

*Contention and Democracy
in Europe, 1650–2000*

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2004

Printed in the United States of America

Typeface Janson Text 10/13 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Tilly, Charles.

Contention and democracy in Europe, 1650-2000 / Charles Tilly.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in contentious politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-83008-7 – ISBN 0-521-53713-4 (pb.)

1. Europe – Politics and government. 2. Democracy – Europe. I. Title. II. Series.

JN8.T55 2003

320.94 – dc21 2003055122

ISBN 0 521 83008 7 hardback

ISBN 0 521 53713 4 paperback

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Contention and Democracy

Unlike its 20th-century counterparts, the *Leeds Mercury* for 30 March 1871 devoted its opening pages entirely to classified advertising, official announcements, and market reports. But by page 4, as usual, the newspaper had plunged into the day's urgent political affairs. "The result of the Paris elections," declared the *Mercury's* editorial writer,

gives such authority to the Commune as may be assumed to flow from an illegal proceeding to condone a revolt. It is simply, however, the authority of usurpation based upon the vote of a minority, the majority abstaining from the exercise of their rights, and so far giving a colourable sanction to acts which they had not the courage to protest against or to oppose. The victory has been won, as such victories too often are won, by the unscrupulous exercise of power in the name of liberty. For the moment, the Party of Disorder, of Anarchy, of Revolution, and of Tyranny have triumphed, and it may be that with the phrases of liberty, equality, and fraternity on their lips, they will for a time hold their own by a Reign of terror which will once more and for another generation make French Republicanism a bye-word and a scorn in the mouths of all men.

The *Mercury's* editorialist intertwined three themes commonly voiced by 19th- and 20th-century commentators on France, emphatically including British and French antirevolutionaries: comparison of current struggles with the revolution of 1789, association of revolution with terror, and assertion that if a revolution occurred, it could not possibly have represented the majority will.

After much more in the same vein, the editorial pronounced a scathing but ultimately fearful judgment:

At present the Commune has no legal authority. It is neither more nor less than a revolutionary body, and as the authority of the Government has not been overthrown, its assumption cannot be recognised without danger to the lawful Government of

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the country. There may be, and probably is, sufficient ground for demanding a reform of the municipal system of government in force in Paris, and the large towns of France. Indeed, the necessity of reform has been admitted, and unless the violence of the commune outrages public opinion, such reform must now come speedily; but the right of Paris to an autonomy, independent of the National Government, is a right which cannot be conceded. It is a claim for which there is no justification. There is too much reason to fear that it covers designs which would make property a curse instead of a blessing, by imposing the burthen of taxation upon the rich, and providing work for the poor at the cost of the State. So long as these theories remain theories France can afford to smile at them. They are the dreams of visionaries. Unfortunately the visionaries are in power in Paris, and in all probability will seek to realise their dreams, pursuing their ends blindly, and at all costs.

The editorial ended with a prediction: that the Commune would leave a legacy of “misery and distress, from which all will suffer, and none more than the poor” (*Leeds Mercury*, 30 March 1871, pp. 4–5). Thus once again, according to the *Mercury*, French people had revealed their propensity for revolutionary adventurism. Violent victories, in a self-righteous British view, could produce only long-term defeats for reason and democratic order.

What had happened? In 1848, French revolutionaries replaced their monarchy with a republic that provided work for its many unemployed and greatly expanded workers’ rights, including nearly universal manhood suffrage. At the end of 1851, elected president Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (nephew of the earlier emperor) swept away the republic with a coup d’état, then created his own empire the following year. Louis Napoleon’s coup initiated eighteen years of urbanization, industrialization, political consolidation, and, toward the end, liberalization with increasingly turbulent rule. War with Prussia proved his downfall. On 1 September 1870, France’s commanding general Macmahon surrendered and Prussian forces took Napoleon III captive at Sedan. Three days later, a relatively peaceful revolution terminated the empire, established a republic, and formed a government of national defense in Paris. But Prussian armies continued to batter their French foes, as a determined Prussian siege of Paris began on 5 January. German artillery then pounded the city for three weeks.

