

**Democracy Protests:  
Origins, Features, and Significance**

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# CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction

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Democracy protests have come and gone throughout history with varying degrees of success. While some democracy protests have resulted in full-fledged democracies, others have introduced no more than a few modest reforms. In South Korea, for example, after massive student-led protests arose demanding direct presidential elections among other things, the government agreed to implement major democratic reforms ahead of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. While South Korea celebrated more than ten years of consolidated democracy, Serbia embarked on its own transition to democracy. In 2000, hundreds of thousands of Serbs overtook the streets of the capital Belgrade and forced Slobodan Milošević to hand over power to his opponent Vojislav Koštunica, the winner of the country's presidential elec-

tion. Outside of Asia and Europe, in the Middle East and North Africa, democracy protests have resulted in smaller-scale reforms, including the lifting of demands on certain political parties and the expansion of the right to vote, in the last decade.

In other countries, demands for more open and competitive elections have been ignored, as they were in the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Protests or, still worse, have resulted in backlashes against democracy and the rise of more authoritarian regimes.<sup>1</sup> After tens of thousands of Russians mobilized against alleged fraud in the 2011 Duma elections, the Russian government drastically raised fines against unauthorized protests, adopted laws that branded non-governmental organizations accepting aid from abroad as “foreign agents”, and intensified arrests of regime opponents. At times, democracy protests have even provoked backlashes against democratic freedoms outside the countries in which they have occurred. In order to forestall the Arab Spring protests from reaching its borders, China’s communist-controlled government restricted already limited internet freedoms, stepped up arrests of political activists, and even banned jasmine flowers, the symbol of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution.

More often, states have used forceful means to repress democracy protests. In Bahrain, military forces, flanked by troops from the Gulf States, evicted democracy protesters from Pearl Roundabout, the site of the 2011 Bahraini Uprising, before setting ablaze and razing the historical landmark. In 2007, Burma’s military junta cracked down violently on democracy protests, beating and arresting thousands of demonstrators, even raiding the monasteries of Buddhist monks who spearheaded the protests. Two years earlier, Ethiopian security forces massacred nearly two hundred people in the capital Addis Ababa who were

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<sup>1</sup> The Umbrella Protests were named after the umbrellas people carried to shield themselves from the sun and the pepper spray that municipal police forces initially used against the protesters.

protesting against the 2005 elections, which were seen by the protesters and international observers as fraudulent, while tens of thousands of others were arrested and injured in the aftermath.

That democracy protests arise at all is remarkable given the uncertainties surrounding their success and the risks that protests pose to participants. Not only can people lose their jobs by taking part in democracy protests, but they can also be denied access to schools, fined, jailed, beaten, and even killed. Even bystanders have been harmed in the bedlam surrounding some democracy protests. A young college student known as Nedā became an icon of the Iranian democracy movement when she was shot dead near Azadi Square in route to the 2009 Tehran protests. Her death was captured on a cell phone and broadcast over the internet. Participating in democracy protests presents additional challenges for women, like Nedā Āghā-Soltān, who are known to have been molested and raped during protests. At least a hundred women were sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square in the protests leading up to Mubarak's resignation, including a journalist for the US news magazine 60 Minutes and an up-and-coming Dutch reporter.<sup>2</sup>

Today, evading punishment for participating in protests of any kind is harder thanks to modern technologies. In Iran, people who took to the streets in the Green Revolution were arrested after pictures of them were published online by a pro-regime news agency asking Iranians to out those in the photographs.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in Thailand, the military junta promised 15 dollars to anyone who came across a photo on Facebook or Instagram of a Thai person criticizing the 2014 coup d'etat. To flush out regime opponents, the junta also interrupted popular television shows with the names of people wanted for questioning scrolled across the

