Conclusion

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The authors of this book were invited to address a number of key questions in respect of their discipline or region of special interest, such as: What does it most have to offer a critical understanding of democratization? In respect of the disciplines, how is democratization understood and what conceptual lenses are used to interrogate the subject? In regard to the regions, what does democratization mean to the inhabitants, what has been their experience, the main constraints or limitations and future prospects? The chapters address these prompts each in their own way. In doing so they reveal not just the issues for which their discipline or area studies demand priority but also their own insights and answers. Collectively, they illustrate a combination of different and overlapping frameworks of analysis for making sense of political processes generally, and democratization together with democratic possibilities more specifically, in a wide range of settings. What is abundantly clear is that democratization does not have to be a discipline's central preoccupation or, even, a cherished value in order that it provide interesting and important analytical insights, relevant theoretical propositions and empirically-testable observations.

A bibliometric analysis would show that not only do the contributors draw on disparate literatures but, more unexpectedly, very few authors or texts concerning democratization are so central as to be cited everywhere. Samuel P. Huntington and Seymour Martin Lipset are confirmed as being among the most ubiquitous (Huntington's 'waves' metaphor has become almost universally embedded in the discourse, notwithstanding various criticisms of his analysis),

and even more so in the comparative areas studies literature; Anthony Giddens's work resonates too. The variety of perspectives, themes and issues presented by the chapters holds out a mirror to the very qualities of pluralism, diversity and respect for difference that, together with a commitment to inclusiveness, constitute hallmarks of most theories of democracy. At the same time it is clear that we should navigate carefully between the two sound tenets articulated through historical observation and comparativism respectively. On the one side Calvert is right to say that uniqueness in the detail does not mean that different approaches are not referring to the same thing or cannot be treated as belonging to the same family of 'descriptions'. On the other we should beware of judging unlike with unlike within a common temporal dimension – especially any eras that are chosen more or less arbitrarily (Breslin).

Significantly the chapters provide some major points of convergence and shared understandings as well as clear points of contrast. Just as none of the disciplines have stood still but have evolved over time, so they *all* exhibit their own domestic disputes concerning democracy and its relationship to surrounding factors. Even in Cerny's conclusion on the relatively youthful study of international political economy (IPE) we find different accounts of the future possibilities for democracy and democratization in a globalizing world. More particularly, at regional levels such as Latin America Philip tells us that the very meaning of democratic *consolidation* is very far from being settled. In parts of Africa and Asia where *Western* notions of democratization *tout court* are essentially contested, not only is democratic consolidation a remote prospect or problematic, but politics *per se* is in flux, 'in transition' to an unknown future.

Even the most mathematically rigorous of the social sciences betrays considerable disagreement over such matters as the true relationship between democracy, economic growth and political change, let alone the controversies in other much more discursive branches of inquiry. Economists like Addison show an especial sensitivity to issues of sequencing and to how different time-horizons can affect the results gleaned from multivariate analysis. But perhaps it is fitting that it is a sociologist (Wood) who reminds us that

even as problems persist over how to reconcile democratic principles with (widening) social inequality and (increasing) concentrations of economic power, we must not lose sight of the centrality of state power to democratic concerns. Even anthropology, influenced by the rise of non-Western scholars, now grapples increasingly with 'state effects', chiefly at the local level. That said, the stuff of politics generally and the concerns of democratization specifically clearly extend far beyond state institutions, as is evident in the anthropologists' concern with power – whether located in formal organizational structures and more informal relationships or when manipulated through the political rhetorics. For one thing, in democratization there is contestation (Wood) and struggle – which Rai shows to be especially prominent in the feminist discourse – and the quest for consensus across a much broader plane. For another, and as International Political Economy makes abundantly clear, contemporary forms of organization of social and economic life among non-state actors at both sub-state and supra-state levels, transnational and transgovernmental, pose multiple challenges to the traditional instruments of state authority, as they manipulate and bypass state legal systems. Conventional democratic legitimacy appears to be seriously challenged. By comparison, democratization's consequences for globalization seem to have been the focus of far less critical inquiry by political scientists and others.

