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Authoritarianism in the 21st Century

Editor
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Editorial

Authoritarianism in the 21st Century

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Abstract
This introduction offers an overview of the key works in this edited volume on authoritarian regimes. This edited volume explains how authoritarian regimes were studied in the past and how this may contrast with how authoritarian regimes are studied today. This compilation also examines the newest trends in authoritarianism in the 21st century and showcases interesting works on elections, media pluralism and regime hybridity. The volume also highlights the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes to the international order and the growing influence of authoritarian regimes.

Keywords
authoritarian elections; authoritarian regimes; hybrid regimes; totalitarian regimes

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Authoritarianism in the 21st Century", edited by Natasha Ezrow (University of Essex, UK).

Though most academic studies of politics have focused on democracy, the past fifteen years has seen a huge upsurge in academic work on authoritarian regimes. In the past the study of authoritarian regimes led to broad generalizations about these regimes. Though some of these stereotypes hold, they do not accurately depict all regimes.

No longer shrouded in mystery, many scholars have uncovered the ways in which authoritarian regimes differ and how these differences can lead to a range of outcomes.

Studies of authoritarian regimes of the past focused mostly on whether regimes were totalitarian or authoritarian. As such the key questions in studying dictatorships was how brutal the regime was, how it rose to power and how it exerted its will over the people. Totalitarian regimes a—special subset of authoritarian regimes that held complete power over its brainwashed citizens—were written about as if they were abundant. In totalitarian regimes there were no elections, the media was completely under state control and state propaganda was used to activate the citizens into loyal foot soldiers for the regime. Key examples studied were mostly found in Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union, East Germany, Albania and Romania. All other authoritarian regimes that were not totalitarian were lumped into a large category. These authoritarian regimes focused on creating an apathetic public that had no interest in involving themselves in the affairs of the state.

The level of brutality in totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the past was also notable. Totalitarian regimes such as Uruguay (1973–1984) had a high percentage of political prisoners. Authoritarian regimes such as Iraq under Saddam Hussein (1979–2003) and Argentina under the military junta (1976–1983) brutally killed many of its own citizens. But today totalitarian regimes are almost extinct, with the one lone survivor being North Korea. The level of brutality of authoritarian regimes in general has also dissipated, as regimes have found other means to hold power effectively, without resorting to killing and controlling their citizens.

Generalizations of authoritarian regimes of the past also focused on their unpredictable nature. Authoritarian regimes such as Uganda under Idi Amin (1971–1979) made decisions on a whim, never considering the advice of technocrats or experts. Case in point, in early of August 1972, Amin ordered the expulsion of the Asian minority, given them only 90 days to leave the country. Studies of authoritarian regimes also focused on their eccentricities. Saparmurat Niyazov the former leader of Turkmenistan, for example, named the months and days of the week after himself and his family. Bal-

let was banned because he found it dull. A course in the Rukhnama, a book of spiritual musings penned by Niyazov, was required to receive a driver's license (Blank, 2007; Polese & Horák, 2015). Similarly, Kim Jong-il, former leader of North Korea used to travel in armoured trains, due to a fear of flying, and had lobsters air-lifted to him daily while he travelled. His son and current leader, Kim Jong-un travels with his own toilet. Muammar Gaddafi forced every Libyan to own chickens, even those living in small apartments. Every Libyan citizen was also forced to read his self-penned Green Book which outlined his philosophies. Though there are still some authoritarian regimes that are brutal, unpredictable and eccentric, there are also authoritarian regimes like that of Singapore, which are reasonable, stable and on most days may seem like a democracy.

In spite of these interesting anecdotes, much of the study of authoritarian regimes was unknown. One reason for this is that the study of authoritarian regimes is difficult. This area of research presents us with unique challenges because of the very fact that they are authoritarian. An extreme example of this is the case of Laos, a single-party dictatorship. For many years in Laos, even the identity of the party leaders was unknown. In some dictatorships, obtaining the most basic facts about the regime is impossible. Because of this, testing hypotheses regarding dictatorial political systems can be difficult. In spite of this, new studies of authoritarian regimes have been able to go beyond the classification that characterized regimes as either totalitarian or authoritarian and the old stereotypes of the past. New typologies of authoritarian regimes have shed light on who holds power, focusing on how that may impact the propensity for conflict, stability and development. Work has examined the factors that cause authoritarian regimes to breakdown and the mode of transition (Geddes, 1999, 2004).

While the last twenty-five years led to a mushrooming of studies focusing on authoritarian regimes, the 21st century has brought new forms of authoritarianism to examine. Post-Cold War authoritarian regimes are lasting in office longer than their predecessors. From 1946 to 1989, the average duration of authoritarian regimes was 12 years. Since the end of the Cold War this number has almost doubled to an average of 20 years. Today, the typical dictatorship has been in power for 25 years. Iran's theocratic regime, for example, has ruled for 39 years—since the fall of the Shah in 1979. And the Cuban regime has maintained power for 42 years, riding out the 2008 transition of power from Fidel Castro to his brother Raúl. Learning from the mistakes—and successes—of their predecessors and peers, autocrats are altering their tactics to increase the durability of their regimes. The longevity and tactics of authoritarian rule has been one of the major areas of research of the past few decades.

This edited volume examines the newest trends in authoritarianism in the 21st century, namely the ways in which authoritarian regimes function today in light of greater scrutiny on sham elections, and greater power of the media. How do authoritarian regimes use elections to sustain their power and legitimacy and is this effective? How much media pluralism do authoritarian regimes actually offer? And, given that most authoritarian regimes have adopted elections and some media pluralism, many authoritarian regimes may actually fit in the hybrid category. In light of this, what are new ways for us to study hybrids to offer a better understanding about how they function? The volume offers a better understanding of not only the institutions in authoritarian regimes but the how these institutions affect citizen perceptions of what authoritarianism is. The volume also explains the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes and authoritarian styles of rule to the international order.

To provide a useful starting point, the first article by Erica Frantz (2018) presents an overview of the field of authoritarian regimes, offering a history of the key studies in authoritarian research and how the study of authoritarian regimes has changed over time. The article examines the study of totalitarian regimes, which was then followed by the emergence of single party, military and personalist regimes. The article also highlights the two major debates in the field: how to measure and categorize authoritarian regimes and whether or not pseudo-democratic institutions help authoritarian regimes survive.

In many cases, authoritarian regimes have been adaptable, using democratic institutions to sustain their rule indefinitely (Levitsky & Way, 2012; Slater & Fenner, 2011). As authoritarian regimes have moulded themselves to appear more democratic, this has also impacted citizens. Many citizens of authoritarian regimes perceive that they are living in democracies. Authoritarian regimes are not only more resilient than ever before but they are better at concealing their authoritarian nature.

Some authoritarian regimes have engaged in cosmetic democratization. After decades of near total control over its citizens the military regime in Myanmar unilaterally decided to embark on the path to political liberalization by holding relatively free and fair elections in 2010. But these democratization efforts masked a strong military that continues to rule behind the scenes and remains brutally repressive to the Rohingya minority. The example of Myanmar highlights an important trend in authoritarian regimes: holding elections without democratizing.

Elections are held by almost all authoritarian regimes, some of which are free of massive fraud. Elections are no longer an institution in which democracies hold a monopoly. But when elections are held by authoritarian regimes it is not a sign that genuine democratization is taking place. Rather elections are a tool used by authoritarian regimes in order to prolong their rule. In spite of this, studying elections in authoritarian regimes is a useful exercise. As the second article by John James Kennedy, Hongyan Liu, and Haruka Nagao (2018) indicates, the Chinese government has invested time and en-

ergy into promoting voting in local elections as a civic duty of its citizens. Though China holds no national elections, studying its local elections is a way to gain further knowledge about how much support the regime has, and where the regime receives its strongest support.

In addition to being proficient at using elections to their advantage, some authoritarian regimes have become adept at using the media more creatively than in the past. Rather than completely controlling the media, some authoritarian regimes have figured out ways in which to allow some limited forms of media pluralism, at least in name. The third article in this edited volume, by Andreas Heinrich and Heiko Pleines (2018) explains the role of the media in authoritarian regimes in three staunchly authoritarian post-Soviet states: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In all of these cases the media appears to be more pluralistic than it is in reality. Whereas past authoritarian regimes made no effort to appear to have limited pluralism, new authoritarian regimes pay lip service to this concept, but don't allow the opposition much leeway.

By offering limited pluralism of the media and civil liberties, holding elections and allowing some space for the opposition a new category of authoritarian regimes has emerged. The most recent wave of democratization has resulted in the proliferation of regimes that are neither fully democratic nor classically authoritarian. In today's day and age most regimes defy these binary categories. Though not all studies of authoritarian regimes consider the regimes that are stuck in the grey zone, the study of hybrid regimes is a topic where there is a growing interest. Initially mentioned almost thirty years ago, hybrid regimes are a "functional and territorial political mix" (Karl, 1995, 83). Hybrid regimes are a distinct subset from flawed democracies which are actually democratic but have certain defects that affect how they function. Hybrid regimes are often considered to be authoritarian regimes that have some democratic features. The fourth article, by Mariam Mufti (2018), examines the research on hybrids and argues in favour of moving away from only looking at elections to measure hybrids, and adopting a multi-dimensional assessment.

The growth of hybrids and flawed democracies around the world has led to concerns about the waning strength of democracy. The final article by Thomas Ambrosio (2018) explains the spread of authoritarian norms and the erosion of democratic legitimacy. The rise in power of Russia under Putin and China under Xi Jinping has signalled a shift in the normative structure of the international system. Democracy is no longer the dominant paradigm, and authoritarian regimes have increasingly more soft power. The rise of right-wing populist parties and leaders has also tapped into the growing dissatisfaction about democracy and a growing will for authoritarian models of governance.

In spite of these trends, the world still lives mostly in democratic governments; democracy is not going to disappear any time soon. However, these new models of authoritarianism that no longer exercise power in a totalitarian fashion, and are able to use and exploit democratic institutions for their longevity, pose a serious threat to democracies and to the democratic world order. Understanding more about the world of authoritarian regimes and hybrids helps us to better identify the challenges facing worldwide democracy and how and if to respond to them.

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Natasha Ezrow is a Professor of Government at the University of Essex, where she serves as the Director of Education. She specializes in authoritarian regimes, corruption and failed states and has written several books on these topics including a forthcoming book titled *Democracies and Autocracies*. In addition to research, she enjoys teaching modules in the areas of International Development and Comparative Politics.

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Commentary

Authoritarian Politics: Trends and Debates

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Abstract
In the past two decades, the field of authoritarian politics has grown substantially. This commentary surveys the major findings in the field, how it is has evolved, and key debates that have emerged in response.

Keywords
authoritarian politics; authoritarian regimes; autocracies; dictatorships

Issue
This commentary is part of the issue "Authoritarianism in the 21st Century", edited by Natasha Ezrow (University of Essex, UK).

1. Introduction

Dictatorships govern about 40% of the world's countries today (Geddes, Wright, & Frantz, 2014). Though democracy spread across much of the globe after the end of the Cold War, it did not take root everywhere. Many long-standing dictatorships withstood the chaos that accompanied the fall of the Soviet Union, such as those in China and North Korea, and many new democracies that emerged at this time slowly reverted back to authoritarian rule afterwards, such as Russia by 1993 and Armenia by 1994. Still, even after the post-Cold War dust settled in the mid-1990s, democracies outnumbered their authoritarian counterparts by about two to one. That said, there are indications that authoritarianism is set to make a come back. According to the watchdog organization Freedom House's 2018 report assessing global political rights and civil liberties, democracy has suffered 12 consecutive years of decline (Freedom House, 2018). Despite the optimism of modernization theorists many decades ago (Lipset, 1959), authoritarian regimes do not appear to be going away any time soon.

Perhaps in response to this reality, the field of authoritarian politics has expanded considerably in the past two decades or so. Whereas historically research on democracies far outpaced that on dictatorships—at least partially due to the difficulties inherent in studying authoritarian regimes—this is decreasingly the case. This commentary surveys the major developments in the literature on authoritarian politics, summarizes the key findings, and highlights the key debates that have emerged in response.

2. The Evolution of Research on Dictatorships

Research on dictatorships has in many ways evolved in line with changes in the nature of authoritarian rule we have witnessed over the course of the last century. In response to the emergence of regimes such as Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler and the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin, for example, scholars focused on the concept of totalitarianism. Totalitarian regimes are dictatorships led by a single political party that feature a highly cohesive ideology and an all-encompassing secret police (Friedrich & Brzezinski, 1956). The goal of such regimes is to fundamentally transform society through state propaganda and coercion. Research on totalitarianism primarily emphasized the characteristics of these regimes, as well as the factors that enabled their emergence, such as the social isolation citizens experienced following periods of crisis (Arendt, 1951).

Following World War II and the collapse of colonial empires around the globe, a new crop of dictatorships formed, many of which bore little in common to the totalitarian regimes identified in the literature. Many of these new dictatorships featured a single, dominant political party, but—unlike their totalitarian counterparts—they did not seek societal conversion to meet an ide-

ological goal. Many of these regimes sprouted on the heels of independence movements, such as Kenya under the Kenyan African National Union (1963 to 2002) and Singapore under the People's Action Party (1965 to the present). In response to these developments, scholars sought to explain the different features of dominant parties and how they influence regime strength, with the intensity and duration of the party's struggle to assume power identified as critical (Huntington & Moore, 1970).

As the Cold War heated up in the 1970s and global superpowers devoted greater military resources to developing countries to secure their support, military dictatorships took power in many parts of the developing world, including Brazil (1964 to 1985), Nigeria (1967 to 1979), and Thailand (1977 to 1988). In conjunction with this trend, scholars turned their attentions toward differentiating military dictatorships, primarily based on the ambitions of the ruling junta in terms of their intent to rule indefinitely or step down after bringing the country order (Perlmutter, 1977).

Many dictatorships also emerged at this time that looked like military dictatorships, because the leader wore a military uniform, but were governed differently because the military institution lacked any de facto influence over policy. Examples include Uganda under Idi Amin (1971 to 1979) and Iraq under Saddam Hussein (1979 to 2003). In response, scholars also delved into the nature of strongman rule—often referred to as personalist dictatorship—where all power lands in the hands of a single individual. Research on this form of dictatorship emphasized the tendency for such leaders to steal from the state, erode state institutions, and put their countries on paths toward political decay (Decalo, 1985).

Following the end of the Cold War, geopolitical pressures for countries to pursue political liberalization—often linked to foreign aid—led to significant changes in terms of what the "typical" dictatorship looked like. Whereas only around half of all dictatorships in power during the Cold War featured legislatures and multiparty electoral competition, today the vast majority of them do (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2014). These dynamics led scholars to unpack the purposes of pseudo-democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes, with a key finding to emerge being that they tend to enhance authoritarian survival (Gandhi, 2008). These developments have generated new questions and debates, a subject to which I now turn.

3. Key Debates in the Field

There undoubtedly exist a plethora of unresolved debates in the field of authoritarian politics; this commentary focuses on the two that—in my view—are the most relevant to a broad swathe of the literature.

The first has to do with classification and measurement. Classifications of dictatorships fall into two categories: categorical and continuous (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011). Categorical typologies view dictatorships as equally authoritarian, with the key distinction of interest being various features of their rule. Examples include classifications of dictatorships as civilian, monarchic, or military (Cheibub, Gandhi, & Vreeland, 2010), or personalist, monarchic, dominant-party, or military (Geddes et al., 2014). Continuous typologies, by contrast, see authoritarianism as a linear concept, such that systems can be placed on a scale ranging from fully authoritarian to fully democratic. Examples include the broad array of typologies that emphasize hybrid political systems, often referred to as grey zone (Diamond, 2002), competitive authoritarian (Levitsky & Way, 2002), or electoral authoritarian (Schedler, 2006), as well as the measures often used to capture these concepts, such as combined Polity scores (Marshall, Gurr, & Jaggers, 2017) and Freedom House civil liberties and political rights scores (Freedom House, 2018).

The distinction between the two typologies may seem unimportant, but is actually quite consequential and the subject of substantial discussion (see, for example, Cheibub et al., 2010; Kailitz, 2013; Wahman, Teorell, & Hadenius, 2013). One of the messages to come out of this discussion is that scholars should take great care in their research to ensure that the theoretical concepts they emphasize are reflected in the typology that they rely on. Categorical typologies, for example, allow scholars to avoid making any assumptions about the linearity of the path from dictatorship to democracy, but cannot shed light on dynamics of political liberalization. At the same time, continuous typologies can tell us about whether systems are moving to or away from different gradations of authoritarianism, but mask political changes occurring within countries from one equally authoritarian regime to the next (e.g., Iran transition from the Shah's rule in 1979 to the theocratic regime in power today; Conroy-Krutz & Frantz, 2017). Given that research on authoritarianism suggests that pseudo-democratic institutions prolong authoritarian survival, how do we know whether the adoption of political institutions that broaden participation and contestation is indicative of a political system that is less authoritarian as opposed to a sign of a savvy regime boosting its odds of survival?

Relatedly, a second critical debate has to do with the mechanisms through which pseudo-democratic institutions influence authoritarian survival. Some scholars posit that such institutions bolster survival because they serve as tools for mobilizing supporters and signaling strength to challengers (Geddes et al., in press); others assert that they enable dictators to commit to power-sharing deals (Magaloni, 2008); and others put forth that they are arenas in which regimes can provide policy concessions to rivals (Gandhi, 2008). It is possible that all of these pathways are at play, perhaps dependent on the type of institutions under analysis. Yet, future research is needed to connect the dots and inform our understanding of how, precisely, pseudo-democratic institutions confer survival gains, and under what contexts. Importantly, if the vast majority of dictatorships today

feature pseudo-democratic institutions, then what type of analytical leverage do we gain by stating that they prolong survival? Future research is also needed to dig deeper into the full range of institutions that dictatorships employ to maintain control, as well as examine how the rise in pseudo-democratic institutions across dictatorships has influenced their use of other survival instruments, such as repression.

4. Conclusion

The field of authoritarian politics has expanded considerably in the past two decades or so. We now know that dictatorships are not all the same and that the differences among them often have important consequences for policies of interest (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011). We also know that most dictatorships today feature the same types of institutions that we typically associate with democracies, even though they serve very different purposes (Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009). These advances have brought with them new debates, suggesting there are many promising avenues for future research in the years to come.

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Article

Voting and Values: Grassroots Elections in Rural and Urban China

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Abstract
Authoritarian leaders often claim that they promote democratic institutions such as elections and democratic values. In China, the central propaganda often promotes the right and duty of citizens to vote in local elections as well as the importance of citizens' input into the policy making process. However, there is often a gap between government rhetoric and reality. In this article, we use the China General Social Survey (CGSS) 2013 to evaluate the determinants of voting in local elections and democratic values (attitudes) in rural and urban China. The results show that respondents with higher education tend to have lower levels of democratic values and participate less in local elections, but respondents with only compulsory education are more likely to display democratic orientations and vote. This suggests the relative success as well as the limits of authoritarian democratic propaganda.

Keywords
China; democratic values; education; grassroots elections; voting

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Authoritarianism in the 21st Century", edited by Natasha Ezrow (University of Essex, UK).

1. Introduction

In 2012, during the 18th Party Congress, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced the "12 Core Socialist Values", and "democracy" was near the top of the list behind "prosperity". The list also includes "freedom", "equality" and "justice". Interestingly, these are also some of the key terms used to describe democratic values in other countries in North America and Western Europe. In addition, the CCP also promotes elections especially voting for grassroots leaders in rural and urban China. However, the CCP defines democratic values, such as public participation in government and voting, as a duty rather than a right. Thus, the term "democracy" may have a different meaning for citizens in China than in the western democracies.

In general, much of the previous literature suggests that democratic values, such as the importance of voting and having a voice in the policy making process, tend to develop among the more educated urban middle class (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Lipset, 1959; Moore, 1966). However, national surveys for the last two decades show that over 70% of respondents (rural and urban) support the central leadership (Dickson, 2016). Despite rapid urbanization and increased levels of education, general support among the middle class for the CCP and the single party regime remain relatively strong (Chen, 2013; Chen & Dickson, 2008; Chen & Lu, 2011; Tsai, 2007). At the same time, rural and urban residents are voting in competitive grassroots elections (Li, 2003; O'Brien & Li, 2000; Tang, 2016). Thus, do more educated middle class urban residents hold stronger democratic values? What is the relationship between democratic values and voting in China?

One interesting puzzle is that even though there is wide spread support for the authoritarian regime most citizens tend to vote in grassroots elections and display a relatively high level of democratic values. Indeed, previ-

ous studies and surveys show that most Chinese respondents agree that political participation and individuals having a voice in the policy making process is an important part of the democratic process (Chen & Zhong, 2002; Shi, 1999). One critical debate is how these democratic values influence voting within an authoritarian regime. For example, Shi (1999) suggests that having democratic values promotes political efficacy and increases the likelihood of voting in grassroots elections because they believe even limited democratic institutions can replace corrupt local officials. However, Chen and Zhong (2002) argue that within an authoritarian regime people with more democratic orientations believe local elections are ineffective in replacing corrupt cadres and decide to abstain as a form of protest. Yet, both Shi (1999) and Chen and Zhong (2002) imply causality regarding the influence of democratic values on voting. Indeed, while there seems to be a correlation between voting and democratic values, the direction of causality is unclear. More importantly, they presuppose a positive relationship between education and democratic values. However, previous studies on China's grassroots elections have yet to disentangle the effect of education on democratic values and voting respectively. Moreover, there needs to be greater emphasis on the definition of democracy in the Chinese context.

In this article, we examine the possible relationship between voting in grassroots elections, democratic orientations, and education within an authoritarian regime. Previous studies examine democratic orientation and how this may influence voting either by promoting participation or abstention. In these studies, voting is the dependent variable and democratic values are the key independent variables. However, we argue that it is also important to look at how voting and education can influence democratic orientation. Using the 2013 China General Social Survey (CGSS), we find that education has strong influence on both voting behavior and democratic values. Moreover, it is not just the level of education, but the type of education (compulsory versus secondary) that affect voting and values. The results show that respondents with no education and those with college degrees tend to have the lowest voter turnout rates, suggesting a curvilinear relationship between voting and education. Yet, college educated respondents display the lowest proportion of democratic values. Thus, higher education is associated with lower voter participation as well as lower democratic orientations for both rural and urban residents. One implication is that respondents with compulsory education (9th grade) or below are more likely to absorb state messaging regarding their duty to vote and accept the CCP definitions of democracy. On the other hand, higher educated respondents have a more diluted view of their civic duty to vote and are less acceptant of the CCP presentation of democratic duties (values).

This article is divided into four sections. For the first part, we examine the general literature on grassroots governing bodies in China as well as the relationship between voting, democratic values, and education. We also examine one of the key debates regarding the relationship between democratic values and voting behavior. The second section covers the theoretical assumptions and three key hypotheses. The first hypothesis examines voting as the dependent variable and democratic values and education as the main independent variables. The second hypothesis analyzes democratic values as the dependent variable, with voting and education as the main independent variables. The third hypothesis includes CCP membership as the independent variable and voting as the dependent variable in order to isolate the effect of education on voting. The third section is the descriptive and statistical analysis. We present two sets of regression models: one with voting as the dependent variable and the other with democratic orientation as the dependent variable. We find the level of education is a key explanatory factor regarding a respondent's willingness to perform their democratic duty (voting) and acceptance of the CCP democratic values. The fourth and final section is the concluding comments.

2. Literature Review

Democratic values under the CCP definition reflects citizens' collective duty to vote, as opposed to the western definition of liberal democracy that emphasizes individual rights and freedom. As Shi (1999) argues that the CCP promotes the idea that voting is citizens' duty, democracy in China indicates "duty" rather than "rights". Tang (2016) also identifies the unique conception of democracy within China and the need to separate liberal democracy from Chinese definition of democracy. Indeed, Dickson (2016) demonstrates that both political leaders and ordinary citizens in China perceive democracy as citizens' contributions to the state through political participation rather than citizens' individual rights and freedom. Perry (2008) argues that the increase of protests in China is a sign of "rules consciousness" and not "rights consciousness" (p. 47) and states that "political rights in modern China were consistently regarded as bound up with a moral responsibility to the larger political community" (p. 46). Therefore, democratic values in the Chinese context reflects a sense of duty to participate (including voting), rather than pursuits of individual rights.

The CCP promotes this conception of democracy through propaganda posters and state media. Through media, the CCP fosters a sense of duty to vote in local elections and also advocates the importance of indirect elections at the municipal, provincial and central levels. Beijing's Election Committee posts posters across the city that encourage people to vote in district people's congress elections. The posters connect vote to democracy as well as party leadership and rule abiding behaviors. For instance, one poster says "Cherish democratic rights. Cast a sacred and solemn vote". Other posters include wordings such as "Exercise electoral rights in

accordance with law" and "Uphold a party leadership. Uphold and carry forward democracy". While the party-state uses words such as rights and democracy, they effectively connect democratic rights to a sense of duty and support for the current party leadership. Furthermore, the word "democracy" frequently appears on state media's news articles. For instance, a search for a word "democracy" in Chinese ("民主") on the People's Daily ("人民网") web page produces over 240,000 articles. Indeed, scholars argue that education and state media indoctrinate people with the CCP definition of democracy (Lu, Aldrich, & Shi, 2014; Lu & Shi, 2015).

Western notions of democratic values are strongly associated with voting and education. Scholars suggest higher levels of education are associated with democratic values and in turn these values promote political participation (Cho, 2015; Evans & Rose, 2012; McAllister & White, 2017). McAllister and White (2017) examine the World Values Survey (WVS) from 1990–2012 and find that education has the strongest influence on a support for democracy. In China, scholars find similar patterns regarding education and democratic values. For instance, Chen and Zhong (1998) use a 1995 urban Beijing survey and show that higher levels of education are positively associated with greater democratic values. Zhong (2005) conducted a 2000 survey in rural Jiangsu, an economically developed yet rural area, and finds that along with other factors a higher level of education positively influences democratic values. Similarly, Lu (2004) finds the same results using the 2001 WVS in China.

Rural and urban grassroots elections represent the CCP attempt to promote party-state vision of participation and democracy. In the countryside, the lowest level of administration is the town, and within each town there are a number of village committees VCs (rural grassroots units). VC members are responsible for key village resources, such as collective land, and they also have a level of autonomy from the town government regarding local governance and policy implementation (Benewick, Tong, & Howell, 2004; Gui, Cheng, & Ma, 2006; Kennedy, 2002). In urban areas, the lowest administrative level is the street office and under each street office are several resident committees (RCs). However, RCs tend to have less autonomy and manage fewer resources than their rural counterparts (Heberer, 2008; Huang, 2008; Read, 2000). As a result, several scholars suggest that voter turnout tends to be lower for RC elections than for VCs (Chen & Yao, 2005; Gui et al., 2006).

Several factors may influence voting behavior in rural and urban grassroots elections. Older residents tend to vote more than younger professionals even in the urban grassroots elections (Xiong, 2008). While education seems to have a positive influence on voting in western democracies, several studies find that education is negatively correlated with voting in China. Zheng and Zhu (2013) use the CGSS for 2006 and they find the high school and college educated rural and urban respondents are less likely to vote. Read (2003) finds the relatively new class of urban homeowners are more likely to participate in local elections. These residents have a greater stake in the RC elections regarding the need for services such as trash collections and upkeep of public spaces.

