

Challenges to Democracy

Session 6: Democratization (Part II)

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Plan for today's session

1. presentation of your podcast project
2. discussion on second reading of last week by Hager and Krakowski (2022)

Your podcast project

1. presentation

Your podcast project

1. presentation
2. what have you learned?

Your podcast project

1. presentation
2. what have you learned?
3. what would you do differently? *or*: is there anything you'd like to investigate further?

Your podcast project

1. presentation
2. what have you learned?
3. what would you do differently? *or*: is there anything you'd like to investigate further?
4. what were your experiences in the research process?

Last session

Last week,

- we learned more about existing theories of democratization
- we discussed the paper by Baturo and Tolstrup (2024)
- but: we did not discuss the second reading by Hager and Krakowski (2022)

Does State Repression Spark Protests?

In one sentence, summarize the essence of the paper. [in pairs]

Does State Repression Spark Protests?

- **Research Question:**
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Analysis:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Does State Repression Spark Protests?

- **Research Question:** What's the effect of (non-violent) repression on anti-regime activities?
- **Main Argument:** Repression is a double-edged sword; it targets regime critics but facilitates their organization
- **Data and Analysis:** mixed-methods analysis using data on anti-regime protests in Upper Silesia, Poland, (1945-1989) and testimonies
- **Results:** Physical surveillance increases protests but decreases sabotage
- **Implications:** Repression can backfire

What do they analyse and why?

- effect of surveillance on anti-regime mobilization
- common assumption: in authoritarian regimes, repression is an effective tool to suppress anti-regime resistance → repression as a deterrent of resistance
- their argument: repression sparks a backlash → repression as a cause of resistance
- mechanism? individual-level: repression leads to anger; group-level: repression facilitates collective action

How do they analyse it?

- archival data on the number of secret police officers (not all secret agents)
- matched with number of protests (Solidarnosc) from 1980-1986
- ...and sabotage acts (productivity in compulsory Saturday work)
- in addition, they have testimonies from anti-regime activists

How do they analyse it?

Main analysis:

- panel data regression models (community and time fixed effects to rule out confounders)
- for a test of causality, instrumental variable approach (Catholic priests as spies as an instrument for secret police officers)
- qualitative analysis of the mechanisms (semi-structured interviews + testimonials and case studies; partly use of text analyses)

What do they find?

- police secret agents increase protests but decrease acts of sabotage
- people become angrier and participate in protests not to be convicted as a spy
- however, they try not to give the regime any reason for violent intervention or accusations of corrupt behavior → less sabotage

What does it imply for democratization?

Even in authoritarian regimes, there is bottom-up agency, which can even be fostered by repression

- autocrats cannot be sure that repression works
- collective action can function, even in difficult information environments

Everything said?

According to Hager and Krakowski (2022), repression increases the likelihood of protest as people reveal their true identity not to be convicted as a spy.

What do you think about their argument?

Everything said?

Plausible because...

- being convicted as a spy could destroy close bonds (families, friends, etc.)

Implausible because...

- revealing identity may be more costly if surveillance is followed by physical repression
- spies could also participate in protest as a cover-up

Everything said?

Generalizability?

- Poland may be a very specific case; citizens from a country that has been repressed repeatedly may behave differently than others
- Upper Silesia may be an even more specific case even if it representative on some characteristics to the Polish population; e.g., what is the reason that data is only available there? different civil society?

They show that Poland is not outstanding in their use of surveillance; surveillance also increases protest in other countries

Everything said?

Proxies?

- data used can only proxy relationship between repression and anti-regime reaction
- no protest data before 1980
- no data on the number of all agents
- only data on number, not on intensity of protests
- productivity measurement might be dependent on other factors

Everything said?

What do you think of recent developments in surveillance; i.e., would Hager and Krakowski (2022) results hold in current autocracies?

Max: How meaningful are the results for surveillance states like China?

Everything said?

Greta:

How can a country and its citizens "heal" from trust violations like that? How can the following government gain back the citizens trust into political systems?

Conclusion

What we have learned from today (and last week)...

- We learned more about the current state of free speech and its conception
- The behaviour of autocrats can hamper (cf. Baturu and Tolstrup 2024) or *facilitate* (cf. Hager and Krakowski 2022) the transition to democracies

To prepare for next week...

- next week, we move from democratization to the reverse trend
- more specifically, we will discuss democratic backsliding
- **readings:**
 - Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012>
 - Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown

Any further questions?

Literature

- Baturo, A., & Tolstrup, J. (2024). Strategic Communication in Dictatorships: Performance, Patriotism, and Intimidation. *The Journal of Politics*, 86(2), 582–596.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/726945>
- Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012>
- Bolet, D. (2021). Drinking Alone: Local Socio-Cultural Degradation and Radical Right Support—The Case of British Pub Closures. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(9), 1653–1692.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414021997158>
- Haas, V. I., Bogatyrev, K., Abou-Chadi, T., Stoetzer, L. F., & Klüver. (2024). *The Electoral Effects of State-Sponsored Homophobia*.

Literature

Hager, A., & Krakowski, K. (2022). Does State Repression Spark Protests? Evidence from Secret Police Surveillance in Communist Poland. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 564–579.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000770>

Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown.