Introduction

On May 15, 1932, Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi was assassinated by naval officers in the official residence of the prime minister in Tokyo. On May 26, Admiral Saitō Makoto was appointed prime minister by the emperor, based on the recommendation of *Genrō* Saionji Kinmochi. Saitō's appointment put an end to the practice of party government—in which leaders of political parties became prime ministers—and meant that the semi-democratic regime of prewar Japan had broken down. Following the breakdown of the semi-democratic regime, an authoritarian regime in which the military projected strong influence was established. This regime brought Japan to the Second World War.

Objectives and Challenges

How and why does a semi-democratic regime—a regime that developed as a result of a significant degree of democratization—break down without experiencing further democratization? These are the questions I raise in this book. My answer emerges through a case study of changes in political regimes in prewar Japan.

The semi-democratic regime is a subtype of hybrid regimes, which have been increasingly drawing scholarly attention in recent years.[1] Hybrid regimes contain attributes of democratic regimes as well as authoritarian regimes. Examples of hybrid regimes include competitive authoritarianism, electoral authoritarianism, pseudo democracy, and so on.

I undertake a case study of a semi-democratic regime to advance research on hybrid regimes. It is only in recent years that students of political regimes have initiated intensive research on hybrid regimes. As a result, many interesting questions still remain to be answered. Studies on hybrid regimes have more or less focused on a particular, contemporary type, namely, those in which the nature of political competition can be characterized as competitive authoritarian or electoral authoritarian.[2] In these regimes, although elections are regularly held, political competition is not fair nor free and authoritarian incumbents have a huge advantage over the opposition.

Yet, hybrid regimes are not limited to those that have been intensively studied. They can be multidimensional, just like democratic regimes.[3] There can be hybrid regimes in which electoral control over political offices may be different than in democratic regimes. Furthermore, hybrid regimes are not limited to the contemporary era. Historically, there are also instances of such regimes.

This study on a semi-democratic regime is an effort to expand our knowledge of other types of hybrid regimes. I define a semi-democratic regime as follows:

1. Even when there is competition for political offices, and elections are held regularly to fill political offices, they are not fully free or fair. Civil rights that are necessary to make political competition and elections free and fair—such as freedom of expression and association—are not sufficiently protected.
2. Not all effective political offices, that is political offices that have power to influence policy formulation, are held accountable to the electorate through elections. In other words, even when free and competitive elections are regularly held, there remain "reserved domains"—political offices that are not accountable to the electorate but can exercise significant political power.
3. Only a portion of the population has the right to vote.

Semi-democratic regimes develop into democratic regimes when they fulfill the following conditions:

1. There is competition for political offices, and the people select political officeholders through free, fair, and regularly held elections. Civil rights that are necessary to make political competition and elections free and

fair, such as freedom of expression and association and equality among votes, are protected.

2. All effective political offices are held accountable, either directly or indirectly, to the electorate through elections. In other words, there are no "reserved domains," and no political offices can project significant political power if they are not accountable to the electorate, either directly or indirectly.
3. A significant portion of the population (normally, all adults) have the right to participate in elections.

Judged by these definitions, Great Britain, for example, was semi-democratic in the latter half of the nineteenth century. With respect to political competition, two major political parties competed against each other and elections were regularly held. Yet, they were not completely fair or free because of election fraud. With respect to control over political offices by the electorate, not all effective political offices were yet accountable, either directly or indirectly, to the electorate. This was because the House of Commons' superiority to the House of the Lords had not yet been established, although by the 1870s the practice arose that the cabinet would be formed from the majority party in the House of Commons. On the last point—electoral participation—even after the reform of 1884, only 16 percent of the total population had the right to vote.

Great Britain came to fulfill the three conditions for a democratic regime with the reform of 1911, which established the superiority of the House of Commons over the House of Lords, and the reform of 1928, which established universal suffrage.

Between 1918 and 1932, Japan, with its practice of party government, also fulfilled the three conditions for a semi-democratic regime. First, there was significant political competition, but it was not fully free and fair. During this period (with the exception of a few years), two major parties competed against each other and formed cabinets. Although they were not completely free and fair, elections were regularly held and determined the distribution of power in the Diet. On the second dimension—the electorate's control over political offices once party government had been established—the cabinet was indirectly accountable to the electorate and the Lower House was directly accountable. Not all political offices, however, were accountable to the electorate; institutions such as the genrō, the House of Peers, the Privy Council, and the military were not subject to electoral control. On the third dimension—electoral participation—there were limits. With the reform of 1919 males who paid an annual tax of at least three yen could vote. The reform of 1924 implemented universal male suffrage.

