

Democracy and democratization

Comparative Perspectives

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How to understand democracy

- democracy is an “essentially contested concept”, i.e. a term with many definitions;
- debates about how to define democracy are an important part of scholarly discussion of how democratic regimes function
- most theoreticians agree that **political rights** (elections) and basic **freedoms** are integral parts of democracy

What is democracy?

- procedural (**minimalist**) definitions:
- how the regime is organized and
- what processes ensure citizen representation, accountability of elected representatives, and regime legitimacy
- typical examples are definitions of J. Schumpeter and A. Przeworski

Schumpeter: a minimalist definition

- free competition for votes
- a mechanism used to select and deselect political leaders/rulers
- "The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote"

Minimalist exclusions

- No social or economic aspects are included
- No measure of accountability, responsibility, responsiveness or representation
- No measure of freedom, liberties or human rights
- No measure of participation e.g. universal franchise
- No reference to civil-military relations
- What are 'competitive' elections?

Dahl: Polyarchy

- For Dahl, modern democratic states can be understood in practice as 'polyarchies'
- These can be identified by the presence of certain key political institutions:
 - 1) elected officials;
 - 2) free and fair elections;
 - 3) inclusive suffrage;
 - 4) the right to run for office;
 - 5) freedom of expression;
 - 6) alternative information; and
 - 7) associational autonomy

Pros and Cons?

- Broader concept than simply elections
- Expands range of civil liberties and political rights
- Common basis for standard empirical measures (Freedom House and Polity IV)
- Yet focuses only on negative freedoms – seeks to protect citizens from the power of the state
- What of positive freedoms and social equality, cultural and economic rights?

Substantive definitions of democracy

- reflect the depth and quality of democracy
- democracy is not just about procedures, it is also about outputs
- regimes can deepen the degree of their democracy
- participation, social inclusion, the role of civil society, racial, gender and other types of equality, institutional performance, absence of corruption, poverty and social inequality

Differences between democracies

Lijphart (1984, 1999)

Ref: Arend Lijphart <i>Patterns of Democracy</i> 1999	'Majoritarian' Model Effective and accountable	'Consensus' Model Inclusive and representative
Exec-Parties	One-party cabinet	Coalition government
Parliament	Executive dominant	Balanced exec-legislature
Party system	Two-party	Multi-party
Electoral system	Majoritarian	Proportional Representation
Interest groups	Pluralist	Corporatist
Federal-Unitary		
Government	Centralized-unitary	Decentralized-federal
Parliament	Unicameral	Balanced Bicameral
Constitution	Flexible	More Rigid
Judiciary	Parlt. sovereign	Judicial review
Central Bank	Dependent	Independent

Huntington: waves of democratization

- three waves of democratization followed by anti-democratic reversals
- 1. 1826-1926 (followed by a fascist reversal),
- 2. 1945-1960s/70s
- 3. 1974-1989 (followed by a wave of authoritarian reversal, around 2000)

Dimensions of democracy

- one dimension concerns the role of **the people** (demos): freedom of association, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, government derived from the people
- second dimension concerns **constitutional limits** on the executive, checks and balances
- liberal democracies perform well on both dimensions
- illiberal democracies organize democratic elections (formal guarantees in place)
- however, they have problems to guarantee constitutional limits on the executive power and generally perform poorly on the second dimension

Huntington's Waves of Democracy--first wave 1828-1926

- Before WWI: U.S., Britain and settler colonies, France, Scandinavia, Italy, Argentina
- Then after WWI, post-Imperial Europe:
- Weimar Germany, Poland, Austria, Baltics, Czechoslovakia, plus Spain, Chile

First reverse wave 1922-42

- Fascism, Soviet expansion



Second Wave 1943-62

- Fall of fascism
- Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan
- and many others--Korea, several in Latin America, India, Nigeria

Second reverse wave 1958-1973

- tensions of cold war, failures of new democracies, one-party model, rise of “bureaucratic authoritarianism”
- Greece, Turkey, Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, India, Africa, Latin America

Third Wave--1974-

- Last non-Communist European non-democracies fall--Spain, Portugal, Greece
- Latin American non-democracies transition out
- Asia--Taiwan, Korea, Philippines, India, etc.
- Fall of Communism
- South Africa, Nigeria

Third reverse wave?

