MOHAMMAD ALI KADIVAR

Mobilization for and against Democracy

Abstract

This essay reviews scholarship on mobilization and its various consequences for democracy and autocracy. It highlights how collective action can advance democratization, stall or reverse it, or reinforce authoritarian rule. The review synthesizes key themes in this literature, including organizational foundations, coalitions, diffusion, tactics, and discourse, as well as the long-term implications of mobilization for democratic consolidation and deepening. It also considers how authoritarian leaders and regimes actively mobilize their supporters, in both democratic systems and authoritarian contexts. The essay concludes by outlining directions for future research, emphasizing the need for multi-level approaches that bridge subnational findings and cross-national comparison.

Keywords: Democracy; Mobilization; Contentious Politics; Autocracy; Social Movements.

SCHOLARS have long debated the role of mass mobilization in processes of democratization and de-democratization. Over the past several decades, this debate has evolved alongside new waves of democratization and autocratization, examining diverse patterns and dynamics of mobilization and its short- and long-term effects on democratic prospects. These discussions engage with political sociology and comparative politics scholarship on the emergence and trajectory of political regimes, as well as with the literature on social movements and contentious politics. This essay provides a comprehensive review of the scholarship on mobilization for and against democracy.

There has been significant debate on how to define democracy and autocracy. Democracy can be conceptualized in either binary or continuous terms. A binary definition identifies a set of minimal conditions that a regime must fulfill to be classified as democratic. These typically include universal suffrage, the right to run for office, fair and free elections, and the freedoms of speech and assembly. When these conditions are met, a regime qualifies as an electoral democracy. Liberal democracy requires additional institutional guarantees, such as judicial independence and

Mohammad Ali KADIVAR, Department of Sociology, Boston College, United States.
Email: kadivarm@bc.edu

European Journal of Sociology, 67, 2-3 (2026), pp. 232–263—0003-9756/26/0000-900$07.50per art + $0.10 per page
© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Archives européennes de Sociologie/European Journal of Sociology. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited [doi: 10.1017/S0003975626100435].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

checks and balances to protect minority rights from majoritarian overreach. In contrast, an autocracy is a regime in which rulers exercise power without effective constraints, and in which electoral competition and political pluralism are either absent or tightly controlled. Autocratic regimes may range from outright dictatorships to more hybrid forms that hold elections without enabling meaningful opposition or accountability. The absence of institutionalized mechanisms for popular input and elite contestation is a defining feature of autocratic rule [Coppedge *et al.* 2011; Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2014; Linz 2000].

Democratization refers to the process through which political regimes move towards greater democratic inclusion and institutionalization. Within this framework, democratic transition marks the achievement of the minimal conditions for electoral democracy. Democratic consolidation occurs when all major political actors come to accept democratic rules as the legitimate framework for political competition. Going beyond these minimal criteria, democratic deepening refers to processes that expand meaningful citizen participation in collective decision-making beyond elections and representative mechanisms—what some refer to as democratic depth [Fishman 2016; Linz and Stepan 1996; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986].

While democracy and autocracy refer to institutional configurations, contentious mobilization refers to extra-institutional collective actions such as demonstrations, strikes, and riots. Democracies, by definition, allow more space for contentious mobilization, protecting freedoms of speech and assembly. Autocracies, by contrast, tend to restrict these activities. If we conceive of regime types as a spectrum, democracies offer broader protections and channels for collective action; closed autocracies repress any form of independent contentious activity; and hybrid regimes lie in between, allowing certain forms of protest while suppressing others. These hybrid regimes themselves vary, leaning closer to either pole.

Contentious collective action can also adopt different orientations *vis-à-vis* political regimes. Some claims are explicitly political, calling for the establishment, protection, or restoration of democratic or autocratic institutions. These might include demands for free and fair elections, government accountability, or, conversely, support for personalist rule and the exclusion of certain social or political groups. Other claims are not explicitly about political regime type but rather concern policy, wages, or local grievances. Still, the mere existence of contentious claim-making suggests some opening in the regime structure, bringing it closer to the democratic pole. Such claims would be impossible under fully closed totalitarian systems, such as Stalin's Soviet Union. However, many

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contemporary authoritarian regimes take hybrid forms, allowing limited spaces for protest so long as core regime tenets are not challenged. As a result, collective claims may arise in both democratic and non-democratic settings.

While the goals and discourses of mobilization matter, they do not determine outcomes. Mobilization may aim to promote democracy but fail, or even backfire and lead to repression. Mobilization in support of autocracy may bolster authoritarian rule, but under certain conditions it can backfire and be transformed into anti-regime protest. Even neutral claims may evolve in unpredictable ways, tolerated or institutionalized under authoritarian rule, escalating into pro-democracy demands, or co-opted by autocratic regimes. Claims that align with pro-democracy or pro-autocracy discourses may still yield divergent outcomes, either pushing regimes toward liberalization or triggering crackdowns that shrink political space.

Much of the literature explores how mobilization shapes democratization but it does not always specify the types of claims involved. The first part of this review engages with that scholarship, focusing on how key dimensions of mobilization—such as organizational structure, coalition-building, diffusion, tactics, and discourse—affect democratic outcomes in the short or long term. While earlier studies often emphasized the democratizing potential of popular mobilization, more recent work reveals its ambivalence: under certain conditions, it can also contribute to democratic backsliding or help consolidate authoritarian rule. This section thus explores both the enabling and the constraining effects of collective action on democratization.

The second part of the essay shifts focus to pro-regime mobilization under authoritarian rule. It examines how autocratic governments and leaders—within both formal democracies and non-democratic regimes—employ mobilization to consolidate their rule. This includes an analysis of the issues around which state-led mobilization is organized and the structural and institutional drivers that sustain it.

Mobilization and Democracy

Historical Background and Debates

For decades, scholars have debated and analyzed the role of mobilization in democratization. Barrington Moore's [1966] seminal work emphasized

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that the path to parliamentary democracy often involved bourgeois revolutions, drawing on comparative case studies of Britain, the French Revolution, and the American Civil War. According to this political-economy model, democratic institutions emerged where the balance of power favored the bourgeoisie over the landed elite. However, this perspective focused primarily on the structural drivers of these revolutions, putting less emphasis on the mobilization processes that occurred during democratic revolutions.

Scholarly interest in popular mobilization and democratization grew with the onset of the third wave of democracy in the mid-1970s, beginning in Southern Europe and later spreading to South America. In contrast to the political economy approach that focused on conditions before democratic revolutions, the new scholarly attention focused on political elite interaction during democratic transitions, defined as the time between the breakdown of authoritarian regimes and the establishment of democratic institutions, often signified by a constituting election. In the 1980s, transitologists emphasized the role of political elites in initiating and managing transitions, identifying key divisions between hardliners and soft-liners within authoritarian regimes and moderates and radicals within opposition movements. The success of democratic transitions, they argued, depended on negotiations and cooperation among these four groups. Pact-based transitions were particularly praised for ensuring the stability of emerging political regimes. While this literature acknowledged the critical role of civil society mobilization in supporting transitions after elite splits and negotiations, transitologists warned that mass mobilization could threaten these processes. Excessive pressure from mass movements, they cautioned, might alienate pivotal elites and lead them to undermine the transition [Huntington 1984; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986]. Reflecting their pessimism about contentious mobilization, these studies largely overlooked the processes and dynamics of mobilization itself.

Recent scholarship continues to emphasize the role of incumbent elites in achieving stable democratization. Miller [2021] argues that lasting, high-quality democracies often result from "electoral continuity," in which strong ruling parties democratize, anticipating electoral dominance. This process involves minimal concessions from elites, reducing their incentive to stage coups and creating a stable environment for democratic institutions to gradually take root. Similarly, Riedl *et al.* [2020] describe "authoritarian-led democratization," and Slater and Wong [2022] call it "democratization through strength." These transitions involve authoritarian elites democratizing without losing power, with incremental

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reforms under pressure eventually solidifying and making democratization stable.

As the wave of democratization expanded into Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s, the earlier pessimism surrounding mass mobilization was challenged. A new wave of scholarship emerged, shedding light on the leading role played by mass mobilization in eroding authoritarian regimes and propelling democratic transitions. This scholarship emphasized that mass mobilization not only did not harm transition processes, but rather it significantly enhanced their chances of success, even in transitions initially described as elite-driven by transitologists [Bermeo 1997; Bratton and Van de Walle 1992, 1997; Collier 1999; Wood 2001, 2003].

While earlier analyses were reliant largely on single or comparative case studies, the availability of cross-national data on protests and civic campaigns led to a series of quantitative analyses. These studies documented the positive impact of protest mobilization on democratic transitions. Utilizing various data sources on protests and democracy indices, these studies revealed that the likelihood of a successful democratic transition increased significantly during periods of high rates of mass mobilization, in comparison with times of relative calm [Alemán and Yang 2011; Kadivar and Caren 2016; Teorell 2010].

Why therefore has mass mobilization emerged as a driving force for democratization? For one thing, within the context of authoritarian regimes, mass mobilization serves as a potent source of critical information regarding the public's grievances and their aspirations for the form of government they desire. Authoritarian regimes, often employing censorship and restrictions on freedom of speech, endeavor to portray their rule as legitimate and widely supported. They attempt to signal to potential dissidents and disgruntled citizens that their discontent is isolated, and that others will not join in voicing their grievances. Episodes of mass mobilization, however, send signals to the public, the incumbents, and the opposition that discontent is widespread in society and that citizens are willing to take action to press for their demands [Kuran 1991, 1995].

