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PATTERNS OF AUTOCRACY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the wake of the third wave of democratization, democratic leaders across the globe have begun to react to increasingly open political space by tightening their hold on power. Democratic erosion or backsliding has attracted growing attention from academics, international NGOs and advocacy groups concerned about closing civic space. However, democratic erosion is only one side of the coin, as dictatorial governments and "hybrid regimes" have also experienced reductions in open space. Less is known about such strategies of autocratic consolidation or "autocratization" -- especially how they compare to strategies of democratic erosion. But a better understanding of these patterns of autocracy is key for researchers, practitioners and policymakers who operate within this narrow band of "open space". As such, the Bush School of Government & Public Service's Master of International Affairs Capstone Team has partnered with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Fundamental Freedoms Fund (FFF) consortium to examine strategies of autocratic consolidation, how they vary within autocracies, and how they compare to strategies utilized by the autocratically-inclined executives in democratic societies.

To motivate this research, the Capstone Team initially looked to identify differences in open space between autocratic and democratic societies by examining protest data. Using the Mass Mobilization Protest Data Set (Clark & Regan 2016), the Capstone Team identified that, contrary to expectations, protest levels were similar across regime types: democracies, electoral autocracies, and closed autocracies. The latter, despite their non-participatory political structure, still experienced substantial levels of protest. However, despite similar levels of protest across regime type, autocratic regimes responded to protest differently, with higher levels of violent crackdowns than their democratic counterparts. This demonstrates that the pressures within autocracies may be similar to democracies, but they have a morbid flexibility in the strategies they can use to achieve their goals.

Examining this flexibility, the Capstone Team then sought to compare the strategies available to autocrats to consolidate control to the strategies utilized by executives in democracies for similar purposes. Utilizing Hill et al.'s (2018) empirical framework of democratic erosion as a building block, we identified events that serve as precursors to autocratic consolidation, acts that are symptoms of constricting civil space, and events that are sources of resistance to such consolidation, thereby creating an analogous framework to Hill et al.'s Democratic Erosion Event Database (DEED) which we term the Autocratic Consolidation Event (ACE) framework. Figure 1 presents the ACE framework and its overlap with DEED. In addition to the three event types in DEED (precursors, symptoms and resistance), the Team identified another item of interest, called "openings". The events considered openings are windows where there is a potential to challenge autocratic consolidation or where there is a temporary widening of the civil space in society, providing an opportunity for internal and external actors to potentially influence more enduring expansion. The development of this framework was iterative, with the Team initially utilizing the DEED event categories as a foundation and then adding or modifying categories for

autocracies based on events identified in the protest data and in the case studies discussed below.

Additionally, the Capstone Team recognizes that there is substantial variation within autocracies, an insight informed by the work of Geddes et al. (2018), that should affect the strategies of consolidation available or most attractive to autocrats. This heterogeneity includes variation in the level of existing open space within the autocracy, variation in the institutionalization of the autocracy, and variation in the groups that may resist efforts to consolidate power into the autocrat's hands. To identify additional strategies and pressures that may lead an autocrat to consolidate power and how they vary across types of autocracies, the Capstone Team utilized case study analysis, a methodological approach appropriate for hypothesis generation (Gerring 2004; Levy 2008). To select the case studies, the Team sought to maximize variation along two dimensions considered most deterministic of variation in autocratic strategies: existing open space (measured as the average level of polyarchy using VDEM data) and the level of consolidation (measured as an index of ruler longevity), with special consideration provided for countries of interest to the FFF consortium. Using these metrics, the Capstone Team chose three case studies -- Cuba, Cambodia, and Armenia -- that are each highly distinct from each other along both our dimensions of interest (see Figure 2). To complement these cases and improve the generalizability of our inferences, the Team also chose three shadow cases, or less in-depth case studies, used to examine whether mechanisms identified within each primary case had some external validity. These analogue cases, chosen for their proximity to our main cases along our dimensions of interest, were Libya (pre-2011), Uganda, and Georgia (pre-2003), for Cuba, Cambodia, and Armenia, respectively (see Figure 3).

The case study analysis generated several interesting insights with regard to intra-autocracy variation in terms of autocratization strategies with respect to both frequency and typology of strategies used (see Figure 4). The Team found that in cases where autocratic power has already been heavily consolidated into the hands of one executive (for example, the cases of Cuba and Libya), autocrats utilize fewer strategies for consolidation. This is likely due, in part, to the autocrat's previous actions resulting in less need for future consolidation. In other words, where the autocrat has already established his rule as uncontested, there is less need to actively contest for more power. Additionally, a corollary explanation could be that citizen expectations differ between closed versus more open autocracies. For instance, a society which has experienced a legacy of extended stay by the autocrat likely has low expectations of executive turnover, creating a complacency among citizens and thereby less motivation for an autocrat to step down at regular intervals.

Another inference that can be drawn from the case study exercise is that there are autocratic strategies that appear universal. Efforts by the autocrat to curtail civil liberties, repress the media, and stymie the opposition were seen in each case study, as was the use of violence by the state (or its proxies) in the pursuit of these goals. The universal occurrence of these event types across cases examined could indicate a fundamental concern of autocrats regardless of context: the necessity of controlling the narrative and perception of the state both in terms of

legitimacy, but also reducing the ability for dissident voices to catalyze resistance to the regime. Additionally, in the case of state conducted violence, autocrats can "save costs" on the other, more active and resource intensive consolidation tactics by manufacturing an environment of self-censorship due to the high personal costs for acts of defiance against the regime.

Beyond these universal tactics, the variance in strategies utilized by autocracies is informed by the threats they face. Autocrats are able to identify what threats may depose them, and actively work to neutralize those forces. For example, the Team identified that autocracies with more open space that must maintain a more robust veneer of democratic legitimacy were more likely to actively target the electoral sector, while states where representation was voided did not face these same constraints. Within closed autocracies, the autocrat's largest threats come from within, so the utilization of parallel structures and candidate selection allow for the autocrat to filter out discordant voices, ensuring loyalty and uniformity within the ruling clique. For autocracies that are between these two extremes, the executive appears to utilize strategies targeting both internal and external threats, leading to a greater number of strategies used. The idea that levels of autocratic consolidation form an inverse-U shape with respect to baseline levels of consolidation is a promising hypothesis for future research.

Additionally, strategies for consolidation are not mutually exclusive and can influence one another. For instance, the creation of parallel structures that is observed in our most closed case studies serve as a mechanism to co-opt the civil service, weaken horizontal checks on the executive, and repress the opposition. The multifunctionality of these structures provides a form of efficiency in protecting the autocrat's hold on power, but these parallel institutions can also serve as a scapegoat when needed to quell anti-government sentiment. By distancing themselves from the official governmental apparatus, and ruling via these parallel structures, autocrats can maintain a veneer of innocence and responsiveness to the people.

This examination into autocratic consolidation strategies is a starting point for further research into the study of closing space inside already restricted autocratic societies. Further investigations into the consolidation strategies of various autocracies should elaborate, confirm, and refine the initial framework presented in this study. While the three case studies selected have substantial variation, there are institutions not represented that may add nuance, such as military control over the government or strong dynastic norms within a royal family. Additionally, the openings identified are a proposed starting point for investigations on how to reverse, resist, or even overcome autocratic consolidation efforts. Finally, the current framework makes no differentiation between event severity, treating the complete outlawing of a rival political party as equivalent to a campaign of targeted legal and physical harassment. Identifying a way to scale strategy severity may uncover more useful information about the differences between autocratic and democratic executives. As an immediate next step, the ACE framework can serve as a starting point for coding autocratizing events across a broader range of cases and years, creating an event dataset analogous to DEED but tailored to autocracies. Developing such a dataset would allow for the testing of hypotheses related to both intra-autocracy variation and variation across regime types in strategies used to close space.

1: ACE Framework and Analogues to Existing DEED Framework

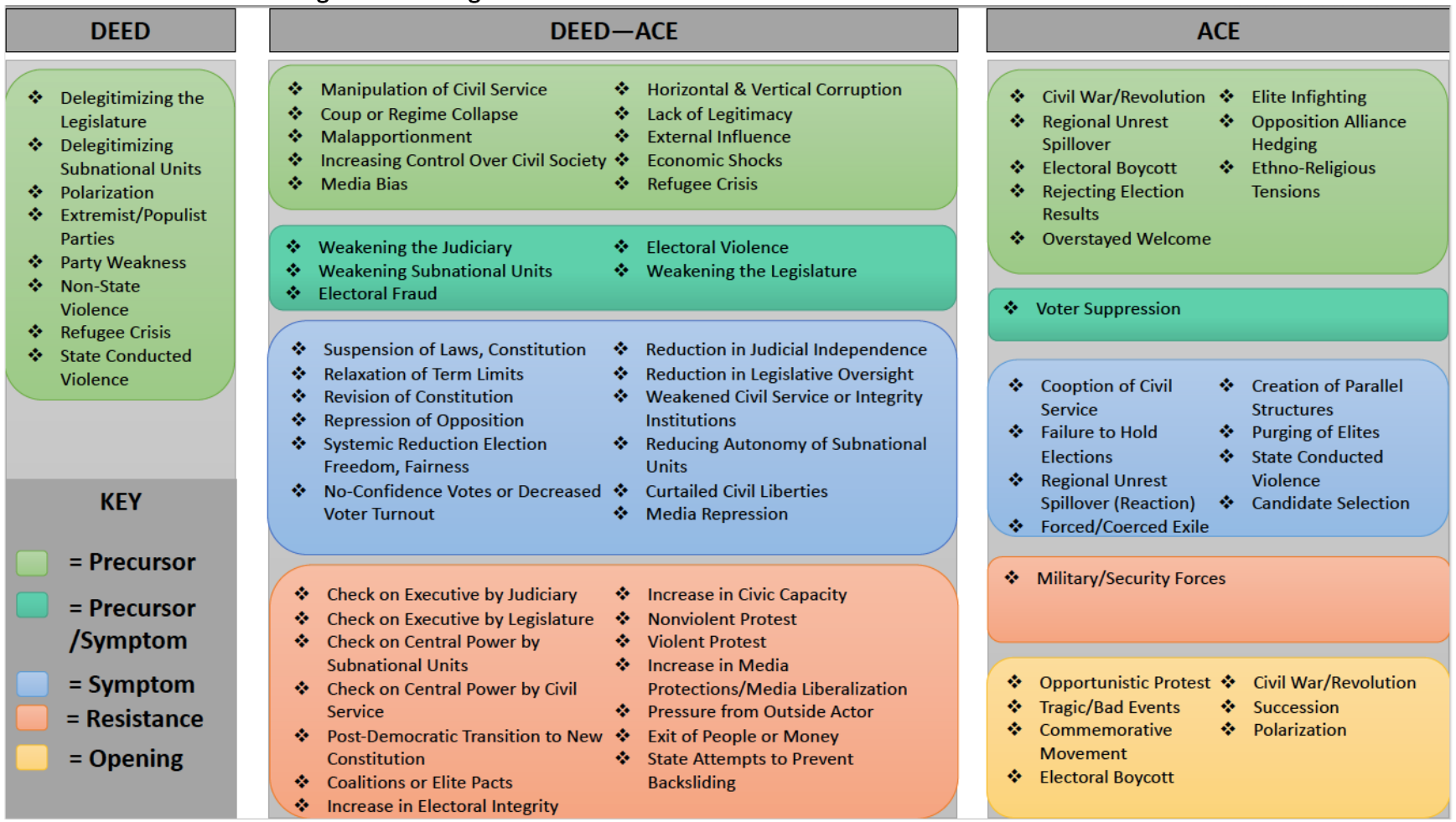


Figure 2: Case Selection Variation

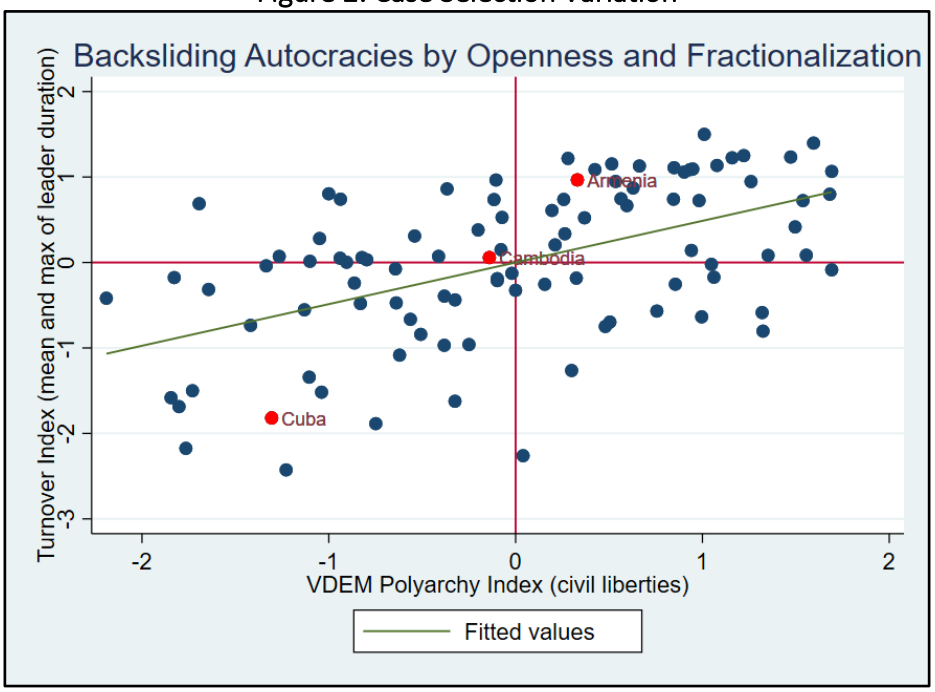
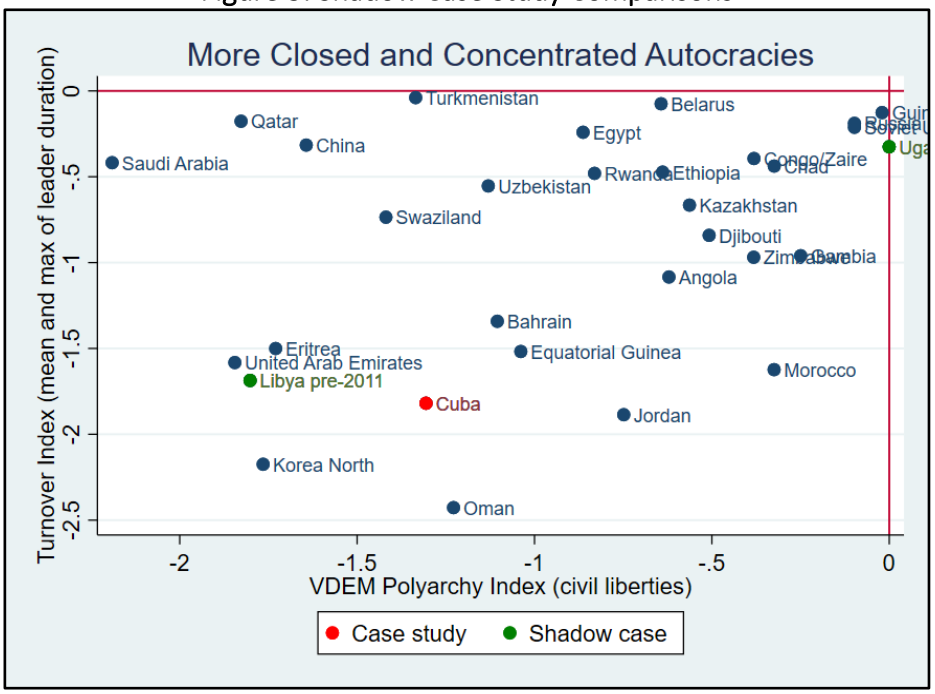
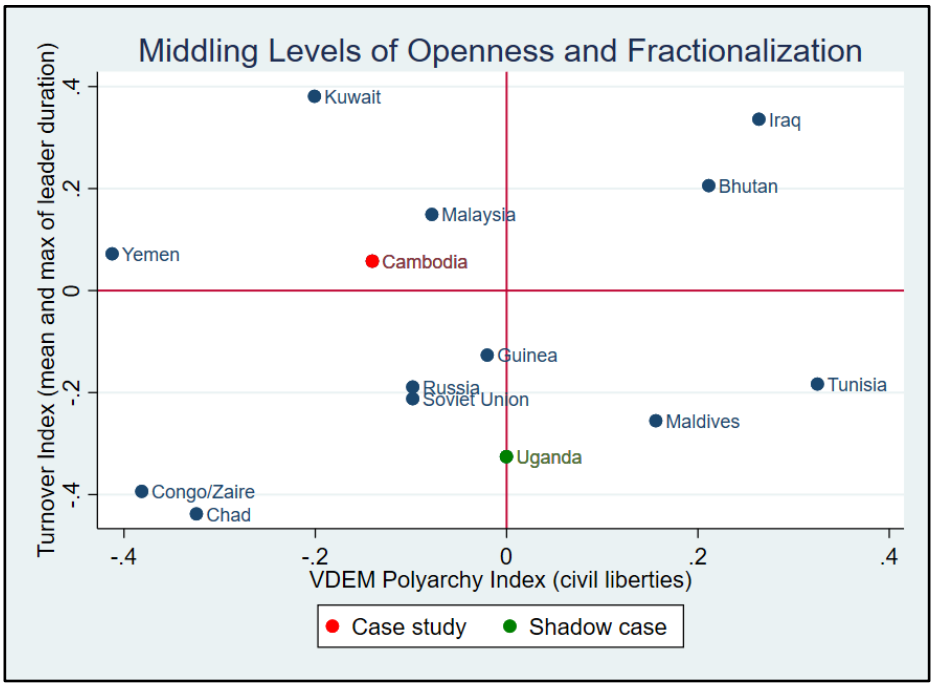


Figure 3: Shadow Case Study Comparisons




Middling Levels of Openness and Fractionalization
Turnover Index (mean and max of leader duration)
VDEM Polyarchy Index (civil liberties)
Kuwait
Iraq
Bhutan
Malaysia
Yemen
Cambodia
Guinea
Tunisia
Russia
Soviet Union
Maldives
Uganda
Congo/Zaire
Chad
Case study
Shadow case

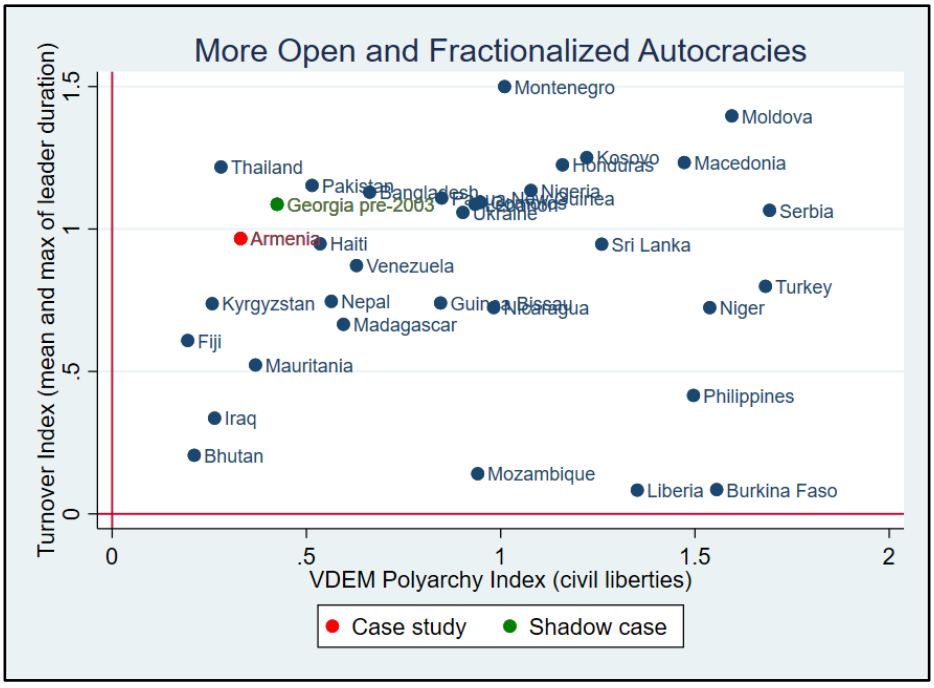

More Open and Fractionalized Autocracies
Turnover Index (mean and max of leader duration)
VDEM Polyarchy Index (civil liberties)
Montenegro
Moldova
Kosovo
Honduras
Macedonia
Thailand
Pakistan
Nigeria
Georgia pre-2003
Ukraine
Serbia
Armenia
Haiti
Sri Lanka
Venezuela
Turkey
Kyrgyzstan
Nepal
Nicaragua
Niger
Madagascar
Fiji
Mauritania
Philippines
Iraq
Bhutan
Mozambique
Liberia
Burkina Faso
Case study
Shadow case

Figure 4: Inter-Autocracy Strategy Variation

ACE Category	ACE Type	Cuba	Libya (until 2011)	Cambodia	Uganda	Armenia	Georgia (until 2003)
Precursor	Civil War/Revolution			●	●	●	●
Precursor	Electoral Boycott	●		●			
Precursor	Ethnoreligious Tensions				●		
Precursor	External Influence	●		●			
Precursor	Corruption			●	●	●	●
Precursor	Manipulation of Civil Service			●	●		
Precursor	Opposition Alliance Hedging			●			
Precursor	Overstayed Welcome				●	●	
Precursor	Refugee Crisis				●		
Precursor/Symptom	Electoral Fraud			●	●	●	●
Precursor/Symptom	Electoral Violence			●	●		
Precursor/Symptom	Unpopular Judicial Sentencing/Weakening the Judiciary			●	●		●
Precursor/Symptom	Voter Supression	●		●	●	●	●
Precursor/Symptom	Weakening Subnational Units	●	●		●		
Precursor/Symptom	Weakening the Legislature	●	●	●			
Symptom	Candidate Selection	●	●		●		
Symptom	Weakening of the Civil Service			●	●		
Symptom	Creation of Parallel Structures	●	●		●		
Symptom	Curtailed Civil Liberties	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Force/Coerced Exile	●		●			
Symptom	Media Repression	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Reduction in Judicial Independence			●	●	●	
Symptom	Repression of the Opposition	●	●	●	●	●	
Symptom	Revision of Consitution	●		●	●	●	
Symptom	State Conducted Violence	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Systemic Reduction Election Freedom, Fairne	●		●		●	●
Resistance	Nonviolent Protest	●	●	●	●	●	●
Resistance	Pressure from Outside Actor	●	●	●	●		
Resistance	Violent Protests				●		
Resistance	Resistance from Judiciary				●		
Opening	Civil War/Revolution					●	●
Opening	Economic Crisis	●					

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the third wave of democratization, leaders in democratic countries have begun to react to the increasingly open political space by tightening their hold on power. In these circumstances, leaders take actions that undermine the institutions that hold them accountable, through efforts that bypass, weaken, or repress them. This phenomenon, known as "democratic erosion" or "democratic backsliding" has attracted increasing attention from concerned individuals and organizations, who see the closing of civil space as a reduction in the reliability of those institutions that ensure liberty and rule of law. Academics, practitioners, and policymakers have heard the Reveille and begun to tackle this challenge, seeking to understand what events inspire this erosion and what strategies are utilized by executives to pursue it. One such initiative is the Democratic Erosion cross-university consortium (https://www.democratic-erosion.com/), which is a collaborative initiative between over 40 universities that educates students about this growing phenomenon and has also produced the Democratic Erosion Event Dataset (DEED) which systematically codes events related to democratic erosion across countries and over time.

However, in many cases, policymakers and practitioners who promote democracy and civil liberties do not operate in democracies. Instead, they operate in arenas with already constricted space, such as dictatorships or so-called "hybrid regimes". These autocracies have also seen a similar phenomenon emerge, where executives are engaged in campaigns to reduce the space that opened during the global thaw that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. In these states, strategies of autocratic consolidation, or "autocratization", are being implemented to cement power into the hands of the few or, in many cases, the one. However, despite its importance to practitioners, there has not been as much attention given to this second phenomenon.

The Capstone Team from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University was commissioned by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and its partners in the Fundamental Freedoms Fund (FFF) consortium to investigate this phenomenon. This investigation had two core components: to compare autocratic consolidation strategies to democratic erosion strategies, and to investigate whether and how autocratic consolidation strategies vary between autocracies.

Prior to this investigation, the Capstone Team conducted a review of the existing literature on democratic backsliding and autocratic consolidation to survey contemporary discussions on these two phenomena.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democratic Backsliding and Autocratic Consolidation

Authors have presented a variety of theories as to the origins and strategies underlying democratic erosion. Some authors, such as Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), center on what they term the "fateful alliance." According to this theory, democratic erosion can occur when the dominant political establishment attempts to co-opt outsiders to retain power, thereby giving the outlier political faction clout and legitimacy. For instance, after the longstanding Weimar political system in Germany collapsed in 1930, a series of appointed chancellors took office in an attempt to stifle radical factions and establish governance. However, the absence of a majority in parliament perpetuated the political stalemate. Eventually, the conservatives in Germany's government hatched a plan to unite and prop up one Adolf Hitler, then a political outsider with a large following, who they believed they could control. Similar "fateful alliances" likewise contributed to the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. To counter these fateful alliances, Levitsky and Ziblatt highlight the importance of political elites joining together to isolate demagogues.

