

University of Georgia

---

From the Selected Works of Cas Mudde

---

2008

# Upping the Odds: Deviant Democracies and Theories of Democratization

Renske Doorenspleet

Cas Mudde, *DePauw University*



Available at: [https://works.bepress.com/cas\\_mudde/12/](https://works.bepress.com/cas_mudde/12/)

This article was downloaded by: [University of Leeds]

On: 20 November 2008

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 789227951]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Democratization

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713634863>

## Upping the Odds: Deviant Democracies and Theories of Democratization

Renske Doorenspleet; Cas Mudde

Online Publication Date: 01 August 2008

**To cite this Article** Doorenspleet, Renske and Mudde, Cas(2008)'Upping the Odds: Deviant Democracies and Theories of Democratization', *Democratization*, 15:4, 815 — 832

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/13510340802191102

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13510340802191102>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# Upping the Odds: Deviant Democracies and Theories of Democratization

RENSKE DOORENSPLEET and CAS MUDDE

---

This concluding article tries to integrate the different insights of the individual case studies of this special issue into some comparative observations. The findings are related to debates and findings of the broader literature on democratization, with the aim of generating new insights that might help develop new studies on the topic. Importantly, our suggestions are to be considered as hypotheses complementary to the two dominant theories of democratization, rather than opposite to them, accepting both their key assumptions and stipulations. More specifically, two aspects of key concern to the study of democratization are discussed in more detail: the phasing of the process of democratization and the ambiguity of the process(es) of diffusion. We argue and show that, while accepting that the different phases of the process of democratization might overlap in practice, the analytical distinction of democratic transition and consolidation provide clearer insights into the factors affecting processes of democratization. We also emphasize the importance of processes of diffusion in explaining (the different phases of) democratization, but at the same time analyse the current conceptual, methodological and theoretical problems involved in diffusion theory.

---

Key words: democracy; democratization; diffusion; transition; consolidation

## Introduction

With so many years of research on the dos and don'ts of democratization, it is not surprising that the field does not hold too many secrets. In fact, it is striking how many cases of democratization can be explained by the development and diffusion theories. At the same time, this makes a thorough study of the few deviant democracies, i.e. cases of democratization *not* explained by these two theories, the more important.

In this concluding article we try to integrate the different insights of the individual case studies of this special issue into some comparative observations. These findings will be related to debates and findings of the broader literature on democratization, with the aim of generating new insights that can, as suggestions, feed into new studies on the topic. Importantly, we stress that these suggestions are not seen as alternatives to the development and diffusion theories. As Lijphart has rightly noted, deviant cases can only invalidate a probabilistic theory 'if they turn up in

---

Renske Doorenspleet is Associate Professor at the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom. Cas Mudde is Associate Professor (ZAP-BOF) in Political Science at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. In 2008–2009, he will be Visiting Professor at the Department of Political Science of the University of Oregon.

Democratization, Vol.15, No.4, August 2008, pp.815–832  
ISSN 1351-0347 print/1743-890X online  
DOI: 10.1080/13510340802191102 © 2008 Taylor & Francis

sufficient numbers',<sup>1</sup> which is clearly not the case here. Rather, our suggestions are to be considered as hypotheses complementary to the two dominant theories of democratization, accepting both their assumptions and stipulations.

This concluding article consists of two separate, but related, substantial sections. The first section presents our comparative observations based on the five single case studies in this special issue. We have separated this discussion by phase of democratization, i.e. transition and consolidation, which are at times conflated in the literature. For each phase we discuss the most relevant factors on the basis of the internal-external and structure-agency dichotomies, as discussed in the introductory article.<sup>2</sup> Although some factors seem to play a role in both phases, as will be highlighted in the third sub-section, some play only a (significant) role in one phase.

The second section of the conclusion relates the comparative empirical findings to the larger theoretical debates in the field. More specifically, two aspects of key concern to the study of democratization are discussed in more detail: the phasing of the process of democratization; and the ambiguity of the process(es) of diffusion. In the concluding section, we briefly discuss some methodological issues and formulate a couple of suggestions that we hope will help inform future research on both deviant and 'normal' cases of democratization.

## Comparative Observations

### *Transition*

All countries in the special issue were selected as examples of deviant democracies, in terms of the modernization and diffusion theories, in both the transition and the consolidation phases. All but one of the case studies clearly show that their country was economically underdeveloped at the time of transition. However, despite John Booth's elaborate discussion on the topic, we remain convinced that Costa Rica was also deviant during transition according to the main indicators of modernization theory. Particularly in comparison to other Latin American countries like Argentina, Chile or even Panama, let alone various European countries, Costa Rica belonged to the poor(er) countries in terms of GNP per capita, GDP or Vanhanen's Index of Power Resources.<sup>3</sup> In terms of per capita income, Costa Rica was well below the Latin American average when its transition started, US\$347 compared to US\$396.<sup>4</sup> In other words, not only Botswana, Benin, India, and Mongolia, but also Costa Rica was a relatively poor country during both the transition and the consolidation phases. Hence, in our opinion the case studies in this special issue can all be seen as 'deviant democracies' on the basis of the modernization theories.

While all countries are clearly deviant according to diffusion theory, i.e. they were surrounded by non-democracies during transition, this point does require some clarification. Most importantly, hardly any country democratizes in isolation. In this study, all five countries were part of a group of democratizing countries in their geographical region. This raises the question whether the diffusion effect is limited to democracies, or can in fact be extended to democratizing countries, at least in the transition phase. We will discuss this point in detail in the theoretical section below.

