



From authoritarian rule toward democratic governance:

Learning from political leaders

Abraham F. Lowenthal and Sergio Bitar



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Preface

International IDEA is pleased to present *From Authoritarian Rule Toward Democratic Governance: Learning from Political Leaders*. This essay by Professor Abraham F. Lowenthal and Senator Sergio Bitar distils the principal conclusions they drew from interviews they conducted with 13 prominent political figures who played leading roles in helping to end autocracies and to craft democracy in nine different countries on five continents. Commissioned by International IDEA, at the initiative of my predecessor Mr Vidar Helgesen, these interviews shed fascinating light on how repressive regimes were ended and democracies took hold. The leaders interviewed were Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Patricio Aylwin and Ricardo Lagos of Chile, John Kufuor and Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, B. J. Habibie of Indonesia, Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico, Fidel V. Ramos of the Philippines, Aleksander Kwasniewski and Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Poland, F. W. de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, and Felipe González of Spain.

The entire set of interviews—together with a context-setting essay on each country's distinct transition, timelines of relevant events, a biographical sketch of each leader, and a guide to readings on each case—will be published in September 2015 by Johns Hopkins University Press as *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders*, edited by Sergio Bitar and Abraham Lowenthal. The volume also includes a special chapter on the role of women and women's movements in these transitions, prepared by Georgina Waylen of the University of Manchester, and concludes with the chapter by Lowenthal and Bitar which we present here as an essay. No other book offers such political experience and wisdom from so many world leaders about how authoritarian rule can be brought to an end and democratic governance established—issues that are timely and timeless.

Translations of this volume into Arabic, French and Spanish will also be published in 2015, and a summary translation into Burmese is already under way.

Transitions toward democracy, of course, are achieved not only, or perhaps even mainly, by those at the top of the political order. Mass movements, civil society organizations and the instruments they employ have been crucial in virtually all democratic transitions. Political parties, trade unions, women's movements, students, professional associations, religious organizations and international institutions help bring about change. Socio-economic structures, demographic and geopolitical realities and deep national histories and cultures also shape the demands for democracy and the obstacles that have to be overcome to achieve it.

Yet these interviews compellingly demonstrate that individual political leaders also count. One cannot imagine the South African transition without Nelson Mandela, F. W. de Klerk, Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki. Nor can one understand the Indonesian transition from the long Soeharto regime without the decisive role of B. J. Habibie, comprehend Chile's transition without recognizing the special contributions of Patricio Aylwin and Ricardo Lagos, appreciate the Spanish transition without taking into account the crucial parts played by King Juan Carlos, Adolfo Suárez and Felipe González, or assess the Polish achievement of democracy without examining the roles played by Lech Wałęsa, Wojciech Jaruzelski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Aleksander Kwasniewski. Structures are undoubtedly important, but so are human agents. Political scientists often tend to downplay the importance of leadership. This essay, and the entire volume, highlights the role of leaders.

I am proud of this accomplishment and believe this essay and the forthcoming book will be valuable for current and future political leaders and citizens around the world who strive to establish and deepen democratic governance; for activists in civil society organizations; for the media and the international community; and for all who want to understand, foster, conduct and support democratic transitions.

Yves Leterme
Secretary-General
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
(International IDEA)

Interviews presented in
Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders

Fernando Henrique Cardoso

President of Brazil 1995–2003

Patricio Aylwin

President of Chile 1990–94

Ricardo Lagos

President of Chile 2000–06

John Agyekum Kufuor

President of Ghana 2001–09

Jerry John Rawlings

President of Ghana 1993–2001

B. J. Habibie

President of Indonesia 1998–99

Ernesto Zedillo

President of Mexico 1994–2000

Fidel Ramos

President of the Philippines 1992–98

Aleksander Kwasniewski

President of Poland 1995–2005

Tadeusz Mazowiecki

Prime Minister of Poland 1989–91

F. W. de Klerk

President of South Africa 1989–94

Thabo Mbeki

President of South Africa 1999–2008

Felipe González

President of Spain 1982–96

From authoritarian rule toward democratic governance:

Learning from political leaders

Abraham F. Lowenthal and Sergio Bitar

Opposition movements, often calling for democracy, have been challenging authoritarian governments in such different countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Myanmar. Some of these governments have given way, and others are likely to follow, as undemocratic regimes are facing (or will face) growing demands for participation and representation in East and West Asia, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Building democracies to replace authoritarian regimes has not been easy or quick, nor will it be in current and future cases. Yet for several decades currents of change, sometimes subject to undertows, have generally moved toward more open, participatory and accountable politics. Heightened expectations of personal autonomy and political expression have often been reinforced by higher levels of urbanization, income, education and literacy. These tendencies, in turn, have been accelerated by new information and communications technologies that make opposition movements easier to mobilize.

People everywhere want their voices to be heard and heeded. This aspiration for political expression puts the question of transitions from authoritarian rule toward democracy squarely back on the international agenda, and makes it timely to study how prior democratic transitions were achieved. This is especially important because successful prior transitions were not at all inevitable, and in many cases were surprising.

This essay draws on our interviews with 13 political leaders (12 former presidents and one former prime minister) from nine countries who

helped end autocracies and craft democracies in their place during the last quarter of the 20th century. These nine countries all achieved democratic governance—unevenly and, in some cases, incompletely—but without reversal.

Although attempted transitions to democracy have failed in several other countries, we focus on these nine successful cases in order to capture insights from leaders, most of them now long retired from partisan political struggles, who played leading roles in guiding their countries to democracy. We seek to distil principles that can be helpful for those who want to achieve future transitions.¹

We begin by presenting some of the contours of these nine transitions, highlighting their main similarities and differences. We highlight several difficult issues that recurred repeatedly, albeit in various forms. We then show how political leaders, both incumbents from authoritarian regimes who were ready to support a transition toward democracy and challengers from opposition movements who aimed to achieve such transitions, perceived and addressed these recurrent issues. We examine the strategies the leaders developed, the obstacles they confronted and what lessons can be learned from their experiences. We consider how the circumstances of current and future transitions will differ from those of the late 20th century, and what these differences may imply for the future. We conclude by identifying the distinct qualities of political leadership that are illustrated in these interviews and are very much needed in our time. Leaders cannot by themselves bring about democracy, but their contributions are essential.

The broad contours of nine successful transitions

- Most of these transitions from authoritarian rule toward democracy were extended processes rather than single events. Dramatic moments of visible change—the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, the People Power outpouring in the Philippines, the decisive victory of the ‘No’ campaign in Chile’s 1988 plebiscite or the surprising defeat of the Polish communists in the partially free elections of 1989—captured broad attention. But these and most of the nine transitions occurred gradually over considerable time. Iconic events can play a vital role in catalysing or symbolizing political transformation, but the road toward democracy often begins years before (and extends years after) these moments. Those who want to undertake or support democratic transitions should keep this in mind.

These transitions typically had their origins long before the memorable moment when the authoritarian regime finally ended. The first steps toward transition often took place quietly, even invisibly: in the political opposition, within the authoritarian regime itself, in civil society or in multiple places.

For opposition movements, these pre-transition phases—sometimes involving political parties, study groups, think tanks, labour unions, women’s and student movements, and other domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—helped establish or deepen personal connections and fostered trust among disparate opposition sectors. In some cases, they also improved communications and developed mutual understanding between figures within the authoritarian regime and leaders in the opposition.

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- Once they begin, transitions proceed at different speeds, with advances and retreats, and often with zigzags. Unexpected events can have major effects. Brazil's president-elect, Tancredo Neves, who had been chosen by the opposition movement as its candidate in the indirect elections of 1985, became fatally ill on the eve of taking office as the first civilian president after two decades of military rule. As a result of a political deal that had been struck to enhance the opposition's electoral prospects, Neves' death unexpectedly brought to the presidency vice-president-elect Jose Sarney, a conservative civilian figure from the military regime; this slowed—but in some ways facilitated—the transition process. The failed assassination plot by left-wing extremists against Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1986 forced the democratic opposition to break definitively with those willing to use violence. The assassinations of Luis Carrero Blanco in Spain, Chris Hani in South Africa and Benigno Aquino (leader of the political opposition to the regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, who was slain on the airport tarmac as he returned from exile to Manila in 1983) helped trigger important political choices. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—and the subsequent changes within, and ultimate dissolution of, the Soviet Union—radically transformed the context for change in Poland and South Africa, and the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 undermined Soeharto in Indonesia. Political leaders did not anticipate any of these surprises, many of which presented unforeseen obstacles. These events required nimble responses, but did not derail the possibilities for achieving democracy.

- On rare occasions, authoritarian regimes collapsed abruptly in the face of economic crisis, as in Indonesia in 1998, or popular outrage triggered by inflammatory events, such as the assassination of Aquino followed by the grossly fraudulent ‘snap’ elections staged by Marcos in 1986.² Even in these exceptional cases, however, an extended process of social mobilization against the regime, followed by tacit or explicit negotiation, often helped produce agreements on the principles and procedures necessary to make democratic governance possible. Democracies did not directly emerge from crowds in the street, however impressive they might have been.
- Most of these transitions took many years to reach maturity and institutionalization. In some countries—including Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa and Spain—many years of pressure from opposition movements were needed to end authoritarian rule. There were multiple stages and occasional setbacks. In South Africa, Ghana, Poland and Brazil, autocratic regimes (or sectors within them) reached out to moderate opposition elements, in part to enhance international legitimacy or respond to external pressures, and built relationships with opposition forces that were willing to negotiate an opening up of those regimes. In Spain, South Africa and Poland, for instance, long-gestating processes of dialogue and negotiations among elites emerged from extended conflicts, with periodic demonstrations of force by one or both sides. These negotiations established parameters and enabled the gradual elaboration of core principles and rules of engagement that allowed democratic movements to gain broad support and eventually take hold.
- The transitions had some common features, but they differed in their inception, sequence and trajectory. The circumstances in which they arose included personal dictatorships with military backing in Spain, Indonesia and the Philippines; institutional military rule in Brazil and Chile; quasi-military rule by a charismatic autocrat in Ghana; one-party dominant systems of very different types in Mexico and Poland, in the latter case bolstered and constrained by external support from the Soviet Union; and exclusionary rule by a white oligarchy that had long repressed the black majority in South Africa.³

These regimes differed in a number of other ways that influenced how they ended and conditioned the prospects for democracy. They varied in the degree to which they controlled their national territory and commanded the allegiance of their citizens, including those of different ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and regional loyalties. Such differences significantly influenced the transitions in Spain, South Africa, Ghana, Indonesia and the Philippines, where particular regions and ethnic groups demanded greater autonomy and resources.

Several authoritarian governments had been reasonably successful at achieving economic development, promoting social welfare, and protecting national and citizen security, at least for dominant segments of the population; others had not. Transitions from relatively successful regimes and from badly faltering ones took different courses, shaped by the relative power of the governments vis-à-vis the opposition forces. The transitions in Brazil, Chile and Spain, for example, were affected by the perceived success of the incumbent authoritarian governments in providing citizen security and economic growth.

