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**RE-RETHINKING PROSPECTS FOR
DEMOCRATIZATION**
A New Toolbox



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Re-reflecting Prospects for Democratization A New Toolbox

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Introduction

The fall of the Berlin wall, together with the collapse of the Soviet Union, marked the beginning of a perceived rapid transformation of the remaining non-democratic regimes towards democracy. Two decades later, in which the 'end of history' bubble bursted, it is obvious that non-democratic rule has not lost its prominence in global politics at all. In fact, non-democratic regimes still rule over a significant proportion of the world's population. This situation caused the last twenty years, and probably the years to come, to be glorious times for practices of democracy promotion/assistance and the dissemination of theories and ideas regarding the issue. Obviously a lot of literature has been written on (different facets of) democracy as such; from the history of democracy to the different democratic systems and from the meaning of democracy to the feasibility of it. The same applies for writings on democratization and (the business of) democracy promotion/assistance. Most of the literature, however, treats these topics more or less isolated. Besides, literature on democratization rarely gives attention to the 'big picture'. More often, scholars select one (or a few) key factors which are supposedly essential for democratization to take place or for a democracy to maintain its vibrancy.¹ As a result, many blank spots within research on democratization remain existent. This contribution will go beyond such approaches. Democratization, and all the above mentioned related topics, are highly complex matters, and in order to come up with valuable and credible conclusions, should be approached that way (De Vries 2009: 17-19).² A holistic framework is needed and, therefore, within this contribution the concepts of democracy, democratization, and democracy promotion/assistance will be dealt with in relation to each other. The main goal is to reveal those factors that are most relevant considering prospects for democratization in general - that is, those factors that have a strong positive or negative influences on the realization of democratization. I will insert the factors into a model, which can be used as a toolbox in order to analyze prospects for democratization in specific cases. Before doing so, an overview of global democratization during the last two decades will be given first. Thereafter, the concepts of democracy and democratization will be outlined and clarified, using different existing theories. The second section of this paper will analyze assumptions surrounding both concepts; the reasons why democratization is seen as a desired phenomenon and the obstacles in the way of the process will be discussed. After an outline of the structure-agency debate regarding democratization has been given, the model will be introduced.

¹ Examples are abundant: Patai (1973), Lewis (2002), Kedouri (1992), Weiffen (2004), Behdad & Nomani (2009), Kamrava (2007), Langohr (2004), Sardamov (2005), Brumberg (2003), Resul (2004), Perthes (2008), Harris (2009), Brownlee (2007), Diamond (2010) etc. all point to a single or a few key factors influencing democratization or non-democratic rule. The factors that they indicate range from culture and oil to the lack of a modern middle class, civil society or political institutions, powers in the global system, transnationalist capitalist classes and elite coalition cohesion. It is not to say that all these contributions have been useless. However, the theories seem too simplistic for a debate in need for a broader scope.

² For a more detailed reading on this issue, read the article on <http://www.hivos.net/Hivos-Knowledge-Programme/News/Complex-Dynamics-Civil-Political-Societies-and-Democratization-Processes>

A Short Overview: Democratization in the Balance

The transition of some thirty countries from non-democratic to democratic political systems, often described as ‘the third wave of democratization’³, is seen as one of the most, and perhaps even the single most, important global political developments of the late twentieth century (Huntington 1991: xiii). Roughly one hundred countries experienced at least some movement toward political openness and away from authoritarian or totalitarian rule (Carothers 2006: vii; Diamond 1999: 25). Although highly promising at first sight, at the beginning of the twenty-first century democracy’s third wave seems to have halted or even reversed (Diamond 1996: 30-31; 2008 Carothers 2002; 9; Whitehead 2008: 8; Plattner & Diamond 2010: 7). Despite the phenomenal increase of political pluralism, the outcomes of many attempted democratic transitions are very much in question or upfront disappointing (Carothers 2006: 3). The ‘worldwide democratic revolution’, predicted by President Ronald Reagan, Secretary of State George Shultz, and other high-level U.S. officials, did not bring about the expected large scale global political reforms. In many countries the foundations of democracy remain unsteady, and in others they are completely absent (Brownlee 2007: 2). Some regions, Russia, China and the Middle East being the most obvious, have missed out on the so called ‘revolution’ and can be regarded as white spots of the last wave (Gerrits 2006: 103).

According to some scholars it is especially the Islamic world, the (Arab) Middle East in particular, standing out among the regions resistant to democratization (Brenner 2008: 6; Youngs 2008: 151-152). The many particular existing forms of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East have been resilient enough to survive, and in some cases even ‘flourish’ after the (alleged) pro-democratization boost following the September 11th attacks. Although these regimes in many cases look somewhat democratized from the outside, a closer look reveals the superficial democratic processes that disguise and help legitimate authoritarian rule within such ‘semi-authoritarian hybrid systems’ (National Endowment for Democracy 2006: 2). All in all the state of democratic transition in the region does not look promising and it seems to be a bleak landscape for democrats: until now, the main character just never shows up (Brown & El-Din Shahin 2010: 1; Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004: 371).

Despite these disappointing democratization outcomes and the resilience of authoritarian regimes, or perhaps because of them, western governments keep spending considerable amounts of money and efforts on democracy promotion in the region. This has become particularly visible after the September 11 attacks. Although it seems reasonable to think that democratization has benefited from such promotion efforts, this is not the case. On the contrary, a (global) backlash against democracy promotion and assistance has come to the fore (Plattner 2009: 8). A growing number of governments regard western democracy assistance as ‘illegitimate political meddling’ and, fed by fear of ‘color revolutions’ as in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, implement new restrictive legal and extra-legal measures directed against democracy promotion organizations (Carothers 2006: 55; National Endowment for Democracy 2006: 2). Most commonly these restrictions are justified in the

³ The first (long) wave of democratization, with its roots in the American and French revolutions, took place from 1828 until 1926. The second (short) wave started during the Second World War (1943) and ended in 1962. Both waves were followed by reversed waves which took place between 1922 – 1942 and 1958 – 1975. For a comprehensive outline of all the waves see Huntington (1991: 13-26).

name of resisting Western (or United States) hegemony or protecting national sovereignty (Plattner 2009: 8). Apart from governments, democracy promotion seems to be increasingly mistrusted by a large part of the Middle Eastern population.⁴ Images of the (unpopular) US-led invasions in Afghanistan and especially Iraq, the 'assertive' and 'relentless' presentation of Bush's 'global freedom agenda' and the 'Bush doctrine', the frequent flow of threats in the direction of the so called 'Axis of Evil', the abuse of detainees in the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay prisons, the civil liberty encroachments in the name of 'the war on terrorism' and failed promotions of a fair solution for the Palestinians, all have had a negative impact on (Western) efforts to promote and assist democratization⁵ (Burnell 2010: 15-16; Carothers 2010: 59-65; Kodmani 2010: 154). The issue of democratization, thus, is more complex than it looks at first sight.

⁴ This trend can be observed in other parts of the world, such as Latin America, Russia and Asia, as well.

⁵ Although a backlash against democracy promotion exists, according to McFaul the reality is more complex. He claims that the 'interpretation of the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and American popularity on the one hand and the status of democratic values on the other is misleading. The correlation between Bush's rhetoric about democracy promotion and the U.S. fall from favor within the international community has created the false impression that other governments and peoples do not support democratic ideals or the foreign policies that seek to advance them' (McFaul 2004: 147-148). He goes on by stating that (1) democracy as an international norm is stronger today than ever, and democracy itself is widely regarded as an ideal system of government and (2) democracy promotion as a foreign policy goal has become increasingly acceptable throughout *most* of the international community (emphasize mine). Although this might (partly) be true, and McFaul admits this himself, 'the existence of norms does not mean that they are always followed' (ibid: 148). Besides that, one might have legitimate doubts about democracy (promotion) being a universal norm or value (in fact the debate on that issue is highly alive). For a full overview of McFaul's argumentation see his article 'Democracy Promotion as a World Value' (2004). 'Democracy as a Universal Value' by Sen (1999) and 'Universal Democracy' by Diamond (2003) are good starting points for exploring the debate on the universalism of democracy. A more general and highly interesting plead *against* (universality of) principles within democracy comes from Fish (1999). In his work *The Trouble With Principle* he even claims that universal principles are non-existent, because they are inherently contradictory.

Democracy

Quoting Laurence Whitehead ‘to [focus on] a topic that has already been examined from every conceivable angle for over twenty five centuries might seem unpromising, but it is also inescapable’ (Whitehead 2002: 7). Bookshelves full of literature on democracy exist, nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, the core of the issue will be examined here.

The Concept of Democracy

As with many concepts within social sciences, democracy is not easy to define: the term is used in an infinite number of ways. Although democracy has been discussed, debated, supported, attacked, ignored, established, practiced, destroyed and sometimes reestablished in the past twenty-five centuries, this has not led to agreement on fundamental questions about democracy (Dahl 1998: 3). Through the many years ‘democracy’ has meant different things to different people at different times and places’ (ibid). Democracy, as Dahl states, was not just invented once and for all (ibid: 9), and although it has spread, through time but also geographically, it never stayed the same as some kind of unambiguous concept. The ‘ancient tree of democracy’ was planted during the times of the Greeks and Romans (around 500 B.C.E.), establishing foundations so solid that they persisted for centuries (ibid: 11). With occasional (but thorough) changes the democratic political system was embraced in the following centuries by many different peoples (and later nations) in regions scattered around the globe: from representation in Western Europe and Italian city-states (republicanism) during the (late) middle ages, through the English, American and French revolutions, all the way up to the 20th and 21st centuries (Dahl 1989; Dunn 1992; Akkerman 2005; Fennema 2001).⁶ Looking back it seems fair to state that the Greeks gave us the word (literally meaning ‘rule by the people’), but did not provide us with a ready-to-use model (Birch 2007: 109).

