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Where and When Was Democracy Invented?¹

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INTRODUCTION

Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* made explicit an influential but usually unstated principle for comparative political sociology. In his search for the social sources of different sorts of political systems, Moore devoted chapters to revolutionary or quasi-revolutionary upheavals in England, France, the United States, Japan, China, and India. He did not feel it equally important to consider the history of democracy in Scandinavia, the Low Countries, or Switzerland (not to mention Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). The lesser players on the world stage, buffeted by the prestigious ideologies of the greater players, tied to the latter's economies and sometimes assaulted by their armies, are less rewarding as research sites for comparativists looking for distinct national "cases" to test their ideas. Small, weaker powers are not, in this reasoning, independent cases of anything. One presumes the same logic led Moore to include only third world giants like China and India and not the many other countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Characteristically, it is Germany and Russia that Moore regards as the most significant cases of democratic failure omitted from his study: not Spain or Italy, let alone Bolivia or Burma.² In many a theory of "modernization," England—or England and France—have been taken as prototypes or paradigmatic cases, and the broad outlines of their histories are therefore far more likely to have entered the education of American sociologists than the histories of other places in Europe or beyond. Sometimes the presumed centrality of one or more of these cases is made explicit, sometimes not.

The "great power" perspective on world history has its uses—more weak

¹ For comments on an earlier draft and other suggestions I thank Hermann Giliomee, Michael Hanagan, Juan Linz, Verónica Montecinos, Dora Orlansky, Rudolf Rizman, Richard Rose, Lionel Rothkrug, Arthur Stinchcombe, Charles Tilly, and Sasha Weitman. A fellowship from the University Center for International Studies of the University of Pittsburgh is also gratefully acknowledged.

² Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. xi–xiii. Moore went on to tackle the missing German case in *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1978) and, more briefly, the Russian in *Authority and Inequality Under Capitalism and Socialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

powers sneeze when the U.S. catches cold than the reverse—but it also obscures much of the dynamic ebb and flow of social processes across frontiers. Not everything happened first in a great power. Nor are the great powers always usefully thought of as independent cases.

If we move beyond comparative history as conventionally conceived—as the study of similarities and differences among the historical trajectories of different places—to the study of complexly interactive transnational systems, it would be an error to assume that innovations invariably diffuse from a creative great power to weaker players who seek to curry favor, who are intellectually enchanted by powerful models of success, or upon whom the powerful can impose their institutions by force. Of course, these paths of diffusion from stronger to weaker states have been exemplified many times. No one would write a history of democracy without noting the impact of the French armies in the 1790s or the American armies in the 1940s. But the pattern of innovation and diffusion may often be far more complex.

In this essay I will be looking at the times and places when innovations in democracy were pioneered. Democracy could be defined in 1690 as a “Form of government in which the people have all authority,”³ a definition as succinct as it is imprecise. In the subsequent age of democratic breakthrough (and still today) the challenge was (and is) the creation of concrete institutions that realize such a notion. But what institutions? If we look over the history of modern democracy, we will find that those who called themselves democrats at the tail end of the eighteenth century were likely to be very suspicious of parliaments, downright hostile to competitive political parties, critical of secret ballots, uninterested or even opposed to women’s suffrage, and sometimes tolerant of slavery. The claim that some institutions and not others are modes for realizing democracy is a very powerful one; but what those institutions are has been subject to considerable change.

Any discussion of the loci of democratic breakthroughs must acknowledge ambiguity and limited knowledge, the former compounding the latter. Such ambiguity is inherent in any search for origins within an ongoing historical flow, in which there are always precursors and prototypes, as well as interesting offshoots that went somewhere else. In addition, we have aborted and interrupted developments. France, for example, was early to enact universal male suffrage, but later retracted it.

To keep the subject from overflowing even a long essay, some boundaries need to be set. We focus on the national state here, rather than subnational or supranational institutions; however, we cannot altogether ignore the distinction between local and national government, which are not always organized the same way, to put it mildly. We can find instances where significant democratic practice at the national level coexists with widespread village despotisms (as in

³ Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970 [1690]), v. 1.

contemporary India); we can find—particularly in the world before the eighteenth century—semidemocratic assemblies at the village level coexisting with traditional forms of sacralized monarchy and aristocratic rule⁴ at the national level (a widespread experience in many parts of the world). In federal systems, rights at state and national levels may differ—a significant matter in the democratic histories of Australia, the United States and Switzerland; they may differ among the states as well, as seen, for example, in the removal of gender restrictions on voting in the United States. As for the temporal boundaries of this essay, I take my starting point as the 1780s, for reasons that will be made clear below.⁵

One last ambiguity remains: the law may be a breakthrough, but what of actual practice? Where there is a substantial gulf between the “legal country” and the “real country,” to use a distinction well-known in nineteenth-century France and contemporary Latin America, it may be very misleading to look at the date of enactment of some new law as the only indicator of electoral procedure, parliamentary practice, or voting rights. The law is part of reality, but a researcher could seriously err to take it as the entire reality.⁶ But there is also just plain ignorance—much of the world history of democracy seems to me effectively unknown. If I’ve slighted a democratic innovation here or exaggerated the living reality of an innovation that had no actuality beyond an unenforced law there, let the brickbats fly. And where the history is shrouded in darkness, may some hardy researcher shed some light.

In an essay discussing something whose meaning has historically been so contested—and altered—as democracy,⁷ I should make clear that I plan to look at the initial breakthroughs in the institutionalization of democracy as that term is rather generally deployed in the late 1990s. Democracy is used, for now, primarily to mean a set of political procedures in which the holders of power are responsible to electorates, either directly (by virtue of being elected) or indirectly (by virtue of being appointed by the elected); in which almost all adult citizens can vote (while noncitizens, nonadults, and small numbers of criminal

⁴ Steven Muhlberger and Phil Paine, “Democracy’s Place in World History,” *Journal of World History* 4, 1993, pp. 23–45; for much detail on France, see Henry Babeau, *Les Assemblées générales des communautés d’habitants en France du XIIIe siècle à la Révolution* (Paris: Rousseau, 1893) and Albert Babeau, *Le Village sous l’Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 1915).

⁵ Important earlier innovations in the development of representative institutions that could bargain on the taxpayers’ behalf with those who controlled organized violence will not be considered here; nor will earlier innovations in the development of electoral practices, secular rulership, state control of military force, bureaucratic/administrative capacities of governments to enforce policies, and citizenship rights.

⁶ Even the act of dating the law is not without its ambiguity. Laws may be enacted at one moment, subject to some form of ratification at a later point, and formally go into force at yet a third moment; they may then be reinterpreted years or decades later by courts, or modified by subsequent legislative action; they may or may not be vigorously enforced; and whether enforced or not may be more or less widely flouted. I have therefore tried to base my principal claims about the loci of democratic innovation on broad patterns, rather than on any single episode.

⁷ See John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996)

adult citizens do not necessarily have such rights); and in which people can form parties to contest elections, campaigns provide some opportunity for oppositions to address the electorate, and the official vote counts are not profoundly fraudulent (but in which it is not necessarily the case that all parties have equal opportunities to make their case, nor that the vote counts be totally honest).

Although political scientists today are generally reluctant to admit any features of social structure into their procedural definition of democracy⁸—so that egalitarian and inegalitarian societies are identically democratic if they both adhere to such procedures to the same degree—I would add one condition that I believe is simply taken for granted by the many social scientists of the 1990s, but would not have been presumed by anyone in the 1790s. This is that residence and citizenship must broadly overlap.⁹ Privately owned chattel slavery and the existence of rural majorities subject to seigniorial rights are not compatible with “democracy” as generally understood in the 1990s, regardless of how dominant minorities or majorities govern themselves and their dependents. In other words, in current notions of democracy legally enforceable structures of servitude, dependence, or deference that subordinate large numbers of adult persons do not exist.

Finally a plea for forbearance: so many specific practices have become part of the history of democracy that no one could document them all short of a very long book. The bases for exclusion from political rights, for example, have been varied enough that what follows is inevitably but a selection. I pay no attention here, for example, to exclusions based on religion.

For all the ambiguities, uncertainties and inevitable errors of dating, I believe that the following survey shows a basic pattern so persistently that more evidence and more refined concepts would be unlikely to alter it fundamentally: for the past two centuries the great innovations in the invention of democratic institutions have generally not taken place in the world’s centers of wealth and power.

The First Democrats

The late eighteenth century seems to be the moment when people on several continents began to speak of democracy as a form of political organization to be actively pursued or actively resisted. The word “democracy” had been known by educated Europeans (and Americans) for a long time before that, to

⁸ In the editors’ preface to their important collection on the democratizations of the 1980s, for example, we find Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset explaining: “We use the term ‘democracy’ in this study to signify a political system, separate and apart from the economic and social system to which it is joined. Indeed, a distinctive aspect of our approach is to insist that issues of so-called economic and social democracy be separated from the question of governmental structure” (*Democracy in Developing Countries*. v. 4, *Latin America* [Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989], p. xvi.).

⁹ On this point see Charles Tilly, “Democracy is a Lake,” in *Roads from Past to Future* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), p. 199.

be sure, as one of the basic types of political systems recognized by the thinkers of classical Greece. Indeed, the word was often used to denote an ancient political system as a point of reference when discussing a living one¹⁰, as in the observation of a late seventeenth-century dictionary that “democracy only flourished in the republics of Rome and Athens.”¹¹ At other times it was used pejoratively, as a failed system whose invitation to mob violence was to be avoided.¹² But it was in that late eighteenth-century moment that the form “democrat” came into use, for that was when social movements began to challenge existing social orders in the name of democracy and Europeans and North Americans saw their countries divided into two camps.¹³

The terms “democrat” and “aristocrat,” denoting the partisans of these two camps, began to be widely used in revolutionary struggles in the Low Countries during the 1780s¹⁴ and were almost at once taken up elsewhere, as those engaged in political conflicts found the dichotomy serviceable in their own struggles. American as well as French revolutionary elites wrestled with the relationship of their own political ideas to democracy, sometimes explaining the superiority of a republic to a democracy, sometimes conflating the two¹⁵; the Prussian government explained its participation in the dismemberment of Poland in 1793 by the spread to that country of “French democratism.”¹⁶

¹⁰ It was occasionally applied to existing political systems, particularly some of the Swiss cantons, but also a number of self-governing German cities (Conze and Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. 845–47). For a superb discussion of one instance, see Randolph C. Head, *Early Modern Democracy in the Grisons: Social Order and Political Language in a Swiss Mountain Canton, 1470–1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*.

