POLITICS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Comparing Experiences with Democracy

edited by
Larry Diamond
Juan J. Linz
Seymour Martin Lipset

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Lynne Rienner Publishers   Boulder & London

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Introduction:
Comparing Experiences with Democracy

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The ten case studies in this book analyze the political development of a selection of countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East—or what we term, for lack of a better label, "developing countries." While analyzing the full sweep of regime evolution and change, we focus on a particular issue in political development that can justifiably be called the preeminent political issue of our times: the struggle for democracy. Beginning from a common theoretical agenda, we seek to explain whether, why, and to what extent democracy has evolved and taken root in the vastly different cultural and historical soils of these countries.

The larger (twenty-six–nation) comparative study from which these cases derive was undertaken at a time of tremendous democratic ferment in the developing world.[1] The movement toward democracy that witnessed, in the mid-1970s, the toppling of Western Europe's last three dictatorships—Greece, Portugal, and Spain—moved on through Latin America. In the ensuing decade, most Latin American military dictatorships collapsed or withdrew, defying predictions of a longer reign for these "bureaucratic-authoritarian" regimes. By the end of the 1980s, the transition to democracy was nearing completion in Chile, and the world was transfixed by the campaign for democratization in China, the growing demands for national autonomy and further political liberalization in the Soviet Union, and the stunning collapse of Communist rule throughout Eastern Europe. The latter developments showed the diversity of paths to democracy—even within the seemingly homogeneous Communist world—ranging from reform from above to negotiation to the violent overthrow of a regime that combined Communist with personalistic (sultanistic) rule in Romania.[2]

In East Asia, democratic progress was apparent in the dramatic transitions in the Philippines and South Korea, and in the incremental but considerable movement in Taiwan and Thailand. In the old British South Asian raj, Pakistan completed a transition to democracy, but India experienced serious and persistent challenges to its democratic institutions and Sri Lanka descended into an ethnic civil war.

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Among the states of Africa, which found it difficult to establish new nationhoods and democratic regimes, there were also some signs of democratic emergence or renewal. Uganda, for example, struggled to put an end to decades of anarchy, tyranny, and civil strife in order to fulfil its hopes for democracy and human rights. Despite intense repression (somewhat diminished by 1990), the black and colored peoples of South Africa continue their struggle for a nonracial democracy through multiple forms of nonviolent action, including an increasingly powerful trade union movement. Nigeria instituted an elaborate timetable for democratic transition from military rule, beginning with local government elections and the formation of two political parties, to be followed in stages by partisan elections at the local and state and then federal levels. In North Africa, processes of political liberalization were launched in the late 1980s in Tunisia and Algeria, and a partially competitive, partially liberal, multiparty system persists in Egypt.

The 1980s witnessed an unprecedented growth of international concern for human rights—including, prominently, the rights to choose democratically the government under which one lives and to express and organize around one's political principles and views. As torture, disappearances, and other grave human rights violations became more widespread but also more systematically exposed and denounced around the world, there developed a renewed and deeper appreciation for democratic institutions which, with all their procedural messiness and sluggishness, nevertheless protect the integrity of the person and the freedoms of conscience and expression. The growth of democratic norms throughout the world is strikingly evidenced in the degree to which authoritarian regimes find it necessary to wrap themselves in the rhetoric and constitutional trappings of democracy, or at least to state as their goal the eventual establishment of democracy.

The global advance of democracy in the 1980s was assisted by the demise of its historic ideological rivals. Fascism was destroyed as a vital force in World War II. The appeals of Marxism-Leninism have declined with the harsh repressiveness, glaring economic failures, and loss of revolutionary idealism of the existing Communist regimes. More-limited, quasi-socialist or mass mobilizational models—the Mexican, Yugoslav, and Nasserite—have also lost their aura. Military regimes almost universally lack ideological justification and legitimacy beyond a temporary intrusion to correct political and social problems. With the important but still-indeterminate exception of the Islamic fundamentalist state—for that large portion of the world from Indonesia to West Africa wherein Islam is a major or dominant religion—democracy is the only model of government with any broad ideological legitimacy and appeal today.