- Brazil, Burundi, Russia, Hungary, Serbia, Turkey, Poland
- who is left?

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- China and some of Asia
 - Most of Africa
 - Most Muslim nations

O'Donnell: Delegative democracy

- Latin American, strongly majoritarian systems
- free elections
- after winning the executive office, few effective constraints
- similar characteristics apply to other third-wave democracies:
- in many countries, democratization effectively means free elections

Transformation of democracies over time

- **1. incorporation:**
- gradual incorporation of adult population into demos
- limits on universal suffrage gradually lifted (sex, gender, property, education and race – the latter removed in South Africa only in 1994)

Incorporation

- FRA, GER, SWI male universal suffrage since 1848, USA 1870
- women's right to vote spread slowly: - New Zealand 1883, Australia 1902, Finland 1907, Switzerland 1971
- age: typically from 25 to 21 and 18, in some countries 16

Transformation of democracies over time

- **2. representation:** the right to form political organizations (parties) and gain parliamentary representation
- in many countries effectively the same as introduction of PR electoral systems
- PR typically introduced because the disenfranchised groups of voters/parties became stronger over time
- Finland 1907, the Netherlands 1917, Germany 1918

Transformation of democracies over time

- **3. success of the organized opposition**
- situations in which all important democratic parties are accepted as legitimate governing alternatives
- the Socialists in government: never in USA, Canada and Luxemburg
- first Socialist breakthrough in Australia in 1904
- Socialists in Europe gained power in the interwar period (Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Finland, Norway)

New transformations?

- citizens are dissatisfied with some of the aspects of how democracies function
- civic participation is in decline
- turnout in elections declines, weakening of the identification of voters with their parties, decreasing levels of party membership
- voters less interested in politics = "nonpolitical"/expert solutions to public policy problems increases

New transformations?

- independent agencies, regulatory bodies, central banks or external actors like the European Union
- **status of politicians and functioning of democratic institutions became the subjects of political competition**
- voters (referenda, participatory decision-making) or non-partisan institutions (regulatory bodies, agencies, the EU etc.) given more say
- elections and parties are becoming less important than ever before

How democracies emerge?

Modernization

- Lipset, Huntington, Przeworski:
- modernization plays a key role in transition to, or consolidation of, democracy
- **Epstein et al (2006)**: besides democracies and non-democratic regimes, hybrid forms need to be taken into account
- **GDP per capita** increases the likelihood of transition from authoritarian regime, however, a partial democracy/hybrid regime may emerge on its stead

