

Identifying Trends in Democratic Erosion

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Executive Summary

The Democratic Erosion capstone project of Texas A&M University conducted research to inform the Fundamental Freedom Fund's Research, Evaluation and Learning agenda. A novel dataset generated insights on four lines of inquiry which aim to aid policymakers in diagnosing the type of governance problem (Themes 1 & 2), recognizing warning signs of erosion (Theme 3), and understanding the determinants of successful resistance to erosion (Theme 4).

The Democratic Erosion (DE) Database:

A dataset created by the Democratic Erosion Project consisting of the precursors, symptoms, and resistance events to democratic erosion in 66 countries between 2007 and 2017. Only countries that, in 2007, were classified as electoral or liberal democracies and had decreased at least 1.5% in their VDEM democracy-index score from 2007 to 2016 are included in the dataset.

- Precursors: Events that seemed to be leading to severe erosion
- Symptoms: Events where erosion had been institutionalized
- Resistance: Reaction events to symptoms

Theme 1: Categorizing Democratic Erosion

There are two major types of erosion, each having two sub-groups. Intentional erosion is where an actor or various actors intentionally breakdown democratic norms and institutions over time. Opportunistic erosion is when a crisis allows an actor to attempt erosion. We used inductive reasoning to create these categories, based on cluster analysis which is a methodology that creates groups from our data based on similarity.

- Intentional subgroups:
 - Calculated: A single actor or party, over an extended period, degenerate institutions to centralize power; and
 - Pluralistic: A variety of uncoordinated actors' break down democratic norms and values to increase their respective own power.
- Opportunistic subgroups:
 - Deep: When an eroding actor can substantially damage democratic institutions and norms during a crisis; and
 - Superficial: Characterized by a glut of precursors and little to no symptoms, this occurs when democracy seems poised to erode but instead returns to its previous status quo.

Theme 2: Strategies of Erosion

Since calculated erosion is the primary focus of policymakers and academics, we use Coppedge's (2017) framework for identifying two distinct strategies of erosion:

1. Horizontal Erosion: Increased concentration of power in one branch of government at the expense of legislative, judiciary, or executive; and
2. Vertical Erosion: Repression of civil liberties (individuals, media, NGOs, etc.)

Using the symptom event codes in the DE database, we classified all countries as suffering from Horizontal, Vertical, or Neither strategy of calculated erosion. Horizontal countries had nearly twice as many symptom events as Vertical countries and higher levels of erosion, overall. We also found:

- Horizontal countries tended to be less democratic; and
- Horizontal countries were less likely to have erosion precursors, but they more likely to have resistance events and at a higher rate of success.

Theme 3: Predictors of Erosion

Interested in better understanding whether current events can help predict future ones, a quantitative analysis of the DE data helps forecast future erosion-related events. We asked which precursors are predictive of symptoms, which symptoms tend to be followed by resistance events, and do these trends vary by erosion type? Panel regression using the DE dataset, GDP data, and data on the initial level of democracy (VDEM) revealed that:

- Four precursors are significantly predictive of symptom occurrence in the next 0-2 years: (1) Extremist/populist parties; (2) increasing control of civil society; (3) media bias; and (4) state violence/abuse;
- Predictive precursors vary by erosion type in a country: in intentional erosion countries, extremist/populist parties and state violence/abuse are predictive of symptoms, while in opportunistic erosion countries, the only statistically significant predictive precursor is media bias;
- Resistance events tend to follow suspension of rules/constitution within 0-2 years. In contrast, curtailing of civil liberties makes resistance less likely; and
- In countries with a stronger initial level of democracy, suspending the rules/constitution is more likely to be followed by a resistance event than in countries with a weak initial level of democracy.

Theme 4: Factors Contributing to Resistance Success

To inform when resistance to democratic erosion is most likely to succeed, we first used secondary sources to code the 100 resistance events in our data as:

- Failed: the specific goals of the resistance event were not met;
- Indeterminate: the event is ongoing or is still unclear;
- Successful- Not Democratic Norms: the event was illegal and/or turned violent;
- Successful- Democratic Norms: the event was legal and/or nonviolent.

Forty-eight percent of all resistance events were classified as successful following democratic norms. A qualitative analysis of cases of resistance in our data confirm existing theories: that greater linkages and leverage between democracy promoters and their partner nation make resistance movements more successful (Levitsky, 2006), that broad-based and long-lived social movements are more likely to succeed (Chenoweth, 2014), and that the more polarized or further away a leader is from its opposition, the more they can erode the constitution without resistance by citizens (Svolik, 2017).

Introduction

The recent rise of autocratic, populist movements around the world has brought renewed interest to the study of democratic backsliding. However, the concept of what constitutes democratic backsliding and how to prevent it remains elusive. Since the end of the Cold War democratic backsliding has taken on different forms (Bermeo, 2016, p. 5). These new forms can be incremental and subtle, making it difficult to predict what countries will suffer backsliding and what countries are merely experiencing tumultuous politics.

In the popular imagination democratic backsliding is marked by sudden and dramatic ruptures in the constitutional order. However, research shows that democratic backsliding rarely manifests in this fashion. Since the end of the Cold War open-ended military coups led by military leaders for the purpose of establishing dictatorships have fallen dramatically (Bermeo, 2016, p.6). Executive coups, unconstitutional seizures of power led by incumbent leaders, have also declined dramatically since the end of the Cold War (Bermeo, 2016, p. 5).

In place of these dramatic seizures of power, a more insidious form of backsliding has taken root. The first is the promissory coup as detailed by Bermeo (2016, p.8). Promissory coups occur when a political faction, sometimes in conjunction with the military, seizes power and ousts an incumbent by framing it as necessary to protect democracy in that country. Sometimes the new leadership will hold elections quickly, as in the case of Honduras in 2009, where elections were held five months after a promissory coup. Other promissory coups return countries to electoral rule much more slowly, such as the Gambia, where elections were held six years after the military seized power.

The most difficult form of democratic backsliding to counter is executive aggrandizement. Executive aggrandizement seeks to slowly extend and enhance the executive's power at the cost of the opposition and other parts of government (Bermeo, 2016, p. 10). The channels that an executive has at their disposal to aggrandize their power are varied. These include referendums, the courts, and constitutional assemblies. The fact that many of these channels are completely legal makes it even more difficult to counter executive aggrandizement.

A final form of democratic backsliding that can take place alongside executive aggrandizement is the strategic manipulation of elections. This form of electoral manipulation involves changing the electoral rules, seizing control of electoral institutions, hampering voter registration, and generally attempting to tilt electoral institutions in favor of an incumbent against their opposition (Bermeo, 2016, p. 13). Most of this backsliding occurs before election day. This means that traditional forms of democratic strengthening such as election monitoring may not be as effective in arresting strategic manipulation of elections.

Executive aggrandizement and strategic manipulation of elections can both be considered “stealth authoritarianism,” a term coined by Ozan Varal. Stealth authoritarianism involves the use of legal mechanisms of a democracy for undemocratic ends (Varal, 2015, p. 1684). It reduces the likelihood of peaceful transitions of power by severely raising the costs of unseating an incumbent leader. Stealth authoritarianism is difficult to detect because it hides undemocratic practices by masking them under a veneer of legality. While democracy may be eroding in a

country, this erosion is carried out through perfectly legal channels. Much of this erosion depends on discretion given to actors in a democracy (Varal, 2015, p. 1720). When the executive is granted discretion in exercising their constitutional powers, the door's open for selective enforcement of laws against one's political opponents, a key tool in the executive aggrandizer's toolbox.

Since executive aggrandizement, electoral manipulation, and stealth authoritarianism are all carried out under legal means, existing democracy promotion programs have a challenging time detecting these forms of democratic erosion. The current "checklist" structure of many democracy promotion programs means that these programs are best suited for detecting blatant breaks with constitutional democracy but are less suited to noticing the gradual, incremental nature of modern stealth authoritarianism (Varal, 2015, p. 1729).

Stealth authoritarianism is on display in dozens of countries across the world. From Viktor Orban's attempts at sidelining the opposition and creating a competitive autocracy in Hungary to Daniel Ortega's strategic manipulation of elections in Nicaragua, leaders all over the world have discovered that democratic backsliding allows them to expand their power and current forms of democratic promotion are of limited use in countering these actions.

In this capstone we provide quantitative and qualitative tools to better understand, predict, and combat democratic erosion around the world. We will classify the diverse types of democratic erosion that we observe occurring as well as the strategies that stealth authoritarians and other actors use to erode democracy. We apply quantitative tools to data to determine what factors predict democratic erosion in a country. Last, we examine what makes resistance to democratic erosion successful and how Western countries can help.

The purpose of this capstone is to provide policymakers with tools to counteract the democratic erosion that is occurring at an alarming rate around the world. Would-be autocrats have discovered that the traditional forms of democratic backsliding they employed during the Cold War are no longer feasible due to democratic norms becoming more consolidated in the international system. However, by eroding democracy gradually they can extend their power and make peaceful transitions of power less likely. Existing democratic promotion programs are of limited use in detecting and counteracting stealth authoritarians. Through this capstone we hope to contribute a quantitative and qualitative framework that can be used to describe, detect, and counter stealth authoritarianism in the future.

The Democratic Erosion Database

In 2018, the Bush School of Government & Public Service Master of International Affairs Capstone Team produced an event dataset of the precursors and symptoms of, and resistance to, democratic backsliding. This section will include a description of the Democratic Erosion Database indicators and selection criteria of the countries included in the database, as well as, the results of the internal and external consistency validation that we performed on our indicators. The data is publicly available at <http://democratic-erosion.com/event-dataset/>.

The dataset covered over 800 events from 66 country case studies. The target period was from 2007 to 2016. The events coded in the dataset were based on standardized country case studies written by about 150 students enrolled in a Democratic Erosion course across 19 partner universities.

The countries included were identified as potential backsliders. The identification consisted on countries that, in 2007, were classified as electoral or liberal democracies according to the VDEM regimes in the world index and that had decreased at least 1.5% in VDEM liberal democracy index from 2007 to 2016.

Considering that there is a logical chain of action and reaction between events in the erosion process, last year's graduate Bush School students categorized events using the following analytical framework.

- Precursors: events that seemed to be leading to severe erosion
- Symptoms: events where erosion had been institutionalized
- Resistance: the antithesis of the symptoms

In addition, last year's graduate Bush School students provided a subjective erosion level rating by country on a five-point scale (hereafter: 'DE Rating'):

- 0: No backsliding, and weak threat of future backsliding
- 1: There are precursors to backsliding, e.g. the rise of extremist parties, but erosion of democratic institutions has not yet taken place
- 2: There is weak erosion of democratic institutions, perhaps the institutions being eroded are not critical for the functioning of democracy
- 3: There is moderate erosion of democratic institutions
- 4: There is severe erosion of democratic institutions; it is unclear whether democracy will recover

Validating the DE Indicators

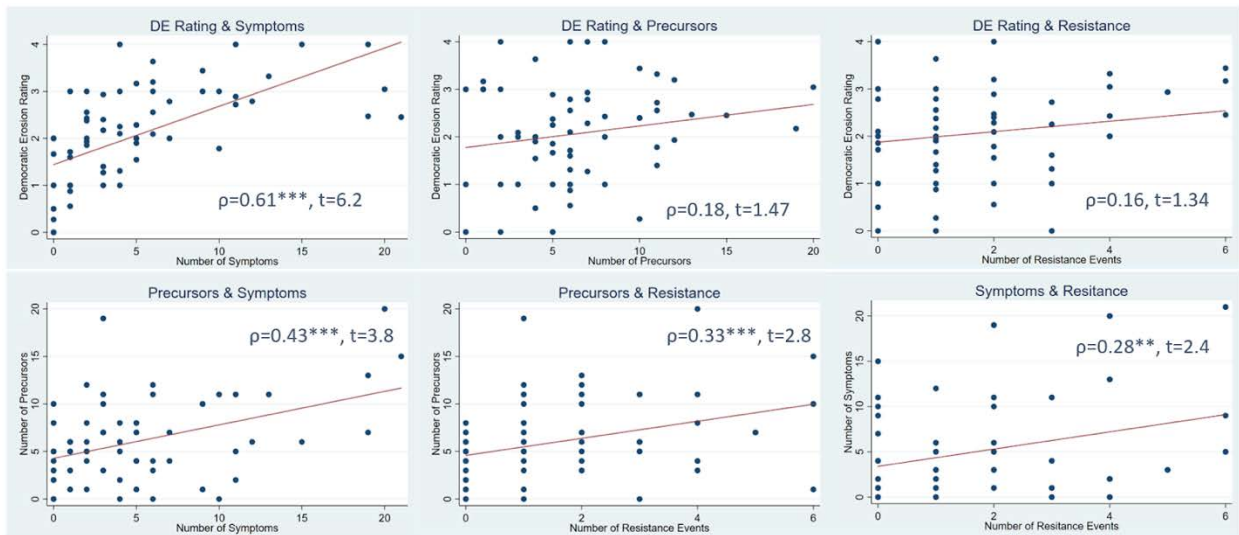
This section provides evidence of our data internal and external consistency. We calculated the correlation of the DE indicators by country (DE Rating, number of precursors,

number of symptoms and number of resistance events) within each other and with external democracy indicators (V-Dem’s Liberal Democracy Index, Polity V’s Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, and Freedom House’s Aggregate Freedom Score).

Internal Validation

In our database, we found a positive and significant correlation between the DE Rating and the number of symptoms, which was expected considering that the number of symptoms reflects how institutionalized is the erosion in a given country. We also found a positive and significant correlation between the three categories of events; thus, having more of one type of event is associated with having more of the other types. Figure 1.1 presents the scatterplots and the correlation coefficient.

Figure 1.1: DE Rating and Number of Events

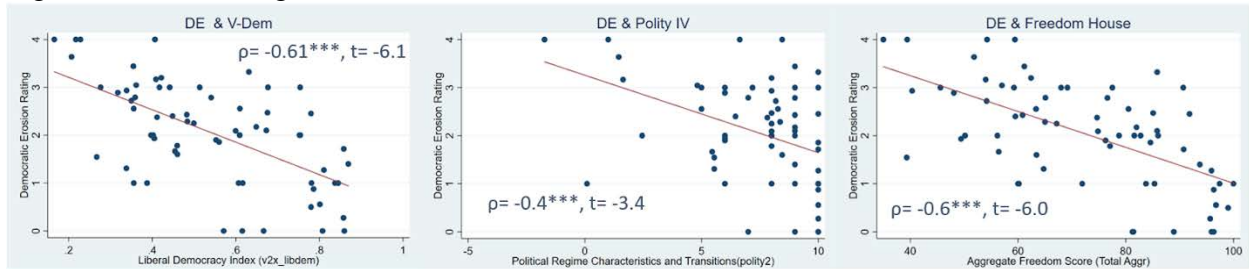


*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

External Validation

We compared our overall scale of erosion with three different external indicators that reflect the quality of democracy. Since we have just one DE Rating by country, we calculated the country average of the external indicators from 2007 to the most recent period available. As expected, we found a negative and significant correlation between our DE Rating indicator and the Liberal Democracy Index, Polity 2, and the Aggregate Freedom Score). The negative correlation provides evidence that higher rate in the overall erosion is associated with lower values for the quality of democracy.

