

PACTUM 2023
Summer school
Kairouan – 21 June 2023

*About waves of democratization and
authoritarian tides: (Mediterranean)
European experiences*

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Political regimes

- Political regimes as a general concept: useful but rarely defined
 - « The concept of a political regime (...) is defined, on the one hand, by the procedural rules, whether formal or informal, that determine the number and type of actors who are allowed to gain access to the principal governmental positions, the methods of access to such positions, and the rules that are followed in the making of publicly binding decisions, and, on the other hand, by the strategic acceptance of these rules by all major political actors and the lack of normative rejection of these rules by any major political actor » (Munck, 1996: 9).
 - « There is one key element that this definition of political regime, as all the definitions it draws upon, assumes: *a national state*. Indeed, it would be more accurate to use the term 'national political regime' instead of political regime. What this means is that regime analysis takes the national state, which defines both where power is located and over whom it is exercised, as a given » (Munck 1996: 9, fn 11, my emphasis).

Gerardo Munck, « Disaggregating Political Regime: Conceptual Issues in the Study of Democratization », *Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Papers*, n. 228, August 1996.

Three main types of modern political regimes

Types of Political Regimes¹⁶

Regime Types	Attributes	Number & Type of actors allowed access to power	Methods of access to power	Rules for making publicly binding decisions
Democratic		Many actors: leaders of multiple political parties	regularly held competitive elections with popular participation	system of checks and balances
Authoritarian		Few actors: leaders of military and business elites	decisions within the military	bounded arbitrariness
Totalitarian		One actor: leaders of single party	decisions within the single party	unbounded arbitrariness

Regime type definitions (1)

- Munck's suggestion heavily relies on the fundamental work of Juan Linz (*Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2000 [1975]):
- Totalitarian regimes when :
 1. There is a monistic but not monolithic center of power and whatever pluralism of institutions or groups exists derives its legitimacy from that center, is largely mediated by it, and is mostly a political creation rather than an outgrowth of the dynamics of the pre-existing society.
 2. There is an exclusive, autonomous, and more or less intellectually elaborate ideology with which the ruling group or leader, and the party serving the leaders, identify and which they use as a basis for policies or manipulate to legitimize them. The ideology has some boundaries beyond which lies heterodoxy that does not remain unsanctioned. The ideology goes beyond a particular program or definition of the boundaries of legitimate political action to provide, presumably, some ultimate meaning, sense of historical purpose, and interpretation of social reality.
 3. Citizen participation in and active mobilization for political and collective social tasks are encouraged, demanded, rewarded, and channelled through a single party and many monopolistic secondary groups. Passive obedience and apathy, retreat into the role of "parochials" and "subjects," characteristic of many authoritarian regimes, are considered undesirable by the rulers (Linz 2000 [1975]: 70).

Regime type definitions (2)

- Authoritarian regimes: “Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable one” (Linz 2000).
- Democratic regimes are met with a combination of procedural (separation of powers, rule of law) representative government based on elections with universal suffrage) and substantive features (actual pluralism, real rule of law, free and fair elections that are assimilated by political actors and citizens).

