



APSA | COMPARATIVE POLITICS

THE ORGANIZED SECTION IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS
OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME XXXI ISSUE 1 SPRING 2021

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FROM THE EDITORS: Transitions

by Eugene Finkel, Adria Lawrence, and Andrew Mertha



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In his April 28, 2021 address to the U.S. Congress, President Joe Biden compared the country to a “house on fire” and declared that the U.S. was at “a great inflection point in history.” Political speech-making encourages hyperbole, and yet such statements can be effective when they convey a shared sense that the current moment is one of uncertainty and change, as the country and the global community undergo a shift from the past to an unknown future. Recent developments suggest that that the second decade of the twentieth century is opening with new challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic and its uneven global effects, climate change, political polarization, the emergence of right-wing populism, the eruption of mass protest, and the possibility of violence and democratic backsliding in established democracies, to name a few.

Within the academy, the past year has brought both opportunities and constraints. The global pandemic and its political effects have raised new research questions, even as scholars have faced serious constraints on their ability to undertake research. As a field, we have become more aware of the disparities within our discipline: resources, childcare needs, illness, and

job insecurity have affected some in our ranks more than others and deepened inequality within the academy. We have all been forced to adapt our teaching, research, and outreach to existing circumstances. As vaccination rates rise, talk has turned to questions of what the “new normal” will look like, a phrase that suggests that our current predicaments are unlikely to lead to a return to the past, but to new, as yet unknown, practices.

It thus seems like an ideal time to consider the scholarship on transitions within comparative politics. Periods of transitions are characterized by uncertainty – their endpoints are unknown. The hopeful research agenda on transitions to democracy that followed the wave of democratization in Europe, Latin America, and Asia prompted, as Juan Linz put it, a desire to understand such transitions “for the purpose of political engineering, so as to carry forward the democratic banners.”¹ But as Linz and subsequent scholars pointed out, transitions can begin but remain incomplete, and have both positive and negative consequences for politics and society. Regime transitions are only one kind of transition. Transitions are periods of

1. Linz, Juan J. “Transitions to Democracy.” *The Washington Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 1990): 143–64.



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uncertainty; they are critical for political change but also challenging to study and understand.

In this issue, our contributors discuss a wide range of socio-political transitions, from climate change to migration to regime changes. Several contributions focus on recent advances in our understanding of how political regimes transition.

Amanda Edgell, Matthew Wilson and Seraphine Maerz introduce the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset. Focusing on episodes and instances of transformation that fall short of full-scale transition to or from a certain regime type, they argue, can be helpful in better understanding broader political dynamics. Nicolas van de Walle surveys the experience of thirty years of regime transitions in Africa and the lessons they offer for the broader comparative politics scholarship. Elections and vertical accountability institutions, he argues, are the key factors researchers need to study to better understand the diverging results of regime transitions in the continent.

Justine Davis zooms in on one specific feature of regime transitions in Africa, namely the role of civil society organizations in promoting democratization in post-conflict settings. The contribution argues that to fully understand the challenges of post-conflict democratization scholars and policymakers need to better understand the impact of violence on NGOs and their ability to promote democratic norms and behavior.

Hilary Appel and Mitchell Orenstein unpack the challenges of simultaneous political and economic transitions by focusing on post-communist Eastern Europe. Appel and Orenstein demonstrate that even though voters in newly democratized Eastern Europe were expected to

reject painful neoliberal reforms, the dynamics of the post-communist countries' reintegration into the global economy made neoliberalism a durable feature of transitions from communism.

Elizabeth Nugent and Stas Gorelik analyze the emergence of mass protests under autocracies. Focusing on the Arab Spring, Nugent discusses the promises of the political psychology approach to understanding mobilization. More specifically, she highlights three areas in which psychological approaches are especially helpful in explaining contentious politics: emotions and protest mobilization, identity and contingency, and personal transformations as transitional outcomes. Gorelik adopts a similar approach to explain the seemingly sudden recent emergence of mass protests in Belarus. The contribution argues that the concepts of accountability and moral shocks help explain the onset of protest mobilization in the country. Zachary Steinert-Threlkeld discusses the impact of social media on protest mobilization. New technologies and modes of communication, he demonstrates, did change contentious politics in some ways, but contrary to early expectations, they did not alter the more fundamental dynamics and logics of protest.

Justin Schon surveys the co-evolution of migrants' strategies and states' enforcement responses. He concludes that the co-evolutionary development of migration and enforcement strategies is unlikely to yield positive outcomes for unauthorized migrants. Yang-Yang Zhou focuses on the changes in the perception of migrants within host societies. Examining the heterogeneity among migrants and citizen groups and the cross-cutting identities between them, Zhou argues, sheds new lights on how migration transforms political attitudes.

Catherine Reyes-Housholder examines the gender aspects of political transformations by studying Latin America's female presidents. The contribution demonstrates that the phenomenon of female presidents is both recent and precarious, as female presidents face different expectations and challenges than their male counterparts. Nina McMurry, Danielle Hiraldo and Christopher Carter analyze transitions in indigenous politics. The authors focus on a recent growth in the recognition of Indigenous rights and find that recognition can improve political representation when it strengthens Indigenous institutions but might also reduce representation if indigenous institutions are weakened.

Debra Javeline discusses adaptation to climate change. Javeline shows that comparativists largely ignore the topic despite its crucial importance. She suggests ways to better integrate climate studies and comparative politics scholarship.

Finally, Erica De Bruin and Anastasia Shesterinina focus on transitions in the practices and use of violence. Erica De Bruin surveys the emerging global phenomenon of police militarization. The militarization of police, she argues, has important political consequences in areas such as distribution of resources, prevention of police reforms and the survival of leaders and regimes. Shesterinina leverages her research on the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993 and Colombia to analyze transitions to and from civil wars. To better understand such transitions the contribution highlights the key importance of micro-level mechanisms and individual trajectories of mobilization and demobilization.

In this issue of the Newsletter we include short Q&As with current and recent editors of several top disciplinary and subfield journals. Aili Tripp, Graeme Robertson, Margit Tavits, Shaun Bowler, Mark Beissinger and David Samuels answer our questions about how research and publishing in Comparative Politics is changing. ●

If you would like to cite this,

or any other, issue of the Comparative Politics Newsletter, we suggest using a variant of the following citation:

Finkel, Eugene, Adria Lawrence and Andrew Mertha (eds.). 2021. "Transitions." Newsletter of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association, 31(1).

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EPIISODES OF REGIME TRANSFORMATION: Assessing Democratization and Autocratization since 1900

by *Amanda B. Edgell, Matthew C. Wilson, and Seraphine F. Maerz*



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By now, most would agree that regime change tends to occur in wave-like patterns across the globe (Huntington 1991). Most will also agree that the current global trend appears to be in a more autocratic direction. According to Freedom House, democracy is “under siege”. The Economist Intelligence Unit also observed a “very bad year” for global democracy, downgrading a majority of countries on its index. Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) go so far as to claim we are living through a “third wave of autocratization”.

This raises the question: Are instances of apparent democratization (or its reverse, autocratization) meaningful for explaining where a country is headed? Although Gabon is not very democratic today, changes associated with the 1990 legislative elections – the first multiparty contest since 1967 – appear substantive when compared to neighboring Equatorial Guinea. Repeated observations of failed liberalization may help to explain eventual democratic transitions in countries like Ghana or Argentina, which are characterized by “ratcheting” as iterated attempts at liberalization progressively moved these countries toward democracy. This information may also be helpful for understanding

the tenuous circumstances facing countries that have recently liberalized, such as Armenia, Burma/Myanmar, and Ethiopia, as well as democracies that show ongoing backsliding, such as Brazil, Poland, and South Africa.

Questions about political regime change – what explains democratization and democratic breakdown, and descriptions of historical trends – constitute a major area of research in comparative politics that is primed for innovation. Recent work by Treisman (2020) highlights gradual processes and the role of accidents, encouraging a renewed approach to identifying and explaining regime change. Despite the increasing sophistication of quantitative analyses on the topic, dominant approaches to explaining regime change suffer from several issues. They fail to account for cases in which changes occurred but a transition was never observed, they tend to prioritize short-term changes, and they focus separately on movements toward and away from democracy.

To extend the empirical study of regime change, we and a large team of collaborators developed the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset to identify periods of substantial and



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Regime transformation is not a rare event. Rather, it is a global phenomenon in a geo-temporal sense.

sustained changes in the V-Dem electoral democracy index (EDI) (Edgell et al. 2020; Maerz et al. 2021; Coppedge et al. 2020). These data contain information on the start, end, and outcome of 680 ERTs in 168 countries from 1900 to 2019. We also developed an R package that allows users to compile the data and to reset the parameters for sensitivity analysis (Maerz et al. 2020).

The ERT offers several main advantages over existing approaches to studying regime change and supports growth in the research in this area. This is exemplified by the fact that we observe many different transformation processes and outcomes and considerable uncertainty concerning the likelihood of democratization and autocratization.

In this contribution, we describe global trends in regime transformation over the past 120 years

and discuss the potential benefits of rethinking our approach to studying regime change. This builds on and summarizes research conducted by a larger team of collaborators who have contributed to the conceptualization and development of the ERT dataset.¹

In this piece, we do not address the more technical details of our coding decisions; readers can find this information in our documentation, R-package, and working paper (Edgell et al. 2020; Maerz et al. 2020; Maerz et al. 2021).

What are Episodes of Regime Transformation?

Episodes of regime transformation (ERTs) are periods of sustained and substantial changes in a country's adherence to the institutions and practices associated with polyarchy (as defined by Dahl 1971). These episodes have a defined start and end date, direction, and magnitude and are classified along several possible outcomes. As such, we blend differences-in-degree (gradual regime transformations) and differences-in-kind (regime transitions), finding value in both approaches to the study of regime change.

Regime transformation can take two general forms: *democratization*, or movements toward the democratic ideal, and *autocratization*, movements away from it. While often treated separately in the literature, we argue that democratization and autocratization should be thought of as obverse processes or two sides of regime transformation, as illustrated in *Figure 1*.

As shown in *Figure 1*, the ERT also differentiates episodes with the *potential* for a regime *transition* across the democracy/autocracy divide from those that further deepen existing regime qualities (Maerz et al. 2021). Specifically, we use the term *liberalizing autocracy* for democratization episodes in autocracies and the term *democratic regression* for autocratization episodes in democracies. When further democratization occurs within a democracy, we call this

1. In addition to the authors of this contribution, the larger ERT team also includes (alphabetized): Vanessa Boese, Sebastian Hellmeier, Jean Lachapelle, Staffan I. Lindberg, Patrik Lindenfors, Anna Lührmann, Laura Maxwell, Juraj Medzihorsky, and Richard Morgan. Joshua Krussell has also provided assistance with C++ coding and the R-package. The ERT is funded by the Swedish Research Council Grant 2018-01614, P.I. Anna Lührmann; by the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation to the Wallenberg Academy Fellow Staffan I. Lindberg, Grant 2018.0144; by the European Research Council, Grant 724191, P.I. Staffan I. Lindberg; as well as by internal grants from the Vice Chancellor's office, the Dean of the College of Social Sciences, and the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. Computations of expert data were enabled by the Swedish National Infrastructure for Computing (SNIC) at the National Supercomputer Centre, Linköping University, partially funded by the Swedish Research Council through Grant no. 2019/3-516.

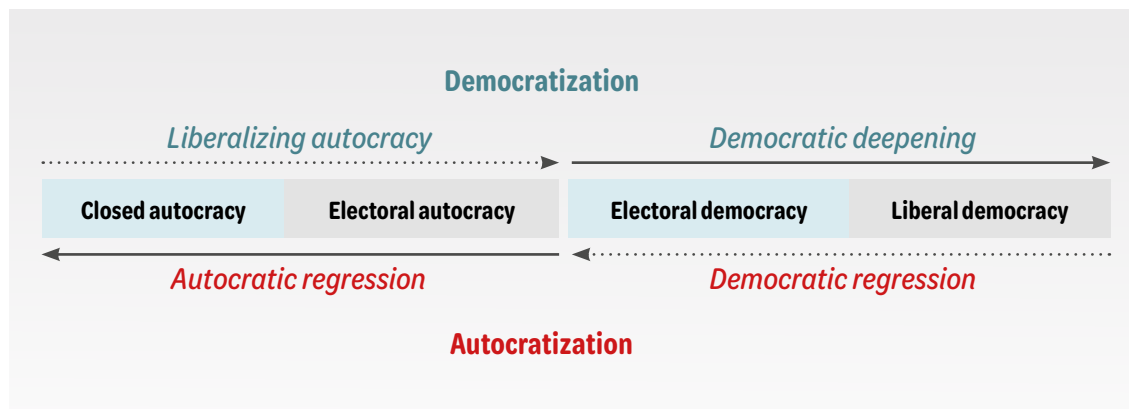


Figure 1. Conceptualizing episodes of regime transformation (from Maerz et al. 2021).

democratic deepening. Similarly, when further autocratization occurs within an autocracy, we call this *autocratic regression*.

Finally, to define regime transitions, we use a rather thick conceptualization derived from case studies and our own extensive face validity tests. A *democratic transition* occurs when an autocratic regime meets minimally democratic conditions (based on the *Regimes of the World* classification, Lührmann et al. 2018) and holds founding democratic elections for the legislature, a constituent assembly, or the executive. We also require that the officials chosen in the founding election are able to assume office. Conversely, a *democratic breakdown* occurs when a democratic regime becomes a closed autocracy or if it falls below the minimal threshold for democracy and either holds a founding

authoritarian election for the legislature, a constituent assembly, or the executive or remains autocratic for at least five years.

Regime Transformation over Time and Space

Table 1 provides a quick summary of the ERT dataset. Several novel insights can be gleaned from this simple overview. First, we observe a total of 680 episodes from 1900 to 2019. These episodes comprise 4,217 country-years, or about 22.4% of the V-Dem sample.² They occur in 168 countries, meaning that 92% of the 183 countries included in the main V-Dem data have experienced at least one ERT. This suggests that regime transformation is not a rare event. Rather, it is a global phenomenon in a geo-temporal sense.

2. Throughout, when we refer to the “V-Dem sample”, we mean the ordinary, post-1900 country-years. We exclude the historical V-Dem data going back to 1789 due to missing data on variables needed to construct the ERT.

Table 1. Episodes in the ERT (v2.2)

	N	Percent	Censored	Countries	Years	Mean Duration
Democratic deepening	44	6.5	6	39	327	7.4
Liberalizing autocracy	383	56.3	15	164	2554	6.7
Democratic regression	96	14.1	25	70	674	7.0
Autocratic regression	157	23.1	14	91	682	4.3
Total	680	100.0	60	168	4127	6.1

Notes: “Censored” in this table refers to episodes ongoing in the final year for which data are available or the year before a gap in the V-Dem coding.

This finding is further reinforced in *Figure 2* and *Figure 3*. *Figure 2* plots the number of countries experiencing an ERT over time. For both democratization and autocratization, we see a clustering of episodes during particular time periods, reflecting the overall wave-like nature of regime transformation previously observed by Huntington (1991) and more recently by Lührmann and Lindberg (2019). *Figure 3* maps the number of episodes each country has experienced since 1900. This illustrates the scope of regime transformation, with democratization and autocratization episodes occurring across all geopolitical regions.

Second, we find that democratization is much more common than autocratization; 63% of all episodes constitute improvements in electoral democracy. Most of the democratization we see is driven by liberalizing autocracies, rather than further deepening in established democracies. These episodes of liberalizing autocracy have

occurred in 164 countries, or 88% of the V-Dem sample. This reflects a general, global trend toward more democratic forms of governance and away from authoritarianism, which has arguably been the default regime type throughout much of known human history (Ahram and Goode 2016). These trends are further depicted by the temporal and spatial patterns in *Figures 2* and *3*.

Third, the average ERT lasts for more than six years, reinforcing the argument that regime transformation is a protracted process taking place over several years. Only 53 episodes in the ERT last just one year (less than 8% of the data). By contrast, over half (53% or 361 episodes) of observed ERTs last for 5 years or more. This suggests that analyses of country-year data with short temporal lags, which are common in the comparative field, may be biased because they do not account for the fact that regime transformation often unfolds over a longer time span.

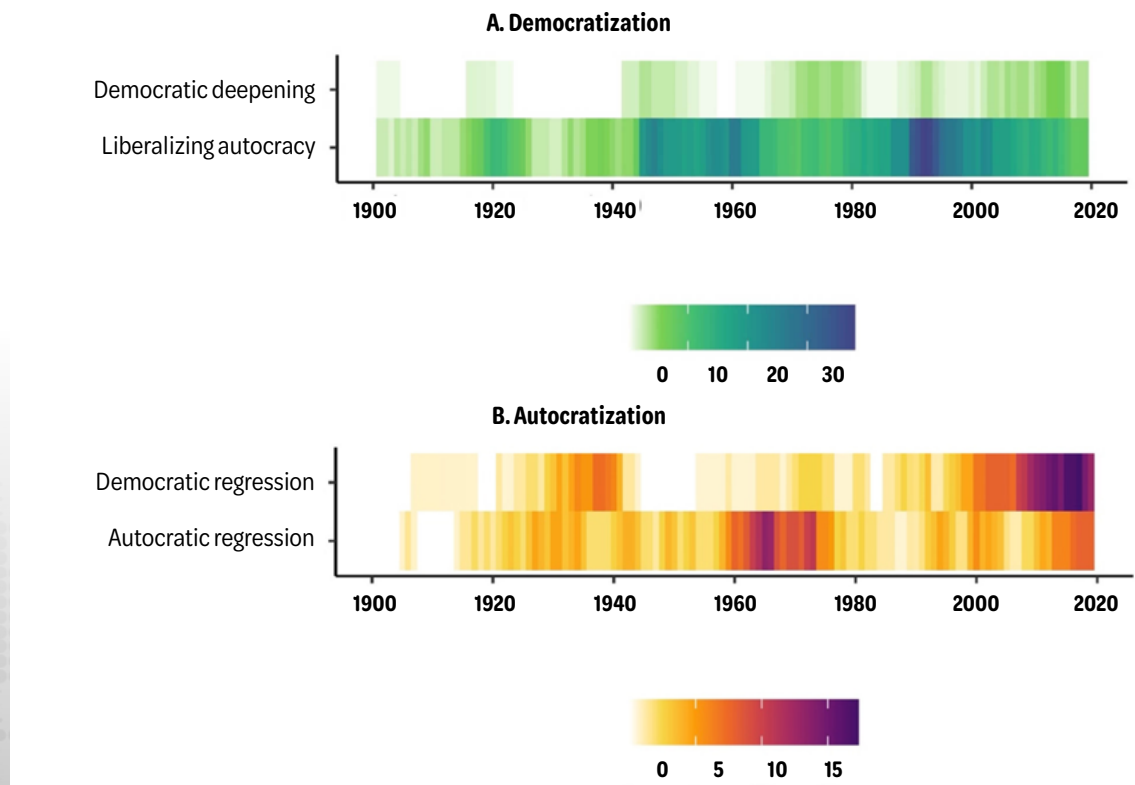


Figure 2. Temporal trends in regime transformation from 1900 to 2019. Shading represents the percentage of countries globally experiencing that particular type of ERT within the year. Darker shades represent higher percentages of countries in an episode.

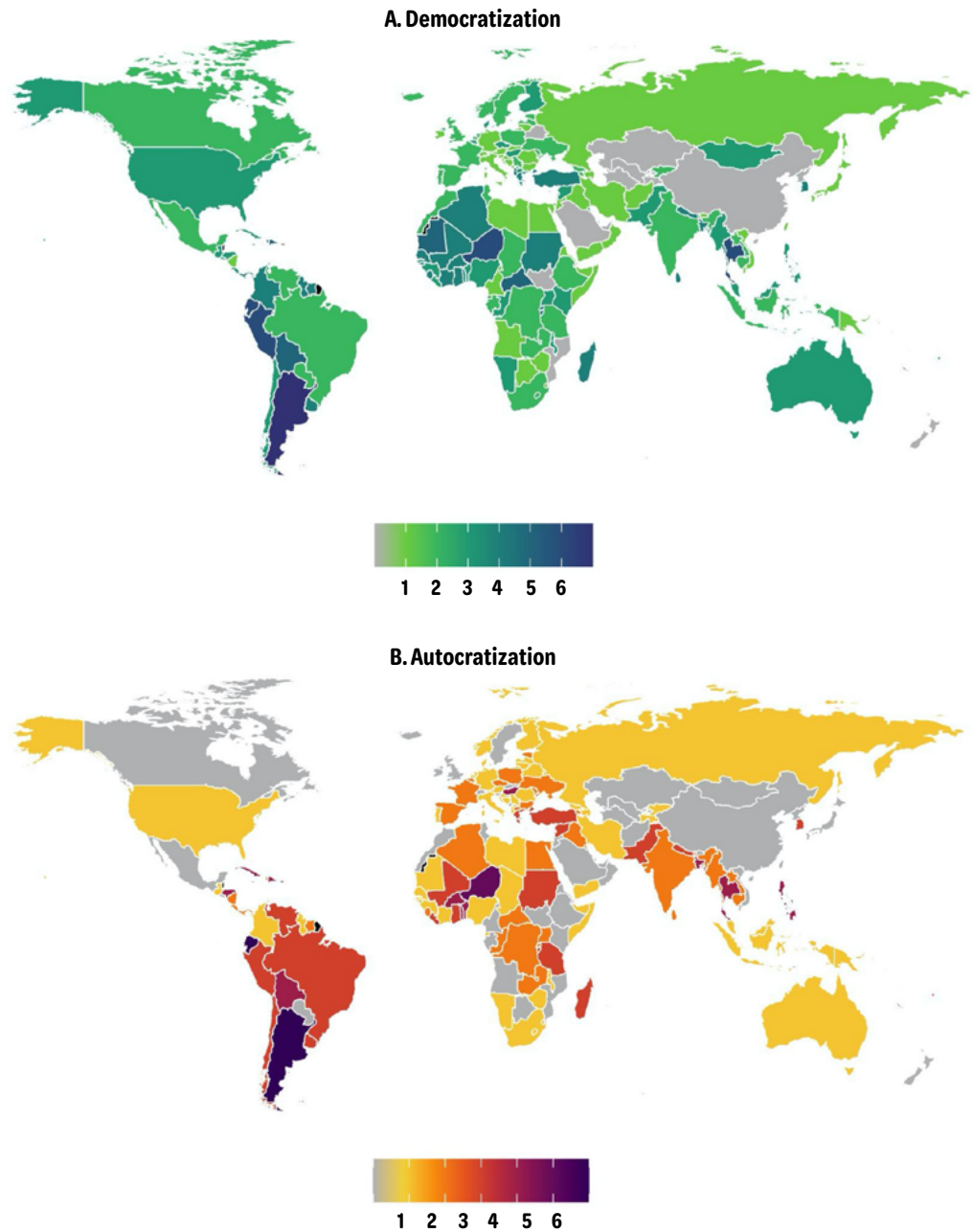


Figure 3. Geographic trends in regime transformation from 1900 to 2019. Values represent the number of episodes experienced by the country during this period. Darker shading represents a greater number of episodes. Countries in grey have not experienced any episodes.

Episodes of Regime Transformation are Fraught with Uncertainty

In *Table 2*, we highlight *liberalizing autocracy* as an authoritarian regime undergoing democratization with the prospect of a democratic transition and *democratic regression* as autocratization in democracies that might ultimately yield democratic breakdown (Maerz et al. 2021).

These two episode types are represented in *Figure 1* using a dashed line to emphasize that despite their potential for a regime transition, such transitions are by no means guaranteed. Indeed, the ERT dataset provides strong empirical evidence of this uncertainty. *Table 2* shows that over half – 245 out of 455 or 54% – of all episodes with the potential for a regime transition did not experience a transition by the end of the episode.

Table 2.
Episodes with a potential regime transition in the ERT.

	N	Transition	No transition	Censored	Continues
Liberalizing autocracy	383	145	226	12	112
Democratic regression	96	65	19	12	51
Total	479	210	245	24	163

Notes: “Censored” in this table refers to episodes where the outcome is unknown because a transition had not yet occurred and the episode was ongoing in the final year for which data are available or the year before a gap in the V-Dem coding.

The ERT also shows that liberalization in autocracies is considerably more uncertain than autocratization is for democracies (Wilson et al. 2020; Boese et al. 2021). Liberalizing autocracies fail to produce a democratic transition 61% of the time (226/371 uncensored outcomes). Burundi is a typical example: four episodes of liberalization have yielded no democratic transition, and after each episode, the case has reverted back to an apparent autocratic equilibrium. Yet, cases like Ecuador and Senegal illustrate the bumpy road to democracy; each experienced four failed attempts at liberalization before successfully democratizing in 1980 and 1990 respectively.

By contrast, democracies rarely avoid breakdown once autocratization has begun (Boese et al. 2021). Democratic regression produces a democratic breakdown about 77% of the time (65/84 uncensored outcomes). This includes Hungary, which became the EU’s first autocracy in 2018. At the same time, nineteen cases managed to “beat backsliding”, such as South Korea under the Lee and Park administrations (from 2008-2016), which has since “re-equilibrated” its democracy (Croissant 2020; Linz 1978).

Transitions are Events Embedded within a Longer Process of Regime Transformation

We find that when transitions or breakdowns occur, they tend to be a waystation rather than the culmination of the episode (Maerz et al. 2021). After a democratic transition, episodes continue with democratic deepening about 77%

of the time (112/145 transitions, see “Continues” Table 2). Portugal serves as the classic example of the “third wave of democracy” (e.g. Huntington 1991) where democratization began as early as 1970, well before the 1974 Carnation Revolution yielded a democratic transition in 1976, and continued to deepen until 1984. Likewise, after a democratic breakdown, episodes continue with further autocratic regression over 78% of the time (51/65 breakdowns, see “Continues” Table 2). Nicaragua, for example, began autocratizing in 2003, experienced a democratic breakdown in 2007, and has seen further autocratic regression ever since.

Regime Transformation is More Likely in Autocracies

Despite the grim realities for democratic regression presented in Table 1, we find that democracies are generally quite stable. Just 96 episodes of democratic regression occur between 1900 and 2019, suggesting that democracies are overall highly resilient to autocratization onset (Boese et al. 2021). Similarly, we find only 44 episodes of democratic deepening, or further democratization within already democratic countries. By contrast, the vast majority – more than 79% – of episodes originate in autocracies, regardless of their direction, suggesting that authoritarian regimes are much less stable than democracies. The high degree of uncertainty for autocracies reflects the well-known dynamics of power sharing and control under information-poor conditions (Svolik 2012; Schedler 2013).

What Happens When Transformation Falls Short of Transition?

The high uncertainty surrounding regime transformation, particularly when it comes to transitions, presents a set of new questions: What ultimately happens to autocracies that liberalize, but fall short of democracy? Similarly, what happens to democracies that regress, but avoid breakdown? To address these questions, we conceptualize three non-transition outcomes for episodes that had the potential to but nevertheless did not experience a transition. *Figure 4* illustrates these outcomes and their observed frequencies.

Liberalizing autocracies can fail to produce a democratic transition in three ways (Wilson et al. 2020). A *preempted transition* occurs when the country achieves minimally democratic conditions but fails to hold a founding election

before reverting back to autocracy. We observe this “near miss” outcome 16 times in the ERT (just 7% of 226 no-transition outcomes). For episodes that never temporarily meet the minimal criteria for democracy, we distinguish two other possible outcomes. We classify those that end with no further meaningful changes on the EDI for 5 years or more as *stabilized electoral autocracy*. As we might expect from the literature on authoritarian institutional adaptation (e.g. Schedler 2013), we find this outcome in 87 episodes (about 38% of no-transition outcomes). Finally, *reverted liberalization* refers to countries that revert back to closed autocracy or experience a meaningful one-year or substantial five-year decline on the EDI after the end of the episode. This outcome is most common – accounting for over half of the no-transition outcomes (123/226).

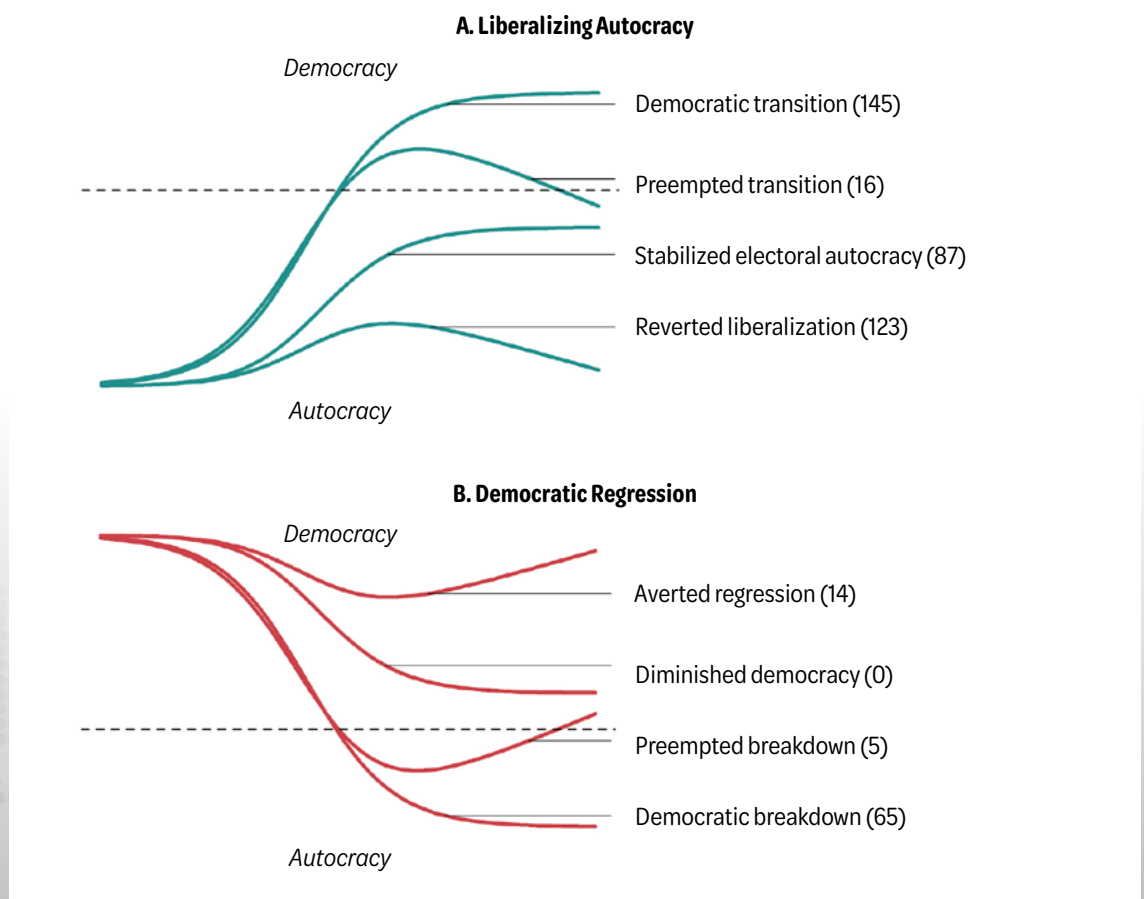


Figure 4. Possible outcomes of liberalizing autocracy and democratic regression (adapted from Maerz et al. 2021).

