

Waves of Democratization

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The term, “waves of democratization,” popularized by Huntington (1991), can be conceptualized in at least three ways: as rises in the global level of democracy, as periods of positive net transitions to democracy, and as linked sets of transitions to democracy. Each of these approaches to the concept carries distinct theoretical implications and generates somewhat different historical patterns. The three approaches are examined using four cross-national, time-series operationalizations of democracy.

Samuel Huntington’s influential book, *The Third Wave* (1991), introduced the concept of “waves of democratization” to the social-scientific lexicon (Chang et al. 1996; Diamond 1996; Jagers and Gurr 1995; Liu 1993; Markoff 1996; Rowen 1995; Schraeder 1994; Shin 1994). Although the concept has been widely adopted, it is not clear just what it refers to. I wish to describe three general approaches to the concept and to operationalize these approaches with data from the past two centuries.

Approach #1: Level of Democracy

Perhaps the most common approach to “waves of democratization” involves statements about the general level of democracy in the world. Ups and downs in this global level correspond, in this approach, to “waves.” This approach is particularly useful for research on the global zeitgeist; for example, the study of the “democratic peace” might seek correlations between the number of wars in the world at any given moment and world democraticness. Similarly, studies of international regimes might use the level of democracy in the world as an indicator of global norms.

This approach to the concept of “waves” carries with it the implication of per-

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petual oscillation. Whether the analogy refers to electromagnetic waves or to waves in water, the image suggests that upward surges in levels of democracy will inevitably be balanced by future downward cycles. Waves are defined by the fact of their imminent demise. If they did not reverse or crash, they would not be waves—we would have to abandon the metaphor. This view is a welcome correction to the rosy-tinted vision of democracy as advancing inexorably, and to teleologies that view temporary circumstances as the end of history. But the image of the wave may go too far in the other direction, implying that the reverse wave, the destruction of democracy, is natural and inevitable. Why bother supporting democratization if it is “just” a wave and doomed to disappear?

There are two basic approaches to the operationalization of the global level of democracy: counting the number of democracies in the world (either as a raw figure, as a percentage of all countries, or as a percent of the world’s human population subject to such regimes); or rating all countries on a democracy scale and taking the mean (again, this might be weighted for national populations). The difference between the two depends on whether democracy is defined as a dichotomous or continuous variable. Huntington (1991) prefers a dichotomous definition¹ and presents the data displayed in Table 1. These numbers support Huntington’s contention that the present spate of democratizations since the mid-1970s in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia constitute the third such wave in the modern era. The first wave began in the United States in 1828 and peaked at 45 percent of all nations in 1922, followed by a reverse wave troughing at 20 percent of all nations in 1942. The second wave began at the end of World War II and peaked at 32 percent in 1962, followed by a reverse wave that bottomed out at 25 percent in 1973. The present, third wave began with the Portuguese Revolution of 1974 and, as of Huntington’s writing in 1990, was still on the upswing—45 percent of all nations in 1990, though Huntington notes a handful of reversals that might presage a third reverse wave. In sum, the three waves of democratization peak at one-third to one-half of the the world’s nations and trough at one-fifth to one-quarter.

Other databases of democracy reproduce the general outlines of Huntington’s three waves. These databases, described more fully in the Appendix, use different operationalizations of democracy. Polity III (Jagers and Gurr 1995, 1996) involves a scale composed of scores for openness of political participation, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the executive. The Vanhanen index of democracy (Vanhanen 1984, 1990) combines the electoral performance of opposition parties and the percentage of population voting. The Arat scale (Arat 1991) combines openness of recruitment for elected office, effectiveness of the legislature, extent of adult suffrage, competitiveness of elections, and an indicator of civil liberties. Finally, the Freedom House scale (Freedom House 1973–1995) combines expert evaluations of political rights and civil liberties. All of these operationalizations are intended to form scales rather than dichotomies, and any dichotomous threshold line would be more or less arbitrary (though Vanhanen and Freedom House find such lines to be useful). For this reason, Figure 1 reports only the continuous operationalizations, namely the mean level of democracy in the world, rather than

TABLE 1
Level of Democracy: Huntington

Year	Democracies	Democracies as Percentage of All Countries
1922	29	45
1942	12	20
1962	36	32
1973	30	25
1990	58	45

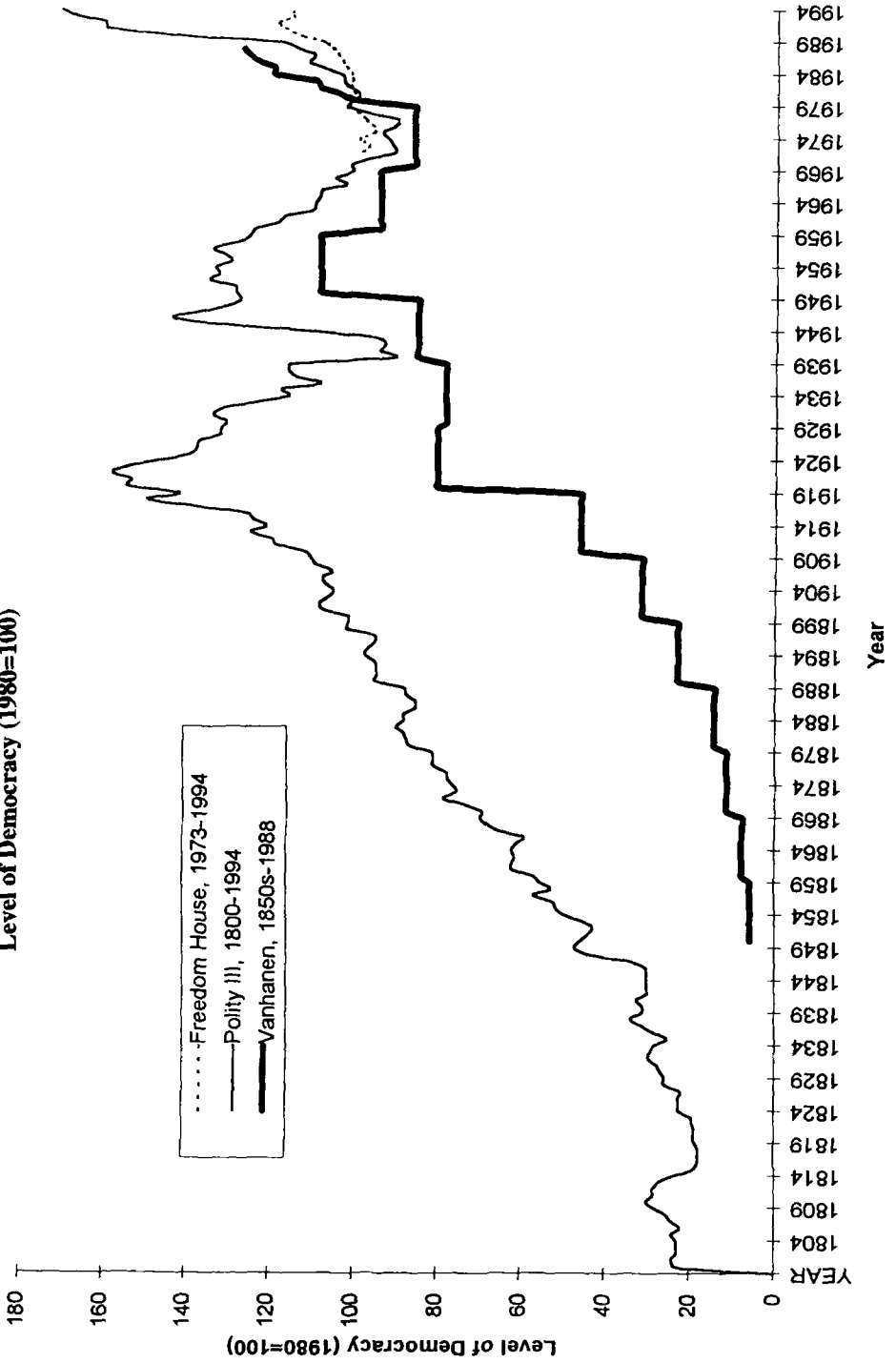
Source: Huntington (1991:24).

