

Vol.16(3)

September

2018

**THE ANNALS OF COMPARATIVE  
DEMOCRATIZATION**

**"SHOULD MODERNIZATION  
THEORY SURVIVE?"**



**COMPARATIVE DEMOCRATIZATION SECTION  
AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION**

# ANNALS of

Volume 16, No. 3

September 2018

## IN THIS ISSUE

### “Should Modernization Theory Survive?”

- 2 Executive Editor's Note  
Staffan I. Lindberg
- 4 Modernization Theory – What  
Do We Know After 60 Years?  
Sirianne Dahlum
- 7 Economic Development and  
Democracy: A Disaggregated  
Perspective  
Knutsen, Gerring, Skaaning,  
Teorell, Maguire, Coppedge and  
Lindberg
- 12 Richer, More Equal, and More  
Democratic  
Carles Boix
- 18 Modernization and Democracy:  
An Emancipatory Nexus  
Christian Welzel
- 26 Beyond Modernization Theory  
Daron Acemoglu and James A.  
Robinson
- 32 Triggering Democracy  
Daniel Treisman
- 37 Modernization Theory as a Case  
of Failed Knowledge Production  
Gerardo L. Munck
- 42 Sections News
- 48 Editorial Committee

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S NOTE

Staffan I. Lindberg, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg



Dear Members and Friends,

These are unfortunately times when our expertise is more needed than ever since our section's founding. While the level of democracy in the world is still close to an all-time high, for the first time since 1979, the number of countries sliding back significantly is the same (N=24) as the number advancing, and the countries sliding back are big with large populations. These include India, Brazil, the USA, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine. Some 2.5 billion citizens live in countries affected by autocratization – the sliding back on democratic qualities across the regime spectrum. (see V-Dem's Democracy Report 2018)

Unsurprisingly, this year's APSA conference had many panels across many sections of the organization with papers inquiring into this global trend. This turn is obviously warranted. In light of this, there is also a proposal from the current leadership of the section to modify its name to reflect that we study not only democratization but also autocratization as well as other types of regime change.

I also urge all members again to take the profession's "third mission" seriously: engage in public debate to inform the conversation based on facts and research findings. We cannot, should not, only debate amongst ourselves (although that must not stop of course) but be active in the public debate now that democracy is threatened across the world and including as I see it, in the United States. I maintain that we have a duty as intellectuals to be public and take our share of the responsibility for informed deliberations in the public sphere. Whatever little we can do, we ought to contribute.

In this respect, I think the present issue on the evidence for and against modernization theory is particularly relevant and important. As a general theory, and then rephrased in so many varying parts, it has guided much thought over the past 60 years or so as well as policy. This stock-taking we present here should hopefully spur further deliberations and inquiries that can inform public debate and programmatic efforts going forward. Big thanks to the lead editor Sirianne Dahlum for taking this challenge on, and to all the authors for absolutely terrific contributions.

You will also note that we have changed the name of our publication. We feel that the contributions to our symposia reflect a high level of scholarship and deserves far more recognition than the designation of a "newsletter" affords. Hence, from now on this publication is referred to as "The Annals of Comparative Democratization, Section of the American Political Science Association."

Lindberg

Finally, allow me to announce that I am resigning as executive editor effective this time next year. The September 2019 issue of the Annals will be the last under my watch. I joined the editorial committee at University of Florida in 2010 when Michael Bernhard took over as Executive Editor and brought the (then) newsletter to new heights with the introduction of symposia. In 2012, Benjamin Smith and I took over as executive editors and ran it for two years. After my final move to University of Gothenburg and opening of the V-Dem Institute, I have been the sole executive editor overseeing a fantastic, rotating crew of editorial committee members. In effect, I have been at this for nine years next year and that should be enough.... It is time for someone else to take over, form a team, and have their perspectives and ideas materialize. I hope that you have found the past years' issues informative and helpful.

Staffan I. Lindberg  
Executive Editor

**Are You the Next Executive Editor?**

Staffan I. Lindberg has announced that he is leaving the office as Executive Editor effective with the publishing of the 2019 September issue. We are therefore looking for bids from members to take over the office as Executive Editor and form an editorial team for the Comparative Democratization Annals (formerly "Newsletter"). The first issue for the new team will be the January 2020 issue.

Please contact us for further information and presentation of bids, latest by January 15, 2019.

**Chair**

Rachel Beatty Riedl  
Northwestern University  
r-riedl@northwestern.edu

**Vice-chair**

Margit Tavits  
Professor, Department of Political Science  
Washington University in St. Louis  
r-riedl@northwestern.edu

## MODERNIZATION THEORY – WHAT DO WE KNOW AFTER 60 YEARS?

Sirianne Dahlum, V-Dem Institute



Economic development has had far-reaching impacts on people's lives - through education, industrialization, urbanization, increasing income levels, and communication technology. Does it also promote democracy? According to modernization theory, the answer is yes. The thesis that economic development explains the rise and persistence of democracy, often referred to as the "Lipset thesis" after Seymour Martin Lipset's 1959 article in *American Political Science Review*, has been reviewed extensively (Lipset's study has almost 8000 google scholar citations), and empirical tests have gradually been drawing on more extensive data sets and more sophisticated methods.

After almost 60 years of extensive scholarly attention, what do we know about the validity of the modernization thesis? This symposium takes stock of current insights, by asking six experts to provide their accounts of the merits of modernization theory. For instance, are we closer to a conclusion on whether economic development promotes democracy, or alternatively, that the joint development of economies and institutions is driven by a common background factor? This debate also raises broader questions about progress in political science. Ideally, to move forward we should be able to discard some theories and corroborate others after extensive testing. To what extent has the field made progress in our empirical assessment of modernization theory?

At first glance, there seems to be substantial disagreement between the different contributions to this symposium. In part, this reflects the fact that authors highlight different empirical contributions, favor different model specifications, and even seem to hold different perceptions of the core theoretical propositions

of modernization theory. At the same time, points of convergence between many or all of the contributions suggest that we gain much from bringing these perspectives together in a symposium. In particular, three lessons stand out.

1. Most of the authors suggest that modernization theory in its most "simple version", as Treisman refers to it, rests on shaky empirical foundations. That is, at best there seems to be limited evidence in favor of the hypothesis that a change in income in a given year produces an *unconditional, instantaneous* change in the likelihood of democracy in the following year.

Even the authors that are more favorably inclined towards modernization theory in some form, are skeptical of this "simple" version of the argument. For instance, Boix argues that there is scarce evidence that income relates to democracy in the *short-term*, even when using a global sample of countries extending back to 1820. Along similar lines, Treisman concludes that while recent studies yield some more support for this version of modernization theory than the older literature, the evidence is still "thin".

In line with this, Munck's contribution throws cold water on modernization theory. His review of 83 quantitative studies of the income-democracy link since 1959 shows that the majority of studies go against the expectations of modernization theory, suggesting that there is no or a negative income-democracy link. This is particularly the case for studies conducted after 1997. Munck concludes that not only are the underlying theoretical assumptions of the initial version of modernization theory – reductionism and unilinearity – proved inherently flawed – but that the empirical evidence also tilts against the theory.

One apparent exception to this finding is suggested by the contribution of Knutsen et al., who disaggregates democracy into its various components using data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project – to investigate whether the effect of income varies for different democracy aspects. They find that income is systematically related to the *electoral aspect* of democracy also in the short term (1-year). However, they do not find any evidence that income is systematically related to other democracy components such as civil liberties, rule of law, political participation, judicial constraints and suffrage. Income only seems to be linked to the quality and fairness of elections. Importantly, the authors only find evidence that income relates to the *survival of electoral regimes*, and not democratization, at least since 1900. This reflects the finding of Przeworski and Limongi (1997) that income only affects regime type to the extent that it stabilizes existing democracies (rather than also promoting democratic transitions).

2. Although the thin version of modernization theory may not hold, economic development may still translate into more democracy in more subtle ways, which brings me to the second insight. Several of the contributions point to substantial evidence in favor of a more refined version of modernization theory, suggesting that increasing income promotes democracy i) in the medium or long-term and ii) conditional on certain "triggers" of authoritarian regime breakdown.

For instance, the Boix piece analyzing all sovereign countries from 1820 to 2016 period, presents evidence that income is a statistically significant predictor of democracy when measured with ten-year lags, even when accounting for country-specific and year-specific effects. This is consistent

## Dahlum

with Treisman's finding that income mainly matters in the medium run (10-20 years).

Why is this the case? Treisman suggests that this is consistent with the finding that income will only lead to democracy if combined with some kind of trigger, which is more likely to occur in a 10-20 year period than in the short term. In particular, he finds that income coupled with a leader turnover induces democratization, as this creates an opening for the opposition to mobilize and the leader's grip on power is weakened. Hence, as time goes by, and the likelihood of an event such as a leader turnover increases, the democratizing potential of economic development is more likely to be realized. The findings of two other independent studies point in a similar direction and support a "conditional version" of modernization theory: Kennedy (2010) finds that income promotes democracy during or after an economic crisis, and Miller (2013) finds that the pro-democracy effect of income is activated by institutional weakness.

These arguments also align with the finding that higher income per capita generally stabilizes all regimes – including autocracies (e.g., Kennedy 2010; Bueno de Mesquita 2004). This reflects insights from the literature on authoritarian regimes, suggesting that the ability of dictators to remain in power is boosted by access to economic resources. These stabilizing effects of income clarify why we should only expect economic development to produce democratization in the aftermath of a trigger such as an economic crisis. Welzel's contribution points to a similar logic, arguing that although higher income is linked to a lower likelihood of *any type of regime transition*, the share of transitions to democracy (compared to autocratic transitions) increases with income level. The finding that higher income

promotes democracy during events such as violent leader removals and economic crises appears to be on firm footing, and none of the authors seem to dispute this.

Scholars part way, however, on the question of what "the conditional income effect" implies for modernization theory. For instance, Munck's take is that modernization theory should have been rejected a long time ago, and that its persistence in the political science literature is an instance of "failed knowledge production". He argues that the evidence in favor of the conditional argument is a retreat from early claims of modernization theory and therefore a "major concession to critics". In his view, the very essence of modernization theory is its aim to provide a global theory of democratization. Evidence that higher income only promotes democratization for countries or years characterized by certain conditions, or recent evidence that income actually reduces the likelihood of authoritarian regime breakdown (but increases the chance that a breakdown will lead to democracy), falsifies modernization theory, according to Munck.

How many modifications to a theory can we allow for it to still be the same theory? This question is at the heart of the discussion. A widely held view in the philosophy of science is that "degenerating research programs" are characterized by attempts to add "ad hoc" auxiliary assumptions to a theory to save its general propositions (Lakatos, 1971). However, if modifications come with novel predictions that turn out to be true, then these should be seen as instances of theoretical progress. Research on modernization theory needs to assess whether additional assumptions indicate progress or degeneration, and at what point will we have to reject the overall theory rather than propose a revised version. This may to a certain extent be a question

of labeling (what do we refer to as "modernization theory"?), but it can also have important implications for both the scholarly discussion and for policy recommendations. For instance, do we conclude that the findings are "mixed" or "inconclusive" based on the fact that different model specifications seem to yield different results? Or do we instead reject the theory because we lack conclusive findings, and by implication suggest to the policy community that they should not expect improvements in democracy following economic development? This symposium does not provide an answer to those questions, but it suggests that they are indeed critical ones for us as a community to address. And, these questions lead me to a third point.

3. In light of the distinction between progressive and degenerative research programs (Lakatos, 1971), the discussion should turn on whether the amendments to modernization theory are a) in line with the core propositions of the theory, and b) make novel predictions. Several authors in this symposium speak to this point, by proposing to develop the core of the theory and testing additional theoretical implications. This seems particularly acute given that conclusions hinge on different model specifications: We need a more elaborate theory to guide the choice of model specifications. Welzel's contribution to the symposium offers a notable suggestion, building on extant work by himself and Ronald Inglehart. Drawing on psychological micro-mechanisms rooted in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, he sketches how increases in material resources (such as money) and cognitive resources (such as education) shifts people's preferences from existential concerns to freedom and self-realization – as part of "emancipative values". This contribution yields additional testable implications, that Welzel presents evidence for, building on data from World Values

## Dahlum

Survey. For instance, we should expect that economic development is related to increases in “emancipative values” at a global scale and preferences for liberal democracy rather than just populations paying “lip service” to democracy.

Several nuances can be added to this discussion. For instance, while the authors of this symposium have mostly focused on the link between modernization and democratic transitions, it should be noted that there seems to be more evidence in favor of a link between income and democratic survival that Lipset (1957) himself emphasized and that Przeworski and Limongi (1997) evidenced. When considering democratic survival, income may even have an unconditional effect and an instantaneous (one-year) effect. At least this is the case for the electoral aspect of democracy, as demonstrated by Knutsen et al's piece.

Finally, most studies use a measure of income level such as GDP per capita adjusted for power purchase parities when testing the modernization theory. Yet, the literature has far from settled on what aspect of economic development is the “key” to democracy. Is income just proxying for some other relevant trait that is really driving democratization, such as education, urbanization, new patterns of social interaction or particular values?

Finally, although most studies have considered a measure of income level when testing the modernization theory, the literature has far from settled on what aspect of economic development is the “key” to democracy. Is income just proxying for some other relevant trait that is really driving democratization, such as education, urbanization, new patterns of social interaction or particular values? As pointed out by Boix in his contribution, unpacking economic development is needed to generate testable propositions for

how current economic changes will influence political regimes and the future of democracy. Even if we accept income as an appropriate proxy for the economic and social changes that have occurred in developed countries, or are currently undergoing in the developing world due to industrialization, increasing income levels may not necessarily capture post-industrial changes. This points to the importance of further theoretical elaboration – at least if the goal is develop a theory that is general enough to account for economic development across time and space. Will post-industrial changes also promote further democratization among countries that are not yet fully democracies? And will it prevent democratic backsliding among countries that are fully democratic? Even if we are to accept “conditional modernization theory” as true, it has limited predictive value unless it can also yield expectations about the political outcomes of economic development in the post-industrial world.

### References

- De Mesquita, B. B., & Smith, A. (2010). Leader survival, revolutions, and the nature of government finance. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(4), 936-950.
- Kennedy, R. (2010). The contradiction of modernization: a conditional model of endogenous democratization. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(3), 785-798.
- Miller, M. K. (2012). Economic development, violent leader removal, and democratization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(4), 1002-1020.
- Lakatos, I. (1971). History of science and its rational reconstructions. In *PSA 1970* (pp. 91-136). Springer, Dordrecht.

Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy. *American political science review*, 53(1), 69-105.

Przeworski, A., & Limongi, F. (1997). Modernization: Theories and facts. *World politics*, 49(2), 155-183.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY: A DISAGGREGATED PERSPECTIVE\*

Carl Henrik Knutsen, University of Oslo

John Gerring, University of Texas at Austin

Svend-Erik Skaaning, Aarhus University

Jan Teorell, Lund University

Matthew Maguire, San José State University

Michael Coppedge, University of Notre Dame

Staffan I. Lindberg, University of Gothenburg



In recent decades, modernization theory has been challenged. Studies have found that richer countries are more likely to maintain democratic rule, but that the initial transition to democracy is unrelated to economic development, or that even the former relationship is spurious, disappearing once country fixed-effects are accounted for.<sup>1</sup> Others counter that the relationship between development and democracy is restored if historical data stretching back to the nineteenth century is incorporated, if different estimators are used, or when conditioning the relationship on institutional or leadership changes taking place.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the modernization

\* This piece is a shortened and revised version of the article "Economic Development and Democracy: An Electoral Connection", *European Journal of Political Research* (forthcoming 2018).

1) Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M.E., Cheibub, J.A. & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and Development*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., Robinson, J.A. & Yared, P. (2008). "Income and Democracy." *American Economic Review* 98(3): 808–842; Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., Robinson, J.A. & Yared, P. (2009). "Reevaluating the Modernization Hypothesis." *Journal of Monetary Economics* 56(8): 1043–1058.

2) Boix, C. & Stokes, S.C. (2003). Endogenous Democratization. *World Politics* 55(4): 517-49; Che, Y., Lub, Y., Tao, Z. & Wang, P. (2013). "The Impact of Income on Democracy Revisited." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 41(1): 159–169; Treisman, D. (2015). "Income, Democracy, and Leader

debate, at present, rests upon a complex set of modeling choices.

Left out of this long-running debate is an explicit consideration of the outcome – democracy. *A priori*, there is no reason to expect economic development to have uniform effects across different dimensions of democracy. Calling for a more nuanced approach than studying the overall link between development and democracy, before subsequently rejecting or confirming it, we propose that economic development is differentially related to various aspects of democracy. This insight helps account for the fragility of this relationship in extant studies and provides guidance to the ongoing debate about possible mechanisms at work in the development-democracy nexus. Specifically, we hypothesize that development primarily affects electoral contestation, while its impact on other aspects of democracy is less clear.

### I. Economic Development and Democracy

Democracy is a many-splendored concept embracing diverse elements such as electoral contestation, constitutionalism, participation, and deliberation. We argue that economic development favors the *electoral* aspect of democracy while expectations are ambiguous on other aspects. To convey this idea we distinguish two players: *citizens* and *leaders* (incumbents). We assume that citizens of a polity

Turnover." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 927-42..

are more likely to prefer a democratic regime than its leaders and that economic development increases the *relative power resources* of citizens vis-à-vis leaders. A richer, better educated, more urbanized, more connected citizenry is, by virtue of these traits, more powerful.<sup>3</sup> Although development may also enhance the power resources of leaders, leaders in poor countries are *already* in control of considerable resources, especially in autocratic states. Thus, we expect economic development to have a differential effect on the power resources of citizens and leaders, with citizens improving their relative position as a society develops.

However, acquiring more power resources is insufficient for ensuring a democratic outcome. No citizen can effectively challenge an incumbent leader alone. For citizens to affect the character of national institutions, they must overcome their collective action dilemma. A critical feature distinguishing electoral institutions from others is the role that elections play as a *focal point* for mitigating collective action problems that would otherwise constrain popular mobilization. This protects against democratic backsliding, helping to ensure that electoral institutions, once established, are respected.

The focal role of elections stems from several key features: Elections are high-stakes endeavors; elections are highly visible, and often intensively

3) Inglehart, R. & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Rueschmeyer, D., Stephens, E.H. & Stephens, J.D.. (1992). *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

canvassed by the media and informal networks; actions that impair election quality – e.g., voter intimidation or denial of access to the ballot to a major party – are often fairly easy to discern; and elections occur during a short and well-delimited period of time and culminate in a single event, the announcement of a winner. At this point, it is natural for large numbers of people to mobilize if their preferences are not respected.

These characteristics set elections apart from other aspects of democracy, and the prospect of collective action ought to make leaders think twice before blatantly manipulating them. By contrast, infringements on *non*-electoral features of democracy such as civil liberties, should not provide as clear a focal point as major electoral fraud or the cancellation of elections. Using various tools of repression, great damage may be done to civil liberties, for example, without a high level of public awareness and without a single galvanizing event necessarily prompting the general public to take action.

When citizens are empowered by education and wealth they are more able to resist the blandishments and coercions of the leader and more likely to behave in a peaceful and orderly manner. This is most obvious for vote-buying, a common strategy of electoral fraud. Mired in poverty, even public-spirited citizens may sell their votes for a modest sum. Well-off citizens, by contrast, are less likely to do so, or will require larger payments, raising the cost of vote-buying.

Importantly, focal points operate *only* where elections already exist. This suggests that development might only have an impact on maintaining electoral democracy but not on the initial transition to electoral rule. Hence, our argument suggests that once established, elections will

combine with economic development to form a safeguard against deterioration in electoral democracy. But before electoral institutions are in place, our argument has no clear implications for how economic development might affect the fate of electoral democracy.

## II. Main Results

We assume that economic development involves a set of factors, including income, industrialization, changing sectoral composition, education, communications infrastructure, and urbanization. As such, economic development typically entails both increased specialization in production, labor and capital markets, and social reorganization for example with a growing urban middle class. Since the aforementioned indicators of economic development are causally inter-related and highly correlated, we adopt the common strategy to use log GDP per capita as a proxy for the composite concept.

