

CHAPTER I

DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

OVERVIEW

This book is about democracy. In this first chapter we see how democracy has expanded during the last hundred years to more and more countries in the world. More than half of the independent countries in the world today are democracies. The expansion of democracy has not been smooth and straight. It has seen several ups and downs in different countries. It still remains an unstable and uncertain achievement.

This chapter begins with different stories on the making and unmaking of democracy from different parts of the world. These stories are meant to give a sense of what it means to experience democracy and its absence. We present the pattern of the spread of democracy first with a series of maps and then with a short history. The focus in this chapter is on democracy within a country. But towards the end of the chapter, we take a look at democracy or its absence in the relations among different countries. We examine the working of some international organisations. This allows us to ask a big question: are we moving towards democracy at the global level?



President Salvador Allende (wearing a helmet) and his security guards in front of La Moneda, Chile's Presidential Palace, on 11 September 1973, hours before his death. What do you read on everyone's face in this photograph?

1.1 TWO TALES OF DEMOCRACY

"Workers of my country, I have faith in Chile and its future. Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail. Keep in mind that, much sooner than later, the great avenues will again be opened, through which will pass free men to construct a better society. Long live Chile! Long live the people! Long live the workers!"

These are my last words, and I am certain that my sacrifice will not be in vain. I am certain that, at the very least, it will be a moral lesson that will punish felony, cowardice, and treason."

These are some extracts from the last speech of Salvador Allende (pronounced Ayen-they). He was then the President of Chile, a country in South America. The speech was given on the morning of 11 September 1973, the day his government was overthrown by the military. Allende was the founder

leader of the Socialist Party of Chile and led the Popular Unity **coalition** to victory in the presidential election in 1970. After being elected the President, Allende had taken several policy decisions to help the poor and the workers. These included reform of the educational system, free milk for children and redistribution of land to the landless farmers. He was opposed to foreign companies taking away natural resources like copper from the country. The landlords, the rich and the Church opposed his policies. Some other political parties in Chile also opposed his government.

Military Coup of 1973

On the morning of 11 September 1973, the military took over the seaport. The Defence Minister was arrested by the military when he arrived at his office. The military



Why did President Allende address himself mainly to 'workers'? Why were the rich unhappy with him?

commanders asked the President to resign. Allende refused to resign or leave the country. But realising the danger to the country and to his life, he addressed the people on the radio, part of which we read in the beginning. Then the military surrounded the President's house and started bombing it. President Allende died in the military attack. This was the sacrifice he was talking about in his last speech. A government elected by people was overthrown by the military through conspiracy and violence.

What took place in Chile on 11 September 1973 was a military **coup**. General Augusto Pinochet (pronounced Pinoshe), an Army general, led the coup. The government of the United States of America was unhappy with Allende's rule and is known to have supported and funded activities that led to the coup. Pinochet became the President of the country and ruled it for the next 17 years. From a government that was elected by the people, the power shifted to the

military officers. They could do as they wished and no one could question them. Thus a military dictatorship was established in Chile. Pinochet's government tortured and killed several of those who supported Allende and those who wanted democracy to be restored. These included General Alberto Bachelet of the Chilean Air Force and many other officers who refused to join the coup. General Bachelet's wife and daughter were put in prison and tortured. More than 3,000 people were killed by the military. Many more were reported 'missing'. No one knows what happened to them.



Did the army have any legal right to arrest the defence minister of the country? Should the army have the power to arrest any citizen?



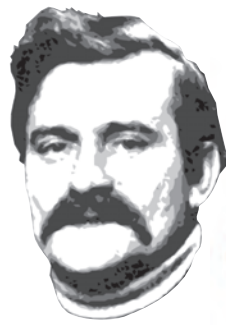
A C T I V I T Y

- Locate and shade Chile on the map. Which state in our country has a shape similar to Chile?
- Follow the newspaper for one month and collect news items related to any country in Latin America. Did you find the news coverage adequate?

President Michelle Bachelet addressing her supporters after her victory in the presidential election in January 2006. From this photograph do you notice any difference between an election rally in Chile and in India?



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Lech Walesa



Poland is famous for its poster art. Most of the posters of Solidarity carried this special way of writing 'Solidarność'. Can you find similar examples of poster art or wall writing in Indian politics?

Restoration of Democracy

Pinochet's military dictatorship came to an end after he decided to hold a **referendum** in 1988. He felt confident that in this referendum, the people would say 'yes' to his continuing in power. But the people of Chile had not forgotten their democratic traditions. Their vote was a decisive 'no' to Pinochet. This led to Pinochet losing first his political and then his military powers. The hope Allende expressed in his last address was realised: felony, cowardice and treason were finally punished. Political freedom was restored. Since then Chile has held four presidential elections in which different political parties have participated. Slowly, the army's role in the country's government has been eliminated. The elected governments that came to power ordered inquiries into Pinochet's rule. These inquiries showed that his government was not only very brutal, but also very corrupt.

Do you remember a little reference made earlier to General Bachelet's daughter who was imprisoned and tortured along with her mother? That girl, Michelle Bachelet (pronounced Mishel Bachelet), was elected President of Chile in January 2006. A medical doctor and a moderate socialist, Michelle became the first woman to be a Defence Minister in Latin America. In the presidential elections she defeated

one of Chile's richest men. In this photograph of her victory speech, she is saying to her supporters:

"Because I was the victim of hatred, I have dedicated my life to reverse that hatred and turn it into understanding, tolerance and — why not say it — into love."

