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Failed Democratization

M. Steven Fish and Jason Wittenberg

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Overview

This chapter identifies key factors that lead to democratization 'going wrong'. After explaining why some new democracies slide backwards while others

flourish, the chapter considers how the hazards of democratic reversal can be reduced.

Introduction

The early 1990s were a time of high spirits for democrats. Much of Latin America had recently shaken off authoritarian **regimes** that had become symbols of Ibero-American despotism, with their abysmal human rights records and farcical rhetoric of national grandeur. They had seemed rock-solid in the 1970s, but in the 1980s they yielded to movements for open rule. In some countries in East and South-East Asia a similar trend was evident, with military-backed regimes that had appeared impregnable submitting to popular movements. The very symbol of robust twentieth-century despotism, the Soviet Union, as well as authoritarian Yugoslavia,

had disintegrated. The 10 states that had formed the Soviet or Eastern bloc became 28 separate states, many of which were racing headlong toward political freedom. In Africa, broad national conferences were calling strongmen to public account and neo-colonial racial oligarchies were headed toward demise. Even in some countries that did not democratize, the winds seemed to be favourable. Most noteworthy were China, Indonesia, and Iran, where broad reform movements, though repressed, exposed popular longing for change.

From the standpoint of the current day, however, the early 1990s seem like a golden age. It is now clear

that the path to an open polity is strewn with obstacles and twists. Indeed, one of the most pronounced trends of the first decade of the twenty-first century is the reversal of democratization. This chapter aims to explain why some democratizers slid backwards while others did not. It further considers how to reduce the hazards of democratization's reversal. To investigate failed democratization, we analyse all countries with a population of at least half a million.

Categorizing Countries

We sort countries into five categories. Two categories—*established democracies* and *established autocracies*—contain countries that have not experienced regime change since 1975. Established democracies have had an FHI of 2.5 or better each year since 1975. Established autocracies lie on the other end of the spectrum. Their annual FHI was never better than 4, the midpoint on the FHI scale. The established democracies were always open polities; the established autocracies never came close to being open polities. Of the 158 countries under examination, 23 count as established democracies and 45 as established autocracies.

The other three categories consist of three different kinds of *democratizers*. Democratizers are defined as countries that both failed to reach the 2.5 level in at least one year and that had a score of 3.5 or better in at least one year during the period 1975–2007. Among these countries we distinguish among *robust democratizers* (39 countries), *tenuous democratizers* (31 countries), and *failed democratizers* (20 countries). In this chapter we focus on the democratizers, and especially on the failed democratizers and what makes them different.

Robust democratizers

The robust democratizers are the successful cases. Each failed to reach the 2.5 level in the FHI in one or more years between 1975 and 2004, but subsequently attained that level (or better) in all three consecutive years from 2005 to 2007. Some of the robust democratizers had relatively favourable scores throughout the

To assess the progress of democratization, we use the Freedom House Index (hereafter FHI). The scores range from 1 for the most open polity to 7 for the least open polity (see Ch. 3 for details). Our time frame is 1975–2007. When referring to the FHI for particular years, we use the data that reflect conditions in the country. Thus, when we refer to 2002, we mean the scores that Freedom House released in 2003, which represent conditions in 2002.¹

three decades between 1975 and 2004, but in one year or a small set of years failed to meet the 2.5 threshold in the FHI. Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, India, Mauritius, Portugal, and Trinidad and Tobago are the cases. Other robust democratizers—Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Peru, and Slovakia—experienced substantial ups and downs, but the general trajectory of regime change was nevertheless positive and the countries ranked at the 2.5 level or better in 2005–07. Still others once laboured under autocratic regimes, but after an antiauthoritarian breakthrough exhibited linear movement to democracy and rated 2.5 or better in 2005–07. Benin, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Namibia, Panama, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Uruguay fit this description.

Tenuous democratizers

The tenuous democratizers are the intermediate cases. They are countries that in at least one yearly survey scored 3.5 or better, but that also failed to score as favourably as a 2.5 between 2005 and 2007. These countries also have avoided autocracy in the recent past; the FHI for each averages better than 4 over the three years from 2005 to 2007.

A broad range of countries falls in this category. Some have a history of open politics but slipped in recent years. Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, and the

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Philippines are the cases. Others lack a substantial history of democracy, but have exhibited a generally positive trend following an antiauthoritarian breakthrough, without reaching the 2.5 level between 2005 and 2007. These countries are Albania, Bosnia, Kenya, Liberia, Macedonia, Madagascar, Moldova, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. Still other cases resided in an intermediate zone for most of the time since 1975 but have generally been closer to closure than to openness and have resisted a democratizing impulse in the recent past. Malaysia and Morocco typify this pattern. Finally, some countries have been on a regime-change roller coaster. Comoros, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and Zambia fit that description.

Failed democratizers

The failed democratizers have an experience of political opening but subsequently underwent a major reversal. They scored a 3.5 or better in at least one year in the past, but over the past three years have averaged 4 or worse. These polities at one time showed promise as potential democracies or actually were democracies, but then moved toward authoritarianism and, as of this writing, have not recovered. Since failed democratization is the subject of this chapter, more detail on the countries in this category is in order.

Armenia achieved political opening in the early years of the post-Soviet period and rated 3.5 in 1992–94. It then became a more closed polity and received scores of 4.5 in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Bangladesh rated as a free polity for two years, 1991 and 1992, but subsequently declined dramatically. It received a score of 4 for each survey during the half-decade covering 2002–06, and deteriorated further to 4.5 in 2007.

In the wake of dissolution of the USSR, Belarus experienced a spell of relatively open politics, receiving a score of 3.5 in 1992. But it subsequently made a slide to hard authoritarianism. In 2004 its FHI sunk to 6.5, where it has subsequently remained. Belarus has become home to one of the world's most repressive political regimes.

Burkina Faso experienced a short period of constitutional rule in the late 1970s. It ranked as a free

polity in 1978 and 1979, with a score of 2.5 in each year, but then lapsed into dictatorship. The country underwent a partial opening in the 1990s, but its FHI was not better than 4 in any given year since then.

