

process where more citizens choose to sit out the election rather than exercise their franchise?

Moreover, creating a competitive election is only one factor in democratizing a society.

A second institutional change associated with democratization is greater mass participation in politics. This change has occurred in Latin America, particularly since the 1930s in the more industrialized countries, e.g., Argentina, Chile and Mexico and since the 1950s in most other countries, as women were enfranchised and urban and rural workers began organizing to achieve political ends in the political process. This change has resulted in the growth of political organizations such as interest groups and political parties, which are the logical extension of greater political activity among citizens of a polity. In Mexico, for instance, the challenge provided to the historical dominance of PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party) by the PAN (National Action Party) and the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) in recent years is a sign of the emergence of political party pluralism in what was a one-party state for most of the 20th century. The PRI historically functioned in a very corporatist manner, subsuming and controlling interest groups that were potential competitors and thus thwarting the democratic process. The National Front agreement under which Colombia operated from the late 1950s through the 1970s was another example of a highly controlled democracy, in which conservatives and liberals alternated in power and excluded any other parties from the electoral process.

Greater public participation in political institutions and elections does not in itself guarantee a higher degree of democratization; nor does broader popular participation in politics bring greater stability. During the 1960s and 1970s, mass political activity was often challenged by the military. Democratic movements met with harsh responses from military and civilian elites. Governments in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay were experimenting with democratic changes. The response was for authoritarianism in each case. In fact, much of the literature suggests elite change and accommodation is far more powerful than mass political activity in inducing the transition to democracy. However, the fact that the masses become involved as part of democratization remains an important step in creating responsible government.