

INTRODUCTION

Progress toward a fully developed democracy has been exceedingly slow and, as yet, is incomplete everywhere. It has taken 2,500 years to move from democracy in Athens to various forms of democracy in Western and non-Western societies today. Athenian democracy only gave political rights to a small number of male citizens, excluding women and slaves. However, Athens held frequent elections, and those with political rights rotated in positions of power and participated in decision making. In contemporary democracies, all adults (felons sometimes excepted) have political rights, but with many years between elections, most people remain unengaged in politics, and those in power can seldom be moved out. As I write, the approval rating for the U.S. Congress has fallen to about 10%, but the vast majority of congressional office holders are likely to be back in power after the next election.

Contemporary democracies have a great deal of room for improvement. This book is part of an effort to bring about this improvement. It explores the psychological processes underlying political behavior with the goal of

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The Psychology of Democracy, by F. M. Moghaddam

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facilitating faster change toward what I call *actualized democracy*: full, informed, equal participation in wide aspects of political, economic, and cultural decision making independent of financial investment and resources.

For several reasons, I strongly believe that democracy is the best form of government and that societies should adopt actualized democracy as their goal. First, democracy provides the greatest freedom of choice and expression to citizens, including the freedom to criticize national leaders, government officials, and government policies. Second, democracy provides the highest level of government transparency. This combination of citizen right to criticize the government and government duty to be transparent ensures the highest level of government efficiency. Third, high efficiency and low corruption are enhanced because democracy gives citizens the opportunity to change government representatives and elect better leaders through regular, genuinely open elections. Fourth, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary are integral to democracy. Fifth, human rights and the dignity of individuals are upheld better in a democracy. Sixth, democratic nations are less likely to go to war against one another. A world consisting of democratic nation-states would be more peaceful.

Central to actualized democracy is an education system that develops critical thinking skills in the general population and not just a select elite. This education system nurtures and maximizes the blooming of collective talents of all society, as well as the talents of individual citizens. The full and informed participation of all citizens in every important aspect of decision making ensures that political, economic, and cultural policies are transparent and accurately reflect the true interests of every segment of society. No society as yet has qualified as an actualized democracy, although the Scandinavian societies, Holland, and Switzerland have made relatively more progress than others. For a brief time, citizens have come close to the kind of informed, engaged participation central to actualized democracy. An example is the high level of critical engagement among Scottish citizens in the weeks before the September 18, 2014, referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. To develop an engaged citizenry and make progress toward actualized democracy, attention needs to be given to psychological processes underlying democracy.

PSYCHOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY

The journey from where we are to actualized democracy requires transformations in our psychology—in how we think and act. The *psychology of democracy* concerns the psychological changes we need to experience, the changes in our cognitions and actions that must come about for us to succeed

on this journey. My particular approach to psychology begins with the fact that before each of us arrives in this world, society and the larger culture are already here. Individuals develop and take shape within a cultural context. Following Vygotsky (1978), I give considerable importance to collective processes and avoid focusing just on processes within individuals (Harré & Moghaddam, 2012). Thus, a major theme in this text is the power of the context to shape thinking and actions as reflected in the research tradition represented by Milgram (1974), Zimbardo (2007), and many other psychologists (Moghaddam, 2002).

A second major psychological theme is that of the *identity tradition* initiated by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Above all, becoming democratic involves changing the way we see ourselves and how we see our relationships with others, including the leaders of our groups. This transformation involves moving away from *ethnocentrism*, the tendency to view the world only from the perspective of one's own in-group(s) and become more open and accepting toward others. Associated with this change is greater tolerance for ambiguity and less rigid categorical "we are correct and they are wrong" or "we are good and they are evil" thinking. As societies make progress toward actualized democracy, they become more open to new experiences. They also become less unquestioningly obedient and conformist. Leadership style changes from a top-down one to more participatory and collaborative leader–follower relations.

Leadership implies that some individuals enjoy greater power and prestige, and that society is stratified. Psychology plays an important role in stratification. Indeed, debate is ongoing within psychology as to how to explain stratification and inequalities. Some psychologists have argued that individuals with higher intelligence rise to the top in Western and, in particular, American society, and that inequalities in power and resources reflect inequalities in intelligence. However, I argue that although intelligence does play a role in social stratification, the resources one begins with also play a vitally important role. One's position in the social hierarchy is determined largely by the poverty or wealth one is born into. This issue takes us back to a continuous debate in the history of psychology: the role of dispositional versus environmental factors in shaping our behavior.

