Using Civil Society to Model Democratization in a Complexity Framework

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# Table of Contents

I. Explaining Democratization........................................................................................................3
   i.  Cultural Determinism.............................................................................................................3
   ii. Modernization Theory..........................................................................................................6
   iii. Transition Dynamics: Sequencing and Gradualism.............................................................10
   iv.  Transition Dynamics: Pre-Transition Regimes.................................................................15
   v.   Measuring Democracy.......................................................................................................17
   vi.  Explaining Democratization: A Summary.........................................................................22

II. Conceptualizing Civil Society..................................................................................................24
    i.  Conceptions in Political Philosophy: From Hobbes to Gramsci........................................25
    ii. Contemporary Conceptions of Civil Society.......................................................................27
    iii. Measuring Civil Society......................................................................................................33

III. Complexity Theory as an Analytical Framework.................................................................38
    i.  Defining Complexity............................................................................................................39
    ii. Methods of Complex Systems Analysis............................................................................43
    iii. Contrasting Complexity Theory with Traditional Social Science Theories...................56
         a. International Relations: Systemic Neorealism and Neorealist Evolution..................56
         b. Political Sociology and Economics: New Institutionalism.........................................62
    iv.  Summary............................................................................................................................66

IV. Appendix A. Examination of the Democracy Income Threshold........................................68

V. Bibliography............................................................................................................................69
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Over the last thirty years the world has been transformed by the “third wave”\(^1\) of democratic transitions, in which democracy (of varying quality) became the most prevalent form of governance and effectively established a monopoly on legitimacy of rule. Despite initial claims of a triumph of liberalism and the “end of history,”\(^2\) it became clear that only some of the transitions carried by this “wave” had been successful, leaving many to backslide into autocracy and repression, or to become mired in anocracy - an ongoing transition to nowhere.\(^3\) Nonetheless, the transformation itself was a significant phenomenon in need of explanation. Why did this wave of democratization occur, and why have some transitions been successful while others have failed?

I. Explaining Democratization

i. Cultural Determinism

The very notion that this wave is the third of its kind, the first two occurring in 1828 and 1943-1962, suggests a previous body of scholarship explaining democratization. Indeed, one of the first explanations of democratic transition focused on culture. Banfield’s *Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (1953) was one of the first to pose a cultural link between values (“amoral familism”) and democratic governance and economic development, and his work in Italy was followed by many others. Following in his line of reasoning, scholars have pointed to Roman

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Catholicism, Islam, Arab ethnicity, and Confucianism as being incompatible with democracy, often in contrast to Protestantism and, specifically, Protestant European values.

These arguments hold that because the population of a state is predominantly Catholic, Muslim, or Confucian, and because these religions are structured hierarchically (or, in the case of Confucianism, espousing patriarchal values), its people will be more likely to accept similar authoritarian rule by government. Protestantism in Europe, it is argued, places value on individualism and secular government, and features a more democratic structure, featuring a more equitable relationship between pastor and congregation. This immediately raises questions however, especially given the inconsistent treatment of church and state separation in the West. While France has systematically separated the two, many Protestant sects in the United States have lobbied for closer government ties, assuming a very active political role.

Furthermore, the assumption that people will submit to authoritarianism because they have been raised in patriarchal religions is unwarranted and generally left undefended. The notion that a person, let alone an entire population, would be willing to accept repression and human rights violations because his religion is governed hierarchically is weak at best. Moreover, these arguments equate religion with culture, which is a much more complex phenomenon, certainly including religion but also involving ethnicity, language, and perception of shared history, among other concepts. The Confucian “culture,” for example, are very often

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mixed with other religions (e.g. Shintoism in Japan, Buddhism and Taoism in China, Catholicism in the Philippines), and is spread across dozens of languages, ethnic backgrounds and, indeed, cultures. Unless one accepts Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, aggregating all of East and Southeast Asia under one “Confucian culture” heading results in a fairly useless analytical tool.⁸

These cultural arguments are also generally unsupported empirically. While the majority of Confucian societies are, indeed, currently governed by autocratic or semi-autocratic systems (e.g. Lee Yuan Kew in Singapore), this represents a very small sample size, with the notable outliers of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Similarly, while Spain was governed by the (Roman Catholic) dictatorship of Franco while Lipset was positing his theory, its transition to democracy in the mid-1970s was spectacular. While it is possible that Latin American democracies have struggled because of their Roman Catholic heritage, it seems more likely that they have struggled because of repeated US interventions during the Cold War, a history of tension between indigenous peoples and European imperialism, economies heavy on resource extraction and drug production, and extreme, sustained income inequality. Indeed, it was not uncommon for Catholic religious leaders in Latin America to lead the fight against repressive governments.

Similarly, the link between Islam and autocracy has been difficult to establish empirically because of confounding factors, including economic dependence on oil exports, historical tensions between religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East (often initiated and maintained by European powers), the overlap of Arab and Muslim populations, and the relatively successful transitions of Muslim democracies in Southeast Asia. While some evidence does point to an Arab “democracy gap,”⁹ this also suffers from questions of spuriousness described above, and

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there is also no commonly accepted definition of the “Arab” ethnicity, much less one that points to values associated with authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{10}

This critique of cultural determinism does not mean that culture is unimportant, and indeed, some aspects of culture are critical to democratic development, but these are rarely religiously defined. Gender roles are an example of one such aspect. If a society is traditionally patriarchal and gender-biased, implementing universal suffrage can be expected to disrupt cultural norms significantly. North Atlantic democracies had the advantage of implementing universal suffrage gradually (150 years for women, 180 years for blacks), while most current young democracies are expected to include universal suffrage quickly after the transition. Many countries with traditional gender biases have successfully transitioned to universal suffrage, most notably including Japan and Turkey.

\textit{ii. Modernization Theory}

While cultural determinism was effective at explaining democracy when democracy was contained to Western Europe and North America, successful Third Wave transitions in Latin America (e.g. Costa Rica), Asia (e.g. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), Africa (e.g. Namibia, Botswana, South Africa), and elsewhere have challenged its weak linkage between institutions and religious values. Another approach to explaining the first and second waves of democratic transition was actually proposed by cultural determinist Seymour Martin Lipset, who proposed a link between economic development level and democratization, and who found a positive

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{9} Stepan and Robertson, 2004.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10} Halim Barakat, 1993, \textit{The Arab World: Society, Culture, and the State} (University of California Press); Yousseff M. Choueiri, \textit{Arab Nationalism: Nation and State in the Arab World} (Blackwell Publishing).}
correlation between the two. The statistical correlation between national wealth (GDP or GNP) and democracy has since been repeatedly confirmed in the literature.

Recent works have refined Lipset’s analysis, and have discovered that the correlation is not linear, but rather there exists an income threshold beyond which most countries are democratic, and below which most democratic transitions fail. Further research identified a transition zone, within which transitions are the most likely, and above which increases in wealth do not translate into likelihood of transition. Some, such as Przeworski and Limongi, have argued that this is because the increased wealth acts as a stabilizing force once the transition zone is passed, allowing authoritarian regimes that survived to endure. Others, such as Larry Diamond and Robert Dahl, argue that the probability of a democratic transition is so high above the threshold that increases in GDP have no significant effect. Both groups of these scholars miss the fact that all seven autocratic countries above the threshold identified by Przeworski ($3,000 GDP per capita), are heavily dependent on oil production. Indeed, for only two of these countries, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, do oil exports account for less than 70% of total commodity exports. This suggests that wealth based on petroleum exports, and possibly natural

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resource extraction more generally, serves to strengthen the autocratic regime, perhaps because resource-generated wealth is less likely to be redistributed, negating the middle-class-growing effect identified in other types of transition economies.

Regardless of the explanation for the statistical outliers at the autocratic end of the spectrum, most scholars agree that for countries below the income threshold, but still in the lower-middle income zone, increases in economic development is associated with improved likelihood for successful transition. This phenomenon has many different explanations, but most focus on the role of economic development in changing the values of the population, increasing the size of the middle class and encouraging urban migration. A larger middle class and a wealthier working class tend to demand greater influence over government decisions, and simultaneously reduce the likelihood that radical socialism will spread in the lower classes, which otherwise threatens the livelihood of economic elites, raising the premium on maintaining a monopoly on political power.

That economic development leads to changes in class structure and consciousness, demographics, and even popular and elite values, is uncontested. These changes are critical in order for a society, and particularly societal elites, to accept democratic institutions, but it has been extremely rare for successful democratic transitions to have been caused by concerted class action. Importantly, many middle-income countries during the Third Wave experienced the changes in social structure that modernization theorists predict (indeed, China is doing so now), without concurrent transitions to democratic governance. The populations of South Korea and

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16 See Appendix A for analysis of non-democracies above the threshold, with emphasis on petroleum exports.

17 Most of these explanations can be found in Lipset, 1959, with refinements and additions made by later scholars. For an excellent discussion of the middle class/democratization argument in East Asian transitions, see Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao and Hagen Koo, 1997, “The Middle Classes and Democratization,” in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien (eds.), Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press): 312-333
Taiwan, for example, certainly became more accepting of democratic norms during their economic development periods in the 1970s and 1980s, but it took some other agency to cause leaders to pursue democratic transition. Changes in social structure cannot, themselves, be responsible for the decision to implement democratic institutions.

Related to both the cultural and modernization theoretical approaches is an argument based on civil society. One important contribution of modernization theory is the theory that economic development, by improving education, increasing incentives for political participation, and by creating and improving communications and transportation networks, will lead to stronger and more numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and thus civil society, of which NGOs are a significant part. These autonomous organizations, organized and sustained not by the state or political elites, but from the bottom-up, serve to check government excesses and, more importantly, to increase and train people in political participation and to generate and spread new opinions. Whereas parents of most starving families will not have time to organize themselves politically, increased economic development incentivizes these groups’ formation, and improvements in communications allow them to form and proliferate. These organizations form a significant part of “civil society,” which this author will argue is critical to democratic transition, and which is described in more detail in Section II.

While scholars have recognized the importance of civil society in democracy since 19th century political philosophers studied the first wave, this idea has largely been overshadowed by post-Third Wave literature focusing on the “transition” between autocratic regime and democratic consolidation. States undergoing this process, characterized by extreme uncertainty

within the polity, have been found to be extremely vulnerable to autocratic backsliding, civil and interstate war, and state failure. Avoiding the question of what causes democratic transitions, this literature has instead focused on the steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of these negative outcomes.

\[ \text{iii. } \textit{Transition Dynamics: Sequencing and Gradualism} \]

A key debate in this area has been between supporters of “sequencing,” the idea that democratic institutions must be established, or at least taking root, before mass participation and electoral competition is encouraged, and supporters of “gradualism,” who argue that necessary institutions can be developed at the same time that people are learning to participate in elections. While gradualists argue, to paraphrase President George W. Bush, that practice of democracy is the best preparation for democracy, sequencing supporters argue that successful transition requires prerequisites in the form of established institutions.

