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October 2018

Working Paper

SERIES 2018:79

THE VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
DEPT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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

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29<sup>th</sup> October, 2018

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\*This paper is the result of a collaborative effort and authors are therefore listed in alphabetic order. Nonetheless, Laura Maxwell and Matthew C. Wilson deserve special credits for doing most of the data analyses and writing. This research project was supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Grant M13-0559:1, PI: Staffan I. Lindberg, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; by Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation to Wallenberg Academy Fellow Staffan I. Lindberg, Grant 2013.0166, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; by European Research Council, Grant 724191, PI: Staffan I. Lindberg, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation to Patrik Lindenfors, Grant 2017,0049; as well as by internal grants from the Vice-Chancellor's office, the Dean of the College of Social Sciences, and the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg. We performed simulations and other computational tasks using resources provided by the Notre Dame Center for Research Computing (CRC) through the High Performance Computing section and the Swedish National Infrastructure for Computing (SNIC) at the National Supercomputer Centre in Sweden, SNIC 2017/1-407 and 2017/1-68. We specifically acknowledge the assistance of In-Saeng Suh at CRC and Johan Raber at SNIC in facilitating our use of their respective systems. The authors thank participants of the V-Dem Research Conference (5/2018) and the APSA conference (8/2018) for their helpful comments.

## **Abstract**

What explains successful democratization? Answering this requires that researchers identify not only countries that successfully transitioned to democracy, but also those that began to liberalize—that initiated institutional reforms that move it towards democracy—but failed to transition. In this paper, we propose a solution that allows researchers more fully to capture the liberalization period and then classify these episodic events according to their outcome: successful, failed, or censored episodes of democratization. We identify the appropriate procedures and data necessary for operationalization of such episodes and present the first ever dataset of the full universe of democratization episodes 1900-2017, compare them to existing measures and assess construct validity. We also demonstrate the value of this approach showing how we can substantially improve upon what we know about democratization, including their relationship to development, state capacity, underlying temporal features, and the relationship between patterns of liberalization and whether a country successfully transitions to democracy.

# Introduction

What explains successful democratization? Answering this requires that researchers identify not only countries that successfully transitioned to democracy, but also those that began to liberalize—that initiated institutional reforms that move it towards democracy—but failed to transition. In this paper, we propose a solution that allows researchers more fully to capture the liberalization period and then classify these episodic events according to their outcome: successful, failed, or censored episodes of democratization.

Foundational works on the processes of democratization, in combination with observed global patterns, facilitated the growth of a burgeoning literature on “transitology” in the 1980s and 1990s. A key finding in the literature is that regime transitions are highly contextual and indeterminate in nature (O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986; Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1988). The 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal set in motion a reversal from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe, and Latin America followed suit beginning with the Dominican Republic in 1978. After the tumultuous events of 1989, the “winds of change” swept over nearly 100 other countries in the former Eastern Bloc, Africa, and Asia (Neher & Marlay, 1995; van de Walle & Bratton, 1997). In their wake, the study of transitions took on increasing methodological sophistication, resulting in numerous new insights on the structural, institutional, and behavioral correlates of democratization (e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Ansell & Samuels, 2010; Bernhard, Nordstrom & Reenock, 2001; Boix & Stokes, 2003; Geddes, 1999; Haggard & Kaufmann, 2016; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2003; Miller, 2015; Pevehouse, 2002; Przeworski et al., 2000; Reenock, Staton & Radean, 2013; Ross, 2012; Svobik, 2008; Teorell, 2010).

Notwithstanding conceptual and methodological advances that helped to inform our understanding of the causes and consequences of democratization, contemporary approaches seem to have forgotten a fundamental insight of the earlier transitions literature—that liberalization involves complex processes in which many factors interact in long chains of relationships with uncertain outcomes. Regression analyses, for example, typically approach this problem by trying to isolate the average effects of a small number of factors. However, doing so requires a drastic simplification of a complex process. Ignoring that democratization is the result of many factors interacting with each other, typically over an extended period of time, obscures how democracy actually develops. This does not mean that existing studies and approaches are irrelevant only that certain approaches are limited in how much they are able to reveal.

Contemporary research on the subject is also constrained by a reliance on *transitions-as-events* when explaining the processes of democratization. This results in the potential misspecification of observations in which countries liberalized but failed to fully transition to democracy. Studies that compare cases that transitioned to democracy to those that did not require the assumption that the within-category subjects are homogeneous and

that the effects are symmetrical across categories. To the extent that cases that did not transition to democracy differ from those that did, this approach risks leading to erroneous conclusions. This well-known problem—often called Simpson’s paradox—refers to making incorrect inferences by failing to distinguish between different observations and treating them as similar to one another (Blyth, 1972; Wagner, 1982).

If cases that liberalized but failed to transition to democracy are meaningfully different from those that never took steps towards liberalization, the empirical trends that distinguish these two distinct types may disappear or reverse as a result of combining them in the same category. Using regression analysis to estimate the effects of a treatment on a sample that combines cases that liberalized but never transitioned with cases that never liberalized makes it difficult to distinguish between factors that increase the *likelihood* of a transition towards democracy and those that determine its ultimate success. Further, denoting cases that failed to transition to democracy after a period of liberalization is also critical for properly specifying the relevant counterfactuals in analyses that aim to explain both the process of democratization and the occurrence of a transition. The approach we advance in this paper addresses these issues.

Liberalization is inextricably connected to the prospects of regime change, but political openings do not necessarily lead to transitions to democracy. For example, the literature on competitive autocracies and electoral authoritarianism has pointed to the potentially stabilizing effects of liberalization on autocratic rule (Brumberg, 2002; Bunce & Wolchik, 2010; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Magaloni, 2008; Schedler, 2013). Political reforms have also frequently occurred without the explicit aim of creating democracy, but democratization has been an unintended consequence (Treisman, 2017). At the early stages of liberalization, the intent of such efforts is often unknown, and the outcome is highly uncertain. Thus, identifying liberalization events and distinguishing their trajectories is therefore crucial to understanding the key differences between processes that stabilize autocracy and those that make a transition to democracy more likely.

In short, the focus on transitions to democracy or assumed-to-be equivalent changes along an interval measure, and not on the processes and the universe of *potential* transitions that can result, limits our ability to answer questions that make up core elements in the research on democratic transitions the earlier literature pointed to as critical: *When a country moves from autocracy towards democracy (or vice versa), which elements tend to come first? Are there common patterns by which countries liberalize that fail to lead to democracy?* For policy purposes, answering such questions is essential: *Which determinants of democracy are most exogenous—affecting other components—and least endogenous—dependent on other components—that would be the ideal targets for democracy promotion?*

To address these issues we suggest a new approach to identifying periods of liberalization that had the potential to lead to democratization but which were not always successful.

This approach captures the fundamental uncertainty of the early stages of regime change (the “liberalization” phase) and avoids the potential for sample bias resulting from focusing exclusively on cases of successful transitions. It also avoids the assumptions of homogeneous unit and symmetric effects that characterize most TSCS specifications, opening up a range of new possibilities for quantitative analysis. Our approach brings together the concepts of liberalization and transition in the concept of *democratization episodes* and distinguishes between successful and failed democratization outcomes. A democratization episode refers to the period of time over which a regime becomes significantly more democratic, rendering a more liberal autocratic regime or even facilitating a short-lived or successful transition to democracy. Thus, it includes liberalization—a period of political opening in an autocratic setting—and the potential for a transition to democracy that may succeed or fail.

Using estimates of the institutional prerequisites for democracy, as outlined by Dahl (1971), and whether a country held elections, we construct a dataset of democratization episodes that entail one of four outcomes, the first three of which we consider *failed*: a period of liberalization followed by (1) a return to closed autocracy; (2) stagnation and the institutionalization of electoral authoritarianism; (3) a short-lived transition to democracy only to revert back to autocracy quickly, and (4) the *successful* transition to democracy. The coding rules that we introduce establishes the full universe of cases that allows scholars to place bounds around the beginning and end of such episodes and to compare both successful and failed democratization outcomes. To increase transparency and ease replication, we also provide, as a public good, an ease-to-use interface—available as an R-package—that allows users to define their own inclusion parameters.

In this paper, we first outline the conceptualization and operationalization procedures we use to construct our sample of episodes with data from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) for the period 1900 to 2017 (Coppedge et al. 2017, 2018). We describe the resulting set of episodes, comparing them to existing measures and assessing construct validity. We also demonstrate the value of this approach for reevaluating findings in the literature on democratization. Specifying a more complete set of potential cases and denoting the period over which changes occurred can substantially improve upon what we know about democratization, including their relationship to development, state capacity, underlying temporal features, and the relationship between patterns of liberalization and whether a country successfully transitions to democracy.

## Conceptualizing Episodes of Democratization

The key concept of interest is democratization. In broad terms, democratization refers to a series of substantial institutional changes that improve the democratic characteristics of a regime. These institutional changes may or may not result in the transformation of the regime from an autocracy to a democracy. In the classic literature on political

transitions, this is a process that first involves *liberalization*—loosening restrictions under autocracy—and then a transition to democratic practices (e.g., O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead 1986).

The notion of a clearly delineated transition to democracy is commonly employed in quantitative analyses of democratization, which use dichotomous measures to indicate regime change and calculate regime survival (Boix, Miller & Rosato, 2013; Boix & Stokes, 2003; Przeworski et al., 2000). These prior approaches often rely on minimal criteria to qualify as a democracy and represent transitions as a "switch in time" that occurs once a country fulfills basic criteria. These binary representations of democratization, however, mask important qualities that exist alongside institutional practices and affect the extent to which they reinforce democratic traits. Others take democratization to mean any move towards a more democratic regime, denoted by increases between a theoretical minimum and maximum on a latent scale (e.g., Lindberg 2009).<sup>1</sup> However, without a theoretically justified threshold for where on a scale a country becomes a democracy it is nearly impossible to distinguish liberalization from transition. As a result, this approach has the potential to confound traits that make countries more democratic (liberalization) with those that are associated with a country ultimately becoming a democracy.

One way to draw on the strengths of both of these approaches is through the concept of *democratization episodes*. We define this as sustained periods of significant institutional changes in which an autocratic regime becomes more democratic, which *may* or *may not* lead to it meeting minimal requirements to be considered a democracy.<sup>2</sup> This conceptualization has the advantage of taking into account liberalization (movement towards an open society) while distinguishing it from the outcome (whether a country surpasses some threshold to be considered a democracy). As Elkins (2000) notes, a graded measure of democracy enables one to identify incremental effects that would otherwise not be observed through the use of a dichotomous measure. It also eschews the use of a specific—often arbitrary—cut-off value that can affect the strength of an observed relationship. Notwithstanding the value of using the richness of incremental data to test the effect of democracy level and democratization, certain research questions require dichotomizing or categorizing information to delineate the sample of outcomes in which we are interested (Collier & Adcock, 1999). The coding rules that we apply thus create a bounded set of cases that enable us to identify periods of liberalization and examine whether or not they successfully democratized.

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<sup>1</sup>For a review of indices of democracy, see Munck & Verkuilen (2002) and Högström (2013).

<sup>2</sup>This paper is not concerned with the process of a democracy further developing from an electoral democracy to a liberal democracy.



## Operationalizing Episodes

We rely on the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data (Coppedge et al. 2017, Pemstein et al., 2017) to operationalize successful and failed democratization episodes. Version 8 of the V-Dem country-year dataset provides data on about 350 specific indicators for some 180 polities from 1900 to 2017. We base our approach on Dahl’s notion of *polyarchy*, which requires that electoral democracies not only hold multi-party elections, but that these take place in a free and fair political context and include pluralistic sources of information, and the freedoms of expression and association (Dahl, 1971). V-Dem’s electoral democracy index (EDI) builds on Dahl’s (1971, 1989) conceptualization, measuring each of the associated institutions with 25 expert-coded indicators that identify the extent to which officials are elected and the extent of suffrage, the quality of elections, freedom of association, and freedom of expression (Teorell et al., 2018).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the EDI, our operationalization process also takes advantage of the Regimes of the World classification scheme (RoW), which uses V-Dem data and the EDI to classify country-years into four regime-types: closed autocracies, electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, and liberal democracies (Lührmann, Tannenbergh & Lindberg, 2018).<sup>4</sup> Identifying and distinguishing between democratization episodes involves four steps: (1) restricting the sample to liberalization that begins in non-democracies, setting criteria to denote (2) the beginning and (3) the end of a liberalization period, and (4) determining whether liberalization resulted in successful democratization. We discuss these procedures below.

### The Inclusion Criterion

A democratization episode is the period of time in which progressive institutional changes take place. Democratization can be gradual, occurring in a piecemeal fashion across a long period of time, or sudden and dramatic. Nonetheless, they must start in non-democratic regimes. This serves as an inclusion condition. It allows us to rule out cases of electoral democracies becoming more democratic after the initial transition to an electoral democracy. Therefore, using the RoW measure, we restrict the sample to episodes that began in closed or electoral autocracies.

Limiting the focus to liberalization occurring in non-democratic regimes is an important condition. Given the goal of studying democratization and making proper comparisons between democratization episodes that succeed and those that fail, cases must share a similar starting point. This also avoids a problem in standard TSCS designs, in which an

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<sup>3</sup>Originally eight, Dahl narrowed them down to six: (1) free, fair, and frequent elections that transfer legitimate authority to (2) elected officials; (3) freedom of expression; (4) the existence of and access to alternative information, separate from official government sources; (5) associational autonomy; and (6) inclusive citizenship.

<sup>4</sup>The V-Dem variable name for the electoral democracy index is *v2x\_polyarchy*, while the V-Dem variable tag for the regimes of the world classification scheme is *v2x\_regime*.

improvement in an already relatively liberal democracy is assumed to mean the same and have the same relationship to explanatory factors as an equivalent magnitude of change by which a closed autocracy becomes a competitive electoral regime.

### From Potential to Manifest Episodes

The second step of the identification process involves detecting *potential* democratization episodes. We do so using empirically-grounded changes in the EDI. Notably, there is no dataset that explicitly identifies periods of liberalization. Existing indices such V-Dem’s EDI and the index of democracy from the Polity Project (Marshall, Gurr & Jaggers, 2017) can be used, but this requires imposing a threshold for which there is no consensus or accepted practice. Our approach aims to improve on this by outlining an explicit set of criteria for placing bounds around the beginning and end of liberalization. As with any sensitive scale-measure, the EDI can register small, inconsequential changes from year to year.

In order to make our measure of democratization episodes maps closely to our conceptualization, it is necessary to remove cases that are not true episodes of democratization. To do so, we proceed in two steps. To identify the beginning of a *potential* episode, we first evaluate whether there was any positive change in a country’s EDI score of at least 0.01 (on a scale from 0-1) from  $year_{t-1}$  to  $year_t$ . We use the 0.01 threshold in order to capture meaningful institutional change, rather than noise in the measure. While 0.01 may seem like a small change, the majority of the yearly changes in the EDI fall between -0.01 and 0.01.<sup>5</sup> The positive 0.01 threshold captures 2,135 country-years.

