



PacificMUN 2017

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Backgrounder Guide

Topic A: Revolutionary Transitions



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Dare to Speak | February 24–26 2017

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Dear delegates,

My name is Rio Leung, and I have been granted the distinct pleasure of serving as your Director of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee at PacificMUN 2017. Currently in Grade 12 at Vancouver College, I am heavily involved in Model United Nations, attending many hotel and day conferences as a delegate and staff member. I remember with great enthusiasm my first delegate experience, with the mixture of nervousness and adrenaline rushing from head to toe as I conquered my fears of public speaking. I believe that Model United Nations has helped me develop into a more confident and social individual.

Throughout my career in Model United Nations, I have concluded that being prepared for a conference by researching and writing position papers will allow for an educational and enjoyable experience. For all members participating in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, especially those that are beginners, having resources readily available to you as opposed to hastily searching for information during committee session is key to your success as a delegate.

Model United Nations has enabled me to connect with many other passionate individuals, and create bonds that may last a lifetime. I have also amassed an arsenal of ideas and knowledge about current events through every single conference I have attended. I, along with your Assistant Director Kelly Kwan and your Chair Jan Lim, wish you the best of luck in your writing and research, and will be looking forward to seeing each and every one of you in February.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at specpol@pacificmun.org.

Best Regards,

Rio Leung
Director of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee
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Committee Overview

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, or SPECPOL is the Fourth Committee of the General Assemblies of the United Nations (UN). It was established in 1993, with its mandate focused on “subjects related to decolonization, Palestinian refugees and human rights, mine action, outer space, public information, atomic radiation and University for Peace.”¹ Including all 193 Member States, SPECOL is united in helping alleviate developing countries’ dependence on former colonizing powers. It has ties to the Special Political Committee formed in 1947 dealing with issues relating to international politics and security. SPECPOL was an ad-hoc committee until 1978, when it became the Fourth Committee after replacing the Trusteeship Committee. When the United Nations declared the time period of 1990-2000 to be the “International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism,” SPECPOL was formally modified to become the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

This committee is an advisory committee, following the trend of the other General Assembly Committees. SPECPOL recommends courses of action to the other specialized agencies, governments of Member States, international and nongovernmental organizations, and the Security Council. It does not have the arbitrated power to pass a binding resolution nor take military action in any circumstance.

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee has a specific and unique role in the scope of the United Nations. While many other committees have a goal of resolving current global issues, SPECPOL aims to heal countries from the impact of colonization and other troubles in the past. The objective of this committee is to bring forth the benefits of independence and self-reliance that have been hidden in the shadows of many countries, and ensure that all countries worldwide are economically, culturally, and socially liberated.

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>



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Topic Introduction

“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”
-John F. Kennedy²

Democracy is a core value and principle of the United Nations. It has been on the rise ever since the turn of the 19th century, and continues to trend upwards on a global scale. While democratization has grown strong in many parts of Europe, Latin America, and East Asia, other parts of the world remain under authoritarian rule in varying degrees. Nonetheless, the change to democracy is riddled with violent demonstrations and protests, riots, and civil wars.

As shown by, but not limited to, the revolutions in the Arab Spring in the beginning of the 21st century, the absolute monarchies and authoritarian regimes in many countries directly lead to the destruction of regimes in horrific ways. The implications of these violent democratic transitions will result in negative effects on the quality of the emerging democracies. While achieving independence from tyrannical rule by any means possible may seem to be the best option, is it worth giving up a sturdy system of civil liberties?

More issues arise with the security of the future of democracy in recently revolutionized nations. Countries need to be able to keep their radically new democratic government in check as well as vigilantly scrutinize outside forces with proper safety measures and subsequent planning, or else chaos will ensue once again.

² <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/democratization.html>



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Timeline

1945	The end of the Second World War marks an ultimate victory for democracy in Europe.
1948	Israel declares independence, the first full democracy in the Middle East ³ .
1957	The Eisenhower Doctrine ⁴ begins a policy of American democracy in the Middle East and North Africa.
1966	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is signed ⁵ .
2003	Saddam Hussein is dethroned ⁶ , paving the way to a new constitution for Iraq.
2004	The Orange Revolution (2 months of non-violent protests) spurs action towards a democratic society in Ukraine.
2010	The uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa begin ⁷ .
2010	Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire, sparking the revolution of the Arab Spring ⁸ .
2011	Tawakkol Karman from Yemen is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work organizing peaceful protests ⁹ .
2011	The Occupy movement demonstrates participatory democracy as a notable feature of their general assemblies ¹⁰ .
2015	Tunisia becomes the first Arab country classified as free.

³ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-israel/>

⁴ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/eisenhower-doctrine>

⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.ibuzzle.com/editorials/4-10-2004-52758.asp>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/01/arab-spring-five-years-on/>

⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/mohamed-bouazizi-arab-spring-worth-dying-151228093743375.html>

⁹ <http://nobelwomensinitiative.org/meet-the-laureates/tawakkol-karman/>

¹⁰ <http://occupywallst.org/about/>



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Historical Analysis

Democracy has been the staple of many cultures and countries for many years. Although there have been snippets of change from an authoritarian government throughout the ages, including the Waves of Democracy, as coined by Samuel P. Huntington, the success of World War Two resulted in effective advancements around the world. Following the Allied victory in 1945, democratization flourished. The beginning of the Cold War affected the Middle East greatly, in terms of freedom and dependence of nations. The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, which provided U.S. forces in order “to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism,” was really issued to prevent the growing Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria, as well as the increased Arab hostility towards the west.

In 1962, there were 36 recognised democracies in the world. The Third Wave of Democracy took place in 1974, with the democratic transitions beginning in Portugal¹¹ with the “Carnation Revolution.”¹² This revolution started with a military coup by military soldiers who opposed the dictatorship, but soon turned into a widely popular instance of civil resistance. Almost no shots were fired, and carnations were placed in the barrels of the rifles that the army men used. This nonviolent revolt was unanticipated, but had extremely positive results, leading to the collapse of the Estado Novo regime.

Along with the Third wave came governmental shifts in Latin America, Asia Pacific, and Eastern Europe. However, many of the newer democracies were not fully stable. This is due to economic instability, political dominance, heavy military interference in public events, and so on. While there are electoral fixtures available, democracy that is established and solidified is still to be achieved in many countries. As well, nations that have just undergone an extreme transformation to the other end of the political spectrum are also at risk of backsliding. These momentary lapses in government are detrimental to the development of countries in their transition process.

The most current wave of democracy, also known as the Fourth Wave is associated with the demise of several dictatorships in Middle East and North Africa. More commonly known as the Arab Spring, this revolutionary wave of both violent and nonviolent protests began with the Tunisian Revolution in 2010. One of the first major protests was Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire¹³ due to the unfair treatment that he and the people of Tunisia had gone through. He became one of the catalysts for the rapid succession of uprisings that occurred almost immediately after. Soon after the president of Tunisia was overthrown, the people of Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Libya attempted to end their autocratic dynasty as well. In these six

¹¹ http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/cv/Kurzman_Waves_of_Democratization.pdf

¹² <http://adst.org/2015/04/the-carnation-revolution-a-peaceful-coup-in-portugal/>

¹³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/mohamed-bouazizi-arab-spring-worth-dying-151228093743375.html>

