
Introduction

On Monday, October 30, 1905, late in the afternoon, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia signed a one-page document promising to respect civil rights, share power with a parliament, and hold free elections. “There was no other way out than to cross oneself and give what everyone was asking for,” Nicholas wrote to his mother two days later. General strikes gripped the major cities of his realm; his government’s finances were a shambles; his sole candidate to lead a hard-line crackdown had refused the job that very morning, threatening to kill himself in the tsar’s presence if reforms were not granted.¹

Prodemocracy activists learned of the announcement several hours later. A journalist from the prodemocracy newspaper *The Russian News* raced across St. Petersburg and presented a still-wet proof sheet to a meeting where the country’s first open political party was being founded. The activists were ecstatic. “We can congratulate each other on the realization of our cherished aspirations!” *The Russian News* editorialized. “Let us embrace as free people, as citizens of a free constitutional Russia!” Not everyone shared this optimism. Pavel N. Miliukov, a leader of the prodemocracy movement, spoke instead on the limitations of the pronouncement and the precariousness of the tsar’s concessions. “Nothing has changed,” he reportedly concluded. “The war continues.”²

This was the first revolution covered “live” by international telegraph services, and by midnight, the news was all over Europe. Prodemocracy strikes had shut the St. Petersburg–Berlin telegraph lines, but telegrams were rerouted via Scandinavia and some European papers were able to include notice of the tsar’s manifesto on Tuesday morning, October 31. “Only a few thousand people throughout Russia as yet know the glad news,” wrote the correspondent of *The Times* of London. *The Dawn* of Paris, longtime supporter of the Russian prodemocracy movement, put the manifesto on its front page.³

Radiating from London, international telegraph services carried the tsar's manifesto around the world. In Portugal, the prodemocracy newspaper *The World* published its first comment on Wednesday, cautiously worrying about the tsar's real intent: "Hopefully a bloody deception will not follow [the Russian people's] generous hopes!" On Friday, *The North-China Herald* in Shanghai called the event "remarkable." The chief Iranian prodemocracy newspaper, *The Strong Bond*, published in Calcutta, India, mentioned the manifesto the following Monday. In mid-November, a prodemocracy socialist in Hong Kong commented, "the great ferment of the Russian Revolution has affected the entire globe like a clap of thunder." The editors of an Ottoman prodemocracy paper, which resumed publication in December in Cairo after a long absence, fulfilled their "duty, as staunch liberals, to send a fraternal salute to the champions of liberalism who are even now struggling in the vast Russian empire in the name of the Rights of Man and Citizen."⁴

Thus began a global wave of democratic revolutions. Though later upstaged by the Russian Revolutions of 1917, the Russian Revolution of 1905 gave an enormous boost to democracy movements around the world. *The Strong Bond* urged Muslims to "adopt the peoples of Russia as a model," and Iranians seem to have done just that. According to a British diplomat in Tehran, "the Russian Revolution [of 1905] has had a most astounding effect here. Events in Russia have been watched with great attention, and a new spirit would seem to have come over the people. They are tired of their rulers, and, taking example of Russia, have come to think that it is possible to have another and better form of government." Ottomans followed the Russian Revolution with "extra-ordinary interest," an opposition newspaper noted, concluding that "If we strive like Russians, . . . it won't be long before we see even the Sultan's aides-de-camp among our supporters." "Surely," the president of India's Congress Party commented in 1906, we British subjects "are far more entitled to self-government, a constitutional representative system, than the peasants of Russia." "The sparks of [the Russian Revolution] are still flying about," an Arab democrat wrote several years later. The Russian events "have echoed throughout the world like a powerful recurrent cry," according to a Portuguese democrat.⁵

These influences rebounded across the continents. Certain prodemocracy activists in Portugal called themselves "Young Turks," drawing on the image of Ottoman reformers, who themselves drew on the Young Italians of the nineteenth century. The Russian tsar and Ottoman sultan schemed to support the Iranian shah's antidemocratic campaigns. Mex-

ican revolutionaries crossed paths with veterans of the Russian movement in exile in San Francisco. Chinese prodemocracy newspapers published numerous stories on lessons to be learned from recent movements in other countries.⁶ And a wave of democratic revolutions emerged, consuming more than a quarter of the world's population by World War I:

- Russia, 1905
- Iran, 1906 and 1909
- Ottoman Empire, 1908
- Portugal, 1910
- Mexico, 1911
- China, 1912

This global reach places the wave alongside other clusters of democratic revolutions, such as the wave triggered by the French Revolution of 1789, the uprisings of 1848, the anticolonial movements after World War I and World War II, and the democratic movements of the late twentieth century.⁷

In addition to the influences and linkages that flowed among the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century, these events followed parallel trajectories. In all of them, prodemocracy movements unseated long-standing autocracies with startling speed. The nascent democratic regimes held elections, convened parliaments, and allowed freedom of the press and freedom of association. Considerable disorder accompanied democratization, and the new regimes failed in numerous instances to uphold the rights and freedoms that they proclaimed. Coups d'état soon undermined the democratic experiments in every case but one, Portugal, where democracy survived an attempted coup d'état in 1915 and lingered until 1926. See Table 1 for a rough tabular chronology.