This brings us back to the main question of this special issue: how to explain these deviant democracies? While the case studies offer a lot of information, our primary task in this conclusion is to summarize them, and to see whether more general patterns can be detected. We will first describe the domestic (f)actors and then the international (f)actors, examining both actors and structural factors, ones which have often been omitted or underdeveloped in previous – mainly quantitative – research.

Regarding the domestic (f)actors, we identify three key actors (political elites, the military, and civil society) and one structural factor. The role of internal actors is the most prominent domestic factor mentioned in all of our cases of deviant democracies, particularly *political elites*. In line with the actor-oriented literature on democratization,<sup>5</sup> we also found that domestic elites play an important role in the transitions of deviant democracies. This is not a surprising result, as the dominant approach within the qualitative literature on democratic transitions has generally emphasized the role of actors in explaining regime change.<sup>6</sup> According to this actor-oriented approach, regime transitions are not determined by structural factors, but shaped by what principal political actors do as well as by when and how they do so.

Of particular importance is the role of the old elites, which are considered the biggest potential threat to democratic transition. In four of the five deviant democracies the former regime either disappeared, through the process of decolonization (Botswana, India), or its main actors prepared the transition (Costa Rica, Mongolia). Thus, in none of the cases did remnants of the old regime constitute important blocks of opposition to the transition to democracy. Therefore our deviant cases show that democratic transition was more possible where there was little or no opposition from old political elites.

This still leaves many things unexplained, however. For instance, the question often remains *why* the political actors did what they did. Was it indeed political actors that were key decision-makers, or were they so constrained by structures that they didn't really have an alternative? Whatever the reason, particularly in Costa Rica and Botswana, politicians seem to have used the state to protect their own economic interests, requiring stability and (therefore) some level of legitimacy, whereas many leaders in failed democracies did not have any wealth except for the rents they accrued from state access. This begs an interesting side-question: are businessman-cum-politicians better for democratization than professional politicians?

While most attention in the actor-oriented literature is reserved for political elites, the deviant democracies in this special issue highlight the role of another important actor: *the army*. In fact, the political insignificance of the army has been mentioned as one of the crucial factors in explanations of the overwhelming success of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe in comparison to the less impressive record in Latin America.<sup>7</sup> Still, whereas the army is considered a major (f)actor in studies of failed democratization, it plays little role in studies of successful democratization.<sup>8</sup>

In all five deviant democracies, the army was either a relatively weak actor or more or less pro-democratization. Costa Rica had abolished its standing army just before the transition, partly because of its prior anti-democratic behaviour, while Botswana didn't even have an army to begin with. Mongolia's army had always been weak, given that the Soviet Union had been the main protector of its borders.

Finally, in Benin and India the army chose the side of the democratizers. In fact, the role of the army is the most striking factor in the comparative studies of Benin and other democratizing African countries. In Seeley’s comparative study of Benin and Togo in particular,<sup>9</sup> the preference of the army is the only significant difference between the two countries (see also Rachel Gisselquist’s article in this special issue, i.e. Table 1). Therefore, again, our deviant cases show that democratic transition was more possible where the military was either relatively weak or supportive of democratization.

Another domestic actor that is often discussed in the democratization literature is the amorphous ‘civil society’. Particularly in the literature on the recent democratization in Eastern Europe, the importance of a heroic civil society is often highlighted, referring to the roles of organizations like the Polish Solidarity and the Czech Charter 77.<sup>10</sup> In several of the cases of deviant democracy we indeed found a strong civil society, in terms of activity and independence, before the process of democratization started (Benin, Costa Rica, India). However, Mongolia had only a very short period of strong pro-democracy civil society activity (1988–1990), in fact not much different from communist Czechoslovakia, while Botswana’s society was politically completely passive.

In short, a strong civil society is not a necessary condition for democratic transition, but it can play an important role; for example, by limiting the political space for other actors that may oppose democratization, such as political elites and the army. In contrast to some of the theoretical literature on the topic, the relationship between civil society and democratization is complex, however. This is, in part, because of the broadness of the concept of civil society, which delineates roughly a sphere between the state and the family, and encompasses a multitude of often highly diverse and opposing values.<sup>11</sup> Hence, it is the *nature* of the dominant civil society actors that determines the relationship toward democratization, not simply the absence or presence of these actors. That said, transition can also benefit from a lack of civil society activity, as this provides pro-democracy political elites with more space and time to develop their policies (such as in Botswana).

A further internal factor, a structural one, that is often considered problematic to democracy and democratization is the (high) ethnic fragmentation of a society.<sup>12</sup>

TABLE 1  
OVERVIEW OF MAIN (F)ACTORS OF DEVIANT DEMOCRATIZATION BY TYPE AND PHASE

Categories	Internal	External
Agency	<i>Political elites</i> <i>Army</i> <b>Civil Society</b>	<i>Former colonizer</i> <i>Regional hegemon</i> <u>International funders</u>
Structure	<u>Economic growth/stability</u> <u>State centralization</u>	<b>Diffusion</b>

*Italic* means relevant mainly during transition; underlined means relevant mainly during consolidation; and **bold** means relevant in both transition and consolidation.  
In addition, the factor ‘external shock’ (economic or political) plays a role during transition.  
*Source:* Authors’ compilation.

However, that structural factors only influence politicians' actions, and not determine them, is made clear in the case of ethnic fragmentation here. In the three deviant democracies that are ethnically fragmented, national political elites decided *not* to play the ethnic card (Benin, Botswana, India). Admittedly, in India the success of Congress's strategy was undoubtedly 'helped' by the partition of colonial India and the creation of independent India and Pakistan, which significantly weakened the remaining Muslim opposition. Incidentally, the recent successes of the Indian People's Party (BJP) seem to indicate that consolidated democracies can deal better with ethnic politics. In other words, the absence of ethnic politics seems particularly relevant for the transition phase.

