

Making Waves:

Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America

Theory sections of book manuscript

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INTRODUCTION: PUZZLING TRENDS IN WAVES OF CONTENTION

Political regime changes and conflicts over such transitions often occur in clusters and advance like waves. As one country transforms its constitutional framework, discontented actors in other countries take inspiration from this precedent and start to undertake similar efforts. The frontrunner's success encourages them to challenge their own rulers and push for transforming the way in which political authority is exercised. Due to such demonstration effects, regime contention frequently snowballs and sometimes triggers avalanches (Markoff 1996). For instance, the French revolutions of 1830 and especially 1848 set in motion dramatic diffusion processes; within one month of "Citizen King" Louis Philippe's overthrow in February 1848, half of Europe stood aflame, engulfed by protests and rebellions against autocratic princes (Sperber 1994; Dowe, Haupt, et al. 2001). The Russian Revolutions of 1917 also spurred contention and regime change throughout Central and Eastern Europe from 1917 to 1919; and the "third wave of democratization" that started in Southern Europe in 1974 rippled across the world during the subsequent two decades (Huntington 1991; Kurzman 1998; Lehoucq 2011; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán forthcoming).

These waves of regime contention have had divergent characteristics, however. The differences in timing are particularly striking. Regime conflict during the third wave unfolded over the course of two decades (1974 to early 1990s), whereas the 1848 revolution spread explosively within days (Traugott 2010: 131-42): Louis Philippe's downfall on 24 February triggered mobilization and protests in Baden on 27 February (Real 1983: 47-50), Stuttgart on 3 March, Munich 6-7 March, Vienna 13-15 March, Berlin 18-19 March, and Copenhagen 20-21 March. From April onward, it also had repercussions in far-away Brazil (Quintas 2004: 67-95), Colombia (Posada-Carbó 2002: 224-40), Chile (Wood 2011: 158-64, 193-202), and even the U.S., where it helped set the context for the July 1848 Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights (Dowe, Haupt, et al. 2001; Thomson 2002; Howe 2007: 846-47). Thus, contention spread almost as fast as news of the Paris events traveled before television and cell phones. Rebellion also proved quickly contagious in 1830, when the French King's overthrow in July triggered protests and uprisings in Belgium, the Prussian Rhineland, Brunswick, and Southern England in August, Berlin and some German middle states such as Saxony in September, Switzerland in October, and Poland in November (Church 1983); in that month, it also gave an impulse to the English movement for electoral reform, contributing to the suffrage extension of 1832 (Ertman 2010: 1007, 1009).

In the 20th century, by contrast, regime contention spread much more slowly. The wave of rebellions inspired by the Russian Revolutions of 1917 got under way in late 1918 and early 1919 only, more than a year after the triggering events. The third wave of democratization advanced at an even more leisurely pace. In South America, for instance, regime contention erupted three years after the Portuguese precedent in Peru in 1977,

then Bolivia in 1978 and again in 1982, Argentina 1982, Brazil and Chile 1983, and Uruguay 1984. Actual transitions happened in Ecuador in 1979, Peru 1980, Bolivia 1982, Argentina 1983, Uruguay 1984, Brazil 1985, Paraguay 1989, and finally Chile 1990. Thus, the third wave took more than a decade to unfold in South America, whereas the 1848 revolutions swept across Europe in less than one month.

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That efforts at regime change in Europe and Latin America tended to diffuse more quickly during the 19th than the 20th century is puzzling.¹ Given tremendous advances in communication and transportation, one would expect acceleration. But the fastest diffusion process in the history of democratization occurred early, in 1848.²

Speed does not equal success, however. On the contrary, there is an inverse relation between diffusion's speed and its success – defined here as significant, non-fleeting steps toward liberalism and democracy (and specified in greater depth in this chapter's concept section below).³ In the most dramatic wave, 1848, challenges against rulers spread immediately, but rarely led to significant effective transformations; the only substantial advance toward liberal democracy resulted from preemptive reforms in Denmark, Piedmont, and—to a lesser extent—the Netherlands. By contrast, 20th century challenges spread more slowly, but had a higher rate of success, as evident in Germany's and Austria's democratization and British, Italian, and Swedish suffrage reforms in 1918/19;⁴ in Hungary, however, an incipient Communist revolution was violently suppressed and ushered in authoritarian rule. There were even more successful regime

transitions during the third wave; in South America, democracy prevailed sooner or later, even where authoritarian incumbents offered stubborn resistance (as in Chile) or where fleeting new dictatorships temporarily interrupted a transition (as in Bolivia).

Thus, as the diffusion of regime contention diminished in speed, its success rate increased over the last two hundred years. In 1848, many dominoes quickly trembled but few were knocked down; in the 20th century, they did not shake immediately, but then many did fall. Thus, there is an inverse relation between the speed of diffusion and the degree of regime change that it managed to prompt.

What accounts for these two trends and their negative correlation? My study seeks to answer this puzzling question by comparing the mechanisms that propelled the spread of regime conflict in 1848, 1917 to 1919, and the late 1970s to 1980s in Latin America. Based on a wealth of contemporaneous documents, eyewitness reports, and personal interviews with leading participants in three third-wave cases, the book reconstructs the perceptions, thoughts, and decision making of the protagonists. In this way, it elucidates how and why they took inspiration from foreign precedents; why some actors sought to emulate the triggering event immediately whereas others preferred to wait; and why some succeeded in advancing much farther toward their goals than did others.

With this analysis, the book sheds new light on political processes that have attracted tremendous scholarly attention. From the late 1970s onward, democratization has arguably been *the* single most-studied topic in Comparative Politics; thousands of articles and hundreds of books, often written by the leading lights in the field, have investigated many different aspects of regime transition and consolidation. Most of these studies have focused on domestic factors, however, following the guidance of seminal

early contributions, especially O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986: 18-19). Only during the last decade have scholars picked up on some early conceptual and theoretical discussions (see especially Huntington 1991: 31-34, 100-6; Kurzman 1998) and conducted systematic empirical studies of external impulses and democratic diffusion. These efforts to capture the wave-like character of regime change have mostly applied statistical techniques to establish that "diffusion is no illusion" (Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Wejnert 2005; Torfason and Ingram 2010). Yet whereas these analyses convincingly document powerful demonstration and contagion effects, they do much less to unearth the causal mechanisms that produce these horizontal impulses.

The present book attempts to push the democratization and diffusion literature a step forward by investigating the forces that drive the spread of regime contention: What are diffusion's underlying causes and driving mechanisms? Why do political impulses cross borders? In particular, why do discontented sectors in one country infer from a regime change in another nation that they can accomplish the same feat? And how do these causal forces shape the patterns of diffusion, giving rise to the negative correlation between speed and success highlighted in the beginning? By addressing these kinds of questions, the book elaborates the international dimension of regime transitions and helps to rectify the imbalance arising from the longstanding emphasis on domestic factors.

In sum, by shedding new light on the much-discussed processes of democratization, modernization, and globalization, this book holds considerable theoretical and substantive relevance.

A NEW THEORY OF POLITICAL DIFFUSION:

COGNITIVE HEURISTICS IN EVOLVING ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

What explains the surprising trends highlighted in this volume, namely the historical slowdown in the diffusion of political regime contention and its increasing success? What underlies the negative correlation between these two developments? This paper first demonstrates the insufficiency of explanations derived from various extant approaches and then develops a new argument that, resting on cognitive-psychological micro-foundations, highlights political-organizational macro-developments.

The first section shows that neither hypotheses about shrinking distances among countries nor about deepening gulfs between them can account for the observed changes in diffusion patterns. The former, derived from modernization and network theories, predict acceleration not deceleration, and the latter, based on theories of nationalism, expect diminishing rather than increasing success. Specifically, modernization and globalization have produced a much “smaller” world where information circulates amply and instantaneously. How do these trends square with the slowdown of diffusion? Alternatively, as nations stress their unique identity, they should become more immune to external inspirations that are increasingly perceived as foreign and therefore inapplicable.

By contrast to these arguments about uniform trends in the international arena, other theories depict diffusion as a product of inequalities in the global system. These theories highlight either push or pull factors, that is, the “overwhelming” impact of innovative experiences and precedents on potential followers or the autonomous initiative of the importers of these new models. Accordingly, world system theory and constructivism suggest that forceful influence or normative and symbolic appeals

promote external models and induce weaker, more backward countries to adopt them, whereas rational choice stresses self-interested, autonomous learning from the successes of more advanced countries. World system theory and constructivism would predict a speed-up of diffusion: With the gradual advance of liberalism and democracy over the last two centuries, political regime contention moved downward in the global hierarchy to countries that were much more subject to external pressures and influences than the nations of the North Atlantic area that were the main battleground during the 19th and early 20 centuries. For instance, the “hegemonic” U.S. should be able to push its preference for democracy much more quickly on Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s than France, just one of five European great powers at the time, was in 1830 and 1848. As regards rational learning, the distinctly mixed success of earlier waves of political regime contention should have counseled caution in 1848 – but instead, people across Europe immediately jumped on the bandwagon and unleashed a tsunami. Moreover, my research conclusively shows that people’s decision-making process about joining in externally inspired protests and challenges differed starkly from the systematic, thorough, and balanced procedures of full rationality. People eagerly and rashly jumped to conclusions, rather than assessing the promise and applicability of foreign precedents carefully.

Since the conjectures derived from major extant approaches cannot convincingly account for the changing features of diffusion, the second part of this chapter develops a novel theory. And since rational choice does not offer a realistic micro-foundation, I draw on an alternative that has found robust empirical corroboration, namely cognitive-psychological insights on bounded rationality. Laboratory experiments and field studies

document that people deviate in their inferences and judgments from the ideal-typical maxims of comprehensive rationality. Normal mortals do not process ample information systematically; they commonly engage in selective perception and apply cognitive shortcuts that produce inferences efficiently and thus allow them to make pressing decisions – yet at the risk of distortions and biases. The use of cognitive heuristics, rather than strict rules of logic, is especially pronounced in situations of profound uncertainty, as it prevails when challenges to established authorities gather steam.

As explained in depth below, cognitive heuristics draw disproportionate attention to striking experiences, such as a regime collapse in another country, and lead people to infer rashly that they can attain a similar success. These mechanisms of bounded rationality propel the rapid spread of political regime contention. Yet because the underlying inferences are ill-considered and problematic, these efforts result in frequent failure. These tendencies—quick diffusion with limited success—prevailed in the first half of the 19th century, when cognitive heuristics held full sway because it fell to common people to decide whether to emulate foreign precedents and engage in political regime contention. In 1830 and 1848, there were no large-scale political organizations with representative leaders who could have guided people’s choices and actions. Instead, politically inexperienced individuals who had tenuous access to information had to decide on their own whether to join protests, and they heavily drew on cognitive heuristics to make up their minds. Thus, before the rise of mass-based political parties and interest associations, rationality was tightly bounded, triggering rash challenges under unpropitious conditions. The prevalence of cognitive heuristics in organizationally inchoate polities explains the speed yet limited success of the waves of 1830 and 1848,

that is, one side of the negative correlation between diffusion characteristics highlighted in this volume.

The secular rise of political organization from the late 19th century onward then made diffusion slower but more successful. As organizational ties strengthened, the bounds of rationality loosened (cf. Simon 1976: 102-3, 240-41). Instead of using cognitive heuristics to draw their own inferences, more and more people looked to representative leaders for direction. These leaders had better access to information and greater experience in making decisions. Standing on firmer ground, they were less affected by the rash inferences suggested by cognitive shortcuts. While they deviated from comprehensive rationality as well, they had a better grasp of the constellation of political power and therefore could make more realistic decisions, even under conditions of uncertainty. Accordingly, organizational leaders waited for propitious circumstances before spearheading efforts to emulate foreign precedents. They did want to achieve similar success, but led their followers into conflicts only when a good opportunity arose. Therefore, diffusion got under way more slowly, but ended up with greater goal attainment.

