

Democracy Protests: Origins, Features and Significance
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Key Points: “Democracy protests” are mass public demonstrations in which the participants demand countries adopt or uphold democratic elections. Democracy is defined in a minimal sense in which there are no significant legal or non-legal barriers preventing political parties, candidates, or voters from participating in elections.

- 310 democracy occurred between 1989 and 2011
- 40% (Africa) and 37% (Asia); 13% (Latin America and the Caribbean) and 11% (Europe)

Chapter 2. Characteristics of Democracy Protests

This chapter describes in detail various characteristics of democracy protests in the post-Cold War period -- where they occur, who organized them, how long they typically last, what specific demands they make on governments, and what strategies they employ to achieve their goals.

Key Figures:

- Parties/candidates and their supporters organized a majority of democracy protests between 1989 and 2011.
- Almost two-thirds of all protests in this period attracted less than ten thousand participants.
- Between 1989 and 2011, 43% of democracy protests were organized in opposition to electoral fraud and manipulation and approximately 30% of protests demanded that governments make elections more open and competitive.
- Nearly two-thirds of all democracy protests that took place between 1989 and 2011 ended in three days or fewer.
- Protesters acted violently at least one rally in 45% of the cases of democracy protests between 1989 and 2011.

Chapter 3. Relating Economic Crises to Democracy

This chapter lays out my theoretical argument about the relationship between economic crises and democracy protests, and the relationship, in turn, between these two phenomena and democratization. In brief, I argue that crises increase discontent with governments, and authoritarianism in particular, and also increase support for opposition candidates who are more likely to organize protests, especially during election periods. Economic crises are also shown to create chances for opportunists to capitalize on anti-regime sentiment and mobilize support against governments. However, if crises are severe and protests concomitantly large, governments are likely to be compelled to make accommodations with protestors, regardless of their likelihood of retaining office.

Chapter 4. Analyzing the Rise of Democracy Protests

This chapter demonstrates statistically the relationship between democracy protests and economic crises – as measured by objective economic indicators - growth, unemployment, inflation, and corruption, as well as subjective measures of economic well-being taken from the Gallup Worldview Polls. It also measures the relationship between crises and the outcome of elections – a key trigger of democracy protests.

The analysis covers 1989-2011 and shows that higher rates of growth and lower rates of corruption are significantly associated with a lower likelihood of democracy protests to occur, while higher rates of unemployment, including youth unemployment, are significantly associated with a higher likelihood of protests to occur. The effects of inflation are essentially flat, but more negative evaluations of one's own standard of living are also significantly associated with a higher likelihood of protests to occur. Negative evaluations of one's country's overall economic conditions are also associated with a higher likelihood of democracy protests to occur although the effect is not significant potentially because of the limited coverage of these data.

In contrast to modernization theories, the analysis also demonstrates that more economic development is associated with a lower likelihood of democracy protests to occur, as well as a lower likelihood of these protests to arise in the midst of economic crises. Not only is GDP per capita not significant, but neither are the measures for education, urbanization, internet, telephones, and cell phones in most models.

Chapter 5. Analyzing Elections as Trigger Events

This chapter demonstrates statistically how elections mediate the effect of economic crises on democracy protests. According to the analysis, elections are associated with a higher likelihood of democracy protests to occur, particularly when economic conditions are poor in countries. Elections are also associated with a significantly higher likelihood of democracy protests to

occur when they are fraud-ridden and result in an incumbent victory, especially, in the case of the latter, when economic conditions are poor. At the same time, however, electoral fraud is significantly related to higher margins of victory for incumbents, which, in turn, are related to a lower likelihood of democracy protests to occur.

Chapter 6. Historical Trends in Government Responses

This chapter describes in detail how governments responded to democracy protests in the post-Cold War period – whether they ignored them, accommodated them economically or politically, opposed them peacefully (e.g., with restrictions on the media, internet, and public demonstrations), and/or whether governments repressed them with police or military force.

Key Figures:

- Between 1989 and 2011, governments violently repressed two-thirds of all democracy protests that occurred in this period using either military or police force.
- Governments non-violently repressed approximately one-third of them.
- Governments made concessions to slightly less than a quarter of all democracy protests in this period

Chapter 7. Analyzing Political Accommodation

This chapter demonstrates statistically the factors that influence how governments respond to democracy protests. The analysis examines 310 democracy protests between 1989-2011. Consistent with my argument, the analysis shows that governments are more likely to accommodate larger protests (which are more likely to occur during crises), but that other characteristics, including their demands, cohesiveness, tactics, and so forth do not. Other factors that the analysis examines include: the military strength of the regime, economic inequality, capital mobility, democracy, regime type, and so forth.

Chapter 8. Historical Trends in Democratization

It also describes whether there are changes in countries' democracy scores (as measured by the Polity Index) the year after democracy protests occurred, and whether these changes were durable or not.

Key Figures:

- 23% of the 215 cases of democratic transitions that occurred between 1989 and 2011 were preceded by democracy protests.
- Approximately, 12% of the 257 cases of democratic reforms between 1989 and 2011 were preceded by democracy protests.

Chapter 9. Analyzing Democratization

This chapter analyzes whether or not democracy protests lead to changes in countries' democracy scores (as measured by the Polity Index) within one year of the protests. The results substantiate the findings of the previous chapter, showing that very large protests, especially those that overthrow authoritarian regimes, lead to durable changes in democracy.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

References:

Dawn Brancati. 2016. *Democracy Protests: Origins, Features, and Significance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dawn Brancati 2014. Pocketbook Protests: Explaining the Worldwide Emergence of Pro-democracy Protests. *Comparative Political Studies* 47(11): 1503-1530.