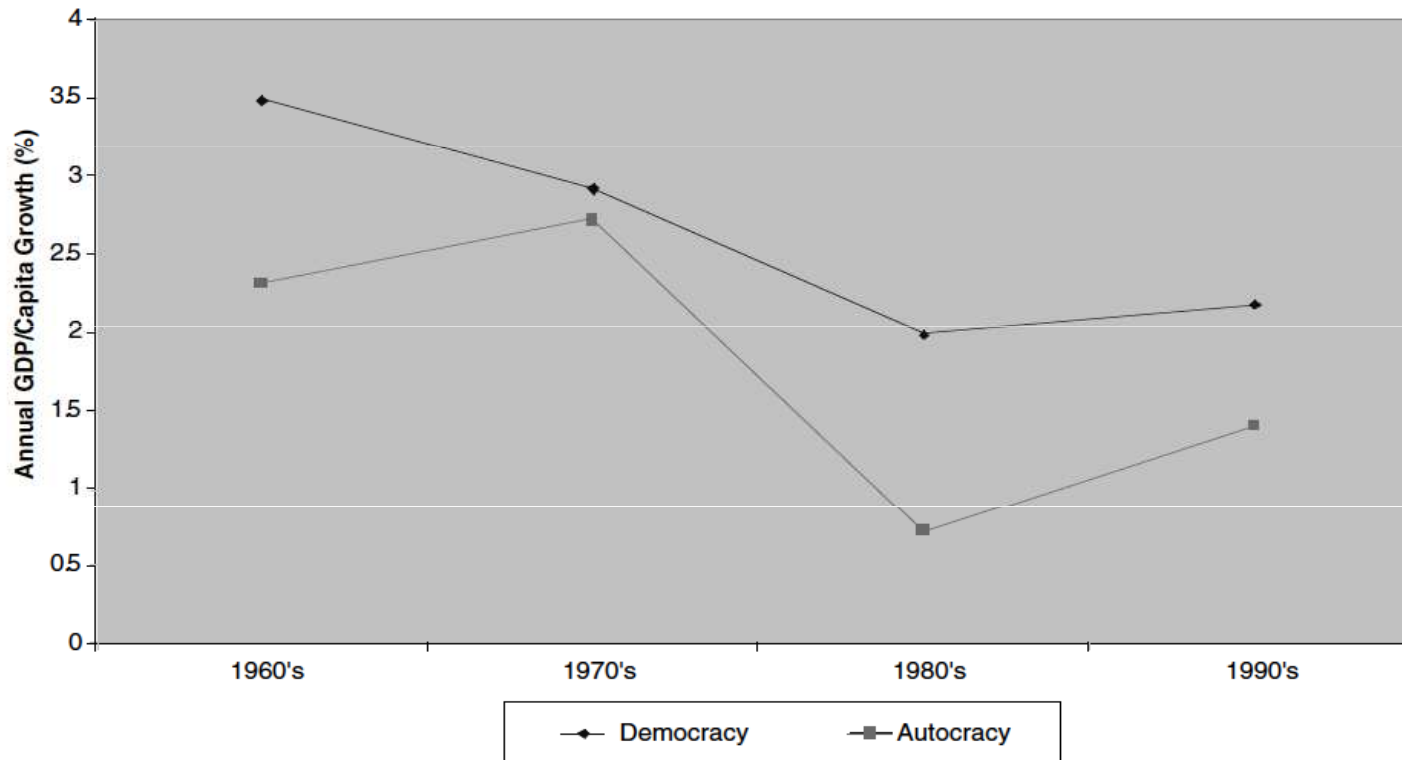
How democracies emerge?

Dynamic models

- D. Rustow: a dynamic model of transition
- no social requisites, no democratic political culture required
- the power equilibrium between competing groups of elites fighting for power and resources
- if the balance of powers last for a long time, they may agree on a peaceful way to resolve their conflicts, i.e. elections
- elite consensus on the rules of the game is crucial