Second, to qualify as a *manifest* democratization episode it is necessary that there is a sufficient aggregate change in the EDI over the entire episode. We consider a sufficient shift during the episode to mean that the initial EDI value must be significantly different from the highest value in an episode based on the standard deviation,  $x_{t=1} + \sigma_{t=1} < x_{t=T} - \sigma_{t=T}$ , where  $x$  is the EDI value and  $T$  is the length of the episode in years. While the standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) of the EDI varies quite a bit depending on the consensus of the country-experts, on average this condition requires that there be about a minimum of 0.05 total change in the EDI score, which covers 5% of the possible range of the variable. We drop potential episodes that do not meet this criterion. Based these criteria, we identify 316 *manifest* democratization episodes during the period from 1900 to 2017.

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<sup>5</sup>79% of all V-Dem country-year observations (13,395 observations out of the 17,604 observations) see a change in their EDI scores between -0.01 and 0.01; 5,702 country-years register a positive change of at least 0.01 from the year prior, which is about 34% of cases. The median positive change is 0.006 while the mean is 0.025, suggesting that the distribution is highly skewed by a few large positive changes.

## Denoting Episode End

To identify whether the end of an episode resulted in a success or a failure, one must first establish when it ended. Thus, the third step is to determine when a democratization episode ends. Operationally, our approach defines three ways to determine an episode's end point. The first is that there are ten years of stagnation, meaning that the EDI score does not change  $\geq 0.01$  in either direction for 10 consecutive years. While seemingly arbitrary, ten years typically allow for two consecutive elections in electoral regimes and enough time in others to reasonably consider any future changes to be part of a new trend rather than a continuation. Stagnation can occur in democratic as well as in authoritarian regimes, and can thus be associated with either success or failure.

The second condition for episode termination is a sudden, substantial decrease in either the EDI or RoW measure. In the case of the continuous EDI, a one-year decrease of  $\geq 0.1$  constitutes a sudden, substantial decrease, as it is approximately 2 standard deviations of the yearly change distribution (0.051) and is thus significantly different from 0 based on standard 95% confidence intervals. While this type of episode-end can indicate a failure to democratize, it is important to recognize that sudden drops can also occur and terminate episodes in democracies. For example, a country that democratized and quickly reached an EDI score of 0.85 could drop down to 0.75; it would stay above the bar for an electoral democracy, but it would no longer qualify as democratizing. A third disruption to a democratization episode is a reversion to closed autocracy from any advancement made on the RoW measure. Therefore, when the yearly change in RoW is negative *and* results in a value of 0, the democratization episode is terminated.

## Success or Failure?

The fourth and final step is to delineate successful, failed, and censored democratization episodes. To be classified as *successful*, a democratization episode must meet the following two conditions: (1) institutional changes that are substantial enough to make the regime transition to an electoral democracy, and (2) these gains are maintained during a period of time that makes it meaningful. We argue that maintaining the democratic quality of institutions at the level required to be classified as an electoral democracy and practicing the processes of electoral democracy over at least two consecutive elections (either two legislative or presidential, or including one constituent election) is evidence that an episode was successful. Thus, episodes where coups or a swift return to autocracy occur after briefly achieving electoral democracy are not counted as successful.

As discussed above, *failed* episodes can be one of three mutually exclusive kinds. The first is when a country improved significantly but then fell back to being a closed autocracy. This is indicated by the third rule, stipulated above, for when an episode ends. The second type of failure results from a process in which a country improved significantly

on the electoral democracy index, but the process stalled for ten years and did not reach the threshold to be considered an electoral democracy on the RoW measure. We identify cases that failed due to stalling (*stagnation*) by examining the nature of the RoW measure throughout the duration of the episode. In order to be considered a failed episode, the country must never become an electoral democracy during the episode ( $v2x\_row \leq 1$ ), while at the same time it is not classified as a closed autocracy in the RoW measure for the entire duration of the episode. The third way for a democratization episode to fail is by briefly reaching the threshold for electoral democracy but reverting to an authoritarian regime before completing two consecutive elections as an electoral democracy. The criteria here are identical to the successful episode, except that the regime dropped back to an electoral or closed autocracy on the RoW scale within two election cycles. The plots in Figure 1 illustrates these potential outcomes.

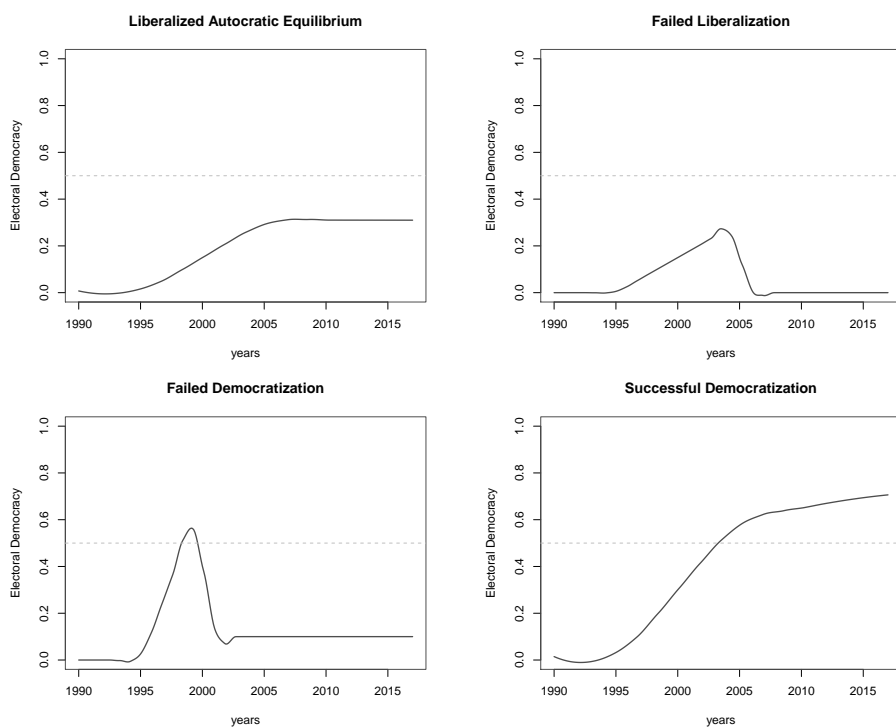


Figure 1: Possible Outcomes of Liberalization Events

Identifying censored cases enables scholars to systematically compare the effect of including or omitting censored episodes as a robustness test and to inform inferences about recent democratization processes. Similar to successful episodes, truncation must occur after classification to capture only the years that results in the movement away from autocracy. In practice, this means that an episode concludes either when the transition to  $RoW \geq 1$  occurs, or when the final upward movement of 0.01 on the polyarchy index occurs, whichever comes later. As with most time series data, the problem of right-censorship occurs as a result of our construction of episodes. A country may not have achieved successful democratization (not yet held two consecutive elections under democratic

conditions), but also not have failed based on the criteria outlined above. Further, because a democratization episode conceptually involves moving towards democracy, we truncate them to capture only the years that results in the movement from autocracy towards greater democracy. Operationally, this means that an episode concludes either the year after the transition to electoral democracy ( $\text{RoW} \geq 2$ ) occurs, or when the final upward movement of 0.01 on polyarchy occurs, whichever is later.

## Descriptives

According to the coding rules described above, we identified 316 democratization episodes taking place in 150 countries over 117 years (1900 to 2017). We list information about each of the 316 episodes in Online Appendix B. We identify 13 ongoing (*censored*) episodes that cannot be conclusively classified as either failed or successful, 120 successful democratization episodes occurring in 99 countries, and 183 failed democratization episodes across 97 countries. Of these 183 episodes of failed democratization, 70 (38.2%) failed due to stagnation, 64 (35%) failed by never reaching electoral democracy and experiencing a swift autocratization to terminate the period of liberalization, and 49 (26.8%) failed by experiencing a brief period of electoral democracy, but quickly retreating back to autocracy.

Of the 32 countries in the V-Dem dataset without a democratization episode, 3 maintained democratic rule for the entire period, 22 maintained consistent autocratic rule for the entire period and 7 experienced a break in their existence, resulting in no continuous transition.<sup>6</sup> We also conducted a sensitivity analysis of the criteria that we used to identify episodes (Online Appendix C), finding the sample to be largely robust to alternative threshold values for inclusion. More specifically, while the country-years differ, running 161,051 unique combinations of threshold values captures all episodes identified with our initial thresholds, but suggests three additional episodes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Denmark, Iceland, Norway).

The concept of a democratization episode we lay out captures quite a bit of variation within the failed and successful categories, both in duration and magnitude. Indeed, from prior research—both case study and large-N analyses, one thing is clear: in some contexts successful democratization processes are very swift, while in other cases these processes are much more protracted and gradual. Figure 2 presents four countries that exemplify these different patterns, using our conceptualization and operationalization procedures. As the

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<sup>6</sup>The democratic countries are Australia, Iceland, New Zealand and Switzerland, and the closed autocracies are Bahrain, Eritrea, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Palestine/British Mandate, Palestine/Gaza, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Swaziland and United Arab Emirates. Armenia, German Democratic Republic, Iceland, Montenegro, Palestine/West Bank, Ukraine and Uzbekistan were classified as electoral autocracies for periods of time, but experienced a break in their existence, resulting in no continuous transition to or from closed autocracy.

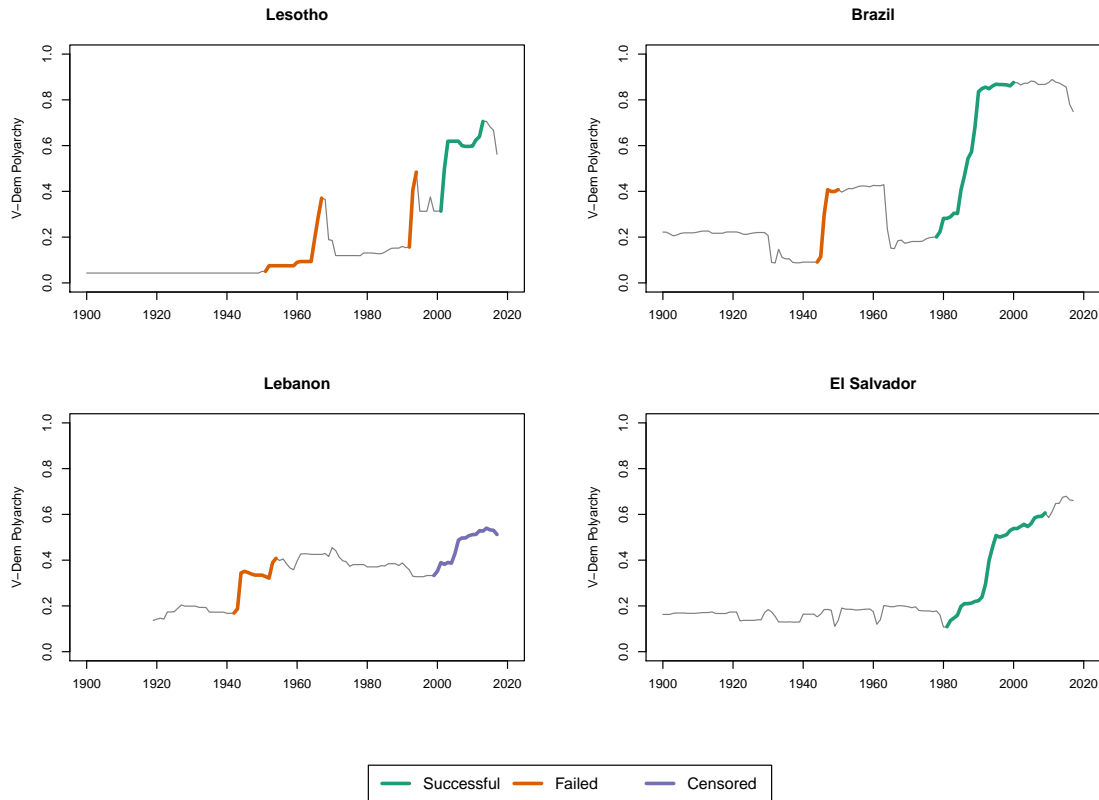


Figure 2: Typical patterns in democratization episodes

figure shows, the case of El Salvador in the 1980s-2000 was more protracted than many others, such as Brazil in the late 1980s and Lesotho in the early 2000s, where successful democratization covered a greater magnitude of change, relative to El Salvador, and did so over a shorter period.

Regarding failed episodes, the difference between swift versus gradual change also appears. Even within the same country, these two types of episodes occur; in Lesotho, the first attempt at democratization in the 1950s began quite gradual with no major movement until the tenth year of the episode. Later, in 1994, Lesotho experienced very swift democratization efforts (both of which were followed by an immediate backslide to autocracy). These examples also illuminate the different types of failure. Brazil and Lebanon in the late 1940s experienced episodes of liberalization that resulted in a prolonged state of liberalized autocracy, while both failed episodes in Lesotho resulted in a swift reversal of the liberal gains made during the episode. Lebanon, from the 2000s to present, is an example of a censored episode in which the outcome is yet unknown.

Of the 120 successful democratization episodes, the average episode last 6.95 years; however, 41.7% are swift, reaching electoral democracy in 3 years or less from when the episode began. Among 183 failed episodes the pattern is similar, with 68 cases (37.1%)

becoming electoral autocracies within 3 years of the episode's start, with an average episode duration of 5.31 years. The record length is held by Mali, which took 17 years to move from closed autocracy to electoral autocracy. While there were observable liberalization efforts occurring over the entire span from 1945 to 1961, the episode was, nevertheless, a failure. This variety in both failed and successful episodes indicates that duration and magnitude are important features to consider when comparing episodes to one another.

## **Comparison to existing data on transitions**

As mentioned earlier, there are several different approaches that researchers have used to identify when a country transitions to a democracy. One approach is to code a country as a democracy when it satisfies a set of criteria. Two of the most utilized measures that take this approach to classification are Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2012, hereafter BMR) and Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010, hereafter CGV). Both include some indicator of the concept of democracy. BMR code a country a democracy if it meets two criteria: the executive and legislature are popularly elected and a majority of adult men have the right to vote. CGV classify a country a democracy if the executive and legislature are popularly elected in multiparty elections and alternation in office occurs under similar rules. Both of the measures are dichotomous, and researchers often use them to indicate the year in which a transition to democracy occurred, as well as whether there was a transition from democracy to some form of autocratic rule.

While the BMR coding rules do not perfectly align with those CGV use, their focus on free and fair elections at the national level result in their years of transition aligning quite often. As seen with the examples of Ghana and Cyprus in Figure 3, the two coding schemes perfectly align in two of the four transitions. And although they disagree on the timing of transition for successful episodes that we identified in each country, these indicators remain within 6 years of each other. As a means of validation, and to identify differences in the samples of cases, we compare the democratization episodes created by our coding rules to the transitions indicated by each of the two measures.

