Chileans take to the streets to advocate an end to General Augusto Pinochet’s 15-year dictatorship. These people were taking great personal risks, as the government had murdered more than 2,000 of their fellow citizens during its regime, and imprisoned thousands of others. Their efforts proved successful in defeating Pinochet’s efforts to win another term in office.
What are the causes of regime change?

In 1970, Salvador Allende won Chile’s presidential election. Allende was a Socialist, and because of Chile’s plurality electoral system for presidential elections, he was able to win with little more than one-third of the vote. This meant that a majority of voters opposed Allende and his policies. But Chile had held free and fair democratic elections since before World War II, and although all of its neighbors were governed by military regimes at the time, Chile’s military leaders did not impede Allende from taking office. However, three years later, in the midst of political and economic chaos, the military decided to intervene. Troops murdered Allende, and leaders of the armed forces assumed power. For 15 years, the leader of the Chilean army, General Augusto Pinochet, ruled the country with an iron fist. Chilean democracy had collapsed into military dictatorship.

During Pinochet’s rule, thousands of Chileans were imprisoned, tortured, killed, or “disappeared.” However, in the face of increasing international pressure to restore democracy, on October 5, 1988, Pinochet sent Chileans to the polls and gave them two options: “Yes” or “No.” According to Chile’s 1980 constitution—which Pinochet himself had helped to write—a majority for “No” would require Pinochet to call free and fair presidential elections in 1989 and then relinquish the presidency in 1990. A majority for “Yes” would have given Pinochet another eight-year term as president. Fifty-six percent of Chileans overcame their fear of Pinochet’s brutal regime and voted “No.”1 With these results, the dictator faced a dilemma: abide by the rules of his own constitution, or ignore the result and remain in power.

In his hands, Pinochet had the tools to maintain political order—particularly the coercive power of the military, police, and judicial authorities. Yet, he surprised many observers when he conceded defeat and relinquished power. Today, Chile has a thriving and stable democracy. In contrast to 1973, Chile in 1990 represents a case of democratization—the shift from non-democracy to a democratic form of government.

What are the causes of regime change? Governments and leaders come and go; this is normal in both democratic and non-democratic states. Yet, a more fundamental political question asks why states sometimes change political regimes. A political regime refers to the fundamental form state institutions take: It is either a democracy or a non-democracy. Why would Allende’s democratic regime collapse into non-democracy—and why would Pinochet’s military regime give up power and reestablish democracy?

The Chilean regime changes in 1973 and 1990 raise the questions of why democracy emerges or collapses in some countries and not in others. How can we explain such transitions between regime types? This chapter’s question is critically important for the future of global politics: people who live in democracies are likely to live healthier, longer lives because the government is less likely to repress dissent with violence; democratic regimes also perform better on a variety of measures...
such as providing health care, education, and other benefits that promote citizens’ general welfare.

There are no easy explanations for changes in political regimes, because global developments such as the spread or decline of democracy often have multiple causes. In addition, the causes of regime change in one country at one particular moment in time may be relatively unimportant in another country 20 years later. To get a handle on this chapter’s question, we first review the frequency of regime change between democracy and non-democracy over time. We then explore the domestic and international political factors that appear to be systematically associated with transitions between regime types and assess the likelihood that democracy will continue to spread throughout the world—or be undermined by emerging global political dynamics.

**HISTORICAL TRENDS**

A first step toward understanding the causes of regime change comes from looking at historical trends both toward and away from democracy. At a very broad level, the world has experienced three “waves” of democratization, two of which were followed by “reverse waves” of regime change in which many democracies collapsed into dictatorship. In each wave and reverse wave of regime change, a number of countries make the same transition from one regime type to the other. As Table 5.1 indicates, the First Wave began in the early 1800s with the emergence of

<p>| TABLE 5.1 |
| Waves of Regime Change |
| --- | --- | --- |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Time Period (Approximate)</th>
<th>Democracies as Percent of Total Number of Countries</th>
<th>Examples of Regime Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Wave of Democratization</td>
<td>1825–1925</td>
<td>22/67 (33%)</td>
<td>US, UK, France, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Reverse Wave</td>
<td>1925–1945</td>
<td>16/71 (23%)</td>
<td>Germany (1933)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Wave of Democratization</td>
<td>1945–1960</td>
<td>34/110 (31%)</td>
<td>Germany, Italy, Japan (~1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Reverse Wave</td>
<td>1960–1974</td>
<td>36/140 (26%)</td>
<td>Brazil (1964), Chile (1973)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

democracy in several countries in North America and Western Europe, including the United States and the UK. In the late 1920s, the first “reverse wave” began, as several of these countries—most notably Germany—collapsed into dictatorship.

In 1945, the defeats of Hitler’s Nazi regime and the Japanese and Italian dictatorships brought about the second wave of democratization. The Allied victors of World War II imposed democracy in Germany, Japan, and Italy and restored it to a few other European countries. Several Latin American countries and newly independent states such as Israel and India also adopted democracy. Still, many countries remained non-democratic, including several communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe.

A second “reverse wave” began during the Cold War era, when several newer democracies—such as those in Latin America—then collapsed. However, the “Third Wave” of democratization began in the mid-1970s with the collapse of a longstanding dictatorship in Portugal—ironically, just a year after Allende’s overthrow in Chile. As Table 5.1 indicates, by the 1990s, dozens of countries across the planet had adopted democracy, including Chile. Since the mid-1970s, most changes to democracy have occurred in Latin America and Southern and Eastern Europe. A few countries in Africa and Asia also began to shift toward democracy, but large swaths of the world remain dominated by “not free” non-democratic regimes.

Regime change—when a non-democratic state adopts democracy or the reverse—is common. Indeed, the Third Wave of regime change involved an unprecedented number of transitions to democracy in a relatively short period of time. The recent spread of democracy around the world returns us to this chapter’s main question: What are the causes of regime change? The geographic spread of democracy also raises additional questions: why did some countries experience regime change to democracy during the Third Wave, while others never did? In the future, will countries that recently democratized collapse back into dictatorship? These are the sorts of questions we will consider in the remainder of this chapter, which explores the domestic and international factors that explain why countries experience regime change.