As mentioned above, the word ‘democracy’ has no clear core meaning that is universally applicable and essentially objective (Whitehead 2002: 8). When it is defined in terms of either source of authority or purpose, serious problems of imprecision and ambiguity arise (Huntington 1991: 6).⁷ The difficult question to be raised is what counts as democracy? When is a country ‘allowed’ to claim the ‘title’? The term, in its (pre-)modern sense, was first used in the nineteenth century to describe a system of representative government in which the representatives are chosen by free competitive elections and most (male) citizens are entitled to vote (Birch 2007: 110). According to Freedom House a country is classified as an electoral democracy if it meets the criterion of choosing its political leaders in reasonably free and fair elections (Diamond & Plattner 2009: iv).⁸ Obviously, this

⁶ For a more lengthy overview of the history of democracy see Dahl (1989): *Democracy and its Critics* (chapters 1, 2 and 3); Dunn (1992): *Democracy: The Unfinished Journey: 508 B.C. to A.D. 1993*; Akkerman (2005): *Democratie: De Grondslagen van het Moderne Idee* (in Dutch) and Fennema (2001): *De Moderne Democratie: Geschiedenis van een Politieke Theorie* (in Dutch).

⁷ Birch explains that the term has to be regarded as currently contestable. The vagueness of the terms commonly used to define a democratic political system, the difficulty of clarifying these terms in a ‘value-free’ way, and the array of partially incompatible justifications for democracy advanced by democratic theorists are to be seen as sources of confusion (Birch 2007: 110-111). Therefore, this section does not try to give a timeless conceptualization on which everyone agrees. Considering the debatable character of the concept, there is bound to be disagreement over particular applications of the term, accompanied by a license for subjectivity and arbitrariness. This does not mean, however, that anything goes (Whitehead 2002: 7). This issue will be discussed more extensively later in this paper under the heading of ‘Democracy: critiques & critical perspectives’.

⁸ In addition, Freedom House gives an annual ranking of countries as Free, Partly Free or Not Free, based on their performance in protecting the civil liberties and political rights of their citizens (Diamond & Plattner: iv).

criterion does not clarify the concept to a great extent; what to make of 'reasonably free and fair' for example? Another quite minimal but well-known (procedural) definition is given by Schumpeter who states that 'the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter 1942: 260). David Held on the other hand considers democracy to be more than a political procedure; it should be seen as a process in which majorities should be constrained by institutional arrangements that protect minorities (Held 2006: 264).

However accurate such definitions may be, they do not really help us to understand the broader meaning of democracy.⁹ In order to tackle that problem, Schmitter and Karl distinguish between concepts, operative principles and procedures. The most distinctive feature of democracy at the conceptual level is said to be the existence of a broad category of 'citizens' who can hold rulers accountable for their actions in the public realm through the competition and cooperation of elected representatives (Schmitter & Karl 2009; Whitehead 2002: 10). Operative principles on the other hand, reveal the way in which democratic regimes actually function (ibid: 11), and democratic procedures must be regarded as the (minimum) procedural conditions indispensable (although insufficient) for the persistence of democracy (ibid: 10). Regarding the latter, Schmitter and Carl join Dahl in his findings. Dahl tries to clarify the conceptual question by distinguishing between 'ideal democracy' and 'actual democracy'¹⁰, without forgetting about the connections between both.¹¹ To clarify the concept, fundamental questions within both categories need to be answered (Dahl 1998: 28-31). Figure 1 represents Dahl's elements of democracy.

Democracy	
Ideal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What is democracy? •Why Democracy? 	Actual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What political institutions does democracy require? •What conditions favor democracy?

Figure 1 Dahl's main elements of democracy (Dahl 1998: 29)

This method will not be clarified in detail here¹², however, starting with the question what democracy is, these fundamental questions will be answered, more or less, along the way. Dahl continues by explaining what ideal democracy is: it provides opportunities for (1) effective participation, (2) equality in voting, (3) gaining enlightened understanding, (4) exercising final control over the agenda and (5)

⁹ The minimalist definition is insufficient and too demanding at the same time. Insufficient because it excludes the teleological component of democracy and too demanding because existing democracies cannot be expected to conform to the minimum standard consistently (Whitehead 2002: 10). Although Huntington agrees with the finding that the definition of democracy in terms of elections is a minimal one, he warns for using a more inclusive definition when looking for useful analysis. He continues by claiming that free, fair and open elections are the inescapable sine qua non of democracy: 'governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible [...]. These qualities may make such governments undesirable but they do not make them undemocratic' (Huntington 1991: 10)..

¹⁰ The same nuance is made by Paul Fairfield since, according to him, 'ideals are perfectly realized only in the imagination of theorists and ideologues, not in the real world of politics' (Fairfield 2008: xix).

¹¹ When democratic ideals are spelled out, the next step is to consider what the practical implications of such ideals are. The other way around, one can start by observing political practice and common usage, which then leads to definitions in terms of institutions and processes. The latter leaves questions of justification open for (academic) debate. Combining the two methods seems desirable.

¹² For a more detailed explanation of the method, I refer to Dahl's book *On Democracy* (1998).

inclusion of adults. Although no government is likely to measure up to these criteria,¹³ they 'provide highly serviceable standards for measuring the achievements and possibilities of democratic government' (ibid: 37-42). Six elements are needed to transform ideal democracy into actual (large-scale) democracy: (1) elected officials, (2) free, fair and frequent elections, (3) freedom of expression, (4) alternative sources of information, (5) associational autonomy and (6) inclusive citizenship (ibid: 84-93).¹⁴ Schmitter & Karl add two criteria to that list: (7) popularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding opposition from unelected officials and (8) the polity must be self-governing; it must be able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system (Schmitter & Karl 2009: 9).¹⁵ A country then, is only a democracy when it possesses all of the eight elements. This, however, does not imply that these elements are always sufficient for democracy, or that there is only one type of democracy. In fact, many potential (sub)types or combinations that are differently democratic exist: Greek, American, industrial, parliamentary, consociational, consensus, modern, assembly, representative, direct, participatory, radical, crude and even preventive and apolitical democracy are some examples (Barber 2003: 151; Birch 2007: 112-128; Dahl 1998: 102-104; Dunning 2008; Kioupkiolis 2010: 137; Lijphart 2008; Urbinati 2010). A more recently debated form is deliberative democracy, wherein political decision making relies on popular consultation and public deliberation. It adopts elements of direct and representative democracy.¹⁶ Different types of democracy also vary widely on elements like the degree of consensus and participation, access to the political realm, responsiveness of political leaders, institutionalization of majority rule, sovereignty of parliament, structures of political parties, pluralism of representation, territorial division of authority (federalism), concentration of authority in one or more persons (presidentialism) and the implementation of checks and balances. All these elements should not be seen as essential components of democracy, but rather as indicators of particular types of democracy, or else as useful standards for evaluating the performance of particular regimes (Schmitter & Karl 2009: 11-12).

So far, it has become clear that democracy is not just some particular, clear-cut set of rules, institutions or procedures. Nevertheless, the ideals of democracy have a tremendous power of attraction to many people all over the world. Therefore, one might conclude that democracy is a fairly uncontested ideal. Drawing such conclusions, however, seems too soon.

¹³ Huntington's hits the mark here when he states that 'political regimes will never fit perfectly into intellectually defined boxes, and any system or classification has to accept the existence of ambiguous, borderline, and mixed cases' (1991: 8). For an interesting overview on non-democratic elements of present day democracy see Chipkin (2009): 'Democracy and Dictatorship'.

¹⁴ The full explanation why these elements are needed can also be found in Dahl's work.

¹⁵ Probably, the latter has been taken for granted, however became more explicit under consideration after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and their reformations to 'democratic' systems.

¹⁶ More on deliberative democracy can be found, among others, in the work of Barber (1984): *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*; Elstub (2008): *Towards a Deliberative and Associational Democracy*; Estlund (2002): *Democracy*; Fishkin (2009): *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*; Gutmann & Thompson (2000): *Democracy and Disagreement: Why Moral Conflict Cannot be Avoided in Politics, and What Should be Done About it*; McAfee (2008): *Democracy and the Political Unconscious*; Mutz (2006): *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*; Rostbøll (2008): *Deliberative Freedom: Deliberative Democracy as Critical Theory*; Talisse (2005): *Democracy after Liberalism: Pragmatism and Deliberative Politics*; Dryzek (2009): 'Democracy as Deliberative Capacity Building'.

Democracy: Why it is Valued

Democracy is valued for various reasons. One motivation in favor of supporting the concept is the belief that democracy is a value in itself. Formulated differently, some believe that democratization is desirable (anywhere) because democracy itself has an intrinsic value. Such 'non-instrumental' arguments for democracy, thus, support the idea that democracy is justified in terms of the values, of which equality is one of the most noteworthy, that the democratic procedure itself realizes (Machin 2009: 103). As Machin notes (although he does not agree), 'democracy constitutes the public affirmation of citizens' moral equality [...] For the non-instrumentalist, then, citizens' democratic rights are analogous to their other rights: they have these rights in virtue of being moral creatures, whatever else is true' (ibid: 103-104). Amartya Sen and Robert Dahl are famous scholars who endorse the notion of democracy being a non-instrumental value. They consider the deed of practicing civil and political rights as essential for living a proper life as a social being. Political equality between individual members of a community is considered to be something inherently good (Sen 1999: 10; Dahl 1998: 64-65). However, not everybody who stands for this notion praises democracy all the way down. It is widely recognized that democracy inhibits an inherent deficit in the sense that it, in the words of Winston Churchill, 'is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried'.

