DEMOCRACY AND THE GLOBAL ORDER
For T. G. and J. B. T.
DEMOCRACY AND THE GLOBAL ORDER

From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance

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Polity
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There is a daunting challenge facing democratic theory and practice today. The key traditions of democratic thinking, above all those which stem from republicanism, liberalism and Marxism, appear to be severely strained in the face of major twentieth-century developments. Among these developments are to be counted the dynamics of a world economy which produce instabilities and difficulties within states and between states which out-reach the control of any single polity; the rapid growth of transnational links which have stimulated new forms of collective decision-making involving states, intergovernmental organizations and international pressure groups; the expansion and intensification of transnational communication systems; the proliferation of military technologies and arms as a ‘stable’ feature of the contemporary political world; and the development of pressing transnational problems – involving, for instance, environmental challenges like acid rain, damage to the ozone layer and the ‘greenhouse effect’ – which do not acknowledge national boundaries and frontiers.

Moreover, the form of international governance which dominated world politics for over four decades – the Cold War international system – has disintegrated; no alternative has yet developed, while debates about alternatives have all too often been stymied by old state interests and strategic concerns. However, with the end of the geopolitical divisions created in the aftermath of the Second World War, a new fluidity has been established in international affairs which heralds the possibility of a new
fluidity in political thought. These circumstances present significant opportunities for the establishment of an international order based upon the principles of constitutionality and democracy — opportunities which need to be grasped if the current revival of sectarian politics and of the use of force, evidenced in the resurgence of right-wing politics in Europe, the intensification of racism and the spread of ethnic and political separatism throughout the world, are to be checked.

While democratic theory has debated at length the challenges to democracy that emerge from within the boundaries of the nation-state — for instance, the development of mass bureaucratic parties, the preoccupation of parties with their own particular ends and ambitions, the fragmentation of political power, the problem of 'overloaded government' — it has not seriously questioned whether the nation-state itself can remain at the centre of democratic thought. The rapid growth of complex interconnections and interrelations between states and societies — often referred to as the process of 'globalization' — along with the intersection of national and international forces and processes pose questions that remain largely unexplored. These centre on the challenges to democracy deriving, on the one hand, from the world political economy and the web of relations and networks which stretch across national borders and, on the other, from the divergence that sometimes exists between the totality of those affected by a political decision and those who participated in making it (however indirectly) within a democratic state.

If democratic theory is concerned with 'what is going on' in the political world and, thereby, with the nature and prospects of democracy, then a theory of democratic politics today must take account of the place of the polity within geopolitical and market processes, that is, within the system of nation-states, international legal regulation and world political economy. The pursuit of political knowledge on old disciplinary grounds is not adequate to this task. For too long the concerns of political theory, political economy, international relations and international law have been kept separate, with persistently disappointing outcomes. Significant beginnings have been made in recent times to reintegrate elements of these disciplines, but a great deal of ground remains to be covered. At issue is rethinking the nature, form and content of democratic politics in the face of the complex intermeshing of local, national, regional and global relations and processes.

The pursuit of the following questions is central to this enter-
prise: is the idea of democratic politics progressively comprised by the intersection of national and international forces and pressures? Is the notion of national self-determination becoming an anachronism in a world of interconnected political authorities and power centres? What is the contemporary meaning of citizenship and citizenship rights? Is the principle of territorial representation the single most appropriate principle for the determination of the basis of political representation? Are there duties beyond borders? If so, what are the political and legal implications of these duties? How should agencies that cut across nation-state boundaries be regulated? What is the appropriate level of democratic control – the local, national, regional, global?

Democratic political theory has to be rethought, and along with it the actual underlying principles and practices of democratic politics. The explosion of interest in democracy in recent times has all too often left unquestioned whether democracy must be conceived as liberal democracy, whether democracy can only be applied to ‘governmental affairs’ (and not to the economic, social and cultural realms as well), and whether the most appropriate locus for democracy is the nation-state. These terms of reference are all critically addressed in this book. By examining how the conditions of democracy are changing on national and international levels, and by rethinking some of the central principles and concerns of democratic theory, it is hoped it is possible to reconfront the problems faced by democracy in the contemporary global order.

