

Comparative Transitions to Democracy
Masaryk University in Brno

Unit III. The Long Democratic Cycle: Liberalisation and Democratization

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3.1 Waves of Democracy

In this course we are going to analyse “waves” of democracy
term used by Samuel Huntington to describe the form adopted by
processes of democratisation

reaching at several societies
domino-effect, snowball effect
forcing changes

counter-wave, retreat of the democratic waters
collapse of democratising regimes



The idea of wave implies the existence of
an internal (societal) dimension of democratisation
endogenous factors
an external (international) dimension of democratisation
exogenous factors [Waves](#)

It is the combination of the external and the internal what makes possible the process of democratisation

Huntington refers to 3 waves of democracy (with its reversal waves)

1. the long democratic cycle, from 1789-WWII
2. the post-1945 cycle, 1945-1970s
3. the third wave, 1973-today

some authors object this taxonomy



3.2 The Long Cycle: the First Wave of Democratisation

A very particular cycle of democratisation

long process in which countries transformed internal political structures introducing elements bringing them closer to the ideal of democracy

but, a transition?

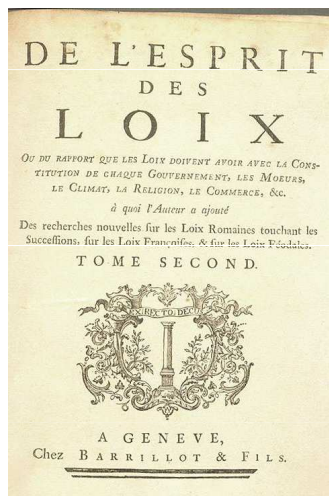
processes that lasted decades or more than a century
slow transformation

if we use Schmitter's and O'Donnell's definition:
movement in regime type from something towards something else, it could be considered transition

and democratisation?

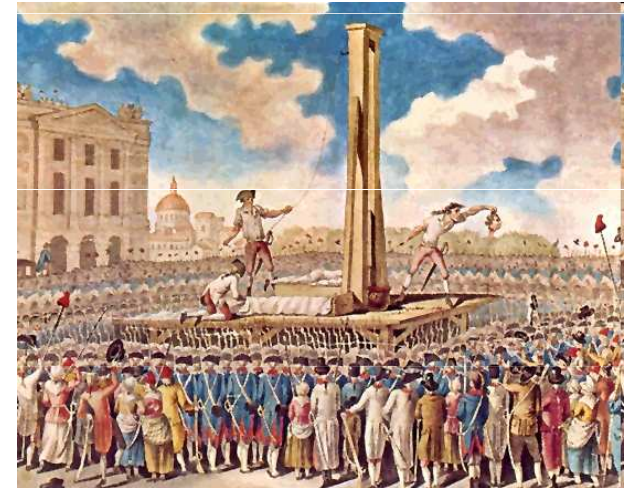
in many cases more exact to talk about liberalisation,
democratisation only will occur in the XX Century

if we take the whole period, it is democratisation



This is the period that links
traditional autocratic European political models
modern democracies in the early XX Century
in a continuum

Two different tracks toward democracy
evolutionary, gradual approach
British liberalisation and democratisation
revolutionary, micro-transitions
French Revolution
American Revolution



3.3 Setting the Scenarios: The Creation of the Ancient Regimes

Fall of the Roman Empire in Europe

creation of a new order, the early Medieval order

2 swords, two realms

civil power

religious power

2 different spheres, but communicated

Religious legitimacy of power

Civil power consolidation

develops into feudalism

king's superiority

“primus inter pares”

relation of loyalty

protection and responsibility

autonomy



Models that limit the capacity of the king to rule
English model: Magna Carta Libertarum (1215)

King John – 25 notables
parliament

English model

Magnum Concilium
Curia Regis

With the evolution of European Politics
strengthening of the royal authority
institutionalisation of the royal power

autonomy from religious power
capacity to control nobility
development of a state administration

Appearance of the modern state

renaissance, reformation: Macchiavelli
absolutism: Hobbes



Centrality of the kings

absolutism

royal sovereignty

state law

state administration

from XV Century, hegemonic model

a tension arises

smaller political elite

circle around the monarch

role of parliaments

by passed by king's authority

seed of first “democratising” movement

England

France

United States



England

Stewarts have replaced Tudor dynasty

increase absolutist trend: Privy Council, Charles I

Parliament protests: Petition of Rights (1628)

taxes

justice

army

Fight parliament-king ended in civil war (1642-9)