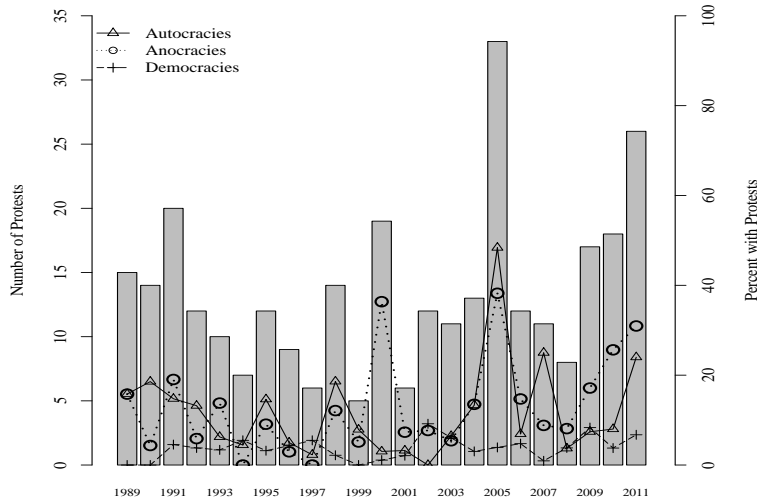
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<sup>2</sup> "Women Sexually Assaulted in Egypt Protests," *Al Jazeera*, 3 July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Goose, "Pro-Iran Regime Website Outs Protesters Using Photos Shown on Western Media," *CNN iReport*, 22 June 2009.



Figure 1.1: Frequency of Democracy Protests, 1989-2011



Note: Protests that took place across years are depicted in the figure according to the first year of the protest to avoid double-counting protests.

screen. Meanwhile, in the Ukraine, the government identified participants in the Euromaidan protests from the location of their cell phone signals.<sup>4</sup> With this information, the government sent protesters an ominous message saying, “Dear subscriber, you are registered as a participant in a mass disturbance” to intimidate them into disbanding.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, these high technology measures may supplant more rudimentary, but no less effective measures, like water from police canons dyed colors to identify protesters afterwards.

Yet, despite the risks and uncertainties surrounding these protests, democracy protests do occur. Between 1989 and 2011, 310 democracy protests occurred in 92 countries, representing about 13 percent of weakly democratic and authoritarian states in this period.<sup>6</sup> (See Figure

<sup>4</sup> The Euromaidan protests were not democracy protests like the Orange Revolution protests ten years earlier, but evolved from concerns about European integration.

<sup>5</sup> “Ukraine’s Opposition Says Government Stirs Violence,” *The New York Times*, 21 January 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Weakly democratic and authoritarian states are countries scoring below 5 on the polity index scale the

1.1.) Protests peaked at the beginning and at the end of this period with the lifting of the Soviet Iron Curtain and the start of the Arab Spring. More protests occurred in 2005 than in either of these periods, but these protests were spread out over fewer countries than in 2011. More countries experienced democracy protests in 2011 than any other year in this period. The year 2011 is also the only year for which democracy protests were on an upward trend in all four regions of the world.

Democracy protests took place in every region of the world between 1989 and 2011, but occurred most commonly in Africa and Asia, where 40% and 37% of democracy protests took place respectively. Only 13% occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean while 11% occurred in Europe.<sup>7</sup> (See Figure 1.2.) In East Central Europe, democracy protests topped out around the end of the Cold War. Another smattering of protests occurred in this region in the early 2000s with the Colored Revolutions. In Africa, there was a spat of protests in the early 1990s and an even more pronounced rise in protest activity at the end of the first decade of this millennium, while in Asia, protests ebbed and flowed throughout the entire post-Cold War period. As in Europe, democracy protests occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean at a relatively constant but low rate throughout this period.

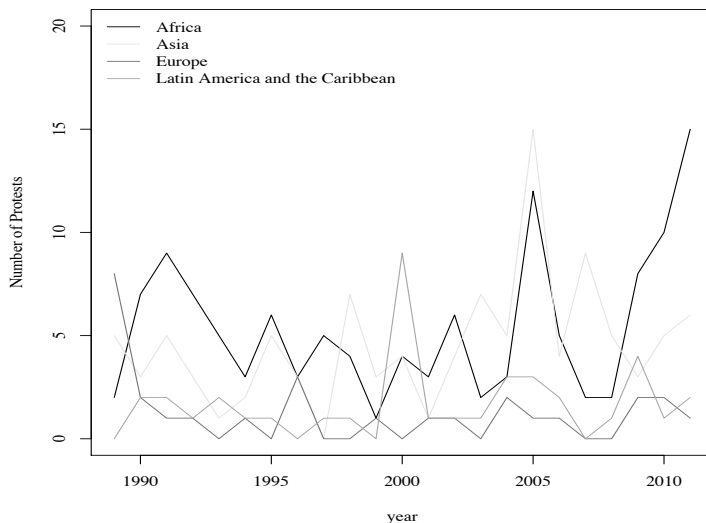
Why do democracy protests emerge in some countries at certain periods of time and not others? Why in some cases do governments accommodate these protests, undertaking democratic reforms with wide-sweeping consequences, and in others, only make shallow promises of reform, or either peacefully or violently repress the protests? These are the questions this book sets out to address.