In sum, the emergence of political mass organizations concentrated effective decision-making in representative leaders who had greater capabilities for information processing, relied less on cognitive shortcuts, and gave their followers more prudent guidance. Political-organizational development thus helps account for the deceleration but growing success of democratization waves – the other side of the negative correlation stressed in this book. As explained in depth below, additional repercussions of this secular increase in polities' organizational density reinforced these tendencies in the

course of the 20th century. By developing this theory, the second part of the present chapter embeds cognitive-psychological micro-foundations in political-organizational macro-structures and thus helps build a theory of politics that stands on firm empirical ground but goes beyond the individualistic focus of cognitive psychology and does greater justice to the essential collective dimension of politics.

The Insufficiency of Extant Approaches

Network Approaches: Shrinking Distance among Countries

Diffusion studies often stress the role of networks (Rogers 2003: chap. 8), that is, the web of formal or informal connections through which various impulses flow (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Ansell 2007; Kahler 2009; Christakis and Fowler 2009). In this view, the network's extension and structure and the location of different units account for patterns of emulation. For instance, an innovation adopted by a node that lies in the middle of the network should spread more quickly than one developed by a unit on the outskirts. Moreover, the denser the connections between various nodes, the faster and more widely waves of diffusion should advance.

Arguments about modernization and globalization are often added to account for broader trends in network development, especially the secular growth of transnational connections and the increasing density of all kinds of networks. Over the last two centuries, communication and transportation have improved enormously and network linkages have multiplied and expanded. The “weak ties” whose “strength” sociologists extol (Granovetter 1973), that is loose, non-intense connections through which most novel impulses spread, have proliferated. The globe has shrunk to a “small world”

(Christakis and Fowler 2009: 19-29, 162-69), allowing information to travel almost instantaneously to the most remote places.

Therefore, an obvious prediction of network approaches is that over the course of history, diffusion processes will occur more frequently and unfold ever more quickly (Oliver and Myers 2003: 177, 186-91; see also Tarrow 2010: 208). Because the growing web of connections diminishes effective distances among countries, influences of all kinds should spread faster and farther. And because globalization erodes national distinctiveness and produces greater uniformity, the impact of foreign impulses on domestic structures and processes should grow as well; external models should more strongly mold internal politics and thus reproduce themselves. In the democratization literature, Huntington (1991: 101-2) advances this argument, which is also implied by Levitsky and Way's (2010: 43) emphasis on "linkage," understood as "myriad networks of interdependence ... to Western democratic communities." According to these lines of reasoning, diffusion should advance with increasing speed and ever greater success.

But the observed waves of regime contention and transition falsify the prediction of growing velocity. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848 (and even the protests triggered by the French Revolution of 1789: Timmermann 1989: 48, 369-77, 399, 537-44; Palmer 1959: 349-51, 424-26) spread faster than the conflicts set in motion by the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the third wave of democratization. In an era of slow communication and difficult transportation, political impulses diffused more quickly than in the age of CNN and easy air travel! Although the web of networks, including transnational political organizations, was incomparably denser in the 20th century than the 19th, challenges to established regimes spread with greater velocity then. Surprisingly,

globalization and the processes underlying it did not speed up the diffusion of regime contention. In sum, network approaches and modernization arguments cannot account for the historical trends in diffusion patterns.

Observable implications of network approaches about the main agents of diffusion are not consistently borne out either. According to these theories, the internationally most connected actors should spearhead emulation efforts. In fact, intellectuals and students, who are particularly attuned to novelty and curious about foreign developments, spearheaded the wave of 1848, which some scholars call “the revolution of the intellectuals” (Namier 1992).⁵ But in 1917-19, leadership fell to professional politicians, especially party and union leaders, who did not have direct connections to the protagonists of the triggering events, such as the Russian Bolsheviks. For instance, the German social democrats, who took over the lead in the revolution of November 1918, were distant from and hostile to Lenin and his comrades, but the October Revolution nevertheless helped induce them to push for their country’s full democratization. Although the world had shrunk considerably during the intervening decades, the protagonists in 1917-19 had looser connections than in 1848.⁶ Network features do not explain the patterns and characteristics of diffusion across the various waves investigated in this book.

The Rise of Nationalism: Greater Distance between Countries

Network approaches see an ever smaller world as better communication and transportation shrink effective distances among political units. Arguments about nationalism suggest the opposite: Political and cultural gulfs deepened as each nation

became its people's primary anchor of identity and loyalty. Network approaches reflect the enlightenment hope that universalistic reason, embodied in science and technical progress, brings the world together. Nationalism, by contrast, rests on the romantic idea that historical-cultural particularities set different organic units apart. According to this inward-looking perspective, people's proper referent is their own nation. Therefore, they should question the applicability of external experiences and models and be averse to foreign imports.

In this view, rising nationalism posed increasing barriers to the diffusion of regime contention. For instance, nationalism fed the idea of a German *Sonderweg*, a special trajectory that diverged from materialistic Western civilization, embraced nobility, hierarchy, and order, and therefore rejected the plebeian chaos of democracy (Winkler 2000). Similarly, Slavophiles rejected Westernization in Russia. These particularistic ideas immunized nations against external influences and created intellectual and political closure.⁷ In fact, emergent nationalism cut connections through which contention had diffused before. In the late 18th century, many foreigners, such as the French Marquis de Lafayette, the Prussian General von Steuben, and the Polish Colonel Kościuszko, fought in George Washington's ramshackle army of patriots; a few years later, both Lafayette and Kościuszko led uprisings in their home countries, and Lafayette kept applying his American experiences to revolutionary causes in Europe throughout his lifetime (Kramer 1996: 102-9, 227-73; Markoff 1996: 26). But during the 19th century, such border-crossing participation in regime contention and personal borrowing from other countries' experiences became ever less common; intensifying nationalist loyalties precluded it from the demand and supply side.

Arguments about nationalism, which gathered strength from the early 19th century onward, claim that immunity against foreign contagion grew over time. They therefore predict a steady slowdown in diffusion and a concomitant diminution of success. But this expectation of parallel trends diverges from the negative correlation between diffusion's speed and success highlighted in the introduction. In particular, over the last two centuries external impulses became more—not less—effective in spurring domestic transformations. Although nationalism intensified and found stronger adherence, political actors ended up replicating foreign precedents more. Despite the deepening divergence in popular loyalties and the emergence of hostility between countries, there was a tendency toward convergence in political regime type.

Arguments about nationalism do not only have difficulty accounting for changes in diffusion's success, but also in its speed. The single most dramatic wave of regime contention occurred in 1848, when nationalism was already intense. Although a crisis over the Rhine border in 1840 had inflamed German hostility toward France, for instance, just a few years later many Germans looked at France as a model of how to challenge repressive governments. Thus, despite the consolidation of national identities from the Napoleonic Wars onward, diffusion actually gained speed during these decades. The biggest deceleration occurred in the late 19th century, when nationalism continued its advance but did not achieve any qualitative breakthrough. In sum, the rise of nationalism cannot account for the inverse trends in the spread of political regime contention.

A closer look at the complex, multifaceted events of 1848 confirms that rising nationalism did not impede diffusion but was part and parcel of it. In Germany, Italy, and Hungary, national independence and unity were integral components of rebels' demands,

together with political participation and liberalization as instituted in Belgium, Britain, and France. Political actors did not see the contradiction between nationalism and Western liberalism, between inward-looking self-discovery and openness to external influences that arguments on nationalism postulate. Some Germans felt embarrassed that they again followed a French precedent, rather than acting on their own initiative (Varnhagen 1862: 264-70; Bayer 1948: 35-36)—but they did follow: Growing national pride did not block contagion from France.

For these reasons, arguments about nationalism cannot explain the changing characteristics in the diffusion of regime conflict. As demonstrated so far, neither shrinking distances nor increasing barriers among countries account for the slowdown and increasing success of contentious waves; they cannot explain the negative correlation examined in this book.

World System Theory and Constructivism: The Power of External Impulses

Whereas network approaches and theories of nationalism emphasize common features of the international system, world system theory and constructivism stress qualitative differences between more powerful and advanced countries vs. weak and backward nations. In this view, diffusion flows from the “center” to the “periphery.” The center promotes its innovations with material or ideational influence; countries outside the center, especially in the periphery, cede to this pressure or find the center’s models attractive as instruments or symbols of modernity and progress (Meyer, Boli, et al. 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Torfason and Ingram 2010: 355-60; Owen 2010; Huntington 1992; Gunitskiy 2010; Narizny 2012; Levitsky and Way 2010). Since

diffusion is conceptualized as a downward flow of impulses and models in a regional or global hierarchy, it has a strong vertical component and clear directionality.

Accordingly, the speed and success of diffusion depend on the point of origin: The center's innovations unleash more dramatic and effective waves of emulation than experiments in less influential, advanced, and prestigious countries, such as the semi-periphery. Patterns of diffusion should also vary with the concentration of hard and soft power in various regions or the world system as a whole. Hegemony gives rise to quick, powerful tsunamis, whereas multipolarity and balance produce modest tides of limited impact.

The waves of 1830 and 1848 indeed started in the most powerful and prestigious center country of that era, France, whereas the revolutions of 1917 and the initial transitions of the third wave occurred at intermediate rungs in the world system: Tsarist Russia was a great power militarily but underdeveloped and backward in socioeconomic, political, and cultural terms; and the Portugal, Greece, and Spain of the 1970s were semi-peripheral. But interestingly, France had limited direct influence over the rest of Europe, where four other great powers guaranteed a balance. After 1815, France did not command hegemony; and in 1830 and 1848, it did not use its power to promote the spread of regime contention (as it had done in the 1790s and early 1800s). Thus, French influence did not drive the explosive wave of 1848. It is even less plausible to attribute the relative success of the 1918/19 revolutions to Russian prowess; the country was racked by defeat in war, violent revolution, and secessionist movements and had no capacity to project power at that moment. For instance, Lenin and Trotsky were unable to

support the struggling revolutionary government of fleetingly Communist Hungary, which fell to foreign intervention.

By contrast, the U.S. commanded a great deal of hard and soft power over Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s; for instance, it had tremendous economic clout and longstanding connections to ruling militaries. When Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan during his second term embraced the promotion of democracy, world system and constructivist approaches would anticipate a fairly quick transformation of the U.S.

“backyard.” But despite President Carter’s use of moral suasion and sanctions and President Reagan’s later resumption of these pressures, serious challenges to dictators and actual transitions were years in coming. While the change in U.S. policy orientation clearly weakened authoritarian rulers and helped to sap their resolve, these effects were much weaker than world system theory and constructivist approaches would expect. In particular, if these approaches argue that France’s mere prestige set in motion tsunamis among fellow European countries in 1830 and 1848, how can they account for the surprisingly slow and halting advance of the third wave of democratization in “peripheral” Latin America, right in the shadow of the “hovering giant” (cf. Blasier 1985) and within reach of the “talons of the eagle” (Smith 2008)?