¹² Although Furetière needed no more than ten lines to define both “democracy” and “democratic” in his dictionary of 1690, he found the space to inform the reader that “the worst of all outbursts is a democratic one,” and that “seditions and turmoil happen often in Democracies” (*Dictionnaire universel*).

¹³ The following discussion draws heavily on Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett Verlag, 1972–84), v. 1, pp. 821–99; Robert Palmer, “Notes on the Use of the Word ‘Democracy’, 1789–1799,” *Political Science Quarterly* 68, 1953, pp. 203–26; Pierre Rosanvallon, “The History of the Word Democracy in France,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, 1995, pp. 140–54; Horst Dippel, “Démocratie, Démocrates,” in Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt, eds., *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1920* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1986), vol. 6, pp. 57–97; Jens A. Christophersen, *The Meaning of “Democracy” as Used in European Ideologies from the French to the Russian Revolutions. An Historical Study of Political Language* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968).

¹⁴ For a slightly earlier isolated use, see Conze and Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, p. 854.

¹⁵ Madison held a “republic” better than a “democracy” in 1787 in *Federalist* No. 10, as did Jacques-Pierre Brissot in 1791. Robespierre in 1794 held that “these two words are synonyms.” See Jacob E. Cooke, ed., *The Federalist* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 62–5; Brissot in *Recueil de quelques écrits, principalement extraits du Patriote Français*, reprinted in *Aux origines de la République, 1789–1792*, v. 5: 1791, *Naissance du parti républicain* (Paris: EDHIS, 1991), pp. 3–7; Maximilien Robespierre, *Oeuvres*. v. 10, *Discours, 17 juillet 1793–27 juillet 1794* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 352.

¹⁶ Karol Lutostański, *Les partages de la Pologne et la lutte pour l’indépendance* (Paris: Payot, 1918), p. 113.

By the late 1790s, such usages were well-known and widespread. In 1797, a future pope's Christmas homily claimed the compatibility of democracy and the Gospels.¹⁷ But, although such terms had become widely current, it was far easier to know what a "democrat" was—an anti-aristocrat—than what "democracy" was.¹⁸ "Aristocrats" could be identified with the defense of legally sanctioned structures of birth-based privilege, a hierarchical and corporate social order, sacralized monarchy and an established church. But it was much harder to specify the new institutions that democrats wished to create; and many who challenged hierarchical, corporate, royal, and sacred institutions distanced themselves from the term "democracy." If aristocracy was identified with familiar institutions, the institutions of democracy were to be invented. The power of the broad notion of democracy was much greater than any consensus on what precisely was being advocated. Democrats have debated the institutions needed for democracy ever since.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The Writing of Constitutions

In their struggles against arbitrary acts of monarchical authority, eighteenth-century opposition movements in Europe and North America often rallied around the notion of a constitution; constitutionalists, however, were themselves deeply divided between two conceptions of the constitutional idea. Some had in mind a combination of fundamental laws, customary practices, understandings of the divine plan, and common sense that could be invoked in criticism of arbitrary monarchs and their tyrannical ministers: the restoration of proper respect for a polity's traditions was needed. Others did not clamor for the restoration of the existing constitution, but for the drafting of new, explicit rules for political life—rules that would have to be brought into existence. Setting these rules down in written form, through the attendant processes of debate, revision, adoption, and promulgation, became a powerful foundational act. By making the fundamental laws of the political order the outcome of deliberate actions by living people, the writing of a constitution became a powerful statement situating the fount of authority in human wishes. Such written statements, deliberately setting forth the organization of government and the powers of its principal components, also had the potential, if effectively followed, to provide barriers to arbitrary authority.

That constitution-writing was in the air in the late eighteenth century is shown by such prototypes as the document issued by Sweden's Gustav III, which aimed for popular support against the nobility through a formal clarifi-

¹⁷ Palmer, *Democratic Revolution*, v. 1, p. 18.

¹⁸ A dictionary of 1792 defines "democrat" as "one of the revolutionary words that has had the greatest success. It means the subject of a democratic government and someone who, by principle and by fashion, is a partisan of democracy." See Max Frey, *Les Transformations du vocabulaire française à l'époque de la Révolution (1789–1800)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925), p. 139.

cation of the powers of monarch and parliament¹⁹; wartime constitutions in Britain's rebelling American colonies²⁰; and the text proposed by Utrecht's Patriots in 1784.²¹ But it was the new United States that was celebrated as the great pioneer in this regard when its Articles of Confederation were replaced by a more enduring constitution (ratified in 1789), whose clear provisions for amendment—immediately utilized to add on the Bill of Rights—further amplified the model of a fundamental document, written and correctable by human hands. This sense was all the more strengthened by the opening words “We the People,” which made a very different claim than a royal declaration, just as a specifically empowered constitutional convention and a ratification procedure further enhanced the element of human debate, reflection, and decision.²² The first European state to follow suit was Poland, whose constitution of 1791,²³ in announcing that the King ruled “by the grace of God and the will of the nation,”²⁴ suggested a divine as well as a human source of authority.²⁵ This document was soon rendered inoperative by the occupying armies of Russia,

¹⁹ Sweden's 1772 constitution was a development in an already established tradition. In 1720 Sweden's parliament adopted the first of several fundamental documents that defined the structure of central authority, writing a constitution for which Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Mably professed admiration. See Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty: Sweden, 1719–1772* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); H. Arnold Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era, 1760–1815* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and “Gustav III of Sweden and the Enlightenment”, *Eighteenth Century Studies* 6, 1972–73, p. 8.

²⁰ Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, pp. 127–61.

²¹ Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (New York: Random House, 1977), 1776–1787 (New York: Norton, 1972), pp. 88–89.

²² A “convention” was a centuries-old English term for a meeting outside (and sometimes opposed to) established institutions; the phrase “national convention” seems to be an Irish radical coinage of 1783. See Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, pp. 310–12; Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 303; Robert B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, 1760–1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 302–11.

²³ The May 3, 1791 document suggests revisability by sometimes using the word “constitution” to refer to a collection of documents beyond itself, some already written, some yet to be. See Janusz Duzinkiewicz, *Fateful Transformation: The Four Years' Parliament and the Constitution of May 3, 1791. East European Monographs* no. 367 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 40–54.

²⁴ Elsewhere, the May 3 document states that “all power in civil society should be derived from the will of the people” (art. 5). See *New Constitution of the Government of Poland Established by the Revolution of the Third of May 1791* (London: J. Debrett, 1791), pp. 3, 12. The same ambiguity is found in France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, whose Article 3 has it that “the principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation,” after having described itself as being declared “in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being” (Duverger, *Constitutions et documents politiques*, p. 3). An important echo of the Polish formulation is found in the 1824 constitution of newly independent but still monarchical Brazil, in which Dom Pedro's authority exists “by the grace of God and the unanimous acclamation of the peoples.” The would-be emperor of independent Mexico in the 1820s reigned, so the official formula had it, “by divine providence and the congress of the nation.” See *Constituição política do império do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Silva Porto, 1824), p. 3; Timothy E. Anna, *The Mexican Empire of Iturbide* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 76.

²⁵ This ambiguity was retained in the many subsequent constitutions that balance an explicit human derivation of authority with a sacred source as well. See John Markoff and Daniel Regan, “Religion, the State and Political Legitimacy in the World's Constitutions,” pp. 161–82 in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson, eds., *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987).

Prussia and Austria. The Polish document, moreover, presents itself as a royal enactment even as it embodies claims of popular sovereignty. It may well be that the new United States and the old Polish Republic were the pioneers, successful and unsuccessful, because the notions of social contract so dear to those who urged a constitution had a particularly vivid reality in both places: the United States had well-developed representative mechanisms in its local meetings and colonial assemblies; the Polish nobility not only exercised considerable governing functions in the fifty-odd local parliaments, but literally drew up a new social contract (the *pacta conventa*) with each king they chose by election.²⁶ It was not in the northwest European core that constitutions were first written, but on the western and eastern fringes²⁷ (although the French soon pushed the notion of popular sovereignty further still by having a national plebiscite on their constitution of 1793).²⁸

In Europe, revolutionary France assumed a major role in diffusing constitutionalism further afield, not only by marking its own changes of regime with new constitutions (in 1791, 1793, 1795, 1799, 1802 and 1804) but by inspiring and compelling similar documents to be adopted in the satellite states that its armies overran in the 1790s and beyond,²⁹ sometimes thus reinforcing already-present constitution writing propensities. Other states, trying to resist French dominance, followed suit. Haiti marked its independence from French rule by enacting its own constitution in 1805, becoming the second New World state to do so.³⁰ Pressed by French forces, the besieged remnants of a Spanish government convened an assembly that issued a constitution in 1812, partly modeled on the French constitutions of 1793 and 1795. The Cadiz Constitution became an important model for the predominantly republican sentiments of the leadership in the newly independent countries of Spanish America during the early nineteenth century, who marked the founding of their own independent states with constitutional texts.³¹

²⁶ The literature on the U.S. constitution is vast beyond citation; for one work, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993). On Polish institutions see Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. 1.

²⁷ If we stretch our time frame back a bit, we would tip this picture towards the northeast with Sweden's constitution of 1772.

²⁸ René Bataille, "Le plébiscite sur la Constitution de 1793", *Révolution française* 57, 1909, pp. 496–524; 58, 1910, pp. 5–30, 117–55, 193–237, 327–41, 385–410.

²⁹ Duverger, *Constitutions et documents politiques*; H.B. Hill, "L'influence française sur les constitutions de l'Europe (1795–1799)", *La Révolution française*, 1936–37, pp. 352–63; 154–66. On revolutionary Dutch constitutionalism in the 1780s, see Wayne P. te Brake, *Regents and Rebels: The Revolutionary World of an Eighteenth-Century Dutch City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

³⁰ David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 36.

