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Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identification, and Description*

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Abstract

What explains successful democratization? This paper makes four contributions towards providing more sophisticated answers to this question. Building on the comparative case-study and large-N literature, it first presents a new approach to conceptualizing the discrete beginning of a period of political liberalization, tracing its progression, and classifying episodes by successful vs. different types of failing outcomes, thus avoiding potentially fallacious assumptions of unit homogeneity. Second, it provides the first ever dataset (EPLIB) of the full universe of episodes from 1900 to 2018, and third, it demonstrates the value of this approach, showing that while several established covariates are useful for predicting outcomes, none of them seem to explain the onset of a period of liberalization. Fourth, it illustrates how the identification of episodes makes it possible to study processes quantitatively using sequencing methods to detail the importance of the order of change for liberalization outcomes.

1 Introduction

Many countries experience periods of political liberalization, but only some of them develop into democracies. What explains successful democratization? Despite 60 years of increasingly sophisticated studies, that question still calls for adequate answers. This paper is motivated by a quest to make it possible for us, as a discipline, to answer this “big” question with its obvious importance for the world.

While the field has produced many significant and increasingly sophisticated studies (some of which we discuss below), it is hampered by conceptual and methodological divisions where each side has its own strengths and weaknesses. The conceptual divide comes from considering democracy-autocracy either as a matter of degree or in terms of a dichotomy. The former approach relies on interval measures where any change of the same magnitude in any direction regardless of where on the spectrum it happens is treated as empirically equivalent under very strong assumptions of unit homogeneity and constant, symmetric effects. The latter approach – *transitions-as-events* – is forced to make heroic assumptions of unit homogeneity in each class of objects and risks findings are biased by the so called Simpson’s paradox (Blyth, 1972). Both approaches miss two critical aspects of democratization: *When and why did it start?* and *How does the process unfold and does that matter for the outcome?*

Seeking to overcome this bifurcation and to provide a unified approach that allows for a more comprehensive analysis of what explains successful as well as failed episodes of political liberalization,¹ this paper makes four contributions: First, it addresses weaknesses in the quantitative literature and merges their benefits with a systematic delimitation of periods of liberalization or what we refer to as *episodes*. We thus conceptualize episodes building on insights from the comparative case-study literature and present a new approach of decision rules to identifying the discrete beginning of a liberalization period, tracing its progression,

¹Throughout the paper we refer loosely to “liberalization” as those political and institutional reforms enhancing the guarantees that make up Dahl’s definition of polyarchy.

and classifying episodes by successful vs. different types of failing outcomes in a quantitative framework.

Second, the paper puts this new approach into practice and introduces the Episodes of Political Liberalization (EPLIB) dataset: the first ever capturing the full universe of liberalization episodes from 1900 to 2018. Drawing on the nuanced Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data (Coppedge et al., 2019a), EPLIB delineates the onset, duration, reforms during the process, and outcome of liberalization episodes from 1900 to 2018. Acknowledging that not all periods of liberalization necessarily lead to democracy, this dataset also differentiates successful democratic transitions from three types of failure, thus avoiding potentially fallacious assumptions of within-category unit homogeneity.²

As a third contribution, this paper demonstrates the value of the new approach and the EPLIB dataset. It allows us to simultaneously address why autocrats initially decide, or are forced to start with liberalizing reforms; what explains incremental changes during an episode of liberalization; and the eventual outcome. Just as scholars have warned against conflating functional and genetic explanations of democracy (Rustow, 1970; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997), we should not assume that the same predictors explaining the onset of democratic reforms in a non-democracy also explain either the extent of liberalization or whether that regime ultimately becomes a democracy.³ Using the EPLIB episodes data, we demonstrate that several well-established determinants of democratization outcomes do not explain the onset of a period of liberalization, despite remaining good predictors for democratic transition given an ongoing liberalization episode. This opens up a new research agenda for the comparative politics of democracy and autocracy.

²For the sake of transparency and replication we provide an open-access and easy-to-use interface available as an R package, and also report a series of checks to illustrate how the results may change with different threshold specifications. While we are confident in our conceptualization and measurement, the package also allows users to define their own inclusion- and thresholds parameters.

³Recent work addressing transitions from electoral authoritarianism make a distinction between onset and outcome (Brownlee, 2009; Bernhard, Edgell, and Lindberg, 2019), but have thus far lacked the adequate approach and/or data to explore the process in more detail.

Finally, the paper provides an empirical illustration of how the identification of episodes makes it possible to study liberalization *processes* quantitatively. It uses a new set of sequencing methods to detail the importance of the *order* of change for outcomes. The vast comparative and historical case study literature teaches us that the process of democratization itself is an important factor in determining outcomes, but the quantitative literature until now has lacked methods for both identifying the relevant episodes to be studied and for detailing how the process unfolds. The EPLIB data set provides an opportunity to start exploring how the ordering of reforms affects whether a country undergoing a liberalization episode eventually transitions to democracy or remains autocratic. Taking advantage of methods recently adapted from evolutionary biology (e.g. Lindenfors, Krusell, and Lindberg, 2019; Lindenfors et al., 2018) this paper opens up a second new research agenda for quantitative studies of democratization – as well as for its opposite autocratization, (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). The illustrative analysis here suggests that early developments in freedoms for civil society organizations to form and operate and capable electoral management bodies (EMBs) tend to distinguish successful liberalization episodes from failures. Thus, early investments in these two areas may be fruitful for democracy promotion efforts.

The remainder of the paper first reviews the conceptual divide in the quantitative democratization literature and its resulting weaknesses; details the conceptualization and operationalization of liberalization episodes ; describes the EPLIB dataset and makes comparisons to existing data; uses the EPLIB data to conduct a first exploratory analysis of the onset of liberalization and outcomes as well as of sequences of liberalization; and finally concludes.

2 The Conceptual Divide and Its Problems

Early cross-national studies attempting to explain democracy tend to focus on its social and economic “requisites”, namely those factors more commonly observed in countries that

are democratic (e.g. Lipset, 1959; Almond and Verba, 1963). These foundational works laid the groundwork for a burgeoning literature on “transitology” in the 1980s and 1990s following world events and calls by scholars to differentiate the causes of democracy from those features that help it endure (Rustow, 1970). The 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal initiated reversals from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe, and Latin America followed suit beginning with the Dominican Republic in 1978 (Collier, 1999; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, 1992). After the tumultuous events of 1989, the changes swept over nearly 100 other countries in the former Eastern Block with its “Color Revolutions”; in Africa where many dictators turned into democrats; and in Asia, where several of the former “tigers” became democracies (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006; Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, 1988; Mitchell, 2012; Neher and Marlay, 1995; van de Walle and Bratton, 1997).

One key insight of the classic “transitology” literature was that such processes are highly indeterminate, distinguished by an opening followed by *liberalization* – loosening restrictions under autocracy – and then a transition to democracy by way of a founding election (e.g. Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, 1988; O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986). Another insight from the vast comparative case-literature is that the factors leading up to the initial opening up of an authoritarian regime (the *onset* of an episode in our terminology) are often very different from the factors that explain the subsequent unfolding and eventual outcome of the liberalization period.

Yet, these key insights were lost in the increasingly methodologically sophisticated large-N studies offering new findings on the structural, institutional, and behavioral correlates of democratization (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Ansell and Samuels, 2010; Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock, 2001; Boix and Stokes, 2003; Geddes, 1999; Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2003; Miller, 2015; Pevehouse, 2002; Przeworski et al., 2000; Reenock, Staton, and Radean, 2013; Ross, 2012; Svobik, 2008; Teorell, 2010). Scholars commonly seek to isolate the average effects of a small number of factors on a dichotomous or continuous measure of democracy. Whether offering a

difference in kind (Alvarez et al., 1996; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, 2010, e.g.,) or of degree (Jackman and Bollen, 1989, e.g.,) account of democratization (Collier and Adcock, 1999), the onset and process of democratization remained either outside of the analyses or conflated with outcomes with potentially consequential effects.

The stream of quantitative research relying on *transitions-as-events* using dichotomous measures as the dependent variable (e.g. Brownlee, 2009; Miller, 2015; Boix, Miller, and Rosato, 2013; Boix and Stokes, 2003; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, 2010) typically set some minimal criteria to qualify as a democracy (e.g. Alvarez et al., 1996; Huntington et al., 1991, pp. 11–12). Many of these studies provide important knowledge on conditions that enhance the prospect of shifts from autocracy to democracy and on what factors makes democracies endure (e.g. Boix, 2003; Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016; Higley and Burton, 1989; Przeworski et al., 2000). Yet, binary representations of democratization require the assumption that within-category subjects are homogeneous. All negative cases are lumped together, ignoring differences between those that never had an opening, those that (un-)intentionally reached an electoral authoritarian “equilibrium”, and those that had substantial liberalization but whose transition was preempted by a coup or radical change. For example, some regimes open up as a tactic for authoritarian survival (*a.k.a.*, “autocratic liberalization;” see Gandhi, 2008; Svobik, 2012; Schedler, 2013), while stalled liberalization can result when other forces intervene to preclude the potential of a democratic transition. If cases that liberalize but fail to transition to democracy are meaningfully different from those that *never* took steps towards liberalization, empirical results will disappear or reverse as a result in what is known as Simpson’s paradox (Blyth, 1972; Wagner, 1982). To the extent that cases that liberalized but did not transition to democracy differ from those that never liberalized, we risk missing the factors that lead some countries to liberalize significantly and come close to a transition but that nevertheless fail to become fully democratic.

The second strand of literature conceptualizes democratization as “any move towards more democraticness” on a scale from non-existent to full democracy and typically relies

on various time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) regressions treating any change toward or away from democracy as conceptually and empirically equivalent regardless of where on the spectrum it happens (e.g. Diamond, 1996, p. 53; Coppedge and Reinicke, 1990; Jackman and Bollen, 1989; for an exception, see Teorell, 2010).⁴ Typically no distinction is made between improvements or reversals at either ends of the scale, thus introducing another simplification that potentially masks important empirical relationships that may exist for a subset of regimes. Seeking to establish the average effect of a factor such as economic growth, the recent increase of i units of democracy in highly authoritarian Myanmar is taken to be conceptually and empirically equivalent to i units in already democratic South Korea. But why would we expect an opening – an increase on a democracy-autocracy scale – in a country like Myanmar to have the same explanation (*a.k.a.*, assuming unit homogeneity and linear, constant, symmetric effects) as a further improvement of democracy such as South Korea?

Disregarding for now the concern with causal identification in observational studies, these assumptions are at odds with what we know from the comparative case-study literature and undermine our ability to devise appropriate tests of theories. For example, research on competitive autocracies and electoral authoritarianism notes the potentially stabilizing effects of liberalization on autocratic rule (Brumberg, 2002; Bunce and Wolchik, 2010; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Magaloni, 2008; Schedler, 2013) and some argue that the liberalization witnessed in autocratic regimes is never intended to lead to democratic transition, but instead, this is a deliberate tactic to ensure authoritarian survival (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014; Miller, 2017). Liberalization periods that result in a democratic transition are often interpreted as successful attempts of regime change (e.g. O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986; Bunce and Wolchik, 2010), but these transitions may also occur by mistake (Treisman, 2017). For example, evidence suggests that setting regular multiparty elections in motion under authoritarianism increases the prospects of regime breakdown and transition to democracy, whether intended or not (Brownlee, 2009; Edgell

⁴For a review of indices of democracy, see Munck and Verkuilen (2002), Högström (2013), and Boese (2019)

et al., 2018; Lindberg, 2006). At the early stages of liberalization, actors' intent is typically unobservable, and the outcome is highly uncertain (Bernhard, Edgell, and Lindberg, 2019; Schedler, 2001).

The difference of degree-studies of democratization typically eschew the use of a specific—often arbitrary—cut-off value that can affect the strength of an observed relationship. However, this makes it nearly impossible to distinguish onset from liberalization, and liberalization from transition, and therefore risks confounding traits that make countries start a process, or become more democratic (liberalization), with those that are associated with a country ultimately transitioning to a democracy. Notwithstanding the value of using the richness of incremental data, certain research questions simply require dichotomizing or categorizing information to delineate the sample of outcomes of interest (Collier and Adcock, 1999).

In short, the focus on transitions-as-events or the assumed-to-be equivalent changes along an interval measure has led us to forget the overlook fundamental insights from the comparative literature and stymied the analysis of regime change processes in our field. This does not mean that existing studies and approaches are irrelevant, only that these approaches now dominating much of the conversation are limited in how much they are able to reveal. We need a new approach that preserves the important conceptual and empirical distinctions in a large-N framework to enable us to adequately conceptualize democratization and test existing theories. We also need quantitative techniques for uncovering order by which liberalization episodes unfold *a.k.a.* “process-tracing.” This together would allow us to answer questions related to democratic transitions that the earlier literature pointed to as critical: *What factors explain the opening up of an autocratic regime? Why do some liberalization periods lead to democracy while others stall or revert back? Are there common patterns of liberalization - sequences - that succeed or fail to lead to democracy?* For policy purposes, this will allow further exploration into essential questions like: *Which determinants of democracy would be the ideal targets for democracy promotion?*

3 Conceptualizing Episodes of Liberalization

We suggest drawing on the strengths of the approaches outlined above, incorporating them under a broad conceptualization of *democratization* referring improvements of the democratic characteristics of a regime, regardless of where on the democracy-autocracy scale a case happens to be found. “Democratization” thus represents any move toward more democratic traits as a matter of degree. The focus is here on the subset of *liberalization episodes* that by definition starts in a non-democratic regime. Noting the important conceptual and empirical insights from comparative case studies and the literature on discrete regime transitions, we build on Schedler (2002), Lindberg (2009), and Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) to recognize that a liberalization episode always involves a political opening that must be identified, followed by a period of reforms.⁵ However, this process is inherently fraught with uncertainty and does not necessarily involve a *successful* transition to democracy (Schedler, 2001; Schedler, 2013). Failure constitutes a period of liberalization followed by, alternatively, a stagnation and stabilization of an authoritarian equilibrium (A: *stabilized electoral authoritarianism*); a reversal and return to closed autocracy (B: *failed liberalization*); or a period of liberalization leading to a situation where the regime can be characterized as minimally democratic but where founding elections are preempted (C: *preempted transition*).⁶ Finally, an episode may result in a *successful* transition to democracy (D) as illustrated in Figure 1.⁷

Operationalizing Episodes

This takes seriously prior calls to pay greater attention to when a democratic transition initiates, its process, and when it ends (Schedler, 2001). The task is then to construct a set

⁵This approach mirrors recent advances in the study of *autocratization* or movement in the opposite direction (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019), opening up new avenues for the study of regime change more generally.

⁶The term “failing” is used here in the perspective of democratization. A process that does not reach democracy is not necessarily a failure seen from the perspective of those seeking to maintain autocratic rule.

⁷The order and timing for these processes of democratization can vary, i.e. not all countries achieve electoral (or liberal) democracy via electoral authoritarianism, rapid democratization with direct jumps from closed autocracy to democracy, for example, may also occur. In addition, exploring processes of democratic deepening lies beyond the scope of this paper.

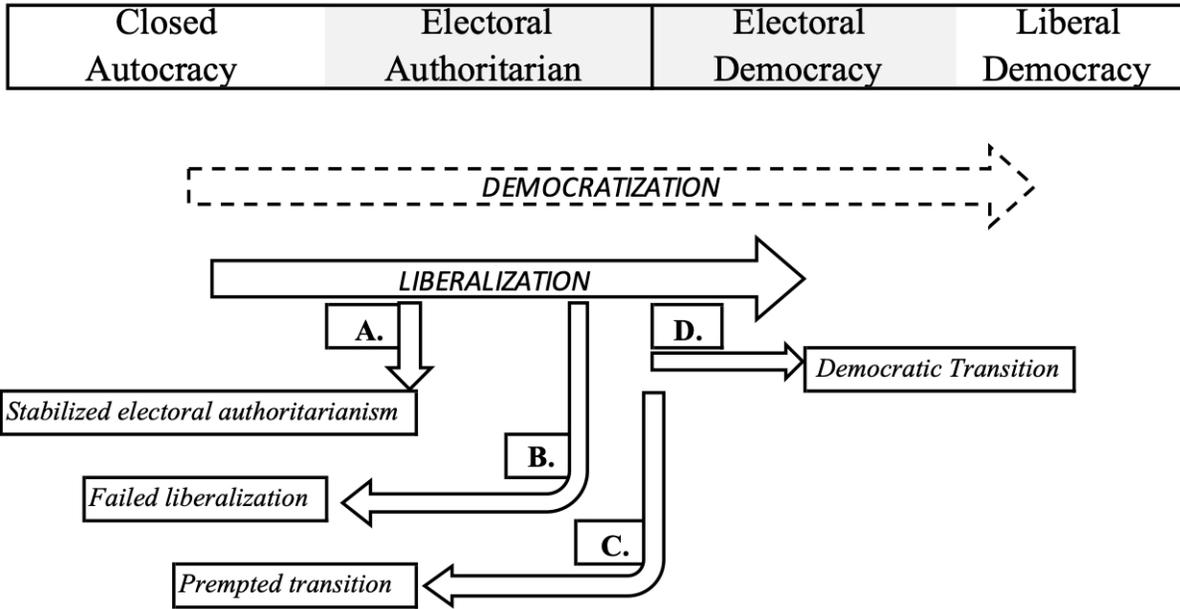


Figure 1: Path Diagram for Failed and Successful Episodes of Democratization

of rules for operationalization of this conceptual framework. Identifying and distinguishing between liberalization episodes involves three steps: (1) restricting the sample to liberalization that begins in non-democracies; (2) setting criteria to denote the beginning of a liberalization period; and (3) determining whether an episode led to a *successful* transition to democracy or to one of the three types of failure.

