Democracy is the greatest governmental institution devised by man, and will not only remain at the forefront of political rule, but expand to every country around the world. This statement is fact? Is it not? Many would say that yes, of course this is fact, democracy is the most successful system we have come up with, so why wouldn’t it spread to every country? However, there are others who say that although democracy is great, it does not work for all people, and will rise and fall in popularity as societies change and grow throughout the future of man. Samuel P. Huntington, Ken Jowitt, and Marc F. Plattner are three professors of government working at various Universities around the nation whom share their views on democracy in the text The Global Resurgence of Democracy. All three share common views about the history of democracy and all focus on the end of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a major turning point for the future spread of democracy. However, when it comes to what happens next, all three seem to have their own opinions of what might possibly happen. Because this text was published in 1996, some of the events foreseen have already taken place, helping one to understand how democracy works and how it might evolve in the future.

In order to understand where the future of democracy is headed, one must first look at how modern democracy has fluctuated throughout history. Samuel P. Huntington, author of “Democracy’s Third Wave,” or chapter one of the text, writes that democracy has went through three separate world surges and recesses in the modern world. The modern world of course does not refer to the absolute democracies of ancient civilizations such as the Greeks. The first wave started in the 1820’s and ended in the 1920’s. During this period the number of democracies rose to 29 only to be followed by
a recess wave, bringing the number down to 12 by the year 1942. The second wave came
due to the victory of the Allied Forces in WWII, surpassing the once high tally of 29
democracies to an impressive 36 countries by 1962. Inevitably this increase would not
last; the second recess of democratic countries brought the number back down to 30 by
1975. From that time period until 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union that number
nearly doubled, with at least 30 new democracies forming. So now the question is what
will happen next? Will the number of democracies continue to rise, or will we go into yet
another recess and watch the number of democracies fall? The truth of the matter is that
nobody can answer these questions with any certainty, but there is a lot of speculation in
both directions on the future of democracy.

Ken Jowitt, author of “The New World Disorder,” or chapter two of the text sees
the spread of democracy to the third world as a “long march” and that nobody should
expect such nations to accept democracy speedily. The third world of course refers to
those countries that are developing nations, similar to Europe and the Americas during
the Industrial Revolution. During that time in history much of Europe was struggling
between democracy and absolutism. In the end democracy was the decided choice
through much pain and hardship over a number of years. Fast forward to present day and
that’s what we see in our developing nations, does this mean these countries will
inevitably change to democracy? Perhaps, however, there are no guarantees that any of
these nations will develop a democracy, communism, socialism, dictatorship, or any
other form of government man has devised. Who knows maybe they will come up with a
new form of government that best suites their people? As Jowitt states on page 35 of the
text, “Not every route has to be a copy of a prior western one; alternative courses will be
possible, but exceptional.” This is a great statement, to often developed countries believe that they can make other nations become them in a sense; force them to become democratic because that is what the world is supposed to be like. Who is to say that if you let them make their own decisions that they wouldn’t learn from even the mistakes of democracy and come up with something better, who are we to make developing countries decisions for them are. When Europe and the Americas decided democracy was the best answer it was their own decision to do so, and went through many trials and tribulations to arrive at the great system we have today. The fact remains that we did it on our own and we worked through it to make it better, if such an institution is forced upon other nations and we are always butting in, then they aren’t allowed to make their own mistakes and own decisions. True, we may have to put up with fascists and dictators sometime, but that doesn’t mean we have a right to not let that country and its people evolve on its own path.

In chapter one Huntington stated that the U.S. would concentrate on countries in the Middle East as the next target to try to convert in the future. Bare in mind this was written years ago, yet sounds pretty familiar to what is happening today does it not? She later went on to say that, “The trade and budget deficits impose new limits on the resources that the United States can use to influence events in foreign countries.” Doesn’t sound like our current present has neglected to read this text, after all our budget has only gotten bigger and is getting bigger because our need to bring democracy to the Middle East. “Operation Iraqi Freedom” is what we are calling this war and it is called that because that is and was our main goal for going in to Iraq, the spread of democracy. Forget weapons of mass destruction and an imminent threat, obviously that has been
proven to be untruthful, the real reason we are there is because democracies want to spread democracy. However, like Huntington alluded to, sometimes it’s just not in the budget, and this was published in 1996.

This of course does not mean that democracies such as the U.S. don’t mean well, after all they are just trying to improve the quality of life for people around the world. Not only do democracies help with human rights issues and the suffering of the oppressed and the poor, but also helps the world economy by allowing more goods and services to be transferred between countries with alike governmental systems. Also, there is yet to be a war between two democracies, helping the world in the direction of world peace, all countries united under the same democratic system. Jowitt does not believe that all of the world will arrive at democracy anytime soon, or at all for that matter. Do to culture differences around the world he feels like some peoples are just not suited for Liberal democracy and feels that “a redrawing of the lines” will occur with the fall of the Soviet Union. It is true that many African countries and those in Eastern Asia and the Middle East of recessed back to their old forms of government. As Benson Onyeji says in his African History class at Manchester University, “you can’t tell a country how to govern themselves.”

It is in this where Jowitt’s ideas make sense, and brings this topic full circle. A country must chose it’s own destiny and it’s people, oppressed or not, must be allowed to make their own decisions. We can go into a third world country and overthrow a dictator, but where is the honor for the people in that country. During the French Revolution it was the common people, those who were oppressed by the king who rose
up and set their country in the right direction. It is up to the people to decide the direction their country will go, not a foreign government who thinks they know what is best.

The future of democracy is uncertain, perhaps Huntington will be correct and the number of democratic countries will fall, rise, and then fall again until the end of civilization. Maybe democracy will trump all other forms of government and we will have a global democracy. It is possible that democracy will one day fail and be replaced by a terrible form of government, or for that matter a better form. If you were to ask a Roman during the time of the Roman Empire if that system would last forever, he would tell you that Rome was too strong to fail and would never cease to exist. History tells us that throughout human history nothing lasts forever, and the world is constantly evolving. The same is true for comparative politics.