While internal (f)actors are the most important during the transition phase, at least in most cases, external (f)actors do contribute too. This is self-evident in the process of decolonization, although history has shown that this in no way guarantees successful democratization. Three external (f)actors are examined here: the former colonizer; the regional hegemon; and external shock.

The position of the *former colonizer* towards the former colony seems very important. In the cases of India in the late 1940s and Botswana in the early 1960s, the United Kingdom actively pushed for democracy. In Benin, France has done the same since the late 1980s. In fact, France's pro-democracy stand toward Benin differed markedly from its position toward other former African colonies, such as Togo, which failed to democratize (see below).

There is another external actor that can play a crucial role during the transition phase: the *regional hegemon*. With regard to Botswana, Costa Rica, and Mongolia the regional hegemon tolerated the democratization process. In all three cases the external actor in question took an exceptional position, as it had often negatively interfered in democratization in the region: (apartheid) South Africa in neighbouring states, the US in much of Central and Latin America, and Russia in Central Asia. One could even add France's role in much of francophone Africa, where it is both a former colonizer and, to some extent, a regional hegemon.

Explanations for this exceptional behaviour of the regional hegemon seem primarily linked to internal conditions, notably the limited economic or strategic value (structural) and the non-threatening foreign policy position (actor) of the democratizing country. If one compares the deviant democracies to similar countries in the region that did not successfully democratize, their lack of natural resources stands out. Similarly, the countries don't have a strong geopolitical position; the possible exception is Mongolia, although it seems that all hegemonies concerned preferred the country to take a 'neutral' position. In fact, it appears that relatively 'unimportant' countries can prevent significant political interference from their regional hegemon by implementing a neutral or moderately pro-hegemon foreign policy, whereas more geopolitically relevant countries are expected to be more decidedly pro-hegemon (to the extreme of being satellite or vassal states). Therefore, deviant cases are more likely where there is a lack of opposition from significant external actors such as former colonizers or regional hegemonies.

The final factor, *external shock*, is more difficult to situate within the dichotomies structure-agency and internal-external. This notwithstanding, it seems to have played

an important role in triggering democratic transition. In four of the five cases transition was preceded by an economic or political shock to the previous (autocratic) system – leaving aside the shock of decolonization. Benin was hit by an economic crisis, while in Mongolia this was at the very least looming (and the elites were aware of it). Costa Rica and India experienced a civil war (and India a partition too). Only Botswana did not face a shock to the previous system; though it might have been the country most dependent upon its colonizer and therefore had the shock of facing a ‘political vacuum’. Despite this partial exception, however, deviant cases are more likely to occur where the existing regime is confronted with economic or political shock or crisis.

### *Consolidation*

Not surprisingly, many (f)actors that are conducive to democratization in the transition phase play a role during consolidation. Logically, this is even more the case for structural factors, be they mainly internal or external. However, it also makes sense that the effect of particular (f)actors decreases during the process of democratic consolidation. This dynamic process, as well as the differences between the two phases of democratization, will be discussed in the next section. Here we highlight the (f)actors that are mainly relevant during the phase of consolidation.

Overall, domestic actors play a less important role during the phase of democratic consolidation, when institutionalization and routinization increasingly limit the space of political elites and socialize both the elites and the masses. The same applies to the army, although its military power provides it with more possibilities to disrupt the democratization process (most notably by staging a coup d’état). With regard to *civil society*, much depends (again) on the nature of the dominant coalition of active organizations. Democratic consolidation is probably only really threatened by civil society when the active dominant coalition is anti-democratic. While a democracy might not be able to ‘deepen’ without a strong (pro-democratic) civil society, it can definitely consolidate without one.<sup>13</sup> This is most clearly exemplified in the case of Botswana, as Kenneth Good and Ian Taylor carefully showed in their case study.

This is not to say that internal factors do not play a crucial role during consolidation, but rather that these are predominantly structural. Somewhat in line with the development theory of democratization, the development of the economy seems highly relevant; however, not in terms of absolute minimum requirements. It is striking that all five deviant democracies experienced *economic growth or stability* after their transition to democracy. While stability might already be enough to appease potential counter-elites, who often have vested economic interests in the country, economic growth will provide the democratic regime with at least passive support from the masses. Because, whereas elites will probably need to *see* actual results, the masses initially will be appeased by having *hope* of positive results in the (near) future.

A second internal structural factor is the state structure, more specifically the *centralization of the state*. In all cases the new democratizing state was very centralized, sometimes despite regional legacies (notably India). By centralizing finances



and powers, the national political elites have the means to implement their policies and win support for their regime (among others, through economic growth or stability). Moreover, centralization undermines the potential anti-democratic opposition, which is forced to challenge the (strong) centre to undermine the regime. The latter is particularly relevant in ethnically fragmented countries. In Botswana, for example, local elites were marginalized by centralization; and then co-opted into the system for legitimization. This was probably also possible because there were too many 'nations' to challenge the centre. In other words, the absence of (ethnic) groups big enough to challenge the democratic centre by themselves increases the chances of successful democratic consolidation (see also India).

Finally, international actors continue to play an important role, although there are some important differences with the transition phase. Rather than former colonizers and regional hegemon, international organizations (such as the International Monetary Fund or World Bank) and foreign states that provide substantial financial aid to democratizing countries weigh significantly on their policies. This was the case, for example, in Benin and Mongolia; and one could argue that both Costa Rica and Botswana required foreign expertise to develop their natural resources. Where funders explicitly require or support democracy as a condition for (the continuation of) aid, and democratizing countries are heavily dependent upon this aid, the positive role of external actors is greatest.

