Democracy and Autocracy

"Is Democracy Promotion Dead?"

IN THIS ISSUE

Symposium authors presenting at WCED Panel, "Is Democracy Promotion Dead?" on February 4th in Ann Arbor. From left to right: Thomas Flores, Jennifer Raymond Dresden, Erica Frantz, Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, David Waldner, Dan Slater.

New Decade, New Name, New Home

Executive Editors' Note

Dan Slater, *Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professor of Emerging Democracies, University of Michigan*

Rob Mickey, *Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan*

It has been nearly twenty years since APSA established its first organized section devoted entirely to the topic of democratization. Much has changed since then, from the burst of democratic optimism of the early 2010s to the more recent wave of autocratic reaction. These changes are reflected in the new name for both our organized section and our newsletter. What was once the section on Comparative Democratization and its *Annals of Comparative Democratization* is now captured by one shared name: *Democracy and Autocracy.*

The new decade has not only brought our newsletter a new name, but a new home. This is the inaugural issue published by the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) at the University of Michigan. After a decade of hand-in-glove collaboration with our sister area-studies center, the Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia (WCEE), WCED has embarked as a global and interdisciplinary center in its own right, dedicated to the study of all matters related to democracy, authoritarianism, and transitions between them. In assuming the editorship of *Democracy and Autocracy*, WCED seeks to advance its global mission while bringing an interdisciplinary flavor to one of APSA's most active and robust organized sections. As a comparativist and Americanist with shared interests in the history of democratization and authoritarianism, we will also be sure that the case of the United States is not left out of these vital conversations.

We will draw on the scholars and resources of the WCED community in publishing *Democracy and Autocracy.* The heart of the center is its two-year postdoctoral program, and this inaugural issue is both introduced and guest-edited by one of our current postdocs, Matthew Cebul (Ph.D. Yale, 2019). WCED's core public mission is to organize and host expert roundtables on pressing issues of the day. Our intention is to pair these public roundtables with the newsletter in the form of thematic symposia.

This inaugural issue is dedicated to the question: *"Is Democracy Promotion Dead?"* As Matthew discusses in his thematic introduction, it features essays by three

teams of scholars who authored reports for USAID's "Theories of Democratic Change Research Initiative" from 2013–18. We see *Democracy and Autocracy* as an excellent opportunity to bring the best research on democratization into conversation with the policy community. And we can think of no more pressing issue for our collective consideration than the future of democracy promotion in an era of democratic backsliding and breakdowns.

Past readers of this newsletter will realize that we are maintaining the symposium structure introduced by our editorial predecessors at the *Annals of Comparative Democratization*, led so ably and energetically by Staffan Lindberg at the University of Gothenburg. We are also adding a new element in the form of a book author's exchange. Here, we seek to showcase exciting new research by emerging and junior scholars on questions of interest to section readership.

Democracy and Autocracy represents one dimension in WCED's growing publication profile. Another is our new WCED Book Series with University of Michigan Press, which has already produced two new titles on democratic performance in Argentina and Indonesia, as well as an edited volume on authoritarian regimes and economic crises across the globe. New titles on Ukraine and Thailand will appear in the coming months. WCED eagerly invites contributions to this new book series — the first since Johns Hopkins University Press's now-lapsed series dedicated entirely to questions of authoritarianism and democracy — and funds book workshops in Ann Arbor for select authors seeking to publish with University of Michigan Press.

Democratic rule finds itself on the defensive. No country is immune from antidemocratic trends, and no citizen enjoys immunity from doing their part to stand up for what they feel is right. We here at WCED hope to contribute to this common effort. We hope you enjoy issue 18:1!

Democracy Promotion: Dead, Dying, or Dormant?

Guest Editor's Introduction

Matthew Cebul, Postdoctoral Fellow, Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, University of Michigan

One striking characteristic of the post–Cold war era has been the United States and its democratic allies' commitment to democracy promotion. Though liberalizing pressure has been applied unevenly, often in deference to U.S. strategic interests, the past three decades have witnessed a profound invigoration of both governmental and non-governmental efforts to develop democratic institutions, monitor elections, support free media, and – in extreme cases – to directly replace repressive autocracies with peaceful and prosperous democracies (Carothers 1999; Hyde 2011; Bush 2016).

Recently, however, global momentum for democracy appears to have slowed, if not reversed. The Trump presidency marks a clear departure in rhetorical support for democracy promotion – Trump has openly embraced repressive autocracies across the Middle East even as he lampoons European allies as inadequate international partners. Meanwhile, democracy is on the back foot, as Russia and China promote autocracy in their respective spheres of influence and illiberal democrats in the Philippines, Turkey, and Brazil drag their nations towards autocracy in all but name (Diamond 2019, Carothers 2020). In these circumstances, it is both appropriate and pressing to ask: is democracy promotion dead?

This issue of *Democracy and Autocracy* illuminates what political science can and cannot tell us about the efficacy of international efforts to promote democracy. Authors synthesize findings from comprehensive reviews of the democracy promotion literature, originally conducted for the U.S. Agency for International Development's "Theories of Democratic Change Research Initiative." Articles address the causes of democratization (Conroy-Krutz and Frantz); democracy promotion in conflict settings (Dresden, Flores, and Nooruddin); and democratic promotion more generally (Lust and Waldner). Echoing the Dresden, Flores, and Nooruddin contribution, our issue concludes with an author-author dialogue reviewing two recent books that interrogate the relationship between external assistance and intra-state violence, in the contexts of foreign aid (Trisko Darden) and electoral assistance (von Borzyskowski).

What key themes and findings emerge from this compendium? Though the authors find some reasons for optimism, they are markedly skeptical about the efficacy of democracy promotion. That skepticism manifests in two broad concerns: on one hand, we lack concrete evidence that democracy promotion reliably leads to democratization; and on the other, democracy promotion may also have unintended negative consequences.

First, authors found it difficult to state with confidence that democracy promotion facilitates democratization. As a preliminary matter, authors contend that we simply do not know enough about the causes of democratization to reliably promote it. Conroy-Krutz and Frantz find mixed support at best for a number of theory families commonly invoked to explain democratization, and are consequently hesitant to endorse corresponding policy interventions. Similarly, Lust and Waldner observe that temporal variation can muddle even those factors most commonly associated with democratization – for instance, that income is generally linked to democratization pre–World War II does not prove that economic development is the handmaiden of democracy in the modern era of democratic backsliding. Moreover, even if we were confident in democracy's determinants, policymakers may still fail to translate that knowledge into context-specific interventions; as Lust and Waldner put it, "knowing that some element is a likely causal factor of democratic outcomes does not mean that we know how to devise relevant treatments."

To be sure, not all democracy promotion news is bad. Dresden, Flores, and Nooruddin document the maturation of democracy promotion towards more narrow and technical efforts to patiently develop democracy's "supporting infrastructure," through programs that measurably increase civic participation, inter-ethnic cooperation, and government responsiveness. Similarly, von Borzyskowski finds that election observation and technical assistance both lower the incidence of pre-election violence. Yet while these interventions may have positive short-term effects, here we encounter what Dresden, Flores, and Nooruddin call the "levels of analysis" problem: we cannot readily demonstrate that micro-level "tactical successes" aggregate upwards into macro-level democratic change. The process by which the combined effects of small-scale interventions might eventually accumulate into full-blown democratization is merely assumed, not verified.

Second, democracy promotion, however well-intentioned, may also have inadvertent and harmful consequences. The disastrous U.S. intervention in Iraq has encouraged a renewed emphasis on non-military forms of democracy promotion, but authors observe that even these often do more harm than good. For instance, Conroy-Krutz and Frantz stress that, because competitive authoritarian regimes can convert quasi-democratic institutions into tools of regime legitimacy and control, interventions that promote constrained liberalization may actually prolong authoritarian rule. Similarly, Trisko Darden finds that fungible foreign aid can be diverted away from economic development and towards the machinery of violent repression – as she puts it, "foreign aid is a flawed instrument for advancing freedom." And while von Borzyskowski generally celebrates election monitoring, she also observes that monitors can trigger post-election violence if their work encourages defeated parties to challenge suspicious electoral results.

These concerns about the inadvertent effects of democracy promotion are echoed in my own research on the 2011 Syrian Revolution. The prevailing wisdom about external support for democratizing movements is that the international spotlight deters excessive regime violence, opening space for nonviolent activists to forge a peaceful path towards democracy (e.g. Franklin 2008). Yet in the Syrian case, I find that the prospect of international engagement also emboldened activists to persevere in their demands for change even after the regime responded with brutal violence. As external pressure proved insufficient to deter regime violence, movement participants suffered prolonged exposure to withering repression, which in turn discredited nonviolence and radicalized the nonviolent resistance into an armed rebellion. In this sense, half-hearted international support for the Syrian nonviolent movement was well-intentioned but highly counterproductive.

In sum, contributors suggest that while promoting democracy is normatively laudable, our ability to do so remains empirically ambiguous. Though they generally hesitate to speculate on the future trajectory of U.S. democracy promotion efforts, I conclude by observing that this disconnect between ends and means may help to explain why the Trump administration has turned its back on the democracy promotion consensus with so little resistance. Setting aside U.S. domestic politics, it may be that our famously transactional president is simply not sold on democracy promotion – in part because Trump does not see democratic allies as any more valuable than autocratic ones, but perhaps also because Trump remains skeptical that the U.S. has earned sufficient returns on its democracy promotion investments. On this latter score, Trump's instincts are not without merit.

Ultimately, whether democracy promotion is dead, dying, or merely dormant likely depends on its proponents' ability to both provide clear and compelling evidence that democracy promotion works, and also to help practitioners identify and avoid interventions with high risks of negative spillovers. This issue of *Democracy and Autocracy* reveals that political scientists have much to offer in both respects.

References

Bush, Sarah Sunn (2016). *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators.* Cambridge University Press.

Carothers, Thomas (1999). *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Carothers, Thomas (2020). "Rejuvenating Democracy Promotion." *The Journal of Democracy* 31(1): 114–123.

Franklin, James C. (2008). "Shame on You: The Impact of Human Rights Criticism on Political Repression in Latin America." *International Studies Quarterly* 52: 187–211.

Hyde, Susan D. (2011). "Catch Us If You Can: Election Monitoring And International Norm Diffusion." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 356–369.

Diamond, Larry (2019). "Democracy Demotion: How the Freedom Agenda Fell Apart." *Foreign Affairs*, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-06-11/democracy-demotion.

What We Know—and Don't—About Democratization, and Why it Matters for Democracy Promotion

Erica Frantz and **Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz**, *Michigan State University*

Over the last decade, the US government has dedicated at least $2 billion to democracy-promotion efforts around the world.[1] These funds have gone to a range of programs, including organizing elections and supporting election-monitoring exercises, strengthening the capacity of political parties, training journalists and bolstering independent media, and building civil society. Similarly, the European Union dedicates more than $177 million each year to efforts to promote democracy and protect human rights around the world.[2] Despite these commitments, the last fifteen years have seen democracy on the defensive, to the extent that we now seem to be in an era of authoritarian resurgence.[3] The watchdog organization Freedom House, for example, has documented 13 consecutive years of declines in political rights and civil liberties from 2005 to 2018. Now is therefore an especially important time to consider what research says about how countries democratize.[4]

To better inform practitioners' efforts, USAID tasked us with summarizing key research on paths away from authoritarianism for phase II of their "Theories of Democratic Change" project. We organized this broad area of research into seven theory families: political leadership, political culture, political institutions, political economy, international effects, triggering events, and state capacity. We then identified the key hypotheses that have emerged on each of these themes, summarized the research that supports them, and assessed what the evidence suggests. Using these evaluations, we provided practitioners with recommendations for whether democracy-promotion

---

[1] "Democracy Promotion: An Objective of U.S. Foreign Assistance," *Congressional Research Service*, January 4, 2019, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44858.pdf (accessed November 19, 2019).
[2] Ken Godfrey and Richard Youngs, "Toward a New EU Democracy Strategy," *Carnegie Europe,* September 17, 2019, https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/09/17/toward-new-eu-democracy-strategy-pub-79844 (accessed November 19, 2019).
[3] The *Journal of Democracy* dedicated a full section to the theme of "Authoritarian Resurgence" in its April 2015 issue (Volume 26, Issue 2).
[4] See, "Freedom in the World 2019," *Freedom House*, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019 (accessed November 19, 2019).

efforts in these areas would likely be effective.

One of the major messages to emerge from this effort is that the factors that are likely to foster political liberalization – or those changes in a society that make it more participatory and/or competitive – do not necessarily pave the way for democratization. The legalization of opposition political parties in dictatorships, for example, surely qualifies as political liberalization, but does not tell us much about whether regimes are genuinely dedicated to political reform. Though there are certainly real benefits for ordinary citizens when political liberalization occurs in authoritarian contexts, they often come with the risk of extending authoritarian rule. In turn, our review of the literature suggests that researchers should place greater care in ensuring that the concepts they use are operationalized correctly. Measures of political liberalization do not always correspond to democratization; researchers should be careful to make this clear when highlighting the policy implications of their findings. Relatedly, practitioners should use caution when dedicating resources to areas that research shows encourage political liberalization without considering possible impacts on autocratic survival and, ultimately, democratization. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the factors that research indicates encourage democratic deepening and consolidation cannot be expected to also encourage transition from dictatorship to democracy. Political dynamics in democratic settings do not always translate to autocratic ones.