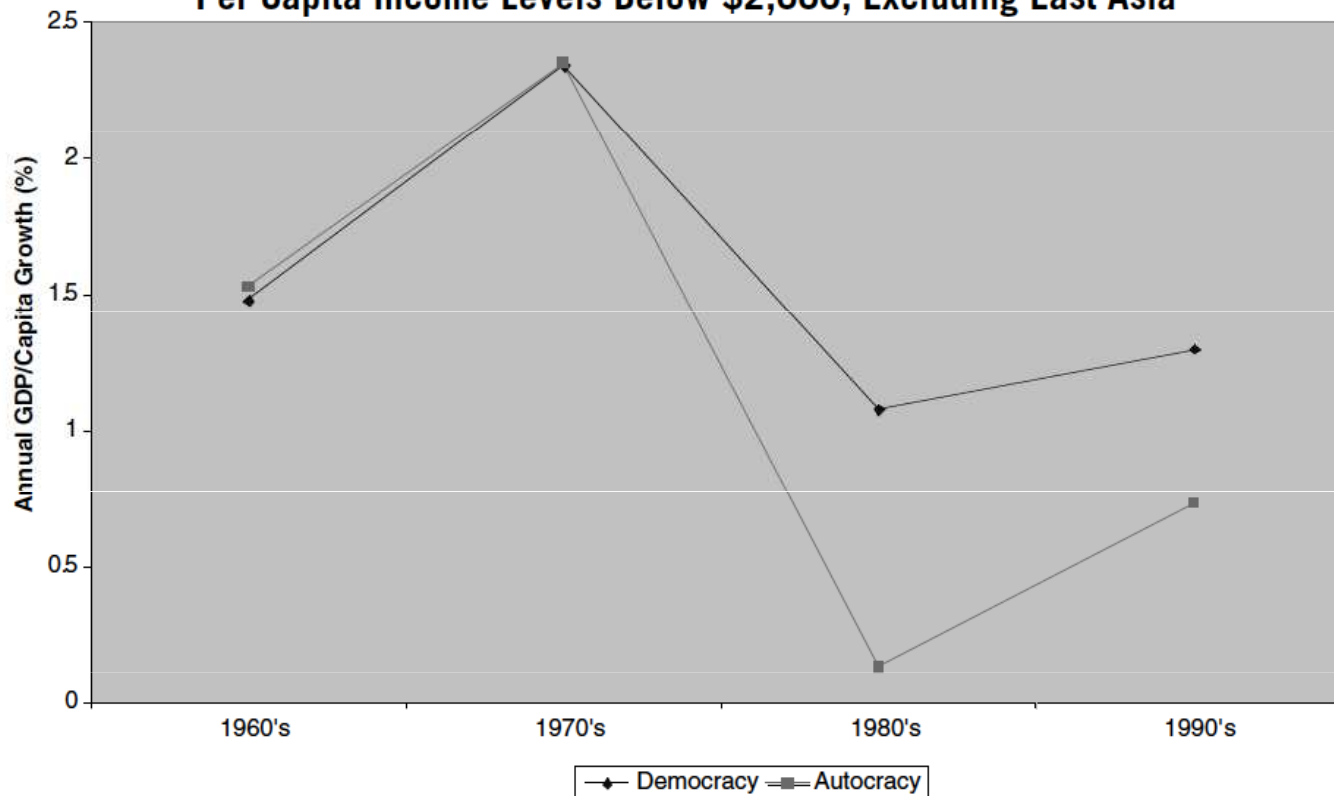
Consequences of democracies: Halperin et al 2010

