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# The Will to Democracy. Democracy in East Asia and a New Global History of Democracy in the 21st Century

This project deals with a question that has been gaining in importance recently: how can one explain the worldwide rise of Western democracy from the 19th century to our time? The focus of the project is on the experience of the democracies in East Asia (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), whose success is reflected in their political stability, rapid economic growth, and, most recently, effective and successful management of the COVID-19 crisis. By historically and comparatively examining the paths to democracy in East Asia and comparing them with the European cases, the project aims to critically examine different explanatory models for the conditions and causes of the development of democracy and to produce new research approaches.

Central to the considerations is the concept of the will to democracy, which is also the title of the project proposed here. The concept emphasizes the artificiality of modern democracy: artificiality in the sense that modern democracy, rather than being a natural evolution out of certain cultural characteristics, was rather an artificial product of thought and endeavor, in which a number of ideas played a core role (in philosophical terminology, they are called "values" precisely to denote their artificiality): the freedom of individuals, equality, and later human dignity and equal rights. They were supplemented by certain organizational principles of government. A society becomes democratic only when consensus is formed on those core values and principles. For this, they must be consciously propagated. Once democracy is established, it can survive and spread only if one persists in those values and principles and strives to develop them further. Democracy is thus based on a series of acts of will, both in its formation and in its survival.

The concept of the will to democracy is intended to mark precisely this centrality of the voluntaristic aspect. The insight gained through this project into the development of democracy in East Asia will finally serve to reflect on the state of democracy from a global perspective. By doing so, this project attempts, on the one hand, to reconstruct the various development paths of democracy from a global historical perspective and, on the other hand, to ask what prospects there are for democracy as a form of political and social life in our age.

## Recommended Reading

Yun, Bee. "A Long and Winding Road to Reforming the Corrupt Republic: Niccolò Machiavelli's Idea of the One-Man Reformer and His View of the Medici." *History of Political Thought* 41, no. 4 (2020): 539–558.

—. *Wege zu Machiavelli: Die Rückkehr des Politischen im Spätmittelalter*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2021.

—. "The Scientist of Politics? The Typology of Princedoms in The Prince and Machiavelli's Ambition as a Theorist of Human Action." In *Rethinking Medieval and Renaissance Political Thought: Historiographical Problems, Fresh Interpretations, New Debates*, edited by Chris Jones and Takashi Shogimen, 59–86. London and New York: Routledge, 2023.

# The Will to Democracy: The Development of Korean Democracy and Its Implications in the Worldwide Democracy Crisis

It has long been argued that democracy is a natural political form of human society. Democracy is considered a necessary consequence and destination of the unfolding human propensity for and pursuit of freedom and equality and the capacity for reason. As such, democracy is seen as the endpoint of humanity's political evolution.

The current crisis, visible in the seemingly unchecked rise of populism from both the right and left, has increasingly questioned this perspective of democracy. It has become daily apparent that democracy, like any other human invention and institution, emerges historically and evolves from the interplay of various factors. Democracy is fragile. It can perish unless it is consciously nurtured and protected.

This thesis is demonstrated by the democratic experiences in South Korea, which have gained increasing attention due to their success in terms of political stability, rapid economic growth, and effective crisis management. Central to these considerations is the concept of the will to democracy. A society will remain democratic only if this constitutional form is consciously ideologically worked on and promoted. Thus, this presentation views democracy as a result of a series of acts of will, be it by an individual, a group, a stratum, or a class, as proven by the Korean democracy and its fluctuating history. An attempt is also made to expand this observation of the centrality of acts of will as the basis of successful democracy to the democratic experiences in the history of the European cultural sphere.

This is the first step in an attempt to illuminate the real conditions of the birth and perpetuation of democracy and, thereby, to gain a foundation to reconstruct from a fresh perspective the history of democracy from its origins in antiquity to its global spread after World War II.

Yun, Bee (New York, NY [u.a.],2024)

Was the Peloponnesian war inevitable? : Athens' campaign to Egypt (460-454 BCE) and the evolution of its grand strategy  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1883158214>

Yun, Bee (Göttingen,2021)

Das Komische, das Moralische und das Politische : der Pfaffe Amis in der Gedankenwelt der Stauferzeit  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853836818>

Yun, Bee (New York, NY [u.a.],2021)

Persia and Pericles' grand strategy : was the Peloponnesian war a bipolar hegemonic war?  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853835900>

Yun, Bee (Berlin,2021)

Culture of prognosis in the Medieval western Christian tradition of the Mirror-of-Princes  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853835412>

Yun, Bee (Wien,2021)

Wege zu Machiavelli : die Rückkehr des Politischen im Spätmittelalter  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1678696668>  
Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte ; Band 91  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1678696668>

Yun, Bee (Exeter,2020)

A long and winding road to reforming the corrupt republic : Niccolò Machiavelli's idea of the one-man reformer and his view of the Medici  
<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1853834629>