The Central African Republic, after decades of dictatorship, liberalized in 1993. At that time its FHI improved to 3.5, where it stayed in 1994 and 1995. After a brief decline, it resumed its previous level of 3.5 in 1998–2000. After that, however, the country's score deteriorated. In 2005 and 2006 it stood at 4.5, and in 2007 it further worsened to 5.

Congo-Brazzaville underwent an opening in the early 1990s. In 1992 it received a score of 3. It subsequently degenerated dramatically. In 2005 the country's FHI stood at 5, and in 2006 and 2007 fell further, to 5.5.

Djibouti began its post-independence existence in 1977 as a relatively open polity. Between 1977 and 1980, it rated 3.5. The country then moved toward authoritarianism and has remained a mostly closed polity for the past quarter century. It received a score of 5 over the past half-decade.

Fiji was a democracy from 1975 to 1986, but yielded to autocracy in 1987. It subsequently recovered and in 1999 regained status as a free polity. But the island nation again reverted to authoritarianism. Its FHI for 2005, 2006, and 2007 were 3.5, 5, and 5, respectively.

Gabon had a partial opening in the early 1990s, rating 3.5 in 1991. It then reverted to authoritarianism. The country received a score of 5 in each of the surveys for 2005, 2006, and 2007.

The Gambia has a tortuous political history. From 1975 to 1980 it was the most democratic country in Africa. Democracy eroded in the 1980s, though the Gambia still remained a partially open polity. Between 1989 and 1993 it experienced another political opening and recovered its status as Africa's most open political regime. In 1994 it fell into dictatorship. The country subsequently experienced some liberalization, but never returned to democracy. It rated 4 in 2005 and 2006 and 4.5 in 2007.

Jordan has known much more autocracy than democracy. It did, however, undergo a noteworthy opening in the early 1990s, scoring 3 in the FHI in 1992. The kingdom subsequently reverted to less open politics, and its score stood at 4.5 for each of the surveys for 2005–07.

Kuwait is included in the category of failed democratizers rather than established autocracies by virtue of its relatively favourable score in a single year—1975, the first year in the period under consideration. Thereafter Kuwait's FHI deteriorated and never recovered. It stood at 4.5 in each of the surveys for 2005–07.

Kyrgyzstan underwent a dramatic opening following the demise of the USSR, attaining a score of 3 in 1992. Its level of political openness subsequently declined precipitously. Though it underwent a slight recovery in the wake of the 'Tulip Revolution' in 2005, its FHI has not advanced beyond the 4.5 level, where it remained between 2005 and 2007.

Nepal has a topsy-turvy political history. It achieved status as a free polity in 1991 and 1992, with a FHI of 2.5 in each year, but subsequently declined. The country rated 5.5 in 2005 and 4.5 in both 2006 and 2007.

Between 1979 and 1983 Nigeria was a democracy, receiving scores of 2.5 in each year during this interval. The country subsequently succumbed to autocracy. While it experienced another opening at the end of the 1990s, it never recovered its status as a democracy. It rated 4 in each of the past three surveys.

Pakistan had a spell of relatively open politics in the late 1980s, rating 3 in 1988 and 1989. Its subsequent history has been one of greater political clo-

sure. Pakistan received scores of 5.5 in each of the three years between 2005 and 2007.

Russia's recent history of political openness resembles that of Pakistan. Its FHI was 3 in 1991, but it then steadily slunk toward autocracy. The country received scores of 5.5 over the past three annual surveys.

Tajikistan, like Russia, had a short-lived breakthrough in 1991, when its FHI was 3. Unlike Russia, which returned to authoritarianism gradually, Tajikistan reverted immediately; its FHI was 6 in 1992. The authoritarian regime has remained in place ever since.

Venezuela was a democracy for most of the period under consideration. During 1975–1991, it rated as a free polity, with an annual FHI of 2.5 or better. During this era, it was an exception to the autocracy that prevailed in Latin America. But in the 1990s its level of democracy declined. In 1999 Venezuela's FHI was 4, placing it at a much lower level of openness than it had historically enjoyed. It held this score in 2005–07.

Zimbabwe was never a full-blown democracy, but it did achieve a score of 3.5 in 1980. It subsequently tumbled. It scored 6.5 during each of the surveys for 2005–07, marking it as one of the world's harshest autocracies.

What Undermines Democracy?

In order to unearth the conditions that precipitate democratic failure, we use a statistical analysis that treats the three categories of countries as the dependent variable, i.e. as the phenomenon to be explained by other factors or variables. To be able to calculate statistical effects, we code the established democracies as 4, the robust democratizers as 3, the tenuous democratizers as 2, the failed democratizers as 1, and the established autocracies as 0. These five categories run from most to least success with democracy. We then test the influence of factors that scholars normally consider to be causes of cross-national variation in democratic attainment. We also consider

several variables that are less frequently examined. Our aim is to figure out which major situational conditions influenced where countries ended up in terms of regime change.

High economic development is widely seen as democracy's fastest friend and poverty its biggest foe. Higher levels of development are typically associated with more sophisticated populations, larger middle classes, and less desperate lower classes (see Ch. 8). To assess development, we use gross national income (GNI) at purchasing power parity (PPP) in the year 2000, measured in thousands of US dollars.

To measure economic reliance on hydrocarbons, which is sometimes regarded as a bane to open government, we use the proportion of export income generated by oil and gas. Oil may distort modernization, finance repression, fuel corruption, promote economic statism, and reduce economic stability—among other pathologies (see Ch. 8). All these effects of oil wealth may hinder democratization. Data on this factor are scarce for many countries. Locating numbers for this variable for each country for each year, or for any given year, is impossible. We therefore construct the best set of data we can, drawing on the figures for years that are as close to 2000 as we can find.

Some observers believe that ethnic heterogeneity hinders democratization. They hold that diverse societies are more prone to conflict and less able to generate the compromise that is integral to democratic practice (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). We assess this factor using the ethnic fractionalization scores that Alberto Alesina and colleagues (2002) have constructed. Among scholars who regard cultural context as significant, some focus on religion (see Ch. 9). Some recent studies have shown that Islam may pose special challenges (Fish 2002). A close association between sacred and secular authority, a strong distinction between believers and non-believers, and a lower status for females have been regarded as features of Islamic societies that may lower the prospects for open politics. We measure this variable using the percentage of the population that adheres to Islam.