**FIGURE 5.1**

Waves of Regime Change

History has seen several “waves” of regime change, with the adoption of democracy being more frequent during some periods and transitions to non-democracy dominating in other eras.
DOMESTIC CAUSES OF REGIME CHANGE

When we speak of domestic factors that drive regime change, we refer to aspects of a country’s history and culture, the political interests in society, and its institutions. Our goal is to determine which of these factors are associated with regime change: which seem to cause states to adopt democracy, and which seem to perpetuate non-democracy? Domestic background conditions and historical trajectories make some political outcomes more likely and others improbable or even impossible. The challenge is to identify those trajectories, and then to explain how they lead to democracy—or away from it.

Religious, linguistic, and economic conditions that exist in any particular country emerge out of long-term historical processes. Historical developments establish a set of conditions that can preclude or permit some sort of political change. In this section, we consider the impact of three pre-existing domestic conditions as they pertain to regime change: an element of political identity that we refer to as civic culture; changes in political interests and culture that result from economic development; and the armed forces’ attitude toward civilian political institutions.

The Civic Culture

Does the nature of a country’s culture make regime change more or less likely? This idea seems plausible: After all, if a country’s culture has historically supported the divine right of kings, then democracy may not flourish. The core claim of a cultural approach to regime change can be stated quite simply: “No democrats? Then no democracy.” The “d” in democrats is deliberately lower-case, because the claim is not a partisan statement in favor of one American political party over the other. It simply asserts that if a country’s citizens value political equality and individual freedoms, then a democratic regime is more likely to emerge than if they do not hold those values. Many hold up the United States as a society with strong elements of what we call a civic culture, which is defined by three specific elements: high civic engagement, political equality, and solidarity.

Elements of Civic Culture

Civic engagement refers to the degree of citizens’ active participation in public affairs, such as by voting or participating in social movements, interest groups, or political parties. In other words, in cultures with high civic engagement, citizens do more than pursue their own private business or family affairs. In contrast, citizens in cultures with low civic engagement are less likely to express their interests publicly in the political arena. For example, the United States has long been noted for having multiple organizations, social movements, and interest groups. In contrast, an “uncivic” culture would have few such associations.

In a civic culture with political equality, citizenship offers both equal rights and obligations. Citizens in such communities believe that no one should be above the law. They do not tolerate giving some people political rights while excluding others, and they view non-democratic regimes as illegitimate. The more a political culture approximates this ideal of political equality, the more predisposed it is to...
democracy. In contrast, a society in which people believe that some people should have more rights than others, or that some people are by their nature above the law, is one in which political inequality is valued. Individuals in some cultures are relatively more deferential to religious or political authorities, for example. The less a political culture values equality, the less it is predisposed to democracy.

Finally, in a civic culture with solidarity, citizens generally trust and respect one another and are willing to lend a helping hand, even when they might disagree on matters of public policy. This is not to say that a civic community lacks conflict over what public policies to adopt, but it suggests that citizens tolerate divergent views because they trust that even their opponents have the best interests of the community in mind. In contrast, in an “uncivic” culture, citizens tend to distrust one another, are intolerant of different views, and less willing to lend a hand to communal endeavors. An uncivic society is one in which relatively few people join organizations or participate in organized activities outside their household, passively accepting that only the state can organize society, typically through the use of coercion.

Measuring Civic Culture To what extent does regime change depend on the degree to which the citizens embody a civic culture? To assess this argument, we first need to know how we might measure the degree to which a community is civic. Only then might we compare societies to discover whether this sort of culture is associated with the emergence or collapse of democracy.

A key indicator of a society’s civic engagement is its individuals’ willingness to form and join social and political organizations. Such organizations need not be political: church choirs, bird-watching clubs, and even bowling leagues are good examples. Participation in such groups contributes to democracy by encouraging patterns of cooperation, respect for others’ views, a spirit of public-mindedness, an ability to work with strangers, and feelings of trust and shared responsibility for the fate of the community. Participation in groups promotes unselfish behavior and the expectation that others should behave similarly.

Overall “civic-ness”—and, thus, the quality of democracy—can be measured by the density of a society’s network of societal groups and associations. The higher the ratio of groups to the total population, the greater the civic qualities of that society’s political culture and the greater the likelihood that the country will experience regime change to democracy.

Problems with the Civic Culture Argument This civic culture argument confronts at least two challenges. First, although the density of social groups certainly indicates that citizens are engaged, not all organizations have similar goals. For example, some organizations and their members—such as the Red Cross, the local PTA, or the Eagle Scouts—promote engagement and concern for others in the community, and we might agree that people active in such groups do contribute to the development of effective social collaboration. However, other organizations are exclusive—and they can also be disdainful, intolerant, or even violent toward nonmembers. Examples include elite country clubs, the KKK, skinhead groups, and street gangs.
The differences between “good” and “bad” social engagement suggests that the density of organizational membership does not accurately measure a society’s degree of civic-ness. Instead, the reasons why people mobilize are more important for the emergence of democracy than is the raw number of groups. This problem is illustrated by the case of Germany. Although a dense network of groups and associations emerged by the 1920s and 1930s, this culture of civic engagement still enabled the rise of Hitler’s Nazi Party.6

A second issue is the chicken-and-egg problem. Does a citizenry oozing with “civic-ness” cause democracy to emerge, or does having a democracy cause citizens to become more civic? If the latter is true, then the idea that a civic culture causes democracy to emerge may not be true. This problem is illustrated by the case of the UK—one of the world’s oldest democracies, but also a country of royalty and nobility, a place of longstanding elite snobbery against those in the working and lower classes, and a country that colonized much of the world. How did democracy emerge from an aristocratic system in which political elites treated the masses both at home and abroad with such contempt? If democracy can emerge in that cultural context, then perhaps it can emerge in any cultural context. The example of the UK suggests that a civic culture may reflect democracy, but not cause it to come about. Given these two problems, an argument that emphasizes the causal importance of political culture is at best incomplete, and we need to consider alternative explanations for regime change. Instead of political culture, let’s consider the possibility that broad economic change—such as that caused by widespread industrialization—can bring about political change.

Economic Change

A country’s economic transformation from poor to rich may cause a political transformation from dictatorship to democracy. Why would this be so? To answer this question, we can look to the political consequences of the Industrial Revolution—which began around 1800—and the related process of economic modernization in Western Europe. Those countries that industrialized changed rapidly from primarily rural to primarily urban, and they experienced breathtaking technological changes and improvements in quality-of-life indicators such as education and infant mortality.

