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Joseph Derdzinski

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Review

Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972–2006

Jan Teorell. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
220 pp.

Joseph Derdzinski*

Just as the Color Revolutions of the last decade did, the Arab Spring once again brings the concept of democratization to the forefront of public discourse. They remind us yet once again how few countries have made at least the initial transition from authoritarianism, and how many more there are to democratize. Yet, having said this, the pool of countries that have liberalized politically and socially has grown tremendously in the past 40 years, yielding a fertile universe of cases for study and analysis. Jan Teorell at Sweden's Lund University, in his compact but rich *Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972–2006*, capitalizes on both the array of cases and emerging analytical practices to present, ultimately, broad lessons for the promotion of democracy.

Teorell analyzes the variables that impact democratization through the infrequently seen, but welcomed, fusion of qualitative and quantitative assessment. The five substantive chapters each explores one of the major categories of factors that are broadly understood to impact democratization: social determinants, such as religion and

* **Joseph Derdzinski** is a senior international development adviser, a lecturer in political science, and is active in promoting the care of persons with developmental disabilities. Joseph was a U.S. Air Force officer, retiring after 22 years as a special investigator and ultimately a senior faculty member at the United States Air Force Academy. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Denver's Korbel School of International Studies and a Master of Arts in East European Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Much of his research and consulting centers on the democratic consolidation processes of post-authoritarian states.

population size; economic factors, including economic stratification, crises, and modernization; international dynamics, such as regional organizations; and popular mobilizations, especially non-violent resistance movements. Reflecting the most contemporary discussions in the field, Teorell's mixed quantitative-qualitative approach succeeds in deepening understanding of how democracy advances and retreats.

Quantitatively, Teorell bases his results on regression analysis, employing year-to-year changes in an established democracy index as his dependent variable, while various potential democratization factors as the independent variable. Teorell's application based on large-n evidence (when feasible) doesn't stretch the bounds of applied statistics. Rather, his consistent application across the range of variables in his five chapters provides a sensibility that each variable is tested with more or less the same rigor. Combined with the nine cases studies interspersed throughout the chapters, Teorell develops an analytical paradigm to appeal more broadly to both "quantophiles" and the less numerate as well. The combined statistical and case-oriented approach is gaining traction in the social sciences, though as Teorell rightly asserts, "is rarely put into practice."

Teorell provides a variety of fascinating, and at times counterintuitive, conclusions to the array of democratization factors. As he argues it, socioeconomic modernization, in which he includes industrialization, urbanization, education, and media proliferation, coupled with economic freedom, was a strong factor in preventing democratic backsliding. Contrary to popular understanding, many social and economic factors, among them, surprisingly, resource-rich countries, were not strongly correlated with third wave democratization. Regime type, notably one-party and military, did matter in terms of responsiveness to shocks to the status quo. Most notable for those interested in the promotion of peaceable political transitions, his findings that non-violent mass movements, "neighbor diffusion" (the idea that propinquity to democratizing states sparks transitions), and democratic regional organizations are more effective for fostering durable democracies can only bolster arguments in favor of ongoing efforts to promote liberal governance abroad.

Determinants of Democratization contributes clearly to the extant work on post-authoritarian political transitions. Its lucid prose style should be penetrable to a wide audience: from busy policymakers seeking best-practices to shape the direction of foreign assistance, to those actually living in states who seek to move toward more responsive

and open governance. Graduate students and academics not steeped in the democratization literature will certainly find value in Teorell's encapsulation of the major understandings of the causal variables and in the unabashed ambition to apply conclusions to the universe of problems. Moreover, as alluded to already, the structured approach to each chapter—roughly, a literature review, including clarification of terms and concepts; empirical analysis; and brief case studies—provides a reassuring rhythm as one proceeds from chapter to chapter. For example, in his analysis of the impact of popular mobilization, Teorell hits perfectly the major dichotomy in the transitions literature between mass and elite movements, summarizing well the major understandings of the impacts of each transition mode on the success of democratic projects. He follows with a brief analysis of the short-term (i.e., one year following the events) impact of non-violent movements, concluding these movements do have a significant impact on democracy's success. Demonstrating an inherent weakness of large-n analysis, Teorell supplements his conclusions with case analyses of the Philippines, South Africa, and Nepal. This particular chapter underscores the strength of Teorell's dual approach, though a few recurring aspects are worth noting.

Reversing Mark Twain's adage about not having time to write a short letter, Teorell seeks a tightly-written and theoretically dense work, which requires careful choices about what goes in and what stays out. Because the literature review that frames each chapter are by necessity short, Teorell could not reflect the universe of critiques. For example, during his discussion of the social determinants that shape the practice of politics, there is no mention of political culture (which he places briefly under in his chapter on modernization). Outside of institutional design, few factors have endured in academic discourse as long as the relationship between political culture and behavior. Case selection for Teorell is also not immune from critique. A more even balancing of the division of cases across the chapters, as well as cases that could have been more interesting and enlightening (modern Serbia's ouster of Milosevic, for example, for social mobilization). These critiques, however, should not detract from the overall importance of Teorell's work.

Determinants of Democratization exceptional approach, style and breadth should serve to spark debate and promote effective policies. The billions of people around the world who have yet to experience the benefits (and yes, the failings) of liberal governance deserve scholarship that seeks to improve their chances for achieving a more

just political system. Teorell's greatest contribution ultimately may be that he nudged the debate in this direction.