Leading the sequencing argument in recent years have been Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, who have built upon, most notably, the work of Dankwart Rustow. They argue that a strong legal system, representative government institutions, and a free press, are critical preconditions for democratic transition. These institutions are established by liberal-minded

\[ 19 \text{ The “transition” concept is derived from a seminal series of works in this field, edited by O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead. This series includes: Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., 1986, } \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies} \text{ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), } \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe} \text{ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), } \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives} \text{ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), } \textit{Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions} \text{ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).} \]


autocrats, sometimes through pact-formation with moderate opposition groups,\textsuperscript{22} and/or with international support. To support their thesis they have examined the historical record, particularly the oldest western democracies, where these institutions were well-established before democratic transition, and in which the transition process was fairly peaceful (e.g. Great Britain, United States, Canada). These institutions “provide a framework for civic action, and a focal point for civic loyalty.”\textsuperscript{23}

In this scenario, once institutions are either established or “taking root,” depending on one’s interpretation of the sequencing argument, the authoritarian government will use these institutions to “liberalize,” by opening up some areas for public debate and guaranteeing certain rights (e.g. habeas corpus, press freedom, limited civil liberties), consistent with the ideas of O’Donnell and Schmitter, and Huntington.\textsuperscript{24}

Importantly, sequencing scholars argue that premature transitions (i.e. those initiated without established impartial institutions) result in “birth defects” in institutions that haunt the democracy for the rest of its life, and which actually decrease the likelihood of another transition to occur successfully. Thailand, for example, has experienced multiple failed transitions to democracy, largely due to the continued supremacy of the monarch. Similarly, Mansfield and Snyder point to the founding role of the military in Argentine, Pakistani, and Turkish transitions, and the resulting pattern of democratic transitions and military coups. In these cases, 

\textsuperscript{22} The importance of pact formation between autocratic regime and opposition actors has long been recognized as both a factor within sequencing, and as a direct cause of democratization (and also autocratic endurance). For example, see: O’Donnell, et al., Transitions ... Tentative Conclusions, p. 38-47; Frances Hagopian, 1990, “Democracy by Undemocratic Means? Elites, Political Pacts, and Regime Transition in Brazil,” Comparative Political Studies 23 (2): 147-170; Terry Karl, 1990, “Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America,” Comparative Politics 23 (1); Daniel V. Friedheim, “Bringing Society Back into Democratic Transition Theory after 1989,” East European Politics and Societies 7 (3); Huntington, The Third Wave, p. 165-171.


\textsuperscript{24} O’Donnell, et al., Transitions ... Tentative Conclusions, p. 7; Huntington, The Third Wave, p. 9.
development of institutions while mass participation was being initially encouraged actually institutionalized and reinforced the country’s problems.

In contrast, gradualists, led by Sheri Berman and Thomas Carothers, argue that the vulnerability associated with democratic transition is constant and universal, regardless of the sequence in which the transition occurs. Institution building should occur simultaneously with encouragement of mass participation and competitive elections. Preconditions that are supportive of democracy (i.e. economic development, rule of law) are great, but they are not necessary for the transition to be successful.

The greatest flaw in the gradualist argument is a tendency to ignore Snyder and Mansfield’s arguments about the destabilizing effects of competitive elections. Without agreement on the “rules of the game,” elections can encourage violence and create incentives for government manipulation of the system. Without preexisting institutions, respected by all parties, to oversee and judge the election, there can be no guarantee of fairness, and thus no incentive to participate fairly. The victors in a democracy must also be willing to respect the rights of the minority and govern the entire population, a norm that seems unlikely to be developed immediately, especially in the tumultuous and often divisive atmosphere surrounding the disintegration of an autocratic regime and the formation of new institutions.

Gradualists do point to two serious flaws in the sequencing argument. First, it relies on a benevolent philosopher-king style autocratic, who is willing to support the establishment of democratic institutions (and thus, his own demise). Indeed, transitions in this style have been exceeding rare. While dictators in Taiwan, South Korea, Costa Rica, and South Africa proved willing to hand over the reins, how often can we expect to find an F.W. De Klerk rather than an

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H.F. Verwoerd? A Chiang Ching-kuo rather than Chiang Kai-shek? Or in much-exalted Western Europe, Juan Carlos rather than Francisco Franco? Secondly, the sequencing argument is unclear as to how developed institutions need to be before elections should be risked.26

Indeed, even within Western Europe smooth sequencing-based transitions have been rare, as Berman and Carothers note. Many Western European democracies achieved stability only after significant conflict, false starts, and temporary periods of autocratic backsliding. The United States, Great Britain and Spain all suffered bloody civil wars after attempts at democratic transition, before they achieved stability (and universal suffrage many years later). Similarly, France’s democracy did not stabilize until the establishment of the Fifth Republic in 1958, 160 years after the French Revolution. Even South Korea, an oft-cited example of the sequencing story, had a failed democratic experiment in the Second Republic, leading to Park Chung-hee’s dictatorship, apparently without damming the now-democratic Sixth Republic with “birth defects.”

Both gradualism and sequencing claim some empirical support, but both theories also have serious flaws, and the arguments of each seem to capture only a small part of the democratic transition story. Importantly, both generally ignore civil society, focusing instead on institutional development (i.e. rule of law, free press, representative institutions) and competitive elections as critical factors. While sequencing relies on the role of the liberal autocrat and a moderate opposition, and gradualism the radical democratic reformer, neither of these groups can be consistently relied upon to bring about transition. Philosopher kings are rare, opposition to a repressive regime is rarely moderate if it exists openly, and radical democrats are just as likely to bring about their own destruction as they are a successful revolution. While the F.W. De Klerk and the moderate leaders of the Africa National Congress were busy negotiating a democratic

transition in South Africa, radical reformers in the *Inkatha Freedom Party, Pan-African Congress*, and reactionaries in the *Conservative Party* nearly brought the country into civil war.

The sequencing and gradualism debate also ignores the fact that the boundaries between stable autocracy, disintegration of the autocratic regime, democratic transition, and democratic consolidation are so vague as to be almost meaningless. While proponents of a separate consolidation concept argue that consolidation is a “discernible process by which the rules, institutions, and constraints of democracy come to constitute ‘the only game in town,’ the one legitimate framework for seeking and exercising political power,” others, notably Guillermo O’Donnell, argue that consolidation is actually part of the transition experience, and to equate consolidation with institutionalization of party systems is inappropriate in a system where weak, volatile party systems can coexist with stable and perceptibly legitimate democracies, as in Italy.  

As the term “democratic transition” implies, democratization in this author’s conception is a process beginning with liberalization and intent-to-democratize in an existing autocratic regime, and is completed when democracy becomes “the only game in town.” While consolidation in fragile democracies may be worth studying independently, for the purposes of this study, the terms “democratization,” and “democratic transition,” are used interchangeably. If a country liberalizes, adopts some democratic institutions, possibly even including electoral competition, but does not “consolidate,” then the transition was never successfully completed. This is not to say that democracy and autocracy are to be considered dichotomous; instead of

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democracy and non-democracy, this author conceives democracy as existing on a continuum with authoritarianism, and we can discuss relative degrees of success in the transition process.

iv. Transition Dynamics: Pre-Transition Regime

Interestingly, the first to study consolidation systematically, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, also offered the first model of the democratic transition process using pre-transition regime type as the independent variable, in which they combine transition and consolidation into their dependent variable (although they do maintain separate terms in their title). Pre-transition regime types, they argue, significantly affects the transition process, due to the willingness of certain regime types (in turn, due to their authority characteristics) to institute reforms in five critical areas. In this argument, the temporal order of institution establishment and mass participation is necessarily fluid and dependent upon the preceding regime type.

Linz and Stepan identify five critical “arenas” to democratic transition: (1) a civil society composed of autonomous self-organizing groups and movements that represent and advance specific interests; (2) structured political society, within which the polity structures and exerts political control; (3) rule of law; (4) state bureaucracy; and (5) an institutionalized economic regime, including norms, regulations, and institutions through which the market and state interact. The degree of development of these arenas is dependent upon the type of non-democratic regime extant prior to the transition; Linz and Stepan identify four types: totalitarian, post-totalitarian, authoritarian, and sultanistic. The arenas will be poorly developed under the personalistic and unpredictable totalitarian and sultanistic regimes, but will be better developed in post-totalitarian (which is characterized by a continuum of reform of the totalitarian state) and authoritarian regimes. They propose several transition paths dependent on each pre-transition

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regime type and its associated arena development level, and also compare the effects of military and civilian structures within their pre-transition regime types.

Linz and Stepan made a significant contribution by developing such a rich analytical model and applying it to series of cases across the world, but the utility of their argument is weakened by its extreme complexity. Despite beginning with a simple and parsimonious idea (four regime types → four democratic transition patterns), they develop an overwhelmingly complex schema to modify it, eroding any parsimony without adding much explanatory power. For example, Linz and Stepan postulate five arenas, four regime types, four institutional structures, nine “regime-specific circumstances,” and four paths to transition, without a system of integration for these variables. While some combinations of factors are impossible, without a system of integration there exist so many possible combinations of these variables and codicils as to render application of the theory almost impossible. It is also unclear that the four most non-democratic basic regime types Linz and Stepan postulate are empirically justified. As Gil Graeme notes, the authoritarian regime type is so broad as to encapsulate multiple institutional configurations, and there is no clear line between post-totalitarian systems and authoritarian systems.

Other scholars have noted the distinct transition paths associated with pre-transition regime types, generally agreeing with the findings of Linz and Stepan, although attempts to compare their paths systematically have been rare.\(^{30}\) Party-based non-democratic regimes are generally associated with more successful transitions, but empirical analysis of this has been

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\(^{30}\) One of the most recent and systematic approaches was by Marshall and Cole, comparing party and military regime types prior to the beginning of the transition (defined broadly), finding that military-based regimes were nearly twice as likely to experience major political instability during the transition process than were party-based regimes, or democratic transitions proceeding directly from independence. Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, 2008, “A Macro-Comparative Analysis of the Problem of Factionalism in Emerging Democracies,” (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 29 August 2008).
heavily skewed by transitions in the former Soviet states. Party-based regimes are argued to be more open and structurally conducive to liberalization than military regimes, as discussion and debate already occurs within the party, and the party as an institution is less threatened by opposition than is a military regime, in which the legitimacy of the military in government is necessarily questioned by supporters of democratic reform. It has also been argued that non-democratic party regimes are more conducive to civil society formation than other types of non-party regimes, because people learn organizational and political participation skills from the existing party. That said, as in other democratization explanations, civil society development has been woefully under-investigated.

v. Measuring Democracy

As studies of democracy have entered the mainstream of comparative political analysis, they have also come to use the sophisticated statistical methods preferred by the political science community. As with much political science quantitative analysis, however, the methods generally far outstrip the available data (ordinal at best) in terms of accuracy and reliability. The problems associated with classifying regime types and measuring democracy have generally been ignored, but how we classify and measure this concept is at the very heart of its studies. This section analyzes some of the most prominent datasets on governance, and discusses fundamental problems with existing classification and measurement schemes on governance.