_Democracy and the Global Order_ is divided into four parts. Part I addresses why conventional accounts of the nature and meaning of democracy will no longer do, and introduces the issues which inform the volume as a whole. Part II offers an analysis of the nature and the development of the modern state. Different state forms are explored and an explanation is offered for why the liberal democratic nation-state became the predominant form of the modern state. Key stages in the formation of the international order – the states system and the United Nations Charter framework – are then examined and a map is provided of the dense network of regional and global relations in which states and societies are enmeshed. Against this background, the changing role of the nation-state, and of the idea of a national democracy, is assessed. It is argued that, in an era in which the fates of peoples are deeply intertwined, democracy has to be recast and strengthened, both _within_ pre-established borders and _across_ them. The particular con-
ditions which created the impetus to the establishment of the liberal democratic nation-state are being transformed and, accordingly, democracy must be profoundly altered if it is to retain its relevance in the decades ahead.

How democracy might be altered within borders, on the one hand, and across them, on the other, are the subjects of, respectively, parts III and IV. Unlike part II, which offers an historical and empirical analysis of the changing form and context of the modern state, part III engages in a reconstruction of some of the core concepts of political theory. It begins by examining the tensions between the idea of the modern state, as a circumscribed system of power which provides in principle a regulatory mechanism and check on rulers and ruled alike, and the idea of democracy, as a political association in which citizens are able to choose freely the conditions of their own association. Among the matters raised are questions about the proper form and scope of supreme political power; the conditions and limits of democratic participation; and the legitimate range and scope of democratic decision-making. The case is made that democracy entails a commitment to what I call the ‘principle of autonomy’ and a set of ‘empowering rights and obligations’ – rights and obligations which must cut across all those sites of power, whether rooted in politics, economics or culture, which can erode or undercut autonomy, for individuals and groups. Such a principle and set of rights and obligations create the possibility of what is referred to as a ‘common structure of political action’. Such a structure, it is suggested, needs to be entrenched and enforced in a ‘democratic public law’ if it is to be effective as the basis of a fair and circumscribed system of power. I explore lines of argument which seek to show how the ideas of democracy and of the modern state can be coherently linked through the notion of a ‘democratic legal order’ – an order which is conditioned and shaped by democratic public law in all its affairs.

Part IV elaborates this position. In particular, it argues that democracy can only be adequately entrenched if democratic public law is enacted in the affairs of nation-states and in the wider global order – that is, as cosmopolitan democratic law – and if a division of powers and competences is recognized at different levels of political interaction and interconnectedness. I contend that democratic politics needs to be reshaped at local, national, regional and global levels, for each of these levels is appropriate for a different set of public problems and issues. Thus, a democratic political
order must embrace diverse and distinct domains of authority, linked both vertically and horizontally, if it is to be a creator and servant of democratic practice. The discussion focuses on the idea of a cosmopolitan model of democracy, and its short- and long-term implications. Such a model, it is maintained, provides a basis for thinking that democracy might become an enduring and stable framework for the politics of our times, although the obstacles to the realization of it are formidable. However, the nation-state was not built in a day, and cosmopolitan democracy, assuming for a moment that it can find a broad range of advocates, will certainly not be either!

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Part I

Introduction
Democracy seems to have scored an historic victory over alternative forms of governance. Nearly everyone today professes to be a democrat. Political regimes of all kinds throughout the world claim to be democracies. In an age in which many traditional ways of resolving value disputes are treated with the utmost caution – especially those which appeal, for instance, to other-worldly teachings, or to doctrines about the natural order of rank and hierarchy, or to claims about the proletarian interest – it seems as if political choices can only begin to be adequately recognized, articulated and negotiated in a democracy. Democracy bestows an aura of legitimacy on modern political life: laws, rules and policies appear justified when they are ‘democratic’. But it was not always so. The great majority of political thinkers from ancient Greece to the present day have been highly critical of the theory and practice of democracy. A widespread commitment to democracy is a very recent phenomenon. Moreover, democracy is a remarkably difficult form of government to create and sustain. The history of twentieth-century Europe alone makes this clear: fascism, Nazism and Stalinism came very close to obliterating democracy altogether.