Democracy in Poland

Let us turn to another event, this time from Poland, in 1980. At that time Poland was ruled by the Polish United Workers' Party. This was one of the many communist parties that ruled in several countries of East Europe at that time. In these countries no other political party was allowed to function. The people could not freely choose the leaders of the communist party or the government. Those who spoke against the leaders or the party or the government were put in prison. The government in Poland was supported and controlled by the government of the Soviet Union (USSR), a vast and powerful communist state.

On 14 August 1980, the workers of Lenin Shipyard in the city of Gdansk went on a **strike**. The shipyard was owned by the government. In fact all the factories and big property in Poland were owned by the government. The strike began with a demand to take back a crane operator, a woman worker, who was unjustly dismissed

Michelle Bachelet served as President of Chile (2006–2010) and Executive Director of UN Women (2010–2013). She was elected as President of Chile for a second term in 2014.

from service. This strike was illegal, because **trade unions** independent of the ruling party were not allowed in Poland. As the strike continued, a former electrician of the shipyard, Lech Walesa (pronounced Lek Walesha), joined the strikers. He was dismissed from service in 1976 for demanding higher pay. Walesa soon emerged as the leader of the striking workers. The strike began to spread across the whole city. Now the workers started raising larger demands. They wanted the right to form independent trade unions. They also demanded the release of **political prisoners** and an end to censorship on press.

The movement became so popular that the government had to give in. The workers led by Walesa signed a 21-point agreement with the government that ended their strike. The government agreed to recognise the workers' right to form independent trade unions and their right to strike. After the Gdansk agreement was signed, a new trade union called Solidarity (Solidarnosc in Polish) was formed. It was the first time an independent trade union was formed in any of the communist states. Within a year, Solidarity swept across Poland and had about one crore members. Revelations of widespread corruption and mismanagement in the government made matters worse for the rulers. The government, led by General Jaruzelski, grew anxious and imposed **martial law** in December 1981. Thousands of Solidarity members were put in prison. Freedom to organise, protest and express opinions was once again taken away.

Another wave of strikes, again organised by Solidarity, began in 1988. This time the Polish

government was weaker, the support from Soviet Union uncertain and the economy was in decline. Another round of negotiations with Walesa resulted in an agreement in April 1989 for free elections. Solidarity contested all the 100 seats of the Senate and won 99 of them. In October 1990, Poland had its first presidential elections in which more than one party could contest. Walesa was elected President of Poland.



A C T I V I T Y

- Locate Poland on the map. Write down the names of the countries that surround it.
- Which other East European countries were ruled by communist parties in the 1980s? Shade them on the map.
- Make a list of political activities that you could not have done in Poland in 1980s but you can do in our country.

Two Features of Democracy

We have read two different kinds of real life stories. The story from Chile was of a democratic government led by Allende being replaced by a non-democratic military government of Pinochet, followed by restoration of democracy. In Poland we tracked the transition from a non-democratic government to a democratic government.

Let us compare the two non-democratic governments in these stories. There were many differences between Pinochet's rule in Chile and the communist rule in Poland. Chile was ruled by a military dictator, while Poland was ruled by a political party. The government of Poland claimed that it was ruling on behalf of the working classes. Pinochet made no such claim and openly favoured big capitalists. Yet both had some common features:



Why was an independent trade union so important in Poland? Why are trade unions necessary?

- The people could not choose or change their rulers.
- There was no real freedom to express one's opinions, form political associations and organise protests and political action.

The three democratic governments identified above — Allende's Chile, Walesa's Poland and Bachelet's Chile — are different in their approach towards social and economic matters. Allende preferred government control on all big industries and the economy. Walesa wanted the market to be free of government interference. Bachelet stands somewhere in the middle on this issue. Yet these three governments shared some basic features. Power was exercised by

governments elected by the people and not by the army, unelected leaders or any external power. The people enjoyed some basic political freedoms.

From these two stories let us draw a rough way to identify a democracy.

Democracy is a form of government that allows people to choose their rulers. In a democracy:

- only leaders elected by people should rule the country, and
- people have the freedom to express views, freedom to organise and freedom to protest.

We shall come back to this question in Chapter Two and develop a definition of democracy. We shall also note some features of a democracy.



Anita made a list of the features of all the five governments that we have discussed so far. But somehow the list got mixed up. Now she has a list of many features but she does not remember which feature applies to which government. Can you help her by writing the correct feature under the name of the government in the table below? Remember, some of these features may apply to more than one government and would need to be written separately under each of these.

Features:

<p>Criticism of the government not allowed</p> <p>Military dictatorship</p> <p>Widespread corruption</p> <p>The president was once a political prisoner</p> <p>Ruler elected by the people</p> <p>Government owned all industries</p> <p>More than one party exists</p> <p>Ruler not elected by the people</p> <p>Missing people</p> <p>People enjoyed basic political freedoms</p> <p>Foreign intervention in domestic affairs</p>				
Chile Allende	Chile Pinochet	Chile Bachelet	Poland Jaruzelski	Poland Walesa

