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Parties, Movements, and the Making of Democracy

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What sorts of civilian collectivities promote and sustain democratic regime change?[1] How do these collectivities emerge? Much of our most influential scholarship answers these questions with a focus on stylized classes and on the economic conditions that shape class preferences. Highlighting the effects of particular patterns of economic development and the role of "the rich," "the poor," and the "middle classes," our most vibrant debates are often less about who the key players in regime change are than about which configurations of income, wealth, and inequality most shape their preferences for democracy or dictatorship.[2]

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[1] Military actors also play a pivotal role in the process of democratization, but space constraints force us to discuss *only* civilian actors in this chapter.

[2] Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ben Ansell and David Samuels, "Inequality and Democratization: A Contractarian Approach," *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (December 2010), 1543–1574 and *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Christian Houle, "Inequality and Democracy: Why Inequality Harms Consolidation but Does Not Affect Democratization," *World Politics* 61, 4 (October 2009), 589–622; Torben Iversen and David Soskice, "Two Paths to Democracy," CES Papers-Open Forum CES Harvard 2010.

This volume proposes that we move beyond the singular focus on economic and class structure and widen the lens we use to study democratization, especially in the developing world. In particular, we highlight the need to focus our theoretical energies on the specific collective actors that are doing the hard work of demanding, forging, and sustaining democracy. Drawing on empirical material from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, we argue that the domestic collectivities at the *core* of the democratization process are not necessarily classes per se. Though we do not deny that classes may often be powerful actors, we argue, instead, that political parties and social movements (i.e., political collectivities with mixed-class constituencies and their own organizational incentives) are usually key to democratization's fate. These collectivities are pivotal because they can mobilize across a diverse set of societal cleavages; because class cleavages may not always trump other cleavages; because no group's preferences can translate into enduring democratic institutional change without collective action; and because elites associated with movements and parties have drafted our constitutions and designed our democratic institutions for centuries.[3] Because parties and movements stand center stage in the drama of successful democratization and because they mobilize along a range of historically and contextually contingent cleavages, an exclusive focus on either abstract class actors or material conditions leaves us ill-prepared to understand democratization in the developing world.

By *democratization* we mean the additive process through which a regime changes from an autocracy (where unelected leaders rule) to a *democracy* (where elected leaders rule and are made accountable through institutions that provide channels for broad citizen participation, on the one hand, and guarantees for freedom of thought, expression, and association, on the other.[4] Democratization is an additive process in that

[3] See Jennifer Widner, "Constitution Writing in Post-conflict Settings: An Overview," *William and Mary Law Review* 49 (March 2008), 1522–1523; Jonathan Wheatley and Fernando Mendez, eds., *Patterns of Constitutional Design: The Role of Citizens and Elites in Constitution Making* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013); Jai Kwan Jung and Christopher Deering, "Constitutional Choices: Uncertainty and Institutional Design in Democratizing Nations," *International Political Science Review* 36 (November 2013), 4; Gabriel Negretto, "Political Parties and Institutional Design: Explaining Constitutional Choice in Latin America," *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2008), 123–124; Jon Elster, "Forces and Mechanisms in the Constitution-Making Process," *Duke Law Review* 45, 2 (1995), 378; Timothy Frye, "A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies," *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (1997), 524.

[4] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

its elements are assembled one by one through subprocesses with uncertain outcomes. These subprocesses include the democratic regime transition itself, the crafting of the specific political institutions that shape a democracy's qualities and quality, and finally, the consolidation of the democratic regime.

Because democratization is a *process*, that is, because democratization has multiple phases, we consciously encouraged our authors to explore different phases of regime change. Some explain transitions to democracy, others explain democratic durability, and others explain the quality and nature of particular democracies. Yet, across these processes in different regions, all our authors illustrate the merits of focusing on parties and movements and the inadequacy of economic and class analysis alone.

Our discomfort with an overreliance on economic development and class configurations as a predictor of democratization complements recent quantitative work on regime change. A number of scholars (including leading figures whose seminal work promoted materialist arguments in the first place) have now noted a decline in the predictive utility of traditional economic development measures.[5] This observation has led to calls for granting greater explanatory weight to international factors. It has also led to calls for the discovery of new economic explanations.[6] We agree that international factors matter and that the quest for new economic variables is worthwhile. Yet we insist that the independent explanatory weights of parties and movements merit particular attention as mechanisms of change. Whatever effects international actors and economic variables might have on regime outcomes, they will be mediated by the sorts of domestic political parties and movements that are participate in the transitional context.