democracies as a percentage of all countries in the world. For comparability, the scales reported here were standardized as percentages of the ratings for 1980, the first year covered by all four databases. As discussed in the Appendix, the Freedom House scale has been inverted in this study so that higher scores indicate greater levels of democracy.²

Despite their quite different approaches to the operationalization of the concept of democracy, three of the scales follow the same general wave-like pattern.³ The longest-running time-series, Polity III, reproduces all three of Huntington's waves, though the peak year of the second wave is two decades early: the long nineteenth-century upward wave culminates in a peak level of 158 in 1922, descends to 90 in 1940, rises to 143 in 1946, falls to 90 in 1977, and shoots up to 170 in 1994. Vanhanen's democracy scale displays only a tiny wave in the 1920s, with a level of 80 as compared to 78 in the 1930s, but this may be due to Vanhanen's exclusion of countries from the database that were no longer independent when he was writing in the early 1980s—in particular the three Baltic nations later annexed by the Soviet Union. (If we assign Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania the maximum democracy rating for the decade, that of New Zealand, the global level for the 1920s rises to 92.) The second and third waves appear more prominently, with peaks of 108 in the 1950s and 127 in 1988, and a trough of 86 in the 1970s. The Freedom House database, starting in 1973, traces the third wave beginning with a trough of 96 in 1975 and a peak of 118 in 1992.

This descriptive analysis is partially disconfirmed, however, by simple statistical tests using a binary indicator for years included in Huntington's waves. The Vanhanen and Freedom House datasets cannot be examined in this manner because they include too few time-points to run regression analysis (21 and 23, respectively), and only two time-points not included in Huntington's wave years.⁴ The Polity III dataset, however, comprises 195 time-points, 55 of them not included in Huntington's wave years. The global democracy mean for Huntington's wave years is 91.18, while the mean for other years is 66.26, a large difference in the predicted direction. However, a simple time-series analysis, controlling for the previous year's global

FIGURE 1
Mean Level of Democracy in the World (1800-1994)
Level of Democracy (1980=100)



democracy mean, suggests that the independent effect of a wave year is negative and statistically significant:

$$P3MEAN = 1.63* + 1.00(LAG(P3MEAN))^{**} - 2.77(HBINARY)^{**}$$

where P3MEAN is the global democracy mean for Polity III, LAG(P3MEAN) is the previous year's global democracy mean for Polity III, HBINARY is the binary variable for Huntington's wave years (1 = wave year), * represents statistical significance at the .1 level, and ** represents statistical significance at the .001 level. The r-squared for the equation is .99. This simple test suggests that the Polity III global democracy mean is quite stable from year to year, despite the peaks and valleys depicted in Figure 1, and that Huntington's wave years involve deceleration in the global democracy mean. This analysis does not by itself undermine Huntington's concept of waves, but neither does it confirm the global zeitgeist implication that wave years contribute a positive independent effect to global democracy.

Several further observations emerge from this exercise. First, descriptive analysis of the mean level of democracy in the world demonstrates a general three-wave pattern postulated by Huntington, regardless of the operationalization of democracy. Second, as emphasized by Paxton (1997), the treatment of women's suffrage changes the shape of the first wave considerably: the Polity III database, which assigns top democracy scores to countries that lacked women's suffrage (Switzerland, for example, receives a 10 out of 10 rating every year since 1848, despite the disenfranchisement of women in federal elections until the 1970s), shows an ample first wave, as does Huntington; by contrast, Vanhanen, whose measure of democracy includes voters as a percent of the total (not just male) population, shows a much weaker first wave. Third, there appear to be numerous mini-waves. In the Polity III data, for example, the late 1840s is a notable instance, with the level of democracy in the world rising by more than 50 percent in three years. Fourth, the third wave appears in the Polity III and Freedom House scales to be divided into two distinct stages, one in the late 1970s and another in the mid- to late-1980s, separated by a minor relapse in the early 1980s (both databases show the level of democracy to be lower in 1980 and 1981 than in 1979). This bifurcation will appear again in later approaches.