This seems to have been the most notable factor in the consolidation phase of Mongolian democracy, particularly during the period of parliamentary dominance of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). Cynically, one could say that the MPRP simply copied the political regime of its major funders; it was totalitarian during USSR patronage, and became democratic during Western sponsorship. While the situation might have been less opportunistic in other countries, significant foreign aid can make democratic policies an economic necessity for local elites. Moreover, it can legitimate both the political leaders and the democratic regime – again, through economic growth or stability.

## Theoretical Issues

It is not easy to draw general conclusions that are of importance for theory development in democratization studies on the basis of the analyses of deviant democracies such as India, Benin, Costa Rica, Botswana, and Mongolia – all very different countries with particular historical legacies, cultural contexts, and societies. That said, two important broad deductions can be made on the basis of the research in this special issue: the first is related to the distinction between the phases of transition and consolidation of political regimes, while the second conclusion concerns the importance of democratic diffusion effects.

### *Distinguishing Different Phases of Deviant Democratization*

In our view, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the explanations of transitions to and consolidations of democracy.<sup>14</sup> The different phases of democratization should be separated, since the factors that keep a democracy stable may not be the

ones that brought it into existence.<sup>15</sup> As Muller recognized over a decade ago, 'the most promising direction for future theory and research on democratization is to pursue the possibility of differential structural causation – that the structural causes of the transitions toward democracy may not be the same as the causes of the stability of democracy'.<sup>16</sup>

Systematic separation of the different phases is contested, however. An alternative approach which focuses on processes of democratization in general, instead of clearly separating the analyses of the transition and consolidation phases, has recently been reinforced by Carothers' article, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm'.<sup>17</sup> In this article, Carothers goes a step further and criticizes, among other things, the usefulness of the concept of 'transition to democracy'. He disagrees with the idea that democratization tends to unfold in a set sequence of phases, and rejects the assumption that countries moving away from authoritarianism tend to follow a three-phase process of democratization, consisting of liberalization or opening of the authoritarian regime, breakthrough or transition to democracy, and consolidation of the new democratic regime. According to Carothers, it is time to discard the transition paradigm.

Although we agree with Carothers that countries do not necessarily follow a three-phase *linear* path towards democracy, and that countries can easily slide back toward authoritarianism, we do not believe that this is reason enough to reject the separation of (possible) different phases of democratization altogether; let alone for those countries that democratize successfully. The simple reason for our view is that 'different things should have different names', as Sartori noted many years ago.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, we strongly endorse attempts by scholars like Schedler, who encourages colleagues to use terms in consistent and unambiguous ways, and to try and attach one clear meaning to different concepts such as transition and democratic consolidation.<sup>19</sup>

Our study found that, at least in part, different (f)actors played a different role in different phases of the process of democratization (see overview in Table 1). We here highlight the most important ones. Obviously, given the limited number and specific nature of our cases, i.e. five deviant democracies, our observations have to be considered as hypothesis-generating rather than as established and full-fledged theories. We have again structured the discussion on the basis of the more common internal-external and structure-agency debates.

With regard to the role of internal actors, the democratization literature has mostly acknowledged the role of explicitly political actors, i.e. (party) politicians, and civil society organizations. At the same time, it seems to have largely ignored the role of the army; which, in sharp contrast, is highly prominent in studies of authoritarianism or democratic breakdown.<sup>20</sup> Our studies clearly demonstrate the importance of domestic actors in deviant democratization, but also point to the different roles of the different actors.

While most attention has been devoted to the role of political actors, i.e. (party) politicians, their role seems most prominent during the relatively short phase of transition. As democracies get more established and routinized, space for individual actors (i.e. leaders) to make a difference shrinks. Or, put more positively, the type of regime becomes less dependent upon the choices of one or more individuals, but rather becomes the standard *modus operandi* for all (or at least most significant)

political actors. It is the default option, which in time gets a status that is 'above politics', or, in Linz and Stepan's<sup>21</sup> famous term, 'the only game in town'.

However, the game is not only played by explicitly political actors, like politicians. The army is potentially a major political actor too, as has been demonstrated over and over again in all parts of the world (recent examples include the Central African Republic, Fiji, Turkey, and Venezuela). As with political actors, the army's role is greatest during the insecurity and instability of the period of transition. However, because of its military power, it has more opportunity to significantly effect the phase of consolidation than political actors. Once a democracy is truly consolidated, however, one would expect the space for military actors to be limited.

The last domestic actor of importance, civil society, is also the most heterogeneous and confusing. Indeed, 'civil society' is too diffuse a concept to denote a unitary actor. It is a sphere within which individual actors operate, often in cooperation and competition. As a consequence, arguing that civil society plays an important role during both phases of democratization is both true and relatively meaningless. Particularly in the light of new studies on the 'uncivil' aspects of civil society,<sup>22</sup> the relationship between 'civil society' and (the two phases of) democratization should be the subject of serious empirical (mixed-method) analysis, rather than only of normative-philosophical theorizing.

When democracy becomes the only game in town internally, and for *all* relevant domestic actors, external factors will become less powerful too. Consequently, one would expect the impact of former colonizers and regional hegemons to decrease over time. That said, if they (help) frustrate democratization attempts in surrounding countries, a negative diffusion effect might occur.