Although voting in grassroots elections is common in China, it is unclear how democratic values influence voting behavior. The debate is whether democratic orientation promotes participation or abstention in grassroots elections. Shi (1999) suggests that citizens' democratic orientations have a positive influence on voting in China. In a 1991 nationwide survey, Shi (1999) examines citizens' voting behaviors in rural and urban grassroots elections as well as the elections for deputies to local people's congress at both township and county levels. The election quality for the grassroots and people's congress vary by level of competitiveness. A semi-competitive election has multiple candidates for each seat whereas non-competitive typically have one candidate for each available position. Shi (1999) demonstrates that more educated citizens with greater democratic orientations are more likely to participate in semi-competitive elections, but they tend to abstain from non-competitive elections. Furthermore, the perception that semi-competitive elections can replace corrupt local leaders increases internal efficacy and this is associated with a higher voter turnout. Therefore, Shi (1999) concludes that higher educated people hold democratic values and they vote in local elections to articulate their interests in replacing local officials and fostering democracy.

However, some scholars argue that educated citizens who hold democratic values within an authoritarian regime are more likely to abstain from voting. For example, Zhong and Chen (2002) conducted a survey in rural Jiangsu province in 2000, and find that people who have democratic orientations, internal efficacy, and a higher level of education are less likely to vote in the village committee elections. In addition, Zheng and Zhu (2013) use the 2006 CGSS to examine factors that influence voter behavior in rural and urban grassroots elections, and they find that democratic values have no significant influence on voting. Chen and Zhong (2002) evaluate a 1995 survey conducted in urban Beijing and illustrate that respondents with democratic orientations and internal efficacy are less likely to vote, whereas those who support the authoritarian regime are more likely to vote. These citizens abstain from voting, because the "constraints are incompatible with their democratic values" (Chen & Zhong, 2002, p. 185). Moreover, people who vote in these elections also display a level of compliance and support for the central leadership.

The notion that citizens who only complete compulsory education are more likely to support the authoritarian system and participate in grassroots elections is similar to previous studies that examine the relationship between education and regime support. Geddes and Zaller (1989) as well as Key (1961) suggest that the educational experience, especially compulsory education, can

have a direct influence on an individual's political opinion. However, citizens who complete higher education or college (post compulsory) learn to evaluate rather than simply absorb state information and they may even begin to resist state messages and propaganda. Thus, these educated individuals may also abstain from voting within the authoritarian system.

Yet these studies assume a positive relationship between levels of education and democratic values. The existing literature adopts the western notion of liberal democracy that focuses on individual rights and freedom. As a result, previous studies start with the assumption that education increases democratic values, and examine whether this orientation encourages people to vote or abstain. In this study, we start with the CCP definition of democracy and test the notion of duties rather than rights. As Key (1961) suggests, compulsory education and party-state propaganda may have a strong influence on citizens' perception of democratic values and strengthen their sense of duty. However, given the CCP definition of democratic values, it is more likely that higher educated citizens (post compulsory) and professionals tend to have a weaker sense of duty. These educated citizens may choose to not vote, and may display lower levels of commitment to their democratic duties (lower democratic values). Indeed, non-voting may not reflect stronger rights consciousness in a liberal democratic vein, but rather a form of noncompliance with their perceived duties.

3. Hypothesis and Measures

In order to test the difference between rights and duties, we evaluate three hypotheses. The first hypothesis examines an influence of democratic values on voting. Shi (1999) adopts the western definition of democratic values and argues that voters with democratic values are more likely to vote to replace local officials. However, we start with the CCP definition of "duty to vote" rather than the western definition of individual rights. Thus, when democratic values are defined as "duty to vote", respondents with higher levels of democratic values should be more likely to vote. Therefore, we test (H1) democratic values hypothesis: *respondents with higher level of democratic values are more likely to vote in grassroots elections*.

The second hypothesis investigates the impact of education on voting and democratic values respectively. The general assumption in the literature is that greater education is positively associated with voting (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Lipset, 1959; Moore, 1966). Scholars also suggest that education is positively associated with the western notion of democratic values (Cho, 2015; Evans & Rose, 2012; McAllister & White, 2017). Overall education seems to be the driving force influencing democratic values (rights consciousness) and voting. Furthermore, the literature assumes a covariation of education and democratic values and examines their effect on voting (Chen & Zhong, 2002; Shi, 1999). However, with democracy defined as duty to vote, theoretically "democratic values and voting" should correspond, rather than "education and democratic values". In other words, we suggest education should have a similar effect on both democratic values and voting. Thus, we examine two dependent variables, democratic values and voting, and we test (H2) education hypothesis: *education influences democratic values and voting in the same direction*.

The third hypothesis further assesses an influence of education on voting by considering CCP memberships. Other studies indicate that compulsory education will strengthen citizens' support for the state and conform to the political views of the regime (Geddes & Zaller, 1989; Key, 1961). This also suggests that people who attain higher levels of education may challenge these positive perceptions of the state. However, starting with the CCP definition of democratic values as a civic duty, higher education should reduce the effect of indoctrination and propaganda as well as dilute their sense of duty. Thus, educated respondents are less likely to vote. Yet, even among educated, if respondents are CCP members, then they should have a much stronger sense of duty to participate in local elections. Thus, we test (H3) the CCP membership hypothesis: *educated CCP members are more likely to vote than educated non-party members*.

We use the 2013 CGSS to investigate the hypotheses. The CGSS is a collaborative survey with Renmin University of China, Department of Sociology, and the Survey Research Center of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Since 2003 the CGSS has conducted several nationwide surveys and the 2013 survey has a random sample of over 11,000 respondents. This sample size is much larger than that of the 2011 Asian Barometer Surveys in China (N = 3,473) and the 2012 WVS in China (N = 2,300). The large sample size is one of the key advantages of the survey because it reduces the standard error and enables more precise analysis. For example, education variable divides respondents according to five levels of educational attainment, and each of the five categories contain more than 1,000 observations. Finally, the 2013 CGSS contains a specific set of questions on democratic values. The survey questions directly inquire people's perceptions of democracy and offer a suitable operationalization of democratic values. Some previous studies tend to use "demand for democracy" as conceptualization of democratic values, but this assumes a liberal democracy definition (Chen & Zhong, 2002; Shi, 1999). Instead, the CGSS's questions examine perceptions of democratic values such as voting and people's voice in government.

Table 1 of the Annex displays the key variable names and definitions as well as percentage and frequencies from the 2013 CGSS. The four key variables are voting, democratic values, levels of education, and CCP membership. Voting is reported participation in the last election. Although the survey age range is from 14 to 94 years old, we only include respondents over

the age of 20 to ensure a sample of possible voters over the age of 18 for the last election (grassroots election occur every three years). Voting is dependent variable in the first set of regression models and independent variable in the second set of regression models. Democratic values is an index combining the following three survey questions on democratic values: (1) democracy means the government should be for the people ("民主就是政府要为民做主"), (2) a country is a democracy only when ordinary people have direct voices and decision power on important state and local matters ("只有老百姓对国家和地方的大事都有直接的发言权或决定权, 才算是民主"), (3) a country is a democracy if ordinary people have rights to vote for their own representatives to discuss important state and local matters ("如果老百姓有权选举自己的代表去讨论国家和地方的大事, 也算是民主"). The answers to each question are coded dichotomously as either "agree" or "disagree" and comprise the democratic values index that ranges from 3 to 6 (6 is the highest level of democratic values). Democratic values is independent variable in the first set of regression models and dependent variable in the second set of regression models.

Education is self-reported completion of specific grade levels. The key distinction is the difference between completion of compulsory education (middle school or 9 years) and post compulsory education (high school and college). The number of respondents with CCP membership accounts for 10% of the entire sample. This is slightly higher than the 6% national percentage of CCP members.

The control variables include generation, election quality, class status, home ownership status, and gender. To test generational influence, we divide the population into two groups: those born before and after 1968. This is a delineation based on respondents who came of age during the reform era (born after 1968) and those who came of age before. County level election quality is also a self-reported measure based on the individual question whether or not the respondent knows the election process. Only about 30% of the respondents could identify the type of election process. The elections vary from open nominations and competitive elections to no elections (i.e. appointed positions). For those who know the process, 58% reported an open election process. We then examine the number of respondents who reported open elections within the county, if at least half reported an open election then we code it as "open elections". We find a clear variation in election quality at the county level. Class status is a self-reported measure of class ranging from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). The largest proportion is the 5th category or the middle class at 33%. Both homeownerships and gender are measured dichotomously.

4. Analysis

The descriptive data suggests no clear relationship between voting and democratic values. Table 2 of the Annex shows that only about 50% of respondents with the highest level of democratic orientations are likely to vote. While respondents who have democratic values are more likely to vote than those who do not, about half of the respondents who display democratic values did not vote at all. Thus, the data does not easily resolve the democratic orientation and voter abstention debate (Chen & Zhong, 2002; Shi, 1999). Indeed, there can be a number of reasons for not voting, from apathy to busy schedules, as well as diminished sense of duty.

As Gui et al. (2006), Chen and Yao (2005), and Xiong (2008) point out, voter turnout is much lower in urban grassroots elections. There is a 14% difference in the likelihood to vote between rural and urban respondents. This is possibly due to the fact that urban RCs have fewer resources and decision-making power than elected VC members (Xiong, 2008).

Generational differences, election quality and homeownership have an influence on voting, while gender and class have little impact. The majority, just over 60%, of younger respondents (under 45) did not vote, but the majority of the older respondents voted. This pattern holds for both rural and urban grassroots elections. Indeed, as Xiong (2008) suggests the vast majority (64%) of the older urban respondents voted in the last election as opposed to 36% of the younger generation. Election quality can also influence voter behavior especially within an authoritarian regime. In fact, the majority of respondents (58%) did not vote in the closed non-competitive elections, while close to 60% of the respondents that experienced an open election process participated in the election. The descriptive data also shows that homeownership has a positive influence on voting in local elections. As Read (2003) suggests, homeowners are more politically active than renters and tend to be involved in grassroots elections especially in the urban areas.

Gender and class status have little effect on voting behavior. The proportion of lower and higher classes are just as likely to vote (or not vote) as the middle class. Unlike the middle class expectations within the traditional modernization literature, such as Lipset (1959) and Moore (1966), voting behavior of middle class respondents are no different than other classes. Gender also has little influence on voting. However, females are slightly less likely to vote than male respondents.

One of the most striking determinates on voting is education. Table 3 of the Annex displays the non-linear pattern of influence. The smallest proportion of voters are among respondents with the lowest and highest levels of education. Indeed, only 33% of college educated respondents voted in the last election. However, majority of respondents, who attended or only completed compulsory education, voted in the last grassroots election. It is the middle educated rather than the middle class who have a higher proportion of political participation. This reflects Zheng and Zhu (2013) as well as Li's (2016) findings regarding the non-linear effect of education on voting. Table 4 of the Annex shows the similar non-linear

relationship between education and voting among CCP members. However, compared to the entire sample, CCP members tend to have higher educational attainment. About 67% of the CCP members completed higher education while only 35% of the total sample completed higher education. Overall CCP members are far more likely to vote than non-party members.

The regression analysis suggests a similar pattern observed in the descriptive tables. Table 5 of the Annex displays four logit regression models with voting in the last election as dependent variable. This is dichotomous variable and we used a logit model. As the descriptive tables suggest, Model 1 shows the statistical significance of democratic values, elections quality, and generation as well as homeownership, and CCP membership. Gender and class have no influence on voting. The variable "rural" is 1 for rural and 0 for urban. As the descriptive statistics suggest, rural respondents are more likely to vote. Education is not statistically significant in Model 1, but when we add the squared education term (quadratic) in Model 2 to test for a non-linear influence we find that education has a curvilinear influence on voting.

Model 3 only examines rural respondents. Interestingly, the effect of democratic values is not as strong as urban respondents, but it is still positive and statistically significant. Thus, a sense of duty (state conception of democratic values) seems to have a positive association with voting. Education remains strong and statistically significant. Also, males are more likely to vote than females in rural grassroots elections.

Finally, Model 4 examines urban respondents. In this model, democratic values are more strongly correlated with voting than the rural model. Also, CCP membership is positive and statistically significant in all the four models. Thus, CCP members are much more likely to vote than non-party members. The data shows that higher educated respondents are less likely to vote, but CCP members tend to be higher educated. This suggests that the sense of duty is higher among party members than collage educated nonparty members.

The results support H1 that democratic values positively influence voting behaviors. The results are in line with the theoretical assumption that democratic values, defined as sense of duty, increases the likelihood of voting. The findings appear to support Shi's (1999) argument, yet under a different rationale. The non-linear effect of education remains a strong factor for all three models, but the magnitude (z-score) of education is lower for urban respondents. In order to test the influence of education on an individual's sense of duty, we need to examine democratic values as dependent variable.

Table 6 of the Annex displays the descriptive relationship between democratic orientation and education. First, the overall measure of democratic values is relatively high. For the whole sample, 65% of the respondents display the highest level of democratic values or a sense of duty to the state. However, with 65% as the base line, Table 6 shows a clear negative relationship between education and democratic values with college educated respondents 18% below the baseline and respondents with no education 13% above. This suggests that higher levels of education, especially college, erodes democratic orientation. However, given the definition, it is more accurate to describe this result as an erosion of the respondent's perceived duty to participate in state functions such as voting.

Table 7 of the Annex shows the ordered logit regression models with democratic values as the dependent variable. Like the regression in Table 5, voting is positively associated with democratic values. However, in this case, correlation is not causation. Both voting and democratic values are viewed as a sense of duty and this varies with the level of education. Model 2 in Table 7 suggests older rural respondents are more likely to hold democratic orientation. This is also associated with education. Older respondents tend to have lower levels of education especially in the countryside. Thus, we expect them to display a high level of duty to the state.

The results support H2 that education influences democratic values and voting in the same direction. Table 7 shows that respondents with the lower levels of education are more likely to display a sense of duty to vote and participate in the political system. The results from the two regression models in Table 5 and Table 7 suggest that education drives both voting and measures of democratic orientation into the same direction. Our results differ from previous research because we start with a CCP definition of democratic values.