These transitions were also shaped by the degree of professional discipline and coherence of, as well as the level of public support for, the armed forces, police, intelligence and other security services. They were conditioned by the relative strength of civilian institutions, including political parties, legislatures and judiciaries. The Chilean and Brazilian transitions were facilitated by the persistence and recovery of pre-existing political parties, institutions and traditions. Prior constitutional or legal norms and networks were also important in Indonesia, the Philippines, Ghana, Mexico and Spain. In some countries, aversion to recent experiences of violence, repression and/or corruption, or else nostalgia for valued aspects of the past, affected the transitions.

They were also influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by the relative strengths and distinct qualities of civil society organizations (CSOs), such as trade unions, religious communities, student federations and women's groups. It mattered, too, how these groups had related to the authoritarian regime, security forces and business

sectors. The African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, the Coalition for 'No' and then the Concertación in Chile, the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE) and the Communist Party (Partido Comunista de España, PCE) in Spain, Solidarity in Poland and other parties, political movements and CSOs in other countries helped mobilize pressure on authoritarian governments. The broader the organized support for the opposition movement and its leadership, the more likely it was to secure important concessions in the explicit or tacit negotiations with the authoritarian government that often took place.

- Some of these transitions were initiated at least in part by mutual approximation by sectors within the upper ranks of the authoritarian regime and elements of the opposition, as was the case in Brazil, Spain, Mexico, Poland and Ghana. In some cases, regimes responded mainly to pressures from bottom-up social mobilization, as in Poland, Indonesia, Chile, the Philippines and South Africa. Many transitions emerged from tacit or explicit negotiation between elements of the incumbent government and the opposition, as occurred in different ways in Spain, Brazil, South Africa, Chile, Indonesia, Mexico and Poland. A few transitions (but not many) involved formal accords among elites, such as Spain's Moncloa Pacts on economic policies, which later led to political agreements.
- All these transitions were the result of domestic forces and processes, but they were also affected, in different ways, by the broader international context and specific external actors. Regional tendencies, prevailing international ideologies and linkages to long-established democracies were relevant, as were the nature and degree of each country's integration into the global economy.⁴ So, in some cases, were specific pressures by major powers, neighbouring countries, international institutions and other external actors, including NGOs, business, labour and media organizations, as well as diaspora communities. In many countries, the personal experience abroad of political leaders, often in exile, and the ideas and networks that resulted, were also relevant, as illustrated in the interviews with Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Ricardo Lagos, Thabo Mbeki and B. J. Habibie.

In some (but by no means all) cases, political leaders, political parties and other participants learned from the experiences of earlier transitions and the international exchange of ideas. Mbeki emphasizes how the advice of Tanzania's Julius Nyerere on building a new constitution influenced the ANC's thinking in South Africa and how Chile's experience with its Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped inform South Africa's work on transitional justice. Lagos notes how important the advice of Spain's Felipe González on how to deal with the armed forces, police and intelligence services was for Chileans. Poland's Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Aleksander Kwasniewski both mention how the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Hungary affected the approaches of both General Wojciech Jaruzelski and the opposition in Poland.

The Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and its end, profoundly affected all these transitions. Although international actors alone were not decisive in any of the transitions, in virtually all these cases international reinforcement of (and interactions with) local actors and/or the withdrawal of external support from the authoritarian regime were important.

None of these structural, historical and contextual factors by themselves determined when and how autocracies ended, or whether and how democracy could ultimately be fashioned, however. Critical decisions had to be made by political leaders in governments, parties and movements, often among unattractive options. Both skill and luck played a role.

In these nine countries, all the transitions from authoritarian rule led to constitutional democracies—institutionalized through regular, mainly free and reasonably fair elections, combined with meaningful restraints on executive power and practical guarantees of essential political rights, especially of free speech and assembly, and individual freedoms.⁵ Some of these countries still have important issues related to (or limits on) the nature or degree of effective democratic governance, but basic democratic institutions remain in place in all these cases. The fact that all these countries managed to achieve constitutional democracies that have not been reversed in a

generation (or longer) makes it particularly useful to learn from the political leaders who helped guide these historic transformations.

Given the diverse circumstances and trajectories of transitions from authoritarian rule toward democracy, there can be no ‘one size fits all’ model or simple manual of ‘best practices’ for such transitions. But we can learn a great deal from the leaders who shaped these transitions, especially by identifying and exploring how they perceived and handled key issues that arose in virtually all cases.

Recurrent challenges of transitions

Four broad clusters of challenges stand out: preparing for the transition, ending an authoritarian regime, making and managing the transfer of power, and stabilizing and institutionalizing the emerging democracy. These challenges did not emerge in linear fashion or necessarily in that chronological order, but they appeared in all these cases and are likely to be present in future transitions.

Preparing for the transition

Domestic forces seeking to end an authoritarian regime typically had to achieve enough broad support, coherence, legitimacy and other resources to challenge the regime's capacity to govern, as well as to become plausible contenders for national power. In some cases they also had to become viable interlocutors for those within the authoritarian regime who realized that the regime needed a partner to facilitate a possible exit strategy. Sometimes they also had to become credible to international actors who wanted to support a transition. Achieving these goals often required bridging deep disagreements about aims, strategies, tactics and leadership among those opposed to the authoritarian regime. Convincing diverse opposition groups to work out their major differences in order to confront an authoritarian regime typically was not easy. Building a broad coalition capable of ousting an authoritarian regime, and with a strong commitment to democratic values, often required working assiduously to overcome divisions within the opposition, while at the same time understanding and taking advantage of divisions, evident or latent, within the regime. Knowing both how to unite the opposition and how to split the incumbent regime was at the heart of many transitions, as discussed,

for example, by Cardoso, who emphasized his core strategy: not to oust the military, but to induce them to reach out in search of an exit.

Ending the authoritarian regime

Authoritarian governments did not relinquish power until at least one important sector within the regime perceived that doing so was the only way to avoid major unwanted consequences: severe loss of public support, civil violence, a split of the armed forces, serious economic damage, international ostracism or threats to the nation's territorial integrity. The humiliation of military defeat, economic collapse or electoral debacle sometimes hastened a regime's exit. But these traumas usually led to democratic transitions only when segments of the authoritarian government tolerated or supported opposition demands for democracy.

Opposition forces had to craft approaches that could induce such elements within the authoritarian government to be open to a transition. This often required assuring them that wholesale revenge against the former rulers and their main supporters would not be taken; that economic and other interests of established power centres would be respected, although blatant corruption and gross privileges would not be accepted; and that the individual rights of the former ruling elites would be protected under law as the new authorities took power. It was not easy to reconcile such assurances with the understandable aspirations of long-excluded opposition forces that had taken great risks to combat the authoritarian regime. But this was possible, and it often seemed to transition leaders, both from incumbent governments and from opposition movements, to be necessary.

Making and managing the transfer of power

Implementing successful transitions required dealing with multiple, often interconnected, tensions and dilemmas. Those who took power had to foster civil order and end violence, while at the same time striving to assure that all security and intelligence forces, including some that were at the heart of previous repression, would henceforth act within the law and be subject to control by the new civilian authorities.

They also had to inspire domestic trust and gain international legitimacy. In many cases, this involved developing electoral procedures to ensure that the will of the majority of voters would be recorded and respected, but also reassuring key political minorities (often including some associated with the outgoing regime) that they would be represented and that their core interests would be protected, according to the rule of law.

A third need was to assure that those who took office would be well prepared, technically and politically, for their new governing responsibilities: by acquiring the necessary training and skills, attracting officials who already had those skills and/or keeping on some personnel from the previous regime, as González, Mazowiecki and Mbeki emphasize. On a range of issues—from macroeconomic policies to the delivery of social services and the quest for transitional justice—governing required perspectives, competencies and expertise that were very different from those of opposition. In many cases, this meant learning on the job.

Oppositions-turned-governments had to balance the need for bureaucratic, technocratic, security and judicial expertise against the aim to curb the influence of the former regime. They had to refocus the bureaucracy and the security and police forces from controlling subjects to serving citizens. They needed to persuade citizens, in turn, to accept and begin to trust a state many had understandably rejected as illegitimate and hostile.

Transition leaders had to balance the conflicting imperatives of responding to those whose human rights had been violated by the

previous regime and holding accountable those who had committed gross violations, on the one hand, while preserving the loyalty of security forces (some of whose members had been involved in these violations) on the other. At the same time, they had to assure citizens that these forces could effectively deal with crime, violence and, in some cases, separatist and insurgent movements. They had to find ways to foster peaceful mutual acceptance by former bitter enemies, which is no easy matter.

The new authorities typically inherited long-standing patterns of corruption and impunity. They needed to establish or protect the autonomy and authority of independent judiciaries and independent media that could hold national executives and others accountable, while avoiding the creation of veto centres that could block all the new government's initiatives.

They also needed to achieve economic growth and expanded employment, and control inflation, while improving the provision of housing, health and education and expanding public expenditures to meet the long-deferred needs of the poor. Doing so required the new authorities to engage national and foreign investors without fuelling fears that they were selling out to the privileged. Often the new governments had to gain public support for macroeconomic policies that were intended to produce long-term benefits but imposed painful sacrifices and uncertainties in the short term. Leaders of all these transitions adopted market-oriented approaches and prudent monetary and fiscal policies. They accepted—even those who were not originally so inclined—that these were necessary in an ever more globalized economy, in tandem with strong social policies that could produce more equitable economic development.

Stabilizing and institutionalizing the emerging democracy

As democratic transitions took hold, political leaders frequently faced other thorny issues. After some years, the public often blamed democratic leaders, and sometimes democracy itself, for the failure to meet economic or political expectations. Movements that had united

in opposing the authoritarian regime often fragmented, creating challenges for governments, or else decayed over time into conformism and complacency.

By the same token, civil society organizations—including human rights groups and women’s movements—that had contributed importantly to anti-authoritarian opposition sometimes atrophied or else moved to extreme and disruptive positions after many of their most talented and pragmatic leaders entered government or party politics. In these circumstances, it was not easy to maintain active and independent non-governmental organizations. Building mutually beneficial relationships between a new government and new opposition forces (that sometimes included the former authorities), as well as with independent social forces and civil society organizations, was not simple. This required especially sensitive and sustained attention.

Learning from political leaders

In the particularly uncertain circumstances of systemic transitions, political leaders often have to take decisions with very limited information or assurance about their consequences.⁶ Many of these leaders emphasized the apprehensions that pushed them to fashion compromises that some at the time (as well as some in succeeding generations) criticized as too timid. Their testimony explains how and why they made the hard choices they did on such questions as civil-military relations, transitional justice and reserved domains.⁷ Fear of reversion or violence also shaped their approaches to crafting constitutional provisions, electoral systems and economic policies. Risks, uncertainties and tough decisions were inevitable, but they did not necessarily prevent leaders from taking actions that could break through stalemate.

Moving forward incrementally

All these leaders believed that it was important to take advantage of even partial opportunities to move forward rather than reject incremental progress in the hope of later being able to make a possible (but not assured) greater change. They emphasized their determination to ameliorate undesirable situations rather than to imagine a way to start from scratch or simply wish away the tough constraints that slowed progress toward their ultimate goals.