Briefly put, we conceive of democratization in the developing world not as the outgrowth of class preferences produced by a given economic configuration, but as an institutional bargain reached (or not) by different coalitions of movements and parties operating within historically

[5] See most notably the work of Carles Boix. Carles Boix, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato, "A Complete Dataset of Political Regimes, 1800–2007," *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (December 2013), 1523–1554. Also see Michael K. Miller, "Economic Development, Violent Leader Removal, and Democratization," *American Journal of Political Science* 56, 4 (October 2012), 1002–1020; Ryan Kennedy, "The Contradiction of Modernization: A Conditional Model of Endogenous Democratization," *Journal of Politics* 72, 3 (July 2010), 785–798; Renske Doorenspleet, *Democratic Transitions: Exploring the Structural Sources of the Fourth Wave* (London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2005).

[6] Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2013); and Carles Boix, "Democracy, Development, and the International System," *American Political Science Review* 105 (November 2011), 809–828.

specific contexts. Some of these coalitions are pro-democratic, some are antidemocratic, and some are of uncertain commitment, but each faces two challenges: *a coordination challenge* as they try to use, but also manage, the disruptive and constructive power of domestic movements and foreign forces, and a *competition challenge* as they battle against one another for systemic control through elections. While movements generally take the coalitional lead in visibly demanding a democratic opening, their allied political parties generally take the lead when elections are set. Successfully moving the power of the streets to the halls of power requires visible organizations whose leaders must coordinate, sustain, and manage cross-class collective action throughout the democratization process.

The nature of these competing coalitions is shaped not only by economic development and class configurations but also very much by historical, cultural, and ideational factors – including, most importantly, the institutional legacies of colonial and postcolonial antecedent regimes, the identity and ideational frames adopted by movement and party elites, and the interaction between domestic political concerns and the interests of foreign powers.

We begin our argument by highlighting an empirical puzzle our structuralist understanding of democratization leaves unsolved. The puzzle involves the emergence and persistence of poor democracies – a phenomenon we call "democracy against the odds." We then move on to show how a conceptual framework focused on parties and movements makes this puzzle less perplexing and enables a better analytic understanding of the causal mechanisms and processes of democracy in the developing world. The regionally focused essays of our project collaborators justify the framework we propose.

DEMOCRACY AGAINST THE ODDS

Aristotle argued that democracies would do best where most of their inhabitants were "not poor,"[7] and theorists have connected economic structures with regime type ever since. Linking representative institutions to the successful economic development initiatives of Pisistratus,[8] to the

[7] Aristotle's *Politics* 1318 b8, in Cynthia Farrar, "Ancient Greek Political Theory as a Response to Democracy," in John Dunn, ed., *Democracy: The Unfinished Journey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 34.

[8] Robert K. Fleck and F. Andrew Hanssen, "How Tyranny Paved the Way to Democracy: The Democratic Transition in Ancient Greece," *Journal of Law and Economics* 56 (May 2013), 389–416.

tributes of maritime empire,[9] or to the moderating influence of propertied "middling men,"[10] the causal stories told about our earliest democracies share striking similarities with those we craft for more contemporary regimes. The emphasis on development, classes, inequality, and material resources remains fundamental to our understanding of how modern democracies start and sustain themselves. Though the weighting and framing of various materialist explanations still spark heated debate, numerous studies illustrate that development is positively correlated with democracy (even if scholars debate the temporality and the endogenous-versus-exogenous origins of that relationship).[11]

The continuities in our thinking across time and region give our theories the hue of lasting truths and the air of universality. Yet this very sameness forces us to pose unsettling questions about the boundaries of the common wisdom. Do the profound changes in society and in the very meaning (and scope) of democracy across the ages really matter only at the margins? Are radical differences in cultural and regional history essentially marginal too? In sum, does economic development impact preferences for democratization in the same way across time and space? A whole host of exemplary work in political economy rests on the assumption that the earliest democracies in Europe and the most recent democracies in the developing world are not only similar enough to be compared but rooted in the same causal dynamics.[12]

We argue that the temporal and spatial boundaries of the common wisdom are narrower than often assumed. Our materialist explanations

[9] Simon Hornblower, "Creation and Development of Democratic Institutions in Ancient Greece," in Dunn, pp. 1–16.