Besides being seen as a non-instrumental value, democracy is desired by many because it is linked to other interests as well. To put it differently, democracy is seen as an instrumental value because it is believed to lead, for example, to peace, stability and prosperity. It depends on the context why democracy is favored by particular actors at particular moments in time. Therefore, motivations should be analyzed for any case on its own. For that reason, this section will not go into this issue any further.

Democracy: Critiques and Critical Perspectives

As much as democracy is an admired and pursued ideal, it has received a great deal of criticism as well. Many Greek philosophers and historians regarded Greek democracy as an insufficient and poor system. Democracy was seen as a form of government by the ignorant or the poor. Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides all shared such a vision. During the following two thousand years the political system identified as 'democracy' was held in general disrepute (Birch 2007: 109). Critical reactions on the chaotic events surrounding the French Revolution were ventilated by Edmund Burk, Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Alexis de Tocqueville.¹⁷ Sharing in the generally poor view of democratic government were the founders of the American constitution. The leaders of the French Revolution, the Founding Fathers and British people all described their political system as a republic or as representative and responsible government, and not as a 'democracy' as such (ibid). More modern 'contra-ideas' can be found in Anarchism and Guardianship. Anarchists like William Godwin, P.A. Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Emma Goldman and others, in general, claim that (democratic) states are coercive and thereby intrinsically bad. Therefore, they

¹⁷ For a more comprehensive account on these critics see Burke [1790] (2009): *Reflections on the Revolution in France*; Holmes & Meier (1975): *Henri de Saint-Simon: Selected Writings on Science, Industry and Social Organisation*; Hegel (1986): *Werke in 20 Bänden und Register, Bd. 12, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (in German); De Tocqueville [1840] (2008): *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (in French); Fennema (2001): *De Moderne Democratie: Geschiedenis van een Politieke Theorie* (in Dutch).

should be eliminated and replaced with voluntary associations¹⁸ (Dahl 1989: 37). Guardians reject the assumption made by democrats that ordinary people are qualified to govern themselves. Persons who are specially qualified to govern by reason of their superior virtue and knowledge should be entrusted rulership (ibid: 52). Ideas based on meritocracy are often ventilated by the young educated who oppose (neo-)populist political ideas and practices. At the other side, however, people (mainly coming from the working class) claim a crucial (non-democratic) role for a strong leader in defending (or reclaiming) stability and prosperity.

Of course, critique on democracy is just as context- and time-dependent as the content of the concept of democracy itself. Self-interested critiques, obviously, can always be found in the opinions of non-democratic rulers and their (clientelistic based) surroundings. Criticism also seems to flourish where democracy is regarded as a façade for more sinister (often geopolitical) purposes. This section, however, focuses on the broader perspectives on democratic ideas of constructivism and critical theory.¹⁹ As Whitehead mentions in his book, it is necessary to work with a (moderately) constructivist approach if theory on democracy and democratization is to be examined in the light of contemporary experience (Whitehead 2002: 7). In other words, context matters: democracy, non-democratic rule and authoritarianism are all concepts loaded with context-dependent connotations. The result is that democracy, not only as theoretical concept but also as existing political system, (within borders) seems to be what actors make of it. This is where constructivism and critical theory meet: the hegemonic definitions, *conceptions* and *practical models/systems*²⁰ used for the term 'democracy' are essentially political contestable and therefore changeable. The desirability of democracy, thus, depends on the way the concept is defined and interpreted, on the way it is institutionalized, but foremost on the degree to which the desired definition, interpretation and institutionalization match each other. Because of the malleability of democracy, understood as a particularly defined and institutionalized political system, it is not always desired by everyone involved. Formulated in the words used by Whitehead, this is the case 'both because of the good and the bad consequences for particular interests that will follow from *adopting [and implementing]* one meaning [or model] rather than another, and because although the concept has real substance, its meaning is not fixed by some extra-political authority [...] to which ultimate appeal can be made' (ibid: 15 emphasis mine). Discourse is highly relevant within this process of modeling, manipulating, interpreting and institutionalizing and through deliberation an agreed-upon meaning or model might arise. However 'even when the social consensus over a particular [model,] policy or a particular political discourse seems at its most overwhelming, the separate consciousnesses of individual citizens continue to engage in critical deliberation, rechecking, interrogating, and reinterpreting what seems to have been agreed' (ibid: 18). That is also why, as made clear in the previous section, any definition and established model of democracy will *remain* partly contestable and criticized. As Whitehead puts it, 'democracy has some indispensable components, without which the concept would be vacuous, but these indispensable elements are skeletal and can in any case be arranged in

¹⁸ Since anarchism is an even less coherent body of thought compared to democracy, this image of it obviously is simplistic and incomplete. See Dahl (1989) for more on this issue.

¹⁹ For a general introduction and a reading guide on both perspectives consult Baylis et al. (2008): *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*.

²⁰ Italics are used here to distinguish between the previous section of this chapter, which focused exclusively on defining the term 'democracy', and this section wherein the focus lies mainly on (critiques of) actual existing conceptions and models/systems of democracy.

various possible configurations' (ibid: 20).²¹ The procedural minimalist definition and model can be regarded as current hegemonic conception and many will describe a desired form of democracy in words and visions relating to that image. However true and understandable this might be, the purpose of this section is to show that choosing or supporting the hegemonic institutionalized definition is not self-evident. A consequence of the contestability of any particular definition, conception or model of democracy is that every hegemonic example of democracy is doomed to be criticized and regarded as undesirable by a selection of people.

²¹ In order to conduct research, however, concepts must be defined in particular (well substantiated) ways. That is why most commonly the hegemonic definition of democracy, given on the next page, is used by politicians, policymakers, and scholars.

Again, one might conclude from this reasoning that 'anything goes' and that the meaning of democracy depends on taste or fashion. Therefore, Whitehead's position on this issue deserves to be quoted in full here: '[This] charge of moral relativism directs attention to a real danger and therefore serves a constructive purpose. It can, however, be countered once we recall the distinction between (i) acknowledging the inevitability of conflict [about the hegemonic definition] and (ii) concluding from it that anything goes. There may be no single timeless stipulative definition that can be imposed from without regardless of local conventions and understandings, but there is a broad stream of meaning within which democratic discourse is mutually intelligible. Attempts to appropriate the term for meanings outside that stream have to be resisted not least because they would destroy the possibilities of reflexive dialogue on which any democracy must rest. Since there is no external fiat that can stipulate the precise status of each claimant to the designation of 'democracy', the main court that can adjudicate between valid and abusive challenges will have to be the court of democratic opinion [...] There can be no guarantee *either* that only morally sound interpretations of democracy will be validated or that morally sound interpretations of democracy will get even a provisional hearing. But the critical point for our purposes is that this deliberative filter constitutes a major socially grounded protection against the destruction of meaning and value that would otherwise accompany the contestability of concepts' (Whitehead 2002: 21-22). At the global level, the problem exists of how to contain excesses of relativism. Whitehead sees 'international civil society' as most promising area to function as an international deliberative filter (ibid: 24). However, it is the question whether this filter functions in real life. Rather, geopolitical and ideological hegemony/domination seems to dominate global politics.

Democratization

Although non-democratic government has been the norm for most of human history, democracy has never been more widespread, influential and demanded by people within non-democratic regimes than in today's world. In other words, many states have shifted from non-democratic to democratic rule. This section examines the processes underlying such shifts.

*Democratization as a Concept*²²

Democratization can be described as the process of introducing democratic aspects within the functioning of a state. Ignoring the earlier described ambiguity underlying the concept of democracy for a moment, we could simply state that the process starts with such introductions and ends when a state fulfills all the criteria needed in order to claim the title 'democracy'. According to the simple 'two turnover test'²³, for example, the exit of an authoritarian regime marks the beginning of democratization, while the process ends after competitive elections have given rise to two successive peaceful transfers of government between contending parties (Whitehead 2002: 26). Another, more sophisticated notion holds that the end of democratization is reached 'when all significant political actors accept that the electoral process has become established as 'the only game in town'' (ibid). Promoters of such perspectives presume that the problem of forming an elected government is the most important aspect of democratization. As Huntington states: 'if popular election of top decision makers is the essence of democracy, then the critical point in the process of democratization is the replacement of a government that was not chosen this way by one that is selected in a free, open, and fair election' (Huntington 1991: 9). Democracy viewed in this way thus implies some kind of end state or ideal form, whereas democratization implies a historical process towards that ideal (Qadir, Clapham & Gills 1993: 417).

Returning our focus on the section about democracy, however, both notions become untenable. Although right in defining democratization as a process, they are too focused on a strictly defined end state and thereby too dogmatic. While a consolidated democracy can indeed be considered as a desirable outcome, both notions guide attention to a range of objective facts without highlighting their value connotations. Democratization, however, cannot be defined by some fixed and timeless objective criterion because, as mentioned earlier, democracy itself is to be viewed as a contextually variable concept (Whitehead 2002: 26). Following Whitehead, 'democratization is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic and *open-ended* process. It consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics' (ibid, italics mine). Nevertheless, because it is so closely linked to 'democracy', it involves a combination of fact and value and therefore necessarily contains internal tensions (ibid). Thus, instead of defining democratization as a unambiguous and potentially rapid transition²⁴ with a particular permanent end state, democratization

²² This paragraph draws heavily on the work of Laurence Whitehead (2002), *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, Oxford University Press, New York (chapter 1).

