

# Challenges to Democracy

## Session 5: Challenges and Facilitators of Democratization

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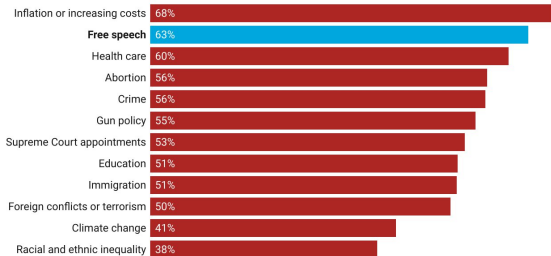
13 November 2024

## Plan for today's session

1. Discuss the readings on democratization
2. Possibility of clarifying remaining questions about podcast project
3. Brief demo about [Shotcut](#), a video editing software that allows you to cut audio as well

## US elections

### 63% of Americans indicate that free speech is "very important"



*Question:* How important, if at all, are each of the following issues in making your decision about who to vote for in the 2024 Presidential election? *Notes:* Percents are those who selected "very important." Poll fielded October 11-14, 2024. N=1022.

Chart: Nathan Honeycutt • Source: FIRE / NORC • Created with Datawrapper

Figure: Most important issue in elections in the US

## Last session

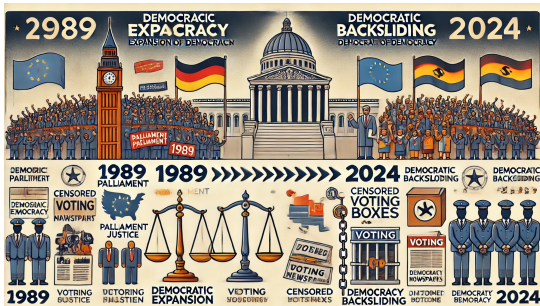


Figure: Summary of last session with GPT-4o

## Last session

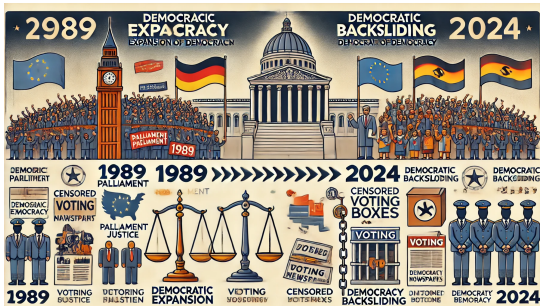


Figure: Summary of last session with GPT-4o

**\*Prompt:** Can you create an infographic containing the following elements?

1. In 1989, some people claimed that the "End of History" has been reached. Liberal democracy essentially won against its competitors.
2. In 2024, the situation is much different. We can experience democratic backsliding in different parts of the world.
3. Democracies fail by coup but more often its principles erode.

## What is democratization?

Democratization denotes the process in which a country transitions from an authoritarian into a democratic regime.

- start and end points of democratization are contested
- often distinction between different stages: transition vs. consolidation

## Causes of democratization

*Think of potential examples: what could cause democratization?*

## Causes of democratization

There are several theories on what causes democratization, among others:

- economic development (Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Boix 2011; Lipset 1959)
- societal transformations and alliances (Moore 1966)
- political culture (Huntington 1991; Inglehart and Welzel 2002; Putnam et al. 1994, December)
- international environment (Huntington 1991; Levitsky and Way 2010)
- agency-based approaches (O'Donnell 1986)



# Modernization theory

**Any idea what modernization theory is about?**

## Modernization theory

Modernization theory posits that democratization is a consequence of economic development. There are two types of the theory:

1. **endogenous** democratization: transition to democracy caused by economic development
2. **exogenous** democratization: different reasons for democratization, but economic growth stabilizes democracy

Mechanisms? Urbanization, literacy, education, evolution of civil society, reduction in inequality (less conflict potential between rich/poor, see Acemoglu and Robinson (2001))

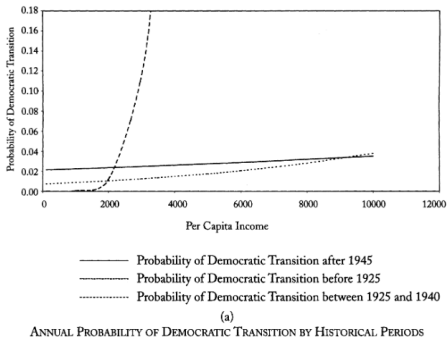
## Modernization theory

### Which theory is right?

No definite answer... maybe there is a conditional effect of modernization following the idea that **marginal utility of income** is capped at a certain level.