Against this background, it is unsettling that some recent political commentators have proclaimed (by means of a phrase borrowed most notably from Hegel) the ‘end of history’ – the triumph of the West over all political and economic alternatives. The revolutions which swept across Central and Eastern Europe at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990 stimulated an atmosphere of celebration. Liberal democracy was championed as the agent
of progress, and capitalism as the only viable economic system: ideological conflict, it was said, is being steadily displaced by universal democratic reason and market-orientated thinking (see Fukuyama, 1989, 1989/90; cf. Held, 1993a, 1993b). But such a view is quite inadequate in a number of respects.

In the first instance, the 'liberal' component of liberal democracy cannot be treated simply as a unity. There are distinctive liberal traditions which embody quite different conceptions from each other of the individual agent, of autonomy, of the rights and duties of subjects, and of the proper nature and form of community. In addition, the 'celebratory' view of liberal democracy neglects to explore whether there are any tensions, or even perhaps contradictions, between the 'liberal' and 'democratic' components of liberal democracy; for example, between the liberal preoccupation with individual rights or 'frontiers of freedom' which 'nobody should be permitted to cross', and the democratic concern for the regulation of individual and collective action, that is, for public accountability. Those who have written at length on this question have frequently resolved it in quite different directions. Furthermore, there is not simply one institutional form of liberal democracy. Contemporary democracies have crystallized into a number of different types, which makes any appeal to a liberal position vague at best (see, for example, Lijphart, 1984; Dahl, 1989). Moreover, they have crystallized at the intersection of national and international forces which have profoundly affected their nature and efficacy. To neglect these issues is to leave unanalysed a wide spectrum of questions about democracy and its possible variants.

This introductory chapter seeks to address this lacuna, first, by examining the development of different models of democracy and their conditions of application; secondly, by exploring the meaning of democracy in the context of the progressive enmeshment today of states and societies in regional and global networks; and thirdly, by considering a number of leading approaches to the understanding of transnational and international phenomena. The result, it is hoped, is a step towards the specification of an historical and theoretical framework for the problems and issues addressed in the volume as a whole.
1.1 Models of democracy

Within the history of democratic theory lies a deeply rooted conflict about whether democracy should mean some kind of popular power (a form of politics in which citizens are engaged in self-government and self-regulation) or an aid to decision-making (a means of conferring authority on those periodically voted into office). This conflict has given rise to three basic variants or models of democracy. First, there is direct or participatory democracy, a system of decision-making about public affairs in which citizens are directly involved. This was the ‘original’ type of democracy found in ancient Athens, among other places. Secondly, there is liberal or representative democracy, a system of rule embracing elected ‘officers’ who undertake to ‘represent’ the interests or views of citizens within delimited territories while upholding the ‘rule of law’. Thirdly, there is a variant of democracy based on a one-party model (although some may doubt whether this is a form of democracy at all). Until recently, the Soviet Union, East European societies and many developing countries were committed to this conception. The following discussion deals briefly with each of these models in turn. Although it offers a guide to what will be familiar territory to some readers, it develops concepts and issues which will be drawn upon in later argument.

The active citizen and republican government

Athenian democracy has long been taken as a fundamental source of inspiration for modern Western political thought. This is not to say that the West has been right to trace many elements of its democratic heritage exclusively to Athens; for, as recent historical and archaeological research has shown, some of the key political innovations, both conceptual and institutional, of the nominally Western political tradition can be traced to older civilizations in the East. The city-state or polis society, for example, existed in Mesopotamia long before it emerged in the West (see Bernal, 1987; Springborg, 1992). Nonetheless, the political ideals of Athens — equality among citizens, liberty, respect for the law and justice — have been taken as integral to Western political thinking, and it is for this reason that Athens constitutes a useful starting point.