[10] Ian Morris, "The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy," in Josiah Ober and Charles W. Hedrick, eds., *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19–49; Josiah Ober, "What the Ancient Greeks Can Tell Us about Democracy," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (June 2008), 67–91.

[11] Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49 (January 1997), 155–183; Acemoglu and Robinson (2006); Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55 (July 2003), 517–549; Ansell and Samuels (2010).

[12] To highlight the dramatic changes in the threshold for democracy over time, we note that the Polity Data Set codes the United States as a democracy beginning in 1809, France and Switzerland as democracies in 1848 and the United Kingdom as a democracy in 1880, even though these countries all had restricted forms of suffrage at the time. Countries that excluded people from the electorate because of race, sex, wealth, or education today would not be considered democracies. Many of the nineteenth-century cases that were coded by Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2013) as democratic would also be considered autocratic regimes by today's standards.

are analytically useful but not universally determinant, especially if we consider democratization in the developing world. The lasting effects of colonialism, the persistence and resurgence of nonclass identities, and profound changes in the nature of transnational institutions and associational life, mean that economic variables and class identities are less singularly consequential for democracy than we once imagined.

One of the most perplexing puzzles our major materialist arguments leave unexplained relates to poor democracies. These are electorally competitive regimes where many or most of the inhabitants *are* poor and where moderating "middling men" are proportionally few. Important examples of poor democracies began to emerge in the late 1940s and 1950s, but their numbers have increased significantly over time and many have proven surprisingly durable – even in the face of deep economic crisis and high levels of inequality. Theories that give primary causal weight to the class configurations resulting from particular levels of economic development leave these facts unexplained.[13]

As Figure 1.1 illustrates, the income level of countries making the transition to democracy has dropped dramatically since the 1970s. Following a common convention and using a +6 Polity 2 score as the threshold for categorizing a country as an electoral democracy, we see that the income profile of countries making a transition to democracy is now at an historic low.

Figure 1.2 affords a closer look at the pieces of the poor democracy puzzle. It shows the association between regime type and logged GDP per capita across a fifty-year period. The dashed vertical lines mark GDP per capita income quintiles.

We look first at the association between income and democracy in 1957, because this is the period in which Lipset's foundational modernization arguments were crafted.[14] Not surprisingly, the picture in 1957 is in keeping with materialist analyses. Only a few poor countries were democratic and most of these failed quickly. But patterns changed radically in the fifty years that followed. The percentage of countries in the poorest quintile classified as democracies rose from 25 percent to 37 percent while the percentage in the second quintile leapt from 13 percent to 43 percent.

[13] Renske Doorenspleet and Cas Mudde study a number of these regimes in a special issue of *Democratization*. See "Upping the Odds: Deviant Democracies and Theories of Democratization," *Democratization* 15 (August 2008), 815–832.

[14] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (March 1959), 69–105.

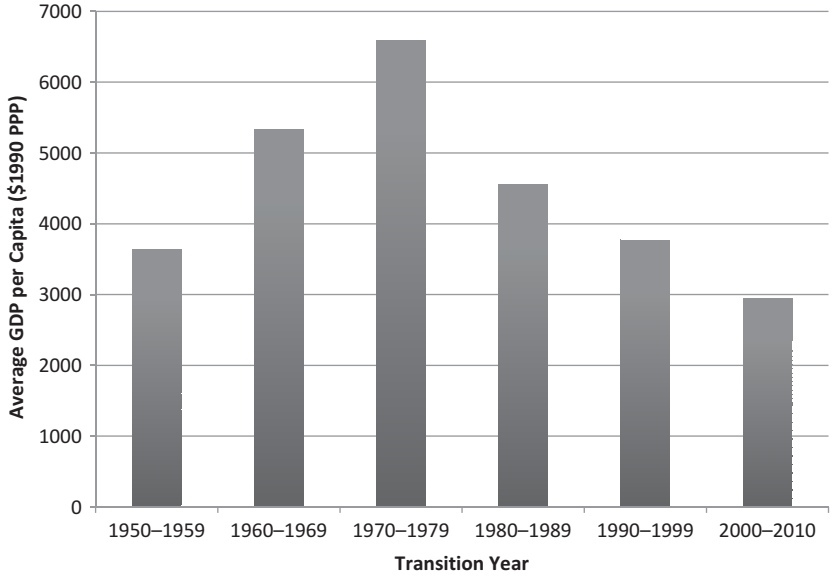

FIGURE 1.1 Average Income of Countries Making a Transition to Democracy
Sources: GDP per capita data are from Maddison (2013) and are in $1,990 PPP (purchasing power parity).
Transition year is taken from Polity 2 scores in the Polity IV dataset. See Monty Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr and Keith Jaggers version 2012.

