

General theory of democratisation



This essay explores theories of democratisation, and will discuss the characteristics and issues faced countries in transition to democracy. It will also investigate idiosyncratic of transition in different countries. This essay will look at case studies, and will apply the scholars' theories for democratisation to see if those arguments fit transition process. Each country had their own circumstances for their progress toward democracy, this essay will find the common factors in these countries and will argue what were the causal or correlation for these countries that led them on the path for democracy. On other hand, this essay will also examine individual country which had odd transition and will analyse factors which encouraged the transition to democratisation.

Historically, non-democratic states have taken a wide range of forms toward their transition to democracy. The regimes democratised in the first wave were generally absolutism monarchies. Those countries which democratised in the second wave had been fascist regimes, military dictatorships and colonies. These regimes had some previous democratic experience. The regimes that moved toward democratisation in the third wave had complicated process. Huntington (1991, 588) argued that the regimes democratised in the third wave were one party system, military regimes and personal dictatorship. He further argued that the third wave transitions were complex involving variety of groups struggling for power and for and against democracy and other aims. This illustrates the role of government for transformation and the role opposition groups in the trans-placement toward democratisation.

Scholars have argued that there was complex process which involved many factors that led to transition in most of the countries. Lipset (Gledtisch: 2006) stated that economic development was a key precondition for democratic regimes. Lipset (Geddes: 1999, 318) believed that modernisation have caused democracy. He suggested that increasing the education, urbanisation, experience of working in factories, liberalising economy, and all effective economic developments would result into patching the way for democracy. Lipset argument reveals that there is correlation between the development and democracy, and if citizens have more tolerant and participatory attitudes in society, the demand to have say in government increases and ultimately lead to transition. Other scholars have supported Lipset argument, similarly, Marx (Geddes: 1999) argued that middle class which tends to grow the economy, also develops demand for democracy. Marx further stated that “ no bourgeoisie, no democracy” (Geddes: 1999, 320). On the other hand, Boix (2003) argued that income equality and capital mobility lower elites fear of democracy. This depicts that democratic government reduces distributions among its general population, and elites do not fear to support the transition process. This is because democracies do not heavily tax elites, in case, those democratic states which highly tax elites, it also provides exit opportunity for capital holders. However, Przeworski et al (Geddes: 1999) suggested that development does not cause democratisation, it rather lowers the likelihood of democratisation. Przeworski seems to reject the notion of economic developments cause transition process. He rather believed that “ exogenous theory holds and the endogenous one fails” (Boix & Stokes et al: 2003). This explains that economic developments make democracies more established, and once

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established, it's less likely to fall back to dictatorship. Therefore, for Przeworski, under developed economic conditions democracy can sustain, and their transition to democracy is a random event

It seems that transition can occur for many reasons, not all of which are systematic. It could also be argued that education, urbanisation, and individual mobility could lead to demands for democracy. Barro (Geddes: 1999) argued there is positive correlation between primary education and democracy. He stated that education guarantees the requirement of democracy. It also makes it possible for the society to demand for democracy, when the society reaches a certain level of civilisation. On the other hand, there are factors which discourage the process for transition; such as state reliance on oil. Geddes (1999) argued that reliance on oil or other mineral exports lower the likelihood of democracy. This illustrates that citizens in these states tend to be calm due economic satisfaction and high level of income. This argument tends to contradict Lipset argument of modernisation and support Przeworski's argument that economic development does cause democratisation.

International factors have huge impact on the transition process. Gleditsch (2006) argued that external factors exert a strong influence on the transition to democracy. He suggested that in transition, domestic social factors cannot adequately explain the process for democratisation. This demonstrates that international factors play vital role in the transition. External factors could be economic sanctions, political pressures and contagion effect of democracy in the region. Gleditsch argument could also be applied to Afghanistan and Iraq. External factors in both countries forced the regime change. But, for <https://assignbuster.com/general-theory-of-democratisation/>

O'Donnell external factors play different role in different regions. He argued that “ international factors were more favourable to democracy in Southern Europe than in Latin America” (O'Donnell et al: 1986). This demonstrates the interest of hegemonic powers in different regions.