1.2 THE CHANGING MAP OF DEMOCRACY

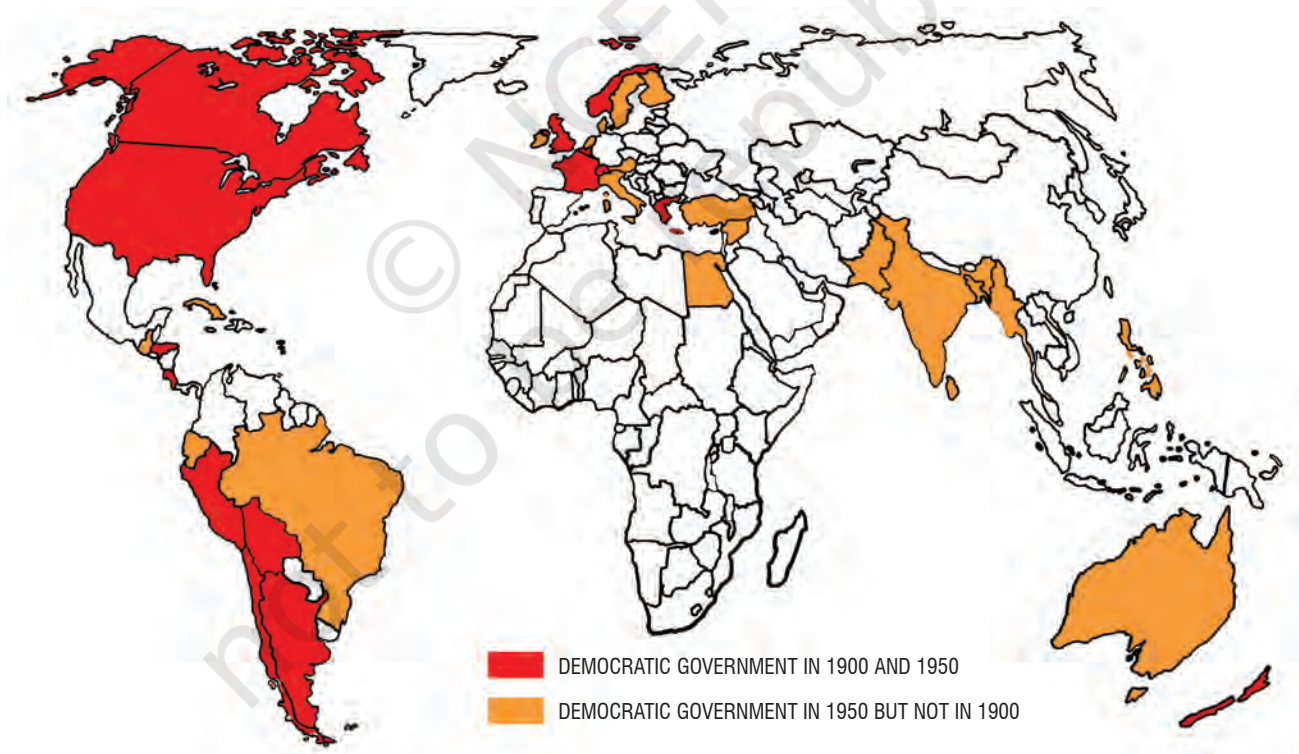
Twentieth century was full of the kind of stories we have read above: stories of transition to democracy, of challenges to democracy, of military coups, of struggles of the people to bring back democracy. Was there a pattern to these stories that record both the march towards democracy and the setbacks to democracy? Let us use the basic features we noted earlier and identify democracies among different countries of the world.

This is what the three maps shown here do. Take a look at these three maps below and find out if there was a pattern in the way democracies have evolved in the twentieth century. The first map depicts the countries

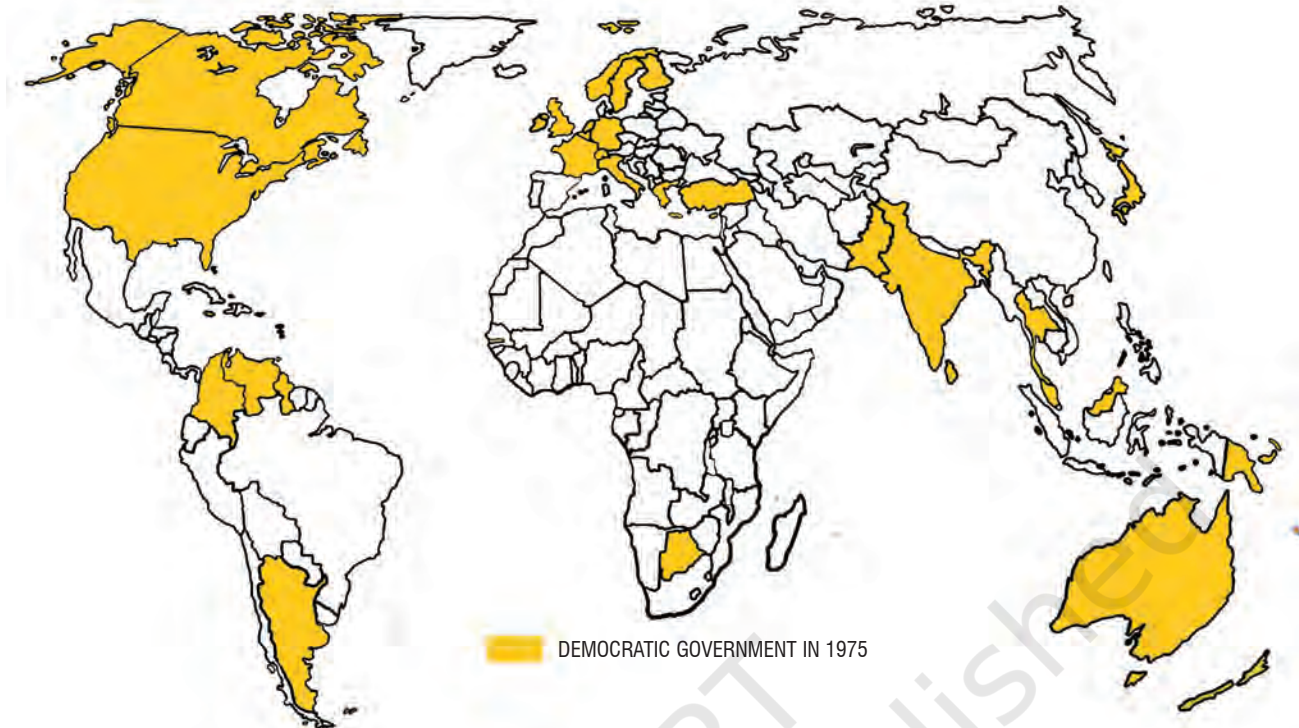
that were democratic in 1950, a few years after the end of the Second World War. This map also shows countries from this set that had already become democratic by 1900. The second map presents a picture of democratic regimes in 1975, after most of the colonies had gained independence. Finally, we take another leap and look at democracies in the year 2000, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As we look at these maps, let us ask ourselves some questions. How has democracy marched through the twentieth century? Is there a clear pattern of expansion? When did the expansion take place? In which regions?