At the same time, continuing positive reinforcement of the democratic regime and its main protagonists will undoubtedly push more actors to accept democracy as the only game in town. This is not only done through political legitimization by former colonizers or regional hegemons, but increasingly through economic support by international organizations and foreign states. Particularly when democratizing countries are highly dependent upon (the continuation of) foreign aid, to be able to provide economic growth or stability, the political agenda of the external funders becomes more relevant.

Finally, although 'diffusion' is relevant in both phases of democratization, this is in part the consequence of the ambiguity of the term. Scholars capture many related but distinct processes under the general term 'diffusion'. Not all play a role during both phases of democratization, however, a claim developed in more detail below.

### *Types of Diffusion*

A second general conclusion is that diffusion theory needs more attention, since international factors in general, and diffusion effects in particular, played a huge role in all of the deviant democracies examined here. In addition, future studies could usefully focus more on the possible mechanisms behind the diffusion of democracy around the world. It is clear that hardly any country democratized in isolation, as most were part of a group of democratizing countries in their geographical region. Most countries became democratic during a certain wave of democratization, meaning that they

are part of a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specific period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the idea of a wave implies that one gulf of water causes the rolling of another gulf on the sea. In other words, one transition increases the chances of another transition. Paradoxically, though, there has not been much attention to the dynamic implied by the idea of waves themselves, i.e. for diffusion effects. Although scholars are often aware that countries are dependent upon each other, there is a serious lack of clear hypotheses and empirical evidence on this topic. It is not clear how, when, and why democratic clustering actually takes place.

To be fair, some excellent quantitative large-N studies have been published, in which econometric and geographical methods are used to study spatial and network effects.<sup>24</sup> These studies all show that there is a clear democratic clustering, thereby offering some evidence for the idea that diffusion plays a role. However, the studies focus on the effects of countries that border each other or that are in the same region. Non-geographical diffusion effects are largely neglected in large-N studies. Moreover, there are some important exceptions to the rule that similar types of political regimes are clustered together. These deviant democracies were not part of a wave or cluster, but were surrounded by authoritarian neighbours. Against the odds, they democratized.

The deviant democracies enable us to show some of the limitations and possibilities of the diffusion approach. Until now, the diffusion approach has mainly focused on the effects of democratic neighbours or regions on the likelihood of a transition, but the contributions in this special issue show that this approach could also be extended to the influence of non-geographical factors of diffusion. In other words, the deviant cases demonstrate that democratic clustering and diffusion via democratic neighbours is only part of the story. Democratic diffusion can also take place via learning, adaptation, and cooperation with other states, as the cases have highlighted.

There are three possible explanations for the clustering of regime types.<sup>25</sup> The first explanation holds that countries react in similar ways to the same circumstances. The idea then is that countries democratize independently, but because of similar responses to similar political and economic pressures that hit their countries at the same time. The case studies in this special issue provided little evidence in support of this explanation. Without a doubt, political regimes in general, and deviant democracies in particular, are not independent entities, but interconnected with each other. Such dependence among cases can lead to 'Galton's problem', named after the 19th-century anthropologist who challenged anthropological studies that did not take temporal and spatial dependency into account.

In fact, if we study democratization in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we should not study these countries separately, before comparing them systematically. We should see democratization as part of one process, which is in fact only *one* case. A study based mainly on making independent comparisons of countries is not telling us much about phenomena like democratization, economic liberalization, conflicts, and war. Recent trends of intensified globalization are probably decreasing the usefulness of a comparative study based on 'independent'

national observations even further. In other words, scholars who are interested in democratization should be cautious about drawing conclusions based on comparing countries that are not independent, but actually sub-units drawn from the same political system.<sup>26</sup> Hence, a (further) integration of insights and theories from comparative politics on the one hand and international relations on the other hand will undoubtedly prove fruitful.

A second explanation appears much more powerful: the analyses of all deviant democracies in this special issue show that transition and consolidation are often promoted or supported by a group of nations, a hegemonic power, or an international organization. In other words, promotion of democracy by external actors seems to be crucial for the likelihood that a country actually makes a transition to democracy.

Most notably, the actions and support of the country's former colonizer (Benin-France, Botswana-United Kingdom, Mongolia-Russia, India-United Kingdom) or regional hegemon (Costa Rica-United States) seem to have been crucial for the transition phase. In Costa Rica, for example, the influence of American politics and power was huge. During the transition process in the late 1940s, Costa Rica remained on the 'good' (anticommunist) side of the US. In contrast to Venezuela and Guatemala at that time, the leaders of the new democratic regime in Costa Rica had defeated the communist and labour-left forces. This certainly helped the fledgling democracy to consolidate as well: the new democratic regime in Costa Rica was founded upon the defeat of the communist-led labour left in the 1948 civil war, and the highly contained left presented no essential threat to the Cold War worldview of the US. The external hegemonic force (i.e. the US) had hence no interest in trying to weaken the democratic regime. To give another example, French policy played a key role during both the transition and consolidation phase in Benin in the 1990s. The French government not only advised and pressurised the government to hold a National Conference, but also offered to pay for it. Evidently, promotion of democracy by external actors was influential in all the deviant democracies.

As mentioned above, the positions of the former colonizer and/or regional hegemon towards the deviant democracy are highly influenced by (1) the position of the new democratic government towards them, and (2) the country's economic or strategic role for them. If the country is of limited economic or strategic importance, it will probably also survive a neutral position; note the differences between France's actions towards resource-poor Benin and resource-rich Togo, or Russia's role towards 'insignificant' Mongolia versus 'strategic' Ukraine.