²³ Dawisha (1997) gives the following example: 'When communism fell, a first round of elections was held. Typically two to four years later, a second round was held: if the group in power since the fall of communism was displaced, this would count as the first turnover. Only after this group or party was displaced by a second round of elections could one then speak of a country having passed the 'two turn-over test'' (Dawisha 1997: 43).

²⁴ A lot has been written on this so called 'democratic transition process' in which democratization is divided into sequential stages. These stages, being the authoritarian period, early transition, mid-transition, late transition and early consolidation, for a long time were claimed to be irreversible and leading straight into the direction of the end state of the

in this contribution is seen as a lengthy process of social construction that is necessarily open-ended. To put it differently, an 'interpretivist' theoretical approach is used in order to analyze democratization processes (see Whitehead 2002: 27).²⁵

A consequence of this approach is that, although in most cases the hegemonic form of democracy will be considered as the (ideal) outcome to which the process is leading, the actual outcome of the process is 'neither stable nor entirely predetermined' (ibid: 32). Clearly, one can never be certain about the eventual outcome of long-term and open-ended processes. Because it is not the outcome but the process that defines our object of study, democratization processes may not lead to predetermined hegemonic types of democracy. That does not imply, however, that there is no scholarly procedure to analyze *processes* called 'democratization'.²⁶ As Whitehead states, it is usually possible to conclude with reasonable confidence that there has been an intention (by the regime) to democratize. In that case a non-democratic regime establishes one or more of the components of democracy mentioned in the section on democracy. Indeed, one might wonder whether such an *intention* is enough. Intentions *might* be followed by clear and visible measures of implementation. But even in the examples where that is not the case, and instead the follow-up measures are abandoned or reversed (under a façade of formal democracy or not), referring to an ongoing process of democratization is not necessarily incorrect or misleading. If the collective imagination has been gripped by the future (possibility) of regime change and this vision influences behavior on the ground, then the process, although in many cases lingering and to a large extent invisible, lives on. All in all, although often difficult, processes of democratization are researchable. It is important to keep in mind, however, that just as multiple paths may lead to similar outcomes, 'highly similar processes may debouch into contrasting outcomes' (ibid: 34). Democratic consolidation, therefore, is possible rather than inevitable.

Democratic Consolidation? Democratization vs. Liberalization

One of the possible outcomes of a democratization process is a political system which fulfills most or many of the characteristics of a democracy such as mentioned before. After coming to the conclusion of the previous section, however, it is obvious that such an outcome is only optional. As mentioned in the first part of this contribution, many of the promising democratizations of the third wave did not end in full-grown consolidated democracies. Charles Tilly goes as far as to state that 'sunny optimism about the durability and inevitable advance of democratization seems utterly misplaced' (Tilly 2003) and Larry Diamond points to the fact that the third wave seems to be over²⁷ and that 'celebrations of

process, being 'democracy'. Considering the fact that most contemporary 'democratizations' do not follow this unambiguous linear process, theory on the transition process has been criticized since the beginning of the new millennium onwards. More on this issue can be found in Carothers (2002).

²⁵ The 'interpretivist' approach towards democratization can be stated, according to Whitehead, as follows. 'Democratization is best understood as a complex, long-term, dynamic, and open-ended process. It consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics. Like 'democracy' it necessarily involves a combination of fact and value, and so contains internal tensions' (Whitehead 2002: 27).

²⁶ Whitehead compares this kind of research with contemporary analysis of the unfolding of the European Union and the spread of global capitalism. As he states: 'If *these* topics can be illuminated by scholarly enquiry, notwithstanding all the imprecisions of terminology and the complexity of the causal chains involved, then so too can the comparative politics of democratization' (Whitehead 2002: 33).

²⁷ This however, does not imply that a third reversed wave is under way. Nevertheless, where Diamond spoke before of an equilibrium 'in which the overall number of democracies in the world neither increases nor decreases significantly' (Diamond 1996: 31; 2000), more recently he claims that the world has possibly entered a third reversed wave (Diamond 2008).

democracy's triumph are premature' (Diamond 1996: 31; 2008: 36). Recent changes have not allowed for some form of real power sharing nor have they limited the powers of ruling elites (Brown & Shahin 2010: 6). A common phenomenon of the 1980s, 90s and current times are the limited or flawed democracies most notorious in sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region. A flawed democracy as one of the outcomes of a democratization process is to be seen as a proto-democracy in which it is not clear whether a country will fall back into non-democratic rule or push on to a full democracy. A limited democratization most often occurs at the beginning of a democratization process and often takes the form of a consolidated semi-democracy. Systemic weaknesses are particularly relevant when analyzing democratization processes that lead to semi-democracies (Brooker 2009: 234). Weaknesses in the party system or electoral system, such as a weak state unable to guide the process of elections or incompetent politicians²⁸, may work as catalysts within a process towards semi-democratic systems. Such weaknesses can be exploited or even supported by those who profit from them, and they are often combined with active misuse of public power to influence elections (creating 'skewed electoral playing fields' instead of 'level playing fields' (ibid; Levitsky & Way 2010). Although still instruments potentially useful for keeping democratization alive, elections become semi-competitive that way. When electoral advantaging is taken beyond the limits of a semi-democracy however, in the case of using full scale electoral fraud and repressive force in order to 'win' elections, a regime turns into a (badly) democratically disguised dictatorship (ibid: 235). This transition may be noticed as fairly obvious, although, considering the sliding scale, most often it will be quite hard to distinguish between both types. Nevertheless, the differences between them are considerable. Semi-dictatorships should not be viewed as limited or hybrid forms of dictatorship. As Brooker notes, 'they are 'semi' dictatorships only in the sense of using multiparty *semi*-competitive elections to provide themselves with a more convincing democratic disguise than if they had either refused to hold *any* form of election or allowed only *non*-competitive elections, with only one candidate, party or coalition' (ibid). Although elections within semi-dictatorships are given a multiparty gloss, they fall short of the democratic credibility of elections held within semi-democracies in which 'the regime's official party actually competes for votes (to some degree) with other parties that are (to some degree) autonomous, and not puppet parties.

Neither semi-democracies nor semi-dictatorships (fully) fit the description of the hybrid regimes mentioned by, among others, Ottaway (see Ottaway 2003). Although difficult in some cases, the different types should not be mixed up. All may become consolidated political systems, but they are different nevertheless. Semi-democracies are limited democracies that fit most (important) characteristics of a democracy mentioned before, although only partially. Semi-dictatorships do not, but try to convince other countries that they are legitimate by faking democratic elections. Although hybrid regimes, often labeled as semi-authoritarian, might have characteristics of both, they actually are a different phenomenon: they fall more or less in between. In order to understand this it is necessary to look at the concept of 'liberalization' beside the concept of 'democratization'. Political liberalization, in a non-democratic setting, includes a mix of policy and social changes of which toleration for opposition is the most important. Formulated differently, it is the partial opening (less censorship of the media, the releasing of political prisoners, the return of exiles etc.) of a non-

²⁸ For more on this issue see Carothers (2006): *Confronting the Weakest Link. Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*.

democratic system short of the election of governmental leaders through genuine free and competitive elections (Linz & Stepan 1996: 3; Huntington 1991: 9). Democratization, in contrast, is a wider and more specifically political concept: it entails liberalization, but it also requires open contestation over the right to win control over the government and thus free and fair elections (ibid). As Linz and Stepan argue, 'a *democratic* transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new politics, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*' (Linz & Stepan 1996: 3). All three mentioned alternatives fall short of this end state, however, semi-democracies less than semi-authoritarian regimes and semi-dictatorships. Both liberalization *and* democratization are absent within semi-dictatorial settings. Within semi-democracies both processes can be found, although democratization at times may be jeopardized and the outcome of the process remains uncertain (in the sense that democratic consolidation may never be reached). A process of liberalization can be found within semi-authoritarian regimes as well, while it depends on the state of such a regime in how far it is democratizing.

As mentioned earlier, while the early hybrid regimes of the Middle East were thought to be on their way to becoming democracies, they turned out to be consolidated forms of non-democratic rule.²⁹ If such regimes do not introduce (semi-)competitive elections in which (more or less) autonomous parties are able to compete for governmental positions at some point in time, the term democratization no longer applies while the term liberalization still might.³⁰ By distinguishing between both concepts it becomes clear that, although liberalization might lead to democratization, there can be liberalization without democratization (Linz & Stepan 1996: 3; Huntington 1991: 9). In fact, in many cases (especially within the Middle East³¹) political liberalization has not brought democratization, let alone consolidated democracies (Brownlee 2007: 6; Schmitter 2010: 26). The 'halfway house' in such cases has become a fortress and a way of life instead of a way station (Brownlee 2007: 16).

²⁹ This does not make such regimes semi-dictatorial. Although hybrid regimes use elections as a façade to gain legitimacy they provide more freedom to political and civil society compared to their semi-dictatorial counterparts. Hybrid regimes make use of political liberalization in order to hold on to power; semi-dictatorships do not.

³⁰ This is a typical case of a blurry border. When hybrid regimes become consolidated the process of democratization ceases to exist. However, it is very difficult to mark the exact moment of closure. As mentioned in this chapter, even in cases where democratic follow-up measures are abandoned or reversed, referring to an ongoing process of democratization is not necessarily incorrect or misleading. That does not imply, though, that democratization lingers on forever after the process was set in motion at a particular moment in time. When a regime keeps using the process of liberalization in order to protect itself from losing power without implementing *genuine* democratic elements, it no longer earns the label of being in a process of democratization. Nevertheless, the democratization process might be restarted at any moment, considering the fact that (civil) society in general finds itself in a constant flux.