For democracy, this means that up until a certain level, economic development facilitates democratization; moreover, the effect of development on democratization is shaped by the **international order** (Boix 2011)

## Modernization theory



**Figure:** Relationship between economic development and transitions to democracy by Boix and Stokes (2003, p. 532)

→ period-specific effect of economic development

## Social alliances

According to Moore (1966), “no bourgeoisie, no democracy” (418)

- middle class key in the evolution of democracy
- top-down revolutions (by the landed upper class) led to fascism, peasant revolutions to Communism and bourgeois revolutions to Western democracy

## Political culture

Not independently, but in conjunction with institutions, political culture may affect democratization – either in its transition phase (Huntington 1991) or in consolidating (Putnam et al. 1994, December)

### In its **transitioning phase**

- values related to minority protection and post-materialism correlate with level of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2002)
- some scholars apply a social determinism, arguing that Confucian and Islam societies offer necessary preconditions (like individual rights) for democratization (Huntington 1991)

**careful:** correlation  $\neq$  causation

## Political culture

### In its **consolidating phase**

- political traditions influence how well institutions work
- ‘civic humanism’ (values like civic engagement, solidarity, equality) boost efficiency of public institutions
- those values are passed on in civil associations

“An association unites the energies of divergent minds and vigorously directs them toward a clearly indicated goal”  
(de Tocqueville et al. 2012, p. 304)

# Political culture

**FIGURE 4.4**  
The Civic Community in the Italian Regions

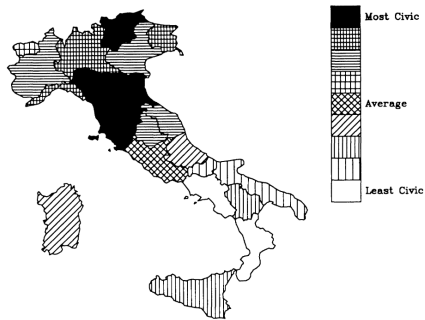


Figure: Civic Community in Italy (Putnam et al. 1994, December)



## International environment

International actors serve as facilitators and external anchors (Morlino 2011) in democratization. In this way, democratization often follows global trends (Huntington 1991)

- promoting the democratic idea, like the US, EU, etc.
- actors preventing democratization losing power (e.g. the Soviet Union)
- if favourable internal conditions, spill-over effects of democratization possible

This can happen in both directions; waves and reverse waves of democratization.

# Strategic Communication in Dictatorships

In pairs, try to respond to the following items:

- Research Question
- Main Argument
- Data and Analysis
- Results
- Implications
- Your Questions

# Strategic Communication in Dictatorships

In short:

- **Research Question:** Do autocrats use their rhetoric strategically?
- **Main Argument:** Autocrats adjust communication to the context, influencing public and external actors
- **Data and Analysis:** corpus of speeches by 51 leaders of 12 post-Soviet countries; analysed via computational text-as-data methods
- **Results:** Autocrats indeed adjust their message to the context; e.g., bolstering public support in elections via patriotism
- **Implications:** Communication matters and autocrats are aware of it

## What do they analyse and why?

- authoritarian leaders regularly deliver speeches
  - but do they really matter? → two schools of thoughts
    1. **no**, because public opinion simply less relevant for their survival
    2. **yes**, they can shape public opinion and increase regime legitimacy portraying themselves as serving for the public good
- Baturo and Tolstrup (2024) argue for the latter perspective but condition it.

## What do they analyse and why?

Speeches matter insofar as they appear in proximity to decisive external events. They zero in on three important contexts

1. economic crises
2. elections
3. internal quarrels and international threats

For each of these contexts, there exists a communication strategy (**patriotism**, **performance** and **intimidation**).

## How do they analyse it?

- collected 304 annual addresses by 51 post Soviet leaders from 1991 to 2019
- they use *Latent Semantic Scaling*, a scaling technique to classify texts
- how it works? you (usually) use polarity words on a given dimension to obtain a positional score on how much a sentence resembles a certain position
- they combine these data with explanatory variables on economic performance (GDP growth); elections and referendums; and protests, interstate disputes and sanctions

## What do they find?

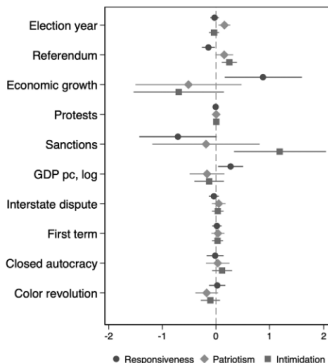


Figure 3. Effects of predictors on authoritarian communication. Marginal effects estimated following models 2, 5, and 8 in table 1. Annual dummy variables are estimated but omitted.