Mass mobilization also escalates the costs of repression, which is another linchpin of authoritarian survival, alongside censorship. Despite their restrictions on public participation, authoritarian regimes frequently claim to represent the people and work in their interest [Frantz 2018; Kendall-Taylor, Lindstaedt, and Frantz 2020]. However, such rhetoric is undermined when confronted with mobilized protests, and the repression of protestors further diminishes their claims of legitimacy and representation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Furthermore, mass mobilization can create schisms within the incumbent elite, as authoritarian leaders may differ in their views on whether to employ repression or make concessions. These internal divisions further erode support for the authoritarian regime and encourage defection within the ruling coalition, which is yet another pillar of authoritarian strength and stability.

Tactics

More recent scholarship has paid particular attention to the actors, tactics, and organizations involved in mobilization episodes that contribute to democratizing outcomes. In terms of tactics, a significant distinction is drawn between violent and nonviolent tactics [Nepstad 2011; Schock 2005]. Scholars of nonviolent resistance argue that nonviolent campaigns, in general, have a higher chance of success and an even greater chance of promoting democracy. This is because nonviolent tactics necessitate the participation of a large number of individuals and are accessible to a broader cross-section of the population. Crackdowns on nonviolent protestors are also costlier for governments, and nonviolent resistance often has a better chance of garnering support and solidarity from third parties and international audiences [Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Chenoweth 2021; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008].

In recent years, subsequent analyses have prompted a reevaluation of whether the distinction between violence and nonviolence or, more accurately, armed and unarmed tactics, remains a valid framework. It has become apparent that civilians often resort to violent yet unarmed tactics, such as scuffling with the police, throwing objects, or causing property damage. An examination of unarmed violence in the context of democratization suggests that these tactics are relatively common during democratic transitions. There is evidence to suggest that such tactics do not undermine the progress of democratic transitions but can, under certain conditions, enhance the likelihood of successful democratization outcomes [Kadivar and Ketchley 2018]. Additionally, research highlights disparities in the accessibility and effectiveness of nonviolent tactics for ethnic majorities and minorities, with excluded ethnic groups being labeled as violent even when employing nonviolent methods [Manekin and Mitts 2022]. Furthermore, an experimental study in the context of Hong Kong reveals that while respondents view violent tactics as morally unacceptable, they hesitate to condemn them publicly,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

indicating that movements can maintain cohesion even when employing nonviolent yet forceful strategies [Yuen 2023].

This area remains ripe for further research. We have gained insights into the different consequences of armed versus unarmed tactics, but questions remain regarding the varying effects of unarmed violent tactics compared with peaceful protest tactics. This includes their short-term and long-term impacts, their influence on the internal dynamics of movements, and their interactions with governments and third parties.

Organizations

Scholars have also delved into the types of organizations that have played pivotal roles in pro-democracy mobilization episodes. Foremost among these are workers' unions, which have been extensively highlighted in studies of democratizing episodes rooted in the political-economy tradition. Labor unions, which are among the largest civil society organizations, maintain direct connections with the everyday needs and demands of ordinary citizens. They possess a familiarity with conflict and compromise, two facets of politics. Workers' unions have, at different times, had to employ both contentious tactics, such as strikes, and accommodative tactics, such as negotiations. These skills are crucial for the democratic opposition during mobilization episodes. Comparative historical analysis and time-series statistical analyses have documented the positive role of trade unions in democratization processes [Collier 1999; Dahlum, Knutsen, and Wig 2019; Kadivar 2022; Lee 2012; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Usmani 2018].

However, key questions remain regarding the effectiveness of labor unions as vehicles for democratic mobilization, particularly in the Global South. A significant challenge in these regions is the prevalence of informal labor, which often falls outside the scope of unionized action, limiting the organizational power of unions compared with their counterparts in the Global North. Additionally, even in cases in which organized labor has demonstrated organizational effectiveness, their commitment to democracy is not guaranteed. While unions have frequently supported democratization, there are notable instances, such as in Tunisia, where they have remained passive or even complicit in authoritarian resurgence. This raises the critical question of what factors determine whether workers' unions support, oppose, or remain neutral in the context of democracy mobilization?

While much attention has focused on the challenges unions face in countries with large informal sectors, comparative historical research

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

shows that industrial unions have nonetheless played central roles in democratic transitions. In Brazil and South Africa, labor movements helped build broad pro-democracy coalitions that linked demands for political rights to social justice. In Poland and South Korea, strong industrial unions provided the organizational infrastructure and strategic leadership necessary to sustain opposition to authoritarian regimes [Ekiert and Kubik 1999; Lee 2016; Seidman 1994]. These cases underscore the importance of examining how labor movements build cross-class alliances and frame democratization as both a political and economic transformation.

In addition to labor unions, professional associations have been found to play constructive roles in democratizing episodes, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Communities of faith have also proven to be significant agents in mobilizing pro-democracy movements [Pinckney, Butcher, and Braithwaite 2022]. However, for communities of faith to assume a pro-democracy role, they must have developed a theology compatible with democracy and have achieved financial and institutional independence from the state [Philpott 2007; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011]. A comparative historical analysis of democratic revolutions in southeast Asia also shows that such revolutions have emerged and succeeded in countries in which they have been supported by the communal elite, a group possessing nationalist and religious credentials [Slater 2009]. Comparative historical analyses demonstrate the prominent role played by political parties in organizing pro-democracy campaigns [Haggard and Kaufman 2016], although the democratic commitment of political parties has been questioned in other studies [Pinckney, Butcher and Braithwaite 2022]. Similar questions can be raised about the action or inaction of major social organizations within a country during mobilization episodes. Understanding why certain organizations align themselves with democracy movements while others remain silent or side with the state is very important.

Finally, university campuses have always been a hotbed for protest movements, especially pro-democracy mobilization. When authoritarian regimes suppress civil society organizations, university campuses can emerge as a free space or indigenous organization for mobilization. The structure of campuses often facilitates coordination. Students have time and motivation to mobilize, and they often promote the values of democracy and human rights [Dahlum and Wig 2021]. Furthermore, when students participate in a campaign it tends to stay nonviolent [Dahlum 2018].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Social Groups and Democratization

The role of social class in democratization has been a central focus of debate, reflecting the deep embedding of organizations within broader social structures. Barrington Moore's [1966] early scholarship posited the bourgeoisie as the primary driver of democratization. In contrast, later comparative historical analyses by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens [1992] identified the working class as the most consistent force behind democratization, particularly in Europe and Latin America, a finding corroborated by subsequent comparative and cross-national studies [Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig 2019; Usmani 2018].

During the third wave of democratization, some scholars emphasized the middle class's significant role in advancing democracy [Huntington 1993]. Others examined the contributions of intellectuals and the educated class, particularly in early 20th-century democratization waves and transitions from communist rule in Eastern Europe [Kurzman and Leahey 2004; Kurzman 2008]. Similarly, students have served as key actors in opposition movements over the past several decades, frequently framing their protests around themes of democracy and human rights [Dahlum 2018; Dahlum and Wig 2021].

Survey data from recent revolutions in Ukraine, Egypt, and Tunisia reveal that individuals from middle class backgrounds participated at higher rates than other groups [Beissinger 2022]. Additionally, intra-class differences within the middle class have been explored. A study of democracy protests in Russia found that middle-class individuals employed by the state were less likely to participate in anti-regime protests than those working in the private sector. This disparity is attributed to the incentives and penalties the state offers its employees [Rosenfeld 2017].

Other studies have examined the role of women in mobilization and democratic transitions, highlighting their impact on post-transition political landscapes. Research indicates that transitions driven by contentious mobilization tend to result in higher representation for women in government. Additionally, when women actively participate in pro-democracy coalitions, the policies of the new regime are more likely to be favorable towards gender equality [Fallon, Swiss and Viterna 2012; Viterna and Fallon 2008]. A comparative analysis of the Arab Spring uprisings underscores this dynamic, showing that the active presence of women in the Tunisian revolution played a crucial role in its success, distinguishing it from other uprisings in the region. Women's involvement

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not only strengthened democratic demands but also contributed to more inclusive and durable democratic outcomes [Mako and Moghadam 2021]. Research on the Egyptian uprising similarly shows how women's engagement in the 2011 revolution expanded democratic imaginaries and transformed political subjectivities, even as post-revolutionary developments failed to institutionalize gender-inclusive reforms [Allam 2018].

Building on these findings, another analysis suggests that democratic transitions rooted in unarmed mobilization are more likely to foster inclusive democracies that better represent marginalized groups. Specifically, when women, ethnically marginalized communities, and excluded social classes play a significant role in mobilization, the resulting democratic regime is more likely to reflect greater inclusivity along gender, ethnic, and class lines [Bogati *et al*. 2024].

This enhanced attention to a broader range of actors beyond the traditional working class reflects a wider shift in the study of democratization. Scholars increasingly emphasize the role of "everyday struggles" among marginalized and excluded groups as central to democratic transformation. In Latin America, for example, grassroots mobilizations emerging from poor urban communities, Indigenous groups, rural peasants, and environmental defenders are now seen as key drivers of democratic change. These movements may not always operate through formal political channels, but they may reshape democratic practices by advancing demands rooted in lived experience, local knowledge, and cultural identity [Almeida and Cordero Ulate 2015].