All the regions have been touched unevenly by political transformation, and more specifically by liberal democratic advance, and even within individual countries there are signs of both forwards and backwards movements, as well as overall situations of very little change. Apart from there being one common observation of regional diversity, it may be as challenging a task (although not impossible) to establish sound and significant generalizations within regions as between regions. The contrasts between different parts of a single country like India, or, say examination of the impact that inter-state or supra-state relations make at the local level, can be every bit as revealing as comparisons between much more distant points of departure. So, for example, a comparison of South Africa or Israel with their neighbours and inquiry into the bearing that relations with the region have on the internal politics could be every bit as rewarding

as an attempt to compare the convoluted history of democratic trends in those two named states.

Of course, history is always open to reinterpretation, not least in the light of present-day issues and the way more proximate circumstances are perceived and the particular concerns these give rise to. And if democratizing states individually cannot be understood outside their specific historical contexts and capacities (Grugel 2002: 90), then neither can democratization as a contemporary world historical phenomenon be fully grasped in isolation from debates over the political and intellectual well-springs of where it all began. Put crudely, of the different revolutionary traditions, which is the more authentic?; do theories based around the rights and freedoms of the individual, or ideas of political equality and popular sovereignty, supply dominant genes? In practice it seems that when providing us with the raw material even the most celebrated historians can do no more than bequeath their own versions of rationality and orderly – or sometimes chaotic – development (Calvert). Yet as is shown in many places, for example in Africa, society's memories of the past (not least of any previous failures to sustain democracy or to move democratization further forwards) can be vital to making sense of present-day developments and the attitudes taken towards those developments and future prospects. Myths relating to women, for instance, can be just as potent, and may be singularly damaging (Rai). And as South Asia today illustrates all too well, the legacies of old hostilities can continue to bedevil the possibility of registering democratic progress through beneficial co-operation and mutual support among states within a region, in addition to exerting a negative influence within countries individually. Yet even in much older democracies the democratic content is being reconfigured as we speak. Witness the impact European Union membership is now having on shifting the boundaries of judicial power in Britain, where, as McEldowney shows, we need a historical awareness to understand the antecedents and to appreciate the full significance of more recent advances in the 'justicialization of government'. And it is also worth repeating, as Gonzales and King usefully remind us, that the United States made a quantum leap forward in respect of civil rights really only very recently – within the lifetime

of American citizens now endeavouring to export their democracy abroad.

The chapters display the particularities within a common concern for institutional structures and their performance, ranging over the representation of women, electoral systems and constitutions (in Africa) and presidentialism (in Latin America). These objects span the borders of politics and legal affairs; to which can be added the economists' interest in democracy's institutional guarantees more broadly defined, most notably investment in education (Addison). South Asia appears exceptional in terms of the inertia displayed by formal political institutions and traditional actors, but the picture takes on a different colour once we turn the spotlight on the vibrant social sphere (Singh). The various chapters detail a variety of types of social grouping, including especially social movements, but not necessarily political parties, as being in the vanguard pressing for change. The weakness of class conflict relative to other social divisions such as those involving race, ethnicity and religion is remarked on in several countries and not just the more prosperous United States and European Union, notwithstanding growing middle-class interest in political reform in certain East Asian countries.

At the same time the impact of international influences is found by most to be ambivalent, not least because of a widely-shared suspicion of the more adverse consequences of globalization and the hegemony of the neo-liberal economic agenda especially – and for women specifically (Rai). In contrast, there is the welcome contribution that international organizations' pressures are making to greater transparency in governments' management of the public finances, although national controls over the flows of private monies are becoming considerably weaker. So far the European Union's influence on accession candidates (and their rejection of the past in the shape of Soviet domination) constitutes a special case of benign external influence, although Lewis and Warleigh offer differing views on the EU's capability to help with their democratization in the future. Yet the tendency of these accession candidates to identify democratization with Europeanization jars somewhat with the essentially inward-looking focus of the EU itself, as the constituent parts grope towards deciding what kind of

political entity the EU should become and whether, or how, it could be made more democratic.