Similarly, regressing democracies may avoid breakdown in three ways. A *preempted breakdown* happens when a democracy regresses into an electoral autocracy but crosses back above the democratic threshold within 5 years and without holding a founding authoritarian election. Such “near misses” for democratic breakdown account for 5 out of 19 averted democratic breakdowns within the ERT dataset (or 26%). When democratic regression does not result in a temporary lapse into electoral autocracy, we anticipate two possible outcomes but empirically only observe one of these. Theoretically, a democracy can decline in democratic quality before stabilizing as a *diminished democracy*, but we do not observe this using the default ERT thresholds. Rather, we find that *averted regression* – or those episodes of democratic regression that are followed by a return to liberal democracy or a sufficiently large one-year to five-year increase on the EDI – account for the majority of no-breakdown outcomes (14/19, or 74%).

Rethinking How We Conceptualize and Study Regime Change

The study of regime change and regime transitions has long occupied comparative scholars and has important implications for ordinary people and policymakers worldwide. On behalf of a larger team of collaborators, we offer here a brief introduction to the ERT dataset and challenge colleagues to rethink how we conceptualize and study regime change.

Emphasizing discrete regime transitions overlooks cases where countries undergo regime transformation without transitioning. This means that our knowledge about the determinants of democratization rests on the conflation of cases that *never* liberalized and those that

liberalized but failed to democratize. Examining annual changes in levels of democracy does not overcome this problem because (a) it overlooks more dynamic, longer term processes, and (b) it treats annual unit changes as empirical equivalents regardless of where the regime currently falls on the scale.

By contrast, our novel approach to episodes of regime transformation accounts for incremental changes over a longer time span and incorporates information about where the regime began and the episode’s ultimate outcome. This allows scholars to explore the differences between regime transformation with and without a regime transition. For example, liberalization that did not bring about a democratic transition during the 1950s and 1960s, including the Gambia, Cambodia, and Kuwait, deserves more attention. Meanwhile, the 1990s saw almost as many episodes of democratization resulting in stabilized electoral authoritarian rule and reverted liberalization as it did democratic transitions (Wilson et al. 2020). Conversely, the observation that so few democracies survive autocratization opens up important and timely questions about the conditions for democratic resilience (Boese et al. 2021).

By incorporating other potential outcomes of regime transformation, the ERT creates opportunities to hone arguments about the causes of regime change. A number of existing theories could benefit from a re-examination. This includes revisiting debates over the ways that key factors such as economic development and social mobilization support democracy – their impacts on democratization versus democratic stability or decline –, exploring the diffusion of institutional change over space and time, and elucidating the impacts of institutional legacies on future political developments. For example,

two recent studies find that the factors explaining the onset of ERTs are not the same as those explaining their outcomes (Boese et al. 2021; Wilson et al. 2020). Future applications could use matching techniques to develop causal arguments by comparing subsamples of episodes that could have followed similar trajectories.

Thinking about regime change as an episode rather than a discrete event provides opportunities to compare cases based on the *pace* of change and to consider why some cases experience more protracted episodes of regime transformation. This allows scholars to distinguish between short and long-term processes and to consider the sequence or ordering of the reforms taking place within episodes. For exam-

ple, a recent study suggests that liberalization follows a fairly similar path, but that ERTs resulting in a democratic transition implement earlier reforms to electoral management (Edgell et al. *Forthcoming*).

Finally, the ERT can help those with an interest in promoting and defending democracy by offering more fine-grained insights into the dynamics of regime transformation. In particular, the ERT includes a number of ongoing episodes where the outcome remains uncertain. This raises an important question of whether – and how – revisiting and scrutinizing past episodes of regime transformation can help inform our understanding of current trends and when the tide is likely to change. ●

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COMPARATIVE LESSONS FROM AFRICA'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS, THIRTY YEARS LATER

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The transition to multi-party electoral politics in Sub-Saharan Africa is now three decades old. Until 1990, all but half a handful of African countries were single party dictatorships; by the end of 1995, 38 of the region's 49 countries had held multi-party elections, and by 2021, somewhere between 8 and 12 multi-party elections were being held annually in the region. Although only Mauritius and Botswana regularly convened multi-party elections before 1989, today the majority of African countries hold such elections – only three (Eritrea, Somalia and Eswatini) do not (Bleck and van de Walle 2018).

The scholarly literature that emerged in the 1990s treated these transitions as “democratic” transitions, integrating their analysis within the comparative literature on the Third Wave of democratization (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Joseph 1999; Wiseman 1995). The African cases offered an interesting contrast to the patterns the emerging literature posited for the earlier Latin American and Southern European transitions. Both had come in the context of economic crisis. The latter appeared to have been mostly elite-pacted transitions, with little popular protest (O'Donnell et al. 1986, Karl 1990; Di Palma 1990) and marked by negotiation between the incumbent government and the op-

position. Meanwhile the Africanist scholarship noted the preponderance of economic and political protest during transitions, the general absence of elite pacts, and generally a much shorter, discontinuous transition. As the wave spread to Eastern Europe and the former states of the Soviet Union, they exhibited yet other patterns. Scholars noted these differences and argued they pointed to patterns that were unique to specific regions and types of authoritarian regimes as well as universal characteristics of transitions (Bunce 2000; Geddes, 1999).

Much of this initial Africanist foray into “transitology” was produced in the heat of the moment, even as some of the transitions being studied were still in considerable flux. With three decades of hindsight, today it may be useful to rethink both the global and regional generalizations made at the time. I will argue that some of the initial findings continue to resonate, but that over the course of the last three decades, several new comparative lessons have come into greater focus concerning the African transitions of the 1990s.



Political transitions are embedded within slower processes of socio-economic change.

Huntington expressed a general consensus when he predicted in 1984 that “most African countries are, by virtue of their poverty or the violence of their politics, unlikely to move in a democratic fashion” (Huntington 1984, 216). Scholars took these structural constraints to heart and few anticipated the political transitions in Africa. Indeed, the initial literature on the Third Wave ignored the region, despite its avowed predilection for discounting structural in favor of more contingent explanations for transition outcomes.

In Africa, as elsewhere in the post-colonial world, the long period of authoritarian rule had favored structural accounts of politics, and Africanist political science in the 1980s focused on such “longue durée” factors such as the colonial legacy, class, state society relations and economic dependency (Bayart 1989; Lonsdale 1981; Rothchild and Chazan 1988; Young 1995). The sudden collapse of seemingly stable regimes in a matter of weeks, abetted by popular protests and the powerful agency of new kinds of actors coming out of civil society could not easily be explained by the usual structural theories. The global economic crisis that gained speed after the second oil crisis in 1979-1980 clearly undermined some regimes in the region, and appealed to scholars who viewed the insertion of Africa into the global economy as problematic, as an explanation for the political crises suddenly enveloping the region in the late 1980s (Decalo 1992; Ake 1991). In a number of countries, protests from civil servants and students were clearly initially motivated by economic grievances before they morphed into openly

political claims; but it proved harder to establish a clear statistical economic explanation for the variation in political outcomes across the region. Not all economic crises generated protests, and not all protests generated regime change (Bratton and van de Walle 1997, 129-34; Widner 1994).

Nonetheless, following the emphasis of the democratization scholars covering the earlier transitions in Latin America and Southern Europe, Africanists began to focus more of their theoretical attention on the contingent factors that had precipitated and then moved the transitions forward. Transitions were marked by chaos and fluidity, so that structural constraints to political change were temporarily attenuated, and the attitudes, choices and actions of individuals both in government and in the opposition during the transition were argued to have shaped transitions decisively. Emblematically, Benin’s transition in 1991 was precipitated by the decision of President Kérékou to convene a “national conference,” a meeting of the nation’s elites to forge a dialogue with the opposition about the country’s burgeoning crisis. It featured prominently in the democratization literature, not least because it proved a spectacular blunder when the sitting president could not prevent the invited lawyers and civil society activists from declaring the conference sovereign, dispossessing Kérékou of the presidency and calling for new elections (Heilbrunn 1993), thus precipitating Benin’s transition.

In retrospect, however, it seems clear that institutional legacies and socio-economic factors shaped the transitions in various ways that were probably underestimated at the time, in Africa, as in other regions that were involved in the Third Wave. First, Bratton and van de Walle

(1997) had emphasized the importance of the political institutions of the *ancien régime* in shaping the nature of the transition. Notably, they pointed to the preponderant powers of African executives, who dominated their political systems, as “presidents for life”, and made any political compromise and incremental political reform harder. This African presidentialism was a legacy of both colonial era political institutions, and the personal nature of power after independence, and helped to explain that so many of the African transitions turned out to be protest driven. Still, the lasting power of this institutional legacy was probably underestimated. Hyper presidentialism would survive the transitions, even in the cases in which the old president was removed from power and political pluralism established. One reason, missed by most scholars at the time, was that few transitions entailed significant constitutional reform, and newly elected presidents quickly realized they benefited from constitutions that granted them significant discretionary and statutory powers that lessened their accountability, as well as a good deal of latitude in shaping government to suit their personal interests. Presidentialism was also broadly accepted by the political class, as attested by the fact that not a single transition altered its constitution to a parliamentary form of government, as commonly did transitions in Eastern Europe, for instance. In retrospect, the African transitions offer comparative theories of democratic transitions one insight: the ability of the transition to address the institutional legacies of the *ancien régime* will often be key to its long-term achievements, even when the events of the transition suggest a sharp break with the past.

Institutional legacies and socio-economic factors shaped the transitions in various ways that were probably underestimated.

Second, the participatory explosion that marked regimes such as Kérékou’s heralded the coming of age of a civil society that low levels of urbanization, literacy and low income had discouraged and authoritarian regimes before and after independence actively repressed. One of the smaller national capitals in West Africa, Cotonou, had grown from 70,000 inhabitants in 1960, to half a million in 1990, progressively creating a market for a lively independent press and an increasingly lively associational community, both catering to a tiny but growing middle class, with an increasing tendency to have university degrees, and to have adopted a more cosmopolitan worldview and democratic values. All across the continent, it was these new actors who asserted themselves to topple regimes.

At the time, scholars tended to rightly lament the comparative weakness of the middle class and civil society in the region (Bratton 1989; Lewis 1992), but perhaps did not appreciate enough the rapid growth and strengthening it was undergoing (for an early exception, see Chazan 1982 and Monga 1995), thanks to urbanization and educational progress. One of the reasons that the gains of the African transitions have mostly been sustained since the early 1990s is indeed the continuing evolution of these same structural factors. Today, Cotonou has a population of 2.5 million.

Third, Africa’s economic crisis colored all of the analysis of the political transitions, but today seems like a somewhat less important factor. The disastrous growth performance left the average African poorer in 1990 than at independence and had resulted in the accumulation of

massive international debt which resulted in micromanagement by western creditors (van de Walle 2001). That these transitions were occurring in the context of this dreadful and seemingly permanent economic crisis was viewed not only as a precipitating factor for the transitions, but also a reality that would shape political outcomes negatively. In an influential essay, Cheibub et al (1996) provided evidence that rapid economic growth was the most important factor to allow low-income democracies to endure, suggesting that political reform in Africa was doomed. Further pessimism was offered by the popular argument that countries would find it extremely challenging to undertake political and economic reform simultaneously (Haggard and Kaufman 1995).

A quarter of a century later, a somewhat different assessment appears necessary. While the economic crisis may well have precipitated political crises in some countries, the greater puzzle remains that it did not have more of an effect, since the presidency changed hands in only 19 cases during this entire period of turbulence, and not always for political reasons (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018). In addition, the economic crisis soon loosened its grip on most countries. By 1995, thanks to donor support, policy reform and a substantial uptick in commodity prices, the African region was beginning a long and sustained period of growth and poverty alleviation that would last two decades and make it the fastest growing region of the world outside of China (Radelet 2010). Ironically, this period of growth probably helped the remaining long-standing authoritarian president in the region endure, as much as the handful of democratic regimes that had emerged during the transition.

Much the same could be said about economic growth for the other regions of the Third Wave.

Arguably, the earlier transitions in southern Europe and Latin America were more marked by economic crisis. Still, the comparative insight here from the African transitions is that economic crises can propel regime crises and bring about a political transition, but they have less political impact in the long-run (following the transition) than was widely believed at the time, even when they occasion enormous hardship on the population.

Transitions to what?

The academic literature on transitions clearly identified the object of its study of the Third Wave to be “democratic transitions.” In part, this was due to the fact that the wave started in Southern Europe, where the clear expectation was that relatively rich countries with past experience of parliamentary democracy, like Greece, Spain and Portugal would democratize and join the European Union. In part, political scientists were more likely to view the regime debate as a binary one – governments were either democratic or authoritarian. Thus, when a group of scholars created a new section within the American Political Science Association to focus specifically on the process of political change taking place, it was named the “Democratization” section.

To be sure, political scientists probably suffer from an occupational bias towards pessimism, and even at the height of the romance of the transition moment, there were voices to argue both that liberal democracy was unlikely to be sustained in the Africa region, and that if it were to be sustained, it would be unlikely to have a major impact on the nature of politics there (for instance, Chabal and Daloz 1999). Most Africanists were skeptical of the likelihood of success of these democratic transitions. It

seemed clear right away that some autocrats were managing to contain the pressure to democratize. As the transitions moved to electoral politics, the advantages of incumbency in highly clientelist political systems asserted themselves, promoting political continuity, as did the weakness of opposition political parties, in countries without much prior experience of competitive electoral politics (Rakner and van de Walle 2009), and in which identity politics could be manipulated by incumbents to undermine the building of viable opposition coalitions (Young 2007).

Writing about the transitions in the middle of the decade, Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 120) identified only 16 of the countries in the region as having had a complete transition to democracy, by 1995. Today, however, the shortcomings of the African transitions seem even more glaring, at least if we think of them as transitions to democracy. In 2021, Freedom House ranked only 7 of the countries in the region in its "Free" category.

Clearly, the modal regime in Africa today is not a democracy, but rather an electoral autocracy, or an authoritarian country with some form of multi-party electoral politics. The realization that liberal democracy was not the likely outcome of any African transition was belated. By the early 2000s, scholars were postulating that the outcome of many of the transitions of the Third Wave were not likely to result in liberal democracy, but some form of hybrid regime instead (Carothers 2002; Diamond 2003; Levitsky and Way 2003), which combined regular elections and a legal legislative opposition with authoritarian practices. Today, what have increasingly been called electoral authoritarian regimes dominate a majority of the countries that were authoritarian before the beginning of

the Third Wave. They are particularly prevalent in Africa and Eurasia.

That is not to suggest that the African transitions of the early 1990s do not constitute a watershed period of significant proportions. The early 1990s did witness significant political liberalization in most countries, with the legalization of opposition parties, the commitment to regular multi-party elections, as well as a significant liberalization of the media, and other civil and political rights. The period has also witnessed the decline of military regimes in the region; coups still take place, albeit significantly less often, but military rule has become illegitimate enough that soldiers are forced to give up power much more quickly than in the past (Clark 2007). Similarly, while there are still some presidents-for-life in the region, term limits and presidential alternation has become more common (Posner and Young 2007; Mckie 2017). As a result, the mean Freedom House combined score for civil and political rights in the region, which had hovered between 11 and 12 (out of 14) for the last two decades and stood at an authoritarian 11.23 in 1989 had declined to a more pluralistic 8.88 in 1999, making the region more democratic than at any time since the first months of independence.

Reconceiving the African transitions as "electoral and civilian transitions" rather than as "democratic transitions" does usefully impel scholars to rethink the initial transition theories. First, the focus on contingent factors led scholars to focus more on the countries with dramatic, more overt regime crises, rather than other countries, in which the authoritarian regimes were not challenged as clearly. In the mid-1990s, the distinction between the regimes which had progressed through mass protest, a crisis, and alternation in power, and those which had not,

appeared obvious. Today, it is not so clear. A small number of countries did undergo the former and have remained considerably more democratic. But we also witness more states in which the regime crisis resulted over time in a rather similar authoritarian regime, albeit now with regular multi-party elections, as well as states in which incumbents accepted the turn to electoral politics, but manipulated it to their advantages and prevent more democratization (Bleck and van de Walle 2018). Most damaging to our original theories, states such as Ghana, Senegal, or Kenya weathered the wave of democratization of the early 1990s, but then underwent slower, incremental processes of top-down democratization that were driven by elite compromise and accommodation, with little political protest. In sum, the convergence around electoral autocracy followed several different paths rather than a single predictable one.

Second, the prevalence of electoral autocracies in the countries of the Third Wave has undermined the concept of democratic consolidation (Bleck and van de Walle 2018, 22-25). In the initial literature, transitions to liberal democracy in the third wave were usually conceived of as a relatively quick process that would be completed within a couple electoral cycles. Initial stumbles in many transitions led scholars to progressively expand the concept of consolidation to mean a broader and longer process of democratic deepening, to strengthen the real but shallow roots of democracy which the transition had planted, but left vulnerable. But what does it mean in countries that lack so many core elements of liberal democracy? How long does such a process take? If even some of the oldest democracies seem vulnerable to substantial bouts of backsliding, is the concept of democratic consolidation all that useful?

Third, the convergence onto electoral autocracy may help to explain why the current global trend of democratic backsliding has largely spared Africa (Ariolla et al. 2021), at least so far. Perhaps the gains of the Third Wave appear to be more vulnerable in countries which democratized more than did the African cases. Electoral autocracy has been argued to constitute a transitional type of regime (Levitsky and Way 2010), but it may constitute instead a relatively stable political equilibrium, as the combination of popular plebiscitary electoral institutions and minimal levels of political and civil rights may broadly be acceptable to a sizeable majority of Africans.

The future for transitions?

What does the emergence of electoral autocracies as the modal regime in the countries of the Third Wave augur for the future of democratic transitions? I conclude this brief essay with two conjectures. First, a defining characteristic of these regimes is the greater level of mechanisms of vertical accountability compared to those of horizontal accountability. The key achievements of the third wave of democratization were mostly the institutionalization of regular multi-party elections and the acceptance of the principle of minimal political and civil rights. Much evidence suggests the rise in political participation has made a real difference to the responsiveness of governments (Bleck and van de Walle 2018, 261-284). Institutions of vertical accountability can still be improved, to be sure, but in most of these regimes, the key present democratic deficit is the weakness of the institutions of horizontal accountability; in other words, substantial progress still needs to be made in the mostly intra-elite dynamics involving the ability of key institutions such as the judiciary and the legislature, as well as of social

and economic elites to restrain the power of the executive. This is likely to require negotiation and deal making among elites. The terrain for these reforms is unlikely to be participatory, and the process is probably slower and more incremental than the political reforms of the 1990s, unless elites can use periods of popular ferment to push them forward.

Second, elections are not necessarily vehicles for democratization, as some scholars of democratization once posited (Lindberg 2009), but they do represent brief political moments in which both positive and negative change is somewhat more likely. Their generalized institutionalization in the current era, however uneven the electoral playing field remains, inevitably

structures the political calendar for all electoral autocracies into a recurring four or five year cycle. In the days of the "President-for-Life," it was the president's age and health, a major economic shock, or a military coup that was mostly likely to bring about the demise of the regime. Increasingly in the future, it will be contentious issues such as term limits, the administration of elections, and electoral results which will most likely activate both popular protest and elite negotiation. This does not make further democratization more likely, least of all through the discontinuous transitions of an eventual Fourth Wave; but it does mean that, like clockwork, every four or five years, electoral autocracies will face the ambiguous possibility of change with a sense of heightened vulnerability. ●

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FACILITATING TRANSITIONS? Civil society organizations in post-conflict democratization in sub-Saharan Africa

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Since the early 2000s, international donors have provided over 4 billion USD to fund more than 18,000 democracy-promotion projects implemented by local civil society organizations (CSOs) in countries emerging from conflict in sub-Saharan Africa.¹ Building democracy through local actors is seen as a crucial element to bring about peace and democracy in post-conflict settings (De Zeeuw 2005).

Yet, civil society organization ecosystems, their leaders, their members, and their constituents in post-conflict settings remain understudied in comparative politics. I argue here that in order to fully comprehend challenges to post-conflict democratization, we need to gauge how war can affect organizations' propensity to build democratic culture and how citizen perceptions of these organizations can affect the uptake of pro-democracy norms.

From 2004-2015, a fourth of all overseas development assistance channeled through CSOs in post-conflict African countries has been used for civil society/governance and peace initiatives. Though this may seem small, this is double that which goes towards education, five percent

higher than aid towards emergency response, and rivals only aid going towards health (19%) in these countries. Forty-six percent of these civil society and governance projects were about democratic participation and 20 percent were for human rights programs, while 71 percent of peace programs were for civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and resolution; all three of these programs require civil society organization engagement with citizens at the grassroots level.

International donors focus on CSOs in these efforts for two reasons. First, a robust civil society is expected to contribute to democratic consolidation and prevent the re-emergence of conflict. Second, in contrast to low-functioning state institutions, international donors see these organizations as more efficient and effective, as well as more accountable, transparent, and reliable at achieving the intended objectives of reduced violence and democratization (Belloni 2008; Brass 2016; Carothers 1999; Dietrich and Wright 2015; Finkel et al 2007; Jamal 2009; Posner 2004).

Civil war can have dramatic effects on the make-up and functioning of post-conflict civil society.

1. This includes 23 countries whose conflicts terminated between 1994 and 2015; this represents roughly 12% of all ODA development aid.



Wartime uncertainty, particularly when rebels take physical control of a locality, produces long-lasting effects on democratic attitudes and behaviors of civil society leaders.

Violent conflict can polarize civil society, leaving resentment and distrust in its wake (Belloni 2008). Indeed, conflict can spawn un-civil society organizations that either use violence, or are divisive for society as a whole – like organizations whose membership is determined by criteria that reinforce hostile, existing cleavages (Hadenius and Ugglå 1996; Kasfir 2013). Furthermore, in describing a “conflict trap,” Collier et al. (2003) find that war increases polarization, which in turn can foster future violence. In these contexts, civil society organizations may be harmfully seen as explicitly “doing politics” (Bell and Keenan 2004; Marchetti and Tocci 2009).

This review proceeds as follows: first, I discuss the pathways through which war can affect civil society organization leadership’s democratic potential. I then discuss how citizen perceptions of partisan organizations in polarized contexts can condition their expectations for democracy. I then expound upon the implications of both of these findings and suggest possible directions for future research.

Wartime Experiences of Civil Society Leaders

Much of our knowledge on the social cohesion effects of exposure to war focuses on civilians or combatants (Bauer et al. 2016; Blattman 2009; Fearon et al. 2009; Justino et al. 2018). Since experienced violence may serve to bring communities together, research has found that social cohesion and cooperation are stronger in contexts of widespread violence (Gilligan et al. 2014; Voors et al. 2012). However, others have found that in contexts of intense contestation between belligerents and extreme political po-

larization, victims of violence are less likely to have generalized trust and kinship/ethnic identification is reinforced (Becchetti et al. 2011; Cassar et al. 2013; Rohner et al. 2013).

Despite the importance of understanding the impact of war on social cohesion, little research has examined war’s impact on civil society organization leaders, critical actors in post-conflict democratization who manage large aid portfolios. I consider civil society organization leaders as key development brokers (Bierschenk et al. 2002) whose main role in society is to serve as a liaison between international donors and local constituents. It is thus essential to examine how they respond to the trauma and uncertainty of war in order to gauge their ability to provide goods and services to war-affected populations.

Are civil society leaders affected by war altruistic? I argue that wartime uncertainty, particularly when rebels take physical control of a locality, produces long-lasting effects on democratic attitudes and behaviors of civil society leaders (Davis 2020b). Since rebel control can induce high levels of uncertainty and fear, civil society leaders who lived under rebel control develop behaviors and strategies to cope with this changing environment. First, the fear associated with the unpredictable nature of local governance encourages them to hoard resources. Second, civil society leaders become more discriminatory in their relationships with constituents as the broader conflict realigns loyalties with identity-based cleavages, whether ethnic, religious, or partisan.

Through in-depth interviews and surveys, as well as lab-in-the-field games in post-conflict Côte d’Ivoire, I show that civil society leaders who lived under rebel control are less likely to be altruistic and more likely to discriminate than their counterparts in former-government

controlled areas. To empirically test the theory described above, I first use a pre-treatment statistical matching strategy to select most similar regional units as cases in Côte d'Ivoire. From those cases, I then sampled civil society organizations leaders, inviting them to participate in a capacity-building workshop where they completed a series of dictator games. In the games, where leaders were able to allocate real sums of local currency to local associations, civil society leaders who had lived under rebel control kept more for themselves and were more likely to discriminate against the outgroup than their counterparts from former government-controlled areas.

These findings have significant implications for post-war democratization: the prospects for robust democracy are likely to be limited when civil society leaders, as the purveyors of democratic norms, fail to exhibit the altruism and inclusivity that liberal and representative governance often entails. These findings provide greater understanding of the behavioral constraints faced when relying on war-traumatized civil society leaders to facilitate the growth of democratic culture.

Post-Conflict Polarization and Trust in Civil Society Organizations

In addition to investigating local organization leadership characteristics, we also need theoretical and empirical frameworks to explore citizen response to post-conflict polarization and democracy-building through these organizations.

Data from Afrobarometer R7 (2018) illustrates this point: across the continent, citizens are

highly likely to view most CSOs as corrupt. However, this is particularly acute for citizens living in post-conflict settings: 66% of citizens in 13 post-conflict countries² state that most or all CSOs are corrupt, compared to 64% in non-conflict countries. In every country that has experienced a civil war in the Afrobarometer sample, CSOs are viewed as more corrupt than religious leaders. Specifically, in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, citizens view CSOs as more corrupt than chiefs or traditional leaders. Examining why citizens view these organizations in such negative light will help us recognize the ability of these organizations to contribute to post-conflict democratization.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, I probe whether citizens positively or negatively view democracy-promoting CSOs, and how this may be associated with their response to these types of activities. In a survey conducted in the economic capital, Abidjan, I find that respondent political identification greatly conditions perceptions of CSOs in Côte d'Ivoire: opposition supporters believe these organizations are partisan and are less likely to engage with their activities.

Partisanship amongst democracy-promoting organizations is not, in itself, negative for democracy; indeed, CSOs that engage in this type of work are explicitly encouraging democratic practice and are actively engaged in politics, making it difficult for them to remain fully impartial. Partisanship matters in contexts where all sides of the political spectrum are not represented, especially if partisanship determines access to redistribution, or if CSOs are perceived as partisan in only one direction, i.e. supporting the governing parties. If citizens

2. Countries within the Afrobarometer sample which have reached the violence threshold of 1,000 battle deaths. Includes: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda.

believe their access to resources, aid, or educational initiatives is contingent on how they vote or which party they support, it undermines the ability of democracy promoting CSOs to do what they are expected – encourage inclusive participation, pluralism, and cultivate democratic values. Citizens who perceive that their political interests are not represented by CSOs may be more likely to have negative evaluations of CSOs and democracy in general. This is particularly relevant because these organizations are often the exclusive providers of voter education in pre-election periods.

I provide further evidence that could explain these perceptions. Utilizing an original dataset of Ivorian NGO registrations from 2000-2016, I infer leader ethnicity using a name-based classification procedure. I show that in the period that the current president has been in power (2011-2016), his co-ethnics are more likely to lead civil society organizations committed to democracy and peace. They are also disproportionately represented in leadership positions, compared to their share of the national population. This is not to say that these organizations are negligent in providing the goods/services they promise. However, it could explain why opposition supporters, in particular, hold such negative views. If they think that the state somehow controls or determines the distribution of resources through these organizations, they may disengage from the activities that are supposed to encourage democracy and peace.

By systematically investigating citizen perceptions of these organizations and investigating the make-up of civil society organizations, we can better understand the democratizing role of civil society in post-conflict settings.

Implications for Democratization in Post-Conflict Settings

Taken together, the policy ramifications of this research agenda are large. These local civil society organizations' role is to foster democracy at the citizen-level through civic engagement, humanitarian assistance, and efforts to hold the post-war state accountable. Their mandate is to promote pro-social and democratic norms among the population, and they control a large sum of resources to do so. If the leaders themselves do not demonstrate these attitudes, how can we expect them to cultivate them on the ground? Indeed, these organizations may reinforce existing cleavages and could potentially exacerbate conflicts in the post-war period.

Further, citizen experiences with these organizations may be mediated by the political context in which they operate. Channeling international aid through these organizations without taking into consideration the heterogeneous responses to democracy-promoting activities may undermine this process.

Since these organizations are sometimes the only providers of public goods, information, and resources to populations impacted by war, the solution is not to reduce or stop funding their activities. However, these findings do show that a "one-size-fits-all" strategy for civil society development may not be prudent when working with local organizations in post-conflict settings. Instead, donors should work to recognize sub-national dynamics that shape behaviors and attitudes when working with local actors and to overcome biases if they aim to productively contribute to post-conflict democracy and development.

Lessons for Future Research

My research has shown that the wartime experiences of civil society leaders shapes their ability to contribute to post-conflict democratization. By considering the development of democratic culture at the civil society leader level of analysis, I have provided insights into behaviors and attitudes of an important type of broker and decision-maker working towards the arduous goal of post-conflict democracy. This sets a foundation for a compelling avenue of investigation, in which scholars can examine variation in civil society leader attitudes and behaviors across regime types, levels of development, and levels of democracy.

To better understand the role of civil society organizations in post-war democratization, researchers can employ a variety of methods. My work builds on extensive fieldwork, interviews, participant observation, surveys, and lab-in-the-field. Not all of these methods need to be employed to study post-war democratization at the micro-level, but I encourage researchers to consider studying “actual” civil society as it is on the ground (Obadare 2011). By examining a single case study in-depth, I have uncovered

new puzzles and ways to think about post-conflict democratization through civil society organizations.

These findings also have consequences for how we research post-conflict settings. Recognizing that civil society organizations are often embedded in the political process and reproduce the political contexts in which they exist becomes imperative when considering implementing partners for our research projects. In working with local partners who hold negative reputations, we may reinforce these cleavages and introduce bias into our research designs (Davis 2020a).

There are, of course, a multitude of explanations for why democratization efforts may stall in the aftermath of violent conflict. The research agenda described here highlights one pathway through which these efforts may be thwarted, despite extensive international support. Understanding the impact of war on civil society organizations, their leaders, and their constituents will enhance our knowledge of the impediments to peace and democracy in the post-conflict period. ●

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HOW EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SIGNALLED THEIR REFORMS TO THE WORLD: Theorizing Post-Communist Transition

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Early theories of transitions from communism took a domestic political economy approach, focusing on the expected challenges and contradictions of simultaneous political and economic liberalization. Transition theorists widely expected that countries transitioning from communism to capitalism would suffer deep recessions. Market competition would lead to the closure of unprofitable or uncompetitive enterprises, creating widespread unemployment, social dislocation, uncertainty, inequality, and poverty. As a result, voters in these new democracies were expected to reject capitalist reforms after a brief honeymoon period. Voters would punish economic reformers at the polls, ushering in a return to more statist economic policies, if not a return of communism itself. The so-called “window of opportunity” for capitalist reform would be very brief, given the simultaneous introduction of free markets and democracy (Balcerowicz 1994; Blanchard 1993; Dahrendorf 1990; Myant and Drahokoupil 2011, 83; Sachs and Lipton 1990; Offe 1991; Ost 1992; Przeworski 1991; Sachs 1994).

Yet, in our 2018 book, *From Triumph to Crisis: Neoliberal Economic Reform in Postcommunist Countries*, we find that this domestic political

economy focus caused scholars to overlook the dynamics of the post-communist countries’ reinsertion into the global economy. They failed to understand how a desperate need to attract foreign capital and reintegrate into the global economy would drive neoliberal policy adoption. As a result, early theories of transition could not account for the most perplexing mystery of transition – why neoliberal policies continued to dominate policy-making in the region not for the one or two years predicted by “window of opportunity” thinkers, but for 20 years from 1989 to 2008.

Fear that neoliberal economic policies would soon be thwarted at the ballot box motivated the choice of reform strategies. The shock-therapy approach in Eastern Europe was driven, first and foremost, by the imperative of speed. If leaders only had a short period of time to carry out reforms, speed had to be the overwhelming priority (Balcerowicz 1994). Shock therapy and rapid mass privatization would enable the transition required to overcome formidable institutional and cultural resistance stemming from decades of communism (Jowitt 1992; Offe 1991; Rychetnik 1995; van Zon 1994). As Naomi Klein (2007) noted, shock therapists feared that the



opportunity for reform would be short-lived and might not present itself again once the honeymoon ended and nostalgia took hold.

Thirty years after the end of the Cold War, we now know that the window of reform was not so short after all, and that the early transition theories missed important dynamics driving transitions. Thirty years later, we can see that the neoliberal moment in Eastern Europe lasted for decades. Market reforms survived electoral turnover, the rise of left-wing alternative parties, and even the return of renamed communist successor parties. Indeed, the dire predictions

of early transition theorists failed to materialize. Political and economic liberalism took hold in many post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, with nearly a dozen formerly communist countries joining the European Union. Most continue to meet the EU's expectations for democratic governance, although the

EU initiated Article 7 procedures against Poland and Hungary for violating political norms (Appel 2019). East European countries that joined the EU continue to have competitive free markets. The social and cultural legacies of communism did not prevent the development of an entrepreneurial class or make governments abandon a capitalist reform trajectory. On the contrary, these nascent democracies raced to adopt neoliberal reforms for nearly two decades and fully integrate themselves into the global economy. Defying Jeffrey Sachs's quip that "you cannot cross a chasm in two jumps" (Sachs 1994), many post-communist countries adopted market reforms in two or three jumps, with subsequent neoliberal reforms growing more and more radical over time.

Regardless of periodic setbacks and widespread voting for anti-reform parties, popularly elected

governments on both the left and the right repeatedly adopted bold, if not radical, neoliberal policies in Eastern Europe for decades (Cook, Orenstein, and Rueschemeyer 1999). Curiously, research shows that left governments in the post-communist countries adopted pro-market reforms as much as, if not more than, governments on the right, to prove their capitalist credibility (Tavits and Letki 2009; Appel 2011).

Post-communist governments of various stripes first adopted the early neoliberal reforms of the Washington Consensus, like trade liberalization, privatization, deregulation of prices, capital account liberalization, and others in the 1990s. Next, they undertook deep institutional reforms in the early 2000s to qualify for Association Agreements and membership with and within the European Union (Epstein 2008; Vachudova 2005). Then, most post-communist European countries went well beyond the EU's requirements for membership, adopting avant-garde radical neoliberal reforms, like the flat tax, pension privatization, drastic cuts to corporate taxes, extreme monetarism, and strong central bank independence (Johnson 2017, Appel and Orenstein 2016, 2018; Tudor and Appel 2016). This more extreme embrace of neoliberal policymaking can be found in countries on the path to EU membership as well as countries that were not accepted to be EU candidate countries, like Georgia (Schueth 2011). These avant-garde neoliberal policies – like the flat tax or pension privatization – went well beyond what could be found in the established capitalist economies of North America and Western Europe.

Why did the adoption of neoliberal reforms last not just a year or eighteen months, as predicted, but instead for decades? Why did post-communist governments embrace neoliberalism in more radical forms over time, well into the

Thirty years after the end of the Cold War, we now know that the window of reform was not so short after all.

2000s, only to slow down with the global financial crisis? More specifically, why did long the embrace of neoliberalism loosen only after a global economic crisis, rather than a domestic rebellion, as predicted, following the introduction of competitive elections? Why did the dominant theories of transition fail to predict the trajectory of political and economic liberalization in Eastern Europe?

We provide an international political economy theory of transition based on *competitive signaling* to better explain its dynamics and results, and argue that early theories of post-communist transition under-appreciated the role of the competition for foreign direct investment, globalization, and the dominant position of neoliberal ideas within powerful multilateral organizations. After decades of relative economic decline, post-communist economies experienced an acute shortage of domestic capital. They required access to foreign capital and foreign markets, and given the ideological hegemony of neoliberal ideas in policy circles in the West, East European leaders sought to adopt the reforms advised by international financial institutions for decades. Moreover, governments in post-communist countries competed with one another to signal their attractiveness to foreign investors through the adoption of free-market capitalism. This competition was facilitated by the European Union, World Bank, and EBRD, which through various rating and ranking systems, produced annual updates on the extent to which these countries had adopted neoliberal reforms. Countries used these systems to signal their attractiveness to investors, creating substantial pressure for reforms to continue.

While the literature on post-communist transition pays very little attention to policy signaling, the political science literature on policy diffusion has explored this phenomenon (Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett 2006). Scholars of international security also pay close attention to policy signals used to demonstrate leaders' intentions to deter adversaries in the hope of reaching settlements and avoiding war (Jervis 1970; Fearon 1997; Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001; Tarar and Leventoglu 2009) or halting violent outbreaks (Filson and Werner 2002; Slantchev 2003). In addition, some scholars researching foreign direct investment (FDI) have written about how governments might offer tax holidays, deregulate financial markets, or pursue investment treaties to win FDI in environments where little is known about local market conditions (Campos and Kinoshita 2008, 10; Bandelj, Mahutga, and Shorette 2015).

Our research shows that policy signaling sustained the neoliberal trajectory of reform. This international political economy perspective better explains transition policy outcomes than the previous model based on domestic tensions between markets and democratization (Dahrendorf 1990; Elster 1993; Przeworski 1991). Post-communist states had been cut off from global markets and had limited trade and capital flows from and with the West. Once Eastern Europe opened to Western investors and foreign markets, it had to compete with East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America for investment and trade opportunities. East Europeans had to compete in global markets without many necessary institutions and valuable networks. Since most of these countries were starved for capital, they had to find ways to capture the interest, attention, and ultimately, the resources of foreign investors. Many countries in other reforming

regions had a head start in creating the market institutions endorsed by the Washington Consensus. Even China, another statist planned economy, had started a process of liberalization in 1979 and thus was better positioned to take advantage of substantial opportunities in the global economy in the 1990s after the Cold War ended. China had begun the process of joining global networks and supply chains and enjoyed connections with foreign investors and multinational corporations. While China and other Asian economies became magnets for FDI, East European countries were forced to compete for scarce foreign capital. This competition for capital, coupled with a desire to join Europe, overwhelmed the domestic political economy tensions that were predicted to be the dominant force in post-communist transition.

Given the global environment and the desperate need for capital, transitioning countries needed to prove their capitalist *bona fides* and stand out from the pack. The adoption of pro-market reforms was an effective strategy to do this. Neoliberal policy adoption helped these countries compete against other “emerging economies”. This strategy, along with a favorable location beside wealthy West European states, helped them attract foreign direct investment. Countries like Hungary and the Czech Republic sought “front-runner” status, while other countries like Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania raced to keep up with their neighbors and avoid being seen as laggards by international financial institutions and rating agencies (Cooley and Snyder 2015). While different countries adopted different neoliberal reforms over two decades at different paces and in varying reform sequences, and while they had different motivations for adopting some reforms first over others, there was nonetheless a clear trajectory of neoliberal

policy adoption as the mode of post-communist transition throughout the region, with limited backtracking or reversals, prior to the global financial crisis. Some neoliberal adopters were motivated by a belief in neoliberal ideas whereas others hoped to win greenfield investments and newly constructed factories. Other governments may have been ideologically opposed to neoliberalism at various points, but were concerned about falling behind neighboring states in seeking investment, market access, and EU membership or trade agreements. Still other leaders perceived that adopting a steady stream of market reforms was a basic condition of holding power and avoiding international disapproval and censure. For all of these reasons, the transition to capitalism continued and intensified for two decades. Although popular opposition to painful capitalist transition did occur, as predicted, it had only a muted effect.

While competitive signaling was driven by a demand for capital, ideas and ideology mattered too. Neoliberal policy signals only worked because neoliberal ideology had become hegemonic in the international financial institutions in the 1980s and 1990s. Leaders who signaled using neoliberal policies could be confident that their efforts would be well received, with international organizations approving and broadcasting these policy developments. The World Bank (through its Ease of Doing Business Index), the European Bank for Research and Development (through its Transition Indicators), and even the European Union (through its annual Regular Reports in the leadup to membership) rewarded neoliberal policy adoption with favorable reviews and positive reports about progress in market reforms (Schueth 2011; 2015). These positive rankings and reviews would in turn translate into improved access to capital in in-

ternational markets. External actors communicated this progress and turned the adoption of neoliberal policies into globally relevant signals.

After 2008, however, these signals lost some of their potency due to a crisis of confidence in neoliberal ideas and a sudden stop in capital flows to the region. In post-Communist Europe (and much of Western Europe for that matter). The 2008 crisis proved highly damaging and long-lasting. Growth rates in all but one East European country fell significantly, and the return to growth stalled for much longer than other developing economies. In looking for an explanation for the crisis, neoliberal reform was seen as partly to blame. Eastern Europe had liberalized more than other regions and the hybrid economy of China weathered the crisis better. Many voices blamed the deregulation of financial markets and institutions for the collapse, as well as an over-reliance on Western financial markets, which had sent extraordinary financial flows to Eastern Europe over the preceding fifteen years. Foreign bank ownership, extremely high in the region (Epstein 2017), exposed post-communist economies to the boom and bust cycles of the global economy. As capital dried up, governments in Eastern Europe questioned the value of neoliberal policy signals. As perceptions changed, these signals lost much of their impact. Even the International Monetary Fund acknowledged that it may have encouraged excessive liberalization of capital markets to the detriment of emerging economies, exposing them to a level of volatility difficult to manage (Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri 2016; Ban and Gallagher 2015; Chakraborty 2016).

In short, the international political economy of competitive signaling explains the dynamics of reform in Eastern Europe better than prior

models focused on a domestic political economy and based upon expected conflicts between democracy and reform. Post-communist countries pursued neoliberal policy adoption enthusiastically, despite the economic fallout of these choices that many citizens experienced. Socio-economic insecurity, growing levels of inequality, and new economic hardship for many societal groups did coincide with frequent political turnover as predicted, but these factors did not change the direction of reform. What sustained reform was the need to compete for capital in the global economy through joining the European Union, winning foreign direct investment, and competing with one another to win the attention of international financial institutions and global corporations. By focusing on the international context and the importance of capital flows, not only is the trajectory of communism to capitalism better understood, but also the tensions that arose following the global financial crisis and Europe's sovereign debt crisis. This focus helps to elucidate why the momentum for neoliberal reform in the region slowed and reversed in places after capital stopped flowing. While this book documents how post-communist countries used policy signals to bid for foreign investment, and these may be extreme cases, the same dynamic can exist in all developing countries. The mechanism we describe of competitive signaling likely applies throughout the developing world, explaining not only why developing countries often comply with international organizations' advice, sometimes to the detriment of major domestic interests, but even go beyond what international organizations require of them to embrace avant-garde reforms designed to appeal to foreign investors. ●

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THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF REGIME TRANSITIONS

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The literature on regime transitions¹ is one of the largest and oldest in political science. While much of the discipline has increasingly incorporated insights from psychology, the transitions literature continues to overlook psychological variables and effects in explaining transitional processes and outcomes. One of the central questions addressed in political psychology is, “How well are citizens equipped to handle their democratic responsibilities? Can they deliberate over the issues of the day fairly to arrive at a reasoned judgment, or conversely do they succumb to internecine enmities and fall victim to irrational intolerance?” (Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2013) The application of political psychology to transitions begs an altered but related question: how well equipped are people – whether politicians or average citizens – to handle their responsibilities in a regime transition? Can they coordinate, cooperate, and compromise, overcoming a variety of potentially debilitating political, social, and economic divisions, during moments of immense political consequence?

Our understanding of regime transitions always experiences major theoretical innovation when spurred by real-world events, most recently following the Third Wave of democratization. 2021 marks ten years since the beginning of the Arab Spring, a wave of unprecedented mass mobilization in the Middle East, and the passing of a decade presented an important moment to reflect on what we have learned. While the transitional outcomes of the Arab Spring have been largely disappointing in a normative sense,² academic studies produced by the high highs and low lows of the Arab Spring prove that the incorporation of political psychology is theoretically generative for the study of transitions. Rational choice approaches dominate literature on previous transitions. In contrast, innovative scholarship on the Arab Spring focuses analysis on the imperfect, emotional, identity-laden human beings charged with making decisions during moments of low information, heightened passion, and immense consequence. A focus on the individual compels an approach rooted

1. A transition is “the interval between one political regime and another... delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative” (Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5).
2. While every country in the region witnessed some form of unprecedented mass mobilization, only four countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya) experienced a transition. At the time of writing, only Tunisia remains on the difficult path towards democratic consolidation.



Political psychology illuminates global aspects of decision-making that underpin both elite and mass political behavior.

in psychology, and political psychology applies findings from social and cognitive psychology about affect, emotions, personality, identity and intergroup relations to the study of politics. In doing so, political psychology illuminates global aspects of decision-making that underpin both elite and mass political behavior (Kertzer forthcoming).

In this piece, I highlight where scholarship on the Arab Spring has advanced our collective understanding of transitions through the application of a political psychological framework. In particular, I highlight three areas in which political psychology expands previous work on transitions in research in the Arab Spring: emotions and protest mobilization, identity and contingency, and personal transformations as transitional outcomes. A political psychological approach to transitions underscores what we have missed about the non-rational components of human behavior before, during, and after previous transitions.

Emotions in Protest Participation

Revolutions tend to catch the world by surprise, and they tend to have notable tipping points in which small protests turn into extraordinary ones. One particularly influential theoretical development resulting from the events of the Third Wave was the application of preference falsification, the tendency of individuals not to reveal publicly their private preferences, to protest behavior. Because of preference falsification, the argument goes, individuals cannot assess other's revolutionary thresholds, defined as the likelihood that an individual who opposes a regime would join some kind of movement or protest or take some kind of action against it if a certain number of others did so as well. The rational-choice framework explores how sud-

den shifts in political opportunity structures can start a cascade of participation as the cost of potentially dangerous dissent behavior decreases (Kuran 1991).

Preference falsification helps to make sense of important events in the Arab Spring, such as the sudden onset of protests, cascades of protest participation, and the subsequent diffusion of protests. However, it assumes that individuals have a "considered and precise" estimate of their revolutionary threshold, a cost that they know but conceal from others (Goodwin 2011). In a study of cascading participation in the Iranian Revolution, Kurzban (2004) writes that in reality, individuals' revolutionary thresholds "cannot be known in advance; nor can the willingness to participate. They shift drastically from moment to moment on the basis of amorphous rumors, heightened emotions, and conflicting senses of duty" (Kurzban 2004).

Pearlman's meticulous research on individual experiences during the Syrian uprising demonstrates how psychological understandings of human behavior expands our understanding of protest mobilization. The author draws on central findings in psychology about how emotions influence individual decision-making and identifies what narratives of "breaking the barrier of fear" reveal about the individual cognitive process behind protest participation. When individuals feel disappointment, fear, or sadness, they are more pessimistic in outlook, less persistent in tasks, and undertake less risky behavior. When applied to political protest, individuals who feel these demobilizing emotions are less likely to participate. In contrast, when individuals feel anger or self-efficacy, they experience renewed persistence and willingness to undertake costly behavior like protest (Pearlman 2013). This approach is fundamen-

tally different from a rationalist one, in which participants weight the costs and benefits of the behavior, and instead act because they are compelled to do so by how they feel.

Identity and Contingency

Scholarship on transitions during the Third Wave coined the term “structured contingency” (Karl 1990). This brought together two competing strands of literature, in which either preceding structural factors or the processes of contingent choice among agentic actors (but not both) explained the success of democratic transitions. The central idea here is that while individuals have significant agency in dictating outcomes, the choices made by political actors in any given moment are constrained by antecedent historical conditions (Mahoney 2001).

Structure has been helpful for making sense of the Arab Spring. Cross-national comparison of Arab Spring outcomes demonstrates that the success of the uprisings depended on “deep historical and structure variables” (Brownlee et al. 2015). While scholars were initially chided for “missing” the Arab Spring (Gause 2011), pre-2011 scholarship on the structures and institutions that assist in authoritarian persistence has proven remarkable in explanatory and staying power for post-2011 developments. The robust coercive apparatus that was long blamed for region’s lack of democracy in the region was central in permitting a revolutionary situation and a potential transition to unfold (Bellin 2012). Historical developments that resulted in dynasticism and oil wealth helped the region’s monarchies survive the uprisings intact (Yom and Gause III 2012). Inherited state capacity determined whether the disruption caused by the uprisings destabilized and destroyed the country (Brownlee et al. 2015). On the contingent aspect of transitions, nearly all academic schol-

arship and popular writing on the Arab Spring referenced polarization. However, similar to the Third Wave scholarship on contingency and polarization among political actors (both within the opposition and between opposition and the *ancien regime*), this work did not explain where that polarization came from, what kind of polarization (affective or preference) mattered for democratic transitions, and how it might have affected cooperation and compromise differently across cases.

My own work on the Arab Spring tries to address this lacuna in the transitions literature using a political psychological approach. In *After Repression*, I present a theory of polarization under authoritarianism, highlighting the repression that defines these contexts, to understand how polarization developed in Egypt and Tunisia, leaving these two cases very differently polarized in 2011 with consequences for their subsequent transitions (Nugent 2020). Repression first influences how opposition actors come to identify themselves, and these identities then shape the landscape of affective bonds and articulated preferences among groups. The nature of repression determines its effect; widespread repression creates bridging political identities and decreases polarization (e.g. Tunisia), while targeted repression increases in-group identification for repressed groups and increases polarization (e.g. Egypt). Decades of repression reinforce these trends.

In making my argument, I draw from psychological studies on shared trauma, identity formation, and group differentiation. While the history of both cases demonstrate that organizational and social processes affected by repression reinforce polarization trends, my argument prioritizes a psychological mechanism that conditions the nature and structure of politi-

cal identities. Repression reveals information to groups about their relative status and which other groups are similarly victimized. This matters for who else one considers to be part of the in-group, whether that ends with a specific party group or encompasses the broader opposition.

In political psychology, structures and institutions are not ignored; indeed, they condition the identities that matter in politics. But it does refocus analysis on the people making the decisions surrounding cooperation and compromise, those who introduce contingency into moments of transition.

Personal Transformations as Transitional Outcomes

As I mentioned at the outset of this piece, only Tunisia continues down the difficult path towards democratic consolidation despite the widespread wave of mobilization. Many obituaries have been written for the Arab Spring, citing the lack of democratization following the uprisings captured by the visible, measurable, and predominantly institutional aspects of democracy such as free and fair elections, the increase in repression of all sorts, and the decline in protections for civil liberties. Depending on one's viewpoint, the Arab Spring either failed or was defeated.

A political psychology approach to the Arab Spring transitions challenges us to think critically about the outcomes of transitions, even when they fail to result in democratization. In contrast to outcomes measured at an aggregate or institutional level, the uprisings were a transformative individual-level experience for participants. In the squares where crowds gathered, participants experienced unity, cooperation, similarity, affection and acceptance with strangers. They met and learned about compatriots from differ-

ent backgrounds and of different experiences. In his ethnography of the Egyptian revolution, Ambrust (2019) refers to the euphoric feeling of being in the middle of a process of change as "liminal," combining the terrifying uncertainty of infinite number of possible alternative realities with the dangerous liberation of witnessing the destruction of institutions, norms, and meanings that were previously assumed to be established, understood, unchangeable.

The majority of those who participated in the Arab Spring's large protests eventually left the squares and went back to their regular lives, particularly when old regimes regrouped and responded violently to protests. Demobilization after participation in social movements or protests is common, and explanations include shifting political opportunity structures (like the return of repression, or the achievement of the movement's goal) or shifts in individual circumstances or responsibilities (activists get older, and have spouses, houses, and children to take care of) (Fillieule 2015). This approach incorporates rationality; either opportunities or personal circumstances change, and with it changes the associated costs of continued participation.

But for thousands if not millions of others across the region, the uprisings were life-changing, a major rupture that cleaved their lives into a before and an after. El Chazli (2020) documents how participants in the Egyptian uprising made revolutionary changes to parts of their lives after the uprising and attribute these decisions to their participation. Some changed the entirety or portions of their professional lives, shifting their focus from career as a means to an economic end, to work focusing effort on issues they care about and oriented towards leaving a last mark. Others made different decisions about how they raised their children, assigning equal

weight to sons' and daughters' educations or encouraging their children to study abroad to experience other places and ideas. El Chazli refers to revolutions as "intensely reflexive moments" that for many serve as a "personal awakening," regardless of the ultimate outcomes produced by them. Participants in the politically impossible, that of protesting in the streets and demanding accountability from their government, also questioned what was "normal and possible in their other life spheres, including friendship circles, family, and the workplace."

These effects are miniscule, largely hidden away from both the regime and political scientists in private lives and spaces, and thus are easy to overlook. But there is undoubtedly a significant shift in the way individual participants think differently about what is political, how to define and practice politics. These effects not only increase the likelihood of long-term change as the ultimate outcome of transitions, as el Chazli notes hopefully, but also suggests there may be myriad to measure the effects and outcomes of transitions.

This political psychological approach, like previous work on the biographical consequences of social movement participant, implies that rather than changing structures and costs, transitions and the possibility of change they introduce (even when it cannot be produced) changes *people*.

Conclusion

Political psychologists Huddy, Sears and Levy (2013) write, "the democratic process may be messy, unsatisfying, and frustrating, but it is inherently psychological. As scholars we need to know something about both a political system *and* human psychology to make sense of it." The same must be said about political transitions, with human beings and all their cognitive and emotional biases at the heart of the action at every phase of transitions, whether successful or not. The scholarship summarized above demonstrate the utility in applying a political psychology framework and what we know about human psychology to understanding the processes through which transitions become possible through mass mobilization, are derailed through lack of cooperation and compromise, and leave a lasting legacy on participants and witnesses. Much of the work produced on the Arab Spring over the last decade prioritizes the individual lived experience of politics. In doing so, it not only documents what it was like to participate in, experience, and recover from a moment of potentially massive change. It also advances our collective knowledge and conceptualization of transitions by underscoring the non-rational components of human behavior during highly contingent and highly consequential political moments. ●



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EXPLAINING WHEN EXACTLY AUTOCRATS' MISDEEDS GENERATE MASS PROTEST: Evidence from the 2020 Belarus uprising

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Recently, there has been increased scholarly attention to how emotions drive popular protest mobilization in democratic and authoritarian regimes (e.g., Jasper 2011; Pearlman 2013; Aytaç, Schiumerini, and Stokes 2018).

This focus on sentiments and sensations contrasts with conventional cost-benefit analyses of protest participation (Aytaç and Stokes 2019). It has been also demonstrated how strong or unexpected grievances can help citizens

solve collective action problems (Walsh 1981; Simmons 2014; Kern, Marien, & Hooghe 2015). Finally, some work in historical sociology (Sewell 1996) and political science (Treisman 2020) has pointed out that we tend to neglect the role of particular events in political transformations. Treisman, for instance, argues that dictators' miscalculation, such as unmotivated use of violence, has been a common source of democratization (2020).

I believe that two questions remain underexplored in these accounts underscoring the spontaneous nature of political change and

mass protest, especially if one aims to explain transitions from autocracy to democracy. First, we need more systematic research on why only some grievances and events become extremely

The concepts of accountability and moral shocks can be used to explain when exactly protest mobilization is more likely to begin.

important to citizens, even though numerous sources of discontent often exist in authoritarian polities. Second, although some studies have showed how so-called moral shocks can spur citizens to join protest movements (see Jasper

2014), we need more examples of why and how this can happen on a national level and even in repressive contexts.

The uprising in Belarus, my home country, which started around the August 2020 presidential election, as I believe, provides important evidence to further address these two issues. Through its analysis, I will show how the concepts of accountability and moral shocks can be used to explain when exactly protest mobilization is more likely to begin, even in quite non-democratic contexts. Some work on the post-Soviet "colored revolutions" and



post-election demonstrations in general (Tucker 2007; Kuntz and Thompson 2009; Little, Tucker, and LaGatta 2012) points out that credible signals about electoral fraud make aggrieved citizens and opposition parties believe that many others will take to the streets. Then, it has been shown that the visibility of police repression is linearly and positively related to the likelihood of protesting (Sutton, Butcher, and Svensson 2014). However, I argue that the regime's wrongdoing – be it electoral fraud, excessive violence, or something else – does not function merely as a focal point, facilitating coordination among potential protesters. In fact, some recent survey-based research indicates that *perceptions* of injustice and unfairness should be more critical to post-election dissatisfaction (Cho and Kim 2016; Daxecker, Di Salvatore, and Ruggeri 2019) and that citizens react differently to different forms of electoral fraud (Reuter and Szakonyi 2021; Szakonyi 2021).

Somewhat similarly, I suggest that protests are less likely to start if the regime's particular misdeeds are not popularly considered being beyond of what can be at least acquiesced to. These imaginary red lines are "crossed" by revelations about the true, unaccountable nature of the ruling regime, which come in the form of particular policies and wrongdoing, or by its encroachments on goods and opportunities perceived by citizens as being essential to their minimal well-being. These are not mere final straws. Without them, anti-government manifestations are less likely even in polities already crippled by corruption, economic stagnation, inequality, or violations of political rights, which are typical of the post-Soviet republics. That is, the incumbent's particular decisions can be

central to the onset of protesting, even when it seems to be overdetermined. As will be shown, one of such events in the Belarusian case was the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The case of Belarus is special since it allows for showing that incumbents' mistakes (to use Treisman's (2020) term) can be powerful enough to allow for solving collective action problems in very non-democratic contexts. According to some estimates (Douglas et al. 2021), around 700 thousand Belarusian, or more than 14% of the Belarusians aged 16-64 took to the streets at least once by the end of 2020. This happened after the 26 years of Alyaksandr Lukashenka's very repressive rule, whose signature political tactic had been to nip opposition in the bud (Silitski 2005). When the protests started there were no strong opposition parties in Belarus, while civil society organizations were largely hamstrung. Furthermore, the prior most significant anti-Lukashenka protests in 2006 and 2010 gathered no more than 35-40 thousand people. In addition to the Belarusian case, however, I will also rely here on insights drawn from fieldwork I conducted in Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine in early 2019¹. These three post-Soviet republics all saw massive protests in the 2010s.

Authoritarian unaccountability as a source of mass protest

To account for the start of the Belarusian protests and, more generally, to explain when exactly autocrats' particular misdeeds can generate unrest, I first, use the concepts of moral shock and procedural justice. As Jasper and Poulsen (1995) argue, moral shocks can be understood as revelations about the true nature of the world. Then, if a revelation about the ruling regime's

1. This work was sponsored by a grant provided by the ZEIT-Stiftung (Hamburg, Germany).

true nature is in stark contradiction with prevailing moral beliefs it is likely to generate anger and outrage². Procedural justice explanations of social movement participation (see Tyler and Smith 1998) underscore that it may be more important to citizens how they are treated by authorities than what they receive from them. Relatedly, some research has shown that voters are more likely to be satisfied with democracy if all parties are believed to have equal chances to win (Fortin-Rittberger, Harfst, and Dingler 2017).

Second, to connect to each other the above arguments about moral shocks and procedural justice, I use the understanding of the government's accountability suggested by Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova: "... de facto constraints on the government's use of political power through requirements for justification of its actions and potential sanctions by both citizens and oversight institutions" (2020, 812). One can assume, then, that the likelihood of protest should increase when incumbents are popularly seen as being unaccountable, when they do not justify their actions before citizens and act as if citizens are not entitled to punish them.

In authoritarian regimes, especially if they tolerate at least some opposition, many citizens, of course, may perfectly realize that the ruling clique is unaccountable and yet acquiesce to the regime's corrupt practices. So when do citizens turn from apathy to street action? First, already discontented citizens may value the availability of some basic welfare goods and political opportunities and may view these basics as something "untouchable". In such cases, the stability of authoritarian rule equally depends on what these regimes provide and on what

they take away. For instance, the Armenian government's decision to increase electricity prices in 2015 by no more than a couple of cents per kilowatt hour caused a wave of mass demonstrations, popularly known as "Electric Yerevan" (see Shahnazarian 2016). Some of them attracted around 15,000 participants, while the country's population is officially no more than 3 million people. Although data about the "Electric Yerevan" movement are scarce, I hypothesize that many Armenians should have viewed this seemingly miniscule increase in the basic commodity as an especially cynical example of state-sanctioned plunder, although corruption had already been rife (Armenia had the 94th place in the 2014 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index).

Ukraine's Euromaidan provides another illustration. The then-incumbent's decision not to sign an association agreement with the European Union in late 2013 indeed provoked some mass protest. But it was short-lived and relatively small, even regardless of the fact that Western and some parts of Central Ukraine were largely pro-European and vehemently disapproved of the ruling regime. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets only when the riot police brutally dispersed a peaceful demonstration organized by university students, some of whom were under 18 years old. Afterwards, the incumbent's rule became intolerable for too many Ukrainian citizens (see Paniotto 2014, for an analysis of survey data on who and why joined Euromaidan protests).

Second, the incumbent's actions may demonstrate its disdain for popular needs, basic or substantial ones, to such an extent that citizens become shocked by the true extent of the re-

2. Lohmann's (1994) seminal work on informational cascades and protest dynamics similarly underscores that citizens' willingness to protest depends on their conclusions about the regime's true nature.

gime's unaccountability, even though they may suspect it. In late 2014, the news came out that Moldova's ruling elite might have been involved in the disappearance of one billion USD, around 15% of the country's GDP, from the national banking system. This led to a series of rallies that lasted until early 2016 (see *Brett, Knot, & Popșoi 2015*), although they failed to bring about political change. Between 50,000 and 100,000 citizens participated in some of them, impressive figures for a country whose population, at least on paper, is around 3 million.

Of course, there is nothing surprising in protests against corruption or police brutality. However, the suggested focus on authoritarian unaccountability and the two forms of its revelation can provide novel explanations of when citizens voice discontent in authoritarian regimes. First, this focus emphasizes the need to pay attention to the non-material, moral aspects of protest mobilization in non-democratic contexts. The more excluded and simply disrespected citizens feel because of autocrats' particular actions, the more likely they are to protest. Realization of the regime's unaccountability should be a major source of "emboldening emotions" (Pearlman 2013, 391-93), which can make citizens forget about the dangers of protesting in repressive contexts. Citizens should be more likely to grow angry when their already strong hopes for change are trampled during elections³ (e.g., when popular opposition candidates are denied victory), or when a corruption scheme is of some impressive magnitude, realized in an especially cynical manner, or relates to basic goods too valuable to citizens. Second, as outlined above, the newness of information about

the regime should be key to mobilization. When citizens are already accustomed to authoritarian unaccountability, new transgressions are less likely to cause uproar.

In the next section, I will show how a series of consecutive revelations about the Belarusian dictator's unaccountability led to largely spontaneous and leaderless protests. That is, those events to a great extent – if not completely – determined the unfolding of the initial mobilization. In comparison to the above-mentioned cases of Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine, Belarus has been a rather closed authoritarian regime. There were no popular opposition movements right before the 2020 elections, when the uprising started. Meanwhile in Ukraine, relatively strong opposition parties were involved in the Euromaidan. Belarusian civil society was also more repressed and less experienced than those in Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Belarus' Core Civil Society Index, which is used in the V-Dem Project to measure civil society's robustness on a scale from 0 to 1, has never been higher than 0.35 since 2000. For Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine, it has never dropped below 0.5 during the same period. Finally, in contrast to Belarus, these three more democratic cases had experienced successful (Moldova and Ukraine) or almost successful (Armenia) "colored revolutions" in the 2000s (see Hale 2015).