The Athenian city-state, ruled as it was by citizen-governors,
did not differentiate between state and society. In ancient Athens, citizens were at one and the same time subjects of political authority and the creators of public rules and regulations. The people (demos) engaged in legislative and judicial functions, for the Athenian concept of citizenship entailed their taking a share in these functions, participating directly in the affairs of 'the state'. Athenian democracy required a general commitment to the principle of civic virtue: dedication to the republican city-state and the subordination of private life to public affairs and the common good. 'The public' and 'the private' were intertwined. Citizens could properly fulfil themselves and live honourably only in and through the polis. Of course, who was to count as a citizen was a tightly restricted matter; among the excluded were women and a substantial slave population.

The Athenian city-state – eclipsed ultimately by the rise of empires, stronger states and military regimes – shared features with republican Rome. Both were predominantly face-to-face societies and oral cultures; both had elements of popular participation in governmental affairs; and both had little, if any, centralized bureaucratic control. Furthermore, both sought to foster a deep sense of public duty, a tradition of civic virtue or responsibility to 'the republic' – to the distinctive matters of the public realm. And in both polities, the claims of the state were given a unique priority over those of the individual citizen. But if Athens was a democratic republic, contemporary scholarship generally affirms that Rome was, by comparison, an essentially oligarchical system (Finley, 1983, pp. 84ff). Nevertheless, from antiquity, it was Rome which was to prove the most durable influence on the dissemination of republican ideas.

Classical republicanism received its most robust restatement in the early Renaissance, especially in the city-states of Italy (see Rahe, 1994). The meaning of the concept of 'active citizenship in a republic' became a leading concern. Political thinkers of this period were critical of the Athenian formulation of this notion; shaped as their views were by Aristotle, one of the leading critics of Greek democracy, and by the centuries-long impact of republican Rome, they recast the republican tradition. While the concept of

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1 When referring to the Greek polis, some scholars prefer to use the term 'city-republic' on the grounds that the concept of the state was an early-modern formulation. For some of the issues underpinning this preference see Held, 1987, ch. 2.
the *polis* remained central to the political theory of Italian cities, most notably in Florence, it was no longer regarded as a means to self-fulfilment (see Pocock, 1975, pp. 64–80). Emphasis continued to be placed on the importance of civic virtue but the latter was understood as highly fragile, subject particularly to corruption if dependent solely upon the political involvement of any one major grouping: the people, the aristocracy or the monarchy. A constitution which could reflect and balance the interests of all leading political factions became an aspiration. Niccolò Machiavelli thus argued that all singular constitutional forms (monarchy, aristocracy and democracy) were unstable, and only a governmental system combining elements of each could promote the kind of political culture on which civic virtue depends (see Machiavelli, 1983, pp. 104–11). The best example of such a government was, he proclaimed, Rome: Rome’s mixed government (with its system of consuls, Senate and tribunes of the people) was directly linked to its sustained achievements.

The core of the Renaissance republican case was that the freedom of a political community rested upon its accountability to no authority other than that of the community itself. Self-government is the basis of liberty, together with the right of citizens to participate – within a constitutional framework which creates distinct roles for leading social forces – in the government of their own common business.² As one commentator put it, ‘the community as a whole must retain the ultimate sovereign authority’, assigning its various rulers or chief magistrates ‘a status no higher than that of elected officials’ (Skinner, 1989a, p. 105). Such ‘rulers’ must ensure the effective enforcement of the laws created by the community for the promotion of its own good; for they are not rulers in a traditional sense, but agents or administrators of justice.

In Renaissance republicanism, as well as in Greek democratic thought, a citizen was someone who participated in ‘giving judgement and holding office’ (Aristotle, 1981, p. 169). Citizenship meant participation in public affairs. This definition is noteworthy because it suggests that theorists within these traditions would have found it hard to locate citizens in modern democracies, except perhaps as representatives or office holders. The limited scope in

² The republican view emphasizes, in short, that the freedom of citizens consists above all in their unhindered pursuit of their self-chosen ends. The highest political ideal is the civic freedom of an independent, self-governing republic.
contemporary politics for the active involvement of citizens would have been regarded as most undemocratic (see Finley, 1973b). Yet the idea that human beings should be active citizens of a political order – citizens of their states – and not merely dutiful subjects of a ruler has had few advocates from the earliest human associations to the early Renaissance (see chapters 2 and 3).3