In a more general perspective, world system theory and constructivism suggest a secular increase in diffusion’s speed as political liberalism and democracy advanced over the last two centuries at the global level. Open struggles over political regime type started in the North Atlantic region, where countries had relatively equal status and were not tied into direct center–periphery relations. After Western Europe gradually established and consolidated democracy, the frontier of political regime contention moved East and South

toward the periphery, including the former colonies of Latin America. As democratization moved down the global hierarchy, the developmental gradient between forerunners and promoters, on the one hand, and potential emulators, on the other, turned steeper.⁸ If the postulate of a vertical flow were correct, the diffusion of political regime contention should therefore gather greater speed; the remaining hold-outs would face increasing political, economic, symbolic, or moral pressure to fall in line with regional or global trends. But the secular slowdown of diffusion in Europe and Latin America falsifies this expectation and casts doubt on world system theories and constructivist perspectives.

Constructivism, specifically, does not fully capture the success of emulation efforts either. This approach conceptualizes diffusion as the spread of moral norms or ideational blueprints; it assumes that emulators replicate the original innovation in its substantive content. In this view, diffusion by definition produces convergence. But as explained in the introduction's definition of diffusion, the waves of political regime contention investigated in this book saw many instances of preemptive reform. That is, powerful actors on a number of occasions managed to forestall the full replication of a precedent by enacting a less profound reform. By making partial concessions, they erected a bulwark that took the wind out of the sail of demands for imitating the original experience. For instance, social-democratic leaders at the end of WWI in Germany tried with all means to sideline radical efforts to engineer a council system à la Bolshevik Russia; instead they pushed very hard for popular elections to a constituent assembly that would institute representative democracy. Similarly, a majority of European revolutionaries in 1848 embraced political liberalism and constitutional monarchy to

avoid the proclamation of a republic and subsequent radicalization that had occurred in Paris, although it was the regime collapse in France that provided them with the impulse for challenging their own governments. Ironically, the downfall of a liberal, constitutional monarchy in France induced many emulators to push for precisely such a liberal, constitutional monarchy in their own countries! Thus, the Parisian events inspired them to act – but to act differently from the Parisian protagonists. Constructivism, which identifies diffusion with imitation and expects the spread of sameness, overlooks this striking disjuncture.

Certainly, however, international prestige and influence did affect the spread of regime contention. These factors turned some countries' experiences and accomplishments more salient and appealing than others'. Furthermore, developmental gradients created pressures for moving in the same direction as frontrunner countries. Most importantly, prevailing ideas and norms gave diffusion waves their broad direction. Above all, they explain why during the long 19th century, these processes brought advances toward political liberalism and democracy, whereas in the interwar years, authoritarianism, corporatism, and fascism exerted a strong pull. Thus, world system theories and constructivism certainly help to explain important features of the diffusion of political regime contention.

But these lines of reasoning are of little help for understanding the important features of diffusion examined in the present book. For the reasons mentioned, world system and constructivist arguments cannot fully account for the changing speed and success rate across different waves of political regime contention. Above all, they do not foresee the negative correlation between these two trends.

Rational Learning: Autonomous Initiative of Domestic Emulators

Whereas world system arguments stress the proactive force of external impulses and depict the emulating units as reactive, learning theories advance the opposite view and attribute the main initiative to the emulators. In the prototypical version, learning proceeds rationally and is guided by the self-interest of importing actors: They follow foreign impulses if cost/benefit analyses yield a positive balance.⁹ As recipients make these evaluations in a rational fashion, their autonomous needs—not pressures from powerful countries—drive the spread of innovations. Emulators are in control and are driven in their replication decisions by self-regarding motives.

Rational learning suggests that emulation efforts, like other types of political action, are guided by assessments of the pertinent opportunities and risks. Actors will go ahead when benefits are likely to outweigh costs. This line of reasoning yields a prediction about the speed of democratic diffusion: People will act quickly when political regime contention looks particularly promising (cf. Weede and Muller 1998: 45); yet when in doubt, they will prudently wait for a better chance. Assuming that actors have a reasonable grasp of the actual constellation of power and can reliably ascertain their chances of success, rational learning suggests a positive correlation between diffusion's speed and success: People will act rapidly when their chances of goal attainment are particularly high; when they do not face a good opportunity, they will wait until chances improve. Rational choice certainly does not foresee a negative correlation between speed and success: Why would rational individuals rush into contentious challenges when failure is likely? Strict versions of rational learning that assume people have good

information about the objective situation (e.g., Meseguer 2009) therefore cannot account for the negative correlation between diffusion's speed and success.¹⁰

Less stringent variants of rational choice recognize, however, that actors may not have a firm grasp of objective circumstances, especially the opportunities and risks of political regime contention. In the real world, cost/benefit calculations must rely on imperfect information, especially because challenges to established authorities face great uncertainty. The effective strength of the incumbent regime is unclear; it depends on backing from police and military and the ruler's own determination and skill in exercising power, which are difficult to gauge, especially in repressive non-democracies (cf. Wintrobe 2007: 365-67). The breadth, intensity, and cohesion of the opposition are also shrouded in uncertainty due to prudent preference falsification (Kuran 1995) and the difficulty of overcoming collective action problems. To maximize their interests despite this fog, rational actors search for useful information and learn from developments occurring in other, similar countries and from the earlier experiences of their own nation. Accordingly, a successful change abroad can suggest that the time is ripe for undertaking a similar effort at home; a failed attempt, by contrast, counsels caution.

This softer version of rational choice seems to offer a more promising explanation for the secular slowdown yet increased success of the diffusion of political regime contention. Given the limited achievements of the early revolutionary waves, rational learning over time prompted greater caution. Opponents of established regimes noticed that it was unrealistic to emulate external precedents immediately. Rather than rushing into action, they learned how to wait for a good opportunity to attain their goals. With

this line of reasoning, rational choice accounts for the overall trends in the spread of democratizing impulses, including the negative correlation between speed and success.

But a closer look at specific waves and especially at the process of decision-making casts doubt on this learning theory as well, which presupposes only “weak requirements of rationality” (Tsebelis 1990: 24-31). In particular, ‘1848’ arose from the third French revolution; ‘1789’ and ‘1830’ had also triggered contagion. But these earlier rounds of challenges had yielded only temporary or limited success, at considerable cost. By 1848, the great risks and low promise of defying repressive governments had certainly become clear. Any careful cost/benefit analysis would have counseled prudence. How can rational choice then explain the striking velocity of contention’s spread in 1848? Why did so many people disregard the obvious lessons of ‘1789’ and ‘1830’ and jeopardize their lives by protesting right after hearing about Louis Philippe’s downfall? Following upon two not very successful waves of revolution, the rush to the barricades in 1848 diverged from rational maxims.

Instead, oppositionists in 1848 should have initiated challenges only where careful assessments found propitious conditions. But they did exactly the opposite: The news from Paris triggered spontaneous protests in a wide variety of settings, even under highly unpromising circumstances, as in the backward, repressive Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Overenthusiastic masses threw rational caution to the wind; careful, thorough calculations, which the high stakes of regime contention made imperative, were conspicuous by their absence (Weyland 2009). Due to this puzzling rashness, the 1848 wave swept across Europe quite indiscriminately. Emulation efforts did not occur selectively, as rational assessments would have counseled.

The content of lesson-drawing in 1848 does not suggest rational choice either. Paradoxically, the majority of challengers across Europe pushed precisely for the regime type that had just collapsed in France, namely a constitutional monarchy! In some sense, hard-core reactionaries, such as Austria's Clemens Metternich and the Prussian king's brother, Prince Wilhelm, drew a more logical inference from the overthrow of France's "Citizen King," namely that this mixed system was inherently unviable and unsustainable (Metternich 1883: 565-66, 592-93, 627; Varnhagen 1862: 261; see Ruttman 2001: 177-80). As liberal reformers felt inspired by Louis Philippe's downfall to institute the regime type that he had embodied, they relied on a rather twisted kind of reasoning – and the resulting wave of rebellions indeed ended largely in failure.

Most importantly, the process of actors' decision-making diverged starkly from the rules of rational learning. Especially in 1848, actors on both sides of the barricades did not base their choices on thorough, systematic assessments of opportunities and risks. The challengers, in particular, imprudently incurred tremendous risks by initiating and joining protests against regimes that had commonly applied brutal force. Careful deliberations were conspicuous by their absence. Instead, the news of Louis Philippe's overthrow quickly filled many oppositionists with optimism and enthusiasm; they jumped to the conclusion that they could accomplish a similar feat. The prevailing mood during this "springtime of the peoples" was not one of prudent calculation but of rash inferences that inspired excessively high hopes. In sum, the way people made their choices could not have been farther from the postulates of full rationality.

For all of these reasons, rational choice does not offer a convincing explanation of the processes and patterns of diffusion examined in this book. There is some indication

that learning across waves played a role in the slowdown and increasing success of diffusion, but this learning does not look all that rational. In particular, the inferences drawn from the precedent events diverged from the norms of rationality. How can one square these diverse elements?

A New Explanation: Cognitive Heuristics amidst Organizational Developments

Given the analytical insufficiency of extant explanations, this study proposes an alternative that rests on cognitive-psychological micro-foundations and highlights organizational macro-processes as the main cause of the changing features of democratization waves. Adding to earlier efforts to draw on bounded rationality (Simon 1958; March and Simon 1993; Lindblom 1965; McDermott 1998, 2004; Jones 2001; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Weyland 2007; Bendor 2010), this book emphasizes how the emergence and spread of political organizations reshaped the operation and impact of cognitive mechanisms. In this way, it goes beyond a simple import of psychological findings, which focus on individual perceptions and choices, and elucidates collective action and strategic interaction, which are decisive for politics. After the following section establishes the micro-foundation of this theory, the subsequent sections explain the principal components of my macro-organizational arguments.

Bounded Rationality: Interaction of External Impulses and Domestic Emulators

As demonstrated in preceding sections, neither world system theory and constructivism nor rational learning fully elucidates the diffusion of political regime contention.

Promotion by the “center” and the initiative of emulators in the “periphery” are not alone

decisive. The momentum of the external stimulus and the interests of the emulators do not determine diffusion on their own. Instead, they operate in interaction. This book therefore proposes an approach that combines the appeal of the original model and the quest of the imitators: Recipients pursue their own interests in learning from external inputs, but their information processing is molded and distorted by the magnetism of foreign precedents.

Bounded rationality theoretically accounts for this interaction. This approach diverges from rational choice by highlighting the distortionary attraction and influence of the object of learning; and it differs from world system theory and constructivism by attributing initiative to the subjects of learning. The bounds of rationality mediate between these two poles. Specifically, foreign innovations can grab people's attention in recipient countries, rather than being proactively sought out. Yet at the same time, the new model does not impose itself automatically; potential emulators assess it in light of their own interests. This assessment is distorted by characteristics of the model, however, and does not arise from recipients' interest calculations alone.

Bounded rationality rests on the solid empirical findings of cognitive psychology about actual human decision-making, not the ideal-typical postulates of rational choice. It highlights people's limited capacity to cope with over-abundant information, especially under uncertainty and time pressure.¹¹ Since normal mortals cannot perform the comprehensive, systematic information processing prescribed by rational choice, they rely on inferential shortcuts to arrive at decisions and thus operate in fluid environments. But these shortcuts focus attention on some aspects while filtering out others, and they draw conclusions in simple and quick, yet not fully logical ways; therefore, they create

the risk of distortions and biases. While these heuristics allow people to react to decisional opportunities and challenges and avoid overload and paralysis, they can easily lead to mistakes and failures, especially in complex, rapidly shifting situations.

