The State in Democratic Breakdowns: Who, How, and Why

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It is often invoked that the state is a prerequisite for democracy to exist. While this is an important insight, cross-national research opting for explaining democratic stability typically applies it as a static assumption rather than a dynamic causal proposition. Therefore, we are largely left in the dark about who the relevant state actors are, how they contribute to democratic breakdowns, and indeed why they would do so. Specifying who, how, and why is a vital first step in developing a better understanding of the state-democracy nexus, including whether a disaggregation of the state concept matters. In this paper, I present an overall theoretical framework and seven causal mechanisms to answer these questions. At the general level, I propose that the state – based on a tripartite differentiation between a monopoly on violence, administrative effectiveness, and citizenship agreement - is relevant for containment of anti-systemic forces and management of security-related and socioeconomic conditions. I then specify mechanisms related to processes of military restoration, security and socioeconomic delegitimization, and ethnic conflict all of which stem from weaknesses in one of the three attributes of the state. Empirically, I exemplify an illustrative analysis of the seven mechanisms for the 14 democratic breakdowns of the interwar period.
Causality and state-democracy research

Recent reviews of research in democratization (e.g. Munck 2011) call for a more comprehensive theorization of the relationship between state and democracy – that is, a more specified causal relationship between state and democracy. In a special issue on what was termed the ‘state-democracy nexus’ (cf. Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014), it was argued that a better understanding of the different ways in which the state⁠¹ may stabilize the holding of free, fair, and inclusive elections was the most pressing concern.² Specifically, I argue that theories of state-democracy relationships must better address who the relevant state actors are, how they contribute to democratic breakdowns, and indeed why they would do so.

Typically, the question of causality between state and democracy has been precluded by conflation of state and regime characteristics (cf. Mazzuca 2010); state-democracy theorization has ended in necessary yet often overly simplistic discussions of endogeneity stressing allegedly powerful causal influences flowing from democracy to state (for a review, see Mazzuca and Munck 2014); or the state’s importance for democratic stability has been treated as a static assumption or almost in functionalist terms both of which have tended to stay at the macro-level without specifying how such a relationship would work at the micro-level (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996; Rose and Shin 2001: 333-339; Fukuyama 2005; Bratton and Chang 2006: 1059-1063; Kraxberger 2007: 1056-1057; Møller and Skaaning 2011).³ In consequence, empirical findings have tended to cloud more than illuminate new understandings of the state-democracy relationship (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014: 9-10). Perhaps most notably, the so-called sequencing debate has pointed to the importance of political accountability for state-building in early modern Europe (Møller 2015). This is definitely worth acknowledging but it does not change the fact that introduction of mass democracy, a different concept from political accountability involving extension of suffrage to the population at large, in a context of weak stateness is associated with civil conflict and regime instability (see e.g. Rose and Shin 2001; Carothers 2002: 8-9).

Hence, what is needed are a set of more dynamic causal propositions answering who, how, and why concerning the state’s stabilizing effect on democracies. I thus pursue the state-democracy nexus agenda by a disaggregated approach with multiple pathways from state to democracy. To this end, I capitalize on already existing research of civil-military relationships (e.g.

¹ I refer to the state strengths and weaknesses as matters of stateness.
² The editors noted the need for disaggregation of the concept of stateness and thinning of the concept of democracy to enable causal analysis of the state’s effect on democratic stability.
³ To be fair, scholars (e.g. Fukuyama 2014) now increasingly specify their causal propositions.
Nordlinger 1977; Stepan 1988), clientelism, corruption, and political polarization (e.g. O’Donnell 1973; Rothstein 2011; Cornell and Lapuente 2014), and ethnic fractionalization and citizenship conflicts (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996; Wimmer 2013). Yet, I sharpen these theories and anchor them in a unified theory of how the state affects democracy under the larger condition of ongoing socioeconomic modernization (cf. Przeworski 2005; Ansell and Samuels 2014).

In answering who, how, and why, I build on sociological theory, particularly that on social movements, defining a causal mechanism as “a delimited class of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations” (Tilly 2001: 25-26). I take this to mean that a causal mechanism must explicate the participating actors, their properties, activities, and relations and in that sense connect cause and effect via the attitudes and behavior of the specified actors (cf. Hedström and Ylikoski 2010: 50-52). In turn, who the relevant actors are needs to be identified. The state-democracy argument proposes that the state constrains and incentivizes actors meaning that identifying the relevant actors is pertinent to distinguishing state from other effects. If, for instance, an explanation focuses entirely on party politicians or trade unionists as the causal drivers towards democratic breakdown, how can causality then stem from the state? Next, answering how the outcome of democratic breakdown comes about is a necessary part of a causal explanation separate from analyses of confounding effects since it regards the mechanism connecting state and democratic breakdown (George and Bennett 2005). It regards an account at the behavioral level of how actors were able to contribute to democratic breakdown. For instance, explanations sometimes focus on certain social classes who nevertheless are later identified as politically insignificant and thus without the required opportunity to convert ideas into reality (see e.g. Luebbert 1987: 449-450). Finally, answering ‘why’ at least demands scrutinizing the basic motivations of the actors measured at the attitudinal level. Identifying key motivations risks succumbing to ex-post judgment. On the other hand, actor motivation is a pertinent part of a causal explanation in the sense that we intuitively demand accounts of both ‘can’ and ‘will’ in explaining a given outcome. Notably, far from all explanations of democratic breakdown stress the importance of powerful presidents or military elites who could easily have destroyed democracy if they wanted to. As will be theorized, state actors do not have to be both motivated and enabled for stateness to contribute to democratic breakdown. However, at a minimum it must be shown that they enabled others or were themselves vital drivers of breakdown.

The remainder of the paper contains theorization of seven mechanisms connecting the state with democratic breakdown on the basis of these criteria for who, how, and why. Yet, I also
illustrate how these mechanisms may be analyzed by building causal process observations in the
democratic breakdowns of the interwar period. Before the theorization and application of the
mechanisms, however, I present the theory of how the state, despite its different mechanisms, at an
overall level stabilizes democracies.

The state and the distributionist model of democracy
This paper aligns with the distinctions of state and regime from Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning
(2014; for similar distinctions, see also Mazzuca and Munck 2014). I thus define the overarching
concept of state as the organization with the capacity to impose law and order and to construct and
implement policies within a clearly demarcated territory and the claim to legitimacy as the primary
political unit of the territory. Three conceptually distinct aspects of the state – monopoly on
violence, administrative effectiveness, and citizenship agreement - relate to each part of this
definition. A monopoly on violence entails the capacity of the military and police to impose public
order throughout the territory of the state. This involves three necessary and jointly sufficient
criteria. First, the state is the superior coercive force vis-à-vis societal forces (in active cooperation).
Second, monopoly on violence implies high cohesion (hierarchical organization and
professionalism) among the security forces. Third, the security forces, military and police, must
accept ultimate subordination to the political executive in matters of their organizational interests
(salary, level of administrative autonomy, and political prerogatives) (see Nordlinger 1977: 64-76;
Stepan 1988: Ch. 6).

Administrative effectiveness is the capacity of the civil administration, including the
judiciary, to construct and implement policies regarding public services and regulations accurately,
swiftly, and with high quality throughout the territory. The three criteria here are first, a penetration
by administrative structures of the territory of the state entailing a relatively stable connection
between center and periphery by which laws, decrees, and other political signals are
communicated. Second, administrative effectiveness hinges on the existence of a functioning civil
service system basing recruitment of personnel on merits rather than political status or social
connections. The third requirement regards the responsiveness of the civil administration implying a
willingness to serve with equal effectiveness any government decision, no matter its content (see
Dunleavy 1985; Rauch and Evans 2000).