The demise in the West of the idea of the active citizen, one whose very being is affirmed in and through political action, is hard to explain fully. But it is clear enough that the antithesis of homo politicus is the homo credens of the Christian faith: the citizen whose active judgement is essential is displaced by the true believer (Pocock, 1975, p. 550). Although it would be misleading to suggest that the rise of Christianity effectively banished secular considerations from the lives of rulers and ruled, it unquestionably shifted the source of authority and wisdom from this-worldly to other-worldly representatives. During the Middle Ages, the integration of Christian Europe from the Eastern Atlantic seaboard to the Balkans came to depend above all on two theocratic authorities: the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire. There was no theoretical alternative to their account of the nature of power and rule (Bull, 1977, p. 27; cf. Black, A., 1992). Not until the end of the sixteenth century, when it became apparent that religion had become a highly divisive force and that the powers of the state would have to be separated from the duty of rulers to uphold any particular faith, did the nature and limits of political authority, law, rights and obedience become a preoccupation, from Italy to England, of European political thought (Skinner, 1978, vol. 2, p. 352).

3 The concern with aspects of ‘self-government’ in Renaissance Italy had a significant influence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, France and America. The problem of how civic life was to be constructed, and public life sustained, was faced by diverse thinkers. While the meaning of the ideal of active citizenship was progressively altered – and denuded of many of its most challenging implications – threads of this ideal remained and continued to have an impact. It is possible to trace ‘radical’ and ‘conservative’ strains of republicanism throughout the early modern period (cf. Wood, 1969; Pocock, 1975).
Liberal representative democracy

This preoccupation became the hallmark of modern liberal theory, which constantly sought to justify the sovereign power of the state while at the same time justifying limits on that power. The history of this attempt is the history of arguments to balance might and right, power and law, duties and rights. On the one hand, states must have a monopoly of coercive power in order to provide a secure basis on which family life, religion, trade and commerce can prosper. On the other hand, by granting the state a regulatory and coercive capability, liberal political theorists were aware that they had accepted a force that could, and frequently did, deprive citizens of political and social freedoms.

How this dilemma was addressed in early-modern political theory is explored in chapter 2, which sets out the scope of the early formulation of the concept of political sovereignty and the idea of the modern state, alongside rival accounts of these notions found in the work of Bodin and Hobbes, and Locke and Rousseau. However, important as these accounts were to the development of the discourse of the modern state, it was not until later that a new model of democracy was fully articulated – liberal representative (or simply representative) democracy – by those who subsequently became known as liberal democrats. For the latter, representative democracy constituted the key institutional innovation to overcome the problem of balancing coercive power and liberty. The liberal concern with reason, lawful government and freedom of choice could only be upheld properly by recognizing the political equality of all mature individuals. Such equality would ensure not only a secure social environment in which people would be free to pursue their private activities and interests, but also a state which, under the watchful eye of political representatives accountable to an electorate, would do what was best in the general or public interest. Thus, liberal democrats argued, the democratic constitutional state, linked to other key institutional mechanisms, particularly the free market, would resolve the problems of ensuring both liberty and authority.

Two classic statements of the new position can be found in the philosophy of James Madison and in the work of one of the key figures of nineteenth-century English liberalism: Jeremy Bentham. In Madison’s account, ‘pure democracies’ (by which he means societies ‘consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble
and administer the government in person’) have always been intolerant, unjust and unstable (Madison, 1966, no. 10, p. 20). By contrast, representative government overcomes the excesses of ‘pure democracy’ because regular elections force a clarification of public issues, and the elected few, able to withstand the political process, are likely to be competent and capable of ‘discerning the true interest of their country’.

The central concern of Madison’s argument is not the rightful place of the active citizen in the life of the political community but, instead, the legitimate pursuit by individuals of their interests, and government as a means for the enhancement of these interests. Although Madison himself sought clear ways of reconciling particular interests with what he called modern ‘extended republics’, his position signals a clear shift from the classical ideals of civic virtue and the public realm to liberal preoccupations (1966, no. 10, pp. 21–2). He conceived of the representative state as the chief mechanism to aggregate individuals’ interests and to protect their rights. In such a state, he believed, security of person and property would be sustained and politics could be made compatible with the demands of large nation-states, with their complex patterns of trade, commerce and international relations (see Krouse, 1983, pp. 58–78).