Ninety thousand National Guards and regular troops under a reluctant General Trochu made a spectacularly unsuccessful attempt to break out and reach Versailles on 19 January. On 28 January, French national authorities signed an armistice turning the forts of Paris over to German occupation. But Parisians, mobilized in political clubs and connected by the National Guard’s Central Committee, began to organize the city’s resistance and

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self-rule. In Paris and elsewhere, radicals agitated for pursuit of the war against Prussia as well as for more decentralized and democratic forms of government. A new national regime, led by Adolphe Thiers and based in Bordeaux, cut off National Guard stipends. It also passed ineffectual measures calling for Parisians to resume rent payments and other routine obligations.

Seeking to break Parisian resistance, Thiers ordered his forces to seize the National Guard's cannon. The army's effort to do so before dawn on 18 March called Parisians into the streets, incited the killing of two army generals in Montmartre, and precipitated what the *Leeds Mercury* was soon calling another revolution. At that point, the National Guard's Central Committee occupied the Hôtel de Ville, constituting a de facto municipal government. After city-wide elections (Sunday, 26 March) brought revolutionary leaders into office, on 28 March they declared Paris an autonomous Commune. Until government troops invaded the city and took it back street by street two months later, the Commune ruled Paris through a structure built on revolutionary committees and the neighborhood-based National Guard backed by flourishing popular associations (Gaillard 1971; Gould 1995; Greenberg 1971; Gullickson 1996; Johnson 1996; Lafargue 1997; Lissagaray 1969; Rougerie 1964).

Speaking in Free Trade Hall, Manchester, almost exactly a year after the Commune's declaration, British Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli compared the British Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867:

Lord Grey, in his measure of 1832, which was no doubt a statesmanlike measure, committed a great and for a time it appeared an irretrievable error. By that measure he fortified the legitimate influence of the aristocracy, and accorded to the middle classes great and salutary franchises; but he not only made no provision for the representation of the working classes in the Constitution, but he absolutely abolished those ancient franchises which the working classes had peculiarly enjoyed from time immemorial. Gentlemen, that was the origin of Chartism, and of that electoral uneasiness which existed in this country more or less for 35 years. (*Times* [of London], 4 April 1872, p. 5)

Disraeli had it right. Renewing a long-term campaign in 1830, a vast mobilization of middle-class and working-class activists had created a crisis to which the British government finally responded by passing the Reform Act of 1832. The act not only excluded the great bulk of workers from voting for Parliament while effectively enfranchising many masters and merchants who had previously lacked the vote, but also increased the property requirements for suffrage in a number of boroughs where ordinary

workers had previously voted in considerable numbers. The worker-based Chartist movement that surged repeatedly between 1838 and 1848 only to collapse in a year of French revolution had indeed represented those excluded by the 1832 settlement. Despite arising in the context of widespread struggles between workers and capitalists, the movement had focused not on workers' rights as such but on democratic reform, including manhood suffrage.

In practice, furthermore, the 1832 Reform Act gave electoral advantages to Liberals over their Conservative rivals. The act created 144 parliamentary seats elected by property-holding county voters, 323 seats elected by property holders in recognized urban boroughs, and four seats elected by university officers. On the whole, Liberals did better in boroughs and in county districts that included many city-based property holders. In that respect the Conservatives of 1867 could reasonably see the 1832 Reform as having underrepresented their likely supporters. If they could push through a new reform that would shift parliamentary seats from boroughs to enlarged county electorates (where landlords had a good chance of swaying votes of their tenants and workers), Conservatives could actually gain electoral power. They also had a mixed interest in the working-class franchise: a modest increase was likely to favor the Liberals by drawing in skilled workers who at that point benefited more directly from Liberal programs, but an increase large enough to enfranchise general laborers could well increase Conservative support through patronage and through divisions within the working class.

Liberals nevertheless had strong incentives to broaden both the urban electorate and its parliamentary representation. County by county and borough by borough, parliamentary representation remained the same from 1832 to 1866. Over the same period, however, rising rural property values and urban capitalization lifted many men above the property thresholds for voting. Economic expansion thus increased the county electorate by 47 percent while increasing the borough electorate by 82 percent, but the numbers of MPs per borough and per county remained unchanged. That meant the number of electors per MP rose more rapidly in the Liberals' preferred territories than in the Conservatives'. A move toward representation proportional to local population and, especially, toward increase in the number of borough seats would therefore benefit Liberals. From 1865 onward, Reform Unions and similar organizations brought middle-class radicals and working-class activists into a nationwide campaign of public meetings and marches on behalf of parliamentary reform. All this served as

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context for intricate parliamentary struggles during which Liberals failed to push through their leaders' reform bill in 1866 but Conservatives managed to get their own much-amended version passed in 1867.

