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THE AUTHORITARIAN VIRUS

BETWEEN INFECTION AND IMMUNITY

SJIFRA EDITH DE LEEUW

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AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF AUTHORITARIAN FRAMING EFFECTS IN 42 DEMOCRACIES

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THE AUTHORITARIAN VIRUS

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An empirical investigation of authoritarian framing effects in 42 democracies

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHORITARIAN VIRUS AND ITS POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Democracy is the Trojan horse by which the enemy enters the city. To fascism in the guise of a legally recognized political party were accorded all the opportunities of democratic institutions

KARL LOEWENSTEIN, 1937

1

On June 16, 1989, 250.000 citizens gathered on Heroes' Square in Budapest, Hungary. They were there to attend the reburial of Imre Nagy, who led the 1956 revolution against the Soviet-backed government. On this occasion, a 25-year-old Viktor Orbán would deliver his famous pro-democracy speech. Hungary would transition to democracy a few months later. Today, little is left of Orbán's democratic activism. In his second term as Prime Minister, Orbán has done a lot to undermine democracy as he packed the courts, gerrymandered election districts, and asserted control over the media. Now that the parliament has been suspended, Hungary is the first European state to slide back into authoritarianism. What explains this democratic backslide? It is an example of an *authoritarian framing effect*, whereby long-term exposure to images of what living under authoritarian rule would look like affects citizens' democratic values. We can imagine these images as a sample of an authoritarian virus: For some citizens, exposure causes infection, disease, and possibly even death. For others, exposure helps breed white blood cells, antibodies, and, eventually, immunity. In this dissertation, I ask how exposure to such images affects societal vulnerability to authoritarian influences in 42 democracies.

When Orbán gave his famous speech, Hungary had had two subsequent experiences with authoritarianism. From 1920 to 1944, right-authoritarian Miklós Horthy ruled the country. Horthy profited from the Trianon Treaty humiliation, due to which Hungary had lost two-thirds of its territory. Under his leadership, Hungary remained stable, experienced economic growth, and even regained parts of its territory. Nowadays, many Hungarians see the Horthy regime in a positive light. As such, the rehabilitation of Horthy's legacy has served as a useful tool for Orbán to foster pro-authoritarian attitudes. By contrast, many citizens remember the Communist regime between 1949 and 1989 in a negative light. Images of this regime call to mind a period of economic decline, restrictions on public life, and moral decay. These negative sentiments fared well with Orbán's anti-communist rhetoric. Today, the Communist past is discredited to the extent that even its symbols are banned.

This example illustrates the two types of framing effects I will address in this dissertation: infection and immunity to the authoritarian virus. Infection occurs when the virus enters a body with a weak immune system. In such cases, it receives the opportunity to multiply and spread. If it succeeds in infecting many people, it may even disturb the political, social, and cultural life of entire countries.[1] Positive authoritarian framing effects work in the same way: Exposure to the image of authoritarian rule helps authoritarian influences spread by corroding citizens' democratic values. In

[1] Any resemblance between the authoritarian virus and actual viruses, living, dead, or neatly contained in a protective protein shell, is purely coincidental.

Hungary, positive framing effects occurred in relation to the Horthy regime. When citizens imagine what living under this regime would look like, they emphasize its positive features. Exposure to such images may, therefore, produce a desire for social change: Citizens may come to praise authoritarian regimes for their ability to sustain societal order (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Popper, 1945) or follow through on its promises (Gryzmala-Busse, 2002; Loxton & Mainwaring, 2018). The outcome is that citizens – and thus society as a whole – become a little more open to authoritarian alternatives.

The first type of framing effect occurs among citizens with a weak immune system. However, when citizens with a strong immune system are targeted, their bodies will use excessive amounts of energy to combat the virus. White blood cells rush to the point of infection, new antibodies are grown, and body temperature reaches an extreme. Eventually, their bodies might develop immunity to the virus. Moreover, if many people develop immunity (i.e., herd immunity), the virus has few opportunities to spread. This is how negative framing effects work: Exposure to the image of authoritarian rule prevents authoritarian influences from spreading by reaffirming citizens' democratic values. In the Hungarian case, immunity took on the form of a vehement rejection of Communism. Citizens feel appalled when they imagine what living under this regime would look like. They may come to praise democracy for the rights and freedoms it grants to them and others. These sen-

timents produce a force in the opposite direction: They reaffirm democratic values and legitimize strategies of democratic defense (Art, 2005; Bourne, 2018; Costa Pinto, 2010; Morlino, 2010; Van Spanje, 2018). In such cases, exposure protects society from future infections.

Although a good example, this anecdote represents an overly simplified depiction of authoritarian framing effects. Aside from its illustrative purpose, this simplification also captures the two limitations of extant research. First, this example assumes that these two framing effects occur in relation to two different images: Positive framing effects apply to the right-wing regime and negative framing effects to the left-wing regime. This assumption mirrors the tendency of earlier works to almost exclusively focus on the signs of infection, i.e. positive framing effects (e.g., Alesina & Fuchs-Schüdeln, 2007; Bernhard & Karakoc, 2007; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Neundorf, 2010; Neundorf & Pop-Eleches, 2020; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017, 2020; Mishler & Rose, 2007). What this literature lacks is the theorization and assessment of the source of immunity, i.e., negative framing effects. Without it, we cannot come to a comprehensive evaluation of the authoritarian threat. Hence, there is a clear need to study these two effects in concert. In this dissertation, I present an effort to do so.

My second assumption in this example is that these images hide in citizens' active recollection of the authoritarian past. This assumption reflects legacy research's habit of focusing on individuals'

exposure to authoritarian rule. If this were the only locus of these images, framing effects would only occur in former authoritarian countries and fade as new generations replace old ones. However, a virus does not only reside in the bodies of the ill. It may find a temporary home in the air, in the water, or on surfaces in our daily environment. This ability of a virus to travel through time and space makes it contagious. Democracy research would greatly benefit from asking where else these images may hide, and, thus, how framing effects travel across time and space. This is a second gap I aim to address in this dissertation. I argue that irrespective of countries' history, images of authoritarian rule may resurface in, e.g., media content, literature, education, popular culture, architecture, or institutions. This wide variety of vehicles permits framing effects to travel across time and space.

Hence, the specific theoretical contribution of this dissertation is twofold. First, I study positive and negative framing effects in tandem. Second, I theorize how these effects travel in time and space. I examine these effects in 42 democracies. In doing so, I aim to answer the following research questions:

(1) Does authoritarian framing erode democratic values?
(2) Does authoritarian framing reaffirm democratic values?
(3) If so – how far do these framing effects travel in time?
(4) If so – how far do these framing effects travel in space?

In answering these questions, I enhance existing knowledge in

three ways. The principal theoretical contribution lies in the theorization of negative authoritarian framing effects. To this end, I borrow insights from literature on militant democracy (Bourne, 2018; Bourne & Casal Bértoa, 2017; Casal Bértoa & Bourne, 2017; Loewenstein, 1937; Rijpkema, 2018) and elite behavior in post-authoritarian countries (Art, 2005; Backes, 2006; Downs, 2012; Klamt, 2007; Van Spanje, 2018). Drawing on these insights, I propose that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule may also reaffirm democratic values. In doing so, I simultaneously offer two broader contributions to democracy scholarship. Thus far, this scholarship has mostly focused on the indicators (see, e.g., Foa & Mounk, 2017; Inglehart, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and determinants (e.g., Inglehart, 2016; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Mounk, 2018; Norris, 1999) of societal vulnerability. I expand this knowledge by theorizing the indicators and determinants of societal resilience. Among other things, I examine support for strategies of democratic defense and hostile media responses. In addition, I identify possible determinants of societal resilience, such as countries' legal doctrines and media traditions.

This necessarily brings me to several empirical contributions. First, I offer an escape from the pessimistic mood of earlier democracy scholarship. Notwithstanding the importance of studying the signs of infection, doing so involves a twofold risk. If one concentrates on positive framing effects, one may erroneously arrive at the

conclusion that democracy is dying. More problematic is that by obsessively paying attention to those causing the corrosion of democratic values, we may unintentionally end up contributing to their success (Popper, 1945). My findings help alleviate this pessimistic mood. I find strong evidence that many citizens are willing to go to great lengths to protect democracy against its enemies. More importantly, my analyses suggest that the signs of immunity outweigh the signs of infection and that this will be increasingly so as new generations replace old ones. At the same time, I pay attention to new signs of infection. Therefore, the second empirical contribution lies in my effort to answer Adorno *et al.*'s (1950) question of what would-be authoritarians look like.

Methodologically, I contribute by developing macro- and micro-level tests of framing effects. The aim of the macro-level tests is to study framing effects on a societal level. These tests allow me to reflect on the questions of (a) whether society at large leans more toward group infection or group immunity and (b) which durable characteristics of the political environment contribute to these outcomes. I use the micro-level tests to assess the durability of these effects. Specifically, I compare old and new generations to determine whether these effects will fade with the process of generational replacement. The empirical chapters are devoted to answering the research questions of this dissertation. In the remainder of this chapter, I first expand on the authoritarian virus. What is it? Where does the fear of this virus come from? How

much should we worry? I proceed by describing the notion of authoritarian framing. What is it? Where do these frames hide? What are their effects? I subsequently explain how I test my claims. Finally, I lay out the structure of the book.

The authoritarian virus

What is the authoritarian virus?

A virus pressures the body to develop a disease. Likewise, the authoritarian virus pressures citizens to submit to authoritarian rule. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) describe the outcome of these pressures as individuals' readiness to submit to authoritarian rule. This readiness is not a binary feature: Citizens may occupy any position between two extremes. At one extreme, we find citizens who fully embrace authoritarianism and all its traits. Examples of commonly used indicators of this readiness include support for authoritarian alternatives, democratic dissatisfaction, and ideological extremism (see, e.g., Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Inglehart, 2016; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Mounk, 2018; Norris, 1999). At the other extreme, we find citizens who wish to protect democracy at any cost. The first contribution of this dissertation lies in identifying the indicators of resistance. Examples include citizens' disidentification with and hostile responses to authoritarian currents and support for strategies of democratic defense.

Strong and weak immune systems

The authoritarian virus is omnipresent. In effect, every citizen has encountered some mutation of the virus. However, among some citizens, exposure causes infection, while among others, exposure helps build immunity. Whether citizens belong to the former or the latter group depends on the strength of their immune system. A first step in assessing the effects of the authoritarian virus is identifying the causes and symptoms of weak and strong immune systems. We can look for signs that indicate a weak immune system, i.e., colds, itches, and fevers. We can also look for signs of a strong immune system, i.e., white blood cells and antibodies. Political scientists play a central role in identifying these signs. Like virologist, their task is to discern which citizens are prone to infection and which citizens are strong enough to develop immunity.

The causes and symptoms of a weak immune system

The causes of a weak immune system are twofold. First, external attacks may weaken the immune system. Citizens may be swayed to support authoritarian rule via terror, repression, propaganda, indoctrination, clever rhetoric, or empty electoral promises (Arendt, 1951). Scholars interested in such attacks focus on, e.g., extremist and radical parties (Eatwell & Mudde, 2004; Przeworski, 2019), conspiracy theories (Arendt, 1951; Kuzio, 2011), or populist communication strategies (Aalberg *et al.*, 2016). Unfavorable societal conditions may also damage the immune system. This is because

some citizens believe that only authoritarian regimes can improve these conditions. Scholars interested in such conditions examine the role of poverty, economic insecurity, or rapid cultural change (Betz, 1994; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Norris & Inglehart, 2018).

Second, some citizens are born with a weak immune system. As a consequence, they may feel naturally inclined to submit to the virus. The causes of this inclination are manifold. They may feel intimidated by democracy's emphasis on individual achievement, social advancement, and equality (Nolte, 1963; Popper, 1945), or they may have trouble coping with rapid change (Adorno *et al.*, 1950). Scholarship studying such internal causes examine citizens' psychological traits, such as intolerance, overconfidence, distress, dogmatism, conservatism, and simplicity (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Jost *et al.*, 2003; Kruglanski *et al.*, 2014; Rokeach, 1956).

The causes and symptoms of a strong immune system

A strong immune system is also the product of internal and external factors. External factors may help build the immune system by reaffirming citizens' dedication to democracy. Examples of such factors include citizenship education, democratic propaganda, and involvement in the democratic process (e.g., Bobo & Licari, 1989; Miklikowska & Hurme, 2012). Scholars interested in the external causes of immunity may study media coverage, elite strategies of exclusion, physical artifacts, and constitutional provisions to protect democracy (Art, 2005; Bourne, 2018; Ellinas, 2010; Van

Spanje, 2018). These external factors may considerably decrease citizens' readiness to submit to authoritarian influences.

Second, it is important to acknowledge that some citizens are born with a stronger immune system than others. This argument also holds for citizens' resilience to the authoritarian virus. Citizens with a strong immune system commend democracy for the freedoms it grants to them and others (Popper, 1945). Alternatively, they may feel appalled by the reprehensible practices of authoritarian regimes (Wachsmann, 2008). These citizens embody the opposite psychological traits as those with a weak immune system. Scholars wishing to identify these citizens focus on openness to change, the ability to adapt to new circumstances, and high levels of tolerance (for an overview see, e.g., Schwartz & Sagie, 2000).

Where does the fear of this virus come from?

We fear a virus when it is highly contagious, and when it has the potential to disrupt society as a whole. This is also where the fear of the authoritarian virus comes from. Just like some viruses can disturb the political, social, and cultural life of entire countries, the authoritarian virus may potentially destruct democracy. This worry is not new. Both Plato (trans. 2012) and his student Aristotle (trans. 1992) believed that democracy would ultimately degenerate toward authoritarianism.[2] As Popper (1945) points out, the idea that we are naive to think that democracy is permanent resonates

[2] Plato states in *The Republic* that democracy would decay into tyranny, while Aristotle claims in his work *Politics* that it would degenerate into despotism.

in the works of many of history's greatest thinkers – most notably those of Hegel and Marx. Some of these thinkers emphasize that autocracies have their merits; others argue that democracy must copy authoritarian methods to survive, thereby ensuring its self-destruction.

In the first half of the twentieth century, these fears would materialize. The unparalleled violence and repression following the Nazis' rise to power in the Weimar Republic and multiple failed experiments with democracy in Eastern Europe have become paradigmatic examples of authoritarian revival. These events inspired the research agenda of many political philosophers: How can authoritarian rule happen (Arendt, 1951)? What does a would-be authoritarian look like (Adorno *et al.*, 1950)? To what degree has democracy recovered from the shock of its birth (Popper, 1945)? And relatedly, how can democracy prevent its subversion (Loewenstein, 1937)? By contrast, empirical democracy scholarship primarily focused on democratic transition and consolidation (e.g., Dahl, 1971; Almond & Verba, 1963). Only in the 70s, the fears of political philosophers spilled over to this area of research. Specifically, it is the publication of Michel Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanuki's (1975) report that prompted the idea that democracy was once again in crisis.

The concerns raised by Crozier and colleagues (1975) still echo in the scholarly community today. Most scholars have discarded the idea that democratic transition is an irreversible process. As

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p.6) point out in their work *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*: even when democracy is here, “there are many tasks that need to be accomplished, conditions that must be established, and attitudes and habits that must be cultivated” for democracy to stay. Only once democracy has become the only game in town both in society and institutions (Dahl, 1971; Almond & Verba, 1963), it is safe from future destruction.

How much should we worry about this virus?

Today, 75 years after the collapse of the Nazi empire and 30 years after the demise of most communist regimes, the fear of authoritarian revival has not subsided. *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), *The People vs. Democracy* (Mounk, 2018), *Crises of Democracy* (Przeworski, 2019), *The Signs of Deconsolidation* (Foa & Mounk, 2017) and *The Cultural Backlash* (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) are only a few recent examples in a long line of publications unraveling the many pressures citizens endure to submit to authoritarian influences. They sound the alarm about the resurgence of the far-right, declining support for democratic values, or Donald Trump’s 2016 electoral victory. Like Plato and Aristotle, these scholars believe they are witnessing signs of democratic decay. Mounk (2018, 2019), for example, uses the terms democratic deconsolidation, the end of the democratic century, and the age of autocracy’s global transcendence. Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) talk about the death of democracy. Norris and Ingle-

hart (2018) warn that authoritarianism may one day become the only game in town.

The strength of these studies lies in their emphasis on the process of democratic corrosion. Norris and Inglehart (2018), for instance, pay attention to the question of how the rise of authoritarian populism erodes societal support for liberal democratic principles. This form of populism does so by appealing to citizens' need for conformity and security. The work of Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) points out how many world leaders lack a commitment to constitutional laws and democratic norms. In effect, these leaders contribute to the weakening of democratic institutions. On the whole, these, and many other democracy scholars, provide sufficient evidence that there are reasons to worry about the future of democracy.

Without trivializing the concerns raised by this scholarship, we should approach such pessimistic interpretations of current events with caution for at least two reasons. The first reason is conceptual. In interpreting the signs of infection, most scholars emphasize the worst possible outcome, namely, the death of democracy. Even when reasonably justified, readers may easily mistake a warning for a prophecy, especially when these warnings appear in the form of rather dramatic titles. In reality, we do not know whether the problems democracies face inevitably indicate a democratic backslide. Not everyone who shows the symptoms of a virus has it. Not everyone with a weak immune system gets the disease. In emphasizing the worst possible outcome, democracy literature

encourages readers to commit a double fallacy: equating authoritarianism with its elements (Arendt, 1951) and talking in terms of historical necessity (Popper, 1945).

The second reason is empirical. The narrative of democracy in crisis simply does not hold up to scrutiny. Evidence of the corrosion of democratic values is inconclusive at best. There is no systematic downward trend in citizens' dedication to democracy. Instead, trendless fluctuations characterize the last few decades in most countries (Van der Meer, 2017). Aside from being inconclusive, this evidence is also far from complete. The empirical story democracy scholarship tells is either about minimums or averages. It is a story of minimums to the extent that it focuses on citizens with anti-democratic values. It is a story of averages when the values of all citizens are represented through a single number. This literature lacks an assessment of the other extreme, the maximum, i.e., citizens with unconditional loyalty to democracy. Only by studying both extremes, we can come to a comprehensive evaluation of the risks of authoritarian revival.

In this dissertation, I try to avoid these risks. Rather than implying a regression toward the end of democracy, I adopt a probabilistic language. For instance, rather than emphasizing the possibility of the death of democracy, I interpret my findings as uncovering the weak spots of democratic society. Moreover, I pay equal attention to the strong spots of democratic society, i.e., citizens with a strong immune system and, thus, strong immune responses.

Authoritarian framing and its effects

What is authoritarian framing?

Virologists have several other jobs, aside from gauging the strength of individuals' immune systems. First, they need to know where the virus hides and how it survives. Second, they need to understand how it affects the body. The same holds for democracy scholars. Their job is to find out where the authoritarian virus hides and how it affects citizens' readiness to submit to authoritarian influences. In this dissertation, I focus on a very mild form of exposure to the virus: a sample, if you will. This sample comprises an image of authoritarian rule. This image plants a seed in citizens' minds: the idea that another world is possible. In this world, the collective prevails over the individual, continuity over change, submission over freedom, and hierarchy over equality. If citizens emphasize the positive traits of this world, we speak of a positive frame. If they highlight its negative traits, we speak of a negative frame. In this section, I first discuss where the images of the past hide. I subsequently theorize the two types of effects linked to these frames.

Where do these images hide?

One limitation of the extant literature is its insistence that these images exclusively hide in citizens' active recollection of the authoritarian past. If this is the case, framing effects only occur among

citizens living in former authoritarian countries and die out as new generations replace old ones. However, a virus does not only reside in the bodies of the ill. Neither are authoritarian regimes the only place where these images hide. Recognizing the variety of vehicles in which these images might appear is crucial because it uncovers the potential of authoritarian framing effects to travel across time and space. The second theoretical contribution of this dissertation lies in theorizing where these images might hide beyond direct exposure. To this end, I draw on research on politics in post-authoritarian countries and elite strategies of exclusion.

Institutions are the safest hiding place. Their long life and continuity offer a fertile environment for these images to survive. Examples of institutional references to authoritarian rule are manifold. Some political parties, for instance, are the direct successor of a past authoritarian regime (Loxton & Mainwaring, 2018). Others carry labels, such as 'Communist,' that prompt images of authoritarian rule (Van Spanje, 2018). Aside from parties, laws may also contain references to authoritarian regimes. For example, many constitutional provisions for the criminalization of authoritarian parties and leaders reference Europe's authoritarian past (Bourne, 2018; Costa Pinto, 2010; Morlino, 2010). A more specific example is Hungary's Citizenship Law, which is explicit in its aim to continue Horthy's effort to restore national pride (Euractiv, 2014).

Physical artifacts may also constitute a clever hiding place. The strength of this hiding place lies in its diversity: They are there in

"school books, church prayers, statues, plaques, street names, and thousands of other reminders" (Tremlett, 2009, p.27). These artifacts make the public sphere "a memory boom, and memorial to the past" (Art, 2005, p.87). Only through consistent and meticulous labor can one erase all traces from the public sphere. Aside from ensuring long term survival, the many forms in which these artifacts may appear also make that, no matter the country, the world's authoritarian history is one we cannot escape.

Finally, these images may survive for a shorter period of time by hiding in elite discourse. Every time a politician talks about one of the many autocracies abroad, these images resurface. They also resurface when politicians reference (a fictional version of) the authoritarian past. In the case of radical politicians, these references often pertain to the heartland (Taggart, 2004): a highly romanticized depiction of the days before liberal democracy existed. The narratives Órban has constructed about the Horthy era are good examples of this type of discourse (Rupnik, 2012; Toomey, 2018). Mainstream actors (politicians and the media) may also spread images of authoritarian rule. In former authoritarian countries, these references are often part of accusations of sympathizing with the past regime (Art, 2005; Costa Pinto, 2010; Van Spanje, 2018; Santana-Pereira *et al.*, 2016). Elsewhere, mainstream actors may use comparisons with notable historical examples of authoritarianism to discredit their radical counterparts (see, e.g., Van Heerden & Van der Brug, 2017; Van Spanje & Azrout, 2019).

What are the effects of authoritarian framing?

In daily life, citizens may spend little time and energy thinking about democracy because it is a given. In effect, their beliefs on this topic may lack depth, coherence, and intensity. This changes when citizens encounter an image of what living under authoritarian rule would look like. When this happens, the mind starts thinking about whether and why it prefers democracy or its alternatives. Opinions and beliefs that were previously unimportant become important. Citizens now feel the need to articulate their beliefs about democracy. The outcome of this process is a better-informed, more coherent, and more intense version of their pre-existing beliefs. In such cases, we speak of authoritarian framing effects. The third and central theoretical contribution of this dissertation lies in theorizing these effects.

Positive framing effects: Infection

When the virus attacks a body with a weak immune system, it receives the opportunity to multiply. The same applies to the authoritarian virus when it attacks citizens with weak democratic values. When these citizens imagine a different world, they emphasize its positive traits. To these citizens, this world offers an escape from the flaws and strain of democratic society (Adorno, *et al.*, 1950; Nolte, 1963; Popper, 1945). In this process, this image becomes a blueprint for their desired future. This is how the authoritarian virus infects the body: by deteriorating democratic support and breeding support for its alternatives. In such cases, we speak

of a positive authoritarian framing effect: Citizens positively frame the image and respond accordingly.

Although not explicitly labeled as such, the theoretical origins of this effect lie in research on authoritarian legacy effects on citizen attitudes. This literature argues that citizens who have witnessed authoritarian rule in person may have difficulties embracing the new democratic status quo. Consequently, they tend to have extreme ideological beliefs (Dinas, 2017; Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020; Alesina & Fuchs-Schüdeln, 2007), low support for and satisfaction with democracy (Neundorf, 2010; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2014, 2017), low levels of political trust, low levels of civic and political participation (Bernhard & Karakoc, 2007; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Northmore-Ball, 2014) and a desire to return to the authoritarian past (Mishler & Rose, 2007).

Despite the host of outcomes these studies address, they all focus on just one form of exposure, namely, direct exposure. In defense of this approach, direct contact is linked to the highest likelihood of infection. However, this focus also comes with a twofold limitation. First, it is the most extreme and rarest form of exposure. Focusing on direct exposure, therefore, tells us little about what amount of exposure tips the scale. Second, it is only one of the many possible sources of exposure. This hinders us in acquiring knowledge on how the virus spreads and survives in other contexts. In this dissertation, I address this limitation by theorizing how different sources of exposure may cause authoritarian framing effects.

Negative framing effects: Immunity

Conversely, when a virus enters a body with a strong immune system, it faces resistance. Eventually, the body will develop immunity to future infections. A similar thing happens when the authoritarian virus targets a citizen with strong democratic values. In such cases, it may face tremendous amounts of resistance. To citizens with strong democratic values, authoritarian rule calls to mind images of war, violence, and repression. Rather than a blueprint for the future, this negative frame acts as a deterrent. The outcome of this process is immunity: Exposure reaffirms the need to defend democracy by any means and at any cost. When this happens, we speak of a negative authoritarian framing effect: Citizens negatively frame the image and respond accordingly.

The inspiration for the theorization of these effects comes from the literature on militant democracy. This scholarship is the intellectual heir to philosophers such as Mill, Rawls, and Popper. It is similar to the works of these philosophers in its insistence that rights should not be used to abolish other rights. Following this tradition, in 1937, German philosopher Karl Loewenstein articulated the idea that states should design laws to undercut the resources and legitimacy of extremist movements. This militant way of dealing with the extremists resonated particularly well in countries that struggled in creating a definitive rupture with their authoritarian past (see Art, 2005; Backes, 2006; Downs, 2012; Klamt, 2007). These observations have been generalized into the argument

that (past) exposure to authoritarianism may reaffirm the need to protect democracy.

In this dissertation, I argue that these considerations also spill over to citizens. Specifically, I contend that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule strengthens citizens' dedication to democracy. To wit, this dissertation is the first theoretical and empirical effort to do so.

How are the arguments tested?

Authoritarian framing effects occur when citizens' democratic beliefs change following exposure to an image of authoritarian rule. Therefore, identifying framing effects requires three empirical ingredients: a stimulus, a receiver, and a response. We can establish the existence of a framing effect when the response – i.e., democratic attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors – from citizens who have received the stimulus differs from those who have not. Framing effects may occur on two levels. I primarily focus on the macro-level, i.e., effects on mass infection and herd immunity. Still, I study micro-level effects to learn about the durability of these macro-level effects. Given my interest in macro-level effects, the empirical chapters contain comparative investigations of framing effects. However, doing so comes with a myriad of challenges that one would not encounter assessing micro-level effects using, e.g., experimental

designs. In what follows, I discuss how I operationalize these three ingredients and how I resolve these challenges.

The stimulus: The image of authoritarian rule

The stimulus (and key independent variable) of each empirical chapter is exposure to the image of authoritarian rule. Although framing occurs within individuals, we do not know whether an individual received the stimulus or not. The absence of this information hinders the operationalization of exposure on a macro-level. I resolve this problem by comparing groups of citizens with a high likelihood of exposure to otherwise similar groups with a low likelihood. The first methodological contribution of this dissertation lies in proposing these macro-level measurements of the stimulus.

I employ two strategies to distinguish between low and high exposure groups. In *Chapters 2, 3*, and *4*, I leverage geographical variation in countries' authoritarian history. This strategy works because authoritarian regimes leave behind many traces that remind citizens what living under that regime would look like. The vehicles of these traces may be material. They may take on the form of literature, education, popular culture, architecture, *et cetera*. The vehicles of these traces may also be human. Elite debate and parental socialization are examples of such human vehicles. As a consequence of these traces, citizens living in former authoritarian countries have a higher likelihood of exposure than citizens living elsewhere.

Despite its advantages, this strategy suffers from one major limitation. One of the central claims of this dissertation is that authoritarian framing effects also occur beyond the context of former authoritarian countries. Leveraging geographical variation in countries' history cannot assist in empirically corroborating this claim. Therefore, in *Chapter 5*, I propose a strategy to measure the stimulus in countries without an authoritarian history. In this chapter, I leverage temporal variation in the visibility of foreign authoritarian regimes in news media. Citizens observed at a time that these regimes are highly visible have a higher likelihood of exposure to the stimulus than citizens observed at a time that they are not. This distinction enables me to identify low and high exposure conditions beyond the context of former authoritarian countries.

The receivers: Citizens

The receivers of these stimuli are citizens. In effect, each empirical chapter compares groups of citizens with a high likelihood of exposure to groups with a low likelihood. However, my interest in macro-level effects makes this comparison a bit more challenging. In an experiment, we can make sure that the composition of these groups is the same in all respects, apart from their exposure to the stimulus. Cross-national comparisons using survey and media data do not have this *ceteris paribus* convenience. Thus, facilitating a clean comparison across conditions requires developing tricks to increase the comparability in the composition of the data. In survey research, this is called sample equivalence.

In *Chapters 2, 3*, and *5*, achieving sample equivalence requires little effort on my part. In these chapters, I use public opinion data to study framing effects. The organizations responsible for collecting these data ensure a high level of sample equivalence by using the same inclusion criteria in every context. Doing so enables them to obtain a representative cross-section of the population. The use of these samples makes the composition of low and high exposure groups equally representative in all countries. In the case of *Chapter 4*, I do not have this luxury. The reason for this is that, unlike survey research, text analysis has a limited toolkit to deal with sample inequivalence. The second methodological contribution lies in proposing a simple solution to sample inequivalence: studying coverage of the same topic in all contexts.

The response: Readiness to submit to authoritarian rule

The final ingredient to identify framing effects is citizens' responses to the stimulus (i.e., the dependent variable). Each empirical chapter contains a measurement of citizens' readiness to submit to or resist authoritarian influences. However, here too, we come across a possible comparability problem. Just like the composition of the data needs to be similar across groups, so does the measurement of the response. This is fairly easy in an experimental setting, where one has full control over what these measurements are and when they are collected. In the data I use, this is less straightforward because their collection is not fixed at a single point in space and time. Survey research uses the term measurement

equivalence to describe this form of comparability.

In this dissertation, I address this challenge by looking for response variables that have remained constant across time and space. In the case of public opinion data, survey organizations have done this work for me. Through the careful and precise adjustment of the questions, these organizations have made sure that the response variable is comparable across different years and countries. This is an advantage text data do not have. The third and final methodological contribution of this dissertation lies in proposing a way to achieve measurement equivalence in comparative analysis of text data. I do so by focusing on a small set of terms with the same indisputable negative connotation independent of the time, language, and place in which they were written.

Plan of the book

This book comprises four self-contained empirical chapters. Each of these chapters contains different tests of authoritarian framing effects and answers one or multiple research questions.

Chapter 2: Ideological and democratic beliefs

In *Chapter 2*, I ask how authoritarian framing affects citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. To this end, I study survey responses of 105,495 citizens in 38 European countries. I treat citizens in countries with a history of authoritarianism as a high

exposure group and citizens in countries with a democratic legacy as a low exposure group. I combine linear and nonlinear analysis techniques to answer all four research questions. First, I assess positive framing effects by asking whether exposure encourages citizens to support the ideological and anti-democratic beliefs of the authoritarian predecessor. Second, I study negative framing effects by focusing on citizens' support for the opposite beliefs. Third, I examine whether these effects also exist beyond the context of new democracies by including countries with a distant authoritarian history. Finally, I determine how far these effects travel in time by studying whether these effects occur among citizens who grew up after democratic transition.

Chapter 3: Support for strategies of democratic defense

Chapter 3 examines framing effects on citizens' support for strategies of democratic defense. In this chapter, I analyze survey data collected among 195,405 citizens in 27 European countries. Like *Chapter 2*, I use countries' authoritarian history to distinguish between low and high exposure groups. Unlike *Chapter 2*, this chapter does not study to what extent the two types of framing effects co-exist. Instead, this chapter looks at the overall sum of effects, i.e., whether one prevails over the other. Doing so helps answer three research questions. First, I investigate whether positive or negative framing effects prevail in former authoritarian countries. I do so by determining whether support for measures of democratic defense is lower or higher in former authoritarian countries than

elsewhere. Second, like *Chapter 2*, I test how far these effects travel across space by including countries with a distant authoritarian history. Third, I examine generational differences to learn about the durability of these effects.

Chapter 4: Hostile media coverage

Chapter 4 examines negative framing effects on a group of citizens whose occupation fulfills a central role in democratic society: political journalists. To this end, I collect and analyze 27,830 articles about US President Donald Trump published in 35 newspapers in 12 countries (and 7 languages). To measure negative framing effects, I look at whether these articles identify Trump as a threat to democracy by describing him as "sexist," "racist," "dictator," *et cetera*. Like the previous two chapters, I use countries' authoritarian history to create low and high exposure groups. Analysis of these data allows me to learn more about whether negative framing effects also occur in a context where the standard of neutrality strongly prevails and why negative framing effects prevail in established democracies.