Reliance on cognitive shortcuts is especially pronounced under conditions of profound uncertainty, when established institutions, expectations, and calculations have lost their guiding force, people face unexpected novelty and unpredictability, and outcomes seem up for grabs. Waves of political regime contention can trigger such “eventful” situations (Sewell 2005) and constitute critical junctures, characterized by considerable contingency (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). As preexisting decision rules fail to provide valid orientation, actors have to make up their minds from scratch, considering a multitude of fluid developments in their complex interaction. Under these confusing, if not chaotic circumstances, when the whole political ground is shaking and the passage of time seems to speed up enormously (cf. Becker 1999: 265-77, 289-90, 355), people are especially eager to resort to the crutches of cognitive shortcuts in a desperate effort to get a minimal grip. Time pressures preclude the gathering of solid information and deliberate decision-making; participants are flooded with contradictory news about fast-changing events (cf. Langewiesche 1998: 24-25) and lack the opportunity to ascertain its reliability. To navigate these unbounded situations, people feel compelled to draw on the mechanisms of bounded rationality.

Cognitive psychologists highlight two shortcuts, the heuristics of availability and representativeness (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982; Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman 2002; Hastie and Dawes 2010: chap. 5). The availability heuristic shapes attention and memory recall and skews people’s information intake and probability

estimates. In a nutshell, drastic, vivid, directly witnessed events make a disproportionate impression on people's mind; by contrast, less stunning though equally or more relevant information is neglected. As people overweight striking appearance relative to actual importance, they deviate from rational calculations. Dramatic events have an excessive impact on people's perceptions and thinking, leading to an overestimation of their likelihood. After 9/11, for instance, many Americans avoided plane rides and went by car although that was much more dangerous; scholars estimate that 1,500 people died as a result (Gigerenzer 2006)! In a similar vein, automobile drivers commonly slow down after seeing a car crash—although a single accident should not alter their cost/benefit calculations about speeding. But the shocking view overpowers systematic, rational considerations. It captures observers' attention and distorts their judgments; the object of learning shapes the subject's information processing.

The representativeness heuristic also causes deviations from rational judgments by basing inferences on apparent, even superficial similarities while disregarding relevant information, such as statistical base rates. One aspect of this multifaceted heuristic is that people have a tendency to draw excessively firm conclusions from limited data; they improperly assume that patterns found in small samples are representative of the whole population. Accordingly, an early stretch of success can imbue an innovation with the aura of inherent quality and make it look unusually attractive to a wide range of actors; a fully rational evaluation, by contrast, would consider the possibility that accidental factors contributed to the strong initial performance, which might soon give way to a regression toward the mean. But the representativeness heuristic induces people to be overly impressed by a short run of data and to jump to conclusions about its significance.

Once again, features of the object of learning distort the subject's inferences; the external stimulus influences its own reception, in the interactive way discussed above.

The representativeness heuristic also leads observers to overrate the similarities between the forerunner and the situation that they themselves confront, and to underestimate the differences and their significance. These facile judgments make domestic circumstances appear similar to those that allowed for the precursor's original success. Accordingly, actors jump to the conclusion that the conditions for replication are given in their own country. They come to believe that their established regime is also weak; that internal discontent is widespread and intense; and that potential challengers are willing and able to mobilize collectively and to defy the forces of organized coercion. In other words, people in a variety of countries see the precedent as "representative" of the political situations they are facing, discounting important differences that a fully rational assessment would seriously consider.

Bounded rationality helps explain the observed patterns of innovations' spread. Due to the heuristics of availability and representativeness, a striking, impressive success has a disproportionate effect and grabs people's attention in other countries as well; and facile judgments of similarity fuel much stronger contagion than cautious rational learning justifies. As a result of these shortcuts, a dramatic precedent inspires the belief that challengers in a wide range of countries can achieve a similar feat; thus, it reshapes people's assessments of the feasibility and promise of confronting their own governments. Conversely, an unpromising rebellion that ends in catastrophic failure, such as the ill-fated Paris Commune of 1871, sends the opposite message (cf. Kautsky 1914:

285-87; Engels 1895: 17); interpreted via the representativeness heuristic, it discourages defiance elsewhere.

The mechanisms of bounded rationality, especially the heuristics of availability and representativeness, can thus explain tsunamis of diffusion that sweep with stunning speed beyond the limited range of similar political-institutional settings. They are crucial for understanding the wave of 1848, when the downfall of Louis Philippe triggered a plethora of immediate emulation efforts all over Europe. But since cognitive shortcuts inspire rash, ill-considered challenges of established regimes, aborted efforts and failures abound. Under the influence of the availability and representativeness heuristics, people rush into emulation efforts, often under distinctly unpropitious conditions. Therefore, many incumbents manage to suppress these protests and defeat uprisings. Cognitive heuristics thus elucidate the negative correlation between speed and success in the diffusion of regime contention, most striking in the aborted revolutions of 1848, when exalted initial hopes gave way to deep frustration and disappointment (Weyland 2009).

Insights on bounded rationality also capture people's decision-making process much better than alternative approaches, especially rational learning. As the wealth of primary documents show, participants in political regime contention commonly diverged from the rules of logic in defining their choices on this high-stakes issue. Given the tremendous danger of joining protests against repressive regimes, comprehensive rationality would counsel careful deliberation, a systematic evaluation of opportunities and risks, and an overall preference for caution. But thorough assessments of benefits and costs were conspicuous by their absence. People did not wait for solid information, but rushed into action on the basis of unfounded rumors.¹² Swept along by rash inferences

that stimulated high levels of enthusiasm, critical masses of people threw caution to the wind.

The common resort to cognitive heuristics can also explain the outburst of emotions that characterized these “interesting times.” As many participants and eyewitnesses of the 1848 wave noted (Boerner 1920: 73-83; Schurz 1988: 100-1; Varnhagen 1862: 211-16; Wolff 1898: 5, 21), news about the downfall of a seemingly powerful regime in another country often stimulates upsurges of strong feelings, such as wild enthusiasm and humanity-embracing joy. While these sentiments can threaten to overpower any semblance of rationality, they arise from the shortcuts of bounded rationality: They are unleashed when a foreign precedent suggests the rash inference that the domestic authorities are surprisingly weak as well and that the long-awaited chance for effecting a political transformation has finally arrived. As people jump to conclusions, they suddenly believe in unlimited political opportunities in their own country. This belief, produced by cognitive shortcuts, inspires tremendous excitement.

As inferential heuristics explain the dramatic speed yet limited success of the spread of political regime contention in 1830 and 1848, what then accounts for diffusion’s deceleration thereafter, as evident in the slower ripples emanating from the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the unhurried advance of the third wave of democratization? Why did external triggers not induce 20th century oppositionists to jump on the bandwagon as quickly and unthinkingly as their forefathers had done? Why was 19th century rashness followed by greater circumspection thereafter?

Organizational Developments and their Impact on the Bounds of Rationality

As its main contribution to theory building, this book argues that organizational developments reshape the processing of political information and mediate the impact of cognitive mechanisms on political decision-making, which is a collective process. Cognitive psychology elucidates individual perception, inference, and choice, but political contention involves collective action and is therefore affected by organizational structures. By the 19th century, modernization and industrialization had produced masses of urban dwellers that were available for contentious mobilization, and the rise of the territorial state had created an institutional arena for such mobilization (Tarrow 2011: chap. 4). But organizations that encompassed these people, especially above the local level, were incipient and inchoate in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the decision whether to emulate external precedents and join protest and rebellion fell to individuals, who had only their friends, families, and other small, often informal networks to consult. These people had sparse, tenuous access to information, limited processing capacity, and minimal experience in political decision-making.¹³ As a result, they were especially prone to rely on cognitive shortcuts and “defenseless” against the resulting inferences; they tended to jump to conclusions without thorough, systematic deliberation and to disregard caution. Therefore, there was a strong chance that a stunning external precedent would induce a critical mass of people to engage in spontaneous emulation – and that many of these rash efforts would fail.

Specifically, a foreign success processed via the representativeness heuristic made opponents believe that their incumbent regime was also brittle and that discontented people would eagerly join challenges, just as in the frontrunner country. This over-

optimistic updating of preferences drove more and more citizens of all walks of life into the streets. Because not only notorious “trouble-makers” such as students (Huntington 1968: 369-74) protested, but a cross-section of the population including shopkeepers, notables, artisans, professionals, workers, and even women and children, belief in the breadth and depth of discontent and in challengers’ determination to withstand repression spread. Seeing the rapidly growing crowds, initially hesitant people came to share this belief and decided to participate as well. A cascade of contention erupted, unleashed and propelled by cognitive shortcuts (cf. Kuran 1995: 74, 158-66, 180, 258; Kuran and Sunstein 1999). Thus, in inchoate societies, striking external precedents processed via inferential heuristics inspired critical masses of people to contest their rulers. By instilling excessive hope in the success of challenges, cognitive shortcuts helped to overcome collective action problems and to spark spontaneous collective action despite the absence of national-level organizations.

Yet when broad-based organizations arose, these unplanned outbursts of regime contention were replaced by more deliberate, targeted challenges, initiated and commanded by organizational leaders. In the second half of the 19th century, a momentous process of organization building began, especially among poorer and middling sectors that sought sociopolitical inclusion (Tilly et al. 1975: 192-97, 212, 227, 237, 254). Social-democratic parties and unions came to envelop millions of workers in firm organizational structures and encompassing subcultures (Bartolini 2000: Eley 2002: chaps. 1-2, 4). Catholic parties soon followed suit, and secular parties on the right and center eventually emerged as well. Employee and professional associations also grew to

large scales. Common people now had leaders to follow, who guided and controlled collective mobilization and spearheaded regime contention.¹⁴

Whereas in the inchoate polities of the mid-19th century, common people on their own had decided whether to challenge the established authorities, from the late 19th century onward, more and more people took cues and guidance from their leaders (cf. Popkin 1991; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Ahlquist and Levi 2011), whose substantial access to information, experience in political calculation and decision-making, and contacts to other organizational leaders and the established authorities gave them a much better grasp of the constellation of power and the prevailing opportunities and risks for forcing political change. Since organization leaders had a larger stock of knowledge (stronger “priors”) and a greater capacity for obtaining and processing relevant news, their inferences and judgments were less profoundly shaped—and distorted—by cognitive shortcuts (cf. Jones 2001: 23, 82, 131). They better understood the depth and breadth of discontent with current rulers; the power capabilities, collective strength, and determination of the opposition; and the likely reactions of the government. This knowledge base, much more solid than what common people could muster (Simon 1976: 136-39, 166-68; Bendor 2010: 163-77), anchored leaders’ judgments and left less room for cognitive heuristics. Because organization leaders faced lower uncertainty and suffered from less “confusion” (Kurzman 2004), they relied less on inferential shortcuts. Standing on firmer ground, they did not grasp as much at straws.

In general, bounded rationality is not invariant and uniform, but comprises a range of inferential patterns that deviate to different degrees from the strict standards of full rationality (cf. Forester 1984). While cognitive psychologists find individual variation,

the aggregation of individual judgments in collective decision-making introduces further, even more pronounced differences. Organizational structures can enhance information processing in several ways (Bendor 2010: 165-69; Simon 1976: 41, 100-03, 240-41; Sah 1991: 70-71, 80-81, 86; Jones 2001: 23, 82, 131; Secchi 2010: chaps. 7-9). While these insights emerge mainly from the study of bureaucracies and business firms (Landau 1969; Stinchcombe 1990; Heimann 1995; Sah 1991; Koh 1992; broad recent overview in Hodgkinson and Starbuck 2008b), several points are transferable to political organizations as well.