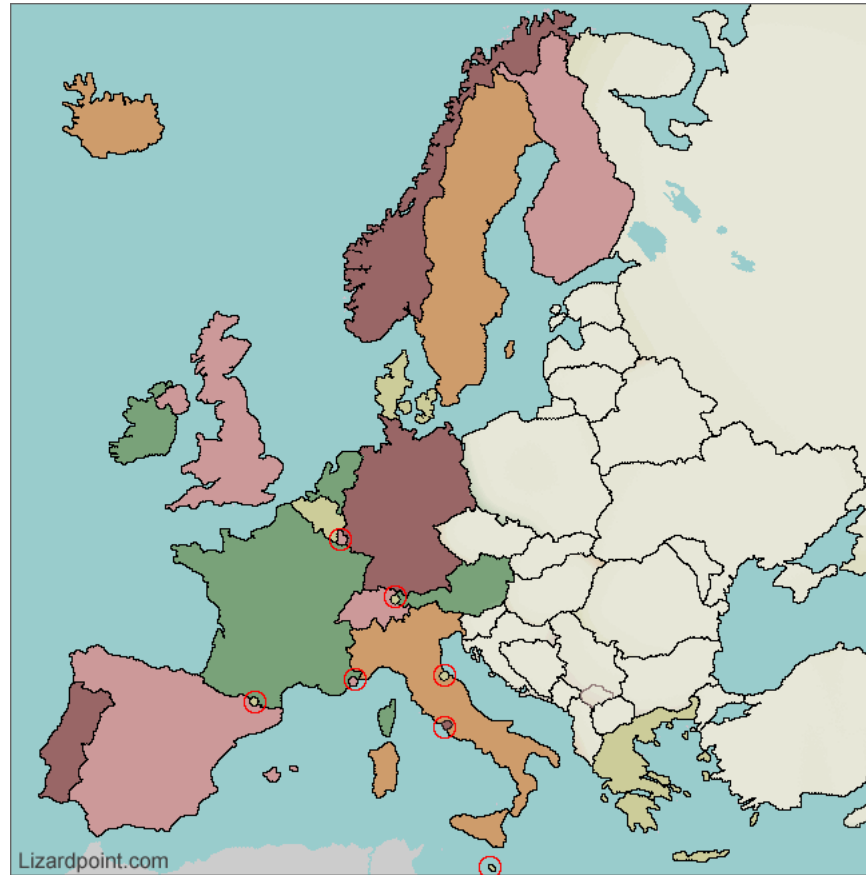
Democracy and “the West”

- Modern democratic regimes were born first in Europe and America, after a series of transformations:
 - Nation-states: waves of state- and nation-building
 - GRADUAL Political change
 - Liberalization / constitutionalism
 - Representative government (parliamentary/presidential)
 - Growing participation → democratization
- Questions about the dynamics and directions of political change.

“Linear” democracies... or not

- In some countries democratization has been a largely linear movement:
 - Enduring political institutions and stability
 - Continuous, gradual consolidation of pluralism and political participation
 - No move backward: democracy remains grounded and is part of those countries' political culture.
- Examples?

Western Europe as a case for intracontinental differentiation



Why Western Europe?

- (Central-)Eastern Europe
 - centuries of dominance by imperial structures (Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in the Centre-North, Russian empire in the far East, Ottoman empire in the South-East) which gave rise to national states between the 19th and the 20th centuries
 - Communist rules in the post-war period (WWII) on the eastern side of the iron curtain until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, which prompted a wave of late democratic transitions

Western Europe as the bulk of democracy in Europe, but not in a smooth way.

Democracy: successful but contested

- Not all of Europe is rock-solid democracy. In some areas its development has been easier than in others
 - within Western Europe, there is a North-South cleavage, with democracy stronger in the North
- Important to understand the dynamics of democratization, i.e. back-and-forth moves.
- 4 ideas:
 - There is no significant delay in Southern Europe compared to Northern Europe in the early phase of democratization
 - There has been a stronger democratic breakdown in the interwar period in the South
 - There has been a late re-democratization which has proved to be very successful
 - Since 2010s at least, open questions regarding the state of democracy re-emerged

1. Democratizing Mediterranean Europe: not a late-comer

- The main impetus was first provoked by the so-called 'Atlantic revolutions' (UK, USA, France), but then roughly all countries experienced the same pattern of political change.
- Pre-condition: state and nation building → diversity (Spain, France, Portugal vs. Greece, Italy) – but late effective nation-building is common (see Deutsch 1966, E. Weber 1976)
- Constitutionalism and liberalization (Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, first transformation in the 1810s-1820s: *Pepa* in Spain, 1812, Portugal 1822) – but later when national independence was still to be gained (Greece, 1844; in Italy 1848).

1. Mediterranean Europe: democratization under strain

- The very values of political liberalism and constitutionalism were not unanimously acclaimed. They were promoted by a progressive *avant-garde* that further split into moderate and radical branches, and fought by conservative forces.
- As a result, while some political systems were characterized by gradual collective adjustment to new normative settings, others were marked by a structural polarization about a number of issues
 - Monarchy vs. republic
 - Promotion of parliamentarism vs. advocacy of strong political executives
 - Defending religion vs. *laïcité*
 - Civilian power vs. military influence in politics
- As a consequence, political instability was a striking feature of 19th century politics with frequent coups in some countries, as far as regime change was concerned (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Greece), and at least political instability within parliamentary representative government (e.g. Italy, France).