Although Great Britain made a transition from a semi-democratic regime to a democratic regime, Japan did not. With the May 15 Incident in 1932, party government was terminated and the semi-democratic regime collapsed. After a four-year period of transition, there emerged an authoritarian regime led by the military (see Chapter 2). In other words, Japan's prewar democratization was aborted in the early 1930s.

Studies of Hybrid Regimes

This book's analysis of the collapse of the Japanese semi-democratic regime expects to make two contributions to the literature on comparative politics. First, it expands our understanding of hybrid regimes. A recent surge in scholarly attention to hybrid regimes obviously reflects a teleological bias in the study of the so-called third wave of democratization.[4] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter's seminal research on democratic transitions has emphasized transitions from authoritarian to other types of political regimes, and has noted that not all transitions necessarily lead to democratic regimes.[5] As Thomas Carothers has pointed out, however, there has been an implicit assumption in the literature that "any country moving away from dictatorial rule can be considered a country in transition *toward* democracy."[6] Research on democratization has often been based on the assumption, whether implicit or explicit, that a nondemocratic (authoritarian) regime can make the transition to a democratic one within a relatively short time.[7] When we look at countries with long histories of democracy, it is easy to see that they did not move quickly from being nondemocratic to democratic. Most of these countries "gradually expanded the suffrage, reduced plural voting, introduced the secret ballot, and established the responsibility of prime ministers and cabinets to parliaments."[8] Although some scholars have argued that it is necessary to "telescope such a long historical process [of democratization] into a few critical years,"[9] that many scholars have modified the term "democracy" with various adjectives such as "pseudo," "illiberal," and "delegative" shows that for many countries such telescoping is very difficult.[10] The development of a democratic regime takes time, even in our contemporary era.

Today scholars pay more attention to hybrid regimes for two reasons. First, the number of countries that cannot be classified as democratic regimes or authoritarian regimes has simply increased. According to Larry Diamond, as of the end of 2001, out of 150 countries with a population of more then one million, 55 can be categorized as hybrid regimes.[11] In addition, there is growing recognition that many hybrid regimes are not making the transition to democratic regimes. They just endure as they are.[12] For example, in their research on competitive authoritarianism, a sub-category of authoritarianism, which has at least one of three characteristics—unfair elections, imperfect protection of civil liberties, and immense advantage enjoyed by incumbents—Levitsky and Way argue that out of the 35 cases they examine, 19 competitive authoritarian regimes persisted for at least fifteen years.[13]

Certainly students of political regimes have always been aware of hybrid regimes. For example, Robert Dahl refers to the development of "near polyarchies," "competitive oligarchies," and "inclusive hegemonies."[14] Yet, because of the aforementioned bias in the literature on democratization, it is only in recent years that scholars have embarked on intensive research on hybrid regimes.[15] Studies so far have focused on such issues as the classification of hybrid regimes, political dynamics under hybrid regimes, and conditions for the endurance of hybrid regimes as well as for their development toward democratic regimes. These studies have made important contributions to our understanding of hybrid regimes. However, there is further room for expanding and deepening our research on hybrid regimes, following their lead.

Previous studies have three elements in common. First, they concentrate on contemporary hybrid regimes. Second, while they are aware of diversity among hybrid regimes, they tend to focus on one subtype, variously labeled as electoral authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, or pseudo democracy.[16] This subtype has two characteristics: first, elections are regularly held yet are neither fair nor free; second, authoritarian incumbents have a huge advantage over the opposition in elections.

Lastly, while previous studies are concerned with the transition of competitive authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes as well as their persistence, they overlook the possibility that hybrid regimes may break down and turn into classic authoritarian regimes.

The current state of the literature on hybrid regimes has several implications for further research. To begin with, historically there have been many instances of hybrid regimes. The experience of traditional democracies such as Great Britain tells us that, historically, democratization unfolds over a very long time. After autocratic, despotic, or authoritarian regimes begin to democratize, free competition among politicians, regularly held elections, guarantees of various political rights, and control over political offices gradually emerge. These first democratic steps transform nondemocratic regimes into hybrid regimes.

One important subtype of hybrid regimes deserves more attention: regimes in which nonelected officials can have substantial political influence. The literature on competitive authoritarianism as well as electoral authoritarianism, after all, focuses on the nature of political competition. In this subtype, which does not encompass all hybrid regimes, some political offices, in particular the military, which are not held accountable to the electorate neither directly nor indirectly, may wield significant political power.

Finally, we should be aware of the possibility that hybrid regimes can turn into classical authoritarian regimes. When hybrid regimes break down, exploring the circumstances of their collapse is likely to enhance our knowledge of the dynamics of the transformation of political regimes.