Of the successful episodes, BMR coded roughly 83% as democratized at some point during the episode that we identified. However, BMR also coded 38% of failed episodes as democratized, for which their dichotomous coding has an accuracy of about 61% (i.e., only 61% of the cases they coded as democratized were successful by our standards). That is not to say that these transitions did not succeed in reaching minimal levels of participation and contestation, but that often these transitions to democracy did not qualify as electoral democracies. Likewise, CGV coded roughly 89% of the successful episodes as democratized at some point. However, CGV coded 45% of failed as democratized as well, for which their dichotomous coding has an accuracy of about 54% (i.e., only 54% of the cases they coded as democratized were successful by our standards). Although they met the criteria

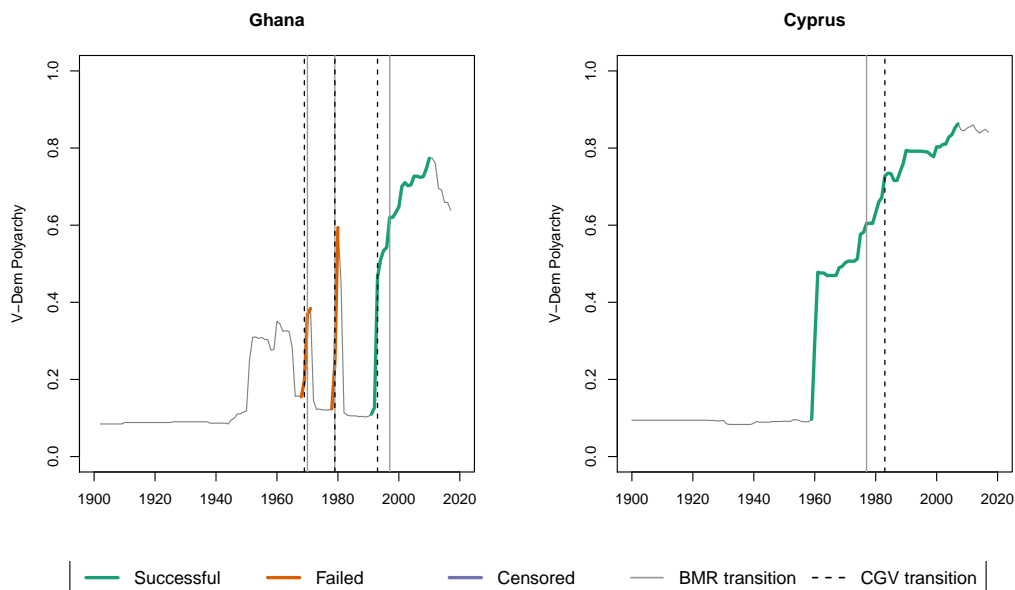


Figure 3: Example episodes with transitions coded by BMR (2012) and CGV (2010)

outlined by CGV to be considered a transition to democracy, the transition did not result in a stable regime as is required in our definition of a successful democratization episode.

Another approach to indicating democratic transitions is to use a continuous index that combines information on various dimensions. One example is the Polity score from the Polity IV Project (Marshall, Gurr & Jaggers, 2017). Ranging from -10 to 10, with higher values indicating more democratic states, Polity scores are aggregate estimates of constraints on executive authority, the competitiveness and openness of electoral participation, and executive recruitment. Concerning regime classification, the Polity project suggests a three part categorization scheme: countries with scores between -10 and -6 are autocracies, those with scores between -5 and 5 are “anocracies,” and regimes with scores between 6 and 10 are democracies. While this classification scheme is used widely throughout the comparative and international relations literatures, a prominent critique of this approach is that the choice of cut-off is somewhat arbitrary.

To determine how selecting different thresholds affects the inclusion of cases, we compared the number of episodes that we observed across values of the Polity score. As Figure 4 illustrates, the proportion of successful episodes that we identified met or surpassed Polity values up to and including 6. Around 99% of democratization episodes that we coded as successful reached or exceeded 0, while 90% reached a 6 or higher on the Polity index. In contrast, the proportion of failed democratization episodes that met higher thresholds falls precipitously across the index—only 63% and 27% of failed episodes ever obtained values of 0 or 6, respectively. Notably, comparing the proportion of successful episodes captured by various thresholds on the Polity index suggests that 6



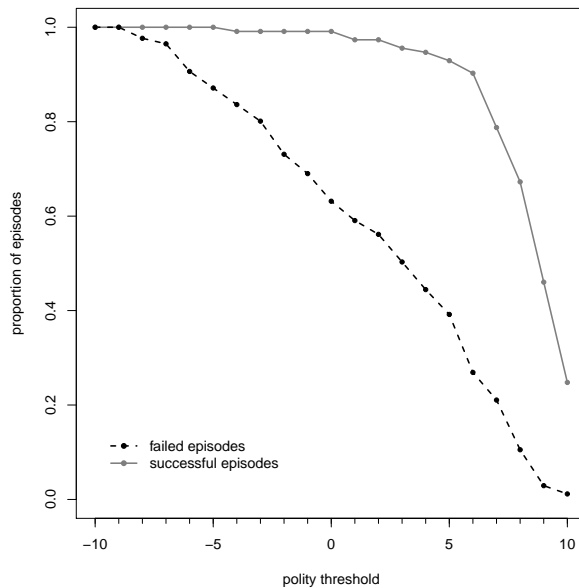


Figure 4: Proportion of episodes that met or exceeded different Polity values

is an appropriate delimiter of those countries that successfully became democracies and those that did not.

Comparing our sample of democratization episodes to alternative methods for denoting a transition highlights three important differences between approaches. First, our episodic approach incorporates yearly observations before and after transitions that vary considerably in duration, suggesting that they capture different paths to the moment of transition. This allows for systematic investigation of the endogenous development of democratic features that lead up to and sustain a democratic transition. Second, as the case of Ghana (Figure 3) shows, the differentiation between failed and successful democratization attempts is important and lacking from the other transition-centric coding schemes. To be able to understand how the process of democratization differs for episodes that result in stable democracy and those that revert to authoritarianism in a systematic manner, researchers must take this distinction into account.

Finally, the detection of failed episodes that never reached the point of free and fair elections are absent from existing measures of transition. This makes sense when attempting to understand the nature of regime change, but for questions regarding the sequence of institutional development that leads to failed or successful democratic outcomes, it is imperative that researchers identify these stunted democratization attempts. With classification schemes that simply code a transition without noting if there is a subsequent consolidation of democracy, researchers cannot evaluate differences between successful and failed democratization efforts. Thus, understanding the conditions at the onset of an episode and the changes that occurred during an episode and determined its success is a novel contribution of this approach to measuring democratization.

## Evaluating face validity: Examples from Latin America

In addition to the relationship of our coding rules to other measures of the same phenomenon—or the criterion validity of our approach, we are also concerned with the extent to which the episodes we identify reflect reality in a sample of cases (Adcock & Collier, 2001). We assess the content validity of our approach by comparing the set of outcomes designated by our coding rules to descriptive expectations regarding the appropriateness of fit. Specifically, we examine the validity of the cases that our coding rules designated as democratization episodes, but do not explore cases that potentially should have been coded but were not. Using qualitative information about the events that transpired over each democratization episode, we evaluated the 53 episodes that occurred in Latin America. Our selection of cases within the same region aims to leverage these countries' similar historical experiences and geographic and demographic characteristics to ensure a standard of comparison across cases. Here, we explore in-depth the various democratization episodes that occurred in four countries: Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. As depicted in Figure 5, these cases are representative of the different types of episodes created by our coding rules.

We focus first on the more complex case of Argentina (the upper left panel in Figure 5). As this plot shows, between 1900 and 2017, there were seven democratization episodes in Argentina, only two of which were successful. The first episode (1912 to 1926) maps closely to the enactment of universal male suffrage in 1912 and secret-ballots in 1916, the first election of President Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1916 and the second consecutive election in 1922 that resulted in the election of Marcelo T. de Alvear. This successful episode ends just before the re-election of Yrigoyen in 1928, after which we see a sharp drop in Argentina's EDI score, the product of a military coup that deposed President Yrigoyen from office in 1930.

Shortly thereafter, in 1933, we see an uptick in Argentina's EDI score. Argentina saw the rise of a new political alliance, *Concordancia*, in 1932, which helped assuage the military's political concerns. While promising in the beginning, political persecutions of opposition parties, electoral fraud, and pervasive government corruption mired this liberalization period. This failed democratization episode ended in 1940, the last year that there was a significant increase ( $\geq 0.01$ ) in Argentina's EDI score before the bottom dropped out due to another military coup in 1943.

We see another short-lived, and failed, Argentine democratization episode beginning in 1947 and ending in 1948. This period corresponds with the first election of Juan Perón in 1946, and the drafting of a new constitution in 1947, which granted women the right to vote. It ended in 1947, as Argentina's EDI score dropped due to the systematic imprisonment of political opponents of President Perón, the suppression of independent newspapers, and provisions in the new constitution that strengthened the power of the

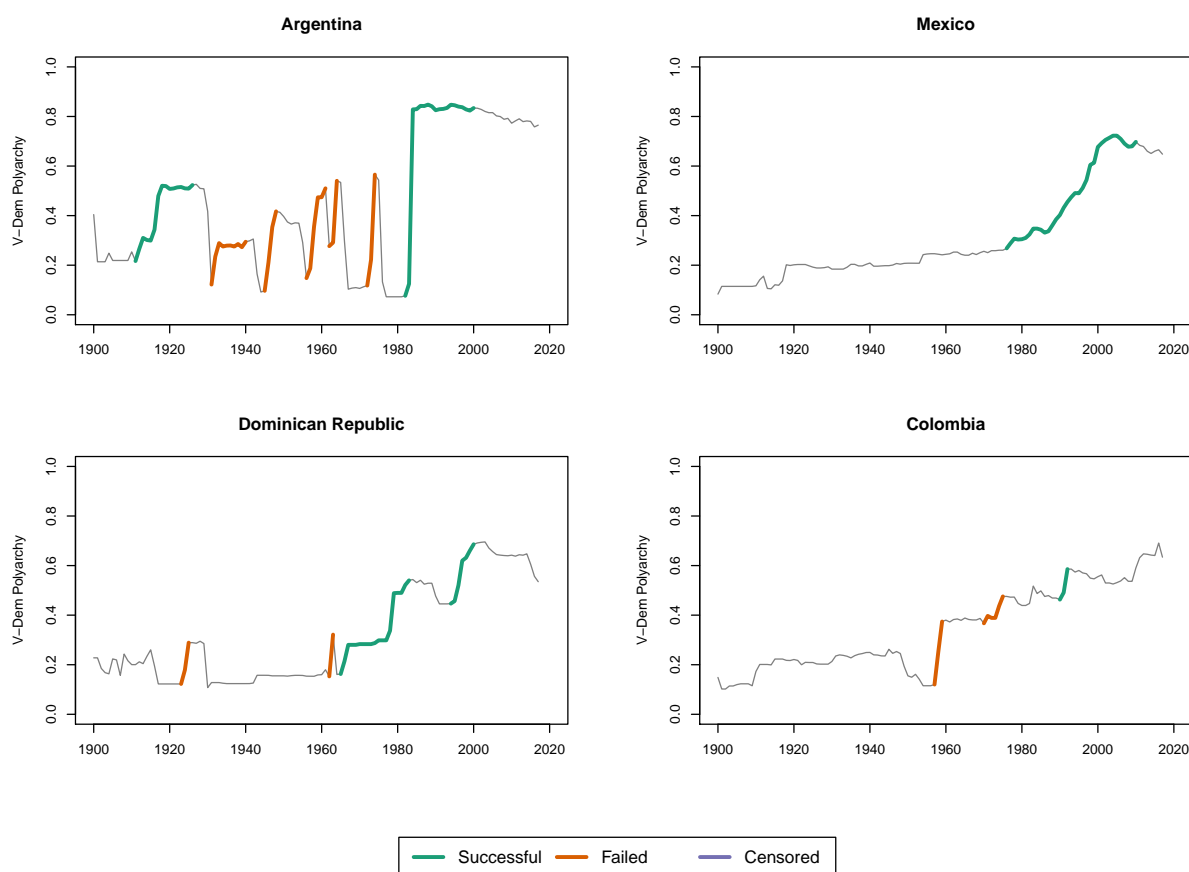


Figure 5: Polyarchy scores with episodes highlighted

president. The first Peronist period came to an end in 1955, after a military uprising forced President Peron to resign, seeking exile in Venezuela.

The 1958 election, which Arturo Frondizi won, marks the start of fourth Argentine democratization episode since 1900. Similar to the last two episodes, this democratization attempt was short-lived, ending in 1961 due to the military's involvement in politics. Specifically, after President Frondizi's failed attempts to lift the military-imposed ban on the Peronist Party, the Justicialist, Perón loyalist established proxy parties to compete in the 1962 legislative elections. After Peron loyalists won critical seats, the military intervened and forced President Frondizi to annul the election results, forcing him and his vice president to resign. Under the guise of constitutional authority, the military then appointed Senate President José María Guido as the provisional president followed by the election of Arturo Umberto Illia in 1963. The return to civilian-rule marks the start of the fifth, and again failed and short-lived (beginning and ending in 1964), democratization episode in Argentina. Here too, the military's involvement in domestic politics, political infighting, and revenges politics, ultimately led to a military coup in 1966, in which

General Juan Carlos Onganía seized power.

After a series of coups and counter-coups that punctuated Argentine politics from 1966 to 1971, the military dictator, Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, embattled by economic turmoil and increasing guerrilla violence by Peronists, saw fit to hold national elections in 1973. These elections and the relatively peaceful transfer of executive power to the winner, the former president Juan Perón, marks the start of Argentina's sixth democratization episode in 1974. This episode also failed within a year. When President Perón died in July 1974, the vice president, Isabel Martínez de Perón, who was also his wife, ascended to the presidency. Corruption scandals, political killings, and forced disappearances lead to impeachment proceedings against the president and, eventually, a military coup in 1976.

Finally, our coding scheme sets 1983 as the start year of Argentina's seventh democratization episode. Unlike the last five episodes, our coding scheme classifies this episode as a success. This episode began with the return of the Argentine military to the barracks following a loss in the Falkland conflict. This is a significant departure from the other episodes, the failures of which reflect Argentina's rich history of military interventions in domestic politics. It ends in 2000, shortly after a series of presidential and legislative elections.

Mexico is also an exemplary case because of the coding rules' sensitivity to movements away from and within an authoritarian regime. As shown in the plot on the upper right of Figure 5, during the span of hegemonic rule by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) that lasted nearly 70 years, a protracted period of democratization began in 1977. This year corresponds with the start of a series of electoral reforms. These reforms included measures to increase the size of the lower house (the Chamber of Deputies) from 237 to 400, 100 of which were set-aside seats for minority parties, and they introduced a limited form of proportional representation in order to ensure better representation of opposition parties. These reforms gave opposition parties greater capacity to exert influence at the national level and reduced the size of PRI electoral majorities. These changes in the quality of elections indicate a period of liberalization that led to the subsequent replacement of hegemonic rule.