³¹ With two western hemispheric precedents behind them, two Spanish American constitutions of 1811 preceded the Spanish document (Colombia, Venezuela). The Cadiz constitution was a significant model, not just in Spanish America, but in Italy and Norway. See William W. Pierson and Federico G. Gil, *Governments of Latin America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), pp. 107–33; Timothy E. Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Isabel Arriazu, Cristina Diz-Lois, Cristina Torra, and Warren M. Diem, *Estudios sobre las cortes de Cádiz* (Pamplona: Editorial Gómez, 1967); Jorge Mario García Laguardia, Carlos Melén-

By the time the conservative forces had triumphed in Europe, the model of constitution-making had been firmly implanted in two hemispheres. The French defeat sparked a wave of constitution writing in the German states.³² Even the restored French monarchy itself issued a constitution in 1814, granted, so its royal preamble tells us, in recognition “of the wishes of our subjects.”³³

Competitive Electoral Parties

Political groupings for the purpose of contesting elections or pursuing legislative objectives were known wherever there were elected bodies of one sort or another. Even where such groupings were fairly stable—hardly always the case—and hence tended to develop collective identities, as in the case of Britain’s Whigs and Tories or Sweden’s Caps and Hats³⁴, a sense of illegitimacy hung about such their activities.³⁵ Those inclined to the cause of popular sovereignty often regarded such coalitions as wholly illegitimate, representing the purely private interest of individual powerholders, of a network of friends and relations³⁶, or of some other group that differed from and was very likely antagonistic to the interests of the whole. The very term “party” was largely used invidiously, for example, during the French Revolution, when the claim that someone identified with some part of the people was a step short of an accusation of treason. Organized campaigning was scorned, and even declaring one’s own candidacy disapproved.³⁷ British electoral practice was often seen as a model of corruption, not of order nor of democracy.³⁸ Aspirants to office

dez Chaverri, and Marina Volio, *La Constitución de Cádiz y su influencia en América* (San Jose: CAPEL, 1987); Juan Ferrando, *La Constitución de Española de 1812 en los comienzos del “Risorgimento”* (Rome: Instituto Jurídico Español, 1959); Antonio Annino, “Pratiche creole e liberalismo nella crisi dello spazio urbano coloniale. Il 29 novembre 1812 a Città del Messico,” *Quaderni Storici*, Nuova Serie 69 (December) 1988, pp. 727–63; Manuel Ferrer Muñoz, *La Constitución de Cádiz y su aplicación en la Nueva España* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993); T.K. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway, 1814–1972* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 9.

³² James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 411–25; Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800–1866* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 237–43.

³³ “Charte constitutionnelle de 4 juin 1814”, in Duverger, *Constitutions et documents politiques*, p. 80.

³⁴ Michael Roberts, *Swedish and English Parliamentarism in the Eighteenth Century* (Belfast: The Queen’s University, 1973), pp. 24–6.

³⁵ On eighteenth-century thinking about parties in Britain, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 1–39; for a broad sample of eighteenth-century writings, see J. A. W. Gunn, ed., *Facions No More: Attitudes to Party in Government and Opposition in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Frank Cass, 1972).

³⁶ The designation “Familia” for the faction around the Czartoryskis in eighteenth century Poland’s parliamentary politics is symptomatic.

³⁷ Since such condemnation of electioneering was particularly intense in revolutionary France, the study of hidden candidacy in that country is correspondingly particularly revealing. See Patrice Gueniffey, *Le nombre et la raison: La Révolution française et les élections* (Paris: Editions de l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1993), pp. 323–52.

³⁸ Crook, *Elections in the French Revolution*, pp. 69–70; Gueniffey, *Le nombre et la raison*, pp. 315–21.

might in fact be working for their election behind the scenes, giving substance to the sense of widespread electoral cabals.

With the development of parties inhibited—as some gentlemen found electioneering shameful and some democrats found election-contesting coalitions redolent of aristocratic conspiracy³⁹—the hope of a unitary popular will was enhanced. Democracy could be equated with unanimity. Party legitimation, by contrast, opened the way to a more pluralistic conception of democracy.⁴⁰

The priority of unity had been expressed, for example, by Lord Bolingbroke, when he suggested in 1738 that a “patriot king” would unify his people: “instead of putting himself at the head of one party in order to govern his people, he will put himself at the head of his people in order to govern, or more properly to subdue, all parties.”⁴¹ James Madison, arguing in 1787 that one of the virtues of a proper constitution was its capacity “to break and control the violence of faction,” commented “that the public good is disregarded by the conflicts of rival parties.”⁴² Indeed, a good deal of Madison’s collaboration with Hamilton and Jay on *The Federalist* was devoted to demonstrating that the new constitution would avert such dangers.

The core issue is not the existence, nor even the tactics, of concerted efforts to attract voters to office-seekers who were in coalitions based on kinship, friendship, mutual self-interest, or policy; the more difficult historical problem is the shift in legitimacy of such activities. The air of disrepute that hung over election-contesting organizations would have been particularly salient when *The Federalist* addressed these concerns, for the revolutionary period in the United States saw the proliferation and development of caucuses, conventions, and coalitions (and their condemnation as cabals) on a wide scale, as election campaigns proliferated. And the new country saw the formation of a major oppositional grouping in the form of the Republicans.⁴³ Yet an element of opprobrium was attached to all this activity.⁴⁴

It is hard to be sure where and when the idea of a party began to change, and

³⁹ Some of this moral condemnation may represent the lingering influence of the medieval tradition of elections within the Church, when open office-seeking was taboo, because it was associated with the serious sin of simony, or trafficking in ecclesiastical office (Léo Moulin, *La Vie quotidienne des religieux et religieuses au Moyen Age, x^e–xv^e siècle* [Paris: Hachette, 1978], p. 196). In Canto 19 of *Inferno*, Dante wedged simoniacs upside down in holes with their feet on fire. Twentieth-century canon law continues to bar electioneering (J. Creusen, *Religieux et religieuses d’après le droit ecclésiastique* [Paris: L’Edition Universelle, 1950], p. 53).

⁴⁰ For much insight into unitary conceptions see Jane M. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

⁴¹ Henry Saint-John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke* (London: Cass, 1967), v. 2, p. 402.

⁴² James Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” in *The Federalist*, Jacob E. Cooke, ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 56–57.

⁴³ There is an enormous literature on the early history of parties in the United States. Two important statements are: Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*; and Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 257–302.

⁴⁴ Robert J. Dinkin, *Voting in Revolutionary America: A Study of Elections in the Original Thirteen States, 1776–1789* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 57–89.

it undoubtedly cannot be identified with a single moment or a single place. Some scholarship suggests the early nineteenth-century United States as one important location. The old critique of “faction” was retained for the personalistic coalitions that were clustered around family or held together by greed; a “party” was increasingly likely to be an impersonal body united around common principle.⁴⁵ By the 1820s, adherents of New York State’s Democratic Republicans were openly proclaiming their loyalty to the party, and were championing the very idea of party as an antidote to the new forms of tyranny that a republic could nurture: “When party distinctions are no longer known and recognized, our freedom will be in jeopardy, as ‘the calm of despotism’ will then be visible.” No longer was the party label to be denied: “We are party men, attached to party systems.”⁴⁶

By the middle of the nineteenth century, those who called themselves democrats in Europe had generally accepted the notion of party as a proper form of organization, rather than as the corruption of some ideal. Although the left in France’s Revolution of 1848, for example, looked back in many ways to the Revolution of 1789 for models, it also accepted the party label.⁴⁷ The history of ideas of party in France—and elsewhere in Europe—between 1789 and 1848 remains to be written.⁴⁸

Conflation of Democracy with Representative Institutions

This was an American innovation. Thomas Paine recognized the significance of such conflation almost instantly, characterizing the new U.S. political model as “representation ingrafted upon democracy.”⁴⁹ In the 1780s, many writers thought of representative institutions as something quite distinct from democracy. James Madison distinguished “republics” like the thirteen newly independent states from “pure democracy” precisely because they had a “scheme

⁴⁵ Wallace, “Changing Concepts of Party.”

⁴⁶ Quoted in Wallace, “Changing Concepts of Party,” p. 487. Similar notions were expressed earlier in Sweden (Roberts, *Swedish and English Parliamentaryism*, p. 26).

⁴⁷ See, for example, Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades: Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830–1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). The term “parties” continued to retain enough of its pejorative sense that Louis Napoleon Bonaparte claimed to identify with the whole nation by being above party. Rather more recently, after a close victory in Poland’s bitter presidential election in 1995, the victor resigned from the Democratic Party of the Left in order to be a president outside the party system (*New York Times*, November 26, 1995, I, p. 6). Indeed, condemnation of parties and party systems has been a striking part of the political culture of post-communist democratization, as witness anti-party stances by such diverse figures as Poland’s Lech Wałęsa, the Czech Republic’s Václav Havel, and Russia’s Boris Yeltsin. For suggestive observations see Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 247.

⁴⁸ In Jean Dubois’s dictionary we find that around 1870 there was a wide range in use of the term “party,” from the pejorative through the neutral to the honorific. See *Le Vocabulaire politique et social en France de 1869 à 1872* (Paris: Larousse, 1962), pp. 366–67.

⁴⁹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), v. 1, p. 371.

of representation.”⁵⁰ Common European notions of representation envisaged some mechanism, not necessarily electoral, by which delegates presented the views of the ruled to the ruler. Democracy, in contrast, was often perceived as the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making⁵¹, which even an enthusiast like Rousseau thought inappropriate to a large territorial state. Rousseau’s scorn for elected representation was notable: “The people of England regards itself as free, but it is gravely mistaken. It is free only during the election of members of Parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing. The use it makes of the short moments of liberty it enjoys merits losing them.”⁵² Few thought Britain’s parliament had much to do with democracy after the upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century gave way to a restored monarchy. Indeed, as late as the debates on the Reform Bill of 1832, the champions of limited suffrage expansion could deny the slanderous accusation that they were democrats.⁵³

Those who held themselves to be democrats during the French Revolution sometimes avowed a suspicion that representatives were but a step from becoming new aristocrats.⁵⁴ Indeed, favorable and unfavorable invocations of “democracy” tended to occur in the context of criticizing elected revolutionary officials for their autonomy from popular control. Sieyès, for example, condemned the “ignorance” of those who held “the representative system incompatible with democracy.”⁵⁵ But in 1795 Holland’s mobilized democrats in Rotterdam insisted that “Representatives” are no more than “the executors of our Will since we have alienated no part of our sovereignty.”⁵⁶ Although negative views of democracy were a commonplace by the time the American constitu-

⁵⁰ James Madison, in *Federalist No. 10* (in Cooke, ed., *The Federalist*, p. 62). See also Robert W. Shoemaker, “‘Democracy’ and ‘Republic’ as Understood in Late Eighteenth Century America”, *American Speech* 41, 1966, pp. 83–95.