Approach #2: Net Transitions

A second approach to "waves of democratization" focuses on net transitions. In Huntington's words, a wave consists of "a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes [or more democratic regimes, if we define democracy as a continuous variable] that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time" (Huntington 1991:15; also see Markoff 1996:2). This approach relies on individual cases rather than global generalities. Newly emergent democracies are distinguished from longstanding democracies, making this approach particularly appropriate for

TABLE 2
Net Transitions: Huntington

Period	Transitions to Democracy	Transitions From Democracy
1828–1926	33*	0
1922–1942	0	22
1943–1962	40	0
1958–1975	0	22
1974–1990	33	0
1983–1990	0	3

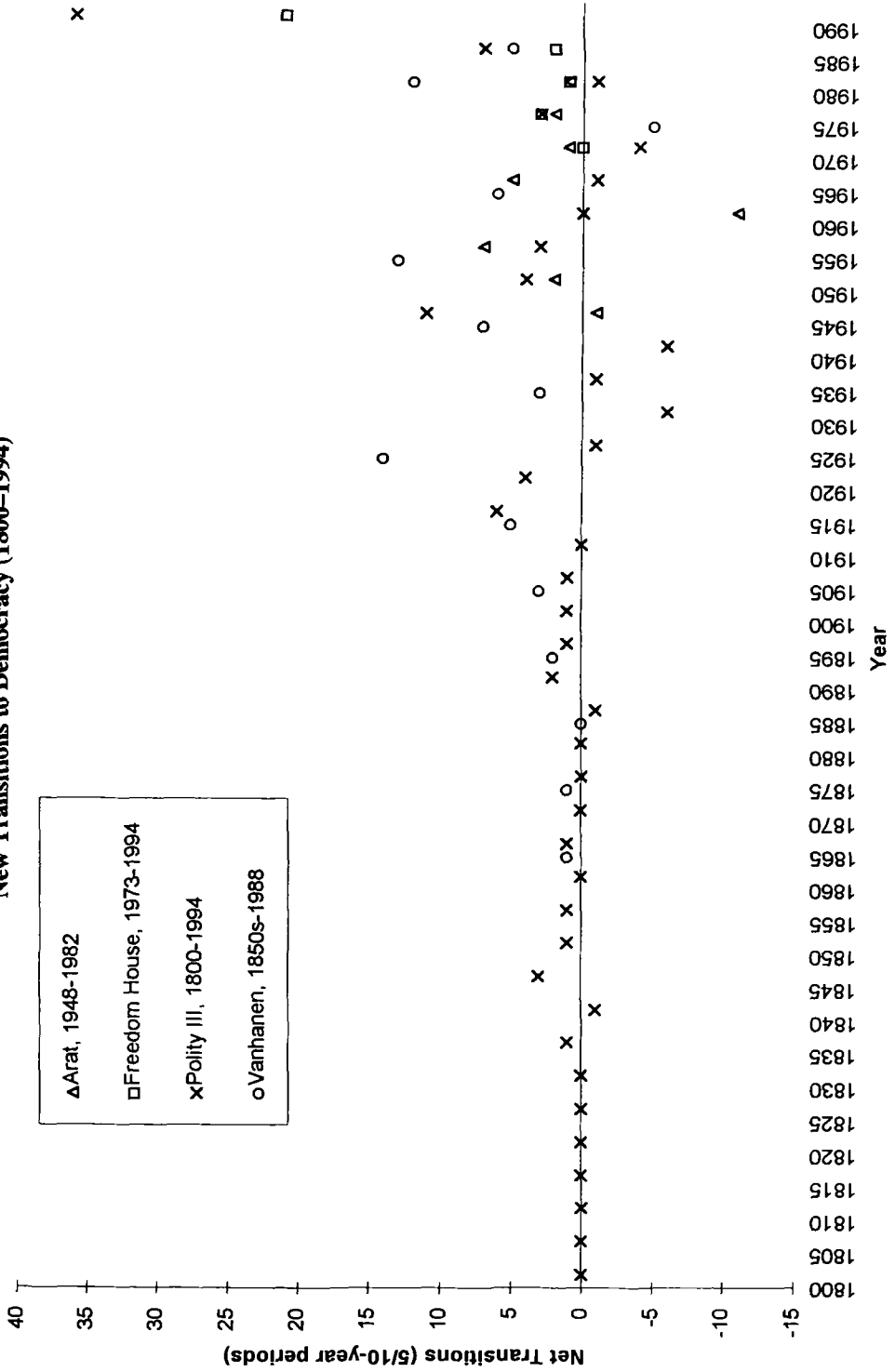
*This figure anachronistically counts West Germany and East Germany as two separate democratizations. Source: Huntington (1991:14, 16).

the study of democratization and transitions to democracy. For example, the time-honored research program around the socioeconomic bases of democracy might wish to seek correlations between national wealth and the timing of the democratic transition.

This approach subverts the naturalistic wave metaphor by suggesting that transitions occur in both directions at the same time, and each wave contains within it components running in opposite directions. Perhaps this is how electromagnetic and liquid waves actually operate, but, for the purposes of metaphor, the image is murkier. It is more difficult to speak of a global wave of democracy during a period in which some countries lose democracy. The connotation is rather one of competing trends, democratization and authoritarianization. The image of a single global zeitgeist fractures into two zeitgeists duelling for preeminence. This image makes the end of the wave seem less inevitable, and justifies supporting democratization in its struggle against authoritarianization. Waves, in this view, do not die naturally; they are killed.

Huntington muddies the concept of net directionality of transitions, unfortunately, by allowing the waves and reverse waves to overlap (four years for each of the first two cycles) while implying, as shown in Table 2, that no wrong-way transitions occurred during any of the waves or reverse waves.⁵ Still, Huntington's formulation is generally corroborated by other databases. As before, the Arat, Freedom House, and Polity III databases' treatment of democracy as a continuous variable leads us to report transitions along the continuum of greater or lesser democracy rather than Huntington's dichotomous transitions between non-democracy and democracy.⁶ Transitions of one standard deviation or more—an arbitrary measure, discussed later—are cumulated for each half-decade (or decade, in the case of the Vanhanen data; for details see the Appendix). Polity III shows +6 net transitions in 1915–19 and another +4 in 1920–24, with negative net transitions in the periods following; +11 in the late 1940s and another +7 in the following decade, with negative transitions in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and an astounding +36 net transitions in the early

FIGURE 2
New Transitions to Democracy (1800-1994)



1990s. The Vanhanen data show an even larger first wave, with +14 net transitions in the 1920s; as before, the first reverse wave is simply missing, with Vanhanen registering an improbable +3 net transitions for the 1930s. Vanhanen's post-World War II data confirm the second wave, with +13 and +6 net transitions in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, a downturn of -5 net transitions in the 1970s, and an upswing of +17 net transitions in the period 1980-88. Arat's data place the second wave in the late 1950s, with +7 net transitions, and the second reverse wave in the early 1960s, with -11 net transitions. Interestingly, another upswing begins in the late 1960s, with +5 net transitions. The Freedom House data, beginning in 1973, register only small net transitions until the early 1990s.