2. (Pre-)democratic breakdowns

- In spite of instability, a trend towards democratization emerged, exemplified by the enlargement of suffrage and the existence of a growing body of (male) voters at the beginning of the 20th century, with frequent elections.
- However, in many parts of Europe, a number of pre-democratic settings faced a crisis in the interwar period
 - Stronger political polarization and instability (Russian revolution, nationalism)
 - International turmoil (wars and their consequences)
 - Economic crisis and its social impact
- Some countries resisted more than others – e.g. UK, Scandinavia (Welfare state).

2. (Pre-)democratic breakdowns

- However many countries, notably in Mediterranean Europe, suffered from a severe crisis that eventually gave rise to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes or attempts
 - Portugal: election and assassination of president Sidónio Pais (1918), turmoil, “National dictatorship” (1928), *Estado Novo* (1933-1974)
 - Italy: fascism (Mussolini) (1922-1943)
 - Spain: dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), Second Republic (1931-36), Civil War (1936-1939), Francoist Spain (1939-1975)
 - Greece: 4th of August regime (Metaxas) (1936-1940), Second World War with Italian invasion and German occupation then civil war until 1949 + Greek junta (1967-1974)
- These breakdowns have had enduring consequences in part of Mediterranean Europe.
 - Italy sets apart since, as Germany, it underwent a democratic transition at the end of WWII.
 - On the other hand: Spain, Portugal, Greece had to face authoritarian regimes until the mid-1970s. A large part of Mediterranean Europe was an authoritarian *enclave* in a fully democratic Western Europe.

3. Late and successful (re-)democratization

- Southern Europe was marked by a late (re-)democratization with the democratic transition started in 1974 in Portugal and Spain and in 1975 in Spain.
- Despite the common timing these transition were different
 - Democratic coup in Portugal and Greece, within the framework of international crisis (Portuguese colonial question, Cyprus affair in Greece).
 - Death of the dictator and 'transition by pact' in Spain.
- Elections (universal suffrage) and referenda were the tools used:
 - Greece: 1974 general election, 1974 referendum (republic), 1975 Constitution
 - Portugal: 1975 general election , 1976 Constitution and general election
 - Spain: 1977 general election, 1978 Constitution, 1978 referendum (approval) + failed coup in 1981

3. Late and successful (re)democratization

- Since then, a strong democratic political culture has developed in former authoritarian countries in Europe
 - Democratic institutions
 - Pacific alternation to power
 - Stabilized party system based on the opposition of two main parties
 - PP/PSOE Spain
 - PASOK/ND Greece
 - PS/PSD Portugal

4. Democracies under strain since the 2010s

- Impact of the 2007-2008 economic crisis ('Great Recession')
 - Economic problems
 - Social impact – direct and indirect because of austerity policies, which prompted Eurosceptic stances
- Transformation of party systems
 - Decreasing weight of ruling mainstream parties
 - Birth of new political parties / renewal of fringe parties
 - On the right and far-right: Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks (ANEL) (Greece), Brothers of Italy, Northern League with nation-wide prospects (Italy), Vox (Spain), Chega (Portugal)
 - On the left and far-left: Podemos (Spain), Syriza (Greece), Bloco de Esquerda (Portugal)
 - In the 'centre': Ciudadanos (Spain), La République en Marche (France)

4. Democracies under strain since the 2010s

- A relevant change is that populist parties used to be mostly in a position of protest parties, criticizing ruling governments from the opposition from parliament or outside.
- The most recent period has shown that those protest parties were also able to get closer or even to access power:
 - sometimes as members of parliamentary majorities (e.g. Bloco de Esquerda)
 - sometimes as members of governmental coalitions (e.g. Podemos)
 - sometimes controlling the government (SYRIZA).
- The most recent challenge is embodied by the rise of far-right parties such as Brothers of Italy (late 2022) while other equivalent parties appear to be in a favourable position in opinion polls (Vox in the coming Spanish general election in July 2023, Rassemblement National in France).

Conclusion

- These elements remind us that:
 - Democratization often follows a sinuous trajectory
 - It is better understood when studied in a long-term perspective
 - Democracy, even when established, should not be taken for granted, even in those areas where democracy is believed to be strongly rooted
 - The current period is of particular interest to understand the challenges democracies have to face.