Naturally, each case has its own unique history. Yet the shared aspects of their trajectories distinguish the democratic revolutions of 1905–1912 from other movements of the same period: reformist democratizations, such as Austria in 1907, Sweden in 1909, Colombia in 1909–1910, Greece in 1909–1912, and Argentina and Italy in 1912; failed democracy movements, such as the Young Afghans, Young Bukharans, Young Khivans, and the Radical Civic Union's uprising in Argentina in 1905; anticolonial movements such as the Herero and Maji-Maji rebellions in southern Africa, Swadeshi in India, Sarekat Islam in Indonesia, Irish Nationalism, Korean resistance to Japanese rule, the Watchtower movement in Malawi, and Shaykh Ma al-'Aynayn's defense of the Sahara; and peasant uprisings in Moldavia and Burma.

Table 1. Democratic Revolutions of the Early Twentieth Century

	Russia	Iran	Ottoman Empire	Portugal	Mexico	China
Movement take-off	1905	1905	1908	1910	1910	1911
Democratic breakthrough	1905	1906	1908	1910	1911	1912
Parliamentary elections	1906	1907	1908	1911	1911	1913
Parliament convenes	1906	1907	1908	1911	1912	1913
Parliament subjugated	1907	1911	1909	1926	1913	1913

International observers at the time noted the flurry of democratizations. V. I. Lenin, the Russian communist, lumped several of these events together as “bourgeois-democratic revolutions.” James Bryce, the British liberal, called them misguided attempts to “set a child to drive a motor car.” British positivists noted that positivism played “so great a part” in them.⁸ *The Journal of Despotism*, a satirical journal in Iran, ran an article written by fourteen-month-old “Democracy” to its half-brother “Parliament” in Russia likening various democracy movements around the world to siblings:

My father [is] Justice-of-the-State, and my mother Iran-of-All-Lands. My father married a woman in every country that he visited; his first wife he married in England. . . . Now—praise be to God—I have 47 brothers[,] the majority of whose names I don’t know, but I know [this much] that we all look alike except maybe with just a little difference in appearance. . . . Another thing that I’ve heard is that from India Justice-of-the-State intends to go to China, [and] I don’t know where he will go first, the Ottoman country or China, undoubtedly he will not stay [put] in India; I know my father, where ever he goes he takes a wife and as soon as his wife becomes pregnant he leaves that country. [So] if you [happen to] know where he is going after India [please] write to me.⁹

As it happened, Justice-of-the-State appears to have visited the Ottoman Empire first, and then China several years later. In the decades since the wave crashed, however, these democratic experiments have receded into

the province of area specialists. Plenty has been written about the individual cases—the present study relies heavily on this historiography—but the 1905 wave is rarely treated as an international event.¹⁰ I propose that the wave is worth studying for contemporary and analytical purposes, in addition to its intrinsic historical interest.

In the late 1980s, a tentative liberalization in Russia once again generated a global wave of democratization. Dozens of countries toppled autocrats and experimented with democratic procedures.¹¹ Understanding the emergence of democracy has always been an important and prominent academic enterprise, but it has taken on added urgency as new democracies around the world struggle to survive. Studying the wave of democratic experiments set in motion by the Russian Revolution in 1905 offers a precedent for the study of new democracies at the end of the twentieth century. The sad fact that the democratic experiments of the earlier period all failed allows researchers to study both the upward and downward trajectories of democratization, and the linkages between them. Similar ideological contexts appear to have been involved in the democratizations of the early and late twentieth century: both periods witnessed a temporary downturn in tension between the competing ideals of democracy and national development. Indeed, in both periods democracy was often held to be a necessary, even, at optimistic moments, a sufficient, cause for national development. Both waves involve independent nations (with the exception of the Baltic and Adriatic coasts in 1989–1992), thereby avoiding the crosscutting issues of decolonization that affected the intervening waves of democratization. Similar international contexts also appear to have been involved in the democratizations of the early and late twentieth century: both periods witnessed the hegemony of capitalist democracies and economic (as opposed to ideological) competition among the Great Powers. In the pre-Soviet era this competition set Britain and its allies against Germany and its allies; the post-Soviet era pitted the United States against the European Union against Japan (though China's growing global presence may increase ideological diversity in this competition). As I will argue in the conclusion (Chapter 10), the new democracies of 1905–1912 were dress rehearsals for the new democracies of 1989–1996.

Hours before the announcement of the October Manifesto, Anna Sergeevna Miliukova stood at the founding conference of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Russia and demanded women's suffrage.

Women had participated actively in the prodemocracy movement, and feminist leaders such as Miliukova claimed the same political rights as male citizens of Russia. The matter was put to a vote, and the party agreed by a narrow majority to include women's suffrage in its platform. Pavel Miliukov, Miliukova's husband and a leader of the party, was furious. He berated two friends who had stepped outside and missed the vote, and managed to insert a clause indicating that the suffrage vote was not binding on party members.¹² With little pressure on this count from the main prodemocracy organization, the Russian government excluded women from elections in 1906 and 1907.