The results from Table 4, Table 5 and Table 7 support H3 that educated CCP members are more likely to vote than educated non-party members. Table 4 shows that CCP members are mostly higher educated, and Table 4 and Table 5 show that they are more likely to vote. Table 7 shows that CCP membership and democratic values have a negative relationship, but not statistically significant. This indicates that CCP members are more likely to fulfil their duty to vote even though they are higher educated.

The reason why higher educated respondents are less likely to vote and have a reduced sense of duty is due to the education system and indoctrination of the CCP definition of democracy, especially through compulsory education. The CCP has historically claimed to be democratic and promotes the CCP definition of democracy and political participation including the right to vote and the role of the people in decision making. Moreover, the most intensive exposure to government perspective is compulsory education. Observing American public opinion, V. O. Key (1961) argued that "formal education may serve to indoctrinate people into the more-or-less official political values of the culture" (p. 340). The effectiveness of this indoctrination may be greater in authoritarian regimes (Geddes & Zaller, 1989; Kennedy, 2009). Indeed, compulsory education in China instils the ideals of a socialist democracy that includes the right to vote and people's influence in the decision-making process, which

indoctrinates people to perceive a sense of duty to vote as democratic values.

Higher education is typically viewed as the opportunity to expand the educational experience and question the status quo. This is at the heart of the liberal democratic ideal of higher education and enlighten political views especially questioning authority. However, higher education in China does not provide this type of liberal experience, but the high school and college educational opportunities do move beyond the compulsory education particularly in the areas of career choice and specialization. Post compulsory education may have the unintended consequence of diluting the sense of political or civic duty that was instilled during elementary and middle school years. The only way to maintain the CCP democratic duty after college is to be involved in a career choice that includes CCP membership. In fact, many younger CCP members join when they were in college in order to improve their employment chances.

5. Conclusion

One of the most challenging aspects of studying authoritarian regimes, especially in China, is the problem of translation and definitions. The word democracy in China is *minzhu* and it literally translates to "People in Charge". The "people" are the face of the authoritarian leadership from the inception of the People's Republic of China to the "12 Core Socialist Values" of the 18th Party Congress. While the central leadership introduced village elections and political reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, the intention was not to democratize China from a liberal democracy perspective, but to expand the democratic duties of the "people". Most Chinese grow up hearing the words "democracy", "freedom" and "elections", but these terms do not reflect the individual rights as they are understood in liberal democracies. Instead, the terms are part of the party state lexicon including conception of the "people" and duties as well as service to the state.

When evaluating Chinese attitudes or perceptions of democracy, researchers need to discuss not only the accepted social and political definitions, but also how and where citizens can be exposed to alternative definitions. Our study started off with the CCP definition of democracy and the concept of duty rather than rights. Given this definition, the results seem to contradict previous assumptions regarding the relationship between democratic values, voting and education. While our study does not support the ideal that higher education instills liberal values even in China, a closer look suggests that our results do support the general idea that higher education can dilute state propaganda and indoctrination in compulsory education. This may have great implications for regime support in the future.

The remaining puzzle is that while most surveys still display relatively strong public support for the central leadership, a growing number of citizens are completing high school and college education especially in urban areas. In addition, China is urbanizing at a rapid pace. In order to maintain public support, the CCP aggressively promoted the "12 Core Socialist Values" during the 18th (2012) and 19th (2017) Party Congress. Thus, is the Core Socialist Values campaign generating greater trust and support for the regime or widening the gap between government rhetoric and practice?

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Annex

Table 1. Descriptive data for voting and democratic values. Source: China General Social Survey 2013.

Code	Variable Label		Percentage	Frequency
vote	Voted in last VC and RC elections (over 20)			
		Yes [1]	48%	4,922
		No [0]	52%	5,389
demo123	Democratic Values Index			
		Agree to all three [6]	65%	5,947
		Agree to two out of three [5]	25%	2,340
		Disagree to two out of three [4]	9%	817
		Disagree to all three [3]	1%	114
generation	Respondents born before and after 1968			
		Over 45 [1]	49%	5,650
		Under 45 [0]	51%	5,788
edu	Level of Education			
		No Education [1]	13%	1,484
		Elementary School [2]	23%	2,582
		Middle School [3]	29%	3,326
		High School [4]	19%	2,180
		College [5]	16%	1,863
coelect	Quality of election grassroots election: good quality is open nomination process and competitive election within the county			
		Open Elections, Yes [1]	37%	4,099
		No [0]	63%	7,123
rural	Hukou status at the time of the survey			
		Rural [1]	55%	6,333
		Urban[0]	45 %	5,083
ownhome	Respondent owns home			
		Yes [1]	50%	5,672
		No [0]	50%	5,731
class	Self-identified class status: Highest 10, Lowest 1			
		[1]	7%	788
		[2]	8%	867
		[3]	16%	1,778
		[4]	18%	2,074
		[5]	33%	3,708
		[6]	12%	1,319
		[7]	5%	518
		[8]	2%	234
		[9]	0	35
		[10]	1%	74
gender		Male [1]	50%	5,756
		Female [0]	50%	5,682
party	Chinese Communist Party member			
		Yes [1]	10%	1,161
		No [0]	90%	10,277

Table 2. Voting and democratic values for respondent over 20 years old. Source: China General Social Survey 2013.

	Democratic Values			
Voting	Low	Medium Low	Medium High	High
No	74%	65%	55%	49%
Yes	26%	35%	45%	51%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(freq)	(91)	(688)	(2,042)	(5,484)

Table 3. Voting and the level of education for respondents over 20 years old. Source: China General Social Survey 2013.

	Education Level				
Voting	No Education	Elementary	Middle	High	College
No	55%	43%	49%	56%	67%
Yes	45%	57%	51%	44%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(freq)	(1,425)	(2,481)	(3,070)	(1,833)	(1,500)

Table 4. Voting and the level of education for respondents over 20 years old with CCP memberships. Source: China General Social Survey 2013.

	Education Level				
Voting	No Education	Elementary	Middle	High	College
No	37%	31%	34%	38%	57%
Yes	63%	69%	66%	62%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(freq)	(41)	(108)	(218)	(260)	(469)

Table 5. Factors that influence voting in village committee (rural) and residence committee (urban) elections in China (2013) for respondents over 20 years old.

	Coefficient (z-score)			
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3 (Rural)	Model 4 (Urban)
Democratic Value	0.20 * ** (5.58)	0.19 * ** (5.22)	0.13* (2.33)	0.24 * ** (4.97)
Election Quality	0.57 * ** (11.12)	0.58 * ** (11.33)	0.53 * ** (7.60)	0.57 * ** (7.18)
Generation (age)	0.53 * ** (10.11)	0.54 * ** (10.29)	0.57 * ** (8.00)	0.59 * ** (7.16)
Rural	0.67 * ** (11.84)	0.63 * ** (10.95)		
Gender	0.06 (1.18)	0.02 (0.40)	0.14* (2.06)	−0.16* (2.21)
Education	−0.02 (0.60)	0.79 * ** (8.24)	1.05 * ** (7.28)	0.66 * ** (3.75)
Education Squared		−0.13 * ** (8.69)	−0.20 * ** (7.31)	−0.11 * ** (4.10)
Class Status	0.002 (0.11)	0.004 (0.24)	−0.002 (0.12)	0.005 (0.23)
Home Ownership	0.46 * ** (9.34)	0.44 * ** (8.80)	0.50 * ** (7.32)	0.35 * ** (4.77)
CCP member	0.48 * ** (6.19)	0.59 * ** (7.41)	1.09 * ** (6.48)	0.47 * ** (4.97)
North China	0.30 * * (3.43)	0.32 * ** (3.64)	0.40 * * (3.11)	0.14 (1.17)
Northeast China	−0.15 (1.89)	−0.18* (2.23)	0.46 * ** (4.13)	−1.00 * ** (7.52)
East China	0.14* (2.03)	0.16* (2.30)	0.18* (2.03)	0.03 (0.32)
Southwest China	0.28 * * (3.48)	0.28 * * (3.47)	0.29 * * (2.89)	0.25 (1.84)
Northwest China	−0.19 (1.88)	−0.14 (1.39)	0.07 (0.60)	−0.69 * * (3.37)
Constant	−2.42 * ** (10.02)	−3.34 * ** (12.58)	−2.80 * ** (7.52)	−3.23 * ** (7.73)

Notes: For Model 1 and 2 N = 8,073, for Model 3 N = 4,376 and Model 4 N = 3,697. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

Table 6. Democratic values and the level of education. Source: China General Social Survey 2013.

	Education Level				
Democratic Values	No Education	Elementary	Middle	High	College
Low	0%	0%	1%	2%	3%
Medium Low	4%	6%	7%	11%	17%
Medium High	18%	19%	25%	29%	34%
High	78%	75%	67%	58%	47%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(freq)	(1,021)	(1,976)	(2,745)	(1,848)	(1,625)

Table 7. Factors that influence individual democratic values in China (2013) for respondents over 20 years old.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2 (Rural)	Model 3 (Urban)
Voting in Local Elections	0.27***	0.17*	0.37***
	(5.53)	(2.39)	(5.30)
Generational Differences	0.31***	0.44***	0.17*
	(5.86)	(5.79)	(2.26)
Education	−0.20***	−0.17***	−0.23***
	(7.96)	(4.59)	(6.74)
Gender	−0.17**	−0.13	−0.20**
	(3.48)	(1.68)	(3.03)
Class Status	−0.03	−0.04	−0.02
	(1.92)	(1.66)	(0.94)
Home Ownership	0.06	0.06	0.06
	(1.29)	(0.82)	(0.83)
Rural	0.41***		
	(7.27)		
CCP member	−0.07	−0.18	−0.008
	(0.88)	(1.25)	(0.09)
North China	−0.01	−0.11	0.09
	(0.17)	(0.86)	(0.92)
Northeast China	0.57***	0.48***	0.71***
	(6.66)	(3.81)	(5.98)
East China	0.18**	0.09	0.29**
	(2.69)	(0.99)	(3.02)
Southwest China	0.25**	0.15	0.41**
	(2.94)	(1.35)	(3.04)
Northwest China	0.27**	0.33*	0.14
	(2.60)	(2.48)	(0.83)

Notes: For Model 1 N = 8,239, for Model 2 N = 4,386 and Model 3 N = 3,853. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

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Article

The Meaning of 'Limited Pluralism' in Media Reporting under Authoritarian Rule

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Abstract
Research on mass media in authoritarian regimes focuses more on state mechanisms of control than on actual media reporting and on moments of crises much more than on times of stable functioning of the regime. In order to shed more light on the role of journalistic mass media in authoritarian regimes, this article deals with the actual limits of pluralism in media reporting regarding policy issues in 'ordinary' authoritarian politics. Looking at pluralism in sources (i.e., actors being quoted) and pluralism in opinion, the article also deals with the often assumed increasing degree of pluralism from TV over print media to the Internet. This study is based on a qualitative content analysis of media reporting on export pipelines in three post-Soviet authoritarian regimes (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan). The text corpus comprises 3,618 media reports from 38 different journalistic media outlets published between 1998 and 2011. Two major results of the study are, first, that concerning the degree of pluralism, the differences between types of media are country specific, and, second, that 'limited pluralism' seems to be a misnomer, as the political opposition—at least in our cases—regularly does not have a voice at all.

Keywords
authoritarian regimes; authoritarianism; internal pluralism; mass media reporting; media content analysis

Issue
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1. Introduction

Juan Linz has famously defined authoritarian regimes as 'political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones' (Linz, 2000, p. 159). He went on to clarify that there is a 'fairly wide range [of pluralism] in which those regimes operate' (Linz, 2000, p. 161).

Since Linz published the first version of his definition in 1964, political scientists have extensively examined the meaning of limited pluralism and its empirical forms in the case of political forces, such as government institutions, political parties, and different kinds of elite factions. While Linz originally developed a typology based on several qualitative aspects, including the social origin of the ruling elites, their guiding mentality and the development stage of the regime, newer typologies of authoritarian political regimes focus more exclusively on the degrees of pluralism or political competition (cf. e.g., Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Roessler & Howard, 2009), where the central distinction is between hybrid regimes (which combine democratic and authoritarian features) and fully authoritarian regimes. Brownlee (2009) as well as Roessler and Howard (2009) use 'closed authoritarianism' to designate cases of extreme authoritarian control.

The role of mass media in authoritarian regimes, though, has gained little attention in political science,

while the mainstream of media studies deals almost exclusively with democratic regimes. Existing research on mass media in authoritarian regimes focuses more on state mechanisms of control than on actual media reporting and much more on moments of crises for the regime (related to protests and potential democratization) than on times of its stable functioning.

In order to better understand the role of mass media in the functioning of authoritarian regimes, our analysis asks how pluralistic actual media reporting on an 'ordinary' policy issue is in fully authoritarian regimes.

Most literature on authoritarian regimes perceives mass media (often implicitly) as a mere transmitter of messages ('propaganda') produced by the ruling political elites (see Walker & Orttung, 2014, for a recent example with an explicit reference to mass media). Akhrarkhodjaeva (2017, summarized in Tables 2.5–2.7) has conducted a meta-analysis of political regime typologies and a dataset of electoral malpractice compiled by Sarah Birch, which—taken together—show that manipulation of mass media reporting is the second most common deviation from democratic standards in fully authoritarian regimes. In this view, there is no pluralism and those who are visible in media reporting represent the ruling elites. Accordingly, media appearances could be used to analyse the composition of the ruling elites.