It is a sign of the changes in our world, politically and intellectually, that the normative question—Why study democracy?—now seems, at the start of the 1990s, much less contentious and problematic than it did in the 1960s. Nevertheless, previous historical cycles warn that the 1990s may bring

setbacks and even a renewed crisis of confidence in democracy. Some critics suggest that political democracy is the wrong problem and ask: Are there not more pressing issues of survival and justice facing developing societies? Others contend our choice of topic betrays a misplaced value bias for democracy. They ask (or assert): If in some societies democracy in our (liberal) sense has to work against so many odds, as our research unveils, is it worth striving for, or are there alternatives to democracy that should be considered?

We wish to state quite clearly here our bias for democracy as a system of government. For any democrat, these questions carry serious implications: The former suggest that economic and social rights should be considered more important than civil and political liberties; the latter implies granting to some forms or cases of authoritarian rule the right to use coercive measures, in the name of some higher good, to suppress democratic opposition. For ourselves, neither of these normative suppositions is tenable.

If there were many undemocratic governments (now and in the past) committed to serving collective goals, rather than the interests of the rulers, and ready to respect human rights (to refrain from torture and indiscriminate violence, to offer due process and fair trial in applying laws that, even if antiliberal, are known in advance, to maintain humane conditions of imprisonment), we might find these questions more difficult to answer. However, no undemocratic regime meets these two requirements, and even those that begin with a strong ideological commitment to the collectivity and a professed sensitivity to human rights often become increasingly narrow, autocratic, and repressive, although these trends, too, are subject to reversal.

Even where authoritarian rulers (whether civilian or military, bureaucratic or charismatic) strive to serve collective goals, why should we assume that their conception of the collective good is better than that of any other group in society? Only if we were totally certain that one ideological conception is the expression of historical reason—true and necessary—would we be forced to accept such an authoritarian alternative as better than democracy. To do so, as we know, justifies any sacrifices and ultimately terrible costs in freedom and human lives. Democracy—with its relativism and tolerance (so disturbing to those certain of the truth), and its "faith" in the reasonableness and intelligence of the common people, deciding freely (and with a chance to change their minds every four or five years) and without the use of force—seems still a better option.

• THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY •

Despite the growth of political and intellectual interest in democracy in developing countries, there remain huge gaps in our understanding of the factors that foster or obstruct the emergence, instauration (establishment), and consolidation of democratic government around the world. The

contributions to this book are distinctive in that they deal with the entire history of a country's experience with democracy: establishment, breakdown, reequilibration and consolidation of democratic government; periods of democratic persistence, crisis, authoritarianism, and renewal; and all of the ambivalences and oscillations in between. We consider each country's early cultural traditions, analyze (where relevant) the colonial experience, and consider all of its postindependence history, giving special emphasis to post–World War II developments. Whereas most other works cut horizontally through the history of countries to focus on limited time spans and particular processes (usually ignoring the phenomena of democratic consolidation and stability),[3] we cut vertically through historical phases in order to explain the overall path of a country's political development.

While it can be enormously fertile, this historical approach is not without methodological problems. In particular, it runs the risk of attributing contemporary political patterns to antecedents far removed in time, without clearly demonstrating that those factors (or characteristics resulting from them) are operating at a later time and account for the failure or success of democracy. To overcome this risk, each case study author reviews the country's political history, describing its major experiences with democratic and undemocratic governments, including the structure, nature, and characteristic conflicts and tensions of each regime; and explains the fate of each regime (especially each democratic one)—why it persisted, failed, or evolved as it did, and why successive regimes emerged as and when they did. Finally, each author offers a summary theoretical judgment of the factors that have been most important in determining the country's overall degree of success or failure with democratic government, and considers its prospects for democracy, along with any policy implications he or she might wish to derive. Each country's overall experience is assessed along a six-point scale of ideal types, ranging from stable and consolidated democratic rule to the failure or absence of democracy.[4] Our readers are cautioned, however, that the case studies provide no more than capsulized surveys of a country's experience, which will hopefully inspire wider study.