Psychology is also central to another theme in democracy: justice. Whereas lawyers and judges are interested in formal law (what is on the books), psychologists focus on subjective justice and how people feel, and they think about fairness. In many situations, no objective criteria exist according to which we can judge the justice of a procedure or outcome. For example, should the fine for speeding on a city road be \$20 or \$200? Should the prison sentence for robbery be lengthier than the prison sentence for injuring a pedestrian while driving under the influence of alcohol? How many times

larger than the salary of factory workers should be the salary of the company CEO—10 times larger, 50 times larger, or perhaps 100 times larger? Should term limits exist for all political offices? Should citizens be fined if they fail to vote in national elections? In these situations in which no “correct” answers exist and practices vary across societies, subjective justice takes on even greater importance. However, despite there being no objective criteria to make decisions about fairness and morality in certain contexts, some psychological research and theory (Kohlberg, 1963, 1973) has suggested that people who have reached higher levels of moral development make decisions by applying moral principles.

In some other domains, democracy requires a certain outcome, but the psychological conditions for bringing about the outcome need to be clarified on the basis of research. For example, free speech is integral to democracy: Without free speech, democracy is impaired. However, the successful implementation of free speech requires psychological skills in practicing particular styles of turn-taking, reciprocity, and empathic listening. This book explores how such psychological skills are essential for the successful practice of free speech—particularly true when majority and minority groups with different levels of power are interacting and exercising their free speech rights.

Cultural diversity and the presence of majority and minority groups with different social, religious, linguistic, and other characteristics are common to most major societies today. Psychological research has important implications for how cultural diversity and relations between majority and minority groups can be best managed. I examine how policies such as multiculturalism and assimilation have psychological foundations, and how psychological research helps us assess the validity and viability of these foundations. Also, psychological research has suggested certain areas of behavior, such as tolerance for differences, should be a greater focus for skills training in democracies.

Psychological research also has informed us about how much and in what ways human thinking and action are malleable and can be reshaped toward particular democratic goals. Research on different types of thinking has suggested that, in many instances, human decision making is rapid and implicit, an outcome of long-term evolutionary processes (Kahneman, 2011). Such thinking is often structured by heuristics, hunches, or shortcuts in thinking that enable us to rapidly make decisions. However, although the sheer speed and economy of such rapid thinking can be an advantage in many situations in which fast action is needed, situations exist in which such rapid decision making results in faulty outcomes. One of the issues taken up in this book is the role of heuristics and rapid decision making in voting and other political behavior.

One of the other psychological themes in this book is that of *motivation*, more specifically, the question of whether motivation for self-interest always takes priority over motivation to address group interests. Some psychological research has suggested that individuals engage in *social loafing*, that is, they exert less effort when they have to work as part of a group; but I also discuss psychological research about the conditions in which individuals engage in *social laboring* and make a greater effort when they are working as part of a group. These issues of effort and motivation have to be considered in the larger context, and issues related to how we should measure “progress.” For example, should we discuss motivation and effort strictly in relation to material measures, such as gross domestic product? Some countries have started to measure the subjective sense of happiness in society, thus giving psychology a more central place in discussions about “societal progress.”

These, then, are the major psychological themes explored in this book as part of the discussion of the psychological foundations of democracy. Becoming democratic involves changing how we think about ourselves and our identities, and changing how we think and act in the political domain in general. Consequently, psychology is at the heart of democratization processes. It is essential to think of such processes as part of an emergence that involves societal and individual level changes.

THE EMERGENCE OF CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACY

With respect to the opportunity to vote, democracy as we know it today has existed only since the late 1960s. Before that era, in the United States, for example, African Americans and other minorities were largely excluded from political participation, and it was only in the early 20th century that women won the right to vote. Even now, barely 50% of U.S. citizens vote in presidential elections, and voting in local elections routinely falls to below 20% (Sharp, 2012). Almost 6 million American citizens are denied the right to vote because of their past or current felony convictions; Black men are disproportionately and detrimentally affected such that, in some states, about one quarter of all Black men are disenfranchised (Manza & Uggen, 2006).