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year before the protests occurred. See the appendix for more information regarding the polity index.

<sup>7</sup> The numbers do not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 1.2: Frequency of Democracy Protests by Region, 1989-2011



Note: Protests that took place across years are depicted in the figure according to the first year of the protest to avoid double-counting protests.

## 1.1 What is a Democracy Protest?

I define “democracy protests” as mass public demonstrations in which the participants demand countries adopt or uphold democratic elections.<sup>8</sup> In turn, I define “democracy” in a minimal sense in which there are no significant legal or non-legal barriers preventing political parties, candidates, or voters from participating in elections (Przeworski 1999; Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland 2010; Boix, Miller and Rosato 2013). This definition of democracy protests excludes protests regarding human rights or political and civil rights, like the Charlie Hebdo protests in France or the miniskirt protests in Tunisia (2015), which are not directly about the electoral process, but which are related to a more maximal definition of democ-

<sup>8</sup> Although it would be more precise to refer to these protests as “prodemocracy protests” in order to distinguish them from “antidemocracy protests”, which are largely held by Islamists seeking to establish caliphate states, I eliminate the prefix for simplicity’s sake.

racy.<sup>9</sup> Certain political and civil rights are important for conducting open and competitive elections, such as freedom of speech and assembly, but other issues often considered part of a more maximal definition of democracy, such as religious freedom and labour rights, are not intrinsic features of democracy, although they may be important features of a good polity. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.2 for details regarding the protests’ demands.)

Democracy protests are also distinct from antigovernment protests, which are protests demanding that elected officials, who hold either elected or unelected power within a political system, step down from power. While democracy protests often demand that a government resign, unlike democracy protests, the reasons that antigovernment protests make these demands are unrelated to the openness and competitiveness of elections. The motivations for antigovernment protests often include economic and policy reforms, corruption charges, human rights concerns, and so forth. Examples of antigovernment protests include the 2014 Euromaidan protests in the Ukraine, the 2012–13 European debt crisis protests, and the 2015 Burundi term-limit protests.

Democracy protests, in contrast, are antiregime protests, opposed not only to the government, but also to the institutions that make up the political system itself. Of course, other types of protests can incorporate demands for democracy in them, just as democracy protests can also include other types of demands. But, for the purposes of this book, in order for a protest that includes non-democracy issues in it to constitute a “democracy protest”, democracy must constitute the protest’s primary demand. Protests, which are considered to be democracy protests, but which include nondemocracy related issues among their demands and for which it is difficult to determine the paramount demand of the protesters,

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<sup>9</sup> The Tunisian miniskirt protests were held to demand women’s rights in the Muslim world. They were modeled after the Slutwalk protests, which objected to the notion that women provoked rape by the way in which they dressed.

are denoted in the analysis.

Distinguishing one democracy protest from another is challenging, particularly when protests suspend activity for extended periods of time. For the purpose of this analysis, a single demonstration on a given day and location is referred to as a “rally”. A “protest” refers to one or more rallies that are separated by no more than three months and that have the same target, demands, and organizers.<sup>10</sup> The target refers to the chief executive who has discretion over whether or not to use military force against the protesters, while the demands are the specific requests that democracy protests make of governments regarding open and competitive elections (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Lastly, the organizers are the groups of actors that mobilize democracy protests, not those who merely participate in them (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). They include opposition parties or candidates and their supporters, civil society groups, such as non-governmental organizations, unions, religious institutions, rebel groups, and the public-at-large. To be included in the analysis, protests must include more than one person and take place in the country that is the target of the protests.