Median GDP/Capita Growth for Democracies and Autocracies

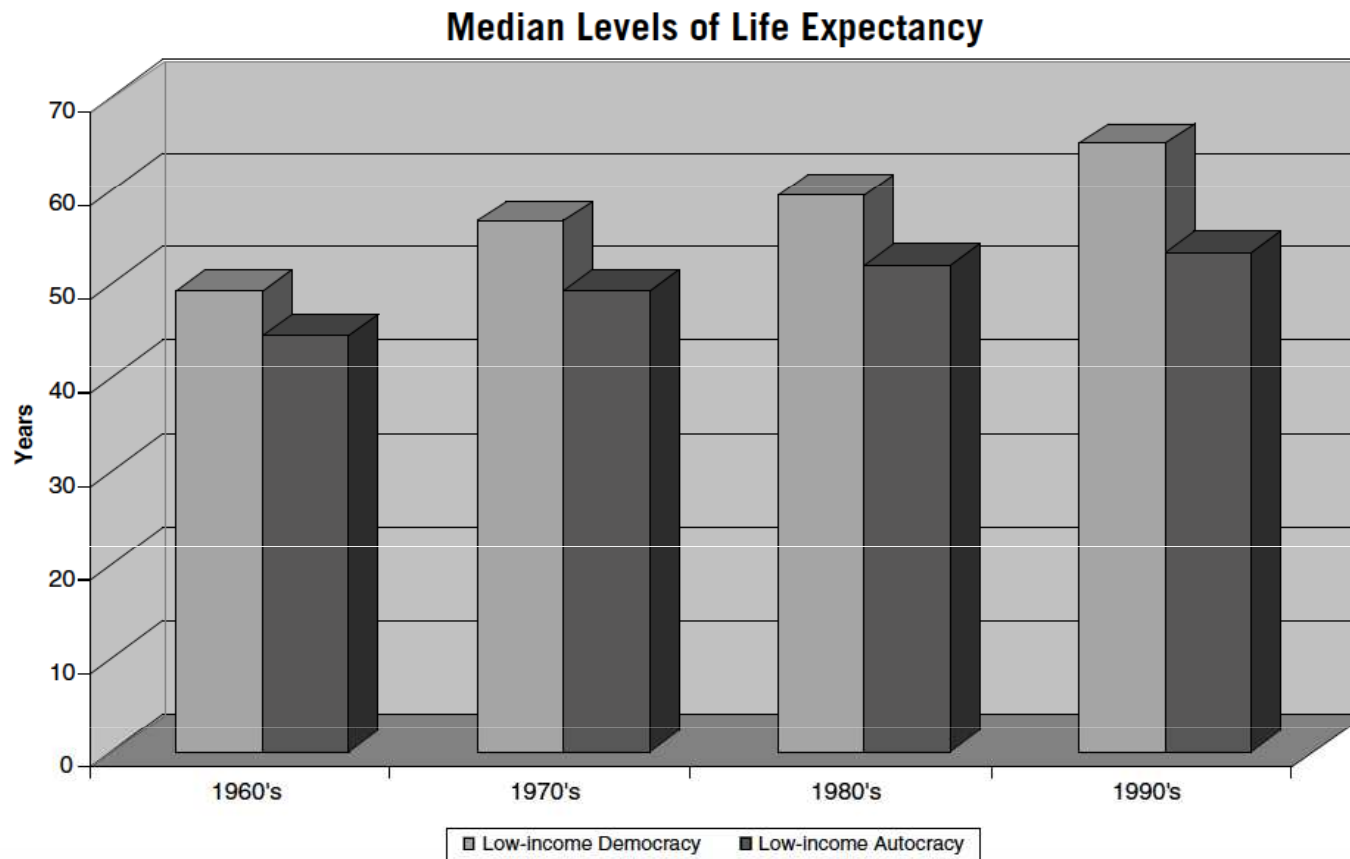


Low income democracies and autocracies

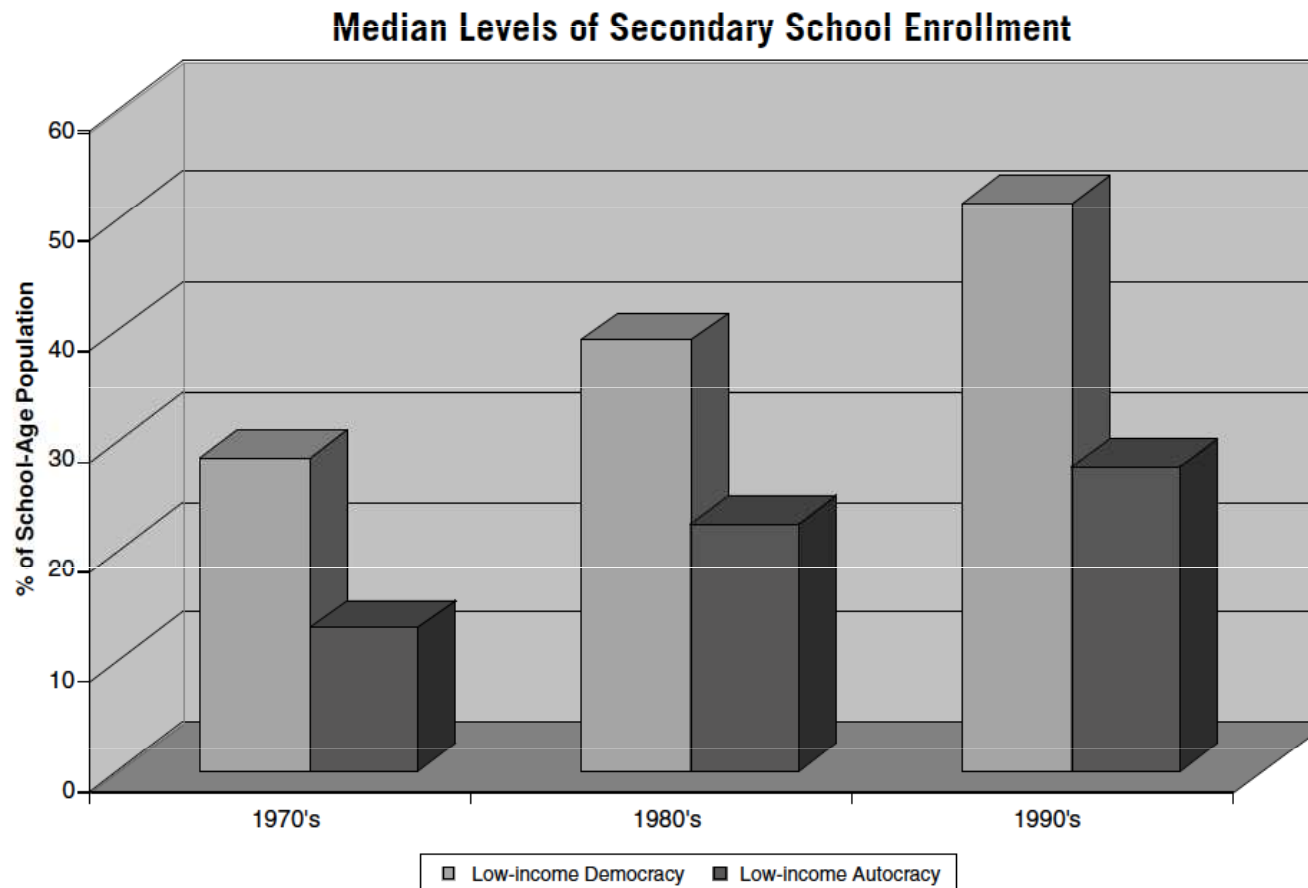
Median GDP/Capita Growth Rates for Democracies and Autocracies with Per Capita Income Levels Below \$2,000, Excluding East Asia



