

# 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

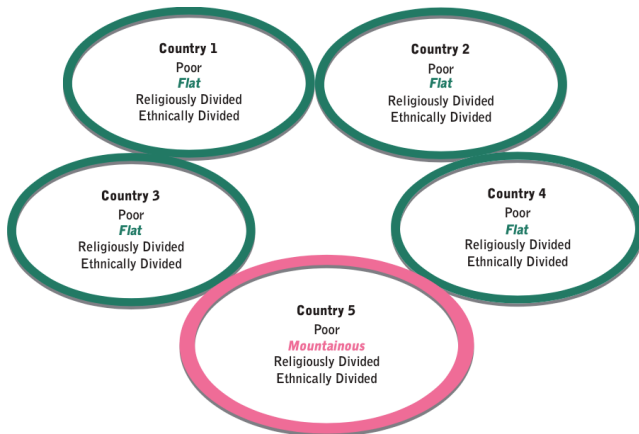
- ▶ How do the authors use their review of literature to motivate the study? What is the puzzle?
- ▶ Why is this study interesting, in relation to what we already know, or assume that we know? Why is it interesting in relation to pressing social, developmental, and health problems?

# 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?

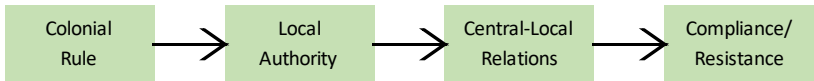
## Discussion: Alternative explanations

- ▶ 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

- ▶ *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

- ▶ 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