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Theories of Democratic Change

Phase I: Theories of Democratic Backsliding

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Yale University



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Theories of Democratic Change

Phase I: Theories of Democratic Backsliding

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The DRG Center of Excellence is pleased to share “*Theories of Democratic Change—Phase I: Theories of Democratic Backsliding*.” This publication was produced by USAID in partnership with the Institute of International Education as part of the Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series.

The *Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance*¹ reaffirms USAID’s commitment to “generate, analyze, and disseminate rigorous, systematic, and publicly accessible evidence in all aspects of democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) policy, strategy, and program development, implementation, and evaluation.” This paper, along with the others contained in the series, makes a valuable contribution to advancing this commitment to learning and evidence-based programming.

This series is part of USAID’s Learning Agenda for the DRG Sector, a dynamic collection of research questions that serves to guide the DRG Center’s and USAID field missions’ analytical efforts. USAID seeks to inform DRG strategic planning and project design with the very best theory, evidence, and practical guidance. Through these efforts, the Learning Agenda is contributing to USAID’s objective to support the establishment and consolidation of inclusive and accountable democracies to advance freedom, dignity, and development.

This publication organizes and evaluates the body of current academic theory that can contribute to understanding how and why a governance system that had been democratizing would shift instead toward greater authoritarianism. The publication was produced by a research team from Yale University and the University of Virginia, and informed and vetted in two peer review workshops by a group of democratization scholars from Cornell University, Duke University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Oxford University, Princeton University, and the University of Illinois.

The document introduces the concept of democratic backsliding, and presents a theory matrix that gives a snapshot of the academic theories relevant to backsliding, organized into six theory families. The publication then presents a deeper background on each of the theories and the theory families, and guides the reader through the process of selecting and organizing the theories. It concludes with four appendices—the first two focused on definitions, the third on the criteria used to evaluate the theories, and the fourth on three case studies in which the theories are applied.

I hope you find this research enlightening and helpful. The DRG Center will continue to bring forward the latest in relevant social science research to important constituencies for our work, particularly our DRG cadre and implementing partners, but also others. I invite you to stay involved as this enriching, timely, and important work proceeds.

Neil Levine, Director
Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
U.S. Agency for International Development

¹ [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20DRG_%20final%20final%206-24%203%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20DRG_%20final%20final%206-24%203%20(1).pdf)

ACRONYM LIST

ACPSS	Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (Egypt)
CIDOB	<i>Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia</i> ; formerly: <i>Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano</i>
CIPEV	Commission of Inquiry in Post-Election Violence (Kenya)
COB	<i>Central Obrera Boliviana</i>
COMIBOL	<i>Corporación Minera de Bolivia</i>
CONDEPA	<i>Conciencia de Patria (Bolivia)</i>
CORD	Coalition of Reform and Democracy (Kenya)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Russia)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSUTCB	<i>Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia</i>
DCHA	USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
DEDI	The Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (Egypt)
DFG	Democracy Fellows and Grants Program
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
DRG Center	USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Kenya)
IIE	Institute of International Education
IPSP	Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (Bolivia)
LDPR	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo (Bolivia)</i>
MIP	Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (Bolivia)
MNR	Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Bolivia)
MRTK	Tupaj Katari Revolutionary Movement (Bolivia)
MUJA	Julian Apana University Movement (Bolivia)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement (Kenya)
PNU	Party of National Unity (Kenya)
TSCS	Time-Series, Cross-Sectional Datasets
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democratic backsliding is a challenge USAID faces worldwide, in many contexts. Degradation in the quality, functioning, and experience of democracy and democratic rights negatively affects international development goals, in all sectors. The continued decline in democratic governance around the world raises new questions about how DRG practitioners and scholars understand and confront backsliding. Is backsliding simply democratization in reverse? What makes countries vulnerable to backsliding? Which democratic practices and institutions are most at risk? How can DRG programs respond to or mitigate closing political space?

Through a research grant funded by USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (the DRG Center), under the Democracy Fellows and Grants Program, a research team from Yale University and the University of Virginia worked with the DRG Center to organize and evaluate the body of current academic theory that can contribute to understanding how and why a governance system that had been democratizing would shift instead toward greater authoritarianism. The publication was further informed and vetted in two peer review workshops by a group of democratization scholars from Cornell University, Duke University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Oxford University, Princeton University, and the University of Illinois.

The publication begins with an introduction that provides an academic evaluation of the phenomenon of democratic backsliding and the difficulties of defining it. The theories related to democratic backsliding are then presented in a simple theory matrix that allows practitioners quickly and easily to:

- Survey the body of current academic theory that contributes to explaining the phenomenon of democratic backsliding, through a quick presentation of 32 theories organized within six thematic theory families;
- Digest the cause-and-effect relationships that academic theory identifies through a clear, if-then hypothetical statement;
- Understand how scholars rate the strength and reliability of each theory, through a summary of the research team's assessment of each theory and the reasons for that assessment; and
- Explore how each theory can support the assessment and design of development programs, through basic questions that offer guidance for how to determine the relevance of that theory's specific cause-and-effect pathway to a particular context.

Organizing the theories into six thematic families provides a structure that allows for closer comparison to be made among related theories, and clearer distinctions to be drawn among theories that identify different causes for the changes through which democratic backsliding occurs. However, the researchers note that complex political phenomena like democratic backsliding result from a combination of changes captured in several theory families. After the matrix, the publication offers practitioners more background and deeper analysis on the theories and theory families:

- Part 1 explains how the theories can be grouped conceptually, by whether the change relevant to backsliding may be ascribed to individual actors (agent-based) or the social and political order (structural) and affected by causes that:

- Occur in the long- or short-term;
 - Respond to demand-side or supply-side pressure; and/or
 - Are stimulated by interventions with institutions or more systemic cultural, social, or political shifts.
- Part 2 analyses the six thematic theory families:
 - Political leadership,
 - Political culture,
 - Political institutions,
 - Political economy,
 - Social structure and political coalitions, and
 - International factors.
 - Part 3 analyses the 32 theories in detail, providing for each theory:
 - A short title,
 - A simple if-then hypothesis statement,
 - A description of the main type of academic methodology used to establish each theory,
 - The name(s) of the theory author(s),
 - A summary of the theory,
 - An assessment of the theory's relevance to democratic backsliding,
 - A description of the lessons practitioners can derive from the theory to guide intervention, and
 - An evaluation of the rigor and reliability of the theory.
 - Part 4 concludes with a short, overall evaluation of each theory family.

Overall, this research concludes that although democratic backsliding is a common experience faced by USAID, it is not clearly defined in academic literature. In summarizing, evaluating, and deriving lessons for practitioners from academic theories of democratic backsliding, the researchers often inferred insights from broader theories of democratic transition, consolidation, and breakdown.

In doing so, the team determined that backsliding is best conceived as a change in a combination of competitive electoral procedures, civil and political liberties, and accountability, and that backsliding occurs through a series of discrete changes in the rules and informal procedures that shape those elections, rights, and accountability. These discrete changes take place over time, separated by months or even years, and the end result is not pre-determined: backsliding may result in democratic breakdown, or it may not, and can occur within both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Regardless of whether these changes ultimately, or eventually, lead to regime change, they do degrade citizens' rights and their engagement with the state, and both have widespread repercussions for USAID's work.

Ultimately, there is much work to be done to develop a complete understanding of backsliding and the conditions fostering it. The tools produced under the Theories of Change in Democratic Backsliding research project take a critical first step, by providing a close look at lessons that can be derived from existing academic theory to understand what democratic backsliding is and how it may be reversed.

WHITE PAPER: THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

A. Democratic Backsliding

Democratic backsliding is an unsettlingly common phenomenon. Too often, competitive elections are undermined, citizens lose their rights to mobilize or voice their demands, and governments become less accountable. That is, changes are made in formal political institutions and informal political practices that significantly reduce the capacity of citizens to make enforceable claims upon the government. These changes may not lead to the breakdown of democratic regimes—indeed, backsliding can occur in both democratic and authoritarian regimes—but they do degrade citizens’ rights and their engagement with the state. Yet, despite backsliding’s frequency and the attendant consequences for hundreds of millions of people, there is limited understanding of the phenomenon or its contributing factors.

There are large and intellectually vital literatures regarding the definitions of democracy and autocracy, as well as the causes of democratic transitions, democratic consolidation, authoritarian resilience, and democratic breakdown. Of these, however, only democratic breakdown sheds light on the processes of democratic backsliding, and it addresses only cases in which backsliding has led to a change from democracy to autocracy. Scholars have paid scant attention to defining and distinguishing modifications of regimes when they fall short of regime transitions. They have also undertaken few studies assessing determinants of backsliding, with much of the extant literature being highly particularistic accounts of individual cases or lightly theorized, large-n, empirical analyses of highly heterogeneous, and problematic, data.² In short, we know very little about democratic backsliding.

This white paper assesses the current state of knowledge on political change through a “Theory of Change” lens, paying particular attention to the processes of democratic backsliding. For development practitioners, a Theory of Change may best be understood as a “description of the logical causal relationships between multiple levels of conditions or interim results needed to achieve a long-term objective. It may be visualized as a road map of change and outlines pathways or steps to get from an initial set of conditions to a desired end result” (USAID 2013, p9). Our goal in this paper is to summarize, evaluate, and derive lessons of theories of democratic backsliding, recognizing that these insights must often be inferred from broader theories of democratic transition, consolidation, and breakdown.

We proceed as follows. Section I begins with a conceptualization of backsliding. Section II then assesses lessons learned from six theory “families,” or theoretical strands that have dominated the study of regime change. Given the emphasis the field has placed on democratization, this assessment focuses heavily on classic and exemplary works in the study of democratization, democratic consolidation, and breakdown, with lessons drawn from these dominant works to the study of backsliding. Finally, we conclude by drawing from lessons learned from the six theory families.

i. Conceptualizing Democratic Backsliding

Backsliding entails a deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance within any regime. It is a decline in the *quality of democracy*, when it occurs within democratic regimes, or in *democratic qualities of governance* in autocracies. In both cases, Erdmann (2011, p39) is correct in saying that, “We are dealing with finer nuances or degrees of change than in the case of regime

² For a more detailed discussion of the measurement problems, see Lueders, Lust, and Waldner (2015).

changes. Therefore, an analysis of changes in the quality of democracy not only requires that fine-tuned ‘measures’ or instruments be used, but also entails a refined conceptualization of democracy in the first place.”

Scholars agree that democracy is a multidimensional concept, although they vary in how they operationalize it. Minimalists focus exclusively on elections, while those who take a maximalist view require highly informed citizens to engage in near-constant deliberation to produce policies that maximize social, economic, and cultural equality. We seek a middle ground. We argue that backsliding is best conceived of as a change in a combination of competitive electoral procedures, civil and political liberties, and accountability.

The inclusion of *electoral procedures* by which governments are selected should be unsurprising. Joseph Schumpeter famously defined democracy as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” Democratic procedures should embody three core principles: 1) Uncertainty, such that office holders and the outcomes they pursue cannot be known for certain *ex ante*; 2) Impermanence, such that governments have a limited duration; and 3) Constraint, such that constitutional limits are imposed on the obligations and sanctions a government can impose on citizens. Operationally, making these principles manifest requires that legislative and executive offices be filled via free and fair elections in which multiple parties compete with incumbents using the power of the state to handicap oppositions. Thus, the procedural element requires not only that we examine the conduct of elections, but also that we cast a broader net to gauge the existence of independent electoral bodies to supervise the execution of election laws to preserve electoral integrity. Participation must accompany competition: the widespread right to participate in elections and to run for office is a distinct attribute of democracy. The right to participate must be widely distributed according to contemporary global norms, with only limited restrictions on universal franchise. Importantly, restrictions on the franchise must not be based directly on cultural or biological attributes such as age, gender, race, or ethnicity; nor should they be based on other contingent attributes that are correlated with these cultural or biological attributes, such as property ownership, literacy, or formal documents that are beyond the reach of many citizens.

But, as Dahl (1971) famously argued, citizen participation is meaningful for democratic practices only if participants enjoy equal and guaranteed rights and freedoms, such as freedoms of speech and association. Thus, civil and political liberties form the second leg of our conceptualization. Concern for civil and political liberties prompts us to look at laws governing civil society associations, the media, freedom of assembly, and affiliated venues. It also requires assessing implementation of such laws, including the ability of the judiciary, legislature, and others to safeguard these rights.

Accountability forms the third leg of our conceptual triad. “If men were angels,” James Madison wrote in the *Federalist Paper* No. 51, “no government would be necessary. . . . In framing a government . . . the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.” Thus, although most scholars of democratic backsliding emphasize electoral competition and liberties, pointing to stolen elections, restrictions on political parties, associations, and speech,³ accountability is important as well. Indeed, Tilly (2003, p38) highlights

³ Cf. Gasiorowski (1995), Barraca (2004), Gates et al. (2006), Levitz & Pop-Eleches (2010).

accountability in his discussion of “de-democratization,” which he defines as the reversal of a population’s “binding, protected, relatively equal claims on a government’s agents, activities, and resources.” For him, backsliding occurs when political participation is narrowed, equal access is withdrawn, *collective control over the government’s resources and activities is reduced, and its arbitrary power increases*” (p40, italics ours).⁴ Similarly, Kapstein and Converse (2008, pp57-58) note that “One of the first things that would-be authoritarian leaders try to do is roll back existing constitutional constraints,” thereby limiting accountability.

Accountability has two parts: “answerability” and “punishment.” Answerability refers to the obligation of public officials to provide information about their activities and to justify them; to offer both facts and explanations. Punishment refers to the capacity to impose negative sanctions on officeholders who violate certain rules of conduct. Accountability, moreover, comes in two basic flavors. Horizontal accountability is the classic notion of checks and balances, in which independent state agencies hold each other accountable. Vertical accountability, on the other hand, is exercised by non-state actors (citizens, civil associations, the media) on state agents.

We argue that backsliding should be understood as changes that negatively affect competitive elections, liberties, and accountability. There are theoretical reasons to believe that the three realms are intricately linked, and it is difficult to imagine *significant* changes in one that do not lead to changes in the others. For instance, undermining democratic elections removes a foundation of vertical accountability and is likely linked to constrained rights as well. So, too, it is difficult to see how competitive elections and the transparency necessary for effective monitoring, and thus accountability, are maintained in the face of limited civil and political rights. Thus, we propose that backsliding be understood as changes that affect multiple dimensions of democratic quality: electoral competition, liberties, and accountability.

Empirical descriptions of backsliding lend support to the argument that backsliding entails changes in multiple arenas. Take, for instance, Fealy’s (2011) description of Indonesia:

Indications of this regressive trend became far more pronounced during 2011, with the four most salient forms being: the deliberate undermining of key oversight institutions whose primary purpose is to ensure the transparency and integrity of political, economic, and bureaucratic processes; the winding back of regional elections and local democracy; the deepening problems in the functioning of parties and the legislature; and the failure to protect minority rights. (p336/p338)

Similarly, we find Kienle’s description of backsliding in 1990s Egypt:

⁴ For Tilly, these are necessary but not sufficient conditions for backsliding. Dan Slater’s (2013) discussion of “democratic careening” also emphasizes the importance of accountability. He defines careening as “political instability sparked by intense conflict between partisan actors deploying competing visions of democratic accountability . . . When actors who argue that democracy requires substantial *inclusivity* of the entire populace (vertical accountability) clash with rivals who defend democracy for its *constraints* against excessive concentrations of unaccountable power, particularly in the political executive (horizontal accountability).” As he points out, instability caused by a tug-of-war over the primacy of vertical and horizontal accountability can potentially drive backsliding.

Since the early 1990s, Egypt has experienced a substantial degree of political deliberalization. . . . Repressive amendments to the penal code and to legislation governing professional syndicates and trade unions as well as unprecedented electoral fraud are only some of the indicators. . . . [that contribute to the] erosion of political participation and liberties” (p219).

So too, Serra’s (2010) discussion of Mexico’s 2007 backsliding focused on the weakening of electoral institutions, strengthening of party leaders’ dominance, and reduction in freedom of speech. Systematic evidence needs to be gathered to determine whether cases that most observers would consider to be significant incidents of backsliding always include changes in multiple arenas, but there is good reason to believe this is the case.

Identifying whether a country is backsliding thus requires that we examine changes in institutions and procedures in a number of sectors. The procedural dimension of democracy requires us to pay particular attention to electoral competition (*e.g.*, the laws governing the ability of parties to organize and participate in elections, the existence of independent electoral bodies). The emphasis on liberties and rights requires us to consider laws and procedures governing civil society associations, the media, and freedom of assembly. Finally, the concern with horizontal and vertical accountability calls us to consider the strength and independence of judicial and legislative branches, as well as civilian constraints on the armed forces.

Carefully defining backsliding helps to avoid excessive inclusion of cases of political change and crises that fall short of significant degradation in the democratic qualities of regimes. There are a variety of policies and political outcomes that might have anti-democratic overtones but that should not be considered democratic backsliding. Tighter restrictions on press freedoms, including some prosecution of independent journalists, may be deeply unsettling, and they may also be early warning signs of more systemic efforts of backsliding. However, practices that are limited in scope may not in and of themselves be sufficient for democratic backsliding. Such changes can also be the normal push and pull of politics; they are near ubiquitous and can be observed even in advanced and seemingly stable democracies. So, too, dramatic political crises are alarming and can even require international intervention, but they are not necessarily democratic backsliding, as the case of the Kenyan 2007 – 2008 electoral crisis demonstrates (see Appendix D).

Not only does focusing on the interrelated changes in elections, liberties, and accountability help us to avoid false positives, but it also allows us to recognize similar processes despite very different conditions. Backsliding may take very different forms. As a number of scholars (Sanhueza 1999, Brambor and Lindvall 2014, Weiffen 2013) have pointed out, democratic breakdown may be the result of relatively rapid military intervention, steady encroachment of incumbent elites, or, less frequently, other factors (*e.g.*, mass mobilization, external intervention). They emphasize the modes of breakdown, as does Maeda (2010), who distinguishes between exogenous termination, in which an outside force topples a democratic government (usually through a military coup), and endogenous termination, in which a democratically elected leader suspends the democratic process. Similarly, Barraca (2004, pp1480-81) saw military coups as a primary mechanism by which anti-system forces instigate “sudden death” to democratic regimes, as opposed to the “slow death” meted out by internal forces that gradually undermine democratic institutions through the erosion of civil liberties, manipulation of

elections, or other practices. A closer look at Egypt and Russia, as discussed in Appendix D, shows that although military coups and executive takeover imply very different starting points for democratic backsliding, the processes that constitute backsliding are very similar. Mode matters, but there is value in recognizing the similarity of processes and outcomes, whether through death by a thousand cuts or by the quick fall of the guillotine.

Indeed, understanding democratic backsliding as the decrease in competitive elections, liberties, and accountability also helps us to avoid inappropriately restricting backsliding to cases only of democratic breakdown or conflating it with regime change. Although some scholars (Kapstein & Converse 2008) use the term “democratic backsliding” almost exclusively as a synonym for reversion to authoritarianism, we agree with Aleman & Yang’s (2011) criticisms of transition-based categorizations that do not allow for incremental regime changes.⁵

Indeed, all four episodes set forth in Box 1 are examples of backsliding, even though they—like many other instances across the globe—occurred within very different contexts and hence with very different implications for their regimes. In the Peruvian example, the democratic backsliding initiated by Alberto Fujimori with the assistance of allies within the military was of sufficient magnitude that a formerly democratic regime was transformed into an authoritarian one. The harsh restrictions placed on Egypt’s oppositional candidates for parliament, in contrast, took place entirely within an authoritarian regime, before and after the backsliding. Finally, the recent assault on Turkish freedom of the press and other acts against civilians represent backsliding within a political regime; Turkey remains democratic, but citizens have more limited opportunities for participation, and the incumbent elected government has become increasingly buffered from the need to respond to citizens’ preferences. Importantly, these examples demonstrate that democratic backsliding can occur during periods of authoritarian or democratic survival. Indeed, empirically, the vast majority of declines in the level of civil and political liberties are intra-regime changes. Erdmann’s (2011: 26) study of 52 cases of backsliding found that only five were a transition from a democracy to an authoritarian regime, and four of these took place before 1989.

⁵ See also Fish (2001) for an approach similar to ours.

Box 1: Democratic Backsliding: Similar Processes in Diverse Circumstances

On April 5, 1992, Alberto Fujimori, who had been elected to the Peruvian presidency two years earlier, responded to political deadlock by suspending the constitution, removing adversaries from the judiciary, and dissolving Congress. In the aftermath of this *autogolpe*, Fujimori again ran for president in 1995 and 2000, though on both occasions he used the power of the state to place his opposition at an extreme disadvantage and won both elections. Only after charges of corruption galvanized international condemnation and widespread domestic protests did he flee to Japan and resign from office.⁶

Meanwhile, two continents away, the ruling National Democratic Party in Egypt received 94% of the vote in the 1995 parliamentary elections, a large improvement over its 79% share in the 1990 elections. Rather than representing a spontaneous surge of enthusiasm for Mubarak's autocratic regime, the superior competitiveness of the ruling party no doubt reflected earlier legislation that invalidated elections in the professional syndicates, as well as other restrictions on political and civil liberties that had been haltingly advanced over the prior two decades, perhaps most notably the increasing use of military tribunals to hear cases against civilians, a judicial arrangement that, with unsettling regularity, concluded with death sentences against opponents of the regime.⁷

A more gradual clampdown took place in Russia under Vladimir Putin, after he assumed power following Boris Yeltsin's resignation on December 31, 1999. In contrast to Fujimori's *autogolpe*, Putin used institutional reforms to gradually roll back democratic freedoms. For instance, new media laws passed in 2005 restricted the freedom of speech, and the 2006 antiterrorism legislation helped the government crackdown on political opponents. Following uprisings in 2011, the Russian government placed greater sanctions on public assemblies, NGOs, and the Internet, and amended a law on treason to allow a wide range of seemingly innocuous activities to be deemed criminal activity—thus making it easier to cut down opponents. Finally, in a move to de facto circumvent constitutional term limits, Putin installed his then prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev, as his president from 2008 to 2012, while he himself served as prime minister. In preparation for Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, the presidential term was extended to six years. Re-elected in 2012, Putin can remain in power until 2024.

Turkey, too, has seen an increasing clampdown on political and civil liberties. In May 2013, Turkish citizens began a series of protests against the increasingly authoritarian style of then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose AKP party had won the 2002, 2007, and 2011 elections by large margins. As protests ballooned that summer, including more and more people from a wide cross-section of Turkish society, Erdoğan's government adopted a heavy-handed response, including systematic pressure against Turkish journalists, with a sharp increase in the number of journalists who were fired, forced to resign, or jailed. Consequently, in a 2014 report on global freedom of the press, Turkey was downgraded from "partly free" to "not free;" its score worsened from 56 to 62 on a 100-point scale.⁸

Not only can backsliding occur in the absence of democratic breakdown or regime change, but the relationship between backsliding and democratization or democratic consolidation is not clear. As Amel Ahmed (2014, p2) has noted, the concept of backsliding, as it is conventionally used, implies a "theoretical move back on an imagined linear trajectory"; that is, it suggests that a backsliding episode makes it harder for a country that backslides at present to attain democracy in the next period. Yet, one can raise two objections to this portrayal. First, both autocratic and democratic regimes have

⁶ Seawright (2012) is an indispensable analysis of the decline of the traditional party system that allowed Fujimori to first come to power.

⁷ Kienle (2001) is the best survey of Egypt's period of "deliberalization." Blaydes (2010) is an exhaustive analysis of the use and abuse of elections by Egypt's autocratic rulers.

⁸ See Karlekar (2014). For comparison, China, Iran, and North Korea received scores of 84, 90, and 97 respectively.

inclusionary and exclusionary measures that fluctuate over time. That is, all regimes are inclusionary to some degree, granting some civil and political liberties to at least some elements of the population, and they also are all exclusionary to some degree, placing restrictions on these liberties. Second, apparently exclusionary measures can further democratization, allowing regime stability necessary for further strengthening or, at other times, providing focal points or “mobilizing narratives” around which political forces rally, pressing for more democratic measures. Thus, Ahmed cautions, “‘backsliding’ need not always be remedied. Certain safeguards that could be viewed as backsliding in some cases may, in fact, help to strengthen and consolidate democracy in the long run” (p7).⁹

Ahmed’s claims are important, because they help set our expectations. We need to be open to the possibility that apparent setbacks in democratic practices and institutions may ultimately provide context or catalysts for further democratization. (We find this to be the case in Kenya’s 2007 election crisis, although notably, we also argue that what many see as an episode of democratic backsliding does not meet the standards we set forth above.) So, too, reversing or thwarting “backsliding” may not necessarily foster democratization in the manner that many policymakers, scholars, and optimists expect: the relationship between backsliding, democratization, and democratic consolidation is complex.

There are also potentially important distinctions among backsliding experiences. Backsliding can vary in the extent to which democratic qualities are degraded. Egyptians saw their rights peeled back and democratic institutions undermined both in the last months of President Mohamed Morsi’s administration and in the period since Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power. Yet, as described in Appendix D, the restrictions on the media, civil society associations, and political parties have been more severe under Sisi than Morsi. Both are backsliding spells, but the latter has more significantly degraded democratic qualities than the former. Backsliding spells can also differ in length, with some occurring through swift and decisive changes and others through a more gradual creep. On one hand stands Mao Zedong’s dramatic announcement of the Cultural Revolution; on the other, Putin’s quiet erosion of democratic governance in Russia and, arguably, similar moves by Erdoğan in Turkey.

There are also important differences in the nature of coalitions or cleavage structures that drive backsliding. These require more study, but there is reason to believe that the extent to which underlying issues are seen as zero-sum games, either because they are around socially transformative projects or identity-based cleavages, can affect the likelihood the elites engage in backsliding. For instance, as described in Appendix D, unresolved ethnic, class, and regional conflicts have characterized Bolivian politics, and thus, while winners and losers have changed over time, the need to protect gains that are seen as relatively fixed, zero-sum games has remained. These have been catalysts for backsliding, leaving the country politically unstable for much of its history and careening between backsliding and liberalization. Whether regimes are pulled to the left or right may also have implications for the process of backsliding (which institutions are targeted, and the ways in which this happens), and almost certainly affect the implications of backsliding. For instance, when the victors take a left-populist position, they may actually mobilize citizens more and reward a larger segment of the population. Equality of

⁹ This view contrasts with that of Gates *et al.* (2006), who consider “consistent” and “inconsistent” institutions within regimes, seeing the role of these institutions as quite static across time. For them, “Consistency means a set of institutions that are mutually reinforcing. For both democracies and autocracies, these reinforcing institutions bolster one another, thereby serving to perpetuate the regime” (p894).

participation, accountability, and freedoms may still diminish, but, at the same time, it may be done in the name of “the people” and, in the short run, be accompanied by redistributive measures (Weyland 2013). Very different outcomes are expected when the backsliding brings right-wing elements to power.

Defining periods of backsliding is a tricky task. Backsliding occurs through a series of discrete changes in the rules and informal procedures that shape elections, rights, and accountability. These take place over time, separated by months or even years. Gasiorowski (1996: 472) designed his dataset on the premise that “changes among these three types of regime (*e.g.*, democracies, semi-democracies, and autocracies) are marked by singular, characteristic events, such as free or fraudulent elections, constitutional changes, coups d’état, declarations of martial law, or arrests of prominent individuals.” Yet there is reason to doubt that such events should be seen as the “moment” of backsliding. Comparing backsliding across existing, alternative measurements, we found that backsliding episodes accompanied by military coups were easily detected events but not necessarily the modal case (Lueders, Lust, and Waldner, in progress).

Moreover, the impact of the changes entailed in backsliding is not always readily discernible, and often changes are taking place that are seemingly contradictory; for instance, there may be a clampdown on civil liberties at the same time that new elections are called and new parties allowed to participate. This makes it difficult to see backsliding. This is particularly true if one relies on cross-national datasets, which are often less sensitive to low-scale changes, but it is even true of on-the-ground assessments. It can be difficult to determine the starting point of backsliding. Indeed, citizens and observers often debate whether a country is backsliding.

Ultimately, there is much work to be done to develop a complete understanding of backsliding and the conditions fostering it. Scholars and practitioners need to define and be able to identify backsliding independent of regime change. They need to develop tools to recognize the duration, intensity, and significance of backsliding spells. And they need to consider how the character of the backsliding (*e.g.*, different underlying coalitions, sequences of changes) affects outcomes. These are first steps toward developing a better understanding of the forces propelling backsliding and the potential mechanisms to thwart it; ultimately, this may help improve citizens’ lives, regardless of the relationship between backsliding and regime change. Before such tasks can be tackled, however, a closer look at the lessons from existing theories is in order.