Taking citizen participation as an important marker, we must question the extent of 21st-century democracy in America and in some other major “democratic” societies. In their study of factors influencing 1,779 important policy issues in the United States, Gilens and Page (2014) concluded that, based on how policy decisions are made, America is an oligarchy rather than a democracy. Important, this conclusion includes policy decisions concerning the allocation of key resources among different interest groups in society. The U.S. president, not Congress, as constitutionally required, has taken the lead

in moving the United States to war in numerous engagements in the post-World War II era (Kalb, 2013). Thus, in our nuclear age, when international wars can be especially perilous for humanity, one person has been responsible for leading the United States and many other Western and non-Western countries into war. An example is when, in 2003, President George W. Bush led many nations into the disastrous war in Iraq.

Although the United States and other Western societies typically referred to as democratic have made progress in moving away from dictatorships (see Moghaddam, 2013, for detailed discussion of characteristics of dictatorships), they are still far from becoming fully developed democracies. Increased complexity and size may even weaken contemporary democracies, and rulers may become more removed from the citizens (I. Marsh & Miller, 2012). The countries traditionally described as democratic merely have made relatively more progress than other societies, such as China, Russia, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, in moving toward democracy. It is only in a comparative manner that the term *democratic* can be correctly applied to the United States, European Union countries, and other “free world” societies.

All countries categorized by us as democracies or dictatorships for the sake of convenience can be conceived as lying on a continuum with *pure dictatorship* at one end and *pure democracy* at the other (see Figure 1). None of the contemporary democracies, not even the Scandinavian societies, is a fully developed democratic society, just as none of the contemporary dictatorships, not even Iran and North Korea, is a completely dictatorial society. All societies began in the historical past as politically closed and have within them antidemocratic elements that could generate change toward dictatorship (Moghaddam, 2013).

The tradition of categorizing societies simplistically as democratic or dictatorial has had a number of detrimental consequences, among them greater complacency in how we evaluate democracies. Countries in the democratic category are treated as if they are already fully developed democracies, which is far from the truth. India is often described as the world’s largest democracy, whereas in-depth studies of Indian society have shown high levels of systematic corruption and discrimination with more than one third of the population deprived of the most rudimentary health, education, and other basic services (Sen & Drèze, 2013). Lack of political representation, grinding poverty, insecurity, corruption, and persecution do not suggest a developed democracy.

Pure Dictatorship ————— Pure Democracy

Figure 1. The dictatorship–democracy continuum.

Thus, my starting point is that countries we typically refer to as democratic have only made modest progress toward actualized democracy. Unlike critics who see little hope in the future of capitalist democracy (e.g., Zizek, 1991) and who advocate anarchism (R. P. Wolff, 1970), monarchy (Hoppe, 2001), or guardianship in various forms (see discussions in Dahl, 1989), I firmly believe that we can achieve actualized democracy. Furthermore, we must continually be reminded that societal movement has not always been, and will not always be, in a forward direction. All societies are in a state of flux, and there is no inevitability about the direction of future change (Moghaddam, 2013). Although the general trend for most countries has been a gradual move away from pure dictatorship toward increased openness, countries labeled as dictatorships today could grow more democratic, and those labeled democracies today could become more dictatorial. In some cases, the move backward is orchestrated from the top by outside powers, such as in 1973, when the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency backed a coup d'état against the popularly elected President Salvador Allende (1908–1973), which took Chile back to dictatorship.

Underlying transformations in large-scale political systems are psychological processes concerning how people think, feel, and act (Moghaddam, 2002). Political socialization is such that the cognitive styles, relational skills, values, and allegiances needed to function in a political system become integrated within individual identities; they become part of personal and collective identities, “the sort of person” I see myself to be, and the “sort of people” we are.