Bearing the aforementioned points in mind, I follow the lead of recent studies by focusing on a semi-democratic regime, a subtype of hybrid regimes that has often been left out of current research. I emphasize that some countries may go through two steps in the process of making a transition to a democratic regime; that is, developing into a semi-democratic regime first and then developing into a democratic one—a possible course also recognized in traditional arguments on democratization.[17]

If a semi-democratic country is to make the transition to democracy in two steps, it is important that it stabilize before proceeding with further democratization. This raises questions about the conditions that determine whether regimes stabilize or collapse. In particular, I explore the conditions under which a semi-democratic regime breaks down—an issue not addressed in the literature—and propose an analytical framework to explain such a collapse, paying particular attention to the timing and process of the breakdown.

Prewar Japanese Political Development and Comparative Politics

The second objective of this research is to enhance our understanding of prewar Japanese politics. As a result of past research, there is an extensive literature on political development in prewar Japan, particularly in the 1910s and early 1920s as well as the late 1930s. Furthermore, such political issues as the labor movement and social policy in prewar Japan have been the subject of past research. Yet, much work remains to be done to understand political development between the mid-1920s through the mid-1930s.

Thus, my analysis of political development from the late 1910s to mid-1930s provides what has been a missing link in the literature. I reconstruct political development during this period within the same, single framework in order to show why political parties that gained a huge amount of political power in the late 1910s lost it by the early 1930s.

In discussing the period between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s, I briefly refer to the state of research on prewar Japanese politics. The literature on how democratization in Japan proceeded until the early 1920s is extensive. While this literature focuses on political parties and shows how they came to dominate politics, few works discuss what happened to political parties once they came to power. For example, Tetsuo Najita's discussion of the political development of Japan between 1905 and 1915 focuses on the powerful leader Hara Kei and describes how he expanded the power of the Seiyūkai, the political party he led, but does not reach the year 1918, when the Seiyūkai came to dominate government and the semi-democratic regime emerged.[18] Peter Duus takes a more comprehensive view of the growth of political parties in prewar Japan by drawing attention to such political parties as the Dōshikai and Kenseikai, which competed against the Seiyūkai, to demonstrate how a two-party system emerged in prewar Japan.[19] Development of a two-party system was certainly an important part of prewar Japanese democratization, yet Duus's analysis ends when the Minseitō, Seiyūkai's rival, was formed in 1927. Duus does not discuss a series of events between the late 1920s and mid-1930s that weakened political parties and triggered the collapse of the semi-democratic regime. Murai Ryōta also traces how the practice of party government developed, focusing on the process of nominating prime ministers,[20] yet he again covers only the period until 1927 and does not examine why the practice did not continue. Kitaoka Shinichi describes the history of Japan, focusing on politics between 1924 and 1941,[21] yet again there is a problem with the period covered since his narrative does not deal with the initial phase of the semi-democratic regime.

Gordon Berger also describes political development in prewar Japan by focusing on political parties.[22] Yet, he discusses only the period between 1931 and 1941. Berger is mainly concerned with how political parties retained power even after the year 1932 when democratization was aborted and political parties could not make their presidents into prime ministers.[23]

Banno Junji gives an account of the period between 1918 and 1932 as a part of his political history from the Meiji Restoration through the late 1930s.[24] However, he emphasizes particular political events such as the signing of the London Naval Treaty by the Hamaguchi cabinet or a failed attempt to make a grand coalition between the Seiyūkai and Minseitō.

In short, none of the aforementioned studies covers political development between the late 1910s and early 1930s within a single analytical framework. As a result, they cannot explain why political parties, which came to dominate politics by the early 1920s, grew politically weak from the mid-1920s and ultimately why democratization failed in prewar Japan.

Although several scholars have studied extensive periods of prewar Japan, which include the period from the late 1910s through the early 1930s, the main subject of their analysis is not failed democratization but other political issues. For example, Andrew Gordon traces the history of the labor movement in general between 1905 and 1940 while undertaking a case study of Nankatsu, an area in the eastern part of Tokyo.[25] Sheldon Garon traces the formulation of social policy in the prewar period, paying particular attention to the period between 1918 and 1945.[26] Gregory Kasza traces government policy on various types of mass media such as the press, film, and radio.[27] Kasza has also examined the development of administered mass organizations orchestrated by the prewar state to penetrate into society.[28] Richard Samuels examines the role of leadership in history by looking at important political figures in prewar Japan such as Itō Hirobumi and Hara Kei.[29]

Aside from these scholars, Maruyama Masao addresses the question of why the military intervened in politics and a fascist regime emerged in prewar Japan.[30] Maruyama argues that military intervention became possible and a fascist regime developed because of the fragmentation of political institutions under the Meiji Constitution. Since no political actor or political institution had consolidated political power, it was very difficult to stop the military once it had begun to intervene in politics. While Maruyama captures the inherent defects of the Meiji Constitution, he cannot explain why different political regimes emerged under that constitution. In other words, it is difficult to explain why democratization was aborted after having made significant progress by just looking at the constant influence of the Meiji

Constitution. Further, he does not chronologically trace how the balance of power among different political actors changed.

While all these works contribute to understanding their respective subjects, they do not directly address why prewar Japanese democratization failed and why the semi-democratic regime came to break down. In the extensive literature on prewar Japanese politics there are but two major works that address why democratization in prewar Japan failed—one by Robert Scalapino and the other by Barrington Moore.

Scalapino conducted a single case study to examine why democracy failed in Japan before the Second World War.[31] He locates its failure in the demise of political parties and tries to explain why they could not retain their power once they had acquired it. The failure of democracy in prewar Japan, Scalapino believes, was a deviant case, because Japan was unable to develop a full-fledged democracy despite various favorable socioeconomic conditions. He argues: "In some respects, Japan resembles a 'controlled experiment.' The presumed prerequisites for a modern democratic society—the independent nation-state, industrialization, and mass literacy—were all attained by modern Japan. Thus, one is not dealing with a society, which lacked the elementary democratic 'requirements.'"[32]

Scalapino emphasizes the roles of two structural variables to make a deterministic argument that democracy in Japan was doomed to fail. Democracy could not develop in prewar Japan, he argues, because of the inherited feudal tradition and the timing of economic development. The feudal tradition, which emphasized the family system and the importance of the group, and discouraged respect for individual rights, was a significant obstacle to the emergence of democracy. Japanese capitalism was unable to break free of this tradition and spread liberalism. In the West, by contrast, industries developed on their own. They, together with the newly created middle class, overwhelmed the feudal tradition, challenged the government, and spread liberalism, thereby establishing a strong foundation for the development of democracy. In Japan, industries themselves retained the feudal tradition. Scalapino also claims that the timing of economic development in Japan discouraged political parties and democracy from developing. In Japan, where the state took the initiative in the race to catch up with the West economically, industries depended on the state. As a result, they and the middle class could not challenge the government and push for full-fledged democracy. Instead they often colluded with the government; even when they supported the parties their support was given to enhance their parochial interests and not to promote democracy.

Moore argues that there are three distinct routes to modernization: "bourgeois revolution," "revolution from above," and "communist revolution." To explain how the countries he examines followed different paths, he operationalizes three variables: the strength of the bourgeoisie, the mode of commercial agriculture, and the potential for peasant revolution. For Japan, he argues that a particular combination of these variables explains the rise of Japan's fascist regime. In Japan, where the potential for peasant revolution was weak, a coalition between the commercial-industrial elites and the landed upper class with a "labor repressive" mode of production brought on the Meiji Restoration and ultimately led Japan into a fascist regime. Moore also argues that democracy in Japan was destined to fail and that the Depression was a mere catalyst because Japanese capitalists (probably identical to commercial elites) could not challenge the state since they depended on it. These same capitalists also did not distribute the benefits of capitalism across a wide range of the population, thereby failing to raise the stakes of preserving capitalist democracy among the people. Moore adds that the plight of the peasants and petty bourgeoisie under capitalist development drove the military to intervene in politics and led to the rise of a fascist regime, although the coalition between commercial elites and landlords remained.

Scalapino and Moore mainly rely on structural factors, such as economic and social structures and tradition, to make deterministic arguments about the nature of political regime development. They show that structural factors imposed severe constraints on the development of democracy in prewar Japan. The problem with this approach, however, is that while structural factors do not vary in the short-to-medium term, countries often experience different types of political regimes in such a time frame. Despite the constant constraints of structural factors, different political regimes existed in prewar Japan. It is important to note that the semi-democratic regime which existed between 1918 and 1932 was replaced by a military authoritarian regime. This implies that other factors are at work in triggering changes in political regimes. In addition, their research has become dated. Moore's research dates back more than thirty years, and Scalapino's more than half a century. In recent years, the study of democratization has advanced, and now focuses on the process of democratization itself. It is helpful to incorporate insights from such recent advances in order to create an analytical framework to explain the breakdown of semi-democratic regimes.

Being aware of these two problems, I undertake a case study of Japanese political development and explain the collapse of the semi-democratic regime in prewar Japan. In constructing an analytical framework to explain the collapse, I use insight gained from studies in comparative politics, in particular in the field of democratization. In constructing a framework, I take note of the objective of social science: the development of theory.[33] Theory has to explain why a phenomenon happens accurately, parsimoniously, and generally.[34] Parsimony means that theory has to explain why a phenomenon happens with as small a number of variables as possible; generality means that it has to explain as many cases as possible. In social science, however, it is very rare that completely identical phenomena happen more than once. As each of several phenomena of the same kind has original elements of its own, tensions exist between accuracy on one hand and parsimony and generality on the other.[35] That is, when a theory tries to explain one particular case as accurately as possible, it loses parsimony and generality; when it tries to explain as many cases as possible, it loses accuracy.