In this essay, we summarize the major insights we gleaned from our review of research in each of the seven theory families, including over 350 published journal articles, books, and other reports on various determinants of democratization. (We point readers to the full USAID study for details on the particular studies pertinent to each; here we simply summarize the takeaway points.[5]) We then offer some concluding remarks regarding what these insights suggest for democracy promotion today.

Political Leadership

The literature on paths away from authoritarianism that looks at political leadership focuses on how individual actors and/or the distribution of power between

---

5 Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz and Erica Frantz, "Theories of Democratic Change Phase II: Paths Away from Authoritarianism," *DRG Center Working Paper*, USAID Research and Innovation Grants Working Paper Series, 2017, https://www.iie.org/Programs/USAID-Democracy-Fellows-and-Grants-Program/Grants/Grantees/Theories-of-Change#MSU (accessed November 19, 2019).

key political actors can shape political trajectories. These "great man" theories suggest that countries' political futures can be shaped by the preferences and personalities of skilled individuals who happen to hold power at key moments. This literature draws from examples such as the case of South Africa and Nelson Mandela (who fostered democratization) and the case of Zimbabwe and Robert Mugabe (who preserved autocracy). The implication that emerges, regardless of the focal point, is that those interested in paving the way towards democracy should look to the preferences, capabilities, and relative power (with respect to opponents) of key actors.

From a practitioner's perspective, this theme has the potential for actionable implications. If the leader's identity is consequential for bringing about democratization, then practitioners should prioritize allocating resources towards countries led by individuals who possess critical qualities, or seek to promote and protect such individuals.

One problem with this literature, however, is that it tends to underplay economic, demographic, and cultural factors. There are good reasons, in other words, to be suspicious of the argument that simply putting in place the "right" leader will guarantee democratization. We highlight two here. The first is that while "great men" make important choices, we still know little about why certain types come to power in some situations but not others. The second is that many of these explanations seem tautological, given that the expectation is essentially that leaders supportive of democracy are going to be more likely to oversee democratization (and vice versa). One of the big messages that emerges from our review of the literature on political leadership and paths away from authoritarianism is that cultivating "great men" is unlikely to be a fruitful democracy promotion strategy. Democratic leaders may exist, but more often than not democracy comes about because incumbents governing in authoritarian contexts have no better choices.

Political Culture

Research on paths away from authoritarianism focusing on political culture ties specific values and traditions with prospects for democracy. Political culture refers to the attitudes and beliefs that a broad group of people holds that informs their political actions and preferences. The underlying idea here is that different populations will have different responses to the same forces. The studies that fall in this thematic category link certain political cultures with certain patterns of behavior. Thus, in countries where populations hold pro-

democratic values - such as tolerance for opponents, inclusivity, and the imperative for citizens to hold government officials to account - democratization is more likely than those where they do not. Political culture, from this perspective, is both observable and influential. Empirically, clear correlations exist between democratic political culture and democracy.

There are obvious actionable policy implications for practitioners that stem from this research agenda. If it is true that a democratic political culture increases prospects for democratic transition, then resources should be devoted to programs that help foster and develop such values. And, indeed, we see programs all over the world funded by donors that are in line with this agenda, such as civic education programs.

That said, our evaluation of this research suggests that practitioners should be extremely cautious before funding projects related to these themes, if the ultimate goal is pushing authoritarian regimes towards democracy. The evidence linking democratic political culture as a cause of democratization is weak and unpersuasive. There are studies that show that such values are important for democratic consolidation — democracies are more likely to endure when their populations exhibit democratic political cultures. But we simply lack compelling evidence that the same is true in autocratic contexts. In other words, there is no systematic evidence that suggests that changing the specific cultural attributes of a country's citizenry will bolster a country's prospects for democratic transition.

There are a number of methodological challenges in this thematic area that are worth highlighting, as well. First, political cultures are notoriously sticky, meaning that they do not typically exhibit meaningful changes over short periods of time. Though political cultures frequently vary quite a bit from one country to the next, they rarely change dramatically within a country in a manner that lends itself to explaining significant, comparatively rapid political change, as we often see with democratic transitions. Second, though clear, positive correlations exist between democratic political cultures and democracies, existing research has not established clear causal patterns linking the two. Those studies that have identified correlations typically do not offer evaluations that test underlying causal mechanisms: namely, does democratic culture promote democracy, or do democracies cultivate democratic cultures?

There are many compelling reasons to associate specific cultural traits with greater probabilities for democracy. That said, the evidence to support such associations is weak at best. Practitioners should therefore be clear-eyed about efforts to change culture and, in turn, change regimes.

Political Institutions

Research examining the impact of political institutions on paths away from authoritarianism centers on the role that elections, political parties, and legislatures play in fostering such political change. In authoritarian contexts, these sorts of institutions are referred to as "pseudo-democratic," because they typically mirror those we see in democracies, albeit absent any real bite. In other words, such institutions are democratic in name only; they do not meaningfully limit incumbent power, as they do in democracies. Research in this theory family documents a rise in pseudo-democratic institutions since the end of the Cold War and emphasizes the distinctiveness of such systems, often referred to as "gray-zone," "competitive authoritarian," and "hybrid." In addition, some work suggests that, when authoritarian systems collapse, countries with these types of institutions are more likely to experience transitions to stable, functioning democracies than are countries that lack them.

This suggests that practitioners should prioritize democracy-promotion efforts in countries with these pseudo-democratic institutions. Moreover, greater resources should be provided to develop such institutions in authoritarian contexts and strengthen them in those "hybrid" contexts where they have already been established.

It is certainly tempting to link pseudo-democratic institutions with greater odds of democratization. However, our evaluation of existing research in this domain, suggests that this is dangerous territory for practitioners. It is perhaps in this theory family where the distinction between political liberalization and democratization is most relevant and consequential. The adoption of pseudo-democratic institutions is consistent with a movement toward greater political liberalization. Autocracies that suddenly allow multi-party elections in which opposition parties can actually win seats in the legislature are exhibiting political liberalization, in the sense that their political systems are becoming more open to participation and competition. Yet, a wide body of evidence suggests that these pseudo-democratic institutions actually help autocrats stay in power longer by giving them opportunities to coopt opponents, gather information about their popularity, and bolster their domestic and international legitimacy. Thus, when autocrats do establish such institutions, it is impossible for the observer to intuit whether these

changes are part of genuine efforts at political reform or simply a savvy dictatorship's response to changing geo-political incentives. Political liberalization in these instances simply tells us very little about the prospects for meaningful democratic change.

While there is some evidence that institutionalized dictatorships are more likely to democratize upon their collapse than those regimes that lack such structures, such a collapse is likely to take many years to come about. Practitioners must therefore consider the double-edged nature of promoting pseudo-democratic institutions: while the existence of such institutions does seem to increase the chances that democracy will take root if an autocracy falls, those same institutions also limit the likelihood of such a fall occurring in the first place.

From a normative perspective, there are certainly some positives for ordinary citizens when authoritarian regimes adopt institutions that mimic those we see in democracies. These benefits range from allowing members of the opposition to mobilize "above" ground upon the legalization of opposition parties, to holding local officials accountable for poor performance when participatory channels for airing citizen grievances are built. Such positives must surely be considered when assessing the value of pseudo-democratic institutions in dictatorships, but all while remembering that they often come at the expense of longer-lasting authoritarianism.

That said, while it is true that the latest research suggests many things are normatively better for citizens in "politically liberal" dictatorships as opposed to those that are less so, a large body of research has revealed that the gains are even more pronounced for citizens living under democratic rule. Human rights outcomes are better in democracies than in dictatorships, public goods investments are greater, and – as the definition of democracy implies – citizens are able to have more of a say in who will represent them.

Political Economy

Research on political economy and paths away from authoritarianism is grounded in the perspective that structural factors are critical for understanding regime trajectories. These theories emphasize the important role of the economy, with the underlying idea being that when economic times are good, incumbent governments will fare well; when they are bad, incumbent governments will be punished. In other words, the expectation is that prosperous and stable economic conditions correlate with regime stability, while periods of economic crises correlate with regime breakdown. Indeed, many examples illustrative of this dynamic quickly come to mind, such as the economic downturns that brought down the Soviet Union, Egypt under Mubarak, and Indonesia under Suharto. Research in this area also evaluates the extent to which economic development influences political outcomes. Here, the argument is that greater economic prosperity lifts standards of livings and leads to the opening of democratic freedoms (and eventually democratization). This expectation draws from the observation in the mid-20th century that wealth and democracy seem to go together.

From a practitioner's perspective, the theories in this area imply that resources should be devoted towards assisting with economic development (we save our discussion of how factors such as sanctions, which are intended to provoke economic crises, influence political paths in the section that follows).

Though the correlation between economic wealth and levels of democracy is strong, evidence that this is a causal relationship is extremely mixed. In some studies, the evidence supports this expectation, in others the results are mixed, and in others there is little evidence at all. This is perhaps a disappointing assessment, given the optimism of many in the policy community that fostering economic prosperity globally would likewise foster democratic development. Encouraging economic development is not a simple task, of course, but from a normative perspective it is a compelling cause. There are many risks involved with such an effort if democracy promotion is the end goal, however, given what we know about the evidence. For one, there is little way to ensure that economic growth (and in turn greater overall wealth) would not end up prolonging authoritarianism. If the benefits of such prosperity simply land in the hands of the regime leadership, it could use such riches to fund its security forces and buy the support of key groups. Further, there are also examples of authoritarian leaders in places such as East and Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf using economic prosperity as an argument in favor of their continued rule. Thus, economic development could mean longer-lasting dictatorship, as opposed to a movement towards greater democracy.

International Factors

Research on the impact of international factors on moving countries on paths away from authoritarianism is particularly pertinent from the perspective of practitioners. In this branch of research, studies look directly at the effectiveness of international instruments in bringing about political change. Though democratization has only been the goal of such activities

in recent decades, this has evolved into a big industry. Gaining insight into the conditions under which such efforts are likely to bear fruit is therefore of critical importance.

Research in this area has examined the impact of a number of instruments, such as foreign aid and economic sanctions. The actionable policy implications here are quite obvious. In our review of this research, foreign pressures can incentivize movements towards democracy under certain conditions. Military interventions with this goal in mind have been the least likely to be successful; close political ties or linkages with existing, well-established democracies, such as the United States or countries of the European Union (particularly in the period just after the Cold War) do seem to have increased prospects of democracy, however. Foreign aid is more of a mixed bag. In some instances, foreign aid has simply propped up authoritarian governments, rather than bringing about any real political change. That said, there is some recent evidence that targeted aid geared specifically towards supporting democracy can be effective, particularly in supporting areas such as elections, development of civil society, and support for free media.

It is worth mentioning that research on international factors as they pertain to democratization has also looked at diffusion effects, the idea being that events transpiring near a country's borders raise that country's probability of experiencing something similar. Surely political change does not occur in a vacuum, as events such as the Colored Revolutions illustrate. This idea also finds support in quantitative literature, as a number of studies have shown that geographic and temporal clustering of regime change does occur.

The actionable implications of this research agenda are perhaps that greater resources should be devoted for the purposes of democracy promotion in countries whose neighbors have recently undergone such a transition. That said, the mechanisms underlying these relationships are still unclear, and it is still unknown whether diffusion effects increase the chance of democratization specifically or regime change broadly speaking, which might include the emergence of a new dictatorship.

Triggering Events

Sudden events, such as coups, protests, and natural disasters, are often catalysts for political change. We refer to these events as "triggering" events due to their potential to set in motion movements towards greater democracy. Research in this area draws from theories

of "threshold models" and "information cascades" to highlight the ways in which such events can change pro-reform citizens' calculations over whether to make their preferences known. That said, the causal mechanisms identified vary quite a bit, given the distinct nature of the types of events under analysis.

Studies that look at protest, for example, highlight the ways in which non-violent protests in particular can spread with rapidity and elevate the odds of a democratic transition. Those that examine coups, by contrast, emphasize how such seizures of the state can create opportunities for democracy that would not exist otherwise. The termination of civil war can serve a similar function, as can natural disasters and elections. In the case of leadership death in office (by natural causes), the research is less optimistic; there are few instances of the death of a leader bringing about significant political change.

For practitioners, if specific triggering events create openings for transition to democracy, then interventions in the aftermath of such events (which are often easily observable, though not always easily predictable) should increase democratization prospects. Practitioners should therefore time their resource allocation in conjunction with the emergence of these developments.

Our evaluation of this research suggests that while most triggering events do indeed generate opportunities for political change, there are risks involved. Sometimes such change leads to democratization (particularly in the case of non-violent protests). Other times, however, it simply installs a new dictatorship. Even worse, in some instances, the regime emerges from the triggering event unscathed and responds by ratcheting up repression against regime opponents. These challenges aside, it is possible that greater pro-democracy resource allocation at the time of a triggering event could help push countries towards the first outcome. This is, perhaps, one of the more promising domains for pro-democracy intervention efforts, with the caveat that these events by nature can be hard to anticipate.