To test the association between income and democracy we employ an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator with country and year fixed effects, a lagged dependent variable (LDV), and robust errors clustered by country. Right-side variables are lagged one period behind the outcome and country-year is the unit of analysis. The time-series extends for more than 100 years and sometimes up to two centuries.

We begin with measures focusing on *non-electoral* components of democracy. This includes four meso-level indices from V-Dem that measure Liberal, Participatory, Deliberative, and Egalitarian components of democracy.<sup>4</sup> Additional V-Dem

indices that we test measure more specific aspects of democracy. All measures are re-scaled to a 0-1 scale.

Coefficient plots for GDP per capita, estimated from these tests, are shown in Figure 1. Income predicts none of the twelve non-electoral measures of democracy (with the expected sign). Robustness tests (not shown) suggest that some of these measures are related to income in some model specifications; but none are very robust.

Next, we examine composite indices commonly used to measure democracy in its entirety (following different understandings of the concept). This includes Polity2, Unified Democracy Scores, and the Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices from Freedom House.<sup>5</sup> Results shown in Figure 1 suggest that these composite indices are not clearly linked to income.

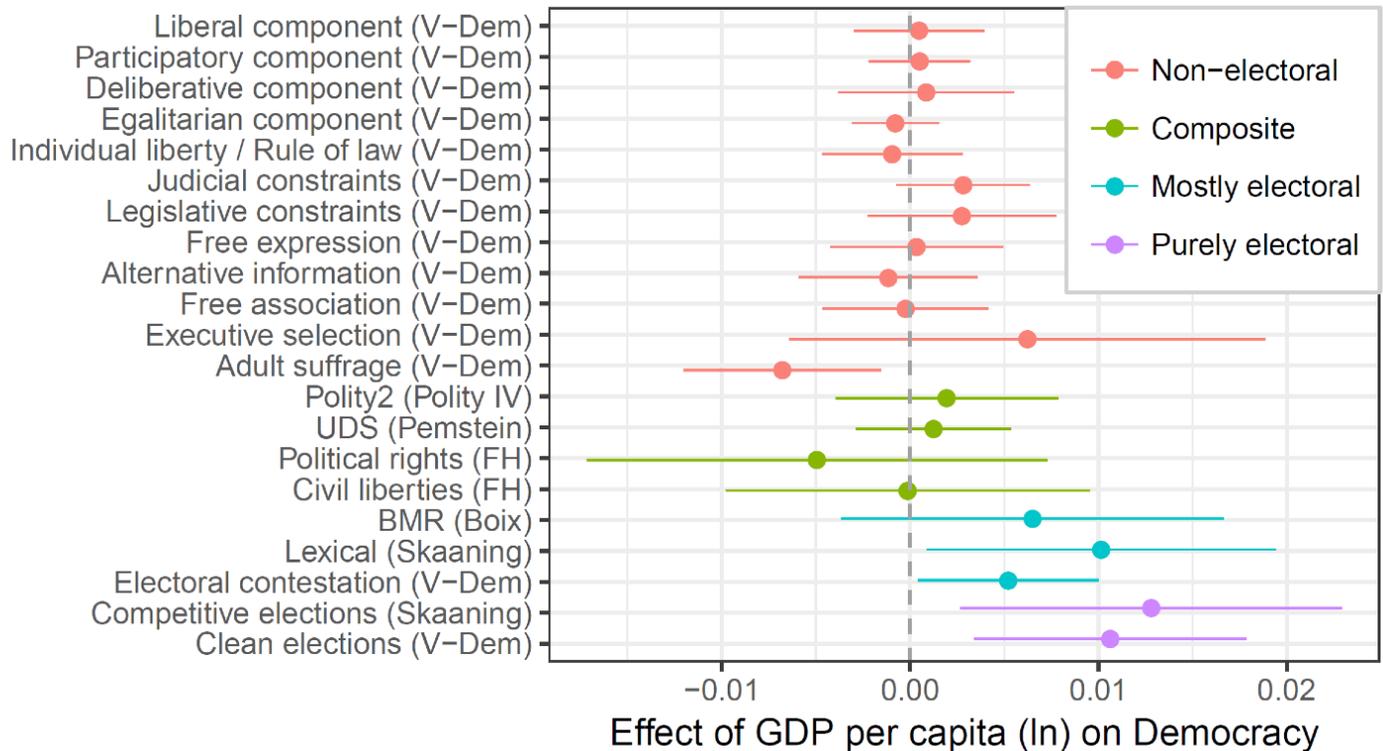
Further, we examine three indices that focus primarily on the electoral component of democracy: the binary measure (“BMR”) from Boix et al., which captures whether the legislature

---

Seim, B., Sigman, R., Staton, J., Stepanova, N. & Wilson, S. (2017). V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v7.1. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project; Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Lindberg, S.I., Skaaning, S.E., Teorell, J., Krusell, J., Marquardt, K.L., Mechkova, V., Pemstein, D., Pernes, J., Saxer, L., Stepanova, N., Tzelgov, E., Wang, Y. & Wilson, S. (2017). V-Dem Methodology v7.1. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project; Pemstein, D., Marquardt, K.L., Tzelgov, E., Wang, Y., Krusell, J. & Miri, F. (2017). The V-Dem Measurement Model: Latent Variable Analysis for Cross-National and Cross-Temporal Expert-Coded Data. University of Gothenburg, Varieties of Democracy Institute: Working Paper No. 21, 2nd edition.

5) Marshall, M., Gurr, T. & Jagers, K. (2014). Polity IV, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>; Pemstein, D., Meserve, S.A. & Melton, K. (2010). Democratic Compromise: A Latent Variable Analysis of Ten Measures of Regime Type. *Political Analysis* 18(4): 426-449; Freedom House. (2014). Freedom in the World Survey, <http://www.freedomhouse.org> (last visited 4/11 2016).

4) Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Lindberg, S.I., Skaaning, S.E., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Fish, S., Glynn, A., Hicken, A., Knutsen, C.H., Krusell, J., Lüthmann, A., Marquardt, K.L., McMann, K., Mechkova, V., Olin, M., Paxton, P., Pemstein, D., Pernes, J., Petrarca, C.S., von Römer, J., Saxer, L.,



**Figure 1: Income and various measures of democracy**

Notes: The plot displays coefficient estimates surrounded by 95% confidence intervals. Regressions are OLS with LDV, country- and year fixed effects, and errors clustered by country. Right-side variables measured at T-1. Scales normalized to 0-1 (1=most democratic)

and executive are chosen (directly or indirectly) in free and fair elections where at least a majority of adult men are enfranchised (the inclusion of suffrage is the only departure from a purely electoral indicator, following our definition); the Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (“Lexical”), a cumulative aggregation of indicators capturing whether national elections are held, opposition parties can run, elections are competitive, and suffrage is inclusive; and an index of Electoral Contestation based on different V-Dem indicators including measures of Freedom of Association, Clean Elections, and Executive Selection combined through multiplication.<sup>6</sup> All indices bear a

positive relationship to income, though BMR does not surpass conventional thresholds of statistical significance.

Finally, we examine indicators that are tightly focused on electoral democracy, constituting our core dependent variables. Competitive Elections from Lexical measures the existence of contested multi-party elections without any consideration of suffrage. Next, we use the V-Dem index Clean Elections based on eight indicators (presented below). For years where national elections are not on track, because they have not been introduced or discontinued due to coups, etc., the score is 0. For indicators observed only in election years, scores are repeated within election regime periods as defined by V-Dem. These electoral

measures are strongly correlated with prior levels of income.

To put the latter results in perspective, an extremely poor country, at \$250 USD per capita GDP, is predicted to hover around 0.25 on the Clean Elections index – approximately the level of PRI-Mexico in the 1980s. Quadrupling that income, to \$1000 USD, the expected long-run level of Clean Elections rises by about 0.1. A median-income country by 2010 standards, roughly \$7300, is expected to score right above the 0.5 midpoint of Clean Elections – corresponding (roughly) to late-1990’s Ghana. These results suggest that economic development brings a substantial shift in the quality of elections.

We conducted a large number of additional tests, accounting for

6) Boix, C., Miller, M.K. & Rosato, S. (2013). A Complete Data Set of Political Regimes, 1800-2007. *Comparative Political Studies* 46(12): 1523-1554; Skaaning, S.E., Gerring, J. & Bartusevičius, H. (2015). A Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy.

*Comparative Political Studies* 48(12): 1491-1525.

## Knutsen, Gerring, Skaaning, Teorell, Maguire, Coppedge and Lindberg

additional confounders and modeling the possible endogeneity of income to democracy. The relationships between income and our electoral measures of democracy are very robust. The general picture emerging from all these tests is thus that the relationship between economic development and democracy depends on an electoral connection. The more closely an indicator homes in on the purely electoral component of democracy, the more sensitive it is to economic development.

### III. Inside the Box

The Clean Elections index offers a unique opportunity to peek inside the box of an intriguing relationship. This index is composed of eight indicators, all originally coded on five-point ordinal scales by several country experts and then transformed to interval-scale measures by the V-Dem measurement model.

Four indicators tap into problems of electoral integrity pertaining to violence

or fraud. *Government intimidation* inquires whether opposition candidates, parties, or campaign workers were subjected to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment by the government, the ruling party, or their agents. *Other violence* asks whether the campaign period, election day, and post-election process were free from other types of campaign/election-related violence. *Vote buying* inquires into vote and/or turnout buying in an election. *Other irregularities* refers to other irregularities on the part of the incumbent and/or opposition parties, such as double IDs, intentional lack of voting materials, ballot-stuffing, misreporting of votes, and false collation of votes.

Three other indicators in Clean Elections measure the capabilities of states to manage election processes. *Voter registry* asks whether there was a reasonably accurate voter registry in place at the time of an

election and whether it was utilized. *EMB capacity* measures whether the Electoral Management Body in charge of administering national elections has sufficient staff and resources to administer a well-run national election. *EMB autonomy* measures the ability of the Election Management Body to apply election laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections, separate from pressures exerted by the government or governing party.

The final indicator is *Free and fair elections*. This provides a summary judgment of whether the national election was free and fair.

In Table 1, we regress each outcome on income in our benchmark.

Notably, all indicators associated with electoral violence and fraud bear a strong relationship to income (Models 1-4) while indicators reflective of state capacity do not (Models 5-7).

Table 1: Clean Elections, Disaggregated

Outcome	Fraud & Violence				Voter Registry	Capacity		General
	Government Intimidation	Other Violence	Vote Buying	Other Irregularities		EMB Capacity	EMB Autonomy	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
GDPpc (ln)	0.032*** (0.012)	0.052*** (0.016)	0.036*** (0.011)	0.031*** (0.011)	0.004 (0.011)	-0.000 (0.009)	0.008 (0.010)	0.026** (0.012)
Lagged Y	0.910*** (0.006)	0.869*** (0.010)	0.909*** (0.008)	0.910*** (0.007)	0.903*** (0.009)	0.955*** (0.004)	0.949*** (0.005)	0.906*** (0.007)
Countries	156	156	156	156	156	156	156	156
Years	111	111	111	111	111	111	111	111
Obs	11538	11538	11538	11538	11535	11680	11675	11538
R2 (within)	0.841	0.778	0.842	0.841	0.859	0.949	0.934	0.839

Note: OLS regression with country and year fixed effects, errors clustered by country. \*, \*\*, \*\*\*.01. Right-side variables measured at T-1.

Deficiencies in the fraud and violence indicators are more straightforward for citizens to connect to the intentional actions of the government and other elites than deficiencies in the capacity variables. Hence, these analyses provide additional fodder for our argument that a richer economy empowers citizens to deter leaders from engaging in blatant manipulation of elections and weakens the incentives of leaders to do so.

#### IV. Upturns and Downturns

Finally, we investigate whether the relationship between income and electoral democracy is symmetric or asymmetric. Does economic development enhance the probability of upturns (transitions to greater democracy) *and* reduce the probability of downturns (to greater autocracy)? Or does it only affect downturns?

Using Competitive Elections and Clean Elections along with a third measure that registers the existence of an Electoral Regime (where regular elections are on course), we ran regressions differentiating movements toward and away from electoral democracy. Results support the asymmetric hypothesis. Higher income discourages downturns, but does not clearly encourage upturns.<sup>7</sup> These results conform with our theoretical expectation that a combination of economic development and pre-existing elections should prevent leaders from discontinuing elections, or blatantly manipulating them.

#### V. Conclusion

7) One exception is when we test dynamic probit models for Competitive Elections. Here, we find a positive coefficient both on onset and survival of competitive elections. Since this measure extends back to 1800, the result corresponds well with those in Boix & Stokes (2003), suggesting that economic development might have had a stronger influence on democratic transitions in the 19th century.

The relationship between economic development and democracy is robust only with respect to the electoral component of democracy, narrowly construed as the existence of competitive national elections and the procedural integrity of the electoral process. Other aspects of democracy are not, or only weakly, related to income. This may help to explain why tests employing composite indices such as Polity2 or Freedom House show inconsistent results, depending on choice of model specifications. We also find that while economic development prevents backsliding in electoral democracy it does not show a significant relationship to democratization, corroborating the thesis of asymmetric effects.

We proposed a theoretical framework that may explain the differential effects of economic development on different aspects of democracy. Development reduces the relative power and alters the utility calculus of leaders, who are in a position to respect or subvert multiparty elections. Development raises the direct costs of subversion (e.g., through vote-buying) while lowering the opportunity costs of leaving office. Yet, citizens of rich countries cannot simply push through institutional changes of any kind. Elections play a focal role, providing a coordination mechanism for citizens who wish to see the “will of the people” respected.

Regarding our contribution to the wider “modernization debate”, we note that different explanations – not only (versions of) modernization theory -- are consistent with the prediction that development affects democracy, but not with the more nuanced patterns that we find in the data. Our theoretical argument, which is consistent with the observed patterns, incorporates elements familiar to some classic formulations of modernization theory

(power resources of citizens increasing with development) but also elements that modernization theorists have typically overlooked (the role of focal points for citizen action against the regime). Further, our empirical findings point towards a potential reconciliation of the long-running debate between proponents and skeptics of the notion that development leads to democracy. Just as Przeworski and colleagues called attention to possible asymmetries between democratization and democratic consolidation we have called attention to another nuance; economic development affects some aspects of democracy more than others. While we don't expect this nuance to definitively settle the debate, it will hopefully contribute to a more fine-grained discussion. Rather than trying to prove that the “modernization hypothesis” is entirely true or entirely false, scholars might think about the varying strength of this relationship in different contexts.

## RICHER, MORE EQUAL, AND MORE DEMOCRATIC

Carles Boix, Princeton University and IPERG - University of Barcelona



To examine the relationship between development and democracy, I organize this note in three sections. In section 1, I argue that higher levels of development lead to democracy – in the medium to long run. In section 2, I show that development (proxied through income) has had a varying effect on democracy for at least two reasons: the dynamics of the authoritarian regime preceding a potential democratic breakdown; and the structure of the international system. In section 3, I consider the mechanisms through which development affects the type of political regime and I discuss emerging new venues of research in the field.

### 1. From Development to Democracy?

The existence of a tight correlation between economic development (generally proxied through per capita income) and democracy is a well-established fact. Between 1820 and 2016, whereas over 70% of the countries in the top quartile in the world distribution of per capita income held free and competitive elections, only 7% in the bottom quartile did. The yearly probability of authoritarian countries transiting to democracy increased (concavely) with income – from about 0% for a per capita income below \$1,000 per capita to around 5% for \$6,000 or more. In turn, no democracy with a per capita income above \$7,000 has ever collapsed.<sup>1</sup>

To examine whether we can interpret that correlation causally, column 1 in Table 1 regresses the level of democracy on logged income per capita (lagged ten years), employing

the universe of sovereign countries from 1820 (that is, a time when there were hardly any democracies) to 2016, and a standard pooled OLS regression with country fixed-effects (to control for country-specific traits) as well as year dummies (to capture any common shocks to all countries). The democracy variable is a dummy, following the dataset in Boix et al. (2011), updated through 2016. To maximize the number of observations, data on GDP per capita is based on Bourguignon and Morrisson (2002) and Heston, Summers, and Alden (2002). The coefficient of per capita income, which is statistically significant, implies that a 10% increase in per capita income leads to a long-run increase in the democracy index of 0.01 points. Doubling per capita income implies a shift of 0.1 points on a scale from 0 to 1. Given that income per capita has risen by more than ten times in developed countries in the last two centuries, development appears as a powerful correlate of the general process of democratization.

The possibility of simultaneous causation in the relationship between income and democracy calls for a direct Granger test between level of income and political regime with a two-lag model, which I report in column 2 and 3 in Table 1. In column 2, the dependent variable is the presence or absence of democracy. The lagged values of income significantly affect the level of democracy in the expected direction. In column 2, where the dependent variable is income per capita, the lagged values of democracy are not statistically significant (either individually or in a joint test). In previous work (Boix 2011), I have also used a set of exogenous measures of the variation in levels of development to instrument for the effect of income on democracy.<sup>2</sup>

In short, income matters for democracy. The finding is in line with most of the empirical literature: Lipset (1959), Dahl (1971), Przeworski and Limongi (1997), Huntington (1990), Barro (1999), Boix and Stokes (2003), Benhabib et al. (2011), Miller (2012), Treisman (2015). The claim made by Acemoglu et al. (2008) that income and democracy are unrelated appears to be the result of the empirical strategy they implement: a sample of about 25 countries (even though the number of sovereign countries was over 50 in 1900 and almost 200 by 2000); and data for 1875 to 2000 grouped in 25-year periods; all together yielding six observations per country and extremely limited within-country temporal variance.

### 2. Varying Effects of Development

According to recent research, the “democratizing” effect of income has the following characteristics: (1) it takes place in the medium run; (2) it is generally positive but decreasing in size; and (3) its strength has varied over time. (1) Although income has a positive effect on democratization in the medium run (as shown in column 1 in Table 1), it does not in the short run, that is, when income is lagged one to five years. In other words, economic development does not mechanically lead to the collapse of an authoritarian regime. Rather, a transition to democracy generally takes place when, in a relatively developed country, there is a sufficiently strong perturbation of the preexisting authoritarian political equilibrium (Treisman 2015). Such “perturbation” may be the result of a long-run endogenous

1) The data comes from Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013), recently updated to cover all sovereign countries from 1800 to 2015. The data can be accessed in: The new data is online at Dataverse: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/FJLMKT>.

2) The instruments are: Acemoglu et al. (2008)'s

trade-shares between countries; Spolaore and Wacziarg's genetic distance interacted with a historical trend calculated as “year – 1800”; the ratio of each country's income to the world median income in 1850 multiplied by time trend (calculated as “year – 1800”; and the ratio of each country's income to the world median income in 1850 multiplied by the world median income each year. The instruments, which arguably meet the exclusion restriction, deliver statistically significant positive coefficients.

process – in the sense of the kind of long-run economic and social change experienced by several European countries in the 19th century that eventually incentivized politicians to expand the franchise. But it may also be the consequence of a shock (to the authoritarian system) produced by the violent removal of an incumbent dictator (Miller 2012) or, more generally, by any instance that makes the latter leave office (Treisman 2015). In other words, the specific, immediate causes of democratic transitions are diverse, ranging from military defeats and foreign occupations to democratic transitions engineered by authoritarian elites. In fact, according to Treisman (2017), about two-thirds of all democratic transitions may be attributed to mistakes made by overconfident incumbents. A central point, however, is that, once a window of political opportunity opens up, income matters.

(2) Column 4 in Table 1 examines the varying effects of income at different stages of development through a spline function – below \$3,000, between \$3,000 and \$6,000, between \$6,000 and \$10,000 and above \$10,000. Income has hardly any effect on democracy for low levels of development. For middle levels of development, per capita income accelerates that process (any dollar, in log terms, over \$3,000 adds 0.016 points to the level of democracy). However, the effects of per capita income wear off as development progresses beyond a certain threshold (above \$6,000 the coefficient drops to 0.011). Over \$10,000, the coefficient becomes slightly negative, implying that the impact of development on democracy flattens out. In short, democratization happens at a certain point in the process of economic growth. Once it does, any further growth does not translate into ‘more’ democracy, mainly because the country is already fully democratic.<sup>3</sup> From a historical point of view,

the nonlinear effect of income on democracy may be interpreted as follows: Up until the first half of the twentieth century, as (mainly European) countries became more developed, they transitioned to democracy (with a few reversions to authoritarianism). Once almost all wealthy countries became fully democratic after 1945, their continuous growth simply contributed to the consolidation of democratic rule – but it did not result in any change in the polity index. In turn, a substantial number of high-income countries that had not moved to democracy before 1950 relied on natural resources (mainly, oil and gas) hardly conducive to political liberalization (Boix 2003, Boix and Stokes 2003).