Although individuals are not passive in the process of socialization, and even in dictatorships people can resist taking on the ruling group's ideology and values, most people, for survival, learn to outwardly conform and obey to a sufficient degree. Behavior is shaped to be functional in specific political systems. Popper (1966) made a useful distinction between societies that are less and more open. *More open societies* are characterized by individual choice, critical thinking, and governments that are transparent, tolerant, and responsive to the people's needs. In *less open societies*, the mechanisms of influencing mass behavior are, to a greater degree, based on brute force and the explicit threat of imprisonment, torture, assassination, and punishments; I examined such mechanisms in an earlier book on the psychology of dictatorship (Moghaddam, 2013). In more open societies, such as capitalist democracies with their enormous and increasing group-based inequalities (Piketty, 2014), the mechanisms of influencing mass behavior are subtler and based more on ideology, and often are transmitted in implicit and indirect ways through the education system and media. Given the present circumstances of more open societies, how can we move toward actualized democracy?

The central question addressed in this book is: What are the psychological processes underlying change toward actualized societies? This question

includes the changes in thinking, social skills, and action needed to achieve the “psychological citizen” who is capable of fully participating in and sustaining actualized democracy (Moghaddam, 2008c). Developing or third world societies, such as those involved in the Arab Spring, are confronted by the challenge of socializing “democratic psychological citizens,” but so are “democratic” Western societies that currently are characterized by alienated and distrustful populations, including tens of millions of new immigrants. What kinds of psychological characteristics should we be trying to develop within immigrants so that they will move themselves and their adopted societies further toward actualized democracy rather than away from it? This is a vitally important question in the context of 21st-century globalization, which is characterized by its vast movements of people—many of whom originated from dictatorships—across national borders in search of better lives for themselves and especially for their children.

To address these questions and to help arrive at actualized democracy, I introduce a circle model that details the characteristics societies and individuals ultimately must have to become actualized (see Figure 2). Leadership



Figure 2. The democracy circle.

style is at the center of the circle because it affects societal progress at every step of the way. The nine components of this circle are (a) leaders responsive to wishes of citizens, (b) rule of law, (c) leaders removable through popular will, (d) freedom of expression, (e) minority rights, (f) independent judiciary, (g) universal suffrage, (h) meritocracy, and (i) distributive justice. I identified these components after conducting extensive and in-depth reviews of the research literature. Each component is associated with particular psychological processes, and progress to the next segment requires successful psychological changes. The changes are primarily collective, but they also occur at the individual level. These psychological changes, involving styles of thinking, doing, and relating to the self and others, often develop only over longer periods and through collective processes.

QUESTIONING DEMOCRACY

Politics is the battleground for fights over how to divide nation's economic pie. It is a battle that the 1 percent have been winning. That isn't how it's supposed to be in a democracy. (Stiglitz, 2012, p. 118)

Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2012) is among those who have questioned the workings of Western democracies; he has even argued that electoral politics seem to have “failed in Western democracies” (p. x). R. Wolff (2012) went further and argued that we need to develop an alternative bottom-up democracy because capitalism has fatally impaired contemporary democracies by concentrating power in the hands of the few: “In capitalism, the directors are the capitalists; workers are excluded from direction” (p. 90). Although Stiglitz and R. Wolff represent the intellectual force of a critical left-leaning movement, outcry in the early 21st century comes from street-level movements on both sides of the political spectrum. Occupy Wall Street protests the current system from the left and the Tea Party movement rages against the inadequacies of the present American political system and government overreach from the political right. Although the political left and the political right disagree about the solutions, they report feeling strongly that the current state of democracy is not working satisfactorily.

But those firmly on the political left and right are not alone. Many in the political center also are questioning how well democracy is currently working. In a recent talk I gave on psychology and politics to a group of well-educated Americans in Washington, DC, a businessman self-described as “middle of the road” stood up at the end of my talk and seriously asked if it is not time for us to set aside democracy, at least for a while, and adopt “the Chinese system” of government. He justified his question by noting that, 30 years ago, China

and India were comparable economically but the Chinese now have pulled ahead: Democratic India has fallen economically behind “dictatorial China.” Is the Chinese model not superior? Many Americans echo that businessman’s question, seeing too much democracy as a problem (Goidel, 2014).