Chapter 5: Presidential job approval

In the final empirical chapter, I study framing effects on presidential job approval in the world's oldest continuous democracy: the United States. To achieve this, I compile a large time-series dataset. This dataset comprises 3,126 approval ratings, aggregated from 3,126 public opinion polls collected between 1947 and

2019. To create low and high exposure conditions, I perform an automated content analysis of 9,862,251 articles. For each of these articles, I record whether it references a foreign country and the country's regime characteristics. I subsequently identify citizens measured when autocracies are hardly visible as a low exposure group and citizens measured when autocracies are highly visible as a high exposure group. Analysis of these data helps answer three research questions. I study positive framing effects by examining how citizens respond to news about autocracies with which the US has strong political or economic ties. Furthermore, I investigate negative framing effects by analyzing responses to highly anti-electoral and repressive regimes. Third, by focusing on the United States, both analyses permit me to assess how far these two effects travel in space.

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CHAPTER 2

DEMOCRATIC AND IDEOLOGICAL BELIEFS

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ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom dictates that the more citizens lean toward either end of the ideological spectrum, the lower their support for democracy. The main model pitted against this 'rigidity-of-the-extremes model' is the 'rigidity-of-the-right model.' This model assumes that rightist citizens are less supportive. This study proposes and empirically demonstrates the validity of an alternative model, which we call 'the authoritarian legacy model.' This model predicts that whether leftist or rightist citizens are less supportive of democracy depends on countries' experience with left- or right-authoritarianism. To evaluate its validity, we present a systematic comparative investigation of the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs, using European and World Values Survey data from 38 European countries (N = 105,495; 1994-2008). In line with this model, our analyses demonstrate that democratic support is lowest among leftist citizens in former left-authoritarian countries and among rightist citizens in former right-authoritarian countries. We find that this relation persists even among generations that grew up after authoritarian rule. These findings suggest that traditional ideological rigidity models are unsuitable for the study of citizens' democratic beliefs.

Replication: The replication code and data are available in the following repository: www.github.com/sdleeuw2/Replication-Code-Democratic-Support-And-Left-Right-Dimension

2

Introduction

In their seminal work *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford proposed that would-be authoritarians share fundamental ideological beliefs. In recent years, this work has regained significance. The rise of radical right movements and strongman politics seem to indicate that democracy is not fully uncontested (Foa & Mounk, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). For this reason, scholarship has sought to understand the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. Two models have been proposed to study this relation. The rigidity-of-the-extremes model dictates that the more citizens lean towards either end of the ideological spectrum, the lower their support for democracy (see, e.g., Mounk, 2018; Rokeach, 1956). The main theory pitted against this model is the rigidity-of-the-right model. This model predicts that citizens on the right end of the spectrum are less supportive (Jost *et al.*, 2003; Jost, 2017). This study proposes a third model, which we refer to as the authoritarian legacy model. This model posits that whether leftist or rightist citizens are less supportive depends on historical experiences with

left- or right- authoritarianism. To evaluate its validity, we present a systematic comparative investigation of the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs across 38 countries.

To substantiate our argument, we combine insights from the literature on cognitive rigidity (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost, 2017; Rokeach, 1956), authoritarian legacy effects (Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2020), and elite behavior in post-authoritarian countries (Art, 2005; Bourne, 2018; Van Spanje, 2018). We argue that reminders of the past regime provoke two types of responses. The first response occurs among citizens who maintain a positive reading of the past. These citizens may praise authoritarian regimes for their ability to sustain societal order (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Nolte, 1963; Popper, 1945) or follow through on its promises (Gryzmala-Busse, 2002; Loxton & Mainwaring, 2018). In effect, they may feel more inclined to support the past regime's ideological or democratic beliefs. The second type of response occurs among citizens who maintain a negative reading of the past. These citizens may be appalled by the regime's authoritarian practices (e.g., repression and violence; Wachsmann, 2008) or commend democracies for the rights and freedoms it grants to them and others (Popper, 1945). Consequently, they may become more supportive of the past regime's antipode: its pro-democratic ideological opponent. If this is the case, leftist citizens should be less supportive of democracy and rightist citizens more in countries such as Slovakia or Poland. Inversely, rightist citizens

should be less supportive and leftist citizens more in countries such as Austria and Greece.

Our study offers several contributions. Empirically, we demonstrate that existing models of ideological rigidity are unsuitable for the study of democratic beliefs. Specifically, we refute the assumption that cognitive rigidity affects citizens' democratic and ideological beliefs in the same way in every country. This finding is consequential for comparative democracy research, in which it is standard practice to make such assumptions (see, for instance, Ferrin & Kriesi, 2016). Our study also offers two theoretical refinements of arguments made in earlier research on legacy effects. First, we propose a novel type of legacy effect, namely, the reaffirmation of citizens' democratic beliefs. Second, we develop a framework that is particularly suitable to study long-term legacy effects on citizens' political beliefs, thereby moving beyond prior research's focus on new democracies. Methodologically, we contribute by developing nonlinear tests of our expectations. To this end, we pool data of 105,495 individuals in 38 European countries from the European and World Values Survey (1994–2008). We take advantage of the variety of historical backgrounds to assess how the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs varies with countries' political history. We subsequently leverage variation in individuals' birthyear to assess whether these effects persist despite processes of generational replacement.

Theory and Hypotheses

Ideological rigidity models

In the early 1950s, scholars such as Adorno *et al.* (1950) and Rokeach (1956) first articulated the hypothesis that authoritarian-minded citizens are similar in their ideological rigidity. They argued that the defining psychological traits of these citizens – e.g., intolerance, overconfidence, distress, dogmatism, and simplicity – pushes them toward certain (extreme) ideological beliefs. Popular and scholarly belief is that these traits push less democratic citizens toward either end of the ideological spectrum (see Kruglanski *et al.*, 2014; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Rokeach, 1956). Social psychologists labeled this assertion the rigidity-of-the-extremes model. The main model pitted against it is called the rigidity-of-the-right model. This model differs in its insistence that citizens with rightist beliefs are more cognitively rigid and, thus, less supportive of democracy (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Jost *et al.*, 2003; Jost, 2017).

In their current form, the predictions derived from these two models are mutually exclusive. The reason for this is that these models assume that cognitive rigidity affects citizens' political beliefs in the same way everywhere: No matter the context, less democratic citizens tend to lean more toward either end of the spectrum or just the right end. In what follows, we propose an alternative model to study the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. We call this the authoritarian legacy model. To be sure,

in proposing this model, it is by no means our intention to refute the established knowledge that cognitive rigidity lies at the basis of citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. Instead, we reject the idea that this rigidity influences mass political behavior in different countries in the same way. According to our model, citizens with a rigid mind are leftist and less democratic in former left-authoritarian countries and rightist and less democratic in former right-authoritarian countries. Consequently, lower support for democracy should be located on just one end of the spectrum in former authoritarian countries.

The authoritarian legacy model

Authoritarian legacies

We can best summarize the central premise of authoritarian legacy research as a criticism of the idea of a zero-hour (Minkenberg, 2015). This idea holds that it is possible to facilitate a complete break with the authoritarian past and start with a clean slate. Authoritarian legacy scholars refute this idea. They argue that we can find traces or reminders of the past regime in the present. The vehicles of these traces may be material. They may take on the form of literature, education, popular culture, architecture, democratic propaganda, et cetera (Art, 2005). The vehicles of these traces may also be human. Parental socialization and elite debate are examples of such human vehicles. Altogether, these traces create general historical awareness among citizens, irrespective of whether they have lived through it or not. In this study, we focus on

traces resulting from the two most salient traits of twentieth-century authoritarian regimes in Europe, namely, their authoritarianism and extreme ideologies (Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020; Kailitz, 2013; Neundorf, 2010). That is, communist and socialist states were authoritarian and left-wing. Others, such as Nazi Germany or the military regimes, e.g., Spain and Greece, were authoritarian and right-wing.

The purpose of legacy research is to demonstrate that these traces affect individual, elite, and mass political behavior. The authoritarian past, then, serves as an additional contextual factor that needs to be taken into account when studying political behavior. In this case, authoritarian legacies may affect political behavior because the word 'authoritarianism' calls to mind images of the past regime. Besides, the label 'left' calls to mind the images of the past regime in countries with a left-authoritarian legacy and the label 'right' in countries with a right-wing legacy (Bobbio, 1996; Dinas, 2017; Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). In other words, the past creates an interpretative lens through which citizens judge the meaning of these words (Art, 2005; Morlino, 2010). In effect, citizens in former authoritarian countries are more likely to believe that their ideological and democratic beliefs say something about their evaluation of the past regime and its practices.

Two types of legacy effects

For this reason, the connotations the word 'authoritarianism' and ideological labels have acquired in former authoritarian countries are hardly neutral. They evoke specific images of what living under the rule of the past regime would look like. In the following paragraphs, we theorize that the authoritarian past (directly or indirectly) influences citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. In particular, we theorize two types of legacy effects.

This first type comprises the traditional understanding of legacy effects. It envisions legacies as an inheritance from the past regime. This effect occurs among citizens who maintain a positive reading of the past and adjust their political beliefs accordingly. There are two reasons why citizens would maintain such a positive reading. The explanation behind the first reason mirrors that put forward in the cognitive rigidity literature (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Rokeach, 1956). This explanation acknowledges that even after democratic transition, some citizens prefer the societal hierarchy and order one would typically find under authoritarian rule (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017, 2019). These less democratic citizens view democratic freedoms as a burden rather than a privilege (Nolte, 1963; Popper, 1945). Of course, the stronger these feelings are, the more supportive these citizens are of the past regime's ideological beliefs (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2020).

A second reason why citizens would maintain a positive reading of the past regime is that they agree with its ideological practices, val-

ues, or policies (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). These citizens feel attracted to the ideological core of the past regime and commend authoritarian forms of government for their ability to follow through on their promises (Gryzmala-Busse, 2002; Loxton & Mainwarring, 2018). That is, authoritarian governments need not compromise and are particularly effective in pursuing their policies. Besides, these citizens imagine a time where supporting the regime's ideological beliefs ensured that one would be entitled to its benefits (Backes & Kailitz, 2015; Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020). For this reason, some citizens may be more embracive of authoritarian forms of government. For instance, in former communist countries, this should mean that citizens who develop a typically left-wing (communist) preference for a planned economy are more sympathetic toward authoritarianism (Thorisdottir *et al.*, 2007).

Legacy research has already paid a substantial amount of attention to the theoretical mechanisms behind the first type of legacy effect. By contrast, this literature has mostly overlooked the reactions among those who maintain a negative reading of the past. However, various studies within the fields of militant democracy (Bourne, 2018), party politics (Art, 2005; Costa Pinto, 2010; Morlino, 2010; Van Spanje, 2018), and media coverage (de Leeuw *et al.*, 2020; Gunther, Montero & Wert, 2000) in post-authoritarian countries suggest that disassociating oneself with the beliefs of the authoritarian predecessor is a common practice. Once again, there are two reasons why this type of legacy effect would spill

over to citizens. First, some citizens may feel appalled by the anti-democratic traits of the past regime. Their cognitive characteristics are the opposite of the would-be authoritarians described in the work of Adorno *et al.* (1950). They are characterized by high levels of cognitive flexibility and commend democracy for the freedoms it grants to them and others (Popper, 1945). These citizens remember the past regime for its atrocities, violence, and repression. Of course, they are reluctant to identify with the ideology of the past regime. Even more so, they may feel more inclined to identify with the opposite ideology, which they might conceive as the voice of democratic activism.

Second, some citizens may be appalled by the memory of the past because they maintain different ideological beliefs. They remember the authoritarian past as a time where citizens with similar ideological convictions were at risk of being persecuted or assassinated (Wachsmann, 2008). To these citizens, democracy represents a system in which they have the freedom to express their ideological beliefs, and that, to some degree, will cater to their needs. The memory of the past may, therefore, reaffirm their democratic values. The more citizens disagree with the past regime's ideological beliefs, then, the more supportive they may be of democracy.

To be sure, these mechanisms need not apply to all citizens for legacy effects to occur. It is very well possible that only a share of the population deliberately adjusts their political beliefs in ac-

cordance with their reading of the past. That being said, these mechanisms may still indirectly affect the remainder of the population. Other citizens who are aware of the past may influence the political beliefs of this group of citizens. Another possibility is that this group of citizens learns to associate the labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ with ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in another context, without knowing its historical origins.

Empirical implications and evidence

If we find evidence in favor of this model, we offer an important innovation to earlier ideological rigidity models. Specifically, the authoritarian legacy model has two implications for the relation between citizens’ ideological and democratic beliefs. The first implication is that the direction of this relation depends on countries’ authoritarian history. Our model predicts that lower levels of democratic support are associated with leftist beliefs in former left-authoritarian countries and with rightist beliefs in former right-authoritarian countries. These expectations imply a break with earlier ideological rigidity models and existing democracy scholarship, which assume that the direction is invariant across contexts. The second implication is that the shape of this relation depends on countries’ authoritarian history. That is, if less democratic citizens are pushed toward one end of the spectrum and more democratic citizens toward the opposite end, we should find that the relation takes on a more linear form in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere. The rigidity-of-the-extremes model may, therefore, only

correctly predict citizens' democratic support in countries without a legacy of left- or right-authoritarianism. Likewise, the rigidity-of-the-right model may only correctly predict citizens' democratic support in countries with a legacy of right-authoritarianism.

Thus far, a comprehensive analysis of legacy effects on the relation between left-right orientation and democratic support (and the shape thereof) is still lacking. However, the findings of extant studies in this area are consistent with our argument. Focusing on post-war Italy, La Palombara and Waters (1961) find that support for authoritarian alternatives is considerably higher among rightist (48.0%) than among leftist (42.5%) citizens. In Central and Eastern Europe, both Dalton (2006) and Tufis (2014) reveal that leftist citizens are less supportive of democracy. The data collected by the Pew Research Center (Wike *et al.*, 2018) shows similar patterns, with rightist citizens being most supportive of authoritarian alternatives in former right-authoritarian Germany and Italy. In Venezuela, a country that has been ruled by left-wing strongmen since 1999, on the other hand, the data reveals that leftist citizens are most supportive of authoritarian rule. The argument discussed above can bring together all these findings. In particular, we can derive two expectations:

> *Hypothesis 1:* (a) Rightist beliefs are associated with lower levels of democratic support in former right-authoritarian countries and (b) leftist beliefs in former left-authoritarian countries.

Hypothesis 2: The relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs is (a) different in former authoritarian countries and (b) follows a more linear pattern than elsewhere.

Data and Methods

Data: European and World Values Study

For this study, we rely on cross-sectional survey data collected within the framework of the European and World Values Study. The advantage of these surveys is threefold. First, five survey-wave combinations (1994–2008) include a seven-item measurement of democratic support, tapping into support for democracy as well as the rejection of authoritarian alternatives. Second, these surveys include all countries in the European region, thereby ensuring a substantial variability in countries' political history. Finally, their over-time availability permits us to assess the durability of legacy effects. The data in these surveys were collected through a sample representative of the adult population, using face-to-face interviewing techniques. We did not include countries with a history of both right- and left-authoritarianism (i.e., Hungary and East Germany) in our analyses.[1] The pooled dataset comprises 112,801 respon-

[1] Leave-one-out tests (Annex Table 2.3) reveal that our findings are insensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of a single country.

dents in 38 countries (country-level response rate between 71% and 89%).

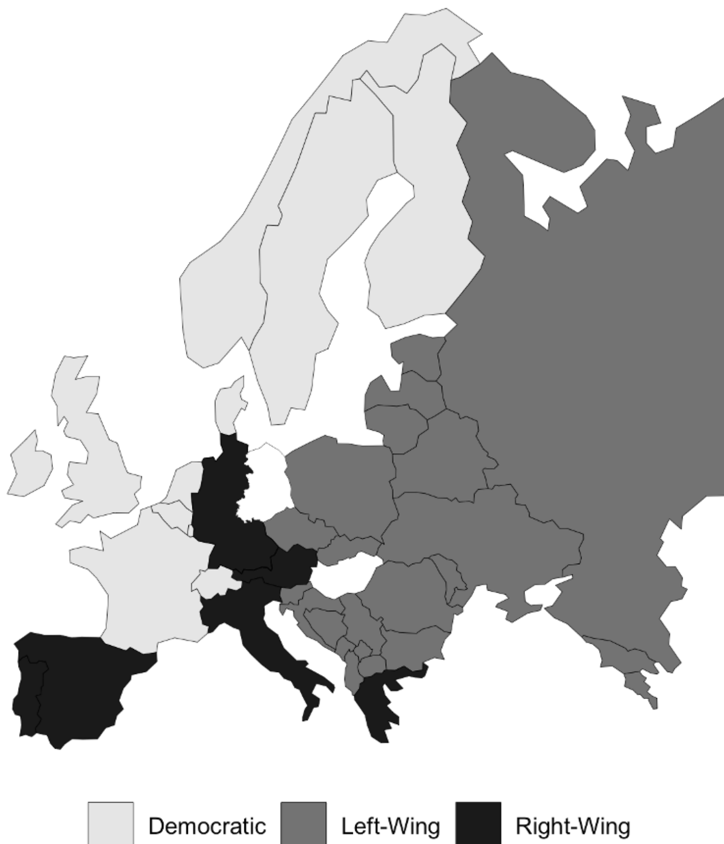
Variables

This study aims to assess whether the authoritarian past affects the relation between citizens' democratic and ideological beliefs. In the theory section, we formulated two arguments why this would be the case, one in which democratic support was the dependent variable and one in which left-right orientation was the dependent variable. Although the analysis techniques we use require specifying one as an independent and the other as the dependent variable, we retain this bidirectional nature by alternating between dependent variables in our analyses. For the sake of parsimony, we only discuss the analyses using democratic support as the dependent variable. As the remainder of this study shows, the second set of analyses yields the same conclusions.

To measure democratic support, we use an extended version of the democracy-autocracy index, proposed by Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2017). This index consists of seven items on a four-point scale, ranging between 'very bad' and 'very good' or 'disagree strongly' and 'agree strongly.' We measure support for authoritarian as the mean of items asking whether respondents agreed that (1) having a leader who does not have to bother with elections and (2) having the army govern is a good way of government; and that democracies (3) do not have a well-functioning economic system, (4) are bad at maintaining order and (5) are indecisive. We use the

mean of items asking whether respondents agreed that democracy is (1) a good way of government and (2) better than any other form of government to measure support for democratic rule. We construct the index by subtracting support for authoritarian rule

Figure 2.1: Country classification



from support for democratic rule. The outcome is an index ranging between full support for authoritarian rule (-3) to full support for democratic rule (+3), with a Cronbach's α of 0.78. Citizens' ideological beliefs are measured using their self-placement on the left-right dimension, ranging between 1 'left' to 10 'right'.

The only truly independent – and exogenous – variables in this study are countries' and citizens' experiences with authoritarianism. To determine countries' experiences, we first use V-Dem data (Coppedge *et al.*, 2020) to tentatively map all twentieth-century authoritarian regimes (see Annex Figure 2.6). To avoid relying on arbitrary cut-off criteria, we pinpoint the start- and end-dates based on identifiable historical events, such as transfers of power, coups, and the first democratic elections. We consider countries with a mostly uninterrupted experience with democracy since the turn of the twentieth-century democratic legacies. We classify countries with a history of fascism or military regimes as right-authoritarian and post-socialist or post-communist countries as left-authoritarian. Figure 2.1 visualizes the regime classification. We subsequently use information about respondents' birthyear to distinguish between respondents who have experienced authoritarian rule and respondents who have not. This variable enables us to assess whether country-level legacy effects persist despite processes of generational replacement.

Table 2.1: Summary statistics

Variable	*N*	Mean / Proportion	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.
DV: Democratic Support	105,495	1.25	1.05	-3.00	3.00
DV: Left-Right	105,495	4.87	2.38	1.00	10.00
IV: Democratic Support	105,495	0.71	0.21	0.00	1.00
IV: Left-Right	105,495	0.49	0.24	0.00	1.00
Age	105,495	0.33	0.18	0.00	1.00
Educational Attainment	105,495	0.47	0.34	0.00	1.00
Experience: No	12,217	0.12		*Ref.*	
Experience: Yes	61,162	0.88		0	1
Political Interest	105,495	0.50	0.30	0.00	1.00
Sex: Male	51,686	0.49		*Ref.*	
Sex: Female	53,809	0.51		0	1
Survey-Year: EVS 1999	21,896	0.21		*Ref.*	
Survey-Year: EVS 2008	40,795	0.39		0	1
Survey-Year: WVS 1994	22,734	0.22		0	1
Survey-Year: WVS 1999	5,671	0.05		0	1
Survey-Year: WVS 2005	14,419	0.14		0	1

We also include several demographic controls to factor out the possible confounding influence of citizen characteristics. We first include two variables to permit analysis of generational differences: a continuous measurement for citizens' age and a dummy for each survey-wave combination. Second, we include an ordinal variable gauging respondents' level of educational attainment, ranging between 0 'no formal education' to 9 'completed university-level education.' Third, we measure political interest on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 'very interested' to 4 'not at all interested.' Finally, we include dummies for respondents' sex and whether they are natives. Before running the analyses, we inverted the scales of inversely coded items and rescaled all variables to range between the values 0 and 1. Table 2.1 contains the summary statistics.

Analysis strategy

In analyzing legacy effects, we face four methodological challenges: (1) identifying legacy effects, (2) assessing their durability, (3) obtaining adequate estimations of these effects, and (4) testing the shape of these effects. The first challenge involves separating legacy effects from other noise in the data. In particular, we wish to separate variation in the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs explained by countries' authoritarian past from variation explained by other factors. A good way to deal with this problem is by looking at how patterns in former authoritarian countries differ from those elsewhere. The variation they share, then, clearly has nothing to do with the authoritarian past, while

the remaining variation does. In other words, we can resolve this problem by using countries with a democratic legacy as a benchmark.

The second challenge pertains to testing the intergenerational durability of legacy effects. Doing so is tricky because it is statistically difficult to disentangle these so-called cohort effects from the potentially confounding influences of age and period. To resolve this, we use age-period-cohort analysis techniques. These techniques deal with this problem by using constrained specifications of age and period variables as controls. Imposing these constraints reduces the correlation between these three variables. In our case, we include a dummy variable for each survey-wave (i.e., period), and we constrain the coefficient of age to be linear.[2] Annex Figure 2.7 summarizes the age distribution by country.

The third challenge involves obtaining adequate estimations of legacy effects. Doing so requires optimizing the association between citizens' left-right orientation and democratic support. In particular, we wish to obtain an estimation of left-right orientation [democratic support] for each legacy that best represents that of all units of analysis (i.e., countries) classified under that legacy. Obtaining an adequate estimation of the coefficient and standard error entails eliminating the possible bias introduced by the complicated, nested structure of the data. We address this challenge by using multilevel analysis techniques. These techniques remove

[2] Using a categorical specification of age does not alter the conclusions.

this bias by factoring out the 13.63% variance explained by the clustering of respondents within countries. Models 1a to 1c summarize the analyses of a single legacy, with country-fixed effects. The following equation describes these models:

$$Y_{ij} = (\beta_0 + u_{0j}) + \beta_1 X_1 + \Sigma\beta X_{2,k} + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{2.1}$$

in which Y_{ij} denotes the value on democratic support [left-right orientation] for individual *i* in country *j*, β_0 the grand intercept, u_{0j} the deviation between the grand intercept and the intercept for country *j*, β_1 the fixed effect for citizens' left-right orientation [democratic support], $\Sigma\beta X$ the coefficients the control variables and ϵ_{ij} the stochastic error for individual *i* in country *j*. Another advantage of multilevel techniques is that they allow us to consciously impose and lift constraints on the cross-national variability in the strength of individual-level coefficients. Allowing the coefficient of left-right orientation [democratic support] to vary (i.e., random slopes), enables us to assess whether the average value of this coefficient varies with countries' authoritarian legacy. Model 1d uses the pooled data to model this interaction. We can describe the equation for this model as follows:

$$\begin{gathered} Y_{ij} = (\beta_0 + u_{0j}) + (\beta_1 X_1 + u_{1j}) + \\ \beta_2 LeftWing + \beta_3 RightWing + \beta_4 X_1 \times RightWing + \\ \beta_5 X_1 \times LeftWing + \Sigma\beta X_{6,k} + \epsilon_{ij} \end{gathered} \tag{2.2}$$

Equation 2.2 differs from Equation 2.1 due to the addition of dummies for countries' legacy (β_2 and β_3), the partition of the fixed effect for ideology into a grand coefficient β_1 and a country-random part u_{1j} and a cross-level interaction between ideology and legacy (β_4 and β_5). Rather than relying on the crude practice of interpreting p-values, we calculate 90% bootstrapped confidence intervals, thereby facilitating a 5% confidence level for our one-sided hypotheses. This procedure produces a sampling distribution of plausible parameter estimates. We visualize these estimates through coefficient plots. We consider a hypothesis fully supported when the upper and lower bounds align with our expectations.

The fourth and final challenge is testing legacy effects on the shape of the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs (Hypothesis 2b). This is a challenge parametric techniques cannot address for at least two reasons. First, parametric techniques force us to make presumptions about the shape of these relations. This is problematic because these techniques may provide support for any specification, even when incorrect. Second, parametric techniques do not provide a measure of linearity. This limitation makes it difficult to test our expectations formally. We employ a nonparametric analysis technique to address this challenge: Generalized Additive Mixed Models (GAMMs). In layman's terms, this technique allows us to drop any presumption we might have about the shape of the relation. It furthermore ensures that the estimated shape of the effect reflects its actual shape. It does so

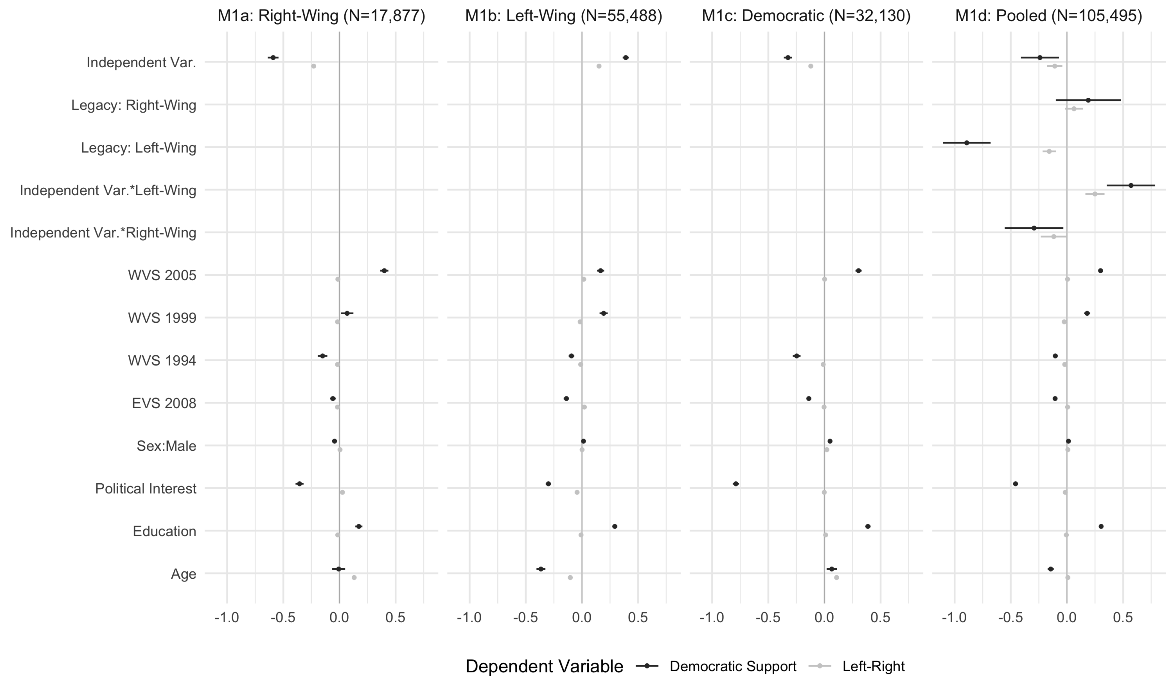
by lifting the restriction that predictions must be a weighted sum of the predictors. Instead, this technique allows us to model the outcome as a sum of (regular) linear terms $\Sigma\beta X$, combined with functions $f(X)$ for the terms of interest. The shape of the effect of $f(X)$ is a priori unknown.

In the case of GAMMs, these arbitrary functions $f(X)$ are (cubic) spline functions. We can imagine these functions as elastic line gauges bent on certain values of the scale of the variable of interest (i.e., knots). During the estimation procedure, GAMMs learn to find the optimal position for these knots. In our case, we use these techniques to produce smoothed nonlinear curves for citizens' left-right orientation. As Equation 2.3 demonstrates, we use the same specification for these models as for Models 1a to 1c, with the sole exception that we now estimate the fixed effect for ideology using a spline function:

$$Y_{ij} = (\beta_0 + u_{0j}) + f(\beta_1 X_1) + \Sigma\beta X_{2,k} + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{2.3}$$

To test Hypothesis 2b, we look at a statistic evaluating the degree to which the curve deviates from linearity: Effective Degrees of Freedom (*edf*). The higher the value of this statistic, the more the curve deviates from linearity. Therefore, this statistic allows us to formally establish whether the relation between citizens' democratic and ideological beliefs follows a more linear pattern in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere.

Figure 2.2: Linear test of legacy effects. **Source:** European and World Values Survey (1994–2008). **Notes:** Entries are the result of multilevel analyses with observations nested in countries. Figure shows 90% bootstrapped confidence intervals (iterations = 10.000, seed = 1993).



Results

Legacy effects on democratic and ideological beliefs

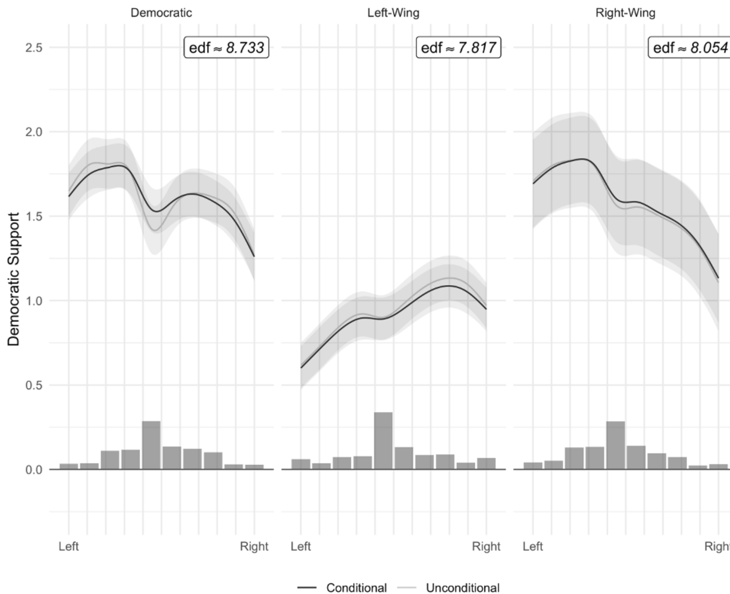
Our first and principal expectation is that lower levels of democratic support are associated with rightist beliefs in former right-authoritarian countries (Hypothesis 1a) and leftist beliefs in former left-authoritarian countries (Hypothesis 1b). To test this, we estimate a separate linear analysis for each legacy. Models 1a to 1c in Figure 2.2 contain the results of these analyses. These analyses provide full support for Hypothesis 1. The negative value of the coefficient for left-right orientation in Model 1a (*B* = –0.59; *SE* = 0.03; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.64,–0.54]) shows that in former right-authoritarian countries, rightist citizens are 0.59 points (9.83%) less supportive than leftist citizens. These findings align with the expectations formulated in Hypothesis 1a. Likewise, the positive value of the estimate for left-right orientation in Model 1b (*B* = 0.39; *SE* = 0.02; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.36,0.42]) predicts that in former left-authoritarian countries, leftist citizens are 0.39 points (6.50%) less supportive than rightist citizens, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 1b.

To ascertain that these differences can be attributed to countries' past, we benchmark the coefficients for left-right orientation in countries with an authoritarian legacy to that in countries with a democratic legacy. We expect that this coefficient is significantly different in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere (Hypothesis 2a). The main coefficient for left-right orientation in Model

1d (*B* = –0.24; *SE* = 0.10; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.41,0.07]) predicts that in countries with a democratic legacy, rightist citizens are 3.01% less supportive than leftist citizens. In line with Hypothesis 2a, the interaction term with right-wing legacies (*B* = –0.29; *SE* = 0.18; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.55,–0.04]) reveals that this relation significantly differs in former right-authoritarian countries. This model predicts that in countries with a right-wing legacy rightist citizens are 0.50 points (8.33%) less democratic. Likewise, the interaction term with left-wing legacies (*B* = 0.57; *SE* = 0.13; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.36,0.79]) shows that in countries with a left-wing legacy leftist citizens are 0.33 points (5.52%) less democratic than their ideological counterparts. Hence, the analyses provide full support for Hypothesis 1b.