As the Chinese democracy movement came to power in early 1912, it too debated female suffrage, moving away from its earlier pledges to support women's rights. A group of women led by Tang Qunying—one of the democracy movement's earliest members and chief bomb-makers—burst into the provisional parliament at Nanjing and heckled the speakers so persistently that the session was adjourned. Over the next two days, the women scuffled with parliamentary representatives and guards, demanding equal rights for women. They too were denied the vote.¹³

Women were denied suffrage in all of the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century, except Portugal, where one woman voted as a test case in 1911. The new democracy in Portugal then removed women's suffrage in 1913.¹⁴ These regimes instituted other limits on suffrage as well: illiterate men were disenfranchised in Portugal, as were poor men in several countries. In addition, the newly implemented government institutions were disorderly and did not always follow their own rules. Some elections were rigged, some rights were repressed, some officials were venal and corrupt.

By the standards of the early twenty-first century, the new democracies of the early twentieth century were hardly full democracies. Even by the standards of the early twentieth century, the new democracies were not in the vanguard of democratizing reforms worldwide. Yet few countries at that time approached today's standards of democracy—in 1904, only four countries enfranchised more than half of their adult population. As a result, the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century placed their countries in the middle of the pack along with various European countries that international observers classified as democratic at the time, including Britain, France, and the United States, all of which refused the vote to women. Prodemocracy activists studied these models intensely and considered their own movements as following in

the path of existing democracies, paying special attention to the legacy of the French Revolution, which democracy movements around the world treated as an iconic ideal, despite the French Revolution's very imperfect record as a democracy. Democratic ambitions of the period were so limited that many activists venerated Japanese constitutionalism, an extremely restricted semidemocratic system that was widely credited with defeating Russian autocracy in the war of 1904–1905. Indeed, the terms used for democratic revolution at this time were sometimes ambiguous: *mashrutiyat* in Iran and *meşrutiyet* in the Ottoman Empire could refer either to constitutionalism or democracy, depending on the context, and the words for revolution in each country (*revoliutsiia*, *shurish*, *inkilâb*, *revolução*, *revolución*, *geming*) were not necessarily accompanied by modifiers specifying the goals as democratic. Nonetheless, these revolutions marked a major transformation in the direction of democracy: limiting the powers of the dictator, instituting competitive elections, and unleashing political debate through electoral campaigns, parliamentary sessions, and a vibrant press. If R. R. Palmer could call the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries an “age of the democratic revolution,” based on the limited rights gained by the French Revolution and its global successors, then the early twentieth century deserves this label as well.¹⁵

Large numbers of citizens associated these revolutions with democratization and greeted them enthusiastically, almost apocalyptically, treating these events as significant political transitions. “In every corner of the Ottoman lands,” an Istanbul newspaper effused soon after the reinstatement of the constitution in 1908, “hundreds of thousands of people—Muslims, Christians, and Jews, whole families, men, women, and children—have held unimaginable and indescribable celebrations, holidays, and feasts for the past 10 days. This joy will not disappear from the nation's heart til the end of days.” In Mexico City, more than a hundred thousand people lined up to greet the leader of the democracy movement as his carriage arrived in the capital. In parts of China, celebrations were so widespread that the governor considered banning them: “Beijing opera, Sichuan opera, shadow plays and storytellers were making a clamorous noise everywhere, and actors and cooks did not get a day's rest.” The arrival of a constitution was viewed by its most enthusiastic supporters as a panacea.¹⁶

In the early twentieth century, unsympathetic observers suggested that the masses did not comprehend the meaning of the new political system. Russian business officials suggested that “the magic word ‘freedom,’

understood by [workers] to mean that one can do what one wants, attracts the youth and creates scandalous behavior in the supposition that such behavior is necessary and demanded by the goal of achieving freedom.” An upper-class Iranian man circulated a story about a lower-class protestor who thought that *mashrutiyat*, the Persian word for democracy and constitutionalism, was some sort of food. “I’ve been waiting for two days,” the protestor said, “and I haven’t gotten even a single piece of *mashrutiyat*.” Two Mexican peasants, welcoming the leader of the democracy movement as he made his way to the capital, are supposed to have said, “And what, *amigo*, is this *democracia* for which all are shouting?” “Why, it must be the lady who accompanies him.”¹⁷

Contrary to these derogatory comments, millions of people participated knowledgeably in the political affairs of the new democracies. They voted in elections that were the freest in their countries’ history, despite limited suffrage and considerable irregularities. They followed politics in the profusion of newspapers that sprouted after democratization. As a satirical journal in the Ottoman Empire joked, “Everybody is talking about the government and governmental affairs. What is this all about? Even a poor man standing next to his brazier at night talks with his mother-in-law about politics and discusses the issues. As soon as he gets up in the morning, he says, ‘What is going on? What has been happening?’ and dives into the newspapers.”¹⁸ Many people took advantage of their new liberties to organize in groups such as unions, as we will see in Chapter 6.