Assuming that such a tension exists, and recognizing that a theory cannot capture all elements relevant to a phenomenon, I attach particular importance to parsimony and generality. In other words, a theory should single out several factors that are most relevant in causing a given phenomenon and, by concentrating on those factors, explain as many cases as possible.

Thus, in developing an analytical framework for the breakdown of semi-democratic regimes, I will not try to capture every factor that is relevant but instead concentrate on factors that are most relevant.

In this Introduction, I have so far introduced the book's main themes and objectives. In the remaining section, I discuss in greater detail the nature of the semi-democratic regime and how it differs from other political regimes, such as democratic and authoritarian regimes. In Chapter 1, I discuss the theoretical foundations for developing an analytical framework on the breakdown of semi-democratic regimes. After introducing existing approaches that can be applied to explain the breakdown of semi-democratic regimes, I propose a new analytical framework.

In Chapter 2, I show that Japan was a semi-democratic regime between 1918 and 1932 in the light of the definitions I have introduced in this Introduction. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 explain the breakdown of the semi-democratic regime in prewar Japan, relying on the analytical framework presented in Chapter 1. In the Conclusion, I summarize the book's arguments and consider their implications for research on democratization.

Defining the Semi-Democratic Regime

As I have argued above, the semi-democratic regime is one that has already undergone a significant degree of democratization. It is in this sense a hybrid. There have been three particularly influential definitions—two recent and one almost two-decades old—of such regimes. The first, by Schedler, describes them as "electoral authoritarian": "Electoral authoritarian regimes play the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections for the chief executive and a national legislative assembly. Yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than 'instruments of democracy.'"[36]

According to the second, by Levitsky and Way, such regimes are "competitive authoritarian": "Competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents."[37]

Although the terminology differs and there are nuanced differences between the two definitions, electoral authoritarian regimes and competitive authoritarian regimes have common characteristics.[38] That is, electoral competition is neither fair nor free and incumbents have a huge advantage over the opposition due to their manipulation of elections and the state apparatus.

The third definition is from Diamond, Linz, and Lipset:

> [A regime is semi-democratic when] the effective power of elected officials is so limited or political party competition so restricted, or the freedom and fairness of elections so compromised that electoral outcomes, although competitive, do not produce true popular sovereignty and accountability, or in which civil and political liberties are so uncertain that some political orientations and interests are unable to organize and express themselves peacefully, without fear.[39]

None of these definitions, however, captures the full gamut of hybrid regimes. As Levitsky and Way put it, "there are multiple ways to be partially democratic."[40] To encompass other subtypes of hybrid regimes I begin by examining a classic definition of the democratic regime. Here I refer to a definition of democratic regimes by Robert Dahl. He proposed the following eight conditions as requisite for democratic regimes:[41]

1. Freedom to form and join organizations;
2. Freedom of expression;
3. The right to vote;
4. Eligibility for public office;
5. The right of political leaders to compete for support;
6. The availability of alternative sources of information;
7. Free and fair elections;
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

A semi-democratic regime can be thought of as one that, as a result of democratization, satisfies these eight conditions to a significant degree.

In defining a semi-democratic political regime, it is necessary to reflect on what democratization essentially means. As Dahl argues, the essence of democratization is the development of a political system in which the government responds to the preferences of its citizens, whom it considers to be political equals.[42] Dahl also notes that democratization consists of two dimensions—the increase of public contestation and the expansion of participation. In other words, under a democratic regime, free and fair political competition emerges, as do people who have the right to participate in elections.

Although Dahl nicely captures the essence of democratization, he fails to consider one important element—the increase in electoral control over political offices. Democratization must lead to a situation in which all political offices are accountable to the electorate, either indirectly or directly, a point often emphasized in recent research on democratization.[43] This is an important point. Even when fair and free competition emerges in politics and the people have the right to participate in elections, if some political offices are not accountable to the electorate and can exercise power freely, government cannot respond to its citizens' preferences. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the expansion of electoral control over political offices as an important facet of democratization.

Thus, it is possible to consider democratization as a process consisting of the following three components: the development of free and fair political competition; an increase in electoral control over political offices; an increase in the number of people with the right to participate in elections. The concept of electoral authoritarianism as well as of competitive authoritarianism acknowledges that the second and third can be dimensions of hybrid regimes but attaches greater importance to the first. Yet, if we are to enhance the scope of research on hybrid regimes in order to capture historical cases, it is necessary to avoid slighting the other two dimensions. Also the concept of semi-democracy is useful in analyzing contemporary hybrid regimes for which the electorate has limited control over political offices.

