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Theories of Democratic Change Phase II: Paths Away from Authoritarianism

DRG Center Working Paper

Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series

December 12, 2017



College of Social Science
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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

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

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

This publication organizes and evaluates the body of current academic theory that can contribute to greater understanding of democratic openings in authoritarian systems. The authors explore why and how these openings may occur, recognizing that most cases of subtle change away from authoritarianism do not necessarily foretell a steady and unidirectional path towards democracy. The publication was produced by a research team from Michigan State University, and informed and vetted in two peer review workshops by a group of democratization scholars from American University, Brown University, Columbia University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, and the University of Chicago

The document begins by exploring the distinction between political liberalization and democratization, followed by a presentation of a theory matrix that gives a snapshot of the academic theories relevant to movements away from authoritarianism, organized into seven theory families. The publication then presents a deeper background on each of the theories and the theory families, and guides the reader through the process of selecting and organizing the theories.

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

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

ACRONYM LIST

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CSRD	Conseil Suprême pour la Restauration de la Démocratie
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
E&E	Europe and Eurasia
EU	European Union
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HZDS	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko
IO	International Organization
KKS	Slovak Communist Party
MENA	Middle East North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the global spread of democracy following the end of the Cold War, dictatorships still rule about one-third of the world's countries. The persistence of authoritarian governments poses a challenge for the international community on a variety of fronts: dictatorships are more likely to repress their citizens, instigate wars, and perpetrate mass killing, among others. This challenge is even more pressing given the gradual decline in the number of democracies worldwide over the last decade. Practitioners confront critical questions about which strategies are likely to pave the way for democratization versus which are likely to stifle it.

Through a research grant funded by USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (the DRG Center), under the Institute of International Education's (IIE's) Democracy Fellows and Grants Program, a research team from Michigan State University worked with the DRG Center to organize and evaluate the body of current academic scholarship that can contribute to understanding how and why countries move on paths from authoritarianism to democracy. The publication was informed and vetted in two peer review workshops by a group of democratization scholars from American University, Brown University, Columbia University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University, and the University of Chicago.

The publication begins by providing an overview of the concept of democratization and the difficulties of identifying and defining it. The theories related to democratization are offered in a simple theory matrix, allowing practitioners to quickly and easily:

- Survey the body of academic work dedicated to democratization through a succinct presentation of 34 theories organized within seven thematic theory families;
- Interpret the cause-and-effect relationships that academic research identifies through the presentation of brief hypotheses;
- Understand how scholars evaluate the strength and reliability of each hypothesis through a brief summary of the research team's assessment of causal arguments and evidence; and
- Explore how each theory can support the assessment and design of development programs, through basic questions that offer guidance for how to determine the relevance of that theory's specific cause-and-effect pathway to a particular context.

Organizing the theories into seven thematic families enables a close comparison of related theories on democratization and clear distinctions to be drawn among them. The researchers note, however, where ideas overlap across these theory families.

Following the matrix, the publication provides practitioners more detailed background on the seven theory families and the hypotheses within them.

Part I discusses key concepts in the democratization literature. Specifically, it delves into what democracy means and how it pertains to political liberalization more broadly. It also provides insight into how scholars measure paths from authoritarianism to democracy, and the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches.

Part II introduces the seven theory families, which include:

- Political leadership;
- Political culture;
- Political institutions;
- Political economy;
- International factors;
- Triggering events; and
- State capacity.

Part III presents the 34 hypotheses in detail, providing for each:

- A short title;
- A simple if-then hypothesis statement;
- A description of the main type of academic methodology used;
- The name of the relevant scholars;
- A summary of the underlying causal arguments;
- An assessment of the hypothesis' relevance to democratization;
- A summary of the lessons practitioners can derive to guide intervention; and
- An evaluation of the plausibility of the causal arguments and persuasiveness of the evidence.

Part IV concludes with a brief overall evaluation of each theory family.

Overall, this research concludes that despite the large body of literature devoted to democratization, many key hypotheses have mixed evidence to support them. And among those hypotheses that do have empirical support, the factors they emphasize often do not provide a clear entry point for practitioner intervention. Importantly, one of the central messages to emerge is that practitioners should pause before interpreting political liberalization as an indicator of a likely path toward democratization. The evidence suggests that many events that observers intuit signal an impending movement toward democracy are often instead efforts on the parts of authoritarian governments to entrench their rule.

Ultimately, there is more work to be done disentangling how specific events and conditions in authoritarian environments work toward or prevent subsequent democratization.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most consequential political changes of the last half-century has been the near-global spread of democracy. Between the 1970s and 1990s, dictatorships in regions including Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia collapsed. These changes were particularly rapid after the end of the Cold War, as the proportion of states in the world that could be said to have at least minimally democratic regimes increased from 34% in 1989 to 60% in 2010, according to the watchdog organization Freedom House. More recently, democratic openings have occurred in countries as varied as Burma, Burkina Faso, and Tunisia. The widespread growth in democracy has correlated with lower levels of repression, declining poverty rates, and a significant decline in the number of interstate wars.

However, despite the optimism of modernization theory and the “third wave” of democratization, dictatorships still govern about one-third of the world’s countries. Moreover, although the number of democracies is at its highest point in history, there are indicators that the positive democratic trend may be in reversal. In 2017, Freedom House reported that political and civil liberties worldwide have declined for the 11th consecutive year. And respect for democratic principles has declined in recent years in a broad swath of countries, including Ecuador, Hungary, Mali, Poland, Thailand, Turkey, and Zambia. The pervasiveness and persistence of autocratic rule underscores the importance of better understanding the political dynamics at play in these regimes and likely pathways to democracy.

Insights from academic literature on authoritarian regime dynamics and regime change can inform the development of effective strategies to reverse this decline and further democratic development in regions that have been more resistant to change, such as the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Africa. The first phase of the *Theories of Democratic Change* project identified and discussed the factors most likely to influence the movement away from democracy (as in, democratic backsliding). This phase of the project examines the flip side of the coin and investigates those factors most likely to foster transitions away from authoritarianism. It focuses on identifying the conditions that encourage states to proceed toward the democratic end of the autocratic-democratic spectrum.

For consistency, this white paper follows a similar organizational framework as [the white paper from Phase I](#). In the first section, we offer background on how we conceptualize paths away from authoritarianism, focusing on definitions (i.e., democratization and political liberalization), the importance of authoritarian politics to the probability and nature of regime change, and measurement of regime transition. In the second section, we describe and evaluate the major theories that have been proposed to understand it. We divide these theories into “families.” Within each theory family, we identify the central hypotheses that underlie them and spell out their specific expectations regarding the factors that influence democratization. In the third section, we discuss the utility of these studies for practitioners interested in global democracy. At the end of the report, we offer a glossary with brief explanations of key terms.

1. CONCEPTUALIZATION

The literature on what can be called “paths away from authoritarianism” is vast, comprising perhaps the largest focus of the comparative politics subfield, at least since the 1980s. Despite—or perhaps because of—this broad interest, several important issues with regard to the study of regime change remain unresolved. Given the fundamental nature of these issues, we review them before introducing the identified theory families.

1.1. Defining Democracy

Social scientists have long debated how to define concepts such as democracy and authoritarianism, and what the essential features of any regime type are. For the sake of inclusivity, we adopt a procedural definition of democracy, which primarily considers the ability of citizens to choose their government freely in an environment marked by open, fair competition between aspirants for public office. Importantly, elections, while a necessary component of democracy in that they facilitate this periodic choice and competition, are not sufficient. Nearly every country, including China, Cuba, Ethiopia, North Korea, Russia, Rwanda, Syria, and Vietnam, currently holds regular elections; however, these countries’ regimes are marked by an absence of any real competition for the most important policymaking positions, and thus do not offer their citizenries any real choice. Authoritarian regimes, which vary significantly in terms of their organization (Section 1.3), are marked by the absence of these essential components of choice and competition.

Broader definitions of democracy include concepts such as representation and accountability. The former refers to the extent to which government policy reflects the interests and preferences of the population. By choosing those who will hold office in executive and legislative positions, citizens theoretically have the opportunity to express their preferences and select individuals who will devise policies that are reflective of their interests. The latter refers to the citizenry’s ability to punish or reward incumbent governments for their past performance. Governments that are deemed to have underperformed in important areas, such as economic growth, provision of public goods and social services, or corruption, can be removed via the ballot; more-successful governors will be rewarded with retention. Thus, regular, competitive elections provide opportunities for citizens to induce good performance by their governments.

However, we caution against equating democracy with representation and accountability. While both are typically enhanced by democratization (defined in Section 1.2), authoritarian regimes can improve their performance in these areas without making meaningful steps toward allowing participatory and competitive politics. Authoritarian leaders sometimes attempt to incorporate—and thus, ostensibly represent—myriad sectoral (e.g., industrial, agrarian) and identity-based (e.g., ethnic, religious) interest groups in official policymaking bodies. In theory, these steps broaden representation, although the extent to which they actually improve incorporated groups’ ability to affect policy varies tremendously. Wedeen (2008) argues that somewhat democratic regimes might fail to represent their populations’ interests, while others without competitive elections might perform better in this area.

Authoritarian leaders might also design systems that improve citizens’ abilities to incentivize good government performance; such policies include anti-corruption campaigns, increased transparency, and decentralization. For example, a number of contemporary authoritarian regimes, including China and

Uganda, have undertaken meaningful reforms to empower local governments. These changes bring government closer to the people and thus ostensibly give citizenries more leverage to influence policy and track office holders' behavior. However, rather than a sign of impending democratization, improvements to representation and accountability might simply strengthen the authoritarian regime. Truex (2016), for example, argues that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has bolstered its hold on power through strategies to encourage "representation within bounds" in bodies like the National People's Congress and "responsiveness" through increasing reliance on elections, particularly for empowered local-level bodies. Other China scholars, including Landry (2008) and Dickson (2016), have outlined how the CCP maintains authority not in spite of, but perhaps due to, its robust decentralization of authority to mayors and local party secretaries. These strategies can facilitate information flows between the leadership and populations, improve regime legitimacy, divert citizen activism away from the center and toward local agents, and enhance the provision of goods and services to local populations, thus increasing loyalty to the regime. In some instances, reforms like decentralization can end up providing space for "subnational authoritarianism," as strongmen capture institutions of local governance (Gibson, 2005). In short, while representation and accountability usually accompany democracy and actors should generally support interventions in these areas because of the positive effects they often have on individuals' day-to-day lives, we are wary of equating these concepts with democracy, since smart authoritarian leaders often use reforms in these areas to enhance their power.

In a related sense, it is also important to note that it is unclear how democracy affects everyday citizens' lives, broadly speaking. Theoretically, democracy might improve governments' performance via increased accountability, improvements to civil society organization, marginalized groups' abilities to seek equality, and improved bureaucratic performance (Halperin, *et al.*, 2005). In fact, social scientists have identified myriad tangible benefits of democracy, including fewer wars (with fellow democracies) (Doyle, 1983; Maoz and Russett, 1993), greater spending on public goods such as health and education (Brown and Hunter, 2004; Brown and Mobarak, 2009; Deacon, 2009, Ghobarah, *et al.*, 2004; Halperin, *et al.*, 2005; Lake and Baum, 2001), fewer famines (Dreze and Sen, 1989), fewer human rights abuses (Davenport and Armstrong, 2004), and fewer instances of intrastate war (Reynal-Querol, 2005). However, there is no consensus on these positive externalities of democracy. Relationships between political regime type and human development might be non-existent or mixed, at best, according to some studies (Gauri and Khaleghian, 2002; Ross, 2006; Gerring, *et al.*, 2012), while others have found that, at least among poorer countries, democracy provides no boost in terms of greater levels of economic development (Przeworski, *et al.*, 2000). Some of the apparently salutary components of democracy, such as improved opportunities for accountability, might be mitigated by the pressures that regular, competitive elections put on leaders to seek short-term boosts in popularity, rather than putting in place forward-thinking policies that might be more likely to yield robust development improvements in the longer term (Haggard, 1991). And a number of cases, such as Qatar, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates, suggest that when a government is interested in fighting corruption, authoritarian practices might be an asset, rather than an impediment (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). However, despite these mixed findings, it is clear that democracy improves political rights of dissidents by providing them with greater opportunities for voice and mobilization, with lessened fear of retributive violence and other forms of persecution. Given the lack of a clear consensus about democracy's broader effects, we restrict our focus here to narrowly defined procedural elements, such as the extent of the franchise and the regular holding of meaningful, competitive elections, and generally do not address quality-of-life issues.

1.2. Defining “Paths Away from Authoritarianism”: Democratization and Political Liberalization

There are at least two ways to conceptualize transitions away from authoritarianism: democratization and political liberalization. Although these concepts are typically thought of as related, they are distinct, often conflated in the literature, and not necessarily mutually reinforcing. For many, democratization implies a clear change of system type, with authoritarian systems giving way to ones that can be characterized as democratic. Using Freedom House (FH) data (1972-2017), we identify 42 cases of transitions from authoritarianism (i.e., an average score of 5.5 or above on FH’s political and civil liberties ratings) to democracy (i.e., an average score of 2.5 or below). Readers should note that FH’s conceptualization of what constitutes being “free” is more-encompassing than that which we use to consider democracy—again, we use a broad definition to cover a broader swath of literature—but we use the FH cutoffs because of their widespread accessibility. In 25 (59.5%) of these cases, the country retained its democratic classification, with no interruptions, from the transition to the present (or until the country ceased to exist). These cases are clustered in Europe (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Serbia and Montenegro) and the Americas (Argentina, Chile, Grenada, Guyana, Panama, Uruguay), but there are also examples in East and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan) and sub-Saharan Africa (Benin, Cape Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, South Africa). In some cases, transitions to democracy are followed by at least temporary “reversions” to status between authoritarianism and democracy (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Malawi, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Zambia), and in a few others, some return to authoritarian ratings (Mali, Nigeria). Three countries—Ghana, Peru, and Thailand—experienced two authoritarian-to-democratic transitions.

These transitions can seem to occur rapidly, with an authoritarian system collapsing and giving way, in short order, to multipartyism and free-and-fair elections. In 13 of the 42 cases of authoritarian-to-democratic transition we identify, the gap between the last FH authoritarian score and the first democratic one is two years or less. Such rapid transitions include Argentina, Benin, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Grenada, Malawi, Mongolia, São Tomé e Príncipe, Suriname, and Zambia.

Transitions can also occur much more gradually, with reforms improving oppositions’ abilities to compete and citizens’ abilities to participate, leading to a democratic breakthrough, such as the toppling of the ruling party or autocrat, usually via elections, or a recognition on the part of observers that the country has opened enough to be considered democratic. The mean transition period across cases was 6.1 years, and eight cases were marked by transitions that took more than a decade: Thailand (11 years), Lesotho (12), Nepal (12), Nicaragua (12), Sierra Leone (15), Guyana (18), Taiwan (20), and Senegal (27). Shorter transitions seem to result in less-frequent reversions: of the cases in which transition took two years or less, only four (Bolivia, Malawi, Suriname, and Zambia) saw a reversion (30.1%), while in cases taking a decade or longer, reversions occurred in 75.0% (i.e., in all but Guyana and Taiwan). Most observers would contend that these 42 cases characterize paths away from authoritarianism constituting democratization, regardless of whether democracy “stuck.”

While democratization clearly implies paths away from authoritarianism, political liberalization is a broader concept. Political liberalization is typically defined as any change in a political system that makes the politics of that system more participatory and/or competitive. This conceptualization builds off the foundational work of Robert Dahl (1971), who defined “polyarchy”—rule by the many, or what he

considered the closest that regimes in the modern era could come to true democracy—as a system with high levels of effective enfranchisement (i.e., most adult citizens could participate in politics, including by voting) and a somewhat level playing field (i.e., truly competitive politics, usually marked by multipartyism). Any reform that moved a polity closer to polyarchy could be considered an example of political liberalization.

Treatments of “paths away from authoritarianism” should therefore consider political liberalization as part of the process of regime change; democratizations, after all, all involve significant political liberalization. However, much of the discussion to follow focuses more narrowly on democratization, namely because, while political liberalization can constitute a path away from authoritarianism, democratization is not necessarily an outcome of liberalization. Political liberalization can occur in any type of system: democratic, authoritarian, or hybrid. With regard to the former, regimes already considered democratic can institute reforms that broaden participation or encourage even greater competitiveness. For example, in 1971, the United States expanded the franchise with a constitutional amendment ensuring the right to vote by 18-, 19-, and 20-year-old citizens. The state-run British Broadcasting Corporation’s monopolies over domestic television and radio broadcasting in the United Kingdom ended in 1955 and 1973, respectively, with the opening of the airwaves to independent entities. And in 1994, Japan instituted electoral reforms that introduced greater proportionality in seat distributions and reduced perceived corruption in campaign financing, thus apparently increasing other parties’ abilities to compete with the long-dominant Liberal Democrats. While these reforms can all be considered examples of political liberalization, in that they increased participation and/or competitiveness, few observers would have considered the countries in which they were implemented to have been authoritarian prior to those changes.

On the other side of the spectrum, many authoritarian systems have instituted reforms that can be characterized as political liberalization, yet these reforms do not seem to undermine the durability of the regime. For example, in 2015, women won the right to vote in local elections in Saudi Arabia, thus expanding their opportunities to participate in the kingdom’s politics. In 2005, Uganda amended its constitution, following a referendum, to allow political parties to compete in elections, thus ending the nearly two-decade experiment with “no-party” politics. And in Vietnam, provincial-level officials gained increasing ability to act autonomously from the center throughout the 1990s and 2000s. However, these reforms do not seem to have challenged the rule of the House of Saud, President Yoweri Museveni, or the Vietnamese Communist Party, respectively, nor do they seem likely to do so, at least in the immediate future. It is, of course, difficult to ascertain the actual extent to which any particular reform has diminished a government’s capacity; future social scientists might view these reforms as critical to the dismantling of authoritarian systems. Still, political liberalization does not necessarily mean that an authoritarian regime is in imminent danger of collapse.

Perhaps more importantly, it is critical to consider that, apart from not significantly weakening authoritarian regimes, reforms characterized as political liberalization might often strengthen them. Most authoritarian leaders, especially in the aftermath of the Cold War, have allowed, or acquiesced to, “quasi”- or “proto”-democratic institutions, such as legislatures, parties, elections, and independent media. As we discuss in great detail in Section 2.2.3, while these institutional reforms do frequently create openings that allow opposition forces space to organize, mobilize, and force further, more-meaningful reforms, they might also help the authoritarian leadership address pressing problems, and thus actually prolong their tenure. *In other words, political liberalization might, perversely, stave off democratization.* Some have interpreted China’s empowerment of local governments in recent decades

as a strategy of, at least in part, diverting citizen anger over perceived failures at lower-level officials, and therefore away from the central leadership of the CCP (Lorentzen, forthcoming). Uganda's return to multipartyism coincided with the abolition of presidential term limits, with the former seen by many as a move to appease many parliamentarians' discomfort with the latter (Carbone, 2008). Others view elections and legislatures as opportunities for authoritarian leaders to learn more about populations' (Schedler, 2013; Pop-Eliches and Robertson, 2015) and politicians' (Gandhi, 2008) preferences, respectively. These examples make clear that while political liberalization sometimes constitutes a path away from authoritarianism, it is distinct from democratization.

In sum, political liberalization is a form of political change in autocracies (as well as in democracies), but it is one that may or may not bring with it democratization. Therefore, given that the goal of this phase of the project is to synthesize the key academic theories that inform our understanding of paths away from authoritarianism, evaluate their theoretical propositions and empirical strategies, and identify the key lessons they offer for policymakers, our primary focus will be on democratization, and we will only address political liberalization when it is part of more-significant regime transitions.

Finally, it is also important to emphasize that the factors that push countries toward greater democraticness do not necessarily guarantee that democracy (should it emerge) will be long lasting. Democratic transitions and democratic consolidation are distinct processes. In the first instance, authoritarianism is the starting point, while in the second, democracy is. For this reason, this phase of the project does not address democratic consolidation; we discuss it briefly, however, in Box 1.

Box 1: Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation occurs when groups accept and adhere to the democratic rules of the game. Though it is tempting to define a consolidated democracy based on the number of competitive elections and/or peaceful transfers of power that have occurred, most scholars consider the reality more complex. As Przeworski (1991) famously put it, "democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town" (p. 26). In other words, democratic consolidation involves the institutionalization of not only formal arrangements that secure democracy, but also informal and agreed upon norms of behavior.

This means that democracies essentially fall into two categories: those that are consolidated, where the odds of reverting to dictatorship are extremely low, and those that are not consolidated but survive because of some fortunate circumstances (Svolik, 2008). As Svolik emphasizes, we often cannot observe under which category a specific democracy falls. A single free and fair election is not a sure sign that democracy is consolidated, nor are subsequent ones.

1.3. Taking Authoritarianism Seriously

Any analysis of democratization should start with a focus on authoritarianism, for two reasons. First, measuring the extent to which political change has occurred is difficult without a common understanding of pre-existing conditions. Scholars have offered a wide range of definitions of authoritarianism, which complicates attempts to establish clarity around concepts such as

democratization and liberalization. Because definitions of dictatorship vary significantly across the literature, this project highlights how specific theories conceive of dictatorship and the impact such conceptualizations have on understandings of movements away from authoritarianism. It is careful to make clear the circumstances under which the terms “authoritarian regime,” “non-democracy,” and “autocracy” have different meanings, but otherwise uses them interchangeably.

Second, the nature of the *ancien régime* often significantly affects not only the likelihood of regime change, but also how it occurs and the prospects for consolidation. Certainly, dictatorships are not one and the same (Geddes, 2003; Gandhi, 2008). Mexico under the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) looks very different from Nicaragua under the Somoza family, while the Communist party systems of Eastern Europe contrast starkly with military regimes in West Africa. Dictatorships are also not necessarily synonymous with the leaders who rule them (Geddes, *et al.*, 2014; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011). Though in some instances the leader and the regime are indistinguishable, in many the regime lasts well beyond the tenure of any single leader, like North Korea under the Kim family or China since Mao. This helps to explain why international pressures on dictatorships to democratize or change their behavior that focus on the leader often fail to bring about the intended effects (Escribà Folch and Wright, 2010). Finally, dictatorships often adopt the same institutions that scholars have historically viewed as hallmarks of democracies—including elections, parties, and legislatures—even if they have no intention of using them for democratic purposes (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009; Geddes, 2006; Gandhi, 2008; Smith, 2005) (Section 2.2.3). As a consequence, the adoption of democratic-looking elements like elections by dictatorships does not necessarily suggest an increase in the “democraticness” of the regimes governing them. Saddam Hussein, for example, won both of the presidential referendums he organized in Iraq with 100% of the vote.

Scholars have attempted to organize the study of authoritarianism by proposing a number of typologies to capture these differences. These are important to outline because they reflect fundamental differences in how scholars understand and theorize about movements to and from authoritarianism. Most typologies fall into two categories: continuous and categorical.

Continuous typologies of dictatorship disaggregate regimes according to how “authoritarian” they are, with the idea being that political systems can be placed along an autocratic-democratic scale. A number of scholars claim, for example, that many regimes lie in the middle of this continuum, as they use formally democratic institutions that conceal a “reality of authoritarian domination” (Diamond, 2002, p. 24). Scholars have referred to these regimes as “grey zone” (Ibid.), “competitive authoritarian” (Levitsky and Way, 2010), “illiberal democracies” (Zakaria, 1997), “semi-authoritarianism” (Ottaway, 2003), and “electoral authoritarian” (Schedler, 2006; 2013). Such regimes are neither fully authoritarian nor fully democratic. Though they often hold elections in which opposition parties are allowed to compete and occasionally win legislative seats, electoral contests are not truly competitive because the electoral playing field is not level. Incumbents control access to the media, use the security apparatus to harass and intimidate members of the opposition, and manipulate the electoral rules and outcomes to tilt outcomes in their favor.

Importantly, continuous perspectives allow researchers to recognize that regimes can move away from authoritarianism (i.e., liberalize) without actually becoming what most observers would recognize as democracies. Openings in the political system, such as allowing opposition parties to hold legislative seats, are considered indicators of greater “democraticness” even though the regime leadership remains unchanged, and any increases in actual political competitiveness might be marginal. Certainly, such

changes have real consequences for citizens, such that those living under semi-autocratic rule enjoy greater freedoms than those living under fully autocratic rule. Citizens may not be able to have a say in the selection of their leaders, but at least they have limited influence in other political domains. Decentralization and expansions of the franchise, as discussed in Section 1.1, are examples of this type of dynamic. In some cases, such as Guatemala in the 1980s and more recently in Burma, initial political reforms were a precursor to more sweeping change, giving some of the political opposition real access to power even if it is circumscribed within particular policy areas and the military retains power over key positions in defense and security. Table 1 presents a selection of such continuous measures.

Table 1. Selection of Continuous Measures of Authoritarianism

	Polity	Freedom House	Varieties of Democracy
Variable name	<i>Combined Polity Score</i>	<i>Average of Political Rights and Civil Liberties</i>	<i>Electoral Democracy Index</i>
Scale	-10 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic)	1 (most free) to 7 (least free)	0 (least democratic) to 1 (most democratic)
Authoritarian cutoff	5 (or 6) and lower	3.0 and higher (Partly Free, Not Free)	0.66 and lower (Autocratic, Electoral Authoritarian)

Categorical typologies, on the other hand, differentiate regimes based on specific dimensions, enabling scholars to avoid making any assumptions about the linearity of the path from dictatorship to democracy. Most categorical typologies focus on differences in regime structures. The typology developed by Geddes (1999; 2003) and further expanded by Geddes, *et al.* (2014), for example, categorizes dictatorships based on differences in the identity of the group that controls leadership selection and policy choices. It differentiates regimes according to whether this group consists of an individual and supporters (i.e., personalist dictatorships), the military (i.e., military dictatorships), a dominant party (i.e., single-party dictatorships), or a ruling family (i.e., absolute monarchies). The argument is that political actors in these distinct institutional environments behave differently, which affects regimes’ survival rates, the manner of regime breakdown, and prospects for democratization. Another widely used typology, first introduced by Alvarez, *et al.* (1996) and further developed by Cheibub, *et al.* (2010), categorizes dictatorships based on the type of leader (i.e., monarch, a member of the military, or a civilian). Whereas civilian dictators do not rely on a pre-existing organization to govern (and in turn typically turn to a political party), monarchs rely on the royal family, and military dictators rely on the armed forces. The motivation underlying this typology is that differences in the nature of the leader bear on the incentives leaders face and in turn on their strategies and prospects for survival in office.

Categorical typologies presume a more rigid understanding of regime change than continuous ones. From this perspective, all dictatorships are equally autocratic; movements away from authoritarianism only occur with democratization (as in, when democratic regime change has occurred). As discussed in Section 1.1, many political developments often attributed by continuous perspectives as “openings” are in fact part of a regime’s survival strategy. For example, most dictatorships since the end of the Cold War have responded to changes in the international environment by holding regular elections, often with multiple political parties, and frequently housing elected representatives in a legislature—all

institutions typically associated with democratic rule (Kendall-Taylor and Frantz, 2015). And such heavily institutionalized dictatorships last even longer in power than their less-institutionalized counterparts. Citizens may enjoy greater political freedoms, but at the expense of very long-lasting and resilient autocratic governments. The implication of this perspective is that subtle signals of political liberalization mean little until the key leadership group relinquishes its monopoly on political power. Table 2, which is drawn from Lidén (2014, p. 56), offers a selection of these categorical measures.

Table 2. Selection of Categorical Measures of Authoritarianism

Geddes (1999); Geddes, <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Hadenius & Teorell (2007); Wahman, <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Alvarez, <i>et al.</i> (1996); Cheibub, <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Kailitz (2013)
Monarchy	Monarchy	Monarchy	Monarchy
Military	Military	Military	Military
Personalist	No-party	Civilian	Personalist
Dominant-party	One-party		One-party
	Multi-party		Communist
			Electoral

While continuous typologies enable researchers to capture transitions to (or from) democracy based on movements up (or down) a scale, categorical typologies allow researchers to detect the full range of regime change that can occur in authoritarian political systems. Regime change is defined here as a change in the “basic informal and formal rules that determine what interests are represented in the authoritarian leadership group and whether these interests can constrain the dictator” (Geddes, *et al.*, 2014, p. 314). For example, continuous typologies will reveal the transition to democracy in Brazil in 1985, but they may miss when an authoritarian regime leaves power and transitions to a failed state or chaos, as in Somalia in 1991 or Libya in 2011, or to a new authoritarian regime, as in Uganda in 1971 or Iran in 1979. Continuous typologies are simply not devised to identify these forms of regime change. Yet, this is not a minor point, given the frequency with which authoritarian-to-authoritarian regime changes occur. Table 3 illustrates this using data from Geddes, *et al.* (2014). It shows that, since the end of the Cold War, democracy is increasingly the likely outcome when an authoritarian regime leaves power. However, new authoritarian regimes or failed states still result about one-third of the time. (See Section 2.2.5.3 for more on the changing geopolitical environment.)

Table 3. Frequency of Different Types of Authoritarian Regime Change

Percentage of authoritarian regime transitions to:	1946-2010	1946-1989	1990-2010
Democracy	45%	35%	66%
New authoritarian regime	50%	64%	22%
Failed state	5%	1%	12%

The factors that scholars theorize affect movements away from authoritarianism, not surprisingly, vary substantially based on the perspective underlying the research agenda. Because of this, this project will

differentiate throughout how authoritarian regimes are categorized in specific theories and the consequences of such categorizations for understanding paths away from authoritarianism.

To summarize, movements toward greater democracy may or may not mean democratization. Categorical typologies enable us to identify when democratic transitions occur (along with other forms of authoritarian regime change), but more-subtle political liberalizations are only noticeable with continuous typologies. In addition, we cannot assume that political liberalization necessarily leads to democratization, particularly in the short term. Countries may linger in grey-zones for many years, such as contemporary Russia and Venezuela. Practitioners interested in global democracy, therefore, should be careful to articulate the specific outcome in which they are interested (more democraticness broadly speaking versus full democracy) and categorize countries' political systems accordingly.

From a normative perspective, full democracy is often associated with a host of positive outcomes, as mentioned earlier (Section 1.1), and a variety of "good" things to perhaps justify its pursuit globally. If we conceptualize full democracies as places where free and fair elections determine who holds the executive post (see the Phase I report for a detailed discussion of different conceptualizations of democracy), the evidence indicates that, as of 2010, about 60% of the world's countries fall under this category (Geddes, *et al.*, 2014).

At the same time, recent evidence suggests that, normatively speaking, there are positives for citizens living under grey-zone regimes as opposed to full dictatorships. (In the comparisons here, full dictatorships are the reference category.) Where regimes regularly hold multiparty elections, there are better outcomes on health, education, gender equality, and basic freedoms compared to where no elections are held (Miller, 2015). The idea is that contested elections (even at low levels of electoral competition) incentivize regimes to improve social welfare while improving their capacity to do so. These findings correspond with additional research that ties the legalization of opposition parties in dictatorships to greater calorie consumption and civil liberties (Conrad, 2011). Despite the optimism that such findings suggest for the quality of life for citizens living under grey-zone rule, we must be cautious before assuming that there are not costs that come with it. The evidence also indicates that though such regimes repress civil liberties less than do full dictatorships, they are associated with much higher rates of targeted repression of opponents, such as torture, extrajudicial killing, and political imprisonment (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014).

With these points in mind, we leave it to practitioners to assess the desirability and feasibility of focusing on democratization, greater democraticness, or both as the end goal. We now turn to a discussion of the theory families in the democratization literature that we highlight in this white paper.

2. DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF THEORY FAMILIES

We divide theories of paths away from authoritarianism into seven families, which cover the major ideas proposed in the field. These include: Political Leadership, Political Culture, Political Institutions, Political Economy, International Factors, Triggering Events, and State Capacity. In what follows, we provide a literature review of these families; for continuity, we divide this review into four parts, following the organizational structure of Phase I.

Part one of this section offers a brief introduction of the seven theory families, as well as a discussion of the central ideas and assumptions that they share. Theories are statements that seek to explain a given outcome and provide insight into the causal mechanisms that underlie it. They are abstract and not directly testable. Hypotheses, by contrast, are testable: they identify one or more independent variables and a dependent variable, and make expectations about their relationship. (See the Phase I report for a more in-depth discussion of these distinctions.) Part two of this section therefore narrows the focus to the specific hypotheses that emerge from each theory family. For each hypothesis, we offer a synthesis of the central expectations, the relevance of the hypothesis for democratization, the lessons for policy interventions, and an evaluation of the hypothesis' merit, theoretical plausibility, and empirical support. Throughout, we offer a handful of cases—on transitions in East Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Niger, Slovakia, South Africa, and Tunisia—to highlight, in greater detail, some of the arguments in the literature. Part three of this section concludes by summarizing the key insights from our evaluation of the seven theory families and the hypotheses that emerge from them. Part four offers a theory matrix, in which we summarize hypotheses, key literature, and overall assessments.

2.1 Introducing the Seven Theory Families

In this phase of the *Theories of Democratic Change* project, we group theoretical arguments about the causes of movements away from authoritarianism into the seven aforementioned categories: Political Leadership, Political Culture, Political Institutions, Political Economy, International Factors, Triggering Events, and State Capacity. These categories correspond closely with the categories in Phase I, providing continuity to the project and allowing practitioners to track theories and approaches across each phase.

The first five categories overlap with those of Phase I because they encapsulate existing research on authoritarian survival and democratization. The specific factors that we focus on in Phase II differ, however, as does our approach. While Phase I took democratic governance as the starting point for theoretical inquiry, Phase II takes autocratic governance as the starting point. This is an important distinction. Causal pathways are not always consistent across both environments. For example, political institutions such as parties function vary differently under dictatorship than they do under democracy (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009) and should not be expected to exert the same effect on political outcomes, such as bargaining over policy choices.

The latter categories—Triggering Events and State Capacity—are new to this phase of the project. The first captures the role that specific political events, such as coups, protests, and civil wars, play in altering prospects for movements toward greater “democraticness.” The second addresses questions of the necessity of strong state institutions to the emergence of democracy.

One category from Phase I—Social Structure and Political Coalitions—is excluded here. As the Principal Investigators in Phase I astutely assess, “the majority of the ‘classic’ theories of social structure, political coalitions, and democracy rest heavily on informal theory and non-disciplined case-study narratives” (p. 47). They offer suggestions for the ways in which these theories can contribute to future theoretical development of democratic backsliding, all of which would be relevant to research on democratization and political liberalization. There would be little value added in simply repeating this exercise, although we will reference these theories in this report when warranted, albeit in other categories.

The seven categories in Phase II provide a broad synthesis of the existing literature on democratization; in doing so, the survey covers foundational literature, as well as newer research that addresses recent developments. In addition, Phase II highlights at least three major trends in the development of thinking about pathways from authoritarianism, including 1) a movement away from teleological approaches, and an understanding that democratic development is not an automatic or one-way process (as recognized by USAID’s commissioning of the Phase I study); 2) increased attention to theories focusing on leadership, which was common in the 1970s and 1980s, but received less attention as theories of mass mobilization became more popular in the 1990s; and 3) a new focus on “triggering events,” and how societal groups’ abilities to organize collective action around such events is changing.