We draw on the nuanced Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data to identify the onset and progression of liberalization episodes, denote different pathways to outcomes, and create the EPLIB data set (Coppedge et al., 2019a; Pemstein et al., 2017). We adhere in our approach on Dahl’s notion of *polyarchy* (Dahl, 1971; Dahl, 1989).⁸ As the first comprehensive and nuanced index-measure of polyarchy based on almost 30 indicators, V-Dem’s electoral democracy index (EDI, $v2x_polyarchy$)⁹ measures each of the associated institutions, including the extent to which officials are elected, the extent of suffrage, the quality of elections, freedom of association, and freedom of expression (Teorell et al., 2018).

⁸Originally eight, Dahl narrowed polyarchy to six criteria.

⁹For more information on $v2x_polyarchy$ and its components please see Coppedge et al., 2019b.

First Step: Inclusion in the Sample

Following from the conceptualization of liberalization as a period of political reform that may or may not lead to a transition to democracy, such episodes must start in a non-democracy. Limiting the sample this way also helps fulfill a basic notion of unit homogeneity, avoiding the strong assumption that equal movements on a continuous measure of democracy are equivalent and have the same relationship to explanatory factors in autocracies and democracies. The operationalization takes advantage of the Regimes of the World (RoW, *v2x_regime*), classifying country-years into the four regime-types shown in Figure 1: closed autocracies, electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, and liberal democracies (Lührmann, Tannenbergh, and Lindberg, 2018). Using the RoW classification scheme, we therefore restrict the sample to liberalization episodes that began in closed or electoral autocracies and for the period from 1900 and on-wards.

Second Step: From Potential to Manifest Episodes

The second step involves first detecting the onset of *potential* liberalization episodes. We do this by locating cases with a positive change in the EDI score of at least 0.01 (or 1% on a scale from 0-1) from $year_{t-1}$ to $year_t$. While 0.01 may seem like a small change, the majority of the yearly changes in the EDI are actually smaller.¹⁰ The positive 0.01 threshold captures 2,943 country-years, which is about 16% of the V-Dem sample. Of these, 1,785 occurred in non-democracies, about 13% of the autocratic country-years. The 0.01 change on the EDI from one year to the next indicates that we have observed what may show to be a period of substantial political liberalization, and provides the marker for the onset. Variations below that threshold are arguably mostly noise. In total, there are 780 potential episodes in the world between 1900 and 2018.

¹⁰73% of all V-Dem country-year observations from 1900 to 2018 (13,322 out of the 18,307) have an annual change in EDI between -0.01 and 0.01. The median positive change is 0.01 while the mean is 0.025, suggesting that the distribution is highly skewed by a few large positive changes.

Second, to qualify as a *manifest* liberalization episode following the conceptualization above, a substantial aggregate change in the EDI is necessary over the episode, whether it occurs gradually over years or is sudden. To align our measure closely with the conceptualization of liberalization as a “substantial” change, it is necessary to remove cases that register small or initial changes on the EDI that do not translate into periods of significant positive change. There is also a measurement-related reason for this: There are over 25 specific indicators going into the construction of the EDI, and V-Dem uses a custom-designed IRT model to aggregate country-year estimates along with highest-posterior densities for each variable, from a set of country-expert ratings. There is thus a certain amount of measurement error associated with every country-year score on the EDI. Smaller year-to-year differences can therefore register without indicating a real change. We consider a sufficient shift to mean that the EDI increases by a minimum of 0.1 during the episode, which is 10% of the possible range of the variable. Additionally, we require that the country in question must *not* be classified as a closed autocracy during the entire episode based on the RoW classification scheme to ensure that the cases we include in the EPLIB dataset are instances of real, substantive change. We drop 443 potential episodes that do not meet the criteria for a manifest episode, leaving 337 *manifest* liberalization episodes from 1900 to 2018.

Third Step: Success or Varying Versions of Failure?

The third and final step is to delineate episode outcomes as either success or one of three types of failure, as illustrated in Figure 2. To be classified as *successful*, an episode must meet the following two conditions: (1) a regime transition to at least electoral democracy, and (2) sufficiently free and fair “founding” elections after which the winner is allowed to assume office.¹¹ The end dates for successful episodes are coded as the year of these founding elections.

¹¹We operationalize this using the V-Dem measures for lower chamber legislative (*v2eltype_0*) and executive (*v2eltype_6*) elections, whichever occurs first, and the indicator for election assume office (*v2elasmoff*). We require that elected officials are fully able to assume office (i.e., a score of 2 on the ordinal version of this indicator)

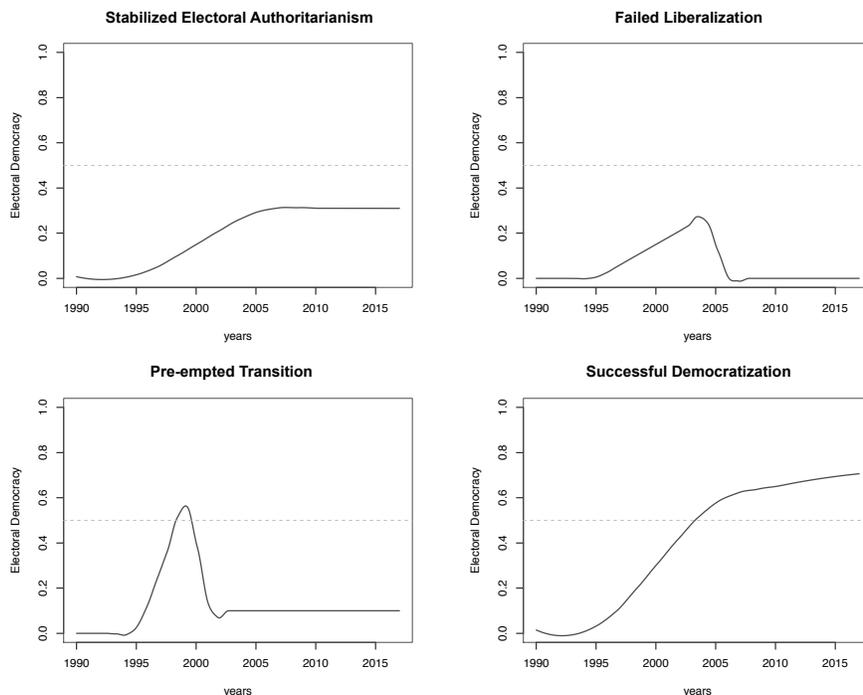


Figure 2: Possible Outcomes of Liberalization Events

A *preempted transition* is characterized by briefly achieving the threshold for electoral democracy but reverting to an authoritarian regime without holding a founding, democratic election that installs a duly elected legislature or executive. The founding-elections criterion builds on insights from the extensive case study literature highlighting the importance of successful founding elections, and we treat these “near misses” as separate types of failure given that we could expect these cases to be more closely related to success than to the other types of failures – both in terms of explanatory factors and in terms of differences in sequences of reforms when compared to other episodes.

Failed liberalization is when a country liberalizes significantly but then experiences a substantial decrease in either the EDI or RoW measure. We consider a one-year decrease of ≥ 0.02 on the EDI to constitute a sudden, substantial decline in democracy. A drop of ≥ 0.02 is fairly rare, occurring in 1,205 country-years (less than 7% of the sample years) in the V-Dem data. When such a decline occurs in an autocratic country-year the episode

terminates.¹² We also consider a decrease in EDI of ≥ 0.1 that accumulates over up to 10 years as an indication that the democratization episode has failed.¹³ In addition, any reversion to closed autocracy also constitutes failed liberalization.

Finally, *stabilized electoral authoritarianism* is identified when an authoritarian regime liberalizes to what counts as a substantial extent following the rules laid out above, and then stabilizes at that level. This stabilization is operationalized as manifest liberalization episodes followed by a period of ten years without any positive changes to the EDI of ≥ 0.01 and without any large drops to the EDI of ≥ 0.1 while the regime remains classified as an electoral autocracy. While the literature on authoritarian regimes suggests that stabilized electoral authoritarianism may result from strategic choices by rulers (e.g. Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014; Gandhi, 2008; Schedler, 2013), the intention of elites at moments of uncertainty is inherently difficult to establish in a large-N context. Liberalization is bound to produce unexpected consequences for both would-be democratizers and regime hardliners (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986; Treisman, 2017). We thus refrain from attributing any intent to the onset or the progression of episodes and focus instead on empirical evidence.

As with most time series data, the problem of right-censorship occurs. Because of the ten-year requirement of stabilized electoral authoritarianism and the election-related requirements for successful episodes, some ongoing episodes are indeterminate at the time of analysis. These appear as *censored* episodes in the EPLIB data set.¹⁴

¹²If the country-year remains classified as electoral democracy, despite such a sudden drop, we allow the episode to continue because it may come to satisfy the criteria above for successful or preempted episodes.

¹³Gradual drops in EDI also occur in democracies without falling below the threshold for an electoral democracy, as has been the case for Poland and Croatia in recent years but in the construction of the EPLIB data set we are not at present concerned with such instances of democratic backsliding, or autocratization.

¹⁴Because the current version of the EPLIB data set is bound between 1900 and 2018, some cases may have begun to liberalize toward the end of our time interval. These positive cases may be coded as null because we do not know whether the case will reach the 0.1 change threshold during future years. Likewise, liberalization episodes that began prior to 1900 could be left-censored in two ways. First, if the case liberalizes sufficiently after 1900 to meet our coding criteria, we will still capture the episode but we will underestimate its duration and extent. Second, our data may overlook liberalization episodes that began prior to 1900 if the portion of the episode observed after 1900 does not present sufficient liberalization to meet our criteria for a manifest episode.

Our approach here to create the EPLIB data set has the advantage of identifying when a potential democratic transition begins, taking into account the varying trajectories of liberalization and their outcomes (i.e. reversals, stabilized authoritarianism, preempted transitions, or successful democratic transitions). The coding rules we suggest ¹⁵ create a bounded set of cases that enable us to identify the onset and extension of periods of liberalization and examine whether or not they successfully democratized – and if not, the various ways that they fail. EPLIB is the first ever data set that explicitly identifies periods of liberalization alongside their outcomes to enable quantitative analysis. It avoids the potential for sample bias resulting from focusing exclusively on cases of successful transitions and does not rely on the assumptions of unit homogeneity and symmetric effects, opening up a range of new possibilities for quantitative analysis.

4 EPLIB: The Universe of Liberalization Episodes

The EPLIB data set thus contains the full universe of 337 liberalization episodes taking place in 155 countries between 1900 and 2018 (see online Appendix A for a full list). Of these, 146 *successful* episodes occurred in 110 countries, while 182 *failed* episodes occurred in 91 countries. Failed liberalization due to a sudden or gradual decline is by far the most common form of failure, constituting 124 (68%) of the failed episodes. Preempted transitions are fairly rare, with just 22 instances in 19 countries during the period. Notably, nine of these countries later experienced successful liberalization episodes ending with transitions to electoral democracy. The remaining 36 failures (20%) constitute observations of stabilized electoral autocracy. Nine episodes were ongoing in 2018, i.e. right censored, and therefore cannot be conclusively classified as either successful or failed at this time.¹⁶ We also report

¹⁵We determined these rules based on the extant literature outlined above in combination with numerous sensitivity analyses (see Appendix C). Nevertheless, EPLIB users can change the episode inclusion criteria to the research question at hand by using the publicly available R package (*link blinded for review*).

¹⁶Of the 29 countries in the V-Dem data without a democratization episode, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland maintained democratic rule for the entire period. The remaining cases maintained consistent autocratic rule without significant liberalization. These cases include: Bahrain, China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic (ceased to exist, merged with democratic Germany in 1991), Hong Kong,

results from a sensitivity analysis of the criteria used to identify episodes (Online Appendix C). Inspecting 161,051 unique threshold combinations, we find that the identified episodes are almost surprisingly robust to alternative threshold choices. In other words, one can be fairly confident in that the episodes of our new approach constitutes the real full universe of cases relevant to study for the field of comparative democratization.

Figure 3 is a visualization of the full EPLIB data set with 18,451 country-year observations on V-Dem's EDI from 1900 to 2018¹⁷. It highlights the main types of liberalization episodes against the background of country-years where no episode registers.

The top panel shows the trajectories of country-episodes where successful liberalization leading to democratic transitions is colored blue. All three types of failures are given the same orange color to enhance readability, while censored (yet indeterminate) cases are colored green. Country-periods where no episode registers are depicted with light gray lines. The middle panel shows how many episodes started each year and the bottom panel how many countries in each year were in an episode. Both of these panels employ the same color scheme as the first one.

Already this visual description provides some novel findings. The well-established three waves of democratization are clearly perceptible especially in first and third panels. But we can now also see that the first wave culminating in the early 1920s consisted mostly of successful episodes. The second wave that took off after World War II and that came to include a large number of decolonization processes, was dominated by failures. The first part of the third wave originating in the mid-1970s typically led to successful transitions but from around the end of the Cold War it came to produce roughly an equal number of successful and failed liberalization episodes. With the EPLIB data set we can now see this pattern for the first time based on a systematic and robust methodology.

Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Mozambique (missing data from 1974-1994), North Korea, Oman, Palestine/British Mandate (ceased to exist in 1948), Palestine/Gaza (gap in data from 1967-2006), Palestine/West Bank (gap in data from 1950-1966 and missing data from 1967-2002), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, South Yemen (ceased to exist, merged with North Yemen in 1991), Swaziland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan.

¹⁷On the original scale from 0 to 1 with a mean=.311, min=.007, and max=.948

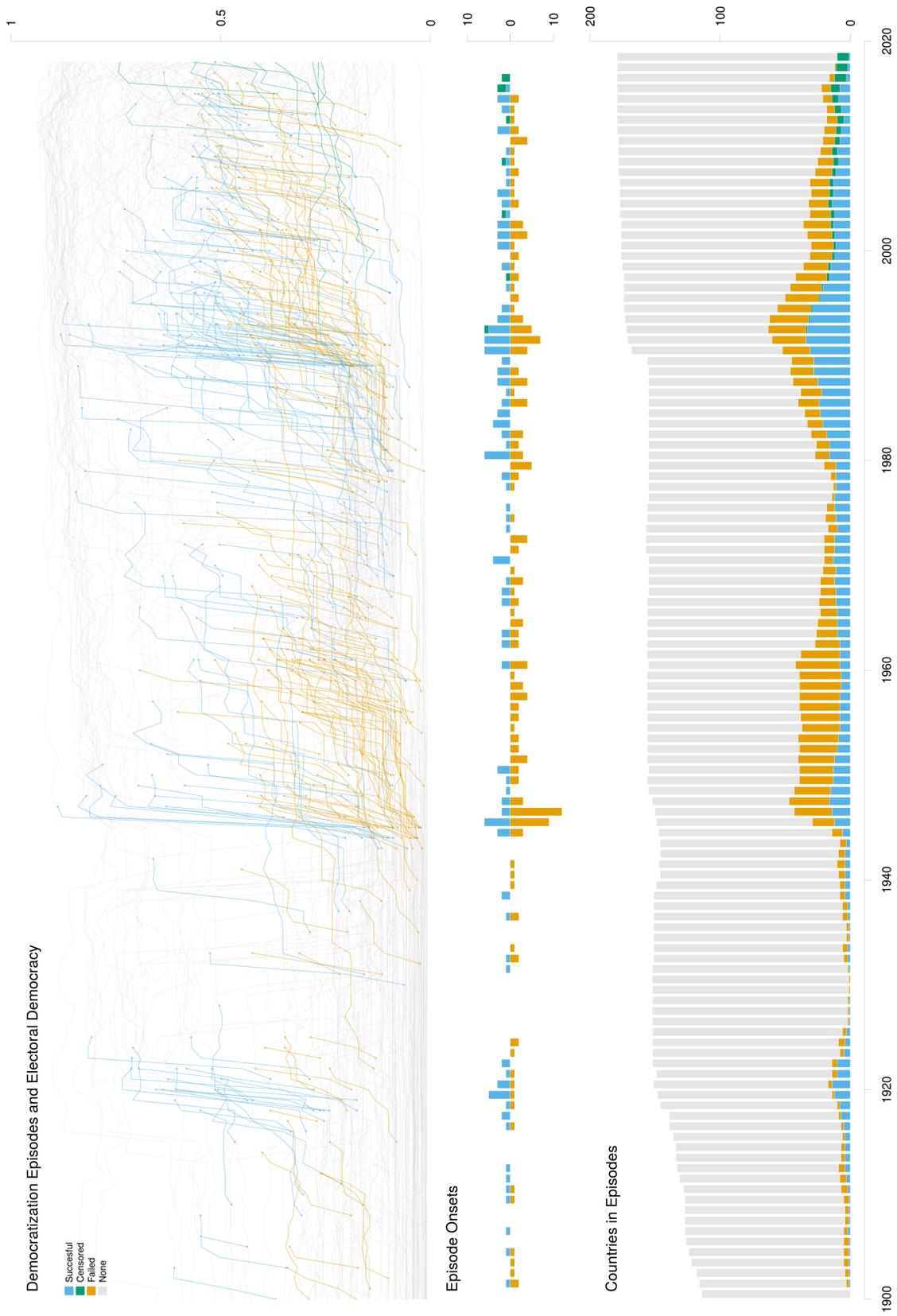


Figure 3: Democratization episodes in the context of V-Dem electoral democracy data, 1900–2018.

