



Transitions to Democracy: A Comparative Perspective

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As demonstrated by current events in Tunisia and Egypt, oppressive regimes are rarely immune to their citizens' desire for democratic government. Of course, desire is always tempered by reality; therefore how democratic demands are made manifest is a critical source of study for both political scientists and foreign policy makers. What issues and consequences surround the fall of a government, what type of regime replaces it, and to what extent are these efforts successful? Kathryn Stoner and Michael McFaul have created an accessible book of fifteen case studies from around the world that will help students understand these complex issues. Their model builds upon Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead's classic work, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, using a rubric of four identifying factors that can be applied to each case study, making comparison relatively easy.

Transitions to Democracy yields strong comparisons and insights. For instance, the study reveals that efforts led by the elite and involving the military are generally unsuccessful, whereas mass mobilization, civic groups, and new media have become significant factors in supporting and sustaining democratic actors. This collection of writings by scholars and practitioners is organized into three parts: successful transitions, incremental transitions, and failed transitions. Extensive primary research and a rubric that can be applied to burgeoning democracies offer readers valuable tools and information.

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