Other authors, such as Nancy Bermeo (2016), have tracked the historical patterns in democratic backsliding, categorizing the various manifestations of this phenomenon. Bermeo finds that some forms of backsliding have diminished, while other forms, often more complex and difficult to counter, have increased in frequency. Specifically, open-ended coup d'états have been replaced by promissory coup d'états, where the regime change is cached as a restoration of democracy and promised improvement. Additionally, executive coup d'états, where the leader outright suspends the constitution and assumes total power, have been replaced by executive aggrandizement, or a more gradual erosion of the checks and balances that limit their authority. Finally, election-day voting fraud has been replaced by strategic electoral manipulation. Using these trends, Bermeo provides several insights. First, democratic backsliding has become incremental rather than sudden. Second, newer forms of backsliding are a rational response to pressures (i.e., sanctions) and constraints faced today. Third, backsliding which uses democratic institutions and processes can be challenging to both identify and respond to. Fourth, democracies that are overturned become less authoritarian and have shorter lifespans than the overturned democracies of previous periods.

However, although democracies have occupied a prime spot in academic research circles, dictatorships have not received comparable focus or treatment. This point is highlighted by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) in their seminal work on dictatorial regimes, *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse.* The authors examine several challenges that researchers face when examining the nuances of policymaking in autocratic leaning governments. First and foremost is the problem of finding reliable sources of information on the decision-making inside the elite circles of dictatorships. Whereas democratic regimes will publish data on their activities, self-published sources of information are rare or unreliable in dictator states. Second, studying the official policy institutions of dictatorial states will often

obscure the fact that these bodies may merely be bureaucratic "yes men" for the real nexus of decision-making that occurs informally. Third, dictatorships vary greatly in their relationships with surrounding countries, their relative economic prosperity, their income inequality, and their belligerence. Such variance can challenge attempts to create generalizable theories that map onto all dictatorships. As the authors state, despite the abundance of expert analysis on single dictatorships, comparative studies have been less common, creating knowledge gaps that would explain the underlying reasons for the variance observed in these states.

In addition to the logistical challenges to studying autocracies, an overly optimistic worldview on democratic progress could also contribute to their second-place status in scholarship. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way (2010) in Chapter 1 of their book, *Competitive Authoritarianism: The Origins and Dynamics of Hybrid Regimes in the Post-Cold War Era*, note that in the post-Cold War period, superpowers stopped or reduced their funding for dictatorships. This in turn led to domestic crises and weaker coercive apparatuses, forcing many autocrats to either liberalize or lose power. Additionally, the costs of being an openly authoritarian regime went up, as foreign aid access and preferential treatment was increasingly conditionalized on progress in democracy and human rights. However, over time, governments realized that being superficially liberal or making only modest concessions to human rights, was enough to maintain their international standing and access to aid, while simultaneously maintaining control.

The "competitive authoritarian" regimes that emerged in the aftermath are often wrongly categorized as transitional/nascent democracies—terminology that assumes there is some progression towards real democracy. Some of these competitive authoritarian regimes do democratize, while others remain authoritarian, even in the presence of leadership or regime turnover. Levitsky and Way (2010) note that competitive authoritarian states appear democratic lack several of the key hallmarks of legitimate, functioning democracies. First, while elections do not exclude the opposition and blatant electoral fraud is minimal, the fairness is undermined by the incumbent's control over the media and abuse of state resources. Second, they note that basic civil liberties are codified, but frequently violated in such ways like harassing or disadvantaging government critics. Third, the playing field is skewed against the opposition because the incumbent can leverage the judiciary, media, and state resources. They note that competitive authoritarian regimes follow three broad trajectories. The first pathway is the route to democratization, with the establishment of free and fair elections, active protection of civil liberties, and the creation of an even playing field. The second path is "unstable authoritarianism", where the incumbents are removed but replaced by another autocrat. The final path is "stable authoritarianism" where the incumbent stays in power, either remaining competitive or becoming more closed. This may inform the strategies utilized by autocrats who wish to maintain power, as they want to consolidate their control in a way to ensure their country does not follow the first or second paths.

The literature demonstrates that, although the main focus has been on democratic backsliding, there are in fact reasons to consider backsliding in autocracies, or autocratic consolidation, as a unique phenomenon. Applying models of democratic erosion to autocracies restricts nuanced

analysis of the trajectories that autocracies may take. A better understanding of these patterns of autocracy is key for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who operate within this narrow band of "open space".

Intra-Autocratic Variation

There is also literature that demonstrates that autocracies vary in some important ways, reflecting the different institutional structures, histories, and relations with other countries of these states. It is important to acknowledge these differences as they may have a significant impact on the strategies that are available to a specific autocracy. One of the most important sets of variables is the presence of institutions that can serve as a check on the power of the executive. Wright (2008) argues that regimes that depend on domestic investment to generate resources (as opposed to those that can rely on natural resource rents or foreign aid) have an incentive to create a binding legislature to assure domestic investors and producers that their businesses will have legal protections. However, if they have sufficient authority, legislatures can control the laws passed or begin efforts to depose the executive. Even in scenarios where their power is more limited, they can influence public opinion through critiques of policy, inciting dissidence. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) explain that a legislature generates a number of jobs that can be given as patronage to key supports to ensure continue support. Furthermore, they note that the regime can use competition for party favors to motivate prospective parliamentarians to extend their own personal patronage networks, increasing the number of people receiving benefits from the dictatorship and investing them in the regime's survival. The strength and position of the legislature can therefore dictate how the autocrat works alongside it and whether the autocrat can sideline it without drawing resistance.

Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) also note that this history of the autocracy can have a significant impact on how an autocracy functions. The origin of the regime can determine both how the initial executive is shaped as well as what resources are available to it. Groups that were more unified before capturing control of the state (due to a strong political party structure, or a disciplined military) are more likely to succeed in overcoming the previous regime, but also make it harder for the autocrat to consolidate power under himself personally. Alternatively, if the regime is divided into factions upon taking power, they cannot credibly threaten to coordinate and oust the dictator if he oversteps and seizes too much power. The length of rule is likewise significant, as they note that the swifter the dictator is when consolidating power, the longer their rule. The nation's first dictator also has an advantage in consolidating power because the inner circle is less experienced, as they have not consolidated their own networks in the new order. In these nascent autocracies, the dictator and his allied elites cooperate to prop up the regime and are forced to create new ground rules for the state. This creates an arena for bargaining where the autocrat's interests and those of the inner circle are opposed, where the autocrat wants primacy and his advisors want "collegiality". Geddes, Wright, and Frantz note that bargains made by the dictator during this moment of weakness only last so long as they are "self-reinforcing". This may inform our observation of consolidation strategies as we see early elites purged from the ruling clique.

Another facet of autocracies which Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) highlight is the presence of a party structure. These institutions distribute benefits (such as salaries, favors, and special access) to other members outside of the party elite, who in turn reciprocate by pledging loyalty and support for the regime. Party networks also let the dictatorship use supporters' time, skills, and connections to the community for their own benefit, to do everything from arranging mass demonstrations to explaining policy choices to other citizens. These parallel structures can also serve as a counterbalance to the military and were found to decrease the incidences of coups and attempted coups. If these structures are absent or weak, the autocrat's choice in strategies may be constrained by the institutions they would supplant.

Finally, outside actors can also play a key role. Levitsky and Way (2010) explain how democratization progress in autocracies can be influenced by international pressures, which are identified through international leverage and linkages. The leverage, which is identified by the authors as direct forms of pressure utilized to ensure reform, is often viewed as the primary way that the international community influences other states. However, Levitsky and Way note that the effect of linkages, ties that exist due to economic, diplomatic, or historical relations, often drive reform from within autocracies. They also note the existence of leverage and linkages that are not tied to democratization, in which sponsor states support autocracies despite their current governance. Referred to by Levitsky and Way as "black knights", these states can mitigate the ability of pro-democratic states to exert pressure on autocrats. The presence of these sponsors may permit autocrats to utilize strategies that would otherwise be costly.

Through this literature review, the Team identified four variables that were believed to have the largest effect on the autocratic consolidation of the state. As Levitsky and Way (2010) note, the regional linkages a state has can have a dramatic effect on whether a state democratizes. They note autocracies that have close proximity with democratic states, as well as autocracies that have high levels of linkages between their citizens and those of democratic states, are more likely to walk the path towards democratization. However, a similar effect can occur when states have close proximity and high linkages to stable authoritarian regimes. As such, linkages and international connections may be a strong predictor of autocratization. Similarly, Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2018) note that the historical context of the state matters, as states that previously experience autocratic regimes are likely to see new regimes autocratize as well after they overthrow the old despot. From Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, the Team also drew the prediction that the initial level of openness in the system will influence the strategies and ability for the autocrat to further consolidate power. In more open systems, with wider ruling cliques and external threats to the regime's control over the state, the bargains the autocrat makes with the inner circle and other elites are reinforced by the need to maintain power. In cases where space has closed and external threats have subsided, the autocrat may be permitted to "renegotiate" his terms with the inner circle, leading to different autocratization strategies. Finally, the level of personalism within the state was examined. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz note that autocrats that quickly seize and consolidate their power personally last longer than their slower counterparts. The Team posits that this quick seizure of power will create a different

political topography for the personalistic autocrat to navigate, potentially leading to less of a need to engage in additional consolidation strategies.

While each of these four variables is important, the Team chose to examine the level of personalism and the openness of the society as key determinants of the variation in autocratic strategies of consolidation. This was in part due to measurement concerns, as an objective measure of international linkages and ties would be difficult, and simple usage of proximity wouldn't capture the individual-level connections that Levitsky and Way (2010) note as being important for democratization/consolidation. In addition, the two dimensions selected yield the greatest variation, as the shared historical legacy of the Cold War limits variation in historical autocratic experiences.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

The review of the literature provided a firm theoretical basis for identifying the differences executives might use to consolidate power between autocracies and democracies, and for identifying variation across autocratic regimes. To generate more concrete insights and contribute to a framework of autocratic consolidation, the Team next searched for any existing data sets that catalogued the differences between autocratic consolidation strategies and democratic erosion strategies. Although no such data set was found, the Team was able to identify a several data sources that could contribute to the development of a framework. These data sets are briefly summarized below.

Varieties of Democracy (VDEM)

The Varieties of Democracy (VDEM) data set captures the erosion of civil space in both autocracies and democracies through a variety of indexes (Coppedge et al., 2020). There were three indicators of interest: an aggregate index identifying the status of electoral democracy in the country (*v2x_polyarchy)*; an aggregate measure of civil liberties, rule of law, and constraints placed on the executive (*v2x_liberal);* and a categorical variable, Regimes of the World (RoW), which classified each country into a categories to describe the level of open space in the country (*v2x_regime)*. From most closed to least closed, the classifications are *closed autocracy*, *electoral autocracy*, *electoral democracy*, and *liberal democracy*. A state's classification in RoW can vary over time, allowing the Team to merge other data sets with yearly observations.

Although VDEM measures some of the democratic backsliding and autocratic consolidation in the first two indicators, it does not identify the exact strategies which produced these effects. As such, VDEM was helpful in identifying windows of potential backsliding, but did not open those windows to explain what was happening.

There are a number of additional considerations that must be taken into account when using the VDEM data. First, because the polyarchy variable is an index of multiple indicators, positive increases in one indicator could mask negative changes in another indicator, giving the false

impression that the situation in the country was static. Second, because initial levels of openness in autocracies are low, it is hard to detect problematic behaviors in VDEM because they do not appear as change. For example, if a country's freedom of expression laws are extremely repressive, and have been so for the last 30 years, we would not expect to see any shifts in this part of the polyarchy index, even though this factor is highly significant in term of the leader's ability to stay in power. This tends to be less of a problem when looking at democracies, which are in general more dynamic.

Finally, some backsliding events aren't captured in VDEM. This includes actions that do not fall under one of the five components of the polyarchy index (freedom of expression, freedom of association, suffrage, clean elections, and elected officials) such as a reduction in judicial independence or attempts to coopt to the civil service. In addition, other backsliding events are not captured in the data because the events themselves are not problematic, but the motivations behind them are. This is generally more applicable to places where leaders are constrained to work within existing legal frameworks. A clear example of this comes from Armenia, which amended its constitution in 2015 to change the country from a semi-Presidential system to a parliamentary republic with the power resting in the Prime Minster. There is nothing inherently wrong or problematic with having a parliamentary system of government, however, the change was seen by many observers as a way for then-President Sargsyan to avoid term limits and stay in power.

Mass Mobilization Protest Data

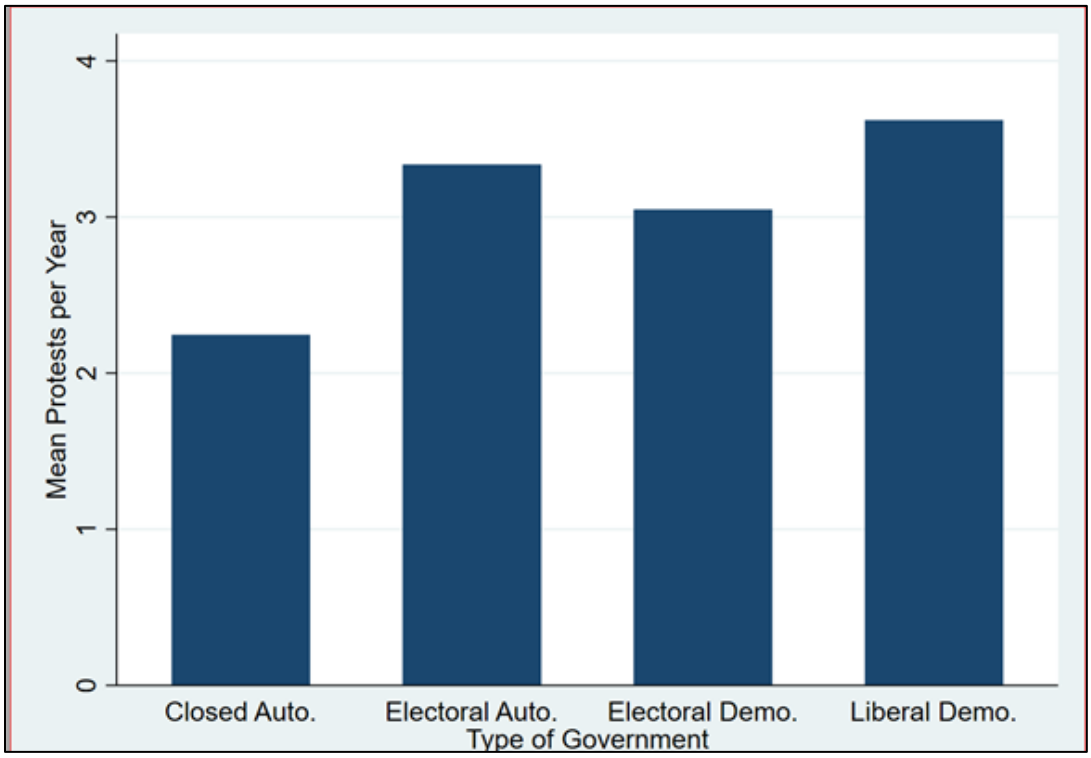
Another data set that captures the aftereffects of power consolidation was the Mass Mobilization Protest Data project. This project by Clark and Regan (2020) records protests larger than 50 people directed against governments in 162 countries between 1990 and March 2017. Drawing information from Lexis-Nexis, the project documents the protester demands, the government's response, protest location, and identity of protest group. Government response was of great interest for the Team as a means to differentiate how autocracies have reacted to mass mobilizations compared to democracies. The dataset captured eight different types of government response: accommodation to the protesters, ignoring the protests, engaging in crowd dispersal tactics (defined as attempts to move or break up protest short of violence), arresting protestors, beating protestors, killing protestors, and shooting protestors (which is associated with indiscriminate violence). The dataset identifies up to three government responses for each protest, which allows individual data points to track escalation of the government's response.

Examining the protest data was worthwhile for two reasons. First, identifying whether there were more protests in democracies than in autocracies would help inform our approach to identify autocratic strategies. While not all protests documented in Mass Mobilization are in response to autocratic consolidation or democratic erosion, public outcry often brings these policies to public light. If there is not a similar level of protests in autocracies, there would need to be a different approach to identify autocratic consolidation strategies. If protests are readily

apparent in autocracies, the individual protest data points for countries could be examined to identify autocratic consolidation strategies. Second, analyzing the protest data would help differentiate between autocracies and democracies if we found that the strategies utilized between the two were substantially different. Theoretically, there should be fewer restraints on the autocrat's actions, permitting harsher treatment of protestors. If this was found to not be the case, it suggests the presence of a mitigating factor that prevents autocrats from acting differently from democrats, which would merit exploration.

To compare the data across regime types, the Team collapsed all protests identified into yearly totals for each country. Then, the Team utilized VDEM's RoW designation to properly assign each country, year, number of protests (as a triad) the proper regime classification. This allowed for countries that experienced shifts during the time frame to be assigned to the proper category for each year. This process permitted the data to be compiled to identify how many protests, on average, a regime of each classification faced each year (see Figure A).

Figure A: Mean Protests per Year, by Regime of the World Classification



This exercise demonstrates that there is some difference in protest level between autocracies and democracies, but not to the level expected. While liberal democracies face more protests, and closed autocracies less, protests remain extant in all four categorizations, with no significant difference in protest level between electoral democracies and electoral autocracies. This

demonstrates that even when people have no expectation of access to the political system, such as in closed autocracies, they still protest. It is possible if we were to further divide regimes into categories, we may however see increased variation. In the most totalitarian regimes, such as Cuba or North Korea, it is likely active protests will be suppressed by the draconian nature of the regime.[1]

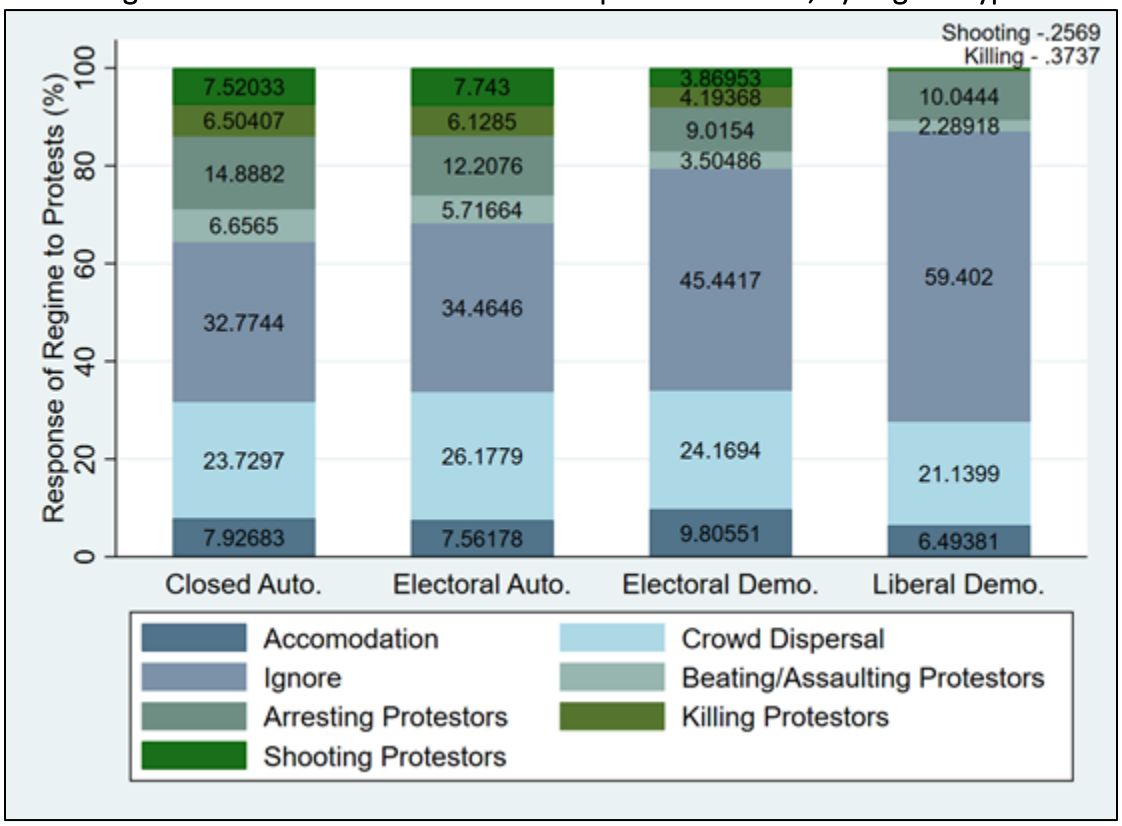
The Team generated some hypotheses from this exercise to explain this lack of variation. First and foremost, the nature of the Mass Mobilization data set as a news search may make it vulnerable to overreporting by dissident sources, but we should see a like inflation of protests in all regimes that have opposition. It is also possible that protests can be tacitly permitted by autocratic regimes to serve as an information gathering tool, especially in situations where the state does not have access to the ballot box to gauge public discontent.[2]

To explore how regimes differed in their responses, the Team identified which strategies were utilized in response to each protest in the data set and then compared the total list of protests to see how likely a government would be to utilize a given strategy to react to a protest.

[1] Interview with Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020

[2] This argument is forwarded in the Chinese case by Peter Lorentzen, who argues low-level protest is an informational gathering tool by the Chinese government. See Peter L. Lorentzen, "Regularizing Rioting: Permitting Public Protest in an Authoritarian Regime," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8 (2013). 127-158.

Figure B: Likelihood of Government Response to Protest, by Regime Type



Unfortunately, this exercise confirms that autocrats have more options when responding to protests, and are more likely to use harsher methods, including indiscriminate violence (*Shooting Protestors*). By contrast they are less likely to ignore the opposition, indicating higher priority on ensuring the protest is suppressed. This increased use of violence, as well as the increased use of arresting protestors, is likely due to the autocrat being less restrained by institutions, such as the judiciary, and being able to use those very institutions to eliminate opposition.

These exercises were informative in constructing the framework for autocratic consolidation described in the following section. However, there are several important caveats that must be considered. First, the Mass Mobilization data set does not include some major liberal democracies, including the United States and Australia, which may limit the comparisons made between the liberal democracies and the other classifications. Additionally, the Mass Mobilization data set only includes nonviolent protests, and does not include more violent forms of uprising, therefore not capturing the effects of these movements.

AUTOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION EVENT FRAMEWORK

To answer the question about how autocrats consolidate power differently from executives in democracies, The Team constructed a framework mirroring that of the Democratic Erosion Event Dataset, or DEED (https://www.democratic-erosion.com/event-dataset/project-summary/), called the Autocratic Consolidation Event framework (ACE). Before detailing the ACE framework construction process and its utility for studying authoritarian regimes, a short background explanation of DEED is in order.

Compiled by researchers and students across many academic institutions to study trends in democratic backsliding, DEED documents erosion events in 98 countries from 2000 to 2018, categorizing them as either Precursors, Symptoms, or Resistance. By way of an example, an event such as an attempted coup (a Precursor), could potentially incite the executive to suspend the constitution (a Symptom), which in turns leads to resistance in the form of non-violent protests, a new democratic constitution, or pushback from the elite (Resistance). Under the DEED framework, Precursors and Symptoms are further segregated as horizontal or vertical, where horizontal events originate from within or affect government institutions, while vertical events originate from or affect the citizenry.[3]

Using the DEED event labels as a starting point, the Capstone Team sought to delineate event types which could vary between autocracies and democracies. To guide this endeavor, the Team once again made use of protest data. The intuition behind this approach was that in closed societies, acts of consolidation may be hard to observe because of limited access to information and poor reliability of primary sources. Additionally, since autocracies are by definition more restricted in terms of civic space, some events which would be considered backsliding in a democratic context may simply be "par for the course" in autocratic contexts. Therefore, the Team reasoned that by examining protest-inducing events inside autocracies, it would be possible to indirectly identify acts of consolidation.

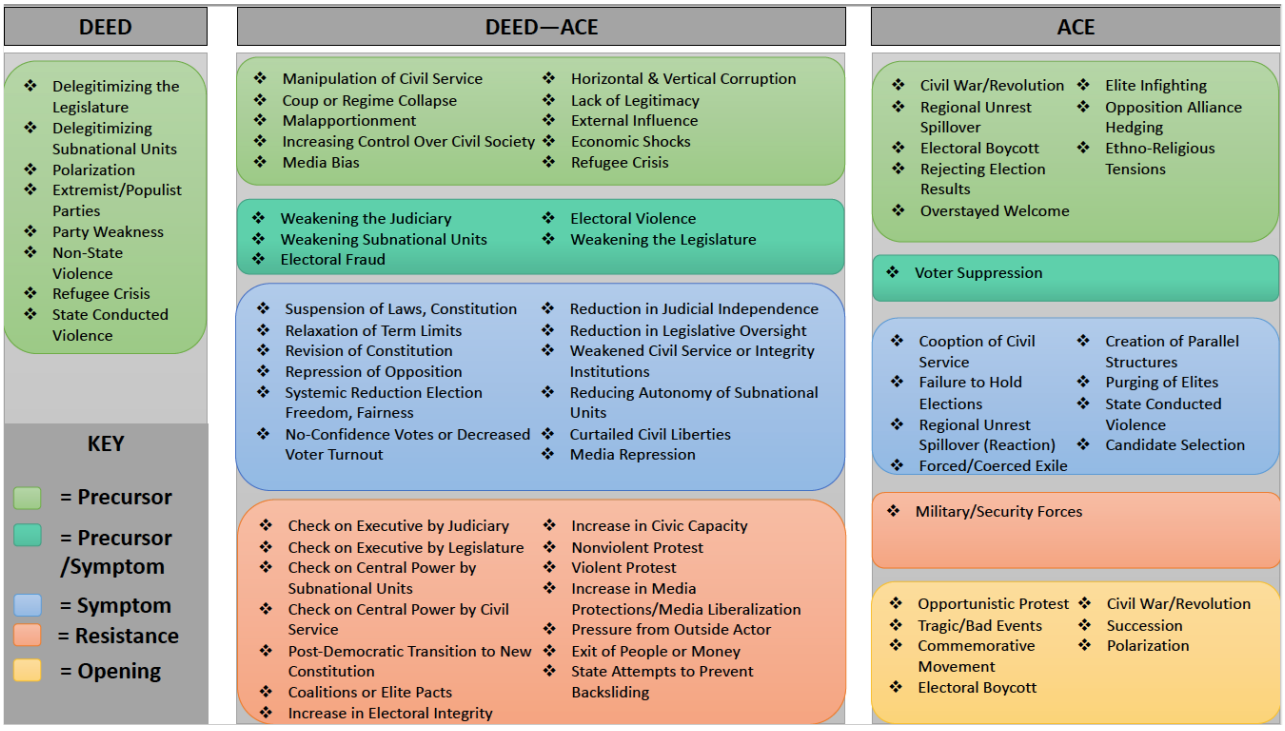
Working with the Mass Mobilization Protest data, the Team isolated protests for both electoral autocracies and closed autocracies between 2010 and 2016, a timeframe adopted to enable the Team to observe recent trends in protests frequency. To narrow the scope of the analysis, the Team identified outlier countries that experienced unusual spikes in protests in a given year, and countries which had higher average protest occurrences over the years examined. This yielded a list of 42 countries of interest. After this, the Team selected years with notable amounts of protests and performed basic research to briefly describe each large protest in that year, and any

[3] For more information regarding this division, see "About," Democratic Erosion, accessed May 3, 2020, https://public.tableau.com/shared/5WGB7YZW5?:showVizHome=no&:embed=true.

state actions or political conditions which triggered it. In total, there were 72 protest-inducing events in this initial data set.

