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Nondemocratic Regimes and Institutional Restraints

Totalitarian tendencies define qualities of regimes that eliminate individual political and economic freedom for the utopian vision of a repressive state. Post-totalitarian regimes are transitional periods of government granting more liberties to individuals relative to the amount of autonomy they were granted by a totalitarian regime. As individual freedom grows, essential democratic institutions must be crafted to ensure that the enduring qualities of totalitarianism are eliminated. And as other non-democracies become democratic regimes, institutions that restrain the centralized power of economic and political elites prevent democracies from becoming illiberal and only democratic in name. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan describe five classification of regimes, but the common theme between different types of regimes is actually a question of power decentralization. Based on this notion, Fareed Zakaria, Larry Diamond, and Erika Weinthal and Jones Luong propose institutional solutions to accordingly limit the extent of centralized power, and to improve the individual political and economic freedom of individual citizens in non-democracies.

The Development of the Middle Class

Fareed Zakaria describes that decentralized government allows for the stratification of power across class divisions. In fact, burgeoning middle classes developed due to property rights granted by the state. Without the middle class, nondemocratic ideologies limit the development of regions because political reform does not include the insight of society. Based on the observations of Linz and Stepan, nondemocratic regimes shape the path dependent institutional governance of a state. Totalitarian regimes that rule with undefined limits restrict the participation of society through coercion. Zakaria

suggests that eroding coercive institutions in the Middle East will over time create democratic regimes for the future; this action must catalyze with the budding middle classes.

Restraining Predatory States

Larry Diamond discovered predatory states also contain, in the metaphorical billiard ball of the state, elites that forcefully limit the citizenry of a state; by placing restrictions on the elites, the capacity that oppressive states exert over societies will also diminish. Similarly to Zakaria, Diamond finds that citizens must challenge hierarchy and other existing institutions that favor oppressive minorities. Furthermore, citizens should strive to create movements across the boundaries of states. Large homogenous groups, by this theoretical case, will be able to diminish the capacity of states and the repression of predatory elites. Diamond admits that reform does not happen until leaders admit that change is inevitable, and suggests that states are not coerced into competing with their citizens.

Resource Blessing?

After power relations between states and citizens shift, the state apparatus can effectively change other institutions. Erika Weinthal and Jones Luong make one encouragement; institutional mechanisms which directly improve privatization of resources and that also develop economic freedom and individual property rights transform the resource curse into a blessing. By ceding resources from the control of the state, the conditions of the institution that cause economic inequality can be reversed if the state adopts policies which decentralize the resources. Of course, multilateral cooperation between individuals of different classes and ideological backgrounds must cooperate. And, in totalitarian regimes, the formalized qualities of cooperation simply do not exist; however, individuals that succeed in removing despots can improve the probability that their state will become better in the

future. Domestic privatization in countries like Russia is possible in producing a more democratic country.

Implications

In cases of non-democracies, power tends to be centralized in favor of small groups of elites; especially in the cases of totalitarian regimes where the state is highly repressive and has a monopoly on power. Citizens in democratic regimes inalienably carry the right of political and economic participation; although, the historical level of democratic institutions are decentralized to different extents with tendency of a decline in institutional centralization. Fareed Zakaria notes that institutions that favor the development of the Middle Class provide for more democratic regimes. Larry Diamond describes that restraining predatory tendencies of elites also restrains the capacity that oppressive states exert over societies. Erika Weinthal and Jones Luong encourage institutional construction of privatization that favors economic freedom, and individual property rights that cede resources from the control of the state; the resource curse is merely a condition of the institution a state adopts.

On the whole, the actions of elites and leaders are determinate on the institutions of the state; in the event that non-democracies wish to become democracies, they simply need to adopt institutions that restrain power, form formalized and enforceable constitutionalism that checks the power of elites, and maintains a decentralized power structure. But, this is implicit on the desire that elites have motivation to make long-term investments by sacrificing short-term control. In fact, the overall implication relates to democratic regimes in becoming better democracies.