Through the 1990s, Mexico's EDI score began a rapid climb, increasing from roughly 0.40 in 1990 to 0.68 in 2000. During this liberalization phase (in 1996, to be specific), Mexico moved from an electoral autocracy to an electoral democracy. Further, the election in 2000, the first qualifying election under our coding scheme, saw the first transition of presidential power between parties in Mexico's history. The second election in 2006 and the subsequent rise in Mexico's EDI score until 2010 marks the end of this Mexico's successful, if not prolonged, democratization episode.

The panel in the lower right of Figure 5 highlights the three democratization episodes in Colombia. Politics in Colombia was complicated by a period of violence between Liberals and Conservatives, which occurred over the period 1948-1958 and represented one of the

most violent times in Colombia, known as *La Violencia*. Following the exile of military leader Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1957, the warring parties formed a coalition government (National Front) in 1958, but its exclusionary nature prompted backlash. The failed episode that is coded as beginning with the coalition government reflects the conciliation between parties, but this did not ultimately produce democracy. Another episode began in 1971 and lasted until 1975; in 1968 the state of siege was lifted and plans were made to phase out the National Front arrangement, but this did not fully occur until 1974. Another short but successful episode begins and ends in 1992, which corresponds to a new constitution that included provisions for religious freedom and guaranteed indigenous rights. According to the RoW measure, Colombia became an electoral democracy in 1992. And while its EDI score began to slowly decline shortly after it this transition, which is why the episode stops at 1992, it did hold two consecutive and successful elections in 1994 and 1998. This case highlights the flexibility of our coding scheme to help account for both periods of stagnation and periods of modest decline.

Two brief episodes in the Dominican Republic occurred for the periods 1924-1925 and 1963 (the panel on the lower left in 5). Although Horacio Vásquez was elected president in 1924 after U.S. occupation, he was forced to resign in 1930 and Rafael Trujillo was elected president. The period 1960-1963 was a brief interlude following the resignation of Héctor Trujillo in 1960. The one-year jump in the Dominican Republic's EDI score corresponds to the election of Juan Bosch in 1963, who was replaced by a military junta in the same year. According to our coding rules, a successful episode of democratization began in 1966 after the U.S. intervened in the civil war and negotiated a truce, and elections were held. Peaceful presidential succession occurred until the army violently suppressed uprisings over financial conditions in 1984, which marked the end of the episode. The final episode occurred over 1995-2000; a new constitution was inaugurated in 1994 that limited the presidential term and recognized basic human rights, after which regular succession occurred.

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

## Revisiting Existing Debates

Classifying democratization episodes as failed or successful allows us to reexamine some of the existing explanations concerning the factors that might make democratization more or less likely. Because our sample includes both successful and failed transitions, simply describing the difference between the categories provides new insight into this question. We briefly revisit three major debates in the literature on democratization, demonstrating how conceptualizing democratization episodes both expounds and builds upon—and in some ways, challenges—existing research. Specifically, we discuss the notion that democratization has historically occurred in waves, the impacts of development on democratization, and debates over whether the timing of democratization matters. In the Online Appendix D, we provide a discussion on the potential relationship between state capacity and democratization.

### Waves of democratization

Our identification of episodes facilitates a fresh look on Huntington's (1991) account of the three waves of democratization. Since 1991, the study of democratization has mainly focused on transitions to democracy (without taking into account how persistent they may have been), or on average levels of democracy in the world. Figure 6 displays the number of countries going through a democratization episode in any given year and which ones succeeded or failed. This helps highlight the difference in the success rate of each of these waves, something our approach makes possible to see for the first time.

Overall, the third wave of democratization has affected—and continues to affect—a far greater share of countries than the first and second wave. This is not news. However, we also see that the first wave produced the highest success rate to date, with an equal number of successes as failures. During the second wave following World War II, most attempts failed, which occurred in many countries after the end of colonization. While the success rate during the third wave is closer to the trends we witnessed in the first wave, the censored cases make it difficult to assess the final ratio. That is, the share of censored (unfinished) episodes outnumbers both the successful and failed episodes since 2000, making the nature of democratization in the 21st century unclear for the time present.

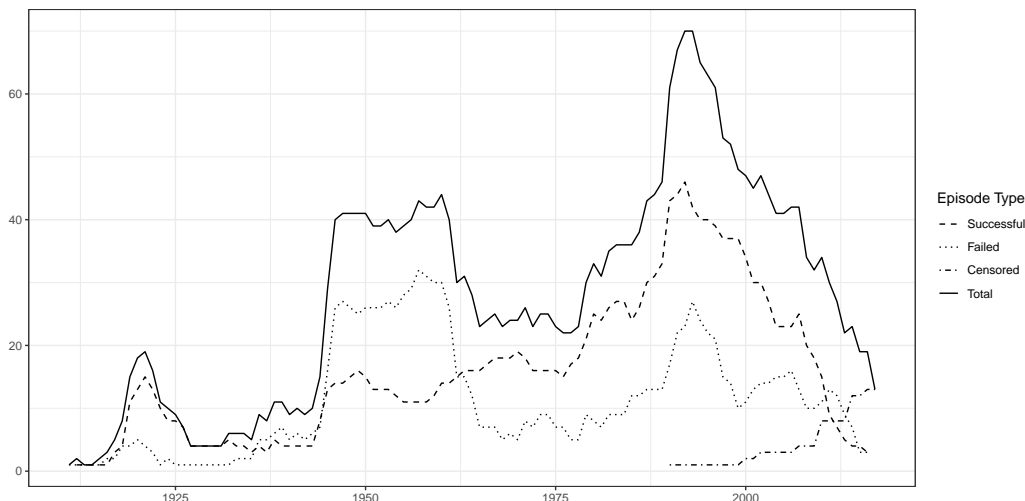


Figure 6: Number of ongoing democratization episodes (1900-2016)

By defining democratization episodes the way we do, we can see patterns that are consistent with the description of past transitions occurring in waves. However, our approach also helps us show that many of the second-wave democratizers represented failed efforts, a finding pointed out by scholars who have recently attempted to explain global patterns of democratic reversals and autocratization (e.g., Lust & Waldner 2015, Kurlantzick 2013, Lührmann & Lindberg 2018, among others).

## Modernization and Democratization

A large portion of the comparative democratization literature assesses the impact that development, modernization, and wealth might have on the sustainability of a democratization attempt. Since Lipset (1959), debate has continued about whether, and to what extent, modernization and development affect democratization (Acemoglu et al., 2009; Boix, 2003; Bollen & Jackman, 1985; Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994; Haggard & Kaufmann, 2016; Inglehart & Welzel, 2009; Przeworski et al., 2000; Teorell, 2010). However, failing to denote the beginning and ending of a transition to democracy makes it difficult to separate factors that affected the likelihood that a transition occurred from those that affected whether it succeeded. One notable and intractable example in this debate is the question of whether economic development makes democracy more likely to occur (Lipset, 1959; Przeworski et al., 2000; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997; Boix & Stokes, 2003). As Geddes (1999) described, there is a general consensus that the conditions for democracy are more favorable in more developed countries. Conclusions about *how* development affects democracy, however, is decidedly mixed. Some research suggests that higher levels of economic development make transitions to democracy more likely, while others argue that income does not promote democratization but instead helps to stabilize democracies once the transition is complete (Przeworski et al., 2000; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997; Boix

& Stokes, 2003).

Assessments of Lipset's (1959) conjecture that development makes democracies more likely—often referred to as modernization theory—are confounded, in part, by the question of when transitions occurred. The level of development in a country may affect the likelihood of social and institutional changes that encourage liberalization, but it is, in turn, partly determined by how democratic a country is in the first place. Specifying a set of criteria for isolating transition periods is critical for determining whether starting values differentiate democratizers, how the effects of development on transitions to democracy differ from their effects on democratic survival, and for honing its relationship to the duration of a democratization episode.

To contribute to this debate, we assess the relationship between initial level of development just prior to the beginning of a democratization episode and the outcome of that episode. As is common in the literature, we use GDP per capita as a proxy for development because it is available for all countries in our sample over the entire time period, which does not apply for other measures of development (e.g., economic inequality or human development indicators). As Figure 7 shows, there is a clear difference in the distribution of initial levels of GDP per capita between failed and successful episodes. The green line in the panel plots the density distribution of the initial GDP at the onset of a successful democratization episode, while the orange line plots the density distribution of the initial GDP at the onset of a failed democratization episode.

While there is some overlap in the distributions, there is a clear association between the GDP per capita level at the onset of a democratization episode and the outcome of the episode. The average logged GDP per capita for a successful episode is 7.7, while only 6.9 for failed, suggesting that higher levels of development are associated with a higher democratization success rate. Lower per capita GDP does not appear to prevent the success of democratization in a deterministic fashion. We find quite a few cases with a low level of GDP that ended up having a successful democratization episode. At the same time, almost no democratization attempt at a very high level of per capita GDP (above 8.5 on the logged scale) failed.

## Timing and speed

With our new approach we can also contribute to debates on the timing of democratization. Mansfield & Snyder (2007), for example, argued that there may be necessary preconditions to ensure that a country successfully transitions to a democracy and remains democratic. This claim is bolstered by the observation that many transitions occur in post-conflict settings that have proven particularly volatile. As such, they suggested that sequencing reforms in the process of liberalizing may affect whether a country successfully democratizes. Underlying the debate over whether certain elements should occur in a particular order is



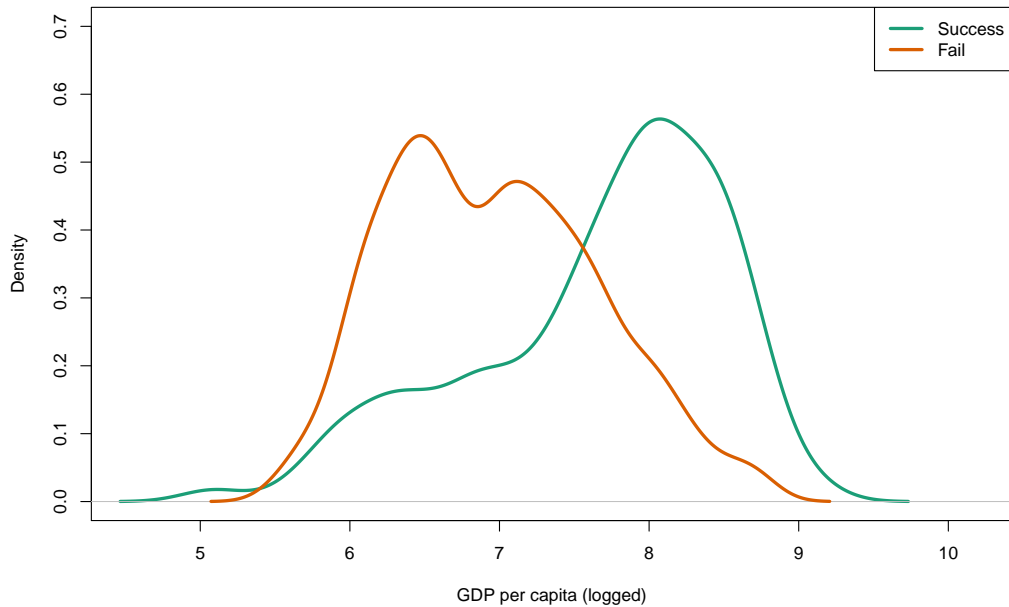


Figure 7: Distribution of initial GDP per capita by outcome

also a question of whether the speed of liberalization matters. Although other scholars, such as Carothers (2007), reject sequentialist arguments for democratization, they encourage a gradual approach that suggests that successful democratization episodes take longer to develop. This question is intimately connected to research on autocratic institutions and electoral manipulation, in which some scholars have argued that quick transitions that deprive elites of control make successful democratization more likely.

Figure 8 shows that successful episodes on average are longer than failed, which differ by nearly 8 years. This illustrates how our conceptualization of democratization as an episodic event and differentiating these democratization episodes according to their outcome can open up the possibility for investigations looking at different temporal aspects such as duration and speed. Moreover, using the disaggregated indicators of democracy in the V-Dem data allows for a more granular understanding of what aspects of democracy change most and which are more initially different based on outcome, enabling a more direct test of sequencing arguments.

## Opening Up for Sequencing Methods

Many existing theories of democratization (often originating from comparative case-study literature) suggest interlinked and long chains of factors play an important role during democratization episodes. The analysis of complex relationships in long causal chains have proven difficult to even describe with existing quantitative approaches. It has thus not been possible to test these sequential descriptive propositions properly and

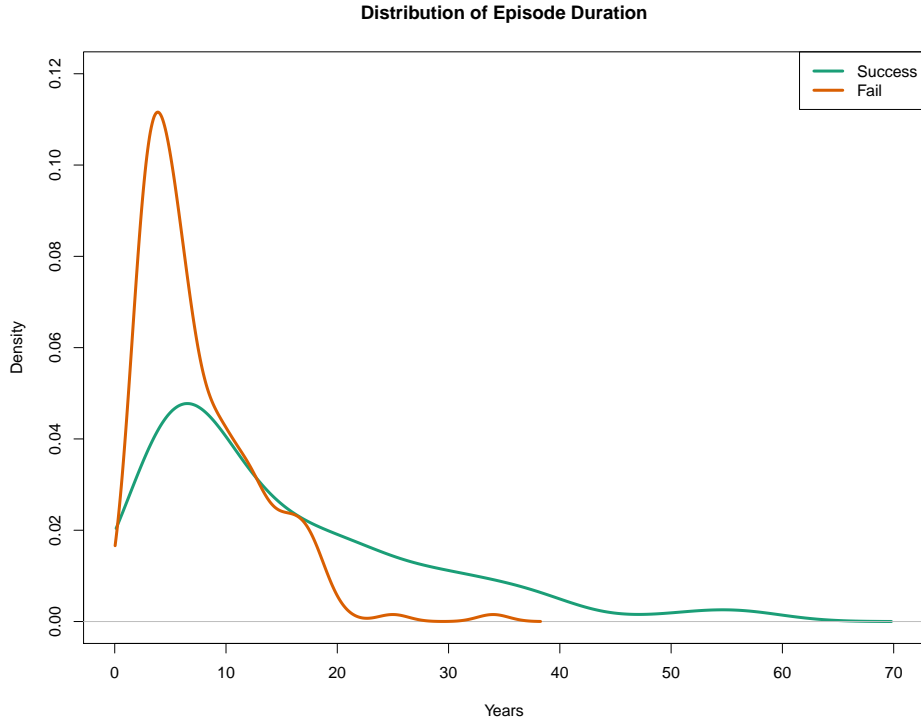


Figure 8: Difference in the span of episodes by outcome

in a systematic fashion. Indeed, the empirical basis for conclusions about endogenous interrelationships is generally limited to selected countries (e.g., Capoccia & Ziblatt, 2010). The few exceptions to this have looked at characteristics such as the timing of suffrage extension (Dix, 1994), the prior performance of regimes as measured by authoritarian legacies (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Geddes, 2003; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006), the age of the regime (Bernhard, Reenock & Nordstrom, 2003), the number of government turnovers (Gasiorowski & Power, 1998), or the number of past regime breakdowns (Przeworski et al., 2000). These studies are nevertheless oriented towards explaining the timing of individual factors rather than longer chains of interdependent institutional reforms. Our approach to identifying a sample of democratization episodes, however, makes it possible to draw upon methods that borrow from genomics and evolutionary biology to differentiate and analyze *processes* associated with democratization (Lindenfors, Krusell & Lindberg, 2016; Lindenfors et al., 2018; Mechkova, Lührmann & Lindberg, 2018; Wang et al., 2017).