Munck and Verkuilen (2002) offer a sophisticated meta-analysis of the nine most commonly used large-n governance datasets, finding all to have significant weaknesses (generally associated with minimalist conceptualizations), and individual strengths. Conceptualization is the most important stage of the measurement process, and a particularly difficult one for democracy because of the myriad attributes we associate with democratic regimes. Adopting a definition with too many attributes (maximalism) raises the risk of reducing epistemic correlation, reducing the possibility of finding empirical matches to the theoretical construct, and eliminating avenues for future research by incorporating related factors (particularly causes or effects) into the definition. For example, if one’s definition of democracy includes social welfare provision or a capitalist economy, in the former case there may be states that are generally considered democratic but that would not fall under the definition (e.g. USA), or in the case of the latter, would eliminate the possibility of researching linkages between economic development and governance. The opposite tendency, minimalism, however, is equally dangerous, because including only the most basic elements will lead to the classification of non-democratic regimes as democracies, or, more commonly, will create a category so broad as to be almost meaningless.

Munck and Verkuilen found that most working definitions of democracy have adopted minimalist definitions focused on democratic procedures and structures in order to avoid the problems of maximalism, with the exception of Freedom House, which includes twenty-five different components, although its calculation scheme is not open for peer review. This tendency towards minimalism creates its own problems, as the purpose of democracy (to increase public

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deliberation in and influence over public policymaking), for example, had generally been left unconsidered by most measurement schemes.

Of the list considered by Munck and Verkuilen, two of the most commonly cited, and representative of the datasets covered in their sample, are Polity and Freedom House. Polity IV generally embraces the minimalist definition trend, but was designed to measure autocracy and democracy as coexisting elements in any given polity. Polity measures democracy on the basis of three major concepts: executive recruitment (defined in terms of competitiveness, regulation and openness), constraints on the executive, and political competition (defined in terms of competitiveness and regulation of participation). The measurement level for each concept is ordinal, based on a coding scheme refined over four generations of the Polity project. Although suffrage is included under political competition, the dataset is inconsistent in its treatment of suffrage historically. For example, the United States is coded with the highest political competition score prior to the 1920 national enactment of women’s suffrage legislation, and the Jim Crow laws that prevented minority voting in the South are also ignored. Although Polity covers suffrage almost universally in the post-World War II era, this important historical artifact makes long-term analysis of democracy trends problematic, and raises fundamental questions about its definition of democracy.

One of the greatest weaknesses of Polity, beyond its minimalist structure and procedure-based definition, is that the scheme was developed during the 1970s, prior to the Third Wave or the post-Soviet revolutions, when autocracies were the global norm and were thus the regime type of primary interest. Thus, Polity tends to show more variation among autocracies than among democracies, especially at the upper end of the democratic spectrum. For example, Polity

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codes Botswana as a 9 (the second-highest possible on a scale of -10 – 10), despite the fact that Botswana has only had a single party in power since independence, and has never had a change in executive directly due to an election. Polity is unable to differentiate between types of party systems, provided multiple political parties compete at a basic level, different types of legislatures, and struggles when dealing with illiberal democracies.

Due to the different variation at different ends of the scale, and to the additive nature of the Polity measurements, it is not appropriate to use Polity linearly, which is also a weakness in its design. The Polity variable, which is its most commonly used measure of governance, was actually created by researchers using the dataset and not the creators, although Marshall and Jaggers later included it in the dataset. The Polity score is the difference between the autocracy and democracy scores, which were originally conceived as being coexistent and not mutually exclusive. Treating the Polity data linearly ignores the cases in the middle of the Polity scale where autocratic and democratic elements mix to produce, in Marshall’s terms, anocracies. Thus, Polity is better converted into a three or five-category measure, ranging from autocracy (-10 – -6), anocracy (-5 – 5), and democracy (6 – 10). That said, this “problem” is also of Polity’s greatest strengths, as individual variables hold important, independent meaning for researchers; many Polity variables are frequently used independently of the Autocracy, Democracy, or Polity scores.

Freedom House, in contrast, adopts a maximalist definition of democracy, but incorporates its twenty-five elements into only two aggregate concepts: civil liberties and

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35 Ibid.

political rights. The civil liberties score is composed of fifteen elements that comprise four sub-concepts: “freedom of expression and belief,” “associational and organizational rights,” “rule of law,” and “personal autonomy and individual rights.” The political rights score is composed of ten elements that comprise three sub-concepts: “electoral process,” “political pluralism and participation,” and “functioning of government.” While certainly encompassing more of what it means to be democratic than Polity, the Freedom House scale encounters problems associated with the maximalist end of the definition spectrum. Elements in the civil liberties measurement scheme that might confound democracy with other commonly-research concepts include such factors as economic exploitation, equality of economic opportunity, free market capitalism, discrimination, “freedom from war,” presence of trade unions and collective bargaining, and academic freedom. In political rights, Freedom House includes such as elements as: “changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory,” government operating with transparency and openness, and freedom from corruption. Although many of these concepts are certainly related to democracy, and could be correlates and perhaps even effects of democracy, it is not clear that they belong in the definition of democracy. A country may be democratic and yet be unable to guarantee “freedom from war,” and it is far from clear that democracies are, either epistemically or empirically, free from corruption.

The end result of the Freedom House coding scheme is a 1 – 7 ordinal scale measuring civil liberties and political rights, independently, where 1 indicates maximum freedom, and 7 indicates maximum restriction. While these concepts are measured separately, their high degree of correlation (.944) is notable. Countries are also coded as free, not free, or partly free, based in part on the civil liberties and political rights scores. Despite their different definitions Polity and
Freedom House are highly correlated, with correlation coefficients of approximately -.891 for Political Rights, -.837 for Civil Liberties, and -.881 for an average of the two.\textsuperscript{37}

The problems and successes of these two databases, representative of the broader set considered by Munck and Verkuilen, raise fundamental questions about how we perceive and define democracy. Typically, our working definition of democracy is much more simple than the construct of democracy we hold in our heads. Ask any political science undergraduate what constitutes a democracy, and you will receive a surprising list of attributes: social welfare provision, checks on the executive, checks on and within the legislature, presence of an independent judiciary, free and fair elections for legislative and executive positions, lack of corruption, checks on the tyranny of the majority, freely elected local and national representatives, a democratic culture, individual and group freedoms, rights, and liberties, etc. In short, we have come to define democracy in terms of the myriad specific goals we hope to achieve by it, and lose sight of the broader aim of democratic governance: public deliberation.

This author would argue that the procedural and structural attributes measured by the most common datasets miss almost entirely the extent to which public deliberation is allowed, encouraged, and incorporated. Public deliberation is closely connected to civil society dynamics, and will be addressed in later sections. Importantly, however, none of the major democracy datasets includes civil society in their definitions of democracy, although many, including both Freedom House and Polity, measure conditions that make civil society more likely to flourish.

\textit{vi. Explaining Democratization: A Summary}

The various theories of democratization are eloquently synthesized by Huntington in \textit{The Third Wave},\textsuperscript{38} and might be diagrammed as follows:

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} Analysis conducted on 2007 Polity2 variable and Freedom House 2008 civil liberties and political rights scores (n = 162).}
However, in Huntington’s own words, these factors “do not make democratization necessary, and are at one remove from the factors immediately responsible for democratization. A democratic regime is installed not by trends, but by people. Democracies are created not by causes, but by causers.” While Huntington’s statement that these factors are necessary but not sufficient causes is accurate, his claim that people are the primary causal factor is weak. How often are liberal autocrats to be relied upon to destroy their own regimes in favor of democratization, and can this be achieved without an autonomous, self-organizing, emergent civil society? It is easy to think of transformational leaders who have attempted to transition to democracy only to meet failure, often due to the lack of a strong civil society to counteract authoritarian tendencies.

38 Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 106. Also see p. 69 for similar diagram on effects of economic development.

39 Ibid., 107.
Moreover, although civil society is conspicuously absent from Huntington’s list of general causes, its emergence and development are clearly implied in each of the general causes he lists. Culture and religion offer organizational experience, meeting areas for discussion of both religion and politics, and provide, in many cases, leadership of emergent popular movements. Economic development, by educating the populace, increasing the size of the middle class, increasing incentives for popular participation in government, and creating transportation and communication networks, encourages NGO growth, which in turn encourage the development of a democratic political culture. Pre-existing institutions protect civil society leaders and NGOs from repression, and provide legal avenues for participation in civic dialogues and local politics. Finally, international pressure and support is often focused in the NGO sector, and both people and NGOs learn lessons from their neighbors’ experiences, strengthening civil society domestically. In short, this author proposes that Huntington’s entire list, and most theories of democratization, can be distilled into civil society development.

II. Conceptualizing Civil Society

Civil society has found a recent resurgence in the democratization literature, due in part to the highly publicized acts of democratic reform by ordinary people during the 1990s: protestors staring down tanks at Tiananmen Square, East Germans tearing down the Berlin Wall, purple-thumbed voters in Baghdad. Despite its recent return to explanatory celebrity status, the relationship between civil society and democratization is at least as old as the latter. Indeed, Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* focuses predominantly on the topic, which he describes as “the *only* means of preserving freedom.”\(^{40}\) Despite its historical and recent prominence in democratization literature, there is no consensus on the definition of civil society, with many scholars simply creating their own to best fit their hypotheses. This section distills common

elements of various conceptualizations of civil society from the literature, and develops a
definition of civil society that is as pluralistic as possible without sacrificing parsimony.

i. Conceptions in Political Philosophy: From Hobbes to Gramsci

The modern conception of civil society derives from two trends in political philosophy.
Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were the first to deal with civil society after the development of
the modern state following the Thirty Years War. While Hobbes’ *Leviathan* is commonly seen as
the origin of the social contract and the vertical relationship between people and government,
Hobbes also asserted a horizontal relationship amongst people, under the state, including the
willingness to compromise certain liberties so as to not infringe upon those of others, which fits
the modern conception of civil society.\(^41\) Locke’s conception of civil society was similar,
although it predated the state in his argument, and the state was thus formed as subject to and
with obligations to respect civil society.\(^42\) Importantly, in both of these conceptions civil society
comprises relationships among people, derived from natural laws instead of state compulsion or
direction, but is co-existent with the state.

Immanuel Kant offered a similar view of civil society, ignoring the question of whether
social life was brutish or civil in the state of nature as irrelevant. Civil society for Kant is similar
to Hobbes and Locke in that it is coexistent and symbiotic with the state. While Kant’s civil
society exists to force humans to respect each other’s rights, he offers no sharp distinction
between state and society.\(^43\)

In contrast, Hegel offers a view of civil society that is separate from, but linked with, the
state, and which emerged after the development of capitalism in order to protect individual rights

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and private property from the state. In his conception, the state and civil society interacted: civil society monitored the state to prevent infringement of its interests and to maintain moral order; the state monitored and corrected divisions within civil society to prevent fragmentation. While Tocqueville followed in Hegel’s separation of civil society and state spheres, he argued that within the realm of association there also existed a political society, distinct from both civil society and the state. For Tocqueville, this was critical, as the tyranny of the majority could only be prevented by strong, self-governing civil and political associations with cross-cutting interests. Thomas Paine accepted Tocqueville’s distinction between political and civil societies, as well as his fear of the state, but rejected Tocqueville’s notion of associational life, instead arguing, like Hegel, that civil society was developed to protect the economic interests of a growing middle class.