Longevity of statehood may also affect democratization's chances. How long a country has enjoyed independence may influence national identity and political psychology, among other factors that can, in turn, affect the political regime (see Chs 2 and 9). In a blunt but useful way to capture this difference, we include a dummy variable for whether a country enjoyed national independence by the year 1900. Countries that existed as independent states at the advent of the previous century are scored as 0; those that gained independence only after 1990 are coded as 1. Finally, we include a measure for sex inequality. Greater sex equality may be conducive to popular rule by promoting a less hierarchical cultural milieu for decisionmaking, among other advantages (Fish 2002; Inglehart, Norris, and Welzel 2002; see also

Ch. 10). We measure this variable using the sex literacy gap, which is the male literacy rate minus the female rate. Figures are for the year 2000. A higher number is a sign of greater inequality between the sexes. This indicator measures deep demographic conditions. It is largely stable from year to year and even decade to decade. The correlation between the literacy gap in 1980 and in 1990, for example, is .96; virtually the same correlation obtains between the figures for 1990 and 2000 ('Summary Gender Profile,' 2002).

In the terminology of the 'bathtub model', introduced in Chapter 4, each of the variables assessed here may be regarded as *objective* geopolitical and social structural conditions. All are background conditions, and none normally changes quickly. The correlation between income per capita across recent decades, like that for the sex literacy gap, is over .9.² Numbers for relatively recent years are used because the data are more plentiful and there are fewer missing cases. The results do not change appreciably when data for earlier decades are substituted. While each factor considered here may itself be affected by democracy in the long run, the hazards of endogeneity—meaning that what is treated as the dependent variable actually causes what are treated as the causal variables—are not acute. None of the causal variables are institutions (e.g. voting rules), events (e.g. wars), trends (e.g. economic performance), or policies (e.g. level of economic openness). The last two factors may be worth considering, but assessing their effects without risking endogeneity is more difficult. In this section, we measure only the effects of the objective factors just reviewed.

Table 17.1 presents the results of a series of ordered probit models. The idea behind these models is to assess the independent effects of each hypothesized factor, contingent on the inclusion of the other factors, when the outcome consists of ordered discrete possibilities. In this case, these ordered possibilities are the probability of becoming an established autocracy, a failed democratizer, a tenuous democratizer, a robust democratizer, or an established democracy. Model 1 includes all the factors that we hypothesized would determine the category a country ends up in; to test the robustness of the findings we also present alternative specifications, for a total of five models.

Table 17.1 Ordered Probit Regressions of Political Regime Type on Hypothesized Determinants

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Economic development	0.13*** (0.02)	0.11*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)
Fuels dependence	-0.02*** (0.004)		-0.03*** (0.004)	-0.02*** (0.004)	-0.02*** (0.004)
Ethnic fractionalization	1.12* (0.47)	0.39 (0.42)	1.10* (0.47)		
Percentage Muslim	-0.008** (0.003)	-0.01*** (0.003)		-0.01*** (0.003)	
Late national independence	-0.48 (0.25)		-0.61* (0.24)		
Sex inequality	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)		
Pseudo R ²	.32	.24	.31	.29	.26

Note: $N = 158$ countries. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Standard errors are a measure of our uncertainty in the estimates. The larger the ordered probit regression coefficient relative to the standard error, the more confident we are in a factor's effect. Conventionally confidence is indicated through the use of asterisks. The more asterisks there are, the more confident we are in the result.

Sources: For economic development, World Bank 2002b; for fuels dependence, World Bank 2002a and annual reports for other years; for ethnic fractionalization, Alesina *et al.* 2002; for percentage Muslim, *Muslim Population Worldwide* 2003; for sex inequality, United Nations Development Programme 2002.

Economic development, fuels export dependence, percentage Muslim, colonial heritage, and sex inequality are all statistically significant and the signs are in the expected direction. Higher economic development is good for democracy; more economic dependence on fuels is bad for it. Likewise, a higher proportion of Muslims is bad for democracy, as are late national independence and sex inequality. The only possible surprise is ethnic fractionalization, which does not hinder democratization. The sign on the coefficient is positive, indicating that higher fractionalization may help rather than hurt the prospects for democracy, but it is not statistically significant in all three of the models in which it is included. The results suggest that we cannot say whether or not higher ethnic fractionalization is good for democracy, but we can infer that it is not bad for it.

Comparison of the failed democratizers and the robust democratizers fleshes out the picture. The importance of economic development is evident. Annual income per person in the 20 failed cases

averages roughly US\$3,700; in the 39 successful cases, US\$8,100. In only two of the failed democratizers, Kuwait and Russia, are incomes higher than the average income in the robust democratizers. Poverty is democracy's antagonist. We can also illustrate how poverty reduces the prospects for democratization by computing the predicted probabilities of failed democratization at different levels of economic development. These probabilities are shown in Figure 17.1. To generate the lines in the figure we set the values of all the explanatory variables in our model except gross national income per capita to their average values in the data. We then computed, for values of gross national income per capita varying from 0 to 40,000 dollars, the predicted probabilities of failed democratization given our model. The solid line represents these predicted probabilities; the dashed lines indicate the associated 95 per cent confidence intervals. All statistical estimates have some uncertainty associated with them. Ninety-five per cent confidence intervals indicate the range within which we are 95 per cent confident that the

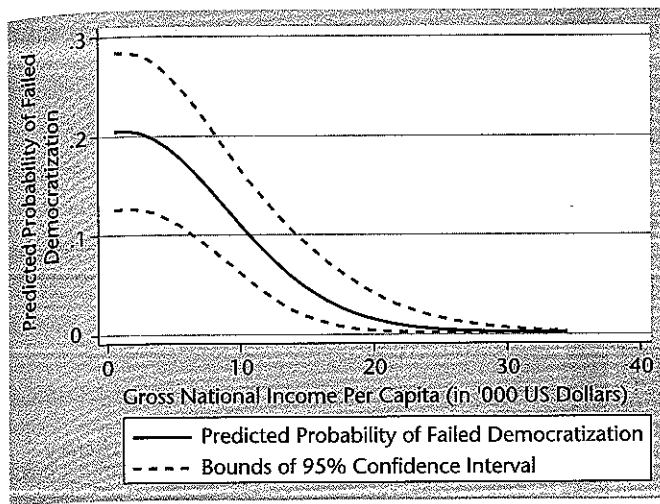


Fig 17.1 The Relationship between Economic Development and Failed Democratization

true value lies, in this case the true probability of failed democratization. As is clear from the downward trend in the figure, economic development is an excellent way to maximize the chances of successful democratization.