State Capacity

Research on state capacity focuses on how different state features affect regime trajectories. State capacity has multiple meanings in the literature, but the basic idea centers on the ability of the state to entrench itself in society and control resources. Some studies in this field look at sequencing, examining whether a strong state is an important precondition for democracy. These studies have mixed findings. Other studies focus instead on the relationship between state capacity and

authoritarian durability. Here the message is that the two are positively correlated, but – on the bright side – also that durable democracy is more likely should the regime collapse. There is one exception, however: states with greater capacity to extract taxes are more likely to experience political liberalization (though this research does not look at democratization specifically).

Arguments in this literature imply that practitioners should be wary before devoting resources towards building the capacity of the state, apart from improving the capacity for extraction. Greater state capacity is associated with greater regime durability.

The policy messages that emerge from our analysis of this area of research are complicated. While devoting resources towards strengthening the state's capacity could end up prolonging the regime, it could also improve prospects for stable democracy should the regime transition. Moreover, from a practical perspective, building the state's capacity could lead to positive outcomes for ordinary citizens – through investments in security and the delivery of social services – even if it does not put the country on a path towards democratization.

Concluding Remarks

Research on paths away from authoritarianism has identified a number of factors that are thought to be important in bringing about democratization. That said, not all of these factors are actionable from the perspective of practitioners, and not all of the studies that uncover such relationships hold up to further scrutiny. Moreover, our extensive review of this literature suggests that evidence for many key hypotheses is mixed. Examples are wide-ranging, including research dedicated to economic inequality, resource wealth, civil war termination, state building, and civic culture, to name a few. This implies that our baseline uncertainty about the causes of successful democratization is perhaps greater than we might commonly assume.

A larger problem is that the literature often conflates two meaningfully different outcomes – a movement away from authoritarianism is distinct from a democratic transition. Importantly, the former does not guarantee the latter. This is critical from a practitioner's perspective, given that resources devoted towards pushing countries towards political liberalization that fall short of democratization may have the unintended effect of prolonging authoritarian rule. We simply do not know as observers whether events consistent with political liberalization are part of a savvy dictatorship's

efforts to extend its rule or a genuine attempt at political reform. We also cannot predict whether political liberalization will meaningfully empower regime opponents and develop in ways that get out of dictators' control, thus leading to more-meaningful political change. The messages are twofold: 1) researchers need to take greater care in terms of the concepts they emphasize and how they operationalize them, making sure that political liberalization and democratization are treated as distinct and measured as such; and 2) practitioners need to use caution when advocating an approach that pushes for political liberalization that falls short of democratization.

Democracy Promotion and Conflict: Successes and Continuing Challenges

Jennifer Raymond Dresden, *Georgetown University*; *Thomas Edward Flores,* *George Mason University*; *Irfan Nooruddin*, *Georgetown University*

Introduction

Generations of scholars have investigated the origins of liberal constitutional democracy and the process by which citizen majorities wrest power from elites by demanding representation and accountability. More recently, scholars have had to acknowledge that transitions to democracy are not inevitable, and that authoritarianism has proven more adaptive and resilient than they once thought and hoped. The result has been a greater focus on understanding the variety of forms authoritarian institutions take, and the repertoire of legitimation and survival tactics autocrats employ to preserve power. The lessons of these two rich bodies of scholarship are comprehensively synthesized in the first two USAID Theories of Democratic Change reports.

The empirical record of democratization efforts, particularly since the end of the Cold War, highlights an especially important factor: internal armed conflict is inextricably entwined with the process and prospects for democracy. The end of great power competition and a resurgent United Nations facilitated the conclusion of any number of protracted civil conflicts in which one or more sides had been supported by the United States or Soviet Union (Boutros-Ghali 1992). What followed was a new chapter in democracy promotion, what Marina Ottoway termed 'democratic reconstructionism,' in

which international actors simultaneously tackled the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and democratic state-building, with limited success (Flores and Nooruddin 2009a, 2016; Ottaway 2003). Complicating these efforts still further is the mounting evidence uncovered by scholars and recognized by practitioners that democratization begets conflict, or at least creates permissive conditions for conflict to emerge. The very institutions we pursue following conflict might make it easier for conflict to endure.

The third report in the USAID series, which we authored, examined over six hundred books and articles in pursuit of meaningful, policy-relevant lessons to offer democracy promoters working in post-conflict settings (Dresden, Flores, and Nooruddin 2019). It identifies thirty-five hypotheses that together provide a comprehensive framework that clarifies what we have learned and how much remains to be done based on the highest standards of scientific research. In this essay, we focus on two broad lessons for the future of democracy promotion. The first is what we label the 'levels of analysis' problem that we argue bedevils this research area. Much effort by democracy promoters focuses on improving attitudes and behaviors that could be described as lower-order attributes of democratic practice at a micro-level (e.g., political participation; civic skills). Yet we know little about whether such changes actually bolster broader patterns of democratic practice in the long-run. Our second lesson questions the possibility of democratic accumulation through such "tactical" successes. Conflict remakes society by redistributing power; this new balance of power is codified by whatever post-conflict institutions are established. Political winners following conflict can use the executive authority of the state to consolidate rule and to persecute former enemies, undermining democratic practice.

Before we begin, we confess our vulnerability to a common mistake in any such effort: in seeking to arrive at generalizable conclusions useful for policy audiences, we may end up building a caricature of democracy promotion that no practitioner would endorse or even recognize. A first step therefore is to describe more fully the maturation of the practice of post-conflict democratization since its inception in the 1990s.

The Maturation of Democracy Promotion in Conflictual Societies

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, as the Third Wave spread to Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, democracy promotion frequently arrived in conflictual societies. By one estimate, a quarter of all national elections are held in the shadow of either active or recently concluded civil conflict (Flores and Nooruddin 2016). Early efforts at supporting democracy in such societies encountered grave challenges, including missteps by an international democracy promotion community that had limited prior experience in post-conflict countries. Authors often critiqued these efforts for holding elections too quickly after the cessation of violence, risking renewed conflict, stalled economic reconstruction, and a return to illiberalism (Brancati and Snyder 2011, 2013; Flores and Nooruddin 2012; Paris 2004). Thorny questions emerged. Should ex-combatants contest elections, even when they had committed atrocities? How could democracy be built in 'failing' states? A common critique of international actors was that they were impatient for exit and viewed the holding of an election as an escape hatch: 'aid amnesia' could turn the international community's attention away after a first post-conflict election, when democracy and peace could be undone.

These early results shaped the perspective of democracy promoters and spurred major changes in their approach. Democracy promotion at once grew more ambitious and more modest. Its ambitions grew as democracy promoters increasingly recognized the need to transform institutions that support and manage electoral competition. Whether through supporting former armed groups in their transition to political parties through aid and training (Matanock 2017) or building conflict-managing institutions that can prevent election violence (Von Borzyskowski 2019), practitioners sought to build democracy's supporting infrastructure. They lengthened timelines and expanded their missions.

Democracy promotion also grew more modest, however. Tempered by past failures, programming shifted towards technical goals that would not openly confront leaders in weak semi-democratic regimes. Programs focused on realizable, measurable goals that would allow NGOs to demonstrate their utility to funders (Bush 2016). This move also featured a partnership with scholars unimaginable only twenty years ago. Democracy promotion efforts now variously target voters' attitudes towards violence, their ability to hold incumbents accountable, and their propensity to cooperate across ethnic lines. This attempt to shape societal norms in addition to formal institutions is ambitious in vision and in methodology. Along with academic partners, democracy promoters have utilized cutting-edge experimental techniques to evaluate whether programs succeed in their goals. This results in greater ability to identify the drivers of the successes and failures of democracy promotion, allowing scholars to redesign programs for greater effectiveness in different contexts.

This shift is also modest, however, as practitioners have focused on specific technical goals that can be measured in a short period of time.

The Levels-of-Analysis Problem

This new practice of democracy promotion nevertheless confronts deep obstacles arising directly from the successes described above. Our analysis identifies two such challenges. The first concerns the success of randomized evaluations of democracy promotion and state building programs in conflictual societies. Such interventions predominantly evaluate programs' *tactical* successes: that is, they evaluate whether programming improves a particular low-level indicator of democratic performance. Practically, this involves measuring micro- and meso-level impacts. While some studies focus on citizen knowledge and attitudes (Blair, Karim, and Morse 2019; Gottlieb 2016), others focus on meso-level results, such as village-level collective action (Fearon, Humphreys, and Weinstein 2009), incumbent performance (Grossman and Michelitch 2018), voting patterns (Mvukiyehe and Samii 2017), and election violence (Collier and Vicente 2014).

Many such studies encourage cautious optimism. Experimental evidence suggests that such programming bolsters attitudes and behaviors that strengthen democracy. Knowing that distributing incumbent performance scorecards increases their efforts on behalf of constituents in certain circumstances (Grossman and Michelitch 2018), for instance, is encouraging not only because increased effort by elected officials is an unalloyed good but because we assume that it strengthens democratic accountability, which in turn deepens democratic practice more broadly. In sum, following Coppedge et al. (2011), programming improves an *indicator* of democratic performance, which in turn should bolster a *component* of democracy, which in turn bolsters democratic-institutional performance as a whole. The impacts, in time, should flow up towards a stronger democracy.

Still, this optimism should be tempered by a fair amount of skepticism. First, experimental evaluations of democracy promotion programming cannot capture how the complex effects of a program combine to affect higher-order components of democracy. Two recent studies of post-war programming in Liberia illustrate this difficulty. Blair, Karim, and Morse (2019) find that a randomized rollout of police reform in Liberia increased citizens' knowledge of the law and confidence in their property rights, while reducing rates for certain crimes. Yet they also find that the program did not bolster citizen trust in the police, court system, or the national government. Mvukiyehe and Samii (2017), meanwhile, find that a civic education initiative and security intervention shifted several citizen attitudes positively, including enthusiasm for national political participation, yet also resulted in increased reports of exposure to political intimidation (even though they find little objective evidence that such intimidation increased). In each case, scholars identified the short-term effects of a program on specific indicators of broader concepts of democracy and peace. Deciphering the impact of programming on higher-order concepts of democracy, such as citizen trust in institutions or participation in national politics, is difficult because programming's effects on different indicators contradict each other. Such findings might be valuable for program implementers but are puzzling for those interested in whether programming improves higher-order democracy promotion.

Second, any optimism is rooted in the implicit claim that programming's *tactical* success in promoting micro-level (e.g., confidence in property rights or an increased tendency to question politicians) and meso-level change (e.g., increased collective action) will accumulate over time into *strategic* success in promoting democracy. As waves of programs address indicator-level democratic performance, the effects will accumulate, flowing up to broader attributes of democracy and eventually democratic performance as a whole. In a sense, such democracy promotion works but only if we equate indicator-level successes with higher-order component-level success. But these evaluations, however well-identified, cannot tell us whether their localized, short-term impacts lead to more democratic outcomes in the longer-run, much less whether such effects would replicate across widely varying post-conflict contexts. For better or worse, those conclusions require a leap of faith. The long-term effects of programs on indicator-level outcomes are unclear: it is entirely possible, for example, that intervening events in Liberia could wipe out the positive, short-term effects of civic education on citizen voting patterns. Alternatively, a successful attempt to strengthen government effectiveness may merely entrench an elected autocrat's claim to legitimacy.

Even if these effects are sustained, will programmatically induced shifts in political participation lead to deepening democracy? The answer is unclear. Theoretically, there is reason to doubt the more sanguine assumptions of democracy promoters and scholars. Huntington's (1968) classic treatise on changing societies argued that increasing participation and expectations in the face of weak institutions could lead to violent political collapse. Ironically, Sexton's

(2017) experimental evaluation of a program to increase accountability in Peru bolsters this case, finding that the intervention increased citizen support for (potentially violent) unrest as a means to communicate frustration. In the long-run, only rigorous studies of democratic change can answer the question of whether democracy promotion's lower-order successes translate into higher-order promotion. Such assessments are challenging, however, precisely because of non-random assignment in programming and the long time-horizons needed to detect success. A recent review concludes that the impacts of foreign aid on conflict prevention, post-conflict peace-building, state-building, and democratization are unclear and likely dependent on a host of contextual factors (Findley 2018).

Promoting Power

Our uncertainty regarding the aggregate impact of tactical successes derives in large part from the fact that democracy promotion in conflictual societies must grapple with the realities of power. Democratic reform requires persuading elites to constrain themselves. While democracy promotion might aspire to establish *de jure* constraints on politicians' power, redistributing *de facto* power is a different challenge altogether. Macro-level democratic change counters the entrenched interests of those who would stand to lose most under a new democratic system. This inescapable *political* fact is the biggest obstacle for successful democracy promotion.

Power complicates democracy promotion. First, post-conflict parties' *de facto* power often derives from wartime processes of violence and survival that may or may not leave them with robust ties to voters. Their modes of participation in democratic practice (including elections) are conditioned by this legacy and the capabilities it leaves them (Daly 2019; Dresden 2017; Huang 2016; Ishiyama and Batta 2011; Ishiyama and Widmeier 2013). This does not leave all parties equally equipped for - or committed to - democracy. Yet the process of transitioning from war to politics institutionalizes and formalizes their positions. In extreme cases, armed conflict leaves one powerful party in firm control of national politics (Lyons 2016) and this dominance is often long-lasting (De Zeeuw 2010; Muriaas, Rakner, and Skage 2016).