Patricio Aylwin, for instance, discusses the debate within the opposition on whether (and on what terms) to participate in the 1988 plebiscite in Chile, mandated by the constitution Pinochet imposed in 1980, and his ultimately prevailing arguments for challenging the regime within

its own rules rather than continuing to insist on its illegitimacy. Lagos recalls the advice that Felipe González gave him and his colleagues about ‘getting out of the well’—that is, achieving greater strength and leverage—before formulating additional demands. Cardoso explains his inclination, opposed by many others in the Brazilian opposition, to accept that direct presidential elections would not be permitted by the military regime and instead to work within the regime’s rules to contest the elections of 1985.

F. W. de Klerk and Mbeki discuss the crucial decision to agree on the principles for a provisional constitution before the first national democratic election, to be debated, improved and approved by the Congress that would be elected later in South Africa. Mazowiecki and Kwasniewski both emphasize the agreement to proceed with partially free ‘contract’ elections in Poland in 1989 on terms intended to guarantee that the communists would have a majority of seats and that General Jaruzelski would be confirmed as president, in order to assure gradualism. John Kufuor explains why he rejected his party’s boycott of the 2000 Ghanaian elections. Ernesto Zedillo underlines the importance of incremental reforms in electoral procedures proposed by the main opposition party, the National Action Party (Partido de Acción Nacional, PAN), and accepted by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) over the course of several previous years before his presidency, when the PRI seemed unlikely ever to cede national power.

These leaders consistently gave priority to gaining ground wherever possible, even when some vital priorities could only be partly achieved

and when some important constituents and supporters were making demands that the leaders considered unviable. **Rejecting maximalist positions sometimes called for more political courage than adhering to those goals or hewing to attractive but perhaps impractical principles.**

In order to combat repression and push for openings, opposition leaders had to mobilize protests; challenge the established order and rules; denounce the imprisonment, torture and expulsion of dissidents; and combat the regime's national and international legitimacy. They always had to be prepared, however, to make compromises that would improve their position. Incumbents in authoritarian regimes who were open to a democratic transition, in turn, had to find ways to maintain authority and the support of their core constituencies while providing space for opposition partisans. They had to be willing to take risks to do so, as de Klerk, for instance, did by calling and winning an all-white referendum to support his approach to negotiations with the ANC. Mazowiecki, González, de Klerk, Mbeki, Cardoso, Aylwin and Lagos all stress, from different perspectives, that leaders on both sides had to combine exerting continuous pressure with a real willingness to work out compromises. Transition making is not a task for the dogmatic.

The need for a hopeful and inclusive vision

Although accepting unsatisfying compromises was sometimes necessary, these leaders also understood the need to consistently project a broad and hopeful vision of what the transition would signify. They emphasized the way forward rather than concentrating on past grievances. A compelling vision of the longer-term future for the whole society, combined with modest promises of more immediate gains, helped sustain complex transitions through stressful periods that involved dangers, costs and disappointments. Such visions were needed to combat the fear that could demobilize social organizations and paralyze people. Overcoming pervasive fear was an enormous challenge for many of these leaders, as emphasized by Lagos, de Klerk, Mazowiecki and González. An anecdote told by Lagos, about a socialist woman who had reluctantly decided to vote for a conservative candidate in order to avoid a return to polarization, is particularly poignant.

Building convergence and coalitions

Encouraging convergence, forging consensus and building coalitions among opposition forces were all vital both for achieving these transitions and for beginning to construct democratic governance. It was important to connect the opposition's political actors to social movements, including workers, students, women, human rights groups and religious institutions, in the process of defining and achieving the opposition's overarching aims. Connections at the elite level were obviously important, both within opposition forces and between opposition forces and some of those who were opposed to regime change. But so was the sense among the wider public that democratic movements were truly inclusive and not merely vehicles for particular individuals or groups. It was vital to build on the participation of social movements in mobilizing opposition to the authoritarian regime and then in framing a new constitution, protecting human rights, and building political parties and civil society.

In many cases, the participation of women and women's organizations was critical to achieving these objectives, as mentioned by Habibie, Mbeki, Cardoso, Jerry Rawlings, Lagos and Fidel V. Ramos, and discussed in detail in Georgina Waylen's chapter. As Waylen emphasizes, transitions from non-democratic rule can offer important openings for social movements that are trying to reshape the rules of the game, with regard to gender or other social issues. To be effective in doing so, 'Women's organizations need clear agendas that are developed by a range of actors and backed by broad coalitions with civil society'.⁸

Accomplishing convergence required focusing sharply on what united people rather than on what divided them, as Aylwin, González and others emphasize. But it also required making difficult decisions to exclude some groups that refused to renounce violence, or that insisted on uncompromising demands for regional, ethnic or sectarian autonomy. Incorporating these would likely have hurt the chances for a successful transition in Spain, South Africa, Chile, Indonesia and the Philippines. Political leaders had to nurture reciprocal acceptance among the often mutually hostile opponents of an authoritarian regime, and find ways to reconcile differing positions or establish a basis for mutual tolerance

with those from the incumbent government and their supporters, and at the same time isolate those who remained intransigent on both sides.

Opposition leaders often had to build bridges to moderate elements within the old regime and to other power centres in society, especially key business interests. In many cases it was also necessary to try to reconcile the views of members of the opposition living in (or just returned from) exile with those who were organizing within the country—or sometimes to choose between them, as Mbeki, Lagos, Cardoso and González all observed.

Personal style and deference were important for building consensus. Habibie went himself to the National Assembly to seek its support immediately after the fall of Soeharto, and he authorized General Wiranto to retain the extraordinary emergency powers that Soeharto had granted, thus assuring his loyalty. Ramos adopted a highly consultative and deliberative approach to policy formulation in the Philippines. Cardoso went with his wife to the promotion ceremonies of Brazil's military officers in order to strengthen the personal relationships he would need to draw on later to remove service heads from the cabinet and establish a civilian minister of defence, as he intended. Aylwin individually and actively recruited members of Chile's Truth and Reconciliation Commission who had credibility in different sectors, going to their private residences at times. Mazowiecki presided over long consensus-building sessions of his cabinet and worked consistently to make his government broadly inclusive. Zedillo accepted proposals from the opposition PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) parties to change Mexico's electoral laws and procedures. All these initiatives took self-confidence, vision, patience, persistence and precious time. They also reflected conscious and thoughtful efforts to signal to contending forces that all would have a stake in the new regime.

Creating and protecting spaces for dialogue

Creating and protecting spaces for direct dialogue among opposition groups and between government and opposition leaders was often critical. Such explorations sometimes required secrecy that temporarily

exacerbated distrust among opposition groups. It was vital to build bridges between political movements and other sectors—including business groups, professional associations, religious groups and civil society organizations—some of which had cooperated earlier with the authoritarian regime but now seemed ready for neutrality or perhaps even to defect. These leaders thought that it was much more important to invest in future-oriented relationships than to sort out disputes about the past.

Such future-oriented dialogues often sharpened the opposition's vision and programmes, built incipient consensus and developed shared commitments, including those to democracy and human rights; they also helped clarify the issues that would be the hardest to negotiate. These dialogues provided ideas and analysis and even helped craft the norms and rules of the game for eventual democratic governance. This was illustrated by the secret 'talks about talks' held outside South Africa between government officials and ANC leaders, as well as the 'bush retreats' de Klerk held with National Party leaders to build consensus for the negotiations with the ANC. Other examples included the roles of the Group of 24, the Center for Christian Humanism, CIEPLAN and Vector in Chile; CEBRAP and other centres of reflection in Brazil; the Round Table and the pre-Round Table private discussions at Magdalenka between Solidarity and the communist government in Poland; the talks between Adolfo Suárez and the Committee of Nine before the 1977 elections in Spain; and the roles of Islamic organizations in Indonesia and of the Lawyers' Association and other civil society groups in Ghana. It was important not to short-change or truncate the prolonged discussions often required to construct coalitions and forge consensus.

Constitution making

Drafting a new constitution or amending an existing one was typically an essential, but a difficult and sometimes dangerous task. That process inevitably opened important debates on fundamental issues: from social and economic rights to the design and details of the electoral system; from the role of the military to the reform of the justice system; and the issue, in some cases, of regional autonomy. Electoral systems

and procedures were often matters of strong contention, as was the legalization of previously banned political groups that authoritarian governments had considered subversive.

Several alternative approaches were employed for designing a new constitution: electing a constitutional assembly, establishing a special commission or delegating that function to the parliament, sometimes before submitting the resulting document to the public for approval by referendum. Each process makes sense in certain circumstances. Whatever the process chosen, leaders emphasized the importance of engaging a wide range of participants in drafting a constitution and trying hard to accommodate the core demands of key contending groups.

This was important even when it meant reluctantly accepting (at least for some time) such cumbersome procedures as Chile's undemocratic provisions: appointed senators and especially the designation of former President Pinochet as commander of the armed forces for eight years after his presidency, and as senator for life. In some cases, transition leaders determined that building broad support for the new constitutional document required incorporating certain aspirations that might eventually need to be revised. This was true, for example, of the lofty but fiscally unsustainable socio-economic guarantees of Brazil's 1988 constitution, as well as its provision to entitle the various armed services to participate in the cabinet, which was revised during the Cardoso presidency.

Sometimes it was necessary to proceed through multiple stages. In Spain, the government led by Suárez secured approval of provisions to hold democratic elections from a parliament that was still dominated by supporters of the former dictator Francisco Franco, and deferred the drafting of a new constitution until after those elections. In Poland, proposed constitutional reforms that were not approved by the sitting parliament were revived by President Kwasniewski and presented to (and approved by) the next parliament, which was democratically elected. South Africa's experience was perhaps the most complex. The de Klerk government and the ANC negotiated a provisional constitution based on 34 agreed principles. They deferred the drafting of a permanent text

until after the first democratically elected parliament constituted itself as a Constitutional Assembly, and then subjected the permanent text to approval by the Constitutional Court in order to ensure compliance with the 34 principles.

All these leaders understood that whether the constitutional text would be truly permanent mattered less than whether its framers could achieve broad ‘buy-in’ regarding its main terms and legitimacy, establish consensus on a framework for moving forward, and agree on a way—that was neither too easy nor practically impossible—to amend the document at a later stage, when conditions warranted. Although the exact wording of a constitution obviously matters, it also matters how it is adopted, when and by whom.⁹

Providing assurances to elements and supporters of the former regime that their economic and institutional interests—as well as their individual rights—would be protected was often vital in the constitution-making process, despite the foreseeable protests such assurances provoked among those who were previously excluded (and often repressed). An important principle was that assurances should be transparent and consistent with democratic and constitutional procedures in order to allow the possibility of further review under these procedures at later stages. Tough issues such as transitional justice and civil-military relations did not necessarily have to be resolved in a single step, but could be tackled in stages over time. In announcing the establishment in 1990 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Chile, for example, Aylwin promised to seek justice only ‘insofar as is possible’, but he hoped that what was possible might expand over time, as it eventually did.

It was more important to reach agreement on the procedures by which political power could be obtained and challenged than to specify in advance the precise details of political representation. Compromises were often required in order to achieve broad participation in the political process, even if these reduced the authority of elected officials and created the need for further adjustments in the future.

Debate continues to this day about whether such compromises went too far. In Chile, for example, the binomial electoral system adopted under Pinochet after the 1988 plebiscite, but before the Concertación took power, was not changed by the 2005 constitutional revision. It made it possible for a minority party that obtained one-third of the vote in district elections to Congress to gain representation equal to that of the majority party that got 60 per cent, making it difficult for any president to win a comfortable legislative majority. This controversial provision remained until 2015—25 years after the end of dictatorship—when Congress approved a new electoral law. But there is no doubt that such a compromise helped draw highly polarized movements into peaceful electoral competition, and thus helped create stable democracies that were open to further evolution at later stages.

The political economy of transitions

The Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 precipitated the fall of Soeharto and thus the Indonesian transition toward democracy. In Brazil, South Africa and Poland, long-term economic stagnation, short-term decline, and/or fiscal deficits and high inflation helped convince some important economic groups that had prospered under authoritarianism that a political change was now necessary, or at least acceptable, as Cardoso discusses. Unemployment, recession and, in some cases, inflation also mobilized many people to oppose authoritarian governments. The most direct precipitants of transitions were usually more political than material, but adverse economic conditions certainly weakened some authoritarian governments.

Regardless of how a transition began, once a new government was in place, economic issues became a priority. In Poland (and in other former communist economies), welfare subsidies for most people were reduced or eliminated in order to achieve fiscal balance. The need to alleviate poverty as well as address concerns about financial crises and unemployment conflicted in many countries with the need to impose economic reforms and fiscal discipline in order to promote future growth, as emphasized by Mbeki, Habibie and others. But fiscal austerity risked strong political backlash, as Zedillo and Mazowiecki point out. Habibie, Mazowiecki and González highlight the need for

quick action to alleviate poverty and undertake economic reforms while there is strong popular support for political change. Aylwin and Lagos emphasize that the Concertación commitments to reducing poverty and achieving economic ‘growth with equity’ won support from both business and labour while affording the government the political authority needed to restrain wage demands—from the powerful miners’ union, for example.¹⁰ In many cases, special social measures were needed to mitigate the hardships endured by the most vulnerable.

The importance of political parties

Political parties, old and new, played a major role in most of these transitions. They established regional and territorial networks, developed ties with social movements and civil society organizations, helped craft and implement strategies to combat the authoritarian regime, and mobilized international support. Parties helped choose candidates for, organize and conduct electoral campaigns; prepare platforms and programmes for electoral competition and governance; train cadres for public service; mediate conflict among political allies; and assure that governments did not lose touch with their popular base.

Authoritarian regimes generally had banned parties or tried to weaken or destroy them. Exceptionally, as in Brazil and Indonesia, they created ‘official’ parties to support themselves. They sometimes allowed circumscribed official ‘opposition’ party activity in order to legitimize the ruling party’s hegemony, as in these two countries and in Poland and Mexico. Authoritarian regimes usually restricted the access of such opposition parties to campaign funding and the media, and often repressed or intimidated opposition leaders. They generally discredited and hampered politics, parties and politicians.

Most of the leaders who worked to end authoritarian regimes and foster democratic governance began by building or reviving political parties. They sought to legalize parties and assure their fair access to media exposure and campaign finance, and helped them reduce atrophy, division or marginalization. In several cases, leaders mobilized international solidarity and support for all these purposes. They devoted substantial effort to developing electoral rules and procedures

to help parties avoid fragmentation, and to enable them to broaden and institutionalize their appeal. Aylwin, Lagos, Cardoso, Rawlings, Kufuor, Mbeki, de Klerk, González, Ramos and Habibie all invested heavily in party-building efforts. (Mazowiecki, who did not make this goal a priority during his short tenure as prime minister, observed in retrospect that this was a mistake.) Zedillo, from the long-ruling PRI, played an important role in Mexico's transition by supporting reforms that created more favourable conditions for opposition parties, helping them become strong enough to compete with the PRI. He also introduced primary elections as the means of choosing the PRI presidential candidate, thus 'cutting off his finger (*dedo*)' to end the *dedocracia* by which Mexican presidents had personally chosen their successors for more than six decades.

Indonesia, Ghana, Poland and the Philippines all illustrate problems that democracies face when strong parties are not developed. Political parties have lost credibility and strength, even in many established democracies, and attacks on *partidocracia* are common in many countries. **But parties have played and can play important positive roles when they are not merely the vehicles of individual political figures and their cronies. Institutionalizing parties takes time and continuing attention, but early and sustained investment can pay rich dividends.**

Achieving democratic civilian control of the military, police and intelligence services

In almost every case, a key challenge was to bring the armed forces and other security institutions under civilian authority while recognizing their legitimate roles, their appropriate claim on some level of resources and their need to be protected from reprisals by former opposition forces.¹¹ These issues were handled differently from case to case, but it was generally necessary to remove or retire top officers responsible for torture and brutal repression; to place top military commanders under the direct authority of civilian ministers of defence; and to insist firmly that active-duty military officers refrain entirely from political commentary and partisan involvement. Aylwin, Lagos, Cardoso, González, de Klerk, Mbeki, Kufuor, Mazowiecki, Kwasniewski, Habibie

and Ramos provide fascinating testimony on how these important goals were accomplished in very diverse circumstances. The anecdotes these leaders recount about their own relations with military leaders speak volumes about the qualities required to manage this difficult issue. It took judgement and courage to determine when a ranking officer needed to be removed and when to look the other way, and more generally how best to harness military discipline to strengthen democratic governance.

It was necessary to recognize and enhance the professionalism and self-esteem of the armed forces, help them focus on external defence rather than internal security, and provide them with the equipment and facilities they required. It was also important that senior civilian officials charged with overseeing defence policy were knowledgeable about security matters and respectful of their military peers. This was challenging in countries where democratic movements had clashed violently with the armed forces, and mutual distrust, even disdain, persisted.

Habibie, Ramos, González and Mbeki all emphasize the need to separate both police and domestic intelligence functions from the armed forces. It was crucial to reorganize, redefine and limit the role of the police by inculcating new attitudes toward the general population and substituting protection for repression, while maintaining their capacity to dismantle violent groups. The domestic intelligence services also had to be brought under civilian control. This was by no means simple. Civilians had to be encouraged to enter and staff the intelligence services, previously not considered a suitable professional career, as González emphasizes.

Being aware of, and consistently clear about, communicating all these points was vital for constructing democratic governance. **Subjecting all security and intelligence forces to firm civilian control was often one of the most protracted challenges new democracies faced. It sometimes took repeated confrontations over several years between democratic governments and elements of the armed forces and/or the intelligence and police agencies—some highly visible, others not—to firmly establish civilian control.** Aylwin did not at first take

advice from González to establish his own intelligence capability, for example, but over time he learned the wisdom of this counsel.

Achieving transitional justice

There was strong political and social pressure in all cases to hold members of the former authoritarian regime accountable for human rights violations and blatant corruption. It was critical, however, to balance the need for truth and justice with the requirement to provide assurances and safety to those leaving power. In some cases, this involved transparent legal processes, carried out over time, to extract the truth (to the extent possible) about violations of rights; to provide recognition and even reparation to victims; and, when feasible, to bring major violators to justice. It was also important to guarantee those leaving power that there would be no wholesale prosecution of former officials.

There was no simple formula for handling these complex questions. These interviews underline how important it was to address them openly, emphasizing both recognition of victims and measures to achieve mutual tolerance, if not reconciliation. In Brazil and Spain, amnesties allowed members of the democratic opposition who had been operating clandestinely to enter open political competition. In Chile, South Africa and Ghana, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and recognizing violations were vital steps. The tension between drawing a ‘thick line’ between the past and the present (as Mazowiecki and Kufuor emphasized) and recognizing and remembering the abuses that had occurred so that they would not be repeated (as stressed by Aylwin, Lagos, de Klerk and Mbeki) cannot easily be resolved; most of these leaders struggled to respect and reconcile the two objectives. In Indonesia, where human rights violations were swept under the rug, the unresolved issues remain problematic.

Mobilizing external support

External actors—governments, international and multilateral institutions, corporations, trade unions, religious organizations, international associations of political parties and other non-

governmental entities—helped support most of these transitions. In some cases, they provided the necessary venue and conditions for dialogue among different opposition sectors, as well as between them and representatives of authoritarian regimes and other social forces. These contributions were illustrated in South Africa, where a major mining corporation provided funding and safe venues outside the country for secret meetings between government officials and ANC leaders, as Mbeki discusses, but they were also significant in Spain and Chile.

External actors helped reinforce civil society organizations by sharing expertise and providing encouragement and support, often long before a challenge to authoritarian rule was actually mounted or the time for turnover arrived. External actors facilitated the exchange of experiences from different countries on political party organization, electoral systems and conduct, coalition building, constitution making and advancing the rights of women. They provided training on community organization, communications and information, public opinion polling, exit polling, quick counts, election monitoring and other practical aspects of democracy building. In some countries, international electoral monitoring missions helped bolster the credibility of elections and their results. External organizations also provided educational and networking opportunities on substantive issues that helped opposition cadres prepare for the eventual responsibilities of government. These activities were important, for instance, in Poland, where a generation of economists was trained abroad in how to liberalize an ineffective statist economy and promote markets. The policy decision to build a market economy was made in Poland, but international cooperation helped make possible its implementation.

International actors facilitated access to prior experience in the recurrent issues that put transitions at risk: civil-military relations, transitional justice, the conduct of credible elections, police reform and the oversight of domestic intelligence agencies, right down to the details of disarming hostile surveillance and intelligence activity, which were vividly described by González. They also promoted peer group communication and training opportunities with counterparts in the armed forces, business and labour groups, professional associations and

other sectors, which sometimes helped reinforce democratic attitudes and behaviour among these groups. And they provided reassurance, broad counsel and, on occasion, detailed practical advice.¹²

Concerted external pressure to curb repression and respect human rights, including those of free expression and assembly, were often important. Economic sanctions were critical in South Africa and Poland. Various trade, investment, aid and cooperation programmes were significant in Poland, Indonesia, Ghana and the Philippines. In addition to pressure, international recognition of Rawlings for accepting multiparty elections, reasonably fair electoral procedures and term limits reinforced his contributions to Ghana's democratic transition.

Finally, international organizations, governments, foundations and non-governmental organizations sometimes played significant roles in responding to critical social and economic needs during transition periods. In Spain, South Africa, Ghana and Poland, they provided resources to mitigate the social impact of necessary economic reforms, invested in infrastructure development and capacity building, and offered other financial and technical assistance. The European Union (EU) and the US government were crucial in helping Poland (and other Central and Eastern European countries) move toward democracy in the 1990s. Such international economic assistance can be critical when it is provided in response to local needs, in cooperation with local actors, and leaves policy choices to local political debates and decisions.

Aspiring transition makers and external actors need to understand both the potential contributions and the limits of external involvement. Democracy can take root in a society only after it becomes the most accepted way to contend for political power. International actors can often do a good deal—patiently, quietly and at the request of local actors—to reinforce movement in that direction, but they cannot take the place of domestic actors. Having a broader understanding of the many difficult challenges and obstacles that must be faced, and of the considerable time it may take for democratic governance to take hold, should help international actors avoid impatient, ineffective and counterproductive interventions and instead enable them to contribute more consistently over the longer term. They are most likely to be

effective when they listen, raise questions that arise from comparative experience, and encourage local actors to consider issues from various perspectives, rather than promoting pre-packaged answers.

Changing contexts for transitions

The contexts of current and future challenges to authoritarian rule differ importantly from those in which the transitions of the late 20th century took place. The world continues to change, ever more rapidly.

Transformed geopolitics and international norms

Today's challenges to authoritarian rule are mostly free of the Cold War's pressures to contain social mobilization, limit changes to property regimes and determine political alignments in the light of international geopolitical balances. Since the Cold War's end, the major powers have become less inclined to see political change in authoritarian allies as threatening, thus opening up more space for democratizing movements, but also perhaps diminishing international support for such forces in specific situations.

The strengthening of international legal norms and institutions to protect individual human rights and prosecute crimes against humanity, as well as the creation of the International Criminal Court, have somewhat reduced the possibility that outright repression can take place without repudiation or sanctions; brutal repression continues in several notorious cases, but at least there are international standards that somewhat discourage such practices. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the decline of US international influence in recent years have produced a more multipolar international system. International constraints on democratic openings have diminished, but so has the international capacity to respond to internal violence and gross repression, or to help broker solutions. Some rights, including those of women, have been much more widely accepted.

The collapse of the Soviet economic system and China's rise in the international economy reinforced global turns toward economic liberalization, market-oriented reforms, private foreign investment, and the globalization of world production, finance and trade. Most governments today seek to expand international trade and respect international financial and investment norms and regulations, leaving little room in the global economy for closed economies, especially for small and mid-sized countries. Some countries have strengthened the state's role in avoiding economic concentration, improving income distribution, promoting regional development and protecting the environment.

Democratic governance has become more widely accepted internationally as the most legitimate basis for political order. But there are different concepts regarding what democracy entails and requires. 'Competitive authoritarian' regimes have been established in several countries that are not incomplete or decaying democracies, but rather deliberate efforts to present alternatives to liberal democracy by combining reasonably free plebiscitary elections with authoritarian governance.¹³ The pressures of globalization, the consequent openness to international influence, and the strengthening of international legal regimes and institutions may make it harder over time for authoritarian governments to maintain systematically anti-democratic practices and suppress human rights, including the rights of women, but this is certainly not yet the case.

Legacies of prior democratic experiences

Many authoritarian regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, and a few in the 1990s, came to an end in countries that had some prior experience with constitutional democratic governance; in several cases some democratic institutions were still formally in place. Political actors in these countries had networks, experience in negotiating and fashioning compromises, and confidence that they could compete effectively under democratic rules. Future transitions from authoritarian rule will often take place in countries with little or no such prior experience, and in some cases with leaders who have long suppressed dissent. Some national traditions of responsive government—at local levels, for example—can be invoked against such regimes. The universal and powerful appeal of participation in self-government, which is perhaps rising with income levels and capacity for political expression, can also be energizing. But developing the culture and institutions of democratic politics takes time, effort and skill.¹⁴

Socio-economic, class and demographic differences

The transitions of the 1970s and 1980s, and some in the 1990s, mainly took place in countries with a growing and educated middle class that was often favourably disposed toward expanded political expression and had training in law, public administration and economics, which helped build effective democratic governance. Transition attempts in countries with low income and development levels, fragile trade unions and social organizations, small middle classes, weak states that are incapable of providing social services and citizen security, and few people trained in public administration, may be more difficult, especially in the face of popular pressure for quick ‘bread and butter’ economic gains. Other attempts, especially in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf states, will occur in resource-rich countries with high incomes and expanding middle classes. Many of these countries, however, also have bloated states and high levels of clientelism and corruption. For geopolitical reasons related to their strategic location or their natural resources, they experience little sustained external pressure to open their political systems. Such regimes are more able to buy off or stifle opposition movements.

Many contemporary authoritarian regimes in Asia and Africa are in societies that have strong ethnic and/or religious and regional divisions and inequalities, which contribute to polarization. Some have increasing numbers of frustrated and educated young people who are unable to find gainful employment, and can thus be readily mobilized for protest. Engaging young people in political organizations, parties and other institutions—not merely in street demonstrations—is a major challenge to governance in many countries, including long-established democracies. Today’s leaders must relate well to new generations and encourage them to organize democratically and to stay involved.

All these and other difficulties—including the presence of powerful organized crime syndicates and transnational extremist political movements—put intense pressure on weak political institutions. It will be challenging, therefore, to formulate approaches and build institutions that can facilitate dialogue and convergence, establish checks and balances and the means of accountability, build independent judiciaries and the rule of law, establish civilian control of all security forces and lay the other foundations for democracy. Democratic governance will be harder to achieve in countries with weak states and institutions, but it can be constructed, as illustrated by Ghana’s experience.

International efforts to promote democracy

Many European transitions, including Spain’s, Poland’s and others in Central and Eastern Europe, were strongly aided by the prospect of incorporation into the EU and by proffered economic assistance from the EU and the United States that was conditioned on political reforms. Several Latin American openings toward democracy, including Chile’s, were facilitated first by the US administration’s new emphasis on human rights in the late 1970s (under Jimmy Carter) and then by the return of US policy to actively promoting democracy and human rights in the mid-1980s during the second administration of Ronald Reagan. Democratic openings were also reinforced by the consensus for human rights and political freedoms developed in the Organization of American States and by the strengthening of international legal norms and institutions, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the International Criminal Court. Mexico’s democratization

was bolstered by the general integration of labour markets, production processes and popular culture between Mexico and the United States, and by the mobilization of US and Mexican businesses and NGOs to support democratic opening and the rule of law, reinforced by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Regional institutions, today and in the future, may be equally, more or in some cases (such as the Gulf Cooperation Council) less supportive of democratic governance. The slow but growing engagement of regional intergovernmental organizations is promoting and protecting the integrity of elections. The African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance has come into full effect. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Political and Security Blueprint includes common language on democracy standards, and the ASEAN Secretariat provided observers for the 2012 Myanmar by-elections. Such regional partnerships provide important resources on which transition leaders can draw.

Regional and cultural differences

A number of potential transitions are being (or may be) attempted in countries with Muslim majorities at a time when there are salient divisions between fundamentalist and moderate interpretations of Islam, and when the civil state, the role of the armed forces and popular sovereignty are all highly contested concepts. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, has built increasingly effective democratic governance over the past generation, and pro-democracy sectors are influential in many other Muslim-majority countries. In some countries, however, powerful conservative sectors contend that law should be derived solely or primarily from sharia, and that religious orthodoxy and traditional gender roles should be enforced by the state. Both religious conservatives and secular liberals see compromise on the role of religious law and the status of women as morally unacceptable. Thus they may both support authoritarian solutions, but of different types and for opposite reasons.

Armed forces in the Middle East have mainly been committed to civil rather than religious states. They are challenged now by both secular

democrats and religious fundamentalists. International peer discussions with military leaders should focus on the principles and practices that are most conducive both to ongoing political stability and to the coherence and integrity of military institutions.

Religious institutions have often acted as bulwarks of authoritarian regimes, but in the late 20th century they sometimes fostered democratization, particularly in Roman Catholic countries such as Spain, Brazil, Chile, the Philippines and Poland. The roles of cardinals Raúl Silva Henríquez and Juan Francisco Fresno in Chile, Paulo Evaristo Arns in Brazil, Vicente Enrique Tarancón in Spain and Jaime Sin in the Philippines, and of Pope John Paul II in his native Poland, were all important. In South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Protestant Church and clergy from other churches, including some Dutch Calvinist ministers, also supported the transition toward inclusive democracy. Muslim organizations, movements, parties and individuals in Indonesia also helped build the country's non-sectarian democracy; the role of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) deserves special mention.

Muslim religious authorities will doubtless play major roles in other countries, but these are likely to vary from case to case, and in Arab and non-Arab cultures, just as the political roles of various Christian denominations and political leaders have varied between (and sometimes within) countries. Finding ways to engage Muslim religious authorities more actively in support of democratic governance is an important challenge. Such engagement may also benefit from international exchanges of relevant experiences, including consultations about how best to cope with transnational organizations with extremist visions that promote violence in support of sectarian causes.

The information and communications revolutions

The revolutions in information and communications technologies (ICT) have eroded the capacity of governments to control information, reduced the costs of sharing alternative views and news, facilitated popular organizing, and made it easier to draw upon external sympathy and support. Anyone anywhere with a mobile phone camera can

spark protests by recording egregious behaviour. These processes will accelerate as smartphones and broadband become available to most of the population, especially the youth. Social networks using these technologies cannot replace political organizations in governing, but they can shake up political systems, requiring political parties and institutions to adapt or be severely weakened.

Innovations in ICT are not always good for democratization, however. They may help create short-lived bursts of popular involvement that give democratic organizers undue confidence in their ability to move ahead without persistent and organized negotiation and compromise. They may also enable extremists to expand their support, and may help give the perception that fringe groups are major actors. Technologically sophisticated governments, sometimes aided by multinational companies, can use the same technologies to repress citizens. Governments can now intercept electronic communications, identify protesters filmed on security cameras, and threaten or imprison opposition members.

Those who want to undertake or support democratic transitions must learn how to harness new technologies and combine them with the more time-consuming but vital processes of deliberation, negotiation, coalition building, compromise and consensus building. They must also learn how to protect democratic forces from the manipulation of ICT, both by authoritarian regimes and by anti-democratic extremist elements.

Qualities of political leadership

There is no prescribed, ‘central casting’ model for a transition leader. The leaders we interviewed, who were opposition activists and incumbents from authoritarian governments, included experienced politicians, lawyers and economists, a senior military figure, a junior military officer, a journal editor, an academic sociologist and an aeronautics engineer. They had different religious beliefs and practices, ranging from devout to non-believing, and included Catholics, Protestants and a Muslim. Their physical presence and personal styles differed remarkably.

Some were not, in fact, democrats by temperament, conviction, experience or reputation. Jerry Rawlings ruled for a decade as a military dictator, and agreed to hold open, multiparty elections, under domestic and external pressure, only when secret polls showed that he would win easily. His interview reveals the complex attitudes Rawlings had and still has toward representative, liberal democracy. F. W. de Klerk was committed for many years to apartheid and its exclusion of South Africa’s large black majority until he became convinced, late in the day, that this system was no longer sustainable for economic, political and moral reasons. B. J. Habibie was an intimate associate of Soeharto, Indonesia’s long-term dictator. Habibie’s respect for democratic institutions, apparently acquired during his 20 years as an aeronautical engineer in Germany, was not evident until he was thrust into power when Soeharto fell. Starting without any political base or significant support, and with strident opposition in the streets, Habibie worked quickly to achieve legitimacy through a number of dramatic democratizing steps.