Karl Marx built upon Hegel’s re-conception of civil society as a capitalist institution, as well as his linkages of political and civil societies, but rejected wholesale Paine’s view of the market-based civil society as a positive force. While civil society was the realm of social relations, labor, and production, it was dominated in practice by the bourgeoisie. Political society and the state, in turn, represented and defended the interests of the bourgeoisie. Interestingly, Antonio Gramsci departed significantly from Marx’s conceptions of civil and political society, which he saw instead as institutions of coercion and consent, respectively. While, like Marx, Gramsci envisioned civil society as a private, non-state sphere, Gramsci did not see it as dominated by the bourgeoisie. Instead, he envisioned the bourgeoisie compromising with the

masses, represented by labor unions and mass parties in civil society, in order to maintain its long term hegemony over the political sphere. Thus, while Marx argued that civil society, like the state, had to be destroyed in order for the proletariat to succeed, Gramsci argued that the proletariat was destined to use its position within civil society to create a self-regulating civil society independent of the state, which could then supersede the unneeded political sphere.

ii. Contemporary Conceptions of Civil Society

Four major schools of thought exist dominate the contemporary debate on civil society, each of which follows from one of the philosophical perspectives outlined above, as shown in Table 1. Neoliberalism, in the line of Thomas Paine agrees with Post-Marxism on the role of private economic interests in determining civil society, but sees civil society as an independent force of the state. Post-Marxism, following Hegel, posits a civil society linked with the state, but built upon private economic interests. The Regime School, based on the theories of Locke, also sees civil society and the state as interrelated, but existing as the manifestation of associational life, rather than economic interests. Lastly, the Associational School, following Tocqueville, is the direct counter of Post-Marxism, positing a separation between state and civil society, where civil society is caused by associational life, similar to the beliefs of the Regime School.

47 This table is inspired by Figures 1 and 2 in Hyden’s meta-analysis of civil society discourse, on which much of this section is based: Goran Hyden, 1997, “Civil Society, Social Capital, and Development: Dissection of a Complex Discourse,” Studies in Comparative International Development 32 (1): 6, 9.
Table 1. Philosophical Roots of Major Contemporary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis in Economic Interest</th>
<th>State/Society Linked</th>
<th>State/Society Separate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Ancestor</td>
<td>Hegel, Marx, Gramsci</td>
<td>Paine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary School</td>
<td>Post-Marxism</td>
<td>Neoliberalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis in Associational Life</td>
<td>Philosophical Ancestor</td>
<td>Locke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regime School</td>
<td>Tocqueville</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Associational School</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Neoliberal views of civil society are directly descendant from the libertarian philosophy of Thomas Paine. According to Neoliberals, civil society developed historically to protect citizens’ economic interests, and the best way to encourage civil society is to establish a liberal economy, wherein civil society associations can flourish separate from the state. If an economy is allowed to organize itself, without state planning or regulation, then the need to secure private property will lead to the generation of civil society associations, and the economy will flourish. Importantly, however, these scholars argue that economic rights are not effective without corresponding political rights.

The practical recommendations of Neoliberalism are reflected in the structural adjustment policies instituted in the developing world following the failure of the 1970s and 1980s experiments with autarky and import substitution. For many states that implemented these reforms, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Mexico, liberalizing the economy was easier under an autocratic government that did not need to deal with a strong civil society, but the creation of economic rights spurred the autonomous development of a civil society, which then demanded political reform as well. Civil society, however, was not the driver of democratization, but rather
a force created by economic liberalization for the purpose of protecting private property and economic interests of the new middle class.

While Post-Marxism, like Neoliberalism, accepts the causal relationship between economic change and social structures, it rejects the Neoliberal recommendation of economic liberalization, arguing that such structural reforms serve only to enhance elite interests and reinforce class hierarchies. One’s socioeconomic status determines whether one has the time and resources needed to participate in civil society and challenge the state, creating a situation in which civil society exists only to defend the interests of higher classes, with strength of civil society and existing economic resources linearly correlated. Policymaking and civil society are thus both the provinces of the economic elite.

Although Post-Marxists agree that civil society can play an important role in democratization, if it is led by the working class, they argue that most democratic transitions are characterized by fairly minor reforms, and achieve little if any change in the power structure, which remains dominated by traditional economic elites. Indeed, recent years have seen the growth of a rich body of Post-Marxist and Neo-Marxist literature on a new form of western imperialism whereby international civil society development NGOs, particularly in Africa, depoliticize social problems and create dependence on the industrialized world for funding and technical solutions.48 Achieving fundamental change in power structures and eliminating

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imperialism, for Post-Marxist authors, requires the mobilization of strong transnational social movements, led by the marginalized classes.

Although the Post-Marxist argument boasts both parsimony and elegance, it struggles to explain the overwhelming percentage of strong social movements that emerge in industrialized capitalist democracies rather than developing or socialist countries. Most improvements in women’s rights, the environment, and labor laws, at the expense of the interests of economic elites, have been demanded by transnational social movements based in the capitalistic west. The most compelling argument by the Post-Marxists is that development NGOs, even if operating on the basis of a noble purpose, are “recolonizing” underdeveloped countries in Africa. More empirical research is needed in this area particularly, to determine whether civil society development is being encouraged or stunted by the presence of western development NGOs.

Unlike the largely cautious perspectives on civil society offered by Neoliberal and Post-Marxist Schools, the Regime and Associational Schools offer a more positive outlook. The Regime School argues for close linkages between civil society and the state, and argues that democracy can only be sustained by formal interconnections between the two. Civil society is not necessarily democratic, and constitutions, alone, cannot curb authoritarian tendencies and autocratic backsliding. Instead, constitutions must tie civil society to the state, creating a framework in which civil society can develop and thrive, thus limiting the state. The Regime School is less concerned about the nature of civil society organizations, as the structure of their interaction with state institutions.

Prominent Regime School scholars include the American Federalists, and Madison in particular, who argued for the importance of citizen obligations as equal to citizen rights, and for constitutional and legal mechanisms that limit executive power, such as political parties. In more
contemporary political analysis, the regime transition scholars, such as O’Donnell and Schmitter, Bratton and Van de Walle, and Hyden, have been particularly prominent. These scholars have all focused on the “rules of the game,” that control state-society interaction, and have been particularly interested in the recent surge in transitional governments in countries undergoing democratic transition, which often have made special efforts to include civil society actors in constitution design and state building. For this school, the nature of the organization is much less important than the legal structure by which state and society are intertwined.

While the Regime School focuses on the structure of state-society relationships, the Associational School discounts the importance of these relationships, in fact treating them as separate entities, and instead focuses on the content of civil society association. The Associational School is particularly important in this analysis because it is the home of most scholars who posit positive linkages between the distinct spheres of civil society (associational life) and democratic political society, in the line of Alexis de Tocqueville. Despite some early skepticism at the beginning of the Third Wave, reflecting the influence of the Post-Marxism school, Associational School scholars have argued for positive linkages between civil society and democracy, albeit with differing conceptions on its role.

In the seminal The Civic Culture Almond and Verba describe civil society as a place where citizens relate to their political systems and empower themselves. Civil society forms the key to democracy in Robert Putnam’s conceptualization: it makes people “expect better

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50 See, for example, Samuel Huntington’s argument about the destructive effects of “mass praetorianism” and “excess of democracy” in Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

government,” and “get it (in part because of their own efforts),”\textsuperscript{52} and broadens citizens’ identity to include the community and the nation.\textsuperscript{53} Civil society has also been conceived of as a school for civic manners, and, in the Hegelian line, as a force that informs, limits and counter-balances state power, \textsuperscript{54} providing “reservoirs of resistance to arbitrary or tyrannical action.”\textsuperscript{55} Democratization scholars Alfred Stepan and Larry Diamond are also prominent authors in this school, arguing that, among other things, civil society encourages scrutiny of the state, stimulates political interest and participation, and by creating cross-cutting rather than parallel cleavages in political life. This school also focuses on the positive roles of non-governmental organizations, which are both manifestations of the positive aspects of associational life, and which also serve as international carriers of the Associational School idea, encouraging civil society growth and reproducing themselves in developing countries.

The heart of the Associational School argument is pluralism, the idea that groups will organize around shared interests and will be balanced by groups representing opposing interests, thus assuring that no tyranny of the majority or the state is allowed. This argument assumes, however, that all other factors, such as distribution of resources, are equal, which we know to be false. Some groups will have more resources than others, and if they have the support of the


economic elite, feared by the Post-Marxists, then the society could very quickly become aristocratic, rather than democratic. The possibility that civil society organizations could pursue anti-democratic ends should not be underestimated.

Despite the important role of civil society in democratization that many scholars have identified, few have systematically investigated civil society as the primary cause of democratization outcomes. Among those that have, including Putnam, Taylor, Victor Perez-Diaz, Hannan Rose, Laurence Whitehead, Michael Berhard, Thomas Carothers, and Graeme Gill, among others, none have investigated this relationship macro-comparatively, or using large-n statistical analyses, in part because of the difficulties in defining and measuring civil society on a cross-national basis. Qualitative and small-n comparative case studies, while useful for developing models of relationship dynamics and identifying causal mechanisms, have reduced explanatory power at a higher level of aggregation. Perez-Diaz’s treatment of civil society and transition in Eastern Central Europe, for example, tells us little of modeling civil society outside of the region, because of the narrow definition of civil society employed. While Putnam was right to point out declining membership in bowling leagues and the Parent Teacher Association, his definition of civil society was too narrow to identify simultaneous shifts towards other organizations (such as less formal, localized parent teacher organizations) and forms of community interaction.

iii. Measuring Civil Society

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Two groups in particular have set out to measure civil society systematically. Civicus, a Johannesburg-based INGO, launched the pilot phase of its Civil Society Index (CSI) in 2000.\textsuperscript{57} It has since completed its Phase I data collection project, and its Phase II project began in 2008. The second major effort towards a civil society index has been led by Helmut Anheier and Sally Stares, who proposed their Global Civil Society Index (GCSI) in 2002.\textsuperscript{58}

Civicus’ CSI is an assessment of four dimensions: “(1) the \textbf{structure} of civil society, (2) the external \textbf{environment} in which civil society exists and functions, (3) the \textbf{values} held and advocated in the civil society arena, and (4) the \textbf{impact} of activities pursued by civil society actors.”\textsuperscript{59} Each dimension is composed of several sub-dimensions, each of which is measured using multiple indicators. The CSI is assessed on a country-by-country basis by teams of field researchers, who analyze each country’s performance on each indicator using community stakeholder interviews, surveys, news combing, and “fact-finding” studies.\textsuperscript{60} Unlike other indices, CSI is not aggregated into a standardized score, but is rather presented with each dimension distinct on a four-axis “civil society diamond” in its qualitative country reports.

The Civicus model is laudable for embracing complexity by preserving a balance between cross-national reliability, by using a common and transparent methodology for scoring information on common dimensions, and country-specific validity, using detailed qualitative country reports. This method ensures that findings are accurate at both micro- and macro- levels, allowing the complexity of civil society dynamics to come through. Although the comparability


\textsuperscript{59} Civicus, \textit{Summary of Conceptual Framework}.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 2.
could be improved with an aggregate index, without sacrificing detail, the basic structure of the model is strong.