This is not to deny continuities between the old regimes and the new. Monarchs retained significant power in Russia and, for a time, in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. There and elsewhere, the new democracies maintained or rebuilt many of the old, repressive state apparatuses, and local elites frequently retained power. In addition, many of the old regimes had been committed to the modernization of economic and cultural life, and the new democracies built on some of the older reforms. The new legal codes that the Chinese democracy adopted in 1912, for example, had been drafted several years earlier under the monarchy.¹⁹ Similarly, some of the new democracies’ initiatives were maintained after democracy itself was suppressed, such as the top-down educational expansion called the “Tuba tree” policy in the Ottoman Empire, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

These continuities are clearer in hindsight than they were at the time, when historical disjuncture was the dominant experience. Holdovers

from the old regime seem to have been viewed as temporary, to be swept away when the new democracy found its footing. The future was unpredictable, as attested by Ukrainian author Lesia Ukrainka, writing to relatives in the weeks after the October Manifesto: “We live as if we were persons in a romantic novel surrounded by contrasts, antitheses, impossibilities, tragedies, comedies, tragicomedies, chaos and among these some heroic scenes and figures, as if from a [classic] ancient drama. No one knows what will happen tomorrow; few remember what happened yesterday.” These uncertainties tend to get short shrift in the study of the social bases of democratization, but I wish to put them front and center, in keeping with the approach in my earlier work on the Iranian Revolution of 1979.²⁰

Observers of established democracies may be cynical about representative institutions. They may focus on how democracy can be co-opted by elites and dream about more radical measures of social change. But in countries that lack these institutions, democracy threatens “to change the relations between the people and those who have the power,” in the words of a prodemocracy leader in early twentieth century China.²¹ It often takes a wrenching social movement to force an entrenched autocrat to grant elections, to share power with a representative parliament, and to recognize the sovereignty of the people. Who is capable of carrying out such a movement? And who is capable of protecting democratic institutions against the challenges that seem to arise inevitably in their early years?

The usual suspects, according to social-scientific studies of democratization, are the bourgeoisie, the working class, and the middle class. The roles for antagonists are generally allotted to the landowners and the military. Foreign governments are sometimes accorded parts on either or both sides of the drama. But in the early twentieth century, as I contend chapter by chapter in the second part of this book, these characters played their roles inconsistently.²² Groups of landowners sometimes supported democratization, for example; the bourgeoisie and the working class scarcely existed, in some cases. Many of these groups switched political affiliations rapidly, jumping in and out of the democratic movement in just months. Viewed in terms of the classic social-scientific scripts, the democratic revolutions of this period were a jumble.

One response to this jumble might be to focus on the process of democratic transition rather than the identities of the people who engage in this

process. This approach, known half-jokingly among social scientists as *transitology*, proposes that the presence or absence of particular social groups is not required for democracy, and therefore group identities are not key to the analysis of democratization.²³ What are we to do, then, with evidence that a particular group identity mattered a great deal to the prodemocracy activists of the early twentieth century? Participants and observers consistently identified the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century with a single social group: the emerging global class of modern intellectuals.

The term *intellectuals*, as a collective self-identification, had recently gained international popularity through the Dreyfus Affair in France in 1898, in which a movement of French writers and academics contested and eventually overturned the conviction of a Jewish military officer imprisoned for treason. Intellectuals around the world followed news of the campaign intently, as the reader will see in Chapter 2, and many sought to reenact the Dreyfusard mobilization in their own countries. The U.S. philosopher William James, for example, told the Association of American Alumni in 1907:

We alumni and alumnae of the colleges are the only permanent presence that corresponds to the aristocracy in older countries. We have continuous traditions, as they have; our motto, too, is *noblesse oblige*; and unlike them, we stand for ideal interests solely, for we have no corporate selfishness and wield no power of corruption. We sought to have our own class consciousness. "*Les intellectuels!*" What prouder club-name could there be than this one.²⁴

James's definition of intellectuals as college graduates was one of many definitions that circulated in that era. For other self-proclaimed intellectuals, the defining feature was merely a high school education or any modern-oriented education or even a state of mind, regardless of formal education. This study does not impose any single definition, but rather attempts to track the political activities of people who identified themselves as intellectuals. In the more democratic nations of the world, the class consciousness of self-defined intellectuals manifested itself in statist social engineering. Intellectuals sought to reshape society along "rational" and "scientific" lines in the Progressive movement in the United States, Fabianism and New Liberalism in Britain, "Solidarism" and "Interventionism" in the Leftist Bloc in France. This trend drew leading segments of socialism and old-style liberalism into near unanimity.²⁵ In less democratic nations of the

world, by contrast, the class consciousness of self-defined intellectuals manifested itself in prodemocracy movements.

Auguste Comte, the prophet of the modern intellectual class, scorned democracy as the rule of mediocrity. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, when the identity of “intellectuals” had gone global, their dominant ideology had shifted to a positivist liberalism, as I contend in Chapter 2. Among the pioneers of this shift were British academics who proposed democratic reforms that would allow an alliance of “brains and numbers on the one side” to carry the day against “wealth, rank, vested interest, possession in short, on the other.” In the decade before World War I, intellectual organizations—student groups, alumni groups, professional associations, study groups, literary circles, and so on formed the backbone of prodemocracy movements around the globe, as Chapter 3 will demonstrate. This was true even in Mexico, where an earlier generation of intellectuals known as Científicos—also positivists—was closely associated with the authoritarian regime. The Mexican democracy movement rejected the Científicos’ identification as intellectuals, claiming that title for “the poor intellectuals who have not suffered the corrupting influence of wealth. Among those one finds the thinkers, the philosophers, the writers, the lovers of the Fatherland and of Freedom.” Moreover, as detailed in Chapter 2, intellectuals felt that democracy would bring them to power. The brains behind the alliance of “brains and numbers” anticipated that the “numbers” would recognize the intellectuals’ right to rule and vote them into office. In this way, democracy was a self-interested ideology for intellectuals of the early twentieth century.²⁶