Culturally, the cases in this book encompass much of the enormous variation in the developing world: Brazil, Chile, and Mexico—Christian (largely Catholic) societies of Latin America; India with its mosaic of traditions, including the distinctive Hindu culture; two largely Islamic societies—Senegal and Turkey (whose secularization is linked historically with its democratization); largely Buddhist Thailand; South Korea with its mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity; multiethnic Zimbabwe; and a major example—Nigeria—of what Ali Mazrui calls the "triple heritage" of Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religion and culture.

One of the most complex and intractable problems in our world is the tension between the model of ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous societies that satisfy the ideal of the nation-state and the

multiethnic, multilingual societies that face the difficult task of nation- or state-building in the absence of the integration and identification we normally associate with the idea of the nation-state. Even in Europe, before the massive and forced transfers (if not destruction) of populations, most states did not satisfy that ideal, but outside of Europe, even fewer do. Virtually no African or Asian countries and only a few Latin American countries (in this book, only Chile) seem to satisfy that model. Others, such as Brazil and Mexico, include not only descendants of the *conquistadores* and European immigrants but also substantial populations (intermixed to varying degrees with the above) of Indians and descendants of black slaves. To the list of the relatively homogeneous countries could be added South Korea and Turkey (with some significant minorities, such as the long-suffering Kurds). Our remaining cases confront us with the problem of democracy in ethnically and culturally divided societies. In some of our cases, most prominently India and Nigeria, these cultural divisions have generated conflicts that have cost dearly in terms of political trauma and human bloodshed, and that continue to endanger the prospects for democracy and political stability.

One experience that almost all of these countries share is a previous history of domination by an outside imperial power. Only Turkey and Thailand have been continuously independent and only in the latter do we find a continuity with a premodern traditional monarchy. Our study therefore does not cover a sufficient number of countries to deal with the question: Does continuous legitimacy of rule by an indigenous state facilitate both modernization and, ultimately, democratization, by contrast with the historical trauma of conquest and colonial domination?

For those who have raised the question of the relation between size and democracy,[5] our larger, twenty-six–country study includes the largest (most populous) democracy—India—and some of the smallest. Because the larger countries are generally of wider interest for classroom consideration of cross-regional comparisons, we have tended to favor them in the selection of cases for this book. Unfortunately, this required us to exclude the fascinating and theoretically informative cases of several small countries that have experienced unusual democratic success (Costa Rica, Uruguay, Botswana) or crisis (Sri Lanka). Since the major countries—with their political influence and their capacity to serve as models—occupy a special position in their respective areas, leading some to speak of subimperialisms, we feel our selection on this account is justified.

Save for the deliberate exclusion of countries with no prior democratic or semidemocratic experience, or no prospect of an opening to freedom, our study encompasses virtually every type of democratic experience in the developing world. As the decade turns, several of the cases in this book can be classified as democratic, albeit with some important qualifications (India, Turkey, Brazil, and South Korea); some are semidemocratic but moving in different directions (Thailand toward greater democracy, Zimbabwe toward

less); and two are authoritarian military regimes embarked on transitions to democracy, with Chile transferring power to an elected civilian president (but not yet fully repealing military prerogatives), while Nigeria is not scheduled to reach the same point until October 1992. Although its democratic institutions and cultural commitments have been wearing thin over the past twenty years, India's democracy has persisted for four decades (interrupted only by Indira Gandhi's emergency rule from 1975 to 1977). The democracies in Turkey, Brazil, South Korea, and now Chile, are only recently renewed after long, traumatic periods of authoritarian rule or, in Turkey's case, unstable alternation between civilian-democratic and military regimes. From these cycles of regime change, Turkey has managed to emerge with a generally longer and more-successful democratic experience than has Thailand or Nigeria, although the increasing historical and political distance from its last successful coup in 1977 suggests that Thailand may be well on the road to the institutionalization of a stable (if not yet fully democratic) parliamentary regime.

• CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, AND CLASSIFICATIONS •

Depending on the individual, ideology, paradigm, culture, or context, democracy may mean many different things. It is reflective of the political climate of our time that the word is used to signify the desirable end-state of many social, economic, and political pursuits, or else to self-designate and thus presumably legitimate many existing structures. Hence, it is imperative to be as precise as possible about exactly what is being studied.

