, it appears that both economic development and democratic diffusion play a role during the phases of transition and consolidation. Although it is important to point out that other factors such as class structure, economic dependency, and political culture explain processes of democratization to some extent as well, the factors of economic development and diffusion clearly are the most powerful ones.<sup>70</sup> However, these large-N studies also show that there are some 'outliers' or deviant cases, which do not fit into the general pattern, and cannot be explained by the general theories and models. The case studies in this issue – Costa Rica, Botswana, India, Mongolia, and Benin – are examples of such deviant cases.

Therefore, second, we perform a small-N qualitative analysis, as will be done in each of the following country articles. The goal of each individual case study is to specify in what ways the country is an 'outlier', using data on economic development, together with a short analysis of 'democracy' in the country's regional context. Importantly, each case analysis is geared towards detecting important variables that can explain the unexpected transition to and consolidation of democracy. It is then the goal of the concluding chapter to provide a synthesis and outline how

these individual explanations will increase the explanatory power and the robustness of the results of large-N quantitative studies, and contribute in turn to theory building.

## Conclusion

Numerous studies have convincingly shown that structural factors matter in the process of democratization. Among these structural factors, it is above all the level of economic development and the presence or absence of democratic neighbours that have had most impact on a country's prospects for democratization. However, there are countries that have experienced, in various historical periods, a successful transition to democracy in a structural context that may be considered to be unfavourable for both the launching and the sustaining of this process of political change. Their level of economic development was low *and* they were surrounded by non-democratic neighbours at the time their own non-democratic regimes began to crumble. Yet, after transitions of different lengths, they successfully constructed a new competitive and inclusive political regime – i.e. a minimal or electoral democracy. Moreover, most of these countries have also succeeded in consolidating their new democratic order; i.e. they have sustained their minimal or electoral democracies well beyond the initial period of transition and the first free democratic elections. They may not be perfect democracies by western liberal democratic standards, but they represent a success story that is or was quite unusual given the context in which their transitions took place.

As we have specified in this introduction, such deviant cases of democratization include Costa Rica and India, which made their transition to democracy during the second wave of democratization following the end of World War II; Botswana, which experienced successful transition in the 1960s; and Benin and Mongolia, which managed to make the transition to democracy in the early 1990s during the more recent fourth wave of democratization. All these countries can be considered as 'democracies against the odds'. In other words, they do not fit the expectations of modernization and diffusion theories. In the light of the exceptional and anomalous nature of democratization in these countries, the articles that follow this introductory article aim to bring a better understanding of political change in those deviant cases. The collection also represents an opportunity to refine existing accounts of democratization by integrating non-structural factors into explanations of political change. Indeed, the theoretical outlook of this collection, as well as the employment of generic concepts and working definitions that we outlined in this introduction, should help to overcome the usual problems involved in comparing such vastly different countries across time and space, as well as the different time periods in which these deviant cases occurred.

## NOTES

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2. Renske Doorenspleet, 'Reassessing the Three Waves of Democratization', *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2000), pp. 384–406. On the exact meaning of the Fourth Wave see below.
3. Doorenspleet, *Democratic Transitions* (note 1), Chapter 2.



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Manuscript accepted for publication February 2008

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