B. Theory Matrix: Democratic Backsliding

i. Theory Family 1: Political Leadership

Theories in this family identify attributes (*i.e.*, personal traits such as wisdom, judgment, or decisiveness) of and actions (*i.e.*, processes shaped by attributes such as negotiations with oppositions) by political elites as the primary causal agents of democratic backsliding.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>1.1 Tactical Judgment</p> <p><i>Democracies survive when leaders take appropriate action against threats posed by anti-democratic extremist parties.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that democratic breakdown can result from political leaders making poor tactical decisions that fail to sideline extremists who then take advantage of electoral competition to gain strength but remain committed to overthrowing democracy. It is reasonable to expect that this can be applied to backsliding, particularly the common situation of anti-democratic parties using the electoral process to gain sufficient political power to erode democratic quality, once elected: how political leaders develop and implement a strategy to respond to those attempts could encourage or inhibit backsliding.</p>	<p>Linz (1978) and Capoccia (2007): breakdown of democracies in inter-war Europe</p>	<p>This theory is underdeveloped: although general patterns of what happens as a result of how a government handles extremist groups can be observed, how leaders' personalities, behaviors, relationships, skill sets, <i>etc.</i> contribute to their decisions related to such extremist groups has not been measured, nor have the relevant leader characteristics or attributes been identified for measurement.</p>	<p>Does a leader have history of adopting exclusionary tactics to advance own agenda?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>1.2 Strategic Interaction I: Elite Compromise</p> <p><i>Given a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle between political groups otherwise united by a sense of national unity, a small group of leaders may decide that compromise is a superior outcome to prolonged struggle.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that, given a sense of shared identity and recognition that no compromise is possible, a small group of leaders may decide that democracy is better than other forms of government.</p> <p>However, backsliding is likely if elite consensus is impeded. In addition, the period after elites have reached a compromise but before they have fully adjusted to the agreement ("habituation") is very vulnerable to backsliding.</p>	<p>Rustow (1970); Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986)</p>	<p>These ideas have not yet been systematically tested, and the theory does not specify what conditions make elite compromise more likely, making testing difficult. It appears that democratic transitions do not require splits among the autocratic political elite, and that such splits can be triggered by economic distresses.</p>	<p>What are the wedge issues on which consensus is least likely?</p> <p>Are positions on these issues divisive enough to threaten system integrity?</p> <p>Are there issues where regime soft-liners more closely align with the opposition?</p>
<p>1.3 Strategic Interaction II: Negotiated Transitions</p> <p><i>Democratic transitions occur when soft-liners within regimes negotiate with moderates within opposition.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis states that the prospects of democracy are dim if there is no alliance between hard-liners and soft-liners, or if hard-liners in either the government or the opposition are too strong.</p> <p>This hypothesis focuses on the complex negotiating processes that conclude in full democratic transition; however, looking at those processes in such detail can also provide insights into how steps toward reform may be reversed. For instance, countries may be vulnerable to democratic backsliding when extremists or hard-liners within the government or opposition gain strength and build constituencies, and possible mechanisms of intervention are to strengthen moderates and soft-liners.</p>	<p>O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Przeworski, Bermeo (2003)</p>	<p>This hypothesis is an important theoretical statement without substantial empirical support. It is closely tied to case studies of elite-negotiated transitions, specifically in Latin America; however, there is also substantial evidence from other cases that the elite can remain relatively unified but still be overthrown or forced to make democratic concessions by determined collective action. In addition, several democratic transitions have not been spurred by a split within the autocratic elite into hard-liners and soft-liners.</p>	<p>How cohesive are the members of the opposition and the regime?</p> <p>Are there strong anti-democratic forces in either or both?</p> <p>Is there a basic consensus or agreed framework on how to conduct politics?</p> <p>Do the forces striving to control the country agree on a basic set of rules for political competition?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>1.4 Super-Presidentialism (Cross-reference: Political Institutions theory number 3.2)</p> <p><i>Power-seeking presidents unconstrained by powerful institutions or competing centers of power initiate backsliding.</i></p>	<p>Formally and informally unconstrained presidents will often take steps to concentrate executive authority. Institutions that concentrate executive authority erode democratic institutions. Presidents, provided limited institutional constraints, can pursue policies that neutralize their oppositions and consolidate their incumbency.</p> <p>There is strong evidence of a relationship between super-presidentialism and backsliding: backsliding can be enabled by institutional and cultural factors that concentrate power in the presidency, such as a weak legislature, weak or repressed political parties, weak or repressed civil society, etc.</p>	<p>Fish (2002); van de Walle (2003)</p>	<p>Tests of this hypothesis have been able to demonstrate statistically that elites have autonomy from structural factors. However, there is not evidence to support the assumption that leaders always want to arrogate more power to themselves (<i>e.g.</i>, see Hypothesis 1.5). In addition, questions remain on the origin of super-presidentialism, and this hypothesis may not adequately take into account that presidents in similar institutional arrangements will have individual differences in personality, goals, behaviors, etc. See Hypothesis 1.1.</p>	<p>Do checks and balances exist in the constitution?</p> <p>Does the executive enjoy sufficient support or exert sufficient control in the legislature and judiciary to render “formal” checks and balances irrelevant?</p> <p>What are the powers of the executive versus the legislature?</p>
<p>1.5 Leaders' Normative Preferences</p> <p><i>Democracy survives when political leaders seek moderate policies and have a normative preference for democracy.</i></p>	<p>Backsliding is likely when political elites adopt extreme, anti-democratic positions. Democracies whose leaders 1) demonstrate policy preferences that are radical compared to the preferences of other political actors within the polity and 2) do not demonstrate a normative commitment to democracy as a political system will be more vulnerable to democratic breakdown. They will also be more vulnerable to democratic backsliding, if leaders pursue policy goals that threaten democracy or curtail democratic behaviors without formally abolishing democracy.</p>	<p>Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013)</p>	<p>Tests of this hypothesis clearly establish that leaders vary in terms of their policy preferences and normative commitments; however, individuals tend to have fairly stable preferences about type of government, and the hypothesis does not explain how elite preferences are formed or changed to be more conducive to democracy. It is questionable whether these preferences are truly uninfluenced by social, economic, cultural, and institutional structures.</p>	<p>Are political leaders committed to democratic principles?</p> <p>Are political elites willing to compromise in order to preserve democracy?</p>

ii. **Theory Family 2: Political Culture**

Theories in this family explain political outcomes by way of attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, and rituals that are widely shared, have deep emotional resonance, and divide appropriate and socially sanctioned from inappropriate behavior.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>2.1 Civic Culture <i>Societies whose citizens exhibit civic culture are more likely to experience democratic transitions and democratic stability.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that regime change is linked to societal values. Societies are more likely to experience sustained democracy if citizens possess a civic culture that prefers secular values over traditional ones, and self-expressive values over survival ones. The shift to civic culture results from economic change, especially the change from industrial to post-industrial.</p> <p>Democratic backsliding or democratic breakdown could be more likely in a democracy formed without a mass civic culture that emphasizes self-expressive, secular values, since the gradual erosion of democratic quality may be less likely to engender popular protest. However, backsliding can also occur in a democracy with a self-expressive, secular civic culture.</p>	<p>Inglehart and Welzel (2005)</p>	<p>This hypothesis is difficult to substantiate statistically; scholarly consensus is that existing efforts are not successful and that the measure of civic culture is flawed.</p> <p>Scholars consistently have found strong support for democracy in countries without a self-expressive, secular civic culture, and countries with such a culture have also experienced significant backsliding. In addition, the hypothesis assumes that economic change precedes the shift in civic culture that spurs political change; however, political change can also result directly from economic change. In addition, level of income is very strongly correlated with which set of values dominate civic culture, and so disentangling civic culture from economic development is difficult.</p>	<p>What percentage of citizens has a traditional and/or religious orientation?</p> <p>How developed is the country's economy?</p> <p>Is there an incongruence between political institutions and mass political culture, such that "supply" exceeds "demand," or vice versa?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>2.2 Social Capital</p> <p><i>Citizens can engage in collective action and hold governing officials accountable when they possess social capital.</i></p>	<p>The hypothesis assumes that regime change is linked to citizens' engagement in politics and society. If citizens engage in collective action and participate in civil society organizations (CSOs), they develop social capital, which enables them to hold public officials accountable.</p> <p>The importance of social capital to democratization, and by transfer to democratic backsliding, is uncertain; however, backsliding can occur if citizens lack social capital, and trust in institutions and one another is low. Under these circumstances, citizens do not engage in collective action and do not hold public officials accountable.</p>	<p>Putnam (1994)</p>	<p>Some studies show that social capital—as evidenced by a vigorous associational life and attendant civic culture—is directly linked to citizen demand for greater accountability and improvement in democratic quality; however, this specific hypothesis is based on a relatively narrow empirical scope—the study of government performance in 18 Italian regional governments—and may overemphasize the “demand side.”</p> <p>In addition, there is substantial counter-evidence: explicitly non-democratic movements have come to power in societies with strong social capital, and there are also many examples of widespread collective action occurring in societies without strong social capital, with mixed results for democratization and democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>How many citizens participate in civil society organizations?</p> <p>Is participation low and apathy high? If so, who is apathetic and why?</p> <p>What is the level of citizen trust in one another and in institutions?</p> <p>In addition to voting, are there other mechanisms for citizens to be informed about and participate in civic life?</p>
<p>2.3 Civic Education</p> <p><i>Civic culture can be taught; participants in civic education programs are more likely to participate in local government.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis argues that participants in civic education programs will attain and apply values, skills, and attitudes that are seen as crucial to democracy, implying that political culture can be taught or at least influenced.</p> <p>The hypothesis does not suggest that civic education would deter backsliding, but it is plausible to assume that 1) civic education may reduce some of the negative effects of democratic backsliding and 2) that backsliding is less likely to occur if citizens are actively encouraged to acquire pro-democracy attitudes.</p>	<p>Finkel (2007, 2011, and 2012)</p>	<p>In contrast to Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2, which indicate that civic culture is beyond the influence of development programs, there is firm evidence that participants in civic education programs are far more active in local politics, particularly in interacting with local officials to solve local problems. It is unclear, however, whether 1) this shift in civic culture at the local level can be scaled up to create citizen support to preserve or promote democracy at the national level, 2) whether mass attitudes can be changed through interventions at the national level, and 3) whether changed mass attitudes affect the likelihood of democracy.</p>	<p>Are there civic education programs or other government- or NGO-led initiatives to encourage citizens to acquire pro-democracy attitudes?</p> <p>Do civic education programs allow for opportunities to participate in democratic institutions or processes?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>2.4 Electoral Abuse and Collective Action</p> <p><i>Electoral abuses by incumbent leaders may be sufficient to trigger pro-democratic collective action, even in the absence of civic culture.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis suggests that mass protest against autocratic practices can occur in the absence of civic culture; however, since the studies do not allow direct observation of protest results, they do not establish a direct link between collective action and backsliding. Backsliding may be more likely after fraudulent elections that did not trigger mass protest.</p>	<p>Tucker (2007), Chernykh (2014), Beaulieu (2014)</p>	<p>Even with low levels of civic culture and social capital, there is excellent evidence that highly visible electoral abuses motivate collective action, indicating that mass protest against autocratic practices can occur in the absence of civic culture. It is still unclear under what conditions citizens do or do not mobilize after fraudulent elections; however, citizens are less likely to mobilize after fraudulent elections when there are repressive conditions or fragmentation among themselves.</p>	<p>Is information about possible election abuse widely accessible?</p> <p>Have fraudulent elections been held?</p>

iii. **Theory Family 3: Political Institutions**

Theories in this family study political institutions as “rules of the game” that constrain and sanction the actions of political actors differently and thereby affect political outcomes.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners’ Analysis
<p>3.1 Presidential democracies <i>Presidential democracies are more prone to breakdown than parliamentary democracies.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis states that presidential systems have four features that make them more prone to political crisis and democratic breakdown: 1) they divide legitimacy between executives and legislators, 2) they have fixed terms in executive office and so no electoral means to respond quickly to political stalemate, 3) they have a winner-take-all set of rules, and 4) they cultivate an authoritarian presidential style.</p> <p>Although this hypothesis was developed to explain democratic breakdown, it is reasonable to extend it to infer that presidential democracies would be more vulnerable to backsliding than parliamentary democracies.</p>	<p>Linz (1990)</p>	<p>Current evidence cannot attribute greater stability to parliamentary democracies over presidential democracies, because there are too many other factors affecting the democracies studied to assign the difference in stability to parliamentary versus presidential, rather than whether democratization followed a civilian versus military dictatorship, how populous the democracy was, etc.</p>	<p>Is this a presidential system?</p> <p>Is there a balance of power among branches of government and between central and local government?</p> <p>Is the system prone to political stalemate between executive and legislatures?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>3.2 Consociational Democracy <i>In “plural” societies, consociational institutions create a higher likelihood of democratic survival</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that institutions in plural societies that promote power sharing (grand coalition, proportionality, mutual veto powers, and federalism) can help improve the chances of democratic survival.</p> <p>Backsliding is thus more likely to occur in plural societies if the institutional design is non-consociational—that is, disproportional and unitary, allowing some ethnic, religious, or other societal groups to win over others.</p>	<p>Lijphart (1977)</p>	<p>The hypothesis originally was illustrated by four case studies, two of which now provide counter examples: Lebanon, which has suffered two intense civil wars, and Nigeria, which suffered a string of democratic breakdowns. It is difficult to see how these studies support the hypothesis; however, the hypothesis has not been fully tested. It should be noted that achieving consociationalism would require the simultaneous reform of a very large number of institutions.</p>	<p>Are there strong ethnic or religious cleavages in society?</p> <p>Are institutions organized such that power is concentrated among the few or widely shared with different groups?</p> <p>Are there quotas within political parties or legislated by the state to encourage or require participation of candidates from particular groups?</p> <p>What are the mechanisms through which power and resources are devolved to the sub-national level?</p>
<p>3.3 Inclusive Electoral Institutions <i>In new democracies, electoral institutions based on proportional representation can generate political stability.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis states that the design and structure of electoral institutions can mitigate ethnic conflict and promote political stability. Specifically, electoral systems based on proportional representation can prevent elections from exacerbating ethnic conflict, because they create incentives for politicians to accommodate each other. On the other hand, majoritarian institutions that concentrate political power can increase the likelihood of democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Reynolds (2011)</p>	<p>The statistical models presented in support of this hypothesis do not meet contemporary standards, and so it is difficult to say what effect this specific aspect of consociationalism may have on democratic stability; however, establishing inclusive electoral institutions is a more achievable goal than establishing inclusivity across all government institutions.</p>	<p>What is the electoral system in the country of interest?</p> <p>How competitive is it in practice?</p> <p>What forces limit the competitiveness of the system?</p> <p>Are parts of the population excluded, formally or informally, from meaningful political participation?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>3.4 Party System Fractionalization <i>High levels of party-system fractionalization generate political instability.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis states that high levels of party-system fractionalization (<i>i.e.</i>, the degree to which a party system is dominated by many political parties versus just a few) generates political instability.</p> <p>This hypothesis is stated in terms of political instability, which is not identical to democratic backsliding; however, increased levels of political instability may be considered either an indicator or predictor of backsliding.</p>	<p>Powell (1982), Mainwaring (1993)</p>	<p>Tests of this hypothesis suggest that democracies with fewer political parties (two-party system or limited multi-partism) have greater political stability. However, the hypothesis needs further exploration: statistical tests of this hypothesis analyze complex interactions (levels of fractionalization in presidential versus parliamentary systems, undergoing economic expansion or contraction), but none of the findings has been replicated.</p>	<p>How many parties are running for office and are represented in parliament? What is the ideological distance between them?</p> <p>What forces promote or hinder consensus between political parties?</p>
<p>3.5 Party System Collapse: <i>The collapse of a traditional-party system creates an opportunity for democracy to be subverted from above.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that the collapse of traditional-party systems—induced by, for instance, high levels of corruption or economic crises—creates opportunities for democracy to be subverted from above. Thus, backsliding becomes more likely if traditional parties collapse.</p> <p>This hypothesis also suggests that even well-established political parties are vulnerable to collapse—and hence the democratic system vulnerable to backsliding—if the parties are not responsive to grievances spurred by economic crises and endemic corruption.</p>	<p>Seawright (2012)</p>	<p>The empirical support for this hypothesis is broad and deep, but so far is limited to the Latin American context and to explaining the collapse of support for traditional parties in a long-standing party system.</p>	<p>How stable is the existing party system?</p> <p>Is the traditional party system responsive to popular grievances?</p> <p>Beyond elections, how are public officials held accountable for their actions and who are the main actors doing so?</p> <p>What is the nature of the relationship between political leaders/policymakers and society as a whole?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>3.6 Dominant-Party Systems in Africa</p> <p><i>Dominant-party systems produce low levels of competitiveness and virtually no alternation in power.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis suggest that a dominant-party system (<i>i.e.</i>, one in which a single dominant party competes against a relatively large number of smaller, weaker parties) may encourage leaders to suffocate their opponents, thus making backsliding more likely.</p> <p>The emergence of a dominant party in a previously competitive system could be a predictor of backsliding. In addition, these studies highlight mechanisms for strengthening political competition that may deter backsliding, such as supporting political parties to develop broader, multi-ethnic coalitions for issues or supporting institutions (<i>i.e.</i>, labor unions) that span ethnic and regional cleavages. See Hypothesis 5.4.</p>	<p>Arriola (2013), LeBas (2011), Riedl (2014)</p>	<p>This hypothesis is more descriptive than causal: there are several explanations for dominant-party systems in different African countries, but not yet a more general, continent-wide hypothesis that has survived rigorous testing.</p>	<p>Is there meaningful competition between the parties in a country?</p> <p>Has there been an alternation in power between the different parties?</p> <p>Are there institutional constraints on the executive that prevent political leaders from dominating their opponents?</p>
<p>3.7 Mobilizational Asymmetry</p> <p><i>Democratic development can be threatened by unbalanced party systems, creating the potential for backsliding.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that backsliding may occur when party systems are unbalanced, with some parties being organizationally weak and others strong.</p> <p>This hypothesis has direct implications for backsliding, suggesting that fractionalization among political parties (see Hypotheses 3.4 and 5.4) is less threatening for democratic stability than unevenness in parties' levels of grassroots mobilization. This unevenness may be particularly harmful to new democracies if more powerful parties effect policies that are unacceptable to large unrepresented or under-represented sectors of society.</p>	<p>Lust and Waldner (2014)</p>	<p>This hypothesis is at an early stage of development, but the empirical support from two primary cases in Egypt and Tunisia is strong.</p>	<p>To what extent do parties have different organizational strengths?</p> <p>How polarized are the positions over which they compete?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>3.8 Hybrid Regimes <i>Hybrid "semi-democracies" are less stable than either full democracies or full autocracies.</i></p>	<p>The quality of democracy and stability of democracy are related. This hypothesis posits that hybrid, semi-democratic, or inconsistent regimes, which have both democratic and autocratic features, are less stable than either full democracies or full autocracies. Thus, hybrid polities that have some democratic features but are generally deficient in civil liberties, accountability, or both, are more vulnerable to backsliding.</p>	<p>Goldstone <i>et al.</i> (2010)</p>	<p>There is strong empirical support for this hypothesis: it seems quite clear that backsliding is more likely to occur in hybrid regimes than in full democracies.</p>	<p>Is the country of interest clearly democratic, or does it display both democratic and autocratic features?</p>
<p>3.9 Judicial Review <i>The diffusion of power between relatively balanced political parties is conducive to the development of judicial review.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis focuses on how and why judicial review develops within a political system when it is, by definition, a restraint on politicians' power.</p> <p>The presence of judicial review as a horizontal accountability mechanism is potentially a powerful deterrent to backsliding: backsliding is less likely in a country with a strong judiciary, which prevents the accumulation of executive powers and guarantees minority rights. This hypothesis complements others in Theory Family 3 that associate backsliding with uneven balances of power.</p>	<p>Ginsburg (2003)</p>	<p>The empirical support is currently limited to three East Asian case studies that focus on the emergence of judicial review within a political system. However, the model is plausible; combined with other hypotheses in this theory family, it suggests it may be useful to examine the balance of power between political forces to understand the selection of political institutions.</p>	<p>How strong and impartial is the country's judiciary?</p>

iv. **Theory Family 4: Political Economy**

Theories in this family study the link between economic structures and economic development on one hand, and democratic consolidation and backsliding on the other.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>4.1 Levels of Income Higher levels of income raise the likelihood of democracy.</p>	<p>This hypothesis links higher levels of income to likelihood of democracy in two ways: 1) rising income might lead to the collapse of dictatorships and so potentially to democratic transition, or 2) rising income might increase the likelihood that a democracy will survive, regardless of whether the democracy's origins are attributable to income. Following the link between rising income levels and democratic stability, a democracy in which income levels are rising should be less vulnerable to backsliding. However, existing studies focus mostly on democratization and categorize countries as either democracies or autocracies, without a middle ground, making clear applicability to backsliding difficult.</p>	<p>Przeworski <i>et al.</i> (2000), Boix and Stokes (2003)</p>	<p>The link between income levels and democratization is not well-established, and the literature has not fully explored the implicit hypothesis that democratic transitions in poor countries yield democracies that are more susceptible to backsliding. However, there is widespread support for the hypothesis that, once a country becomes democratic, rising income levels make democratic breakdown less frequent.</p>	<p>How developed is the country's economy? Is the economy growing steadily?</p>
<p>4.2 Distribution of Income At high levels of economic inequality, democratic transitions are less likely, and, if they occur, democratic breakdowns are more likely.</p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that, at high levels of income inequality, wealthy citizens fear democratization because they expect that, if given the vote, poorer citizens will demand redistribution. Hence, they oppose democratic transitions and support democratic backsliding. As with Hypothesis 4.1, following the link between income inequality and democratic stability, a society in which income is unevenly distributed should be more vulnerable to democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Boix (2003), Acemoglu and Robinson (2006)</p>	<p>Empirical studies show that inequality can influence the probability of a democratic transition and democratic breakdown. However, inequality and democracy are more closely related through the middle of the 20th century: multiple studies find that more recent democratic transitions have occurred at relatively high levels of inequality.</p>	<p>How is income distributed in society? What is the level of equality (i.e., the Gini coefficient) in the country at large and between different regions of the country? How much income do the poorest strata in society possess?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>4.3 Oil Income Hinders Democracy</p> <p><i>Heavy state reliance on oil revenues makes democracy less likely.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that in countries in which governments do not need to finance their activities via taxation, citizens demand less accountability, and hence do not demand democracy. If increasing oil revenues endanger democracy and lead to democratic breakdown, democratic backsliding may be an interim and perhaps reversible step that precedes full breakdown (see Hypothesis 4.4).</p>	<p>Ross (various years)</p>	<p>The causal effects of oil revenue are time-sensitive; however, a strong case can be made that, since the 1970s when many developing countries (with low levels of economic development and political institutions with low capacity) nationalized oil companies and so ensured that revenue accrued to the state, oil negatively affected the likelihood of democratic transitions and made democratic breakdowns more likely.</p>	<p>What percentage of government revenues comes from the export of oil and gas?</p> <p>How much of the country's economic resources are controlled by political authorities or those dependent on them?</p>
<p>4.4 Oil Income and Democratic Backsliding</p> <p><i>Oil income induces backsliding.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that rising oil rents generate a "rentier populism" that diminishes vertical accountability and induces democratic backsliding; in fact, this hypothesis is a prime example of one that was developed to explain democratic breakdown, and refined to address democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Mazzuca (2013)</p>	<p>This hypothesis receives solid support from three brief case studies from Latin America, but needs more extensive research both on the original cases and as a more general hypothesis.</p>	<p>What has been the change in percentage of government revenues coming from the export of oil and gas?</p>
<p>4.5 Macro-Economic Performance</p> <p><i>Short-term macro-economic performance, especially growth and inflation rates, is associated with changes in the political regime.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis associates economic downturns with changes in the political regime: higher rates of GDP growth are associated with lower risks of authoritarian reversion, while high rates of inflation in any year substantially raise the risk of reversion to autocracy.</p> <p>This hypothesis links poor economic performance to democratic breakdown, but it is reasonable to infer that poor economic performance—low growth, high inflation, or both—is also associated with democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Kapstein and Converse (2008)</p>	<p>There is substantial support for the family of hypotheses linking democratic transitions and survival to macro-economic conditions, especially if the economic growth or contraction is significant. However, the findings are contextual: in some studies, the effect depends on democracy type (presidential versus parliamentary), in others on government ideology; in still others, the effects are decade-specific. A recent study finds that in "new" democracies, economic growth is associated with lower risks of authoritarian reversal and inflation substantially increases the risks of reversal.</p>	<p>What is the recent economic growth trend?</p> <p>What is the level of inflation?</p>

v. **Theory Family 5: Social Structure and Political Coalitions**

Theories in this family study the bases of group formation among citizens (mainly economic structure, as well as sociocultural or ethnic structures), the potential for conflict between these groups, and the implications of group formation and intergroup conflict for democratic backsliding.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
5.1 The Bourgeoisie and Democracy <i>No bourgeoisie, no democracy.</i>	<p>The hypothesis assumes that the only class actor that historically supported democracy is the bourgeoisie. That is, a strong bourgeoisie—merchants with autonomous control of economic resources and hence with the incentive and the capacity to gain distance from the dominant ruling class—can support democracy. It is inferred, thus, that having a weak bourgeoisie increases the likelihood of democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Moore (1966)</p>	<p>Virtually no contemporary social scientist would agree with the claim “no bourgeoisie, no democracy,” but there is significant diverse evidence to support the relationship between the middle class and democracy. Related to many of the hypotheses in Theory Family 4, this hypothesis supports the importance of long-term, demand-side, systematic interventions that distribute economic resources more equitably.</p>	<p>What is the strength of the middle class?</p>
5.2 The Working Class and Democracy <i>The full development of democracy required the emergence of an organized industrial class.</i>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that only the industrial working class has reliably pro-democratic preferences. As industrial development shifts the balance of political and economic power in favor of middle and working classes, democracy becomes more likely. On the other hand, the lack of an organized industrial class puts democracy at risk, and democratization without a substantial base among industrial workers and middle classes may be more prone to backsliding.</p>	<p>Rueschemeyer <i>et al.</i> (1992)</p>	<p>Studies have shown that a strong industrial class is not necessary for democratic transition: electoral competition is widespread in the developing world, far more than would be predicted by the strength of the industrial working class. There is evidence, however, that organized working classes can play a critical role in developing a strong civil society that demands accountability.</p>	<p>How strong is the industrial working class in terms of organizational strength?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>5.3 Peasants and Political Order</p> <p><i>Political order in developing nations requires a political alliance with the countryside.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that when political participation outstrips political institutionalization, political disorder results, which, in turn, endangers democratic survival. Political order can be achieved through a coalition with the countryside. Political disorder is a term that describes many different phenomena, from coups and riots to civil war. However, moving from political disorder to order may make backsliding less likely, and governments with widespread rural support may deal more effectively with urban political challenges and especially leftist movements, making democracies more likely to survive.</p>	<p>Huntington (1968)</p>	<p>Several case studies confirm that forming rural coalitions reduces political instability. However, recent statistical models demonstrate that these urban-rural coalitions reduce the chance of failure for both autocracies and democracies, implying that the nature of political coalitions plays an important, but under-theorized, role in democratic dynamics.</p>	<p>How much rural support does a government have?</p> <p>Is political participation higher than institutional strength?</p> <p>How broad is the current ruling coalition?</p>
<p>5.4 Ethnic Competition and Polarization</p> <p><i>The political salience of ethnic cleavages produces democratic instability.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that the politicization of ethnic groups produces democratic instability, because people are loyal to their communal group, not the nation, and there is pressure on politicians to appeal directly to members of their own community. This reduces the prospects of multi-ethnic coalition building.</p> <p>Democratic backsliding is more likely in ethnically heterogeneous societies, where ethnic divisions are politicized. Ethnic fractionalization is not in itself an obstacle to democracy: the deliberate politicization of it is. To prevent backsliding, interventions should focus on building multi-ethnic coalitions or supporting institutions that facilitate multi-ethnic coalitions.</p>	<p>Rabuska and Shepsle (1972), Bates (1974)</p>	<p>The claim that ethnic-based politics leads to increased voter willingness to tolerate politicians' abuses is widespread; however, few studies explicitly test this relationship. Ethnically homogenous communities may share cultural norms and institutions that can exclude those who do not "belong," creating a vicious cycle that undermines democratic institutions more broadly and impedes collective action across ethnic groups. It also prevents national political dialogue and action from forming around broader interests that are common across ethnic groups, and so pose a powerful obstacle to the development of a strong, issue-based civil society.</p>	<p>How strong are ethnic cleavages in society?</p> <p>Is there consensus on the multi-ethnic nature of the country?</p> <p>Is there respect among the citizenry for multi-ethnicity?</p> <p>Do politicians appeal to ethnic differences in society?</p> <p>Do politicians distribute public goods and realize policies in favor of their own group?</p> <p>Are there multi-ethnic coalitions?</p>

vi. Theory Family 6: International Factors

Theories in this family link external (*i.e.*, international and regional) factors to democratic backsliding. They assume that an analysis of domestic factors alone is not sufficient to explain backsliding, as regime changes often occur in waves, and world regions are often characterized by similar regimes. Most of the theories in this family, however, argue that international factors affect regime changes only *in interaction* with domestic factors.