Moreover, poor democracies have become more durable since the 1950s: A full 54 percent of the poor democracies existing in 2007 had survived more than a decade while 17 percent had survived more than two decades. By 2012, an impressive 61 percent of democracies in the poorest two income quintiles had lasted over a decade, and 42 percent had lasted over two decades.[15] Today, many countries are clearly democracies against the odds. How can their trajectories best be explained?

Focusing on the developing world, this project probes why and how democracy emerges and even survives in cases that are under-predicted by material factors alone. We seek to better understand why countries that are relatively poor, highly unequal, economically troubled, or some combination thereof become and remain democracies. Why did India manage to transition to democracy in 1950 and remain democratic almost continuously, despite being poor? Why have countries such as Ghana and El

[15] These percentages were calculated from the sources for Figure 1.2. Poor democracies are those in the bottom two quintiles.

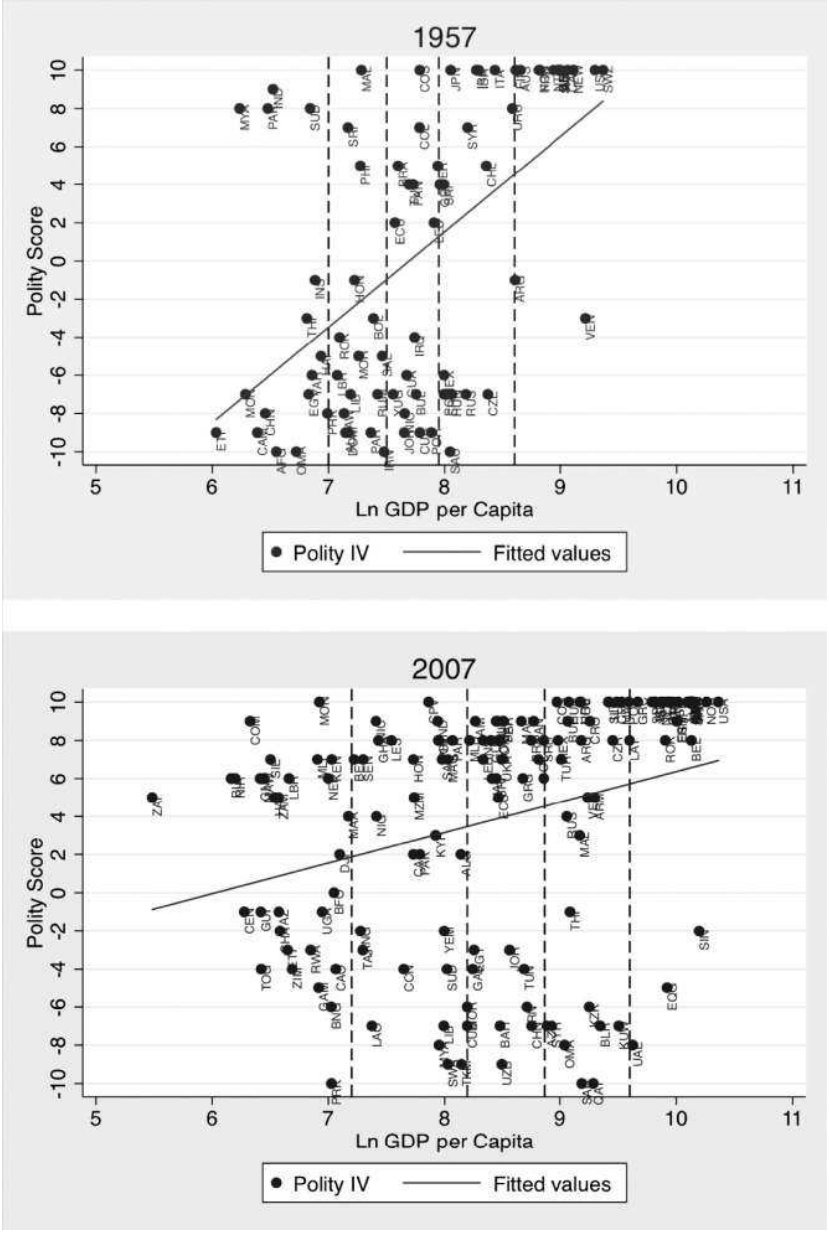

FIGURE 1.2 Economic Development and Democracy, 1957 vs 2007
Sources: GDP per capita data are from Maddison (2013) and are in $1,990 PPP. Polity data are from Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers version 2012.