The process of coding these events was iterative. The Team started by using the DEED event labels and category markers that best described the protest. However, it soon became evident that these DEED labels did not adequately capture certain protest events in our data set. Therefore, the Team performed a second coding pass, this time generating novel descriptive labels for the events. The Team then carried out several rounds of comparison to measure how these labels aligned or conflicted with the DEED framework. Events which the Team believed were artifacts of the protest-centric starting point were removed to ensure the remaining labels were geared toward acts of consolidation or precursors to consolidation. Finally, the comparative case studies, described in "Case Study Methodology & Selection," yielded additional examples of consolidation tactics used by autocrats, which the Team labeled and included in the ACE framework.

Figure C: The DEED and ACE Frameworks in Comparison



In cases where labels generated by the team closely mirrored or were direct analogues of labels in DEED, the Team adopted the original DEED event type phrasing. These shared events between the two frameworks are represented in the middle column of Figure C. Any labels which the Team believed described unique events to our autocratic consolidation framework were placed in the righthand column. It is important to note that these events are not necessarily exclusive to autocracies, but their absence from the DEED framework could indicate that they may occur

with greater frequency in autocracies relative to democracies. Finally, the left-hand column represents events for which there was no clear analogue to the events coded in our dataset or identified in the case studies.

In the course of this comparative exercise, the Team added two new category types under the ACE framework that are not included in DEED. The first is the joint Precursor/Symptom category, which was included to reflect the difference in pre-existing levels of consolidation between democracies and autocracies. The rationale is that in democracies, precursors of backsliding can occur without ever manifesting as a symptom. For instance, weakening of the legislature may occur in response to an extenuating circumstance, but fail to manifest as a systemic erosion or de-institutionalization of the legislative body long-term. By contrast, in autocracies where there is an assumed constant level of consolidation by the executive, it is possible the same event may function as both a symptom of current consolidation and precursor of further erosion. Thus, in autocracies where the legislature may already be weak and functioning as a rubber stamp institution, attempts to weaken it can simultaneously pave the way for further consolidation, but also maintain the existing level of executive control.

The second category new to ACE is Openings, which occur across two dimensions. The first dimension refers to events that create a window for resistance or challenge to autocratic consolidation. These openings may or may not be visible to outsiders or institutions that are excluded from the executive's in-group. One example could include polarization of the ruling elite in a single party state. The second dimension to openings is events where civil space is temporarily widened, even if only at the margins. For instance, a tragic event that leads to anti-government protest could provide an opportunity for internal and external actors to influence more enduring expansion of civil space beyond that brief window.

Figure D: Summary Statistics for DEED-ACE Comparison

Category	Framework	Count	% of Total
Precursor	DEED-ONLY	8	10.81
Symptom	DEED-ONLY	0	
Resistance	DEED-ONLY	0	
Sub-Total		8	10.81
Precursor	DEED-ACE	10	13.51
Precursor/Symptom	DEED-ACE	5	6.76
Symptom	DEED-ACE	12	16.22
Resistance	DEED-ACE	14	18.92
Sub-Total		41	55.41
Precursor	ACE	8	10.81
Precursor/Symptom	ACE	1	1.35
Symptom	ACE	8	10.81
Resistance	ACE	1	1.35
Opening	ACE	7	9.46
Sub-Total		25	33.78
Grand Total		74	100%

In terms of descriptive statistics, the ACE framework (including events shared with DEED in the middle column) contains 67 events, 25 of which are new events labels. The majority of the ACE-only events fall into the Precursor (10.81%), Symptom (10.81%), or Opening (9.46%) categories, with Precursor/Symptom and Resistance representing the smallest share (1.35% each). Examining the total number of events compiled in Figure D, we can see that 55.41% of the 74 events are shared between the autocracy-centric framework and democracy-centric framework. Across all three of the original DEED categories (Precursor, Symptom, Resistance), there is a significant degree of overlap with ACE. In fact, event labels recorded in DEED without an observed ACE analogue were only found in the Precursor category, and even then these 8 events represent just under 11% of the total.

Every Symptom recorded within DEED contained an analogue or direct counterpart Symptom in ACE. This finding makes intuitive sense. Since an autocrat likely faces fewer institutional constraints on their power, every option for centralizing authority in a backsliding democracy should likewise work in an autocracy. Important to note however, is that the severity, scale, and frequency of these strategies for consolidation could vary considerably across democracies and

autocracies, depending on the event. For instance, constitutional changes may occur with relative infrequency in both regime types, but the scope of these changes in an autocracy could dwarf those made in a democratic nation. Additionally, media repression, although present in democracies and autocracies, is subject to varying degrees of magnitude. A statement of censure against an opposition media outlet is certainly not comparable to mass arrests, imprisonment, or complete state control of information. Finally, reductions in election freedom and fairness in autocracies, where the playing field is already grossly uneven, will have a more negligible impact in marginal terms than the same symptom in a democracy where some expectations of electoral integrity remain.

In a similar manner, the Team reasoned that each type of Resistance event that can occur in backsliding democracies can technically occur in autocracies as well, but hypothesized that they were likely to occur with less frequency or could have a lesser impact on state responsiveness to reverse consolidation. For instance, state attempts to prevent backsliding, which is essentially the government placing constraints on itself, did occur in one of our case studies (Armenia), but as a whole we would not anticipate widespread self-correction in autocratic regimes. When such self-corrections do occur, it could be a strategy to minimize outside pressure or mitigate the effect of sanctions from the international community (as was the case of Cuba under Raul Castro). Other categories of resistance, such as horizontal checks on the executive from the legislature or judiciary, may be instituted in autocracies in an official capacity, but lack practical enforceability.

Moving to the ACE column, there are several Precursor events that may trigger consolidation in an autocracy which have not been formally noted in DEED as precursors of backsliding. For instance, an "Overstayed Welcome" refers to a situation where the executive has disregarded an informal understanding that they will not continue in office, but in which there is no constitutional term limit or constraint they are officially violating. By contrast, in democracies, executives may need to change term limits or the constitution, working around preestablished constraints, prior to overstaying their tenure.

Whereas each Symptom of democratic erosion was a subset of the Symptoms of autocratic consolidation, there are a handful of strategies which emerged during the analytic process that could prove more unique to autocracies. For instance, "Failure to Hold Elections", where there is a chronic condition of election postponement, could occur inside autocracies at regular intervals without instigating massive uprisings. However, the same event in a democracy, where civil society may be more robust, could result in substantial backlash or even revolution. Additionally, other strategies for consolidation, such as the creation of parallel structures to supplement or even supplant official government bodies, could be a novel strategy type reserved to the most closed autocratic contexts, and is discussed in the section on intra-autocracy variation.

As the framework stands now, there is only one Resistance event label that was generated for ACE—pushback from the military or security forces. This does not imply that resistance from the military sector does not occur in democratic spaces. However, autocrats in particular must vie

with the possibility of coups from within the security sector of government. Finally, since Openings is a new event category, there is no comparison point to be made as of yet between DEED and ACE in that regard.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY & SELECTION

Case Study Research Design

To help expand the framework to capture strategies that were not identified through the exercise with the Mass Mobilization data set, the Team utilized a series of case studies. Case studies are a tool that is well-suited to this task. Levy (2008) notes that hypothesis-generation is one of the primary uses for case studies, as researchers can intensively analyze events within a case and how they change over time. Levy states this "process tracing" is particularly good at cutting open theories to identify why they do or do not work. Gerring (2004) also supports the usage of case study in investigating causal mechanisms, as well as noting that case studies are uniquely useful in answering questions of descriptive inference. Because our interest is how and in what ways autocratic consolidation strategies differ from democratic backsliding analogues, as well as how these autocratic strategies differ among different types of autocracies, case studies will help us identify these mechanisms.

There are is a limit to case study analysis that must be acknowledged. External validity, or generalizability, of the lessons from one case study cannot be assumed. Gerring admits that representativeness is one of the weaknesses of the case study. To help ensure this generalizability, the Team decided to utilize shadow cases, which are smaller case studies. In theory, shadow cases should be almost identical to the primary case study to ensure it is capturing the same mechanisms, but this is not entirely possible in practice. As such, when engaging in the shadow case selection, the team attempted to identify countries that were similar on the dimensions predicted to be most important to determining variation in autocratic consolidation patterns. The shadow cases were then examined to see if the strategies identified in the primary case were also present within the shadow case. This would demonstrate the generalizability of the strategy outside the primary case.

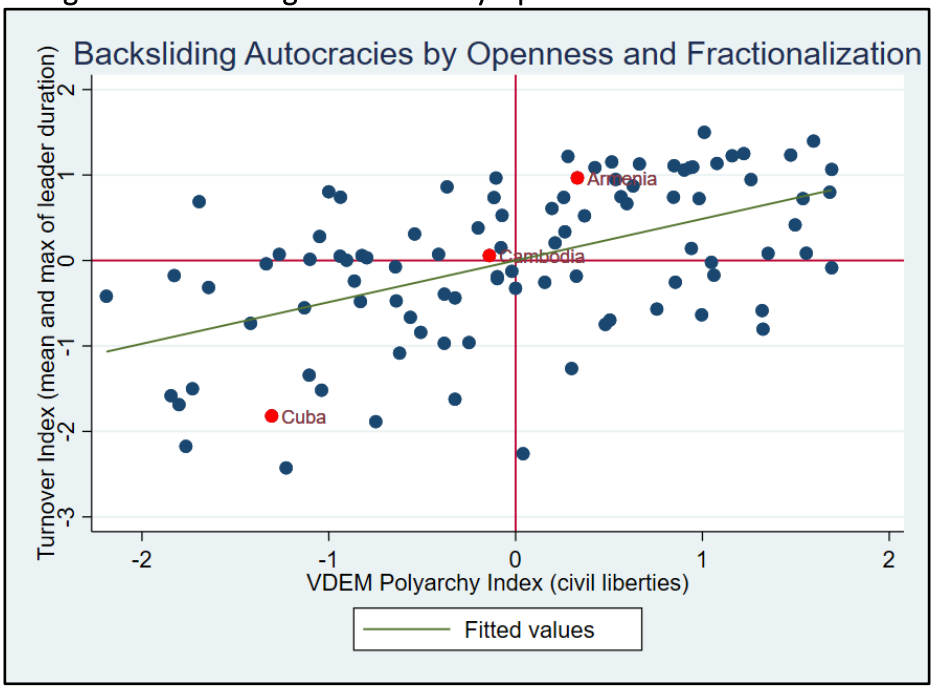
Case Selection Methodology

When selecting the case studies, the Team wanted to ensure that the three autocracies varied in significant ways, in order to examine the impact of these dimensions of variation on the autocraticization strategies used. To do this the team identified four variables that were believed to be most important in determining autocratic variation: personalization (the level of control over the country the executive has), regional linkages, history of autocracy, and level of openness in terms of civil space. Of these four, the Team identified personalization and level of

openness as the two to observe.[4] The Team then created a scatterplot (Figure E) for all countries that Regimes of the World classified as either a closed autocracy or an electoral autocracy, marking where each country fell in terms of these variables.

To measure the level of openness in each autocracy, the Team used V-Dem's polyarchy index, which takes into account freedom of expression, freedom of association, clean elections, elected officials, and suffrage, and then averaged the polyarchy score over our time period of interest (1990-present), to get a single "openness" value. The level of personalization is highly correlated with turnover, so to create a proxy measure, the Team created our own index that used the mean and maximum leader duration for each nation during the timeframe, which we derived from the Rulers, Elections, and Irregular Governance Dataset (REIGN) (Bell 2016). Constructing the measure in this way stopped the results from being skewed in countries that experienced recent leadership transitions, such as Cuba.

Figure E: Backsliding Autocracies by Openness and Fractionalization



As can be seen in Figure E, there is a general trend that autocracies with less turnover (that are more personalized) tend to be more closed, whereas autocracies with higher levels of turnover tend to be more open.

[4] The Team believed that due to the shared historical context of the Cold War, the variation in terms of history of autocracy would be limited, while regional linkages would be difficult to readily capture.

To select our case studies (marked in red in Figure E), we chose one from each key area of the scatterplot – the lower left quadrant, the middle, and the top right quadrant. The Team worked with NDI and FFF-REL to identify cases within each of these areas that were relevant to their programming. The cases selected were Cuba, Cambodia, and Armenia. The Team conducted desk research on each of these cases, and then spoke with experts on each country. The experts were able to verify findings or identify when observations were incorrect, speak to the bias in the sources used, and capture subtle actions that did not come across easily in secondary sources, such as the idea of rule by sub-decree in Cambodia. The full write-ups of the case studies are included in Appendices I-III.

In order to determine if the main cases offered generalizable findings or if the results were idiosyncratic, the Team chose three "shadow cases" for Cuba, Cambodia, and Armenia: pre-2011 Libya, Uganda, and pre-2003 Georgia, respectively. These cases were selected for their similarities to the main cases in terms of openness and personalization, as well as contextual factors. For example, Armenia and Georgia's similar location and shared history of being former Soviet Republics. The shadow cases underwent a brief analysis, so it is important to note that there may be strategies used by autocrats unique to these cases that were not captured, as their primary purpose was to verify that the strategies in the main case also occurred in the shadow case.

INTRA-AUTOCRACY VARIATION

Comparison Methodology

The question of intra-autocracy variation in autocratic consolidation can be in part informed by the individual case studies. The Team additionally undertook a more systematic approach to comparing intra-autocratic variation to provide greater insights. To compare the range of strategies present in the case countries, the Team used the ACE framework to identify and label strategies in each case study. Once these strategies were documented, they were put into a matrix (Figure F) in which a dot indicates the presence of the strategy within the country. After the matrix was constructed, the Team went back through the cases to identify whether there were strategies that had been missed.

Figure F: Intra-Autocracy Strategy Comparison

ACE Category	ACE Type	Cuba	Libya (until 2011)	Cambodia	Uganda	Armenia	Georgia (until 2003)
Precursor	Civil War/Revolution			●	●	●	●
Precursor	Electoral Boycott	●		●			
Precursor	Ethnoreligious Tensions				●		
Precursor	External Influence	●		●			
Precursor	Corruption			●	●	●	●
Precursor	Manipulation of Civil Service			●	●		
Precursor	Opposition Alliance Hedging			●			
Precursor	Overstayed Welcome				●	●	
Precursor	Refugee Crisis				●		
Precursor/Symptom	Electoral Fraud			●	●	●	●
Precursor/Symptom	Electoral Violence			●	●		
Precursor/Symptom	Unpopular Judicial Sentencing/Weakening the Judiciary			●	●		●
Precursor/Symptom	Voter Supression	●		●	●	●	●
Precursor/Symptom	Weakening Subnational Units	●	●		●		
Precursor/Symptom	Weakening the Legislature	●	●	●			
Symptom	Candidate Selection	●	●		●		
Symptom	Weakening of the Civil Service			●	●		
Symptom	Creation of Parallel Structures	●	●		●		
Symptom	Curtailed Civil Liberties	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Force/Coerced Exile	●		●			
Symptom	Media Repression	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Reduction in Judicial Independence			●	●	●	
Symptom	Repression of the Opposition	●	●	●	●	●	
Symptom	Revision of Consitution	●		●	●	●	
Symptom	State Conducted Violence	●	●	●	●	●	●
Symptom	Systemic Reduction Election Freedom, Fairne	●		●		●	●
Resistance	Nonviolent Protest	●	●	●	●	●	●
Resistance	Pressure from Outside Actor	●	●	●	●		
Resistance	Violent Protests				●		
Resistance	Resistance from Judiciary				●		
Opening	Civil War/Revolution					●	●
Opening	Economic Crisis	●					

It is important to acknowledge this method's limitations. The comparison is a cross-sectional analysis, so it does not capture temporal variation within each case study. Some of the countries in the case study, such as Armenia and Cambodia, have undergone substantial changes during the period examined, but while this change is present in the case studies, it is not reflected in the matrix. Additionally, there is no comparison of frequency or intensity permitted through this method. If both countries have a mark that indicates “Repression of the Opposition”, there is no immediate way to determine how often these states engage in such repression. Similarly, “State-Conducted Violence” can range from using security forces to forcibly break up protests to targeted political assassinations. While the case studies can provide an answer to these questions, the inability to discern this from the matrix does lower its individual utility.

However, there are advantages to this method as well. By observing presence and not frequency, this method allows for the comparison of strategies between autocracies without potentially excluding strategies utilized sparingly. By making the line for inclusion the strategy's existence and the fact it was utilized to gather power in the hands of the executive in the case, there is less risk of ignoring valid data points due to a more arbitrary line that was crafted by the Team. Additionally, the matrix provides an easy framework for countries that could be added through future desk research. Finally, it permits the observation of how a regime's strategies are inter-connected. While identifying electoral strategies as related is straightforward, identifying other strategies that were utilized by one end of the spectrum but not the other allows a return to the case studies to examine how those strategies are utilized together. This can help answer the question of "why" a chosen suite of strategies was utilized, which may difficult to identify with a single data point.

Analysis

Strategies Used by Autocratic Typologies

Certain strategies appear to be universal across all autocratic contexts examined in the comparative case studies. These include curtailing civil liberties, repression of the media and the opposition, and state conducted violence. Some of these, such as restrictions on civil liberties, are expected. By definition, autocracies will contain fewer institutionalized protections for liberties as a whole, otherwise their classification as autocracies is suspect. However, by tightly restricting certain freedoms such as association and assembly, autocrats are able to prevent the emergence of mass organizations, stifling the opposition before it is able to unify and form a cohesive bloc. This was very evident from the onset in Fidel Castro's Cuba, and the near-total, if not total lockdown, on civil society inside the regime has continued to this day.5 However, the presence of this tactic across even the relatively more "open" regimes indicates that curtailing civil liberties is likely a fundamental strategy that autocrats must use to remain in control.

The pervasiveness of media repression in the case studies reveals yet another possible fundamental strategy. By controlling the narrative of the state in official publications, or by curtailing negative portrayals that could influence the public against the regime, autocrats can inhibit dissident voices which could otherwise act as catalysts for mass mobilizations or revolt. Regular messaging and propaganda which conveys the idea that the state is infallible and performing essential functions efficiently, and which reminds the populace of the repercussions of insurrection, creates legitimacy and encourages self-censorship. Similarly, whereas other strategies of consolidation may require more resources or bureaucratic oversight to maintain, state-conducted violence can be performed at a relatively lower cost. Unleashing violent gangs of paramilitary forces, death squads, or state security to torture dissidents or assault protestors

[5] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020

can manufacture an environment of self-censorship due to the high personal costs for acts of defiance against the regime.

Trends in More Closed Autocracies

Certain strategies, namely parallel structures and candidate selection, appear to be primarily utilized by the more closed regimes. In the case of parallel structures, the autocrat has created a highly institutionalized informal center of power that coexists with, but supersedes, the official state bodies, possibly including the legislature and judiciary. This strategy is particularly versatile, as it can function both as a hedge against elites inside the government, co-opt the civil service, weaken horizontal checks on the executive, and repress the opposition. This in turns introduces the concept of interrelations between strategies, and how consolidation tactics should not be thought of as isolated or mutually exclusive events.

In some autocracies, parallel structures may have a hand in both directing and constraining civil society, either through coercion or cooption (or both simultaneously). For instance, the autocrat can use parallel structures to encourage mass participation in state-sanctioned "civil spaces", monitor those spaces for potential dissent, then use those same parallel structures to replace opposition voices with ones favorable to the regime. The multifunctionality of these structures provides a form of efficiency in protecting the autocrat's hold on power, but these parallel institutions can also serve as a scapegoat when needed to quell anti-government sentiment. By distancing themselves from the official governmental apparatus, and ruling via these parallel structures, autocrats can maintain a veneer of innocence and responsiveness to the people, as was the case in Libya (see Appendix IV).

Alternatively, parallel structures that are institutionalized in the form of a political party can be extremely effective in ensuring longevity of the regime. It is possible that within closed autocracies, the autocrat's largest threats come from within the government. So, the utilization of parallel structures and candidate selection allow the autocrat to filter out discordant voices, ensuring loyalty and uniformity within the ruling clique. By maintaining a monolithic political entity where conformity is the norm, the autocrat can ensure party loyalists exist not only in the official government apparatus, but also occupy positions of authority throughout the rest of society. This is exemplified in the Communist Party of Cuba (see Appendix I).

If the parallel structures have a security component, they can also serve as a mechanism of coup-proofing. Therefore, the most closed regimes that have high levels of personalism may have an advantage when one highly versatile strategy (such as parallel structures) can perform a multitude of functions that serve to perpetuate the executive's hold on power. These strategies are multifaceted, covering a wide range of sub-strategies that all flow out from one source.

The Team found that in the most closed cases where autocratic power has already been heavily consolidated into the hands of one executive (for example, the cases of Cuba and Libya), autocrats utilize fewer strategies for consolidation. This is likely due, in part, to the autocrat's

previous actions resulting in less need for future consolidation. In other words, where the autocrat has already established his rule as uncontested, there is less need to actively contest for more power. Additionally, a corollary explanation could be that citizen expectations differ between closed versus more open autocracies. For instance, a society which has experienced a legacy of extended stay by the autocrat likely has lower expectations for executive turnover, creating a complacency among citizens and thereby less motivation for an autocrat to step down at regular intervals.

This does not indicate, however, that autocracies that are more closed do not use the strategies marked in the less closed cases examined in this framework. However, it could suggest that the combined weight of a few highly effective and multifaceted strategies (like parallel structures), in conjunction with lowered expectations in the citizenry for diffusion of power, eliminates the need for a large toolbox. If one highly efficient means of consolidating control accomplishes the same objective as many strategies, it makes sense to focus attention and "specialize," as it were, in that one strategy.

The Team observed fewer Precursors in the most closed states. This is in part idiosyncratic, because many of the Precursors, such as Civil War/Revolution, Refugee/Migrant Crisis, and Ethno-Religious Conflicts are context-specific and may easily be present in Closed Autocracies that are not Libya and Cuba. However, there are structural explanations on why some other Precursors are less likely to emerge as harbingers of autocratic consolidation in more closed autocracies. For instance, Corruption is less likely to be an apparent Precursor to autocratic consolidation within closed autocracies because the preferential treatment for in-group members has been made institutionalized, meaning that the spoils are no longer "illegitimately" taken from the state.

Trends in More Open Autocracies

There are also strategies that are identified as being more likely to occur within more open autocracies than their closed counterparts. Chief among these strategies are those that influence elections - what has been identified in our ACE framework as Electoral Fraud, Voter Suppression, and Electoral Violence. Electoral autocracies believe that elections are necessary to maintain their legitimacy in the international system, allowing them to continue to receive aid and support from developed democracies. Additionally, there are expectations from the citizenry that elections will continue, investing them in the election cycle. As they are not willing (or able) to abolish elections, open autocracies face a potential legal challenge from the opposition, which could potentially unseat the autocrat. Identifying this as a premier threat to the ruling clique, autocrats and ruling elites within electoral autocracies recognize the importance of maintaining their control over the election system. This worry is non-existent for closed autocracies, as there is no legitimate way for out-group opponents to challenge for power after election systems have been thoroughly co-opted or abolished. In our intra-autocracy comparison, Armenia and Cambodia both experienced significant electoral irregularities, either through blatant cases of

fraud or through efforts by the ruling party to ensure the election never occurred on equal footing (see Appendixes II & III).

This focus on the opposition and the external legitimacy also makes more open autocracies more susceptible to external influence. This can go in two ways. In some cases, the state may react to perceived pressure from allies to widen the band of political space available in the country. This was seen in Uganda, where the state introduced legal multi-party elections. However, more open autocracies also gain significantly from the presence of patrons who are not concerned with the level of democracy in the country. These "black knights" can offer autocrats support even if the actions the autocrat is taking would previously leave them ostracized from the international community, galvanizing more extreme autocratic actions and potentially allowing the autocracy to become much more closed. In the Cambodian case study, China's support for Hun Sen permitted him to take actions, such as banning the Cambodian National Rescue Party and expelling foreign NGOs, without fearing a massive economic crunch caused by the loss of Western trade.