In parallel with this view, Bentham held that representative democracy ‘has for its characteristic object and effect . . . securing its members against oppression and depredation at the hands of those functionaries which it employs for its defence’ (1843, p. 47). Democratic government is required to protect citizens from the despotic use of political power, whether it be by a monarch, the aristocracy or other groups. The representative state thus becomes an umpire or referee while individuals pursue in civil society, according to the rules of economic competition and free exchange, their own interests. The free vote and the free market are both essential, for a key presupposition is that the collective good can be properly realized in most domains of life only if individuals interact in competitive exchanges, pursuing their utility with minimal state interference. Significantly, however, this argument has another side. Tied to the advocacy of a ‘minimal state’, whose scope and power need to be strictly limited, there is a strong commitment to certain types of state intervention: for instance, intervention to regulate the behaviour of the disobedient, and to reshape social relations and institutions if, in the event of the failure of laissez faire, the greatest happiness of the greatest number
is not achieved – the only defensible criterion, Bentham held, of the public good.

From classical antiquity to the seventeenth century, democracy, when it was considered at all, was largely associated with the gathering of citizens in assemblies and public meeting places. By the early nineteenth century, in contrast, it was beginning to be thought of as the right of citizens to participate in the determination of the collective will through the medium of elected representatives (Bobbio, 1989, p. 144). The theory of representative democracy fundamentally shifted the terms of reference of democratic thought: the practical limits that a sizeable citizenry imposes on democracy, which had been the focus of so much critical (anti-democratic) attention, were practically eliminated. Representative democracy could now be celebrated as both accountable and feasible government, potentially stable over great territories and time spans (see Dahl, 1989, pp. 28–30). It could even be heralded, as James Mill put it, as 'the grand discovery of modern times' in which 'the solution of all difficulties, both speculative and practical, would be found' (quoted in Sabine, 1963, p. 695). Accordingly, the theory and practice of popular government shook off its traditional association with small states and cities, opening itself to become the legitimating creed of the emerging world of nation-states. But who exactly was to count as a legitimate participant, or a 'citizen' or 'individual', and what his or her exact role was to be in this new order, remained either unclear or unsettled. Even in the work of John Stuart Mill ambiguities remained: the idea that all citizens should have equal political weight in the polity remained outside his actual doctrine, along with that of most of his contemporaries (see Held, 1987, ch. 3).

It was left by and large to the extensive and often violently suppressed struggles of working-class and feminist activists, frequently in complex coalitions with other groups (notably, sectors of the middle class), to accomplish in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a genuinely universal suffrage in some countries (see Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens, 1992). Their achievement remained fragile in places such as Germany, Italy and Spain, and was in practice denied to some groups, for instance, many African-Americans in the US before the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. However, through these struggles the idea that the rights of citizenship should apply equally to all adults became slowly established; many of the arguments of the liberal democrats could be turned against existing institutions to reveal the extent to
which the principles and aspirations of equal political participation remained unfulfilled. It was only with the actual achievement of citizenship for all adult men and women that liberal democracy took on its distinctively contemporary form: a cluster of rules and institutions permitting the broadest participation of the majority of citizens in the selection of representatives who alone can make political decisions, that is, decisions affecting the whole community.

This cluster includes elected government; free and fair elections in which every citizen's vote has an equal weight; a suffrage which embraces all citizens irrespective of distinctions of race, religion, class, sex and so on; freedom of conscience, information and expression on all public matters broadly defined; the right of all adults to oppose their government and stand for office; and associational autonomy – the right to form independent associations including social movements, interest groups and political parties (see Bobbio, 1987, p. 66; Dahl, 1989, pp. 221 and 233). The consolidation of representative democracy, thus understood, has been a twentieth-century phenomenon; perhaps one should even say a late twentieth-century phenomenon. For it is only in the closing decades of this century that democracy has been (relatively) securely established in the West and widely adopted in principle as a suitable model of government beyond the West.