⁵¹ Acknowledging the common view that democracy was a formula for continued violent revolt, D’Argenson in 1765 made the uncommon suggestion of a democratic road to order through popularly elected authorities, anticipating the later conflation of democracy and representation (Rosanvallon, “History of the Word ‘Democracy’,” p. 143).

⁵² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat social*, Book III, ch. 15 (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1943), p. 340. Montesquieu differed with Rousseau on much, but also saw elected representatives as incompatible with “democracy”: “The suffrage by lot is natural to democracy; as that by choice is to aristocracy” (*The Spirit of the Laws* [New York: Hafner, 1949], v.1, p.11).

⁵³ The radical Henry Hunt’s account of the ministerial reformers’ response to attacks by the conservative Sir Robert Peel: “When Sir Robert Peel charged them [the ministers] with going to make a democratical House of Commons . . . they said ‘No, we are going to keep power out of the hands of the rabble’” (quoted in Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* [London: Hutchison University Library, 1973], p. 187).

⁵⁴ On the development of more participatory notions of democracy and their conflicts with representation, see R.B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas and Institutions in Paris, 1789–92* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Kåre Tønneson, “La Démocratie Directe sous la Révolution Française”, in Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 2: *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 295–307.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Rosanvallon, “The History of the Word ‘Democracy’,” p. 148

⁵⁶ Quoted in Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, p. 226.

tion was ratified, many Americans felt that they had created a new kind of government, and some were using the word “democracy” to describe it.⁵⁷

Accountability of all Powerholders to an Electorate

This very powerful idea was profoundly advanced in the new United States, whose constitution of 1789 rejected a hereditary monarchy, a hereditary aristocracy, and an established church. No one was to be president or sit in Congress by right; other powerholders would either be elected, or appointed by those who were elected. In France, electoral processes were enlarged by the new revolutionary regime. Officials from village councilmen to national legislators (but not the king) were to be elected, as were magistrates, public prosecutors, National Guard officers, Catholic bishops, and even army sergeants (a plan to add schoolteachers was never implemented).⁵⁸ Although the scope of electoral institutions kept changing, by 1792 the unelected king was gone. The radicalism of making all powerholders responsible to those down below was, however, attenuated by the propensity to indirect elections in both the U.S. and French cases.⁵⁹ The history of democracy in most of nineteenth-century western Europe was marked by the coexistence of elected parliaments and hereditary monarchs, who battled over their respective powers. The unhappy history of the French constitution of 1791, for example, ended with its abrogation and the king’s trial by parliament and execution.

There is a long tradition of partial precursors in European history, such as city-states governed by councils⁶⁰ and elected monarchs such as the Polish king, the emperor, or the pope; and much experience with electoral principles⁶¹ in various forms of corporate governance (including monastic orders, villages, guilds and other forms of association as well).⁶² At the national level, howev-

⁵⁷ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, pp. 593–96.

⁵⁸ Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789–1820s* (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 60–64.

⁵⁹ The initial U.S. design had senators elected by state legislatures and presidents by an electoral college; the French tended to have a variety of multistage elections from the Estates-General through the Directory.

⁶⁰ Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), pp. 60–65; Moulin, “Les origines religieuses des techniques électorales et délibératives modernes,” *Revue Internationale d’Histoire Politique et Constitutionnelle* (nouvelle série) 3–4, 1953–54, pp. 106–48.

⁶¹ Town councils often had ecclesiastics who sat *ex officio*; many bodies practicing *electio* were engaged in acts of collective acclamation, rather than in choosing among alternatives. See Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 30–34. On the other hand, notions of division and majority rule are also not hard to find in the European past, as in the Genoese statutes of 1143 or the apparent twelfth-century Icelandic decision-making by majority (Moulin, “Techniques électorales,” p. 112; Sigurdur Lindal, “Early Democratic Traditions in the Nordic Countries,” in Erik Allardt et al., *Nordic Democracy* [Copenhagen: Det Danske Selskab, 1981], p. 18).

⁶² Moulin, *Religieux et religieuses*, pp. 191–208 and “Les origines religieuses des techniques électorales.” Babeau, *Le village sous l’Ancien Régime*, pp. 62–64. Emile Coornaert, *Les Corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), p. 214. Electoral procedures could be well enough established that charges of election irregularities might figure in internal guild disputes; for an interesting example, see Daniel Heimmermann, “‘The Blackest of Treasons’: Strife Among

er, such mechanisms were invariably joined with notions of hereditary right. Even the Polish nobility who elected the king were an almost closed (although very large) hereditary grouping. Thus European social contract theory often stressed the notion of a contract between the monarch and the representatives of the people, and saw as a fundamental political question the extraction of power-limiting concessions from that monarch. The question of checks and balances for Montesquieu, for example, was how to offset monarchical power by other power. In the exhilarating discussion about new institutions to be created that accompanied the American colonies' defeat of the British army, the participants realized that their social contract would be quite otherwise: a contract among the people that created centralized power.⁶³ How to avoid the re-creation of either monarchical or aristocratic tyrannies, rather than having monarchs and aristocrats each as counterweights to the other, became a central issue for applied political theorists on the western side of the Atlantic, which made the American experience seem quite irrelevant to many democrats across the ocean.

As nineteenth-century Europeans attempted to reconcile monarchical and aristocratic institutions with the newly powerful idea of democratic legitimation opened up by revolutionary France, they began a long history of struggle between legislatures that had some degree of democratic legitimation and some recognized power, and those whose power derived from birth, tradition, and God. The republicanism of France and its satellites was crushed externally, but only after it had been pushed aside by Napoleon's new monarchical order. Many nineteenth-century European countries had some sort of parliament, but monarchs often retained the power to name and dismiss ministers, draw up budgets, and order their armies into combat; in many places, elected chambers shared power with "upper" chambers composed of hereditary or monarchically appointed members.

In opposition to claims of tradition, Jefferson held that government was exclusively at the service of living human beings, since "the dead have no rights. They are nothing; and nothing cannot own something . . . This corporeal globe, and everything upon it, belong to its present corporeal inhabitants during their generation."⁶⁴

Masters Inside the Leather Guilds of Eighteenth-Century Bordeaux", paper presented to the meetings of the Society for French Historical Studies, Lexington, Kentucky, 1997. That leadership could derive from the consent of the led, rather than be bestowed by higher authority, would have been a likely experience of the crews of pirate vessels in the early modern Atlantic world. Pirate crews not only elected their captains, but were familiar with countervailing power (in the forms of the quartermaster and ship's council) and contractual relations of individual and collectivity (in the form of written ship's articles specifying shares of booty and rates of compensation for on-the-job injury). See Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 261-66.

⁶³ For a very rich treatment, see Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*.

⁶⁴ Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Samuel Kercheval" (12 July 1816) in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), v. 15, pp. 42-43.

The first group of countries to follow the United States and France in the radical break from hereditary authority were the newly independent states of Spanish America. Although these new states are often denigrated for “merely” aping the North American example, it surely mattered on the world stage that the republican initiative—as of, say, 1840—was represented in a whole group of countries, not a largely isolated United States.⁶⁵ The Europe of the Congress of Vienna was not following that example at all.

Secret Ballot

Various voting mechanisms had long been known⁶⁶, but secrecy was not always favored by eighteenth-century advocates of popular sovereignty.⁶⁷ In the view of some, the vote was only appropriate for those of independent conscience; a true citizen proudly voted in public. As the Girondin Louvet put it: “Decree that we shall not write; decree that each shall speak up firmly ‘I am so-and-so and I name so-and-so.’ That’s the ballot worthy of free men.”⁶⁸ Others held that written ballots lent themselves to fraudulent vote counts.⁶⁹ But still others claimed that public voting made elections into acts of hierarchies or collectivities, rather than a summation of individual wills. For some, this was a recommendation: in some versions of this view those down below would defer to the voting choices of their betters; in other versions, communities would make collective choices.⁷⁰ Montesquieu held open voting essential to maintain the rule

⁶⁵ The easy demonstration that Latin America’s democratic institutions were characterized by clientelism, corruption, fraud and violence is hardly ever put in a comparative context in which actual electoral practices in nineteenth century North America or Europe—not supposed ideals—are taken as the benchmark. Such comparative studies are long overdue. It may be the case that during the 1820s and 1830s, for example, clientilistic voting was more characteristic of Brazil than Bavaria, violence more likely to accompany attempts to exercise rights that existed on paper in Chile than Kentucky, and fraudulent vote counts more characteristic of Venezuela than Venice but it is far from obvious. Consider, for example, Alain Garrigou’s discussion of nineteenth-century French voting in *Le Vote et la vertu: Comment les français sont devenus électeurs* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1992).

⁶⁶ Secret ballots were used in some medieval ecclesiastical elections, which suggests the possibility of the preservation of electoral techniques from antiquity (Moulin, “Techniques électorales,” p. 144).

⁶⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville contended in 1835 that secret ballots were unimportant for American democrats since “there has been too little danger in a man making his vote public to create any great desire to conceal it” (cited in Bourke and DeBats, “Identifiable Voting,” p. 261).

⁶⁸ Quoted in Gueniffey, *Le nombre et la raison*, p. 310.

⁶⁹ For some examples from colonial North America, see Robert J. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen Colonies, 1689–1776* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 135.