"Unaccountability shocks" and the 2020 Belarus uprising

In 2020, the Belarusian incumbent Alyaksandr Lukashenko was believed to secure his sixth presidential term. Things changed, howev-

3. Brancati (2014) and Lucardi (2019) rely on similar arguments in their analyses of post-election protests and political change in non-democratic regimes experiencing economic downturns.

er, when COVID-19 reached Belarus in March 2020. Lukashenka ignored the threat and publicly called citizens' fears "Corona psychosis" (*koronapsikhoz*). No systematic measures were taken against the pandemic, while the official COVID-19 statistics have been widely believed to be unreliable. When coronavirus-related deaths were finally officially acknowledged in late March, Lukashenka publicly blamed the victims for being too old or too obese to fight COVID-19. Most Belarusians, however, as two surveys conducted in March and April demonstrate (Mojeiko 2020), were strongly in favor of state-wide measures to combat the pandemic and were concerned about how it would affect their lives and well-being.

In this context, three unexpected candidates announced their intentions to run for presidency. They were unrelated to the old and largely marginalized opposition camp, which meant that they could not rely on pre-existing organizational resources. One of them was a YouTube blogger Syarhey Tsikhanousky. He was imprisoned in late May, officially for participating in a skirmish with the police. Investigative journalists, however, almost immediately found out that a person who started the skirmish was a prostitute, allegedly hired by authorities for organizing the spectacle. Another candidate, more popular Viktor Babaryka, a former banker, was abruptly arrested over corruption charges in mid-June. Babaryka's arrest caused first spontaneous protests, which led to some violent confrontation with the riot police (the notorious OMON). Perhaps only a few thousand people participated in those demonstrations. Nevertheless, they were already decentralized, as seen when protesters formed spontaneous "solidarity chains" in many parts of the capital city of Minsk. Importantly, the leaders of the Babaryka campaign did not call on people to

take to the streets and asked supporters to exercise restraint.

After these events, the campaigns of Tsikhanousky and Babaryka, as well as the third independent candidate, who was simply not allowed to run for presidency, decided to join their efforts. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the wife of the arrested blogger, became the main independent candidate and was registered for participation in the presidential race. On August 9, the election day, huge numbers of Belarusians turned to the polling stations, so that some of them had to stay open for a few more hours after the official end of voting. Moreover, groups of voters remained around many polling stations, attempting to monitor ballot counting.

Later the same day, however, the Central Election Commission announced that Lukashenka scored more than 80% of the votes. Protests erupted immediately, although neither Tsikhanouskaya nor anyone from her camp openly supported them or tried to provide leadership. The police exercised extreme violence against those who turned to the streets. There are now hundreds if not thousands of accounts evidencing that the police beat and humiliated ordinary citizens and even raped them with batons (Human Rights Watch 2020). This tactic of unprecedented terror backfired, so hundreds of thousands would take to the streets of Minsk from mid-August and until November. When the regime managed to regroup in the late fall of 2020, repressions against activists and journalists started again, which, nevertheless, did not invigorate the protest movement. Yet, at the moment of writing this article in the spring 2021, local protests and acts of defiance are still happening in Belarus on a daily basis.

Avenues for future research



How can one establish that the incumbent's particular misdeeds have been crucial to the onset of unrest? First, we can try to ask protesters themselves about their motivations and goals. Online surveys, which have grown in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, may be conducted even in the most repressive contexts, and they have been indeed organized in Belarus (see Douglas et al. 2021).

Second, we can look at potential triggers that, nevertheless, have not generated uproar. The goal of such within-country comparisons is to rule out the possibility that the protests one studies have been overdetermined. For instance, in Moldova in late 2012, another important corruption scandal happened⁴, which did not result

in any big rallies, unlike the aforementioned one-billion-dollar heist. Obviously, to effectively use this strategy, one must also explain why other potential triggers did not spur protest mobilization. Finally, we can design survey experiments about events hypothesized to function as revelations about the regime's unaccountability. Aytaç and Stokes's work (2019, 83-102) provides a good example of how experiments about particular grievances and police repression can be conducted online, even during protests themselves. This method should be especially useful for figuring out whether and how prior discontent with the regime "interacts" with new information about its nature. ●

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4. Drunken officials, including the prosecutor general, illegally hunted in a protected forest; one of the hunters, supposedly the prosecutor general, accidentally killed a person.

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PLUS ÇA CHANGE: New Media and Eternal Protest

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Since social media is a recombination of universal, preexisting behaviors and technology, it does not transform most of the important parts of protest.

Social media have transformed protest in some ways, yet in more ways than not, they do not alter the fundamental dynamics of protest. While social media can create political power by opening new spaces for dissent (Diamond 2010; Shirky 2011), any pro-protest effect of this opening starts to dissipate by the first half of 2011, the middle stages of the Arab Spring. The reason for this muted effect is, like the solution to homelessness, eponymous. The combination of humans' instinct to communicate (social) and the ability to disseminate that communi-

cation broadly (media) is a new development for humanity, and that merger transforms protest in specific ways. At the same time, since social media is a recombination of universal, preexisting behaviors and technology, it does not transform most of the important parts of protest, including states' efforts to suppress them.

How digital communication technology affects protest has been extensively studied. Because cell phones and the internet enable like-minded individuals to communicate amongst themselves and are more difficult than mass media for states to control (Little

2015; Warren 2015), they lower the cost of protest and therefore increase their occurrence (Christensen and Garfias 2018). The effect is true for social media as well. When Facebook introduces its service in a local language, more people protest, especially under certain preexisting conditions (Fergusson and Molina 2019). The uneven spatiotemporal rollout of VKontakte in Russia suggests that a 10% increase in social media penetration increases the number of protests by almost 5% and their size by almost 20% (Enikolopov, Makarin, and Petrova 2020).

This essay does not contribute to the empirical study of social media and protests. Instead, it discusses the two at a higher level, from institutional and historical perspectives. From that vantage point, though social media certainly affect protests, they have not transformed them. Researchers should therefore think of social media primarily as a source of data that enables a better understanding of contentious politics, not a major independent driver of them (Barberá and Steinert-Threlkeld 2020).

Protest and Communication

To understand how social media affect protest, it is necessary first to think about how com-



munication affects protest. In turn, how social media changes communication will be how it transforms protest.

Communication is a key component of protest mobilization. Before a protest, it helps dissatisfieds find each other: realizing many others share grievances increases the probability that any one person will protest (Marwell, Oliver, and Pahl 1988).

The size of the communication technology's audience and how available it is to non-elites in turn determine if a new communication technology advantages protesters or the state.

Some, such as radio or television, are restricted because increasing returns to scale lead to consolidation and therefore only a few points of access. Others, such as phones, are widespread (Warren 2015). At the same time, different communication technologies create different broadcast capabilities. Some, such as newspapers or television, reach large numbers of individuals, while others, like all technology before the railroad or electronic communication, are available to a small, nearer audience. *Table 1* shows how different communication technologies map onto these two dimensions.

Table 1.
Communication Technologies.

		Access	
		Restricted	Widespread
Audience	Small	Pre-electronic communication; telegraph	Phones; e-mail
	Large	Newspaper, radio, television	Social media

Transformations

Social media are unique because of their audience and access. Newspapers and television can reach vast populations, and satellite television makes that audience global. If social media were unique solely because of their scale, however, they would not differ significantly from previous mass media. New electronic communication tools such as e-mail and text messaging are widespread because they use the same underlying technology as social media, but they facilitate one-to-one or one-to-few communication; they are intimate. The same is true of smartphone chat applications such as WhatsApp or Telegram.

Unlike those media, however, social media are open to essentially everybody. Because social media are free to use and the internet and smartphones are ubiquitous in many places

and almost ubiquitous in even more, they combine the reach of mass media with the easy access of the internet. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Sina Weibo, Twitter, or VKontakte that encourage public consumption, production, and sharing of content, therefore, create large audiences and social interactions within them. It is this widespread access, the "social" part of social media, that transforms.

The second transformation follows from scale. Just as social media weaken existing gatekeepers, they weaken traditional protest gatekeepers. Previous communication technology made it difficult for regular individuals to communicate with each other over large distances, so organizations that could solve this problem were privileged (Andrews and Biggs 2006). Thus, religious groups or labor unions, for example, have historically played pivotal roles in protests. Now

that individuals can more easily find each other on social media, these movement gatekeepers have become less necessary for the organization of protest (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Steinert-Threlkeld 2017a).

This second transformation may explain the apparent failure of so many recent mass protests (Tufekci 2017). Governing and policy-making require organization, and groups that organized protests can facilitate policy changes when those protests were successful. When protests do not require organizing, however, there is no organization to guide policy change. This spontaneity explains why Egypt’s Arab Spring protests erupted without help from major organizations but the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest and most organized non-state institution, ultimately won the 2012 presidential election. (The protests were not *sui generis*, as labor unions and youth groups were essential to them and used social media. See Ghonim 2012; Steinert-Threlkeld 2017b.) Though there are benefits to social media making protests more spontaneous, obviating organization is also their Achilles heel.

The third, final way social media transform protest is by making them more visible. This development is related to the diminution of gatekeepers. Since publishing on social media has very low fixed costs and even lower marginal ones, previously voiceless groups of people

can now make themselves heard and seen. This external communication sustains movements that may otherwise not exist or have had trouble sustaining a community. This feature is true for any kept-out group, whether the issue is around civil rights, sexual abuse, or conspiracy theories. Moreover, this visibility transforms academic research because it makes many more types of events amenable to quantitative analysis, especially protests (Steinhardt and Goebel 2019; Zhang and Pan 2019). The felt increase in social tension worldwide is therefore probably a mixture of increased protest frequency, as well as more awareness of ones that previous eras would have lost to the sands of time.

Persistence

Despite these transformations, from many vantage points, social media change very little about protest. Just as social media are unique because they combine the human proclivity to communicate with the technological capability to broadcast widely, they are not unique because humans have always communicated and broadcasting has always existed in various forms. States’ motivation as well remain unchanged. *Table 2* lists at least six ways social media have not transformed protest, in contrast to the three transformations just discussed.

The simplest continuance is perhaps the most pervasive: protest existed long before social

Transformed	Not Transformed
Scale	Protest has always existed
New, non-institutional actors enabled at expense of civil society	Communication technology always changes
Improved research	Private enterprise, including “influencers”, exploits the new technology
	State censorship of communication
	State repression of protest
	State desire for legibility

Table 2.
Transformation and Persistence.

media. Though public contestation has probably existed in one form or another since at least the earliest states coalesced, the oldest record of it comes from a fragment of a scribe's plea to Ramses III, who ruled Egypt's New Kingdom from approximately 1186-1155 BCE, just before a strike over labor conditions (Golia 2011, 2018). And though mass protests recognizable to a current audience probably did not exist before the emergence of social movements in the 19th century, policy disagreement was expressed through actions such as leaving the polity, burning administrative records, riots, and revolt (Scott 2009). Protest predates social media; it will postdate it, as well.

Human nature also has not changed. Though it is common to project romantic ideals of stability onto pre-industrial polities (Berman 1983), it is not clear that people alive in previous eras felt the same way. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates complains that writing, a relatively new technology reserved for the elite, "is no true wisdom [...] but only its semblance, [...] as men filled, not with wisdom but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows." Briggs and Burke (2009) show that communication technologies have consistently evolved since Gutenberg first printed the Bible, and these transformations are accompanied by proclamations of a changing world (Standage 1998). Though the pace of technological change has certainly quickened (Johansen and Sornette 2001; Kremer 1993), change has been, as they say, the only constant.

Social media's low barriers to entry have created large groups of people trying to earn a living from platforms. This exploitation of new communication technology for personal profit is not new behavior. The English dramatist James Shirley complained that "they [journalists] will write you a battle in any part of Europe at an

hour's warning, and yet never set foot out of a tavern" (Pettegree 2014, 257). During the French Revolution, 165 years after Shirley's lament, the profusion of newspapers – many printed daily, an exuberance that must have felt like the internet does today – caused many journalists to become famous and wealthy and many wealthy to become journalists (Popkin 1990, Chapter 2). That today's social media creates and empowers "influencers" does not then seem much different from influencers of yore.

Switching perspectives from the technology to the state reveals more continuation. The Chinese Communist Party's 50 cent army, private companies' self-policing of content, or Saudi Arabia's arrest of prominent individuals for their online posts are provocative (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013; Pan and Siegel 2020), but states have always censored media. Whether against salacious plays or anti-religious images or texts, the state often feels certain messages should not spread. Publishing under pseudonyms or in foreign jurisdictions is not an invention of today's digital activists but a long-standing resistance to the state's repression (Briggs and Burke 2009, pp. 45-49). Since the state always requires a social base of support, censorship can also serve as a political reward to private actors, as was the case in Pinochet's Chile or America in the 1950s (Esberg 2020). More heavy-handed digital censorship, such as Uganda's tax on dozens of social media platforms or India's world-beating use of internet blackouts, also have historical equivalents (Boxell and Steinert-Threlkeld 2021).

Similarly, it is hard to find an example of a state, democratic or not, that does not attempt to repress political action it views as threatening. Prominent examples include the treatment of protests for racial minorities' rights in the

United States or extensive use of domestic spying in the former Soviet Union. Protest repression, however, is arguably a sign of the state's failure to preventively suppress the individuals and institutions that created the protest (Ritter and Conrad 2016). Before protests start, states target the building blocks that could support them: offices, printing presses, and sources of funding are all frequent targets of monitoring or seizure (Sullivan 2016). The widespread use of anti-sedition laws, monitoring of private establishments such as coffee houses, or infiltration of oppositional groups are other examples of preventative repression (Churchill and Vander Wall 1990). The lawlike recurrence of repression in response to challenger politics means that repression is the rule and not the exception, regardless of an era's novel communication technology (Davenport 2007).

Finally, states in the last decade have learned that social media and the internet can be exquisitely *useful* tools for repression for the same reason they are great for researchers. The state has always existed at or near the edge of the technological frontier, and it embraces technology that provides it more data about its domain (Scott 1999). The term "surveillance capitalism" describes the marketing-led tracking of individuals (Zuboff 2015), yet that same power is beneficial to a state that wants to propagate its messages, identify antagonists, or receive policy feedback without the use of competitive elections (Egorov, Guriev, and Sonin 2009; Gohdes 2020). When the vast majority of a population freely provides behavioral data in one place – which is what happens on social media – the state's domestic monitoring simplifies. It should therefore not be a surprise that Vladimir Putin expropriated VKontakte instead of shut-

ting it down, China allows and carefully monitors Sina Weibo, and less capable governments purchase monitoring software from private companies.

Conclusion

This increased legibility neatly encapsulates the transformation social media has wrought. Without gatekeepers online, individuals can see each other more easily, so social media build and sustain movements that otherwise may not have coalesced. This visibility increases the probability of protest. The same affordances also allow states to monitor protestors in a level of detail never before possible (Driscoll and Steinert-Threlkeld 2020; Kokcharov 2018; Purdy 2018). The cumulative transformation should therefore be more protests but no increase in policy or regime change.

Contention springs eternal, perhaps because it also requires hope. The Black Lives Matter movement mobilized the largest protests in American history, yet it continues a centuries-old struggle for racial equality. Chilean youth transformed a protest about transit fares into a nationwide movement against vestiges of Pinochet's regime, but the core fight over inequality predates both.

Similarly, new digital communication platforms such as Telegram or WhatsApp that emphasize privacy and intragroup communication now carry the liberation technology flame. Combining the speed of digital diffusion with the difficulty of monitoring offline behavior, these new platforms are increasingly favored by protesters around the world. Yet the state is not far behind (Gallagher 2020). The more things change, the more they stay the same. ●

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TRANSITIONS IN MIGRATION STRATEGIES AND GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT: How Outcomes Will Only Become Worse for Irregular Migrants

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International migration is a process filled with transitions in migrant strategies, transitions in governmental immigration enforcement, and transitions in migrant and government strategies in response to each other. As migrant and government strategies co-evolve, prominent destination country governments pursue immigration enforcement strategies that will target migrants that they find undesirable, which often means attempting to stop the irregular migration of unauthorized migrants. International migration flows may remain steady over time, or even increase, but destination country governments can be expected to continue escalating their efforts to prevent irregular migration and attempting to eliminate pathways for irregular migrants to regularize their status.

These transitions occur as migrants develop strong motivations to move internationally in search of economic opportunity, safety, joining friends and family, or other benefits (Schon and Johnson 2021; Czaika and Haas 2014; Fitzgerald, Leblang, and Teets 2014), but destination country governments vary in their willingness to host

new immigrants (Holland and Peters 2020). Reluctance to welcome new immigrants might seem odd from an economic perspective, given that immigration is consistently linked with improved economic outcomes (Clemens 2011; Kerr et al. 2016). Hollifield, Hunt, and Tichenor (2008) label this as the “liberal paradox,” where industrialized economies like the United States have strong economic interests in encouraging high levels of immigration and political interests in minimizing immigration. The economic interests maintain strong motivators, or pull factors, for immigration, whereas the political interests often prevail in their desire to restrict legal opportunity for immigration. Globalization provides reinforcement to those political interests by creating opportunities to outsource low wage labor away from industrialized democracies (Peters 2017).

In this context, international migration can fall into a contentious cycle, one that is filled with transitions as migrants and governments iteratively act and react to each other. Migrants attempt to complete their desired international



As policies and enforcement transition in attempts to restrict immigration opportunities, migrants transition into new strategies.

migration, while destination country governments may attempt to prevent that migration. Governments most directly work to prevent unauthorized migration at the borders of their territory with border enforcement. Placing border patrol staff at major crossings, monitoring with technology such as drones and biometric data, and legal measures to restrict the provision of legal, regular immigrant status are all standard measures to deter and prevent immigration (Longo 2017; Czaika and Hobolth 2016).

For migrants, this cycle can continue despite government attempts to deter and prevent their migration because pull factors can overcome opportunity restrictions (Cornelius and Salehyan 2007; Massey et al. 1993). As policies and enforcement transition in attempts to restrict immigration opportunities, migrants transition into new strategies to complete their desired migration. These strategies typically include some form of deflection – shifting to new routes and destinations or between regular and irregular status – which can be classified as deflection or deflection, respectively (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012; Czaika and Hobolth 2016).

Government reactions to these transitions can lead to a wide variety of new techniques. Responding to spatial deflection, governments can, and often do, harden their borders with physical barriers, increased border patrol staff, and increased technology (Simmons and Kenwick 2021). They may also try to stop international migration before migrants even reach their borders, by outsourcing migration management responsibility to transit countries through externalized enforcement, or “remote control” (FitzGerald 2019). Responding to sta-

tus deflection, governments can change laws, rules, and regulations. They may also enact policies such as the Migrant Protection Protocols in the United States, where asylum-seekers were required to wait in Mexico as their claims were processed (Leutert 2020).

These transitions do not just discretely occur and then yield passive responses. Migrants and governments iteratively act and react in response to the other, following relational dynamics (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). To understand the transitions throughout migration and immigration enforcement, it is critical to consider this contentious nature of migration.

Transitions in Immigration Enforcement

Long histories have generated large demand for international migration opportunities into the United States, Europe, and other industrialized economies like Canada and Australia (FitzGerald 2019; Brachet 2009). Improving transportation options have allowed international movements to cover greater distances (Schon and Johnson 2021). This has contributed to people from a growing number of origin countries attempting to migrate to a small number of destination countries (Czaika and Haas 2014). For those destination countries, the resultant demand for entry often exceeds what they are willing to explicitly allow (Mourad and Norman 2019).

Transitions in immigration enforcement have been most closely documented since the end of the Cold War. This is an important turning point because, when the Cold War ended, a powerful political motivation for many countries in Europe and the United States to accept new migrants as refugees disappeared (Betts and Loescher 2011). Since refugee status requires

host countries to provide people with specific rights and protections, countries that had been accepting and resettling large numbers of refugees during the Cold War suddenly admitted far fewer new refugees (Schon and Johnson 2021). Migrants who had previously obtained refugee status now had to pursue irregular migration. This “push into irregularity” contributed to the large unauthorized migrant populations that emerged (Mourad and Norman 2019; Betts 2010). This includes large populations of asylum-seekers, who had typically reached a host country through irregular migration and had then applied for asylum as an attempt to shift from irregular to regular status (Galli 2019; Hamlin 2014; Law 2010).

In addition to cutting off options for migrants to obtain legal status, destination countries have also added obstacles to block migration routes. Many destination countries built physical barriers after the end of the Cold War, increased the quantity and sophistication of technological methods to monitor borders, and increased the number of personnel actively monitoring borders (Longo 2017; Massey, Pren, and Durand 2016; Andersson 2016). Big data, biometrics, drones, radar, and many other high-tech methods have become part of border enforcement activities (Bellanova and Glouftsiou 2020). These efforts were all part of progressively “militarizing” borders, so that they could potentially deter new unauthorized migration (Jones and Johnson 2016; Simmons 2019; Simmons and Kenwick 2021).

Another key transition has been a growing use of externalized immigration enforcement (FitzGerald 2019). The United States adopted Operation Frontera Sur, which provided at least \$1.5 billion to Mexico from fiscal year 2008

through fiscal year 2015, to collaborate with Mexico in building its capacity to stop the transit migration of Central Americans on their way to the United States (Vega 2017). Australia pursued deals with Manus, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea to detain migrants and stop them from attempts to continue their migration all the way to Australia (Rabinovitch 2014). Considering the failure of “Fortress Europe” to stop unauthorized migration, the European Union aggressively pursued migration management deals with countries throughout Africa and the Middle East (Casas Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2015; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2016; Akkerman 2018).

Spatial Deflection & Status Deflection: Transitions to new routes, destinations, and status

Migrants do not passively accept these transitions in immigration enforcement. They adapt and shift into new routes and destinations or between regular and irregular migrant status. These shifts can be classified as deflection strategies, either spatial deflection or status deflection. Spatial deflection includes shifts in migration routes and/or destinations. Status deflection includes shifts from a regular status to an irregular status, or vice versa.

Spatial deflection includes transitions to new routes and destinations in response to immigration enforcement. Unauthorized migrants crossing into the United States through its border with Mexico shifted from primarily occurring through the San Diego sector from 1977-1997, then the Tucson sector from 1998-2012, then the Rio Grande Valley sector from 2013-2018, and then back to Tucson in 2019 (Figure 1).

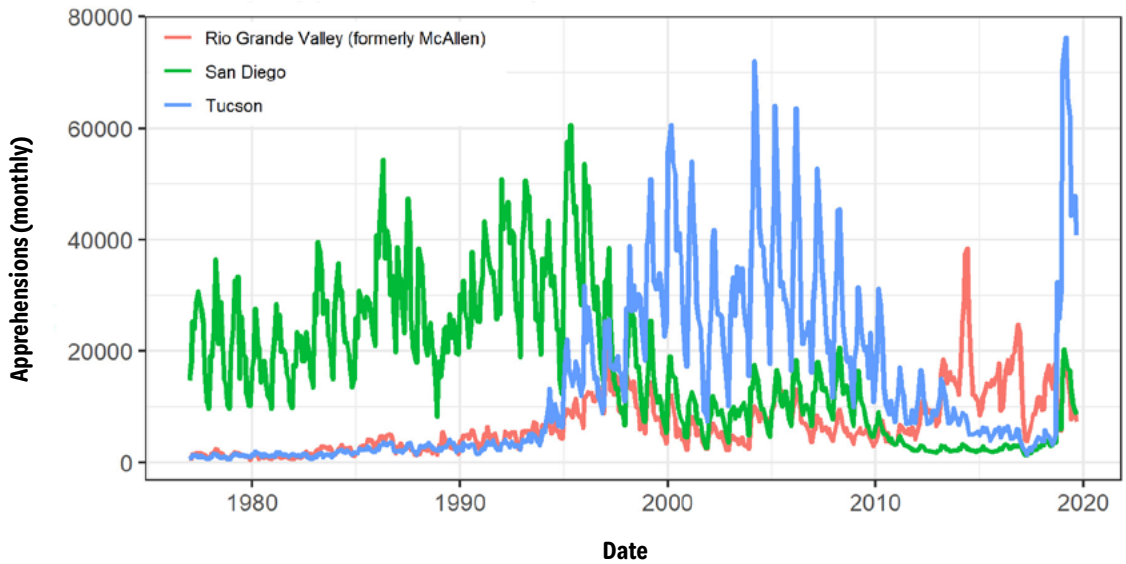


Figure 1.
Monthly Apprehensions by Sector, 1977-2019.

In Europe, unauthorized crossings over the Mediterranean Sea from 2009-2019 primarily occurred through the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan Routes (Figure 2), although over time there have been periodic shifts between the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Mediterranean, and Western Mediterranean Routes (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012).

Figure 2 illustrates the Mediterranean routes, with the understanding that movement surged through the Western Balkan route in 2015 at the same time as it surged through the Eastern Mediterranean route. This 2015 surge was so large that I display apprehensions through the Eastern Mediterranean route on a separate axis.

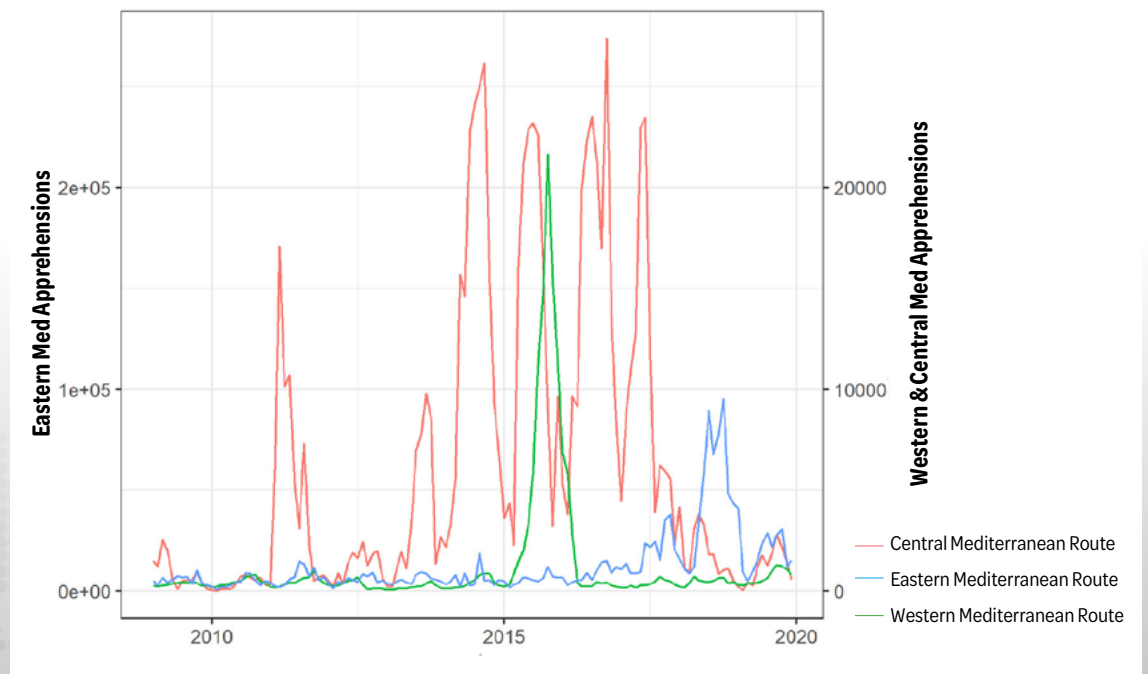


Figure 2.
Monthly EU Apprehensions by Corridor, 2009-2019.

Status deflection includes transitions between regular and irregular migrant status in response to immigration enforcement. Czaika and Hobolth (2016) show that restrictions on visa programs in Europe led to an increase in irregular migration. Schon and Leblang (2021) show status deflection in the opposite direction, as migrants respond to physical barriers on country borders by applying for political asylum. Galli (2019) also discusses how immigration attorneys advise undocumented clients with strong cases for asylum to apply for it in order to regularize their status in the United States.

Enforcement Transitions in Response to Migrant Transitions

Just as migrants do not passively accept government immigration enforcement policies, governments do not passively accept migrant responses to those policies. The process of migration leading to transitions in immigration enforcement, transitions in enforcement lead-

ing to transitions in migration, and then those migration transitions leading to additional transitions in enforcement is continuous.

As migrants transition to new routes and destinations, governments can adjust their monitoring practices. If migrants are crossing at new points, governments can add patrols at those points. This process of spatial deflection and then shifting patrol monitoring points can be observed in the shifting of border patrol staff on the United States-Mexico border, as shown in *Figure 3*. During the implementation of the Secure Fence Act from roughly 2006-2011, border patrol staffing increased throughout the US-Mexico border. Outside of that time period, staffing appears to have responded to trends in unauthorized crossings, just as migrants may have responded to trends in border patrol staffing.

Facing the challenge of preventing unauthorized migration when migrants are choosing spatial deflection, externalization can be a response that

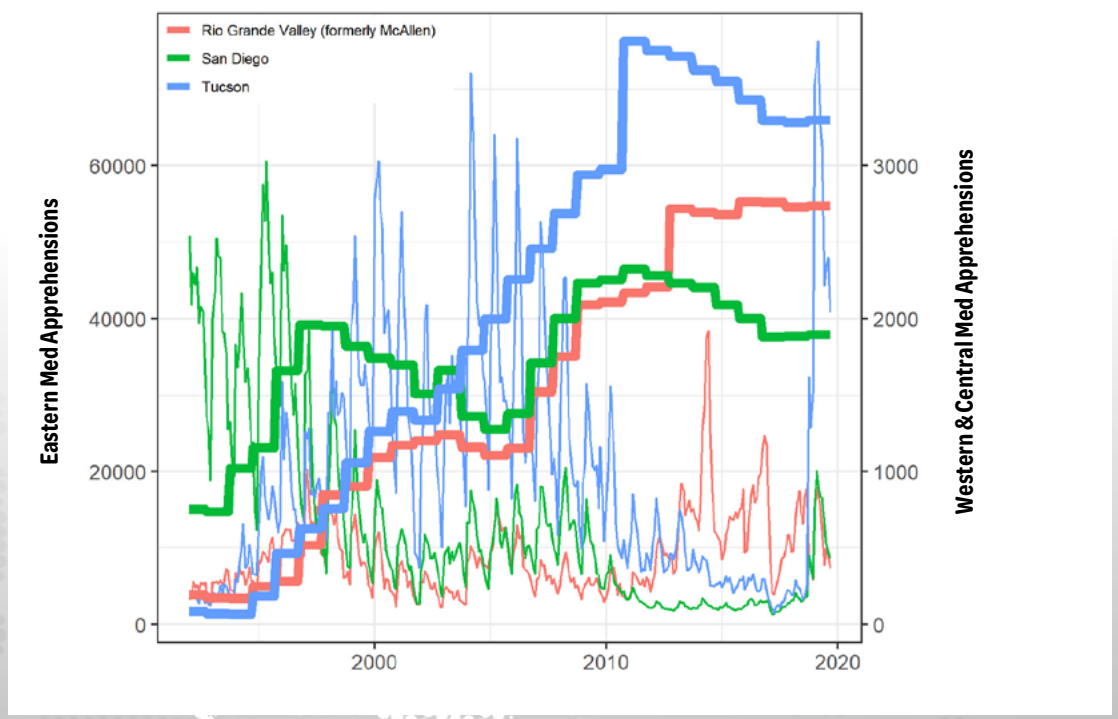


Figure 3.
Apprehensions & Border Staffing by Sector, 1992-2019.