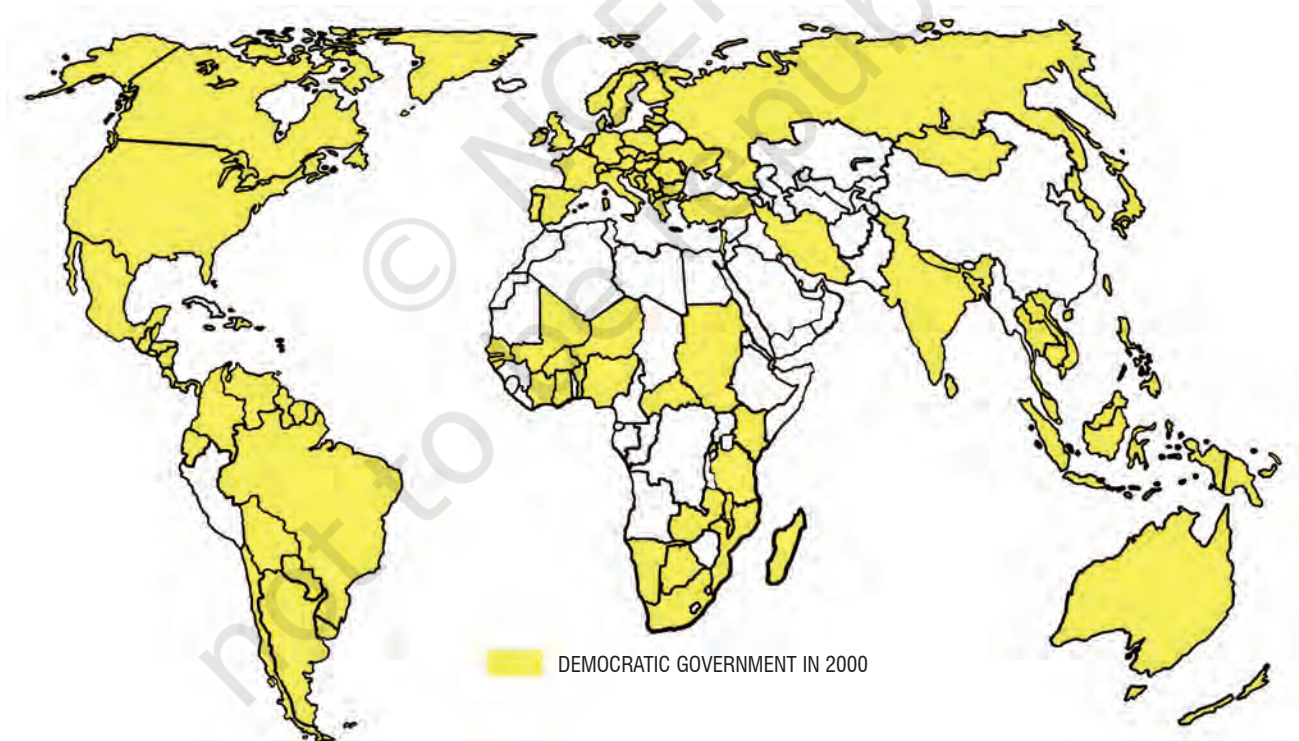
MAP 1.1: DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS IN 1900-1950



MAP 1.2: DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS IN 1975



MAP 1.3: DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS IN 2000



Source: Historical data for these maps is taken from Polity IV Project dataset of University of Maryland. This dataset defines democracy as existence of choices about policies and leaders, checks on executive power and guarantee of civil liberties. Here we have used positive 'Polity' scores as indicating the existence of democracy. In some cases the scores of dataset have been modified. For details see <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu>

On the basis of these maps identify up to three countries (in some cases you won't find three countries) that were democratic in these continents for the given years and make a table as given below.

Year	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America
1950				
1975				
2000				

- Identify some countries from map 1.1 that became democratic between 1900 and 1950.
- Identify some countries from map 1.1 and 1.2 that were democratic in 1950 and 1975.
- Identify some European countries from map 1.2 and 1.3 that were democratic in 1975 and 2000.
- Identify some countries in Latin America that became democratic after 1975.
- Make a list of big countries that were not democratic in 2000.

Let us summarise the main points that emerge from a reading of these maps. You need to go back to the maps to answer the question that comes after each point.

