

The Temporal Determinants of Democracy: Beyond Duration

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Paper prepared for the Lausanne Conference on Sequence Analysis
University of Lausanne, June 6th-8th 2012

(Expanded) ABSTRACT

An important area of research in political science concerns the causes and consequences of democratization. There are many explanations for why democracy emerges and persists. *How* factors influence the emergence and survival of democracy is still largely unknown, however, in large part because the role of certain temporal processes in democratization is ignored. Though many scholars assert that critical factors of democratization occur in a specific order, such processes are difficult to test quantitatively. This paper aims to shed light on the effect of political sequencing--namely, prior regime histories--on the timing and success of democratization. Do the sequences of prior regimes matter for when democracy emerges and 'sticks'? A contribution of the proposed project is to separate out significant unordered processes that make democracy more likely from significant ordered events. Doing so may provide support for theories previously refuted by empirical models that were not designed to detect long-term outcome-dependence. Analyzing the role of sequencing at the onset of transitions to democracy also has major implications for the processes by which democracies consolidate. Do countries with similar historical regime sequences have similar rates of success once democracy is installed? Understanding how various factors influence the timing and pattern of democratization may shed new light on when it is likely to be successful.

Theories of democratization can be broadly organized into three related streams centered on political institutions, the economy, and bargaining. Primarily, I will focus on institutional explanations. Institutional theories of democratization explain democracy as the conception of a particular set of institutions. Certain institutions can engender democracy as well as halt the transition process. Contextual factors and residual institutions from prior regimes can carry over during the democratization process and forestall a successful outcome. Differences in the order of liberalization and reform can therefore quell, incite, or neutralize calls for reform, changing the probability that a country democratizes. The institutionalist paradigm in the literature on

Supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, DGE-0750756.

democratization implies several general hypotheses regarding whether the sequence of institutions that pre-dates democracy significantly predicts the likelihood (and timing) of successful democracy emerging:

The concept of interest is democratization to a successful democracy. I based my indicator of democracy on a discrete classification of regime type. In building on the Democracy-Dictatorship (DD) data, Cheibub et al. (2010) adopted Przeworski's (1991) definition of democracy. The data include all independent regimes for the post World War II period, 1946-2008. Herein, 'successful' democracies are considered to be those lasting at least five years. To understand the determinants of successful democracy, I specify the dependent variable in three distinct but related ways. I estimate the time to democratization for a lasting democracy, whether a country democratizes to a democracy lasting five or more years, and the extent to which it consolidated (i.e., the number of consecutive years that a country remained democratic after surpassing five years). I also ran a time-series model estimating the probability of democracy lasting five years or more. To test whether or not democracy occurs I use a binary time-series cross-sectional model that accounts for duration dependence (e.g., a duration model) (Beck et al. 1998). Finally, I examined whether regime sequences explain how long democracies last once they surpass the five-year threshold.

The independent variable is the history of prior regime-change--the institutional legacy--that precedes democratization, based on a discrete dataset on authoritarian regimes provided by Cheibub et al. (2010). To account for patterns of institutional change, I treat the string of regime-types that a country has experienced as a unique sequence and include in the model groups of similar sequences. I used the Optimal Matching algorithm (OM) and chose an indel cost of 1 and a constant substitution cost of 2. I clustered the resulting distance matrix into five groups using hierarchical clustering from Ward (1963). With each additional year I recalculated the distances between sequences and reassigned them to one of the five clusters, a result of which being that the assignment of each institutional history to the clusters is time-varying. Control variables include GDP per Capita, lagged regime-type, armed conflict incurring at least 25 battle-related fatalities, and region of the world.

A summary of the relative goodness-of-fit of each model shows that—whether one is modeling time to democracy, democracy, or consolidation after democracy lasting five years or more—it is best improved by controlling for the prior regime type as well as the longer history of

institutional changes. What is more, comparing the goodness-of-fit of the models with regime type only and with regime sequences only shows it to be a close call between them. For predicting the emergence of democracy lasting five years or more, regime sequence appears to be as good if not a better predictor than the prior regime type. The results of the empirical models presented support some of my hypotheses but not others. The overall impact of the findings presented herein, however rudimentary, establishes the importance of political sequences in the study of democratization. By several different standards, it would appear that the emergence of successful democracy (one lasting five years or more) is not a first-order process, but one which is affected by events farther back in the past. This seems true at least as far as institutional explanations for its emergence are concerned. Indeed, scholars have suggested the decision to democratize and the timing at which it occurs are path-dependent (Mahoney 1991; Yashar 1997). The results also illustrate one way in which political scientists might be able to incorporate sequence analysis in their research. In so doing, we will be better able to understand the role that path-dependent processes play in politics (Page 2006).