³¹ This does not imply that processes of (de)liberalization are uniform across the region. As Albrecht and Schlumberger state: 'political liberalization and deliberalization are not linear processes that occur in easily discernable patterns in the MENA region. Variations in both timing and scope are significant and disprove "end of history"-style hypotheses. Political liberalization and deliberalization are successfully employed by Arab regimes as strategies for political survival (Brumberg, 2002). Their alternating use is ultimately a function of each individual country's political situation at a given moment in time, that is, its given constraints and opportunities' (Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004: 374).

Structure versus Agency Explanations of Democratization

It has become clear that democratization should not be considered as a linear process leading to a predetermined unambiguous outcome. The road to any kind of democracy is 'bumpy' to say the least and full of potential downturns. In this contribution a model will be introduced in which 'all' relevant positive and negative contributions to democratization are combined (as far as possible). Before introducing and clarifying that model, one more issue has to be discussed.

The third wave of democratization, mainly occurring in Latin-America, post-communist Eastern Europe and South-East Asia, marked the beginning of a lively debate on the different possible causes of democratization (Amineh forthcoming). One of the main distinctions between causes of democratization is the one between structural and agency theories (see Mazo 2005). Theories focusing on structural explanations emphasize conditions for democracy and see democratization as a gradual process (Amineh forthcoming; Brownlee 2007: 18). Such theories were especially dominant during the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, agency theories, popular ever since the third wave, 'emphasize that the actions and decisions of social actors determine whether democracy emerges' (Amineh forthcoming). Although supporters of such theories acknowledge that certain preconditions are necessary for democratization to take place, it is ultimately the agency of human beings that determines which type of government arises (ibid).³² Agency theories have received the critique of focusing only on the signs of supremacy of the human will in regard to the collapse of non-democratic regimes. Brownlee, for example, claims that historical backgrounds that preceded and culminated in regime change are neglected when only the fall of a regime is examined. Scholars who apply such a method will be unable to explain why a particular regime fell while similar ones elsewhere did not (Brownlee 2007: 17-18). On the other hand, structural theories are accused of overestimating the durability of authoritarianism (ibid: 20). I would add to this view that such overestimation of durability bears the risk of self-fulfilling prophecies: democratization will be limited because considered as 'mission impossible' from the beginning. Although leaning towards the structural theory, Brownlee pleads for 'a balanced and careful integration of structure and agency' (ibid: 21). The first attempts of such an approach were made in the late 1990's, for example by Haggard and Kaufman (1997), who tried to connect structure and agency theories by analyzing how interests and choices of political actors, who are engaged in democratic transitions, are influenced by structural conditions (like economic conditions and social forces) (Amineh forthcoming). Although such research has been a good first attempt, it does not reach far enough in uncovering the symbiosis between structure and agency. As Amineh states, 'democratization should be understood as the outcome of a complex interaction between *both* structural and agency factors' (ibid, emphasis mine). He continues by noticing that we shall hardly increase our understanding of democratization if we decide to focus on structure or agency alone (ibid).³³ The durability of regimes, that is the

³² Note that structural and agency theories are overall categories covering different notions on which variables determine democratization processes. Although such notions might share an overall category (structural or agency), that does not make them necessarily compatible. Within structural theories scholars may, for example, concentrate on culture, religion, economic development or the quality of a state, while scholars applying agency theories might focus on the role of political society, civil society or the international community.

³³ Amineh's view on this issue, considering its clarity, deserves to be quoted in full here: 'Actors do not function in a vacuum. Structural factors influence democratization indirectly, by shaping the preferences, ideas and possibilities for action of political agents. At the same, these very actors can change the structure under which they act. None of the structural- (culture, economy, international system, political institutions) and agency factors (preferences, decisions, and

protection from (opposition) challenges, is explained by structural theories. Structural factors give insight which regimes are likely to be unstable, weak and otherwise exposed to change (e.g. democratization) (Brownlee 2007: 23). This structure influences possibilities for human agency (for example 'projects' of external democracy promotion), however, this relation works in the opposite direction as well: structures are influenced and restructured by agency. At particular moments in time, when different variables 'fit together' in certain ways, windows of opportunity appear which can be used to alter structures. Figure 2 and 3 show this process schematically.

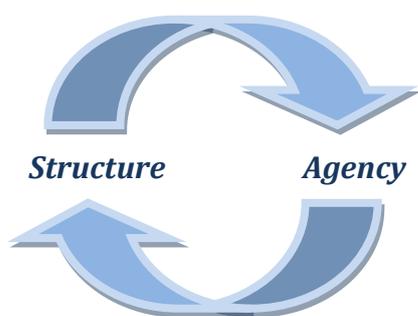


Figure 2 The Structure - Agency Symbiosis

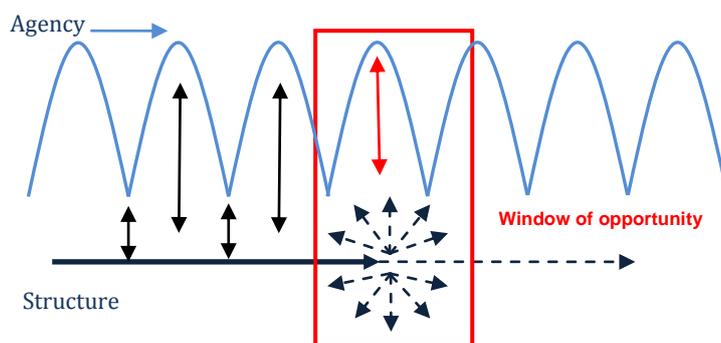


Figure 3 Structure, Agency and Windows of Opportunity

Figure 3 shows the interaction between agency (the light-blue waves) and structure (the dark-blue horizontal arrow). At particular points in time windows of opportunity arise in which the combination of (1) a peak in agency (e.g. a strong leader) and (2) the interaction between structure and agency (the red double arrow) leaves opportunities for change (in the structure). When seized, such opportunities have the *potential* of changing the 'course' of the structure (the small blue dotted arrows). Note that, (1) although changed, the structure keeps existent and thereby the structure-agency dynamics as well; (2) in the context of democratization this dynamic occurs at (sub-)national, regional, international and supra-national levels simultaneously.

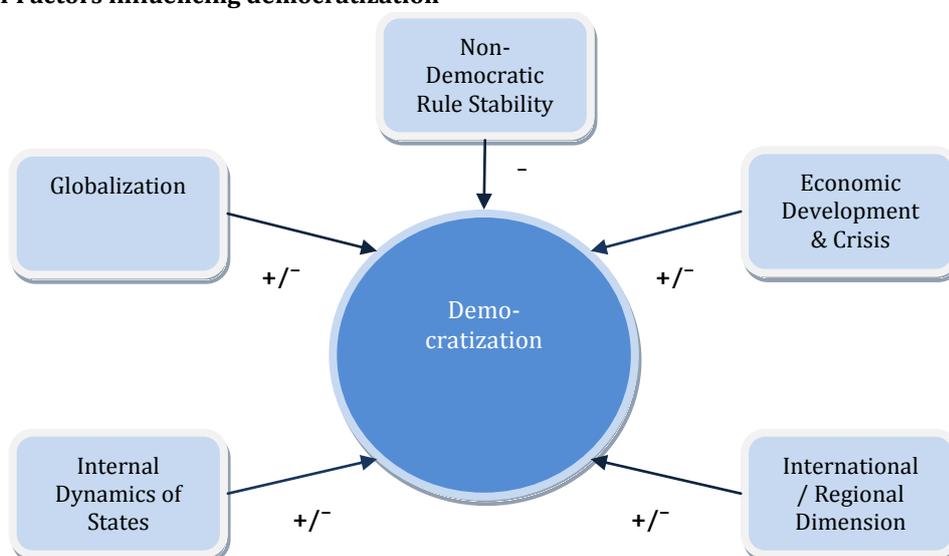
actions) should ultimately be understood to act in exclusivity of the others. We thus need to overcome the agency-structure dualism, a-historic structuralism and determinism on one side and a-historic voluntarism on the other side, in the analysis of both global-, and national politics and provide an ontological and epistemological foundation for a non-deterministic yet structurally grounded explanation of democracy and democratic transition. Agency and structures, ideas and material conditions are bound together and mutually influence each other' (Amineh forthcoming). For more on this issue see Cox (1987), Baylis et al. (2008), Wendt (1999) and Friedman & Starr (1997).

Factors Influencing Democratization: The Introduction of a Model

Democratization processes are so complex that 'no single variable will ever prove to be universally necessary or sufficient for it' (Bellin 2004: 141).³⁴ The model that is going to be introduced in this section is innovative because it is based on that principle. Every model necessarily simplifies reality. However, it should do so in a responsible manner: oversimplifying gives unacceptable bias. The model that is going to be introduced (see figure 4) combines different variables and interconnects them instead of approaching them in an isolated matter. In other words, all factors combined in the model contribute, in a positive or negative way, to democratization of a state, although differently in particular cases.

The model can be used as a toolbox for the analysis of specific cases: factors have a different influence in different contexts.³⁵ Particular factors which are very important and influential at one specific moment in time might be less important or even irrelevant at another moment.³⁶ To quote Huntington: 'the causes of democratization are [...] varied and their significance over time is likely to vary considerably' (Huntington 1991: 39). Secondly, the model is not a user manual applicable for implementing democracy where missing. The complexity of the issue and the unpredictable influences of human agency do not allow for such a manual to exist. Indeed, the model may overlook factors which might be (highly) influential or incorporate others which turn out to be negligible. When considered necessary such factors can be added to, or removed from, an analysis/the model.

Figure 4 Factors influencing democratization



³⁴ Political scientists in this case speak of the problem of 'overdetermination'. 'By this they normally mean having a multiplicity of plausible theories to explain an event and the consequent problem of establishing the relative validity of those theories. [...] To occur historically, an event almost has to be overdetermined theoretically. Such is clearly the case with democratization' (Huntington 1991: 36-37). The model introduced in this section shows the factors which are likely to play a role in democratization processes. However, it does not solve the problem of overdetermination, considering the fact that scholars still have to find out which factors are of relevance in specific cases.

³⁵ An assumption underlying the model is the necessity of 'stateness' for democracy and democratization. That is to say that, although the relation between democratization and state-sovereignty may be 'an awkward coupling' sometimes (see Whitehead 2010a), in order to flourish, democratization 'will still have to be grounded on a basic respect for state sovereignty' (Whitehead 2010a: 41). For more on this see Linz & Stepan 1996, chapter 2 as well. This, however, does not mean that I do not believe in a democratic system in a non-state setting (e.g. a global democratic regime). Nevertheless, for that to happen, a contra-hegemonic vision has to be institutionalized: something that is not likely to happen in the near future.

³⁶ Democratization processes differ between particular non-democratic regime types as well. For more on this issue see Brooker (2009) chapter 7, Linz & Stepan (1996) chapter 4 and Hadenius & Teorell (2007).

Non-democratic Rule Stability

Non-democratic rule stability has an influence on the possibility of democratization and the ease of reaching that goal. It will be difficult, although not impossible, for democracy to take root when a non-democratic regime enjoys high degrees of stability. On the other hand, declining legitimacy, unsatisfactory performances and the resulting regime destabilization have contributed to democratization in the past (Huntington 1991: 46). Thus, factors like regime capacity and political and civil opposition capacity have an influence on democratization as well. That implies that a certain overlap exists between processes of non-democratic rule (de)stabilization and processes of democratization.³⁷ Non-democratic rule destabilization does not necessarily lead to more democratic oriented regimes. Although opportunities for democratization increase when non-democratic regimes destabilize, such phenomena of destabilization may have other consequences. The model introduced in this section focuses exclusively on factors influencing democratization opportunities.

Economic Development and Crisis

The relation between economic development and democratization has been analyzed and described extensively in the academic literature. A complex relation exists between both concepts, although it is an ambiguous one. No level or pattern of economic development in itself is either sufficient or necessary to bring about democratization, however, an overall *correlation* exists between the phenomena (Huntington 1991: 59). As mentioned earlier, it is widely believed that a direct correlation exists between the level of democracy of a state and successful capitalist industrial development (Amineh forthcoming). The assumption is that an economic basis is required for (the facilitation of) democracy. As Martin Lipset argued fifty years ago, the more well-to do a country is, the better its prospective for democratization (Diamond 2010: 97). Successful transitions towards democracy, it is believed, need the rise of an independent social (middle) class³⁸ and an autonomous private sector, and thus alter state-society relations (ibid). At the same time, successful transitions will strengthen those classes and sectors, consolidating the space for political participation. Linz & Stepan argue that states do not just need a market economy but also an 'economic society', having a nontrivial degree of market economy and owner diversity, in order to reach the status of a *consolidated* democracy. Although a consolidated democracy will not exist without a *partly* free market nor will it come into existence under the wings of a *completely* free market (Linz & Stepan 1996: 11-12; Dahl 1993). In sum, the overall level of income in a society correlates strongly with the ability to sustain a (stable) democracy (Fukuyama 2005).

Democratization, however, is not determined simply by economic development (Huntington 1991: 63). If that were to be the case, countries like Czechoslovakia and East Germany should have been democratic in 1976, and Spain, Portugal and Poland should have become democracies sooner than they actually did (ibid). Nowadays many countries in the Middle East are quite 'well-to-do' as well (Diamond 2010: 97). Comparing per capita income levels, Kuwait almost matches Norway, Bahrain matches France, and Oman matches Portugal. Even countries like Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Yemen are no poorer than Indonesia or India (ibid). Although economic internationalization was

³⁷ For more on non-democratic rule and regime stability see working paper ... in this serie.

³⁸ This notion, however, is contested. See, for example, Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens (1992), *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

believed to open the door to political reform everywhere, in some cases it, instead, paved the way for even firmer authoritarian control in the face of perceived free-market threats (Youngs 2008: 164). Per capita income figures, thus, do not tell the whole story: they, for example, leave out the distribution of income. Recently published research, however, rejects the notion that inequality hampers democratization. Although it hurts consolidation, it does not seem to have a net effect on democratization (Houle 2009: 615). Besides that, human development figures of some Middle Eastern non-democratic regimes do not differ from democratic states like Bulgaria, Panama, Indonesia and South Africa (Diamond 2010: 97). Instead, one of the main factors probably influencing democratization is the economic structure of a country. Rentier states, heavily dependent on natural resources, with all their characteristics seem difficult to democratize. Extensive oil resources are often said to enable regimes to keep on to their power. Energy (mainly oil and gas) exports make the state relatively autonomous of society, since it does not have to rely on taxable income from privately owned sources of wealth. Income from energy resources are used by the ruling elite to buy loyalty and obedience. In other words, regimes are able to institutionalize clientelistic state-society relations by using the money received from oil-exports. Additionally, the money can be used in order to facilitate coercive tools, like the security apparatus of a state.³⁹

Major discontinuities in the status of global democracy figures can be partly attributed to shifts of the world economy (Whitehead 2010: 47). Although not the only factors of relevance, economic shifts in 1929, 1989 and 1998 probably contributed to changes in democratization patterns. Economic crisis may hinder democratization and destabilize democracies but, the other way round, it may lead to the fall of authoritarian regimes as well. Huntington claims that 'the combination of substantial levels of economic development and short-term economic crisis [...] was the economic formula most favorable to the transition from authoritarian to democratic government' (Huntington 1991: 72). Indeed, it is too early to tell what the consequences of the crisis of 2008 will be. However, they seem complex and dependent on regional characteristics (Whitehead 2010).⁴⁰

International/Regional Dimension⁴¹

Where the international dimension is important considering non-democratic regime (de)stabilization, the same applies for prospects for democratization. As Aarts (2007) mentions: 'Part of the answer we are looking for certainly lies somewhere outside the box of domestic politics. It appears to be far more conceivable that the crucial difference between the success and failure, or the persistence and fall, of monarchies [or other forms of non-democratic rule] can be found in the regional and global strategic-economic picture rather than in the local one. At the very least a combination of the two perspectives is necessary to get to a reasonable explanation. It would be rather simplistic to attribute the survival of regimes *solely* to external backing, but it would be equally naïve to suppose that such support (or the lack of it!) would be of no importance' (Aarts 2007: 253-254). Linkages to major global powers and major global power leverage both have an effect on the stability of non-democratic regimes. Such linkages and leverage may strengthen or weaken regime stability. When regimes are

³⁹ It is important to realize that the mentioned effects of natural resources on the political character of states are ambiguous and, therefore, disputed. For more on this issue see Karl (1997), Ross (2001), Smith (2004), Herb (2005), Luciani (2007), Dunning (2008), Youngs (2008a), Hartog (2010).

⁴⁰ For more on the effect on economic crisis on Democratization, see Huntington (1991) chapter 2 and Whitehead (2010).

⁴¹ For a recent contribution on the international dimension of democratization see Teixeira (2008).

weakened by the international dimension, transition to (more) democratic regime-types becomes one of the potential consequences. The specific influence of the international dimension, however, is dependent on many underlying (and partly interconnected) factors.

Multi-level Global Politics

Most important is the insight that global politics take place at different interconnected levels. Political actors create and (try to) implement policy in a complex environment. Global politics includes decision-making on different levels of collectivity: (1) where it is expected that developments on one level influences other levels and (2) where it is expected that decision-making can be 'simultaneous': political actors try to influence developments on a particular level by taking action on another (Burgoon 2009). Politics of international decision-making and negotiating, thus, can be conceived as multi-level games.⁴² Political actors play simultaneously on national, international, supra-national, regional and sub-national interconnected levels. Democratization takes places in this context as well and, therefore, the prospects and outcomes of such processes depend on the interests, ideas and power of all relevant players, and the relations between them. When major global powers support the idea of a particular form of democracy, which fits their interests, chances for democratization increase. Interests and (institutionalized) ideas of major powers, however, are not enough for democratization to take place. Complex configurations of ideas and interests of less powerful states have to be taken into the equation as well.⁴³ Such states may commit themselves to anti-hegemonic struggles or, on the other hand, they potentially contribute to (and, therefore, are part of) the hegemonic project. Configurations of ideas and interests of all relevant players are not only complex but dynamic as well. Democratization may, for example, fit in the strategy of a hegemonic actor at a certain moment in time. However, when it does not fit its interests, chances fade. In other words, democratization only takes place when the configuration of multi-level global politics supports such a development.