However, there is also an alternative view in the literature which stresses the need of the ruling elites to get reliable information regarding public sentiment concerning important policy issues. It has also been argued that media reporting can be used to give criticism a controlled channel of expression in order to avoid unexpected and harder to control eruptions of public anger in the form of protests. Based on a large-scale analysis of online censorship by the Chinese government King, Pan and Roberts (2013, p. 339) argue that the Chinese leaders 'seem to recognize, looking bad does not threaten their hold on power so long as they manage to eliminate discussions associated with events that have collective action potential'. The authors claim that 'this 'loosening' up on the constraints on public expression may, at the same time, be an effective governmental tool in learning how to satisfy, and ultimately mollify, the masses'. Heydemann (2007, p. 21) claims that Arab authoritarian rulers 'recognize the value of these technologies [i.e. new media] as steam valves: outlets that mitigate social pressures that might otherwise become politicized'.

In this context, it is also often argued that the Internet offers a new opportunity for dissenting voices in authoritarian regimes (for an exemplary critical discussion of this argument related to our case countries see Imamova, 2015; Pearce, 2014). Looking at pluralism in mass media reporting, our analysis also tests the hypothesis of an increasing degree of pluralism from TV over print media to the Internet (i.e., news websites in the case of journalistic mass media).

2. Operationalizing Media Pluralism

At its core, media pluralism is a normative concept, related to the democratic idea of free debates, implying the ability to challenge existing power relations and to engage in a debate based on the merits of the better argument (cf. e.g., Hrvatin & Petković, 2015; Karppinen, 2013). At the same time, it is not possible to determine an ideal score of perfect pluralism. As pluralism is not a value in itself ('the more, the merrier'), it is restricted to (what is deemed to be) legitimate ideas presented in an accepted manner with reasonable arguments.

In this context, Valcke, Picard and Sükösd (2015) differentiate between external pluralism, the plurality of media outlets and media ownership, and internal pluralism, the plurality of opinions in actual reporting. As the authors highlight, although the conditions of external pluralism 'increase the possibility of achieving the objectives of pluralism, they do not guarantee it because they are not necessary and sufficient conditions for its existence' (Valcke et al., 2015, p. 2). Nevertheless, attempts to measure media pluralism focus on external pluralism, not only because it is easier to measure, but also because policy measures to improve—or in the case of authoritarian regimes, restrict—media pluralism are foremost directed at external pluralism (cf. e.g., Aslama et al., 2007; Picard, 2000).

However, in order to assess 'limited pluralism' as a core feature of authoritarian regimes and, thereby, to understand the visibility of alternative opinions in authoritarian regimes, internal pluralism is the vital indicator. In this sense, 'political pluralism in the media refers to fair and diverse representation of, and expression by (i.e., passive and active access) various political and ideological groups, including minority viewpoints and interests, in the media' (Hrvatin & Petković, 2015, p. 113).

In order to assess the 'limited pluralism' in media reporting, this analysis will focus on actual reporting (internal pluralism) in the case of 'ordinary politics', i.e., debates about a policy issue. For an assessment of pluralism in everyday politics, the policy issue under study should not directly challenge regime legitimacy; however, it should be related to political decisions and be of great relevance for the respective country, so that the political leadership cannot simply ignore the issue. Moreover, the selected issue should allow for more than one policy decision as an outcome, so that there is—in principle—room for a pluralistic debate. To allow for a comparison between countries, the respective policy issue should fulfil these criteria in all case countries over a longer period of time.

In order to measure internal pluralism, this analysis refers to 'sources' (i.e., various political and ideological groups) as well as 'opinions' (i.e., various viewpoints and interests). The first aspect indicates the variety of people or institutions being quoted by journalists. The key question concerning 'limited pluralism' here is to what extent voices not belonging to the ruling elites are being quoted

and which voices in particular. The second aspect indicates a variety of opinions (independently of the author). The key question concerning 'limited pluralism' here is to what extent diverging and conflicting opinions can be voiced in the media.

For the actual content analysis, the most popular media as well as the media outlets of the major political camps should be included. The focus of this analysis is exclusively on journalistic mass media, as social media require a different form of analysis.

In order to identify sources of information (as opposed to mere references to actions by the same people or institutions) and, even more so, to identify opinions, the qualitative content analysis has to be done manually with the support of specialised coding software. In the text corpus, we have coded all sources being quoted (including interviews and guest authors). In order to assess plurality of opinion, frames[1] related to the policy issue have been coded, as well as whether the respective frame is thought to be adequate or not (i.e., whether the frame 'explains' the respective policy issue). Finally, positive and negative references to specific policy options have also been coded.

3. Case Selection

For our analysis, we have opted for authoritarian states in the post-Soviet region, as they qualify as most similar cases in terms of historical and geopolitical context. Moreover, with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, three authoritarian states can be selected for which the construction of oil and gas export pipelines is a relevant and similar policy issue over a long-term period. This policy issue is controversial, as pipelines have been proposed in all cardinal directions: north to/via Russia, east to China, south to/via Iran or Afghanistan and west to Turkey and/or the European Union. Plans for the construction of oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian region have been drafted since in the late 1990s. All major projects starting in the three countries were completed by 2011 (for an overview of the post-Soviet pipeline infrastructure see Heinrich, 2014; for related official discourses see Heinrich & Pleines, 2015). Accordingly, our analysis looks at mass media reporting on export pipelines from 1998 to 2011.

Comparative political science literature (namely Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Roessler & Howard, 2009) largely agrees that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan belong to the category of full or hegemonic authoritarian regimes, while Turkmenistan is often described as closed authoritarian. This assessment is also confirmed by political regime indices (namely Freedom House, Polity IV, Bertelsmann Transformation Index and Economist Democracy Index); Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are clearly in the group of authoritarian countries, while Turkmenistan receives the most extreme values (for an overview see Akhrarkhodjaeva, 2017, Tables 1.6 and 1.7).

Country rankings of press freedom match the overall assessments of the political regimes. In the 'Freedom of the Press Index' (Freedom House) both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan score between 65 and 85 on a scale from 0 to 100, where a score above 60 indicates 'not free'. For both countries, the long-term trend is a slight worsening of the situation. Turkmenistan scores above 85 for the full period under study. In the 'Press Freedom Index' compiled by Reporters without Borders all three countries are continuously ranked among the 80 worst countries, Turkmenistan is often among the 10 worst (an overview of the rankings is provided by Pleines, 2014).

All studies on mass media in the case countries describe different mechanisms of state-organised media control and repression, i.e. restrictions to external pluralism (Allison, 2006; Anceschi, 2015; Freedman & Shafer, 2011, 2014; Freedman, Shafer, & Antonova, 2010; Junisbai, 2011; Kazimova, 2011; Kenny & Gross, 2008; Lange, 1997; Laruelle, 2015; Lewis, 2016; Nazarbetova, Shaukenova, & Eschment, 2016; Pearce, 2014, 2015; Pearce & Kendzior, 2012), while the official legal framework may claim differently (cf. Richter, 2008).

Media consumption in the case countries is dominated by largely government-controlled TV broadcasting, which is the primary source of information for the vast majority of the populace. In Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the circulation of independent newspapers and journals has, since the 1990s by and large, been restricted to the major cities because many people cannot afford to buy print media and there are logistical, commercial, and political restrictions to country-wide distribution (Caucasus Analytical Digest, 2011; Junisbai, Junisbai, & Ying Fry, 2015). The importance of the Internet has increased significantly over the period under study. According to 'Internet World Stats', Internet penetration (in percentage of the population) rose from 0.1% in 2000 to 44% in 2011 in Azerbaijan and from 0.5% to 35% in Kazakhstan.[2] Turkmenistan is in a separate league, mainly due to direct state control and censorship of all mass media in the country (Anceschi, 2011). In order to ensure control, access to the Internet has been heavily restricted in the country. Internet penetration still stood at a mere 2% in 2011.[3]

Our analysis covers the reporting by national newspapers, journals, TV stations, and professional (journalistic) Internet sites in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Only mass media with nation-wide (or capital-based) coverage that addresses a national audience in the respective country were included. Media that contained, on average, less than one report on our topic per year was not included. News agencies were not in-

[1] Frames can be defined as the basic cognitive structures that guide the perception and representation of reality (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6). 'To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described' (Entman, 1993, p. 52, emphasis in the original).

[2] Internet World Stats, available at http://www.internetworldstats.com

[3] Internet World Stats, available at http://www.internetworldstats.com

cluded because they do not directly participate in national debates.

For Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the database includes a large part of the most popular (print, TV, and Internet) and important media for the major political camps as well as national specialised business journals from 1998 to 2011, if these exist. The most popular TV stations and print media were identified based on viewer statistics, print circulation figures, public surveys on media consumption, and expert assessments. For Internet sites in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, lists of the most frequented news websites were used.[4] For Turkmenistan, which has strong state control over all media, only the state TV channels have been included in the analysis.

The resulting text corpus comprises 3,618 media reports on export pipelines published between 1998 and 2011 by 38 different journalistic media outlets. As explained in section 2, our analysis considers pluralism in sources (i.e., actors being quoted) and pluralism in opinion based on manual software-aided coding.[5]

4. Results

As TV dominates media consumption in all three case countries, we begin with an analysis of pluralism of sources, i.e. actors being quoted, in TV reporting. For TV channels, the text corpus comprises a total of 925 'quotes', i.e., direct or indirect quotes plus interviews. Of these, 565 are from Azerbaijan (AZ), 124 from Kazakhstan (KAZ), and 236 from Turkmenistan (TKM). If we consider all pro-government actors, i.e., politicians and state officials who are part of the ruling elites, their share in the total number of TV quotes stands at 52% for Azerbaijan, 59% for Kazakhstan, and 79% for Turkmenistan, as shown in Table 1. At the same time, a real opposition, i.e. politicians openly opposing the government, is only verifiable in Azerbaijan, where it accounts for 1% of all quotes.

It is telling for the special position of Turkmenistan that the president personally accounts for nearly two thirds of all pipeline-related quotes, combined with officials of the regime increasing to a total share of 79%. All the remaining quotes come from foreign politicians and business people, mainly in the form of selected quotes from official (i.e., diplomatically phrased) press conferences after meetings. Compared to Turkmenistan, there is more diversity in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. First, the quotes from representatives of the regime are much less dominated by the presidents personally; instead, a larger number of people speak for the regime. Although the outspoken political opposition is in fact banned from TV appearances, independent domestic actors, namely experts and representatives of (foreign) private business, are clearly visible.

The interesting question, therefore, is whether this broader variety of people being quoted is reflected in a broader variety of opinions in media reporting. In a first step, we look at different groups of arguments—'frames'—used to justify or explain pipeline decisions. In the case of export pipelines, the 'classical' frames are 'geopolitics', whereby pipelines are considered as a way to foster alliances in foreign policy, and 'profitability', i.e. pipelines are a means of generating financial income for the country (see Heinrich & Pleines, 2015, for details on these frames).

Our results show that some 'apolitical' frames, namely 'diversification' and 'technical feasibility', are quite popular, while controversial issues like the 'environment' or the 'resource curse', i.e. the negative consequences of a resource boom, are by and large neglected. However, in each country, the five most popular frames are men-

Table 1. Share of different groups in total number of quotes in TV reporting. Source: Authors' own analysis and calculation.

	AZ (TV)	KAZ (TV)	TKM (TV)
President	23%	27%	63%
Pro-government politicians	15%	18%	4%
State officials	14%	15%	13%
Total official regime	**52%**	**59%**	**79%**
Opposition	1%	0%	0%
Foreign politicians	17%	19%	15%
Business representatives	24%	19%	6%
Experts	5%	3%	0%
N (total no. of quotes)	*565*	*124*	*236*

[4] For Kazakhstan, they were compiled by zero.kz on the basis of actual internet traffic. For Azerbaijan, data on the most popular news websites were taken from a representative opinion poll conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre.

[5] Detailed documentation concerning the creation of the text corpus, along with the codebook, is available at http://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de/UserFiles/file/Pipelines-Caspian_media-list+codebook.pdf

tioned in at least 10% of all media reports. That means that there is variety when it comes to arguments about specific policy decisions (i.e., pipeline routes in our case).

However, this variety is largely consensual. In the case of Turkmenistan, the 369 reports included in the analysis comprise only 13 remarks questioning the appropriateness of a specific frame; nine of them relate to 'political feasibility', thus in fact supporting the official project of a pipeline through Afghanistan despite questions about its political feasibility. Kazakhstan has the highest number of critical comments about frames, a total of 118 accounting for 8% of all reports included in the analysis. Here, two-thirds refer to 'geopolitics' and 'profitability'. In both cases, the largest share of critical comments can be attributed to business journals and news websites. In Azerbaijan, critical comments about the adequateness of specific frames are more evenly spread. Throughout the full text corpus, there is no recognisable pattern, neither concerning media type nor political orientation. However, in total only 4% of media reports in Azerbaijan include a critical reflection about frames.

When it comes to concrete policy decisions, i.e., an opinion for or against a specific pipeline project, the large majority of reports avoid any clear position. In all three countries, about 60% of assessments made neither support nor criticize the pipeline projects they are reporting about. Quite often this makes for very dull reading with long lists of technical information about pipeline routes, partners, and through-put volumes.

In order to understand pluralism of media reporting in a political regime, it is also important to assess differences by media type. This question relates to the idea that—although mass media reaching the whole population, namely TV, is strongly controlled by the state—there are niches of pluralism in authoritarian regimes which are, in principle, accessible for large parts of the population. Although most people never bother to get access, in times of growing discontent with the regime, these media outlets—and the journalists working there—may grow into a more important role. Traditionally, small newspapers with an intellectual image were the major representatives of this pluralism in the media landscape. Increasingly, the Internet has taken over this role. As this study focuses on journalistic mass media reporting on policy issues, the relevant part of the Internet are news websites.

In order to allow for a more fine-tuned differentiation, we have divided print media into pro-government, independent, and opposition. In the case of Kazakhstan, there also is a critical mass of business newspapers and journals which—similar to the 'Financial Times' and 'The Economist' in Great Britain, for instance—address first of all a business audience, but offer comprehensive reporting about political events.

The data for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, reported in Tables 2 and 3, clearly support the assessment that TV reporting is closest to the government and thus the least pluralistic. The share of quotes from official representative of the regime is above 50% and the share of formally non-aligned experts does not exceed 5%. At the same time, reports with a neutral stance about the policy issue dominate with about 70%.

The picture for the other media types, though, is much less clear cut. Azerbaijani print media fit the expectation of more pluralism. Concerning the share of quotes from representatives of the regime, the difference between pro-government and oppositional print media is much less distinct than the difference between print media in total and TV. News websites in general are similar to oppositional print media in the share of quotes from official representatives of the regime. Formally non-aligned experts, though, are most visible online. At the same time, the share of neutral reports is highest for news websites.

In Kazakhstan, however, business-oriented print media offers the highest degree of pluralism as far as quotes

Table 2. Azerbaijan: Share of different groups in total number of quotes by media type. Source: Authors' own analysis and calculation.

	TV	Print total	Print-pro	Print-opp	Websites
President	23%	12%	16%	5%	10%
Pro-government politicians	15%	7%	6%	9%	5%
State officials	14%	3%	2%	3%	2%
Total official regime	**52%**	**23%**	**25%**	**17%**	**17%**
Opposition	1%	4%	3%	12%	1%
Foreign politicians	17%	24%	22%	18%	21%
Business representatives	24%	31%	39%	33%	31%
Experts	5%	18%	12%	20%	30%
N (total no. of quotes)	*565*	*512*	*248*	*110*	*351*

Note: As one newspaper has been coded as independent, it counted neither as pro-government nor as opposition. As a result, the sums of print-pro and print-opp are smaller than the total for print.

Table 3. Kazakhstan: Share of different groups in total number of quotes by media type. Source: Authors' own analysis and calculation.

	TV	Print total	Print-pro	Print-opp	Print-bus	Websites
President	27%	12%	17%	12%	7%	16%
Pro-government politicians	18%	17%	16%	28%	16%	23%
State officials	15%	10%	11%	6%	9%	10%
Total official regime	**59%**	**40%**	**44%**	**46%**	**33%**	**49%**
Opposition	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Foreign politicians	19%	18%	20%	17%	20%	14%
Business representatives	19%	26%	27%	22%	24%	29%
Experts	3%	16%	9%	15%	24%	7%
N (total no. of quotes)	*124*	*623*	*235*	*65*	*221*	*234*

Note: The three business print publications included in the analysis are not coded as pro-government or opposition, so there is no overlap between the three sub-categories for print publications. As three non-business newspapers have been coded as independent, they counted neither as pro-government nor as opposition. As a result, the sums of print-pro, print-opp and print-bus are smaller than the total for print.

are concerned. It has the lowest figure for the share of quotes from regime representatives and the highest share of quotes from experts. Kazakhstan's news websites have an even higher share of quotes from business people, but the share of experts is lower only in TV reporting. At the same time, news websites have the highest share of non-neutral assessments, being the only media type in Kazakhstan where less than half of all assessments are neutral.

5. Conclusions

Our results for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as typical fully authoritarian regimes illustrate that internal media pluralism is so limited that it is completely toothless in political terms. The political opposition is not visible in mass media reporting at all—outside its own small print outlet in Azerbaijan. As a result, pluralism is restricted to experts and foreigners. As the policy option preferred by the regime is often not clear at the time of reporting, most media outlets opt for a neutral stance in order to err on the side of caution. Consequently, even in 'ordinary' politics—which pose no threat at all to regime survival—controversial debates about different policy options do not take place in the mass media. That is why the situation in Turkmenistan—at least in relation to internal media pluralism—seems to differ more in degree than in kind.

Though there is a difference between types of media, with the exception of TV it is not clear-cut. In both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, TV is clearly the least pluralistic medium in terms of quotes and the most neutral in terms of opinion. Between the other media types the differences are minor when it comes to pluralism of sources, with the business press in Kazakhstan being the only outlier offering more pluralism. As far as expression of opinion is concerned, news websites in Kazakhstan offer slightly more non-neutral assessments than the other media types, while those in Azerbaijan offer markedly less.

A tentative explanation for these differences might be that those media outlets which are most clearly associated with the opposition, like oppositional newspapers and also news websites in Azerbaijan, have to be careful not to overdo their criticism as they are under special surveillance. Media outlets which are considered to be closer to the regime, like business print media and many news websites in Kazakhstan, may find it easier to voice some different opinions as their loyalty to the regime is less likely to be questioned.

In summary, using the terminology of discourse theory, one can state that fully authoritarian regimes—as long as they remain stable—enjoy discursive hegemony in mass media not only in the discourse about regime legitimacy but also in 'ordinary' policy discourses.

Thus, if we take TV reporting as a 'mirror' of the ruling elites, we obtain some insights into the elite structure in the countries under study. First, in Turkmenistan, authoritarian rule is clearly more personalised. Even on ordinary policy matters, it is first of all the president who personally speaks for the regime. In Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, however, it is a broad group of political elites and state officials who represent a more collective leadership to TV audiences. Business representatives form a distinctive and highly visible group in TV reporting in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan—where they collectively get more quotes than the respective president. This highlights the role of business actors (including foreign ones) in patronage schemes, or 'pyramids of power' (Hale, 2015), in fully authoritarian regimes. In Turkmenistan, however, business as a relevant actor is marginalized. This again points to more centralised rule in Turkmenistan.

However, unlike the Chinese leadership, the example which we quoted in the introduction, the ruling elites in fully authoritarian regimes of the post-Soviet region do not seem to use any mass media as a way to obtain a second opinion on policy issues or to manage public dissent. This is in contrast to 'authoritarian upgrading', which uses mass media to check public sentiment, to build pre-emptive consensus and to channel dissent (cf. e.g., Cavatorta, 2010; Heilmann, 2010; Heydemann, 2007). Nevertheless, all three post-Soviet regimes have achieved a remarkable degree of stability.

In this context, our results point in two directions reaching beyond our own research. First, as mass media do not give a voice to the political opposition in fully authoritarian regimes, a focus on social media is justified. Although, authoritarian regimes—including in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan—have increasingly used social media to promote their own agenda, harass its critics or dissuade Internet users from political activism (Anceschi, 2015; Freedman & Shafer, 2014; Lewis, 2016; Pearce, 2014, 2015; Pearce & Kendzior, 2012), social media are still the only communication channel through which oppositional activists can reach a broader audience. The decline of journalistic mass media vis-à-vis social media does not necessarily favour the opposition, but it offers a new arena—one which is also used by journalists who have been ostracised by the regime. In this respect, Turkmenistan as a closed authoritarian regime presents an extreme case because here not even social media can fulfil that function.

Second, while the difference between fully authoritarian regimes like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan on the one hand, and closed authoritarian regimes like Turkmenistan on the other, is clearly visible in the degree of internal pluralism, its impact on domestic politics should be limited, as opposing voices are not represented in mass media in either regime type. If there is a distinction between full and closed authoritarianism, it most likely lies in the interaction between political elites, not in mass media communication with the broader public. Thus, concerning media pluralism, the distinction between fully authoritarian regimes and hybrid regimes might be more relevant. Though a systematic comparison is still lacking, a cursory look at media reporting in hybrid regimes demonstrates that the opposition—though discriminated against—is clearly visible in mass media reporting, e.g., in the post-Soviet region in the cases of Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, or Russia (especially before 2008).

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The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

What Do We Know about Hybrid Regimes after Two Decades of Scholarship?

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Abstract
In two decades of scholarship on hybrid regimes two significant advancements have been made. First, scholars have emphasized that the hybrid regimes that emerged in the post-Cold War era should not be treated as diminished sub-types of democracy, and second, regime type is a multi-dimensional concept. This review essay further contends that losing the lexicon of hybridity and focusing on a single dimension of regime type—flawed electoral competition—has prevented an examination of extra-electoral factors that are necessary for understanding how regimes are differently hybrid, why there is such immense variation in the outcome of elections and why these regimes are constantly in flux. Therefore, a key recommendation emerging from this review of the scholarship is that to achieve a more thorough, multi-dimensional assessment of hybrid regimes, further research ought to be driven by nested research designs in which qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used to advance mid-range theory building.

Keywords
authoritarianism; classification of regimes; Cold War; dictatorships; elections; hybrid regime

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1. Introduction

As the Third Wave of Democracy ended in the 1990s, a plethora of regimes emerged in the non-western world that were qualitatively different from each other, but also from Western democracies. These were hybrid regimes that occupied the "grey zone" between liberal democracies on the one hand and closed authoritarian regimes on the other (Carothers, 2002). The main challenge that scholars of comparative politics faced was how to define and classify these hybrid regimes without falling prey to concept stretching. This spawned a vast literature, which attempted to unpack this category of regimes. Nearly two decades later it is important to evaluate how this research agenda has evolved and if we have enhanced our understanding of this regime type.

Early work on hybrid regimes focused on conceptualizing these regimes because it was necessary to distinguish the boundaries among different regime types—authoritarian, hybrid and democracy (Merkel, 2004; Puhle, 2005). Scholars have since then established that hybrid regimes should try to avoid the teleological bias of earlier studies that categorized hybrid regimes as diminished sub-types of either democracy or authoritarianism (Bogaards, 2009; Gilbert & Mohseni, 2011; Morlino, 2009). We have now also learnt that hybrid regimes are not transitional phases but in fact political regimes that manifest a combination of both authoritarian and democratic tendencies that ought to be examined in comparison to each other and not against the standards of democracy.

A thriving set of literature that treats hybrid regimes as being a sub-type of authoritarianism due to flawed electoral competition (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Schedler, 2002, 2006) tends to examine these regimes along only one dimension of electoral competitiveness. This review makes the case that if we are to understand the political consequences of elections on regime type, it is imperative to treat hybrid regimes as multi-dimensional concepts. However, to conduct meaningful multi-dimensional analysis, this article proposes nested research designs that entail both qualitative and quanti-

tative approaches. Qualitative research should be driven by single-n case studies, or paired comparisons based on in-depth field research with the intention to advance our contextual knowledge of these regimes and facilitate mid-range theory-building. This qualitative approach should be complemented by large-n statistical analysis that tests the strength of the independent variable gleaned from the case study.

This article proceeds in the following way: section 2 sheds light on the conceptual confusion that has persisted among scholars over the question, what are hybrid regimes and makes the case that these regimes are not transitional states. The next section examines the importance of treating regime type as a multi-dimensional concept. Section 4 suggests ways to advance causal research on hybrid regimes.

2. What Are Hybrid Regimes?

Despite the extensive theorization of hybrid regimes and numerous attempts to bring some clarity to the blurred lines among different political regimes, it is difficult to find consensus among scholars over what hybrid regimes actually are. This unfortunately has hampered the "accumulation of knowledge" on what a hybrid regime is (Cassani, 2014, p. 548). The inconsistency in the variety of approaches used to define hybrid regimes is proof that scholars are not in conversation with each other or building on each other's work to advance the research agenda.

Hybrid regimes are variably understood as diminished subtypes of democracy (Merkel, 2004; Puhle, 2005; Zakaria, 1997); diminished subtypes of authoritarianism (Schedler, 2006); transitional "situations" that are expected to revert back to either democracy or authoritarianism (Armony & Schamis, 2005; Linz, 1973); a residual category of regimes that fit neither democracy nor authoritarianism (Bogaards, 2009; Gilbert & Mohseni, 2011); or as clear-cut instances of authoritarianism (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011; Gandhi, 2008).

2.1. Diminished Subtypes

A diminished subtype stems from a root concept, where the attributes of the latter are not fully shared by the former (Collier & Mahon, 1993, p. 848). If we can visualize hybrid regimes to comprise the "sprawling middle of a political continuum between democracy and non-democracy" (Bunce & Wolchik, 2008), the graded nature of the spectrum sees "democracy as an institutional quality that is principally a matter of degree" (Wahman, Teorell, & Hadenius, 2013, p. 21). It follows therefore that as one moves away from the democratic end of the spectrum essential qualities of the regime are lost, making the democratic regime a diminished version of itself. This led scholars to proliferate typologies of democracy, a trend described as "democracy with adjectives" (Collier & Levitsky, 1997) or the "terminological babel of democratization studies" (Armony & Schamis, 2005, p. 113). Some of the most popular terms were *delegative* democracy (O'Donnell, 1994), *semi-democracy* (Diamond, Linz, & Lipset, 1995), *illiberal* democracy (Zakaria, 1997), and *pseudo*-democracy (Diamond, 2002). Most recently, German scholars like W. Merkel, (2004) built on the concept of *defective* democracy or *incomplete* democracy. The central pre-occupation of these scholars was to understand why these diminished forms (or hybrid regimes) were unable to transition to democracy because, as Linz (2000, p. 34) points out, there was a hope that these imperfect democracies would amend themselves.

On the other end of the spectrum, scholars of authoritarianism have also been complicit in viewing hybrid regimes as a "corruption of the preceding regime" (Morlino, 2009, p. 280). The only redeeming merit according to A. Cassani (2014, p. 544) was that these scholars "stressed the attributes that these regimes possessed than what they lacked". M. Ottaway (2003) coined the term *semi-authoritarianism* to describe a regime that displayed characteristics of both democracy and authoritarianism—these were not failed democracies, but regimes that wanted to maintain their ambiguous character. The co-existence of elections as the predominant form of elite succession and dictatorial control led A. Schedler (2002, p. 36) to identify *electoral authoritarianism*—a regime in which leaders "hold elections and tolerate some pluralism and interparty competition but violate democratic norms so severely and systematically that it makes no sense to call them democracies, however qualified". The distinguishing feature of multi-party elections with the absence of democracy led to an even more precise typology including the *hegemonic electoral authoritarian* regimes (see Magaloni, 2006, on Mexico), in which the leader's party routinely wins; *competitive authoritarianism* (Levitsky & Way, 2002), in which opposition parties can win substantial majorities in elections; or the *closed authoritarian regime*, where no opposition parties are allowed to exist.

