

Democratization in Asia: Lessons from the Americas

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Pro-democracy activist Rome Rangsiman (C) holds up a Thailand flag as anti-government protesters gather during a protest to demand that the military government hold a general election by November, in Bangkok, Thailand, May 22, 2018. REUTERS/Athit Perawongmetha - RC1CA4507CEO

Democracy, or the concept of rule by the people, is the idea of a system of government where individual preferences become public policy. It is called "liberal democracy" when the system protects the rights of individuals. ^ t where

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Spain and Portugal.

With independence from Napoleonic Spain the victorious

Argentina wealthier by some measures than European countries including Italy. However, when Southern Cone economies were disengaged from international markets by WWI they stagnated. The result was the degeneration of political parties into patronage mills for party loyalists and widespread populist sentiment culminating in military coups.

Twentieth century Latin American political change was also spurred by indigenous ideas, perhaps most notably by the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), founded by Peruvian Victor Raul Haya de la Torre in Mexico City in 1924. It eventually became a continent-wide political movement with significant influence in the mid-century Democratic Action (AD) Party in Venezuela, the National Liberation (LN) Party in Costa Rica, the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) in the Dominican Republic and Peru's own APRA Party. Initially APRA-linked parties strongly opposed oligarchic interests, military dictators, and the interests of the United States. However, after engaging in myriad political compromise with local conservative forces and, by the time of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, which "discovered" them as the region's democratic left opposition, they had lost much of their appeal and had taken on the slow-moving and bureaucratic forms of their Southern Cone counterparts.

Another political form was created in three Latin American countries where social revolutions took place—in Mexico in 1910, in Bolivia in 1952, and in Cuba in 1959. In each of these countries the result of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing social order was the establishment of an "Official Party"—the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico; the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) in Bolivia; and Cuba's Communist Party. The PRI was founded in 1929 to stabilize Mexico's post-revolutionary politics. It held continuous power until 1990, by which time it had become a center-right political force and was rejected by Mexico's middle class. The MNR held power for only 14 years until 1968 when it was overthrown by Bolivia's armed forces. However, its impact on Bolivian society is visible in the current democratically elected government that has instituted far-reaching policies to engage Bolivia's alienated indigenous population with national political life. Cuba's Communist Party, which overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, continues to hold power evolving its distinctive political form. Gestures have been made to achieve a transition of power from Cuba's original revolutionary leadership and to diversify the nation's economy, but the official party retains strong control of national politics and shows no sign of abandoning its national project. Despite initial attempts, it has not lo

Despite this formally democratic structure, the politics of this “First Republic” were based on an alliance between politicians and big landowners (called *coronelismo*) that was periodically and unsuccessfully contested by popular movements led by, among others, junior military officers and messianic religious leaders. In 1930 a military junta led by General Getulio Vargas took power, promoting industrialization and modernization and supporting urban middle-class interests. The junta remained in control until 1945 when Vargas was democratically elected president. The democratic regime presided over an economic boom with expanded state capacities until the abrupt resignation of President Janio Quadros and the leftist politics of his Vice-President Joao Goulart led to a 1964 military coup supported by traditional Brazilian politicians and the government of the United States. The military government lasted until 1985, beginning with another economic boom but ending in shambles of inflation, national debt, increasing inequality, and anti-government insurgency. Since 1985 Brazil has elected five men and one woman to the presidency and has had three vice-presidents assume power, one due to a death (Jose Sarney succeeded deceased Tancredo Neves in 1985), and two, due to impeachments (Itamar Franco succeeded impeached Fernando Collor in 1992 and Michel Temer replaced impeached Dilma Rousseff in 2016). Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994 to 2002) and Luiz Ignacio Lula DaSilva (2002 to 2010) served out their terms although DaSilva was later prosecuted for corruption and was thus ineligible to run for office in 2018. Despite this political volatility, through policies initiated by the Cardoso government and continued thereafter, Brazil survived significant financial crises and brought tens of millions of its citizens out of poverty. This took place despite a legislature fragmented by representatives from more than three dozen political parties and massive political corruption that was unearthed by resolute prosecutors. In 2018 Jair Bolsonaro, a conservative populist, was expected to be elected president in a second round of voting, promising a new start for Brazilian politics and an end to corruption. Whether Bolsonaro moves Brazil's politics into illiberality and whether he is able to move Brazil out of economic doldrums caused by huge public sector debt, is of great concern to a nation of more than 200 million people with expectations for personal freedom, security, and prosperity.