Here, we briefly illustrate one way to use the variables that comprise the electoral democracy index to explore differences in successful and failed democratization episodes. In particular, we focus on four aspects related to election management bodies and civil society that are some of the indicators used to construct V-Dem’s electoral democracy index: election management body (EMB) capacity, EMB autonomy, civil society repression, and the entry and exit of civil society organizations (CSOs). Using ordinalized versions of these component variables, we tabulated how often each pair of variables reached a given

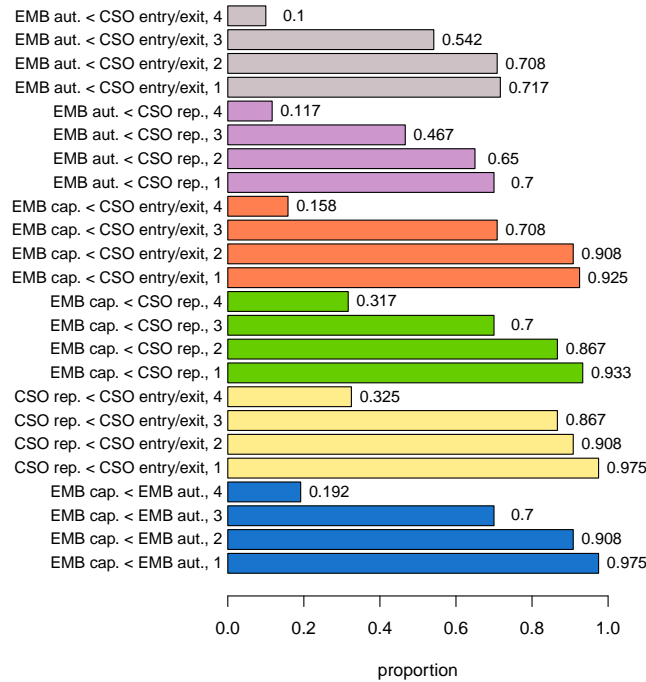


Figure 9: Proportion of pairwise precedence in successful episodes

level and how often one preceded the other.

Figure 9 shows the proportion of times that each pair of variables reached a value, and how often one preceded the other, for successful democratization episodes. The contrasting image for failed episodes is provided in Appendix A (Figure 10). The results provide evidence suggesting that EMB capacity either develops in tandem with or precedes EMB autonomy. In over 90% of the episodes, EMB capacity reached a 2 or higher at the same time as or before EMB autonomy, which is true for 70% of episodes for a value of 3. Likewise, civil society repression was either at the same level of improvement or improved before CSO entry and exit in roughly 87% of successful episodes for a threshold value of 3. Notably, the strength of the observed relationships is not driven by the way in which the episodes began—only 25% of successful episodes entered the sample with values at or above 3 for EMB capacity and autonomy, and only about 27% had a 3 or higher for both civil society repression and CSO entry and exit.

The evidence also suggests that improvements in EMB capacity tend to precede improvements in the civil society measures in successful democratization episodes. The extent to which improvements in EMB autonomy precedes improvements in civil society is somewhat weaker, however. Although the proportions of episodes that reached each value differ considerably between episodes that did and did not result in democracy, their relative differences in the order in which variables improved are not as different. This observation suggests that failed episodes did so not because they followed a different order,

but because they failed to develop effective election management bodies and a strong civil society. This is consistent with research on the success of more “liberal” authoritarian regimes, which often resort to electoral fraud and maintain control over the activity of civic organizations (Foley & Edwards, 1996; Schedler, 2002; White, 1994).

Two rather intuitive findings from this brief illustration are that EMB capacity is a strong precedent of EMB autonomy and that civil society repression is a strong precedent of CSO entry and exit. The more interesting finding is the possible order between EMB capacity and measures of civil society. On the one hand, it should not be surprising that EMB capacity would be a precondition for other changes, especially those related to the quality of elections. It is, however, a noteworthy observation that election management bodies so strongly differentiate failed and successful episodes and that its development may create prospects for improvements in civil society. In exploring the contingencies between specific variables, we also found that order is less of a distinguishing factor of episode success than level. It nevertheless exemplifies particular attributes that were unlikely to occur in liberalizing episodes that did not transition to a democracy. Periods of liberalization that did not produce democracy do not appear to have done so because of an improper order of development, but because critical elements did not develop. Among those that did become democracies, however, there is an apparent order in the improvement of election management bodies and aspects of civil society.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that current research on democratization may be limited by a focus on successful cases and obscurity in when transitions begin and end. Despite empirical and conceptual gains that point to potential determinants of democratic transitions, the success of “liberal autocracies” and the unintended consequences of liberalization underscore the need to differentiate liberalization from the transition to democracy. At the same time, the two processes are closely connected elements of democratization. Advancing our collective knowledge of the processes of democratization thus depends on a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between liberalization and democratic transition, with all of its complexity and uncertainty. In part, this supports a return to analyses that aimed to differentiate between *modes* of transition to assess their impacts on the success of democratization (Huntington et al., 1991; Munck & Leff, 1997).

We outlined an approach to studying democratization that involves conceptualizing them as episodes of liberalization that only sometimes succeed. Combining estimates of the institutional prerequisites suggested by Dahl (1971) with the observation of elections, we specified a set of coding rules to generate a sample of 316 democratization episodes over the period 1900-2017, of which 120 could be considered successful. The rules that we described go some way toward setting coherent and transparent rules regarding prospective

episodes and building upon recent efforts to explain successful democratization.

As we demonstrated, using our conceptualization of democratization episodes and classifying them into failed and successful allows us to revisit existing theories about factors that influence their success. The descriptive evidence presented shows support for general findings in the literature regarding global-historical patterns of democratization, development and state capacity at the onset of an episode, and whether the duration of democratization matters for its ultimate success. In future work, identifying episodes of democratization in this way may help to overcome the threat of sample bias and provide greater insights into how democracy develops.

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## Appendix A Supplementary Figures

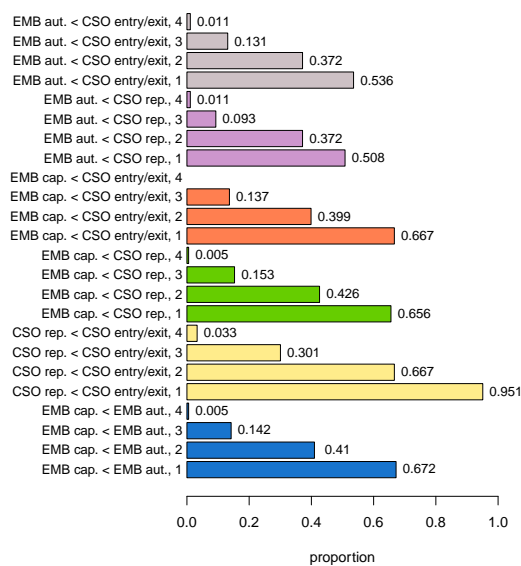


Figure 10: Proportion of pairwise precedence in failed episodes

## Online Appendix B Description of all Episodes

In the table below, all of the episodes that are detected in the V-Dem v8 data are listed in the table below. Included in this table is the start and end years of the episode as well as whether the episode ended in successful democratization, failed to become a stable democracy, or if the episode is currently right-censored.

Country	Start_Year	End_Year	Outcome	Country	Start_Year	End_Year	Outcome
Afghanistan	2002	2006	Failed	Equatorial Guinea	1960	1969	Failed
Albania	1917	1922	Failed	Equatorial Guinea	1983	1996	Failed
Albania	1947	1947	Failed	Estonia	1922	1926	Success
Albania	1991	1995	Failed	Estonia	1994	1996	Success
Albania	1999	2010	Success	Fiji	1964	1977	Success
Algeria	1956	1963	Failed	Fiji	1993	1997	Success
Algeria	1997	2006	Failed	Fiji	2003	2002	Failed
Argentina	1913	1926	Success	Fiji	2015	2017	Censored
Argentina	1933	1940	Failed	Finland	1918	1921	Success
Argentina	1947	1948	Failed	France	1946	1949	Success
Argentina	1958	1961	Failed	Gabon	1958	1961	Failed
Argentina	1964	1964	Failed	Gabon	1991	2017	Censored
Argentina	1974	1974	Failed	Georgia	1994	1997	Failed
Argentina	1984	2000	Success	Georgia	2002	2007	Success
Austria	1919	1918	Failed	Germany	1920	1920	Success
Austria	1921	1921	Success	Ghana	1970	1971	Failed
Azerbaijan	1992	1993	Failed	Ghana	1980	1980	Failed
Bangladesh	1973	1974	Failed	Ghana	1993	2010	Success
Bangladesh	1978	1980	Failed	Greece	1925	1924	Failed
Bangladesh	1987	1987	Failed	Greece	1946	1953	Failed
Bangladesh	1991	1997	Success	Greece	1975	1984	Success
Bangladesh	2010	2009	Failed	Guatemala	1946	1951	Failed
Barbados	1945	1969	Success	Guatemala	1967	1967	Failed
Belarus	1992	1992	Success	Guatemala	1986	2016	Success
Belgium	1920	1922	Success	Guinea	1958	1959	Failed
Belgium	1945	1950	Success	Guinea	1986	1996	Failed
Benin	1947	1961	Failed	Guinea	2011	2017	Censored
Benin	1981	1992	Success	Guinea-Bissau	1991	2001	Failed
Bhutan	2007	2009	Failed	Guinea-Bissau	2005	2005	Failed
Bolivia	1937	1939	Failed	Guinea-Bissau	2015	2017	Censored
Bolivia	1953	1960	Failed	Guyana	1958	1967	Failed
Bolivia	1984	2004	Success	Guyana	1987	2002	Success
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1997	1999	Failed	Haiti	1952	1951	Failed
Botswana	1960	1970	Success	Haiti	1988	1988	Failed
Brazil	1946	1950	Failed	Haiti	1992	1991	Failed
Brazil	1980	2000	Success	Haiti	1994	1998	Failed
Bulgaria	1991	2007	Success	Haiti	2007	2007	Failed
Burkina Faso	1950	1963	Failed	Honduras	1950	1950	Failed
Burkina Faso	1992	2001	Success	Honduras	1972	1971	Failed
Burkina Faso	2017	2016	Failed	Honduras	1981	2007	Success
Burma/Myanmar	1946	1961	Failed	Hungary	1919	1918	Failed
Burma/Myanmar	2011	2017	Censored	Hungary	1921	1922	Failed
Burundi	1983	1985	Failed	Hungary	1989	1991	Success
Burundi	1993	1995	Failed	India	1949	1957	Success
Burundi	2004	2006	Failed	India	1978	1979	Success
Cambodia	1952	1956	Failed	Indonesia	1946	1957	Failed
Cambodia	1993	1994	Failed	Indonesia	1972	1972	Failed
Cameroon	1983	2014	Failed	Indonesia	1999	2004	Success
Canada	1921	1938	Success	Iraq	2005	2007	Failed
Cape Verde	1973	1976	Failed	Ireland	1922	1936	Success
Cape Verde	1981	1996	Success	Israel	1950	2001	Success
Central African Republic	1947	1960	Failed	Italy	1945	1953	Success
Central African Republic	1988	1994	Failed	Ivory Coast	1991	1993	Failed
Central African Republic	2006	2006	Failed	Ivory Coast	1997	1996	Failed
Central African Republic	2017	2017	Censored	Ivory Coast	2002	2001	Failed
Chad	1946	1958	Failed	Ivory Coast	2008	2017	Censored
Chad	1991	1998	Failed	Jamaica	1939	1973	Success
Chile	1933	1971	Success	Jamaica	1980	2016	Success
Chile	1990	2002	Success	Japan	1945	1971	Success
Colombia	1959	1959	Failed	Kenya	1957	1965	Failed
Colombia	1972	1975	Failed	Kenya	1991	2003	Failed
Colombia	1992	1992	Success	Kenya	2011	2013	Failed
Comoros	1991	1991	Failed	Kosovo	2001	2003	Failed
Comoros	1998	1997	Failed	Kyrgyzstan	2011	2011	Failed
Comoros	2003	2009	Success	Laos	1942	1948	Failed
Comoros	2013	2014	Failed	Laos	1951	1958	Failed
Costa Rica	1920	1921	Failed	Latvia	1922	1923	Success
Costa Rica	1951	1954	Success	Lebanon	1944	1954	Failed
Croatia	1993	2001	Success	Lebanon	2001	2017	Censored
Cuba	1937	1941	Failed	Lesotho	1953	1967	Failed
Cyprus	1961	2007	Success	Lesotho	1994	1994	Failed
Czech Republic	1920	1921	Success	Lesotho	2003	2013	Success
Czech Republic	1991	1991	Success	Liberia	1986	1986	Failed
Democratic Republic of Congo	1956	1961	Failed	Liberia	1992	1998	Failed
Democratic Republic of Congo	1999	2007	Failed	Liberia	2006	2007	Success
Democratic Republic of Vietnam	1947	1947	Failed	Libya	2012	2013	Failed
Denmark	1946	1948	Success	Lithuania	1920	1922	Success
Dominican Republic	1925	1925	Failed	Luxembourg	1920	1925	Success
Dominican Republic	1964	1963	Failed	Luxembourg	1946	1947	Success
Dominican Republic	1967	1983	Success	Macedonia	1996	1999	Success
Dominican Republic	1996	2000	Success	Macedonia	2003	2004	Success
Ecuador	1939	1939	Failed	Madagascar	1958	1961	Failed
Ecuador	1948	1957	Failed	Madagascar	1988	1994	Success
Ecuador	1968	1969	Failed	Madagascar	2014	2015	Failed
Ecuador	1979	1984	Success	Malawi	1961	1964	Failed
Egypt	1937	1950	Failed	Malawi	1977	1979	Failed
Egypt	2013	2012	Failed	Malawi	1993	1995	Failed
El Salvador	1983	2009	Success	Malaysia	1947	1962	Failed
				Malaysia	1974	1975	Failed
				Maldives	2006	2010	Success
				Mali	1946	1961	Failed
				Mali	1993	1993	Success
				Mali	2015	2017	Censored
				Mauritania	1946	1961	Failed
				Mauritania	1993	2002	Failed
				Mauritania	2008	2007	Failed
				Mauritania	2011	2012	Failed

