

Challenges to Democracy

Session 3: Concepts

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Last session

- How can we define 'good research'?
- Which parts should every empirical article contain?
- What are theories and research designs and how can we develop those?

Today's session

- What's the method of comparison and why do we compare?
- How can we conceptualize democracies?
- Liberal vs. electoral democracies
- Tensions within democratic systems
- How do citizens define democracy?

The Comparative Method

"all social science requires comparison, which entails judgments of which phenomena are "more" or "less" alike in degree (i.e., quantitative differences) or in kind (i.e., qualitative differences)." (King et al. 1994, p. 2)

As the Chair of *Comparative Politics*, the comparative approach is the core pillar of our research.

Do you have an idea why it might be important to compare?

An example

Democratic states do not fight wars against each other.



Fundamental problem of causal inference

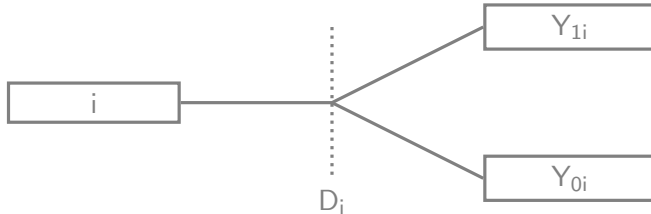


Figure: Potential Outcomes

¹see Cunningham (2021, pp. 125–128)

Fundamental problem of causal inference

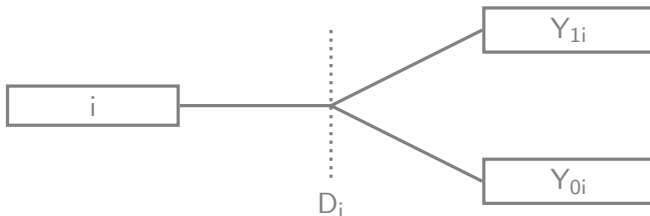


Figure: Potential Outcomes

Problem: We cannot observe the same unit in different conditions at the same time.¹

¹see Cunningham (2021, pp. 125–128)

Why comparison?



Laurel Coons   
@LaurelCoons

Correlation ≠ Causation



10:13 · 15 May 21 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

178 Retweets 21 Quote Tweets 839 Likes



End The Duopoly   ... · 15 May 21
Replying to @LaurelCoons
Are you sure? LOL



1



If we studied only one case, we would never know whether cats are responsible for bumpy roads.

Why comparison? II

“If we cannot rerun history at the same time and the same place with different values of our explanatory variable each time—as a true solution to the Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference would require—we can attempt to make a second-best assumption: we can rerun our experiment in two different units that are ‘homogeneous.’” (King et al. 1994, p. 90)

What counts as a comparison?

- A global study of how people define democracy in their own words?
- An experiment of how violations of democratic procedures is evaluated by citizens?
- A study of how the European Union frames democracy?

What counts as a comparison?

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- An experiment of how violations of democratic procedures is evaluated by citizens?
- A study of how the European Union frames democracy?

In the course of this seminar, we will define comparative politics more broadly. It's not necessarily a study across countries, but can very well be applied within countries (Pepinsky 2019).

An introductory remark by Sartori

TABLE 1. LADDER OF ABSTRACTION

Levels of Abstraction	Major Comparative Scope and Purpose	Logical and Empirical Properties of Concepts
HL: <i>High Level Categories</i> Universal conceptualizations	Cross-area comparisons among heterogeneous contexts (global theory)	Maximal extension Minimal intension Definition by negation
ML: <i>Medium Level Categories</i> General conceptualizations and taxonomies	Intra-area comparisons among relatively homogeneous contexts (middle range theory)	Balance of denotation with connotation Definition by analysis, i.e. per genus et differentiam
LL: <i>Low Level Categories</i> Configurative conceptualizations	Country by country analysis (narrow-gauge theory)	Maximal intension Minimal extension Contextual definition

Figure: Scope of concepts in the social sciences (Sartori 1970, p. 1044)

What's a democracy? I

Form pairs. In your own words and understanding, discuss what constitutes a democracy? [5 minutes]

