

Democratization: a critical introduction, 2nd ed., by Jean Grugel and Matthew Louis Bishop, Houndmills and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, xiv + 386 pp., £27.99 (paperback), £70.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-230-22057-7

Democratization: A Critical Introduction offers what the title promises: a critical – but not dogmatic – introductory text to democratization in theory and practice. The book is divided into three parts: the Introduction and Chapters 1–3 set the stage by discussing conceptions of democracy and democratization, the historical evolution of democracy globally, and the way that theorizing about democratization has evolved over the last decades. In the second part (Chapters 4–6), the authors delineate their own theoretical framework for understanding both the causes of democratization and why some democratization trajectories have been more successful than others. The proposed framework, centring on the role of the state, civil society, and the global context, builds on elements of previous democratization theories, and in particular historical sociology, the agency approach, and critical international political economy. Chapters 7–11 are devoted to empirically applying the authors’ theory across the main regions of the world: Europe (including both Southern Europe and the countries of the former Eastern bloc), Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East (which is defined broadly to include also the Maghreb), and Asia. The focus is thus on “third wave” democratization attempts. Throughout the book, there are a number of boxes providing more detail on specific subjects touched upon in the text: Schumpeterian democracy, “uncivil” society, corporatism and populism in Latin America, political Islam and democracy, and so on.

This book is in its second edition (the first edition was reviewed in *Democratization* 9:4, 2002). It avoids the main pitfalls of second editions: uneven, sloppy updating, and clumsy texts attempting to marry old and new bits. In that sense, the book is exemplary: it is very extensively updated and revised and the authors have not tried to cut corners by keeping outdated references or bits of text.

The authors recognize that their theoretical framework is not parsimonious, and that can indeed be a strength, in particular when dealing with a phenomenon as multifaceted as democratization. For an introductory text such as this one, a more holistic theory is also arguably more suitable as it can give the reader a better grasp of the main parameters of the phenomenon at hand. However, the theory could have been presented in a more systematic and rigorous manner. At times, the theory appears to be more of a laundry list of issues and concerns encountered in various democratizing settings around the world than a set of interconnected propositions. This becomes even more evident in the empirical chapters, where the theory fails to prove that it has a strong heuristic, explanatory, or systematizing value.

The main strength of *Democratization: A Critical Introduction* is also its main weakness: its broad, critical sweep and grasp of the literature is the main asset of the book, but at the same time the wide scope cannot always do justice to the

complexities of the issues covered. The amount of literature covered is indeed impressive and makes it a good starting point for further enquiries and research. Its critical stance is valuable in a field sometimes prone to profess social engineering and to uncritically accept that markets, democracy, and justice form a harmonious, self-reinforcing whole at the end of the day. At the same time, the breadth also entails a lack of depth: it is impossible to do justice to concepts as complex as democracy, civil society, citizenship, and so on, in such a short space. The same is true for the empirical chapters. For example, the Balkans is treated in little more than one-and-a-half pages, which is supposed to cover the whole post-communist period. Obviously, this allows very limited nuance and differentiation within a diverse sub-region. Perhaps a more promising approach would have been to focus on fewer, more in-depth case studies. In a book aiming to cover all the main regions of the world, there will always be regions and cases with which the authors are more familiar, and in this case, the Latin American (and more broadly Spanish-speaking) regions seem to be covered in more detail than others. The Caribbean also seems over-represented, although these are interesting cases less often treated in the literature.

All in all, and the above weaknesses notwithstanding, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction* makes an excellent textbook for undergraduate students, both for its comprehensive overview of the literature and as a basis for discussion.

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New challenges for maturing democracies in Korea and Taiwan, edited by Larry Diamond and Gi-Wook Shin, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2014, 408 pp., index, \$25.16 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8047-8918-9

Korea and Taiwan not only share similar geopolitical conditions, i.e., national division and the presence of strong external security threats, but have also followed quite similar trajectories of economic and political changes, i.e., state-led industrialization since the 1960s and democratic transition in the late 1980s. Larry Diamond and Gi-Wook Shin's edited volume *New Challenges for Maturing Democracies in Korea and Taiwan* attempts to illustrate how and why these two countries have achieved imperfect but stable and functioning democracies.

In the introductory chapter, Diamond and Shin raise the necessity of using a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to investigate new challenges and key issues that arise in the maturation and consolidation stages of democracy. Here, the editors clarify that their intended goal is to examine post-democratization