**Marxism and one-party democracy**

The struggle of liberalism against tyranny, and the struggle by liberal democrats for political equality, represented a major step forward in the history of human emancipation, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels readily acknowledged. But for them, and for the Marxist tradition more broadly, the great universal ideals of 'liberty, equality and justice' cannot be realized simply by the 'free' struggle for votes in the political system together with the 'free' struggle for profit in the market-place. Advocates of the democratic state and the market economy present these institutions as the only ones under which liberty can be sustained and inequalities minimized. However, according to the Marxist critique, the capitalist economy, by virtue of its internal dynamics, inevitably produces systematic inequality and massive restrictions on real freedom. The formal existence of certain liberties is of little value if they cannot be exercised in practice. Therefore, although each step towards formal
political equality is an advance, its liberating potential is severely curtailed by inequalities of class.

In class societies the state cannot become the vehicle for the pursuit of the common good or public interest. Far from playing the role of emancipator, protective knight, umpire or judge in the face of disorder, the agencies of the liberal representative state are enmeshed in the struggles of civil society. Marxists conceive of the state as an extension of civil society, reinforcing the social order for the enhancement of particular interests. Their argument is that political emancipation is only a step towards human emancipation; that is, the complete democratization of both society and the state. In their view, liberal democratic society fails when judged by its own promises.

Among these promises are, first, political participation, or general involvement mediated by representatives in decisions affecting the whole community; secondly, accountable government; and thirdly, freedom to protest and reform (Bobbio, 1987, pp. 42–4). But 'really existing liberal democracy', as one Marxist recently put it, 'fails to deliver' on any of these promises (Callinicos, 1991, pp. 108–9). For it is distinguished by the existence of a largely passive citizenry (significant numbers of eligible citizens do not vote in elections, for example); by the erosion and displacement of parliamentary institutions by unelected centres of power (typified by the expansion of bureaucratic authority and of the role of functional representatives); and by substantial structural constraints on state action and, in particular, on the possibility of the piecemeal reform of capitalism (the flight of capital overseas, for example, is a constant threat to elected governments with strong programmes of social reform).

Marx himself envisaged the replacement of the liberal democratic state by a 'commune structure': the smallest communities, which were to administer their own affairs, would elect delegates to larger administrative units (districts, towns); these in turn would elect candidates to still larger areas of administration (the national delegation) (Marx, 1970a, pp. 67–70). This arrangement is known as the 'pyramid' structure of 'delegative democracy': all delegates are revocable, bound by the instructions of their constituency, and organized into a 'pyramid' of directly elected committees. The post-capitalist state would not, therefore, bear any resemblance to a liberal, parliamentary regime. All state agencies would be brought within the sphere of a single set of directly accountable institutions. Only when this happens will 'that self-reliance, that freedom,
which disappeared from earth with the Greeks, and vanished into the blue haze of heaven with Christianity’, as the young Marx put it, gradually be restored (1844).

In the Marxist-Leninist account, the system of delegative democracy is to be complemented, in principle, by a separate but somewhat similar system at the level of the Communist Party. The transition to socialism and communism necessitates the ‘professional’ leadership of a disciplined cadre of revolutionaries (see, for example, Lenin, 1947). Only such a leadership has the capacity to organize the defence of the revolution against counter-revolutionary forces, to plan the expansion of the forces of production, and to supervise the reconstruction of society. Since all fundamental differences of interest are class interests, since the working-class interest (or standpoint) is the progressive interest in society, and since during and after the revolution it has to be articulated clearly and decisively, a revolutionary party is essential. The party is the instrument which can create the framework for socialism and communism. In practice, the party has to rule; and it was only in the ‘Gorbachev era’ in the Soviet Union (from 1984 to August 1991) that a pyramid of councils, or ‘Soviets’, from the central authority to those at local village and neighbourhood level, was given anything more than a symbolic or ritualistic role in the post-revolutionary period.

Democracy, the state and society

What should be made of these various models of democracy today? The classical participatory model cannot easily be adapted to stretch across space and time (see Held, 1987, chs 5 and 8). Its emergence in the context of city-states, and under conditions of ‘social exclusivity’, was an integral part of its successful development. In complex industrial societies, marked by a high degree of social, economic and political differentiation, it is very hard to envisage how a democracy of this kind could succeed on a large scale without drastic modification (see Budge, 1993; and chapter 12 of this volume).