Aleksander Kwasniewski, a junior minister in the communist government in Poland who played an important role as a representative

of that regime in the Round Table negotiations, later launched a social democratic party, was elected president after the transition, and eventually helped strengthen Poland's new democratic institutions and practices. Successive Polish political leaders brought very different qualities to the changing challenges of transition. Lech Wałęsa was a dissident trade union leader who articulated bold demands and mobilized broad popular support, but later lost much legitimacy when he pushed to acquire more personal power. Tadeusz Mazowiecki concentrated on tough political and economic policy choices, inclusionary and conciliatory approaches, and managing Poland's important link with the Vatican and delicate relations with the Soviet Union. Kwasniewski focused largely on effective administration and institution building.

Ernesto Zedillo had democratic inclinations from an early age, but held important posts in Mexico's ruling PRI at a time when it had controlled virtually all political positions for many decades. Previous electoral procedures had been designed to assure that this domination would continue. Zedillo's willingness as president to accept changes in the procedures and conditions for elections opened the way for alternation of power in Mexico and progress toward effective democratic governance, what Zedillo called 'normal democracy'.

All these leaders—even those with autocratic backgrounds—concluded, for diverse reasons, that government based on popular sovereignty and constitutional restraints was a better path for their country and themselves than available alternatives. Some had strong democratic principles. Some developed or strengthened their commitment to democracy in response to social pressures in unfolding circumstances. Others adopted democracy-opening approaches only when it became

politically advantageous. None of these particular leaders was a saint. They were all pragmatic politicians who looked for ways to gain or maintain influence and solve problems, who bet on democratic processes to do so, and who helped bend their countries toward democracy.

Whatever their backgrounds or motives, these leaders shared some common qualities that helped them succeed.

- Each had—some from the beginning, others developing over time—a strategic sense of direction toward more inclusionary and accountable governance, and a fundamental preference for peaceful and incremental (rather than violent or convulsive) transformation.
- They captured the mood and spirit of citizens and reinforced the efforts of political parties and social organizations to move toward democracy.
- They diversified and expanded their own bases of support and worked to weaken intransigent elements, both within the regime and within the opposition. They were able to assess the interests and influence of multiple power centres and interest groups, and often found paths toward political compromise and accommodation.
- Many showed resolution and courage, sometimes even risking their lives in conditions of polarization and violence that took the lives of colleagues. Often these leaders mustered great patience, persistence and stamina in the face of opposition, obstacles and setbacks, and were able to persuade others not to lose heart.
- They had the self-confidence needed to take difficult, decisive and timely decisions with calm conviction. Some were by nature highly analytical and reflective, but even they managed consistently to look forward rather than second-guess their prior decisions.
- Most relied heavily on competent associates who shared political values and specific expertise in order to deal with difficult issues. Although they could (and did) make key choices personally, most of them concentrated mainly on building consensus, forging coalitions, constructing political bridges, and communicating consistently with key constituencies and the broad public.
- They were generally able to persuade others to accept their decisions. Although some were eloquent and/or charismatic, they mainly did so by understanding and responding to the core interests of diverse

actors, including adversaries, rather than primarily by fiat or the force of their personalities.

- Although they were deeply grounded in their respective national societies and relied primarily on domestic relationships, each of these leaders knew how to mobilize external support without becoming instruments of foreign actors.
- Above all, these leaders adjusted rapidly to events and used unexpected turns to seize the initiative. They piloted in turbulent waters: bending into the current, steering left or right, to and fro, as the rapids required, while ultimately moving forward. They did not determine the direction and pace of the currents, but they managed to help guide their countries to calmer waters and toward eventual democratic governance.

It is hard to imagine that these transitions would have been so successful without these leaders and their decisions. They and other individual leaders in these countries—including Nelson Mandela, Cyril Ramaphosa, Oliver Tambo, Roelf Meyer and Desmond Tutu in South Africa; Corazon Aquino in the Philippines; Lech Wałęsa, Wojciech Jaruzelski, Adam Michnik and Czesław Kiszczak in Poland; Tancredo Neves, Ulysses Guimarães, Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva and generals Golbery do Couto e Silva, Ernesto Geisel and João Figueiredo in Brazil; Andrés Balderrama, Clodomiro Almeida, Manuel Bustos and Gabriel Valdés in Chile; Manuel Clouthier, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Ernesto Ruffo and Vicente Fox in Mexico; and King Juan Carlos, Adolfo Suárez, Manuel Fraga and Santiago Carrillo in Spain—helped open their countries' paths toward democracy.¹⁵ The top political executives did not work on their own, and they could not have achieved success without social, political and civic forces, but they worked creatively and constructively with many others, within tight constraints, to build new realities.

The prospects for building democracies in other countries, now and in the future, depend in considerable measure on the emergence and performance of such leaders. As Samuel Huntington observed, 'A democratic regime is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers'.¹⁶ These interviews provide ample evidence.

Looking forward

In his interview, Felipe González makes two points worth emphasizing. He notes that leadership is not learned on university courses, but rather in actual practice, by applying broad principles to concrete circumstances. And, citing the late novelist Gabriel García Márquez, González suggests that people often learn such broad principles from anecdotes, from narratives of remembered experiences. That is the fundamental premise of *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders*.

New actors, technologies, institutions, norms, challenges and opportunities have emerged, and will no doubt continue to do so. But, though actors and technologies change rapidly, the imperatives of political expression and action are much more permanent. Mobilizing for political freedom, building spaces for dialogue, constructing convergence and consensus, forging agreement on procedures and rules of engagement, and reassuring opposing forces that their fundamental interests will be protected will remain vital priorities. Establishing mechanisms to deal with issues of transitional justice and memory; to assure civilian control of military, police and intelligence forces; and to protect both civil order and individual human rights will continue to be central challenges. That is true both for those seeking to end authoritarian governments and for those trying to counter a reversal of democratic gains by governments that are fairly elected but then weaken or ignore the checks and balances of democracy.

Social movements and civil society organizations, enhanced by electronic networking, will pressure governments and other institutions. But, though these actors and their techniques can be helpful, they cannot

replace political parties, social organizations and political leaders in the difficult tasks of building electoral and governing coalitions, winning public support, preparing viable public policies, calling for sacrifices in the common good, inspiring people to believe that democracy is possible and governing effectively. The importance of vision, patience, persistence and openness to compromise will therefore continue.

Future leaders will have to consider carefully which aspects of prior experiences elsewhere are relevant in the specific circumstances of their own countries. Knowing that many of the issues they confront have been experienced before, and understanding the different ways these have been handled, should be immensely helpful. We hope they will be inspired by the qualities and achievements of these political leaders.

Notes

- ¹ We do not offer this essay primarily as a contribution to political science theory, for which other methods and additional cases would be necessary. We aim rather to make accessible the political wisdom of key leaders who contributed importantly to successful democratic transitions.
- ² In other cases that we did not review, authoritarian regimes sometimes collapsed after military defeat, as was the case in Greece, Portugal and Argentina. The perception in the Philippines that the New People's Army (MPA) insurgency was gaining strength contributed to the weakening of the Marcos regime and to the 'Reform the Armed Forces Movement' (RAM), which helped topple Marcos.
- ³ In other cases, transitions have taken place after civil wars or in the wake of foreign occupation, or from monarchies or patrimonial regimes. Each of these transitions presented special issues, but many of the recurrent challenges considered here were also relevant.
- ⁴ For comparative views on the role of external forces in democratic transitions, see Stoner, K. and McFaul, M., *Transitions to Democracy: A Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- ⁵ Other transitions during these years have produced different outcomes, including hybrid, semi-authoritarian regimes that combine competitive elections with serious ongoing violations of democratic procedures, as well as highly uneven and incomplete democratic governments that have been subject to reversion. See Levitsky, S. and Way, L. A., *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- ⁶ In their ground-breaking study of transitions from authoritarian rule, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter emphasized the special uncertainties of such transitions and how and why they differ from 'normal politics'. See O'Donnell, G. and Schmitter, P. C., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; republished with a new preface by Cynthia Arnson and Abraham F. Lowenthal, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- ⁷ Reserved domains are special concessions to previous power groups to preserve certain privileges, such as guaranteeing budget levels to military institutions, putting parts of the economy under the control of specific groups, and assuring political representation to designated individuals, institutions or interest groups.

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- ⁸ Waylen, G., 'Women Activists in Democratic Transitions', in International IDEA, *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders*, eds S. Bitar and A. Lowenthal (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, Forthcoming, 2015).
- ⁹ Philippe Schmitter emphasized this point in 'Contrasting Approaches to Political Engineering: Constitutionalization and Democratization,' unpublished manuscript, February 2001.
- ¹⁰ For an illuminating discussion of the political economy of market-opening transitions, see Besley, T. and Zagba, R. (eds), *Development Challenges in the 1990s: Leading Policymakers Speak from Experience* (Washington, D.C. and New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2005).
- ¹¹ A recent and comprehensive study of civil–military relations and their importance for building and consolidating democracy is Barany, Z., *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- ¹² Foreign governments also provided asylum to threatened opposition leaders and later to exiting members of authoritarian regimes (as occurred with Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines); furnished advanced voting machines and personal identification techniques to facilitate clean elections (as in Ghana); and pressed local authorities to assure that the opposition would have reasonable access to the media (as in Chile's 1988 plebiscite). International organizations offered technical assistance for economic management (as the German Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund did in Indonesia), and reinforced local pressures for free and fair multiparty elections (as in Ghana and Mexico).
- ¹³ For a full discussion, see Levitsky and Way, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁴ As the late European social scientist Ralf Dahrendorf observed in his *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: In a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Warsaw*: 'The formal process of constitutional reform takes at least six months; a general sense that things are looking up as a result of economic reform is unlikely to spread before six years have passed; the third condition of the road to freedom is to provide the social foundations which transform the constitution and the economy from fair-weather into all-weather institutions capable of withstanding the storms generated within and without, and sixty years are barely enough to lay these foundations' (New York: Times Books, 1990, pp. 99–100).

- ¹⁵ The role of King Juan Carlos of Spain, for instance, is concisely highlighted by Charles Powell in 'Abdication is the King's final gift to a grateful Spain', *Financial Times*, 4 June 2014.
- ¹⁶ Huntington, Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 107.

Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
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| ANC | African National Congress (South Africa) |
| EU | European Union |
| ICT | information and communications technologies |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| PAN | Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party) (Mexico) |
| PCE | Partido Comunista de España (Communist Party of Spain) |
| PRI | Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party) (Mexico) |
| PSOE | Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) |
| SLD | Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance) (Poland) |

About the leaders:

Brief biographies of the leaders interviewed in *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders*

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, president of Brazil 1995–2003

Fernando Henrique Cardoso made his initial professional reputation as a sociologist; his dissertation and first book were on race in Brazil. He soon displayed his political and administrative talents in the governance of the University of São Paulo. Deprived by the military regime of his tenured position there, Cardoso went into exile in Chile, where he co-authored a landmark volume on dependency and development. He turned down attractive international academic posts to return to Brazil in 1968. With help from the Ford Foundation, he co-founded CEBRAP, an independent social science research centre, where he led the development of research on urban São Paulo, focusing on income distribution and other themes with policy implications that challenged the military regime. Cardoso entered elective politics in the partially free 1978 congressional elections, then played an increasingly important role in Congress as a member of the opposition, and co-founded the Social Democratic Party of Brazil.

