



# Democracy Protests: Origins, Features, and Significance

By Dawn Brancati



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Why do democracy protests emerge in some countries at certain times, but not in others? Why do governments accommodate these protests, undertaking sweeping reforms in some cases, and in others find ways to suppress protests? In *Democracy Protests*, Brancati highlights the role of economic crises in triggering protests. She argues that crises increase discontent with governments, and authoritarianism in particular, and also increase support for opposition candidates who are more likely to organize protests, especially during election periods. Economic crises are also shown to create chances for opportunists to capitalize on anti-regime sentiment and mobilize support against governments. However, if crises are severe and protests concomitantly large, governments are likely to be compelled to make accommodations with protestors, regardless of their likelihood of retaining office. Brancati's argument rests on a rich statistical analysis of the causes and consequences of democracy protests around the globe between 1989 and 2011, combined with qualitative case studies.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Studies of democratization are finally turning back to the effect of economic and social forces in generating protest and displacing authoritarian regimes. Dawn Brancati's excellent book brings compelling new data to bear, explaining when democracy protests arise, succeed - and also fail. Beyond its immediate contribution, the book helps set a new and fresh agenda for the study of regime change."

Stephan Haggard, Krause Distinguished Professor, University of California, San Diego

"Dawn Brancati's monograph appears at a time when elite theories of democracy have come into fashion again. Democracy Protests fundamentally challenges such theories, and does so very persuasively using a massive amount of thoroughly researched evidence ... The findings question prominent approaches that consider democratization a top-down process in which the mass-factor plays a negligible role."

Christian Welzel, Chair in Political Culture Research, Leuphana University, Germany

"Are protests a force for democratizing change? Brancati advances our understanding of this important topic by bringing together new empirical findings that convincingly show how the magnitude of economic crises condition the relationship between protest and democracy. Citizen unrest is likely to follow any form of economic crises, but this book helps us understand when and why such unrest will lead to significant political change."

Susan D. Hyde, Yale University

#### About the Author

Dawn Brancati (PhD Columbia University, New York) is the author of *Peace by Design* (2008) and has published widely in leading academic and policy journals. Her research focuses on political violence and has been recognized with awards, fellowships, and grants from various institutions, including the American Political Science Association, the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University, New Jersey, the German Marshall Fund, the Harvard-MIT Data Center, and the National Science Foundation. She has taught at Harvard University, Massachusetts, Washington University, St Louis, and Columbia University, New York.

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