(3) As pointed out in Huntington (1990), the overall spread of democracy has varied quite dramatically over time, peaking during the first years of the interwar period, immediately after World War Two, and following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The nature of the international system appears to matter considerably for those shifts and the fluctuating effect of income. The effect of the international system may be a function of the underlying distribution of material and military capabilities. Historically, great powers have interfered in the domestic politics of their allies (and, if possible, of the allies of their enemies) as a further means of advancing their interests in the international arena. The Peloponnesian War was ignited by the disputes of opposing factions in Corcyra and the involvement of Athens and Sparta. After the Napoleonic wars, the members of the Holy Alliance suffocated any liberal revolution across Europe. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States maneuvered, either directly or by proxy, to secure friendly administrations across the world (Boschini and Olofsgård 2007; Muller 1985; Schmidt 2006; Westad 2005). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Europeans and Americans supported democratization

movements in several regions of the world (Dunning 2004; Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Levitsky and Way 2005; Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998; Whitehead 1986). Boix (2011) and Gunitsky (2014, 2017) have shown that shifts toward autocratic global actors have historically limited the spread of democracy through coercion and influence, and vice versa. International factors may also affect domestic politics through ideational channels. Brinks and Coppedge (2006), Gleditsch and Ward (2006) and Leeson and Dean (2009) examine how the diffusion of democratic institutions in a region reinforces democratic actors in transitioning countries in the area, although the causal mechanisms remain partly unclear (Torfason and Ingram 2010). Miller (2016) claims that the relative economic success of democracy (*vis-à-vis* autocracy) increases the incentives of domestic elites to embrace democratic institutions.

Table 1, Column 5 reports the effect on democracy of being allied with and/or occupied by the Soviet Union, and of being allied with the United States (in general and in the Cold War period). A Soviet occupation reduces the likelihood of democracy by 25.3% on average. An alliance with the United States also reduced the chances of being democratic between 1945 and 1990 – the United States supported anticommunist dictatorships – but not later on.

### 3. Mechanisms

Per capita income has been widely used as a proxy for development: its wide coverage and intrinsic comparability makes it particularly convenient to use in our empirical studies on democratization. Yet, how do a higher income and more development affect the chances of transitioning to and sustaining democracy? Broadly speaking, existing explanations fall in two camps. On the one hand, part of the literature argues, first, that stable democracies require a population of democrats, that is, individuals normatively committed to the idea of the democracy, and, second, that their

3) The same pattern take place when we employ a continuous index of democracy such as Polity IV.

See, for example, Boix (2011).

## Boix

commitment grew through the expansion of the idea of toleration as development led to a process of secularization and/or higher levels of education. Although such views were more extended in the first waves of democratization studies (cf. Almond and Verba 1960; Inglehart 1990; Huntington 1990), they are still influential today (Geddes 2007; Welzel and Inglehart 2007).

On the other hand, a growing literature explains democratic stability as a political equilibrium in which political actors who may not be necessarily committed to democracy from a normative standpoint accept fair and competitive elections because the expected policy losses from shifting to democracy (and losing control over government with some nonnegative probability) are smaller than the repression costs incurred to maintain a dictatorship (Dahl 1971; Przeworski 1991; Weingast 1997; Boix 2003; Ansell and Samuels 2014). Development may foster democracy through several channels. First, following the standard assumption that the marginal utility of additional income declines with income, the disutility of transferring income to low-income voters will fall with income: at higher levels of development, high-income voters may be more willing to accept democracy, especially if the costs of repression are fixed. Second, the industrial revolution was based on technological change that, particularly in the long run, made semi-skilled and skilled labor increasingly complementary to capital, fostering the expansion of human capital, the growth of low and median salaries, and more equal wage and income distributions (Davies and Shorrocks 2000; Morrisson 2000) – all of which dampened political conflict (Boix 2015). Finally, development is correlated with a shift in the nature of wealth—from fixed assets (land) to mobile capital. As the latter increases, taxes decline, because capital holders can credibly threaten exit. As a result, the costs of democracy become sufficiently low to convince wealthier voters to accept democratic institutions. By contrast, in

unequal economies (with immobile assets), the threat of high taxes under democracy compels high-income individuals to support authoritarian regimes.

Measuring the underlying mechanisms triggered by development is harder than using per capita income. However, the measures we have seen to give plausibility to the explanation presented so far. Figure 1 shows the distribution of democratic (marked with a black letter “D”) and non-democratic country-years (marked with a gray letter “a”) as a function of a measure of percentage of family farms (proxying for equality) and industrialization and urbanization (proxying for asset mobility and/or a growing demand for skilled labor). Democratic countries are clustered in equal and technologically advanced regions of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Looking ahead, the literature needs to go further in untangling the channels through which development and democracy are related. Determining them has important empirical and theoretical implications. Take the following example. As a result of the rise of populism in the West, there has been a growing debate on the likelihood that democratic institutions may erode or even collapse in advanced economies (see, for example, Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). As shown in Treisman (2018), employing the existing empirical models of democratic breakdown based on income, such predictions are unfounded: for example, the probability of the United States turning authoritarian today is less than one in 1,000. However, and again as an example, if the relationship between rising incomes and lower inequality was circumscribed to the production technologies of 20th-century capitalism, but were not to apply to the technological revolution generated by new information and communication technologies (Boix, forthcoming), then further growth may not result in more stable democracy.

4) Democratic country-years are those scoring 1 in the Boix et al. (2013) dataset.

A promising venue of research (to complement both formal models, based on very stylized assumptions about the goals and beliefs of its agents, and cross-country comparisons) may consist in developing more refined studies of the actual preferences of political elites and citizens toward democratic institutions. A few (historical) studies have tried to identify the attitudes and strategies of elites toward regime transitions, mainly in the context of Britain’s democratization (cf. Almond 1973, Aidt and Jensen 2014, Bronner 2014). Nonetheless, because they explore one particular moment in time or an isolated episode of reform, they cannot relate their specific case to the overall democratic progression of Britain and its relationship to social and economic variables. Moreover, they tend to misinterpret the motivations of politicians at the time of the franchise, often because they do not compare their strategies during processes of reform with moments when there was no political change (see Treisman 2017; also, Basu et al. 2018).

Two recent lines of research offer promising ways to assess the underlying structure of interests towards democracy. On the one hand, Svobik (2017) has designed a battery of survey experiments to evaluate the true attachment of non-elites to democratization.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Fresh (2018) has matched a panel of British parliamentarians with economic variables over a period of two centuries to understand the impact of industrialization on elite turnover and the presence of political dynasties. Basu et al. (2018) use roll call votes on franchise reform in the House of Commons between 1826 and 1918 and apply Bateman et al.’s (2017) procedure to estimate the preferences of MPs regarding the size of the franchise – allowing them to describe the divergent evolution of democratization preferences across parties, the correlation of those

5) See Treisman (2018) on why straightforward surveys may be of little value to evaluate those attachments.

preferences with the characteristics of each MP constituencies, and the role of party leaders as agenda setters in the policy-making process that resulted in different electoral reforms.

Sixty years after Lipset's (1959) seminal article, a combination of more data, better statistical methods and empirical research designs, and more sophisticated theoretical models have allowed us to make progress on the problem of political modernization. A higher level of development has both fostered the transition to mass democracy (especially in the industrial core) and stabilized democratic regimes (across the world). That effect has often been conditional on preexisting local institutions and on the structure of the international system. Looking forward, we still have much work to do. Democratization scholars still need to dig deeper into the specific incentives of political actors and into the mechanisms that connect development and democracy.

## References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James E. Robinson and Pierre Yared. 2008. "Income and Democracy," *American Economic Review* 98(June): 808-42.
- Aidt, Toke S., and Peter S. Jensen. 2014. "Workers of the world, unite! Franchise extensions and the threat of revolution in Europe, 1820–1938." *European Economic Review* 72: 52-7.
- Almond 1973. In Almond, Gabriel Abraham, Scott C. Flanagan, and Robert John Mundt, eds. *Crisis, choice, and change: historical studies of political development*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1973.
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1960. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ansell, Ben W., and David J. Samuels. 2014. *Inequality and Democratization*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barro, Robert J. 1999. "Determinants of Democracy," *Journal of Political Economy* 107(6): 158-83.
- Basu, Chitralkha, Carles Boix and Paulo Serôdio 2018. "Democratizing from Within: British Elites and the Expansion of the Franchise," IPERG, Unpublished manuscript.
- Bateman, David A., Joshua D. Clinton, and John S. Lapinski. 2017. "A House Divided? Roll Calls, Polarization, and Policy Differences in the US House, 1877–2011." *American Journal of Political Science* 61.3: 698-714.
- Benhabib, Jess, Alejandro Corvalan, and Mark M. Spiegel. 2011. *Reestablishing the income-democracy nexus*. No. w16832. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Boix, Carles. 2011. "Democracy, development, and the international system." *American Political Science Review* 105 (4): 809-828.
- Boix, Carles. 2015. *Political order and inequality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boix, Carles. 2019. *Democratic Capitalism at a Crossroads?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Forthcoming.
- Boix, Carles and S. Stokes. 2003. "Endogenous Democratization." *World Politics* 55 (July): 517-49.
- Boschini, Anne and Anders Olofsgård. 2007. "Foreign Aid: An Instrument for Fighting Communism?," *Journal of Development Economics* 43 (May): 622-48.
- Bourguignon, François and Morrisson, Christian. 2002. "Inequality Among World Citizens: 1820-1992," *American Economic Review* 92: 727–744.
- Brinks, Daniel, and Michael Coppedge. 2006. "Diffusion is no illusion: Neighbor emulation in the third wave of democracy." *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (4): 463-489.
- Bronner 2014. "Property and Power: MPs' Assets and Support for Democratization in the 1867 UK Reform Act." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 39 (4): 439-466.
- Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Davies, James B. and Anthony F. Shorrocks. 2000. "The Distribution of Wealth." In *Handbook of Income Distribution*. Elsevier. Chapter 11, pp. 605-675.
- Dunning, Thad. 2004. "Conditioning the Effects of Aid: Cold War Politics, Donor Credibility, and Democracy in Africa." *International Organization* 58(2): 409-23.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2007. "What Causes Democratization?," in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, ed. 2007. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 14.
- Gleditsch, Kristen S., and Michael D. Ward. 2006. "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization." *International Organization* 60(4): 911-33.
- Gunitsky, Seva. 2014. "From shocks to waves: Hegemonic transitions and democratization in the twentieth century." *International Organization* 68 (3): 561-597.
- Gunitsky, Seva. 2017. *Aftershocks: great powers and domestic reforms in the Twentieth century*. Princeton University Press.
- Heston, Alan, Robert Summers and Bettina Aten, Penn World Table Version 6.1, Center for International Comparisons at the University of Pennsylvania (CICUP), October 2002.

## Boix

- Huntington, Samuel P. 1990. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald. *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Leeson, Peter T., and Andrea M. Dean. 2009. "The democratic domino theory: an empirical investigation." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (3): 533-551.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. 2005. "International Linkage and Democratization." *Journal of Democracy* 16(3): 20-34.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. Crown.
- Lipset, Seymour M. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53: 69-105.
- Lucas, Robert J. "Some Macroeconomics for the 21st Century," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14 (Winter): 159-168.
- Meernik, James, Eric L. Krueger and Steven C. Poe. 1998. "Testing Models of U.S. Foreign Policy: Foreign Aid during and after the Cold War," *The Journal of Politics* 60 (February): 63-85.
- Miller, Michael K. 2012. "Economic development, violent leader removal, and democratization." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (4): 1002-1020.
- Miller, Michael K. 2016. "Democracy by Example? Why Democracy Spreads When the World's Democracies Prosper." *Comparative Politics* 49 (1): 83-116.
- Morrison, Christian. 2000. "Historical Perspectives on Income Distribution: The Case of Europe." In *Handbook of Income Distribution*. Elsevier. Chapter 4, pp. 217-260.
- Muller, Edward. 1985. "Dependent Economic Development, Aid Dependence on the United States, and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World," *International Studies Quarterly* 29 (4): 445-69.
- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49 (January).
- Schmidt, David. 2006. *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965-1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spolaore, Enrico, and Romain Wacziarg. 2009. "The Diffusion of Development." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 104 (2): 469-529.
- Svolik, Milan W. 2017. "When Polarization Trumps Civic Virtue: Partisan Conflict and the Subversion of Democracy by Incumbents." *Unpublished Manuscript, Yale University*.
- Torfason, Magnus Thor, and Paul Ingram. 2010. "The global rise of democracy: A network account." *American Sociological Review* 75 (3): 355-377.
- Treisman, Daniel. 2015. "Income, democracy, and leader turnover." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (4): 927-942.
- Treisman, Daniel. 2017. "Democracy by Mistake." NBER Working Paper No. w23944.
- Treisman, Daniel. 2018. "Is Democracy in Danger? A Quick Look at the Data." UCLA. Unpublished manuscript.
- Weingast, Barry R. 1997. "The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law." *American Political Science Review* 91 (2): 245-263.
- Welzel, Christian and Ronald Inglehart. 2007. "Mass Beliefs and Democratic Institutions." In Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, ed. 2007. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 13.
- Westad, Odd Arne. 2005. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitehead, Laurence. 1986. "International Aspects on Democratization." In Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Lawrence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

**Table 1. Testing Causality Between Income and Democracy, 1820-2016.**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Granger Test .....				
DV:	Democracy	Democracy	Log Y cap	Democracy	Democracy
Democracy t-10	0.378*** (0.045)	0.334*** (0.048)	0.012 (0.022)	0.352*** (0.044)	0.350*** (0.045)
Democracy t-20		0.063 (0.044)	-0.022 (0.020)		
Log GDP Per capita t-10	0.070** (0.034)	0.085** (0.042)	0.875*** (0.033)	0.002^^^ (0.037)	0.088*** (0.032)
Long GDP Per capita t-20		-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)		
Long GDP per capita t-10 (Over \$3000)				0.016** (0.004)	
Long GDP per capita t-10 (Over \$6000)				0.011** (0.005)	
Long GDP per capita t-10 (Over \$10,000)				-0.002^^^ (0.004)	
Allied to Russia/Soviet Union					-0.098 (0.067)
Allied to USA					0.239*** (0.060)
Allied to USA during Cold War					-0.224*** (0.074)
Soviet Occupation					-0.253*** (0.058)
Observations	1,139	1,144	1,143	1,319	1,319
Countries	168	143	142	168	168
R-squared	0,53	0,54	0,96	0,53	0,55
F-Significance Test (p-value) of All Income Variables				7.22 (0.00)	

Fixed-effects OLS regressions with country dummies, time dummies and robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. The dependent variable is the Polity index of democracy, normalized from 0 to 1.

\*\*\* p<0.01; \*\* p<0.05; \*p<0.10; standard errors in parentheses

In joint test with all per capita income variable: ^^p>0.01, ^^p>0.05.

## MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRACY: AN EMANCIPATORY NEXUS

Christian Welzel, University of Lüneburg



### What is Modernization?

Lipset's proposition that modernization operates in favor of democracy, formulated in 1959<sup>1</sup>, is the most researched claim in political science. Focusing on hard indicators, modernization is a complex bundle of closely intertwined transformations, including accelerating technological progress, growing labor productivity, rising living standards, fading child and maternal mortalities, increasing life expectancies and ageing populations, decreasing female fertility and expanding education, progressing urbanization and occupational diversification, growing middle classes and a transition towards nuclear families and alternative forms of cohabitation, as well as expanding communication, information, mediatization and—since recently—digitalization. Contrary to widespread cultural pessimism, growing parts of the world have been changing and continue to change in this progressive direction at an accelerating speed since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

With its multiple manifestations, modernization is a pervasive process that transforms all areas of life in a most profound manner—and mostly to the better of ordinary people's well-being, by diminishing pestilence, poverty, illiteracy, social immobility, local isolation and other existential constraints. Indeed, modernization transforms the nature of human life from a source of pressures that dictate one's daily actions into a source of opportunities that allow one to pursue a purpose of one's choice. Where it proceeds, modernization is an

1) S.M. Lipset. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 53: 69-105.

2) H. Roesling, A. Roesling Ronnlund and O. Roesling. 2018. *Factfulness*. New York: Flatiron Books. S. Pinker. 2018. *Enlightenment Now*. New York: Viking.

inherently emancipatory process that brings a massive gain in human agency.<sup>3</sup>

Based on this premise, my key lesson for this forum can be summarized like this: the modernization-induced gain in human agency gives rise to emancipative values, which constitute a major selective force in global regime evolution because these values turn people's regime preferences in favor of liberal democracy. For this reason, democratic backsliding and autocratization remain limited to countries where weak emancipative values allow strong leader cults to flourish.

### The Modernization-Democracy Nexus

The nexus between modernization and democratization began to surface shortly before the colonial era when Europe's level of state organization caught up with the older Eurasian civilizations.<sup>4</sup> To be simple, state formation followed two distinct trajectories in Europe. Eastern and Southern Europe and its overseas colonies in Latin America and the Caribbean followed a top-down, "coercion-intensive" course of state building. In stark contrast, the "cool water" regions of Northwestern Europe and its colonial offshoots in North America, Australia and New Zealand followed a bottom-up, "capital-intensive" path of creating state capacities.<sup>5</sup>

The "capital-intensive" type of state formation led to "representative government," which is historically speaking

3) C. Welzel. 2013. *Freedom Rising*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

4) B. Moore. 1966. *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. London: Beacon Press.

5) The distinction between "coercion-" and "capital-intensive" modes of state formation has been introduced by C. Tilly. 1997. *Coercion, States and Capital*. New York: Cambridge University Press

a singularity of Northwestern Europe's cool water regions and their overseas settler colonies. Representative government stays in sharp contrast to the autocratic forms of government that established themselves everywhere else in the world where organized statehood emerged. Representative government does not (yet) mean democracy because its incipient form still excluded sizeable population segments from representation, most notably women. Representative government means that the ruler's executive authority is checked by the legislative competences of an elected assembly in which the social groups with bargaining power are represented. This arrangement establishes a social contract that became known under the principle "no taxation without representation." An inherent advantage of the representative principle is its evolutionary potential: whenever a new group gained bargaining power, the franchise has been extended to include this group—until universal suffrage has established modern democracy 125 years ago (in 1893 New Zealand is the first nation to grant universal male and female suffrage).<sup>6</sup>

### The "Cool Water" Origin of the Nexus

The Cool Water Theory<sup>7</sup> offers an explanation of why the emergence of representative government and its subsequent evolution into democracy happened first in cool water regions (see Figure 1). The cool water condition is a geo-climatic configuration in the vicinity of coasts that combines temporarily frosty winters and relatively cool summers with continuous rainfall throughout all seasons. Cool water regions allowed

6) S. Finer. 1999. *The History of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. D.S. Landes. 1998. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. New York: W.W. Norton

7) C. Welzel. 2014. "Evolution, Empowerment and Emancipation." *World Development* 64: 33-51.

## Welzel

hunter-gatherers to sustain a foraging lifestyle without depleting their natural resources. As a consequence, people in the world's cool water regions had no need to adopt agriculture and only did so when it was enforced from outside—when the wave of diffusing agriculture reached them. Since agriculture is the basis of state formation, the late adoption of agriculture explains why Eurasia's cool water regions began to build states much later than the pristine civilizations in the Mediterranean, Middle East, India and China. The cool water regions outside Eurasia, which became attractors of European migration, have been so isolated from major civilizations that the native people in these regions still cultivated a foraging lifestyle upon contact with Europeans.