2.1.1. Political Leadership

One of the most salient debates in the literature on regime change—as well as on many questions of interest to social scientists—is over how much emphasis to place on individual decision-making in determining outcomes of interest. According to agency-based perspectives, individuals’ decisions have significant bearing on political trajectories; individuals’ interests, orientations, and decision-making processes therefore deserve particular attention. With reference to regime transitions, scholars adopting such an approach have tended to focus on political elites, including leaders of opposing factions. These approaches contrast with so-called “structuralist” ones, which consider political outcomes to be largely shaped by factors that are relatively stable and/or difficult to change (e.g., economic development, wealth distribution, ethnolinguistic fractionalization). Taken to the extreme, structural approaches treat human actors almost as billiard balls, reacting in predictable ways to external stimuli, and without much ability to shape their own trajectories. In later sections, we focus on such approaches, with particular attention to economic factors.

Approaches emphasizing political leadership can be sorted into two broad categories. The first focuses on what might best be called the idiosyncrasies of individual elites and how their personalities, skills, and preferences affect regime trajectories. The second, and more voluminous, category includes research on how the distribution of power, within governments and between government and opposition, influences preferences, strategies, and bargaining. While literature in the first tradition tends to focus on individuals, particularly national leaders, the second is more likely to consider recognized leaders and other regime supporters, as well as those in the opposition.

Regardless of focus, approaches in this vein suggest that those interested in fostering democratic transitions should pay greater attention to important figures’ preferences, capabilities, and relative positions *vis-à-vis* potential political opponents. Democratic transitions are most likely to occur when most important political actors feel assured, not necessarily about their opponents’ motives, but about their likelihood of adhering to the democratic rules of the game for the foreseeable future. However, a major critique of leadership approaches is that they ignore economic, demographic, and cultural

realities, as discussed below. Democratization is not as simple as identifying and empowering the “right” leaders; the best-equipped and most-committed democrats might falter in the face of economic instability, inter-ethnic animosity, and populations with little experience with, or support for, democratic norms. Conversely, favorable structural conditions or institutional designs might enable democracy to emerge, even when major political actors are less-than-committed to democracy as a regime.

2.1.2. Political Culture

Political culture refers to the attitudes and beliefs communally held by a people, which form the root of their political behavior. Unlike institutional and structuralist approaches, cultural approaches assume that distinct populations often vary in their reactions to the same forces.

Most theories in this family tie certain tendencies in populations’ attitudes and values with certain institutional patterns. Specifically, they argue that democratic political cultures help to explain stable democratic institutions. This idea originated in ancient Greece, with philosophers such as Aristotle asserting that different types of government were reflections of the predominant values of their peoples.

There are three major competing hypotheses in this strand of the literature, which differ primarily in terms of the specific cultural features posited to be most important for democracy: civic cultural values, social capital, and legitimacy. There are critical assumptions common to all of these hypotheses: that political culture is observable, that it is fixed in a particular setting, and that it influences political outcomes.

Because political culture is a difficult concept to measure directly, most researchers use survey responses as a proxy for it (even though survey questions may have different meanings in different languages and cultural contexts). They typically examine how national aggregates of individual-level attitudes affect some indicator of “democraticness.”

“Democraticness” can be measured by looking at levels of democracy, democratization, or democratic consolidation. How researchers operationalize it matters. Studies that test the impact of political culture on levels of democracy or the chance of democratic transition speak to our understanding of paths away from authoritarianism. Those that look at democratic consolidation (as in, democratic deepening or stability), by contrast, are more relevant to our understanding of backsliding in countries that are already democratic. Much of the research in this branch of the literature falls into the latter category, and we cannot assume that the same cultural factors that entrench pre-existing democracies will also cause countries to transition away from authoritarianism.

Empirically, correlations exist between democratic political culture and democracy, but causal patterns are not well established. Even in those instances where empirical tests are consistent with a causal story, there is typically little evaluation of the underlying mechanisms that drive it.

Moreover, while political cultures might vary substantially from one country to the next, as well as regionally within them, they are notoriously slow changing over time. As a result, a central criticism common to theories in this family is that culture is too sticky to explain political change satisfactorily.

The theories in this strand of the literature on political culture imply that policymakers should emphasize changing specific cultural attributes of a country's citizens to increase its propensity for greater "democraticness." At the same time, those pursuing such efforts should bear in mind that there is not compelling evidence that democratic political culture is effective in pushing countries out of authoritarianism. This does not mean that a relationship does not exist—culture is very difficult to measure—but rather that it has yet to be established empirically.

There are two much smaller branches of the literature on political culture and democratization that are also discussed here. The first looks at the role of social movements, while the second looks at ideology (religion, specifically). We include social movements in this theory family because they are typically reflections of the underlying associational patterns of the citizenry. Likewise, we include ideology here because it is tightly connected to values and attitudes.

The bulk of the research in these two areas is based on case studies, indicating that the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. That said, there are two messages that emerge. The first is that social movements that are decentralized and ideologically neutral are more likely to be successful in pressing authoritarian regimes to democratize. The second is that there is no single ideology that is associated with democratization. Whether religion will influence a transition to democracy is context-dependent.

2.1.3. Political Institutions

Some theories focus on the specific ways in which institutions such as elections, political parties, and legislatures influence prospects for political liberalization. Under authoritarianism, such institutions are often referred to as "pseudo-democratic," because they mimic those typically found in democracies, albeit absent elections that are truly free and fair contests and other institutions that actually limit rulers' power in meaningful ways. Here, the distinction between political liberalization and democratization specifically is quite critical. Some scholars assess that the creation and maintenance of specific political institutions is a sign of political liberalization; others assert that these same institutions actually perpetuate the continuance of autocratic rule (thereby delaying democratization).

The presence of pseudo-democratic institutions in dictatorships is not altogether new, but it has become more common since the end of the Cold War. Research on "illiberal democracies," "hybrid regimes," and "competitive authoritarian regimes" has documented this rise, highlighting dictatorships' increased reliance on institutions typically associated with democracy. Building off of this observation, others contend that institutionalized dictatorships are now the norm; the majority of today's dictatorships feature political parties and regular elections, and many allow opposition representation in legislative bodies.

Though pseudo-democratic institutions in dictatorships are often associated with prolonged regime survival, their incorporation exposes dictatorships to some risk, even if small, that they will be used to unseat them. In Africa, for example, the holding of elections, however flawed, seems to be associated with democratic gains over time (Lindberg, 2006). When institutionalized dictatorships do collapse, there are some indications that their prospects for democratization are higher than those of dictatorships that govern in institution-free environments (Howard and Roessler, 2006). Such institutions might provide important experience and resources to pro-reform actors in the pre-transition era, while they might also disperse power in ways that allow for greater pluralism after democratic openings occur.

While there is also empirical evidence to support arguments about the connections between certain institutional arrangements and particular outcomes, such studies might be limited by the difficulty of determining causality. Namely, countries might adopt certain proto- or pseudo-democratic institutions because they are more predisposed to democratic rule, by dint of historical legacies, economic conditions, or social structures.

A central message to emerge from this theory family for practitioners is that they should be cautious before interpreting the adoption and/or deepening of pseudo-democratic institutions in dictatorships as a sign that democratization is around the corner. Certain institutional arrangements may boost the chance of a democratic transition (particularly conditional on an election year), but the baseline risk of it happening at any given moment in time is still low.

Though there is a large and abundant literature tying political institutions with autocratic survival and explaining the reasons why dictatorships adopt them, the hypotheses selected here tie them with democratization specifically, and the discussion focuses on that particular relationship.

2.1.4. Political Economy

Many scholars who view structural factors as important determinants of regime trajectories consider questions related to political economy. Theories on government retention and change in democracies typically pay close attention to economic conditions. The so-called economic voting literature suggests that citizens condition their support for incumbents on their evaluations of the state of the economy (Fiorina, 1981; Erikson, 1989; Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Tucker, 2006; Healy and Malhotra, 2013), with attention to factors such as macroeconomic growth, employment levels, and inflation. Simply, in good economic times, populations reward incumbents by reelecting them; in bad times, they punish them by ousting them with their ballots.

A growing literature also focuses on how macroeconomic conditions affect regime stability, more broadly, rather than simply government retention. According to this perspective, regime collapse is more likely during periods of economic crisis. Citizens are less willing to support the *status quo* if they evaluate that it is threatening their ability to be gainfully employed or put food on the table. Regimes' legitimacy, in other words, is undermined by poor economic performance. While this phase focuses specifically on the potential for economic crisis to undermine authoritarian regimes, democratic regimes are also vulnerable to backsliding for similar reasons, as Phase I outlined. Parliamentary democracy in Weimar Germany and a so-called "pacted democracy" in Venezuela, for example, collapsed in the wake of popular disgruntlement over economic issues. Autopsies of authoritarian regimes also frequently point to economic factors as a primary cause for their demise (Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; 1997). Treatments of regime change in places as varied as Egypt, the former Soviet Union, Benin, Indonesia, and Argentina have focused on how economic decline, crisis, or sclerosis catalyzed popular uprisings or reformist movements that eventually led to major political liberalization.

Many of the rules that Bueno de Mesquita and Smith enumerate in their *Dictator's Handbook* (2012) involve controlling and strategically allocating access to resources. However, unfavorable economic realities threaten incumbents in various ways, including by limiting the availability of resources for incumbents to co-opt support or finance repression, increasing support for an opposition promising

change, creating splits within the ruling coalition with regard to optimal paths forward, and delegitimizing systems that promised economic growth as a tradeoff for political freedoms.

Other literature takes a significantly different approach with regard to the relationship between economic conditions and regime trajectories. Modernization theory, which has ebbed and flowed in its popularity among academics and practitioners since the 1950s, posits a direct, causal relationship between development and democracy (Lipset, 1959). Here, economic development might actually be threatening to dictators, since such changes foster the emergence of a better-educated, more-capable population that is less reliant on the state for survival and advancement; an efficacious, independent population hungry for political input is a recipe for disaster, from a dictator's perspective. Other approaches mix modernization theory and standard economic voting literature, arguing that the most-dangerous point for an authoritarian is when the economy grows for a sustained period, and then suffers a downturn. Under such a scenario, a newly empowered population is likely to have significant grievances against the regime, due to its most-recent performance, and demand change accordingly.

Approaches focusing on the economy have long suffered from concerns over causation. In short, to the extent that there is a relationship between economic development and democracy—and scholars disagree on this—it is not obvious whether economic growth stimulates democratization, political liberalization unleashes economic growth, or some third factor drives both simultaneously. Additionally, a burst of recent literature looks beyond growth and is more concerned with the distribution of wealth within countries. Here, the findings are just as seemingly contradictory, with some scholars predicting that inequality increases chances for democratization, while others arguing that it hampers it. While we focus on the differences—theoretically, methodologically, and empirically—within this literature below, the lessons for policymakers are still unclear.

2.1.5. International Factors

External forces can influence domestic politics, including regime trajectories. Most directly, foreign governments and other external actors attempt to change regimes, or nudge transitions in certain directions. Historically, the goal of many interveners was not democratization *per se* but rather the overthrow of unfriendly governments, replacing them with alternatives more favorable to the intervener. Such logic explains the ouster of authoritarian regimes in places such as Uganda (1979), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and Afghanistan (2001), and arguably Austria, Germany, Italy, and Japan after World War II. Democratization had only been a primary end goal of international intervention in the past several decades, although the Kennedy administration created USAID in the 1960s to enhance development and democracy in Latin America as part of a larger strategic goal to prevent Communist revolutions in the region in the wake of the 1959 Cuban Revolution. There is debate about whether democratization was the primary goal for many of the incursions during this period, with the most-prominent example being the 2003 U.S.-led overthrow of the regime in Iraq.

Perhaps more commonly, populations and governments are influenced by regime transitions they observe elsewhere. So-called “demonstration effects” might occur when a population learns—usually via mass media—of successful anti-regime activities in one country, and opposition activists attempt to replicate such activities in their own countries. Such behavior might explain, at least in part, why Huntington (1991) observed democratization occurring in “waves,” with anti-regime protest movements clustering temporally and geographically. The collapse of single-party regimes in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria in the span of a few months suggests such a contagion

effect, although these systems were weakened not only by a rise in popular protests but by the decline of their patron, the Soviet Union. Earlier, “People Power” in the Philippines (1986) might have been inspired by anti-military protests in Argentina. More recently, the wave of protests that swept the Arab world likely drew inspiration from the successful mobilization that first occurred in Tunisia, followed by Egypt.

In addition, governments might also draw lessons from what they have witnessed occurring in other countries. Numerous African dictators, for example, might have agreed to national conferences (i.e., constitutional conventions that included broad swaths of the population) and other forms of political liberalization because they wished to avoid the fate of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was overthrown and executed beside his wife in December 1989 after refusing to acquiesce to popular demands for economic and political reforms. And during the Arab Spring, those autocrats who first faced popular uprisings (i.e., Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt) fell quickly, while other governments were able to squelch nascent protest movements through repression (e.g., Bahrain), cooptation (e.g., Saudi Arabia), or moderate reforms (e.g., Morocco), possibly because they were able to learn from their peers’ earlier errors. Those who were eventually overthrown (i.e., Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen) only fell after pronounced periods of violence.

Finally, international events, such as economic crises, sudden changes in prices for commodity goods, and shifts in the leadership of major donors, could affect regimes in numerous countries simultaneously.

In sum, political change within a country does not occur in a vacuum. Simply being surrounded by democratic neighbors increases the chance of democratization (Gleditsch and Ward, 2006). However, the effect of external forces has apparently not been consistent across history. While the first (1800s-1914) and second waves (1945-1962) of democratization were “inside jobs,” driven primarily by domestic factors, external forces were more influential in the third wave, which saw nearly a quarter of countries transition from dictatorship to democracy in the last quarter of the 20th century (Huntington, 1991). And while there is general agreement that international factors matter, studies vary in terms of the types of influences they highlight.

2.1.6. Triggering Events

Structural conditions are a key component of understandings of political liberalization, yet specific events (termed “triggering events” here) are often the catalyst for change. Theories of “threshold models” and “information cascades” help explain why.

In authoritarian regimes, advocates for change may exist, but they often have good reason to keep their preferences hidden (Kuran, 1991). As a result, other pro-reform citizens lack the information they need to make an informed decision about whether to make their preferences known. A triggering event can change this, however, by prompting some citizens (even if they are only a minority) to reveal their preferences publicly, leading to a cascade effect where soon many more do (Nathan, 2013). As Kuran (1991, p. 13) writes in his analysis of the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, “seemingly unshakable regimes saw public sentiment turn against them with astonishing rapidity, as tiny oppositions mushroomed into crushing majorities.”

For this reason, it is important to understand the contexts under which certain types of concrete, observable, and episodic political events are likely to engender movements to greater democracy. This

theory family therefore captures the role that specific political events, such as coups, protests, and civil wars, play in altering prospects for movements toward greater “democraticness.”

A number of studies show that protest, for example, can play a critical role in democratization. Moreover, protests are unseating a greater proportion of authoritarian leaders now than prior to the Cold War, suggesting this may be a fruitful lens through which to view the future prospects of democratization. Non-violent protests, in particular, are associated with democratic transitions, while violent protests increase the chance of autocracy-to-autocracy transitions (Celestino and Gleditsch, 2013). Political opportunity appears to be a key factor that predicts where non-violent protest is likely: citizens rebel where the costs are low and the chance of success is high. These protests might be sparked by specific events that serve as focal points for opposition groups. In Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, protests against economic austerity contributed to many incumbents’ decisions to allow multiparty elections. In more recent years, apparent incidents of electoral fraud in Eastern Europe and Central Asia sparked various “Color Revolutions,” while in Africa, attempts by incumbents to amend term-limit provisions have generated anti-regime movements, some successful (e.g., Burkina Faso), others not (e.g., Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo). In other instances, the deaths of individuals, whether via suicide (e.g., Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia) or government abuse (e.g., Khaled Said in Egypt), can catalyze mass action. Studies suggest that such events become “revolutions” when they generate broad-based coalitions against the *status quo*; studying how social media and other technological and social changes facilitate this constitutes an important frontier in the study of regime transitions.

Another possible triggering event is a military coup. There is some evidence that coups (though on the decline) are more likely to lead to democracy now than during the Cold War. An example of this dynamic comes from Niger, where a military coup in 2010 ushered in free and fair elections the following year; in other recent instances, however, coups have been more associated with backsliding (e.g., Egypt in 2013, Thailand in 2014). Evidence also exists that a transition to new dictatorship is the more likely outcome when a coup occurs in a dictatorship (Derpanopoulos, *et al.*, 2016).

Additional triggering events include natural disasters, which can destabilize dictatorships under certain conditions, and the termination of civil war, which some studies find can create opportunities for democratization.

Note that triggering events may themselves be the result of triggering events. For example, Bouazizi’s self-immolation in December 2010 in Tunisia led to widespread protests across the country, which in turn toppled the regime less than a month later. Likewise, the same event may occur repeatedly, as protests often do, but not necessarily “trigger” political change.

In addition, some triggering events are exogenous to democratization (such as natural disasters), but most are not. The same factors that cause a democratizing triggering event often help explain why democratization is the outcome. The example from Tunisia illustrates this. A number of structural factors, such as high youth unemployment, increased the baseline risk the Tunisian regime would collapse. They also led to the outbreak of protest, which in turn was the event that led to democratization. Underlying structural factors, in other words, help explain *whether* political liberalization is on the horizon, while triggering events help explain *when* it will happen.

For these reasons, the causes of specific triggering events will not be discussed here. Rather, the focus will be on how, why, and when these events can lead to political liberalization.

The insights from the hypotheses in this theory family suggest that practitioner interventions in the aftermath of easily observable events can increase prospects for democratization, particularly where resources can be mobilized quickly. Triggering events open up opportunities for political change that are otherwise absent. They nearly always increase a dictatorship's baseline chance of democratizing, but democratization is far from guaranteed. Indeed, in many instances what results instead is the establishment of new dictatorship or—in cases in which the regime emerges unscathed—a crackdown on regime opponents. That being said, it is possible that greater assistance for pro-democracy groups at the time of a triggering event can help divert countries away from these two outcomes and toward a path of democratization (Beaulieu, 2014).

2.1.7. State Capacity

Theories of state capacity address how different features of the state influence political regime dynamics. According to Weber (1918), the modern state is a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” Beyond this basic feature, however, states vary substantially from one context to the next. The theories in this family pay special attention, in particular, to how they differ in terms of their capacity.

State capacity is defined in a number of ways, and scholars are not in full agreement over what constitutes a strong (i.e., capable) versus a weak (i.e., incapable) state. In general, however, state capacity has to do with a state's “capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relations, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways” (Migdal, 1988, p. 4).

The hypotheses discussed here look at how state capacity affects political trajectories in authoritarian contexts, specifically. Though there are a number of studies (e.g., Rose and Chin, 2001; Way, 2005) that emphasize the importance of state capacity for democratic consolidation and the prevention of democratic backsliding, they are not included here because they address the role of state capacity in countries that are already democratic.

Among those studies that take authoritarianism as a starting point, there are two key branches of work. One looks at the sequencing of the relationship between the state and democracy. Studies here examine, specifically, whether a strong state is a requirement for democracy. Some argue that timing is important, in that democracy is impossible without a strong state; others contend that democracy and a strong state move together, while others argue that timing matters little. The messages that come out of this branch of the literature are so varied partly because of differences in how state strength is conceived and operationalized and partly because in a number of studies the theoretical ideas proposed are not rigorously empirically evaluated.

The other branch assesses the relationship between state capacity and authoritarian durability. Studies that adopt this approach focus on whether stronger states pave the way for more resilient authoritarian rule. These studies vary in terms of the specific components of state strength that they emphasize. Most use evidence from particular regions or cases to evaluate the theories put forth. A central message throughout is that state capacity leads to more durable authoritarianism, but also potentially more durable democracy should a democratic transition occur.

The discussion that follows identifies four hypotheses related to state capacity and paths away from authoritarianism. These hypotheses in some ways overlap. They are grouped in this manner, however, to be consistent with the major themes of this literature. Key debates in the field are integrated, where relevant.

2.2 Theory Matrix

This section summarizes the hypotheses offered in each theory family; offers some questions for practitioners to consider in their efforts; and provides a brief evaluation of the causal mechanisms underlying the hypotheses, the evidence supporting them, and their relevance for informing our understanding of paths away from authoritarianism. We asterisk hypotheses that, in order estimation, enjoy a particularly high level of support across empirical tests, and that we therefore believe are especially worthy of practitioners' attention.

Theory Family 1: Political Leadership

Theories in this family posit that elites, as individuals or organized in small groups, can significantly affect regime trajectories by dint of their preferences and/or their strategic interactions with one another.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>1. "Great Man" Theories</p> <p>Countries will be more likely to transition to democracy when leaders, at critical junctures, prefer that regime type or institutions that will support it.</p>	<p>As <i>ancien régimes</i> collapse, democratic institutions are more likely to emerge and thrive when key decision makers—often charismatic figures such as George Washington, Nelson Mandela, and Jawaharlal Nehru—place limits on their own potential power, for the good of the country.</p>	<p>Do individuals who hold or might soon hold power have values and preferences that are conducive to democracy?</p> <p>Can such individuals be identified, and then nurtured and/or supported?</p>	<p>Leaders are clearly important to a country's trajectory, and charismatic leaders even more so, but there is significant evidence that structural and institutional factors that extend beyond leaders' immediate control have large effects on regime outcomes. Also, it is difficult to identify such "great men" before and during transitional moments, and external actors should be wary of supporting select "great men": today's potential democrats often end up being tomorrow's autocrats.</p> <p>Varshney (1998); Lipset (1998)</p>
<p>1.1.2. Leadership Values</p> <p>Democracy is more likely to emerge when individuals who dominate the class of potential leaders hold pro-democratic values.</p>	<p>A community of elite leaders must prefer democracy to other potential regime types, and defend institutions that foster public input, checks and balances, and accountability, for democracy to thrive.</p>	<p>What are the predominant values among the class of current or potential leaders?</p> <p>Can exchanges or other programs be designed to foster such values?</p>	<p>It is difficult to measure the values of elite leaders, especially potential leaders, before a transition occurs, and also difficult to know if, how, and to what extent those values influence country trajectory. Further, many scholars argue that even if leaders express democratic values, their primary goal is to gain and maintain power, and that expressing democratic values is a strategy to do so, not a legitimate commitment. And the same caveat from 1.1.1 applies: structural and institutional factors are important for regime outcomes.</p> <p>McFaul (2002); Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2013); Gift and Krcmaric (2017)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>1.2.1. Incumbents vs. Oppositions</p> <p>Democracy is most likely to emerge under conditions of power parity between incumbents and oppositions.</p>	<p>When competing actors are of roughly equal power, they often conclude that a live-and-let-live strategy is optimal. They will then enter a pact in which they agree to compete via established rules surrounding elections, with the winner agreeing not to use its accumulated power to eliminate the loser, and the loser agreeing to accept the results. The “loyal opposition” thus survives to compete another day.</p>	<p>Do competing groups agree that elections are the best way to continue competition?</p> <p>Do competing groups feel secure that their fundamental rights will be protected if they lose elections?</p>	<p>Although this argument is logically appealing, testing is difficult (i.e., how does one define competing sides and measure relative power distribution?). In addition, some empirical evidence counters it. competing groups often form along ethnic divisions, which can be destabilizing, and further competing groups can simply prolong instability in power distribution, instead of aligning to support the emergence of democratic institutions.</p> <p>Rustow (1970); Dahl (1971); Przeworski (1991)</p>
<p>1.2.2. Intra-Government Ruptures</p> <p>Transition outcomes are the product of power struggles within authoritarian governments, between hardliners and softliners, and between government and opposition.</p>	<p>Upon facing crises, authoritarian governments often divide into hardliners (who prefer not to make any democratic concessions) and softliners (who believe that the best way to ensure their personal survival is to negotiate with the opposition). Democratic transitions are most likely to occur when softliners win these internal struggles, and acquiesce to democratic reforms.</p>	<p>Are there observable splits among regime insiders, with regard to attitudes toward political reform?</p> <p>Can moderates (i.e., those who view political liberalization as the optimal path) be identified? If so, how can they be supported in effective and responsible ways?</p>	<p>**Although intra-governmental splits do often occur as authoritarian governments face stresses, the biggest challenge for practitioners is to prepare for such possible splits by identifying and then empowering potential softliners versus hardliners. Also, there are varied reasons why members of a ruling coalition may become softliners, most of which do not involve a normative conversion to democracy.</p> <p>Linz (1978); O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Huntington (1991); Linz and Stepan (1996)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>1.2.3. Divided Oppositions</p> <p>Transitions from authoritarianism are more likely when oppositions are unified.</p>	<p>Authoritarian leaders often practice divide-and-rule strategies designed to minimize the chances that a unified opposition will threaten their rule. Oppositions that can overcome their collective action problems will be most threatening to autocrats.</p>	<p>Are segments of the society and political class that are opposed to authoritarian incumbents united behind similar goals and potential leaders?</p> <p>What strategies can be used to encourage coalition-building among those opposed to the <i>status quo</i>?</p>	<p>It is unclear whether authoritarian regimes are strong because they face divided oppositions, or whether oppositions are divided because they face strong autocrats. Regimes have many tools with which to introduce division within the opposition, from exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions to encouraging political party proliferation. However, transitions do occur, even in the face of significant splits within the broad opposition, and with such groups having very different visions of what the post-transition system should look like. Thus, while opposition coordination is often useful, it is not a necessary condition for democratization.</p> <p>Weingast (1997); Magaloni (2006, 2010); Greene (2007)</p>

Theory Family 2: Political Culture

Theories in this family posit that the attitudes and beliefs communally held by a people can affect their political behavior and the types of regime outcomes they are likely to accept and support.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>2.1. Civic Culture</p> <p>Civic culture is a requirement for stable democracy.</p>	<p>Citizens must desire, and feel that they have the ability, to participate in politics for basic democratic institutions to function effectively. However, they must also be appropriately respectful of rules and legitimate authority, and be willing to accept victory by opponents. This “sweet spot” of values constitutes a “civic culture.”</p>	<p>To what extent are individuals interested in politics, engaged in political processes, and respectful of legitimate authority?</p> <p>What interventions can change interest, attitudes, and orientations among the mass public?</p>	<p>**Many studies have found correlations between certain attitudinal patterns in populations—such as a value for self-expression—and regime outcomes. However, it is unclear whether such values create democracy or whether their existence is predicated on an already-thriving democracy. Finally, it is also extremely difficult for interventions to change mass culture in meaningful ways.</p> <p>Almond and Verba (1963); Inglehart and Welzel (2005)</p>
<p>2.2. Social Capital</p> <p>Social capital is important for democracy.</p>	<p>Democracy is more likely to emerge and survive when citizens have high levels of trust for one another. This allows citizen groups to form (i.e., civil society), which can in turn push back against government infractions on political and civil rights.</p>	<p>To what extent do members of society trust one another and desire to cooperate with one another to achieve common goals?</p> <p>What interventions change populations' willingness, desire, and capacity to cooperate?</p>	<p>Many scholars hold that social capital and the ability of citizens to organize in civil society is a positive force (i.e., democracy-enhancing). However, civil society is not monolithic: citizen groups do not inherently support democracy, or the same type of democracy, and robust civil society has been, in some cases, associated with undesirable outcomes, such as the rise of authoritarian movements and communal violence. In other words, it is not just whether individuals cooperate, but to what ends.</p> <p>Putnam (1993, 2000); Lussier and Fish (2012)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>2.3. Legitimacy</p> <p>Citizens must view the political system as legitimate for democracy to emerge, particularly if there are viable alternatives.</p>	<p>Citizens will only be willing to demand and defend democratic institutions if they prefer that regime type to all others. Autocrats are more likely to accumulate and hold power if there is limited public demand for democratic participation and contestation.</p>	<p>Do populations view democratic regimes as inherently superior to possible alternatives?</p> <p>What interventions change populations' attitudes with regard to regime preferences?</p>	<p>Democracy seems less likely to emerge and thrive if citizens are unwilling to fight for it, or if they actively oppose it. However, as with 2.1, it is unclear whether citizen attitudes drive outcomes, or merely reflect them. Finally, as with 2.1, interventions to affect mass attitudes about something as fundamental as regime type are extremely difficult.</p> <p>Easton (1965); Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer (1998)</p>
<p>2.4. Social Movements</p> <p>Social movements can increase the chance of democratization when they have certain features.</p>	<p>Popular mobilization can pressure autocrats into accepting democratic reforms, or even force such leaders from power. These movements are more likely to yield robust democracy when they are seen as inclusive and non-threatening to important societal groups (i.e., ideologically narrow movements might provoke support for authoritarian backlash).</p>	<p>What social movements, with goals supportive of political democracy, are likely to emerge in a given society?</p> <p>What is the structure and ideological makeup of the movements?</p> <p>What interventions can support the emergence of pro-democratic social movements?</p>	<p>Myriad case studies point to the importance of social movements to specific regime changes. However, social movement success depends on many things, including its organizational robustness, its resilience, and the enabling environment factors that contribute to both, and many pro-democratic social movements fail to generate regime change. In addition, as with 2.2, social movements are not monolithic and may support the emergence or durability of authoritarianism. For practitioners, picking and empowering groups with the greatest likelihood of achieving robustness is challenging.</p> <p>Tilly (2004); Osa (2003); Schock (2005)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>2.5. Religious Institutions</p> <p>Religious institutions are most likely to play a role in political liberalization when they have autonomy from the regime.</p>	<p>Religious organizations can have important effects on regime trajectories, in that they can criticize the authoritarian government and mobilize large numbers of supporters against the <i>status quo</i>. However, religious organizations only likely to work for democratization if they are autonomous from the regime.</p>	<p>Do religious organizations have widespread support and significant autonomy from the state?</p> <p>To what extent are major religious organizations' interests aligned with the authoritarian governments? And how would these organizations fare under more-democratic dispensations?</p> <p>What interventions can support the empowerment and autonomy of pro-democratic religious elements?</p>	<p>There are notable cases of religious organizations with autonomy from and opposition to the state being important actors in democratization; therefore, identifying and supporting pro-democratic organizations that are autonomous from the state might be productive. However, the knowledge is based on a limited number of studies, and findings here might not be broadly generalizable.</p> <p>Philpott (2007); Slater (2009); Künkler and Leininger (2009)</p>

Theory Family 3: Political Institutions

Institutional arrangements under authoritarianism can affect the likelihood and mode of democratic transitions.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
3.1. Collegial Military Rule Military dictatorships are more likely to democratize than other forms of dictatorship.	When challenged, military rulers have the option of returning to the barracks and continuing to enjoy perquisites and authority. Other authoritarian leaders do not have these options, and therefore often attempt to hold on to power at all costs.	To what extent is the top authoritarian leadership led and constrained by the military?	** There is robust evidence that military juntas are less durable than other types of authoritarian regimes, and more likely to democratize. They are therefore productive targets for democratization efforts. However, such regimes are increasingly rare. Geddes (2003); Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014)
3.2. Personalist Rule Personalist dictatorships are less likely to democratize than other forms of dictatorship.	When challenged, personalist dictators are unlikely to agree to significant reforms and will instead hold onto power at all costs, since they often do not have viable exit options. If regime change does occur, democratization is unlikely, because there is limited experience with political institutions in the country.	To what extent is power concentrated in the hands of a single dictator? Does the dictator have viable exit options if threatened, or is the dictator likely to try to hold power at all costs, since imprisonment or death are likely outcomes of losing power?	** There is robust evidence that personalist dictatorships, which are increasingly common, are less likely to democratize than other types of authoritarian regimes: leaders hold onto power to the bitter end. These regimes are therefore not optimal targets for democratization efforts, and democracies that emerge from such contexts tend not to have significant durability. However, transitions might be more likely if outsiders can provide autocrats with viable exit options. In addition, if these regimes create a political party, rather than allying with a pre-existing party or ruling without one, the regime is longer lasting but more likely to democratize. Bratton and van de Walle (1994); Chehabi and Linz (1998); Geddes (2003); Geddes, <i>et al.</i> (2014)

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>3.3. Competitive Authoritarianism</p> <p>Dictatorships are more likely to democratize when the regime party does not hold the vast majority of seats.</p>	<p>Competitive authoritarian regimes are marked by elections involving genuine competition, although the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of the incumbent. These systems often provide opposition parties with significant shares of seats in national legislatures. This, in turn, provides opportunities for oppositions to launch effective electoral campaigns against incumbents.</p>	<p>To what extent does the authoritarian government monopolize power, particularly in the legislature?</p> <p>What interventions can encourage the success of opposition parties in these arenas?</p>	<p>** Competitive authoritarian regimes are potentially productive targets for democratization efforts, given that they are marked by relatively well-organized oppositions and functioning institutions. However, while elections in such regimes often have liberalizing outcomes, it is unclear how often such changes produce democracy.</p> <p>Howard and Roessler (2006); Donno (2013)</p>
<p>3.4. Opposition Political Parties</p> <p>Democratization is more likely in competitive authoritarian regimes when opposition parties adopt sophisticated and historically unprecedented strategies for challenging the regime during elections.</p>	<p>When elections take place in competitive authoritarian environments, incumbents are most likely to be defeated when opposition parties use strategies such as aggressively campaigning, assisting with voter registration and turnout operations, and engaging in election monitoring.</p>	<p>What strategies by opposition parties make electoral success on their part more likely?</p>	<p>It is difficult to prescribe specific recommendations to oppositions: what works in one context may not work in another, or may not even be permitted, depending on the strength and sophistication of the regime. However, there is evidence from the E&E region that aggressive political campaigns, extensive voter registration and turnout efforts, election monitoring, and close collaboration with other allies (civil society groups and international democracy activists) can be effective. External actors can provide advice, technical expertise, and financial support to allow opposition parties to adopt such strategies, which might yield incumbent defeat and even democratization. However, the evidence here is drawn from only a few case studies, and more research is necessary on the topic.</p> <p>Bunce and Wolchik (2010)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>3.5. Ruling Parties</p> <p>Democratization from within is possible when dictatorships feature strong ruling parties that integrate cross-cutting cleavages.</p>	<p>Ruling parties might initiate reforms that allow for freer and fairer elections when they anticipate that they will still win, but that their power might be waning otherwise.</p>	<p>When are authoritarian incumbents most likely to feel confident enough that reforms that allow greater competitiveness will not threaten their long-term goals?</p>	<p>Many regimes with strong ruling parties do institute reforms that eventually seem to lead to democracy. However, these regimes are also very durable, and parties may support democratization as a means to retain power, believing they can control institutions such as elections well enough to continue to rule. It is also unclear how we can identify likely candidates for democratization-from-strength trajectories; further research is needed, given the limited number of cases that have been studied.</p> <p>Slater and Wong (2013)</p>