4To capture differences between less capable states, I only require administrative effectiveness in the key public sectors
of economics and trade, finance, judicial affairs, interior affairs, and social and labor market policy.
I conceive of citizenship agreement as the sheer agreement on who are and could potentially be the members of the state. There are two necessary and jointly sufficient criteria which I term mutual subgroup acceptance and state legitimacy. First, mutual subgroup acceptance requires that the significant ethnic subgroups along racial, religious, or linguistic lines inside the state territory accept each other’s presence which may often be conceived as the absence of profound conflicts based on ethnic belonging. Second, it entails a measure of state legitimacy – that is, a common, or at least non-conflictual, view of the state as an ethnic symbol (see Linz and Stepan 1996: 16; Gellner 2006; Stepan, Yadav, and Linz 2011).

I define democracy as a political regime producing governments from free, fair, and inclusive elections. I, however, pragmatically lower the demands for inclusiveness to entail suffrage for only half of the adult male population (see Boix, Miller, and Rosato 2012). In turn, I understand democratic stability as the continued existence of these elections. Civil wars and martial law provisions are understood as democratic breakdowns when they postpone such elections indefinitely. Otherwise, military and paramilitary coups d’état as well as autogolpes by incumbents and bloodless coups (invited coups) are also understood as democratic breakdowns (see Linz 1978: Ch. 4).

Any theorization of the state-democracy nexus must acknowledge the intimate relationship between the state and processes of socioeconomic modernization or, more generally, levels of economic development and equality. Indeed, state-building is part of modernization in Weberian and Marxian thought. What may be termed the distributionist model of democracy merely takes stock of the reinvigoration of modernization theory in the last two decades (see Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Boix 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Ansell and Samuels 2014). In this, democracy endures as a result of a bargaining equilibrium between three groups: the rich, the poor, and the middle classes. For democracy to endure, these three groups of actors must see democracy as the regime that maximizes their potential gains (Przeworski 2005: 253-254). This equilibrium is stable when overall wealth is so high as to make the elite costs of rebellion higher than the benefits of accepting the redistributions that follow from democracy. Even though the relative importance of economic wealth and equality in enabling the equilibrium has been disputed (Acemoglu et al. 2009), the wealth and equality theories are compatible in one key respect: With economic development, in the form of industrialization, income inequalities rise and put pressure on autocrats to grant democracy which levels out the differences between the bourgeoisie (and sometimes even also the masses) and the previous autocratic elite (Przeworski 2005: 265; Ansell and Samuels 2014:
The resulting bargaining equilibrium is enduring because of the nature of democratic elections providing de jure institutional certainty that the agreement is not broken tomorrow (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; for a slightly different version of this argument, see Boix 2003).

While my theory basically concurs with this model, its point of departure is that the model assumes the state to be in place. That is, it is wrongly assumed that the bargaining equilibrium is continuously enforced and trusted. To the contrary, I hold that any legitimate distribution of economic and political resources rising from democratic elections is not necessarily implemented and therefore not credible by definition. Instead, it must be maintained by a centralized authority, the state – a point that Przeworski (2003; 2005: 266-267) raises himself but does not pursue. From the history of the Western world, we are used to treating a strong state as largely endogenous to economic development and patterns of redistribution. Yet, this is far from a tenable assumption in other settings of the world (cf. Huntington 1968; Evans 1995; Grindle 1996). A more historical look at interwar Europe leaves the same impression of wide variation in levels of ‘infrastructural and coercive capacity’, ‘civic order’, and ‘the rule of law’ even in countries with relatively similar levels of economic development and equality (e.g. Bermeo 1997: 19; Mann 2004: 31-38; Lapuente and Rothstein 2013).

A short outline of a typical process of democratic destabilization suffices to place different mechanisms of stateness in the same framework. First, stateness is only relevant for regime stability in non-consolidated democracies. Consolidated democracies is a narrow group of countries in North-Western Europe and the British settler colonies of North America, Australia, and New Zealand defined by a history of high levels of public trust in political representatives making for widespread, intrinsic valuation of democracy (see Svolik 2013; for similar definitions, see Linz and Stepan 1996: 5-6; Alexander 2002: 56). These regimes have virtually no risk of breaking down, state weaknesses notwithstanding. In non-consolidated regimes, either so-called semi-loyalists or disloyalists dominate. Semi-loyal groups are for some reason, typically socioeconomic or ethnic, opposed to the current political order to such a degree that the very rules of the democratic regime are, as an unintended consequence, challenged. However, they do not write off democracy from scratch but instead, given the costs of rebellion, give it ‘the benefit of the doubt’. Disloyal groups intendedly challenge democracy because they are more inclined to reject democracy as a principle.

The distinction between semi-loyalists and disloyalists is studied broad because it captures the different groups that have contributed to democratic breakdown since the early 20th century: rightists (fascists, monarchists, oligarchic conservatives), leftists (communists, anarchists),
or secessionists. Similarly, semi-loyalists and disloyalists have been found among elite and mass cohorts alike, in both government and opposition parties, and among public and private sector employees (Linz 1978: 27-37; for similar distinctions, see Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 23).

State actors – the bureaucrats and military and police officials in the state apparatus and ethnic groups in society – may be semi- or disloyal themselves but what is relevant here is whether state actors work, deliberately or not, to safeguard democracy. I argue that state actors have two effects on democratic stability, via containment and crisis management. First, if semi-loyalists dominate, crisis management is a salient political issue. Either crisis is related to a strained security situation, in which public disorder and high levels of crime prevail, or to an economic crisis spurring social destitution. Because of the variability of support for democracy, good performance during these crises, either by actual successes in improving economics and security or the perception that the future will bring such improvements, tends to save while poor performance tends to doom democracies (cf. Gilley 2006; Rothstein 2011; Svolik 2013). A minority of young democracies experience economic booms which temporarily make them resilient to breakdown (the so-called ‘honeymoon period’), since economic booms also tend to decrease conflict and violence in society, but most non-consolidated democracies cannot rely on continued economic booms but rather go through outright economic recessions or stagnation (Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2003). Here, crisis management is the key to democratic stability. Effective management of the economy and extremism at hand contributes to legitimizing the regime and co-opting the critically important semi-loyalists. By contrast, failed crisis management implies an increased risk that semi-loyalists cannot be coopted by the regime. In turn, they are more inclined to ally with or be persuaded by extremists in bids for rebellion or coups d’état.

Second, containment is vital whether semi-loyalists or disloyalists dominate. Even the non-consolidated democracies in an economic boom may break down because absolute political power is always attractive. Most generally, any non-consolidated democracy may succumb to a sitting executive or a state military or paramilitary coup d’état which simply take power because existing institutions are ineffective in dealing with questions of divided rule (cf. Przeworski 1991: 52-53). If disloyalists dominate, successful crisis management cannot save democracy. Here, containment is obviously important since the democratic regime is likely challenged from numerous sides by forces with relatively small perceived costs of rebellion (Loewenstein 1937). And these costs decrease even further if rebels or critical elites face a weak state apparatus (Tilly 2007: 16-18).
To sum up, democratic breakdowns result from one of three possible routes in which containment and crisis management are relevant:

1) precondition: no salience of performance legitimacy; process: lack of containment of coup plotters or rebels → breakdown
2) precondition: salience of performance legitimacy and economic boom; process: lack of containment of coup plotters or rebels → breakdown
3) precondition: salience of performance legitimacy and economic recession (or stagnation); process: lack of containment or lack of management of economic/security crisis → breakdown

The next section elaborates on these processes and relates problems of containment and crisis management to the three aspects of state. It presents seven mechanisms: two regarding how a disputed monopoly on violence leads to, respectively, poor containment and failed management of security crises; three regarding how administrative ineffectiveness leads to failed or biased management of socioeconomic crises; and finally, two regarding how citizenship disagreement leads to overwhelmingly high conflict levels precluding effective containment or political compromises on social and economic distribution. I start with the mechanisms from disputed monopoly on violence and proceed to administrative ineffectiveness and citizenship disagreement. The mechanisms contain a number of steps which must be observed for the mechanism to be vindicated. Even though I specify the route where each mechanism is relevant, only observable implications for the state actors as described earlier are necessary. Throughout, figures will simplify the mechanisms by focusing on the motivation and behavior of state actors.