⁷⁰ The following works treat these issues in the English context: Paul F. Bourke and Donald A. DeBats, “Identifiable Voting in Nineteenth-Century America: Toward A Comparison of Britain and the United States before the Secret Ballot,” *Perspectives in American History* 11, 1977–1978, pp. 259–88; David C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976); T.J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North-east, 1832–1874* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). For French revolutionary debates and shifting practices, see Gueniffey, pp. 281–316.

of enlightened elites over dangerous plebeians: “by rendering the suffrage secret in the Roman republic, all was lost; it was no longer possible to direct a populace that sought its own destruction.”⁷¹ Whether those who thought of themselves as democrats favored open or secret voting was in part a question of the changing general notions of “democracy,” and in part a question of immediate circumstances. In Oregon, for example, the political elite seems to have maintained open voting during the American Civil War, in order to stifle potential disloyalty to the Union.⁷² Illinois, to take another instance, adopted oral voting in 1818, ended it in 1819, reinstated it in 1821, ended it again in 1823, opted for it yet again in 1829, and terminated it in 1848.⁷³

One of the reasons why a written ballot might be associated with aristocracy, rather than democracy, was the absence of organized parties and the general illegitimacy of open election-contesting actions. French revolutionaries, for example, had no legitimate election-contesting organizations and no election bureaucracy to draw up lists of candidates: voters could not pick colored ballots, or check off symbols or names on prepared sheets of paper, but were expected to offer a name aloud or in writing. Under such circumstances a mandatory written ballot, secret or otherwise, would exclude the illiterate and would largely be desired or condemned for that reason. French democrats often argued that preserving open voice voting was an essential weapon against aristocracy.⁷⁴

In France, moreover, the revolutionaries’ electoral tradition began with the convening of assemblies to draw up lists of grievances, as well as to elect deputies to higher bodies in a multistep process. This imparted a collective flavor to voting that was retained through the entire revolutionary period. The constitution of 1793, for example—the earliest moment in the history of modern democracy of legislated universal manhood suffrage—calls for voting to take place in primary assemblies that elect delegates to higher bodies; at those primary assemblies, citizens were to choose between oral and written voting.⁷⁵

The historical range of electoral procedures could vary enormously in openness/closedness: in nineteenth-century England, votes were written down and later published; in nineteenth-century America, voting was often public and oral; in the twentieth-century Soviet Union, a voter had the option of a secret ballot, but to choose to enter the voting booth was tantamount to a confession of dissidence⁷⁶; in many times and places, written ballots were identifiable

⁷¹ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, v. 1, p. 12.

⁷² Bourke and DeBats, “Identifiable Voting,” p. 273

⁷³ Bourke and DeBats, “Identifiable Voting,” p. 270

⁷⁴ Malcolm Crook, *Elections in the French Revolution*; Gueniffey, *Le nombre et la raison*.

⁷⁵ Duverger, *Constitutions*, p. 33.

⁷⁶ Alex Pravda, “Elections in the Communist Party States,” in Guy Hermet, Richard Rose, and Alain Rouquié, *Elections Without Choice* (New York: Wiley, 1978), p. 177. The dominant Whigs of Massachusetts in 1853 crucially modified a two year old law requiring ballots to be placed in envelopes, by making the request for such an envelope a voter’s option (Wigmore, *Australian Ballot*, p. 26).

(easily distinguishable, for example, if differently colored paper represented different candidates or if political parties distributed their own ballots).⁷⁷ The task of tracing the history of voting forms is complicated by the possibility of non-uniform procedures, not to mention the frequent gap between legislative enactments and discrepant practices. Although France's constitution of 1848, for example, required a secret ballot, the effective achievement of secrecy in that country should be dated from 1913, when voting booths were mandated.⁷⁸

No country effectively and uniformly required the secret ballot before Britain's Australian colonies, and more specifically Victoria and South Australia (1856).⁷⁹ Recently-established Victoria had little in the way of established electoral tradition, and much in the way of social turbulence. The secret ballot idea may have been carried to Australia by immigrants with experience of it in some of Britain's districts.⁸⁰ A more important source was probably transported British workers in the towns and gold fields, who had carried with them the program of the Chartist movement (including secret balloting). Australia's identity as the model for this practice was firm enough that in debates on voting mechanisms in England, the United States, and Latin America, the use of a publicly-provided ballot that was marked in secret became known as the "Australian ballot."⁸¹ In the 1870s and 1880s, several European countries followed suit.⁸² A wave of U.S. locations followed starting with Louisville, Kentucky in 1888.⁸³ Indiana, Montana, and Massachusetts required it statewide in 1888 and 1889; it spread considerably in the next decade.⁸⁴

In spite of the Australian label, however, a number of other places had laws

⁷⁷ At one point in colonial Rhode Island, for example, written ballots were signed on the reverse side (Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, p. 137).

⁷⁸ "Constitution du 4 novembre 1848" in Duverger, *Constitutions et documents politiques*, p. 92; Olivier Duhamel, *Aux Urnes, Citoyens* (Paris: Editions du Mai, 1993).

⁷⁹ See J.F.H. Wright, *Mirror of the Nation's Mind: Australia's Electoral Experiments* (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1980), p. 24 et seq.; Lionel E. Fredman, *The Australian Ballot: The Story of an American Reform* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968), pp. 3–11; the background is discussed in I.D. McNaughton, "Colonial Liberalism, 1851–1892," in G. Greenwood, ed., *Australia: A Social and Political History* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1955), pp. 98–144. A leading opponent of the innovation held it "not only unconstitutional, but un-English" and added "no Englishman would desire to do that secretly which ought to be done fairly and openly" (quoted in Wright, *Mirror*, p. 27).

⁸⁰ For a possible instance, see John H. Wigmore, *The Australian Ballot System* (Boston: Soule, 1889), p. 2.

⁸¹ Although most of the country adopted the secret ballot for legislative elections between 1856 and 1859, its use in local elections was a slightly later development. Western Australia waited until 1879, which seems to make New Zealand the first place actually to institutionalize secrecy at the national level (1870). Spencer D. Albright, *The American Ballot* (Washington, DC: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942); *The Modern Encyclopedia of Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Horwitz-Graham, 1964), p. 129.

⁸² Britain acted in 1872, Belgium in 1877, Luxembourg in 1879 (Albright, *American Ballot*, p. 24).

⁸³ Kentucky maintained oral voting in rural areas until 1891 (Bourke and DeBats, "Identifiable Voting", p. 270 n. 2).

⁸⁴ Albright, *American Ballot*, pp. 26–27.

on the books at an earlier date. In Colombia, secret ballots have been the formal rule since the constitution of 1853, although scholars question the extent of enforcement of these provisions, particularly since political parties distributed their own ballots until 1988.⁸⁵

*Extension of Suffrage: The Propertyless*⁸⁶

This is a difficult matter to assess, because many countries have both national and local elections to consider; in some countries, like the United States or Australia, state or provincial elections must be considered as well. It is also sometimes difficult to distinguish between the voting rules in law and actual practice, particularly in rural regions far from the scrutiny of the central government and urban journalists. Finally, systems of multistage elections may have greater restrictions at higher stages.

The French constitution of 1793 seems to be the first attempt to eliminate property or wealth qualifications at the national level. It superseded the constitution of 1791, which had established a minimal tax payment for participants in primary electoral assemblies (but a higher payment for second-stage electors).⁸⁷ The constitution of 1793, however, never went into effect (although it was ratified by a referendum with broad suffrage). By the early nineteenth century many of the states of the new United States had eliminated such requirements for white men. By 1825 all but three states had universal suffrage for white men.⁸⁸ Switzerland's Protestant cantons liberalized male suffrage in the 1830s by reducing—but not necessarily eliminating—tax thresholds (although sometimes there were other restrictions).⁸⁹ In Geneva, the required tax payment

⁸⁵ See "Colombia" in Dieter Nohlen, ed., *Enciclopedia Electoral Latinoamericana y del Caribe* (San José, Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, 1993), p. 139; Jonathan Hartlyn and Arturo Valenzuela, "Democracy in Latin America Since 1930," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), v. 6, part 2, pp. 129–30. David Bushnell finds that the elections of the 1850s were sometimes controlled by local bosses, but largely accorded with the official rules ("Voter Participation in the Colombian Election of 1856," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, 1971, pp. 238–49).

⁸⁶ The precise mechanism for such exclusions was often the setting of a minimum tax rate. I omit here a separate treatment of literacy exclusions, although they have been very important in some countries. Under Ecuador's 1929 constitution, for example, "citizens" had to read and write, thereby excluding sixty four percent of adults from voting rights. See Rafael Quintero López, *El mito del populismo en el Ecuador: Análisis de los fundamentos del Estado ecuatoriano moderno (1895–1934)* (Quito: Universidad Central del Ecuador, 1983), p. 226.

⁸⁷ Duverger, *Constitutions*, pp. 8–9, 32–33. The tension inherent in combining grassroots participation in collective assemblies with the delegation of effective decision-making to a higher level is characteristic of the difficult relationship between direct democracy and representation throughout the entire revolutionary period in France. See Gueniffey, *Le nombre et la raison*.

⁸⁸ Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, pp. 294–95. The pioneers, Vermont and New Hampshire, eliminated pecuniary requirements before 1800 (Laura J. Scalia, *America's Jeffersonian Experiment: Remaking State Constitutions, 1820–1850* [DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999]).

⁸⁹ Valentin Gitermann, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (Thayngen: Augustin-Verlag, 1941), pp. 447–48. For a contemporary survey of cantonal variation in democratic practice as of 1843 (the author distinguishes six types of cantonal government), see A.-E. Cherbulez, *De la démocratie en Suisse*

was reduced in 1819, again in 1832 and 1834, and eliminated in 1842. At those moments, one can see the erosion of the tax threshold from the most restrictive sixty-three florins set in the post-Bonaparte constitution of 1814, to twenty-five, fifteen, seven, and finally zero, although the 1842 constitution still excluded those recently on public assistance. In 1847 yet another constitution dropped this final restriction.⁹⁰ Following the defeat of its conservative cantons in a civil war in 1847⁹¹—a trigger of the revolutionary wave of 1848—Switzerland's new constitution became the first in Europe to eliminate such requirements at the national level.⁹² France's revolutionary constitution of 1848 eliminated property qualifications for men a few weeks after the Swiss constitution was adopted, but a more restrictive set of rules was soon reintroduced, before France's Second Republic was shut down by its elected president.⁹³

There are also some precocious cases in Latin America. An 1812 election held in Mexico City seems to have had very wide suffrage in practice, because officials did not enforce the legal restrictions.⁹⁴ In principle, the Cadiz Constitution of 1812—under which colonial elections were held—provided wide suffrage for non-Black men.⁹⁵ In defiance of the standard image of Latin Americans looking to Europe for models of democratic progress, we find a Mexican liberal looking to Europe for models of how to restrict popular participation in electoral politics.⁹⁶ For conservative forces in independent Spanish America, the Europe shaped by the Congress of Vienna was a source of guidance on how to put a cat back into a bag.