Once the cultures in the cool water region of Northwestern Europe began to build organized statehood, they did it in an entirely different manner, which explains the emancipatory dynamic of Western civilization. The reason is a trivial but fundamental truth: a most vital resource, fresh water, and its derivative resources—like land of agrarian value—are in no way locally concentrated but highly diffuse under cool water conditions. This diffuseness of existential resources supported local autonomies and multi-polar power-sharing arrangements. Accordingly, larger social entities—from local assemblies to business corporations to civic associations—evolved due to the principles of consensual self-organization. Entities practiced in self-organization know how to coordinate their activities, which means that they can mobilize effective resistance against over-ambitious rulers who try to tax incomes without the earners' consent. For this reason, rulers could build the backbones of a modern state—a civil service and standing armies—only in return for concessions that eventually

led to representative government. Once established, the principle of representation encouraged extant excluded groups to struggle for their inclusion, most visible in the stepwise progression of the enfranchisement. Struggling for emancipation, thus, become a formative motive of Western civilization. These struggles experienced recurrent setbacks, and yet they defined the pulse of Western civilization.<sup>8</sup> The West's emancipatory dynamic released the grassroots energies that fueled the philosophical, scientific, technological and organizational breakthroughs from which the Industrial Revolution took off—the penultimate Big Bang for what we understand as modernization today.<sup>9</sup>

### Reasons for the Nexus

Throughout human history, mass living standards were precarious and life expectancies short in all civilizations of the world. In this regard, the Industrial Revolution meant indeed a most profound sea change.<sup>10</sup> Growing prosperity gives the masses more weight as consumers, taxpayers and participants in economic

and public life. Universal suffrage is a logical compensation for the greater involvement of the masses. Equipped with material resources, the masses also possess more effective means to join forces, raise their voice and mobilize pressures against the elites. Hence, modernization raises the costs of oppressing mass preferences to a level at which the elites are no longer willing to afford these costs. Moreover, modernization moves the median income closer to the elites' income, for which reason the risk that the masses instrumentalize majority rule to expropriate the elites shrinks. So in the moment in which the risks of conceding democracy to the masses fall below the costs of repression, the elites agree to abandon autocracy and to establish democracy.<sup>11</sup>

Regime stability and change depend on mass and elite actions that are driven by corresponding regime preferences. Because of that, assumptions about the factors that shape preferences in favor of autocracy or democracy must be at the center of any credible regime theory. Such a theory should be informed by key psychological concepts, because psychology is the science of preference formation. So what is the expected effect of modernization on regime preferences from a psychological point of view? An obvious starting point is Maslow's hierarchy of human needs because it addresses precisely the existential principle under which modernization most profoundly changes societal life.<sup>12</sup>

8) Two theoretical qualifications are due at this point. To begin with, it might seem that in the debate between institutionalists and materialists, the Cool Water theory takes sides for the institutionalists by emphasizing that representative institutions preceded the Industrial Revolution. However, the Cool Water theory also emphasizes that representative institutions emerged from a diffuse distribution of existential resources, which is a materialistic argument in the end. Second, the Cool Water theory might seem deterministic. But it also stresses that the grip of the cool water condition on developmental outcomes is continuously loosening since the 1980s—in parallel with the growth of global communications, which facilitates cross-cultural policy learning, thus giving societies choices that the confines of geography were denying them before.

9) E. Jones. 1987. *The European Miracle*. New York: Cambridge University Press. M. Mann. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

10) O. Galor. 2012. *Unified Growth Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

11) This argument is most often attributed to Acemoglu and Robinson (cited below) but the truth is that it originates in C. Boix. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

12) A. Maslow. 1954. *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper & Row. J.C. Davies. 1994. "Maslow and a Theory of Political Development." *Political Psychology* 389-420: 12. M.R. Hagerty. 1999. "Testing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

## Welzel

Simply put, rising levels of material prosperity satisfy people's primary existential needs. For this reason, the higher-ordered need for self-realization, which requires freedom of choice, gains importance. Naturally, the implicit shift in priorities from security to liberty should strengthen people's appreciation of the freedoms that define democracy. Hence, from a psychological point of view, mass preferences for democracy are not a constant but a variable shaped by existential conditions. Modernization changes these conditions such that mass preferences for democracy become stronger at the same time as the masses possess more powerful means to voice their preferences.

Another branch of modernization theory—influenced by Lerner—emphasizes the cognitive rather than the material aspects of modernization.<sup>13</sup> The point of departure is the information flows that grow in density, diversity and extension through progressing communication technology and expanding education. Richer information flows “enlighten” people by expanding their knowledge, elevating their awareness and increasing their capacity to think for themselves. Consequently, people are no longer in need of the doctrinal guidance of authorities.<sup>14</sup> This gain in mental agency naturally awakens in people an emancipatory drive towards freedom from external domination in what to believe and to do. In this “self-authoring” process, people adopt an “elite-challenging” mindset that questions any form of

arrogated authority.<sup>15</sup> These mentality shifts pre-dispose people to value the freedoms that define democracy—for these freedoms' own sake. Since we are dealing here with natural psychological adaptations to people's increased mental agency, it needs no political program, no deliberate effort and no centrally coordinated strategy to awaken people's emancipatory drives, once expanding information, communication and education begin to stimulate people's mental capacities.

### Evidence for the Nexus

Empirical tests of the modernization thesis revolved around the relationship between income and democracy. Starting out from simple correlational analyses, more sophisticated regression models have developed over time. Increasingly, they accounted for the temporal dimension to uncover the causal direction in the cross-sectional relationship between the populations' per capita incomes and the respective countries' levels of democracy. Over the years, the debate has taken several turns. An important landmark was Przeworski and Limongi's claim that modernization is conducive to the stability of democracy once it is in place but not to its emergence where it does not yet exist.<sup>16</sup> To support this claim, the authors showed that the number of transitions from autocracy to democracy declined, instead of increasing, with growing per capita incomes. With simple means, Inglehart and Welzel have questioned this conclusion, showing that the number of transitions into the

opposite direction, from democracy to autocracy, also declines with growing per capita incomes—and even more sharply so.<sup>17</sup> This pattern reflects the fact that regime transitions in either direction are more frequent in poorer than in richer countries, which is indicative of decreasing rates of regime oscillation as societies get more affluent. To control for a given income group's specific oscillation rate, one needs to calculate the ratio of transitions into the democratic to those in the autocratic direction. Doing so shows that this ratio shifts monotonically in favor of transitions into the democratic direction as income levels rise. Thus, Przeworski and Limongi's claim that per capita incomes do not favor the emergence of democracy is flawed. Using time-pooled cross-sectional regressions, Boix and Stokes came to the same conclusion.<sup>18</sup>

The next turn in the debate came with Acemoglu and his co-authors' finding that the relationship between democracy and income vanishes in regressions using country-fixed effects.<sup>19</sup> The authors take this result to indicate that the income-democracy association is not causal and that instead time-invariant country-specific characteristics account for the relationship.<sup>20</sup> Acemoglu

with National Quality of Life across Time.” *Social Indicators Research* 46: 249-271.

13) D. Lerner. 1958. *The Passing of Traditional Society*. New York: Free Press.

14) P. Norris and R. Inglehart. 2009. *Cosmopolitan Communications*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

15) P. Kegan. 1983. *The Evolving Self*. Boston: Harvard University Press. R.M. Ryan and E.L.

Deci. 2000. “Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-Being.” *American Psychologist* 55: 68-78.

16) A. Przeworski and F. Limongi. 1997. “Modernization: Theory and Facts.” *World Politics* 49: 155-183.

17) R. Inglehart and C. Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

18) C. Boix and S. Stokes. 2003. “Endogenous Democratization.” *World Politics* 55: 517-549.

19) D. Acemoglu, S. Johnson, J.A. Robinson and P. Yared. 2009. “Income and Democracy.” *American Economic Review* 98: 808-842.

20) These types of analyses eliminate time-invariant country-specific factors, instead of specifying them. This elimination means a substantial restriction in perspective because it blinds out the plausible possibility that differences in certain initial conditions kicked-off countries to embark on enduringly distinct trajectories. By blinding out trajectorial differences you to decide to ignore the key shaping feature of

## Welzel

et al. attribute these time-invariant characteristics to past institutional choices that set countries on vicious- vs.-virtuous trajectories. Casting further doubts on the income-democracy association, Cervelatti et al. claim that the impact of income on democracy is divergent: positive among never colonized countries but negative among former colonies.<sup>21</sup>

These claims triggered another series of studies, most exemplary perhaps an analysis by Benhabib et al.<sup>22</sup> These studies show that the results of Acemoglu as well as those of Cervelatti and their co-authors turn into their opposite under more advanced model specifications.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the income-democracy relationship remains fully intact when scholars use the most conclusive analytical techniques.

In addition, Murtin and Wacziarg examined which aspect of modernization is most influential, distinguishing the material (income) and cognitive aspect (education).<sup>24</sup> The authors find that

---

development as such: path dependency. At any rate, the cool water condition is a decent candidate for the unspecified, time-invariant country-specific factor, which could be tested in a “mixed between-within” model—an open research gap.

21) M. Cervelatti, F. Jung, U. Sunde and T. Vischer. 2014. “Income and Democracy: Comment.” *American Economic Review* 104: 707-719.

22) J. Benhabib, A. Corvalan and M. M. Spiegel. 2013. “Income and Democracy.” *Economics Letters* 118: 489-492. R.J. Barro. 2015. “Convergence and Modernization.” *Economic Journal* 125: 911–942.

23) Applying panel regressions to country-by-year data, findings that disconfirm the income-democracy association rely on the Arellano-Bond “difference” GMM (generalized method of moments) estimator. Confirmatory findings, by contrast, use the Blundell-Bond “system” GMM estimator. The current consensus is that the system estimator is more appropriate than the difference estimator for highly persistent time series—a condition that applies to both income and democracy.

24) F. Murtin and R. Wacziarg. 2014. “The

(a) both income and education show a positive effect on subsequent democracy; (b) that the effect of education is stronger than that of income; and (c) that there is no reverse effect of democracy on either income or education. The latest word in this debate is Knutsen et al.’s analyses of the new democracy indices by V-Dem.<sup>25</sup> Their findings establish that per capita incomes strengthen especially the electoral component of democracy, whereas there is little evidence for a reverse flow of causation, that is, from electoral democracy to per capita incomes.

Unfortunately, these results don’t tell us whether the stronger role of education compared to income also applies to the V-Dem measures of democracy. Apart from this knowledge gap, the prevailing evidence establishes beyond reasonable doubt that modernization does operate in favor of democracy, although some indications suggests that income inequality weakens the positive impact of income levels on democracy.<sup>26</sup>

The V-Dem measures of democracy have conceptual and methodological advantages over the traditional measures by Polity and Freedom House. These advantages pay off empirically because the V-Dem data show a reality that the traditional measures disguise. With the traditional measures, the old Western democracies have defined the top standard of democracy from day one and never changed. Then, through

---

Democratic Transition.” *Journal of Economic Growth* 19:141-181.

25) C.H. Knutsen, J. Gerring, S.-E. Skaaning, J. Teorell, M. Maguire, M. Coppedge and S. Lindberg. 2018. “Economic Development and Democracy.” *European Journal of Political Research* 57: 1-23.

26) H.J. Faria and M. Montesinos-Yufa. 2018. “Economic and Political Development are Positively Correlated.” *Research Gate Working Paper* (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325544099>).

consecutive waves of democratization, region after region caught up with the Western standard and the world as a whole became more democratic. With the V-Dem data, the world as a whole also became more democratic but because of a different dynamic: although most non-Western cultures became more democratic over time, none of them closed the gap to the Western standard, which kept improving continuously—thus, holding the frontier position in democratic development, despite other regions’ democratic improvement. Hence, the global differences in democracy along cultural fault lines largely diminished with the traditional measures, whereas these differences are as significant today as they were in the past with the V-Dem measures.<sup>27</sup>

### The Emancipatory Nature of the Nexus

These insights fall in line with the Theory of Emancipation according to which modernization and democracy are sequentially related contributions to human emancipation (understood as the liberation of people’s lives from external domination).<sup>28</sup> Democracy is the institutional contribution to human emancipation in that it entitles people to utilize freedoms—freedoms in guiding their personal lives and in participating in politics. Bringing this emancipatory purpose to fruition requires that most people are able and eager to utilize freedoms, which is a matter of resources and values. Hence, democracy places two major demands on the populations among which it is practiced: (1) action resources—including material means, cognitive capacities and connective opportunities—need to be widely dispersed throughout large population

---

27) C. Welzel. 2018. “A Tale of Culture-Bound Regime Evolution.” *V-Dem Users Paper* 11: 1-30.

28) Welzel. 2013. op. cit.

## Welzel

segments because only these resources enable people to utilize freedoms; (2) likewise, emancipative values need to be firmly encultured among large population segments because only these values motivate people to utilize freedoms.<sup>29</sup>

The relevance of modernization lies in the fact that it strengthens precisely these two pre-requisites of democracy (see Figure 2). For action resources, this is self-evident because they define modernization. For emancipative values, the evidence is less well known but data from the World Values Surveys demonstrate in striking clarity that emancipative values rise in response to spreading action resources (see Figure 3).<sup>30</sup> And this regularity is by no means limited to Western cultures but is observable wherever action resources grow, including such apparent strongholds of autocracy as Singapore and China—in spite of “Asian values.”<sup>31</sup>

29) Welzel. 2013. op. cit.

30) To measure emancipative values, Welzel (2013, op. cit.) combines twelve items from the World Values Surveys ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)). The items cover four themes, including child autonomy, gender equality, sexual self-determination and popular voice. In “Value Orientations from the World Values Survey” (*Comparative Political Studies* 49: 1039-1067), J. Aléman and D. Woods (2015) criticize the measure of emancipative values because the cohesion among its items varies between countries. In “Misconceptions of Measurement Equivalence” (*Comparative Political Studies* 49: 1068-1094), C. Welzel and R. Inglehart (2016) refute this critique by demonstrating that variability in the within-country cohesion of emancipative values has no effect on these values’ functioning across countries. In “The Index of Emancipative Values” (*American Political Science Review* 113: 1-14), B. Sokolov (2018) renews the previous criticism but fails to disprove the key point in favor of these values: that the functioning of emancipative values across countries is unaffected by variable inter-item cohesions within countries.

31) C. Welzel. 2011. “The Asian Values Thesis Revisited.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 12: 1-31

### The Key Psychological Force in Regime Evolution: Emancipative Values

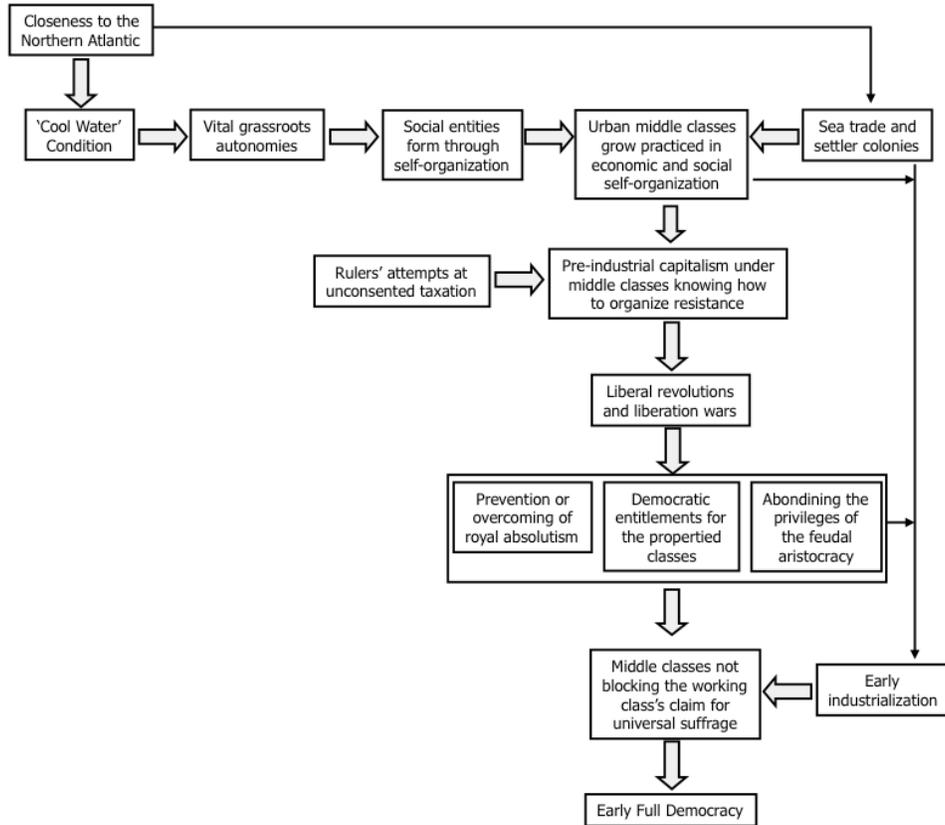
Equally important, emancipative values alter the meaning of support for democracy in ways that work in favor of the Western liberal model of democracy. Public opinion surveys show surprisingly high rates of lip service to democracy in all corners of the globe, including non-Western countries.<sup>32</sup> But public lip service to democracy masks drastic differences in how people understand and view democracy. In many countries, people misunderstand democracy as its exact opposite, that is, some form of authoritarian rule.<sup>33</sup> People in these countries also rate their regimes uncritically as highly democratic when in fact they have huge democratic deficits or lack democracy altogether.<sup>34</sup> In these cases, the meaning of support for democracy turns into its own contradiction, indicating support for autocracy instead. Emancipative values constitute the alternating psychological force here: where these values remain weak, authoritarian misunderstandings of democracy and uncritical views of a country’s democratic qualities are widespread; when emancipative values grow stronger, understandings of democracy turn towards the liberal Western understanding and evaluations of democratic qualities become more critical (see Figure 4). In summary, in giving rise to emancipative values, modernization provides the key selective force in regime evolution, turning people’s preferences in favor of liberal democracy Western style. Consequently, the prospects of democracy are bleak where emancipative values remain weak.

32) R. Maseland and A. van Hoorn. 2012. “Why Muslims Like Democracy Yet Have So Little of It.” *Public Choice* 147: 481-497.

33) C. Welzel and H. Kirsch. 2017. “Democracy Misunderstood.” *World Values Research* 9: 1-29.

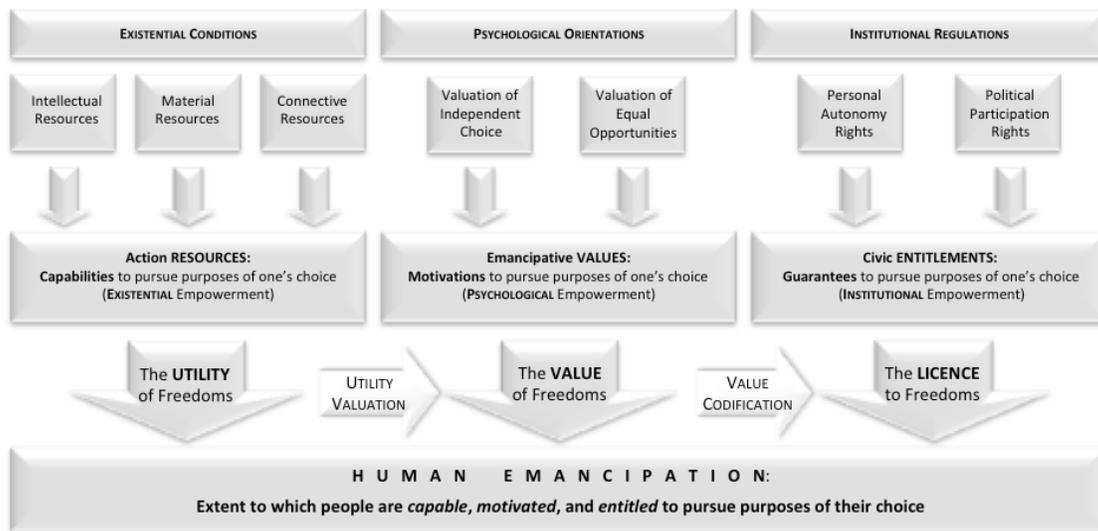
34) S. Kruse, M. Ravlik and C. Welzel. 2017. “The Legitimacy Puzzle.” *World Values Research* 9: 1-30.

