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Introduction

Democracy protests have come and gone throughout history with varying degrees of success. While some democracy protests have resulted in full-fledged democracies, others have introduced no more than a few modest reforms. In South Korea, for example, after massive student-led protests arose demanding direct presidential elections among other things, the government agreed to implement major democratic reforms ahead of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. While South Korea celebrated more than ten years of consolidated democracy, Serbia embarked on its own transition to democracy. In 2000, hundreds of thousands of Serbs overtook the streets of the capital Belgrade and forced Slobodan Milošević to hand over power to his opponent Vojislav Koštunica, the winner of the country's presidential election. Outside of Asia and Europe, in the Middle East and North Africa, democracy protests have resulted in smaller-scale reforms, including the lifting of demands on certain political parties and the expansion of the right to vote, in the last decade.

In other countries, demands for more open and competitive elections have been ignored, as they were in the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Protests or, still worse, have resulted in backlashes against democracy and the rise of more authoritarian regimes.[1] After tens of thousands of Russians mobilized against alleged fraud in the 2011 Duma elections, the Russian government drastically raised fines against unauthorized protests, adopted laws that branded nongovernmental organizations accepting aid from abroad as "foreign agents," and intensified arrests

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[1] The Umbrella Protests were named after the umbrellas people carried to shield themselves from the sun and the pepper spray that municipal police forces initially used against the protesters.

of regime opponents. At times, democracy protests have even provoked backlashes against democratic freedoms outside the countries in which they have occurred. In order to forestall the Arab Spring protests from reaching its borders, China's communist-controlled government restricted already limited internet freedoms, stepped up arrests of political activists, and even banned jasmine flowers, the symbol of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution.

More often, states have used forceful means to repress democracy protests. In Bahrain, military forces, flanked by troops from the Gulf States, evicted democracy protesters from Pearl Roundabout, the site of the 2011 Bahraini Uprising, before setting ablaze and razing the historical landmark. In 2007, Burma's military junta cracked down violently on democracy protests, beating and arresting thousands of demonstrators, even raiding the monasteries of Buddhist monks who spearheaded the protests. Two years earlier, Ethiopian security forces massacred nearly 200 people in the capital Addis Ababa who were protesting against the 2005 elections, which were seen by the protesters and international observers as fraudulent, while tens of thousands of others were arrested and injured in the aftermath.

That democracy protests arise at all is remarkable given the uncertainties surrounding their success and the risks that protests pose to participants. Not only can people lose their jobs by taking part in democracy protests, but they can also be denied access to schools, fined, jailed, beaten, and even killed. Even bystanders have been harmed in the bedlam surrounding some democracy protests. A young college student known as Nedā became an icon of the Iranian democracy movement when she was shot dead near Azadi Square en route to the 2009 Tehran protests. Her death was captured on a cell phone and broadcast over the internet. Participating in democracy protests presents additional challenges for women, like Nedā Āghā-Soltān, who are known to have been molested and raped during protests. At least a hundred women were sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square in the protests leading up to Mubarak's resignation, including a journalist for the US news magazine 60 Minutes and an up-and-coming Dutch reporter.[2]

Today, evading punishment for participating in protests of any kind is harder thanks to modern technologies. In Iran, people who took to the streets in the Green Revolution were arrested after pictures of them were published online by a pro-regime news agency asking Iranians to out those

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[2] "Women Sexually Assaulted in Egypt Protests," *Al Jazeera*, July 3, 2013.

in the photographs.[3] Similarly, in Thailand, the military junta promised 15 dollars to anyone who came across a photo on Facebook or Instagram of a Thai person criticizing the 2014 coup d'etat. To flush out regime opponents, the junta also interrupted popular television shows with the names of people wanted for questioning scrolled across the screen. Meanwhile, in the Ukraine, the government identified participants in the Euromaidan protests from the location of their cell phone signals.[4] With this information, the government sent protesters an ominous message saying, "Dear subscriber, you are registered as a participant in a mass disturbance" to intimidate them into disbanding.[5] Eventually, these high technology measures may supplant more rudimentary, but no less effective measures, like water from police canons dyed colors to identify protesters afterwards.