- **Democracy has expanded throughout the twentieth century.** Is it correct to say that at each point in these maps, the number of democratic countries is larger than at the previous point in time?
- **Democracy did not spread evenly in all parts of the world.**

It was established first in some regions and then spread to other regions. Which continents in the world had a large number of democracies in 1900 and 1950? And which continents did not have almost any?

- **While a majority of countries are democratic today, there are still large parts of the world that are not democratic.** Which regions in the world account for most of the countries that were not democracies in 2000?



Looking at these maps, which period do you find most important in the expansion of democracy? Why?

1.3 PHASES IN THE EXPANSION OF DEMOCRACY

The Beginning

These maps do not tell us much about what happened before the twentieth century. The story of modern democracy began at least two centuries ago. You may have read the chapter on the French Revolution of 1789 in the history book of this course. This popular uprising did not establish a secure and stable democracy in France. Throughout the nineteenth century, democracy in France was overthrown and restored several times. Yet the French Revolution inspired many struggles for democracy all over Europe.

In Britain, the progress towards democracy started much before the French Revolution. But the progress was very slow. Through the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, series of political events reduced the power of monarchy and feudal lords. The right to vote was granted to more and more people. Around the same time as the French Revolution, the British colonies in North America declared themselves independent in 1776. In the next few years these colonies came together to form the United States of America. They adopted a democratic



Why were women given voting rights much later than men in most countries? Why did this not happen in India?

constitution in 1787. But here too the right to vote was limited to very few men.

In the nineteenth century struggles for democracy often centred round political equality, freedom and justice. One major demand was the right for every adult citizen to vote. Many European countries that were becoming more democratic did not initially allow all people to vote. In some countries only people owning property had the right to vote. Often women did not have the right to vote. In the United States of America, the blacks all over the country could not exercise the right to vote until 1965. Those struggling for democracy wanted this right granted universally to all adults — men or women, rich or poor, white or black. This is called ‘universal adult franchise’ or ‘universal suffrage’. The box here tells us when universal suffrage was granted in many countries of the world.

When was universal adult franchise granted?

1893	New Zealand
1917	Russia
1918	Germany
1919	Netherlands
1928	Britain
1931	Sri Lanka
1934	Turkey
1944	France
1945	Japan
1950	India
1951	Argentina
1952	Greece
1955	Malaysia
1962	Australia
1965	US
1978	Spain
1994	South Africa

Note: This is only an illustrative list from different parts of the world. The year indicates when the principle of one person one vote was fully realised in that country. The list does not include those cases where the right to vote was withdrawn later.

As you can see, by 1900 New Zealand was the only country where every adult had voting right. But if you go back to the map, you can see many other countries are marked as ‘democracies’ by the beginning of the twentieth century. These countries had by then governments elected by a significant number of people, mostly men, and had granted political freedom in some measure. Early democracies were established in Europe, North America and Latin America.

End of Colonialism

For a very long time most countries in Asia and Africa were **colonies** under the control of European nations. People of the colonised countries had to wage struggles to achieve independence. They not only wanted to get rid of their colonial masters, but also wished to choose their future leaders. Our country was one of the few colonies where people carried a nationalist struggle to liberate the country from the colonial rule. Many of these countries became democracies immediately after the end of the Second World War in 1945. India achieved Independence in 1947 and embarked on its journey to transform itself from a subject country to a democracy. It continues to be a democracy. Most former colonies did not have such a good experience.

The case of Ghana, a country in western Africa, illustrates the more common experience of former colonies. Ghana used to be a British colony named Gold Coast. It became independent in 1957. It was among the first countries in Africa to gain independence. It inspired other African countries to struggle for freedom. Kwame Nkrumah (pronounced Enkruma), son of a

goldsmith and himself a teacher, was active in the independence struggle of his country.

After independence, Nkrumah became the first prime minister and then the president of Ghana. He was a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru and an inspiration for democrats in Africa. But unlike Nehru, he got himself elected president for life. Soon after, in 1966, he was overthrown by the military. Like Ghana, most countries that became democracies after gaining independence had a mixed record. They could not remain democracies for long.



ACTIVITY

- Locate Ghana in an atlas and then spot it in the three maps in the previous section. Was Ghana a democracy in 2000?
- Do you think it is good to elect someone President for life? Or is it better to hold regular elections after every few years?

Recent phase

The next big push towards democracy came after 1980, as democracy was revived in several countries of Latin America. The disintegration of the Soviet Union accelerated this process. From the story of Poland we know that the then Soviet Union controlled many of its neighbouring communist countries in Eastern Europe. Poland and several other countries became free from the control of the Soviet Union during 1989-90. They chose to become democracies. Finally the Soviet Union itself broke down in 1991. The Soviet Union comprised 15 Republics. All the constituent Republics emerged as independent countries. Most of them became democracies. Thus the end of Soviet control on East Europe and the break up of the Soviet Union led to a big change in the political map of the world.

In this period major changes also took place in India's neighbourhood. Pakistan and Bangladesh made a transition from army rule to democracy in 1990s. In Nepal, the king gave up many of his powers to become a constitutional monarch to be guided by elected leaders. However, these changes were not permanent. In 1999 General Musharraf brought back army rule in Pakistan. In 2005 the new king of Nepal dismissed the elected government and took back political freedoms that people had won in the previous decade. But, in 2008, Pakistan became democratic again and Nepal emerged as a democratic republic after abolishing the monarchy.