Theory Family 4: Political Economy

Economic factors can affect popular attitudes with regard to regime type, societal capacity, and elites' preferences and strategies.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>4.1. Modernization Theory</p> <p>Economic development generates democracy.</p>	<p>As societies develop economically, their populations become less dependent on the state, they develop larger middle classes, and their educational profiles improve. These changes bring more empowered citizenries that are more likely to demand, and have the capacity to agitate for, democratic reforms.</p>	<p>Do particular elements of economic development within authoritarian regimes make democratic emergence more likely?</p> <p>How, and under what circumstances, might economic development within authoritarian regimes make democratic emergence less likely?</p>	<p>** The empirical evidence on the relationship between economic development and regime type is mixed, with some finding a positive relationship between development and democracy, others only a relationship between wealth and democratic survival (but not emergence), and still others finding no significant relationship between the two. However, it does appear that authoritarian breakdowns that occur in better-developed settings are more likely to yield more-durable democracies.</p> <p>Lipset (1959, 1960); Przeworski <i>et al.</i> (2000); Boix and Stokes (2003); Acemoglu <i>et al.</i> (2008)</p>
<p>4.2. Inequality</p> <p>Democracy is less likely under conditions of economic inequality.</p>	<p>High inequality means that the median citizen is relatively poor, and there are therefore likely to be significant popular pressures for redistribution. Fearing this, the wealthy will fight against any kinds of democratic reforms that might empower the masses.</p>	<p>How is wealth distributed in particular authoritarian regimes?</p> <p>Can institutions be developed that make economic elites more comfortable with political reforms that might empower lower classes in unequal societies?</p>	<p>While there is empirical and logical support for the notion that democratic emergence is less likely under conditions of income inequality, a number of recent studies have found more-complicated relationships, or none at all. Further, the evidence supporting the basic assumption that poorer citizens demand redistribution under levels of significant inequality is weak. However, there is strong evidence that inequality matters with regard to asset mobility. Specifically, when land is concentrated in the hands of a small class, the privileged are likely to ally with autocrats to prevent democratization; if assets are more mobile, and can be protected from taxation</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
			<p>and redistribution, elites are less likely to resist democratization.</p> <p>Moore (1966); Meltzer and Richard (1981); Boix (2003); Acemoglu and Robinson (2001, 2006); Houle (2009); Ansell and Samuels (2014)</p>
<p>4.3. Authoritarian Capacity</p> <p>Authoritarian regimes are more likely to break down when they face constraints on their ability to purchase support.</p>	<p>Autocrats often maintain power by strategically distributing patronage positions and other selective benefits (i.e., through clientelism) to win and hold allies in society. As economic crises, high-level corruption, and assorted shocks undermine the resources available to the incumbent, the regime becomes more vulnerable to breakdown.</p>	<p>To what extent do authoritarian leaders rely on strategies of “purchasing” support to remain in power?</p> <p>What strategies do oppositions use—and how effective are those strategies—when authoritarian leaders have adequate resources to purchase widespread support?</p>	<p>** There is significant evidence, from a range of contexts, that authoritarian collapse is more likely when governments are resource-strained; democratization is one possible outcome, but by no means assured. However, many authoritarian regimes are adaptable and have been able to rely on other tools, such as repression, to maintain power, even under severe economic strain.</p> <p>Haggard and Kaufman (1995, 1997); Ross (2001); Magaloni (2006); Greene (2007, 2008); Morrison (2009); Arriola (2013)</p>

Theory Family 5: International Effects

External factors, such as foreign governments' actions and war, can significantly affect regime trajectories.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>5.1. Military Intervention</p> <p>Military intervention by democratic powers yields democratic regime change.</p>	<p>Foreign powers can overthrow authoritarian systems and replace them with democracies through military intervention.</p>	<p>What underlying structural, cultural, or institutional factors make it more likely that a country with an authoritarian regime toppled by external military intervention will develop into a democracy?</p> <p>After a military intervention, what other strategies can be implemented to make democratic emergence more likely?</p>	<p>While external military interventions have successfully toppled authoritarian governments in many parts of the world in the last several decades, there are very few cases of such actions leading to the emergence of stable, democratic regimes. This is surely the costliest intervention strategy, and among the least likely to find success.</p> <p>Peceny (1999a, 1999b); Pickering and Kisangani (2006)</p>
<p>5.2. Foreign Governments' Pressures</p> <p>Closer relationships with more-powerful democracies will increase the probability that authoritarian regimes will themselves democratize.</p>	<p>When pro-democratic actors, such as the United States and EU, have well-developed economic and political ties (i.e., linkages) with countries, those countries are more likely to develop democratically. However, the actors need to also have leverage over these countries to be able to induce reforms; when the countries are not reliant on Western aid, security support, or economic ties, they can resist demands for reform.</p>	<p>Should democratic governments invest in linkages with authoritarian governments, even when those governments might have significant human rights abuses?</p> <p>How can governments interested in fostering transitions from authoritarianism in other countries establish and then use leverage?</p>	<p>**There is significant support for these logics in the period immediately following the Cold War—countries with more-robust ties to the West were more likely to democratize. However, it less clear the extent to which leverage will be relevant in the future, particularly since many authoritarian regimes now have relatively lower levels of linkage with established democracies, or have more leverage of their own.</p> <p>Levitsky and Way (2010)</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>5.3. Diffusion</p> <p>Democratization in one country in a region will make democratization in other countries in the same region more likely.</p>	<p>When regime change occurs in an authoritarian system in one country, similar changes become more likely in other authoritarian systems in the region. This might be because similar shocks affect multiple countries' regimes similarly, or because of "demonstration effects" (i.e., opposition movements learn from the strategies employed by counterparts elsewhere).</p>	<p>Why do regime changes seem to cluster geographically and temporally?</p> <p>What interventions can support the diffusion of pro-democratic norms and anti-authoritarian strategies?</p> <p>If clustering is mainly a phenomenon of authoritarian collapse (rather than democratic emergence), what interventions can make democratization more likely in the wake of such clustered collapses?</p>	<p>** Many scholars have documented geographic and temporal clustering of regime change. Diffusion can occur in many ways, including through direct knowledge transfer between individuals from different countries who participate in concrete, identifiable human interactions, and among elites via participation in international institutions and transnational networks. However, the mechanisms underlying these patterns are unsettled, and some have identified clustering to be more likely to lead to authoritarian collapse, but not necessarily democratic emergence.</p> <p>Starr 1991; Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Houle <i>et al.</i> 2016</p>
<p>5.4. Foreign Aid</p> <p>Targeted foreign aid can induce countries to institute democratic reforms.</p>	<p>External actors can promote democratization through two routes: 1) attaching democratic reforms as conditions for other forms of economic, political, and military assistance, and 2) directly investing in democracy-enhancing activities, such as funding elections, building state capacity, and supporting civil society.</p>	<p>How much and what kinds of aid are effective at making democratization more likely?</p> <p>How can donors avoid aid being used to strengthen authoritarian governments?</p> <p>What kinds of authoritarian regimes—and under what conditions—are more susceptible to democratization-through-aid?</p>	<p>Foreign aid seems to have become more associated with democratizing reforms in the post-Cold War era, as Western donors, in particular, enjoy increased leverage. The bulk of direct support goes to incumbent governments for activities related to state building, but there is evidence that economic aid can support multi-party transitions and that democracy aid can support democratic consolidation. However, democracy promotion has become "tamer" over time as international NGOs and donors increasingly select more regime-compatible projects to secure the ability to continue to work. In addition, there is little evidence that foreign aid induces regime change and the emergence of democracy.</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
			Bermeo (2011, 2016); Dunning (2004); Goldsmith (2001); Wright (2008); Dietrich and Wright (2015)
<p>5.5. Migration</p> <p>Remittances from expatriates are associated with increased probability of democratic transition.</p>	<p>As the value of remittances flowing into a country increases, recipients might have an exit option from incumbent-organized distribution networks. Further, remittances can fund opposition activities. Thus, remittances could make individuals less dependent upon the government and more able to challenge it.</p>	<p>What effects do Western countries' policies regarding asylum, immigration, and remittance flows have on authoritarian governments?</p>	<p>Both the logic and evidence here are mixed. There is evidence that remittances are associated with decreased strength for incumbents and with greater opportunities for oppositions. However, "exit options" might simply allow authoritarian leaders to export many of their most-effective potential opponents.</p> <p>Abdih <i>et al.</i> (2012); Pfitze (2012); Escribà-Folch <i>et al.</i> (2015)</p>

Theory Family 6: Triggering Events

Sudden, and often unexpected, shocks can destabilize authoritarian regimes, thus making transitions to democracy more likely.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
6.1. Protests Protests can increase the chance of democratization, particularly when they are non-violent.	While violent protests have been associated with the collapse of authoritarian regimes, non-violent protests are particularly likely to bring about democratization. Non-violent activities are less costly to participate in, and thus include a broader swath of the population. In addition, they are less likely to meet with repression, more likely to win over regime insiders, and more likely to result in compromise between the opposition and government.	Under what conditions are anti-regime protests most likely to arise? When protests arise, what makes it more likely that they will be non-violent? What interventions decrease the probability of violence related to protests?	**Authoritarian regimes are more likely to democratize following large, non-violent protests; however, we know less about what causes protests to take on certain characteristics. Enhancing potential organizers' mobilizational capacity, and their ability to ensure that anti-regime activities are non-violent, is a potentially fruitful focus. Since violent protests increase the probability of transition to another authoritarian regime, outsiders and other pro-democracy advocates should be especially wary of encouraging protests that might turn violent. Celestino and Gleditsch (2013)
6.2. Coups Coups are increasingly leading to the installation of democratic leaders since the end of the Cold War.	Coups are more likely to result in the establishment of authoritarian regimes; however, since the end of the Cold War, the likelihood that they yield democracy is increasing. This is likely because important foreign actors are increasingly using their ties to and power over other countries to demand democratizing reforms in the aftermath of extraconstitutional changes in government.	Under what conditions are authoritarian leaders most likely to be threatened by coups? Under what conditions are coups against authoritarian leaders most likely to generate democratic openings? What tools do foreign governments have to increase the probability that coups against authoritarian governments that do occur are more likely to lead to democratic outcomes?	Although democratization coups are more frequent since the Cold War's end, and coups can spur changes conducive to democracy, the most likely outcome of a coup is more dictatorship. In addition, most coups, and attempted coups, are followed by increased state repression. Our knowledge of when coups are likely to occur is limited, but, more significantly, more research needs to be conducted on the factors that make post-coups democratization more likely. Marinov and Goemans (2013)

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
6.3. Civil War Termination Democratization is difficult following civil war, but it can occur under certain circumstances.	Given that post-civil war situations often involve the remaking of political institutions, such periods might offer opportunities for democratic openings. Even though democratization is exceedingly rare after civil wars, the implementation of power-sharing institutions that increase buy in from former combatants might be beneficial in bending trajectories toward democracy.	What institutions in post-civil war settlements increase the probability of democratic emergence?	There is little evidence that democratization is a likely outcome in post-civil war situations. Given the potential for further instability and the mixed empirical record in research on this topic, practitioners should pause before devoting significant resources to support democratization in such contexts. Fortna and Huang (2012); Hartzell and Hoddie (2015)
6.4. Natural Disasters Natural disasters in countries headed by dictatorships increase the chance of protests and shorten leader tenure.	Autocrats are often threatened in the wake of natural disasters. Such events often concentrate populations, many of whom are aggrieved in the wake of the disaster, making anti-regime mobilization more likely.	Under what conditions are natural disasters most likely to create democratic openings? How can foreign actors take advantage of opportunities, particularly given the complexity of providing necessary assistance in the wake of mass-suffering events?	There is some empirical evidence that natural disasters can destabilize authoritarian regimes. Disasters can result in people being concentrated in camps or other facilities in which they would not otherwise interact, easing coordination barriers for mass mobilization. Disaster can also lessen a regime's repressive capacity. Practitioners should be prepared for heightened anti-regime mobilization in the wake of disasters. However, it is unclear that these events create democratic openings, rather than simply instability. Quiroz Flores and Smith (2013)
6.5. Elections Elections are focal points for regime change and	Many grey-zone dictatorships hold elections, and these elections generally have been thought of as advancing regime durability. However, elections can present	Under what conditions are elections most likely to threaten authoritarian regimes?	While elections are potentially dangerous periods for authoritarian regimes, they often result in a strengthening of the regime. Further, when elections do constitute points around which authoritarian regimes collapse, it is

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
can lead to the defeat of autocratic incumbents.	opportunities for regime change, in that they involve popular mobilization, pressures for opposition coordination, and opportunities for ties with democracy-promoting domestic and international actors. Elections are especially likely to threaten autocrats when they are marked by protests, claims of malpractice that galvanize the electorate, or the opposition's use of historically unprecedented strategies to mobilize, persuade, and improve the fairness of the process.	What interventions make it most likely that elections will a) threaten authoritarian incumbents, and b) result in transitions to more-democratic systems?	unclear whether democracy is the likely successor regime. Practitioners should focus on elections as key time periods during which regime change is possible, especially if the pre-election period has been marked by protest or the post-election period by accusations of fraud. Opposition parties should be encouraged to push for robust election monitoring and actively campaign, to increase the chances of authoritarian breakdown. Bunce and Wolchik (2011); Knutsen, Nygard, and Wig (forthcoming)
6.6. Leader Death When authoritarian leaders die in office of natural causes, democratization is unlikely.	Although the natural death of an autocrat has, in select cases, augured regime change, it generally does not produce meaningful threats to the regime. Should the regime collapse, transition to new dictatorship is a more likely outcome than democratization.	Under what conditions is the natural death of an authoritarian leader likely to lead to democratization? Political liberalization? Authoritarian collapse? Instability? What interventions might make it more likely that, in the event of authoritarian leader natural death, political liberalization or even democratization is a likely outcome? What interventions can be implemented in the immediate aftermath of an authoritarian leader death that make political liberalization or democratization more likely?	In the vast majority of cases (92%), an authoritarian regime persists after the leader dies. However, there are some key cases in which deaths have provided openings, and more research is needed to determine why different outcomes occur. Practitioners should closely monitor these events, but they should not invest heavily in the hopes that, after an autocrat dies, opportunities for democratic openings will be vast. Kendall-Taylor and Frantz (2016)

Theory Family 7: State Capacity

State capacity has important effects on the likelihood of democratic emergence and authoritarian leaders' abilities to prevent regime change.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>7.1. Incumbent Capacity</p> <p>Incumbent capacity increases authoritarian durability and lowers the chance of democratization.</p>	<p>Incumbents are particularly powerful when they have effective control over subordinates and can control policymaking over a large range of issues. Further, their latitude is larger when they rule over large states and large economies. Under such circumstances, democratization is unlikely.</p>	<p>How do we measure incumbent capacity in authoritarian systems?</p> <p>Under what conditions do authoritarian regimes that leave power under conditions of low incumbent capacity liberalize politically and/or transition to democracy?</p>	<p>Low incumbent capacity should increase the risk of regime instability, making authoritarian regime transition more likely. However, there needs to be more empirical testing in this area on a broader range of cases. Most importantly, it is unclear whether low incumbent capacity increases the chances of democratization, specifically, or simply regime turnover (i.e., possibly, to another authoritarian system or outright state collapse).</p>
<p>7.2. Extractive Capacity</p> <p>The ability to extract taxes increases the chance of liberalization.</p>	<p>States that rely on taxes must provide some form of representation to citizens.</p>	<p>How do we measure states' extractive capacity?</p> <p>To what extent do citizens care about being taxed without being represented in government?</p>	<p>Way (2005)</p> <p>** There is some evidence that the need to use taxation to generate state income is correlated with political liberalization, although the evidence on democratization specifically is lacking. There is a possibility, therefore, that working with states to increase their taxation capacity might increase democraticness. However, if taxation is accompanied by better social services, populations might not be as inclined to demand political reforms.</p>

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
			Ross (2004); Baskaran (2014); Slater and Fenner (2011)
H7.3. Coercive Capacity Coercive capacity increases authoritarian durability and suppresses pressures for democratization.	Unless authoritarian governments choose not to use repression against pro-democracy movements, higher levels of coercive capacity are usually inimical to democratization. Leaders who enjoy strong coercive capacity can simply use violence against opposition that emerges, or threaten any would-be opponents into acquiescence.	What are the prospects for democratization in contexts of low state capacity? Under what circumstances might authoritarian governments with high levels of coercive capacity restrain from using it to repress pro-democracy actors?	** There is significant evidence that authoritarian regimes with more coercive capacity are more likely to endure. However, undermining authoritarian leaders' coercive capacity might yield unintended consequences—namely, state weakness and even collapse. Under such outcomes, democracy is especially unlikely to emerge or endure.
			Bellin (2004); Levitsky and Way (2010); Slater (2012)
7.4. State Building State building is a precondition for democracy.	Democracy cannot survive under conditions of extreme state weakness, since individuals cannot enjoy full political rights when their fundamental rights are threatened by instability. Further, contestation will prove difficult if competitors cannot be assured of their security.	What are the prospects for democratization in contexts of low state capacity? What interventions can increase state capacity in ways that improve citizens' lives (i.e., increasing service delivery and rule of law), while not simultaneously strengthening authoritarian leaders?	The literature here is quite mixed, with some arguing that democracy can only emerge in contexts of strong states, particularly with regard to a strong rule of law, and others arguing that sequencing is not important. Other works suggest that strengthening the state can actually empower autocrats. More empirical evidence, in a range of contexts, is necessary. However, we note that, from a practical standpoint, improvements in state capacity often have significant, positive improvements on citizens' lives, and practitioners ought to consider them regardless of their effect on regime outcomes.

Hypothesis Name & Statement	Hypothesis Summary	Questions for Practitioners' Analysis	Evaluation
<p>7.5. Internet Infrastructure</p> <p>Greater Internet penetration increases the likelihood of democratization.</p>	<p>Citizen access to the Internet improves abilities to monitor government abuses, learn about democratic freedoms enjoyed elsewhere, and coordinate opposition activities.</p>	<p>To what extent do citizens learn about government abuses and democratic freedoms from the Internet?</p> <p>To what extent has the Internet been used as a tool by opposition elements to coordinate strategy and win support?</p> <p>To what extent have authoritarian regimes used the Internet to legitimize their rule, monitor the opposition, and spread disinformation?</p>	<p>Linz and Stepan (1996); Chua (2004)</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence from the last decade suggests that the Internet—and social media, in particular—were crucial at galvanizing opposition to authoritarian regimes. However, more-rigorous empirical evidence finds no evidence that greater Internet penetration is associated with increased democraticness. Internet penetration might help societies in myriad other ways, including economic development, and thus practitioners will usually see some positive benefits from supporting improved access, even if democratization is not immediately in the offing.</p> <p>Best and Wade (2009); Mays and Groshek (2017)</p>

2.3. Hypotheses

In this section, we offer a list of key testable hypotheses that have emerged from each of the seven theory families. We do not delineate all of the hypotheses that have been proposed in the literature to date, nor do we reflect on potential hypotheses that have yet to be considered. We find that typically only a limited number of hypotheses offered in the literature are relevant to this project, among which even fewer have been subject to rigorous empirical evaluation.

The specific studies this report covers are based on the following criteria: 1) the relevance of the study to understanding democratization in “softer” authoritarian regimes (because political liberalization in countries at the extreme end of the autocratic spectrum is of lesser importance for *Theories of Democratic Change* project); 2) the extent to which contemporary scholars draw from the study to generate new insights about democratization (because widely cited studies provide insight into the evolution of academic thinking and often inform future theoretical development, even if they are discounted today by many scholars; this means that the report may cover studies with little or inconclusive empirical support if the theory proposed is plausible); and 3) the extent to which the theory proposed in the study matches the empirical reality, as assessed by contemporary researchers in the field (because theoretical insights are of greater utility for practitioners if the empirical record supports them).

It is important to note that many of the hypotheses we identify as falling under one theory family could easily be placed under others. This is not surprising, given that political processes are often complex, with multiple causal mechanisms and pathways.

The bulk of the hypotheses discussed here address the causes of democratization, though there are a few that do not directly do so. In those instances in which the outcome of interest is not democratization, we discuss the motivation underlying our inclusion of the hypothesis, as well as the specific ways in which it can inform our understanding of paths from authoritarianism.

Because of the paucity of studies that have explicitly looked at democratic backsliding, many of the hypotheses introduced in Phase I of the project actually address democratization (as the PIs note). For this reason, there may be quite a bit of overlap across the two reports in terms of the ideas discussed. We include hypotheses below based on the aforementioned criteria, regardless of whether they were already covered in the first phase of the project. Not all of the hypotheses in that phase are presented here, of course, because they are not all relevant to democratization. At the same time, where there is overlap in the hypotheses presented, the assessments might not be identical because we are approaching these ideas from a different vantage point.

2.3.1. Political Leadership

2.3.1.1. “Great Man” Theories of Regime Transition

Hypothesis: Countries will be more likely to transition to democracy when leaders, at critical junctures, prefer that regime type or institutions that will support it.

Primary methods: Country case studies, psychological profiles of key leaders, process tracing

Primary authors: Varshney (1998), Lipset (1998)

Summary: The 19th-century notion, popularized by Carlyle (1888), that “great men” have the capacity, by dint of their privileged position or remarkable skill, to shape the course of events in ways that conform to their preferences has influenced thinking on regime trajectories. (Note that our use of gender-specific language stems from our borrowing of a widely known historical approach, and from the fact that most of the literature focuses on male elites. However, female leaders, in both government and opposition, have been cited as taking their countries down paths away from democracy (e.g., India’s Indira Gandhi) and toward it (e.g., the Philippines’ Corazon Aquino and Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi)). Some scholars have argued that leaders’ preferences and predilections can profoundly shape outcomes, even when structural conditions make alternate pathways more likely.

Varshney’s (1998) arguments on India are particularly emblematic here. India’s poverty and tremendous ethnolinguistic diversity would seem to augur against stable democracy; that the country has been widely recognized as a strong democratic performer for nearly all of its post-independence history, aside for a brief interregnum under Prime Minister Gandhi in the late 1970s, suggests that it is an outlier and, thus, in need of special explanation. Varshney turns, partly, to exceptional leadership of post-independence leaders. In particular, Jawaharlal Nehru, the country’s first prime minister and Ms. Gandhi’s father, set precedents by allowing dissent within the ruling Congress Party and accepting the legitimacy of institutional checks on their power. This behavior constrained subsequent Indian leaders.

Lipset (1998), whose contributions to modernization theory (Section 2.2.4.1) means he is often associated with theories of structuralism, wrote glowingly of the role of George Washington in the democratic development of the United States. Not only was Washington’s charisma key in mobilizing popular support for the costly struggle against British colonialism, but his “moderation,” anti-monarchism, and unwillingness to serve beyond two terms as president helped develop norms surrounding the limitations of executive power in the United States. South Africa’s first post-apartheid president, Nelson Mandela, set a similar precedent, choosing not to seek a second term, thereby bucking a trend against hyperpresidentialism in Africa and empowering his country’s democratic institutions (see Case 1). These leaders helped create democratic spaces, institutions, and norms by, to borrow language from Levitsky and Way (2010), deciding to “underutilize” their power. Like Varshney and Lipset, Diamond (2008) writes of how post-colonial leaders can have outsized influence in determining their nascent countries’ respective political cultures.

The personalities and preferences of leaders of the authoritarian *ancien régime* should also not be overlooked. In Section 2.2.1.4, we discuss the importance of “softliners” or “moderates” within the authoritarian regime in guiding reforms that allow for democratic openings. Although these individuals likely do not have a normative preference for democracy, they might agree to negotiation with anti-

regime actors or eschew repression at key junctures, out of a desire to avoid costly conflict or further their country's economic and social development. In an alternate reality in which important positions of power are held by individuals who are less-inclined to negotiate and more willing to repress violently, democratic openings might not materialize. Such transformative leaders might include Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, F. W. de Klerk of South Africa, and Thein Sein of Burma.

Certainly, all countries are not fortuitous enough to have leaders like Nehru, Washington, and Mandela—or Gorbachev, de Klerk, and Thein Sein—at critical junctures. Ottaway (1999) writes of how “Africa’s new leaders”—men like Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, and Paul Kagame of Rwanda—focused on state-building and economic development, winning some international accolades for guiding post-conflict environments, while also “postponing” democratic reforms. Miguel (2004) attributes the highly ethnicized nature of post-independence Kenyan politics to the divide-and-rule tactics of leaders like Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi; in neighboring Tanzania, he argues, a more integration-minded Julius Nyerere succeeded in forging a new, national identity, and left a country less riven by ethnic particularism (although he certainly did not prioritize political democracy, with his strong advocacy for *de jure* single partyism). Varshney contrasts Nehru with Asian leaders like the Philippines’ Ferdinand Marcos, South Korea’s Syngman Rhee, Indonesia’s Sukarno, and Pakistan’s Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who took their respective countries down decidedly undemocratic paths. Within India, he argues that alternate pathways of rule by leaders with more-authoritarian or less-secular dispositions, such as Subhas Chandra Bose or Vallabhbhai Jhaverbai Patel, would have been less auspicious, from a democratic perspective. And Zakaria (1994) outlines how Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew brought Singapore near-unprecedented prosperity, while successfully articulating an anti-democratic philosophy based in so-called “Asian values.”

Broadly, many historians have been skeptical of “great man” approaches, since at least the late 19th century. Spencer (1896), for example, considered leaders to be products of their social milieu and their decisions to be reflective of prevailing norms and preferences. In that sense, it is more important to study factors such as political culture. Others argue that leaders are profoundly constrained by factors such as the distribution of power, electoral institutions, political economy, and popular preferences, to the extent that the effects of their personal proclivities on regime outcomes are minimal. Even those who write on the importance of individual leaders tend to argue that other considerations play roles in countries’ political development. Varshney, for example, also attributes India’s relative democratic success to factors such as the nature of the anti-colonial struggle, federalism, and the Green Revolution.

Others, to be discussed later (Sections 2.2.1.3 and 2.2.1.4), outwardly reject the notion that leaders must embrace liberal values for democracy to emerge. We speculate that most social scientists are likely to agree that individual leaders’ preferences and personalities can affect regime trajectories, particularly in “off-line” cases, which over- or under-perform democratic expectations based on structural factors. However, treatments of regime change that focus mainly on individual leaders have long not been in favor in the most-cited social science journals and presses, and there are obvious limitations with such approaches with regard to establishing theories that are widely generalizable and testable.

Perhaps the most successful arguments mix structural and voluntarist approaches. In his study of the emergence of “pacted democracy” in 1950s Venezuela, Karl (1987) concludes that oil windfalls changed the country’s economic class structure in ways conducive to democratization, by weakening an agricultural sector that had propped up military dictatorship and supporting the emergence of a reformist, urban sector. However, it took the leadership of leaders such as Rómulo Betancourt, Rafael

Caldera, and Jovito Villalba, who represented distinct constituencies, to negotiate the country's specific institutional arrangements. Upon winning founding elections in 1958, Betancourt assigned key ministerial positions to the two other major parties, thus giving them a stake in defending the party system. Although Karl presciently noted the dangers of "frozen democracy" (p. 88), in which power alternates among a narrow band of seemingly collusive elites, the pacted system did endure for over three decades. "[W]hat converts a structural opportunity into a reality are the relative political skills of different actors," Karl writes (p. 87).

Case 1: Nelson Mandela's Precedent for South Africa

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years of imprisonment for his opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime, which severely limited the political, economic, and civil rights of the country's majority black population. Mandela subsequently led negotiations with the National Party and its leader, then-President F. W. de Klerk, which eventually resulted in the country's first multiracial, democratic elections in 1994. The African National Congress (ANC) won overwhelmingly, and the National Assembly selected Mandela, the ANC leader, to serve as de Klerk's successor.

Mandela's iconic status provided him with the opportunity to shape his country's politics dramatically during this presidency. Although his tenure contained some decided dark marks—economic inequality, a legacy of the settler colonial and apartheid systems, continued to be strikingly high, and his administration was accused of doing little to combat the explosive HIV/AIDS pandemic—Mandela made at least two crucial decisions that many analysts argue contributed to the emergence of South Africa as a stable democracy.

First, Mandela reached out to white South Africans to assure them that they, too, were part of the "Rainbow Nation." A lack of buy-in from white South Africans could empower radicals, on both sides of the racial divide, leading to greater polarization and potentially violence, while capital flight remained a threat to economic, and thus political, development. Therefore, Mandela assigned several key cabinet posts to members of the National Party and named de Klerk as deputy president under a Government of National Unity (Lodge, 2006; Meredith, 2010; Sampson, 2011). He spearheaded a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated human rights abuses and granted amnesties to many perpetrators. His reconciliation efforts even extended to the arena of sports, where he publicly lauded the white-dominated national rugby team, the Springboks, and personally presented their trophy when they won the 1995 World Cup.

Second, Mandela remained wildly popular as the country headed into its second democratic elections, in 1999; four in five South Africans expressed satisfaction with his performance that year (Lodge, 2006, p. 219). That popularity, combined with continued goodwill toward the ANC, made a second term Mandela's for the asking. However, he declined to seek a second term, thereby seemingly setting a precedent that individuals in South Africa, no matter how popular, should not accumulate excessive power. Future South African presidents would not seek to overturn the 1996 constitution's two-term limit on presidents. Rupiah Banda, who served as president of Zambia from 2008 to 2011, and stepped down peacefully after an electoral defeat, stated that "After serving one term, he [Mandela] was still immensely popular. He could've continued for a second term, but he said it was time now to call upon others to take up the leadership mantle" (Wild and Cohen, 2013). Indeed, South Africa is not the only African country to have seen an institutionalization of term limits; leaders in competitive systems, such as Benin and Ghana, have stepped down upon reaching limits, and even leaders in a number of

dominant-party systems (akin to South Africa's), such as Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tanzania, have recently accepted limits. In some countries, including Burkina Faso, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, and Zambia, presidents' attempts to abolish term limits have been unsuccessful (see Dulani, 2011). These experiences contrast sharply with other countries, such as Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda, where leaders have abolished or otherwise tweaked term limits to extend their tenures; in these countries, personalist dictatorships prevail. Mandela can therefore be seen as setting important precedents against state-sponsored racial discrimination, centralized authority, and personal rule in the nascent South African democracy.

Relevance for democratization: Individual leaders' personalities and preferences can have significant impacts on regime trajectories.

Lessons for intervention: These approaches might be accused of treating regime outcomes as historical accidents. They argue that countries such as India, South Africa, and the United States could have gone down very different paths had leaders at critical junctures had different preferences, personality types, or skills. As such, it is both easy and difficult to envision interventions significantly affecting regime transitions. On one hand, an outside actor with sufficient power could provide assistance to specific potential leaders who are pre-identified, on the basis of their public pronouncements, past actions, and private communications, to have pro-democratic preferences. On the other hand, the identification of such leaders in advance is not always straightforward. Individuals are often encouraged to misrepresent their commitments to democracy, particularly if they believe such posturing will increase their probability of receiving external assistance, while preferences are likely to be endogenous to context (i.e., there is likely some truth in the cliché that power corrupts, as individuals might find that their willingness to tolerate opposition dissipates once they are themselves the incumbents). In short, betting on particular leaders can be risky. Even more fundamentally, interventions to try to influence either the identity of a leader or that leader's decision-making are often infeasible and/or likely to raise ethical concerns.

Evaluation: Without research designs that make use of potentially exogenous information, such as the natural death of individual leaders, it is difficult to disentangle the *ex ante* personal attributes of leaders from the successes they preside over while in office (particularly given that their chief success is survival in office in the first place). Therefore, without a measurement strategy for identifying *ex ante* "greatness," these theories almost become unfalsifiable.

We note there is a flip side to the concept of a "great man": the "crazy, unhinged dictator." Recent assessments of Kim Jong-un's leadership in North Korea fit this category. When Kim assumed leadership after his father's death, some observers focused on his youth and inexperience in politics to predict that he would be unable to consolidate personal power. Later, when he killed his uncle and purged many powerful members of the elite, observers also referenced his personality to explain his actions. Such personality-based perspectives of autocratic behavior encounter the same issues with falsifiability as "great-man" hypotheses.

Finally, with regard to all theories that focus on leadership, one has to factor in the importance of institutions. Leaders—either as individuals or as classes—can affect long-term regime trajectories by changing norms (see Section 2.2.1.2), but also by establishing institutions (i.e., rules and established patterns of behavior) that have long-term impacts (Section 2.2.3). Those in power at critical junctures can have considerable influence over the establishment of the rules of the game, and in many contexts,

such rules become “sticky” and constrain future elites’ strategies, even when their goals are vastly different from those who preceded them. In other words, while certain individuals’ personalities and preferences might matter at key points, it is only through the establishment of durable institutions that their decisions might have long-lasting legacies.

2.3.1.2. Leadership Values

Hypothesis: Democracy is more likely to emerge when individuals who dominate the class of potential leaders hold pro-democratic values.

Primary method: Large-*N* analysis

Primary authors: McFaul (2002); Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2013); Gift and Krcmaric (2017)

Summary: “Great man” theories focus on the role that individual leaders can play in bending the arc of history and how these critical individuals’ preferences, values, and abilities can nurture democratic breakthrough. As noted in the evaluation to Section 2.2.1.1, many scholars believe that such approaches place too much emphasis on the agency of one individual. Specifically, one needs to consider that leaders who garner such attention—e.g., the Gandhis, Washingtons, and Mandelas—are themselves part of a broader class of leaders. Such elites help shape the preferences and strategies of the “great men” in many circumstances; in others, decisions are made more collectively, with the narrow lens of retrospection only giving credit to a select few heroes. If elites generally, rather than individuals narrowly, are critical, scholars of regime transition must consider the values and preferences of broader groups.

Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2013), for example, argue that elites’ preferences over what they call “procedures” are important determinants of regime trajectories. While others have paid attention to elites’ preferences with regard to distributional outcomes (see Section 2.2.4.2), this approach contends that many elites also have inherent preferences for one regime type over another. The authors proceed with the type of strategic-interaction approach followed by earlier scholars (see Section 2.2.1.3), arguing that democracy will be more likely when coalitions comprised of individuals with pro-democracy preferences are dominant. “Political actors are instrumental,” they write, “but they are not always *only* instrumental or narrowly self interested” (p. 11, emphasis in original). They must, for example, believe that electoral losers should accept defeat and be willing to lose out on policy battles in legislatures. Similarly, McFaul (2002) argues that, in the post-communist world, regime trajectories have been determined by the balance-of-power at the type of the *ancien régime*’s collapse: when those with ideological leanings that support democracy are dominant, democracy is more likely to emerge.

If elite preferences with regard to regime type are important, how do pro-democratic norms develop? Gift and Krcmaric (2017) point to the importance of education. Namely, they find that countries whose leaders have been educated in Western countries are more likely to democratize. Although they posit that such leaders’ transnational linkages give other governments leverage to push for democratizing reforms (see Section 2.2.5.2), they also identified changes in the adoption of pro-democratic norms through Western education as a possible mechanism.

Relevance for democratization: Elites care about procedure, not just outcomes. To the extent that pro-democratic norms are more prevalent among circles of current and potential leaders, democracy will be more likely to emerge and endure.

Lessons for interventions: Gift and Krcmaric’s analyses (2017) point to the potential value of U.S. State Department programs such as International Visitor Leadership, Leaders for Democracy Fellowship, and Fulbright. Although there is, to our knowledge, no experimental evidence to suggest more definitively that such programs have a causal effect on leaders’ values, these approaches suggest that further commitments to such programs, by the U.S. Government and other actors, could bear fruit.

Evaluation: There is logical appeal to the argument that, if individuals in leadership positions value democracy as a regime type, democracy will be more likely to emerge and endure. Certainly, other studies have found that leaders’ values matter. Nelson (2014), for example, finds that the International Monetary Fund’s loans were “less onerous, more generous, and less rigorously enforced” when recipient countries’ top economic policymakers held ideological positions that were more compatible with the lenders’. However, there are at least five potentially serious limitations to value-based approaches. First, it is not entirely clear what specific values the leadership class must hold to make democracy more likely. The list of potential values—e.g., tolerating a wide range of political voices and belief systems, allowing spaces for many types of civil society actors, respecting women’s rights—is long, and it is not clear which values are necessary or sufficient for democracy to emerge. In a related vein, measuring leaders’—or, perhaps more importantly, potential leaders’—preferences with regard to regime type before a transition even occurs is a challenging prospect. Certainly, leaders have reasons to wish to overstate their democratic affect. Next, as discussed in Sections 2.2.1.3 and 2.2.1.4, leaders’ preferences are often endogenous to context: the dominant political class might shift its preferences in favor of democracy when environmental factors change (i.e., when pro-democratic forces in the society become more powerful and, thus, threatening). If this is the case, leaders’ values are not driving change; the broader context is. Fourth, it is also unclear whether leaders’ pro-democratic values would be sufficient to carry through a democratization effort, if other structural and institutional factors make successful transitions unlikely. Finally, it is not clear how pro-democratic values might arise among leader groups, nor is the development of such values among entire classes of potential leaders a task that is likely to be accomplished easily.