The division of labor gives organizations a much wider scope of attention than individuals (March and Simon 1993: 173; Bendor 2010: 165-66). Focusing on different aspects of the environment, subunits compose a more comprehensive picture of the setting (Simon 1976: 102, 166-69; Jones 2011: 134, 148-49, 159). Political parties, for instance, often have sections that deal with specific policy spheres, constituencies, or territorial areas. By extending and coordinating their information intake, organizations are therefore less at risk of neglecting relevant facts than ordinary people applying the availability heuristic. Specialization also allows for and breeds organizational competencies (Ansell 2011: 77-81) and technical expertise (Simon 1976: 136-38; Rosen, Salas, et al. 2008), which lead organizational officers to question the superficial similarities highlighted by the representativeness heuristic and to consider relevant differences. While specialized knowledge is more essential for firms and bureaus, political organizations have also recruited and relied on experts, such as people trained in specific policy areas or pollsters and campaign consultants.

These organizational competencies and technical expertise, and the resulting broader, more systematic information processing help especially organizational leaders. These top officers also have a good deal of experience and considerable political skill, which allow them better to understand power constellations and identify promising conjunctures. These capacities, attested by a relatively high education level, for instance, are products of political recruitment (Almond and Powell 1978: 123-40; Schwartz 1969: 556, 568-69; Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981). The more solid the organization, the longer it takes ambitious aspirants to rise through the ranks, which increases future leaders' opportunities for learning and the organization's chance of identifying and eliminating unpromising candidates; German Social Democracy, for instance, tested its officers through a long sequence of positions. To pass these hurdles, candidates had to prove nimble and well-grounded, reasonably prudent and not too rash; intelligence and practical reason helped (see in general Mumford, Friedrich, et al. 2007: 516-19, 537). The officials who managed to move up the ladder acquired a wealth of experience; learning from political experiences improved their aptitude.¹⁵ For all of these reasons, organizational leaders tended to have a richer stock of knowledge and a greater capacity for calculations than average citizens. While intra-organizational learning and selective promotion in no way guaranteed full rationality, they helped to keep in check the facile inferences suggested by cognitive shortcuts.

The features mentioned so far benefit all organizations, albeit to varying degrees. For instance, large size allows for greater specialization, more expertise, and longer testing of and learning by rising leaders. Additional contributions to the quality of information processing and decision-making depend on the type of organization,

especially the difference between broad-based, internally diverse, and pluralistic organizations vs. narrow, homogeneous, unity-seeking groupings.¹⁶

On one side of this spectrum, the mass parties and unions that emerged from the late 19th century onward comprised a variety of sectors with diverse political positions. To process the disagreements arising from this pluralism, broad-based organizations instituted mechanisms for internal discussion and deliberation. The reasonably open debates conducted in these fora, which ranged from executive committees to party conventions,¹⁷ helped to weed out biases and mistakes (see in general Fearon 1998: 49-52; Mackie 1998: 79-92; less sanguine Brodbeck, Kerschreiter, et al. 2007, and George and Chattopadhyay 2008: 364-67). Drawing on dissimilar experiences and advancing different interests, participants voiced divergent viewpoints and questioned each other. Therefore, argumentation tended to dig deeper, mitigating the facile inferences suggested by cognitive heuristics (cf. March and Simon 1993: 150-51, 202-3; Mercier and Sperber 2011: 62-63, 72-73; see also Mutz 2002: 116-18). Though limited by conformity pressures and the ideological commitments shared inside the organization, these deliberations allowed organizational leaders to achieve a better understanding of the political constellation.

Procedures for holding leaders accountable and obliging them to explain their decisions and actions further increased the chances for uncovering problematic judgments. Research shows that such representational mechanisms can lead to higher-quality decision-making.¹⁸ The elected officials of broad-based organizations, whom I call “representative leaders,”¹⁹ had a special incentive to process information carefully, evaluate the promise and applicability of foreign models, and assess whether the

domestic opportunity structure was propitious for their emulation. As a result, they did not rush to replicate external precedents but waited for a good chance to do so successfully.

By contrast to these broad-based, internally pluralistic organizations that loosened the bounds of political rationality, small radical groupings that split off into cohesive, ideologically homogeneous sects were prone to engage in “groupthink” and suffered from particularly severe distortions in political judgment (Esser 1998; McDermott 2004: 249-55; Benabou 2010; Schafer & Crichlow 2010; see also Bendor 2010: 179). For instance, proto-Communist cells such as the far-left Spartacus Group in Germany in the 1910s, which sought “true unanimity in all decisive questions” (Liebknecht 1974: 697) and were averse to any compromise (Spartakus 1958: 356), were hothouses for cognitive shortcuts. The tendency to de-legitimate or purge dissent stifled criticism and debate and gave problematic judgments free rein.

In such sect-like organizations, safeguards against misperceptions and cognitive biases are weak. The quest for homogeneity actually aggravates the tendency toward problematic judgments. For instance, while psychological experiments demonstrate that people generally “prefer supporting to conflicting information when making decisions,” “homogeneous groups showed a particularly strong confirmation bias, which was clearly stronger than that of individuals” (Schulz-Hardt, Frey, et al. 2000: 655, 658). Similarly, the rash inferences suggested by the availability and representativeness heuristics may reinforce each other and exacerbate distortions in judgments. Ideological sects thus operate with bounds on their political rationality that seem even tighter than those of inexperienced mass actors. Consequently, they may “get hooked on” some apparently

successful external model and stubbornly pursue its replication against all odds, losing touch with reality, as the dramatic failures of the Spartacus Group in 1919 and of the armed wing of the Chilean Communists in the 1980s suggest (see chapters five and seven, respectively).²⁰

In conclusion, organizational structures deeply affect the bounds of rationality; above all, internal pluralism and deliberative procedures yield better information processing and higher-quality decision-making. Political macro-factors thus shape the operation of cognitive micro-mechanisms. Divergent from the methodological individualism underlying rational choice, micro-foundations do not drive and determine macro-structures uni-directionally. Instead, macro-structures also mold how micro-mechanisms play out; for example, organizational accountability affects leaders' judgments (Tetlock 1985: 298-307). The macro and micro levels interact thoroughly.

For these reasons, the speed and success of contentious waves depended on the principal locus of oppositional decision-making – common people in an amorphous, inchoate crowd (Rudé 2005) or representative leaders guiding large numbers of followers. While both commoners and leaders are affected by cognitive shortcuts, representative leaders are significantly less affected and deviate less starkly from full rationality. Organizational ties can untie political judgment and decision-making; as people are bound by broad-based organizations, the bounds of political rationality loosen (though they do not dissolve). Drawing on their improved information processing and political strategizing, representative leaders guide affiliates and sympathizers with higher-quality assessments of external precedents and more promising ideas about applying these lessons in their own polities. By following the suggestions, pleas and commands of

their leaders, commoners act in ways that are less affected and distorted by cognitive shortcuts.

Representative leaders guide organizational members through persuasion, appeals to loyalty, or authority. Leaders who face accountability seek to explain and justify their decisions. Followers are receptive to argumentation because they expect leaders to define organizational strategy with some independence, rather than mechanically reflecting the views of the bases (Fearon 1999: 60-63). With their information access and experience, leaders then have a good chance of convincing members that their course of action was reasonable (cf. Dickson forthcoming; Dewan and Myatt 2008). When affiliates continue to have doubts, loyalty induces many to accept and even support their leaders' decisions (Hirschman 1970: chap. 7). Last but not least, representative leaders command some degree of authority (cf. Wilson 1995: chap. 11), even if they owe their position to competitive, democratic elections; in fact, bottom-up legitimation can strengthen them. Leaders can use this authority to achieve compliance, for instance by rewarding supporters and sidelining critics. Drawing on these forms of influence, representative leaders can usually guide their affiliates and sympathizers and ensure that their higher level of political rationality shapes the contentious actions of large numbers of citizens.

For all of these reasons, the enormous advance of popular organization from the late 19th century onward, exemplified by the growth of the social-democratic labor movement (Bartolini 2000; Eley 2002), underlies the notable deceleration in the diffusion of regime contention. The leaders of broad-based organizations have firmer ground under their feet than ordinary citizens as well as radical sects, who get carried away by waves of protest and surf them eagerly. Representative leaders, by contrast, have a better grasp of

chances and risks and proceed with more realism; they do not act before a good opportunity for emulating an external precedent seems to arise. In the era of mass organization, regime contention therefore spreads more slowly but with a higher likelihood of success. As chapter five below shows, this argument can account for the historical record of democratic contention in the 20th century: Representative leaders tamed the mass impulses triggered quickly by the Russian Revolutions of February and October 1917 and channeled popular pressures toward institutional reforms achieved by non-violent means and legitimated by elections.

Certainly, however, representative leaders are normal mortals and therefore subject to bounded rationality as well. While their decision-making capacity is less limited than that of common citizens and ideological sects, they are also affected by the heuristics of availability and representativeness to some extent. Therefore, they tend to overestimate the ease of following external precedents and act in ways that deviate from the commands of full rationality. Cognitive shortcuts have a special impact on leaders when they face a foreign event that deviates dramatically from their expectations and thus confounds or even shatters the assessments and calculations that leaders derive from their longstanding experiences. Since they have difficulty sizing up such a surprising occurrence and suddenly find the ground shaking, even representative leaders take significant recourse to inferential heuristics to cope with such a mental shock.

Chapters five through seven document instances in which even longstanding party leaders initiated challenges under less than propitious conditions or over-reacted to sectarian efforts to replicate a foreign model. For instance, German social democrats responded with excessive force to far-left attempts to emulate the Bolshevik capture of

government power in October 1917. While hostile to the death, both sides ironically acted out of the belief that it was easy for radicals to grab power during revolutionary turmoil. This belief resulted from the representativeness heuristic and the rash inferences it drew from Lenin's success, which posed a striking challenge to Social Democracy's effective abandonment of a revolutionary strategy; by shaking up established patterns of thinking, this dramatic event prompted representative leaders to rely more strongly on cognitive shortcuts than they tend to do under normal circumstances.

Thus, representative leaders could be affected by cognitive shortcuts as well. But because their ample knowledge and longstanding experience prepared them reasonably well for many eventualities, they resorted to these crutches much less than ordinary citizens. And because their broad-based, pluralistic organizations had internal mechanisms for open discussion and deliberation, their judgments and decisions faced more scrutiny and were therefore less distorted by problematic inferences than was common in ideological sects. In sum, while the political rationality of representative leaders was bounded as well, it was comparatively less bounded and deviated less strongly from the standards of systematic information processing and logical inference.

The Increase in Organizational Density and the Inward Shift of Political Attention

The emergence of mass organizations had further implications that contributed to the notable slowdown yet greater success of the diffusion of political regime contention in 1917-19 and especially during the third wave of democratization. Most importantly, the increasing organizational density of politics tipped the balance of political attention more and more toward the domestic arena. Consequently, external precedents made less of an

impression on actors' judgments and calculations. As successful foreign events generated a weaker impulse for emulation, such efforts only got under way when the internal constellation of power looked promising. External precedents no longer triggered replication attempts immediately, but only when domestic opportunities opened up. This inward shift of political attention reshaped diffusion processes and contributed to the lower speed yet higher success rate of contentious waves.