Figure 1: The Cool Water Origin of Western Civilization’s Emancipatory Dynamic



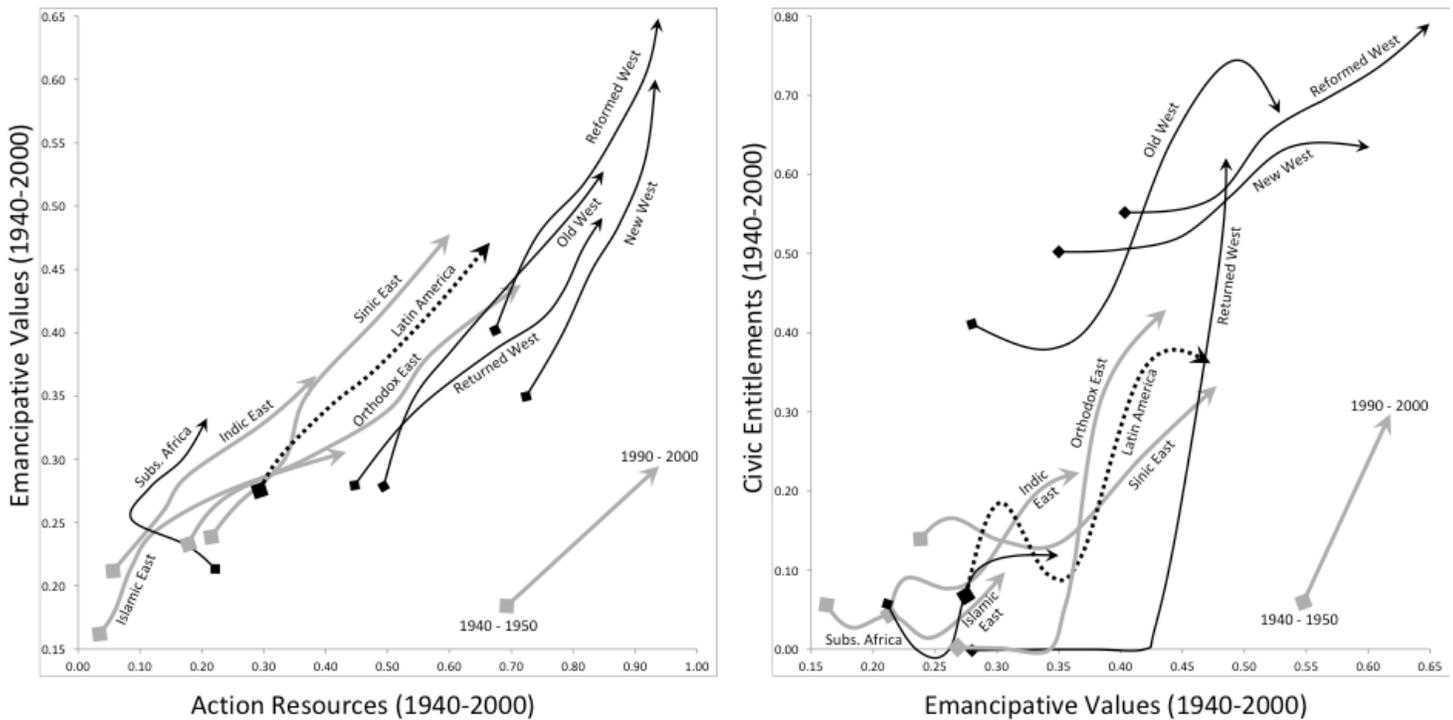
Note: Welzel (2018: forthcoming).

Figure 2: The Emancipatory Nature of the Modernization-Democracy Nexus



Note: Reprint of Figure 1.1 in Welzel (2013: 44), by permission of the author, see: [www.cambridge.org/9781107664838](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107664838).

**Figure 1: The Cool Water Origin of Western Civilization’s Emancipatory Dynamic**



Note: Reprint of Figure 4.5 in Welzel (2013: 160) by permission of the author. Culture zones and indicators are described in all detail there.

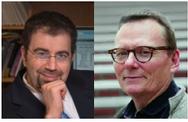
Arrow tail is a culture zone’s position in the decade 1940-50; arrow head is its position in the decade 1990-2000. Trace from tail to head covers decades in between 1940-50 and 1990-2000 in ascending temporal order. Each culture zone’s score on the three variables is the average in a given decade over the societies belonging to the respective culture zone, with each society weighted equally. Calculating culture zone averages by weighting societies for their population size produces similar results because the population-richest societies are the trend setters in their culture zone. Emancipative values for previous decades are estimated from the cohort differences in these values in the most recent survey, using society-specific trend adjustments (as detailed in Appendix 4).



## BEYOND MODERNIZATION THEORY

Daron Acemoglu, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

James A. Robinson, University of Chicago



The question posed by this symposium has a simple answer; no. On average, at least over the past 150 years, there is no tendency for countries to become more democratic as they become more 'modernized' whether in terms of higher levels of income per-capita (Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson and Yared, (AJRY), 2008), or education (AJRY, 2005). This is a surprising fact given the preponderance of opinion in political science since the days of Lipset (1959) that there was a causal relationship between modernization and development. The existence of such a causal relationship was conjectured because there was and is a strong cross-sectional relationship. It is true that democracy today is much more common in places with high levels of GDP per capita. But this relationship does not prove modernization theory. Maybe democracy causes modernization, not the other way around? Or maybe something else, an omitted variable, causes both modernization and democracy? That this might be so was conjectured long ago by Max Weber when he wrote in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that.

"Montesquieu says (Esprit des Lois, Book XX, chap. 7) of the English that they "had progressed the farthest of all peoples of the world in three important things: in piety, in commerce, and in freedom". Is it not possible that their commercial superiority and their adaptation to free political institutions are connected in some way with that record of piety which Montesquieu ascribes to them?" (Weber, 1930, p. 11)

Here Weber is specifically arguing that the "commercial superiority" of the

English, for which read "modernization", and their "free political institutions" for which read democracy, at least by the standards of the time, were caused by an omitted variable, "piety".

The simplest way empirically to examine whether, as Weber conjectured, other factors might be causing both GDP per capita and democracy is to eschew cross-sectional comparisons and focus on the "within-variation" and investigate whether as a country grows faster, it becomes more likely to turn democratic. Econometrically, the natural way to do this with cross-national data is to include country fixed effects that absorb any time-invariant characteristics of countries that simultaneously impact modernization, broadly or narrowly construed, and democracy.

The first person to do this, albeit at an informal level, was Guillermo O'Donnell. In his path-breaking book on bureaucratic authoritarianism, O'Donnell (1973) pointed out that there was a big difference between comparing countries and studying them over time and in fact, contra modernization theory, it was the most economically successful Latin American countries that had experienced democratic collapse.

What O'Donnell intuited, turns out to be the general case. Once one looks at the within variation, the picture is very different than what the variation between countries suggests. In fact, there is no correlation between income per-capita and democracy. Modernization doesn't work.

This strategy looks like a simple step empirically, but it is a radical transition from pre-existing knowledge, albeit not always fully appreciated. For example,

modern influential work by Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000) dismisses O'Donnell's research as having focused on a "distant outlier", even though more recent work shows that he identified the general pattern and that the presumed empirical support for modernization theory is not convincing.

O'Donnell wasn't the only one to recognize the flaws of modernization theory. The classic work of comparative development by Barrington Moore, Moore (1966), also went against the basic tenets of modernization theory by postulating that there were different "paths into the modern world". These involved democracy, fascism and communism. Yet, which one of these radically different political regimes the country ended up with has, according to Moore, nothing to do with modernization, and everything to do with historical conditions impacting both economic development and political regimes. The same is true for the study of comparative political development in Latin America by Collier and Collier (1991).

The type of fixed effects strategy we described above is the simplest approach and far from perfect. It controls only for time-invariant country characteristics potentially impacting modernization and democracy. If instead there are time-varying factors, such as a change in the political power of different social groups that can shape both political development paths and economic outcomes, fixed effects strategies will not estimate the relevant causal effects. AJRY (2008) therefore used a variety of instrumental variables strategies to address this problem. They proposed various sorts of exogenous sources of variation in

## Acemoglu and Robinson

income per capita, such as historical savings rates, or regional growth rates, to solve the problem. These findings all point in the same direction: there is no evidence for modernization theory.

These results show that the presumed support for modernization theory is entirely based on cross-sectional comparisons that do not control for characteristics that simultaneously impact modernization and democracy (AJRY, 2009, also re-visit the existing empirical literature and show why it came to different conclusions using older techniques).

Since these findings were published, several researchers have replicated and confirmed them (see, for example, Moral-Benito, 2013; Cervellati, Jung, Sunde and Vischer, 2014; Bonhomme and Manresa, 2015). But a number of papers, including Bobba and Coviello (2007), Murtin and Wacziarg (2014) and Faria and Montesinos-Yufaargue (2017), claim to find evidence more favorable to the modernization theory. The approach adopted by all of these papers is common: they use the panel data estimator based on Arellano and Bover (1995) and Blundell and Bond (1998). Though this estimator can be useful in situations in which there are problems of “weak instruments”, it is less suited to the context of estimating the impact of income on democracy. This is for two reasons. First, there are no obvious indications that weak instruments are a major problem in this case (specifically, in panel data models, the leading issue is when the lagged dependent variable has a coefficient close to 1, which is never even close to being the case when democracy is the dependent variable of interest). Secondly and more importantly, these estimators are only valid under additional conditions which are unlikely to be satisfied in this context.

In particular, as noted in AJRY (2018, footnote 11), the exclusion restriction imposed by these estimators is that changes in democracy are orthogonal to the fixed effects, which capture factors that create long-run correlation between income and democracy. In fact, AJRY document a strong long-run correlation between the levels of income and democracy, extending beyond the sample used in these studies. This suggests that these Blundell-Bond estimators are showing a positive effect of income and democracy because they are incorrectly capturing the long-run correlation between the level of income and the level of democracy.

These conclusions are confirmed by Moral-Benito (2013) who develops a limited information maximum likelihood estimator that has better small-sample properties than existing moment-based estimators and is less affected by potential weakness in instruments. Moral-Benito then applies this estimator to the AJRY data and confirms that there is no positive impact of income on democracy, and also shows that the additional moment conditions implied by Blundell-Bond estimators are rejected in the data, thus verifying the argument in AJRY that these estimators are not well suited to the problem at hand.

The results we have been emphasizing estimate the average effects of modernization on democracy. They leave open as to whether there could be “heterogeneous effects” – modernization could impact democracy in some specific circumstances. This would lead to a type of “conditional modernization theory” and Cervellati, Jung, Sunde and Vischer (2014) and Treisman (2015) have proposed various ideas along these lines. For example, Cervellati et al. find that there is a positive association between economic growth and democracy

among countries that were not colonies, but a negative association for those that were former European colonies. This contrasting patterns are clearly at odds with the essential precept of modernization theory. But perhaps conditional on not being a colony, the forces emphasized by modernization theory are operational?

We believe that even a conditional modernization theory is not the right way to think about the data. Instead, we have to understand the divergent political development paths of countries. To see what we mean by this, let us follow AJRY (2008), and extend the investigation of the relationship between GDP and democracy all the way back to the early modern period, say 1500. At this point, of course no society was democratic. But also, this was before the “Great Divergence”, before countries all around the world started diverging economically and had fairly similar levels of income per capita. So in the intervening five centuries, some countries, such as many in Western Europe and North America, simultaneously increased their income levels much more than others and also became more democratic than others. Is this modernization theory in action? Not really. Instead, this long divergence is a reflection of their different political development paths. It isn't that their growth is causing their democratizations. Rather, these countries embarked on a type of development that created more “inclusive” institutions (using the terminology from Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012), which involved the establishment of a range of political arrangements, including democracy, undergirding these inclusive institutions and simultaneously enabling more rapid economic growth.

AJRY (2008) already provided some support for this perspective by showing

## Acemoglu and Robinson

that former European colonies that had lower mortality risk for Europeans (following Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001)) and lower population densities (following Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2002)) were more likely to embark on a development path favoring modernization and democracy than other colonies, because these characteristics made it less likely for Europeans to pursue the most extractive colonization strategies. In other contexts, however, where the disease environment was adverse (such as in West Africa – the “white man’s graveyard”) or where there were large densities of indigenous populations to exploit, as in much of Latin America, extractive societies emerged focused on the exploitation of indigenous peoples or natural resources.

In this perspective the initial conditions created inclusive or extractive institutions which then put the societies onto very different long run paths of income per-capita, modernization and development.

But how do we conceptualize these institutions? Can we say something at a deeper level about the essence of the societies whose institutions created poverty and the absence of democracy?

One way of thinking about this in the Latin American case, is in terms of the prevalence of “dominance” in the creation of its societies. Our concept is the same as the political philosopher Philip Pettit (1999) who argues that dominance occurs when you “live at the mercy of another, having to live in a manner that leaves you vulnerable to some ill that the other is in a position arbitrarily to impose.” Dominance is the lot of “the wife finds herself in a position where her husband can beat her at will, and without any possibility of redress; by the employee who

dare not raise a complaint against an employer, and who is vulnerable to a range of abuses ... that the employer may choose to perpetrate; by the debtor who has to depend on the grace of the moneylender, or the bank official, for avoiding utter destitution and ruin.” Citizens in such a society “live in the shadow of the other’s presence, even if no arm is raised against them. They live in uncertainty about the other’s reactions and in need of keeping a weather eye open for the other’s moods ... They find themselves ... unable to look the other in the eye, and where they may even be forced to fawn or toady or flatter in the attempt to ingratiate themselves.”

You don’t have to look far in Latin America to find dominance. A good example is the life story of Rigoberta Menchú, an indigenous Guatemalan woman.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1959, the *coffee fincas*, the large plantations in the mountains along the Pacific coast became her life. She recalled “From when I was very tiny, my mother used to take me down to the *finca*, wrapped in a shawl on her back.” She started work there when she was eight years old. She asked her mother; “Why do we go to the *finca*?” And my mother used to say; ‘Because we have to.’”

Rigoberta paints a disturbing picture of the initial meeting with the absentee landowner; “He was very fat, well dressed and even had a watch. We didn’t know about watches then”. Rigoberta had neither shoes nor a watch (it was the 1970s!). The landowner “was accompanied by about fifteen soldiers ... The overseer said, ‘Some of you have to dance for the owner’”

<sup>1</sup> There is a controversy about the veracity of Menchú’s memoir (see Stoll, 2007). Nevertheless, the disagreements do not concern any of the issues we discuss here (see the assessment of the debate by Grandin, 2010).

... The landowner was speaking, and the overseer started translating what he was saying. They told us we all had to go and make a mark on a piece of paper ... We all went to make our mark on the paper ... I remember that the paper had some squares with three or four drawings on it ... He warned us that anyone who didn’t mark the paper would be thrown out of work [and] not paid.” This was how elections took place. Afterwards “The landowner left, but ... I dreamed about him over and over again ... it must have been the fear, the impression made on me by the man’s face ... all the children ran away ... and cried ... at the soldiers and weapons. They thought they were going to kill their parents. I thought so too. I thought they were going to kill everybody.” Rigoberta’s harrowing book ends with her mother, father and brother all being murdered.

The importance of dominance in Latin America is that it was institutionalized; into a hierarchy of *castas* (“casts”) which defined who dominated whom; into legal systems that gave different rights to different casts enshrining the absence of the rule of law; into differences in economic opportunities; even to differences in the types of clothes one could wear (Jackson, 1999). The best visual depictions of this institutionalized dominance are the *Casta* paintings of colonial Mexico (New Spain). We reproduce one in Figure 1. These paintings display the complex hierarchy of peoples that comprised Spanish colonial America.

There were four main categories. Peninsular, a Spaniard born in Spain; Criollo, a person of Spanish descent born in the New World; Indio, a person who is descendent of the original inhabitants of the Americas; Negro, a person of black African origin. These four categories could be mixed in many

Figure 1: Detail from a Casta Painting



possible ways so that by the end of the colonial period almost 100 different types of “mixtures” were recognized (Katzew, 2004).

The organization of colonial society by castas had profound economic and political effects. Economic opportunities or basic legal rights were tied to caste. As (Caldas, 2014, p. 8) puts it

“The procurement of rights and benefits was an important concern for the New Spanish population, as the authentication of one’s affiliation with a casta group determined the advantages, or disadvantages, in the socio-economic sphere.”

The vast mass of people were excluded from economic incentives or opportunities, a recipe for lack of investment, innovation and poverty. In the political sphere political rights were narrowly concentrated making an “elective affinity” between a society of castes and dictatorship.

This society of castes and dominance has persisted to a remarkable extent in Latin America. Distinct *de jure* legal rules for indigenous peoples lasted until 1945 in Guatemala (1952 in Bolivia) and they lived on after this *de facto*, as we have seen. The absence of a rule of law for all is still characteristic of Latin America (see Mendez, O’Donnell and Pinheiro, 1999). In Mexico today, for example, there is the concept of an *amparo*. The *amparo*, literally “protection”, is a legal instrument that allows an individual to claim that a particular law does not apply to them. The absence of the rule of law became institutionalized in the legal system! The absence of the rule of law in Colombia was vividly illustrated in 2013 when it came to light that the law firm of Brigard and Urrutia, one of whose partners was Colombia’s ambassador to the United States, had helped to create dozens of shell companies to game the countries’ land reform laws. The result was the illegal purchase of vast amounts of valuable agricultural lands in the eastern plains. One of the winners was Luis Carlos Sarmiento, Colombia’s richest man,

who ended up with 16,000 hectares of land supposedly reserved for peasants. A journalist on La W radio station asked a lawyer from Brigard and Urrutia

“The question is: did you have to “stretch” the law so you could buy and keep the land?

Brigard and Urrutia: The law is there to be interpreted. Here they are not white or black, they are there to be interpreted ... we assumed one which we think is correct (interpretation of the law).”

In Colombia the law is not “white or black”, it is to be manipulated, mostly by elites, since the notion of a rule of law is an anathema. In colonial Latin America the adage “obedezco pero no cumplo” - I obey but I do not comply – characterized the relationship between elites and the colonial state (see Melo, 2012, on the history of this in Colombia, and Robinson, 2016, for other examples). That’s still the way elites see things today, a fact which chimes with a great deal of empirical

## Acemoglu and Robinson

work in social psychology suggesting that elites are less pro-social and more likely to break rules than non-elites (see Piff and Robinson, 2017). When confronted with a violation of the law, a Colombian's elite's response is: you don't know who I am! (Robinson, 2017).

It is the structure of dominance and its legacies that have shaped Latin America's political development path, and simultaneously impeded economic growth and made it so difficult to build democracy. In principle, one could imagine mechanisms via which economic development and modernization impact democracy. But that is neither what the data nor the historical record show.

It is time for political scientists to look elsewhere and develop a better understanding of one of their key concepts.

### References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson (2001) "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation", *American Economic Review*, 91, 1369-1401.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson (2002) "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118, 1231-1294.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared (2005) "From Education to Democracy?" *American Economic Review*, 95, 44-49.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared (2008) "Income and Democracy", *American Economic Review*, 98, 808-842.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared (2009) "Reevaluating the Modernization Hypothesis," *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 56, 1043-1058.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson (2012) *Why Nations Fail*, New York: Crown.
- Arellano, Manuel, and Olympia Bover (1995) "Another look at the instrumental variable estimation of error-components models," *Journal of Econometrics*, 68, 1, 29-51.
- Bobba, Matteo, and Decio Coviello (2007) "Weak instruments and weak identification, in estimating the effects of education, on democracy," *Economics Letters*, 96, 3, 301-306.
- Blundell, Richard and Stephen Bond (1998) "Initial conditions and moment restrictions in dynamic panel data models," *Journal of Econometrics*, 87, 1, 115-143.
- Bonhomme, Stéphane, and Elena Manresa (2015) "Grouped patterns of heterogeneity in panel data," *Econometrica*, 83, 3, 1147-1184.
- Caldas, Natalia (2014) "Casta Paintings and the Characterization of Colonial Mexican Identities," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Western Ontario.
- Cervellati, Matteo, Florian Jung, Uwe Sunde and Thomas Vischer (2014) "Income and Democracy: Comment", *American Economic Review*, 104(2), 707-719.
- Collier, David and Ruth Berins Collier (1991) *Shaping the Political Arena*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Faria, Hugo J. and Hugo M. Montesinos-Yufa (2017) "Is the Effect of Income on Democracy Heterogeneous?" <https://ideas.repec.org/p/mia/wpaper/2017-05.html>
- Grandin, Greg (2010) "It was the Heaven that the Burned: Who was Rigoberta Menchú," *The Nation*, September 9.
- Jackson, Robert H. (1999) *Race, Caste and Status: Indians in Colonial Spanish America*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Katzew, Ilona (2004) *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959) "Social Requisites of Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, 53, 1, 69-105.
- Melo, Jorge Orlando (2012) "Debería haber una ley," [http://www.jorgeorlandomelo.com/ti\\_deberia.html](http://www.jorgeorlandomelo.com/ti_deberia.html)
- Menchú, Rigoberta (1984) *I Rigoberta Menchú*, London: Verso.
- Mendez, Juan E., Guillermo A. O'Donnell and Paulo Sergio De M. S. Pinheiro (1999) *The (Un) Rule of Law and the Underprivileged in Latin America*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Moore, Barrington Jr. (1966) *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Formation of the Modern World*, Cambridge: Beacon Press.
- Moral-Benito, Enrique (2013) "Likelihood-based Estimation of Dynamic Panels with Predetermined Regressors," *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics*, 31-4, 451-472.