2.3.1.3. Incumbents vs. Oppositions

Hypothesis: Democracy is most likely to emerge under conditions of power parity between incumbents and oppositions.

Primary method: Deductive reasoning

Primary authors: Rustow (1970), Dahl (1971), Przeworski (1991)

Summary: In their purest form, approaches focused on political leadership dismiss the importance of structural factors outright. The foundational work of Rustow (1970) is of particular note. Pushing back against the ascendancy of modernization theory, which took an essentially teleological approach in connecting economic development with political democratization (Section 2.2.4.1), Rustow rejected the notion that certain preconditions needed to be in place before democracy could emerge in a given country. His only exception was that competing elites needed to agree that the polity should remain

united; a stable, democratic regime could not emerge in the face of disagreements over secession or which groups should be considered part of the “nation.” Di Palma (1990) would draw similar conclusions about preconditions, arguing that democracy was not a “hot-house plant” that could only survive under very specific conditions.

Rustow viewed democracy as the outcome of a bargaining process in which opponents concur that, in lieu of violence, competition over control of the country should be conducted through elections. Both sides agree that the electoral loser would a) retain the right to exist, and b) have the opportunity to seek power through future elections conducted on a level playing field. Any attempt by the winner to destroy the loser or abolish electoral competition upon achieving power would result in violence, which was anathema to both sides.

For Rustow, the key variable that would predict democracy was the distribution of power. Simply, when power was distributed evenly between opponents, a stalemate would develop, and elections would be a more appealing means of conducting future competition. Neither side wished to fight in a contest that promised to be protracted and unpredictable. A significant imbalance in the distribution of power, on the other hand, would encourage the more-powerful actor to seek to destroy its opponent, thus monopolizing power without the need for elections. This focus on how the distribution of power between government and opposition would determine regime outcomes would underpin the transitions literature for the next two decades.

Dahl (1971) reaches similar conclusions: governments are more likely to tolerate oppositions, he writes, when the cost of suppression increases. This cost is, in turn, likely to be determined by the opposition’s ability to resist. “The circumstances most favorable for competitive politics exist when access to violence and socioeconomic sanctions is either dispersed or denied to both oppositions and to government,” he argues (p. 51). However, Dahl’s approach can also be considered structural, in that he considers the economic conditions that are likely to produce this dispersion (i.e., industrial societies have less hierarchically distributed wealth than most agrarian ones).

Przeworski (1991) comes to a somewhat different conclusion, by adding uncertainty into the mix. Like Rustow, Przeworski argues that democratic institutions are unlikely to emerge in situations of obvious power disparity. However, known balance might also not lead to the emergence of stable democratic institutions, as actors might not agree as to the precise institutional mix: one side is likely to feel that one arrangement would best suit its needs, while the other side prefers another. Actors might ultimately decide that the costs of accepting an imperfect institutional arrangement are lower than those that might be incurred by seeking advantages outside of the democratic system (e.g., violence or extraconstitutional politics). Rather, for Przeworski, democracy is most likely to emerge out of situations of uncertainty with regard to the balance of power. Actors will be less tempted to upend democratic institutions if they fear that a competitor might be powerful enough to eliminate them in any struggle. Both sides will therefore be willing to accept the “institutionalized uncertainty” of democracy, under which loss at elections is possible, but protection from outright elimination is offered to those willing to defend the system.

However, there is empirical evidence that runs counter to these predictions. Lijphart (1977), for example, finds that democracy is most likely to break down—not emerge—when “there are two major segmental parties.” In many societies, particularly in the developing world, the size—and therefore, capacity—of competing groups is determined by ethnic demography (Horowitz, 1985). In that sense, we

might expect that countries with evenly sized ethnic groups would be the most likely to democratize. However, such medium levels of ethnic diversity are often associated with state breakdown and violence (Collier, 1998; Bates, 1999). And McFaul's "noncooperative" transitional model (2002) holds that, in post-communist countries, situations of power balance result, not in pacts and the emergence of democratic institutions, but rather in "unconsolidated, unstable partial democracies and autocracies" (p. 214). Balance, in other words, does not necessarily seem conducive to democracy.

Finally, others have emphasized not the distribution of power between major actors, but rather the stridency of their positions. As Bermeo (1997) writes, "It makes sense to distinguish between the amount of opposition activity and its content" (p. 307). Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2013) contend that, when elites take "radical" policy positions, the likelihood of democratic durability declines, since actors are not as willing to countenance the possibility of rule by opponents. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that opposition actors will be more likely to provoke harsh authoritarian responses if they threaten the nation-state's territorial integrity, the military's command structure, international alliances, or basic property rights. And Rueschemeyer, *et al.* (1992), who argue forcefully for the importance of working-class mobilization in pushing forward democratic change, caution that, if such demands are made by groups with seemingly radical views, the authoritarian leadership might act overly defensively. Such arguments suggest that political polarization could threaten democracy. However, Bermeo (1997) herself challenges the co-called "moderation hypothesis," pointing out that successful transitions occurred in cases such as Spain and Portugal even in the face of perceived extremism and mass mobilization. Representatives from the *ancien régime* might still countenance elections under such conditions if they believe that they, or non-extremist actors, will win, thereby mitigating the ostensibly radical threat. "Moderation," she concludes, "is not a prerequisite for democracy" (p. 314).

Relevance for democratization: The domestic distribution of power among relevant actors can significantly affect regime trajectories. The power of the opposition *vis-à-vis* the incumbent should be of particular interest to those studying democratization.

Lessons for interventions: Many classificatory schemes define democracy largely by the existence of level playing fields, as discussed earlier (Section 1.1). Rustow and others, however, focus more on equality in resources than equality of opportunity. Eliminating resource imbalances is therefore a necessity for democracy to emerge, according to this approach. What this means in practical terms is unclear, however. The possibility of civil war looms large in these accounts, suggesting that selective arming of (potential) combatants could be a viable solution (i.e., balanced groups will be more likely to seek negotiated outcomes). Though such strategies have long been recommended for ending long-standing civil wars (e.g., Bosnia, Syria), detractors warn of prolonging or exacerbating ongoing conflicts, engendering distrust between groups, and contributing to spillover conflicts. And a democratization-through-arming strategy, especially in competitions that have not been militarized, seems perverse. Rather, outsiders could focus on providing guarantees that limit actors' fears of elimination if they lose elections.

Since democracy can emerge in the absence of democrats (Di Palma, 1990), focuses on instilling democratic values (i.e., fostering a democratic culture) might not be necessary, and might even be ineffective in situations of significant incumbent-opposition imbalance. Rather, most of this literature suggests that interventions that help relevant sides achieve power parity will be the most successful. Such interventions would most likely be welcomed by the less powerful, but vigorously opposed by the more powerful (i.e., in most cases, authoritarian incumbents).

Evaluation: Pieces by Rustow, Dahl, and Przeworski are considered seminal in the democratization literature. Such arguments influence a great deal of later work, focusing on economic imbalances between the state and society (Section 2.2.4.1), economic inequality (Section 2.2.4.2), and civil society's capacity to challenge the state (Section 2.2.2.2). At the core of these varied approaches is the recognition that democracy is very unlikely to emerge and endure in the face of sustained asymmetries. That said, evaluating the balance approach is difficult, in that it requires clear identification of the major actors involved and a measure of each actor's capacity. The latter is complicated by the fact that there are myriad ways to measure capacity (e.g., financial resources, number of supporters, combatants and weaponry, etc.). In other words, it is difficult to know who the relevant pre-transition actors are and whether there is balance or imbalance in their relative powers.

2.3.1.4. Intra-Government Ruptures

Hypothesis: Transition outcomes are the product of power struggles within authoritarian governments, between hardliners and softliners, and between government and opposition.

Primary authors: Linz (1978), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Huntington (1991), Linz and Stepan (1996)

Primary methods: Deductive reasoning, comparative case studies

Summary: Recent literature on authoritarianism has problematized assumptions of unitary rulers, by focusing on collective decision-making within ruling groups or the need for dictators to maintain coalitions (Buono de Mesquita, *et al.*, 2003; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011; Buono de Mesquita and Smith, 2012; Svobik, 2012). Even earlier, scholars brought intra-government competition to the forefront in discussions of authoritarian breakdown, arguing that schisms within ruling coalitions often precipitated regime transition. Just as Linz and Stepan (1996) rejected once-dominant structuralist approaches to regime transitions as focusing on the "virtual inevitability" of such changes, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) brought intra-government debates to the forefront. "We assert that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself," they wrote (p. 19). In particular, they focused on splits between "hardliners," who defended the *status quo* and opposed liberalization or concessions to the opposition, and "softliners," who advocated for such changes, largely out of concern for long-term survival and even "future reputation." According to Huntington (1991), reformist elements might emerge because they a) conclude that the costs of staying in power via repression and cooptation outweigh the benefits; b) fear the consequences of being overthrown, and thus possibly jailed or killed, if they ignore opposition demands (i.e., they are engaging in a "minimax" strategy, or minimizing the probability that they will suffer maximum losses); c) believe that such changes will accrue payoffs from pro-democratic international actors; d) conclude that they can remain in power even with a loosening of controls; or e) come to view democracy as normatively preferable to continued dictatorship. Further, splits generally are likely to emerge in the face of perceived regime weakness. For example, Gandhi and Reuter (2010) find that fractures are more likely to occur in dominant-party systems during economic downturns. In short, there are varied reasons for a ruling coalition to splinter—and for some members to come to embrace reform, even if they have not undergone a normative conversion to democracy.

Theoretical attention to schisms within the authoritarian elite, and how these schisms affect bargaining with the opposition, remained a theme in subsequent writing. Authors argued that distinct trajectories were largely determined by two factors: 1) the relative strength of hardliners and softliners, and 2) the relative strength of the government and the opposition. Huntington (1991), for example, identified four potential outcomes that might emerge out of an intra-governmental schism.

In the first, stand-patters defeat reformists within the ruling elite, while the opposition is not strong enough to force the government to make concessions. As a result, opposition is repressed, sometimes brutally, and the authoritarian *status quo* largely prevails. A contemporary example might be Bahrain, in which King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa sided with hardliners during 2011 protests, rebuffed opposition demands, and was powerful enough—due largely to the intervention of Saudi Arabia—to squelch the anti-regime movement.

In other cases, hardliners might win intra-governmental debates, yet still be overthrown by a relatively powerful opposition. Such outcomes, termed “replacements” by Huntington and *rupturas* by Linz (1978), often occur via spectacular fashion, involving mass protests (e.g., Portugal (1974), Greece (1974), the Philippines (1986), East Germany (1989), Romania (1989), Tunisia (2010-11), Egypt (2011), and Burkina Faso (2014)) or civil war (e.g., Zaïre (1997), Libya (2011), and Côte d’Ivoire (2011)). In retrospect, a minimax strategy of accommodation might have seemed advisable, given that such ousted dictators incur heavy costs of exile, imprisonment, or even death.

Cases in which softliners have more power typically involve more negotiated transitions, according to this type of perspective. Examples of “transformation,” to use Huntington’s terminology (or “*reforma*,” to use Linz’s), include many in which dominant-party regimes gradually reformed systems before finally losing elections (e.g., Hungary (1990), Mexico (2000), Taiwan (2000)) or military or personalistic regimes that orchestrated paths to elections (e.g., Spain (1982), Brazil (1985), Chile (1990), and Nigeria (1979, 1999)). Given power imbalances in the incumbent’s favor, leaders of the *ancien régime* often retain special powers (“authoritarian enclaves”), such as immunity from prosecution for human rights abuses and corruption, budgetary powers, or reserved legislative seats, in the new dispensation (e.g., Chile post-Pinochet, Indonesia post-Suharto (Case 3)). In other cases, the incumbents retain enough power to continue to rule after the first post-reform elections (e.g., Bulgaria (1990), Mozambique (1994), Tanzania (1995)).

A fourth category describes cases in which the anti-*status quo* forces enjoy enough power to engage in negotiations with incumbents as equals, or even as the more-powerful actors. Linz and Stepan (1996) referred to these situations as “four-player games,” in that they involved contestation and negotiation between hardliners and softliners within both government and opposition camps; for a successful “pacted” transition to occur, moderates within both sets of actors must be sufficiently empowered. Such “transplacements,” as Huntington called them, are less likely to produce liberalized regimes that contain significant authoritarian enclaves, since the opposition has greater ability to set the agenda and reject incumbent demands. A number of the more-successful transitions of the “Third Wave” era—in the sense that they produced more-democratic outcomes—can best be placed in this category; such cases include South Korea (1988), Poland (1990), Czechoslovakia (1990), Mongolia (1990), El Salvador (1991), Zambia (1991), Benin (1991), and South Africa (1994).

Finally, the recent turn to understanding authoritarian rule as the maintenance of often-delicate coalitions has improved our understanding of how and when repression fails. Dictators who rely, for

example, on autonomous military and security apparatuses risk overthrow if those forces refuse to use force against fellow citizens during protests. Such principled insubordination marked the death knell for hardliners in authoritarian regimes in Portugal and the Soviet Union, as well as, more recently, in Tunisia (Case 7) and Egypt during the Arab Spring. Conversely, those leaders who decided to build security apparatuses primarily populated by their own coethnics and other loyalists are less likely to face such internal revolt, since forces' livelihood is tightly tied to the continuance of the *status quo*. Those forces are more likely to use violence against civilians during popular uprisings, which might successfully quell challenges to the regime or, if the opposition is sufficiently powerful, result in a civil war between pro- and anti-regime actors (e.g., Libya and Syria) (Bellin, 2012) (for more, see Section 2.2.7.3).

Authoritarian rule persists through strategies other than bald repression via security forces, of course. Electoral fraud, for example, is a common tool in autocrats' "menu of manipulation" (Schedler, 2002). Rundlett and Svobik (2016) develop a formal model in which bureaucrats responsible for election administration have independent agency. When authoritarian loss at an upcoming election seems possible, self-interested agents might refuse entreaties to commit fraud, out of fear of prosecution in the event of a regime change, even while hoping that their fellow agents will commit enough fraud to prevent incumbent loss. As a result, agents might avoid engagement in fraud *en masse*, resulting in the collapse of the incumbent's vote totals, as occurred in cases such as Mexico (2000), Senegal (2012), and Sri Lanka (2015).

Relevance for democratization: Regime trajectories are affected by dynamics within the authoritarian coalition, and between that coalition and the opposition.

Lessons for interventions: Empowerment of moderates, both within the pre-transition government and the opposition, seems essential for successful transition from authoritarianism, according to these approaches. The only scenario in which authoritarian breakdown occurs without such moderate empowerment—replacement—has sometimes led to relatively successful, durable democracy (e.g., Portugal, Greece, the Philippines, Argentina, Tunisia). However, there are many examples of replacement leading to new types of authoritarian rule (e.g., France after 1789, Egypt after 2011), or of clashes between hardliners and reformers devolving into serious violence and state collapse (e.g., Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo). These latter cases suggest that moderation makes democratic success more likely.

However, there is the question of how such moderates can be identified, and thus supported by outsiders. Government moderates might support reform, not because they embrace democratic norms, but because they fear the consequence of standing pat in the face of rising public opposition, and thus meeting the fate of a Ceaușescu or Qaddafi. Moderates might be unpopular within the opposition, given their potential penchant for gradualism and negotiation.

Another strategy might be for outsiders to make credible threats to prosecute ruling elites and low-level agents for activities such as violence and fraud. This could discourage such actors from engaging in such practices, thereby undermining autocrats' abilities to extend their rule. On the other hand, if actors have already committed human rights violations and other crimes, the threat of prosecution could harden their resolve to defend the regime, thus making negotiated transition less likely.

Evaluations: Empirical evidence suggests that authoritarian regimes do often undergo splits between hardliners and moderates, in very public ways, with dissidents often being jailed or fleeing into exile, or

reformist influences winning out over standpatters. The 1991 coup in the Soviet Union was a result of such a hardliner-moderate split, as were numerous defections by highly ranked government insiders in Libya in 2011 and The Gambia in 2016-17. However, such splits are not always obvious to outsiders, and their occurrence, even when publicly visible, do not always foretell impending regime challenge. Seemingly stable authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea and China, frequently execute or imprison former insiders, while others (e.g., Bahrain, Zimbabwe) survive despite high-ranking defections at seemingly perilous moments. The persistence of such regimes suggests that oppositions in those countries were not powerful enough to overthrow a hardliner-led government via force. It is thus unclear whether such theoretical approaches have much predictive capacity, as the relative power of various factions within the government and opposition(s) is difficult to measure.

It is also unclear when moderates will prevail over hardliners. Such theories can provide a framework for understanding how regime transitions have unfolded in the past, but it is likely necessary to look to other factors, such as the government's access to patronage (Section 2.2.4.3) and repressive tools (Section 2.2.7.3), and the opposition's ability to overcome collective action problems (Section 2.2.1.5), to understand why certain outcomes occur.

2.3.1.5. Divided Oppositions

Hypothesis: Transitions from authoritarianism are more likely when oppositions are unified.

Primary methods: Deductive reasoning, comparative case studies

Primary authors: Weingast (1997), Magaloni (2006, 2010), Greene (2007)

Summary: While the previously discussed literature tended to emphasize the importance of potential splits within the authoritarian coalition, others have focused on how divisions within the opposition can affect the probability of transition from authoritarianism. Here, Barry Weingast's (1997) game-theoretic model has been especially influential. Weingast argued that incumbents would be more likely to violate citizens' rights when they faced a divided population; only a unified population would have the capacity to push back against such fundamental transgressions. It was therefore in incumbents' interests to practice a version of divide-and-rule, taking advantage of or creating schisms within the population, and targeting transgressions against some groups and benefits to others. This dynamic could explain, Weingast argued, why multiethnic societies were less likely to be democratic. Democracy and the rule of law would thus only be possible when all relevant groups within the citizenry could decide that a violation of *any* group's fundamental rights is unacceptable. Constitutions develop as coordinating mechanisms, in that they enumerate agreed-upon fundamental rights and limit governments' actions.

Magaloni (2006; 2010) extends Weingast's model, studying how divided oppositions provide opportunities for authoritarian leaders to extend their rule via fraud. In a simple model with two opposition groups, one group's acceptance of electoral fraud by the incumbent enables the incumbent to survive. Civil uprisings against fraud are unlikely to occur if the population gets mixed signals from the opposition with regard to the acceptability of a just-completed election. Examples from post-Communist settings, such as Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Ukraine, suggest that populations mobilized by anger over election fraud can succeed in toppling governments (Tucker, 2007). In contrast, Magaloni argues that mass protests never developed against Mexico's ruling PRI in 1988, after a likely stolen presidential

election, because one opposition faction accepted the results, thus muddying a potential signal to the population.

Governments have numerous strategies at their disposal, including exacerbating interethnic tensions among the opposition and using patronage to coopt subsets of opponents, to reduce the probability of a united opposition. In fact, simply allowing multiple political parties to form can further the incumbent's goals. For example, Greene (2007) argues that, in dominant-party regimes, only ideologues will be willing to bear the costs of joining opposition parties that have low probabilities of victory. When ideological cleavages around questions other than the character of the regime (e.g., over the proper level of state involvement in the economy) exist, the opposition is likely to be divided into polarized camps. This not only allows the ruling party to situate itself as the defenders of the moderate middle, but it also decreases the likelihood of opposition coordination. Such dynamics facilitated the long-term rule of parties such as Mexico's PRI, Taiwan's *Kuomintang*, and Senegal's *Parti Socialiste*. In all three cases, however, the dominant party lost elections when the opposition was able to overcome its coordination problems, usually because some exogenous factor (e.g., economic decline) significantly weakened the incumbent.

Relevance for democratization: Demographic and ideological divisions within society can strengthen autocrats, by limiting oppositions' abilities to form a united front.

Lessons for interventions: Oppositions might be divided on numerous questions, including issues of national identity and economics. However, they share in common their preference for democracy or, at the very least, their opposition to the authoritarian *status quo*. Dialogue among opposition elements is therefore important, to help groups establish compromise with regard to the issues that divide them and agree upon anti-regime strategies, such as which candidate to field in upcoming elections. Opposition groups should be encouraged to accept such compromises, and participation in such dialogue could be seen as a prerequisite for international assistance.

Evaluations: There are two limitations with such approaches. First, it is unclear whether authoritarian regimes are strong because they face divided oppositions, or whether oppositions are divided because they face strong autocrats. In other words, the literature seems to acknowledge that, when the authoritarian is weakened, opposition coordination becomes more likely, as turnover seems more possible. However, it is unclear whether opposition coordination therefore has an independent effect on regime trajectories. Second, opposition coordination does not seem to be a necessary condition for regime collapse to occur. Mexico's PRI lost power in 2000 even though it faced two strong opposition parties that were unlikely to coordinate because of their ideological differences, for example.

2.3.2. Political Culture

2.3.2.1. Civic Culture

Hypothesis: Civic culture is a requirement for stable democracy.

Primary method: Quantitative analyses of survey data measuring individual values and assessments of democratic stability/indicators of level of democracy

Primary authors: Almond and Verba (1963); Inglehart and Welzel (2005)

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USAID/DCHA/DRG Working Papers Series

Summary: Almond and Verba’s original (1963) and subsequent (1980) work on civil culture is foundational in the field. In their research, they find that some features of a polity’s political culture are more conducive to democratic rule than others. Specifically, the cultural form of a society informs its prospects for democracy. They find that a “civic” culture, in which individuals are actively interested in politics, engaged in the political process, and respectful of the rule of law, is the key. In their view, a civic culture is a requirement for democracy because how citizens view their role in affecting government policy is critical.

Almond and Verba test their expectations by studying survey data from five countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Mexico), which exhibit wide variation in terms of citizens’ beliefs about their role in society. They group political cultures into three categories—participatory, subject, and parochial—based on the extent to which people follow politics and believe that they should be active citizens. Participants believe that they can affect political outcomes, subjects express interest in the political system but are disconnected from it, and parochials know little about the system and have little interest in participating in it as a consequence. Countries’ dominant cultures do not necessarily fall into a single category, but the extent to which their people lean toward one category versus the others affects their prospects for democratic success. They expect that Italy and Mexico, which they classify as subject cultures, will have a lower chance of democratic success than countries such as the United States and United Kingdom, which mix elements of various political cultures. In the latter two countries, where Almond and Verba argue a “civic culture” prevails, people felt and behaved like engaged and responsible citizens, but were also willing to respect authority and the rights of opponents who win power legitimately to rule, thereby increasing prospects for democratic stability.

There are a number of empirical issues with Almond and Verba’s work (discussed shortly) that more recent work has sought to address. Inglehart and Welzel’s study (2005) is likely the best known. In it, they build on the idea that civic culture is critical for securing greater levels of democracy, but emphasize the importance of citizen preferences for self-expression, which they define as the ability for individuals to act based on autonomous choices. They take issue with Almond and Verba’s assertion that subject cultures are important for democracy and argue instead that some distrust of government is actually good for democracy. Inglehart and Welzel’s central argument is that when citizens value self-expression, they are more likely to push for greater political rights and government accountability, resulting in greater pressures for democracy.

Inglehart and Welzel test their argument using survey data and find that levels of democraticness are higher where citizens prioritize individual liberties and civic autonomy. They use statistical tests to try to account for potential reverse causality and find that their key results hold. Simply supporting democracy in theory is not sufficient; individuals must value self-expression if democracy is to flourish.

Subsequent research has found little empirical support for Inglehart and Welzel’s key findings, once sample selection bias, country-specific effects, and the endogeneity of values to democracy are taken into account (Coppedge, 2012). Self-expression is not shown to increase levels of democracy or the chance of democratization, nor is it shown to stabilize existing democracies. By contrast, recent research suggests that the relationship runs in the opposite direction, such that democracy increases self-expression values (Dahlum and Knutsen, 2017).

In sum, the civic culture camp in the political culture theory family argues that making democracy work requires civic values among the citizenry, though there is mixed empirical evidence in support of it.

Relevance for democratization: The theories in the civic culture wing of the political culture literature suggest that if liberal-democratic values become widespread, this will convert into popular collective action that leads to greater democraticness.

Lessons for intervention: The message for policymakers is that investing resources in civic education that helps instill in people the value of self-expression will improve a country's prospects of democratizing. However, the literature differs on precisely what values are most conducive to democracy, and there remains great uncertainty over the best way to promote those values. Moreover, the jury is out regarding whether the arguments proposed have empirical support.

Evaluation: Almond and Verba's study was foundational to the field of political culture and democracy, but it was subject to very serious criticism due to methodological issues (unrepresentative samples, invalid questions, ethnocentrism, and so forth).

Inglehart and Welzel's study improves on many of the shortcomings in Almond and Verba's, yet there are still a number of methodological critiques. First, they use factor analysis to address the concern that survey questions do not have the same meaning across different cultural and linguistic contexts. But interpreting what the dimensions from factor analysis mean is not obvious; as a result, it is difficult to know with much certainty whether all of the measures that went into their proxy of self-expression actually belong in it. Second, they evaluate the relationship between civic culture and democracy over a relatively short time period. More extensive time-series survey data are required to make causal inferences about whether a change in civic culture leads to a change in levels of democracy within a single country. Third, the relationship at a national level between aggregate citizen values and democracy says little about what is happening at the individual level, which is the focal point of the theory (a problem common to many studies in this field). Despite the methodological issues in Inglehart and Welzel's study, their work—at a minimum—suggests that preference for self-expression is correlated with higher levels of democracy. Theoretically, Inglehart and Welzel assert that the mechanism tying civic culture to greater democracy is collective action: if value of self-expression becomes widespread across the citizenry, it will steamroll into popular collective action and, in turn, greater democracy. Though they do not test this component of their theory, it is theoretically troublesome due to the difficulty of organizing collective action in dictatorships and the ability of authoritarian governments to deter it.

2.3.2.2. Social Capital

Hypothesis: Social capital is important for democracy.

Primary methods: Qualitative and quantitative analyses of data on associational patterns and good governance/democratic consolidation

Primary authors: Putnam (1993, 2000); Lussier and Fish (2012)

Summary: Putnam's original (1993) and subsequent (2000) work on social capital is foundational in the field. In it, he emphasizes that social connections and citizen participation in associations are key

requirements for democracy. Such theories have their roots in the ideas of Alexis de Tocqueville, who observed in the early 19th century that citizens of the United States joined many civic associations. So-called “neo-Tocquevillians” argue that communal orientations create social capital (i.e., the ability for individuals to cooperate and function more effectively within groups), which is reflected in voluntary organizations and trust in fellow citizens. Importantly, democracies flourish in the context of this communal ground. There are two mechanisms tying social capital to democraticness. First, the capacity of citizens to organize in groups will increase their ability to challenge powerful actors and pressure for democracy. Second, greater social trust begets even more social trust, in turn motivating public officials to respond to citizen demands and making democracy more stable.

Putnam’s original analyses primarily focus on Italy and the United States, but scholars have applied his ideas to other cases as well. Lussier and Fish (2012), for example, examine the experience of Indonesia. At first glance, Indonesia appears to be a poor candidate for democracy; its population is predominantly Muslim, it is extremely ethnically diverse, and its democratic transition in 1998 was abrupt and violent. Yet, its democracy has been remarkably robust. Lussier and Fish attribute this to Indonesia’s vibrant associational life. Indonesians are better able to defend their rights and hold elites accountable because of their extraordinary levels of civic engagement, which facilitate collective action in politics. They argue that the Indonesian experience is consistent with the “neo-Tocquevillian” perspective that the vitality of associational life affects the viability of open politics, and challenges those theories that cast doubt on the value of a robust civil society for democracy. Others have found that civil society organizations, such as unions, can be important actors in pro-reform movements and form the bases for strong parties in the aftermath of transitions (LeBas, 2011).

At the same time, there is evidence that calls into question the relationship between social capital and democratization. Jamal (2009), for example, looks at the experience of the Palestinian West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world and shows that civic engagement can just as easily generate authoritarian citizenship that buttresses the regime as democratic citizenship that challenges it. Her study suggests that we should pause before assuming that greater participation in associations and, in turn, greater civic engagement will bring about democracy.

The theoretical mechanism tying social capital with democracy has also been criticized. Some scholars have pointed out that, while social capital allows individuals to cooperate better within groups, cooperation need not be for pro-democratic ends. For example, Berman (1997) notes that Weimar Germany was marked by high levels of involvement in civil society. Rather than promote democracy, as neo-Tocquevillian theory would predict, she demonstrates how the Nazis were able to expand and eventually undermine democracy, by reaching new audiences through preexisting, apolitical organizations. Others have noted that citizen associations often organize violence and propagate hate speech (Varshney, 2001). In these cases, social capital allows groups to be more productive, but to anti-democratic ends.

Part of the issue is that civil society organizations are not uniformly pro-democratic. As White (2004) writes, some elements of civil society are “politically uninvolved, some tolerant or supportive of authoritarian rule, some working towards an alternative conception of democracy radically different from the liberal version, and some ‘progressive’ in the sense that they favour and foster a liberal democratic polity” (p.11). For this reason, “any statement to the effect that a ‘strong’ civil society is conducive to democratization [is] meaningless” (p. 11). This is consistent with research on social movements (see Section 2.2.2.4) which emphasizes that not all social movements have pro-democratic

messages). It is also in line with work on labor unions, highlighting that, in many authoritarian regimes, unions function as instruments of control, rather than organizations designed to represent workers (Robertson, 2007, p. 783).

As an additional point, it is worth noting that research on personality and support for authoritarianism in Russia finds that agreeableness—a personality trait concerned with interpersonal relationships and the desire to maintain positive ties with others—is associated with higher approval of the Putin government (Greene and Robertson, forthcoming). This implies that the greater the number of pro-social citizens in grey-zone regimes, the greater the overall support for incumbents. This finding runs counter to the expectation that social connectivity is conducive to democratization.

Relevance for democratization: This branch of the political culture literature argues that countries with higher levels of social capital will be more likely to be democratic: social connectivity is a key requirement for democracy to flourish.

Lessons for intervention: The social capital hypothesis implies that helping countries build and support civil society networks and other forms of social connectivity will increase the viability of democracy. Such work has been a central focus of democracy-promotion organizations for several decades. At the same time, there is mixed empirical support for this hypothesis and many questions regarding the causal mechanisms proposed.

Evaluation: Critics have taken aim at a number of the claims in the central Putnam hypothesis tying social capital to democraticness. There is little exploration of the mechanisms that tie social capital with institutional performance; the big ideas in this theory might be correlated, but there are few linkages between them, and the underlying logic is underspecified. How does societal cooperation (the product of micro-level behaviors) translate into superior government institutions (a macro-level feature of the state)?

Beyond these issues, there are a number of unanswered questions in the theory. We know that social capital varies from one country to the next, but why? How was the “virtuous circle” initiated in the first place? These questions are of central importance for practitioners interested in spreading democracy.

The theory also does not arbitrate between the relative power of social capital and institutional design in making governments effective. By looking at a single country case, political institutions are held constant. It is therefore impossible to assess the comparative contribution of social capital and institution design to good governance.

Lussier and Fish’s study offers more comparative evidence that associational patterns matter for democratic consolidation (comparing Indonesia to a variety of other developing countries). Yet their approach cannot explain why dictatorship has been the dominant form of government for the bulk of Indonesia’s history. If the patterns of social and political engagement have been entrenched in Indonesia for some time, why did it take so long for Indonesia to democratize? It may be that social capital is important for stabilizing democratic regimes, but does little to influence the chance of democratic transition in the first place.

Even if we assume that social capital does influence democratic viability, some critics argue that following this argument as a roadmap may lead to more harm than good. Putnam himself acknowledged

that outsider attempts to promote local civic associations are likely to have a “high failure rate.” Such projects can backfire for many reasons, not the least of which is the incentives the influx of resources create for individuals to try to capture and divert them to private uses.

2.3.2.3. Legitimacy

Hypothesis: Citizens must view the political system as legitimate for democracy to survive, particularly if there are viable alternatives.

Primary methods: Theoretical model; quantitative analysis of survey data measuring individual values and assessments of democratic viability

Primary authors: Easton (1965); Rose, *et al.* (1998)

Summary: Easton (1965) first put forth the idea that political systems need legitimacy to survive; the public must support the system’s institutions and the sum of its parts if there is to be stability. Diffuse support of the political system (the political authorities and the regime), which manifests itself in trust in and belief in the legitimacy of the system, is critical.

Building off this idea, scholars in this camp argue that public support of democracy as a system of governance is required for it to operate effectively. Specific cultural values do not matter so much as general levels of citizen confidence in democratic institutions. This implies that lower confidence in political institutions threatens democratic stability, particularly because democracies rely on legitimacy (as opposed to force) to survive.

Rose, *et al.* (1998) offer a more nuanced take on this hypothesis. They derive their argument by looking at survey data across a number of post-Communist societies. They argue that the legitimacy of the system matters, but that observers must take into account the alternative systems under consideration. The critical idea here is not that citizens must support democracy, but that they must prefer it to the other potential alternatives that political elites can reasonably supply. From this perspective, what matters when trying to understand whether a democratic transition will be successful is whether citizens view the new democracy as more legitimate than its predecessor or rivals, as well as whether elites can reasonably sustain it.

Rose, *et al.*’s argument helps to explain why democracies may persist even if they are unpopular: democracy will survive even with low public support if citizens believe it is the best of the existing alternatives.

Relevance for democratization: The argument implies that new democracies will only last if citizens view the new system as a better form of governance than the autocratic alternatives.

Lessons for intervention: Policymakers should assist new democratic governments in cultivating citizen support for the system as a whole, while bearing in mind the viability of alternatives. How best to do this, however, is unclear.

Evaluation: Legitimacy is a difficult, if not impossible, concept to measure directly. As a result, most scholars seek to capture it by looking at public support for the system. The hypotheses that fall into this camp emphasize that support for the system is essential for the system to survive.

The central issue with this research agenda has to do with its practical utility. It is theoretically persuasive to expect that public trust in the political system is important for democracy to survive (or conversely that distrust in the political system is important for autocracy to falter). However, it is unclear how such attitudes emerge. Research by Mishler and Rose (2001) suggests that institutional performance is critical to the cultivation of such support. If institutional performance—in the form of rooting out corruption, protecting freedoms, growing the economy, and otherwise responding to public demands—is the necessary condition for democratic support, then incorporating the concept of public support and/or legitimacy into our understanding of democratization may be superfluous. Rather, it is likely to be more efficient for policy efforts to focus on helping governments in new democracies perform well in specific areas than to devote resources to the broader (and fuzzier) goal of cultivating public trust in the political system.

2.3.2.4. Social Movements

Hypothesis: Social movements can increase the chance of democratization, when they have certain features.