Figure: Their results in a nutshell... (Baturo and Tolstrup 2024, p. 592)

Anything surprising to you?

## What does it imply for democratization?

### Leaders can anticipate challenges

- they can claim credit if the economy runs smoothly (performance)
- they can distract from other challenges in elections year (patriotism)
- they can channel fear and repression if attacked by internal or external enemies



## So, everything's said?

Not yet, question by Greta:

“If physical surveillance makes people angry over time, is there a similar effect for the autocrats communication strategies? Are citizens more likely to protest when being manipulated like that?”

*Do you have anything further to criticize or comment?*

## So, everything's said?

### Open questions

- Can you think of other communication styles?

## So, everything's said?

CNA Insider

### **Made in China, for China: Is patriotism the answer to its weakening economy?**

With China's growth target of 5 per cent this year deemed ambitious, the programme Insight looks at the factors behind its economic challenges and whether relying on innovation and domestic spending can steer its economy towards recovery.

Figure: Two strategies at the same time? (Source: [Channel News Asia](#))

If this was the case, finding that patriotic frames are used to strengthen regime legitimacy could be flawed.

## So, everything's said?

### Open questions

- Can you think of other communication styles?
- What do you think of their case selection?

## So, everything's said?

It is possible that due to the regional clustering, there is some sort of diffusion in communication strategies

- nation-building has similar origins; this may affect the usage of patriotic frames
- economic crises may be regional crises; if some dictators use a certain frame, this may spill-over to other countries

However, they do test whether their results travel and they find support for it!

## So, everything's said?

### Open questions

- Can you think of other communication styles?
- What do you think of their case selection?
- Do we need to take the timing of an annual address into account?

## So, everything's said?

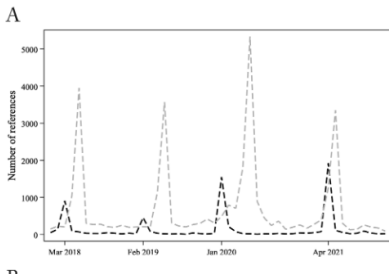


Figure: Dates of annual addresses in Russia

It does seem that there is a bit of variance. So, dictators may have some strategic leeway in when to deliver a speech.

**Is this a problem for the analysis?**

## So, everything's said?

Not necessarily. But it could downplay some of the implications:

- maybe, strategic communication is not that important if leaders can still choose when to speak to the public
- they can decide only to respond to certain events



## So, everything's said?

### Open questions

- Can you think of other communication styles?
- Case selection an issue for generalization?
- Do we need to take the timing of an annual address into account?
- Why do they use Latent Semantic Scaling?

## So, everything's said?

**Latent Semantic Scaling** is a technique to **scale** a text on one dimension. For instance, to assess whether someone talks positively or negatively about the economy.

- but: Baturo and Tolstrup (2024) do not measure the direction of a frame
- classification models would make much more sense

## Conclusion

What we have learned today...

- There is a wide array of potential factors causing democratization.
- The behaviour of autocrats can hamper (cf. Baturu and Tolstrup 2024) or *facilitate* (cf. Hager and Krakowski 2022) the transition to democracies

## The podcast project

- How's your progress?
- Do you have any remaining questions?
- Short demo on how to cut audio (also see this [tutorial](#))

## To prepare for next week...

- next week, you'll present your podcast project!
- afterwards, we'll discuss how democracies die
- **readings:**
  - Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012>
  - **focus on:** Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown or Abou-Chadi, T. (n.d.). Daniel Ziblatt. How Democracies Die..

Any further questions?

## Literature

Abou-Chadi, T. (n.d.). Daniel Ziblatt. How Democracies Die..

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2001). A Theory of Political Transitions. *American Economic Review*, 91(4), 938–963.  
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- Morlino, L. (2011). *Changes for Democracy. Actors, Structures, Processes*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199572533.001.0001>
- O'Donnell, G. A. (Ed.). (1986). *Prospects for democracy*. Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr.
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. Y. (1994, December). *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400820740-004>