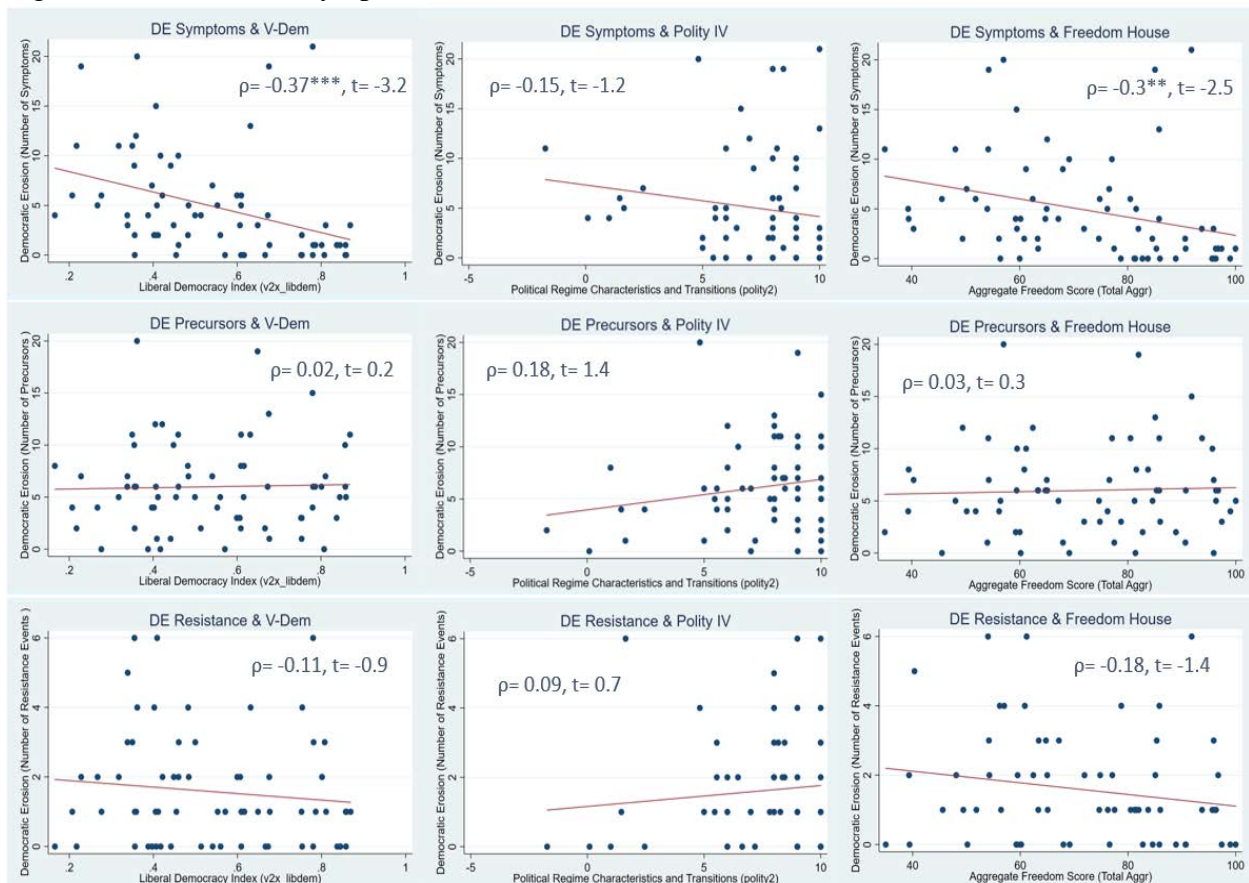
Figure 1.2: DE Rating and External Indicators



*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

We also compared the number of precursors, symptoms and resistance events with the external indicators as shown in Figure 1.3. We found a negative significant correlation between the number of symptoms and both the Liberal Democracy Index and the Aggregate Freedom Score. Regarding the number of precursors and resistance events, we cannot reject that there is no correlation. This result suggests that the external indicators react to more severe events of erosion.

Figure 1.3: Number of Symptoms and External Indicators

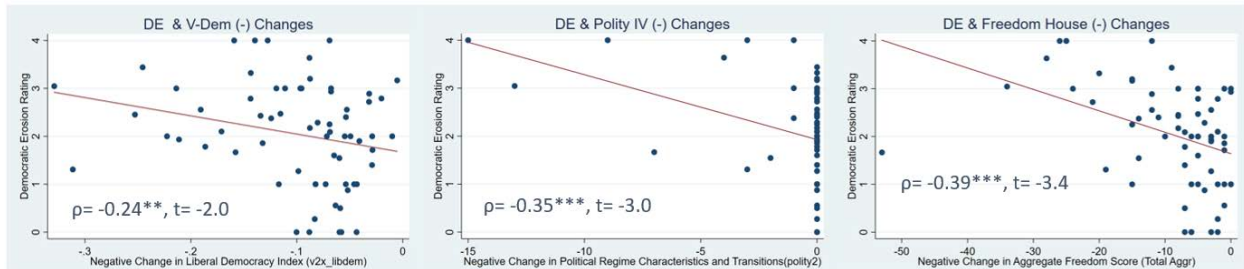


*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

In addition to the average of external indicators, we wanted to also compare changes in those indicators. First, we added positive and negative changes by country since 2007 and correlated that with the DE Rating and the number of symptoms. Although we did not find a significant correlation between the DE Rating and net negative changes, we did find that having more symptoms was correlated with net negative changes in the Liberal Democracy Index and the Aggregate Freedom Score.

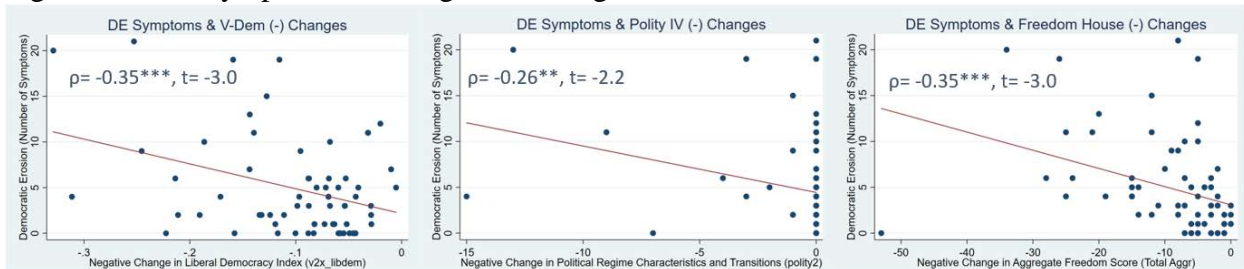
Second, we added just the negative changes by country since 2007 and correlated that with the DE Rating and the number of symptoms. Figure 1.4 and 1.5 present the scatterplots and the correlation coefficient for the DE Rating and number of symptoms, respectively.

Figure 1.4: DE Rating and Negative Changes in External Indicators



*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Figure 1.5: DE Symptoms and Negative Changes in External Indicators



*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

We found a negative and significant correlation between the three external indicators. Since our indicators measure the erosion of democracy, we expected the decline in the quality of democracy captured by external indicators to be negative and significant.

DE-FFF Overlap Findings

The DE dataset was cross-examined with a list of countries where the FFF has recently led active efforts to combat erosion. The FFF list had 64 countries compared to the DE database’s 67 countries. Twenty-five countries were in both the FFF list and the DE database and will be referred to as “overlap” countries. Twenty-nine of the countries on the FFF list were not originally included in the DE database because they were not classified as an electoral or liberal democracy in VDEM’s Regimes in the World rating during the 10-year study period, which is a requirement for entry in the DE database. The 10 other FFF countries were originally excluded from the first iteration of the DE database because they either did not erode sufficiently in the DE database timeline of inquiry (2006-2017), are micro-states, or were erroneously excluded from the DE database but will be included in the upcoming, 2nd iteration) forthcoming second version of the dataset. Regionally, African countries were more likely to be only on the FFF list, while South American and western European countries were more likely to be only in the DE database.

Given that the FFF list countries were sometimes autocratic regimes, it is not surprising that the DE rating of erosion was higher (more severe) in overlap countries and exhibited lower democracy scores (worse) on the VDEM liberal democracy index and Polity2 ratings (Table 1.1, below).

Table 1.1: DE Rating Compared to VDEM and Polity Ratings

Variable (2007-16)	DE-only countries	DE-FFF Overlap	FFF-only countries
Dem. Erosion Rating	1.73**	2.57**	N/A
VDEM Dem. Score	.611**	.429**	.239**
Polity2 (-10 to 10)	7.48*	6.22*	1.23**

Significance levels for two-tailed t-tests: *=0.1; **=0.01

Theme 1: Classifying Erosion

In this section, we will give a preview of our democratic erosion framework, why it is useful, the methodology which allowed us to inductively create the framework, and the complete definitions of and examples for these classifications.

The Classic Definition of Democratic Backsliding

“The state-led debilitation or elimination of the political institutions sustaining an existing democracy - Nancy Bermeo” (Bermeo, 2016).

Most current literature on democratic backsliding focuses on intentional and calculated erosion or the intentional degradation of a democracy by an actor or party with potentially authoritarian aspirations, as demonstrated above by Nancy Bermeo’s definition of democratic backsliding. In *“Stealth Authoritarianism”* (Varol, 2015) and *“The Pipe Dream of Undemocratic Liberalism”* (Berman, 2017), other authors follow this definition of democratic erosion. The works of Norris (2017) and Lust & Waldner (2015) are useful in identifying what democratic erosion is when undertaken in a calculated fashion over an extended period. However, not every case of democratic weakening fits within that category. In the below analysis, we identify three categories of “false positive” cases of democratic erosion, or cases where we might observe some of the same indicators of democratic backsliding but where the definition of intentional and calculated erosion is not appropriate. If an actor misdiagnoses the type of erosion happening in a state, they may misallocate resources to sectors or programs that will not effectively combat erosion. The strategies to reverse or resist democratic backsliding vary; those strategies which are held to work against a form of calculated, intentional erosion may not work in cases of opportunistic or pluralistic erosion, which we define below.

First, we present a brief overview of the categories of democratic erosion that will be further explained in the section entitled: **Classifications: Definitions and Examples**. There are two major types of erosion, each having two sub-groups. Intentional erosion is where an actor or various actors intentionally breakdown democratic norms and institutions over time. Opportunistic erosion is when a crisis allows an actor to attempt erosion. We used inductive reasoning to create these categories, based on cluster analysis which is a methodology that creates groups from our data based on similarity.

The final categories and subcategories of democratic erosion derived from our inductive analysis are illustrated in Figure 2.1 and defined briefly here. W

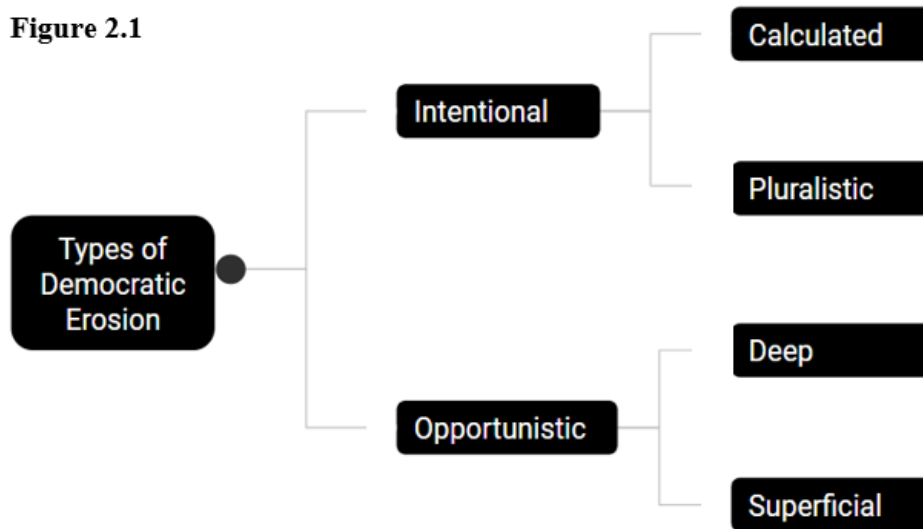
Intentional subgroups:

- Calculated: A single actor or party, over an extended period, degenerate institutions to centralize power; and
- Pluralistic: A variety of uncoordinated actors’ break down democratic norms and values to increase their respective own power.

Opportunistic subgroups:

- Deep: When an eroding actor can substantially damage democratic institutions and norms during a crisis; and
- Superficial: Characterized by a glut of precursors and little to no symptoms, this occurs when democracy seems poised to erode but instead returns to its previous status quo.

Figure 2.1



The standard definition of democratic erosion in the literature best resembles our category of Calculated Erosion, a subgroup of Intentional erosion. Thus, we consider the other three categories -- the two subgroups of Opportunistic erosion, Superficial and Deep, and the other subgroup of Intentional erosion, Pluralistic -- as potential false positives. Given that countries in these categories exhibit some of the same events and indicators as countries experiencing calculated erosion, a policymaker or researcher risks assigning the country an incorrect diagnosis. Since the patterns of events and motivations of actors are qualitatively different, these countries should be recognized as distinct and policies to rectify backsliding in these “false positive” countries should likely differ as well.

Identifying Erosion Types: Methodology

To identify different erosion patterns inductively, we first employed cluster analysis using the DE data. Cluster analysis groups units (in this case, countries) together based on their shared characteristics. Once similar countries are identified, one can examine these clusters qualitatively to identify similarities and differences and generate hypotheses regarding patterns of erosion.

To conduct cluster analysis, we created a variable for each of the 48 event types (25 precursor types, 13 symptom types, and 10 resistance types). We then assigned each country a value of 1 for a given event variable if the event had occurred at any point in the 2007-2018 period; otherwise, we assigned a value of 0. This produced a dataset with an event profile for each country. An extract of this dataset is illustrated in Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Sample of Dataset for Cluster Analysis

Country	Corruption	Economic shocks	Curtailing civil liberties	Media Repression	Repression of Opposition	Nonviolent Protest
Argentina	1	1	0	1	0	0
Austria	0	1	1	0	0	0
Bangladesh	0	0	0	0	1	1
Benin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bolivia	0	0	1	1	1	0

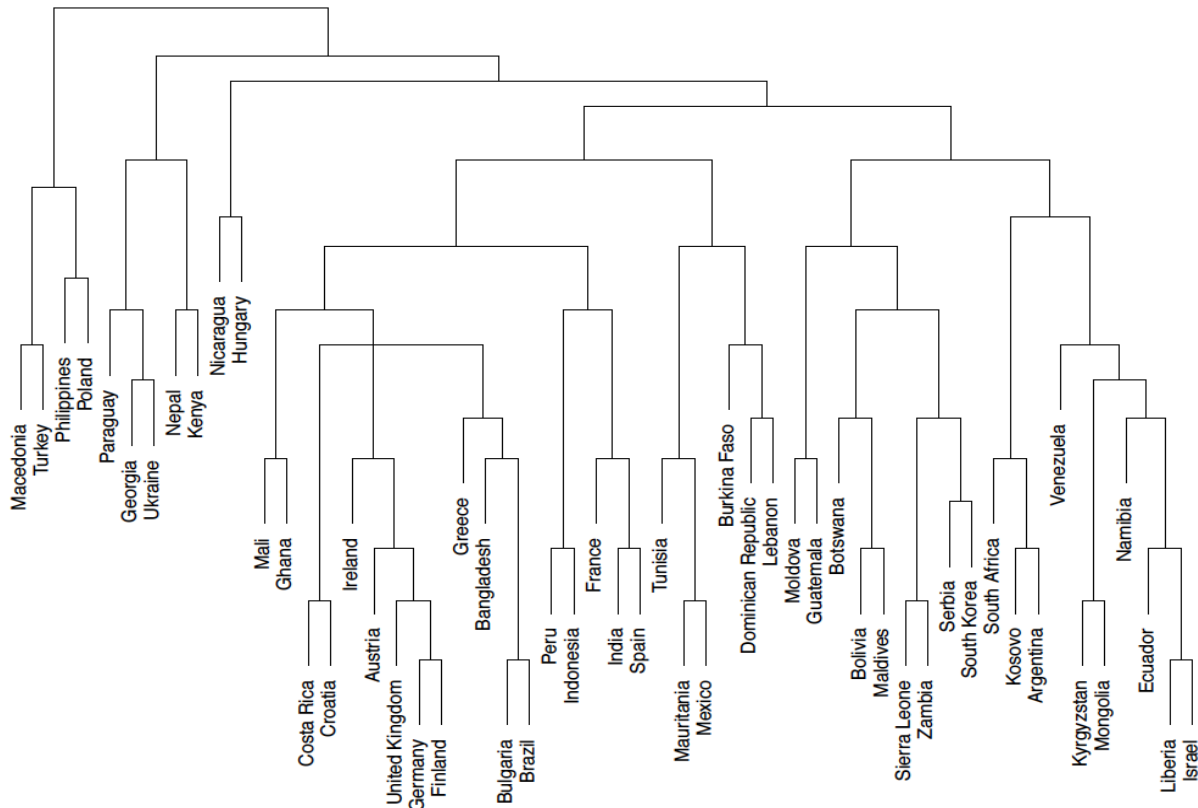
We used the statistical program R to generate clusters of countries based on these event profiles. We found, however, that countries with 0 values for almost all events were identified as most similar to each other, simply because of their shared scarcity of events. Since we were interested in identifying patterns of erosion, we needed to identify countries which shared several erosion events.