The term *democracy* is used in this book to signify a political system, separate and apart from the economic and social system to which it is joined. Indeed, a distinctive aspect of our approach is to insist that issues of so-called "economic and social democracy" be separated from the question of governmental structure. Otherwise, the definitional criteria of democracy will be so broadened and the empirical reality narrowed to a degree that makes study of the phenomenon very difficult. In addition, unless the economic and social dimensions are kept conceptually distinct from the political, there is no way to analyze how variation on the political dimension is related to variation on the others. Most of all, we distinguish the concept of political democracy out of a clear and frankly expressed conviction that it is worth valuing—and hence worth studying—as an end in itself.

In this book, then, democracy—or what Robert Dahl terms polyarchy—denotes a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive *competition* among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a "highly inclusive" level of *political participation* in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major

(adult) social group is excluded; and a level of *civil and political liberties*—freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations—sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.[6]

While this definition is, in itself, relatively straightforward, it presents a number of problems in application. For one, countries that broadly satisfy these criteria nevertheless do so to different degrees (and none do so perfectly, which is why Dahl prefers to call them polyarchies). The factors that explain this variation at the democratic end of the spectrum in degrees of popular control and freedom is an important intellectual problem, but it is different from the one that concerns us in this book, and so it is one we have had largely to bypass. We seek to determine why countries do or do not evolve, consolidate, maintain, lose, and reestablish more or less democratic systems of government, and even this limited focus leaves us with conceptual problems.

The boundary between democratic and undemocratic is sometimes blurred and imperfect, and beyond it lies a much broader range of variation in political systems. We readily concede the difficulties of classification this variation has repeatedly caused us. Even if we look only at the political, legal, and constitutional structures, several of our cases appear to lie somewhere on the boundary between democratic and something less than democratic. The ambiguity is further complicated by the constraints on free political activity, organization, and expression, and the substantial remaining political prerogatives of military authorities, that may in practice make the system much less democratic than it might appear. In all cases, we have tried to pay serious attention to actual practice in assessing and classifying regimes. But still, this leaves us to make difficult and in some ways arbitrary judgments. The decision as to whether Thailand and Zimbabwe, for example, may today be considered full democracies is replete with nuance and ambiguity. Even in the case of Brazil, which was generally presumed democratic after the election of a civilian president in 1985, Alfred Stepan cautions that the extent of military prerogatives to participate in government and wield autonomous power put the country "on the margin of not being a democracy."[7] With the direct presidential election of December 1989, the transition may now be considered closed, but serious problems of democratic consolidation remain.

We have alleviated the problem somewhat by recognizing various grades of distinction among less than democratic systems. While isolated violations of civil liberties or modest and occasional vote-rigging should not disqualify a country from broad classification as a democracy, there is a need to categorize separately those countries that allow greater political competition and freedom than would be found in a truly authoritarian regime but less than could justifiably be termed "democratic." Hence, we classify as *semidemocratic* those countries in which the effective power of elected officials is so limited, or political party competition so restricted, or the

freedom and fairness of elections so compromised, that electoral outcomes, while competitive, still deviate significantly from popular preferences; or where civil and political liberties are so limited that some political orientations and interests are unable to organize and express themselves. In different ways and to different degrees, Senegal, Zimbabwe, and Thailand fit this category (so would the electoral but still heavily military-dominated regimes in Guatemala and Honduras, for example).

Still more restrictive is a *hegemonic party system,* in which opposition parties are legal but denied, through pervasive electoral malpractices and frequent state coercion, any real chance to compete for power. Such a system has long prevailed under the domination of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico, but the political reforms of the 1980s and especially the unprecedented gains of both right and left opposition parties in the 1988 elections, discussed by Daniel Levy in his chapter, justify a reclassification of the Mexican system as a "semidemocracy."