These findings are in line with broader theoretical and empirical work on new social movements, which emphasize that democratic struggles are often grounded not only in class but also in gender, ethnicity, and other axes of identity. In Latin America, for example, social movements rooted in these struggles have redefined democratic politics by centering autonomy, cultural identity, and local knowledge. Rather than focusing solely on class-based mobilization, these movements have challenged dominant development paradigms and expanded the meaning of democratic participation to include subaltern voices and epistemologies [Escobar and Alvarez 1992].

Beyond analyzing the role of specific social groups, scholars have also examined multi-sectoral coalitions in anti-authoritarian campaigns. Cross-national research suggests that movements composed of broad-based coalitions—spanning different classes and social sectors—have had a higher likelihood of toppling authoritarian regimes and leading to either short-term or long-term democratization [Dahlum 2023].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Mobilization in Repressive Contexts

In repressive authoritarian regimes, mobilization often occurs without relying on traditional organizational structures. Activists in such contexts employ alternative mechanisms to compensate for the lack of formal organizations. One strategy is social appropriation, which involves repurposing organizations not originally intended for contentious mobilization, such as labor unions, communities of faith, or professional associations, for mobilizational purposes [Tilly and Tarrow 2015]. Another strategy is to leverage focal points, temporal contexts that naturally stimulate collective action even without direct communication. Events such as Friday prayers, religious or national holidays, or funerals can serve as focal points, facilitating mobilization when conventional organizational resources are unavailable [Ketchley and Barrie 2020; Opp and Gern 1993].

Another key strategy involves maintaining distance—both spatially and symbolically—from state institutions and formal political arenas. This distance can become a source of power, enabling activists to operate beneath the radar of repression and forge new solidarities in peripheral or ambiguous spaces. Evidence from Latin America shows how such distancing, rather than weakening movements, can strengthen their resilience and allow new forms of organization and identity to emerge [Davis 1999].

Mobilization can also generate its own organizational structures, as ongoing contention fosters increasingly sophisticated forms of organization. New vehicles of organization may emerge that bypass established relationships, creating fresh social ties and unique forms of sociability. Activists often rely on micro-solidarities, utilizing technology, spontaneity, and transnational influences to sustain their efforts. Grassroots coordination units, functioning as trust networks, covertly connect neighborhood activists and provide a foundation for collective action. However, the challenges of repression frequently compel activists to disengage from existing networks. At the same time, contention can transform social dynamics, fostering cooperation and mutual respect among advocates of peaceful revolution [Pearlman 2021].

Digital Media

While historically traditional organizations such as unions and professional associations have structured mobilization, in recent decades

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

activists have increasingly turned to digital media to coordinate collective action across space and time. Digital media has introduced new capabilities and vulnerabilities to pro-democracy mobilization. With the aid of digital media, like-minded individuals can connect without needing to be in the same physical location. Organizing tasks that traditionally were carried out by conventional social movement organizations, such as coordination, communication, and logistical preparations, can now be executed by a small group of activists located in different places. The affordances of social media have enabled activists to quickly mobilize large waves of pro-democracy supporters in a short timeframe [Clarke and Koçak 2018; Earl and Kimport 2011; Kadivar 2022; Tufekci 2017]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in what Mark Beissinger [2022] terms "urban-civic revolutions." In these revolutions, people employ civic tactics to gather large crowds in public spaces, uniting against despotic and corrupt autocratic governments. Prime examples of such uprisings include the Arab Spring and the revolutions in former Soviet republics, such as the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine.

While activists have demonstrated their ability to mobilize masses rapidly through social media, they have often faltered in maintaining coalitions and establishing consensus within the movement regarding strategy, leadership, and discourse. The nature of digital media tends to elevate individuals to de facto leadership positions, as those who can produce popular content on digital platforms take center stage. However, the skills required to craft engaging online posts differ from those necessary for effective leadership of social movements. As studies of leadership and strategic capacity demonstrate, effective leadership demands diversity, familiarity with various forms of contention, the ability to bridge divides and unite different factions within a movement, strategic vision, and the capacity to lead concrete actions on the ground [Ganz 2004, 2010; Kadivar 2022; Tufekci 2017].

The coalitions formed during urban-civic revolutions, often described as "negative coalitions," have proven to be fragile, built primarily on opposition to incumbent governments rather than on consensus on substantive issues [Beissinger 2013]. Consequently, once these revolutions succeed in ousting incumbent leaders, they often descend into bitter disputes and disagreements about what should come next. These movements, which rely heavily on digital media, find their fragility exacerbated by certain features of digital platforms. Inflammatory and polarized posts tend to receive the most attention on digital media, while attempts to adopt a middle ground are met with online attacks and abuse from both sides [Beissinger 2017; Tufekci 2017].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Nevertheless, digital media is not inherently ill-suited for the tasks of organizing and building coalitions. It is still a valuable tool for these purposes. However, communication for the purpose of organizing and coalition-building may need to take place through private conversations between activists that remain hidden from public view [Han 2014]. Future research has the potential to shed more light on how digital media can be employed effectively in creating leadership and organizational capabilities and for uniting coalitions.

Another evolving dynamic in the relationship between digital media and mobilization is the increasing use of digital connectivity by political regimes as a tool for social and political control. Advances in communication technologies have often acted as double-edged swords. While these technologies empower activists and dissidents to overcome coordination challenges in innovative ways, they simultaneously enable incumbent governments to develop and deploy new methods of surveillance and control [Weidmann and Rød 2019].

Scholars have explored how activists adapt their use of digital media for coordination in response to evolving state surveillance and repression. Initially, digital media was employed to share information about the time and location of protests, but governments quickly learned how to exploit this same information to impose more effective crackdowns. A study of the Sudanese revolution illustrates a tactical innovation in response to this dynamic: local activists organized simultaneous protests adjacent to the main protest sites. This strategy diverted state repression away from central demonstrations or safeguarded smaller protests from crackdowns concentrated at primary locations [Hassan 2024].

Elections

Elections have proved to be a significant catalyst for democracy mobilization [Trejo 2014]. During election periods, there is a heightened sharing of information, and emotions run high. A specific form of democracy mobilization has emerged in response to fraudulent elections, which are a common feature of electoral authoritarian regimes. Electoral authoritarian regimes are a subtype of non-democratic regimes that conduct elections that fall short of being free and fair. These regimes often manipulate rules in their favor, utilize state resources for electoral advantage, curtail freedom of speech and assembly to undermine their opponents, and resort to electoral fraud if deemed necessary [Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013]. In such regimes, election periods provide a window of opportunity that facilitates mobilization against the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

incumbent authorities. During elections, a wealth of information is disseminated, often signaling the extent of government corruption and widespread grievances in society. This influx of information, coupled with heightened emotional states, paves the way for mobilization when voters become incensed over alleged electoral fraud [Beaulieu 2014; Kadivar 2017; Kuntz and Thompson 2009; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2015].

The Economic Context of Mobilization

The economic context also plays a pivotal role in shaping the prospects for democracy mobilization. A cross-national analysis of democracy protests indicates that democracy mobilization is more likely to occur during economic downturns rather than during periods of economic prosperity. When citizens are content with the state of the economy, they are less inclined to participate in such mobilization. Furthermore, even during economic downturns, democracy mobilization is more likely when citizens hold the government responsible for the economic challenges they face. Additionally, during election periods, citizens are more prone to attribute economic poor performance to the government, further increasing the likelihood of democracy mobilization [Brancati 2016].

Another important aspect of the economic context of mobilization is the effects of revenues from natural resources. The rentier state theory posits that the presence of significant oil revenues can hinder the prospects of democracy in these nations. This is because oil-rich states are less reliant on taxing their citizens, opting instead to utilize oil revenues to expand welfare programs, establish clientelist networks, and develop strong repressive apparatuses [Ross 2001, 2012]. Empirical research has demonstrated that oil-producing countries tend to have lower rates of protest mobilization [Kadivar and Caren 2016; Smith 2004]. However, it's noteworthy that democracy mobilization has emerged nevertheless in some oil-rich states such as Indonesia and Nigeria. To advance our understanding, future research should delve into how activists have managed to mobilize in these oil-rich contexts despite the challenges and limitations outlined by the literature.

Democratic Diffusion

Democracy mobilization has often occurred in waves, with instances clustered in both time and geographic proximity [Brinks and Coppedge

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Gleditsch and Rivera 2015; Weyland 2010, 2014]. The success of mobilization in one place has inspired people in other areas to mobilize for democracy against autocratic leaders. When such mobilization leads to the removal of incumbent elites and democratic breakthroughs, the demonstration effect is even more pronounced [Kadivar and Caren 2016]. This power of example has enabled democracy mobilization in contexts that might not initially have seemed favorable for such action [Beissinger 2007]. However, its impact varies from country to country, and nations with a rich tradition of democracy mobilization may be less influenced by demonstration effects, while they have a stronger effect on countries with a weaker history of mobilization [Braithwaite, Braithwaite, and Kucik 2015]. Nevertheless, this perspective on the diffusion of democracy mobilization faces challenges from some scholars, who argue that these protests are driven primarily by domestic processes and are often unaffected by similar actions in other countries in terms of diffusion [Brancati and Lucardi 2019].