I have heard exactly the same sentiment from moderate Europeans who feel threatened by what seems to be an inevitable economic decline and a tidal wave of immigrant populations that do not share Europe’s democratic values. Some even advocate a solution adopted in ancient Rome: In times of crisis, give a dictator temporary absolute power to steer society out of trouble (Lintott, 1999). The press of corporate globalization also can be associated with these unsettled feelings and enormous new challenges. Pinkney (2005), for example, suggested that

the extent to which society’s problems can or should be resolved through the democratic process [is not clear]. In both affluent and poor countries, globalization constrains democratic solutions, as governments have to bow to the demands of global businesses or risk the loss of investment, employment and goods to other countries. In both, the ability of civil society to perform its textbook role as an intermediary between government and the governed is in question. (p. 36)

The questioning of 21st-century democracies is particularly heated in the European Union, where the economic recession and austerity measures are resulting in severe economic hardship for the majority of people and where many fear that the arrival of tens of millions of immigrants from Asia and Africa is threatening the “European way of life.” In reaction is a growth of extreme right-wing political groups, such as the Golden Dawn in Greece and the English Defense League in England (“Briefing: Europe’s Populist Insurgents,” 2014). During my travels in 2014, I witnessed swastikas painted on walls in rural Greece. Ironically, some of these extreme movements are represented by political parties, such as the Freedom Party in Austria and Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front in France, that have done well in democratic elections but are at their core hyper-ethnocentric, antiminority rights, and antidemocracy. Under certain conditions, these right-wing movements could help create the political, economic, cultural, and psychological conditions—the springboard that could enable a potential dictator to spring to power (Moghaddam, 2013).

Although globalization is associated with some movements for social justice, through bitter personal experiences in Iran and elsewhere, I am keenly aware that globalization also is associated with the growth of movements that nurture closed, corrupt, and repressive political systems. Globalization is resulting in the growth of extremist nationalist, ethnic, and other movements (Moghaddam, 2008a), among the most dangerous being fundamentalist

religious movements. Religious fundamentalists—extremist Muslims, Jews, and Christians, among others—represent a major challenge to democratic values because, to them, the “will of the people” is irrelevant compared to the “truth” set out by God in holy books. Representatives of God on Earth, in the shape of mullahs, rabbis, and priests, insist that only they have the right to interpret the “word of God.” As globalization accelerates and ideas about human rights and democratic freedoms spread, an increasingly fierce backlash will come from religious extremists against more open societies (Moghaddam, 2008a). That religious groups may come to power through the ballot box, as the Muslim Brotherhood did in Egypt in 2012, certainly does not guarantee that they support democracy.

The time thus seems ripe for a fresh investigation of democracy, and specifically from the psychological point of view. In this era when global trends are placing greater pressure on national and local populations, political and economic changes across the globe are associated with the serious questioning of democracy (Runciman, 2013) as a political system capable of solving 21st-century challenges. Increasing economic inequalities and the economic and political decline of the middle class in many democracies continue as formidable challenges. Also a challenge is the need to limit the influence of big money in democratic politics (Phillips-Fein, 2009) and the need for stronger government regulation of the financial sector (Barth, Caprio, & Levine, 2012). A focus on actualized democracy as a goal and the psychological changes required to reach this goal help in the broader struggle to meet these challenges.

There seems to be another reason why the subject of the psychology of democracy is especially pertinent now. The rising power on the global stage is China, which is still closer to being a dictatorship than a democracy. The United States is a democratic superpower, but it may have reached the height of its relative military and economic superiority. After this point, U.S. relative superiority will probably decrease as China catches up. The emergence of China and the resurgence of Russia under President Vladimir Putin further highlight the contrast between the varieties of relatively closed and open societies, thus raising questions about why democracy might be the better path to take.

Unfortunately, historical examples exist of societies moving backward from democracy to dictatorship, such as Germany in the 1930s. There is no guarantee it will not happen again, particularly as public participation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and some other major democracies is at historically low levels. Indeed, dictatorship rather than democracy has been the norm in human history (Moghaddam, 2013). As Held (1997) pointed out,

A uniform commitment to democracy is a very recent phenomenon. Moreover, democracy is a remarkably difficult form of government to

create and sustain. The history of twentieth-century Europe alone makes this clear: fascism, Nazism and Stalinism came very close to obliterating democracy altogether. (p. 78)

Similarly, referring to democracy, Moller and Skaaning (2011) noted, “Not until the French Revolution did salient political actors start to use the term to signify something positive” (p. xvi). This important observation raises a number of questions that are central to psychological science and its relation to political behavior in the modern pro-democracy era.