In the years and months before the intellectuals came to power, as they confidently planned to inherit the reins of government, these dreams of grandeur seemed delusional. The intellectuals’ numbers were miniscule and some of them were in exile, whereas their autocratic opponents were experienced and powerful. Perhaps the most startling aspect of the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century is the hegemonic leadership that the intellectuals usurped, virtually overnight, from other social groups. That is, these other groups came to view the intellectuals and their democratic ideology as serving societal, and not merely self-interested, goals. Two of the intellectuals’ key supporters were classes often identified by social scientists as the protagonists of democratization: the bourgeoisie and the working class. Activists in these groups viewed themselves not as leaders but as followers of the intellectuals, and to the

extent that they favored democratization, they did so under the banner of the intellectuals' movement.

Workers joined the democracy movement despite the intellectuals' elitist treatment of working-class issues and personalities, as the reader will see in Chapter 6. For example, Francisco I. Madero, the leader of the Mexican prodemocracy movement, appealed for working-class support with the ambiguous slogan, "You do not want bread, you want only freedom, because freedom will enable you to win your bread." Yet crowds of workers came out to cheer Madero as he toured the country. João Chagas, a leading prodemocracy activist in Portugal, refused to promise workers "penny codfish" (that is, cheap food). Yet Portuguese workers participated actively in the democracy movement, suffering the bulk of casualties in the democratic revolution, and even standing guard, "defending the banks and the money of the rich, with the police and the Guard completely disarmed," as a prodemocracy intellectual recalled in amazement.²⁷ Moreover, democratic revolutions occurred in countries such as Iran and China that had almost no industrial working class.

The bourgeoisie's sporadic embrace of the intellectuals' hegemony has sometimes led the two groups to be lumped together as the "middle class," as I discuss in Chapter 5. In the early twentieth century, however, there were no self-proclaimed "middle-class" organizations, and middle-class political participants, such as shop owners or professionals, were as likely to oppose one another as to oppose other political groups. Yet an uneasy alliance did emerge between the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals in many countries in the decade before World War I, and the bourgeoisie's acceptance of the intellectuals' leadership was a crucial factor in the emergence of new democracies during that period. In Russia, for example, even conservative bourgeois organizations began to adopt the intellectuals' call for democratic reforms in 1905. Industrialist V. Belov explained his support for the democracy movement on the basis of self-identification with intellectuals, identification being the highest form of hegemony: "All of us intelligentsia, industrialists and non-industrialists, feel every minute that we are under surveillance." In Iran, merchants leading sit-ins against the state's arbitrary economic policies called in students and faculty from Tehran's new modern schools who lectured them on the need for democracy and inserted the call for a constitution and an elected parliament into the strikers' list of demands.²⁸

The hegemony of the intellectuals was so strong in the first years of the twentieth century that even the past and future enemies of democracy, the

landed elite and the military, exhibited signs of support, albeit briefly. Certain cosmopolitan aristocrats, for example, identified with the intellectuals and joined the democracy movement, and collective organizations of landowners, where they existed, dropped their resistance for a time, as detailed in Chapter 7. Modern-educated military officers were crucial allies in the democratic revolutions, as I will show in Chapter 8, though they later worked to undermine the fledgling democratic regimes they helped create.

The intellectuals' final pillar of support, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 9, was the Great Powers: Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. The Powers' support was supplemented by regional powers such as Austria-Hungary and Japan. (Russia, a regional power whose autocracy managed to undermine the democratic experiment within its own borders, played an unremittingly antidemocratic role in its relations with neighboring new democracies.) At crucial moments during the democratic revolutions, one or more of the Great Powers stepped in to assist them. The U.S. government allowed Francisco Madero to organize his invasion on Texan soil; Great Britain allowed Iranian prodemocracy sit-ins at its embassy grounds near Tehran; German military officials stationed in Ottoman Rumelia sent positive reports on the Ottoman democracy movement to the kaiser. France postponed loan negotiations with the Russian tsar until democratic political reforms were announced; Britain and Japan refused an emergency loan to the Chinese emperor while he was fighting against the prodemocracy revolution; British diplomats refused to summon British warships to protect the king of Portugal, despite the "fixed idea at the [Portuguese] Court that if a revolutionary movement were attempted we [British] should intervene."²⁹

Many of the Great Powers' representatives expressed surprise and satisfaction at the attempt to mimic Great Power political formulas. The U.S. ambassador in Tehran commented on the Iranian prodemocracy movement, "The further development of this struggle will naturally attract the interest and sympathy of the friends of liberty throughout the world." Yet the Great Powers' sympathies were laced with racist misgivings about the possibilities of democratic self-governance in "backward" lands. The same U.S. ambassador in Tehran argued at length in the same memorandum that it was doomed to fail: "The great body of the Shah's subjects have no idea of the meaning of 'Constitutional Government'; the Persian language contains no equivalent of 'Constitution' as we understand the term. . . . History does not accord a single instance of successful constitutional government in a

country where the Mussulman [Muslim] religion is the state religion; Islam seems to imply autocracy.” A British ambassador characterized the Portuguese as “not everyday Europeans” and justified his interference in domestic affairs by writing to the Foreign Office, “I believe that if you found yourself face to face with this inert and corrupt mass you would be the first, now and then, to use the goad.” Further examples of similar attitudes are presented in Chapter 9.³⁰