Disraeli, who had led Parliament as it passed the 1867 Act, twitted the Liberals who long talked reform but did nothing about it. The Conservatives, he said, were more decisive:

And, gentlemen, what has been the result? In 1848 there was a French Revolution and a Republic was established. No one can have forgotten what the effect was in this country. I remember the day when not a woman could leave her house in London, and when cannon were placed on Westminster Bridge. A year ago there was another revolution in France, and a Republic was again established of the most menacing character. What happened in this country? You could not get half a dozen men to assemble in a street and grumble. Why? Because the people had got what they wanted. They were content and they were grateful. (*Times*, 4 April 1872, p. 5).

Thus France gave lessons in revolution, while Britain gave lessons in democracy. Or so went a frequent British boast.

To be sure, five years earlier many conservatives – including some full-fledged Conservative party members in Parliament – had looked at the 1867 Reform Bill as a prologue to revolution. Speaking of Disraeli, Lord Carnarvon then thundered, “If you borrow your political ethics from the ethics of the political adventurer, you may depend upon it, the whole of your representative institutions will crumble beneath your feet” (Evans 1983: 351). As enacted, the Reform Bill did almost double the electorate, allowing most male working-class householders to vote for parliamentary candidates and inaugurating a period in which both Liberals and Conservatives had to calculate the effects of their policies on workers' votes. Disraeli's final maneuvers and concessions had produced a more radical bill than even leading Liberals had advocated. In retrospect, nevertheless, the British ruling classes generally congratulated themselves on avoiding revolution by judicious enlargement of the electorate, and thus of political life as a whole. They also frequently pointed across the Channel to the bad example set by the contentious French.

To Explain Contention, Democratization, and Their Connections

However we evaluate the British self-image, comparison of French and British politics in the time of the Paris Commune does reveal impressive national differences in the forms, dynamics, and outcomes of contention. That comparison does raise questions about the foundations of democratic

politics. Confluence between investigations of national differences in contentious politics and of democracy's diverse origins identifies the river this book navigates. Seen from upstream, *Contention and Democracy in Europe* concerns explanation of the various trajectories followed by contentious politics – politics in which people make concerted claims bearing on each other's interests. Seen from downstream, the same book concerns the diverse origins of democratic institutions. If the book does its work well, it will establish that the two streams, although separable for the sake of argument, eventually join so extensively as to become indistinguishable. To explain the varieties of contentious politics is also to explain a rare, contingent outcome of contentious politics: democracy.

Contrasting French and British experiences between 1825 and 1871 offer a slice of the European world this book seeks to explain. On the French side: movement from revolution to revolution through a brief, turbulent democratic experiment, the return of authoritarian government, a phase of hesitant democratization and expanding contention followed by war, disintegration of the regime, and new attempts at revolution. On the British side: vast mobilizations for religious rights and parliamentary reform capped by modest concessions to previous outsiders and tightened control over Irish dissidents, widespread but ultimately ineffectual campaigns for workers' political rights, formation of a militant nationalist movement in Ireland, and contained struggles yielding some democratization, at least in Great Britain if not in Ireland. In both French and British experiences we witness intimate interaction of popular contention and democracy-affecting changes of regime.

The 19th-century histories of France and Great Britain hardly exhaust the ranges of contentious politics and democracy. In the perspective of a 21st-century world where South Africa, Slovenia, Costa Rica, India, Canada, and Portugal all count as democracies of sorts, the experiences of France and Britain display strong resemblances and connections: similar and interacting patterns in legalization for organized workers, in policing of public order, in expansion of the franchise, in formation of popularly responsible governments, in creation of political parties, and much more. Political leaders and activists in the two countries communicated with each other repeatedly, sometimes borrowed each other's political solutions to shared problems, and even more often reacted by differentiating themselves from their cross-channel neighbors. Still, France and Britain arrived at relatively vigorous, viable democratic polities by different but continuously contentious paths, provided models of political organization

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that significantly influenced other countries, and accumulated histories of contention – democratic and otherwise – that have challenged generations of analysts.