The first panel where each country-period's trajectory is mapped on the EDI, also shows that a clear pattern for the non-episode country-periods displayed in light gray. In the first half of the 20th century, the vast majority of the non-episode country-years are found as gray lines at the bottom of the panel. But during the last 25 years of that century and over the beginning of the 2000s, there are almost no gray lines left at the very bottom and most of them are found in the top-half of the spectrum indicating relatively stable electoral democracies albeit of very varying quality¹⁸. It is a very different world today with very few closed autocracies at the bottom rung compared to much of the last century. This also means that episodes of liberalization happening today occur in a very different context where most countries have at least experimented with liberalization and those that failed (whether intentionally or not), maintain some mediocre level of freedoms rather than fall back to the very bottom.

The first panel also demonstrates that both duration and magnitude of liberalization varies considerably, both between and within the episode outcome categories. The average successful episode lasted about 7.94 years, although about 5% ended within a single year and 5% persisted for more than 20 years. The pattern is very similar for the 182 failed episodes with an average episode duration of 7.67 years, but with about half or a total of 5% of them ending after a single year or progressing for more than 18 years. The world record episode duration is held by Cameroon, which slowly liberalized over the course of 36 years from 1980 to 2015 before reaching a point of stabilized electoral authoritarianism. Three other episodes also lasted more than thirty years, including Mexico (1967-1997) ending in a successful transition, Lebanon (1923-1953) ending in a failed liberalization, and Singapore (1968-2002) ending in a stabilized electoral authoritarianism. Meanwhile, 27 episodes lasted just a single year, of which 13 were successful and 14 failed. The variety in both failed and successful episodes indicates that duration and magnitude are important features to consider.

¹⁸The EPLIB data set also captures episodes of autocratization with a mirror-set of coding rules to the ones identifying liberalization episodes but describing that counter-part of the EPLIB conceptualization, methodology and data falls outside the present paper, see also (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019)

In some contexts successful democratization processes are very swift, while in other cases these processes are much more protracted and gradual.

Figure 4 presents four countries that exemplify the different patterns. El Salvador from 1982 to 1999 had a more gradual path to successful democratization, as compared to the rather rapid successful episode witnessed by the transition from military rule in Greece from 1974 to 1977. Failed episodes also illustrate the difference between swift versus gradual liberalization. For example, Lebanon experienced two long periods of liberalization from 1923 to 1953 and again from 2000 to 2016. The former represents an example of stabilized electoral authoritarianism, while the second exemplifies a preempted transition, in which the case managed to achieve the RoW-designated threshold for electoral democracy but reversed to authoritarianism before holding founding elections and EPLIB therefore classify it as a failure. By contrast, Greece's democratization episode in 1924 failed almost immediately after the 1925 coup d'état, and the early post-WWII episode did not fair much better, failing after eight years.¹⁹

As expected from the existing literature, we also see heterogeneous democratization experiences *within* countries. For example, in Burkina Faso, a slow liberalization effort unfolded under French rule from 1949 to 1961, only to fail quickly after independence. This same case experienced another democratization episode starting in 1977 that was quickly thwarted by a coup d'état in 1979. From 1991 to 1997, Burkina Faso experienced a successful episode during the third wave of democratization in Africa. Yet, after stabilizing for several years the country experienced mass uprisings and another coup d'état in 2014-2015. Burkina Faso's current liberalization efforts (since 2016) provide an example of a censored episode in which the outcome is yet unknown. These examples and the regional face validity analysis in Appendix B arguably provides robust support for the episodes approach and operationalization rules.

¹⁹In Appendix B, we provide an additional face validity test by comparing all cases in the Latin America region and describe trends in four representative countries.

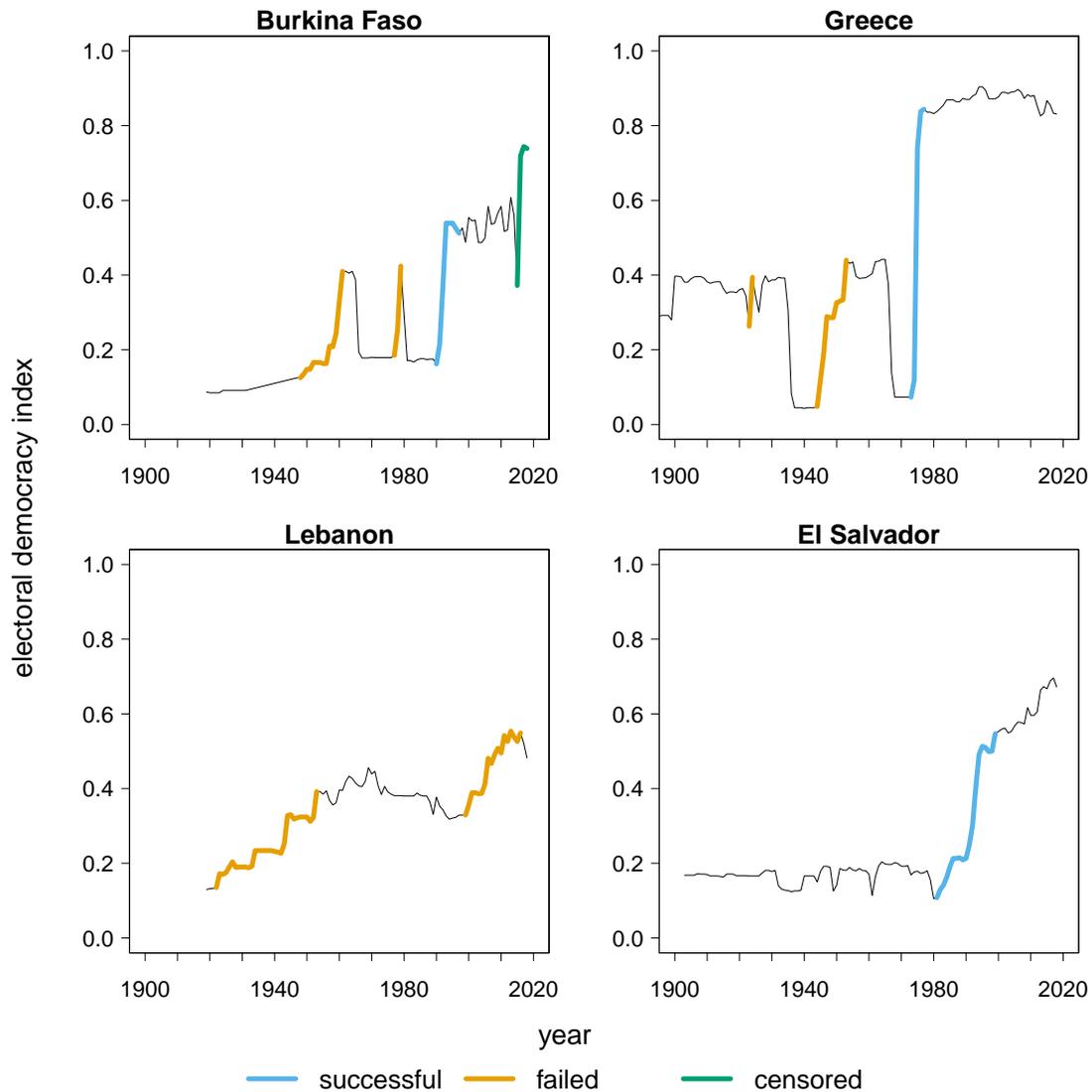


Figure 4: Typical patterns in democratization episodes

Comparison to Existing Data on Democratic Transitions

We compare the EPLIB data set of liberalization episodes to the transitions indicated by two popular data sets identifying discrete changes between democracy and autocracy – Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2012) and Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010), hereafter referred to as BMR and CGV respectively. As shown by the examples in Figure 5, these two coding schemes align closely, although they may disagree on the exact timing of transitions. The EPLIB data set based on V-Dem data overlaps with 132 democratic transitions in the BMR

data, of which 97 (73%) occur during a period we classify as a liberalization episode. 63 of these (65%) happen during successful episodes leading to a transition. Yet, the BMR democratic transitions only account for half of the 125 successful episodes. Likewise, out of 101 democratic transitions in the CGV data from 1946 to 2008, 82 took place during a EPLIB-coded liberalization episode. Forty-seven (57%) of these occurred during a successful episode. This accounts for just 52% of the 89 successful episodes overlapping with their sample.

This illustrates the value of our approach when compared to traditional binary measures of democratic transition. Measuring liberalization episodically as a process that unfolds over time with varying outcomes, generates substantially different results and captures the full universe of comparable cases while acknowledging heterogeneity in the sample and enables systematic and unbiased estimations of varying covariates. Where there is agreement between our new conceptualization with the accompanying data set and the BMR or CGV, EPLIB also provide additional detail that allows us to analyze not only the events surrounding the transition year, but how events prior to and during the liberalization episode affected the process.

For example, according to EPLIB Ghana's successful democratic transition in 2000 actually began in 1991, with the liberalization process unfolding over nearly a decade. During this time, GDP per capita grew by nearly 20%, with an average annual change of 2%. By contrast, the coding by BMR and CGV only tells us that Ghana transitioned in a particular year (1997 and 1993, respectively), during which the annual growth rates were 3% and 1%, respectively. As a result, an analysis using the BMR data may overestimate the importance of annual economic growth rates, while using the CGV data may underestimate it for this particular case.²⁰ Likewise, both data sets would underestimate the overall effects of economic

²⁰Admittedly, scholars could also apply moving averages for years leading up to the transition, but the choice of how many years would be arbitrary. Estimates for annual changes in GDP per capita are drawn from the Maddison project (using real GDP per capita with the 2011 USD benchmark, see Bolt and Van Zanden, 2014).

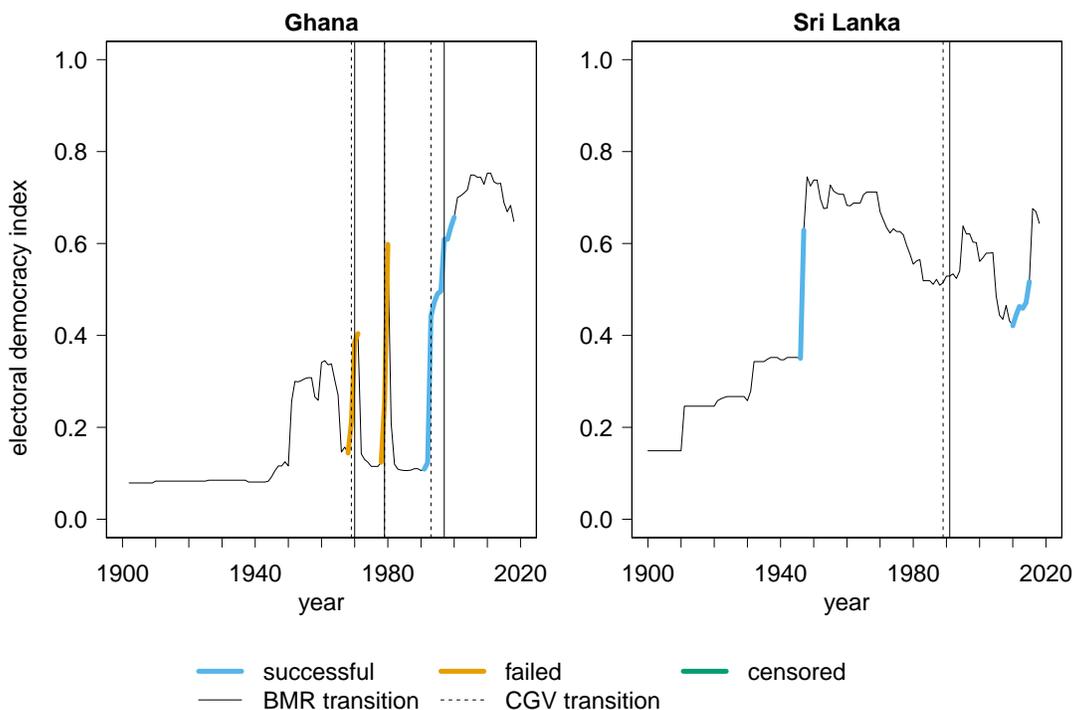


Figure 5: Example episodes with transitions coded by BMR (2012) and CGV (2010)

growth during the democratization process because they do not identify the point in time when democratization began.

Figure 5 illustrates some additional disagreements between traditional binary measures of democratic transition and the EPLIB criteria for classifying successful and failed democratization episodes. According to BMR and CGV, a democratic transition occurred in Ghana during what was really a failed liberalization episode lasting from 1969 to 1971. The beginning of this episode coincides with parliamentary elections, the first since the 1966 military coup d'état overthrew independence leader Kwame Nkrumah and the first multiparty elections since 1960. The newly elected government implemented reforms yielding steady increases on the EDI from 0.144 in 1968 to 0.404 by 1971. This was a substantial increase but by any reasonable standard based on Dahl's understanding of democracy as polyarchy, Ghana was not an electoral democracy in 1971. A military coup d'état in 1972 prompted the end of this episode without the regime ever achieving electoral democracy, resulting

in a failed liberalization. Similarly, both CGV and BMR code a democratic transition for Ghana in 1979, coinciding with the first multiparty elections since the 1972 coup d'état. The following year, Ghana attains electoral democracy status, thus this election does not count in our “founding elections” criteria. The regime installed by the 1979 elections was subsequently overthrown in a coup d'état led by Jerry J. Rawlings in late 1981, resulting in a preempted transition. While democratic “experiments,” neither of these liberalization episodes resulted in democracy.

Finally, the case of Sri Lanka demonstrates that democratic transitions based on traditional binary measures may occur outside of EPLIB-identified liberalization episodes. Citing a long history of universal suffrage and electoral turnover, Sri Lanka is often considered one of the few long-standing “Western-style democracies” in the developing world (De Silva, 1979). Yet, both BMR and CGV code Sri Lanka experiencing a democratic breakdown in 1977, the end of the first republic. That year, Sri Lanka’s EDI was 0.619, low for democracies on the RoW measure but above the 25th percentile for electoral democracies. Afterward, both data sets consider Sri Lanka an autocracy, until 1991 and 1989 respectively. Yet, Sri Lanka’s EDI is considerably lower (0.529 and 0.515, respectively) during these BMR- and CGV-coded “democratic transitions”. By contrast, the EPLIB data effectively capture Sri Lanka’s early successful democratization in 1947 leading up to independence. Starting in 1970, Sri Lanka experienced substantial autocratization (or, democratic backsliding if one prefers that term) as evidenced by annual declines on the EDI, eventually resulting in a democratic failure and transition to electoral autocracy on the RoW measure in 2005. This coincides with the election of Mahinda Rajapaksa as president, whose regime was marked by increasing personalism, nepotism, corruption, and harassment of journalists (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018). Democratic conditions improved after the civil war, promoting the start of a new liberalization episode.