Beyond ideological sympathies, the Great Powers cheered democratization because it sometimes served their economic and geopolitical interests. French government and business circles were jubilant over news of the October Manifesto, according to the Russian ambassador in Paris, because they felt that political concessions would help to restore order in Russia, preserving the country’s value as an ally and a field of investment. The British foreign office was pleased that the restoration of the Ottoman constitution might balance the pro-German affinities of the court with the pro-British affinities of the prodemocracy coalition: “If only this Young Turk party can consolidate itself and introduce a really good administration, they will have been playing our game entirely, but perhaps not the game of other more interested Powers.” Yet the Powers soon soured on the democracies. As it turned out, the game that the new democracies played was not that of the Great Powers, but rather that of the ruling intellectuals.³¹

The intellectuals calculated correctly. Their hegemony in the prodemocracy movement, based on the confident alliance of “brains and numbers,” launched large numbers of intellectuals into power in the new democracies (see Chapter 4). In Russia, a hostile tsarist official called parliament “the dregs of the Russian ‘intelligentsia’”; 42 percent of parliament had a higher education. In Portugal, the leading prodemocracy newspaper called for “the heroes of the field of battle”—those who had participated in the days of the revolt—to give way to “the heroes of thought,” who would rule the new democracy. Old-style intellectuals opined, “The diploma in this country is everything—wisdom, nothing,” and less-educated republicans complained that all the best government jobs were going to youths whose sole qualification was “having spent years of their youth eating sardines and strumming guitars alongside the learned teat of the University.” In Mexico, young intellectuals “picked up the plums of office, while the real captains of the revolution”—the nonintellectuals who had actually fought against the dictator’s army—“were fobbed off

with, at best, lowly commissions in the *rurales* [gendarmes].” In the Guangdong province of China, where the democracy movement was most entrenched, foreign-educated men occupied “practically all the important government posts for the province.”³²

The intellectuals miscalculated, however, the stability of hegemony. The pillars of support that had carried them into office crumbled, sometimes within months, as the new ruling class ruled in its own interests. The working class was the first to defect from the prodemocracy coalition. Or rather, the working-class mobilization that had served the prodemocracy movements simply continued once democracy had been announced. With strikes now legal, and the new governments hesitant at first to use force against their own citizens, working-class activists escalated their demands for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions. A flurry of strikes struck the new democracies, and the ruling intellectuals soon struck back at this challenge to their authority. In Russia, one prodemocracy leader called continued strikes “a crime against the revolution”—though he later used the threat of strikes to try to wrest further concessions from the tsar. In Portugal, the state invented a monarchist plot to subvert the republic through worker unrest and used this as a pretext to clamp down on worker activism. Even British ambassador Arthur Hardinge, who was generally hostile to the new democracy in Portugal, commended it for the “vigorous measures” taken to suppress railway strikes in mid-1912. In Mexico, the government’s new Department of Labor worked with textile-mill owners to calm the strikers. In China, public health officials tried to regulate the “night-soil coolie” industry, which involved the carrying of city-dwellers’ feces in buckets to dumping sites outside of town; when the workers resisted, they were arrested. In the Ottoman Empire, the government struggled to commandeer the port strikes that broke out when Austria annexed Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina. As a result of these tensions, the working class sat idly by when the new democracies lurched into crisis.³³

The next group to defect was the bourgeoisie, which resented the disorder of the new democracies, the intellectuals’ monopoly on power, and the taxes being foisted upon the wealthy to pay for positivist-inspired government programs. In Portugal’s new democracy, a sympathetic British diplomat noted, “Taxation is high, but now all pay their share, and before the republic, the influential and rich escaped almost scot free. Commerce has fallen off, nevertheless the amount of customs duties collected has increased, as evasion has now become difficult, if not impossible. Formerly

anyone with money could make an ‘arrangement’ with the officials.” In Iran, a German diplomat reported, the wealthy tired of democracy as parliament “begins to question even their traditional prerogatives and their most sacred possession: their freedom to steal and their freedom from taxes.” In Mexico, the government debated major tax increases to solve the three most pressing problems facing educational reform in the country, as identified by an intellectual in Yucatán: “money, money, and money.” In the first weeks of the new democracy in China, the French consul in Shanghai noted, “The bankers and the wealthy wholesalers and compradores have all had to contribute and there is no doubt that many of them are beginning to find the new regime very burdensome.”³⁴

In Portugal, five major business groups were so “disgusted” with “the agitated life of party politics” that they wrote the president requesting “a rapid solution of the political crisis, so as to assure peace and domestic tranquility”—catchwords for authoritarianism. One business group complained in 1915 that popular suffrage resulted in the election of stupid men, rather than representatives of the “conservative classes.” In Mexico, business groups became openly critical of the democratic regime by early 1913, and several leading businessmen supported the military coup d’état of February 1913. In the Ottoman Empire, much of the bourgeoisie consisted of ethnic minorities, in particular Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, who eventually turned from Ottoman democracy to nationalist separatism, supporting Greek annexation of Ottoman Cyprus, Armenian revolutionary movements, and Zionist settlement—though this turn occurred after democracy had been undermined.³⁵

