

PSC 202

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

**INTRODUCTION TO
POLITICAL
ANALYSIS
RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN POLITICAL
SCIENCE**

HOUSEKEEPING

- **Quizzes start now**
 - First quiz will be online later (under Assignments)
 - Questions on this lecture and reading for next Monday
 - Due by Monday start of class

HOUSEKEEPING

- First homework posted later today
 - Course website and Blackboard
- Due Friday next week (Feb 3, 9:30 AM)
 - Via Blackboard

RECAP

SYLLABUS

- For all kinds of details, **read the syllabus**
 - Read the parts “Main Things to Know” and “More Details on Important Things”
 - **No really, read them carefully...**

- First class

RECAP

HOUSEKEEPING

- Read the syllabus
 - Carefully!

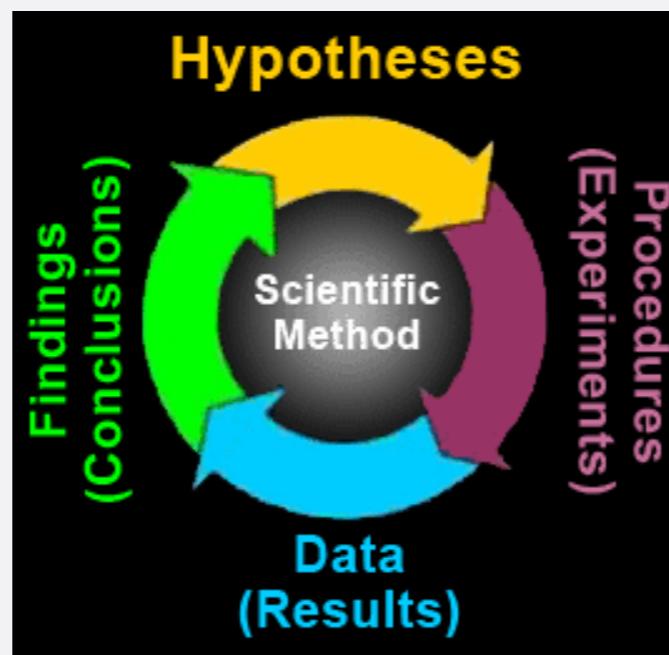
- Second class

RECAP

Finally, there will be miscellaneous small tasks throughout the semester for which you can get credit. For example, one is right here: To show that you read the syllabus, go to <https://forms.gle/F4ohccct2BCM3fCq5> and enter your name, SUID, and tell me about your current favorite movie/TV show, book, album, or podcast. If you do, you'll receive credit towards your participation grade.

RECAP

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



RECAP

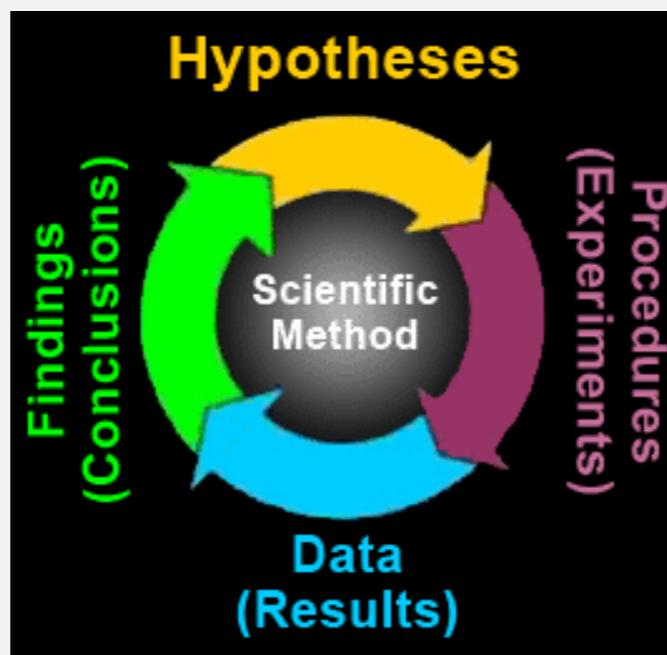
- Preview: We'll do our own research project as a class
- Survey
 - We (you) develop research questions and theories
 - You come up with survey questions
 - Everyone in class takes the survey
 - We analyze the data

TOPICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

- American Politics
- Comparative Politics
- International Relations
- Political Theory

TODAY

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



TODAY

- **Developing a research question**
- **Current research questions in political science**

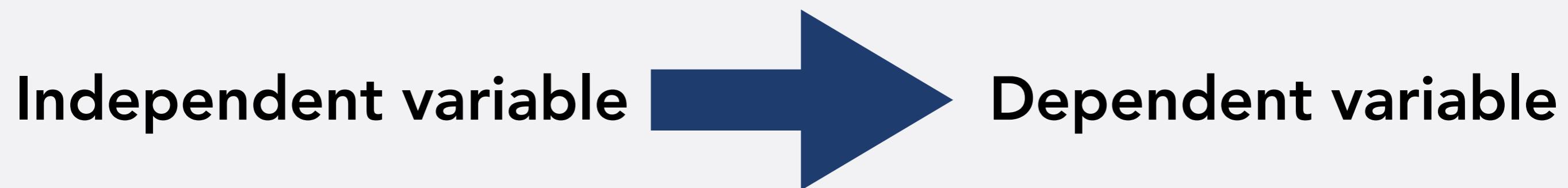
GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Prerequisite for anything else in research process
- A good research project needs a good research question

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO?

- Goal: Provide causal explanations for social/political phenomena
- What we are trying to explain: *dependent variable*
- What we are explaining it with: *independent variable*

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO?



- Ultimate goal of research project:
 - _____ causes _____
 - Higher _____ causes higher _____
 - Higher _____ causes lower _____

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Some recent research questions from one political science journal

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Do Immigrants Move to Welfare? Subnational Evidence from Switzerland

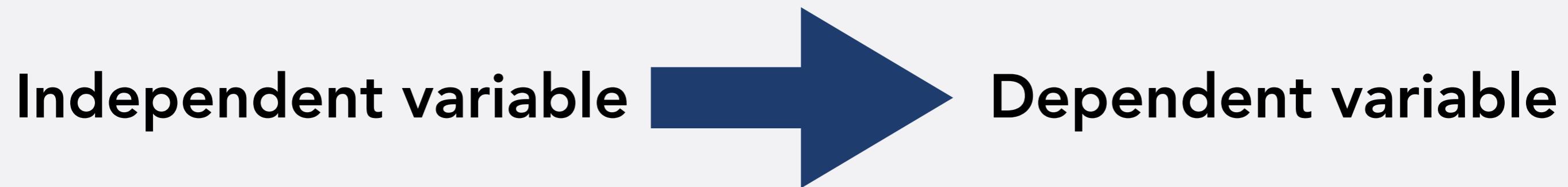
Jeremy Ferwerda ✉, Moritz Marbach ✉, Dominik Hangartner ✉

First published: 13 January 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12766>

Abstract

The welfare magnet hypothesis holds that immigrants are likely to relocate to regions with generous welfare benefits. Although this assumption has motivated extensive reforms to immigration policy and social programs, the empirical evidence remains contested. In this study, we assess detailed administrative records from Switzerland covering the full population of social assistance recipients between 2005 and 2015. By leveraging local variations in cash transfers and exogenous shocks to benefit levels, we identify how benefits shape intracountry residential decisions. We find limited evidence that immigrants systematically move to localities with higher benefits. The lack of significant welfare migration within a context characterized by high variance in benefits and low barriers to movement suggests that the prevalence of this phenomenon may be overstated. These findings have important implications in the European setting where subnational governments often possess discretion over welfare and parties frequently mobilize voters around the issue of “benefit tourism.”