**Mechanisms connecting state to democratic stability**

*Disputed monopoly on violence*

A disputed monopoly on violence - either via simple resource problems, lack of coherence, lack of subordination or some combination of the deficiencies - spurs two mechanisms affecting the process of democratic destabilization. I term the first mechanism an ‘authoritarian restoration’ in which opposition or incumbent elites succeed in a coup d’état because of poor containment by the security forces or the state military takes power to restore its organizational powers. This is inspired by the theories of military power in civil matters in young, typically Latin American but also Sub-Saharan African, democracies (Linz 1978: Ch. 5; Stepan 1988: Chs. 6-7). The other mechanism
regards a ‘security delegitimization’, that is, a weakening of performance legitimacy in security matters which radicalizes the masses in turn provoking martial law, a revolutionary coup, or civil war. Research has focused less explicitly on this mechanism (some exceptions are the globally applied theories of Tilly 2007; Rothstein 2011) but it is likely a relevant one given the importance of security in regime performance.

Of all seven, these mechanisms are arguably the most complicated to evaluate because of the intimate relationship between politicians and military figures in many young democracies. Evaluation of authoritarian restorations is easened, however, because I explicitly demand concessions to the military in order to verify that military ‘restoration of organizational powers’ caused breakdown. Evaluating security delegitimization is easened because security forces typically have a large degree of autonomy in security matters in democracies, disregarding the ideological stand of the government. Hence, even though implementations are no better than the content of the policies and vice versa, the government’s role in setting the content of policies is disregarded in both mechanisms as it can largely be assumed to be as focused on security as possible. Still, the observation of government orders to provide security which are then poorly implemented would increase the uniqueness of the examination.

Authoritarian restorations play out in either of two paths dependent on the configuration of semi-loyalists and disloyalists and whether an economic boom exists. In the upper path (see Figure 1 below), disloyalists (or alternatively, semi-loyalists dominate amidst an economic boom) dominate meaning that the mechanism consists of only two steps where the first one involves the direct transition from stability to an attempt at overthrowing democracy, and next, the succession of this attempt. Two very different motivations may drive security forces, depending on the specific type of problem pertaining to monopoly on violence. If the disputed monopoly on violence stems from either a lack of resources or cohesion, we should observe expressions of constitutional values (publicized in speeches, public debates, or recorded by journalists) which are, however, dominated by frustration of stalled implementation or internal disagreement about the appropriate means to be employed. In turn, paramilitary coup plotters are actually fought but without success. This leads to an overthrow or civil war if military powers are more balanced between the paramilitary and state military forces. Note that the failure of containment here is not due to a lack of willingness to protect democracy or the constitution as such but rather a weak ability to do so. Otherwise, the mechanism would amount to a somewhat trivial claim that democracy broke down because the military was anti-democratic.
The second motivation is about what happens when the disputed monopoly on violence stems from a lack of subordination. This is a very different dynamic because we are here looking for security forces turning their backs on democracy because they have come to conceive of it as too much of a threat to their organizational powers. They wanted to maintain or increase their powers but have been turned down by the government. Often, these forces align with generally authoritarian cadres of the military. The observable implications of this motivation are attitudes of praetorianism or military autonomy in budgetary and/or policy decision-making beyond purely means of coercion (cf. Stepan 1988: 92, 100). In turn, the state military may support a coup attempt by oppositional forces or support an ‘autogolpe’ or ‘bloodless coup’ in return for promised concessions of their organizational powers.

In the case where the security forces lack resources, cohesion, and subordination, I would expect to see either of these two motivations and paths. It may of course also be that a successful military intervention actually saves democracy. This is what happens when martial law is initiated as a legal instrument of the constitution, public order restored, and a date for new elections is set within reasonable time. However, I do not expect such a mechanism. Rather, if the monopoly on violence is disputed, I expect martial law to become permanent and thus end in democratic breakdown.

The actors, their attitudes, behavior, and observable implications are basically the same whether disloyalists dominate or semi-loyalists dominate amidst an economic boom. The only difference is that the latter process is less likely to unfold given the boom and the salience of performance legitimacy.

The lower path whereby the ‘authoritarian restoration’ mechanism plays out involves the regimes with semi-loyalist domination and economic recession or stagnation. The process of destabilization contains three steps: mobilization, attempt, and breakdown. The mobilization-step is the substantial difference between the two paths. As indicated, crisis management is here a relevant parameter alongside containment. Whether grievances are socioeconomically based or security-related, security forces gain prominence as actors of containment in the same way as in the upper path. Even though the need for containment is less pressing in the earlier mobilization-step than when an actual attempt occurs, the motivations of the security forces are basically the same: containment of the threat within constitutional boundaries if resource-insufficiency and/or incoherence are the problems or containment via extra-constitutional means if autonomy is the problem. However, the observed behavior of underequipped and/or factionalized security forces
should be different in the mobilization step when containment also hinges on the ability to identify the subgroups or elite factions in society which mobilize on explicitly anti-systemic messages. Security forces with a genuine interest in containment should be observed trying to track down these movements or dissolve them. This battle is, however, lost due to weak intelligence work and coordination. The behavior by autonomous security forces is the same as in the upper path as they may try to install military rule with or without direct support of the opposition to restore their organizational powers. Yet, such a coup d’état may occur preemptively before an actual paramilitary coup attempt.

[Figure 1 about here]

The rest of the mechanisms differ from authoritarian restorations in two respects: one, they play out in only one path; and two, their unique effect is not found in the last step from attempt of to successful breakdown but in the preceding steps of dissatisfaction, mobilization, and attempt. In any breakdown, the security forces enter the equation in the last step where final containment is a logical possibility. But this does not mean that authoritarian restoration is a trivial explanation as indicated by the strained demands for observable implications of military concessions. Instead, the point is that the remaining mechanisms, if verified, exist no matter the actions of security forces in this last step.

The ‘security legitimization’ (Figure 2) mechanism typically regards regimes where semi-loyalists dominate and booms do not occur. This mechanism uniquely involves the steps of dissatisfaction and mobilization. In the dissatisfaction-step, it must first be shown that, observing the same variation in motivation as in authoritarian restorations, autonomous security forces engage in arbitrary dissolution of crowds not sanctioned by government orders whereas security forces with low levels of resources or incoherence conduct weak identification and unsuccessful fighting (via, for instance, arrests) of criminals committing murders and spurring violence. Either way, there is an ‘unsuccessful enforcement of monopoly on violence’.

The role of security forces in the dissatisfaction-step is more limited than in later steps when the threat against public order is more serious. However, even though anti-systemic ideologies, which people may rally around in the mobilization-step, often come and go as a result of the economic situation and the management of it, a considerable evaluative aspect may, as indicated, also pertain to the containment of violent acts itself since people want to be insured
against arbitrary violence. In democracies, it might be the specific trigger of public agitation and mobilization for a military rule with easier access to repression. Note that these concerns may also refer to perceived and thus purely imagined problems of security which, for instance, disloyalists often use as propaganda. However, there are usually some truth to the security problems even though these are exaggerated by the masses or mobilizing elites. And as it is also a harder test of the mechanism, I demand an observation of actual security problems.