Policies of External Actors

This factor is clearly related to the factor of multi-level global politics. When configurations of global politics allow democratization to take place, the democratization of a state becomes (perhaps decisively) influenced by 'the actions of governments and institutions external to that country' (Huntington 1991: 85). In fact, it is very well possible to identify historical periods in which the international context has been highly important (Pridham 2008: 54). As mentioned earlier, the Cold War proved to be a phase wherein potential democratization was retarded by major global powers, because it did not fit their interests. The events of 1989 and September 11th 2001 changed such policies, although only partially. Besides changing policies of powerful states, it is believed that chances of democratization increased when a change occurred in the leadership, doctrine, popular

⁴² Putnam, in his article of 1988, speaks of 'the logic of two-level games'. He states that 'the complexities for the players in this two level game are staggering. Any key player at the international table who is dissatisfied with the outcome may upset the game board, and conversely, any leader who fails to satisfy his fellow players at the domestic table risks being evicted from his seat. On occasion, however, clever players will spot a move on the board that will trigger realignments on other boards, enabling them to achieve otherwise unattainable objectives. [...] Neither of the two games [domestic and international] can be ignored by central decision makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign' (Putnam 1988: 434). In today's world we rather speak of multi-level games, considering the fact that, besides national and international levels, supra-national, regional and sub-national levels exist.

⁴³ To raise the level of complexity even higher, Pridham (2008) argues that 'given the ever increasing impact of interdependence, the key issue is the interactions between different external factors [and actors] and different levels of domestic systems' (Pridham 2008: 69).

involvement and political alignment of the Roman Catholic Church (ibid: 75). Change, however, can be difficult to reach when path dependency stands in the way. Patterns may become so (seemingly) logical that actors create an aversion against change. In other words, patterns of non-democratic rule, when deeply rooted and institutionalized, may be difficult, if not impossible, to alter.

Obviously, the policies of external actors are closely related to the linkage to and leverage of major global powers. When major external powers (potentially supported by a large Diaspora and/or pressure groups) support democratization in a particular state, it may not become inevitable, although much more likely.

Democracy Promotion

When the global political configuration suits democratization, outcomes depend on the desired nature of the democracy promoted and democracy promotion strategies used by those who support and guide the process.⁴⁴ Relatively little has been done deliberately and specifically to promote (and protect) democracy across national borders, until recently (Schmitter 2008: 27). Although democracy promotion and protection (DPP) is often skeptically approached,⁴⁵ the possibility that external democracy promotion has contributed positively to unprecedented successful outcomes has to be left open (ibid: 31). Schmitter finds that DPP actually contributes positively to democratization when distributed in a certain fashion, regardless of differences in cultural or historical contexts or the stage of regime change. Nevertheless, availability of 'critical masses of financial support' are needed and DPP seems better suitable for protecting democracy than promoting it in the first place (ibid).⁴⁶

The increasing imposition of political conditionality has been one of the most significant changes in the international dimension of democratization (Pridham 2008). Together with democracy promotion efforts, such policies have the potency to contribute positively to democratization. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the introduction of this contribution, potential (global) backlashes against democracy promotion and assistance may obstruct such efforts. Longer-term and indirect consequences of democracy promotion as well as direct and immediate ones may support or hinder democratization in the long run.

Snowball-Effect and Zeitgeist

One of the potential effects of growing (international) interconnectedness is the 'snowball' (or 'domino'/demonstration') effect of democratization. Democratization in a particular country is increasingly capable of triggering a comparable (and almost simultaneous) process in another country (especially when such countries are geographically proximate and culturally similar (Diamond 2010: 102)). Democratization of a country potentially encourages others to achieve the same goal, and many successful democratization processes in a short while (globally or regionally) may lead to a reduction of self-confidence and legitimacy of non-democratic rulers (Brooker 2009: 201). Indeed, demonstration effects in particular cases contribute differently to the outcomes of such cases. Nevertheless, they have the general influence of demonstrating how democracy is possibly achieved,

⁴⁴ Note that not only states are involved in democracy promotion. The role of non-state actors should not be underestimated. See Scott (1999) for the influence of political foundations and think-tanks in democracy promotion.

⁴⁵ See Schmitter (2008) for fourteen skeptical propositions.

⁴⁶ For the details of his analysis see Schmitter (2008).

and they show what practices to avoid as well⁴⁷ (Huntington 1991: 101). ‘Strategic swing states’ (Iran and Russia, for example), explained by Diamond as those states whose evolution towards or away from democracy greatly determine the future of democracy in the world (Diamond 2001), are especially important in this regard.

Snowball-effects may lead in the opposite direction as well. This insight is linked to the recent backlash against democracy promotion. The notion of western democracy promotion as illegitimate political meddling combined with (and triggered by) the U.S. led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, have had a negative impact on (western-style) democracy appreciation, especially within populations of the Middle East. Such feelings are (mis)used by non-democratic rulers who try to make democratization efforts look bad. However, in order to be considered as a negative phenomenon, democratization does not need such efforts of non-democratic rulers. When democratization is used in order to mask other (geo-political) goals, or when it is perceived that way, its bad name will probably follow automatically. This potential negativity surrounding democracy promotion and democratization leaves room for opposing visions to fill the vacuum (e.g. the Chinese or Russian models).

Zeitgeist, coming from German intellectual tradition and meaning ‘spirit of the times’ (Linz & Stepan 1996: 74), is closely related to the concept of snowball-effects. To put it bluntly, democratization will be achieved more easily when the *Zeitgeist* is in favor of (particular forms of) democracy than when it is not. Or, as Linz and Stepan formulate it, ‘when a country is part of an international ideological community where democracy is only one of many strongly contested ideologies, the chances of transiting to [...] democracy are substantially less than if the spirit of times is one where democratic ideologies have no powerful contenders’ (ibid). The (reversed) waves of democratization show that the combination of snowball-effects and *Zeitgeist* plays an important role in influencing the spread of democracy or contending ideologies. After the American and French revolutions in 1783 and 1789 democratization discourse and activity, in general, became *bon ton*. A *Zeitgeist* negative for democratization came into existence after the Napoleonic wars and the congress of Vienna. The democratization-positive environment vanished as a consequence of the rehabilitation of the formerly dispelled monarchies, the weight ascribed to the status quo and the abolishment of rights granted after the French revolution. After the ‘revolution year’ 1848, in which many uprisings occurred in Europe, the tide turned. The same occurred at the end of the 19th century, when workers, strengthened and united as a consequence of the industrial revolution, commanded suffrage. After World War 1, however, in the aftermath of a highly destructive four years in Europe, the rise of communism and fascism created strong opponents of democracy. Although the allies won the war and, in the face of United States leadership and decolonization, the chances for democratization seemed strong, it was the cold war (after World War 2) that spoiled such prospects. After 1975, but especially after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, ‘the spirit of times’ became well-disposed towards ‘democratizers’ again. Nowadays we find ourselves in stagnation or even a reversed wave of democratization.

⁴⁷ Gül, for example, considers the democratization of Eastern Europe as an example for democratization of the MENA region. For more on this issue see Gül (2008).

Internal Dynamics of States

'You cannot impose democracy on a country that does not want to be democratic' (Fukuyama 2005). Although the international dimension is a very (and sometimes the most) important factor within democratization processes, most scholars and practitioners acknowledge that democratization is not an export business, and democracy can only take root when it is homegrown (Plattner 2009: 1). As Bermeo states in her conclusion in a recently published contribution on the exportability of democracy⁴⁸, 'we are forced to conclude that democracy is not exportable' (Bermeo 2009: 242). An external actor is (almost) never the prime mover in promoting democratization anywhere: unless there is a strong domestic demand by local actors who want democracy, democracy cannot come about in any society (Fukuyama 2005). To put it slightly differently, the impetus for democratization must come from within (Rakner et al. 2008: 2). Indeed, democratic features in democratic latecomers have not all come from the outside. Internal dynamics are (evenly) important as well: in order to influence outcomes of democratization, external actors have to work with and through domestic actors (McFaul 2007: 47). Different factors play a role in the internal dynamics of a state.

History

Every current situation is rooted in historic events. Democracy in Western Europe is rooted in an elongated process of struggling for participation and representation. Histories involving colonialism, dependency and imposed state-formation may have hindered democratization in countries all over the world. According to Lisa Anderson, most of the Middle Eastern states failed to develop modern bureaucratic institutions as a result of the legacy of the Ottoman Empire's collapse, European colonial policies and global support of rentier regimes ('in other words, the modern history of the region') (Anderson 2006: 209). In a recent contribution, Avineri argues that those countries that have experienced successful transitions to democracy (whatever that may be)⁴⁹ have one thing in common: a 'usable past' (Avineri 2010: 87, 96). Memories, institutional and normative structures anchored in 'democratic' traditions help societies to become democratic (also after major setbacks) or to stay that way. Countries without such a history miss the foundation on which to build alternative societies (ibid: 90).⁵⁰ Democratic development, thus, is a multigenerational process that needs some preconditions. When present, democracy has a much greater chance of development and stabilization than otherwise. When not, but when democratization is desired nevertheless, attempts to develop a democratic culture should be made.

When countries manage to democratize, consolidation is far from given. In fact, consolidation of young democracies in many cases is highly problematic and uncertain. They are especially at risk during their first five years of existence (Kapstein and Converse 2008: xviii). As Huntington notes, these 'new democracies are, in effect, in a catch-22 situation: lacking legitimacy they cannot become effective; lacking effectiveness they cannot develop legitimacy (Huntington 1991: 258). The way new democracies deal with such problems decides the eventual outcome of the democratization process and, thus, in how far they will be able to remain democracies.

⁴⁸ See Barany & Moser (eds) (2009): *Is Democracy Exportable?*

⁴⁹ Avineri names the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary as illuminating successes.

⁵⁰ This, however, does not mean that such countries are not able to become democratic. 'History is not always destiny' (Kapstein & Converse 2008: xv) and historical cultural traditions are not immutable but, like all social traditions, malleable and subject to change (Avineri 2010: 91).