---

---

**Acemoglu and Robinson**

---

---

Murtin, Fabrice and Romain Wacziarg (2014) "The Democratic Transition," *Journal of Economic Growth*, 19, 141-181.

O'Donnell, Guillermo (1973) *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*, Berkeley: University of California International Institute.

Pettit, Philip (1999) *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Piff, Paul K. and Angela R. Robinson (2017) "Social class and prosocial behavior: Current evidence, caveats, and questions," *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 18, 6-10.

Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi (2000) *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, James A. (2016) "La Miseria en Colombia," *Desarrollo y Sociedad*, 76(1):1-70.

Robinson, James A. (2017) "El usted no sabe quién soy yo," *Semana*, November 5.

Stoll, David (2007) *Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, New York: Routledge.

Treisman, Daniel (2015) "Income, Democracy, and Leader Turnover," *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(4): 927-42.

## TRIGGERING DEMOCRACY

Daniel Treisman, University of California



During the last two centuries, democracy has spread from just one country—the United States—to almost one hundred, depending on how one measures it. Some countries transitioned earlier, others later. Others remain authoritarian today.

What can account for the pattern of regime change? One argument contends that economic development causes the adoption of democracy. There is a simple version of this, arguing that, for instance, a 10 percent increase in some measure of economic development immediately prompts a 10 percent increase in some measure of democracy. Call this the *simple modernization thesis*.

Then there is a version in which increases in economic development make democratization more likely—but not certain. The effect is probabilistic rather than deterministic; not instantaneous; and may be stronger or weaker in different periods. The exact timing of transitions is determined by some triggering factor or factors, which interact with economic development. Call this the *conditional modernization thesis*.

Most work testing the claim that economic development causes democracy has focused on the simple thesis. Evidence for it is thin. For instance, Przeworski et al. found that higher income helped to *preserve* democracy where it existed already. But they “failed to detect any thresholds of development that would make the emergence of democracy predictable,” and concluded that “modernization theory appears to have little, if any, explanatory power.”<sup>1</sup>

1) Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions*

However, if development merely increases the odds of transition, there need not be any income threshold at which all dictatorships democratize. And this is all the more true if the effect operates with some delay and its intensity varies across periods.

The evidence for the conditional thesis is much stronger. Before discussing this, however, it’s worth considering what alternative explanations there might be for the global spread of democracy over the last two centuries.

#### What else could it be?

One possibility is that democracy emerges randomly. For instance, some argue that what matters is the contingent choices of key individuals and groups at important moments. While these choices can be analyzed afterwards, they can’t be deduced from underlying factors. Authors invoke Machiavelli’s *fortuna* to suggest the irreducible uncertainty of the process.

Another view sees institutional change as resulting from a mix of exogenous shocks, unpredictable responses to them, and path dependence. Dramatic events—“critical junctures”—disrupt political and economic equilibria. Actors react. Then small initial differences are magnified by long stretches of “institutional drift.”

Since institutional drift “has no predetermined path and does not even need to be cumulative,” there is no telling where countries will end up. As proponents of this view admit, “the predictive power of a theory where both small differences and contingency play key roles will be limited.”<sup>2</sup> Again, the

and *Well-being in the World, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 137.

2) Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: Origins of Power, Poverty and*

unfolding of democratization should look haphazard.

But it doesn’t. Democratization clusters both geographically and temporally. The patterns are striking. The agency view and the random walk version of institutionalism offer insights into other questions, but they cannot easily explain these regularities.<sup>3</sup>

Another institutionalist argument might. Not all countries had the luxury of evolving autonomously. Many had governance systems imposed on them by imperial powers. If geography determined what sort of institutions the colonists created, then institutional legacies might cluster geographically.

Can colonial heritage explain regime types in the post-colonial world? If so, we might expect current levels of democracy in former colonies to correlate with levels of democracy right after decolonization. They do, but not that strongly. Variation in the Polity2 measure of regime type around the time of independence can account for 10-20 percent of the variation in former colonies’ Polity2 scores today (regressing the latter on the former yields R-squareds of .1 to .2, depending on specification). That leaves considerable variation to explain—

*Prosperity* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 434. For the first view, see Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

3) Perhaps critical junctures that affect multiple countries simultaneously could explain temporal bunching. However, proponents of this view insist that actors can respond in opposite ways to the same critical juncture (e.g., raising wages after the Black Death or enserfing the peasants): “the contingent path of history implies that it is difficult to know whether a particular interplay of critical junctures and existing institutional differences will lead toward more inclusive or extractive institutions” (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012, 436-7).

## Treisman

along with the variation among those countries never colonized.

### When income matters

Conditional modernization approaches may help. Recent years have seen a growth of work in this area, first establishing that the simple relationship between income and regime type is stronger than critics of modernization theory have suggested, and, second, exploring factors that trigger the development effect.

For a start, scholars have refuted the claim of Przeworski et al., later reiterated by Acemoglu et al., that higher development does not lead to democratization. Both the Przeworski et al. analysis and the main models of Acemoglu et al. focused on years between 1950 and 2000. Acemoglu et al. found that once country and year fixed effects were included in a panel regression, income per capita no longer correlated with the Polity democracy measure, among others.<sup>4</sup>

However, Boix and Stokes demonstrated that income was significant when all years since the mid-19th Century were included. Other papers showed that income had a larger and more significant effect when the Polity democracy measure was adjusted for top-censoring; when the system-GMM estimator, which performs better than dynamic fixed effects or Arellano-Bond difference-GMM in the presence of slowly changing regressors, was used; and when the effect of income was investigated over longer periods.<sup>5</sup>

4) Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James Robinson, and Pierre Yared, "Income and Democracy," *American Economic Review*, 98(3), 2008, 808-42.

5) See Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics*, 55(4), 2003, 517-549; Jesse Benhabib, A. Corvalan, and M. Spiegel, "Reestablishing the Income-Democracy Nexus," NBER Working Paper 16832,

Why would economic development matter more for democracy in the medium and long run than it does in a given year? Such a result fits naturally with the conditional thesis. If some factor that occurs periodically triggers the political effect of economic development, then that trigger is more likely to show up within a 10-year spell than in any individual year.

Scholars have suggested several possible triggering factors. First, Kennedy argued that economic crises prompt regime change, which results in democratization in countries that are relatively developed. Much other work confirms the link between poor economic performance and political transitions. In this context, a paradox arises. The level of income and the annual growth rate—although mechanically connected—turn out to have different, and sometimes *opposite*, effects on dictatorships. While a high level of development predisposes them to democratize, a high growth rate entrenches the incumbent dictator and his regime.

Miller, meanwhile, suggested that the fragility of an autocratic regime is what triggers the pro-democracy effect of higher development. Strong authoritarian states can withstand the effects of modernization, but internally divided or ineffective ones often cannot. He provided evidence for this, proxying for institutional weakness with the occurrence of violent leader turnover.

2011; Matteo Bobba and Decio Coviello, "Weak Instruments and Weak Identification in Estimating the Effects of Education on Democracy," *Economics Letters*, 96(3), 2007, 301-306; Daniel Treisman, "Income, Democracy, and Leader Turnover," *American Journal of Political Science* 59, 4, 2015, 927-942. Acemoglu et al. (2008) included some 100-year regressions, but, as Murtin and Wacziarg point out, the non-significance of income in these regressions results from omitting the initial level of democracy (Fabrice Murtin and Romain Wacziarg, "The Democratic Transition," *Journal of Economic Growth*, 19(2), 2014, 141-181).

Finally, I found that *all* types of leader turnover in non-democracies—even those caused by peaceful handovers of power and natural deaths in office—activated the effect of economic development. Another way to put this is that economic development catalyzes democratization mostly in the first years of a new leader. After an autocrat has survived for some time, he tends to become insulated from pressure to reform, no matter how modern his country becomes.<sup>6</sup>

Is this finding just another version of the Przeworski et al. claim that countries democratize for idiosyncratic reasons but then are more likely to remain democratic if they are economically developed? Not exactly. Countries with higher income are more likely to democratize. The triggers may be hard to predict and sometimes appear random; in another paper, I show that democratization has often occurred because incumbents made unexpected mistakes.<sup>7</sup> But in less developed countries such triggers tend to produce only another autocracy.

### Spanish lessons

If leader turnover catalyzes the income-effect, that could explain why standard statistical methods often fail to detect a simple, short-run relationship between economic development and democratization.

Consider the case of Spain. Under Generalissimo Francisco Franco, who seized power in 1939, the country grew from a rural backwater into the world's

6) See Ryan Kennedy, "The Contradiction of Modernization: A Conditional Model of Endogenous Democratization," *Journal of Politics* 72(3), 2010, 785-98; Michael K. Miller, "Economic Development, Violent Leader Removal, and Democratization," *American Journal of Political Science* 56(4), 2012, 1002-20; Treisman (2015).

7) Daniel Treisman, "Democracy by Mistake," NBER Working Paper 23944, October 2017.

## Treisman

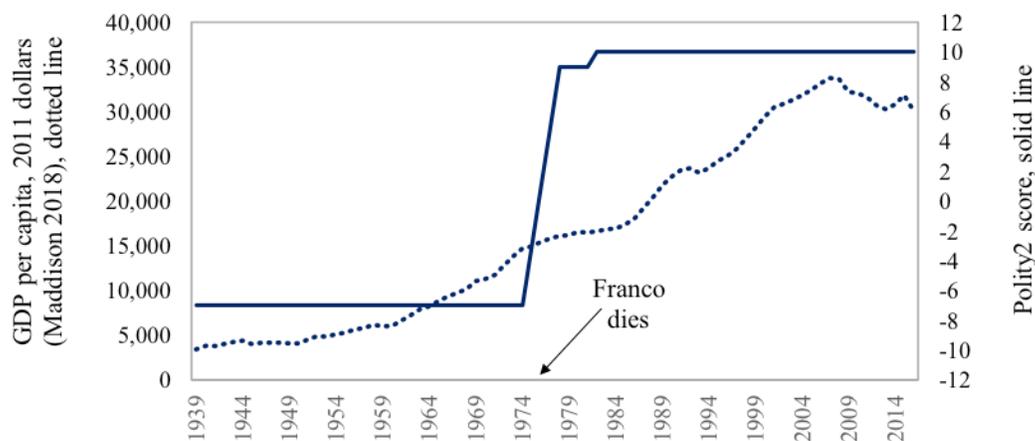
eleventh largest industrial economy. By the time Franco died of old age in 1975, GDP per capita had quadrupled and the number of telephones had increased by more than 250 times. Yet, the state remained brutal and arbitrary.

However, just a few years after the dictator's funeral Spain had become

one of the world's highest-rated democracies. Historians see a clear link between the country's economic and social modernization in the 1960s and its political metamorphosis in the late 1970s. Economic development prepared the ground for democracy. But its impact was felt only after the dictator left the stage (see figure).

A standard dynamic model would not find much relationship here. From 1939 to 1974, and then again from 1982 to 2007, Spain's democracy level remained flat despite soaring income. At first, the country was trapped in Franco's autocratic straight-jacket; later, it was capped at the democracy scale's maximum score. All the

Income and Democracy in Spain, 1939-2016



Sources: Polity IV, Maddison Project Database (version 2018).

increase in Spain's democracy score came between 1975 and 1982, in the period after Franco's death, but income rose only slightly during those years. In short, economic development may lead to democracy, but in a way that is too discontinuous and concentrated to be captured easily by annual panel regressions.

Are there other Francos? Indeed, quite a few. I identified 20 other rulers of non-democracies between 1875 and 2004 under whom GDP per capita rose above 6,000 1990 dollars. (Other thresholds in the middle income range would yield similar results.) These dictators did not allow much democratization on their watch—on average, their countries suffered a drop of 0.7 Polity2 points. However, in the decade *after* the given

dictator left office, the average Polity2 score jumped 8.1 points. Eight of the 20 were, like Franco, followed by an increase of 10 or more points—a jump that occurred in only about 4 percent of all 10-year periods in the data. Not all democratized. But an unusually high number did.

Conditional modernization arguments hint at a reason for temporal and geographical clustering in democratization. In line with Kennedy, I find that economic crises trigger the development effect—when, that is, they also prompt leader turnover. Wars also accelerate leader turnover, and indirectly regime change. Both economic crises and wars simultaneously affect groups of geographically proximate countries. Income levels also cluster geographically.

### Mechanisms and triggers

If the data support conditional modernization theory, that still leaves the question which aspects of economic development predispose countries to democratize. The original modernization theorists saw broader participation and self-government as the climax of a syndrome of linked economic and social transformations. These included industrialization, urbanization, occupational specialization, the growth of a middle class, the spread of education, literacy, and a scientific culture of inquiry, higher incomes, the reduction of inequality, increased leisure, and the birth of mass media.

Identifying the separate impact of these phenomena is difficult. One influential approach emphasizes culture, and sees

## Treisman

only the later stages of modernization as truly conducive to democracy. In a number of works, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel have argued that industrialization, urbanization, and rising income lead to a transition from “survival values” to “secular-rational values,” which can support either democratic or authoritarian systems. Later stages of modernization produce a second shift to “self-expression values,” which prioritize identity, autonomy, and political participation, while rejecting authoritarian control.

A second approach focuses on education. Murtin and Wacziarg find that a measure of primary school completion absorbs much or all of the explanatory power of income in cross-national panel regressions. They estimate that the diffusion of literacy resulting from such early education accounted for roughly half of the total increase in democracy between 1870 and 2000.

Education could promote democratization in several ways. First, it could induce Inglehart-style cultural change. If so, one might expect less of an effect in systems where the curricula and styles of teaching reinforce authoritarian values. This could be tested. Second, education might empower citizens to monitor officials and formulate demands more effectively, exploiting opportunities in existing laws. Thomas Jefferson argued that educating the common people would enable them “to know ambition under all its shapes, and... exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes” (quoted in Murtin and Wacziarg, 143). Botero, Ponce, and Shleifer show that better educated people are more likely to report official misconduct, generating greater accountability. Third, education may enhance the social and communications skills needed to organize and coordinate opposition.<sup>8</sup>

8) See Murtin and Wacziarg (2014); Juan Botero,

Another aspect of development is change in the level of economic inequality—and in the assets that are most politically salient. During the “first wave,” unequal ownership of farmland seemed to generate obstacles to reform in certain countries. The most eager democratizers were states where small family farms dominated the countryside. Later, as financial and human capital overtook land in significance, inequality no longer appeared to inhibit political liberalization.<sup>9</sup>

Insight into the mechanism by which modernization favors democracy might come from examining one set of notable exceptions to the pattern. Some oil-rich states have failed to democratize despite achieving record levels of GDP per capita. Does this challenge the explanatory scope of modernization theory? It depends. One interpretation is that oil wealth blocks democracy precisely by inhibiting certain aspects of modernization—in particular, the development of light industry, and the associated employment and social mobilization of women. If that’s right, then the survival of autocracy in oil-rich states is not an exception that contradicts modernization theory but rather an “exception” that proves the rule.<sup>10</sup>

Another set of questions concerns why particular factors—such as economic

Alejandro Ponce, and Andrei Shleifer, “Education, Complaints, and Accountability,” *The Journal of Law and Economics* 56.4 (2013): 959-996.

9) See Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Ben Ansell and David Samuels, *Inequality and Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

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

crisis or leader turnover—trigger the political effect of development. The role of triggering factors is to initiate regime change, the character of which is then determined by the country’s level of modernization. They could do this in several ways.

First, such factors may help the opposition coordinate. Both economic crisis and leader succession may provide focal points for such coordination. Second, they could shift the balance of power between the regime and its opponents. Economic crisis may reduce the incumbent’s resources for repression, while lowering the opportunity cost of revolt. It could also reveal the leader’s incompetence, motivating citizens to seek change. Meanwhile, leader turnover may replace an experienced hardliner, selected over time for his survival skills, with a relative neophyte (see Treisman (2015) for evidence of such selection effects). Succession often also provokes struggles among elite factions, weakening the regime. Third, triggering factors could change incumbents’ objectives, rendering them more willing to try reform. Economic crisis might—as it did for Mikhail Gorbachev—prompt an incumbent to risk political tinkering. In developing autocracies, peaceful succession often brings to power a more highly educated leader, with more modern values, who is more open to adjustments.

Since its first formulation in the 1950s, modernization theory has endured repeated attacks. Yet no alternative theory of democratization has achieved anything like its appeal. The “counterexamples” cited by skeptics have often converged to the theory’s predictions. Asian countries were once deemed culturally unsuited to democracy, regardless of income level. Yet Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Mongolia have become stable

## Treisman

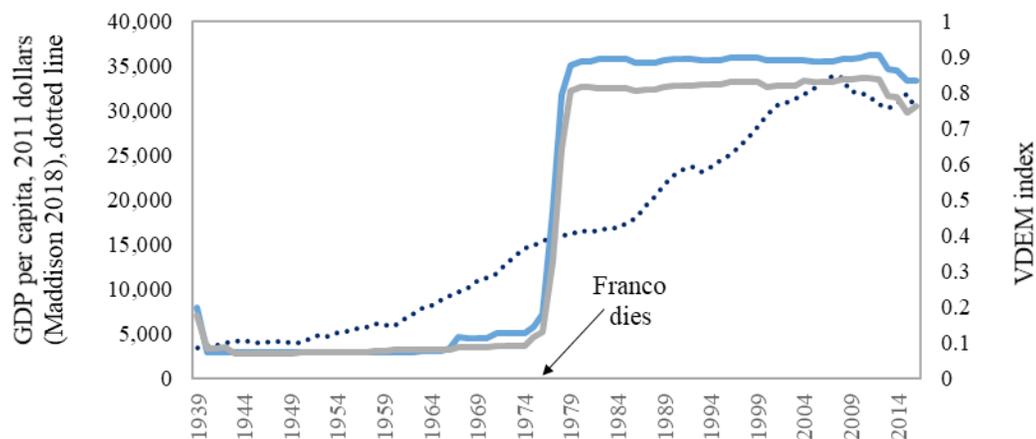
democracies. Military regimes in relatively developed Latin American countries in the 1970s prompted some to reject modernization theory. Yet today Argentina, Uruguay, and other former “bureaucratic authoritarian” states have been democratic for more than 30 years. The industrialized communist dictatorships of Eastern Europe also seemed inconsistent with the theory—until, that is, they collapsed, with many transitioning to democracy, albeit flawed.

The biggest anomaly for modernization theory—simple or conditional—today is Singapore. With a per capita income of \$66,000, according to the Maddison income database, it is among the richest countries in the world. Yet, through several rounds of leader turnover, its rulers have managed to preserve a highly effective form of soft authoritarianism. Modernization theory suggests we should not be surprised to see the country democratize in coming years. *Conditional* modernization theory

adds that such a transition is more likely to come in a year of economic crisis and leader change, but cautions not to expect it at any particular income threshold.