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>6.1 International Leverage and Linkage <i>Western leverage and linkage are associated with the democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes is more likely if the country is vulnerable to Western pressure (leverage) and there are dense economic, political, social, and diplomatic ties between the country and the West (linkage). The primary study of international linkage and leverage is applied to democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes; however, the same factors should influence the probability of democratic backsliding.</p>	<p>Levitsky and Way (2002, 2010)</p>	<p>Concerns about this hypothesis include 1) there is no testable statement of how different levels of leverage and linkage interact to produce what outcomes; 2) cases of high linkage may reflect long-term economic development, and so democratization may result more directly from domestic factors, even if those domestic factors are influenced by international actors; and 3) international leverage and linkage affect other domestic variables—most importantly regime vulnerability, which is most affected by domestic balance of power, rather than international actors.</p>	<p>To what extent is the West able to effectively exert pressure on the country? How dense are economic, social, political, and diplomatic ties between the country and the West? Are Western nations exploiting this leverage?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>6.2 International Diffusion</p> <p><i>A higher proportion of democratic neighbors decreases the probability that an autocracy will survive and increases the probability that a democracy will survive.</i></p>	<p>This hypothesis assumes that regime change in one country also affects changes in adjacent countries: a higher proportion of democratic neighbors decreases the probability of backsliding and increases the probability that a democracy will survive. In contrast, the absence of leverage would allow competitive authoritarian regimes to avoid democratization pressure, which can be viewed as a particular form of backsliding.</p>	<p>Gleditsch and Ward (2006)</p>	<p>This hypothesis is plausible and supported by impressionistic evidence, but needs development and testing. For example, pro-democratic mass protests emerged in Tunisia before they emerged in Egypt, but temporal precedence does not guarantee causal influence. Also, not all countries are equally susceptible to the same international events—Egypt may have followed Tunisia in many ways, but Algeria did not. In addition, differences in domestic factors strongly affect the likelihood that international diffusion occurs.</p>	<p>What is the nature of political change in a country's neighborhood?</p> <p>Is the neighborhood generally democratic or autocratic?</p>
<p>6.3 International Organizations</p> <p><i>Membership in international organizations impedes backsliding.</i></p>	<p>Related to 6.1, this hypothesis assumes that membership in international organizations creates linkage and leverage, which helps induce and consolidate democratic reforms and thus impede backsliding. The study testing this hypothesis is directly relevant to backsliding: it includes a measure of backsliding and concludes that EU membership resulted in a lower probability of backsliding.</p>	<p>Pevehouse (2002), Levitz and Pop-Eleches (2002)</p>	<p>The study does not have general applicability, since the EU provided strong democratization incentives prior to accession. In addition, the EU chose countries most favorable to democratic reforms, so evidence that post-accession countries did not suffer backsliding is not yet sufficient to establish a causal effect for international influence. In addition, not all international organizations seem to advocate democratic reforms, and, once a country becomes a member, international organizations may be less able to monitor or enforce reforms than before membership was granted.</p>	<p>Is the country a member of international organizations that advocate democracy?</p> <p>Are commitments to democratic reform required as a member, and if so, how are they enforced?</p>

Hypothesis	Relevance for Backsliding	Evidence	Evaluation	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis
<p>6.4 Foreign Aid <i>Foreign aid reduces rulers' dependence on their citizens for tax revenues and thus removes a primary ingredient of democratic accountability.</i></p>	<p>The hypothesis assumes that the effects of direct foreign aid to a government are similar to those of oil rents: it stimulates rent-seeking behavior, curtails the capacity of citizens to hold governments accountable, and reduces rulers' dependence on their citizens for tax revenues. As a result, direct foreign aid to a government may lead to backsliding. To avoid this, foreign aid should be complemented by long-term, systematic interventions that increase resources available to citizens so that it does not induce an imbalance of power between rulers and citizens.</p>	<p>Djankov <i>et al.</i> (2008)</p>	<p>There is mixed support for this hypothesis, with findings very sensitive to how the statistical model is constructed. One study found that foreign aid acts like oil rents, with large magnitude aid reducing a ten-point democracy index by as much as one point. Other studies have not replicated this result.</p>	<p>Does the country receive significant foreign aid? To what extent does foreign aid replace taxation?</p>
<p>6.5 International Election Monitoring <i>International monitoring of elections can deter electoral fraud.</i></p>	<p>Monitoring can increase the quality of elections, and thus prevent democratic backsliding; however, a high-quality election does not imply that backsliding will not occur.</p>	<p>Hyde (2009)</p>	<p>There is direct evidence that election monitoring reduces electoral fraud at the monitored polling stations; however, monitoring may also have other, unintended consequences: 1) monitors face pressures to endorse flawed elections; 2) "shadow markets" can emerge, in which more lenient monitoring organizations allow countries to "choose" monitors and 3) election-day monitoring may increase pre-electoral manipulation by incumbents.</p>	<p>Do international monitors observe elections? What is the quality and independence of the monitoring effort?</p>

C. Description and Evaluation of Theory Families

The goal of this section is to evaluate hypotheses about democratic backsliding derived from six theory families: 1) political leaders, 2) political culture, 3) political institutions, 4) political economy, 5) social structure and political coalitions, and 6) international factors. The literature review is divided into four parts.

Part one first discusses the distinction between structural theories and agent-based theories and then discusses the relationship between social-science theories and policy-based interventions. These two abstract topics are critical to the appropriate appreciation of what social-science scholarship can offer the policymaker.

Part two briefly introduces each of the six theory families by providing the main concepts and assumptions shared by all members of the theory family. A theory is a set of logically consistent statements that generate highly abstract explanations of a general category of outcomes; theories provide models of the causal processes that produce the world we observe, usually by making claims about human motivation and action. Because of their abstraction, theories are not directly testable.

Part three makes the transition from theory to specific hypotheses derived from the theory. In contrast to a highly abstract theory, a hypothesis is a testable statement about the observable relationship between two or more variables, or measures of some feature or characteristic. Hypotheses thus substitute concrete and particular measures for the theory's abstract categories. We do not test the theory of political culture, for example: we test a specific hypothesis about political culture. Note that multiple hypotheses can be derived from the same abstract theory, so each theory family is represented by several hypotheses. For each hypothesis, we provide a concise summary, state the relevance of the hypothesis to backsliding (for reasons discussed below, sometimes this relevance is indirect), derive possible lessons for intervention, and then conclude with an evaluation of the credibility of the hypothesis by discussing the procedures used to test specific hypotheses and the results of those tests.

Part four concludes the literature review with a summary evaluation of each of the six theory families.

i. Part One: Structure, Agency, and Causation

Consider, for a moment, the difference between oil fields and gardens. Oil fields were formed over extraordinarily long time periods in a process that cannot be reproduced in the short term; we can discover oil fields, but we cannot create them from scratch. Gardens, on the other hand, can grow in a wide variety of conditions; under most conditions, hard work will produce a thriving garden. Oil fields and gardens are metaphors for two broad categories of theories that we call, less euphoniously, structural theories and agency-based or agentic theories. A structural theory explains an outcome by referring to pre-existing factors or conditions that are resistant to change, at least in the short term. A structural factor can shape an outcome in one of two broad ways. First, it can constrain or make some choices infeasible and hence make some outcomes highly unlikely; think of the constraint imposed by a budget. Second, it can motivate, making some choices and hence some outcomes more likely. Most of the theories we look at below are some version of a structural theory.

Agentic theories, on the other hand, place the bulk of explanatory burden on some contingent features or actions of political actors or agents. In these theories, we lift the structural constraint so that political actors have a high degree of freedom of choice. We explain the outcome by reference to this relatively

unconstrained choice or action; by calling an action or choice contingent, we assume that it could feasibly have been otherwise, given the sum total of external conditions.

Structural theories, of course, seldom completely neglect agents: structural factors cause outcomes by shaping the behavior of agents. But insofar as we place the burden of explanation on structures, we are claiming that individual characteristics of leaders are largely irrelevant such that if we were to somehow change the leadership, we would not change the outcome, because the new leader would still be susceptible to the same structural influence.

Understanding the distinction between structural and agentic causal factors is important for properly conceptualizing causal interventions. A cause is something that makes a difference. For our purposes, think of a cause as a switch, such that flipping the switch from one position to another produces a change in an outcome, such as democratic backsliding. Structural theories and agent-based theories thus imply different types of switches. Some causes work in the background, taking their time to produce an observed outcome. Other causes are more visible and perhaps immediate in their effects. Policymakers need to be attentive to both broad types of causes.

The six theory families discussed below thus represent different types of causes and the distinctions among them:

1. *Long-term versus short-term causes.* Sometimes flipping a switch will produce a change almost immediately; other switches take a long time to produce an effect. In general, agentic factors work in the short term, while structural factors work over the long term, but this is not always the case.
2. *Supply-side versus demand-side causes.* Supply-side refers to causes that work directly on the political leadership “supplying” political reforms, while demand-side refers to causes that lead citizens to demand political reforms.
3. *Institutional versus systemic causes.* Institutional interventions directly shape political institutions, while systemic interventions operate via “background” factors such as the economy or the cultural system.

These three distinctions do not exhaust the ways in which we can describe causal interventions, but they are the most useful for summarizing the lessons of social-science theories. Policymakers certainly care about other features of policies: whether they are diplomatic or developmental, or whether they are legal-procedural versus behavioral, for example. But these features can be derived from the distinctions already raised: these three distinctions yield eight combinations, which should be sufficient to describe most policy interventions. We might define a “diplomatic” intervention, for example, as one that is short term, institutional, and supply side. Intervention via foreign aid, in contrast, would constitute a long-term, demand-side, and systemic intervention.

ii. Part Two: Introducing Six Theory Families

These six theory families group together types of causes. Theory families should be viewed as types of switches. To be sure, democratic backsliding is a complex phenomenon, not analogous to the mechanical process of turning on a light. But for each theory family and for each hypothesis within each theory family, we encourage readers to approach the hypothesis by asking what would happen if this factor were switched to a different position.

a. Political Leadership

Theories of political leadership exemplify agentic theories. To explain political outcomes, these theories invoke some aspect of the political leadership that is itself not dependent upon other causes. Actions of political leaders, in other words, are relatively unconstrained by anything other than strategies and behavior of other political leaders. There are a variety of ways of thinking about these contingent choices made by agents. We might attribute unconstrained choice to some durable personal attribute of the agent: temperament, intellect, or other personal disposition. We might attribute unconstrained choice to specific decisions, strategic or tactical. Or we might attribute unconstrained choice to interactions between two or more agents. By emphasizing freedom of choice, theories of political leadership imply causal interventions that are short term, directed at the supply side, and institutional.

b. Political Culture

Theories of political culture explain political outcomes by way of attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, and rituals that are widely shared, have deep emotional resonance, and divide appropriate and socially sanctioned from inappropriate behavior. Culture can produce political outcomes either directly, by forming preferences over forms of political practice, or indirectly, by shaping behavior, such as the propensity to cooperate with others, that makes some forms of political practice more likely than others.

Theories of political culture are structural theories in three important ways. First, cultures are properties of large groups of people, either entire societies or substantial subgroups in society. We do not speak of cultures as properties of individuals. Second, cultures are inherited from the past; individuals learn cultural norms from parents and teachers, and from repeated interaction with other members of society. Third, while individuals can in small ways shape culture—culture is not static over time, after all—cultural change tends to be relatively slow and not under the control of political leaders. From the perspective of the individual agent, cultures can be treated as “givens,” in the sense that cultural norms, cultural beliefs, and the behavior they induce are stable, routine, and often unquestioned.

Classic theories of political culture made statements about collectivities. In his play *The Persians*, the Greek playwright Aeschylus distinguished East and West, associating the former with despotism and the latter with democracy. Two millennia later, Montesquieu divided the political world into monarchies, despotisms, and republics, associating these with Western, Eastern, and ancient Greek civilization, respectively. Some contemporary social scientists follow in this tradition, making claims about the relatively homogeneous culture of entire societies or regions. More often, however, contemporary social scientists measure culture in ways that allow for greater heterogeneity within a collectivity. They define culture as the aggregation of individual attitudes and behaviors and tap into these attitudes and behaviors primarily via surveys. The culture of a larger group can be described by reference to the distribution of these survey responses. Associating culture with a distribution allows for individual-level heterogeneity while simultaneously permitting cross-societal comparisons by way of average responses. This approach also allows for more reliable measurement of culture via repeated surveys. Scholars debate, however, whether survey-based measurement of individual psychological attitudes validly captures the meaning of culture.

Political-cultural theories imply two broad types of causal intervention. Both types of causal intervention would be long term and systemic: insofar as cultural factors are amenable to change, it is highly unlikely that this change will occur in the relatively short term. Cultural factors by definition are systemic and not

institutional. But we can envision efforts to change the culture of political leaders directly or to change the culture of citizens in the anticipation that their subsequent actions will then influence political leaders: these two possibilities correspond to supply-side interventions and demand-side interventions, respectively.

c. *Political Institutions*

Institutions are a major type of external constraint on human action. “If men were angels,” James Madison wrote in *The Federalist Papers*, “no government would be necessary.” But the form that government takes varies widely, and political theorists have long believed that different forms of political institutions constrain differently and hence produce different outcomes. “In framing a government,” Madison continues, “the first difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed and in the next place to oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control of the government, but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.”

Theories of political institutions investigate the implications of these “auxiliary precautions.” We can think of democratic political institutions as having three broad types of effect (outcomes observed after flipping the switch). First, different democratic institutions may affect the level of *vertical accountability and representativeness*, such that governments are more responsive to citizens and citizens view their government as a legitimate source of authority, diminishing the incentive to support anti-democratic movements. Second, different democratic institutions may affect the level of *horizontal accountability*, impeding members of the government from acting in increasingly autocratic ways and subverting democracy from within. Third, different democratic institutions may affect the level of *governmental efficaciousness and performance*, avoiding political stalemate and crisis that can provide the excuse or the reason for anti-democratic actions. A parallel set of theoretical claims, which will not be described here, could be made about authoritarian institutions.

The metaphor of an oil field is slightly misleading when applied to institutions. Institutions are the formal and informal “rules of the game.” They are authoritative organizations and procedures, authoritative in the sense that they are capable of sanctioning non-conforming behavior. We know, however, that human agency can intervene to shape institutions; *The Federalist Papers*, referenced above, contain debates about the appropriate form of institutional design. At times that intervention can be rapid and far reaching. The metaphor of a lake might be apt here: one can be created by human agency, but only under unusual circumstances and often only with tremendous effort. A related issue involves the ability of institutions to sanction powerful individuals and groups. Some polities feature a highly imbalanced distribution of power, such that stable institutions do not produce patterned political behavior. We often refer to these as patrimonial polities, in which personal connections to powerful actors matter more than impersonal rules that, in principle, apply equally to everyone.

Interventions on institutions are generally short term, oriented to the supply side, and institutional. These interventions change the menu of incentives and constraints available to political leaders, and so their effects should be almost immediate, unmediated by citizens’ actions, and, by definition, institutional.

d. *Political Economy*

Political economy is the study of the reciprocal relationship between the organization and exercise of power on one hand, and the production and exchange of consumable goods and services on the other. Government structures and activity can affect economic structure and activity in myriad ways, from establishing courts that allow for private property and enforceable contracts to setting tax rates that affect rates of savings and spending. The effect of economic factors on government structure can also operate through diverse channels, from levels of income, such as the long-term accumulation of wealth or changes in short-term economic performance, to the distribution of income between classes or the differential effect of different sources of income. Broadly speaking, we can think of these economic factors exercising influence on government structure in one of three ways. First, we can think of governments as “revenue maximizers,” shaping government structures and policies in order to gain access to greater tax revenue. Second, we can consider how changing levels of income, either in the short term or in the long term, influence citizens’ preferences over different types of government structures and their capacity to act collectively on behalf of their preferences. Third, we can consider how economic factors lead to divisions among and conflict between different groups of citizens.

Economic factors are more intuitively structural than either cultural or institutional variables. Cultural variables matter only insofar as individuals conform to cultural norms; institutional variables matter only insofar as individuals conform to institutional rules. Economic factors, on the other hand, are more obviously external to the actor, although even these factors depend on institutional rules, such as the collective agreement to recognize currency as an authoritative unit of exchange. Furthermore, although there are problems inherent in measuring economic variables, it seems more self-evident that we can count money in contrast to the more ambiguous efforts to measure cultural norms.

Notice how these economic factors change on an annual basis: studies of political economy inhabit a data-rich environment. Coupled with the rise of computing power, this allows scholars of political economy to compile a unique type of datasets called “time-series, cross-sectional datasets,” or TSCS. A TSCS dataset is, in essence, a spreadsheet in which each row corresponds to a *country-year*. If the dataset covers the period 1950 – 2000, a country may be represented by as many as 51 rows, one per year. Columns corresponding to time-variant economic variables will be observed annually; each entry within a column differs from all other column entries. Other columns may represent time-invariant variables that either change very slowly or are very difficult to measure and so are measured infrequently. Two key points must be taken away from this brief introduction to the structure of data within this theory family. First, TSCS datasets are analogous to snowflakes: no two are exactly alike. Scholars make a host of decisions: which countries to include, which years to include, which measures of each variable to use, which control variables to include, and many others. Second, there are many choices that must be made about the statistical model used to analyze the data. There is no single “right” answer to either set of choices; compiling and analyzing complex-structure datasets contains a great deal of art. This point should be emphasized to prepare the reader for the very real possibility of divergent findings based on different decisions about constructing and analyzing the dataset.

The effects of political-economic factors can be either short term or long term. Policy-based interventions can be implemented quickly—think of rapid economic liberalization, known colloquially as “shock therapy”—while efforts at economic growth may bear fruit only over the long term. The effects of an intervention on a political-economic factor may operate directly on the political leadership (supply side) or may be mediated through citizens (demand side). An example of an effect on the supply side

would be privatization that reduces the resources available for political leaders to dispense patronage. An example of an effect on the demand side would be long-term growth that changes citizens' political preferences or, by giving citizens greater resources, increases citizens' capacity to make binding demands on political leaders. All political-economic interventions are, by definition, systemic.

e. Social Structure and Political Coalitions

For the most part, the previous four theory families have treated citizens as a homogeneous group. This theory family relaxes that assumption; it considers alternative ways to conceptualize the bases of group formation among citizens, the potential for conflict among these groups, and the political implications of group formation and inter-group conflict. There are two major axes of division: economic structure and sociocultural or ethnic structure. The first axis combines elements of class analysis and sectoral analysis: alongside divisions regarding the structure of production, pitting owners versus workers, are divisions along factor endowment, such as town versus country. These are *interest-based* divisions: owners of different types of resource endowments may favor different economic or political policies, placing them into conflict with one another. The second heterogeneous axis can fall along religious, linguistic, racial, or other descent-based bases of identity and potential conflict. These are *identity-based* divisions, although these divisions may overlap with interest-based divisions. For example, members of different occupational groups may belong disproportionately to a particular ethnic group; members of different ethnic groups might populate regions with different economic endowments; or different ethnic groups might bear different relations with the government as privileged beneficiaries or marginalized members of society.

Several caveats bear emphasis. First, these claims about socio-economic divisions vastly simplify reality. For any individual, there are many possible sources of identity, and each individual can combine them in different ways, at different times, and in different contexts. Second, following from the first caveat, these divisions are not “naturally occurring” but rather take place through complex social processes that we do not always fully understand. Third, it is not accurate to claim that social divisions are formed first and then influence political processes and structures. Rather, it is certainly the case that political structures and processes influence group identity formation. Political entrepreneurs, for example, might deliberately facilitate certain types of group formation and impede others.

Finally, and following from the above points, a key point of intersection between socio-economic divisions and political processes is the formation of *political coalitions*. Even a ruthless dictator needs the support and loyalty of, at minimum, members of the security forces and key government officials. In almost all cases, membership of this *winning coalition* extends beyond members of the state apparatus to embrace citizens, as well. Citizen members of the coalition provide a range of valuable resources, from financial support to votes. Political entrepreneurs form these coalitions by negotiating the exchange of government-controlled resources in the form of public goods (general policies) or private goods (individual payoffs) for political and economic support.

Coalition formation in turn can influence political processes and structures in three ways. Most directly, key elements of the political process may be subjects of direct negotiation during coalition formation, as targeted members of the winning coalition demand political changes in return for their support. Second, the breadth and composition of the winning political coalition may influence the *stability* of the government and its capacity to pre-empt or survive crisis. Third, and indirectly, the public and private goods used to construct the winning coalition may have feedback effects that influence political

processes and structures by way of political-economic factors. For example, an over-reliance on private goods may breed corruption, undermine the rule of law, and hence pose an obstacle to investment and long-term growth; or highly expansionary public policies may generate rapid inflation that destabilizes the government.

The determinants of social structure are covered by other theory families. Political-economic factors shape the class structure, while cultural and institutional factors can contribute to identity formation. Causal interventions to shape political coalitions themselves are usually best described as short-term interventions on the demand side, for they shape the combination of political preferences that are of the most importance to political leaders.

f. International Factors

We treat international influence as working through the channels described by the five prior theory families.¹⁰ What distinguishes hypotheses in this theory family is that the primary agent of the causal intervention is an actor in the international system, not a domestic actor. But the instruments of change are cultural, institutional, economic, or diplomatic efforts to persuade local political leaders to alter their behavior. Consider the most extreme form of an international intervention, occupation-based nation building. From Germany and Japan through Iraq, nation building has included efforts to alter the cultural, institutional, and political-economic landscape. For example, the US military occupation of Japan, effective through April 1952, involved changes to the Japanese constitution; short-term economic policies to encourage stabilization and growth; policies aimed at restructuring the Japanese economy, such as dismantling the *zaibatsu* (economic conglomerates), land reform, and a trade union act; and even education reform that, among other features, sought to eradicate militarist values and inculcate liberal and civic cultural values. US nation building in Iraq has embraced a similarly large set of constitutional, political-institutional, political-economic, and even political-cultural interventions.

Thus, international factors can be categorized as short term or long term, as targeted to the demand side or the supply side, as institutional or systemic. The question for analysis of causal interventions initiated externally is two-fold: to what extent are these interventions available, and to what extent are they efficacious? To continue our metaphor, to what extent is the “light switch” within the reach of the international community? Some types of intervention might not be readily or cost-effectively available to the international community. On the other hand, some types of intervention might be available but not efficacious. Efficacy can have two components. First, is the intervention generally efficacious? Second, is the efficacy conditional on the source? An intervention by a domestic actor could, in principle, have a very different effect than an analogous intervention by an external actor. For example, an external intervention (or even the perception that an intervention is externally controlled) might trigger alarm at “foreign meddling” and hence inadvertently trigger a nationalist reaction.

iii. Part Three: Hypotheses

In this section, we shift attention from abstract theories to concrete and testable hypotheses. But first a few caveats and conditions must be emphasized. First, while the derivation of hypotheses from a theory follows some basic logical rules, there is no analogous rule by which we can reason logically from the truth or falseness of a hypothesis back up to the theory family. In principle, an unbounded number of

¹⁰ We omit discussion of direct intervention via overt or covert efforts by military or security agencies to trigger political change via military occupation, assassination, sponsoring coups, etc.

hypotheses could be derived from a theory and subject to testing; in practice, a limited number of hypotheses are proposed and tested and the scholarly community draws judgments from them. We cannot know, then, how other hypotheses not proposed and not tested would have performed. Given the inherent malleability of political processes and structures, with wide variation observed across time and space, it is highly unlikely that any single theory will ever be decisively confirmed or disproved. In the end, the evaluation of theories involves fallible judgment.

Second, although this literature review draws bright borders around theory families, actual political processes and structures repeatedly trespass these borders. Most social scientists think that complex political phenomena are caused by the interactions of multiple causal factors, some of which contribute to a cause and some of which may exercise contrary influence.

Third, it is crucial to emphasize that the vast majority of the hypotheses reviewed below were *not* initially formulated to explain democratic backsliding. Over the past several decades, scholars have moved toward the study of non-incremental regime change; that is to say, either they have studied transitions between autocracy and democracy (usually called democratic transitions and democratic breakdowns) or they have studied stability within these two categories (usually called democratic consolidation or authoritarian resilience). In contrast, democratic backsliding often takes the form of incremental change, of some form of the degradation of democratic routines and practices that does not necessarily constitute democratic breakdown.¹¹ To be sure, there are studies that explicitly study democratic backsliding, but these represent the distinct minority of the entirety of hypotheses discussed below, most of which explicitly address democratic transition, democratic consolidation, democratic breakdown, or authoritarian resilience.

We think it wise to cast our hypothesis net widely, so that it captures hypotheses about democratic transition, democratic consolidation, democratic breakdown, and authoritarian resilience, and more narrowly construed hypotheses about democratic backsliding. We include hypotheses that are not explicitly about backsliding for two reasons. First, we are often initially agnostic as to whether these hypotheses have relevance for explaining backsliding. A hypothesis not initially posed as an explanation of backsliding might nonetheless be relevant, perhaps with some modification. Second, even if we deem a hypothesis irrelevant to backsliding, we think it better to articulate this judgment and make sure all readers have the same explicit knowledge than to leave it to readers to speculate whether the omission of a hypothesis was inadvertent. After all, many classic statements have at least implicitly entered public discourse, and failure to discuss them might be interpreted as either tacit approval or neglect.

¹¹ Backsliding, of course, can take place within an autocratic regime as well.

Hypotheses about Political Leadership

Hypothesis 1.1: Tactical Judgment

Hypothesis: Democracies survive when leaders take appropriate action against threats posed by anti-democratic extremist parties.

Primary method: Case studies of embattled democracies in inter-war Europe

Primary authors: Juan Linz, Giovanni Capoccia

Summary: Extremist parties can destabilize democratic systems by introducing centrifugal tendencies, inducing other parties to move away from the political center and toward the extremes in order to not lose votes to the extremist party. At this point, political leaders committed to preserving democracy can take steps to meet the extremist challenge. Democracy-preserving measures include using existing or new legislation to strengthen state institutions and hamstringing extremists, strengthening the centrist bloc of parties and preventing defections toward the extremes, and perhaps constituting a new political leadership that will be better equipped to manage the crisis. The cardinal sin that must be avoided is to attempt to coopt the extremists by inviting them into the government. Superior tactical judgment is sometimes attributed to unobserved personal characteristics of leaders.

Relevance to backsliding: The hypothesis explains the survival or breakdown of democracy, given extremist political parties taking advantage of electoral competition to gain strength but remaining committed to overthrowing democracy. The hypothesis has indirect relevance to backsliding because we frequently observe anti-democratic parties that use the electoral process but that are not committed to sustaining democracy if elected to office. We expect that political leaders will be called on to exercise tactical judgment to counter such threats in a wide variety of contexts, and that the successful application of such judgment can forestall backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: There is no systematic analysis of how leaders make the appropriate tactical choices. This makes it difficult to derive lessons for intervention, especially given the context-specific nature of the challenges faced and the counter-measures that will be necessary.

Evaluation: Studies of this hypothesis are closely tied to the specific conditions faced by inter-war European democracies, limiting the generalizability of their lessons. In general, they featured insufficient attention to leaders' decision-making; they describe actions taken but they do not analyze how leaders made these choices. For example, in democracies that survived inter-war crises, leaders of many parties refused to defect from the centrist bloc. Were these acts of pure volition or were they rational responses to incentives? It would surely be a mistake to attribute actions to leaders' political acumen or personality unless we have some instrument for measuring those attributes *ex ante*. Otherwise, it will be too easy and possibly deceptive to infer attributes from actions. Answering these questions is critical, both to fully validate the hypothesis and to generate lessons about incentive structures and the possibility of manipulating them to engineer superior outcomes.

Hypothesis 1.2: Strategic Interaction I: Elite Compromise

Hypothesis: Given a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle between political groups otherwise united by a sense of national unity, a small group of leaders may decide that compromise is a superior outcome to prolonged struggle.

Primary method: Illustrative and brief case studies of Sweden and Turkey

Primary author: Dwankart Rustow

Summary: This hypothesis takes the form of a four-stage model: 1) a background condition of national unity, such that most citizens feel they belong to the same political community; 2) a preparatory phase characterized by a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle; 3) a decision phase in which protagonists determine that democratic rules of conflict resolution are a superior outcome to continued struggle; and 4) a habituation phase in which an initially distasteful decision becomes more palatable. A key point is that prolonged struggle does not automatically produce a democratic transition; leaders can decide to continue their struggle indefinitely, perhaps out of the belief that they can win a full victory without compromise.