The relationship between fuels dependence and democracy is even more unequivocal. In 6 of the 20 failed cases (Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Kuwait, Nigeria, Russia, and Venezuela) fuels account for over half of exports, while in only one of the 39 robust democratizers, Trinidad and Tobago, do they account for more than one-quarter of exports. Democracy knows no greater foe than oil.

Islam may also complicate democratization. The proportion of the population that adheres to Islam in the failed democratizers averages 44 per cent; in the robust democratizers it is 11 per cent. Predominantly Muslim countries make up half of the failed democratizers but only 8 per cent of the robust democratizers. Countries that did not exist as independent states prior before 1900 may also have a disadvantage. Only 2 of the 20 failed democratizers, Russia and Venezuela, enjoyed an independent national existence prior to the year 1900, while 10 of the 39 robust democratizers did so.

Sex inequality may hinder democratization as well. Among the failed democratizers, the gap between male and female literacy rates favours males by 13 percentage points on average; among the robust

democratizers, the gap is only 4 percentage points. The damaging effects of literacy gaps on democratization's prospects are illustrated in Figure 17.2. To generate the lines in the figure we set the values of all the explanatory variables in our model except sex inequality in literacy (defined as male minus female literacy) to their average values in the data. We then computed, for values of sex inequality in literacy ranging from -20 per cent to 40 per cent, the predicted probabilities of failed democratization given our model. As in Figure 17.1, the solid line represents these predicted probabilities; the dashed lines indicate the associated 95 percent confidence intervals. Figure 17.2 shows that, all other things being equal, as the gap between male and female literacy increases, the probability of failed democratization also increases.

Box 17.1 Key points

- The level of economic development is positively related to successful democratization.
- Fuels dependence, a large Muslim share of the population, and sex inequality are all negatively related to successful democratization.

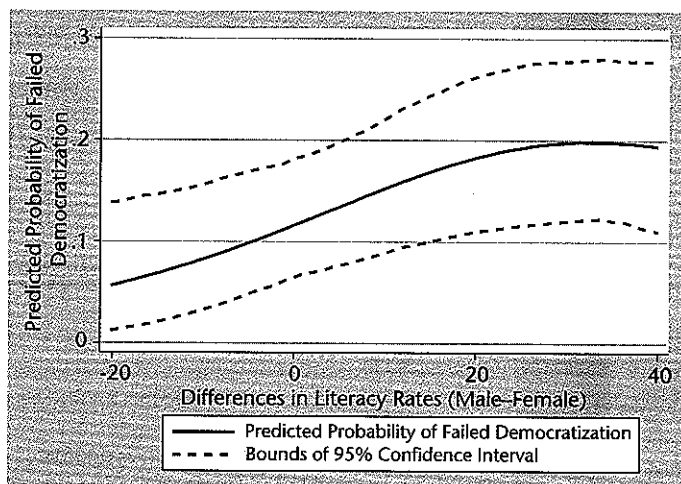


Fig 17.2 The Relationship between Literacy Rates and Failed Democratization

Who Undermines Democracy?

The limits of situational factors

The above analysis gives us a handle on the underlying conditions that affect how countries fare in regime change. But how far does it take us toward understanding why democratization fails in specific places? In order to delve into specific countries, we focus on the three categories in which some regime change took place (the robust democratizers, the tenuous democratizers, and the failed democratizers). We now drop the established democracies and established autocracies from the analysis and look only at the democratizers, which number 90 countries.

We are especially interested in the 20 failed democratizers. Zeroing in on them, let us ask: How well did our model predict that they would fail? How well can it account for the fact that these countries became failed—rather than tenuous or robust—democratizers? To determine this, we estimate, for each actual failed democratizer, the expected probability (conditional on the values of all the variables in our statistical model) of being a failed, tenuous, or robust democratizer.³ Table 17.2 presents these expected probabilities, with 95 per cent confidence intervals in parentheses below each estimate. The left-hand

column shows the probability, given a country's scores on the six causal variables used in the analysis, of that country becoming what it became, meaning a failed democratizer. The middle column shows the chance of it becoming a tenuous democratizer, and the right-hand column of becoming a robust democratizer.

For the countries that had a 40 per cent or greater chance of ending up where they did in fact (meaning as failed democratizers), we may say that our statistical model worked reasonably well. This condition obtains for 10 of the 20 countries. For example, in Bangladesh, given the country's scores on the causal variables we used above, the chances that democratization would fail were 57 per cent. Bangladesh's export profile includes no oil or gas, which is a big plus for democracy's prospects. But it is poor (annual income per capita is US\$1,650), Islamic (88 per cent of the people are Muslims), recently decolonized (in 1971), and highly unequal in terms of sex (the literacy gap is 22 per cent). So too does our model work well for predicting the trajectory of regime change in Nigeria, where the chances of democratization failing were an overwhelming 98 per cent. Nigeria is impoverished (annual income per capita is US\$790),

Table 17.2 The Failed Democratizers and the Probabilities of Their Fates, in Percentages