Nor do voters consistently provide a robust counterweight to these parties. Early theories of post-conflict democratization posited that democracy would empower voters as the pro-peace arbiters of political conflict between formerly warring factions (Wantchekon and Neeman 2002). Instead, the experience of conflict is politically polarizing (Bauer et al. 2016). Although voters do prioritize security over other issues in post-conflict elections, their understandings of the conflict and its violence are refracted through the narratives promoted by the most powerful organized actors – precisely those whose power was gained through war (Daly 2019).

Finally, the insecurity that permeates the post-conflict period raises the stakes of any election. The goal of incumbents to preserve power becomes an existential imperative in order to avoid persecution by their aspirant successors. Under such circumstances, the effectiveness of democracy assistance depends in large part on the balance of domestic political power among elites (Zürcher et al. 2013, 26). This difficult operating environment leads to international interventions that produce programmatic results rather than institutional change (De Zeeuw 2005) and target the easiest cases instead of those in greatest need (Flores and Nooruddin 2009b). This undoubtedly hinders the aggregation of tactical successes into macro-level change. It may also help to explain why we see so few cases of robust, systemic democratization after contemporary civil wars.

If armed conflict provides incentives and resources to actors who will ultimately undermine democratic change, perhaps democracy promoters delude themselves about the scope of possible impact. All of this could be taken as an indictment of post-conflict democracy promotion as a waste of resources. Yet there is also room for a more optimistic interpretation. If wartime concentration of power constrains democracy promotion's effectiveness, the presumptive prescription is to build the capacity of actors and institutions that can offer multiple centers of power in the medium to long run and thus challenge authoritarian consolidation.

The conflict itself may hold the key to success. Major armed conflict fundamentally disrupts existing hierarchies. This enables the problematic violent redistribution of power discussed above. Yet these structural breaks can also produce windows of opportunity for democracy promotion. How might democracy promoters capitalize on these cracks in the system to support longer-term processes of change? An example is useful.

The rapidly growing field of research on women's empowerment during civil war has shown that the pressures of conflict break down patriarchal norms and facilitate new networks that result in women taking up previously unavailable roles outside the home and politically empower them in the post-conflict period (Fuest 2008; Tripp 2015). Conflict disrupts existing power structures in ways that provide voice and political

inclusion for a previously disempowered group. For example, many post-conflict countries see a higher proportion of women in the national legislature (Fallon, Swiss, and Viterna 2012; Hughes 2009; Hughes and Tripp 2015). The area of women's empowerment would thus seem to be ripe for international programming to support such processes (Freedman 2015; Mageza-Barthel 2015; Tripp 2015).

Yet even these successes run up against new or residual structures of power. Women's pursuit of empowerment may be challenged by reasserted patriarchal social structures (Berry 2017), uneven access to legal and other protections based on status and networks (Lake, Muthaka, and Walker 2016), or a mismatch in gender power dynamics inside and outside the home (Calderón, Gáfaro, and Ibáñez 2011). By understanding such challenges, interventions can be more effectively designed and sustained. This could empower local actors to preserve, expand, and aggregate these opportunities, facilitating the slow-moving process of democratization. Unfortunately, even in our example this theory of change is largely hypothetical. We do not yet fully know how and if international assistance facilitates genuine, lasting empowerment for all women in a country.

In short, whatever the content of individual programs, democracy promotion cannot escape the reality that its cumulative effects are not just technical; they are political. Especially under conditions of insecurity, those who stand to lose from these efforts will always have strong incentives to subvert them. Programming can only do so much.

Conclusions

Our purpose in this essay is not to bury democracy promotion, but to praise it. Democracy promotion has taken new forms at once more ambitious and more modest. Programming still seeks a fundamental socio-political transformation of societies caught in cycles of political violence and repression. Yet democracy promotion, chastened by past experiences from Iraq to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has largely abandoned the pursuit of wholesale regime change in favor of small, tactical victories. This approach acknowledges democratization as a long-term process over which democracy promoters have only limited, but hopefully compounding, influence.

Accordingly, the question we ask is, "Is democracy promotion healthy?". Our answer is decidedly less optimistic. The move to experimental evaluations that precisely quantify the impact of democracy programming relies on the unsubstantiated hope that

small shifts in micro- and meso-level attitudes and behaviors will persist after the evaluation and deepen the systemic practice of democracy in the long-run. Our concern here is that the levels-of-analysis problem and the presence of violent actors who resist democratic practice pose fundamental barriers to democracy promotion. Though we hope that the incremental successes of programming deepen democracy in the long-run, we ultimately cannot expect to detect such effects for years if not decades. We also have good reason to doubt that this occurs: political elites whose *de facto* political power depends on violence will resist democratic practice, as democratic backsliding in Uganda and Cambodia years after the conclusion of their civil wars demonstrates.

These concerns inform our view of democracy promotion's future. A more optimistic vision requires today's advanced democracies to recommit to democratization and peacebuilding as foreign policy goals. In such an environment, tactical, bottom-up programming could combine with diplomatic, top-down pressure to support democracy in conflictual societies, tackling the levels-of-analysis and power dilemmas we identify above. At its best, this paired approach could turn the tide at pivotal movements, as when citizens demand an end to authoritarian rule. We do not see trends in this direction, however, as leaders in Europe and the United States downplay democratization as a major foreign policy goal. So, for the foreseeable future at least, we expect a continuation of current trends, as democracy promoters -- and the citizens they seek to empower -- await their political moment.

References

Bauer, Michal et al. 2016. "Can War Foster Cooperation?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30(3): 249–74.

Berry, Marie E. 2017. "Barriers to Women's Progress After Atrocity: Evidence from Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Gender & Society* 31(6): 830–53.

Blair, Robert A., Sabrina M. Karim, and Benjamin S. Morse. 2019. "Establishing the Rule of Law in Weak and War-Torn States: Evidence from a Field Experiment with the Liberian National Police." *American Political Science Review* 113(3): 641–57.

Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. 1992. *An Agenda for Peace*. New York: United Nations.

Brancati, Dawn, and Jack Snyder. 2013. "Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Postconflict Stability." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57(5): 822–53.

Brancati, Dawn, and Jack L. Snyder. 2011. "Rushing to the Polls: The Causes of Premature Postconflict Elections." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55(3): 469–92.

Bush, Sarah Sunn. 2016. *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators.* Cambridge University Press.

Calderón, Valentina, Margarita Gáfaro, and Ana María Ibáñez. 2011. "Forced Migration, Female Labor Force Participation, and Intra-Household Bargaining: Does Conflict Empower Women?"

Collier, Paul, and Pedro C. Vicente. 2014. "Votes and Violence: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria." *The Economic Journal* 124(574): F327–55.

Coppedge, Michael et al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(2): 247–67.

Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2019. "Voting for Victors: Why Violent Actors Win Postwar Elections." *World Politics* 71(4): 747–805.

De Zeeuw, Jeroen. 2005. "Projects Do Not Create Institutions: The Record of Democracy Assistance in Post-Conflict Societies." *Democratization* 12(4): 481–504.

———. 2010. "'Sons of War': Parties and Party Systems in Post-War El Salvador and Cambodia." *Democratization* 17(6): 1176–1201.

Dresden, Jennifer Raymond. 2017. "From Combatants to Candidates: Electoral Competition and the Legacy of Armed Conflict." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34(3): 240–63.

Dresden, Jennifer Raymond, Thomas Edward Flores, and Irfan Nooruddin. 2019. *Theories of Democratic Change, Phase III: Transitions from Conflict.* Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development..

Fallon, Kathleen M., Liam Swiss, and Jocelyn Viterna. 2012. "Resolving the Democracy Paradox: Democratization and Women's Legislative Representation in Developing Nations, 1975 to 2009." *American Sociological Review* 77(3): 380–408.

Fearon, James D, Macartan Humphreys, and Jeremy M Weinstein. 2009. "Can Development Aid Contribute to Social Cohesion after Civil War? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia." *American Economic Review* 99(2): 287–91.

Findley, Michael G. 2018. "Does Foreign Aid Build Peace?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 359–84.

Flores, Thomas Edward, and Irfan Nooruddin. 2009a. "Democracy under the Gun: Understanding Postconflict Economic Recovery." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(1): 3–29.

———. 2009b. "Financing the Peace: Evaluating World Bank Post-Conflict Assistance Programs." *The Review of International Organizations* 4(1): 1–27.

———. 2012. "The Effect of Elections on Postconflict Peace and Reconstruction." *The Journal of Politics* 74(2): 558–70.

———. 2016. *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Freedman, Jane. 2015. *Gender, Violence and Politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo.* London: Routledge.

Fuest, Veronika. 2008. "'This Is the Time to Get in Front': Changing Roles and Opportunities for Women in Liberia." *African Affairs* 107(427): 201–24.

Gottlieb, Jessica. 2016. "Greater Expectations: A Field Experiment to Improve Accountability in Mali." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 143–57.

Grossman, Guy, and Kristin Michelitch. 2018. "Information Dissemination, Competitive Pressure, and Politician Performance between Elections: A Field Experiment in Uganda." *American Political Science Review* 112(2): 280–301.

Huang, Reyko. 2016. *The Wartime Origins of Democratization: Civil War, Rebel Governance, and Political Regimes.* Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, Melanie M. 2009. "Armed Conflict, International Linkages, and Women's Parliamentary Representation in Developing Nations." *Social Problems* 56(1): 174–204.

Hughes, Melanie M., and Aili Mari Tripp. 2015. "Civil War and Trajectories of Change in Women's Political Representation in Africa, 1985–2010." *Social Forces* 93(4): 1513–40.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies.* The Henry L. Stimson Lectures Series edition. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Ishiyama, John, and Anna Batta. 2011. "Swords into Plowshares: The Organizational Transformation of Rebel Groups into Political Parties." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44(4): 369–79.

Ishiyama, John, and Michael Widmeier. 2013. "Territorial Control, Levels of Violence, and the Electoral Performance of Former Rebel Political Parties After Civil

Wars." *Civil Wars* 15(4): 531–50.

Lake, Milli, Ilot Muthaka, and Gabriella Walker. 2016. "Gendering Justice in Humanitarian Spaces: Opportunity and (Dis)Empowerment Through Gender-Based Legal Development Outreach in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo." *Law & Society Review* 50(3): 539–74.

Lyons, Terrence. 2016. "Victorious Rebels and Postwar Politics." *Civil Wars* 18(2): 160–74.

Mageza-Barthel, Rirhandu. 2015. *Mobilizing Transnational Gender Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. Routledge.

Matanock, Aila M. 2017. *Electing Peace: From Civil Conflict to Political Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muriaas, Ragnhild L., Lise Rakner, and Ingvild Aagedal Skage. 2016. "Political Capital of Ruling Parties after Regime Change: Contrasting Successful Insurgencies to Peaceful pro-Democracy Movements." *Civil Wars* 18(2): 175–91.

Mvukiyehe, Eric, and Cyrus Dara Samii. 2017. "Promoting Democracy in Fragile States: Insights from a Field Experiment in Liberia." *World Development* 95: 254–67.

Ottaway, Marina. 2003. "Promoting Democracy after Conflict: The Difficult Choices." *International Studies Perspectives* 4(3): 314–22.

Paris, Roland. 2004. *At War's End*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Sexton, Renard. 2017. "The Unintended Consequences of Bottom-Up Accountability: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Peru." Working Paper, Princeton University.

Tripp, Aili Mari. 2015. *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Von Borzyskowski, Inken. 2019. *The Credibility Challenge: How Democracy Assistance Influences Election Violence*. Cornell University Press.

Wantchekon, Leonard, and Zvika Neeman. 2002. "A Theory of Post-Civil War Democratization." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 14(4): 439–64.

Zürcher, Christoph et al. 2013. *Costly Democracy: Peacebuilding and Democratization After War*. 1 edition. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Democracy Promotion in an Age of Democratic Backsliding

Ellen Lust, *University of Göteborg*; ***David Waldner***, *University of Virginia*

In *Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding* (Lust and Waldner 2015), we surveyed the literature on democratic transition and consolidation in order to consider what we can learn about the relatively new phenomenon of democratic backsliding. We grouped existing literature into six "theory families," one of which was international factors – including democracy promotion. Here, we probe issues of democracy promotion more deeply. It is an opportune time to do so.

Much of what we think we know about democracy promotion stems from studies spanning the three decades of the Third Wave of democratization. Some of the more optimistic findings about the potential of targeted promotion efforts to enhance democracy spanned a relatively short time frame from the late 1980s to the early 2000s (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson 2007; Scott and Steele 2011). With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that these works emerged at the dawn of a period since roughly 2000 that Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) have called the "Third Wave of Autocratization." In earlier work we characterized backsliding as relatively fine-grained and incremental degrees of change *within* regimes, to distinguish it from classic transitions across regime types. Democratic backsliding, we argued, (Waldner and Lust 2018, 95), "makes elections less competitive without entirely undermining the electoral mechanism; it restricts participation without explicitly abolishing norms of universal franchise seen as constitutive of contemporary democracy; and it loosens constraints of accountability by eroding norms of answerability and punishment, where answerability refers to the obligation of officials to publicize and justify their actions, and punishment refers to the capacity of either citizens or alternative governing agencies to impose negative consequences for undesirable actions or violations of sanctioned procedures." Because these actions are almost always initiated by elected heads of government, it is highly unlikely that those same executives would invite democracy promotion.