The implication of defining hybrid regimes as diminished subtypes of either democracy or authoritarianism was that empirical research would be extremely challenging because the boundaries between the mixed regimes and their root concept were blurred (Bogaards, 2009). Furthermore, the definition of a hybrid regime would vary depending on how scholars understood the root concept. His solution to this problem was a double-root strategy in which the "root concepts are defined in relation to each other and cases are classified with a view to both" (2009, p. 410). As a result, Bogaards argued that hybrid regimes ought to be conceived as a residual category that fits neither democracy nor authoritarianism but as a regime type unto itself.

2.2. A Residual Category

The proposal to treat hybrid regimes as a residual category and to study them on their own terms instead of being anchored to either democracy or authoritarianism

resulted in the proposal of fresh typologies that have attempted to advance the comparative analysis of political regimes (Gilbert & Mohseni, 2011; Wigell, 2008). Scholars also attempted to create intermediate types between democracy and authoritarianism. For example, the trichotomous scheme advocated by Mainwaring, Brinks and Perez-Linan (2001) organized regimes into democracy, *semi-democracy* and authoritarianism. Other labels for this intermediate regime type included *mixed* (Bunce & Wolchik, 2008) or simply *hybrid* (Ekman, 2009; Karl, 1995). Although this approach allowed for greater differentiation, its analytical utility is limited. The regimes that fit this residual category are so qualitatively different from each other that except for the one commonality that they are neither democratic nor authoritarian, it is very hard to actually compare them systematically.

2.3. An Authoritarian Regime

Those who favor a more dichotomous approach to categorization treat hybrid regimes as overt instances of authoritarianism. For these scholars there is no overlap between regime types. This allows for more parsimonious categorization by creating mutually exclusive categories that classify regimes as being democratic or authoritarian (Cheibub, Gandhi, & Vreeland, 2010; Sartori, 1987). The presence of political institutions that have been integral to democratization in the West contribute to the hybridity of the regime, such as political parties (Gandhi, 2008; Greene, 2009; Magaloni & Kricheli, 2010); elections (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009) and the legislature (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007; Malesky & Schuler, 2010). However, Cassani (2014) notes that these scholars downplay the mixed nature of the regime, because the presence of democratic institutions does not fundamentally alter the identity of the authoritarian regime itself.

Another way to conceptualize the hybrid regime is to categorize it as an authoritarian sub-type, a trend that is suggested by B. Magaloni's (2006) *hegemonic party regime* or the *limited multi-party regime* (Hadenius & Teorell, 2007) which corresponds to Schedler's conception of the electoral authoritarian regime.

2.4. A "Transitional Situation"

Partly the reason for why there is a conceptual divergence among scholars on how seriously to view hybrid regimes as a regime type, and not in relation to other regimes is due to the inherent instability stemming from the ruling elite competing over the resources of the state and the effort expended to implement policies aimed at their self-preservation. The fluid nature of politics is assumed to be symptomatic of the regime being in a transitional "situation", suggesting that the transition will either be completed once democracy consolidates or the regime could backslide and renew forms of autocratic control (Armony & Schamis, 2005). But there is also a third possibility, where a regime could stabilize in this uncertain state and persist as a hybrid regime. This is because the coalition of individual or collective actors that maintain the regime can use the ambiguity of the regime to achieve their preferred political goals and, therefore, do not have the incentive to aim for an ideal regime type. Morlino (2009) argues that if the co-existence of authoritarian and democratic features continues to persist for more than ten years, then one can plausibly argue that the main actors in the regime have found an adequate means for their perpetuation, or that a central power keeps the regime in its characteristic "state of ambiguity and uncertainty" (p. 286).

This section has shown that although the conceptualization of hybrid regimes led to a vast literature, unfortunately confusion over what hybrid regimes are still lingers. The disagreement on whether hybrid regimes are diminished subtypes, residual category, transitional phase or an outright case of authoritarianism has important implications for empirical work. Cassani's analysis of eight studies that attempt to identify political regimes found that they disagreed on which regimes to call hybrid (2014). Morse (2012) also observes that there is significant divergence among scholars studying the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in that there is no consensus over the extent of electoral violations that would make a regime non-democratic. For example, Egypt and Singapore, which do not have competitive elections would be considered authoritarian by Levitsky and Way (2010), yet Schedler would deem them to be electoral authoritarian and therefore hybrid. The selection bias stemming from this conceptual divergence can make it difficult to evaluate causal research. Moreover, the misidentification of regime type can have important policy implications for those in the field of democracy promotion.

The conceptual confusion over what constitutes a hybrid regime has also led scholars to move away from the lexicon of hybridity towards either electoral democracy (Diamond, 2002) or electoral authoritarian regimes (Lindberg, 2009; Schedler, 2006), with a greater empirical focus on dimensions or components of these regimes through continuous measures suing databases such as V-Dem, Polity IV, Freedom House, etc. This shift has encouraged the recognition of how regimes may be "differently democratic" or "differently authoritarian" or even "differently hybrid".

However, I would urge caution before we discard the term "hybrid" for two reasons: first, political regimes are not inherently stable. Therefore, we need to move beyond the teleological assumptions embedded in the "diminished subtypes" approaches. Contemporary politics shows that democracy itself may not be a stable category. After the election of Trump in the United States, following the election of similar leaders in established democracies like Hungary, Poland and Venezuela, not to mention less established democracies such as Russia and Turkey, there is increasing concern over democratic backslid-

ing. Democracies themselves can be "diminished" (see Mounk, 2016, 2018), which challenges the need to measure "hybrid" against stable categories of democracy or dictatorship. Perhaps hybrid is the norm?

Second, hybrid regimes are also not a transitional state that is expected to quickly amend itself and become either a democracy or an authoritarian regime. In fact, what we have found is that hybrid regimes are often quite durable and need to be understood for what they truly are and that the terminology used to refer to such regimes should reflect this.

3. The Importance of Multi-Dimensionality

The most common underlying dimension for classifying regimes is electoral competition (Howard & Roessler, 2006; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Lindberg, 2009; Schedler, 2006). However, hinging the classification of hybrid regimes on the basis of electoral competition on a unidimensional spectrum anchored by liberal democracy on the one end, and closed authoritarianism on the other, can prove to be problematic. L. Morgenbesser (2014) explains that the role of elections in democracies, and the meaning attached to them, is not the same as in an authoritarian regime (Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009). In the former, the assumption is that elections are a democratic institution for the purposes of legitimate elite succession. But elections in authoritarian regimes can also serve as instruments of elite-management, distribution of patronage and signaling legitimacy in non-democratic regimes (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009; Magaloni, 2006). For Morgenbesser (2014) this has resulted in concept stretching because analysts have failed to recognize that the role performed by elections—an institution that makes the regime hybrid—will vary depending on the root concept used and also the political context. Regime analysts only pay attention to the "quality" elections for regime analysts and not to "quality and meaning" (p. 25).

The overwhelming emphasis on elections also overlooks a range of more fundamental dimensions that are critical to the analysis of political regimes. It ignores the reality that hybrid regimes can be different from each other ways besides the competitiveness of an election. Munck and Snyder (2004) explain that the political consequences of elections depend on interaction with key extra-electoral factors, such as *who rules*, *how do they rule*, *why do they rule* and *how much do they rule*. These are all factors that Morse refers to as "actor capacity" (2012, p. 173).

Similarly, Gilbert and Mohseni (2011) have also found that by redefining of the electoral regime they discovered additional regime dimensions—*competitiveness* and *competition*—that are important for classification. They explain that "democracies are competitive regimes with fair competition, whereas authoritarian regimes are uncompetitive regimes with unfair competitions. Hybrid regimes occupy the conceptual void of competitive regimes with unfair competition" (Gilbert & Mohseni, 2011, p. 280). While competitiveness is crucial for distinguishing democratic and hybrid regimes from authoritarian ones, only the quality of competition is operationalized in distinguishing democracies from non-democracies (including authoritarian and hybrid regimes). Beyond elections, another key element that establishes this boundary between democracy and non-democracies is *tutelary interference*, when unelected bodies such as the military, religious authorities or a monarch constrain the agency of elected leaders or veto national legislation.

Multi-dimensional conceptualizations of regime types are not new to political science. For example, R. Dahl (1971) dropped the use of the word democracy and introduced polyarchy—a regime type defined by the intersection of two dimensions, contestation (the right to compete over desired policies) and participation (the freedom to participate in the political process). Merkel (2004) emphasized three dimensions of democracy including vertical legitimacy, horizontal accountability plus rule of law and effective government. These dimensions were further broken down into sub-criteria, which, if violated, would result in four types of defective democracy—exclusive, illiberal, delegative, and tutelary democracy. Inspired by Merkel, Wigell (2008) also starts with the root concept liberal democracy, emphasizing that the goal of democracy is popular government, and the goal of liberalism is limited government, leading to the construction of a typology along two dimensions—electoralism and constitutionalism. Yet the problem he faced is that by assuming that flawed elections and the absence of rule of law are the only ways a regime can be hybrid, he misses out on cases like Pakistan, that are in fact hybrid due to the presence of reserved domains of power (Adeney, 2015). This is why he is compelled to add additional attributes to his minimal criteria of electoralism and constitutionalism. Although, these studies make valiant efforts to move beyond the simplistic unidimensional conceptions of hybrid regimes, they still retain the tendency to view regimes through the "prism of democracy" (Munck & Snyder, 2004, p. 1) and are therefore limited in grasping the full range of variation in regime type globally.

The greatest stride made in regime classification has been made by L. Gilbert & P. Mohseni (2011) who proposed a multi-dimensional conception of hybridity utilizing a configurative approach (Geddes, 1999; Linz, 2000) for the categorization of hybrid regimes. This approach is particularly suitable because it can capture the complexity posed by hybrid regimes, by combining multiple attributes (competitiveness, tutelary interference and civil liberties) as the defining characteristics of the regime. These dimensions cannot be combined to form a single continuum. Each attribute is viewed dichotomously because it emphasizes "differences in kind rather than degree" (p. 282). Gilbert & Mohseni advocate strongly for this approach for three reasons: First, because it enables the comparison or measurement of hybrid regimes in re-

lation to other regime types. Second, it allows regimes to be hybrid not just because of flawed competition but may be due to other factors such as the presence of reserved domains of power. Third, in comparison to other typologies of hybrid regimes, the configurative approach provides the most comprehensive list of hybrid regimes that have existed from 1990–2009, grouped under the categories of illiberal hybrid regime, tutelary illiberal hybrid regime and tutelary liberal hybrid regime. As noted by Gilbert & Mohseni (2011), their three-dimensional categorization shows which countries can be grouped together to facilitate comparison and advance the research agenda.

The configurative approach to regime classification that pays heed to multi-dimensionality is a complex categorization, but that is also the reason for its completeness. The challenge of gainfully adopting this approach is that one needs to understand the unique political context of each case before categorizing it, thereby requiring scholars to undertake in-depth single-n case studies. An excellent example is K. Adeney's analysis of Pakistan's hybrid regime (2015). She argues that Pakistan has meaningful, multi-party elections, increasing civil autonomy from the tutelary control of the military compared to the 1990s or early 2000s because of which there would be temptation to view Pakistan as a transitional democracy. However, Pakistan ranks very low on civil liberties and the indirect intervention by the military in politics and foreign policy make it a hybrid regime. By acknowledging regime heterogeneity, and scoring Pakistan's hybrid regime on a three-dimensional continuum, Adeney demonstrates the utility of the configurative approach, which is to pinpoint precisely what factors are preventing Pakistan from crossing the threshold of democracy.

4. Advancing Causal Research

To recap, two decades of scholarship on hybrid regimes has advanced our understanding of political regimes in two important ways. First, it is unfruitful to make the teleological assumption that the hybrid regimes that emerged in the post-Cold War era as being diminished sub-types of democracy or authoritarianism, which anchor the grey zone that these regimes occupied. Further, it is unrealistic to expect these regimes to necessarily democratize as liberalization occurred and elections were held.

Yet, the response to this lesson has been to view hybrid regimes as a type of authoritarian regime, advanced by Schedler's conception of the electoral authoritarianism. This has been an important conceptual shift for two reasons. First, scholars have begun to study hybrid regimes relative to one another instead of examining how they fall short of meeting the prerequisites of a democracy. Second, instead of democratization, the central occupation of scholars is to understand authoritarian durability and to consider factors that perpetuate hybridity or catalyze democratization. However, an overemphasis on only a single dimension of regime type—electoral competition—has prevented an examination of extra-electoral factors that are necessary for understanding how regimes are differently hybrid or why there is such immense variation in the outcome of elections.

Therefore, the second lesson learnt from the hybrid regimes literature is to adopt multi-dimensional assessment of regimes, as showcased by Gilbert and Mohsenis' refreshing hybrid regime classification described in section 3. However, complex, multi-dimensional categorizations necessitate that further research on hybrid regimes ought to be driven by single-n case studies, or paired comparisons based on in-depth field research with the intention to advance our contextual knowledge of these regimes and facilitate midrange theory-building.

Practically, the challenge of a single-n, case-driven research design is one of access and observation. The institutions and norms of such regimes are dismissed as being unstable and therefore difficult to examine (Loyle, 2016). Often hybrid regimes are unsafe and politically-charged environments, where research travel is viewed as suspicious activity, and getting access to political elite and authentic evidence very difficult. Methodologically, the challenge is best described by Morse (2012, p. 163): "research cannot be too distant from actual cases, leading to conceptual ambiguity, nor too close to specific cases, thus failing to generate comparative leverage". It is not enough to just undertake the configurative approach, populate it with country cases, perhaps also with quantitative indicators because this will only tell us about how politics really works in Malaysia, Egypt, Singapore or elsewhere. It is necessary for the knowledge gleaned from the individual cases to help bridge research agendas and generate new avenues for causal research. Perhaps one way to do this is to adopt a nested research design (see Howard & Roessler, 2006, p. 366), which includes both "quantitative and qualitative methods, with the goal of providing a more valid, reliable, and powerful causal explanation than could be achieved with either method alone". They use large-n statistical analysis to test the strength of their independent variable, and follow-up with a single-n case study to demonstrate how the independent variable matters.