[Figure 2 about here]

Administrative ineffectiveness

I expect three mechanisms leading from administrative ineffectiveness to democratic breakdown, all of them expectedly only relevant where semi-loyalists dominate and there is no economic boom. The mechanisms reflect how the civil service engages in several different tasks whereas security forces perform a narrower set of duties. The first mechanism, which I name ‘socioeconomic delegitimization’, captures some of the most profound examples of processes of breakdown in democracies such as those strained by economic recession (see e.g. Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2003), or those democracies whose state apparatuses are out of line with the social structures and thus incapable of delivering the demanded socioeconomic transformation (see e.g. O’Donnell 2007; Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). The second mechanism is termed ‘elite bias delegitimization’ to describe the process that may emerge from a certain type of administrative ineffectiveness, namely that of a politicized administration that implements socioeconomic policies, civil liberties, or property rights in a way that biases against the oppositional party elite. The incumbent’s bias against the opposition delegitimizes democracy, and autocracy becomes an assurance for the protection of the opposition’s vital interests. The third mechanism is termed ‘mass bias legitimization’ and describes the specific mass dynamics of this sort of process. While the process in the elite-based mechanism is structured around foreseeable party political dynamics and is thus relatively easy to predict, the mass-based process is muddier and has the particular explosive potential of leading to civil war. Particularly Latin American democracies have been scrutinized along the lines of such theories of elite and mass discrimination (see e.g. O’Donnell 2007; Cornell and Lapuente 2014).

Socioeconomic delegitimization (Figure 3) involves the crisis management of dissatisfaction and mobilization whereas mass and elite bias delegitimization only uniquely regards
crisis management in the mobilization-step. Socioeconomic delegitimization is a mass-based mechanism since the dissatisfied are those most seriously hit by economic recession or stagnation, that is, in terms of unemployment, hyperinflation, or general impoverishment. It is these concerns that the government and civil service address. Since socioeconomic policy issues are deeply ideological and usually clearly differentiate the political right and left, the content of the governments’ policy reactions to the public’s concerns cannot be taken as a given, as in security matters. For instance, right-wing governments will tend to propose means and ends of fiscal austerity in times of recession while left-wing governments propose countercyclical policies via tax exemptions or public investments. As civil servants hinge on receiving such executive policy orders, and given that the quality of any policy is inherently difficult to classify a priori, the examination is strongest when it is observed that the government actually initiates policies targeted directly at inequality, unemployment and/or hyperinflation (depending on what is the specific problem of the economy). Only in this case can it be forcefully shown that the civil service is responsible for poor performance.

The behavior of the civil service in socioeconomically relevant ministries and agencies must then, on an overall account, have one or both of the following features: When the civil service is non-meritocratic ( politicized or patrimonial), the implementation of the government proposals is either delayed or inaccurate because of sheer incompetence or corrupt practices. Alternatively, when civil servants are unresponsive, implementation is interrupted or sabotaged (circumvented).

I will not observe the attitudes of the civil service as they are expectedly very hard to track down, if any strong ones exist at all. This is due to the traditional demands of strict loyalty of the civil service to the government which are increasingly becoming legally regulated with the advent of bureaucratic reforms sweeping the developing world (Hirschmann 1999). Also, it is generally hard to observe the influence of the civil service on policy contents because policy-negotiations between government and civil service are most often closed processes. Civil service behavior in implementation is therefore a relatively powerful and, in any case, the most reliable parameter for detecting the difference between an unresponsive and a non-meritocratic administration.

In the mobilization-step, the angry crowds turn anti-systemic in calling for some form of economic authoritarianism, that is, as we know from present-day China and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, a system of economic management by authoritarian means. A likely reaction from
the politicians, openly addresses the more moderate concerns among the crowds with increased social spending or more direct redistribution. Again, however, the civil service stalls implementation through either of the two ways described above. From this point on, administrative ineffectiveness has already contributed to breakdown by radicalizing the crowds to engage in revolutionary activities provoking coup attempts or civil war.

[Figure 3 about here]

‘Elite bias delegitimization’ (Figure 4) assumes an initial atmosphere of dissatisfaction with socioeconomic conditions as a foundation for the government to engage in undermining the rule of law and initiate particularly discriminating policies against the opposition. Biased policies and state repression can of course also be seen when the economy is improving and even when the opposition is generally satisfied with the conditions of the day, but repression of the opposition is much more likely when societal conditions are worsening because this often contributes to polarizing the opposition from the incumbents in a game of blame and mutual threats.

The mechanism begins with civil servants in politicized administrations who, given the direct dependence of their job on the will of the elected incumbents, provide weakly credible limits to executive power leading to biased policies in matters of socioeconomic distribution and rule of law which antagonizes the opposition. In contrast to socioeconomic delegitimization, the problem here is not stalled implementation but rather the opposite, namely too precise and uncritical implementation. A core feature of meritocracy is the ability to balance responsiveness by concerns for the lawfulness and impartiality of policies – concerns which patrimonial administrations do not have. Therefore, I should observe governments initiating policies aimed at hurting the opposition followed by a predominantly politicized civil service, particularly likely in the department of justice, including notably the judiciary, which implements these policies directly and uncritically (despite the inaccuracy and delays that may occur given its incompetence). Importantly, implementation here counters established principles of law in the given country that any professional bureaucracy would respect.

The relevant policy areas are socioeconomic rights as well as civil liberties and property rights provision. Thus, we might, for instance, observe the civil service giving impunity for government party members, violating the rule of law through arbitrary arrests of opposition
forces, or illegally seizing their property. In socioeconomic matters, we might observe unfair distribution of social benefits with discrimination of certain social or economic groups.

Importantly, the government’s biased policies are not sufficient for anti-democratic mobilization to occur. The civil service could stop their implementation on grounds of their unlawfulness but its dependence on government patronage hinders this. As a result, I should observe that the opposition party elites, which are already organized, remobilize with internal agitations to rally for ending these (perceived) injustices with extra-constitutional means. This could be met with an escalation or continuation of measures by the government and a dedicated implementation hereof by the civil service, as both the government and the civil service perceive the emergence of the opposition threat to their own security, rights, and economic goods. The threat may of course not even be detected before an actual coup attempt by the opposition is carried through. Similarly, any attempt is not necessarily tried at first because the incumbents might be ousted in an election. In this last case, the mechanism would predict the same process to unfold, only with a new set of incumbents and opposition elites. In any case, a coup attempt eventually occurs. This is likely paramilitary but the state military, backed by incumbents or not, may initiate a coup before that as a precaution of the opposition threat. The figure again leaves out the escalation between government and opposition for the sake of simplicity.

[Figure 4 about here]

‘Mass bias delegitimization’ (Figure 5) is equal to elite bias delegitimization in terms of the sequence of events and the behavior and attitudes of actors. However, the actors, and thus the particular arena of action, are at the mass-level. Masses are more diverse and by definition farther away from executive political power than elites, and their behavior may thus be less rational and predictable indicating a different kind of process. Specifically, the issues of the means and timing of government reaction and military coup attempts are therefore harder to determine a priori. Otherwise, the same dynamic applies: A politicized administration may simply bias against a whole population group, either based on socioeconomic, ethnic, or other criteria. The unifying characteristic of the targeted groups, however, is their attachment to the opposition. For instance, governments may engage in biased policies because it sees executive power as an opportunity of exploitation of resources and favoritism of certain groups over others – predatory states are extreme cases hereof. In turn, the mass opposition are radicalized and driven to attempt a coup (by some
representatives) or rebellion. This may, as in the other mechanisms, be preempted or reacted to by the security forces, succeed, or end in civil war. In fact, due to the unpredictable dynamics of radicalization among the masses in this mechanism, civil war is a particularly likely outcome of it.

[Figure 5 about here]

Citizenship disagreement

The first mechanism connecting citizenship disagreement with democratic breakdown regards the destabilizing effect of ‘citizenship violence’ (Figure 6). This mechanism may occur in any non-consolidated democracy - that is, disregarding the distribution of semi-loyalists and disloyalists and the instance of economic boom. It captures the great variety of democratic instability in diverse societies which, for instance, dominates in Sub-Saharan Africa but also in countries in the Balkans or in Sri Lanka where religion is a vital source of political conflict. Thus, it relates to the works of Horowitz (1985), Wimmer (2013), and others on the severity of ethnic conflicts and their consequences for civic order (see also Alesina et al. 2003).

