

MY410 Week 7 Seminar

Chao-Yo Cheng

Recap: Case Studies

- ▶ Why case studies?
 - Context-dependent
 - General claim (scope condition?)
- ▶ What is a case?
- ▶ Which type of case studies?
 - Theory-testing: testing a causal claim (deductive: process tracing; comparative case studies)
 - Theory-building: advancing ways of seeing (inductive and abductive)
- ▶ Case selection: typical, deviant, theoretical, critical, etc.?
- ▶ Sources for case studies?

Reading: Wilkinson & Fairhead (2017)

Wilkinson, A., & Fairhead, J. (2017). Comparison of Social Resistance to Ebola Response in Sierra Leone and Guinea Suggests Explanations Lie in Political Configurations not Culture. *Critical Public Health*, 27(1), 14–27.

- ▶ Review of literature
- ▶ Case selection
- ▶ Data and findings
- ▶ Alternative explanations
- ▶ Generalizability

Discussion: Review of literature

- ▶ How do the authors use their review of literature to motivate the study? What is the puzzle?
- ▶ Why is this study interesting, in relation to what we already know, or assume that we know? Why is it interesting in relation to pressing social, developmental, and health problems?

Discussion: Case selection

- ▶ How is the selection of cases for comparison justified?
- ▶ What is the evidence that they are different on the dependent variable (resistance to public health measures)? They mention that resistance could be expressed in different ways, is this a problem for their claims?



Discussion: Case selection

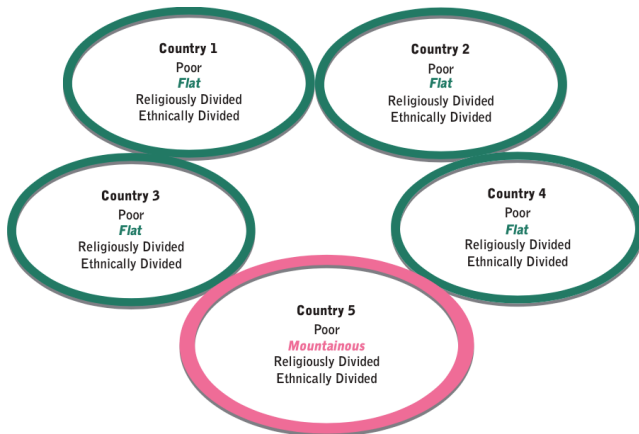


FIGURE 1.2

Using the Method of Difference

Countries 1 through 4 all remained at peace—and all share several characteristics. Country 5 went to war, and the only way it differs from the other countries is in its terrain. Using the method of difference in this example suggests a causal relationship between rough terrain and civil war.

Discussion: Findings

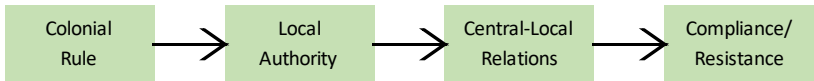
- ▶ What is the authors' favoured explanation for the differences between Guinea and Sierra Leone in terms of resistance to public health measures?
- ▶ Where does their evidence for that explanation come from? What is the most convincing (to you) piece of evidence?

Discussion: Alternative explanations

- ▶ What alternative explanations to their own central argument do they consider?
- ▶ How convincing is their rebuttal of these alternatives?

Discussion: Generalizability

- ▶ Which part of their argument could generalise to other contexts?
- ▶ Are there particular contexts to which is it more or less likely to generalise?
- ▶ Can you imagine this generalising to your own home country? Why? Why not?



Additional references: Books

- ▶ *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*, Barbara Geddes (2003)
- ▶ *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (2014)
- ▶ *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Charles C. Ragin (2014)
- ▶ *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, John Gerring (2017)

Additional references: Articles (methods)

- ▶ Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150. – a very interesting piece about selection bias in comparative case studies
- ▶ Pepinsky, Thomas. 2019. "The Return of the Single-Country Study." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 187-203. – an insightful piece for you, if you are wondering why and how studying a single country can generate broad implications
- ▶ Waldner, David. 2012. "Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science*. Harold Kincaid ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. – an interesting (yet unique) piece for you if you are interested in process tracing and causal inference based on qualitative research

Additional references (examples)

- ▶ Treisman, Daniel. 2020. "Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer Government." *American Political Science Review* 114(3): 792-810.
- ▶ Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2012. "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 495-516. – a very interesting (and rigorous) example of comparative case studies
- ▶ Falleti, Tulia G. 2005. "A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 327-346. – a very good example of theoretically grounded process tracing