These changed circumstances invite a reassessment of some older beliefs, considering whether any lessons learned can be extended into the current era. Governing elites of nascent democracies might have welcomed democracy promotion in the past, but those who have

recently initiated democratic backsliding are much less likely to entertain these interventions. Thus, our question: in an age of democratic backsliding, is democracy promotion still a viable enterprise?

Here, we focus on the causal knowledge that successful democracy promotion would require. We write this essay just after the publication of the Afghanistan Papers and the emergence of a wrenching political crisis in Iraq (Whitlock, 2019; Rubin 2019). The evident and costly failures of nation-building in Afghanistan and Iraq reaffirm our conviction that any discussion of democracy promotion must be predicated on reliable knowledge about whether interventions will have the intended consequences. Have we accumulated sufficient causal knowledge to guide and justify democracy-promoting intervention?

First, we consider to what extent the discipline's knowledge about democratization provides useful lessons for democracy promoters. Second, we take a "bottom-up" approach, looking at the extent to which actual efforts at democracy promotion, typically focused on more short-term and proximate factors, have made a measurable and generalizable contribution to democratic transitions or consolidation. Our answers to both questions leave us quite skeptical about the utility of democracy promotion.

A Contemporary Mirror for Princes?

"Mirror for Princes" refers to a genre of literature in which political thinkers advised their rulers how to organize politics in an increasingly secular, post-feudal Europe. In this section, we pose four questions whose answers would determine whether we scholars of comparative politics should continue this tradition. First, to what extent have scholars developed, tested, and confirmed general and parsimonious theories of the determinants of democratization? Second, to what extent can these general theories guide interventions in particular contexts? Knowing that some element is a likely causal factor of democratic outcomes does not mean that we know how to devise relevant treatments. We might believe that income and democracy are related in the long-term without knowing how to produce an increase in income, for example. Other theoretical treatments – religious beliefs or ethnic heterogeneity – would of course not be attributes that we could easily or ethically manipulate. Still other treatments, like constitutional arrangements, might require the pairing of highly abstract and general knowledge with context-specific knowledge. Third, to the extent that such theories exist, do we have reason to believe that policymakers will adopt our theory-derived best

practices? Finally, to the extent that such theories exist and inform interventions, do we have confidence that they would produce substantively meaningful increases in levels of democracy that would not have occurred in the absence of those interventions? Some treatments have heterogeneous effects based on perhaps unknown unit-specific features; alternatively, we might imagine that some of our "units" refuse "treatment."

The literature on democracy promotion has largely ignored this full suite of questions. A quantitative study of foreign aid and democracy, for example, would reasonably seek correlations between levels of aid and levels of democracy, without worrying about the larger set of questions. A debate about the future of democracy promotion does not have the luxury of such a narrow perspective. To answer the first and most fundamental question, let's quickly consider the state of the debate of three theory "families": political economy, political culture, and political institutions.

Six decades after Seymour Martin Lipset (1959)'s seminal analysis of the link between income and democracy, most scholars support the claim that observed associations between income and democracy are not spurious. However, several contentious issues remain (Boix and Stokes 2002; Boix 2003; Cheibub and Vreeland 2011; Houle 2009; Przeworski and Limongi 1997). First, scholars debate whether the relevant condition is the level, or distribution, of income. Second, they debate whether some facet of income directly causes democratic transitions or is unrelated but promotes democratic *survival*. Third, there appears to be unexplained temporal heterogeneity, with a seemingly strong positive link between income and democracy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a much weaker or non-existent link for much of the post-World War II period, and, more recently, a trend in which countries make the transition to democracy at much lower levels of income (Boix and Stokes 2002; Haggard and Kaufman 2012; Slater, Smith, and Nair 2014; Bermeo and Yashar 2016). Finally, there is ongoing debate about heterogeneous effects based on sources of income, especially whether oil-derived income is democracy-promoting or democracy-inhibiting (Ross 2001, 2012; Haber and Menaldo 2011; Jones Luong and Weinthal, 2010).

The sheer volume of studies that treat income as either an independent or a control variable might mask the extent of these disagreements. While there might be broad agreement that income "matters" in some way, this is not equivalent to claiming that theories linking income to democracy have been shown to be valid across time and space. Not surprisingly, there is little evidence that foreign aid (including development assistance), is

consistently associated with democratic outcomes, with scholars finding no effect (Knack 2004), a consistently negative effect (Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal Querol 20008; DiLorenzo 2018), a heterogeneous effect based on either donor or recipient characteristics (Bermeo 2011), or a positive but very small effect (Kersting and Kilby, 2014).

Consider next theories linking culture and democracy. Many of these theories pertain to relatively durable cultural features like religion or ethnic diversity that would produce no knowledge relevant to any reasonable and ethical form of democracy promotion. Other scholars make strong claims about the democracy-enhancing attributes of a civic culture (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). We have evidence that targeted interventions can inculcate higher levels of civicness, at least in the short-term among the relatively small subset of the population exposed to civics training (Finkel 2003; Finkel, Horowitz, and Rojo-Mendoza 2012). However, systematic data for evaluating the civic culture hypothesis date back only to the 1980s, so we cannot study the link between civic culture and democracy for the first and second waves of democracy or their reverse waves. There are ongoing debates about how to measure civic culture, and significant concerns about our ability to disentangle the possible effects of culture from the possible effects of economic development that is closely associated with civicness (Sokolov 2018; Teorell and Hadenius 2006; Coppedge 2012). Finally, many country studies have found democratic transitions in either the absence of widespread civic culture or the absence of democratic transitions in the presence of civicness. Not surprisingly, those studies that have found evidence that targeted interventions can raise civicness among study participants conspicuously avoid the claim that this induced civicness has been a critical contributor to democratic transitions, democratic deepening, or democratic survival.

Compared to theories of political economy or political culture, theories of political institutions and democracy should receive priority in studies of democracy promotion, as institutional variables could, in principle at least, be amenable to interventions in the form of constitutional engineering. Despite this promising avenue of research, theories remain underdeveloped and empirical findings are at best ambiguous. Consider the claim that presidential democracies are intrinsically more fragile than parliamentary democracies (Linz 1991; Stepan and Skach 1993). There is limited empirical support for this proposition, and there is a very high likelihood that the observed relationship is largely due to omitted variable bias or sample selection bias (Shugart and Carey, 1992; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Cheibub

2007).

The other major strand of institutional theorizing focuses on electoral systems, distinguishing power-concentrating systems with majoritarian electoral systems from power-sharing systems with proportional representation. Pippa Norris (2008) and Andrew Reynolds (2011) both report a positive relationship between measures of power-sharing and democracy scores. But the usual caveats about drawing causal inferences from observational data with selection on observables apply here with great force. On the one hand, these studies use pooled data that does not distinguish cross-case and within-case variance. On the other hand, it is very reasonable to doubt that models with more than a half-dozen covariates adequately identify treatment effects given the near certainty of both endogeneity bias and sample selection bias (Pepinksy 2013).

It is worth reflecting for a moment on the reasons why these studies of political institutions do not support strong claims about constitutional engineering. The first concern is about sample-selection bias: a country that debates optimal constitutional design – and that invites the contributions of foreign experts – has already been "selected" out of the pool of strong autocracies; it is no surprise that constitutional engineers do not operate in China or North Korea, or that foreign experts were consulted in Iraq after 2003 but not in Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein. Without accounting for selection, we cannot assume that constitutional engineering is an all-purpose tool of democracy promotion. Moreover, it seems likely that those ruling elites that select power-sharing institutions might differ in unmeasured ways from political elites that select power-concentrating institutions. Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie (2015), for example, find that the adoption of power-sharing arrangements in the immediate aftermath of a civil war makes it more likely that a country will achieve at least minimal forms of democracy. This effect, however, largely disappears when taking into account whether the conflict ended by way of decisive military victory or negotiated settlement. The authors suggest that this negative finding might reflect model misspecification, but this defense only points to the need for further research into selection effects.

Even if we were to accept one of these general theories as being a close approximation of the best available model of democracy, we would still face the second-order problem of crafting context-specific interventions. Even if we had consensus about optimal practices derived from one part of the world, it is not self-evident that these would work as advertised in other locations. Francis Fukuyama powerfully critiques this "best-

practice" mentality, arguing that "[s]uccessful programs are often idiosyncratic, involving what James Scott has labeled *metis* – the ability to use local knowledge to create local solutions" (2002, p. 82). To achieve tailored interventions, we would need to pair general theoretical knowledge with country-level expertise, analogous to what is sometimes called "personalized medicine," or the crafting of interventions to individual- or group-level specificities. There is little reason to believe that we have the knowledge needed to do so. In late 2002 and early 2003, there was a lively debate about how to "make Iraq democratic," with contributions from Iraq specialists and experts in constitutional law and electoral-system reforms. These experts offered a wide variety of prescriptions that often contradicted one another (Waldner 2009).

Let's make the generous assumption that we know how to derive context-specific interventions from well-specified and validated theories. The third-order problem is whether the relevant policymakers and officials would select and implement these policies. Particular agencies may have organizational cultures or path-dependent policy commitments that lead them to implement suboptimal policies. At the macro-level, policymakers will almost certainly be motivated by multiple priorities, including national-security imperatives, ideological imperatives, budgetary constraints, and the need to maintain electoral support. Principal-agent problems, both within public agencies and bureaucracies and between these official bodies and private contractors, are likely to introduce further deviations from optimal policies.

Finally, our fourth-order question is about net outcomes, about the effects of interventions at the unit-level, i.e. actual democracy promotion in a particular country. Even if we assume that regression coefficients are unbiased estimates of causal effects, it is worthwhile to consider just a few of several remaining concerns. First, effect sizes might be substantively negligible, mattering in statistically significant ways but not altering regime characteristics enough to make a genuine difference in daily political life. Second, we remain relatively ignorant of the intermediary processes that link causes and effects, processes that may be highly relevant to democracy promotion. Third, effect sizes might be heterogeneous across cases due to causal interactions, countervailing causal forces, and strategic behavior. Finally, there may be reasons that a particular study cannot be generalized.

The conclusion to be drawn from the discussion so far is that we simply do not know enough about the sources of democracy to guide the selection and implementation of successful instruments of democracy promotion.

Looking Back to Look Ahead

As noted above, there are two ways to approach the question of democracy promotion. Instead of searching for a general theory from which we can derive lessons, perhaps we should approach the question from the "bottom-up" perspective of policy evaluation, asking which instruments appear to work best. Perhaps a retrospective survey of "best practices" would provide valuable insight into our general theories.

Let's consider three forms of democracy promotion at different scales of intervention: large-scale interventions to radically restructure basic institutions under some form of military occupation, medium-scale interventions to monitor national elections and punish non-compliers, and micro-level interventions to inculcate democracy-promoting attitudes and best-practices.

In the early 2000s, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for "nation-building," which involved the radical reconstruction of the institutional foundations of the state, the economy, and the system of governance. This enthusiasm was largely based on the belief that America could recreate the success it had achieved in postwar (West) Germany and Japan. Just a few years later, with dismal failures of even achieving basic security, nation-building fell into disfavor. We now know that the early enthusiasm was based upon basic mistakes of omitted variable bias and sample selection bias (Bellin 2004, Edelstein 2004). Surveying a broader set of cases in which failures vastly outnumbered successes, Jason Brownlee (2007, 339-340) concluded that "the U.S. has been more effective at refurbishing and strengthening an existing state than at laying a new foundation; it has done best where it has attempted less." Yet coercive interventions that have focused more narrowly on democratic transitions have not fared any better. Taking selection effects into account, Alexander Downs and Jonathan Monten (2013) conclude that "states that experience [foreign-imposed regime outcomes] initiated by democracies on average gain no significant democratic benefit compared with similar states where democracies did not intervene." In short, there is no evidence that large-scale, occupation-based interventions are a feasible instrument of democracy promotion.

Some evidence for feasible democracy promotion comes to light as we move to medium-scale interventions in the form of monitoring of national elections. In her study of the 2003 Armenian presidential election, Susan Hyde

(2007) exploits a natural experiment – the haphazard or "as-if" assignment of international election monitors to precincts – and finds that monitoring substantially reduced electoral fraud. However, we must be cautious before generalizing these findings; effect heterogeneity derives in part from the strategic behavior of actors. Judith Kelley (2009) finds that election monitors have complex and mutually incompatible incentives. On the one hand, monitors are concerned with democracy promotion and with preserving a reputation for integrity. On the other hand, monitors may be concerned with the national interests of their home countries, the desire to avoid election-day violence, and even organizational preferences. The resulting clash of interests can produce endorsements of flawed elections; monitors, in other words, may fail to deter or to punish electoral fraud. To some extent, incumbents that wish to have their elections endorsed as free and fair have some latitude to select their monitors from a "shadow market" of more lenient organizations, and can also alter their menu of fraud, opting for more difficult-to-observe forms of electoral manipulation, including pre-electoral manipulation that stacks the deck before monitors arrive (Beaulieu and Hyde, 2009; Kelley 2012). Finally, recent research suggests that international election monitoring lacks credibility among citizens of monitored democracies (Bush and Prather 2017; Benstead, Kao, and Lust forthcoming).