Note: Thick lines are fiscal year border staffing. Thin lines are monthly apprehensions in the United States Southwest Region.

outsources the challenge of stopping migrants to transit countries (Akkerman 2018). In these cases, the transit country tends to have less money and military power than the destination country, so transit countries have an asymmetric power relationship with the destination country. Transit countries may threaten to unleash large migration flows onto destination countries in order to obtain concessions (Greenhill 2016). Tsourapas (2019) compares how Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon responded to hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees and finds that Jordan and Lebanon pursued strategies with Europe to obtain concessions, whereas Turkey pursued a strategy. Transit countries must be careful, however, not to push for too much, due to the risk of backfire if the destination country is unwilling to bargain (Greenhill 2010). As the United States interacts with Mexico through Operation Frontera Sur, Europe interacts with countries like Turkey or Niger through bilateral migration deals, or Australia interacts with countries like Manus, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea, externalization is facilitated by power imbalances between destination and transit countries.

Status deflection also provokes new transitions in immigration enforcement. These transitions may occur through changes in immigration and asylum laws, policies, and regulations. Alternatively, destination country governments may turn to externalization as they respond to status deflection. Asylum-seekers who have rights to remain within the destination country frustrate those who want to prevent their entry altogether (Hamlin 2014). In some cases, this leads to pushbacks, where aspiring asylum-seekers are not given the opportunity to formally ask for asylum.

In other cases, this leads to destination country governments announcing that asylum-seekers

must wait outside their borders. This is what happened under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) in the United States (Leutert 2020). More broadly, so-called Safe Third Country agreements allow destination country governments to send asylum-seekers to other countries that are allegedly safe. These agreements rarely result in asylum being granted. An agreement between the United States and Guatemala led to zero out of 945 asylum-seekers who were transferred to Guatemala being granted asylum in the United States (Democratic Staff Report 2021). Denmark has also actively incorporated externalization into its asylum policies, using European Union policies like the Dublin Protocols and deals with countries in the Maghreb, Sahel, and West Africa to help outsource border control to transit countries and Frontex (Lemberg-Pedersen et al. 2021).

These transitions by governments are just another stage in the relational dynamics of unauthorized migration and immigration enforcement. Actions and reactions continue in an iterative and dynamic process.

Conclusion

This essay shows how international migration and immigration enforcement can form a process of contentious migration. International migrants attempting to enter destination countries face a wide variety of border enforcement tactics. Their transitions to new routes and destinations or between regular and irregular status prompt responses in border enforcement, as well as externalized enforcement. The cycle continues.

Analyzing international migration and immigration enforcement as an evolutionary cycle offers numerous advantages. It recognizes the agency of migrants to respond to the coercive

power of the state. In addition, the evolutionary lens makes it easier to understand how governments select new immigration enforcement policies. These benefits of examining international migration and immigration enforcement co-exist while highlighting the value of considering historical and contextual features of specific cases.

Unfortunately, we should not expect this evolutionary cycle to yield positive outcomes for unauthorized migrants. Governments may continue welcoming desirable, highly skilled, and low cost immigrants (De Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli 2016). There is no reason, however, to expect immigration enforcement toward im-

migrants that a government does not find desirable to suddenly flip and become welcoming. Europe, the United States, and Australia periodically increase enforcement efforts, but they generally do not end enforcement activities once they begin. We can also expect asylum processes to erode away, especially as governments grow increasingly frustrated by the cost of maintaining expensive asylum determination processes (Hamlin 2014). Irregular migrants will therefore continue to lose options for regularizing their irregular status. Without fundamental political shifts, we can therefore expect the human rights situations and economic livelihoods of irregular migrants to only get worse. ●

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STUDYING MIGRANT EXCLUSION WITHIN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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In recent decades, hosting migrants has increasingly been met with public backlash in the Global North, as highlighted by a large literature (Dancygier and Laitin 2014; Adida, Lo and Platas 2018; Hangartner et al. 2019)^{1,2}. Migration scholars have predominantly focused on Latin American and Asian migrants entering the U.S. and Canada, and on African and Middle Eastern migrants entering Europe. Xenophobic reactions in these contexts are rooted in fears and animus over racial, ethnic, and religious differences (e.g. Hajnal and Rivera 2014; Adida Laitin and Valfort 2016). Yet migrants within the Global South are often located in the border regions of neighboring countries. In these contexts, they can share ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties to local communities. Absent cultural differences, one might expect that there would be *less discrimination and greater inclusion of migrants* into local host communities. However, my work challenges this assumption.

In my book project, I theorize that if migrants are framed as threatening by (political) elites, host citizens who share cultural ties with those migrants will reify other boundaries of exclusion. When migrants are highly stigmatized, co-ethnic host citizens may fear being “migrantized” or mistaken for migrants themselves. These citizens will seek to emphasize the social and political identities (e.g. national identity) that will distance themselves from migrants, thereby further ostracizing them. In this essay, the term *co-ethnicity* not only refers to people believing they share a social identity based on common cultural, linguistic, religious, and descent-based ties, etc., but it also accounts for how individuals *believe they are perceived by others* as belonging to an ethnic group or not. If an individual does not wish to be perceived as co-ethnic with a marginalized group (e.g. migrants), what steps might they take in changing their own social identity to distance themselves

1. To clarify the term migrants, this essay focuses on individuals affected by displacement crises, such as conflict, economic collapse, natural disasters, or persecution. There is ongoing debate over what to call these individuals. This group includes refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and individuals that the UNHCR calls “people of concern”—those who do not meet the legal definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Scholars and practitioners have also used the dichotomy, “voluntary” vs. “forced” migrants. However, I take on a broader conceptualization, because it is often unclear where the line between forced migrants and voluntary migrants lies and the term “forced migrant” removes agency from the people making well-informed choices to migrate (Holland and Peters, 2020). I recognize that the term “migrant” is not value neutral either, but increasingly politicized (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Mourad and Norman 2020).
2. I also use the term “host (country) citizens” instead of “native-born citizens,” which is a common term in this literature for two reasons: first in countries with *jus sanguinis* citizenship, not all those who are born in the state are citizens, and second to acknowledge the indigenous societies that are often not included in these studies.



from that group? I explore these dynamics by presenting evidence from Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Colombia. I also highlight other recent, path-breaking work in this area.

To structure this essay, I highlight three types of transitions and the research questions they raise. The first is migration itself; when migrants from the Global South migrate and settle to another country, how is that transition different if they are going to a country in the Global North versus a neighboring country within the Global South? We might assume that the transition to the latter is smaller particularly if there are ethnic and cultural ties across the border. Second, how does the presence of these migrants change the social and political landscapes of host countries, particularly if the migrants become politicized? Lastly, how do host citizen attitudes and identities shift in light of these

changes? Are they more accepting and inclusive of co-ethnic migrants, or do they seek to exclude and try to differentiate themselves from the migrants?

Migrant-Hosting Dynamics in the Global South

Although most migration research has focused on receiving countries in the Global North, regions of the Global South host the vast majority of the over 80 million people affected by displacement events such as large-scale conflicts and economic and environmental insecurity (see Figure 1) (UNHCR 2020).³ They are expected to house and integrate larger migrant populations for longer periods of time. Host governments in these regions tend to be under-resourced, and they not only face domestic but to a large extent, international pressures. In this section, I consider how hosting migrants within the Global South may differ from our

Regions of the Global South host the vast majority of the over 80 million people affected by displacement events.

change the social and political landscapes of host countries, particularly if the migrants become politicized? Lastly, how do host citizen attitudes and identities shift in light of these

3. The slight increase for OECD countries starting in 2013 is due to Turkey hosting Syrian refugees.

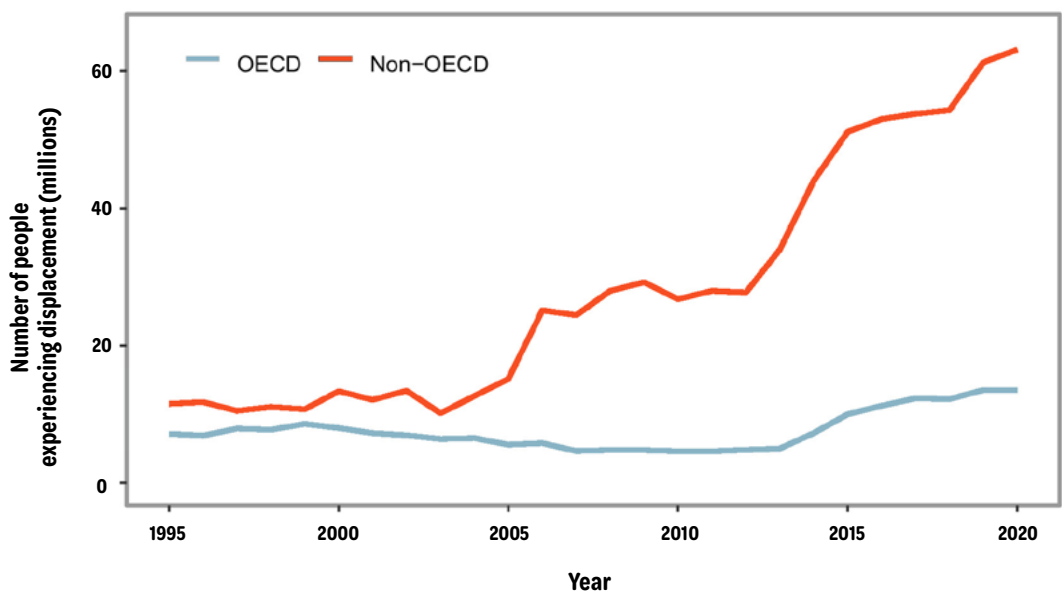


Figure 1. The vast majority of people affected by displacement are located in non-OECD countries. Data source: UNHCR population statistics database.

predictions based on existing research in the Global North. The main factors of difference I consider are economic concerns, focusing on 1) aid spillovers or resentment as opposed to labor competition; 2) repressive, ambiguous, or liberal asylum policies; and 3) cultural similarity, i.e. the presence of co-ethnic kin.

Much of the migration scholarship about public opposition to migrants in Europe and North America examines economic competition. Host citizens may oppose migration in ways that affect their personal labor prospects (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Peters et al. 2019), their industries (Mayda 2006; Dancygier and Donnelly 2013; Malhotra, Margalit and Mo 2013), the national economy (Citrin et al. 1997), or whether they will contribute or draw from the social welfare system (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Goldstein and Peters 2014). Turning to developing contexts, economic competition may play a larger role if migrants have similar skills, as opposed to complementary ones. For example, Adida (2014) shows that economic competition between co-ethnic migrants and locals in the informal sector in West Africa creates pressures for exclusion. Nevertheless, since hosting large migrant populations who are affected by crises often brings an influx of humanitarian aid, host citizens are likely less concerned about migrants accessing their welfare state and more concerned with whether their communities can benefit from this aid. Lehmann and Masterson (2020) find a reduction in anti-migrant hostility in Lebanon when cash transfers to Syrian refugees also benefited locals. In multiple African countries, areas hosting refugees also experience greater market activity, electrification, and access to education and health care facil-

ities, improvements to sanitation infrastructure, and road expansion (Tatah et al. 2016; Betts et al. 2017; Alix-Garcia et al. 2018; Maystadt and Durantou 2018; Zhou and Grossman 2021).

On the other hand, when migrants are segregated from host communities, such as through strict encampment politics, citizens are prevented from interacting with migrants and benefiting from positive spillovers. Through conducting interviews, focus groups, and a regionally representative survey in northwest Tanzania in 2015 and 2016, I learned that the communities geographically proximate to the large refugee camps expressed greater resentment (Zhou 2019). These citizens were able to observe the aid going to Burundian and Congolese refugees, but they were unable to access it for their own underserved communities: “We have no electricity, no running water. In the camps, we know the UNHCR provides the Burundians all these things.”⁴ This sentiment was echoed by aid officials: “It’s very often that host communities resent camps because they are such a visible place of people being assisted. Very often in places where refugees are isolated and have no work permits, no land, when they are sitting in camps they are being assisted while the other population has to fend for itself.”⁵

Host country policies within the Global South also differ from those in the Global North due to the greater numbers of migrants who are hosted for often protracted periods of time. Domestic and international pressures (such as the externalization of U.S. border control into Mexico, and EU borders into North Africa) lead these host states to strategically choose repressive, liberal, or even ambiguous policies (Adamson and Tsourapas 2020; Frost 2020; Norman 2020;

4. Female focus group participant in Kibande, July 29, 2015.

5. Interview conducted with senior UNHCR Official, September 12, 2018.

Abdelaaty 2021). For instance, Blair, Grossman and Weinstein (2020) find that political elites are more likely to enact liberal asylum policies when their co-ethnics in neighboring countries are marginalized. Scholars have also found that migrants in North America and Europe often choose to settle in areas where there are more co-ethnics, and they integrate more successfully in these “ethnic enclaves” (Portes 1981; Edin Fredriksson and Åslund 2003; Martén, Hainmueller and Hangartner 2019; Mossaad et al. 2020). In these contexts, migrants typically differ from majority citizens in terms of ethnicity, race, and religion. Thus, anti-migrant attitudes there are often attributed to perceived threats on the majority citizens’ culture and national identity (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004; Adida, Laitin and Valfort 2016; Bansak, Hainmueller and Hangartner 2016).

Whereas most of these theories focus on cultural differences, it is less clear whether perceived *cultural similarities* increase support among host communities. It is possible that migration between developing countries results in more empathetic responses because of cultural and ethnic similarities (Cogley, Doces and Whitaker 2018; Alrababa’h et al. 2021). But as others have pointed out, there is variation in how migrants and their descendants choose to identify ethnically and culturally with host citizens, depending on how they might be stigmatized (Waters 1994; Malkki 1995). Mirroring this logic, co-ethnic citizens will also alter how they identify with migrants – either in solidarity or active opposition – based on strategic calculations around discrimination. For example, Gaikwad and Nellis (2017) find that in Mumbai, marginalized minority communities welcome co-ethnic internal migrants to bolster their social and political influence. However, in contexts where migrants are labeled by political rhetoric and

the media as dangerous (e.g. bringing conflict, crime, disease), I argue that co-ethnic host citizens will fear being mistaken as migrants by the state and other non-co-ethnic co-nationals. These fears, in turn, will lead to further out-group distancing of migrants even amongst their own ethnic kin. In this way, identities and boundaries are malleable and remade depending on context (Brubaker et al. 2004; Wimmer 2008).

National Identity and Political Ideology as Boundaries of Exclusion

When co-ethnic host citizens fear being “migrantized,” how do they differentiate themselves from this out-group (migrants) and signal affinity with their desired in-group (non-co-ethnic co-nationals) (Tajfel and Turner 2004)? Through my work in Tanzania (Zhou 2019) and Colombia (Holland, Peters and Zhou 2021), I find that citizens emphasize their national identity and political ideology as new boundaries of migrant exclusion.

Similar to most sub-Saharan African countries, Tanzania has hosted several waves of migrants from neighboring countries since its independence. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, under the “Open Door” refugee policy of President Julius Nyerere, Tanzania was generally receptive of migrants. However, in recent decades, the government has increasingly scapegoated refugees for political purposes and enforced restrictive hosting policies such as strict encampment (refugees must remain within 4km of camp boundaries), forced repatriation, and arbitrary detainment (Chaulia 2003; Kweka 2007; Schwartz 2019). In April 2015, a political crisis in Burundi led to over 250,000 Burundians fleeing into Kigoma region in northwest Tanzania, where, along with the already present 64,000 Congolese refugees, they settled into three

camps – Nyarugusu, Nduta, and Mtendeli. Compared to the Tanzanian population of 2 million in Kigoma, hosting these Burundian refugees posed a sudden and sizable demographic shift. It is also important to note that the majority citizen ethnic group in this region, the Ha people, is not the majority ethnic group in Tanzania. In fact, the Ha people share strong linguistic and cultural ties with the Burundian Hutus across the colonially constructed border. Due to the porousness of the border, the two groups often engage in trade, use of common markets and water sources, inter-marriages, and share many historical, socio-cultural, and economic connections (Whitaker 2002; da Costa 2018).

To explore Tanzanians’ attitudes towards the recent Burundian refugees, in the summer of 2015, my research team and I conducted ten focus groups with 150 adult Tanzanian citizens in communities near the border and near Nyarugusu camp. I randomly selected half of the focus groups to start with a discussion about refugees (treatment):

Can you tell me about the refugees in Tanzania? Have they affected your community? If yes, how?

After discussing refugees, I then asked about the main outcomes of interest, the meaning of their national identity and granting access to citizenship:

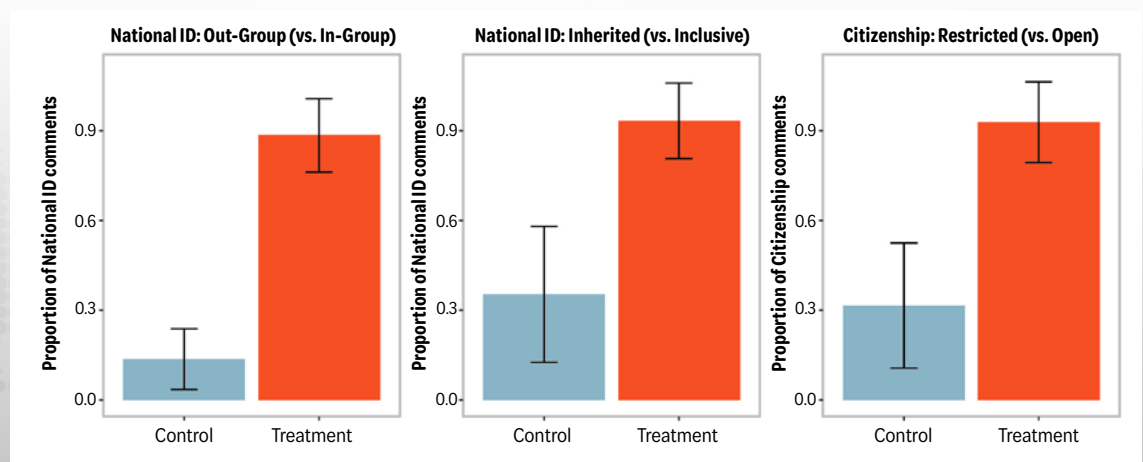
When I say ‘national identity’ or ‘to be Tanzanian,’ what does that mean to you? And if a foreigner wants to become Tanzanian, do you think he or she should be given the opportunity to do so?

For the control focus groups, I reversed the order of these questions, asking about refugees *after* discussing national identification and citizenship. When referring to Burundians, a typical quote from the control groups would emphasize shared ties: “We have villages on either side of the border that use the same river. Of course, we know each other. You will find a Burundian with uncles in Tanzania.”⁶ However, for the treatment groups, a more typical quote emphasizes Tanzanian national identity and distance with Burundians: “For me, I am proud to be Tanzanian because it is a peaceful country. If any disagreement happens, we sit and discuss. Not like our neighbors. When they have disagreements, they become violent quickly, then a misunderstanding blows up into war.”⁷

Figure 2.

These figures compare the proportions of responses by national identity and citizenship type between control (blue) and treatment (orange) citizen focus groups in Kigoma, Tanzania (95% CIs and standard errors clustered by group). The treatment is prompting discussion of refugees before discussing their national identity. Treated groups make significantly more references to an out-group and describe their national identity as innate or inherited. Additionally, they are more likely to say that citizenship access should be restricted.

- 6. Male participant, Buhigwe focus group, July 27, 2015.
- 7. Male participant, Makere focus group, August 4, 2015.



To assess whether national identification was discussed differently between treatment and control groups, my team and I coded the comments blind to treatment status on the following dimensions: whether statements about national identity are based on in-group values or out-group comparisons (distancing), whether national identity is inclusive of others versus an inherited/innate trait, and whether access to citizenship should be open to others or restricted. From *Figure 2*, participants in the treatment group made significantly more references to Burundians as an out-group, described their own national identity as innate or inherited, and supported citizenship restrictions.

Echoing the sentiments expressed by both local and national political elites that refugees are dangerous, participants associated the Burundian refugees with unsubstantiated claims of spreading disease and violent crime: “Some of their behaviors are not our culture, like robberies and killing people.”⁸ In contrast, the control focus groups were more likely to describe Burundians as their co-ethnic neighbors and kin. The following year, through a survey with over 2,000 Tanzanians in this region, I found greater exposure and proximity to refugees substantially increased one’s own national identification and resource resentment, particularly for co-ethnic citizens. It is precisely these citizens, due to their cultural and geographic proximity to the migrants, who would fear being “migrantized” themselves.

In related co-authored research on the reception of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, we examine how in another case of cultural similarity, differences in political ideology become the boundary for migrant exclusion (Holland, Peters, and Zhou 2021). Venezuelan migrants and

Colombians speak the same language (Spanish), practice the same religion (Catholicism), and have similarly mixed skin tones. Yet, for electoral gain, certain politicians have spread misperceptions that the 1.8 million Venezuelan migrants leaving an economic crisis into Colombia also bring far-left populist ideology. This rhetoric seems to have worked; areas hosting more migrants voted against left-wing parties (Rozo and Vargas 2021). When we surveyed over 1,000 Colombians and 1,600 Venezuelans living in Colombia in 2019, we found that Colombians viewed Venezuelan migrants as left-wing even though they reported being more politically right than Colombians. These misperceptions are consequential: Colombians who viewed migrants as left-wing were less likely to support welcoming border policies. Compared to Colombians in the interior, those living on the border with Venezuela who have long had cross-border ties also reported that they were less culturally similar with Venezuelans.

Both cases reflect how in times when migrants are portrayed by political elites as threatening, host citizens who are culturally and ethnically proximate to migrants will seek to shift their own identities to put greater distance between them. In place of co-ethnic solidarity, we would observe greater tension, animosity, and rejection. This leads to both theoretical and practical implications for interventions aimed at reducing exclusion.

Implications for Reducing Migrant Exclusion

The ability of migrants to transition to another country and live with dignity depends on the extent to which host communities welcome them. In contexts marked by prejudice and

8. Female participant, Kibande focus group, July 29, 2015.

discrimination, what works in reducing negative attitudes towards migrants and migration? At the individual level, relatively light-touch primes or exercises that ask participants to complete a perspective-taking exercise imagining themselves as refugees (Adida, Lo and Platas 2018); or consider their own families' histories of migration (Williamson et al. 2020); or listen to personal narratives of refugees in Kenya (Audette, Horowitz and Michelitch 2020) have promoted empathy toward migrants. Similarly, in Rosenzweig and Zhou (2020), we found that reframing a major national event – a football match win, in ways that celebrate diversity and highlight a shared superordinate identity (pan-Africanism), led Kenyan survey respondents to express greater solidarity with migrants.

While these interventions are promising and relatively simple, they are not substitutes for interventions that need to take place at the structural level. Undoubtedly, asylum policies, which determine whether migrants are encamped and must rely on aid or can self-settle and legally work, structure migrant-host relations. Thus, instead of concentrating resources within segregated migrant camps, international migration organizations and host governments can ensure that host communities benefit from positive spillovers and are able to interact with migrants. This is in line with the 2018 UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees and initiatives like the “30-70 Principle” in Uganda, which states that 30 percent of humanitarian aid for refugees also target host-community needs. Intentionally

designing migrant hosting policies and practice to be more inclusive of both migrants and local host communities may prevent resentment and promote public support for migrant integration. It might also make scapegoating of migrants by elites an untenable political strategy. These are open questions for future research.

Finally, this essay raises several implications for the study of migrant exclusion and inclusion. First, this essay makes the case for generating new research questions about why co-ethnic host societies might exclude migrants, particularly within the Global South. In these contexts, even when ethnic and cultural bases for migrant exclusion are weaker, elites and host societies can still construct out-groups and reify national and political boundaries. Second, when we as scholars research issues of migration, we cannot treat host societies as a monolith. We often assume the majority citizen group to be the “host community” and speak on behalf of all citizens. But when we explicitly examine heterogeneity among migrants and citizen groups, and the cross-cutting identities between them, we can generate new theoretical expectations. Third, the fear of “migrantization” by minority citizens is not only a Global South phenomenon (e.g. Asian-Americans feeling the need to emphasize our American-ness in light of COVID-19-related anti-Asian discrimination). Nevertheless, studying migration issues within the Global South can help us further unpack these dynamics and bring much-needed attention to regions where most migrants live. ●

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FAILING TO TRANSITION IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

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Humans live in a world that has already transitioned. Only recently, geologists labeled the current epoch the Holocene, a relatively stable environmental state that endured for 11,700 years. In some not-too-distant past, perhaps starting with the industrial revolution or the invention of synthetic fertilizer or the invention of agriculture itself, the Holocene transitioned to the Anthropocene, a period defined by human activity as the main driver of global changes (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Subramanian 2019).

These changes are mostly for the worse. Humans have dramatically reduced biodiversity, polluted the air, water, and soil, acidified the oceans, and altered atmospheric chemistry, all of which work to the detriment of those very humans. More than ever in Holocene history, humans are now victims of floods, fires, heat waves, and droughts (Settele et al. 2014; Wong et al. 2014). We suffer from the incremental transition of the sea level that puts high tide in Miami basements and salinates aquifers in Pacific islands and from the sudden transitions of hurricanes and wildfires that upend lives overnight, causing casualties and billions of dollars in damage.

Yet, humans ourselves are not transitioning, in the sense that we are not significantly altering our lifestyles and social and political organization to prevent the most dangerous impacts of climate change and to maximize our safety and welfare in the face of those impacts. Scholars of comparative politics, too, are not transitioning, in the sense that our subfields and research questions seem firmly rooted in the Holocene. Although the Anthropocene is upon us, we largely ignore biological, chemical, and physical alterations to the geopolitical spaces we study, and we have so far failed to apply our relevant and unique expertise to help craft the more just and humane political institutions and processes that the Anthropocene requires.

The failure to mitigate

Discussions of humanity's resistance to transition typically focus on our failed mitigation efforts. It is 125 years since Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius first explained how excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would change the chemistry enough to alter global temperatures, over 30 years since climate scientist James Hansen announced to the United States Senate that global warming had begun,



and almost 30 years since the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the process by which almost all nations on earth convene to discuss climate change and interventions to slow, stop, or reverse it.

What do we have to show for these efforts? A nonbinding accord reached in Paris in 2015 that admits that humans should not be emitting greenhouse gases at a level that would push the temperature above 2°C or, when we are really being honest, 1.5°C (IPCC 2018), but no clear pathway to reduce emissions to keep global mean temperatures below either level. Humans still burn fossil fuels, make most products from petroleum-based plastics, eat livestock raised in factory farms, and travel in gas guzzling vehicles (1.4 billion of them). You may be reading this Comparative Politics Newsletter on one of the tens of billions of electronic devices in the world made from plastics, rare earth metals, and other diminishing resources, and in a building with lights needlessly aglow during the daytime.

The failure to adapt

Humanity's lack of transition also involves a failure to adapt to climate change, or adjust to its impacts and thereby reduce our vulnerability (Javeline 2014). This failure gets less attention and is the one I will focus on here, for many of us may have changed our lightbulbs and even our vehicles, but few of us have made the lifestyle changes commensurate with the daunting destabilization of the global environmental transition (UNEP 2018).

Consider this: Many (most?) readers of this newsletter are doing so from the comforts of our homes along the hurricane-prone Atlantic or Gulf coasts or in the wildfire-prone West. Many (most? almost all?) are not planning inland mi-

gration or a move to higher elevation and have done little if anything to reduce the vulnerability of our primary assets and protective structures, our homes. We are among the millions of Americans and billions of humans worldwide who are vulnerable to catastrophic losses, if we have not already suffered such losses. When the losses come, we expect insurance payouts or disaster assistance or humanitarian relief, so that we can go back to business-as-usual, often rebuilding with the same level of pre-disaster vulnerability. This is not a transition; this is delusion and perhaps collective insanity.

Lack of transition characterizes almost every dimension of human life. For example, protecting the human food supply may require changes in crop choice, the timing of planting and harvesting, the geography of farming, and water and soil management (Rockstrom et al. 2017). In the United States, this agricultural transition might mean reevaluating our commitment to corn and soy products and the dependence of our nation's diet on irrigated lands in drought-prone California. Is anyone doing this reevaluating on a scale commensurate with the task at hand? Food supply and distribution problems are noted in small circles of environmentalists, farmers, academics, journalists, and insurers, but public conversations about these critical topics are lacking, as are widespread calls to action by policymakers, let alone actual action.

For another example, reducing the vulnerability of cities to higher temperatures, flooding, and sea level rise may require converting impermeable surfaces to green infrastructure and restricting oceanfront development (Skougaard et al. 2015; Hino 2017). Again, circles of committed urban planners and other experts are discussing these issues, and attempts are underway in individual cities, heralded as climate

Why should comparativists and other political scientists be interested in the failure to transition in the Anthropocene?

leaders, to adapt to increasingly hazardous climate events. But climate leaders are up against numerous and powerful developers and other real estate stakeholders whose profits depend on squashing discussion of the vulnerability of traditional infrastructure in hazardous locations. The anti-transition developers are winning.

The coastal real estate market offers as telling evidence as any that humans see little urgency in adapting. Threats escalate, as evidenced by 2020's record 22 weather events in the U.S. costing over \$1 billion each in losses (Erdman and Dolce 2021) and by hurricane losses alone that are estimated to increase from \$28 billion to \$39 billion annually and outpace the growth of the U.S. economy (CBO 2016). Nevertheless, properties in coastal shoreline counties, especially those with an ocean view, are in high demand. Anecdotally, there may be risk-averse buyers who anticipate hazards and avoid the coasts, but rising housing prices suggest these remain desirable locations. Nearly 40 million Americans have moved to the coast since 1970, bringing the total to 127 million, or 40% of the U.S. population, and growing (NOAA 2013, 2021).

Nor are these coastal residents transitioning by adapting in place. My research with Tracy Kijewski-Correa, a structural engineer focused on disaster risk reduction, shows that U.S. coastal homes are minimally protected, with homeowners taking few actions to address their homes' structural vulnerabilities (Javeline and Kijewski-Correa 2019). Windows go unshuttered, door hinges attach in the wrong direction, roof shingles are uncertified for high winds, roof-to-wall connections are unreinforced with hurricane straps, and protective measures for

many other essential structural features are not taken. Inaction characterizes Republicans and Democrats, climate change deniers and science advocates (Javeline, Kijewski-Correa, and Chesler 2019). Efforts to address our increasingly hazardous planet with measures that strengthen our homes and infrastructure are, in most locations, not mandated, incentivized, or even encouraged in public discourse. Regulatory inattention and homeowner inaction persist despite clear evidence that such measures work: Every dollar spent adopting the latest model building codes would save up to \$11 in prevented losses (NIBS 2019).

The (correctable) failure of comparative politics

Why should comparativists and other political scientists be interested in the failure to transition in the Anthropocene? Because very soon, the transition will be forced upon us, if it isn't already. Involuntary migration, climate refugees, reconfigured maps, food and water shortages, mass impoverishment, economic disruption, and public health crises on an unprecedented scale – these all are about to happen or already happening, and they have political causes and consequences.

In terms of causes, failure to transition – to adapt to climate change – is a function of poor governance, corruption, and lack of political will (Moser and Seville 2017), along with uncertainty in some cases about the appropriate courses of action to minimize catastrophe. Most current political institutions are poorly designed to meet the adaptation challenge or are dominated by special interests opposed to adaptation, and political elites and citizens in wealthy nations seem largely unsupportive of the major lifestyle adjustments that adaptation may re-

quire (Javeline and Chau 2020). (Many elites and citizens in wealthy nations have shown they are unsupportive of even tiny lifestyle adjustments to avoid catastrophic consequences, like wearing masks during pandemics.) Elites and citizens in poorer and more vulnerable nations are often willing to adjust but lack the means. In some countries, such as Russia, adaptation may be stymied by the false perception that climate change brings more advantages than disadvantages (Lustgarten 2020).