Mauritius	1949	1984	Success	Slovakia	1996	1999	Success
Mexico	1978	2010	Success	Slovenia	1991	1992	Success
Moldova	1992	1999	Success	Solomon Islands	1961	1990	Success
Moldova	2008	2011	Success	Solomon Islands	2003	2004	Failed
Mongolia	1991	1993	Success	Solomon Islands	2008	2015	Success
Montenegro	2000	2003	Success	Somalia	1942	1964	Failed
Mozambique	1992	1998	Failed	Somaliland	2002	2011	Failed
Namibia	1981	1995	Success	South Africa	1991	2010	Success
Nepal	1951	1960	Failed	South Korea	1947	1949	Failed
Nepal	1983	1992	Failed	South Korea	1965	1964	Failed
Nepal	1996	1996	Failed	South Korea	1982	2000	Success
Nepal	2007	2010	Failed	Spain	1932	1934	Success
Nepal	2015	2017	Censored	Spain	1968	1980	Success
Netherlands	1919	1923	Success	Sri Lanka	1949	1949	Success
Netherlands	1946	1980	Success	Sri Lanka	1994	1995	Failed
Nicaragua	1987	1993	Success	Sri Lanka	2011	2017	Censored
Niger	1958	1961	Failed	Sudan	1950	1956	Failed
Niger	1989	1991	Failed	Sudan	1965	1966	Failed
Niger	1994	1994	Success	Sudan	1987	1987	Failed
Niger	2001	2005	Failed	Sudan	2011	2017	Censored
Niger	2012	2012	Success	Suriname	1950	1950	Success
Nigeria	1979	1980	Failed	Suriname	1977	1976	Failed
Nigeria	1999	2000	Failed	Suriname	1988	1990	Success
Nigeria	2012	2016	Failed	Sweden	1918	1922	Success
Norway	1946	1998	Success	Syria	1947	1948	Failed
Pakistan	1971	1977	Failed	Syria	1954	1955	Failed
Pakistan	1986	1989	Failed	Syria	1962	1962	Failed
Pakistan	2003	2017	Censored	Taiwan	1988	2012	Success
Panama	1949	1949	Failed	Tanzania	1959	1963	Failed
Panama	1953	1960	Failed	Tanzania	1982	1996	Failed
Panama	1980	2000	Success	Thailand	1934	1935	Failed
Papua New Guinea	1947	1975	Success	Thailand	1974	1976	Failed
Paraguay	1991	2010	Success	Thailand	1980	1989	Failed
Peru	1940	1946	Failed	Thailand	1995	2001	Success
Peru	1951	1957	Failed	Thailand	2009	2012	Failed
Peru	1965	1964	Failed	The Gambia	1961	1963	Failed
Peru	1979	1982	Success	The Gambia	1967	1978	Failed
Peru	1994	1996	Failed	The Gambia	1997	2012	Failed
Peru	2002	2002	Success	Timor-Leste	1999	2008	Success
Philippines	1945	1954	Failed	Togo	1947	1960	Failed
Philippines	1983	1990	Success	Togo	1992	1995	Failed
Poland	1920	1923	Failed	Togo	2004	2008	Failed
Poland	1990	1992	Success	Togo	2012	2014	Failed
Portugal	1912	1912	Failed	Trinidad and Tobago	1937	1992	Success
Portugal	1971	1984	Success	Tunisia	2012	2016	Failed
Republic of the Congo	1946	1961	Failed	Turkey	1947	1951	Failed
Republic of the Congo	1980	1993	Failed	Turkey	1963	1967	Success
Republic of the Congo	2003	2010	Failed	Turkey	1983	2003	Success
Republic of Vietnam	1948	1956	Failed	Uganda	1957	1963	Failed
Romania	1991	1997	Success	Uganda	1982	1981	Failed
Russia	1988	1994	Success	Uganda	1990	1997	Failed
Rwanda	1956	1962	Failed	Ukraine	1993	1996	Failed
Rwanda	2005	2014	Failed	Ukraine	2006	2008	Success
São Tomé and Príncipe	1991	2011	Success	United Kingdom	1920	1930	Success
Senegal	1961	1961	Failed	United States of America	1920	1932	Success
Senegal	1969	2000	Success	Uruguay	1916	1920	Failed
Serbia	1981	2003	Success	Uruguay	1923	1926	Success
Seychelles	1965	1971	Failed	Uruguay	1939	1947	Success
Seychelles	1980	1985	Failed	Uruguay	1985	2010	Success
Seychelles	1991	2016	Success	Vanuatu	1971	1981	Success
Sierra Leone	1952	1963	Failed	Venezuela	1937	1948	Failed
Sierra Leone	2003	2003	Success	Venezuela	1959	1989	Success
Singapore	1956	1959	Failed	Yemen	1989	1992	Failed
Singapore	1969	1981	Failed	Zambia	1964	1965	Failed
				Zambia	1991	2009	Success
				Zanzibar	1994	2011	Failed
				Zimbabwe	1980	1991	Failed

## Online Appendix C Sensitivity Analysis

To identify democratization episodes, the algorithm we developed takes into account five parameters: (1) whether a country’s EDI score increased from the year prior  $\geq 0.01$ , (2) whether the cumulative change during a potential episode was  $\geq 0.10$ , (3) whether a country’s EDI score decreased from the year prior  $\leq -0.02$ , (4) whether the cumulative change during a potential episode was  $\leq -0.10$ , and (5) whether there was little to no change in a country’s EDI score for ten consecutive years (stasis years). To assess changes to these thresholds affects the probability that any given country-year is included in our sample—i.e., how sensitive our sample is to these parameter choices, we considered eleven equally spaced values centered on our chosen threshold. This yielded  $11^5 = 161,051$  unique combinations of the values.

First, we identified all of the episodes under each of these combinations. Next, we aggregated these by computing for each country-year the probability that it belongs to an episode, and whether the episode is successful, failed, or censored. In the aggregation, we weighted episodes according to the thresholds that yielded them. Table 2 shows the threshold values and weights.

	Threshold					Weight
	OI	CI	OD	CD	SY	
1.	0.005	0.05	-0.015	-0.05	5	0.025
2.	0.006	0.06	-0.016	-0.06	6	0.050
3.	0.007	0.07	-0.017	-0.07	7	0.075
4.	0.008	0.08	-0.018	-0.08	8	0.100
5.	0.009	0.09	-0.019	-0.09	9	0.150
6.	0.010	0.10	-0.020	-0.10	10	0.200
7.	0.011	0.11	-0.021	-0.11	11	0.150
8.	0.012	0.12	-0.022	-0.12	12	0.100
9.	0.013	0.13	-0.023	-0.13	13	0.075
10.	0.014	0.14	-0.024	-0.14	14	0.050
11.	0.015	0.15	-0.025	-0.15	15	0.025

Table 2: Threshold values tested in the sensitivity analysis and their aggregation weight. OI – one-year increase, CI – cumulative increase, OD – one-year decrease, CD – cumulative decrease, SY – stasis years.

Figure 11 shows how often the country-years we identified in the main analysis end

up nested in episodes identified in the sensitivity analysis. Country-years that were not included in the main analysis episodes rarely feature in episodes identified under different threshold values, and country-years identified in the main analysis were also identified as episodes across our sensitivity analysis. Only a small fraction of them had an inclusion probability below 0.5. In short, whether a country-year was identified as a part of an episode is largely insensitive to the evaluated thresholds. This is further evidenced in Figure 12. All main analysis episodes were identified under the great majority of the tested threshold combinations. Only three episodes that were not identified in the main analysis featured under most of the combinations. All three are early 20th century successful examples (Iceland, Denmark, and Norway).

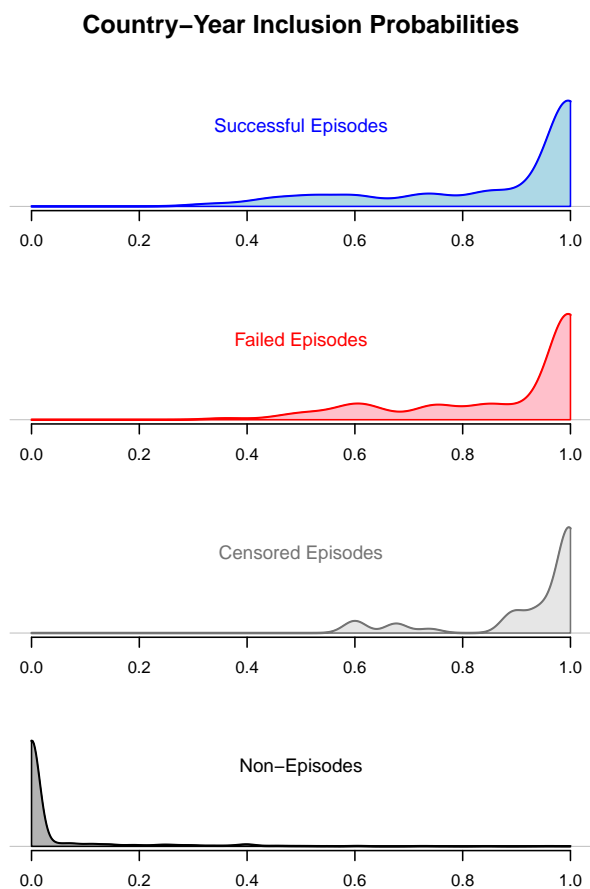


Figure 11: Distributions of episode inclusion probability in the sensitivity analysis by episode type under the main thresholds.



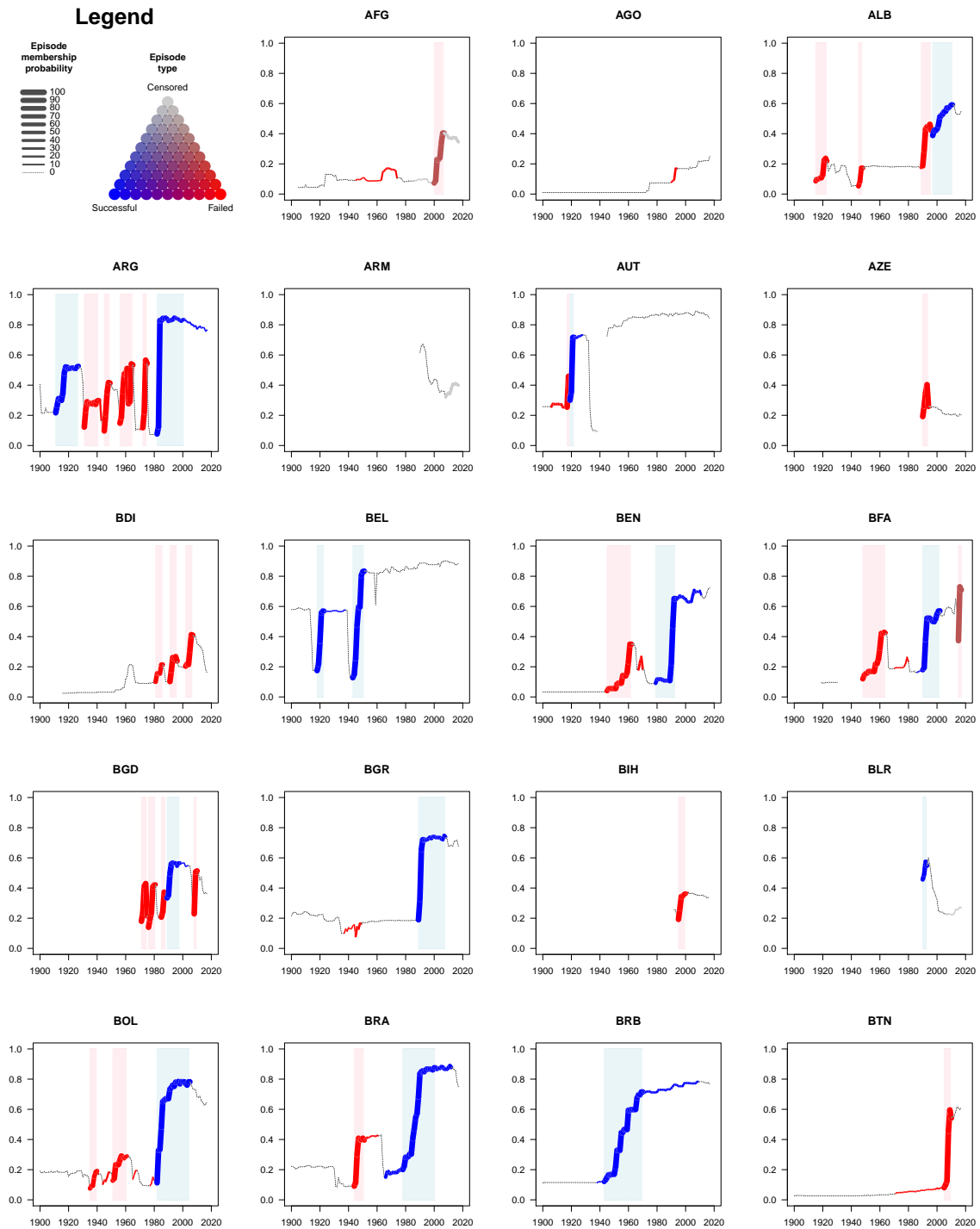


Figure 12: Episodes identified in the main analysis (indicated by background color) and summaries of episodes found in the sensitivity analysis (shown by line thickness and color). Only countries with at least one episode found in the main or sensitivity analysis shown. Continued below.