The significance of these reflections is reinforced by examining the fate of the conception of democracy advocated by Marx and Engels and their followers. In the first instance, the ‘deep structure’ of Marxist categories – with its emphasis on the centrality of class, the universal standpoint of the proletariat, and a conception of politics which is rooted squarely in production – ignores or severely
underestimates the contributions to politics of other forms of social structure, collectivity, agency, identity, interest and knowledge. Secondly, as an institutional arrangement that allows for mediation, negotiation and compromise among struggling factions, groups or movements, the Marxist model does not stand up well under scrutiny, especially in its Marxist-Leninist form. A system of institutions to promote discussion, debate and competition among divergent views – a system encompassing the formation of movements, pressure groups and/or political parties with independent leaderships to help press their cases – appears both necessary and desirable. Further, the changes in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 seem to provide remarkable confirmatory evidence of this, with their emphasis on the importance of political and civil rights, a competitive party system, and the ‘rolling back of the state’ – that is, the freeing of civil society from state domination.

In the chapters which follow, therefore, I shall argue that a defensible account of the proper meaning of democracy must acknowledge the importance of a number of fundamental liberal and liberal democratic tenets. Among these are the centrality, in principle, of an ‘impersonal’ structure of public power, of a constitution to help protect and safeguard rights, and of a diversity of power centres within and outside the state, including institutional fora to promote open discussion and deliberation among alternative political viewpoints and platforms (see chapters 3 and 7 especially). However, to make these points, I shall also contend, is not to affirm any one liberal democratic model as it stands. For by focusing on the proper form and limits of government, liberal democrats have failed to explore and specify adequately, on the one hand, the conditions for the possibility of political participation and, on the other, the set of governing institutions capable of regulating the forces which actually shape everyday life. The requirements of democratic participation, the form of democratic control, and the scope of democratic decision-making are all insufficiently examined in the liberal democratic tradition (see chapters 7–9).

Accordingly, if a justifiable account of democracy is to be established, it is not enough to inquire into the proper principles and procedures of democracy and of the liberal democratic state, important though this is. An inquiry into the conditions of enactment of these principles and procedures is also necessary; that is, an inquiry into the character and dynamics of different types of power and their impact on democratic arrangements. Such an investigation must ask how and why one particular type of power
– political power – crystallized and became embedded in the state, and how and why democracy came to be associated with this site of power, above all others. How it was that democracy became established as, and became almost synonymous with, liberal democratic government needs clarification, as do the consequences of this for collective decision-making and the nature of accountability. At issue, it will be seen, is an attempt to understand the nature of the modern state, its reach over social and economic affairs in a given territory, and the implications of this for the form and efficacy of democracy. However, democracy has another side which also requires specification if its contemporary meaning is to be grasped fully. The problems of democracy extend beyond state borders.

1.2 Democracy, globalization and international governance

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries theorists of democracy have tended to assume a ‘symmetrical’ and ‘congruent’ relationship between political decision-makers and the recipients of political decisions. In fact, symmetry and congruence have often been taken for granted at two crucial points: first, between citizen-voters and the decision-makers whom they are, in principle, able to hold to account; and secondly, between the ‘output’ (decisions, policies and so on) of decision-makers and their constituents – ultimately, ‘the people’ in a delimited territory.

Even contemporary critics of modern democracies have tended to share this assumption; following the narrative of democracy as conventionally told, they have thought of the problem of political accountability as, above all, a national problem. Representative structures are, they hold, insufficiently responsive to their citizens; and, in discussing various forms of direct democracy, or in interpretations of the continuing relevance of republicanism, they place emphasis on making the political process more transparent and intelligible, more open to, and reflective of, the heterogeneous wants and needs of ‘the people’ (see Macpherson, 1977; Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1985).

But the problem, for defenders and critics alike of modern democratic systems, is that regional and global interconnectedness contests the traditional national resolutions of the key questions of democratic theory and practice. The very process of governance can escape the reach of the nation-state. National communities by