In many countries military dictatorship eventually led to transition, whether it was a peaceful or violent, military had a huge role for developing power transition. Huntington (1991) stated that for transition to democracy, a pre-existed condition for some of the states were authoritarian regimes. This demonstrates that most of the countries had some kind of dictatorial regimes which ultimately led to transition process. In the authoritarian regimes, there were so many factors which helped to put huge pressures on the regimes. These factors could be strong opposition parties, economic crisis, and civil society groups. O'Donnell et al (1986) suggestion is similar to Huntington's argument. However, O'Donnell et al (1986) attempted to generalise Latin American states, he argued that almost all Latin American countries had a previous military or authoritarian regimes. This illustrates common factor between Huntington and O'Donnell that most of the transitions have took place cause of their pre-existed bureaucratic authoritarian regimes

Since there is controversy among these scholars about how in general countries transition to democracy have occurred. It could be argued that each individual country has had its own circumstances that led to democratisation. However, there are some fundamental common factors which could be applied to most of the transition which took place. This essay will examine Huntington (1991) and O'Donnell's (1986) argument which

stated that a pre-existed dictatorial regimes is the requirement for the transition. To prove this point, this essay will compare two case studies, Argentina and Indonesias' Transition. Both countries have different geographical location, different culture and social, however, their political development had some common factors which led to transition for democracy. On the other hand, this essay will also look at Benin and Senegal, both countries are located in the same region and share some similar culture and social, however, both countries had divergent political developments. Both countries had different reasons which caused the process for democratisation. The Example of Benin and Senegal will prove that States which share similar geographical location, share culture and social, do not have to developed similar political development for transition. As argued that each state had different causal factors for transition, however, there are some factors which can be seen in most of the transitions.

Argentina and Indonesia, both countries have different geographical locations, population, religion, culture and social. However, their causes for transition to democracy had some mutual factors. Both countries were under the dictatorship for a period of time. Opposition groups contributed to the process of democratisation in both countries. This fits Huntington (1991) argument that in military or authoritarian regimes opposition groups take the lead to bring about democracy. The transition in both countries depended on the role of military. It has been an influential player in the transition to democracy. The transition was helped to build momentum through internal split of military elites in both countries, who played critical role in shaping

the transition. This demonstrates that authoritarian regimes eventually do not sustain. Furthermore, the civil society movements also played vital role in the transition. In both countries civil society groups were strong pro democracy movements.

The second common factor both countries shared for their transition was their economic performance. Both countries did not do well enough economically under military regimes, which mobilised the movements against regimes. Geddes (1999) argued that the decline in economic performance increase the likelihood of authoritarian regimes to breakdown. Geddes argument fits both Argentina and Indonesia. Both countries had huge declined in their national economies on their recent years run up to collapse of the military regime. This also depicts that there is a correlation between low economic performances and transition. The third common factor, which led to transition in both military regimes, was the international pressures and contagion effects of the democracy in the region. United States foreign policy also played vital role in these two countries. US traditional foreign policy advocated democracy over military regimes. This supports Gledtisch (2006) and O'Donnell et al (1986) arguments that external factors exert strong influence for the transition. The Example of Indonesia and Argentina reveal that two different countries with different social and cultural traditions had some similar factors in transition to democracy.

Benin and Senegal did not had much common factors toward their transition, however, their transition were quite different. For Benin it was radical change all at once, but for Senegal it was quite gradual procedure toward transition.

The third wave of democratisation which occurred in Africa in 1990, Benin was included in this process. The transition marked the end of the dictatorial regime of Mathieu Kerekou replacing the dictator regime with democratic transition. The first presidential elections happened on 1991, and the transition of power took place in a peaceful manner. Benin fit Huntington's (1991) argument that as a pre-existent factor for a move toward transition is the existence of a previous military regime. This was the case in Benin. Kerekou seized power in 1972 through a military coup and ruled the country for 17 years.

