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CHAPTERS IN BRIEF

Struggles for Democracy, 1945–Present

Summary

CHAPTER OVERVIEW *The history of Latin America revealed how difficult it is to set up a democracy. In Africa, ethnic conflicts worked against democracy. In the early 1990s, communism fell in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But long-hidden ethnic tensions broke the regions into smaller countries. In China, communist leaders made economic changes but kept tight political control.*

1 Democracy–Case Study: Latin American Democracies

KEY IDEA *In Latin America, economic problems and authoritarian rule delayed democracy.*

For democracy to work, there must be free and fair elections. There must be more than one political party. The people of the country should have a good education so that they can make informed choices. They should share a common culture. All must accept the idea that everyone has equal rights. Finally, there must be rule by law, not by power. Many nations in Latin America have had difficulty achieving democracy because all these factors are not present.

In 1822, newly independent Brazil began life as a monarchy. After 1930, a dictator ruled. But, in 1956, an elected leader tried to make the economy better. He broke up large estates and gave land to the peasants. Landowners opposed the plan. They backed a group of army leaders who took power in 1964. The military ruled Brazil for 20 years. The country's economy grew, but the people had few rights. When the economy soured in the 1980s, the army gave up power to an elected president. In 2002, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a leftist candidate, was elected president.

Mexico has had stable government for almost all of the 1900s. Since the 1920s, one political party—now called the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—has been in power. The PRI has controlled the local, state, and national governments. At times, the party acted harshly to stop any dissent. In recent years, though, the party has opened up the political system to candidates from other parties. In 1997, two opposition parties won enough seats to the national legislature to deny the PRI control of that congress. In 2002, Mexican voters ended PRI rule by electing Vicente Fox as president.

Argentina has struggled toward democracy, too. In the 1940s and 1950s, Juan Perón was a popular

dictator. He put in place many programs to benefit the masses. In 1952, though, the army overthrew him and kept control of the government for the next 30 years. Army leaders ruled harshly, killing many who opposed them. In 1982, the army suffered a stinging defeat in a war with Britain. The generals agreed to step down. Since 1983, Argentina has been led by freely elected leaders. However, it faces severe economic problems. In 2003, Nestor Kirchner became president.

2 The Challenge of Democracy in Africa

KEY IDEA *Recent histories of Nigeria and South Africa show ethnic and racial conflict hindering democracy.*

Nations have had a hard time setting up democracy in Africa because of colonial rule. European powers drew up borders in Africa that paid no attention to ethnic groupings. They put people who disliked each other in the same area, causing conflict. Also, they never developed the economies of their colonies. Most of the colonies lacked a middle class or skilled workers. Both are needed for a strong democracy. When Britain and France gave their African colonies independence, they gave them democratic governments. Soon, though, problems arose between rival groups.

Nigeria is an example of this. In 1960, it became independent from Britain. But conflict broke out in just a few years. The people of one ethnic group tried to break away from Nigeria but lost in a three-year civil war. After a period of military rule, Nigeria finally got an elected government. Army officers said the government was corrupt, though, and overthrew it. Once in power, they treated the people from other ethnic groups harshly. They allowed elections in 1993 but did not accept the results. In 1999, Nigerians elected their first civilian president in 20 years, Olusegun Obasanjo. He was re-elected in 2003.

In South Africa, the conflict was between races. A white minority ruled a black majority. In 1948, they put in place a policy called apartheid—the strict separation of blacks and whites. Black South Africans were denied many basic rights. Some joined together in a group called the African National Congress (ANC) to fight for their rights. The government cracked down, putting many ANC leaders in prison.

By the late 1980s, several riots had taken place, as blacks angrily struck back at the system. Also, many nations would not buy goods produced in South Africa. They hoped to persuade the government to end apartheid. In 1990, new President F. W. de Klerk took that step. He made the ANC legal and released ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison. Parliament passed a law ending apartheid. In April 1994, all South Africans—even blacks—were able to vote in an election for a new leader. The ANC and Mandela won easily. In 1996, the new government approved a new constitution. It gave equal rights to all South Africans. In 1999, ANC official Thabo Mbeki won election as president.

3 The Collapse of the Soviet Union

KEY IDEA Soviet leaders Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, and Vladimir Putin promoted democratic reforms and economic restructuring.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the leaders of the Soviet Union kept tight control on society. In 1985, Communist Party leaders named Mikhail Gorbachev as the leader of the Soviet Union. He was the youngest Soviet leader since Joseph Stalin. He was expected to make minor reforms. Instead, he launched a revolution.

Gorbachev felt that Soviet society could not improve without the free flow of ideas and information. He started a policy called glasnost, or openness. He opened churches and released dissenters from prison. He allowed books to be published that in the past had been banned. Then he began a new policy called perestroika, or restructuring. It aimed at making the Soviet economy perform better by lifting the tight control on all managers and workers. In 1987, he opened up the political system by allowing the Soviet people to elect representatives to a legislature. Finally, Gorbachev changed Soviet foreign policy. He moved to end the arms race.