Before large-scale collective actors had formed, domestic politics was amorphous, fluid, and opaque; the distribution of political preferences and power capabilities was very hard to decipher. In the absence of broad-based organizations, who could know how widespread and intense political support for the established regime was; how willing oppositionists were to incur the risks of challenging the authorities and withstanding repression; and how capable they were of mobilizing and sustaining collective action? Because political forces were inchoate, valid and reliable information on internal developments was scarce. Therefore, actors tended to draw inferences from actual, visible changes that occurred elsewhere, such as the downfall of a neighboring regime. Because the domestic situation was inscrutable, common citizens and aspiring leaders looked for cues abroad. In the era of low organizational density and formless politics, they attributed disproportionate informational value to observable foreign precedents, which therefore exerted a substantial impact and triggered rapid emulation efforts.

This inferential approach was logically problematic, however: It privileged ease of observation over the relevance of the object of observation. Specifically, it assumed that hidden behind the fog of domestic uncertainty lay a similar political opportunity as had just been revealed by the foreign event. Thus, the focus on external precedents

entailed a heavy reliance on the availability and representativeness heuristics and exposed domestic actors to the distortions and biases inherent in these shortcuts. Dramatic, striking events impressed themselves on actors' mind; foreign successes were overrated in their significance and replicability, based on facile impressions of similarity between the precursor and the conditions facing potential emulators. These rash inferences derived from external events did not guarantee high decision quality, and the resulting replication attempts achieved only limited success.

In sum, before the secular advance of political organization, actors were trapped in domestic fog and eager to draw conclusions from regime changes abroad. By contrast, their counterparts in organizationally denser polities had better information about the internal constellation of power and therefore displayed less interest in foreign developments. After collective political actors formed, engaged in observable interactions, and established a track record on the political stage, domestic power relations became clearer and more predictable (cf. Przeworski 1991: 64-65). To assess future prospects, such as the likely fate of their regime, observers had an incentive to focus predominantly on the domestic situation; they now felt less need to draw indirect inferences from foreign developments, including gathering waves of regime contention. And as more reliable information on the internal opportunity structure became available and uncertainty therefore diminished, cognitive shortcuts held less sway; heuristic inferences could be cross-checked with more solid evidence.

Of course, as the literature on third wave transitions stressed (seminal O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 3-5, 66, 70), even these processes of regime contention were shrouded in uncertainty; therefore, domestic actors in the late 20th century also took

external developments into account and did apply cognitive shortcuts. But this level of uncertainty, and the compensatory tendency to take inspiration from foreign events, was much lower than before the organizational consolidation of polities, when more profound “confusion” (Kurzman 2004) prevailed. After all, political parties, unions, and other interest associations now populated the political stage and established patterns of actions and interactions, which allowed for informed guesses about future developments. Compared to the 19th century, uncertainty therefore diminished and became more bounded. As the domestic political ground turned firmer, actors had less reason to grasp at foreign straws, and the room for cognitive shortcuts to shape their thinking, calculations, and decisions narrowed.

This profound inward shift in attention helps explain why before the secular advance of political organization, people quickly jumped on the bandwagon of a gathering wave of contention even when the domestic political situation was actually unpropitious. After this historical change, by contrast, representative leaders based their decisions more on the domestic opportunity structure, which had become much clearer. External impulses turned into only one of several factors in the participation calculus, whereas they had supplied the main trigger before. This repercussion of the secular rise of organizations contributed to the lower speed, yet higher success of diffusion waves.

Indeed, organizational development gave diffusion less force overall – a truly surprising finding in light of prevailing theories about globalization, which would predict the opposite. ‘1848’ constituted a much more obvious, dramatic diffusion process than the variegated currents and eddies of the third wave. This unexpected result emerges clearly from the research conducted for this book, especially the testimony of participants

and observers. The “overwhelming” impact of external triggers, especially the Parisian precedent, is patently obvious in 1830 and 1848. As chapter four below shows, actors of all political persuasions and positions of power, ranging from Austria’s Prince Metternich, Berlin’s military commander, and other aristocrats all the way to rebellious students, uniformly stressed the tremendous effect that the French events had on their thinking, feeling, and behavior. As one indication, people were addicted to the news about developments in Paris; whoever got hold of the most recent newspaper had to climb on a table and read aloud for all to hear (Streckfuss 1948: 24; Vitzthum 1886: 75).

By contrast, references to external precedents and their role in stimulating domestic emulation efforts are much less frequent in 1917-19 and especially during the third wave of democratization. There certainly is conclusive evidence that foreign experiences mattered; actors of all stripes mentioned them and reacted to them. The Russian Revolutions did have a substantial impact, and various external precedents, especially Spain’s pacted transition to democracy, served as sources of inspiration during the third wave in Latin America. But compared to 1830 and 1848, references to these foreign events are much sparser, and participants attributed less weight and impact to them. In fact, several former opposition leaders in Brazil and Chile reported in interviews that other countries’ experiences played little role in their deliberations and decisions or characterized this impact as merely “atmospheric,” rather than as a source of strong impulses and concrete inspirations (author interviews with Correa 2007, Braga 2008, Dirceu 2008, and Franco 2008). Instead, the domestic constellation of power and the shifting relations among organized national contenders provided the principal base for

their calculations and actions. External triggers mattered, but were heavily filtered through assessments of the correlation of internal forces.

In conclusion, as the world became “smaller” and globalization advanced, external factors paradoxically ended up having less—rather than more—impact (contra Huntington 1991: 101-2). The globalization literature debates whether external determinants have come to overwhelm internal actors and structures or not; controversy revolves around the extent to which global variables have increased in causal force. The present analysis of the diffusion of political regime contention finds the opposite: Over the last two hundred years, foreign precedents have become less influential, whereas internal developments have acquired greater immunity and autonomy. When domestic politics is inchoate and therefore difficult to decipher, actors of all persuasions have particularly strong reasons to take cues from foreign developments. But as domestic politics takes shape, as collective actors emerge and establish observable patterns of interaction, internal developments become easier to read; this lowers the incentive to take a detour and draw inferences from external precedents.

The Ideological Crystallization of Political Forces and the Diversification of Diffusion

As a final effect on the reception side of diffusion, the increasing political organization of the mass citizenry yielded a variety of parties and associations with different programmatic and ideological postures. In 1848, political actors had divergent orientations, but they were often inchoate, ill-defined, and fluid. Even among members of Germany’s constituent assembly, coalitions and alignments shifted as electoral politicians groped toward defining their own stance on the multidimensional issues they suddenly

faced. The secular rise of political organization in subsequent decades brought clearer and firmer definitions of ideological positions and the sorting of politicians into distinct parties and associations that were reasonably coherent in their visions and programs.

The emergence of distinct ideological camps led political forces to gravitate toward different foreign precedents and to establish separate transnational affinities and connections;²¹ after all, groupings that have “shared mental models” typically are drawn to each other (Denzau and North 1994; Mantzavinos 2001: chap. 5; Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). Whereas in 1848, virtually every political actor was captivated by the dramatic events in Paris, in 1917/19 and especially during the third wave, political forces took inspiration from divergent external experiences. For instance, German Social Democrats were encouraged by the Russian February Revolution to push for full democracy, but saw the Bolshevik October Revolution as a deterrent example to avoid; far-left sects, by contrast, sought to imitate precisely Lenin’s takeover of state power. Even more clearly, different forces in Chile’s ideologically well-defined party system responded to dissimilar external precedents. Christian Democrats were impressed by Spain’s pact-making; moderate Socialists for a while took some hope from protests and regime collapse in Argentina; and Communists sought to replicate the Sandinista insurgency in Nicaragua.

These divergent currents of diffusion resulted on the reception side from the ideological differentiation of political forces, which accompanied the rise of organizations from the late 19th century onward. Of course, this diversification also presupposed a change on the input side of diffusion, namely the emergence of a variety of external precedents and models, which the next section discusses. Specific stimuli from

this broader menu appealed to different domestic forces, depending on their ideological worldview. As a result, diffusion no longer resembled a single wave, but a jumble of surges, tides, and even undertows, which sometimes reinforced, sometimes counteracted each other. Whereas diffusion processes were predominantly monotone in the 19th century, they became polyphonic, if not cacophonous, in the 20th century.

The diversification of diffusion contributed to its slowdown yet greater success. The uniform wake-up calls of the 19th century spurred challengers into quick action, but that often meant defying repressive governments with problematic means at inopportune moments. The downfall of French kings stimulated mass contention in a variety of settings; but conditions were often unpropitious, leading to frequent failure. 19th century challengers poured into the streets to protest and build barricades (cf. Traugott 2010), but when these uniform contentious tactics did not succeed, they had no fallback option.

In the 20th century, by contrast, ideologically defined organizations responded to different signals that arose at various times. Depending on the distribution of influence among opposition forces, this diversity could slow down the spread of political regime contention. Disagreements over which model to emulate limited the backing that any contentious strategy garnered. Where organizational leaders were in control, they often sought to sort out this discord before initiating challenges. And where rashly acting ideological sects took the lead, broad-based, pluralist organizations often felt compelled to counteract this precipitation. As various groupings simultaneously pursued their own favorite approach, their tactics could get into each other's way; violent protests by extremist sectors, for instance, could block moderates' efforts at negotiation. For instance, Chilean Communists' attempts to spark a mass insurrection à la Nicaragua

helped to undermine the peaceful demonstrations pursued in 1983/84 by the centrist and moderate-leftist opposition, which took some degree of inspiration from Argentina.

As the diffusion of contention diminished in speed, however, it eventually tended to achieve greater success. This result emerged from politically mediated learning, which benefited from the larger set of models made available by the diversification of diffusion. Such diversity generally tends to stimulate beneficial deliberations and give rise to better outcomes because the advocates of different options highlight the advantages of their preferred option and point to the problems with alternatives (Page 2007: chaps. 6-8). Accordingly, in the course of political regime contention, some external models came to appear as unpromising, whereas the strategies and tactics adopted by other oppositionists found more support and made headway. More and more challengers therefore abandoned their initial projects and switched to alternatives that seemed to hold better chances. In Chile, for instance, the center-left opposition gradually gave up its strategy of mass demonstrations, took encouragement from the Philippine transition of 1986, and contested the Pinochet regime in a constitutionally scheduled plebiscite, which it ended up winning. Thus, learning from political experiences sooner or later leads challengers to converge on a promising option, which holds the prospect of finally bringing success.

This groping toward a solution takes advantage of the variety of options that different opposition groupings initially embrace. When all eyes focused on a single source of inspiration, as in the 19th century, challengers disposed only of one instrument for attaining their goals. By putting all their eggs in one basket, they ran a considerable risk of failure. But when oppositionists have several irons in the fire, there is a higher likelihood they will end up forging an effective weapon for bringing down an

authoritarian regime. After all, the shared goal of dislodging a dictator provides a strong incentive for learning and some cooperation.²²

This learning from political experiences is not a purely intellectual enterprise, of course, and it does not reliably follow the rules of logical inference. Instead, it is mediated by political power and shaped by the (looser) bounds of rationality affecting representative leaders. First, some contentious tactics win out over others because they look more promising, but this promise itself reflects the balance of influence among ideologically diverse contenders. Learning involves assessing the power capabilities, determination, and tactical savvy of the government and of various opposition forces, all of which have reason to dissimulate and bluff.²³ Arriving at a result is as much a question of negotiation and pressure as of perception and inference. Therefore, a strategy may emerge as the best option precisely because it has had the most adherents from the beginning, before any learning took place.

