Conceptual Framework for Defections Project

Jonathan Pinckney

2026-01-23

Introduction

When do supporters of authoritarian and democratic backsliding regimes cease to support their former leaders? When do they *defect*? And what actions by opposition forces, civil resistance campaigns, or third party actors can motivate such changes? This document presents a conceptual framework for understanding this process. The framework will inform a series of research projects that seek to generate and test hypotheses on when, why, and how defection happens. These research projects in turn will inform a series of public engagement and storytelling projects to facilitate understanding of how to spark defection from authoritarian and democratic backsliding regimes.

What is Defection?

All political regimes rely on key groups and institutions to provide them with the power and resources needed to sustain themselves. For example, for political regimes to engage in repression they require the consistent cooperation of police and security forces. If security forces refuse to carry out orders, then the state will be unable to repress opposition. Similarly, every regime requires some degree of propaganda and public-facing narrative. If media refuse to spread regime narratives, then the regime will be unable to gain the compliance of the populace. All political power rests upon a flow of these kinds of resources and obedience that must be continually replenished (Sharp 1973).

In normal times, regime supporters provide their support in relatively unchanging ways. Orders are rarely questioned, norms of authority and obedience are followed, and politics proceeds as it always has. These common patterns of obedience create the illusion that power is stable and unchanging.

Yet loyalties shift. For many reasons, from changing self-interest, to fear of the future, to moral conviction, the individuals and groups that previously supported a regime cease to do so. They behave in ways that go against the wishes of political leaders. Soldiers refuse to

open fire on demonstrators. Government attorneys refuse to engage in politically-motivated prosecutions. Legislators resign their offices, or vote against the leaders or parties through which they originally came to power.

All these are examples of what we, drawing on an extensive literature, refer to as *defection*. Defection is any instance in which a regime supporter ceases to provide the level of support that they previously provided. It is a critical component of any process of political change. It is particularly crucial in processes of *nonviolent* political change, whose logic of change rest not on eliminating one's opponents but on shifting them to one's side (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

Consider, as a unifying metaphor, the *spectrum of allies and opponents* (shown in Figure 1), originally developed by Oppenheimer and Lakey (1965), and now a common training tool among movements for social and political change. The tool places all relevant social and political groups in a political struggle in five ordinal categories along a spectrum of loyalty toward a regime, ranging from active support to active opposition. This identification process then informs the strategies that movements employ toward those groups, always seeking to move them from the right to the left along the spectrum. A *loyalty shift* is any movement from any point along this spectrum to any other. *Defection* is any left-ward movement that begins in active or passive support.[1]

Scope Conditions

Defection is a process that occurs in all political regimes, and indeed in some senses all organizations.[2] For this project, we are examining defection in the context of authoritarian and democratic backsliding regimes.

This scope condition is both theoretically and practically motivated. In theoretical terms, we expect that defection in these contexts will be systematically different from defection in healthy democracies. Repression of opponents is much higher in authoritarian and would-be authoritarian regimes (Davenport 2007). Defection in these contexts thus comes with much more significant risks than in democracies. Given this different risk environment, the personal, social, and political motivators of defection are likely to be distinct.[3]

[1] Defection thus overlaps with but is not identical to *mobilization*, which is any right-to-left movement on the spectrum that ends in the "Active Opposition" point. Defection overlaps with mobilization when it begins in Passive or Active Support and ends in Active Opposition, yet many instances of defection do not end in active opposition.

[2] Hirschman (1970) is one attempt to generate a macro-theory of defection relevant across all kinds of organizations, with a focus on firms.

