

Abstracts

Jørgen Elklit

Democratization - Why, How, When?

Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have crumbled lately, in South an East, in Latin America and Africa. The latest two decades have witnessed a wave of democratization - the third such wave - which culminated in 1989 and a few years thereafter. But why was the ecstasy then followed by a democratic decline in a number of countries? This article presents some of the issues relevant for the general analysis and understanding of recent processes of democratization; some of the issues addressed are also highly relevant for policy makers and democracy advisors in the growing industry of support for democracy in previously non-democratic countries.

Jørgen Dige Pedersen

Brazil: From Dictatorship towards Democracy

The Brazilian change from authoritarianism to a democratic regime has been gradual, peaceful and highly controlled. The democratic opening initiated by the military rulers progressed further than expected mainly due to a strong popular mobilization that took advantage of the new opportunities for political participation. The resulting democratic regime has been consolidated, but problems remain in the area of party formation and in the challenges that an economic and social crisis poses.

Søren Tholstrup

Democracy in Nigeria: Third Time Unlucky

Since Nigerian independence in 1960, the existence of a fractionalized elite, with the state as economic base, has impeded the development of democracy in the country. During changing periods of democratic (civilian) and authoritarian (military) regimes, the masses have been excluded from influence and meaningful participation. Nigeria's present economic crisis offers a structural explanation of why an intra-elite equilibrium could not be established at the 1993 presidential election that should have completed a planned transition to democracy, initiated after the 1985 Babangida-coup. The structural explanation is supplemented by actor explanations that show unsolvable conflicts among individual elite-members who participated in the final phase of the transition process. With the present military Abacha-regime in Nigeria, prospects for successful transition to democracy in near future are dubious.

Thomas K. Nielsen

Taiwan's Road to Democracy

This article challenges the mainstream interpretations of Taiwan's democratic transition which sees democratization as the outcome of a strong pressure from civil society generated over the past two decades by the country's rapid economic development. The argument of the article is that the pressure of civil society for democracy was weak and unorganized and, therefore, it can not explain the democratic transition. Instead, the political reforms is explained as a strategic move of the political elite to counter various international challenges to the long term survival of the regime. This strategy was viable only due to the political weakness of civil society.

Aksel Vladimir Carlsen

The Democracy Discussion in the Post-soviet Russia

The transition in Russia raised hopes of fast solutions to the many problems of Russian society. The hopes were not met because of - among other things - lack of stability and clarification of fundamental democratic values. Even among reasonable Russian political scientists opinions differ to a great extent about the assumptions and basic values of democracy. The development of a wide, and widely accepted, concept of democracy is definitely a necessary precondition for the consolidation of democracy in Russia.

Jørgen Elklit og Palle Svesson

When are Elections Free and Fair?

There are no generally acknowledged standards for deciding whether an election is free and fair. „Free and fair“ has nevertheless become the catchword in discussions about elections and referendums in new democracies. Any analysis of transition processes to democracy is therefore to gain from an awareness of the problems associated with the use of these concepts. Based on their own experiences in a number of countries, the authors claim that „free and fair“ is often used rather ambiguously. However, by clarifying both the kind of criteria election monitors must include in their systematic account and the additional considerations they apply, it is still possible to evaluate elections in a transparent and worthwhile manner.

Frands S. Pedersen

New Perspectives on Nordic Cooperation

The Nordic enlargement of the European Union and the ever closer European integration, in particular between the signatories of the Schengen Treaty, have put Nordic cooperation under pressure. Therefore, institutional reforms are being implemented. However, these reforms do only improve decision-making efficiency. They do not improve the Nordic Council's and the Nordic Council of Ministers' proactive capabilities. Therefore, within and outside the European Union, Nordic cooperation will retain a reactive nature unless new institutional reforms are implemented.