The deviant cases also provide evidence for a third explanation, namely that there is uncoordinated interdependence between the countries, what Elkins and Simmons<sup>27</sup> explicitly call 'diffusion'. The actions and choices of one country affect another, but the dependency is not explicitly coordinated and is not characterized by direct cooperation or imposition. But how does this diffusion actually work? What are the specific mechanisms that can be derived from our knowledge of the deviant democracies? Three such mechanisms are identified here: diffusion through networks of countries/regimes; diffusion through information and learning, especially from so-called familiar or similar countries; and diffusion through uncoordinated interdependence.<sup>28</sup> These are outlined in turn below.

The first diffusion mechanism seems to be that countries want to be part of a beneficial network. Countries/regimes can derive practical benefits from being part of a strong network of countries/regimes. In this case, it appears that democratizing countries get practical benefits from being part of the network of democracies, which are in general the richer countries in the world. Democratizing countries also get technical, financial, and moral support from this network. The Mongolian case makes this point very clear, as demonstrated by Verena Fritz in this special issue. When the Soviet Union began to withdraw its support in the 1980s, Mongolian policymakers started to look for new sources of support. Furthermore, Mongolian political elites needed a new external power to ensure continued statehood vis-à-vis its two powerful neighbours, so diplomatic relations were established with the US in early 1987. Mongolia's desire to be part of a beneficial network, which could provide financial support, clearly mattered for its transition to and consolidation of democracy. A similar mechanism played a crucial role in Benin. There is strong evidence that the aid received just after Benin's transition to democracy – particularly during Soglo's presidency (1991–1996) – 'helped create the feeling in Benin that democracy goes hand in hand with improvements in daily life' and that being part of a beneficial network with generous democratic donor countries facilitated the consolidation of Benin's new (minimal) democracy.<sup>29</sup>

Countries that adopt a certain policy – in this case a regime change towards more democracy with its own political institutions and rules and laws – need expertise that they can use for changing and improving their plans. It is not easy for political leaders to plan such big changes on their own. Elkins, for example, shows that external expertise is important to constitutional delegates, who are faced with the choices of particular political institutions and electoral systems.<sup>30</sup> Political leaders considering political reform are aware that they are joining a network of other countries on which they will depend for advice, support, and service of these very same institutions.

Take the example of Botswana, or to be more specific, the governing Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which strongly identified its interests and aims with the United Kingdom, as clearly described by Good and Taylor in this special issue. Interesting enough, though, the BDP's leaders also drew towards South Africa, despite the apartheid regime, since, for economic and geographical reasons, they found it necessary to maintain good relations with South Africa. Despite joining this beneficial authoritarian network, Botswana consolidated its (minimal) democracy. In other words, the impact of the United Kingdom on Botswana's type of political regime appears to have been greater than the impact of its direct neighbour.

The second diffusion mechanism seems to be that countries generally exchange information about regime change, politics and policy; hence diffusion through information and learning is an important mechanism. During the process of learning, information about the conditions of transitions to democracy is provided, including the benefits and drawbacks of adopting change. The idea is that political leaders are inclined to work as follows: they recognize a problem in their country, develop some basic theory about how to solve the problem, review the various solutions available, and attempt to ascertain the effectiveness of these solutions. Often, actors only know whether actors in other countries have adopted the policy as well, in this case



whether others have made a transition to democracy. In this case, adopting countries reason that they should take advantage of the accumulated wisdom of past individuals' decisions.

Certain information is particularly powerful. For example, familiar information can have a bigger effect on a country's decision to change its policy. People tend to prefer practices that are familiar to them. As Elkins and Simmons explain:

Such attraction might stem in part from a strategy of risk reduction: familiar choices may appear to be safe choices. However, it is also probable that familiarity breeds appreciation and shapes taste. As such, surrounding oneself with highly available examples of policy can lead to an appreciation, or at least tolerance, for that policy.<sup>31</sup>

This process seems to be important in India, for example. Although it is questionable that the British colonial powers directly influenced (the promotion of) the transition to democracy in India, the systems of administration which were established by the British were easily adapted to democratic politics by the new Indian leaders. While the colonial administration provided a familiar framework for representative government in India, it was the success of the Congress leadership in expanding, adapting, and entrenching the democratic institutions that were already familiar to them.

This mechanism of familiar information has also been important for democratic transitions after 1989, albeit in a different way. Benin and Mongolia, for example, are examples of deviant democracies that made a transition to democracy in a period of time when democracy spread globally, the so-called fourth wave of democratization. Having spread to both rich and poor(er) countries, democracy could be seen as a dominant and familiar type of regime. People living under non-democratic repressive regimes suddenly realized that democracy was a possible route for many different countries, and they started to think 'Why not us?' The *zeitgeist* favoured the idea of democracy as a norm; and adopting democratic institutions has become a familiar choice globally – so, also for the so-called deviant democracies.

Moreover, it is also likely that the policy of *prominent* nations will be highly available as information, and consequently, political leaders will tend to weigh those cases disproportionately. For example, it is likely that for India, the political regime and institutions of the United Kingdom were most important as an example. For countries such as Mongolia, which democratized after 1989 in a world order with only one hegemonic power, it is likely that information from the US is more available and powerful.