[3] The boundaries between these conditions are fuzzy. Scholars debate, for instance, what constitutes a period of democratic backsliding (Little and Meng 2024), and some of these periods look very similar to periods of democracy. We define democratic backsliding following Jee, Lueders, and Myrick (2022), 755, as "any change of a political community's formal or informal rules which reduces that community's ability to guarantee the freedom of choice, freedom from tyranny, or equality in freedom." In the 21st century, such periods tend to be characterized by "executive aggrandizement," the gradual centralization of power in the hands of the

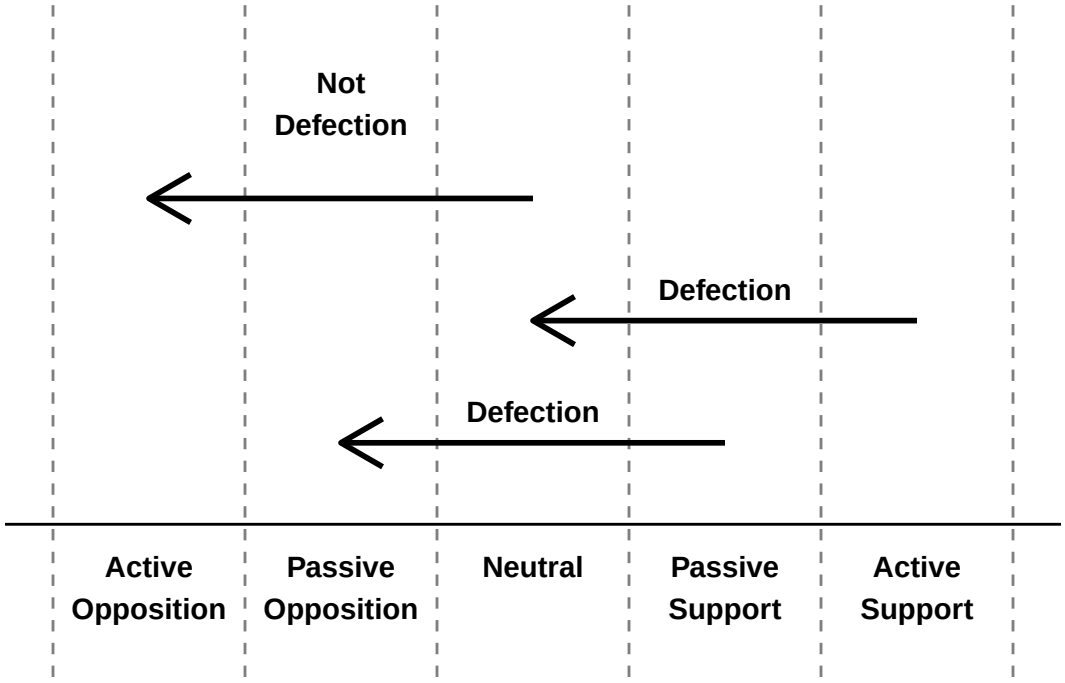

Figure 1: Spectrum of Allies and Opponents

In practical terms, this project's core motivation is to better understand how to protect, repair, and advance democracy. Thus the factors that motivate lower-risk defection in healthy democracies are of less interest. We do not rule out gaining insights into our conditions of interest through examining defection in democracy, nor do we think that our findings would be irrelevant for better understanding defection in healthy democracy.

We are also interested in defection in the contemporary world, with a particular focus on the post-Cold War period. This is because, as is well-established in the literature, the logic of both authoritarian and backsliding regimes is significantly different today than in the past (Bermeo 2016; Guriev and Treisman 2019; Levitsky and Way 2010).

What Do We Already Know?

Different forms of defection have mostly been studied in isolation, without a unifying framework. Many scholars have examined defection by the military or other security forces, particularly in the context of ongoing civil resistance campaigns (Nepstad 2013; Morency-Laflamme 2018; Grewal 2019; Neu 2022; Dahl, Celestino, and Gates 2026; Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham

executive, often initially through legal avenues (Bermeo 2016; Riedl et al. 2024). Operationally, our starting point for identifying periods of democratic backsliding is the definition of autocratization episodes from Lührmann and Lindberg (2019)

2014). Others have examined defection by individual elites or specific elite groups. For instance, there is a significant literature examining why and how legislators in authoritarian single-party regimes leave the ruling party (del Río 2022; Reuter and Gandhi 2011; Reuter and Szakonyi 2019), and a smaller literature examining why individual authoritarian regime supporters cease to support a regime (Hale and Colton 2017; Tertytchnaya 2020).