To address this, we eliminated from the dataset event types (variables) for which three or fewer countries experienced the event. This eliminated 11 categories (6 precursor types, 3 symptom types, and 3 resistance types), leaving us with 37 event types. Additionally, we eliminated countries with three or fewer event types (of the restricted set of 37 types). This dropped 12 countries from the dataset, leaving us with 54 countries. (The dropped countries were Benin, Chile, Taiwan, Malawi, Montenegro, Panama, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Suriname, Tanzania, and Uruguay).

We then conducted a new cluster analysis using this restricted group of countries and event types. The result is shown in Figure 2.2. To produce this hierarchical cluster, known as a dendrogram, the statistical program uses the event profiles to find the two countries that are most

similar. It then identifies the country most similar to the average of the first two countries. It continues in this way, working from bottom to top, until all countries are incorporated into the cluster. (For this process, we used the complete linkage method in R.) Thus, the bottom-most countries are the most similar, while the top-most countries are most dissimilar. Some of the most similar pairs are identified below. We then conducted qualitative analysis of these pairs to identify erosion types, as will be discussed in the next section.

Figure 2.2: Hierarchical Country Cluster



Creating the Classifications

Using the dendrogram to indicate the most similar country clusters, the capstone divided pairings into case studies to be analyzed qualitatively. Some country pairings were obvious in that they shared a geographic and political history while others such as South Korea and Serbia came from different regions and experienced a different degree of erosion. Asking what made these countries similar qualitatively was the beginning of creating a set of identifiable characteristics for Calculated erosion. Each state had a primary actor responsible for eroding democracy over the course of at least 5 years.

The distinction between Calculated and Opportunistic erosion was motivated by observing Opportunistic erosion in the case study of Sierra Leone. There a vast majority of erosion symptoms occurred during a single two-year period when Ebola was ravaged the

country. During the two-year period Ebola was active in Sierra Leone, almost all symptoms were related to combating erosion or taking advantage of the crisis to strengthen the political power of the ruling party. Creating the definition for Opportunistic erosion focused on a singular event or crisis which triggers a variety of erosion symptoms. This crisis may vary depend on cultural context; however, there should be minimal precursors and symptoms of erosion prior to this crisis.

We further divided Opportunistic erosion into two subgroups. This was due to both types happening in response to a crisis, but one saw symptoms develop while the other did not. The crisis, or opportunity, was the key element to democratic erosion in these cases. Creation of the designation “Superficial” erosion came first, where there is an opportunity for erosion to occur but where few or no symptoms follow the precursors. The case cluster of Austria, Finland, Germany, the UK, and Ireland led directly to the creation of this classification. The second subtype is Deep opportunistic erosion, where precursors and symptoms both occur during or following a crisis. This category emerged with the analysis of the Sierra Leone paired case study. Sierra Leone experienced severe erosion over a brief period due to an Ebola outbreak as described above. However, unlike in Superficial erosion, Deep opportunistic erosion does lasting damage to democratic institutions and civil rights, even if erosion may halt after the crisis ends.

Calculated erosion came about when trying to define the obverse of Opportunistic erosion. At first Calculated erosion was simply erosion that occurred over an extended period with a variety of precursors and symptoms as seen in South Korea, Turkey, Venezuela, and Serbia. This period was chosen to be over at least 5 years to avoid being specific to a singular crisis period. While multiple crises may occur over 5 years, continued erosion throughout all these crises is most likely calculated by a particular actor.

Then, we noticed a trend that most countries with calculated erosion were primarily being eroded by a singular actor. This could be a political party, military, or branch of government. In each scenario, a singular actor took advantage of precursors and crises to erode democracy in their favor. After an extended period of erosion, actors accelerated erosion to take power more quickly before being challenged by other actors. This created the definition of Calculated erosion which is that there must be a singular driving actor and erosion must occur over the course of at least 5 years. A hypothesis for this definition is that erosion will accelerate the longer the primary driver stays in power. Effectively, the longer the eroding actor stays in power the more frequently symptoms will occur.

The category of Pluralistic Erosion emerged in response to the observation that some countries had multiple actors all working to erode democracy in their favor. It did not fit into the calculated erosion category because a wide range of power centers were working without coordination to erode democracy rather than a singular actor trying to centralize power for itself. No individual case study led to the creation of this classification, rather it was the qualitative differences between these and calculated which forced its creation.

While every country in the database was analyzed, not all could be placed in this framework. This was due to insufficient evidence within the DE database to make a distinction. 34/66 countries were designated with a classification. The full list is available in Appendix 1.

Classifications: Definitions and Examples

This section is devoted to defining and providing examples for the distinct types of erosion, specifically, Intentional and Opportunistic Erosion and their subgroups. It also provides country cases which exemplify each form erosion and describes in which ways they are affected by erosion.

Intentional erosion is when actors are deliberately eroding democracy for their own benefit. This category is subdivided into Calculated and Pluralistic erosion, depending on the number of actors working to erode democracy. Intentional erosion will take advantage of opportunities to accelerate erosion but will not be started by these crises.

Calculated erosion specifically sees a government or party testing the boundaries of a democratic system. Whether this is through executive aggrandizement or curtailing civil liberties, these factions test the democratic system to see where it is weak. Calculated erosion will be characterized by a variety of precursors and symptoms which continue despite resistance events. This trend will go on for a period, which may change due to context, and be followed by a flood of erosion symptoms once the principle-eroding actor is confident erosion will end in their favor. The normal indicator is that erosion occurs over the course of 5 years, primarily executed by a singular actor or party. Calculated erosion significantly targets weaker democratic countries, or countries with a shorter history of democracy. This allows aspiring authoritarians to damage institutions and seize power, because checks, balances, and institutional norms are still not firmly established within society more significantly. A hypothesis for this definition is that erosion will accelerate the longer the primary driver stays in power. Effectively, the longer the eroding actor stays in power the more frequently symptoms will occur.

An example of this would be Hungary's governing party consolidating power over civil liberties and media under the government. The party is confident it will maintain control of the government despite any resistance or election (Miklos et al., 2015). Another example of this is in Turkey, where President Erdogan and the AKP actively violated democratic norms and institutions to strengthen their position and erode their chances of losing power (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). Even though the crisis of the 2016 military coup aided Erdogan in solidifying power, the AKP and Erdogan were actively eroding democracy in their favor prior to the crisis.

Pluralistic erosion is when multiple sectors of society actively encourage erosion of democracy. It is not a calculated attack on democratic norms and freedoms by an actor or set of actors, but rather a variety of power centers trying to achieve dominance by undermining democratic norms. Examples of Pluralistic erosion are Greece and Mexico, where multiple power centers are eroding democracy along ethnic lines to bolster their own power. In Greece it is a combination of citizen attitudes and parliamentary forces eroding governance to satiate their own greed. Roughly 80 percent of Greek people are willing to defraud the government for benefits they are not entitled to, and 60% regularly evade taxes (Azariadis and Ioannides,

2014). No one major party or actor is pursuing corruption, rather a majority of society itself is actively eroding democracy and government capabilities for personal gain. In Mexico, it is the governmental overreach to fight the drug cartels, the massive government corruption, and overall competition between the cartels and multiple political parties in the government for power. A majority of territories cartels compete for drug routes and enforce their own laws. This competition for sovereignty over territory erodes the power of the democratic government in Mexico. The massive corruption within the Mexican government, as coded in our database and widely available via open source data, shows that ignoring of democratic rules and norms takes place at all levels of society. From the cartels to the President, no authority respects democratic norms and institutions (Semple and Malkin, 2019).

Opportunistic erosion is harder to predict, because the events which trigger it are varied by country and culture. An opportunistic event which leads to a flood of democratic erosion may not cause the same result from one country to another. Indicators of opportunistic erosion could be a glut of precursors and resistance events, but few symptoms. Observing a leading party's character, prominent political figures or the viability of extremist/populist can indicate whether a country is primed for opportunistic erosion. There are two types of opportunistic erosion, superficial and deep erosion. **Superficial erosion** is where a country experiences a glut of precursors due to a crisis and appears likely to suffer erosion, but no symptoms occur. After the opportunity passes, the country will likely return to its pre-crisis norm. **Deep erosion** occurs when an actor takes advantage of a crisis and successfully manages to erode democracy. While symptoms may end at the end of the crisis, the actor has dealt damage to democratic norms and institutions.

An example of **Deep** erosion is Sierra Leone, where the Ebola Outbreak provided the government with significant chances to erode democratic institutions. The government of Sierra Leone began attacking freedoms during the crisis, despite very few precursors and symptoms occurring prior to the Ebola outbreak. After the Ebola outbreak ended in 2015, all symptoms taper off as well. In summary, the outbreak provided an opportunity for erosion, but following the outbreak, erosion ended as the government was unable to find a valid reason to continue to control or change society. A major problem with studying deep erosion is the overall lack of cases. Sierra Leone is the clearest example, but there is only one other, Spain. However, due to the variant nature of this case, it does deserve its own category. It is highly likely that in weaker democracies who lack resilient democratic institutions will suffer from this erosion during crisis.

Superficial erosion is widely seen throughout Europe and in developed countries. Examples of this include Germany, the UK, Finland, and Ireland. Specifically, in the UK, there are a plethora of precursors such as polarization, extremist parties, and a refugee crisis. This culminated into a vote on Brexit, which entailed the UK leaving the EU. However, this vote is currently being postponed and potentially redone via referendum. This would return the UK to the status quo with no major symptoms of erosion lasting past the current crisis.

Economic and Institutional Bases of Erosion

The economic and regional setting matters just as much as the drivers of erosion, as features of the context create constraints on the opportunity to erode democracy. In settings with

weaker institutional checks, there are always opportunities to erode democracy, whereas in systems with strong institutional checks, only crises provide the opportunity to erode. This may be why Opportunistic, specifically Superficial, erosion occurs mainly in Western Europe and developed countries. It also suggests why Intentional, both Calculated and Pluralistic, erosion is more likely to occur in weaker democratic systems across the globe. There is not a need for a specific opportunity for erosion because weak institutional checks and balances enable actors to take advantage of those weaknesses at any time.

Theme 1 Takeaways

In **Theme 1: Categorizing Erosion**, we find that Calculated erosion is by far the most common of all types of erosion. It is a global phenomenon which strikes at weaker democracies, where it does not need a distinct opportunity because there are always institutional weaknesses an aspiring authoritarian can exploit. Opportunistic erosion, namely Superficial erosion, occurs when there is a crisis an aspiring authoritarian may exploit to erode democratic institutions, because normally there is no way to erode the robust democratic institutions in Superficial erosion countries. These differences generate the false positive categories of erosion, or the potentially misdiagnosed cases of the common conception of calculated democratic erosion. Addressing Superficial, Pluralistic, or Deep erosion using the same strategies as Calculated may result in failure of internal or external resistance to democratic erosion.

Theme 2: Strategies of Erosion

After identifying what is and is not calculated democratic erosion (Theme 1), we sought to further analyze strategies of calculated erosion – the type of erosion usually referred to in academic literature and of primary concern for policymakers. By assigning the countries experiencing calculated erosion to distinct strategies, we will be able to see if the profiles of these countries differ significantly enough to provide a roadmap for policymakers looking to identify traits and trends for a country experiencing calculated erosion.

We focus on two distinct strategies of calculated erosion: horizontal and vertical (Coppedge, 2017). Horizontal erosion is the increased concentration of power within the executive, i.e., executive aggrandizement (Bermeo, 2016), at the expense of the judiciary and/or legislative branches. Vertical erosion, which Coppedge defines as a reformulation of O'Donnell's (1994) "delegative democracy," is the reduction in civil liberties of individuals or non-government bodies (e.g. the media, NGOs, certain race/ethnicities). The next section will discuss the coding methodology for horizontal and vertical erosion by country.

Coding of Horizontal and Vertical Strategies

The horizontal and vertical strategies of erosion were coded country by country using the symptom event codes found in the DE database. In the DE database, symptom events are grouped into three categories: "reduction in horizontal accountability," "reduction in vertical accountability," and "other." These categories formed the basis of the coding the erosion strategy of every country in the DE database into the mutually exclusive categories of "horizontal," "vertical," and "neither":

- A country was coded as exhibiting horizontal erosion if it had any symptom under the category "reduction in horizontal accountability."
- A country was coded as exhibiting vertical erosion if it had any symptom under the category "reduction in vertical accountability" and no symptoms under "reduction in horizontal accountability."
- A country was coded as exhibiting neither horizontal nor vertical erosion if it only had symptoms under the category "other," or if it had no symptoms of erosion.

The low threshold for being classified as "horizontal" is a result of there being fewer instances of "reduction in horizontal accountability" symptom events in the DE database compared to "reduction in vertical accountability" symptom events. Since horizontal erosion events are perceived as more serious, widespread occurrences such as suspension of the constitution, the classification threshold was low to capture country profiles and trends that have exhibited any horizontal erosion. Most horizontal countries also had vertical erosion symptoms; in fact, most horizontal countries had many more vertical events than horizontal events. Therefore, a more specific explanation of the horizontal strategy categorization is that countries

coded as horizontal have the ability and motivation to erode horizontally, not that these countries are primarily or exclusively eroding by horizontal events.

The result of this classification scheme was 31 horizontal countries, 21 vertical countries, and 14 countries falling into neither category. Of the 14 “neither” countries, only Ireland had a symptom of erosion (because Ireland’s only symptom was classified as “other”), while the rest had precursors and/or resistance events but no symptom events (countries listed in Appendix 2).

Patterns of Horizontal vs. Vertical Erosion

Coppedge (2017) disaggregated erosion into two distinct types: one that more of a drop in electoral rights and individual liberties (vertical erosion) and another that saw a decrease in government institutions because of executive aggrandizement (horizontal erosion). Coppedge’s main conclusion was that corruption is more prevalent in countries where the horizontal erosion strategy is observed. The DE dataset does have a precursor event code for corruption; however, this only captures major media events of observed erosion. In the DE dataset, vertical erosion countries saw equivalent amounts of corruption as horizontal erosion countries according to the existence of this corruption event code.

Looking at the summary statistics (Table 3.1), even with the low threshold to be classified as a horizontal erosion country (having one horizontal erosion symptom, see coding methodology), there were significant differences in horizontally and vertically classified countries in the DE dataset. Horizontal countries had higher DE ratings (more severe erosion), lower VDEM liberal democracy index scores (less democratic regimes), and more than double the number of erosion symptoms as their vertical counterparts. “Neither” countries showed the least amount of erosion and had the highest democracy rating.