Relevance to backsliding: The hypothesis does not directly address backsliding. It does, however, claim that the initial decision to accept democratic rules must be followed by a period of “habituation,” such that rules grudgingly accepted at first become more generally accepted as legitimate. Backsliding could thus occur if habituation is somehow impeded or elite consensus breaks down.

Lessons for intervention: The hypothesis does not specify conditions that make elite compromise or habituation more likely and so gives little guidance as to how to manufacture these outcomes. One potential lesson is that elites are more likely to compromise if they believe they can neither vanquish their opponents nor be soundly defeated by them. Efforts to promote a balance of power between rival groups might thus cultivate a greater propensity to compromise.

Evaluation: This hypothesis usefully directs our attention to “family feuds” as a motive for elite compromise over democratic conflict resolution. It seems reasonable to assume that a unified elite will not seek new measures of conflict resolution and that a deeply divided and antagonistic elite will not compromise under most circumstances. The hypothesis provides little further guidance, however; it cannot identify or predict what types of conflicts will qualify as an appropriate family feud. The hypothesis was never stated in a testable manner and the evidence given on its behalf was not systematically gathered and analyzed. But, we see echoes of this hypothesis in much subsequent work.

Box 2: Backsliding in Egypt

Conventional readings of backsliding in Egypt, which often focus on the leadership of Presidents Morsi (2012–2013) and Sisi (2014–present), illustrate how elite theories can make very different claims about how elite decisions lead to backsliding. Those focusing on Morsi point to his weak leadership style, inability to reign in other forces within the Muslim Brotherhood, and subsequent mistakes in overstepping boundaries that ultimately sparked revolt against him (Debeuf 2013, Samaan 2015.) In contrast, elite explanations for backsliding under Sisi argue that his strong leadership style, uncompromising position toward the Muslim Brotherhood, and general determination to eliminate opposition explain backsliding after the June 2013 military coup. (Hendawi 2014, Mansour 2015).

Hypothesis 1.3. Strategic Interaction II: Negotiated Transitions

Hypothesis: Democratic transitions occur when soft-liners within regimes negotiate with moderates within opposition.

Primary method: Brief and illustrative material from third-wave democratic transitions

Primary authors: Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Adam Przeworski, Nancy Bermeo

Summary: In the late 20th century, authoritarian regimes inevitably split between hard-liners, who want to maintain the existing dictatorship, and soft-liners, who want to reach out to opposition to provide a broader base for the non-democratic regime. Opposition, however, is split between moderates, willing to cut a deal to allow for some liberalizing reforms, and radicals, who want full transition, usually accompanied by socio-economic reforms. Either hard-liners or radicals may derail negotiations between soft-liners and moderates. If not, soft-liners may lose control over liberalizing reforms and full democratic transition may ensue. This often occurs when elites in regimes over-estimate their likelihood of winning elections, so democratic transition may be inadvertent. A complementary route to successful transition occurs when leaders of extremist parties learn from their past mistakes to value democracy over their party’s substantive objectives, becoming less extremist and hence less threatening to democracy.

Relevance for backsliding: The main focus of this hypothesis is on processes that conclude with full democratic transition, but focus on complexity of the negotiating process offers insight into ways that liberalizing reforms can be reversed.

Lessons for intervention: Possible mechanisms of intervention are to strengthen soft-liners within autocratic regimes, strengthen moderates in opposition, and weaken extremists and hard-liners.

Evaluation: This hypothesis is very closely tied to cases of negotiated transition “from above” (*i.e.*, elite-driven transitions in which citizens play a marginal role) in Latin America. The dynamics of democratic transition appeared much different elsewhere. It cannot be assumed that autocratic elites will divide into soft-liners and hard-liners, and that the dynamics between these two groups will everywhere be the main impetus for transitions. On the contrary, we have ample evidence drawn from cases in which the

elite remained relatively unified yet were overthrown or forced to make democratic concessions by determined collective action. See, for examples, the discussion of hypotheses 2.4 and 6.2.

Hypothesis 1.4: Super-Presidentialism

Hypothesis: Power-seeking presidents unconstrained by powerful institutions or competing centers of power initiate backsliding.

Primary method: Statistical and illustrative case studies of post-communist Europe and Central Asia; Illustrative case material of contemporary African democracies

Primary authors: Steven Fish, Nicolas van de Walle

Summary: The Fish version of this hypothesis, based on the post-communist cases, makes behavioral assumption that post-communist presidents always prefer to arrogate more power to themselves. The opportunity to establish a more powerful position occurs under “super-presidentialism,” a “constitutional system that concentrated power in the president that could be readily manipulated in a way that facilitated such concentration of power.” The result is backsliding, where a backslider is a country that received a Freedom House score of 5 or lower (*i.e.*, more democratic) since the early 1990s, but had more recently received a score that was higher (worse) than their best score received in a previous year. The van de Walle version of this hypothesis, based on African politics, does not make the explicit assumption that presidents always prefer to arrogate more power to themselves, though this appears to be a tacit assumption. Africa’s democracies are overwhelmingly presidential with very weak legislatures; the political elite is narrow and based on personal ties to the president. Consequently, presidents are largely “above the law” and free to pursue policies that neuter oppositions and consolidate their incumbency.

Relevance to backsliding: The Fish version of the hypothesis is explicitly about backsliding and so has direct relevance. The van de Walle version explains why so many African democracies are non-competitive and illiberal; insofar as these features of contemporary African democracies are associated with backsliding, the hypothesis is directly relevant.

Lessons for intervention: The hypothesis underscores the need to provide incentives to presidents to counterbalance their preference for monopolizing power. Alternatively, the hypothesis addresses the need to correct any imbalance of power among presidents, other government agents, and civil society so that other political forces can counter the power of the president.

Evaluation: This hypothesis marks a critical transition toward the study of agency using the standard tools of social-science methods. Elite autonomy from structural factors is demonstrated statistically, not asserted. Some problems remain, however. First is the assumption that leaders always want to monopolize power and diminish constraints. This assumption clashes with assumptions made by other hypotheses about political leadership; Hypothesis 1.5., for example, explicitly identifies leaders with normative commitments to democracy. Second, this hypothesis identifies super-presidentialism as the institutional structure that can be exploited by power-maximizing presidents. We are thus led to ask

why some democracies have super-presidential institutional structures and others do not. For further discussion, see Hypotheses 3.1 and 3.6 below.

Hypothesis 1.5: Leaders' Normative Preferences

Hypothesis: Democracy survives when political leaders seek moderate policies and have a normative preference for democracy.

Primary method: Statistical analysis of Latin American democracies; intensive case studies of Argentina and El Salvador

Primary authors: Scott Mainwaring and Anibal Pérez-Liñán

Summary: Political actors, not economic or cultural structures, are key to democratic survival. Two features of political actors are central to the analysis: the degree of radicalism of their policy preferences and their normative commitment to democracy. Policy preferences can be arrayed on a left–right continuum. Policy preferences are moderate when they are relatively close to the preferences of other political actors; they are radical when they are far away from preferences of other actors. The key feature is not the absolute placement of policy preferences but their relative position *vis-à-vis* other actors. Actors have a normative commitment to democracy when they value democracy for its own sake, not simply as an instrument to achieve policy preferences. Actors with normative preferences for democracy will therefore not sacrifice democracy to achieve their instrumental policy goals. This approach generalizes many of the earlier hypotheses, many of which implicitly assume policy moderation or a normative commitment to democracy, or both.

Relevance for backsliding: Democracies whose leaders have radical policy preferences or lack normative commitments to democracy, or both, will be more fragile and vulnerable to breakdown. These democracies might also be vulnerable to backsliding, as actors may seek their policy goals without formally abolishing democracy.

Lessons for intervention: Successful intervention would have to induce policy moderation and heighten normative commitments to democracy, but the hypothesis does not offer insight into the instruments that might effect these changes.

Evaluation: This hypothesis is studied with exemplary care to demonstrate that leaders vary in terms of their policy preferences and normative commitments; we do not have to be satisfied by untested assumptions about leaders. Note how this hypothesis dovetails with earlier hypotheses that were not systematically tested; the claim about moderate policy preferences, for example, is one instrument for testing claims about “family feuds” that are left untested in Hypothesis 1.2. The problem for this hypothesis is to account for the sources of elite preferences. Stability in actors’ preferences is widespread, so we need to ask why they changed over time to become more conducive to democracy. The prevailing theory is of cognitive updating, as actors learn from the past to update their preferences. This theory is, however, still at early stages of development.

Hypotheses About Political Culture

Hypothesis 2.1: Civic Culture

Hypothesis: Societies whose citizens exhibit civic culture are more likely to experience democratic transitions and democratic stability.

Primary method: Cross-national surveys to measure degree of civic culture; cross-sectional statistical models to test relationship between civic-mindedness and democracy since the mid-1980s

Primary authors: Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel

Summary: Sustained democracy is possible only if citizens possess a civic culture. Civic culture has two components: an emphasis on *secular* values over *traditional* values, and an emphasis of *self-expressive* values over *survival* values. Cultural change is produced by prior economic change. The long-term shift from agricultural to industrial economies engenders a shift from *traditional* to *secular* values. The subsequent shift from industrial to post-industrial economies engenders a further shift from *survival* values to *self-expressive* values. Empirically, with this two-dimensional plot of cultural values, the authors are able to locate virtually all of the world's countries according to their mean values on each cultural dimension. Strikingly, this geography of cultural values shows a very strong association between income and cultural values. The final step in the argument is to link cultural values to democracy. It is the extension of self-expressive values, with their attendant emphasis on autonomy and emancipation, not secular-rational values, that is linked to the emergence of democracy: as the proportion of society emphasizing self-expressive values rises, democratic institutions are more likely to be observed.

Relevance for backsliding: Backsliding or democratic breakdown could occur if democracy were established in a society that lacked civic culture; in this case, there is incongruence between political institutions and mass political culture, such that "supply" exceeds "demand." This incongruence is viewed as a potential source of democratic backsliding, as leaders slowly undermine vertical accountability without fearing public protest.

Lessons for intervention: Target interventions to alter mass cultural attitudes. In practice, it is not clear that cultural change could occur in the absence of prior structural economic change, nor is it clear that external intervention could induce large-scale cultural change so that mass attitudes change.

Box 3: Interpersonal Trust, Mobilization, and Backsliding

One strand of the argument that associational life fosters democratization is based on the notion that such associations foster interpersonal trust. Trust is expected to help bridge across social groups, making it easier for groups to cooperate in mobilizing to make demands, as well as to solve problems through negotiations and compromise rather than conflict.

In Egypt, Russia, and Bolivia, interpersonal trust is relatively low. For instance, World Values Surveys found that on a scale from 1 to 2, where 1 represented agreement with the statement that “most people can be trusted” and 2 was agreement with the statement that “one can’t be too careful,” the average trust in Russia (1995) and Egypt (2008) were both 1.8. In Bolivia, only 18% of people in a Latinobarómetro survey (2010) agreed that “most people can be trusted.” Moreover, a 2008 interpersonal trust index found that Bolivia scored considerably lower than the average in Latin America (Diez Medrano, *n.d.*).

The extent to which this contributes to backsliding remains an open question. As the events in Egypt 2011 showed, collective action can (at least in the immediate term) promote feelings of trust and unity among diverse segments of the population. Weak interpersonal trust may also make it easier for elites to unify their constituents in what are then perceived as zero-sum games, lending support for the peeling back of democratic freedoms. Experiences in Egypt and Bolivia suggest that this mechanism may be at play. Presidents Sisi and Morales have both made claims that anti-democratic actions are required in order to defend against segments of the population, thus both exploiting and likely exacerbating low levels of trust among the population.

Evaluation: Efforts to substantiate this hypothesis continue to face daunting obstacles. First, systematic collection of data about cultural change dates only to the 1980s, so the hypothesis cannot be tested on any earlier periods. Second, multiple studies contend that the measure of civic culture is flawed. Third, the hypothesis must disentangle the effects of economic change and cultural change; recall that economic change precedes and causes cultural change, according to the hypothesis. However, economic change may also directly cause political change. This is a daunting challenge for statistical models to overcome and the scholarly consensus is that existing efforts have not been successful. We also find a great deal of contrary or even contradictory evidence. On one hand, scholars have consistently found strong levels of support for democracy in countries that do not have modern civic cultures; these findings have been repeated multiple times over the past two decades. On the other hand, countries in which the appropriate cultural ingredients have been identified have subsequently experienced backsliding. Survey research in Russia in the early 1990s, for example, identified the strong development of networks of civil society that would engender trust and engagement necessary to successful democratic consolidation. Subsequent events have not supported this optimistic forecast.

Hypothesis 2.2: Social Capital

Hypothesis: Citizens can engage in collective action and hold governing officials accountable when they possess social capital.

Primary method: Statistical analysis of Italian regional governments; historical analysis of cultural evolution in northern and southern Italy

Primary author: Robert Putnam

Summary: Civic culture generates social capital, which makes collective action more available to citizens. Civic culture is a combination of attitudes and membership in organizations; it can be measured by surveys. Social capital is not directly observed; it is the widespread expectation of reciprocity, which makes collective action more likely by creating a normative aversion to “free-riding,” allowing others to pay the costs of providing public goods and services. Civic culture and the social capital it generates are not by-products of economic development; they are products of long, historical evolution and they cannot be easily manufactured in the short term. Because northern Italy enjoys widespread social capital, regional government agencies there are highly responsive to citizen’s demands for better services; lacking social capital, southern Italians suffer from unresponsive and poor-performing government agencies.

Relevance to backsliding: The landmark study was based on Italian regional governments after 1970, a period when Italy was democratic at the national level. But the theory has relevance beyond government performance; social capital facilitates citizens’ collective action, which should, in turn, have a host of political consequences as citizens band together to demand government accountability. The absence of social capital predicts less pro-democratic collective action, and hence a greater likelihood of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: If the roots of social capital are deeply historical, then interventions are unlikely to bring about cultural change.

Evaluation: This hypothesis is based on relatively narrow empirical scope: the study of government performance in 18 Italian regional governments. Advocates have lauded the results, and the theory of social capital has been widely cited and endorsed. Over the past two decades, however, contradictory evidence has accumulated rapidly. On one hand, we have substantial evidence of societies with a vigorous associational life and attendant civic culture, yet explicitly non-democratic movements came to power; these studies are now widespread in the study of Weimar Germany, for example. On the other hand, we have abundant examples of widespread collective action in societies that were not previously identified as possessing large reservoirs of social capital. This is particularly true for the countries participating in the Arab Spring, where the demand for democracy did not rest on social capital and did not uniformly lead to the supply of democracy.

Box 4: Civic Associations and Backsliding in Russia and Egypt

Russia and Egypt saw an enormous growth in associational life in the decade preceding backsliding. Russia, which was home to only 30-40 registered associations in 1987, had 237,935 registered organizations in December 1998, with about one-quarter of these engaged in civic issues, such as human rights and social protection (USAID 2000). Egypt saw an increase in the number of organizations from 13,000 in 1991 to 45,000 in 2011 (USAID 2011). Yet, such numbers can be misleading. Many associations were registered on paper but non-existent or ineffective in practice; they were clustered in the capital cities and select regions, and they often operated with closed hierarchies and exclusivity, thus replicating and reinforcing existing norms rather than fostering interpersonal trust and support for democracy. Given this, one could argue, it may be less surprising that Russia and Egypt witnessed backsliding despite this significant growth in associational life.

Hypothesis 2.3: Civic Education

Hypothesis: Civic culture can be taught; participants in civic education programs are more likely to participate in local government.

Primary method: Statistical analysis of participants and non-participants in civic education programs in Poland, the Dominican Republic, South Africa, and Kenya

Primary author: Steven Finkel

Summary: In contrast to Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2, both of which conceive of culture as relatively static in the short term, this hypothesis argues that civic education programs can inculcate the values, skills, and attitudes seen as crucial to democracy. Political culture, then, is more malleable than other theories propose. Compared to non-participants, participants in civic education programs were observed to be far more active in local politics, especially in terms of interacting with local officials to solve local problems. This is true even though the civic education programs did not boost participants' expressed support for democracy. A follow-up study looked at the impact of civic education in Kenya; it found that a program completed prior to the outbreak of electoral violence in 2007 has some positive effects on expressed support for the peaceful resolution of ethnic and political violence.

Relevance to backsliding: The first set of studies investigated the effects of programs on local-level political action, not the impact on levels of democracy. The second study looks at the ability of civic education programs to have an effect that survives a period of political crisis but makes no claims about the ability of such programs to deter political crisis. This finding suggests that civic education may reduce some of the negative effects of democratic backsliding, but we cannot extrapolate that civic education would deter backsliding itself.

Lessons for intervention: Some behavior can be taught. Two critical questions are about scaling these lessons to the national level. Can mass attitudes be changed through these intensive interventions? If so, will new mass attitudes increase the likelihood of democracy?

Evaluation: Studies of the effects of civic education programs are methodologically exemplary. Yet they also exemplify the shortcomings of theories of the demand side. We can demonstrate that civic education programs increase local political participation, for example, but there is simply no evidence that these programs scale up to produce any change at the national level in terms of democratic consolidation.

Box 5: Support for Democracy: Deeply Held, Stable Beliefs? Evidence from Egypt and Latin America

Polling evidence from Egypt suggests that support for democracy may be more malleable than theories of political culture would predict. Pew polls have found that support for democracy among Egyptians fell from 2011, when 71% agreed that democracy was the best form of government, to 2013, when 66% did. Moreover, only about half of Egyptians (52%) saw democracy as the solution to the country's problems in 2013, compared to 43% who favored a strong leader. This also represented a decline from 2011, when 64% of Egyptians saw democratic governance as the solution to the country's problems, vs. 34% who favored a strong leader. Moreover, a large percentage of Egyptians are willing to sacrifice democracy for a better economy. These attitudes are particularly prevalent among the poor: 31% favor ensuring democracy, while 66% prefer a strong economy (Pew Research Center 2014). This is not entirely surprising, as a Transitional Governance Poll (2013) found that the majority of Egyptians (70%) stated that the most important feature of democracy was either narrowing the gap between rich and poor or assuring that basic necessities are provided for all. This suggests that citizens view democracy in instrumental terms, and their support for democracy can change more quickly than many theories of political culture would predict, depending on economic and social outcomes associated with democratic experiences.

Evidence from the Latinobarómetro shows similar instability. Between 2009 and 2010, the percentage of the population supporting democracy rose 21 percentage points in Ecuador (from 43% to 64%) and 11 percentage points in Colombia (from 49% to 60%). At the same time, it decreased nine points in El Salvador (68% to 59%) and seven points in Uruguay (82% to 75%) (Latinobarómetro 2010).

Hypothesis 2.4: Electoral Abuse and Collective Action

Hypothesis: Electoral abuses by incumbent leaders may be sufficient to trigger pro-democratic collective action, even in the absence of civic culture.

Primary methods: Diverse statistical models and case studies

Primary authors: Joshua Tucker, Svitlana Chernykh, Emily Beaulieu

Summary: While it may be true that social capital is a solution to the collective action problem, this set of studies suggests other possible solutions. Highly visible electoral abuses may act as a “focal point,” such that large portions of the mass public receive simultaneous information that leads them to expect others to be similarly outraged and willing to engage in collective action. When expectations converge on these focal points—when each potential participant believes that others will participate—the perceived costs of participation are lowered and the perceived likelihood of success is raised. Therefore, protests can occur, even when civic culture and social capital are noticeably weak.

Relevance to backsliding: These studies suggest that mass protest against autocratic practices can occur in the absence of civic culture; these studies do not directly allow us to observe the consequences of these protests, so the link between collective action and backsliding is not directly observed.

Lessons for intervention: Interventions that make information about electoral abuse more widely available may help facilitate anti-autocratic collective action.

Evaluation: Studies of this hypothesis demonstrate the shortcomings of political-cultural hypotheses. We have excellent evidence that electoral abuse can motivate collective action, even in settings not exhibiting civic culture or social capital. We have less evidence, however, that collective action in the face of electoral abuse acts as a significant deterrent to backsliding.

Hypotheses about Political Institutions

Hypothesis 3.1: Presidential Democracies

Hypothesis: Presidential democracies are more prone to breakdown than parliamentary democracies.

Primary method: Illustrative case studies and some statistical models

Primary author: Juan Linz

Summary: Parliamentary and presidential democracies are distinguished in essence by the nature of responsibility: is the government accountable to an independently elected legislature or independent of it? According to this hypothesis, presidential systems have four features that make them more prone to political crisis and democratic breakdown: they divide legitimacy between executives and legislators; they have fixed terms in executive office and so no electoral means to respond quickly to political stalemate; they have a winner-take-all set of rules; and they cultivate an authoritarian presidential style. Several subsequent studies provide additional empirical support via statistical models that control for levels of wealth and other possible confounding variables. Note that hypothesis 3.1 is distinct from hypothesis 1.4. Hypothesis 1.4 assumes that leaders want to establish hegemonic control over the political system and views “super-presidential” systems as providing the appropriate opportunity to do so. Hypothesis 3.1, on the other hand, makes no analogous assumption about the political preferences of leaders; crisis is fully produced by the institutional setup of presidential democracies.

Relevance to backsliding: The hypothesis was initially developed to explain democratic breakdowns. It is a reasonable inference from this hypothesis that presidential democracies would be more vulnerable to backsliding than parliamentary democracies.

Lessons for causal intervention: Institutional design matters. Efforts should be targeted at initial institutional selection or institutional reform in established democracies.

Evaluation: Several studies initially confirmed the finding that presidential democracies were more prone to breakdown than parliamentary democracies. But this finding has subsequently been undermined. Many of these early studies compared stable parliamentary regimes among economically advanced countries to non-stable presidential systems in the developing world. Furthermore, one-third of the stable parliamentary democracies in these samples had populations under 1 million; four of them had populations under 100,000. Cheibub (2007) reports the following findings that strongly confirm suspicions that parliamentary systems were selected in contexts that were otherwise highly propitious for democratic stability. Democracies that follow civilian dictatorships have an elevated risk of democratic breakdown relative to democracies that follow military dictatorships. Furthermore,

democracies that follow military dictatorships have a much higher likelihood of being presidential systems, while democracies that follow civilian dictatorships are far more likely to be parliamentary systems. Once the analysis accounts for this “selection” mechanism, there is simply no meaningful causal effect of a presidential versus parliamentary system. This analysis fatally undermines the presidential versus parliamentary hypothesis; in doing so, it provides vivid illustration of the need to account for the selection of institutions prior to determining the consequences of institutions.

Box 6: Presidentialism and Backsliding in Egypt

Egypt stands as an example of backsliding in a presidential regime that emerged from a military-backed authoritarian regime. That analysts’ arguments that Egypt should develop a parliamentary system (e.g., Bruce Ackerman, “To Save Egypt, Drop the Presidency,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2013) went unheeded was not surprising. Strong political forces had no interest in parliamentarism, and average citizens—long used to a strong president following the 1952 Free Officers Movement—saw such a system as foreign. In short, the choice of presidentialism was driven by factors that, independently, portended poorly for democratization.

Hypothesis 3.2: Consociational Democracy

Hypothesis: In “plural” societies, consociational institutions create a higher likelihood of democratic survival.

Primary method: Small number of brief case studies of European and non-European democracies

Primary author: Arend Lijphart

Summary: In plural societies (which are discussed further below in Hypothesis 5.4), ethnic cleavages have been politically mobilized, so that politics becomes a game of ethnic allocation. Losers in this game are demographically disadvantaged and so have incentive to seek to alter the rules of the game in ways that are detrimental to democratic survival and political order. This hypothesis argues that carefully designed electoral systems and governing institutions can mitigate the problem of ethnic fragmentation and political competition that constitute serious challenges to democracy. Consociational democracy refers to a cluster of institutions whose formal mechanisms embody the principles of consensus and power-sharing. Central to consociationalism is the *grand coalition*, in which governments guarantee participation by parties representing all ethnic groups, including the possibility of quotas in all major branches and agencies of government. The other main features of consociationalism are proportionality, a mutual veto, and federalism.

Relevance to backsliding: Consociationalism was proposed as an institutional counterbalance to widespread political instability and unconstrained competition, including democratic breakdown and civil wars. It may credibly be considered as a preventive measure against the incremental degradation of democracy.

Lessons for intervention: In ethnically divided societies, power-sharing institutions such as grand coalitions help prevent backsliding.

Evaluation: Empirical support for the consociational democracy hypothesis is very weak. The original statement of the hypothesis provided four illustrative case studies, none of which constituted a test of the hypothesis. These country studies included Lebanon, which suffered two intense civil wars, and Nigeria, which suffered a string of democratic breakdowns; it is difficult to see how these studies support the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3.3: Inclusive Electoral Systems

Hypothesis: In new democracies, electoral institutions based on proportional representation can generate political stability.

Primary method: Cross-national statistical model of approximately 60 recently democratic countries

Primary author: Andrew Reynolds

Summary: The design and structure of electoral institutions can mitigate ethnic conflict and promote political stability. Basically, inclusive, power-sharing institutions are favored over majoritarian institutions. The most important finding is that electoral systems based on proportional representation can prevent elections from exacerbating ethnic conflict, because they create incentives for politicians to accommodate one another.

Relevance to backsliding: Indicators of political stability included disaggregated Polity IV scores, so include both incremental backsliding and democratic breakdown.

Lessons for intervention: Institutional design matters, and the scope of institutional reform is not as large as under original versions of consociational democracy (3.2).

Evaluation: The statistical models presented as support for this hypothesis fail to meet contemporary standards. For example, the state of the art is to minimize the number of control variables, to avoid “garbage-can” models that include every conceivable control variable. Reynolds has cross-sectional data with no longitudinal component, and so has only 56 observations. The models contain almost two dozen control variables, making them very difficult to interpret. The dependent variable measuring democratic stability, furthermore, is an unorthodox average of two omnibus measures: the Failed States Index and the Political Stability Index of the World Bank. Each of these measures is a highly aggregated composite of multiple indicators, many of which are unrelated to democracy. Furthermore, the two measures go back in time only to 2004 and 1996, respectively. Finally, these statistical models do not control in any way for statistical treatment, even as illustrative case material that accompanies the statistical models clearly indicates that strategic political rulers often select electoral institutions that will most disadvantage their oppositions.

Hypothesis 3.4: Party System Fractionalization

Hypothesis: High levels of party-system fractionalization generate political instability.

Primary method: Statistical analysis

Primary authors: G. Bingham Powell, Scott Mainwaring

Summary: Scholars of party systems in established democracies identify four attributes that may be related to levels of political stability. *Fractionalization* refers to the degree to which just a few or many political parties dominate a party system. *Alignment* refers to the degree to which political parties are closely rooted in social groups, especially ethnic groups, religious communities, or economic class. *Extremism* refers to the presence of parties that seek radical change, including overthrow of the existing political system. *Volatility*, finally, refers to changes of voter support for parties across elections. Of these four attributes, fractionalization has been most closely associated with rising instability. Party systems can be evenly balanced between two parties; have a single dominant party; or be divided among multiple smaller parties, none of which can command an electoral plurality on its own. This hypothesis suggests that either two-party systems or systems of moderate “multi-partism” are the most stable, such that once the number of parties crosses a threshold of moderation, fractionalization breeds instability. Most scholars, however, believe that extreme versions of multi-partism are deleterious for democratic stability only in interaction with other institutions, such as presidentialism.

Relevance for backsliding: The hypothesis is stated in terms of political instability, which is not precisely equivalent to backsliding. However, increased levels of political instability may be considered as either indicators or predictors of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: In principle, intervention could be targeted at consolidation of the party system via merger, although we have no evidence of the efficacy of such measures.

Evaluation: Several studies provide statistical tests of this hypothesis: the results are inconclusive. Most of the studies test complex interaction effects—for example, by looking at the interaction of different levels of fractionalization in presidential versus parliamentary systems and then exploring democratic stability under conditions of economic expansion and contraction. None of the findings has been replicated using different datasets or models. The results are interesting and suggestive, but not conclusive.

Hypothesis 3.5: Party System Collapse

Hypothesis: The collapse of a traditional-party system creates an opportunity for democracy to be subverted from above.

Primary methods: Intensive case studies of Peru and Venezuela, accompanied by statistical models and experiments

Primary author: Jason Seawright

Summary: Seawright traces a lengthy causal chain in which the collapse of the traditional party system in Peru and Venezuela is the proximate cause of democratic backsliding. Economic crisis generates high levels of anxiety among citizens, which in turn heightens their attention to questions of the governance problems that result from political underrepresentation. When anxious citizens confront corruption and their traditional political parties are closed to their grievances, they experience a decline in party identification, a growing acceptance of risk, and hence openness to supporting new parties. The result is party-system collapse, as traditional parties that had dominated electoral politics for decades experience a vertiginous loss of support. Highly relevant to our purposes is that the collapse of the traditional party system made it possible for Hugo Chávez and Alberto Fujimori to come to power in their respective countries and, in their own ways, subvert democracy from above.