While this fragmented literature comes to a variety of conclusions, a few consensus findings stand out:

First, defection is *consequential*. The civil resistance literature is a central touchstone here. Security force defections in particular significantly increase the likelihood that a maximalist civil resistance campaign will succeed (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), and civil resistance strategies that focus on sparking defections from regime supporters outperform strategies focused solely on mass mobilization (Chenoweth, Hocking, and Marks 2022). More broadly, divisions in elite coalitions are one of the most consequential precursors of democratization (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Djuve, Knutsen, and Wig 2020)[4]

Second, defection is *difficult*. Loyalty to one's group, even at the expense of personal self-interest, is a basic characteristic of human psychology (Billig and Tajfel 1973). Thus, defection faces inherent initial psychological barriers. Beyond this, authoritarian leaders are well-aware of the threat posed by defection and develop strategies to prevent it (Svolik 2012; Markowitz 2017), from designing institutional structures to co-opt potential defectors (Gandhi 2008) to censorship of nascent collective action (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013), to unleashing state repression (Frugé 2019). This means that defection is also rare. In del Río (2022)'s study of defection among legislative elites in authoritarian regimes, only 3% of the individuals studied ever defected, even in the final days of a regime. Pillars of support for democratic backsliding regimes similarly defected *en masse* in only a small proportion of backsliding spells (Pinckney and Trilling 2025).

Third, defection is *complex but predictable*. Kuran (1991), in a foundational work, argued that defection from authoritarian regimes was likely to be inescapably unpredictable due to near-universal preference falsification, and thus the inability of an outside observer to know beforehand the conditions under which individuals would be willing to speak out against the regime. When change occurs, Kuran argued it was likely to do so as a sudden shocking "cascade." Later research has built on Kuran's insights, highlighting that defection is not linear, but that it does have reliable predictors (Hale and Colton 2017; Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham 2014).

[4]Though the effects of such divisions may be contingent on regime characteristics (del Río and Higashijima 2025)

A Few Guiding Assumptions

Given the breadth of the defections concept, even within the empirical scope limitations we have laid out there are numerous ways to approach studying defections. Thus, in this section we lay out a few of the core theoretical assumptions underlying our approach.

Defection Can Be Individual or Collective

Defection occurs at an individual (micro) level and at a group (meso) level. Individuals may make personal decisions to defect that do not affect the social and political groups that they are a part of. But groups may also make collective decisions to defect that cannot be reduced to an aggregation of individual decisions. Individuals are embedded in social groups, and groups are embedded in large social and political systems. While the aggregation of individual-level characteristics for all members of a group can tell us something about the group's likely behavior, it is unlikely to tell us the whole story. Similarly, simply knowing the groups to which an individual belongs can tell us something about their propensity to defect, but is unlikely to tell us everything.

This means there is interesting and important research to be done on defection both at the level of the individual and at the level of the group, and research that ignores one of these levels is likely to provide an incomplete picture.

Defection is Social

Defection cannot be studied in isolation. While unit-level factors influence a person or group's propensity for defection, defection takes place in an inescapably social context. People and groups make choices to defect or not defect not just based on what they want but on what they think other people and groups are likely to do (Koehler, Ohl, and Albrecht 2016). Thus, to understand defection we must understand not just the characteristics of individuals or groups but their embeddedness in broader social networks and the flows of information through those networks.

Defection Has Complex, Obscure Motivations

Individuals or groups defect for many reasons. These may be stated or unstated, and may be transparent or opaque even to the defector. Defection may in some cases be a matter largely of rational, material utility maximization. In other cases it may be a matter of moral conviction or suasion (Pearlman 2018). Or it may be due to changing norms of appropriate behavior in one's social group. These motivations are not sharply segmented from one another, and in most cases have some degree of interaction. It is easier to advance once's material interests if

one can morally justify them. Conversely, one can more easily stand by one's principles if it happens to also be materially beneficial.