### Using VDEM

#### Income and Democracy in Spain, 1939-2016



Sources: Polity IV, Maddison Project Database (version 2018).

Blue is electoral democracy index, grey is liberal democracy index.

## MODERNIZATION THEORY AS A CASE OF FAILED KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Gerardo L. Munck, University of Southern California \*



The trajectory of modernization theory, and particularly of modernization theory's explanation of democratization, is a key example of a basic problem in the production of knowledge about the social world: the failure to treat some basic matters as settled. Modernization theory was dominant in the 1950s until the mid-1960s, roundly criticized and out of favor in the 1970s and 1980s, and revived in the 1990s. Moreover, this trajectory of rise and fall and return has a prior history. The basic ideas that became known as modernization theory had been worked out by the mid-19th century and had been roundly criticized in the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, the modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s was already a re-elaboration of old and thoroughly criticized ideas. In short, modernization theory, twice discarded and twice resurrected, is an example of the failure to make progress in the field of comparative democratization.

This cycle of fall and return does not, by itself, indicate whether the problem is due to those who discarded or those who resurrected modernization theory. However, as argued in this commentary, the case against modernization theory is strong. There are both theoretical and empirical grounds for claiming that modernization theory was discarded correctly twice, and that discarding it once again—and hopefully for good—would be a sign of scientific progress. More specifically, this claim is justified on the basis of several criteria: the consistency of modernization theory and its hypotheses with the relevant background knowledge, the fruitfulness of theorizing, the results of

empirical tests of hypotheses, and the appropriateness of the empirical tests used to assess modernization theory.

**Metatheory**

All theories are based on some metatheoretical ideas or general theoretical principles, which play an important role, serving as orienting principles that guide the development of middle-range theories. And such metatheoretical ideas can and should be assessed, in light of background knowledge. Thus, a point of entry into an evaluation of modernization theory is a consideration of the general theoretical principles that are distinctive of modernization theory as a school of thought.

The metatheoretical ideas of modernization theory are well-known. One is the thesis of societal and, more specifically, *economic reductionism*, that is, that political changes are explained by the domestic environment of politics, primarily by economic factors and, importantly, that political changes do not themselves shape the economy or the culture. A second is the thesis of *unilinear development*, whereby economic development, at least since the industrial revolution, is held to unfold in the same way or along a single path and to have the same political consequences all around the world.

The history of these theses is also rather well-known. They were novel when first introduced by stage theorists, such as Adam Smith in the late 18th century and Comte and Spencer in the 19th century, who addressed, if in a rather sketchy way, the origins of democracy. Moreover, they played a positive role at the time, in that they provided guidance to initial research on political change and democratization in the nascent social

sciences. However, these theses came rapidly under scrutiny and were subject to withering critiques.

The shortcomings of societal and economic reductionism were exposed by scholars such as Weber, Hintze, Pareto, and Mosca in what was a, or even the, central theoretical debate in the social sciences of the late 19th and early 20th century. As these authors argue, since political factors also affect society, the role of the state has to be considered and the relationship between politics and economics is better seen as one of reciprocal determination. Moreover, since geopolitical factors played a role, an analysis purely focused on domestic factors is also limited. In turn, the viability of diverse modes or paths of economic development, adopted by late developers due to the different position in the global economy, and the political consequences of such diverse modes of economic development, was explored by Veblen and Gerschenkron during the first decades of the 20th century. Moreover, during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s a huge amount of research on the impact of the state and economic policy on society, and of the state system and the global economy, further revealed the weakness of the theses of economic reductionism and unilinear development.

Thus, the two revivals of 19th century theories under the label of modernization theory were neither innocent nor an advance in knowledge. The theorists who launched modernization theory in the 1950s in the United States, and reasserted the principles of economic reductionism and unilinear development,<sup>1</sup> ignored

\* The following draws on Chapters 5 and 6 of a book manuscript in progress, provisionally entitled *How Advances in the Social Sciences Have Been Made: The Study of Democratization Since 1789*. This manuscript includes a full list of references

1) Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53.1 (1959): 69-105, 69; and Daniel Lerner, "Modernization. Social Aspects," In David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the*

## Munck

valuable theoretical insights developed during the first 30 to 40 years of the 20th century and hence set out to explain democracy on a weaker foundation than provided by existing theory. In turn, by the time modernization theory was relaunching in the 1990s, and these two metatheoretical theses were reasserted once more,<sup>2</sup> the inconsistency between the theoretical principles of modernization theory and the fund of existing knowledge was simply staggering. In short, particularly because the theoretical principles of modernization theory had been discarded after an explicit and careful consideration, and the basis for discarding them was so strong, the return of modernization theory was a clear setback in knowledge.

### Theoretical Hypotheses

Modernization theorists have also proposed several theoretical hypotheses regarding the origins of democracy and, before turning to the results of empirical tests of these hypotheses, it is important to assess the fruitfulness of such theorizing and, once again, its consistency with background knowledge.

The core hypothesis proposed in the literature in the 1950s and 1960s is the *Lipset hypothesis*, which relates level of economic development to democracy through the growth of the

middle class and middle-class values.<sup>3</sup> This hypothesis is pretty much a verbatim copy of a hypothesis that was, by the mid-19th century, commonplace. Many authors, including Adam Smith and Tocqueville, had argued that there is a link between certain economic changes—the rise of commerce and industry—and democracy. Furthermore, many 19th century works had specified that link, arguing that such economic changes bring about an increase in wealth and lead to an expansion of the middle class, which is the carrier of certain cultural predispositions. Thus, modernization theorists in the 1950s did not open up new areas for exploration or generate a stream of new hypotheses and thus failed to show that modernization theory was a fertile, progressive agenda of research.

However, the revised version of Lipset's hypothesis proposed by Inglehart and Welzel,<sup>4</sup> the fruit of the most concerted effort to elaborate modernization theory since the collapse of communism, is even more troubling. In formulating the *Inglehart and Welzel hypothesis*, these authors introduce two significant changes to Lipset's hypothesis. First, Inglehart and Welzel revise the scope or domain of Lipset's hypothesis. Succinctly, Lipset posits that his hypothesis is relevant to cases around the globe at least since the start of the industrial era; though Lipset refers to Aristotle and thus seems to

indicate that his hypothesis should hold from the times of Ancient Greece onward, his broader discussion and indicators clearly suggest a focus on changes initiated with industrialization. In contrast, Inglehart and Welzel rather clearly suggest that the effect of economic development on democracy operates primarily since the transition to a post-industrial economy, that is, only since the 1970s.

Second, Inglehart and Welzel propose a change to the causal mechanism associated with Lipset's hypothesis, that is, the process at the level of actors through which economic development produces democratization. Lipset does not offer an elaborate discussion of any causal mechanism. But, in seeking to account for how change in the level of economic development would lead to democracy, he draws on Marx's idea of class struggle and posits that democracy is the outgrowth of a conflictual relationship between actors driven by economic interests. In contrast, Inglehart and Welzel drop any such reference to class struggle and suggest a different causal mechanism. Since Inglehart and Welzel rely on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they posit that actors push for democracy only in a post-scarcity context, when economic needs cease to be a driving concern and post-materialist, self-expression values flourish. Moreover, since Inglehart and Welzel assume that there is a congruence between mass culture and institutions—in their terms, elites “supply” the level of democracy that the masses “demand”—they hold that democracy is generated simply by values-based mass demand for democracy, regardless of any possible resistance by elites.

The evolution from Lipset to Inglehart and Welzel is testimony to a welcome concern with theorizing. However, it cannot be considered theoretical

*Social Sciences* Vol. 10 (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1968), pp. 386-95.

2) Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 48; Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 205-09; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-2, 5, 8-9, 22-25; and Christian Welzel, *Freedom Rising. Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 37-38, 48-50.

3) Seymour Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review* 53.1 (1959): 69-105. Subsequent references to Lipset are to this text.

4) Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Subsequent references to Inglehart and Welzel are to these texts.

progress. Inglehart and Welzel's revised version of Lipset's hypothesis signals a huge retreat from the earlier more ambitious claim that modernization theory offers a theory of global scope from the industrial revolution onwards, and is explicitly a concession to Barrington Moore's critique of modernization theory.<sup>5</sup> In turn, the problem with the causal mechanism posited by Inglehart and Welzel is that it is inconsistent with a lot of relevant research. There is a wealth of evidence that the demand for democracy is based, at least in part, on economic interests and that actors do not only demand democracy once their material needs have been met. Moreover, there is abundant evidence that the process of democratization is a conflictual one that largely hinges on the resistance to democratization by incumbent elites or important parts of the incumbent elites, who do not "supply" democracy willingly to the extent the masses "demand."<sup>6</sup>

In the end, however, the most notable indictment of recent efforts to revise

5) Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21; Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

6) On the importance of economically-based demands and elite resistance in processes of democratization, see Karl de Schweinitz, *Industrialization and Democracy: Economic Necessities and Political Possibilities* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Adam Przeworski, "Conquered or Granted? A History of Franchise Extensions," *British Journal of Political Science* 39.2 (2009): 291-321; and Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule," *American Political Science Review* 106.3 (2012): 495-516.

and elaborate modernization theory has come from the broader field of comparative democratization. A great amount of work has sought to empirically test modernization theory. Yet this research has, with a few exceptions, focused on Lipset's hypothesis. The lack of data on individual-level values is part of the reason. Nonetheless, it is hard to escape the conclusion that modernization theorists have largely failed to convince the field of democratization studies that it has produced any new theoretical ideas that are worthy of serious consideration beyond a hypothesis already well known in the middle of the 19th century.

### Empirical Tests

Turning finally to the empirical testing of modernization theory, three points bear mentioning. First, a glance at the results of quantitative tests of the Lipset hypothesis, which operationalize economic development largely but not exclusively in terms of income, reveals a rather striking pattern (see Table 1). Prior to the key work by Przeworski and Limongi in 1997,<sup>7</sup> an overwhelming majority of studies confirm Lipset's hypothesis. In contrast, since 1997, the number of studies that disconfirm Lipset's hypothesis slightly outnumber those that confirm Lipset's hypothesis. Indeed, as a thorough meta-analysis of post-1997 tests concludes, this research shows that "there is *no robust effect of income on democratization*."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, adding weight to the results of the more recent research, it is clearly the case that the research from 1997 onwards is more credible than the earlier research, in that it has benefited from more and better data, and an increased

7) Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49.2 (1997): 155-83

8) Troy Saghaug Broderstad, "A Meta-analysis of Income and Democracy," *Democratization* 25.2 (2018): 293-311, 294.

attention to causal inference. Thus, a preliminary conclusion is that the Lipset hypothesis, the core hypothesis of modernization theory, has been thoroughly tested and the evidence does not support modernization theory.<sup>9</sup>

Second, many of the tests conducted by proponents of modernization theory, or that provide support for modernization theory, rely on decisions that are rather questionable, in that they are not consistent with the theory and tend to make the test easier rather than tougher. All empirical tests of theories and even theoretical hypotheses are indirect. Indeed, all empirical tests of hypotheses rely on multiple subsidiary assumptions concerning the formulation of empirical hypotheses and the selection of indicators, and these assumptions are always more or less *ad hoc*. However, there is a concerning pattern in this literature.

Modernization theory is a global theory, that posits that economic development has the same impact on democracy around the world, and a theory that claims that the cause of democracy lies in the domestic environment of politics and is not conditional on political or international factors. In turn, Lipset argues that economic development leads to democracy in all countries, and not that economic development leads to democracy only in countries that have a certain kind of economic development or when certain

9) There has been much less testing of Inglehart and Welzel's version of modernization theory. However, all independent studies, including the recent study by Dahlum and Knutsen—which offers a methodologically superior test compared to that conducted by Inglehart and Welzel—disconfirm Inglehart and Welzel's hypothesis. Thus, research on Inglehart and Welzel's hypothesis further supports this conclusion about the Lipset hypothesis. Sirianne Dahlum and Carl Henrik Knutsen, "Democracy by Demand? Reinvestigating the Effect of Self-expression Values on Political Regime Type," *British Journal of Political Science* 47.2 (2017): 437-61.

Table 1. Quantitative Tests of the Lipset Hypothesis: A Simple Tabulation of Results

Period	Positive (as hypothesized)	Results *	
		Mixed (partly positive, partly negative)	Negative (no pattern) **
1959-1996	<b>N: 23.</b> Lipset (1959), Coleman (1960), Cutright (1963), Russett (1965), McCrone and Crudde (1967), Neubauer (1967), Needler (1968), Olsen (1968), Cutright and Wiley (1969), Banks (1970), Winham (1970), Flanigan and Fogelman (1971), Jackman (1973), Coulter (1975), Bollen (1979, 1980, 1983), Bollen and Jackman (1985), Pourgerami (1988), Burkhart and Lewis-Beck (1994), Helliwell (1994), Muller (1995), Londregan and Pool (1996)	<b>N: 4.</b> Smith (1969), Dahl (1971), Soares (1987), Lipset, Seong and Torres (1993)	<b>N: 4.</b> Hannan and Carroll (1981), Arat (1988), Muller (1988), Hadenius (1992)
1997-2018	<b>N: 20.</b> Barro (1997, 1999), Coppedge (1997), Vanhanen (1997: Ch. 3), Feng and Zak (1999), Boix and Stokes (2003), Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O'Halloran (2006), Norris (2008), Papaioannou and Siourounis (2008), Gundlach and Paldam (2009), Boix (2011), Barro (2012), Heid, Langer and Larch (2012), Moral-Benito and Bartolucci (2012), Paldam and Gundlach (2012), Benhabib, Corvalan and Spiegel (2013), Che, Lu, To and Wang (2013), Faria, Montesinos-Yufa and Morales (2014), Murtin and Wacziarg (2014), Treisman (2015)	<b>N: 5.</b> Glasure, Lee and Norris (1999), Heo and Tan (2001), Foweraker and Landman (2004), Kennedy (2010), Miller (2012)	<b>N: 27.</b> Przeworski and Limongi (1997), Bratton and van de Walle (1997: Ch. 6), Landman (1999), Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000: Ch. 2), Colaresi and Thompson (2003), Mainwaring and Perez-Liñán (2003), Doorenspleet (2004, 2005: Ch. 5), Hadenius and Teorell (2005), Milanovic (2005), Rudra (2005), Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson and Yared (2008, 2009), Houle (2009), Persson and Tabellini (2009), Przeworski (2009), Teorell (2010), Alemán and Yang (2011), Alexander, Harding and Lamarche (2011), Hegre, Knutsen and Rød (2012), Fayad, Bates and Hoeffler (2012), Gassebner, Lamla and Vreeland (2013), Mainwaring and Perez-Liñán (2013), Haggard and Kaufman (2016), Rosenfeld (2017), Broderstad (2018), Knutsen, Gerring, Skaaning, Teorell, Maguire, Coppedge and Lindberg (2018)

Note: (\*) These results are largely the summary results reported by the authors. (\*\*) The one exception is the Fayad, Bates and Hoeffler (2012) study, which finds the opposite of what Lipset hypothesized rather than no pattern.

political or international conditions hold. However, many tests of the Lipset hypothesis that yield a positive result rely on choices that clearly deviate from modernization theory and Lipset's hypothesis. For example, tests routinely drop oil exporting countries from their analysis or control for factor endowments such as oil, suggesting that such an exclusion is justified because oil might have a "negative impact ... on democratic transitions."<sup>10</sup>

Along similar lines, several authors have tested the impact of economic

development on democracy conditional on the ideology of rulers or the global political order, factors that are not only not part of modernization theory but run counter to its metatheoretical ideas. Thus, its reliance on advanced methods notwithstanding, some recent empirical research on the Lipset hypothesis is flawed. In many instances, researchers seem more intent on saving than testing modernization theory.

More broadly, researchers fail to recognize the big difference between the original Lipset hypothesis and the hypotheses that many tests consider. It is one thing to test the hypothesis

that economic development leads to democratization through its impact on class structure and certain values. It is a rather different thing to test the hypothesis that economic development leads to democratization *if* economic development brings about some changes in the class structure and/or the values of societal actors, particularly when the *conditions* accounting for the impact of economic development on the key intervening variables of class structure and distribution of values are extraneous to or even incompatible with modernization theory. Indeed, the hypotheses that are tested in many studies that provide support for

10) Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55.4 (2003): 517-49, 535.

## Munck

modernization theory are one more sign of the retreat from early claims of modernization theory and yet another major concession to critics of modernization theory.

Third, and relatedly, it is noteworthy that several recent studies that claim to offer support for modernization theory actually yield results that are problematic for the theory. One study argues that modernization theory is supported even though it finds that the impact of economic development on democratization “varies across income levels and across eras” and is “weak or nonexistent after World War Two.”<sup>11</sup> Going further, a recent study claims to support modernization theory by showing that an increase in the level of economic development decreases the likelihood of regime change—but increases the probability that, if there is regime change, it will be in the direction of democracy. That is, this study ignores that modernization theory posits that economic development makes a prediction both about regime change and the direction of regime change. Yet, rather oddly, the author suggests that it is the critics of modernization theory that suffer from “a fundamental misconception” that prevents them from recognizing that this finding does *not* “contradict modernization theory.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, scholars fail to recognize that tests showing that the impact of economic development on democracy is conditional on political and international factors should be read as offering support for alternatives to modernization theory, which explicitly criticized modernization theory for its

failure to address the role of political and/or international factors.<sup>13</sup> That is, adding to other problems in the testing of modernization theory, some scholars draw implications from the results of their tests in dubious ways and overstate the case for modernization theory.

In sum, with several decades of research to draw on—it is not a stretch to claim that the Lipset hypothesis is one of the most tested hypotheses in the field of comparative politics—we are in a position to conclude that the evidence runs mainly against modernization theory. Or, put more categorically, it strains credulity to posit that further testing is likely to tilt the evidence strongly in favor of modernization theory and hence that modernization theory deserves more time to prove its empirical validity. Indeed, it is fair to argue that the payoff from recent empirical research is steadily declining and to insist that the lack of robust confirmation of the Lipset hypothesis is much more than a tentative finding.

### Conclusion

We lack a protocol for deciding, as a community of scholars, when a theory should be discarded. And a decision to discard a theory, a research tradition, or a body of literature, should be made deliberately and cautiously. Indeed, the history of the social sciences is full of cases in which important knowledge has been rejected, forgotten or abandoned. However, as argued at the outset, discarding modernization theory once and for all would be a sign of scientific progress.

Modernization theory is a failed theory. It faces major theoretical and empirical

weaknesses. Moreover, it ceased to be productive a long time ago. Indeed, it is a degenerative program, in that its proponents have largely neglected to propose new ideas and open up new areas for research; increasingly retreated from earlier claims, explicitly or implicitly making concessions to critics of modernization theory; and regularly opted to lower rather than raise the bar in their empirical tests. Thus, the costs of any further investment of resources (e.g. research time, research funds, journal space) in modernization theory should be recognized.

Various alternatives to modernization theory show considerable promise and time is better spent developing and testing these theories. Important priorities are the reformulation of a political economy of distributive conflict in a way that avoids the pitfalls of the unrealistic medium voter model, the systematization of the scattered yet useful ideas about the impact of non-democratic regimes, and the launching of an agenda on the nexus between the multi-faceted problematic of the state and democracy that avoids the cul-de-sac of arguments about prerequisites. More broadly, greater attention should be given to theories that link macro- and micro-levels of analysis, address the impact of distal and proximate causes, and explore the possibility of multiple paths to democracy.

In short, it is time to draw a collective conclusion about modernization theory. The field of comparative democratization should act on the considerable signs that modernization theory is a failed theory, set it aside, and move on to more promising avenues of research.

11) Carles Boix, “Democracy, Development and the International System,” *American Political Science Review* 105.4 (2011): 809-28, 809, 820.

12) Ryan Kennedy, “The Contradiction of Modernization: A Conditional Model of Endogenous Democratization,” *Journal of Politics* 72.3 (2010): 785-98, 785, 788.

13) Carles Boix, “Democracy, Development and the International System,” *American Political Science Review* 105.4 (2011): 809-28; Michael K. Miller, “Economic Development, Violent Leader Removal, and Democratization,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56.4 (2012): 1002-20; and Daniel Treisman, “Income, Democracy, and Leader Turnover,” *American Journal of Political Science* 59.4 (2015): 927-42.