What psychological characteristics are needed in a population for democracy to be sustained? What are the psychological changes required at the individual and societal levels for substantial progress toward full democracy? The goal of this book is to explore these and other related questions about democracy through the framework of psychological science and, in so doing, help to move democracy forward over the next few decades of national and global challenges.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy comes from the Greek roots of *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (rule), and means “rule by the people.” Athens had *direct democracy* in which the eligible voters were small enough in numbers to make decisions by voting. Plato (trans. 1987) wrote about a republic of perhaps 5,000 people. The movement toward democracy in modern societies has involved societies with far larger populations. The U.S. Constitution was ratified when the American population was about 3 million. It has been, in part because of the challenge of what engineers refer to as *scale-up* (i.e., moving from small-scale model to large-scale implementation) that larger societies shifted to *representative democracy*, in which the voters elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf.

The contemporary United States has about 320 million people and India, the world’s largest democracy, about 1.3 billion people. Both attempt to be representative democracies. How do 1.3 billion people rule through elected representatives? How many representatives? How are they elected? Do they have term limits, and if so, how long? How do they campaign to be elected? How much money can they spend in election campaigns? Such questions quickly complicate the theory and practice of representative democracy, and, of course, the definition of democracy. Therefore, the following working definition of *democracy* is useful in the context of the 21st-century: rule by leaders who are elected through free and fair elections by a society’s full adult population and who are removable through regular popular elections, and

with independent legislative and judicial checks, protection for minority rights, and freedom of speech and of movement.

But this definition itself raises a number of questions. First, even this minimalist definition proves to be too idealistic when applied to major contemporary democracies, the United States included. The majority of citizens in contemporary democracies are anything but engaged: So few of them vote in even the most important elections. Many of these citizens do not feel they have anyone representing their views and would rather not vote than give credibility to a candidate. Second, by this definition, there were no democracies before sometime in the 20th century. Before the 20th century, the United States and Western European societies did not give every adult the vote (women and ethnic minorities, and sometimes nonproperty owners, were excluded), nor did they protect minority rights in line with the requirements of democracy as understood in the 21st century. Even contemporary parliamentary democracies, such as the United Kingdom and Canada, do not have a strict separation of powers—the executive is answerable to the legislature, but no strong check on the legislature exists.

Freedom of speech and the ideal of equality of voice enshrined in the dictum “one person, one vote” also have become murky, at least in the U.S. context. In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court held that corporations and unions could not be prevented from contributing to political campaigns because to do so would constitute a free speech violation (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, No. 08-205, in Liptak, 2010). Thus, in the 2012 presidential elections, billions of dollars were spent as billionaires exercised what the Supreme Court decided is their First Amendment free speech right: influencing election results through enormous campaign spending (a topic discussed in Chapter 7). Obviously, the vast majority of Americans could not exercise free speech in the same way because they do not have the spending power or access to the dominant mass media.

Underlying definitional debates about democracy are two other issues we need to consider. First, implicit in these discussions is the idea that democracy is superior, an ideal we should strive toward. But if democracy is so wonderful, why is it only applicable to selected and narrow aspects of societies? In some countries, democracy is practiced more broadly. When I lectured at the Universities of Caracas, Venezuela, and Oslo, Norway, I learned that deans and many other university officials are elected for limited terms by faculty and staff. Although the United States is the superpower democracy, officials in American universities are appointed top down, rather than elected. If democracy is superior, why do we not adopt democratic procedures for selecting the top officials in American universities and corporations? What makes sheriffs and judges in some U.S. districts different such that they have to be elected by popular vote? Why are U.S. Supreme Court judges

and university presidents, among many other possibilities, not elected by popular vote?