The mechanism involves steps of dissatisfaction, mobilization, and attempt. From a starting point of stability, we would expect to observe violence between the ethnic groups that do not accept each other’s presence in the same country. If the problem is rather state illegitimacy than inter-subgroup conflict, we may see violent attacks on state symbols and representatives. The insight is that the likelihood of violence in any case, and later of failed containment of actual threats to democracy, increases with the level of citizenship disagreement.

The mobilizations rising from the violence can be very different. Whether violence is inter-ethnic or directed at the state, it may set in motion one of three mobilizations. The more radical the mobilization, the more likely is breakdown. The most radical one is a reversal of the ethnic situation observed by racist, including xenophobic, ideas and calls for ethnic apartheid or hegemony. An equally radical mobilization centers on a wish for secession: an exit from the state which very directly threatens the political unit of the democracy. The least radical one involves a wish for equality and incorporation in the political system of the ethnic groups (whether they are in minority or majority). This last version may seem to be a peaceful claim but an equalization of political and economic powers can be a radical demand that spurs radical reactions from incumbents or their supporters. Plain disloyalists with no immediate stake in the conflict may also use the
conflict and its violent consequences as an excuse for a coup attempt. Alternatively, the state military takes action (preemptively or not) and installs a military dictatorship to end violence.

[Figure 6 about here]

The mechanism of ‘citizenship injustices’ (Figure 7) builds on the same literature as citizenship violence but captures a different dynamic, namely the often debilitating dynamics of state integration amidst economically strained conditions and the effect on the ability of crisis management in the system. In other words, it expectedly only occurs in democracies where semi-loyalists dominate and economic recession or stagnation is present. The mechanism regards the steps of dissatisfaction and mobilization. Generally, it is more relevant if citizenship disagreement involves disrespect between ethnic groups. Indeed, this is the usual logic of theories of discrimination in ethnically diverse countries. However, it may also be relevant in cases of state illegitimacy because the state symbolizes a certain distribution of socioeconomic benefits.

In the dissatisfaction-step, it must be shown that ethnic groups express concerns over socioeconomic injustices that they perceive to exist between them. Unemployment and wages may be perceived to be skewed against particular ethnic groups. The concerns may be either elite- or mass-based but the heart of the matter is that they become salient issues for the parliament and government. Ethnic dividing lines are exacerbated or created within or between the parties in parliament (or in a coalitional government) resulting in polarization of members within or between parties as they are driven to opposite extremes on an implicit scale of ethnic and socioeconomic distribution.

If this polarization does not occur within the government, it may in principle continue business as usual. However, even if not, the government is likely to take stock of the parliamentary opposition (or its coalition partners) to avoid a motion of censure. Either way, this implies observing government failure to promulgate action on the expressed concerns or initiation of half measures – all in all ineffective policy responses as a result of the government’s credence to polarization.

In turn, the ethnic groups are radicalized further because of the unsatisfying government policies. These may then align their cause with lukewarm supporters of democracy. We should thus observe agitations among either elite or mass segments of these groups to mobilize for a socioeconomic upheaval implying reversed ethnocracy. The less radical demand is an economic
authoritarian regime but it must be observed that they rally around inter-ethnic redistribution – only in this way does this step connect with the initial dissatisfaction.

As in elite bias delegitimization, a centrifugal logic of politics may set in here if coup attempts or rebellion do not already occur. A strongly unique examination of the mechanism expects not only a status quo in the government reaction but also a preceding total enfeeblement of parliamentary workings by factionalization (split-ups) of the parties or coalition failure over the ethnic issue. Only the specific government reaction is a necessary observation, however, as this is the motivation for a coup attempt or rebellion.

[Figure 7 about here]

**Empirical analysis**

To illustrate how these mechanisms might work in actual empirical analyses, I have built causal process observations of all the democratic breakdowns in the interwar period. I base the identification of democracies on Boix, Miller, and Rosato’s (2014) codings aligning with the concept of electoral democracy by demanding free and fair elections with suffrage extended to at least half of the male population. They identify 14 democratic breakdowns between 1919 and 1939. Employing causal process observations means measuring all the proposed observable implications of a certain causal theory – in my case, all seven mechanisms. Only if any observable implication in all the steps of a given mechanism can be found, is the mechanism coded as present. But the dataset that I build also must contain some codings of monopoly on violence, administrative effectiveness, and citizenship agreement, or rather, their definitional criteria as described earlier. If monopoly on violence is not disputed, the state administration is effective, and citizenship agreement is intact, then theoretical coherence dictate that their respective mechanisms cannot be found (cf. Haggard and Kaufman 2012). I have done these codings by extensive case studies of all 14 breakdowns from the year of democratic transition to the year of breakdown, relying on biographies and historical case and comparative studies. In the coding of the three aspects of state, I also go back before the first democratic transition of each country to get at issues of possible endogeneity.5

In what follows, I analyze the mechanisms in three steps: First, to align with the general theoretical model I engage in an analysis of the context and preconditions of the

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5 Full analyses of all cases, including codings and threshold ambiguities, are available upon request. I also engaged a research assistant (not finished yet) to code 5 of the 14 cases by random selection (Greece 1926-1936; Germany 1919-1933; Lithuania 1920-1926; Uruguay 1919-1934; Portugal 1918-1926) as a reliability check of my own codings.
mechanisms. In this paper, this analysis is cursory but still highly informative of where we should expect to observe the mechanisms. Full analysis of potentially confounding factors is not part of this paper. Thus, later research may prove that a given mechanism, despite being important in single cases of democratic breakdown, do not provide a comparatively convincing explanation of democratic breakdown. Yet, I show that any mechanism found in the interwar context is in fact highly likely to be relevant when comparing with contemporary democratic survivors. Second, I analyze the development of stateness in the cases. I only present the measurement of stateness for the cases of state weakness (in one of the three aspects) because cases are otherwise excluded from identification of the related mechanisms. Third, I analyze the pattern of mechanisms across the 14 cases.

Preconditions and context

Table 1 gives an overview of the cases. As seen, there is disjuncture between the analytical periods indicated (in parentheses in the first column) and the first year of democratic transition. Arguably, I could have extended the analytical period in Chile, Portugal, and Argentina to cover the years before and during World War I (WWI) but the interwar period provides a crisp comparative setup, as it is situated between the two world wars which constitute very basic critical junctures (Overy 1994). To align with previous analyses, I stick to democratic years between 1918 and 1939.

[Table 1 about here]

Zooming in on the face validity of the general theoretical model and its three routes to democratic breakdown, I first note that only four cases (Chile, Portugal, Argentina, and Greece) of 14 had a legacy of democratic rule before 1918. The unbroken legacies in Chile, Portugal, and Argentina of 8, 6, and 5 years, respectively, are relatively short periods, and they all include the four years of WWI with, arguably, particular relevance for Portugal. This leaves only very few years with an opportunity for institution-building (cf. Schedler 1998). Greece became democratic already in 1864, at the same time as many Western European democratizations, but in contrast to Western Europe the Greek democracy broke down in 1915. Throughout this first democratic episode, Greece was torn in internal conflicts resembling civil war, and borders were unsettled until 1922 (Dakin 1977: 57; Antonopoulos and Yiazitzis 1997: 7). Thus, we may hardly call any of the democratic breakdowns consolidated in 1918. Although years democratic is in itself an insufficient measure of
democratic consolidation, as indicated, it provides a first but powerful indication of consolidation given that political accountability of democratic representatives would, all else equal, increase with years of stable democracy (cf. Svolik 2013). In turn, we are inside the margins of where the state could expectedly influence democratic stability. This corroborates well with Bermeo’s (1997: 19) hint that “What seems to distinguish the casualties from the survivors in the interwar story is less the behavior of an actively anti-democratic public than the state’s capacity to provide what might be called ‘civic order’” which has, to my knowledge, not been examined.