Yet the overall trend in this period points to more and more countries turning to democracy. This phase still continues. By 2016, about 140 countries were holding multi-party elections. This number was higher than ever before. More than 80 previously non-democratic countries have made significant advances towards democracy since 1980. But, even today, there are many

Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park in Accra, the capital of Ghana. This park was commissioned in 1992, twenty years after Nkrumah passed away. What might have caused this delay?



Dev Ley, Wikipedia, GNU Free Documentation License

read the cartoon

This cartoon appeared in 2005 when Aung San Suu Kyi turned 60. What is the cartoonist saying here?

©Stephane Peray, Thailand, Cagle Cartoons Inc.



countries where people cannot express their opinion freely. They still cannot elect their leaders. They cannot take big decisions about their present and future life.

One such country is Myanmar, previously known as Burma. It gained freedom from colonial rule in 1948 and became a democracy. But the democratic rule ended in 1962 with a military coup. In 1990 elections were held for the first time after almost 30 years. The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi (pronounced Soo-chi), won the election. But the military leaders of Myanmar refused to step down and did not recognise the election results. Instead, the military put the elected pro-democracy leaders, including Suu Kyi, under house arrest. Political activists accused of even the most trivial offences have been jailed. Anyone caught publicly airing views or issuing statements critical of the regime can be sentenced up to twenty years in prison. Due to the coercive policies of the military-ruled

government in Myanmar, about 6 to 10 lakh people in that country have been uprooted from their homes and have taken shelter elsewhere.

Despite being under house arrest, Suu Kyi continued to campaign for democracy. According to her: *"The quest for democracy in Burma is the struggle of the people to live whole, meaningful lives as free and equal members of the world community."* Her struggle has won international recognition. She has also been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Finally, under her leadership, the NLD fought the historic 2015 elections and a democratic republic was established.



A C T I V I T Y

- Locate Myanmar on an atlas. Which Indian states border this country?
- Write a short essay on the life of Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Collect newspaper reports on the struggle for democracy in Myanmar.

1. 4 DEMOCRACY AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL?

After reading about the various phases of expansion of democracy, a teacher, Mr. Singh, asked the students to summarise what they had learnt. This is how the conversation took place:

Farida: We have learnt that democracy has been expanding to more and more regions and countries all over the world.

Rajesh: Yes, we live in a better world than before. It seems we are moving towards a world democracy.

Sushmita: World democracy! How can you say that? I saw a television programme that showed how the Americans invaded Iraq without any justification. The people of Iraq were not consulted at any stage. How can you call that a world democracy?

Farida: I am not talking about the relationship between different countries. I am only saying that more and more countries are becoming democratic.

Rajesh: But what is the difference between the two? If more and more countries become democratic, isn't it obvious that the world also becomes more democratic? After all the Iraq war was all about taking democracy to that country.

Sushmita: No, it is not obvious to me.

Singh sir: I think we are talking about two very different things here. Farida spoke about establishment of democratic governments within different countries in the world today. Sushmita and Rajesh have differences over something else. Their difference is over the relationship among different countries. It is quite possible, Rajesh, that the rulers of a country who are democratically elected by their people may want to dominate over other countries.

Sushmita: Yes sir. That is exactly what happened in the case of the war on Iraq.

Surinder: I am confused. How can we talk about democracy at the global level? Is there any world government? Who is the president of the world? If there is no government, how can it be democratic or non-democratic?

International Organisations

Let us respond to the question that came up in this conversation: Does an increase in the number of democratic countries all over the world automatically lead to democratic relations among countries? Before we do that, let us think about the point raised by Surinder. There is a government of India, a government of the United States of America, and so on. But there is no government of the world. No government can pass any law that will apply to all the people of the world. If there is no such government, if there are no rulers and ruled, how can we apply the two features of democracy here? These two features, you would recall, were that the rulers should be elected by the people and that people should have basic political freedoms.



Should there be a world government? If yes, who should elect it? And, what powers should it have?



This cartoon was published in Mexico in 2005 and was titled 'International Games'. Which games is the cartoonist talking about here? What does the ball symbolize? Who are the players?



Should the permanent members of the UN be given the power to veto?

While Surinder is right in a simple sense, we cannot say that the question of democracy does not arise here. There is no single World Government, but there are many institutions in the world that perform partially the functions of such a government. These organisations cannot command countries and citizens in a way a government can, but they do make rules that put limits on what governments can do. Consider these points:

- Who makes laws and rules to govern the seas that do not fall within the boundaries of any one country? Or who takes steps to control environmental degradation that threatens all the countries together. The **United Nations (UN)** has evolved many Conventions on these questions that are now binding on most countries of the world. The UN is a global association of nations of the world to help cooperation in international law, security, economic development and social equity. The UN Secretary General is its chief administrative officer.
- What happens when a country attacks another country in an unjust manner? The **UN Security Council**, an organ of the UN, is responsible for maintaining peace and security among countries. It can put together an international army and take action against the wrongdoer.
- Who lends money to governments when they need it? The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** does so. The **World Bank** also gives loans to the governments. Before lending they ask the concerned government to show all its accounts and direct it to make changes in its economic policy.

Are these decisions democratic?

So, there are many institutions at the world level that perform some of the functions that a world government would perform. But we need to know just how democratic these organisations are. The yardstick here is whether each of the countries has free and equal say in the decisions that affect them. In this light let us examine the organisation of some of these world bodies.