Country	Chance of Becoming a Failed Democratizer	Chance of Becoming a Tenuous Democratizer	Chance of Becoming a Robust Democratizer
Armenia	22 (5-47)	45 (29-58)	33 (11-61)
Bangladesh	57 (21-87)	33 (12-52)	10 (1-34)
Belarus	7 (2-17)	33 (19-49)	60 (39-79)
Burkina Faso	32 (18-49)	46 (33-58)	21 (10-35)
Central African Republic	20 (7-40)	45 (31-58)	35 (15-56)
Congo-Brazzaville	91 (60-100)	8 (0-32)	1 (0-6)
Djibouti	41 (19-63)	43 (28-56)	16 (4-33)
Fiji	6 (2-13)	32 (20-45)	62 (45-77)
Gabon	73 (31-97)	22 (3-48)	5 (0-23)
Gambia	44 (21-67)	42 (26-56)	14 (4-32)
Jordan	30 (13-53)	46 (32-58)	24 (9-44)
Kuwait	36 (3-86)	39 (11-56)	25 (1-75)
Kyrgyzstan	41 (19-66)	43 (28-57)	16 (4-35)
Nepal	22 (4-50)	44 (27-57)	34 (9-66)
Nigeria	98 (84-100)	2 (0-14)	0 (0-1)
Pakistan	51 (26-73)	39 (22-53)	11 (2-26)
Russia	39 (13-69)	42 (26-57)	19 (3-47)

(continued)

Table 17.2 The Failed Democratizers and the Probabilities of Their Fates, in Percentages *Continued*

Country	Chance of Becoming a Failed Democratizer	Chance of Becoming a Tenuous Democratizer	Chance of Becoming a Robust Democratizer
Tajikistan	45 (18-74)	41 (22-56)	14 (2-35)
Venezuela	76 (35-98)	20 (2-47)	4 (0-22)
Zimbabwe	12 (4-24)	41 (27-54)	47 (28-65)

Note: Entries are probabilities of each country falling in the designated category, given the values for that country in each of the causal variables presented in Model 1 of Table 17.1. 95 per cent confidence intervals in parentheses are below each estimate. Bolded entries indicate countries whose expected probability of being a failed democratizer was under 40 per cent, indicating a poor fit to our model.

all of its export income derives from oil, half its population is Muslim, it achieved independence late (in 1960), and sex inequality is considerable (the literacy gap is 17 per cent).

In 10 of the failed democratizers, however, our model offers predictions of failure that are lower than 40 per cent. These are the cases of failure that our model did not do a good job of predicting. They appear in bold in Table 17.2. In Belarus, for example, the probability of failure was only seven per cent, and there was as 60 per cent chance of success. In neighbouring Russia, the odds of succeeding were not as high, but those of failing were still only 39 per cent. Thus, in Belarus, Russia, and the other eight cases where our model yields predications of less than a 40 per cent chance of failure, something besides the factors we included in our models above must be at work. Our analyses, after all, only tested the effects of big background conditions. They did not include the *subjective* dimension of politics, i.e. the political actions of key actors. What other factors might help explain the failure of democratization? The question requires us to look beyond structural factors and to consider specifically who brought democratization to grief.

Agents of democratization's derailment

The first possible culprit for democratization's reversal is the masses, who may carry out an uprising or a revolution. The second are insurgents, who can sabotage democratization by instigating civil

war. The third is a foreign power, which may thwart political opening by launching an invasion or sponsoring proxies who do their dirty work for them. Fourth, the armed forces may be at fault, as they may intervene in politics and throw elected civilian leaders out of power. Fifth, the chief executive may bury democratization by engaging in despotic action. One or some combination of these agents usually authors the reversal of political opening. Here we consider which of them has been active in undermining democratization since 1975. We focus on the 10 cases of failed democratization that our model did not do a good job of predicting.

In Armenia, the President and the armed forces have been democratization's biggest rivals. Independent Armenia's first President, Levon Ter-Petrosian, undermined his opponents and presided over a re-election effort that he won, possibly fraudulently, in 1995. He was succeeded in 1998 by Robert Kocharian, who only intensified his predecessor's high-handed ways and penchant for enforcing his authority thorough flawed elections. The military, by successfully putting pressure on Ter-Petrosian to resign and yield to Kocharian, also played a role in democratization's degradation.

In Belarus, the author of democracy's demise was the President. Shortly after assuming office in 1994, Aleksandr Lukashenko commenced what would become a relentless campaign to muzzle the media and undertake other measures that left Belarus in the company of the world's most closed polities.

Burkina Faso's experiment with democracy in the late 1970s was brought to a halt by the army's intervention. In 1987, Blaise Compaoré came to power

in a coup and assumed the presidency, an office he has held ever since. Compaoré has sought legitimacy through partially open elections and has not emasculated open politics with the zeal that Belarus's Lukashenko has. But he has stood in the way of re-democratization. In Burkina Faso, both military intervention and presidential imperiousness have produced failure in democratization.

In the Central African Republic, insurgencies and the armed forces have been democratization's main antagonists. Early in the current decade, government forces loyal to the then-President, Ange-Félix Patassé, battled insurgents commanded by General François Bozizé, who managed to depose Patassé. As of this writing, Bozizé's government forces are fighting insurgents, many of them thugs and soldiers of fortune.

In Fiji, the military has been the main culprit. It staged coups in 1987, 2000, and 2006. Underlying the military's actions are grievances between Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian groups. While our analyses showed that higher ethnic fractionalization per se is not associated with worse performance in democratization, in Fiji ethnic divisions clearly bred conflict and underlay the armed forces' interventions.

Jordan's reversal of liberalization of the early 1990s, and the current enforcement of the authoritarian regime, owes to executive despotism. King Hussein, who reigned until his death in 1999, allowed liberalization by fits and starts, but consistently rolled back reforms as quickly as introduced them. His son, King Abdullah, has promised democratization but continued his father's tradition of using limited reforms more to shore up the authoritarian regime than to democratize it.

The limiting factor in Kuwait's democratization is also the monarch. Kuwait enjoyed a degree of political openness in 1975, but the emir has regularly shut down parliament, which he did in 1976–81 and 1986–92. Even with parliament now open, the emir remains in charge. He shows little interest in subjecting his own rule to popular scrutiny or in turning the reigns of power over to elected officials.

Nepal also has a monarch problem. The relatively open politics of the 1980s and early 1990s gave way to arbitrary rule by the monarch, King Gyanendra, who ascended the throne in 2001. An armed insurgency that Maoist rebels launched in 1996 shares culpability for the degradation of open politics.

In Russia, democracy's derailment has been the doing of the chief executive. After the high watermark of the early post-Soviet period, Russian politics moved toward closure. During the 1990s, the then-President, Boris Yeltsin, gradually undermined democratization. His successor, Vladimir Putin, accelerated the reversion to authoritarianism.