Relevance for backsliding: The outcomes studied here are two well-known cases of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: Given background conditions of economic crisis, endemic corruption, and traditional party systems that were unresponsive to grievances, an intervention aimed directly at the party system would in all likelihood be ineffectual. A broader set of interventions aimed at economic reform and the elimination of corruption would instead likely be needed.

Evaluation: The empirical support for this hypothesis is broad and deep, but tailored to the Latin American context; the hypothesis explains the collapse of support for traditional parties in a long-lasting party system. This initial starting point does not describe many party systems outside of Latin America.

Hypothesis 3.6: Dominant-Party Systems in Africa

Hypothesis: Dominant-party systems produce low levels of competitiveness and virtually no alternation in power.

Primary method: Multiple country studies

Primary authors: Leonardo Arriola, Adrienne LeBas, and Rebecca Riedl

Summary: A dominant-party system is one in which a single dominant party competes against a large number of smaller and relatively ephemeral parties, resulting in fractionalization and volatility, but not a high degree of competitiveness and virtually no alternation of the party in power. The major concern for the fate of democracy is that powerful incumbents will simply suffocate their opponents.

Relevance to backsliding: These studies are primarily focused on the absence of genuine multi-party competition; however, the emergence of a dominant party in a previously competitive system could be a predictor of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: These studies highlight multiple mechanisms by which the political opposition can become more potent and pose a check on the unconstrained power of incumbents. One mechanism is greater support for political parties, in an effort to effect the development of broader, multiethnic coalitions. A second mechanism is support for institutions and organizations, such as labor unions, that span ethnic and regional cleavages.

Evaluation: There is some debate over the proper way to count the number of parties in a party system; hence there is some debate as to whether most of African party systems are indeed dominant-party systems, although critics of this proposition are in the minority. In its current nascent state of development, this hypothesis is more descriptive than causal. There are several explanations for dominant-party systems in different African cases, but not yet a more general, continent-wide hypothesis that has survived rigorous testing.

Hypothesis 3.7: Mobilizational Asymmetry

Hypothesis: Democratic development can be threatened by unbalanced party systems, creating the potential for backsliding.

Primary method: Country studies of Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, and Libya

Primary authors: Ellen Lust and David Waldner

Summary: Multi-party democracy may require that parties possess a rough balance in the capacity to mobilize supporters and press political programs. It is not fractionalization per se that threatens democracies, but rather the convergence of organizationally weak “novice” parties and stronger programmatic parties that evolve out of grassroots mobilization and organization. The mobilization asymmetry that ensues may be particularly harmful to new democracies when the more powerful parties express ideological commitments that are an anathema to the sectors of society that lack strong parties to defend their interests. One example is the recent military overthrow of the democratically elected Islamist government of Egypt.

Relevance for backsliding: Direct. Political forces threatened by rival parties with greater mobilization capacity have incentives to systematically undermine democracy.

Lessons for intervention: This hypothesis highlights the need for greater balance between parties but provides no clear lessons about how to effect greater balance in mobilization capacity.

Evaluation: This hypothesis is also at an early stage of development. The empirical support from the two primary cases, Egypt and Tunisia, is strong. It remains to be seen whether the hypothesis has more general applicability and whether measures and data can be gathered to test the hypothesis in a multi-variate statistical model.

Box 7: Unequal Mobilization Capacity in Egypt

Survey evidence suggests that, in the 2011–2013 transition period, the Egyptian polity was fairly evenly divided between those who held consistently “secularist” or “Islamist” positions. Yet, in Egypt’s crowded but unbalanced party system, movement parties—and especially the Freedom and Justice and Nour parties—were organizationally far more powerful. Not surprisingly, the Brotherhood out-campaigned their counterparts,¹² leading the Freedom and Justice Party to take 213 seats (43%) and the Nour party to gain 107 seats (21%) in Egypt’s first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections.

“The Islamist parties’ success gave both sides incentives to undermine liberal political institutions. Secularists remained complacent as the higher court decided in June 2012 to disband the Islamist-led parliament on technical grounds; Islamists ignored their opposition’s refusal to engage in the constituent assembly in Fall 2012, ultimately ram-rod-ding the constitution through in a snap referendum by the end of the year; their opposition in turn took to the streets, ultimately leading to the removal of the elected president, Morsi, in June 2013. The stark imbalance between the abilities of movement and relic parties to mobilize voters created political tensions that undermined their ability to play constitutive roles necessary for democracy” (excerpted from Lust and Waldner 2014).

Hypothesis 3.8: Hybrid Regimes

Hypothesis: Hybrid “semi-democracies” are less stable than either full democracies or full autocracies.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary authors: Jack Goldstone, et. al.

Summary: “Inconsistent” or hybrid polities have some democratic features, but are generally deficient in civil liberties, accountability, or both. These hybrid regimes may appear to be more vulnerable than full democracies to an array of adverse consequences, including backsliding.

Relevance for backsliding: This hypothesis is based on the creation of five regime categories based in turn on Polity IV measures: full autocracy, partial autocracy, partial democracy, partial democracy with factionalism, and full democracy. Relative to full autocracy, all three of the partial regime types significantly raise the likelihood of a regime change. This outcome is thus far broader than democratic backsliding and it is not yet clear if we can identify a more specific backsliding effect.

Lessons for intervention: Hybrid regimes, being more vulnerable to backsliding, should be prioritized for interventions to reduce the risks of or to counter backsliding.

Evaluation: This hypothesis is supported by well-executed multi-variate statistical models. It seems quite clear that partial democracies are far more likely to experience backsliding than are consolidated (or full) democracies.

¹² Lust, Soltan, and Wichmann (2013), ch. 5.

Hypothesis 3.9: Judicial Review

Hypothesis: The diffusion of power between relatively balanced political parties is conducive to the development of judicial review.

Primary method: Three country studies of the Republic of China, Mongolia, and Korea

Primary author: Thomas Ginsburg

Summary: Judicial review is a mechanism of horizontal accountability and, as such, is a potentially powerful bulwark against democratic backsliding. This hypothesis looks at the origins of judicial review in new democracies: why do politicians allow for the creation of an institution that constrains them? The answer is an “insurance” model. Political leaders who are *uncertain* about their future tenure in office may seek insurance against future electoral losses by empowering various minoritarian institutions like judicial review. Competition from powerful opposition parties would engender such uncertainty. A leader who believes she will govern indefinitely, on the other hand, will not wish to be constrained and will not yield to judicial review and may indeed seek to undermine it. Time horizons, in turn, are sensitive to the balance of power: political support from political incumbents will be greater when political power is diffused among various parties than when a single dominant party exists at the time of constitutional design. Note that this hypothesis complements others in this theory family that associate backsliding with uneven balances of power.

Relevance to backsliding: While the presence of judicial review might safeguard against backsliding, this has not been established and indeed is not the focus of the hypothesis.

Lessons for intervention: As with other members of this theory family, interventions should seek to redress highly unequal balances of power between incumbents and oppositions.

Evaluation: The empirical support is currently limited to three East Asian case studies, and these case studies focus on the emergence of judicial review, not its subsequent function as an obstacle to backsliding. Still, the model is very plausible; combined with other hypotheses in this theory family, it instructs us to look closely at the balance of power between political forces to understand, at least partially, the selection of political institutions.

Hypotheses about Political Economy

Hypothesis 4.1: Levels of Income

Hypothesis: Higher levels of income raise the likelihood of democracy.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary authors: Adam Przeworski, *et. al.*; Carles Boix and Susan Stokes

Summary: Political theorists have long believed that higher levels of socio-economic development are associated with democracy. Study of this relationship has accelerated over the past two decades for two reasons. First, scholars have recognized that there are two distinct mechanisms by which rising income might cause democracy. Rising income might lead to the collapse of dictatorships and democratic transitions, or rising income might increase the survival of democracies whose origins are unrelated to income, or both. The first mechanism is one of *endogenous* change; the second mechanism is one of *exogenous* change. Second, the development of computing power and of more complex datasets, described above as TSCS datasets, allows for more precise testing of hypotheses. These datasets can range in size from 190 countries observed since 1946, or about 9,000 observations, to datasets whose first observation was in 1800 and contain over 16,000 country-year observations.

Relevance to backsliding: Many state-of-the-art datasets code democracy as a binary variable (1 for democracy, 0 for dictatorship) and hence cannot measure backsliding. There are very serious critiques of datasets like Polity IV or Freedom House that measure democracy on an interval scale and thus could, in principle, be used to test hypotheses about backsliding. There is to date no published research looking for associations between levels of income and backsliding. Therefore, we cannot directly infer a relationship between low levels of income and a higher probability of backsliding, although the inference is plausible.

Lessons for intervention: This hypothesis suggests the importance of long-term, systemic interventions to improve standards of living and economic independence of citizens.

Evaluation: In the endogenous version, rising income causes autocracies to fail and democracies to emerge. In the exogenous version, rising income does not cause democracies to emerge; the transition to democracy is independent of the level of income. However, once a country becomes democratic, rising income increases the probability of democratic survival. These relationships have been studied extensively. There is evidence for the endogenous version: however, the endogenous effect appears to attenuate over time, with the effect size approaching zero after 1950. As already noted, rising incomes did not precede the wave of democratic transitions that spanned the last quarter of the 20th century. There is widespread support for the exogenous version: once a country becomes democratic by whatever means, rising income tends to make democratic breakdown less frequent. However, the literature has not fully explored the implicit hypothesis that democratic transitions amid economic scarcity yields low-quality democracies that are more susceptible to backsliding. A minority position denies any relationship between income and democracy; in the view of these scholars, both

development and democracy are joint effects of a prior set of variables relating to more fundamental political and economic variables.

Hypothesis 4.2: Distribution of Income

Hypothesis: At high levels of economic inequality, democratic transitions are less likely, and, if they occur, democratic breakdowns are more likely.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary authors: Carles Boix; Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson

Summary: At higher levels of income inequality, wealthy citizens anticipate that relatively poor voters would demand higher levels of redistributive taxation; therefore, at higher levels of inequality, the wealthy oppose democracy, acceding to democracy only if they anticipate that the poor could otherwise rise in revolution and impose costs higher than the anticipated level of taxation. But even if democratic transitions occur, the wealthy will work assiduously to return to autocracy when the opportunity arises.

Relationship to backsliding: A reasonable assumption is that at high levels of inequality under democracy, wealthy citizens will work to undermine the ability of poor voters to impose high taxes or will otherwise acquiesce in efforts by elected rulers to diminish electoral constraints.

Lessons for intervention: This hypothesis suggests the importance of long-term, systemic interventions to ameliorate a highly unequal distribution of income.

Evaluation: Empirical studies of the effects of income inequality on democracy largely parallel studies of the level of income and its effects on democracy: inequality can influence the probability of a democratic transition, and it can affect the probability of a democratic breakdown. Some studies identify both effects; others identify only one or the other. Here too, we find support for the claim that inequality and democracy were more closely related through the middle of the 20th century, but that this effect has attenuated over time. Multiple studies report that more recent democratic transitions have occurred at relatively high levels of inequality. For example, over the last decades of the 20th century, the percentage of countries in the poorest quintile that made a transition to democracy increased from 25% to 37%. We suspect that the result is the transition to low-quality, unconsolidated democracies that are more susceptible to backsliding, but no published studies have yet addressed this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4.3: Oil Income Hinders Democracy

Hypothesis: Heavy state reliance on oil revenues or other revenues from extractive industries makes democracy less likely.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary author: Michael Ross

Summary: Immense oil revenues accruing directly to the state and constituting the bulk of state revenues form an obstacle to democracy. The basic intuition is that when state revenues are based primarily on oil rents, so-called “rentier” states do not need to finance their activities via taxation; the converse of “No taxation without representation,” then, is “No representation without taxation.” Scholars have posed a range of other mechanisms by which oil revenues might pose an obstacle to democracy, either by making democratic transitions less likely or by making democratic breakdowns more likely. Most versions of this hypothesis emphasize the first mechanism; oil revenues make autocracies more resilient and so make democratic transitions less likely.

Relevance to backsliding: The hypothesis states that oil makes democratic transitions less likely: oil states will be autocracies and so not prone to democratic backsliding. If the hypothesis is that oil makes democratic breakdowns more likely, then there is an indirect link to backsliding in that backsliding might be an interim and perhaps reversible step that precedes full democratic breakdown.

Lessons for intervention: This hypothesis suggests the importance of long-term, systemic interventions that reduce economic dependence on oil exports.

Evaluation: The likely causal effects of oil revenue are also sensitive to the time period studied. The most comprehensive study stretched back into the 19th century and found that oil has a slightly positive effect on democratic transitions. When we look more closely at the more recent period, however, the effects of oil revenues on countries in the developing world is more clearly negative. A strong case can be made that since the 1970s, when many countries in the developing world nationalized oil companies and thus ensured that huge amounts of revenue accrued directly to the state, all in a context of low levels of economic development and low levels of political institution building (*e.g.*, weak states, limited rule of law, high levels of corruption, *etc.*), oil’s effects are highly deleterious to democratic transitions. Some caution must be exercised, however: there is very credible evidence that the democracy-injurious effects of oil are conditional on other factors, including public ownership of oil and a non-diversified economy.

Hypothesis 4.4: Oil Income & Democratic Backsliding

Hypothesis: Oil income induces backsliding.

Primary method: Illustrative case material from Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela

Primary author: Sebastian Mazzuca

Summary: In Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, rising oil rents helped generate “rentier populism” by which elected leftist leaders used state oil revenues to make payoffs to citizens working in informal economic sectors. These voters then supported plebiscitary mechanisms that diminished vertical accountability. Consequently, these democracies bear some uncomfortable resemblance to the “super-presidential democracies” of the former communist countries, discussed above in Hypothesis 1.4.

Relevance to backsliding: This hypothesis is a prime example of the refinement of a hypothesis that was not originally about backsliding to explain cases of democratic degradation but not necessarily complete democratic breakdown, although the process might continue through backsliding to breakdown.

Lessons for intervention: Same as Hypothesis 4.3. This hypothesis suggests the importance of long-term, systemic interventions that reduce economic dependence on oil exports.

Evaluation: This hypothesis receives solid empirical support from brief case studies from a few Latin American cases. It awaits more extensive research, both on the original cases and perhaps as a more general hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4.5: Macro-Economic Performance

Hypothesis: Short-term macro-economic performance, especially growth and inflation rates, is associated with changes in the political regime.

Primary methods: TSCS statistical models

Primary authors: Ethan Kapstein and Nathan Converse

Summary: Higher rates of GDP growth are associated with lower risks of authoritarian reversion, while high rates of inflation in any year substantially raise the risk of reversion to autocracy.

Relevance to backsliding: The hypothesis links poor performance to democratic breakdown, but it is reasonable to infer that poor performance—low growth, high inflation, or both—is associated as well with democratic backsliding, though no formal study of this relationship has been published.

Lessons for intervention: This hypothesis suggests the importance of short-term, systematic interventions affecting economic performance.

Evaluation: There is substantial statistical support for the family of hypotheses linking democratic transitions and democratic survival to macro-economic conditions, especially if the economy is going through an expansionary period or is contracting. But the findings are highly contextual. In some studies, the effect depends upon the type of democracy, presidential or parliamentary; in others, it depends upon the ideology of the government; and in still others, the effects are decade specific. A recent study of “new” democracies finds that high rates of growth are associated with lower risks of authoritarian reversion, while high rates of inflation substantially increase the risks of reversal.

Hypotheses about Social Structure and Political Coalitions

Hypothesis 5.1: The Bourgeoisie and Democracy

Hypothesis: No bourgeoisie, no democracy.

Primary method: Comparative case studies of Britain, France, United States, China, Japan, and India

Primary author: Barrington Moore, Jr.

Summary: This is an early example of using comparative historical case studies to compare long-term processes of political development and explore both the long-term determinants of liberal democracy and the alternative outcomes that occurred when conditions were not conducive to liberal democracy. The core intuition is that coming out of a feudal Europe, liberal democracy would be imperiled by either a hegemonic crown or a weak crown hemmed in by an unchecked aristocracy. By default, the only class actor capable of breaking some form of the crown-nobility hegemonic alliance was the emergent bourgeoisie, basically merchants with autonomous control of economic resources and hence with the incentive and the capacity to gain distance from the dominant ruling class. In the absence of a strong bourgeoisie, the only result could be fascism, as the state undertook conservative modernization that could not be spearheaded by a weak bourgeoisie, or communism, when peasants were mobilized on behalf of revolutionary change. The hypothesis fundamentally rests on a tacit balance-of-power assumption: democracy is possible only if there exists a social force with the incentives and the capacity to impose democracy.

Relevance to backsliding: Stable liberal democracy is possible only if economic resources are not monopolized by anti-democratic social forces. Without such a social balance of power, democracy will remain continuously imperiled, with backsliding one possible outcome.

Lessons for intervention: Importance of long-term, demand-side, systematic interventions that distribute economic resources more equitably.

Evaluation: Virtually no contemporary social scientist would agree with the claim “no bourgeoisie, no democracy.” But there is scattered evidence that when the private sector is dwarfed by the public sector

so that rulers have extensive control over a largely non-diversified economy, capitalists are politically weak and cannot pose as a counterweight to power-maximizing incumbents. For example, one important claim about dominant party systems in Africa is that businessmen dependent on state-supplied credit cannot become sponsors of oppositional multiethnic coalitions. Stated differently, an independent African bourgeoisie with autonomous control over economic resources and commensurate independence from the state could be a catalyst for more powerful opposition movements able to constrain incumbents and effect alternation in office.

Hypothesis 5.2: The Working Class and Democracy

Hypothesis: The full development of liberal democracy required the emergence of an organized industrial class.

Primary method: Illustrative case material from Europe and Latin America

Primary authors: Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Eveleyn Stephens, and John Stephens

Summary: In pre-industrial societies, large landlords with anti-democratic preferences are powerful political actors. Middle classes may fight for their own political inclusion but will generally not fight for universal franchise. Only the industrial working class has reliably pro-democratic preferences; with sufficient industrial development, the balance of political and economic power shifts in favor of middle and working classes, and the parties that represent them. Economic development thus produces democracy because it transforms the class structure and makes new political coalitions possible to support democracy.

Relevance to backsliding: Transitions to democracy without a substantial class basis among industrial workers and middle classes may be more prone to backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: Importance of long-term, demand-side, systematic interventions that distribute economic resources more equitably.

Evaluation: Early studies of this hypothesis did not fully support the claim that a strong industrial working class was the key actor in the final transition to mass-based democracy. Electoral competition with universal franchise is widespread in the developing world, far more than one would predict based on the strength of the industrial working class. There is evidence, however, that organized working classes can play a critical role in the development of a strong civil society that is able to constrain powerful incumbents. Thus, while we cannot claim that the hypothesis has been confirmed by numerous studies, we believe it important to consider the development of organizations representing workers as potentially powerful ingredients in the development of civil society.

Hypothesis 5.3: Peasants and Political Order

Hypothesis: Political order in developing nations requires a political alliance with the countryside.

Primary method: Brief illustrative case material

Primary author: Samuel Huntington

Summary: In developing nations, political participation generally outstrips political institutionalization; political disorder results. The most important mechanism of achieving political order is to create a coalition with the countryside. Governments with widespread rural support can then deal more effectively with the urban political challenges, especially leftist movements. Control of the countryside also preempts peasant-communist movements.

Relevance for backsliding: Political disorder spans a vast array of phenomena, from coups and riots to civil wars. We can only infer that moving from political disorder to order makes backsliding less likely, although the inference appears very plausible.

Lessons for intervention: Democracy-promotion interventions could consider encouraging broader coalitions that might help distribute economic resources more equitably.

Evaluation: A significant number of case studies confirm the claim that coalitions with peasants reduce political instability. Recent and still unpublished statistical models demonstrate that these urban-rural coalitions reduce the chance of failure for *both* autocracies and democracies. This hypothesis is thus very general, and it is not entirely clear how to adapt it to the study of backsliding. However, the qualitative and quantitative support for this hypothesis strengthens the intuition that the nature of political coalitions plays a large and still under-theorized role in democratic dynamics.

Hypothesis 5.4: Ethnic Competition and Polarization

Hypothesis: The political salience of ethnic cleavages produces democratic instability.

Primary method: Formal model; statistical models

Primary authors: Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle; Robert Bates

Summary: In “plural” societies, ethnic identities have overwhelming political salience, such that loyalty is to the communal group, not the nation, and communal preferences are intense. There will be strong pressure on ambitious politicians to appeal directly to members of their own community, a process known as “outbidding,” which undermines multiethnic coalitions. The anticipated outcome of outbidding is increased ethnic chauvinism, ethnic polarization, the breakdown of democratic institutions, and quite possibly inter-ethnic political violence.

Relevance to backsliding: This hypothesis predicts systematic assaults on democratic practices and institutions. Initial democratic backsliding is expected to accelerate and lead to democratic breakdown and possibly violence.

Lessons for intervention: Target incentives to build multiethnic coalitions; consider institutions that might facilitate multiethnic coalitions.

Evaluation: The claim that ethnic-based politics leads to the degradation of politics is widespread. The commonly expressed concern is that, as politicians abandon any pretense of national programmatic platforms to cater to specific groups, vertical accountability will be weakened, since voters dependent on politicians for their largesse tolerate higher levels of abuse and thus lose their ability to constrain rulers. Yet studies explicitly designed to observe this relationship are exceedingly rare. A more indirect route by which ethnicity can undermine democratic accountability is that ethnically homogeneous communities enjoy norms and institutions that engender cooperation and sanction non-cooperators. Given this mechanism, we can expect that steps by politicians to mobilize their co-ethnics will create a vicious cycle that undermines institutions and impedes large-scale collective action across ethnic groups. Thus, opposition politicians have no incentive to band together into larger parties that might balance dominant parties, and citizens have limited means or motives to demand more comprehensive parties. One striking result is the near-complete absence of ideological cleavages between parties and the absence of interest-based parties. Ethnic-based patronage parties, we conclude, pose a powerful obstacle to the construction of strong institutions of civil society. Finally, we note that the mere presence of ethnic fractionalization is not itself necessarily an obstacle to democracy: it is the deliberate politicization of cultural cleavages, not the cleavages themselves, that create ethnic politics that many see as deleterious to democracy. Thus, statistical studies that include numeric measures of the degree of ethnic fractionalization fail to report that this variable lowers observed democracy scores.

Box 8: Weak Parties: Zambia

Van de Walle (2007) notes the incredible paucity of parties in Zambia defending agrarian interests. In the 1996 Zambian national elections, for example, the National Lima Party actively promoted itself as the defender of rural interests. It was led by several prominent politicians, and received the endorsement of the Zambian Farmer's Association. However, it failed to win a single seat in the legislature.

Hypotheses about International Factors

Hypothesis 6.1: International Leverage and Linkage

Hypothesis: Western leverage and linkage are associated with the democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes.

Primary method: Country studies

Primary author: Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way

Summary: This hypothesis refers to the possibility of democratizing *competitive authoritarian regimes*. These are hybrid regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and structure access to and exercise of power, but, behind the scenes, incumbents exploit built-in advantages in electoral competition, the legislature, the judiciary, and the media to largely ensure that no opposition can meaningfully compete. The two key causal variables are leverage and linkage. Western leverage refers to the authoritarian regime’s vulnerability to external democratizing pressure; high leverage thus raises the costs of sustaining authoritarianism. The extent of leverage is based on the size of the state and economy; the existence of competing Western interests that can be played off one another; and the existence of countervailing powers, or “Black Knights,” that support autocrats. Linkage is an important mediating variable that determines the efficacy of Western pressure. Linkage refers to the density of economic, political, diplomatic, and social ties, along with cross-border flows of capital, information, goods, services, and people. Linkage works by shaping domestic preferences for reform, shaping the domestic distribution of resources, strengthening democrats and weakening autocrats, and heightening the international reverberations of autocratic abuse. When leverage and linkage are high, there is strong and consistent pressure for democratization; when both are low, there is weak external pressure; and when they are mixed (high/low or low/high) there is weaker and more intermittent pressure.

Relevance for backsliding: The absence of leverage would allow competitive authoritarian regimes to avoid democratization pressures; this can be viewed as a particular form of backsliding. For potentially more relevant hypotheses, see 6.2 and 6.3.

Lessons for intervention: Increased levels of leverage and linkage are potential obstacles to ambitious autocrats. Yet these ambitious autocrats might deliberately avoid leverage and linkage, so further study of their determinants is required.

Evaluation: The primary study of international leverage and linkage studies their effects on competitive authoritarian regimes; there is no reason why the same factors should not exercise influence on the probability of democratic backsliding. There are several core problems, however. First, we do not yet have a complete and testable statement of how different levels of leverage and linkage interact to produce outcomes. Second is a problem of observational equivalence: cases of high linkage may reflect long-term economic development, as in Mexico and Taiwan; thus, democratization might reflect these purely domestic factors. Finally, leverage and linkage work through domestic variables, of which regime vulnerability is the most important. But, this claim directs our attention back to the sources of regime vulnerability—in other words, we return to our core concern for the domestic balance of power.

Box 9: Distinguishing Aid from Leverage and Linkage

Egypt provides a great example of how even heavily aid-dependent countries can be ones with low linkage and leverage. Egypt has received an extraordinary amount of aid, from the United States, international organizations, and the Gulf States. Yet, as Levitsky and Way note, Egypt is a case of low linkage given otherwise weak economic and social ties to the international community. Moreover, Egypt has been able to leverage the competition between these actors, as well as the relatively low importance that they place on democratization *vis-à-vis* stability, to its advantage. Even as Egypt noticeably backslid from democratic transition, first Morsi and then Sisi faced no real international pressure.

Hypothesis 6.2: International Diffusion

Hypothesis: A higher proportion of democratic neighbors decreases the probability that an autocracy will survive and increases the probability that a democracy will survive.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary author: Kristian Gleditsch and Michael Ward

Summary: Democracies and democratic transitions are spatially clustered. Diffuse channels of international influence may thus affect the likelihood of democratic transitions and durability. For example, a successful pro-democratic movement in one country may persuade citizens of neighboring countries that their pro-democratic movement could be successful as well.

Relevance for backsliding: Studies of this hypothesis have not directly used measures of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: No direct lessons about instruments of intervention. Successful interventions in one country may unintentionally trigger regional chain reactions.

Evaluation: Studies of international diffusion do not yet have a solid empirical basis. For example, we know that pro-democratic mass protests emerged in Tunisia before they emerged in Egypt; but temporal precedence does not guarantee causal influence. The evidence of a direct causal link is highly impressionistic. Furthermore, it is quite clear that not all countries are equally susceptible to the same set of international events: Egyptians might have followed the path first set by Tunisia; Algeria most certainly did not. It seems clear that differences in domestic factors have a strong effect on the likelihood that international diffusion occurs. Furthermore, regimes can engage in “diffusion-proofing” by taking preemptive measures that reduce their vulnerability to diffusion effects. Although this hypothesis is plausible and has impressionistic evidence in support of it, the hypothesis still requires a great deal of development and testing.

Hypothesis 6.3: International Organizations

Hypothesis: Membership in international organizations impedes backsliding.

Primary method: Statistical models

Primary authors: Jon Pevehouse; Philip Levitz and Grigore Pop-Eleches

Summary: Membership in international organizations helps to consolidate democratic reforms. Membership in the European Union, for example, generates Western leverage and linkage. This hypothesis is thus related to Hypothesis 6.1.

Relevance for backsliding: The study of the effect of membership in the European Union uses a direct measure of backsliding.

Lessons for intervention: Membership in international organizations can facilitate democracy promotion.

Evaluation: Statistical studies of this hypothesis have not fully addressed the problem of selection. The prior decision to join a regional international organization might be an indicator only of the political leadership's prior commitment to democracy. If pro-democratic leaders join organizations, and more ambivalent leaders refrain from joining, we will observe an association between membership and the commitment to democratic reforms but the relationship will not be causal. Similarly, while membership in the EU is statistically associated with a lower probability of backsliding, the challenge remains that the EU provided the strongest incentives precisely to those countries whose domestic historical legacies were most auspicious for democratic reforms. After all, the EU did not dangle an offer of candidacy to a random sample of countries, so evidence that post-accession countries did not suffer backsliding is not yet sufficient to establish a causal effect for international influence.

Hypothesis 6.4: Foreign Aid

Hypothesis: Foreign aid reduces rulers' dependence on their citizens for tax revenues and thus removes a primary ingredient of democratic accountability.