A second issue is the basis on which voters and politicians in contemporary democracies make political decisions: Many voters and politicians make decisions based on inadequate knowledge and, critics say, irrationally. By “irrationally,” those critics often mean that decisions are influenced by emotions and feelings, rather than guided only by facts. But are not these same shortcomings relevant in many other domains, from choosing a career, to buying a house, to selecting a marriage partner, and having a child? Surely having a child is among the most important events in one’s life, yet we do not ask for tests of knowledge or rationality from would-be parents. Thus, the concern shown by psychologists for people falling “far short on almost every normative criterion” when it comes to democracy (Borgida, Federico, & Sullivan, 2009) is not shown in other domains that are arguably just as important, or even more so.

IDEALIST AND REALIST APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY

Wise men saw that the one and only path to public safety lay in equality of property. (More, 1516/1965, p. 37)

But when a prince acquires a new state as an addition to his old one, then it is necessary to disarm that [new] state, except those who in acquiring it have sided with you; and even those one must, when time and opportunity serve, render weak and effeminate, and arrange things so that all the arms of the new state are in the hands of your soldiers who live near you in your old state. (Machiavelli, 1532/1950, p. 78)

In discussing the psychology of democracy, it is useful to position this work with respect to two contrasting traditions of examining societies. The first tradition represented by Sir Thomas More’s (1478–1535) *Utopia* (More, 1516/1965) is idealist, presented as a goal toward which humans should strive. Sir Thomas More was preceded in this idealist tradition by many other thinkers, including Plato, and also followed by many, including Karl Marx (1818–1883). The second tradition is realist and is epitomized by Machiavelli (1469–1527), who wrote about society as he found it and of leaders and followers as he saw them to be rather than as they ideally should be (Machiavelli, 1532/1950). Whereas More’s *Utopia* proposes that private property should be ended and all property equally distributed, Machiavelli saw such schemes as fit only for the realm of dreams. He adopted a hard-nosed approach, giving advice to ensure the subservience of the newly acquired citizens by disarming

the additional states a prince captures. Although I present actualized democracy as an ideal toward which societies should strive, I simultaneously adopt a realist approach that most societies are far from arriving at such an ideal, and some societies are moving, at least in some important respects, in the opposite direction and becoming *less* democratic.

Many reasons exist why we in the 21st century could fall into the trap of being overly optimistic and unrealistic about the future prospects of democracy. In discussions about the future of democracy, current developments associated with globalization and the technology revolution are routinely strutted out to argue that everyone in the world is now interconnected, that new technologies have given ordinary people real power, and that we are moving toward a more open and democratic world. This optimistic perspective should be balanced by noting that globalization forces also support an opposite trend: more powerful tools in the hands of those who support closed societies and greater monitoring of everyday lives and control of information. For example, consider the censorship of the Internet in China, Russia, Iran, and other dictatorships. Even within societies that we currently label as democratic, the massive monitoring of social communications and the lack of mass engagement in political life is a cause for concern to those who seek movement toward actualized democracy.

People were not born either apathetic toward, or engaged with, the political events that directly affect their own lives; rather, they became apathetic or engaged through their socialization experiences. By neglecting citizenship training and critical thinking, the education system and the mass media subtly socialize people to become apathetic and disenchanting, to feel that they are powerless and that nothing can be done to change the political system.

Furthermore, it is clear from events during major elections, such as the 2012 U.S. presidential elections and the 2014 midterm elections, that certain American leaders and groups intentionally attempt to suppress voter participation—as evidenced by the unexpected shortening of the voting day in the presidential elections in Florida and some other states in November 2012 (see Hasen, 2012, for a discussion of voter suppression). Voter suppression is just one indicator that democracy that entails mass voter participation is actively discouraged by some sectors of the elite in the United States and other democracies.

A powerful elite motivated to control mass political participation is common to both dictatorships and democracies, although the motivation for it is subtly different. In capitalist democracies, control of mass participation protects inequalities in economic resources. Key indicators have shown that economic inequalities have been increasing in the United States, the

United Kingdom, and other capitalist democracies (Piketty, 2014). Given that people who are rich are the numerical minority and have fewer votes in democratic elections than the rest of the population, the danger always exists that mass political participation will result in a demand by the majority for more equal resource distribution through, for example, higher taxes on the rich.