At the most micro-level, we find studies that distinguish between democracy assistance and other forms of foreign assistance, disaggregating bundles of policies and other forms of international influence to extract only that aid directly intended to improve the practice of democracy by empowering local actors. Steven Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell Seligson (2007) estimate the democracy-promoting effects of US AID's Democracy and Governance spending over the period 1990-2003, controlling for the recipient country's democracy trajectory over time in the absence of aid. Similarly, James M. Scott and Carrie Steele (2011) control for the reciprocal nature of aid and democratization using actual expenditures of democracy aid by USAID between 1988 and 1991. Both studies report positive and statistically significant coefficients on democracy aid. Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson estimate that on average, ten million dollars of aid would increase a country's Freedom House score by about one-quarter of one point, or would raise a country's Polity score of about one-half of a point. Scott and Steele report a much larger coefficient, with each $10 million increment in democracy aid associated with a one-point increase in a country's Polity score.

But are these substantively large effects? Finkel, Pérez-

Liñán, and Seligson estimate the average growth trajectory of a country's Freedom House score in the absence of aid to be about .04 points annually, so a relatively small investment of $1 million would increase the score by .026 points, or about two-thirds of what would occur in the absence of aid. That result sounds large, but it means that a country democratizing at a relatively glacial pace accelerates its rate of change slightly with democracy aid. Scott and Steele report that with an additional $40 million in aid, a country's Polity score would increase by four points, which is perhaps closer to a substantively meaningful impact. Yet this effect is only hypothetical; the average country received only about $2 million between 1990 and 2001 and we cannot know that the effects of aid would be a linear function of its magnitude. Keeping in mind the other aforementioned methodological pitfalls, these results give at best modest support to democracy promotion.

To be sure, there are many ways – perhaps by way of idiosyncratic and hard-to-measure pathways – that democracy promotion *might* have worked in the past or might be made to work in the future. For now, we can conclude not that democracy promotion is dead but that there is little evidence that it was ever "alive."

References

Beaulieu, Emily, and Susan Hyde. 2009. In the Shadow of Democracy Promotion: Strategic Manipulation, International Observers, and Election Boycotts. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(3): 392-415.

Bellin, Eva. 2004. The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective. *Political Science Quarterly* 119: 595-608.

Benstead, Lindsay, Kao, Kristen, and Ellen Lust. 2019. Does It Matter What Observers Say? The Impact of Election Monitoring on Legitimacy. *Mediterranean Politics*.

Bermeo, Nancy, and Deborah J. Yashar. 2016. Parties, Movements, and the Making of Democracy. In Nancy Bermeo and Deborah J. Yashar, eds., *Parties, Movements, and Democracy in the Developing World*, pages 1-27. Cambridge University Press.

Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett. 2011. Foreign Aid and Regime Change: A Role for Donor Intent. *World Development* 39 (November): 2021-2031.

Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boix, Carles. 2011. Democracy, Development, and the International System. *American Political Science Review* 105(4): 809–828.

Boix, Carles, and Susan B. Stokes. 2002. Endogenous Democratization. *World Politics* 55(4): 515–549.

Brownlee, Jason. 2007. Can American Nation-Build? *World Politics* 59 (January): 314–340.

Bush, S. S., & Prather, L. (2017). The Promise and Limits of Election Observers in Building Election Credibility. *Journal of Politics*, 79(3), 921–935.

Cheibub, José Antonio. 2007. *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cheibub, José Antonio and James R. Vreeland. 2011. Economic Development and Democratization. *In The Dynamics of Democratization: Dictatorship, Development, and Diffusion*, edited by Nathan J. Brown. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 145–182.

Coppedge, Michael. 2012. *Democratization and Research Methods*. Cambridge University Press.

Diamond, Larry. 2019. Democracy Demotion. *Foreign Affairs* 98 (July/August).

DiLorenzo, Matthew. 2018. Bypass Aid and Unrest in Autocracies. *International Studies Quarterly* 62: 208–219.

Djankov, Simeon, Jose Montalvo, and Marta Reynal Querol. 2008. The Curse of Aid. *Journal of Economic Growth* 13 (September): 169–194.

Downes, Alexander B., and Jonathan Monten. 2013. Forced to Be Free?: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization. *International Security* 37 (Spring): 90–131.

Edelstein, David M. 2004. Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail. *International Security* 29 (Summer): 49–91.

Finkel, Steven E., Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, and Mitchell A. Seligson. 2007. The Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, 1990–2003. *World Politics* 59 (April): 404–438.

Finkel, Steven E. 2003. Can Democracy Be Taught? *Journal of Democracy* 14 (October): 137–151.

Finkel, Steven E., Jeremy Horowitz, and Reynaldo T. Rojo-Mendoza. 2012. Civic Education and Democratic Backsliding in the Wake of Kenya's Post-2007 Election Violence. *The Journal of Politics* 74 (January): 52–65.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2004. *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Cornell University Press.

Haber, Stephen, and Victor Menaldo. 2011. Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism: A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse. *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 1–26.

Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2012. Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule. *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 495–516.

Hartzell, Caroline A., and Matthew Hoddie. 2015. The Art of the Possible: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Democracy. *World Politics* 67 (January): 37–71.

Houle, Christian. 2009. Inequality and Democracy: Why Inequality Harms Consolidation but Does Not Affect Democratization. *World Politics*. 61(4): 589–622.

Hyde, Susan D. 2007. The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *World Politics* 60(1): 37–63.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge University Press.

Jones Luong, Pauline, and Erika Weinthal. 2010. *Oil Is Not a Curse: Ownership Structure and Institutions in Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge University Press.

Kelley, Judith. 2009. D-Minus Elections: The Politics and Norms of International Election Observation. *International Organization* 63(4): 765–787.

Kelley, Judith. 2012. *Monitoring Democracy: When International Election observation Works and Why if Often Fails*. Princeton University Press.

Kersting, Erasmus, and Christopher Kilby. 2014. Aid and Democracy Redux. *European Economic Review* 67: 125–143.

Knack, Stephen. 2004. Does Foreign Aid Promote Democracy? *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (March): 251–66.

Linz, Juan J. 1990. The Perils of Presidentialism. *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51–69.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53(1): 69–105.

Lührmann, Anna, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2019. A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here: What is New About It? *Democratization* 26: 1095-1113.

Lust, Ellen, and David Waldner. 2015. Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding. United States Agency for International Development. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAD635.pdf.

Mainwaring, Scott, and Matthew S. Shugart 1997. Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal. *Comparative Politics* 29(4): 449-471.

Norris, Pippa. 2008. Driving Democracy: *Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* Cambridge University Press.

Pepinsky, Thomas. 2013. The Institutional Turn in Comparative Authoritarianism. *British Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 631-653.

Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. 1997. Modernization: Theory and Facts. *World Politics* 49(2): 155-183.

Reynolds, Andrew. 2011. *Designing Democracy in a Dangerous World.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ross, Michael L. 2001. Does Oil Hinder Democracy? *World Politics* 53(3): 325-361.

Ross, Michael L. 2012. *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations.* Princeton University Press.

Rubin, Alissa J. 2019. Iraq in Worst Political Crisis in Years as Death Toll Mounts from Protests. *The New York Times* (December 21).

Scott, James M., and Carie A. Steele. 2011. Sponsoring Democracy: The United States and Democracy Aid to the Developing World, 1988-2001. *International Studies Quarterly.* 55 (March): 47-69.

Shugart, Matthew Soberg, and John M. Carey. 1992. Presidents and Assemblies: *Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics.* Cambridge University Press.

Slater, Daniel, Benjamin Smith, and Gautam Nair. 2014. Economic Origins of Democratic Breakdown? The Redistributive Model and the Postcolonial State. *Perspectives on Politics* 12(2): 353-374.

Sokolov, Boris. 2018. The Index of Emancipative Values: Measurement Model Misspecifications. *American Political Science Review* 112: 395-408.

Stepan, Alfred and Cindy Skach. 1993. Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus Presidentialism. *World Politics* 46(1): 1-22.

Teorell, Jan, and Axel Hadenius. 2006. Democracy without Democratic Values: A Rejoinder to Welzel and Inglehart. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 41(3): 95-111.

Waldner, David, and Ellen Lust. 2018. Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding. *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 93-113.

Waldner, David. 2009. The Limits of Institutional Engineering: Lessons from Iraq. *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report #222 (May).

Whitlock, Craig. 2019. The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War. *The Washington Post* (December 9).

Author Exchange

As part of this issue's discussion of the state of democracy promotion, we asked Inken von Borzyskowski (University College London) and Jessica Trisko Darden (American University) to review each other's recent books. Both authors also had the opportunity to respond to each review.
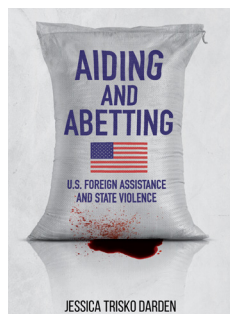
Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence. By Jessica Trisko Darden. Stanford University Press, 2020. 216p. $90 cloth, $30 paperback.

Review by Inken von Borzyskowski, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University College London

Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence sets out to document whether and how U.S. foreign aid worsens repression in recipient countries. The book questions the assumption that foreign aid has predominantly positive effects, drawing our attention to the potentially negative consequences of foreign aid for governments' treatment of their own citizens. Trisko Darden argues that whether intended or not, some forms of foreign aid can be diverted by ill-intentioned governments to further their hold on power through illegitimate means. In doing so, the book builds on previous studies which have shown that foreign aid can worsen violence and human rights, whether through U.S. aid (e.g. Regan 1995; Dube and Naidu 2015; Ahmed 2016) or World Bank and IMF loans (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007). *Aiding and Abetting* advances this work by outlining two mechanisms for the aid-violence link, comparing two specific types of U.S. aid (economic and military), and examining four forms of violence. The book is organized in six chapters plus introduction and conclusion: argument (chapter 1), statistical analysis (chapter 2), three Cold war case studies (chapters 3-5), and analyses for the post-Cold War period (chapter 6).

Trisko Darden argues that U.S. foreign aid can increase government violence and human rights violations because it is fungible and can be used by government recipients for coercion (p. 26). The book focuses on two forms of U.S. aid: military and economic aid. Military aid includes equipment and training of troops in country or abroad, as well as funding for military spending. Economic aid includes food aid, cash transfers, and loans. The argument's key assumption is that foreign aid is quite fungible (p. 23-24): in addition to cash grants/loans, externally provided goods or training can replace domestic spending or be sold for profit, adding funds to government coffers. This non-tax revenue increases the government's income and makes leaders even less accountable to citizens. Thus, foreign aid's negative effect works through two mechanisms, increasing both government income and capacity for coercion. Governments can spend these additional resources to cement their hold on power in two main ways: 1) by boosting service capacity and providing goods to citizens to ultimately coopt citizens and the opposition, and/or 2) by boosting coercive capacity and strengthening security forces to repress the population. Context matters for where we should expect the aid-violence link: non-democratic or semi-authoritarian governments should have more incentives to spend on coercive capacity (p. 18, 29).

Trisko Darden tests the argument with data on 142 middle- and low-income countries between 1976 and 2016. The cross-country statistical analyses link amounts of U.S. military and economic aid to four outcomes of interest: two binary indicators for whether government killings exceed 300 or 25 civilian deaths, a binary indicator for torture, and a five-point scale for the intensity of physical integrity rights repression.

The empirical analyses show that interestingly, the effect depends on the type of aid and type of violence (p. 38). Contrary to Trisko Darden's expectation, U.S. military aid is associated with a *lower* risk of mass killings, state killings, and torture. Reflecting on this, Trisko Darden points out that military training often does improve professionalism and norms of security forces. This is noteworthy and perhaps speaks to the importance of the income mechanism more than the mechanism of coercive capacity. In addition, U.S. economic aid is associated with a *lower* risk of torture. In line with the argument in *Aiding and Abetting*, the analyses show that economic aid is linked to a higher risk of state killings and physical integrity rights violations. Perhaps surprisingly for country context, the aid-violence link does not differ as predicted across political regime types: whether a country is a democracy, anocracy, or dictatorship does not influence the findings (p. 42). The three case study chapters document aid provision and violence in Indonesia, El Salvador, and South Korea.

Can "do no harm" be done? Perhaps the most striking sections of *Aiding and Abetting* are where Trisko Darden discusses the policy implications of her findings. Trisko Darden argues that several potential solutions – such as bypassing, donor oversight, or ending aid – are sub-optimal (p. 114-118). Instead, she proposes that the best way forward is to only aid countries that are at low risk

of violence, i.e. only countries that are democratic, have civilian oversight of the military, and no history of conflict (p. 20). While that is an intuitive solution, the question then, of course, is how much aid can achieve in those types of countries. This also points to some larger policy questions: How do we know whether economic aid does more harm than it helps – how should we weigh the positive effects of economic aid in some areas (like development, literacy, infant mortality) against negative effects in other areas, such as human rights violations?

In addition to these important policy questions, *Aiding and Abetting* raises several questions for future research. Perhaps the more interesting questions concern counterfactuals. For example, do the effects of economic aid depend on donors? How does the U.S. compare to alternative donors? Trisko Darden notes that Soviet aid outstripped U.S. aid in some country-years and, more recently, China is an alternative donor ready to fill the void should U.S. aid decline. If U.S. economic aid can increase the risk of some forms of violence, would aid from China or other repressive regimes lead to the same or worse outcomes? These are ultimately empirical questions, and questions that future work could tackle.

References

Abouharb, Rodwan and David Cingranelli. 2007. *Human Rights and Structural Adjustment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ahmed, Faisal. 2016. "Does Foreign Aid Harm Political Rights? Evidence from U.S. Aid." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 11(2):183–217.