Table 3.1: Democracy Ratings by Country Type

Variable	Horizontal Erosion (31 countries)	Vertical Erosion (21 countries)	Neither Type (14 countries)
DE rating	2.60	2.07	0.79
Avg. # Erosion Symptoms (SD)	7.87 (6.1)	3.71 (2.2)	0.07 (.27)
VDEM 2007	.463	.580	.683
VDEM mean (2007-2016)	.462	.570	.679
Years of Backsliding	4.29	4.33	3.93

Resistance Events by Strategy of Erosion

The distribution of resistance events by strategy of erosion shows that horizontal countries had more resistance events (Figure 3.2). However, as noted above, horizontal countries had more symptoms, which is correlated with having more resistance events. We thus standardize the number of resistance events by number of symptoms to make the analysis more comparable. Comparing number of resistance events by symptom demonstrates that even with this correction, horizontal countries are still more likely to exhibit resistance to erosion than vertical countries (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2: Share of Resistance Events by Type of Erosion

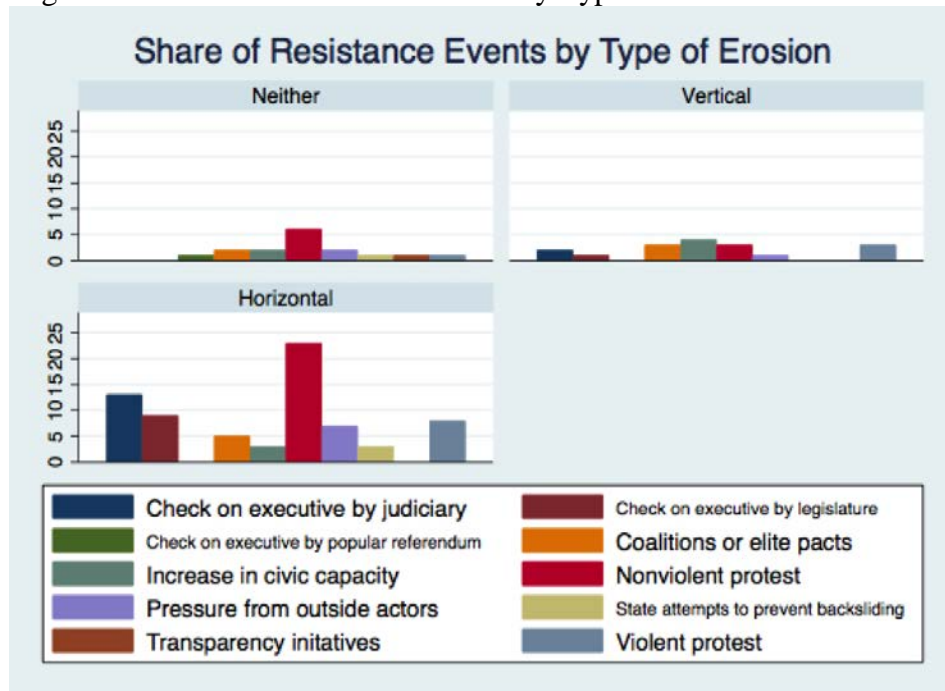


Figure 3.3: Weighted Resistance Events by Type of Erosion

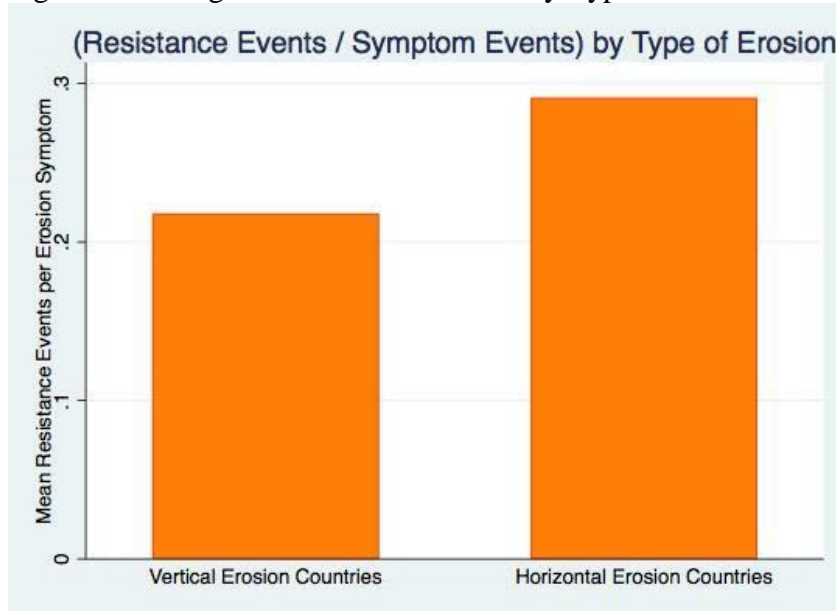
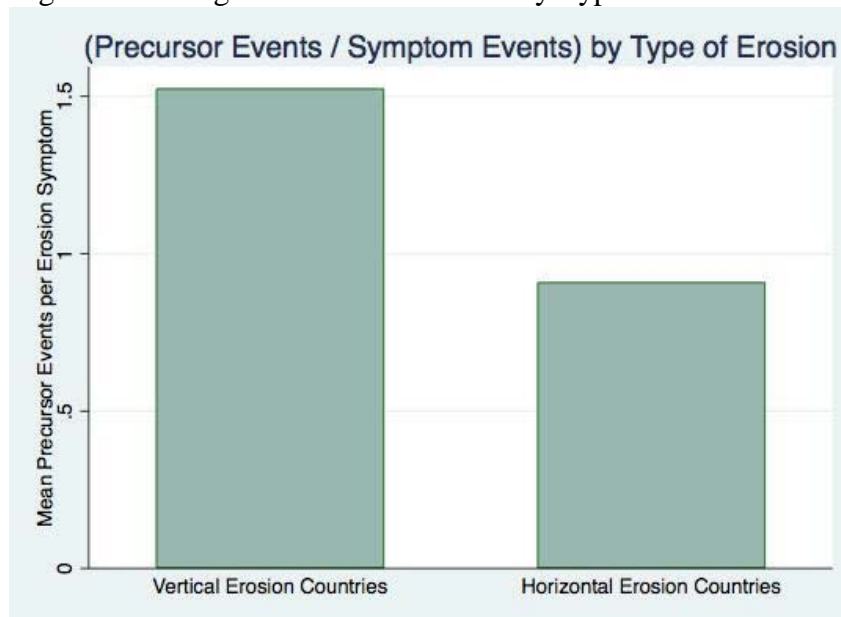


Figure 3.4 graphs the ratio of precursor events to symptom events by erosion type. The graph illustrates that vertical countries saw more precursor events per symptom, but horizontal countries saw more resistance events per symptom.

Figure 3.4: Weighted Precursor Events by Type of Erosion

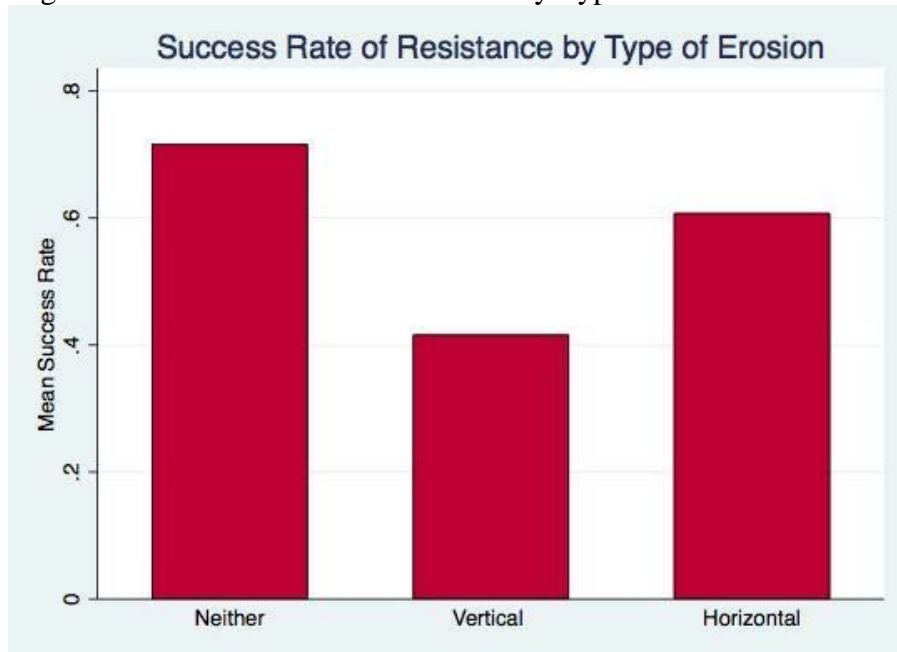


One interpretation of these results is that horizontal events are more salient and produce common knowledge, i.e. produce the kind of knowledge where everyone knows that everyone

else knows that something happened. This kind of knowledge has been shown to facilitate coordination (Chwe, 2001). For example, the country’s populace knows when the constitution has been suspended and a public signal is likely to create common knowledge such that everyone knows that everyone else knows about this. By contrast, when media outlets are being targeted or specific civil societies groups repressed, this may not be officially known. Therefore, horizontal symptoms should be easier to organize resistance events around. In addition, horizontal events often present a greater threat to the democratic future of a country and may increase resistance likelihood because of this perceived threat to democratic values in a country.

Using the supplementary DE database categorizing resistance events by their success rate (see Theme 4), horizontal countries are shown to have a higher rate of success than vertical countries (Figure 3.5), reaffirming the interpretation that citizens resist at a higher rate in horizontally categorized countries due to the salience and perceived threat of horizontal erosion events, which translates to more successful resistance efforts as well.

Figure 3.5: Success Rate of Resistance by Type of Erosion



Theme 2 Conclusions

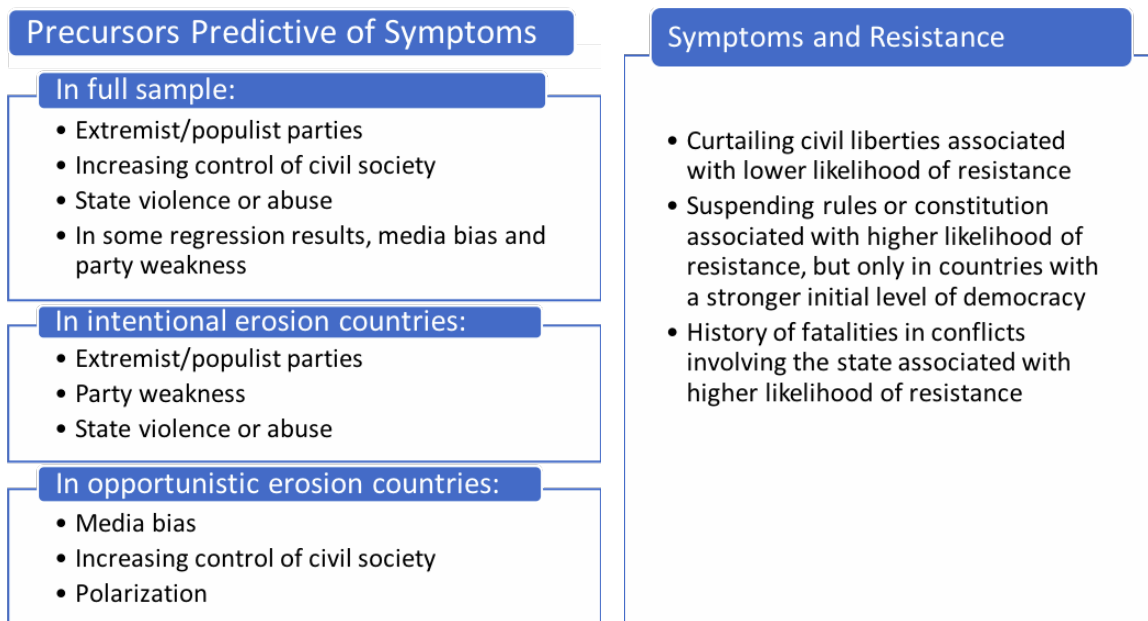
Horizontal erosion is usually seen as more dangerous to democracies than vertical erosion strategies. However, horizontal countries, though they were more likely to occur in less democratic places, did not see higher decreases of democracy overall, even though erosion rates were higher as seen by their DE erosion rating (Figure 3.1, above). The lack of a more significant democratic decrease over time in horizontal countries may be due to the increased chances of resistance to occur at a higher rate of success, which can counter the anti-democratic effects of these horizontal erosion events.

For policymakers, the ability to identify a country as using a strategy of horizontal erosion can motivate additional resources to support resistance efforts, which are more likely to occur and be successful than erosion countries without horizontal symptoms of erosion. While this does not mean vertical countries should not be aided in resistance efforts, it does suggest that focusing on more dangerous, horizontal erosion countries may be more fruitful to reducing democratic erosion.

Theme 3: Predictors of erosion

An understanding of which precursors, symptoms, and resistance events occur together can provide policymakers with a more refined focus on what to look for in monitoring countries for erosion events. Furthermore, knowledge of how some events may be especially predictive of others presents policymakers with an opportunity to better prepare to respond to future events. We exploited the time-series nature of our dataset to explore the sequencing of erosion events over time. We examined which precursors are particularly predictive of an erosion symptom, and which symptoms are predictive of resistance events. A few major takeaways emerge and are summarized in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Theme 3 Takeaways



Our analyses use logistic panel regression and negative binomial panel regression. Logistic panel regression is useful when the outcome variable of interest takes a value of 0 or 1, as is the case in our measurement of whether an event occurred in a given country and year (1) or did not occur (0). This method allows us to calculate the degree to which a given independent variable (for example, a precursor event) increases or decreases the likelihood of occurrence of the outcome variable (for example, a symptom event). For logistic panel regressions, we use a dataset with binary variables, in which each precursor, symptom, and resistance event types (48 event types) is assigned a value of 1 if it occurred in a given country-year, and a value of 0 if it did not.

We also employ negative binomial panel regression, which is useful when the outcome variable is a count of events and when there are a large number of 0s in the dataset (in this case, country-years in which no events occurred). We use a separate dataset for these analyses, in which each event variable records the count of a certain event type in a given country-year

(rather than an indicator of whether the event occurred or not, as in the binary variable dataset). Using this method in addition to the logistic panel regression allows us to validate whether results hold across more than one estimation methodology, which adds robustness to the results.

In both types of regressions, we use lagged variables to capture the extent to which two types of events may occur together, but not in the same year. Hypothesizing that events may be linked yet occur one or two years apart, we create a variable that measures whether an event occurred in the current year, the previous year, or two years prior. In the binary dataset, event variables receive a value of 1 if the given event occurred any time in the three-year span. In the count dataset, it represents the sum of events (of a given event type) that occurred over the three-year span.

Additionally, acknowledging that events may cluster differently depending on a country's income level or initial level of democracy, we control for GDP per capita (measured in constant 2010 U.S. dollars and sourced from World Bank (2019)). We also control for countries' liberal democracy index score at the beginning of the studied time period (2007), sourced from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) database (2018). This indicator measures the quality of democracy based on the limits placed on executive power through civil liberties, rule of law, an independent judiciary, and other checks and balances (V-Dem, 2018).

Results

Which precursors are predictive of symptoms?

First, we regressed an indicator variable for any symptom (regardless of symptom type) on all 25 precursor variables (each capturing two years of lags), controlling for GDP per capita and initial VDEM score, to identify whether any precursors are especially predictive of a symptom. Two precursor types were dropped from the regression because they only had one observation in the dataset: these were cooptation of the opposition and systematic reduction in electoral freedom. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show coefficient plots for twelve precursors. In these plots, the dots represent the coefficients on the precursor variables, while the solid red lines represent the confidence intervals. A confidence interval that does not cross 0 indicates that the coefficient is significantly different from 0 (at the 5% level). Results for precursor types that have fewer than 10 total occurrences in the dataset or for which more than 60% of observations come from one or two countries are not shown, as there are not enough total observations across a sufficiently large group of countries to interpret results for those types as worldwide trends.

In the logistic regression (Figure 4.2), we find that extremist/populist parties are associated with a higher likelihood of symptom occurrence within 0-2 years of the precursor event (at the 5% level). This finding aligns with the predictions of Huq and Ginsburg (2017), who argue in their study of constitutional retrogression in the United States that democratic stability depends on leaders' preferences (which tend to guide the policies of extremist or populist parties). Furthermore, extremist/populist parties often arise in response to economic or refugee crises, and thus may increase citizens' tolerance for non-democratic behavior. As Shifter (2016) argues in a case study of Nicaragua, people may feel that democratic erosion is the "price to pay" for economic growth and safety. Unfortunately, as has been clear in Nicaragua, these precursors can quickly lead to more severe symptoms.

Similarly, state/violence or abuse is also associated with a higher likelihood of symptom occurrence within 0-2 years of the precursor event (also at the 5% level). Since state violence in the form of arresting or killing civilians, seizing land, or responding to protests with violent force suggests that a country already suffers from weak checks on executive power, it is logical that this precursor is associated with erosion symptoms.

Additionally, we find that increasing control of civil society is associated with a higher likelihood of symptom occurrence, though only at the 10% significance level). This may include events such as increasing the restrictions on NGO operations or mandating special reporting protocols. Varol (2015) cautions that such cumbersome requirements are a form of “stealth authoritarianism” used to stifle opposition efficacy without jeopardizing global legitimacy of a nominally democratic regime.

In the negative binomial regression (Figure 4.3), which regresses a count of symptoms (regardless of symptom type) in a given country year on a count of each precursor type (capturing two years of lags), we measure the association of precursor event type with number of symptoms. Similarly, to the logistic regression results, we find that these three precursor types are positively associated with the count of symptoms in a country (though again, increasing control of civil society is significant only at the 10% level). For example, the coefficient of approximately 0.5 on state violence/abuse indicates that an additional instance of state violence is associated with 0.5 additional symptoms; put differently, this means that if we see two additional instances of state violence, we would expect to see one additional symptom within 0-2 years of the state violence event. Additionally, in the negative binomial regression, we find that both media bias and party weakness are positively and significantly associated with number of symptoms.