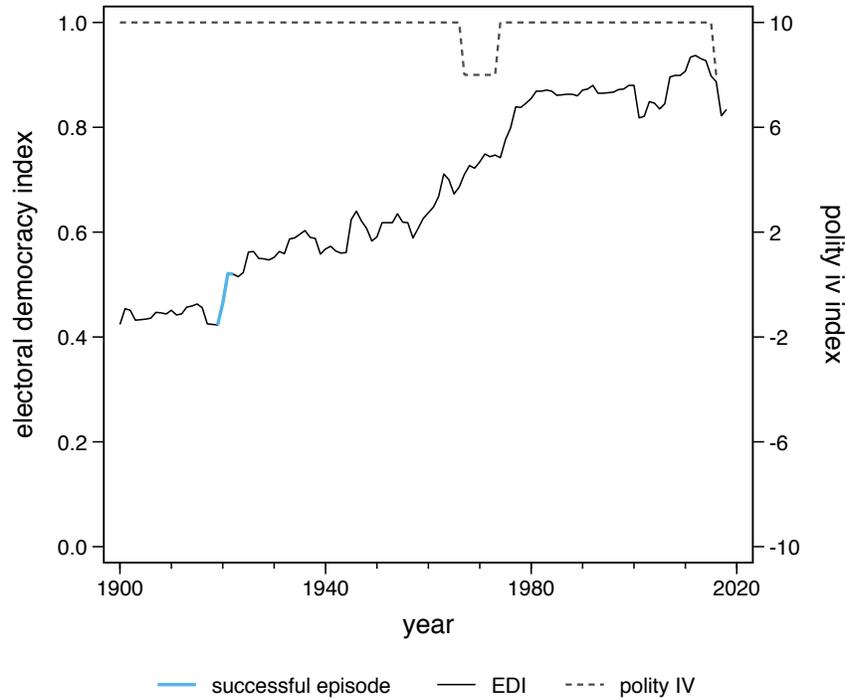


Figure 6: Successful Democratization in the United States compared to Polity IV

In 2015, former health minister Maithripala Sirisena defeated Rajapaksa in presidential polls under democratic conditions, thus marking a successful liberalization episode.²¹

Continuous indices typically combine information on various dimensions such as the Polity2 score from the Polity IV Project (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers, 2017). Polity IV suggests a three part categorization scheme for coding regimes: countries with scores -6 or below are autocracies, those with scores of -5 to 5 are “anocracies,” while scores from 6 and above indicate democracies (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers, 2017). Figure F1 in the online appendix illustrates how the episodes that we identified map onto different thresholds for separating democracies from non-democracies. A prominent critique is that the choice of cut-offs is entirely arbitrary and that the requirements for reaching a “perfect democracy” are too lax (e.g Bogaards, 2012; Coppedge et al., 2011; Lueders and Lust, 2018). For example,

²¹This successful transition was nearly preempted when Rajapaksa attempted to annul the results, only to be thwarted by army and police resistance, leading some scholars to refer to it as a “near miss” for democracy (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018).

the United States has been a democracy since 1809 according to Polity IV, despite the practice of slavery until 1865, no female suffrage until 1920, and institutionalized racial segregation that lasted through the 1960s, among other things. Figure 6 contrasts the Polity IV measure with the V-Dem EDI, which better reflects the slow liberalization of the United States. The extension of women's suffrage in 1919 yields significant increases on the EDI, corresponding to a transition to electoral democracy in 1922, whereas Polity considers the United States a perfect democracy already by 1900. With the elections of 1922, the United States meets the EPLIB criteria for a successful liberalization episode. Notably, this liberalization episode occurs during a period in which the Polity IV classified the United States as a perfect democracy. The many studies in our field using Polity2 as the measure for democratization thus risk a substantial bias and reflecting only covariates of the very early stages of liberalization since the ceiling for becoming democracy is so low. In addition, even if one uses a more nuanced measure like V-Dem's EDI, studies will include a large number of country-years where these interval-measures change levels and estimators will include them in the equation whereas most of these country-years were not instances of liberalization-episodes and thus should not be in the sample.

These comparisons highlight three important advantages with the episodic approach that undergirds the new EPLIB data set. First, EPLIB delimits and provides scholars of democratization a full universe of adequate cases of study based on systematic and rigorous rules and drawing on the most nuanced and comprehensive underlying data available (V-Dem). Second, the episodic approach based on insights from the comparative-case study literature incorporates appropriate series of yearly observations before and after transitions that vary considerably, thus capturing different paths important for understanding outcomes. It thereby opens up for a quantitative approach to testing case-based, complex processual theories. In other words, this allows for systematic investigation of the endogenous development of democratic features that lead up to and sustain a democratic transitions.

Third, the differentiation between failed and successful episodes of liberalization is important and lacking from existing coding schemes focused on transitions-as-events rather than processes. The EPLIB data set also offers an important corrective to studies of democratization using interval measures where all changes of the same magnitude regardless of where on the democracy-autocracy spectrum they occur, are treated as equivalents expected to have the same (typically linear, monotonic, and symmetric) relationship to covariates. EPLIB makes it possible to study democratization using interval measures like V-Dem's EDI but restricted to the appropriate sample and allowing for dissimilar effects across episodes that fared dissimilar fates. To understand how the process of democratization differs researchers must take these distinctions into account. The identification of failed episodes that EPLIB offers is absent from existing measures of transition and remain undistinguished in continuous measures.

By simply coding a transition year, researchers cannot evaluate differences between successful and failed liberalization processes in an unbiased way. Thus, understanding the conditions at the onset of a liberalization episode, the changes that occurred during an episode, and those that determined its success, are distinct advancements afforded by this episodic approach and the EPLIB data set.

5 Opening Up New Research Agendas

The full universe of liberalization episodes in the EPLIB data set makes it possible to do something entirely new in the field of quantitative democratization research: To evaluate the extent to which different factors affect the initiation of liberalization, i.e., the beginning of movement towards becoming more democratic, and whether this movement will result in a democracy. Our approach also allows for a more detailed analysis of the sequences by which reforms occur in successful and failed episodes of democratization. We illustrate these two new research agendas below demonstrating two things: i) factors found in the existing

literature to explain democratization outcomes seem to be irrelevant to explain the onset of regime change; and ii) there are systematic differences between failing and successful episodes with respect to the order in which liberalization happens and this calls for us to investigate the causal implications of order in quantitative research.

Modeling Episode Onset

We first model episode *onset* based on conditional associations with several factors from the democratization literature (e.g. Teorell, 2010). This includes: (1) economic determinants as measured by GDP per capita in constant USD and annual GDP growth; (2) country size using log population (from Bolt and Van Zanden, 2014); (3) dispersion of power across social groups (*v2pepwrsoc*); (4) equality in the distribution of resources (*v2xeg_eqdr*); (5) presidentialism (*e_v2xnp_pres*); (6) the overall environment for participation in civil society organizations (CSOs) (*v2csprtcpt*); (7) average level of electoral democracy for other countries in the region (using the Teorell et al. (2018) six political regions, *e_regionpol_6C*); and (8) armed conflict using a binary indicator denoting conflict-years in which 32 or more deaths occurred (*e_miinterc*) (Brecke, 2001). Each right-hand-side variable is lagged by one year, and we also include the one-year lagged electoral democracy.²²

To mitigate potential sample selection bias and non-linear relationships, we use semi-parametric sample selection models implemented in the **GJRM** package (Radice, Marra, and Wojtyś, 2016; Wojtyś, Marra, and Radice, 2018)²³ Under this joint model, the selection stage is whether an observation was eligible to be in an episode. The second stage models episode onset as a dichotomous outcome. Of the 6,091 country years, 4867 (80%) were eligible for an onset and 186 (4%) of those experienced it. Figure 7 shows the partial effects of each independent variable on the expected value of the linear predictor, in the least restrictive specification (full results shown in Appendix D). The upper blue rug shows the distribution

²²Variable names correspond to those found in the V-Dem dataset (version 9).

²³Such models flexibly generalize Heckman’s (1979) popular bivariate sample selection model. Both the selection and the outcome stage use a Generalized Additive Model (GAM) with Bernoulli likelihood and probit link function. The joint component has a Gaussian copula.

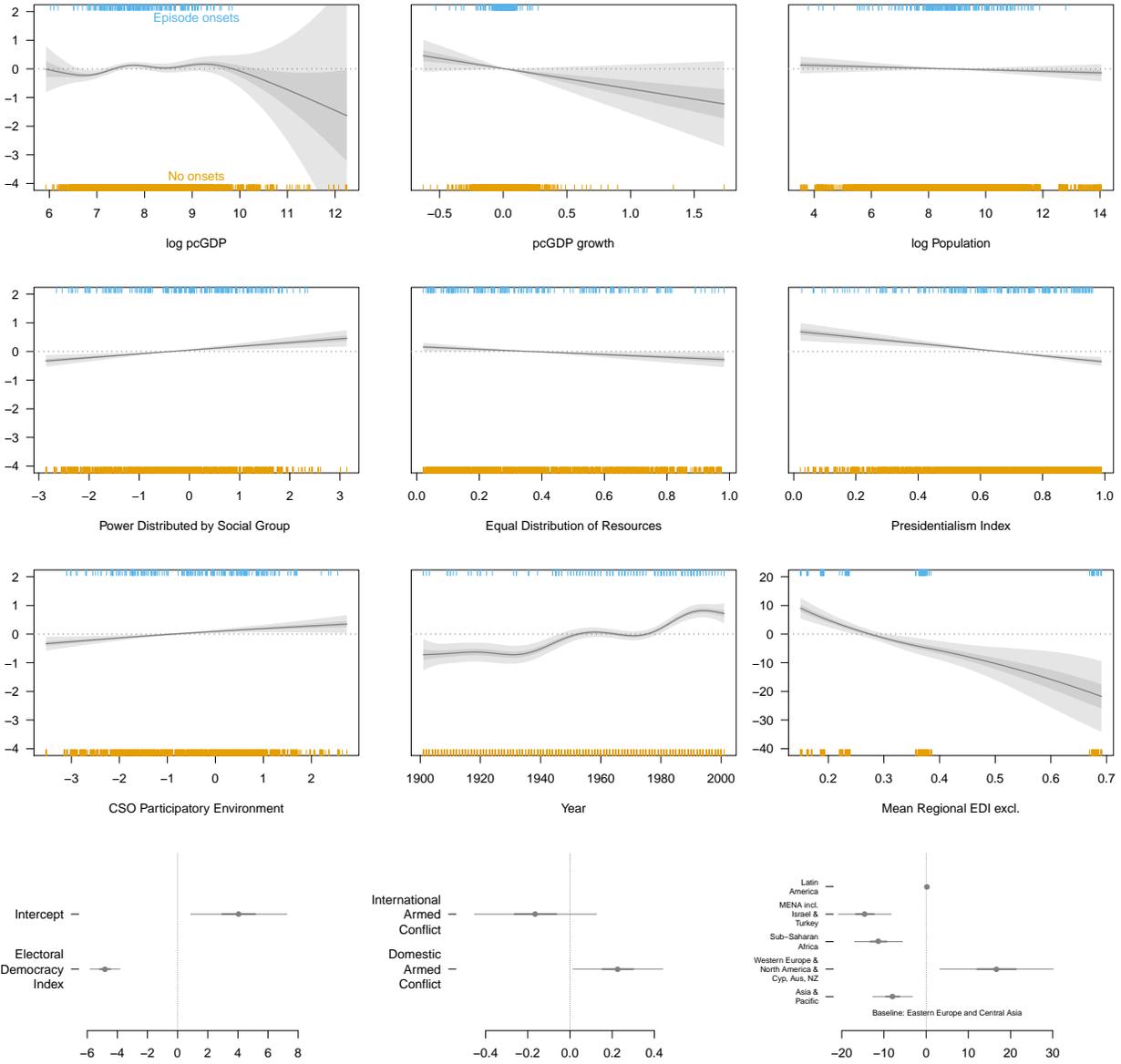


Figure 7: Partial effects under a selection model of democratization onset, second (outcome) stage. First (selection) stage shown in Figure D1 in the Appendix. Joint model AIC is 5850. Copula dependence parameter $\theta = 0.47$, 95% CI (0, 0.8), Kendall's $\tau = 0.31$, 95% CI (0, 0.59). 50% intervals in thicker lines (first two panels) and darker shades (remaining panels), 95% intervals in thinner lines and lighter shades. All right-hand-side variables except the region lagged by one year.

of observations with an onset ($y=1$) while the lower orange rug those that did not ($y=0$). For each graph the horizontal axis corresponds to the value of the covariate and the vertical axis to its contribution to the linear predictor.

To illustrate, consider the following example: think of a new observation for which the value of the dependent variable (whether there was an onset or not) is unknown but the values for each covariate (such as GDP per capita growth, for example) are known. To compute the expected probability of onset, refer to the values on the vertical axis corresponding to the observed values for the right-hand side variables on the curves shown in Figure 7. Taking the probit function of the sum of these values for all covariates yields the expected probability of episode onset for that observation.

The main conclusion is that very few factors from the established literature seem to relate much, if at all to the likelihood that an episode began. The slope for most of the right-hand side variables is almost zero, regardless of the given value; i.e. the fitted contribution to the probability of episode onset is small even at large values of the corresponding variables. Overall, even with the lagged EDI, covariates capture only a tiny fraction of the variation in episode onset: 7% in terms of adjusted R^2 and 18% in terms of the deviance captured by the deterministic component of the model. Classification of cases is also poor. The fitted probability is ≥ 0.5 for only 2 observations out of the 186 that experienced episode onset, despite the flexibility of the model and the fact that it models also the selection stage. The one variable that does stand out presents a new finding: Non-democracies are *less* likely to experience an episode onset the *more* democratic their region (c.f. Brinks and Coppedge, 2006).

Modeling Episode Outcomes

To estimate correlates of *outcomes* of episodes, we model a binary outcome ($y=1$ if the episode succeeded and $y=0$ if it failed) ²⁴ Figure 8 shows the estimated terms. The difference

²⁴The model is a GAM with normal likelihood with the same covariates as above, averaged over the period from the year before the episode to its last-but-one. Fitting the analogical models with Bernoulli likelihood

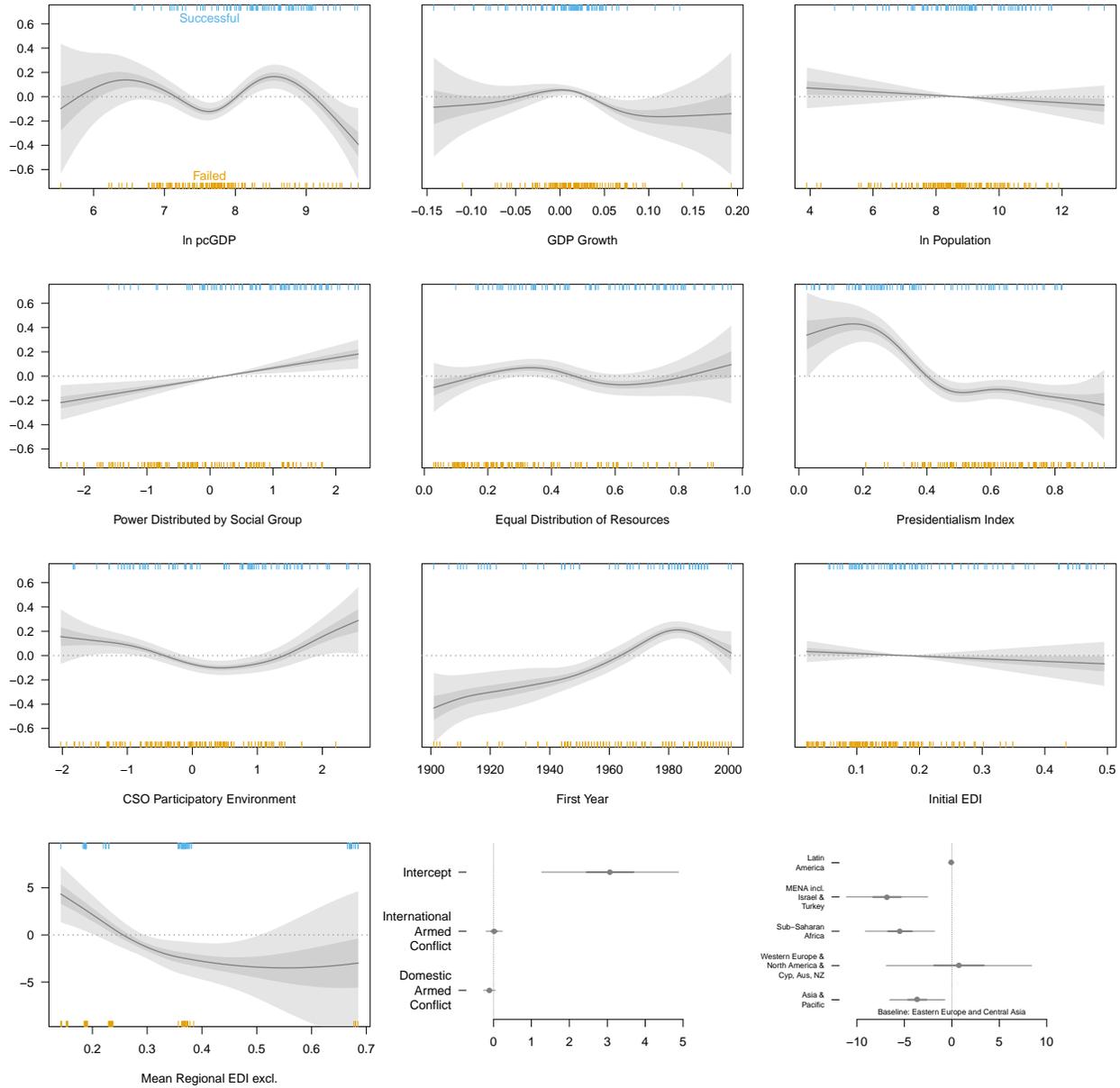


Figure 8: Partial effects under a model of episode outcomes. 50% intervals in darker shades or thicker lines, 95% intervals in lighter shades or thinner lines. All numeric right-hand side variables are averages of one-year lags over the episode. $N = 222$, model AIC=134 (for intercept-only model it is 320).

to the analysis of onsets is stark: The adjusted R^2 is 0.63, the captured deviance is 69%, and the correct classification rate of outcomes is 92%. While providing some refinements, results largely corroborate the established literature. For example, lower levels of GDP per capita (USD1-3,000) are associated with lower rates of successful democratization, while higher levels (USD3-8,000) are linked to higher success rates; presidentialism has lower probability of successful outcomes; and higher levels of democracy in the region helps towards success. This opens up opportunities for new important questions about why having more democratic neighbors makes *onset* of liberalization less likely while democratic neighbors make a liberalization process more likely to *succeed* once it has started. It is important to bear in mind that causal interpretations of the coefficients are considerably complicated by the multiple conditioning.