The President similarly engineered Zimbabwe's reversion to authoritarianism. Robert Mugabe served as Prime Minister in a parliamentary system between the time of formal independence in 1980 and 1987, when constitutional change created a presidential system and Mugabe took over as President. Zimbabwe was a reasonably open polity, albeit not a democracy, in 1980. But since that time Mugabe has dragged the country to ever greater depths of despotism.

The most remarkable finding that emerges from this review is the culpability of chief executives. In five of the 10 cases they were clearly the agents of democratization's failure. In another three cases they shared responsibility with another actor. In five of the eight cases in which democratization was foiled by in part or wholly by the chief executive, the latter took the form of a president. In the three other cases, he was a monarch. The next most frequently involved actor was the military, which was the sole offender in one case and one of two offenders in three cases. Insurgencies are not shown as the sole author of democratization's demise, but were one of two actors in two countries. A pattern is discernible. Over the past several decades the chief executive has been the main perpetrator of democratization's reversal. It follows that constraining the president or the monarch may be crucial to safeguarding democratization. How might this be done?

Box 17.2 Key points

- Objective structural conditions predict about half of democratic failures with a reasonable degree of accuracy.
- Beyond that, we have to look at political actors; the role of the chief executive being particularly important.

What Can Be Done?

Strengthening legislatures and curtailing executive power

A—perhaps *the*—key to reducing the potential for presidential or monarchical abuse of power is a strong legislature. Much of the debate on the effect of political institutions on democratization has focused on the relative merits of presidential versus parliamentary systems (Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Cheibub 2006). Until recently, however, we have been limited to observing these highly aggregated categories, which do not really specify where power resides and in what measure. We have lacked data measuring the powers of the legislature (and the presidency). Recently, however, a study has been issued that offers useful quantitative data (Fish and Kroenig, 2008). The data take the form of the Parliamentary Power Index (PPI), and are based on an extensive survey. Scores range from 0 (powerless legislature) to 1 (all-powerful legislature). We may tap the numbers to see how the strength of the legislature may affect the probability of democratization's failure. Scores are available for all of the democratizers (robust, tenuous, and failed) except for Djibouti.

The correlation between the powers of legislatures and the fate of democratization is substantial. The weaker the legislature, the greater the chance that democracy fails. The average score for the failed democratizers is .42; for tenuous democratizers, .50; and for robust democratizers, .62. We need to be careful about attributing causal force to the power of legislatures, since the level of political openness might have affected the powers of the legislature. Among the 10 cases of failed democracy about which our original model does not produce good predictions, Burkina Faso, Fiji, and Nepal fit this description. Each of these underwent its departure—or, in Fiji and Nepal, one of its several departures—from open politics before the constitutional orders that are currently in place were adopted. Thus, we cannot readily use the PPI as a causal explanation for why democracy failed.

In the other seven countries, however, the powers of the legislatures were established before the

countries moved toward authoritarianism. In these cases we may ask whether having a stronger legislature might have reduced the risk of democratic reversal. The PPI scores for the seven countries are the following: Armenia .56; Belarus .25; Central African Republic .34; Jordan .22; Kuwait .38; Russia .44; and Zimbabwe .31. With the exception of Armenia, these are low scores. In global perspective, they range between medium-low (e.g. Russia) and very low (e.g. Jordan). For these seven countries, we can estimate what the probability of democratic failure would have been had we included the PPI as an independent variable in our statistical models. So too can we make counterfactual statements about what the probability of democracy's failure would have been had the powers of the legislature been different than they were in fact.

As shown in Table 17.2, our statistical model yielded results that would predict that the probability of Armenian democracy failing was 22 per cent. When we take into account Armenia's PPI, the probability rises to 28 per cent. The addition of this variable therefore yields only a mildly better prediction. Clearly, factors other than what we include contributed to the reversal of Armenia's democratization. The same may be said of the Central African Republic. Its probability of suffering reversal is 20 per cent in the initial model and 26 per cent when we take the PPI score into account. As recounted above, however, an overweening presidency was not the main culprit for the Central African Republic's bad experience with democratization. Rather, insurgencies and the army, which normally are much harder for the legislature to countervail than an overreaching president or monarch, were the main culprits. Kuwait provides another instance where including the PPI in the analysis yields a mildly higher prediction of failure (and therefore a more accurate prediction). In the initial model, Kuwait's chance of failing was 36 per cent; including the measure for the powers of the legislature increases the chances to 39 per cent.

The improvement in predictive power is greater in the remaining four cases. Our initial model predicts that democratization in Belarus had only a

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seven per cent chance of failing. Belarus had a lot going for it, including a decent standard of living, an economy that is not based primarily on oil and gas, and a miniscule sex literacy gap. Yet, when we factor in Belarus's (low) score on the PPI, the probability of failure jumps to 35 per cent. These numbers jibe with the story we know: faced with a toothless legislature under a fresh constitution that provided for a powerful presidency, Aleksandr Lukashenko easily defied—and ultimately silenced—his opponents and put an end to Belarus's short-lived experiment with open politics.

The numbers and the story for Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe has played the role of Lukashenko in Belarus, are similar. Democratization 'should have' worked; Zimbabwe's chances of failure were only 12 per cent. But when we include the PPI in the analysis, the probability of failure in Zimbabwe nearly triples, to 35 per cent.

In Jordan, the chances of failure in the initial model were 30 per cent. Including the PPI in the analysis raises the probability to 52 per cent. Indeed, the monarch has been able to quash opponents in part because the parliament does not have the capacity to counterbalance the palace.

In Russia, the likelihood of failure shifts from 39 per cent in the original model to 55 per cent when we account for the country's PPI. Indeed, since Russia adopted its post-Soviet constitution in 1993, the legislature has lacked the capacity to stand up to the president. Counterfactually, we can assess what Russia's probability of failing would have been were its PPI higher. If we set it to .78, the score for Bulgaria, which opted for a strong legislature in its postcommunist constitution, Russia's probability of failure would have been just 18 per cent.

The policy prescription is obvious: would-be democratizers should take special interest in strengthening the legislature. Constitutions' drafters who seek to maximize the chances of democracy's success should vest expansive powers in parliament. The success of democracy, of course, does not depend solely on a strong legislature, and a strong legislature is no guarantee of democratic stability. Fiji's strong legislature (its PPI is .63) did not prevent the military from junking democracy in 2006.