Figure 4.2: Which precursors predict symptoms? (Logistic Regression)

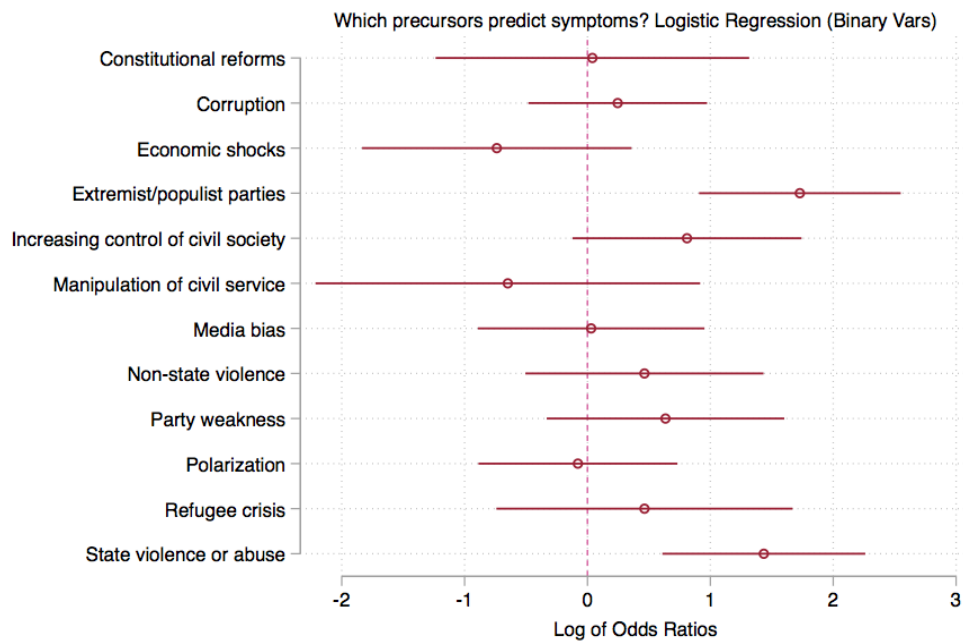
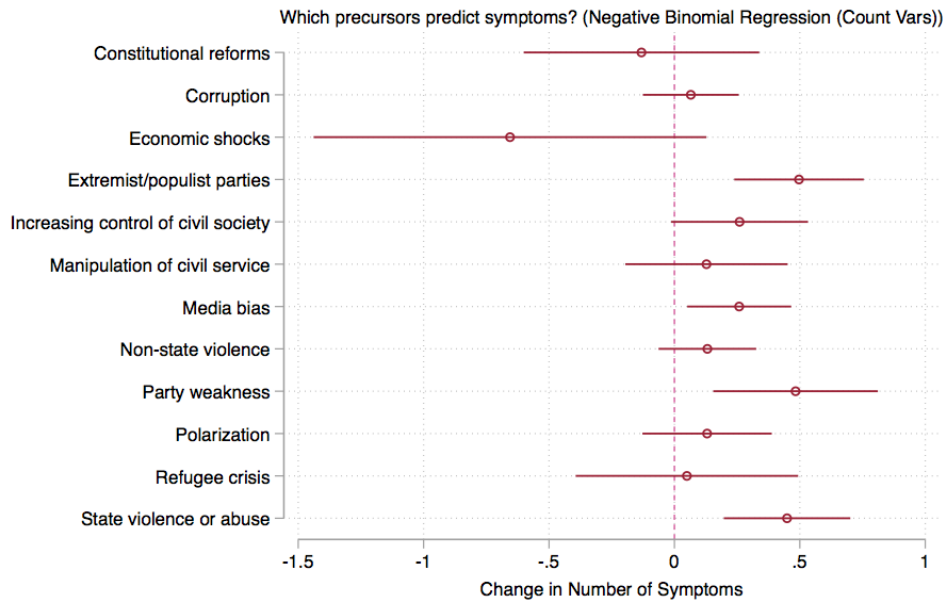


Figure 4.3: Which precursors are associated with a higher number of symptoms? (Negative Binomial Regression)



Next, given the different patterns of erosion that occur in intentional erosion countries and opportunistic erosion countries, we ran the same regressions for each sub-sample of countries. Figure 4.4 shows coefficients for the sub-sample of 23 intentional erosion countries. Here, we see that, as in the full sample, extremist/populist parties, party weakness, and state violence/abuse are highly likely to be associated with a symptom within 0-2 years. However, media bias is not predictive in this sub-sample of intentional erosion countries. In contrast, results for the sub-sample of 11 opportunistic erosion countries (Figure 4.5) demonstrate that in these countries, media bias is the only significant predictor of symptoms. (Only a few precursors are shown in this plot because the smaller sample size (132 country-years) means that there was insufficient variation in values for some precursors to calculate a coefficient).

Figure 4.4: Which precursors predict symptoms in intentional erosion countries?

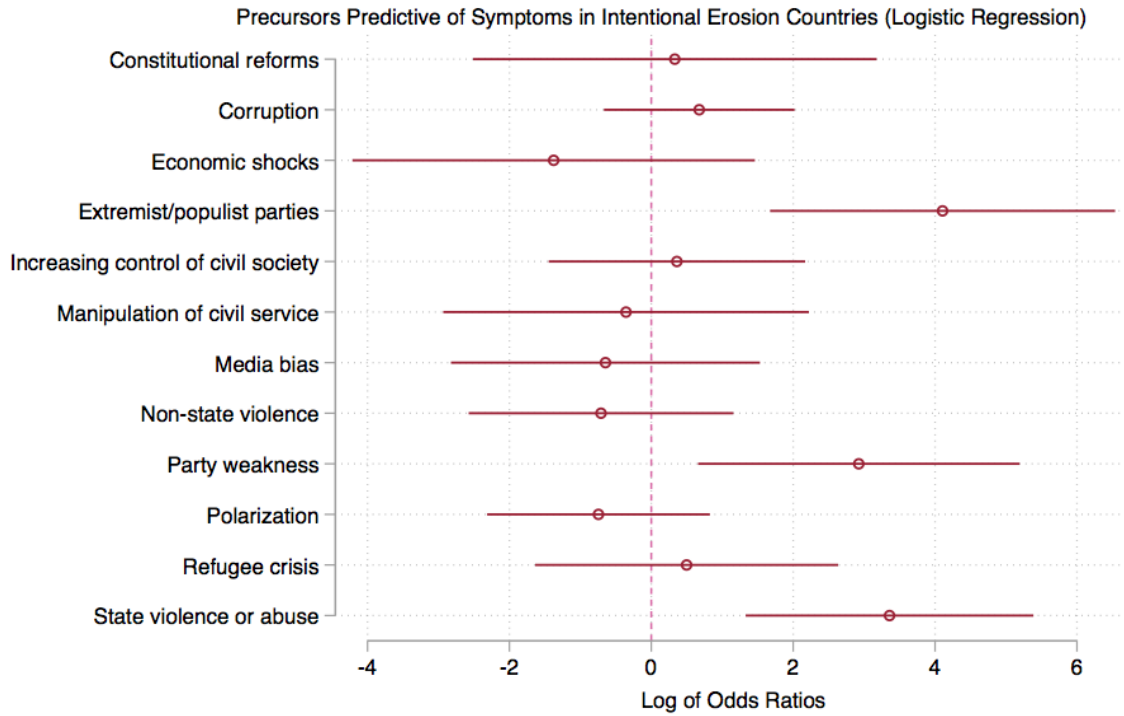
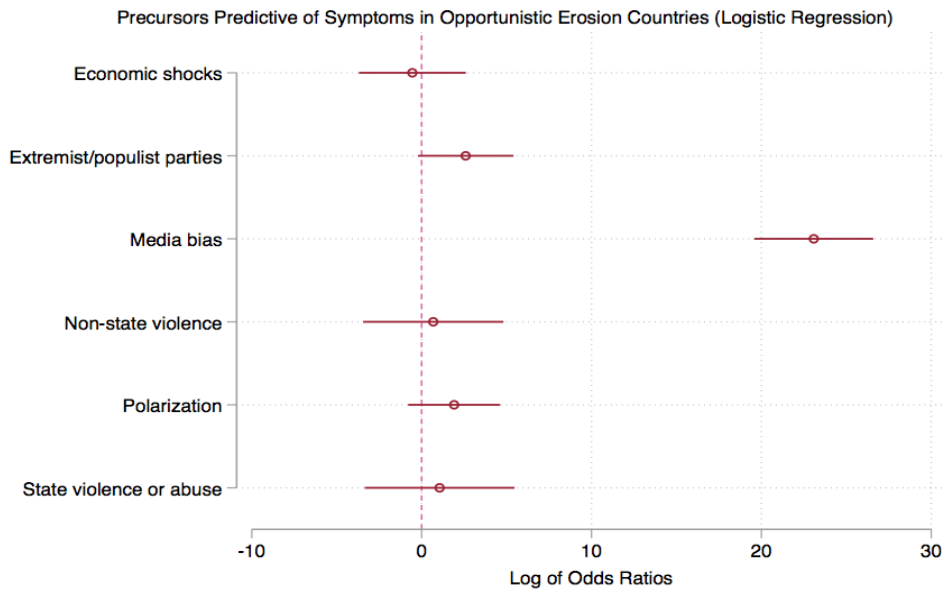


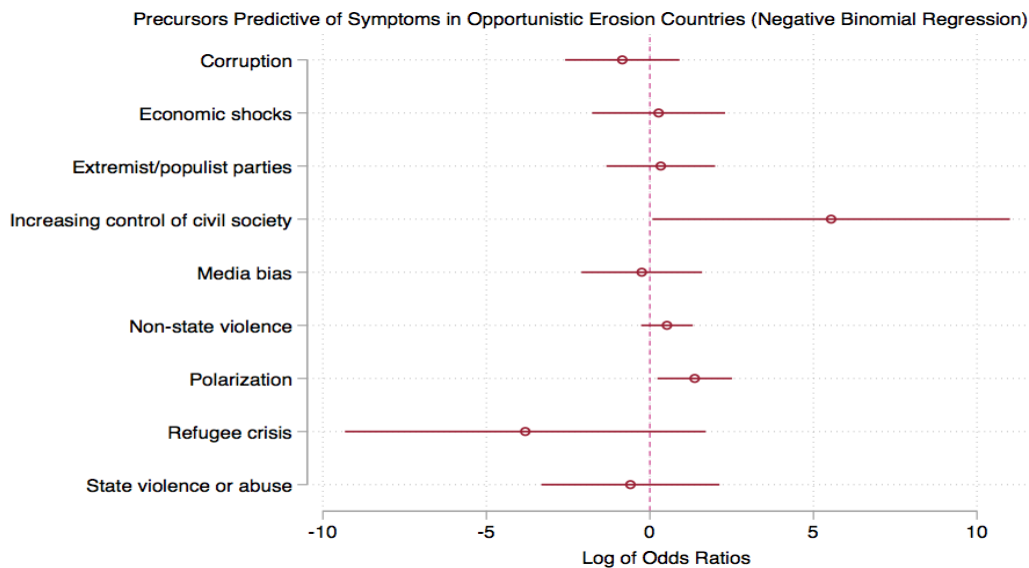
Figure 4.5: Which precursors predict symptoms in opportunistic erosion countries? (Logistic regression)



The results for intentional erosion countries are the same when using negative binomial regression (results not shown). However, results differ between the logistic and negative

binomial regressions for the sub-sample of opportunistic erosion countries. While the logistic regression for this subsample showed media bias as the only predictive precursor of symptoms, the negative binomial regression shows that increasing control of civil society and polarization are the most predictive precursors, while media bias is not predictive of symptoms. Results are shown in Figure 4.5b.

Figure 4.5b: Which precursors predict symptoms in opportunistic erosion countries?
 (Negative binomial regression)



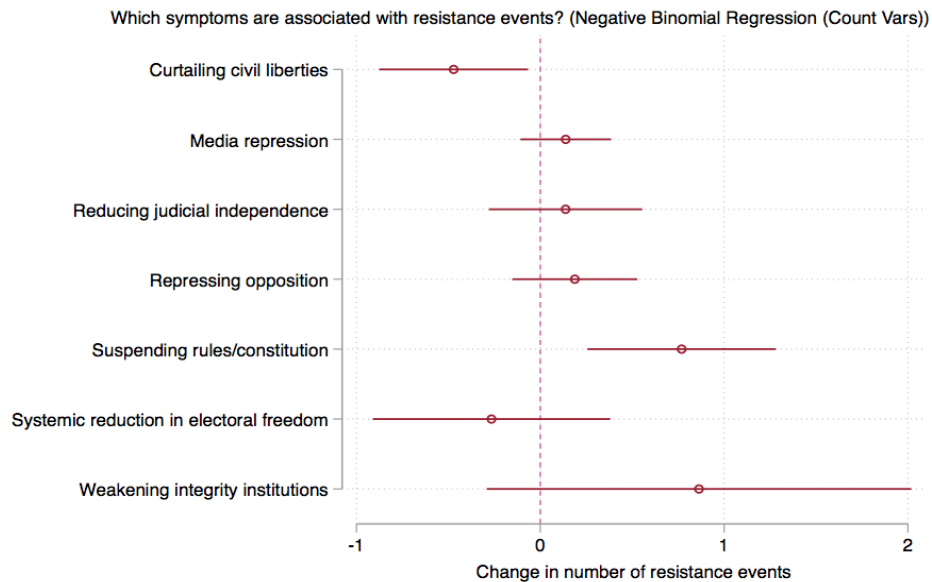
Regarding polarization, Svulik (2017) shows that as political polarization among the electorate increases, the extent to which incumbents can exercise non-democratic behavior increases. This is because as citizens move closer to the extremes of the political spectrum, their willingness to sacrifice democratic values for the policy preferences increases. In this way, polarization may foreshadow erosion symptoms. While McCoy et al. (2018) discuss several cases of countries classified as “intentional erosion” countries in our dataset in which polarization leads to democratic erosion (including Turkey, Venezuela, and Hungary) our results show that this threat is not particularly predictive in intentional countries. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the higher volume of precursors in intentional (versus opportunistic) erosion countries means that polarization often occurs in tandem with other precursors and thus is not especially predictive. This does not mean, however, that polarization should not be a cause for concern even in intentional erosion countries.

These results suggest that policymakers may benefit from being especially attentive to certain precursors depending on whether a country is experiencing opportunistic erosion in response to a crisis event, as opposed to experiencing more protracted, calculated erosion. However, the differences in results for intentional and opportunistic countries should not be interpreted to conclude that precursors that are not significantly predictive of symptoms in one sub-sample of countries should not still be qualitatively monitored for the possibility that they will lead to future erosion.

Which symptoms are predictive of resistance events?

Following the same methodology used to assess precursor-symptom relationships, we investigate the association of particular symptom types with resistance events. In the negative binomial regression, we regress a count of resistance events in a given country-year on the 13 symptom types (capturing the sum of the current year and two years of lags for each symptom type). Results are shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: Which symptoms are associated with resistance events?



Here, we see that curtailing civil liberties is negatively associated with resistance events; that is, a country is likely to have fewer resistance events after experiencing curtailing of civil liberties. This may be because a reduction in freedom of speech or association makes it more difficult for citizens to resist (for example, by protesting). In contrast, a suspension of rules or the constitution is positively associated with resistance events within 0-2 years. A symptom such as suspending the constitution is highly visible to the public, generating common knowledge. Huq and Ginsburg (2017) argue that the existence of focal points around which people may mobilize is important for resistance. Thus, when an event is publicly and widely known to have occurred, citizens are more likely to act. This stands in contrast to events such as revoking an individual journalist’s license or NGO’s registration, which may not be publicly-known and thus are less likely to generate resistance.

In the logistic regression (results not shown), we regress an indicator of resistance (equal to 1 if any resistance event occurred in a given country-year) on the 13 symptom types (capturing two years of lags). In this model, we find that suspending rules or the constitution is positively and significantly associated with resistance. In contrast to the negative binomial model, however, the logistic model does not show a significant association between curtailed civil liberties and resistance.



Lastly, we consider that the extent to which symptoms are predictive of resistance events may differ by a country’s initial level of democracy. Controlling for income level, we find that there are differential relationships based on initial strength of democracy. Suspension of rules or the constitution increases the likelihood of resistance in countries with an initially strong level of democracy (as measured by a VDEM score above the median), but not in countries with an initially weak level of democracy. The same is true for repressing the opposition: though we do not see any significant relationship between repressing the opposition and resistance in the full sample of countries (as shown in Figure 4.7), we find that this symptom increases the likelihood of resistance in countries with an above-median level of democracy at the beginning of the studied period, while this is not the case for countries with a low initial level of democracy. This may be because in countries with stronger democracies, people have higher expectations that resistance may stop erosion, whereas in weaker democracies, citizens are not hopeful that resistance will make a difference. These relationships are shown in Figures 4.7 and 4.8, in which “1” on the x-axis represents the relationship between symptom and resistance for above-median democracies, and “0” represents the relationship for below-median democracies.