There are, however, welcome anomalies – cities, states, nations, and international efforts to adapt to climate change – and understanding the anomalous success stories through systematic and in-depth comparative research is urgent. Yet comparativists, like the larger population of political scientists, have not responded to the urgency and embarked on such research. This nonresponse is also a failure. Professional norms may be partly to blame: Despite the planetary crisis and popular claims about the value of interdisciplinarity, our major institutions – departments, universities, journals, and professional associations – continue to prioritize and reward narrow disciplinary conversations and findings over interdisciplinary and applied scholarship.

The field of comparative politics and all its many subfields must begin its own transition: to investigate the role of politics in human vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. We comparativists must modify our thinking of what constitutes a politically relevant subfield; connect the social world to the biological, chemical, and physical world; and attempt to identify the political causes of successful adaptation.

In terms of consequences, failure to adapt to climate change will influence the structure and functioning of local, national, and international

political institutions. As disasters mount and populations shift, governments will necessarily have to shift too and reflect new borders, constituencies, problems, and conflicts. They will have to respond to a global new normal that includes more crop failures, extreme water scarcity, famine, thirst and hunger, civil unrest and civil war, migrants by the millions, and the increased possibility of state collapse, interstate war, and “the end of global civilization as we know it” (Scranton 2021).

What are the ideal governing arrangements for these current and impending scenarios? As comparative political scientists, we should have answers to this life-and-death question.

Most of us specialize in countries or regions threatened by sea level rise, fires, flooding, extreme heat, or droughts. As these threats materialize, how could and should the catastrophic consequences be managed in the best interests of human welfare and interest representation? Most of us have relevant thematic specialties as well, such as regimes, legislatures, courts, elections, militaries, political parties, constitutions, political economy, or civil unrest, or we specialize in policy areas, such as public health, education, immigration, or civil rights. How should institutions be reformed or revamped entirely to govern in the Anthropocene, and what policies will serve the greatest good in these new polities?

For example, consider water stress. If, as the United Nations acknowledges, water is a human right, how can this right be secured, given droughts, pollution, salination, and domestic and international conflicts over limited supplies? Or consider human population shifts. As unlivable regions force human emigration, who should determine target destinations of climate refugees and their citizenship status, by what

criteria should target destinations be chosen, and how should the resettlement be financed?

The field of comparative politics must transition here, too, by joining this conversation and improving it with applied research. We should prescribe: We need to tell the world's leaders and publics about the optimal political shifts to let humans survive and—if we still allow ourselves utopian thinking—thrive.

The necessary steps

Where to begin? First, we need to know the lay of our lands. Country or regional experts could, without much effort, learn more about the regions' distribution of humans, potable water, fertile soil, eroding shoreline, and hazards (hurricanes, wild-fire, inland flooding, etc.) and the threats these are posing for the regions' agriculture, industry, educational institutions, jobs, housing, transportation, energy, and other infrastructure.

Second, we need to learn what could and should be done to adapt to these threats and reduce human vulnerability. This information already exists and is not that controversial. Our colleagues in the natural and physical sciences provide voluminous literature on these issues, and even simple Internet searches on "climate change adaptation" and a country or continent name will produce accessible sources for speedy immersion. For example, the [IPCC Fifth Assessment Report \(WGII AR5\), Chapters 22-27](#) offer comprehensive reviews of vulnerabilities and adaptations in Africa, Europe, Asia, Australasia, North America, and Central and South America.

Third, once we understand the science – the impacts to people and planet and the necessary physical adaptations – we need to ask the important questions that we social scientists

are trained to ask: Why are these adaptations not being implemented? What are the *political* obstacles, and how could they be overcome? Is there meaningful intra-region or intra-country variation in adaptation, and if so, what lessons can we learn about the political conditions that facilitate success? Given scientifically-informed projections for in-migration, out-migration, water scarcity, sea level rise, or other crises, what government institutional responses are possible and optimal? Comparativists whose work is not region-specific but cross-national can ask and answer these same questions at higher levels of analysis. This is the information that does *not* exist and *is* controversial and could lead to useful scholarship and desperately needed policy and institutional change. It could and should be published in a wide range of outlets from our field's top journals to interdisciplinary journals to policy reports and media, informing IPCC assessments and, ideally, decision making by governments, businesses, NGOs, and ordinary citizens.

Somewhere in this sequence of actions, comparativists should reach out to colleagues in the hard sciences at our home institutions where we will find eager collaborators. Scientists seem to understand better than political scientists that adaptation is political and involves questions outside their areas of expertise, that gaps in knowledge might be filled if only they could team with experts on politics. Indeed, several major National Science Foundation programs now require scientists to include at least one social scientist co-PI (e.g., Peek et al. 2020). In sum, much of the needed work does not involve costly retooling but rather asking the right questions, finding fruitful partnerships, applying our existing expertise, and noting and promoting the implications of our findings for real world governance.

The imperative of political science advocacy

But prognostications and prescriptions, we say, are not what political scientists do. Nonsense.

We political scientists make bizarre claims about objectivity and detachment as if emulating our colleagues in the hard sciences, but scientists do not operate by such amoral and possibly immoral standards. Paul Crutzen, the Nobel Prize winning chemist who died this past January helped identify chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in everyday aerosol sprays and refrigerants as the source of ozone depletion and its resulting harm to human and environmental health, and he popularized the term “Anthropocene” for our present geological epoch (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000; Crutzen 2002). Did Crutzen neutrally report and then “stay above the fray”?

Crutzen’s work spurred the 1987 Montreal Protocol that phased out CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances and drew much needed attention to the dangers of anthropogenic activities more generally. NASA scientist James Hansen said of Crutzen, “he was not afraid to point out the moral implications of the changes that humans are causing to the atmosphere. And he was unafraid to criticize government actions and policies” (Roston 2021). Hansen himself is similarly unafraid, leveraging his position as an award-winning climatologist not only to convey findings to Congress but to criticize current policies and suggest alternatives, often getting arrested in the process.

In emulating these scientists, we comparativists can tackle the relatively safe task of offering suggestions for better governing arrangements. And we should do this, because we are the scholars best equipped to understand the ramifications of differing governing arrangements, along

with the ramifications of policies, leadership, ideology, and public preferences and behavior.

One of the best descriptions of the human failure to transition is *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*, by science historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway (2014). The slim book, revised and expanded from their original *Daedalus* article, is speculative climate fiction (or “cli-fi”), but it is scientifically informed: Every depiction of events in a few hundred years stems from actual scientific and human events of the past and present. Oreskes and Conway include alarming maps of residual land masses poking through the higher oceans, with shading for the countries and continents as they used to appear.

Imagine if these shifts were to happen tomorrow. Wouldn’t we, as specialists on political systems, have anything to offer to render these remaining political geographies livable, more just and equitable, safer, and economically viable? If not us, who else has done the relevant research to inform and improve humanity’s transition to life in the Anthropocene?

Oreskes and Conway provocatively cast China as the hero of the story, assuming that its centralized authoritarian regime is better suited to save its population than Western democracies. Are they right? My research with Angela Chesler, Kimberly Peh, and Shana Scogin (n.d.) suggests that no regime type has an advantage in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, probably because the performance of most countries has been abysmal regardless of regime type, but what about adaptation? Specialists on regimes are particularly suited to offer guidance on the role of regimes in managing humanity’s transition in the Anthropocene. Specialists on other dimensions of politics are similarly well-positioned to apply their much-needed expertise.

International relations scholar Jessica Green writes in a 2020 *Daedalus* article, “we must be explicit about what our findings indicate we should do. This should go further than laying out the options; we must indicate which among them is preferable and why.” Green is writing mainly about mitigation, but her exhortation could just as easily be applied to adaptation: Based on the wealth of knowledge accumulated by political scientists about the political and social world, what should humanity do when that world is on the brink of collapse? Can anything be done to overcome our failure to transition in the Anthropocene? ●

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GENDER INEQUALITIES AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS: (Im)possible to Transform?

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In 2020, 6% of popularly-elected presidents in office were women.^{1,2} This essay first outlines reasons to consider men's dominance in the presidency as one of the most egregious power inequalities in contemporary democracies worldwide. Female presidential victories, though still rare, might suggest avenues to transform presidential politics, enhancing gender equality and democratic robustness.

Given the consolidation of its democratic elections and high concentration of presidential powers, Latin America provides a fertile region to explore possibilities for such transformations. Research on how *presidentas* have used their power and the gendered challenges to their presidencies nevertheless paints a rather pessimistic assessment of such prospects. I conclude that although we might normatively hope for greater gender equality in presidential politics worldwide, such a transition appears

unlikely in the near future, particularly in the absence of an effective institutional mechanism such as gender quotas.

The Rarity and Relevance of Female Presidential Victories

As heads of state, presidents figuratively embody their nation on the world stage, shaping cultural views on how politicians and the public should act. Presidents usually command the armed forces and shoulder the burden of international affairs. Presidents of large countries, such as the United States, France, Russia, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, and Indonesia maintain the status of regional or world leaders, directly or indirectly shaping the lives of billions of citizens.

Presidents with the greatest constitutional powers generally govern in "pure" presidentialist regimes, such as those in the United States,

1. I thank Karen Beckwith, Pedro dos Santos, and Farida Jalalzai for comments on early drafts of this essay. My research agenda receives financial support from Fondecyt grant 31909196 and the Center for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (COES) through the ANID/FONDAP/151300009 grant.
2. As an initial point of comparison, women occupied 25% of national lower-chamber legislators in November 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). The 2020 statistic is also not temporally anomalous. Women also won 6% of the world's democratically held presidential elections from 1990-2020.



The presidency is a site of unusually glaring inequalities between the sexes.

all of Latin America,³ as well as several African and Asian states (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Presidents in these regimes serve not only as heads of state, but also as heads of government, a role which designates power over executive tasks in the domestic sphere. They appoint cabinets, manage enormous bureaucracies, implement national-level regulations, and tackle day-to-day crises. They often set their countries' legislative agendas, although presidents' informal and formal powers in this realm remains uneven across time and space (Palanza 2019).

Aside from presidents' enormous – yet variable – powers, there is another reason to examine gender inequalities in this institution: the presidency competes only with prime ministerships as the most recurring chief executive office worldwide. Samuels and Shugart (2010, 4-6) observe that upon the third wave of democratization, Latin America stuck with or adopted pure presidentialism while Eastern Europe turned to semi-presidentialism. Presidentialism consequently outpaced parliamentarianism as the most prevalent form of democracy, according to Samuels and Shugart. The presidency is not only one of the most powerful institutions in the world; it also represents a common institutional configuration.⁴

The presidency is a site of unusually glaring inequalities between the sexes. Statistical modeling has shown that women are even less likely to become presidents than prime ministers (Jalalzai 2013; Thames and Williams 2013), and the most recent data on sex ratios of chief executives worldwide seem to uphold this crucial finding. To date, 54 countries have held democratic electoral processes that resulted in a female chief executive, either a female president or prime minister. *Figure 1* displays a “listogram” indicating the chronological order in which these countries reached this milestone.⁵ Countries presented lower in the figure achieved this earlier in the decade than countries higher up.

Pure presidential and parliamentary regimes can only appear once in this listogram. Dark blue shading signals pure presidentialist regimes in which a female has democratically won an election (9 instances). Dark green shading shows parliamentary regimes in which a female prime minister emerged democratically, usually through her leadership of the most-voted party (14 instances).

Dual executive countries – where presidents and prime ministers share chief executive power – can appear twice in the listogram.⁶ Light blue indicates dual executive regimes in which a female president has won a direct or indirect

3. Latin America includes 18 Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

4. Scholars of parliamentary regimes debate the “presidentialization” of selection processes of prime ministers (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Research on how women access presidential power through elections can have implications for students of contemporary parliamentary regimes.

5. Democratic elections may confer greater legitimacy to chief executives (Tavits 2008). Consequently, I focus on countries where women obtained power via electoral processes rather than other means, such as the death or resignation of a current leader. Countries where women have only governed on an interim basis are excluded.

6. Six countries with dual executives have elected both a female president and prime minister.

instances). These patterns remind us that men tend to guard higher concentrations of power more closely, an observation entirely in line with feminist theories of executive power (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Beckwith 2020).

Third, most democracies in the world have not yet achieved the milestone of electing a female president or prime minister. Plus, almost all countries that have reached the milestone have elected female chief executives *once*, despite many opportunities to do so.⁸ This brief overview of gender inequalities in chief executive – especially presidential – power show few signs of true transformation.

Female Victories in Latin America's Presidentialist Regimes

The presidency – particularly in its purest form where the roles of head of state and government are fused – stands out not only as one of the most powerful offices in the world, but also one of the most male-dominated. Latin America is the only world region to exclusively feature this kind of democratic regime, and women here have won presidential elections nine times beginning in 1990.⁹ Women's 6% success rate in Latin America from 1990-2020 approximates global rates of women winning presidential elections. Thus, it is not the frequency of female victories that make the region anomalous, but rather the democratic emergence of female presidents in systems of high concentration of executive power (Jalalzai 2016).

So, how do women win the Latin American presidency? These women, unlike their counterparts in Asia, tend to lack family ties to the presidency (Jalalzai 2016; Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2021). Recent work has sought to understand how women come to launch viable – but not necessarily victorious – candidacies. Gwynn Thomas and I (2021) have pointed out that to achieve this, women, more often than men, need the support of parties with adequate campaign resources. Due to stereotypes about women in politics, these parties might perceive incentives to nominate women when these parties need to convey novelty, credibly commit to alternative forms of leadership, and mobilize female voters. Our study focuses on how women came to achieve serious, but not necessarily successful, presidential bids. Future research needs to go beyond viability to sort out the determinants of victory.

Figure 2 categorizes the female presidential victories by quinquennial, displaying the last name of the female victor above her country's name. Green shading indicates the female victor ran as a candidate of a challenger party (2 instances). Gray shading signals female victors who ran with the support of an incumbent party (4 instances). Blue coloring corresponds to instances when *presidentas* ran for re-election (3 instances). No woman has won during the most recent quinquennial.

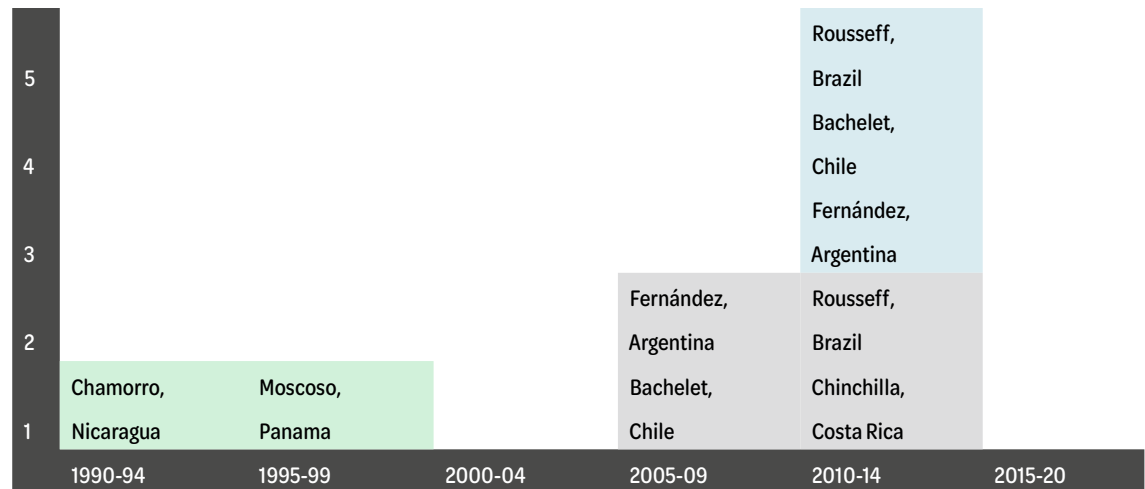
Incumbent parties may have helped propel electoral successes between 2006-14 (Reyes-

8. The exceptions prove the rule. The United Kingdom, Norway, New Zealand, and Bangladesh have elected different female prime ministers twice, respectively. Finland, a country of dual chief executives, has elected three female prime ministers and a female president. Ireland and the Philippines also have elected two different women to the presidency.

9. At one point in 2014, women simultaneously governed Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica, almost 40% of the region's population. However, men regained their monopoly on presidential power by March 2018 (O'Brien and Reyes-Housholder 2020, 251).

Figure 2:
Female Presidential
Victories in Latin America
1990-2020

Notes:
Green shading indicates the president was supported by a challenger party; gray indicates she was supported by an incumbent party; blue indicates she ran for re-election.



Housholder 2020b), but not all women nominated by incumbent parties have won.¹⁰ Winning as a candidate supported by the incumbent party seems to heavily depend on fundamentals, especially the outgoing presidents’ popularity and, relatedly, macroeconomic conditions.

Female Victories and Opportunities for Pro-Women Change?

Upon achieving the unlikely feat of electoral victory, do these women presidents promote pro-women change to a greater degree than their male counterparts? Maybe yes, but maybe no. On the one hand, female presidents may be expected to do “more” for women – for example, naming more female ministers and promoting pro-women policies. On the other hand, they also face institutional constraints—derived from the masculinist origins of the presidency – in their attempt to do so.

Presidentas seem to possess greater incentives and capacity to promote policies benefiting women, but their collective impact hardly suggests true transformations in gender equality.

To start, Latin American presidents possess extensive powers in appointing ministers who then draft, execute and promote legislation. *Presidentas* tend to name more women to their inaugural, but not end-of term cabinets (Reyes-Housholder 2016). They also name more women to stereotypically feminine ministries, such as health and education, but not to other kinds of ministries, suggesting that their impact on transforming intra-cabinet gender relations might be less than what many feminists had hoped.¹¹

What about pro-women policymaking? Female presidents theoretically – on average and in the long run – have a higher probability of perceiving the right political incentives (via their core constituencies) and possessing the technical capacity (through their personal constituencies) to use their power to promote pro-women change (Reyes-Housholder 2019). As candidates, these women may have greater motivations than their male counterparts to mobilize women on the basis of gender identity (Reyes-Housholder 2018). Such a mobilization strate-

10. These victories via incumbent parties temporally coincided with the region’s left turn (Levitsky and Roberts 2011)

11. Female prime ministers, however, do not tend to name more women to their cabinets (O’Brien et al. 2015), a discrepancy which may be due to institutional differences in chief executives’ appointment powers or in their perceived mandates.

gy can involve promising pro-women change, meeting with women's groups, and evoking women's shared identities (especially as mothers and potential victims of sexism). Moreover, women on the campaign trail may be more likely to network with elite feminists who possess the technical knowledge, essential for any serious pro-women policymaking.

Significant pro-women policy changes directly resulting from female presidents' use of power appear to be more of an exception than the rule. President Michelle Bachelet of Chile remains the only female president who consistently prioritized gender equality throughout her administration (Waylen 2016). Dilma Rousseff's administration is perhaps best characterized as an extension of many of the pro-women policies of her predecessor Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Reyes-Housholder 2019), with a symbolic emphasis on women's empowerment (Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015; dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021).

Gendered Challenges to Presidential Governance

The presidency has long been described as a singularly masculinist institution (Duerst-Lahti 1997; Conroy 2016; Katz 2016). Party elites, the media, and the public might expect these female presidents to conform to masculine norms, but also at the same time defy them, a phenomenon often referred to as the double bind. Women in Latin America who have democratically triumphed in a pure presidentialist regime indeed seem to face different expectations and challenges than their male counterparts.

How might we reasonably compare the overall performances of male and female presidents? Presidential performance is not easy to measure. Approval ratings constitute one of the

most common indicators of governing success, even though these ratings are often determined by macroeconomic forces that are beyond the control of presidents (Campello and Zucco 2015). Citizens' approval also constitutes a key – and yet informal – source of presidential power: presidents with lower ratings tend to struggle more to pursue their legislative agenda and to win re-election.

Two statistical studies have shown that female presidents earn lower approval ratings overall (Carlin, Carreras, and Love 2020; Reyes-Housholder 2020a). One of the reasons for this disparity is that the public seems to punish female presidents more for scandals and corruption in the executive branch. Gender stereotypes linking women in politics to greater moral integrity could help women win the presidency for multiple reasons (some of which are not necessarily under the control of the female presidential candidate). However, the media and the public seem to disproportionately respond once female presidents become implicated in a scandal. The case of President Michelle Bachelet's second term *Caso Caval* scandal as well as the dubious basis for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff illustrate these dynamics between gendered expectations, corruption accusations, and *presidentas'* falling popularity (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021; Reyes-Housholder 2020a).

In addition to approval ratings, another indicator of presidents' success is whether they and their successors win subsequent elections. All of the female presidents who were eligible for re-election during the post-2006 period did end up securing re-election: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in 2011; Michelle Bachelet in 2013; and Dilma Rousseff in 2014. However, none of their

potential successors to date have won after they left office, as these women's presidencies were followed instead by men from opposing parties.

Could some of this research on female presidencies be asking the wrong questions, or perhaps phrasing their questions unproductively? For example, research on whether female presidents promote pro-women change (Reyes-Housholder 2019; dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021) may assume that female and male presidents *should* be evaluated differently. It follows that if the female president "fails" to at least attempt to promote pro-women change, then she indeed is a leadership failure, a standard rarely applied to male presidents.

Another example: rather than asking why the public punishes female presidents more for corruption (Reyes-Housholder 2020), perhaps scholars should dig deeper into the gendered reasons why the public forgives or excuses male presidents for corruption scandals. In order to better investigate the question of whether it is possible to transform gender dynamics in presidential politics, we may need to deepen or update our understanding of masculinity, presidential campaigns, and power.

Conclusions

One of the most difficult political offices for women to obtain arguably is the most important: the presidency. Female presidential victories remain empirically rare, but theoretically relevant. Female candidates' ability to leverage positive gender stereotypes to secure the support of incumbent parties could be key to understanding how women democratically ob-

tain presidential power. Yet, even electorally victorious women seem to face different, indeed higher, standards than their male counterparts, ultimately resulting in lower levels of "success," as measured by public approval ratings.

Effective gender quotas worldwide have propelled impressive transformations in sex ratios and gender inequalities in national legislatures (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012). Two obvious challenges impede easy adoption of such a mechanism to the realm of presidential elections. First, the presidency generally remains a single-occupancy office, and most gender quotas apply best to collective bodies of elected officials. Second, gender quota arguments historically have referred to legislators' representational duties while presidential duties align more with executive functions (Franceschet and Piscopo 2017). It may be less persuasive to propose institutional reforms such as gender quotas to chief executive offices.

This essay suggests broader lessons for political transitions, discussed here in terms of progress towards gender equality in presidential politics. Gains in women's access to presidential power worldwide are historically *recent*, as *Figure 1* shows. Advances are also *precarious*, as *Figure 2* reveals in the case of Latin America. Masculinist institutions seem to constrain women who do win presidential elections, as they tend to assimilate to rather than challenge standard norms. Democracies worldwide have a long way to go in more equitably distributing presidential power between the sexes and de-gendering presidential politics. ●



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THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION: Implications for comparative politics¹

by *Nina McMurry, Danielle Hiraldo and Christopher L. Carter*



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Recent decades have ushered in a new era for the recognition of Indigenous rights (McCarty & Nicholas 2012).² Today, more than half of all United Nations member states recognize some form of Indigenous governance in their constitutions (Holzinger et al 2019), and dozens more have done so statutorily. This marks the culmination of a shift in the international consensus around Indigenous-state relations – from the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into nation-states throughout most of the twentieth century to a contemporary recognition of their collective rights to self-determination. This transition has profound implications for governance in modern states and, in turn, for the study of comparative politics. In recognizing self-governance and self-determination rights for Indigenous peoples, the emerging Indigenous rights paradigm envisions a degree of political and societal heterogeneity that seemingly challenges the state’s aspirations to monopolize political, social, and territorial control within its borders. The rec-

ognition of collective rights, by many accounts, also stands in tension with liberalism’s emphasis on individual rights and thus has implications for representation within democratic polities.

Yet, despite its relevance to fundamental questions of sovereignty, state capacity, societal diversity, and representation, the recognition of Indigenous rights – and Indigenous politics more broadly – remains understudied within mainstream political science (Lightfoot 2016; Ferguson 2016; Falletti 2020). In this essay, we focus on two empirical questions of particular relevance to comparative politics. The first question concerns the effects of collective rights on states: Does the recognition of Indigenous collective rights impede or facilitate state consolidation? The second question involves the consequences of collective rights for Indigenous peoples in terms of their relationship to the state: Does recognition improve or threaten the representation of Indigenous interests within state political structures?

1. For very helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay, we thank Jessie Bullock, Laura Evans, Raymond Foxworth, Alyssa Huberts, and Julie Anne Weaver. This article was made possible by the generous support of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation, the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, and the University of Arizona.
2. We use the term “Indigenous” to represent the original peoples of specific lands. The term “Indigneous” is common in the international context while American Indian, Native American, and the term “tribe” is commonly used in the United States. We capitalize “Indigenous” to signal nationality parallel as we would do with “American” or “European”. It is important to note that these external identifiers do not supersede the way Indigenous Peoples refer to themselves such as “Lumbee” and “Hopi” in the U.S., “Aymara” and “Quechua” in Bolivia, or “Iraya” and “Manobo” in the Philippines.





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Government acknowledgement of Indigenous rights may shape the persistence, effectiveness, and composition of longstanding institutions.

These questions go beyond concerns specific to Indigenous politics and speak to important theories of state consolidation and democratic representation. The study of Indigenous recognition, however, is not merely of theoretical interest. A recent study found that Indigenous peoples manage or have tenure rights to areas representing a quarter of the Earth's land surface, including land in 87 countries and intersecting approximately 40% of all terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes (Garnett et al. 2018). Thus, government policy toward Indigenous peoples also has wide-ranging implications for environmental protection, land management, and climate change.

Equally important are the implications of recognition for Indigenous peoples, independent of their relationship to the state. Indigenous institutions do not depend on state recognition for legitimacy. However, government acknowledgement of Indigenous rights may shape the persistence, effectiveness, and composition of longstanding institutions. We acknowledge that the discussion in this essay places a primary emphasis on the state and its institutions. This reflects an attempt to situate questions surrounding Indigenous recognition within the extant comparative politics literature, which has tended to be state-centric (Ferguson 2016). However, this traditional approach is inherently limited, a point we revisit in the conclusion.

This essay first provides a brief account of the transition in the international consensus on Indigenous rights. We then turn to a discussion of the emerging evidence around the effects of recognition of Indigenous collective rights,

drawing on related debates in comparative politics, existing scholarship on Indigenous politics, and our own empirical research in the United States, Peru, and the Philippines. We conclude by highlighting implications for the comparative politics literature and outlining directions for future research.

Evolving State Approaches to Indigenous Rights

The international community now widely acknowledges that Indigenous peoples have inherent rights to maintain and develop their distinctive cultures, languages, and institutions. International legal instruments such as the 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169) and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognize collective rights of Indigenous peoples to self-governance and self-determination. Nearly all UN member states voted to adopt UNDRIP, and the four that voted against it – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States – subsequently issued formal statements supporting its provisions (Lightfoot 2016). In the U.S., where Native rights have rarely occupied a prominent place on the government's agenda, the Biden administration recently made history by nominating Deb Haaland as the first Native American cabinet secretary (Ellenwood et al. 2021) and pledged to make respect for tribal sovereignty a “cornerstone” of its engagement with Native communities (Bennet Begaye 2021).

These developments reflect an ongoing, decades-long transition in the international consensus around Indigenous rights. From the turn of the twentieth century until the 1960s, collective self-determination rights were largely absent from international discourses regarding Indigenous-state relations. Instead, many

state policies – including the establishment of residential schools, the banning of languages and cultural practices, and the breaking up of communal lands into private parcels – aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into broader national communities within state borders. States viewed these “integration” efforts as particularly urgent following widespread global decolonization, as newly-independent countries sought to create themselves as nation-states in the image of former colonial powers (Rodríguez-Piñero 2006). In the context of the post-World War II international human rights regime, discussions focused on Indigenous *individuals’* rights to non-discrimination and development within nation-states, while largely ignoring collective claims to sovereignty and self-determination (Jung 2008; Lightfoot 2016).

An alternative conception of Indigenous rights, advanced by Indigenous advocates on the international stage beginning in the 1960s, met initially strong resistance from national governments. Leaders argued that Indigenous self-determination threatened state sovereignty, stood in contradiction to individual human rights, and was fundamentally incompatible with Western-style liberal democracy (Rodríguez-Piñero 2006). Scholars of Indigenous politics have similarly highlighted tensions between Indigenous rights now recognized in international law and modern conceptions of the state. “Indigenous political actors,” Bruyneel writes, seek to negotiate “a space of sovereignty and/or citizenship that is inassimilable to the modern liberal democratic settler-state and nation” (2007, 217). Rights to land and self-governance are, according to Champagne et al., “highly unusual and outside the theory of the formation and growth of nation states” (2005, 4). Lightfoot posits that the recognition and implementation

of Indigenous rights recognized in UNDRIP require no less than “a rethinking and reordering of sovereignty, territoriality, decolonization, liberalism, and human rights” (2016, 4).

Thus, according to Indigenous scholars and – historically – governments, state recognition of Indigenous self-determination rights may be expected to challenge state authority and complicate governance. Prominent theories in social science support similar predictions, which we discuss below.

Consequences for state consolidation

Social scientists have long emphasized state aspirations to establish monopoly control over territory (Weber 1994, 300-311; Migdal 1988) and forge a unified political system and national identity (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Weber 1976). Indeed, doing so has often been seen as necessary for effective state consolidation. Yet, state recognition of Indigenous self-determination rights, as currently envisioned in international law, entails accepting the existence of multiple forms of political authority and culturally distinct sub-state collectives (including nations) within the borders of a single state.

Existing scholarship suggests two key ways in which this recognition may undermine the state’s authority. First, policies that emphasize sub-national Indigenous identities may reduce attachments to a national identity and undermine state legitimacy (Horowitz 1985). Second, policies strengthening non-state Indigenous authorities may reduce citizens’ reliance on the state or empower non-state authorities to resist state priorities (Migdal 1988; Levi 1989). The latter may be particularly salient if non-state authorities outperform state authorities. In Mexico, municipalities governed under Indigenous institutions provide more public

goods than those governed by political parties (Diaz-Cayeros et al. 2014; Magaloni et al. 2019), and voters in these areas participate less in national elections (Hiskey and Goodman 2011). In the U.S., some Indigenous governments have similarly proven to be more effective at service provision than state institutions (United for Oklahoma 2020).³

Our own research across multiple contexts challenges perceptions of Indigenous recognition as incompatible with state authority. In the Philippines, McMurry (2021) finds that the granting of collective land titles to Indigenous communities, a result of a progressive Indigenous rights law passed in 1997, has increased Indigenous self-identification on the census while simultaneously increasing compliance with the state. Findings from a survey experiment suggest that recognition encourages this integration, at least in part, by fostering legitimating beliefs about the state and a sense of belonging in the broader national community. McMurry (2020) expands on this idea, arguing that collective recognition can encourage greater voluntary engagement with the state by (1) making such engagement compatible with the incentives of Indigenous elites and (2) enhancing Indigenous communities' bargaining power in interactions with the formal political system.

In addition to encouraging integration, recognition may also demobilize Indigenous communities. Using evidence from across Latin America, Carter (2021) argues that states historically recognized Indigenous authority as part of a broader strategy to reduce the threat of rebellion from Native communities. Generally, these strategies have been effective. In Peru, for example, Carter

(forthcoming) finds that recognition facilitates market integration, erodes long-standing social institutions, and thereby reduces Indigenous communities' ability to act collectively.