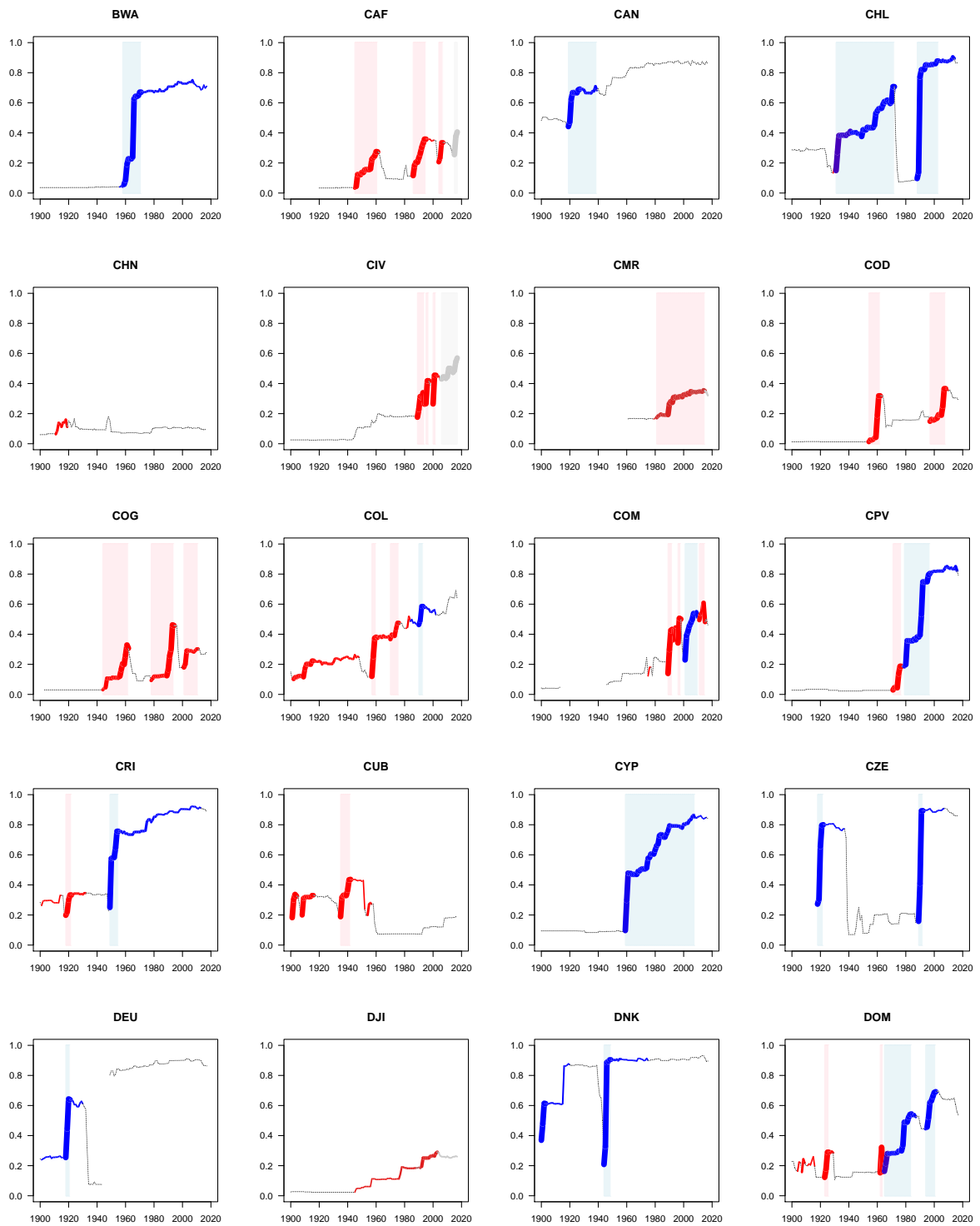


Figure 13: Figure 12 continued.

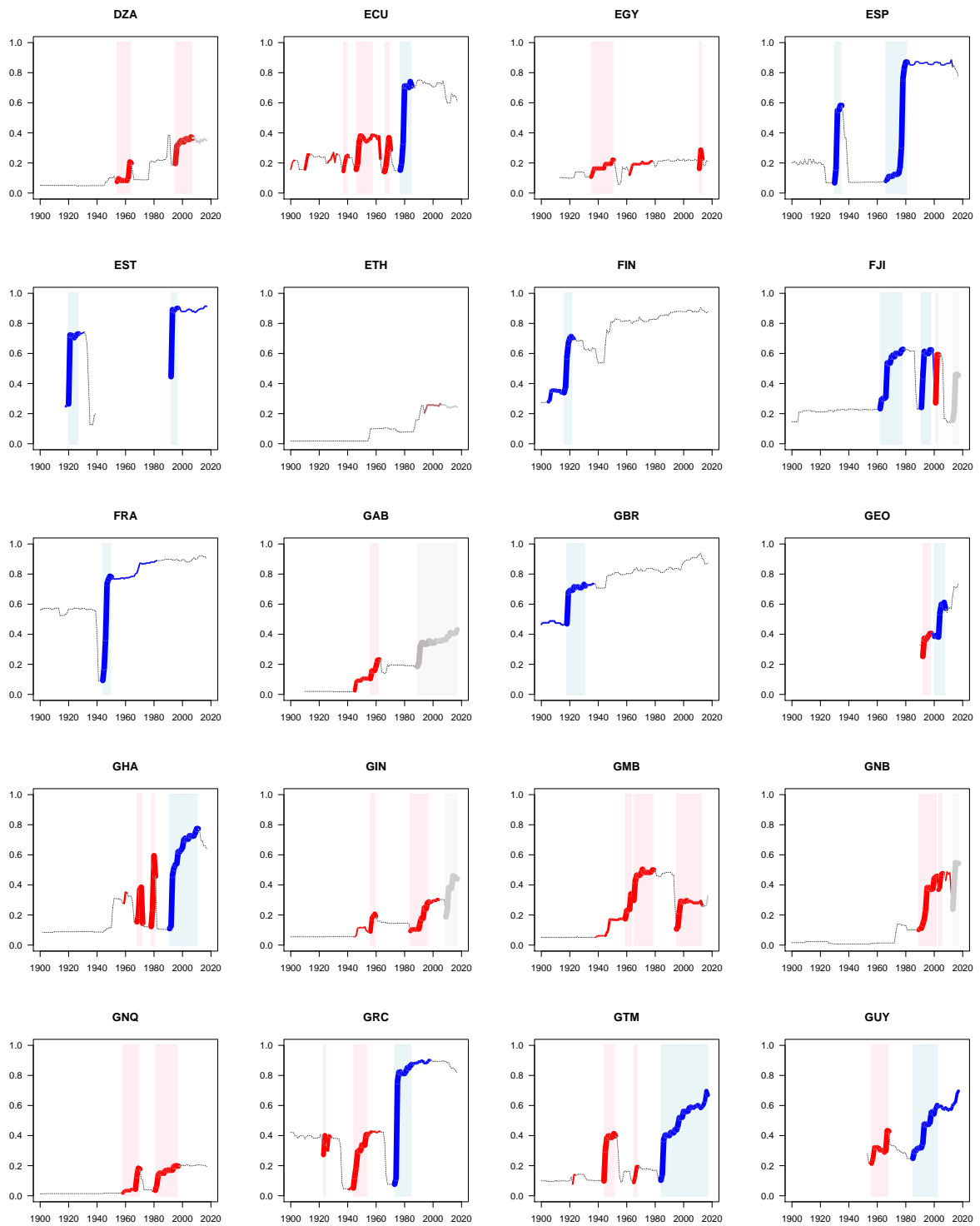


Figure 14: Figure 12 continued.

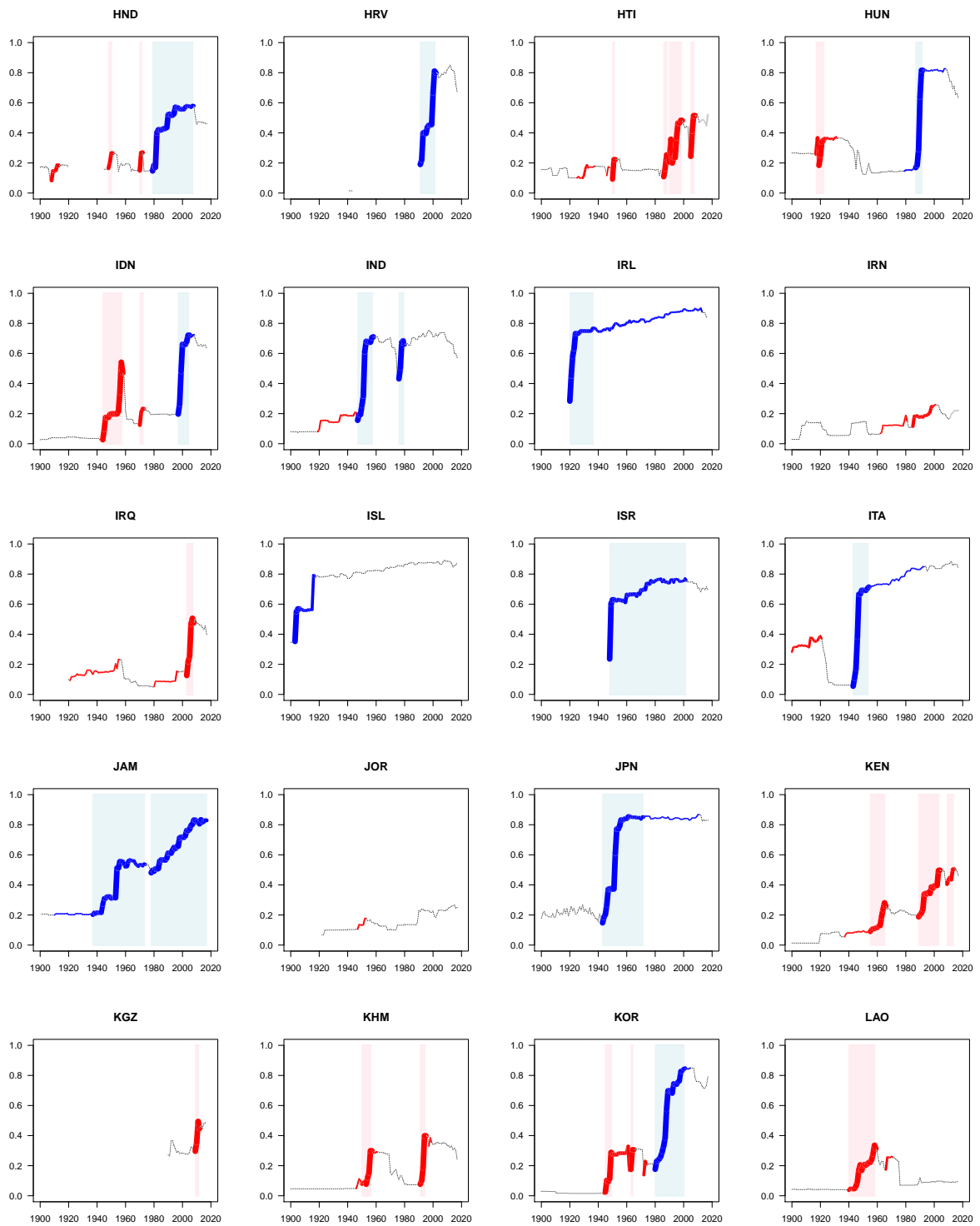


Figure 15: Figure 12 continued.

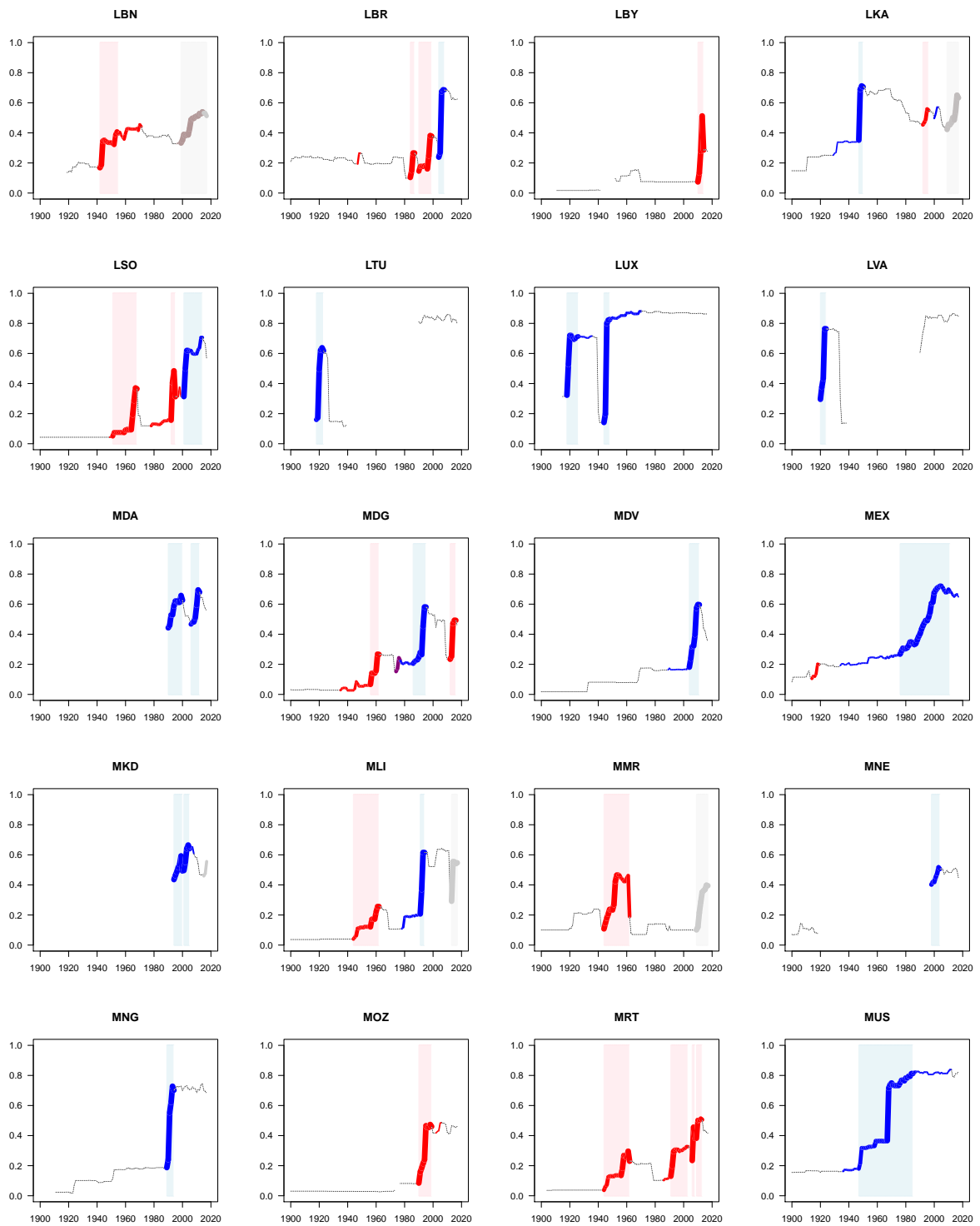


Figure 16: Figure 12 continued.

