

Preface

The purpose of this volume is to examine the condition of democratic institutions and practices throughout the world. This includes not only the health of existing full and partial democracies, but also any movement in more authoritarian states toward or away from liberal-democratic values and practices. We are concerned not only with changes of regime type, which are few (the Philippines and Haiti being the only clear-cut cases in 1986–early 1987), but also with signs of strengthening or solidification of democratic institutions, efforts to establish more representative government, indications of loosening of authoritarian or absolutist claims to complete control, and their opposites—the weakening or degradation of democratic institutions, hardening of repression, or tightening of authoritarian regimes.

This survey covers all countries except a few ministates and nonself-governing territories during the year 1986 and the first two months of 1987. For descriptive purposes, the world is divided into eight more or less coherent regions, each treated by a specializing scholar: Western Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Near East, South Asia, East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and the Soviet-East European sphere.

In part these divisions represent simple geography, but they also correspond for the most part to cultural and political groupings. Western Europe is marked more by democratic, as distinguished from Marxist-Leninist or Communist, institutions than by longitude; it includes Greece but not Yugoslavia. North America is separated from Latin America both by politics and by the difference between

the dominantly English-speaking countries, settled mostly from northern Europe, and the Spanish- (or Portuguese-) speaking countries, settled from Iberia, with a large proportion of Amerindian blood in most places. Africa begins with the Sahara less because of politics than because North Africa belongs culturally, linguistically, and religiously to the Near Eastern world. South Asia, between Iran and Burma, is a fairly coherent geographic and cultural area. This cannot be said, however, of East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, which is the most heterogeneous of our regions. It includes absolutist governments, both Marxist (China and Vietnam) and non-Marxist (Burma and Brunei), democracies (Japan and Australia), and many shades between. It is also racially and culturally diverse, from Korea to New Zealand. The Soviet sphere, on the other hand, is politically bound (except for one-time members of the bloc Yugoslavia and Albania) and racially and culturally not very diverse (except for Asiatic parts of the Soviet Union and Mongolia).

This raises important questions about the relationship of political institutions to ethnic-cultural, economic, and geographic conditions. It is clearly not accidental that in each region a majority of states are of the same type (except in the grab-bag Asia-Pacific region). Political forms go to some extent with cultural similarity, and neighbors obviously influence one another.