Landed elites, whom scholars expect to be the social group most hostile to democracy, resumed their assigned role in several countries, including Portugal, where some aristocratic landowners supported monarchist invasions. Only in Russia, however, did the landowners’ monarchist plots succeed, when the tsar’s government reasserted control and rewrote the election rules to favor landed elites. More often, democracy was undone by military officers and their coups d’état: Mahmud Şevket Pasha in the Ottoman Empire, Samsam al-Saltanah in Iran, Félix Díaz and Victoriano Huerta in Mexico, Yuan Shikai in China, plus Joaquim Pimenta de Castro’s near-coup in Portugal. None of these would-be dictators lasted much longer than the democratic experiments that they toppled, and years of chaos and war ensued.

The plotters who undermined these new democracies in the early twentieth century were keenly aware of the international context of their actions.

They eagerly courted Great Power support, as did the prodemocracy forces, and searched for cues of Great Power sympathies. The governments of Britain, France, and the United States—as well as less-democratic governments in Austria-Hungary, Germany, Japan, and Russia—obliged the anti-democracy forces by withdrawing support from the new democracies in various ways. The Great Powers offered unconstitutional loans to the leaders planning coups in China and Russia. In Mexico the U.S. ambassador actually helped to arrange a coup d'état. The British gave permission that the Iranian coup-makers requested, and the British and Germans cooperated to cover the Ottoman coup-makers' Balkan flank through diplomatic pressure on Ottoman neighbors. In Portugal, too, the British expressed satisfaction with the military government of 1915: "I trust Portugal has at last been endowed with a moderate and sensible government."³⁶

Yet the Portuguese coup did not succeed, presenting us with an instructive comparison: Why did this attempted coup fail to undermine the new democracy, while coups succeeded in all the other cases? Chapter 9 takes up this question and concludes that the Portuguese democracy survived because of a failed alignment of resources among the antidemocratic forces. The military coup planners in Portugal were so pro-German that they refused to seek British assistance, and the British, despite their preference for a military dictatorship in Portugal, recognized that prodemocracy intellectuals were more staunchly pro-British. In the other cases under study, no such accidental discrepancy barred the alignment of resources among the military, the bourgeoisie, the landowners, and the Great Powers.

The story of new democracy that emerges in these case studies, then, is one of alliances gained and lost. On the prodemocracy side, the intellectuals gained hegemony over and support from workers, capitalists, portions of the military, and the Great Powers. When this hegemony disintegrated, the military and landowners attempted to woo the capitalists and the Powers to an alternative, antidemocratic alliance. In Portugal, the two alliances clinched in virtual stalemate for a decade, until the fascist coup of 1926. In the Ottoman Empire and China, the antidemocratic alliance won the capital but lost the provinces to centrifugal disintegration. In Mexico, the antidemocratic alliance's victory lasted only a year, but the prodemocracy forces emerged from a decade of civil war looking like the antidemocratic regime they had ousted. In Iran, the antidemocratic alliance lost power to foreign occupation during World War I. Only in Russia did the antidemocratic alliance return to power for any length of time,

about a decade, succumbing to a second democratic revolution in 1917 that lasted no longer than the first.

The failure of the new democracies devastated the intellectuals. Their newspapers were closed, their parties were driven from parliament, their state sinecures were purged, and many were driven into exile. The new authoritarians adopted parts of the intellectuals' ideology—mass education and public health reform, for example—but incorporated intellectuals selectively and only in subordinate roles. Many intellectuals plunged into despair, and themes of hopeless bleakness emerged in the literatures of all of the former democracies. In Russia, a leading poet worried: "Already, as in a nightmare or a frightening dream, we can imagine that the darkness overhanging us is the shaggy chest of the shaft-horse, and that in another moment the heavy hoofs will descend." A prodemocracy poet in Iran brought his audience to tears with the lament, "These ruins of a cemetery are not our Iran. These ruins are not Iran, where is Iran?" An Ottoman author opined: "My friend, sometimes the environment is like a bad omen, like a graveyard. What intelligence, what wisdom, what talent can survive there?" A well-known Mexican novelist came to the "basic conviction that the fight is a hopeless one and a thorough waste." In Portugal, after the coup of 1926, the journal *School Federation* warned, "Black days await us. Days of hunger threaten us. Days of slavery await us."³⁷ A Chinese writer offered this extreme metaphor: "Imagine an iron house having not a single window, and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won't feel the pain of death. Now if you raise a shout to awake a few of the light sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn?"³⁸

With their class mobilization in ruins, intellectuals began to criticize the collective identity of "intellectual." In Russia, a widely noted book of essays berated the intellectuals' class mobilization, one figure bemoaning the great breach between "the people and the intelligentsia; a hundred and fifty million on the one hand, and a few hundred thousand on the other, unable to understand each other in the most fundamental things." In the Ottoman Empire, a popular pamphlet denounced prodemocracy intellectuals for aping the West, and in Iran, prodemocracy intellectuals were mocked as "national goody-goodyies." In China, leftist intellectuals adopted the slogan "Down with the intellectual class." In place of prodemocracy activism, intellectuals turned to nonpolitical pursuits or shifted to serve other masters.