To explain similarities and differences in French and British experience since 1650 constitutes a reasonable start toward more general explanations of variation within Europe as a whole. Since European polities and their immediate transplants originated most of the contemporary institutions we recognize as democratic, furthermore, any explanation that gets right the last few centuries of European involvement in contention and democracy offers some promise of helping to identify likely origins of democracy elsewhere. This book uses sustained comparison of French and British histories since 1650 or so as a springboard for more general comparisons within Europe. From there it leaps to ideas concerning the rest of the world.

Stated without definition of terms and in stark preliminary form, here are the book's guiding arguments:

1. Differing combinations of coercion, capital, and commitment in various regions promote the formation of significantly different kinds of regimes, and different directions of regime change, within those regions.
2. Trajectories of regimes within a two-dimensional space defined by (a) degree of governmental capacity and (b) extent of protected consultation significantly affect both their prospects for democracy and the character of their democracy if it arrives.
3. In the long run, increases in governmental capacity and protected consultation reinforce each other, as state expansion generates resistance, bargaining, and provisional settlements, on one side, while on the other side protected consultation encourages demands for expansion of state intervention, which in turn promote increases in capacity.
4. At the extremes, where capacity develops farther and faster than consultation, the path to democracy (if any) passes through authoritarianism; if protected consultation develops farther and faster than capacity and the regime survives, the path then passes through a risky zone of capacity building.
5. Although the organizational forms – elections, terms of office, areal representation, deliberative assemblies, and so on – adopted by democratizing regimes often emulate or adapt institutions that have strong precedents in villages, cities, regional jurisdictions, or

adjacent national regimes, they almost never evolve directly from those institutions.

6. Creation of citizenship – rights and obligations linking whole categories of a regime’s subject population to governmental agents – is a necessary but not sufficient condition of democratization.
7. In high-capacity regimes, nondemocratic citizenship sometimes forms, and with extensive integration of citizens into regimes even reduces or inhibits democracy.
8. Nevertheless, the prior presence of citizenship, other things equal, generally facilitates democratization.
9. Both creation of citizenship and democratization depend on changes in three arenas – categorical inequality, trust networks, and public politics – as well as on interactions among those changes.
10. Regularities in democratization consist not of standard general sequences or sufficient conditions but of recurrent causal mechanisms that in varying combinations and sequences produce changes in categorical inequality, networks of trust, and public politics.
11. Under specifiable circumstances, revolution, conquest, confrontation, and colonization accelerate and concentrate some of those crucial causal mechanisms.
12. Almost all of the crucial democracy-promoting causal mechanisms involve popular contention – politically constituted actors’ making of public, collective claims on other actors, including agents of government – as correlates, causes, and effects.
13. In the course of democratization, repertoires of political contention (arrays of widely available claim-making performances) shift from predominantly parochial, particular, and bifurcated interactions based largely on embedded identities to predominantly cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous interactions based largely on detached identities.

The book’s point is to pursue this line of argument by means of broad but careful historical comparisons among European national experiences between 1650 and 2000.

Having already promised – or threatened! – too much, let me retrench immediately. At best, this book does no more than make understandable and plausible the approach just sketched. It tells defensible stories about European political histories, pointing out parallels between those stories and the arguments. It neither lays out systematic evidence for the thirteen

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assertions in my list nor provides decisive refutations of competing explanations. It merely illustrates the sorts of causal mechanisms a more detailed set of explanations would require – showing, for example, that tactical alliances between dissident power holders and political outsiders promoted democratization under some circumstances despite the absence of explicitly democratic programs on either side of the alliance. For the most part it settles for demonstrating that democratization commonly occurred as a result of struggles during which (as in 19th-century Britain and France) few if any of the participants were self-consciously trying to create democratic institutions.

Such an approach involves high-risk wagers in theory and method. It rests on the assumption that democracy emerges contingently from political struggle in the medium run rather than being a product either of age-old character traits or of short-term constitutional innovations. Partisans of political culture, on one side, and of democratization as legal reform, on the other, have often bet against that assumption. My inquiry guesses, furthermore, that the social world's order does not reside in general laws, repeated large-scale sequences, or regular relationships among variables. We should not search for a single set of circumstances or a repeated series of events that everywhere produces democracy. Nor should we look for actors having democratic intentions, seeking to discover how and when they get chances to realize those intentions. We should look instead for robust, recurrent causal mechanisms that combine differently, with different aggregate outcomes, in different settings. (More on mechanisms in a moment.)