The definition of semi-democratic regimes I have introduced at the beginning of this Introduction captures the three dimensions of democracy. When democratization proceeds along all three dimensions, a democratic regime will finally emerge. My definition is similar to that of Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, although they emphasize the state of electoral competition, while I attach particular importance to the second dimension.

How, then, are democratic regimes defined in the way introduced at the beginning of this Introduction? Larry Diamond introduces two definitions of democracy: electoral democracy and liberal democracy.[44] Electoral democracy attaches importance to competition for political offices and free and fair elections. Liberal democracy adds three more requirements. First, all political offices must be accountable to the electorate. Second, there must be horizontal accountability among political offices. Third, pluralism must be firmly established. The definition of democracy I adopt in this book can be located halfway between electoral and liberal democracy. The definition of electoral democracy is insufficient in that it does not clearly capture the dimension of putting all political offices under the control of the electorate. On the other hand, the notion of liberal democracy is susceptible to problems of its own. A definition of liberal democracy can be analytically useful for examining the conditions under which a government responds to its citizens' preferences. However, when we seek to identify the minimum conditions for developing a political system in which a government will be responsive to its citizens, a detailed definition such as liberal democracy raises too many different issues, rendering arguments difficult and cumbersome.

The Semi-Democratic Regime and Other Political Regimes

How does the semi-democratic regime differ from other political regimes? I have so far considered the differences between it and the democratic regime, and have also demonstrated how it is distinct from electoral authoritarianism and competitive authoritarianism.

Below I examine differences between the semi-democratic regime and other nondemocratic regimes. My definition is different from that provided by other scholars and is used in different ways. The term "semi-democratic regime," as defined by other scholars, is often used to highlight that elections are unfair, as in "electoral authoritarianism" and "competitive authoritarianism." For example, according to William Case, in the semi-democratic regime "governments regularly hold elections, thus offering a snapshot of propriety on voting day. But they have limited civil liberties beforehand, thereby hindering opposition parties in contesting effectively. . . . Government candidates may make heavy use of state resources in campaigning, practices winked at by election commissions."[45]

Likewise, Paul Brooker states that semi-democratic regimes are democratic regimes with serious flaws. They suffer from limitations on suffrage and sovereignty, systemic weaknesses, shirking that involves the misuse of public power to influence elections, and semi-competitive elections that are difficult to distinguish from those of disguised dictatorships.[46] In Brooker's eyes, the key characteristic of the regime he calls semi-democratic is unfair elections.

One other political regime that is similar is the tutelary regime. In the words of Samuel Fitch, "in tutelary regimes, the armed forces participate in the policy process and exercise oversight over civilian authorities. The military's share of power within such regimes may vary, although their implicit veto power is usually respected when the issue involves intense and widespread military pressure."[47]

However, there is a major difference between semi-democratic regimes and tutelary regimes. Political offices in the semi-democratic regime that are not controlled by the electorate are not necessarily limited to the military. Valenzuela calls these offices "reserved domains" and refers to the monarch and the high civil service as examples.[48] Members of the second chamber and of institutions that assist the monarchy are also candidates for such political offices. I would add that there can be other political offices that are not held accountable to the people. Also, the adjective "tutelary" itself has a drawback. Tutelary as an adjective signifies "serving as a protector, guarding, or patron."[49] It reflects that the military intervenes in politics because it perceives itself as the guardian of the country.[50] Yet, the term does not really capture the reality that the military remains outside the control of the electorate.

As I have suggested earlier, there have been historical instances of semi-democratic regimes. Yet, semi-democratic regimes are different from traditional nondemocratic regimes such as competitive oligarchical regimes and authoritarian regimes. Dahl refers to competitive oligarchical regimes, which accurately describes Great Britain during the period when its two major party system gradually emerged.[51] Although Dahl does not give a detailed definition of the competitive oligarchical regime, his discussion of democratization reveals that the competitive oligarchical regime is one in which public contestation has significantly increased but participation has not. In other words, in a competitive oligarchy, there exists a significant degree of competition in politics and political rights that are necessary to secure political competition. Even so, the number of people with voting rights is quite limited. Thus, the competitive oligarchic regime and the semi-democratic regime are similar in that significant political competition takes place, but different in that the number of people who participate electorally is much more limited in the former.