We also test whether a symptom’s ability to predict resistance differs by country income level, but do not find any difference in relationship between countries below and above the median GDP per capita.

Figure 4.7: Marginal Effects of Suspending Rules/Constitution on Probability of Resistance, by Initial Strength of Democracy

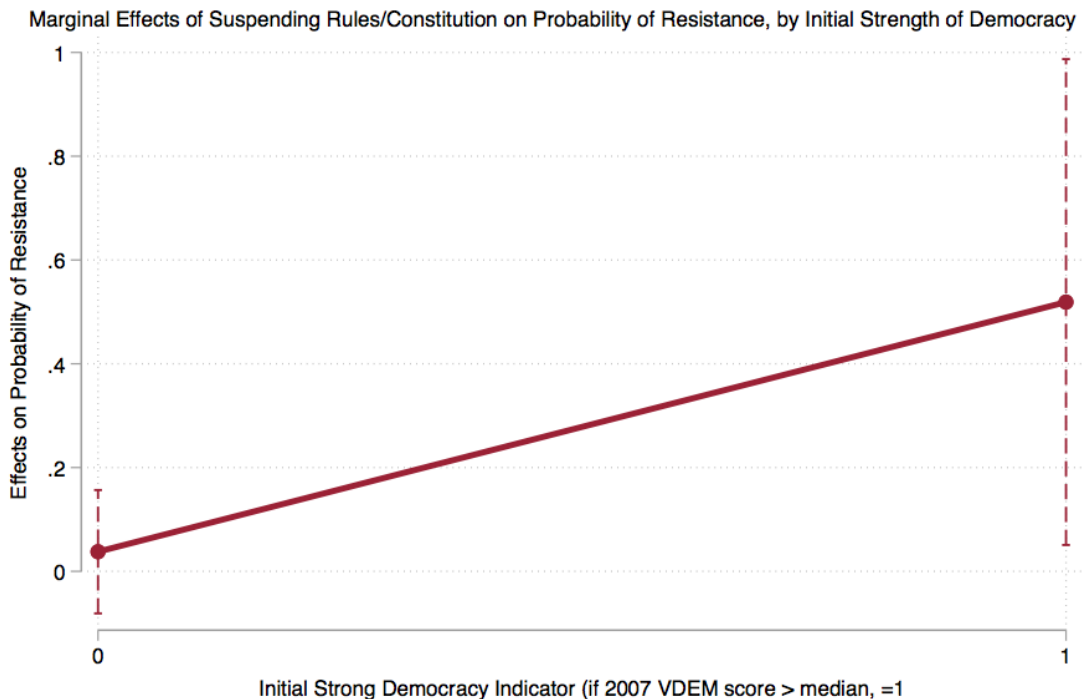
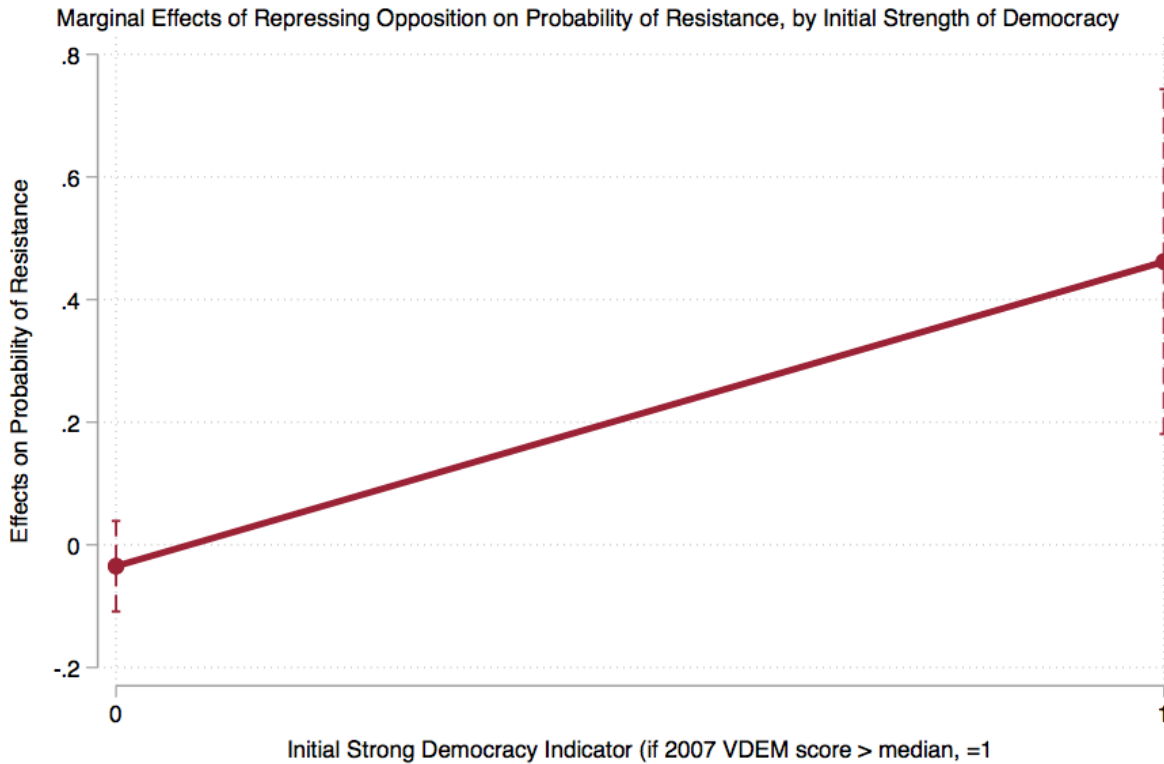


Figure 4.8: Marginal Effects of Repressing Opposition on Probability of Resistance, by Initial Strength of Democracy



Does a prior history of state violence affect resistance?

Based on the evidence that some symptoms are significantly associated with resistance only in countries with a stronger initial level of democracy, we considered the factors that may be limiting resistance in initially weaker democracies. As noted above, citizens in these countries may have lower expectations of the potential of resistance to effect change, and thus do not resist. Alternatively, if these countries have a history of government repression and violence, citizens may be afraid to resist because of the potential for government retaliation. On the other hand, the effect could work in the opposite direction: citizens with a memory of a repressive regime are more likely to resist, as they have a stronger desire to prevent return to such a regime.

To answer this question, we tested whether a history of state violence is associated with resistance. Using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, we merged into our dataset a measure of fatalities in internal conflicts in which the state was an actor. (Note that this does not measure fatalities perpetrated by the state, but all fatalities in conflicts involving the state.) We converted this into a binary indicator variable equal to 1 for country years in which there was any

history of such fatalities (regardless of number) and extended our period of study from 2000-2018 to capture the history of state violence more comprehensively.

We then used an ordered probit model to assess the relationship between this variable and resistance of any form. We also explore whether a history of state violence is more likely to lead to violent or nonviolent protest, drawing from the findings of Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) which suggest that nonviolent resistance can be more effective than violent resistance because it increases the costs of repression for the incumbent regime and lends more legitimacy to the resistance campaign in the eyes of the domestic population and foreign governments. They also find that the greater the willingness of the regime to use violence, the greater the likelihood for success of nonviolent campaigns and the greater the disadvantage for violent campaigns. Knowing this, resistance movements in countries with a history of state violence may be especially likely to pursue nonviolent resistance means.

We find that a history of fatalities in conflicts with the state is associated with a likelihood of resistance 1.5 times higher than the likelihood of resistance in states without such a history (significant at the 10% level). Furthermore, a history of fatalities is associated with a likelihood of nonviolent protest that is 2.5 times higher than the likelihood of nonviolent protest in countries without a history of fatalities (significant at the 5% level). History of fatalities is not associated, however, with violent protest.

While these results suggest that prior state violence makes citizens more likely to resist, one should use caution in interpreting the results regarding specific types of resistance (i.e. violent vs. nonviolent protest). In the dataset, there are only 30 country-years in which nonviolent protest occurred, and 12 country-years in which violent protest occurred. Thus, these relationships are based on a small number of events, and should be re-tested with future, expanded iterations of this dataset.

Summary of Findings

Testing the relationship between precursors and the occurrence of symptoms, we find that extremist/populist parties, increasing control of civil society, and state violence or abuse are positively and significantly associated with the likelihood of symptom occurrence within 0-2 years of the precursor event. These results hold for both logistic and negative binomial regressions. In the negative binomial regression, we additionally find that media bias and party weakness are positively and significantly associated with the number of symptoms occurring within 0-2 years.

We examine whether these relationships differ between intentional and opportunistic erosion countries. In intentional erosion countries, extremist/populist parties, party weakness, and state violence/abuse are highly likely to be associated with a symptom within 0-2 years, while media bias is not predictive of symptoms in this sub-sample.

In opportunistic erosion countries, results vary by methodology, but show that media bias, increasing control of civil society, and polarization are especially predictive of symptoms in these countries. These results suggest that policymakers might consider different precursors as

warning signs of symptoms depending on whether a country's situation is more characteristic of opportunistic erosion in response to a crisis event, as opposed to more protracted, calculated erosion.

Regarding the relationship between symptoms and resistance events, we find that curtailing civil liberties is associated with a lower likelihood of resistance in the next 0-2 years. This may be because when government limits citizen or media freedoms, it is more difficult to resist. This relationship may also reflect that curtailing of civil liberties may be targeted at individuals and not widely observed by the public, making it less likely that citizens will react through resistance. In contrast, suspending the rules or the constitution is associated with a higher likelihood of resistance. Such types of horizontal erosion are usually widely visible, which may help incite resistance. Furthermore, these relationships differ by countries' initial level of democracy at the beginning of the studied period in 2007. Suspending the rules or the constitution or repressing the opposition are significantly associated with a higher likelihood of resistance in countries with an above-median initial level of democracy, but not in countries with a below-median level. This may reflect that citizens in weaker democracies have lower expectations of the potential of resistance to effect change or are afraid of government retaliation to resistance.

Lastly, we examine whether a prior history of fatalities in internal conflicts involving the state is associated with resistance. We find that compared to states without a history of fatalities, states with a violent history are more likely to have a resistance event (of any type), and more likely to have nonviolent protest. They are not more likely, however, to experience violent protest. These results should be interpreted cautiously given the sparse number of nonviolent and violent protests captured in the dataset but suggest that citizens with a memory of state violence are more likely to resist, perhaps because of increased aversion to returning to a repressive regime.

Theme 4: Resistance and Resistance Success

If there is democratic erosion happening in a country, is there a way to stop it or prevent it from happening again? This section looks at organic resistance events that arise in response to democratic erosion. With the aforementioned knowledge of what symptoms lead to resistance events, policymakers can plan to support resistance events that occur naturally or are shown to be most successful. This section will examine which factors are most likely to lead to successful resistance events, such as broad-based support, high international leverage situations, and a non-polarized society. Policymakers can move to act more forcefully in these situations, helping to prevent further democratic erosion around the world, as one of the major findings suggests international pressure where the US has high leverage over another country is a determinant of successful resistance to democratic erosion. But before studying the determinants of resistance success, we first describe how we code resistance success in our database, which we will then use to both examine the implications of existing theories as well as generate our own theories.

Creating the Resistance Database

The Resistance Database is a subset of the Democratic Erosion database. There were 104 events listed as “Resistance” in the original database. Each of these events was then investigated more thoroughly, using English news sources covering the event. We chose multiple sources to try to establish a complete picture of the event that was as unbiased as possible. However, we recognize limitations of this approach based on our language constraints, our ability to assess bias in news sources, and the capability of domestic and/or international news media to work in the countries during the resistance events. Five events were removed from the new resistance database: one from Botswana was a duplicate coding on the same event; Germany, where the event was too vague and no information could be found validating the event; two from Kosovo, one where the event was too vague and could not be validated and one was determined to not actually be a resistance event; and one from Peru could not be validated.

For each event, we classified external and internal pressures. In events where both types of pressure were present, we code both. External pressures include if there was external (international) influence or outside action. These events are further classified according to type of event and actor(s) involved. We also code the success of external pressures. Success was determined by whether the action or influence helped the event be successful in preventing the democratic erosion. Due to the small number of instances of external pressure, each external actor was disaggregated in the database into specific actor, including individuals and individual other nations, rather than grouped together. All external actors that were involved were coded, giving some event lines multiple actors. External event type was categorized based on the overall theme of the external pressure. All of these may be found in Appendix 3.

Internal resistance pressures were classified similarly. Pressures that were not external were classified as internal, and there were some external pressures that were determined during the event case study to have an internal resistance aspect, which was also classified as an internal resistance pressure. Each event was coded on a 0-4 scale based on its success at that time in resisting democratic erosion.

- 0= Failed; the event did not accomplish its purpose in resisting democratic erosion.
- 1= Indeterminate; the success of the event is indeterminate, or the event is still ongoing. (These are usually investigations, political agreements, and increasing civic capacity.)
- 2= Successful- Not Democratic Norms; these events were successful in preventing the democratic erosion, but they were illegal or against democratic norms. (These events are protests that turned violent or leaks that started investigations.)
- 3= Successful- Democratic Norms; these events were successful in preventing democratic erosion event and were started legally or following democratic norms. (These include demonstrations that started peacefully but turned violent following state action.)

Internal actors and internal event types were aggregated for the purpose of evaluation, though if more information about a specific actor or event type was found, it was noted in the “Other” column in the resistance database. Additionally, if an event had multiple actors or could be classified as multiple event types, all that were applicable were listed in the database. These coding’s may be found in Appendix 3.

Summary statistics from resistance database

The resistance database contains a total of 99 events. The following section presents the summary statistics of the dataset.

Figure 5.1. Resistance Events by Success Category

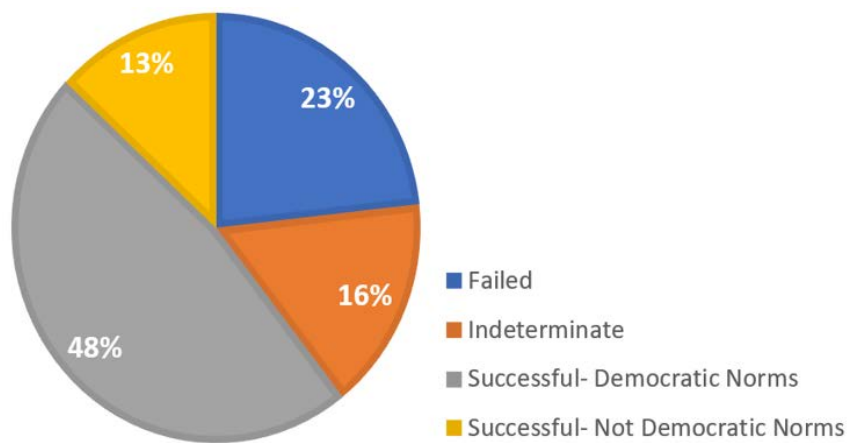
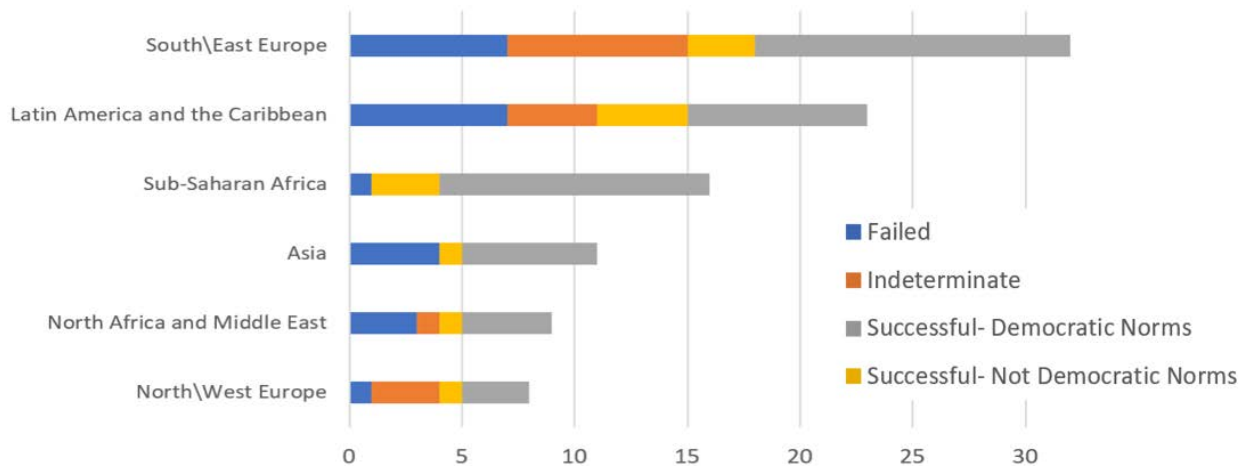


Figure 5.1 shows that 48% of the resistant events were classified as successful following democratic norms and the other 52% were distributed among successful not following democratic norms, failed and indeterminate events.