People from many different ethnic groups in the Soviet Union began calling for the right to have

their own nation. In 1990, Lithuania declared itself independent. Gorbachev sent troops, and they fired on a civilian crowd, killing a few people. This action and lack of reform cost Gorbachev support among the Soviet people.

Many people began to support Boris Yeltsin. Old-time communists, at the same time, were becoming angrier at Gorbachev's changes. They thought the changes made the Soviet Union weaker. In August 1991, they tried to take control of the government. Thousands rallied in the streets. When the army refused to back the coup leaders, they gave up.

To strike back the parliament voted to ban the party from any political activity. Meanwhile, more and more republics in the Soviet Union declared their independence. By the end of 1991, Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would no longer exist. Russia and the other 14 republics were each becoming independent states.

Gorbachev lost all power, and Yeltsin became president of Russia. He faced many problems. Efforts to move the Russian economy toward capitalism caused suffering. In addition, rebels in the small republic of Chechnya declared their independence from Russia. Yeltsin refused to allow it. He sent thousands of troops, who were caught in a bloody war for two years. In 2000, Vladimir Putin was elected president of Russia and dealt forcefully with the rebellion in Chechnya, but the fighting dragged on. Putin also dealt with economic, political, and social problems in Russia.

4 Changes in Central and Eastern Europe

Key Idea Soviet Reforms of the late 1980s brought big changes to Central and Eastern Europe.

Gorbachev urged leaders in Central and Eastern Europe to change their policies. They resisted, but the people of their countries wanted reform. Protest movements began to build. In Poland, many years of economic problems led the government to lift a ban on a workers' movement called Solidarity. Facing growing unrest, the government was forced to allow elections. The Polish people voted overwhelmingly against the communists and for Solidarity. However, the Polish people became frustrated with how long and painful the process was to achieve democracy and capitalism. In elections in 1995, they voted the former leader of

Solidarity out as president of Poland and elected Aleksander Kwasniewski in his place. In Hungary, reformers took over the communist party. Then it voted itself out of existence.

Change soon came to East Germany. Its leaders resisted at first. Then thousands of people across the country demanded free elections. Soon the Berlin Wall, which divided East and West Berlin, was down. By the end of 1989, the communist party was out of power. The next year the two parts of Germany, East and West, were united once again. The new nation had many problems, though. It had to fix the problems in the old East German economy.

In Czechoslovakia, similar calls for reform took place. When the government cracked down on protesters, thousands of Czechs poured into the streets. One day hundreds of thousands of people gathered to protest in the nation's capital. The communists agreed to give up power. Democracy led to a breakup. In 1993, the country split into two separate nations: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In Romania, a tough dictator used the army to shoot at protestors. The incident enraged Romanians. Massive protests forced him out. He was captured and executed in 1989. General elections followed.

Yugoslavia was made up of many different ethnic groups, and in the early 1990s they began fighting. When Serbia tried to control the government, two other areas declared independence. Slovenia beat back a Serbian invasion, but Serbia and Croatia fought a bloody civil war. In 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina also declared independence. Serbs who lived in that region opposed the move. Using aid from Serbia, they fought a brutal civil war with Muslims, the largest group in Bosnia. The United Nations was able to stop the fighting, but peace remained uncertain. The change to democracy and capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe was not smooth.

5 China: Reform and Reaction

KEY IDEA *China's government has experimented with capitalism but has rejected calls for democracy.*

Mao Zedong had tried to build a China on the ideas of equality, revolutionary spirit, and hard work. But his policies kept the economy from growing very quickly. Other leaders tried to modernize the economy. This caused Mao to launch the

Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. The result was chaos, and it was followed by a period of more moderate government action.

During this time, China had little role in world affairs. Zhou Enlai, another Chinese leader, worried about this. He worked with U.S. President Richard Nixon to improve U.S.–Chinese relations.

After Mao and Zhou died in 1976, moderates took control of the government. The chief leader was Deng Xiaoping. He tried to modernize the economy. He ended farming communes and allowed farmers more freedom. He made similar changes to industry. Suddenly, people had more income. They began to purchase appliances and other goods that had been scarce before.

Deng's new plan caused problems. The gap between rich and poor grew wider, which caused unrest. Western political ideas entered the country. In 1989, thousands of Chinese students gathered in a public square in the capital of Beijing. They called for democracy and freedom. Deng responded by sending army troops and tanks to put down the rally. Hundreds were killed and thousands wounded. China has continued to stamp out protest to this day. Deng died in 1997, and was replaced as president by Jiang Zemin. Eventually Jiang retired and was replaced by Hu Jintao.

Another major issue for China was the status of Hong Kong. The island became part of China again in 1997 when the British gave it back after 155 years of colonial rule. China promised to respect Hong Kong's freedom for 50 years, but many worried.

Review

- Determining Main Ideas** In what ways do Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina show how difficult it is to establish democracy?
- Identifying Problems and Solutions** What problems in establishing democracy occurred in Nigeria and South Africa?
- What reforms did Gorbachev put in place?
- Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** Why did the Soviet Union break apart?
- Drawing Conclusions** What path did China take, and what difficulties did it meet?