

## Chapter 4

# The Fourth Reverse Wave?

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the work of Samuel Huntington and his theory regarding waves of democratization. The chapter notes that the international community is witnessing a move away from the globalized world order that the era has facilitated (or de-globalization) and that de-democratization is seemingly occurring simultaneously. The chapter pays particular attention to the United States and actions that have been viewed as anti-democratic by the previous presidential administration, which has accelerated the global community's leering when it comes to international cooperation led by the U.S.*

### INTRODUCTION

The field of comparative politics has had a complicated relationship with Samuel Huntington, particularly in relation to his thesis in the controversial text, *Clash of Civilizations* (1993), which argues that the conflicts and wars in the future would be fought along cultural and religious lines rather than by (or amongst) nation-states. Although the 1993 thesis has been derided throughout the field of political science, his 1991 thesis on democratization remains a standard on contemporary democratization and the potential causes of a backslide, or reverse wave. Huntington's thesis on democratization and international cooperation has been met with mixed reviews throughout its nearly 30-year existence. The waves of democracy have been associated with varying events, conflicts, and issues impacting the international community; and have certainly waned and surged at times throughout history. This chapter

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will make readers aware of the seminal Huntington thesis and update it for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world order.

Huntington, of course, argues that democratic transitions occur in waves or phases that are followed by subsequent counter waves of transitions to authoritarian and/or semi-authoritarian. According to Huntington, the first short wave occurred in the early 1800s, and coincided with the near universal suffrage for white males in the U.S. within the Jackson administration and the populism espoused at the time; simultaneously the breakdown of the empire system (including the Ottoman, Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian led to the creation of 29 democracies around the world (Huntington, 1991, P. 17-18). The reverse wave associated with the first wave of democracy (1828-1926) began with the rise of Mussolini in Italy and the expansion of fascism across continental Europe, and at its peak, the reverse wave decreased the number of democracies to 12 by 1942 (Stearns, 2001, P. 413). The second wave just after the end of World War II, and lasted for almost 20 years until 1962, when the number of democracies around the world had more than doubled from the 12 in 1942, to 36 total, and while the reverse wave would occur in the late 1970s, when democracies around the world waned to under 30, according to Huntington, it was less consequential than the first wave. The third wave is the most consequential (to-date) for Huntington because it coincided with the era of globalization that led to the proliferation of digital technologies and the adoption of the global market economy. The third wave began in 1974 with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal and Spanish transition to democracy in the late 1970s from authoritarianism (Franco). The Carnation Revolution began as a military coup in Lisbon that led to the ousting of the authoritarian Estado Novo regime, which was organized by an organization comprised of military officers who were opposed to the regime but soon blossomed into a full-fledged revolution when citizens joined the movement, which resulted in a democratic Portugal. Spanish democratization officially began after the death of authoritarian leader Francisco Franco in November 1975, and led to the democratic consolidation of Spain's governing regime into a parliamentary monarchy under Juan Carlos I (Sanchez-Cuenca & Aguilar, 2009, P. 429).

The spirit of democracy spread throughout the international community during the 1970s-1980s, with revolutions or processes of democratization occurring in Latin America during the 1980s, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan during the mid-1980s, and culminating in the biggest contributor to the third wave democracy count: the breakdown of the Soviet Union into satellite states that began to democratize even before the collapse was official

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