Long-term Effects of Mobilization

Alongside the short-term effects of contention on democratization, a growing body of research examines its long-term consequences for democratic consolidation and growth. This scholarship emphasizes that the mode of transition—particularly the level and position of social movement participation—shapes the quality of the resulting regimes [della Porta 2016]. Cross-national analyses show that transitions rooted in bottom-up mobilization tend to yield more enduring democracies [Bethke and Pinckney 2021; Haggard and Kaufman 2016; Lambach *et al*. 2020]. Extended periods of unarmed mobilization further increase the likelihood of democratic survival by fostering organizational infrastructures, forging broad coalitions, and cultivating civic leadership that sustains civil society after transition. These pro-democracy organizations enhance pluralism in the post-transition period, while contentious repertoires developed during mobilization often inspire citizens to continue holding leaders accountable [Kadivar 2018, 2022]. Evidence from Africa illustrates this dynamic: when citizens perceive voting as ineffective, they turn to protest to voice grievances about worsening economic conditions [Harris and Hern 2019].

Besides contributing to democratic durability and consolidation, activism and mobilization have also played a central role in deepening democracy. Democratic depth refers to processes through which citizens participate in collective decision-making beyond elections and the formal

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mechanisms of representative politics. In this regard, the mobilization of civil society actors has been crucial for establishing institutions that enable bottom-up participation and for expanding the boundaries of democratic inclusion [Fishman 2016, 2019; Fung and Wright 2003; Heller 2019]. In Latin America, for example, popular movements have often served as generative spaces of political learning and institutional experimentation. Rather than being episodic or reactive, these movements have shaped the quality of democratic governance by embedding civic agendas and actors into state structures [Inclán 2008]. One of the key institutional innovations that emerged from these efforts is participatory democracy, which has developed as a response to the limits of representative institutions, particularly in contexts in which electoral systems are captured by elites or distorted by clientelism.

Across much of the Global South, popular movements and civil society organizations have demanded new channels for ongoing citizen participation. These demands have led to the institutionalization of participatory budgeting, local councils, and deliberative planning forums, allowing marginalized groups to influence public policy and resource allocation. Unlike technocratic or consultative models, participatory institutions that have had the greatest impact are often rooted in prior mobilization and supported by dense networks of association that can articulate collective demands and ensure accountability. While these initiatives vary in effectiveness, research shows they are most likely to democratize governance when civil society is autonomous, political parties are responsive, and state bureaucracies are open to reform [Avritzer 2002; Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Wampler 2015]. In these cases, participation not only enhances state accountability and redistribution but also contributes to the formation of active, empowered citizens.

Recent research on civil society in the Global South highlights three key dimensions of its role in democratization: enhancing associational capabilities, nurturing civic identities, and promoting organizational autonomy. Civil society provides spaces for marginalized actors to develop political agency, fosters solidarity-based identities that cultivate democratic norms, and influences whether movements emphasize broad, inclusive interests or narrower, exclusive ones. Two critical conditions support these processes: a strong rights-based culture that challenges existing hierarchies and the development of horizontal ties among civil society actors before the formation of political parties [Heller 2022].

Empirical research further suggests that democracies emerging from extended periods of unarmed mobilization are more likely to institutionalize participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democratic practices.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Brazil serves as an illustrative case: movements that resisted military dictatorship later spearheaded policies that expanded citizen participation beyond electoral processes. Additionally, the entry of democracy activists into state bureaucracy played a crucial role in resisting attempts at democratic backsliding [Avritzer 2006; Bradlow and Kadivar 2023; Gianpaolo 2003; Kadivar, Usmani, and Bradlow 2020]. Similar dynamics can be observed in Europe, where mobilizations during the austerity era experimented with assemblies, horizontal networks, and mutual aid, creating alternative democratic practices in response to legitimacy crises and weakened representative institutions [Della Porta 2015]. These findings underscore the long-term impact of mobilization in shaping not only democratic transitions but also the depth and resilience of democratic governance.

Sociological research has particularly documented how activists have used the emerging institutional openings within democratic regimes to expand practices of citizenship. In the Global South, civil society has functioned not only as a space of resistance but also as a key arena for building political agency and inclusive participation. Marginalized actors, including women and racialized communities, have used legal institutions, informal associations, and self-help groups to claim rights and contest dominant power structures. These associational spaces help to generate new forms of citizenship and foster solidaristic identities through practices of mutual recognition and collective claim-making. The democratic impact of civil society depends in part on its autonomy and its ability to build horizontal alliances and generate shared norms of inclusion [Fraser 2021; Paschel [2016] 2018; Roychowdhury 2020; Sanyal 2014].

Building on this understanding of civil society, recent research has emphasized how class-based mobilization—particularly among workers—has shaped both the trajectory and substance of democratization. Informal and precarious workers, especially women, have advanced political claims around dignity and livelihood, often organizing outside the bounds of traditional labor unions. In contexts such as Brazil and South Africa, labor movements embedded in broader social struggles have helped to push authoritarian regimes toward democratic openings. Historical and comparative research highlights how coalitions between workers, rural laborers, and opposition parties have been central to both democratic transitions and the formation of more participatory and redistributive institutions [Agarwala 2013; Desai 2002; Sandbrook *et al*. 2007; Seidman 1994].

Extending the link between mobilization and democratic substance, a growing body of scholarship shows how developmental outcomes—

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

especially in health, welfare, and urban governance—are shaped by contentious politics. Social movements and professional networks have played key roles in expanding access to public services and institutionalizing pro-poor policies, often through strategic alliances with reformist bureaucrats. In Brazil, the health movement was instrumental in reshaping municipal governance and embedding universal health-care commitments into the state. In South Africa and Brazil, urban movements have directly influenced how state institutions are built and restructured, often pushing for participatory planning, redistributive urban policies, and more inclusive governance frameworks. In Indian urban slums, informal leaders and neighborhood associations have been central to negotiating access to basic services, illustrating how state responsiveness is shaped by local power structures. These studies show that inclusive development outcomes often emerge not from technocratic reform alone but from political struggles rooted in local mobilization [Auerbach 2019; Bradlow 2024; Gibson 2019; Harris 2017].

Discourses of Mobilization

Another pertinent aspect of mobilization and democratization concerns the ideological and discursive content of contentious episodes. Several cross-national studies that highlight the positive effects of mobilization for democracy often do not consider the depth of democratic commitment within these episodes. This issue has gained prominence in recent years, as in various cases, actors who initially championed democracy did not maintain their commitment to democratic causes over the long term.

In Egypt, for instance, activists who initially played a pivotal role in toppling Mubarak later organized protests against democratically elected President Muhammad Morsi, with the hope that the military would intervene and remove Morsi from power. Subsequently, a coup followed these protests, putting an end to Egypt's brief democratic experiment. In his comprehensive analysis of revolutionary episodes in the 20th and 21st centuries, Mark Beissinger [2022] suggests that many of these revolutionary episodes against authoritarian regimes might be described more accurately as anti-autocracy mobilizations rather than as pro-democracy movements, as democratic commitments in these episodes are often weak. Another analysis of democracy protests also indicates that in most cases participants do not share a thorough philosophical understanding of democracy, but rather demand the change of an incumbent leader or a higher standard of living [Brancati 2016].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A case study of the Tunisian uprising further complicates this picture, showing that democratic content does not always define initial mobilization. Instead, as new social actors with a stronger commitment to democracy join the movement, democratic ideals can emerge over time [Barrie 2023]. These findings suggest that the impact of mobilization on democratization depends not only on mass participation but also on the ideological and discursive evolution of movements.

A recent study of democratic commitment employed new indicators from the V-Dem dataset that distinguish between mobilizations for democracy and against autocracy. Similar to other data in the V-Dem dataset, this information is based on coding by numerous experts from various countries. Cross-national analysis of this data confirms that mobilization for democracy has indeed had positive effects on democratic transitions and enhancements [Hellmeier and Bernhard 2023].

Mobilization and Democratic Decline

As several studies and historical cases illustrate, mobilization for democracy does not always advance democratization and, under certain conditions, can contribute to democratic breakdown or backsliding [Bermeo 2016]. An influential analysis of civil resistance and democratization suggests that maximalist demands—such as denying electoral outcomes or demanding the immediate resignation of elected governments—can distort civil resistance campaigns and undermine democratic transitions. This approach argues that the relationship between mass mobilization and democratization depends on the degree of maximalism involved. High mobilization with low maximalism tends to support democratic breakthroughs, while high maximalism, especially when combined with high mobilization, often leads to fragmented, unstable political systems. In extreme cases, such dynamics can accelerate the transition to autocratic rule [Pinckney 2020].

By contrast, other scholars argue that the problem lies not in excessive demands, but in the absence of a radical democratic vision and the constriction of revolutionary horizons within neoliberal frameworks. Asef Bayat [2017] contends that the Arab uprisings represented "revolutions without revolutionaries"—mass mobilizations that lacked ideological direction, organizational infrastructure, and a transformative political project. In this view, the failure of these revolutions stems not from overreach, but from their reformist limits, as they failed to challenge deeper structures of inequality and authoritarianism. Similarly, Atef Said [2023] highlights how the Egyptian revolution was symbolically

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and politically "squared"—reduced to a confined space (Tahrir) and narrow procedural goals, while more expansive demands for social justice and participatory democracy were sidelined. For these scholars, the tragedy of the uprisings lies in their demobilization and depoliticization, not in their maximalism. They suggest that it was precisely the absence of sustained, organized, and visionary mobilization that allowed counter-revolutionary forces to reclaim power.