Our final expectation is that countries' authoritarian past encourages citizens with a positive reading of the past to associate with the regime's beliefs, and citizens with a negative reading to dissociate from its beliefs. If this is the case, the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs should follow a more linear pattern in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere (Hypothesis 2b). To test this, we calculate an *edf* statistic based on the results of nonlinear analyses. A lower value on this statistic indicates a higher degree of linearity. Figure 2.3 confirms Hypothesis 2b. This figure shows that in countries with a democratic legacy, lower support is concentrated on both ends of the left-right spectrum and the center. In former authoritarian countries, by

Figure 2.3: Nonlinear test of legacy effects. **Notes:** Figures are the result of Generalized Additive Mixed Models, with a cubic spline function estimation for citizens' left-right orientation (knots = 10). The grey bound represents a 90% confidence interval around the predicted value. The *edf* statistics can be read as measures of linearity and only apply to the conditional estimations. The lower the value of this statistic, the more linear a relation is.



contrast, lower support is concentrated on just one end. The *edf* statistics tied to the estimations in former authoritarian countries confirm the tentative conclusion that the relation between left-right orientation and democratic support follows a more linear pattern in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere. The value of this statistic is considerably lower for the analyses of former authoritarian countries (*edf* = 7.82 in left-wing legacies and *edf* =

8.05 in right-wing legacies) than for analyses of countries with a democratic legacy (*edf* = 8.73). The analyses, therefore, provide full support for Hypothesis 2b.

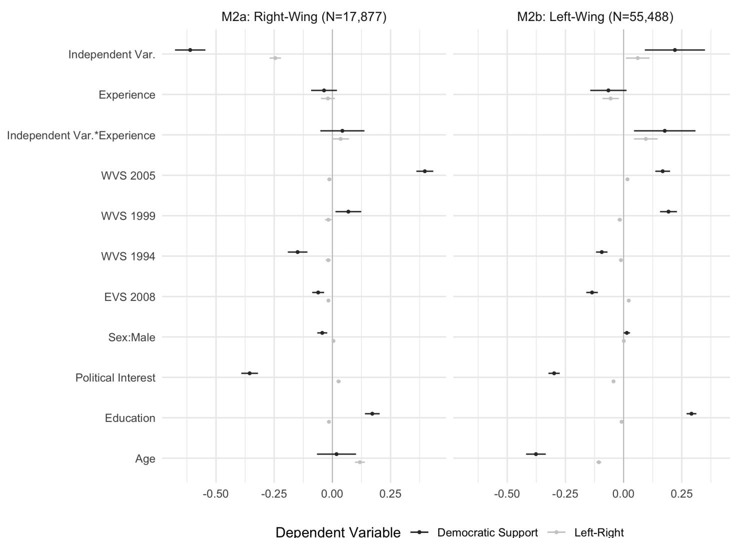
These findings are important for several reasons. In general, the results suggest that a core assumption of existing rigidity models, namely, its insistence that citizens' democratic and ideological beliefs are related in the same way in every context, is incorrect. In addition, these findings provide support for two refinements of extant research on authoritarian legacies. They show that legacy effects exist in all former authoritarian countries, irrespective of how long ago they transitioned to democracy. The nonlinear analyses show that authoritarian legacies do more than encourage citizens with a positive reading of the past to associate themselves with the past regime's beliefs: They also pressure citizens with a negative reading to disassociate themselves.

The intergenerational durability of effects

A central claim we make in our theory section is that legacy effects transcend generations. We perform age-period-cohort analysis to test whether this is the case. These analyses include an interaction term between citizens' ideology and whether they have experienced authoritarian rule. The inclusion of this interaction term permits us to estimate a separate line for citizens who have experienced authoritarian rule and those who grew up thereafter. Figure 2.4 contains the results of these analyses. The analyses provide strong evidence that the observed legacy effects survive

processes of generational replacement. The main coefficient for citizens' left-right orientation in Model 2a (*B* = –0.61; *SE* = 0.04; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.68,–0.55]) predicts that in former right-authoritarian countries, rightist citizens born after authoritarian rule are 0.61 points (10.17%) less democratic than their right-wing counterparts. Likewise, the main coefficient for left-right orientation in Model 2b (*B* = 0.22; *SE* = 0.08; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.09,0.35]) predicts that in former left-authoritarian countries, leftist citizens born after authoritarian rule are 0.22 points (3.66%) less democratic than their right-wing

Figure 2.4: Linear test of generational differences. **Source:** European and World Values Survey (1994–2008). **Notes:** Entries are the result of multilevel analyses with observations nested in countries. Figure shows 90% bootstrapped confidence intervals (iterations = 10.000, seed = 1993). The intercept is not included in the visualization to increase the readability of the results.

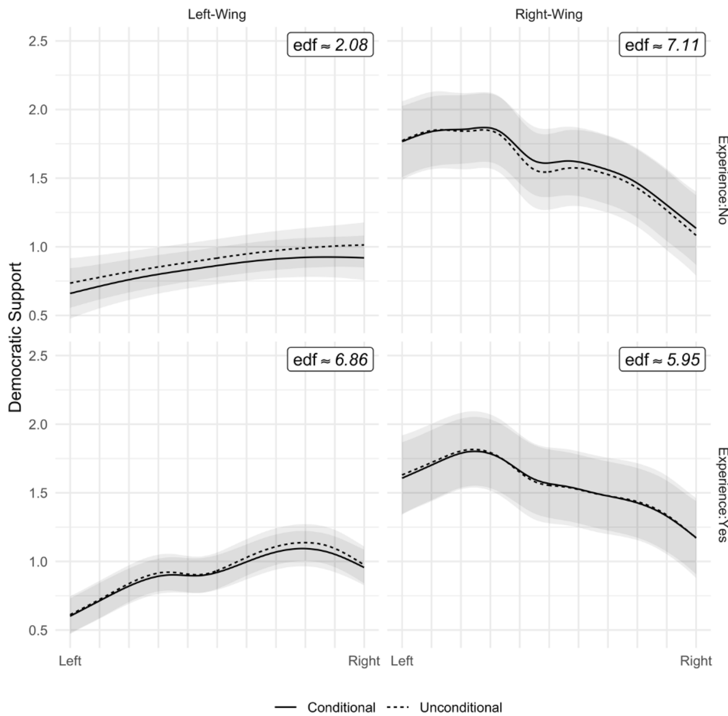


counterparts. In other words, these analyses consistently show that legacy effects also occur among generations who grew up after authoritarian rule.

We perform nonlinear analyses to evaluate whether legacy effects on the shape of the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs persist across generations (Figure 2.5). We may conclude that legacy effects persist if the value of the effective degrees of freedom of the coefficient for citizens' left-right orientation is lower than that in countries with a democratic legacy for each cohort. Here, too, we find strong evidence that legacy effects persist across generations. The left panels in Figure 2.5 show that in former left-authoritarian countries, the relation is both more linear among citizens who have not (*edf* = 2.08) and citizens who have (*edf* = 6.86) experienced authoritarian rule than among citizens in countries with a democratic legacy (*edf* = 8.73). The right panels mirror these findings for countries with a right-authoritarian legacy. These panels show that the relation between citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs is considerably more linear among citizens who have not experienced authoritarian rule (*edf* =7.11) and those who have (*edf* = 5.95) than among citizens in countries with a democratic legacy (*edf* = 8.73).

What can we learn from these findings? If we take a closer look at the left panels of Figure 2.5, we see that in former left-authoritarian countries, deviations from linearity among citizens with direct exposure to authoritarianism are mostly located on the left side of

Figure 2.5: Nonlinear test of generational differences. **Notes:** Figures are the result of Generalized Additive Mixed Models, with a cubic spline function estimation for citizens' left-right orientation (knots = 10). The grey bound represents a 90% confidence interval around the predicted value. The edf-statistic can be read as a measure of linearity. The lower the value of this statistic, the more linear a relation is.



the ideological spectrum. The right panels, by contrast, show that these deviations exist on both sides in former right-authoritarian countries. This observation yields an especially important conclusion. It tells us that the second type of legacy effect, that is

the desire of citizens with a negative reading of the past to disassociate with the beliefs of the past regime, only exists in former right-authoritarian countries.

Discussion

Who opposes democracy? Despite growing concerns over the future of democracy, there is surprisingly little popular and scholarly agreement regarding the ideological alignment of less democratic citizens. Most point to the ideological extremes as the main source of lower support. Others believe that lower support is exclusively concentrated on the right end. In this study, we proposed, tested, and demonstrated the validity of another model, called the authoritarian legacy model. We showed that whether lower support is located on the left side, the right side or both sides of the ideological spectrum depends on historical experiences with left- or right-authoritarianism. The theoretical corollary of this claim was that citizens' reading of the authoritarian past would influence their support for the past regime's beliefs. In line with this argument, we found that the relation between citizens' left-right orientation and democratic support differs along with countries' experiences with authoritarianism.

Our findings play well to several longstanding debates in political science. Theoretically, our study shows that the models political

psychology has developed to study cognitive rigidity are unsuitable for studying democratic support. To be sure, the overwhelming empirical evidence in favor of the authoritarian legacy model does not disprove any of the theoretical arguments fielded in political psychology. Ideological and democratic beliefs may still very well be rooted in citizens' cognitive rigidity. Instead, this study should be viewed as an invitation for scholars working in this field to take into account the historical background of a country, at least when studying democratic support. That is, we show that the validity of the predictions made by earlier ideological rigidity models is a matter of context. For example, our findings provide support for the rigidity-of-the-extremes hypothesis, but only in countries with a democratic legacy. Likewise, we found support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, but only in former right-authoritarian countries.

Our study also offers two additions to extant research on authoritarian legacy effects. First, we theorized a novel type of legacy effect, caused by citizens' desire to disassociate with the beliefs of the past regime. We investigated this by studying legacy effects on the shape of the relation between left-right orientation and democratic support. Our findings provide compelling evidence for this refinement of earlier theories. Our nonlinear analyses revealed that rightist beliefs imply stronger support for democracy in former left-authoritarian countries, as much as leftist beliefs imply weaker support. Inversely, leftist beliefs indicate stronger support

in former right-authoritarian countries, as much as rightist beliefs indicate weaker support. A second, related, contribution is that that this extension enabled us to theorize legacy effects that are not only relevant in the context of new democracies. Our findings provided evidence that the authoritarian past structures the association between left-right orientation and democratic support in former authoritarian countries, irrespective of how long ago they transitioned to democracy.

The findings of our study are also empirically relevant for multiple reasons. In general, our findings confirm that the ideological beliefs of less democratic citizens are more similar in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere. Although not necessarily opposed to democratic government, these citizens may be swayed to support authoritarianism if they feel democratic government does not cater to their psychological needs or ideological interests. This means that an important condition for the mobilization of less democratic citizens is more strongly fulfilled in these countries than elsewhere. Moreover, we found that these patterns weaken but do not disappear along the process of generational replacement. This may explain why parties with a link to the authoritarian past do not only have a stable basis in new democracies, such as the Czechian Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) but also in established democracies, such as the German National Democratic Party (NPD). Likewise, our findings suggest that the beliefs of more democratic citizens are more similar in former authoritarian

countries than elsewhere. Even more so, this pattern appears to strengthen along the process of generational replacement. These findings reveal an opportunity for democratic activism and defense. Together, these two findings suggest that legacy effects on the reaffirmation of democratic values will surpass legacy effects on the weakening of democratic values in the long term.

Methodologically, this study offers two contributions arising from our decision to develop a nonlinear test of our expectations. First, using nonparametric methods enabled us to drop preconceptions regarding the shape of the relation. Doing so helped us achieve higher levels of confidence regarding the shape of effects than a theoretically informed model specification would. This exploratory feature of nonparametric methods is especially valuable in studies like ours, in which there are various conflicting theoretical claims about the shape of a relation. Second, this approach permitted us to propose a novel way to study legacy effects. We argued and empirically demonstrated that the authoritarian past resulted in a more linear relation between citizens' democratic and ideological beliefs. Besides, the exploratory nature of these analyses yielded findings that would have gone unnoticed using parametric methods. For instance, we found evidence that leftist citizens who experienced right-authoritarian rule were more supportive of democracy. By contrast, we did not find any evidence that rightist citizens who experienced left-authoritarian rule were more supportive. This observation necessarily invited us to reflect on the reason why. A

possible reason is that left-wing regimes were more consistent in their efforts to indoctrinate the masses than right-wing regimes. This regime characteristic may contribute to the homogenization, rather than polarization, of public opinion. Further theorization and analysis on shape effects may yield more nuanced conclusions about the influence of countries' authoritarian past.

This tentative suggestion necessarily brings us to the discussion of other limitations and avenues for future research. First, it is questionable whether we can extend the arguments put forward here to countries with competing authoritarian (left- and right-wing) legacies, such as Hungary and East Germany. In these rare cases, both ends of the ideological spectrum are tainted by an anti-democratic connotation. It is, therefore, unclear what the empirical implications for mass political behavior would be. However, qualitative analysis of these cases can be very instructive, and they may even help further refine our theory. Knowledge of how citizens deal with these competing pressures may help us better understand which type of regime traces (e.g., reference in political debate, memorial sites, museums, popular culture) prevail in citizens' considerations. Second, it is important to note that our finding that leftist citizens are less democratic in former left-authoritarian countries seems to be at odds with the observation that radical right parties are flourishing in some of these countries (for instance, PiS in Poland). We believe that the reason for this is that the left-authoritarian past has enabled the radical right to

acquire a pro-democratic reputation. This argument can be loosely substantiated by the fact that PiS entered the electoral arena as a pro-democratic party with a strong anti-communist rhetoric. This rhetoric may have permitted this party to ward off accusations of political extremism. More research is necessary to investigate whether this is the case.

Despite these shortcomings, it is clear that the implications of this study reach beyond the question which citizens are more likely to oppose democracy. Contrary to earlier research on legacy effects, our study shows that the authoritarian past establishes lasting effects on citizens' beliefs. As such, this study tells us a great deal about the mobilization potential of reactionary and democratic activist movements across different countries.

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Appendix

Figure 2.6: Regime date validation. **Source:** V-Dem (2019) **Notes:** Figure represents the level of indoctrination and repression (see Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020) and the level of illiberal democracy. The grey areas denote the period of time coded as authoritarian rule.

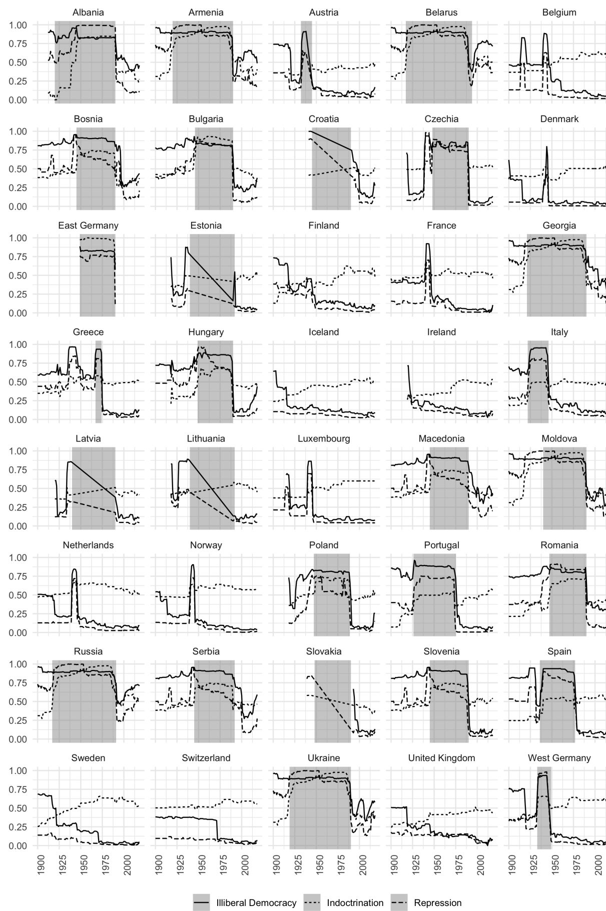
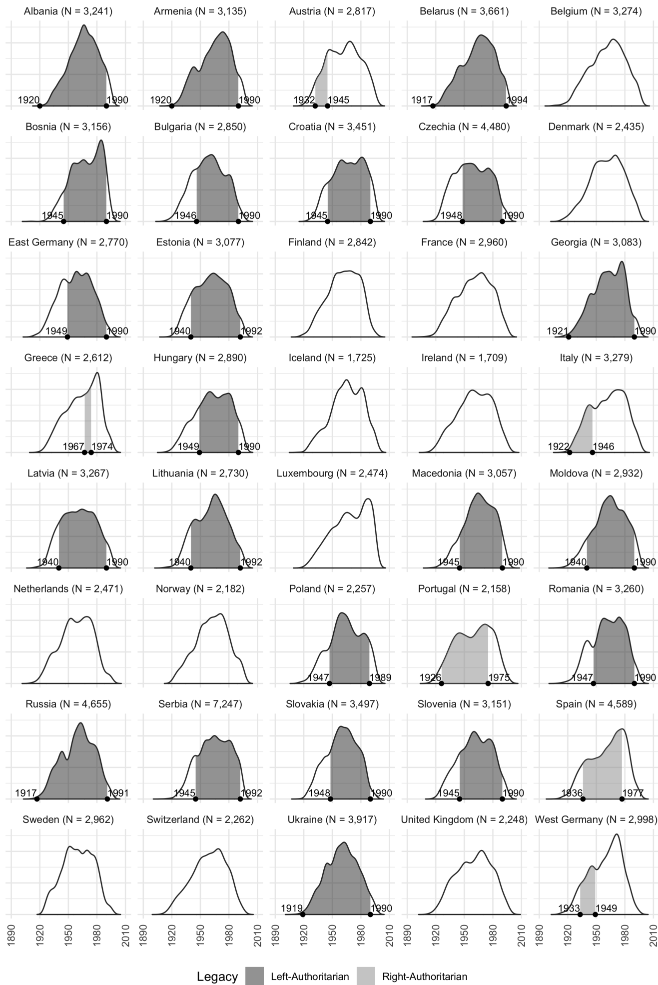


Table 2.2: Directional analyses. **Source:** WVS – EVS (1994-2008). **Notes:** – indicates a significant negative effect, + a significant positive effect and ns an insignificant effect. A ✓ indicates that all analyses yield the same conclusions as the original analysis± that they only partially yields the same results.

		DV: Dem. Support						DV: LR Orientation						
Model	Key Term	Gender	Education	Religiosity	Pol. Interest	Native	All	Gender	Education	Religiosity	Pol. Interest	Native	All	Robust?
M1a	Indep. Var.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓
M1b	Indep. Var.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	✓
M1c	Indep. Var.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓
M1d	Indep. Var. × Legacy: Left	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	✓
M1d	Indep. Var. × Legacy: Right	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	✓
M2a	Indep. Var. × Experience	+	ns	+	+	+	+	ns	ns	+	ns	+	+	±
M2b	Indep. Var. × Experience	+	ns	+	+	ns	ns	+	+	+	+	+	ns	±

Figure 2.7: Year of birth distribution. **Source:** EVS WVS (1994-2008) **Notes:** Figure depicts a density function of respondents' birth year by country. The grey areas denote the periods of time coded as authoritarian rule.



	Model					
Removed	M1a	M1b	M1c	M1d	M2a	M2b
Albania		✓		✓		✓
Armenia		✓		✓		✓
Belarus		✓		✓		✓
Bosnia		✓		✓		✓
Bulgaria		✓		✓		✓
Croatia		✓		✓		✓
Czechia		✓		✓		✓
East Germany		✓		✓		✓
Estonia		✓		✓		✓
Georgia		✓		✓		✓
Hungary		✓		✓		✓
Latvia		✓		✓		✓
Lithuania		✓		✓		✓
Macedonia		✓		✓		✓
Moldova		✓		✓		✓
Poland		✓		✓		✓
Romania		✓		✓		✓
Russia		✓		✓		✓
Serbia		✓		✓		✓
Slovakia		✓		✓		✓
Slovenia		✓		✓		✓
Ukraine		✓		✓		✓
Austria	✓			✓	✓	
Greece	✓			✓	✓	
Italy	✓			✓	✓	
Portugal	✓			✓	✓	
Spain	✓			✓	✓	
West Germany	✓			✓	✓	
Belgium			✓	✓		

Denmark	✓	✓
Finland	✓	✓
France	✓	✓
Iceland	✓	✓
Ireland	✓	✓
Luxembourg	✓	✓
Netherlands	✓	✓
Norway	✓	✓
Sweden	✓	✓
Switzerland	✓	✓
United Kingdom	✓	✓

Table 2.3: Leave-One-Out Tests. **Source:** WVS – EVS (1994–2008). **Notes:** A ✓ indicates that the substantive conclusion of the analysis has remained the same after removing one country from the sample.

CHAPTER 3

CITIZENS' SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIES OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE

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ABSTRACT

It has long been speculated that banning parties from participation in elections may be counterproductive because it might provoke societal resistance. Using the European Social Survey (2002-2010, *N* = 195,405), our study suggests otherwise. We demonstrate that party bans enjoy the legitimacy of majority support. This holds true irrespective of countries' resilience to extremist influences (or lack thereof) resulting from "institutional intolerance," electoral entry barriers and authoritarian legacies. Individual orientations toward the democratic establishment do matter to a small extent: Citizens with authoritarian tendencies and low system support are less supportive, while this is less so for citizens with extreme ideological beliefs. Even though party bans entail significant democratic dilemmas, this study reveals societal resources supportive of repressive responses to extremist parties.

Replication: The replication code and data are available in the following repository: https://github.com/sdleeuw2/Replication-Code-Explaining-Citizen-Attitudes-to-Strategies-of-Democratic-Defense

3

Introduction

In his famous appeal against fascism in 1937, German émigré Karl Loewenstein warned that democracy might become the “Trojan horse by which the enemy enters the city” (1937, p.424). The Nazis’ rise to power in Weimar Germany has provided the paradigmatic case of political extremists overthrowing democracy under the ruse of respecting legality. Since then, various democracies have recalled these tactics to justify militant responses to political extremism, including association bans and the criminalization of offensive speech acts (see, e.g., Bleich, 2011; Capoccia, 2005; Downs, 2012). One of the most repressive measures is banning political parties from participating in elections or party bans. Even though justified as measures to defend democracy, party bans challenge principles of political tolerance and undermine the level playing field of electoral competition. In addition to these normative dilemmas, one of the prime arguments fielded against their use is that they do more harm than good, among other things, because they might provoke societal resistance (Bleich, 2011; Downs, 2012). Societal resistance includes radicalization,

increased support for extremist parties. Party bans are, therefore, typically approached with caution.

Party bans are an infrequent but not unusual phenomenon in Europe. In an expert survey of party ban practices in 37 European democracies, Bourne and Casal Bértoa (2017) show that the majority of these countries banned a party at some point during the post-war period and that in total 52 parties were banned. Prominent party ban cases include the German *Sozialistische Reichspartei* (1952) and the Communist Party (1956); *Sinn Fein* (1956) in Northern Ireland; the Dutch Centre Party '86 (1998); *Batasuna* in Spain (2003); the Belgian Flemish Block (2004); and the Workers Party in the Czech Republic (2010). Altogether, these events have ignited public and scholarly interest in the consequences of party bans. Nevertheless, no study has assessed citizen attitudes toward party bans. This is an important shortcoming, given that academics, political elites, and the media have warned against the societal backlash resulting from decisions to implement a ban.

Research on citizen attitudes provides knowledge on whether elite positions on an issue as fundamental as who is permitted to contest political power enjoys the legitimacy of citizen support. It also permits us to reflect on whether potential costs in terms of societal resistance outweigh potential benefits such as the reaffirmation of democratic values. To this end, we ask: To what degree is the public divided over the use of party bans? Moreover,

does opposition to party bans vary in accordance with countries' resilience to political extremism and individual orientations toward the democratic establishment? We address these questions by analyzing opinion data from the European Social Survey (ESS; N = 195,405) between 2002 and 2010 in 27 European countries. Although not subjected to analysis before, questions on attitudes to party bans have been regularly posed in ESS. First, we map the aggregate levels of support for party bans in European countries, after which we explain this support in function of country and individual characteristics.

Theory and Hypotheses

Militant democracy and party bans

After the Second World War, European democracies faced the question of protecting the democratic order against extremist influences. They found their answer in the literature on militant democracy. First coined by Loewenstein (1937), militant democracy entails the protection of democratic freedoms by preemptively curtailing the rights of those trying to subvert it. Examples of militant democracy instruments include anti-racism legislation and association bans (Bleich, 2011; Bourne, 2018; Capoccia, 2005; Downs, 2012). One of the most repressive measures is banning a party from participating in elections, thereby partially or fully excluding it from the public sphere.

In addition to the normative dilemmas surrounding their implementation, party bans spark controversy because they might provoke societal resistance. We should weigh this potential cost against two other factors: how capable a country is of defending itself against extremists (i.e., resilience), and which types of citizens oppose bans (Minkenberg, 2006).

Countries' resilience to extremist influences

We should first weigh public support for party bans against countries' resilience. In this study, we focus on constraints on extremist parties' ability to reach positions of political authority. In this section, we theorize how different dimensions of resilience influence public support for party bans.

Institutional tolerance toward political extremism

One of the principal contributions by legal scholars to the literature on democratic defense is the construction of typologies of legal-constitutional responses (see Fox & Nolte, 2000). The procedural model draws on Schumpeter's (1947) conception of democracy. It holds that parties derive their legitimacy from electoral support. This legitimacy limits the state's authority to restrict extremist views. Legitimacy in substantive democracies, by contrast, draws on Mill, Rawls, Popper, and others in its insistence that parties cannot abuse democratic rights to abolish others. If parties attempt to do so, the state may deny them access to the electoral realm.

There is extensive literature linking public opinion to institutional traditions. Most notable is the representative model of judicial decision making. This model dictates that legal institutions abide by the same norms as citizens (Cook, 1977; Gibson, 1980). If this is the case, institutional commitment to "open debate and competition among all ideological factions [even extremist ones]" (Fox & Nolte, 2000, p.200) in procedural democracies reflects a wider societal consensus that no voices should be excluded. In substantive democracies, institutional willingness to curtail the rights of political extremists should follow a societal commitment to maintaining conditions for cultural tolerance. In light of these arguments, we expect that:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Citizens in substantive democracies are more supportive of party bans than citizens living in procedural democracies.

Authoritarian legacies

Many have also linked historical experiences of authoritarianism (e.g., Nazism, fascism, and Communism) to countries' resilience against extremist influences. Such arguments are often inspired by the paradigmatic case of German militant democracy (Backes, 2006). In the German case, the legacy of Nazism justified constitutional provisions to marginalize extremist influences. Comparative studies have generalized this observation into the argument that these deep-seated traumas of the past established institutional

pressures to create a rupture with the past (Downs, 2012; Klamt, 2007).

The relation between authoritarian legacies and public support for party bans, however, is much more ambiguous. On the one hand, work by some scholars (Bourne, 2012; Bourne & Casal Bértoa, 2017) suggests that elites are more likely to consider a ban in situations where the public is arguably least supportive. This is especially the case in new democracies, where a considerable share of the population may still support authoritarian forms of government. In this context, party bans may serve as a necessary but contentious instrument to eliminate the remnants of the past. We can therefore expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2a:* Citizens in countries with recent experiences with authoritarianism are less supportive of party bans than citizens living elsewhere.

On the other hand, the traumatizing records of the past may also underpin a convincing narrative to justify the necessity of militant measures in countries with a distant authoritarian legacy (de Leeuw, Rekker, Azrout, & Van Spanje, 2020). Support for party bans in these countries may, therefore, be higher than elsewhere. We, therefore, expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2b:* Citizens in countries with distant experiences with authoritarianism are more supportive of party bans than citizens living elsewhere.

Electoral entry barriers

Party bans are arguably less useful in a context where extremist parties have limited opportunities to exercise a meaningful role in parliamentary or governmental arenas. In that case, citizens may not find the party sufficiently threatening to warrant a ban. Among the most potent tools to prevent extremist parties from exercising any power whatsoever is the manipulation of electoral rules. Doing so raises the entry barriers of electoral participation. As such, electoral entry barriers may serve as a viable alternative to party bans.

The debates about banning the German *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD) in 2017 provide evidence of such considerations. Here, the Federal Constitutional Court rejected the ban because the NPD did not pose a threat to the democratic order (Bourne, 2018). The reason for the limited threat of the NPD was its limited electoral showing due to the 5% legal threshold for parliamentary representation. We can formulate a broader argument for the proportionality of electoral systems: Highly proportional systems enable the election of small (radical) parties. A key example is the French *Front National* (now *Rassemblement National*), which performed well under a system of proportional representation but lost its momentum after the reintroduction of a majoritarian system (Downs, 2012). Party bans are, therefore, more desirable in countries with highly proportional systems, like Israel, but less so in the United States, with its plurality system

(Navot, 2008; Pedahzur & Weinberg, 2004).

If it is easier for extremist parties to gain electoral ground, citizens may feel more inclined to identify these parties as a realistic threat. Besides, citizens living in countries with low entry barriers are more likely to have witnessed extremist parties in the electoral arena. These two factors may reinforce the perception that it is necessary to curb extremist influences. We, therefore, expect that:

> *Hypothesis 3:* Citizens in countries with low entry barriers for electoral representation are more supportive of party bans than citizens in countries with high barriers.

Individual orientations toward the democratic establishment

A second point requiring further scrutiny is the question of which types of citizens oppose party bans. In this section, we theorize that citizens with negative orientations toward the existing democratic order are also the least supportive of party bans.

Authoritarian tendencies

Several studies on authoritarian socialization propose that citizens who grew up in a context where authoritarianism is promoted as a viable form of government are less supportive of democratic government – and by extension of measures designed to protect it (Neundorf, 2010; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017). Authoritarian tendencies may then continue throughout individuals' lifespans because the ideas acquired during pre-adulthood tend to remain

stable afterward (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). Therefore, it is plausible that citizens who grew up under authoritarian rule are also less supportive of measures designed to protect democracy. In line with these arguments, we expect that:

> *Hypothesis 4:* Citizens socialized under authoritarian rule are less supportive of party bans than citizens socialized thereafter.

Ideological extremism

Another possibility is that strategic considerations steer citizens' support for party bans. This idea is borrowed from earlier research on elite strategies of exclusion. For instance, Van Spanje (2010) argues that mainstream parties are less likely to ostracize parties with similar ideological convictions since they may be potential coalition partners. On the other hand, Müller (2005) suggests that parties may benefit from bans against ideologically proximate parties because they are most likely to attract their contenders' supporters in subsequent elections. In a similar vein, we may argue that strategic considerations influence citizens' support for party bans. That is, it is plausible that support is lowest among citizens whose ideological beliefs are most likely to be targeted by a ban, that is, citizens maintaining extremist beliefs. We can therefore expect that:

> *Hypothesis 5:* Citizens with extreme right- and left-leaning ideological beliefs are less supportive of party bans.

System support

Individuals' system support may also matter for two reasons. First, the implementation of party bans typically requires the involvement of various institutions, including governments, parliaments, and the judiciary as the final arbiter. However professional they may be, public officials may have ulterior motives for implementing a ban, for instance, their partisan alignment. Citizens may only support party bans if they believe that public officials live up to moral standards, such as impartiality and integrity. Second, system support also reflects individuals' support for law compliance (Marien & Hooghe, 2011). Citizens with strong law compliance are less tolerant toward those challenging the legal status quo. As such, they may be more willing to implement measures to prevent them from doing so. We, therefore, expect that:

> *Hypothesis 6:* Citizens with high levels of system support are more supportive of party bans

Data and Methods

Data: European Social Survey

To test our hypotheses, we use all waves of the ESS containing a measure of support for party bans (2002–2010). To our knowledge, this is the only cross-national dataset that contains such a

measurement. To ensure that all models in our analyses include the same countries, we restrict our analyses to the 27 countries for which we have information about their previous experience with party bans and their institutional tradition. Data were collected through a representative random sample of the population (aged 15 and up), using face-to-face interviewing techniques. The pooled dataset comprises a sample of 195,405 respondents in 27 countries with an overall response rate of 70%.

Dependent variable: Support for party bans

We measure citizens' support for party bans using an item asking respondents to what degree they agreed that "parties wishing to overthrow democracy should be banned." This item's original scale ranges between 1 'completely agree,' and 5 'completely disagree.' We recode item to a 0–4 scale, with higher values indicating higher levels of support.

Independent variables

To identify institutional tolerance toward political extremism, we use data compiled by Bourne and Casal Bértoa (2017). These scholars distinguish between procedural democracies, with high levels of tolerance, and substantive democracies, with low levels. Second, we use the data outlined in the study of de Leeuw *et al.* (2020) to distinguish between countries that experienced democratic transition (a) in the first half of the 20th century, (b) in the 1970s, and (c) around the 1990s.