The confusion and inter-relationship of the many potential motivations for defection mean that, while we should pay careful attention to how people describe their decisions to defect, we should treat these descriptions as one data source among many, not as the definitive answer to *why* defection occurred. The stories people tell about why they made dramatic decisions are not simply direct replications of their actual motivations, but are narratives intended to shape a self or collective image (Nisbett and Wilson 1977).

This guiding assumption leads directly to the following guiding assumption:

Defection is Behavioral

Defection is defined not by what people *think* but by what they *do*. For defection to occur, we must observe a behavioral change vis a vis an authoritarian regime. People or groups must stop providing the support they previously provided. While we are interested in "changes of heart" as causal factors that may *lead* to defection, if those changes of heart do not result in meaningful, observable differences in behavior they do not constitute defection.

This does not mean, however, that we are not interested in what people *say* publicly about their loyalty to or support for an authoritarian regime. The way we speak is an important aspect of our behavior, particularly in authoritarian contexts where even the slightest indication of dissent is politically meaningful (Hale and Colton 2017). Individuals and groups making statements that reflect a different attitude toward a regime are important behavioral changes and can have important consequences (Kuran 1991).

It does mean that what constitutes defection is not the same at all times. Whether a particular behavior is a defection will depend on what, for that person or group, constitutes loyalty. Some actions may be clearly defection across almost all contexts, but in most cases understanding whether something is a defection, and the significance of that defection, will require significant contextual knowledge.[5]

For example, Vaclav Havel (1985)'s seminal essay "The Power of the Powerless" describes the momentousness of a shopkeeper in Communist Czechoslovakia choosing to remove a "Workers of the World, Unite" sign from his shop window. Havel describes how the universality of such displays creates the metaphysical structure that gives the post-totalitarian Communist regime its power and thus the great import that comes with such a removal. Yet to notice the importance of such an action, we must have Havel explain to us the common behaviors

[5]See Pinckney (2021) for a similar discussion of what constitutes nonviolent resistance. A public march, for instance, by an excluded group in a dictatorship where such marches are criminalized, is a bold act of nonviolent resistance. A tactically identical march by a privileged group in a democracy may simply be politics as usual.

expected of an average citizen of this regime and how people interpret deviations from those behaviors.

This discussion leads into our final guiding theoretical assumption:

Defection Takes Many Forms

The ways in which defection happens are as diverse as the ways that regime supporters display loyalty. Defection will look different across the people and groups who defect. It can involve small steps or large steps, can be publicly stated to the world or only privately stated within groups of trusted friends and confidants.

As a start for gaining some theoretical clarity on this diverse set of behaviors, we categorize the forms of defection as falling along two basic dimensions: whether they *break* or *bind* with the regime and whether the involve *speaking, acting,* or *standing in the way.*

The first dimension refers to whether the defection is intended to attempt to change the regime while remaining a part of the regime or going outside of the regime.[6] Defection that *breaks* typically involves public denunciations, or highly visible actions. In social psychological terms, it involves a definitive disconnection from a social identity that one formerly held. Defection that *binds*, on the other hand, seeks to maintain one's prior social identity as a part of a regime while using internal forms of pressure to motivate change in the regime's behavior. It typically involves behaviors that are quiet, behind the scenes, and perhaps only visible in their effects.

The second dimension refers to the defector's specific behaviors. Defection through *speaking* involves verbally expressing one's opposition to the regime. Defection through *acting* involves taking positive steps against the regime. Defection through *standing in the way* involves refusing to go along with regime actions that would normally be expected.[7]

Defection as a process that unfolds over time will likely first involve binding and then breaking, and a mix of speaking, acting, and standing in the way. Individual acts of defection by the same group or individual can be distinguished from one another based on whether they vary across these dimensions.

A Few Propositions

Having laid out our guiding assumptions about defection, in this section we describe a few initial hypotheses that are ready for more research. We are particularly interested in the ways in which action by opposition groups, civil resistance campaigns, and others struggling against

[6]This dimension has close parallels to the idea of *insider* or *outsider* strategies for achieving social change, as well as Hirschman's classic distinction between "voice" and "exit" (Hirschman 1970)

[7]This dimension closely parallels Gene division of the methods of nonviolent action into *protest and persuasion* (speaking), *non-cooperation* (standing in the way), and *nonviolent intervention* (acting)

authoritarian or backsliding regimes can facilitate or spark defection, thus our hypotheses are generally framed in terms of this context.