As a consequence, we should expect that prevailing circumstances for democratization vary significantly from era to era and region to region as functions of previous histories, international environments, available models of political organization, and predominant patterns of social relations. We should also expect to discover not one but multiple paths to democracy. If all these assumptions hold, then close comparison of historical experiences with an eye to recurrent causal mechanisms and their combinations offers the greatest promise of advancing explanations of democratization. If the assumptions are wrong, the book's review of European experiences with democratization will still provide grindable grist for other analysts' mills.

Previous analyses of democratization provide inspiration and context for this book. Since Aristotle, western thinkers have repeatedly addressed two fundamental questions. First, what connections exist between democratization and human well-being? Second, under what conditions and by what means do durable democratic regimes come into existence? In recent years,

western political analysts have searched for general answers to these two questions that would simultaneously fit the experiences of long-established democracies, account for the tumultuous histories of democratization and de-democratization across the globe since World War II, and provide guidance for the promotion of durable democracy in the contemporary world. On the count of well-being, for example, students of democracy have explored the hopeful possibility that democratic regimes make war against each other less frequently than other pairs of regimes, hence that over the long run world democratization would reduce the prevalence of war across the globe (Gowa 1999). Yet most theorists rest with the assumption that democracy constitutes a good in itself, and therefore enhances human well-being simply by taking shape.

When it comes to the origins of durable democratic regimes, disagreements flourish, but an implicit agreement has emerged on the nature of the explanatory problem. On the whole, recent theorists have rejected conceptions of democratization as a gradual deposit from long-term social processes or as a set of political changes that might occur piecemeal, in different orders, through different paths. They have preferred the idea that under specifiable conditions some fairly regular and rapid process transports regimes from undemocratic into democratic territory. Most analysts have tried to specify those conditions and to identify the crucial process. As a consequence, empirical studies of democratization have alternated between cross-sectional comparisons of democratic and undemocratic regimes (asking, e.g., whether some critical level of prosperity separates the one from the other) and close examination of circumstances prevailing just before or during transitions from undemocratic to democratic regimes (asking, e.g., whether failures of military rulers to manage national crises regularly precipitate democratization).

What sorts of *explanations* do such efforts involve? We can distinguish roughly among four styles of argument in recent attempts to explain democratization and de-democratization: necessary conditions, variables, sequences, and clusters. *Necessary condition* arguments sometimes spill over into specification of *sufficient* conditions for democratization – identification of the circumstances under which a regime always democratizes. If successful, such an effort would not only establish a general law, but also indicate what conditions one would have to discover or promote on the way to producing new democratic regimes. The justly renowned synthesis of Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992: 75–78), for example, makes allowance for variation among regions and periods, but still comes

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down to an overall formulation of necessary, and perhaps sufficient, conditions: transnational diffusion of democratic ideas and practices; a measure of national unity; an autonomous, effective state; economic growth; generation of subordinate classes by that growth; growing organizational density of civil society; and mobilization of subordinate classes on behalf of collective rights and political participation. As Ruth Berins Collier sums up the final segment of their argument:

Democracy is an outcome of the struggle between the dominant and subordinate classes and hence an outcome of the balance of class power. Democratization occurs when the democracy-demanding classes, above all the working class, are stronger than the democracy-resisting classes, who reject the demands and pressures of the former, though there is also room in this account for democratic initiatives by other classes as a co-optive response to a working-class threat. (Collier 1999: 10).

At a minimum, then, Rueschemeyer et al. stipulate necessary conditions for democratization. They come close to stipulating sufficient conditions.

Other scholars emphasize *variables* that in differing combinations can all promote democratization. In 1991, Samuel P. Huntington published *The Third Wave*. The book's ideas immediately began organizing a new round of research and theory. Speaking of the wave of democratization he saw as beginning in the 1970s, Huntington identified five explanatory variables as crucial: (1) delegitimation of authoritarian regimes through internal failures and external rejections, (2) global economic growth and its expansion of democracy-demanding populations, (3) shift of the Catholic Church toward political reform, (4) shifts in policies of external actors (notably the European Union, the United States, and Russia) toward authoritarian regimes, and (5) spiraling demonstration effects (Huntington 1991: 45–46). Rather than treating them as a set of necessary conditions for democratization, Huntington explicitly treated these variables as differing in weight for different democratizing regimes; he argued, for example, that “politics and external forces” inhibited the effects of economic growth on democratization in Czechoslovakia and East Germany (Huntington 1991: 63).