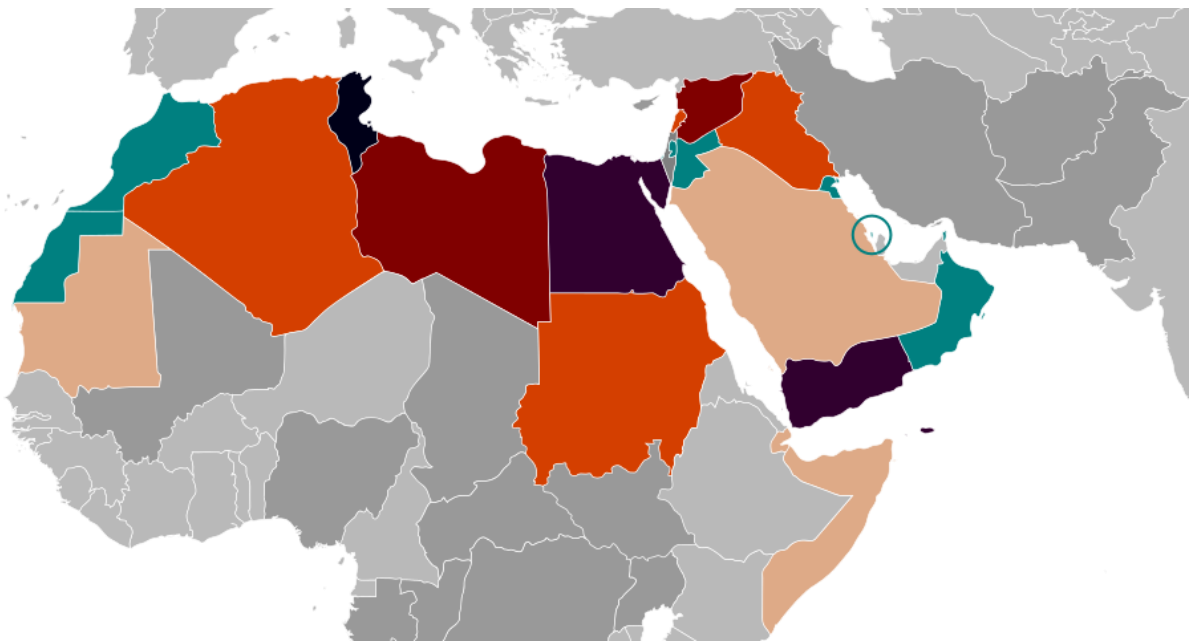


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Historical Analysis

countries, the death toll after the protests exceeded 210,000¹⁴ and both Syria and Libya entered a civil war.

While there were many cases of violent revolutions, pacifists like Tawakkol Karman, who was able to organize many peaceful protests in Yemen, brought about nonviolent change and global recognition to her home country. However, the Yemeni Civil war did commence not long after, so better democratic transitions are still necessary in countries that may seem to have converted well. As well, Samuel Aranda was able to capture a heartbreaking image of a Yemeni woman holding an injured loved one, and this also sparked worldwide acknowledgement and support to the situation in the Middle East. The Tunisian Revolution, or the Jasmine Revolution¹⁵ mainly consisted of intensive civil resistance campaigns which resulted ultimately in the end of the Ben Ali government. This included many workers going on strikes, the publishing of leaked confidential documents detailing the corruption of the Tunisian regime, and self-immolation. It is important to note that Tunisia suffered one of the fewest death tolls during the Arab Spring but had the best outcome out of all the nations that underwent protests.



- Government overthrown multiple times
- Government overthrown
- Civil war
- Major protests
- Minor protests
- Protests and governmental changes
- Other protests and militant action outside the Arab world

¹⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/03/fallen-leaves-arab-spring-150310060732982.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Jasmine-Revolution>



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Current Situation

Currently, the issue with democratization lies mainly in the countries associated with the Arab Spring. However, the Arab Spring has since then evolved into the Arab Winter, which consists of many regional civil wars, economic decline, and religious discrimination across the Middle East and North Africa. In the time period of four years, nearly a quarter of a million soldiers and civilians have died, and countless millions of refugees have been displaced.

While Tunisia has become fully free, other surrounding countries have not been so lucky. In Libya, after Muammar Gaddafi was killed, the situation became worse than it was before the revolution. The bloody uprisings did manage to end with the death of a ruthless dictator, but the rebel militias soon began to turn on each other while Islamist parties were defeated in elections under the supervision of the United Nations. This soon turned into a three way war between the current government forces, the rogue Libya Dawn party, and ISIS. Blame is being thrown around by Libyans, who blame the North American Treaty Organization for their lack of political support, the non-existence of democratic institutions and proper infrastructure, and even their country's tribal structure.

Meanwhile in Syria, after the battle between the government and rebel forces escalated, and civil war ensued. The Syrian Civil War pits the Sunni majority against the president Bashar al-Assad's Alawite Shia sect, these being the main two branches of Islam in Syria. As well, the Islamic State, a jihadist group with violent ideologies, has take control of a large part of Syria. With all this chaos occurring, the Arab Spring uprising billowed into a proxy war. Both Iran and Russia have been supporting the government of President Assad by providing military advisors and weapons, as well as carrying out attacks themselves. On the other hand, the Sunni have attracted help from international superpowers like the US, UK, and France.

In the Arab world, things are starting to change. Tunisia's successful revolution is revelled as a beacon of hope; instead of falling into anarchy, the country pushed for a consensual process of developing new social contracts that encompass every single citizen's rights. Granted, Tunisia still faces serious economic, security, and social problems, but the people are free from authoritarian rule. The citizens of other countries still involved in war and rebellion have taken to the media, and are taking a stand in the fight against dictatorship. Countries are also beginning to reform their economic systems, as oil starts to diminish and prices fall. Many North African and Arab nations are being forced to shift towards a model that puts emphasis on both investment and productivity. Technology is also playing a large part in the economic change; it is estimated that over 240 million Arabs, with the majority being the youth, have access to the Internet and other forms of communication¹⁶. Experts are predicting that

¹⁶ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/05/13/improving-governance-in-arab-world-pub-63586>



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Current Situation

technology will singlehandedly facilitate the sharing and harnessing of knowledge. It can speed up development in the torn and broken countries that took part in the Arab Spring, and help to provide stability, transparency, and awareness. As well, technology is vital in the stoppage of civil wars in neighbouring countries, so that effective and credible political institutions can be built.