Finally, we should distinguish between authoritarian regimes and semi-democratic regimes. Juan Linz, who pioneered research on authoritarian regimes, defined them as "political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without [an] elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (except [at] some points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones."[52] Linz originally used this definition to classify regimes that are neither totalitarian nor democratic.[53]

Limited political pluralism in an authoritarian regime means that there is some diversity in the supporting groups of the regime. It also means that the state does not dictate the operation of all of society (which a totalitarian regime tries to do), and that some groups are independent of the state, particularly in the economic and social arenas. The political leaders in an authoritarian regime are not accountable to the citizens, but rather to the ruling class. While there are often single parties supporting such regimes, when it comes to politics the people are passive or apathetic. Even when citizens participate in politics, it is often because of the regime's encouragement.

Under an authoritarian regime, political groups with power do not ask people to demonstrate explicit support. Likewise, an authoritarian regime, unlike a totalitarian regime, does not require a commitment from the people to a certain ideology. Rather, an authoritarian regime is characterized by a diffusion of mentalities, which only vaguely stipulate various ideas from many sources, reflecting the diversity of the groups that support the regime. “Ideology” clearly refers to a set of ideas to which its believers strictly adhere, while “mentalities” vaguely describes “noncodified ways of reacting to different situations.”[54] In other words, “the complex coalition of forces, interests, political traditions, and institutions—part of the limited pluralism—requires the rulers to use as symbolic referent the minimum common denominator of the coalition.”[55]

Though it may be modest, the predictability of exercising power in an authoritarian regime derives from respect for legal order and procedural legality. Because of the lack of an ideology, repression is often directed toward what people do against the regime and not toward what they conceive in their minds. In a totalitarian regime, ideas themselves become subject to repression.

Semi-democratic and authoritarian regimes are similar in that under both regimes political offices without accountability to the people can project significant political power. In an authoritarian regime, some political offices may be subject to control from the ruling class. However, the way political offices are controlled is very informal and not institutionalized. In a semi-democratic regime, by contrast, some offices are accountable to the people through elections, although elections may not be perfectly fair.

Furthermore, political competition is much more limited under authoritarian than under semi-democratic regimes. Elections and political parties may exist in authoritarian regimes, but even when they do a single party supporting the regime holds a dominant and privileged status, which reduces the significance of electoral competition. In a semi-democratic regime, there is a significant degree of competition among political parties, and often power is transferred from one political party to another as a result of elections, even if elections may not be perfectly fair. While in an authoritarian regime the people only passively participate in politics, in a semi-democratic regime the people often voluntarily and actively participate.

Examples of Semi-Democratic Regimes

The political regime that existed in Japan between 1918 and 1932 was semi-democratic. Although elections were regularly held and competitive, they were neither perfectly free nor fair. Several offices, the Privy Council, and the House of Peers remained outside electoral control. Above all, the military, which was not subject to civilian control, wielded significant influence in politics. Lastly, only men could vote after the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1925. I describe the semi-democratic nature of the regime in more detail in Chapter 2.

GREAT BRITAIN

Among other examples of semi-democratic regimes is Great Britain from the middle of nineteenth century until the turn of the century.

During this period competitive elections were regularly held. Yet, they were not free and fair. Bribery and coercion were prevalent in elections.[56] It was very common for candidates to buy votes. The more money voters were offered, the more heated elections became.[57] In addition, employers projected coercive influence over their employees on how they would vote.[58] Moreover, an important political institution, the House of Lords, which could block legislation passed by the House of Commons, was not accountable to the electorate. And it was not until the end of 1860s to the early 1870s that civilian control over the military was established.[59] Lastly, suffrage was limited. Even after the expansion of suffrage with the Reform Act of 1884 only 16 percent of the total population could participate in elections.[60] I will more fully compare the semi-political regime of Japan with that in Great Britain in Chapter 2.

There are also examples of semi-democratic regimes in the period after the Second World War. Here one must note that the degree of electoral participation in the postwar era in the two examples explored below—Brazil and Thailand—was comparatively very high given that they, like most countries, had adopted universal suffrage.

BRAZIL

Brazil between 1945 and 1964 is often considered democratic—for example, Thomas Skidmore treats it as such[61]—but in fact Brazil during this period was semi-democratic.

Three important political offices—the presidency, the Senate, and the Chamber of Deputies—were selected through elections and elections were regularly held. Yet, they were not fully fair or fair. First, the Communist Party of Brazil was banned from participating in elections after 1947 and the senators and deputies of the Communist Party elected in the election of 1947 were expelled.[62] Second, there remained the tradition of "coronelismo," as provisional oligarchies could control and give the votes of "most of those dependent upon [them] for a livelihood" to candidates of their choice.[63]

Control of the electorate over political offices posed another problem. This was because an important political office, namely, the military, which had a great deal of political influence, was not accountable to the electorate. The military was given prerogatives by the constitution. Article 176 stipulated that the military is "under the supreme authority of the President of the Republic, and within the limit of the law," and Article 177 that "it is the mission of the Armed Forces to defend the Country and guarantee the constitutional powers, as well as law and order." Thanks to these articles, the military could legally intervene in politics as a "moderating power."[64]

Exploiting these prerogatives, it indeed intervened in politics a number of times during this era. It demanded President Getúlio Vargas's resignation in August 1954, which led to Vargas committing suicide. It staged a coup d'état in November 1955 to secure the inauguration of Juscelio Kubischek de Oliveria, who won the presidential election in October. Some officers opposed Vice President João Goulart becoming president from August to September 1961 after the sudden resignation of President Jânio Quadros. The opposition by some military officers led to the introduction of a parliamentary system, which was intended to weaken the power of the president. Finally, the military intervention in 1964 led to the collapse of the semi-democratic regime.