Table 3.1: Summary statistics. **Source:** ESS 2002–2010. **Note:** Table only includes respondents for whom we had information regarding their attitudes to party bans (the dependent variable).

VARIABLE	*N*	MEAN / PROPORTION	STANDARD DEVIATION	MIN.	MAX.
Support for Party Bans	195,405	2.67	1.15	0.00	4.00
Age	194,453	47.40	18.24	13.00	123.00
Auth. Socialization: During	53,176	53.01		*Ref.*	
Auth. Socialization: After	47,131	46.99		0	1
Gender: Male	92,350	47.32		*Ref.*	
Gender: Female	102,821	52.68		0	1
Ideology: Center	57,649	33.21		*Ref.*	
Ideology: Far-left	9,341	5.38		0	1
Ideology: Center-left	46,872	27.00		0	1
Ideology: Center-right	49,864	28.72		0	1
Ideology: Far-right	9,865	5.68		0	1
Institutional trust	191,791	5.13	2.60	0.00	10.00
Period: Wave 1	36,364	18.61		*Ref.*	
Period: Wave 2	39,041	19.98		0	1
Period: Wave 3	36,321	18.59		0	1
Period: Wave 4	40,987	20.97		0	1
Period: Wave 5	42,692	21.85		0	1
Years of Education	193,415	12.19	4.04	0.00	56.00

We consider countries with a mostly uninterrupted experience with democracy since the turn of the century democratic legacies. Finally, we use electoral entry barriers to operationalize the difficulty for parties to gain a seat in parliament. Given our emphasis on the visibility of smaller parties, we include a measure that captures the impact of all types of electoral entry barriers, namely, Gallagher's Least Square Index (Gallagher & Mitchel, 2005). High values on this index indicate that smaller parties have been unsuccessful at breaking through the electoral threshold, while lower values suggest that parties' seat and vote share are similar. We reverse this scale so that higher values indicate higher levels of proportionality. Table 3.2 contains the full overview of country-level variables.

We leverage within-country variation in individuals' birth year to test individual legacy-effects (i.e., socialization under authoritarian rule). All respondents who turned 18 under authoritarian rule were considered socialized by that regime. We use the traditional left-right self-placement scale (ranging between 0 'left' and 10 'right') to construct a categorical variable for ideological extremism: far-left (0–1 on the original scale), center-left (2–4), center (5), center-right (6–8), and far-right (9–10). Third, we focus on political trust as a diffuse form of system support. To this end, we construct a mean scale of five routinely used items (Cronbach's α = 0.90), measuring individuals' trust in the parliament, the judiciary, political parties, the police, and politicians.

Table 3.2: Country characteristics. **Sources:** Sources: Bourne & Casal Bértoa, 2017; de Leeuw *et al.*, 2020.

		Proportionality					Authoritarian regime		
	Legal trad.	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	Transition	Start	End
Austria	Procedural	1.33	1.33	2.80	2.92	2.92	1940s	1932	1945
Belgium	Procedural	2.99	5.16	5.16	3.37	3.37	Democratic		
Bulgaria	Procedural	7.82	7.82	3.97	3.97	7.00	1990s	1946	1990
Croatia	Procedural	5.65	9.60	9.60	7.58	7.58	1990s	1945	1990
Cyprus	Substantive	1.59	1.59	2.42	2.42	2.42	Democratic		
Czechia	Procedural	5.73	5.73	5.72	5.72	8.76	1990s	1948	1990
Denmark	Procedural	1.58	1.58	1.76	0.72	0.72	Democratic		
Estonia	Procedural	4.57	3.50	3.50	3.43	3.43	1990s	1940	1992
Finland	Procedural	3.24	3.16	3.16	3.20	3.20	Democratic		
France	Substantive	21.95	21.95	21.95	13.58	13.58	Democratic		
West Germany	Substantive	4.61	4.61	2.16	2.16	3.40	1940s	1933	1945
East Germany	Substantive	4.61	4.61	2.16	2.16	3.40	1990s	1933	1990
Greece	Substantive	6.78	7.37	7.37	6.99	7.29	1970s	1967	1974
Hungary	Procedural	8.20	8.20	5.13	5.13	11.67	1990s	1949	1990
Ireland	Procedural	6.62	6.62	6.62	5.85	5.85	Democratic		
Italy	Substantive	10.22	10.22	3.61	5.73	5.73	1940s	1922	1946
Lithuania	Procedural	10.42	10.42	5.03	5.03	11.14	1990s	1941	1992
Netherlands	Procedural	0.88	1.05	1.03	1.03	0.81	Democratic		

	Legal trad.	Proportionality					Authoritarian regime		
		2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	Transition	Start	End
Norway	Substantive	3.31	3.31	2.67	2.67	3.01	Democratic		
Poland	Procedural	6.33	6.33	6.97	4.67	5.95	1990s	1947	1989
Portugal	Substantive	4.64	4.64	5.75	5.75	5.63	1970s	1926	1975
Slovakia	Procedural	6.97	6.67	5.53	5.53	7.46	1990s	1948	1990
Slovenia	Procedural	1.51	4.79	4.79	3.89	3.89	1990s	1948	1990
Spain	Procedural	6.10	4.25	4.25	4.49	4.49	1970s	1936	1977
Sweden	Procedural	1.52	1.52	3.02	3.02	1.25	Democratic		
Switzerland	Procedural	3.17	2.47	2.47	2.56	2.56	Democratic		
United Kingdom	Procedural	17.76	17.76	16.73	16.73	15.13	Democratic		

All items range between 0 'no trust at all' to 10 'complete trust.' In addition to these variables, we control for gender, educational attainment, age, and the wave of the survey. Table 3.1 contains a summary of all individual-level variables. Before conducting the analyses, we rescale all variables to range between 0 and 1.

Analysis strategy

Our data implies at least three sources of clustering, namely, countries, waves, and each country-wave combination. Not taking this clustering into account would substantially increase the chances of making a Type I error. To tackle this challenge, we follow Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother's (2015) advice to perform multilevel analyses with individuals strictly nested in country-wave combinations, country-wave fixed regression coefficients, and country-waves cross-classified with countries and waves.

Models testing generational differences are an exception to this rule. Such models require a specification that permits disentangling socialization or cohort effects from the potentially confounding influences of age and period. A rich literature collected under the umbrella term age-period-cohort analysis resolves this issue by imposing informed constraints on the specification of these variables to reduce the correlation between them. We use a method proposed by Kritzer (1983), which deals with this problem by constraining age effects to be linear and period effects to be fixed.

To facilitate a substantive reading of the results, we report boot-

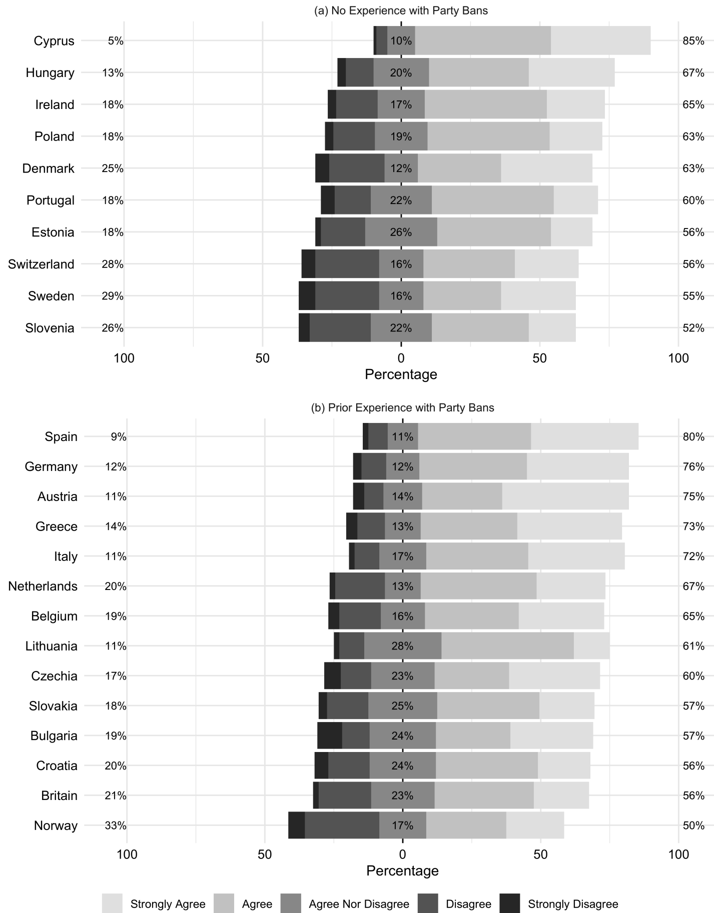
strapped confidence intervals (CI). This procedure creates an artificial sampling distribution comprised of random samples with replacement drawn from the original sample. The lower and upper bounds of these intervals denote the lowest and highest plausible values of the parameter. Rather than relying on the crude practice of interpreting p-values, we consider a hypothesis fully supported when both the upper and lower bound align with our expectations.

Results

Mapping public support for party bans in Europe

To what degree is the public divided over the use of party bans? Moreover, does this pattern mirror elite responses to political extremism? Figure 3.1 visualizes the distribution of support for party bans in countries where elites have implemented a ban before and in countries where this is not the case. Figure 3.1 demonstrates that in virtually every state, citizens supporting the implementation of party bans are in an overwhelming majority. Societal support ranges between 50% of support in Norway and 85% in Cyprus. This observation is surprising, given the severely repressive nature of this measure. The second-largest share consists of citizens without a clear opinion about party bans, which may be attributed to conflicting feelings on, or general unfamiliarity with, this topic.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of support for party bans by country. **Source:** ESS 2002–2010. **Notes:** Figure contains a summary of the responses to the question to what degree respondents agreed with the following statement: "Parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned."



Overall, the percentage of respondents against party bans is marginal, with 33% opposed in Norway and 5% in Cyprus. Besides, support for party bans does not seem to mirror elite responses to extremist parties. Support for party bans is high, irrespective of whether or not countries have banned a party in the past. This suggests that public opinion has not influenced elite responses, nor the other way around.

Explaining support for party bans

Before evaluating the country-level hypotheses, we first ask how much variation there is in support for party bans between countries. An inspection of the intra-class correlation of an intercept-only model reveals that only 3.87% is located at the country-level while the remaining 96.13% of the variation can be ascribed to individual characteristics. When it comes to evaluating country-level hypotheses, this finding means that – even when significant – the effects are admittedly marginal in terms of size. By contrast, the overwhelming share of individual-level variability is rather promising for our individual-level hypotheses.

Countries' resilience

Given the low amount of country-level variance, there is little reason to expect that country-characteristics substantially impact individuals' support for party bans. To be sure, we estimated a series of analyses with country-level predictors.

Figure 3.2: Explaining support for party bans using countries' resilience. **Source:** ESS 2002–2010. **Notes:** Entries are the result of a multilevel analysis with individuals exclusively nested in country-waves and country-waves cross-classified with countries and waves (N = *195,405*). CIs are calculated using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations (seed = 1).

Figure 3.2 displays the results. Model 1 evaluates whether support for party bans mirrors patterns of institutional tolerance. We expected that support would be higher in countries with high institutional intolerance (i.e., substantive democracies) than elsewhere (Hypothesis 1). Although the coefficient for legal tradition (*B* = 0.15; *SE* = 0.10; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.03,0.34]) flows in the expected direction, the analysis provides little statistical support for this expectation. Not only are the differences insignificant, but the upper bound of the CI also suggests that they are minor at best, with citizens in substantive democracies being at most 0.34 points (6.90% of the scale) more supportive than citizens in procedural democracies. In other words, there is little reason to believe that higher institutional commitment to excluding extremist voices results in higher societal commitment.

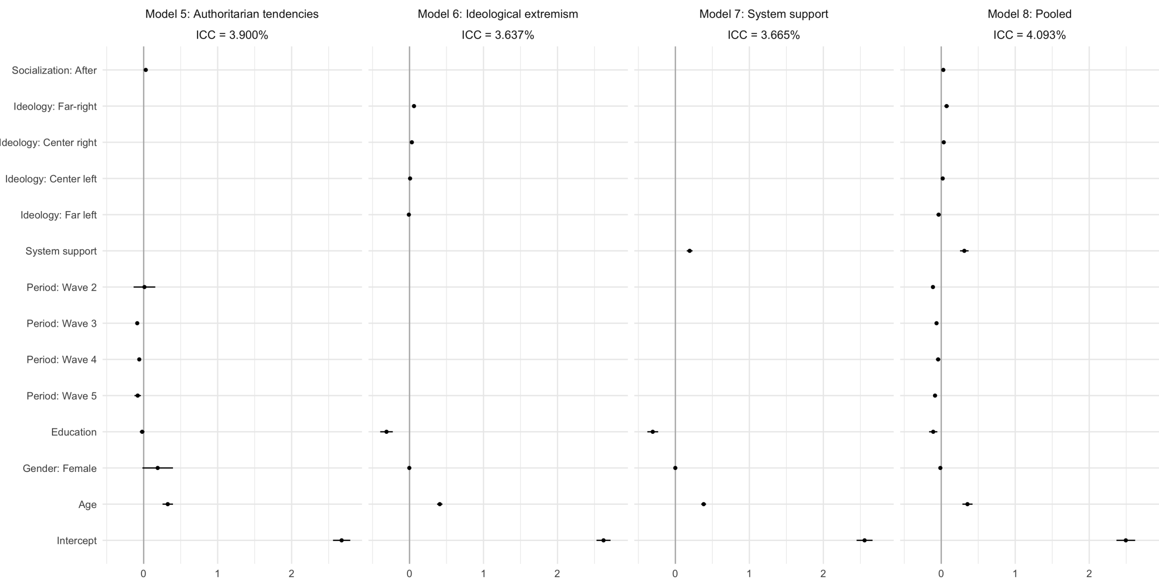
In Model 2, we investigate whether support is lower in new democracies with recent experiences with authoritarianism (Hypothesis 2a) and higher in established democracies with more distant experiences (Hypothesis 2b) than elsewhere. The coefficient linked to countries that transitioned in the 1990s (*B* = 0.00; *SE* = 0.09; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.18,0.18]) provides little support for Hypothesis 2a. The CI shows that the opposite claim, namely, that support is higher is equally plausible. Even more so, the low value of the upper bound suggests that even if there were a difference, it is minor at best (6.90% of the scale). We do find some support for Hypothesis 2b, with citizens in countries that transitioned in the 1940s (*B*

= 0.15; *SE* = 0.09; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.13,0.67]) being significantly more supportive than those in countries with a democratic legacy, with citizens in these countries being at most 13.48% more supportive. Although insignificant, a similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to countries that transitioned in the 1970s (*B* = 0.24; *SE* = 0.15; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.04,0.53]).

Model 3 evaluates whether support is higher in countries where extremist parties have a greater chance of breaking through the electoral threshold due to their high degree of proportionality (Hypothesis 3). Against this expectation, the coefficient for proportionality (*B* = –0.04; *SE* = 0.09; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.25,0.14]) provides more support for the opposite hypothesis, namely, that citizens in countries with lower levels of proportionality are more supportive. Even if we were to find a positive effect, the impact of proportionality is admittedly low, with the highest plausible difference being 0.14 points (2.88% of the scale). This shows that citizens' support for party bans is not steered by extremist parties' chances to gain electoral ground.

Overall, the analyses confirm the conclusion drawn before, namely, that support for party bans varies little – if at all – in function of countries' resilience against political extremism. Substantively, this implies that citizens in democracies where party bans are most needed do not perceive party bans as more or less legitimate than citizens elsewhere.

Figure 3.3: Explaining support for party bans using individuals' orientation toward democratic establishment. **Source:** ESS 2002–2010. **Notes:** Entries are the result of a multilevel analysis with individuals exclusively nested in country-waves and country-waves cross-classified with countries and waves (*N* = 195,405). Model 5 is the result of a regular multilevel analysis with observations nested in countries. CIs are calculated using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations (seed = 1).



Individuals' orientations toward democratic establishment

With 96.13% of the variance located at the lowest level, individual predictors may yield much more promising explanations. Figure 3.3 shows the results of the analyses. We begin this section with the estimation of an age-period-cohort (APC) analysis. This analysis allows us to evaluate whether citizens who grew up under authoritarian rule are less supportive of party bans than citizens who grew up thereafter (Hypothesis 4). The coefficient indicating citizens' socialization after authoritarian rule in Model 5 (*B* = 0.03; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.00,0.05]) provides support for this hypothesis. Citizens who grew up under authoritarian rule are significantly less supportive of party bans than citizens who grew up thereafter. However, this difference is relatively minor, with the highest plausible difference being 0.05 points (1.08% of the scale). Authoritarian tendencies, therefore, seem to matter, but only to a minimal extent.

Second, we expected that individuals with extreme ideological beliefs are less supportive of such measures (Hypothesis 5). Countering this expectation, Model 6 demonstrates that citizens with extreme beliefs are no less supportive of bans than their centrist counterparts. Instead, the coefficient linked to far-right beliefs (*B* = 0.06; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.04,0.09]) suggests that far-right citizens are slightly but significantly more supportive of party bans than centrist citizens. The coefficient linked to far-left ideological beliefs (*B* = –0,01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.04,0.02]) reveals

that far-leftist citizens are no less supportive than centrist citizens. Altogether, these observations imply a general relation between citizens' ideological beliefs and support for party bans, but not with ideological extremism. Citizens support party bans, irrespective of whether their preferred ideology is more likely to be targeted by one.

Finally, we theorized that citizens with low system support are less supportive of party bans (Hypothesis 6). Model 7 suggests that of all individual-level predictors, system support by far has the strongest effect. While still relatively minor in terms of size (*B* = 0.19; *SE* = 0.02; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.15,0.23]), the findings suggest that citizens with the highest levels of system support are 0.19 points (3.60% of the scale) more supportive than citizens with low levels of system support. This shows that citizens' confidence in institutions involved in the implementation of bans to some degree influences their support for party bans.

On the whole, there appears to be some support for the idea that individual orientations toward the democratic establishment affect support for party bans. More remarkable, however, is how little these attitudinal predictors explain. This observation implies that societal polarization over the use of party bans is very limited and that support is high even among segments of the population that are theoretically least supportive of such practices.

Discussion

Party bans are one of the most repressive instruments for curtailing extremist influences in democratic societies. They do so by undercutting the resources and legitimacy of these groups. Nevertheless, it has long been speculated that such exclusion measures may also be counterproductive as they might provoke societal resistance (e.g., Bleich, 2011; Downs, 2012). Although this argument has echoed in academic, elite, and media discussions, we know remarkably little about citizen attitudes to party bans. Analysis of citizen attitudes allowed us to reflect on (a) whether party bans enjoy the legitimacy of majority support and (b) whether the potential benefits outweigh potential costs in terms of societal resistance.

Despite the recurring concerns about a possible societal backlash, our study showed that party bans enjoy the legitimacy of majority support in every country. Contrary to our expectations, we found little evidence that countries' resilience against extremist influences matters. Citizens in countries with strong institutional tolerance, a recent experience with authoritarianism, and low electoral entry barriers are no less supportive than citizens elsewhere. In other words, support for party bans is high, even in countries prone to extremist influences. In line with our expectations, we found some support for the idea that citizens with negative orientations toward the democratic establishment are less supportive of party

bans. Our analyses revealed that citizens with authoritarian tendencies and low system support are less supportive. Even though significant, citizens' democratic orientations matter remarkably little.

Overall, these findings reveal that a crucial condition favoring the implementation of party bans is met everywhere in Europe. More specifically, our findings satisfy the requirement that when framed as a democratic threat, party bans will obtain sufficient popular support, despite the gravity of the measure (Bourne, 2018; Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde, 1998). Our findings that support for party bans is high in all countries and among all citizens suggest that this measure is less contentious than commonly assumed. Even citizens with negative attitudes toward democracy seem to be favorable to measures designed to protect it. Furthermore, these findings enable us to identify new conditions favoring the implementation of party bans. Our finding that citizens socialized under authoritarian rule are significantly less supportive suggests that long-term processes of democratization may alter levels of support for party bans. In the long-term, the small number of citizens opposed to this practice may decrease even further.

One limitation of this study is our focus on a single-item dependent variable. This measure falls short in three respects. First, the measure exclusively gauges support for banning anti-democratic parties. This type of party is rare and only has a limited electoral showing. Second, individuals' response to this question depends

on their conception of what overthrowing democracy entails. As such, this measure does not address some of the most important contemporary challenges to liberal democracy. These new challenges often take on the form of illiberal parties promoting or implementing democratic backsliding, where democratic institutions are weakened rather than overthrown. Finally, it is important to note that this item focuses on just one instrument of democratic defense. This makes generalizations to other widely employed instruments unwarranted. Future research is needed to examine the validity of our findings in relation to other instruments of militant democracy, although we are unaware of any other cross-national surveys examining such measures.

In addition to this methodological limitation, it is also important to stress the theoretical shortcomings and avenues for future research. Although our study provides novel and informative insights into the distribution of societal support for party bans, it remains exploratory. Future research would benefit from deepening the arguments and empirical tests presented here. Of particular importance is how democratic slippage affects support for party bans (Gibson, 2013; Lindner & Nosek, 2004). Do illiberal politicians responsible for this slippage deliberately erode support for these measures? Or do they exploit such instruments to eliminate their competition? Direct application of this concept to party bans is admittedly complex, given that bans' highly repressive nature blurs certainty about whether support is a measure protecting or un-

dermining civil liberties. Further research designed to uncover differences between moral support for party bans and political tolerance in specific instances could help address this point.

As many have observed, the developments in countries such as Hungary and Poland shows striking similarities with tactics of legal revolution. In these countries, politicians have democratically induced constitutional changes to weaken democratic institutions. The strong electoral support for radical politicians in these countries suggests sufficient ambiguity about their democratic credentials. Therefore, it is unclear whether citizens' support for banning extremist parties carries over to such cases. At the same time, the effects of democratic slippage and illiberal judicial reforms, over the long term, may undermine support for banning parties if they entail increasing sympathy for pro-authoritarian forms of managed democracy or a loss of support for democratic establishment. These are additional questions for further research.

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CHAPTER 4

MEDIA COVERAGE

Publication: de Leeuw, S.E., Azrout, R., Rekker, R., & van Spanje, J.H.P. (2020). After all this time? The impact of media and authoritarian history on political news coverage in twelve Western democracies. *Journal of Communication*, *70*(5), 744-767. doi: 10.1093/joc/jqaa029

ABSTRACT

Historical classifications of journalistic traditions are the backbone of comparative explanations for political news coverage. This study assesses the validity of the dominant media systems framework and proposes and tests a novel framework, which states that a history of authoritarianism affects today's coverage. To facilitate a clean cross-national comparison, we focus on the same person and measurement in 12 Western democracies, that is, the use of the pejorative terms "sexist," "racist," "dictator," and equivalents to describe Donald Trump. Our manually validated automated content analysis (2016-2018; N = 27,830) shows that content varies along with countries' media and authoritarian history: pejoration is more common in countries with a polarized pluralist media system and former authoritarian countries than elsewhere. Newspapers' ideology does not matter, irrespective of countries' level of political parallelism or experiences with authoritarianism. Combined, we provide new methodological and theoretical handles to further comparative communication research in Western democracies.

Replication: The replication code and data are available in the following repository: https://github.com/sdleeuw2/Replication-Code-Media-History-Political-History-and-News-Coverage

4

Introduction

Why does news appear in different forms in different countries? In *Four Theories of the Press* (1956), Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm proposed that what we read in the paper today is the product of a historical interplay between the press, government, and society. This work would later inspire Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's (2004) seminal study *Comparing Media Systems*, which argued that the historical development of media systems shapes content features of coverage. Since then, Hallin and Mancini's classification has been the most prominent and virtually uncontested comparative framework (e.g., Benson, 2004; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008). However, discouraged by the lack of standardized measurements (Norris, 2009) and growing concerns over their relevance in times of global convergence (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Hallin & Mancini, 2012), various other important historical differences between countries have remained unexplored. In this study, we propose and demonstrate empirically that countries' experience with authoritarianism is an equally viable explanation for what we read in the papers today. In particular, we

contend that these experiences leave such deep-seated national traumas that they serve as recurring frames of interpretation in contemporary news coverage.

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of countries' media and authoritarian history. To this end, we develop a highly standardized design, which holds the topic and measurement constant across all countries under investigation. We do so by focusing on the use of pejorative terms that are known to provoke a sense of disgust in all established democracies, such as "sexist," "racist," "dictator," and equivalents in news coverage of one single person. Following Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work, we argue that in countries where journalistic standards promote a detached style of writing, journalists are more likely to avoid these terms than elsewhere. Furthermore, we develop a novel theory, which is based on insights from political science literature on authoritarian legacies (e.g., Art, 2005; Costa Pinto, 2010; Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2017). Building on these insights, we argue that journalists are more likely to produce pejorative content when the object of coverage is associated with historical examples of authoritarianism.

Given its comparative angle, this study speaks to several long-standing debates in communication science. Theoretically, our study adds a novel classification to an area with a relatively limited number of theoretical contributions (Norris, 2009). In doing so, we also demonstrate the theoretical fertility of explanations focus-

ing on countries' political culture (see Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Empirically, this study provides a more comprehensive validation of Hallin and Mancini's classification than earlier efforts. Specifically, we expand the scope from 6 (at most) prototypical examples of each media system (see Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008) to 12 countries. This enables us to test the viability of this classification beyond prototypical cases.

Methodologically, we address three problems typically associated with comparative analysis of media coverage. That is, our focus on coverage of a single person who (a) has attracted extensive media attention in many countries, (b) has been frequently labeled with pejorative terms, and (c) has been recurrently compared to historical and contemporary authoritarian figureheads, enables us to achieve higher levels of sample, measurement, and instrument equivalence than prior research. Currently, US President Donald Trump is the only case that satisfies these criteria. We use the frequent pejoration of Trump to our advantage to conduct a systematic, manually validated automated content analysis of 27,830 articles in 35 newspapers in 12 Western democracies (2016–2018).

Theory and Hypotheses

Journalistic neutrality and news content

In producing news content, media practitioners must choose between two opposing roles (Cohen, 1963). They may assume an active role aimed at influencing the public through providing interpretation, commentary, and criticism. Alternatively, they may consider a neutral role, aimed at informing the public by providing impartial and objective coverage. Although both roles have their merits, the weight of evidence is that media practitioners everywhere pledge allegiance to the neutral role (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Tuchman, 1978; Weaver, 1998). However, they may still move toward a more active role when they feel pressured to do so. To what degree this is the case may be the result of various internal and external pressures resulting from journalists' personal beliefs, media routines, organizational characteristics, extra-media influences, or societal influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

In the following paragraphs, we argue that countries' media and authoritarian history establishes pressures to adhere to or abandon this coveted standard of neutrality. Although the standard of neutrality influences various features of news coverage – such as the use of frames, reporting styles, and the promotion of political agendas – we focus on the use of the pejorative terms "sexist," "racist," "dictator," and equivalents. Even when justified, such words are deeply discrediting and imply that an actor's behavior is beyond

the pale. Therefore, the use of these terms arguably requires a conscious decision on the part of the journalist.

Explaining cross-national differences in coverage

Media history

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) book *Comparing Media Systems* articulates the prevailing comparative explanation of media coverage. Among other things, these scholars argue that countries' media history shapes news content. One tangible outcome of countries' media history is the promotion of a detached style of writing. We can trace this writing style back to two historical developments: the professionalization of the press and the amount of state intervention in its development.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, the press was primarily left to market forces and retained independence from the state (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Journalism became a profession with its own educational, organizational, and normative structure, all emphasizing the distinction between news and opinion (Schiller, 1981). This development resulted in a "liberal" media system and a detached, information-oriented style of journalism. Although the press in continental Western Europe also professionalized, the press did retain strong ties to the state and politics. These developments resulted in "democratic corporatist" media systems, in which the emphasis on neutrality was weakened in relation to political advocacy and dedication to the public interest. The the press in Southern

Europe, by contrast, followed a different historical trajectory. Here, the strong dependence on parties and the contributions of skilled writers and politicians resulted in the development of "polarized pluralist" media systems.

It is plausible that countries' media system affects the use of pejoration in news content. In liberal systems, media experience a strong societal pressure to act as a neutral observer. The weak ties to the state and politics furthermore limit the influence of external actors. Their high levels of professionalism may also establish intra-media pressures to provide neutral coverage, for example, resulting from a code of ethics or journalists' self-conception as detached observers (Kepplinger & Köcher, 1990). Pejoration is, therefore, likely to be avoided or to be edited out afterward. In democratic corporatist systems, the neutral role coexists with an active role. Governments, the public, and journalists themselves may expect the media to abandon the standard of neutrality to defend the public interest. The motivation to use pejoration is, therefore, mixed. In polarized pluralist systems, the pressure to assume an active role arguably outweighs the pressure to remain neutral. Society, political parties, and journalists may agree that the media must provide commentary and abandon the standard of neutrality when it is deemed appropriate. The production and publication of pejorative content are thus less objectionable in countries with a polarized pluralist system than elsewhere.

Various studies show that role conceptions of journalists as de-

tached observers are most common in countries with a liberal media system and least common in countries with a polarized pluralist system (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Köcher, 1986; Van Dalen, Albæk & De Vreese, 2011). Studies drawing on comparisons of news coverage furthermore demonstrate that countries' media system affects the prevailing style of journalism. These studies show that opinionated reporting styles (Esser & Umbricht, 2013), critical news content (Benson, 2010; Benson & Hallin, 2007), and interpretative styles (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006) are most common in prototypical examples of polarized pluralist systems and least common in examples of liberal systems. Tied back to pejoration, we expect that:

> *Hypothesis 1a:* Pejoration varies across media systems and is most common in polarized pluralist systems and least common in liberal systems.

Countries' media history may also influence the role of newspapers' ideology in the production of news content. The concept "party-press parallelism" was first coined by Seymour-Ure (1974) to describe the close alignment of parties and press in Britain. Hallin and Mancini (2004) later use the concept "political parallelism" to describe the general bonds between press and ideologies. Parallelism is strongest when newspapers defend only one political–ideological current and weakest when they are fully impartial. Strong parallelism is typically found in Southern Europe,

medium levels in continental Western Europe, and weak parallelism in most Anglo-Saxon countries.

Parallelism influences news coverage because it determines how newspapers respond to ideas of other ideological currents. When parallelism is weak, newspapers provide balanced access to different opinions. When parallelism is strong, newspapers only voice their ideology. Ideological diversity can only be achieved insofar different papers offer different views (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Parallelism may produce additional pressures to use or refrain from using pejoration. For instance, parallelism implies a firm hold of political parties on the media, which encourages the production of partisan content. It also translates to internal pressures to produce partisan content because poorly paid jobs in journalism serve as a springboard to a career in politics (Ortiz, 1995), and because it promotes journalists' self-conceptions as political advocates (Hallin, 1986). Therefore, it is plausible that newspapers' ideology matters more in countries with high levels of parallelism than elsewhere.

Although scholarship agrees that parallelism affects role conceptions of journalists as political advocates (e.g., Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Van Dalen *et al.*, 2012), evidence that this spills over to news content is mixed (Benson & Hallin, 2007; Tandoc *et al.*, 2013; Van Dalen *et al.*, 2012). Despite this mixed evidence, it is likely that the higher the level of parallelism, the more newspapers' ideology matters. If this is true, the difference in the prevalence of pejoration between, for instance, the Canadian *Toronto Star*

(left) and the *National Post* (right)—published in a country with low levels of parallelism—is less pronounced than that between the French papers *Le Monde* (left) and *Le Figaro* (right). We, therefore, expect that:

> *Hypothesis 1b:* The higher countries' level of political parallelism, the more pronounced the difference in pejoration between left- and right-leaning newspapers.

Authoritarian history

Countries' authoritarian history may also contribute to what degree journalists believe it is acceptable to use pejoration. Within the context of Western democracies, historical experiences with right-authoritarianism are arguably especially important determinants of media content. That is, in the interwar period, fascism was the leading ideology in Austria, Germany, and Italy. Later in the century, right-authoritarianism retained its significance in the form of military dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. These regimes were notorious for the intensity of their well-publicized physical repression, surveillance, and propaganda (Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2017), thereby leaving deep-seated collective traumas.

It is commonly acknowledged that historical experiences with right-authoritarianism have resulted in strong pressures to create a rupture with the past. Institutional pressures include constitutional provisions permitting the criminalization and prosecution of parties and leaders of the past regime (Bourne, 2018; Costa Pinto, 2010;

Morlino, 2010). Societal pressures are even further reaching and extend to anyone who might be associated with the past regime. Even the slightest similarity with the authoritarian predecessor may be used as an excuse to recall the traumatizing records of the past. As a result, the past is frequently recalled in elite and public debate to discredit opinions, persons, and parties (Encarnación, 2004; Morlino, 2010).