Second, this learning does not strictly follow the systematic procedures of comprehensive rationality but is affected by cognitive heuristics, which—as mentioned above—even representative leaders use to some extent.²⁴ Therefore, organized opposition forces do not process information in a neutral, unbiased fashion, but tend to gravitate toward recent, striking experiences to which they have an ideological affinity. The availability heuristic often skews attention. For instance, the solution to the impasse facing Chile's opposition in 1986, after the failure of mass demonstrations, emerged in part from the unexpected downfall of the Ferdinand Marcos regime as a result of electoral contestation – a success that made participation in Pinochet's plebiscite look promising. The surprising Philippine transition in 1986 grabbed Chileans' attention and affected

their judgments.²⁵ This lesson drawing also presupposed an assumption of similarity between Marcos' Sultanistic regime (Thompson 1998) and the institutionalized Pinochet dictatorship – a typical, yet logically questionable product of the representativeness heuristic.

For these reasons, the experiential learning that occurs in the course of political regime contention tends to deviate from fully rational procedures, such as Bayesian updating.²⁶ Reliance on cognitive heuristics can yield rash inferences and misjudgments. Yet discussions among a variety of representative leaders, who bring their diverse perspectives to bear, can uncover the problems of some contentious tactics and realize the promise of others; inter-organizational pluralism tends to have a similar salutary effect as the intra-organizational pluralism discussed in a preceding sub-section (see in general Page 2007). These debates among various parties and associations, which can take considerable time, tend to give opposition efforts greater success. The ideological differentiation in the attraction to external precedents, another corollary of organizational development, thus helps explain the slowdown yet growing success of contentious diffusion.

Transformation of the Triggers of Diffusion Processes

The preceding three sections have analyzed the most important ways in which the emergence of broad-based organizations have reshaped the reception and domestic processing of external precedents of political regime contention; they have thus shown how emulation decisions have changed over the last two hundred years. But the features of diffusion waves are not determined by the imitators and their choices alone; the nature

of the originating events that trigger such waves can also play a crucial role. Different types of stimuli set in motion different diffusion processes (Boushey 2010: chap. 3; Makse and Volden 2011). The signal matters, not only its reception. The present section therefore examines how the input side of diffusion changed, also as a result of organizational development.

In the democratization waves under investigation, the originating events indeed varied considerably. This is evident in terminology. The triggers in 1848 and 1917-19 were the revolutions in France and Russia, respectively, whereas the most important model for the third wave was the pacted transition in Spain. Accordingly, regime contention in 1848 and 1917-19 is called revolutionary, and the democratizations of the third wave, non-revolutionary. Yet rather than hindering comparisons of these historically distant waves, this difference itself is part of my explanation because it resulted from the macro-structural development highlighted in my study, the formation of broad-based organizations. By substantiating this crucial point, my theory accounts for the evolution of diffusion triggers; in social-science jargon, it endogenizes this difference by explaining the shift from transgressive to contained contention (cf. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: 7-8). An apparent conceptual problem thus turns into an additional insight, indeed a cornerstone for a comprehensive explanation. Instead of comparing apples and oranges, my book explains how crabapples were domesticated into orchard fruits.

In a nutshell, the creation and proliferation of political mass parties and wide-ranging interest associations produced a profound change in the predominant mode of democratic contention, which affected the impulse that these precedents gave to emulation efforts. As firm, reasonably disciplined collective actors emerged, spontaneous

street protests that could quickly turn into mass uprisings gave way to negotiations and compromises among political leaders who used controlled mobilization merely for demonstrating their power capabilities. Such negotiated transitions, common during the third wave of democratization in the late 20th century, were much less risky than the insurgencies of 1830 and 1848; accordingly, the rate of success that efforts to emulate these precedents attained increased substantially over time. But where a mass assault managed to dislodge an apparently powerful ruler, as in Paris in February 1848, this unusual success was much more dramatic and stunning than a transition engineered via bargaining and compromise. Such a striking event therefore triggered a much quicker wave of imitation efforts. In the world of bounded rationality, where the availability and representativeness heuristics play a significant (albeit varying) role, the transformation of the main mode of democratic contention, which provided the signal for diffusion processes, helps explain the diminishing speed yet increasing success of emulation efforts over the course of modern history.

How, exactly, did organizational development produce this change in triggering events? In the inchoate, amorphous polities of the early 19th century, crowd protests and mass assaults constituted the only viable option for challenging the established authorities. The absence of firm, broad-based organizations that could sustain effective collective action over time compelled oppositionists to try and overwhelm autocrats quickly through escalating street confrontation. The need to defeat the incumbent right away created strong incentives for raising the intensity and transgressiveness of contention and proceed from mass demonstrations to violent attacks and full-scale

insurrection. But such attempts to force immediate change held tremendous risks; many rebellions were defeated and backfired by provoking repression.²⁷

In the rare cases in which unorganized mass contention managed to unseat an autocrat, however, this unlikely achievement constituted such a stunning success that it turned into a powerful signal for oppositionists in other polities. Given the heuristics of availability and representativeness, which drew disproportionate attention to this dramatic event and made observers overestimate similarities with their own domestic situation, such a precedent provided strong impulses for sweeping emulation efforts. The force of this stimulus unleashed tsunamis. But the risks inherent in violent crowd contention, attempted rather indiscriminately in a diversity of settings, led to frequent failures. Thus, the striking characteristics of the type of originating event that prevailed before the era of mass organization help account for the speed of diffusion as well as its meager success.

As broad-based parties and interest associations formed, however, challengers acquired the capacity to maintain collective pressure over time and to calibrate and target it more carefully. Rather than having to rely on all-out confrontation designed to topple autocrats quickly, representative leaders were able to pursue their goals over the medium and long run and to apply influence in calculated dosages. Given the lower risks of this controlled strategy, oppositionists tended to back away from crowd protests and adopt gradualism and reformism, which often involved contacts and negotiations with the established authorities as well. Rather than pushing for an immediate, total victory in a desperate quest for all-or-nothing, challengers came to pursue their goals step by step. This moderation in turn elicited less repression from incumbents and thus reduced the risk and cost of failure.

At the same time, however, success now came through compromise and mutual concession and thus amounted to a less clear-cut and stunning achievement. Since bargaining often proceeded in a secretive fashion among elites, including unaccountable sectors such as the military and big business, it seemed to establish limited forms of “democracy by undemocratic means” (Hagopian 1990). As a result, a regime change accomplished through this moderate, negotiated mode of transition constituted a much less powerful stimulus for emulation efforts elsewhere. Whereas the rapid overthrow of a ruler had served as a powerful trigger for diffusion, a replacement based on compromise provided a weaker, muffled signal. Though substantively important and rationally preferable due to its favorable balance of benefits and risks, it was not the kind of clarion call that inspired a rash of imitation attempts in the world of bounded rationality. Negotiated regime transitions simply do not have the “overwhelming” force as a trigger of diffusion waves that successful mass insurgencies had. They provided an especially limited stimulus for mass actors who relied heavily on the heuristics of availability and representativeness.

By contrast, representative leaders, who operate with less narrowly bounded rationality, did learn from these precedents; but since these leaders proceed with greater prudence, they acted on them only when the domestic opportunity structure looked propitious. As a result, a negotiated transition as in Spain inspired emulation efforts more slowly, but with a greater likelihood of success.

In sum, the transformation of the triggers of contentious waves helps account for the changing characteristics of these diffusion processes, especially their diminishing speed and higher rate of goal attainment. The change in the main signal helps resolve the

puzzle examined in this book by complementing the explanations focused on the reception side of diffusion. The macro-structural development emphasized in this study, namely the formation and proliferation of broad-based parties and interest associations, reshaped the external impulses of emulation waves as well as their domestic processing, both of which, in turn, contributed to the negative correlation between diffusion's speed and success. Whereas many scholars focus merely on one side of diffusion processes, usually the reception side (cf. Boushey 2010: 62; Makse and Volden 2011), the theory developed in this book draws a more equilibrated and complete picture by analyzing the stimulus side as well.

It is noteworthy that changes in the input and reception side of diffusion came into play at different points in historical development. The waves of 1848 and 1917-19 were both unleashed by revolutions; they emanated from the same kind of precedent. Their differential features and outcomes resulted mostly from the transformation of the reception side, namely the rise of mass organizations in the intervening decades. By contrast, the further slowdown of diffusion evident in the leisurely pace of the third wave in Latin America was not caused by an additional strengthening of parties and interest associations; while such organizations spread across the ideological spectrum and thus brought more balance in polities' organizational density, in Latin America they rarely ever attained the institutional solidity that many European parties boasted. Instead, the additional reduction in diffusion's speed and the corresponding increase in its success resulted especially from the change in precedent event, namely the marginalization of the revolutionary option and the growing predominance of negotiated regime transitions, exemplified by the Spanish model. Thus, the change in signal highlighted in the present

subsection held principal responsibility for the special features of South American democratization.

The Complex Interweaving of Factors

The preceding subsections have designed a theory that becomes increasingly complex as organizational development advances. While this macro-structural process constitutes the fundamental moving cause for the transformation of diffusion waves, it does not exert its causal force in a singular, linear way. Instead, the emergence and proliferation of broad-based organizations gives rise to several developments that interact in ever more complicated ways. By the time of the third wave of democratization in Latin America, this intersection of factors has become rather jumbled.

In inchoate polities, political impulses spread in a straightforward way: A dramatic foreign precedent quickly stimulated unorganized crowd action and set in motion a fairly uniform wave of contention. With the rise of broad-based organizations, a new type of actor emerged and came to moderate diffusion: Representative leaders now sought to filter the impact of external precedents, tame and guide contentious mass energies, and initiate emulative challenges only at propitious moments. At this stage, intra-organizational procedures that allowed for better information processing and decision-making made the crucial difference. One main change thus accounted for the new features of diffusion that appeared in Europe during the early 20th century.

Yet the further slowdown and increasing success that characterizes the third wave in Latin America did not result from a linear advance of organizational development. That region's political parties and interest associations are not stronger and more

encompassing than their European counterparts; in many cases they are weaker and have narrower constituencies. The New World has never had an equivalent to German Social Democracy of the early 20th century.

Instead, what shaped the third wave were other ramifications of organizational development, especially its spread across the ideological spectrum. As various organizations with different worldviews arose, inter-organizational dynamics acquired particular importance. Parties and associations entered into discussions and negotiations, and this political learning tended to weed out distortions in the processing of foreign inputs and to yield useful lessons. This further change at the reception side of diffusion was predicated upon the transformation of the input side that also resulted from organizational development, namely the rise of the negotiated transition model. As just explained, this option preferred by representative leaders provided only a muted impulse for emulation efforts. Whereas revolutions had quickly unleashed contentious mass energies, Spain's pacted democratization provided a less powerful signal, which gave leaders the latitude to target emulation efforts to political opportunities. It was these indirect effects of organizational development that made the biggest difference for the third wave. The macro-structural change that provides the main causal thread for this study affected this diffusion wave as well, but through different mechanisms. Whereas in Europe during the early 20th century, intra-organizational processes played the main role, in South America during the late 20th century, inter-organizational dynamics and the differentiation of modes of contention took center stage.

Conclusion

Trying to explain the striking slowdown yet increasing success in the diffusion of political regime contention, this chapter has assessed a wide range of arguments derived from major theoretical approaches. But my extensive research about the waves of 1848, 1917-19, and the 1970s and 1980s suggests that transnational networks that grew in density with modernization and globalization; the rise of nationalism in the course of the 19th century; the differentials in hard and soft power invoked by world system theory and constructivism; and the learning modeled by rational choice cannot convincingly account for the negative correlation between the two diffusion trends and for the process of actors' decision-making. Above all, by highlighting one trend, established approaches cannot account for the other.