Sequence arguments repeatedly tempt analysts of democratization. Many analysts, for example, distinguish four distinct stages, each one a prerequisite of the next stage: development of preconditions, exit from authoritarianism, transition to democracy, and democratic consolidation (see, e.g., Sørensen 1998: 24–63, and, for critique, Carothers 2002). Typically, theorists treat the preconditions stage as a long-term development. They then present the next three – exit, transition, and consolidation – as outcomes of choices

and interactions among major political actors. Conversely, reversals (e.g., exit from fragile democracy into new authoritarianism) result from failure of conditions for the next stage combined with undemocratic choices and interactions among major political actors (see, e.g., Diamond 1999: 64–116). In an influential formulation, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan declare:

Behaviorally, democracy becomes the only game in town when no significant political groups seriously attempt to overthrow the democratic regime or secede from the state. When this situation obtains, the behavior of the newly elected government that has emerged from the democratic transition is no longer dominated by the problem of how to avoid democratic breakdown. Attitudinally, democracy becomes the only game in town when, even in the face of severe political and economic crises, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic formulas. Constitutionally, democracy becomes the only game in town when all the actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to the established norms and that violations of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly. In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as in calculations for achieving success. (Linz and Stepan 1996: 5)

Linz and Stepan go on to claim that a consolidated regime breaks down only in response to new circumstances “in which the democratic regime cannot solve a set of problems, a nondemocratic alternative gains significant supporters, and former democratic regime loyalists begin to behave in a constitutionally disloyal or semiloyal manner” (Linz and Stepan 1996: 6). Consolidation, then, installs a ratchet that only exceptional force can reverse.

Cluster treatments of democratization claim that conditions, causes, and sequences of democratization vary significantly from one period, region, or type of regime to another. As a consequence, one can risk generalizations for a single cluster – for example, one of Huntington’s waves – but not for democratization everywhere since the beginning of time. In a crisp example, Barbara Geddes treats recent democratization as transition from various types of authoritarian regime, then argues that the crucial processes vary depending on whether the authoritarian regime is personalist, military, single-party, or an amalgam. As she summarizes:

transitions from military rule usually begin with splits within the ruling military elite, as noted by much of the literature on Latin American transitions. In contrast, rival factions within single-party and personalist regimes have stronger incentives to cooperate with each other. Single-party regimes are quite resilient and tend to be brought down by exogenous events rather than internal splits. Personalist regimes are also relatively immune to internal splits except when calamitous economic

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conditions disrupt the material underpinnings of regime loyalty. They are especially vulnerable, however, to the death of the leader and to violent overthrow. (Geddes 1999: 122)

Geddes thereby combines necessary-condition and sequence arguments, using sketches of strategic situations – games – entailing choices by those who already hold pieces of power. Other cluster analysts stress variation from region to region or period to period (e.g., Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Collier 1999; Markoff 1996b).

This book's analysis borrows especially from the necessary conditions and clusters traditions of explanation, while generally rejecting variable and sequence arguments. At a certain distance, it owes a great deal to Robert Dahl's classic treatment of necessary conditions (Dahl 1998). Yet it breaks with most current analyses of democratization in four obvious ways:

First, it denies the existence of standard sequences of change from undemocratic to democratic regimes, insisting instead that many different paths lead to democracy because the crucial mechanisms activate in a wide variety of combinations and orders.

Second, on similar grounds it denies that any general set of sufficient conditions exists for democracy. (It does, however, propose some *necessary* conditions.)

Third, in contrast to the many studies that correlate transitions to democracy with attributes of regimes at or immediately before those transitions, it denies that the crucial causes of democratization activate immediately before or during a regime's crossing of a well-defined boundary between undemocratic and democratic politics. It therefore spends little effort on yes-no comparisons, concentrating instead on time-consuming processes that promote or inhibit democratization.