The potential for ordinary people to influence through political processes the economic vectors that can make so much difference to their daily lives emerges as a central topic that seems ripe for further study (the key question being not what political economy perspectives might have to offer but whether it is any longer meaningful to isolate for purpose of analysis the purely *domestic* political economy). This interdependence of political trends and economic and social development (or lack of development), inescapable everywhere and especially salient in the poorest countries of Africa, is given extra meaning in post-communist societies. That is because of the transformative approach to economic management there, combined in some cases with the additional imperatives of nation- and state-building. This provides a clear contrast with the nostalgia for socialism and distrust of capitalist individualism that Southall reports in parts of Africa. Perhaps it is all the more remarkable to find group tendencies bidding for a place among the defining features of American nationalism too. And if democracy only thrives where there is some shared identity equivalent to nationhood (*demos*), that too must feature in the building plans for the EU (Warleigh) – as well as being a vital issue in countries emerging from the dismantling of former socialist states and in Asia too. Thus issues of both state and nation feature prominently in alternative scenarios depicting the democratic possibilities, but with distinct regional particularities.

Similarly, both Europe and North America present in their different ways a kind of bridge between domestic and international dimensions of democratization. But perhaps most intriguing of all is the colouring of American attitudes towards their own polity, and thereby the consequences for political progress in the United States. On the one side are the carefully crafted myths about America's past, noted by Calvert. On the other, paralleling the reservations some Americans have about the country's democratic pretensions owing to its dubious Cold War engagements abroad (Gould), foreign perceptions of democracy in the United States prompted by its claims to leadership of the free world have reverberated inside the country (Gonzales and King). This

makes the United States absolutely unique. There, external factors appear to have worked to the benefit of societal integration. That contrasts starkly with the disintegrative and possibly very divisive impact of global economic integration and marketization on the domestic social structures of many developing countries, including those in Latin America whose political systems have long been attuned to US influence (Philip), and in East Asia. The potentially adverse consequences for democracy are well rehearsed.

The future

The rapid accumulation of political studies of democratization in the 1990s came about as a result of political developments on the ground. The one tracked the other; and it is worth asking now what are the implications for the future. The evidence so far has been of dynamism in the study of democratization. There is scope for further advances in theory and in practice, such as by moving away from the standard liberal state model of 'democratic accountability' – queried in the sociological and anthropological literatures and regarded as increasingly obsolete from within IPE – towards consideration of new possibilities. More truly participatory forms of political engagement and the elevation of meaningful empowerment are obvious examples. The 'democratization from below' that Singh finds on the rise in India could be one source of inspiration. The democratic development of the European Union offers speculative possibilities for innovation (Warleigh). Even in Africa – with few obvious 'champions' of democracy and a conviction that political science largely fails to offer the sort of version of democracy that Africans are said to want and need – democracy remains very much 'on the agenda' (Southall).

Yet in large parts of the world the democratic openings of the 1980s and early 1990s and the optimism they gave rise to have given way to a more sober judgement: the most sanguine is that we are now seeing a period of democratic stabilization, or survival without consolidation ('trendless fluctuation'). Many 'transitions' proved unsuccessful – they were not transitions to liberal democracy – or remain

glaringly incomplete. For many societies and communities the 'deepening' of democracy in any meaningful sense still lies a long way off. The possibility of democratic regression in some countries cannot be ruled out. Hence, even if his demo-pessimism regarding China is overstated, Breslin's caution against 'concept stretching' has value far beyond just East Asia. And looked at through the lens of IPE in a gathering climate of globalization, the early rose-tinted view of a third, or even fourth wave of democratization now looks to have been only partially sighted, even though the widespread collapse of old-fashioned autocracies was so evidently under way.