Yet, despite the risks and uncertainties surrounding these protests, democracy protests do occur. Between 1989 and 2011, 310 democracy protests occurred in 92 countries, representing about 13 percent of weakly democratic and authoritarian states in this period.[6] (See Figure 1.1.) Protests peaked at the beginning and at the end of this period with the lifting of the Soviet Iron Curtain and the start of the Arab Spring. More protests occurred in 2005 than in either of these periods, but these protests were spread out over fewer countries than in 2011. More countries experienced democracy protests in 2011 than any other year in this period. The year 2011 is also the only year for which democracy protests were on an upward trend in all four regions of the world.

Democracy protests took place in every region of the world between 1989 and 2011, but occurred most commonly in Africa and Asia, where 40 percent and 37 percent of democracy protests took place, respectively. Only 13 percent occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean while 11 percent occurred in Europe.[7] (See Figure 1.2.) In East-Central Europe, democracy protests topped out around the end of the Cold War. Another smattering of protests occurred in this region in the early 2000s with the Colored Revolutions. In Africa, there was a spat of protests in the

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3 Jim Goose, "Pro-Iran Regime Website Outs Protesters Using Photos Shown on Western Media," *CNN iReport*, June 22, 2009.
4 The Euromaidan protests were not democracy protests like the Orange Revolution protests ten years earlier, but evolved from concerns about European integration.
5 "Ukraine's Opposition Says Government Stirs Violence," *The New York Times*, January 21, 2014.
6 Weakly democratic and authoritarian states are countries scoring below 5 on the polity index scale the year before the protests occurred. See the appendix for more information regarding the polity index.
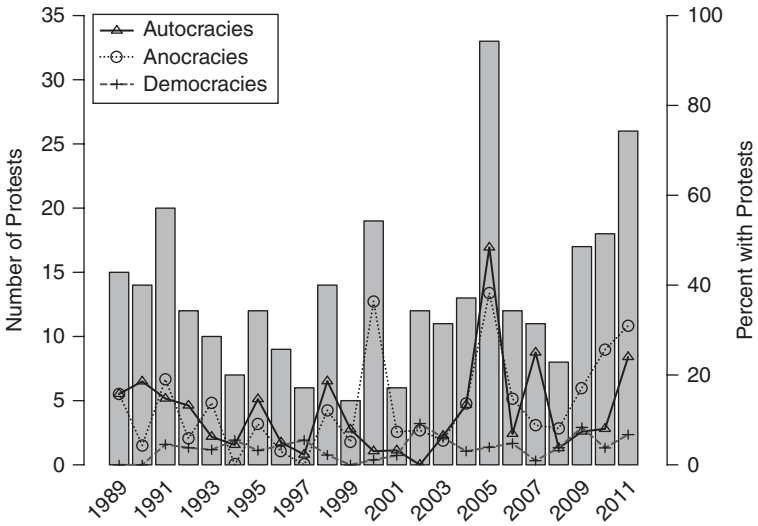7 The numbers do not sum up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Introduction

FIGURE 1.1. Frequency of democracy protests, 1989–2011.

Note: Protests that took place across years are depicted in the figure according to the first year of the protest to avoid double-counting protests.

FIGURE 1.2. Frequency of democracy protests by region, 1989–2011.

Note: Protests that took place across years are depicted in the figure according to the first year of the protest to avoid double-counting protests.
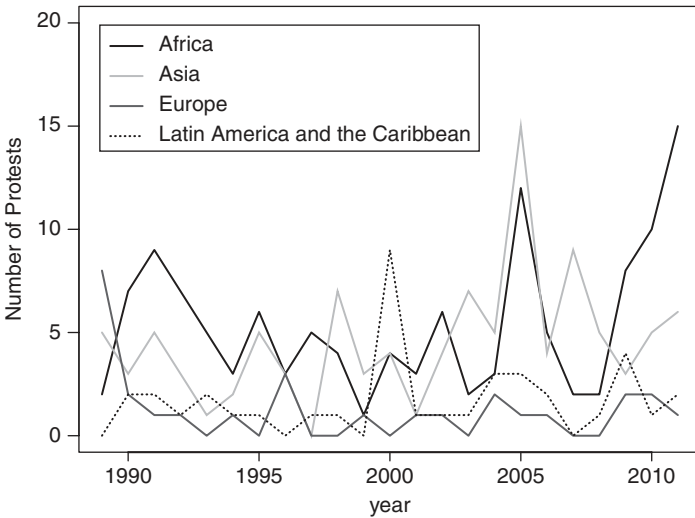
early 1990s and an even more pronounced rise in protest activity at the end of the first decade of this millennium, while in Asia, protests ebbed and flowed throughout the entire post–Cold War period. As in Europe, democracy protests occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean at a relatively constant but low rate throughout this period.