Fourth, while conceding that many political regimes stay in place because people attach other valued routines to them despite the regimes' defects, it denies that democracy enjoys a super-stable position such that once arrived in that position a country only de-democratizes through crisis and breakdown. Although democracy has, indeed, become more prevalent in recent centuries, de-democratization still occurs frequently and widely.

Again, if these principles are wrong, the book still provides well-documented narratives of multiple European experiences. Since most general accounts of democratization in the contemporary world look back at European democratization as a calm, orderly, and definitive process, that contribution alone should justify the book.

What are we trying to explain? Democratization means *increases in the breadth and equality of relations between governmental agents and members of the government's subject population, in binding consultation of a government's subject population with respect to governmental personnel, resources, and policy,*

and in protection of that population (especially minorities within it) from arbitrary action by governmental agents. In shorthand, we can speak of increases or decreases in *protected consultation*, calling high levels of protected consultation democratic. Democratization does not mean arrival at full, definitive democratic functioning, but any substantial move toward higher levels of protected consultation. De-democratization – which coming pages often describe and attempt to explain – means any substantial move away from protected consultation.

This definition stresses political processes. To political process definitions some theorists prefer *substantive* definitions emphasizing such outcomes of governmental action as equity, community, and well-being. Other theorists prefer *constitutional* definitions emphasizing representative mechanisms, courts, and laws. In recent years, most western students of democratization have opted instead for *procedural* definitions. Such definitions stem ultimately from Joseph Schumpeter's (1942) minimalist view of democracy and center on the institution of competitive elections for public office (for reviews of definitions and measures, see Collier and Levitsky 1997; Geddes 1999; Inkeles 1991; Lijphart 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000: 55–59; Vanhanen 2000). I am prepared to argue the advantages of a political process definition for historical-comparative analyses (see Tilly 2001a, 2001b, 2003a). Here, however, the choice doesn't matter much practically: over Europe since 1650, substantive, constitutional, procedural, and political process criteria produce similar classifications of actually existing governments.

Although it certainly rests on shared understandings and practices, democracy does not reduce to a state of mind, a set of laws, or a common culture. It consists of active, meaningful social relations between individuals and groups that share connections with specific governments. As we will see abundantly later on, furthermore, democracy is always relative to those specific governments: democracy sometimes prevails, for example, within households, shops, or villages that in turn form part of emphatically undemocratic systems at a larger scale. Internally undemocratic parties, unions, and associations, furthermore, sometimes participate in unquestionably democratic public politics. Although the borrowing of democratic practices (such as contested elections) across scales will figure importantly in the stories of democratization to come, this book concentrates on democracy and democratization at a national scale, at the level of states.

From the political process understanding of democratization follows a set of distinctions that recur throughout the book: among public politics, contentious politics, and citizen-agent relations. The three form an

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overlapping set. *Public politics* includes all externally visible interactions among constituted political actors (those having a name and standing within a given regime), including agents of government. Within public politics, *contentious politics* includes all discontinuous, collective making of claims among constituted political actors. Noncontentious politics still makes up the bulk of all political interaction, since it includes tax collection, census taking, military service, diffusion of political information, processing of government-mediated benefits, internal organizational activity of constituted political actors, and related processes that go on most of the time without discontinuous, public, collective claim making. Although the conduct of such relatively noncontentious political activities incrementally affects democratization and de-democratization, I argue that contentious politics figures more directly and immediately in those changes.

Overlapping both contentious and noncontentious politics, *citizen-agent relations* include all interactions between subjects of a given government and established agents of that government. (Later I argue that full-fledged citizenship appears only in a limited set of political regimes, but it will save many words to call all subjects of a given regime its “citizens” and to apply the phrase “citizen-agent relations” across all regimes.) Democratization consists of a set of changes in citizen-agent relations: broadening them, equalizing them, protecting them, and subjecting them to binding consultation. Distinctions among public politics, contentious politics, and citizen-agent relations matter because democratization centers on shifts in citizen-agent relations, those shifts depend on more general alterations in public politics, and political contention causes those shifts.

How so? Crucial changes in social relations underlying democratization take place in three interacting sectors: public politics, categorical inequality, and networks of trust. In the course of democratization, the bulk of a government’s subject population acquires roughly equal rights to participate in public politics, a process that in turn establishes binding, protected, relatively equal claims on a government’s agents, activities, and resources. In a related process, categorical inequality declines in those areas of social life that either constitute or immediately support participation in public politics. (As distinguished from individual inequality, categorical inequality distinguishes such sets as female-male, black-white-Asian, and Muslim-Hindu-Sikh from each other.)