Specifically, arguments about modernization and globalization, world system theory, and constructivism predict increasing success but at the same time suggest a speed-up of diffusion, not the deceleration that my comparison of the three major waves of political regime contention finds. Arguments about nationalism, in turn, predict reduced speed but also diminishing success, again opposite to observed trends. Finally, rational choice postulates an inherent connection between speed and (the chance of) success, an expectation falsified by the inverse correlation found in this study. Process tracing also disconfirms strict rationalism: Participants in all three diffusion waves diverged substantially in their information processing and choices from the postulates of inferential logic and rational decision-making.

A wealth of primary documents shows instead that actors on all sides of political regime contention regularly resorted to cognitive heuristics. These mechanisms of

distinctly bounded rationality profoundly shaped their perceptions and calculations and caused substantial deviations from fully rational decision-making. Yet as my theory emphasizes, these micro-mechanisms played out differently depending on the political macro-context. In organizationally inchoate polities, as they prevailed during the 19th century, cognitive heuristics had full sway. In the absence of representative leadership, the choice on whether to challenge established governments fell to individual citizens, who had limited information access and little experience in making such high-stakes political decisions under tremendously uncertain circumstances. Therefore, these common people were susceptible to the rash inferences derived via cognitive heuristics from striking foreign precedents. The prevalence of bounded rationality explains why emulation efforts spread rapidly yet often happened at inopportune moments and therefore had a low rate of success.

The emergence of mass organizations from the mid-19th century onward then accounts for the diminishing pace yet increasing success of diffusion waves, that is, the other side of the negative correlation between these two trends. The rise of representative leadership meant that the main decision about defying non-democratic governments now lay in the hands of experienced operators who had better information access and a higher processing capacity than common citizens. Standing on firmer ground, leaders were less influenced by cognitive heuristics; while they did rely on these shortcuts and therefore deviated from the postulates of full rationality as well, they had more opportunities to crosscheck the resulting inferences, especially where institutional procedures allowed for reasonably open discussion and debate. Therefore, leaders did not jump to conclusions about the replicability of striking, successful foreign precedents but waited for a good

opportunity to launch their emulation efforts and defy established regimes. Accordingly, political regime contention spread with less speed but attained greater success.

Two additional repercussions of organizational development reinforced this secular change. First, the emergence of collective actors clarified the constellation of domestic power and therefore drew actors' attention predominantly to the internal front. External precedents, which provided comparatively valuable information at a time when domestic politics was inchoate and therefore shrouded in fog, now became less important as the base for drawing inferences. Instead, relevant actors could now assess internal opportunities and constraints more thoroughly and therefore did not act rashly in response to a foreign impulse.

Second, the crystallization of ideological positions that accompanied the emergence of political organizations produced a diversification of diffusion. Specific parties and groupings gravitated toward different sources of external inspiration. As a result, they embraced distinct strategies and tactics of contention and received impulses for challenging their own government at different times. Yet since most organizations knew that they could not attain their goals easily, they sought to garner support from other organizations or waited for a particularly good opportunity before initiating contention. As a result, contagion advanced less fast. And while the pursuit of divergent emulation efforts could create complications and obstacles in the short run, it entailed higher chances of success in the medium run by bringing various options into play, stimulating diverse political experiences, and allowing for lesson drawing. Sooner or later, a promising proposal for effecting regime change often emerged, found increasing

backing, and ended up carrying the day. Thus, this repercussion of organizational development also made a probabilistic contribution to diffusion's greater success.

Last but not least, the emergence of broad-based mass organizations also transformed the predominant trigger of democratization waves, and this shift in the impulse unleashing diffusion processes complemented the changes on the reception side that have just been mentioned. With the rise and proliferation of political parties and interest associations, more and more challengers backed away from escalating street protests and mass insurgencies and instead resorted to compromise and negotiation when trying to effect regime transitions. As the principal model that propelled emulation efforts changed, the features of the resulting diffusion processes changed as well. Dramatic, stunning "revolutions" spark quick, rash imitation attempts, but due to their haste, they often fail. By contrast, pacted transitions that proceed via mutual concession and compromise do not inspire mass enthusiasm. Instead, they mostly offer lessons to representative leaders who send their broad-based organizations into emulative contention only when the time seems ripe. Consequently, diffusion proceeds more slowly, but has a greater chance of achieving its goals. This fundamental change in the trigger of diffusion reinforced the changing features of the reception side and contributed to the secular change in democratization waves, having a particular impact on the third wave in Europe and Latin America.

All of these arguments elucidate the spread of political regime contention and account for the negative correlation between its speed and success. My new theory demonstrates that insights from cognitive psychology, which have already been applied to individual-level political choices, help explain collective political action as well. For

this purpose, cognitive micro-mechanisms need to be combined with macro-structures, as I do with my emphasis on organizational developments. Indeed, there is a profound interaction between these two levels. The emergence of political mass organizations does not only set the framework for the operation of cognitive mechanisms, but affects their operation profoundly: Organizational ties loosen the bounds of rationality. This interactive argument helps build a theory of politics that stands on the well-corroborated micro-foundation of bounded rationality and does justice to the complex macro-phenomena of politics.

Notes

¹ An obvious exception is the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, which the concluding chapter discusses in some depth.

² Even the wave of regime contention that started to sweep across the Arab world from December 2010 onward (which is also examined in the Conclusion) did not unfold as rapidly as the day-by-day progression of the tsunami of 1848.

³ Specifically, democratic contention is counted as successful if collective challenges to authoritarian incumbents achieve significant, non-fleeting steps toward liberalism or democracy. The crucial indicator is that such an advance is accomplished in the short run and sustained over the medium run, even if it ends up being abolished in the long run, as during the “reverse wave” of the interwar years (Huntington 1991: 17-18). Accordingly, this study defines success in terms of regime transition, not consolidation, as distinguished by the democratization literature of the 1980s and 1990s. Of course, this definition implies a significant change on the regime dimension; an autocrat’s displacement is not sufficient because another authoritarian ruler may quickly take control. Instead, only where regime contention achieves significant progress toward political liberty or competitive popular rule and where this advance is maintained for at least three years has there been success in the terms of this book.

⁴ The substantial democratic advances of 1918/19 appear clearly in the statistical analysis of Freeman and Snidal (1982: 320-21, 323, 325) and the comparative-historical investigation of Collier (1999: 35, 77-79).

⁵ As discussed in chapter four, however, this label is inaccurate because broad cross-sections of people, such as artisans, workers, shopkeepers, professionals, housewives, and youths, participated on the frontlines of regime contention in 1848.

⁶ This point is emphasized by Geyer (2010: 218-19).

⁷ Smith 1993: 76-77; cf. Brubaker 1992. Marx (2003) also emphasizes the “exclusionary origins of nationalism.”

⁸ An alternative argument derived from world system theory and constructivism could highlight different waves' point of origin and claim that a precedent occurring in a core country has a more powerful impact than a similar event in the semi-periphery and periphery. But one of the few extant comparisons of different diffusion waves stresses that the Bismarckian social security system spread much more slowly from late 19th-century Germany, by then a core country, than Chilean pension privatization diffused in the 1980s and 1990s; this semi-peripheral innovation spread significantly faster, even across world regions, i.e. from Latin America to Eastern Europe (Orenstein 2003). Other semi-peripheral innovations, such as the participatory budgeting initiated in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, have also spread to the "core" with surprising speed, stimulating a large number of replication efforts in Europe and North America (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2009).

⁹ For the sake of theoretical clarity, this book conceptualizes rational learning as the deductive approach derived from a few fundamental postulates about instrumental rationality (particularly well-explained in Tsebelis 1990: chap. 2); by contrast, empirical findings about people's actual patterns of cognition and decision-making give rise to the theories of bounded rationality discussed below (see Thaler 2000).

¹⁰ In their rationalist model of the likelihood of popular rebellion, Bhavnani and Ross (2003: 362-63) find that "repressive governments ... should be able to deter rebellion." Since this conclusion under-predicts rebellions, they are compelled to resort to "mistakes" to account for actual outcomes.

¹¹ These problems affect even business managers, who face strong performance incentives (Mezias and Starbuck 2008).

¹² Rudé 2005: 257. Traugott (2010: 193-95) argues that potential insurgents calculated the chances of success rather carefully and acted accordingly. But several episodes that he examines show, on the contrary, that "revolutionary zeal prevented [protesters] from heeding [a notable's] call for caution" and that another leader's cautious and prudent "opinion was ignored by the men in his company [and] he relented rather than break ranks with his men" (Traugott 2010: 194 and 195, respectively).

¹³ To the present day, levels of knowledge among the mass public have remained strikingly low (e.g., Somin 2006), despite the much improved availability information.

¹⁴ For an interesting formal model on "the leader as catalyst," see Majumdar and Mukand (2010).

¹⁵ For a useful general discussion of political learning, see Levy (1994).

¹⁶ See in general Page (2007: chaps. 6-8). The performance of organizations that fall in between these two poles depends on their level of diversity vs. homogeneity.

¹⁷ German Social Democracy, for instance, had well-established fora for continuous internal debates about questions of tactics, strategies, and goals (see, e.g., Kautsky 1914: 127-55; Schönhoven 1985). Thus, the party was in fact not run by the unified "oligarchy" depicted by Michels ([1915] 1959)—as the very conflicts among leaders over the party's role in WWI show, which erupted soon after Michels wrote and which in 1917 provoked the defection of a significant number of party leaders. For a nuanced discussion of Michels' strikingly "categorical" claims, see Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992: 55).

¹⁸ Tetlock 1985: 314-321; Lerner and Tetlock 1999: 257-59, 262; Ryfe 2005: 57. These benefits depend on leaders not knowing their constituents' position (otherwise leaders opportunistically pander to those views) – a condition that seems fulfilled during uncertain, “confusing” episodes of regime contention.

¹⁹ My concept of representative leadership is very similar to John Higley's definition of elites via “their strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements” (Higley and Burton 2006: 7), and my thinking about the historical emergence of the negotiated transition model (see chapter three below) is influenced by his theoretical and empirical work (especially Higley and Gunther 1992).

²⁰ The same arguments apply to the guerrilla groupings operating in Latin America during the 1960s, which were inspired by the Cuban Revolution due to its “psychological immediacy and temporal proximity,” reflecting the availability heuristic. And, echoing the representativeness heuristic, a “Communist party leader...noted that ‘The victory of the Cuban revolution spread the illusion of a rapid and heroic triumph, leading to mechanical transplants.’” (Wickham-Crowley 1992: 33) On the role of cognitive shortcuts in these disastrous inferences, see Wickham-Crowley (2012: 13-14).

²¹ In Europe, the left again took the lead in establishing transnational networks (e.g., Eley 2002: 86-93). For Latin America during the third wave of democratization, see Angell 2001 and Grabendorff 2001.

²² Despite the traditional cleavage between Peronists and anti-Peronists, even Argentina's opposition parties formed a wide-ranging coalition, which drew up a number of programmatic agreements (Multipartidaria 1982).

²³ The resulting difficulties of learning from political and historical experience are stressed by Levitt and March (1988: 324-26, 333).

²⁴ Levy (1994: 291-94, 304-5) emphasizes in general that learning does not necessarily imply greater accuracy.

²⁵ The Uruguayan plebiscite of 1980, when a majority voted down a new constitution under a military dictatorship (a clear contrast to the Chilean “yes” vote that same year), also served as a foreign source of inspiration – a product of lesson drawing less affected by cognitive shortcuts.

²⁶ See for a similar argument Schiemann 2007.

²⁷ From 1815-1851, there were several revolts and uprisings in Paris, for instance – most of them unsuccessful (Mansel 2001: chaps. 9, 13).