The processes driving economic modernization transformed or even destroyed preexisting social and economic structures across Western Europe. Because such changes occurred in what were at that time all non-democratic regimes, scholars have long suspected that such socioeconomic changes might also transform political structures and bring about regime change to democracy.

There are two ways economic change leads to political change. The first approach focuses on interests—specifically, the way economic development can bring about the rise of new social classes, who then have strong desire to fight for access to political power. The second approach emphasizes identities—specifically, the way economic modernization changes people’s values so that they grow more supportive of democracy.
Chapter 5  Regime Change

**Class Conflict Causes Regime Change**  The first economic hypothesis about regime change suggests that democratization is more likely when widespread economic development reduces the influence of elite classes and increases the relative influence of newly emergent middle and working classes. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the dominant economic system in Europe was feudalism. Under feudalism, the nobility owned agricultural land, from which they derived their wealth and power. The rest of the population worked land they did not own and had little if any political power. In such societies there was no real middle class—the wealthy upper-class landowners dominated politics, lording it over the huge mass of impoverished lower-class agricultural laborers.

The demise of agricultural feudalism and the rise of industrial capitalism had a tremendous impact on both economic growth and political organization. The onset of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism brought about the rise of a middle class, which included entrepreneurs who made their living through trade and commerce and applied their profits to furthering their industrial, financial, or commercial investments. With newly realized economic influence, members of the middle class in growing urban areas were keenly aware that they still lacked corresponding political rights. In turn, the established upper classes fought to retain their privileged positions and to limit other groups’ access to power.

The logic of this argument with regard to regime change depends on the strength of established versus emerging economic groups. In some countries, the wealthy landowners managed to survive and thrive. To the extent that landowning elites retained power even as industrialization advanced, regime change to democracy was less likely because the wealthy could continue to block regime change. In contrast, if landowning elites grew weaker as industrialization advanced, democratization was more likely. Similarly, if the middle classes grew in numbers and became organized into political parties, unions, or interest groups, regime change to democracy was also more likely. If, however, the middle classes remained small and disorganized, regime change was less likely.

The hypothesis linking economic development to democratization through class conflict most clearly applies to a few European cases in the first wave of regime change. For example, in the 1800s and early 1900s, non-democratic regimes evolved into stable democracies in the UK, Sweden, and the Netherlands, where landowning elites grew economically less important and the middle classes grew in size and strength. In contrast, where landowning elites remained economically important even as the middle classes grew in strength, as in Spain and Germany, weak democracies emerged only to collapse back into non-democracy. These different outcomes underscore the key premise of the class-conflict argument: regime change to stable democracy depends on the emergence of a sizable middle class and a weakened wealthy landowning elite. Where the middle classes were weak and/or the landowning elite remained powerful, stable democracy was unlikely to emerge.

The class-conflict argument works well where conflicting interests of clashing economic groups has been intense. Unfortunately, it is less helpful in explain-
ing more recent cases of democratization. This is because in recent decades many
countries adopted democracy despite weak or nonexistent middle classes. This was
the case with another South American country, Paraguay in 1989, for example,
which experienced democratization despite widespread poverty and inequality, no
industrialization, and a relatively tiny middle class. The existence of several cases
that democratized without strong middle classes means that—like the civic culture
argument—we cannot rely on class conflict to explain all cases of regime change.
The argument appears to best apply to transitions that occurred in the First Wave of
democratization, but not to others.

**Modernization and Regime Change**  What alternative stories might explain
more recent cases of regime change? It is true that democracy remains more com-
mon in richer countries, while non-democracy is more common in poorer coun-
tries. The association between level of economic development and the likelihood
that a country is a democracy is among the strongest empirical relationships you
will ever see in a social science class. Given this correlation, a second version of
this economics and politics story downplays class conflict and political interests
and returns to political culture. This argument, known as modernization theory,
suggests that democracy is not simply a function of economic growth, but rather
that it is a function of the cultural changes that accompany economic growth. In
contrast to the class-conflict argument, which points to the growth of a strong
middle class as a key cause of regime change, modernization theory suggests that
economic development encourages citizens’ values to be more supportive of de-
mocracy and less supportive of non-democracy.

Economic modernization tends to result in more complex societies, largely
due to the growth of large cities. Growth is also associated with better education
and literacy, and greater exposure to the mass media, which encourages citizens
to develop greater awareness of and concern for politics and public affairs. As a
consequence of economic development, growing proportions of the population
come to possess pro-democratic interests, such as aspirations for greater partici-
pation and the idea that every individual should have equal rights to participate
in politics.

The key element of modernization theory is the connection between eco-
nomic development and changes in citizens’ understanding of politics. Poorer,
less-developed societies maintain their traditional rigid and hierarchical political
cultures, in which the poor remain deferential to established authorities. Yet, as a
country grows wealthier, its citizens’ attitudes toward political authority change.
For example, some observers suggest that recent (and as yet unmet) demands for
democracy in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt follows from the emergence of
a new, educated middle class that values political freedoms historically unknown
in those countries.7

In global perspective, the evidence for modernization theory appears to fit the
facts: country wealth is highly correlated with whether a country is democratic.
However, just as with the cultural and class-conflict arguments we’ve already
discussed, modernization theory leaves some difficult questions unanswered. Many
dictatorships remain intact even after they have become quite wealthy. In fact, in the early twentieth century, modernization in countries such as Germany and Japan generated support for non-democracy, precisely the opposite of what modernization theory predicts! Stable democracies only emerged in those countries because the United States and its allies imposed it after World War II. In the contemporary world, too, we find many exceptions. For example, Saudi Arabia retains a hierarchical political culture and appears in no danger of democratizing, no matter how wealthy it grows. At the same time, democracy has emerged and survived in several impoverished countries. India, for example, confounds modernization theory: it adopted democracy upon independence in 1948, even though it was one of the poorest countries on earth. If modernization theory were true, India should not be a democracy.

The existence of wealthy non-democracies and of poor democracies show that while economic modernization may explain some instances of regime change, it cannot provide a complete answer to this chapter’s question about why some countries experience regime change. Even though wealthy countries do tend to be democracies and poor countries tend not to be, exceptions suggest that the relationship between economic development and regime change is not as straightforward as modernization theory implies. This, in turn, points us to other important factors of regime changes besides aggregate economic growth.