Figure 5.2. Resistance Success by Region



The distribution of resistance events varies across regions. As Figure 5.2 presents, regions with the higher number of resistance events from 2007 to 2016 were South and East Europe (32 events), Latin America and the Caribbean (23 events) and Sub-Saharan Africa (16 events). The majority (55%) of the events that were successful following democratic norms took place in South/East Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 5.3. Resistance Success by Actor

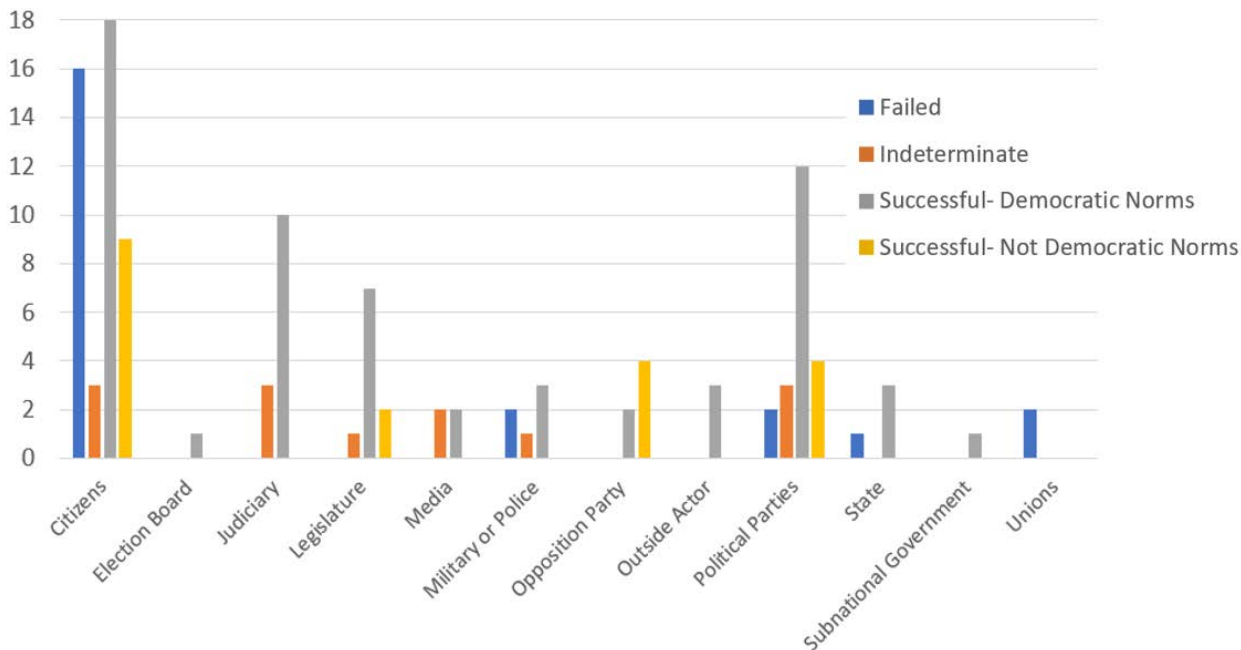
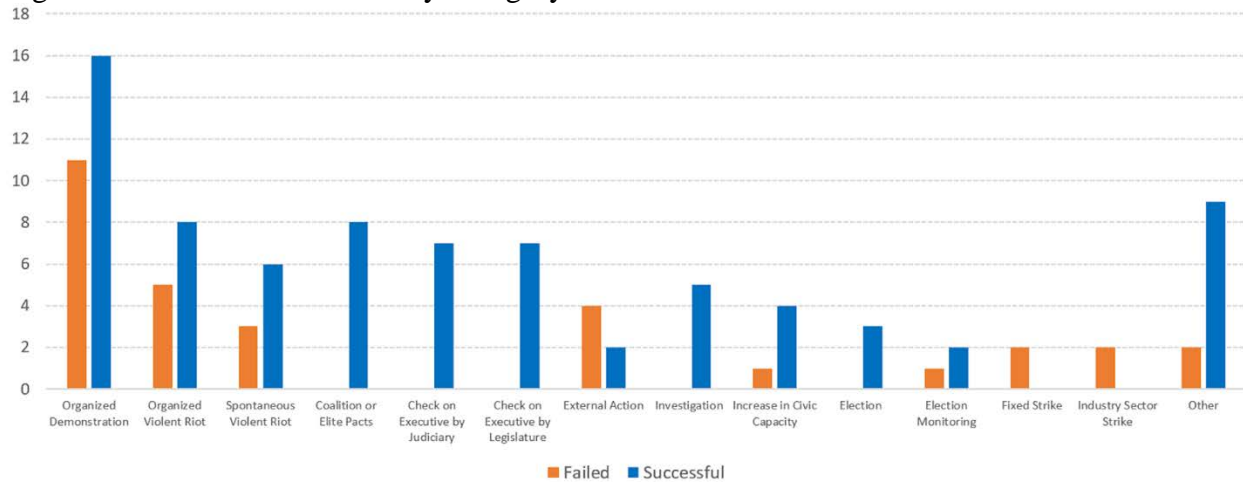


Figure 5.3 presents the participation of different actors in resistance events. If a resistance event had more than one actor involved, we included separate event observations to

measure how active each actor is and if there are any interesting trends regarding resistance outcomes.

Citizens played a key role in resistance events presenting the higher participation frequency in both successful and failed events.

Figure 5.4. Resistance Success by Category



In Figure 5.4 we grouped both successful events following democratic norms and successful events not following democratic norms into the successful category. Also, we excluded indeterminate events and if an event started with one category and finished with another category, we counted them as different observations.

The most common events were organized demonstrations and organized violent riots. Both categories had elevated levels of both successful and failed events. Resistance events classified as checks on the executive by the judiciary or by the legislature were either successful or indeterminate, while all strike events were classified as failed.

What makes internal democratic resistance successful?

Erica Chenoweth (2014) articulates a theory of successful civil resistance movements that can be usefully applied to efforts at resisting democratic erosion. Her theory describes how social movements operate more generally and how they succeed as public opinion shifts in their favor. The characteristics she attributes to social movement success provide a potential roadmap for assessing the likelihood of a democratic resistance movement’s success. These characteristics of a successful civil resistance movement are as follows:

1. They enjoy a broad base of support in society (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 96).
2. They are peaceful (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 95).
3. They are rooted in long-standing grievances (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 97).
4. They are channeled through civil society institutions (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 98).

Movements that share these characteristics are more successful because:

(a) **They raise the costs of repression.** It is much easier for a government to repress a small group that does not enjoy widespread acceptance among the population. Once a resistance movement is large enough a regime risks alienating its bases of support if it engages in widespread repression against that movement (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 96).

(b) **A widespread civil resistance movement can induce defections from the government.** As the costs of repression begin to rise, members of the ruling regime will sometimes defect to the resistance movement if they believe that the regime's position is unsustainable. This is more likely to happen if the resistance movement enjoys so much support in society that its success appears likely (Chenoweth, 2014, p. 97).

What Determines External Actors' Success in Aiding Resistance Movements?

Stephen Levitsky's (2006) theory of how international actors can pressure other polities to change regime type can be usefully applied to studying the determinants of success of an external actor in aiding democratic resistance. Below, we describe the two determinants that comprise his theory – linkages and leverages – and then apply them to several case studies from our dataset to evaluate their usefulness in understanding the determinants of successful *external* resistance to democratic erosion.

Linkages are the ties between the West and the country the resistance movement is operating in. These linkages can be commercial trade ties, cultural ties, Official Development Assistance, (ODA) membership in regional or international organizations, or any other connection between the Western country and the country where the resistance movement is operating (Levitsky, 2006, p. 383).

Leverage is the relative power of the Western country regarding the country the resistance movement is operating in. In this case, power is defined as economic and military power. If the Western country attempting to aid the resistance movement has a greater degree of military and economic power than the country it is attempting to aid in democratizing, then the West is considered to have leverage in this situation (Levitsky, 2006, p. 382).

Case Studies

Three cases were selected at random from our database of resistance success to examine how well the above theories apply to explaining success or failure in the context of resistance to democratic erosion.

Ukraine

The 2014 Euromaidan protests that drove former President Viktor Yanukovich from power were a textbook example of a relatively peaceful resistance movement that enjoyed widespread political support and was rooted in existing social grievances. Opinion polling from December 2013 showed that between 45 and 50% of the Ukrainian population supported the Euromaidan protests. By March 2014, the percentage of Ukrainians supporting the protests had increased to 57% of society (IRI, 2017). A pro-European Union movement had been growing in Ukraine since 2008 when Ukrainian authorities signed an "Agreement on Association" that was

expected to mature into accession to the EU. Public opinion within Ukraine on that country's accession to the EU grew from 36% in March 2012 to 52% in March 2014 (IRI, 2017). During that same time public opinion supporting an economic alliance with Russia declined from 43% to 27% (IRI, 2017).

Poland

In Poland, public opinion polling from the CBOS public opinion research center indicates that 87% of Poles support their country's membership in the European Union. IRI polling from 2018 indicates that 41% of Poles believe the main benefits they derive from membership in the EU are financial. The electorate's perception of financial benefits from the EU gives the EU leverage in aiding democratic resistance movements in Poland.

In July 2018, the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) lowered the retirement age of Supreme Court justices from 70 to 65 (BBC, 2018). This would have retired a third of the Supreme Court and allowed PiS to name their replacements (BBC, 2018). Protests broke out and the matter was referred to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that issued a negative ruling against the move in October 2018 (BBC, 2018). By December 2018, the Polish government had reversed its plan to retire the justices (BBC, 2018).

In the Polish case the perceived leverage that the EU had over Poland aided the EU in pressuring the Polish government to not purge the justices. According to CBOS polling 44% of Poles, a plurality, believed that the Polish government should take into consideration the EU's concern about erosion of the judiciary (CBOS, 2018). The broad public condemnation of the government's move coupled with the leverage and linkages that the EU enjoyed helped reverse this example of democratic erosion.

Brazil

In July 2017 then-president Michel Temer was arrested after tapes of him accepting a bribe surfaced. Temer was extremely unpopular with an IBOPE poll from that month revealing an 77% disapproval rating and a mere 4% approval rating (Globo, 2018). The movement against Temer's government was broad-based and channeled through civil society groups. Brazil enjoys a density of ties with the United States and the European Union and is a member of most major international organizations. However, instead of preventing democratic erosion, the widespread dissatisfaction against the Temer regime resulted in Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right president who has engaged in further democratic erosion, to come to power. The case of Brazil illustrates the limits of the explanatory power of our theories describing the success of internal and external resistance actors.

Chenoweth's theory postulated that broad-based movements can lead to success in different contexts. However, the case of Brazil illustrates that not all broad-based movements lead to success and some movements that enjoy broad support within society that are channeled through civil society and are rooted in long-standing grievances can actually lead to democratic erosion. This highlights a constraint of applying more general theories to the specific phenomena of democratic erosion. For this reason, we turn to a more inductive approach of generating new hypotheses from empirical patterns in our data.

Selective Case Studies

The previously discussed theories can help explain why resistance movements are successful but do not necessarily explain when they are successful in preventing democratic erosion or successful in building democratic institutions. As with the case of Brazil, we also see they do not apply to every case. We therefore strategically picked a pair of case studies to conduct an inductive analysis of what makes resistance successful or unsuccessful. We restricted our selection of cases to countries found with the Democratic Erosion database as well as the FFF database to maximize their utility. Additionally, we chose two countries where there were common event profiles but different resistance outcomes, i.e. one was an example of failed resistance while the other an example of success. The fact that many other features were the same helps to identify the features that might contribute to differential success or failure. Both cases in the pairing had civilian protests, this resistance event followed a noted symptom in our database, and they had similar domestic characteristics. The case studies chosen were the successful 2014 Burkinabé protests in Burkina Faso and the failed 2007 Republic Protests in Turkey.

Burkina Faso

In 2000, Burkina Faso amended the Constitution, limiting the president to two terms in office. Since it was not applied retroactively, President Blaise Compaoré could run and be elected in 2005 and 2010. However, in 2014, Compaoré attempted to change the Constitution and extend his term. Large civilian protests started on October 30, 2014, eventually forcing Compaoré to flee the country, the military leaders to take over in a transitional government, and power to then be handed over to a democratically elected president. Burkina Faso was a successful resistance event due to several reasons, the major ones of which are discussed in the following case study (Taoko, 2014).

Openness to civil society

In 1998, there were large protests after Norbert Zongo, a journalist and fierce critic of the regime was brutally killed on Compaoré's order. These protests forced Compaoré to accept significant reforms, successfully opening civil society in Burkina Faso more than most other similar regimes in West Africa. Though these civil society organizations could function, they also, until 2014, proved successful in pacifying the people enough to minimize threats to Compaoré's regime (Taoko, 2014).

Media

One of the reasons the protest in Burkina Faso was successful was due to the openness in civil society. The opposition frequently took to social media to push the protests and then after to disseminate knowledge to the public regarding the ruling power. Opposition leader, Zephirin Diabré, took to social media to protest the amendment and call for revolution. Throughout the crisis, the media kept the country and international community up to speed on the events happening in Ouagadougou. Before the protest, they were pivotal in providing truthful information regarding the proposed amendment. During the two-days of conflict (night of October 30-31, November 1), the government had shut down SMS and Internet services. The media continued to print newspapers and air radio programs, at significant risk to themselves (some had participated in self-censoring, fearing the response of Compaoré). They played the

watchdog role before, during, and after the protests, and helped to put pressure on Traoré and Zida to hand over military rule to the African Union, NGOs, and a transition government (Rakotomalala, 2014).

Economic Growth / Economic Freedom

Another factor that allowed people to successfully protest was the economic freedoms they enjoyed. The five years prior to the deposition of Compaoré showed an impressive period of economic growth. Additionally, rapid urbanization was encouraged and supported by competent urban planning. This caused people to increasingly move to the city. Without having to be completely worried about fighting for their survival every day, they had the time to protests. The youth had been increasingly moving to the cities, lured by the aspects of jobs and a better future. Upon arrival, there were limited opportunities for those outside of Compaoré's party, resulting in marginalization. These youth made up the large majority of those who participated in the protests. It is important to note that though it was considered a "mass uprising with popular support," those 15,000 protesting in the city may have not been representative of the 10+ million Burkinabe that lived in rural areas (Taoko, 2014).

Role of the Military / History of Military Revolutions

Often, leaders are able to aggrandize power or stay in power because they have the explicit support of the military. However, in Burkina Faso, the military chose to support the people. Though the uprising and subsequent power transition is often viewed as a military coup, the military leaders chose to follow the interests of civil society organizations. The top military leaders were General Traoré and commander of the Regiment of Presidential Security Lieutenant Colonel Zida. Before the Revolution, both Zida and Traoré had been communicating with opposition leaders and leaders of other NGOs civil society organizations. When the uprisings started, Zida and his men, mostly junior officers, were ordered to fire on the crowd. Instead, they refused, choosing not to fire on the crowd but also not make their deceit known, by firing shots in the air. Zida and his officers then forced Compaoré's resignation (they were "protecting" him in the Presidential Palace.) After the uprisings, Traoré was thought to be the interim head of state. However, Zida and his officers, along with the citizens in the protests called for Zida to be the head of state. This had the unique positions of two parts of the military declaring they were in charge without actually fighting. Traoré then recognized Zida as the new head of state. When Zida came to power, he promised to implement a transitional government within 60 days. Burkina Faso has had a history of popularly-supported military coups that did not result in a transition of power to a democratically elected leader. In 1983, Compaoré led a military coup on behalf of Thomas Sankara. Sankara, known for his Marxist and pan-African policies lead large-scale reforms that, while helping the poor, rural communities, isolated the powerful, small middle-class. Sankara himself was killed by Compaoré in 1987, who then never gave up the position of Presidency. This history gave the people a rallying point- they did not want it to end up like what happened when Sankara was deposed, where Zida (or any military) leader remained in power indefinitely (Mampilly, 2014).