Why do democracy protests emerge in some countries at certain periods of time and not others? Why in some cases do governments accommodate these protests, undertaking democratic reforms with wide-sweeping consequences, and in others, only make shallow promises of reform, or either peacefully or violently repress the protests? These are the questions that this book sets out to address.

1.1 WHAT IS A DEMOCRACY PROTEST?

I define "democracy protests" as mass public demonstrations in which the participants demand countries adopt or uphold democratic elections.[8] In turn, I define "democracy" in a minimal sense in which there are no significant legal or nonlegal barriers preventing political parties, candidates, or voters from participating in elections (Przeworski 1999; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010; Boix, Miller, and Rosato 2013). This definition of democracy protests excludes protests regarding human rights or political and civil rights, like the *Charlie Hebdo* protests in France or the miniskirt protests in Tunisia (2015), which are not directly about the electoral process, but which are related to a more maximal definition of democracy.[9] Certain political and civil rights are important for conducting open and competitive elections, such as freedom of speech and assembly, but other issues often considered part of a more maximal definition of democracy, such as religious freedom and labor rights, are not intrinsic features of democracy, although they may be important features of a good polity. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.2 for details regarding the protests' demands.)

Democracy protests are also distinct from antigovernment protests, which are protests demanding that elected officials, who hold either elected or unelected power within a political system, step down from power. While democracy protests often demand that a government resign,

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[8] Although it would be more precise to refer to these protests as "pro-democracy protests" in order to distinguish them from "anti-democracy protests," which are largely held by Islamists seeking to establish caliphate states, I eliminate the prefix for simplicity's sake.

[9] The Tunisian miniskirt protests were held to demand women's rights in the Muslim world. They were modeled after the Slutwalk protests, which objected to the notion that women provoked rape by the way in which they dressed.

unlike democracy protests, the reasons that antigovernment protests make these demands are unrelated to the openness and competitiveness of elections. The motivations for antigovernment protests often include economic and policy reforms, corruption charges, human rights concerns, and so forth. Examples of antigovernment protests include the 2014 Euromaidan protests in the Ukraine, the 2012–13 European debt crisis protests, and the 2015 Burundi term-limit protests.

Democracy protests, in contrast, are antiregime protests, opposed not only to the government but also to the institutions that make up the political system itself. Of course, other types of protests can incorporate demands for democracy in them, just as democracy protests can also include other types of demands. But, for the purposes of this book, in order for a protest that includes nondemocracy issues in it to constitute a "democracy protest," democracy must constitute the protest's primary demand. Protests that are considered to be democracy protests, but which include nondemocracy-related issues among their demands and for which it is difficult to determine the primary demand of the protesters, are denoted in the analysis.

Distinguishing one democracy protest from another is challenging, particularly when protests suspend activity for extended periods of time. For the purpose of this analysis, a single demonstration on a given day and location is referred to as a "rally." A "protest" refers to one or more rallies that are separated by no more than three months and that have the same target, demands, and organizers.[10] The target refers to the chief executive who has discretion over whether or not to use military force against the protesters, while the demands are the specific requests that democracy protests make of governments regarding open and competitive elections (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Lastly, the organizers are the groups of actors that mobilize democracy protests, not those who merely participate in them (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). They include opposition parties or candidates and their supporters, civil society groups, such as nongovernmental organizations, unions, religious institutions, rebel groups, and the public-at-large. To be included in the analysis, protests must include more than one person and take place in the country that is the target of the protests.