Protests are not the only way in which the public agitates for democracy. Strikes, riots, and rebellion are other ways in which the masses press for democracy. Nonetheless, protests are more common and for important reasons. If poor economic conditions, as argued in this book, support popular mobilization for democracy, strikes are not likely to be the weapon of choice for activists since strikes can worsen economic conditions. Riots typically occur around elections deemed to be unfair and not the broader context around which democracy protests occur. Rebellion is the most costly and least common prodemocracy tactic and, unlike protests, does not necessarily require public support. Examples include the Ivory

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<sup>10</sup>Admittedly, three months is an arbitrary period of time. When rallies are separated by a large lapse in activity, even if the target, organizers, and demands are the same, the character of the protests is often different in many respects, including the size and strategies of the protests.

Coast, where armed militias forcibly expelled the government of Laurent Gbagbo from office after it refused to recognize the results of the 2010 presidential elections, and Niger, where in the same year, a military coup d'état restored democracy after President Mamadou Tandja shut down the country's democratic institutions in order to extend his presidential mandate. Both actions were preceded by protests.

Other forms of civil disobedience or “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 1987), such as sabotage and non-compliance, are harder to identify, and likely to be more nettlesome than effective. After the 2009 crackdown on protesters in Azadi Square, Iranians adopted new tactics to oppose the Ahmadinejad regime, including an e-mail campaign urging Iranians to simultaneously plug in energy-sapping devices to cause a power blackout, and another one to hoard small change in order to render basic daily transactions impossible.<sup>11</sup> In 2011, Albania's Socialist Party held a 21-day hunger strike to challenge elections they considered fraudulent. (The strike was marked by controversy as some strikers were photographed eating.) The following year in Togo, opposition parties called on women to withhold sex for one week to protest President Faure Gnassingbé's attempt to remove term limits in Togo in order to remain in power indefinitely.<sup>12</sup> And, most recently, in Thailand, in order to protest the 2014 coup d'état, activists ate sandwiches in public to evade the ban on gatherings of more than five people, organized flash mobs, staged silent readings of George Orwell's *1984*, and raised their hands in public in three-finger salutes inspired by the science fiction trilogy “The Hunger Games”.<sup>13</sup>

Other types of protests may also provoke regime transitions (Ulfelder 2005; Toerell 2010;

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<sup>11</sup> “The Call to Prayers Could be a Call to Arms for Iranian Opposition Groups,” *The Irish Times*, 17 July 2009.

<sup>12</sup> “Togo Women Plan Sex Strike in Political Protest,” *QMI Agency*, 27 August 2012.

<sup>13</sup> “Sandwiches, Codes and Salutes in Thailand,” *BBC Trending*, 13 June 2014.

Alemán and Yang 2011; Trejo 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s, economic protests sparked by shortages and high prices contributed to the ousting of a number of regimes. The Tunisian protests, which ousted Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and inaugurated the Arab Spring, were also economic protests in which Tunisians expressed concerns about unemployment, poor living conditions, rising food prices, and corruption. Tunisians even made broad-based calls for honest, accountable government, but stopped short of demanding democratic reforms. In most cases, governments are unlikely to grant democratic reforms to protests that do not demand them, since opening the government up to free and fair elections would pose significant risk to the survival of the incumbent government, especially during economic crises.

Moreover, the goal of this book is not to explain why the demand for democracy is expressed through protests as opposed to another form of collective action. There is already an extensive literature on social movements important in understanding this issue (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Benford and Snow 2000; della Porta 2014). Rather the goal of this book is to explain when democracy protests are more likely to occur and what are their effects. While there are many studies of the origins and effects of certain democracy protests (Kalandadze and Orenstein 2009; Bellin 2012; Beissinger 2013; Bunce and Wolchik 2013), there are no longitudinal, cross-national statistical analyses of either the causes or consequences of democracy protests as in this book.<sup>14</sup>

In order to understand these two issues, I amassed a major new dataset on the occurrence of democracy protests between 1989 and 2011, as well as government responses to them. The dataset begins in 1989 because this year marks the end of the Cold War and an increase in popular mobilization for democracy around the world due to the end of the rivalry between