Defection Requires a Way Out

Regime supporters will be highly unlikely to defect if they do not perceive an acceptable post-defection future. For example, Sinanoglu (2025) points out that corruption can powerfully deter defection by business elites not just because businesses fear losing its material benefits but because corruption makes business elites despised by the opposition. Since business elites know that they are unpopular among the opposition, they remain loyal to the regime even when it is not in their material interest because they fear punishment by the opposition were they to defect.

Defection thus is only likely to occur when there are avenues through which potential defectors can continue to achieve their core individual or organizational goals post-defection. This is partially a matter of institutional structure that is outside of activists' control - if the existing social, political, or economic institutions provide no avenues for meaningful post-defection life, then defection will be particularly rare (Langston 2002). Eliminating such alternative avenues is one of the key strategies of authoritarian control.

However, skillful resistance campaigns can counter this strategy and promote "ways out" for defectors in several ways: through creating and providing alternative institutions, by negotiating exit plans for potential defectors, and by promoting an inclusive image of a post-regime future in which potential defectors can see themselves.

It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know

Defection is likely to be driven by social connections. Individuals and groups behave not just following a material "logic of consequences" but a "logic of appropriateness" for people and groups "like them" (March and Olsen 1998). Any factor that increases a regime supporter's positive connections to individuals and groups that have publicly-known lower levels of loyalty to the regime will tend, all else equal, to reduce that supporter's level of regime loyalty and increase the probability of defection. This mechanism also connects to the social psychological factors of in-group loyalty that make defection difficult. If the boundaries of the "group" are problematized, such that regime supporters see their social group as containing both regime supporters and opponents, then in-group loyalty will no longer necessarily imply *regime* loyalty.

For this mechanism to operate, lower levels of loyalty to the regime among a regime supporter's social group must be *known*. Thus, factors that cause regime supporters to update their priors about the level of dissent against the regime, particularly among unlikely dissenters, is likely to increase the probability of defection.

For resistance campaigns, this means that defection will be increased under two conditions: (1) when the campaign increases their social connection to regime supporters and (2) when they effectively signal that dissent is more widespread and that dissenters are more committed to this dissent than regime supporters previously anticipated.

...but Material Consequences Matter

However, social connections are not the whole story. Defection in authoritarian contexts is also a high-risk, high-cost endeavor, and regime supporters are likely to be sensitive to the costs of their potential actions. Thus, factors that increase the personal or group cost of remaining loyal to the regime relative to the cost of defection are likely to increase the scale and scope of defection. To avoid overly stretching the concept of cost we focus on material costs and benefits.

Resistance campaigns can heighten the costs of loyalty through tactics of non-cooperation or nonviolent intervention that target the material bases of support for regime loyalists.

There is a tension between the social logic for promoting defection highlighted in the prior hypothesis and the material logic of promoting defection highlighted in this one. To illustrate, consider a business that is providing support to an authoritarian leader. An anti-authoritarian campaign could attempt to motivate the business to defect by encouraging its members to patronize the business, thus building strong social connections between the business and the campaign's members and, over time, developing a social logic of appropriateness that might motivate the business to change its behavior. Or the campaign might encourage its members to boycott the business, directly cutting off social connections between itself and the business, but heightening the material costs of loyalty until certain concessions are given. Which strategy should the campaign pursue?

We are skeptical that either the social or the material logic of sparking defection predominates across all contexts. Instead, effective campaigns are likely to spark defection through a carefully sequenced combination of tactics that employ these varying logics. Tactics that attempt to impose material costs are likely to be most effective when they are built on a foundation of social connection and clear communication, in other words when the imposition of costs is seen as a temporary break in a relationship that can be restored based on good behavior.