As certain nations gradually move towards a less totalitarian rule, others that have been considered free and democratic long before the Arab Spring are being criticized by Western countries, like Israel has been. "The Economist", an esteemed news journal, listed Tunisia as the only democracy in the Middle East, and dropped Israel down to a regime that only maintains a democratic facade¹⁷. However, arguments against this show how Israel's judicial system has just sentenced a former prime minister to prison for ties to corruption, and the trials for many government officials are free from any influences or bias. As well, Israel practices administrative detentions. While this may seem contrary to freedom, each detention is reviewed by a judge, and detainees also are able to appeal to the court against a wrongful detention. Democracy is not solely based upon the right to elect government representatives; political institutions and the law itself have a huge impact on the citizens and the way the state will function.

In Eastern Europe, Belarus has also been under the impact of a dictator, and with little hopes of resurfacing. Dictator Alexander Lukashenko runs a country that is the last of its kind in Europe - a totalitarian government right in the midst of the skirmish between Ukraine and Russia. However, the recent election which kept Lukashenko in power was widely considered as corrupt, with many instances of violations by the officials counting the ballots. Any revolutions, peaceful or violent, are immediately squashed by the KGB, the national intelligence agency of Belarus, and the right to free speech is almost a dream. However, the main problem lies with fear. The influences of Russia have created growing terror of the annexation of Belarus, and the country is divided. No matter the nation, and despite any situation, outside influences must be stopped in order for proper democracy to take its place. Many countries are on the verge of a breakthrough, but lack the support, security, and infrastructure to make realistic change.

¹⁷<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Has-Tunisia-replaced-Israel-as-the-Middle-Easts-only-genuine-democracy-449905>



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United Nations Involvement

Ever since the United Nations was founded in 1945, one of its main goals has been to foster and strengthen democracy worldwide. Supporting democracy in both developed and developing nations through committees like the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women¹⁸ has been a mandate for many years. The activities carried out by these branches of the UN are closely linked to issues regarding human rights, development, and peace and security. Promoting the rights of humans, providing help with elections and political infrastructure, making access to justice systems easily accessible, and advocating for equal participation in political life are just a few tasks of the UN.

However, since the UN is both universal and impartial, it is unable to provide any sort of model for democracy or promote democracy in a certain way. However, democratization should be key in every culture and tradition, and the UN has been part of this change in many nations. The Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948 states that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government". Adopted unanimously by the UN, this commitment to democracy has been followed for many years.

Using Tunisia's recent revolution as an example, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon pledged full support for the transition to democracy. "The United Nations is ready to provide all support to the Tunisian Government and people, particularly in the area of the electoral process and constitution drafting and helping the Tunisian Government to restore the rule of law and promote human rights, promote gender equality,"¹⁹ Ban Ki-moon reassured Tunisia. The expertise of the UN covers the challenges of supporting elections, promoting transparency, slowing corruption, equal rights for women and their participation in politics, and building back the economy. While Tunisia is the only country in the Middle East that has successfully undergone revolution, the UN has provided aid in fostering its democratic transitions.

The United Nations has also played a large role in conflict prevention, especially in the Middle East. There are a number of peacekeeping missions deployed in the region to maintain truces and promote security and resolution of conflicts. While these missions have a great deal of political support, in the Middle East and North Africa, a resolution has much less impact due to the current situation. The 1967 Security Council Resolution calling for the "Withdrawal of