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[10] Admittedly, three months is an arbitrary period of time. When rallies are separated by a large lapse in activity, even if the target, organizers, and demands are the same, the character of the protests is often different in many respects, including the size and strategies of the protests.

Protests are not the only way in which the public agitates for democracy. Strikes, riots, and rebellion are other ways in which the masses press for democracy. Nonetheless, protests are more common and for important reasons. If poor economic conditions, as argued in this book, support popular mobilization for democracy, strikes are not likely to be the weapon of choice for activists since strikes can worsen economic conditions. Riots typically occur around elections deemed to be unfair and not the broader context around which democracy protests occur. Rebellion is the most costly and least common pro-democracy tactic and, unlike protests, does not necessarily require public support. Examples include the Ivory Coast, where armed militias forcibly expelled the government of Laurent Gbagbo from office after it refused to recognize the results of the 2010 presidential elections, and Niger, where in the same year, a military coup d'etat restored democracy after President Mamadou Tandja shut down the country's democratic institutions in order to extend his presidential mandate. Both actions were proceeded by protests.

Other forms of civil disobedience or "everyday forms of resistance" (Scott 1987), such as sabotage and noncompliance, are harder to identify, and likely to be more nettlesome than effective. After the 2009 crackdown on protesters in Azadi Square, Iranians adopted new tactics to oppose the Ahmadinejad regime, including an e-mail campaign urging Iranians to simultaneously plug in energy-sapping devices to cause a power blackout, and another one to hoard small change in order to render basic daily transactions impossible.[11] In 2011, Albania's Socialist Party held a 21-day hunger strike to challenge elections they considered fraudulent. (The strike was marked by controversy as some strikers were photographed eating.) The following year in Togo, opposition parties called on women to withhold sex for one week to protest President Faure Gnassingbé's attempt to remove term limits in Togo in order to remain in power indefinitely.[12] And, most recently, in Thailand, in order to protest the 2014 coup d'etat, activists ate sandwiches in public to evade the ban on gatherings of more than five people, organized flash mobs, staged silent readings of George Orwell's *1984*, and raised their hands in public in three-finger salutes inspired by the science fiction trilogy "The Hunger Games."[13]

[11] "The Call to Prayers Could be a Call to Arms for Iranian Opposition Groups," *The Irish Times*, July 17, 2009.
[12] "Togo Women Plan Sex Strike in Political Protest," *QMI Agency*, August 27, 2012.
[13] "Sandwiches, Codes and Salutes in Thailand," *BBC Trending*, June 13, 2014.

Other types of protests may also provoke regime transitions (Ulfelder 2005; Toerell 2010; Alemán and Yang 2011; Trejo 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s, economic protests sparked by shortages and high prices contributed to the ousting of a number of regimes. The Tunisian protests, which ousted Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and inaugurated the Arab Spring, were also economic protests in which Tunisians expressed concerns about unemployment, poor living conditions, rising food prices, and corruption. Tunisians even made broad-based calls for honest, accountable government, but stopped short of demanding democratic reforms. In most cases, governments are unlikely to grant democratic reforms to protests that do not demand them, since opening the government up to free and fair elections would pose significant risk to the survival of the incumbent government, especially during economic crises.

Moreover, the goal of this book is not to explain why the demand for democracy is expressed through protests as opposed to another form of collective action. There is already an extensive literature on social movements important in understanding this issue (Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; della Porta 2014). Rather the goal of this book is to explain when democracy protests are more likely to occur and what are their effects. While there are many studies of the origins and effects of certain democracy protests (Kalandadze and Orenstein 2009; Bellin 2012; Beissinger 2013; Bunce and Wolchik 2013), there are no longitudinal, cross-national statistical analyses of either the causes or consequences of democracy protests as in this book.[14]

In order to understand these two issues, I amassed a major new dataset on the occurrence of democracy protests between 1989 and 2011, as well as government responses to them. The dataset begins in 1989 because this year marks the end of the Cold War and an increase in popular mobilization for democracy around the world due to the end of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as the democratization of the latter. It ends in 2011, the first year of the Arab Spring. The dataset includes all 180 independent states in this time period with a population of at least 250,000 people (Gleditsch and Ward 1999). All states, regardless of their regime, are included in the analysis because democracy protests occur in all type of regimes, including full-fledged democracies. In democracies, protests arise against threats to democracy, like coups d'etat, and in favor of small-scale reforms, such

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[14] Preliminary results from this project have been published elsewhere (Brancati 2014*d*).

as the unbanning of particular political parties. All borderline cases for which there is some uncertainty about whether or not they fit the coding criteria are denoted in the dataset and analysis.