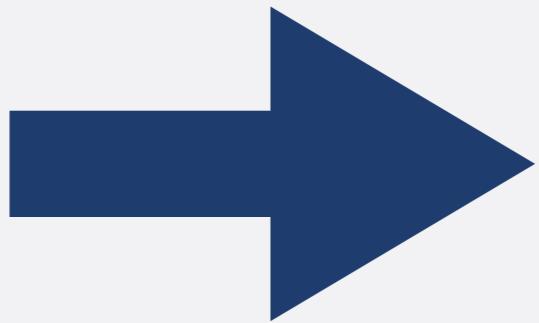
CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Research question: Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Welfare benefit
generosity



Immigrants'
decision where
to move

- Research question: Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

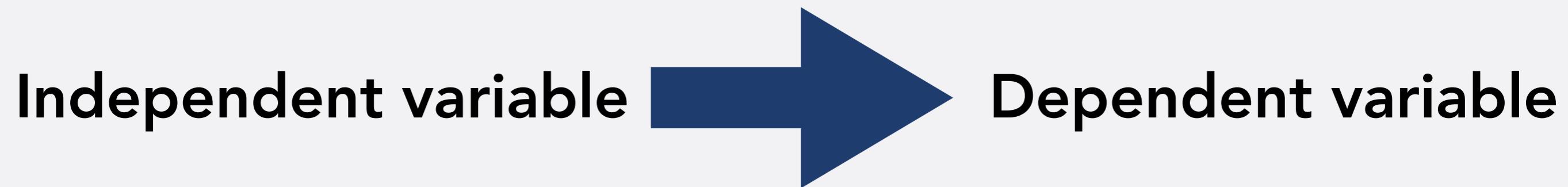
Media Attention and Strategic Timing in Politics: Evidence from U.S. Presidential Executive Orders

Milena Djourelova , Ruben Durante 

Abstract

Do politicians tend to adopt unpopular policies when the media and the public are distracted by other events? We examine this question by analyzing the timing of executive orders signed by U.S. presidents over the past four decades. We find robust evidence that executive orders are more likely to be signed on the eve of days when the news is dominated by other important stories that can crowd out coverage of executive orders. This relationship only holds in periods of divided government when unilateral presidential actions are more likely to be criticized by Congress. The effect is driven by executive orders that are more likely to make the news and to attract negative publicity, particularly those on topics on which president and Congress disagree. Finally, the timing of executive orders appears to be related to predictable news but not unpredictable ones, which suggests it results from a deliberate and forward-looking PR strategy.

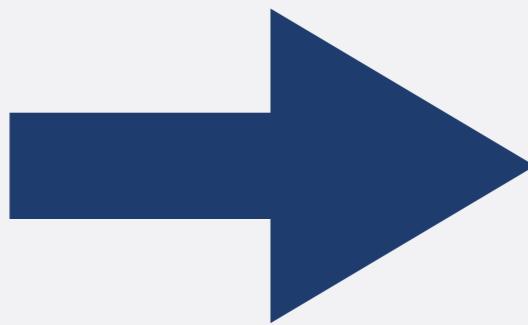
CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Research question: Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Media/public
attention



Adoption of
unpopular policies

- Research question: Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?

EXERCISE

Politicians' Private Sector Jobs and Parliamentary Behavior

Simon Weschle

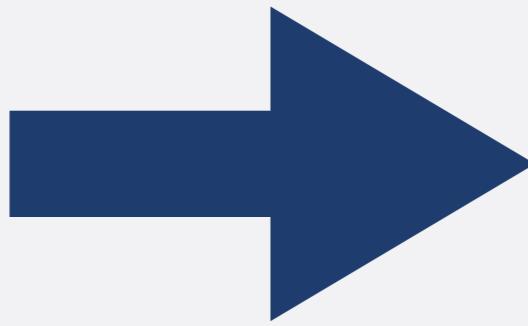
Abstract

About 80% of democracies allow legislators to be employed in the private sector while they hold office. However, we know little about the consequences of this practice. In this article, I use newly assembled panel data of all members of the United Kingdom House of Commons and a difference-in-differences design to investigate how legislators change their parliamentary behavior when they have outside earnings. When holding a private sector job, members of the governing Conservative Party, who earn the vast majority of outside income, change whether and how they vote on the floor of parliament as well as increase the number of written parliamentary questions they ask by 60%. For the latter, I demonstrate a targeted pattern suggesting that the increase relates to their employment. The article thus shows that one of the most common, and yet least studied, forms of money in politics affects politicians' parliamentary behavior.