We can, however, further distinguish the cases of democratic breakdown to come closer to some expectations of where the different mechanisms would particularly likely be observed. The distinction between semi-loyalists and disloyalists is here relevant. Yet, it is difficult to measure because of questionable credible criteria for choosing groups of political significance in the first place. Most importantly, the labels of ‘semi-loyal’ and ‘disloyal’ may be arbitrary in cases where actors do not define themselves in regime terms but care exclusively about socioeconomic or other kinds of policies. These problems notwithstanding, we can rely on criteria by Mann (2004: 38) and Capoccia (2005: 7) who have also coded the interwar European universe of cases. By implication, Table 1 lists disloyalists as dominating in 7 of 14 cases and semi-loyalists as dominating in 3. Italy is ambiguous since Mann views it as disloyalist while Capoccia views it as semi-loyalist. The three Latin American cases could not be classified but we may tentatively say that Uruguay was a case of semi-loyalist domination because of the year-long stable pattern of democratic competition between Blancos and Colorados (cf. Finch 1991: 218) whereas Argentina and Chile leaned towards disloyalist domination.

This leaves us with two conclusions. First, we have reasons to believe that the state is generally a likely explanation of the pattern of breakdown and survival in the interwar cases and that the mechanisms are also likely to be found. Second, the three mechanisms of administrative ineffectiveness are less likely to be found given that disloyalist domination precludes the relevance of crisis management. We might say that the sample here provides a hard test of the effect of administrative ineffectiveness on democratic breakdown.

Next, the existence of economic booms determines further our initial expectations of the mechanisms. As indicated in Table 1, only two cases (Lithuania and Yugoslavia) had a high economic growth rate in the year before breakdown (1926 and 1929, respectively). Interwar

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6 Mann (2004: 40-41) defines a frontier zone in Central Europe as countries with a ‘prolonged struggle between authoritarianism and democracy’.

7 Capoccia (2005: 11-15) focuses on cases where forces for and against democracy were of relatively equal strength.
analyses focus on at least two periods of economic crisis, the years of postwar inflation (1918-1923) and the Great Depression (1929-1933) (Møller, Schmotz, and Skaaning 2015: 307) the last of which I, however, extend to the rest of the 1930s based on the case studies at hand as well as the theoretical argument that economic crisis exist as long as growth rates are below the pre-contraction level (cf. Hausmann, Rodriguez, and Wagner 2008). The years 1924-1928 have in some cases, notably Germany, been seen as years of economic boom but scholarly opinions differ in each case and between cases meaning that we must rely on specific case evidence for breakdowns during these years. Whereas Chile, Poland, and Portugal went through various export and inflationary crises related to the aftermaths of WWI, the Lithuanian economy was greatly successful in terms of agricultural production and industrial growth until the breakdown in 1926 (Aldcroft 2006: 100-101), and although the Yugoslavian economy was overwhelmingly agrarian, its industrial growth rate was high and stable during the 1920s (Aldcroft 2006: 80-81). That is, in Lithuania and Yugoslavia the instance of economic booms likely worked to stabilize matters, despite disloyalist domination, thus making for a harder test of the mechanisms than in the rest of the cases of disloyalist domination. Finally, there are no cases of semi-loyalist domination admist economic booms, supporting the model’s assumptions.

We now better understand the national preconditions and the context in which any state mechanisms would work. The democratic breakdowns we are looking at were young democracies, typically with disloyalists dominating the political arena but with some notable cases of semi-loyalist domination. The vast majority of these democracies were strained by their economy to some degree. The international context is, however, also highly relevant in this regard given that international systems such the bipolar power logic between the US and the Soviet Union and power distributions favoring autocracies would undermine the effect of the state (cf. Boix 2011). In other words, because democratic states need to be stronger in terms of provision of containment and crisis management when they face international pressures of authoritarian stability, ideology, and example, observing mechanisms in autocratic international periods is a hard test.

I have ordered the breakdowns in the table chronologically (descending). The sample is split in two equally sized groups, with 7 breakdowns occurring under democratic international conditions and 6 under autocratic conditions. Germany is a special case, in fact the decisive case, in this pattern as Hitler’s breakthrough there defined the international autocraticness of the rest of the 1930s. Thus, I conclude that the six subsequent democratic breakdowns are hard tests of any state mechanism.
The development of stateness

Table 2 shows all the cases of state weaknesses at the level of the subcomponents of monopoly on violence, administrative effectiveness, and citizenship agreement in the year before democratic breakdown. Most cases (not marked in parentheses) had state weaknesses in the year before breakdown. Still, a significant number of cases (marked in parentheses) started their democratic period with a weak state but strengthened the state within a few years. Most such changes regarded a strengthening of the monopoly on violence, particularly the establishment of resource supremacy and security force coherence.

Resource supremacy was established in 1920 in Latvia. Since the end of WWI, the Latvian army, also created from the imperial Russian army, had engaged in continued fights with German troops. In the spring of 1920, control was obtained over the lower Livland and the Riga area, helped through by allied troops (Graham 1927: 332). Similarly, the technicalities and raw man power needed for extending Estonian control of the, albeit, small territory of the Northern Baltic seemed almost insurmountable, and the process of setting up an Estonian army was an ‘improvisation’ (Graham 1927: 255; Smith et al. 2002: 1). Nevertheless, resource supremacy of Estonian security forces succeeded during wars against Russian Bolsheviks and German invaders from 1918 to 1920 (Parming 1975: 7; Smith et al. 2002: 1). The same situation was evident in Poland (Watt 1979: 150-151). In Germany, the existence of the Freikorps, despite their sometimes intimate relationship with the Reichswehr, were outside state control and were only detronized after the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 (Waite 1952: 196-197). Improvements of security force coherence in Austria, Latvia, and Estonia and of territorial penetration in Latvia and Estonia in the early 1920s occurred for the same reasons: a logical building of state power in successor states of the former Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, respectively. One interpretation of the developments could be that the democratic regime created the foundation for state improvements. However, as the cases above show, these state-building efforts were conducted either by the military itself during war times or building of coercive power to control populations rather than delivering public services (cf. Mann 2004: 31-38).

Moving on, the improvements towards citizenship agreement in Estonia were more clear results of democratic dialogue upon constitutational provisions of minority protection (Parming 1975: 25). More to the effect of democracy, only one case experienced deterioration of stateness under democracy. This is Spain where the security forces lost their resource supremacy in the spring
of 1936 when the Civil Guards and the Republican Assault Guard split into paramilitary factions and Franco’s Moroccan army entered the country (Payne 2006: 168; Alpert 2013: 21).

Nevertheless, the general impression points toward stateness as independent of the regime type. The vast majority of cases had constant levels of stateness throughout their democratic period indicating that actors had difficulties manipulating stateness. Further, in the majority of cases stateness of the interwar period was either a continuation of pre-democratic patterns or, as mentioned, a product of changes occurring in a situation of state anarchy and regime upheaval during and immediately after WWI. For instance, the Latin American countries went through WWI and the transition to democracy largely unchanged in matters of stateness generally. Argentina’s security forces established its resource supremacy in the 1880s and coherence in the early 1900s but against the expectations of democratic effects of stateness, coherence was lost with Yrigoyen’s entry under democratic rule in 1916. Yrigoyen thus undermined military professionalism by circumventing the regular army in containment matters (Goldwert 1972: 4). Politicization from top down remained dominating in administrative matters until the 1990s in Argentina and Chile (Ferraro 2004: 4-5; Grindle 2010: 4-7, 12, 17-18). The continuation of patrimonialism prevailed in otherwise unstable Italy after WWI and through the democratic transition.