Exploring the specific parameters of when and how these logics can be most effectively employed, how they are best combined, and how their logics interact with other consequential factors such as the relative power, pre-existing relationships, and institutional position of regime supporters are all key areas to explore in future research.

Little Steps are Easier than Big Steps

Defection will be easier among those who have the lowest levels of support for the regime, and small-scale defection will be much more common than large defection. In the framework of the spectrum of allies and opponents, the most common type of defection will be moves from passive support to neutrality. The second most common will be moves from active support to passive support. Moves of more than one level - at the most extreme from active support to active opposition - will be much less common.

For active supporters of a regime to become active opponents will thus typically take multiple steps. Active supporters will typically move from active to passive support, then to neutrality, then passive opposition, before moving into active opposition.

...but authoritarianism can make defection all or nothing

Authoritarian and would-be authoritarian regimes have strong incentives to prevent the natural process of gradually-declining loyalty described in the previous hypothesis, and will be highly likely to punish even modest indications of declining loyalty with severe repression. Thus, supporters whose private loyalties are changing will be more hesitant to express those changing loyalties. This means that over time authoritarian and would-be authoritarian regimes accumulate large numbers of public supporters whose private preferences are strongly opposed to them (Kuran 1991). When these people defect, they are likely to do so in dramatic, all-or-nothing ways.

Thus, we hypothesize that the scale of defection will be directly related to the degree of authoritarianism in the current political regime. In more open environments, we will tend to observe more small defections. As the system becomes more authoritarian, defection will become less common but when it occurs will be larger. We will see more moves from active regime supporters to active regime opponents.

Conclusion

All political regimes are built on loyalty. Understanding changes in that loyalty is key to understanding changes in those regimes. For democratization to occur, or for democratic backsliding to be checked, the individuals and groups that have supported an authoritarian leader must cease to provide that support. They must defect.

This project, built on the conceptual framework laid out in this document, seeks to both unify the disparate ways in which scholars have studied defection in the past and advance new understandings of when, how, and why defection occurs in order to provide actionable recommendations to activists and policymakers seeking to advance, defend, and repair democracy around the world.

References

Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27 (1): 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012.

Billig, Michael, and Henri Tajfel. 1973. "Social Categorization and Similarity in Intergroup Behaviour." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 3 (1): 27–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420030103.

Chenoweth, Erica, Andrew Hocking, and Zoe Marks. 2022. "A Dynamic Model of Nonviolent Resistance Strategy." *PLOS ONE* 17 (7): e0269976. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0269976.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Dahl, Marianne, Mauricio Rivera Celestino, and Scott Gates. 2026. "Disaggregating Defection: Dissent Campaign Strategies and Security Force Disloyalty." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 70 (1): 170–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027251348389.

Davenport, Christian. 2007. *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*. Cambridge University Press.

del Río, Adrián. 2022. "Strategic Uncertainty and Elite Defections in Electoral Autocracies: A Cross-National Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 55 (13): 2250–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140221074273.

del Río, Adrián, and Masaaki Higashijima. 2025. "Democratic Reforms in Dictatorships: Elite Divisions, Party Origins, and the Prospects of Political Liberalization." *Comparative Political Studies* 58 (12): 2682–2717. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241302772.

Djuve, Vilde Lunnan, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Tore Wig. 2020. "Patterns of Regime Breakdown Since the French Revolution." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Frugé, Kimberly R. 2019. "Repressive Agent Defections: How Power, Costs, and Uncertainty Influence Military Behavior and State Repression." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 36 (6): 591–607. https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894219881433.

Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510090.

Grewal, Sharan. 2019. "Military Defection During Localized Protests: The Case of Tataouine." *International Studies Quarterly* 63 (2): 259–69.

Guriev, Sergei, and Daniel Treisman. 2019. "Informational Autocrats." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33 (4): 100–127. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.100.

Hale, Henry E., and Timothy J. Colton. 2017. "Who Defects? Unpacking a Defection Cascade from Russia's Dominant Party 2008–12." *American Political Science Review* 111 (2): 322–37. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000642.

