



The Origins of Liberty

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Why would sovereigns ever grant political or economic liberty to their subjects? Under what conditions would rational rulers who possess ultimate authority and who seek to maximize power and wealth ever give up any of that authority? This book draws on a wide array of empirical and theoretical approaches to answer these questions, investigating both *why* sovereign powers might liberalize and *when*.

The contributors to this volume argue that liberalization or democratization will only occur when those in power calculate that the expected benefits to them will exceed the costs. More specifically, rulers take five main concerns into account in their cost-benefit analysis as they decide to reinforce or relax controls: personal welfare, personal power, internal order, external order, and control over policy--particularly economic policy. The book shows that repression is a tempting first option for rulers seeking to maximize their benefits, but that liberalization becomes more attractive as a means of minimizing losses when it becomes increasingly certain that the alternatives are chaos, deposition, or even death. Chapters cover topics as diverse as the politics of seventeenth-century England and of twentieth-century Chile; why so many countries have liberalized in recent decades; and why even democratic governments see a need to reduce state power. The book makes use of formal modeling, statistical analysis, and traditional historical analysis.

The contributors are Paul Drake, Stephen Haggard, William Heller, Robert Kaufman, Phil Keefer, Brian Loveman, Mathew McCubbins, Douglass North, Ronald Rogowski, and Barry Weingast.

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