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<sup>14</sup>Preliminary results from this project have been published elsewhere (Brancati 2014*d*).

the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as the democratization of the latter. It ends in 2011, the first year of the Arab Spring. The dataset includes all 180 independent states in this time period with a population of at least 250,000 people (Gleditsch and Ward 1999). All states, regardless of their regime, are included in the analysis because democracy protests occur in all type of regimes, including full-fledged democracies. In democracies, protests arise against threats to democracy, like coups d'etat, and in favor of small scale reforms, such as the unbanning of particular political parties. All borderline cases for which there is some uncertainty about whether or not they fit the coding criteria are denoted in the dataset and analysis.

While datasets on many different types of protests exist – including datasets on antigovernment protests, such as the *Cross-National Time-Series* (CNTS) dataset, and datasets on protests against electoral fraud, such as the *National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy* (NELDA) dataset, and the *Electoral Protest and Democracy in the Developing World* dataset, datasets on democracy protests in particular do not. The dataset collected as a part of this book includes information about many different characteristics of democracy protests, including the size, duration, demands, strategies and location of these protests, as well as government responses to them, including whether governments use police, paramilitary, or military force to repress the protests, whether they use non-violent means to repress the protests, such as blocking the media, cell phones, and the internet, or whether they accommodate the protests by promising reforms or by stepping down from power.

The dataset is based on primary and secondary news sources, including serial reports by governmental and nongovernmental agencies, such as the US State Department's *Human Rights Reports* (1999-2011), the International Federation for Human Rights' *Steadfast in Protest* reports (2006-2011), Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* reports (2002-2012),



the International Crisis Group’s *Crisis Watch Database* (2003-2012), Keesing’s Record of World Events, as well as a multitude of news accounts from English and foreign language sources, documentary films, blogs videos, and so forth. To ensure the accuracy of the coding, the data have been checked by multiple coders, randomly checked against precoded, gold standard examples, and triangulated with other relevant datasets.

## 1.2 Economic Crises and Democracy

A great deal of research has been written about the relationship of the economy to democracy, most of which focuses on the link between overall economic development and democracy. Many different arguments have been proposed to explain the strong positive correlation identified in this research between high levels of economic development and democratization, including the effect of economic development on the promotion of values conducive to democracy, such as autonomy and self-expression, and on a culture of trust, tolerance, and political activism (Lipset 1959; Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart and Welzel 2009; Welzel 2013). Other explanations of this relationship focus on the importance of development to mobilization, and specifically on urbanization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992), and more recently, on technological advances in communication, such as cell phones and the internet (Carafano 2009; Stepanova 2011; González-Bailón et al. 2011).

Much less have been written about the relationship of economic crises, in particular, to protests and democratization. Haggard and Kaufman (1995), pioneers on this issue, argue that economic crises lead to democratization by sparking mass protests, and by undermining the confidence of the business elite in the ability of the government to manage crises effectively, leading these elites to align with moderates in the opposition. They also ar-

gue, along with other scholars, that economic crises facilitate democratization because they weaken the capacity of states to repress protests by undermining the military's support for the government (Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005).

Empirical support for these arguments is mixed. Haggard and Kaufman (1995) find that crises contributed to the democratization of a number of countries in Asia and Latin America, yet statistical evidence for a more general trend is not robust. Brückner and Ciccone (2011) find that negative rainfall shocks, which serve as a proxy for economic crises, are significantly associated with democratization in subSaharan Africa (1980-2004), while Gasiorowski (1995) finds that high inflation rates inhibited democratic transitions in the 1950s and 1960s but facilitated them in the late 1980s, while economic growth was unrelated to transitions in both periods.

Some scholars are more skeptical about the strength of this relationship. Przeworski et al. (2000) argue, for example, that “economic circumstances have little to do with the deaths of dictatorships” (117). Their conclusion is based on a statistical analysis in which one measure of economic crises, negative economic growth, is not significantly associated with the downfall of authoritarian regimes between 1950 and 2000. Other scholars suggest that the effect of crises on democratization is conditional both on the presence of a viable alternative to the regime (Bermeo 2000), and on the type of authoritarian regime, with military regimes being less stable than single-party regimes because of their greater vulnerability to internal splits (Geddes 1999).