An 1821 post-independence law in Buenos Aires province provided for “universal” suffrage for free men⁹⁷; but servants, day laborers, and illiterates were

(Paris: Cherbuliez, 1843), v. 2. Cantonal constitutions from the 1830s and 1840s are found in Ludwig Snell, *Handbuch des Schweizerischen Staatsrechts* (Zurich: Drell, 1844), v. 2.

⁹⁰ William E. Rappard, *L'Avènement de la démocratie moderne à Genève* (Geneva: Jullien, 1942), pp. 83, 143, 191–92, 214, 316, 410–11. By contrast, Zurich eliminated the tax threshold in 1831 (Rappard, *L'Individu et l'état dans l'évolution constitutionnelle de la Suisse* [Zurich: Editions Polygraphiques, 1936], p. 195).

⁹¹ Joachim Remak, *A Very Civil War: The Swiss Sonderbund War of 1847* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

⁹² Article 63 of the 1848 constitution enfranchised those “not excluded from the right of active citizenship by the legislation of the canton in which he has his domicile.” This would seem to leave open the possibility of cantonal restrictions. (See “Constitution fédérale de la confédération suisse du 12 septembre 1848,” in William E. Rappard, *La Constitution fédérale de la Suisse* [Boudry: Editions de la Baconnière, 1948], p. 431). In light of post-1848 exclusionary provisions in some cantons, scholars differ in their assessments of Swiss democracy at mid-century. See, for example, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 85; Göran Therborn, “The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy,” *New Left Review* no. 103, 1977, p. 16.

⁹³ Raymond Huard, *Le Suffrage universel en France (1848–1946)* (Paris: Aubier, 1991); Duverger, *Constitutions*, p. 92.

⁹⁴ Richard Warren, “The Will of the Nation: Political Participation in Mexico, 1808–1836,” paper presented at the meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, Los Angeles, 1992.

⁹⁵ Excluded were those of African descent, the unemployed, and domestic servants.

⁹⁶ Torcuato S. Di Tella, *National Popular Politics in Early Independent Mexico, 1820–1847* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pp. 97–98.

⁹⁷ This seems to be following a precedent set in an election of 1812, according to Tulio Halperín-

excluded five years later.⁹⁸ In the militarized climate that emerged from the independence wars, a substantial number of voters were government soldiers, leading the opposition to complain of the grant of “the suffrage and the lance to the proletariat.” One might wonder about the climate of intimidation fueled by such armed voters, but the government’s candidates did sometimes lose at the polls. In short order, however, the electoral system was utilized for plebiscitarian legitimation by Juan Manuel de Rosas.⁹⁹

There was no “Argentine” government to speak of at this point, although developments in Buenos Aires and other provinces had considerable mutual impact. The frontier province of Entre Rios had provided voting rights for free adult males even earlier (1820), although it adopted some restrictions two years later. The province of Corrientes adopted similar rights in 1821. Northern Salta province also enfranchised free adult males in 1823, and Uruguay followed suit in 1825 (in indirect elections), but abandoned broad suffrage two years later.¹⁰⁰ Brazil’s constitution of 1824 provided for such broad participation at the base of a multistage process, despite its explicit and implicit exclusions, that even under the more restrictive revised law of 1846 conservative Brazilians could lament “universal suffrage.”¹⁰¹

Extension of Suffrage: Women

At the outset of the modern era of democratization, women were not completely deprived of the vote. The absence of codified suffrage rules may have permitted small numbers of women to seek the vote, and election officials to permit them; corporate notions of representation entitled female fiefholders and members of convents to be represented in France’s Estates-General of 1789 through male surrogates, while the widows of urban guild masters and female heads of rural households could attend town and village assemblies in person. In early post-independence America a small number of women could also vote. Even where laws permitted women’s voting, if only by silence, informal definitions of women’s roles seem to have effectively kept participation low.¹⁰² The sys-

Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 361.

⁹⁸ See David Bushnell, *Reform and Reaction in the Platine Provinces, 1810–1852* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1983), pp. 22–23.

⁹⁹ Halperin-Donghi, *Politics, Economics, and Society*, pp. 360–64.

¹⁰⁰ Bushnell, *Reform and Reaction*, pp. 34, 36–37, 43, 134–36.

¹⁰¹ Richard Graham’s exemplary study shows that in 1870, when the 1846 law was still in force, more than half of free adult men had the right to vote. Since the language of the 1824 constitution suggests an electorate at least as large, it seems probable that in the 1820s Brazil had a more generous suffrage for free males than almost anywhere in Europe. See Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth Century Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 101–09.

¹⁰² In the elections for the Estates-General, for example, those women entitled to participate (such as widows of members of urban guilds) only very rarely actually did so. See Michel Naudin, “Les élections aux états-généraux pour la ville de Nîmes,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 56, 1984, pp. 497–98; the official rules for the Estates-General can be found in Jacques Cadart, *Le Régime électoral des états généraux de 1789 et ses origines (1302–1614)* (Paris: Sirey, 1952).

tematizing work of French revolutionaries¹⁰³ and the crafting of new state constitutions in the U.S. meant that the modern democratic era virtually began by completing and systematizing the disfranchisement of women.¹⁰⁴

New Zealand was the first country to secure women's voting rights in national elections (in 1893).¹⁰⁵ Australia followed suit in 1902 (although women could not vote in all elections in all states until 1908). Perhaps the shortage of women in these two frontier societies and the desire to attract women immigrants from Europe played a role in this decision, especially for those who sought to infuse these male-dominated lands with the civilized values that women were felt to embody. This hypothesis is buttressed by a state-by-state look at the achievement of voting rights by women in the United States. The first places where women voted on an equal footing with men were the western territories of Wyoming (1869) and Utah (1870), followed by the western states of Colorado (1893) and Idaho (1896).

Whatever the precise engine that achieved suffrage for women, it was a process that moved from economically and politically marginal areas to more powerful centers. The pioneering places in the Pacific—in the world, in fact—were part of the British Empire, and hardly sovereign states; the first places within the U.S. were, at the time, territories, and not even full-fledged states. In North America, another British dominion, Canada, preceded the the United States at the national level.¹⁰⁶ In Britain itself, women householders were enfranchised and gained the vote in local parliamentary elections in 1881 in yet another tiny piece of empire—the Isle of Man.¹⁰⁷ The earliest large territory in

¹⁰³ In the national referendum on the French constitution of 1793 the votes of women (and children) were counted in a few places, even though the constitution on which they voted did not recognize female (or childhood) suffrage. Perhaps some election officials took very seriously the notion that prior to the sovereign people's consent to a constitution, no authority had any legitimate right to restrict political action. See Baticle, "Le plébiscite sur la Constitution de 1793," *Révolution française* 57, 1909, pp. 511–12.

¹⁰⁴ For some instances of woman's voting in seventeenth-century English elections, see Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Votes and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 18–19. On prerevolutionary villages in Burgundy, see Robert M. Schwartz, "Beyond the Parish Pump: The Politicization of the Peasantry of Burgundy, 1750–1850," in Michael Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne te Brake, eds., *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 120–35. The American situation is treated in Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, pp. 29–30. For some nineteenth-century instances of women voting or attempting to vote in Latin America, combated by more explicitly exclusionary legislation, see Luis Vitale, *La Mitad invisible de la historia latinoamericana. El protagonismo social de la mujer* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana/Planeta, 1987), pp. 107–10.

¹⁰⁵ Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1972). But in 1838 tiny Pitcairn Island, settled by the mutinous crew of H.M.S. *Bounty* and their Tahitian companions, adopted a constitution clearly specifying that their magistrate be elected by "every native born on the island, male or female." See Walter Brodie, *Pitcairn's Island and the Islanders in 1850* (London: Whitaker & Co., 1851), p. 84.

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds., *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 350.

¹⁰⁷ Melissa A. Butler and Jacqueline Templeton, "The Isle of Man and the First Vote for

Europe to follow the Pacific island-nations was Finland, which in 1906 was still a part of the Russian Empire. Finland was not followed by the economic, political and military centers of European power, but by its neighbors, Norway and Denmark, in 1913 and 1915.¹⁰⁸

In Latin America, it was not the wealthiest or most powerful states, nor those whose political and intellectual elites were most profoundly connected to Europe, that first recognized women's voting rights, but Ecuador in 1929¹⁰⁹ (although the constitution of 1946 made voting "obligatory for men and optional for women": a distinction radically affecting actual participation until the constitution of 1967 made voting "obligatory for men and women"¹¹⁰).

Extension of Suffrage: Racial or Ethnic Categories

This is an extremely difficult matter to assess, and I will not attempt a synthesis here. Racially defined groups may be excluded from genuine participation by terror as well as by law, as Tocqueville already noted in the early nineteenth-century United States.¹¹¹ Citizenship rights may be more secure for a dominant *staatsvolk*, as in constitution of post-Communist central and eastern Europe in the 1990s.¹¹² In the 1990s as well, there are millions of temporary, semipermanent, and permanent residents with limited rights in Western Europe and the United States. For the United States, we would have to consider the disenfranchisement of free blacks, northern and southern, prior to the Civil War¹¹³; the Reconstruction Amendments; the renewed deprivation of rights by local law and violence; and the post-World War Two civil rights struggle, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Australia has a corresponding history of limitations on aboriginal rights¹¹⁴, and South Africa the progressive disenfranchisement of

Women," *Women and Politics* 4, 1984, pp. 33–47. English women began acquiring the vote for various local offices in 1869; see Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 7–10.

¹⁰⁸ Daley and Nolan, *Suffrage and Beyond*, p. 349.

¹⁰⁹ *Constitución política de la República del Ecuador* (Quito: Talleres Gráficos Nacionales, 1929), arts. 13, 18. Ketty Romo Leroux argues that Ecuador's constitution of 1897 actually deserves credit for "suppressing the gender restriction," implicitly allowing literate women to vote, as the State Council later ruled (*La mujer: Dura lucha por la igualdad* [Guayaquil: Universidad de Guayaquil, 1983], pp. 196–97).