Additionally, more open autocracies also engage in strategies to ensure compliance from branches of government that rival the executive. In the observed case studies, the primary example of this was efforts by the executive to reduce the independence of the judiciary. When the judiciary is institutionally separate from the executive, it has the ability to prevent the at-will enforcement of the executive's will. Conflicts with the judiciary inspire the government to take efforts to draw the judiciary into the executive's orbit, ultimately creating an environment where rule of law is only applicable to the executive’s rivals. It is worth noting that, as a quirk, the primary case studies each had a parliamentary or semi-presidential system, putting the legislature often under the direct control of the executive. It is possible that under a presidential system where the opposition controlled or influenced the legislature, one would see a similar effort to reduce the independence of the legislature due to its potential position as a foil for the executive.

Trends in Middle Autocracies

For autocratic regimes that are located between the two extremes, the autocrat will use the strategies appropriate for their situation. These autocrats are still likely to face potential rivals from the out-group if elections are still permitted, meaning they will still engage in strategies intended to manipulate the electoral system, and they will attempt to bring any rival power structures within the government to heel. However, due to the comparative stability, in that the ruling clique never expects to lose elections, the autocrat may also face increasing challenges from within the in-group as well. In these cases, they have more to lose than their more open contemporaries and will likewise use strategies to maintain internal party discipline. As such, this wider range of threats means that autocracies "in transition" will utilize a wider repertoire of strategies to consolidate control under the executive.

GOING FORWARD: USING ACE AND FUTURE STEPS

The ACE framework, as currently constructed, is the first step in developing a more comprehensive understanding of autocratic consolidation strategies and the variation in strategy usage among autocratic regimes. The ACE framework offers policymakers and practitioners a tool that may be helpful in policy development, project design, and evaluation. The 30th April 2020 workshop organized by NDI helped identify a number of areas where the ACE framework may be helpful, as well as helping to identify future steps that may be taken to craft a more robust tool. One of the first steps that should be taken is expanding the number of cases examined by ACE. This exercise will help validate the analysis in this paper, but may also find additional patterns in strategies that are utilized and, potentially more excitingly, patterns in resistance to autocratic consolidation, which could assist in finding partners within countries.

The ACE framework may help inform decision points within a program cycle for policymakers. Because Openings may be temporary, recognizing these chances to cement an expanded civil space may be helpful in encouraging the growth of open space in environments that ordinarily would be hostile to such activity. If the framework can accurately identify trends in autocratic consolidation strategies by typology, it may be possible to identify future strategies used by a regime and buttress the institutions and groups that may be targeted by autocratic consolidation strategies. Additionally, constructing a timeline of consolidation based on trends observed in ACE (such as countries moving from one quadrant to another) could identify not only when erosion may be imminent, but also where an autocratic regime may have "pressure points," or areas where civil society has the greatest chance to influence change. The framework can also serve as a guide for cross-country evaluators and program staff looking to familiarize themselves with a country where they are only assigned for brief moments in time. This could be combined with a more thorough stakeholder analysis to analyze what events are occurring in a chosen country and how they affect specific populations, which may be salient to groups that focus on narrower cohorts within the general population.

An expanded ACE framework and full event dataset would also provide a valuable tool for researchers looking to answer questions about how autocratic consolidation varies in different situations. One clear example provided during the workshop was questioning how autocratic consolidation may look different at different levels of state capacity. Such a comparison would be especially salient after times of crisis, as it provides the autocracy the opportunity to prove its capacity. For many research questions like this one, a dataset developed around the ACE framework could provide the dependent variable to use alongside already existing or novel data sets to investigate one variable's impact, such as state capacity, on consolidation in autocratic regimes.

There are several important areas, beyond an expansion of the case study pool, that may also be worked on to improve the ACE framework. One key task will be to develop a coding scheme that can account for the severity and frequency of autocratization strategies. Certain strategies may look very different in different countries. While "State Conducted Violence" in Armenia refers to

police assaulting protestors, in Cambodia it includes the use of indiscriminate, lethal violence. In addition, it may be necessary to develop a scheme to demonstrate how confident researchers are that a certain strategy is being utilized by the executive, since many strategies, by their nature, are done covertly. This may be especially useful when examining closed societies where there is limited information. Finally, there should be a move to code variables by year, so that changes over time can be accounted for and patterns of possible path dependence can be observed. There should also be an effort to identify new Precursors, Symptoms, Resistance, and Openings when they occur to ensure a more comprehensive framework. Other suggestions included parsing out certain variables to identify more specific strategies. This would result in the division of variables such as "Repression of the Opposition" into more granular strategies, such as the use of political terror or mass political arrests. Such a nuanced indicator list may help alleviate the need for a severity coding schema.

Finally, the development of an ACE dataset would allow researchers and policymakers to conduct new lines of inquiry. This was a subject of considerable discussion at the virtual workshop, and the key areas for further exploration that were raised were the role of technocratic capacity in the speed and severity of consolidation, what impact regional and neighborhood effects had, and what role crises and outside actors (like NGOs) had in impacting state legitimacy.

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APPENDIX I: CUBA CASE STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cuba's government has a long legacy of authoritarian and autocratic behavior since Fidel Castro came into power in 1959. With a virtually total lockdown on civil society, there is truly very little space for independent political action or engagement, apart from occasional protests which are quickly and efficiently quelled through detentions, arbitrary arrests, and other forms of intimidation. However, Cuba is in an unusual transitory state, with the installation of both a new president (Miguel Diaz-Canel) and new constitution in the past two years. Although the new constitution provides for term limits and ostensibly dilutes the power of the president, it institutionalizes the influence or control of the executive in the legislature, election council, and prime minister.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Formal Role of the Executive

The executive in Cuba historically served as both the head of government and head of state via the position of the President of the Council of State, assisted by a 31-member Council of State and Council of Ministers, the latter functioning as a cabinet. During Fidel Castro's tenure, and part of Raul Castro's time in office, the executive also served as First Secretary of the Communist Party and commander in chief of the armed forces, and had a high degree of wide-reaching, concentrated authority.[6]

Formal Role of the Legislature

The official unicameral legislature comprises the 614-member National Assembly of People's Power (Asemblea Nacional del Poder Popular; ANPP). Each member serves a five-year term. The ANPP is also responsible for electing the president, vice president, and judges of Cuba's People's Supreme Court (Tribunal Supremo Popular; TSP),[7] as well as the President and Vice President of the Council of State, and president, vice president, and secretary of the ANPP.[8] However, this is likely simply a formal "confirmation" of the communist party leadership's recommendations. When not in session, the ANPP's

[6] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
105 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.
[7] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
108 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.
[8] August, Arnold. Democracy Still in Motion: The 2013 Election Results in Cuba. Vol. 6 Pluto Journals, 2014. 92-93 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.6.1.0087. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=96560174&site=ehost-live.

responsibilities are fulfilled by the Council of State,[9] which assumes real responsibility for legislative matters.

Cuban Communist Party

The Cuban Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Cuba; PCC) was established as the preeminent authority within Cuban politics under the 1976 constitution. The party is headed by a 24-member Politburo and 149-member Central Committee.[10] The PCC is the only legally recognized party and dominates the high-offices, but non-members can technically serve in the National Assembly.[11]

Historical and Current Civil Liberties

Civil space in Cuba has been incredibly closed from 1990 (the starting focal point of the case study analysis) until today, with no significant variation. In fact, the language used by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in their annual country report has remained almost uniform, if not verbatim, during this period, especially with regard to fundamental freedoms including free speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly.

- In their 1991 report, HRW stated that free press did not exist in Cuba, and freedom of speech was limited by "enemy propaganda," "contempt," and "clandestine printing" laws. Additionally, assembly was curtailed by "illegal association" and "public disorder" laws. At the time, HRW wrote that "There are no legally recognized civic or political organizations," and free elections were also absent. The legal system was a puppet of the executive.[12]
- In their 2000 report, HRW stated that "The rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement, and of the press remained restricted under Cuban law." The government also preemptively arrested or surveilled people under allegations of "dangerousness" (*estado peligroso*).[13]

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[9] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
105 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.

[10] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
105 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.

[11] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
106 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.

[12] Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch World Report 1992 - Cuba . https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca451e.html: Unknown: Human Rights Watch, 1992.

[13] Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch World Report 2001 - Cuba . https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a8dd3c.html; Unknown: Human Rights Watch, 2000.

- After Raul assumed power from his brother in August of 2006, HRW wrote that "Cuba remains the one country in Latin America that represses nearly all forms of political dissent."[14] Although 2008 saw the new executive signal, in nominal terms, a larger commitment to human rights, HRW wrote that "The repressive machinery built over almost five decades of Fidel Castro's rule remains intact and continues to systematically deny people their basic rights."[15]
- As of 2019, Cuba continues its pattern of repression, with slight modifications to its tactics. Since 2017, the number of arbitrary arrests has steadily declined each year after sharply increasing during the 2010-2016 period. However, the monthly average from January to August of 2019 was still 1,818 (albeit a 10% drop from the previous year in the same window). The government regularly prevents protests by detaining individuals and harassing, intimidating, and beating them. Independent blogs and website are blocked by the Cuban government, but internet access is already limited to most Cubans because of cost. Decree-Law 370/2018, which came into effect in July of 2019, is designed to prevent independent blogs and news from hosting websites abroad. There are at least 109 political prisoners in Cuba at this time.[16]

Profile of Executive

Miguel Diaz-Canel has been the executive in Cuba since April 19, 2018, ending the tenure of the Castro brothers who were in power since 1959.[17] Díaz-Canel was born after the revolution and lived through the "special period," or post-Cold War depression, where it is said he rode a bike, signifying his solidarity with socialist ordeals. His mother was a school teacher and his father worked at a mechanical plant. He graduated with a degree in electrical engineering from Central University of Las Villas, served in the Air Force, and performed some type of mission in Nicaragua. He also worked his way through the communist party, first in the Young Communist League and up through First Secretary of the Party in Villa Clara province. He was an LGBT advocate and promoted information technology.[18]

Table 1: Roles Before Presidency

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[14] Human Rights Watch. World Report 2008 - Cuba . https://www.refworld.org/docid/47a87c00c.html; Unknown: Human Rights Watch, 2008.
[15] Human Rights Watch. World Report 2009 - Cuba . https://www.refworld.org/docid/49705fa58.html; Unknown: Human Rights Watch, 2009.
[16] Human Rights Watch. *Cuba: Events of 2019*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cuba; Unknown: Human Rights Watch, 2020.
[17] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020. 112 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.
[18] Wilkinson, Stephen. Cuba: Plus Ça Change?. Vol. 10 Pluto Journals, 2018. 6 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.10.1.0005. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=131648804&site=ehost-live.

2003	2009	2012	2013
Elected to Politburo	Minister of Higher education	Vice President of the Council of Ministers	First Vice President.[19]

Raúl Castro stated that Díaz-Canel would replace him as party head, and indicated that the selection process involved a "group,"[20] likely implying deliberations with other members of the PCC. After assuming the presidency, Díaz-Canel gave a speech in which he highlighted that the direction of the government would remain under the stewardship and guidance of Raúl Castro. This could indicate deference to the legacy of the Castro's in Cuba's revolution.[21] On July 26, 2019, Díaz-Canel presided over the 66th anniversary celebration of the Moncada Barracks raid, a role which had previously been reserved for high-profile members of the historic generation (Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Ramiro Valdés, and Machado Ventura). Díaz-Canel's speech was again deferential to the legacy of the historic generation, but there was a symbolic "passing of the torch" in allowing him to lead the commemoration.[22]

Although there were rumors that some in Cuba's elite circle were fearful of Díaz-Canel becoming "another Gorbachev," indications of the new face of government becoming "soft" or amenable to loosening Cuba's totalitarian restrictions have not manifested. The new president's rhetoric is in line with Raul, and it is readily apparent to both Diaz-Canel and the people that true power is still vested in the *caudillo,* or strongman position, held by Raul.[23] [24]

AUTOCRATIZATION STRATEGIES

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[21] Wilkinson, Stephen. Cuba: Plus Ça Change?. Vol. 10 Pluto Journals, 2018. 5 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.10.1.0005. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=131648804&site=ehost-live.
[22] Reinaldo Escobar. "'The 26th' of Cuban President Diaz-Canel ." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* July 26, 2019, http://translatingcuba.com/the-26th-of-cuban-president-diaz-canel/.
[23] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[24] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.

Constitutional Reforms—Executive Extension into Provincial Government, Legislature, and Elections

On May 13, 2013, a working group within the PCC Bureau began drafting a new constitution for Cuba. The proposal was discussed in the National Assembly from July 20 through July 22 in 2018,[25] and a final draft was approved in December of that year. The new constitution was ratified in a referendum in February of 2019.[26]

- Cuba's new constitution changes the process for constructing the provincial level governments, or the Provincial Assemblies of People's Power (Asambleas Provinciales del Poder Popular; APPP). Whereas before all members were elected by popular vote, under the new constitution the President of the Republic nominates the Chair of the Provincial Council (the Provincial Governor) who is then appointed by the Municipal Assembly of People's Power for a five-year term.[27]
- The new constitution also limits the national level ANPP to two sessions per year for two or three days, except for permanent work commissions. Therefore, the Council of State (the ANPP's surrogate) and its leading figures (president, vice-presidents, and prime minister) assume primary responsibility throughout most of the year.[28]
- The old National Electoral Commission was replaced by the permanent National Electoral Council (CEN) that assumes authority for election-related legislation. The ANPP is charged with electing and appointing the President of the CEN and its members, unless it is not in session. In that case, the Council of State appoints the head of the CEN based on the President's nomination.[29]

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[25] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 123 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.

[26] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 117 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.

[27] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 126-127 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.

[28] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 128 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.

[29] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 128 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.

Transitory and Compliant National Assembly

Article 68 of the old constitution dictates that a Nominating Committee will consist of a host of "mass organizations," to include the Cuban Workers Center, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Woman, the National Association of Small Farmers, the University Students Federation, and the Secondary Students Federation. Representatives are appointed "at the request" of the three levels of the Electoral Commission (National, Provincial, and Municipal). Leaders of these mass organizations are members of the Central Committee or Politburo, and the organizations codify their commitment to the PCC, making the party directly involved in candidate selection.[30] [31] Although the Electoral Commission is no longer in place, the process of vetting candidates by these mass organizations remains unchanged as of 2019 under Cuba's new electoral law.[32] Although non-party members can serve in positions, the majority of members are affiliated with the PCC.[33]

According to Reinaldo Escobar, an independent journalist, the Nominating Committee selects half of the members from 15,000 district delegates nationwide, while the remainder are appointees with some form of acclaim attached to their name in athletics, sciences, arts, politics, or the military. Escobar implies that these individuals do not campaign or seek office, but are nominated at the discretion of the Nominating Committee. The selection process ensures that the National Assembly achieves diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, profession, geography, age, and gender.[34]

After elections for the 9th legislature in 2018, 231 incumbents returned to the National Assembly (38%), and 62% were novice members. These new members were not high-ranking government officials or leaders in the PCC, which Reinaldo Escobar writes limits their agency. Escobar also highlights a group of "immovables," which consist of leaders of the "mass organizations," Central Committee members, Council of State ministers, military and Ministry of the Interior leaders, and the "historic generation" survivors. According to Escobar, these individuals form the center of power in parliament, while the rest of the body are show pieces to maintain the façade of democratic representation.[35] This could explain

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[30] Reinaldo Escober. "Cuba's New Electoral Law Consolidates the Monopoly of the Communist Party." Translating Cuba (blog), *14ymedio,* June 20, 2019, http://translatingcuba.com/cubas-new-electoral-law-consolidates-the-monopoly-of-the-communist-party/.

[31] Reinaldo Escobar. "For a Parliament without a Nominating Committee." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* March 16, 2015. http://translatingcuba.com/for-a-parliament-without-a-nominating-committee/.

[32] Reinaldo Escober. "Cuba's New Electoral Law Consolidates the Monopoly of the Communist Party." Translating Cuba (blog), *14ymedio,* June 20, 2019, http://translatingcuba.com/cubas-new-electoral-law-consolidates-the-monopoly-of-the-communist-party/.

[33] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.

[34] Reinaldo Escobar. "For a Parliament without a Nominating Committee." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* March 16, 2015. http://translatingcuba.com/for-a-parliament-without-a-nominating-committee/.

[35] Reinaldo Escobar. "Cuba's Next Government Will be More of the Same." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* February 1, 2018. http://translatingcuba.com/cubas-next-government-will-be-more-of-the-same/.

why votes against laws are extremely rare, if present at all.[36] As stated by one of our experts, the National Assembly is in effect simply the pawn of the Communist Party, a rubber-stamp institution that takes a back-row seat to the Council of State.[37]

CONSTRAINTS, RESISTANCE, AND RESPONSE

Apparent Constraints Against Executive Consolidation

Separating Head of State from Head of Government

The new constitution reinstates a Prime Minister into Cuba's government, a position which was introduced in the 1940 Constitution but eliminated under the 1976 Constitution. The President of the Republic is charged with nominating the Prime Minister, who is appointed by the National Assembly for a 5-year term. The Prime Minister is eligible to serve only two consecutive terms, and his/her responsibilities are ostensibly related to administration of the government,[38] but the exact function and purpose is unclear.[39]

However, as a political appointee of the President of the Republic, the lines between head of state and head of government will likely be nonexistent. The current Prime Minister, Manuel Marerro Cruz, was formerly the Minister of Tourism, and is not a member of the Central Committee.[40] Both experts consulted for this case study concur that this formal distribution of power is a façade, with the Communist Party keeping a tight hold on the reigns.[41] [42] Even the position of the president itself is

[36] Reinaldo Escobar. "For a Parliament without a Nominating Committee." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* March 16, 2015. http://translatingcuba.com/for-a-parliament-without-a-nominating-committee/.
[37] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.
[38] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 127 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.
[39] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[40] 14ymedio. "14ymedio's 14 Faces of 2019: Manuel Marrero, Prime Minister." Translating Cuba (blog), *14ymedio,* December 24, 2019, http://translatingcuba.com/14ymedios-14-faces-of-2019-manuel-marrero-prime-minister/.
[41] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[42] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.

formal, with the real power resting in the hands of the *caudillo*, Raul Castro, whether in office or not. This de-concentration of power act under Raul's "good cop" persona was not possible under Fidel's tenure, given the latter's highly personalistic rule which made even nominal concessions to power distribution impossible. Therefore, one purpose of the reinstatement of the prime minister position is to create legitimacy in the eyes of international observers.[43]

Term Limits

Term limits for public office were first proposed by Raul Castro in April 2011,[44] and were codified in the new constitution. However, officials within the Council of State and elsewhere could potentially rotate into different roles,[45] so it is unclear at this time how term-limits will play out.[46]

However, Raul's sponsorship of term limits belies the ostensible purpose of distributing power at regular intervals, even if they are institutionalized and respected. The establishment of term limits is part of a longer-term strategy to change the source of legitimacy of the executive from the caudillo as the face of government and source of succession, to the party as the face of government and source of succession. Term limits therefore prevent the emergence of another caudillo that would undermine Raul's efforts to institutionalize party rule after his death.[47] [48]

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[43] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[44] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020.
35 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.
[45] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 128 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.
[46] Noguera Fernández, Albert1, albert.noguera@uv.es. EL SISTEMA POLÍTICO-INSTITUCIONAL EN LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN CUBANA DE 2019: ¿CONTINUIDAD O REFORMA? (Spanish) 2019. 128 doi:10.2436/rcdp.i59.2019.3305. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=140347893&site=eds-live.
[47] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[48] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.

The rationale could be that legitimacy of subsequent executives, and respect of the elites, will not be guaranteed in the absence of a caudillo like Raul. However, it could be guaranteed via norms of party selection of individuals that have been groomed for positions of authority, rising incrementally through the ranks.[49]

Resistance to the Executive Consolidation

Factions Inside Political Establishment

Raul Castro was set to surrender the presidency on February 24, 2018, but in December of 2017 it was announced that this transition would be postponed until April 19, 2018. Miriam Celaya of Cubanet explains that the rationale behind this decision could be symptomatic of the divide between the traditionalist faction of the PCC, "Fidelistas" or "Stalinists," and the newer, slightly more reformist "Raulistas." In that event, the postponement could be designed to afford Raul's compatriots and loyalists more favorable positioning post-transition, but this explanation is caveated with the admission that the short 2-month extension makes this "jockeying for power" explanation suspect.[50]

Rumors and supposition regarding the existence of "factions" inside the Cuban regime abound, but their validity and verifiability is suspect. One dissident gossip writer and son of a military commander with contacts inside Cuba, Juan Juan Almeida,[51] wrote an opinion piece that Raul has attempted to change the inner circle to avoid "his older brother's ghost," or the influence of old-guard elites. Almeida claims that within the PCC, G2 (State Security) "has always plotted against him," and that the military elite is uncertain of their future, and that Castro has not been able to control the Central Committee.[52]

Reliability of Almeida's sources notwithstanding, factions inside Cuba's elite is antithetical to the nature of Cuban politics, where the legacy of the caudillo, or strongman, holds fast. This strongman role was first vested in Fidel, and later assumed by Raul. The brothers are Stalinists to the core, albeit of differing varieties. The word and action of the caudillo is not questioned, and elites fall in line obediently. Even though Raul does not hold office, the military and government still respond to him with deference.[53]

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[49] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[50] Miriam Celaya. "Castro Suspects." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *Cubanet,* December 22, 2017, http://translatingcuba.com/castro-suspects-cubanet-miriam-celaya/.
[51] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[52] Juan Juan Almeida**.** "Raul Castro, the Loner." *Translating Cuba* (blog)*,* February 20, 2013. http://translatingcuba.com/raul-castro-the-loner-juan-juan-almeida/
[53] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.

As a result of this near categorical obedience and subservience to the executive, divisions in the ranks of Cuba's elite will be imperceptible to outside observers. Alleged "restructuring" that took place once Raul assumed power were simply administrative in nature, comparable as one expert stated to a new CEO instituting his preferred team.[54] In early 2006, one of the 24 members of the Politburo, Juan Carlos Robinson, was dismissed on charges of corruption.[55] On March 2, 2009, Raul Castro changed 10 members of his cabinet, including 5 considered to be hardline supporters of Fidel Castro. Fidel Castro stated two days later that he had been consulted in this process and provided his approval.[56] However, the transition of authority from Fidel to Raul began many years before the official exchange of power took place in 2008, with no clash of personalities or struggle for power.[57]

Children of Officials *Leaving Country*

Pedro Campos, writing for *14yMedio* in 2016, claims that senior government officials and officers in the Ministry of Interior and Revolutionary Armed Forces were frustrated with the lack of effective response to the economic hardships facing Cubans. He also stated that the children of high-ranking officials were leaving the country, but does not quantify the extent.[58] However, this exit does not necessarily signal resistance to the executive, as the children of elites are not important in Cuba's political environment.[59]

Voting Patterns

Candidates for the provincial and national assemblies were historically selected by a candidacy commission, with one candidate per open position. From 1993-1998 the Cuban government and organs of the state pressed for a "slate vote," or *voto unido*, where voters casted their support in favor of each candidate in their municipality. The alternative is the "selective vote," where voters affirm only certain

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[54] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.

[55] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020. 25-26 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.

[56] *Cuba Country Review* CountryWatch Incorporated, 2020. 29 http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=141471731&site=ehost-live.

[57] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.

[58] Pedro Campos. "Central Committee Plenary, Beans, Clothes, and the Roof." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* January 23, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/central-committee-plenary-beans-clothes-and-the-roof-14ymedio-pedro-campos/.

[59] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.

candidates. Candidates must receive at least 50% of votes to take office (in essence, be "confirmed").[60] From 1993-2008 slate voting declined as more people exercised selective voting. In the 2013 election cycle, where there was no *voto unido* campaign, slate voting dropped to 81.29% from 90.90% in 2008, while selective voting increased by a factor of two.[61] Voting participation (per state media reports) fell to 90.88% in 2013 from 96.89% in 2008. The number of officials that were elected with between 91-100% of votes dropped from 93.54% in 2008 to 35.78% in 2013.[62]

These numbers, which are derived from *Granma* (state press) statistics and analyzed by a pro-regime source, should be taken with a grain of salt. Official state conducted voting surveys by the People's Opinion Department of the PCC are secretive, and any information that is released to the press is likely intended to inform messaging or propaganda campaigns.[63] However, other writers seem to corroborate this pattern. Although the survey method/source is unknown, an independent writer (Dimas Castellanos) stated that in the 2015 municipal elections, non-participation was at 11.70%, which in conjunction with voided ballots (ballots which have been defaced) totaled 20%. The 2013 total for non-participation and voided ballots was 14.22%, which itself was an increase by a factor of two from 2003. Castellanos attributes this trend to frustration over the economic human rights situation, as well as the lack of agency delegates have to address these issues in a single-party state. Voided ballots are therefore a form of protest.[64]

Protests

Following a devastating tornado early in 2019, Diaz-Canel was met in one neighborhood to the sound of booing—a reaction to the government's slow relief response effort.[65] This public response is noticeably different than would be expected for the previous two faces of government, Fidel and Raul. As one Cuba expert stated, although resistance inside the government to Diaz-Canel is not yet present or at least

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[60] August, Arnold. Democracy Still in Motion: The 2013 Election Results in Cuba. Vol. 6 Pluto Journals, 2014. 88, 92 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.6.1.0087. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=96560174&site=ehost-live.

[61] August, Arnold. Democracy Still in Motion: The 2013 Election Results in Cuba. Vol. 6 Pluto Journals, 2014. 88-89 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.6.1.0087. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=96560174&site=ehost-live.

[62] August, Arnold. Democracy Still in Motion: The 2013 Election Results in Cuba. Vol. 6 Pluto Journals, 2014. 88-90 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.6.1.0087. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=96560174&site=ehost-live.