Primary method: Case study research and surveys

Primary authors: Tilly (2004); Osa (2003); Schock (2005)

Summary: A social movement is a “challenger that seeks a collective good for a constituency by means of a variety of tactics, some of which entail unconventional, even illegal, pressuring of the target” (Oberschall, 1996, p. 384). Social movements are remarkably heterogeneous (as are civil society organizations (see Section 2.2.2.2)). Some social movements have a clear chain of command, while others lack a centralized hierarchy. There is variance ideologically, as well. Some social movements are non-ideological; others are anti-democratic and designed to promote the regime (such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution); and yet others are pro-democratic with the purpose of advocating for political liberalization (such as the People Power Revolution in the Philippines) (Oberschall, 2000). Scholars have identified a number of features of pro-democratic social movements that increase the chances they will be successful in their efforts.

Note that there is substantial overlap in the democratization literature between social movements and protest. This hypothesis emphasizes organizational features of social movements that are conducive to democratization. Section 2.2.6.1 focuses on characteristics of protest events specifically.

Much of the literature on social movements and democratization draws from the work of Tilly (2004), who suggests that under certain conditions social movements can be effective in promoting democratization. Looking at the case of Communist Poland, Osa (2003), for example, identifies a number of factors that are important for social movements to emerge in authoritarian settings and mount sustained challenges. These include: 1) a pre-existing support structure (in this case the Catholic Church) for the movement; 2) a message that is ideologically neutral (to lessen the regime’s ability to splinter the

movement); and 3) the existence of a more radical group that opposes the regime that can serve as a target of regime repression (making the mainstream movement seem less threatening).

Schock (2005), similarly, looks at instances of non-violent popular movements (which he terms unarmed insurrections) in six authoritarian regimes and identifies why some were successful in contributing to political liberalization but others were not. He emphasizes two factors. The first is resilience, which refers to the capacity of popular movements to continue to mobilize despite facing challenges. Decentralization is important for increasing resilience. The second is leverage, which refers to the ability of popular movements to attract individuals to their cause and away from the regime. Disrupting regime-citizen ties by making individuals less dependent on the regime is important for increasing leverage.

A central theme in these studies is that a social movement's ability to weather challenges is critical to its likelihood of success in effecting democratic change. This robustness, in turn, is a product of specific features of the social movement, including decentralization and ideological neutrality.

It is important to note, however, that the same factors that are conducive to a social movement's success may be harmful for democratic consolidation. In his study on Ukraine, for example, Beissinger (2013) finds that movements that incorporate diverse groups united primarily in their opposition to the regime may lead to post-transition instability because of their fractured nature and lack of consensus over key policy issues.

Finally, a subset of the social movements literature focuses particularly on the role of women in activism that can bring about democratization. In fact, to the extent that gender is incorporated into studies of the causes of democratization, it is typically through focus on social movements. Women's roles in democratization through social movements has perhaps most been evident in Latin America. Waylen (1994) cites three types of groups or movements that women often dominated in the region, particularly in the late 1970s and through the 1980s. First, human rights organizations, such as *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and *Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos* in Chile prominently called for information about the "disappeared," who were often young adults punished for their anti-authoritarian activism. Second, community-based groups focused on issues surrounding consumption agitated for improved living standards; Chile's *organizaciones economicas populares* fit this description. Finally, explicitly feminist groups, such as Chile's *Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer*, were largely comprised of professional, middle-class women. Alvarez (1991) argues that women found "political space" in these contexts that were closed to men, given that authoritarian leaders often did not initially view women's mobilization as threatening. Further, women often mobilized under the guise as mothers searching for answers about children (e.g., *Las Madres* and *Las Abuelas* in Argentina) or seeking to feed their families; the public embrace of these roles made it difficult for authoritarian leaders, who often touted the virtues of motherhood, to repress female activists. Waylen (1994) contends that the initial success of these movements in bringing people into the street helped crack climates of fear that authoritarians had tried to create—the first notable anti-Pinochet protests in Chile occurred in 1978 on International Women's Day, she points out—and thus helped bring about the "initial breakdown" of authoritarianism. However, Waylen points out that, once authoritarian regimes were weakened, women were quite often marginalized in the negotiations or discussions within elite groups that followed.

Relevance for democratization: Not all social movements have democratic goals, and among those that do, not all are successful in advocating for democracy. Among pro-democracy social movements, those that are more robust are more likely to be successful in advocating change. A number of factors increase robustness, including ideological neutrality (to help movements withstand regime efforts to fracture them) and decentralization (to increase their resilience in the face of challenges, such as a change of leadership).

Lessons for intervention: Assistance for pro-democratic social movements should focus on helping them organize in ways that foster robustness.

Evaluation: There is a wide array of research dedicated to why social movements emerge. The literature on social movements and democratization specifically, however, is smaller in scope (Tarrow, 2012, p. 21). This is true despite the insights of Tilly more than a decade ago that such movements likely play a valuable role in democratic transitions. That said, the studies that have arisen on this subject suggest that organizational robustness is an important predictor of a movement's success. Because research in this area is based on handful of cases, however, it is possible that the findings offered are not generalizable to other contexts. Moreover, it is also important to bear in mind that the same features that increase a movement's chance of bringing democratization may later work against the democracy's consolidation.

Case 2: Die Montagsdemonstrationen and the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Many of the dramatic authoritarian collapses that occurred in late 1989 were marked by the occurrence of large protests against the *status quo*. Perhaps nowhere was the potential power of anti-authoritarian social movements more noticeable than in East Germany, where a long-time movement of a relatively small number of activists with grievances against the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) developed into a mass movement that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Leipzig was in many ways the center of opposition to SED rule in East Germany. There, about 200 anti-regime activists had been gathering for several years for "peace prayer services" (*Friedensgebet*) on Monday evenings at the Nikolaikirche. The Stasi reportedly kept close watch over the attendees' activities, and on the occasions in which meetings did develop into public protests, participants were quickly detained.

By summer 1989, however, the authoritarian government of Erich Honecker was under increasing strain. Many East Germans concluded that local elections in May had been seriously rigged for SED-affiliated candidates, and a worsening international debt crisis threatened to further undermine the macroeconomy. In the meantime, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms signaled that the authoritarian government's external patron would not intervene as strongly to shore up the regime. When Hungary's reformist government announced liberalized travel restrictions across the Iron Curtain in August, an estimated 13,000 East Germans fled, spawning the beginnings of the so-called "exit crisis" (Pfaff, 2006).

As the country hemorrhaged population to the West, the *Montagsdemonstrationen* (Monday demonstrations) at the Nikolaikirche burgeoned in size. On September 4, the meeting spilled out onto Karl-Marx-Platz, meeting little resistance from the security forces. By October 9, an estimated 70,000

were attending; these numbers exploded in subsequent weeks, to 120,000 by October 16, and 320,000 by October 23. Honecker resigned as general secretary of the SED on October 18.

The government's apparent inability to curb anti-regime demonstrations, which were publicized to East Germans by television stations in the West, encouraged other disenfranchised citizens to gather in *Montagsdemonstrationen* in other cities throughout September and October. The protests met their crescendo with the government's easing of travel restrictions to West Germany on November 9, which was met with crowds' spontaneous dismantling of the "Anti-Fascist Protective Wall" in Berlin.

The *Montagsdemonstrationen* began with a small number of committed activists, protected to a large extent by the Lutheran Church, which remained one of the few institutions with much autonomy under the SED. Like many social movements, they lacked a centralized hierarchy, were non-ideological (aside from being opposed to the authoritarian excesses of the SED) (i.e., the simple chant of "*Wir sind das Volk!*" ("We are the people") was the protesters' rallying call), and grew in popularity as domestic conditions worsened and the apparent costs of resistance declined (Obserschall, 2000). Three weeks after the Berlin crowds' attacks on the Wall, the constitution was amended to strip the SED of its privileged position, and the party's leadership resigned *en masse*. Democratic parliamentary elections were held in March 1990. Six months later, that legislature approved the unification treaty that officially abolished the German Democratic Republic.

2.3.2.6. Religious Institutions

Hypothesis: Religious institutions are most likely to play a role in political liberalization when they have autonomy from the regime.

Primary method: Case studies; cross-national qualitative analyses

Primary authors: Philpott (2007); Slater (2009); Künkler and Leininger (2009)

Summary: Philpott (2007) explores the conditions under which religious organizations play an influential role in democratization. (For a discussion of whether the type of religion influences democratization prospects, see Box 2.) He shows that the Catholic Church helped democratization in some instances (Philippines), but hurt it in others (Rwanda). A key factor driving the outcome is whether the religious group differentiated itself from the state. Religious groups that are more autonomous are better positioned to actively oppose the regime. Where they are in privileged positions and/or dependent on the regime for resources, they are less likely to levy criticism against it. A number of factors also increase the likelihood that religious groups will play a critical role in political liberalization, including the size of the group, its centralization, and the commitment of its members.

This message is consistent with that of other studies. Slater (2009), for example, uses cases from Southeast Asia to illustrate that democratization is more likely when communal elites who have nationalist and religious authority take an opposition stance. Where such elites have independence and political salience, the prospects for democratization should improve. Likewise, Künkler and Leininger (2009) show using a selection of case studies that though religious actors did not determine democratic outcomes, their role was likely to be larger where they had greater legal autonomy *vis-à-vis* the regime. They find that such actors were more likely to play an influential role in the constitution-drafting process and in institutional welfare assistance post-transition when they had *de jure* independence prior to it.

Relevance for democratization: Where religious groups have autonomy from the regime they can play a key role in democratization.

Lessons for intervention: Devoting resources toward pro-democracy religious groups that operate independently of the regime may be effective, particularly if such groups are large and politically salient.

Evaluation: The literature on religion and democratization suggests that religious actors can be integral to processes of political liberalization. Most of the insights from this literature, however, are based on a limited number of cases. It is therefore possible that they are not generalizable to other authoritarian environments. It is also important to note that much of this research examines the conditions under which religious groups are going to support or oppose democracy, rather than whether we are likely to see democratization as a result.

Box 2. Religious Values and Democracy

Many cultural arguments about political regimes have focused on the supposed (in)compatibility between different religious traditions and democracy. Connections between Protestantism and normatively valued outcomes, such as economic development and democracy, grew out of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which contended that Calvinist traditions emphasized individual autonomy and the importance of sacrifice and hard work during one's life, for the payoff that will come in the afterlife. Modern Protestant traditions valued individualism (and even iconoclasm), were decentralized, and were suspicious of hierarchy, all traits that might support liberal democracy (Tusalem, 2009). The democratizing power of Protestantism was so significant that it could be transferred via missionary activity (Woodberry, 2012). Before the Third Wave, Catholicism—which was seen as centralized, hierarchical, and dismissive of dissent—seemed incompatible with democracy, and more aligned with authoritarianism prevalent in Southern Europe, Latin America, and the Philippines (Huntington, 1991). More recently, scholars have noted the paucity of majority-Muslim democracies and pondered whether certain aspects of Islam (or, perhaps more appropriately, of cultures in which Islam is commonly practiced), such as diminished social, economic, and political rights for women, inhibit democratic development (Fish, 2002).

However, it is important to note that religion as it is lived in the real world often differs substantially from how it is portrayed theologically, according to Anderson (2004). It is for this reason, he argues, that in some instances religious traditions seem compatible with democracy, while in others they do not. Whether a broad religious tradition will help spur democratization, therefore, is less about the specificities of its theology and more about the nature of the particular organizational context (see Section 2.2.2.6). As Bayat (2007) writes, understanding where and when we are likely to see democracy has to do with “political struggle rather than religious scripture, even though religion is often deployed to legitimize or to resist political domination” (xvii).

Work by Stepan and Linz (2013) supports these assertions, finding little evidence that a specific religious tradition is incompatible with democracy. In fact, Stepan and Robertson (2003) have argued that the type of Islamic-democratic deficit others have found actually has its roots in the Arab world; non-Arab, predominantly Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, Mali, and Senegal, have enjoyed higher levels of democracy than Arab counterparts. This is consistent with Hefner's (2000) work, which shows that social and cultural patterns in Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim nation—are consistent with those of a democratic society, contrary to the stereotype that Islam is hostile to democracy.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that religious values on their own do not determine regime trajectories.

2.3.3. Political Institutions

2.3.3.1. Collegial Military Rule

Hypothesis: Military dictatorships are more likely to democratize than other forms of dictatorships.

Primary methods: Quantitative cross-national statistical tests looking at the impact of military dictatorships on the risk of a transition to democracy

Primary authors: Geddes (2003); Geddes, *et al.* (2014)

Summary: Military dictatorships are those in which the military, as an institution, is in power. (See Table 2 for more on categorical typologies.) In military dictatorships, the military is able to constrain the behavior of the leadership. Examples include Argentina from 1976 to 1983 and Brazil from 1964 to 1985. They therefore differ from non-military dictatorships, in which civilians are in control (e.g., Communist China), as well as from strongman dictatorships, in which a single officer is (e.g., Uganda under Idi Amin).

Geddes (2003) and Geddes, *et al.* (2014) argue that military dictatorships are not only the most fragile, but also the most likely to democratize. When challenged, members of the military junta would often rather step down from power and return to the barracks than maintain power as a divided or unpopular force. Because they have a job to return to afterwards, soldiers leading military dictatorships typically negotiate their exits from power (as opposed to fighting on until the end) and are therefore the most likely to democratize. Cross-national statistical tests support these assertions.

Military dictatorships have been uncommon since the end of the Cold War, however. Most dictatorships today are either led by a dominant party or a single individual.

Relevance for democratization: Military dictatorships—in which the military as an institution is in power—are the most short-lived dictatorships and the most likely to democratize.

Lessons for intervention: Though military dictatorships are rare today, they are good targets for democracy-promotion efforts.

Evaluation: These studies are criticized for not accounting for the endogeneity of the relationship between authoritarian institutions and democratization. It may be, for example, that the same factors that make dictatorships more likely to democratize make them more likely to adopt collegial military rule. That said, there are strong correlations between military dictatorship and both lower survival rates and higher rates of democratic transition.

2.3.3.2. Personalist Rule

Hypothesis: Personalist dictatorships are less likely to democratize than other forms of dictatorship.

Primary methods: Case studies; quantitative cross-national statistical tests looking at the impact of personalist dictatorship on the risk of a transition to democracy

Primary authors: Bratton and van de Walle (1994); Chehabi and Linz (1998); Geddes (2003); Geddes, *et al.* (2014)

Summary: Personalist dictatorships are those in which power is in the hands of a single individual. (See Table 2 for more on categorical typologies.) In personalist dictatorships, political parties may exist, or the leader may wear a military uniform, but neither the party nor the military can challenge the leader's decisions. They are comparable to *sultanistic* regimes (Chehabi and Linz, 1998), in which personal power is the basis for authoritarian rule (e.g., Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo) and *neopatrimonial* regimes (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994), in which personal patronage is the means through which the leader maintains control (e.g., Equatorial Guinea under Macias Nguema). Regardless of the term used to describe them, in personalist dictatorships power is concentrated in the leadership post, and independent institutions are lacking.

In personalist dictatorships, leaders tend to hold on to power until the bitter end, and their exits are often violent and protracted. They behave this way because the strategies they must use to maintain power amid hollowed-out institutions typically generate enemies at home, increasing their chance of imprisonment, exile, or death should they lose power. For this reason, personalist dictatorships are less likely to democratize than are other forms of dictatorship (e.g., dominant-party dictatorship or military dictatorship) (see Section 2.2.3.1 for more on military rule).

Geddes (2003) and Geddes, *et al.* (2014) provide evidence to support this using cross-national statistical tests. Their findings are consistent with case studies on sultanistic regimes (Chehabi and Linz, 1998) and neopatrimonial regimes (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994).

This means that, among today's dictatorships, those led by a single individual are poor candidates for democratization. This is troubling for global democracy given evidence that personalist dictatorships have become increasingly common since the end of the Cold War (Kendall-Taylor, *et al.*, 2017).

It is important to note, however, that even in personalist dictatorships, there are pathways to democratization (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2017). Where personalist dictatorships create a political party (as opposed to allying with a pre-existing party or ruling without one), the regime is longer lasting, but also more likely to democratize.

Relevance for democratization: Personalist dictatorships are poor targets for democratization efforts.

Lessons for intervention: Though democratization is difficult in personalist environments, providing leaders with an appealing exit strategy during times of regime vulnerability may be important. Engaging in strategies to prevent consolidation of power in the hands of a single individual is also worth pursuing.

Evaluation: As with research on military rule (see Section 2.2.3.1), these studies are criticized for not addressing the endogeneity of the relationship between personalist rule and democratization. The process of becoming a more collegial or institutionalized dictatorship, for example, may itself be part of a movement toward greater democraticness. Though causal pathways are difficult to establish, there is a negative correlation between personalist dictatorship and transition to democracy.

Case 3: Golkar and the Collapse of Suharto's *Orde Baru* in Indonesia

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a key component of Indonesian President Sukarno's so-called "Guided Democracy" was the co-optation of key societal elements via the establishment of functional groups that would create ties with the ruling elites. The powerful Indonesian military, elements of which distrusted Sukarno and which above all feared the power of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI, Communist Party of Indonesia), supported such moves as a means of maintaining the *status quo*. One of the most important of these groups was the *Sentral Organisasi Karyawan Swadiri Indonesia* (*Soksi*, Central Organization of Indonesian Workers), a union that was intended to counter the attraction of the PKI to Indonesian labor.

These functional groups were, in turn, united under *Sekber Golkar* (Joint Secretariat of Functional Groups) in 1964. Golkar eventually consisted of hundreds of organizations, which were organized into seven sub-groups. General Suharto, who seized power following the alleged PKI-led coup attempt in 1965 and subsequent bloody purges of accused Communists, embraced Golkar as the basis for a new ruling party. Under Suharto's *Orde Baru* (New Order) dictatorship, Golkar dominated legislative elections in the 1970s and 1980s, under conditions of severe constraints on political competition, including proscriptions against participation by all but a small number of Suharto-approved groups.

Although Suharto increasingly centralized his control over Golkar throughout the 1970s, culminating in his selection as chairman of the Executive Board in 1978, the organization was an important authoritarian tool. The top-down corporatist structures allowed Suharto and his allies to maintain ties with key segments of society; patronage and propaganda flowed down these networks, while loyalty and information flowed up. Further, Golkar provided Suharto with institutionalized opportunities to share authority with the powerful armed forces; most party chairs had military backgrounds, and most province- and district-level offices within the party were led by retired officers (Liddle, 1999). Through such strategies, Suharto was able to maintain the military's support and avoid the fate that befell his predecessor. The *Orde Baru* thus became institutionalized, with many analysts confident that the system could outlast Suharto.

Orde Baru did not, ultimately, outlast Suharto, but Golkar's existence, and Suharto's institutionalized style of rule more generally, was likely a key component in the country's transition to democracy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In May 1998, Suharto resigned, following a severe economic crisis and a particularly violent riot in Jakarta, which left over 1,000 dead. His successor, Vice President B. J. Habibie, immediately acceded to protestors' demands and began dismantling the *Orde Baru*; he loosened media restrictions and promised multiparty, democratic elections in 1999. Critically, the military did little to restrict Habibie's moves, for several reasons. First, according to Liddle (1999), Golkar had made the upper echelons of the military somewhat acquiescent to Suharto's decision-making. The dictator centralized power, while elements in the military enjoyed stability and a semblance of authority within the (somewhat hollowed-out) structures of the party. When Suharto resigned, the new military leadership was unwilling and unable to mount a major challenge to his successor.

Perhaps more importantly, the continued existence of Golkar in the new democratic dispensation gave elements of the *ancien régime* a foothold with which to survive (Horowitz, 2013). Many hardliners within the military were skeptical of Habibie, who was a civilian technocrat. However, their ability to maintain influence through Golkar reduced incentives to attempt to undermine the

transition. In June 1999 legislative elections, Golkar lost 205 seats, yet still won over one-fifth of the vote and claimed 120 seats in the People's Consultative Assembly. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Sukarno, led the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDI-P, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) to victory, although the Assembly named the more-conservative Abdurrahman Wahid to the presidency several months later, partly due to support from the military and security forces (who maintained several dozen reserved seats) and Golkar members (Thompson, 1999). Although Golkar would not claim the presidency in subsequent elections, either—a former military chief, General Wiranto, would be the party's presidential candidate in 2004—it was part of the governing coalition of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) and recently re-entered the majority coalition in the Assembly, with Setya Novanto taking over as speaker in 2016. Further, Golkar continues to maintain support and dominate many local governments in certain regions, particularly outside of Java. As Mujani and Liddle (2009) write, one of the most-significant elements of Indonesia's democratic transition has been “the transformation of Golkar from a purely top-down instrument of personal and military rule...to a party genuinely representative of the interests of significant political groups, as it is today” (p. 587). This “soft landing” for those in the *ancien régime*, coupled with a basis for social mobilization, has resulted in a more robust transition to democracy in Indonesia, compared to other countries that experienced significant change in the mid to late 1990s (Lussier, 2016).

2.3.3.3. Competitive Authoritarianism

Hypothesis: Dictatorships are more likely to democratize when the regime party does not hold the vast majority of seats in the national legislature.

Primary method: Quantitative cross-national analyses of the impact of competitive authoritarianism on levels of democracy and the chance of democratic transition

Primary authors: Howard and Roessler (2006); Donno (2013)

Summary: Competitive authoritarian regimes—first discussed in depth by Levitsky and Way (2002)—are those in which the dictatorship allows some contestation of political posts, such that the regime party does not maintain a monopoly on representation (e.g., does not hold more than 70% of seats in the legislature). Competitive authoritarian regimes therefore differ from dictatorships that do not hold elections (non-electoral authoritarian regimes), as well as from those that hold elections that the regime party overwhelmingly dominate (often called hegemonic authoritarian regimes).

Howard and Roessler (2006) find that competitive authoritarian regimes are more likely to have a “liberalizing electoral outcome,” where an election becomes a moment of significant liberalization, and the process is more free and fair than in the past. They suggest that this is due to the fact that in competitive authoritarian regimes it is easier for opposition elites to form a strategic coalition and mount a viable challenge to the regime party or candidate come election time.

Donno (2013) builds on this research but offers insight into the causal mechanism linking elections in competitive authoritarian regimes with greater democracy. She compares post-election outcomes in competitive authoritarian regimes with those in hegemonic authoritarian regimes. She argues that the former are more likely to experience a democratic transition because incumbents are weaker, which makes it easier for opposition groups to form electorally viable coalitions and more difficult for incumbents to use electoral manipulation to ensure victory. Moreover, because weak incumbents are

more dependent on external support to maintain power, competitive authoritarian regimes are more sensitive to international pressures for democratic reforms.

Bunce and Wolchik (2010), however, take issue with the central causal mechanism advocated here, arguing that opposition unity bears little impact on whether opposition movements will be successful.

Relevance for democratization: Dictatorships in which the regime party does not monopolize legislative seats are more likely to democratize.

Lessons for intervention: Interventions targeting competitive authoritarian regimes where elections have the potential to have democratizing outcomes may be effective, given that such regimes may be more sensitive to international pressures for reform.

Evaluation: A number of studies have revealed an empirical relationship between competitive authoritarianism, on one hand, and greater democraticness, on the other. These studies, however, have been criticized on a number of fronts. First, Howard and Roessler’s work assumes that “less” authoritarian means that a dictatorship is somehow “more” democratic, even though democratization is not guaranteed following a liberalizing electoral outcome. They acknowledge this and state that a liberalizing electoral outcome at least creates the opportunity for stable democracy to emerge, but this warrants further empirical evaluation (and is methodologically difficult to disentangle).

Donno’s study provides greater detail explaining how competitive authoritarian regimes can pave the way for democratization, but it can be criticized on a number of empirical grounds. Specifically, it (and others like it) assumes that competitive authoritarianism—measured by the lack of regime dominance in the legislature—is a sign of incumbent weakness and opposition strength. Yet, though relatively small margins of victories may mean that the regime made some concessions to and reforms for the opposition, they might also mean that the regime is strong because it was able to win. More nuanced proxies of regime strength and opposition weakness are needed to evaluate these types of proposed relationships.

Moreover, many of the empirical tests in these studies feature elections as the unit of analysis, implying that elections are independent and identically distributed. This is likely an unrealistic assumption, given that interactions between the regime and opposition are iterative and what happens in one election often influences what happens in subsequent ones. Case studies, for example, indicate that regime breakdown is often triggered by actions far more complex than the behavior of actors in the period leading up to a single election; previous elections and what happened are important.

2.3.3.4. Opposition Political Parties

Hypothesis: Democratization is more likely in competitive authoritarian regimes when opposition parties adopt sophisticated and historically unprecedented strategies for challenging the regime during elections.

Primary method: Case studies of semi-competitive elections and outcomes in a selection of post-Communist dictatorships

Primary authors: Bunce and Wolchik (2010)

Michigan State University
USAID/DCHA/DRG Working Papers Series

Summary: Competitive authoritarian regimes tolerate substantial opposition competition, but amid an uneven playing field. (For research on opposition unity, see Section 2.2.1.5.) For this reason, elections in these regimes often lead to regime continuance, not regime collapse. That said, occasionally opposition parties are victorious in such contexts. Bunce and Wolchik (2010) examine the conditions that drive these different outcomes by looking at eleven semi-competitive elections in post-Communist Europe and Eurasia, of which six led to democratization and five led to regime endurance. Their analysis reveals that defeating dictatorships depends heavily on the extent to which opposition parties use new and intricately planned strategies for maximizing their chances of winning. These strategies include aggressive political campaigns, extensive voter registration and turnout efforts, and the implementation of electoral monitoring procedures. They find little evidence that opposition unity matters, in contrast to earlier work in this field. In addition, their study shows that close collaboration between opposition parties and other allies (e.g., civil society groups and democracy activists overseas) can increase the efficacy of opposition efforts.

Relevance for democratization: Sophisticated and historically unprecedented strategies by opposition political parties in competitive authoritarian regimes can increase the chance of a democratic transition come election time.

Lessons for intervention: Interventions prior to semi-competitive elections that assist opposition parties with innovative and intense efforts to win votes help set the stage for incumbent losses.

Evaluation: This detailed analysis of elections in competitive authoritarian regimes offers a number of insights into the specific strategies opposition parties have pursued and the conditions under which they have been successful. The authors do not identify what a sophisticated strategy is *a priori*, however. The evidence also comes from single elections across a number of similar countries. Therefore, it does not speak to how these dynamics change over time within countries, or whether they are relevant outside of post-Communist settings. Moreover, it does not explain why opposition parties were allowed or able to engage in sophisticated strategies in some regimes and not others, leading to the criticism that it is the less-savvy and weaker incumbents that were more likely to experience defeat to begin with. In short, it is difficult to prescribe specific recommendations to oppositions across a range of contexts.

2.3.3.5. *The Ruling Party*

Hypothesis: Democratization from within is possible when dictatorships feature strong ruling parties that integrate cross-cutting cleavages.

Primary method: Comparative historical analysis; comparative case studies

Primary authors: Slater and Wong (2013)

Summary: Dictatorships thrive and endure when they command support from a broad swath of elites. Such regimes are better able to resist pressures from below for reform, and less likely to suffer collapse because of internal schisms. Slater (2010), for example, demonstrates that governments in Southeast Asia that were established on the basis of “protection pacts” that organized broad groups of elites into coalitions against perceived common threats had more durable authoritarian regimes, as well as stronger states.

While authoritarian rule by parties that integrate a diverse group of actors is associated with greater durability, it can also give rise to incumbent-driven democratization. Slater and Wong (2013) show that authoritarian ruling parties operating from a position of strength may support democratization because they have a reasonable shot of continuing to rule afterwards. (Indeed, the evidence suggests that in many former dictatorships, authoritarian successor parties remain politically powerful (Loxton, 2015)). Though it is a risky strategy to allow free and fair electoral competition, ruling parties are encouraged to do so if 1) they anticipate the party has a chance of winning; and 2) they assess that the party has reached its peak of domination. They support their argument using evidence from cases in East Asia. Their research suggests that ruling party strength—which is enhanced by the integration of cross-cutting societal cleavages—can lead to incumbent-led democratization.

This argument is consistent with work by Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010) on the emergence of democracy in Europe, which emphasizes the key role of political parties in bringing about democratization. They argue that though class-based political parties existed everywhere, many countries also featured political parties that did not mirror class interests. In those places where political parties represented a diverse coalition of actors, negotiations were more likely to result in institutions that reflected the interests of multiple classes. Similarly, looking at the historical experiences of Europe, Ziblatt (2017) shows that inclusive, centralized conservative parties were critical to the democratization process. Where conservative parties were weak, extremist voices gained greater influence leading to resistance to reform.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that regimes with strong ruling parties are often remarkably durable and can last in power many decades. Unlike personalist authoritarian regimes (see Section 2.2.3.2), which face serious challenges dealing with leadership succession, when strong parties are in power, well-established succession mechanisms are often in place that enable such regimes to withstand transitions from one leader to the next (Frantz and Stein, 2017).

That said, when regimes with strong ruling parties do democratize, their prospects for a stable party system are higher than when personalist dictatorships do. Often, one of the parties has a stable base because it was in government under the *ancien régime* (e.g., Mexico's PRI, Indonesia's Golkar, the Hungarian Socialist Party, Ghana's National Democratic Congress, Senegal's *Parti Socialiste*, and the *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*) or is led by individuals who held important posts during the authoritarian era (e.g., Tunisia's *Nidaa Tounes*). In Africa, in particular, more-institutionalized authoritarian regimes yield more-institutionalized multiparty systems after transitions (Riedl, 2016).

Relevance for democratization: Ruling parties may push for democratization from within when they are strong, integrate cross-cutting groups, and sense that they have passed their apex of domination.

Lessons for intervention: Though dictatorships led by strong ruling parties are very durable, pressures to encourage them to democratize are most likely to be effective when the party is at the early stages of decline.

Evaluation: The argument that ruling party strength can lead to a path of democratization is persuasive, and the logic underlying it is clear. From a practitioner's perspective, however, it may be difficult to identify those dictatorships that are good candidates for potentially pursuing this path. In addition,

because this research is based on a handful of cases from two regions of the world (East Asia and Europe), it is possible that the findings would not hold in other contexts.

2.3.4. Political Economy

2.3.4.1. Modernization Theory and its Critics

Hypothesis: Economic development generates democracy.

Primary method: Quantitative analyses (time series, cross-sectional studies)

Primary authors: Lipset (1959; 1960), Przeworski, *et al.* (2000), Boix and Stokes (2003), Acemoglu, *et al.* (2008)

Summary: The 1950s and 1960s saw the development of a number of theories on economic and political development that came to be grouped under the heading of modernization theory. Although theorists in this tradition were concerned with different outcomes related to social, political, and economic development, they were similar with regard to their assumptions that structural factors explained history's big questions, their preferences for democratic and economic liberalism, and the teleological nature of many of their expectations. For example, Rostow's seminal *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960) plotted a common path for all societies, from a so-called "traditional" stage to an "age of high mass consumption." Modernization theory was ascendant in many social science circles at the time, and a number of its proponents became key White House advisors (Latham, 2000). Further, many of its main lessons continue to influence academic research.

With regard to democratization specifically, modernization theory posited a direct, causal relationship between economic development and democratization. Most cited here is Lipset (1959; 1960), who noted the statistical association between various social and economic indicators of what he and others termed "modernity" (e.g., a large middle class, higher standards of living, greater opportunities for educational attainment, urbanization). According to Lipset, modernity brings with it lower levels of public dependence on the state (due to a strong, employment-producing private sector), which enables individuals to demand accountability from their government, rather than vice versa. Next, better-educated individuals with more resources have more participatory and organizational capacity, which allows them—and the civil society they create—to check incumbent transgressions. Finally, a large middle class acts as a moderator: middle-class citizens are, by this logic, less extremist, in that they do not demand the radical redistribution that the poor might desire, nor do they share the rich's fervent desire to block such economic reforms. This brings stability and facilitates compromise. In sum, modernization theory posits that economic development and democracy are positively related.

A number of scholars have therefore attempted to use various datasets and statistical techniques to establish a causal relationship between economic and political development. Some found general support for modernization theory. For example, Barro's analysis suggested that "increases in various measures of the standard of living forecast a gradual rise in democracy" (1997, p. 160).

Others' work tells a less-straightforward story. Limongi and Przeworski (1997) argued that Lipset, in particular, has actually been misinterpreted: one of the grandfathers of modernization theory, they

argued, did not actually contend that development would *cause* democracy. Rather, they pointed out, Lipset more narrowly argued that democracy would be more likely *to survive* among wealthier countries, which they referred to as an “exogenous” theory of democracy (i.e., some other factor produces democracy, which is then sustained by high wealth). Later, Limongi and Przeworski, along with Alvarez and Cheibub, would produce the seminal *Democracy and Development* (2000), which largely supported the “exogenous” approach. There, they found that the relationship between development and democracy was not linear, but instead bell-shaped. Namely, greater wealth increases the probability of democratization, but only up to a point (in Przeworski, *et al.*’s analysis, \$7,000 US per capita GDP). Beyond this level, higher levels of wealth actually decrease the probability of regime change among authoritarian settings. In other words, wealthy regimes appear to be stable ones.

Boix and Stokes (2003) challenge this, contending that Przeworski, *et al.*’s findings are largely an artifact of their time period of focus (i.e., post-1950). Extending their analysis to the beginning of the 19th century, Boix and Stokes find greater support for an “endogenous” theory of democratization, with economic development increasing the probability of transition to democracy, as well as a decrease in the probability of democratic decay. Dictatorships are also, according to their analysis, more likely to democratize as incomes grow. Przeworski *et al.* simply studied a time period in which there were relatively few wealthy authoritarian settings and, observing little regime change among them, concluded that their wealth stabilized them. This, according to Boix and Stokes, misses that many authoritarian regimes had already transitioned to democracies as they grew wealthier, pre-1950. Although Boix and Stokes ultimately conclude that factors such as equality are probably more responsible for democratization than income growth, *per se* (see Section 2.2.4.2), their findings are more consistent with stylized depictions of modernization theory. Triesman (2015) adds an additional twist, finding that economic growth stabilizes autocrats’ rule, but that it leads to democratic openings in the medium term (i.e., 10-20 years), after the incumbent autocrat leaves office.

Some scholars have discounted any relationship between wealth and democracy. Acemoglu, *et al.* (2008) contend that preceding analyses were limited by their lack of consideration for factors that might have simultaneously affected both wealth and regime types. They instead employ a fixed-effects analysis, which allows them to more precisely track changes *within* countries over time; after all, they argue, modernization theory is not about how global averages in wealth and democracy should change together, but rather how economic growth in one country should affect regime type in that same country. They find no statistical relationship between income per capita and level of democracy. Thus, an academic consensus on this topic is elusive, with findings varying according to the datasets and analytical strategies used.

Finally, a number of scholars have challenged the focus on the middle class that has grown out of Moore’s and others’ work. Specifically, some have focused on the democracy-promoting efforts of working classes. For example, Rueschemeyer, *et al.* (1992) stress the organizational capacity of the working class within civil society as a major factor in democratization in Europe and Latin America, while Collier (1999) also highlights mobilization of the working class in those regions. And in his study of democratization in Central America, Paige (1998) argues that the coffee-producing elite was a primary supporter of authoritarianism, while working-class citizens formed the backbone of the guerilla insurgencies that forced these landed elites to make democratic concessions.

Case 4: The “Mexican Miracle” and the Decline of the PRI

The *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) was born in the crucible of the violent Mexican Revolution of the early 20th century, and, by the time it was finally ousted from power in 2000, had enjoyed a longer duration in power—71 years—than any other governing party at the time. Modernization theory might predict that the PRI was, paradoxically, undermined by its own success.