Benin was going through the period of instability and popular discontent and much pressure from opposition and other civil groups. Kerekou could not ignore these issues, which ultimately forced him to call for national conference in 1990. The conference involved civic leaders, stakeholders, religious leaders, farmers and other opposition groups. Huntington (1991) argued that several groups struggle for and against transition process. The groups which support the transition could be standpatters, liberal reformers, democratic reformers in the governing coalition, democratic moderates and revolutionary extremist in the opposition. This illustrates that despite huge pressure on Kerekou to lead with transition process, he was accused of the deliberate starvation of funds to electoral commission. Kerekou wanted to hold on and delay the election; however, he did not succeed in this, as the election took place through private donations. This also fits Bratton and Walle (1997) argument that African states leaders resist transition process for as long as possible. Furthermore, Benin was hit by severe economic crisis and the country was plunged into poverty, and its people blamed the

government and the demand for a change raised. The example of Benin's transition fit Geddes (1999) argument that severe economic crisis leads to the collapse of the dictatorial regimes. In case of Benin, this was clear for people to demand for a change in regime in order to overcome economic crisis.

The transition in Senegal took place in different route compare to Benin. The third wave of democratisation that happened in many African countries in the 1990's did not result into massive change in Senegal. The transition process in Senegal was quite different compare to Benin. In Senegal it was a gradual process toward transition. In 1974, (Arnie: 2011) the gradual transition emerged when President Senghor allowed opposition party Progressiste Senegalaise to contest in the elections. President Senghor party was the only party in power since independence in 1960. This was a gradual procedure started in Senegal cause of the pressures mainly from the opposition party.

This transition process was described by Huntington as “ Semi Democracy” (Arnie: 2011). In 1976, the constitution was amended to allow three political parties to contest in the elections. These parties were based on three main political ideologies, Liberal, Socialist and Marxist. This was an introduction to limited multiparty democracy. This gradual process continued and in 1978, the constitution was amended again to allow a fourth political party, based on Islamic ideology. The peaceful process was also helped when President Senghor voluntarily retired in 1980, and Prime Minister Abdou Diouf took office, as the Second President of Senegal. Diouf provided the opportunity for some more democratic reforms by allowing all parties contest in the

elections, liberalising media and elections reforms. These democratic reforms helped the transition, however, in 1990s, Diouf was still the president of Senegal, and the same party was in power since Senegal independence in 1960. The real change occurred when the long time opposition party leader was elected as the president of Senegal. This was the crucial turn over for Senegal transition to democracy. The Example of Senegal is in contrast to Benin and many other states that the third wave of democratisation cause by massive reforms, however, Senegal passed through a more gradual transition process.

The example of Argentina and Indonesia reveals that there are some common transition theories which could be applied to some countries. This also confirms the relationship between economic and democracy. Both countries had military regimes prior to their transition. This demonstrates that prior regime type appears important legacies for transition. The role of internal and external factors could not be underestimated in both cases. On the other hand, Benin and Senegal transition demonstrates that there are some common factors for democratisation; however, this does not apply to all countries for their transition, as there is no universal model for democratisation. Senegal had a gradual process to transition. The transition took long process to complete compare to Benin which was radical change in 1990.

Ultimately, there are internal and external factors which influence the process for democratisation. Internal factors could be the strong pro democracy opposition parties, civil society groups, economic crisis which create the path for democratisation, furthermore, education, urbanisation

could also influence the transition. This could be argued that there had been some common factors in many transitions. Argentina, Indonesia and Benin examples revealed that prior regimes types played crucial role in transition. In all these countries military regimes eventually led to transition process, however, Senegal had quite gradual process, in Senegal the gradual process started when the ruling party allowed opposition party to contest in the elections. This was the clear progress toward democracy. The transition completed when the opposition party leader won the presidential elections and peaceful power transition took place. This reveals that there is no universal model for democratisation. But, there are some common factors which could be applied to most of the transitions.