It is plausible that the authoritarian past also creates pressures to produce pejorative news content. Good examples of institutional pressures are the Italian and Portuguese constitutional charters, which were designed to counter all remnants of the past regime (Costa Pinto, 2010; Morlino, 2010). Evidence for societal pressures can be found in Spain, where for years, the mainstream right was deeply mistrusted due to its perceived association with the Franco regime (Encarnación, 2004; Morlino, 2010). The attempts of the Portuguese center–right party *Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular* (CDS-PP) to accuse the left of authoritarian politics furthermore shows that everyone can be targeted (Santana-Pereira, Raimundo & Costa Pinto, 2016). The need to produce content that resonates well with the public (Snow & Benford, 1988) and journalists' self-conceptions as defenders of democracy may furthermore constitute important internal pressures to target potential threats to democracy.

Empirically, this assertion can be loosely substantiated by arguments made in other studies in the field of communication science.

First, some studies have argued that past experiences with authoritarianism have resulted in an emphasis on the promotion and defense of democratic values in news media (Gunther, Montero, & Wert, 2000; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Van Dalen *et al.*, 2012). In keeping with this argument, Köcher (1986) shows that journalists in former authoritarian Germany are almost twice as likely to agree that it is their task to oppose anti-democratic parties as their British counterparts. Thus, we expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2a:* Pejoration is more common in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere.

Authoritarian legacies may also mitigate the importance of newspapers' ideology, irrespective of countries' level of parallelism. From literature on party politics, we know that the institutional and societal pressures discussed before are especially strong for parties with a higher risk of being associated with the past (Art, 2005; Van Spanje, 2018). A similar argument can be made for outlets with a more similar ideological leaning as the authoritarian predecessor. These outlets may be aware of the negative impact non-pejorative content of controversial figures may have on their public image. Even on a subconscious level, journalists may feel inclined to discredit controversial figures, because they grew up in a context where it was common to do so as well. In former right-authoritarian countries, left-leaning newspapers, therefore, have an ideological motivation to discredit anyone associated with the past regime, whereas right-leaning papers have a pragmatic

reason.

Literature on party politics and transitional justice corroborates that discrediting the authoritarian past transcends the division between left and right. The German center-right party *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU), for example, has made considerable efforts to disassociate itself from the Nazi past (Art, 2005; Van Spanje, 2018). Likewise, the Portuguese CDS-PP still excludes anyone who is associated with the *Estado Novo* regime (Costa Pinto, 2010). If the same applies to newspapers, it is plausible that ideology matters less in former right- authoritarian countries, because both right- and left-leaning outlets have an interest in discrediting anyone associated with the past regime. The empirical implication is that the difference in the prevalence of pejorative coverage between *Die Tageszeitung* (left) and *Die Welt* (right) in former right-authoritarian Germany should be less pronounced than that between *De Volkskrant* (left) and *Algemeen Dagblad* (right) in the Netherlands. In short, we expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2b:* The difference in the prevalence of pejorative coverage between left- and right-leaning newspapers is less pronounced in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere.

Data and Methods

Case selection: Donald Trump

Our case selection is based on theoretical and methodological motivations. Theoretically, the aim of this study is admittedly challenging. Not only do we wish to validate a framework that has passed various empirical tests already, but we also propose a novel framework that is yet to pass its first test. For both purposes, a least-likely case selection is desirable. In a least-likely case, all dimensions of a case predict that an outcome will not occur, but "if the theory turns out to be correct regardless, the theory will have passed a difficult test, and we will have reason to support it with greater confidence" (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p.209). As many have pointed out, a least-likely case study is especially valuable at the stage that candidate theories, like ours, are being tested. It also permits us to evaluate whether established theories, like Hallin and Mancini's, are capable of passing a more rigorous test. As the only foreign politician receiving extensive media attention in all countries under investigation, US President Donald Trump presents a unique least-likely case to study cross-national differences in coverage. That is, diffusion theory predicts that news media in different countries should behave in a very similar manner covering foreign news. The reason for this is that media often draw information from the same sources for such news, such as international news agencies. This is in stark contrast with coverage

of domestic politicians, which constitutes the majority of political news and for which newspapers collect their own information. It is therefore plausible that if we find evidence for cross-national differences in coverage of Trump – and our explanations for these differences – cross-national differences in political news coverage at large are much more pronounced.

Aside from its theoretical advantages, a focus on Trump also helps us resolve three problems resulting from the limited comparability of media data across countries. In survey research, these problems are qualified as sample, measurement, and instrument inequivalence. First, focusing on a single person enables us to hold the characteristics of the object of coverage constant across countries, thereby improving the sample equivalence of our data. Second, the repeated pejoration of Trump as "sexist," "racist," "dictator," and equivalents permits us to employ a measurement that is understood in the same way in all countries under investigation. This allows us to achieve higher levels of measurement equivalence. Finally, a focus on Trump offers an opportunity to achieve higher levels of instrument equivalence by paying special attention to comparisons with notoriously despised authoritarian figure-heads. By doing so, we minimize the bias introduced by the use of different coders and dictionaries across countries.

Data

Several criteria guided the data collection. First, the selection was constrained by the online availability of news sources in the

databases Nexis Uni and Go Press Academic. We selected countries in such a way to facilitate considerable variation in countries' media and political history. Within these countries, we selected all available national quality newspapers, as to ensure that we compare the same type of newspapers in all countries.[1] We then retrieved all available coverage mentioning Trump between 1 January 2016, and 31 December 2018. Finally, we ensured that we study a time frame in which news coverage was available in all countries by narrowing down our selection to articles published after the date of the announcement of Trump's candidacy on 16 June 2016. This procedure resulted in 27,830 articles in 35 newspapers in 12 countries.

Dependent variable: Pejoration

The dependent variable of this study is the pejoration of Trump. To detect the presence of pejoration, we first conducted a systematic automated content analysis, based on an extensive dictionary of pejorative terms. This dictionary was translated by native speakers to seven languages, covering the 12 countries under investigation. Words were considered pejorative if they implied a comparison or association with political currents generally considered beyond the pale. This broadly includes (a) antidemocratic currents (e.g.,

[1] In our data collection, we made two decisions to ensure that the newspapers and their articles would be comparable across countries. First, we excluded tabloids because tabloids are virtually inexistent in Southern European countries. Second, we opted to include both regular and opinion pieces, because it is impossible to distinguish between these two types of coverage in Southern European newspapers.

"authoritarian" and "dictator"), (b) illiberal beliefs that deny the equality between citizens (e.g., "sexist" and "racist"), (c) historical examples of authoritarianism (e.g., "fascism" and "Benito Mussolini"), and (d) contemporary examples (e.g., "Neo-Nazism" and "Vladimir Putin"). The automated content analysis returned 16,991 hits spread across the 27,830 articles in our dataset.

To redress the chances of articles being incorrectly coded as positive, we asked our coders to validate each hit. We did so by presenting them with short text fragments (snippets) in which the captured term and Trump's name were capitalized. Our coders were asked to evaluate whether the capitalized term was indeed pejorative, as to identify incorrectly captured words. In Italian articles, for example, the search string "nazi" incorrectly returned the word "nazionale" (national). We then asked whether the term was linked to Trump through a label, a comparison, or a general association. In this phase, texts such as "Trump meets with authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un" were recoded as negative. Finally, we asked all coders to code the same subset of English snippets (N = 320), which confirmed that coders worked according to the same criteria (Krippendorff's α = 0.75).[2] Ultimately, these endeavors resulted in

[2] Approximately half of this dataset consisted of snippets that the authors of this article considered false positives. Since non-English coders do not have a perfect command of the English language, Krippendorff's α may be underestimated. We also used this dataset to assess the direction of a possible systematic bias introduced by the coders. A post hoc test based on a generalized analysis of variance revealed that the differences in the propensity to identify false positives between all coders were insignificant, apart from the Spanish and German coders. The Spanish and German coders were 3

a dependent variable where 1 indicated that an article contained pejorative language in relation to Donald Trump and 0 that it did not.

Independent variables

Drawing on the classification proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), we distinguish between countries with (a) liberal, (b) democratic corporatist, and (c) polarized pluralist media systems. Building on the same work, we furthermore differentiate between countries with (a) low, (b) medium, and (c) high levels of political parallelism. To investigate the influence of countries' authoritarian history, we classify countries according to their prior experiences with right-authoritarianism. On the level of the news outlet, we identified newspapers as (a) left-leaning, (b) centrist, or (c) right-leaning. Finally, we control for the length of the article, because pejorative coverage is more likely to occur in longer articles and because the average length of an article may vary between countries. All country and newspaper characteristics are summarized in Table 4.1.

percentage points less likely to identify false positives. This means that the main effect of countries' media system (Model 1a, Table 4.2) might be slightly overestimated, whereas the main ef- fect of countries' authoritarian legacy (Model 2a, Table 4.2) might be slightly underestimated.

Table 4.1: Country and newspaper characteristics

	Media System	Parallelism	Legacy	Newspaper	Leaning	N
Austria	Corporatist	Medium	Yes	Der Standard	Left	277
				Die Presse	Right	336
Belgium	Corporatist	Medium	No	De Morgen	Left	754
				De Standaard	Right	580
Britain	Liberal	High	No	Daily Telegraph	Right	171
				The Independent	Center	2,610
				The Guardian	Left	2,984
				The Times	Right	591
Canada	Liberal	Low	No	National Post	Right	1,344
				The Globe and Mail	Right	1,763
				Toronto Star	Left	2,243
Denmark	Corporatist	Medium	No	Politiken	Left	1,003
France	Polarized	High	No	Le Figaro	Right	830
				Le Monde	Left	852
				Le Parisien	Left	227
				L'Humanite	Left	199
				Libération	Left	142

	Media System	Parallelism	Legacy	Newspaper	Leaning	*N*
Germany	Corporatist	Medium	Yes	Die Tageszeitung	Left	1,053
				Die Welt	Right	1,433
				Frankfurter Rundschau	Left	433
Ireland	Liberal	Low	No	Irish Examiner	Center	52
				Irish Independent	Center	1,356
				The Irish Times	Center	1,408
Italy	Polarized	High	Yes	Corriere della Sera	Right	1,077
				La Stampa	Left	913
Netherlands	Medium	Medium	No	Algemeen Dagblad	Right	228
				De Volkskrant	Left	989
				NRC Handelsblad	Center	1,042
				Telegraaf	Right	687
				Trouw	Center	734
Spain	Polarized	High	Yes	ABC	Right	117
				El Pais	Left	1,132
				El Mundo	Right	545
Switzerland	Corporatist	Medium	No	Le Temps	Right	142
				Tages Anzeiger	Left	521

Analysis strategy: Bayesian multilevel logistic regression

Since countries are the main unit of analysis, the prime statistical challenge is producing an adequate estimation of country-level effects. In the empirical part of this study, we have made two methodological choices to address this challenge. First, we employ multilevel analysis techniques, with articles (Level 1) nested in outlets (Level 2) and countries (Level 3). These techniques take into account the variance explained by the clustering of observations within outlets and countries. In addition, these techniques are commendable for their ability to estimate interactions between different levels of clustering or cross-level interactions by allowing the slope of an effect at a lower level of clustering (in our case newspapers' ideology) to vary across countries. Given that centrist newspapers were not available in all groups under investigation, we did not include centrist newspapers in analyses estimating these interactions.

Second, we address difficulties arising from the fact that we are dealing with a small number of countries (N = 12) spread across two or three groups. Using frequentist multilevel approaches would be problematic because when the number of countries is small, the estimation of variance components, point estimates and confidence intervals tend to be biased with up to as much as 20% (Stegmueller, 2013). Overall, these techniques would substantially increase the chances of making a Type I error. In such cases, various studies have recommended the use of Bayesian analy-

sis techniques (Baldwin & Fellingham, 2013; Stegmueller, 2013), which have shown to produce unbiased estimates with as little as three clusters. They do so by estimating a series of parameters and creating a density distribution (or posterior distribution) of all credible parameter values. More specifically, for each iteration, it evaluates how well the estimate fits the data. These estimations are then combined in a posterior distribution, which can be summarized using the following equation:

$$P(Y) \sim N(\beta^T X, \sigma^{2I}) \tag{4.1}$$

As equation 4.1 shows, a posterior distribution is an approximately normal density distribution *N* of all estimated values of an unknown parameter β, with a measure of variance σ^2.[3] In addition to avoiding crude measures such as significance tests (see Levine *et al.*, 2008), Bayesian hypothesis testing allows for an intuitive interpretation and is merely a way of expressing the credibility of a hypothesis, given the data. The credibility is calculated as the share of the posterior distribution that supports the hypothesis. For instance, if a hypothesis predicts that a particular effect is negative, the empirical support for this hypothesis equals the percentage of the distribution that falls below the value zero on the x-axis. To allow for a substantive reading of the results, we report a credible interval (CI) containing the 90% parameter estimates that are best

[3] In this equation, *T* denotes a transposed data matrix and *I* the inverted matrix.

supported by the data. We use the point estimates to calculate the predicted percentages, using the following equation:

$$\frac{e^{\alpha+\Sigma\beta X}}{1+e^{\alpha+\Sigma\beta X}} \times 100 \tag{4.2}$$

where α represents the intercept of the analysis and $\Sigma\beta X$ the sum of the coefficients of the relevant predictors.

Results

Mapping Cross-National Differences

Figure 4.1 shows the amount of pejorative coverage as a percentage of the total coverage of Trump in each country, with darker colors indicating a higher percentage. This figure shows that pejorative coverage is common, ranging between 18.26% of total coverage in the Netherlands and 47.01% in Spain. Cross-national differences seem to reflect a clear geographic divide, with pejoration being more common in Southern Europe than elsewhere. However, this distinction does not capture all variation. For instance, despite the geographic proximity of the Netherlands and Germany, only 18.26% of Dutch news coverage contains pejoration, whereas in Germany, this equals 34.12%.

Figure 4.1: Comparing pejorative coverage in news media

Explaining Cross-National Differences

Media history

The first explanation for these cross-national differences held that the use of pejoration varied across media systems (Hypothesis 1a). The main effect of countries' media system (Table 4.2, Model 1a) evaluates whether this is the case. The negative value of the dummy for democratic corporatism (*B* = –0.17; *MCSE* = 0.05; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.23,–0.10]) tells us that pejoration is less common in countries with this system than in countries with a polarized pluralist system. This coefficient indicates that this difference equals 4.07 percentage points.

Table 4.2: Explaining pejoration using countries' media and political history. **Notes:** Entries are the result of Bayesian multilevel logistic regression analyses, with a Hamiltonian Monte Carlo Sampling Algorithm. Models are based on 2 chains with 5000 MCMC iterations and weakly informative normally distributed priors (seed = 934), with a 0.990 Target Average Acceptance Probability. The key terms of each model to which the partial R-Squared applies, are displayed in bold.

	MODEL 1A $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 1B $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 2A $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 2B $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]
System:				
Corporatist	**–0.17(0.05)**			
	[–0.23,–0.10]			
Liberal	**–0.18(0.06)**			
	[–0.25,–0.11]			
Parallelism:				
Medium		–0.02(0.09)		
		[–0.13,0.10]		
High		0.12(0.09)		
		[0.01,0.24]		
Par. × Leaning:				
Medium		**0.04(0.08)**		
		[–0.06,0.14]		
High		**0.02(0.08)**		
		[–0.08,0.12]		

	MODEL 1A $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 1B $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 2A $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]	MODEL 2B $\beta(MCSE)$ [90%CI]
Legacy: Yes			**0.11(0.06)**	0.11(0.06)
			[0.03,0.18]	[0.04,0.18]
Legacy × Leaning:				
Right				**–0.02(0.04)**
				[–0.07,0.03]
Ideology: Center	–0.02(0.03)	–	–0.02(0.03)	–
	[–0.05,0.02]	–	[–0.05,0.02]	–
Ideology: Right	0.00(0.02)	–0.03(0.07)	–0.00(0.02)	0.01(0.03)
	[–0.02,0.02]	[–0.12,0.06]	[–0.02,0.02]	[–0.03,0.04]
Length	1.86(0.05)	1.93(0.06)	1.86(0.05)	1.93(0.05)
	[1.80,1.92]	[1.86,2.00]	[1.80,1.92]	[1.87,2.00]
Intercept	0.31(0.04)	0.15(0.08)	0.15(0.04)	0.15(0.03)
	[0.25,0.36]	[0.04,0.25]	[0.10,0.19]	[0.10,0.19]
Pseudo R2: All	8.99%	9.40%	8.99%	9.39%
Key Terms	3.70%	0.01%	3.70%	0.09%
LOO-CV	38856.6	30291.5	38856.0	30291.1

Likewise, the dummy for liberal systems (*B* = –0.18; *MCSE* = 0.06; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.25,–0.11]) suggests that pejoration is 4.39 percentage points less common in countries with this system than in countries with a polarized pluralist system.

To assess the credibility of Hypothesis 1a, we conduct three tests on the posterior distributions of the coefficients for countries' media system (Figure 4.2a). To test whether pejoration is more common in polarized pluralist systems than elsewhere, we calculate the share of each of the two distributions falling below zero. This reveals 99% support for the expectation that pejoration is more common in polarized pluralist systems than in democratic corporatist systems and 99% support for the expectation that it is more common than in liberal systems. A final test calculates the credibility of the expectation that pejoration is more common in democratic corporatist systems than in liberal systems. This test provides only 60% empirical support for this expectation. Thus, we find considerable (but not full) support for Hypothesis 1a.

A second expectation was that higher levels of political parallelism would result in more pronounced differences between left- and right-leaning newspapers (Hypothesis 1b). We test this by estimating an interaction between countries' level of parallelism and newspapers' ideology (Model 1b, Table 4.2). The negative value of the main effect of ideology (*B* = –0.03; *MCSE* = 0.07; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.12,0.06]) predicts that pejoration is 0.64 percentage points less common in right- than in left-leaning newspapers in countries

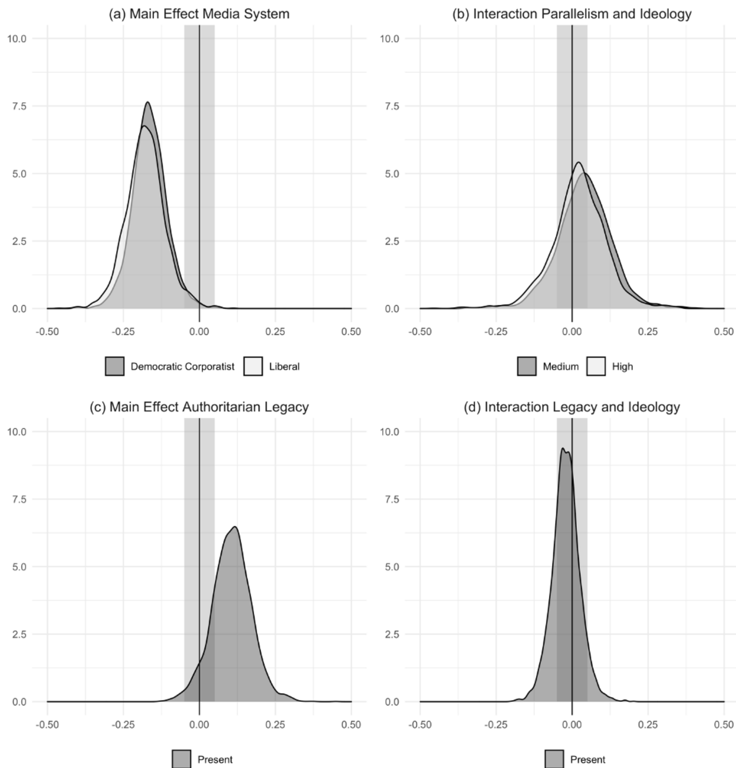
with low levels of parallelism. However, the low value of the interaction term for medium levels of parallelism (*B* = –0.02; *MCSE* = 0.09; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.13,–0.10]) and the near-zero value of that for interaction term for high levels (*B* = 0.12; *MCSE* = 0.09; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.01,0.24]) show that there is little reason to believe that this ideological difference is more pronounced in countries with higher levels of parallelism.[4]

Hypothesis tests based on the posterior distributions of the interaction terms (Figure 4.2b) confirm this preliminary conclusion. These tests reveal 70% support for the expectation that newspapers' ideology matters more in countries with high levels of parallelism than in countries with low levels and 62% support for the expectation that it matters more than in countries with medium levels. In addition, there is very little support (36%) for the expectation that these ideological differences are more pronounced in countries with high than in countries with medium levels of parallelism. The data, therefore, provide little to no support for Hypothesis 1b.

Altogether, these findings suggest that differences in news content can, to some extent, be attributed to countries' media history. The determination coefficient for Model 1a reveals that this model

[4] Descriptive analyses of our data (see Annex Figure 4.4) show that, even though there are no discernible differences between newspapers in accordance with their ideology, there are considerable differences in the use of pejoration between newspapers within countries. This observation suggests that these historical contextual factors provide an opportunity, a legitimate reason, for newspapers to use pejoration if they wish to do so, rather than encouraging all media practitioners to use such terms.

Figure 4.2: Posterior distributions media and political history effects. **Notes:** The grey area surrounding the y-axis depicts the area of negligible change, as suggested by Kruschke (2018). Figure 4.2a is based on Model 1a; Figure 4.2b on Model 1b; Figure 4.2c on Model 2a; and Figure 4.2d on Model 2b in Table 4.2.



explains 8.99% of the variance in our data, of which approximately 3.70% is accounted for by countries' media system. At the same time, the near-zero value of the partial determination coefficient for the interaction term between newspapers' ideology and coun-

tries' level of political parallelism (Model 1b) shows that countries' media history cannot account for differences in content between newspapers of different ideological leanings.

Political history

We furthermore argued that pejorative coverage would be more prevalent in former authoritarian countries (Hypothesis 2a). We test this by estimating a model with a dummy variable for countries' authoritarian history (Model 2a, Table 4.2). In keeping with Hypothesis 2a, the positive coefficient for countries' authoritarian legacy (*B* = 0.11; *MCSE* = 0.06; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.03,0.18]) shows that pejoration is around 2.62 percentage points more common in former authoritarian countries. A test based on the posterior distribution of this coefficient (Figure 4.2c) reveals that there is considerable support for Hypothesis 2a (95%).

Our final hypothesis was that past experiences with authoritarianism would mitigate the impact of newspapers' ideological leaning (Hypothesis 2b). We test this by estimating an interaction between newspapers' ideology and countries' authoritarian history (Table 4.2, Model 2b). The near-zero value of the main effect of newspapers' ideology (*B* = 0.01; *MCSE* = 0.06; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.03,0.04]) shows that in countries without a legacy of authoritarianism, pejoration is almost equally common in right- and left-leaning newspapers (the difference is less than 1 percentage point). Countering our hypothesis, the near-zero value of the interaction term between newspapers' ideology and countries' authoritarian legacy

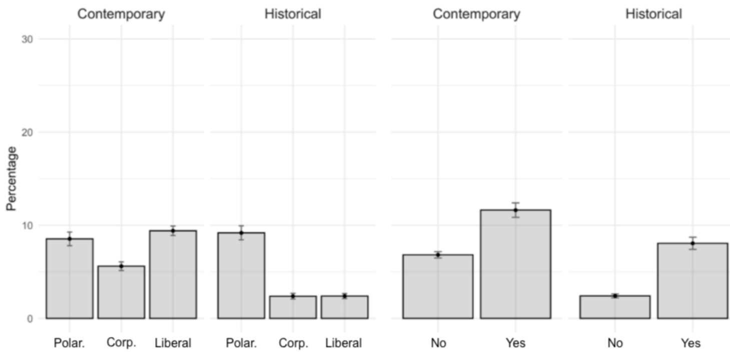
(B = –0.02; $MCSE$ = 0.04; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.07,0.03]) suggests that it is unlikely that this difference is more pronounced in former authoritarian countries. A hypothesis test based on the posterior distribution of this analysis (Figure 4.2d) confirms that there is indeed little empirical support for Hypothesis 2b (68%).

These analyses show that this novel way of classifying countries is able to pass a difficult test. What is more is that its predictive capacity is comparable to that of Hallin and Mancini's classification. That is, the partial determination coefficient for countries' authoritarian legacy presented in Model 2a, shows that 3.70% of the variance in the data is accounted for by countries' authoritarian legacy. This is only 0.01% less than the partial determination coefficient for countries' media history presented in Model 1a. In other words, this novel classification performs equally well as Hallin and Mancini's classification of media systems despite being considerably more parsimonious. At the same time, this explanation is equally incapable of accounting for differences between newspapers of different ideologies.

Robustness test

Our design already enables a high level of cross-national comparability. However, the use of different coders and dictionaries in different countries may be a source of instrument inequivalence. The reason for this is because there may be cultural, linguistic, and semantic differences across languages and coders. For instance, the number and type of adjectives used may very well be

Figure 4.3: Robustness test facilitating instrument equivalence. **Notes:** The vertical whiskers indicate a 95% credible interval around the predicted percentage.



culturally determined. Likewise, some languages have a much richer vocabulary than others, resulting in variation in terms of the length of our dictionaries. Finally, in terms of semantics, it can be debated whether words such as “authoritarian” or “bigot” are equally pejorative in all languages.

To ensure that our findings for countries’ media system and authoritarian history cannot be attributed to this possible lack of instrument equivalence, we conduct a test that focuses on two subtypes of pejoration, namely comparisons with historical and contemporary examples of authoritarianism.[5] These types of pejoration are less sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and semantic influences because (a) there is virtually no cross-national variation in the number of synonyms for names such as “Hitler” or “Putin”

[5] We also repeated the analyses across all other sub-types of pejoration. We summarized the results in Annex Figure 4.5.

and words such as “Nazism” and “fascism” and (b) they leave substantially less room for interpretation than other forms of pejorative coverage. Figure 4.3 visualizes the results of this robustness test.

The left panels of Figure 4.3 show that our findings for historical pejoration mirror the patterns of earlier findings, with pejoration being more common in polarized pluralist systems than elsewhere. Likewise, we find little to no difference between liberal and democratic corporatist systems. By contrast, our findings do not hold when focusing on contemporary pejoration, which is equally common in polarized pluralist systems as liberal systems. The right panels of Figure 4.3 show that our findings for countries’ authoritarian history do hold. Pejoration is systematically more common in countries with a legacy of authoritarianism than elsewhere, regardless of whether it concerns contemporary or historical pejoration. In short, Hypothesis 2a is robust to this particular test, whereas this is less so for Hypothesis 1a.

Discussion

In *Four Theories of the Press*, Siebert *et al.* (1956) first asked why news content appears in different forms in different countries. A few decades later, the landmark study of Hallin and Mancini (2004) would attempt to formulate an answer to this question, arguing that

cross-national differences should be attributed to the historical development of countries' media system. Validation of this framework, as well as the development of new ones, however, has remained a difficult theoretical and empirical task. In this study, we developed a least-likely and standardized test to investigate whether countries' media and authoritarian history affect content features of news coverage. This enabled us to demonstrate empirically that aside from countries' media history, historical experiences with authoritarianism influence what we read in the paper today. We found that pejorative coverage is more common in countries with polarized pluralist media systems and former right-authoritarian countries than elsewhere. At the same time, we found little evidence that newspapers' ideological leaning matters: Pejoration appeared to be equally common in left- and right-leaning newspapers, regardless of countries' level of political parallelism or past experiences with right-authoritarianism.

The findings of this study play well to at least three longstanding debates in communication science. Theoretically, we advanced a novel explanation for cross-national differences in news coverage. In particular, we argued that countries' traumatic historical experiences with right-authoritarianism would influence political news content. Our theoretical contribution is also relevant to the field of comparative communication at large. The form in which news content appears is different in every country and outlet. This characteristic makes studying macro-level determinants of news

content especially instructive. They sensitize us to the role systemic characteristics play in the production of news content in a way that single-country research cannot. This is where the broader contribution of this study lies: in revealing the theoretical fertility of what comparative scholars have identified as the main area of theoretical expansion, that is countries' political culture (see Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004).

Empirically, our study shows that the two historical classifications we discuss are able to pass an extremely difficult test. In light of this evidence, we can conclude that countries' history still accounts for cross-national variation in news coverage. This counters two recurring criticisms fielded against Hallin and Mancini (2004), namely, their inability to validate their conceptualizations empirically (see, e.g., Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Norris, 2009) and their inappropriateness in times of global convergence (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2012). Indeed, the finding that pejoration is equally common in liberal as in democratic corporatist systems is consistent with the argument that some media landscapes are converging toward the liberal model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2012). However, the sharp contrast we observed between these two groups of countries on the one hand and polarized pluralist systems, on the other hand, provide validation for (parts of) Hallin and Mancini's (2004) classification. We also showed that countries' authoritarian history, a framework based on insights from political science, may provide a more robust explanation

than this landmark classification. Even more so, this classification performs equally well in terms of explanatory power, despite being considerably more parsimonious.

Methodologically, this study addressed several recurring challenges resulting from a limited comparability of media data (Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004; Norris, 2009). Prior research has already taken significant steps forward by focusing on news coverage of comparable objects to increase the comparability of the data (see Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 1994), and using random sampling techniques to improve their representativeness (most notably Esser & Umbricht, 2013). Our study shows that a careful case selection may even further improve the comparability of analysis of news content. First, we improved the sample equivalence by focusing on a narrow topic to hold the object of coverage constant across countries. Second, our focus on a limited set of words with similar connotations in all countries enabled us to reach higher levels of measurement equivalence. Finally, acknowledging a possible bias introduced by a lack of instrument equivalence, we conducted robustness tests focusing on forms of pejoration that are virtually insensitive to cultural, linguistic, and semantic differences. Our efforts to take these considerations into account meet the growing demand for a methodological toolkit to permit systematic comparative analyses in communication science (Norris, 2009; Wirth & Kolb, 2004). Even more so, the dataset and content analyses compiled for this specific study can very well be utilized by future

scholarship interested in macro-level effects on news coverage.[6]

Notwithstanding these contributions, several limitations and avenues for future research have to be considered. Perhaps the most pressing theoretical limitation is the generalizability of our claims beyond the context of Western democracies. Like Hallin and Mancini's work, our novel framework is grounded in several implicit assumptions, including that the press is free and that historical experiences with authoritarianism have been sufficiently impactful to leave a collective trauma. Only if these assumptions are met in countries other than those included in this study, we can speak of a truly generalizable framework. If this is not the case, then the usefulness of our framework is limited to its classificatory function. This necessarily brings us to a second, empirical limitation. Although large for comparative communication standards, the number of countries we study does not suffice to add nuance to our empirical models. This is, for instance, reflected in our choice to classify countries into generic classes, such as "right-authoritarianism" or "polarized pluralist systems." In addition, this limited scope has made that we were unable to study the interaction between countries' media and authoritarian history. Yet, the hypothesis that the formation of media systems and countries' political history are intertwined in some countries has been around since the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy*

[6] The raw dataset will be published soon in the data repository *Harvard Dataverse*.

in America (1835).[7] Further expanding our database to more countries, more topics, and more diverse measurements may resolve these limitations.

Finally, our methodology also suffers from several limitations. First, it is important to acknowledge a possible constraint on the replicability of our findings. At this point, no politician other than Trump has received this much negative attention in this many countries. That said, it is conceivable that a similar opportunity will arise in the future, as several countries have elected a leader whose democratic credentials are widely doubted (e.g., Boris Johnson, Jair Bolsonaro, Viktor Orban) and about whom negative coverage is currently accumulating. A second methodological limitation is a direct consequence of our standardized design. By removing various sources of variation both between newspapers and between countries, the effects reported in this study are likely to be underestimated. This may very well explain our null findings for our hypotheses on ideological differences between newspapers. Third, our focus on a single case hinders us in our ability to say something about how much countries' history matters. News coverage on Trump may not be representative of other news coverage. This is especially consequential for our novel theoretical framework, for which this study presents the first and only test. For this frame-

[7] Tocqueville proposed that the emphasis on neutrality in American news media originated from the fact that the press depended on the public and advertisers for its income. In France, the press came emerged as a tool of absolutist rulers and, therefore, lacked neutrality.

work, our contribution mainly lies in demonstrating its theoretical and empirical viability, although the results presented in this study should be considered exploratory and preliminary. More research is necessary to assess its validity beyond this case. A final limitation arises from our decision to focus on a least-likely case. Our null findings for our tests of ideological differences suggest that a key assumption of a least-likely test is unfulfilled. That is, even a least-likely design rests on the assumption that the predicted outcome is possible (although improbable). Although it is theoretically possible to find ideological differences in coverage of Trump, there are two reasons to suspect that our design has crossed the fine line between improbability and impossibility. One reason is grounded in the fact that he is a foreign and notoriously unpopular politician. This may have rendered the role of newspapers' ideology completely irrelevant. Another reason is that our focus on a single case makes that we lack an adequate benchmark to observe an effect if there is one. For instance, right-leaning newspapers may be more likely to produce pejorative coverage in general but refrain from doing so when it concerns coverage of a right-wing politician. Such alternative explanations cannot be ruled out unless we add another case to the analysis.