A minimalist view on democracy

According to Schumpeter (1942, p. 269), *“the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”*

1. What would Merkel (2004) say about this definition?
2. What does he mean by the term “embedded democracy”?

Embedded democracies I

Inspired by Dahl (1971), Merkel (2004) points out:

- previous conceptualizations (e.g. Freedom House) fail to provide thresholds distinguishing between illiberal and liberal democracies
- democracies are minimally defined by **free and fair elections**
- to ensure these criteria, it needs to be embedded in other securing partial regimes
 1. **internally** embedded by institutional rights
 2. **externally** embedded by facilitating factors

→ enabling democratic functioning + separation of powers

Embedded democracies II

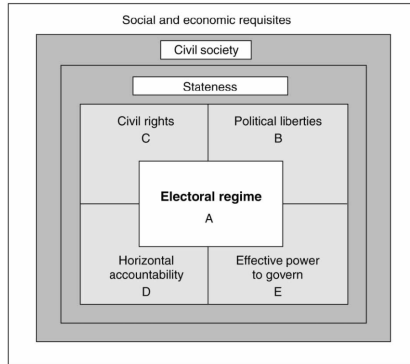


Figure: Concept of embedded democracies by Merkel (2004)

Embedded democracies III

The electoral regime

- core regime of a democracy
- **regular, free, general, fair and equal elections** distinguish democracies from autocracies
- necessary but not sufficient condition for a democracy since elections do not guarantee **accountability**
- example: **active** and **passive** suffrage
- example for a violation of this principle: US Disenfranchisement

Embedded democracies IV

Political rights

- crucial criteria for electoral regime
- enabling citizens to communicate and organize their interests
- examples: freedom of expression and freedom of association
- example for a violation of this principle: Protester being arrested in Russia

Embedded democracies V

Civil rights

- protecting individual freedom
- prerequisite are independent courts to implement rule of law
- protection from the state (negative freedom)
- example: right to fair trial
- example of violation: Guantanamo Bay

Embedded democracies VI

Horizontal accountability

- distribution of power in the trias of executive, legislative and judiciary → **checks and balances**
- design varies by regime: presidential vs. parliamentary system
- not necessarily trias, checks and balances can be further guaranteed by structures within executive, legislative and judiciary
- examples: veto rights, vote of (no) confidence
 - ministerial portfolios
 - bicameral system
 - more than one chamber in the judiciary
- example of violation: Orbán's sidelining of the courts

Embedded democracies VII

Effective power to govern

- those elected are the ones executing power
- extra-constitutional forces exempt from policy enforcement
- counter-examples: military, influential public figures (e.g., businesspeople, former politicians); 'Kapp-Putsch' in the Weimar Republic

Embedded democracies VIII

Liberal Democracies

If all of these regimes are functioning, we can speak of a **liberal democracy**. If partial regimes are not guaranteed, there is a **defect democracy**.

- defects come in different shapes
 - exclusive democracy
 - domain democracy
 - **illiberal** democracy
 - **delegative** democracy

Freedom and equality – a trade-off?

In small groups, consider the following scenario:

With few exceptions for smaller parties, as of July, no person is allowed to make donations to political parties or legislators in Southern Australia. (Source)

Is this democratic? Why? Why not?

Freedom and equality – a trade-off

There is an inherent tension between freedom and equality as two central pillars of democracies (cf. Pennock 2015, March 8)

Freedom/liberty...

- ...highlights the rights of the individual
- ...is central for guaranteeing minority rights

Equality...

- ...follows a collectivist logic
- ...is concerned about egalitarian pre-requisites to democratic reality

For a functioning democracy, both are needed. There needs to be a balance between partial regimes; each of them needs to be protected against the infringement by another regime.

