Democratic Transitions

David Epstein, Robert Bates, Jack Goldstone, Ida Kristensen, Sharyn O’Halloran
In the News…

- Building democracy is getting new levels of scrutiny in the popular press
  - Afghanistan
    - Built off existing institutions (loya jirga)
    - Still, no real national government ("warlords")
  - Iraq
    - One justification for war was to establish a democratic government in the Middle East
    - But a long interim gov’t may be needed first
Big Questions

- How do you establish democracy?
- What keeps democratic governments from sliding into autocracy/chaos?
  - “Home-grown” vs. Imported democracy
- How do you get non-violent transitions?
- If democracy = elections, is this even a good thing for developing polities?
  - Zakaria – “Illiberal Democracies”
Institutions vs. institutions

- We have certain outcomes that we want a political system to deliver
  - Policy that reflects public opinion
    - Public officials responsive to their constituents
  - Protection for minorities, esp. ethnic
  - Rule of Law via a fair, efficient court system
  - Uncorrupt bureaucracy

- These are Institutions
  - Really, objectives of the system
Institutions vs. Institutions

- We know little about what institutions can provide these in different settings
  - Parliamentary vs. Presidential systems
  - Federalism and/or corporatism
  - Electoral rules and campaign finance laws
- Like economic institutions in China
- We have some examples of what fully developed, stable democracies look like
  - But how to reach this destination?
This Paper

- Try to look at how countries have democratized in the past
  - Review existing theories
  - Present some new data and methods
  - Look at the results and their implications

- Speculate about how these trends are changing in the 21st Century
  - What, if anything, can the international community do to help?
Quick Peek at the Results

Results

- Modernization theory holds up well
  - Positive income effects at all levels of democratization
  - Also some support for inequality effects

- Casts spotlight on partial democracies
  - Numerous
  - Most volatile
  - Hardest to predict/understand
Modernization Theory

- Lipset (1959) – Money matters
  - Higher income per capita is associated with democratic governance
  - Supported by evidence until...

- Przeworski, et. al. (PACL, 2000)
  - Positive results were due to over-aggregation of data
  - Separate into democracies and all others
    - Nothing predicts transitions up
    - Once up, per capita income of over $4,000 helps keep things stable
Other Theories

  - Transitions are economically based, as they redistribute income from rich to poor
  - Nonlinear impact of inequality on transitions

- Rosendorff (2001)
  - Inequality as well, plus increases in workforce and capital stock make revolutions less likely

  - Inflation & low growth: transitions out of autocracy

- Schmitter, O’Donnell – Consolidation
  - Factors promoting transition could make it fragile
Data: Partial Democracies

- PACL employ a **dichotomous** regime type
  - Democracy if:
    - Chief executive elected
    - Legislature exists and is elected
    - More than one political party
    - At least one successful transition of power
  - Autocracy otherwise
- We employ a **trichotomous** measure, including partial democracy
Distribution of Polity Scores

Polity Score

Fraction

Autocracy
Distribution of Polity Scores

Autocracy

Partial Democ.

Full Democ.
World Democratization Trends, 1955-2000
Regional Democratization Trends, 1955-2000

Africa

Asia

Australia

Europe

North & Central America

South America
## Transition Frequencies

### 1-Year

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## 5-Year

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Transition Frequencies by Type and Year

**Autocracy**

- A→P: 66 obs.
- P→A: 44 obs.

**Partial Dem.**

- P→D: 22 obs.
- D→P: 14 obs.

**Democracy**

- A→D: 25 obs.
- D→A: 16 obs.
Data: Previous Transitions

- Previous attempts at transition may affect success of current attempt

- Is it like:
  - Trying to quite smoking (+); or
  - A sign of structural instability (-)

- Hard to capture this systematically

- We use “Sumdown,” the sum of previous downward Polity movements
  - Example: Turkey, 1955-2000
Illustration of Sumdown Variable for Turkey, 1955-2000

Polity Score

Sumdown

Year

Polity Scale
Data: Inequality

- Plays a big role in many stories, including Acemoglu and Robinson
- Previous measures are rather incomplete
  - Even Denninger and Squire agree with this
- We create a new measure
  - Idea: infant mortality is caused by both health conditions & inequality
  - So regress IM on health correlates and take the residual as a measure of inequality
Infant Mortality Residual vs. Gini Coefficient

[Graph showing the relationship between Infant Mortality Residual and Gini Coefficient, with data points and a fitted line.]
Econometric Approaches

- **Tobit**
  - Traditional regression approach, using full data range
  - But with limits at -10 and 10
- **Markov**
  - Breaks data into three categories: autocracy, partial democracy, full democracy
  - Looks at impact of variables on transition probabilities
- **Duration Analysis**
  - Analyzes length of time until a given transition occurs
Predictions

- Modernization: GDP/capita (+)
- Acemoglu & Robinson: Inequality (-), Inequality^2 (-)
- Rosendorff: Inequality (-), \Delta Workforce (-), \Delta CapitalStock (-)
- Haggard & Kaufmann: GDP growth (+), inflation(-)
- Consolidation: non-monotone hazard
Markov Analysis

GDP/cap

Inequality

Previous Attempts

Autocracy | Partial | Democracy

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Duration Analysis

Question: What prevents newly democratized countries from backsliding?
- Different from the question of what gets them democratic in the first place
- Can ask this for full or partial democracies
  - I.e., most newly democratized nations will start off as partial democracies
- Tricky estimation, since we have repeated events (can democratize more than once)
Graphs by highgdp

Observed: highgdp = 0
Predicted: highgdp = 0

Observed: highgdp = 1
Predicted: highgdp = 1

Analysis time

Survival Probability
Smoothed Hazard Estimate, Adjusted for Per Capita GDP
Conclusion

- Modernization theory holds up well
  - With 3-way dependent variable, income level does predict transitions out of autocracy
  - Helps keep partials from backsliding
- Acemoglu and Robinson get some support
- Focus debate on partial democracies
  - Increasingly common
  - Most volatile
  - Hardest to predict
Markov Analysis

Variable

Probability

Autocracy

Partial Dem.

Full Democracy

Variable