The strength of the conceptual design of the CSI is undermined by the multitude of sub-dimensional indicators, some of which are different from case-to-case, which necessarily reduces comparability. Furthermore, while the data is transparently coded, if one reads the detailed qualitative reports, the differences between these indicators are not apparent to the researcher conducting quantitative analysis of cross-national factors, and this is an important consideration for any analysis. More importantly, the coding scheme is normative for many of its indicators, “scaling them from ‘most negative’ to ‘most positive,’” based on Civicus’ values. This is problematic because Civicus, as with most of the world today, associates democracy with more “positive” characteristics. They thus unintentionally confound democracy and democratic motives with their measurements of civil society quality, in addition to adding subjectivity into their measurement process, rendering analysis of the effects of civil society on democratization useless. Theoretically, however, a more autocratic state can actually have a more vibrant civil society than a democratic state; a valid and reliable measurement of civil society must take this into account.

Empirically, an average of the CSI components, which currently cover thirty-three countries, including developing and industrialized economies, is highly correlated with both Freedom House indicators (Political Rights: \( r = -.624; \) Civil Liberties: \( r = -.707 \)), and is significantly, but more weakly, correlated with both Polity (\( r = .488 \)) and Polity democracy (\( r = .503 \)) scores. Looking at the individual CSI components, there are strong relationships between Environment and the democracy indicators, with weaker significant relationships between the

\[ ^{61} \text{Ibid., 13.} \]
Sample Field Statement

democracy indicators and Impact and Values, and no statistically significant relationship between Structure and the democracy indicators. Table 2 shows a correlation matrix for these indicators, and Chart 1 a scatter plot of their covariance.

Table 2. CSI & Democracy Correlation Coefficient Matrix

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<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environ.</td>
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<td>.668**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.705**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>.431*</td>
<td>.549**</td>
<td>.496*</td>
<td>.632**</td>
<td>.624**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values</td>
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<td>.670*</td>
<td>.847**</td>
<td>.839**</td>
<td>.860**</td>
<td>.805***</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSI Avg.</td>
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<td>.670*</td>
<td>.847**</td>
<td>.839**</td>
<td>.860**</td>
<td>.805***</td>
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<td>-.704**</td>
<td>.944**</td>
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<td>.379</td>
<td>.450*</td>
<td>.488*</td>
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<td>.502*</td>
<td>-.845**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.847**</td>
<td>.979**</td>
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Note: significance based on two-tailed t tests: * p < .01; ** p < .001

Chart 1: Scatter Plot of Covariance between CSI and Democracy Indicators
Unlike Civicus, Anheier and Stares set out to create an aggregate, standardized index measuring civil society, paying less attention to maintaining micro-level validity. Like Civicus, they break civil society down into dimensions, which are measured by indicators (many fewer, in the case of the GCSI). The GCSI focuses on individuals and organizations as distinct units, each with its own dimensions. For individuals, the two dimensions of the GCSI are “participation,” a measure of citizens’ political activity and membership in “global civil society organizations,” and “civility,” a measurement of tolerance and hospitality towards community members. Organizations have one dimension, “organizational infrastructure,” which is a measure of density of organizations and associations over a given population. Each of these dimensions is measured using from one to four variables, all of which are from survey data, with the exception of the organizational infrastructure measure, and these variables are weighted and combined into sub-indices.

Although the GSCI does not embrace complexity as actively as Civicus, they do maintain objectivity in their measurement design, and keeping the number of indicators small and consistent allows for much greater reliability across cases. Unfortunately, the GCSI relies heavily on surveys conducted primarily in the industrialized world, reducing its applicability in the developing world, where the need for knowledge on civil society is much greater. Also, reflecting its mandate, the GCSI uses only international organizational density to measure organizational infrastructure, when there is no evidence to suggest that international NGOs are more important than domestic NGOs for civil society measurement. The authors probably chose this route because of data availability issues – local, regional, and even national domestic NGOs are largely uncounted, especially in the developing world, while international organizations are carefully counted and monitored. The authors chose to include no developing countries in their

\[\text{Anheier and Stares, “Introducing the GCSI,” 243.}\]
cases; Argentina, Mexico, and Chile are the only non-European cases in the sample. Scholars are in intense disagreement over whether international NGOs might be harmful for civil society development, as the self-organizing and emergent aspects of NGOs are critical, and are predominantly found in home-grown grassroots or community organizations. Having a local bowling league, to borrow from Putnam, may be more important in the development of civil society, than having a national Oxfam chapter.

Interestingly, the GCSI is not significantly correlated with either the Polity aggregate score ($r = .282$) or the Polity democracy score ($r = .334$), although this is partially due to the uniformly high Polity democracy scores for all of the countries covered by the GCSI. The GCSI is only weakly correlated with Freedom House indicators, with correlation coefficients of -.416 for Civil Liberties and -.361 for Political Rights. Comparing GCSI to the Civicus CSI indicators, only one component indicator of the CSI, *Environment*, is significantly correlated with the GCSI score, with a correlation coefficient of .882. However, the number of common cases between the two civil society datasets is only thirteen, prohibiting meaningful comparative analysis.

III. **Complexity Theory as an Analytical Framework**

The vast majority of politics science analysis today, including almost all studies of democratic transition, is either qualitative, relying on narrative and description of case studies, working at traditional individual, domestic, or international levels of analysis, or quantitative, using either game theory or statistical regressions to produce linear, additive models of political phenomena, with the current paradigm favoring the latter over the former. Complexity scholars have, since the beginning of the Behavioral Revolution that spawned the current preference for mathematical modeling, argued that these methods, by vastly oversimplifying and reducing large-scale phenomena to component pieces, ignore the characteristics of the “whole” that we set
out to understand in the first place, and are thus unreliable for understanding causality in complex situations.

*i. Defining Complexity*

What these scholars mean by complexity is far from universally accepted and formally defined, but exploring attempts at definition allows us to trace the development of the theory over time. In his seminal 1965 article, “The Architecture of Complexity,” Herbert Simon defined complex systems as those “made up of a large number of parts that interact in a non-simple way,” and where “the whole is more than the sum of the parts, not in an ultimate metaphysical sense, but in the important pragmatic sense that, given the properties of the parts and the laws of interaction, it is not a trivial matter to infer the properties of the whole.”

Both parts of this definition are critical, as the second piece, specifically the notion that an understanding of the whole does not come trivially from understanding of the parts, allows us to identify two types of complex systems, one unorganized and the other organized.

In an unorganized system, the whole is made up of a large number of independent, interacting parts that affect its operation, but which are systematically unrelated. Examples of this type of system include an insurance scheme: while an insurance program may boast millions of members, the actions of which all affect the larger scheme, the members themselves are unrelated, and their actions, on an aggregate scale, can be measured and predicted using simple statistical regression techniques. Similarly, although an electorate is composed of millions of voters, each of which acts independently with unique motives, the unrelated nature of these individual voters allows for the behavior of the aggregate electorate to be readily predicted using statistical techniques.

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In contrast to these unorganized complex systems, in an organized system variables are “related to each other in organic or interdependent ways.”64 Because traditional statistical methods assume that variables are unrelated, this type of system is inherently resistant to statistical analysis. In systems where variables are systematically related to each other, inferring the behavior of the whole from the behavior of an individual part is impossible, and in Simon’s words, even inferring this behavior from the behaviors of all of the parts becomes “non-trivial.”

Central to our study, however, are systems of organized social complexity. In a social example of an organized complex system, as La Porte notes, members of a social organization must be self-conscious as to their membership and interaction. This self-consciousness forms the interrelated nature of the system, without which analysis of the whole would be no different from analyzing voter behavior or the likelihood of an insurance payout: “interaction… [must] be interdependent and systematic.”65 These self-conscious interactions exist, however, within structures, often unperceived, that increase their interdependence even further. In LaPorte’s example, the homeowner may not recognize her dependence on the city sanitation department until the trash is no longer collected, but the dependence exists, and complexifies the city system, even without her recognizance.

Most recent works dealing with complexity have either accepted the ambiguity of Simon’s original definition, or provided a similar variant incorporating its principal parts. In their important 1999 work, Harnessing Complexity, Alexrod and Cohen define a complex system as one where “there are strong interactions among its elements, so that current events heavily


65 Ibid., 6
influence the probabilities of many kinds of later events,” reflecting Simon’s requirement of non-simple interaction among component parts, as well as LaPorte’s requirement of systematic relationships among variables or components. The density and strength of interaction may also change over time, making interaction dynamic.67

The Axelrod and Cohen definition also points to an important characteristic of complex systems: probabilistic rather than deterministic outcomes. This is due to the large number of interactions among the many independently operating but interdependent component pieces of the system, wherein even small changes can reverberate through myriad interconnections to yield unpredicted and unintended effects at the macro-level. This is sometimes known as the “Butterfly Effect,” after Edward Lorenz’s work modeling weather patterns, where he found that, due to the complex nature of weather systems, minute changes at the micro level (e.g. the flap of a butterfly’s wings) result in major changes at the aggregate level.68 Thus, for multiple iterations of a system with equal initial states, an indeterminate number of novel outcomes can occur.69

Due to these characteristics, complex systems often exhibit “emergent” properties, or properties of the system exhibited at the macro level that are not properties of the component parts, or that, in Simon’s words, would be “non-trivial” to infer from their interaction. The human brain, a complex network of subsystems composed ultimately of individual, living cells (neurons), exhibits consciousness, whereas individual neurons certainly do not; consciousness is

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an example an emergent property. An example from social science is self-organizing segregation: local preferences of individual inhabitants, such as the desire to be close to friends from one’s socioeconomic class or ethnic group, has historically led to massively segregated neighborhoods and even societies along class and/or ethnic lines. This phenomenon is also related to Schelling’s classic example of seating patterns in an auditorium: in any complex system unique and interesting patterns will “emerge” at the macro-level from interactions of independently motivated individuals.

Another important characteristic of complex systems is nonlinear interaction. The large number of interconnections among independent but interrelated parts means that small, steady changes at the micro level can result in abrupt transitions at the macro level, just as water steadily saturates soil steady for weeks before resulting in an abrupt and unpredictable (but not unforeseen) landslide, an example an abrupt phase transition. Similarly, complex systems often exhibit punctuated equilibria, periods of rapid change alternating with periods of no change, such as human conflicts, the periodicity of which has long been documented to follow a power law distribution. Metastability is also common among complex systems, and is a state of dynamic equilibrium in which many outcomes are possible simultaneously, for example a democratic

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polity during an election period, or the international political system during a significant crisis.\textsuperscript{74} This does not imply chaos, but rather stability absent of equilibrium, or in an equilibrium that is dynamic. Explaining how complex systems organize themselves into these orderly states, overcoming or despite of these properties of non-equilibrium dynamics, has been the principal aim of many complexity theorists.\textsuperscript{75}

One final critical property of complex social systems, in particular, is adaptability. Because complex social systems are dynamic and dependent upon interactions by self-aware individuals, all actors in the system are capable of learning from past and present circumstances, and changing their behaviors to improve their situations in the future.\textsuperscript{76} In short, because actors (humans) are capable of learning, the complex social systems we form, from local bowling leagues to states, are capable of adaptation and, to a certain extent, anticipation of future events.