Furthermore, that democracy has its own limitations is also now more freely acknowledged: democracy is neither an instant solution for all *political* ills nor an answer to every major problem, social, economic, or environmental; moreover it seems incapable of confronting some pressing and major global issues. Democracy may simply be unsuited to some countries, for the foreseeable future anyway. The concept of democracy and the route map of democratization mapped out in the West do not necessarily offer useful templates for organizing our understanding of the politics of diverse societies elsewhere. In some situations they can actually derange productive analysis. Such reflections as these certainly resonate well in Africa, where now is not the first time that attempts have been made to transfer Western political aspirations, and where current perceptions are coloured by recollections of a troubled past and the expectation that unfavourable social and economic conditions will persist. Even in eastern Europe it seems that democratization studies have shown an inclination to create their own image of what is happening, so departing from the evidence of 'objective reality' (Lewis).

If the outlook for democratization looks increasingly insecure, is that a bad omen for studies of democratization? Are we doomed to come to the view that, the more we know, the less we think we understand? Critical scrutiny, adherence to Karl Popper's injunction, in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934), for social scientists to seek out falsifying rather than corroborating evidence, and the temptation of academics to accentuate the significance of negative findings, could all put at risk the gains we think

we have made. Of course, the elimination of errors and misconceptions should not as such be a cause for concern – after all, democratic progress has itself been defined in terms of disillusionment or an evaporation of the blind confidence formerly placed in the rulers by the ruled (Huntington 1991: 262). But that is no reason for not trying to aim for more constructive forms of progress than simply the discovery that there are more puzzles for which we do not have adequate explanations than was previously realized. In Latin America Philip reminds us that institutionalized *uncertainty* (concerning who will govern after the next or subsequent elections) is considered by some a defining feature of consolidated representative democracy. Yet in terms of our comprehension of democratization, the quest for *greater certainty* still constitutes a legitimate ambition, a motivating force. That claim is made more realistic, not weakened, by including in the ambit of democratization studies the slowing of democracy's progress and the conditions for democratic weakening or regression, not to mention the so-called 'hybrid' polities. Diamond's (2002: 34) remark that issues in comparative democratic studies now run to the forms and dynamics of 'electoral authoritarianism' can also be seen as lending support. So to conclude, here are at least two reasons to 'think positive'.

First, the increase in pessimism about the future for democratization owes in some measure to the fact that we now redefine democracy in more exacting ways (Burgess 2001: 58). More correctly, we are simply rediscovering democracy's basic values, which had briefly been lost sight of in the early enthusiasm that greeted the political developments of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Then, surface developments captured the imagination, overshadowing more substantive considerations and time-honoured controversies over political ideals. More than a decade later, attention has shifted from the half of the glass that we formerly thought was full to the half-empty portion of what is now more often agreed to be a significantly larger glass. That development is a testimony of the evolution of the literature, not a teleological statement, and certainly not grounds for complaint. Anyway, in politics more generally history tells us the reality all too often falls short of the dream: so democratization – no exception – at least is in good company.

Finally, we can be positive about the future study of democratization *even if* there is going to be only a small and dwindling number of new, unambiguous democracies to study. There is a readily available solution in the event that political science show signs of running out of steam. The fact is that political studies have always needed other disciplines, in order to optimize the chances of making further advances. The evidence displayed by the looking-glass reveals the potential to create more 'added value' by expanding the vision. That means seeking a closer engagement among disciplines and increasing the scope for broad-based comparative analysis, thereby highlighting distinctive cases, confirming important variations, and enhancing the quest for cross-cultural generalizations, both intra- and cross-regional. And for activists, including but not only activists in the women's movement, there is even the possibility of sponsoring more fruitful exchanges over effective strategies for achieving sought-after political change. That put on one side, and regardless of whatever reservations we might have about democratization as a practical vision or a normative undertaking, the possibilities for increasing our understanding that are offered by adopting a more holistic approach are clearly there for the taking.