On the other hand, there are studies that caution against the potential negative role of civil society and mobilization in the context of democratization. A classic study of the democratic collapse in the Weimar Republic documents the active role of civil society organizations in the rise of fascism in interwar Germany. This occurred because political parties, which constitute political society, failed to represent the societal demands of civic organizations, which were later co-opted and directed by the Nazis [Berman 1997a, 1997b]. Similarly, analyses of fascism in Italy and Spain also articulate that in both societies it had its roots in strong civic organizations with antidemocratic ideologies [Riley 2005, 2010].

Recent uprisings have also been the subject of studies that highlight negative effects on mobilization. For instance, an analysis of the protests in post-Mubarak Egypt indicates that they had detrimental effects on the perception of democracy among residents in protesting districts [Ketchley and El-Rayyes 2020]. Another analysis reveals that respondents from these districts voted in higher numbers for the main candidate of the former regime in the 2012 elections [El-Mallakh 2020]. These studies demonstrate that when pro-democracy mobilization lacks organization and strategy, it can backfire and lead citizens to turn against democratic values. Consequently, many Egyptians became more concerned about order and security, prompting them to vote for the candidate of the previous authoritarian regime, which promised to restore stability and order.

Contentious collective action within democracies is often associated with democratic advancement, but recent research has shown that protest can also serve authoritarian trajectories, either deliberately or inadvertently. In countries such as Brazil, India, and Ukraine, antipartisan protest waves have destabilized party systems, delegitimized representative institutions, and opened the door to authoritarian populists who position themselves as alternatives to the discredited political establishment. In Brazil, mass protests between 2013 and 2016 began as broad-based demands for better public services and accountability, but gradually became dominated by anti-PT sentiment, eventually aligning with conservative and antidemocratic actors. Despite rejecting formal political

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

affiliation, these movements played a pivotal role in delegitimizing the political left, paving the way for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and the eventual rise of Jair Bolsonaro [Bradlow and Gold 2025]. These examples illustrate how protest—while often framed as democratic engagement,—can function as a vehicle for elite realignment and political projects that erode democratic norms.

While the broader literature on populism has focused predominantly on electoral dynamics and voter realignment, several studies within this tradition also shed light on non-electoral mobilization that supports authoritarian outcomes. Research on Brazil, Argentina, and the Philippines has shown how conservative civil society networks, evangelical churches, and digitally coordinated movements have engaged in contentious action that delegitimizes liberal democracy and promotes exclusionary governance [McKenna 2020; Gold and Peña 2021; Curato 2017]. These findings suggest that democratic backsliding is often not only top-down but also driven by grassroots mobilization, shaped by civil society actors and moral populist discourse.

Mobilization and Autocracy

Although nondemocratic regimes have been mobilizing their supporters throughout the 20th century, it's only recently that social scientists have started to pay particular attention to this form of mobilization. Unlike democracies, most autocratic regimes don't typically originate from mass mobilization campaigns. However, in parallel with democracies that emerge from contentious politics, authoritarian regimes that have their roots in mass mobilization have proven to be some of the most enduring autocracies worldwide. The key distinction here is that democracies that emerge from unarmed contention tend to be the most durable, whereas authoritarian regimes born out of violent episodes of mass mobilization tend to exhibit greater resilience. This is because these transformative episodes of violent mobilization often suppress civil society, provide the groundwork for the establishment of robust repressive apparatuses, and set the stage for the emergence of mass-based ruling parties [Lachapelle *et al.* 2020; Levitsky and Way 2022].

Beyond the constitution-altering effects of mass mobilization for autocracies, many authoritarian regimes also mobilize their supporters for various purposes. Before the end of the Cold War, it was primarily communist regimes, as well as totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in general, that exhibited high mobilization capacities. In contrast, authoritarian regimes tended to favor maintaining public spaces in a state of quietude and typically kept levels of mass mobilization low. Nonetheless, contemporary authoritarian leaders have progressively come to view the masses as an advantageous resource for bolstering their grip on power and improving their chances of survival [Linz 1964, 2000; Linz and Stepan 1996]. Their interest in controlling the streets goes beyond mere repression; they actively seek to rally their own supporters [Robertson 2011].

The third wave of authoritarianism during the mid-1990s brought about significant changes in the strategies and characteristics of authoritarian governments [Lührmann and Lindberg 2019]. Modern authoritarian regimes have devised novel tactics, including the regular holding of elections [Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013], the establishment of authoritarian institutions [Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007], and the creation of mass organizations [Brownlee 2007; Handlin 2016]. These methods serve to create the illusion of accountability, with minimal substantive change.

One of the strategies embraced by autocrats involves mobilizing the masses through rallies, public gatherings, and campaigns, all aimed at garnering support for state interests and agendas. Autocrats employ this approach for multiple objectives, including responding to threats from anti-government movements [Ekiert, Perry, and Yan 2020; Hellmeier and Weidmann 2019; Ketchley 2017], intimidating the opposition to deter future challenges [Beissinger 2020; Hemment 2015], gathering support for electoral competition against opposition parties [Handlin 2020], advancing their developmental projects [Looney 2020; Ning and Palmer 2020], signaling support for territorial and geostrategic interests beyond their borders [Greene and Robertson 2020], and reinforcing their foreign and security policy signaling strategies [Weiss 2014]. Given the recent surge in democratic erosion and the ascent of incumbents with authoritarian inclinations within electoral democracies, pro-government mobilization tactics have become increasingly prevalent within institutional democracies [Cunningham and Owens 2020; Kydd 2021]. The storming of Capitol Hill in the United States by President Trump's supporters, in an attempt to overturn his electoral defeat, serves as a poignant example of pro-government mobilization in eroded democracies.

Scholars have primarily focused on the threat posed by anti-government mobilization to elucidate variations in the extent of pro-government mobilization. Through a cross-national time-series analysis, Hellmeier and Weidmann [2019] observed a substantial upsurge in pro-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

government rallies during significant episodes of domestic opposition mobilization. They argue that pro-government mobilization enables autocrats to signal their strength and counterbalance opposition efforts against the regime when confronted with direct challenges. Similarly, an event-history analysis of protest mobilization in Egypt from 2011 to 2013 revealed that the intensity of pro-government demonstrations increased following opposition protests [Anderson and Cammett 2020].

The perceived threat of opposition is not the sole driver of state-led mobilization. In hybrid regimes, factional politics and elite competition can also fuel social mobilization. A subnational analysis of labor mobilization in Russia demonstrates that these protests were driven primarily by competition over resources between regional and national elites. Regional elites strategically leveraged labor protests to strengthen their bargaining position against national elites [Robertson 2007, 2011]. This suggests that beyond repression and regime consolidation, intra-elite struggles can also shape patterns of state-backed mobilization.

Autocratic mobilization is not always a reactive strategy to counter opposition protests; it can also be sustained proactively through organizational infrastructure. In Iran, the state has not only relied on repression to prevent mass mobilization but has also infiltrated mosques and universities, transforming them into pro-government associations that provide logistical bases for mobilization. As a result, districts with higher concentrations of mosques and university students tend to exhibit stronger levels of pro-government mobilization. This highlights how indigenous organizations such as religious institutions or campuses, typically established for non-political purposes, can be repurposed to maintain authoritarian contention beyond moments of crisis [Khani and Kadivar 2024].

Autocratic mobilization has consistently reinforced authoritarian outcomes. Cross-national analysis drawing on new V-Dem data demonstrates that when authoritarian regimes mobilize their supporters, these efforts entrench autocracy and diminish prospects for democratic transition. Similarly, when such mobilization occurs within democracies, it accelerates processes of democratic erosion and heightens the risk of authoritarian consolidation [Hellmeier and Bernhard 2023].

While pro-government mobilization has been examined primarily in autocratic regimes, it is increasingly occurring within democracies, particularly in contexts of democratic backsliding. Democratic leaders facing political crises—such as Donald Trump's 2021 Capitol Hill rally or Modi's Hindu nationalist mobilization in India—have used mass mobilization to consolidate power and weaken democratic norms. Comparative studies should explore how state-backed mobilization

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

differs across regime types and its role in accelerating democratic erosion.

Directions for Future Research

The review highlights several promising avenues for future research in the field of mobilization for and against democracy. One critical area for exploration is the tactics of mobilization, with a particular focus on understanding the consequences of unarmed violence and its interactions with peaceful strategies. Scholars can delve into the short-term and long-term effects of such tactics on movement cohesion, public perception, interactions with governments and repressive forces, and subsequent levels of violence within societies.

Another significant area of inquiry revolves around the role of various social organizations in democracy mobilization. While the existing literature has shed light on the positive contributions of organizations such as worker unions, professional associations, faith communities, ethnonationalist groups, and political parties, there remains a need to investigate the conditions under which these organizations support or oppose democracy. Understanding why organizations may shift their stance over time, from supporting democracy to enabling democratic backsliding or breakdown, is a pertinent question. Additionally, researchers can explore how authoritarian regimes and leaders build or co-opt organizations to advance antidemocratic mobilization.