While datasets on many different types of protests exist – including datasets on antigovernment protests, such as the *Cross-National Time-Series* (CNTS) dataset, and datasets on protests against electoral fraud, such as the *National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy* (NELDA) dataset, and the *Electoral Protest and Democracy in the Developing World* dataset, datasets on democracy protests in particular do not. The dataset collected as a part of this book includes information about many different characteristics of democracy protests, including the size, duration, demands, strategies, and location of these protests, as well as government responses to them, including whether governments use police, paramilitary, or military force to repress the protests, whether they use nonviolent means to repress the protests, such as blocking the media, cell phones, and the internet, or whether they accommodate the protests by promising reforms or by stepping down from power.

The dataset is based on primary and secondary news sources, including serial reports by governmental and nongovernmental agencies, such as the US State Department's *Human Rights Reports* (1999–2011), the International Federation for Human Rights' *Steadfast in Protest* reports (2006–2011), Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* reports (2002–2012), the International Crisis Group's *Crisis Watch Database* (2003–2012), Keesing's Record of World Events, as well as a multitude of news accounts from English and foreign language sources, documentary films, blogs videos, and so forth. To ensure the accuracy of the coding, the data have been checked by multiple coders, randomly checked against precoded, gold standard examples, and triangulated with other relevant datasets.

1.2 ECONOMIC CRISES AND DEMOCRACY

A great deal of research has been written about the relationship of the economy to democracy, most of which focuses on the link between overall economic development and democracy. Many different arguments have been proposed to explain the strong positive correlation identified in this research between high levels of economic development and democratization, including the effect of economic development on the promotion of values conducive to democracy, such as autonomy and self-expression, and on a culture of trust, tolerance, and political activism (Lipset 1959; Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart and Welzel

2009; Welzel 2013). Other explanations of this relationship focus on the importance of development to mobilization, and specifically on urbanization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992), and more recently, on technological advances in communication, such as cell phones and the internet (Carafano 2009; González-Bailón et al. 2011; Stepanova 2011).

Much less have been written about the relationship of economic crises, in particular, to protests and democratization. Haggard and Kaufman (1995), pioneers on this issue, argue that economic crises lead to democratization by sparking mass protests, and by undermining the confidence of the business elite in the ability of the government to manage crises effectively, leading these elites to align with moderates in the opposition. They also argue, along with other scholars, that economic crises facilitate democratization because they weaken the capacity of states to repress protests by undermining the military's support for the government (Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005).

Empirical support for these arguments is mixed. Haggard and Kaufman (1995) find that crises contributed to the democratization of a number of countries in Asia and Latin America, yet statistical evidence for a more general trend is not robust. Brückner and Ciccone (2011) find that negative rainfall shocks, which serve as a proxy for economic crises, are significantly associated with democratization in sub-Saharan Africa (1980–2004), while Gasiorowski (1995) finds that high inflation rates inhibited democratic transitions in the 1950s and 1960s but facilitated them in the late 1980s, while economic growth was unrelated to transitions in both periods.

Some scholars are more skeptical about the strength of this relationship. Przeworski et al. (2000) argue, for example, that "economic circumstances have little to do with the deaths of dictatorships" (117). Their conclusion is based on a statistical analysis in which one measure of economic crises, negative economic growth, is not significantly associated with the downfall of authoritarian regimes between 1950 and 2000. Other scholars suggest that the effect of crises on democratization is conditional both on the presence of a viable alternative to the regime (Bermeo 2000), and on the type of authoritarian regime, with military regimes being less stable than single-party regimes because of their greater vulnerability to internal splits (Geddes 1999).

Many scholars also question the importance of protests to democratization. As Samuel P. Huntington emphatically remarks, "democratic