[63] Reinaldo Escobar. "The Cuban Government's Surveys are a State Secret." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* February 22, 2019. http://translatingcuba.com/the-government-surveys-are-a-state-secret/.

[64] Dimas Castellanos. "Elections Highlight Need for Political Change in Cuba." *Translating Cuba* (blog), May 8, 2015, http://translatingcuba.com/elections-highlight-need-for-political-change-in-cuba-dimas-castellanos/.

[65] Mario J. Pentón, "Díaz-Canel y La Prensa Oficial Responden a Video Donde Abuchean a Su Comitiva En Regla," elnuevoherald, February 4, 2019, https://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/cuba-es/article225515675.html.

visible, if the Cuban people are reacting in such a manner, it is *possible* similar negative sentiment of Diaz-Canel is shared among Cuba's elite. Nevertheless, real change inside Cuba will likely be impossible until after Raul has died, removing the last of the *caudillos* from Cuba's political environment.[66] Both experts consulted implied that the tight control over civil society has prevented the Cuban opposition and population from being able to mount mass mobilizations. While such vertical resistance is growing, there is still a steep learning curve before a thriving civil society will be able to mount any unified front against the regime. [67] [68]

Response by Executive to Constraints and Resistance

Changing of the Old Guard in the PCC

The number of surviving members in office from the original Central Committee of the PCC totaled 9 as of October 2015, with an average age of 83. These are Raul Castro, Ramiro Valdés, Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, Leopoldo Cinta Frías, Armando Hart, General Ramon Pardo Guerra, Pardo Guerra, Julio Camacho Aguilera. Of the original Central Committee, it appears that there was only one execution (Arnaldo Ochoa) and one 20-year prison sentence (Jose Abrantes).[69] The last formal election of the PCC occurred on October 10, 1997 before the 5th Party Congress, where there were 150 members that joined the ranks. Since then, 29 have died and 36 have left for either loss of position in outside political organizations, or what independent journalist Reinaldo Escobar calls "disciplinary sanctions." 42 of the 150 from 1997 are left as of 2016.[70] Since 1997, there have been 51 new additions to the PCC via appointment from leadership, not election.[71]

AUTHOR NOTE: The data on remaining Central Committee members from 1997 was compiled by Julio Aleaga Pesant by examining national and provincial reports, but Reinaldo Escobar notes that

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[66] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[67] Gustavo Pérez Silverio (historian and political analyst), in discussion with the capstone team, April 10, 2020.
[68] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.
[69] Reinaldo Escobar. "That First Central Committee." Translating Cuba (blog), *14ymedio,* October 2, 2015, http://translatingcuba.com/that-first-central-committee-reinaldo-escobar/.
[70] Reinaldo Escobar. "One-Third of Cuba's PCC Central Committee is Hand Picked with no Process." *Translating Cuba* (blog) *14ymedio,* April 6, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/one-third-of-cubas-pcc-central-committee-is-hand-picked-with-no-process-14ymedio-reinaldo-escobar/.
[71] Reinaldo Escobar. "One-Third of Cuba's PCC Central Committee is Hand Picked with no Process." *Translating Cuba* (blog) *14ymedio,* April 6, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/one-third-of-cubas-pcc-central-committee-is-hand-picked-with-no-process-14ymedio-reinaldo-escobar/.

government secrecy, limited publication of sanctions, and lack of obituaries hinder this effort. Escobar says the numbers "do not add up," but does not clarify to what extent or how.[72]

At some point, age restrictions (60) for new members of the Central Committee were imposed, which according to Pedro Campos of *14ymedio* could be targeted at limiting the "historic generation" and old-guard from serving on the Central Committee. Sitting members above this age restriction are exempt.[73] Raul Castro has indicated this is an intentional choice to usher in a "new generation."[74] When Díaz-Canel becomes head of Cuba's communist party sometime in April 2021 at the 8th Congress of the PCC, this could further erode the presence of the "historic generation" in Cuba's government.[75] In 2016, Antonio Enrique Lussón was "released" from his position of vice president of the Council of Ministers, and would assume "other duties." He had served in this capacity since 2010. At the time, Lussón was a founding member of the PCC, a Central Committee member, a Major General of the Armed Forces of Cuba, and had received the title "Hero of the Republic of Cuba." He was 85 at the time of his departure.[76]

This systemic removal of the historic generation from positions of power could reasonably be part of Raul's objective to institutionalize party-determined succession. Structures of legitimacy for the Cuban government have been and are undergoing an evolution, beginning first with revolutionary/Marxist ideology, to the current primacy of the historic generation, to the eventual norms of party rule.77 If there was even a semblance of pushback to the new executive from the historic generation that could undermine Raul's narrative of unity after his death, incrementally reducing the number of voices from that demographic could better ensure his plans are not foiled posthumously.

Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs)

Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) are not necessarily a specific state response to the previously discussed voting trends, especially since they were founded by Fidel Castro back in 1960,

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[72] Reinaldo Escobar. "One-Third of Cuba's PCC Central Committee is Hand Picked with no Process." *Translating Cuba* (blog) *14ymedio,* April 6, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/one-third-of-cubas-pcc-central-committee-is-hand-picked-with-no-process-14ymedio-reinaldo-escobar/.

[73] Pedro Campos. "Clothes do Not make the Man." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *14ymedio,* April 23, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/clothes-do-not-make-the-man-14ymedio-pedro-campos/.

[74] Wilkinson, Stephen. Cuba: Plus Ça Change?. Vol. 10 Pluto Journals, 2018. 6-7 doi:10.13169/intejcubastud.10.1.0005. http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=131648804&site=ehost-live.

[75] Reinaldo Escobar. "Cuba's Historic Generation is Already a Thing of the Past." Translating Cuba (blog), *14ymedio,* 12 July, 2019, http://translatingcuba.com/cubas-historic-generation-is-already-a-thing-of-the-past/.

[76] EFE/14ymedio. "Lussón Ousted from Cuban Council of Ministers." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *EFE/14ymedio,* March 31, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/lusson-ousted-from-cuban-council-of-ministers-14ymedio-efe/.

[77] Sebastian Arcos (Associate Director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University), in discussion with the author, April 17, 2020.

before these patterns manifested. However, their functions could lend themselves as a tool of the state to curb voting protests. In addition to other roles, CDRs maintain the Registry Book of Addresses that records changes of residency, and the record-keeper of this book reports which citizens in his/her jurisdiction are eligible to vote. CDRs assist in recruiting individuals for parades and demonstrations, stage "acts of repudiation" against "counterrevolutionaries," and may even have a say in which citizens can receive televisions and telephones. CDR National Coordinators have served on the Council of State and PCC Central Committee.78

Office of Voter Registration

Additionally, at least under the old electoral law, the Office of Voter Registration fell under the Ministry of the Interior, which is a military institution. Laritza Diversent of Cubalex says this "discourages citizens from requesting information necessary to exercise their political rights."79

CLASSIFICATION OF SOURCES AND IDENTIFICATION OF BIAS

Given the difficulty of finding accurate and reliable primary source information on Cuban politics relative to the other case studies, careful attention has been given to identify the potential bias of sources used in this document and noting the information gathered from any questionable sources. These sources are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sources Used in Document

Name	Type	Use	Bias	Explanation
Human Rights Watch	Institutional	Country reports for Cuba covering years 1990-2019	Neutral, Limited	N/A
Country Watch, Inc.	Institutional	Country report on Cuba, 2020	Neutral, Limited	N/A
August, Arnold	Academic	Analysis/statistics of Cuban 2013 election	Extensive, pro-regime	Author uses *Granma* published statistics in election analysis and writes from a very affirming tone of Cuban revolutionary ideology.

[78] Martha Beatriz Roque. "Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and Citizen Participation." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *Cubanet,* April 2, 2015, http://translatingcuba.com/committees-for-the-defense-roque/.
[79] Laritza Diversent. "Three Key Proposals for Reforming the Cuban Electoral System." *Translating Cuba* (blog), *Cubalex,* March 21, 2016, http://translatingcuba.com/three-key-proposals-for-reforming-the-cuban-electoral-system-laritza-diversent/.

Noguera Fernández, Albert	Academic	Analysis of 2019 Cuban Constitution	Extensive, pro-regime	Author writes from an affirming tone of Cuba's revolutionary ideology, but is against the centralization and concentration of vertical power.
Wilkinson, Stephen	Academic	Political analysis on new president	Extensive, pro-regime	Writes from a very affirming tone of Cuban revolutionary ideology
Translating Cuba Consortium	Website/Blog	Independent journalists writing from within Cuba, with some exceptions	Bias likely varies by author.	Likely anti-Castro and not affirming of Cuban revolutionary ideology
	Reinaldo Escober, *14ymedio*	Political analysis; insights into Communist Party	Anti-Regime	Anti-regime; well-established independent journalist
	Miriam Celaya, *Cubanet*	Information on possible infighting/factions	Anti-Regime	Anti-regime; Has profile on Huffington Post
	Juan Juan Almeida	Insider insights into regime	Extensive, anti-regime	Son of Juan Almeida Bosque, a former Castro Revolution member. Almeida is a dissident with connections inside government; writes primarily on gossip about Cuba's elite; unverified
	Pedro Campos, *14ymedio*	Information on children of elites leaving, and changing of the old guard	Anti-Regime	Anti-regime, given 14ymedio contribution;
	EFE/14ymedio	Information on Lussón dismissal	Anti-Regime	EFE unknown, but 14ymedio publishes works from anti-regime writers
	Dimas Castellanos/*Cubanet*	Information on election voting patterns	Likely, anti-regime	

	Martha Beatriz Roque/*Cubanet*	Information on Committees for Defense of Revolution	Likely, anti-regime	
	Laritza Diversent, *Cubalex*	Information on Office of Voter Registration	Likely, anti-regime	
Mario J. Pentón, El Nuevo Herald	Journalist, News Website	Information on Havana tornado and public response	Unknown	Article was provided by one of the experts consulted for the study, Sebastian Arcos of Florida International University

APPENDIX II: CAMBODIA CASE STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party (CPP) have relied on alternating strategies of violent repression and coopting the remnants of their opposition to cement their increasing control over the state. These strategies have been context-specific, with the CPP utilizing more constitutional avenues to sideline the publicly popular monarchy, while resorting to what was effectively open warfare to displace their preeminent rival of FUNCINPEC. Additionally, Hun Sen has been opportunistic in his efforts to eliminate internal opposition, utilizing the power struggles with outside groups to purge long-term party rivals such as Chea Sim and Sin Song. Ultimately, these events have unfolded and led to the CPP having absolute control over the state and Hun Sen dominating the party through familial bonds, business relationships, and old-fashioned patronage networking.

I – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

History

The CPP was installed (as the Salvation Front and then the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP)) by the Vietnamese government following the invasion and overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. The nation the KPRP established, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, was a traditional communist party-state that was supported by the Vietnamese Communist Party. In 1985, Hun Sen became the head of state for the government. [80] The PRK fought against the Khmer Rouge, royalists, and liberals in the ensuing civil war. The war was intractable, and only ended after the Paris Peace Accords which sought to create a national government under United Nations supervision. The CPP abandoned its previous name and communist ideology and came in second in the 1993 elections, behind the royalist FUNCINPEC led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh.[81]

The election result led to claims of fraud by the CPP and an abortive secession attempt east of the Mekong River. The instability was only stopped by a deal negotiated by King Sihanouk, who established himself as head of state and the two party leaders as his prime ministers.[82] However, tensions between FUNCIPEC and the CPP did not cease, ultimately culminating in a brief "miniature civil war", that led to Ranariddh's deposition and the CPP's primacy.[83] More information regarding the CPP's strategies to maintain this primacy are in the section "Autocratization Strategies".

Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary

[80] John Tully, *A Short History of Cambodia: From Empire to Survival* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Urwin, 2005). Chapter 9.
[81] Tully, Chapter 10.
[82] Joel Brinkley, *Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2011). 79. Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014). 57.
[83] Brinkley. 126. Strangio, 80-82.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a dominant-party constitutional monarchy, where the CPP has held control over the parliament since 1998. Hun Sen reigns as the Prime Minister, a position he has held (at least in part) since 1985. The parliament is dominated by the CCP, which holds every seat, and bills can be passed with a simple majority, a change made in 2006 through an alliance of the CPP and the Sam Rainsy Party to eliminate the need for continual coalitions.[84] Laws primarily originate from the ministries, which leads to their approval by the party-dominated legislature. The legislation passed by the government is broad, leading to "rule by sub-decree", where executive does not need to overrule legislature, but rather has the power to interpret the laws so that the executive can do what it wishes.[85]

The judiciary is similarly dominated by the executive, which maintains the power to appoint, promote, and dismiss judges. The government has passed three laws to give the Ministry of Justice substantial oversight over the Judiciary (the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Supreme Council of Magistrates, the Law on the Status of Judges and Prosecutors, and the Law on the Organization of the Courts) in 2014. These laws give the Ministry of Justice absolute control over appointment and stationing of judges.[86] The International Bar Association noted in 2015 that judges affiliated with the CPP are more likely to advance in the judiciary, and that there has been a politicization of discipline, with judges who rule against the executive or its associates being demoted or moved to the rural hinterland.[87]

Civil Society and Media Environment

The period of United Nations supervision in Cambodia has led to the development of a flourishing civil society sector in Cambodia. However, this civil society has not been immune to the pressures of the government. Many of the largest civil society organizations within Cambodia, such as the Red Cross and Boy Scouts, have been coopted and are led by direct allies of the regime.[88] Additionally, in 2015 a law regulating NGOs was passed. The Laws on Associations and Non-government Organizations require registration of all NGOs with the Ministry of the Interior, as well as mandating that the organizations remain neutral toward political parties.[89] Finally, the law creates a subjective rule for which NGOs can be forcibly closed, by stating that the NGO can deny the registrations of NGOs that "harm security, stability, national unity, culture, good traditions, and customs of Cambodian society," leading to fears that NGOs could be closed or prosecuted for actions that go against the CPP's interests.[90] NDI was expelled from

[84] Strangio, 130.
[85] Khaeng Un, *Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019). 16.
[86] Un. 13-14.
[87] International Bar Association, *Justice Versus Corruption: Challenges to the Independence of the Judiciary in Cambodia*, September 2015. 24-34.
[88] Strangio 135, 194.
[89] Un. 52-53.
[90] Melissa Curley, "Governing Civil Society in Cambodia: Implications of the NGO Law for the 'Rule of Law'," *Asian Studies Review* 42:2 (2018). 258.

the country in 2017 after the government refused to grant it approval, citing violations of the 2015 law.[91]

While Cambodia does have a substantial number of media outlets, these outlets are increasingly concentrated in the hands of individuals who are associated with the CPP. Freedom House notes that one of the last independent major media outlets in Cambodia, *The Phnom Penh Post*, was sold to an ally of Sen in 2018.[92] Journalists routinely face threats of violence as well as actual physical harm during their work, and multiple journalists, editors, and publishers have been assassinated in broad daylight. Finally, the government rejects the licensing of institutions that publish or broadcast potentially hostile content, such as Voice of America or Radio Free Asia.[93]

II – AUTOCRATIZATION STRATEGIES

A – Use of Violent or Forcible Strategies

Repression of the Opposition (Violent)

During the 1997 coup d'etat that followed the military buildup by both the CPP and FUNCINPEC, the CPP utilized the violence to engage in a campaign of extrajudicial killings of FUNCINPEC members who did not flee the capital.[94] The CPP has been additionally accused of engaging in direct assassinations (or attempted assassinations) of opposition party members and leaders, as well as the usage of indiscriminate violence to break up protests.[95] The deaths of editor Om Radsady in 2003,[96] human rights activist Kem Ley in 2016,[97] trade unionist Chea Vichea in 2004,[98] monk and advocate San Buntheoun in 2003,[99] and others have been blamed on the government, as was the 1997 grenade attack against the Khmer National Party that killed 16 and injured the International Republican Institute's Ron Abney.[100]

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[91] Ananth Baliga, "NDI to be shuttered, foreign staff expelled," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 23 August 2017. Hannah Beech, "Cambodia Orders Expulsion of Foreign Staff Members With American Nonprofit," *The New York Times*, 23 August 2017.
[92] Attiya Chhor, "The Death of Press Freedom in Cambodia," *Freedom House*, 22 May 2018.
[93] Chhor. Daniel Bastard, *Cambodia: Independent Press in Ruins* (Paris: Reporters Without Borders, 2018). 3-23.
[94] Brinkley. 126.
[95] For more information on additional cases of violent repression, please see documents by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in the Sources section of this case, as they are the most in-depth and cover a wider range of individuals, including those that aren't in the international zeitgeist.
[96] Strangio. 101. Human Rights Watch, "30 Years of Hun Sen," 12 January 2015. Chapter VIII.
[97] Amnesty International, "Cambodia: Three Years and Still no Effective Investigation into Dr. Kem Ley's Killing," 9 July 2019. Aruna Kashyap, "Cambodia's Imaginary Enemies," *Human Rights Watch*, 30 April 2018.
[98] Brinkley. 180.
[99] Strangio. 101.
[100] Brinkley. 107-119.

Electoral Intimidation

The CPP has engaged in widespread electoral intimidation in the run up to elections. The 2018 election was marred by accusations of electoral intimidation, as the local authorities sought to bolster turnout in response to an electoral boycott called by the banned CNRP. VOA found that local authorities were tracking voters in their constituencies and reported threats to deny state services from individuals who refrained from voting.[101] Strangio echoes these accusations for the 2008 election, with local officials being present at 80 percent of polling stations despite their statutory neutrality in electoral matters.[102] NDI reported widespread voter intimidation and electoral violence prior to the 2003 elections, noting that opposition party agents were accosted by security forces during electoral education efforts.[103] HRW notes that the 1998 elections saw blunter methods of voter intimidation that included direct threats of death if persons reneged on their oaths to vote for the CPP.[104]

Enforced Exile

Fear of arrest or forcible expulsion have been utilized to ensure that opposition leaders remain out of Cambodia while not being subject to direct violence that may galvanize support for them. Sam Rainsy and Prince Ranariddh have both spent extended periods of time in exile outside of Cambodia with threats of legal repercussions if they return to their native lands.[105] Chea Sim, former head of the CPP and head of the Senate, was forced to leave the country and go to Bangkok for "medical treatment" when he refused to approve a constitutional amendment.[106]

B – Use of Constitutional, Electoral, and Legal Strategies

Repression of the Opposition (Legal)

The CPP has utilized the courts to legally proscribe its opposition. In 1994, the CPP outlawed the Khmer Rouge, denying any possibility of an amnesty deal supported by King Sihanouk.[107] When Sam Rainsy was expelled from FUNICPEC and attempted to create his own party, the state resisted attempts to recognize the party as a legal entity.[108] The most recent legal repression of the opposition was done through the banning of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), which was forcibly dissolved by the courts in 2017, claiming that the party was intending to topple the government and prohibiting 118 officials from participating in the 2018 elections.[109] Additionally, civil society organizations can also see

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[101] Sun Narin and Thida Win, "Cambodians Speak of Threats, Intimidation During Election," *Voice of America*, 6 August 2018.
[102] Strangio, 113-114.
[103] National Democratic Institute, "Statement of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) Pre-Election Assessment Delegation to Cambodia," 4 February 2003. 7.
[104] Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Fair Elections Not Possible," June 1998.
[105] Strangio, 113, 114, 258. Brinkley, 140.
[106] Strangio, 101.
[107] Strangio, 66.
[108] Strangio, 71.
[109] Prak Chan Thul and Amy Sawitta Lefevre, "Cambodia's main opposition party dissolved by Supreme Court," *Reuters*, 16 November 2017. Un, 53-54.

themselves restricted through legal frameworks. The NGO Law of 2015 restricts the political activity of NGOs, and some international civil society organizations have been expelled from the country. NDI was expelled in 2017, for allegedly providing the CNRP with plans to overthrow the CPP as well as violations to NGO registration requirements.[110]

"Lawfare"

The CPP has engaged in a campaign of prosecution of its critics, whether these charges were justified or not. Sam Rainsy was prosecuted for criminal defamation in 2005,[111] Kem Sokha (the acting head of the CNRP after Rainsy's exile) was charged with treason for the aforementioned overthrow plot,[112] and Prince Ranariddh was guilty of embezzlement as well as state crimes after the 1997 coup.[113] The state has also flexed its ability to prosecute individuals, with individuals including human rights advocates and journalists facing charges. Two ex-RFA journalists, Uon Chhin and Yeang Sothearin, were charged with espionage and then were subsequently charged with production of pornography. HRW as well as the local Cambodian Center for Human Rights claim that these charges are efforts to silence journalists through creating an environment of self-censorship.[114]

Media Repression

Repression of the media has led to an environment where publishing information critical of the government can be dangerous. The CPP has a long history of using the legal system to combat journalists and outlets critical of the regime, including the suing Michael Hayes and the *Phnom Penh Post* for defamation in 1994,[115] the forced closure of the Cambodia Daily in 2017 for alleged tax evasion,[116] the charging of Dam Sith of "spreading disinformation" in 2008,[117] and sentencing Mam Sonando to 20 years of prison for "instigating insurrection" in 2012.[118] Additionally, domestic radio stations that broadcast programming from VOA or RFA were taken off the air by the Ministry of Information in 2017 due to alleged violations of their broadcast licensing.[119] The government has been slower to respond to internet journalism and criticism, though the recent passage of a lese-majeste law

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[110] Baliga. and Beech.
[111] Strangio, 107.
[112] Amnesty International, "Cambodia: Head of Dissolved Main Opposition Party Jailed," 21 December 2017.
[113] Strangio, 113.
[114] Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Drop Case Against Two Journalists," 13 November 2019. Amnesty International, "Cambodia: Civil Society Organizations Condemn the Continued Investigation of ex-RFA Journalists Yeang Sothearin and Uon Chhin," 4 October 2019.
[115] Brinkley, 301.
[116] Chhor.
[117] Vong Sokheng, "Dam Sith quietly leaves for America," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 18 August 2008. Strangio, 195.
[118] Strangio, 172.
[119] Neang Ieng and Sel San, "Cambodia Expels US NGO, Suspends Radio Stations Allowing Government Criticism," *Radio Free Asia*, 23 August 2017.

in 2018 has been utilized in at least two cases to stifle dissent.[120] The 2018 rerouting of internet traffic through a single telecom company (state-owned Telecom Cambodia) was also noted as a way to potentially curtail future criticism according to Freedom House.[121]

Electoral Fraud

It would be incorrect to claim that Hun Sen and the CPP's electoral success is completely reliant on electoral malfeasance. The economic boom Cambodia has experienced has led to substantial legitimate electoral support. However, the CPP has been accused by multiple electoral rivals of engaging in electoral fraud. In the 2013 election, the CPP had a narrow victory over Rainsy's CNRP. The CNRP disputed the election results claiming widespread electoral irregularities and that the CNRP was actually victorious. HRW asserted that there had been fraud, stating that there was institutional electoral fraud at least at the district level, through the use of ICEs (temporary identification documents distributed by Commune Councils). [122] An alliance of election observers, including NDI, noted what they described as an "unusually large number of people using ICEs."[123]

C – Use of Co-Option and Patronage

Expansion of Government Positions/Co-option of the Opposition

Hun Sen and the CPP have used the expansion of the government to attract members of its defeated rivals. Such strategies are used in tandem with the legal or violent oppression of the opposition, offering incentives to individuals who would defect to the CPP. After the 2017 dissolution of the CNRP, the government of Cambodia revised its municipal structures to increase the number of local councilors, while also passing a law that would permit the individual restoration of political rights to individuals who had been previously censured.[124]

After the election of 2003, Heder notes that Hun Sen offered FUNCINPEC portions of the government largesse in return for rejecting an electoral alliance with the SRP. This offer of funding was also coupled with violence against FUNCINPEC politicians to demonstrate the alternative.[125]

Patronage

Hun Sen has a network of business elites, senior politicians, and military officers who he has collected through long-standing avenues of patronage. Some of these individuals are colleagues from the SoC's Foreign Ministry or former comrades from the Eastern Zone, while others were those who were allowed to profit during the privatizations that followed the party's abandonment of Marxism-Leninism. Strangio

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[120] Kim Sarom, "Lese Majeste Convict Not Free," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 13 February 2019. Eli Meixler, "Cambodia Has Made Its First Arrest Under a Repressive New Law," *Time*, 13 May 2018.
[121] Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net 2018 – Cambodia," 1 November 2018.
[122] Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Ruling Party Orchestrated Vote Fraud," 31 July 2013.
[123] Electoral Reform Alliance, "Joint Report on the Conduct of the 2013 Cambodian Elections," 16-17.
[124] Radio Free Asia, "Cambodia's One-Party Parliament Approves Expansion of Councilor Positions with Eye on Opposition," 3 January 2019.
[125] Steve Heder, "Hun Sen's Consolidation: Death or Beginning of Reform?" *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2005). 117-120.

says that those in this network have been allowed access and the ability to profit off of the nation's resources. He notes that five of Hun Sen's children are wed to the families to political allies.[126] Brinkley notes that there is a pseudo-institutionalized title of *oknya* given to individuals who donate funds for public works. Brinkley claims those who received this title are often favored with dispensations from the government, including the ability to purchase public land or resources. This patronage network extends beyond the elite. It also includes large scale education, health, and infrastructure investments made directly by Hun Sen or his allies, leading to the distribution of club goods to communities that support the CPP.[127]

D – Use of Cooperation with the Opposition

Alliances with Opposition to Sideline Other Opposition

Hun Sen and his CPP have been willing to work alongside rivals to create temporary alliances to pursue strategies that change the rules at the expense of their common enemies. The alliance between King Sihanouk and Hun Sen in the wake of the 1993 elections denied FUNCINPEC its ability to rule despite its victory in the UN-monitored elections.[128] Similarly, Sam Rainsy's "liberal" party allied with the CPP to overturn the constitutional requirement for a supermajority in the National Assembly. Rainsy specifically participated in this electoral alliance to eliminate FUNCINPEC as an electoral force, despite the reform likely permitting the CPP to rule alone.[129]

III – CONSTRAINTS, RESISTANCE, AND RESPONSE

The Monarchy

One of the longstanding constraints that has bedeviled Hun Sen is the monarchy. Strangio notes that King Sihanouk was one of the premier rivals of Hun Sen in power, criticizing the Prime Minister both publicly and under a pseudonym Ruom Rith. Sihanouk had considerable public support, not only through the royalist party FUNCINPEC but also in the rural hinterlands that CPP relied upon for support. Direct action against the monarchy is impossible, so instead, Hun Sen utilized alliances with the opposition to sideline the monarchy, while also supplanting the monarchy's role in some traditional roles. Additionally, the CPP's refusal to change the succession laws meant that King Sihanouk was not able to select his successor. After King Sihanouk's abdication, his replacement was King Sihamoni, who does not involve himself in political life.[130] All three of the experts interviewed agreed that the monarchy has been sidelined as a legitimate threat to Hun Sen's power.