Taken together, the results of these analyses arguably demonstrate the value of studying the effects of various factors separately on the likelihood that an episode of liberalization begin and on the likelihood of leading to a transition.²⁵ This empirical analysis corroborates our claim that identifying the beginning of liberalization presents a new agenda for quantitative research on democratization. We have simply not had an approach before to investigate this critical issue and the primary suspects drawn from the literature appear to do a very poor job explaining the start of episodes. This constitutes an important, big question for our field to address in the coming years and EPLIB makes that possible.

Examining the Sequencing of Reforms in Democratization Episodes

Finally, our approach opens up new frontiers for research on the order by which liberalization evolves, and thereby, if sequencing matters. Recent advances in sequential requisites analysis for ordinal data (Lindenfors, Krusell, and Lindberg, 2019; Lindenfors et al., 2018) adapted

and probit or logit link functions led to computational issues. After list-wise deletion due to missing data, we are left with a sample of 222 (129 failed, 93 successful) episodes. All covariates except domestic and international conflict are included through a spline term. Appendix E reports the estimates under conventional normal-linear and Bernoulli-probit generalized linear models.

²⁵While preferably modeling these simultaneously in a semi-/non-parametric staged model, as we do here.

from evolutionary biology provide the tools to describe which institutional reforms come comparatively earlier (or later) during an episode. Applications of these methods in the social sciences include studies assessing reforms to women’s empowerment and political accountability (Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Using the method described in Lindenfors, Krusell, and Lindberg, 2019 to calculate the minimum ordinal value observed for all other indicators when a given indicator has attained each of its ordinal categories, we construct a matrix of sequential requisites that indicates the order of which different aspects develop and if that order differs between successful and failed episodes (for an example, see Appendix G).

Our aim is to illustrate the potential that EPLIB has for such applications and to open up a new agenda for future quantitative research on the sequences of democratization that has hereto been a domain restricted to case-study process-tracing. We focus in this illustration on the highest observed value for each variable, i.e. the most democratic. Most of the time this value is four on an ordinal scale starting from zero, making comparisons easy.²⁶ We take the share of the total possible number of requisite conditions, making it straightforward to compare results even when maximum values are different. The replication materials contain the full matrix for all possible values of each indicator for the full EPLIB dataset of all episodes and disaggregated by successful and failed outcomes. The files also contain the R script used to construct this matrix and the accompanying figures used in the analysis. All calculations were conducted using the R package `SeqR` available on Github at: <https://github.com/jsks/seqR> and discussed in Lindenfors et al. (2018) and Lindenfors, Krusell, and Lindberg (2019).

Table 1 displays the results of such analysis for the maximum values on 24 indicators included in the EDI ²⁷ for successful and failed episodes of liberalization, with the order from

²⁶However, there are two exceptions. First, we have ordinalized the suffrage variable, which typically runs from zero to one as a share of the population, based on quintiles with each ordinal level representing a quarter of the population. Second, for three media variables (*v2meslfcen*, *v2mecrit*, and *v2merange*) the scale runs from zero to three.

²⁷Electoral Democracy Index, *v2x_polyarchy*.

Table 1: Sequential requisites analysis for successful and failed episodes of democratization.

Success		Fail	
Suffrage	0.12	Suffrage	0.04
Other electoral violence	0.17	Other electoral violence	0.10
EMB capacity	0.27	Vote buying	0.10
Party ban	0.29	Party ban	0.10
CSO entry and exit	0.34	Opposition parties autonomy	0.15
Media self-censorship	0.34	Other voting irregularities	0.16
Media critical	0.36	Election intimidation	0.16
Barriers to parties	0.37	Barriers to parties	0.16
Opposition parties autonomy	0.38	Elections multiparty	0.21
Election intimidation	0.38	Voter registry	0.22
Elections multiparty	0.43	Media perspectives	0.24
Vote buying	0.46	Election free and fair	0.25
Voter registry	0.47	Media self-censorship	0.27
Election free and fair	0.48	CSO repression	0.30
Other voting irregularities	0.49	Media critical	0.34
CSO repression	0.51	Media bias	0.35
Media perspectives	0.51	Academic & cultural expression	0.40
Academic & cultural expression	0.53	EMB capacity	0.40
Discussion for men	0.54	Discussion for women	0.43
Media bias	0.55	Government media censorship	0.43
Discussion for women	0.57	CSO entry and exit	0.44
EMB autonomy	0.62	Discussion for men	0.49
Government media censorship	0.65	EMB autonomy	0.72
Harassment of journalists	0.88	Harassment of journalists	1.00

Indicators are sorted based on the number of requisite conditions observed at the maximum value of the indicator as a share of the total possible number of requisites. A smaller share of requisites suggests that the indicator develops comparatively earlier. Largest differences between successful and failed episodes are highlighted in green (earlier in success) and grey (earlier in failed).

top to bottom indicating what aspects develop to be most democratic first and last. For example, freedom from harassment for journalists is the last indicator to develop in both successful and failed episodes. This indicator has a very high number of requisite conditions, 78 for successes and 89 for failed, suggesting that nearly all other components have achieved very high levels before freedom from harassment for journalists is maximized.

While the order is perhaps surprisingly similar, four aspects show marked differences: Early institutionalization of civil society organizations' right to form freely and high capacity of the EMB occurs in successful episodes but these aspects develop among the last in failed

ones. Perhaps because incumbent control of the situation is greater in episodes that fail, voting irregularities and vote buying are not needed much and therefore can reach higher levels (=relative absence) early in failed episodes.

The extension of suffrage exhibits the fewest number of requisite conditions for all episodes, providing additional face validity to our measures given what we know about the role of universal suffrage as a necessary but insufficient condition for democracy and its ubiquity in the late 20th century. This contrasts with the high number of requisite conditions and thus, late development when it comes to protections against the harassment of journalists in both failed and successful cases.

We make no claims of causality here. The purpose here responds to recent calls for researchers to “take up the challenge of description” (Gerring, 2012, p. 744). Yet, if 119 years of data across essentially all countries in the world and all episodes of “attempted” democratization suggest a clear pattern, this should be instructive for both academic analysis and for policy actors. And most important of all, we as a field for the comparative study of democratization (and autocratization) must take order seriously and engage with new approaches to study sequencing. EPLIB makes that possible and thus opens up a new research agenda.

6 Conclusion

The study of democratization has come a long way in the past 60 years. The increasing sophistication of both rigorous process tracing and comparative case studies, and of the large quantitative literature seeking to corroborate causal inferences about independent effects of single factors using advanced modeling techniques, is to be celebrated. It is now time to take another step forward that can bring these divergent research traditions closer together, while at the same time improving on our ability to evaluate more complex theories that are typical for the field.

The recognition that “electoral autocracies” often survive, as well as there being unintended consequences of liberalization, underscore the need to differentiate liberalization from the transition to democracy. At the same time, the two processes are closely connected elements of democratization. Advancing our collective knowledge of the processes of democratization thus depends on a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the start of a liberalization process, its continuation and progress, and the possibility of a democratic transition, taking into account complexity and uncertainty. In part, this supports a quantitative turn to analyses that aimed to differentiate between *modes* of transition to assess their impacts on the success of democratization (Huntington et al., 1991; Munck and Leff, 1997; O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986). This paper lays a foundation for allowing quantitative analyses to approach democratization in such a more sophisticated and nuanced way that so far only the comparative case study literature has been able to do.

We propose an episodic approach building on the insights of comparative case studies and making them available for quantitative analysis that more appropriately test our theories. Combining estimates of the institutional prerequisites suggested by Dahl (1971) with the observation of elections, we specified a set of coding rules to generate the new EPLIB dataset with a full universe of cases: 327 episodes over the period 1900-2018, of which 146 were successful leading to a transition to electoral democracy.

A set of empirical analyses demonstrates that EPLIB opens up at least two new research agenda in our collective endeavor to understand and explain democratization (as well as its opposite — autocratization): first, the main factors from the democratization literature have *very* little bearing on whether a country starts to liberalize (onset of episodes) while results corroborate findings in the literature regarding these determinants for outcomes in terms of failure or success in transitioning to democracy — conditional on liberalization taking place. Second, the identification of episodes opens up possibilities for sequence analysis, bringing quantitative analysis even closer to and drawing on some strengths of the the case study tradition. Using the new sequential requisites analysis adapted from evolutionary biology,

this paper illustrates that there are critical differences between failed and successful episodes in the order of liberalization reforms. While our analysis is limited to differences between success and failure generally, the approach delineated here allows for future research also on for example the various sequences of reforms that may lead to different forms of failure. This opens up another agenda in the study of democratization and autocratization.

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Online Appendix:
Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization:
Conceptualization, Identification, and Description

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Appendix A Description of all Episodes

Table A1: Failed and Successful Democratization Episodes, 1900-2018

Country	Start	End	Outcome
Afghanistan	2001	2008	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Albania	1916	1922	Failed liberalization
Albania	1946	1947	Failed liberalization
Albania	1991	1993	Failed liberalization
Albania	2001	2005	Success
Algeria	1962	1963	Failed liberalization
Algeria	1995	2002	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Angola	2008	2018	Censored
Argentina	1912	1928	Success
Argentina	1932	1933	Failed liberalization
Argentina	1946	1948	Failed liberalization
Argentina	1957	1961	Preempted transition
Argentina	1963	1965	Success
Argentina	1972	1974	Preempted transition
Argentina	1983	1985	Success
Armenia	2012	2018	Censored
Austria	1918	1923	Success
Azerbaijan	1991	1993	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Bangladesh	1972	1974	Failed liberalization
Bangladesh	1977	1980	Failed liberalization
Bangladesh	1985	1987	Failed liberalization
Bangladesh	1991	1996	Success
Bangladesh	2009	2009	Preempted transition
Barbados	1944	1961	Success
Belarus	1991	1994	Success
Belgium	1919	1921	Success
Belgium	1944	1949	Success
Benin	1945	1961	Failed liberalization
Benin	1968	1969	Failed liberalization
Benin	1980	1995	Success
Bhutan	1988	2013	Success
Bolivia	1952	1961	Failed liberalization
Bolivia	1982	1985	Success
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1996	1998	Success
Botswana	1960	1969	Success
Brazil	1945	1950	Failed liberalization
Brazil	1967	1989	Success
Bulgaria	1990	1991	Success
Burkina Faso	1949	1961	Failed liberalization
Burkina Faso	1978	1979	Failed liberalization
Burkina Faso	1991	1997	Success
Burkina Faso	2016	2018	Censored
Burma/Myanmar	1945	1953	Failed liberalization
Burma/Myanmar	2010	2016	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Burundi	1982	1985	Failed liberalization
Burundi	1992	1995	Failed liberalization

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Burundi	1999	2006	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cambodia	1947	1956	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cambodia	1981	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cameroon	1980	2015	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Canada	1920	1921	Success
Cape Verde	1972	1975	Failed liberalization
Cape Verde	1980	1991	Success
Central African Republic	1946	1961	Failed liberalization
Central African Republic	1987	2002	Failed liberalization
Central African Republic	2005	2006	Failed liberalization
Central African Republic	2016	2018	Censored
Chad	1946	1957	Failed liberalization
Chad	1990	1997	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Chile	1932	1961	Success
Chile	1988	1993	Success
Colombia	1903	1915	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Colombia	1958	1960	Failed liberalization
Colombia	1971	1975	Preempted transition
Colombia	1991	1991	Success
Comoros	1979	1992	Failed liberalization
Comoros	1997	1997	Failed liberalization
Comoros	2001	2002	Failed liberalization
Comoros	2004	2006	Success
Costa Rica	1919	1924	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Costa Rica	1950	1953	Success
Croatia	1992	1998	Preempted transition
Croatia	2000	2000	Success
Cuba	1901	1903	Failed liberalization
Cuba	1909	1917	Failed liberalization
Cuba	1936	1941	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cyprus	1950	1968	Success
Cyprus	1970	1970	Success
Czech Republic	1919	1920	Success
Czech Republic	1990	1992	Success
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1960	1961	Failed liberalization
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2001	2009	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Denmark	1901	1903	Success
Denmark	1945	1947	Success
Djibouti	1992	2018	Censored
Dominican Republic	1924	1925	Failed liberalization
Dominican Republic	1963	1963	Failed liberalization
Dominican Republic	1966	1982	Success
Dominican Republic	1991	1996	Success
Ecuador	1910	1912	Failed liberalization
Ecuador	1947	1962	Failed liberalization
Ecuador	1967	1969	Failed liberalization
Ecuador	1978	1984	Success
Egypt	1956	1976	Failed liberalization
Egypt	2012	2012	Stabilized electoral autocracy
El Salvador	1982	1999	Success
Equatorial Guinea	1959	1969	Failed liberalization

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Equatorial Guinea	1982	1996	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Estonia	1919	1920	Success
Estonia	1993	1995	Success
Fiji	1963	1972	Success
Fiji	1992	1994	Success
Fiji	2002	2006	Success
Fiji	2014	2015	Preempted transition
Finland	1917	1919	Success
France	1945	1951	Success
Gabon	1946	1961	Failed liberalization
Gabon	1990	1997	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Georgia	1993	1998	Failed liberalization
Georgia	2004	2004	Success
Germany	1919	1920	Success
Ghana	1969	1971	Failed liberalization
Ghana	1979	1980	Preempted transition
Ghana	1992	2000	Success
Greece	1924	1924	Failed liberalization
Greece	1945	1953	Failed liberalization
Greece	1974	1977	Success
Guatemala	1945	1947	Failed liberalization
Guatemala	1966	1967	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guatemala	1984	1999	Success
Guinea	1957	1959	Failed liberalization
Guinea	1985	2000	Failed liberalization
Guinea	2010	2016	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guinea-Bissau	1992	2001	Failed liberalization
Guinea-Bissau	2004	2006	Preempted transition
Guinea-Bissau	2014	2015	Preempted transition
Guyana	1955	1967	Failed liberalization
Guyana	1986	2001	Success
Haiti	1951	1951	Failed liberalization
Haiti	1987	1988	Failed liberalization
Haiti	1991	1991	Failed liberalization
Haiti	1993	1998	Failed liberalization
Haiti	2006	2007	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Honduras	1949	1950	Failed liberalization
Honduras	1971	1972	Failed liberalization
Honduras	1980	1993	Success
Hungary	1918	1918	Failed liberalization
Hungary	1920	1925	Failed liberalization
Hungary	1988	1990	Success
Iceland	1904	1908	Success
India	1950	1957	Success
India	1977	1977	Success
Indonesia	1945	1956	Preempted transition
Indonesia	1998	2004	Success
Iraq	2004	2008	Preempted transition
Ireland	1921	1922	Success
Israel	1949	1949	Success
Italy	1901	1914	Failed liberalization

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Table A1 – continued from previous page

Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Italy	1944	1948	Success
Ivory Coast	1990	1993	Failed liberalization
Ivory Coast	1995	1997	Failed liberalization
Ivory Coast	2001	2004	Failed liberalization
Ivory Coast	2015	2016	Success
Jamaica	1938	1959	Success
Jamaica	1984	1989	Success
Japan	1945	1952	Success
Kenya	1954	1965	Failed liberalization
Kenya	1990	2003	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Kosovo	2000	2004	Success
Kosovo	2013	2014	Success
Kyrgyzstan	2010	2011	Failed liberalization
Kyrgyzstan	2014	2015	Success
Laos	1944	1948	Failed liberalization
Laos	1951	1958	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Latvia	1922	1925	Success
Lebanon	1923	1953	Failed liberalization
Lebanon	2000	2016	Preempted transition
Lesotho	1952	1967	Failed liberalization
Lesotho	1987	1994	Failed liberalization
Lesotho	2002	2007	Success
Liberia	1985	1986	Failed liberalization
Liberia	1991	1999	Failed liberalization
Liberia	2005	2011	Success
Libya	2011	2013	Preempted transition
Lithuania	1920	1920	Success
Luxembourg	1917	1922	Success
Luxembourg	1945	1948	Success
Macedonia	1994	1998	Success
Macedonia	2001	2002	Success
Macedonia	2015	2018	Censored
Madagascar	1957	1971	Failed liberalization
Madagascar	1975	1996	Success
Madagascar	2013	2017	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Malawi	1960	1964	Failed liberalization
Malawi	1992	1999	Success
Malaysia	1946	1962	Failed liberalization
Malaysia	1972	1975	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Malaysia	1991	2011	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Maldives	1990	2009	Success
Mali	1945	1961	Failed liberalization
Mali	1992	1997	Success
Mali	2014	2018	Success
Malta	1921	1922	Failed liberalization
Malta	1932	1933	Failed liberalization
Malta	1947	1950	Success
Malta	1962	1966	Success
Mauritania	1945	1961	Failed liberalization
Mauritania	1991	2002	Failed liberalization
Mauritania	2007	2007	Failed liberalization

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Mauritania	2010	2010	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mauritius	1948	1976	Success
Mexico	1967	1997	Success
Moldova	1991	1994	Success
Moldova	2009	2009	Success
Mongolia	1989	1992	Success
Montenegro	1999	2003	Preempted transition
Namibia	1985	1994	Success
Nepal	1950	1959	Failed liberalization
Nepal	1982	1992	Failed liberalization
Nepal	2007	2009	Preempted transition
Nepal	2014	2017	Success
Netherlands	1910	1918	Success
Netherlands	1945	1948	Success
Nicaragua	1980	1990	Success
Niger	1957	1961	Failed liberalization
Niger	1988	1991	Failed liberalization
Niger	1993	1993	Success
Niger	2000	2004	Success
Niger	2011	2011	Success
Nigeria	1978	1980	Failed liberalization
Nigeria	1998	2000	Preempted transition
Nigeria	2011	2015	Success
Norway	1906	1906	Success
Norway	1945	1949	Success
Pakistan	1985	1990	Failed liberalization
Pakistan	2002	2010	Preempted transition
Panama	1904	1905	Failed liberalization
Panama	1947	1949	Failed liberalization
Panama	1953	1957	Failed liberalization
Panama	1973	1991	Success
Papua New Guinea	1946	1972	Success
Paraguay	1987	1993	Success
Peru	1939	1946	Failed liberalization
Peru	1950	1960	Failed liberalization
Peru	1964	1964	Failed liberalization
Peru	1978	1985	Success
Peru	1993	1996	Failed liberalization
Peru	2001	2001	Success
Philippines	1944	1968	Failed liberalization
Philippines	1983	1992	Success
Philippines	2006	2010	Success
Poland	1919	1922	Success
Poland	1984	1990	Success
Portugal	1902	1912	Failed liberalization
Portugal	1970	1976	Success
Republic of the Congo	1945	1961	Failed liberalization
Republic of the Congo	1980	1993	Failed liberalization
Republic of the Congo	2002	2003	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Republic of Vietnam	1946	1956	Failed liberalization
Republic of Vietnam	1966	1968	Stabilized electoral autocracy

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Romania	1990	1992	Success
Russia	1987	1995	Preempted transition
Rwanda	1955	1962	Failed liberalization
Rwanda	2003	2018	Censored
Sao Tome and Principe	1987	1994	Success
Senegal	1960	1961	Failed liberalization
Senegal	1968	1970	Failed liberalization
Senegal	1983	1988	Success
Serbia	1980	2002	Success
Seychelles	1963	1971	Failed liberalization
Seychelles	1979	1987	Failed liberalization
Seychelles	1992	2006	Failed liberalization
Seychelles	2008	2015	Success
Sierra Leone	1951	1963	Failed liberalization
Sierra Leone	1994	1997	Failed liberalization
Sierra Leone	2002	2007	Success
Singapore	1946	1960	Failed liberalization
Singapore	1968	2002	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Slovakia	1994	1998	Success
Slovenia	1990	1992	Success
Solomon Islands	1960	1980	Success
Solomon Islands	2002	2004	Preempted transition
Solomon Islands	2007	2010	Success
Somalia	1941	1966	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Somaliland	1993	2010	Success
South Africa	1989	1999	Success
South Korea	1946	1949	Failed liberalization
South Korea	1964	1971	Failed liberalization
South Korea	1981	1988	Success
Spain	1931	1933	Success
Spain	1968	1979	Success
Sri Lanka	1947	1947	Success
Sri Lanka	2011	2015	Success
Sudan	1940	1956	Failed liberalization
Sudan	1965	1966	Failed liberalization
Sudan	1986	1987	Failed liberalization
Sudan	1997	2018	Censored
Suriname	1946	1951	Success
Suriname	1985	1991	Success
Sweden	1909	1924	Success
Syria	1946	1948	Failed liberalization
Syria	1953	1955	Failed liberalization
Syria	1962	1962	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Taiwan	1970	1996	Success
Tanzania	1958	1964	Failed liberalization
Tanzania	1987	1995	Success
Tanzania	2005	2010	Success
Thailand	1933	1938	Failed liberalization
Thailand	1974	1975	Failed liberalization
Thailand	1979	1990	Failed liberalization
Thailand	1992	1995	Failed liberalization

continued on next page

Table A1 – continued from previous page

Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Thailand	1997	1998	Preempted transition
Thailand	2008	2008	Failed liberalization
Thailand	2011	2012	Preempted transition
The Gambia	1960	1962	Failed liberalization
The Gambia	1966	1972	Success
The Gambia	1996	2012	Failed liberalization
The Gambia	2015	2018	Censored
Timor-Leste	1998	2007	Success
Togo	1944	1961	Failed liberalization
Togo	1991	2008	Preempted transition
Togo	2013	2015	Success
Trinidad and Tobago	1938	1966	Success
Tunisia	1956	1967	Failed liberalization
Tunisia	2005	2014	Success
Turkey	1946	1954	Failed liberalization
Turkey	1962	1969	Success
Turkey	1983	1991	Success
Uganda	1951	1963	Failed liberalization
Uganda	1981	1981	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Ukraine	1992	1994	Success
Ukraine	2003	2006	Success
United Kingdom	1916	1922	Success
United States of America	1920	1922	Success
Uruguay	1911	1920	Success
Uruguay	1922	1925	Success
Uruguay	1936	1942	Success
Uruguay	1980	1989	Success
Vanuatu	1970	1983	Success
Venezuela	1936	1948	Failed liberalization
Venezuela	1958	1960	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Vietnam	1946	1947	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Yemen	1988	1993	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Zambia	1964	1965	Failed liberalization
Zambia	1990	1996	Success
Zanzibar	1980	2009	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Zimbabwe	1979	1997	Stabilized electoral autocracy

Online Appendix B Examples from Latin America

We evaluated the 61 episodes that occurred in Latin America to assess the face validity of our approach based on expectations regarding the appropriateness of fit (Adcock and Collier, 2001). Here, we explore democratization episodes that occurred in four of these countries: Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. As depicted in Figure B1, these cases are representative of the different types of episodes created by our coding rules. Our selection of cases within the same region aims to leverage similar historical experiences and geographic and demographic characteristics to ensure a standard of comparison. Examining the Latin American cases shows the episode construction to be face-valid reflections of democratic transitions, though many of the transitions that were initiated by the military or borne from violence remained beset by the threat of future coups or conflict.

We focus first on the more complex case of Argentina (the upper left panel in Figure B1), which experienced 7 episodes between 1900 to 2018. The first episode (1912 to 1928) maps closely to the enactment of universal male suffrage in 1912 and secret-ballots in 1916, the first election of President Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1916 and the second consecutive election in 1922 that resulted in the election of Marcelo T. de Alvear. This successful episode ends with the re-election of Yrigoyen in 1928. Shortly thereafter, there is a sharp drop in Argentina's EDI score, the product of a military coup that deposed President Yrigoyen in 1930.

An uptick in Argentina's EDI score occurs in 1932. That year, Argentina saw the rise of a new political alliance, *Concordancia*, which helped assuage the military's political concerns. While initially promising, this liberalization period became mired by political persecutions of opposition parties, electoral fraud, and pervasive government corruption, and as a result, it is short lived. Another rapidly failing Argentine democratization episode occurs beginning in 1946 and ending in 1948. This period corresponds with the first election of Juan Perón in 1946, and the drafting of a new constitution in 1947, which granted women the right to vote. It ended in 1948, following the drop in Argentina's EDI score associated with the systematic imprisonment of political opponents of President Perón, the suppression of

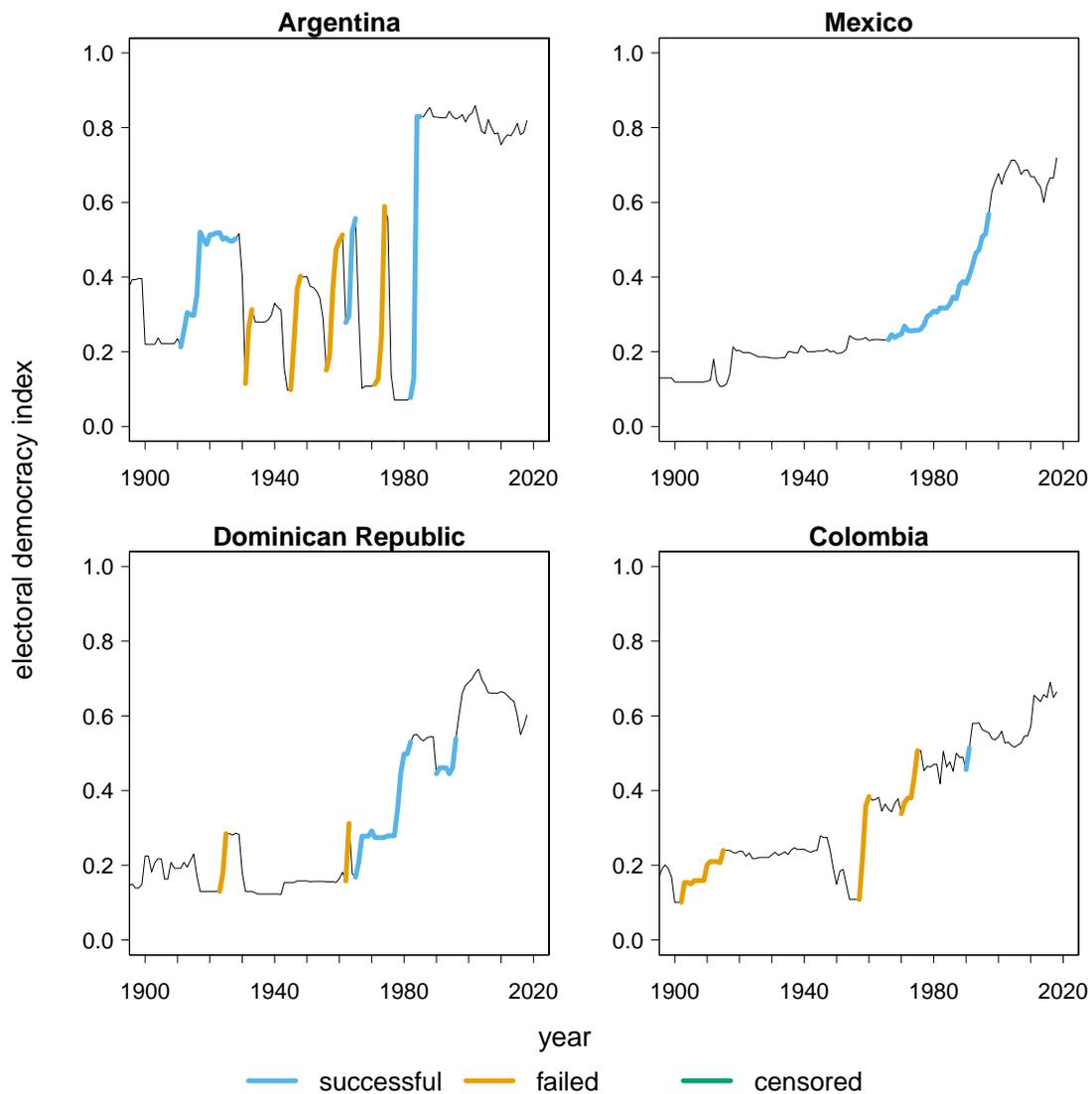


Figure B1: Polyarchy scores with episodes highlighted

independent newspapers, and provisions in the new constitution that strengthened the power of the president. The first Peronist period came to an end in 1955 after a military uprising forced President Perón to resign, seeking exile in Venezuela.

The 1958 election, which Arturo Frondizi won, marks the start of fourth Argentine democratization episode since 1900, which is coded as beginning in 1957. Similar to the last two episodes, this democratization attempt is short-lived, ending in 1961 due to the military’s involvement in politics. Specifically, after President Frondizi’s failed attempts to lift

the military-imposed ban on the Peronist Party, the Justicialist, Perón loyalists established proxy parties winning critical seats in the 1962 legislative elections. Afterward, the military forced President Frondizi to annul the election results, pushing him and his vice president out of office. Under the guise of constitutional authority, the military then appointed Senate President José María Guido as the provisional president followed by the election of Arturo Umberto Illia in 1963. The return to civilian-rule marks the start of the fifth democratization episode in Argentina. Though coded as successful, the military's involvement in domestic politics, political infighting, and revenge politics, ultimately led to another military coup in 1966, in which General Juan Carlos Onganía seized power.

After a series of coups and counter-coups that punctuated Argentine politics from 1966 to 1971, and embattled by economic turmoil and increasing guerrilla violence by Peronists, Alejandro Agustín Lanusse agreed to hold national elections in 1973. The lead-up to the elections and the relatively peaceful transfer of executive power to the winner, the former president Juan Perón, represents Argentina's sixth democratization episode. This episode nevertheless fails within a few years. When President Perón died in July 1974, his wife and vice president Isabel Martínez de Perón succeeded him. Corruption scandals, political killings, and forced disappearances lead to impeachment proceedings against the president and, eventually, a military coup in 1976.

Lastly, our coding scheme sets 1983 as the start year of Argentina's seventh democratization episode. This successful episode begins with the return of the Argentine military to the barracks following a loss in the Falkland conflict. Their retreat was a significant departure from the past, which was rife with military interventions in domestic politics. The general election in 1983 began a transition to civilian rule, which has remained democratic since.

Mexico is also an exemplary case because of the coding rules' sensitivity to movements away from and within an authoritarian regime. As shown in the plot on the upper right of Figure B1, during 70 year hegemonic rule by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), a protracted period of democratization began in 1966. This year corresponds with

organized protests by university students. The episode shows a slow start—the regime took a hard response to the protests, resulting in an event known as the “Tlatelolco massacre”—, but it shows rapid developments following a series of electoral reforms that occurred in the 1970s. The reforms gave opposition parties greater capacity to exert influence at the national level and reduced the size of PRI electoral majorities. Mexico’s EDI score continues to climb throughout the 1990s, increasing from roughly 0.40 in 1990 to 0.68 in 2000. As of 1996, Mexico qualified as an electoral democracy and held “founding” elections, for which the episode ends. Though the PRI maintained the presidency until 2000, important gains were made by opposition parties from 1996 onward.

Two brief episodes in the Dominican Republic occur for the periods 1924 to 1925 and 1963 (the panel on the lower left in B1). Although Horacio Vásquez was elected president in 1924 after U.S. occupation, he was forced to resign in 1930 and Rafael Trujillo was elected president. The period 1960 to 1963 coincides with a brief interlude following the resignation of Héctor Trujillo in 1960. The one-year jump in the Dominican Republic’s EDI score marks the election of Juan Bosch in 1963, who was replaced by a military junta in the same year. According to our coding rules, a successful episode of democratization began in 1966 after the U.S. intervened in the civil war, negotiated a truce, and elections were held. Peaceful presidential succession occurred for several years until the army violently suppressed uprisings over financial conditions in 1984. The final episode occurs over 1991 to 1996; a new constitution was inaugurated in 1994 that limited the presidential term and recognized basic human rights, after which regular succession occurred.

The panel in the lower right of Figure B1 highlights four democratization episodes in Colombia. Politics in Colombia was complicated by a period of violence between Liberals and Conservatives. Liberal forces rebelled against the dominant Conservative government in a conflict known as the “War of a Thousand Days.” The termination of the conflict in 1903 and the period of peace that followed it, corresponded with a liberalization episode that lasted until 1915 but did not qualify as successful democratization (Mazucca and Robinson, 285–321).