In many cases, however, bolstering the legislature may promote open politics. Let us take a look

at Jordan and Kuwait. Their prospects for democracy have often seemed brighter than those of their neighbours (Mufti 1999; Tétreault 2000). Still, robust democratization, decade after decade, has proven elusive in both countries. According to our calculations, however, if we set the set Kuwait's PPI at .78, the figure for Turkey, the probability of democracy failing in Kuwait falls from 36 per cent to only 10 per cent. In Jordan, it would have been a mere 6 per cent instead of 30 per cent. In these countries, monarchs who stand in the way of the expansion of the legislature's power may be democratization's greatest antagonists (Herb 2002; Lucas 2005). Both countries have predominantly Muslim populations, both were decolonized only in the twentieth century, Jordan is relatively poor, and Kuwait's economy is based on hydrocarbons, but each country still should have succeeded in democratization. The chances of them failing would have been much lower if they had legislatures that were as strong as Turkey's.

The powers of the legislature are, of course, institutions. Institutions are the products of human volition and behaviour and can be altered, sometimes quickly. What, though, of the deeper structural factors that we analysed above? Is there any possibility for changing them in a manner that reduces the risk of democratization's failure?

Altering the structural factors

A country's level of economic development can change, but usually this takes decades. Its effects on the prospects for democratization may take generations to materialize. Sustained, rapid economic growth such as happened in post-war South Korea may have contributed to the success of democratization there. Some observers consider China's spectacular development a harbinger of democratization. Still, such explosive modernization is unusual. When it comes to the effects of economic development on democratization, the best source of hope may be the substantial number of exceptions to the general rule. Like the other relationships explored here, the tie between development and democracy is probabilistic, not absolute. Some poor countries have been successful democratizers. Benin, Ghana,

Mali, Mongolia, and Senegal each have an annual per capita income below US\$2,000, yet each falls in the category of robust democratizers.

Countries' histories of national independence are, of course, fixed. But a history of late independence is the rule in the world. A long history of statehood may provide distinct advantages, but a majority of even the robust democratizers obtained independent statehood only in the past century. The ravages of colonialism are real, but they need not block democratization.

The proportion of the population that is made up of Muslims (or any other faith community) is normally stable across time, though it may change over generations. Yet it bears note that three Muslim-majority countries are found among the robust democratizers. One, Indonesia, is the world's largest Muslim-majority country, and two, Mali and Senegal, are major West African nations. In each country over four-fifths of inhabitants are Muslims and levels of religious observance are high. In Indonesia and Senegal, Islamic mass organizations are the mainstays of civil society and have played constructive roles in democratization (Ramage 1995; Villalón 1995). Furthermore, six of the robust democratizers—Benin, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ghana, India, and Mauritius—have substantial Muslim minorities. Thus, Islam should be regarded as the source of special challenges, rather than an insuperable barrier, to successful democratization.

Fuels dependence normally changes slowly or hardly at all. But it *can* change quickly and in a manner that facilitates robust political opening. Mexico and Indonesia furnish examples. In 1990, hydrocarbons accounted for 44 per cent of Indonesia's export income and 38 per cent of Mexico's; in 2004, the figures were down to 18 and 12 per cent, respectively. This transformation, which is rare, may help explain the success of political regime change. Among the robust democratizers, Indonesia and Mexico are the two great latecomers. Each experienced a major improvement in its FHI only at the end of the 1990s, later than all of the other robust democratizers. But both have weathered formidable challenges in recent years without reverting to authoritarianism. Democracy came late, but stuck after it arrived, and the sharp decline in fuels dependence may have facilitated this auspicious outcome.

This result prompts us to speculate about what might happen if fuels-dependent countries whose democratization failed manage to 'outgrow' oil as Mexico and Indonesia did. To assess this, we estimate the probability of democracy failing for different levels of oil dependence. In Venezuela, 86 per cent of export income comes from hydrocarbons, and Venezuela's probability of landing among the failed democratizers was, according to our statistical model, 76 per cent. But if we set the proportion of export income derived from fuels down to 25 per cent, the probability of open politics failing in Venezuela would have been a mere 16 per cent. The practical implications are obvious: a reduction in oil dependence is a great—perhaps the best—hope for democracy's prospects in oil-dominated economies, from Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon to Venezuela and Russia.

What about sex inequality? Our models show that it matters for democratization. If we set the sex literacy gap from its actual 30 per cent down to zero in Pakistan the chance of democratization failing would have been 39 per cent rather than the 51 per cent that it was in fact. Lower sex inequality reduces the risk of failure in democratization. Inequalities between the sexes change slowly. Still, as with fuels dependency, there are exceptions; in some places rapid change has occurred. Examining the data on youth literacy (defined as people aged 15–24) provides a potentially telling glimpse into future prospects. In some places we find marked short-term improvements. Between 1990 and 2004, for example, the gap between male and female youth literacy rates in Tunisia fell from

Box 17.3 Key points

- Strong legislatures can act as important bulwarks against relapses into authoritarianism.
- Although difficult to manipulate in the short term, reductions in fuel export dependence would reduce the likelihood of democratic breakdown.
- Gender inequalities are more amenable to political engineering; their reduction would greatly aid democratic consolidation.

18 per cent to 4 per cent; in Saudi Arabia, from 13 per cent to 4 per cent; and in Albania, from 6 per cent to zero. Such trends are heartening, from the standpoint of human welfare as well as for democra-

Conclusion

The reversal of democratization is one of the central dramas of contemporary world politics. While many antiauthoritarian breakthroughs held fast, fewer than half of the countries that underwent regime change over the past three decades have really succeeded. In most countries democratization has been tenuous or has failed. What is more, among the three major countries that seemed ripe for political opening at the beginning of the 1990s, only Indonesia experienced a sustained breakthrough. China and Iran remain as closed as they were two decades ago.