As an opposition leader in Brazil's gradual transition, Cardoso built bridges among opponents of the military regime and then in the country's successive democratic governments. He served as rapporteur of the congressional committees that fashioned Brazil's 1988 constitution. As finance minister, beginning in 1993, he drew upon academic expertise to curb inflation with the Real Plan, and won public support by articulating the new economic approach to the broad citizenry. The success of the Real Plan strongly aided his election as president in 1994. Cardoso then used his personal and relationship-building skills to forge a governing coalition. He also drew on his family's extensive military background to understand the mores of the Brazilian officers and win their support for important reforms, including the establishment of a civilian ministry of defence. He served two presidential terms, oversaw market-opening economic reforms and active international diplomacy, and then led a seamless transition to the long-time left and labour leader, Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva, elected in 2002, who continued and extended many of Cardoso's economic and social policies.

Patricio Aylwin, president of Chile 1990–94

Patricio Aylwin is a constitutional lawyer and professor of jurisprudence with a long background as a centrist Christian Democratic political leader. He served as president of his party and as a member (and president) of the Chilean Senate before the military took power. He was known for his opposition to socialist President Salvador Allende in the unsuccessful political negotiations that immediately preceded the September 1973 coup by General Augusto Pinochet and the Chilean armed forces that overthrew Allende's Popular Unity government. Despite that controversial stance, Aylwin eventually came to play a pivotal role in bridging differences among major elements of the deeply divided opposition to Pinochet. He helped lead the 'Coalition for the No', which defeated Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite, thus opening the way for the transition to democratic civilian rule in 1990.

Moderate and patrician in manner, Aylwin won support for strategic compromises that brought together the centre, centre left and centre right. He projected a firm commitment to the rule of law and to Chile's long democratic political traditions. As the leader and first president of the Concertación por la Democracia that won the 1989 presidential election and every subsequent national election until 2010, Aylwin moved to exert civilian control over the armed forces in the face of embedded constitutional provisions, imposed by Pinochet in 1980, which made this very difficult. He worked to stabilize the economy and win business confidence, introducing greater attention to social justice. Aylwin operated as a team captain, almost always deferring to trusted advisors. But he took personal responsibility, against advice from his political team, for insisting that a pluralist and representative commission be established to determine the truth with regard to political executions and 'disappearances' under the authoritarian regime and, 'insofar as possible', to seek justice. That decision, and the resulting Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the Rettig Commission), won legitimacy and stability for the democratic transition, and left open the possibility of future progress toward transitional justice.

Ricardo Lagos, president of Chile 2000–06

Ricardo Lagos was a leader of the student federation at the law school of the University of Chile in the 1960s. Also trained in economics, Lagos developed his career in academia and international organizations, entering politics first in the Radical Party and then in the Socialist Party. Allende nominated him to serve as ambassador to the Soviet Union, a post he never took up because of the 1973 coup. In the post-coup years, living first in the United States and then returning to Chile to work for the United Nations, Lagos became a respected opposition figure, known for his acute analysis. He became known as a Socialist representative in the multiparty National Accord, and was briefly arrested after the assassination attempt on Pinochet in 1986. He gained stature because of his willingness to challenge Pinochet directly, especially in a memorable television appearance, as a spokesman for the country's long-repressed dissatisfaction.

Lagos took the lead in establishing the Party for Democracy, which helped build cooperation between the moderate left and the Christian Democrats, and played an important role in the 'Coalition for the No' that defeated Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite and in the subsequent Concertación por la Democracia. He declined to be a candidate for president in 1989, believing that the Concertación was too fragile to risk a divided constituency and that the country was not yet ready for a left-wing candidate; he ran for the Senate that year and lost. Lagos served as minister of education and then of public works in the first two Concertación governments, and was elected president in 2000, serving until 2006. His administration transformed Chile's infrastructure, achieved important constitutional reforms that reduced the anti-democratic features of the 1980 constitution, and established a commission on political imprisonment and torture that furthered transitional justice.

John Agyekum Kufuor, president of Ghana 2001–09

John Agyekum Kufuor, a lawyer of royal lineage from Ghana's majority Ashanti ethnic group, combined national and international experience in business and finance as well as important technocratic roles with years as an opposition leader. He was a minister in the Second Republic government of Kofi Busia (1969–72), an opposition member of parliament in the Third Republic under Hilla Limman (1979–81) and secretary for local government under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) military government of Jerry Rawlings. Kufuor was a founding member of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which organized to contest democratic elections in the mid-1990s. He led the NPP as a presidential candidate in the 1996 elections, which he won. Kufuor's accession to the presidency in December 2000 marked the first successful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another since Ghana's independence in 1957. He was re-elected president in 2004, completed the two terms permitted under the constitution and then handed power over to the newly elected president, John Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), thus deepening Ghana's liberal democracy. Kufuor strengthened Ghana's democratic institutions

by significantly reducing restrictions on the freedom of the press and establishing a commission to investigate human rights violations committed under the pre-1992 regimes. As the head of a political party with a long tradition of liberal democratic and free-market ideology, Kufuor followed consistent free-market economic policies that further integrated Ghana into the world economy.

Jerry John Rawlings, president of Ghana 1993–2001

Jerry John Rawlings was an Air Force pilot and flight lieutenant in the Ghanaian armed forces. Together with other junior officers, he overthrew Ghana's elected government in 1979, leading to the execution of several high-ranking military officers, including three former heads of state. Rawlings facilitated new national elections in 1979, three months after coming to power. Highly critical of the then-elected government of Hilla Limman and its alleged protection of elite privileges, Rawlings overthrew the new regime on 31 December 1981. He ruled as military dictator until 1992, when he agreed to constitutional reform in response to pressure from both Ghanaian civil society organizations and the international community, and threw his support behind competitive multiparty elections.

Rawlings supervised the adoption of a new constitution, establishing the Fourth Republic, which was approved by referendum in early 1992. He formed the National Democratic Congress party and led it as the presidential candidate in the first multiparty elections in November 1992 and 1996, winning on both occasions. The Fourth Republic constitution established non-partisan institutions to oversee elections, civic education, the media and the protection of human rights. During his first term as elected president (1993–95), Rawlings implemented the establishment of these institutions, and allowed them considerable power. In 2000, facing term limits and international scrutiny and pressure, Rawlings stepped down after his party's candidate lost to John Agyekum Kufuor, the opposition leader, thus firmly placing Ghana on the path to liberal democracy. Ghana has since managed additional competitive elections and transfers of power, most recently in the December 2012 elections, despite a closely contested outcome.

Although not a constitutional democrat by prior personal conviction or experience, Rawlings upended the oligarchic quasi-democracy that Ghana had before he took power. He connected with mass popular aspirations through political mobilization and socially inclusive policies that brought previously marginal regions of northern Ghana into the development process. Rawlings built political support, first from urban workers and then from rural peasants, and helped channel Ghanaian politics toward more inclusionary and institutionalized democratic governance.

B. J. Habibie, president of Indonesia 1998–99

B. J. Habibie, as a young man, had a close personal relationship with Soeharto, who served as the country's authoritarian president for 32 years. Habibie went to

Germany in the early 1950s and spent 20 years there as an aeronautical engineer and business executive. Soeharto brought him back in 1974 to run the state-owned aerospace company and advise the government on advancing technology. From 1978 to 1998, Habibie served as minister of state for research and technology. Soeharto gradually gave Habibie broader and more sensitive responsibilities and had him elected vice-president in 1998. Habibie was a member of the governing Golkar Party and chairman of the Muslim Intellectual Association. He understood the workings of power in Soeharto's Indonesia, but he had no appreciable power base of his own beyond some in the bureaucracy associated with the Muslim Intellectual Association, and was generally unpopular with the military and the opposition.

When the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 battered Indonesia's previously thriving economy, opposition to Soeharto mounted rapidly, with massive street demonstrations that forced his resignation in May 1998. Habibie reached the presidency through constitutional succession, endorsed by parliament, which averted a dangerous power struggle among senior military leaders. He immediately exerted personal control over the armed forces, freed most political prisoners, recognized trade unions, and removed censorship and press restrictions. Habibie authorized the formation of new political parties, brought forward the date for new national elections by three years, and removed Soeharto family supporters and several military officers from parliament. He undertook a programme of political and administrative decentralization, appointed a civilian minister of defence for the first time in 50 years and agreed to a referendum that led to Timor-Leste's independence. Habibie acted mainly on his own convictions, bolstered by religious faith and advice from a team of academics and civil servants. He believed that Indonesia required fundamental reform and recognized that contending power centres would accept these reforms in exchange for the chance to compete in early elections. Habibie ended his presidency in 1999 after his accountability report was rejected by a close vote in the People's Consultative Assembly. The changes he introduced have generally remained in place during Indonesia's subsequent extended construction of democratic governance.

Ernesto Zedillo, president of Mexico 1994–2000

Ernesto Zedillo was educated at the primary and secondary levels in Mexicali on the Mexico-Texas border, completed undergraduate studies at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City and then won a scholarship to Yale University, where he completed a PhD in economics and first connected with members of the Mexican elite who were fellow graduate students. Returning to Mexico, Zedillo worked in the state financial sector, developing a reputation for outstanding technical competence rather than political activity. In the presidential administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–94), he served as secretary for budget and planning and then as secretary of education. He resigned early in 1994 to become presidential campaign director for Luis Donaldo Colosio, a fellow northerner. When Colosio was assassinated while campaigning, Zedillo was the only cabinet-level member of the ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party

(Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), eligible to run for president because Mexican law requires cabinet members to resign months before campaigning for election.

In an election with the highest turnout in Mexican history, Zedillo was elected president in August 1994. Zedillo set out to help Mexico become a 'normal democracy' by proposing reforms to strengthen the judiciary and Congress, separate the government from the PRI and strengthen the independent electoral institutions. Despite a severe economic crisis that exploded within weeks of his inauguration, Zedillo undertook reforms in campaign finance rules and media access and accepted opposition control of Mexico City and the national Congress. He called for a 'healthy distance' between the government and the PRI and promoted the party's first internal primary process for candidate selection. His administration's decision to prosecute Raúl Salinas, the former president's brother, broke with the precedent of impunity for former presidents and their close relatives. The Zedillo administration also reinforced the liberalization of Mexico's economy that had been initiated by Miguel de la Madrid and accelerated by Salinas, and introduced an innovative, performance-based poverty-alleviation programme, Progreso, which provided conditional cash transfers.

On the night of the 2000 election, Zedillo congratulated opposition candidate Vicente Fox as president-elect even before the PRI candidate had conceded. Zedillo has subsequently based his career outside Mexico, serving as director of Yale University's Center for the Study of Globalization and on a number of corporate and non-profit boards and policy commissions.