\textit{ii. Methods of Complex Systems Analysis}

Traditional methods of social science research call for reducing systems into independent and dependent variables, assuming all other factors are equal (the system is in an equilibrium state), and identifying the most important cause of an event, or, in the policy world, the one best solution to a given problem. However, we know that for many social systems, variables are interrelated in complex ways, because they are based on interactions of individuals, and are thus not easily predictable; we know that complex systems, by definition, are non-equilibrium phenomena; and we know from experience that sometimes small events can have major impacts


\textsuperscript{75} See, for example, chapters on the emergence of power law properties in Claudio Cioffi-Revilla, ed., \textit{Power Laws in the Social Sciences}.

on even global affairs. If we reject traditional reductionist methods as fundamentally inappropriate for complex systems analysis, what other type of methodology is appropriate? We still need models to help us understand the complicated processes in which we are interested, so how can we study a complex system holistically, while still simplifying reality enough to create a model that aids our understanding?

Three methodological approaches are common to complex systems analysis. The oldest involves statistical analysis of whether and to what degree complex social systems and their associated phenomena organize themselves into dynamic equilibria, and whether they follow certain distributions, particularly the power law. The second mode of complex systems analysis is the complex adaptive systems (CAS) approach, also known as agent-based modeling, which uses computers to construct simulated environments within which many individual agents act and interact based on simple rule sets. The third major mode is qualitative.

Following a power law distribution has been identified as a common emergent property among many complex social systems: language, city size and spatial distribution, population and economy sizes, market crashes, and violent political conflicts are all examples of such phenomena. Where traditional linear regression analysis has typically forced these non-Gaussian-distributed phenomena into linear models, power law analysts recognize that the natural, right-skewed distribution inherent in power law models is often a critical feature. If conflict followed a normal distribution, for example, there would be many more moderate-sized wars, and virtually zero small-scale conflicts or world wars. Power law analysis aims to make predictions about the future of complex social systems, based solely on the distribution the system under investigation tends to follow.

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Unfortunately, power law analysis has rarely addressed the question of why these complex social systems organize themselves into these distributions. Whereas human agents have free will and the ability to learn, unlike most physical agents, we should not necessarily expect complex social systems to continue to exhibit the distributions that they have in the past, regardless of how long they have been thus distributed. In terms of conflict, for example, while the magnitude and timing of human conflicts do follow a power law distribution, to make predictions on the basis of the distribution alone implies that the distribution is causing the behavior, when in reality it is the behavior of the individuals, which can change, that determines, on a macro-level, the distribution of wars. Similarly, city sizes follow a power law distribution as a result of the complex interactions among individuals with preferences about where they live, for example being close to a city-hosted workplace and yet far enough way from work to enjoy a relaxing lifestyle. If the preferences were changed, then the distribution too would change.

It is perilously easy to jump to conclusions about the existence of causal relationships between power law distribution and occurrence of complex events. Indeed, in *Power Laws in the Social Science*, while discussing the emergent power law distribution in human conflict dynamics, Cioffi-Revilla asserts that:

> The scaling property of warfare severity… means that occasionally there must be some high magnitude wars, because many low-magnitude wars are frequently observed… Vice versa, there must be many low-magnitude wars because occasionally some high-magnitude wars do occur—the two go together. These scaling implications are important for understanding the occurrence of

78 Ibid., 7-10.
war, although scaling is not a naturally “observable” phenomenon by historians of conflict analysts.\textsuperscript{79}

and later that:

Power laws provide an aggregate explanation for individual conflict magnitudes, independent of human decisions and particular histories, in the same sense that the power laws of natural phenomena hold independent of local features.\textsuperscript{80}

This conclusion lends the property of a power law distribution far more explanatory power than it deserves; as with physical laws, social science laws do not provide an explanation of the events they describe: they are purely descriptive. Just as Newton’s laws of motion describe the behavior of moving objects, \textit{assuming the rules remain constant}, the power law distribution of conflict describes an important behavior of humans, \textit{assuming the rules remain constant}. Unlike falling apples, however, humans have some control over their direction, and even the rules that govern their behavior; their actions are not random, but, consistent with complexity theory, are based on action and interaction with others and their environment.

The high frequency of low-magnitude wars does not explain the existence of high-magnitude wars, although it does tell us that, should they occur, they will occur much less frequently than their low-magnitude cousins. High-magnitude wars, like any conflict, are explained by a confluence of human behaviors (some of which are likely “hard-wired”) and

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 206-207.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 211.
choices in a very complex social system. The high-magnitude of the Second World War was not
caused by the high frequency of low-magnitude wars over the previous seventeen years, it was
caused by a confluence of micro-level events, including the humiliation of the Entente powers
after World War I, the overly idealistic and hypocritical League of Nations, and the interactions
of human individuals, that led to a polarized system in an environment with easily available
highly-destructive technology. Similarly, the relatively peaceful period following World War II
can be partially attributed to the learning capacities of humans and their organizations, and not
simply to the very recent occurrence of a high-magnitude war, as Cioffi-Revilla and other power
law analysts would suggest.

The scaling properties of power laws tell us what will happen if the rules of the game are
not changed, but the responsibility falls on policymakers to change the rules, to control the local
micro-level phenomena that might otherwise escalate or spiral out of control. Conflicts can be
prevented by changes at the micro-level, just as one can cheat by weighting dice, reducing
randomness and controlling for the many micro-level factors that determine landing position.
Chance does not cause a die to land on any value one-sixth of the time, or a coin to land on heads
one-half of the time, apparently random micro-level factors (e.g. wind speed, air density, torque
and velocity, imperfections in the object) control landing position. If you can control the
randomness, you gain control over the position of the object. Similarly, the scaling property of
complex phenomena only holds true if the events themselves are randomly occurring, without
adaptive characteristics. Policymakers, if they learn from the past and make informed decisions,
can reduce the apparent randomness in human behavior and potentially eliminate the likelihood
of high-magnitude wars; this should be possible in any complex adaptive system, for the reasons
described in the previous section.
An alternative to this type of complex systems analysis is agent-based modeling, also known as complex adaptive systems (CAS) analysis. An agent-based model is a computational model that simulates a complex adaptive system in the form of an artificial world populated by simplistic autonomous agents, situated in place and time, which interact with each other and their environment in pursuit of self-interest. Agents generally have limited knowledge, reflecting real-world human limitations, and in some models are capable of learning, adaptation, and reproduction. The concept underlying agent-based models is that emergent phenomena on a macro-scale can be effected and studied by slight alterations of rules at the agent level. By running these models repeatedly, scholars can inductively determine the probabilities of certain outcomes occurring based on certain rule sets and starting distributions; these models have been used to model complex social phenomenon, and to explain the emergent patterns that are only described in power law analysis.

Although advancements in computer science allowed large scale agent-based models to be developed only recently, simplistic versions have been around since John Conway’s “Game of Life,” and were conceived of as early as the 1940s, with the work of John Von Neumann and Stanislaw Ulam conceptualizing self-replicating cellular automata. The Game of Life represented mathematician John Conway’s attempt to simplify the work of Von Neumann and Ulam, and became one of the most famous examples of an agent-based model. The Game of Life posits a universe consisting of an infinite two-dimensional grid of square cells, each of which is either “dead” or “alive.” Each cell interacts with adjacent cells simultaneously in discrete time periods (“ticks”). The rules of the game are simple: any live cell with fewer than two live

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neighbors dies; any live cell with more than three live neighbors dies; any live cell with two or three live neighbors lives, unchanged; and any dead cell with exactly three live neighbors is regenerated into a live cell. The investigator determines the distribution of cells at the beginning of the game, creating the “seed” of the system, but the system then runs itself, for repeated generations of the game. Although running multiple generations of the game result in a wide variety of complex patterns that emerge at the macro level from different seeds, resulting in its popularity, Conway as able to identify three common outcomes: eventual death of all cells, development of a stable configuration that remained unchanged, or, more commonly, the development of oscillations in which the system repeated itself in an endless cycle.

Despite the popularity of the Game of Life, and the obvious ramifications for studies of complex systems, results of the game were not studied systematically until many years later. Thomas Schelling built on Conway’s work with his segregation model, which originally used checkers to interact with one another, based on simple preferences for neighbors: once surrounded by greater than a certain percentage of neighbors of another color, an agent will move to be with its like-colored neighbors. His models resulted in segregation of agents within the simulated society, an interesting emergent phenomenon that demonstrates how segregated societies can emerge from interactions of individuals with each other in a fixed environment.\textsuperscript{83}

Also arguing for the utility of simulation at this time were Brunner and Brewer, who developed a complicated computer simulation model of the process of political development in Turkey and the Philippines, which while based in complexity theory was not agent-based.\textsuperscript{84} The method far outpaced the validity and reliability of their data: a serious problem for an inductive


\textsuperscript{84} Ronald D. Brunner and Garry Brewer, \textit{Organized Complexity} (New York: The Free Press).}
approach. Following this trend towards simulation, but prior to the computer revolution that enabled the large agent-based models of the 1990s, include Robert Axelrod’s work testing Prisoner’s Dilemma strategies using an agent-based tournament, and Craig Reynold’s “Boids” model simulating flocking behavior among birds, fish, or insects. Axelrod’s work in particular is an important piece of agent-based modeling development, in part because future complexity analysts would seek to avoid his game-theoretic approach of using given actors with fixed exogenous (rational) preferences. This was also a critical work because it inspired some complexity theorists to remodel game theoretic approaches, with learning and adaptation as a possibility, within the confines of social structure. This, in an agent-based model format, would become a hallmark of later work by Lars-Erik Cederman.

While this early work established the theoretical foundation for agent-based modeling, the computer revolution of the 1990s enabled large-scale modeling of more complex artificial worlds. The first and most influential of these models was Axtell and Epstein’s 1996 Sugarscape, which they used to model migratory behavior, environmental pollution, sexual reproduction and evolution, warfare, epidemiology, and, perhaps most importantly, the emergence of equilibrium prices and income inequality in economic models. Axtell, Epstein

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and a team of anthropologists later used a variant of the Sugarscape model to explain the collapse of the Anasazi civilization in present-day Arizona, and Epstein has continued modeling in many fields, most notably epidemiology and class dynamics. Following their pioneering work using agent-based models have been Douglas Samuelson and Kathleen Carley, modeling organizational behavior and structure, Lars-Erik Cederman on nation-building, state formation, and conflict, Kollman, Miller, and Page on political parties and election behavior, and Robert Axelrod on international cooperation. Another significant team of researchers, including David H. Bearce and Philip Schrodt, have used these models to establish analogies between social systems and neural networks.