¹¹⁰ Federico Trabucco, *Constituciones de la República del Ecuador* (Quito: Universidad Central—Editorial Universitaria, 1975), pp. 409, 472. Even without this very significant qualification, the 1929 constitution only enfranchised the literate, which excluded more women than men (*Constitución política* [1929], art. 13; Quintero, *El mito del populismo en el Ecuador*, pp. 239–49).

¹¹¹ "In almost all the states where slavery has been abolished, the Negroes have been given electoral rights, but they would come forward to vote at the risk of their lives." Tocqueville seems to understate the legal barriers that the extralegal threat complemented. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 343; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

¹¹² Robert M. Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in the Formerly Yugoslav Republics," *Slavic Review* 51, 1992, pp. 654–73.

¹¹³ Litwack, *North of Slavery*; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), pp. 90–91, 190–91.

¹¹⁴ The indigenous peoples of Australia got the franchise in 1962, but were not under the same

those non-whites who at one point had voting rights.¹¹⁵ In this context the enfranchisement of New Zealand's Maoris in 1867 is noteworthy.¹¹⁶ The history of voting rights for the original inhabitants of the United States is unusually complex, with differences among states and tribes in the nature of barriers to voting. Some state constitutions, for example, required voters to be "civilized," which was understood to exclude Indians unless they were members of the "Five Civilized Tribes."¹¹⁷ A fuller treatment of this subject would have to consider such topics as the inclusion and exclusion of Indians and Blacks in post-independence Latin America, and post-emancipation practices in Europe's Caribbean colonies.¹¹⁸

Personal Independence

The image of the individual citizen exercising independent judgment in casting a vote is not compatible with ties of personal dependence.¹¹⁹ At the onset of the democratic breakthrough, rural majorities in much of Europe were subject, to varying degrees, to the inherited claims of lords; in the western hemisphere large numbers were slaves.¹²⁰ The general histories of both emancipations are fairly clear.

Several small Western European states developed plans in the eighteenth century for permitting peasants to buy their freedom from seigneurial rights: Baden, Denmark, Savoy. Savoy became the model for the initial French revolutionary legislation of 1789. Rebellious French peasants pushed the new regime to go much further, and by 1793 seigneurial rights were abolished without indemnity—a policy carried far afield by advancing French armies. Other states developed their own plans to immunize their countries against the French contagion. Rural emancipations multiplied during the nineteenth century, especially under threat of peasant insurrection in the revolutionary climate of the early 1830s and, even more so in 1848–49.¹²¹

compulsory voting law as whites until 1984. See Ian McAllister, "Australia and New Zealand," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *Encyclopedia of Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1995), v. 1, p. 100.

¹¹⁵ Hermann Giliomee, "The Non-Racial Franchise and Afrikaner and Coloured Identities, 1910–1994," *African Affairs* 94, 1995, pp. 199–225.

¹¹⁶ Maoris voted in special electoral districts until 1975, when they got the option of registering in the same districts as whites. See McAllister, "Australia and New Zealand," p. 101.

¹¹⁷ Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 231–34.

¹¹⁸ For example, see Mavis Christine Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society: A Sociopolitical History of the Free Coloreds of Jamaica, 1800–1865* (London: Associated Presses, 1976).

¹¹⁹ Thus many systems of restricted suffrage excluded domestic servants. Lack of personal independence was an important theoretical rationale for exclusions of wage laborers, the poor, illiterates, the mentally incompetent, incarcerated criminals, military personnel, clergy, lesser nobles, and women, all of which have been practiced somewhere; it is still the rationale for excluding children everywhere.

¹²⁰ For a recent comparative treatment, see Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment: The Political Economy of the Caribbean World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹²¹ Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University

If the French armed forces gave a critical boost to rural emancipations on the European continent, the British Navy played a significant, but different, role in the abolition of slavery in the Western hemisphere. Slave resistance, including flight and rebellion, had long troubled colonial slavery when the antislavery mobilizations in Britain itself led to termination of the British slave trade in 1807¹²², following—and to some extent encouraged by—Denmark’s pioneering abolition of 1803 (that carried out an edict of 1792).¹²³

Some of the newly independent U.S. states were developing free-soil constitutions¹²⁴, but the national constitution accepted slavery; the trade in slaves was prohibited as of 1808. Revolutionary France, balancing the interests of the Caribbean plantocracy and the merchant-slavers of the Atlantic ports on the one hand, and the increasingly mobilized nonwhites and nonfree on the other, abolished slavery after some hesitation in 1794, but later rescinded it in 1802. More enduringly, the Haitian revolution and the subsequent defeat of French forces bent on re-enslavement—along with British and Spanish forces attempting to seize Haiti—showed the power and threat of slaves freeing themselves. In the Spanish American revolutions of the early nineteenth century, the rebel Creole elite and the Spanish both bid for slave support with promises of emancipation. Many slaves were freed in the course of the independence wars, establishing momentum for the subsequent piecemeal ending of slavery in the Spanish American republics.¹²⁵ Chile pioneered this movement in 1811 with a “free womb” law, followed by the first complete abolition in Spanish America in 1823.¹²⁶ British colonial slavery was ended by several enactments between 1834 and 1838.¹²⁷ With abolition achieved in the British Caribbean, the British attempted to organize international action against the slave trade and employed their Navy to help curtail it, hoping to relieve any competitive disadvantage of their own slaveless colonies.¹²⁸ (The navies of other European powers partici-

Press, 1978); Max Bruchet *L’abolition des droits seigneuriaux en Savoie* (1761–1793) (Annecy: Hérisson Frères, 1908); John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords and Legislators in the French Revolution* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996).

¹²² While the 1807 act prohibited importation of slaves from Africa, British colonies could still buy slaves from each other until 1825 (Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 435).

¹²³ Svend E. Green-Pedersen, “The Economic Considerations Behind the Danish Abolition of the Negro Slave Trade,” in Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn, *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 399–418. Like subsequent abolitions, the Danish law did not fully control realities: some slavers got permission to operate past the law’s deadline and others continued to operate illegally. See Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the Virgin Islands of the United States* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1994), pp. 134–37.

¹²⁴ The initiator was Vermont in 1777, followed by Massachusetts in 1780. See Seymour Drescher, “Abolitionism,” in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *Encyclopedia of Democracy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1995), v. 1, p. 6.

¹²⁵ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 331–79, 509–10.

¹²⁶ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp. 354, 358–59.

¹²⁷ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp. 419–72.

¹²⁸ Since British policy often also aimed at good relations with the major slave powers, whose sense of sovereignty was easily violated by unilateral anti-slave trade action, the mix of interstate

pated in varying degrees.) Despite its early, aborted emancipation, France didn't follow suit in its colonies until the revolution of 1848. The Dutch were later still, and the most dynamic, independent state in the Western hemisphere only emancipated its slaves by proclamation in the course of a bloody civil war, completed by post-war constitutional amendments. Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico were the last western hemispheric holdouts.

OBSERVATIONS

If this sketch of breakthrough moments in democracy is reasonably accurate, then several observations can be made. Let us note first of all that countries that were innovative in some ways may have been less innovative or even downright laggard in others. Switzerland, which was early to eliminate property qualification for voting, was late in the enfranchisement of women.¹²⁹ The United States was innovative in a number of ways, yet had a significant minority without secure voting rights in a large part of its territory into the 1960s. One might say the same of Australia, early in ballot secrecy and woman's rights, but late to enfranchise its aboriginal population. Poland was an important innovator in constitutionalism in the 1790s, but had little in the way of democracy for most of its subsequent history, and was not even an independent state for much of that time. France was early in several short-lived innovations, and was a major diffuser of innovation in the 1790s, but lagged behind other European countries in adopting an effective secret ballot (1913), and was even more laggard in women's suffrage (1944). England, well ahead of the democratic breakthroughs of the late eighteenth century, nourished conceptions of popular sovereignty in the seventeenth century. It was also well-known for its electoral politics—with very restricted suffrage—from well before the starting point of this study¹³⁰; but it was quite late to adapt an equal franchise for all voters.¹³¹ Some of Ar-

cooperation and conflict was complex. See David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 231–58; David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); E. Phillip LeVeen, *British Slave Trade Suppression Policies, 1821-1865: Impact and Implication* (New York: Arno Press, 1977); Serge Daget, "British Repression of the Illegal French Slave Trade," in Gemery and Hogendorn, *The Uncommon Market*, pp. 419–42; W. E. F. Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: Pantheon Books, 1970); Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949); Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Brazil, Britain and the Slave Trade Question, 1807–1869* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

¹²⁹ Enfranchised at the national level in 1971, Swiss women still could not vote in one reluctant canton's elections until the Swiss Supreme Court overturned its procedures in 1990 (Remak, *A Very Civil War*, p. 201 n. 4).

¹³⁰ Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

¹³¹ University graduates and those with businesses got a second vote until 1948. See Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1991), p. 439.

gentina's provinces intermittently tried out property-free voting rights for white men in the first half of the nineteenth century, but these same provinces sometimes imposed restrictions on free Blacks. Colombia's constitutions never restricted Black voters (at least on paper), but maintained property or wealth qualifications until 1853.¹³² Colombia managed to be both early and late in enfranchising women: the soon-reversed enfranchisement in Velez province was extremely early (1853), but on the national level Colombian women were the next to last in Latin America to get the vote.¹³³ The important conceptual point is that democratization is not a single thing, but a collection of many things born in different places. The juxtaposition of institutions has made the history of democracy look more like a frequently shaken kaleidoscope than like an effort to realize a single blueprint. Recall, for example, Edmund Morgan's argument that in the U.S. a slave state like Virginia could be a fount of democratic rhetoric around conceptions of white male citizenship.¹³⁴

Second, many of the places that have figured in our story are either European countries or English-speaking settler colonies. But Latin American places have also appeared with some frequency, although most often as short-lived ventures, or as instances in which the effective implementation of the laws was questionable. And Latin America is hardly a paragon of regime continuity. Nonetheless, it seems worthwhile to reopen the dossier on that region's democratic history, for at least the first half of the nineteenth century.