It is important not to overstate the (independent) influence of 'familiarity', however. Many countries started their transition in the 1990s, but not all democratized successfully, despite the availability of policies of neighbouring and prominent countries. Familiarity probably only plays an important role in the consolidation phase, by providing inexperienced democratic elites with examples of successful democratic policies. Additionally, the availability of successful cases abroad might buy embattled democratic elites some extra time from the masses. This seems to have played an important role, for example, during the consolidation phase in Central and Eastern European countries, where the populations often remained

remarkably optimistic, in part because of looming EU membership, despite economic hardship.<sup>32</sup>

The third diffusion mechanism seems to be that countries that are similar, or consider themselves to be similar, tend to imitate each other. Diffusion takes place through uncoordinated interdependence. Individuals who need to deal with a complex set of choices are inclined to regard the actions of other individuals with perceived common interests as a useful guide for their own behaviour. People, including political leaders and decision makers, tend to identify themselves with others who have comparable characteristics. As Elkins and Simmons explain it:

Some of the more visible and defining national characteristics are geographic and cultural: the country's region, the language its citizens speak, the religion they practice, and the country's colonial origins. It follows, then, that policy makers will align their country's policies with those of geographically and culturally proximate nations.<sup>33</sup>

This mechanism was present in all the deviant democracies. For example, it is clear that Mongolia identified itself with other post-communist countries and hence copied the political developments of those countries. Just before the transition to democracy, most of the Mongolian political elite held administrative or academic posts, and many had studied in Central Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Returning at the end of 1980s, they brought ideas of reform like *glasnost* and *perestroika* back to Mongolia. In this way, important linkages with familiar and similar countries triggered the democratization process even in a remote place like Mongolia.

In addition to our knowledge about the mechanisms behind democratic diffusion, the findings in this special issue also indicate that diffusion theory should be elaborated somewhat, at least for the transition phase. Positive effects might not only come from being surrounded by (consolidated) democracies, but also by being bordered (in a loose sense) by *democratizing* countries. This is most clearly the case in Mongolia, which was heavily influenced by the developments in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. At the same time, a country like Benin was more of a trend-setter, rather than a trend-follower, functioning as a diffusion factor for other countries like Niger or Togo (which, however, did not consolidate their emerging democratic regimes).

In conclusion, deviant cases cannot be explained by the 'thin' version of the diffusion approach, as tested by quantitative studies, which have largely neglected non-geographical diffusion effects. The contributions to this special issue show that the diffusion approach should not be abandoned, however, but rather needs to be concretised and elaborated. We hope that both qualitative and quantitative studies pay more attention in the future to diffusion factors and mechanisms, and incorporate them in their theoretical and empirical models.

## Conclusion

Our comparative discussion of deviant democracies leads us to five concluding points. First, very few democracies *cannot* be explained by the mainstream theories



of economic development and of diffusion. There are only a few so-called deviant democracies in the world, such as India and Costa Rica since the late 1940s, Botswana since the early 1960s, and Mongolia and Benin since the early 1990s. The contributions in this special issue have focused on describing, understanding, and explaining these deviant democracies.

Regarding the strength of the key existing theories, a comparative study of 'deviant autocracies'; seems the most logical next step, as (most notably) the economic development theory has been criticized most forcefully for underexplaining autocracies.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the limitations of the economic development theory are most visible in the many economically developed countries that remain autocratic or have (re)turned to that state (e.g. China, the Gulf states, Malaysia). Similarly, islands of autocracy remain in Europe even (e.g. Belarus or Liechtenstein). A study of the reasons why these countries remain autocratic may provide important additional insights into the process of democratization. Paradoxically, 'deviant autocracies' might reveal more on the success of democratization than deviant democracies did.

Second, while structural theories leave space for actors significantly to influence the process of democratization (notably the army and individual political leaders), in many cases it remains a mystery why these actors make the choices they do. This question, of course, is at the core of the structure-agency debate, i.e. who influences what? Do actors create structures to ensure certain choices, or do structures constrain actors to certain choices. Why did the army in Benin support change, if not necessarily democratization, while the army in Togo did not? Why did the elites in Costa Rica choose to cooperate, while their counterparts in, say, Nicaragua did not?

A third insight of this special issue is that it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the explanations of transition to and consolidation of democratic regimes. The different aspects of democratization should be separated, since the factors that are influential during the transition phase are not (always) the same as the ones that are important for the possible consolidation of the new regime. We highlighted the most important factors in this article, and argued that the transition paradigm should certainly not be disregarded, as Carothers recommended in his compelling 2002 article in the *Journal of Democracy*.<sup>35</sup> Although we believe that the different aspects (or 'phases') of democratization do not necessarily follow each other in a predictable, straightforward and linear way (regime changes, either to more authoritarian or to more democratic forms, are often risky with unexpected outcomes), it is still important analytically to separate the different characteristics within the process and to distinguish, for example, transition from consolidation. This is simply because different things require different attention and (can) lead to different conclusions.

Fourth, empirical evidence from quantitative studies shows that there is a clear spatial clustering of democratization around the world. Non-democratic countries that are surrounded by democracies are much more likely to make a transition to and to consolidate their democracy than non-democratic countries in a non-democratic region. However, our studies of deviant democracies showed that the diffusion approach should be extended to the influence of non-geographical factors

of diffusion as well. Moreover, while the evidence of this correlation between democratic neighbours and democratization is convincing, the mechanisms are not so clear. Not much has yet been written about *why* clustering of types of political regimes might occur. The deviant democracies in this special issue clearly showed that countries want to be part of a beneficial network to get technical, financial, and moral support, that diffusion takes place through information and learning, and that imitation plays a role as well. Future democratization studies, both quantitative and qualitative ones, could usefully focus in more depth on these diffusion mechanisms.