One twist on modernization theory focuses on the nature of a country’s economy—whether it is diverse or whether it depends on one single valuable commodity, such as oil or diamonds. Exceptions to modernization theory lead us to ask if there is a certain kind of economic growth that is a prerequisite for regime change: in fact, non-democracies that develop diverse economies are more likely to see the emergence of a middle class that wants to participate in politics. In contrast, non-democracies that rely on a single commodity for their wealth fall victim to what is called the resource curse, which suggests that economic growth that relies on only one valuable resource may have problematic political consequences.

The logic of the resource curse is as follows: governments in countries with one abundant natural resource have strong interests in retaining tight, centralized control over the production, sale, and taxation of that commodity. Governments sometimes become addicted to the revenue this valuable commodity generates, and use that revenue to purchase political support. Because control of the resource generates such easy money, governments have few incentives to invest in other sectors of the economy. In the end, because economic development depends on government control of the main engine of the economy, a diverse market does not fully develop.

This argument helps explain why economic modernization plays a smaller role in the democratization of many Third Wave cases (1970s–1990s). During the Third Wave, transitions to democracy were more likely in countries with diversified economies than in countries that produce oil or any other single valuable natural commodity. With this hypothesis in mind, the long-term prospects for democracy may be better in developing countries like Brazil or India, which don’t rely on one
Domestic Causes of Regime Change

Export commodity and have complex economies, than in countries like Venezuela, Nigeria, or Russia, which depend heavily on fossil fuel exports.

Economic change can bring about political change. Development can weaken the traditional land-holding political elites and bring about the emergence of a new middle class that has stronger desire to fight for political rights. It can also alter the way people think about politics, changing individuals’ attitudes toward political authority. As countries grow wealthy, individuals grow less respectful towards traditional authority figures, and demand equal rights. However, economic development does not always bring about democracy, suggesting that we must continue to examine other domestic sources of regime change. As we shall see in the next section, the armed forces can play a key role.

The Role of the Military

Civic culture, class-conflict, and modernization theory all point toward the importance of long-term social and economic change as domestic sources of political change. However, other forces in a society may also work against democratization and in favor of maintaining a non-democratic regime. Suppose we had two countries that had identical civic cultures, similarly sized middle classes, equal levels of wealth, and economies that were identical in diversity. Yet, now suppose that these two countries differed in a key way: in one the armed forces were subordinate to civilian authorities, while in the other the armed forces refused to recognize civilian command and were decidedly anti-democratic. Which country would be more likely to democratize? This hypothetical scenario pushes us to consider the potentially critical role of the military.

One of the most common causes of regime change from democracy to non-democracy is a military coup, which occurs when elements in a country’s armed forces overthrow a democratically elected civilian government and take control. “Coup” (pronounced “koo”) is taken from the French term coup d’état, which means “a blow against the state.” Coups have been historically frequent in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia, but they are not limited to the world’s poorer countries. Between World War I and II, several military coups were attempted in European countries and succeeded in Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Latvia. As late as 1967, the military overthrew a democratic government in Greece and ruled for seven years.

In truth, most military coups target non-democratic rulers rather than democratic regimes. For example, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi overthrew Libya’s monarchy in 1969 and served as that country’s personalistic ruler with the support of the military until 2011. In most cases, when the military overthrows a government, the state changes hands from one non-democratic ruler to another. Yet some coups end democratic regimes, as in Chile in 1973.

Coups against democratic regimes continue to occur. For example, in Thailand, the military overthrew democratically elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. The military justified its actions by accusing Shinawatra of...
corruption, conflict of interest, abuse of power, nepotism, misuse of government funds, interfering with the system of checks and balances, and mistakes in pursuing Islamic guerrillas in Thailand's southern provinces. The Thai military set itself up as the defender of law and order and claimed that Shinawatra had “violated Thailand’s ethics and moral integrity” and had destroyed the unity of the Thai nation.8

The Thai military’s rationale for taking power sounds self-serving, yet this example illustrates a key factor in explaining regime change: whether a military traditionally perceives itself as subordinate to or independent of civilian authority. The question here for comparative analysis is, “What is the military’s political identity?” Does that identity encourage the armed forces to intervene in civilian politics or does it constrain the military to remain on the political sidelines? Exploring the historical dynamic of civil–military relations helps us understand why military coups sometimes cause regime change from democracy to non-democracy and other times impede a regime change from non-democracy to democracy.
In some countries, militaries believe they are independent of any civilian authority—democratically elected or not. Military leaders sometimes claim to serve a higher power than the constitution, which in their view is just a piece of paper that organizes the institutions of the state. That higher power, they claim, is the nation—a cultural group based on collective identity.

Even though it is an abstract concept, most citizens tend to possess an image in their mind of their nation’s identity—its land, people, and cultural practices. Such images do not change easily. In contrast, many countries frequently amend or even change their constitutions—and if chaos, corruption, and crime become commonplace, a constitution may not seem worth the paper it is written on. In such situations, powerful political actors will not fear the consequences of violating the highest law of the land.

The United States has a long-standing constitutional tradition of civilian control over the military, which impedes the military’s direct intervention in politics. When personnel enlist in the U.S. military, they swear to defend the Constitution of the United States and to obey the orders of the president as commander-in-chief. In such a system, military officers tend not to believe that they have a legitimate right to replace civilian leaders, under any circumstances. And in other countries, the military is a relatively unimportant player in national politics, a fact that also helps preserve democracy. The survival of democracy in Costa Rica is a case in point, as this chapter’s feature box helps explain.

However, in countries with weak traditions of civilian control over the military, leaders of the armed forces sometimes come to believe that they must intervene when—in their view—civilians have become incapable of ruling or (as was the case in Thailand, mentioned earlier) have brought shame to the nation. Military leaders tend to favor law and order and dislike the chaos of protests and radical change, and they sometimes project this desire for law and order into civilian politics, which they see as messy and disorderly.

Military leaders also see the armed forces’ identity as selfless—for the good of all citizens—whereas they perceive politicians as corrupt, selfish, and particularistic, meaning they are interested in defending only narrow interests or identity groups. Thus, in military coups like those that occurred in Thailand, Chile, and elsewhere, coup leaders rationalize intervention by pointing to their self-professed role as “defenders of the nation.” Such self-identity requires that constitutional traditions of civilian authority over the military be weak, which means that the military has historically enjoyed considerable political autonomy.