The net-transitions approach to democratization again confirms Huntington's three waves. However, the timing of the second reverse wave and the third wave differs in each of the databases. The trough occurs in the early 1960s for Arat, the late 1960s and early 1970s for Polity III, and the 1970s for Vanhanen; the third wave begins in the late 1960s for Arat, the early 1980s for Vanhanen, the late 1980s for Polity III, and the early 1990s for Freedom House. Presumably the outlier for third-wave timing, Arat, is to be explained by the nature of her definition of democracy: the inclusion of a measure of political unrest (relative to government sanctions) might have skewed the democracy ratings for some countries upwards in the late 1960s.

As in the level-of-democracy approach, the late 1840s show up as a mini-wave of democratization in the Polity III data. In addition, the early 1980s show a slight downturn in the Polity III data, though the Vanhanen data—based on electoral performance rather than procedural criteria—show a dramatic up-wave during this same period.

The most striking characteristic of Figure 2, however, is that the scale is considerably smaller than in Huntington's tabulation in Table 2. Huntington's waves are on the order of +33 to +40 on the upside and -22 on the downside, while Polity III shows only +20 for the first long wave, -14 for the second reverse wave, +18 for the second wave, -5 for the second reverse wave, and +9 for the third wave through the late 1980s (before the tremendous jump in the 1990s, too late to be included in Huntington's analysis). Vanhanen's waves total +26, +26, and +17 (through 1988), with an invisible first reverse wave, and -5 for the second reverse wave. Arat's second wave numbers only +9, while Freedom House's third wave numbers only +6 prior to the 1990s. These operationalizations are simply not as dramatic as Huntington's presentation, according to which the first wave consisted of 52 percent of all countries of the period, the second wave 35 percent, and the third wave 26 percent. In the other databases, the first wave consisted of 33 to 42 percent of all countries of the period in the Polity III and Vanhanen databases, while the second wave consisted of 8 percent (Arat), 16 to 20 percent (Polity III), or 22 percent (Vanhanen), and the third wave (prior to 1990) only 4 percent (Freedom House), 7 percent (Polity III), or 11 percent (Vanhanen).

This smaller scale is not a function of the standard-deviation operationalization of democratic transitions, since this definition generated more transitions than Hun-

ington identifies: 143 positive transitions in Polity III as compared with 106 in Huntington, and 79 negative transitions as compared with 47 in Huntington. More restrictive definitions of transition, which would bring the totals down to Huntington's levels, generate even smaller waves of net transitions (for example, a minimum transition of 5 points on the Polity III scale, rather than 4, reduces the first-wave net transition from 20 to 14). A more compelling explanation follows from Huntington's overlapping time periods, which exaggerated the extent of waves and reverse waves. For instance, at the 1922 peak of the first wave, Huntington counts 29 democracies in existence; four of the 33 democratizations reported in Table 2 had already been undermined or had not yet come into existence.

Statistical analysis of the Polity III database confirms Huntington's three waves. Five-year periods falling (entirely or largely) into Huntington's wave years have average net transitions of 3.07 ($N = 27$), while other five-year periods have net transitions of -1.58 ($N = 12$).⁷ A simple time-series equation, controlling for the previous net transition, generates a positive and marginally significant effect of Huntington's wave years:

$$P3TRAN = -1.51 + 0.47(LAG(P3TRAN)) + 4.01(HBINARY)^*$$

where P3TRAN is the net transitions for each five-year period of Polity III ratings, LAG(P3TRAN) is the previous five-year period's net transitions for Polity III, HBINARY is the binary variable for Huntington's wave years (1 = wave year), and * represents statistical significance at the .1 level. The r-squared for the equation is .16, suggesting that this simple model does not explain much of the variation in net transitions to democracy, though Huntington's wave-years have a positive effect (statistically significant at approximately the .08 level).

Approach #3: Linkages

A third approach to "waves of democratization" focuses on linkages among a group of countries undergoing democratization (Starr 1991). What matters is not whether a set of countries happens to undergo this process at the same time, but what these countries have to do with each other. This approach makes the most sense for the study of diffusion and demonstration effects. Whereas the first definition of waves examines the globe as a single unit and the second definition focuses on the nation-state units, this third definition puts relations among nations at the center of study.

This approach fractures the unitary concept of the wave even further than the previous approach. Democratization is not a global ideal, or even one among multiple global ideals, but a set of beliefs and actions associated with specific individuals. The idea and institutions of democratization have to be carried from one country to the next by concrete means of transmission: media (such as the newswires in 1905), migration (such as Third World students educated in the First World), or imposition (such as the British colonial heritage of potentially democratic institutions). Waves of democratization, in this view, are not natural phenomena but

purposeful constructions. What is important is how waves are built and how they are dismantled.

Huntington adopts a linkages approach in his analysis of the third wave (Huntington 1991:101): "This democratic tide manifested itself first in southern Europe . . . moved on to Latin America . . . also had its manifestations in Asia . . . [and] engulfed the communist world" (Huntington 1991:21–23). Here, the individual democratizations are not simply lumped together temporally, as in the net-transitions approach. They appear to be linked to one another through geographic proximity (each continent forming a meaningful set of cases) and through the path of tsunami (the passage from one continent to another). In his discussion of explanatory models for waves of democratization, Huntington suggests that linkage among cases, which he calls "snowballing," is just one of four possible explanatory models (Huntington 1991:31–34), and in general he does not wish to treat linkages as a defining characteristic of waves.