Fidel V. Ramos, president of the Philippines 1992–98

Fidel Ramos is a professional soldier who exercised senior responsibilities in the armed forces and police during the long dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, his distant cousin, who ruled the country under martial law from 1972 to 1986. Educated at the US Military Academy at West Point, with a Master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Illinois, Ramos served in the Philippine Army and saw active duty in Korea and Vietnam. His role in the Philippine transition derived from his personal stature within the Philippine armed forces; his timely support for Corazon Aquino and the 'People's Power' movement that rose in protest in 1986 against the increasingly repressive and corrupt Marcos regime; his close relations with the United States, especially in the Pentagon, where he was known as 'Steady Eddie'; and his positive reputation in the Filipino business community.

First as chief of staff of the armed forces and then as Aquino's minister of defence, General Ramos worked behind the scenes to quash several attempted military coups against her. He was elected president in 1992 as Aquino's designated successor with only 24 per cent of the vote in a seven-candidate race, but he quickly built broader popular support with development and infrastructure programmes, such as constructing new power stations to end the frequent brown-outs that

plagued Manila. Ramos extended amnesty to military coup leaders, repealed the anti-subversive law of 1981 and thus legalized the Communist Party, and reached out to engage both communist and Muslim insurgents. He also accommodated himself to traditional Filipino patronage politics while respecting the national cultural legitimacy of democratic institutions.

The Philippines has managed 20 years of contested and generally fair elections, with an alternation of governing authorities, although there has been little change in its underlying oligarchic structure, weak parties and political institutions, and extensive corruption. Some Filipinos criticize Ramos' tolerance for corruption and military insubordination, and for the return to political life of the Marcos family and other traditional oligarchs. But most Filipinos give Ramos credit for reducing the country's political violence, strengthening the democratic processes that were restored under Cory Aquino and fostering the country's robust economic growth.

Aleksander Kwasniewski, president of Poland 1995–2005

Aleksander Kwasniewski, a career politician, rose through the Polish United Workers' Party (Communist Party) to a minor cabinet position in the last communist government. He was a major player in the transition from authoritarian communist rule to democratic governance and a market economy and led reform communists to electoral success, serving two terms as president in a semi-presidential system.

He began as a leader of the communist student organization in Gdansk in 1976, and then was editor of the party's two national student periodicals. In the last years of communist rule, from 1985 to 1990, Kwasniewski served as a cabinet minister for youth and sports, and then as head of the government's Social-Political Committee from late 1988 to 1989. In 1989 he co-chaired, with Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Round Table group dealing with trade union affairs.

When the Communist Party disbanded in 1990, Kwasniewski was a co-founder and chairman of its successor, the Social Democratic Party, and its parliamentary caucus, the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD). Under his leadership, the SLD did well in Poland's first fully free elections in 1991 and won the 1993 parliamentary elections; Kwasniewski then led the governing coalition. This electoral victory and his subsequent victory over Lech Wałęsa in the 1995 presidential election resulted from both public dissatisfaction with Poland's 'shock therapy' economic programme and Kwasniewski's emphasis on efficient, non-ideological political leadership, which was focused on economic transformation.

As president, Kwasniewski was able, by concentrating on effective administration, to bridge the gaps between left and right in his first term, when the SLD was the ruling coalition, and then after the SLD was defeated in 1997 by the right. He won parliamentary agreement and popular approval for a new constitution in 1997—with limited presidential powers—to replace the 'small constitution' that

had followed the transition. He continued the economic transition to capitalism, brought Poland into NATO and the European Union, and won re-election as president in 2000. In 2001, Kwasniewski helped the SLD return to parliamentary power in coalition with the Polish Peasant Party, only to have the SLD collapse in 2006.

During his presidency and after, Kwasniewski promoted cooperation among Central and Eastern European countries and encouraged democratization in the larger region. He led the mediation efforts that ended the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and headed delegations to observe the subsequent trials of Ukrainian political figures accused of human rights violations. He has also lectured widely.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, prime minister of Poland 1989–91

Tadeusz Mazowiecki played important roles in Poland's Catholic opposition from the 1950s until communism ended in 1989, and then as post-war Poland's first non-communist prime minister. Mazowiecki studied law, but made his career as a Catholic activist and editor. After Poland's liberalization in 1956, he was one of the founders of the lay Catholic intellectual organization *Znak*, and edited their monthly, *Wież*, until 1981. In the 1960s, he was a deputy in parliament until he demanded an investigation of the killings of shipyard workers who demonstrated in 1970. He also helped found the Committee to Protect Workers, which brought Catholic and non-Catholic opposition intellectuals together to press for human and labour rights. In 1980, Mazowiecki advised Lech Wałęsa during the Gdansk shipyard demonstrations, and remained as an advisor to Solidarity and edited its weekly publication. When General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in December 1981, Mazowiecki was interned for many months and the weekly was shut down.

Eight years later, Mazowiecki became a representative of Solidarity and its chief negotiator in the political reforms section of the Round Table negotiations. After the stunning defeat of the communists in the partially free elections of 1989, Mazowiecki was named, on Lech Wałęsa's recommendation, Poland's first non-communist prime minister. He oversaw the transition from communist rule to multiparty democracy, the economic reforms necessary for a market economy, the country's turn to the West and NATO, and the initial reforms of political institutions. He designed and ran his cabinet to include the perspectives of all groups that won seats in the 1989 election: he drew on communist ministers of defence, interior and transport as well as Solidarity activists and specialists. His leadership style involved respectfully listening to divergent views, then making hard choices.

The immediate negative impact of rapid economic liberalization on many Poles undermined Mazowiecki's popularity, and he lost to Wałęsa in the 1990 presidential election. His personal commitment to 'drawing a thick line' under the past rather than punishing former members of the regime facilitated the first democratic

transition in the Soviet bloc, though it also meant that recriminations about the past would haunt Polish politics for many years. Mazowiecki remained a deputy in the Sejm until 2001. He served as UN special rapporteur on human rights for the former Yugoslavia, resigning in 1995 to protest at the weak international response to the atrocities in Bosnia.

F. W. de Klerk, president of South Africa 1989–94

F. W. de Klerk, the son of a prominent Afrikaner political figure, is a lawyer and political leader of the National Party, who served in several different cabinet positions in the 1980s. He was steeped in the Afrikaner commitment to racial apartheid and white parliamentary government, which denied national political representation to nearly 90 per cent of South Africa's population. After the previous president, P. W. Botha, suffered a major stroke, de Klerk was generally considered the more conservative of the potential appointees, but he had opposed the half-measures Botha had taken to reform and defend apartheid because he believed they could not work. Reaching the presidency in 1989, de Klerk moved the government away from Botha's reliance on the internal security apparatus toward those in the National Party who favoured stronger reforms in order to protect longer-term Afrikaner interests; they understood that apartheid could no longer be sustained in a transformed economy, an increasingly urbanized society and a new international environment.

In a February 1990 policy address that took the country and the world by surprise, de Klerk announced the unbanning of the opposition African National Congress (ANC), the release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners, and the beginning of negotiations with Mandela and the ANC to develop a new constitution and open the way to the full participation of the black majority. Although this initiative seemed sudden, it was built upon careful preparation, including years of 'talks about talks' between government officials and Nelson Mandela that were unknown to many cabinet members, as well as several retreats with his cabinet to build consensus. De Klerk managed to maintain his political base, exert control over the hardliners and security forces, and make timely concessions to the ANC while projecting a sense of continuing authority, even as the fundamental bases of his power eroded and non-racial democracy emerged. When Mandela and the ANC won national elections and took office in April 1994, de Klerk served for a time as deputy president in a national unity government under Mandela, but then resigned to lead the renamed New National Party in opposition.

Thabo Mbeki, president of South Africa 1999–2008

Thabo Mbeki, the son of a prominent South African Communist Party and ANC leader, received political and military training in Moscow and continued his studies at the London School of Economics and the University of Manchester. He then participated in 28 years of political activity in exile in London and several

African countries, working as chief assistant to ANC President Oliver Tambo. Mbeki became a leading strategist of the ANC's highly successful campaign to secure international sanctions against apartheid, and took the lead in facilitating conversations outside South Africa between the ANC and white South African leaders.

Returning to South Africa shortly after Mandela's release from prison, Mbeki played a central role in the subsequent negotiation process that led to the 1993 elections won by Mandela. Mbeki served as first deputy president—and in effect, chief operating officer—of the new South African government. He drew upon his political position within the ANC, the relationships he had built with South African white elites—first in the confidential discussions prior to the de Klerk reforms and then in the negotiation process—and his own strategic instincts to help manage the transition. Although not without difficulty, Mbeki successfully built national and international confidence among investors that made it possible to reform and strengthen South Africa's economy. Elected president in 1999 and 2004, Mbeki eventually lost some of his national and international stature, in part because of his response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and was forced out of office in 2008. He has since become a leading spokesman for Sub-Saharan Africa and a trusted mediator of conflicts in the region.

Felipe González, president of the government of Spain 1982–96

Felipe González studied law at Seville University and then at Louvain in Belgium, becoming a labour lawyer and joining the then-illegal Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE) in 1964. Having developed some visibility in his 20s, both in Spain and in the Socialist International, González challenged the established leadership of the PSOE at the 1970 party congress, thus precipitating a split in the party. The Socialist International eventually recognized González's faction. He was elected party leader in 1974 and was briefly detained by Spanish police in 1975. He set up the PSOE's party structure in Madrid that year with assistance from Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation and advice from Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and German Chancellor Willy Brandt. González refused to join the communist-sponsored Junta Democrática and set up a rival Platform for Democratic Convergence instead. He established a rapport with President Adolfo Suárez after General Franco's death, which paved the way for the PSOE's first public congress in Spain since the civil war of the 1930s. González was a member of the Committee of Nine that negotiated the rules for the first free national elections in 1977, and played an important role in the negotiations with Suárez, encouraged by King Juan Carlos, which produced Spain's pacted transition. He led the PSOE to impressive electoral results in 1977 and 1979, and then to a massive victory in 1982, bringing him to the Spanish presidency.

As president of the Spanish government from 1982 to 1996, González consolidated civilian control of the armed forces, negotiated a complex semi-federal system for devolution to calm demands for autonomy in Catalonia and the Basque region, and oversaw an ambitious modernizing agenda that included economic liberalization and social reforms; new health, education and pension systems; Spain's accession to the European Community; and, more controversially, its continued membership in NATO. Having successfully renewed the PSOE's majority in the elections of 1986, 1989 and 1993, González and his party were defeated in 1996, victims of a severe economic downturn and a succession of corruption scandals. Since leaving office, González has been frequently consulted on international governance and transitional issues in many countries.

About the authors

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Sergio Bitar is a Chilean engineer, economist, political leader and public intellectual. He served as Minister of Energy and Mines in the cabinet of Salvador Allende. After the 1973 coup, he was a political prisoner for 14 months and then deported to exile in Venezuela. One of the architects of the “Coalition for the ‘No’” that defeated President Augusto Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. Bitar later served as a Senator, as head of the Party for Democracy and as a minister in the governments of presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet. He is president of Chile’s Foundation for Democracy and director of the Global Trends and Latin America’s Future project at the Inter-American Dialogue. MPP, Harvard University

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