Other indicators 1/2



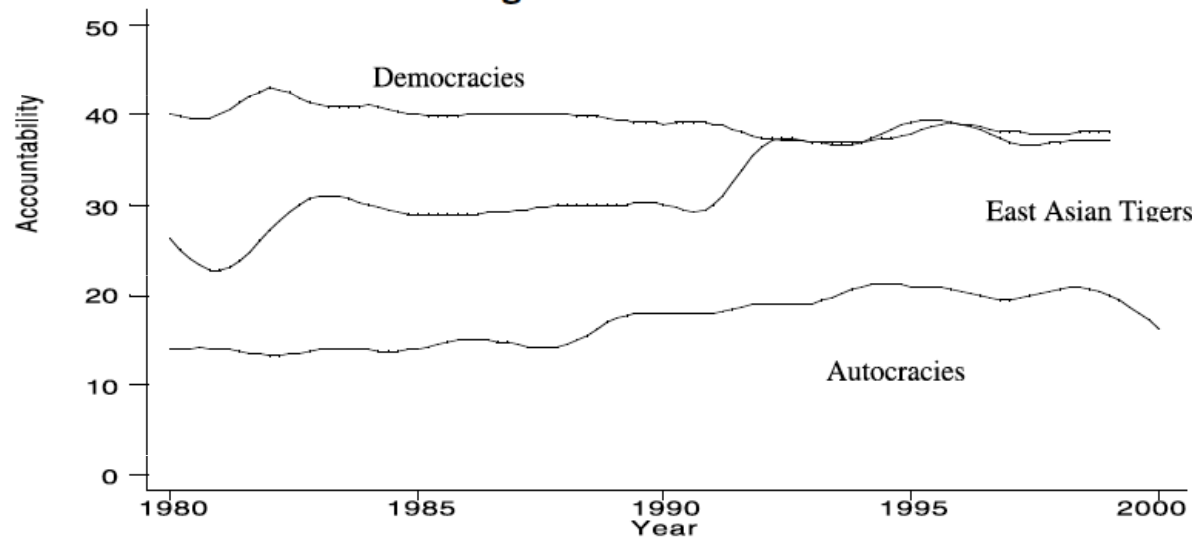
Other indicators 2/2



WHY?

Accountability institutions matter

Comparison of Accountability Levels—Democracies, Autocracies, and East Asian Tigers— of All Income Levels



Based on data from *Polity IV*; Siegle, 2001.

Figure 2.9 The East Asian Tigers distinguished themselves from other autocracies by their relatively stronger accountability institutions.