The period 1948 to 1958, which represented one of the most violent times in Colombia, was known as *La Violencia*. Following the exile of military leader Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1957, the warring parties formed a coalition government (National Front) in 1958, but its exclusionary nature prompted backlash. The failed episode that is coded as beginning with the coalition government reflects the conciliation between parties, but this did not ultimately produce democracy. Another episode begins in 1971 and lasts until 1975; in 1968 the state of siege was lifted and plans were made to phase out the National Front arrangement, but this did not fully occur until 1974. Another short but successful episode begins and ends in 1991, which corresponds to a new constitution that included provisions for religious freedom and guaranteed indigenous rights. According to the RoW measure, Colombia became an electoral democracy in 1991.

Comparing cases in Latin America shows the sample of episodes representing “successful” and “failed” transitions to democracy to be face-valid. As in the case of Argentina, failed episodes can correspond to aborted periods of liberalization caused by military coups. The criteria for identifying episodes are sensitive to liberalization under authoritarianism that precedes a transitions to democracy, as Mexico illustrates. At the same time, the coding rules are able to differentiate negotiated transitions that produced limited reforms, as demonstrated by the National Front in Colombia. The democratization episodes that our coding rules identify also correspond to constitutional changes that led to stable alternation in office, which is consistent with “minimalist” notions of democracy (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, 2010).

Appendix C Sensitivity Analysis

To assess the influence of the thresholds on including any given country-year in an episode, we considered eleven equally spaced values centered on our chosen threshold (Table C1). This yielded $11^5 = 161,051$ unique combinations of the values. First, we identified the episodes under each of these combinations. Next, we computed for each country year the frequency with which it was included in each of the three episode types.

	Threshold				
	OI	CI	OD	CD	SY
1.	0.005	0.05	-0.015	-0.05	5
2.	0.006	0.06	-0.016	-0.06	6
3.	0.007	0.07	-0.017	-0.07	7
4.	0.008	0.08	-0.018	-0.08	8
5.	0.009	0.09	-0.019	-0.09	9
6.	0.010	0.10	-0.020	-0.10	10
7.	0.011	0.11	-0.021	-0.11	11
8.	0.012	0.12	-0.022	-0.12	12
9.	0.013	0.13	-0.023	-0.13	13
10.	0.014	0.14	-0.024	-0.14	14
11.	0.015	0.15	-0.025	-0.15	15

Table C1: Threshold values tested in the sensitivity analysis and their aggregation weight. OI – one-year increase, CI – cumulative increase, OD – one-year decrease, CD – cumulative decrease, SY – stasis years.

Figure C1 shows how often the country-years we identified in the main analysis end up nested in episodes identified in the sensitivity analysis. In short, whether a country-year was identified as a part of an episode is largely insensitive to the evaluated thresholds. The only clear exception to this is a large minority of the 97 country-years identified as within censored episodes under the main thresholds that tend to end up outside of episodes in the sensitivity analysis. Figure C2 shows that this is largely due 27 years from a single episode, Djibouti 1992–2018 (row 7, column 3).

Country–Year Inclusion Probabilities

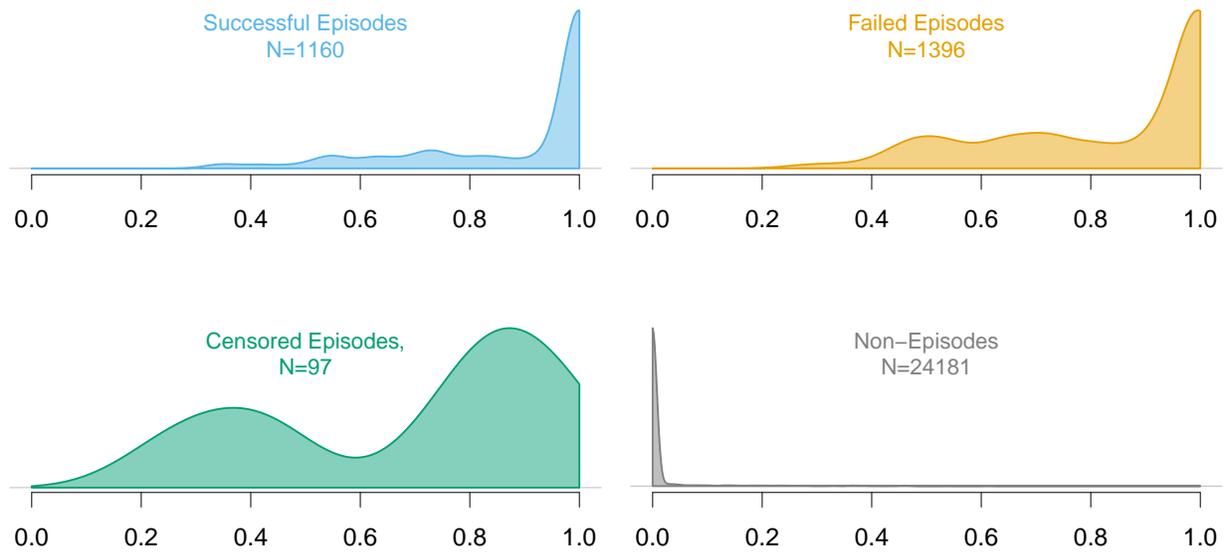


Figure C1: Distributions of episode inclusion probability in the sensitivity analysis by episode type under the main thresholds.

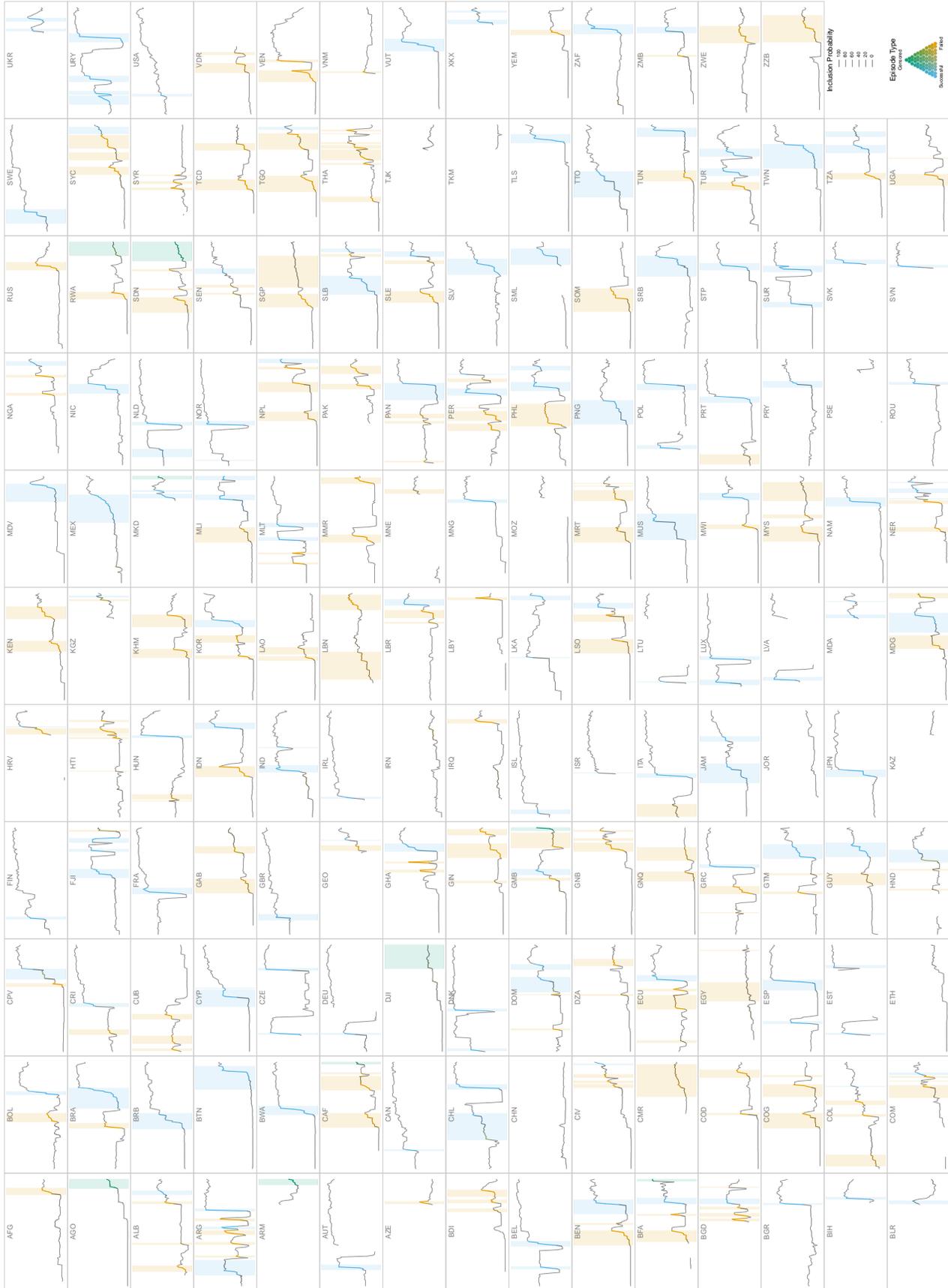


Figure C2: Episodes identified in the main analysis (indicated by background color) and summaries of episodes found in the sensitivity analysis. Only countries with at least one episode found in the main or sensitivity analysis shown.

Appendix D Modeling Episode Onset

We also fit a simpler model that excludes population and conflict variables, which are not available after the year 2000. This yields 7,456 observations, of which 5,997 are eligible for episode onset, and 228 experience it. Figures D2 and D3 show the estimates. The model fits comparably to the larger one, with an adjusted R^2 of 7% and a captured deviance of 16%. All non-onset years have a fitted probability of onset less than 0.5, but only one onset year has a fitted probability ≥ 0.5 .

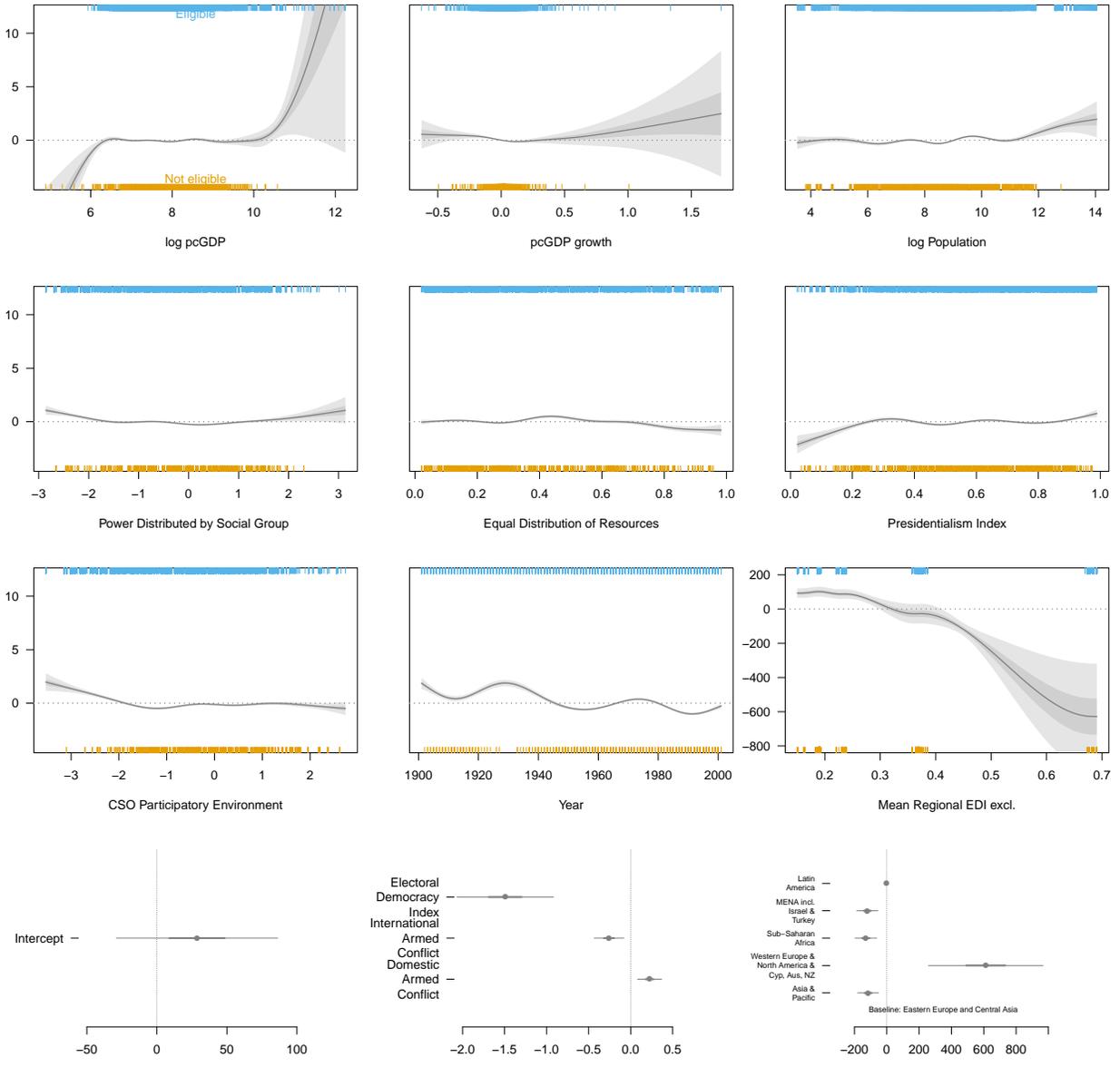


Figure D1: Partial effects under a selection model of democratization onset, first (selection) stage. Second (outcome) stage shown in Figure 7. 50% intervals in thicker lines (first two panels) and darker shades (remaining panels), 95% intervals in thinner lines and lighter shades. All right-hand-side variables except the region lagged by one year.

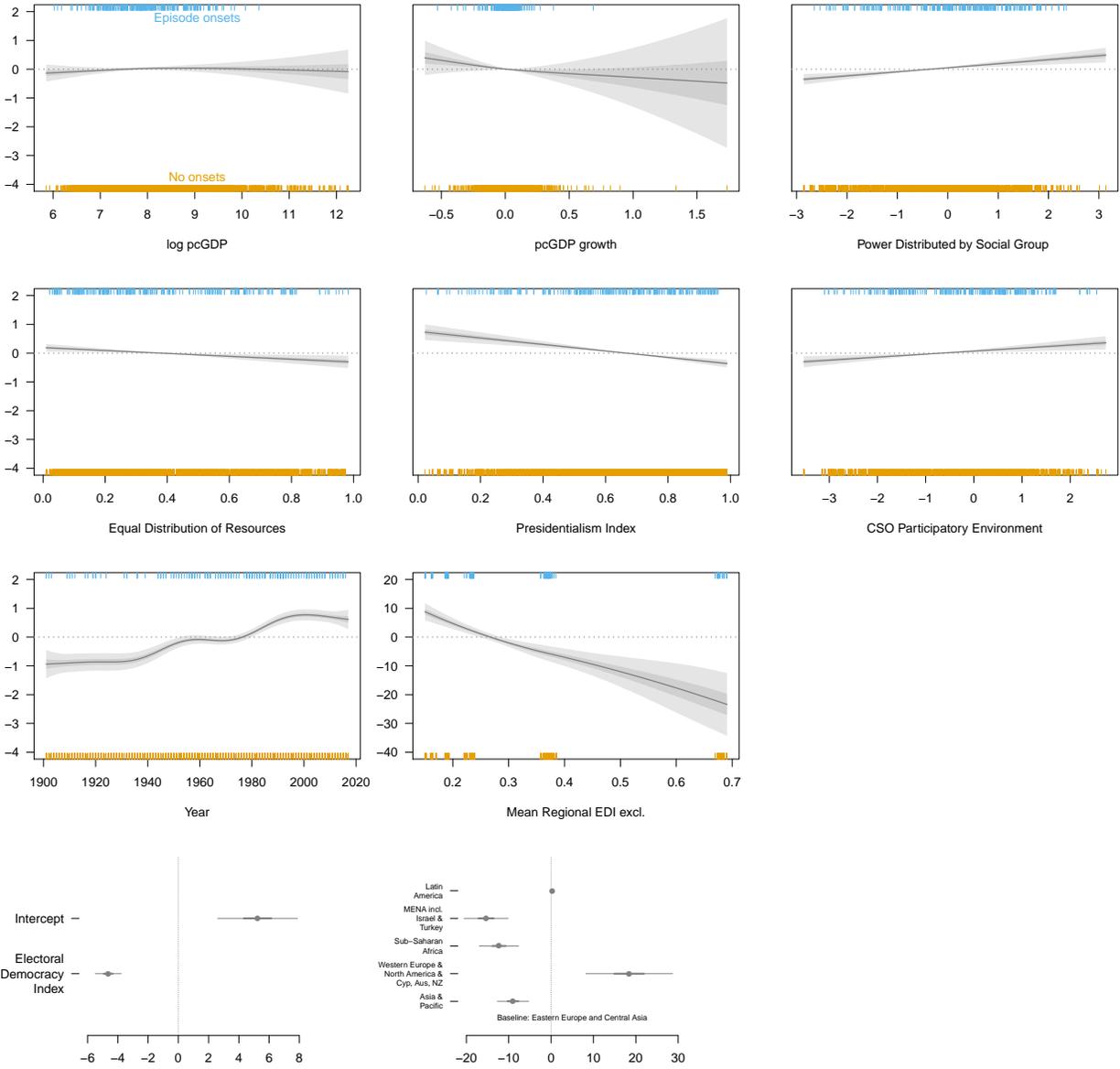


Figure D2: Partial effects under a selection model of democratization onset, second (outcome) stage. First (selection) stage shown in Figure D1 in the Appendix. Joint model AIC is 7,282. Copula dependence parameter $\theta = 0.47$, 95% CI (0.03, 0.74), Kendall's $\tau = 0.31$, 95% CI (0.02, 0.53). 50% intervals in thicker lines (first two panels) and darker shades (remaining panels), 95% intervals in thinner lines and lighter shades. All right-hand-side variables except the region lagged by one year.