Republic (1649-59)

Oliver Cromwell

Monarchic restitution: Charles II

New laws are going to limit powers of the kings

Glorious Revolution (1689)

Habeas Corpus Amendment Act (1679)

Bill of Rights (1689)

Triennial Act (1694)

Act of Settlement (1701)

XVIII Century, institutionalisation of the cabinet



France

It was the archetype of absolute rule in Europe

King and General States

not summoned in 200 years

economic crisis

Composition

Nobility

Clergy

Commoners



1789, First democratic attempt

Universal Declaration of Rights and Freedoms of the Citizens

Constitutional monarchy (1791)

1793 execution of Louis XVI

Republic and radicalisation

1795 Directory

5-members executive

2 legislative chambers

Napoleon

United States

Part of the British empire

Problems

taxes

no representation in English Parliament

XVIII Cent. George III, need of money

War of Austrian Succession

Seven Years War

1765 Stamp Act (public documents need a state stamp)

protest movements

Sons of Liberty

Stamp Act Congress

1766 Derogatory Act

1767 Townshend Act (1770, but tea)

1773 Boston Tea Party

Escalation and War

1776 Declaration of Independence



The first “democratising” movements are related with capacity to decide
king as executive and legislative figure
access to structures of power

Three paths

England, moderate monarchy

slow reforms in XIX Century, gradual approach

France, revolutionary trend

revolutions and counter-revolutions

USA, a real “democracy”

operating since then as a democratic state

some groups excluded

3.4 Deepening Reforms: the XIX Century

With the exception of the newly born American state, the states appeared in Europe did not respond to the ideal of democracy

1814-5 Congress of Vienna
return to the pre-1789 “map”

But absolutism could not return to Europe
the experience of the revolution
extension of the revolutionary ideas and values
socio-economic transformation

Attempts at the absolutists models of government
face the opposition of the “liberals”
revolutionary waves



Revolutionary wave of 1820

reaction to installation of the post-1815 political order
France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Russia and Greece
limited results

Latin American countries' independence



Revolutionary cycle of 1830

the conservative model is exhausted
wider sectors of the population joined the “liberals”
a new style of ruling

France, Italy, Germany, Spain, United Netherlands, Poland

Moderate autocratic Monarchies

Royal Statutes

Limits to executive power

Revolutions of 1848

Real liberal revolutions

liberal ideas

nationalism

the social question

France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Switzerland

Pact Monarchs-People was not enough

real separation of powers

real parliaments



Since mid-XIX Century it was evident that the model of Vienna was unattainable and it was necessary to articulate channels for participation but who is to participate?

3.5 Three Models of Sovereignty

Jean Bodin described sovereignty as “the most high, absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonwealth”

We define sovereignty as the ultimate capacity to decide over what is common for a political community

three different ways of understanding the foundation of sovereignty in the XIX Century

Royal Sovereignty

King as the recipient of that capacity to decide
religious foundation
a pragmatic approach

Pre-1789 model

with the pactist version of the royal statute

King as centre of political life

very conservative model
questioned by liberals



National sovereignty

Nation as the centre of political action

Nation is an abstract concept

who can interpret the Nations' will?

Elitist model

only the best should be allowed to participate
successful

Popular sovereignty

People is recipient of the capacity to decide

Who are the people?

those that are citizens

Democratic model

Liberal project

Britain is the best example of the smooth transition
from restrictive elitist oligarchic monarchy
towards a more open liberal-democratic regime