Dube, Oeindrila, and Suresh Naidu. 2015. "Bases, Bullets and Ballots: The Effect of US Military Aid on Political Conflict in Colombia." *Journal of Politics* 77(1):249–67.

Regan, Patrick. 1995. "US Economic Aid and Political Repression: An Empirical Evaluation of US Foreign Policy." *Political Research Quarterly* 48(3).

Response from Jessica Trisko Darden

In *Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence*, I use statistical analyses of 40 years of U.S. foreign assistance and human rights data as well as in-depth historical case studies of Indonesia, El Salvador, and South Korea to shine a harsh light on the history of America's foreign aid program. In seeking to better understand how U.S. foreign assistance has affected the politics and societies of recipient nations, I come to three key conclusions outlined here.

International actors, such as the United States, both intentionally and inadvertently shape levels of political violence abroad through foreign aid. I contribute to a growing body of research on the political effects of foreign assistance by examining the coercive effect of foreign aid. I find that both economic and military assistance can contribute to a government's use of coercion against its citizens, though in very different ways.

Contrary to popular belief, receiving U.S. military assistance is not associated with increased human rights abuses during the Cold War or post-Cold War periods. While there is evidence that links military assistance to state violence in individual cases, the overall relationship is more nuanced. First, international military education and training may improve the professionalism of struggling militaries. Second, such assistance gives the United States leverage over the human rights behavior of aid recipient militaries, which may make them less likely to perpetrate abuses. Third, most military assistance— for instance, Javelin anti-tank missiles—simply is not useful for repressing demonstrators or arresting political opponents.

U.S. economic assistance, and in particular food aid disbursed through Public Law 480, is consistently associated with increased state violence and human rights abuses both during and after the Cold War. Food aid is particularly susceptible to the coercive effect of aid because it can easily be sold for cash or captured by the state or armed groups and distributed to their supporters. In Indonesia, Suharto used American food aid to feed his army and sold Public Law 480 cotton to generate foreign exchange. These practices continue today in places like Syria, where humanitarian assistance has been stolen by terrorist groups and used by Bashar al-Assad to ensure continued support for his regime.

von Borzyskowski identifies two incredibly important questions that are central to the policy implications of these findings. First, how should we determine whether economic aid does more harm than good in a particular case? Second, would ceding ground to alternative donors by redirecting U.S. resources elsewhere ultimately be more harmful than continuing current practices?

The first question reflects a longstanding tension in U.S. foreign assistance policy. Although it was initially conceived of as a way to help lighten the burdens of "the free peoples of the world," in practice U.S. aid policy is torn between supporting the common good and furthering America's own security and diplomatic interests. Answering this question therefore requires the clear prioritization of some interests—such as the expansion of human freedoms—over others. This,

ultimately, is a political rather than an empirical determination, though it should certainly be informed by our research.

Regarding the human rights impact of other donors' practices (116-117), I argue that the idea of promoting democracy or human rights through foreign assistance is rapidly becoming obsolete with the growing foreign aid programs of not only China, but also Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Research by Sarah Blodgett Bermeo (2011) finds that aid from authoritarian countries disproportionately flows to non-democratic regimes and is also associated with movement away from democracy. Irrespective of the donor, it remains that case that, so far, foreign assistance is a flawed instrument for advancing freedom.

References

Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett (2011). ["Foreign Aid and Regime Change: A Role for Donor Intent,"](#) *World Development* 39(11): 2021–2031.
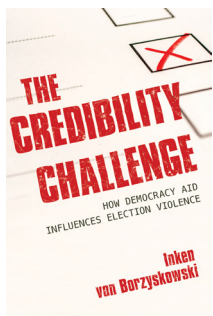
The Credibility Challenge: How Democracy Aid Influences Election Violence. By Inken von Borzyskowski. Cornell University Press, 2019. 246 p. $50 hardcover, $25 Ebook

Review by Jessica Trisko Darden, Assistant Professor, School of International Service, American University

International election observation dates back to the 1850s, with the referendums that united two territories to form modern Romania. In the decades since, but especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, election observation has been cast as an international public good. Taxpayers and donors in wealthy, democratic countries fund election monitoring missions and technical assistance as a form of foreign assistance designed to help expand democracy overseas, ensure that elections take place, and point out instances of fraud and voter intimidation. These are laudable ends. But, as Inken von Borzyskowski points out in *The Credibility Challenge: How Democracy Aid Influences Election Violence*, the effects of this "democracy aid" are far from clear.

As the saying goes, elections do not equal democracy. And while elections are typically associated with representative forms of government, they are also commonly used by authoritarian regimes. In this context, the presence of election observers can inadvertently cast a sheen of credibility on elections that are far from free and fair. Acknowledging this concern, von Borzyskowski expands our understanding of the relationship between international democracy aid and electoral outcomes by differentiating between election observers and technical assistance. The former are extremely visible. Though they spend relatively little time in-country, high-profile election observers are often the focus of international press coverage relating to the election. Their seals of approval or condemnations shape the international community's perception of an election's outcome. In contrast, the impact of the latter form of democracy aid, technical assistance, takes place far from the telephoto lens. Bureaucratic experts seek to increase the capacity of national electoral commissions, facilitate election-related coordination, and ensure the smooth registration of candidates and voters. This technical assistance is implemented over a much longer time horizon and can help increase the credibility of election outcomes by improving both the capacity and credibility of key election-related institutions.

The Credibility Challenge provides significant evidence of the ways in which external actors shift the incentives of local actors to engage in violence through the provision of international democracy aid. By focusing specifically on election violence—a subset of political violence aimed at influencing the election process or outcome—von Borzyskowski is able to isolate a discrete period of time during which the intervention of external actors can have a significant influence on local dynamics. In targeting those involved in the election process, including candidates, their supporters, election officials, and voters, election violence is narrowly conceptualized as actively and intentionally linked to ongoing political processes.

von Borzyskowski focuses specifically on the casualties of such violence, rather than broader patterns of intimidation or harassment which are both more difficult to measure and harder to distinguish from other forms of political violence. Yet, as her own experience being tear-gassed by government forces following Kenya's second 2017 election suggests, the boundaries between election violence and others forms of political violence are often blurred. Election violence can be perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. It can be geographically isolated or widespread. It can have escalatory dynamics, spillover effects, or be a flash in the pan.

One might assume, then, that the causes of election violence should be deeply contextual and influenced by the unique political dynamics surrounding any particular election. Yet, looking at over 400 elections in Africa and Latin America, von Borzyskowski identifies

some key trends. First, the intensity of election violence declines under high-capacity election commissions. Second, high-capacity election commissions are also associated with more peaceful elections in general. But the capacity of an election commission is not the only factor at play. As von Borzyskowski writes, "when [election] observers cast doubt on the credibility of the result by issuing a negative report, they may unintentionally encourage losers to challenge the outcome...Because a negative [international organization] report increases losers' incentives to challenge the result, it can have the unintended consequence of contributing to violence" (18).

The idea that the international public good of independent election monitoring may inadvertently increase the likelihood of electoral violence in countries with contested elections is a serious challenge to the dominant narrative about the impact of international democracy aid. To see how serious a challenge this is, one need only look at the book's endorsements, which (with the exception of Irfan Nooruddin) either dance around or completely ignore this core finding. Instead, they favor von Borzyskowski's other major finding—that election-related technical assistance strengthens public confidence in election results.

To understand this reaction, it is useful to situate *The Credibility Challenge* within the context of a growing body of research that demonstrates the hard limits of America's efforts to expand democracy overseas. Sarah Sunn Bush's *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators* draws attention to the "democracy establishment" that is fueled by the billions of dollars in democracy aid spent by states and international organizations each year. She finds that many current democracy aid-funded activities do not threaten the survival of autocrats. Instead, foreign-funded democracy-related activities and groups create the veneer of political opposition within non-democratic regimes, allowing dictators to claim they are open to dissent. Local actors are allowed to engage in such activities and continue to receive foreign funding so long as they don't push too hard.

But, increasingly, this compromise is falling apart. In countries with some political freedoms, the heavy emphasis of democracy promotion activities on stimulating political participation at the local level may antagonize governments, leading to restrictions similar to those imposed on foreign NGOs in Hong Kong, Egypt, Hungary, India, and Russia, among other countries. This contraction of civil society space has occurred in spite of what Michael McFaul (2004) identified as growth in the legitimacy and practice of external actors promoting

democracy—be they states, NGOs, or international institutions—as the idea that people have a right to democracy has gained support.

The idea that democracy is an end point on a political trajectory is no longer taken for granted. The rigorous statistical analyses and cogent theory provided by von Borzyskowski in *The Credibility Challenge* suggest that our assumptions about democracy aid are also well worth revisiting.

References

Bush, Sarah Sunn (2016). *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators*. Cambridge University Press.

McFaul, Michael. 2004-2005. ["Democracy Promotion as a World Value."](#) *The Washington Quarterly* 28(1): 147-163.

Response from Inken von Borzyskowski

I am grateful to Jessica Trisko Darden for her thoughtful and enthusiastic review, which touches on some of the key contributions of my book and also highlights its importance for researchers and practitioners engaged in democracy assistance and conflict prevention. The issue of foreign aid and democracy promotion is contentious and increasingly controversial in public debates. Aid and democracy promotion need consideration and learning from both successes and failures, and a weighing of the various pros and cons, effects and risks associated with different options in the toolbox of practitioners. As usual, it is not a simple conclusion about aid being good or bad in general. This is important because these debates can find their way into policy discussions and decision-making.

As Trisko Darden rightly points out, one of the core findings of my book is that observer condemnations can have unintended negative effects. Outside observers can exacerbate *post*-election violence intensity if they cast doubt on election credibility. I also document the condemnation effect on the risk of violence—using different data and different models than in the book—in a recent article (von Borzyskowski 2019). The potentially negative consequences of observation are important, but we should also consider the other findings on observation.

Election observation has positive effects especially in the run-up to elections. As I show in the book's second chapter (pp. 71-99), observation can reduce the intensity of *pre*-election violence. It shapes the electoral

environment during the campaign period and can reduce incentives of candidates and parties to engage in violence by increasing accountability for manipulation. It increases the credibility of campaigning periods. This is similar to arguments about the observer effect on fraud: the presence of observers makes it more likely that manipulation will be detected and publicized, thus deterring illicit practices (Hyde 2011). The analyses show that observed elections have less campaign violence, and that this does not seem to be due to selection (observers are not more likely to attend peaceful elections). Together with earlier work, these findings suggest that election observation can reduce fraud and violence before elections – but after elections, observer condemnation can exacerbate the risk and intensity of violence.

Further, the other major type of international election support – technical election assistance – is associated with *less* election violence. As Trisko Darden points out, election commissions are important for lowering the prospects of violence, and technical assistance can increase the capacity of election institutions and perceived election quality (pp. 131-148). Technical election assistance is also associated with *less* election violence before and after voting (pp. 127, 84-87). This form of election support has received little attention in the past and provides a promising field of future research.

Election aid largely has positive effects in terms of reducing fraud and violence – with the negative effect of condemnation a notable exception. These findings suggest nuanced policy implications (pp. 157-163). Together with *Aiding and Abetting*, our two books showcase interesting dynamics of different policy tools (election, economic, military aid) on violence in recipient countries, suggesting nuance and care in how and when democracy and development are supported across a wide variety of country contexts. Support for elections and democracy need not be seen as strictly positive or negative: the question is usually not whether to support democracy, but how and where to support democracy. The same can be said of many other types of aid.

References

von Borzyskowski, Inken. 2019. "The Risks of Election Observation: International Condemnation and Post-Election Violence." 2019. *International Studies Quarterly* 63 (3): 654-667.

Hyde, Susan. 2011. *The Pseudo-Democrat's Dilemma: Why Election Observation Became an International Norm.* Cornell University Press.

Meet the Authors

Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University, studying media, ethnicity, clientelism, and polarization in Africa, and focusing on experiments. His current work examines radio-based efforts to combat hate speech and encourage democratic engagement, in Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Mali, Niger, and Rwanda; he has also worked in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, and Uganda. His work appears in *African Affairs*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, *World Development*, and elsewhere, with funders including the NSF, USAID, BBC Media Action, and US State Department. He currently edits the Afrobarometer Working Papers Series.

Thomas E. Flores is an Associate Professor in the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. His research focuses on democratization, civil conflict, and economic development. He is the author (with Irfan Nooruddin) of *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century* (2016, Cambridge University Press). He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan and a BA magna cum laude in Government from Harvard University. He has been a Fulbright Scholar in Colombia and a Democracy Fellow at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Erica Frantz is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University. She specializes in authoritarian politics, democratization, conflict, and development. She has published seven books on dictatorships and development, the most recent of which are *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2018) and *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes* (Oxford University Press, with Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Natasha Lindstaedt, 2019).

Ellen Lust is the Founding Director of the Programs on Governance and Local Development (est. 2015) and Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. She has held faculty positions at Rice University and Yale University, and has conducted fieldwork and implemented surveys across the Middle East and Africa. She has authored numerous books, textbooks, and articles, including most recently, *Safer Research in the Social Sciences: A Systematic Handbook for Human and Digital Security* (SAGE Publishing, 2019), in collaboration with Jannis Grimm, Kevin Koehler, Ilyas Saliba, and Isabell Schierenbeck. Her current research is aimed at examining political transitions and local governance.