Given the current global challenges to democratic discourse, studying the democratic vision of different mobilizations becomes crucial. Exploring differences in democratic discourses between successful and defeated democracy mobilizations, as well as analyzing how opponents of democracy articulate their views within antidemocratic discourse, offers valuable insights. Examining the rhetorical and discursive strategies used to convey values such as popular sovereignty within authoritarian contexts is also a pertinent area of investigation.

The composition of alliances supporting or opposing democracy mobilization is another area ripe for research. Understanding the challenges of building democratic alliances in the 21st century, particularly in multiethnic societies, can shed light on effective strategies for uniting diverse groups in broad multisectoral coalitions. Nativism, often employed by the far right in antidemocratic mobilization, presents a unique challenge. Researchers can explore how democracy advocates

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

can facilitate defection within antidemocratic alliances without succumbing to nativist narratives.

Another important avenue for future research concerns how we make sense of variation across subnational findings and move towards a more systematic understanding of mobilization's democratic or antidemocratic consequences. Rather than treating subnational comparison as a new solution, scholars should take stock of the accumulated body of subnational, small-n, and experimental research and interrogate the sources of divergence across these studies. This calls for multi-level research designs that systematically compare subnational episodes of contention, either across time within the same country or across similar spatial units in different national contexts. For example, researchers could investigate why certain cities or provinces emerge as centers of democratic contention while others enable authoritarian consolidation, tracing how these dynamics are related to local variations in mobilizing structures, state capacity, or elite alignments. Such designs would allow scholars to identify recurring patterns of conjunction and contingency across cases while also discerning the structural and institutional logics that aggregate up from subnational arenas. As O'Donnell [1993] argued in his work on "brown areas" in Latin America, democratization is often territorially uneven. Recognizing and theorizing this unevenness is essential not only for understanding how democracy unfolds within national borders but also for building comparative insights across contexts.

This review has demonstrated that collective mobilization is a central force shaping both democratic openings and authoritarian entrenchment. Far from having a uniformly positive or negative effect, its impact is contingent on the nature of its demands, organizational foundations, class composition, and interaction with political institutions. Mobilization has been shown to enable transitions to democracy, deepen participatory practices, and empower marginalized groups; but it has also contributed to democratic backsliding when channeled toward maximalist, exclusionary, or authoritarian ends. The literature increasingly recognizes that both pro- and anti-democratic mobilizations can be mass-based, well-organized, and capable of shaping political regimes in lasting ways. Understanding these divergent pathways requires continued attention to variation in tactics, coalition dynamics, ideological content, and state response. Future research should deepen the study of how contentious politics is conditioned by social structure and spatial inequality, and explore how movement actors navigate the tensions between

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reformist inclusion and transformative rupture. As democratic institutions face mounting challenges globally, clarifying the ambivalent political consequences of mobilization is not only an analytical task but a pressing political one.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AGARWALA PROFESSOR Rina, 2013. *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India* (Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press).

ALEMÁN José and David D. YANG, 2011. "A Duration Analysis of Democratic Transitions and Authoritarian Backslides," *Comparative Political Studies*, 44 (9): 1123–51 [doi: 10.1177/0010414011405460].

ALLAM Nermin, 2018. *Women and the Egyptian Revolution: Engagement and Activism during the 2011 Arab Uprisings* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press).

ALMEIDA Paul and Allen Cordero ULATE, 2015. "Social Movements Across Latin America," *in* P. Almeida and A. Cordero Ulate, *Handbook of Social Movements across Latin America*, *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research* (Dordrecht, Springer Netherlands: 3–10).

ANDERSON Ashely and Melani CAMMETT, 2020. "The Dynamics of State-Mobilized Movements: Insights from Egyptin," *in* G. Ekiert, E. Perry and X. Yan, eds, *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Movements* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press: 261–290).

AUERBACH ADAM Michael, 2019. *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press).

AVRITZER Leonardo, 2002. *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

—, 2006. "New Public Spheres in Brazil: Local Democracy and Deliberative Politics," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30 (3): 623–37 [doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00692.x].

BAIOCCHI Gianpaolo, Patrick HELLER and Marcelo SILVA, 2011. *Bootstrapping Democracy: Transforming Local Governance and Civil Society in Brazil* (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press).

BARRIE Christopher, 2025. "The Process of Revolutionary Protest: Development and Democracy in the Tunisian Revolution," *Perspectives on Politics*, 23 (1):1 03–121 [doi:10.1017/S1537592723002062].

BAYAT Asef, 2017. *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press).

BEAULIEU Emily, 2014. *Electoral Protest and Democracy in the Developing World* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press).

BEISSINGER Mark, 2007. "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions," *Perspectives on Politics*, 5 (2): 259–276.

—, 2013. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *American Political Science Review*, 107 (03): 574–592 [doi: 10.1017/S0003055413000294].

—, 2017. "'Conventional' and 'Virtual' Civil Societies in Autocratic Regimes," *Comparative Politics*, 49 (3): 351–371.

—, 2020. "Social Sources of Counterrevolution," *in* G. Ekiert, E. J. Perry and X. Yan, eds, *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Movements* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press: 140–165).

—, 2022. *The Revolutionary City* (Princeton, N.J, Princeton University Press).

BERMAN Sheri, 1997a. "Civil Society and Political Institutionalization," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40 (5): 562–574 [doi: 10.1177/0002764297040005003].

—, 1997b. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics*, 49: 401–429.

BERMEO Nancy, 1997. "Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions," *Comparative Politics*, 29 (3): 305–322.

—, 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of Democracy*, 27 (1): 5–19 [doi: 10.1353/jod.2016.0012].

BETHKE Felix S. and Jonathan PINCKNEY, 2021. "Non-Violent Resistance and the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Quality of Democracy," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 38 (5): 503–523 [doi:10.1177/0738894219855918].
Bogati Subindra, Titik Firawati, Jonathan Pinckney and Ches Thurber, 2024. "How Civil Resistance Improves Inclusive Democracy," *Perspectives on Politics:* 1–18 [doi: 10.1017/S1537592724000999].
Bradlow Benjamin H., 2024. *Urban Power: Democracy and Inequality in São Paulo and Johannesburg* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).
Bradlow Benjamin H. and Tomás Gold, 2025. "A Processual Framework for Understanding the Rise of the Populist Right: The Case of Brazil (2013–2018)," *Social Forces* soae189 [doi: 10.1093/sf/soae189].
Bradlow Benjamin H. and Mohammad Ali Kadivar, 2023. "How Brazil Can Prevent an Authoritarian Resurgence," *Foreign Affairs*, January,12.
Braithwaite Alex, Jessica Maves Braithwaite and Jeffrey Kucik, 2015. "The Conditioning Effect of Protest History on the Emulation of Nonviolent Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 0022343315593993 [doi: 10.1177/0022343315593993].
Brancati Dawn, 2016. *Democracy Protests: Origins, Features, and Significance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.)
Brancati Dawn and Adrián Lucardi, 2019. "Why Democracy Protests Do Not Diffuse," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63 (10): 2354–2389 [doi: 10.1177/0022002718815957].
Bratton Michael, and Nicolas Van de Walle, 1992. "Popular Protest and Political Reform" *Comparative Politics*, 24 (4): 419–442 [doi: 10.2307/422153].
Bratton Michael and Nicholas Van de Walle, 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press).
Brinks Daniel and Michael Coppedge, 2006. "Diffusion Is No Illusion Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies*, 39 (4): 463–489.
Brownlee Jason, 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (Cambridge (England]/ New York, Cambridge University Press).
Bunce Valerie and Sharon L. Wolchik, 2011. *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
Celestino Mauricio Rivera and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, 2013. "Fresh Carnations or All Thorn, No Rose? Nonviolent Campaigns and Transitions in Autocracies," *Journal of Peace Research*, 50 (3): 385–400.
Chenoweth Erica, 2021. *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press).
Chenoweth Erica and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York, Columbia University Press).
Clarke Killian and Korhan Koçak, 2018. "Launching Revolution: Social Media and the Egyptian Uprising's First Movers," *British Journal of Political Science*, 50 (3): 1025–1045 [doi:10.1017/S0007123418000194].
Collier Ruth Berins, 1999. *Paths toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (Cambridge, UK /New York, Cambridge University Press).
Coppedge Michael, John Gerring, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Steven Fish, Allen Hicken, Matthew Kroenig, Staffan I. Lindberg, Kelly McMann, Pamela Paxton, Holli A. Semetko, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jeffrey Staton and Jan Teorell, 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach," *Perspectives on Politics*, 9 (2): 247–267 [doi:10.1017/S1537592711000880].
Cunningham David and Peter B. Owens, 2020. "Enforcement Networks and Racial Contention in Civil Rights–Era Mississippi," *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Movements* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press: 110–139).
Curato Nicole, 2017. "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism," *Journal of Contemporary Asi*, 47 (1): 142–53 [doi:10.1080/00472336.2016.1239751].
Dahlum Sirianne, 2018. "Students in the Streets: Education and Nonviolent Protest," *Comparative Political Studies* [doi: 10.1177/0010414018758761].
—, 2023. "Joining Forces: Social Coalitions and Democratic Revolutions," *Journal of Peace Research*, 60 (1): 42–57 [doi: 10.1177/00223433221138614].
Dahlum Sirianne, Carl Henrik Knutsen and Tore Wig, 2019. "Who Revolts? Empirically Revisiting the Social Origins of Democracy," *The Journal of Politics*, 81 (4): 1494–1499 [doi: 10.1086/704699].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

DAHLUM Sirianne and Tore WIG, 2021. "Chaos on Campus: Universities and Mass Political Protest," *Comparative Political Studies*, 54 (1): 3–32 [doi: 10.1177/0010414020919902].

DAVIS Diane E., 1999. "The Power of Distance: Re-Theorizing Social Movements in Latin America," *Theory and Society*, 28 (4): 585–638.

DESAI Ashwin, 2002. *We Are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York, NYU Press).

EARL Jennifer and Katrina KIMPORT, 2011. *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age (Acting with Technology) by Earl Jennifer Kimport Katrina (2011-03-04) Hardcover* (Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press).

EKIERT Grzegorz and Jan KUBIK, 1999. *Rebellious Civil Society Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press).

Ekiert GRZEGORZ, Elizabeth J. PERRY and Xiaojun YAN, eds, 2020. *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Movements* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

EL-MALLAKH Nelly, 2020. "How Do Protests Affect Electoral Choices? Evidence from Egypt," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 179: 299–322 [doi: 10.1016/j.jebo.2020.09.005].

Escobar ARTURO and Sonia E. ALVAREZ, eds, 1992. *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, Series in Political Economy and Economic Development in Latin America (Boulder, Westview Press).

FALLON Kathleen M., Liam SWISS and Jocelyn VITERNA, 2012. "Resolving the Democracy Paradox Democratization and Women's Legislative Representation in Developing Nations, 1975 to 2009," *American Sociological Review*, 77 (3): 380–408 [doi: 10.1177/0003122412443365].

FISHMAN Robert M., 2016. "Rethinking Dimensions of Democracy for Empirical Analysis: Authenticity, Quality, Depth, and Consolidation," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19 (1): 289–309 [doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-042114-015910].

—, 2019. *Democratic Practice: Origins of the Iberian Divide in Political Inclusion* (New York, Oxford University Press).

FRANTZ Erica, 2018. *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

FRASER Nancy, 2021. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *in* H. A. Giroux and P. McLaren, *Public space reader* (New York /London, Routledge: 58–80).

FUNG Archon and Erik Olin WRIGHT, 2003. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*, 4 (New York /London, Verso Books).

GANDHI Jennifer, 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship* (New York, Cambridge University Press).

GANDHI Jennifer and Adam PRZEWORSKI, 2007. "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies*, 40 (11): 1279–1301 [doi: 10.1177/0010414007305817].

GANZ Marshall, 2004. "Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements," *in* J. Goodwin and J. Jasper, eds, *Rethinking social movements: Structure, meaning, and emotion* (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: 177–198).

—, 2010. "Leading Change: Leadership, Organization, and Social Movements," *in* N. Nohira and R. Khurana, eds, *Handbook of leadership theory and practice*, 19 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard Business Review Press: 507–526).

GEDDES Barbara, Joseph WRIGHT and Erica FRANTZ, 2014. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics*, 12 (2): 313–331 [doi: 10.1017/S1537592714000851].

GIANPAOLO Baiocchi, 2003. *Radicals In Power: The Workers' Party (PT) and Experiments in Urban Democracy in Brazil* (New York, NY, Zed Books).

GIBSON Christopher L., 2019. *Movement-Driven Development: The Politics of Health and Democracy in Brazil* (Stanford, Stanford University Press).

GLEDITSCH Kristian S. and Mauricio RIVERA, 2015. "The Diffusion of Nonviolent Campaigns," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* [doi: 10.1177/0022002715603101].

GOLD Tomás and Alejandro M. PEÑA, 2021. "The Rise of the Contentious Right: Digitally Intermediated Linkage Strategies in Argentina and Brazil," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 63 (3): 93–118 [doi: 10.1017/lap.2021.23].

GREENE Samuel A. and Graeme B. ROBERTSON, 2020. "State-Mobilized Movements after Annexation of Crimea," *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Movements*, 193: 193–216.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

HAGGARD Stephan and Robert R. KAUFMAN, 2016. *Dictators and Democrats: Masses, Elites, and Regime Change* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

HAN Hahrie, 2014. *How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations and Leadership in the 21st Century* (Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press).

HANDLIN Sam, 2020. "Mirroring Opposition Threats: The Logic of State Mobilization in Bolivarian Venezuela," *Ruling by Other Means, Ed. Ekiert, Perry, and Yan* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press: 217–239).

—, 2016. "Mass Organization and the Durability of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes Evidence from Venezuela," *Comparative Political Studies*, 49 (9): 1238–1269 [doi:10.1177/0010414016628186].

HARRIS Adam S. and Erin HERN, 2019. "Taking to the Streets: Protest as an Expression of Political Preference in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 52 (8): 1169–1199 [doi: 10.1177/0010414018806540].

HARRIS Joseph, 2017. *Achieving Access: Professional Movements and the Politics of Health Universalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

HASSAN Mai, 2024. "Coordinated Dis-Coordination," *American Political Science Review*, 118 (1): 163–177.

HELLER Patrick, 2019. "Divergent Trajectories of Democratic Deepening: Comparing Brazil, India, and South Africa," *Theory and Society*, 48 (32) [doi: 10.1007/s11186-019-09351-7].

—, 2022. "Democracy in the Global South," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 48 (1): null [doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-030320-123449].

HELLMEIER Sebastian and Michael BERNHARD, 2023. "Regime Transformation From Below: Mobilization for Democracy and Autocracy From 1900 to 2021," *Comparative Political Studies*, 56 (12): 1858–1890 [doi: 10.1177/00104140231152793].

HELLMEIER Sebastian and Nils B. WEIDMANN, 2019. "Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro-Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes," *Comparative Political Studies* [doi: 10.1177/0010414019843559].

HEMMENT Julie, 2015. *Youth Politics in Putin's Russia: Producing Patriots and Entrepreneurs* (Bloomington, Minn./Indianapolis, Ind., Indiana University Press).

HUNTINGTON Samuel P., 1984. "Will More Countries Become Democratic?," *Political Science Quarterly*, 99 (2): 193–218 [doi: 10.2307/2150402].

—, 1993. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press).

INCLÁN María de la Luz, 2008. "From the ¡Ya Basta! To the Caracoles: Zapatista Mobilization under Transitional Conditions," *American Journal of Sociology*, 113 (5): 1316–1350 [doi:10.1086/525508].

KADIVAR MOHAMMAD Ali, 2017. "Preelection Mobilization and Electoral Outcome in Authoritarian Regimes," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 22 (3): 293–310.

—, 2018. "Mass Mobilization and the Durability of New Democracies," *American Sociological Review*, 83 (2): 390–417 [doi: 10.1177/0003122418759546].

KADIVAR Mohammad Ali, 2022. *Popular Politics and the Path to Durable Democracy* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press).

KADIVAR Mohammad Ali and Neal CAREN, 2016. "Disruptive Democratization: Contentious Events and Liberalizing Outcomes Globally, 1990–2004," *Social Forces*, 94 (3): 975–996.

KADIVAR Mohammad Ali and Neil KETCHLEY, 2018. "Sticks, Stones, and Molotov Cocktails: Unarmed Collective Violence and Democratization," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4: 1–16 [doi: 10.1177/2378023118773614].

KADIVAR Mohammad Ali, Adaner USMANI and Benjamin H. BRADLOW, 2020. "The Long March: Deep Democracy in Cross-National Perspective," *Social Forces*, 98 (3): 1311–1338 [doi: 10.1093/sf/soz050].

KENDALL-TAYLOR Andrea, Natasha LINDSTAEDT and Erica FRANTZ, 2020. *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes* (Oxford, UK/New York, NY, Oxford University Press).

KETCHLEY Neil, 2017. *Egypt in a Time of Revolution: Contentious Politics and the Arab Spring* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

KETCHLEY Neil and Christopher BARRIE, 2020. "Fridays of Revolution: Focal Days and Mass Protest in Egypt and Tunisia," *Political Research Quarterly*, 73 (2): 308–324 [doi: 10.1177/1065912919893463].

KETCHLEY Neil and Thoraya EL-RAYYES, 2020. "Unpopular Protest: Mass Mobilization and Attitudes to Democracy in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *The Journal of Politics* [doi: 10.1086/709298].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

KHANI Saber and Mohammad Ali KADIVAR, 2024. "Sanctuaries or Battlegrounds? State Penetration in Places of Worship, University Campuses, and State Bureaucracy for Pro-Government Mobilization: Evidence from Iran (2015–2019)," *Comparative Political Studies*, 57 (10): 1668–1702 [doi: 10.1177/00104140231194914].

KUNTZ Philipp and Mark R. THOMPSON, 2009. "More than Just the Final Straw: Stolen Elections as Revolutionary Triggers," *Comparative Politics*, 41 (3): 253–272.

KURAN Timur, 1991. "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," *World Politics*, 44 (01): 7 [doi: 10.2307/2010422].