In addition to – and in concert with – changes in public politics and categorical inequality, certain alterations of trust networks promote democratization. A significant shift occurs in the locus of interpersonal

networks on which people rely when undertaking risky long-term enterprises such as marriage, long-distance trade, membership in crafts, investment of savings, and time-consuming specialized education; such networks move from evasion of governmental detection and control to partial reliance on government agents and presumption that such agents will meet their long-term commitments. “Partial reliance” need not connect individuals directly to governments; the connections may run through parties, unions, communities, and other organizations that in turn rely on governmental ratification, toleration, support, or protection. People create associations that simultaneously organize risky enterprises and bargain with authorities, start investing family money in government securities, yield their sons to military service, seek government assistance in enforcement of religious obligations, organize mutual aid through publicly recognized labor unions, and so on.

Reversals de-democratize: when trust networks proliferate insulated from public politics, their proliferation saps governmental capacity, reduces citizens’ incentives to collaborate in democratic processes they find costly in the short run, weakens protections for the bulk of the citizenry, and increases the opportunities of the rich and powerful to intervene selectively in public politics on their own behalf.

Let me underscore what this argument does *not* entail. It does *not* mean that the more governments absorb and dominate social life within their jurisdictions, the more democratic their regimes become. Trust networks reach their maximum effectiveness in promoting democracy when their participants can rightly assume that governmental agents will usually meet their commitments, but those same participants remain free to withdraw consent and to sanction officials who perform badly. When people segregate their trust networks entirely from public politics, they have strong incentives to evade responsibility for governmental performance and to seek short-term private advantage at the expense of long-term public good. In those circumstances, only the few who can turn governmental resources directly to their own advantage participate regularly in governmental activity. Up to a relatively high point, then, integration of trust networks into public politics provides both incentives and means for ordinary people to monitor, sanction, and collaborate with governmental production of public goods. Beyond that high point, I speculate, further integration of trust networks would (as libertarians and anarchists have often feared) reduce democracy; since no democratic regime has yet approached that point, we have no evidence on this speculation.

Contention and Democracy

Nor does the argument mean that categorical inequality within a regime's subject population fatally hinders democratization or that collective action by members of subordinate categories threatens democracy. As we see below, in Europe protected consultation sometimes increased despite rising material inequality. The crucial question is whether categorical inequality translates directly into durable divisions within public politics – political organizations, rights, obligations, and relations with governmental agents sharply segregated by class, gender, ethnicity, or some other categorical division. Such inscription of categorical inequalities into public politics inhibits or reverses democratization.

Only where positive changes in trust network integration, inequality insulation, and the relevant internal transformations of public politics all intersect does effective, durable democracy emerge. Most changes in public politics, on the contrary, produce undemocratic outcomes. What is more, reversals in any of the three – for example, organization of public political blocs around major categorical inequalities – promote de-democratization. The explanatory problem, then, is to specify how, why, and when rare democracy-promoting alterations of categorical inequality, trust networks, and public politics coincide.

The questions “how?” “why?” and “when?” all point to a search for robust causal mechanisms: recurrent small-scale events that alter relations among stipulated elements of social life in essentially the same ways whenever and wherever they occur. In varying sequences and combinations, causal mechanisms compound into *processes*: concatenations of mechanisms that produce broadly similar short-term outcomes. The processes that interest us here are those that produce segregation or desegregation of categorical inequality from public politics, integration or separation of trust networks from public politics, and shifts in citizen-agent relations toward or away from broad, equal, binding, and protected interchanges. (Below I name the eight relevant processes.)

Causal mechanisms sort roughly into cognitive, environmental, and relational events. Cognitive mechanisms involve consequential shifts in perception, individual or shared, as when appearance of a new belief concerning the source of an injustice increases people's sensitivity to that injustice. Environmental mechanisms change relations between social units and their nonhuman surroundings, as when soil depletion reduces an agricultural village's crop yields. Relational mechanisms transform interactions among persons, groups, and social sites, as when members of previously segregated religious communities begin to intermarry. This book's search for