On the other hand, many individuals could be persuaded that group-based inequalities must be protected and even extended because they too could rise up the social hierarchy and join the elite super-rich, moving from the 99% to the richest 1%. The task of persuading people to accept that every person has a fair—if not equal—opportunity to rise in the social hierarchy falls not just on politicians but also on the educational system and much of the mass media.

Democracy as an ideal, in the sense of people's being fully engaged in decision making about their future, has taken hold in much of the world. But as interpreted by many influential policymakers in the United States from the idea that American democracy is an ideal fit for all humanity, it is not much of a leap to the idea that America should be "exporting" its brand of democracy to other countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Unfortunately, this eagerness to export American democracy neglects the fact that American democracy is itself still in an early stage of development and, indeed, is rather underdeveloped in important respects. For example, citizen participation is far more fully developed in the economic sphere in the form of material consumption than in the political sphere. Some such qualifications seem needed because in other spheres of the economy, such as areas of control over working conditions or shares of corporate wealth, there's close to zero development for most citizens. In America, "choice," "freedom," and other concepts central to democracy are practiced far more widely and fervently in that dimension of the economy—as epitomized by the dominance of consumer choice. Freedom comes to mean *consumer choice*, the availability of an ever-widening range of goods and services offered to consumers. However, this freedom does not increase the shared ability among the entire population to purchase such goods and services.

More specifically, freedom in America often is, in practice, the possibility of spending money through choices; the wider the choices, the greater the freedom is assumed to be. Thus, having 100 varieties of salad dressing is seen as greater freedom than having only five varieties, and having 200 different car models to choose from is seen as greater freedom than having only 10 different models. It is not important that Joe cannot afford to buy a car; the important point is that Joe believes he has the freedom to make money and gain the ability to buy a car and to choose from among the numerous models available on the free market.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The two chapters that make up Part I of this book examine how cultural and historical factors can lead to distinct types of democracy, and to the psychological characteristics of prodemocracy individuals. The focus of Chapter 1 is the relationship between the cultural–historical context and the kind of democracy that emerges. This relationship is illustrated through case studies of Britain and Switzerland, two nations that have made serious progress toward becoming democratic. But all societies, even those that currently are dictatorships, have cultural characteristics that could, under the appropriate conditions, contribute to democratic growth. This point is illustrated through a discussion of Iran. The main question addressed in Chapter 2 is: What are the psychological characteristics of citizens who actively participate in and support democracy? This question addresses important issues concerning the sorts of people we can count on to defend democracy against threats, particularly the threat of sliding toward dictatorship. The larger context of these introductory discussions is the relationship between globalization and democracy, which is complex and multifaceted (Eichengreen & Leblang, 2006).

The 10 chapters in Part II describe the necessary conditions for actualized democracy, which I collectively refer to as the “democracy circle.” I outline the conditions in Chapter 3 and discuss them in greater detail in Chapters 4 to 12. Specifically, Chapters 4 to 12 consider how specific psychological processes help or hinder these components of democracy.

In Part III, Chapter 13 concludes the volume by exploring democratic actualization, which is not an end to societal development but, rather, a point of departure for societies to grow in their different ways. Democratic actualization consists of a minimum set of conditions that need to be met for actualization growth to occur. The democratic actualization of the collective sets the context for the democratic actualization of individuals. It is possible for some exceptional individuals to reach the point of democratic actualization in societies that are under-developed democratically. On the other hand, even in a society that has achieved democratic actualization, some individuals will fail to grow along with the society in which they live.

CONCLUSION

This book maps out the path of psychological progress that societies and individuals need to take to reach democratic actualization. Contemporary societies traditionally labeled as democracies and dictatorships are located on the democracy–dictatorship continuum and have been shown to be some distance from pure democracy and pure dictatorship. Even the Scandinavian

countries, probably closest to the pure democracy end of the continuum, have a long way to go to reach pure democracy, just as even North Korea and Iran, probably closest to the pure dictatorship end of the continuum, have not reached the pure dictatorship end.

Although I am critical of the shortcomings of contemporary democracies, and even more so of dictatorships, my analysis is intended to help pro-democracy forces move the world toward more open societies. By understanding the psychological changes that need to take place for societies to progress toward actualized democracy, citizens, practitioners, researchers, and government officials will be able to better plan and implement different educational, training, cultural, and scientific programs that will further this progress.