- **What is the research question? What are dependent and independent variable?**

EXERCISE

Private Sector
Job



Politicians'
parliamentary
behavior

- Research question: Does holding a private sector job affect politicians' parliamentary behavior?

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Good research questions:
 - Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?
 - Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?
 - Does holding a private sector job affect politicians' parliamentary behavior?
- But how to come up with a good research question?
 - Trial and error
 - Some hallmarks of good research questions

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *You should care about your research question*
- Inspiration can come from what you care about personally
 - But: A topic is not a question

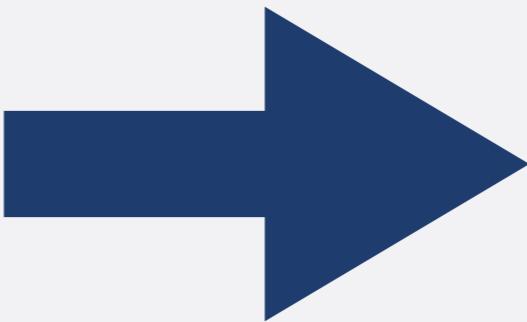
PERSONAL EXAMPLE



- **Gerhard Schröder**
- **Former German chancellor**
- **September 2005: Signs agreement to build controversial gas pipeline between Russia and Germany**
- **November 2005: Resigns as chancellor**
- **17 days later: Accepts position as board chairman of the consortium building the pipeline**
- **Does the fact that politicians can get lucrative jobs in the private sector influence their decisions in office?**

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Private Sector Job



Decisions in Office

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should not be normative*
- Instead, question should be answerable with data
 - Understand not what should be, but what is
 - Not: “Should politicians be able to take positions in the private sector?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should answer an important question in the real world*
- Do people who are not political scientists care about your research question?
 - Does it contribute to a current debate?
 - Does it have policy implications?
 - “So what?”

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The revolving door: why politicians become lobbyists, and lobbyists become politicians

September 21, 2016 4.28pm EDT

Exclusive

Westminster Accounts: MPs earn £17.1m on top of their salaries since the last election - with Tories taking £15.2m

Eric Cantor enters Wall Street's post-politics revolving door

A Revolving Door Helps Big Banks' Quiet Campaign to Muscle Out Fannie and Freddie

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should answer an important question in the scientific literature*
- Do political scientists care about your research question?
 - Has it been answered before?
 - Does it contribute to a current debate in political science?

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should not be too broad*
 - If too broad, hard to answer: “What effects do private sector jobs have?”
 - Should be specific enough to give direction to research project: “What effect do private sector jobs have on how politicians vote in parliament?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ***The question should not be too narrow***
 - “What effect did the private sector job with Gazprom have on Gerhard Schröder’s decision to sign an agreement to build a gas pipeline between Russia and Germany?”
 - Better: “What effect do private sector jobs have on the parliamentary votes of politicians in Germany?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Finding a good research question is a process with lots of trial and error**
 - Question will be too broad
 - Question will be already answered in the scientific literature
 - Question will not be of interest to many
 - You find that you cannot answer your question without answering a different question first
 - etc.

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- You should care about your research question
- The question should not be normative
- The question should answer an important question in the real world and the scientific literature
- The question should not be too broad or too narrow

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

POLITICS

MONKEY CAGE

Analysis

It's been a great nine years for TMC political science analysis

We've published thousands of articles. Here are some of our editors' favorites.



By Kim Yi Dionne, Henry Farrell and John Sides • December 31, 2022

Analysis

These were our 10 most popular posts of 2022

The Monkey Cage 2022 roundup: Top 10.