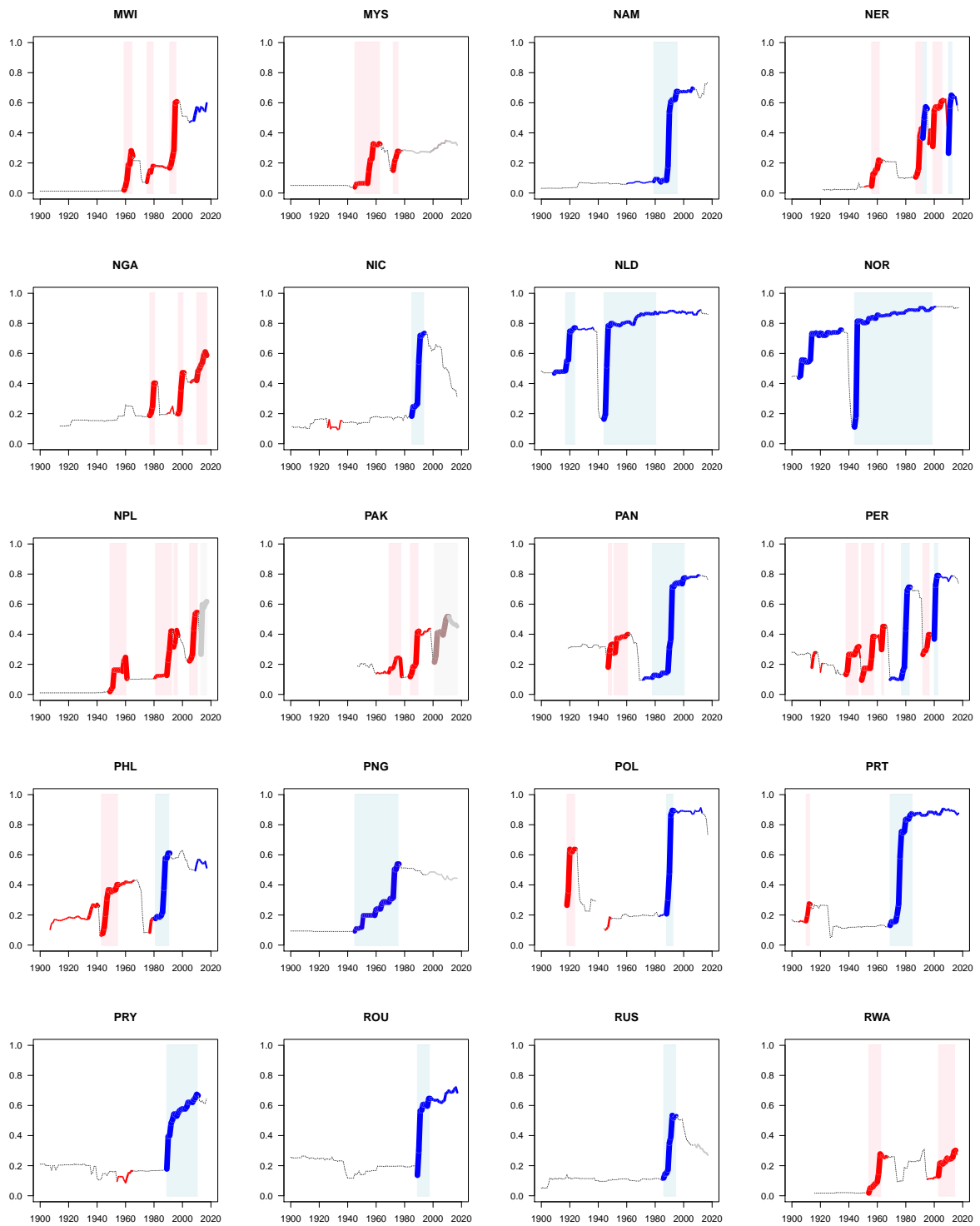


Figure 17: Figure 12 continued.

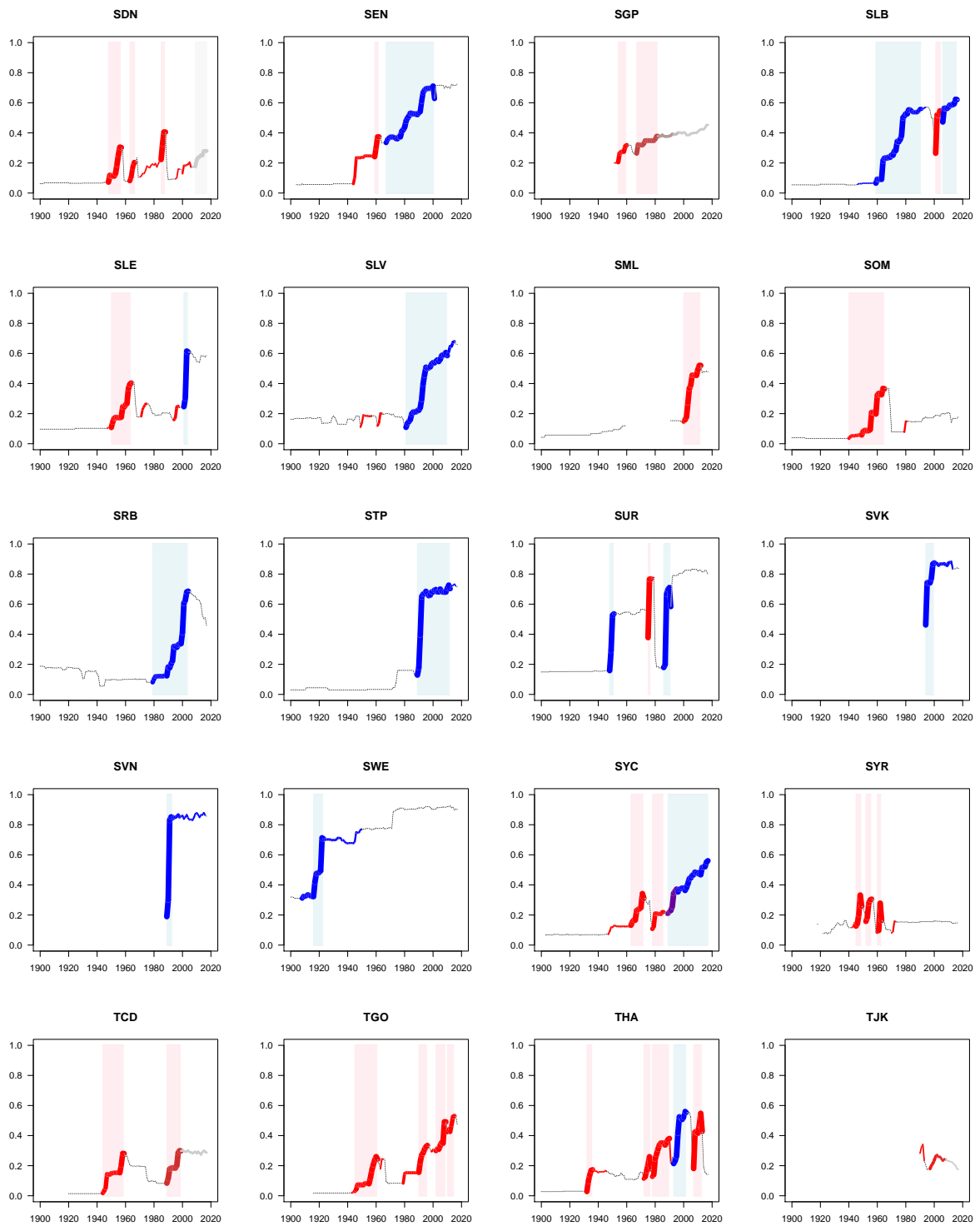


Figure 18: Figure 12 continued.

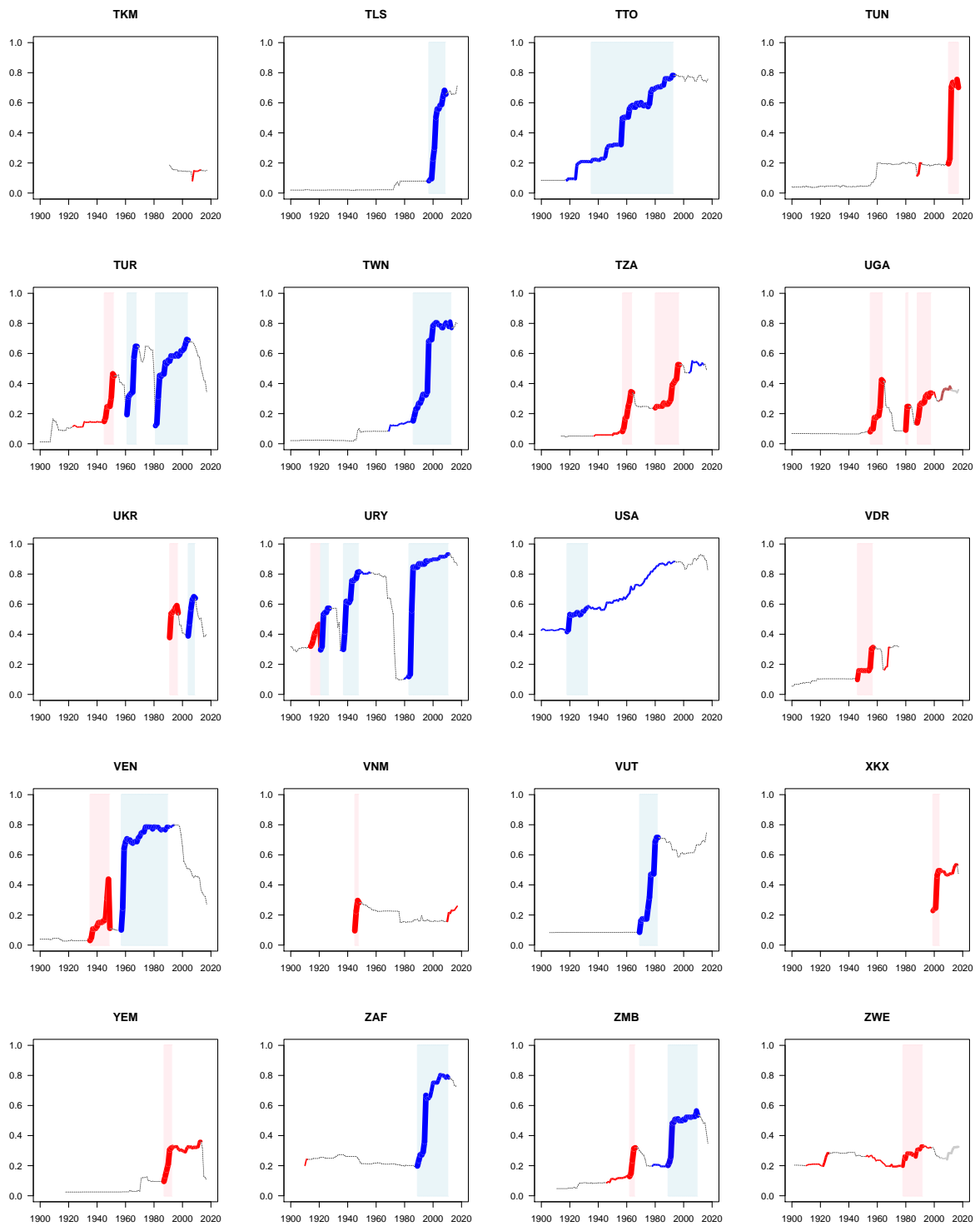


Figure 19: Figure 12 continued.



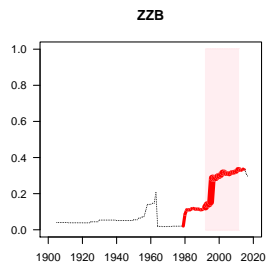


Figure 20: Figure 12 continued.

## Online Appendix D Discussion of State Capacity

The state capacity of a regime at the onset of a democratization episode is likely to have competing effects on the outcome. While it has been noted coercive capacity alone increases the longevity of an authoritarian regime (Bellin, 2004; Way, 2005; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Slater, 2012), the level of extractive capacity has been seen to increase the likelihood of democratization and democratic consolidation (Ross, 2004; Baskaran, 2014; Slater & Fenner, 2011; Fortin-Rittberger, 2014). The primary distinction between these two forms of state capacity in terms of democratization outcomes is that extractive capacity in the form of taxation directly involves the citizenry in the funding of regime policies. As such, this is thought to drive more representation and responsiveness on the part of the regime (Baskaran, 2014). Coercive capacity on the other hand, which may or may not rely on taxation for its funding, has a more clear connection to regime stability through both repression and security. While the literature is mixed on the expected relationship between capacity and democratization, examining these two types of capacity can provide further insight.

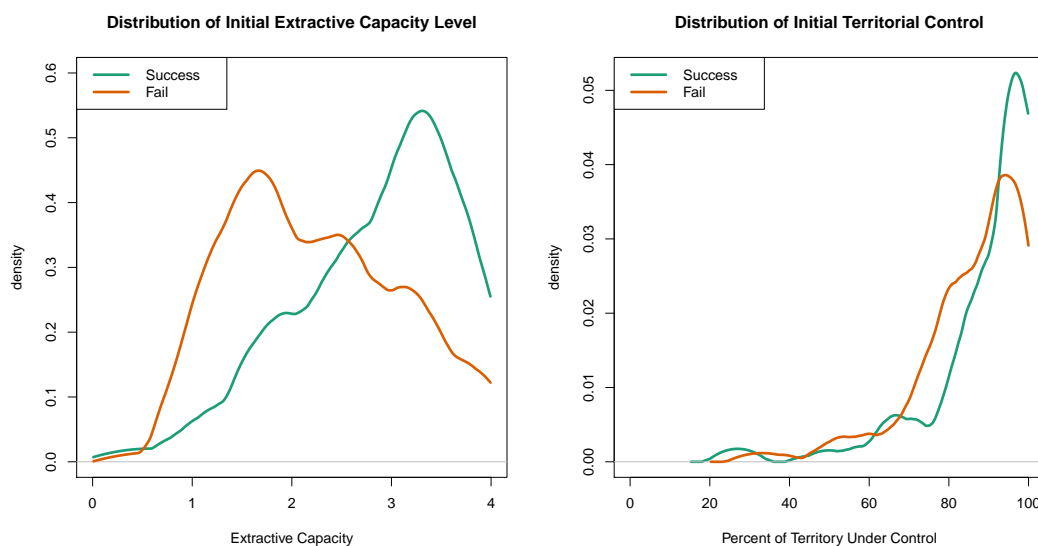


Figure 21: Difference in initial extractive and territorial capacity by outcome

Using two indicators from the V-Dem v8 dataset (Coppedge et al., 2018) which measure two different aspects of state capacity—extractive capacity and coercive capacity—we can evaluate how these theories about the influence of the strength of the state on democratic

development match up to the data presented here. In Figure 21, the left panel displays the distributions of extractive capacity based on the state's fiscal capacity (*v2stfisccap*) and the right panel displays the distributions of coercive control as operationalized by the territorial control that a state has in terms of percent of territory effectively controlled (*v2svstterr*). As above, the distribution of the successful episodes is in green and the failed episodes is in orange.

Figure 21 illustrates that successful and failed episodes are distributed differently when it comes to extractive capacity. The average values of these distributions are 2.9 for successful and 2.2 for failed, with clearly distinct modes. The same cannot be said about territorial control. For both successful and failed episodes, the distributions are highly left skewed with similar mean values; 89.5 and 85.9 for successful and failed episodes, respectively. These findings support both strains of the capacity and democratization literature presented here, showing that higher levels of extractive capacity lends itself to much more distinct and positive democratization outcomes than coercive capacity.