Internal Resistance

Hun Sen has experienced limited resistance from within the CPP. In 1994, Sin Song, former interior minister, and Sin Sen, internal security chief of the CPP, attempted to overthrow Hun Sen. The conflict

[126] Strangio, 113-135.
[127] Brinkley, 172-174.
[128] Brinkley, 79. Strangio, 57.
[129] Strangio, 130.
[130] Strangio, 103-105.

was caused by factionalization and personal disagreements within the CPP. Hun Sen utilized the forces of his erstwhile ally FUNCINPEC as well as government troops rather than CPP security to resist the coup. In the aftermath, however, Hun Sen arrested the ringleaders and forced other senior CPP officers, such as Chea Sim, to allow him greater control over the party security apparatus. In this way, he opportunistically maneuvered an attempt to unseat him into a cementing of his power.[131] Later efforts within the party to resist Hun Sen were punished with this same very security apparatus. When Chea Sim refused to sign a constitutional amendment that would permit a coalition deal between FUNCINPEC and the CPP, Hun Sen had him taken to Bangkok for medical treatment, forcing Sim's deputy to sign the amendment.[132] Dunst notes that while there is some internal disagreement with Sen's policies, patronage and fear of punishment eliminate any likelihood of internal dissention.[133]

External Influence

Cambodia's position in Southeast Asia has made it both a partner of the West and China, however the West's influence in Phnom Penh has waned as Hun Sen consolidates power. While both the United States and European Union have utilized trade as leverage in efforts to constrain Hun Sen's tactics, China has filled the void and allowed Hun Sen to pivot away from relying on Western support. Un notes that these ties began in 1997 after the coup d'etat that removed FUNCINPEC from power, and this support has increased over time. This financial and political backing has allowed Cambodia to continue to autocratize despite the West linking preferential trade access to democracy.[134] Dunst notes that Chinese support is likely what permitted Hun Sen to take the step of banning the CNRP.[135]

IV – SOURCES

Additional Reading

Un, Kheang, *Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism* – A short primer that thoroughly covers the strategies utilized by Hun Sen. Published in 2019, it covers the prohibition of the CNRP.

Human Rights Watch, *30 Years of Hun Sen* – Published in 2015, HRW reports on the tactics utilized by Hun Sen and the CPP to repress the opposition.

Expert Interviews

We would like to thank Charles Dunst, Laura Thornton, and Dr. Kheang Un for their valuable insight into Cambodia.

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[131] Strangio, 74.
[132] Strangio, 101.
[133] Interview with Charles Dunst, 6 April 2020.
[134] Un, 25-27.

on Peaceful Demonstration [30 March 1997], Cambodia: Fear for Safety [10 July 1997], Kingdom of Cambodia: Demonstration Crushed with Excessive Use of Force [21 September 1998], Kingdom of Cambodia: The Killing of Trade Unionist Chea Vichea [3 December 2004], Cambodia: Union Leaders and Activists Under Threat [17 September 2010] Cambodia: Open Letter Re: Arbitrary Detention of Union Leader and Human Rights Defender Sous Chantha [22 June 2011], Cambodia: Proposed Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations: A Watershed Moment [20 December 2011], Cambodia: Government Critic Detained: Mam Sonando [1 August 2012], Cambodia: Arrest of Radio Owner Another Dangerous Blow to Freedom of Expression [4 August 2012], Cambodia: Further Information: Journalist sentenced to 20 Years in Prison: Mam Sonando [21 February 2013], Cambodia: Opposition Party Members Arrested, Charged [15 August 2014], Cambodia: 'Mutlimedia Monk' Faces Baseless Charges: Venerable Loun Sovath [20 November 2014], Cambodia: Further Information: Opposition Members Convicted in Unfair Trial [29 July 2015], Cambodia: Human Rights in Peril Amidst Unlawful Campaign Against Political Opposition and Human Rights Workers [3 May 2016], Cambodia: Charges Against Peaceful Demonstrators Highlight Judiciary's Total Lack of Independence [18 August 2016], Cambodia: Independent Human Rights NGO Threatened With Closure [29 November 2017], Cambodia: Former Journalists Charged with Espionage [7 December 2017], Cambodia: Head of Dissolved Main Opposition Party Jailed: Kem Sokha [21 December 2017], Cambodia: Activist Immediately Jailed After Forcible Return: Sam Sokha [13 February 2018], Cambodia: Civil Society Organizations Condemn the Continued Investigation of ex-RFA Journalists Yeang Sothearin and Uon Chhin [4 October 2019]).

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Note About Bias

Each of the institutional sources has a fairly clear anti-Hun Sen bias and has championed the causes of individuals whom he has oppressed. This does come at the expense of some levels of neutrality, ignoring the anti-Vietnamese rhetoric of Sam Rainsy’s party. However, this does not make those sources unusable, it just means it is necessary be careful to not conflate the events that occurred, the analysis, and the opinions of the writers, or indicate where those may confound us.

For the literature sources, Tully portrays a fairly neutral history of Cambodia, while Strangio and Brinkley both have clear anti-CPP stances. Interestingly, Brinkley also seems to support US Ambassador Quinn’s description of what occurred in 1997. This leads to a situation where Brinkley holds that FUNCINPEC was responsible for initiating the 1997 violence, but Hun Sen won the miniature civil war and extrajudicially eliminated threats to his rule from within FUNCINPEC.

APPENDIX III: ARMENIA CASE STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Autocratization strategies in Armenia generally focused in five primary areas: electoral fraud and manipulation, control of the media, repression of the opposition, suppressing protests, and amending the constitution. Overall, autocrats in Armenia used a comparatively light touch. While elections were highly problematic, they did often continue to a second round of voting, and there were opposition candidates in parliament. Importantly, when faced with the peaceful Velvet Revolution in 2018, Prime Minster Sargsyan chose not to use overwhelming force against the protestors, instead resigning.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

History

After gaining independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia became a semi-Presidential republic. Levon Ter-Petrosian became the country's first President, before being forced from office over his stance over Nagorno-Karabakh by a group headed by then Prime Minster Robert Kocharian. Kocharian succeeded Ter-Petrosian as President and won a second term. Constitutionally barred from running for a third term in 2008, Kocharian backed Prime Minster Serzh Sargsyan, who went up against Ter-Petrosian in a highly contentious election. Sargsyan won, but the opposition alleged massive election irregularities and vote rigging, and led the country in ten days of protests, that ended in a violent crackdown that left ten dead.[136]

Sargsyan won reelection in 2013. In 2015, he introduced a referendum that would change Armenia to a Parliamentary system, where executive power would rest with the Prime Minster, instead of the President. Opponents criticized these changes as a way for Sargsyan to stay in power while avoiding term limits. The referendum passed, and Sargsyan's Republican Party won an absolute majority in the 2017 parliamentary elections, so once his term as President ended in 2018, they appointed him Prime Minister. This prompted massive antigovernment protests, led by parliamentarian Nikol Pashinyan, and Sargsyan resigned after less than a week. Pashinyan became the acting Prime Minster, and then the official Prime Minster after his My Step Alliance swept the Parliamentary elections that December.

Government

While the executive is the most powerful person in Aremnia, there are still some institutional checks from other areas of the government. The legislature had some degree of independence and was not simply a rubber stamp for the executive. While it was always dominated by the Republican party, opposition parties also held seats. Some of these were the "loyal opposition" who always worked with

[136] Stronski, Paul "Armenia at Twenty-Five: A Rough Ride" Carnegie Endowment for Peace, December 07, 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/12/07/armenia-at-twenty-five-rough-ride-pub-66351

the government – serious attempts to push back led to reprisals. However, there was some debate in parliament, and opposition parties were allowed to make noise. Some parliamentary sessions would be streamed online, demonstrating some degree of transparency. (These also played an important role in making Pashinyan known to the general public.)[137] The judiciary is not fully independent and has been used for politically motivated persecutions. However, there are also instances where the Constitutional Court ruled in ways that protected the media.

Civic Freedoms

While there is independent journalism in Armenia, most of this tends to be found online. Attacks on journalist covering protests were common. Traditional newspaper and television sources were generally controlled by, or friendly to, the regime. President Sargsyan's son-in-law, for example, was highly influential in broadcast media before the Velvet Revolution.138 Although the constitution nominally protects academic freedom, state schools and universities were heavily controlled by the government.139 The constitution also guarantees the right to free assembly, but the government often denied requests for demonstrations, and broke up peaceful protests with excessive force.

AUTOCRATIZATION STRATEGIES

Election Manipulation

Armenia's elections have a long history of fraud and manipulation. Both internal and external monitors regularly reported/alleged the following tactics being used: [140] [141] [142] [143]

- Direct bribery (both money and goods) and/or the promise of club goods (such as building roads in villages or renovating apartment blocks in urban areas)
- Pressuring public sector employees
- Instructing soldiers in how to vote, and making them do so in front of their commanders
- Unauthorized personnel in voting stations – including military and police – as a form of voter intimidation.

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[137] Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of International Relations at Stonehill College, in a conversation with the author, April 17 2020
[138] Tom de Waal, Senior Fellow with Carnegie Europe, in a conversation with the author, April 16 2020
[139] Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of International Relations at Stonehill College, in a conversation with the author, April 17 2020
[140] Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe "Elections in Armenia" https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia
[141] Human Rights Watch, "Events in Armenia" (various years)
[142] Iskandaryan, Alexander. "The Velvet Revolution in Armenia: How to Lose Power in Two Weeks" *Demokratizatsiya* 26, no. 4 (2018): 465–82
[143] Bravo, K. E. "Smoke, Mirrors, and the Joker in the Pack: On Transitioning to Democracy and the Rule of Law in Post-Soviet Armenia." *Houston Journal of International Law*, 2007.

- Incumbents using government resources – including government workers and public buildings – for their campaigns.
- Deliberately inaccurate voter lists – including deceased people, but removing some current residents not publicly posted before the election
- Ballot stuffing, and severe flaws – or outright fraud - in the vote counting and verification process.
- Neutral/pro-incumbent television stations losing broadcasting licenses
- Attacks on opposition, protestors, and journalists.

These issues were compounded by the fact that the Central Election Commission was generally reluctant to investigate the ruling Republican Party for any alleged electoral violations, leading to low levels of public trust in both the Commission and the democratic process.[144] A lack of faith that voting would lead to real change in the country increased incentives for people to sell their votes for bribes or favors, since the outcome would be the same regardless, creating a vicious cycle.[145]

Control Over the Media

During the protests following the contested and controversial 2008 elections, the government used a media blackout in Yerevan to block the opposition's call for collective action. In the rest of the country, government censors told major newspapers that printing anything other than official government news was illegal. Online, the domain names for opposition and news sites were suspended, and internet service providers blocked certain opposition pages.[146] In March 2018, the government passed laws forbidding ministers from giving interviews without the Prime Minister's permission, and restricted their ability to attend government meetings and Yerevan city council meetings.[147]

In 2010, the Law on Television and Radio was changed to give the National Commission on Television and Radio to revoke licenses at will. It also mandated that only one digital television license be granted for every region outside the capital.[148]

Although Armenia decriminalized libel in May 2010, they also introduced high monetary fines for libel and defamation, leading to a significant increase in lawsuits.[149] In the following two years, more than 70

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[144] Freedom House "Freedom in the World 2019: Armenia", Freedom House 2020 https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia/freedom-world/2019
[145] Iskandaryan, "The Velvet Revolution…" 471
[146] Tatevik, "Online Media in Armenia…" 285-9
[147] Reporters Without Borders "Mounting concern about press freedom in Armenia" Reporters Without Borders, April 6, 2018 https://rsf.org/en/news/mounting-concern-about-press-freedom-armenia
[148] Tatevik, "Online Media in Armenia…" 286
[149] Human Rights Watch "Armenia: Events of 2010"

lawsuits were filed – mostly against opposition media outlets – seeking disproportionate compensation.[150] Reporters Without Borders reports that, in 2020, reporters are still subject to lawsuits and attacks on their right to protect their sources. There were 74 defamation lawsuits in 2019.[151]

Attacks on journalists during protests were common, and were often carried out by police officers, who often made sure to destroy their cameras and equipment. Very few of the officers involve suffered consequences for these actions.[152] During the April 2018 protests alone, 16 journalists and media workers were attacked.[153]

Armenia's internet is relatively open and free compared with traditional print and television media. Controlling this sphere was seen as less of a priority for the regime due to the low level of penetration outside Yerevan, and because most content is in English. However, Prime Minister Sargysan was reportedly planning to buy advanced surveillance technology from the Chinese prior to the Velvet Revolution.[154]

Suppressing Protests

Although Armenians have the right to free assembly, this is inconstantly upheld. [155] The government also often denied requests to hold demonstrations, especially for opposition parties. In 2009, only 29 out of the 84 opposition requests were granted.[156]

In addition, protestors were often attacked by government forces, who often used excessive force to break up demonstrations. [157] [158] The most notable example is the protests in 2008 (about the elections being rigged), where ten people were killed in the crackdown. [159] As well as attacking them, police also arbitrarily detained and arrested protestors on numerous occasions. In 2008, several hundred demonstrators were detained, and more than a hundred charged with organizing or participating in

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[150] Tatevik, "Online Media in Armenia…"286
[151] Reporters Without Borders "Mounting concern…"
[152] Human Rights Watch
[153] Reporters Without Borders "Violence against reporters during 11 days of protests in Armenia" Reporters Without Borders April 25, 2018 https://rsf.org/en/news/violence-against-reporters-during-11-days-protests-armenia
[154] Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of International Relations at Stonehill College, in a conversation with the author, April 17 2020
[155] Freedom House "Freedom in the World 2019: Armenia"
[156] Human Rights Watch, "Armenia: Events of 2009"
[157] Human Rights Watch, "Armenia: Events of 2016"
[158] Broer, Laurence "In Armenia, a Constitutional Power Grab Backfires", Chatham House, 24 April 2018 https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/armenia-constitutional-power-grab-backfires
[159] Stronski, Paul "Armenia at Twenty-Five: A Rough Ride" Carnegie Endowment for Peace, December 07, 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/12/07/armenia-at-twenty-five-rough-ride-pub-66351

illegal demonstrations. Due process was often not followed, and in a number of cases people were convicted based only on police testimony in accelerated trials.[160]

Judicial System

The judiciary is not fully independent in Armenia. This was especially true under the 1995 Constitution, where the President preceded over, and appointed the members of, the Judicial Council – which recommends people for appointments as judges to the President.[161]

Opposition activists and politicians were commonly arrested are what are widely seen as politically motivated charges.[162] In 2004, the leaders of the two opposition parties reported that they were beaten by police, many of their supporters were arrested (including two members of parliament), and their headquarters ransacked, after they led protests calling on the President to resign.[163] After the founder of Prosperous Armenia Party – gave a speech that was very critical of then-President Sargsyan and his proposed constitutional reform, the President ordered the tax service and police to investigate his businesses. Police also started arresting and harassing his associates until he stepped back from his party leadership role.[164]

However, judicial independence remains a problem under the Pashinyan government, which does not have a transparent/clear rationale for who it decides to prosecute from the old system. His government has also been accused of exerting pressure on the judicial system. After a court ordered former president Kocharyan freed on bail, Pashinyan called for demonstrations.[165] In addition, some judges and

[160] Human Rights Watch, "Armenia: Events of 2008"
[161] Human Rights Watch "Armenia: Events of 2015".
[162] Human Rights Watch
[163] Hakobyan, Anna. "Authorities Hit Back as Opposition Campaign Mounts." *Transitions Online*, April 19, 2004
[164] Armen Grigoryan,"Armenia's Ruling Party Consolidates Power." *Central Asia-Caucasus Analysist* 17, no. 5 (March 18, 2015) 15
[165] Antidze, Margarita "Armenia told to refrain from pressuring judges," *Reuters,* May 21 2019 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-court-premier/armenia-told-to-refrain-from-pressuring-judges-idUSKCN1SR1MY

prosecutors have said that they feel under pressure from the public to punish many of the oligarchy who are believed to have benefited under the old regime, without necessarily undergoing due process.[166]

Constitutional Amendment

In 2015, Armenia's constitution was amended to change the country from a semi-Presidential system to a Parliamentary republic. Many observers – both foreign and domestic – saw this as a way for President Sargsyan to stay in power, despite his statements that he was not planning on running for any other political office – including Prime Minister.[167] This amendment also provided several other benefits to the incumbent government – since people were voting for a party, rather than a person, the President's popularity was less relevant, and elections would only need to be held once every five years. Due to their past successes, and the weakness of the opposition, the Republican party believed that they would have no problem winning elections.[168] The amendment was developed by a commission, all of the members of which were appointed by Sargsyan and which did not include any members of the opposition or civil society. [169] The amendment passed, and Sargsyan became Prime Minister after his part won the 2017 elections.

CONSTRAINTS, RESISTANCE, AND RESPONSE

The Velvet Revolution did not emerge from a vacuum. Instead it was the culmination of years of prior protests about both social and political issues, which helped develop civic capacity, demonstrate the effectiveness of non-violence, and develop a model for how to act. Citizens have taken to the street over a variety of reasons, including political issues such as lack of confidence in election results or calling on politicians to resign, and social issues such as utility prices, environmental concerns, and pension reform. Despite the often-violent measures used to break up protests, people continued to demonstrate. During the Velvet Revolution, repressive measures actually increased participation.[170]

Armenia has a small – but strong – civil society that predates the fall of the Soviet Union. This has always been allowed to exist, even during more repressive periods, and has potentially served as a check on

[166] Feldman, Daniel L., and Haris Alibašić. "The Remarkable 2018 'Velvet Revolution': Armenia's Experiment Against Government Corruption." *Public Integrity* 21, no. 4 (July 2019), p. 426
[167] Galyan, Artak "Gearing towards Consensualism or Unrestrained Majoritarianism? Constitutional Reform in Armenia and its Comparative Implications" ConstitutionNet October 23 2015 http://constitutionnet.org/news/gearing-towards-consensualism-or-unrestrained-majoritarianism-constitutional-reform-armenia
[168] Iskandaryan, "The Velvet Revolution…" 473
[169] Galyan, "Gearing towards Consensualim…"
[170] Iskandaryan, "The Velvet Revolution…" 497

some of the worst excesses of the regime with its work on human rights and election monitoring.[171] Civil society activists and opposition politicians are able to make effective use of social media.[172]

The Velvet Revolution began when Sargsyan announced that he would stay in power as Prime Minster. Opposition politician Nikol Pashinyan began a two-week protest march from Gyumri to Yerevan, protests swept the capital, eventually reaching approximately 50,000 strong. Faced with this massive show of resistance, Sargsyan chose not to respond with a violent crackdown (although he did arrest – and then release - Pashinyan). He eventually resigned on April 23. Pashinyan became the acting Prime Minster, before stepping down in October to trigger elections. These were a landslide victory for his party, and he officially became Prime Minister. One of the keys to the Revolution's success was that Pashinyan did not challenge the state itself, and continued to show respect for state institutions, thus provided stability for the transition. Other factors that played an important role were Armenia's strong civic legacy, and the participation of women in the protests.[173]

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[171] Tom de Waal, Senior Fellow with Carnegie Europe, in a conversation with the author, April 16 2020
[172] Stronski, "Armenia at Twenty-Five: A Rough Ride"
[173] Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of International Relations at Stonehill College, in a conversation with the author, April 17 2020

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APPENDIX IV: SHADOW CASES

LIBYA

LEADER CHARACTERISTIC—*CAUDILLO*/STRONGMAN/CULT OF PERSONALITY

Like Fidel and Raul Castro, General Mu`ammar al-Qadhafi came into power following a coup, and quickly went about establishing a cult of personality of sorts where his visage become synonymous with the revolutionary ideology that permeated the nascent socialist-inspired state. The symbolism of this marriage between al-Qadhafi's personage and the revolutionary ethos of Libyan politics was somewhat encapsulated in his title, "Brother Leader" and "Guide of the Revolution."[174] [175]

CONSOLIDATION EVENTS PRESENT

Symptom—Weakening the Legislature

Under al-Qadhafi's unique and idiosyncratic Jamahiriyya system of popular governance, the highest legislative body consisted of the General People's Congress (GPC), which selected the General People's Committee or cabinet. At the local administrative level, this structure was mirrored with the Basic People's Congresses (BPCs), which in turn selected the Basic People's Committees. Any political action inside Libya had to occur within these political bodies exclusively, effectively curtailing civic society outside of these state-approved boundaries. Further, the BPC was not eligible to legislate on matters pertaining to foreign policy. The Secretariat of the GPC formed the cabinet and real decision-making body. In practice, the Secretaries were appointed by the regime, although in theory they should have been elected by the GPC. The GPC was in turn not eligible to legislate on matters pertaining to foreign policy, military/policing, budgetary concerns, or oil.[176] The GPC was in effect a rubber stamp legislature. As Vandewalle (2006) writes, "Although officially outside the formal framework of authority, Qadhafi made virtually all important policy decisions, channeling them, if necessary for purposes of legitimacy, through the GPC."[177]

Symptom—Media Repression

Media freedoms inside Libya under al-Qadhafi up until circa 2006 were highly limited, with Human Rights Watch (HRW) stating that although there was some nascent unfavorable press against the state in some mediums, "the government still monitors and controls all content, and it allows no unsanctioned

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[174] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 12 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[175] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127
[176] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 104-106
[177] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123-124

criticism of its work or personalities. Private media is not allowed."[178] HRW added the Revolutionary Committees Movement "control the country's main newspapers," and apart from satellite television and the Internet, uncensured information was not available. Some websites were occasionally restricted.[179] According to the Libyan law, publishing rights for print media were restricted to two state owned enterprises, and until 2005 a state-owned entity had a monopoly on magazine and newspaper distribution.[180]

Symptom—Curtailed Civil Liberties

In 2000, Amnesty International wrote that "Libya has no independent non-governmental organizations, human rights groups or independent bar association. Libyan law prohibits the formation of political parties and criticism of the political system."[181] As of 2005, the country had laws on the books that restricted independent associations or political parties.[182] The situation for freedom of expression, assembly, and association remained dim up through 2009.[183] Speaking out against the government, the Jamahiriya system, or al-Qadhafi, and forming independent opposition groups, resulted in detention and imprisonment. The threat of torture also loomed over dissidents.[184] Organizations and associations allowed to operate were affiliated with the government. As HRW wrote in 2006, "There is no functioning civil society in the sense of independent organizations that express views or undertake actions that do not conform to the leadership's views and goals."[185]

Symptom—Repression of the Opposition

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[178] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 56 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[179] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 3 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[180] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 58-59 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[181] "Amnesty International Report 2000 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, June 1, 2000), https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aa1267.html.
[182] "Amnesty International Report 2005 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, May 25, 2005), https://www.refworld.org/docid/429b27eb2.html.
[183] "Amnesty International Report 2009 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, May 28, 2009), https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a1faddbc.html.
[184] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 2 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[185] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 3 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.