In spite of these shortcomings, our study provides reassurance that historical comparative classifications perform well in explaining news coverage. We demonstrated that after all this time countries' history matters. Not only does this finding counter the most promi-

nent criticisms of comparative scholarship exploring legacy effects on media content, but it also serves as an encouragement to expand the scope of theoretical work in this field. In this respect, the theoretical and methodological novelties presented in this study may provide a useful handle to guide these future endeavors.

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Appendix

Figure 4.4: Pejoration by type and outlet. **Notes:** Figure shows the proportion of articles containing pejoration by type of pejoration and newspaper.

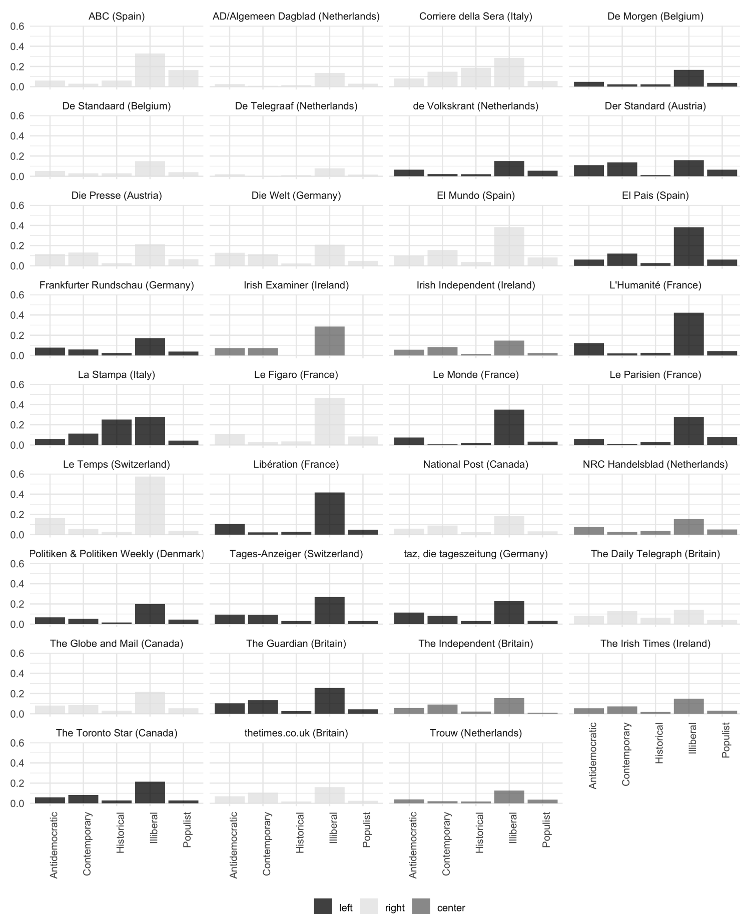
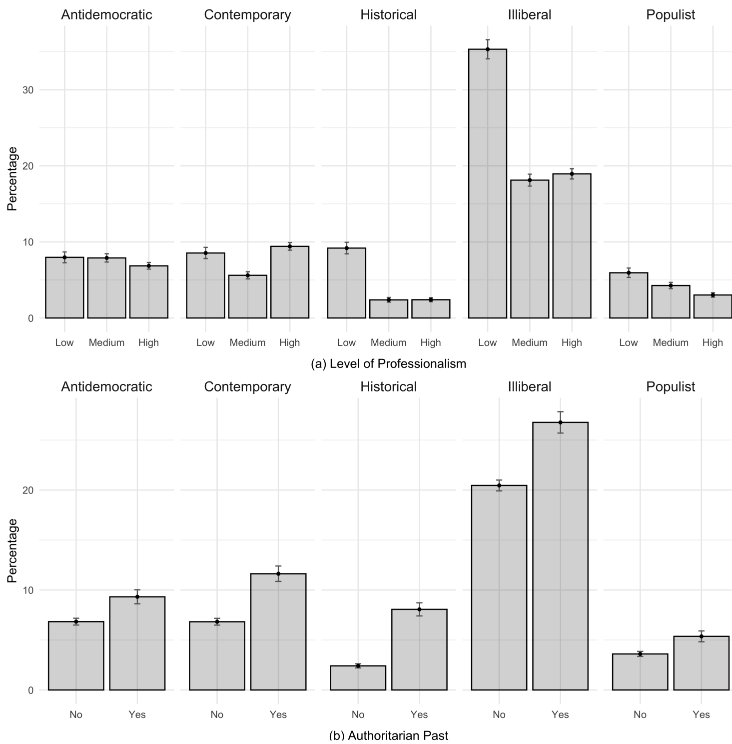


Figure 4.5: Robustness tests by type of pejoration. **Notes:** The vertical whiskers indicate a 95% credible interval around the predicted percentage.



CHAPTER 5

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

Citation: de Leeuw, S.E., Azrout, R., Rekker, R. & Van Spanje, J.H.P. (2020). *Mad Men: Non-hostile relations with autocracies and mass presidential job approval.*

ABSTRACT

Backing up autocracies has been a central pillar of US foreign policy for decades. This study asks whether and and why citizens punish or reward presidents for engaging with autocrats. We argue that citizens base their judgments on two competing values: self-enhancement values pertaining to goals such as catering to the nation's interests, and self-transcendence values such as democratic ideals. To this end, we compile a time-series dataset comprised of media, country, and presidential job approval data between 1947 and 2019 (N_t= 3,126). Our findings suggest that citizens do not invariably prioritize one set of values over the other. Overall, presidents receive rewards nor punishments for engaging with autocrats. Instead, we find that citizens form their judgments case by case. Citizens prioritize the nation's interests and reward presidents for engaging with important political allies. Likewise, citizens prioritize democratic ideals and punish presidents for engaging with highly repressive regimes. These findings strongly suggest that how presidents engage with autocrats reflects on their reputation at large.

Replication: The replication code and data are available in the following repository: https://github.com/sdleeuw2/Replication-Code-President-Dictator-Ties

5

Introduction

"Dictators love Trump, and he loves them" (Kristof, 2018). This is the headline of just one of the many journalistic pieces criticizing the United States (US) President Donald Trump for his perilous approach to autocrats. Since entering office, Trump has praised various autocrats, including Kim Jong Un (North Korea), Xi Jinping (China), and Abdel-Fattah el Sissi (Egypt). Although Trump's admiration for autocrats is unusual, backing up autocracies has been a central plank of US foreign policy for decades. Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized the 1954 coup d'état of Guatemalan military leader Carlos Castillo Armas. John F. Kennedy befriended the Congolese dictator Joseph Mobutu. Ronald Reagan allegedly contributed to perpetuating the military rule of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Although a common practice, we know remarkably little about how citizens respond to presidents' engagements with autocrats. Do citizens reward or punish presidents for engaging with autocracies and – if so – why? To answer these questions, we examine the

effects of the visibility of presidents' interactions with autocrats in news media on mass presidential job approval. We use Schwarz's (1992) *theory of basic values* to theorize the mechanisms behind these effects. We argue that, in forming their judgments, citizens face a conflict between two values. On the one hand, citizens may see these efforts as an opportunity for self-enhancement. That is, when treated well, autocracies may cater to the economic or political interests of the nation (Holmes & Yarhi-Milo, 2016; McManus, 2018). By extent, citizens may reward presidents for doing what is best for the nation. On the other hand, citizens may prioritize values of self-transcendence and reject efforts to engage with countries that deny their citizens democratic rights and freedoms. If this is the case, they may punish presidents for forsaking their moral imperative to defend democratic morale (Carter, 1982; Gray & Michalak, 1984; Harari, 2011; Kaufman & Kaufman, 1992).

In developing and testing these arguments, we enhance the literature in three ways. Theoretically, we propose a new model to explain variation in presidential support. Traditional models emphasize three factors: the inevitable erosion of popularity with time (Cronin, 1980; Mueller, 1973; MacKuen, 1983), contextual effects (Berlemann & Enkelmann, 2014; Chong, Halcoussis & Phillips, 2011; Kernell, 1978), and political drama (Brody & Page, 1975; Neustadt, 1980; Ostrom *et al.*, 2018). Thus far, scholarship has almost exclusively treated foreign affairs as a form of political

drama. The reason for this is that, for a long time, scholarship subscribed to the view of, e.g., Almond (1950) and Lippmann (1955) of foreign policy beliefs as shapeless and incoherent. This view dictates that, unless laden with political drama, citizens neither retain nor respond to information on foreign affairs. In recent years, scholarship has increasingly started to challenge this view. We now know that citizens' basic values structure foreign policy beliefs (Chittick *et al.*, 1995; Herrmann *et al.*, 1999; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987; Rathbun, 2007). However, a few exceptions aside, we still lack theories applying these insights to behavioral effects. This study presents an effort to fill this gap.

Our study is also empirically relevant for several reasons. First, our findings add to the accumulating evidence that the Almond-Lippmann view on foreign policy beliefs is untenable. Citizens care about and hold presidents accountable for foreign policy, despite their lack of knowledge on the subject. This observation reaffirms the argument that political scientists have a too pessimistic view of the mass public (Brutger & Kertzer, 2018). Second, the findings of this study uncover which values citizens prioritize under what conditions. By doing so, we demonstrate the empirical fertility of frameworks emphasizing the role of basic values in the formation of citizens' foreign policy beliefs. Finally, our findings reveal an important opportunity for presidents to build their popularity. That is, our results suggest that presidents may improve their reputation through carefully selecting with whom they engage. This observa-

tion is consequential because we know from prior research that presidents' popularity is a core ingredient of the administration's power and effectiveness (see, e.g., Edwards, 1980; Marra, Ostrom & Simon, 1990; Rivers & Rose, 1985; Rohde & Simon, 1985).

Methodologically, we introduce an analysis technique from the natural sciences to resolve a recurring issue in the study of presidential approval ratings. Starting in 1938, the Gallup organization has frequently commissioned polls gauging presidential approval. Since then, analyzing these data has been a central task of political scientists. Despite this longstanding tradition, scholars have struggled to deal with the fact that these measurements are unevenly spaced in time. Most studies deal with this problem by averaging approval on a monthly level. Yet, as Marra *et al.* (1990) point out, this practice introduces a myriad of problems: They dispose of valuable information, they artificially smooth approval ratings, and they introduce bias. This makes this practice especially unsuitable for studying effects caused by daily fluctuations in, for instance, news coverage. In this study, we use Generalized Additive Models with continuous-time autoregressive terms to address this problem. These methods enable us to treat each poll as a separate observation and adequately model the time between two subsequent observations.

Theory and Hypotheses

Presidential job approval

In 1938, the Gallup organization first commissioned a poll asking whether citizens approve or disapprove of the way [president name] is handling his job as president. From 1947 onwards, this question became a frequently recurring item of Gallup polls. Since then, analysis of presidential job approval has become a regular feature of national politics. As Crespi (1980) once noted, approval ratings created a pseudo-parliamentary situation, allowing citizens to cast a vote of confidence outside election periods. The weight that citizens and policymakers attach to approval ratings makes that they have a very real impact on American politics. When approval is high, citizens are more supportive of the President's party in other elections (Abramowitz & Segal, 1986), the administration is more effective (Edwards, 1980; Rivers & Rose, 1985; Rohde & Simon, 1985), and presidents themselves exert more authority. As such, presidential approval has become a core ingredient of presidential power.

Foreign affairs and presidential job approval

Traditionally, three models have been used to explain presidential approval. The first model emphasizes the reasons why support declines with the number of days in office. The second model focuses on the effect of contextual factors. Finally, the third model

underscores the role of political drama. In the past, scholarship has treated foreign affairs almost exclusively as a form of political drama. By extension, scholars in this field have mostly focused on analyzing highly sensationalized international events, such as wars, attacks, crises, or state visits (see, e.g., Bennett, 2014; Newman & Forcehimes, 2010; Simon & Ostrom, 1989; Ostrom *et al.*, 2018). Such events supply presidents an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities by taking action. Insofar they succeed in doing so; the public rewards them for such efforts.

By contrast, very few studies have studied the effects of foreign affairs on presidential approval beyond these dramatized events (exceptions include Brutger & Kertzer, 2018; Todhunter, 2013; Tomz, 2007). The reason for this is that citizens are uninterested in foreign affairs and, thus, tend to be ill-informed (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Holsti, 2004). Thus, for a long time, scholarship subscribed to the view of, e.g., Almond (1950) and Lippmann (1955) of foreign policy beliefs as shapeless and incoherent. Today, scholarship has largely abandoned the Almond-Lippmann view of foreign policy beliefs. Even though citizens remain ill-informed, we now know that their foreign policy beliefs have structure. The explanation for this is simple: Even in the absence of detailed information, citizens resort to personal values to form their judgments. Some scholars speak of "core values" (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987; Rathbun, 2007), some of "core dispositional values" (Herrmann *et al.*, 1999), and others of "value orientations" (Chittick *et al.*, 1995).

When these judgments are positive, citizens reward presidents. Inversely, when these judgments are negative, citizens punish presidents. We use this value-based perspective as a point of departure to theorize how citizens respond to presidents' engagements with autocracies.

Value-based responses to engagements with autocracies

Schwartz's theory of basic human values

Starting with Weber and Durkheim, social science research has long stressed the primacy of core values as a determinant of social behavior. The word 'value' refers to what individuals find important in life. Although values are personal and vary from one individual to another, they are driven by abstract human needs. Social psychologist Shalom Schwartz (1992) calls these needs 'basic human values.' In his work, he identifies ten abstract values, which he organizes along two bipolar dimensions. The first dimension ranges from openness to change to conservation. The second dimension ranges from self-transcendence to self-enhancement.

These values inform individuals' own opinions and attitudes. They also inform individuals' judgment of others. That is, citizens want others to abide by these values. This expectation is even stronger toward leaders for two reasons. First, citizens want their leaders to embody superhuman qualities (Weber, 1968). Second, citizens expect leaders to achieve desirable outcomes, which are defined by their values (Ciulla, 1995; Cwalina & Falkowski, 2016; Mondak,

1995a, 1995b). It follows that citizens judge their leaders by the degree to which they (are believed to) abide by the same values as they do themselves.

In recent years, IR scholars have theorized that citizens also rely on these basic values to form their foreign policy opinions, attitudes, and judgments (see Rathbun *et al.*, 2016). To do so, citizens need not rely on detailed and comprehensive information on the subject. They also need not be able to discern the possible outcomes of these actions. Instead, they may infer information about whether or not presidents abide by their values by looking at alongside whom presidents appear. Specifically, citizens may look at the characteristics of the countries in question to determine whether presidents abide by the values they prioritize. In what follows, we argue that values of self-enhancement and self-transcendence also guide citizens' responses to presidents' engagement with autocracies.

Engaging with autocrats and self-enhancement

The first possibility is that citizens use values of self-enhancement to judge presidents' engagements with autocrats. In his model, Schwartz identifies two basic self-enhancement values: achievement and power. Achievement refers to the acquisition of resources one needs to survive. Power to the control one exerts over others. Insofar they prioritize these values, citizens will judge presidents on utilitarian criteria. They will judge presidents for whether or

not they do what is best for the nation – and by extent for themselves.

Engaging with autocracies presents an important opportunity for self-enhancement. When treated well, autocracies may help the US achieve a myriad of goals (Holmes & Yarhi-Milo, 2016; McManus, 2018). Autocracies can be valuable political partners in the war against terrorism or in settling violent conflicts. They can also be valuable economic partners insofar they grant access to resources. Moreover, partnerships with autocracies may be preferable to those with democracies for two reasons. First, autocracies have access to valuable natural resources (e.g., oil, lithium, gold) that are more difficult to find elsewhere. Second, it is arguably easier to maximize the economic or political benefits in deals with autocracies than with democracies. That is, democratic governments and leaders are constrained by their citizens' wants and needs. As such, they take into account public opinion and public interests before making deals with other countries. This makes democracies notoriously slow and rigid in making agreements. By contrast, autocracies have little regard for their citizens' interests. They need not compromise and are, therefore, quicker to accept a deal than their democratic counterparts. For these reasons, citizens may reward presidents for engaging with autocracies.

There is an overwhelming amount of empirical evidence showing that self-enhancement values guide citizens' political behavior in domestic politics. Citizens reward presidents for catering to their

economic of cultural preferences. Evidence that these considerations spill over to citizens' orientations toward foreign affairs is scarce. However, one notable exception deserves some attention. Rathbun and colleagues (2016) demonstrate that citizens' foreign policy beliefs are partly rooted in self-enhancement values. Specifically, they show that citizens who prioritize self-enhancement values support militant internationalist policies less and cooperative internationalist policies more. To wit, no study has assessed whether the same considerations steer citizens' presidential evaluations.

Engaging with autocrats and self-transcendence

Citizens may also use values of self-transcendence to judge presidents' engagements with autocrats. Schwartz (1992) identifies two self-enhancement values: benevolence and universalism. Benevolence pertains to the well-being of members of the in-group. It is, therefore, of little importance when judging foreign policy. Universalism relates to the well-being of all human beings. Insofar they prioritize self-transcendence values, citizens will use moral criteria to form their judgments. By extension, they will expect presidents to pursue their role as the principal defender of democracy or – to use the Cold-War colloquialism – as the 'leader of the free world.'

Many believe that these self-transcendence values should also guide foreign policy (Carter, 1982; Gray & Michalak, 1984; Harari, 2011; Kaufman & Kaufman, 1992). This belief is arguably even

more common in the United States. For over 200 years, US constitutional law has emphasized the universality of human rights and the primacy of democratic rights. As Alexis de Tocqueville (1835, p.15) puts it, in America we seek "the image of democracy itself – its inclinations, character, prejudices, and passions." Autocracies break many of these values: They deny their citizens democratic rights, and, more often than not, their practices violate the idea of human dignity. With this in mind, it is clear that engaging with autocracies defies values of self-transcendence. When citizens prioritize these values, they should punish presidents for engaging with autocracies.

Once again, there is no empirical test of whether citizens punish presidents for engaging with autocrats. However, there is compelling empirical evidence for the core arguments we make here.[1] First, several studies show how much importance citizens attach to the morality and integrity of political leaders (Cwalina & Falkowski, 2016; Mondak, 1995a, 1995b). Second, the study of Rathbun *et al.* (2016) suggests that self-transcendence values also structure citizens' central foreign policy attitudes. Finally, a large body of scholarship indicates that these values also affect individuals' political behavior. Specifically, this strand of research shows that citizens tend to avoid currents that remind them of authoritarianism.

[1] Perhaps the most compelling anecdotal evidence that self-transcendence values matter are public reactions to the 1973 publication of Solzhenitsyn's work *The Gulag Archipelago*. This work uncovered the atrocities taking place in the Russian Gulags. These revelations drastically shifted public opinion about the Soviet regime in the democratic world.

In post-authoritarian countries, citizens tend to avoid ideological beliefs (Dinas, 2017; Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020) and parties (Encarnación, 2004; Morlino, 2010) that remind them of the past regime. Elsewhere, citizens punish politicians when the media compares them to authoritarian currents (see Van Heerden & Van der Brug, 2017; Van Spanje & Azrout, 2019).

Hypotheses

In his model, Schwartz (1992) suggests that self-transcendence and self-enhancement are conflicting values. When citizens encounter a value-conflict, they are forced to order values by their importance if they have not done so already. Citizens may use two types of criteria to determine which values they wish to prioritize in judging presidents' engagements with autocrats. First, they may use a generic rule and judge every engagement with autocrats, in the same way. If (most) citizens base this rule on self-enhancement values, we should find that the public rewards presidents for engaging with autocrats. Inversely, if (most) citizens base this rule on self-transcendence values, we should find that the public punishes presidents for these efforts. In either case, we can formulate the following expectation:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Citizens respond to presidents' engagements with autocrats, either positively or negatively.

Alternatively, citizens may change the order of their values depending on the context. Specifically, citizens may use the information

they have to determine which values they should prioritize. They may prioritize values of self-enhancement when there is a high potential for political or economic gain. If this is the case, we may expect that:

> *Hypothesis 2:* Citizens reward presidents more for engaging with autocracies with which the US has strong (a) political or (b) economic ties.

We can make a similar argument for self-transcendence values. The weight citizens may attach to these values may increase when presidents engage with autocracies with morally objectionable practices. If this is the case, we should find that:

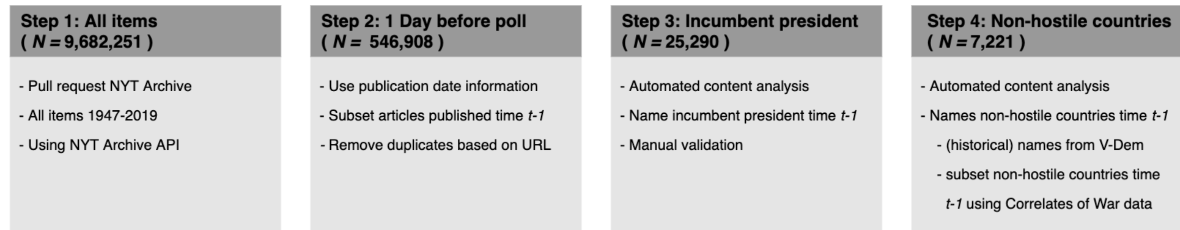
> *Hypothesis 3:* Citizens punish presidents more for engaging with highly (a) anti-electoral or (b) repressive autocracies.

Data and Methods

Data and variables

To test our hypotheses, we compile a large time-series dataset with observations between 1947 and 2019. Each observation in this dataset corresponds to the starting date of a Gallup public opinion poll measuring presidential job approval (N_t = 3,126).

Figure 5.1: Summary content analysis procedure. **Notes:** The complete procedure is visualized in Annex Figure 5.5.



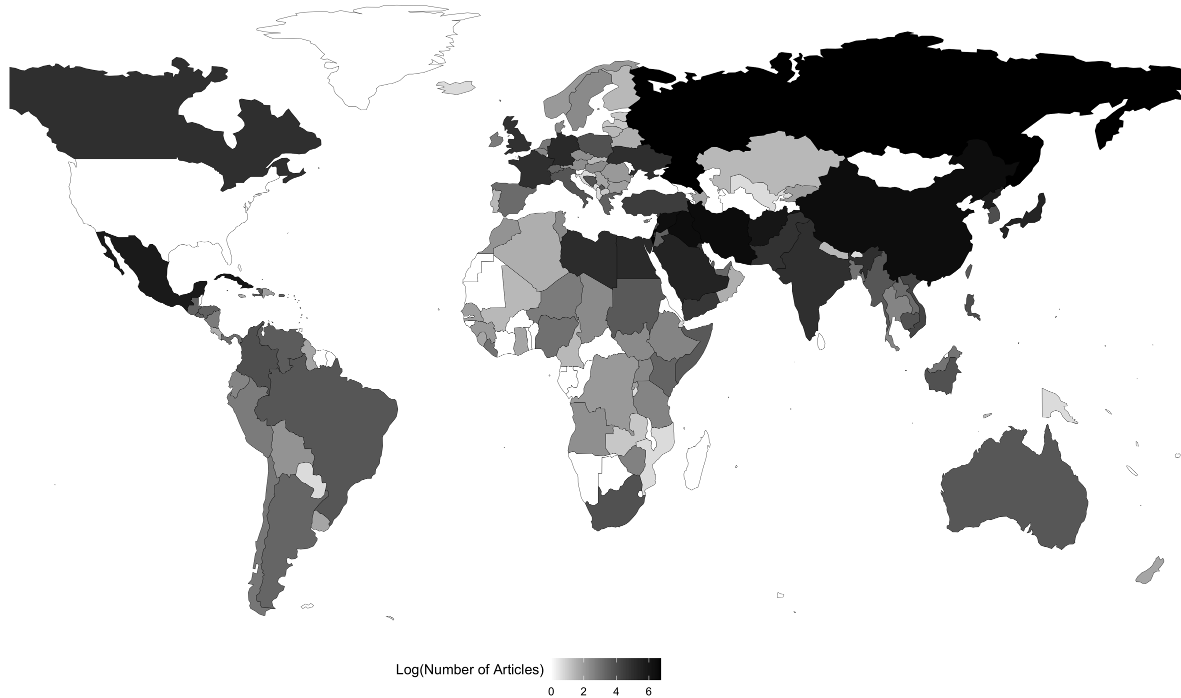
We will refer to the date on which the fieldwork started as time *t*.[2] We construct the dependent variable 'presidential approval' by determining the proportion of respondents of a poll at time *t* approving of the "way that [current president] is handling his job as president."

In our analyses, we explain approval ratings in function of what happened the day before at time *t-1*. We construct separate variables for presidents' engagements with democracies and autocracies. As we will discuss later in this section, we use the information about democracies as an identification strategy. We are interested in two sets of variables: (1) the visibility of presidents' non-hostile engagements with autocracies [democracies] and (2) the characteristics of these countries.

We measure the visibility of these engagements by counting how often the name of the incumbent president co-occurs with the name of a non-hostile autocracy [democracy] at time *t-1*. To this end, we conduct a four-step automated content collection and analysis procedure of the New York Times (see Figure 5.1). In Step 1 we pull all items published between 1947 and 2019, using the Archive API ($N_{articles}$ = 9,682,251). In Step 2 we only retain articles published one day before Gallup's fieldwork started at time *t-1* ($N_{articles}$ = 546,908).

[2] Some of these polls were collected over the course of multiple days. To increase the comparability of approval ratings over time, we treat each polling aggregate as if all data were collected on the first day.

Figure 5.2: Summary results content analysis. **Notes:** Countries that were left blank were either countries for which the content analysis returned no matches, or countries deliberately removed from the search query (i.e., the United States itself and Georgia, which would return too many false positives.)



In Step 3 we conduct a manually validated automated content analysis to subset items mentioning the incumbent president ($N_{articles}$ = 25,290).[3] In Step 4 we conduct an automated content analysis to determine which countries were mentioned in each article.[4] Ultimately, 7,221 articles contained one or multiple references to democracies or autocracies. Using these data, we construct a discrete independent variable by counting the number of references to non-hostile autocracies [democracies] for each date.[5] For instance, if two articles were published on time *t-1*, the first containing a single reference to Australia and the other references to Afghanistan, North Korea, the Netherlands and Belgium, the value of visibility for that day would be 2 for autocracies and 3 for democracies. Figure 5.2 shows the number of articles published at time *t-1* in which the name of the incumbent president co-occurred with the name of the country in question.

[3] We did not manually validated each hit separately. Instead, we first extracted word embeddings (input size = 4) surrounding the matched term. We created a list of all unique embeddings, so that we did not have to validate duplicates. In this process we assigned the value '0' to embeddings we considered true positives and '1' to embeddings we considered false positives. After validating each unique embedding, we merged this list with the original data file and removed all false positives from the dataset.

[4] To decrease the number of false positives in this stage (i.e., matches that do not refer to countries), we first use the geolocation tag of each article. If this tag contained a country name then the content analysis stopped there. If the tag contained a larger region or continent, we then determined whether any countries within that region were mentioned in the text of the article.

[5] Using correlates of war data, we detected 1,149 country-year dyads that we considered hostile due to their involvement in a war or militarized dispute with the US.

The second set of independent variables pertains to the characteristics of the autocracies [democracies] with which the President engages at time *t-1*. We construct these variables by calculating the mean score on the characteristics of the countries mentioned at time *t-1*. Since we cannot calculate such characteristics for points in time where there is no coverage of foreign states, we look at a subset of the data where autocracies [democracies] are mentioned at least once ($N_{autocracies}$ = 2,004; $N_{democracies}$ = 2,221). First, we consider the political or economic importance of these autocracies [democracies] to the US. We measure political interests as the share of engagements with autocratic [democratic] US allies at time *t-1* (using data from Gibler, 2009). We operationalize economic interests by calculating the share of US bilateral trade that autocracies [democracies] account for (using data from Barbieri & Keshk, 2016) at time *t-1*.[6] For example, if two articles were published on date *t-1*, the first referencing Canada ($TradeFlow_{t-1} = 0.200$) and the second one China ($TradeFlow_{t-1} = 0.300$) and Russia ($TradeFlow_{t-1} = 0.150$), then the value of trade flow at time *t-1* would take on the value 0.200 for democracies and 0.450 for autocracies.

Finally, we use data from the Varieties of Democracy Project (Coppedge *et al.*, 2020) to look into the role of autocratic regime characteristics. In light of this focus, we only calculate these measures for autocracies. First, we measure anti-electoralism by cal-

[6] We trained a machine learning model to infer the trade flow on missing time points from available data (accuracy = 99.64%).

culating to what degree the autocracies mentioned on average violate electoral democratic principles at time *t-1*. Second, we determine how repressive these autocracies are on average at time *t-1*.[7]

Table 5.1: Summary statistics.

Autocracy dataset

VARIABLE	*N*	MEAN/PROP.	STD. DEV.	MIN.	MAX.
Approval Rating	3,126	0.49	0.10	0.22	0.89
Visibility	3,126	0.00	1.00	–0.70	19.77
Formal Alliances	2,004	0.00	1.00	–0.25	5.02
Trade Flow	2,004	0.00	1.00	–3.40	0.52
Anti-Electoralism	2,004	0.00	1.00	-4.55	2.09
Repression	2,004	0.00	1.00	–3.65	1.92

Democracy dataset

VARIABLE	*N*	MEAN/PROP.	STD. DEV.	MIN.	MAX.
Approval Rating	3,126	0.49	0.10	0.22	0.89
Visibility	3,126	0.00	1.00	–0.70	11.77
Formal Alliances	2,221	0.00	1.00	-0.93	1.38
Trade Flow	2,221	0.00	1.00	–6.40	0.70
Anti-Electoralism	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*
Repression	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*

In a final step, we standardize all independent variables, so that the mean of each variable equals to 0 and the standard deviation to 1. The value of the coefficients in our analyses, then, refer to the increase in approval if the independent variable increases with one standard deviation. The intercept of each analysis predicts

[7] This measure was constructed and validated by Dinas and Northmore-Ball (2020).

approval for the mean value of the independent variable. Table 5.1 contains the summary statistics of all variables.

Methods

Analysis technique

We test our claims using macro-level analyses of presidential job approval between 1947 and 2019. More specifically, we make use of time-series analysis techniques. These techniques ensure a higher level of causal inference by factoring out three sources of temporal variation: seasons, trends, and autocorrelation. Seasonal variation refers to predictable patterns that recur every year, trend variation to the overtime fluctuations in the mean, and autocorrelation to the dependence between (adjacent) observations. Doing so allows these techniques to identify unexpected patterns (spikes) in longitudinal data, that are difficult to detect using the human eye. For example, if Trump's public approval suddenly increases shortly after his visit to North Korea, time-series techniques will first determine to what degree this increase deviates from the general trend in approval rating and the same month in earlier years before identifying this increase as a spike.

In using time-series analysis techniques for our data, however, we face one important challenge: Our observations are unevenly spaced in time. That is, the number of days between two adjacent measurements ranges between 1 and 100 days. Traditional time-series techniques are unable to deal with this challenge. The

reason for this lies in the way these techniques model autocorrelation ϕ. As Equation 5.1 shows, these techniques estimate an autoregressive term (AR) ϕ to account for autocorrelation. They do so under the assumption that the adjacent observation of Y_t was measured one day (or another time unit depending on the time lag) earlier at time *t-1*:

$$\phi Y_{t-1} \tag{5.1}$$

Since our observations are unevenly spaced in time, the estimation of AR terms would be severely off. In the absence of systematic daily measurements, we rely on a technique that is particularly well-suited to deal with unevenly spaced data: Generalized Additive Models (GAMs) with continuous-time autoregressive error terms (CAR). Unlike AR, CAR does not model the autocorrelation ϕ on the value of *y* at time *t-1*. Instead, CAR uses a function (rather than a parametric estimate) to model autocorrelation:

$$h(\phi^h) \tag{5.2}$$

where *h* represents the amount of time between two adjacent observations. It infers information about how autocorrelation develops over time from the estimation of trend-effects. Of course, this means that an adequate estimation of CAR terms requires very precise estimations of trend-effects. Monotonic linear trends,

therefore, do not suffice. GAM helps resolve this problem. It does so by permitting a complex nonlinear estimation of trend-effects. In our case, we use cubic spline functions to estimate these effects. These functions can be imagined as elastic line gauges bend on a priori unknown trend-scores (i.e., 'knots'). During the estimation procedure, GAMs learn to find the optimal position for these knots. Besides, the inclusion of nonlinear trends allows us to factor out extreme non-systematic fluctuations in the dependent variable ignored by classical techniques, such as crises, or wars.[8] We visualize the results of these analyses through coefficient plots. Bear in mind that these models account for the three sources of temporal variation (seasonal, trend and autocorrelation), even though they are not visualized in the output. We calculate a 90% confidence interval surrounding our estimation, thereby facilitating a 5% confidence level for our one-sided hypotheses.