Havel, Vaclav. 1985. "The Power of the Powerless." In *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, edited by John Keane, 23–96. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Hirschman, Albert O. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jee, Haemin, Hans Lueders, and Rachel Myrick. 2022. "Towards a Unified Approach to Research on Democratic Backsliding." *Democratization* 29 (4): 754–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.2010709.

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107 (2): 326–43.

Koehler, Kevin, Dorothy Ohl, and Holger Albrecht. 2016. "From Disaffection to Desertion: How Networks Facilitate Military Insubordination in Civil Conflict." *Comparative Politics* 48 (4): 439–57. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041516819197601.

Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44 (1): 7–48.

Langston, Joy. 2002. "Breaking Out Is Hard to Do: Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in Mexico's One-Party Hegemonic Regime." *Latin American Politics and Society* 44 (3): 61–88. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2002.tb00214.x.

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Little, Andrew T., and Anne Meng. 2024. "Measuring Democratic Backsliding." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 1–13.

Lührmann, Anna, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2019. "A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New about It?" *Democratization* 26 (7): 1095–1113.

March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. 1998. "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders." *International Organization* 52 (4): 943–69.

Markowitz, Lawrence P. 2017. "Beyond Kompromat: Coercion, Corruption, and Deterred Defection in Uzbekistan." *Comparative Politics* 50 (1): 103–21. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041517821864390.

Morency-Laflamme, Julien. 2018. "A Question of Trust: Military Defection During Regime Crises in Benin and Togo." *Democratization* 25 (3): 464–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1375474.

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. 2013. "Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring Military Defections and Loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria." *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (3): 337–49.

Neu, Kara Kingma. 2022. "Strategies of Dictatorship and Military Disloyalty During Anti-Authoritarian Protests: Explaining Defections and Coups." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 7 (1): ogab033. https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogab033.

Nisbett, Richard E., and Timothy D. Wilson. 1977. "Telling More Than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes." *Psychological Review* 84 (3): 231.

O'Donnell, Guillermo, and Philippe C. Schmitter. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore, MD: JHU Press.

Oppenheimer, Martin, and George Lakey. 1965. *A Manual for Direct Action*. Quadrangle Books.

Pearlman, Wendy. 2018. "Moral Identity and Protest Cascades in Syria." *British Journal of Political Science* 48 (4): 877–901. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123416000235.

Pinckney, Jonathan. 2021. "Nonviolent Resistance, Social Justice, and Positive Peace." In *The*

Palgrave Handbook on Positive Peace, edited by Katerina Standish, Heather Devere, Adan Suazo, and Rachel Rafferty. Palgrave Macmillan.

Pinckney, Jonathan, and Claire Trilling. 2025. "Breaking Down Pillars of Support for Democratic Backsliding." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 30 (2): 171–88.

Pion-Berlin, David, Diego Esparza, and Kevin Grisham. 2014. "Staying Quartered: Civilian Uprisings and Military Disobedience in the Twenty-First Century." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (2): 230–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012450566.

Reuter, Ora John, and Jennifer Gandhi. 2011. "Economic Performance and Elite Defection from Hegemonic Parties." *British Journal of Political Science* 41 (1): 83–110. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123410000293.

Reuter, Ora John, and David Szakonyi. 2019. "Elite Defection Under Autocracy: Evidence from Russia." *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 552–68.

Riedl, Rachel Beatty, Jennifer McCoy, Kenneth Roberts, and Murat Somer. 2024. "Pathways of Democratic Backsliding, Resistance, and (Partial) Recoveries." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 712 (1): 8–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162251319909.

Sharp, Gene. 1973. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston, MA: Porter Sargent.

Sinanoglu, Semuhi. 2025. "Autocrats and Their Business Allies: The Informal Politics of Defection and Co-optation." *Government and Opposition* OnlineFirst.

Svolik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tertytchnaya, Katerina. 2020. "Protests and Voter Defections in Electoral Autocracies: Evidence From Russia." *Comparative Political Studies* 53 (12): 1926–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019843556.