After consolidating its power in the late 1920s, the PRI engaged in a successful, decades-long period of state building and state-directed economic development. The end of the post-Revolution instability provided the foundations for economic growth, while the PRI established party institutions that mitigated the probability of the rise of a personalist dictator and ensured policymaking autonomy for technocrats.

The PRI’s early economic policies were inward-focused and placed heavy emphasis on state involvement. Nationalization of railroads was completed by 1937, and the oil industry the following year. Land reform centered on the establishment of *ejidos* (communal farms), which allowed the state to manage agricultural production more effectively, while also serving as a means to control the population through top-down corporatist structures. Import-substituting industrialization followed in the 1940s, with state-run unions incorporating labor into the PRI apparatus.

These policies initially yielded significant economic returns, especially during World War II, when Mexico became a major supplier for the Allies’ war efforts. PRI governments reinvested gains in education and infrastructure, which provided a basis for greater economic growth and attracted significant foreign direct investment. The economy grew steadily between the 1940s and 1970s, which further legitimized the PRI and provided successive governments with the means to purchase necessary political support.

However, the “Mexican Miracle” ground to a screeching halt in the 1980s. By the mid-1970s, profligate state spending drove up sovereign debt, the export economy had begun to falter, and a leftist turn in government propaganda spooked private investment. Governments increasingly turned to borrowing to fund massive infrastructure projects and other public goods outlays, under the assumption that prices for oil, production of which was increasingly central to the Mexican economy, would remain high. The collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s, among other factors, seriously hampered the country’s ability to service its burgeoning debt; austerity and currency devaluations undermined many Mexicans’ standards of living, while doing little to stanch the debt crisis. Finally, in August 1982, the government announced it was defaulting on its debt, thereby setting off a crisis throughout Latin America. During this “Lost Decade,” economic growth shrunk to near zero, and the economy suffered periods of hyperinflation.

Magaloni (2006) writes that the PRI’s initial economic success proved to be a double-edged sword for the regime. The decades-long “Mexican Miracle” expanded the country’s middle class and increased Mexicans’ organizational capacity. However, the economic downturn of the 1980s reduced opportunities for patronage and delegitimized a regime whose *raison d’être* had been increasing prosperity, thereby increasing pro-opposition sentiments within an increasingly mobilized population. Civil society organization grew particularly more vibrant in the wake of a 1985 earthquake centered near Mexico City, when the government was criticized for its inept response to the disaster. As a result

of these pressures, the PRI was seriously challenged in the 1988 election—with many attributing its victory to doctored vote counts—before eventually losing power to the *Partido Acción Nacional* in 2000. The Mexican case thereby potentially highlights the dangers to authoritarian regimes of pronounced economic downturn following periods of significant growth; other countries, such as Indonesia and Spain, seem to have followed similar trajectories.

Relevance to democratization: Economic development and democratic transitions go hand in hand.

Lessons for intervention: Policies that encourage economic growth might increase citizenries' capacity for mobilization and, thus, the likelihood of democratization. Following Lipset, strengthening education could produce similar effects. These interventions are similar to, but distinct from, those aimed at changing political culture, which specifically refers to citizens' orientations toward democratic values. The argument here is broader: general education, not necessarily civic education, should increase efficacy and, therefore, encourage popular mobilization. However, encouraging economic growth might not always lead to improved chances for democracy, particularly if such growth merely further legitimizes the incumbent and provides it with increased opportunities to purchase support or coopt potential opponents (Section 2.2.4.3).

Evaluation: cursory historical evidence is largely supportive of modernization theory: the wealthiest countries, clustered in North America, Central and Western Europe, and Oceania, are also among the most democratic. Further, most of these countries democratized, or at least consolidated their democratic gains, in the 20th century, which saw remarkable gains with regard to wealth and mass consumption. There is significant evidence that in wealthier countries, if an authoritarian regime falls from power, the chances for democratic emergence are good.

However, early versions of modernization theory were criticized on a number of grounds, including their ethnocentrism, apparent historical determinism, and equation of correlation with causality. Scholars were accused of presuming that all societies would follow paths similar to those that Western Europe and other early democratizers did, and their theories seemed ill-suited for explaining democratic backsliding and democratization among poor countries (e.g., India). Finally, the observation that wealthier countries appear to be democratic was not definitive evidence that the former caused the latter. Democratic countries might be more likely to grow—perhaps they are more likely to invest in their populations' human and social capital, have better-functioning bureaucracies, or produce better macroeconomic policies, because populations can select more-effective managers or use the threat of ouster via elections to incentivize leaders. Finally, it is also theoretically possible that both economic development and democracy are driven by some unnamed independent factor.

2.3.4.2. Inequality and Political Regimes

Hypothesis: Democracy is less likely under conditions of economic inequality.

Primary methods: Comparative historical analysis, quantitative analyses (time series, cross-sectional studies)

Primary authors: Moore (1966), Meltzer and Richard (1981), Boix (2003), Acemoglu and Robinson (2001; 2006), Houle (2009), Ansell and Samuels (2014), Haggard and Kaufman (2012; 2015)

Summary: Debates over the simple relationship between wealth and democracy have given way in recent years to a focus on the importance of distribution. Such work is related to elite-centric approaches, such as Dahl (1971), that focused on power distribution (discussed in Section 2.2.1.3). More directly, two fundamental works—one focusing on the ability of economic elites to repress and the other on citizens’ preferences—have proved foundational to this vein of research. On the first count, Gerschenkron’s (1946) famous “bread and democracy” thesis contends that inequality in the distribution of immobile assets (i.e., land) was inimical to democracy. Landed elites, such as Prussia’s Junkers, are often particularly threatened by any reforms that might empower the populace, who may demand redistribution of land and other important assets. Among economic elites, landholders are especially wary of redistributive impulses, given the fixed nature of their assets. Merchants, entrepreneurs, and others whose capital is more mobile find it easier to evade taxes and other redistributive policies (Boix, 2003). As a result, large landholders often ally with authoritarian leaders, and are willing to provide political and financial support to repressive apparatuses.

Moore’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966) focused on how social and economic change—and, importantly, the relative power of different economic interest groups—produced different regime outcomes. Democracy in the United Kingdom, Moore argues, emerged out of the rise of a *bourgeoisie*, which pushed the commercialization of agriculture and, eventually, industrialization, and whose rising power undermined that of the landed nobility. The clash between these two groups manifested in the English Civil War (1642-51) and the eventual Glorious Revolution (1688), which consolidated Parliament’s power over the monarchy. In other contexts, such as Prussia, the landed nobility allied with the state apparatus to repress the peasantry, thus preventing the type of democratic breakthrough that occurred in Britain.

More recent scholarship has continued to draw connections between land inequality and authoritarianism. Ziblatt (2009), for example, shows that accusations of electoral fraud were more common in areas of Imperial Germany where land inequality was more prevalent, while legislators from such areas were less likely to vote in favor of democratic reforms (2008). In a similar vein, Mares (2015) finds that German legislators from districts with lower levels of economic heterogeneity (i.e., areas that were likely dominated by a small number of powerful employers and asset holders) were more likely to oppose the secret ballot, which would limit opportunities for intimidation and vote buying.

The other thread of literature on inequality focuses not on asset mobility, but on the extent to which wealth more generally is distributed in a pyramidal structure. The fundamental assumption of this strand is similar to that underpinning the work on asset mobility: economic elites are threatened by democratic reforms, because they fear that a politically empowered citizenry will redistribute their wealth. Meltzer and Richard (1981) model this logic, positing that, as the suffrage expands, the median voter becomes more likely to have below-average income. Relatively poor median voters, in turn, prefer redistribution from the rich. In the words of an earlier thinker, democracy is thus a form of “legalized plunder” (Bastiat, 1850). Realizing this, the wealthy should oppose democratic reforms, such as suffrage expansion, that would empower the poor. The number of poor relative to the number of rich is especially large as income inequality increases; thus, as inequality increases, the upper classes have more incentives to resist democracy.

Expanding on his previous work with Stokes, Boix (2003) tests the relationship between income equality and democracy cross-nationally, finding that equality is, indeed, associated with a higher probability of both transition to democracy and stability of democratic regimes. However, as discussed above, Boix

finds that asset mobility is a key factor. Economic elites with highly mobile assets are not as threatened by the redistributive pressures that democracy might unleash because they can easily relocate their assets if threatened with taxation.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2001; 2006) argue that the relationship between inequality and democracy is closer to an “inverted U-shape.” Economic elites, they posit, offer democracy as a minimax strategy to fend off revolutions. With democracy, they argue, elites can make a “credible commitment to future pro-majority policies,” and thus assuage demands for more radical change. At low levels of inequality, democracy is unlikely because the threat of revolution is low, as those not in power will be satisfied with the *status quo*. At high levels of inequality, democracy will also be unlikely because elites will stand to lose their assets by committing to redistribution, and they likely possess the capacity to repress revolutionary threats. Thus, democracy is most likely to emerge at medium levels of inequality.

Acemoglu and Robinson’s argument also employs a strategic logic in which elite promises of redistribution when faced with revolutionary threats in the current period are not credible because the current threat may not materialize in future periods. Democracy solves this credibility problem, they posit, by locking in political power for poor citizens. While immediate redistribution from an autocratic elite to the poor does not avert revolution, democratic reforms enable elites to forestall revolution at the cost of losing long-term political power.

Like Boix, Ansell and Samuels (2014) discuss both asset specificity and income equality. However, they depart from the Meltzer-Richard logic to argue that rising middle-class citizens—which are associated with an *increase* in inequality—prefer democracy to protect their new gains from autocratic elites who would otherwise confiscate these gains. The logic builds on the observations that autocracies historically lacked secure property rights protections. Indeed, as North and Weingast (1989) point out, limits on the aristocracy, such as the “Glorious Revolution,” enhanced the power of the *bourgeoisie* by offering property rights protections. Thus, democratic transitions, Ansell and Samuels argue, are likely when development leads to the emergence of upwardly mobile groups, who desire a say in governance and have the tools to demand it. Inequality is typically *growing* at such times, because those rising groups are located at the top of the income distribution. Transitions in Brazil and South Africa support this theory, they argue, given that changes in those countries occurred at very high levels of income inequality. In short, income inequality that results from a rising middle class favors democracy. Land inequality shapes preferences about redistribution differently, they contend, because under high land inequality a conservative elite is powerful enough to cooperate with the state to repress labor. At low levels of land inequality, however, the large number of smallholders is too divided to challenge the ruling elite. Thus, smaller landholder collective action problems, not elites’ desire to prevent redistribution, limit democratization under high land inequality.

Relevance for democratization: Inequality is an issue of increasing political importance in many societies around the world, with a number of studies suggesting that the wealthy now hold a larger percentage of wealth than at any other period in recorded history. While many commentators are concerned that inequality fosters populism, nativism, and various forms of political extremism that undermine capitalism, minority rights, and liberalism in already-democratic states, the previously discussed literature suggests that it will often inhibit democratic transitions among authoritarian states.

Lessons for intervention: If equality indeed inoculates democracies from the threat of collapse, governments in newly democratic states should especially be encouraged to institute redistributive

policies that diminish preexisting wealth inequalities. And if the implications of Meltzer and Richard are correct, authoritarian regimes might be more likely to undergo transitions to democracy as inequality declines because elites have less to fear from re-distribution under democracy in more-equal societies. Further, increased opportunities for economic elites to convert their assets into mobile forms might diminish their incentives to prevent democratization, as they would have less to fear from any redistributive policies enacted by governments elected by the relatively poor. However, such opportunities, which often follow from economic openness and capital mobility, could reduce tax bases, leaving fewer resources for spending on public goods and welfare states. Any new democracy might see its legitimacy undercut if its governments cannot deliver fundamental services to the poor and middle classes.

Evaluation: A number of important empirical studies have challenged the positive relationship between economic equality and democratization. Acemoglu and Robinson show an “inverted-U” relationship, where democracy is most likely at middle levels of inequality. Boix (2003) finds a linear relationship, dependent on asset mobility. Further, in a finding reminiscent of Przeworski, *et al.* (2000), Houle (2009) asserts no significant relationship between equality and democratization—in either linear or U-shaped form—although he does find that unequal democracies are more prone to breakdown.

Despite their different empirical conclusions, these studies (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, Boix, Houle) all agree with (some of) the assumptions of the Meltzer-Richard model: a) the salient social conflict driving transitions to democracy are distributional cleavages based on asset wealth; b) elites and non-elites accurately assess the level of inequality in society and their position in the income distribution; and c) autocracies represent the interests of economic elites while poor citizens are empowered to make distributional policy decisions in democracies.

There are many democratic transitions where intra-elite conflict—not class-based redistributive conflict—best explains the democratic opening (Haggard and Kaufman, 2012). Business, ruling party, and military elites may view democracy as preferable to the *status quo* under autocratic rule, particularly if they can “manage” the transition process. Further, identity cleavages—such as ethnic, religious, or regional differences—may be more important than asset inequality for understanding democratic openings (Huber *et al.*, 2011; Balcells *et al.*, 2015). Huber (2017) finds that inequality only discourages democratization when ethnic polarization is low; as ethnicity increases in salience, distribution occurs more along ethnic than class lines, thus reducing economic elites’ incentives to limit the power of the resource-poor. On a related note, Houle (2017) finds that a cross-national correlation between economic inequality and redistribution in democracies is much weaker when the poor are divided along ethnic lines, and Luttmer (2001) shows that ethnic identity can shape preferences for redistribution.

Second, there is recent evidence to suggest that citizens *cannot* accurately assess the level of inequality in their society (Chambers, *et al.*, 2014; Bublitz, 2016; Fernandez-Albertos and Kuo, forthcoming; Gimpelson and Treisman, 2015; Niehues, 2014). If the implications of these studies are correct, the micro-foundations of the Meltzer-Richards model are inaccurate. That said, there is some evidence suggesting that individuals who perceive high inequality in their societies—irrespective of whether that perception is accurate—are more likely to prefer redistributive policies than those who perceive low inequality (Finseraas, 2009; Yanai, 2017).

The third set of assumptions have found even less support. Haggard and Kaufman (2012), for example, show that a substantial share of democratic openings during the “third-wave” of democratization (1974 onwards) entailed elites relinquishing power because they “could control the design of democratic institutions in ways that protected their material interests” (p. 496). This suggests democracies might not always favor the economic interests of the poor. Contrary to Meltzer and Richard’s expectations, democracies do not, in fact, seem to distribute more than autocracies (see, for example, Aidt *et al.*, 2010; Aidt, *et al.*, 2006; Aidt and Jensen, 2011; Banerjee and Duflo, 2003; Haggard and Kaufman, 2012; Scheve and Stasavage, 2009). Recent research suggests that radical land reform is more likely in an autocracy than in a democracy (Albertus, 2015).

In fact, Albertus and Menaldo (2014) contend that elites have numerous institutional channels—such as a constitution written under autocratic rule—for protecting post-transition power. Similarly, “strong party” theories suggest that autocratic regimes with strong support parties can preserve elites’ post-transition power, making democratic transition more likely (Wright and Escribà Folch, 2012; Slater and Wong, 2013) (see Section 2.2.3.1). In Mexico, for example, the PRI lost its monopoly on power in 2000, but successfully blocked legislation that hurt its interests during the subsequent decade because it won substantial legislative representation after the transition.

In sum, the evidence linking inequality and democracy is mixed at best, suggesting that if inequality matters, researchers have not reached a consensus on how.

2.3.4.3. Resource Availability and Authoritarian Duration

Hypothesis: Authoritarian regimes are more likely to break down when they face constraints on their ability to purchase support.

Primary methods: Comparative case studies, quantitative analyses (time series, cross-sectional studies)

Primary authors: Haggard and Kaufman (1995; 1997), Ross (2001), Magaloni (2006), Greene (2007; 2008), Morrison (2009), Arriola (2013)

Summary: One of the most important tools in authoritarian rulers’ arsenal is the ability to purchase support through the distribution of targeted benefits. These benefits help sustain dictators’ elite coalitions (Bueno de Mesquita, *et al.*, 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2012), while they can also prove useful in coopting portions of the electorate, and even segments of the opposition. Autocrats who rely on distributional strategies require a substantial pool of distributable resources. Regimes whose leaders enjoy such access are more likely to endure, while those that are resource poor, or experience declines in their ability to access such resources, are more likely to collapse. Democratization is one possible outcome of such collapse, although it is by no means assured.

Much of the attention of scholars working in this field has been on the source of authoritarians’ revenue. Namely, certain structural conditions are likely to provide steadier streams of revenue to leaders, thus bolstering their rule. In particular, leaders of rentier states—which derive large proportions of their national incomes from the export of raw materials or the leasing of access to natural resources to foreign companies (Karl, 1997)—enjoy a two-fold benefit. Such leaders, who often are reliant on a single resource, such as oil, enjoy the incomes they accrue from the sale or leasing of the resource, which is produced through little to no effort on the part of the government. These benefits can then be

used to purchase support, pay for a repressive apparatus, and fund the leader's own consumption. Additionally, these revenues flow to the state via routes other than taxation of the general population. Governments therefore do not need to invest in building up a tax-collecting apparatus or provide significant public goods to the citizenry, since that citizenry's consent is not necessary for the collection of revenue. Citizens might be likely to proclaim "no taxation without representation," but if the state eschews taxation, it can get by more easily without providing citizens opportunities for input. Examples of non-democratic rentier states abound, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Gabon, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea.

Ross (2001) tests the connection between oil, in particular, and democracy in an influential piece. He confirms that oil exports do, in fact, seem to hinder democracy, and that these negative effects occur even with small amounts of oil exporting. Further, the relationship between oil and authoritarianism is not confined to the Middle East, while non-fuel mineral exports have similar democracy-impeding effects. Finally, Ross finds support for three different mechanisms, including 1) the increased opportunities to buy political support while not taxing the population, 2) funding for repression, and 3) deferring modernization, by limiting opportunities for citizens to become involved in a more-diversified economy. Morrison (2009) extends this argument even further, finding that these mechanisms hold when looking at the effects of non-tax revenue generally. Fails and DuBuis (2015), however, find that authoritarians who rely on rents can find stability by diversifying their sources. Being able to sustain a state without taxing one's population thus seems to be conducive to authoritarianism.

Authoritarian leaders have also bolstered their capacity by engaging in large-scale appropriation, often immediately following their seizure of power. Albertus and Menaldo (2012b) find that such strategies increase regime duration. However, rather than providing leaders with rents that they can use to purchase support, expropriation, they argue, sends an important signal to new leaders' current and potential allies that they are committed to targeting the previous elites. The signaling benefits of such strategies decay over time, however.

Other scholars have looked at how declines in governments' abilities to access resources limit their ability to remain in power, and can even foster democratization. First, economic crises can significantly undermine authoritarian leadership, and downturns have often been associated with transitions to democracy. The diminution of leaders' abilities to purchase support is only part of the story here. The so-called "legitimacy thesis"—as opposed to the previously described "coalition thesis"—holds that regimes often attempted to justify their existence by pointing to their ability to generate strong economic growth.

Haggard and Kaufman (1995; 1997) produced particularly path-breaking work on the topic of economic crisis and regime transition. Noting that the previously discussed elite-centric theories on how bargaining and power balances can produce democratic outcomes (Section 2.2.1.3) often neglected to explain how relevant actors' bargaining power was determined in the first place, Haggard and Kaufman note that short-term economic conditions can have significant effects on incumbent-opposition dynamics. In particular, poor economic performance significantly reduces the bargaining power of the incumbent in relation to the opposition. As discussed in Section 2.2.4.1, downturns seem to be especially dangerous for autocrats in middle-income countries, likely because long-term economic growth enhanced citizens' mobilizational capacity.

Crisis is not the only factor that might undermine autocrats' abilities to rule via distribution, however. Economic liberalization, which was commonly implemented in the 1980s and 1990s by lower- and middle-income states under the auspices of adjustment plans negotiated with international financial institutions like the World Bank, typically reduced incumbents' tools to purchase support, while also often creating anti-regime disenchantment among losers under Structural Adjustment Programs (e.g., civil servants and other urbanites) in places such as Africa (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). State-owned enterprises were privatized, agriculture increasingly commercialized, civil service and other patronage positions slashed, and budgets generally trimmed, removing opportunities to distribute largess strategically. Magaloni (2006) and Greene (2007) document how these changes undermined the PRI's ability to coopt opposition politicians and win popular support in Mexico; such tools were especially missed in the wake of the "lost decade" of the 1980s. In another analysis, Greene (2010) finds that dominant-party regimes are remarkably robust during economic crises, but they are particularly prone to collapse when they lose opportunities to politicize public resources, often due to privatization. Tang, *et al.* (forthcoming) find that economic downturns are much more likely to result in regime transitions when the state has previously been heavily involved in the economy. And Arriola (2013) argues that financial liberalization facilitates cross-ethnic opposition coalitions in Africa, by freeing capital that politicians can use to engage in "pecuniary coalition-building strategies" and also eliminating authoritarian incumbents' abilities to use access to credit as a carrot for supporters and a stick against opponents.

Relevance for democratization: Authoritarian leaders are often seriously weakened by resource scarcity and economic declines. While such conditions do not guarantee regime collapse, or that democracy will emerge in the event of change, they might be associated with an increased probability of democratic transitions.

Lessons for intervention: The motivation for many economic sanctions is to deprive authoritarian leaders and their supporters of access to resources that they can use to purchase support, fund repression, and coopt oppositions. Such strategies might also undermine popular legitimacy, if they affect the economy, more broadly. Of course, economic sanctions remain a controversial and questionable strategy, with regards to ethics and effectiveness, particularly when they might harm livelihoods of the poor in less-developed countries.

With regard to rentier states, assistance in economic diversification could reduce reliance on natural resources and increase the collection of non-tax revenue. Some rentier states, such as Saudi Arabia, Botswana, and the United Arab Emirates, have attempted to diversify their economies, to limit their vulnerability to often-unpredictable commodity prices; particularly with regard to the Middle Eastern states, it is unclear whether such reforms will improve chances for democratic development. Efforts to encourage oil producers to budget more transparently and spend more on public goods have often failed (e.g., the World Bank's 2000 "model" oil pipeline deal with Chad). (For more on international efforts in this mode, see Section 2.2.5.2.) Finally, economic liberalization can remove many of the tools that authoritarian leaders use to reward supporters and punish opponents; such policies' broader economic wisdom and effects on populations' standards of living are also up for debate, however.

Evaluation: With regard to the relationship between oil and democracy, in particular, the empirical record is actually somewhat mixed. Brownlee, *et al.* (2014) argue that popular mobilization was less likely to threaten authoritarians during the Arab Spring when those leaders had access to oil rents. On the other hand, Haber and Menaldo (2011) find little evidence that reduction in oil dependence actually

fosters democratization, as the “resource curse” literature often seems to suggest. Similarly, Wright, *et al.* (2015) demonstrate that oil is associated with increases in military spending, which helps authoritarian leaders limit the threat of ouster by rival groups. Moreover, a reduction in dependence might increase probability of authoritarian ouster, but it does not necessarily follow that democracy is the replacement. Dunning (2008) actually finds that oil revenues are often associated with *increased* survival of democracies, at least in some Latin American contexts, where leaders can more easily spend on public goods, thereby increasing their popularity and making coups less likely. And Heilbrunn (2014) argues that, in Africa, it is the legacy of colonialism, and not just oil, that limits democratic development in some states. In fact, he cites evidence that emergent middle classes in petrostates like Angola and Nigeria are increasingly agitating for democratic reforms.

2.3.5. Hypotheses About International Factors

2.3.5.1. Direct Military Intervention

Hypothesis: Military intervention by democratic powers yields democratic regime change.

Primary methods: Time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses

Primary authors: Peceny (1999a, 1999b), Pickering and Kisangani (2006)

Summary: Military interventions by foreign countries or international organizations entail the use of force within the target country’s territory. The empirical evidence for whether military interventions produce democratic regime change is inconclusive, and scholars have only recently begun to examine the consequences of non-U.S. military interventions. While early studies suggested that U.S. interventions aided democratization (Meernik, 1996; Hermann and Kegley, 1998), later research found little support for this proposition, showing instead that democratizations from military incursions were the result of liberalizing policies adopted during U.S. occupation (Peceny, 1999a; 1999b). Even this evidence has come under question (Walker and Pearson, 2007), and once U.S. covert operations are included, on balance U.S. intervention appears to have hurt the long-term prospects of democracy (Berger, *et al.*, 2013).

Examining interventions from all sending countries, not just the United States, Pickering and Kisangani (2006) find that hostile interventions may further democracy, at least as measured by movements along the Polity scale—a finding replicated by Teorell (2010). Further evidence from the three major democratic powers—the United States, United Kingdom, and France—casts doubt on those results though (Pickering and Peceny, 2006). In fact, Pickering and Peceny report only one case of successful and consolidated democratization after U.S. intervention: Panama (1989). The evidence on interventions by international organizations, such as the United Nations, suggests a possible positive effect, particularly after civil war (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000; Pickering and Peceny, 2006). However, Downes and Montén (2013) conclude that, after correcting for selection bias, foreign-imposed leader changes have little effect on democratization.

Much of the empirical literature focuses on the intentions of the intervening state or organization (Pickering and Peceny, 2006; Pickering and Kisangani, 2006; Gleditsch, *et al.*, 2007). The main intuition from these studies presumes that democratic countries are more likely to promote democracy through

their interventions. This may be particularly true of U.S. military interventions, where the explicit foreign policy goal is often the promotion of democracy, and less true of other democratic intervening countries, such as France and the United Kingdom (Van Wingen and Tillema, 1980; Pickering and Peceny, 2006). Some argue, for example, that successful U.S. interventions are more likely when the president makes public commitments to promoting democracy and when occupying forces pursue liberalizing reforms such as sponsoring fair elections (Meernik, 1996; Hermann and Kegley, 1998; Peceny, 1999a, 1999b).

Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) propose an alternate logic, positing that while an intervening country may support democracy in the target state, it also expects the policies of a new government to benefit its own domestic constituencies. A newly democratic government in the target country, however, will be constrained by its own electorate in choosing policies and thus less willing to make concessions to the foreign intervener. This instrumental logic explains why democratic interveners may be more interested in supporting an autocratic regime that can more reliably concede to the preferences of the intervener. These motivations may have been particularly relevant during the Cold War, when strategic considerations drove superpower states to unilateral interventions that damaged the long-term prospects for democracy (Berger, *et al.*, 2013).

Relevance for democratization: Leaders of democratic governments have at times considered direct military intervention to displace dictatorships and install democracies in their place. These efforts can be costly, in terms of resources and lives lost, for both the intervener and the target, and thus the track record of such strategies must be studied closely.

Lessons for interventions: Military invasions from major powers aimed at toppling dictatorships can destabilize them, but toppling dictatorships—such as those found in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011)—is unlikely to yield sustained democracy.

Evaluation: Escribà Folch and Wright (2015) show that military interventions by democracies are no more likely to result in democratic regime change than interventions by autocracies. Further, while military incursions by democracies may destabilize dictatorships in the short-term, they are unlikely to yield democratic regime change, particularly when targeting personalist dictatorships. Most empirical findings of positive correlation between military intervention and democratic regime change are driven by two “successful” cases of U.S. military interventions targeting military regimes in small Latin American countries (Panama 1989 and Haiti 1994). Given past efforts led by the United States and other democracies to promote democracy through military interventions, and the material and human costs associated with these efforts, it is important to stress that there is no strong evidence that such strategies are likely to produce democratic change in the target countries.

2.3.5.2. Foreign Governments and Pressures to Democratize

Hypothesis: Closer relationships with more-powerful democracies will increase the probability that authoritarian regimes will themselves democratize.

Primary methods: Comparative country case studies; time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses

Primary authors: Levitsky and Way (2010)

Summary: One obvious potential explanation for Huntington’s (1991) observation that external actors played a bigger role in third-wave transitions than in previous time periods is the unique existence of a global superpower and other powerful actors that actively promoted democracy in the immediate post-Cold War period. As governments in the United States and Western Europe became less concerned with the threat of domination from international communism, they increasingly promoted democracy in the countries that had been former allies of the Soviet Union as well as in authoritarian systems that had supported the West during the Cold War. As “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989) seemed at hand, actors such as the United States and the European Community (later, the European Union (EU)) placed increasing emphasis on multiparty competition, free and fair elections, open media, the rule of law, civil society, and the protection of human rights.

Of course, authoritarian regimes were not likely to institute liberalizing reforms simply because actors in Washington and Brussels exhorted them to do so. In their book, *Competitive Authoritarianism* (2010), Levitsky and Way exhaustively compare regime transitions in nearly three dozen countries, noting that some countries after the Cold War developed functioning democracies marked by meaningful competition and free elections, while others emerged as hybrid regimes, including “competitive authoritarian” ones, which are marked by playing fields that significantly favor incumbents. The extent to which a country democratizes, according to Levitsky and Way, is partly determined by its “linkages” with powerful actors that promoted liberalization after the Cold War. Those countries with strong political and economic ties to the United States and the EU were more prone to pro-democratic influences than those with weaker connections. These actors could tie benefits such as trade and foreign aid (Section 2.2.5.4) to democratic reforms, while the EU, specifically, made democratization, the rule of law, and protection of human rights criteria for accession. Linkages can take a number of forms, including carrots (i.e., positive inducements, such as promises of aid, access to trade, diplomatic ties, etc.) and sticks (i.e., diplomatic and economic sanctions, threats to remove preexisting aid).

However, some countries with strong ties were able to resist reformist pressures, mainly because they could argue that it was in those powerful actors’ strategic interests that the *status quo* not be upended too significantly. Such countries included natural resource (e.g., oil) producers and strategic allies in volatile regions. In these cases, the West lacked the “leverage” to push democratic reforms. There, hybrid regimes were more likely to emerge, if political liberalization occurred at all.

The EU is not the only international organization to have pushed democratic values in recent decades. In the same region, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has a robust pro-democracy initiative. And even organizations that are not primarily comprised of fully fledged democracies have promoted things like regular elections or, at the very least, opposed extraconstitutional changes in government. The African Union, for example, has suspended members such as Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, and Mauritania after coups, thereby sending a message that only transitions via elections should be considered legitimate. The emergence of international norms against such transfers, and many foreign governments’ enactment of legislation barring funding for governments installed extraconstitutionally, could help explain why coups are on the decline since the end of the Cold War (Marinov and Goemans, 2014), and there are more transfers of power occurring via elections (Posner and Young, 2007). And in some instances, countries interested in promoting democracy are parties to international organizations—or at least support international initiatives—such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and Open Government Partnership, that are aimed at reducing corruption and improving accountability. To the extent that these organizations are successful in reducing authoritarian governments’ abilities to channel resources away

from public goods and toward repression, the literature suggests they may be helpful in fostering democracy as well (see Section 2.2.4.3).

However, it is also important to note that increased ties with foreign actors will not necessarily increase the probability of democratization in authoritarian regimes. Rather, ties with what Hufbauer, *et al.* (1990) called “black knights” can enhance authoritarian durability. After the Cold War, such “counter-hegemonic” powers, who often sought to bolster authoritarian allies to counter pro-democracy efforts by actors such as the United States and EU, included Russia and China (Levitsky and Way, 2010, pp. 41-42). Russia continues to occupy this role, with its support for authoritarian leaders in places like Belarus and Syria, and its apparent attempts to destabilize democratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, and perhaps further afield. In short, while pro-democratic actors can use linkage and leverage to encourage democratization, “black knights” can use similar tools to prop up authoritarian regimes.

Relevance to democratization: International ties can have important effects on regime trajectories.

Lessons for intervention: Levitsky and Way’s theory suggests that engagement, rather than isolation, makes democratic transition more likely. If this is the case, then recent forays by the United States to extend ties with countries such as Cuba and Burma should bear democratic fruit. The promotion of economic ties, diplomatic conversations, and cultural exchanges could generate positive, pro-democratic externalities. Promoting democracy through such a strategy in countries over which the United States and EU have less leverage should prove more difficult, however; unfortunately, these are often the countries with the “hardest” authoritarian regimes.

Evaluation: The linkage theory could explain a number of empirical observations with regard to democracy, including its apparent tendency to diffuse rapidly and to cluster in particular geographic regions (Section 2.2.5.3). Although the theory might fit well with the immediate post-Cold War period, it is unclear how much explanatory power it might continue to have. Much of the “low-hanging fruit” might have already transitioned to democracy; in other words, those countries with which the United States and EU had many linkages—and also a great deal of leverage—in places like Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and East Asia are now rather democratic. In many current authoritarian settings (e.g., Central Africa, Central Asia), linkages with the West are relatively limited, while in others (e.g., the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia) countries hold such strategic importance that leverage over their governments with regard to potential political reform is scant. In other words, the specific cases this research draws from might limit the generalizability of the findings.

The broad structural theory articulated by Levitsky and Way is important because it can be unpacked into a number of more immediate mechanisms that shape how international factors influence democratization. For example, aid conditionality—or using economic aid to buy political reforms in the recipient country—is a form of leverage used to pressure recipient countries to democratize (Goldsmith, 2001). The transfer of ideas and norms across borders is an example of international linkage that takes many specific forms. The following sections summarize research that touches on the broader categories of linkage and leverage. When considering these literatures, it may be helpful to understand how the mechanisms through which specific international factors influence democracy fit into larger structural theories of democracy.

Case 5: Linkage, Leverage, and Regime Change in Slovakia

Vladímír Mečiar did his utmost to guarantee that Slovakia was the democratic laggard of Central Europe in the 1990s. An excommunicated member of the *Komunistická strana Slovenska* (KSS, Slovak Communist Party), Mečiar was a prominent figure in the anti-regime movement in Czechoslovakia, which culminated in 1989's Velvet Revolution. Following June 1990 parliamentary elections, he became Slovak prime minister, a position he held through the "divorce" with the Czech Republic in 1993 (aside from a brief interregnum in 1991-2). Mečiar's government collapsed in March 1994, but he was returned to office a few months later, when his conservative *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* (HZDS, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) won elections that fall.

Over the next several years, Mečiar was routinely criticized for undemocratic tendencies and corrupt practices. While neighbors, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (although not Ukraine), were rated "free" by Freedom House very quickly after the dissolution of their communist regimes, Slovakia retreated, moving from a "free" rating early in Mečiar's tenure to "partly free" by 1996. Mečiar utilized the powerful internal-security apparatus that had been established during the communist years to spy on real, potential, and imagined dissidents in media houses, parties, religious organization, trade unions, and civil society groups. He also used state television's dominance to push pro-government propaganda, withdrew licenses from independent media houses, and threatened journalists with libel charges. Mečiar and his HZDS further benefited from state control over a highly corrupt privatization process, a relatively robust economy, and an ideologically fractured opposition (Levitsky and Way, 2010, pp. 92-4).

However, Levitsky and Way (2010) characterize Slovakia under Mečiar as a situation in which Western democracies possessed both high linkages with and high leverage over the country. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and centrally planned economics across the region, the Slovak economy was increasingly oriented to the West. Further, there was wide popular support for close ties with, and eventual membership in, the EU. In 1994-5, the government signed the Europe Agreement, to begin formal accession talks. However, following criticism of Mečiar's authoritarian abuses by observers such as the European Parliament, Council of Europe, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the EU suspended negotiations in 1997 (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p. 94).