Time-series analysis techniques already help a great deal in identifying causal relations. However, in testing Hypotheses 1 and 2 we face one other challenge to causal inference: separating effects of foreign affairs with autocracies from effects of foreign affairs at large. That is, statistical effects of visibility of autocracies or their political and economic ties to the US can point to two different conclusions: that engaging with autocracies matters, or that foreign affairs at large matters. Of course, this problem does not arise when testing Hypothesis 3, since anti-electoralism

[8] Annex Figure 5.4 visualizes the these differences.

and repression are characteristics that do not apply to democratic countries. We resolve this problem by repeating the analyses for democratic countries. We then use the coefficients estimated in these analyses as a benchmark.[9]

Results

To test Hypotheses 1, 2a, and 2b, we run two sets of models. We estimate the first set using the independent variables pertaining to autocracies and the second set using the independent variables pertaining to democracies. We consider a hypothesis fully supported when the confidence intervals for autocracies and democracies do not overlap. We consider Hypotheses 3a and 3b supported when the bounds of the confidence interval align with our expectations. Figure 5.3 visualizes the results of these analyses.

We first expected that citizens would punish or reward presidents for engaging with autocracies (Hypothesis 1). To test this, we estimate a model (Model 1) with the visibility of engagements with autocracies [democracies] as the key predictor. In line with this hypothesis, the effect of visibility displayed in black (*B* = –0.01; *SE*

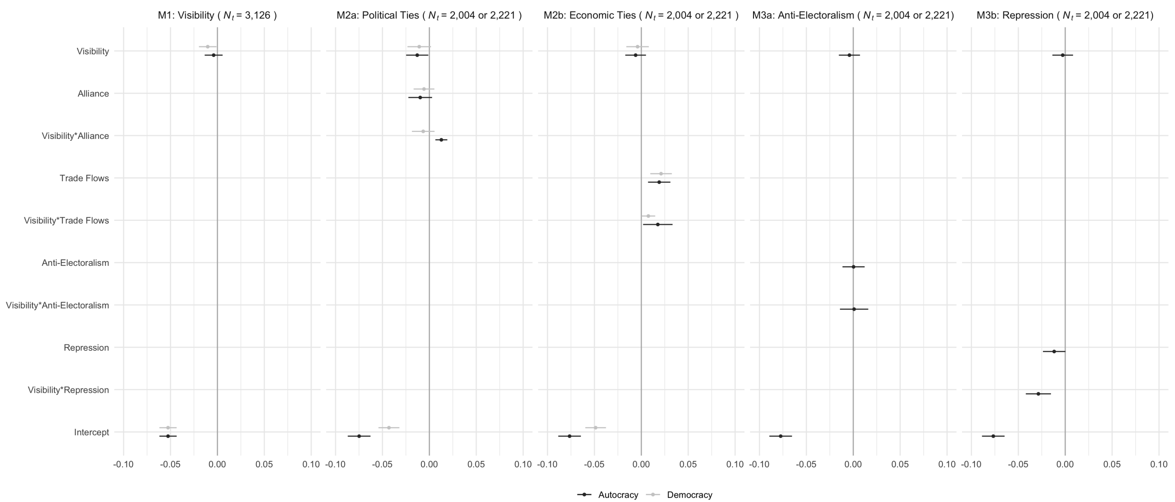
[9] We also formally tested the difference between these coefficients. To this end, we pooled the democracy and autocracy datasets. We subsequently estimated a model with a main effect capturing whether observations pertained to democracies or autocracies and second- and third-order interactions with the variable of interest.

= 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.01,0.01]) predicts that approval drops 0.10 percentage points for one standard deviation increase in the visibility of engagements with autocracies. However, the overlapping confidence interval the coefficient in grey (*B* = –0.01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.02,–0.00]) suggests that citizens do not respond any differently to engagements with democracies. As such, we find no evidence for Hypothesis 1.

Engaging with autocrats and self-enhancement

These null findings can point to two different conclusions. They may indicate that citizens do not care about foreign relations at all, democracies and autocracies alike. Alternatively, they may be the result of two opposing responses that cancel each other out. The second explanation fares well with our justification for Hypotheses 2 and 3. These hypotheses state that citizens form their judgments on a case by case basis. To test this, we estimate models with an interaction term between the visibility of autocracies [democracies] in news media and their average score on two types of regime characteristics. In these models, the main effect of visibility reveals how citizens respond when these characteristics are fixed at their mean score. The interaction term, then, tell us whether citizens respond differently as a result of a one standard deviation increase in these characteristics.

Figure 5.3: Effects of engaging with autocracies. **Notes:** Entries are the result of a Generalized Additive Model with continuous-time autoregressive error terms. Estimations follow a beta distribution with a logit link function to account for the natural 0,1 limits in approval ratings. Models include a smoothed nonlinear trend-effect, which were estimated using a cubic spline function with 10 knots.



Here, the negative value of the main effect of visibility in black (*B* = –0.01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.03,–0.00]) suggests that public approval drops 0.30 percentage points when the share of alliances is fixed at its mean. In line with our expectation, the positive value of the interaction term with political alliance (*B* = 0.01; *SE* = 0.00; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.01,0.02]) suggests that citizens punish presidents less for engaging with autocratic allies. This term predicts that approval neither increases nor decreases following a one standard deviation increase in the visibility of autocratic allies. To determine whether the pattern for autocracies differs from that for democracies, we compare the interaction term in black (autocracies) with the term in grey (democracies). The near-zero and insignificant value of the grey interaction term (*B* = –0.01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.02,0.01]) suggests that it does not matter whether presidents engage with democratic allies or non-allies. This observation confirms that citizens respond differently to presidents' engagements with autocracies than with democracies. Combined, the analyses provide compelling evidence in favor of Hypothesis 2a.

We also expected that citizens punish presidents less for engaging with autocracies when they are important economic partners (Hypothesis 2b). To test this, we estimate an interaction term between visibility and the share of the total US trade flow to these countries (Model 2b). At first glance, the black coefficients are consistent with this expectation. The negative effect of visibility (*B* = –0.01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.02,0.01]) tells us that citizens

punish presidents for engaging with countries with which the US has moderate economic ties. In keeping with Hypothesis 2b, the positive value of the interaction term (*B* = 0.02; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [0.00,0.03]) predicts that presidents are rewarded for engaging with autocracies that are important US economic partners. However, the overlap with the grey coefficients suggests that citizens do not respond differently to autocracies than to democracies. In other words, citizens respond positively to efforts to engage with important economic partners, irrespective of whether these partners are autocratic or democratic. Hence, the analyses provide little support for Hypothesis 2b.

Engaging with autocrats and self-transcendence

Political and economic interests aside, we argued that citizens would punish presidents more for engaging with highly anti-democratic regimes (Hypothesis 3). Since this feature exclusively pertains to autocracies, we do not need or use democracies as a benchmark. We first theorized that countries' level of anti-electoralism would matter (Hypothesis 3a). To test this, we estimate an interaction between visibility in news media and their mean score on anti-electoralism (Model 3a). This analysis provides no support for this hypothesis. Here, the main effect of visibility (*B* = –0.01; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.09,–0.07]) predicts that public approval drops with 1.00 percentage points when anti-electoralism is fixed at its mean. Countering our expectations, the insignificant and low value of the interaction term (*B* = 0.00; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.01,0.02])

provides no evidence that this is any different following a one standard deviation increase in the level of anti-electoralism. The analysis, therefore, provides no support for Hypothesis 3a.

A final hypothesis stated that citizens would punish presidents more for engaging with highly repressive regimes (Hypothesis 3b). We test this expectation by estimating an interaction between autocracies' visibility and their mean level of repression (Model 3b). This analysis provides overwhelming support for Hypothesis 3b. The main effect of visibility predicts that citizens punish presidents for engaging with autocracies with medium levels of repression (*B* = –0.00; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.01,0.01]). These estimations predict that public approval drops with 0.01 percentage points. In line with our argument, the negative interaction term suggests that citizens punish presidents even more for engaging with highly repressive regimes (*B* = –0.03; *SE* = 0.01; $CI_{90\%}$ = [–0.04,–0.02]). This term predicts that public approval drops with 0.75 percentage points following a one standard deviation increase in the level of repression. As such, the analysis provides convincing evidence in favor of Hypothesis 3a.

Altogether, these findings counter the idea that citizens are entirely apathetic to matters of foreign affairs. Overall, we find that presidents neither gain nor lose from engaging with autocrats. However, this is not because citizens do not care, but because positive and negative responses cancel each other out. Citizens reward presidents for engaging with autocracies when these efforts cater to

their values of self-enhancement or self-transcendence. Inversely, they punish presidents when these efforts defy these values.

Discussion

Backing up autocracies has been a central pillar of US foreign policy for decades. Although a common practice, engaging with autocracies raises significant dilemmas. This dilemma emerges from two competing public role conceptions of the presidency: as the defender of the nation's interest and as that of democratic morale. In this study, we asked whether and why the public rewards or punishes presidents for these efforts. We argued that citizens base their decisions on two sets of values. They may prioritize values of self-enhancement and reward presidents for these efforts. Alternatively, they may emphasize values of self-transcendence and punish presidents for these efforts. The results yielded three conclusions. First, we found no evidence that citizens invariably prioritize one set of values over the other. Overall, presidents receive punishments nor rewards for their engagements with autocrats. By contrast, we found strong evidence that citizens make a case by case judgment. Specifically, we found that citizens punish presidents for engaging with non-allied autocracies and highly repressive regimes. We also found that citizens reward presidents for engaging with allied autocracies and regimes with low levels of repression.

These findings have various theoretical, empirical, and methodological implications. Theoretically, we proposed a new model of presidential job approval, using presidents' engagements with autocrats as the key explanatory variable. We argued that the lack of substantive information on foreign affairs causes citizens to resort to their core values to form their judgments. Specifically, we theorized that citizens base their judgments on (a combination of) self-enhancement and self-transcendence values. This effort also offers several broader contributions. The first and arguably broadest contribution is that we provide an additional reason to discard the Almond-Lippmann view of foreign policy beliefs as shapeless and incoherent. We argue that even when ill-informed about foreign policy, citizens still care about whether presidents abide by the norms and values they cherish in their daily lives. Second, this study moves beyond existing efforts to theorize the effects of foreign policy on presidential approval. Most studies in this area focus on the impact of highly dramatized events. Only recently, scholarship in IR has started exploring the continuous interplay between foreign affairs and approval. This literature proposed that citizens use simple rules to judge presidents' behavior in foreign policy. Our study continued the efforts of IR scholarship to identify the general rules by which citizens judge presidents' behavior in foreign policy matters. Unlike earlier work, however, we highlight the importance of citizens' personal values to form their judgment.

Theoretical novelties aside, the findings of our study are empirically relevant for several reasons. First, our findings reaffirm but also expand claims made in earlier research. As pointed out earlier, IR scholarship has only recently started exploring value-based responses to foreign policy. Despite this progress, we still lack a comprehensive and systematic understanding of which values matter and how they affect presidential approval. In demonstrating the fertility of our novel arguments, our study reaffirms the idea that citizens' values matter while simultaneously helping the literature grow toward this comprehensive understanding. This brings us to a second more specific empirical contribution. That is, our finding that citizens punish presidents for engaging with highly repressive regimes reveal (a) how deeply citizens care about democratic principles, and (b) how strongly they expect presidents to abide by these principles in all policy domains. Finally, although marginal compared to the effects of domestic affairs, the observations of this study are still instructive. Presidents' authority on foreign affairs matters is much greater than in other areas (e.g., economic and domestic policy). Foreign policy is one of the few areas that presidents can exert almost full control over and for which citizens can hold presidents fully accountable. In other words, our study's findings reveal the potential of foreign policy as a tool for presidents to influence their popularity and for citizens to gauge their performance.

Our study also offered an important methodological contribution.

Studies on presidential approval have used macro-level analysis of polling data for decades. However, doing so is admittedly complicated. These data have several traits that hinder the application of commonly used analysis techniques, such as dependence and unequal amounts of time between observations. So far, ARIMA has been the best available practice in approval research. This technique deals with the dependence between observations by estimating an autoregressive term. However, using ARIMA to analyze approval data comes at a cost. It requires averaging data on a monthly or yearly level to ensure that observations are evenly spaced in time. As earlier studies have pointed out, doing so creates a myriad of new problems. Some of these problems pertain to the accuracy of estimations: Averaging introduces bias. Even more problematic is that averaging discards much of the variance that we need to study the effects of daily fluctuations in independent variables. This hinders the study of, e.g., effects of news coverage or sudden events. The practice of averaging could render possibly strong effects of such factors insignificant. This study's methodological contribution lies in introducing a technique from the natural sciences to social sciences: Generalized Additive Models with continuous time autoregressive error terms. These models offer the same advantages as ARIMA. Unlike ARIMA, they do not require averaging approval ratings. In effect, they enable researchers to leverage all available temporal variation in their data. This advantage opens up numerous new avenues for scholars interested in the relation between news coverage or unexpected

events on approval.

Notwithstanding these contributions, several limitations and avenues for future research have to be considered. Theoretically, it is important to note that we only solved a small piece of the puzzle that is the relation between foreign affairs and presidential job approval. Although we offer new insights, we do not provide a comprehensive model to understand this relation. Future research could benefit from bringing together these, and insights gathered in previous years to develop such a model. This study also suffers from several empirical limitations. Although automated content analysis techniques enabled us to identify with whom presidents engage, they offered little help in assessing the quality of these engagements. Of particular importance is the distinction between strategies of rapprochement ('carrots') and punishment ('sticks'). Making this distinction is the only way to determine whether the effects we found apply to both strategies, the former or the latter. A second empirical shortcoming stems from the aggregation of the data of our independent variables. Due to this procedure, it is unclear how much impactful events or influential countries (e.g., Russia and China) account for the observed effects. Future research may help resolve these problems by combining automated techniques and manual techniques to add depth to the current analyses. The most pressing methodological limitation stems from the mismatch between our theory and the data. In this study, we inferred the macro-level implications of individual be-

havior while exclusively relying on macro-level analyses of polling data to test these implications. These analyses can only go as far as to demonstrate that the arguments are plausible. However, acquiring knowledge about the individual mechanisms behind these effects requires analysis of (panel-) survey or experimental data. Future research may benefit from the analysis of micro-level data to uncover these mechanisms.

Despite these limitations, our study made an effort to address a moral dilemma at the core of US foreign policy, which is the trade-off between democratic values and self-interest values. Our findings suggest that this dilemma exists as much in reality as it does in theory. Citizens care about the practical and moral implications of presidents' engagements with autocracies. Although we offered plausible explanations of why citizens care, the question of what mechanisms drive these effects has remained unanswered. This is a question for future research.

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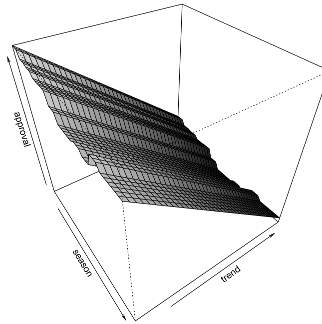
Appendix

Figure 5.4: Comparison of time-series analysis techniques. **Notes:** Figures are based on Generalized Additive Models. Estimations follow a beta distribution with a logit link function to account for the natural 0,1 limits in approval ratings. Figure 5.4a is based on a model containing regular trend and seasonal effects. Figure 5.4b uses a cubic spline function to estimate trend-effects.

(a) Linear Time-series = 15.76%



(b) Nonlinear Time-series = 35.69%

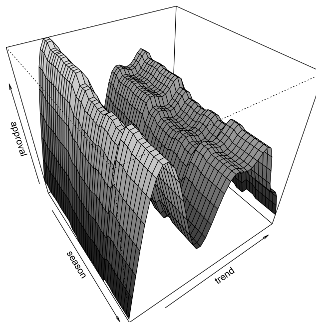


Figure 5.5: Flow chart procedure content analysis.

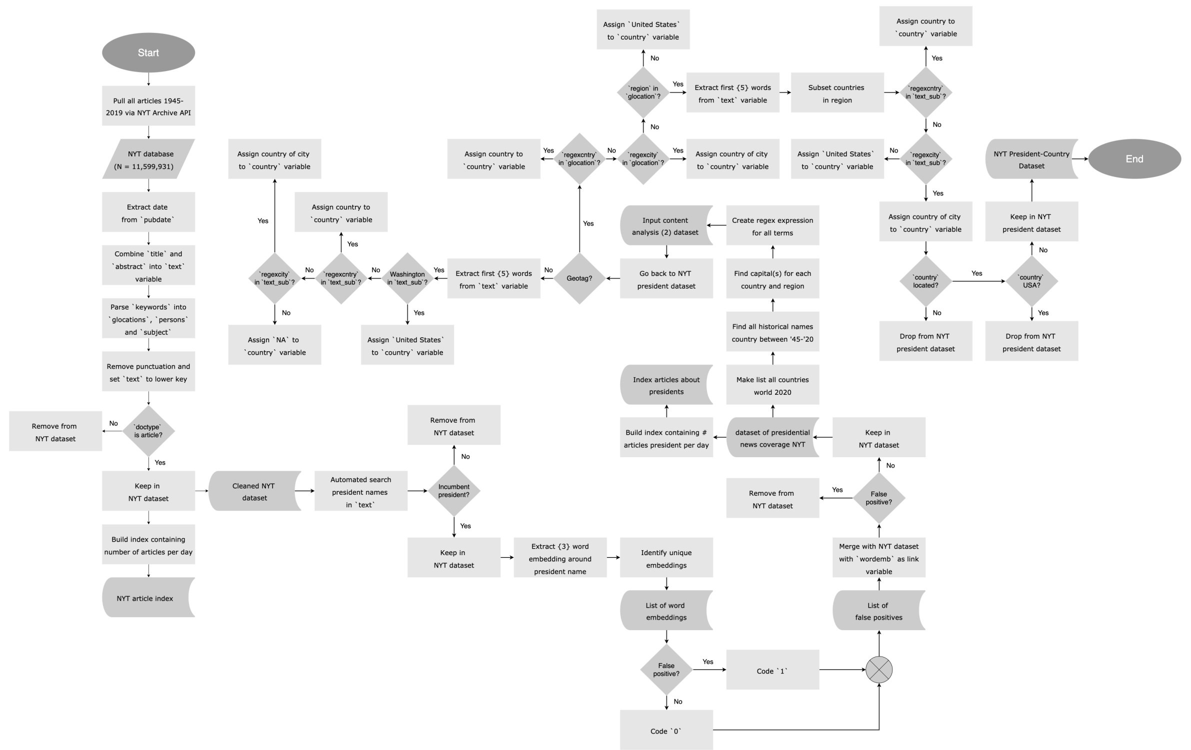
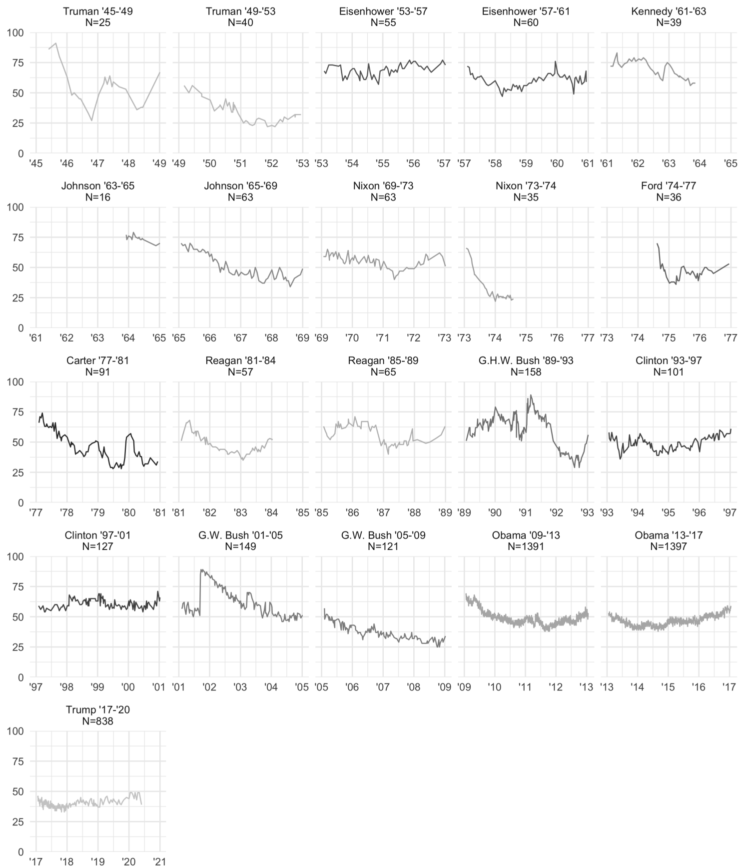


Figure 5.6: Measurements of presidential job approval. **Source:** Gallup.



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

INFECTION OR IMMUNITY?

Instead of posing as prophets we must become the makers of our fate. We must learn to do things as well as we can, and to look out for our mistakes

KARL POPPER, 1945

6

In his famous appeal against fascism in 1937, German philosopher Karl Loewenstein warned democracy may one day be destroyed from within. To date, the fear of this authoritarian virus has not subsided. Scholars, politicians, and citizens alike, all worry that exposure to this virus may cause infection, disease, and possibly even the death of democracy. They sound the alarm about the corrosion of democratic values, the weakening of democratic institutions, the rise of strongman politics, and the resurgence of the far-right (e.g., Eatwell & Mudde, 2004; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2018; Przeworski, 2019). Events in other parts of the world further exacerbate these concerns. Leaders such as Hugo Chavez, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Nicolas Maduro have made significant efforts to destruct basic democratic rights and freedoms. These observations have sparked the interest of democracy scholars. Like virologists, they examine how the virus spreads and how it affects the body.

In this dissertation, I continued this effort. However, unlike earlier scholarship, I did not exclusively focus on the signs of infection.

I argued that exposure to the authoritarian virus also helps build immunity. I tested this claim by asking how citizens respond when they are exposed to a sample of the virus: an image of what living under authoritarian rule would look like. I used the term *authoritarian framing effects* to describe citizens' responses to these images. If exposure to this idea erodes democratic values, we speak of a positive framing effect (or infection). Conversely, if exposure reaffirms democratic values, we speak of a negative framing effect (or immunity). Moreover, I investigated how far these two effects travel in time and space. In this chapter, I discuss the main findings. I proceed by outlining the main theoretical, empirical, and methodological implications of this dissertation. I conclude by identifying several limitations and avenues for future research.

Key findings

In the introduction, I argued that we should judge the authoritarian virus by the same standards as regular viruses, i.e., (1) its effects on citizens and (2) its ability to spread. These two criteria guided the research questions of this dissertation. Specifically, I asked what happens to citizens' democratic values when they are exposed to a sample of the virus, that is, the image of authoritarian rule. Moreover, I investigated how far these authoritarian framing effects travel across time and space. The empirical chapters reveal six key findings.

The signs of infection

Does authoritarian framing erode democratic values? And if so – how far do these effects travel across time and space? Three chapters contained an empirical test of these so-called positive framing effects (*Chapters 2, 3*, and *5*). Furthermore, *Chapters 2* and *3* examined generational differences to determine how far this effect travels in time. All three chapters contained a test of how far they travel in space.

Existence: Evidence of positive framing effects

In *Chapter 2*, I explored positive framing effects on citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. Specifically, I argued that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule would encourage citizens to support the beliefs of authoritarian regimes. I tested this claim using survey data from 105,495 citizens in 38 European countries. I qualified citizens in countries with an authoritarian history as a high exposure group and citizens living elsewhere as a low exposure group. My findings provided evidence of positive framing effects. Citizens in former authoritarian countries were more supportive of the beliefs of authoritarian regimes than citizens elsewhere. Depending on the countries' past regime, these beliefs were either left-wing and authoritarian or right-wing and authoritarian.

Chapter 3 examined positive framing effects on citizens' support for strategies of democratic defense. I claimed that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule would erode citizens' support for these

strategies. To this end, I analyzed survey data of 195,405 citizens in 27 European countries. I employed the same measurement of exposure as the previous chapter. My analyses did not support the positive framing hypothesis. Citizens in a high exposure group – i.e., those living in former authoritarian countries – were no less supportive of these strategies than citizens elsewhere.

Finally, in *Chapter 5*, I studied positive framing effects on presidential job approval. To achieve this, I compiled a large time-series dataset comprised of 3,126 approval ratings between 1947 and 2019. I measured positive authoritarian framing by determining citizens' exposure to news about autocracies, with which the US has strong economic or political ties. I did so by analyzing 9,862,251 articles published in this period. The analyses provided evidence of positive framing effects: Citizens reward presidents for engaging with allied autocracies. By contrast, economic ties seemed to matter little.

In sum, only one chapter (*Chapter 2*) justified the pessimistic mood of earlier democracy scholarship. The other two chapters either provided no evidence (*Chapter 3*) or partial evidence (*Chapter 5*) in favor of the positive framing hypothesis.

Survival: Evidence of positive framing effects across time

In *Chapters 2* and *3*, I developed tests to examine the durability of positive framing effects. I did so by determining whether exposure affects new cohorts of citizens differently than old cohorts. Both

chapters suggested that positive framing effects are considerably weaker among younger cohorts. *Chapter 2* showed that in former authoritarian countries, support for the past regime's ideological and democratic beliefs is weaker among younger cohorts. The findings of *Chapter 3* reaffirmed this conclusion. I found that older citizens, who were socialized under authoritarian rule, are less supportive of strategies of democratic defense. The practical implication of these findings is that positive framing effects die out as new cohorts replace older ones. In effect, the strength of positive framing effects should fade with time.

Transmission: Evidence of positive framing effects across space

Chapters 2, 3, and *5* also examined how far positive framing effects travel across space. I did so by analyzing these effects beyond the high exposure context of new democracies. The results of these analyses were mixed. On the one hand, *Chapters 2* and *5* confirmed that framing effects corroded democratic values beyond the context of new democracies. *Chapter 2* revealed that citizens in countries with a distant authoritarian history are also more supportive the past regime's beliefs than citizens elsewhere. *Chapter 5* provided partial evidence that positive framing effects exist in the world's oldest continuous democracy: the United States. Here, I found that citizens reward presidents when they consume news about autocracies with which the US has strong political ties, but not so much when they consume news about autocracies with which the US has strong economic ties. On the other hand,

Chapter 3 did not provide evidence of positive framing effects on citizens' support for strategies of democratic defense in new democracies, let alone elsewhere.

The signs of immunity

Does authoritarian framing reaffirm democratic values? And if so – how far do these effects travel across time and space? All four empirical chapters contained a test of negative authoritarian framing effects. *Chapters 2* and *3* examined generational differences to determine how far these effects travel in time. All chapters contained a test of how far they travel in space.

Existence: Evidence of negative framing effects

Aside from assessing positive framing effects, *Chapter 2* also examined negative framing effects. This chapter determined to what degree exposure would encourage citizens to support the pro-democratic ideological antipode of authoritarian regimes. As mentioned earlier, I qualified citizens in countries with an authoritarian history as a high exposure group and citizens elsewhere as a low exposure group. Analyses of survey data from 38 European countries provided compelling evidence of negative framing effects. I found that citizens in former authoritarian countries were more supportive of the opposite beliefs as those of the past regime than citizens elsewhere. Depending on the regime, these beliefs were either right-wing and pro-democratic or left-wing and pro-democratic.

In *Chapter 3*, I studied negative framing effects by examining whether exposure strengthened citizens' support for strategies of democratic defense. I employed the same measurement of exposure as the previous chapter. My analyses of survey data from 27 European countries revealed strong evidence of positive framing effects. Citizens living in countries with a distant authoritarian history were considerably more supportive of these strategies than citizens elsewhere.

In *Chapter 4*, I focused on negative framing effects on political news coverage. To this end, I collected and analyzed 27,830 articles about US President Donald Trump published in 35 newspapers in 12 countries. To measure negative framing effects, I looked at whether articles identified Trump as a threat to democracy by describing him as "sexist," "racist," "dictator," et cetera. I employed the same measurement of exposure as the previous two chapters. The analyses yielded an unambiguous conclusion: Negative framing effects also spill over to news coverage. The analyses revealed that pejorative content is much more common in former authoritarian countries than elsewhere.

Finally, *Chapter 5* examined negative framing effects on presidential job approval. I compiled a large time-series dataset comprised of 3,126 approval ratings (1947–2019). I measured negative framing by determining citizens' exposure to news about highly anti-electoral and repressive autocracies. The analyses provided partial evidence of negative framing effects. Citizens punish presi-

dents for engaging with highly repressive autocracies, but not for engaging with highly anti-electoral autocracies.

Unlike the positive framing hypothesis, the negative framing hypothesis was able to withstand every empirical test. Overall, the findings of these chapters yielded overwhelming and systematic evidence that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule reaffirms democratic values.

Survival: Evidence of negative framing effects across time

Chapters 2 and *3* included analyses of generational differences. I used these analyses to assess the durability of negative framing effects. The findings consistently showed that these effects are more pronounced among younger generations. In *Chapter 2*, I found that in former authoritarian countries, support for the ideological pro-democratic antipode of the past regime is stronger among younger than older cohorts. *Chapter 3* mirrored these findings. This chapter revealed that younger citizens, who were socialized under democratic rule, were more supportive of strategies of democratic defense. These findings suggest that, unlike positive framing, negative framing effects do not only survive but even intensify with time.

Transmission: Evidence of negative framing effects across space

Finally, all four chapters tested how far negative framing effects travel across space. All chapters provided consistent evidence that these effects also occur outside new democracies. *Chapter 2*

showed that in countries with a distant authoritarian history, citizens were more supportive of the past regime's pro-democratic ideological antipode. In *Chapter 3*, I found that citizens in these countries are also more supportive of strategies of democratic defense than citizens elsewhere. *Chapter 4* demonstrated that these negative framing effects even spill over to journalistic practices in these countries, with pejorative coverage being much more common in countries with a distant authoritarian history than elsewhere. Finally, *Chapter 5* revealed that negative framing effects even occur in the world's oldest continuous democracy: the United States. Specifically, I found that citizens punish presidents when they consume news about presidents' engagements with highly repressive autocratic regimes.

Implications

What do these findings mean for the state of the art in democracy scholarship at large? And what are their broader societal and methodological implications? In what follows, I discuss the most important implications.

Theoretical implications

As noted in the introduction, the democracy in crisis narrative pursued by many of today's most notable democracy scholars (see, e.g., Crozier *et al.*, 1975; Przeworski, 2019; Mounk, 2018) suffers

from conceptual (Arendt, 1951; Popper, 1945) and empirical (Van der Meer, 2017) limitations. Despite these criticisms, this narrative still dominates popular and scholarly interpretations of current events. Why is this? The source of its power is its negativity. As human beings, we are wired to believe that danger is lurking in the shadows. This negativity bias makes us quick to think that infection by the authoritarian virus may end in the death of democracy. The net result is that we tend to overestimate the weakness of democracy and underestimate its strength.

This negativity bias is problematic for two reasons. As mentioned earlier, this bias hinders a comprehensive assessment of the authoritarian threat. However, there is another reason that is far more important and that I only briefly touched upon in the introduction. It is the reason that drove Karl Popper (1945) to write *The Open Society and its Enemies*. It is the reason behind many of the signs of infection we witness today. It is the reason why the authoritarian virus is fundamentally different from any other virus. That is, unlike other viruses, the authoritarian virus feeds on attention. An extremist or radical movement may start small, but its ability to appeal to the masses increases as it gains the attention of scholars, politicians, the media, and, ultimately, the public. Eventually, the self-fulfilling prophecy becomes self-sustaining: As the virus grows, we feel inclined to pay it even more attention.[1]

[1] The Belgian alt-right movement *Schild en Vrienden* (Shield and Friends) is a typical example. This movement was relatively small until the Flemish television broadcaster VRT exposed this movement in a documentary. After the broadcast,

It is clear that pointing out the empirical and conceptual limitations does not suffice to undercut the democracy in crisis narrative. Neither does it suffice to neutralize its perverse effects. I am also aware that ignoring the signs of infection is not an option, especially given the numerous alternative (online) channels these movements can exploit instead. The democracy in crisis narrative will survive, and we need scholarship to ensure its empirical accuracy. This leaves us with only one option: to ameliorate its perverse effects by capitalizing on our ability to create our future (Popper, 1945). Above all, what political science needs to achieve this is a nonutopian philosophy of hope.[2] And we need to be able to pursue this philosophy without having to face accusations of naivety.[3] This can only be achieved by introducing a theoretically and empirically informed counter-narrative, which focuses on the signs of immunity rather than infection. In turn, this narrative would serve as an inspiration to develop models to understand the strong spots of democratic society. This is where the central and broader implication of this dissertation lies: in helping this new narrative

the movement gained a large number of supporters. Today, its leader even serves as a Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives.