Salvador managed to remain democracies for over two decades despite being mired in the second poorest income quintile? Why and how did Latin American countries, despite the world's highest inequality levels, transition to enduring democratic regimes (albeit ones of varying quality)? We are interested in theorizing about these cases of democracy against the odds. We also seek to understand whether the reversals of democracy in developing countries are indeed rooted in class configurations and preferences. Why, for example, did Malaysian and Singaporean democracies collapse at relatively high levels of development and give rise to long-lasting authoritarian regimes?[16] We posit that these puzzling questions are best understood with more attention to parties and movements – as well as international actors – and to a range of noneconomic factors affecting strategic choices.

REVISITING EXPLANATIONS OF REGIME CHANGE

Prevailing Economic Explanations. Why move beyond economic factors to understand democratization? One reason is that neither of the two prevailing economic arguments used to explain weaknesses in the development-democracy association provides a convincing explanation for the puzzle at hand. Przeworski and Limongi concluded that democracies could "survive in even the poorest nations," if they succeeded in generating *economic growth*,[17] but the essentiality of growth has been called into question by the many third world democracies that survived periods of deep economic crisis in recent decades. The delinking of growth and durability has been most thoroughly documented in recent work on Latin America by Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, but this insight is not limited to Latin America. Countries such as Mongolia have also weathered economic stagnation and even decline without reverting to authoritarianism.[18] Though economic growth has surely been helpful to

[16] According to Maddison, Singapore had a GDP per capita of $2,701 when its new democracy collapsed in 1963. This was over three-and-a-half times the level in India. When the Malaysian democracy collapsed in 1969, its GDP per capita was $2,005, exceeding India's by 134 percent (figures are in 1990 Geary-Khamis dollars.)

[17] Przeworski and Limongi (1997, p. 177).

[18] Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, "Democratic Breakdown and Survival," *Journal of Democracy* 24, 2 (April 2013), 124; Isabella Alcañiz and Timothy Hellwig highlight the complex relationship between performance and blame in "Who's to Blame? The Distribution of Responsibility in Developing Countries," *British Journal of Political Science* 41 (November 2010), 389–411.

democratic durability, the scope and weight of its explanatory power is now uncertain.

The explanatory power of *economic inequality* brought to light by Boix and Stokes in their seminal explanation of temporal variation in the strength of the development-democracy association has also been called into question.[19] In 2009, Houle found that the association between inequality and the transition to democracy was not negative and linear, as Boix and Stokes argued, nor curvilinear, as Acemoglu and Robinson argued, but statistically insignificant.[20] Haggard and Kaufman have also raised questions about the empirical fit between inequality and regime outcomes, concluding that theories based on class-based distributive conflict are "underspecified with respect to scope conditions and only operate under very particular circumstances."[21] Boix, Miller, and Rosato reported that "economic equality ... has steadily declined in its correlation with democracy" and is now only "marginally significant."[22] Taking the debate in exactly the opposite direction, Ansell and Samuels have now published evidence that income inequality is *positively* related to democratization.[23] Though their argument might help explain why so many developing democracies emerged precisely when economic inequality was purportedly on the rise, the unsettled nature of the inequality debate, and the heterogeneity of inequality trajectories in cases that are relatively well studied, suggests that if trends in income inequality do have a significant effect on democratization, their impact is, at best, strongly mediated by other factors.

Which factors might play a pivotal mediating role? As already noted, a number of scholars have recently argued that the effects of income and other economic variables associated with modernization are "strongly mediated by the structure of the international order."[24] We agree that international factors matter but also caution against according the international order too much independent explanatory weight. Three facts

[19] Boix and Stokes (2003, p. 543).
[20] Houle (2009).
[21] Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule," *American Political Science Review* 106, 3 (August 2012), 495–496.
[22] Carles Boix, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato, "A Complete Data Set of Political Regimes 1800–2007," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 12 (December 2013), p. 1525.
[23] Ansell and Samuels (2010); Ben Ansell and David Samuels, *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[24] Boix (2011, p. 827).