Were we to adopt this approach, however, we might generate quite different historical images of waves of democratization. Various operationalizations of linkages are, of course, possible, but the topic is not amenable to the quantitative approach we have used thus far. Let us turn to qualitative historiographical accounts to examine groups of linked democratizations. The sole quantitative criterion I will apply is the minimum of six countries involved in a wave—an arbitrary cut-off that other studies may wish to alter. This approach adopts Huntington's definition of democracy as separate from stability—as we shall see, many of the waves resulted in short-lived democracies. Indeed, we might speculate that democratizations occurring in clusters appear to be far less likely to survive than democratizations that do not appear in clusters. In addition, this exercise uses contemporaneous definitions of democracy rather than a stable standard projected backward in time.

I have identified eight linked waves of democratizations, listed in Table 3. The use of qualitative sources allows us to reach farther back in history than the quantitative time series, to the first major wave of democratization in the modern world, namely the European and Haitian revolutions following in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789.⁸ Palmer's (1959, 1964) comprehensive study of the period discusses the foundation of the Batavian, Belgian, Cisalpine, Cisrhenane, Haitian, Helvetic, Ligurian, Neapolitan, and Roman Republics in the decade after the French Revolution. In addition, he notes the unsuccessful uprisings in Greece and Poland, as well as minor anti-monarchical conspiracies throughout Europe and the Americas. The linkages among these revolutionary movements were clear: the French constitution provided the model for the other republics, and the pro-democracy conspiracies often centered on the clandestine distribution of French revolutionary literature. In a sense, this wave lasted through World War I, since the inspiration and ideals of the French Revolution were prominent up to the early twentieth century (Sohrabi 1995:1384–85); the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, considered below, drew heavily on imagery derived from the French Revolution (Tavakoli-Targhi 1990). The new republics of the late eighteenth century did not meet contemporary standards for democracy, particularly in terms of limited suf-

TABLE 3
Linked Waves of Democratization

	1789-1802	1810-1830	1848-1851	1905-1913	1918-1922	1945-1960	1973-1988	1989-1991
					The Peak of Huntington's First Wave	The Peak of Huntington's Second Wave		
France					Armenia	liberated Europe	Portugal	Communist countries
Batavia					Austria	decolonized Africa	Greece	African countries
Belgium			France parts of Germany and Italy	Russia Iran	Azerbaijan	and Asia	Spain	
Cisalpine Republic			Walachia	Ottoman Empire	Czechoslovakia		Latin American countries	
Cisrhenane Republic			Belgium	Portugal	Estonia		Philippines	
Haiti			Holland	Mexico	Finland			
Helvetic Republic			Sweden	China	Georgia			
Ligurian Republic			Switzerland		Latvia			
Roman Republic					Lithuania			
Neapolitan Republic					Poland			
	Spain							
	Argentina							
	Gran Colombia							
	Mexico							
	Spain (a second time)							
	United Provinces of Central America							
	Peru							
	Venezuela							
	Chile							

frage, and soon degenerated into terror. Nonetheless, they succeeded in sweeping away monarchies and shifting political discourse, if not political realities, toward popular sovereignty. Thus the French Revolution and its successor revolutions count as a wave of democratizations only with a continuous definition of democracy.

The second linked wave began with the Cádiz Constitution in Spain in 1810, which was modeled in large part after the revolutionary French constitutions. The Cortes, or parliament, that drew up the Cádiz Constitution controlled only a small part of Spain, the rest having been conquered by Napoleon. However, the Cádiz Constitution inspired similar movements among the Spanish colonies in Latin America—in part through ideological connections, but also through the relaxation of imperial control that accompanied the French conquest of the metropole. Ferdinand VII of Spain was able to reassert control in Spain and undo the liberalization of Cádiz in the mid-1810, but, in doing so, he sparked renewed independence movements in the American colonies. Not all of the newly independent countries were democratic—even in the limited sense of the early nineteenth century—but a number did enjoy parliaments, constitutions based on the Cádiz model, and limited-suffrage elections: Argentina (Congress of Tucumán in 1816), Gran Colombia (Congress of Angostura in 1819), and Mexico (Constituent Assembly in 1822). Spain itself underwent a second liberalization in 1820, and a secondary wave of democratization occurred in several territories that seceded in the mid-1820s from newly independent Latin American countries: the United Provinces of Central America in 1823, Peru in 1827, and Venezuela in 1830. Chile enjoyed a brief period of constitutional rule in 1823. These democratizations were almost all short-lived, as military coups, factional fighting, and anarchy reduced constitutionalism to a dead letter—from a matter of months in some countries, to everywhere in the region by the mid-1830s (Kinsbruner 1994; Lynch 1986; Munro 1960; Rodriguez 1978).

The third linked wave, like the first, occurred largely in Europe: the revolutions of 1848 (Sperber 1994; Stearns 1974).⁹ These began dramatically early in the year with urban revolts demanding political and social reforms in Paris, and continued in Berlin, Budapest, Cracow, Milan, Munich, Naples, Palermo, Venice, and Vienna. Over the course of the next two years, dozens of regions throughout Europe witnessed democracy movements to varying degrees. Not all of these revolts resulted in democratizations. Democratic forces took power, briefly, in France, parts of Germany and Italy, Walachia, and a number of smaller localities. At the same time, the specter of revolution spurred liberalizing concessions in other parts of Europe: Belgium (suffrage doubled in 1848), Denmark (new constitution in 1849), Holland (new constitution in 1848), and Sweden. The continent-wide movement also helped liberals win out in the Swiss civil war. As appears to be the rule with waves of democratization, most of the revolutionary democracies succumbed quickly; the reformist countries' democratizations proved considerably more durable.

The fourth linked wave in this series has rarely been studied in comparative-historical perspective (see Kurzman forthcoming), though subsets of the wave have been analyzed in Foran (1993), Hart (1987), and Sohrabi (1995). The wave was triggered by the 1905 revolution in Russia, a popular movement that forced the tsar

to concede a written constitution, elections, and a parliament. The Russian Revolution of 1905 was the first revolution reported daily throughout the world via telegraphic wire services (Billington 1980:507). The event was followed soon thereafter by constitutional revolutions in Iran (1906) and the Ottoman Empire (1908). The Russian Revolution "has had a most astounding effect here," according to an observer in Iran:

Events in Russia have been watched with great attention, and a new spirit would seem to have come over the people. They are tired of their rulers, and, taking example of Russia, have come to think that it is possible to have another and better form of government. (Browne 1910:120)

Pro-democracy revolutions followed in Portugal (1910), Mexico (1910–12), and China (1911–12), with the Russian influence particularly great in the latter case (Price 1974). In addition, the Russian pro-democracy movement inspired incipient pro-democracy movements in India and elsewhere in Asia (Spector 1962), even after it had been suppressed by the tsar.

