DRG LEARNING THEME: Theories of Democratic Change

The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and produced recommendations to guide DRG programming in five cross-cutting thematic areas. DRG research on Theories of Democratic Change answered questions related to which factors explain momentary openings and lasting liberalization of authoritarian systems, as well as to what extent institutional, cultural, geographic, and other conditions shape the paths to democratic backsliding or away from authoritarianism. The research consisted of **four** evidence reviews and **one** impact evaluation.

For more information, see the DRG Learning Agenda Overview and Learning Agenda Evidence Rack-Up.

DRG Center Learning Agenda Findings

Democratic Change

What factors explain momentary openings and lasting liberalization of authoritarian systems, short of regime change? To what extent do institutional, cultural, geographic, and other conditions shape the paths away from authoritarianism?

- Democratic backsliding occurs when there are a series of changes in the rules governing electoral procedures, civil and political liberties, and/or accountability. These discrete changes take place over time, separated by months or even years, and the end result is not pre-determined: backsliding may result in democratic breakdown, or it may not, and it can occur within both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

- Moves toward political liberalization may in some cases be disguised attempts by authoritarian governments to entrench non-democratic control.

Key Documents: "Theories of Democratic Backsliding"; "Paths Away from Authoritarianism"; "Transitions from Conflict"

Legend

Learning questions addressed by DRG research

Learning questions partially addressed by DRG research

Learning questions not yet addressed by DRG research