History of Protests

Before these uprisings, Burkina Faso had a long history of protests that were accepted by the government, or at least not met with violence. Burkinabés had been demonstrating against Compaoré and for social and economic reform throughout the entire year leading up to the

protests. They additionally had a history of the military supporting their protests and not firing on them, even if ordered to. Burkina Faso gained its independence from France through peaceful protests in 1960. In the 1980s and 90s, protests against anti-austerity measures led to Burkina Faso pulling out of the World Bank and IMF and working to break France's imperial legacy (Mampilly, 2014).

Regional Governmental Organizations / International Ties

Zida promised a transition government in 60 days following the uprisings. The African Union then forced them to give up the military rule within two weeks, starting November 3, 2014. The African Union threatened to nullify any person who had assumed power if the coup and impose sanctions. The United States and France threatened to end military aid and training if they found that a coup had taken place (France 24, 2014).

Turkey

On April 24, 2007, foreign minister and Justice and Development Party (AKP) member Abdullah Gul was announced as the official AKP candidate for the presidency. Tensions were already high over the threat to secularism, with Prime Minister Recep Erdogan seen as actively trying to erode Turkey's secular identity. Owing to Gul's background of Islamist political parties, people protested Gul's nomination. Though Turkey had similar characteristics as Burkina Faso, the protests were not successful, and Gul was elected president during the 2007 national elections.

Openness to civil society / Economic Growth

At this point in 2007, Turkey and Erdogan had the world's support, as they were seen to be actively improving democracy in Turkey. Revolutionary democratic reforms including equalizing the strength of the military and judiciary, increasing human rights and freedoms for all. It also followed unprecedented economic growth for Turkey, elevating large swaths of the population out of poverty (Somer, 2013).

Role of the Military

For much of modern Turkey's history until 2007, the military had been the body with the most power in government. In 1997, the Turkish military issued a memorandum to the National Security Council, reinforcing their support for a secular leader. After this memorandum was issued, Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan resigned. His coalition government was also disbanded. During the 2007 protests, the Turkish Armed Forces released a statement that they would stand with secularism in Turkey and act very clearly if necessary, to defend that position, encouraging the protestors (Somer, 2013).

History of Protests

The 2007 protests occurred over several different rounds of rallies across multiple weeks. Though police under control of the prime minister and the AKP party watched over the rallies, they allowed them to continue peacefully and did not intervene. As with seen in the 1997 memorandum, military intervention was likely to be pressure and peaceful, and not a violent coup (Somer, 2013).

Media

Media capabilities during the protests were one of the major differences in what made this different from those in Burkina Faso. Except for one, Kanal Turk, domestic media networks were pressured by the AKP to not cover the protests. However, international media was still prevalent and allowed to work (Internet Haber, 2007).

Polarization Theory

Why was the outcome of Burkina Faso and Turkey different when the characteristics were mostly similar? The most striking difference that would have led to the differences in success can be explained by from Milan Slovik's (2017) theory of how polarization contributes to democratic erosion. This theory states that the political center is deflated from the extremism found in highly polarized countries. In these countries, voters have a strong preference towards their favorite candidate, making it more costly for them to punish the incumbent by voting for the opposition. Due to this lack expected punishment, incumbents can push the limits of the democratic institutions, further manipulating it and eroding it, if they wish. In polarized societies, voters are more willing to accept weakened democratic principles for their partisan interests. In a non-polarized society, the public would serve as a better check on the "authoritarian temptations" of the elected official. In these societies, voters would mass around a centralist platform or candidate, providing a credible deterrent to incumbent manipulation of the democratic institutions (Slovik, 2017).

Extreme polarization is found in Turkey, as indicated by the elections that came right after the protests- the AKP party had 50 percent of the voting shares while the other party, the CHP, only accounted for 20% of the voting shares. In situations like these, people are more likely to vote for only their party, no matter how bad that party might seem, because they do not want the other party coming to power. There is no middle ground for other parties to form and gain any political traction. This allows the popularly supported party, the AKP in Turkey, to further erode the Constitution without people protesting. The 2007 protests, while large, were not representative of the general population, and therefore, not broadly supported. The AKP's constituents, largely rural and Muslim populations, benefited from the AKP being in power that they would get from no others, therefore they would not support the protests (Marschall, 2015).

This was different in Burkina Faso. Compaoré appealed to no specific constituency and there were no policies that polarized the population. The people of Burkina Faso participated in representative protests to remove a specific person from power, not to keep power within one party or stop another from gaining power. To them, any next leader was better than what they had, and there was little fear over a group with policies taking power (Isbell, 2017).

Summary of Findings

Democratic resistance movements succeed when they enjoy a broad base of support, when they are peaceful, when they are rooted in a long-standing grievance, and when they are channeled through civil society institutions. External actors can aid resistance movements through their leverage and linkages. Leverage is the economic and military power the West enjoys relative to a country it is trying to influence and linkages are the channels through which

they exert that leverage. These channels include commercial, cultural, and social ties to other countries.

Resistance to democratic erosion is also more likely to achieve success in a non-polarized society. Within a polarized society, the incumbent can take more steps to quell the resistance without alienating voters, as seen in Turkey. Additionally, there needs to be a broad-basis of support for the resistance event. In the events that were successful, the resistance movement mobilized a base representative of the larger population, including people from all ages, genders, education levels, economic levels, and even religion. To this point, there are certain domestic characteristics that are more conducive to resistance movements. These societies have some level of civil society, at least more than they have had in recent memory, and have the economic freedom to protest. Countries that have a history of protesting, mostly successfully and peacefully, are more likely to resist again. The guarantee of military support, rather than the military being in the hands of the government, allowed citizens in Burkina Faso and Turkey to mobilize.

It is also important for people to have a clear objective of what they are protesting or what specifically they are trying to achieve. This is the main difference in successful political/social movements and successful resistance movements that stop or prevent democratic erosion. Resistance movements with no clear objective usually failed. Usually, the media plays a role in supporting this aspect of the resistance event. Media coverage allows the citizens to recognize that other people also have the same desire to resist and can help coordinate the resistance. International media coverage can add legitimacy to the resistance event, encouraging more people to take part.

Relating our Findings to Key FFF Questions

The FFF-REL consortium have established a set of questions to include in their future learning agenda. The Democratic Erosion analysis and case studies can be usefully applied to examine the subset of these questions highlighted below.

FFF Questions and Insights from the Democratic Erosion Analysis

F. Under what conditions is advocacy capacity-building most and least effective in strengthening civic engagement and protecting against violations of freedom of expression in closed and closing space?

J. Under what conditions are capacity building activities sustainable in the aftermath of action forcing events in closed and closing space?

The conclusions of the above section on determinants of successful resistance to democratic erosion contain insights for these two FFF questions. Our DE analysis implies that the conditions under which advocacy capacity-building will be most effective and sustainable will be those in which the advocacy movement is grounded in a broader and well-established movement, where they are tied to a long-standing grievance, where the society is not hyper-polarized, and where outside actors with high linkage and leverage can help apply pressure.

N. Under what conditions is increased access to information most and least effective in protecting and/or promoting Fundamental Freedoms in closed and closing space?

H. Under what conditions are the media campaigns of watchdog organizations most and least effective in increasing government accountability in closed and closing spaces?

Our case studies and analysis of horizontal and vertical strategies of erosion suggest the potential importance of common knowledge in ensuring that information is effective at leading to successful resistance. Common knowledge implies that people know that other people know about the information. This special case of information acquisition has been shown to facilitate social and political coordination when people are more likely to take action when they believe other people will also be acting. Most resistance to democratic erosion would take this form: people would be more likely to engage in resistance when they believe they will be joined by others. There is safety in numbers, but also greater numbers in a resistance movement will increase the likelihood of having an impact and thus increase the expected benefits of what is often costly participation.

Increasing access to information can also increase common knowledge when it modifies expectations regarding what other people know, how other people may react and what is expected as a socially accepted reaction. This can happen if information is disseminated in a public way, e.g. via radio, such that people know that many other people are also listening to the same radio program. It can also happen if information is disseminated at a public meeting or event, or even if people are told that others are also receiving the same information they are being given.

The salience of horizontal erosion events and their ability to lead to increased resistance efforts and success suggests that increasing information about them could also be helpful in promoting resistance efforts. Given the wider impact of horizontal erosion events, access to information about them may be more effective in encouraging resistance rather than vertical erosion events, which may affect a smaller subset of the population.

Conclusion

Theme Takeaways

In **Theme 1: Categorizing Erosion**, we find that Calculated erosion is by far the most common of all types of erosion. It is a global phenomenon which mainly strikes at weaker democracies, where it does not need a distinct opportunity because there are always institutional weaknesses an aspiring authoritarian can exploit. Opportunistic erosion, namely Superficial erosion, occurs when there is a crisis an aspiring authoritarian may exploit to erode democratic institutions, because normally there is no way to erode the robust democratic institutions in Superficial erosion countries. These categories comprise potentially “false positive” categories of democratic erosion, or cases that risk being misdiagnosed as the more common type of Calculated erosion. Addressing Superficial, Pluralistic, or Deep erosion with the same strategies as Calculated could thus result in failed democracy promotion.

In **Theme 2: Strategies of Erosion**, horizontal erosion countries were found to be less democratic and having suffered more severe democratic erosion than their vertical erosion country counterparts. In addition, horizontal erosion countries were less likely to have democratic erosion precursors events in the DE database, but more likely to have resistance events and at a higher rate of success (using the supplementary resistance database in Theme 4). Therefore, the strategy of horizontal erosion, due to its perceived threat to democracy and the common knowledge of its occurrence, is more likely to result in resistance events compared to vertical erosion strategies.

Under **Theme 3, Predictors of Erosion**, we find that extremist/populist parties, increasing control of civil society, state violence or abuse, media bias, and party weakness are significantly predictive of symptom occurrence. We additionally find that these relationships differ among intentional and opportunistic erosion countries, suggesting that policymakers might pay special attention to different precursors depending on whether a country’s situation is more characteristic of opportunistic erosion in response to a crisis event, as opposed to more protracted, calculated erosion. Regarding the relationship between symptoms and resistance events, we find that curtailing civil liberties is associated with a lower likelihood of resistance, while suspension of rules or the constitution is associated with a higher likelihood of resistance, perhaps because such an event is widely visible, which may help incite resistance. Furthermore, suspending the rules or the constitution or repressing the opposition are significantly associated with a higher likelihood of resistance only in countries with an above-median initial level of democracy, perhaps reflecting that citizens in weaker democracies have lower expectations of the potential of resistance to effect change. Lastly, we find that a history of state violence is associated with a greater likelihood of resistance, perhaps because citizens are especially unwilling to return to a repressive regime.

Lastly, under **Theme 4: Resistance and Resistance Success**, we learn that it is possible to be successful aiding resistance events even when working in countries with weak institutions. This is illustrated by the success of Burkina Faso. If there exist democratic institutions, no matter how weak they might be, resistance to erosion can still be successful. In the case of Burkina Faso, the people and then the African Union were able to increase the strength of the democratic

institutions following the resistance event by investing in them to resist erosion. Polarization can cause failures of resistance events even when other determinants of success are present. Compared to Burkina Faso, all the characteristics for a successful protest were present in Turkey. However, polarization among the political parties and populations caused the resistance event in Turkey to fail, as they were not able to gain a broad, representative base of support for the movement.

Limitations of DE Dataset

The DE database was coded using publicly-available media sources, and some of the sources used were not verified for authenticity. The country case studies were written by a group of 150 undergraduate students who had taken a semester-long course using the DE syllabus in one of 19 participating universities across the world. Because of the wide range of participation and lack of rigorous instructions on the creation of the case studies, the events listed in the case studies and later coded into the DE database were at the discretion of individual undergraduate students from their personal research. As such, the DE database cannot claim to include all democratic erosion events in the 2007-2016 time, especially if events were not publicly covered by English-speaking media sources, which were mostly used as sources. However, while local media was not used in most cases, English-speaking media sources generally aggregate the most important local events and in many instances are spatially further from local influences of potentially bias and influence.

Of the events included, there was inconsistency in attributing events to a single year or a range of years, as there was not a rigorous instruction for how to temporally classify events that may have transpired over multiple years. In addition, mischaracterization of events by case studies may have led to incorrect coding of events by the Bush School graduate students that coded the case studies in the Spring 2018 semester.

Rather than provide an expert, comprehensive analysis, and classification of erosion in any country, the purpose and merits of the DE database are for identifying trends and patterns on the macro-level that may be useful for understanding the phenomenon of democratic erosion and its subcategories. Regardless, the next iteration of the DE database (to be coded Summer 2019) is looking to improve the level and quality of coverage of countries in an expanded list of countries with a new set of case studies, which were written in Spring 2019 by undergraduates.

Future Directions

This year's capstone was able to provide a theoretical and empirical framework for analyzing the onset of democratic erosion as well as what factors may aid in resisting that erosion. Future capstones and data collection efforts can refine and build upon these efforts to aid partners in the work of resisting democratic erosion internationally. Based on suggestions from partners, this future work may include the following:

- Expanding the resistance database, including disaggregating the actors in resistance events to include more specific groups. For example, a new iteration might capture specific actors such as workers' unions or religious groups. These would be helpful for

policymakers who work in fields targeting these groups, such as labor rights. It may also add data on minor events that precede the larger resistance event. Often, these smaller pressures influence the trajectory and success of a resistance event.

- Further exploring the role of civil society organizations and the private sector, and how they influence citizens' willingness to resist. Conducting analyses that control for the strength of civil society and the private sector (with indices built by other organizations) may generate results that differ from those presented in this report.
- Conducting quantitative analyses that explore the relationships among specific event types. There is room to build on the work to discern relationships between certain precursors and any symptom, or between certain symptoms and any resistance event (presented in this report). With the larger dataset that will be available next year, we may be able to delve into relationships between precursor, symptom, and resistance event *types*, rather than only these broader categories.
- Investigating the role of transnational actors in fomenting or supporting erosion. While we have investigated the role of external pressure in inciting or supporting resistance, we have not explored this theme in terms of erosion itself. We might explore this trend as it relates to polarization, which may create the conditions for external interference.
- Considering the sourcing of information for country case studies, which become the raw material that is coded for inclusion in the DE dataset. Many student writers are limited to internationally-available news sources, which may not pick up smaller erosion or resistance events which are important in understanding the lead-up to a more significant event. Better guidelines are needed to help students find detailed and minimally-biased information on erosion events.

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Appendix 1: Country Classification List

Intentional Erosion (24):

Calculated Erosion (20):

Croatia, Georgia, India, Hungary, Israel, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Poland, Serbia, Turkey, Venezuela, South Africa, Philippines, Bolivia, Namibia

Pluralistic (4):

Greece, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal

Opportunistic Erosion (11):

Superficial Opportunistic (9):

UK, Germany, Austria, Finland, Ireland, Iceland, France, Latvia, Bulgaria

Deep Opportunistic (2):

Sierra Leone, Spain

Appendix 2: Horizontal/Vertical/Neither Country Classifications

Horizontal Countries (31):

Argentina, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Macedonia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Korea, Suriname, Tunisia, Turkey, Zambia

Vertical Countries (21):

Austria, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Croatia, Finland, France, India, Israel, Japan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela

Neither Countries (14):

Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Germany, Ghana, Iceland, Ireland*, Latvia, Malawi, Mali, Panama, Taiwan, United Kingdom

*Ireland does have 1 erosion symptoms, but it is categorized as neither vertical nor horizontal.

Appendix 3: Internal Event and Actor Type

Internal Event Types:

- Call for re-election
- Check on executive by judiciary
- Check on executive by legislature
- Check on legislature
- Coalition or elite pacts
- Election
- Election monitoring
- Impeachment proceedings
- Increase in civic capacity
- Investigation
- Media freedom
- Organized demonstration
- Organized violent riot
- Political inclusiveness
- Power sharing agreements
- Removal of leader
- Spontaneous violent riot
- Transition of power
- Transparency initiative

Internal Actors:

- Citizens
- Election board
- Judiciary
- Legislature
- Media
- Military or police
- Outside actor
- Parliament
- Political parties
- State
- Subnational government