Descending further on our scale of classification, *authoritarian* regimes permit even less pluralism, typically banning political parties (or all but the ruling one) and most forms of political organization and competition, while being more repressive than liberal in their level of civil and political freedom. Paying close attention to actual behavior, one may distinguish a subset of authoritarian regimes that we call *pseudodemocracies* because the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks (often in part to legitimate) the reality of authoritarian domination. Central America has long lived under such regimes. While this regime type overlaps in some ways with the hegemonic regime, it is less institutionalized and typically more personalized, coercive, and unstable.

Democratic trappings aside, authoritarian regimes vary widely in the degree to which they permit independent and critical political expression and organization. Judging by the level of what the regime allows, one can distinguish between what Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter call "dictablandas," or liberalized autocracies, and "dictaduras," harsher dictatorships that allow much less space for individual and group action.[8] Classifying by the level of what groups in the society recurrently demand (which may or may not overlap with what the regime allows), one can distinguish between authoritarian situations with strong democratic pressures and those with weak democratic pressures. In selecting cases for this book, our bias was toward the former.

Finally, of course, are the *totalitarian* regimes, which not only repress all forms of autonomous social and political organization, denying completely even the most elementary political and civil liberties, but also demand the active commitment of citizens to the regime.[9] With the decay, collapse, or at least partial liberalization of most of the world's Communist regimes in the late 1980s, it is debatable whether the totalitarian distinction is any longer salient. Nevertheless, the totalitarian legacy shapes in distinctive

ways the possibilities and conditions for democratization even in a post-totalitarian age, and what seemed in 1984 the dim possibilities for imminent transitions from communism led us to exclude all of these systems from our larger comparative study.[10]

The "dependent variable" of our study was concerned not only with democracy but also stability—the persistence and durability of democratic and other regimes over time, particularly through periods of unusually intense conflict, crisis and strain. A *stable* regime is one that is deeply institutionalized and consolidated, making it likely to enjoy a high level of popular legitimacy. *Partially stable* regimes are neither fully secure nor in imminent danger of collapse. Their institutions have perhaps acquired some measure of depth, flexibility, and value, but not enough to ensure them safe passage through severe challenges. *Unstable* regimes are, by definition, highly vulnerable to breakdown or overthrow in periods of acute uncertainty and stress. New regimes, including those that have recently restored democratic government, tend to fall in this category.

• FACILITATING AND OBSTRUCTING FACTORS FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT •

Legitimacy and Performance

All governments rest on some mixture of coercion and consent, but democracies are unique in the degree to which their stability depends on the consent of a majority of those governed. So intimately is legitimacy tied to democratic stability that it is difficult to know where definition ends and theorizing begins. Almost as a given, theories of democracy stress that democratic stability requires a widespread belief among elites and masses in the legitimacy of the democratic system: that it is the best form of government (or the "least evil"), "that in spite of shortcomings and failures, the existing political institutions are better than any others that might be established," and hence that the democratic regime is morally entitled to demand obedience—to tax and draft, to make laws and enforce them, even "if necessary, by the use of force."[11]

Democratic legitimacy derives, when it is most stable and secure, from an instrinsic value commitment rooted in the political culture at all levels of society, but it is also shaped (particularly in the early years of a democracy) by the performance of the democratic regime, both economically and politically (through the "maintenance of civil order, personal security, adjudication and arbitration of conflicts, and a minimum of predictability in the making and implementation of decisions").[12] Historically, the more successful a regime has been in providing what people want, the greater and more deeply rooted tends to be its legitimacy: A long record of successful performance tends to build a large reservoir of legitimacy, enabling the system better to endure crises and challenges.[13] As Arturo Valenzuela shows

here in the case of Chile, however, such a long accumulation of democratic legitimacy does not confer immunity from breakdown and can be squandered with great speed by a combination of poor leadership, wrong choices, and outmoded political institutions.

Regimes that lack deep legitimacy depend more precariously on current performance and are vulnerable to collapse in periods of economic and social distress.[14] This has been a particular problem for democratic (as well as undemocratic) regimes in the developing world, given especially their tendency to experience an interaction of low legitimacy and low effectiveness. Because of the combination of widespread poverty and the strains imposed by modernization, regimes that begin with low legitimacy also find it difficult to perform effectively, and regimes that lack effectiveness, especially in economic growth, find it difficult to build legitimacy. Our own studies and many others caution against drawing too deterministic a linkage between the economic performance of democratic regimes and the probability of their survival. Nevertheless, the correlation remains both obvious and understandable.