Every one of the 193 member states (as on 1 September 2012) of the UN has one vote in the UN General Assembly. It meets in regular yearly sessions under a president elected from among the representatives of the member countries. General Assembly is like the parliament where all the discussion takes place. In that sense the UN would appear to be a very democratic organisation. But the General Assembly cannot take any decision about what action should be taken in a conflict between different countries.

The fifteen-member Security Council of the UN takes such crucial decisions. The Council has five permanent members – US, Russia, UK, France and China. Ten other members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. The real power is with five permanent members. The permanent members, especially the US, contribute most of the money needed for the maintenance of the UN. Each permanent member has **veto** power. It means that the Council cannot take a decision if any permanent member says no to that decision. This system has led more and more people and countries to protest and demand that the UN becomes more democratic.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) is one of the biggest moneylenders for any country in the world. Its 189 member states (as on 12 April 2016) do not have equal voting rights. The vote of each country is weighed by how much money it has contributed to the IMF. More than 40% of the voting power in the IMF is in the hands of only seven countries (US, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Italy and Canada). The remaining 182 countries have very little say in how these international organisations take decisions. The World Bank has a similar system of voting. The President of the World Bank has always been a citizen of the US, conventionally nominated by the Treasury Secretary (Finance Minister) of the US government.



ACTIVITY

- Find out more about the history and various organs of the United Nations.
- Collect any news about the decisions of the World Bank and the IMF.

Compare these to the kind of democratic practices that we have been discussing in this chapter. What would you say about a country where some persons have a permanent position in the ministry and have the power to stop the decision of the entire parliament? Or a parliament where five per cent of the members hold a majority of votes? Would you call these democratic? Most of the global institutions fail to pass the simple test of democracy that we use for national governments.

If global institutions are not democratic, are they at least becoming more democratic than before? Here too the evidence is not very encouraging. In fact, while nations are becoming more

democratic than they were earlier, international organisations are becoming less democratic. Twenty years ago there were two big powers in the world: the US and the Soviet Union. The competition and conflict between these two big powers and their allies kept a certain balance in all the global organisations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US appears to be the only superpower in the world. This American dominance affects the working of international organisations.

This is not to say that there is no urge or move towards global democracy. The urge comes from people who get more opportunities to come in touch with one another. Over the last few years the people of different countries have come together without their governments' support. They have formed global organisations against war and against domination of the world by a few countries and business companies. As in the case of democracy within the nations, the initiative for democracy among nations has come from the struggles of the people.

Wolfowitz was a senior official in the Department of Defence in the US (commonly called the Pentagon). He was an aggressive supporter of the invasion of Iraq.

The cartoon comments on his appointment as the President of the World Bank. What does the cartoon tell us about the relationship between the World Bank and the US?

read
the
cartoon





Here are some suggestions to strengthen world democracy. Do you support these changes? Are these changes likely to happen? Give your reasons for each of these.

- More nations should become permanent members of the Security Council.
- UN General Assembly should become like a world parliament with representatives from each country in proportion to the population of the country. These representatives should elect a world government.
- Individual countries should not have armies. The UN should maintain task forces to bring about peace in case of conflict between nations.
- A UN President should be elected directly by all the people of the world.

Democracy promotion

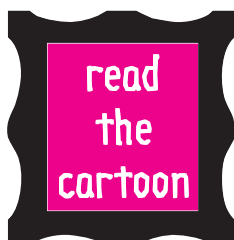
Take a close look at the two cartoons on this and on the next page. These cartoons raise a fundamental question related to global democracy. Recently, many powerful countries in the world, particularly the United States of America, have taken on the task of democracy promotion in the rest of the world. They say that propagating the values of democracy is not enough. Existing democracies should directly intervene in countries that are non-democratic to establish democracy there. In some cases powerful countries have launched armed attack on non-democratic countries. This is what Sushmita was talking about.

Let us see what happened in Iraq. Iraq is a country in Western Asia. It became independent from British

rule in 1932. Three decades later there were a series of coups by military officers. Since 1968, it was ruled by Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (the Arabic word Ba'th means renaissance). Saddam Hussein, a leading Ba'th party leader, played a key role in the 1968 coup that brought the party to power. This government abolished traditional Islamic law and gave women the right to vote and several freedoms not granted in other west Asian countries. After becoming the president of Iraq in 1979, Saddam ran a dictatorial government and suppressed any dissent or opposition to his rule. He was known to have got a number of political opponents killed and persons of ethnic minorities massacred.

The US and its allies like Britain, alleged that Iraq possessed secret nuclear weapons and other 'weapons of mass destruction' which posed a big threat to the world. But when a UN team went to Iraq to search for such weapons, it did not find any. Still the US and its allies invaded Iraq, occupied it and removed Saddam Hussein from power in 2003. The US installed an interim government of its preference. The war against Iraq was not authorised by the UN Security Council. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, said that the US war on Iraq was illegal.

The cartoon "Cactus of Democracy" was published in 2004. What does the cactus look like here? Who is gifting it, and to whom? What is the message?



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ACTIVITY

Collect information on the debate related to Iraq within the US and the UK. What were the reasons originally offered for the Iraq invasion by the President of US and the Prime Minister of UK? What were the reasons offered after the war?

The example of Iraq raises some basic questions that we need to think about:

- Is this the right way to promote democracy? Should a democratic country wage a war and invade other countries for establishing democracy there?
- Does external help work in every case? Or does it work only when the people of a nation are actively engaged in a struggle to make their societies democratic?
- Even if external intervention leads to the establishment of democracy in a country, would it last long? Would it enjoy the support of its citizens?
- Finally, is the use of external force to gift democracy to the people in keeping with the spirit of democracy?