The development of citizenship disagreement in Germany is particularly symptomatic of some general patterns of the cases in which some trait remained stable through WWI whereas another trait of the same overarching state aspect changed. In late 19th century, disrespect between ethnic groups developed especially to the east of Germany where people placed greater loyalty towards their locality, region, or dynasty (Breuilly 1990: 661), and new laws of naturalization caused divisions amongst Germans by separating national identities along ethnic lines (Brubaker 1995: 202) - notably the large Polish minority and the self-assured region of Bavaria. State legitimacy, however, first became a problem with WWI and the democratic revolution in 1918. The ambiguity of a German national identity was only exacerbated by the losses of WWI (Craig 1978: 59). The imperative of national identity was based on culture and ethnicity rather than territory but owing to the federalism of the republic, it could not symbolize an ethno-cultural unity (Breuilly 1990: 666; Preuss 2003: 42).

Summing up, stateness in the interwar period seems to be best analyzed as a structural phenomenon developing according to its own logic where significant changes rarely occur without external stimuli such as large-scale wars.
Apart from this, Table 2 shows a remarkable amount of different state weaknesses. All three aspects of state weakness - disputed monopoly on violence, administrative ineffectiveness, and citizenship disagreement – are represented by more than half of the cases (excluding the cases in parentheses). And this is not primarily a result of the less theoretically interesting, though necessary, criteria of territorial penetration and resource supremacy because most cases actually had achieved these years before breakdown. This indicates the potential relevance of the state. There are some interesting regional patterns in the distribution of state weaknesses, which corroborates well with extant theories on state-building in medieval (e.g. Ertman 1997) and 19\textsuperscript{th} century (e.g. Rothschild 1974; Shefter 1977; Silberman 1993) Europe and Latin America (e.g. Kurtz 2013) but also points out some puzzles of these theories which only the subcomponents can illuminate.

First of all, matters of pure state capacity in terms of resource supremacy and territorial penetration as well as both mutual subgroup acceptance and state legitimacy were most problematic where states were young, as in the Eastern European successor states to the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires defeated in WWI. When it comes to the meritocraticness and responsiveness of civil servants, problems were all-encompassing in Latin Europe and the offsprings in Latin America. But as we would expect, feudalism weighed heavily on local Latin European administrations in Portugal, Spain, and Italy (and Greece in a less clear-cut fashion) causing both patrimonialism and politicization when they entered the era of mass politics in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century while state-building in Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay caused weaker limits on executive power and thus weaker patrimonialism but stronger top-down politicization of civil servants.

In the Central European cases of Germany and Austria bureaucratic legacies with autonomous, meritocratically recruited officials were much stronger than in Latin Europe which hindered top-down politicization as well as spheres of reserved offices and social discrimination. Yet, distinguishing between responsiveness and meritocratic competence in the civil service yields interesting differences of administrative effectiveness in Germany and Austria. In Austria, the interwar bureaucracy was a strong meritocratic organization (Gulick 1948: 97, 109; see also Møller and Skanning 2010: 338). For this reason, there were worries that the bureaucracy could not be managed by a weakly institutionalized party system (Goldinger 1983: 195; Gerlach and Campbell 2000: 52; Botz 2014: 125). However, government proposals of civil service wage cuts and layoffs were implemented stably, despite protests and strikes by railway workers (Carsten 1986: 54). Generally, the Austrian bureaucrats remained neutral servants of the state, beyond party politics but also their own corporate interests. They served social democratic as well as Christian socialist
governments in relative harmony as a modernizing force (Goldinger 1983: 198-202; Berger 2010: 380).

This stands in sharp contrast to socioeconomic and judicial policy but most notably civil service reform implementation in Weimar Germany. In 1918-1919, SPD and DDP opted for a radical break with the past by democratizing the civil service. They did not trust the old monarchical elite servants and sought to purge them but they were met with considerable resistance from the Beamten bureaucrats who were supported by the politische Beamten in the conservative party, DVP, and higher-level servants in the ministries (Runge 1985: 36-38). Reforms eventually stalled as SDP and DDP quickly realized that a rebuilding of Germany demanded the old bureaucracy’s expertise and sheer size (Böckenförde 1985: 15-16). The bureaucracy organized a trade union, DBB, with the clear purpose of protecting civil service interests against parliamentary politics and the working class ideology (Caplan 1988: 59-61). Throughout the 1920s, this union, but also unorganized lower civil servants, simply circumvented reforms that, for instance, would change criteria for career advancement. Otherwise, department heads used their intimate connection with conservative parliamentarians to stall further reform policies (Runge 1965: 119). From the late 1920s and under Chancellor Heinrich Brüning from 1930, the bureaucracy retained its autonomy from political pressures (Craig 1978: 420). In Germany, we thus saw meritocracy strengthening unresponsiveness.

More generally, the regional patterns point to the relevance of disaggregation of the state concept. Looking at Table 2, many democracies only have weaknesses in one or two of the aspects while they fare well in the other aspect(s). Only in 8 of 14 cases are we sure to judge stateness correctly, based on only one aspect. The remaining six cases exemplify the essence of a justified disaggregation since we our judgement of stateness differs between each aspect aspect of it. The number of democracies with state weaknesses differs between subcomponents, although these differences are relatively small and there is a close relationship between weakness in one subcomponent of a given aspect and weakness in the other subcomponents of that aspect.

Finally, as is clear from the cases of state weakness in the year before breakdown in Table 2, administrative effectiveness was most problematic followed by monopoly on violence and citizenship agreement. Thus, no mechanism can be precluded as existing a priori because all three basic state weaknesses are represented, and because administrative politicization is present in no

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8 These eight cases are Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Germany. In all these cases, weakness of state was all-encompassing at the level of the subcomponents, except in Germany.
less than 12 cases precluding the potential exclusion of the elite and mass delegitimization mechanisms.

*The mechanisms of state weakness*

Table 3 lists all observed mechanisms. As is clear, the amount of observed mechanisms on an overall level is remarkable – 39 in total out of 14 cases. This strongly indicates the explanatory relevance of state weaknesses for the interwar democratic breakdowns. The typical picture is that of multiple mechanisms present in each case. In only two cases (Latvia and Uruguay) did exactly one mechanism (citizenship injustices and elite bias delegitimization, respectively) contribute to democratic breakdown while cases such as Yugoslavia, Italy, and Greece can be explained by 5 of 7 possible mechanisms. The correlation between number of state weaknesses and number of mechanisms present across the cases is not particularly close. More importantly, three cases such as Latvia, Chile, and Lithuania suffered from all-encompassing state weaknesses while these only resulted in one or two of the destabilizing mechanisms. This first of all shows the importance of analyzing mechanisms and refraining from inference based exclusively on correlational patterns. More substantially, however, we should not conclude too strongly about the vitality of a strong state for democratic stability since there are cases where state weaknesses were not causally related to democratic breakdown.

Two cases cannot be explained by any of the mechanisms. Yet, in Estonia security forces were manipulated by rather than complacent with Konstantin Päts manipulation of a ‘threat from the right’ which provided him an opportunity to fulfill his dictatorial ambitions in isolation of an obsolete party system (Parming 1975: 45; Isberg 1988: 24; Siaroff 1999: 107). Thus, Estonian democracy’s breakdown is perhaps best interpreted as a contingent outcome. Dolfuss’ decision to dissolve the Austrian parliament on March 7, 1933, was not an entirely contingent actor-effect as he had been strained politically from 1932 by the polarization between the Social Democrats and the *Heimwehr* movement. Yet, his final decision came out of a trivial disagreement in parliament on reactions against railway strikers, and the weakness of the *Heimwehr* makes political systemic explanations less convincing (cf. Jelavich 1987: 113, 194-195).