Civil and Political Society and the Distribution of Power

The internal distribution of power between non-democratic and pro-democratic elements in a state is one of the most critical factors when explaining democratization (McFaul 2007: 51). Democratization is possible when the balance of power leans towards the pro-democratic side or when the distribution of power is more or less equal between both sides. When societal and political opposition forces acquire enough power, they have the possibility to claim democratization (ibid). In order for that to happen, a strong and autonomous civil *and* political society is needed. Democratic demands have potential only when both are influential enough (and partly work together).⁵¹ Civil and political society are not always powerful, nor united enough to make democratization happen. At the same time, civil and/or political society may be strong enough while their aims are non-compatible with democratization ('uncivil society'). Thus, even in established democracies with strong political institutions there are reasons to doubt the simplistic idea that when it comes to civil society, 'the more the better' (Carothers 1999: 22-23). In sum, strong (but balanced), autonomous and united civil and political societies in the right context, when both support genuine democratization, increase chances for democratization, however, do not lead to it necessarily.

Culture (Religion), Ethnic Composition and Demography

Culture, in a way, is a dangerous factor when applied in the context of democratization. It opens the gates towards very simplistic and even perverse conclusions. Therefore, scholars in the field of democratization should avoid two opposite conclusions. The first is that culture is not important at all. The second is that culture is all-determinative (Fukuyama 2005). On the one hand culture matters, because, in order to root, democracy, besides elections, legal reform and institutions, needs a multigenerational evolving democratic political culture in which people strongly support democratic ideas, values and practices (Dahl 1998: 157) At the end it is 'people power' and not government intervention that preserves democracy (Reveron 2009). For example, as mentioned earlier, patriarchal family structures have the potential of hindering democratization (Junne 2009). On the other hand, culture is not decisive on its own. One of the arguments sometimes heard is that Islam is non-compatible with democracy.⁵² Experiences in some Muslim-majority countries (like Albania, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Senegal and Turkey), however, proof this argument to be shaky. As Avineri states, 'like other types of cultural stereotyping, it is misleading and wrong. Islam is intrinsically not different from any other religion when it comes to issues of democracy' (Avineri 2010: 93). The statement that 'Muslims, or Arabs, do not want or value democracy' seems simplistic as well. A large percentage of Arabs agree that 'despite drawbacks, democracy is the best system of government' and that 'having a democratic system would be good for [their] country' (Diamond 2010: 95⁵³). The same applies for (more) religious Muslims (Jamal & Tessler 2008).⁵⁴ Many analysts, diplomats and donors even claim that Islam can be a positive mobilizing force for social justice, stability and democracy (Youngs 2008: 158).

⁵¹ For more on the complex relations between civil society, political society, the state and other factors influencing democratization, see De Vries (2009).

⁵² According to Anderson this attitude is seldom shared by academic specialists (Anderson 2006: 196). See Halabi (1999) for an elucidation against this notion.

⁵³ See also Tessler & Gao 2005: 82-97; Jamal & Tessler 2008: 97-110

⁵⁴ Of course, support for democracy differs between countries and people. For an extensive research on this issue see Fattah (2006).

Nevertheless, religion must be taken into the equation as a potential spoiler when people support both democracy *and* some kind of religious (e.g. Islamic) form of government. Although religion is a malleable concept (in a way it is what actors make of it), when it is interpreted in a dogmatic way it becomes a potential threat to democracy – like any other extreme ideology. When people very strongly hold on to the notion that God is sovereign instead of the people, it becomes difficult, not to say impossible, to reconcile religion and democracy.⁵⁵ Such a notion becomes a threat to democracy in yet another way. Democrats may back non-democratic regimes when they fear that democratization will be ‘hijacked’ by religious fundamentalists. In the face of a ‘one person, one vote, one time’ construction they rather choose the non-democratic alternative. All in all, although not decisive on its own, culture seems to be a factor that should be taken into account when analyzing democratization prospects of countries.⁵⁶

A second point of concern is the ethnic composition of a country. Although exceptions exist, democracy seems to be more likely in countries without sharply differentiated and conflicting (sub)cultures. Such divisions have a great chance of leading to weak opposition cohesion and a low degree of mobilization. As cultural disputes often erupt in political contexts, they become a threat for democracy and democratization (Dahl 1998: 151). Individuals in ethnically divided countries (e.g. most countries of the Middle East) often feel more attracted to non-state loyalties (ethnic and religious communities, kinship groups etc.) than to (the potential national welfare of) their country (Anderson 2006: 209; Chirot 2008: 85). Electoral, let alone liberal democracy seems hardly possible when peoples’ primary identity determines their political loyalty (Galston 2010). Political competition in such cases is seen as a zero-sum game in which gains by a certain community result necessarily in (equal) losses by the others (Chirot 2008: 85). In other words, ‘fundamental differences in basic values can seldom if ever be resolved at the ballot box’ (Friedman 2002: 24). Instead, democratic elections can exacerbate communal conflicts (e.g. in Côte d’Ivoire, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Yugoslavia) (Chirot 2008: 90-95). Nevertheless, democratization is not totally impossible in ethnically divided countries, and elections, besides minority protection, are able to ease communal conflicts as well (e.g. in Malaysia and India) (ibid: 95-99). Specific configurations of the political system, for example the combination of parliamentarism with proportional representation and with a multiparty system (Lijphart 2001), have the potential to lead to more democratic stability. Besides that, inclusion (assimilation), separation (multiculturalism and segregation) and even exclusion are strategies used in order to ‘incorporate’ minorities (Chirot 2008: 103). Although the one more tolerant than the other, all might contribute to a more democracy-fertile environment. In general, however, ethnically divided societies are more problematic regarding democratization than homogenous societies.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ For an interesting, although still debatable contribution on this topic, see Joffé (2008). He stresses the richness of the Islamic tradition and parts of that tradition (e.g. *mu'tazila*) that might have achieved the same (democratic) purpose as the Reformation in Europe.

⁵⁶ See Fish (2009) for a recent attempt to place countries in a ‘cultural receptivity to democracy promotion’ framework as well.

⁵⁷ This point becomes even more important in the context of ‘fragile states’. In their paper, Zweiri et al. argue that state fragility does not only hinder democratization, but ‘that fragility in Middle Eastern state systems is exacerbated by the external shock associated with the democratization process’ as well (Zweiri, Tekin & Johnson 2008: 24).

Demography, at last, has a possible influence on democratization possibilities as well. Countries dominated by traditional (and anti-democratic) communities are expected to be difficult to democratize. Considering the possibility that older generations have become more used to non-democratic rule and are possibly more traditional in their perceptions of culture and religion, countries with a proportional rise in the ageing population experience more difficulty in the face of democratization. Countries with a more balanced or youth-dominated demography may experience more ease in the same process. Of course, this is no universal truth: although elder people (in general) prefer stability and would opt against democracy if that endangers stability, the value system of elder persons often becomes more compatible with democracy. Besides that, younger generations may become more traditional compared to their (grand)parents and, thus, alter the balance in the other direction. Either way demography influences democratization prospects.

Globalization

Just as in the case of non-democratic rule stability, globalization influences prospects for democratization. Increasing interconnectedness between countries and people on the one hand increases the chances of democratization. World-wide democratization is pushed by linking (bilateral) support to 'good governance'. By applying conditionality to development assistance, chances for democratization increase. This however, only works when states aim for genuine (forms of) democratization: other interests may hinder such an attitude. Secondly, democratization, to some extent, is 'pushed' by the globalization of financial markets and global trade (see Baylis et al. 2008: 452-466). Finally, democratization is influenced by increasing and more easily accessible international communication (technologies). Besides allowing the idea of democracy to spread globally, international communication has the potential to spark (massive) support for democratization efforts.

However, the latter applies for contesting visions as well. Opposing ideas (for example state-led democratic development without democratization or religious non-democratic political systems), when proved to be successful or feasible, may, after being transferred via international communication, be copied in other states. Thus, both democratization and opposing perspectives are able to function as (globally spreading) desired outcomes. This factor is linked to all the other mentioned factors, especially to 'snowball-effects' and '*Zeitgeist*'. The more powerful desired outcome has the potential to function as the example needed for snowball-effects. It depends on the particular *Zeitgeist* (and thereby the position of potential hegemonic actors) which outcome stands the best chance.

Conclusion

In this contribution, the concepts of democracy and democratization have been discussed. It became clear that both are contextually variable concepts with (ever contested) hegemonic interpretations as temporary dominant. Secondly, the important differences between liberalization and democratization have been clarified: although liberalization might lead to democratization, there can be liberalization without democratization. Thirdly, the structure-agency divide in the context of democratization has been shortly explained. It was concluded that democratization should be understood as the outcome of a complex interaction between *both* structural and agency factors. Finally, a model consisting of factors that influence prospects for democratization, was introduced and explained. Using the model as a toolbox within analyses enables us to gain insight into prospects for democratization in particular cases.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The model introduced in this contribution can be combined with the model introduced in working paper 13, in order to use them as toolboxes for a combined analysis of non-democratic rule stability and prospects for democratization in particular cases.

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About the Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asia

The paper is produced in the framework of the Knowledge Programme on Civil Society in West Asia. This is a joint initiative by Hivos and the University of Amsterdam with the purpose of generating and integrating knowledge on the roles and opportunities for civil society actors in democratization processes in politically challenging environments. This programme integrates academic knowledge and practitioner's knowledge from around the world to develop new insights and strategies on how civil society actors in Syria and Iran can contribute to various processes of democratization and how international actors can support this.

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