Political prisoners and prisoners of conscience were detained up through the last years of al-Qadhafi's tenure.[186] [187] [188]

Precursor—Reducing Autonomy of Subnational Units

On April 16, 1973 al-Ghadhafi initiated the Popular Revolution, which included dismissing opponents to the change at regional levels, such as governors and a municipal council in Tripoli. After this, the Popular Committees came into effect, but the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) maintained de-facto primacy. However, at this time al-Ghadhafi had not fully consolidated power and some dissent in government remained.[189]

Symptom—Cooption of Civil Service/Candidate Selection/Parallel Structure

The Jamahiriya system attempted to create rule by direct popular power without the need for representatives. This system, "obliges all citizens to participate in Basic People's Congresses in their local districts, where they may debate all matters of government, from budgets to defense."[190] However, a highly influential parallel system of governance comprising state-affiliated institutions and organizations worked in the background and superseded this rule of the people in practice. This conglomerate formed the "revolutionary sector" of government inside the regime.[191] [192]

After 1977, the key informal revolutionary agent, the Revolutionary Committees, emerged. This group was designed to maintain participation of the masses in the BPC, but their role was amorphous and evolved. Revolutionary Committees could replace BPC members at al-Qadhafi's behest. Al-Ghadhafi would eventually resign from his position as Secretary General of the GPC, as did the other RCC members, to take on key leadership of the revolutionary sector. The Revolutionary Committees became the second most powerful group after these legacy figures and al-Qadhafi's confidants. The hand of the Revolutionary Committees was vast, including replacing candidates in BPC elections, and extending to

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[186] "Amnesty International Report 1995 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, January 1, 1995), https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a9f238.html.
[187] "Amnesty International Report 1995 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, January 1, 1995), https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a9f238.html.
[188] "Amnesty International Report 2005 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, May 25, 2005), https://www.refworld.org/docid/429b27eb2.html.
[189] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 85-85
[190] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 12-p.13 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[191] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 13-p.14 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[192] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 119

the police and judiciary.[193] These Revolutionary Committees were highly disliked for their activities, and Qadhafi distance himself and repudiated their actions later in the late 1980s.[194]

The informal branch of government reached an apex in the early 1990s, overshadowing the official authority vested in the GPC. The number of organizations and affiliates in this revolutionary sector were large. On the security side, there was the Intelligence Bureau of the Leader (which functioned as the head intelligence and security organization), the Military Secret Service (al-Ghadhafi's personal protection guard), the Jamahiriyya Security Organization (fought against opposition groups abroad), the Revolutionary Guards, the People's Guard, and the Purification Committees. There were also between 60-80 members of the old-guard that formed the Free Unionist Officers' Movement, and about 100 individuals in the Forum of Companions of Qadhafi, the latter group occupying civilian positions of importance. The People's Social Leadership Committee, which served the purpose of keeping tribes and families in line, and Qadhafi's relatives and members of the Qadhafa tribe or affiliates, round out the informal sector.[195]

Symptom—State Conducted Violence

Writing in 2005, Amnesty International said that the Internal Security Agency faced allegations of mistreatment and torture of detainees to elicit confessions.[196]

Symptom—Revision of Constitution

According to Human Rights Watch, as of 2006, there was no set constitution in Libya apart from the Constitutional Proclamation established in December 11, 1969, and "a series of fundamental laws deemed to have constitutional weight."[197]

Resistance—Nonviolent Protest and Executive Response

Although opposition against al-Qadhafi existed in the form of deposed monarchy elites, disgruntled revolutionaries, the ulama, and general populace, they were unable to effectively unite against the regime. The state curbed opposition with handouts, and the lack of real agency inside the formal structure of government reduced people's will to revolt.[198] The parallel nature of Libyan governance under al-Qadhafi allowed the executive to rule without being formally attached to the government. The ability for people to express discontent provided both an outlet for frustration while simultaneously

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[193] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 120-122
[194] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 142-143
[195] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 150-152
[196] "Amnesty International Report 2005 - Libya" (London: Amnesty International, May 25, 2005), https://www.refworld.org/docid/429b27eb2.html.
[197] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 77 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[198] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 128-129

informing him of the tone of the public, and potential opposition that could emerge. Then, al-Qadhafi was able to distance himself or castigate whatever issue caught the public's ire.[199] [200]

Resistance—Pressure from Outside Actor

Libya has faced a history of sanctions, embargoes, and trade restrictions from both the United Nations and United States over the years.[201] [202] [203]

UGANDA

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The shadow case of Uganda has been chosen as an analogue case for Cambodia, as both have central governments that are dominated by a single powerful executive, and dominant parties that have their origins in military conflict. Uganda has been ruled by Yoweri Museveni since 1986, when his National Resistance Army (NRA) overthrew the autocratic Obote regime (and previously assisted with deposing the autocratic Amin regime) and entered Kampala. Since his ascension, the National Resistance Movement (NRM or Movement) has been the dominant party – the national parliament was not actively contested until 1996, with the Movement dominating the *de facto* parliament, the National Resistance Council (Reid, pg. 153).

Even with laws that institutionalized pluralism and permitted multi-party elections in 2005, the Movement has maintained dominance over the state through a combination of dominance over local patronage networks, an environment of self-censoring media outlets, and active repression of opposition movements. Throughout this, Museveni has also dominated the Movement through the loyalty of security forces and by expelling individuals who might seek to oppose him, such as sacking A. Mbabazi, a long-term government minister, in 2016 when there were accusations that he was gathering support to contest the party's nomination for president.

AUTOCRATIZATION STRATEGIES

Use of Violent or Forcible Strategies

State Conducted Violence

The conflicts that have ravaged Uganda since Museveni's ascension in 1986 have been met with violence by the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF). In combatting threats to the state, the UPDF

[199] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146
[200] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 128-129
[201] "History of UN Sanctions on Libya," Global Policy Forum, accessed April 18, 2020, https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/195-libya/42383.html.
[202] "Libya: Words to Deeds | The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform," Volume 18, No. 1(E) (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2006), p. 15-p. 16 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya0106webwcover.pdf.
[203] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 139-141

has also engaged in indiscriminate violence against civilian populations (Reid, pg 162). Amnesty International notes that the UPDF was responsible for numerous human rights violations in Acholiland, including unlawful detention,[204] sexual violence (including mass rapes),[205] and extrajudicial killings.[206] This violence was not limited to LRA or affiliates, but also affected opposition political parties, such as the Democratic Party (DP).

Repression of the Opposition (Violent)

Violence has also been used in a more direct way to crush the opposition. In 2018, Ugandan police beat six opposition members of parliament as well as 28 other persons, before charging them with treason (see Repression of the Opposition (Legal)).[207] This violence is simply an overt example of the violence used by the government to maintain Movement domination of politics. Protests are routinely met with overwhelming force. In 2011, protests regarding economic pain resulted in roadblocks, which were swiftly broken by security forces, resulting in at least 5 deaths.[208] Supporters of opposition candidates are dispersed by security forces, preventing their campaigning, and force has been used to harass and hamper opposition activists, preventing them from an unrestricted exercise of their political rights.[209] Amnesty International notes that opposition activists detained by security forces often display signs of torture or physical abuse after their detention.[210]

Electoral Intimidation

The Ugandan government has engaged in electoral intimidation to ensure favorable media coverage and prevent individuals from actively opposing their reelection. Human Rights Watch notes that the 2016 elections were marred by a pre-election campaign of threats toward media outlets, forcing radio stations to reject or heavily overcharge opposition advertisements. This was coupled with a campaign of legal and physical threats towards members of civil society and journalists who presented negative coverage of the regime.[211] After the 2001 election, the Ugandan Supreme Court held that there had been electoral intimidation of the opposition by the Movement and the state's security forces. However,

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[204] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Further Information on Fear for Safety/Fear of Torture or Ill-Treatment/Possible Extrajudicial Execution, Twenty Prisoners in Northern Uganda," 17 April 2003.
[205] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Doubly Traumatized: The Lack of Access to Justice By Women Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Northern Uganda.", 30 November 2007.
[206] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Left to Their Own Devices: The Continued Suffering of Victims of the Conflict in Northern Uganda and the Need for Reparations," 17 November 2008.
[207] Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2019: Uganda".
[208] Josh Kron, "Protests in Uganda Build to Angry Clashes," *The New York Times*, 29 April 2011.
[209] Kevin Beesly, "National Elections in Uganda Turn Violent," *NPR*, 19 February 2016.
[210] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Opposition Politician Detained; Signs of Torture," 17 August 2018.
[211] Human Rights Watch, "Keep the People Uniformed: Pre-election Threats to Free Expression and Association in Uganda," 10 January 2016.

it also held that the intimidation had not affected the result of the election in a substantial manner and did not annul the results of the election.[212]

Use of Legal, Constitutional, and Electoral Strategies

Repression of the Opposition (Legal)

Until 2005, Uganda was an institutionalized "no party" system, where no political party was officially permitted to organize or support candidates. This resulted in an effective disenfranchisement of all non-Movement candidates.[213] After the introduction of multi-party elections in 2005, the government has continued to frustrate efforts of rival political parties. The United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor reported that, "authorities often prevented opposition parties and critical civil society organizations from organizing meetings, speaking on the radio, or conducting activities."[214]

"Lawfare"

The Ugandan government has also utilized legal threats to detain and restrict opposition candidates and journalists. The government regularly charges opposition candidates with the loosely defined crime of "treason". Twenty DP members from Northern Uganda were charged with "treason" in 2003,[215] and Bobi Wine, a rival candidate for the presidency, was charged with "terrorism" in 2018 after being released for charges of "illegal possession of firearms".[216] Lawfare has also been used to intimidate and silence journalists, activists, and members of civil society.[217]

Media Repression

The media in Uganda has been subject to significant restrictions, with legal threats being made towards journalists and outlets, while journalists, editors, and publishers are subject to physical violence and government prosecution. Some restrictions fall to simply halting opposition broadcasting. In 2019, police raided radio stations to halt interviews with opposition politicians. However, criticism of the government, and of President Museveni's circle, is quickly quelled. In 2017, Gertrude Uwitware was beaten and kidnapped for covering a dispute involving the First Lady.[218] HRW notes a campaign of legal

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[212] *Besigye Kiiza v Museveni Yoweri Kaguta*, Judgement of the Supreme Court of Uganda. https://ulii.org/ug/judgment/supreme-court/2001/3

[213] Sabiti Makara, Lise Rakner, and Lars Svasand, "Turnaround: The National Resistance Movement and the Reintroduction of a Multiparty System in Uganda." *International Political Science Review* 30:2, 185-204.

[214] US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Uganda 2018 Human Rights Report".

[215] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Further Information on Fear for Safety/Fear of Torture or Ill-Treatment/Possible Extrajudicial Execution, Twenty Prisoners in Northern Uganda," 17 April 2003.

[216] Asha Mwilu, "Bobi Wine Rearrested, to face new charges of terrorism," *Citizen Digital*, 23 August 2018.

[217] Human Rights Watch, "Keep the People Uniformed: Pre-election Threats to Free Expression and Association in Uganda," 10 January 2016.

[218] Reporters Without Borders, "TV Reporter Kidnapped and Beaten Over Post About First Lady," 10 April 2017.

threats and threatened shutdowns was implemented by the Ugandan government in the run-up to the 2016 election,[219] and foreign media has been similarly threatened, with a BBC crew being detained in 2016 after filming a rural hospital.[220]

Internet Repression

Uganda has taken efforts to specifically restrict access to conversations on the internet. In 2018, the government passed a social media tax, which effectively removed large number of Ugandans from being able to communicate on popular social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook.[221] Additionally, there have been efforts to remove opposition voices from the internet. In 2019, the Daily Monitor was ordered to shut down its website due to a failure to register with the government.[222]

Use of Co-Option and Patronage

Patronage

The Movement and Museveni have utilized patronage to maintain their position in Uganda. Museveni has utilize government positions to reward political allies, and put substantial financial support for the Baganda and Banyankole ethnic groups. Museveni reestablished the traditional ethnic kingdoms, under the condition they would remain apolitical, and has created new district governments, creating new civil service jobs.[223] Similarly, Museveni has rewarded allies during the privatization drives of national institutions. Mwenda and Tangri (2005) note that privatization was coupled with accusations of opaqueness and corruption, and also note that the Movement has expanded local government. This effort has resulted in the creation of a substantial portion of the population dependent on the Movement's success for future success.[224]

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[221] Freedom House, "Freedom on the Net: 2019 – Uganda"
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[224] Andrew Mwenda and Roger Tangri, "Patronage Politics, Donor Reforms, and Regime Consolidation in Uganda," *African Affairs* 104:416 (2005). 449-467.

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GEORGIA

SUMMARY

Like its neighbor Armenia, Georgia became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Both countries used similar of autocratic consolidation, mainly focusing on elections, control over the media, and co-opting the judiciary. While violence against prisoners and the use of torture was a much more significant problem in Georgia, both states also used violence to break up protest. Finally, both countries also underwent peaceful revolutions that accelerated democratic progress – Georgia in 2003 with the Rose Revolution, and Armenia in 2018 with the Velvet Revolution.

CONSOLIDATION STRATEGIES PRESENT

Corruption

Corruption was widespread in Georgia, including among senior government figures who were accused of crimes including: embezzlement, smuggling, insider trading, and conflict of interest.[225] Media reports on corruption lead to death threats and campaigns of harassment against the journalists and producers.

Electoral Fraud

In both the 2000 Presidential and the 2003 Parliamentary elections, international observers reported a host of serious problems, including: deliberately inaccurate voter lists, group voting, the unauthorized presence of police and local officials in polling stations, voter intimidation, ballot box stuffing, and a lack of transparency in counting procedures.[226] [227] The fraud during the 2003 election was so severe that it triggered protests that eventually resulted in the resignation of President Shevardnadze.[228]

Weakening the Judicary

The judiciary was influenced by pressure from the executive branch. [229]In addition, it was reportedly common for judges to buy their position, and then make back their investment in the form of bribes.[230]

Voter Supression

The 2003 Parliamentary election had major problems with voter lists, including, among other issues, omitting entire apartment blocks or streets, and voters being listed in incorrect districts. Opposition parties claimed that the areas that were most affected by these issues were where they had expected to receive the most support.[231]

Curtailed Civil liberties

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[225] Karatnycky, Adrian, "Freedom in the World: 1999-2000", Freedom House, 2000 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_1999-2000_complete_book.pdf

[226]OSCE, "Republic Of Georgia Presidential Election: Final Report" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2000 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/15579?download=true

[227] OSCE "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true

[228] OSCE "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true

[229] Karatnycky, Adrian, "Freedom in the World: 2001-2002", Freedom House, 2002 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2001-2002_complete_book.pdf

[230] Bolkvadze, Ketevan. "To Reform or to Retain? Politicians' Incentives to Clean Up Corrupt Courts in Hybrid Regimes." *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 3/4 (March 2020): 500–530

[231] OSCE "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true

Civil liberties were curtailed in a number of ways in Georgia. Religious minorities were subject to harassment. National and local government restrict freedom of assembly.[232] Media outlets and journalists were subject to harassment and threats after publishing certain stories. Police frequently beat prisoners to extract confessions, and prison conditions were awful.

Media Repression

Although the media was relatively free, there were reports of self-censorship.[233] In 2001, independent TV station Rustavi 2 was subjected to a campaign of government intimidation, including being investigated for tax violations, and a Minister reportedly threatening to "destroy" the company. [234] The producer of one of the channels' most popular shows, which investigated corruption, was subjected to harassment for over a year and received death threats from the deputy prosecutor general.[235] Rustavi-2 was also forced to temporarily close in 1996 for reportedly political reasons.

State Conducted Violence

Torture was widespread in the Georgian prison system, and was regularly used to extract confessions from prisoners. There are cases of police and special forces units using violence to break up protests, or firing into crowds. As well, prior to the 2000 election, there were reports of police actively participating in attacks against religious minorities. [236]

Systemic Reduction Election Freedom, Fairness

In the 2000 Presidential election, the OSCE reported that there was "no clear dividing line between State affairs and the incumbent's campaign" and that state media provided coverage biased in favor of the incumbent's campaign.[237] The same problems were apparent during the 2003 Parliamentary election, where one channel went so far as to compare opposition politician Mikheil Saakashvili to Hitler.[238]

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[232] Karatnycky, Adrian, "Freedom in the World: 2001-2002", Freedom House, 2002 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2001-2002_complete_book.pdf

[233]Human Rights Watch, "Georgia" Human Rights Watch, 1997 https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/WR97/HELSINKI-06.htm#P316_107029

[234]Human Rights Watch "Georgia" Human Rights Watch World Report, 2002 https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k2/pdf/georgia.pdf

[235] Human Rights Watch "Georgia" Human Rights Watch World Report, 2001 hrw.org/legacy/wr2k1/europe/georgia.html

[236] Human Rights Watch "Georgia" Human Rights Watch World Report, 2001 https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k1/europe/georgia.html

[237] OSCE, "Republic Of Georgia Presidential Election: Final Report" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2000 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/15579?download=true

[238] OSCE "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true

During the 2003 election, member of the Central Election Commission prioritized their party interests, dismissing violations and unquestioningly accepting improbable results. [239]

[239] OSCE "Georgia: Parliamentary Elections OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 1" OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2004 https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/22206?download=true

APPENDIX V:

AUTOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION EVENT FRAMEWORK CODEBOOK

ACE CODEBOOK

Please note: Indicators that are also included in the DEED framework are black. Their phrasing has been directly adapted from the DEED Codebook (Bairey et al. n.d.). Indicators that are unique to the ACE framework, or were significantly updated, are in blue and italicized.

PRECURSORS

Civil War/Revolution

The violence and conflict of a civil war, or the popular upheaval caused by a revolution, can be used by the autocrat as evidence that more control is necessary to maintain the status quo. The authorization by the legislature to allow the executive to utilize emergency powers or to suspend existing civil liberties may allow the executive to further consolidate power, a situation that remains even as the emergency passes. Additionally, the environment generates a "common enemy", potentially allowing the executive to claim that any opposition to his measures is in fact support for the enemy.

Examples:

- In Cambodia, the post-Paris Peace Accords status quo led to the Khmer Rouge never disarming, permitting Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh of FUNCINPEC to label domestic press who opposed actions as pro-Khmer Rouge outlets. Additionally, the imminent threat of the Khmer Rouge gave the CPP the cover to maintain their own security forces, which would later be used to throw FUNCINPEC out of power

Coup or Regime Collapse

A coup, coup attempt, or other event threatening regime collapse, such as the illegal ousting of officials, can lead to authoritarian consolidation. A coup is, in and of itself, a deviation from democratic norms regarding transition of power. Attempted coups often become excuses for the government to limit media freedom, expand their power, or even suspend the constitution in the name of preventing further insurrections.

Economic Shocks

Shocks may include a dramatic drop in the price of a key export, a monetary crisis, a global recession, among others. Facing economic crisis, the public may favor drastic measures that can be imposed only by (more) authoritarian governments (Huntington, 1991). Leaders can also use their political mandate of repairing the economy to justify the removal of horizontal checks, the extension of term limits, the reduction of civil liberties, and the subversion of elections (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016).

Electoral Boycott

In response to what is perceived as an unfair election process, the opposition to the main political party or ruling regime may completely forgo participation in elections in anticipation of an unfavorable outcome. This boycott can occur through a formal opposition party. Autocrats could potentially use electoral boycotts of this type to consolidate power, since the ruling party would be running unopposed. Additionally, this boycott, especially if accompanied with voter suppression, could present the autocrat with an opportunity to delegitimize the opposition party and diminish its public credibility.

Examples

- In Bangladesh's 2104 elections, the Bangladesh National Party (B.N.P) refused to participate in elections and actively attempted to suppress voter turnout. This occurred after the ruling Awawi League did not consent to allow a caretaker government to oversee the elections. The B.N.P. boycott and voter suppression movement was intended to force new elections under more favorable circumstances

Elite Infighting

Geddes, Frantz, and Wright (2018) explain that a dictator and his/her inner circle of elites cooperate to prop up the autocratic regime, but also engage in "non-cooperative interactions" to gain a relative advantage over each other. These authors explain that the closest elites are the primary culprits in replacing dictators, and as such, dictators have an incentive to increase power relative to the other elites. Factions among the inner circle moderate these elites' bargaining power in two ways. First, the dictator can negotiate on an individual basis with groups and pit them against one another. Second, the threshold of credibility in threatening the dictators not to consolidate power is not as easily met.

Ethno-Religious Tensions

Ethnic and/or religious tensions can be used by people in power to stoke fear and increase division, giving them both an excuse to expand their powers, and preventing people from effectively mobilizing against them.

Examples:

- In Uganda, tensions between the government and the Acholi, a people from Northern Uganda who had supported the previous Okello regime, have resulted in the government engaging in a campaign to suppress dissent in the region. This, coupled, with the emergence of the millenarian Lord's Resistance Army, has given the National Resistance Army/Ugandan People a

justification for military action in the region. Reid (2017) describes the Acholi as the "national scapegoats".

External Influence

External political alignment can take many forms, including membership in international organizations, economic agreements, or military alliances with other countries. Countries can politically align themselves with international actors (e.g. a larger, more authoritarian neighbor) that reduces local independence or supports local authoritarian regimes.

Examples:

- China's support for Cambodia allowed the regime to ignore threats from the United States and other Western actors to cut aid

Horizontal Corruption

Horizontal corruption occurs between government actors, encompassing abuses of public office for private gain or for the benefit of friends and allies. Generally, horizontal corruption involves less direct interaction with the citizenry. Horizontal corruption may affect the deliberative process of policymaking. This would include civil servants, executives, and legislators deciding on how an issue affects their own power or resources, rather than the public welfare (Bailey, 2009). Horizontal corruption also covers more egregious abuses of authority, including embezzlement, misallocation of funds, cronyism, nepotism, sale of party nominations, and tax evasion.

By distorting policy decisions, horizontal corruption thus decreases a government's responsiveness to its citizens. It can also reduce the ability of a country's institutions or agencies to function properly, as corrupt executives appoint unqualified or ill-intentioned allies to high-ranking posts. Parties may also reward wealthy allies or donors with high-ranking government positions or party nominations.

Increasing Control Over Civil Society

Participation in civil society organizations can provide political information, develop civic virtues, serve as a medium for broad political discourse, and equalize representation—all of which enables effective resistance, alternative governance, social coordination, and democratic legitimization (Fung, 2003). When civil society comes under threat, so does this litany of benefits.

This category captures the less-institutionalized threats to civil society that tend to impede its full and free operation rather than directly repress it. Events indicating an increased control of civil society include: requiring organizations to report all funding sources (especially foreign sources); mandating registration, certification, or re-certification with the government; and increased regulation of the freedom of association, among other possible events. Instances where a government has banned large civil society organizations or categories thereof, arrested activists, or otherwise directly repressed civil society, are more severe and should instead be coded as "Curtailed Civil Liberties".

Lack of Legitimacy

A lack of legitimacy arises when the current government institutions are not considered those best suited for the society (Lipset, 1959). This belief can come from the citizenry, the opposition, or the armed forces. Events which demonstrate a lack of legitimacy may include: polls showing a dramatic decreases in public trust in government; unelected candidates or opposition figures declaring themselves the "rightful" authority; failure of the government to respond to urgent needs; failure to govern the entire territory of the country; and existence of breakaway territories or other self-determination movements. All of these events can weaken public trust

Malapportionment

Malapportionment entails a discrepancy between shares of seats in a legislature and the populations of districts represented by those seats (Samuels and Snyder, 2001). This can lead to outcomes where a party or candidate does not receive a majority of votes, yet receives a majority of seats or wins election. This undermines each citizen's ability to have their preferences considered equally by government. incumbent parties can redraw electoral boundaries which favor the election of their party's candidates.

Manipulation of the Civil Service

Broadly, a case of manipulation of the civil service occurs when an executive or incumbent party uses nonpartisan, bureaucratic institutions for political, electoral, or personal gain. Authoritarian tendencies can manifest in the executive manipulating the civil service to aggrandize power or weaken democracy generally. Sometimes, this appears as suppression of speech or intimidation of bureaucrats. Conversely, the executive may buy support from elites and the public by overpopulating the civil service with their allies (Brancati, 2014). This patronage system undermines electoral institutions, since opposition parties or groups cannot necessarily provide the same rewards. Moreover, filling the civil service with loyalists effectively removes another constraint on executive power.

Media Bias

Media bias attempts to influence either the content of the media or the perception of the media itself without exercising the direct control implied by media oppression. Media bias can impact the dissemination of information which is essential for the public to hold the government accountable and make informed decisions.

Opposition Alliance Hedging

In electoral or non-consolidated autocracies, the executive can be confronted with multiple, legitimate challenges to its ability to govern, including opposing political parties, trade unions, domestic political institutions (such as hereditary monarchies), and citizen movements. Some executives may choose to regularly shift alliances with opposition groups to accomplish short-term goals at the expense of other opposition groups. Key to this indicator is the ephemeral nature of any alliance, with the autocrat quickly ejecting the newfound ally after the goal has been accomplished.

Examples:

- In Cambodia, Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party has utilized short-term political alliances to weaken the ability of its political rivals to compete. In 2006, the CPP allied with the Sam Rainsy Party, a populist, pro-democracy party, to eliminate the need for a supermajority in parliament. This law change was intended to eliminate the royalist FUNCINPEC from being able to hold influence in coalitions.

Overstayed Welcome

There are cases where norms or promises have signaled to the public that the executive will step down from his positions, but the executive actively disregards these signals to maintain their position in power. This is separate from an unconstitutional overstay in power, but rather a situation where the executive has disregarded an informal understanding that they will not continue. This desire to stay may be covered in rhetoric stating how the executive's continued service is necessary to avoid disorder or violence.

Examples

- In Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni famously stated in 1986 that one of the key problems in Africa has been political leaders who have overstayed their welcomes, however, Museveni has now been the president of Uganda for over three decades.
- In Armenia, President Sargsyan led an effort to change the country from a semi-Presidential system to a parliamentary republic, led by a Prime Minster. He stated that he was not planning on running for any other political office after his term as President ended, but became Prime Minister, triggering massive protests.

Refugee Crisis

The influx of refugees into a country does not itself lead to authoritarian consolidation, but it may create conditions which inspire harsh reactionary movements. These movements often lead to other precursors to increased consolidation, as the capacities of host countries come under increased strain (Mudde, 2013).

Examples

- In Uganda, the population displacements caused by insurgencies in the Acholi-dominant portions of Northern Uganda led to an increased repression within these internally-displaced person camps and prevention of political activity on the basis of preventing terrorism.

Rejecting Election Results

Rejecting election results allows rulers to bypass both the will of the people and checks and balances, and retain more power for themselves.

If opposition candidates or the people reject the results, it is often an indicator that there are not strong democratic institutions within the country. Rejection results generally means that there was perceived or actual electoral fraud, both of which are harmful.

Regional Unrest Spillover

Regional violence or unrest grant authoritarian leaders the opportunity to further consolidate their power under the guise protecting their country from the crisis. This can take a number of forms, including granting the executive more power, reducing checks and balance, or restricting civil liberties.

Vertical Corruption

Instances of vertical corruption reduce the willingness and ability of policymakers to listen to the preferences of the public and pass them on to decision and policy making bodies (Bratton, 2012). When corruption is prevalent, political decisions are made in the pursuit of personal enrichment, rather than the fulfillment of the preferences of the people. If bribery is seen as a normal "cost of doing business," then corruption, rather than taxation, becomes the economic link between the citizens and their government. This causes elected officials and bureaucrats to be less responsive to the needs and requests of the citizenry without bribery (Bratton, 2012).