Fifth, and finally, we would like to recommend that future studies of democratization use a mixed methods approach.<sup>36</sup> Although we did not apply this approach in the strict sense of the word in this special issue, as all cases studies were primarily informed by qualitative studies, the construction of the central research question relied heavily on the results of large-N quantitative studies. In the introduction, we outlined the results of quantitative research, and discovered that economic development and democratic diffusion are the most important factors to explain democratic transition and consolidation. However, there are important outliers that need more attention in order to understand democratization better. Therefore, we moved to the small-N approach and focused on a few deviant cases in order to discover possible omitted factors. The ideal would be now to re-specify the model, and to again do a large-N statistical study, in order to see whether the explanatory power is increased or not. In other words, the purpose of these case studies is to increase the explanatory power and the robustness of the large-N statistical results. Admittedly, this will not be an easy task.

#### NOTES

1. Arend Lijphart, 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (1971), p. 686.
2. Renske Doorenspleet and Petr Kopecký, 'Against the Odds: Deviant Cases of Democratization', *Democratization*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2008).
3. See, for example, Victor Bulmer-Thomas, John H Coatsworth, and Roberto Cortés Conde (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Pablo Astorga, Ame R. Berges, and Valpy Fitzgerald, 'The Standard of Living in Latin America During the Twentieth Century', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2005, pp. 765–96; Tatu Vanhanen, *Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries* (London: Routledge, 1997), especially Appendix 5.
4. In constant 1970 dollars. See *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*, Vol. 22 (1983), pp. 282–3.
5. Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics* Vol. 2, No. 3 (1970), pp. 337–63.
6. See, for example, Guillermo A. O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter, 'Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies', in Guillermo A. O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies. An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Terry L. Karl, 'Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America', in Dankwart A. Rustow and K. P. Erickson (eds), *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), pp. 163–91.
7. See, for example, Zoltan Barany, 'Democratic Consolidation and the Military: The East European Experience', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1997), pp. 21–43.

8. Philip C. Aka, 'The Military and Democratization in Africa', *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1999), pp. 71–86.
9. Jennifer Seeley, 'Transitions to Democracy in Comparative Perspective: The National Conferences in Benin and Togo', PhD Thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 2001.
10. See, among many others, Bronislav Geremek, 'Problems of Postcommunism: Civil Society Then and Now', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1992), pp. 3–12; Andrew Arato, 'Interpreting 1989', *Social Research*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (1993), pp. 610–46.
11. See, for example, Cas Mudde, 'Civil Society', in Stephen White, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis (eds), *Developments in Central and Eastern European Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 223–5; Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde (eds), *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003).
12. The idea that ethnic fragmentation is problematic for democracy can be found in classic works in comparative politics in the 1950s, such as that by Gabriel Almond, 'Comparative Political Systems', *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1956), pp. 391–409. For one of the first rational choice arguments, see Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1972).
13. For a detailed description of the difference between consolidation and deepening of democracy, see Andreas Schedler, 'What is Democratic Consolidation?', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1998), pp. 91–107; and Doorenspleet and Kopecký (note 2).
14. Rustow (note 5).
15. See Renske Doorenspleet, *Democratic Transitions: Exploring the Structural Sources during the Fourth Wave* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005). See also Renske Doorenspleet, 'The Structural Context of Recent Transitions to Democracy', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2004), pp. 309–35.
16. Edward N. Muller, 'Income Inequality and Democratization: Reply to Bollen and Jackman', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 60, No. 6 (1995), p. 995.
17. Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), pp. 5–21.
18. See Giovanni Sartori, 'Guidelines for Concept Analysis,' in Giovanni Sartori (ed.), *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984), p. 50.
19. Schedler (note 13).
20. For classic studies on democratic breakdowns, see the book series *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, edited by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan for The Johns Hopkins University Press in the 1970s and 1980s.
21. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South Africa and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
22. See, among others, Sheri Berman, 'Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003), pp. 257–73; Sheri Berman, 'Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic', *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1997), pp. 401–29; Kopecký and Mudde (note 11).
23. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave; Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 15.
24. See John O'Loughlin, Michael D. Ward, Corey L. Lofdahl, Jordin S. Cohen, David S. Brown, David Reilly, Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Michael Shin, 'The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946–1994', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (1998), pp. 545–74; Luc Anselin, *Spatial Econometrics: Methods and Models* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1988); Kristian S. Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, 'Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization', *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (2006), pp. 911–33.
25. Doorenspleet and Kopecký (note 2).
26. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 222–3.
27. Zachary Elkins and Beth Simmons, 'On Waves, Clusters, and Diffusion: A Conceptual Framework', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 598, No. 1 (2005), pp. 33–51.
28. Ibid.
29. Mamoudou Gazibo, 'Foreign Aid and Democratization: Benin and Niger Compared', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2005), pp. 67–87. For similar arguments in the case of Benin see also Gisselquist's article in this special issue.
30. Elkins and Simmons (note 27).

31. Ibid., p. 44.
32. Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration After Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
33. Elkins and Simmons (note 27), p. 45.
34. Simon Bromley, 'Middle East Exceptionalism – Myth or Reality?', in David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margaret Kiloh, and Paul Lewis (eds), *Democratization* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), pp. 321–44; Vicky Randall, 'Why Have the Political Trajectories of India and China Been Different', in idem, pp. 195–218.
35. Carothers (note 17).
36. See for more information on mixed methods: Evan S. Lieberman, 'Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (2005), pp. 435–52; See also Doorenspleet and Kopecký (note 2).

Manuscript accepted for publication February 2008

Address for correspondence: Renske Doorenspleet, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, Gibbet Hill Road, Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom. E-mail: [renske.doorenspleet@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:renske.doorenspleet@warwick.ac.uk); Cas Mudde, Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp, Sint-Jacobstraat 2, 2000, Antwerpen, Belgium. E-mail: [cas.mudde@ua.ac.be](mailto:cas.mudde@ua.ac.be)