Thus, in both cases, recognition enables the state to extend its reach, albeit through distinct mechanisms. As illustrated by the Philippines case, recognition may increase the state's legitimacy among historically marginalized populations and encourage voluntary participation in state institutions. Consistent with this mechanism, Schroedel et al (2020) find that trust in the U.S. political system is associated with greater Native participation in non-tribal elections. At the same time, evidence from Latin America suggests that recognition may allow the state to co-opt Indigenous authorities and institutions, thereby suppressing challenges to its authority. This dynamic has also been observed in the United States. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which purportedly expanded tribal governments' autonomy, in fact increased government control over tribal affairs (Wilkins & Lightfoot 2008).

Consequences for political representation

Another set of questions raised by the emerging Indigenous rights paradigm concerns the implications of collective recognition for the representation of Indigenous communities within state (non-Indigenous) governing institutions. A growing body of research in comparative politics has highlighted how non-state authorities, including traditional leaders, can distort democratic processes by acting as clientelistic vote brokers who trade the votes of their communities for private gains (Acemoglu et al 2014; de

3. COVID-19 vaccination rates in many Native nations have outpaced those in neighboring states, and some tribal health services have begun offering vaccines to the general public (Polansky 2021, Siegler 2021).

Kadt & Larreguy 2015; Mamdani 1996; Ntsebeza 2006). Bloc voting, particularly when it occurs along ethnic or identity cleavages, is often associated with a democratic deficit (Horowitz 1985). To the extent that Indigenous recognition reinforces Indigenous authorities and identities, we may expect it to exacerbate these challenges.

Our own research points to complicated effects of Indigenous recognition on representation. Indigenous communities often seek and achieve political representation in outside governments (Evans et al., 2019; Herrick et al. 2020; Huyser et al., 2017; Sanchez et al., 2020) using a number of strategies including collective electoral behavior (Evans 2011a; 2011b) and lobbying through national-level Indigenous movements (Andolina 2003; Jackson and Warren 2005; Yashar 2005). In many cases, these strategies have been successful in obtaining meaningful policy concessions (Foxworth et al 2015). Yet, it remains unclear how government recognition shapes Indigenous peoples' ability to achieve this representation. Generally, we find that recognition improves Indigenous political representation; however, in certain cases (notably, Latin America), the results are more mixed.

In the United States, Hiraldo (2020) illustrates how tribes that are recognized at the state level – but not the federal level – can leverage this status and the U.S. federal system to advance their interests. State-recognized tribes are often assumed to be operating in a resource deficit environment; however, the state-recognized Lumbee tribe has successfully leveraged national politics to influence local law and policy by participating in U.S. democratic elections, holding political office, engaging various levels of government, pushing a political agenda,

and building institutional capacity. Similarly, in the Philippines, McMurry (2020) finds evidence that collective recognition strengthens Indigenous governing institutions and, in doing so, empowers Indigenous communities to make collective claims through electoral politics and achieve substantive representation.

In Latin America, however, collective rights and formal political representation have been somewhat less complementary, perhaps because governments have often used collective rights to cede governing responsibility rather than authority. Governments in the region often recognize Indigenous rights and subsequently deny Indigenous communities access to government resources on the basis that community governments are “autonomous” and therefore self-sufficient (Carter 2020). For example, a Guarani Indigenous leader in the newly autonomous municipality of Charagua, Bolivia observed, “Now we have land, but what good is that if we don’t have resources” (Stauffer 2018). Furthermore, as discussed above, recognition may erode long standing institutions, which would otherwise facilitate coordination among Indigenous voters to achieve political representation (Carter forthcoming).

The effects of recognition on political representation likely depend on the form recognition takes. Where Indigenous institutions directly substitute government institutions, recognition may be less likely to further representation within government institutions. These findings suggest a potential “autonomy-representation dilemma” (Carter 2020); in many Latin American countries, Indigenous institutions are arguably more autonomous but have less influence within state political institutions. Where Indigenous institutions instead overlap with

state democratic institutions, as in the United States and the Philippines, recognition may give Indigenous communities a greater voice. At the same time, this representation may ultimately undermine autonomy, for example by shaping incentives within Indigenous institutions such that acquiescing to the state becomes a requirement for maintaining internal legitimacy.⁴

Takeaways and areas for future research

The rise of Indigenous recognition around the world, an outcome reflecting decades of Indigenous advocacy and resistance, speaks to fundamental questions about the nature of state-society relations. In particular, collective rights to self-determination and self-governance challenge the state's purported ambition to achieve a monopoly on rule-making and territorial control within its borders. The alternative conception of states as encompassing not only multiple nations, but multiple governments with distinct sources of legitimacy has broad implications for political science. Scholars have highlighted the challenge this idea poses to the study of international relations (Shadian 2010; Lightfoot 2016). In this essay, we have focused on implications of Indigenous recognition for major theories of comparative politics. We examined two key domains recognition may influence: (1) state-consolidation and (2) democratic representation.

The findings from our own research on these topics highlight two main takeaways. First, it appears that Indigenous recognition, at least as it has been implemented to date, may be more aligned with state incentives than perhaps expected given existing theories. States may use

recognition to undermine Indigenous institutions and establish monopoly control. Yet, even when recognition reinforces these institutions, it can expand state capacity in peripheral areas. This insight is consistent with recent work on traditional authority in sub-Saharan Africa, which demonstrates that state and non-state authorities can be complementary and mutually reinforcing rather than competing (Baldwin 2015; Logan 2013; Mershon 2020; Van der Windt et al 2018). Taken together, this work suggests an intermediated model of state consolidation, especially in postcolonial contexts, which stands in contrast to more monopolistic and assimilationist approaches emphasized in the state-building literature.

Second, we find that collective recognition has mixed effects on Indigenous political representation. Our findings suggest that collective recognition can improve political representation when it strengthens or reinforces Indigenous institutions; when it erodes these institutions, it reduces representation. This stands in tension with previous work that views non-state and specifically traditional authorities as distortionary for democracy.⁵ These seemingly contradictory findings suggest a need to better understand decision-making within "traditional" institutions and the sources from which they derive their authority (Ferguson 2016). In contexts where "traditional" authorities are directly answerable to the state, as in many cases in sub-Saharan Africa (Mamdani 1996), policies strengthening them may be more likely to weaken democratic representation. This may not hold, however, where these institutions have non-state sources of legitimacy.

4. For a similar dilemma with respect to labor unions, see Dahl (1982).

5. For an alternative perspective, see Baldwin (2013).

Future research may consider more explicitly the connection between sub-national Indigenous identities and national identities, and how collective recognition affects both. Such work may have important implications for the study of nation-building and, in particular may shed light on claims in the ethnic politics literature regarding the (largely negative) consequences of societal diversity (Alesina et al. 1999; Miguel 2004; Habyarimana et al. 2007) and of state policies that emphasize it (Lieberman & Singh 2017). For many Indigenous peoples, nation-building at the national level directly conflicts with conceptions of the nation at the local level. In the U.S., Indigenous nations have worked to establish their own form of nationhood separate from the state, seeking to rebuild institutions that government-led nation-building projects attempted to destroy (Cornell and Kalt 2007). In Bolivia, a country with a large Indigenous population (40-70%), the 2009 constitution recognizes the country as a “plurinational” state. More work is needed to understand the implications of the current paradigm for identity and social cohesion at the level of the central state, and whether Indigenous identities function similarly to or differently from ethnic or other sub-national identities in this respect.⁶

Scholars may also more carefully consider the incentives of states in decisions to recognize Indigenous peoples, and what predicts the specific forms of recognition they choose. The apparent positive effects of recognition we observe for state consolidation may reflect the fact that states have, to date, chosen only those forms of recognition that are directly compatible with their interests (Lightfoot 2016). Indeed, many

Indigenous advocates have criticized existing recognition policies as insufficiently transformative. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, for example, argues that even in pursuing recognition “the state uses its asymmetric power to ensure it always controls the processes...and this ensures the outcome remains consistent with its goal of maintaining dispossession” (2017, 45). A growing perspective among Indigenous thinkers privileges Indigenous institutions and encourages less reliance on the state (Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; L. B. Simpson 2017). It is therefore possible that the implications of recognition, and state incentives surrounding it, will change as the international Indigenous rights paradigm continues to evolve. In particular, future policies pushed by Indigenous rights advocates may prove less compatible with state interests.

Finally, as noted above, this essay focuses primarily on the state – both its recognition of Indigenous collective rights and the effects of this recognition on Indigenous peoples’ relationship to the state. However, there are a number of other domains in which the recognition of collective rights may have effects and to which scholars have devoted only limited attention. Future research may examine, for example, how state recognition shapes the internal functioning of Indigenous institutions and how institutional variation conditions the effects of recognition on democratic representation. Other considerations might include how, absent recognition of specific rights, Indigenous peoples take up the challenge of governance where states have failed. ●

6. While indigeneity may be considered an ethnic identity in some contexts, in many others it is conceptually distinct, more a political identity than an ethnic one (Jung 2008). In the U.S. context see *Morton v. Mancari* (1974) where the Supreme Court held that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) hiring preference does not violate the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. The court held, “the preference, as applied, is granted to Indians not as a discrete racial group, but, rather, as members of quasi-sovereign tribal entities whose lives and activities are governed by the BIA in a unique fashion.”

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POLICE MILITARIZATION AND ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

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Police can leverage their coercive power to extract resources from the state, prevent police reform, affect the outcomes of coups and mass protests, and pressure leaders from office.

Policing is a central function of states. In many communities, the police are the only state agents that people interact with on a regular basis. In recent years such interactions have grown more violent, as police forces around the globe have become more militarized – adopting the weaponry, tactics, and organizational structures of military forces (Kraska 2007).

In the United States, the shift towards more militarized forms of policing has been associated with increases in the use of force against civilians, but not with reductions in crime (Delehanty et al. 2017; Mummolo 2018; Lawson 2019). Police militarization has also served to reinforce racial hierarchies (Gamal 2016). In the wake of recent protests across the country in support of Black Lives Matter, these associations have prompted some lawmakers to begin efforts to restrict police access to military-style gear (Edmondson 2020).

Yet, while political science scholarship on the subject has focused primarily on the United States, police militarization is a global phenomenon.¹ A growing body of work focus-

es on the related but distinct practice of using the military for domestic policing (e.g., Blair and Weintraub 2020; Magaloni and Rodriguez 2020; Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019; Flores-Macías 2018; Osorio 2015). Other studies shed light on the challenges of police reform (Marat 2018; González 2020; Tiscornia 2021), effects of police repression on dissent (Curtice and Behlendorf 2021), and relationships between co-ethnic or inclusive policing, political violence, and crime (Arriola 2013; Nanes 2019), but do not address the causes or political consequences of militarized policing. Efforts to do so have, in part, been hindered by a lack of data on its use internationally.

This essay makes two contributions. First, it presents new data on riot squads, special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, and other militarized units within national and federal police forces across the globe, helping to document the spread of militarized policing internationally. The data illustrates just how prevalent militarized policing has become. While only 12% of countries had police forces with these types militarized units in 1960, some 88% have them today. Second, it theorizes about the ways in which militarization affects the political power of police. Even though

1. One recent review found that over 50% of political science research on policing in general focused on the United States (Crabtree 2018).



they rarely attempt to seize power themselves, police can leverage their coercive power to extract resources from the state, prevent police reform, affect the outcomes of coups and mass protests, and pressure leaders from office. I argue that militarization increases both the capacity and willingness of police to exercise this power. As a result, police militarization can transform not only the relationships police have with the communities they serve, as existing work has emphasized, but also their relationships with the military and the state.

Conceptualizing police militarization

“Police militarization” can refer to a number of different things, including police acquisition of military-grade weaponry and equipment, the creation of special police units organized along military lines, or a police culture that increasingly views the use of force as appropriate in a wide range of circumstances (Kraska 2007; Cohn 2020). It is important to emphasize the roles of police officers and soldiers have always overlapped in important ways (Seigel 2020).² As Kraska (2007, 3) notes, every police force is militarized to some extent. Some police forces, such as the French Gendarmerie or Philippine Constabulary, have been explicitly patterned along military lines since their origin. These “paramilitary”-style police are characterized by a high degree of centralization and hierarchical command structure, and are often organized as a branch of the armed forces. Their use has remained relatively constant over time (De Bruin 2020b, De Bruin and Karabatak 2021).

Other police forces, however – which had historically been fashioned as “civilian” alternatives to the paramilitary model – have become increasingly militarized in recent decades, often through the establishment of special militarized units, such as riot squads, SWAT teams, and tactical units (De Bruin 2020b; Lutterbeck 2004; Bayley 1975). This form of police militarization is the focus here. Within the United States, the causes and consequences of this shift, which has occurred within both federal and local police across the country, have been well documented (e.g., GAO 2020; Lawson 2019; Mummolo 2018; Delehanty et al. 2017). However, efforts to understand international trends in police militarization have thus far been hampered by a lack of data on its use across countries and within them over time.

The spread of militarized police units internationally

To track the global spread of militarized policing, I compiled data on the formation of riot squads, SWAT teams, and other militarized special units within national and federal-level police agencies in 170 countries around the globe, 1960-2020. Militarized units are defined as specialized units with police forces that: (1) have access to military-grade weaponry and equipment; and (2) are organized along military lines, with hierarchical, top-down command structures, and that deploy in military formations.³ The sources for the data include law enforcement encyclopedias; the websites of individual police forces; country-specific academic sources; and news articles in English and translation.⁴

2. In the United States, this is particularly true of their approach to race-class subjugated communities, where police have long viewed residents “not as citizens facing social barriers or as victims needing protection...but as potential (or likely or already active) criminal targets in need of surveillance” (Soss and Weaver 2017: 571; also see Weaver and Prowse 2020).
3. These units may be referred to as SWAT teams, Police Tactical Units, Emergency Response Teams, Police Mobile Units, or other names.
4. For more on data collection process and sources used, see De Bruin and Karabatak (2021).

Figure 1 shows the creation of militarized police units across the globe between 1960 and 2020. Each dot represents the creation of a new militarized unit. While states in Latin America and the Middle East established militarized units at a steady pace during these decades, the uptick in unit creation shown in the late 1970s was driven by states in Western Europe, responding primarily to growing perceptions about the threat of terrorism. The increase in the early 1990s reflects, in large part, militarized police units in a number of newly independent states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Figure 2 shows, the share of all countries in the international system with militarized units in their national or federal police forces rose steadily throughout this period, from 12% in 1960 to 88% in 2020.

One crucial factor in the global spread of militarized policing has been the incentives created by international police assistance programs. The militarization of police forces has been a reciprocal, transnational process (Schrader 2019; Go 2020). In the 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Office of Public Safety (OPS) trained and equipped police forces in fifty-two countries. Aid was frequently used to establish militarized units (Klare and Arnsion 1981). In Brazil, for instance, the OPS pushed for the creation of a militarized Special Operations Squad; recruits were given a military commando course, as well as training in riot and crowd control techniques (Huggins, 1998, 109-110). While restrictions were placed on foreign police assistance after forces that the OPS supplied in Central America were charged with hu-

Figure 1.
Militarized police units established, by year

Note: Includes national and federal police units, 170 countries.

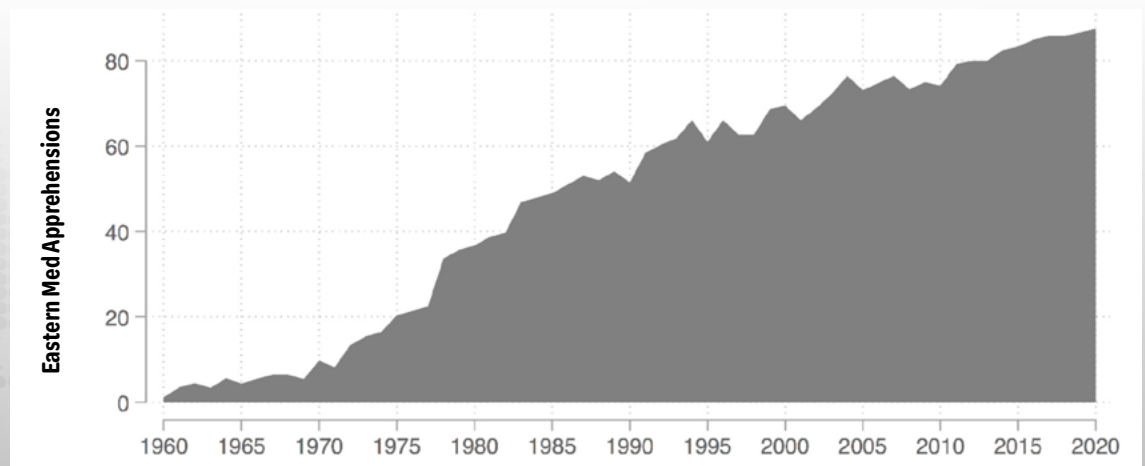
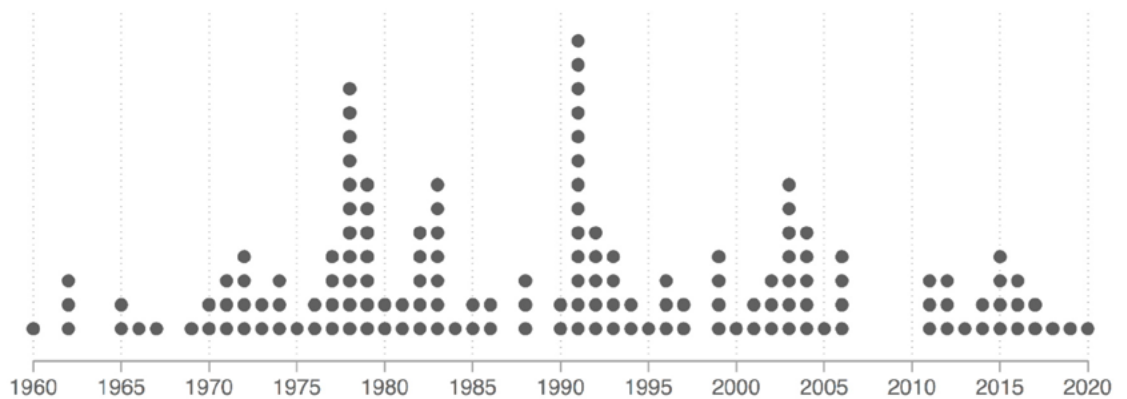


Figure 2.
Percent of regimes with militarized units, by year.

man rights abuses, a series of exceptions were carved out for countries fighting communist insurgencies. Since 9/11, international police aid also expanded under the auspices of counterterrorism and organized crime prevention efforts (Hills 2006).

Another important driver of police militarization globally has been the rise of transnational threats, including terrorism, drug-trafficking, and organized crime – coupled with the desire in many newly democratizing states in particular to address them with police rather than military forces where possible (e.g., Lutterbeck 2004; Hill and Berger 2009; Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019; De Bruin and Karabatak 2021). In some cases, rulers also hoped that new militarized units could serve a coup-proofing role, helping to protect the regime in the event of a coup attempt by the military (De Bruin 2020a).

As *Figure 2* illustrates, once established, militarized units are difficult to abolish. In Fiji, for example, the military disbanded the police Tactical Response Unit following the 2006 coup, but it was subsequently reconstituted under a new name. Likewise, in 2020, the Nigerian government abolished the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a militarized police unit with a long record of abuses, following a series of mass protests and Twitter campaign using the hashtag #EndSARS. Almost immediately, however, it announced that a new SWAT team would replace the disbanded unit (Daly 2020). As Yanilda María González (2020, 4) documents in her study of police reform in Latin America, “policing in democracy can create electoral incentives and generate patterns of demand-making that reproduce authoritarian coercion.” Even notoriously repressive police units thus often survive transitions to democracy and other po-

litical upheavals essentially intact (Bayley 1975, 377). As a result, the share of states with militarized units has only grown over time.

These forces have driven the rise of militarized police units, and help to explain their persistence over time. But what of police militarization’s political effects? In the next section, I describe the different political roles that police can take on, and identify ways in which militarization can increase their political power.

The police officer and the state

As scholars of comparative policing have repeatedly noted (e.g., Bayley 1975; Marenin 1982; Hills 2009), police are often seen primarily as an extension of state power, rather than political actors in their own right. After all, unlike the military, police rarely attempt to seize power. There are a few reasons for this. As the central agents of state coercion, police officers may perceive their own interests to be closely aligned with those of the regime. Hills (2009, 18) relays an anecdote that captures this perception well: when asked about joining trade unions to lobby the state, a group of police officers in Zimbabwe responded, “Why should we? We are the state.”

There can also be structural barriers to collective action among the police. While the military is thought to be characterized by a corporate ethos that encourages officers to prioritize the interests of the institution as a whole (Nordlinger 1977; Huntington 1981), police forces are comparatively decentralized, geographically dispersed, and more focused on local issues. Police work tends to be lower status than the work undertaken by the military (Enloe 1976). Finally, in most countries, people report lower levels of trust in the police than in the

military or other government institutions, which may mitigate against their taking on more of a political role.⁵

Yet despite these challenges, police can and do intervene in politics regularly. As with the regular military (Feaver 2009), the delegation of coercion to police brings with it the potential for principal-agent problems in which police may act to advance their own interests at the expense of the state. Individual police officers may abuse their coercive power to engage in extreme violations of human rights, including torture and executions, or to enrich themselves (Flom 2016). Police also regularly act collectively to advance their corporate interests as an institution. As González (2020, 18) observes, “because police are charged with providing a service that is essential for the functioning of society, police forces also serve as an essential instrument of political power” – and can leverage their position to make demands on the state.

In some cases, police have turned their coercive power directly on the state. In 2010, for example, police officers in Ecuador occupied the National Parliament, closed highways and airports, took over police barracks and airports, and temporarily held President Rafael Correa hostage to protest the reduction of police benefits (Romero 2010). Likewise, in the Maldives, it was the mutiny of police riot units that prompted the resignation of the president in 2012 (Hull 2012). Elsewhere, police actions have determined the outcomes of mass protests and military coups. In Bolivia, for instance, the defection of police units helped pressure Evo Morales to resign from power in November 2019. As one account described it, “Without the support of local law enforcement, his administration could not

control Bolivia’s streets. Losing the allegiance of the unit charged with guarding the presidential palace in La Paz, the nation’s administrative capital, was a particularly cutting blow” (Slattery 2019).

More subtle forms of police pressure have also been remarkably effective in allowing police to evade accountability and reform (Bailey and Dammert 2006; Hinton 2006; Hinton and Newburn 2009; Marat 2018). In the United States, for instance, police organizations spend resources on political campaigns and litigation, as well orchestrate work slowdowns, which pressure lawmakers to abandon reform efforts and protect officers accused of misconduct. In response to social justice campaigns, most notably the Black Lives Matter movement, police organizations have also worked to construct “blue solidarity” among police officers, forging perceptions of common identity and interests among even highly decentralized, local police forces across the country (Thomas and Tufts 2020).

Police militarization is likely to increase the political power of police in at least two ways. First, access to military-grade weaponry and training provides police forces with greater capacity for coercion. Militarized units are organized more hierarchically, with stricter control over rank-and-file members, which may facilitate their ability to collectively. Importantly, in addition to giving police more leverage to extract concessions from the state, militarization enables police to serve as credible counterweights to the military. Because coup plotters typically want to avoid bloodshed during coups, even relatively small militarized police units can effectively impede the execution of coup attempts. Militarization can thus give police the capacity

5. In the most recent wave of the World Values Survey, for instance, respondents had more confidence in the military than the police in three quarters of the countries surveyed (see Haerpfer et al. 2020). I am grateful to Max Gersch for pointing this out.

to serve as arbiters of conflict between military and civilian elites (De Bruin 2020a).

Second, militarization can create new motives for political interference. Where militarized units are used for repression, public criticism can help solidify perceptions of shared interests and motivate officers to mobilize politically (Ray 1997). It can also generate conflict between military and police forces. In some cases, military officers may support police militarization because it enables them to avoid becoming involved with domestic repression – a task that might undermine military popularity or morale (Nordlinger 1977). Other times, however, militarization can result in competition between police and military forces over funding, equipment, and the scope of their authority over internal security tasks (Enloe 1976, 31-32; De Bruin 2020a). Such competition can provide police forces with ample motive to intervene in the policy process or attempt to derail efforts by the military to do so. In short, as Enloe (1976, 32) emphasizes, militarization can turn the police into a “political rival for both military and political leaders.”

Conclusions

Militarized police forces are remarkably resistant to reform. As a result, the global trend towards higher degrees of police militarization is unlikely to reverse itself any time soon. Existing scholarship on militarized policing suggests that the riot squads, SWAT teams, and tactical units that most states have now established within their police forces will be more repressive than their civilian counterparts (e.g., Delehanty et al. 2017; Mummolo 2018). At the same time, there is little evidence that the more aggressive tactics employed by militarized units will succeed in undermining opposition movements or halting protests; if anything, exposure to police re-

pression can increase the willingness of citizens to engage in dissent (Curtice and Behlendorf 2020). As a result, we can expect the trend towards increased police militarization to result in more violent police-community interactions and potentially fuel additional dissent. As I have argued here, police militarization is also likely to expand the power of police to shape policy and regime outcomes.

Future research may seek to better understand the conditions under which collective action by the police is most likely to occur. In addition to shaping patterns of violence (Revkin 2020), the extent to which police forces are fragmented or decentralized may also affect their capacity to act collectively. The origin of police forces may also shape their cohesiveness. In Nicaragua, for instance, the revolutionary origin of police may have helped forge a cohesive identity among Sandinista police (Yasher 2018). Scholars might also productively probe how militarization affects the relationship between police and military forces. Why does the regular military encourage police militarization in some cases, but oppose it in others – occasionally going so far as to stage coup attempts to disband militarized units? Finally, existing work has documented the challenges inherent in efforts to reform the police. An important direction for future research is to better understand the conditions under which efforts to de-militarize police forces might succeed.

Funding disclosure

This research has been supported by a grant from the Centennial Fund, a fund of the American Political Science Association’s Centennial Center, and by the Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College. ●

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TRANSITIONS TO AND FROM CIVIL WAR

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*I find that transitions
to and from civil war
are more complex and
non-linear.*

Civil wars are highly complex processes involving a myriad of actors, including states, non-state armed groups, local populations, and external forces; their interactions with each other and the structural conditions they face; and profound changes in these interactions over time. The literature on civil war has examined the main stages of onset, duration, and termination of war, with a focus on the recurrence of war in the aftermath of armed conflict. More recent turns in the literature to the micro-foundations of individual and group behavior, organizational structure, and enduring legacies of civil war, have enriched our understanding of mobilization, patterns of violence, rebel governance, armed group resilience, and social transformations as a result of civil war, among other dynamics. Relatively less attention in civil war studies has been paid to transitions to and from civil war, which are commonly associated with the fields of social movements and conflict resolution, respectively, with attempts to bridge the stages of conflict and sub-field divides seen as one of the promising directions in future research on civil war (Cederman and Vogt 2017). How do conflicts turn violent? How do civil wars unfold over time? How do distinct dynamics of civil war affect the post-war potential

for peace? These are some of the driving questions in this research programme where I situate my work.

In this essay, I discuss how micro-level analysis of individual trajectories of participants in these processes from the pre- to the post-war stages of conflict can help further advance our understanding of these questions. I focus on transitions from pre-war conflict to civil war – drawing on my research on the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993 – and on transitions from civil war to post-war conflict – drawing on my research on Colombia since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace by the National Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (FARC-EP) in 2016. While these kinds of transitions have often been characterized as part of escalation and de-escalation of conflict, I find that transitions to and from civil war are more complex and non-linear. Civil wars emerge from different pre-war interactions between the actors involved, and these interactions do not necessarily escalate in nature, intensity, and scale in advance of the fighting. Conflicts transform – rather than simply de-escalate – in the post-war period, where existing and new patterns of violence that result from changing conditions



coexist with attempts at peacebuilding. Careful attention to participants' lived experiences of these processes reveals how actors' identities evolve through these processes, to shape their relations in the course of conflict.

This fieldwork-intensive research highlights the potential of examining multiple paths that civil wars follow for our grasp of transitions from pre- to post-war, which my new Civil War Paths project, "Understanding Civil War from Pre- to Post-War Stages: A Comparative Approach," funded by a £1.2m UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship, will turn to over the next years. To better understand these transitions, we will trace evolving interactions between social groups, their organization and participation in conflict, and the ways in which these experiences shape their identities. Placing actors' interactions at the center of analysis will help us identify the dynamics, from pre-war contention and non-state armed group formation to state fragmentation and external intervention, that lead to civil wars in different ways, with implications for how the fighting unfolds and how conflicts transform thereafter. In this effort, fieldwork with participants will show how the very actors involved perceive one another, interpret their relations, and adapt to changing circumstances in the course of conflict. Comparing distinct paths across cases will point to a range of dynamics beyond escalation and de-escalation that scholars of civil war should focus on in the future.

From pre-war conflict to civil war

Transitions from non-violent to violent conflict have been most extensively studied by social movement scholars in the context of contentious politics (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Drawing on this tradition and innovations in data,

such as the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) dataset, recent contributions have highlighted the effectiveness of non-violent resistance, which can prevent violent insurgency (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Scholars have used this and other data to explain why some non-violent protests turn to violence (Gustafson 2020), including civil war (Ryckman 2020). Civil war studies have taken inspiration from this tradition to explore the ways in which state repression and dissent interact in the lead up to civil war (Lichbach et al. 2004; Sambanis and Zinn 2005; Young 2013) and have identified different paths to civil war based on this interaction (Davenport et al. 2006). This literature has shifted attention beyond structural variables associated with civil war onset and beyond the period of civil war, to focus on escalation from non-violent contention and violence short of war to civil war. Comparative evidence, however, has challenged the linear escalation narrative (Lawrence 2010). Civil war is not always an outgrowth of non-violent and violent conflict, and the dynamics of pre-war conflict can affect civil war in other ways – for example, by shaping actors' identities.

As I demonstrate in my book, *Mobilizing in Uncertainty: Collective Identities and War in Abkhazia*, decades of participation in and observation of everyday confrontation, political contention, and violent opposition shaped and reshaped what I call "collective conflict identities," or shared understandings of conflict and one's role in it, before the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993. These repertoires were widespread in Soviet Abkhazia, yet the war broke out abruptly, following a period of relative calm when few violent events took place after the inter-group clashes of 1989. The pre-war non-violent and violent conflict, therefore, did

not “escalate” to civil war, but was important for other reasons. The history of the conflict provided a shared framework for understanding the Georgian advance into Abkhazia in August, 1992, and situated potential participants in the war in relation to one another and the broader group as they were making their mobilization decisions. These aspects of collective conflict identities influenced how people perceived the threat of the Georgian advance and whom they mobilized to protect as a result, with implications for how the Georgian-Abkhaz war unfolded. To arrive at these conclusions, I traced nearly 150 individual trajectories from pre- to post-war, collected through life history interviews during eight months of immersive fieldwork in the area and contextualized with additional primary and secondary materials. Here I highlight three micro-level transitions that participants’ lived experiences of the conflict helped me parse out.

Whereas the escalation framework would suggest inter-group antagonism increasing over time, a subtler picture of inter-group relations emerged from my interviews. In the context where Abkhaz, Georgian, and other groups were highly integrated in familial, neighborhood, and organizational settings, everyday life in Soviet Abkhazia was characterized by constant inter-group interaction. People grew up, studied, worked, celebrated, and grieved together, but the underlying conflict structured their relationships. The collective historical memory of so-called Georgianization offered the Abkhaz a set of shared understandings of the conflict as one aimed at the dissolution of the Abkhaz identity in the dominant Georgian mass. Political issues were considered conversational taboos and, once raised, led to arguments and even brawls among relatives, friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Inter-group tension was normalized and was also felt in jokes, rumors, insults over

group belonging, and bending of customs of neighborly solidarity. Systematic experiences of everyday confrontation cemented Abkhaz views of the conflict, shaped how people interpreted and acted on their regular social roles through the lens of the conflict, and transformed relationships. Refraining from sensitive subjects was one conflict avoidance strategy that people adopted to maintain their familial and friendship ties. However, this strategy drew people apart as they could not address the issues that concerned them with each other.

