

## Terms and Ideas

- Democratic waves
- Hegemonic shocks
- Democratic overstretch
- Insurgent path
- Competitive authoritarianism
- Linkage and leverage
- Polarization
- Mutual toleration and forbearance

## Questions

### **Q: How do hegemonic shocks lead to regime waves?**

**A:** Gunitsky describes hegemonic shocks as abrupt changes in the balance of power among leading states. These shocks produce bursts of institutional change through three mechanisms: (1) coercion, where new hegemonies face lowered costs and higher legitimacy to impose their regime type abroad, (2) inducement, where new hegemonies expand their patronage and trade networks to alter domestic incentives in other states, and (3) emulation, where new hegemonies' success legitimizes their regime type and inspires imitation. These forces interact to create powerful but temporary waves of regime change.

### **Q: What explains the third wave of democratization?**

**A:** Huntington attributes the third wave to a combination of five factors: (1) authoritarian regimes faced legitimacy problems due to their poor economic and military performance; (2) economic growth and more widespread education in the 1960s produced middle-class citizens who demanded political inclusion; (3) doctrinal changes within the Catholic Church made it into a force for reform; (4) external actors such as the United States, the European Community, and the Soviet Union under Gorbachev promoted liberalization; and (5) snowballing effects spread the democratizing momentum from early transitions to other countries and regions.

### **Q: What is the insurgent path to democracy?**

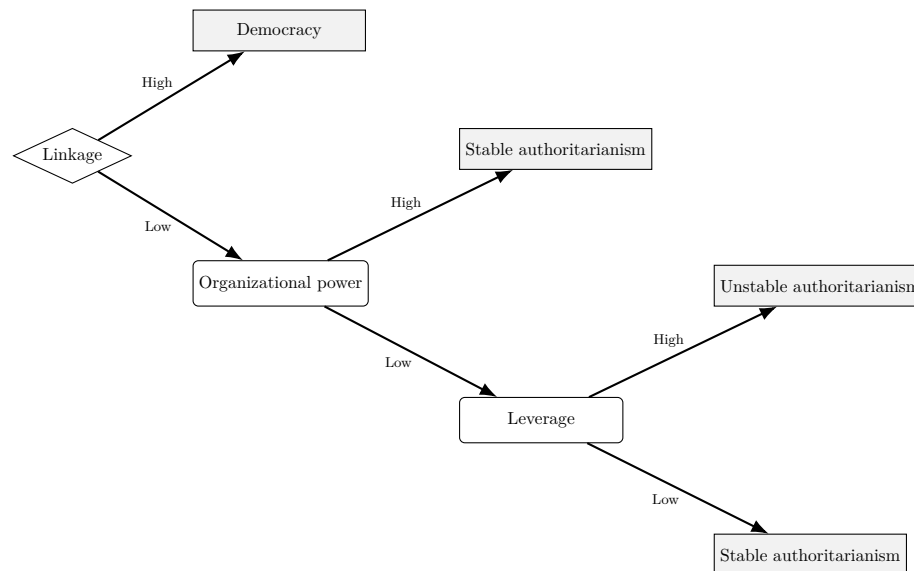
**A:** Wood describes this as a path where mass mobilization from below forces elites to accept compromise. In the oligarchic societies of El Salvador and South Africa, insurgents made authoritarian rule too costly for economic elites to sustain; these elites came to believe that their interests would be better served under a different regime, which pushed them towards negotiated transitions where their economic position would be maintained in return for opening the political system.

### **Q: How do modern democracies die?**

**A:** Levitsky and Ziblatt argue that modern democracies are more prone to collapse through incremental subversion by incumbents than through coups. Elected leaders manipulate courts, change the rules, and weaponize state institutions against their opponents when the informal norms of mutual toleration and forbearance break down. Meanwhile, Svoboda shows that citizens often choose partisanship over democratic principles when societies become polarized. This tradeoff allows incumbents to subvert institutions with popular consent. Democratic backsliding is therefore a process that happens both from above and from below.

### **Q: What is competitive authoritarianism?**

**A:** Levitsky and Way describe competitive authoritarianism as a regime that features democratic institutions (such as elections) but also systematic violations of the rules of the game that make competition meaningful. In these systems, opposition parties exist and citizens can vote, but the incumbents use their control of state resources, the media, and the courts to skew the playing field in their favor. The fate of these regimes depends on two international dimensions — linkage to the West and leverage from Western countries — as well as on domestic organizational strength:



## Takeaways

This week, we continued our discussion on the emergence of democracy and its breakdown. The readings highlighted that democratization is more turbulent and dynamic than we might have assumed. We introduced the international context into the equation to show how the different ways in which foreign actors can shape domestic outcomes and deepened our understanding of the role of norms and informal institutions. It is important to consider how some of the same dynamics that lead to democratization can also act in reverse and entrench autocratic rule in different contexts.

Next week, the course turns to authoritarianism and populism, with most of our readings touching on the former. The persistence of authoritarianism will be examined with a focus on two cases: the Middle East and China. As we think about the conditions that have allowed monarchs and dictators to remain in power in different parts of the world, I encourage you to compare them to the tensions we have seen in the previous week relating to democratization.