While they have not been immune to problems of recession, inflation, and corruption, the more successful democracies in our study have generally experienced relatively steady economic growth, which in turn has benefited their legitimacy. Often this is traceable not (just) to sound policies but to the bounty of highly marketable natural resources, but the dangers of such dependence (and the free-wheeling, populist neglect of savings and investment to raise productive capacities that often accompanies it) are substantial. These were revealed in Venezuela, for example, in early 1989 when the public erupted into violent rioting over the imposition by President Carlos Andres Pérez of harsh austerity measures, necessitated by the decline in oil revenues and by decades of overspending and overborrowing.[15]

An important determinant of steadily successful economic performance, however, is policy. Botswana has benefited from great natural resources and high levels of foreign aid, but underlying its development performance have been sound policies and effective management (which have helped attract foreign aid). State policies have not strangled producers of agricultural exports (in this case, cattle) as they did in much of the rest of tropical Africa. The state has prudently invested in basic infrastructure, and the elite has kept an effective lid on political and administrative corruption. Parastatals have been managed efficiently, and efforts have been made to distribute growth through state investment in education, housing, health, and other social services; unusually effective food distribution programs to relieve the effects of drought; and improvement of wages in the formal sector.[16] This record of performance contrasts markedly with the bloated, predatory state structures, widespread corruption, and ill-designed, poorly implemented development policies that sucked the economic breath from putative democratic republics in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.

Although it is often presumed to have done poorly in delivering material

progress, India has actually achieved significant, if incremental, socioeconomic development, and would have done much better had its population not doubled in the past three decades to 800 million people. As Jyotirindra Das Gupta observes, since independence India has "experienced a partial renovation of agricultural production leading to self-sufficiency in food, developed a structure of industrialization that produces most products that the country needs, expanded the supply of educated and technical personnel . . . , consistently held down the level of inflation to one of the lowest in the world, and in the process ensured a level of self-reliance and payment ability that kept it away from debt crisis." Ample evidence for these claims may be found in Table 1.1, which demonstrates the steady economic and social gains India has continued to make since the mid-1960s, significantly improving such crucial social indicators as education and life expectancy (to among the highest levels for low-income countries) while restraining inflation and foreign borrowing (as a percentage of gross national product (GNP), India's foreign debt burden is the lowest of any of the ten cases in this book). High levels of poverty and inequality remain, along with a need to rationalize the highly inefficient public sector, but such economic prudence and steady development progress, which has dramatically expanded the size of the middle class in a generation, may be one of the least appreciated foundations of India's democratic persistence.

It appears that consistency, prudence, and moderation in economic policy, as in politics, are conducive to democratic stability. In Colombia, eclectic, pragmatic, undoctrinaire economic policies produced steady economic growth with low inflation, following the transition to democracy in 1957. Colombia's flexibility and pragmatism, which motivated a relatively early partial reorientation of the economy from import substitution to export promotion, enabled it to avoid some of the disastrous experiences in import substitution and sharp pendular swings in policy (between populism and radical neoliberalism) that so devastated the economies of Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Uruguay.[17]

As Table 1.1 suggests, a similar emphasis on prudent and consistent economic policies, and on controlling inflation, fiscal deficits, and foreign borrowing (with a particular emphasis on export promotion) has produced an impressive record of economic growth in Thailand, which at the beginning of the 1990s ranks as one of the most dynamic economies in the world, growing at an annual rate of 9–10 percent. While it is accentuating problems of corruption and inequality, rapid economic growth in Thailand is producing many of the same social forces for democratization that arose in South Korea and Taiwan during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s: the expansion of autonomous (and increasingly politically conscious) entrepreneurial and professional middle classes (including social scientists and intellectuals); the movement of labor into manufacturing, furthering the differentiation and organization of the urban sector; and improvements in literacy, education, and communication, which bring much wider circulation of people,