THAILAND

From 1978 to 1997 Thailand also was semi-democratic.[65] First, although elections were regularly held and competitive, they were neither completely free nor fair since they were corrupted by vote buying.[66] Candidates, systematically distributing money to secure votes, hired leading figures in the area as *huajhanaen* (often translated as canvassers) to distribute cash and attract support.[67] Sometimes candidates even bribed officials counting votes.[68]

Second, important political offices remained outside the control of the electorate. To begin with, the prime minister did not have to be an elected politician under the 1979 and 1991 constitutions. It was only after the so-called Black May popular protests that the constitution of 1991 was amended and the prime minister came to be chosen from the members of the House of Representatives.

Throughout this period, two important offices were not subject to the control of the electorate: the monarchy and the military. The monarchy was not just ceremonial; it had real power. For example, under the constitution of 1979 and 1991 it was the king who appointed prime ministers and ministers. The power of appointment was not nominal. He sometimes picked prime ministers of his choice. For example, in 1980, he selected General Prem Tinsulanonda and had him succeed then unpopular Prime Minister Kriengsak Chamanan.[69] After Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon, the leader of a coup d'état of 1991, resigned in the face of strong public opposition in May 1992, the king reappointed Anand Punyarachun, the prime minister before Suchinda, as the prime minister.[70]

The king often influenced the content of laws as well as activities of the government,[71] and when the country was faced with a crisis, he often intervened as a mediator. When the public demonstrations demanding Suchinda's resignation spread between April and May 1992, the military tried to contain the demonstrations by force, which led to bloodshed. The king called on Suchinda and Chamlong Srimuang, the leader of an opposition party, the Palang Dharma Party, to end the confrontation.

As for the military during the period from 1978 to 1997, it was politically powerful although its power gradually declined. Initially, it secured the position of the head of the government. When General Prem Tinsulanonda became prime minister, he was still commander in chief and held this position until 1981.[72] In addition, the 1979 constitution had legally secured the military's influence in politics. The constitution adopted a bicameral system in which the members of the House of Representative were chosen through elections, and the members of the Senate were appointed by the prime minister. The Senate served as the base for the military to project its influence.

The constitution did not permit civil servants and military officers to hold political office, and it gave only the House but not the Senate the right to entertain a motion of no confidence. Yet, the constitution contained transitional clauses, valid for four years, which allowed officials and officers to hold political offices and senators to participate in votes of no confidence as well as in votes on important bills in joint sessions with the House.[73]

Military officers dominated the Senate. Although the temporary clauses expired in April 1983, Prime Minister Prem made new appointments of senators just before the expiration to secure the dominance of the military.[74] Even after the legal prerogatives of the military had been diminished, the military continued to influence politics and the Prem cabinet continued to rely on support from the military.[75]

After the coup d'état in 1991 and Black May, the military's influence was reduced and it gradually withdrew from politics.[76] But it still remained influential in the Senate. Under the 1991 constitution senators were appointed by the king and could be chosen from among public officials as well as military officers. The military dominated the Senate until 1995.[77] In addition, the military kept its autonomy with regard to its structure and human resources management and, as of 1995, civilian supremacy was yet to be established.[78]

Conclusion

Democratization as a process consists of three elements: the development of free and fair political competition; an increase in electoral control over political offices; and an increase in the number of people with the right to participate in elections. Semi-democracy is a political regime that has advanced to significant degree along these three dimensions, but is not totally democratic. Great Britain in the latter half of nineteenth century and Japan between 1918 and 1932 are examples of semi-democracy before World War II, and Brazil between 1945 and 1964 as well as Thailand from 1979 to 1997 are examples of semi-democratic regimes after the war.

This book explores how the semi-democratic regime breaks down and proposes an analytical framework to explain that breakdown. This is an attempt to enhance the understanding of hybrid regimes, which have received more scholarly attention in recent studies of democratization. It is also an effort to connect the experience of Japanese political development in the prewar era with current debates in comparative politics. In the next chapter, I offer an analytical framework to explain the breakdown of semi-democratic regimes.