As this chapter has shown, several major structural factors influence whether democratization succeeds fully, succeeds partially, or fails. Poverty increases the probability of democratization's failure. So too does a late history of national independence, a large Muslim population, economic reliance on oil and gas, and sex inequality. Yet the relationship between the each of these factors and the outcome of political regime change is only probabilistic. It is not absolute. For example, some countries that are poor, predominantly Muslim, and latecomers to national independence have undergone robust democratization. What is more, structural does not always mean immutable. History of national independence is fixed and religious composition of society very nearly so. But poverty, dependence on hydrocarbons, and sex inequalities can diminish over time, thereby mitigating the risk of democratization's failure.

One structural factor, ethnic fractionalization, is virtually fixed but is also unrelated to democratization. This finding bucks conventional wisdom but matches the conclusions of recent empirical studies (Fish and Kroenig 2006). It is good news for many fledgling democracies with diverse populations. Sometimes conflict among ethnic groups occurs and contributes to democracy's demise, as in Fiji. Still, ethnic conflict is the exception and cooperation the

tization's prospects more specifically. These numbers show that public policy can, under certain circumstances, make a difference in the level of sex inequality even in the short run.

norm, and fractionalization per se is not correlated with democratization's failure. We find also that a particular institution, the power of the legislature, may mould democracy's prospects. The legislature is important because it may check the arbitrariness of the president or the monarch, who we found to be common culprits in democratization's reversal.

We further found that the other agents that may take part in reversing democratization are not common threats. The military remains a potential problem, but it is less of a threat than are chief executives. Our finding is consistent with other recent works that have noted a diminution of the hazard that armed forces pose to open politics in recent decades (Clark 2007; Hunter 1997). Insurgencies may pose a danger, but among the 10 cases we examined closely, they were the sole culprits for democratization's reversal in no cases and one of two major actors in only two cases.

Interestingly, two agents that are often considered potential threats, the masses and a foreign power, were, in none of the cases we focused upon, a driving force in democratization's derailment. The spectre of popular uprisings, common in the wake of the interwar mass movements in Europe, is not a contemporary problem. Mass uprisings are not uncommon. But in the present-day world they normally push for democracy rather than against it, as in the Philippines in 1986, Ukraine in 2004, and Burma in 2006 (Bermeo 2003; Schock 2005). Similarly, foreign powers were not the central agent in any of the cases reviewed here. To be sure, outsiders have done some meddling. Some of the insurgents in the Central African Republic are from Sudan and Chad. Some of the chief executives who presided over democratization's demise in other countries enjoyed the backing of foreign governments. American support for Jordan's monarchs and Russia's support for Belarus's President

are examples. But in no case was foreign intervention the central agent of backsliding toward authoritarianism. The fact is remarkable given how frequently outside intervention blocked democratization in times past, as in the US-and-British-sponsored coup in Iran in 1953, the US-sponsored coup in Guatemala in 1954, the US invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Recent decades include such heavy-handed foreign interventions, but usually not against countries undergoing political opening and not for the purpose of reversing such an opening. Perhaps mass uprisings, foreign intervention, insurgencies, and the armed forces posed the greatest immediate threat to open politics during the interwar period or at the height of the Cold War. But in recent times, democratization's chief antagonists are more likely to be clad in cravats than in workshirts, guerrilla garb, or epaulets.

What do our findings imply for democracy's advocates? Acknowledge that economic development, history of national independence, and religious tradition may be important, but they are not destiny. There are enough exceptions to general tendencies in the effects of these variables never to lose heart. Oil is poison; reduce the importance of it in the country's economy or face likely failure in any attempt to democratize. Reduce sex inequalities, even if doing so requires long-term effort and cannot be expected to produce short-term miracles. Fear not the masses or foreign powers. Minimize the political power of the military and the danger of insurgencies, but do not suppose that those with the guns will necessarily be your biggest threat. Fear instead your presidents and monarchs; build strong legislatures to constrain them.

QUESTIONS

1. What does a failed democratizer look like? How might we characterize it?
2. How does a failed democratizer differ from an established autocracy?
3. How might economic dependence upon oil and gas affect the prospects for democratization?
4. How might gender equality reduce the risk of democratization failing?
5. How might a long history of national independence and statehood decrease the probability that democratization will fail?
6. What factors, other than those discussed in this chapter, might affect the probability that democratization will succeed or fail?

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for additional questions to accompany each chapter, and a range of other resources: <www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/haerpfer/>.

FURTHER READING

Åslund, A. (2007), *Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics). This book furnishes a provocative explanation for one of the most momentous cases of democratic failure of modern times, and provides a welcome evaluation of economic as well as political transformation.

- Linz, J. J. (1978), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press). This slim volume remains the starting point for all studies on the failure of democracy. Though it focuses largely on interwar cases, its acute theoretical insights remain relevant for contemporary circumstances.
- Posusney, M. P. and Penner Angrist, M. (2005) (eds), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner). This edited volume provides a wealth of insights on why democratization fails. Its focus on the Middle East, given that the region is often overlooked in studies of regime change, makes the volume particularly useful.
- Smith, P. H. (2005), *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). This engaging book holds up theories of regime change to the experience of Latin America. Exemplary in its use of theory to understand cases, and of cases to refine theory, the book provides a wealth of information as well as insights into various theories of democratization. It also probes the possible limits of democratization and the factors that may impose those limits.
- Villalón, L. A. and VonDoepp, P. (2005) (eds), *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press). Focusing largely on the effects and the limits of the effects of institutions on democratization, this edited volume provides much insight into the difficulty and tenuousness of many of Africa's experiments with open politics.

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

<<http://hdr.undp.org/en/>> The Human Development Report, issued annually by the United Nations Development Programme, contains a wealth of data for nearly all of the world's countries on factors related to socioeconomic development and living standards.

<<http://genderstats.worldbank.org>> GenderStats is an electronic database run by the World Bank that contains data broken down by sex for most of the world's countries.

<www.womanstats.org> The WomanStats project contains qualitative and quantitative information on several hundred indicators of women's status in 172 countries.

NOTES

1. The only countries we do not include are East Timor and Montenegro, which achieved independence only in the current decade.
2. The correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) is a measure of the linear relationship between two variables. Values range between 0 and 1, and a score of .9 indicates a very close relationship.
3. All probabilities and standard errors are computed using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003).