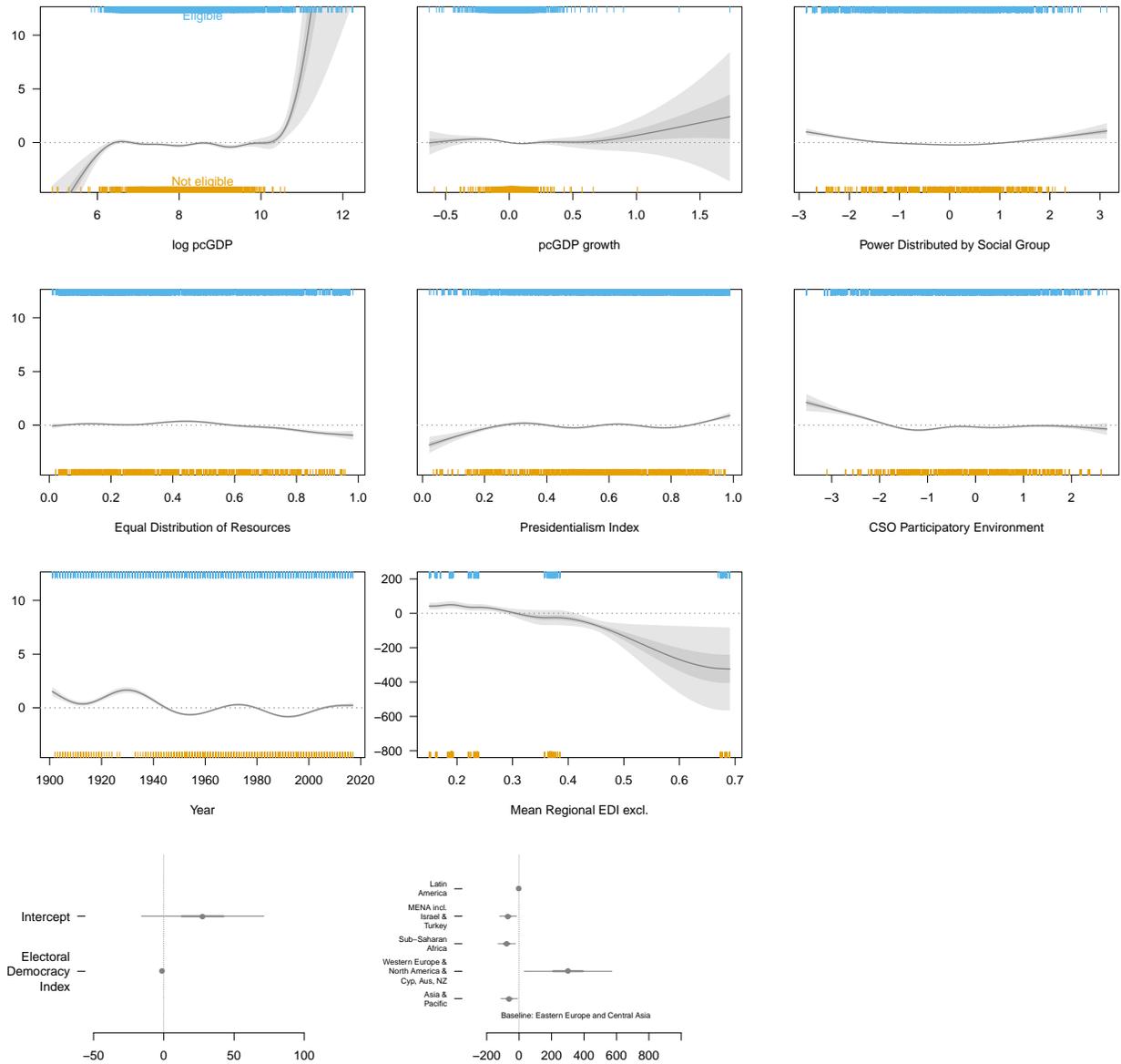


Figure D3: Partial effects under a selection model of democratization onset, first (selection) stage. Second (outcome) stage shown in Figure D2. 50% intervals in thicker lines (first two panels) and darker shades (remaining panels), 95% intervals in thinner lines and lighter shades. All right-hand-side variables except the region lagged by one year.

Appendix E Modeling Episode Outcomes

Normal-linear GLM.

	coef.est	coef.se
(Intercept)	-3.92	3.48
e_migdppcln	0.00	0.05
e_migdpgro	-0.58	0.68
logpop	0.00	0.02
v2pepwrSOC	0.06	0.03
v2xeg_eqdr	0.00	0.19
v2xnp_pres	-0.75	0.18
v2csprtcpt	-0.03	0.03
start_year	0.01	0.00
start_edi	0.04	0.30
excl_region_edi	-20.09	8.09
e_miinteco	-0.05	0.13
e_miinterc	-0.07	0.09
factor(e_regionpol_6C)2	-0.03	0.14
factor(e_regionpol_6C)3	-4.71	1.83
factor(e_regionpol_6C)4	-3.95	1.52
factor(e_regionpol_6C)5	6.48	2.50
factor(e_regionpol_6C)6	-3.04	1.15

n = 222, k = 18		
residual sd = 0.37, R-Squared = 0.48		

Regularized bernoulli-probit GLM.

	coef.est	coef.se
(Intercept)	-50.60	13.87
e_migdppcln	0.01	0.20
e_migdpgro	-3.82	3.15
logpop	0.01	0.09
v2pepwrSOC	0.34	0.15
v2xeg_eqdr	0.35	0.77
v2xnp_pres	-3.91	0.81
v2csprtcpt	-0.07	0.13
start_year	0.03	0.01
start_edi	0.62	1.34
excl_region_edi	0.57	5.65
e_miinteco	-0.09	0.61
e_miinterc	-0.32	0.40
factor(e_regionpol_6C)2	0.54	0.55
factor(e_regionpol_6C)3	-0.57	1.39
factor(e_regionpol_6C)4	-0.88	1.14
factor(e_regionpol_6C)5	1.20	1.86
factor(e_regionpol_6C)6	-0.54	0.95

n = 222, k = 18

residual deviance = 166.3, null deviance = 301.9 (difference = 135.6)

Excluding the conflict variables and the population variable lowers the number of episodes dropped in list-wise deletion. More specifically, the number of episodes available for modeling increases from 222 (129 F, 93 S) to 269 (151 F, 118 S). Figure E1 reports the estimates.

Normal-linear GLM.

	coef.est	coef.se
(Intercept)	-1.40	2.97
e_migdppcln	0.00	0.04
e_migdpgro	0.00	0.44
v2pepwsoc	0.07	0.03
v2xeg_eqdr	0.19	0.16
v2xnp_pres	-0.60	0.16
v2csprtcpt	-0.04	0.03
start_year	0.00	0.00
start_edi	0.36	0.26
excl_region_edi	-20.41	7.42
factor(e_regionpol_6C)2	0.07	0.11
factor(e_regionpol_6C)3	-4.73	1.65
factor(e_regionpol_6C)4	-3.86	1.37
factor(e_regionpol_6C)5	6.60	2.31
factor(e_regionpol_6C)6	-3.00	1.04

n = 269, k = 15		
residual sd = 0.38, R-Squared = 0.45		

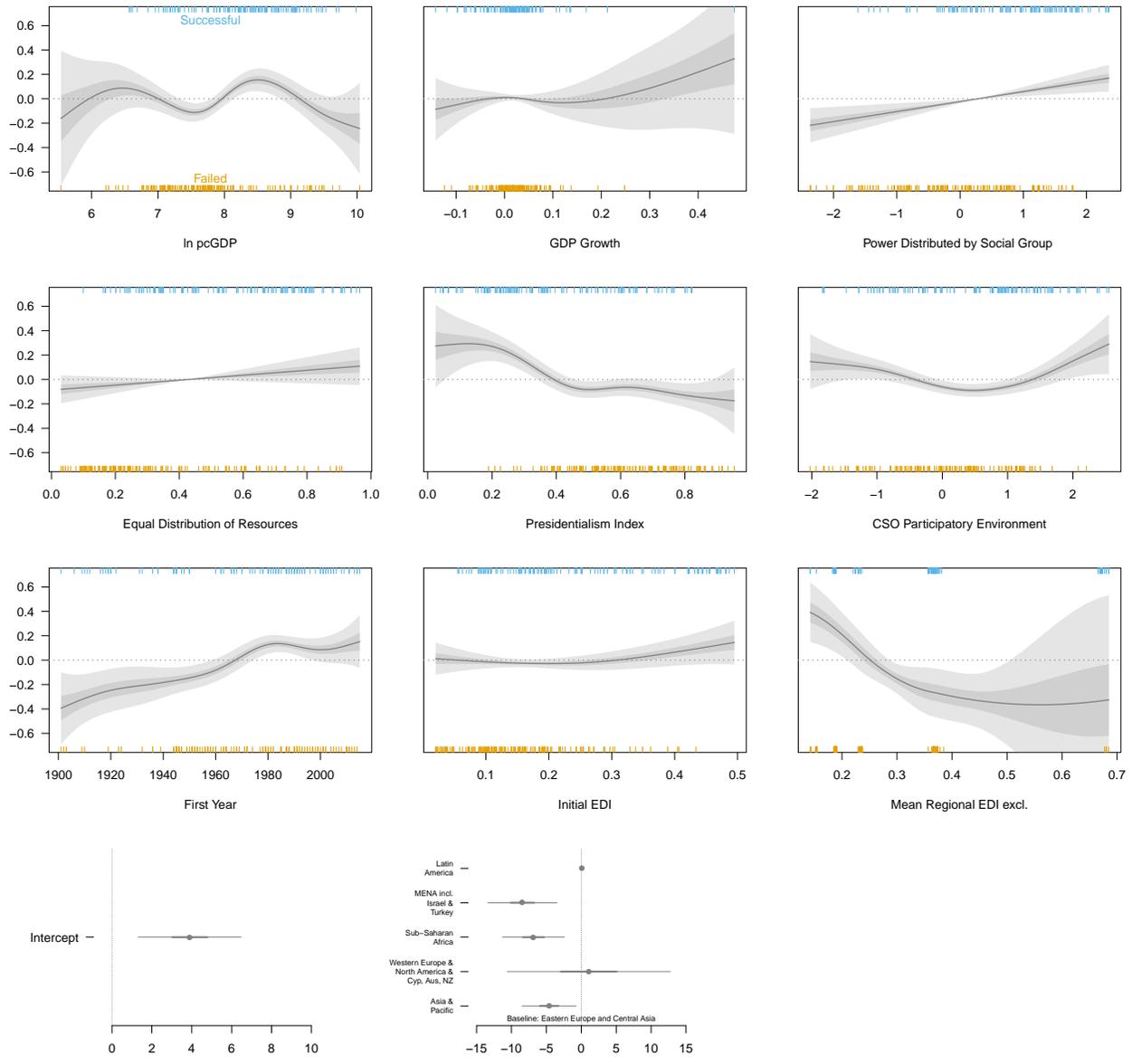


Figure E1: Partial effects under a model of episode outcomes. 50% intervals in darker shades or thicker lines, 95% intervals in lighter shades or thinner lines. All numeric right-hand side variables are averages of one-year lags over the episode. $N = 269$, adjusted $R^2 = 55\%$, captured deviance is 60%, correct classification rate (taking $\hat{y} \geq 0.5$) is 88% (for intercept-only model it is 56%), model AIC=207 (for intercept-only model it is 390).

Regularized bernoulli-probit GLM.

	coef.est	coef.se
(Intercept)	-29.95	10.95
e_migdppln	0.00	0.17
e_migdpgro	-0.51	1.72
v2pepwrSOC	0.33	0.12
v2xeg_eqdr	1.11	0.63
v2xnp_pres	-2.76	0.66
v2csprtcpt	-0.08	0.12
start_year	0.02	0.01
start_edi	1.75	1.07
excl_region_edi	-0.93	5.72
factor(e_regionpol_6C)2	0.72	0.44
factor(e_regionpol_6C)3	-0.78	1.34
factor(e_regionpol_6C)4	-0.58	1.10
factor(e_regionpol_6C)5	1.56	1.86
factor(e_regionpol_6C)6	-0.59	0.88

n = 269, k = 15

residual deviance = 220.9, null deviance = 368.9 (difference = 147.9)

Appendix F Thresholds for Polity IV and Episodes of Democratization

To determine how selecting different thresholds affects the inclusion of cases, we compared the number of episodes that we evidenced across values of the Polity score. As Figure F1 illustrates, the proportion of successful episodes that we identified met or surpassed Polity values up to and including 6. Around 95% of democratization episodes that we coded as successful reached or exceeded 0, while 83% reached a 6 or higher on the Polity index. In contrast, the proportion of failed democratization episodes that met higher thresholds falls precipitously across the index— 62% and 26% of failed episodes ever obtained values of 0 or 6, respectively.

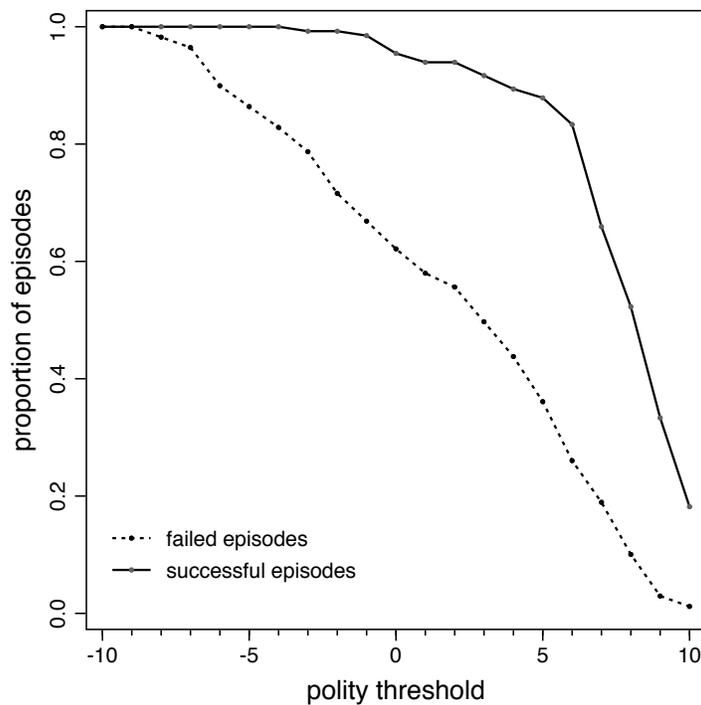


Figure F1: Proportion of episodes that met or exceeded different Polity values

Appendix G Sequential Requisites Example

For example, consider three variables A, B, and C each with an ordinal scale from zero to four. For each observed ordinal level of A, we then scan the data for the minimum value observed for variable B and C. We repeat this procedure for variable B and C, looking for the minimum values on the other variables. The resulting matrix contains one row for each observed ordinal value of each variable and one column for each variable as shown in Table G1. The cells in this matrix contain the number of “requisite conditions” defined as the minimum value for the column variable when the variable-value combination represented in the row is observed. The final column of this matrix is the sum of these requisite conditions for the given variable-value. The higher the number of total requisite conditions for a variable-value, the later this particular condition is likely to be obtained in the sequence. For example, in our hypothetical case, the ordinal value four is obtained comparatively earlier for variable B (sum = 3), when compared to variables A (sum = 6) and C (sum = 8).

Variable-Value	A	B	C	Sum
A-0		1	0	1
A-1		2	1	3
A-2		2	1	3
A-3		4	2	6
B-0	0		0	0
B-1	0		1	1
B-2	0		1	1
B-3	1		1	2
B-4	1		2	3
C-0	2	3		5
C-1	2	3		5
C-2	2	4		6
C-3	3	4		7
C-4	4	4		8

Table G1: Example of a fictional sequential requisities matrix.