A third rather striking observation is that every innovation treated here was initiated by the late nineteenth century, although some were not fully incorporated into a redefined vision of democracy until the twentieth. It is not obvious whether there have been any redefinitional innovations in our own time. International monitoring of elections has become common in the late twentieth century, but only in the Third World; effective campaign finance laws are now widespread, but hardly (yet?) universal. Perhaps there are other innovations, slowly diffusing, that this survey has missed—or perhaps democratic creativity has become exhausted.¹³⁵

Fourth, it is evident from this study that there have been different routes of diffusion, endless chains of precursors and predecessors, and there is much to debate and explore in tracing these links. Poland's elective monarchy, an important element in that country's precocious constitutionalism, may have been

¹³² David Bushnell, "El sufragio en la Argentina y en Colombia hasta 1853," *Revista de Historia del Derecho* 19, 1968, pp. 16, 19.

¹³³ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, pp. 216–17.

¹³⁴ Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: the Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).

¹³⁵ Adam Przeworski laments that "we've had very little institutional innovation during the past two hundred years" ("Democratization Revisited," *Items* 51 [1], 1997, p. 11). Surely we need more attention to the study of innovation. Why have some innovations come to be universally accepted as elements of democracy (like women's suffrage or ballot secrecy), while others are widely but not universally adopted (like mandatory voting or proportional representation)?

a copy of the Holy Roman Imperial model, or it may have been influenced by Central Asian nomadic methods of leadership choice. Australia's secret ballot may originate from transported English radical workers or from a reforming elite. The precocious invention of women's suffrage on tiny Pitcairn Island in 1838 comes from what mysterious mix of the maritime workers stranded in the Pacific, the Tahitians stranded with them, and a British naval captain? Was this development a dead end, only coincidentally related to later developments, or did it make a contribution to the subsequent innovations in New Zealand and Australia?

The fifth and most important observation is a spatial, not a temporal one. Most of the innovations in democratization over the past two centuries were pioneered in countries other than the great powers of the day. Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Poland, New Zealand, Finland and Australia have turned up in our story. The United States also was a major innovator in constitution-writing, in political party formation and legitimation, in the elimination of property qualifications, in fusing representation and democracy. And some of its states were world leaders in enfranchising women, following only Pitcairn and Velez. In general, however, the most innovative moments in U.S. history occurred when it was a collection of towns and farms scattered among forests on the edge of a vast prairie.

And the paradigmatic modernizers, the central cases in the social scientific literature, Britain and France? England's innovations in the middle of the seventeenth century escaped our study's temporal bounds (as did the entire earlier history of representative institutions). But we may well ask whether the particular lacunae of this essay also served to efface some of that country's innovative character from the late eighteenth century onward. Britain seems to have been early to develop some of the modern vehicles for the formation, mobilization, and expression of the views of citizens, without which the history of democracy would be vacuous. While the state of comparative knowledge of such things makes it impossible to write a comparative history of innovations in social activism, it is conceivable that such a comparison would suggest British priority in certain areas. Britain may well be a major pioneer in modern, disorderly politics, in the forms and modalities by which ordinary people have challenged powerholders.¹³⁶ And Britain's dense newspaper network was an early step in the development of the communications networks which educated those outside governing circles about the actions, divisions and agendas of those on high, while informing those on high about the actions, divisions and agendas of those down below.¹³⁷ Indeed, Charles Tilly suggests Britain as a sig-

¹³⁶ The impressive evidence assembled by Charles Tilly shows very important elements of innovation in collective action in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England. In order to track patterns of innovation and diffusion across frontiers, that work now needs to be complemented by parallel studies of Ireland and anglophone North America. See Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹³⁷ France did not even have a daily until 1777; the approach to news of its first such paper may

nificant innovator not just in the forms of popular contention, but in its “parliamentarization”—in the degree to which the British parliament was the object of mobilization, and popular mobilization was a context for parliamentary politics.¹³⁸ Between the 1790s and the Reform of 1832, electoral contests, parliamentary voting, and grass-roots mobilizations both lawful and disruptive became intertwined. So Britain may have been a major innovator in cementing connections among popular mobilizations and representative parliamentary bodies. In short, it may be that this essay short-changes important arenas of British innovation.¹³⁹ But since the 1780s, and in the particular arenas we were able to track here, it was in colonies and ex-colonies like Australia, New Zealand and the United States (not to mention Pitcairn Island), and not primarily in the English imperial core, where English speakers broke new ground in actual practice.

As for France, it seems to have had a mysterious genius for short-lived democratic innovation: for example, near-universal (if unequal) adult male participation was proclaimed in 1789, and rescinded in 1791; the manhood suffrage of the constitution of 1793 was never actualized; the new move to a suffrage without property qualifications in 1848 was restricted in 1850. Or consider France’s early, but rescinded, abolition of slavery. On the other hand, France played a major role as a relay center in the democratic wave of the 1790s, both enriching and spreading constitutionalism, antiseigneurialism, and the very label of “democrat.” Indeed, French revolutionary energies, rhetoric, and armies, were of vital significance in diffusing new social models; the French revolutionaries, moreover, enriched constitutionalism with a popular ratificatory referendum not employed by their American and Polish precursors, radicalized antiseigneurialism by moving beyond the indemnification of their Savoyard model, and profoundly enhanced the prestige of democracy by showing that Austrian and Prussian armies could be beaten by democratic forces, rather than speedily succumbing as in the Low Countries in the late 1780s (or defeating one aristocratic power with significant support from aristocratic allies, as had the Americans). But the point here is that America (and to some extent Poland)

be suggested by its non-coverage, a dozen years later, of the taking of the Bastille. See Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789–1799* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 19, 126. See also Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1994), and Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

¹³⁸ Charles Tilly, “Parliamentarization of Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834,” *Theory and Society* 26, 1997, pp. 245–73.

¹³⁹ Were we to extend the discussion backwards in time, it is not only the parliamentarism of the British that would need further treatment. Dutch and Swiss republican traditions would need more emphasis, as would Scandinavian landholder assemblies and the political traditions of other countries as well. A very insightful treatment of the role of popular mobilizations in shaping European political institutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is Wayne P. te Brake’s *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

provided the French with constitutional models, Savoy furnished the prototype for French antiseigneurial legislation, and the Low Countries injected the powerful identity of “democrats” into French discourse.

The inescapable conclusion: more often than not, the dynamic centers of political creativity in the global history of democratization have been lesser players on the world stage. On the other hand, they have not been among the weakest and poorest nations of the world either. To be sure, the great powers have played a considerable role in the major transnational waves of democratization, by military imposition, by serving as objects of emulation, by providing material support.¹⁴⁰ It is a great theoretical challenge to integrate the history of innovation with the pattern of these major waves and the temporally clustered cycles of followership, which do seem in significant degree pushed by the wealthy and powerful, both through deliberate policy and as models for emulation.

AN EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESIS

We might well attempt to explain each instance of a breakthrough towards democracy individually. We could, for example, try to explain Poland’s precocious constitutionalism as the conjunction of a powerful and idiosyncratic republican tradition, a sense of backwardness among its Enlightenment-oriented elites, and the briefly favorable distraction of autocratic Russia by its Turkish war. We might attempt to explain the pioneering role of Australia in ballot secrecy by discussing elite concessions to a worker’s movement infused with Chartist notions which had been carried to the Pacific by transported English radicals. A whole library has been written on the U.S. innovations. Indeed, since different elements of democratization have been pioneered in different places, a full and adequate explanation requires the capacity to account for such specifics.

But although it is necessary to root each innovation in its specific time and place, the general pattern suggests some general process at work as well. I want to offer a speculative interpretation in terms of the *interests* and *capacities* of *elites*. My simple hypothesis: in wealthy and powerful countries, elites have little motive to seek major reforms. Indeed, when faced with serious challenges in the external arena, elites may well seek to have the costs of declining possibilities borne by their own lower classes, and to do so in the name of the old tradition that made the country great. On the other hand, in much poorer and weaker countries the possibility of radically altering the nation’s position is not very enticing, and the means for major political reorganization are scarce. It is in the middle range of countries that elites—seeing the chance of marching to

¹⁴⁰ Markoff, *Waves of Democracy; The Great Wave of Democracy in Historical Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Institute for European Studies, 1995); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

the front of the world stage, fearing the descent into the abyss—are most exposed to a diversity of pushes and pulls, where they have the hope of change and the resources to bring it about.

These are the places where a great leap into the new is most likely. It is here, in this middle tier, that elites are most active and effective in institutionalizing new forms of political and social organization. The ideas of new forms may be born anywhere, but it is most likely that the marriage of hope and desperation will bear fruit in this middle tier of countries. Among the poorest and weakest there is not enough hope, among the richest and most powerful, not enough desperation.

In directing attention to elites, however, it is important to remember that a good deal (but not all) of what those elites are reacting to is pressure, sometimes including threats, from below.¹⁴¹ The driving force for democratization has often originated among those who challenged the elites: no history of democratization can neglect the marches, petition drives, strikes, insurrections, and other forms these challenges assumed. But even when there is a significant impulse from below, innovative breakthroughs may be easier in lesser powers. English Chartists may have demanded the secret ballot, but part of the Australian elite made this cause its own under pressure from Australia's workers, who may well have been strongly influenced by the transported Chartists among them. The U.S. women's movement was a world pioneer, but national success in the suffrage campaign lagged considerably behind the early successes achieved far away after the American Women's Christian Temperance Union replicated itself in New Zealand and Australia.¹⁴²

CONCLUSION

The history of democracy is profoundly polycentric, and an exclusive or even disproportionate focus on the world's centers of wealth and power will miss much. The history of democracy also shows that democracy is a moving target, not a static structure. Democracy is a juxtaposition of institutions and practices with quite different histories. In considering the current democratizing moment in world history, therefore, or future such moments (should there be any to consider), we would do well to think about more than the degree to which "they" are more or less successfully emulating "our" institutions, however interesting and important such processes are. We need to consider the possibility that there may be still further innovations in what democracy is—innovations that will redefine it for the historians of the future. The historical record hardly suggests with any precision the places where those innovations might be pioneered (or

¹⁴¹ Markoff, *Waves of Democracy*.

¹⁴² John Markoff, "From Center to Periphery and Back Again: The Geography of Democratic Innovation," in Michael Hanagan and Charles Tilly, eds., *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 229–46.

are being pioneered?). But it does suggest that it is unlikely such changes will originate in the current centers of world wealth and power. In this sense today's struggles for democracy in the Czech Republic, Chile, South Africa, and Taiwan are not merely peripheral matters best left to their scholarly specialists, but potentially at the center of the history of the future.