Conflict avoidance became particularly difficult as parallel repertoires of political contention and violent opposition deepened societal polarization and generated a new process of militarization after the first violent clashes of 1989. The Abkhaz had long participated in political contention, from letter writing to Soviet authorities, to demonstrations, and strikes, paving the way for the formation of the Abkhaz national movement in the 1980s, during the period of political opening in the Soviet Union. It is in this context that the first Georgian-Abkhaz clashes took place in Abkhazia. Yet the framework of escalation struggles to capture the micro-level dynamics of the clashes. While the Abkhaz gathering to demand the restoration of Abkhazia’s political status preceded the clashes, the trigger of violence was a different, albeit related, issue of the opening of a Sukhum/i branch of the Tbilisi State University, which was perceived as further threatening the Abkhaz identity by dividing the Abkhaz State University and creating greater educational opportunities for non-Abkhaz students. As Abkhaz activists attempted to prevent entry exams, the clashes started spontaneously, with an attack on an Abkhaz photojournalist recording a Georgian protest elsewhere, and spread across Abkhazia. The experience of inter-group violence split for-

merly integrated teams in employment, education, and government institutions and armed groups were formed on both sides in the conflict. Inter-group relations transformed from underlying but largely contained tension to open division as a result.

Despite the presence of armed actors, no large-scale violence took place thereafter. The Abkhaz Guard formed after the clashes had skirmishes with the Georgian paramilitary group, the Mkhedrioni, that now had a branch in Abkhazia and obstructed unwanted crossings from Georgia proper in the Georgian-Abkhaz border area. However, most guards were released from duty shortly before the Georgian advance into Abkhazia in August, 1992. The advance, therefore, came as a surprise after years of relative calm in Abkhazia – contrary to the escalation argument. The preceding conflict shaped how people made sense of the advance and positioned them in relation to one another in powerful ways as they decided whether and how to mobilize in response. In the uncertainty created by the sudden entry of Georgian forces, the events could have been interpreted as a potential clash similar to that of 1989, policing of the frequently looted railroad, or pursuit of supporters of Georgia's ousted president who were ostensibly hiding in Abkhazia. Yet, these alternative framings did not resonate with Abkhaz experiences of the conflict. Instead, the Abkhaz leaders' framing of the advance as a threat corresponded to these experiences and was adapted to the needs of local defense and consolidated into mobilization decisions within small groups of relatives and friends, to direct protection to those segments of society that people perceived to be threatened. This process resulted in a war that lasted over a year and displaced most of the Georgian population from Abkhazia, with protracted violence and no

political resolution over this de facto state since the Abkhaz victory in the war in 1993.

From civil war to post-war conflict

So far, I have shown that the escalation argument falls short in explaining some transitions from pre-war conflict to civil war and that paying attention to participants' experiences of conflict can help uncover more complex and non-linear paths to civil war. Here I turn to transitions *from* civil war, which are commonly associated with de-escalation. Scholars of conflict resolution have charted a path of de-escalation from war to ceasefire, peace agreements, normalization, and reconciliation, being mindful of setbacks and relapses that can occur along the way (Ramsbotham et al. 2011, 13), and have emphasized that conditions must be "ripe" for negotiations to succeed, pointing to stalemate as a situation when parties might be willing to talk (Zartman 1995). Recent studies have demonstrated the importance of mediation and peacekeeping for establishing mutually acceptable terms of peace agreements and overcoming commitment problems (Walter 2002), thereby contributing to the reduction of violence (Hultman et al. 2014; Beardsley et al. 2019). Overall, de-escalation has been found to significantly affect the potential for peace in post-war societies by reducing the chances of war recurring in the future (Hegre et al. 2017). However, by focusing on the reduction of violence, typically measured by arbitrary battle-death thresholds, the de-escalation approach has overlooked different ways in which conflicts continue when the fighting subsides and conflict and peace co-exist and coevolve (Campbell et al. 2017).

My research on Colombia, where I have collected life histories of former FARC-EP mid-level commanders (*mandos medios* or "middle man-

agers" in Spanish) along with expert interviews and secondary materials, suggests that, as in the case of post-war Abkhazia, the armed conflict in Colombia has continued in multiple ways since the signing of the 2016 peace agreement and new conflict dynamics have emerged in the process. During the negotiations, while the armed conflict with the FARC-EP "de-escalated," the National Liberation Army (ELN), now the largest remaining armed group in Colombia, propped up violent activities. Since then, the ELN has grown in size and extended operations, including into the territories that the FARC-EP had controlled, which highlights weak state presence in many of these territories. Moreover, illicit economies have provided ample opportunities for existing and new armed groups to operate, especially in areas associated with lucrative drug trade and illegal mining. Armed groups that have emerged from the demobilization of the FARC-EP and ex-FARC-EP members who have remobilized since the peace agreement have been part of this landscape. These actors, particularly former mid-level commanders who have continued violent activities, have been viewed as "spoilers" of peace, obstructing the de-escalation of violence (Stedman 1997). However, not all *ex-mandos medios* have followed this trajectory and many have instead played critical roles in the negotiations, disarmament, and peace agreement implementation (Shesterinina 2020). Below I unpack the category of "mid-level commander" to show – following Campbell et al. (2017) – that violent and cooperative activities have coexisted within the same group of participants in this war-to-peace transition and that participants' self-perceptions have transformed over time, to embed some within the peace process.

The category of "mid-level commander" is a grey area in the internal structure of the FARC-

EP, where a distinction could be made between rank-and-file combatants, commanders and deputies of military units, and general command of the organization. It is commanders and deputies of intermediary structures, from squad to front, who were in charge of most day-to-day operations of the organization and who could be considered *mandos medios*, connecting rank-and-file combatants to top commanders. A typical mid-level commander trajectory included at least two years of training, observing FARC-EP regulations, and performing assigned tasks, which if successful could lead to progression to *mando medio* roles, starting with deputy of a squad. Those who were sanctioned for not respecting the rules of the organization rarely progressed. Once in the role, *mandos medios* were responsible for regulating everyday life of their unit, ensuring that their subordinates had access to basic necessities, addressing their problems, maintaining discipline, and assigning tasks based on broader strategy. They were also responsible for working with local populations under their control and securing cash flows for the organization.

As a result, mid-level commanders developed necessary skills and military, economic, and social standing within the organization and among local populations to be able to attract their subordinates and continue violent activities, even as their organization disarmed. Indeed, reports abound not only in Colombia (Zukerman Daly 2014), but also in other contexts (Themnér 2011) where mid-level commanders became "spoilers" undermining the peace process through violent activities or serving as intermediaries between the "spoiler" elite and ex-combatants. Having occupied a central role in the organization, mid-level commanders might feel unrepresented in peace agreements negotiated by top commanders to secure their own interests and

designed for rank-and-file combatants in terms of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) (Theidon 2016). Hence, experts have called on national and international actors to develop special DDR programmes to prevent mid-level commanders' return to violence (FIP 2010). Yet no rank-based strategy has been developed, and a number of former FARC-EP mid-level commanders formed or joined dissident groups during and after the negotiations.

While attention has focused on those former FARC-EP mid-level commanders who have abandoned the peace process, their number is relatively low. In fact, most have remained in the peace process, according to my interviews. More importantly, this focus has masked the coexistence of violent and cooperative activities within this group of participants in the Colombian post-peace agreement transition. Surely some former FARC-EP mid-level commanders have continued violent activities, but others have played critical roles in the peace process since the negotiations in Havana. During the negotiations, *mandos medios* became a key communication channel, transmitting information from top commanders at the negotiations table to rank-and-file combatants. They discussed the contents of the negotiations with their units point by point, to address doubts and fears among combatants – disarmament could make them vulnerable to retaliation from the state, other armed groups, and local populations who have suffered from FARC-EP violence; their skills could not translate to livelihoods outside of the armed struggle; and they could be betrayed in the process, including by their organization. When the peace agreement was signed in 2016, they similarly explained “the laying down of arms” – a concept that did not sit well with life in arms that combatants had led,

often for decades – and managed disarmament through practices of subordination that they previously developed as commanders responsible for their units and new roles that some acquired as part of formal mechanisms established to support the process.

After these initial stages of the war-to-peace transition, many former FARC-EP mid-level commanders have used their skills and standing to organize everyday life and mobilize productive projects in collective reincorporation areas. New leaders outside of the former hierarchical structure have emerged in these settings, including through conflicts between ex-combatants, but former mid-level commanders have continued to lead some ex-combatant communities, often as elected representatives. Despite divisions within the FARC-EP political party, they have also adapted their intermediary position to support implementation of the peace agreement by representing the party and their communities in dialogue and monitoring institutions. Finally, former mid-level commanders have led a range of peace initiatives beyond the formal peace process, repurposing their wartime experience for the advancement of peace, for example, by producing knowledge on territorial dynamics of violence and developing local protection measures through community training. As a result, these individuals' self-perceptions have transformed, from *mandos medios* responsible for their units and the operation of the FARC-EP as an armed organization, to local leaders responsible for their communities. These roles – and the relationships among ex-combatants that they entail – have kept them committed to the peace process despite setbacks in peace agreement implementation, rampant violence against social leaders and FARC-EP ex-combatants, and ongoing stig-

matization of former mid-level commanders due to current and historical precedents of rearmament among this group in Colombia.

Conclusion

This essay has considered transitions to and from civil war and has challenged linear escalation and de-escalation arguments, showing that research on participant trajectories can uncover complex processes whereby conflicts do not simply escalate or de-escalate but rather follow multiple micro-level dynamics and transform actors' identities. In the case of Abkhazia, years of relative calm preceded the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992-1993, which broke out unexpectedly, prompting potential participants to draw on their experiences of inter-group conflict to make sense of the violence and decide whether and how to mobilize in the uncertainty of the events. In the case of Colombia, the armed conflict continued past the signing of the 2016 peace agreement, exposing variation within the same groups of participants, such as former FARC-EP mid-level commanders, some of whom have used their skills and standing to continue violent activities, whereas others have repurposed their wartime experiences for leadership in the peace process.

However, these are only few among a range of paths that civil wars follow from pre- to post-war. For example, Krause (2018) convincingly demonstrates conflict escalation in communal wars in Indonesia and Nigeria, where violence escalated from pogroms to battles and joint attacks of mobile gangs and militias with participation of civilians. Similarly, Dudouet (2013) shows an alternative path of de-escalation whereby armed groups in a variety of settings shifted to non-violent tactics as a result of leadership changes, re-evaluation of goals and means, and exposure to new repertoires of action.

Future research should move beyond general arguments on escalation and de-escalation to theorizing under what conditions escalation and de-escalation dynamics might hold among other paths to and from civil war. This is a central aim of my Civil War Paths project, which will draw on fieldwork-intensive comparison of a number of cases that vary on how civil wars emerged, unfolded, and ended or transformed carried out by a team of researchers at the new Centre for the Comparative Study of Civil War to better understand diverse transitions across the stages of conflict.

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Q&A WITH

MARK R. BEISSINGER (*World Politics*)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

The subfield has grown much more quantitative, more sophisticated, and more focused on causal identification (though at times at the cost of thinking about the important impact of contextual variables and largescale social processes). The availability of data of all sorts has increased exponentially and revolutionized the field. Qualitative work has also grown more rigorous, with higher standards.

How has the subfield changed since you became an editor?

The subfield has been growing truly global in the sense of involving scholars from all regions of the world. Two trends also seem particularly obvious: the proliferation of big data and experimental studies focused on causal identification. Observational studies, however, still remain the bread-and-butter of the subfield.

Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development and how have this trend affected your journal?

In general, it is positive, in that it focuses graduate students on what they will need to do once they attain a job. It does, however, lead to a flood of rejections of less polished submissions to journals. Graduate students need to get used to the idea of rejection – it happens to all scholars (even the most senior) at all stages of their careers. My advice would be not to be discouraged, but take reviews seriously as an opportunity to improve your work.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar?

There are many more pieces under review now, and it has become more difficult to get pieces accepted. Part of this has been the result of many more European scholars submitting to journals. But the standards for acceptance have also risen. Publishers are struggling financially, and the industry is changing rapidly in ways that are not advantageous to journals. All this is



putting new financial pressures on journals and changing the publication process.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you became an editor?

We are a triple-blind journal and continue to take this process very seriously. But over time it

has become more difficult to find reviewers for pieces, given the commitments of people. The flood of submissions has also led to a higher number of desk-rejections (in particular, of pieces that do not fit the goals and guidelines of the journal). ●





Q&A WITH

SHAUN BOWLER (*British Journal of Political Science*)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

In the work I review I'm seeing lots of changes in how we do things over the past few years: increasing use of experiments, the development in qualitative approaches, the influence of causal inference as a way of thinking about things, the increased range in cases and examples under study, etc. – a long list of things have really changed how we think about the work we do.

Underneath all that change, however, reviewers still respond positively to what the research question is – i.e. what the theory and arguments are. So, some important things have not changed.

I don't know where all this is going collectively. In keeping with trends in other disciplines, I do think the boundaries between sub-fields and indeed between political science and other disciplines will continue to blur and be erased – and that's a good thing. "But which boundaries specifically?," someone could reasonably ask. I have guesses, but would not pretend to know the real answer.

How has the subfield changed since you were a junior scholar?

I don't think it is much of a surprise to anyone to note the increased methodological sophistication in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Also, there seems to be a lot more work these days in different regions of the world than used to be the case; there seems to be a lot more work being submitted these days on politics in China and sub-Saharan Africa. There are also a lot more excellent cross-national collections of data and evidence on voting and elections (CCES, World Values, LAPOP, Afrobarometer, elections archives and so on) and also other projects such as the manifestoes data, the government agendas projects, election integrity, Chapel Hill survey, V-Dem. Too many to list really. Those efforts have been enormously influential. As well as the troves of data these projects have provided, they also imply a lot more cross-national scholarly collaboration – which has been good in a range of different ways, not least by helping internationalize the discipline. Generally speaking, there have been a ton of changes that mean nowadays we know more about more and the field is a lot bigger and a lot more varied than it used to be.



Also, the internet happened since I was in grad school. That was big.

In terms of papers ... a lot of the changes have allowed us to develop better answers to questions, but reviewers still pay most attention to the research question itself. I suppose a glib way of re-stating that is to say – for all the changes, reviewers still want to know if the paper is asking a question that we want answered.

How has the subfield changed since you became an editor?

One of the bigger changes is that there is just a lot more work – and a lot more good work – being produced these days than there was in years past. Like all journals, submissions are up, and rising submission numbers mean that all journals find themselves with a lot of good research in their submission queue. That presents a sobering challenge for any editor at any journal. I certainly find it so.

One upside is that there are many more good journals than there used to be. As a profession, I think we had to develop more outlets, given how much more good work is being produced. More journals does mean more venues in which to find readers – and often the readership is more appropriate and more likely to have their own thinking informed by the work.

Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development and how has this trend affected your journal?

Boy, I'm in two minds about this. I'd be interested to hear what others think.

On the one hand, it is clear that early-career scholars are a lot more professional and much better trained than a generation or two ago. Publishing early both reflects that and contributes to it. Sending papers out to journals is part of that process and so it is good that people are engaging that process earlier. There is no virtue in waiting for waiting's sake. There is also no great secret to the publishing process and it is good that more people realize that early and start submitting work so they can start their professional careers sooner. That's all very positive and says it is a good thing people are being encouraged to publish early.

On the other hand, sometimes things are sent out too early. Sometimes it is worth taking a bit of extra time to work on something. In fact, work in some areas – especially within comparative politics and/or qualitative or historical work – simply requires more time than in other areas. If someone is doing fieldwork or archival work, then it is just going to take longer to get into print. Pressures to publish can set up unreasonable expectations for those scholars, especially at an early stage. That's not good for all kinds of reasons – it disincentivizes certain forms of scholarship and of course, it can make early career scholars feel bad for no good reason.

I would also point out the importance of teaching as part of being a professor. The pressure to publish work can sometimes feel like that's really the only thing that matters. And that's just not the case. Teaching is both important and valuable to our institutions and to us.

I know this Q&A has emphasized change and research so this might be a bit off track, but one of the things that have not changed in our discipline is the central role that mentorship plays – both in terms of making us who we are, and who

we, in turn, can help influence. That's not something that should be sidelined. Too overwhelming a focus on publication loses sight of that. It can be easy to over-emphasize publishing. So I go back and forth on whether on the whole "it is a good thing or a bad thing to start publishing early" issue.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar? How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you became an editor?

The peer-review process remains key to how we know what we produce is scholarly knowledge. But it is a process that is under some stress right now – not just in comparative politics but across the board.

Finding reviewers for so many submissions is one challenge lots of journals are facing. I regularly line up 9-10 names as reviewers for papers in order to receive 3 reviews. With so many papers being submitted people are busy reviewing already so we get lots of people saying, "Sorry, I'd love to do this but I still have 2 other papers on my desk to review."

Journals are all working through different ways to deal with those challenges to reviewer pools

– desk rejects are more common, there are schemes to reward reviewers, pool them, and so on.

Still, the world of journals is changing, and I'm not at all sure we have a good handle on that.

Clearly, there are a lot of "non-journal" venues. blogs and social media of course, but also archives and websites (academia.edu, ResearchGate, etc.) for getting work seen and read. Some of it is helping find a wider audience for work that has been peer-reviewed (which is obviously a good thing). Others present work that has not been peer-reviewed. They are different vehicles for scholarly conversation than the journals provide. Where all that is leading still seems up in the air. Regardless of platform, peer-review will continue to matter.

Similarly, Open Access is presenting a whole set of challenges for us as scholars and as a profession. It certainly poses a challenge to the revenue stream of many professional associations that rely on library subscriptions to keep the association going. So the economics of journal publishing is changing in ways that will change how journals operate.

And out of all the changes, I think Open Access is going to be a really big one for the field. Well, that and the internet. I hear good things. ●





Q&A WITH

GRAEME B. ROBERTSON (*American Journal of Political Science*)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

My impression is that the subfield is always in transition – a state of permanent revolution to quote a phrase. This is certainly the case at the current time. There is a critical mass of scholars – mostly young scholars – from many parts of the world who are driving the field forward in exciting and dynamic ways. From my perch at the AJPS, where I see about 500 mostly great, often amazing, manuscripts per year, perhaps the areas of literatures experiencing the fastest growth are: understanding discontent with democracy, unpacking the effects of violence and civil conflict, and deconstructing authoritarianism as a political system. However, advances in causal identification techniques, machine learning, and other tools for handling large amounts of data are transforming almost every area of literature in the sub-field.

How has the subfield changed since you were a junior scholar?

The quality of scholarship has improved dramatically. The range of techniques that graduate stu-

dents and junior scholars are expected to master has grown rapidly, as (apparently) has the capacity of people to master these techniques. The other huge change has been the absorption of the causal identification revolution into the heart of political science. When I was leaving grad school, this term was not widely used, but it quickly burst into the mainstream. In the early stages of this process, there were often a lot of papers that were valued for their causal identification strategy more than their substantive contribution to problems in the world or even problems in the literature. That has now changed completely. Having a good strategy for dealing with causation has become a minimum qualification for publication in the top journals and making a real contribution is now the main element that separates the amazing work from the merely very good.

How has the subfield changed since you became an editor?

One key change is greater awareness of issues around the neglect of scholarship by women and BIPOC scholars. I am not sure how much if any progress has actually been made on these issues yet, so only time will tell how much real change will result from increased awareness.



Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development and how has this trend affected your journal?

I am in two minds about this. Obviously, publishing early and often is good, but I worry that in pushing junior scholars to publish early we may be emphasizing the number of publications over the quality of those publications. At the end of the day, one great paper should be worth more than two, three or more competent ones. But achieving a truly great paper requires acquiring mastery of both substance and technique and that typically takes time. I would rather see people on the job market in particular being judged by the quality of their work, with much less emphasis on the number of publications.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar?

Like most things in our field, the whole publishing process has become more professionalized. Reviewers demand ever higher standards and more robustness tests, particularly since everything now can be put in an online appendix. At the same time, standards of openness and transparency have improved dramatically. Both of these changes are real improvements for science, even if they are not always without cost to authors, reviewers, and editors alike.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you became an editor?

The existing trends towards greater openness and transparency have continued to strengthen, particularly with the mainstreaming of pre-registration. ●





Q&A WITH

DAVID J. SAMUELS (*Comparative Political Studies*)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

On my 1st day of grad school, in my first seminar, Arend Lijphart said “There’s an inverse relationship between how interesting and important a question is and our ability to measure the concepts the question considers. Always try to ask interesting and important questions.” I’m sure he thought similarly as I do today, but I believe we increasingly privilege method over substance. What’s different today is that compared to when I started in 1993, learning and using cutting-edge methods is now commonplace. However, that means that the payoff to learning cutting-edge methods hits diminishing returns. You can’t stand out as a “methods-knowledgeable person” in the subfield since everyone knows the same methods. And it doesn’t seem that better methods necessarily offer better insight into interesting and important questions.

How has the subfield changed since you were a junior scholar?

1. When I was starting out, questions related to gender and other facets of political identity were far less central.

2. When I was a junior scholar far fewer comparativists knew and applied statistical methods.
3. Experimental studies were non-existent and are now methodologically central to many substantively important questions in the field. The discipline as a whole is more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both experimental and non-experimental research designs.
4. Even though I started in the 90s, the subfield was still infused with a Cold War mentality, but I don’t think many knew it at the time. Modernization theory, dependency theory, insurgency and “peasant rebellions” were all still central to the agenda, all without any self-awareness of the intellectual and political roots of the questions we were asking. My impression is that today’s grad students start their programs with better critical self-awareness about why certain “important questions” even become “important questions.”



How has the subfield changed since you became an editor?

In particular, attention to gender as a scholarly question and as an issue of equity within the discipline has become central to our work.

Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development, and how has this trend affected your journal?

Publish or perish has really become cutthroat, and the issue isn't just with junior scholars. Scholars at all stages of their careers and at all sorts of institutions around the world are pushed to publish more, and more frequently. In many ways, this is a positive development. Research production should not be exclusive to scholars at American R1 universities plus those at a top few European outlets. However, there are drawbacks to this development as well. The increasing "supply" of papers means a constant increase in submissions. This has forced us as editors to increase desk rejection rates substan-

tially. Authors should get used to higher rates of desk rejection, or far longer turnaround times as finding reviewers becomes more problematic.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar?

Apart from the already massive increase in submissions, the discipline is increasingly globalized. But this does mean that similar "publish or perish" pressures now exist in what many would not consider "research institutions," whether in the US, Europe or elsewhere in the world.

Since you became an editor?

Specific changes that come to mind are the adoption and pressure to adopt triple-blind reviewing to counter impressions of editorial bias of any kind, and the growth in desk rejecting rates. At CPS we now desk reject 50%; the previous editor only desk rejected about 20%. DR rates may creep higher as submissions continue to grow. ●





Q&A WITH

MARGIT TAVITS (*Journal of Politics*, 2018-2020)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

I would say that it is constantly in transition. New methods, new types of data, new forms of collaboration, stronger global connections, trends, and developments in the discipline and in real-world politics – these are things that are all constantly changing our field.

How has the subfield changed since you were a junior scholar?

Methodologically, more work now uses experiments (field, lab, survey), big data and/or advanced methods. There is less research that relies solely on qualitative case studies. The nature of fieldwork has also changed: in addition to interviewing or archival work, fieldwork now often involves collecting experimental and quantitative data. There is also much more emphasis on causal identification, systematic mechanism testing, and research ethics, and transparency than was the case when I was a junior scholar.

How has the subfield changed since you became an editor?

I started as an editor in 2018 and finished at the end of 2020. This isn't long enough to observe significant change.

Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development and how has this trend affected your journal?

I think it affected JOP in terms of the number of manuscripts that we received. I wouldn't say that it affected the quality. Perhaps there is self-selection in submissions to top journals, but some of the more careful and innovative work was submitted by advanced graduate students.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar?

One of the biggest changes, in my opinion, is that all reviewers can now see each other's reviews. I think this has a disciplining effect on reviewers – reviews have gotten much more substantive and constructive than was the case when I first started out. On the other hand, reviewers



have gotten more demanding. Reviews are often several pages long and ask for an extensive list of revisions. This, in turn, has led to authors creating lengthy online appendixes, which were not an option 15 years ago. Reviewers today expect more rigor, and more carefully planned and executed analysis. There is also more attention being paid to research ethics and replicability.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you became an editor?

Again, my term as editor was only two years, and the review process stayed the same over that time. ●





Q&A WITH

AILI M. TRIPP (*American Political Science Review*)

Keeping with the theme of this issue of the Newsletter, do you think the CP subfield is currently in transition? If so, how? And where it is going?

The subfield is always in transition. For some time now, there has been a shift towards multiple method research, employing experiments, as well as incorporating formal theory. People are beginning to pay more attention to who they cite, making sure that they include relevant literature by women, people of color, and scholars from other parts of the world. There is more concern with ethics and transparency in the research process and greater accountability.

In the mid-1980s, when I was in graduate school, the state was a central subject of analysis, along with topics of state autonomy, state capacity, the developmental state, and social revolutions. World systems theory was still around, and theorizing about regime change was very popular. There were debates between comparativists who did more interpretive ethnographic work and advocates of rational choice theory, game theory and statistical analysis. I was one of the 17 individuals who received the first mysterious email from Mr. Perestroika in 2000 that launched a movement in Political Science to open up the discipline to methodological pluralism. These debates went by the wayside as

mixed methods approaches seem to have become increasingly popular, but the selection of the current APSR editorial team of scholars who value methodological diversity is evidence of the continuation of these concerns.

In the subfield, we seem to have moved away from grand theory to more middle level theorizing, but too often research is driven more by methods than by research questions, and sometimes these are surprisingly narrow questions. In terms of topics, there is greater interest in understanding not only transitions to authoritarianism but also the workings of authoritarian regimes themselves. There has been a lot of interest in civil war, as well as contentious politics, but in more recent years this has shifted to an interest in political violence in its various forms. Work on political parties has grown, especially in Africa. Whole new fields have emerged, such as the study of comparative politics of gender and of LGBTQ studies as well as greater interest in ethnic, religious and other identities. There is also more interest in redistribution and public goods, as well as problems of inequality.

How has the subfield changed since you were a junior scholar?

It has become much more demanding and rigorous, in both good ways and perhaps some



problematic ways. The whole process of doing field research has become much more onerous in my view. Part of this is a result of bureaucratization of processes that were left to the discretion of the researcher in the past. The changes are also the result of a concern for providing oversight and ensuring more transparency and accountability. But at the same time, it has made field research, in particular, a much more daunting proposition, especially for those of us who work in authoritarian and otherwise challenging environments. When I started in 1987 as a dissertator doing field work in Tanzania on the politics of the informal economy with the help of a major grant, the only thing I had to do was get research clearance from the Tanzanian government. Today one has to raise funds, develop a data management plan, get research clearance, manage complicated logistics of fieldwork, go through a rigorous IRB process, talk to a risk management person at your university, provide extensive reporting to donors, put your data online for replication purposes, and so on.

Once you publish your work, you are expected to promote your book or article on social media, videos, and other means. None of these tasks by themselves are all that demanding, but when taken together they can make the research enterprise feel overwhelming at times, especially for those who work in challenging parts of the world. There are more junior scholars in couples made up of dual earners and sometimes they have children. This creates its own challenges since donor support is fairly limited when it comes to fieldwork.

The demands on junior scholars are more onerous in other ways, as well. When I was finishing graduate school, one had to have language and quantitative or qualitative skills, do fieldwork in one country, and write a dissertation using one method. If you had a publication or two as you entered the job market, that was a bonus. Today,

the expectations have ramped up considerably. Not only are graduate students facing a more competitive job market, but they seem to be trying to do fieldwork in two or more countries, using multiple methods, and employing formal theory. All of this can be especially daunting if they have spent a good part of their time in graduate school studying a difficult language that takes years to learn. More junior scholars are also trying to publish in top journals earlier on in their careers. Many of these challenges are especially hard on minority and foreign students as well as women and sexual and gender minorities, who face additional challenges in the profession.

I am not sure we can go back to a simpler way of doing things, but I do think that university administrators and tenure and hiring committees need to be aware that the pressures on comparativists when combined, can feel sometimes overwhelming.

How have the submissions changed since you became an editor?

I just started as a co-editor along with our team in June of 2020, and already we have seen substantial changes in the gender and racial makeup of contributors. We were worried that Covid-19 would affect our submissions, but in fact, overall submissions from when our team took over in June 2020 to the end of the year increased by 37%, compared to submissions in the same period in 2019. Submissions by authors who identified as women increased in the calendar year 2020 by 56% when compared to 2019. For authors who identified as men, they increased by 15.5%. Submissions by individuals or teams of scholars who all identify as Black, Indigenous, or another racial or ethnic identity increased by 84.5% (See "Notes from Editors," APSR, May 2021, May Vol. 115, Issue 2). In case you are interested, we accepted the same per-



centage of manuscripts from males and females (12.9 and 12.8% respectively) and slightly more mixed gender authorships (14.9%).

We have not, however, seen much of a change in the types of submissions yet. But we are looking forward to receiving more manuscripts that represent greater substantive and methodological diversity.

Since we took over, almost 28% of submissions and 45% accepted manuscripts have been in comparative, which is 3% more acceptances than the previous editorial team. We may still see lagged pandemic effects on submissions because field work has taken a hit due to Covid-19.

We would like to see a broader range of research topics published in the journal, more diverse subfields, geographic foci, and methodological approaches.

Junior scholars are now being encouraged to publish earlier in their graduate school careers. Do you think it is a positive development and how has this trend affected your journal?

I am generally very impressed by the work junior scholars are submitting to the APSR. It is often well vetted by colleagues and advisors before being submitted, so is quite polished by the time we see it. Our reviewers are mostly first rate and so even if students don't get their work published, they are likely to receive excellent feedback on their manuscripts. Having said that, I would not encourage junior scholars to submit anything other than their very best work.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you were a junior scholar?

The process itself is much the same as in the past, but the use of email and the web-based platforms like Editorial Manager and Scholar One have streamlined many of the editorial processes like selecting reviewers and corresponding with authors that used to take longer via snail mail. Today, there are new requirements for basic ethics compliance at the APSR and authors deposit their quantitative datasets in the APSR Dataverse when their article is published. Some have pre-registered research plans, although these are optional at APSR. The expectations that authors promote their own work through social media and other venues is something new. Publishers used to send authors a stack of 25 or so offprints, which we would distribute at conferences or send to colleagues who might be interested.

The internet has changed the way we publish in so many other ways, allowing for online pre-publication, open access articles, hyperlinks in citations of online articles, publicizing articles that receive many hits, use of Altmetrics and various databases to track the influence of articles. None of this was possible before the internet became widely used after the 1990s.

How has the peer review process and journal publishing changed since you became an editor?

The main change has been that we have implemented new measures to ensure that all published work that draws on interactions with human participants is based on ethically conducted research. We have adopted APSA's [Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research](#) (approved by the Council in April 2020). We also do more to help authors publicize their work. ●



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The Organized Section in Comparative Politics is the largest organized section in the American Political Science Association (APSA). The Section organizes panels for the APSA's annual meetings; awards annual prizes for best paper, best article, best book, and best data set; and oversees and helps finance the publication of this newsletter, APSA-CP.



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