1832- 4% of population voters

1884 almost "universal"

domestic service

adults living with their parents

Liberal project

include wider sectors of the population

extending voting rights

3.6 The Early XX Century: Extending Rights

The End of WWI marked the beginning of a political process by which most of the European political systems moved towards the liberal democratic model

allowing participation of commoners

establishing structures to channel the participation

parliaments

political parties

Constitutions adopted the model of popular sovereignty

male citizens right to participate

natural law

in some cases, recognition of social rights

start of welfare state

However, 1920s, crisis of the model

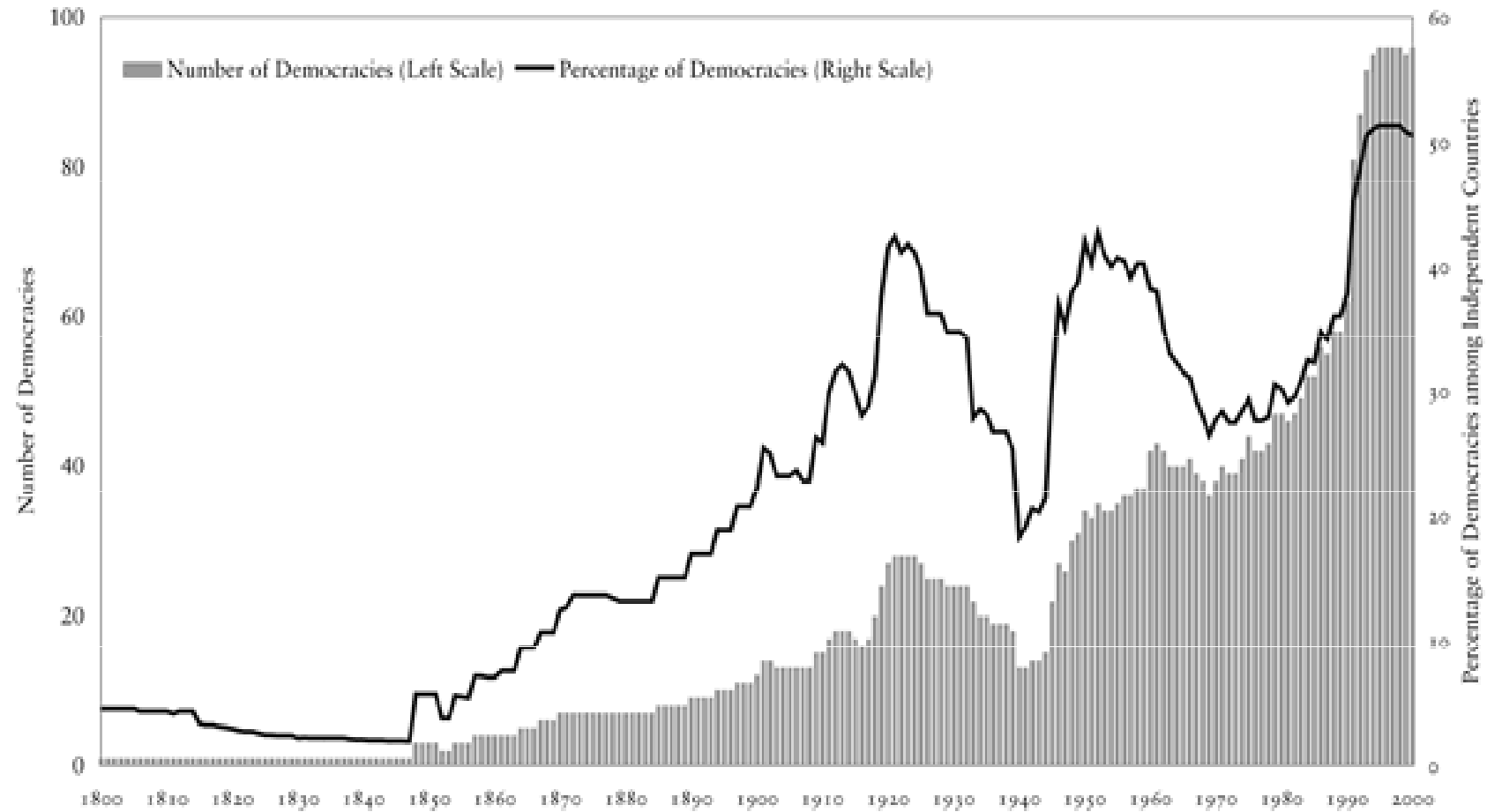
reverse wave

Communist regimes

Fascist regimes

alternatives

1920s-1930s collapse of many liberal democratic regimes



Source: Carles Boix, *Equality, inequality, and the choice of political institutions*, *Public Policy*, 135, 2006

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