Vertical corruption may also impact electoral outcomes, as wealthy elites allied with a regime can fraudulently fund campaigns or finance lobbying efforts to circumvent a country's responsiveness to the public. Finally, vertical corruption may occur as a result of a conflict of interest, in which government contracts are sold to firms owned by party or regime loyalists, providing unique and exclusive economic benefits to political allies.

In short, examples of vertical corruption include: bribery of government officials or bureaucrats, extortion/blackmail, influence peddling, sale of government contracts to party loyalists or regime allies, patronage networks, ties to organized crime groups, campaign finance abuse, and illegal lobbying.

Voter Suppression

Minimizing the power of an opposition party or movement can occur when the state systematically changes the available pool of voters in a manner that favors the autocrat. This can occur in advance of elections. In this way, voter suppression can precede autocratization by creating a structural barrier that prevents the formation of an observable or effective anti-regime voice at the ballot box.

Examples

- In Cuba, state sanctioned Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) have certain functions that could lend themselves as a tool of voter suppression. CDRs maintain the Registry Book of Addresses which reports which citizens in that jurisdiction are eligible to vote. CDR National Coordinators have served on the Council of State and PCC Central Committee. Additionally, at least under Cuba's old electoral law, the Office of Voter Registration fell under the Ministry of the Interior, which is a military institution.

- In a number of elections in Armenia, there were reports of inaccurate voter lists (which were not publicly posted before the election as required) that included deceased people, but not some current resident

SYMPTOMS/PRECURSORS

Electoral Fraud

Electoral fraud entails serious bias in the administration of elections. Such fraud includes bribery, instructing soldiers/public servants how to vote, deleting names from voter registration lists, stuffing or otherwise tampering with ballot boxes, and deliberately inaccurately counting votes, among other methods.

Examples:

- Nearly all of Armenia's elections since independence have been plagued with these issues

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence takes many forms, including pro-state militias targeting the supporters of opposition parties, states using security forces to repress dissidents and intimidate the electorate, political parties building armed wings, and insurgents attacking voters and candidates, among others (Schedler, 2002). Electoral violence does not always manifest as election-day attacks on voters near polling stations (though this is an all-too-common occurrence, especially in sub-Saharan African elections). Schedler notes that sustained or common electoral violence can fundamentally change political practices by stifling the democratic voice among citizens, who lack coercive capability themselves. This trend undermines democratic consolidation and emboldens authoritarians (Schedler, 2002).

Examples:

- In Cambodia, NDI reported widespread voter intimidation and electoral violence prior to the 2003 elections, noting that opposition party agents were accosted by security forces during electoral education efforts.

Weakening the Judiciary/Unpopular Judicial Sentencing

The judiciary serves a critical purpose within national institutions of ensuring equal application of rule of law and preventing actions that blatantly violate the existing constitutional structures of the state. Within autocracies, judiciaries still maintain an important role in imposing the government's decisions. However, this can also lead to the courts restricting the executive. As such, autocratic governments may seek to weaken the ability for the judiciary to provide oversight, while not delegitimizing the judiciary as a whole, as it still relies on the judiciary as a tool.

Examples:

- In Cambodia, judges who rule against the executive or its associates are often demoted or moved to the rural hinterland.

Weakening/Delegitimizing the Legislature

A robust legislature can check the authority of an executive. Authoritarians benefit from eroding trust and support for the legislature, so that the executive and their office may become the primary or sole legitimate governing institution. Authoritarians may wish to keep the body in place - but deprive it of all real power - so it can provide a veneer of legitimacy as it rubber stamps decisions. Instances of delegitimizing or weakening the legislature include attacks on opposition parties or coalitions, the closing of one or more legislative chambers, and the stripping of constitutional powers from the legislature.

Weakening Subnational Units

The Democratic Erosion Event Dataset (DEED) created a precursor category for Delegitimizing or Weakening Subnational Units. However, in an autocracy, delegitimization may occur less frequently. This is particularly the case in single-party states, where all branches and subunits of government serve under the singular head of the party. Delegitimizing these units would be tantamount to delegitimizing the party. However, attempts to weaken, or otherwise encroach upon the jurisdiction of these units, is a potential precursor to autocratization.

Examples:

- Cuba's new constitution changes the process for constructing the provincial level governments, or the Provincial Assemblies of People's Power (Asambleas Provinciales del Poder Popular; APPP). Whereas before all members were elected by popular vote, under the new constitution the President of the Republic nominates the Chair of the Provincial Council (the Provincial Governor) who is then appointed by the Municipal Assembly of People's Power for a five-year term.

SYMPTOMS

Candidate Selection

Autocrats have a vested interest in ensuring there are no threats that could emerge within the in-group, whether that be the legislature or other governing bodies, including parallel structures. By carefully weeding out undesirable candidates, the executive is able to ensure dissenting voices are silenced, maintain cohesion in the ranks of the elite, and prevent any opposition bloc from gaining influence. This candidate selection could take a multitude of forms, including preventing non-approved candidates from running at all, creating requirements that candidates must fulfill before being placed on a ballot, or enacting informal restrictions that otherwise preclude equal and fair access to become a nominee.

Examples:

- In Cuba, a host of pseudo-governmental “mass organizations” with extensive connections to the Communist Party comprise the Nominating Committee, which practices active candidate selection. Additionally, positions of real power in the Cuban government, including the position of the President and President of the Council of State, are selected by a circle of elites, not by popular election. Anyone who ascends to positions of power have been carefully groomed through the years by the Communist Party.

Co-Option of Civil Service

Bureaucracies are used by autocrats to implement the policies of the executive and the laws passed by the legislature but can also be a source of institutionalized autonomy within the government (Dixit 2009). By co-opting the civil service, the executive can ensure bureaucratic compliance with their efforts as well as utilize the bureaucracy as a means to provide patronage for their devoted supporters. This can take two modes. First, the executive can appoint political loyalists and allies to bureaucratic positions, using the bureaucracy as a means to distribute resources from the state to its patronage network. Secondly, the executive can reward bureaucrats who provide political support for the party through promotions and institutional support, creating an environment within the bureaucracy where political support is mandatory for advancement. In such a way, the executive can overcome entrenched bureaucratic interests and institutional inertia while implementing greater control over the agencies that operate the state. Note: This co-option goes beyond the appointment of loyalists in high-ranking positions, but rather is more akin to a spoils system where even local bureaucratic posts are dependent on government discretion for appointment.

Creation of Parallel Structures

Autocrats can consolidate power by creating parallel institutions that mirror official state organizations and agencies. This could especially be the case in one-party states, where the legislature and cabinet members are selected from the dominant, universal party and are subservient to the decision-making bodies of that party.

Examples:

- The Cuban Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Cuba; PCC) was established as the preeminent authority within Cuban politics under the 1976 constitution. The party is headed by a 24-member Politburo and 149-member Central Committee. The PCC is the only legally recognized party and dominates the high offices. Although non-members can serve in the National Assembly, these members are likely token pieces, with real power vested in the party-loyal establishment.

Curtailed Civil Liberties

Civil liberties such as free speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press are crucial to the functioning of free and open societies. They allow citizens to express their views and help to hold the

government accountable. When the public is denied these rights by the government, autocratic consolidation has occurred.

Failure to Hold Elections

Free and fair elections are at the core of a functional democracy. Failing to hold elections prevents people from exercising their power to choose their leader and reduces accountability and checks and balances.

Examples:

- Haiti failed to hold elections in 2019

Forced/Coerced Exile

A strategy similar to state-sponsored violence, forced or coerced exile occurs when the autocrat needs to remove individuals who may serve as a resistance to their consolidation strategy. Such exile can be done by the exile themself, with the exile fleeing potential future legal or physical violence, or forcibly imposed, with the exile being detained and then sent to a "neutral" third-party country. Such an arrangement can be temporary, with the individual only being removed for the period of time necessary to consolidate power, or a permanent removal of the individual so they can no longer frustrate the executive's plans in the future.

Examples:

- In 2004, Chea Sim, the president of the Cambodian upper house and longtime CPP senior member, refused to sign an amendment that would permit the CPP-FUNCIPEC coalition to establish a government through a "package vote". Sim was then forcibly sent to Bangkok, ostensibly for medical treatment, and his deputy signed the amendment, permitting the government to proceed.

Media Repression

News media and other independent groups act as public watchdogs and promote government transparency by providing information and commentary critical of officials and their policies (Varol, 2015). Restrictions on independent media weaken institutional checks and diminish competition among political parties and factions.

While media repression may entail jailing journalists, shutting down news outlets, and outright censorship, some authoritarians may opt for less traditional or direct methods. Such leaders may use libel lawsuits against prominent journalists, compelling self-censorship among news outlets, thereby undermining the public's ability to observe the incumbent's behavior and get obtain critical news coverage (Varol, 2015).

Examples:

- In 2010, Armenia introduced high monetary fines for libel and defamation, leading to a significant increase in lawsuits
- In Cambodia, journalists routinely face threats of violence as well as actual physical harm during their work, and multiple journalists, editors, and publishers have been assassinated in broad daylight.

No-Confidence Votes or Decreased Voter Turnout

Public confidence is an indication of how well the political system is performing and how responsive it is to the people's concerns. An erosion of confidence in representative democracy can demonstrate that the executive is asserting greater control at the expense of the other branches of government, or the public in general. Politicians facing no-confidence votes or a large decrease in voter turnout are indications that there is a lack of confidence in the political system and that autocratic consolidation has taken place.

Purging of Elites

Geddes, Franz, and Wright (2018) state that dictators offer their inner circle just enough power/resources to placate the demands of elites. Since attempting to remove dictators creates risk of removal for the inner circle, the number of elites that accepts the dictators "offer" exceeds the number that attempts a coup. The bargain favors the dictator when the risk of coup is lower. Drawing from this logic, eliminating rivals or troublemakers could be an effective tool of autocrat consolidation, creating uncertainty in the ranks of the inner circle and encouraging compliance among remaining members.

Reduction in Judicial Independence

Established judiciaries may prevent the executive from gaining undue power under the guise of a crisis and can directly check the power of the executive. (Gibler and Randazzo, 2011). In authoritarian regimes, governments often try to subjugate the judiciary through various means including impeachment, co-optation, extortion, or bribery (Levitsky and Way, 2002). Court packing, circumvention of judicial power, or judicial decisions unduly privileging the executive are all symptoms of a reduction in judicial independence.

Examples:

- In Cambodia, the passage of three laws in 2015 (the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Supreme Council of Magistrates, the Law on the Status of Judges and Prosecutors, and the Law on the Organization of the Courts) which permitted the Ministry of Justice to control appointment and stationing of judges.

Reduction in Legislative Oversight

A reduction in legislative oversight may manifest as executive actions or constitutional amendments that limit the legislature's formal powers. It may also take the form of a weakened legislature failing to act as

an effective check on the executive. The elimination of formal checks is not always necessary for an institutional reduction in oversight.

Reducing Autonomy of Subnational Units

Some degree of power and autonomy is allocated to subnational units in many federalist systems. This distribution of power allows such units to check the powers of the central government (Vale, 2017). When the central government of a country reduces the autonomy of these subnational units, it can be symptomatic of consolidation, representing an accumulation of power and the elimination of institutionalized limits on the exercise of that power.

Relaxation of Term Limits

One of the primary signs of executive aggrandizement – a key part of authoritarian consolidation - is the extension, relaxation, or abolition of term limits placed on the executive or members of the executive's coalition (e.g. members of a legislative body). Executive term limits constrain the power of the executive, limit incumbency advantages, and promote competition and alternation in power (Maltz, 2007).

Repression of the Opposition

This occurs when a state represses opposition parties through force or harassment or deliberately engineers an uneven playing field for the opposition. An uneven playing field exists when the incumbent abuses state infrastructure to create disparities in access to resources, media, or state institutions, impairing the opposition party's ability to organize and compete for office (Levitsky and Way, 2010). To create these conditions, the state may curtail the opposition's ability to disseminate information or assemble.

Examples:

- In Armenia, after the founder of Prosperous Armenia Party gave a speech that was very critical of the President and his proposed constitutional reform, the President ordered the tax service and police to investigate his businesses. Police also started arresting and harassing his associates until he stepped back from his party leadership role.
- During the 1997 coup d'etat in Cambodia, the CCP used the violence to engage in a campaign of extrajudicial killings of opposition members

Revision of the Constitution

Not all constitutional amendments should be viewed as authoritarian consolidation events, but revisions that consolidate executive power or undermine checks and balances are symptomatic of authoritarian consolidation.

Examples:

- In 2015, Armenia's constitution was amended to change the country from a semi-Presidential system to a parliamentary republic. This allowed the then President to avoid term limits by

becoming the Prime Minister. The amendment was developed by a commission appointed by the President which did not include any members of the opposition or civil society

State Conducted Violence

Protests are a key form of dissent and check against the government's power – when police forces brutally or violently repress protests, it not only hampers that particular protest's ability to create change, but also creates a climate of self-censorship. Attacks on other figures – such as journalists and opposition candidates – can also disrupt their current activities and make them reconsider future actions against the state. In addition, the support of violent criminal groups by state actors (executives, legislators, judges, etc.) places governing officials above the rule of law, undermining core democratic norms.

Examples:

- In 2008, police in Armenia used excessive force when cracking down on people protesting the election results, causing clashes that led to the deaths of ten people
- In Cambodia, CPP has been additionally accused of engaging in direct assassinations (or attempted assassinations) of opposition party members and leaders, as well as the usage of indiscriminate violence to break up protests.

Suspension of Laws, Constitution

Emergency powers enable executives to gain new powers and circumvent democratic procedures. Under a state of emergency, the executive may establish a curfew or suspend the right to assembly (depending on the specific state). These types of emergency powers are easily manipulated to weaken opposition movements, undermine election processes, or otherwise incapacitate democratic machinery. In some cases, the suspension of the rule of law might be a proportional response to a genuine emergency, such as the outbreak of a disease. The abuse of emergency powers, however, is symptomatic of executive aggrandizement, thus institutionalizing authoritarian consolidation (Freeman, 2003).

Systemic Reduction Election Freedom, Fairness

The system reduction in election freedom/fairness as the institutionalization of an uneven playing field between the government and the opposition, thereby giving the incumbent an artificial electoral advantage.

Weakened Civil Service or Integrity Institutions

Both the civil service and international integrity institutions can check executive power through nonviolent, deliberate resistance (Ingber, 2018). The related precursor category describes replacing these officials with party loyalists, manipulation via patronage networks, or intimidation. However, there are also instances where state agencies are placed directly under executive control or are

restructured to reduce their influence. As Huq and Ginsberg discuss, when the executive takes control over the bureaucracy, it eliminates a potential check on their actions (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018).

RESISTANCE

Check on Central Power by Subnational Units

In federalist systems, subnational governments such as provinces or states can serve as checks on the power of the central government, (Vale, 2017). Subnational institutions can harness powers conferred to them by the central government, such as regulation and discretion in policy implementation, and their own capacity to autonomously legislate to express dissent and curb central government power (Bulman-Pozen and Gerken, 2009). Acts of "uncooperative federalism" at the subnational level—or "uncooperative localism" at the municipal level—can contest, and even alter, national policy (Bulman-Pozen and Gerken, 2009 and Gerken, 20 January 2017). However, not all instances of uncooperative federalism or localism is a sign of resistance against authoritarian consolidation.

Check on Central Power by Civil Service

An autonomous bureaucratic capacity serves as a barrier to the misuse of state power. In such instances where government—or executive—agendas are perceived to be illegal, immoral, or against the stated mandate of a bureaucratic agency, civil servants or government employees can resist through deliberate, nonviolent acts of disobedience or defiance (See Nou, 2019, Ingber, 2018, Kestenbaum, 20 January 2017). Depending on the act of resistance itself, and whether it emerges from within the bounds of the functional or formal power of the bureaucracy, it can come with great risks to those choosing to execute it. Examples include withholding information or approval, releasing public statements of dissent, leaking information to the press, limiting the discretion of political appointees, and seeking judicial recourse.

Check on Executive by Judiciary

The judiciary plays an important role in preventing, or allowing, authoritarian consolidation. Constitutional courts, for instance, can declare laws totally or partially unconstitutional, preventing the executive from manipulating laws for aggrandized executive power. Constitutional courts can serve as powerful veto players in their own right, dependent on the particular political system and powers of the court (Brouard and Honnige, 2017). Judiciaries that lack independence can also engage in acts of resistance.

Check on Executive by Legislature

Though they may vary in composition and exact capabilities, legislatures can serve as important checks on executive power through impeachment proceedings, public critique, and votes on legislation or constitutional amendments. Within the legislative branch itself, multiparty coalitions can serve as formal "gatekeepers," preventing executive aggrandizement and the manipulation of existing democratic structures (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

Check on Executive by Military/Internal Security Forces

The military and internal security forces (paramilitary police, secret police) are often central to autocratic strategies to maintain domestic control. The strategies of coercion and patronage are seldom utilized individually, but rather permit the autocrat to use the state's monopoly on violence to ensure continued compliance of those ensnared in patronage networks. However, the military's continued loyalty may be contingent on concessions made to officers or enlisted personnel. Any disruption of this arrangement would be at the risk of mutiny, so the executive can be constrained and unable to further consolidate control in their favor.

Coalitions or Elite Pacts

If the elite come to an understanding that if all political actors respect the rules of democracy, each may have the opportunity to win power in the future, it can reinforce democratic norms (North, 1990). Levitsky and Ziblatt also note the power of multiparty coalitions in combatting authoritarianism.

Exit of People or Money

In some contexts, citizens face legal or institutional barriers to voicing their dissatisfaction with government actions through protests or elections or perceive that their actions will not accomplish any change. In such instances, exit becomes an attractive option, though not without its own barriers. Removing a significant amount of human or physical capital from a particular state can pressure a state to change (Paul, 1992) or draw international attention to the conditions at play.

Increase in Civic Capacity

Civic capacity, or the capacity of individuals and organizations to create and sustain collective action (Letki, 2019), contributes to citizens' sense of ownership in their government, and can increase accountability. Often accomplished at the local level, increasing civic capacity can take various forms including soliciting public feedback on policy proposals, engaging a community through participatory budgeting, or expanding the reach and scale of civil society organizations (Gilman and Rahman, 10 October 2017).

Increase in Electoral Integrity

Holding free and fair elections with wide participation ensures that the will of the people is followed and can act as a check on executive power. States can expand access to the ballot box, by extending the right to vote to formerly disenfranchised groups, and increasing opportunities to vote (e.g., implementing vote-by-mail, early voting, or absentee ballot programs). Further, states can overturn former policies that restricted access to the ballot box or ensured particular electoral outcomes (e.g., voter ID laws or redrawing districts after gerrymandering).

Increase in Media Protections/Media Liberalization

Deliberate steps by a government to improve protections for independent media or enable further media liberalization can create a landscape open to independent voices, critical opinions, and potential

government watchdogs. Implementing laws that reverse criminal libel laws, increase constitutional protections for journalists, privatize formerly state-run media sources, break up media conglomerates, and other state actions can serve to resist media repression.

Nonviolent Protest

By harnessing the freedom of assembly, citizens can participate in nonviolent protest outside the spaces created for traditional political engagement, opposing government policies and institutions they see as threatening. (Krastev, 2014). Stephan and Chenoweth find that these nonviolent campaigns are more effective than violent protests in producing loyalty shifts and policy changes, particularly when they gain legitimacy among a wide cross section of a population (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008).

Examples:

- In Armenia - the Velvet Revolution - massive rallies and protests led by opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan, forced Prime Minister Sargsyan out of office after he was seen to have overstayed his welcome after changing the constitution to get around term limits

Post-Democratic Transition to New Constitution

The creation of a new, democratic constitution can be a sign of the process of *democratic* consolidation. The institutions designed and how a constitution is drafted have a greater effect on the prospect of democratic consolidation than the act of creating a constitution itself (Munck, 1994). The most democratic and sustainable constitutions forged during transitions arise from wide coalition-building and broad-based citizen input (Eisenstadt et. al, 2015).

Pressure from Outside Actor

Outside actors, including nongovernmental organizations and international organizations, play a large role in holding states accountable to uphold international democratic norms. The role these peer actors play in naming, shaming, and punishing states for breaching accepted standards of conduct or for lapses in democratic governance, can serve to alter behaviors and strengthen democratic norms. Finnemore and Sikkink write of a “norms cascade” process during which pressure for conformity and a desire for increased legitimacy among actors on the international stage can push states to change their behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998).Ways outside actors can pressure states include releasing statements of public condemnation, publishing critical reports, imposing economic sanctions, withholding aid, and preventing said state from joining an international organization.

Examples:

- In Cambodia, the United States and European Union have utilized the threat of withdrawing favored trade status to attempt to ensure a continuation of democracy for the Khmer people.

State Attempts to Prevent Backsliding

Particular actions by the state may have the consequence of preventing authoritarian consolidation, though that may not be the expressed intent. This category should be used to classify actions taken by the state to deliberately prevent consolidation that do not fall under existing categories. This can include the creation of programs to resolve long standing ethnic, political, or social divides through the reversal of discriminatory statutes (e.g. legally mandated racial or ethnic segregation, or the legal distinction of citizens by caste) or through truth and reconciliation commissions. State attempts to prevent backsliding can also take the form of reversing previous policies that allowed for executive aggrandizement or weakened the autonomy of particular branches of government.

Violent Protest

Though Stephan and Chenoweth conclude that nonviolent campaigns are more effective than violent protests in producing loyalty shifts and policy changes (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008), citizen-led protests against a regime may escalate and become violent. Krastev notes that, ideally, nonviolent protests and elections should give citizens an outlet outside of violence through which to voice their opposition or disapproval (Krastev, 2014). However, protests resisting acts of authoritarian consolidation may turn violent, whether deliberately or as a declaration of desperation.

Note on coding: In coding events, it is important to differentiate between violent acts of resistance against a government and violence that erupts between nonviolent protesters and state forces. A terrorist attack against the government, for instance, should not be marked as "violent protest," nor should police violence against protesters. "Violent protest" should be used exclusively when the protesters themselves initiate or participate in violent acts.

OPENINGS

Civil War/Revolution

Civil wars and revolutions may provide autocrats the opportunity to consolidate control, but they also provide a clear opportunity for domestic opposition to coordinate. In the throes of violence and unrest, organizations that had previously been compelled to be satisfied with the status quo may be forced to reveal their true preferences. Additionally, popular unrest that results in the deposition of the autocrat and their replacement with a new regime may provide a path towards democratization.

Example:

- In 2018, peaceful rallies and protests against then-Prime Minister Sargsyan (who was widely seen to have avoided term limits by changing the constitution) to step down.

Commemorative Movement

Similar to bad or tragic events, anniversaries can also spur people into action. The anniversary can be of previous protests, tragedies, or any other significant or potentially meaningful event.

Examples:

- In 2014 in Turkey demonstrations were held marking one-year anniversary of Gezi Park protests
- In 2011, pro-democracy protests were held in eSwatini to coincide with the 38th anniversary of the King's father repealing the constitution.

Electoral Boycott

As with the precursor category, electoral boycott refers to the opposition's decision to drop out in response to perceived unfairness in the election process. While this could potentially foreshadow consolidation attempts and increasing autocratization if the government attempts to delegitimize the opposition party, electoral boycott can also serve as a form of opening. Boycott in the form of voter resistance can indicate growing public opinion against the regime.

Examples:

- In Cuba, where only one candidate for each position is allowed, citizens may be choosing not to confirm certain officials as a form of passive resistance There may also be a growing trend in non-participation and defaced ballots

Opportunistic Protest

Opportunistic protests occur when members of the civil society or opposition capitalize on a smaller or unrelated protest/event to expand their demands/grievances against the government or regime. This could occur as a result of a more limited baseline space inside autocracies for civic action, leading protesters to capitalize when there is a brief lapse in freedom of assembly restrictions. Protests that are directed against third parties or countries, or which begin at local levels of government, are potential avenues for this type of opportunistic opening since they are possibly more benign from the perspective of the state.

Examples

- In Armenia in 2011, protesters in Yerevan province mobilized in response to tighter regulation of fruit vendors. The opposition coalition called the Armenian National Congress (ANC), led by former president Levon Ter-Petrosyan, later attempted to stage protests in Yerevan Liberty Square.

Polarization

If a country became sufficiently polarized, there could be a significant fraction of the country's population who wanted regime change or democracy. If handled properly, this could lead to a positive political transition. (This situation is most often seen in the reverse, where polarization leads to increased autocracy, but the other way around remains theoretically possible).

Succession

Changes of leadership can present potential openings for civic space. New leaders that come into power could be more amenable to working to promote human rights or may lack the institutional knowledge to effectively control civil society and their elites. As such, vertical and horizontal resistance to the autocrat and ruling regime may temporarily experience greater success in mobilizing and calling for change. Geddes, Franz, and Wright (2018) observed that, typically, the initial leader in a country at the incipient stages of a dictatorship will both consolidate and aggrandize power with more success than following leaders, since the elites in those early years face a steep learning curve in curtailing the executive.

Tragic/Bad Event

Tragedies or other bad events can catalyze people into action, often in the form of protests. Frequently, these protests can expand beyond the initial event to encompass other grievances against the government, or to call for democracy or other changes. The catalyzing event can take a number of forms, including (but not limited to): sexual assaults, mass casualty events, death of protestors.

Examples:

- In Venezuela in 2014, protestors began asking for increased security after an attempted sexual assault, but their demands expanded to include releasing arrested protestors, freedom of speech, and an end to shortages

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