The military’s identity helps explain many cases of collapse of democracy into non-democracy. However, as with the arguments presented above pertaining to the civic culture and the impact of economic change, military identity cannot explain every case. After all, even if the military remains subordinate to civilian authority, a civilian can still destroy democracy. This was precisely what happened in Germany in 1933—Hitler was a civilian, but his popularity, combined with the weakness of pro-democratic political forces, allowed him to destroy the democratic regime. In short, although military identity can be crucial, it may be wholly unrelated to regime change in many cases.

All the internal domestic elements that we have considered—culture, economics, and military identity—are potentially critical for understanding transitions from
Several Latin American countries democratized during the second wave of regime change that followed in the wake of the Allied victory in World War II. However, during the Cold War, many of these democracies collapsed into dictatorship during the second reverse wave. Coups d’état destroyed democratic regimes in such countries as Brazil in 1964, Argentina in 1966, Uruguay in 1973, and as noted at the start of this chapter, Chile in the same year. In contrast, Costa Rica democratized in 1948, and its democracy has survived to the present day. Why did Costa Rica, which was vulnerable to the same international influences as its regional neighbors during the Cold War, not experience regime change to dictatorship when other similar countries did?

GATHER EVIDENCE

Costa Rica presents us with a good political science puzzle precisely because its democracy survived, even though it shares many attributes with other Latin American countries. Consider, for example, the similarities between Costa Rica and its immediate neighbors in Central America—El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Guatemala, none of which experienced regime change to democracy until the 1990s. All countries in Central America are relatively poor compared to developed democracies like the United States or the UK, and all have economies that focused not on industry but on exporting agricultural products, such as coffee and bananas. None of these countries has a large middle class. Instead, a relatively small economic elite has dominated politics in each country since independence in the early 1800s. Given these internal political and economic conditions, we have little reason to expect democracy to emerge, much less survive.

All of these small, weak Central American countries were also all vulnerable to U.S. influence during the Cold War. During that period, U.S. foreign policy supported non-democratic rulers in the region. U.S. meddling or outright intervention sometimes stymied countries’ efforts to chart an independent political path, for example in Guatemala, where the U.S. government encouraged a military coup that overthrew a democratically elected president in 1954. We have noted that international influences were particularly important in the Cold War era, as well as during the later Third Wave of transitions to democracy. Yet, Costa Rica resisted the global pressures during the Cold War, which would have predicted a collapse of its democratic regime. What explains democracy’s resilience in Costa Rica?

ASSESS THE HYPOTHESIS

Although Costa Rica shared many attributes with its neighbors, it also differed in two key ways. First, although Costa Rica had never experienced significant industrialization and consequently did not witness the emergence of a large middle class, its wealthy rural...
landowners were politically relatively weak to begin with compared to rural elites in neighboring countries. Most importantly, instead of the typical pattern in which relatively few families controlled most of the good farmland, Costa Rica had a large number of family farms—relatively small operations owned by members of a single family. As a result, Costa Rica’s large landholders had relatively less political influence than did their counterparts elsewhere. Strong rural elites tend to prevent or delay the emergence of democracy; a weak landholding elite means democracy has a greater chance to emerge.

Second, civil–military relations in Costa Rica were different from everywhere else in Latin America. Costa Rica not only had a strong tradition of civilian rule—which contrasts with the autonomy that militaries enjoyed in most other Latin American countries—after 1949, it didn’t even have a military! That year, Costa Ricans rewrote their constitution, abolishing the country’s armed forces (a national police force was established). This permanently and completely eliminated the military from politics, which had the positive effect of removing a force that in many Latin American countries directly contributed to democracy’s collapse.

In sum, Costa Rica differed from its neighbors on two key attributes. The combination of a weak rural elite and the absence of a military stabilized Costa Rican democracy over the long run, even during a period of history when international factors caused many other democracies to collapse.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Why might rural landholding elites oppose the emergence of democracy?
2. If Costa Rica had had a military during the Cold War, would its democracy have survived? Why or why not? Consider the relative political importance of Costa Rica’s landed elite in your answer.

democracy to non-democracy, or vice-versa. The table below summarizes the arguments in this section and provides illustrative examples. Although these domestic factors help us make sense of complex patterns of regime change, they do not always provide fully satisfying explanations. Other factors may be at work, particularly factors that are external to any country’s politics. In the next section, we turn to the impact of international politics on countries’ domestic politics.

INTERNATIONAL CAUSES OF REGIME CHANGE

Apart from domestic factors, international factors coming from outside any particular country are often critical causes of regime change. Such forces were especially relevant during waves of regime change to and from democracy since about 1945, and include the influence of four major global actors—the United States, the Soviet Union, the Catholic Church, and the European Union (EU)—as well as the impact of globalization, which is the spread of political and economic dynamics beyond the borders of any one particular country.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Immediately after World War II, U.S. foreign policy interests encouraged democracy around the world, even imposing it upon several countries. The United States also gave massive amounts of economic and political aid to France and Greece,
where democracy appeared threatened by communism, and it oversaw regime change in the defeated Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Allied forces’ defeat of fascism reverberated around the world, as non-democratic regimes in other regions also collapsed and democracy emerged, for example in Brazil in 1945 and Argentina in 1946.

However, as the Cold War developed, the United States frequently compromised its support for democracy in favor of military rulers and dictators who allied with the United States against the Soviet Union. Given this inconsistent support for democracy, anti-democratic forces gained strength and legitimacy in many countries, leading to the fall of democratic regimes in Brazil in 1964, Argentina in 1966, and Chile in 1973, to name a few. In this way, changes in U.S. foreign policy contributed to both the Second Wave of democratization and the reverse wave that followed.

By the 1970s and especially the 1980s, following the Vietnam War, U.S. foreign policy began to shift yet again, as the U.S. government began to redefine its national interest to support democracy and human rights. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, Congress began conditioning U.S. foreign aid on recipient countries’ human rights standards. These policies continued under Republican presidential administrations of Reagan and Bush (1981–1992), due to those presidents’ interest in contrasting the freedoms of U.S. citizens against the absolute lack of freedoms offered by the totalitarian government that ruled the Soviet Union.