Growing distance from the West and apparent dips in international investment undercut Mečiar's position, both within his own party and among the general public. Several prominent HZDS members defected to the opposition, while Mečiar cycled through six foreign ministers in five years, a sign of his ostensible allies' increasing frustration with Slovakia's chilly relations with the West. In turn, Mečiar made a number of concessions to opposition and pro-democratic forces, perhaps most notably by issuing a license to a private television station in 1996.

By the 1998 elections, Mečiar's position was significantly compromised. Foreign actors provided crucial support to civil society groups and independent media, and funded vote mobilization campaigns that increased turnout in opposition-leaning areas. The Europe issue also became a focal point for the previously fragmented opposition, thereby creating a distinct cleavage between pro- and anti-Mečiar forces. This schism became crucial in post-election negotiations: although the HZDS won a small plurality of seats, no major opposition party would enter a coalition with the party, and Mikuláš Dzurinda was selected as prime minister. His government quickly implemented a number of important

reforms, particularly with regard to media liberalization (Levitsky and Way 2010, pp. 94-7). Within a year, Freedom House had once again rated Slovakia as “free.”

The HZDS and Mečiar would continue to be important players in Slovak politics, but their popularity and power decayed over the ensuing decades. The HZDS finished first in 2002 elections, but Mečiar remained toxic to many parties, and Dzurinda secured another term as prime minister. The party slid to fifth place in 2006, although it managed to enter a coalition government. By 2010, however, the HZDS fell below the 5% threshold, thus losing its remaining seats in the *Národná rada*; it fell below 1% in 2012 elections. Two years later, the HZDS dissolved.

2.3.5.3. Democratic Diffusion and the International System

Hypothesis: Democratization in one country in a region will make democratization in other countries in the same region more likely.

Primary methods: Comparative country case studies; time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses

Primary authors: Huntington (1991), Boix (2011), Gunitsky (2015), Houle, *et al.* (2016)

Summary: Democratic political regimes and the movement toward more democratic regimes cluster in time and space (Starr, 1991; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006; Brinks and Coppedge, 2006). The temporal clustering of democratic transitions is often referred to as “waves of democracy” (Huntington, 1991), while the geographic clustering of democratic regimes provides the observational starting point for many structural theories of democracy, including modernization. Researchers attempt to explain this clustering via mechanisms of emulation and diffusion. These processes occur when elites or citizens observe the behavior of counterparts in neighboring countries and learn from it, or when individuals in different countries cooperatively exchange information to generate similar domestic goals.

Emulation and learning work through both elites and citizens. Citizens can observe protest behavior in proximate countries and emulate this behavior (Beissinger, 2007). These observations constitute what Weyland (2014) calls an “availability heuristic,” or the recognition that, if democratization is possible in a neighbor, it might be possible at home, as well. Elites can observe policy choices in neighboring governments and respond with similar choices (Simmons and Elkins, 2004). Further, a common (regional) shock, such as an economic crisis, may produce similar outcomes in a group of countries when elites or citizens respond in a similar way. For example, Houle, *et al.* (2016) show that common regional shocks—not diffusion processes—produce spatial and geographic clustering of autocratic regime breakdown, while democratic diffusion only influences whether the subsequent regime is a democracy.

Diffusion can also stem from direct knowledge transfer between individuals from different countries who participate in concrete and identifiable human interactions. For example, the transmission of ideas and norms that shape behavior can occur when countries join international organizations (IOs) in which government officials repeatedly interact (Pridham, 1994; Pevehouse, 2002; 2005).

Norm diffusion among elites can take place via myriad international institutions and transnational networks (Risse and Sikkink, 1999). For example, human rights leaders and protest organizers can tap into international and transnational networks for resources, information, moral support, and strategic advice to mobilize resistance to autocratic regimes and pressure for democracy (Sikkink, 1993, Bunce

and Wolchik, 2011). Beaulieu (2017) argues that opposition-initiated protests against flawed elections are most likely to yield democratization when they are backed by significant international support. And the transfer of political values about democracy—i.e., “social remittances” (Levitt, 1998)—occurs via direct communication between individuals and communal networks (see Section 2.2.5.5). These studies suggest that ideas, expectations, and norms can diffuse directly through citizens who interact with those from nearby countries. According to Weyland (2014), diffusion is more likely to occur in an authoritarian country when organizational density there is high.

The broader geo-strategic international context also shapes how specific actions by international actors or structural factors influence democratization. Boix (2011), for example, argues that economic development is most likely to foster democracy when the international system is led by a democratic hegemon, unconstrained by global powers with an alternate, non-democratic political regime model. Without a dominant international rival, peripheral states rely on a democratic hegemon for support, and the democratic hegemon promotes democracy because the cost of failure for the democratic project is low when there is no viable competing hegemon promoting an alternate system. In a multi-polar world, however, democratic hegemons will focus on advancing democracy in developed countries, because the risk of instability in these countries is low and the democratic project is unlikely to fail. For poor countries, however, the democratic hegemon in a multi-polar system will be more likely to support the *status quo*—including autocracy—for fear of political realignment to competing powers if the regime changes.

Gunitsky (2015) identifies specific mechanisms for how the international system shapes democratic diffusion, arguing that shifts in hegemonic power shape political regime waves by creating windows of opportunity for external rising powers, such as the United States and Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II. During these periods, when the costs of external occupation are relatively low, rising powers expand networks of trade and patronage to promote similar regimes in foreign countries. The rise of new global powers also reveals information about relative regime effectiveness to foreign audiences, who in turn use this information to replicate the regime features of the rising powers.

Relevance for democratization: These studies suggest that many of the findings linking international factors to democracy—including Levitsky and Way’s influential study—may hinge on the broader geo-strategic international context. For example, much of the empirical literature on the political consequences of foreign aid and remittances (Sections 2.2.5.4 and 2.2.5.5, respectively) draws on data from the post-Cold War decades characterized by uni-polarity and rising globalization. If subsequent decades see the advent of a multi-polar geo-strategic context and declining globalization, the lessons of research based on observed patterns from the past three decades may not hold.

Lessons for intervention: Norms supporting democracy can be spread through multiple avenues, including international organizations and practitioner networks. Countries interested in promoting democracy should therefore maintain and expand such ties, at both the elite and non-elite levels.

Evaluation: While many studies identify the regional and temporal clustering of democracy and democratic transitions, there is little consensus on the causal mechanisms that underpin this relationship. As Houle, *et al.* (2016) show, what many observers assumed was democratic diffusion might actually be the diffusion of autocratic regime breakdown—or instability more broadly. This observation becomes clearer in light of the Arab Spring uprisings, where we observed a regional and

temporal clustering of regime breakdown and disintegration (Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen) but very little democratic diffusion, with only one autocratic regime collapse yielding democracy (Tunisia).

2.3.5.4. Foreign Aid

Hypothesis: Targeted foreign aid can induce countries to institute democratic reforms.

Primary methods: Time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses

Primary authors: Bermeo (2011; 2016), Dunning (2004), Goldsmith (2001), Wright (2008), Dietrich and Wright (2015)

Summary: The United States and other foreign actors, such as the EU, often tie aid packages to particular policies or reforms in target countries. During the Cold War, a primary goal of aid was establishing friendly relations or alliances, with the goal of limiting the spread of Communism. Economic liberalization was frequently a necessary precondition for receipt of certain forms of aid, particularly from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, during the era of the “Washington Consensus.” And in some cases—and increasingly so since the end of the Cold War—democratization is often a preferred goal of many donors, including the United States.

Despite these efforts, studies linking aid to democracy provide a mixed picture. A large group of studies draws on the assumptions of the resource curse literature to argue that foreign aid constitutes a “free resource” that allows non-democratic leaders to invest in repression, buy domestic political support, and thus escape democratic accountability (Ahmed, 2012; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2010; Djaknov, *et al.*, 2008; Morrison, 2009; Bräutigam, 2000). Just as perniciously, aid may facilitate corruption and exacerbate rent-seeking, dis-incentivizing leaders from relinquishing power (Easterly, 2006; Djaknov, *et al.*, 2008). While many empirical studies set out to prove the foreign aid political curse, the evidence linking aid—especially from Western countries since the end of the Cold War—to a dearth of democracy has not stood up to scrutiny (see Dunning, 2004; Bermeo, 2011; 2016). Notably, studies that group foreign aid with natural resource rents often fail to account for the fact that foreign aid entails a donor who may want political reform in return for aid; oil deposits rarely demand political concessions, though international investment necessary (in some countries) for extraction can pose demands on governments who receive rents from this resource.

On the positive side, scholars posit two mechanisms linking aid to democracy: 1) donors attach political reform conditions to economic aid, and 2) donors directly invest in democracy promotion through activities aimed at strengthening governance institutions and civil society (Dietrich and Wright, 2015).

Some argue that donors leverage their economic power by attaching political reform conditions to aid packages. Using conditionality to “buy reform” requires that donors can credibly withdraw or redirect aid when recipient governments do not comply (Burnell, 1997; Dunning, 2004) and that recipients do not have “outside” options to gain bargaining leverage over the donor. The aid conditionality mechanism is often associated with transitions to multiparty politics, particularly in the 1990s (Crawford, 2001; Handley, 2008; Resnick, 2013). Citing this leverage mechanism, some empirical studies find a link between aid and democratic transitions only during the post-Cold War period, when donors’ threat of aid withdrawal was most credible (Bermeo, 2011; Dunning, 2004; Wright, 2009; Escribà Folch and Wright, 2015; Bermeo, 2016).

Others focus on aid that is specifically tailored to assist with building democratic institutions; this assistance might be focused on the organization of elections, building legislatures, or enhancing capacity among political parties and civil society organizations. Scholars studying this have posited that democracy assistance influences democracy through a direct investment channel, targeting either: a) incumbent governments, or b) democratizing agents in civil society. Dietrich and Wright (2016), for example, show that donors tend to provide the bulk of democracy aid directly to incumbent governments to strengthen state capacity and governance (for the potential importance of these factors, see Section 2.2.7). Others argue that democracy aid to non-governmental actors serves as an investment in actors who push for democracy from the bottom up. According to some, this investment explains why democracy assistance increases the level of democracy, as measured by broad indicators (Finkel, *et al.*, 2007; Scott and Steele, 2011).

Recent evidence from cross-national studies is consistent with both the leverage mechanism linking economic aid to multiparty transitions (particularly post-1990, as shown in Bermeo (2016)) as well as the investment mechanism linking democracy aid to consolidation outcomes—but only those that do not necessarily threaten incumbents (Dietrich and Wright, 2015). This latter finding is consistent with Bush (2015), who finds that, over time, democracy promotion has become more “tame” as international NGOs and donor agencies increasingly select more regime-compatible projects to guarantee future funding.

Relevance for democratization: Myriad governments, including the United States, have devoted significant resources to foreign aid, often with the expressed purpose of promoting democracy. Therefore, careful study of the effectiveness—and potential unintended consequences—of this aid is important for future policymaking.

Lessons for intervention: Aid conditionality is difficult to implement effectively because: a) the donor cannot easily measure compliance (“multiparty elections” are easier to observe than “electoral competitiveness” and “governance”); b) recipients may have outside options (Section 2.2.5.2); and c) donors often must often work through recipient government institutions, which leads to the “taming of democracy assistance” (Bush, 2015).

Evaluation: Most research finds that authoritarian governments are able to harness foreign assistance and other unearned foreign income to prolong their rule (Ahmed, 2012; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2010; Djaknov, et al., 2008; Morrison, 2009), though more recent findings suggest that, in the post-Cold War period, the ability to use aid to thwart democratic reforms is limited to authoritarian regimes of particular strategic importance (Bermeo, 2016). The evidence for effectiveness of aid conditionality, the withholding of aid pending democratic reforms, is mostly found in the 1990s when donors had greater influence over election outcomes and democratization processes (see DRC, 2006). This suggests that the larger geo-political context is important for understanding how general foreign aid influences regime trajectories at the macro level. Studies of aid specifically aimed at promoting or supporting democratization have generally found that democracy assistance is effective overall (Finkel 2007), or, in more recent studies (Escriba-Folch and Wright 2015), that it is effective when the type of assistance is appropriately matched to the type of regime.

2.3.5.5. Migration

Hypothesis: Remittances from expatriates are associated with increased probability of democratic transition.

Primary method: Time-series, cross-sectional analyses

Primary authors: Abdih, *et al.* (2012); Pfutze (2012), Escribà Folch, *et al.* (2015)

Summary: Migration involves two types of international flows that can shape politics in sending countries: emigrants leave their home country, and emigrant workers in destination countries send remittances to relatives back home. These flows can influence domestic politics—and, in particular, democratization—via three mechanisms. A first mechanism focuses on the behavior of incumbent governments in remittance-receiving countries: remittance inflows may augment government resources for repression or the purchase of political support. The other mechanisms focus on the behavior of citizens who leave or those left behind who receive remittances. How emigration and remittance inflow shape citizen engagement with incumbent regimes—and in particular whether increased or decreased engagement helps or hurts prospects for democracy—depends on the political context of the remittance-receiving country.

Remittance income differs from other types of external financial flows—such as export earnings from natural resource extraction and foreign aid—because remittances flow directly to citizens, bypassing governments in remittance-receiving countries. While there is some very recent evidence suggesting that governments can capture some remittance inflow via the collection of consumption taxes (Asatryan, *et al.* 2016)—and there is widespread evidence that remittances increase private consumption among recipient households (Adams and Page, 2005; World Bank, 2006; Gupta, *et al.*, 2009; Fajnzylber and Lopez, 2007), most studies linking remittances to government behavior rely on a substitution argument: remittance-driven increases in private consumption allow incumbent governments to reduce spending on citizens, freeing resources to either invest in repression or purchase additional political support (Abdih, *et al.* 2012; Ahmed, 2012). Using a similar logic, Regan and Frank (2014) find that remittances reduce the risk of civil war onset during economic crises; they argue that remittances compensate recipients for a decline in social welfare payments. In contrast, Miller and Ritter (2014) find that remittance inflows increase the risk of civil war, as they are a source of resources that fund rebellions. And while the evidence for the first part of the causal chain—linking remittances to additional private consumption and even local public goods provision—is substantial (Chami, *et al.*, 2008; Adida and Girod, 2011), the main study showing that remittances decrease democracy globally (Ahmed, 2012) has been criticized on methodological grounds (see the Appendix to Bermeo, 2016; Wright and Bak, forthcoming).

Additional theories linking emigration and remittance inflows to democracy focus on citizens' behavior. On one hand, emigration may *decrease* the incentive for citizens to engage incumbent governments politically in sending countries. Depending on the politics of the sending country, less political engagement can either help or hurt the incumbent.

In autocratic countries where mass mobilization of dissent—such as protest campaigns—is a significant threat to the regime, the emigration of opposition-supporting citizens might help autocracies remain in power. In these political contexts, “exit” should hurt the prospects of mobilization against the regime, lowering the chances of “democratization from below” (Hirschman, 1978; Wood, 2000; Barry, *et al.*, 2014). Further, an increase in family income from external sources (i.e., foreign remittances) can shield

citizens from the adverse consequences of poor economic policy choices by governments, reducing grievance against the incumbent (Goodman and Hisky, 2008; Germano, 2013). Less domestic (economic) grievance can sever political accountability by lowering the likelihood of voting against the incumbent or mobilizing anti-regime protests, thus sustaining poorly performing governments.

However, when dictatorships survive by mobilizing electoral support through the delivery of goods and services in exchange for votes, emigration can undermine the regime's capacity to buy election victories (Pfutze, 2012; Escribà Folch, *et al.* 2015). When nominal regime supporters leave, incumbent governments lose voters. As importantly, worker remittances can erode electoral support for autocratic incumbents by providing individuals and households an exit option from the regime's patronage network, thus severing the clientelistic link between voters and incumbents that underpins regime survival. Indeed, recent research on Latin America suggests that remittances make recipients less dependent on state-delivered goods (Burgess, 2005; Adida and Girod, 2011; Aparicio and Meseguer, 2012; Duquette, 2014), which can explain why remittances reduce incumbent support when these parties rely on clientelism (Pfutze, 2013; Diaz-Cayeros, 2003). And there is growing evidence that worker remittances cause recipients to disengage politically by reducing electoral turnout (Pfutze, 2012, 2013; Germano, 2013; Goodman, 2008; Dionne, *et al.*, 2013) and depressing support for incumbent parties among those left behind (Pfutze, 2012, 2013; Escribà Folch, *et al.*, 2015).

Thus in some contexts, emigration that decreases political engagement in sending countries can help dictatorships survive: when dissenters exit, mobilization against the regime is less likely. In other contexts, however, emigration that leads to less political engagement can hurt dictatorships: when worker remittances undermine dictators' vote-buying strategies, electoral support for incumbent governments decreases.

Alternatively, emigration may *increase* citizens' political engagement against autocratic governments in sending countries. Since emigration entails citizens leaving sending countries, the primary mechanism through which migration might increase political engagement back home is by sending resources that fund the political opposition. Work remittances, for example, have been linked to funding for opposition parties, particularly in election years, and to political protest (Koinova, 2009; Germano, 2013; O'Mahony, 2013; Burgess, 2014; Nyblade and O'Mahony, 2014; Dionne, *et al.*, 2013). Further, there are several cases—such as Eritrea and Sri Lanka—where diaspora networks became essential resources for funding rebel insurgencies (Wayland, 2004; Lyons, 2007; Miller and Ritter, 2014). When emigrants provide resources for the political opposition in autocratic countries, this can weaken the incumbent regime's power. However, whether toppling the regime leads to democratization often depends on the context in which this occurs.

In dictatorships that rely on a narrow base of support, the most likely path to democracy is contentious mobilization against the regime: opposition groups push dictatorships from power, often by forcing elites to view change as preferable to the *status quo*. These autocracies are thus the most vulnerable to anti-regime protest mobilization (Ulfelder, 2005). If emigration saps investment in contentious politics in these countries, migration might help the dictatorship endure. However, if remittances augment the sources necessary for successful anti-regime mobilization, migration should help foster democratization.

Other dictatorships, however, rely on political parties to mobilize support for the regime—often through elections. When these dictatorships lose their resource advantage, they become more vulnerable as nominal supporters defect to the opposition. In Mexico and Senegal in 2000, for example, long-time

ruling parties lost elections for the first time, setting the stage for intense democratic political competition in the subsequent decade. In these dictatorships, emigration of incumbent supporters and additional income provided by remittances can undermine the regime's patronage network, making democratization more likely.

Relevance to democratization: Remittance flows are not only important with regard to economic development; they can also have important effects on regime trajectories.

Lessons for intervention: Recent years have seen an increase in remittances, but also concerns over the inability of states to monitor and control these flows. Non-state actors, including designated terror groups, might derive much of their financing through networks often used for remittances. Further, countries with large in-flows of migrants are becoming increasingly inhospitable, while those with large out-flows have concerns over “brain drain.” However, the previously discussed research suggests that democracy might benefit if remittances are allowed to flow into authoritarian countries, particularly when regimes rely on broad-based distributional networks to retain power.

Evaluation: There are strong theoretical reasons suggesting that out-migration, as a broader phenomenon, might not produce democratic externalities. Hirschman’s influential *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1978) suggests that, if expatriates contain regime opponents, the incumbent might benefit from the reduction in domestic opposition. Authoritarian leaders in countries from Cuba to Equatorial Guinea have used the emigration of political dissidents to reduce anti-regime pressures. However, recent analysis of remittance inflows suggests that this private income to individuals might help undercut autocratic regime strategies based on patronage distribution. Exit—in the form of out-migration or remittance receipt among nominal regime supporters—can undermine authoritarian rule when it is based on purchasing electoral support via patronage networks.

2.3.6. Triggering Events

2.3.6.1. Protests

Hypothesis: Protests can increase the chance of democratization, particularly when they are non-violent.

Primary method: Cross-national quantitative tests of the impact of violent and non-violent protests on the risk of both democratization and transition to new dictatorship

Primary authors: Celestino and Gleditsch (2013)

Summary: Protest and direct action can destabilize dictatorships, especially when the mode of action is non-violent. It is true that violent protests have on occasion provided a path to democracy. As Wood (2001) documents, for example, violent mass movements forced liberalization in both South Africa and El Salvador. (See Section 2.2.6.3 for a discussion of the conditions under which democratization follows civil war, specifically.) But non-violent campaigns, in particular, appear effective in bringing about transition to democracy.

Celestino and Gleditsch (2013) offer evidence to support this. They show that non-violent protests increase the chance that dictatorships will transition to democracy, especially when a high proportion of other countries in the region are democratic. At the same time, they find that violent protests increase the prospects of regime change to new dictatorship. This implies that levels of violence during protests can be important for understanding regime trajectories and put countries on very different paths.

Other studies similarly find a positive relationship between non-violent protest and political liberalization (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Kadivar and Caren, 2016). The Celestino and Gleditsch piece is highlighted here, however, because of its examination of important alternative outcomes, such as the transition to a new dictatorship.

Non-violent protests mobilize larger numbers of the citizenry, decreasing barriers to participation. (See Section 2.2.2.4 for a discussion of social movements.) This in turn increases the likelihood of tactical innovations, decreases the likelihood of successful repression, and increases the likelihood of elite defections. By revealing the relative power of key regime actors and bringing to the surface regime vulnerabilities, non-violent protest can motivate the opposition to get on its feet and encourage erstwhile regime supporters to join it. Non-violent protest pushes outgoing regimes toward democracy as opposed to new dictatorship because it disperses power and increases incentives to compromise.

There is evidence that authoritarian regime type influences these dynamics. Ulfelder (2005) shows, for example, that dominant-party and military dictatorships are more likely to break down in the face of non-violent protests than are personalist dictatorships.

Yet, what are the conditions that give rise to non-violent protests? Unfortunately, the existing literature does not provide a clear answer to why protests take on certain characteristics.

We know, for example, that protests are more likely to steamroll into large-scale revolutions when they forge together a broad-based coalition of individuals who share the demand for the regime's overthrow. Brancati (2016), for example, focuses on the role of economic crises, while Tucker (2007) discusses the importance of electoral fraud in catalyzing popular opposition.

There is also some evidence that new technologies can increase the likelihood of mass protests. For example, the role of the media, including social media, in the organization of mass protests during the Arab Spring has been of particular interest to social scientists in recent years (see, for example, Lynch, 2011). Surveys of citizens from Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab Spring reveal that protest participants were more likely to be heavy Internet users and active on social media (Breuer, *et al.*, 2013; Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). These studies suggest a positive correlation between new technologies and protest participation (for more on Internet penetration, see Section 2.2.7.5), but they cannot establish a causal relationship due to the nature of the research design. Moreover, even if there is a causal relationship, extant studies tell us little about whether new technologies set in motion protests that are more likely to be non-violent in nature.

Research shows that protests in which participants specifically articulate a demand for greater democracy are more likely when the economy is not performing well and citizens place blame for this on the dictatorship, conditions that are more likely during election years (Brancati, 2016). This suggests that one of the reasons why there has been more mass mobilization in recent years is the global recession.

This is an important insight, but it speaks to the factors that provoke pro-democracy protests, not their levels of violence or impact on democratization prospects.

Finally, an additional study that specifically examines the conditions conducive to the onset of non-violent protest finds some support for the argument that political opportunities matter (i.e., people protest when the mobilization costs are low and the chance of success high), but concludes that non-violent protests are very difficult to predict, and most existing theories do not explain them well (Chenoweth and Ulfelder, 2017).

While there is an empirical connection between non-violent protests and democratization, it is important to emphasize that determining levels of violence in protests is challenging. In addition, as Lehoucq (2016) points out, many protest data sources overlook incidences of failed protests, which are more likely to be non-violent.

Relevance for democratization: Non-violent protests boost the chances of transition to democracy. Violent protests have on occasion led to democratization, but they more often lead to new dictatorship.

Lessons for intervention: Resources that can assist pro-democracy groups in mobilizing other anti-regime citizens in ways that facilitate non-violent collective action are important for democratization.

Evaluation: Though there is some criticism of how Celestino and Gleditsch (2013) operationalize regime outcomes (as well as concerns over the protest data they and others use), their finding that non-violent protests raise the chance of democratization is consistent with research in the field.

We still have very little insight, however, into the factors that encourage the onset of non-violent protests. We know that social media use, for example, is tied to higher levels of protest participation, but know little about whether this relationship is causal and if so, whether it leads to protests that are violent or not.

2.3.6.2. Coups

Hypothesis: Coups are increasingly leading to the installation of democratic leaders since the end of the Cold War.

Primary method: Cross-national quantitative tests of the impact of coups on the chance of a competitive election in both democratic and autocratic countries

Primary authors: Marinov and Goemans (2013)

Summary: Coups are successful efforts “by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive using unconstitutional means” (Powell and Thyne, 2011, p. 252). Civilians may support coups, seeing them as a quick means to get rid of a government they dislike. The decision to stage a coup, however, typically lies with the military, the organization that most frequently executes them. Key factors that can increase the risk of a coup include economic and/or political crisis and government actions that threaten the military (budget reductions, interference in promotions, the creation of rival security forces, etc.) (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011).

Plotters often announce plans to hold democratic elections after staging successful coups, occasionally even offering a timeline for when they will leave power (Case 6). Of course, they do not always fulfill these promises.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, coups are increasingly followed by the installation of democratic leaders. The consequences of coups today therefore tend to be quite different than they were during the Cold War. While historically, coups were typically not followed by a competitive election in the five-year period after, since the end of the Cold War, most coups are followed by elections. Marinov and Goemans (2013) argue that this trend is due to greater international pressures for democracy, particularly among those countries most dependent on Western aid. The fall of the Soviet Union had two key consequences: 1) countries could no longer leverage the Soviet Union's international rivalry with the West to secure aid, and 2) the West was encouraged to place greater emphasis on democracy promotion. They find support for their argument: in the post-Cold War period, countries that rely more heavily on Western aid are more likely to hold competitive elections after a coup. This finding is also consistent with Levitsky and Way's (2010) theory and analysis (Section 2.2.5.2).

Derpanopoulos, *et al.* (2016) have subsequently researched the impact of coups on democratization in a sample of dictatorships, specifically. This research finds that since the end of the Cold War, coups levied against dictatorships typically result in the establishment of a new dictatorship, not the onset of democracy. In addition, most coups (and coup attempts) are associated with greater levels of state repression in their aftermath.

Coups can set in motion changes conducive to democracy, but the empirical record indicates that this is not the likeliest scenario.

Relevance for democratization: Coups that usher in democracy are more frequent since the end of the Cold War, but more often than not coups lead to the establishment of a new dictatorship.

Lessons for intervention: Coups levied against dictatorships typically result in the establishment of a new dictatorship. That said, democratization coups do occasionally occur, but unfortunately we lack a solid understanding of where and when.

Evaluation: The evidence indicates that, though democratization coups are more frequent since the Cold War's end, the most likely outcome following a coup is more dictatorship. Better understanding the pathways to democratization coups is important. There is some evidence that dictatorships with leaders who have been in office many years are the most likely to democratize following a coup (Thyne and Powell, 2014), but further studies are needed to establish that this relationship holds in the post-Cold War era and that these same factors do not also lead to an increased risk of transition to new dictatorship.

In sum, coups might create opportunities for democratization that would otherwise be absent, but they also create the very real chance that a new dictatorship will be established; additional research is needed to identify the causal pathways through which the former occur.

Case 6: The Military Squelches the *Tazarché* Campaign in Niger

One African leader who did not heed the example of South Africa's Nelson Mandela (see Case 1) was Niger's Mamadou Tandja. In 2009, after 11 years in power as president, he launched an attempt in earnest to amend the constitution to allow him to stand for a third term. Ostensibly grassroots mobilization to lay the groundwork for a third-term bid began in 2008, with marchers in the capital calling for "*Tazarché*" ("Continuity," in Hausa), which was Tandja's rallying cry in his successful re-election campaign in 2004.

However, the *Tazarché* campaign met with broad opposition, in both elite and non-elite circles. Anti-*Tazarché* marchers mobilized in the capital, Niamey, to counter Tandja's supporters, and dueling rallies, some of which involved violence, continued throughout the late spring and early summer. The largest opposition party, *Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme* (PNDS-Tarayya), was joined by, among the others, the *Convention Démocratique et Sociale* (CDS-Rahama), the position of which caused pro-*Tazarché* forces to lose a majority in the *Assemblée Nationale*. There was broad condemnation, including by many of Niger's West African neighbors, of any change to presidential term limits.

Tandja, hoping for support from the same population that had reelected him four years previously, announced intentions for a referendum that would allow constitutional changes. In June 2009, however, the Constitutional Court declared that, while the constitution gave the president the right to call referenda on almost any manner, Article 136 explicitly forbade any change, including by referendum, to Article 36, which stipulated the two-term presidential limit. Tandja responded two weeks later by announcing the dissolution of the government, rule by presidential decree, and the sacking of the Court. Opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou declared that Tandja had launched a "coup," and other opposition groups called on the population to boycott the early August constitutional referendum. With many anti-*Tazarché* Nigeriens heeding this call, the referendum passed easily, with nearly 93% support. Passage allowed Tandja to extend his rule by an additional three years, beyond the previous December 2009 end of this second term, during which time a new constitution would be drafted. Attempts to mediate a solution to the crisis appealed stalled in the referendum's aftermath.

In March 2010, Nigerien soldiers stormed the presidential palace as Tandja chaired a government meeting and arrested him; ten people were killed in the process. Soon after, a group known as the *Conseil Suprême pour la Restauration de la Démocratie* (CSRD, Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy), under the leadership of Colonel Salou Djibo, declared itself the acting government. Many opposition forces declared support for the new junta, which included several civilians in important posts, and believed the new government's promises to restore democracy, given that several CSRD members had participated in a coup in 1999 that was quickly followed by a restoration of multiparty elections (Baudais and Chauzal, 2011).

The CSRD moved quickly on several fronts, including issuing international appeals for food aid—Tandja's government had previously downplayed near-famine conditions in the country—and dropping charges against opposition leaders who had fled into exile. Less than a year after Tandja's ouster, new legislative and presidential elections were held, the latter of which were won by former opposition leader and anti-*Tazarché* leader Mahamadou Issoufou. The Nigerien case highlights the rare—but increasingly common, by some measures—phenomenon of military officials taking extra-

constitutional steps to remove a leader who is threatening democratic institutions, and rebuilding those institutions to facilitate a genuine transition to more-competitive politics.

2.3.6.3. Post-Civil War

Hypothesis: Democratization is difficult following civil war, but it can occur under certain circumstances.

Primary method: Using a sample of civil wars worldwide since the end of World War II, cross-national quantitative tests of levels of democraticness pre- and post-conflict, and of the impact of power-sharing institutions on the chance of post-conflict democratization

Primary authors: Fortna and Huang (2012); Hartzell and Hoddie (2015)

Summary: Post-civil war political environments are fragile, and paths toward democratization very difficult to secure. Though early research found that civil wars increase the chance of gains in levels of democraticness following the termination of violence, citing the experience of Mozambique, El Salvador, and Liberia, among others (Nickerson and Wantchékon, 2001; Wantchékon and Neeman, 2002), Fortna and Huang's (2012) study casts doubt on this finding. Using cross-national statistical tests that take into account methodological issues with earlier studies, they find little evidence that post-civil war contexts increase the chance of democratic transition. Instead, post-conflict societies are no different than others in terms of the factors that influence their prospects for democratization.

Hartzell and Hoddie (2015) examine the conditions that raise the probability of democratization following civil war. They argue that though it is very difficult for countries that experience civil war to democratize, establishing power-sharing institutions following a conflict's end is critical. (Their study speaks to the impact of rival conflict parties agreeing to power-sharing institutions, not on the actual implementation of these deals.) While there is a large body of literature suggesting that power sharing and democracy are incompatible (see, for example, Tull and Mehler (2005), Jung (2012), and Jarstad (2008)), Hartzell and Hoddie argue that such findings are in large part due to a focus on "ideal" democracy as opposed to more "modest" forms of democracy where the emphasis is simply on holding competitive elections. Their study therefore uses a very minimalist definition of democracy, which emphasizes free and fair electoral competition, as opposed to the imposition of more extensive political rights.

They posit that post-civil war power-sharing institutions can pave the way for democracy by minimizing feelings of insecurity among former warring factions, making it possible for leaders and their support groups to consider using elections as a means of leadership selection. Power-sharing arrangements can provide rivals with some guarantee that even if they lose the election, their opponents are not going to be able to target them afterwards. Once it is taken into account that power-sharing institutions are more likely to be agreed to following difficult conflicts, which are in turn the very environments most hospitable to democratization, Hartzell and Hoddie (2015) find that power-sharing institutions increase the chance of democratization, particularly within two years after the conflict's end.

Fortna and Huang (2012) find little evidence, however, of a boost in levels of democraticness after a civil war compared to before. Moreover, most cases that did experience political liberalization following civil war were dictatorships that liberalized but did not fully transition to democracy (e.g., Tajikistan). This

means that there is little way of knowing whether this type of liberalization will eventually lead to democratization or simply the continuance of a grey-zone regime. Finally, Flores and Nooruddin (2016) find that holding elections too quickly after conflict can threaten stability itself, since actors still cannot credibly commit to not abusing power against one another. Elections in post-conflict situations are most likely to lead to a stable, durable democracy when state-building precedes voting (Section 2.2.7.4), or if the country has significant past experience with democratic institutions.

Relevance for democratization: Democratization is unlikely following a civil war's end. While there is some evidence that democratic gains are possible where previously warring factions have agreed to power-sharing institutions, it is possible that such gains are occurring in authoritarian regimes that never fully democratize.

Lessons for intervention: Given the potential for instability in post-civil war contexts and the mixed empirical record in this area of research, practitioners should pause before devoting significant resources to interventions geared toward encouraging democratization following civil war.

Evaluation: There is little evidence that post-civil war political environments increase prospects for democracy. Certain conditions may make it more likely, but there is not sufficient research to broadly support such assertions.

2.3.6.4. Natural Disasters

Hypothesis: Natural disasters in dictatorships increase the chance of protests and shorten leader tenure.

Primary method: Cross-national quantitative tests of the impact of natural disasters on the chance of protests and leader overthrow

Primary authors: Quiroz Flores and Smith (2013)

Summary: Among leaders in small coalition systems (as in, non-democracies), natural disasters increase the chance of protest and shorten the tenure of leaders (Quiroz Flores and Smith, 2013). The level of fatalities does not affect either, however. Disasters can lead to the concentration of disgruntled sectors of the populace into camps, easing coordination barriers for mass mobilization. By forcing together larger numbers of people, natural disasters make it easier for opposition movements to obtain the critical mass required for a successful political movement. They can also damage the state's capacity to repress. Together, these factors can increase the likelihood of both protest and leadership overthrow. Disasters that affect densely populated urban areas are therefore more likely to lead to protests than those elsewhere.

Relevance for democratization: Natural disasters provide an opportunity for mass populations to mobilize against dictatorships.

Lessons for intervention: Resources should be devoted to helping disaster victims mobilize should they be disgruntled with the leadership, particularly when disasters afflict urban areas.

Evaluation: Unfortunately, this study does not tell us about the chance of democratization specifically, but it at least points to factors that destabilize the leadership, which could potentially open up opportunities for democratization.

2.3.6.5. Elections

Hypothesis: Elections are focal points for regime change and can lead to the defeat of autocratic incumbents.