Although these models have become common enough to merit their own peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation*, they have still not reached the

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mainstream of the social sciences, in part due to the dominating paradigm of linear, statistical modeling, but also due to the very high learning curve associated with the technique. Even understanding the results requires a significant investment of time and energy, as the reporting of results for non-linear models, in contrast with linear models, often requires multiple graphical descriptions, usually operating in three or more dimensions, as well as vector field diagrams, phase portraits, and screen shots of the simulated world in agent-based model visualizations.\textsuperscript{96} Moreover, developing and running one’s own models requires substantial training in computer programming, unless one is willing to rely on pre-fabricated models, such as \textit{REPAST}, \textit{MASON}, or \textit{Netlogo}. This, along with the inherently random nature of agent interaction, also limits the replicability of agent-based modeling results, a frequent criticism of the models.

On a more theoretical level, the agent-based modeling approach is necessarily limited in political science and sociology research because agents are unable to rewrite the rules that bind them. For studies of political transition, such as between autocratic and democratic regimes, people interact to create new rule sets for their behavior, and in a democratic system, are able to rewrite their rules altogether. Agents in a simulated environment can pursue specified interests, and can even change their preferences (adaptability), but they cannot change the rules of the simulation in which they exist. Also, while these models are effective at establishing the \textit{minimum} conditions necessary for a macro-level phenomenon (e.g. formation of a system of large sovereign states, a market-clearing price, spread of a flu-virus, persistence of segregation in the presence of a more tolerant environment) to emerge from non-linear interactions, often dramatically simplifying traditional models, in terms of the number of variables required to reach

the same results, both interpretation and presentation of results are challenging; when many rules are applied both interpretation and presentation become almost impossible.

For these reasons, social scientists moving into the complexity field have often adopted a more holistic, qualitative approach to complex systems analysis. This type of approach generally involves recognizing the complexity in the social system under investigation, and exploring which arrangements and systems result in the “best” outcomes, given that complexity. The study of the ways in which democratic systems are able to function has been a common area for these studies, and is particularly useful for this author, as scholars working in this field have often dealt with democratic government design and civil society within a complexity theory framework.

Some of the most influential early, qualitative, studies of political and social complexity, with governance in mind, were combined by Todd La Porte in his seminal volume, *Organized Social Complexity*. James Bohman built on these ideas, recognizing the problem of managing social complexity in democracies, and argued that government institutions and democratic procedures were necessary to prevent interactions from overwhelming or “overcomplexifying” the system.

While these early studies were critical, they were largely theoretical. Recognizing a lack of empirical investigation of the theses of Bohman and others, Wagenaar (2007) investigated the role of participatory governance systems in neighborhoods in The Netherlands, contrasting them with representative governance systems that are common in most democracies. If we accept that neighborhoods are complex adaptive systems, and that agents in that system (i.e. citizens)

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97 Ibid., 3, 338-339.


respond to government policies by changing their interaction patterns (e.g. becoming activists, opening new lines of communication and interaction, leaving the neighborhood), then the effects of policies are emergent phenomena in the system, arising out of these interaction patterns. Wagenaar found that participatory democratic arrangements were more effective than simple representation structures at “harnessing” the complexity in the system by improving collaboration between citizens and officials, thus increasing the probability of agents reaching consensus. 100

The difference between too much structure and too little, however, is subtle. Rigid, hierarchical representation systems, ranging from Leninist separations of deliberation from decision-making to republican representation styles, such as that in the US, feature very little room for interaction, and restrict information flow to the top-down, preventing effective feedback and policy improvement. In contrast, a system with no government structure would be so dense with unstructured interaction that information would never have an impact – debate rages endlessly in groups and committees without the structure needed to force a decision or reach consensus in order to move forward as a group. 101 There must be bottom-up organization, but there must also be structure to channel that organization in a non-destructive manner. In Wagenaar’s words,

What these observations suggest is that for participatory arrangements to function at all, they need to hover between order


101 Wagenaar, “Governance, Complexity, and Democratic Participation,” 42.
and chaos. For complex governance systems to benefit from the broadened knowledge base, they need to be loose enough to let the information freely flow along the nodes and effect the agents, yet structured enough to let the changes and adaptations coalesce into emerging cooperation and system adaptation.\textsuperscript{102}

In addition to democratic governance and public deliberation studies, qualitative empirical study of complex systems has also been conducted on global civil society,\textsuperscript{103} ethnic conflict and economic development in the developing world,\textsuperscript{104} and most importantly economics, where an entire school of complexity economics has developed from the seminal work of Kenneth Arrow in information economics,\textsuperscript{105} and philosophical roots with Friedrich Hayek,\textsuperscript{106} which has arguably been led by Brian Arthur since its emergence into the mainstream.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.


iii. Contrasting Complexity Theory with Traditional Social Science Theories

Given its core elements and different methods of research, how does complexity theory compare to traditional social science theories at explaining prominent phenomena under analysis in the social sciences? This section contrasts complexity theory with: (a) systemic neorealism and neorealist evolutionary theory, in international relations, and (b) new institutionalism, in both political sociology and economics. Neorealism has dominated the international relations discipline, both in widespread acceptance and as the source of debate, more or less continuously since Waltz published Theory of International Politics in 1979.\textsuperscript{108} Similarly, a return to the study of institutions by the “new institutionalists,” in both political sociology and economics, has found a prominent place in both disciplines since the 1980s, although the study of institutions in the two disciplines is quite distinct.

\textit{iii. a. International Relations: Neorealism and Neorealist Evolution}

Waltz proposed his Theory of International Politics as a response to both classical realism of Morgenthau and Carr and to the liberalism that followed, but also as a rebuttal of the reductionist (i.e. based at individual and domestic levels) analysis that had previously dominated political science.\textsuperscript{109} Waltz’s theory was systemic in the sense that it explained international outcomes using the structure of the international environment, and specifically the number of extant superpowers, as its primary independent variables. The international system is anarchical, in that no supranational power or law exists to govern the relationships between actors, meaning


\textsuperscript{109} Although Morgenthau and Carr relied on many of the same assumptions as Waltz, their treatment of European political history was more sociological or historical than scientific, using multiple variables and angles to explain the First World War within a security-focused perspective. See Hans Morgenthau, 1985, \textit{Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace} (New York: McGraw-Hill); and E. H. Carr, 1966, \textit{The Twenty Years Crisis} (New York: St. Martin’s Press). The beginning of systematic distinction between levels of analysis in IR is generally associated with Waltz and the behavioral revolution. See Kenneth Waltz, 1959, \textit{Man, the State, and War; a Theoretical Analysis} (New York: Columbia University Press).
that states must be concerned first for security, rendering the division of labor seen in the state unfeasible.\footnote{This assumption is central to all neorealist arguments, as well as those of classical realism. For additional examples of the former, see Robert Jervis, 1970, \textit{The Logic of Images in International Relations} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); Stephen Walt, 1987, \textit{The Origin of Alliances} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press); John J. Mearsheimer, 2001, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics} (New York: Norton).} Within this environment neorealism’s primary units of analysis are states, which are conceived to be preexisting, rational, self-interested, unitary actors. Unlike domestic level explanations, neither the nature of governance in the states nor the nation the state represents, nor indeed individual leaders, affect the behavior of states, which is instead determined by the balance of power, which is a manifestation of the international system. Waltz concludes that systems with two superpowers (i.e. bipolar systems) will be more stable than systems with three or more superpowers (i.e. multipolar systems), for three primary reasons: (1) in a bipolar system the threat posed by one’s rival is easily identified and measured, (2) fewer superpowers reduces the free rider problem associated with collective action, and nearly eliminates it in a bipolar system, and (3) in a bipolar system, coalition-forming, and the obligations and dependence that go with it, is unnecessary, because both superpowers have sufficient power to balance the other without allies.

While there has been significant addition to the neorealist framework, as well as enhancement of research methodologies, most notably in game theory, the core tenets of the theory have remained unchanged, and debate over its applicability remains at the forefront of discourse in the discipline. Neoliberalism developed immediately after neorealism, and, while it accepts many neorealist assumptions about anarchy and the preexistent nature of states, it argues that economic interdependence among states, and the presence of non-governmental organizations and international civil society, changes the rules of the game.\footnote{Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, 1989, \textit{Power and Interdependence} (Glenview, IL: Scott and Foresman).} While remaining
at the systemic level, neoliberalism loses a great deal of the parsimony of neorealism by incorporating additional variables and arguing for a flexible hierarchy of foreign policy issues, rather than the sole focus on security postulated by Waltz. Unlike neoliberalism, however, constructivism emerged to challenge the very basis of neorealism: the assumption that both the state and the environment are preexisting elements. Constructivism, developed from the postmodern school, argues that if neorealism’s predictions about state behavior and stability are accurate, then this is only because states, and particularly state leaders, have been taught to perceive their environment is anarchical, and their neighbors as rivals. In the famous words of Alexander Wendt, “anarchy is what states make of it.”112 Because since Thucydides political analysts have reasoned that the world is anarchical and balance of power is the critical determinant of international outcomes, leaders have acted as if their world was anarchical and power the only guarantor of success. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, perhaps most evident in Europe prior to World War I, or in the arms race between the USSR and USA during the Cold War. Importantly, constructivism allows for change in the international system by conceiving both the environment and the state as constructs, which can themselves be altered by re-training leaders and reorienting our understanding of international politics.

In the same vein as constructivism, complexity theory challenges the fundamental assumptions of traditional systemic theories, such as neorealism and neoliberalism, that the state can be taken for granted. Because complexity theory argues that macroscopic effects are often determined by variations and interactions at the microscopic level, the assumption that states sprang fully-formed into the environment is problematic. Instead, complexity theorists in

international relations have argued that a truly systemic theory of international politics must account for both international political phenomena, as well as the development of the state. Indeed, we know from European history that the modern nation-state system is relatively new, having consolidated from hundreds of principalities after the Treaty of Westphalia, and particularly quickly after the Napoleonic Wars. Cederman’s Emergent Polarity model tests neorealist predictions, finding them accurate under very specific circumstances, particularly if pressure for competition is extremely high.\textsuperscript{113} Cederman, however, improves on the neorealist model by explaining state formation, as well as outcomes, which are analyzed under various circumstances. Also, by using a agent-based modeling approach, Cederman is able to cross levels of analysis and, in particular, incorporate the effects of regional balance of power factors and other variables operating between the state and the system, such as technology and weapons knowledge and diffusion, the development of norms, and most importantly, historical contingency, that neorealism ignores and that both neoliberalism and constructivism require.