Primary method: TSCS statistical models

Primary authors: Simeon Djankov, Jose Montalvo, and Marta Reynal-Querol

Summary: Foreign aid is analogous to oil rents (Hypothesis 4.3): it stimulates rent-seeking behavior and curtails the capacity of citizens to hold rulers accountable. High levels of foreign aid are thus associated with measures of backsliding.

Relevance for backsliding: This has a direct relevance for backsliding. The effect of aid on democracy is measured in small increments on an interval scale.

Lessons for intervention: Foreign aid must be complemented by long-term, systematic interventions that increase the resources available to citizens; otherwise, foreign aid may induce an imbalance of power between rulers and citizens.

Evaluation: There is mixed support for this hypothesis, with findings very sensitive to how the statistical model is constructed. One study using TSCS data between 1960 and 1999 found that foreign aid acts analogously to oil rents; large magnitude aid reduces a ten-point democracy index by as much as one point. Other studies, however, have not replicated this result.

Hypothesis 6.5: International Election Monitoring

Hypothesis: International monitoring of elections can deter electoral fraud.

Primary method: Statistical model

Primary author: Susan Hyde

Summary: International election monitors of the 2003 Armenian presidential elections strongly deterred electoral fraud.

Relevance for backsliding: Electoral fraud is one mechanism of backsliding. However, efforts to deter electoral fraud may induce rulers to seek other mechanisms of consolidating their incumbency.

Lessons for intervention: Direct intervention on elections can work but may result in unintended consequences.

Evaluation: Hyde (2007) is the strongest demonstration that international monitoring of elections can deter electoral fraud. In her study of the 2003 Armenian presidential elections, she determines that election monitors were assigned to monitor precincts by a mechanism that appears to have been nearly random. Given this “as-if” randomization, we can be quite confident that any difference in the incumbent’s vote share in unmonitored versus monitored precincts—a quite large difference in the Armenian elections—is directly caused by the presence or absence of monitors. Subsequent research, however, demonstrates a complex relationship between international monitoring and the conduct of elections. Kelley (2009) demonstrates that international election monitors respond to complex incentives, with concerns for their credibility and for democracy promotion sometimes jostling with concerns for the interests of their member states, the desire to prevent election-related violence, and even organizational preferences. Therefore, election monitors sometimes endorse flawed elections. In subsequent work, Kelley (2012) expands on these threats to credible election monitoring, observing the emergence of a “shadow market” of more lenient monitoring organizations that allow countries to “choose” their monitors. Furthermore, Kelley considers the possibility that politicians alter their menu of cheating, moving to more concealable forms of electoral manipulation. Kelley does not find strong evidence for this shift: cheaters are seldom subtle, she concludes. Beaulieu and Hyde (2009) find indirect evidence that pre-electoral manipulation by incumbents has increased, however.

iv. Part Four: Summary Evaluation of Theory Families and Hypotheses

a. Political Elites

Backsliding involves the manipulation and transformation of the formal and informal rules of electoral politics. It would seem reasonable that powerful actors with an incentive to alter the level of constraints on elected leaders would have some freedom of action to choose from what Schedler (2002) calls the menu of manipulation. Still, there are reasons to move forward cautiously before assigning a prominent analytic role to political elites in the explanation of backsliding. First, theories of political elites face the difficult challenge of demonstrating that elites are not substantially influenced by structural factors. These structural factors may influence the incentive to manipulate the rules to degrade democratic accountability, the capacity to manipulate those rules, or both. The main problem running through the existing literature is thus theoretical underdevelopment. In the absence of a robust theory of agency, many of these works appear to assume that political leaders have relative autonomy from structural conditions rather than demonstrate that autonomy. Many of the early works, indeed, lack concrete hypotheses that are tested systematically using credible methods. Fortunately, recent work is beginning to correct the defects of earlier work.

b. Political Culture

Theories of political culture remain logically incomplete: in their current form, they do not logically imply the outcomes they intend to explain. This is because almost all theories of political culture focus exclusively on the *demand side*, on citizens' demands for more accountable government. They do not provide a parallel *supply side* that accounts for how political elites respond to these pressures, choosing sometimes to accommodate demands but at many other times repressing pro-democracy movements. Consider the sequence of developments that a theory of political culture would have to demonstrate in order to account for democratic transition, for example: 1) a long-term evolution in mass political attitudes and behavior, from some form of traditional culture of non-social capital to some form of modern culture or associational life, all under non-democratic auspices; 2) the emergence of mass-based demands for democracy in which we were satisfied that it was "modern" segments of society that were leading the protest movements (see the problem of the *ecological fallacy* in the appendix: briefly, if we know that some subset of society is modern; and we know that some subset of society engages in pro-democratic protests; we cannot automatically assume that the two subsets substantially overlap); and 3) the transition to democracy *in direct response to mass-based demand*. Existing accounts make often-heroic efforts to fulfill the first condition, but even here their efforts are hindered because the infrastructure for modern, cross-national survey research is only a few decades old. Existing accounts have simply not made significant progress fulfilling the second two conditions. With condition Number 2 unfulfilled, the demand side of the equation is incomplete; with condition Number 3 unfulfilled, the supply side of the equation is unsatisfied. It is, therefore, not surprising that studies of contemporary new and unconsolidated democracies do not appear to draw heavily on theories of political culture. Political culture may, of course, contribute to backsliding without fully determining it; we do not have any empirical work, however, that supports this conjecture. On the contrary, existing work suggests strongly that no prior form of political culture is necessary to the emergence of mass movements demanding greater democracy.

c. *Political Institutions*

Studies of political institutions face a thorny methodological problem. We know that institutions structure political processes and outcomes; for that very reason, powerful political actors have strong incentives to mold institutions to favor their preferences. Institutions are not simply exogenous instruments that exert autonomous pressure on political actors; they are also objects of manipulation by strategic actors precisely because they *might* make favorable outcomes more likely to occur. Methodologically, this is the problem of *selection*: if the causes of the institution are also systematically related to the outcomes we seek to explain, then the institution itself may not exercise any causal influence. More concretely, outcomes might be directly caused by powerful actors who simultaneously influence the nature of political institutions. Recent scholarship, such as Negretto (2013) and Pepinsky (2013), suggests that this is often the case in such diverse realms as designing constitutions and designing authoritarian institutions. Institutional analysis, then, will be valid only insofar as it explicitly establishes that the causal origins of the institutions are independent from the outcomes.¹³ It is not surprising, therefore, that we find only weak support for arguments about presidentialism, consociationalism, and inclusive electoral regimes.

This methodological critique does not apply with equal force to all institutional hypotheses, because not all institutions are uniformly susceptible to manipulation by strategic actors. Powerful actors have more leverage over electoral rules than over attributes of the party system, for example. At the same time, we see evidence that many of these party-system attributes are sensitive to the balance of power among political forces. Indeed, one lesson of these hypotheses appears to be that democratic backsliding is highly sensitive to the balance of power between incumbents, opposition parties, and citizens supporting the opposition. Hypotheses about political parties and party systems are an excellent vantage point to study that relationship.

d. *Political Economy*

Four of the five hypotheses discussed in this theory family have been the subject of extensive testing by scores of scholars, each making use of large TSCS datasets and sophisticated statistical models. These studies yield substantial support for each hypothesis, yet there is also a sizable body of research reporting inconsistent findings. When evaluating statistical studies, it is important to keep in mind the range of choices individual scholars must make, choices whose relative superiority over alternatives cannot be established decisively. There is a fair amount of art blended in with this science. Therefore, when interpreting reports of inconsistent findings, keep in mind these possible sources of the inconsistency:

- First, the measure of democracy that is used; the various datasets measuring democracy are correlated to one another yet far from identical. Divergent results might reflect this choice of dataset.
- Second, the inclusion of different control variables that can affect the sign, the magnitude, and the statistical significance of measures of economic variables.

¹³ More technically, institutions must be “exogenous” to the outcome. We recognize that all causal arguments are vulnerable to endogeneity; but we think this problem is particularly pronounced in institutional arguments precisely because powerful and strategic actors have a strong interest and capacity to shape the formation of institutions. A related issue that we do not directly address here is that powerful actors can subvert or evade institutional constraints—indeed, this is one way to think about backsliding.

- Third, the use of alternative measures (sources of data) for control variables.
- Fourth, the spatial and temporal construction of the dataset; for example, some datasets begin in approximately 1950, others extend back to the 19th century. We should not expect identical results from two studies using different datasets.
- Fifth, and finally, the set of assumptions that specify a particular statistical model. Different assumptions often yield different results.

Given the heterogeneity of some of the findings reported above, we suggest the following summary judgments. First, there is little reason to believe that rising levels of income caused democratic transitions in the Third Wave in the prior decades. The effect of rising income on democratic transitions appears to be restricted temporally and geographically; the effect is strong prior to 1925 in Europe and Latin America, but the effect largely disappears afterward. If anything, it was the dismal economic performance of most dictatorships that led to democratic transitions. Second, despite evidence that higher levels of income predict democratic survival, we suspect that this relationship does not explain the absence of a large-scale “reverse” third wave of democratic breakdowns. We suspect, rather, that from the perspective of military leaders, the instrumental value of coups has declined; that international norms and sanctions have raised the cost of dictatorship to levels that dissuade all but the most enthusiastic autocrats from taking this route; and that many leaders have found avenues of combining electoral politics with other mechanisms that preserve incumbency and privilege. Third, democratic transitions have taken place amid high levels of income inequality. We suggest two reasons for this. First, to a large extent, international market forces have constrained avowedly leftist governments from embarking on massive redistributive projects, as argued by Bermeo (2009); Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter (2010); and Fishman (2014). Second, wealthy classes and their political representatives have preferred to undermine accountability within a democratic framework rather than to make the most costly investment in overthrowing democracy. In other words, democratic transitions amid low levels of wealth and high levels of inequality produce weak and unconsolidated democracies prone to backsliding. Fourth, access to oil rents tip the balance of power in favor of incumbents and exacerbate problems of vertical and horizontal accountability. This may be true even though, over the longer time frame, the relationship between oil revenues and democracy is not decisively anti-democratic.

Finally, we note that studies of the political-economic hypotheses have not completely solved the problem of reverse causality, or endogeneity. The hypothesis states that the causal relationship runs from economic conditions to democracy, but it is quite plausible that democracies and autocracies produce different levels of development.

e. Social Structure and Political Coalitions

The majority of the “classic” theories of social structure, political coalitions, and democracy rest heavily on informal theory and non-disciplined case-study narratives. They do not satisfy contemporary standards of theory development, the derivation of hypothesis, case selection, or qualitative causal analysis. Furthermore, a key weakness of these qualitative case studies is the inability to generalize findings beyond the small number of cases included in a study. It is still worth considering these hypotheses, however. As we have seen at numerous instances in this white paper, many hypotheses rest on an implicit balance-of-power framework to explain low-quality democracies that are vulnerable to backsliding or other ills. We believe that these social-structural arguments can play a role in the further development and refinement of this balance-of-power framework.

In contrast, studies of ethnic politics are abundant. Yet what remains scarce are explicit and testable hypotheses linking ethnic politics, and the party competition it encourages, to democratic dynamics. We strongly suspect that patronage politics based on ethnicity is one principle factor in the dominance of many incumbents among new democracies, and that this type of politics removes incentives to build strong party organizations and more balanced party systems. But it is premature to treat this claim as a conclusion; it is more a plea for more research on this topic.

f. Hypotheses about International Factors

We wish to emphasize two conclusions about international factors. First, there can be little doubt that they matter. But second, it is equally evident that they work overwhelmingly by their influence on the domestic factors covered in the first five theory families. Thus, there has yet been limited progress developing generalizable hypotheses about international factors. There are two basic sources of heterogeneity. On one hand, the mechanisms by which international factors exercise influence may differ from country to country. On the other, the susceptibility to international influences might differ from country to country.

Perhaps the heterogeneity of international influence helps explain the imbalance between theory and evidence in this theory family. Some theories of international influence have made progress toward logical coherence—consider, for example theories of international demonstration effects, which feature logically consistent statements about the effects of information cascades. Yet there is little more than impressionistic evidence supporting these theories. In contrast, there is a fair amount of evidence about the role of leverage and linkage without a correspondingly logically coherent theory. Thus, our summary judgment must be very tentative: while international intervention may be efficacious at times, our best prospects for developing our theoretical intuitions about the sources of backsliding will need to focus on domestic-level determinants.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF THEORETICAL TERMS

Accountability

- Horizontal accountability: refers to the classic notion of checks and balances, in which independent state agencies hold one other accountable.
- Vertical accountability: accountability exercised by non-state actors—such as citizens, civil associations, or the media—on state agents.

Authoritarian survival (resilience)

- Denotes that no regime change is taking place; an authoritarian regime remains authoritarian.
- If the authoritarian regime persists over a longer period of time, including the passage of political crises, we speak of authoritarian resilience.

Autocracy (also: authoritarian regime; dictatorship)

- A political regime that is characterized by the absence of competitive elections for executive and legislative offices, the violation of political rights and civil liberties, and/or the inability of citizens to hold their government accountable and exert political influence over the political elite.
- A non-democracy.

Autocratization

- Changes in the formal political institutions of a political regime that reduce the capacity of citizens to make enforceable claims upon the government. It encompasses all forms of democratic breakdown, authoritarian restoration, and authoritarian reversion.
- The process of a political regime's becoming an autocracy or more authoritarian.

Civic culture

- Form of political culture that is characterized by active participation of political subjects in the political process.

Civilian dictatorship

- Form of autocracy in which the effective head of government is neither a member of the military nor a monarch.
- Following the classification by Cheibub *et al.* (2010).

Class

- A social or socio-economic class comprises people who have the same social, economic, professional, or educational status in a society. The concept of social classes is related to social stratification—that is, classes describe a society's socio-economic composition. Members of the same class often engage in the same activities and are thought to hold similar (political) beliefs.
- Most common is the classification of individuals into classes according to either their income (lower class, middle class, upper class) or their professional or educational background (peasants, urban working class, bourgeoisie, aristocracy).

Cleavage

- A cleavage is an enduring division between different individuals or groups in a polity. This division affects these individuals' or groups' political decisions and actions and leads to opposing behavior along the lines the cleavage was originally formed.
- Cleavages can form along political or economic, but also ethnic, sectarian, religious, or regional lines.

Clientelism (clientelistic parties vs. programmatic parties)

- A mode of exchange typically between voters and politicians that is based on 1) conditionality and 2) enforcement. 1) Voters receive a benefit from the politician or the administration only if they return the favor with their vote or another form of political support. 2) Politicians are able to punish voters for defection from this informal bargain. Parties whose political strategy is based on clientelism are called *clientelistic parties*. In contrast, *programmatic parties* follow a different mode of exchange with voters and distribution of public goods. They follow clear and public rules of distribution and are not able to exclude certain voters from benefits.

Coalition

- Created when political entrepreneurs activate particular cleavage structures, mobilizing constituencies to support them based on the promise of fulfilling common interests defined along the cleavage structure and organizing those constituencies in political parties and social movements.
- Highly partisan (in the sense that they are selective) organizational representation of a subset of cleavages.

Conflict

- Two political groups are in conflict when they seek different ends, and their conflict is intense when their competing goals are incommensurate, militating strongly against compromise.

Consociational democracy

- Cluster of institutions whose formal mechanisms embody the principle of consensus and power sharing.
- Central to consociationalism is the grand coalition, in which governments guarantee participation by parties representing all ethnic groups, including the possibility of quotas in all major branches and agencies of government.

Coup

- "Overt attempt[s] by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting head of state using unconstitutional means" (Powell & Thyne 2011: 252).
- Most coups are staged by the military, though sometimes civilians can stage a coup as well.

Competitive authoritarianism

- Hybrid regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and structure access to and exercise of power, but behind the scenes, incumbents exploit built-in advantages in electoral competition, the legislature, the judiciary, and the media, largely to ensure that no opposition can meaningfully compete with them.

Constitution

- A country's constitution collects the fundamental rules according to which the country is governed.

Deadlock

- A situation that can occur in presidential systems and that is characterized by political immobility when the president's party or coalition of parties does not control all houses of the legislature. In that case, policymaking requires extensive bargaining and negotiations, which leads to incremental reforms at best. If the deadlocked political system is exposed to exogenous stress (for instance, due to economic crises), the deadlock can have severe consequences both for policy outcomes and the political system as a whole.

De-democratization

- The opposite of democratization. Synonymous to autocratization.
- Term used by Charles Tilly, who argues for the close connection between inequality and de-democratization.

(Political) Deliberalization

- Process of institutional change that is characterized by a decline in political rights (*i.e.*, the right to participate in a political community) and civil liberties (*i.e.*, the rights governing freedom of action, expression, speech) and an overall closing of the political arena. Deliberalization reduces the capacity of citizens to voice opposition and hold their governments accountable.

Demand side and supply side

- The demand side refers to all actions citizens or groups of citizens undertake to express their needs, demands, and wishes, to fulfill some or all of their demands.
- The supply side, in contrast, refers to all actions of the government, the public administration, or the bureaucracy to grant policies or provide resources aimed at the general public or specific groups.

Democracy (also: democratic regime)

- Rule by will of the people.
- Associated with equal participation of citizens in the polity, the use of competitive elections for executive and legislative offices in which multiple parties compete and parties alternate in office, and vertical and horizontal accountabilities are present.

Democratic backsliding

- Changes in the formal political institutions and informal political practices that significantly reduce the capacity of citizens to make enforceable claims upon the government.

Democratic breakdown

- Form of regime change: An authoritarian regime replaces a democracy.

Democratic survival (consolidation)

- Denotes the absence of regime change in a democracy—a democratic regime remains democratic.
- If a democratic regime survives for a relatively long period of time, we speak of democratic consolidation.

Democratic transition

- Form of regime change: Authoritarian regime is replaced by a democracy.

Democratization

- The process of a political regime becoming less authoritarian and more democratic, or developing into a full democracy.
- It encompasses all forms of regime change that strengthen the democratic political institutions of a political regime and increase the capacity of citizens to make enforceable claims upon the government.

Demonstration effect

- The likelihood that an event occurs in one country is affected by the same or a similar event's occurrence in another country. Certain events, such as revolutions, are not caused by domestic factors alone, but are also affected by international factors.
- See also: *diffusion effect*.

Diffusion effect

- Diffusion is the process whereby political beliefs, ideas, strategies, or policies cross national borders. It follows the assumption that a state is more likely to adopt a policy or a certain political behavior if other states—and especially its immediate neighbors—have adopted this policy or behavior already.
- Diffusion involves information flows, communication networks, and leverage.
- See also: *demonstration effect*.

Electoral competition

- The laws governing the ability of parties to organize and participate in elections, and the existence of independence electoral bodies.

Elite

- A group in society that encompasses all persons who have access to or control over a substantial part of either material (such as economic assets, factors of production, or money) or immaterial (such as religious, moral, or political authority or leverage over employees or part of the media) resources in the country and therefore have political influence and are able to affect the outcomes of domestic policy-making.

Fragmentation (also: fractionalization)

- Degree of heterogeneity within a given group or entity. Usually, measures the probability that two representatives of the group of interest belong to two distinct subgroups (for instance, two different ethnicities, religious denominations, political parties, *etc.*).

- Common measures of fragmentation (fractionalization) look at the degree of religious, ethnic, or linguistic fragmentation in a society. Higher values on these scores indicate a higher probability that two randomly chosen people belong to two distinct (religious, ethnic, or linguistic) groups and hence a higher degree of fragmentation (fractionalization).

Hard-liners

- In a political setting characterized by the conflict between a ruling coalition and the opposition, *hard-liners* are those members of either group who oppose compromising with the other group.
- Those members of an autocratic ruling coalition who oppose democratization by any means.
- Those members of an opposition who oppose collaboration with the regime and advocate a radical overthrow of the current political order.

Hybrid regime (also: semi-democracy)

- Form of political regime that contains both democratic and authoritarian elements.
- *E.g.*, illiberal democracies, delegative democracies, and competitive authoritarian regimes.
- Sometimes these regimes are referred to as *inconsistent (democratic or autocratic) regimes*, as their institutional setup does not completely rely on either democratic or autocratic institutions and principles but is a mix of both.

Institutions

- Institutions are the formal and informal rules of the game.
- They are authoritative in the sense that they are capable of sanctioning nonconforming behavior.

Institutionalization (of democracy)

- Generally speaking, the term institutionalization refers to the process of embedding societal norms and the structure of interactions between individuals, groups, and countries in formal and informal institutions.
- Institutionalization of democracy refers to the drafting and adoption of a democratic constitution. This process is characterized by a high level of fluidity, as the norms and institutions of the new polity's predecessor regime have been suspended, while new rules still have to be negotiated and set.

Intra-regime change

- Form of regime change that describes the improvement or deterioration of democratic quality in a regime that is not associated with a regime change.

Leverage

- Degree to which foreign governments have influence over the politics in a given country. Describes the degree to which domestic governments are vulnerable to external pressure. Examples include vulnerability due to foreign conditionality, sanctions, and external military force (see Levitsky and Way 2006).

Liberal democracy

- Form of democracy that is characterized by a substantial respect for political rights and civil liberties. Other attributes of liberal democracy encompass the rule of law, free and fair

elections, the separation of powers, and the protection of the human, civil, and political rights of the individual.

(Political) Liberalization

- Process of institutional change that is characterized by an increase in political rights and civil liberties and an overall opening of the political arena. Liberalization enhances the capacity of citizens to voice opposition and hold their governments accountable.

Linkage

- Density of ties and cross-border flows between a particular country and other countries. There are five dimensions of linkages: 1) economic (*e.g.*, trade, aid flows); 2) geopolitical (*e.g.*, alliances, treaties, international organizations); 3) social (*e.g.*, migration, tourism, refugees); 4) information (*e.g.*, cross-border Internet and telecommunication); and 5) transnational civil society linkages (*e.g.*, non-governmental organizations, religious groups) (see Levitsky and Way 2006).

Majoritarian democratic system/majoritarian institutions

- Form of democratic regime or set of institutions that is characterized by the concentration of political power. This is achieved through the fusion of executive and legislative power (parliamentary form of government) and disciplined one-party rule (majoritarian electoral systems/elections in single-member districts) (see Bernhard *et al.* 2001).
- See also: *pluralist democratic system*.

Military dictatorship

- Form of autocracy in which the effective head of government is a member of the military. Often, military dictatorships are characterized by the rule of a military junta that comprises the heads of the different branches of the armed forces (army, navy, and air force).

Modernization

- Modernization refers to 1) the process of transition from a non-developed (traditional) to a developed (modern) country, or 2) the process of (incremental) improvements in the socio-economic environment of a country.
- Often associated with an increase in economic wealth and prosperity and overall socio-economic development.

Modernization theory

- A theory linking socio-economic development to democratization and democratic stability.
- In the *endogenous* version of modernization theory, rising income causes autocracies to fail and democracies to emerge.
- In the *exogenous* version of modernization theory, rising income does not cause democracies to emerge; the transition to democracy is independent of the level of income and occurs exogenously. However, once a country becomes democratic, rising income increases the probability of democratic survival.

Movement parties

- Movement parties originate from social movements that led underground opposition during the authoritarian era. They are organizationally powerful and enjoy wide and deep social support (see Lust and Waldner 2014).
- See also: *novice parties* and *relic parties*.

Novice parties

- Novice parties are new parties formed after the transition to democracy. They are characterized by weak ties to voters and often disappear quickly. They originate from civil society activists, previously exiled or quieted political party leaders, or formerly muted political entrepreneurs (see Lust and Waldner 2014).
- See also: *movement parties* and *relic parties*.

Parliamentarianism

- Form of democracy in which the government is responsible to an independently elected legislature. There is only one election in the polity; citizens only vote in parliamentary elections—and this election decides about the formation of the country's government.
- See also *presidentialism*.

Plebiscitarian accountability

- *Plebiscitarian* forms of *accountability* can be found in regimes characterized by what Mazzuca (2013) terms *rentier populism*: Given the support of the informal sector, which is achieved through the redistribution of windfall gains from natural resource exports, political power tends to be concentrated in the presidency. This weakens *horizontal accountability*, but strengthens *vertical accountability* or at least popular support among the informal sector for the president. The popularity of the president, however, lasts only as long as transfers flow to the informal sector. This makes the political system especially vulnerable to exogenous shocks (such as a decline in world prices or a sudden surge in exploitation costs).

Pluralist democratic systems

- Form of democratic regime that is characterized by the dispersion of political power. This is achieved through the separation of executive and legislative functions (presidential form of government) and highly fractionalized legislatures (proportional electoral systems) (see Bernhard *et al.* 2001).
- See also: *majoritarian democratic system*.

Political agency

- The extent to which actors' actions, not structural conditions, affect political outcomes.

Political culture

- Refers to the distribution of political values and political beliefs and the resulting orientations toward political institutions, political processes, and policy outcomes among the individuals in a given political system.

Political economy

- The study of the reciprocal relationship between the organization and exercise of power, on one hand, and the production and exchange of consumable goods and services, on the other.

Presidentialism

- Form of democracy in which the government is independent of the legislature. The head of state is elected independently of the national legislature.
- See also: *parliamentarianism*.

Programmatic parties

- See *clientelism*.

Regime

- “The set of formal and informal rules and procedures for selecting national leaders and policies” (Geddes 1999: fn. 1).

Regime change

- A process that subjects a political regime to changes that result in a different regime (sub)type: the formal or informal rules of the game are changed such that the process by which national leaders are selected or policies are made changes fundamentally.

Relic parties

- Relic parties are the organizational descendants of parties that existed under the authoritarian predecessor regime. Their power is found more in what they accomplished in the past than in what they can do in the present. Relic parties are either former ruling parties that lost their hegemonic status or former loyal opposition parties (see Lust and Waldner 2014).
- See also: *movement parties* and *novice parties*.

Rentier state

- A *rentier state* is a state that draws a substantial part of its national revenues from outside sources or the sale of domestic resources.
- *Rents* refer to gains from the sale of products in excess of the actual costs of production. Typically, rentier states receive rents from the sale of natural resources (especially oil, gas, diamonds, or other gemstones). Due to the scarcity of these resources coupled with high world prices, revenues from the sale of these commodities exceed the actual costs of production by far. However, international development assistance can also be conceptualized as *rent* if it constitutes a government’s main source of revenue and is used to finance a broad range of government services.
- According to the literature on rentierism, *rentier states* are characterized by a decreased need to tax citizens, which may decline public accountability, decrease a country’s prospects for democratization or democratic stability, and may also reduce economic growth, deteriorate social service provision, and increase the likelihood of civil conflict.

Rentier populism

- According to Mazzuca (2013), *rentier populism* refers to a new mode of rule in *rentier states* whereby especially Latin American governments redistribute windfall gains from the export of

natural resources to the informal sectors and the unemployed—who often constitute the (poorer) majority in Latin America—in exchange for their political support. The rents are extracted from owners of the natural resources: private businesses that constitute the main loser of this conditional exchange mechanism.

Royal dictatorship (also: monarchy)

- Form of autocracy in which the effective head of government is a monarch (king/queen, emperor, duke, etc.) and claims power through traditional legitimacy, hereditary succession, and/or divine ancestry.

Selectorate

- According to the *Selectorate Theory* (Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* 2003), the selectorate comprises all citizens who have influence over the selection of political leaders.
- See also: *winning coalition*.

Semi-democracy: See *hybrid regime*.

Semi-presidentialism

- Form of democracy that combines features of parliamentary and presidential systems of government: Both the legislature and the president are popularly elected in independent elections. While the president has no authority over the legislature, his government needs legislative approval to stay in power.

Social capital

- Contains both attitudes and membership in organizations.
- Habit of associational life: engaging in collective action for social and political welfare.

Soft-liners

- In a political setting characterized by the conflict between a ruling coalition and the opposition, soft-liners are those members of either group who support compromising with the other group.
- Those members of an autocratic ruling coalition who would agree to (partial) democratization, provided they consider democratization as inevitable or will benefit from cooperation with the opposition (*e.g.*, through power-sharing arrangements).
- Those members of an opposition who do not oppose collaboration with the regime.

Super-presidentialism

- Sub-category of presidentialism in which constitutional provisions provide virtually no constraints on presidents.

Transition

- In a broad sense, refers to any regime change that results in either the shift from democracy to autocracy, or vice versa.
- In a narrower sense, refers exclusively to a regime change that results in the democratization of a previously autocratic political regime.

Values

- A person's fundamental principles of behavior, political and moral beliefs, and attitudes toward society and the treatment of his or her fellow people.
- Values can differ along two dimensions: While *secular* values derive from a person's moral beliefs and ethics independent of his or her religious convictions, *traditional values* derive in large part from religious beliefs or long-standing, hard-to-change convictions. On the other hand, values can be oriented toward either survival or self-expression. *Survival values* prioritize physiological and safety needs over self-esteem and self-actualization, while *self-expression values* regard the latter to be more important than the former. Typically, individuals start emphasizing self-expression values once their survival is no longer at immediate risk because they have acquired adequate shelter, sufficient food supply, and a social network.

Winning Coalition

- According to the *Selectorate Theory* (Buono de Mesquita *et al.* 2003), the winning coalition comprises all citizens whose support is necessary to a leader's continued incumbency.
- See also: *selectorate*.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Antecedent conditions

- Either a condition that must be met for a specific cause–effect relationship to work, or a condition that determines the effect of one variable on another.

Agreement across multiple measures

- Denotes the extent to which different measures of democratic backsliding agree on whether a democratic backsliding event has taken place or not.
- Calculated as the sum of all measures that indicate backsliding for a particular country year divided by the total number of measures available for this respective country-year.
- Ranges from 0 to 100%, with higher values denoting higher agreement.

Conceptualization

- The process of identifying and defining the relevant attributes of the phenomenon under investigation.

Correlation

- Denotes either the fact that or the extent to which two factors vary concomitantly.

Endogeneity

- In statistical models, a variable is endogenous when there is a non-zero correlation between this variable and the error term.
- Broadly speaking, a variable in a theoretical model is endogenous if its value is (partially or fully) determined by other variables included in this model (opposite: see *exogeneity*)
- Endogeneity is a severe problem whenever there exists a third variable that has an effect on both the dependent and independent variables but is not included in a theoretical model. In this case of omitted variable bias, the correlation between independent and dependent variables may suggest that there is a causal relationship between both variables, although the correlation is caused by a third variable not controlled for.

Error term distribution

- Assuming that there is some function that could perfectly describe the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, in statistical analyses the error term denotes the deviation of an observed value from its (not observed) true value.
- Error terms can be distributed according to different distributions (*e.g.*, normal or Poisson distributions). Assumptions about this distribution guide the choice of the regression model.

External validity

- Denotes the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other cases, settings, time periods, *etc.*

Exogeneity

- A variable is exogenous to an explanatory model if no other factor in this model determines it. That is, its changes are caused by factors not included in the model. Exogenous variables are determined by outside forces.

Functional form

- The specific form of a function that is used to describe the relationship between one or more explanatory variables and the outcome of interest. For instance, the functional form can be linear if we assume that with every one-unit increase in the independent variable, the dependent variable increases by the same number of units, regardless of the values of the explanatory or dependent variables. The functional form could also be exponential if we assume that, for every one-unit change in the independent variable, the dependent variable changes by more units with higher values on the independent variable.

Hypothesis

- A testable statement about the observable relationship between two or more variables, or measures of some feature or characteristic.
- Substitute concrete and particular measures for the theory's abstract categories.

Internal validity

- For instance, the exclusion of important explanatory variables, the misspecification of scope conditions, or the choice of an inadequate theoretical or statistical model can introduce systematic bias into a study. If a study prevents systematic bias, it is said to have high internal validity.
- Internal validity, then, denotes to what extent a theoretical or statistical model is based on methodologically sound assumptions and to what extent they can be used to explain the research question under investigation.

Measurement (also: operationalization)

- The process of choosing indicators to measure the relevant aspects of a phenomenon as it is conceptualized.
- See also: *conceptualization*.

Model specification

- The definition of a regression model.
- Encompasses the choice of the type of the regression model (functional form) and the included and excluded covariates (as measures of), among others. particular hypotheses.

Observational equivalence

- Two theories are observationally equivalent if all of their empirically measurable implications are the same. That is, given the empirical data at hand, we cannot discern the validity of both theories and cannot determine which theory is "right."
- Observational equivalence is often associated with *theoretical under-determination*: Given the available empirical evidence, there is another theory that is at least as capable of explaining the phenomenon under investigation as the first theory.

Outcome

- The effect of a cause; the result of a process.

Scope conditions

- Define the boundaries of the subset of cases a theory is able to explain.
- For instance, time, space, and initial conditions can define the explanatory boundaries of a theory.

Selection bias

- A type of bias in a scientific study that results from an error in choosing the units included in the study.
- For instance, units are included in the study that are not representative of the universe of units to which researchers aim to generalize their findings, or the inclusion of units affects the effect of the independent variable of interest.

Statistical significance

- Denotes the probability of obtaining results at least as extreme as estimated in a regression analysis, given that the null hypothesis is true.
- Indicates to what extent the results obtained could have occurred by chance alone.

Structural conditions

- Structural conditions can have an impact on the outcome of interest.
- In contrast to individual actions or institutions, structural conditions cannot be changed easily by the (political) actions of individuals or groups but are, at most, subject to long-term, incremental change.
- Examples include the class composition of society, geographical variables, and the level of socio-economic development.

Substantive significance

- Denotes the magnitude of the effect of a single independent variable on the dependent variable, given that all other variables are held constant. A variable is said to be of high substantive significance if a one-unit change in it is associated with a large change in the dependent variable, all else being equal.
- Note that a variable can be highly statistically significant but have only a very small substantive impact on the outcome of interest.

Theory

- A system of statements, concepts, or ideas about reality that explain a phenomenon. A theory is an analytical tool that helps us understand, explain, and predict a phenomenon and allows us to derive empirically testable hypotheses.
- An *agentic* theory places the bulk of explanatory burden on some contingent features or actions of political actors or agents. These theories assume that actors have a high degree of freedom of choice.
- A *structural* theory explains an outcome by reference to preexisting factors or conditions that are resistant to change, at least in the short term.

Time-series, cross-sectional (TSCS) dataset

- A dataset that represents several observations per entity/case. Often, a TSCS contains yearly observations for each country under review for a certain period of time.

Variable

- A factor that can take on more than one value. For instance, the variable “democracy” can be “yes” (regime in a given year is democratic) or “no” (regime in a given year is not democratic).

APPENDIX C: EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

This white paper evaluates each theory family according to three criteria:

- Explanatory Relevance and Relation to other Theories: does the theory plausibly explain the outcomes we want to explain, *i.e.*, one or more of the three subtypes of backsliding;
- Logical Coherence: a theory can perform poorly on this criterion if it contains mutually contradictory elements such that contradictory predictions can be derived from it; or if it lacks critical elements such that while non-contradictory, it does not predict the outcome in question; and
- Evidentiary Support, by which we mean the extent and the robustness of the research findings.

This third appendix discusses each of these three criteria more fully. The appendix begins with discussion of logical coherence; theories that do not possess this property cannot be tested. Second, the appendix discusses hypothesis testing using quantitative and qualitative methods. Finally, for those hypotheses that satisfy logical coherence and survive rigorous testing, this appendix considers relative explanatory relevance: how much “work” does the theory perform? What is its explanatory “value-added” relative to other theories?

It should be emphasized that we distinguish a theory from a hypothesis. A theory states relationships between unobservable “latent” variables that have great generality as political phenomena: most obviously, democracy itself is unobservable, as is political culture. To test theories, we derive specific hypotheses containing empirical indicators that make manifest and observable the attributes of the underlying concept. While a theory might connect the concept of economic development to the concept of democracy, a specific hypothesis might associate higher levels of gross domestic product with a rating on the Polity IV measure.

Logical Coherence. The core of the scientific method is hypothesis testing. However, we begin with the property of logical coherence because theories that lack coherence cannot be rigorously tested. Coherence has two key components: consistency and completeness.

Consistency. A theory is internally consistent when the hypotheses derived from it make no predictions that contradict one another. Consider as an example an effort to theorize the relationship between personal income and the propensity to vote. A theory might claim that rising income raises the propensity to vote because the higher-income individual has a greater interest in reducing her marginal tax rate; but a theory might also claim that higher incomes imply higher opportunity costs and hence a lower propensity to vote.¹⁴ A theory that simply stated both propositions without somehow reconciling them would be internally inconsistent; it would be consistent with observations of both higher and lower propensities to vote! Note that we have applied the criterion of consistency to entire theory families, not to individual statements of a theory. If two scholars working within the same theoretical family derive hypotheses that make antithetical predictions, then we cannot work backward from their empirical tests to the validity of the overarching theory. While it might appear to be easy to identify theoretical incoherence, note that the demand for coherence implies a property called *causal*

¹⁴ The example comes from Morton (1999).

homogeneity, the principle that a cause has the same effect in diverse contexts and across multiple units (individuals, states, etc.). This assumption is often not met, and so one task is to identify the relevant *scope conditions*.¹⁵ For example, we might conclude that economic development enhances democracy among advanced industrial economies but not among economies that grow rich on the exploitation of natural resources. But note that these scope conditions cannot be invoked in an *ad hoc* manner to protect a theory; they must themselves be justified theoretically and tested independently.¹⁶

Completeness. A theory is complete when a determinate hypothesis can be derived from each of the theory's premises. Most importantly, at least one of the premises of the theory must have as a logical consequence the *outcome* to be explained. In the white paper, we observe, of Schmitter and O'Donnell's theory of inter-elite splits and transitions, that "a full democratic transition is not a necessary implication of this framework." If a transition is not a logical implication of the split (because the split is a necessary but not sufficient condition), then it makes little sense to test the relationship between splits and transitions, because the absence of any such relationship *does not contradict the theory*; to use language we will introduce below, the theory is not *falsifiable*.

In summary, then, a theory (theory family) must satisfy *both* coherence and completeness to be qualified for rigorous empirical testing.

Hypothesis Testing & Evidentiary Support. The scientific method embodies the logic of the hypothetico-deductive method, a method developed in the mid-19th century given its most important statement in the 1920s by the philosopher Karl Popper, who argued that the principle demarcating science from non-science was *falsifiability*. In quick summary, the hypothetico-deductive method contains three steps: 1) from a theory containing only unobservable theoretical terms, logically derive one or more empirical hypotheses; 2) from each empirical hypothesis, logically derive one or more predictions or observations that must be made (given feasibility) if the hypothesis is true; and 3) make the relevant observations and determine whether they corroborate or falsify the relevant hypothesis.¹⁷ By most accounts, the gold standard of empirical testing is the experiment in which the investigator controls assignment to treatment and control groups via some randomization instrument. In the literature on democratic backsliding, researchers use either quantitative or qualitative methods, or both.

Empirical Testing via Quantitative Methods. A statistical model uses optimization techniques to find the linear or non-linear function that best characterizes the data (collection of observations). In the most widely known linear models, optimization finds the line that minimizes the squared errors, *i.e.* minimizes the mistakes one would make predicting the data based on the line. Various forms of maximum likelihood estimation, in which non-linear functions are found that best approximate the distribution of the data, have largely superseded these models. Each of these models gives us two key pieces of information: 1) the model's parameters, which gives us information about the *substantive significance*

¹⁵ For example, we say that water boils at 212° *at sea level*.

¹⁶ To refer to the example of boiling water, the theoretical justification of the scope condition in the preceding footnote is that the boiling point is defined as the temperature at which the water's vapor pressure equals the pressure surrounding the liquid, so that higher atmospheric pressures impose higher boiling points.

¹⁷ Note that asymmetry between falsification, which implies a degree of finality, and corroboration, which implies, at least in Popper's important formulation, nothing more than the provisional absence of falsification. We approach truth asymptotically by trying and failing to falsify hypotheses.

of the model's "right-hand side variables" (*i.e.*, the predictors or the independent variables, a.k.a. the causes); and 2) the model's calculation of *uncertainty*, or its *statistical significance*.

Substantive significance. In high school-level algebra, we learned how to work with functions of the form $y = mx + b$, where x and y are an ordered pair representing a location on a two-dimensional grid; m is the slope coefficient, loosely defined as "rise over run," and b is the *intercept*, or the value of y when $x = 0$. Linear statistical models are simply an extension of this core equation to embrace multiple possible causes. For each variable, x , the model estimates a slope coefficient equivalent to m . The interpretation of this coefficient is straightforward: for a one-unit change in the value of x , how much does y change? To stick with our running example, let x be gross domestic product and y be a democracy score; the model estimates how much the democracy score changes for a unit change in gross domestic product. We can use these parameter estimates for rudimentary hypothesis testing. Suppose our theory implies a positive relationship between income and level of democracy; we are, in effect, predicting that our statistical model will yield a positive slope coefficient. Two things can go wrong (deferring, until just below, statistical significance): 1) the model can yield an estimated slope coefficient of zero, implying the absence of any systematic relationship between income and democracy¹⁸; 2) our model can estimate a non-zero but negatively signed slope coefficient, implying that rising income depresses democracy scores.

Statistical significance. Imagine for a moment that we conduct an opinion survey among 1,000 adult Egyptians randomly selected from a population of tens of millions. The answers we receive will be conditional on the particular sample we draw; repeating the survey with a different sample would probably give us different answers, albeit not hugely different, given our large sample size and our attention to random selection of respondents. Now let's imagine drawing a very large number of samples, each containing 1,000 Egyptians; as the sample size becomes larger and larger and we compile more and more sets of answers, we'll have a *probability distribution* of sample responses. Now extend this logic to a statistical model estimating coefficient parameters; for each estimated parameter, we can imagine a hypothetical sampling distribution that would occur if we repeated our analysis an infinite number of times.¹⁹ Now ask this hypothetical question: Suppose I have an estimated slope coefficient that is non-zero: what is the probability I would have observed a slope coefficient at least this large or larger if the "true" slope coefficient is zero? This is called the *null hypothesis* and it represents our degree of certainty that any non-zero slope coefficient is not simply a product of chance born of the particular sample we happen to have observed. By conservative convention, we set the *P-value* to .05, so that if this value is greater than .05, we conclude that we *cannot reject the null hypothesis*. Thus, we could see an estimated coefficient that is non-zero but still conclude that our test of the hypothesis does not corroborate it, because we cannot reject the hypothesis that the "true" value is zero.

¹⁸ A slope coefficient of zero means a horizontal line, such that $y_2 - y_1 = 0$. As x changes, y remains unchanged.

¹⁹ This might strike you as odd. While we sample only 1,000 out of 65 million adult Egyptians, in a study of democracy and income, we could include virtually every country, so we have a census, not a sample. Think of it this way: if for every country we have data on income and on five control variables, then we have observations of only a subset of the *possible combinations* of these six variables. If, like income, other variables are also continuous variables (for example, ethnic fragmentation is a number between 0 and 1), then there are an enormous number of potential combinations of variables and we observe only a small subset of the total number of counterfactual combinations that, if they had been observed, might have produced different parameter estimates.

As we have seen, then, a quantitative test of a hypothesis can reject the hypothesis for one of three reasons: 1) it returns a slope coefficient of zero; 2) it returns a non-zero slope coefficient of the wrong sign; and 3) it returns a non-zero slope coefficient that cannot be distinguished, in the statistical sense just described, from zero.

But suppose we have a finding of a non-zero and statistically significant slope coefficient? Has the hypothesis been corroborated? Unfortunately, the answer is “yes” and “no.” “Yes,” because none of the conditions just stated has been met so we can reject the null hypothesis and report findings consistent with a hypothesis. But “no” because the results of statistical models are fragile to a number of considerations, all loosely grouped under the rubric “model specification”:

1. Measurement error: it is quite likely, even probable, that one or more of our variables is measured with either random (patternless) or non-random (biased in one direction or another) error. The effects of measurement error are not easy to predict. In simple bivariate and linear models, measurement error in the predictors tends to attenuate estimated slope coefficients. But in more complex models with multiple predictors (and perhaps with non-linear functions), measurement errors can have unpredictable effects.
2. Omitted variable bias: if a key control variable has been omitted, we cannot predict with certainty what would have happened were it to be included. Including omitted variables can lead to large changes in coefficients (including changing the sign!), confidence intervals, or both.
3. Model specification: much hinges on how we model the distribution of the errors, the functional form, etc.

Needless to say, it is never easy to adjudicate these issues, because they often rest on untestable assumptions. Therefore, it is standard practice to defer judgment until a stream of publications attacks a similar problem from multiple vantage points. Unfortunately, what this often results in, as we have seen in the white paper, is contradictory conclusions. It is for this reason that it is increasingly considered good practice to complement quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis, especially when the two methods are crafted to probe the validity of the assumptions made by the other (Seawright, forthcoming).

Empirical Testing via Qualitative Methods. Scholars increasingly turn to qualitative methods to make independent judgments about theory validity or to complement quantitative models. The reasoning in qualitative studies mirrors the hypothetico-deductive method, but there is a greater burden placed on the elaboration of hypotheses. Basically, statistical models probe for associations between two or more variables, *X* and *Y*. Qualitative methods called process tracing explore the *intermediary links connecting X and Y*. Insofar as the links cannot be observed in the data, a hypothesis can be falsified.²⁰ There are three types of linkages that can be theorized and observed: *intervening variables*, *intervening events*, and *causal mechanisms*. Thus, we might say of a hypothesis that to get from ultimate cause to outcome, we must make observations of a set of variables, events, and mechanisms.²¹ Furthermore, using basic Bayesian reasoning, we can attempt to evaluate the *relative probative value* of a single piece of

²⁰ Here it is necessary to refer back to the discussion of theory coherence; when dealing with intermediary links, the burden of demonstrating consistency and completeness grows accordingly.

²¹ Variables, events, and mechanisms are not synonyms of one another, although current usage is not as precise as one might like. We omit discussion here; for details, see Waldner (2014).

evidence. Insofar as the evidence is highly surprising given background knowledge, it adds more to the confirmation of the hypothesis than evidence that is regularly observed. Hypotheses that predict highly surprising observations that are then made can receive a huge boost of cognitive confidence. Finally, we can organize our empirical observations in terms of *necessity* and *sufficiency*. Consider the basic murder investigation: for a suspect to be guilty, it is *necessary* that she have been in close physical proximity to the crime; the suspect who proves to have been climbing mountains in Nepal cannot have been guilty of committing a crime in Washington, DC (leaving aside Hitchcockian plot twists). On the other hand, evidence that the suspect was present near the crime scene is not logically sufficient for a guilty verdict. For sufficiency, we consider forms of the proverbial smoking gun. This type of highly discriminating evidence is not necessary; a guilty verdict can be reached through painstaking accumulation of evidence. But when found, smoking-gun evidence is sufficient for a guilty verdict. Qualitative analysis largely follows this core logic.²²

Explanatory Relevance and Inter-Theoretical Relations. A recent quantitative study of democratization by highly respected scholars concludes:

Our results indicate that the most important determinants of democratization or the lack thereof are the share of Muslims in the population, the degree of religious fractionalization, country size, the level of socio-economic development, performance, democratic diffusion among neighboring states, membership in democratic regional organizations, and the frequency of peaceful anti-government demonstrations. Taken together, however, these determinants display a strikingly poor explanatory performance in the short-term. . . . Yet in the long term perspective the explanatory performance can be deemed *fairly satisfactory*.

Two features of this summary should be of some concern to practitioners: first, the long list of determinants is extremely heterogeneous and the connections between determinants is left unstated; and second, even this long laundry list of ingredients explains little in the short term (*i.e.*, given annual observations) and only “fairly satisfactory” over the long term (*i.e.*, over many decades of observations). These are the twin problems of inter-theoretical relations and explanatory relevance. It is for this reason that each theory family is considered along these two dimensions. We would not claim that these pragmatic considerations trump questions of research design and data analysis. Rather, we suggest that insofar as policy agendas seek support from academic research, we favor those theoretical programs that have solid evidentiary support and have a proven track record of explanatory relevance.

²² There is more that can be said about qualitative causal inference. According to recent proposals by Waldner (2014), causal inference can be achieved by drawing inferences from event-history maps to causal graphs.

APPENDIX D: ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES

A. Case Study 1: Kenya 2007—Distinguishing Political Crises from Democratic Backsliding

The Kenyan crisis of 2007 – 2008 shook the world. A confrontation between sitting President Mwai Kibaki and the leading contender, Raila Odinga, over results broke into violence. Within a month, an estimated 1,300 Kenyans were dead and nearly 600,000 displaced; churches, shops, houses, and banks were looted and burned. The human and material costs were horrifying. Yet, despite this, it is not accurate to consider this episode one of democratic backsliding.²³

The crisis began immediately after the elections, when officials announced incumbent Kibaki the winner, while the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) declared victory for Odinga. Odinga called for a recount and refused to take the case to the courts, stating that he believed they were not independent from Kibaki. Kibaki responded that the results of elections must be honored in order to stabilize the country. Thus, in the midst of accusations over election rigging and manipulation, he was sworn into office in near secrecy, late in the evening.

The move neither appeased the opposition nor brought stability. Throughout the next month, attempts at negotiation between Odinga and Kibaki were stillborn; Odinga refused to meet with Kibaki unless he stepped down from office, and Kibaki refused to do so. Odinga called on Kenyans to rally in his support, and the security forces—in what Human Rights Watch deemed a “shoot to kill” policy²⁴—met demonstrators with water cannons, tear gas, and bullets. Targeted ethnic violence also erupted, predominantly aimed against Kikuyus, the historically privileged ethnic group from which Kibaki hails. The Rift Valley (an area in which Kikuyus dominate) witnessed horrific scenes, including the massacre of nearly 50 unarmed women and children locked in a church and burned alive. The south and central areas, too, saw violence and looting motivated by ethnic tensions and socio-economic inequalities.

The situation was untenable, with violence flaring, the two parties unwilling to negotiate directly, and regional and international pressures mounting. On January 24, 2008, the two parties met with former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan for the first time. Over the next month, Annan mediated a resolution to the crisis. On February 28, 2008, Kibaki and Odinga agreed to a power-sharing arrangement, the National Accord and Reconciliation Act. The act, passed by the National Assembly, established an office of prime minister and a coalition government. In resolving the crisis, the National Assembly passed three other bills as well: to amend the constitution; to establish a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission; and to resolve ethnic issues.

Negotiations and legislation took nearly two months to complete, but on April 17, Kenya’s next government was sworn into office. Odinga held the office of prime minister, leading a government with 40 ministers and 50 deputy ministers, the largest in Kenyan history. The fundamental problems that had sparked the crisis remained: the weakness of the state and long-standing social tensions were unresolved. Yet, the immediate crisis was over.

²³ It is worth noting that other observers disagree. See Woods (2010).

²⁴ Human Rights Watch (2008).

The crisis left in its wake a number of institutions and processes intended to assure better election processes in the future. The new constitution, approved through national referendum on August 4, 2010, with 67% approval, established an independent electoral commission. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is mandated with supervising registration of voters, regulating political parties, implementing voter education, reforming electoral processes, and resolving disputes. In short, it is now an independent commission that is charged with ensuring that elections are free, fair, and credible.

The constitution and new legislation put in place additional electoral reforms as well. Kenya's electoral map was reorganized into 47 distinct geographical counties, each with an elected governor, senator, and district assembly, and women were given one reserved seat in each district. To counter the ethnically and geographically centered politics that have plagued Kenya, the new legislation also required that a successful presidential candidate obtain a majority of the popular vote in the general election, including at least one-quarter of the vote in half of Kenya's 47 districts.

The election violence of 2007 – 2008 also sparked efforts to assure equality of civil and political liberties. The Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), also known as the Waki Commission in honor of its chairman, Justice Philip Waki, was mandated with examining the broader context of the election violence, and, in this regard, they highlighted the role that ethnic mobilization and social disparities played in electoral violence since the 1990s.²⁵ This contributed to efforts to institute security-sector reform, aimed at ensuring citizens' freedom and security, leading most notably to a 2011 bill establishing a civilian oversight authority. Security-sector reform has been slow to be implemented, but the basis for reform is set. Similarly, the new constitution gave Kenyan citizens a bill of rights and established a foundation for land reform.

The aftermath of the crisis also saw stronger accountability measures. The CIPEV played an important role in helping to establish the notion of accountability; in July 2009, after two failed attempts to constitute a tribunal within Kenya, the committee sent names of the six individuals they deemed to be most responsible for the violence up to the International Criminal Court in the Hague.²⁶ As a result, prosecutor Louis Moreno Ocampo indicted the six and began investigations. So, too, the constitution of 2010 strengthened accountability, giving greater power to local government and placing greater limits on the presidency.

The 2013 elections tested Kenya's democracy but also demonstrated the strides that Kenya had taken since 2007. The electoral context was particularly tense, given memories of the 2007 – 2008 clashes and ongoing ICC investigations into the violence. Two contenders, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, had active cases at the ICC. Although their supporters had engaged in violence against one other in 2007 and their ethnic groups, Kikuyu and Kalenjin, were long-standing adversaries, they joined together in the Jubilee Coalition in an effort to defeat Raila Odinga, who headed the Coalition of Reform and Democracy (CORD). The ICC investigations and mobilization of ethnic identities played prominent roles in the campaigns, exacerbating tensions. And the race was tight. As polling approached, the two coalitions were neck and neck, and both sides expected that they would go into presidential runoffs.

²⁵ Waki Report (2008).

²⁶ Amnesty International (2013).

In short, many of the ingredients of 2007 remained in 2013: ethnic identities were mobilized, and tensions were high. Election day passed relatively well; although clashes erupted in some areas and international monitors noted some irregularities, turnout was high, reaching over 85%. But, when polls closed, Kenyatta was declared the winner, with 50.07%—just barely passing the majority threshold required to avoid a runoff. And, as in 2007, Odinga rejected the results.

In contrast to 2007, however, Odinga turned to the Supreme Court to make his case. The IEBC confirmed the results on March 9, and the Supreme Court followed suit, dismissing the claims made by Odinga and other opponents. The opposition expressed “dismay,” but they also chose to accept the court’s decision.²⁷ Speaking before a crowd of supporters—many willing to take to the streets again as they had before—Odinga explained, “Although we may not agree with some of [the court’s] findings, our belief in constitutionalism remains supreme. . . . We must soldier on in our resolve to reform our politics and our institutions.”²⁸

By 2013, there was good evidence that although the breakdown of elections as the means for political competition spurred the crisis in 2007, the crisis itself did not undermine democracy. Rather than leading to the institution of changes that restrict electoral participation, civil liberties, and accountability, the crisis prompted the development of new institutions that strengthened election practice, aimed to ensure equal participation, and deepened accountability. Thus, instead of viewing the episode as democratic backsliding, it is more appropriate to see it as the revelation of underlying tensions and weaknesses that provided a catalyst for democratic strengthening.

B. Case Study 2: Egypt and Russia—Military Coups and Executive Takeover: Different Starting Points, Similar Processes

Military coups and executive takeover imply very different starting points for democratic backsliding, but the processes are remarkably similar. Military coups are readily apparent, while the beginning of an executive takeover is much more difficult to pinpoint. Both, however, can result in the displacement of a segment of governing coalitions, through a process that involves limiting civil liberties, weakening elections as a mechanism for political competition, and undermining accountability mechanisms.

A comparison of the backsliding process in Russia and Egypt demonstrates the similarities. Neither country was a consolidated democracy before backsliding began, but both had experienced relatively free and fair elections and the hope of democratization. In Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev had instigated perestroika, and Boris Yeltsin appeared, at least at first, set to carry democracy forward. In Egypt, the fall of Hosni Mubarak resulted in the first free parliamentary and presidential elections, bringing Mohammed Morsi to the presidency in July 2012. Yet, only 12 months later, in the midst of popular uprisings, the military removed him from power.

Backsliding in Egypt and Russia appears to have considerable support, at least in its early phases. In both Russia and Egypt, we find the public expresses support for democracy, with a majority of survey respondents claiming democracy as the best form of government.²⁹ Importantly, however, at least in

²⁷ These individuals, who came to be known as the Ocampo Six, included Uhuru Kenyatta, Francis Muthaura, and Mohammed Ali from the PNU and William Ruto, Henry Kosgey, and Joshua Sang from the ODM.

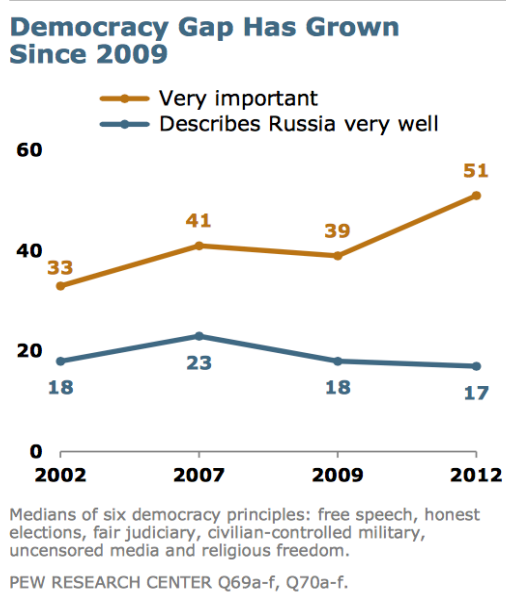
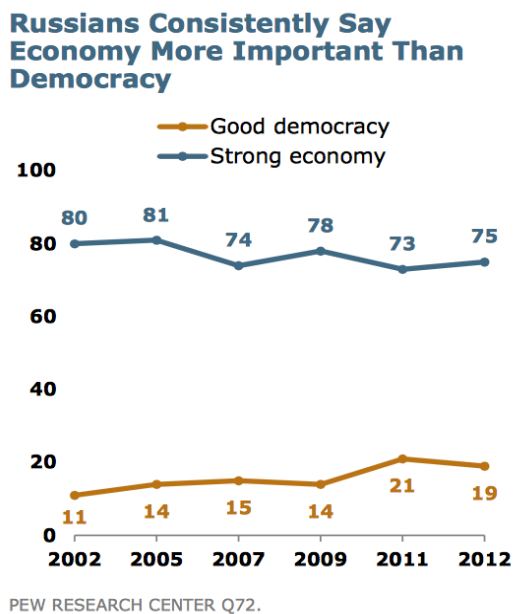
²⁸ International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (2014).

²⁹ BBC News (2013).

Egypt, respondents often equate democracy with economic welfare. Indeed, an ACPSS/DEDI survey conducted in 2012 found that nearly 70% of Egyptians believed that the most important characteristic of democracy is related to improvement in economic welfare.³⁰

Certainly, citizens also value freedoms and democratic institutions, and they recognize the gap between the ideal and Russia's reality, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.³¹ Yet, when citizens see democracy as bringing instability and economic decline, their enthusiasm for democracy wanes. By 2012, Pew polls³² found that Russians valued a strong leader more than democracy (60% vs. 29% in 2009, and 57% vs. 32% in

Figure 1: Public Perceptions of Democracy and Democratic Principles, Russia



³⁰ On Russia, see Colton and McFaul (2002). They found that 62.9% of Russians support democracy, more than two-thirds believed the parliament should be at least as powerful as the president, almost 86% believe electing public officials and voting in elections is important, and nearly 80% value media freedom. Pew (2008) suggests similar findings, although respondents favor a Soviet-style government with democracy. In Egypt, see www.Transitionalgovernanceproject.com.

³¹ This is similar to findings from analyses of Arab Barometer data. See Jamal and Tessler (2008).

³² See also McFaul and Colton (2001), who find that "Most Russians (56.2%) believe that they have no say in what the current government does. Finally, 71.5% of Russians are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Russia. Nevertheless, a solid majority (58.4%) of Russians think a democratic system is an appropriate way of governing Russia, opposed to only 24.4% who believe it is a bad way to govern the country." Similarly, Pew Research Center (2008) finds that about half of respondents who value democracy believe that Russia has attained it, and the other half does not.

2012.) So, too, a strong economy trumps a good democracy (80% vs. 11% in 2002, 78% vs. 14% in 2009, and 75% vs. 19% in 2012.) Quite simply, people care more about the economy and stability than they do about freedom and democracy.

Evidence for this logic is found in a survey conducted by James Gibson (1997). Asking whether or not citizens would agree with a hypothetical situation, in which the government imposed martial law in the face of widespread electoral unrest, he found considerable support for the measure. This led him to conclude:

One of the most important threats to the consolidation of democracy in Russia is the unwillingness of ordinary people to put up with the cacophony and disarray of politics in their nascent democracy. If the Russian people are in fact willing to follow a “strong hand”—an authoritarian leader who would suspend many of the essential ingredients of democracy—then the prospects for consolidating democracy in Russia are bleak indeed” (p272).

The evidence is less watertight in Egypt, but similar logic is apparent. Many tout President Sisi for his strength, his ability to maintain order and, they hope, provide growth and welfare. Support for democracy in the abstract certainly existed, but when faced with the choice of stability or uncertainty, economic growth or civil liberties, many prefer the former. Indeed, in 2013 – 2014, Sisi’s popularity following the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood-led presidency was at a high not seen perhaps since the days of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Many saw him as the restorer of order and hope for economic growth.

Backsliding entails restrictions on civil liberties, whether following military coups or as part of executive takeover. To some extent, incumbents can enlist citizens in silencing the opposition. For instance, as one Egyptian party activist put it, by whipping up nationalist sentiments, the regime has created a fascist environment in which citizens vehemently (and sometimes violently) repress alternative views. If a group went out to demonstrate or voice anti-regime demands, the threat is not simply that the state would repress, but also that average people would beat them.³³

The regimes also (or especially) take proactive steps to clamp down on the opposition. In 2002, Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin put pressure on independent media outlets, silencing some that had previously criticized the government (Freedom House 2003), and, by 2003, it had taken over the last independent television network, replacing it with a sports channel. The decline in press freedom continued throughout the decade, as seen in Figure 1. So too in Egypt, Sisi’s government closed a number of television channels, of varied political tendencies; arbitrarily detained dozens of journalists, including four from Al-Jazeera English; and cowed others into toeing the new party line. Universities, too, have come under attack. Sisi’s government also banned political activities on university campuses, and, when this failed to stop protesters, fired tear gas and bullets. Finally, the regime sought to stifle demonstrations by average citizens, many coming in from the countryside to support President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. The most deadly violence came on August 14, 2013, when police fired on protesters at Rabaa Square, leaving an estimated 700 Egyptians dead. And the clampdowns continue, not only on the Muslim Brothers but also on others who oppose the regime’s increasingly draconian measures.

³³ Author interview, Cairo, August 2014.

Importantly, regimes roll back democratic freedoms not only by repressive measures, but also through new institutions. For instance, among the litany of measures noted in Freedom House reports on Russia, we find that Putin's government passed new media legislation in 2005 that restricted freedom of speech and antiterrorism legislation in 2006 that helped the government crack down on political opponents. Following uprisings in 2011, Putin's government placed greater sanctions on public assemblies, NGOs, and the Internet, and amended a law on treason to allow a wide range of seemingly innocuous activities to be deemed criminal activity—thus making it easier to cut down opponents.

In the last two years, Egypt has also seen restrictions on civil liberties institutionalized. Presidential Decree No. 107 of 2013 (the anti-protest law)³⁴ requires that public gatherings notify the police at least three days in advance of a campaign with specific information on the place of gathering or route of the procession; the start and end time of the event; the subject, demands, and slogans adopted at the event; and the names of individuals or group organizing the event, with a place of residence and contact information (Article 8). So, too, a law governing associations that has been left unimplemented was reactivated; the Ministry of Social Solidarity issued a statement in the state-owned newspaper *Al-Ahram* warning that all international and domestic associations must have explicit permission to operate within 45 days (by September 2, 2014) or they would be in violation of the law. By October, associations such as ICG, Human Rights Watch, the Carter Center, and a number of local associations had closed.

Backsliding also involves tampering with the elections, through both law and implementation. In both Russia and Egypt, authorities undermine election quality through repressive practices. For instance, before the 2004 elections, Russian authorities prosecuted a tycoon known for supporting opposition candidates, creating a sharp decline in stock prices; before the 2007 and 2012 elections, they stepped up restrictions on opposition parties leading, in the latter case, people to take to the streets. So, too, in Egypt, Sisi's search for high electoral turnout in the 2014 presidential election, in the hopes of legitimizing his rule, led to an extension of the voting period and reportedly texted threats against those who abstained from voting.

Such measures are important, but again, backsliding is more consequential when institutional changes are implemented as well. In Russia, for instance, the 2004 electoral law for Duma (legislative) elections mandated a party-list system, with a 7% electoral threshold; the measure was clearly designed to assure the ruling party a majority of seats, shown in Table 1 (Colton and Skach 2005, p123).

In Egypt, the military-led regime designed a law that would largely fragment the 540-seat legislature. Only 120 seats (22.2%) were elected through a closed, majoritarian list system, and these were in four large constituencies (two of 15 seats and two of 45 seats). The electoral law also undermines the development of political parties, favors those with access to substantial funding, and, thus, favors those

³⁴ The Protest Law enacted November 24, 2013, is in contradiction to Egypt's international commitments to freedom of assembly (Article 20 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and Article 73 in the constitution, which grants rights to "organize public meetings, marches, demonstrations, and other peaceful protests with prior notification of authorities as long as they are unarmed. Peaceful private assemblies can be held without prior notification and enjoy express protection from surveillance by security or intelligence agencies" (Carter Center 2014, p21). This opens up the possibility for a number of (negative) interpretations of Article 7, which "bans public meetings, processions or protests if the interests of third parties are affected or if road traffic is obstructed" (Carter Center 2014, p21).

with state support and/or business connections. Further, given that lists winning 50% plus one vote will win all seats in the district (either in the first round or runoff), it reduces the possibility that pluralistic political forces will win parliamentary seats. As one political party activist noted, the result is not competition between political parties but rather a mechanism for political negotiation and collusion prior to elections. The large proportion of individual seats favors traditional (*e.g.*, tribal, family) local elites, those with business connections or money, and those with state support.

Moreover, in Egypt the electoral playing field has been constrained by the dissolving of the Freedom and Justice Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the April 6 Youth Movement, as well as the arrests of thousands of members and activists. It is difficult to tell the exact number of Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters who are effectively disenfranchised, but there is reason to believe that the numbers are substantial.³⁵

Backsliding entails changes that undermine accountability mechanisms. In Russia, the monopolization of power around the presidency began in 1993. The new constitution concentrated power in the presidency, eliminated the legislative presidium and a strong parliamentary chairman, dissolved the lower house, and gave the president control over all ministerial appointments except the prime minister. It also gave the president and bureaucracy immunity from oversight by the legislature and allowed the president the right to declare decrees. In 2005, Russia introduced changes that made governors appointed, rather than elected, officials, further strengthening the presidency while undermining vertical accountability between citizens and the state. As Colton and Skach (2005: 120) noted, “If we measure the *de jure* powers of the presidents in Russia, the French Fifth Republic, and Weimar Germany, the Russian president is constitutionally almost twice as powerful as the president of the Fifth Republic, and at least one-third more powerful than was the president of the Weimar Republic.”

Three years later, Putin continued to prove them right. Faced with term limits, he sought to extend his influence, if not his office. Putin manipulated elections, installing Dmitry Medvedev as successor and maintaining power in his position as prime minister. This arrangement undermined constitutional structures by drawing on informal relationships. When Putin returned to office four years later, he had nearly unbridled power.

The Egyptian coup is interesting with regard to accountability. The ouster of Morsi and dissolution of the Consultative Council in July 2013 left Egypt without elected officials in either the legislature or executive branches. Legislation was passed in the form of decrees, and there was little oversight or transparency. It was up to Sisi and his administration, then, to devise and strengthen accountability, rather than to undermine it.

Sisi ostensibly sought to shore up the democratic practices/legitimacy—calling for a constitutional referendum, presidential, and then parliamentary elections—but in reality he has maintained or weakened the accountability mechanisms that preceded him. The constitution slants power toward the military, judiciary, and executive branch, at the expense of the legislature. A review of the 2014 constitution found that the constitution formalizes “extraordinary privileges for the Armed Forces and

³⁵ Observers suggest that it represents 20% of the electorate, or nearly 8 million of the roughly 40 million eligible voters.

the Judiciary.”³⁶ It also shifts power to the presidency, allowing the executive to call a referendum on any matter involving “supreme interests of the state” (which can include initiating a constitutional amendment),³⁷ vetoing draft legislation, thus requiring a two-thirds majority of all members of the House of Representatives to overcome it, and appointing up to 5% of the members of the house (up to 27 of the 540 members), without reference to any criteria.³⁸

Moreover, the president also enjoys greater power to hold the House accountable than the House does to check the president’s power. The president can dissolve the House of Representatives as long as a “reasoned decision” underpins the dissolution and the reason is different from that given for the decision to dissolve the previous House (Article 137), while the House may withdraw confidence from the prime minister and from the president. In both cases, the dissolution is put to a popular referendum for approval. However, while the House is dissolved if the referendum fails to uphold the dismissal of the prime minister or president, the president faces no such risk.

That is, the Constitution thus gives the House of Representatives potential power but requires a pluralistic, capable parliament to be able to play this role effectively. The Carter Center’s review of the constitution describes this dilemma:

In sum, Egypt’s new institutional framework can be characterized as a semi-presidential system in which the president exercises considerable powers and dominates the executive branch, but in which the House of Representatives retains meaningful influence through its legislative function and involvement in key questions such as states of emergency and declarations of war. However, the exercise of this authority and the achievement of institutional balance between the executive and legislative branches of government will depend on the development of an open and critical political culture in the House of Representatives. Even with a more assertive legislature, the system is unbalanced by the extraordinary influence and independence of the judicial branch and the privileged status of the Armed Forces. Overall, the 2014 Constitution does not provide a recipe for civil government.³⁹

In short, whether backsliding is driven from within by executive takeover or follows a military coup, the process is largely parallel. Backsliding involves degradations in democratic qualities, across the various dimensions, through institutions and practice. The two cases alone do not yield clear lessons regarding sequencing of change or their relative significance. What does appear clear is that they are intertwined processes, taken across time. This is important, for what may appear to be multiple “cases” of backsliding should often be understood as one. Moreover, military coups are often not the endpoint of backsliding, but rather the beginning.

³⁶ Carter Center (2014), p8.

³⁷ See discussion of Article 157 in *Ibid.*, p25.

³⁸ See discussion of Article 102 in *Ibid.*, pp25-26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Figure 2: Press Freedom in Russia

Press Freedom by Country, 1993–2013

Select a country from the drop-down menu. Countries are scored on a 100-point scale. The lower the numeric score, the greater the press freedom.

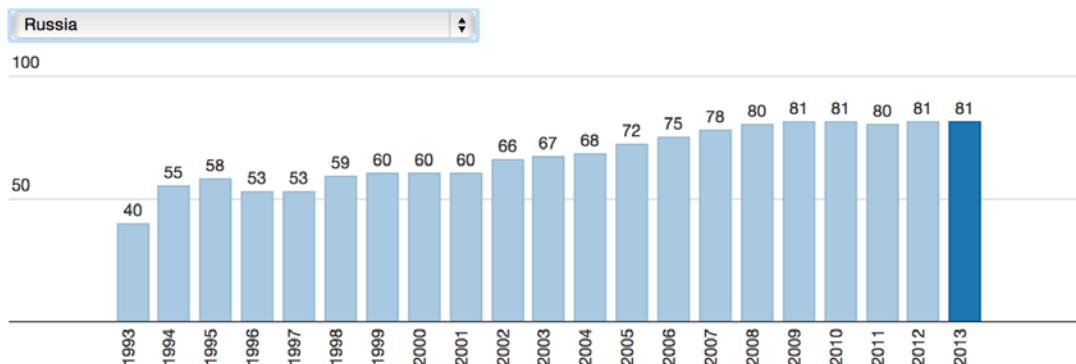


Table 1: Overview: Elections in Russia—Presidential Elections

Year	Date	Elected President	President’s Party	Vote Share	Turnout
1991	June 12	Boris Yeltsin	Independent	58.6% (first round)	74.4%
1996	June 16 (first round); July 3 (second round)	Boris Yeltsin	Independent	54.4% (second round)	69.7% (first round) 68.8% (second round)
2000	March 26	Vladimir Putin	Independent	53.4% (first round)	68.6%
2004	March 14	Vladimir Putin	Independent	71.9% (first round)	64.3%
2008	March 2	Dmitry Medvedev	United Russia	71.2% (first round)	69.7%
2012	March 4	Vladimir Putin	United Russia	63.6% (first round)	65.3%

Table 2: Duma elections

Year	Date	First Party			Second Party			Turnout
		Name	% vote (PR)	% seat	% seat	Name	% vote (PR)	
1990	March 4	CPSU	NA	86.0%	14.0%	Independents	NA	77.0%
1993	December 12	Russia's Choice	15.51%	21.3%	15.6%	LDPR	22.92%	NA
1995	December 17	Communist Party	22.3%	34.9%	11.3%	LDPR	11.18%	64.4%
1999	December 19	Communist Party	24.29%	25.1%	16.2%	Unity	23.32%	61.7%
2003	December 7	United Russia	37.47%	49.6%	11.6%	Communist Party	12.61%	55.7%
2007	December 2	United Russia	64.30%	70.0%	12.7%	Communist Party	11.57%	63.7%
2011	December 4	United Russia	49.32%	52.9%	20.4%	Communist Party	19.19%	60.1%

C. Case Study 3: Bolivia—Repeated Backsliding and Reconciliation over Unresolved Ethnic Struggles

Bolivia reflects unresolved tensions, with the combination of ethnic and class conflicts remaining seeds for instability. The failure to resolve these tensions has left the country careening between democracy and autocracy, a site of repeated backsliding and reconstruction.⁴⁰

Since the colonial period, Bolivia has been characterized by ethnic divisions, with two broadly homogenous areas: a mineral-rich Andean region in the west, where the majority of the country's 55% indigenous population lives; and a hydrocarbon-rich, agricultural region in the east, inhabited primarily by the mestizo and white European population. Ethnic cleavages were overshadowed by class struggles, which focused in the early 1980s on fundamentally different visions of relationships between the state and economy.

Following the overthrow of Colonel Hugo Banzer Suárez in 1978 and then the “democratic” counter coup that same year, class and ethnic tensions threw Bolivia into turmoil. The next three years saw inconclusive, marred elections; coups and counter coups; and escalating popular unrest, driven in part by economic grievances.⁴¹ The class struggle of the early 1980s was an ideological one, focused on fundamental differences between workers seeking continued state protections and political elites turning toward neoliberal policies. The early 1980s thus saw repressive policies and the dismantling of the infrastructures of popular class power, particularly the destruction of tin-mining unions and effective dismantlement of the state mining company, COMIBOL, throwing tens of thousands of miners out of work. Unemployed miners fled to the countryside. They found work as small-scale farmers or street sellers, and, drawing on their organizational skills, contributed to the establishment and strengthening of organizations representing peasants, small farmers, and informal traders.⁴²

Union repression and mine closures, combined with the expulsion of miners to the countryside, placed party leaders in the position of mobilizing the rural, indigenous populace. The cocalero movement emerged, combining revolutionary-Marxist traditions of the relocated ex-miners and the indigenous liberation-traditions of local Quechua peasant-communities.⁴³ The *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), formed from organizations such as the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia,⁴⁴ later joined forces with the Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia⁴⁵ and the Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia,⁴⁶ which formed at this time.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Quantitative indicators denote Bolivia as experiencing five backsliding events, in 1974, 1980, 1995, 2002, and 2003, and it saw military coups in 1951, 1964, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1974, and 1980, depending on the measure.

⁴¹ Kohut & Vilella (2010).

⁴² Webber (2011).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (Spanish: *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*; formerly, Spanish: *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano* or CIDOB) is a national representative organization of the Bolivian indigenous movement. It was founded in October 1982 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra as the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian East, with the participation of representatives of four indigenous peoples of the Bolivian East: Guarani-Izoceños, Chiquitanos, Ayoreos, and Guarayos. Currently, CIDOB gathers 34 peoples living in the Lowlands of Bolivia, in seven of the nine departments of Bolivia: Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, Tarija, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, and La Paz. Among major mobilizations since its inception, CIDOB has played a part in marches for land reform, indigenous autonomy, and for a plurinational state. (Chávez 2010).

⁴⁵ The Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia (Spanish: *Confederación Sindical Única de*

By 1998, such movements had evolved into two main political parties that increasingly mobilized on indigenous issues. The Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP), led by Felipe Quispe, appealed primarily to the indigenous Aymara of the *altiplano*, and the Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (IPSP), led by Evo Morales, appealed to a broader, inter-ethnic, cross-regional indigenous social base.⁴⁸ The IPSP was not permitted to register as an official party in the electoral arena and therefore assumed the name of the MAS. The MAS helped to “indianize” Bolivian nationalism, bringing indigenous issues to the center of political life by drawing on the legacy of the *katarista*⁴⁹ indigenous movement of

Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia, CSUTCB) is the largest union of peasants in Bolivia. The CSUTCB was formed in 1979 in opposition to government-sponsored peasant unions, and immediately replaced the National Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia. Under the leadership of the Tupaj Katari Revolutionary Movement, the CSUTCB became an independent organization. The CSUTCB became involved in the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) labor federation and (because of the decline of the miners' federation) became a leading force in the COB. Through the CSUTCB's pressure, the COB moved beyond a purely class-based focus to address indigenous demands, as well. During the 1990s the CSUTCB moved beyond its support base of Aymara-speaking indigenous people, bringing Guaraní and Quechua speaking indigenous into its ranks. The CSUTCB played a significant role in the series of demonstrations that brought down President Carlos Mesa in 2005. The CSUTCB has supported nationalization of Bolivia's natural gas reserves and opposed water privatization.

⁴⁶ The Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia (Spanish: *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia*; CSCIB) is a peasant union of rural communities in the lowlands of Bolivia whose members included people of highland origin. It is led by Pedro Calderón and includes federations in six departments: La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Tarija, Chuquisaca, and Beni.

⁴⁷ Stefanoni, P. & Hervé D. (2006).

⁴⁸ The MAS-leader Evo Morales was born on October 26, 1959, in the province of Sud Carangas in the department of Oruro. Four of his seven Aymara indigenous siblings died from illnesses related to poverty and the absence of an adequate health-infrastructure in the region. His family, like many others, migrated to northern Argentina in search of work. In Argentina, Morales dropped out of school because of difficulties with the Spanish language. He was raised exclusively in Aymara. He would eventually return to school in Oruro, working at various points as a baker and a trumpeter in the well-known Banda Real Imperial. At the outset of the 1980s, his family was forced to migrate to the Chapare due to a massive drought in the altiplano (Stefanoni and Do Alto 2006, pp. 53–6). Today, his primary language is Spanish, and while he is also relatively fluent in Quechua (from his time spent in the Chapare), he no longer speaks confidently in Aymara. In the Chapare, Morales began his gradual ascent through the ranks of cocalero peasant-unions, becoming secretary-general of the Six Federations in 1988. Ten years later, he was elected leader of the MAS and has maintained this post ever since.

⁴⁹ Katarism (Spanish: *Katarismo*) is a political tendency in Bolivia, named after the 18th-century indigenous leader Túpaj Katari. The katarista movement began to articulate itself publicly in the early 1970s, recovering a political identity of the Aymara people. The movement was centered around two key understandings, that the colonial legacy continued in the Latin American republics after independence and that the indigenous population constituted the demographic (and thus essentially, the political) majority in Bolivia. Katarismo stresses that the indigenous peoples of Bolivia suffer both from class oppression (in the Marxist, economic sense) and ethnic oppression. The agrarian reform of 1953 had enabled a group of Aymara youth to begin university studies in La Paz in the 1960s. In the city they faced prejudices, and katarista thoughts began to emerge amongst the students. They were inspired by the rhetoric of the national revolution as well as Fausto Reinaga, writer and founder of the Indian Party of Bolivia.[3] The group formed the Julian Apanza University Movement, MUJA, which organized around cultural demands such as bilingual education. Its most prominent leader was Jenaro Flores Santos (who in 1965 returned to the countryside, to lead peasants struggles). Another prominent figure was Raimundo Tambo. At the 1971 Sixth National Peasant Congress, the congress of the National Peasants Confederation, the kataristas emerged as a major oppositional faction against the pro-government forces. The 1973 Tolata massacre (in which at

the 1970s.⁵⁰ Through electoral and extra-parliamentary action, it helped bring ethnic cleavages to the center of political debate.

By the 2000s, these identity cleavages were animating both indigenous and traditional parties, and controversies increasingly focused on resource distribution. The controversies in the term of Carlos Mesa, the president of Bolivia from October 17, 2003, to June 6, 2005, centered on regional control over resources. This included the Bolivian gas conflict,⁵¹ which drew momentum from the Cochabamba Water War, both reflecting disputes between the indigenous population and the government over control of resources.⁵² Mesa responded by resisting the indigenous demands, but also by attempting to maintain democratic institutions. He used tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons to put down the left-indigenous insurrection but resisted the use of lethal force. As revolt rose in late May and early June 2005, right-wing forces of the eastern lowlands (the eastern-bourgeois bloc) abandoned Mesa; they wanted the movements crushed. Mesa resigned on June 6, 2005, the country moved to new elections, and Evo Morales won with a 54% absolute majority.⁵³

The primacy of conflicts based on redistributive, identity demands brought new challenges to democracy. By 2008, Bolivia was thrown into crisis between groups centered on the indigenous, western Andean region and the white-mestizo eastern plains region known as the “Media Luna.” Morales

least 13 Quechua peasants were killed) radicalized the katarista movement. Following the massacre, the Kataristas issued the 1973 Tiwanaku Manifesto, which viewed Quechua people as economically exploited and culturally and politically oppressed. In this vision, peasant class consciousness and Aymara and Quechua ethnic consciousness were complementary because they saw capitalism as well as colonialism as the root of exploitation. Katarismo made its political breakthrough in the late 1970s, through the leading role kataristas played in CSUTCB. The Kataristas pushed the CSUTCB to become more indigenized. Eventually, the Kataristas split into two groups. The first, a more reformist strain, was led by Victor Hugo Cardenas, who later served as vice president under Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, heading efforts to institutionalize a neoliberal state-led multiculturalism. A second strain articulated a path of Aymara nationalism. A political wing of the movement, the Tupaj Katari Revolutionary Movement (MRTK) was also launched. This radical stream of katarismo has been represented by Felipe Quispe (aka El Mallku), who took part in founding the Tupaj Katari Guerrilla Army in the 1980s. This group later became the MIP, which became outspoken critics of the neoliberal Washington Consensus and coalesced around ethnic-based solidarity. Quispe advocated the creation of a new sovereign country, the Republic of Quillasuyo, named after one of the four regions of the old empire where the Incas conquered the Aymaras. Current Vice President of Bolivia Alvaro Garcia Linera was a member of this group. Katarista organization were institutionally weakened during the 1980s. In this context NGOs began to appropriate katarista symbols. Populist parties, such as CONDEPA, also began to integrate katarista symbols in their discourse. After the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) had incorporated katarista themes in its 1993 election campaign, other mainstream parties followed suit (most notably the Revolutionary Left Movement). (Sanjinés, pp14-15; Stern, pp390-391; Van Cott, p55).

⁵¹ The Gas War centered on the controversial decision of the MNR to export Bolivian gas through Chilean ports, which had been taken by Chile in the Pacific War of the 1870s. The then President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada 'Goni' resigned and fled to the United States. Vice President Carlos Mesa succeeded Goni. He was then forced to step down amid further widespread protest in El Alto, La Paz, and Cochabamba in June 2005. This led to selection of judge Eduardo Rodriguez as head of a caretaker government, which provided a setting for new elections in December 2005. A number of new parties stepped into the political frame. Evo Morales' MAS party was elected and began implementing the October Agenda, a set of social-movement demands stemming from the Gas War.

⁵² Vibeke (2008).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

attempted to reform the Constitution, nationalizing resources but also redistributing resources and political power to the indigenous areas. The opposition, the “civics,” accused Morales of populist policies aimed at promoting a regional and ethnocentric exclusion toward the non-indigenous population. They sought to uphold the creation of autonomous provincial governments, through autonomy referendums,⁵⁴ and reject the constitutional reforms (nationalization of hydrocarbons, redistribution of land, *etc.*) In turn, the MAS called the opposition “fascist” and “racist,” accused the opposition of promoting separatism, to form a state in the richest territories in which indigenous are the minority, so that they remain marginalized. The conflict did not threaten liberal, democratic principles but rather threw the country into instability, spilling over into neighboring countries. After a year of political crisis, a constitutional reform was approved.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Referendums on departmental autonomy statutes were held in four departments of Bolivia—Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz, and Tarija—in May and June 2008. These four departments, known as the Media Luna, voted in favor of autonomy in the June 2006 elections. The National Electoral Court had blocked the referendums, as they were unconstitutional, since the constitution in force at the time had no provisions for departmental autonomy (under the Framework Law on Autonomy, passed in 2010, the autonomy statutes must be harmonized with 2009 Constitution before being enacted). The first autonomy referendum was held in Santa Cruz Department on May 4, 2008. Autonomy referendums were held in Beni Department and Pando Department in Bolivia on June 1, 2008. Both departments approved autonomy with slightly over 80% of the vote. Turnout was only 34.5% in Beni and slightly over 50% in Pando. A similar referendum was held in Tarija Department on June 22, 2008.

⁵⁵ The Constitutional Reform was approved by 164 of the 255 assembly members. The 2009 Constitution defines Bolivia as a unitary pluri-national and secular (rather than a Catholic, as before) state, formally known as the Plurinational State of Bolivia. It calls for a mixed economy of state, private, and communal ownership; restricts private land ownership to a maximum of 5,000 hectares (12,400 acres); recognizes a variety of autonomies at the local and departmental level. It elevates the electoral authorities to become a fourth constitutional power, introduces the possibility of recall elections for all elected officials, and enlarges the Senate. The judiciary is to be reformed, and judges will be elected in the future and no longer appointed by the National Congress. It declares natural resources to be the exclusive dominion of the Bolivian people, administered by the state. Sucre will be acknowledged as Bolivia's capital, but the institutions will remain where they are (executive and legislative in La Paz, judiciary in Sucre). The electoral authorities will be situated in Sucre.