Primary method: Qualitative analysis of 11 elections in post-Communist competitive authoritarian regimes; cross-national quantitative analysis of the short- and long-term effect of elections on the chance of regime collapse

Primary authors: Bunce and Wolchik (2011); Knutsen, *et al.* (2017)

Summary: Elections are focal points for ousting autocrats. There are a number of reasons for this: they take place within an established period of time, they are associated with expectations of greater political engagement, they have visible outcomes, and they tackle the issue of how power is to be distributed. Elections can help solve a number of coordination and collective action problems among opposition groups in dictatorships by providing an opportunity for alliances to form in conjunction, both among members of the opposition and with international pro-democracy groups. Elections typically do not lead to the ouster of autocrats, of course. But they are more likely to do so and usher in democracy when the opposition and its allies engage in strategies that force the electoral process to be more transparent, making the playing field less biased in favor of the incumbent and increasing the chance of an opposition victory. (This is a similar argument to the one proposed in Bunce and Wolchik's (2010) study, as discussed in Section 2.2.3.4.) Because elections are typically announced far in advance, they give opponents of the regime ample time to get organized in terms of spreading the word that the regime is vulnerable, mobilizing voters, and convincing the population that change is possible. Bunce and Wolchik (2011) draw these conclusions from eleven cases of elections in post-Communist countries, six of which led to democratization and the rest of which did not.

Certain conditions can increase the likelihood that elections will lead to democratization. For one, research suggests that pre-election protests alter election dynamics (Kadivar, forthcoming). Protests prior to an electoral contest provide information about citizen grievances while also suggesting the viability of an alternative to the incumbent. The evidence is consistent with this: pre-election protests increase the chance that elections will lead to political liberalization (more generally) and democratization (specifically). Protests across diverse social groups are particularly likely to lead to post-electoral political liberalization, in line with the insights from the social movements literature discussed in Section 2.2.2.4. In addition, widespread suspicion among the citizenry that the contest was fraudulent can increase the chance that an election will lead to political change. Researchers have shown that stolen elections can be revolutionary triggering events, facilitating a cohesive anti-regime framing among the opposition, increasing citizen willingness to participate in protests, and encouraging intra-elite splits over how to respond (Tucker, 2007).

It is important to emphasize, however, that while elections provide a potential trigger for regime collapse, they are linked to autocratic longevity in the long term (Knutsen, *et al.*, 2017). This is consistent with most scholars' assessment that electoral competition is a means by which dictatorships try to

prolong their survival, drawing from research on electoral authoritarianism (Schedler, 2002). Though Lindberg (2006) finds that repeated elections increase the chance of democratization in Africa, elsewhere there is little evidence of this (McCoy and Hartlyn, 2009; Lust-Okar, 2009; Morgenbesser, 2017). Looking at the Middle East, for example, Lust-Okar (2009) shows that elections actually work to dampen pressures for democracy. Because electoral contests primarily determine who gets access to state resources, voters support candidates who can best deliver the goods, and politicians focus on fulfilling this task. The situation soon devolves into one in which “parties are neutered, voters become cynical, and demands for democratization decline” (p. 468). She writes that funding political parties in these contexts to promote democracy will simply give them a second source of patronage.

Relevance for democratization: Elections in grey-zone dictatorships create opportunities for democratization, but this is context dependent. Elections can also help stabilize authoritarian regimes.

Lessons for intervention: Additional support from international actors to pro-democracy opposition groups around the time of elections in grey-zone dictatorships can be effective in paving the way for political change, particularly if there are pre-election protests and a widespread belief among citizens that the elections were fraudulent.

Evaluation: Bunce and Wolchik’s study provides insight into the factors that successful efforts by opposition groups share in common, but it is difficult for all of these factors to come together to cumulate in an opposition victory. Moreover, the specific type of sophisticated strategies that worked well for opposition groups in one context are not guaranteed to work in others, given the limited sample of cases under analysis. It is also important to note that autocratic incumbents are not passive actors in this process. They, too, are learning from events that have unfolded and likely adjusting their strategies for survival in response.

Knutsen, *et al.*’s study is consistent with the argument that a single election can serve as a triggering event that propels the collapse of an authoritarian regime, but it is unclear whether the new regime that emerges will be democratic or authoritarian. Importantly, their study also shows that in the long term, elections increase authoritarian stability, in line with a large body of research on institutionalized autocracy (Section 2.2.3).

[2.3.6.6. Death of the Leader](#)

Hypothesis: When authoritarian leaders die in office of natural causes, democratization is unlikely.

Primary method: Time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses; case studies

Primary authors: Kendall-Taylor and Frantz (2016)

Summary: Kendall-Taylor and Frantz (2016) examine how frequently political liberalization occurs following a dictator’s natural death in office. Despite the speculations of many observers in the period leading up to a dictator’s death that political transformation is on the horizon, Kendall-Taylor and Frantz find that regime change is unlikely to occur, and political liberalization even less so. In the vast majority of cases (92 percent), the authoritarian regime persists after the leader dies. Examples include the deaths of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 2013, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia in 2012, Laurent-Désiré Kabila in the DR Congo in 2001, and Kim Jong Il in North Korea in 2011. Other indicators of instability, such as coups and mass protests, are also infrequent following a dictator’s death. Kendall-Taylor and Frantz

argue that death in office is *not* the triggering event observers often assume it will be, because elites in the regime's inner circle have an incentive to work to preserve the *status quo* given the uncertainties of the alternatives.

On some occasions, however, a dictator's death is transformative and a trigger of political liberalization, such as with the death of Francisco Franco in Spain in 1975. Kendall-Taylor and Frantz argue that this is more likely to occur the more personalized the authoritarian regime. (This argument pertains to regime change, not necessarily democratization specifically.) Even so, personalist dictatorships are still remarkably resilient to the death of their leaders.

Relevance for democratization: When dictators die in office of natural causes, significant political transformation is unlikely.

Lessons for intervention: Practitioners should pause before devoting resources to encourage democratization in authoritarian regimes solely because leaders are ailing/aging.

Evaluation: The evidence suggests that a dictator's death in office is not usually a triggering event, although there are occasional instances in which it has resulted in democratization. Future research is needed, however, to better understand the specific conditions that make this a more likely outcome.

2.3.7. State Capacity

2.3.7.1. Incumbent Capacity

Hypothesis: Incumbent capacity increases authoritarian durability and lowers the chance of political liberalization.

Primary method: Case studies

Primary authors: Way (2005)

Summary: Way (2005) argues that incumbent capacity is critical to understanding variation in the durability of authoritarian regimes. He defines incumbent capacity along three dimensions: authoritarian state power, elite organization, and know-how. The first dimension is the most relevant to this discussion. It addresses the extent to which top-level officials can control the actions of their subordinates, as well as the scope of issues over which they maintain control. Incumbents are particularly powerful, he argues, when they have effective control over a large state apparatus and a large economy. Looking at the cases of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, he shows that incumbent capacity is negatively correlated with political liberalization. The message to emerge from his study is that weak incumbent capacity undermines authoritarian consolidation and can encourage political competition. Situations in which the incumbent cannot order subordinates, such as those in the military, to carry out their orders are more likely to result in regime instability (see Case 7).

Relevance for democratization: Incumbents' ability to get those under them to obey orders and exercise control over key policy domains (such as the economy) bodes poorly for political liberalization, particularly when incumbents govern a large state and economy.

Lessons for intervention: Opportunities for political liberalization should be more plentiful in authoritarian regimes with low levels of incumbent capacity.

Evaluation: Theoretically, the relationship between incumbent capacity and authoritarian regime durability is compelling. The evidence from Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia is consistent with the arguments proposed. Future research is needed, however, to establish whether these relationships hold outside of these four cases.

2.3.7.2. Extractive Capacity

Hypothesis: The ability to extract taxes increases the chance of political liberalization.

Primary method: Time-series, cross-sectional statistical analyses

Primary authors: Ross (2004); Baskaran (2014)

Summary: Ross (2004) examines the relationship between taxation and representation, specifically whether higher levels of taxation lead to greater demands for representative government. In early modern Europe, for example, monarchs were forced to yield some of their authority to parliamentary institutions in order to raise new taxes. Ross suggests that the same dynamics occur in contemporary authoritarian regimes, such that the need to generate revenues leads to political liberalization. (Note that this is similar to arguments in the resource curse literature (Section 2.2.4.3), that because resource-rich countries do not rely on taxes to fund their rule, they face fewer pressures for democratization.) He tests his argument using cross-national statistical tests from 1971 to 1997 and finds that there is little evidence that taxes relative to income (as a percentage of the total economy) affect democraticness. There is evidence, however, that taxes relative to government services (as a percentage of government expenditure) make countries more democratic. The overall message is that it is not that citizens protest taxation without representation, but rather that they put pressure on governments to democratize if taxes are not commensurate with government services. When either taxes increase and government services stay the same or government services are cut and taxes remain unchanged, authoritarian governments are forced to become more accountable to their citizens.

Baskaran (2014) tests a similar argument and finds a positive relationship between extractive capacity and political liberalization. Using cross-national statistical tests from 1981 to 2008, he finds that greater government revenues relative to income increase the chances of political liberalization.

It is important to note that Slater and Fenner (2011) argue that the ability to extract revenues increases the durability of authoritarian regimes. Though they do not evaluate their argument empirically, it is possible that extractive capacity increases both durability and political liberalization. For example, it could be that greater taxation puts pressure on authoritarian governments to liberalize, but does not actually lead to a democratic transition. Ross (2004) and Baskaran (2014) do not evaluate the likelihood of a democratic transition specifically in their studies, but rather the chance of an increase in democraticness.

Relevance for democratization: Greater extractive capacity increases the chance of political liberalization.

Lessons for intervention: Because greater taxation can lead to citizen pressures for more accountable government, emphasizing tax capacity is one way in which practitioners could foster political liberalization.

Evaluation: The evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between extractive capacity and political liberalization. However, the precise way that taxation is measured appears to affect the relationship. There is evidence that both taxes relative to government spending and overall government revenues relative to the size of the economy increase democraticness, but there is little evidence that taxes (specifically) relative to the size of the economy do. Complicating matters, Slater and Fenner (2011) offer compelling reasons to expect greater extractive capacity will increase authoritarian durability. Further research is therefore needed to assess whether extractive capacity increases political liberalization but at the expense of prolonging the lifetime of the authoritarian regime.

2.3.7.3. Coercive Capacity

Hypothesis: Coercive capacity increases authoritarian durability and suppresses pressures for democratization.

Primary method: Case studies; deductive reasoning

Primary authors: Bellin (2004); Levitsky and Way (2010); Slater (2012)**Summary:** Bellin (2004) examines the relationship between an authoritarian state's coercive capacity and its regime's durability. She argues that existing theories of democratization do not satisfactorily explain why most countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) remain authoritarian. She emphasizes the importance of their coercive apparatus. Because of the strong security capacity of MENA states, the authoritarian governments in the region have been remarkably resilient. Her major message is that democratization will only be possible when "the state's coercive apparatus lacks the will or capacity to crush it" (p. 142). Otherwise, states can simply use the coercive sector to suppress any democratic initiatives that surface.

Other scholars have similarly emphasized the importance of coercive capacity. Levitsky and Way (2010), for example, argue that coercive capacity is critical to authoritarian stability. The more authoritarian governments are able to repress and muzzle opponents, the more durable they will be. They highlight two forms of coercion that are valuable: high-intensity coercion (i.e., overt repression that targets large groups, major actors, or major institutions) and low-intensity coercion (i.e., off-the radar repression, such as surveillance).

Similarly, Slater (2012) highlights the importance of coercive capacity for authoritarian durability. (Note that he is careful to distinguish between regime duration (in terms of the number of years a regime is in power) and regime durability (in terms of a regime's resilience to challenges to its rule.) Though the bulk of Slater's study focuses on the role of state strength (broadly speaking) in increasing the resilience of authoritarian regimes, he points to the coercive arena when discussing the conditions under which strong states are apt to democratize. Looking at the experiences of a range of countries in Asia, he argues that democratization would require authoritarian incumbents to roll back and restrain their use of coercion. He points out that this in turn would depend on the ability of the opposition to levy a major challenge against the regime, which in many strong states is unlikely. (As an additional point, his study also implies that sequencing debates are irrelevant in many authoritarian contexts because the state is

already strong at the time of transition). Moreover, Slater suggests that should strong states democratize, their regimes are likely to be resilient (consistent with the findings of Andersen, *et al.* (2014) referenced below).

Albertus and Menaldo (2012) and Andersen, *et al.* (2014) evaluate these relationships quantitatively. The first study measures coercive capacity using military size (per 100 inhabitants); the second does so using military spending per capita. Both studies show that there is a positive relationship between coercive capacity and authoritarian regime durability. Albertus and Menaldo also find that a stronger coercive apparatus negatively affects political liberalization specifically.

Relevance for democratization: Authoritarian regimes with substantial coercive capacity will be unlikely to democratize unless their governments choose not to use the coercive apparatus to suppress pressures for democracy.

Lessons for intervention: Coercive capacity is associated with authoritarian resilience. At the same time, there are mixed lessons here. On one hand, interventions could target states that have low coercive capacity because they are inherently more fragile, but on the other hand, states with high coercive capacity likely have better odds at consolidating democracy should democratization occur. Moreover, though high coercive capacity implies fewer opportunities for political change, interventions geared toward weakening a state's coercive capacity could create a new set of problems. Declining coercive capacity, for example, could reasonably increase the chance of a military coup or insurgency. Perhaps the central lesson to emerge from this literature is that when authoritarian states have high coercive capacity, the best bet for democratization is to convince the leadership that regime change is in its interest.

Evaluation: The studies here persuasively illustrate the key role that coercive capacity plays in protecting authoritarian regimes from threats to their rule. A stronger coercive apparatus can stall political liberalization by increasing the regime's ability to repress opponents.

2.3.7.4. State Building

Hypothesis: State building is a precondition for democracy.

Primary method: Case studies; cross-national survey data; deductive reasoning

Primary authors: Linz and Stepan (1996); Chua (2004)

Summary: Linz and Stepan (1996) were among the first to promote a sequencing argument, suggesting that a strong state is a precondition for democracy. (Note that though there is a large literature devoted to sequencing in the civil war context (see Section 2.2.6.3), only studies relevant to sequencing in the state building and democratization literature are referenced here.) They argue that an effective state is a requirement for other democratic outcomes, such as effective citizenship and successful privatization. In their words, "no modern polity can become democratically consolidated unless it is first a state" (p. 7). They emphasize, in particular, the importance of a strong state bureaucracy that the new democracy can rely on when governing.

Chua (2004) draws from these ideas, but takes an even more extreme stance. Her argument implies, among other things, that the adoption of democracy should be postponed until the state has been sufficiently developed.

Branch and Cheeseman (2008) offer a subtler message, but similarly put forth that an effective state is critical for countries to weather the challenges of regime transitions. Looking at Africa, specifically, they show that, absent effective institutional safeguards, political liberalization in Africa can lead to crises. They argue that intensely contested elections require some attention to state building, otherwise multi-partyism might only serve to exacerbate underlying societal tensions.

Mazucca and Munck (2014) challenge this view. They review the relevant literature devoted to whether the sequence of state strength and democratization matters, and conclude that there is no basis for the contention that the state must come first. They argue that democratization and democratic consolidation can move forward without the establishment of a strong state. Carothers (2007) is also critical of the sequencing argument, suggesting that it presupposes that authoritarian leaders will spearhead the development of rule of law and state building on their own volition, which is an unrealistic assumption.

Bratton and Chang (2006) lie somewhere in the middle of these poles. Looking at Africa, they show that state building and levels of democraticness are correlated and, using survey data, that stateness affects citizens' perceptions of their country's democraticness. They argue that democratization requires a strong state—particularly in terms of the rule of law. At the same time, from their perspective, state building and greater democraticness work together and are mutually reinforcing. In other words, one is not a precondition for the other. Importantly, however, they view the state to be a hallmark of democracy. In other words, they see a strong state as part of the definition of democracy. This differs from the approach of Slater and Fenner (2011) and others who see the state and the regime as distinct.

Relevance for democratization: Scholars debate whether a strong state must come before democratization. Regardless of the direction of the causal arrow, there is some evidence that state strength is associated with higher levels of democraticness.

Lessons for intervention: Given the lack of strong evidence in support of sequencing, attention to the timing of state building efforts may be less important than originally advocated.

Evaluation: Whether sequencing matters continues to be debated. Some scholars take the position that state-building efforts should precede democratization, while others view this perspective as naïve, suggesting that timing is unimportant. These studies for the most part do not employ rigorous cross-national analyses to evaluate the arguments proposed, apart from Bratton and Chang (though they look exclusively at Africa). They find a positive correlation between state building and democraticness, but it is unclear whether this relationship exists outside of the African context. Further, it is important to recognize that other hypotheses, regarding incumbent capacity (Section 2.2.7.1) and coercive capacity (2.2.7.4) contend that state strength is tied to regime durability. It may help new democracies consolidate after coming to power, but lessen the chances of such transitions happening in the first place. Thus, further research on this topic is warranted, and scholars and practitioners should pay close attention to what aspects of state capacity are likely to affect regime trajectories.

2.3.7.5. Internet Infrastructure

Hypothesis: Greater Internet penetration increases the likelihood of democratization.

Primary method: Large-*N* analysis

Primary authors: Best and Wade (2009); Mays and Groshek (2017)

Summary: Globalization of the Internet has generated optimism about the potential for Internet penetration to increase levels of democraticness. (We include Internet penetration in the State Capacity theory family because it is a product of state infrastructure.) For one, free-flowing information could provide citizens greater information about government abuses of power, while also exposing them to the freedoms afforded to citizens who live in democracies. The Internet could also increase the chance of democratization by making it easier for citizens to coordinate protests and other opposition activities.

Best and Wade's (2009) work is one of the first time-series, cross-national studies to evaluate the relationship between Internet penetration and democratization. Using data from 1992 to 2002, they find little evidence that Internet prevalence is a positive force for democracy. At the same time, when they only look at the years 2001 and 2002, they do find a positive relationship. Because two years is a small timeframe, however, the positive result should be interpreted with caution.

Mays and Groshek (2017) use a larger timeframe (1994 to 2014) to evaluate the relationship between Internet penetration and democracy. They find limited evidence to suggest that Internet diffusion has led to increases in democraticness. Where Internet penetration does lead to greater democraticness, it is under "specific and rare conditions... and even then only as components of larger social and political processes" (p. 443).

Relevance for democratization: Greater Internet penetration does not increase levels of democraticness.

Lessons for intervention: Investments in better Internet infrastructure and access may have a number of benefits for citizens, but there is little evidence that increases in the democraticness of the country's political system is one of them.

Evaluation: There are logical reasons to expect the diffusion of the Internet across the globe to lead to greater pressures for democracy. Indeed, a handful of case studies, most notably on countries of the Arab Spring, have suggested that greater Internet access was critical to the success of pro-democracy protests (see Mays and Groshek (2017) for a review of this literature). Time-series, cross-national studies evaluating the impact of Internet penetration on democratization, however, find little evidence of a relationship. One potential reason for the null effect may be the difficulty of accurately measuring Internet penetration, however.

Case 7: Two Jasmine Revolutions: Tunisia's Military and Regime Transitions

In November 1987, the Tunisian military played a crucial supportive role in a “medical coup” that brought Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali to power, in a moment popularly known as the “Jasmine Revolution.” Almost exactly 23 years later, the military’s leadership would make a critical decision that placed a nail in the coffin of Ben Ali’s regime, during a popular revolution, also given the appellation of “Jasmine.” Perhaps perversely, it was the Tunisian military’s institutionalized strength that led it to usher in a new authoritarian government in the country, while later serving as perhaps the critical decision-maker that pushed it down a more-democratic path.

Ben Ali, a former director-general of national security and prime minister under President Habib Bourguiba, rose to power with the support of the Tunisian military when he and co-conspirators had a number of medical doctors, including several from the military, declare his 84-year-old presidential predecessor declared mentally unfit to continue in the role. Following this, Ben Ali consolidated his control over the *Parti Socialiste Destourien*, which he refashioned as the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD) and led to victory in 1989. That same year, Ben Ali, running as the sole candidate in presidential elections, officially won 100% of the valid votes cast.

During—and prior to—the Ben Ali era, the Tunisian military had a reputation as being among the most “highly institutionalized” in the region (Bellin 2004, p. 149). A 1957 law prohibited military officers from being members of political parties or other organized groups, and although Ben Ali appointed several senior officers, including Abdelhamid Escheikh and Mustapha Bouaziz, to important ministerial posts, the Tunisian military remained largely insulated from domestic power politics. Bellin notes that, like other well-institutionalized entities, the Tunisian military remained “rule-governed, predictable, and meritocratic” (2004, p. 145). In other words, members of the military did not rely on political connections with Ben Ali or the RCD for advancement or wealth accumulation. Rather, the military remained a relatively small, professionalized, and non-politicized entity. Further, as an organization in which selection and advancement were largely based on principles of meritocracy, its makeup reflected the ethnoregional makeup of Tunisian society, with no ascriptive identity groups being seen as overrepresented within, or especially reliant on, the military.

While this institutionalization helped to foster a stronger military, which likely helped extend Ben Ali’s tenure by maintaining internal stability, this feature also likely contributed to Ben Ali’s downfall. Following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in the rural town of Sidi Bouzid in December 2010, large protests against everything from high unemployment and food price increases to corruption and lack of democratic freedoms spread across major population centers, including Tunis. By early January, thousands were demonstrating in the capital.

On January 13, fearing that he was losing control of the situation, Ben Ali reportedly asked Armed Forces Chief of Staff Rachid Ammar to end the protests, using live ammunition, if necessary. Ammar refused, responding, “Agree to deploy soldiers to calm the situation, but the army does not shoot the people.” In retaliation, Ben Ali fired Ammar and had him placed under house arrest; the next day, he declared a state of emergency, dissolved the government, and promised new elections. Ammar’s defiance, however, signaled that the regime no longer had the support of key elites, including the leaders of the security apparatus, and Ben Ali announced his resignation just hours later.

According to Bellin (2012), it was not a lack of coercive capacity on the part of the Tunisian military that led to the overthrow of Ben Ali, and the eventual establishment of the most-democratic Muslim-majority country in the MENA region. Rather, the dictator's Achilles' heel was his inability to convince the military to use that coercive capacity to keep him in power. Given its institutionalization, the Tunisian military concluded that its survival and continued position was not dependent on maintaining Ben Ali and the RCD in power. In other words, General Ammar and other military leaders were not given the incentives to order their personnel to use lethal force against thousands of protesting civilians. This contrasts with Syria, according to Bellin, where the military is dependent on the continuance of the Assad government, in large part because it is disproportionately drawn from the country's non-Sunni minority groups; many officers and personnel there were consequently willing to use deadly force against peaceful protesters and, eventually, armed opposition groups. These cases highlight the importance not just of the military's actual coercive capacity, but of the authoritarian government's ability to order the deployment of that capacity.

2.4. Summary Evaluation of Theory Families and Hypotheses

2.4.1. Political Leadership

Social scientists' interest in the role of leaders—of government or opposition, as individuals or as part of a collective—has waxed and waned over the last half century. When structural factors, such as the economy or overall levels of “modernity,” are ascendant, leaders' preferences, capabilities, and strategic interactions have tended to receive less attention. “Great man” theories propose that historical trajectories can be bent by the preferences of particularly well-suited and skillful individuals holding positions of power at critical times. India's “luck” with Nehru and South Africa's with Mandela, must be contrasted with the experiences of their respective neighbors, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, which went down very different paths with the likes of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq and Robert Mugabe. Such approaches suffer from at least two major limitations, however. First, while “great men” clearly make consequential decisions, it is unclear why certain types come to power in some situations versus others. Social scientists might be left with structural or institutional explanations for why, say, democracy-promoting individuals are able to rise in some contexts, or why individuals who might want to dismantle democracy are foiled in others. Second, such explanations for regime outcomes seem almost tautological. Leaders who favor democracy produce democratic outcomes, while those who prefer authoritarianism produce dictatorships. Such theories are, to be blunt, not terribly interesting.

Foreign policy and diplomacy have, of course, always been focused on leaders. Governments seek to find leaders in other countries whom they can “work with,” and who share compatible visions and strategic preferences. The democracy-promotion community, on the other hand, has been more focused on trying to affect factors such as opposition capabilities, institutional reforms, and political culture. Part of this likely stems from capacity: it is simply not in most democracy-promotion organizations' abilities or mandates to affect populations' or groups' choices with regard to leaders. In the long term, however, it might be a more fruitful democracy-promotion strategy to focus on establishing the structural, cultural, or institutional contexts that encourage the moderation and compromise that many scholars focusing on political leadership argue is necessary for democracy to emerge. Some of these theorists are likely correct: democracy might be able to arise even when few of the elites who negotiate the creation of democratic institutions are actually committed democrats. Rather, democracy might emerge if it is simply all major actors' least-bad option.

2.4.2. Political Culture

The bulk of the literature on political culture and democratization associates specific cultures with democracy. The arguments proposed are often theoretically persuasive. Empirically, patterns do exist: certain cultural beliefs and tendencies are often correlated with higher levels of democraticness. However, such cultural explanations face a number of shortcomings.

For one, cultures are somewhat static, making it difficult to argue that they are key predictors of democratic transitions. For example, Latin America for many years was associated with an authoritarian political culture. How do theories of culture explain the dramatic wave of democratization that swept across the region by the end of the 20th century? It is also difficult to establish the direction of causality in cultural arguments. Is it that democratic countries are more likely to create populations that hold certain attitudes or vice versa? Existing research has sought to address some of these challenges, but they still remain.

Moreover, it may be that the correlation between specific cultural traits and democraticness is due to unobserved factors. For example, Islamic countries have lower levels of democracy than non-Islamic countries do, but studies indicate this is largely due to the association between Muslim societies and the subordination of women (Fish, 2002). Once this confounding factor is taken into account, research reveals that it is suppression of women that lowers chances of democratization, not Islamic traditions. Research from East Asia tells a similar story. Though Confucian cultural traditions have been put forth in the past to explain the history of authoritarianism in East Asia, the evidence indicates that this correlation is spurious. More troubling, studies find that non-democratic elites in East Asia even used cultural arguments to sustain their rule and reject political liberalization (Zakaria, 1994).

Another issue with many of the theories in this family is that the links that tie the theoretical concepts together are often underdeveloped. Even when they are specified, they are typically not subject to empirical evaluation. This means that while it is possible that various features of political culture are correlated with democraticness, we know little about causal pathways. For example, do civic values prompt elites to push for democratization? Do they increase the chance that the masses will engage in non-violent protests demanding it? Do they alter the decision calculus of the military? What is the causal chain of events through which culture leads to political liberalization? Some of these links are hypothesized in some studies, but rarely are they tested.

There are compelling reasons to expect political culture to play a role in movements toward democracy. Though such a relationship has yet to be established empirically, culture is a tricky concept to measure. Additional research is needed, therefore, to assess whether theoretical arguments tying political culture to democraticness are consistent with the empirical reality.

Less-prominent branches of the political culture literature look at the role of social movements and ideology in democratization. With respect to the former, the evidence suggests that certain features of social movements enhance the chance of their success in advocating for democracy. With respect to the latter, there is little evidence that a specific ideological leaning is required for democratization. At the same time, religion can play a role in political liberalization under certain contexts.

These pieces promote compelling arguments, but the literature is still in its infancy. Because the bulk of the insights are drawn from a handful of cases, future research is needed to determine whether the findings are generalizable. As a result, some caution should be exercised when devoting resources to these areas.

2.4.3. Political Institutions

There is a large and robust literature associating political institutions that often are democratic in name, such as legislatures, political parties, and elections, with greater durability in dictatorships. Scholars have proposed a variety of reasons to explain why dictatorships adopt pseudo-democratic institutions, but the basic message is that those that feature them last longer in office than those that do not.

Many of the hypotheses identified here in this theory family seem to run counter to this message. In general, they argue that pseudo-democratic institutions in dictatorships increase the chance of democratization. The disconnect lies, in many ways, in the difference between a dictatorship's baseline risk of collapse and its risk of collapse given that a semi-competitive election has occurred. The bulk of the studies discussed in this section test the prospects for democratization on a sample of autocratic election years. They can therefore inform our understanding of the chance of democratization following a semi-competitive election, but we must also remember that the dictatorship's decision to hold such an election is likely a function of its assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities.

In addition, a number of case studies detail instances of democratization being an iterative process, yet large-*N* cross-national research treats each election year as an independent, isolated event.

Moreover, many of the studies that examine the effect of competitive authoritarianism on democratization integrate causal arguments that are not necessarily well captured by a blunt measure of regime type. The measures of regime type are typically distinguished by election outcomes (the legislative seat share of the regime party), which means that we must believe that regime seat share is a good indicator of regime strength. This is particularly important given that the theoretical ideas proposed to tie semi-competitive elections to democratization often run counter to the aforementioned consensus in much of the literature that such institutions prolong autocracy.

Though there are many instances in which pseudo-democratic institutions lead to regime continuance, democratization has occurred in many of the places that once featured them. A number of the studies outlined here focus not on whether a particular political institution increases the chance of democratization, but rather on the pathways through which it could. It is here where there is the most potential for practitioners' efforts to be effective. The evidence suggests, for example, that new and sophisticated strategies that opposition parties pursue in the pre-electoral period are important, implying that practitioners would be wise to integrate targeted approaches despite the appeal of buzz phrases, such as "opposition unity." Perhaps most importantly, the central insights in many of the studies in this field differ based on the region under analysis. This further conveys that scholars currently lack a one-size-fits-all understanding of the specific ways in which semi-competitive elections in dictatorships can contribute to democratization.

Other studies in this theory family have a more pessimistic message about political institutions in dictatorships and democratic transitions. They show that dictatorships with collegial governing institutions are more likely to democratize than transition to dictatorship should they collapse, but also

that they are long lasting. There are two silver linings, however. First, when collegially governed dictatorships do democratize, their party systems are of higher quality. And second, even in dictatorships in which power is consolidated, party creation can open up opportunities for democracy, albeit in the long run.

2.4.4. Political Economy

The relationships between various economic factors and regime trajectories have long been, and remain, of particular interest to social scientists. And political economy approaches to studies of regime change are likely to remain popular, particularly because the literature is so unsettled. In the 1960s, modernization theorists had outsized influence not only on academia, but also within the policy community, with their all-good-things-go-together approach. Fostering economic growth abroad would not only lift standards of living, but it would also eventually lead to the spread of democratic freedoms and, ultimately, the defeat of anti-democratic alternatives (i.e., the Soviet Union and its totalitarian model). Modernization theory likely thrived for three reasons. First, it seemed plausible: the most-developed countries in the middle of the 20th century were also among the most-democratic. Second, it fit with ethnocentric notions of Western capitalism and liberal democracy as the end stages of a teleological view of history. And finally, it gave many policymakers, and no doubt academics, the answers they wanted to hear: promoting economic development not only served U.S. foreign-policy interests, but would improve civil liberties around the world.

Unfortunately, the succeeding decades have not provided final clarity with regard to whether modernization theorists were correct. Social scientists have produced work both confirming and discounting the relationship between economic development and democracy. Some have found modernization theory to be largely supported, some to be partly supported, and others to be not supported at all. There are, to be sure, few wealthy, non-rentier autocracies in the world today, but there are also poor democracies and hybrid regimes at all levels of wealth.

Encouraging economic development—certainly not a simple proposition in and of itself—would seem to be the normatively favorable policy, given likely improvements in living standards and a reduction in human misery. However, we still cannot discount the dangers that economic growth might have for democratic outcomes. There is no guarantee, to start, that the benefits of growth will be distributed equitably, and there is significant debate within an emerging literature on inequality on that factor's relationship with democratization. Further, there are well-founded concerns that the benefits of growth will find their way into the hands of the autocrat, who can use them to fund a repressive apparatus, buy support, or coopt opponents. Of course, economic growth might also allow the autocrat to further legitimize the dictatorial regime.

2.4.5. International Factors

As political, social, and economic links between countries deepen and proliferate, countries' political trajectories are increasingly likely to be affected deeply by international forces. The 20th century made the importance of these relationships clear. The ebbing of what Huntington called the "first wave" occurred in the inter-war years, as democratic experiments in places such as Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Japan collapsed, and nativist elements gained popularity elsewhere; these changes were clearly driven by a global economic downturn and fascist movements that shared intellectual underpinnings.

The end of World War II and decolonization brought the emergence of the “second wave,” as European countries returned to the democratic fold and lost their colonies in Africa and Asia. The ebbing of this wave was also attributable to international forces, as the emergent superpowers encouraged, or at least acquiesced to, the dismantling of proto-democratic institutions in newly independent states. The importance of international influences was perhaps most noticeable as the “third wave” crested at the end of the 1980s, as authoritarian regimes lost their superpower patrons and pro-democracy popular movements achieved notable successes in Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa.

In subsequent years, actors such as the United States, EU, and developing-world regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and Organization of American States (OAS) have played important, albeit uneven, roles in pushing for democratic reforms. More-powerful actors have used their leverage over and linkages with states with hybrid and authoritarian regimes to encourage political liberalization, as a condition for diplomatic ties, foreign aid, and trade linkages. With regard to the United States, diplomatic engagement with Burma has recently produced real democratic fruit. The EU has used the carrot of membership to encourage democratic reforms and the protection of human rights in places such as Serbia and Turkey, with mixed results, and has recently policed member states, such as Hungary and Poland, for apparent violations of democratic norms. And the AU and OAS have played important roles in opposing extra-constitutional transfers of power in places such as Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Madagascar, and Niger.

Persistence in such efforts will be especially important in coming years, as a number of democracy-monitoring groups have warned of democratic backsliding in many regions. Egypt is a warning that the Arab Spring transitions are not necessarily linear, and countries such as Ecuador, Hungary, Mali, and Thailand warn against the complacency that often sets in when many observers consider a democracy to be “consolidated.” However, major actors seem likely to reprioritize their commitments, away from the promotion and maintenance of democracy overseas, given many populations’ apparent embrace of more-isolationist and autarkic sentiments in times of uncertainty regarding economic and security issues.

2.4.6. Triggering Events

A number of events can occur in dictatorships that increase their probability of transitioning to democracy, though this chance still is relatively low. While continued dictatorship or the establishment of a new autocratic regime is often more likely following a triggering event than is democratization, the chance of democratization is still higher at the time of these events than it would be otherwise. This means that triggering events create opportunities for democratic transitions to occur, however small.

The hypotheses in this theory family imply that where pro-democracy resources can be mobilized quickly, practitioners can leverage the opportunities triggering events create to increase prospects for democratization. Though greater democracy is far from guaranteed following a triggering attempt—and the chances of a new dictatorship being established or a crackdown on regime opponents are very real—triggering events open up a window during which resources might be particularly effective in steering dictatorships toward a path of democratization.

2.4.7. State Capacity

One message of this literature is that state capacity (in a variety of forms) increases the durability of authoritarian regimes. Apart from capacity to extract taxes, greater state strength also appears to lower prospects for political liberalization. Another message is that democratization in strong states is most likely if governments restrain their use of coercion. Importantly, the evidence implies that stronger autocratic states, when they do transition to democracy, are more likely to become stable democracies.

From a policy perspective, the overall message is complex. Interventions could entail strengthening the state, given that state strength improves prospects for democratic stability down the road. This might improve citizens' lives in important ways, by improving security and the delivery of important social services, but it might also make democratization less likely, given that state strength is also associated with more resilient authoritarian rule.

Further complicating matters, scholars lack consensus over whether a strong state is distinct from regime type or an essential component of democracy. Bunce (2003) writes, for example, that a capable state is implied in a definition of democracy, even if the state is not mentioned. Debates exist, in other words, over whether a strong state is a separate entity independent of the political regime or an indicator of democracy.

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