Jessica Trisko Darden is an Assistant Professor at American University's School of International Service and a Non-Resident Fellow at George Washington University's Program on Extremism. She was previously a Jeane Kirkpatrick Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a Visiting Scholar at Yale University's Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence. Dr. Trisko Darden is the author of *Aiding and Abetting: U.S. Foreign Assistance and State Violence* (Stanford, 2020) and co-author of *Insurgent Women: Female Combatants in Civil Wars* (Georgetown, 2019). Her research examines the influence of foreign assistance and international development programs on political violence conducted by both state and non-state armed groups.

Irfan Nooruddin is the Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Professor of Indian Politics in the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is the author of *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2016; with T. E. Flores) and of *Coalition Politics and Economic Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). He has a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan.

Inken von Borzyskowski is Assistant Professor of Political Science at University College London, having recently moved from Florida State University. She received her PhD from UW–Madison. Her research falls into three areas: international democracy assistance, international organizations' membership politics, and election violence. Related to election violence prevention, she has conducted externally-funded field research in Liberia and Kenya. Her work is published in *International Studies Quarterly*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Review of International Organizations*, and Cornell University Press.

Jennifer Raymond Dresden is an Assistant Teaching Professor and the Associate Director of the Democracy and Governance Program at Georgetown University. She specializes in post-conflict political development and is currently completing a book on the challenges of electoral competition after civil wars. She has conducted field research in Sierra Leone and Mozambique and her work has been published in *Conflict Management and Peace Science, Democratization,* and *Democracy & Society.* Dresden holds an A.B. from Harvard University, an M.Litt from the University of St. Andrews, and a Ph.D. from Georgetown University.

David Waldner is an Associate Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia, where he teaches courses in political development, democratic transitions, and qualitative methods. His research focuses on the interconnection between state building, economic development, and democratic transitions in the post–colonial world.

Editorial Team

Executive Editors

Dan Slater specializes in the politics and history of enduring dictatorships and emerging democracies, with a regional focus on Southeast Asia. At the University of Michigan, he serves as the Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professor of Emerging Democracies, the Director of the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, and Professor of Political Science. Previously, he served for 12 years on the faculty at the University of Chicago, where he was the Director of the Center for International Social Science Research, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, and associate member in the Department of Sociology.

Rob Mickey is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan. His research focuses on U.S. politics in historical perspective. He is interested in American political development, political parties, racial politics, and policy responses to inequality.

Guest Editor

Matthew Cebul is a WCED Postdoctoral Fellow (2019–21) and USIP Peace Scholar (2019-2020). He received his PhD from Yale University (Dec. 2019). His research agenda explores topics at the intersection of international security and authoritarian politics, with a regional focus on the Middle East. His book project, *Repression and Rebellion in the Shadow of Foreign Intervention*, investigates how the prospect of external engagement affects the persistence of nonviolent protest movements despite extreme repression, as well as the likelihood that these movements escalate to violence, in the context of the 2011 Syrian Revolution.

Managing Editor

Derek Groom is an Academic Program Specialist with the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies. In this role, he manages the programming, administration, and research/outreach activities of WCED. Before coming to U-M, Derek worked in Washington, DC at American Councils for International Education, administering the Overseas Flagship Programs and Flagship Language Initiatives in Eurasia and Africa. In 2013, Derek completed the Russian Overseas Flagship Program in St. Petersburg, Russia as a Boren Scholar.

About *Democracy and Autocracy*

Democracy and Autocracy is the official newsletter of the American Political Science Association's Democracy and Autocracy section (formerly known as the Comparative Democratization section). First known as *CompDem*, it has been published three times a year since 2003. In October 2010, the newsletter was renamed *APSA-CD* and expanded to include substantive articles on democracy, as well as news and notes on the latest developments in the field. In September 2018, it was renamed the *Annals of Comparative Democratization* to reflect the increasingly high academic content and recognition of the symposia.

About WCED

Housed in the International Institute at the University of Michigan, the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) began operation in September 2008. Named in honor of Ronald and Eileen Weiser and inspired by their time in Slovakia during Ambassador Weiser's service as U.S. Ambassador from 2001–04, WCED promotes scholarship to better understand the conditions and policies that foster the transition from autocratic rule to democratic governance, past and present.

WEISER CENTER FOR EMERGING DEMOCRACIES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Section News

The **APSA Democracy and Autocracy Emerging Scholars Research Development Workshop** provides an opportunity for early career scholars from lower and middle income countries to advance current research towards publication, participate in the APSA Annual Meeting, and develop scholarly networks with colleagues. "Emerging Scholars" include advanced graduate students, post-docs, and pre-tenure faculty based at universities or research institutes in lower to middle income countries.

The program will take place as an all-day APSA short course on Wednesday, September 9, 2020, in San Francisco, CA, and it is expected that participants will attend the APSA Annual Meeting that follows from September 10-13, 2020. The application form is available [here](#).

Michael Bernhard (*Raymond and Miriam Ehrlich Eminent Scholar Chair in Political Science, University of Florida*) has three coauthored papers growing out the Varieties of Democratization project that have hit print (virtually).

1. Bernhard, Michael, Allen Hicken, Christopher Reenock, and Staffan I. Lindberg (forthcoming). "Parties, Civil Society, and the Deterrence of Democratic Defection," *Studies in Comparative International Development*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12116-019-09295-0

2. Bernhard, Michael, Amanda Edgell, and Staffan Lindberg. (Early View 19 September 2019). "Institutionalizing Electoral Uncertainty and Authoritarian Regime Survival." *European Journal of Political Research*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12355

3. Hegre, Håvard, Michael Bernhard, and Jan Teorell. (Published on-line May 30, 2019), "Civil Society and the Democratic Peace," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. [DOI:10.1177/0022002719850620](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719850620).

Dawn Brancati (*Associate Research Scholar, Yale University*) **and Adrián Lucardi** (*Assistant Professor of Political Science, ITAM, Mexico*) participated in the November 2019 forum of *Journal of Conflict Resolution* dedicated to the question of whether democracy protests diffuse and and under what conditions. Their article, [“Why Democracy Protests Do Not Diffuse,”](#) finds that democracy protests are not more likely to occur when protests occur in neighboring countries regardless of a number of factors (e.g., neighbor protest size and government responses). It is featured alongside articles from other section members:

Kurt Weyland (*Professor of Government, UT-Austin*), [“Why Some Democracy Protests Do Diffuse.”](#)

Henry Hale (*Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, George Washington University*), [“How Should We Now Conceptualize Protest, Diffusion, and Regime Change?”.](#)

Michael Coppedge (*Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame*), with others, published the following book:

Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Adam Glynn, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Daniel Pemstein, Brigitte Seim, Svend-Erik Skaaning, and Jan Teorell, with David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Fernando Bizzarro Neto, Joshua Krusell, Kelly McMann, Matthew Maguire, Kyle Marquardt, Valeriya Mechkova, Farhad Miri, Josefine Pernes, Jeffrey Staton, Natalia Stepanova, Eitan Tzelgov, and Yi-ting Wang, *Varieties of Democracy: Measuring Two Centuries of Political Change*. (Cambridge University Press, 2020.)

Jonathan Hartlyn (*Kennth J. Reckford Professor of Political Science, UNC Chapel Hill*), **Agustina Giraudy** (*Associate Professor, School of International Service, American University*), **Claire Dunn** (*Graduate Student, Political Science, UNC Chapel Hill*), and **Emily Carty** (*Center for Global and International Studies, Unversidad de Salamanca*) published the following article:

Agustina Giraudy, Jonathan Hartlyn, Claire Dunn and Emily Carty, *“The Impact of Neopatrimonialism on Poverty in Contemporary Latin America*,” Latin American Politics & Society, [DOI: 10.1017/lap.2019.46](https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2019.46), Vol. 62 No. 1 (Spring 2020), pp. 73-96.

Don S. Lee (*Leverhulme Trust Fellow, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham*) and **Paul S. Schuler** (*Assistant Professor of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona*) published the following article:

Don S. Lee and Paul J. Schuler. 2020. "Testing the "China Model" of Meritocratic Promotions: Do Democracies Reward Less Competent Ministers than Autocracies?" *Comparative Political Studies Volume*: 53 issue: 3-4, page(s): 531-566. [DOI: journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0010414019858962](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0010414019858962)

Carl LeVan (*Associate Professor, School of International Service, American University*), published *Contemporary Nigerian Politics: Competition in a Time of Transition and Terror* (Cambridge University press, 2019). The book engages the democratization literature on pacts and critically evaluates consolidation, drawing on

quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews with secessionist groups.

Kristin Mckie received tenure and promotion to associate professor of Government and African Studies at St. Lawrence University. She also had the following article published:

McKie, Kristin. (2019). ["Presidential Term Limit Contravention: Abolish, Extend, Fail, or Respect?"](#) *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(10) 1500–1534.

Anne Meng (*Assistant Professor of Politics, University of Virginia*) has two recent articles:

1. Meng, Anne. 2019. [Ruling Parties in Authoritarian Regimes: Rethinking Institutional Strength](#). *British Journal of Political Science*. (Available on First View)

2. Meng, Anne. 2019. [Accessing the State: Executive Constraints and Credible Commitment in Dictatorships](#). *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* 33(4): 568-599.

Monika Nalepa (*Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago*) and **José Cheibub** (*Mary Thomas Marshall Professor in Liberal Arts, Texas A&M University*) co-edited the January 2020 Special Issue of *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 32(1) on Electoral Personalism and the Personal Vote. It contains pieces authored by members of the Democracy and Autocracy Section, including but not limited to Gisela Sin, Daniel Kselman, Monika Nalepa, and Jose Cheibub. The full reference is:

Cheibub, José and Monika Nalepa. 2020. [*Special Issue of Journal of Theoretical Politics: Electoral Personalism and the Personal Vote*](#): 32(1).

Monika also has an upcoming article in *Perspectives on Politics* (March) co-authored with two University of Chicago graduate students, cited below:

Bates, Genevieve, Ipek Cinar and Monika Nalepa. 2019. ["Accountability by the Numbers: Introducing the Global Transitional Justice Events Dataset (1946-2016)"](#) *Perspectives on Politics* (FirstView, Published 26 June 2019).

Işık D. Özel (*Visiting Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Carlos III University of Madrid*) and **Kerem Yıldırım** (*Postdoctoral Associate, Department of Political Science, Duke University*) published the following article on the emergence of "authoritarian welfare states" focusing on democratic backsliding and the autocratization process in Turkey, tackling the impact of social assistance on precipitating democratic backsliding:

Işık D. Özel & Kerem Yıldırım (2019): [Political Consequences of Welfare Regimes: Social Assistance and Support for Presidentialism in Turkey](#), *South European Society and Politics*, DOI: 10.1080/13608746.2019.1589155

Justin Patrick (*Secretary-General of the International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS)*) reported that IAPSS recently attended UNESCO's 9th Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 in Hammamet, Tunisia. IAPSS contributed to the final report related to UN Sustainable Goals pertaining to education, calling for more recognition of democratic student governments. The final report from the conference is available [here](#).

Andreas Schedler (*Professor of Political Science, Center for Economic Teaching and Research (CIDE), Mexico*) has three recent publications:

1. Schedler, Andreas, "Elections and Transformation," *Handbook of Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, eds Wolfgang Merkel, Raj Kollmorgen, and Hans-Jürgen Wagener (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 486–491.

2. Schedler, Andreas, "The Breaching Experiment: Donald Trump and the Normative Foundations of Democracy," *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft / Comparative Governance and Politics* 13/4 (December 2019): 433–460. [DOI 10.1007/s12286-019-00438-0](#) (open access).

3. Schedler, Andreas, "Tyrannies of Majorities: A Conceptual Reassessment," Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, Working Paper 433, Democratization Theory Cluster Series, December 2019 ([https://kellogg.nd.edu/working-papers](#)).

Milada Anna Vachudova (*Associate Professor of Political Science, UNC Chapel Hill*) published "From Competition to Polarization in Central Europe: How Populists Change Party Systems and the European Union," in the journal *Polity* (51, 4: 689-706). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336076834_From_Competition_to_Polarization_in_Central_Europe_How_Populists_Change_Party_Systems_and_the_European_Union](#)

She also published an article with Jan Rovny (Sciences Po) in the Monkey Cage blog of *The Washington Post* on the protests in support of liberal democracy taking place in the Czech Republic titled "In Prague, protestors demand the resignation of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš. Why is liberal democracy under threat in the Czech Republic?" (June 25, 2019). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/06/25/prague-protesters-demand-resignation-prime-minister-andrej-babi/](#)

Ashutosh Varshney *(Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and the Social Sciences, Brown University)* published the following two articles on democracy in 2019:

1. Varshney, Ashutosh. "Modi Consolidates Power: Electoral Vibrancy, Mounting Liberal Deficits." *Journal of Democracy*, October 2019.

2. Varshney, Ashutosh. "The Emergence of Right-Wing Populism in India." In Niraja Jayal, ed, *Re-Forming India* (Penguin, 2019).

Inken von Borzyskowski *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, University College London)* recently published the following article:

von Borzyskowski, Inken. "Dangerously Informed: Voter Information and Pre-Electoral Violence in Africa," with Patrick Kuhn. 2020. *Journal of Peace Research* 57 (1): 15–29.