¹⁸ <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/democracy/>

¹⁹ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37860#.V7-HzZMrLVo>

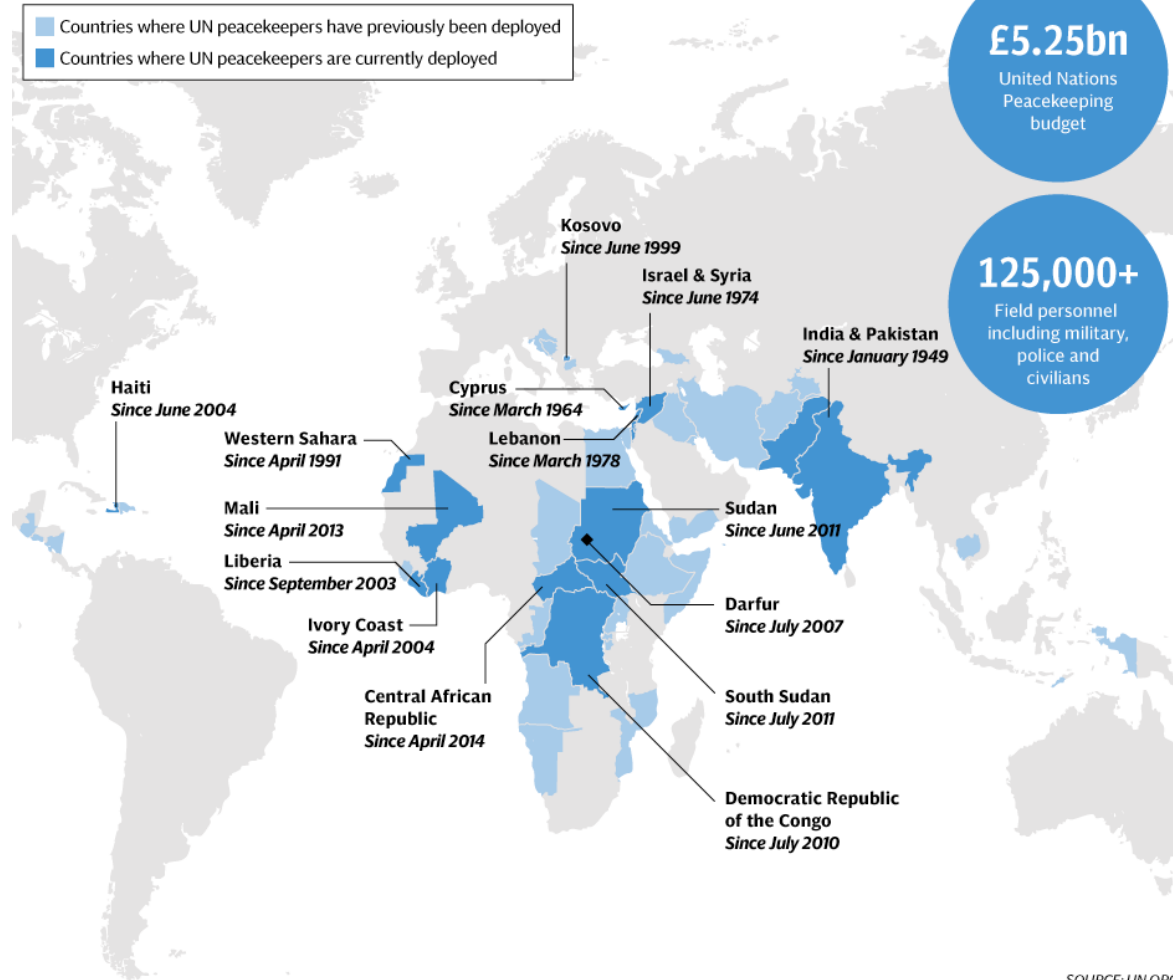


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United Nations Involvement

Israeli armed forces from territories occupied²⁰ was not enforced, and many other interventions since have been less than satisfactory.

Where UN peacekeepers have been deployed



²⁰ http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/meaning_of_242.html



With the shift from authoritarian rule to democracy through the past and the present, there have been a variety of ways that this change has been implemented. While each country reaches a point where fair elections, civil rights, and majority rule presides, nations develop at their own pace. How a government and its people approach freedom and prosperity is also quite disparate; however, there are some key ways that balance can be attained.

Supporting Peaceful Protests

Nonviolent mass mobilizations have proved in the past to lead to a civil society. While peaceful revolutions may seem tedious and unfulfilling, the use of violence against the state would only create overwhelming brutality on both sides. However, there are certain countries that have overcome a violent beginning to undertake successful democratization, using Namibia as a precedent. Nations like Belarus are so engrossed in totalitarianism that numerous nonviolent protests have proved to be fruitless, and an uprising may be necessary in this extreme case. A violent movement, no matter the integrity behind it, shows power taken by force, as opposed to a naturally democratic expression of public opinion through a peaceful protest. Gauging the situation and supporting appropriately is crucial to the transition.

Stimulating Economic Change and Establishing a Solid Middle Class

Economic crisis has, in the past, led to regime changes. With examples in Brazil, Indonesia, and Mexico, when corruption and debt become exceedingly transparent to the public and to the world stage, transformations are bound to take place. With inflation running its course, and the government struggling to keep an authoritarian coalition, the citizens of a nation will cry for change, and the international community with them. Economic trouble does not happen at the push of a button; the global network and the UN must work together to trigger monetary pressures in tyrannical nations. Expanding a middle class is also essential to democratization. With a robust middle class comes higher economic security and higher overall wealth, with less backsliding to dictatorship once again. With this being said, economic safety nets must be put in place, and nations need to be aware of the challenges of restructuring a country without sufficient income and infrastructure.

Decentralizing of Government Powers

Distributing power to both regional and local levels can result in a sturdy emerging democracy. A high concentration of authority in one region is often dangerous to countries in the midst of revolution, or beginning to recover from a dictator. The process is very legislative and federally heavy, with the possibility of countries moving towards the election of regional leaders and diminishing the power of the central government. As well, an election process for local representatives comes hand in hand with power being distributed to different states or provinces in the country. Be that as it may, a move towards federalism might create tensions between different provinces with deep opposing religious or sectarian views.



Using examples from around the world, in the late 1990's, Poland's early reformers gave local districts control over a large chunk of the national budget to put to use in areas like education, infrastructure and health care.²¹ This had a positive effect, increasing independent sources of revenue. However, in less culturally homogenous countries like Mexico and Indonesia, the devolution of power has created even more corruption and single party domination. Before the shift, only the government officials could be bribed, as they held all the authority. Now, even the lesser regional officials have the chance to demand payment for certain corrupt ventures. The decentralizing of government powers has also resulted in even more domination of a single leader, or party, as before, many nations had regions in which a totalitarian ministry could not exert its influence. Devolution has its benefits and implications, and solely depends on the administrative and bureaucratic accountability of the various regions within a state.

Democratic Transition Case Studies

by Stanley Lucas

Successful

- Chile: Overcame one of the most brutal dictators to now having successful power transitions, economic growth & rule of law
- Colombia: Successful transition to legitimate economy; focus on education – future oriented; negotiating an FTA with the US
- Dominican Republic: Economic growth inclusion in regional CAFTA agreement giving access to export growth
- Brazil: Extraordinary economic growth – poised to be a global economic leader; stable government
- El Salvador: Out of a civil war, successful elections, power transitions and economic growth

Failed

- Haiti: Endemic corruption and poverty; poorest country in the western hemisphere; controlled by small group of elites
- Venezuela: Elections only produced a dictator; no media freedom; despite oil – stalled economic development
- Nicaragua: Second poorest country of the western hemisphere mired in corruption, rigged elections and no viable democratic opposition

Latin America provides many recent examples of successful and failed transitions – relevant “lessons learned”. Tunisia has added challenge of religious and regional influences to balance.

²¹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/1990-06-01/polands-economic-reform>



Democratic Countries

These countries want and are promoting democracy for the international community. They believe that a republic yields the most prosperity, and facilitates economic growth. By sharing ideas and participating in peacekeeping missions, free nations are supporting the shift on the political spectrum in transitioning countries.

Countries that are Transitioning from Dictatorship

Newly developing nations that have recently undergone considerable restructuring support the transition, but do not have the funds or manpower to actively provide and build infrastructure in other countries that are in a similar position. While the change may have come about in a variety of violent or peaceful ways, these countries want to continue their development and further enhance their economic, political and social systems in order to become a full-fledged democracy.

Countries still under Authoritarian Rule

Countries such as Belarus, Cuba, North Korea, and many others in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remain under a dictatorship. Many nations in these positions have a slew of citizens that want change, but have been constantly shut down by the government. These countries are plagued by outside influences and ruthless officials with absolute power that want the nation to stay as an autocracy.



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Discussion Questions/Further Reading

1. What possible consequences can come from inciting a change to democracy?
2. How can funds be better allocated for countries that are developing democratic transitions?
3. How much of impact do outside influences have on totalitarian governments?
4. Is there a trend in the ways that nations reach democracy?
5. Are violent revolutions ever really necessary for an overthrow of the government?
6. With most of the world's countries in a democratic state or in transition, what measures can be put in place to ensure that a dictatorship cannot arise again?
7. Are there certain nations in which interfering directly with political operations would be hugely detrimental?

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<http://ftp.iza.org/dp5555.pdf>

<http://www.cfr.org/democratization/pathways-freedom/p30800?excerpt=1&co=C042001>

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