Instead of ruling in their own name, the intellectuals adopted ideologies that allowed them to rule in the name of the working class, the bourgeoisie, or the “nation.” The sociology of intellectuals emerged at this time with the founding insight that intellectuals are to be found on all sides of every political debate.³⁹

Today, a century after the October Manifesto, the identity of “intellectual” no longer carries the global cachet that it did for educated people in the early 1900s. To many ears, my own included, it sounds old-fashioned and elitist. Yet in various parts of the world, the term once again came to inspire and impress in the late twentieth century, and the identity of the intellectual was linked once again with democracy movements. As I will argue in Chapter 10, the linkage between intellectual identities and democratization reemerged at this time, with potentially important implications for new democracies in the early twenty-first century.

This on-again, off-again linkage between intellectuals and democratic ideologies underlines the fluidity of class politics. In the decade before World War I, large numbers of educated people came to identify themselves as intellectuals and commit themselves to democratic activism; in the decade after World War I, many of the same people—and their successors—lost confidence in the class identity of intellectuals and devoted themselves to nondemocratic causes. Similarly, segments of the bourgeoisie followed the intellectuals’ lead and supported democratic revolutions, then turned against democracy within a year or two. Working-class activists opposed dictatorship, then opposed democratic government. Portions of the landowning class did the same. The politics of a class, including the self-definition of a class, can change, and change quickly.

This study tracks these changes as closely as possible. It pays less attention to the long-term causes of change, which are well covered in other academic work, as summarized in Chapter 10. Rather, this study examines the self-understandings of democratic activists and their opponents during the emergence, the brief life, and the demise of democratic revolutions in the early twentieth century. It presents evidence of their collective identity, their organizational affiliation, their political ideology, and their joint activities. The rapid shifts in these self-understandings suggest that long-term causes may not be so important as short-term expectations: the more closely we examine the junctures of dramatic change, the more evidence we see of ideological and political fluctuation.

The evidence examined in this study is of four types: academic histories of each democratic revolution, memoirs by activists and observers,

contemporaneous reports by journalists, and contemporaneous reports by government officials. As is typical in comparative studies of this scope, language barriers prevented entirely parallel evidence for all six cases.⁴⁰ I did not learn Chinese or Russian for this project. However, I was able to study national-language material for the other four cases. The case studies took their initial framework from a handful of books that I took to be the best overall histories of each case: Abraham Ascher's *The Revolution of 1905* and Shmuel Galai's *The Liberation Movement in Russia*; Janet Afary's *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*; M. Şükürü Hanioglu's *Preparation for a Revolution* on the Ottoman Empire; Vasco Pulido Valente's *O Poder e o Povo* and A. H. de Oliveira Marques' *Nova História de Portugal*, volume 11; François-Xavier Guerra's *Le Mexique de l'Ancien Régime à la Révolution* and Alan Knight's *The Mexican Revolution*; and Edward Friedman's "The Center Cannot Hold" on China. These were supplemented with an attempt to review historiographical and memoir accounts in English, French, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish as comprehensively as possible. In addition, I explored contemporaneous accounts by journalists and government officials. I sampled as strategically as I could from the huge number of newspapers that proliferated during the democratic revolutions, seeking representation from diverse ideological positions and focusing my limited time on key episodes such as the emergence and demise of democracy. For government reports, I examined published documentary collections, which are exceptionally rich owing to competition among governments in the 1920s and 1930s to air documents related to the outbreak of World War I. In addition, I consulted the national archives in Istanbul, London, Lisbon, Mexico City, and Washington, thanks to the financial support of the Sociology Program of the National Science Foundation and my home institutions, first Georgia State University and then the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I was also fortunate to be able to consult private archives at the Condumex Center for the Study of the History of Mexico, the National Chamber of Commerce of Mexico City, and the Chamber of Commerce in Lisbon. With the help of research assistants, I focused on archival documents pertaining to the mobilization of intellectuals, such as educational policy reports, finance ministry documents on budget priorities, interior ministry monitoring of oppositional activities, and the flurry of political bargaining that surrounded democratic collapse.

The details of these revolutionary transitions generally bear out the observation I made in my last book, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*

(2004), that in moments of revolutionary confusion, people replace their old routines with new paths based largely on estimates of what they think others will do. They join the revolution when they think others are going to join, and if enough people make the same calculation at the same time, revolution occurs. If not enough people do so, then the revolutionary movement fizzles. There is no way to tell in advance how such a situation will play out, or even to explain the outcome afterwards in terms of preexisting conditions. In other words, my only prediction is that prediction—even retroactive prediction—is impossible. In place of explanation, we are left with the attempt to understand the experience of people living in such unsettled conditions.⁴¹ The experience of the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century, I argue, included attempts by self-described intellectuals to form a class and take power through the hybrid ideology of democratic positivism. The outcome of these movements cannot be predicted retroactively. Instead, I will make one more prediction: No documents will surface to contradict the narrative I have constructed about the democratic revolutions of the early twentieth century.