Many scholars also question the importance of protests to democratization. As Samuel P. Huntington emphatically remarks, “democratic regimes that last have seldom, if ever, been instituted by mass popular action” (1984, 212). Some scholars, like Huntington, claim that

democracy protests do not promote democratization, arguing instead that democratization is a top-down process arising from fissures within the political elite, and that radical, violent, and prolonged forms of agitation compel governments to dig in their heels against any form of liberalization (Huntington 1984; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986).

In contrast, other scholars claim that democratic transitions are the result of a bottom-up process in which popular mobilization forces recalcitrant regimes to liberalize (Skocpol 1979; Boix 2003; Geddes 2006; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Levitsky and Way 2010), and that large, cohesive, and sustained forms of protests are more likely to result in democracy than vice versa (Bermeo 1997). Some civil society-based arguments further suggest that the effect of protests depends on other factors as well, including the regime's expectation of controlling the liberalization process (Bermeo 1997; della Porta 2014) and international support (Levitsky and Way 2010; Beaulieu 2014). Accordingly, regimes that expect to manage the liberalization process and that face an opposition with strong international support are more likely to democratize in the face of mass mobilization than others.

Economic crises make democracy protests more likely to occur, I argue, because they raise discontent within society for governments in general and authoritarianism in particular, and also increase support for opposition candidates who are more likely to organize protests, especially in election periods when opposition support is high. Economic crises also give those who view democracy in more opportunistic terms a chance to capitalize on antiregime sentiment arising from the crisis to mobilize support against regimes. Economic development mitigates the impact of crises and makes democracy protests less likely to arise when economic crises occur. Regimes, meanwhile, have less incentive to accommodate demands for democracy in the midst of crises because governments are less likely to retain power in more open and competitive elections when the economy is not performing well. At the same

time, however, if crises are severe, and protests very large as a result, governments are likely to be compelled to accommodate the protests regardless of their chances of retaining office in open and competitive elections.

### **1.3 What are Economic Crises?**

An “economic crisis” is a broad term that refers to a severe, dramatic, and prolonged period of poor economic performance. Identifying the point at which economies are said to be “in crisis” is difficult. Economists do not generally agree on what indicators should be used to label economic conditions within countries as crises, let alone what cutoff points on these indicators should be used to designate conditions as in crisis or not. Agreement on this issue is difficult because economic crises may be derived from problems in any number of sectors of the economy. Economic crises, for example, can arise from bank runs or credit defaults in developed countries, just as they may arise from natural disasters destroying crops and rising food prices in agriculture-based economies. Even what defines crises for any one of these sectors is generally highly debated.

Within countries, political actors often employ the term “economic crisis” for political goals, further complicating the issue. While some governments will deny that certain economic conditions constitute crises in order not to weaken their legitimacy or promote domestic unrest, others will mischaracterize economic conditions in their countries as crises in order to attract international financial assistance. Governments are significantly constrained in this regard by the actual economic conditions in their country, but they can influence, at least to some extent, how international and domestic audiences perceive these conditions, especially if governments can strictly regulate access to economic information in their own

countries (Wallace nd).

One of the most extreme examples of a government trying to control the dissemination of economic information within its borders occurred in Equatorial Guinea. Not only did Equatorial Guinea's first president, Francisco Macías Nguema, close down the country's libraries, newspapers, and printing presses, but he also reportedly had the government's director of statistics dismembered when he published lower than expected economic estimates (Meredith 2007). China's government has similarly tried to regulate the dissemination of economic information in China by controlling the media. Remarkably, when the Shanghai Composite plummeted 8.5% in 2015, sending stock markets around the world reeling, the communist-run *People's Daily*, the newspaper with second-largest distribution in China, did not mention the crash at all.<sup>15</sup>

Whether or not the public considers their economy to be in crisis is essential to whether or not democracy protests occur because even if a specific subset of the population tries to organize protests, protests will not materialize without the public's support of them. For this reason, I analyze economic crises using both objective and subjective economic indicators, and multiple measures of both. The objective economic indicators – growth, inflation, and unemployment – provide concrete measures of economic conditions within countries, which are consistent over time and comparable across countries. These measures are also derived from a neutral and reliable source, the World Bank, and are available for most countries in the post-Cold War period.<sup>16</sup> They do not capture all aspects of countries' economic performance, but they do represent essential aspects of them, no matter the sector in which

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<sup>15</sup>Chris Buckley, "China's Party-Run Media is Silent on Market Mayhem," 25 August 2015.