[2] I imagine this philosophy as a combination of the works of Ernst Bloch (1954) and Hans Jonas (1979). Bloch introduced the philosophy of hope. However, Marxist utopian beliefs make his philosophy incompatible with liberal democratic thought. Adding Jonas's philosophy of responsibility may help resolve this problem.

[3] A key example of such accusations is the strong criticism political philosopher Francis Fukuyama received for his work *The End of History and the Last Man*, in which he proposed that liberal democracy was the necessary and only logical outcome of historical progression.

evolve. I did so by borrowing insights from studies on elite behavior in post-authoritarian countries (Art, 2005; Backes, 2006; Downs, 2012; Klamt, 2007; Van Spanje, 2018) and militant democracy (Bourne, 2018; Bleich, 2011; Capoccia, 2005; Loewenstein, 1937; Rijpkema, 2018) and translating them to models to understand societal responses to authoritarian influences.

Aside from this broader implication, my findings are also consequential for two sub-fields of democracy scholarship. First, the centrality of countries' history makes that this dissertation contributes to scholarship on authoritarian legacy effects (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2017). The new models presented here answer the call of scholars in this area to formulate falsifiable frameworks to study legacy effects on public opinion. In performing this exercise, I achieved two additional goals: (1) studying legacy effects beyond the context of new democracies, and (2) theorizing a new type of legacy effect, which equates to the negative framing effects discussed earlier. Second, my findings also confirm that political science offers a wealth of comparative models that can be used to answer the oldest question in comparative political communication, i.e., why does news take on different forms in different countries? (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). In doing so, I meet the demand of comparativists to develop new classifications (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Norris, 2009), especially ones focused on countries' political culture (Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Empirical implications

Of course, in countering the democracy in crisis narrative, it helps that my empirical findings unequivocally supported my claims. To be sure, I did find evidence that authoritarian framing erodes democratic values. However, this observation is put into perspective by the fact that this mostly – and sometimes only – applies to (1) particular cohorts, (2) particular countries, and (3) particular values. At the very least, these findings do not indicate that democracy is regressing. Instead, democracy seems to be slowly recovering from the shock of its birth. The strong evidence that authoritarian framing reaffirms democratic values strengthens this optimistic conclusion. No matter the context, these effects occur among a significant and growing number of citizens. This reveals considerable societal resources to undercut the potential for authoritarians to subvert democracy. Taken together, it is safe to say that the signs of immunity outweigh the signs of infection, and this will become increasingly so as new cohorts replace older ones.

Besides this broader contribution, the findings of this dissertation are also empirically relevant to several sub-fields of political science. First, by translating insights from literature on elite behavior in post-authoritarian countries (Art, 2005; Backes, 2006; Downs, 2012; Klamt, 2007; Van Spanje, 2018), and militant democracy (Bourne, 2018; Bourne & Casal Bértoa, 2017; Casal Bértoa & Bourne, 2017; Rijpkema, 2018) this dissertation offered a twofold empirical test of their generalizability to public opinion. This con-

clusion is also consequential for a second reason. It reveals how strongly institutions, elites, and society are intertwined. Effects on one of these three may spill over (in any direction) to the other. Finally, my findings also open up new discussions in the field of authoritarian legacy effects (e.g., Alesina & Fuchs-Schüdeln, 2007; Bernhard & Karakoc, 2007; Ekiert & Kubik, 2014; Neundorf, 2010; Northmore-Ball, 2014; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2014, 2017). My analyses revealed that legacy effects are more than a short-term product of democratic transition, but a durable feature of the political environment. This observation gives new impetus to discussions about the vehicles and durability of legacy effects.

Methodological implications

The negativity bias discussed earlier does not only inform our theoretical decisions but also our analytical ones. Most – if not all – data we have at our disposal to study citizens' democratic values is micro-level data. We ask citizens how they feel and think about democracy. Subsequently, we resort to (linear) regression analysis techniques to understand why some citizens are more supportive than others. In this process, we sort citizens by, e.g., their demographic characteristics, political preferences, and socioeconomic status. The outcome of such analyses is a line that tells us whether citizens' democratic values are higher or lower when sorted along the dimension of choice. In interpreting this line, our negativity bias forces us to draw negative conclusions. For instance, if we observe a positive relation between citizens'

age and democratic values, we would emphasize that younger citizens' democratic values are weaker. Conversely, it is difficult to arrive at positive conclusions.

Of course, this micro-level focus is crucial to understand what drives citizens' democratic values. It cannot tell us something about the strength of democratic society, let alone its resilience. To learn about its strength, we need to examine simple statistics: weighing the number of pro-democratic citizens against the number of anti-democratic citizens (see, for instance, Inglehart, 2003). Learning about its resilience is a much more difficult task. This is because resilience comprises responses to extremist threats. Only comparative research can resolve this puzzle. Yet, the methodological toolkit this area of research has to study such macro-level responses using micro-level data is relatively limited. The reason for this is that developing macro-level tests comes with a plethora of empirical challenges. In comparative analysis of survey data, the only remaining problem was that of identification: How can we establish macro-level effects if we only have individual-level data? In the case of comparative analysis of text-data, many other problems arose. Text analysis methods are still plagued by questions about measurement, instrument, and sample equivalence that survey research has already resolved (Norris, 2009). With this in mind, the methodological implication of the analysis strategies presented here is clear: It contributes to developing a methodological toolkit that helps (1) identify macro-level effects using micro-level

data and (2) resolve equivalence problems in the analysis of text-data.

Limitations and avenues for future research

Despite these contributions, this dissertation also suffers from several limitations. These limitations are primarily theoretical, secondarily empirical, and tertiarily methodological.

Theoretical limitations

Despite my efforts to improve the comprehensiveness of democracy literature, two theoretical limitations put a strain on my ability to do so. Like most democracy scholars, my claims were tailored to a specific geographical context. Their theoretical building blocks – i.e., the literature on authoritarian legacy effects, elite behavior in post-authoritarian countries, and militant democracy – exclusively focus on Western democracies. Consequently, the claims presented here are designed to map the authoritarian threat in this specific group of countries.

However, even within the context of Western democracies, my claims suffer from an important limitation. In drawing attention to our ability to build immunity against the authoritarian virus, I overlooked the viruses that the body fails to detect. In this respect, it is essential to acknowledge that what I labeled as immunity may protect society against only one appearance of the virus and not its

mutations. Clearly, this conclusion uncovers the need to ask what future mutations of the virus will look like. Like virologists, political scientists should adapt to studying these new mutations through a careful formulation of the research agenda. In this respect, research on digital threats to democracy – e.g., online conspiracy theories, fact-free politics, or filter bubbles – sets an excellent example of this adaptation process.[4] Continuing these efforts to adapt and study the new mutations of the virus may very well be the last piece of the puzzle to come to an actual comprehensive assessment of the authoritarian threat.

Empirical limitations

These theoretical limitations also reveal two pressing empirical limitations. First, in tailoring my arguments to the context of Western democracies, I overlooked the part of the world where democracy research is arguably the most needed, i.e., developing countries. Two aspects make my claims unsuitable for studying the authoritarian threat in these countries. First, my central claim rests on the assumption that the body, i.e., democracy, is capable of developing a strong immune system. In developing democracies, the necessary conditions to achieve this – such as freedom of the press, a civic education program, and citizens' involvement in the democratic process beyond elections – may be unfulfilled. Second, even if they are fulfilled, it is debatable whether citizens have access to these resources. Finally, even if they have access,

[4] Unlike regular viruses, the authoritarian virus may mutate into a computer virus.

it is questionable whether these resources help citizens develop immune responses to the authoritarian virus. Citizens first need to conquer threats to their lives before worrying about the quality of life. Only through thorough empirical testing can we assess the generalizability of my claims to developing countries.

The second empirical limitation becomes apparent in an undeniable mismatch between my theoretical claims and empirical reality. If countries' authoritarian past helps citizens develop immunity to the authoritarian virus, how come Hungary is the first European country to slide back to authoritarianism? By extension, what explains the success of the far-right in Eastern Europe? The explanation for this may have little to do with the virus's ability to mutate. Even in Eastern Europe, the far-right carries the risk of obtaining a would-be fascist stigma, despite not having a fascist legacy to build on.[5] In effect, the theorization of these mutations will not help solve this problem. For an answer, we should turn to historical analysis. In several cases, the far-right first emerged as democratic activists and communist resistance. Citizens' continued and growing support for these parties, even after their illiberal turn, may, therefore, have little to do with their changing opinions about democracy. Instead, it is plausible that this manifestation of the authoritarian virus has found a way to disguise itself as a democratic virus. This speculation brings us to a plethora of empirical questions for future research about the protective shields

[5] For instance, both *Fidesz* and the Hungarian left has accused the far-right party *Jobbik* of having a fascist virus and being evil.

the far-right (and far-left) uses to ward off accusations of political extremism, as well as citizens' responses to these shields.

A final, more specific, shortcoming arises from my use of macro-level tests. These tests can only go as far as to demonstrate framing effects on mass political behavior. This leaves future scholarship on authoritarian framing with at least two empirical tasks. The first task revolves around disentangling the effects of different stimuli. A history book with a deliberate negative framing of authoritarian regimes may have a very different impact than a statue. This task is of particular relevance in countries in which there is a trend to remove traces of controversial historical figures from the public sphere. Leveraging regional variability in the prevalence of these different stimuli, or experimental research, may help address this limitation. The second task comprises unpacking mass-effects to learn about the individual, e.g., the role their attitudes, beliefs, and psychological traits play in determining whether they undergo a positive or negative framing effect.

Methodological limitations

This brings me to a final set of limitations, this time pertaining to my methodological choices. First, despite the strengths of the macro-level tests I developed, they lack sensitivity. Specifically, I have neglected that the intensity of exposure to the stimulus (i.e., the image of authoritarian rule) may vary substantially across regions. Statues, memorial sites, and musea are arguably much more common in urban areas than in rural areas (see Art, 2005).

In federal states, there may be differences in the way in which school materials portray authoritarian regimes. Leveraging this variability would enable us to understand the drivers behind the observed effects. Of course, there are several ways to incorporate these regional differences into the methodological toolkit. One way is to count the physical artifacts containing references to authoritarian regimes. Another way is to use historical information as a proxy to map such regional differences. Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016), for instance, leverage regional variation in slavery's prevalence in the United States 150 years ago to explain racial attitudes. We can use similar strategies to map regional differences in exposure to the image of authoritarian rule.

Second, three limitations put a strain on the internal validity of my findings. The first limitation is that I have not measured citizens' pre-existing beliefs. Instead, the core claim of this dissertation rests upon assumptions about these beliefs. In particular, I assumed that citizens who underwent a positive authoritarian framing effect had weak democratic values. Conversely, I assumed that citizens who experienced a negative framing effect had strong democratic values. The second limitation pertains to the independent variable. My analyses do not contain individual measurements of exposure, let alone the intensity of this exposure. Third, the research designs I used are unable to observe changes occurring within the individual as a result of exposure to the image of authoritarian rule. Resolving these problems without losing our ability to

infer macro-level consequences is admittedly challenging. Cross-national panel-survey data may help resolve this shortcoming in the future, although I am unaware of the existence of such surveys.

Final conclusion

Altogether, this dissertation sheds new light on the nature and effects of the authoritarian virus. Some of my findings justify the pessimistic mood of earlier work. That is, I find evidence of positive framing effects: exposure to the image of authoritarian rule corrodes democratic values among some citizens in some countries. However, my findings encourage the addition of an important side note. Specifically, I observe that the symptoms of immunity are much more widespread than the symptoms of infection. My analyses systematically reveal that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule reaffirms pro-democratic values and strengthens support for and the use of strategies of democratic defense among a growing number of citizens. These findings uncover an important source of democratic resilience, namely, societal resilience. These immune citizens constitute a valuable safeguard against future authoritarian revival. After all, history does not just happen, we make it.

Instead of posing as prophets,
we must become the makers of our own fate.
We must learn to do things as well as we can
and to look out for our mistakes.

∼ Karl Popper, 1945, p.280

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SUMMARIES

SAMENVATTINGEN

English Summary

In his famous appeal against fascism, German philosopher Karl Loewenstein warned that democracy may one day be destroyed from within. To date, the fear of this authoritarian virus has not subsided. Scholars, politicians, and citizens alike, all worry that exposure to this virus may end in infection, disease, or possibly even the death of democracy. They sound the alarm about the corrosion of democratic values, the weakening of democratic institutions, the rise of strongman politics, and the resurgence of the far-right.

In this dissertation, I alleviate this pessimistic mood. I argue and demonstrate empirically that exposure to the authoritarian virus helps build immunity as much as it causes infection. To this end, I ask what happens when citizens are exposed to a sample of the virus: an image of what living under authoritarian rule would look like. I use the term *authoritarian framing effects* to describe citizens' responses to these images. If exposure to this idea erodes democratic values, we speak of a positive framing effect (infection). Conversely, if exposure reaffirms democratic values, we speak of a negative framing effect (immunity). Besides establishing their (co-)existence, I ask how far these effects travel in time and space. To test my claims, I develop quantitative empirical tests of these effects in 42 democracies, spread across four self-contained chapters.

In the first empirical chapter, I explore authoritarian framing effects on citizens' ideological and democratic beliefs. I analyze survey data from 105,495 citizens in 38 European countries. I qualify countries with an authoritarian history as a high exposure context and countries without as a low exposure context. My analyses yield three conclusions. First, I demonstrate that positive and negative framing effects co-exist within countries. Some citizens undergo a positive framing effect: Exposure strengthens their support for the past regime's beliefs. Depending on the past regime, these beliefs are either left-wing and authoritarian or right-wing and authoritarian. Other citizens experience a negative framing effect: Exposure strengthens their support for the beliefs of the past regime's antipode. Depending on the past regime, these beliefs are either right-wing and pro-democratic or left-wing and pro-democratic. Second, I show that these effects are not confined to new democracies but also exist in countries with a distant authoritarian history. Finally, nonlinear analyses of generational differences suggest that positive framing effects weaken as new cohorts replace old ones, while negative framing effects strengthen.

The next chapter examines framing effects on citizens' support for strategies of democratic defense. It does so by analyzing survey data of 195,405 citizens in 27 European countries. I employ the same measurement of exposure to the image of authoritarian rule as the previous chapter. Unlike the last chapter, the emphasis of this chapter does not lie on the co-existence of negative and

positive framing effects but on the question of which effect prevails. The findings allude to four conclusions. First, I do not find evidence that positive framing effects prevail anywhere. Citizens in former authoritarian countries are no less supportive of these strategies than citizens elsewhere. Second, I find strong evidence that negative framing effects dominate in some countries: Citizens in these countries are more supportive of strategies of democratic defense than citizens living elsewhere. Third, I show that negative framing effects also travel to countries with a distant history of authoritarianism. Finally, analyses of generational differences suggest that the strength of negative framing effects increases over time as new generations replace older ones.

In the third empirical chapter, I concentrate on the underlying causes of the dominance of negative framing effects. Specifically, I focus on negative framing effects on political news coverage. To this end, I collect and analyze 27,830 articles about US President Donald Trump published in 35 newspapers in 12 countries in 7 languages. To measure negative framing effects, I look at whether articles identify Trump as a threat to democracy by describing him as "sexist," "racist," "dictator," *et cetera*. I employ the same measurement of exposure to the image of authoritarian rule as the previous two chapters. The analyses yield an unambiguous conclusion: Negative framing effects also apply to news coverage. Specifically, I find that pejorative content is much more common in former authoritarian countries than it is elsewhere.

In the final empirical chapter, I study positive and negative framing effects on presidential job approval in a context where one would least expect them to occur: the world's oldest continuous democracy, namely, the United States. To achieve this, I compile a large time-series dataset comprised of 3,126 approval ratings between 1947 and 2019. Despite the US's inexperience with authoritarianism, citizens may still be exposed to the image of authoritarian rule via news about autocratic regimes. To measure the intensity of exposure at different points in time, I analyze 9,862,251 articles published in this period. In this process, I record which countries the articles mention and their regime characteristics. The analyses provide evidence of positive framing effects: Citizens reward presidents for engaging with allied autocracies. I also find evidence of negative framing effects: Citizens punish presidents for engaging with highly repressive regimes. Altogether, these analyses reveal that both types of framing effects can travel across space.

Altogether, this dissertation sheds new light on the nature and effects of the authoritarian virus. Some of my findings justify the pessimistic mood of earlier work: Exposure to the image of authoritarian rule corrodes democratic values among some citizens in some countries, albeit decreasingly so. However, my findings encourage the addition of an important side note. I observe that the symptoms of immunity are much more widespread and durable than the symptoms of infection. My analyses reveal that exposure reaffirms democratic values and strengthens support for and the

use of strategies of democratic defense among a considerable and growing number of citizens. These findings uncover an important source of democratic resilience, namely, societal resilience. These immune citizens constitute a valuable safeguard against future authoritarian revival.

Nederlandse samenvatting

In 1937 waarschuwde de Duitse filosoof Karl Loewenstein dat antidemocratische stromingen de democratie van binnenuit kunnen vernietigen. Sindsdien is de maatschappelijke angst voor het autoritaire virus niet verdwenen. Wetenschappers, politici en burgers vrezen namelijk dat blootstelling aan dit virus infectie, ziekte of mogelijk zelfs de dood van de democratie zou kunnen inluiden. Zij menen in de afname in democratische waarden, de verzwakking van democratische instituties, de opkomst van autoritaire politici en de terugkeer van extreem rechts de symptomen van infectie te herkennen.

In deze dissertatie tracht ik dit pessimistische beeld te doorbreken. Ik betoog en toon aan dat blootstelling aan het autoritaire virus evenzeer immuniteit als infectie bewerkstelligt. Om dit aan te tonen onderzoek ik wat er gebeurt als burgers in aanraking komen met een klein stukje van dit virus: een beeld van hoe het leven er uit zou zien in een autoritaire staat. Ik gebruik de term *autoritaire framing effecten* om de reacties van burgers op deze beelden te omschrijven. Indien hun democratische waarden door blootstelling aan dit beeld worden aangetast, dan spreekt men van een positief framing effect of infectie. Bekrachtigt het juist hun steun voor de democratie, dan spreekt men van een negatief framing effect of immuniteit. Naast de vaststelling van deze effecten, onderzoek ik ook hoe ze zich verspreiden, zowel in de tijd als in de ruimte. Ik

doe dit aan de hand van empirische tests van autoritaire framing effecten in 42 democratieën. Deze tests zijn onderdeel van vier zelfstandige hoofdstukken.

In het eerste empirische hoofdstuk onderzoek ik hoe blootstelling aan het beeld van autoritaire regimes de ideologische en democratische overtuigingen van burgers beïnvloedt. Ik analyseer enquête data van 105.495 burgers in 38 Europese landen. Ik kwalificeer landen met een autoritaire geschiedenis als een context met hoge blootstelling en landen zonder als een context met lage blootstelling. Mijn analyses leiden tot drie conclusies. Ten eerste toon ik aan dat er binnen elk land twee soorten burgers bestaan, die het onderwerp zijn aan twee soorten effecten. Onder sommige burgers is er sprake van een positief framing effect. Blootstelling moedigt hen aan de ideologische en antidemocratische overtuigingen van het voormalig regime te steunen. Afhankelijk van het voormalig regime zijn deze overtuigingen antidemocratisch en links, of antidemocratisch en rechts. Andere burgers zijn dan weer het onderwerp van een negatief framing effect. Zij zijn juist meer geneigd om de tegenovergestelde overtuigingen als die van het voormalig regime te steunen. Afhankelijk van het voormalig regime zijn deze overtuigingen prodemocratisch en rechts, of prodemocratisch en links. In de tweede plaats toon ik aan dat deze effecten ook voorkomen in landen met een verre autoritaire geschiedenis en dus niet enkel landen met een recente autoritaire geschiedenis. In de laatste plaats tonen mijn nonlineare analyses

aan dat positieve framing effecten afzwakken ten gevolge van processen van generationele vervanging, terwijl negatieve effecten versterken.

In het volgende hoofdstuk bestudeer ik framing effecten op de steun van burgers voor harde maatregelen om de democratie te beschermen tegen haar vijanden. Om dit te bewerkstelligen analyseer ik enquête data van 195.405 burgers in 27 Europese landen. Ik hanteer dezelfde meting van blootstelling aan het beeld van het leven onder een autoritair regime als in het vorige hoofdstuk. Daarnaast ligt de focus hier niet zozeer op de vraag of de twee framing effecten zich binnen landen voordoen, maar welk van de twee effecten overheerst. De analyses leiden tot vier bevindingen. Ten eerste toon ik aan dat positieve framing effecten in geen enkele context overheersen. Burgers in voormalig autoritaire landen hebben niet minder steun voor deze maatregelen dan burgers in andere landen. Ten tweede vind ik wel aanwijzingen dat negatieve framing effecten overheersen in sommige voormalig autoritaire landen. Burgers in deze landen hebben namelijk meer steun dan burgers in andere landen. Ten derde observeer ik dat deze negatieve framing effecten zich enkel voordoen in landen met een verre autoritaire geschiedenis en niet in landen met een recente autoritaire geschiedenis. In de laatste plaats observeer ik dat steun voor dergelijke maatregelen toeneemt naarmate oudere generaties plaatsmaken voor jongere generaties.

Het derde empirische hoofdstuk gaat dieper in op de achterliggende

oorzaak van de dominantie van deze negatieve framing effecten. Het legt zich toe op negatieve framing effecten op de inhoud van politieke verslaggeving. Voor dit onderzoek verzamel en analyseer ik 27.830 krantenartikelen over de president van de Verenigde Staten, Donald Trump, gepubliceerd in 35 verschillende kranten in 12 landen en in 7 talen. Om negatieve framing effecten te meten, kijk ik in welke mate berichtgeving Trump als een dreiging voor de democratie bestempelt door hem te omschrijven als een “seksist”, “racist”, “dictator”, et cetera. Ik hanteer hier nogmaals dezelfde meting van blootstelling aan het beeld van een leven onder een autoritaire regime als in de voorafgaande hoofdstukken. De analyses leiden tot een eenduidige conclusie: Er is overduidelijk sprake van negatieve framing effecten op verslaggeving. Verslaggeving in voormalig autoritaire landen bestempelt Trump veel vaker als een dreiging voor de democratie als verslaggeving in andere landen.

In het laatste empirische hoofdstuk, verken ik deze twee framing effecten in een context waar men ze het minst zou verwachten, met name de Verenigde Staten, de oudste democratie ter wereld. In het bijzonder kijk ik naar framing effecten op presidentiële steun. Ik doe dit aan de hand van een grote tijdreeks dataset, bestaande uit 3.126 afzonderlijke metingen van publieke steun tussen 1947 en 2019. Ook al hebben de Verenigde Staten geen autoritaire geschiedenis, burgers kunnen wel blootgesteld worden aan berichtgeving over dit soort regimes in andere delen van de wereld. Om de verschillende gradaties van blootstelling in kaart te

brengen, analyseer ik 9.862.251 krantenartikelen gepubliceerd in deze periode. Aan de hand van deze analyse bepaal ik in welke mate burgers op verschillende tijdstippen worden blootgesteld aan nieuws over autoritaire regimes en wat de eigenschappen van deze regimes zijn. Ook hier lijkt tot op zekere hoogte sprake te zijn van een positief framing effect: Burgers belonen presidenten voor hun contacten met autocratische bondgenoten. Daarnaast zijn er ook tekens van een negatief framing effect. Burgers straffen presidenten namelijk voor contacten met sterk repressieve regimes. Met andere woorden, deze analyses tonen dat zowel positieve als negatieve framing effecten zich zelfs voordoen op een plek waar men deze niet zouden verwachten.

Deze bevindingen plaatsen de natuur en de gevolgen van het autoritaire virus in een nieuw daglicht. Sommige van mijn bevindingen bevestigen het pessimisme van eerder democratie onderzoek: Blootstelling aan het beeld van een leven onder een autoritair regime verzwakt de democratische steun van sommige burgers in sommige landen, alhoewel dit effect lijkt af te zwakken. Desalniettemin plaats ik een belangrijke kanttekening bij deze bevinding. De symptomen van immuniteit lijken namelijk veel dominanter en duurzamer te zijn dan de symptomen van infectie. Mijn analyses tonen immers aan dat negatieve framing effecten doorwerken in elke context: ongeacht de plaats en tijd, blootstelling aan het beeld van autoritaire regimes versterkt de democratische waarden en steun voor sterke maatregelen haar te beschermen onder een

substantieel aantal burgers. Deze bevindingen onthullen een belangrijke bron van democratische weerbaarheid, met name de maatschappij. Het zijn deze immune burgers die de toekomst van de democratie kunnen behoeden tegen haar vijanden.

AUTHORSHIP

AUTEURSCHAP

Authorship

Chapter 1. Introduction.

Sjifra de Leeuw

Chapter 2.

Sjifra de Leeuw, Roderik Rekker, Rachid Azrout & Joost van Spanje

Study design: all authors. Acquisition of the data: SL. Analysis and interpretation of the data: SL. Drafting the manuscript: SL. Critical revision: all authors.

Chapter 3.

Sjifra de Leeuw & Angela Bourne

Study design: all authors. Acquisition of the data: SL. Analysis and interpretation of the data: SL. Drafting the manuscript: all authors. Critical revision: all authors.

Chapter 4.

Sjifra de Leeuw, Rachid Azrout, Roderik Rekker & Joost van Spanje

Study design: all authors. Acquisition of the data: SL. Analysis and interpretation of the data: SL. Drafting the manuscript: SL. Critical revision: all authors.

Chapter 5.

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Study design: all authors. Acquisition of the data: SL. Analysis and interpretation of the data: SL. Drafting the manuscript: SL. Critical revision: all authors.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

Sjifra de Leeuw

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And I have by me, for my comfort,
two strange white flowers—shriveled
now, and brown and flat and brittle
—to witness that even when mind
and strength had gone, gratitude
and a mutual tenderness still lived
on in the heart of man.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS, 1895

Acknowledgments

In his novel *The Time Machine* (1895), H.G. Wells tells the story of a scientist who builds a time machine to travel thirty million years into the future. The scientist finds himself on a version of earth that resembles an endless garden, with little trace of human society. As time progresses, the scientist discovers humankind has degenerated into two species, lacking any form of intelligence or strength. It is a future void of civilization, but in which class conflict and violence had nonetheless persisted and intensified. Anyone who would witness this future would lose his belief in human progress. Anyone who would witness this future would be left with feelings of emptiness, loneliness and darkness.

Despite all this, there is one memory that brings the scientist feelings of love, affection and hope. It is the memory of Weena, a childlike humanoid creature he saves from drowning. He recalls her stuffing his pockets with flowers because she was convinced they were "an eccentric kind of vase for floral decoration." He recalls forming a genuine, warm friendship with her over the course of just a few days. Upon return, when the dark feelings attempt to take over, the scientist reaches in his pockets, where he finds the flowers that Weena gave to him. These flowers forever remind him that we can find comfort in each other's warmth even in the worst of times.

It would be unfair to compare my experiences with those of the

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That being said, the remainder of this text will not elaborate on this gratitude. It pales in comparison to what you – and many others, my pets and neighbors' pets[6] – have given me in the last few years: a shriveled flower in my pocket that fills me with feelings of warmth. In this light, it does not make much sense to structure these acknowledgments along the dimensions of time, space or social sphere. When it mattered most, strangers (some are friends now)[7] have taught me more valuable lessons than my most gifted

[6] My dog Rheia and my cats Esh and Layla, and my neighbors' dogs Roos†, Leon, Luna and Artemis

[7] e.g., the elderly people at the Leo Polak retirement home where I volunteer; my students; the staff of my apartment building on 34th Street, NY; my parents' cleaner Alfred; my doctor Clara Lindijer; and my friends Alexander Wise, Alexis van Gelder, Ariana Carvalho, Felix Bunting, Laure Vandersmissen, Stiene Praet, Wouter Eijgelsheim, and Zhanna Terechshenko

colleagues or teachers. Colleagues[8] and teachers[9] have offered the same emotional guidance as some of my dearest friends. My friends (both from the past and present)[10] have shown a level of patience that one would usually only get from one's parents. Finally, my mom and dad[11] – and my 'family by proxy'[12] – have relieved me from personal burdens that I should have carried on my own. Only in hindsight I realize that you saved me from feelings of disconnect and indifference with your tokens of kindness.

But here is the principal difference between Weena and those

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[8] Alessandro Nai, Alyt Damstra, Anja Neundorf, Angela Bourne, Anna Brosius, Bas van den Putte, Bert Bakker, Carlos Brenes Peralta, Cees van der Eijk, Cristina Montzer, Damian Trilling, Elias Dinas, Edina Strikovic, Emilie van Haute, Erik Bleich, Fernando Casal Bertoa, Hans Beentjes, Ine Goovaerts, Ilse Pit, Ivo Bosilkov, Jasper van de Pol, Joost van Spanje, Judith Möller, Julia van Weert, Laura Jacobs, Linda Bos, Linda van den Heijkant, Lisanne Wichgers, Magdalena Wojcieszak, Mark Boukes, Rachid Azrout, Rens Vliegenthart, Robin Tschötsel, Roderik Rekker, Sarah de Lange, Sanne Kruikemeier, Stefaan Walgrave, Tom Dobber, Tom Powell, and Tom van der Meer

[9] Anne van den Bosch, Bart Kerremans, Delia Canale, Edith Drieskens, Ellen Claes, Gijs Bolten, Heleen Touquet, Herman Spilker, Joeri Wielandts, Matthias Lievens, Marc Hooghe, Peter Buis, Scarlett Arts, Silvia Erzeel, Sofie Marien, Stefaan Fiers and Vera Hoorens.

[10] Arthur Eaton, Bram Feyaerts, Brianna Howell, Claire Schyns, Delphine Jacquemart, Estera Waas, Evelien Moors, Eveline Duyster, Floor van Kuler, Francesca Feo, Gianluca Piccolino, Gloria Kourkoliotis, Greet Kauffman, Gwen Meert, Hannah Fluit, Hannah van Binsbergen, Laetitia Louis, Leonardo Puleo, Lycka Kamoen, Matthias, Mathijs Post, Marilou Sleiderink, Nils Dekeersmaeker, Rebecca Katzy, Renee Van Elk, Sarah Spenninck, Sjors Aartsen, Thomas Mermans

[11] Elisabeth de Leeuw and Karl de Leeuw

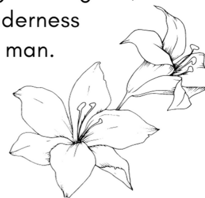
[12] Eva Van Langendonck, Gunther Vanden Eynde, Kaatje Roelant (and family), Karen van Peteghem (and family), Kristien Vanderheiden, Manuka Khan, Rousseau Khan, Susan Vermeer, Wouter de Nooy, Yolanda van der Vaart

listed in this text: I never saved you from drowning. Unlike the scientist, I have not given you a moral obligation to care. Unlike Weena, you are not carefree. At times, you may have been dealing with feelings of sorrow, grief or angst, you may have felt angry about how unfair life was treating you or you may have suffered under a disproportionate amount of professional pressure. But you cared nonetheless. This shows exceptional character, generosity, strength and selflessness.

"To me, the future is still black and blank." Still, it is lit at a few casual places by the memory of your warmth. I know now that I aspire to be like you one day, so that should your dark feelings ever return, you can find comfort in the idea that someone, somewhere cares. "To me, the future is a vast ignorance." Still, I am eternally indebted to you; not for your involvement in my work, but for your kindness in times of adversity.

And I have by me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers—shriveled now, and brown and flat and brittle—to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS, 1895



THE AUTHORITARIAN VIRUS

BETWEEN INFECTION AND IMMUNITY

SJIFRA EDITH DE LEEUW

In his famous appeal against fascism, German philosopher Karl Loewenstein warned that democracy may one day be destroyed from within. To date, the fear of this authoritarian virus has not subsided. Many worry that exposure to this virus may end in infection, disease, or possibly even the death of democracy. In this dissertation, I alleviate this pessimistic mood.
I argue that exposure also helps build immunity. I test this claim by examining how citizens respond when they are exposed to a sample of the virus: an image of what living under authoritarian rule would look like. I use the term authoritarian framing effects to describe these responses. To this end, I develop empirical tests of authoritarian framing effects in 42 democracies.
The results shed new light on the nature and effects of the authoritarian virus. Some of my findings justify the pessimistic mood of earlier work. Exposure corrodes democratic values among some citizens in some countries, albeit decreasingly so. More importantly, I find that the symptoms of immunity outweigh the symptoms of infection. I show that exposure to the image of authoritarian rule reaffirms democratic values and strengthens support for strategies of democratic defense among a growing number of citizens. These "immune" citizens constitute a valuable safeguard against future authoritarian revival.

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