During the Third Wave, American support for democracy meant that non-democratic rulers lost an important external ally. United States support for de-
Soviet Foreign Policy

After the Allied victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, the Soviet Union occupied and established puppet regimes in several countries on its western frontier in Eastern Europe. It also provided overt and covert support to communist insurgencies around the world. At the time, the Soviet Union represented all the qualities of a non-democratic regime: the government prohibited contestation, popular participation was minimal, and the state exerted near-total control over the economy. Competition between the United States and the Soviet Union during this period never exploded into a “hot” war, but the Cold War was a dangerous time—and Soviet support for communist non-democratic regimes, coupled with U.S. support for anti-communist non-democratic regimes, made the Cold War era a hostile global environment for democracy.

By the 1980s, the Soviet Union’s centrally controlled economy was in a tailspin. The country’s leader at the time—Mikhail Gorbachev—attempted to reform the system from within, but he failed, and the regime collapsed in 1991. This meant that the world’s most powerful non-democratic regime had failed. In the wake of Soviet collapse, five Eastern European communist regimes—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary—all quickly transitioned to democracy. In addition, 15 Soviet provinces gained status as independent states, and several of these—including Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—adopted democracy.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, after 1990 there was no global superpower advocating and attempting to spread a non-democratic form of government to other countries. Democracy appeared to be the only legitimate and viable regime left; fascism had lost all legitimacy after World War II, and communism followed in its wake 45 years later.

Changes in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is perhaps the only major global non-state actor that is hierarchically organized—with the pope at the top—that can reach into local communities in most regions of the world. In First and Second Wave democracies, the dominant form of religious identity was Protestant Christianity. In fact, democracy did not flourish early on in predominantly Catholic countries such as Poland, Spain, Chile, Mexico, or Brazil. However, all these and several other majority-Catholic countries democratized during the Third Wave.

Many predominantly Catholic countries remained non-democratic until the Third Wave at least partly because of the Church’s historical indifference or even opposition to democracy. Yet in the 1960s, the Church adopted a firmly pro-democracy stand. Church leaders also nominated a cardinal from a non-democratic country—Poland—to be pope in 1978, signaling support for religious freedom against communist atheism and totalitarianism. That pope, John Paul II (1978–2005),
actively campaigned for democracy during his tenure in his home country and around the world. The shift in Church doctrine was an important factor in advancing democracy in many Third Wave countries, because it meant that non-democratic rulers in predominantly Catholic countries lost one of their main allies, and because the change in doctrine gave ordinary Catholics in non-democratic regimes a religious seal of approval to lobby for political change.

**The European Union**

The final important actor on the international stage to push for democracy during the Third Wave was the European Union (EU). The EU is a supranational organization that distributes subsidies and benefits and controls or influences important elements of monetary, trade, agricultural, and other policies for its 27 member countries. What is relevant here about the EU is that it imposes strict membership qualifications: Countries that wish to join must adopt fully democratic rules. This pressure helped advance the Third Wave, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe. For example, since achieving status as an official EU candidate for membership in 1999, Turkey has implemented new human rights policies, abolished the death penalty, and granted additional rights to ethnic minorities. In short, because many countries have strong interests in joining the EU for its economic benefits, the EU has helped spread democracy.

Major global players do not always promote the spread of democracy; they sometimes actively seek to spread non-democracy or undermine democratic regimes. When major global actors are not promoting democracy, non-democracies are unlikely to democratize—and democracies are more likely to collapse into non-democracy. This dynamic characterized the early decades of the Cold War between 1950–1975, which coincided with the second reverse wave. However, by the late 1980s, the world’s most powerful actors—the Vatican, the EU, the United States, and the USSR—had either shifted policies toward the explicit promotion of democracy or had become more or less democratic themselves. The key point is that by the end of the Cold War in 1991, no major player in global affairs supported non-democracy as part of its stated foreign policy. This change in the global political environment made it harder for dictators to maintain legitimacy and remain in power.

**Globalization**

Foreign policy actions of major global players are not the only way that international factors can impact the likelihood of regime change. Globalization—the spread of political, social, and economic dynamics beyond the borders of any single country—can also work in less direct ways. In some cases a powerful neighborhood effect exists, as countries in a particular geographic region tend to follow their neighbors in terms of adopting a regime type. Specifically, the probability that a randomly chosen country is a democracy is about 75 percent if more than half of its geographic neighbors are democracies—but only about 15 percent if more than half of its neighbors are non-democracies. The case of Chile illustrates this effect well: by 1989, all of its Latin American neighbors had transitioned to
democracy, making Chile stand out as unusual and putting extra peer pressure on her military rulers to conform to the regional trend.

Second, a “global” effect also appears to be at work in recent waves of regime change: The overall level of democracy in the entire world—as measured by averaging the Freedom House score for all countries—influences whether any particular country will experience a regime change. At the global level, when non-democracy is the “thing to do,” non-democratic rulers find remaining in office easier. Yet, when democracy comes into fashion, non-democratic rulers have a harder time retaining power. If the world happens to be experiencing a wave of democratization, then the remaining non-democratic regimes are more likely to democratize.

These findings help explain the Third Wave of democratization. Global political dynamics help by changing the balance of political power within countries. For example, during a wave of regime change to democracy, pro-democratic political parties, social movements, and interest groups can more easily observe and identify with political events in neighboring countries. And if a regime change occurs in a neighboring country, citizens may be emboldened to act, reasoning, “If those people—who look, sound, and think like us—can have a democracy, then so can we.” Government leaders around the world also see political reward in resembling their neighbors—perhaps because governments of similar regime types are better able to communicate on a friendly basis with each other, are less likely to fight each other, and have more profitable trade and investment relations.

The interests of major global actors as well as the dynamics of neighborhood and global effects are all external to the domestic politics of a given country, but they all play an important role in driving regime change. The long-term internal factors identified in the previous section—the civic culture and economic arguments—were relatively more important in the first wave of regime change. In contrast, the international factors summarized in the table on the following page were more important during the Second and Third Waves.

SHORT-TERM CATALYSTS OF REGIME CHANGE

Several domestic and international forces drive regime change. These arguments offer predictions based on background conditions, such as “a wealthy country is more likely to democratize,” or based on changes in the global political environment, such as whether major powers’ foreign policies influence the likelihood of democratization in less-powerful countries.

However, hypotheses such as these do not necessarily explain all of the precise reasons that non-democracies evolve into democracy, or vice versa. In fact, the specific short-term catalysts for regime change tend to vary quite widely from country to country. Sometimes an acute economic crisis leads to regime collapse, as it did to Germany’s democratic regime in 1933, but this is not always the case—the global economic crisis in 2008 did not immediately lead to the collapse of any democracy around the world. Likewise, the death of a longtime dictator can catalyze regime change to democracy, as in Spain in 1975 when General Francisco Franco died, but not in North Korea when Kim II-Sung passed away in 1994.
Here's an analogy to illustrate the contrast between long- and medium-term factors versus those at work in the short term: suppose you wanted to explain why the Titanic sank. On the one hand, you might suggest that the Titanic sank because it hit an iceberg. On the other hand, you might argue that the ship was doomed before it even left port because its design was vulnerable to flooding. Which explanation is more satisfying? The ship certainly would not have sunk without the iceberg, but it also might not have sunk had its design been better, even if it had hit the iceberg. Both explanations—the background conditions and the immediate cause—are important. Both explain the same outcome, but emphasize different factors.

In light of this analogy, consider the transitions to democracy in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay in the 1980s. On the one hand, all four of these regimes were under similar international pressures to democratize. Yet on the other hand, each regime collapsed because of a different short-term factor: Argentina’s military was humiliated in a war with the UK over the Falkland Islands in 1983; Brazil’s military regime grew divided over how to govern the country during an economic crisis and handed power back to civilians; Paraguay’s long-term military ruler died without an obvious heir; and—as noted at the start of the chapter—Chile’s dictator decided to obey the results of a plebiscite that denied him another term in office.
In any case of regime change, short-term factors are the iceberg that sinks the ship. Crises tend to expose a regime’s flaws and delegitimize it in citizens’ eyes. Because the regime has lost its leader, its war, or its way, crises provide catalysts that encourage fed-up citizens to mobilize against the government. In many countries, such popular protests prove critical to the regime’s downfall. In particular, because non-democratic regimes do not have the safety valve of rotating leaders and regular elections, non-democratic regimes may be more brittle and susceptible to collapse in a crisis situation. In these Latin American cases, these short-term catalysts were all different, but led to the same outcome: a transition to democracy.

Such short-term events are always important, but because they can be so different, they are not subject to the more systematic comparative analysis we undertook for the domestic and international factors. Unlike domestic and international causes, short-term factors typically apply only to a particular case, not a whole pattern of regime change. Sometimes a dictator dies but another dictator assumes power, leaving the non-democratic regime in place. Likewise, an economic crisis may cause a fatal decline in regime legitimacy in one democracy but not in another. Because short-term factors vary so much from country to country, the key to answering this chapter’s main question lies with the domestic and international background conditions. And now that we have a handle on the sources of regime change, in the next section consider what the future of regime change might look like.

THE FUTURE OF REGIME CHANGE

Given what we’ve discussed thus far, what does the future hold in terms of regime change around the world? Will the Third Wave of democratization continue and will more non-democracies and partly free countries transition to democracy—for example, in countries like Egypt or Tunisia? Or will we soon see a reverse Third Wave of regime change? There are grounds for optimism as well as pessimism. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and China’s abandonment of communism as a totalitarian ideology, some are optimistic that democracy is now the only form of government around the world with broad legitimacy.14 Recent events in the Middle East, where multitudes have demanded an end to non-democratic rule, have fueled this optimism. And to the extent that this view is correct, we have reason to expect more transitions to democracy in the future.

However, we also have reason to be pessimistic. In the late 2000s, several countries that had at least partially democratized have sunk back into non-democracy, such as the case of Thailand mentioned earlier, where the military overthrew a democratically elected prime minister. In July 2011 elections were held and a civilian government returned to power, but Thailand’s future remains uncertain. Moreover, despite widespread protests and great hopes for deep and lasting change in the region, no Middle Eastern non-democracy has yet to truly transition to democracy.

In general, our crystal ball peering into the future remains cloudy. Although the number of “Free” democratic countries increased and the number of
“Not Free” non-democracies declined during the Third Wave, the number of “Partly Free” countries increased also during this period. Partly for this reason, some worry that contemporary global factors are inauspicious for the further spread of democracy, and that countries that have never transitioned to democracy may get stuck in this “Partly Free” middle category, or even that countries that have made it into the middle category will revert to the fully “Not Free” group.

**Illiberal Democracies**

Another term for “Partly Free” countries is illiberal democracies. Illiberal democracies are regimes that combine elements of democracy such as universal suffrage and regular elections with non-democratic elements such as restrictions on political contestation and a free press, and widespread violations of citizens’ rights.

The dividing lines between democracy, illiberal democracy, and non-democracy can be hard to draw. This is because illiberal democracies appear democratic in some ways—especially since citizens sometimes willingly, even eagerly, elect their leaders, who then violate the democratic rules of the game. Even so, illiberal democracies are not, technically speaking, non-democracies.

Venezuela is sometimes cited as an example of a contemporary illiberal democracy. Venezuela was one of the few Latin American countries to democratize during the Cold War—in 1958. Yet in the 1990s, Venezuela experienced considerable political and economic turmoil and its two main political parties lost popular legitimacy—so much so that the entire democratic regime collapsed. Venezuelan army colonel Hugo Chávez, who led a failed coup against a democratically elected president in 1992, won Venezuela’s 1998 presidential election in a free and fair contest. He was reelected in 2000, and won another six-year term in 2006.

Soon after winning office, Chávez called a referendum to elect members of a constitutional convention. His allies won nearly all the seats, and they drafted a constitution that centralized power, weakened Venezuela’s federal system, eliminated its Senate, and gave Chávez the power to pass decrees that have the force of law without legislative approval. In 2009, Chávez also gained voter approval of a plebiscite that abolished presidential term limits, giving him the ability to run for reelection indefinitely. Observers worry that Chávez will never relinquish power. Venezuela has experienced a partial regime change from democracy to illiberal democracy because although its rules still allow for popular participation, Chávez has stacked the political deck to such an extent that the rules constrain political contestation.

The Venezuela case illustrates the paradox of illiberal democracies. Leaders in illiberal democracies win elections and may—at least temporarily—have considerable popular legitimacy. Moreover, illiberal democracies do not explicitly eliminate all the institutions of democracy. Instead, rulers govern within a formally democratic institutional framework. However, these rulers subtly and gradually change the institutions of government rather than engaging in overt and widespread politi-
cal repression, as in fully non-democratic regimes. Such manipulations of the rules of the game weaken political contestation without explicitly eliminating it, limiting citizens’ ability to vote leaders out of office, thereby undermining democratic accountability.

**From Illiberal Democracy to “Not Free”?**

The growth in the number of “partly free” illiberal democracies suggests that the future of regime change toward democracy remains uncertain. To assess the possibilities, we will focus on the impact of the international political climate as we did in the previous section, asking whether major political actors currently support, oppose, or are indifferent to democracy.²⁰

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union actively supported communist non-democratic regimes while the United States often supported anti-communist non-democratic regimes. As the Cold War wound down in the 1980s, the Soviet Union collapsed and U.S. foreign policy shifted toward support for democracy. In today’s world, no major global power actively encourages the spread of non-democracy. Instead, the world’s major powers at least implicitly support democracy.
However, there are two reasons why the international climate today may provide only weak support for democracy, encouraging backsliding into illiberal democracy, or even into non-democracy. First, although in principle both the United States and the EU support democracy, both apply this principle inconsistently. For example, both Democratic and Republican U.S. presidents have long supported a repressive monarchy in Saudi Arabia, in order to protect U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. European leaders are no less inconsistent—for example they demand that EU member states adhere to strict democratic principles, while they also coddle favor with dictators on other continents. In many cases, democratic global powers conclude that strategic interests in protecting a non-democratic ruler outweigh promoting democracy.

Second, the foreign policies of two other major global powers do not clearly support the spread of democracy, even if they do not actively promote the spread of non-democracy. The first major power is Russia, which has grown increasingly non-democratic since 2000, and which has sought to influence the politics of countries on or near its borders. Russia has little interest in promoting democracy; it is only concerned with achieving its foreign-policy interests. The second major global power that does not necessarily support the spread of democracy is China. China’s rapid economic growth has extended the country’s economic influence to every corner of the planet. Because its economy depends on exports and the imports of food and raw materials, China has strong interests in maintaining ties to friendly governments. Thus far, China has not sought to explicitly support non-democracy, but it has also used its economic influence to sustain dictators in Africa and Asia, for example.21

Overall, as the summary table below suggests, today’s global political environment contains both pro- and anti-democratic elements, and as we have seen, these elements go a long way toward helping us answer this chapter’s main question about why some countries experience regime change and others do not. The United States and the EU both support democracy, but both also apply this principle inconsistently, supporting democracy in some regions or countries, while propping up dictators elsewhere. Moreover, Russia and China are at best indifferent to democracy, favoring any government that supports their interests.

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<th>SUMMARY TABLE</th>
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<td><strong>Element at Work in Global Politics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Effect</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No major global actor actively spreads non-democracy.</td>
<td>Tends to support democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US and EU foreign policy is inconsistent; sometimes support dictators.</td>
<td>May undermine democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian and Chinese foreign policy do not actively support democracy, sometimes support dictators.</td>
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CONCLUSION

Presidents and prime ministers are elected and then lose office; dictators eliminate their rivals to acquire power, but are then eliminated in a later coup d’état. In comparative politics we do not focus on why individual personalities come and go. Rather, we are interested in a more important political question: why states sometimes change political regimes, from democracy to non-democracy, or vice-versa. The world has experienced three “waves” of democratization, two of which were followed by “reverse waves” in which many democracies collapsed into dictatorship. What drives these changes in political regimes?

In this chapter, we explored two sorts of background conditions—domestic and international—that systematically drive waves of both democratization and the collapse of democracy. At the domestic level, the main causes of regime change lie with whether a country has a preexisting “civic” political culture or not, with the way economic development has reshaped the political interests and cultural identities of a country’s citizens, and with civil–military relations. Cultural and economic factors appear more important in pre-1945 waves of regime change, while the military’s attitude toward civilian institutions remains relevant in recent waves.

The domestic sources of regime change—culture, economics, and military identity—are often critical. However, these factors often do not fully explain transitions to or from democracy. In addition—particularly in the post-1945 era—we discovered that we must include important international factors such as the foreign-policy interests of major global powers and neighborhood and global effects. The domestic and international sources of regime change appear to work systematically; that is, if similar forces are at work in different countries, we expect similar outcomes—for example, transitions to democracy in countries subject to the same international influences.

The background domestic and international factors help us understand patterns of regime change. However, they never give us the complete story. We also noted that the catalyst of regime change—the event that finally causes a democracy to collapse or forces a dictator out of power—tends to be different in each and every case. Because these short-term causes of regime change vary so greatly from country to country, they are not subject to systematic comparative analysis, like the background domestic and international factors. Nonetheless, they are a critical part of the story.

This chapter’s main question—what are the causes of regime change?—remains pertinent for understanding politics around the world today. Is the Third Wave likely to spread further, or are we likely to see a reverse Third Wave? Recent events in countries in the Middle East signal that the question is far from settled. In short, although the Third Wave has reinvigorated the global legitimacy of democracy, many parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia remain solidly non-democratic. What are the prospects for democracy in those regions?

The future of regime change around the world depends in the main on the relative weight we accord to domestic factors such as political culture or economic development, and international factors such as the global geopolitical context. If
the cultural identity context is associated with regime change, then what are the prospects for democracy in countries that lack a civic culture? Or, if we believe economic development paves the road toward democratization, which non-democratic regimes are, therefore, more likely to experience regime change? Finally, what impact might today’s global political environment have on the prospects of regime change—in both democracies and non-democracies?

KEY TERMS

- democratization 120
- civic culture 123
- civic engagement 123
- political equality 123
- solidarity 124
- modernization theory 127
- resource curse 128
- military coup 129
- globalization 134
- neighborhood effect 136
- illiberal democracy 140

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Consider the non-democratic countries around the world today. What “background factors” help explain why some of these countries are not democracies?
2. Why do some rich dictatorships not become democracies?
3. What sort of “modernization” helps change a political culture to support democracy?
4. In a democracy, what aspect of military identity is most crucial to preventing regime change to non-democracy, and why?
5. What do current events imply about the future of ‘illiberal democracy’ in the world?

SUGGESTED READINGS


NOTES

2. See for example, Adam Przeworski et al., Democracy and Development (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
4. I base the periodization on Huntington. To calculate the number of democracies and number of countries, I used the cutoff of “6” on the POLITY IV scale, which ranges from –10 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic). You can find these data at http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm.
13. There are countless theories about the Titanic’s sinking. A recent book that advances this argument is Jennifer Hooper McCarty and Tim Foecke, What Really Sank the Titanic (Lebanon, IN: Citadel Press, 2008).