The fifth linked wave is the peak of Huntington's first wave, just after World War I. Billed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson as a war for democracy, World War I did not begin as such—Britain and France entered the war on the side of autocratic Russia, and the United States entered the war three years later, only when its ships were no longer allowed free passage across the Atlantic—and did not end as such. At the Versailles Peace Conference after the war, the victorious powers were quick to back authoritarian leaders in Eastern Europe for fear that the leftist revolutions in Russia and Hungary might spread (Mayer 1967). Nonetheless, democratizations occurred as a result of the war. First, the countries that won the war expanded the suffrage partly in order to mobilize their working classes for military conscription, and partly as a result of worker organizational gains during wartime economic and military mobilization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992:91–92). Second, the countries that regained their independence at the end of the war adopted state-of-the-art democratic institutions. Third, the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian and Russian empires allowed a number of democratizations to occur: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland (Bryce 1922:575). Despite the variety of their sources, these democracies were linked, according to writings of the period, in a single general "democratic movement." Wilsonian rhetoric about democracy and self-determination, however detached it may have been in practice from the policies of the Great Powers, excited hopes throughout the world, "even"—according to the racist world-view common among European commentators of the period—in Africa, where, for example, the parliament of the Bassutos appealed on Wilsonian principles for the return of lands conquered by the Orange Free State (Guy-Grand 1922:157).

The sixth linked wave is Huntington's second wave, after World War II. Again, democratizations clustered into different categories. The European battleground was placed under Allied tutelage and was handed democratic institutions. The European

colonies that became independent over the next two and a half decades were also handed constitutions and other trappings of democracy, which were often made conditions of independence. A number of other countries in the western hemisphere and southeast Europe democratized, some for only short periods, in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As after World War I, there appears to have been a widespread sense of commonality among these various arenas of democratization. Indeed, almost all of these democratizations justified themselves on the basis of a shared understanding that democracy had won the World War and was the most powerful and advanced form of political arrangement (a view contested by left and right authoritarians). To adopt these arrangements was to demonstrate the political maturity of one's nation. In India, for instance, independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru saw problems of democratization in South Asia as "of the same essential nature as the problems of China, or Spain, or many other countries of Europe and elsewhere" (Sigmund 1972:138). In Ghana, pro-democracy leader K.A. Busia saw no shame in the fact that "countries borrow ideas and institutions from one another" (Sigmund 1972:266). In Chile, Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei cited the positive experience of Italian Christian Democracy (Sigmund 1972:458). These leaders and others saw democratization after World War II as a single world-historical phenomenon, despite its various forms.

The agents of Huntington's third wave did not share such a holistic self-image. For this reason, I split this wave into two. The seventh linked wave consists of the democratizations of Southern Europe and Latin America in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. Huntington describes the linkages among these cases as an amorphous sentiment flowing from one region to the other (Huntington 1991:22), and there is some limited evidence of the Southern European example exerting an influence in Latin America. Mexican author Carlos Fuentes, for example, wrote in "homage" of Spain's democratization: "Throughout Spanish America, we used to see Spain and say: Look at the toothless hag. . . . No longer. Fifty years after the Battle of Spain, the lady is sleek, modern, beautiful and, we hope, willing to admit us into her bright new abode" (Pastor 1989:143). In addition, academic observers at the time viewed these movements as linked in several collections comparing the two regions (Baloyra 1987; Higley and Gunther 1992; O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986). The leaders of Southern Europe and Latin America, as well as the Philippines, apparently shared the perception of linkedness when they met and promised mutual support at the International Conference of New Democracies in Manila in 1988.

However, these cases cannot reasonably be linked to the eighth wave, which followed from the liberalization and collapse of the Soviet Union. Soviet reforms sparked reforms, and full-scale democratization, in the Soviet client states of Eastern Europe and Mongolia. Other democracies were born or re-born from the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. And the influence of these events influenced democratization elsewhere, particularly in Africa, where one autocrat commented derisively on the "wind from the east [i.e., the Communist Eastern bloc] that is shaking the coconut trees" (Decalo 1992:7).

This brief discussion of linked democratizations demonstrates how a linkages

approach to waves of democratization may generate quite different historical patterns from the global-level or net-transition approaches. This listing of eight democratizations is not intended to be definitive, and other operationalizations of the concept of linkages might include more or fewer waves. For example, one might include the early 1830s, when France underwent a pro-democracy revolution, followed by revolutionary movements in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, and electoral reform in Great Britain. Another possibility is the "mini-wave" (Schmitter 1993:14) of the early 1870s, which included Denmark, France, Italy, and Switzerland in Europe, plus Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. A third candidate is Huntington's third-wave democratizations in Asia: India after the 1975–77 "emergency," Turkey, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Pakistan. These cases are not included in the present list because they involved fewer than six clearly linked democratizations, but a different threshold might easily generate a dozen or more linked waves of democratization.

Conclusion

This article has identified three approaches to the concept of "waves of democratization": rises in the global level of democracy, positive net-transitions to democracy, and linkages among individual cases of democratization. According to these various approaches, we may currently be experiencing a third wave of democratization, or an eighth. It is indisputable that democratization, by almost every measure, peaked after the two world wars, and may be approaching an all-time high today, as Huntington suggests. It is less clear, however, whether other clusters of democratization should count as waves, and whether these three largest waves should count as single events. One measure considers the inter-war authoritarianization to be relatively minor; a number of indicators find little evidence of a clear second reverse wave; most quantitative approaches show a downturn in democratization in the early 1980s, separating Huntington's third wave into two parts, a finding that the qualitative analysis has sought to confirm.