Think about these questions in the light of all that you have learnt in this chapter.

read
the
cartoon

'Helping Democracy' was a comment on the presence of US forces during the elections in Iraq. Do you think the cartoon can apply to many other situations? Identify some examples from this chapter which this cartoon can help understand.





Censorship: A condition under which the freedom of expression is taken away. Citizens have to take prior permission from the censor authorities of the government for making a speech or publishing news and views. Anything that the government finds objectionable cannot be published.

Coalition: An alliance of people, associations, parties or nations. This alliance may be temporary or a matter of convenience.

Colony: Territory under the immediate political control of another state.

Communist state: A state governed by a communist party without allowing other parties to compete for power. The state controls all the big property and industry.

Coup: A coup d'état (pronounced ku de'ta), or simply a coup, is the sudden overthrow of a government illegally. It may or may not be violent in nature. The term is French for 'a sudden blow or strike to a state'.

Martial law: A system of rules that takes effect when a military authority takes control of the normal administration of justice.

Political prisoners: Persons held in prison or otherwise detained, perhaps under house arrest, because a government considers their ideas, image or activities as a threat to the authority of the state. Often exaggerated or false cases are foisted on them and they are kept in detention without following normal law.

Referendum: A direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. This may be adoption of a new constitution, a law or a specific governmental policy.

State: Political association occupying a definite territory, having an organised government and possessing power to make domestic and foreign policies. Governments may change, but the state continues. In common speech, the terms country, nation and state are used as synonyms.

Strike: Mass refusal by workers or employees to perform work due to certain grievances or because of demands not met. In most democratic countries the right to strike is legal.

Trade Union: An association of workers for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment.

Veto: The right of a person, party or nation to stop a certain decision or law. The word comes from Latin, which means 'I forbid'. A veto gives unlimited power to stop a decision, but not to adopt one.

exercises

- 1 Which of the following does not lead to the spread of democracy?
 - a Struggle by the people
 - b Invasion by foreign countries
 - c End of colonialism
 - d People's desire for freedom
- 2 Which of the following statements is true about today's world?
 - a Monarchy as a form of government has vanished .
 - b The relationship between different countries has become more democratic than ever before.
 - c In more and more countries rulers are being elected by the people.
 - d There are no more military dictators in the world.

- 3 Use one of the following statements to complete the sentence:
Democracy in the international organisations requires that ...
- a The rich countries should have a greater say.
 - b Countries should have a say according to their military power.
 - c Countries should be treated with respect in proportion to their population.
 - d All countries in the world should be treated equally.

- 4 Based on the information given in this chapter, match the following countries and the path democracy has taken in that country.

COUNTRY	PATH TO DEMOCRACY
a Chile	i Freedom from British colonial rule
b Nepal	ii End of military dictatorship
c Poland	iii End of one party rule
d Ghana	iv King agreed to give up his powers

- 5 What are the difficulties people face in a non-democratic country? Give answers drawing from the examples given in this chapter.

- 6 Which freedoms are usually taken away when a democracy is overthrown by the military?

- 7 Which of the following positions can contribute to democracy at the global level? Give reasons for your answer in each case.

- a My country gives more money to international institutions. Therefore, I want to be treated with more respect and exercise more power.
- b My country may be small or poor. But my voice must be heard with equal respect, because these decisions will affect my country.
- c Wealthy nations will have a greater say in international affairs. They cannot let their interests suffer just because they are outnumbered by poor nations.
- d Big countries like India must have a greater say in international organisations.

- 8 Here are three opinions heard in a television debate on the struggle for democracy in Nepal. Which of these do you agree with and why?

Guest 1: India is a democracy. Therefore, the Indian government must support the people of Nepal who are struggling against monarchy and for democracy.

Guest 2: That is a dangerous argument. We would be in the same position as the US was in Iraq. Remember, no outside force can promote democracy.

Guest 3: But why should we bother about the internal affairs of another country? We should be worried about our business interests there, not about democracy.

exercises

- 9 In an imaginary country called Happyland, the people overthrew the foreign ruler and brought back the old royal family. They said: *“After all their ancestors were our kings before foreigners started ruling us. It is good that we have one strong ruler, who can help us become rich and powerful”*. When someone talked about democracy the wise men said it is a foreign idea. Their struggle was to throw the foreigners and their ideas out of the country. When someone demanded freedom for the media, the elders thought that too much criticism of the ruler would not help them improve their living standards. *“After all, the king is so kind and interested in the welfare of all the subjects. Why create problems for him. Don’t we all want to be happy?”*

After reading the above passage, Chaman, Champa and Chandru made the following observations:

Chaman: Happyland is a democratic country because people were able to throw out the foreign rulers and bring back the king.

Champa: Happyland is not a democratic country because people cannot criticise the ruler. The king may be nice and may provide economic prosperity, but a king cannot give a democratic rule.

Chandru: What people need is happiness. So they are willing to allow their new ruler to take decisions for them. If people are happy it must be a democracy.

What is your opinion about each of these statements? What do you think about the form of government in this country?



Form different groups in your class and collect different types of information (news clippings, articles, photographs, cartoons, etc.) about struggles for democracy in any country that is currently not democratic. Focus on the following questions:

- What makes the government non-democratic?
- What are the main complaints and demands of the people in that country?
- How do the existing rulers react to people’s demands?
- Who are the main leaders of the struggle for democracy?

You could present the information thus collected in various forms: an exhibition, a collage, a report or a wallpaper.