Since this article advocates a multi-dimensional approach, the remaining task is to make a case and provide the rationale for a dimension that is often under-studied in hybrid regimes—elite recruitment and selection. In hybrid regimes that are manifestly multi-party systems, investigating the recruitment of the party elite to elected public office is relevant to understanding the distribution of power among the coalition of collective and individual actors who are decisive in maintaining the regime. In other hybrid regimes, we should leverage existing knowledge on non-democratic regimes to identify the relevant political elite, which would be the selectorate (military junta, political party, family/tribe) and the ruler (military dictator, civilian ruler or monarch). I argue that the question of political recruitment and selection is impor-

tant because it determines who gains power, it empowers the recruiters and defines the relationship between the rulers and the ruled by guiding and affecting the behaviour of the political leadership.

There are two reasons for choosing this dimension over all others: First, the definition of a regime entails both behavioural and institutional dimensions, because of which examining the actions of political actors is integral to the understanding of a regime. S.-E. Skaaning's definition of a political regime highlights precisely why elite recruitment and selection matters to an analysis of regime type. A political regime is the "institutionalized set of fundamental formal and informal rules identifying the power holders (character of the possessor(s) of ultimate decisional sovereignty) and it also regulates the appointments to main political posts (extension and character of political rights) as well as the vertical limitations (extension and character of civil liberties) and horizontal limitations on the exercise of political power (extension and character of division of powers—control and autonomy)" (2006, p. 15).

This definition is relevant for the ensuing discussion for three reasons: 1) It accepts that institutions are an important contextual factor shaping and limiting the actions of political actors, while simultaneously acknowledging that the institutional setting is often constructed by the actors themselves. 2) This definition acknowledges that very often the rules and procedures defining a regime may not always be formal and officially-sanctioned, which behoves scholars to also examine the informal aspects of how power is distributed in society. 3) This definition does not just focus on the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (vertical limitations), but also the relationships that might exist among the various power-holders (horizontal limitations). The latter set of relationships entail a constant renegotiation among elites that may cause shifts in the balance of power underpinning a regime.

Political elites and their capacity to perpetuate themselves in positions of power determines the nature of the regime. Examining recruitment and selection of the political elite entails examining not just the resources (time, money, support networks) available to these actors, but also their motivations to pursue political careers and how much autonomy they have in these positions. This is particularly crucial in making this dimension a more superior one because, although Gilbert and Mohseni's dimension of tutelary influence captures the freedom with which leaders can rule, it does not take into account the incentive structures confronting political actors and explain their motivations.

Second, examining recruitment and selection provides a replicable and valid framework that can make comparative analysis of hybrid regimes possible. Any study of political recruitment takes for granted that the elite seek to perpetuate themselves, their goals, and their policies. In authoritarian regimes elites maintain themselves through arbitrary decisions that do not need to be justified ideologically as we might expect in democratic regimes, where multiple elites compete for control over policymaking processes by mobilizing and seeking support from the electorate. The political elite are interested in having a hand in their own succession because as policymakers they also have a stake in the future. A regime is held together at the foundations by stable coalitions of interests made possible by consistent policies. As policies are made by the elite, the perpetuation of the latter is a prerequisite for regime maintenance. Methods of elite recruitment and succession therefore partly define the nature of the regime. When elites are willing to expose themselves to electoral competition and are willing to let citizens determine "who shall rule" in a free election, the regime can be defined as democratic (Huntington, 1996; Schumpeter, 1950). However, when opposite conditions prevail, the regime must be defined as oligarchic at best or authoritarian at worst. If one treats elite recruitment as the independent variable explaining political regimes, the strategies employed by the elite to access power and perpetuate themselves in power is worth exploring (Eulau & Czudonowski, 1976).

5. Looking Ahead

The suggestions made in this article with respect to advancing the research agenda on hybrid regimes are certainly not exhaustive. My suggestion to examine the dimension of recruitment and selection is by no means the only dimension worth exploring, although I would argue it is a robust, valid and replicable starting point. However, more research on other important dimensions of political regimes must also be undertaken. For example, J. Ekman (2009), instead of focusing on horizontal accountability among political elites, examines vertical accountability between the ruler and ruled. He measures the participation of citizens using three variables: confidence in political parties, turnout and confidence in elections and public support for democracy. Another avenue of research would be to reflect on hybrid regimes in their international context (see Tansey, 2013), in relation to democracy promotion, authoritarian diffusion and various forms of globalization. Thus far, patterns of continuity and change in hybrid regimes have only been studied domestically and have not taken into account the influence of global politics.

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Commentary

Authoritarian Norms in a Changing International System

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Abstract
The normative structure of the international system is changing, driven by the logics of effectiveness and appropriateness. Whereas the balance between democracy and autocracy had clearly favored the former, this appears to no longer be the case. Not only are authoritarian methods spreading because they have been found to be successful, but democracy's very legitimacy has been eroded from self-doubt and as a consequence of rising and increasingly confident authoritarian great powers. This commentary provides an overview of these trends.

Keywords
authoritarianism; China; democracy; diffusion; Russia

Issue
This commentary is part of the issue "Authoritarianism in the 21st Century", edited by Natasha Ezrow (University of Essex, UK).

1. Introduction

The international system is currently going through a profound transition. The balance between democracy and autocracy, which seemed tilted so far to the former's advantage during the 1990s and the mid-2000s, appears to be leveling out, with ever more assertive authoritarian states and an increasingly embattled democratic world. One only need look at the headlines.

In March 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in a clear act of aggression, violating one of the most sacred post-Second World War European norms prohibiting territorial aggrandizement. Although few countries recognized its legality, nearly everyone has adjusted to this new reality. Russia has also fueled a civil war in eastern Ukraine, which brought sanctions, but little else. 18 months later, Russia intervened militarily in Syria, representing the first time since the end of the Cold War that a great power used force outside of its immediate neighborhood in defiance of American wishes. Russia is now seen as a player in the Middle East, a region from which it largely had been expelled decades before.

An expanding China is seizing islands in the South China Sea, hundreds of miles away from its mainland and in the territorial seas of several Asian countries. The Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2016 ruling against these moves was shrugged off by Beijing as barely a distraction. In the summer of 2017, China's first, official overseas military base was opened in Djibouti, marking China's expansion into the Middle East and Africa. This solidifies the fact that China is now more than just a regional actor and imbues that country with the trappings of the rising power of the future.

Even in the democratic West, there are mounting questions about the strength of liberal norms as populism continues to spread at the ballot box. Certain countries once thought to be the paragons of a post-communist transition, such as Hungary and Poland, have seemingly copied from the playbook which had previously led to the creation of authoritarian regimes in Belarus and Russia. Moreover, Turkey, a NATO member and perennial European Union hopeful, continued its steady shift from democracy to autocracy—a process which seems both unstoppable and, by now, all too familiar. Freedom House's 2011 Freedom in the World report (Freedom House, 2011) was entitled *The Authoritarian Challenge to Democracy*. It was updated in 2018 as *Democracy in Crisis* (Freedom House, 2018). A new ideological normal appears to be descending on the world.

The swan song of democracy's recent dominance was likely the Color Revolutions. While they were initially successful, they taught autocrats valuable lessons which forestalled what some believed would be the beginning of a "fourth wave" of democracy. The so-called Arab Spring of 2011 rapidly turned into an Arab Winter, with regimes either descending into chaos or strengthening their dictatorships. Only Tunisia benefitted from this optimistic, but ultimately premature, moniker.

The norms that operate within the international system cannot help but be affected by this upsurge of authoritarianism. This wider environment fosters the creation of new norms, weakens or strengthens those that already exist in line with these changes, and facilitates their spread from one country to another. New policies at the domestic level are inevitable as the context within which policies are made has now changed.

This process is driven by two logics: effectiveness and appropriateness (Ambrosio, 2010). The former makes it more likely that norms and the policies shaped by them will be adopted because they appear to be successful. The current autocratic moment was initially driven by this logic. As authoritarian regimes learned lessons from the successes and failures of others, they developed a collection of policies and institutional changes to make them better able to resist democratic pressures at home and from abroad. This has become alternatively called "political technology" (Wilson, 2005), an "authoritarian toolkit" (Diamond, Plattner, & Walker, 2016), or a "menu of manipulation" (Schedler, 2002). Through the logic of effectiveness, items in this tried and tested list were copied by others with the purpose of eroding democracy and strengthening dictatorship. There is no single origin of this methodology, but the "Putin model" is perhaps the most prominent variety within the European context and includes several steps such as weakening the judiciary, undermining nongovernment organizations and civil society, centralizing power, controlling the media, manipulating the electoral process, and selective repression. All of this serves to create a façade of democracy. We can see its influence even in countries once thought to be consolidated democracies, such as Fidesz's systematic attack on checks and balances in the Hungarian political system. Although not always successful, as Viktor Yanukovych found to his misfortune in Ukraine, this blueprint became ubiquitous for the simple reason that it works.

We now appear to be entering a new stage of the global normative structure where the logic of appropriateness increasingly applies. This logic rests, not upon the success of norms or policies, but upon their very legitimacy. According to the diffusion literature, this is the difference between learning (effectiveness) and emulation (appropriateness). In cases of emulation, the normative environment creates pressures to conform to a course of action because it is seen as right and proper. Deviation from this is constrained by the need "to signal…commitment to global norms" (Simmons, Dobbin, & Garrett, 2006, p. 799). When the legitimacy of the old norms weaken, it is easier to violate them and to adopt new ones.

One can see how this once worked in democracy's favor. Within post-communist Europe, communism was not only proven to be a failure, but democracy came to be seen as the only legitimate form of government in the region. Globally, a unipolar international system centered on a norm-proselytizing United States engendered conditions which led McFaul (2010) to title an article "Democracy Promotion as a World Value". The "Asian values" resistance to liberalism during the 1990s never achieved enough normative legitimacy to substantively erode the propriety of democracy. Even Putin framed his power grab in terms of democracy—"sovereign democracy," granted, but democracy nonetheless. Although liberal democracy was never truly the only game in town, a key factor maintaining the global balance in its favor was the widespread belief in democracy's dominant claim to legitimacy. The fact that autocratic regimes paid lip service to the forms of democracy was indicative of its normative power.

As the global legitimacy of democracy appears to be eroding, it is quite possible that a sea change is either currently happening or is on the horizon. If we regard of this as a normative tug-of-war between democracy and authoritarian, then as one weakens, the other strengthens.

Part of this is due to the internal situation within the democratic West which currently expresses itself through the outpouring of populist sentiments. Examples abound. Consider just the following: the rise of populist parties throughout Europe, including and the Alternative for Deutschland, and their electoral victories Hungary, Austria, Poland; the Brexit vote, which succeeded over the objections of all of Britain's major parties; Donald Trump's presidency in America; and, the fact that the center-left and center-right establishment parties are receiving their lowest vote totals since the Second World War in countries such as France, Germany, and Italy. To paraphrase one of the most over-quoted poems in Western civilization, the center, clearly, is not holding. This is obviously due, to a large extent, to concerns about immigration and the fallout from the Great Recession. However, it seems far deeper than this. There is a crisis of confidence within the democratic world, not just about the performance of its institutions, but one which questions the very foundations of the neoliberal consensus. The fact that Viktor Orbán (2014), the prime minister of a European Union member state, can criticize the very foundations of liberal democracy and openly declare that he supports building an "illiberal state", citing such countries as "Singapore, China…Russia, Turkey" as his role models, is indicative of how dramatically things have changed. If the democratic West is questioning itself so at such a basic level, then why shouldn't others? This cannot but help to shift things more in favor of authoritarianism.

Within the authoritarian world, autocrats are becoming more confident and their authoritarian policies more

overt and brazen. Whether this means removing term limits to that they can potentially rule for life, openly interfering in democratic elections in the West, violently cracking down on peaceful protestors, or creating a dynasty by grooming their children to govern after they are gone, the mask has clearly slipped and autocrats are now far less concerned about keeping up the pretenses of democracy. To put it in terms of emulation, governments feel far less concerned about deviating from democratic norms. As such actions become routine, this creates a normative feedback loop which normalizes authoritarianism and reinforces the logic of appropriateness.

That this is occurring even in the absence of proselytizing states is notable. Chinese President Xi Jinping (2015) said that "we have no intention to interfere in other countries' internal affairs, export our own social system and model of development, or impose our own will on others". And there is a lot of truth to this, as modern-day China is clearly no Maoist regime, seeking to spread its version of communism. Putin's Russia, too, is definitely no Soviet Union, which consistently presented itself as a role model to the rest of the world. The fact that neither currently possesses a missionary impulse is ultimately irrelevant, however. While the respectability of norms is strengthened by practice, it is also bolstered by the prestige of major powers which "effectively define international standards of legitimacy, serving as models for other states" (Fordham & Asal, 2007, p. 32). One analysis referred to this as "authoritarian gravity centres" (Kneuer & Demmelhuber, 2016, p. 3). Russia's increased standing on the global stage is surpassed only by China's, which has emerged as the second most powerful country in the world. Even if there is no intention of advancing an ideological agenda, these powerful authoritarian states will inevitably change the nature of the global debate between democracy and autocracy. As more states go down this path, this creates a de facto 'reference group', which further makes authoritarianism appear appropriate. One can cite as evidence of this process the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's role in legitimizing regional norms against regime change and effectively fortifying Central Asian authoritarianism.

In short, the normative structure of the international system is changing. The democratic world must prepare itself for a new, new world order in which the balance between democracy and autocracy no longer clearly favors itself.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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