## SECTION NEWS

**Bustikova, Lenka** (Arizona State University) has assumed the responsibility of editor of *East European Politics*, [www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjcs21](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjcs21).

**Carlin, Ryan, Jonathan Hartlyn, Timothy Hellwig, Gregory J. Love, Cecilia Martínez-Gallardo, and Matthew M. Singer** “Public Support for Latin American Presidents: The Cyclical Model in Comparative Perspective,” *Research & Politics*, July-Sept. 2018: 1-8, available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2053168018787690>. The article examines presidential approval in 18 Latin American countries and relies on data from the executive approval project database, available at: <http://www.executiveapproval.org/>

**David, Roman**, *Communists and Their Victims: The Quest for Justice in the Czech Republic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018, <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15813.html>

**Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz**, *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

**Gellman, Mneesha**, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Emerson College, has published “Democratization and Memories of Violence: Ethnic Minority Rights Movements in Mexico, Turkey, and El Salvador.” (2017)

**Hanley, Sean and Milada Anna Vachudova** (2018). “Understanding the illiberal turn: backsliding in the Czech Republic,” *East European Politics*, Vol. 34, No 3, pp. 276-296.

**Javeline, Debra**, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, has published, “Coastal Homeowners in a Changing Climate,” in *Climatic Change* (with engineer **Tracy Kijewski-Correa**). The article is part of a forthcoming edited special issue on “Adapting to Water Impacts of Climate

Change” that Javeline is co-editing with Aseem Prakash and Nives Dolsak.

**J. Chin, John**, a post-doctoral fellow with the Institute for Politics and Strategy at Carnegie Mellon University, has recently published an article published in the *Journal of Chinese Political Science* that may be of interest to section members: “[The Longest March: Why China’s Democratization Is Not Imminent](#)”.

**Kadivar, Mohammad Ali**. 2018. “Mass Mobilization and the Durability of New Democracies.” *American Sociological Review* 83(2):390–417.

**Kadivar, Mohammad Ali and Neil Ketchley**. 2018. “Sticks, Stones, and Molotov Cocktails: Unarmed Collective Violence and Democratization.” *Socius*4:2378023118773614.

**Muñoz, Paula**, (2018), *Buying Audiences. Clientelism and Electoral Campaigns When Parties are Weak*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

**Niedzwiecki, Sara** (2018): *Uneven Social Policies. The Politics of Subnational Variation in Latin America*: Cambridge University Press.

**Nikolayenko, Olena**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Fordham University, published “Why Women Protest: Insights from Ukraine’s EuroMaidan” (co-authored with Maria DeCasper), in *Slavic Review*, vol. 77 (Fall 2018). She received the 2018 APSA Small Research Grant to conduct additional research on women’s engagement in a revolution.

**Puerta-Riera, Maria**, Associate Faculty, Political Science. Valencia College, Orlando, U.S.A. Puerta-Riera, Maria “Venezuela: The Decline of a Democracy”, *Development*, 60(3), 174-179 (Available at:<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41301-018-0157-6>) DOI: 10.1057/s41301-018-0157-6

In a recently published article, entitled ‘Marketing parliament: The constitutive effects of external attempts at parliamentary strengthening in Jordan’, Dr. **Benjamin Schuetze** (postdoctoral research fellow, University of Freiburg) explores the reconfiguration of authoritarian rule in Jordan via external intervention in the name of democracy. The article is part of a special issue on the topic of ‘Decentring the study of international interventions’ and has appeared with *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2018.

**Siroky, David** recently received the Deil S. Wright Best Paper Award from the American Political Science Association (Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations Section), at the 2018 annual convention in Boston, for his paper “The Limits of Indirect Rule: Containing Nationalism in Corsica” (co-authored with **Sean Mueller, Michael Hechter** and **Andre Fazi**). The Fondation Maison des sciences de l’homme, France, has extended a fellowship to him in support of his work on Corsican nationalism.

**Solingen, Etel**. 2018 National Academy of Sciences, William and Katherine Estes Award, recognizing basic research in any field of cognitive or behavioral science that uses rigorous formal and empirical methods to advance our understanding of issues relating to the risk of nuclear war <http://www.nasonline.org/programs/awards/2018/Solingen.html>

**Solingen, Etel**. Nuclear Proliferation: The Risks of Prediction.” *Oxford Handbook of International Security*. Edited by Alexandra Gheciu and William C. Wohlforth (2018).

**Solingen, Etel and Peter Gourevitch**, “Domestic Coalitions: International Sources and Effects.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*, edited by William R. Thompson (2017).

**Solingen, Etel and Wilfred Wan**, “International Security: Critical Junctures, Developmental Pathways, and Institutional

## Section News

---

Change,” In *International Politics and Institutions in Time*, edited by Orfeo Fioretos (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

**Teorell, Jan, Michael Coppedge, Staffan Lindberg & Svend-Erik Skaaning.** “Measuring Polyarchy Across the Globe, 1900-1917”, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, forthcoming (first view available [here](#))

**Wahman, Michael** (formerly University of Missouri) has assumed a new position as Assistant Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University. He is a co-editor, together with Merete Bech Seeberg and Svend-Erik Skaaning, for a new special issue on “Candidate Nomination, Intra-Party Democracy, and Election Violence in Africa” published in *Democratization*.

**Wan, Wilfred and Etel Solingen,** “International Security: Nuclear (Non-) Proliferation.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, edited by William R. Thompson (Jan. 2017)

**You, Jong-sung**, formerly Senior Lecturer at ANU, has relocated to Korea, taking a new position as Professor at the Graduate School of Social Policy, Gachon University. He has published the article “[Limits of regulatory responsiveness: Democratic credentials of responsive regulation](#)”(with **Seung-Hun Hong**) in *Regulation and Governance*.

## 2018 AWARD RECIPIENTS

### The Linz Prize for Best Dissertation

Recipient: **Soledad Prillaman**, *Why Women Mobilize: Dissecting and Dismantling India's Gender Gap in Political Participation*. Harvard University.

Committee Statement: Soledad Prillaman's dissertation, *Why Women Mobilize: Dissecting and Dismantling India's Gender Gap in Political Participation*, tackles a question of tremendous political significance: why women in India participate in politics at significantly lower rates than men, despite the benefits they stand to gain by engaging with the state. Prillaman advances a compelling argument that women often do not participate because local leaders treat households as unitary actors when doling out patronage, engaging only with the (male) head-of-household, as a way of reducing the cost of maintaining clientelist networks. Along with social norms that isolate women to the domestic sphere, this results in a situation in which women lack access to social networks. However, when they are drawn into such networks, their political identities as women activate and they begin to engage on more equal footing with men. To support her argument, Prillaman uses a natural experiment involving the provision of social programs by an NGO and shows that women in these programs engage in higher rates of political participation than women who did not. Natural experiments, while increasingly common in political science, are notoriously difficult to identify and design, and Prillaman's work should be seen as a model of how such experiments should be conducted. She rounds out her project with qualitative details based on extensive fieldwork conducted in India. This project exemplifies how carefully reasoned theory and an impressive command of mixed-methods design can help elucidate even the most difficult questions in political science.

Honorable mention: **Elizabeth Nugent**, *The Political Psychology of Repression and Polarization in Authoritarian Regimes*. Princeton University.

**Committee Statement:** In her dissertation, *The Political Psychology of Repression and Polarization in Authoritarian Regimes*, Elizabeth Nugent tackles a critical question -- what explains elite polarization under authoritarianism -- which she rightly supposes helps to predict the success of democratic consolidation. Eschewing traditional theories of autocratic elite politics, with their focus on structural constraints alone, Nugent turns to social psychology and its emphasis on group identification. She argues that the type of repression the elites face -- whether targeted or widespread -- shapes their social identities and the degree of elite polarization, where targeted repression induces narrow social identities and greater polarization and widespread polarization generates wider social identities and lower polarization. The theory she develops defines a clear logical connection from state repressive tactics to elite beliefs and behavior, with a set of empirical implications that she assesses in qualitative and quantitative data. Her careful comparison of the Egyptian and Tunisian cases, reflecting years of field work in both countries, illustrates the crux of her argument, explaining the failure of democratization in the former case and its success in the latter in the wake of the Arab Spring. She bolsters this rich qualitative evidence with a set of novel experiments conducted in Tunis, illustrating how information about targeted repression can trigger polarization of policy preferences within subject groups, while information about widespread repression has the opposite effect. The validity of her theory beyond the Middle East and North Africa is bolstered in additional cross-national analysis from post-Soviet regimes. All told, Nugent's work is a prime example of rich theoretical development, together with a masterful mixing of qualitative and quantitative evidence, brought together with clear and compelling writing. Her dissertation stands to make a real contribution to our understanding of autocratic politics and where attempts at democratization are likely to be most successful.

**Chair:** Karen E. Ferree, University of California, San Diego ([keferree@ucsd.edu](mailto:keferree@ucsd.edu))

Avital Livny ([alivny@illinois.edu](mailto:alivny@illinois.edu))

Matthew Rhodes Purdy ([matthew.rhodes-purdy@wustl.edu](mailto:matthew.rhodes-purdy@wustl.edu))

## 2018 Award Recipients

---

### Best Article Award

Recipient: **Michael Albertus**. 2017. "Landowners & Democracy: The Social Origins of Democracy Reconsidered." *World Politics* 69(2): 233-276.

Honorable mention: **Bryn Rosenfeld**. 2017. "Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia." *American Political Science Review* 111(4): 637-652.

**Committee Statement:** The committee carefully read twenty-one articles, based on nominations and on our own proactive search in leading journals. After two rounds of deliberations, Michael Albertus' outstanding article unanimously emerged as the winner. This piece re-examines one of the classical questions of comparative democratization in a theoretically sophisticated way, offers wide-ranging, systematic empirical tests, and arrives at interesting, nuanced conclusions. Through a quantitative study based on careful data collection, the article provides the first statistical corroboration of longstanding arguments about the negative impact that labor-dependent landowners have on democracy.

But Albertus also shows how in recent decades, new political developments, such as land redistribution by autocratic regimes, have produced changes in landowners' political behavior and induced many of them to acquiesce in democratization. The author provides thorough empirical evidence for this transformation and its effects, which have facilitated advances toward democracy. Yet Albertus also demonstrates that landowners' influence is associated with elitist types of democracy that protect property rights and limit the representation of popular interests.

By investigating all these aspects, the article offers a rich and comprehensive picture of landowners' role in regime change, sheds new light on the third wave of democratization, and shows that recent transitions to democracy have come at the cost of limited democratic quality. The multifaceted demonstration of how socioeconomic structures affect political institutions and their transformation is masterful. The committee believes that Michael Albertus has made a major, lasting contribution to the democratization literature and is therefore happy to award him the section's article prize.

The committee also wants to recognize the article by Bryn Rosenfeld, which re-examines another influential argument in comparative democratization, namely the role of the middle class. Through an imaginative and novel empirical approach borrowed from epidemiology, this piece shows that professionals are much more likely to engage in pro-democratic protests if they work in the private sector; state-sector employees are reluctant to defy authoritarian governments. This interesting finding elucidates the political economy of democratization, corroborates arguments of classical liberalism, and helps us understand democratic involution in Russia under Putin and in other cases with state control over good parts of the economy.

**Chair:** Kurt Weyland ([kweyland@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:kweyland@austin.utexas.edu))

Milan Svolik ([milan.svolik@yale.edu](mailto:milan.svolik@yale.edu))

Sarah Shair-Rosenfield Arizona State University [sarah.shair-rosenfield@asu.edu](mailto:sarah.shair-rosenfield@asu.edu)

## 2018 Award Recipients

---

### Best Book Award

Recipient: **Daniel Ziblatt**. 2017. *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

#### Committee statement:

The Comparative Democratization Section book prize committee (Sheena Greitens, Stephan Haggard and Erik Herron) reviewed over 20 submissions and is pleased to announce that the award for 2018 goes to Daniel Ziblatt's *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press).

Prof. Ziblatt's magisterial analysis of democratization in Britain and Germany combines counterintuitive theory with a rich methodological tapestry drawing on a variety of novel sources, from bond market and electoral data to archival materials and party flyers. The book begins with the observation that democratization should not be viewed as occurring in narrow time frames, as the concept of a "transition" implies, but rather occurs over long-run paths that may either be incremental if still contingent (Britain) or punctuated by severe setbacks and reversions (Germany).

The core claim is that well-organized conservative political parties are crucial for "lowering the costs of toleration" and thus for the fate of democracy itself. To demonstrate this theory, Ziblatt must first explain how conservative parties arose in the first place. He then turns to the core comparison of the book, and in the process levels a number of standing assumptions. For example, he shows that agricultural holdings in Britain were larger than in Germany and tenant farming more common; rural social structure was not the barrier to democratization that it is presumed to be. Rather, organization mattered.

These core organizational differences are played out through an historical analysis that shows how Britain's conservative party proved adept at engaging in electoral competition, drawing on cross-class appeals and networks. The path toward wider participation was by no means smooth, and Ziblatt dissects the near miss of the early 20th century. But the conservative party in the end played a stabilizing role that was altogether lacking in Germany, and well before the collapse of Weimar.

Along the way, Ziblatt provides rich within-case narratives and comparisons, as analysis of the formation and strength of other conservative parties in Europe. He concludes by suggesting the broader relevance of his conservative party argument not only for Europe but settings as far afield as Chile and Taiwan. Ziblatt's book is a major accomplishment, both of comparative and historical research. It will stand as a defining work on processes of democratization.

**Chair:** Stephan Haggard ([shaggard@ucsd.edu](mailto:shaggard@ucsd.edu))

Sheena Chestnut Greitens ([greitenss@missouri.edu](mailto:greitenss@missouri.edu))

Erik S. Herron West Virginia [University.erik.s.herron@gmail.com](mailto:University.erik.s.herron@gmail.com)

## 2018 Award Recipients

---

### Best Field Work Award

Recipient: **Egor Lazarev**

Honorable mention: **Elizabeth Nugent** and **Şule Yaylacı**

**Committee statement:** The committee is pleased to name Egor Lazarev as this year's winner of the Comparative Democratization Best Fieldwork Award. Lazarev has assembled a theoretically and empirically rich study of demand for state, religious, and customary law in Chechnya and Dagestan that demonstrates how civil conflict disrupts gender hierarchies and prompts women to select less discriminatory legal institutions. Working under challenging field conditions, Lazarev combines ethnographic, survey, and experimental methods while showing laudible sensitivity to research positionality and potential biases that could influence his data and conclusions.

The committee is also pleased to name Elizabeth Nugent and Şule Yaylacı for honorable mention for the award. Nugent's dissertation combines extensive fieldwork, elite interviews, and lab experiments in Tunisia to study the effects of repression on post-democratization polarization. Yaylacı examines trust among bystanders in civil conflict with an impressive comparison of Turkey and Peru that relies on hundreds of semi-structured interviews and dozens of focus groups conducted under challenging conditions.

**Chair:** Daniel Corstange Columbia University [daniel.corstange@gmail.com](mailto:daniel.corstange@gmail.com)

Nicholas Barnes ([nicholas\\_barnes@brown.edu](mailto:nicholas_barnes@brown.edu))

Sarah Bush ([sarah.bush@temple.edu](mailto:sarah.bush@temple.edu))

### The Best Paper Award (for a paper presented at APSA 2017)

Recipient: **Elizabeth R. Nugent**, "The Psychology of Repression and Polarization in Authoritarian Regimes."

**Committee statement:** The paper shows how authoritarian legacies can shape later transitions by looking at the effect of coercive institutions on political identity and polarization. It explains why elites emerge more or less polarized from authoritarian contexts. Empirically, it compares Tunisia with Egypt. Paradoxically, the presence of a widespread repression in Tunisia reduced polarization and created a more favorable ground for a regime transition.

This is an exciting paper that links preference formation to repression, polarization, and regime change. The paper is well executed, based on multiple types of original data from Tunisia. Studies of democratization often treat patterns of polarization in autocracies as given, but this paper shows that they can be inferred from the repression policies deployed by autocrats. The finding that targeted repression increases polarization has far-reaching implications for the study of legacies and political psychology in autocratic regimes, and it provides important insights into the conditions under which regime transitions are more or less prone to failure. The paper will undoubtedly have a large impact on the field of comparative democratization.

Honorable mention: **Dan Treisman**, "Democracy by Mistake."

**Committee statement:** This paper examines the history of all democratizations since 1800. It demonstrates that democratization occurred because incumbent elites made unintended mistakes that undermined their positions in about two-thirds of the cases. It challenges current theories that posit democratization is a deliberate choice of elites that decide to diminish their power.

This paper is provocative and persuasive. The notion that democratization often happens by mistake rather than by rational calculations of leaders is new, correct and long overdue. The paper disaggregates a large data set of (some canonical) cases. It provides empirical evidence painstakingly constructed from various historical sources and challenges many prominent studies of democratization in the discipline. The paper will undoubtedly have a large impact on the field of comparative democratization.

**Chair:** Lenka Bustikova ([firstname.lastnameATasu.edu](mailto:firstname.lastnameATasu.edu))

Cristina Corduneanu-Huci ([corduneanu-hucic@spp.ceu.edu](mailto:corduneanu-hucic@spp.ceu.edu))

Jonathan Kriekhaus University of Missouri, Columbia [kriekhausj@missouri.edu](mailto:kriekhausj@missouri.edu)

# Annals of Comparative Democratization

*...is the official publication of the American Political Science Association's Comparative Democratization section. Formerly known as CompDem, it has been published three times a year since 2003. In October 2010, the newsletter was renamed APSA-CD and expanded to include substantive articles on democracy. In September 2018, it was renamed Annals of Comparative Democratization in view of the increasing recognition that contributions to symposia receive in the discipline.*



## Executive Editor

**Staffan I. Lindberg** is professor of political science and director of the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg; one of four PIs for Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem); Wallenberg Academy Fellow; member of the Young Academy of Sweden and the Board of U of Gothenburg; and a Research Fellow in the QoG Institute. He is author of *Democracy and Elections in Africa* and editor of *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition*, and has also worked on women's representation, clientelism, voting behavior, party and electoral systems, democratization, popular attitudes, and the Ghanaian legislature and executive-legislative relationships.



**Ruth Carlitz** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Program on Governance and Local Development at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Her research looks at government responsiveness from the 'top down' (how governments distribute public goods) and the 'bottom up' (what citizens and non-governmental organizations can do to promote transparency and accountability). She focuses primarily on East Africa, inspired by my experience living and working in Tanzania from 2006-2008. In addition to her academic research, she has worked on commissioned research for organizations including the World Bank, the International Budget Partnership, the UK's Department for International Development, and the Open Government Partnership



**Anna Lührmann** is a Research Fellow at the V-Dem Institute since 2015. She received her PhD in 2015 from Humboldt University (Berlin) with a doctoral thesis on the United Nation's electoral assistance. Prior to turning to academia, Anna was an MP in the German National Parliament (Bundestag, 2002- 2009). She currently works on several research projects in the realm of autocratization, autocracy, democracy aid, and elections. Her research has been published or is forthcoming in *Electoral Studies*, *International Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Democracy*.



**Ellen Lust** is the Founding Director of the Programs on Governance and Local Development at Yale University and at the University of Gothenburg, and Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. She has authored *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World* as well as articles in *Perspectives on Politics*, edited *The Middle East* and several volumes. The Moulay Hicham Foundation, NSF, the Swedish Research Council and other foundations have supported her research on authoritarianism, political transitions, and local governance.



**Kristen Kao** is a Research Fellow with the Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD) at the University of Gothenburg and a PhD Candidate in Political Science at UCLA. In 2014, she ran a nationwide survey in Jordan in collaboration with Ellen Lust and Lindsay Benstead funded by the GLD program at Yale. She has served as a program consultant and election monitor for a variety of international organizations, including The Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute.



**Kyle L. Marquardt** is a post-doctoral fellow at the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg. He studies identity politics and the politics of authoritarianism. His current project uses data from extensive field and survey research from Eurasia to examine the relationship between language and separatism. Other projects involve the use of list experiments to analyze support for authoritarian leaders and Bayesian latent variable analysis of the components of social identities



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Sprängkullsgatan 19  
411 23 Göteborg  
Sweden