<sup>16</sup>Of course, while these data are widely available for many countries, there are still reporting issues, with countries misreporting economic data and with data missing for territories that weak states and states that are not internationally-recognized, like Taiwan and Kosovo.

the crises originate. In order to capture information about the degrees to which economies are in crisis and to avoid misclassifying economies as “in crisis” or not, I do not classify countries as “in crisis” or not as based on particular thresholds on these indicators. Instead, I evaluate the relationships of the indicators to democracy protests in a continuous manner.

The subjective measures, which are drawn from the *Gallup World Polls* (2006-2011), provide a more holistic view of the economy. They gauge people’s views of the overall economic conditions in their countries and their own standards of living. They also account for people’s knowledge of the state of economy and for views that might differ from what economists consider markers of a good economy. The latter measure is less likely to be affected by a government’s control of economic information within their country since people are more likely to know about their economic well-being than that of others. Furthermore, unlike the objective indicators, which need to be interpreted in terms of a country’s level of economic development, the subjective measures are directly comparable across countries.

The surveys from which these measured are derived are comprehensive, including 158 countries and an estimated 95% of the world’s population. They are also based on nationally representative samples of countries’ resident populations aged 15 and above.<sup>17</sup> However, they cover a much shorter time period than the objective measures and the survey responses may be biased in authoritarian states where freedom of speech is restricted. In these states, survey respondents may underreport the degree to which they are dissatisfied with their standard of living or the economic conditions in their country. To limit this possibility, Gallup keeps all responses confidential but not anonymous. The correlations among the two subjective economic indicators and the three objective economic indicators are low to moderate for

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<sup>17</sup>Gallup, Inc., “Worldwide Research Methodology and Codebook”, December 2011, pp.1-153.

developing countries and moderate to high for developed countries.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.4 Methodological Approach

In order to understand the relationship among economic crises, protests, and democratization, I use a mixed methods approach, combining a statistical analysis of the causes and consequences of democracy protests between 1989 and 2011 with qualitative analysis of cases from this period. The current debate about whether democracy protests lead to democratization is hamstrung by the existing literature's reliance on qualitative methods. That is, some scholars argue that democracy protests lead to democratic transitions by pointing to cases where governments democratized in response to these protests (Bratton and van de Walle 1992; Bermeo 1997; Collier and Mahoney 1997; Wood 2001; Slater 2001; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Beissinger 2007; Bunce and Wolchik 2010, 2013), while other scholars come to the opposite conclusion – that protests do not lead to democracy, or still worse, that they lead to creeping authoritarianism (Huntington 1984; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986; Casper and Taylor 1996; Higley and Gunther 1992; Higley and Burton 2006; Curry and Göedl 2012).

The statistical analysis, in contrast, allows me to identify general patterns in the occurrence of democracy protests, as well as their impact on democracy. Causal inference, though,

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<sup>18</sup>The variables are correlated in the expected direction except in the case of growth, where negative growth rates are associated with a higher percentage of respondents that are satisfied with their standard of living in developed countries. This unexpected result may be a function of increased government expenditures in wealthy countries when economies are not performing well. To explore this possibility, I collected data from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for government spending (% of GDP) about its member states, which are primarily advanced economies, and compared changes in government spending and changes in growth between 2005 and 2011.<sup>19</sup> Consistent with this hypothesis, I find that in 70 percent of cases where there was a decrease in GDP per capita growth from the previous year, there was an increase that year in government spending.

is difficult in statistical analyses based on observational data. To address this issue, I take a number of different tactics. First, in the statistical analysis, I lag the relevant predictors to ensure that they represent conditions within countries prior to the observed outcomes. Second, I conduct an intermediary analysis of the short-term responses of governments to democracy protests, focusing on whether governments offer political reforms to the protesters or forcibly repress them, to test the plausibility of any potential link identified in the statistical analysis relating protests to democratization. Third, in the analysis of democratization, I drop all cases of protests that the qualitative analysis reveals are clearly not causally related to democratization as a robustness test. Finally, as a further robustness test, I repeat the analysis of democratization using propensity score matching and information from the analysis predicting the occurrence of democracy protests to identify potential confounders.