There are two explanations for the variation in findings. First is the variation within each definition of waves due to the different operationalizations of democracy. While the Polity III scale involves qualitative judgments of electoral procedures and of the power of the legislature, for example, the Vanhanen democracy scale is based solely on election results. As a result, the Vanhanen dataset downplays the first wave, in which few countries allowed women suffrage, and undercounts the reverse waves, with sham elections possibly counting as democratic. The minimal reverse waves in the Vanhanen data may thus reflect the fact that authoritarian governments have learned to go through the motions of holding elections. The Arat democracy scale is constructed out of indicators similar to the Polity III scale, combined with electoral indicators similar to the Vanhanen scale (suffrage, percent of votes to largest party), plus a complex indicator of government repressiveness that the other scales do not use (and is, unfortunately, impossible to replicate from the information given in the text). The result is a pattern of waves somewhat differ-

ent from the other datasets: a rising number of democracies in the late 1960s and positive net democratizations throughout the 1970s, instead of the reverse wave indicated in other datasets. Some of the differences in result may be due to coding. For example, the democratizations of 1967 in the Arat dataset include the opening time-series data for Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Malta, and Trinidad; Polity III does not include Barbados, and counts Jamaica and Malta as democratizing in the late 1950s, Trinidad in 1962, and Guyana not at all. Still, the Arat dataset's inclusion of repressiveness no doubt affects the results as well, in ways that are difficult to specify because the factor breakdown of the scale is not reported. Finally, the Freedom House scale takes an entirely different approach: rather than measure specific electoral mechanisms, it is based on subjective expert ratings of civil liberties and political rights. Although the time-series overlap with the other datasets is limited, the extent to which this different operationalization results in similar findings is somewhat surprising.

A second explanation for the variation in findings focuses on differences in conceptualization of waves. One of the clearest examples is the volatility of net democratizations, which increases markedly after World War II (Figure 2). By contrast, the global level of democracy varies not much more after World War II than before (Figure 1). The empirical implications are quite distinct: according to the global-level definition, waves of democratization have simply continued their historical pattern of two steps forward and one step back; according to the net-democratization definition, the waves have become far more erratic and transient.

It may be tempting, after all this conflicting detail, to give up and declare that the past two centuries have been nothing but one ongoing wave of democratization, along the lines of the comparative-historical study of revolutions, which have labeled much of the past two centuries an "age of revolution": 1760–1800 (Palmer 1959, 1964), 1770–1870 (Dowd 1967), 1798–1848 (Hobsbawm 1962), 1830–1930 (Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly 1975). A more fruitful conclusion might be to consider the number of waves of democratization a function of approaches and operationalizations, and to select those that have meaning and relevance for particular theoretical questions.

Notes

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1. Huntington defends a dichotomous definition on two grounds. The first is pragmatic: "A dichotomous approach better serves the purpose of this study because our concern is with the transition from a nondemocratic regime to a democratic one" (Huntington 1991:11). The second, a footnote critique of Bollen (1990), is far more contentious. According to Huntington, Bollen suggests "that democracy varies in degrees as does industrialization. This is clearly not the case, however. . . . [C]ountries can, as the events of 1989–90 in Eastern Europe showed, quickly change from nondemocracy to democracy. They cannot quickly change from nonindustrial to industrial" (Huntington 1991:318).

Yet, it is unclear why differing rates of variability affect the concept of variability; and even if Bollen's industrialization analogy is inappropriate, his definition of democracy does not rest primarily on this analogy. It rests instead on common usage of the term "democracy" (we can speak of "more" or

"less" democratic) and on the continuous nature of operationalizations of the concept, such as suffrage (which varies continuously from 0 to 100 percent of the adult population) (Bollen 1990:13; also see Bollen 1980; Bollen and Jackman 1989). Moreover, Huntington at times accepts the continuous definition. He introduces the category of "betwixt-and-between cases (e.g., Greece, 1915–36; Thailand, 1980–present; Senegal, 1974–present) that may be appropriately classified as 'semidemocracies'" (Huntington 1991:12), and speaks of "liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic" (15), "democratic institutions [that] developed gradually" (16), and "movement toward democracy" (17)—all of which imply a continuum, not a dichotomy. In addition, Huntington operationalizes his definition of democracy through measures that are in part continuous: contestation and participation. Huntington's definition of twentieth-century democracy includes the requirement that "virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington 1991:7). "Virtually" implies a percentage near 100—a percentage, as Bollen notes, that varies continuously. Huntington's participation threshold for nineteenth-century democracy is substantially lower: "50 percent of adult males are eligible to vote" (Huntington 1991:16). Again, Huntington dichotomizes a variable that he appears to recognize as continuous. More seriously, perhaps, the use of separate cut-off points for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century definitions suggests that democracy does not have a single, unitary meaning—that its meanings are historically contextual.

2. The datasets used to generate Figures 1 and 2 are available from the author upon request.
3. The Arat database is not included in this analysis because it displays virtually no variation in global mean over time, suggesting that the annual distribution of democracy ratings has been standardized.
4. The global democracy mean for Huntington's wave years is 75.47 in the Vanhanen dataset (N = 19) and 104.30 in the Freedom House dataset (N = 21), while the mean for non-wave years is 85.91 (N = 2) and 97.43 (N = 2), respectively.
5. For example, Huntington dates democratic transition in Spain and Chile "in the very early 1930s, after the first wave had effectively ended" (Huntington 1991:17), and includes as democratic transitions several countries that did not become independent until after the 1962 cut-off for the second wave: Malta (1964), Botswana (1966), Guyana (1966), and Fiji (1970) (Huntington 1991:20). Unless colonies can be called democratic, all of these cases would seem to fall chronologically into reverse waves, thereby reducing the net total of undemocratic transitions during those periods. Instead, Huntington places these countries' transitions in the first and second waves of democratization (1828–1926, 1943–1962) and counts no democratic transitions during the two reverse waves (Huntington 1991:14–15). In an earlier work in which he did not separate the 1960s and 1970s transitions by direction, Huntington concluded that democratization "trends were mixed" during this period and that "the net record of change in the state of democracy in the world was not very great" (Huntington 1984: 196–97).
6. Arat's dataset is usable for the net-transition approach to waves because it allows countries' ratings to move up and down on an annual basis, even if the global mean is held constant.
7. As before, the other databases do not have enough time-points or non-wave years to run statistical analyses. The average net transitions for wave years are 0 for Arat (N = 6), 6.75 for Freedom House (N = 4), and 4.83 for Vanhanen (N = 12); the averages for non-wave years are 3 (N = 2), 0 (N = 1), and 4.5 (N = 2), respectively.
8. Modelski and Perry (1991) reach even further back and identify a small wave in 1600. For a different reading of the democratization wave of the late eighteenth century, see Markoff (1996:Chap. 3).
9. Schmitter (1993, 1994) identifies the 1848 revolutions as the first of four waves of democratization.
10. Freedom House (1989:50) explains that the 1973, 1975, and 1977 figures are mislabeled as 1974, 1976, and 1978 in Freedom House (1987).