—, 1995. *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press).

KURZMAN C. and E. LEAHEY, 2004. "Intellectuals and Democratization, 1905–1912 and 1989–19961," *American Journal of Sociology*, 109 (4): 937–986.

—, 2008. *Democracy Denied, 1905-1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press).

KYDD Andrew H., 2021. "Decline, Radicalization and the Attack on the US Capitol," *Violence: An International Journal*, 2 (1): 3–23 [doi: 10.1177/26330024211010043].

LACHAPELLE Jean, Steven LEVITSKY, Lucan A. WAY and Adam E. CASEY, 2020. "Social Revolution and Authoritarian Durability," *World Politics*: 1–44 [doi: 10.1017/S0043887120000106].

LAMBACH Daniel, Markus BAYER, Felix S. BETHKE, Matteo DRESSLER and Véronique DUDOUET, 2020. *Nonviolent Resistance and Democratic Consolidation* (Cham, Springer International Publishing).

LEE Cheol-Sung, 2012. "Associational Networks and Welfare States in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan," *World Politics*, 64 (3): 507–554 [doi: 10.1017/S0043887112000111].

—, 2016. "Going Underground: The Origins of Divergent Forms of Labor Parties in Recently Democratized Countries," *Sociological Theory*, 34 (3): 220–249.

LEVITSKY Steven and Lucan WAY, 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York, Cambridge University Press).

—, 2022. *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press).

LINZ Juan J., 1964. "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," *in* E. Allardt and Y. Littunen, eds, *Cleavages, Ideologies, and Party Systems* (Helsinki, The Westermarck Society).

—, 2000. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Pub).

LINZ Juan J. and Alfred STEPAN, 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press).

LOONEY Kristen E., 2020. *Mobilizing for Development: The Modernization of Rural East Asia* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press).

LÜHRMANN Anna and Staffan I. LINDBERG, 2019. "A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New about It?," *Democratization*, 26 (7): 1095–1113 [doi: 10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029].

MAKO Shamiran and Valentine M. MOGHADAM, 2021. *After the Arab Uprisings: Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press).

MANEKIN Devorah and Tamar MITTS, 2022. "Effective for Whom? Ethnic Identity and Nonviolent Resistance," *American Political Science Review*, 116 (1): 161–180 [doi: 10.1017/S0003055421000940].

MCKENNA Elizabeth. 2020. "Taxes and Tithes: The Organizational Foundations of Bolsonarismo," *International Sociology*, 35 (6):610–631. [doi:10.1177/0268580920949466].

MILLER Michael K., 2021. *Shock to the System: Coups, Elections, and War on the Road to Democratization* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

MOORE Barrington, 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 268 (Boston, Beacon Press).

NEPSTAD SHARON Erickson, 2011. *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press).

NING Rundong and David A. PALMER. 2020. "The Resurrection of Lei Feng: Rebuilding the Chinese Party-State's Infrastructure of Volunteer Mobilization," *in* Elizabeth Perry, Gzegorz Eckiert and Xiaojun Yan, eds, *Ruling by Other Means: State-Mobilized Social*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Movements (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press: 314–344).
O'Donnell Guillermo, 1993. "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Postcommunist Countries," *World Development*, 21 (8): 1355–1369 [doi: 10.1016/0305-750X(93)90048-E].
O'Donnell Guillermo and Philippe C. Schmitter, 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Vol. 4: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Maryland, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press).
Opp Karl-Dieter and Christiane Gern, 1993. "Dissident Groups, Personal Networks, and Spontaneous Cooperation: The East German Revolution of 1989," *American Sociological Review*, 58 (5): 659–680 [doi: 10.2307/2096280].
Paschel Tianna, [2016] 2018. *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil* (Princeton, NY, Princeton University Press).
Pearlman Wendy, 2021. "Mobilizing From Scratch: Large-Scale Collective Action Without Preexisting Organization in the Syrian Uprising," *Comparative Political Studies*, 54 (10): 1786–1817 [doi: 10.1177/0010414020912281].
Philpott Daniel, 2007. "Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion," *American Political Science Review*, 101 (3): 505–525.
Pinckney Jonathan, Charles Butcher and Jessica Maves Braithwaite, 2022. "Organizations, Resistance, and Democracy: How Civil Society Organizations Impact Democratization," *International Studies Quarterly*, 66 (1): sqab094 [doi: 10.1093/isq/sqab094].
Pinckney Jonathan C., 2020. *From Dissent to Democracy: The Promise and Perils of Civil Resistance Transitions: The Promise and Perils of Civil Resistance Transitions* (New York, Oxford University Press).
Pop-Eleches Grigore and Graeme B. Robertson, 2015. "Information, Elections, and Political Change," *Comparative Politics*, 47 (4): 459–495.
Della Porta Donatella, 2015. *Social Movements in Times of Austerity: Bringing Capitalism Back into Protest Analysis* (Cambridge, UK, Polity Press).
—, 2016. *Where Did the Revolution Go?: Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
Riedl Rachel Beatty, Dan Slater, Joseph Wong and Daniel Ziblatt, 2020. "Authoritarian-Led Democratization," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23 (1): null [doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-052318-025732].
Riley Dylan, 2005. "Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in Comparative Perspective," *American Sociological Review*, 70 (2): 288–310 [doi: 10.1177/000312240507000205].
—, 2010. *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870-1945* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press).
Robertson Graeme B., 2007. "Strikes and Labor Organization in Hybrid Regimes," *American Political Science Review*, 101 (4): 781–798 [doi: 10.1017/S0003055407070475].
—, 2011. *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia* (New York, Cambridge University Press).
Rosenfeld Bryn, 2017. "Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia," *American Political Science Review*, 111 (4): 637–652 [doi: 10.1017/S000305541700034X].
Ross Michael L., 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," *World Politics*, 53 (3): 325–361 [doi: 10.2307/25054153].
—, 2012. *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press).
Roychowdhury Poulami, 2020. *Capable Women, Incapable States: Negotiating Violence and Rights in India* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
Rueschemeyer Dietrich, Evelyne Huber Stephens and John D. Stephens, 1992. *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
Said Atef Shahat, 2023. *Revolution Squared: Tahrir, Political Possibilities, and Counter-revolution in Egypt* (Durham, Duke University Press).
Sandbrook Richard, Marc Edelman, Patrick Heller and Judith Teichman, 2007. *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery: Origins, Challenges, Prospects* (Cambridge, UK /New-York, Cambridge University Press).
Sanyal Paromita, 2014. *Credit to Capabilities: A Sociological Study of Microcredit Groups in India* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

SCHEDLER Andreas, 2013. *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

SCHOCK Kurt, 2005. *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press).

SEIDMAN Gay W., 1994. *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985* (Berkeley, University of California Press).

SLATER D., 2009. "Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites and Democratic Mobilization in Southeast Asia1," *American Journal of Sociology*, 115 (1): 203–254.

SLATER Dan and Joseph WONG, 2022. *From Development to Democracy: The Transformations of Modern Asia*. (Princeton, NY, Princeton University Press).

SMITH Benjamin, 2004. "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960–1999," *American Journal of Political Science*, 48 (2): 232–246.

STEPHAN Maria J. and Erica CHENOWETH, 2008. "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict," *International Security*, 33 (1): 7–44 [doi: 10.1162/isec.2008.33.1.7].

TEORELL Jan, 2010. *Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972-2006* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

TILLY Charles and Sidney TARROW, 2015. *Contentious Politics* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press).

TOFT Monica Duffy, Daniel PHILPOTT and Timothy Samuel SHAH, 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York, W. W. Norton & Company).

TREJO Guillermo, 2014. "The Ballot and the Street: An Electoral Theory of Social Protest in Autocracies," *Perspectives on Politics*, 12 (2): 332–352 [doi: 10.1017/S1537592714000863].

TUFEKCI Zeynep, 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven /London, Yale University Press).

USMANI Adaner, 2018. "Democracy and Class Struggle," *American Journal of Sociology*, 124 (3): 664–704.

VITERNA Jocelyn and Kathleen M. FALLON, 2008. "Democratization, Women's Movements, and Gender-Equitable States: A Framework for Comparison," *American Sociological Review*, 73 (4): 668–689.

WAMPLER Brian, 2015. *Activating Democracy in Brazil: Popular Participation, Social Justice, and Interlocking Institutions* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press).

WEIDMANN Nils B. and Espen Geelmuyden RØD, 2019. *The Internet and Political Protest in Autocracies* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press).

WEISS Jessica Chen, 2014. *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

WEYLAND Kurt, 2010. "The Diffusion of Regime Contention in European Democratization, 1830-1940," *Comparative Political Studies*, 43 (8–9): 1148–1176 [doi: 10.1177/0010414010370439].

—, 2014. *Making Waves: Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America since the Revolutions of 1848* (Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press).

WOOD Elisabeth Jean, 2001. "An Insurgent Path to Democracy Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests, and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador," *Comparative Political Studies*, 34 (8): 862–888 [doi: 10.1177/0010414001034008002].

—, 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (New York, Cambridge University Press).

YUEN Samson, 2023. "Tolerant Solidarity With Violent Protesters: Evidence From a Survey Experiment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 67 (9): 1731–1756 [doi: 10.1177/00220027231154451].

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975626100435 Published online by Cambridge University Press