With the engagement of the United States and European powers with Latin American economies in the early 20th century, foreign influences competed to shape their political character. This was particularly true for Latin America's armed forces. The United States, Germany, France, and Britain sent military missions to help these institutions professionalize and, at the same time, conservative political elites used their armed forces coercively to restrain, often brutally, middle-class political aspirations. When post-WWII attempts by Latin American nations failed to produce economic prosperity through democratic means and the Cuban Revolution appeared to be providing basic public goods such as health care and education to non-elite groups, a series of coups d'état took place starting in 1964 with the overthrow of President Joao Goulart by Brazil's armed forces. By 1979 all countries on the Latin American mainland from Guatemala to Chile, with the exception of Venezuela, were ruled by military governments. The motivations for these take-overs were many, including elite fears of abrupt loss of privilege, as had happened in Cuba, and military fear that political systems could not continue to provide the officer corps a respectable post-retirement middle class life. The public policies of the military governments varied from state capitalism initiated

in Brazil to Chile's free-marketting, to Peru's experiment with Christian Socialism, to gangsterism and illegal activities in Argentina. Civilian rule began to be restored in 1979 first by Ecuadorian forces which had taken control in the face of fierce violence in its two proximate neighbors – a politically-initiated brutal civil war in Colombia and the Sendero Luminoso insurgency in Peru. By 1991, with the election of Patricio Alwyn as president of L yn a

and other documents making public military assets and military budgets, necessary information for effective subordination of the armed forces to civilian authority. Further, with funds reserved for military pensions and somewhat improved salary scales for security forces, there are fewer incentives for the people with guns to use them to try to advance the interests of their own professional institutions.

A fourth factor mitigating against retreat from democracy has been the resolution of border disputes between countries and the ending of intra-country civil wars. Marxist insurgencies in Southern Cone countries were a pretext for military intervention in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay in the 1960s. Civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, and Peru encouraged authoritarian responses to these threats to domestic peace, and border disputes, including Argentina and Chile, respectively. At

national executives increased. In contrast, support for elections as a way to select leaders remained stable, and support for the expression of minority viewpoints in politics increased. One way to interpret these findings is that citizens are frustrated with their political systems' inability to provide citizen security, to prevent corruption, and to generate economic development, but their solution, reported by AmericasBarometer, can be interpreted as greater citizen participation.

Latin America has been seen traditionally as the region in which a hegemonic nation (the
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Having similar political systems makes it easier for n

The nature of national politics and processes of democratization are diverse both in Latin America and in Southeast Asia. One way to demonstrate this is to simply list seventeen propositions that can be derived from the above reflections on the histories of democratization in Latin America. They are that democratization in Latin America and Southeast Asia:

- Can be reinforced by democratic nations providing public goods that allow for growing economic prosperity and for national and personal security
- Can be reinforced by region-wide agreements that oblige nations to sanction disruptions of democratic governance
- Can be reinforced by national macro-economic policies that provide economic stability domestically and in global context
- Can be improved by positive civil-military relations that enhance civilian capacity to manage and set priorities for national armed forces
- Can be improved by eliminating border disputes and civil wars, both of which can generate forces which undermine government support
- Can be improved by strengthening the rule of law thus providing predictability in the processes through which public preferences become public policy
- Can be improved by domestic and international transparency thus revealing threats to democratization before they can be put into action
- Are threatened by the success of democratization because social frustration increases as conditions improve
- Are threatened by the success of democratization because the state will arrogate too much power to itself to reduce military privilege
- Are threatened by the success of democratization since civilian democracy will go inc

The classic concept is that of "cross-cutting cleavages" most notably developed by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, who explain, based on the classic work of Georg Simmel, that a cross-cutting cleavage exists when groups on one dimension of interests overlap with groups on another dimension of interests. "Cleavages" may include any number of divisions in society including religious, civil-military, racial, and political (liberal-conservative). Formally, when members of a group on a given dimension of interest belong to groups on a second dimension of interest with members of other groups from the first dimension of interest cleavage, the cleavage would be cross-cutting. In contrast, if individuals were arrayed in the same distinct groups for a wide range of dimensions of interests, the divisions would be "reinforcing," thus generating conflict and eventually autocracy. If countries hope to develop sustainable processes of democratization, their interest cleavages, reflected in the above effects, need to be "cross-cutting."

The newer concept is that of multiplexity, developed by Amitav Acharya. Multiplexity in international relations is the number of separate connections between any two actors (state or non-state), i.e., the interaction of exchanges within and across relationships. It is to be contrasted with multipolarity which assumed the primacy of great powers. Acharya argues that, "As with a multiplex cinema... a multiplex world gives audiences a wider choice of plots, actors, producers, and directors." He also argues that, with the decline of the American-dominated international order, this multiplexity will become increasingly complex with more choices being available to an increasing number of actors across more issue areas (not just trade, but also environment, security, social development, governance, and connectivity) and at multiple layers of governance. Multiplexity will give nations in Southeast Asia and Latin America more opportunities to resolve political issues without necessarily needing to be dependent on a specific set of great powers. Democratization will be more sustainable if national interest cleavages are cross-cutting and if ~~it~~ will be ~~it~~ powers. Dd