A maximalist view on democracy... I

*Imagine you did not enjoy formal education and have no money,
does this influence your experience of democracy?*

A maximalist view on democracy... II

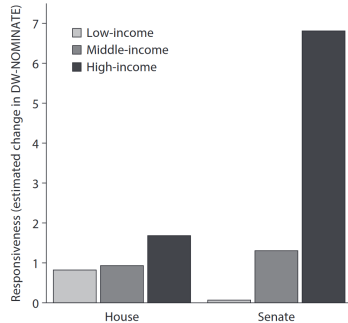


FIGURE 8.3 House and Senate Responsiveness to Income Groups, 2011–2013

Figure: Relationship between Income Inequality and Elite Responsiveness (Bartels 2016, September 20)

A maximalist view on democracy... III

Therefore, others have emphasized the importance of socio-economic equality among citizens (Sigman and Lindberg 2019).

- output matters!
- implicitly, Merkel (2004) also accounts for this conception with what he called the external embeddedness
- socio-economic equality needs to be guaranteed to prevent economic inequality from translating into political inequality (Munck 2016)

Understanding Democracy: Data from Unlikely Places

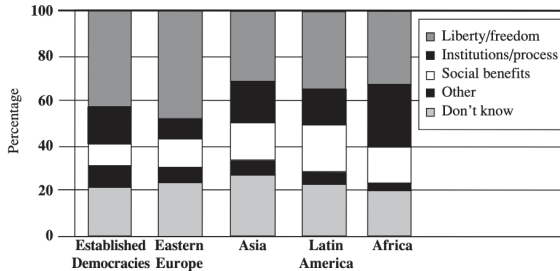
In groups of four, summarize the core findings of Dalton et al. (2007).

Research question(s)

- How do citizens define democracy?
- How are their conceptions shaped by their socio-political environment?

Findings I

**FIGURE 1—THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY
(PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONSES)**



Source: Figure combines results from national surveys in 49 countries.

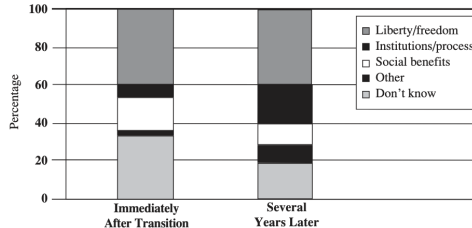
Figure: Regional patterns of democracy conceptions (Dalton et al. 2007, p. 146)

Which explanation is more empirically grounded?

1. *logic of diffusion*: democratic idea is spread across the globe through international community (e.g., media, international organizations)
2. *logic of learning*: socialization shapes how people view democracy

Findings I

FIGURE 3—CHANGES IN MEANING OF DEMOCRACY FOLLOWING A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION



Sources: For Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Romania, the Postcommunist Citizens Survey; for Afghanistan, the Asia Foundation Survey, 2004 and 2006; for Indonesia, the Asia Foundation, National Voter Education Survey, 1999, and Democracy in Indonesia—A Survey of the Electorate, 2003.

Figure: Democratic conceptions over time (Dalton et al. 2007, p. 150)

Which explanation is correct?

Findings II

Evidence for both explanations:

- citizens define democracy differently after transition → learning!
- but: even in non-democratic and very poor regions, people know what democracy is and come to similar definitions

Conclusion

What we have learned today...

- Why we compare
- There exist different levels of abstraction in definitions of democracy.
- While democracy is mainly about free and fair elections, it requires more (partial regimes) to thrive.
- Sub-regimes strengthen democracies but there can also be a tension between them.
- Citizens are able to define democracy; their idea of democracies develops with its consolidation.

To prepare for next week... I

- next session, we will talk about the current state of democratization
- some of you might submit questions
- Readings:
 - Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest*, (16), 3–18. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>
 - Boese, V. A., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Sato, Y., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). State of the world 2021: Autocratization changing its nature? *Democratization*, 29(6), 983–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2069751>

Optional: Wuttke, A., Gavras, K., & Schoen, H. (2022). Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 416–428. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000149>

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

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- Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, 23(1), 1–26.
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- Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics*. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4), 1033–1053.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1958356>
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1942). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. Harper Torchbooks.

Literature IV

Sigman, R., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). Democracy for All: Conceptualizing and Measuring Egalitarian Democracy. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 7(3), 595–612.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2018.6>

Wuttke, A., Gavras, K., & Schoen, H. (2022). Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 416–428.
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