The qualitative analysis complements the statistical analysis in a number of other ways. The qualitative illustrates in detail the process by which economic grievances evolve into demands for democracy, the motivations behind the different actors involved, as well as the conditions that facilitate the evolution of these demands (Haggard and Kaufman 2012). It also helps in identifying changes in democracy resulting from protests that are not captured by the statistical analysis. These include protests that did not advance democracy but prevented a decline in democracy, as in the case of coups d'état, as well as short-term changes in democracy that are undone in the same year that they are initiated, as in the case of the 1994 autogolpe in Lesotho. In this year, King Letsie III suspended the country's first democratically-elected parliament when it sought to investigate the dethroning of his father, but reinstated it a few weeks later following protests, strikes, and pressure from the United States as well as neighboring South Africa. The qualitative analysis also helps identify additional factors that might influence democratization that are not picked up by



the statistical analysis that are hard to measure, such as international pressure.

## 1.5 Plan of the Book

In Chapter 2, I describe in greater detail democracy protests – where they occur, who organizes them, how long they typically last, what specific demands they make on governments, and what strategies they employ to achieve their goals – in order to frame the subsequent discussion and analysis of why democracy protests arise and how governments respond to them. Due to the difficulty of protesting under authoritarianism, protests are expected to be rare, spontaneous, politically and geographically isolated, and to largely occur without coordination through organized social movements (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2004; Tullock 2005). Democracy protests, as this chapter illustrates, are not common, but they are not rare either. At the same time, they are rarely spontaneous, but are initiated most often by organized parties or groups; they are generally small, frequently violent, and are not typically politically isolated but are generally geographically isolated.

In Chapter 3, I introduce my argument in detail about why democracy protests are more likely to arise when economic crises occur, and what effect economic crises are likely to have on government responses to them, drawing on various cases of democracy protests to illustrate my argument. In Chapters 4-5, I analyze the effect of economic crises on the likelihood of democracy protests to occur between 1989-2011. The results show that democracy protests are significantly more likely to occur when economic growth is low, when unemployment is high, and when people are dissatisfied with economic conditions in their country and their own standard of living. The worse the state of the economy, the higher the likelihood of protests to occur. The effects are greatest in election years and when the public

cannot remove incumbents from office through elections. The analysis also demonstrates that economic development minimizes the effect of economic crises on democracy protests, with higher levels of development making protests less likely to occur, and that other factors commonly thought to increase the likelihood of these protests, including technologies like cell phones and the internet, do not.

In Chapter 6, I describe qualitatively and quantitatively how governments respond to democracy protests. In sum, governments respond to democracy protests least often with accommodation, and most often by repressing them either with police or military forces, generally reserving the latter for very large protests. Non-violent forms of repression, such as blocking communication – the media, phones and the internet, as well as restricting permits for rallies, and so forth, generally occur alongside violent repression, not instead of it. Although governments do not accommodate democracy protests very often, when they do, they lead to democratization in nearly half of all cases. In Chapter 8, I describe the changes that occur in the level of democracy in countries within one year of the protests. Democratization, which includes full-scale democratic transitions and larger-scale reforms, occurred within one year of approximately a third of all cases of democracy protests that took place between 1989 and 2011.

Finally, in Chapters 7 and 9, I investigate the factors that are associated with how governments respond to democracy protests, and whether protests are associated with either short- or long-term changes in democracy. In the first of these chapters, I examine the immediate responses of governments to democracy protests, while in the second, I evaluate whether or not there are durable changes in democracy the year after protests occur. The results indicate that governments are more likely to accommodate democracy protests, to step down from power, and to democratize, the larger democracy protests are within countries. The

results further indicate that economic crises are indirectly related to these processes because more severe crises generally give rise to larger democracy protests.