By E.J. Graff • December 31, 2022

- **Currently on hiatus, will return as independent site soon**
- **Updates: twitter.com/monkeycageblog**

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

THE DUCK OF MINERVA



ELECTION OBSERVATION AS AN EXERCISE IN AFRICAN AGENCY

Posted by Anna Kapambwe Mwaba | 23 January 2023, 16.41 EST | Bridging the Gap, International Organization, States & Regions

| 0

6+1 QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDIEVAL SOVEREIGNTY

by Andrew Latham | 23 January 2023, 09.15 EST | 6+1 Questions | 0

GET OFF MY LAWN! ARE JOURNAL DEMANDS FOR "NOVELTY" CREATING A CULTURE OF LOW-LEVEL ACADEMIC DISHONESTY?

by Dan Nexon | 21 December 2022, 00.46 EST | Academia, Theory & Methods |

4

IS REACTIONARY POPULISM A FORM OF FASCISM? DOES IT MATTER?

by Dan Nexon | 21 January 2023, 09.30 EST | Public Facing, Security, US Foreign Policy | 0

AMERICA IS THE PREEMINENT REVISIONIST POWER

by Van Jackson | 1 January 2023, 13.47 EST | Security, US Foreign Policy, Various and Sundry | 1

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED



Matthew Green ★
Jan 8 • 6 min

The struggle to select a Speaker

The historic and dramatic election for Speaker underscores some basic features of Congress and congressional parties.

2 ❤️



Seth Masket ★
Jan 7 • 4 min

The Speaker Fight through the Eyes of Lauren Boebert

Lauren Boebert had an awesome week, and not many people in the House did. She seemed to know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em.

2 ❤️

- www.mischiefsoffaction.com

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AT A GLANCE

EXPERT ANALYSIS ON VIOLENCE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

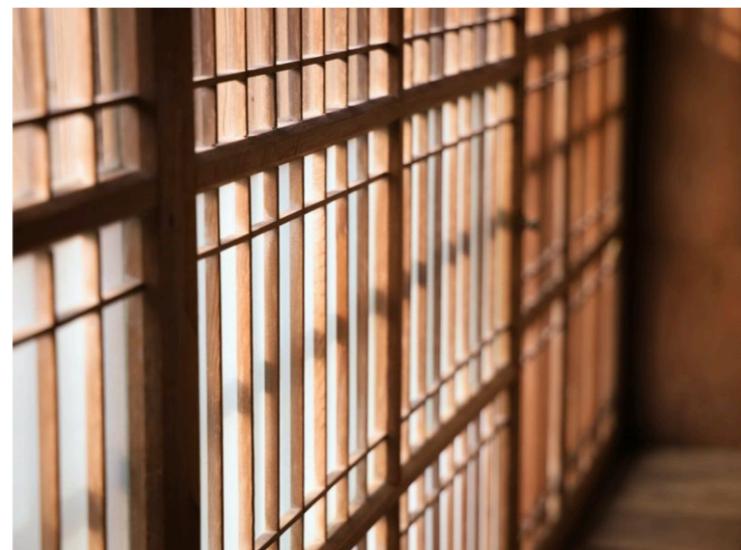


WHY THE MILITARY PROMISED TO WITHDRAW FROM POWER IN SUDAN

By HAGER ALI · January 10, 2023

Guest post by Hager Ali Little more than a year ago, the military side of the coalition charged...

[READ MORE >](#)



PUTTING IDEAS BEHIND BARS: HERE'S WHY IT DOESN'T WORK

By
CHRISTOPH DWORSCHAK AND CHRISTOPH V. STEINERT

January 5, 2023

Guest post by Christoph Dworschak and Christoph V. Steinert "We tried to bury them—we didn't know they were..."

[READ MORE >](#)



- www.politicalviolenceataglance.org/

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

BROADSTREET

Why states colonize

Posted on **October 28, 2022** by **Lachlan McNamee**



"We are often told, 'Colonialism is dead.' Let us not be deceived or even soothed by that. I say to you, colonialism is not yet dead." With these words, President Sukarno of Indonesia (pictured) opened the Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Gathered in the audience were the leaders from 29 African and Asian ... [CONTINUE READING](#)

- www.broadstreet.blog

NEXT TIME

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation