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APPENDIX

Data Sources

Democracy is notoriously difficult to quantify, but this difficulty has not prevented numerous scholars from doing so. This study presents findings from four data sources, each of which operationalizes the concept of democracy in different ways. (For yet more methods of measuring democracy, see Inkeles [1991] and Beetham [1994].) The methods vary from a near-binary measure to a 100-point scale; from indicators of the regularity of elections to subjective estimates of civil liberties; from 21-year coverage to 195-year coverage.

The variation in methods and measures has disappointed some analysts, and each of the measures has come in for serious methodological criticism (Bollen 1980; Bollen and Grandjean 1981; Bollen 1993). This article will not attempt to adjudicate among these measures or to develop new ones. Rather, I take a variety of measures and examine each of their implications for the substantive issue of tracking waves of democratization. In any case, these measures tend to be fairly highly correlated with one another, where they overlap in coverage (Jagers and Gurr 1995:475).

Arat: Zehra F. Arat's democracy scale (reported in the appendix to Arat 1991) presents annual measures of democracy for 150 independent countries from 1948 to 1982. The scale is open-ended; the range is 28 to 104. The scale represents a standardized version of the following components: [Participation x (1 + Inclusiveness)] + Competitiveness – Coerciveness (Arat 1991:23–26).

Participation: (largely drawn from Banks 1971)

Elected executive	1 point
Legislature exists	1 point
Legislature elected	1 point
Legislature somewhat effective	1 point
Legislature quite effective	2 points
Nomination process for legislature exists	1 point
Nomination process for legislature competitive	1 point

Inclusiveness:

Percentage of over-18 population allowed to vote (plus 1)	1–2 points
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Competitiveness:

Some parties allowed	1 point
All but "extremist" parties allowed	2 points
All parties allowed	3 points
Largest party receives less than 70% of vote	2 points
No elections, or largest party receives 70% or more	1 point

Civil Liberties:

Residual of regression of government sanctions and political unrest (divided by negative six)	Point range not indicated
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The author intends the scale to be a continuous variable and has treated it as such in her work (Arat 1988, 1991). To identify democratic transitions I have adopted a minimum one-year shift of one standard deviation (20 points). This operationalization does not, unfortunately, capture multi-year transitions, but it meets the definition of a dramatic, abrupt change in form of governance.

Freedom House: This well-known rating system, founded by Raymond D. Gastil, covers up to 186 independent nations, beginning in 1972 (1972–1988 ratings are reported in Freedom House 1989, except for 1973, 1975 and 1977, which are reported in Freedom House 1987;¹⁰ subsequent years' ratings are reported in the annual editions of Freedom House 1990–1995). The Freedom House ratings cover two separate indicators, political rights and civil liberties. Countries are rated on each account using a seven-point scale, with 1 representing the highest level of freedom and 7 representing the least. I have summed the two scales to create a single measure of democracy, as Gastil (1991) suggests. I have inverted the scale to correspond with the directionality of the other measures of democracy, so that Freedom House ratings of 2 (most free) are now rated 14. In this article, single-year shifts of one standard deviation (4 points) are counted as democratic transitions.

Polity III: The Polity III data cover 177 countries from 1800 to 1994, assigning each an annual democracy rating. This variable is coded on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest degree of democracy. The scale is constructed from several categorical measures, as described in Gurr, Jagers, and Moore (1991) and Jagers and Gurr (1995, 1996):

Political Participation:

Competitive	3 points
Transitional	2 points
Factional	1 point

Executive Recruitment:

Election	2 points
Transitional	1 point

Openness of Executive Recruitment (for elective and transitional executives):

Election of executive or effective chief minister	1 point
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Constraint on Chief Executive:

Executive parity with, or subordination to, legislature	4 points
(Intermediate category)	3 points
Substantial limitations on executive	2 points
(Intermediate category)	1 point

This scale is arranged into an ordinal scale with explicit weighting and distance assumptions that are intended to allow the scale to represent an underlying continuous variable, and its authors have used it as such in their own work (Gurr, Jagers,

and Moore 1991; Jagers and Gurr 1995). In this paper, single-year shifts of one standard deviation (4 points) are counted as democratic transitions. Transitions to and from years in which no democracy rating is given (interruptions, interregnums, transitions, or information unknown) are arbitrarily counted as democratic transitions when the previous/following year has a score of 8 or higher (that is, two standard deviations above 0).

Vanhanen: Tatu Vanhanen's data are compiled from two studies. The first assesses the democratic status of 119 states from 1850 to 1979, decade by decade (Vanhanen 1984); the second assesses 147 countries from 1980 to 1988, year by year (Vanhanen 1990). Like Huntington, Vanhanen uses a categorical definition of democracy. For the period 1850–1979, he uses two categories, democratic and non-democratic, with the “threshold” of democracy consisting of three conditions:

- 1) *Competition.* Political parties other than the leading party receive 30 percent or more of popular votes.
- 2) *Participation.* 10 percent or more of the country's population votes.
- 3) *Index of Democracy.* The product of Competition and Participation (x 100) is 5.0 or greater.

For the period 1980–1988, the definition changes slightly, with minimum participation rising to 15 percent of population, and non-democracies are divided into semi-democracies (competition of at least 20 percent, participation of at least 10 percent) and others. Like Huntington, Vanhanen also refers to democracy on occasion as a continuous variable. Indeed, he states at one point, “It is remarkable that there does not seem to be any natural borderline between more and less democratized countries” (Vanhanen 1990:26). The index of democracy, as a product of two continuously varying percentages, is itself a continuous measure, but I use Vanhanen's minimum cut-off point for the measure of net transitions.

The decade-by-decade approach for the period 1850–1979 prevents Vanhanen's data from reporting short-lived democracies. In addition, Vanhanen does not include countries that were (at the time of study) no longer independent, such as the Baltic nations that Huntington includes in his first wave.