This chapter examines the role of civil society and social capital in democratization processes. It begins by reconstructing the definitions of civil society and social capital in the context of political change, followed by an analysis of the ways in which civil society and social capital are functional for the initiation and consolidation of democracies. It then considers the relationship between civil society and attitudes of trust and reciprocity, the function of networks and associations in democratization, paradoxes of civil society and social capital in new democracies, and the main arguments cast against the idea that civic activism and attitudes are a necessary precondition for a modern democracy. The chapter argues that civil society and social capital and their relation to political and economic institutions are context specific.
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