Cederman finds that international outcomes, such as the stability of the Cold War or the instability that led to the First World War, are due much more to the emergent formation of states (process) than to the number of great powers in the system (structured), which is in fact dependent on the former.\textsuperscript{114} State formation and consolidation, in turn, was found to be significantly dependent upon internal factors, such as economic policies and efficient use of resources, rather than, as classical realists assume, interactions with other states.\textsuperscript{115} Cederman has

\textsuperscript{113} Cederman, \textit{Emergent Actors}, 105.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 214-215.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
also used complexity theory to explain democratic peace theory, a domestic-level liberal theory, again with historical contingency and learning playing important roles.\footnote{Lars-Erik Cederman, 1995, “Back to Kant: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace as a Macrohistorical Learning Process,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 95: 5-31.}

Evolution also plays a central role in neorealism, as the linkage between leaders and state behavior in the international system. State leaders learn from the experiences of others that fail, and from their own interactions with other states and with the international system. States that learn and adapt to the structure of the system are better prepared to succeed within it, relative to other states, and thus accumulate power within the system, increasing their own ability to thrive. States that do not socialize as well will be missed by this process of natural selection, and will “fall by the wayside.”\footnote{Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 71.} Jervis points to the aftermath of the Bolshevik overthrow of the Czar in Russia as an excellent example of this socialization and natural selection process.\footnote{Robert Jervis, 1997, \textit{System Effects} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 104-105.} Although the Bolsheviks came to power on a radical platform, including a foreign policy based on unification with the global proletariat, after taking over the state they quickly adopted many of the practices of their predecessors, including a virtually indistinguishable foreign policy. Once in command of the state, Lenin was forced to socialize to the system in order for his state to survive, and thus Russia’s behavior remained largely unchanged.

While Waltz’s logic is sound, he does not adequately define what success or failure in the system will look like and, indeed, at the time neorealism was developed few or no states had lapsed into state failure. While being conquered is certainly an example of “falling by the wayside,” in recent history few states that have been defeated truly cease to exist. Indeed, the citizens of Germany and Japan, both of which empires suffered serious defeat in the Second
World War, now enjoy living in two of the world’s three largest economies. While military
defeats on this scale have been rare, much more common has been the gradual fall of empires,
such as that of the Dutch in the eighteenth century, the Spanish and Portuguese in the nineteenth
century, or the French and British in the twentieth century. If socialization determines success,
then neorealism would suggest that these empires and their leaders were well-socialized, indeed
the very best natural selection had to choose. Why then did these successful, apparently well-
socialized empires collapse?

Complexity theory offers a more thorough explanation of state evolution, particularly in
the examples of imperial collapse and state failure in the international system, by uniting levels
of analysis and considering historical contingency in analysis of the evolution of the state. In
particular, neorealism fails to recognize that in the course of evolution, actors change not only
themselves and their peers, but also the environment in which they operate. Neorealism assumes
that the environment remains the same while actors adapt. As states have evolved, so too the
environment has changed to favor some forms of behavior better than others.

Complexity theory posits that both actors and the environment are variable, which allows
for a thorough modeling of the first, second, and third interactions of evolution.\textsuperscript{119} Agent-based
modeling of evolution in this area has been led by Axelrod and Cederman, and qualitative work
tracing the development of the state has been led by Douglass North, Philip Bobbitt and Martin
van Creveld, among others.\textsuperscript{120} Differentiation, selection, and amplification associated with the
evolutionary process creates novelty among actors, which allows for systemic expansion and an

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Cooperation}; Martin van Creveld, 1999, \textit{The Rise and Decline of the State} (New York: Cambridge University
Press); Philip Bobbitt, 2003, \textit{The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History} (New York: Anchor
Recorded Human History} (New York: Cambridge University Press).
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increase in complexity. Rather than simply “fall by the wayside,” as Waltz predicts, because of a failure to adapt to the rules of the environment in a specific moment in time, complexity theory allows for the development of state preferences and behaviors, taking historical contingency into account, as well as for change in the rules of the environment over time. Japan, for example, did not “fall by the wayside,” but rather adapted to a new set of rules that emerged following World War II. While Japan did not remain “great,” in terms of superpower status, its citizens are some of the wealthiest in the world, and the country retains considerable influence over the United Nations and its trading partners, through “soft power” and other forms of leverage. In many ways, Japan is more successful now than it was at the height of its imperial expansion, in no small part because of that expansion and its subsequent occupation and rebuilding by the United States.

iii. b. Political Sociology and Economics: New Institutionalism

The quantitative preferences brought by the Behavioral Revolution shifted the attention of social scientists away from the study of institutions, where it had been focused for much of the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1970s and 1980s social science reacted to this shift by returning to the study of institutions, although each discipline did so largely independently, resulting in two, if not three, major schools of “new institutionalism,” often using common references and sharing common assumptions, but offering very different perspectives of the role institutions play in political, social, and economic life.

Institutions in political and social thought are generally conceived of as the structure of an organization, usually a polity, and consist of formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions. Institutions range from standard operating procedures, in a corporation or
bureaucratic agency, to the constitutional structure of a government. Institutions affect behavior by reducing uncertainty about the consequences of actions, by providing information on the behavior of other actors, the nature of mechanisms for policy enforcement, penalties for certain behaviors, etc. Institutions also affect actors’ perception of problems and choices, as well as themselves, by providing “moral or cognitive templates for interpretation and action.” Institutions determine political outcomes by benefiting some groups more than others, particularly by giving some groups disproportionate access to decision-making tools. According to this school, institutions persist because they encourage better decision-making among actors, uncertainty increases when the certainty provided by institutions is at risk, and also because they discourage reform by structuring actors’ thinking about the value of the institution and the costs and benefits of reform. Finally, political and social new institutionalists argue that historical contingency is critical to understanding the role of institutions in political and social outcomes. Institutions in the past structure both future institutions and actor behaviors (or state policies, at a higher level of aggregation). Although generally persistent over time, institutions can undergo major change at certain moments in history known as “critical junctures,” whereupon an institution’s history, and that of the organization it comprises, turns down a radically different path.

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Economic institutionalism, in contrast, stems more from rational choice theory, and places a much greater emphasis on the role played by property rights, rents, reduction of transaction costs, and natural selection in the development of institutions. Indeed, economic new institutionalists argue that the development of any organization can be explained by the behavior of agents attempting to minimize the transaction costs that they would incur in its absence. Actors in the economic new institutionalist conception are assumed to be rational, Bayesian, and utilizing-maximizing, with a fixed, antecedent set of preferences, who, in the course of seeking to maximize their own utility, create and encounter collective action problems, which cannot result in mutually satisfactory outcomes without institutions to guarantee the behavior of fellow actors. Actors thus create institutions in order to cooperate, in order to maximize gains when faced with a collective action problem, and the institutions that persist do so because, in a process of competitive selection, the most efficient and effective producer of benefits to actors will survive lesser producers. Although often used to explain the development of the firm, market regulation, or the rule of law, economic new institutionalists, and their cousins rational choice institutionalists, have also used this perspective to analyze the behavior of US Congressmen and the interactions among political parties.

Both of these theories of institutions are problematic. Political and social theories of institutions, while offering a multifaceted picture of both institutional development and effects, suffer from their own breadth by sacrificing parsimony and discussion of causal mechanisms. While actors are conceived as being flexible in terms of preferences and behavior, there is no

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clear causal route between institution and actor behavior, and in some ways, by not specifying how agencies develop in the first place, this theory sets up a tautology. Economic new institutionalism, on the other hand, asks us to make significant assumptions about human behavior, particularly that we are capable of complex calculations in order to maximize our own benefits (per a clearly defined, fixed set of preferences). It is far from clear that we either seek to maximize our own utility, that the utility function is the same from person to person, or, most dubiously, that we are capable of performing these calculations, or have the knowledge to do so. If we are only interested in maximizing our utility, then why do we (usually) follow the speed limit, even on an open deserted road, or stop at a stop sign, in the middle of the night, with no law enforcement present? Furthermore, while the effort to explain the creation of institutions is important to any complete theory of institutions, the economic new institutionalist argument that people create institutions in order to minimize transaction costs ignores the gradual development of many of our institutions. Rule of law and language did not jump forth into human society at the call of uncertain agents, in order to minimize their costs, but rather evolved over roughly ten thousand years of human history. Moreover, if institutions are created and persist because of function, then why does NATO continue to exist, nearly twenty years after the fall of the Warsaw Pact that it was created to counter?

Complexity economics, where most work on institutions is done, offers a different view of institutions, or “social technologies,” in Beinhocker’s words, incorporating the best elements of both theories. As in political/social institutionalism, institutions are considered heavily path-dependent, and are traced to the earliest human societies as ways of encouraging cooperation. Institutions evolve according to a fitness landscape, which accounts for the

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“critical junctures” of political and social institutionalism, but which is nonlinear. Rather than improving along a linear path, per economic institutionalism, institutional adaptation under complexity occurs in fits and starts, based on a mix of inductive and deductive learning by its component agents. As in economic institutionalism, institutions act to reduce transaction costs, but are also conceived as being central to the creation of positive returns to scale, a concept unknown in traditional economics, but championed by W. Brian Arthur.\textsuperscript{129} Complexity theory also treats agents radically different than in economic new institutionalism, viewing them as inductive learners rather than deductive calculators, operating with limited information rather than total knowledge, and recognizing that agents are subject to biases and learning over time, rather than coming into the world as perfect Bayesians.\textsuperscript{130} Rather than a fixed, antecedent set of preferences, central to the development of agents and institutions in the complexity framework is the formation of preferences, which both shape institutions, and which institutions affect, much as in political and social institutionalism.

\textit{iv. Summary}

This meta-analysis informs suggests that by using complexity theory as an analytical framework, especially for the conceptualization of civil society institutions, and borrowing from a mix of the associational and regime schools of civil society, we can conceive of civil society as the sum of interactions among individuals in a society. Government institutions and procedures structure that interaction. In a pluralistic, deliberation-based system we can expect to see more optimal outcomes than in rigid, hierarchical systems, because complexity in civil society is

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{130} Beinhocker, \textit{The Origin of Wealth}, 126-127, 250-252.
effectively harnessed. Thus, complexity theory also suggests that whether a country is autocratic or democratic, based on current classification schemes, is a less important distinction than if it is deliberative or hierarchical. A democratic system based on representation, without deliberative processes, may be as suppressive of complexity in civil society as a dictatorship. Indeed, Leninist democracy turned into dictatorship in the communist regimes of the 20th century, largely because his concept of a representative one-party system was inherently flawed by not recognizing or incorporating complexity. Similarly, a regime classified as autocratic because of, for example, executive recruitment, could possibly yield better outcomes than a democracy, if it incorporated deliberation and bottom-up feedback mechanisms, effectively embracing social complexity.
IV. Appendix A: Examination of the Democracy Income Threshold

Chart 1: Petroleum Dependence in Autocracies & Anocracies above Threshold\textsuperscript{131}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Petroleum Exports as % of Total Commodity Exports</th>
<th>GDP Per Capita in 2000 US$ (Year: 2000)</th>
<th>Polity Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAH</td>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>73.29%</td>
<td>$11860</td>
<td>-9 (Very Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAB</td>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>83.32%</td>
<td>$3877</td>
<td>-4 (Anocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KUW</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>73.34%</td>
<td>$16838</td>
<td>-7 (Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>91.13%</td>
<td>$6501</td>
<td>-7 (Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAL</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>5.92%</td>
<td>$3927</td>
<td>3 (Anocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMA</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>82.46%</td>
<td>$8136</td>
<td>-9 (Very Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAT</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>46.71%</td>
<td>$17000</td>
<td>-10 (Very Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAU</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>92.07%</td>
<td>$8771</td>
<td>-10 (Very Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIN</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>9.37%</td>
<td>$22768</td>
<td>-2 (Anocratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>29.28%</td>
<td>$21741</td>
<td>-8 (Autocratic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>