Generally, few of the cases in Table 3 are surprising given extant knowledge of the dominating problems of democratic stability in each of the regions present. Authoritarian restorations are dominated by countries inside the margins of the Latin European and American countries which usually had difficulties achieving peaceful civil-military relations in the 19th
century of state-building (cf. Pion-Berlin 1992). Only Poland’s authoritarian restoration breaks this pattern. Similarly, Yugoslavia is the only outsider in the pattern of Latin European and American elite bias delegitimizations. Finally, mechanisms of citizenship disagreement not only pertain to the successor states but also to the older states of Italy and Spain.

The next question is whether the diversity of state weaknesses vis-à-vis state strengths shown in the previous section amounts to different explanatory strength of each aspect. This would increase the relevance of disaggregation. However, no such large differences are observable. Most remarkably, eight mechanisms stemming from citizenship disagreement are present (seven cases were destabilized) which makes this aspect least important for explaining democratic breakdown of all three. Nevertheless, this obviously far from precludes its importance here or in any future analysis. Disputed monopoly on violence and administrative ineffectiveness are both destabilizing via presence of 13 (10 cases were destabilized) and 17 (10 cases were destabilized) mechanisms, respectively. If anything, administrative ineffectiveness was the most important destabilizer of the interwar democracies, though only slightly so.

Summing up, all mechanisms are present indicating the broadness of the state effect on democratic breakdown. In other words, all the theorized mechanisms are analytically useful. Yet, the mechanisms’ analytical usefulness also hinge on the correspondence with the expectations given by preconditions and context. First, let us look at the preconditions. The unambiguous cases of disloyalist domination are represented by 15 of the crisis management mechanisms which were, however, only expected to occur in democracies with semi-loyalist domination. If we believe in the measurement validity of the coding of disloyalism and semi-loyalism, and stretch the inference of this result to its maximum, this seems uplifting for regime stability in young democracies since crisis management by a strong state may save democracies even when they have few genuine democrats. If we look at the two cases where breakdown occurred during an economic boom (Lithuania and Yugoslavia), breakdown was caused by both elite and mass bias delegitimization in Yugoslavia. I take these unexpected findings to mean that the disloyalist-semi-loyalist divide as well as the actual economic situation⁹ are less relevant for the effects of state on democratic stability. My general model is, simply put, relevant for non-consolidated democracies across the board.

Regarding the international context, 12 of the total number of 39 mechanisms present are observed in democratic breakdowns under international autocratic duress – amounting to 31 %.

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⁹ The mass perception of the economic situation, however, was highly relevant in many of the cases.
By contrast, 6 of 13 democratic breakdowns, or 46%, occurred under international autocraticness which corroborates the expectation that state mechanisms seem to be undermined in such an international context.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have investigated the ‘who, how, and why’ of state effects on democratic stability. I built a general model which shows that even high levels of economic development and equality may not be enough for regime stability in non-consolidated democracies given that performance in matters of containment of extremists and economic management is important at any socioeconomic level. I then differentiated between those non-consolidated democracies where semi-loyalists dominate under economic recession or stagnation and those where disloyalists dominate. In the former, only crisis management was assumed relevant whereas both crisis management and containment were relevant in the latter. To this, I related seven well-known yet typically underspecified mechanisms which stem from weaknesses in either of three conceptually distinct aspects of the state: monopoly on violence, administrative effectiveness, and citizenship agreement.

The illustrative analysis of the 14 interwar democratic breakdowns showed the relevance of the general model and the mechanisms in the sense that all mechanisms were relevant. The disaggregation of stateness also proved highly relevant since the cases were neither fully weak nor fully strong in all of the three aspects. The capacity, subordination, and coherence of the security forces, the reach, meritocraticness, and responsiveness of the civil service, and the attachment of ethnic groups to each other and the state mattered for containment and crisis management in different ways and thus for the likelihood of democratic breakdown – not least because stateness developed independently of regime type. The mechanisms were less prevalent after the international tide turned autocratic in 1933. The analysis, however, also leads to some respecifications. While the mechanisms all seem to be relevant, the initial understanding of the context and preconditions of their effect must be amended. Whereas I started out by qualifying the model by the distribution of semi-loyalists and disloyalists and the instance of economic booms, future analysis should rather remove these qualifications. Indeed, the state mechanisms seem relevant in all types of non-consolidated democracies disregarding their economic situation.

This model and its mechanisms propose some new answers to the many remaining empirical questions about democratic stability and breakdown in the second and third waves of
democratization and place scattered research on varieties of the state-democracy connection in a more comprehensive theoretical framework.
Selected bibliography


Figure 1: Authoritarian restoration

Disputed monopoly on violence

- Disputed monopoly on violence
- Preemptive restoration of organizational powers by the military
- Unsuccessful dissolution by security forces
- Violent coup attempt or rebellion
- Unsuccessful containment by security forces of coup attempt or rebellion

State military restores its organizational powers

- State military restores its organizational powers
- Unsuccessful containment by security forces

Democratic breakdown

- Democratic breakdown
- Unsuccessful containment by security forces of coup attempt or rebellion
- Violent coup attempt or rebellion
- Preemptive restoration of organizational powers by the military
- Unsuccessful dissolution by security forces
Figure 2: Security delegitimization

- Disputed monopoly on violence
- Unsuccessful enforcement of monopoly on violence
- Mass mobilization for 'restoring public order'
- Unsuccessful dissolution by security forces
- State military restores order (preemptively or not)
- Democratic breakdown

Unsuccessful containment by security forces of coup attempt or rebellion
Figure 3: Socioeconomic delegitimization

Administrative ineffectiveness

Government initiates policies that address socioeconomic concerns

Inaccurate or delayed implementation by civil service

Interrupted or sabotaged implementation by civil service

Mass mobilization for ‘economic authoritarianism’

Unsuccessful containment of coup attempt or rebellion or restoration by state military

Democratic breakdown
Figure 4: Elite bias delegitimization

Administrative ineffectiveness ( politicization)

Biased implementation against party elite opposition regarding economic goods, civil liberties, or property rights

Mobilization of elite opposition for ‘ending injustices’

Unsuccessful containment of coup attempt or restoration by state military

Democratic breakdown
Figure 5: Mass bias delegitimization

Administrative ineffectiveness (politicization) → Biased implementation against mass opposition regarding economic goods, civil liberties, or property rights → Mobilization of mass opposition for 'ending injustices' → Unsuccessful containment of coup attempt or rebellion or restoration by state military → Democratic breakdown
Figure 6: Citizenship violence

Citizenship disagreement → Violent conflict between ethnic groups → Mass or elite mobilization for 1) reversed ethnic hegemony, 2) secession, or 3) ‘equalization and incorporation’ → Unsuccessful containment of coup attempt or rebellion or restoration by state military → Democratic breakdown
Figure 7: Citizenship injustices

Citizenship disagreement → Polarization or factionalization within and between parties over socioeconomic benefits to ethnic groups → Ineffective policy response by the government → Mass or elite mobilization for ‘economic authoritarianism’ with redistribution or ethnocracy → Unsuccessful containment of coup attempt or rebellion or restoration by state military → Democratic breakdown
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>First transition to democracy</th>
<th>Semi-loyalist or disloyalist domination?</th>
<th>Economic boom</th>
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<td>Yugoslavia (1921-1929)</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Disloyalist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina (1918-1931)</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1919-1933)</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Semi-loyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>First-mover autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria (1920-1933)</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Semi-loyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia (1919-1934)</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Disloyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay (1919-1934)</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia (1920-1934)</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Disloyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece (1926-1936)</td>
<td>1864 (breakdown 1915)</td>
<td>Disloyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (1931-1937)</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Semi-loyalist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
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</table>

Note: Codings of democracy are based on Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2014). Coding of semi-loyalist or disloyalist domination is based on assessments of Mann (2004: 38) and Capoccia (2005: 7). Economic boom is coded by estimates of growth per capita in the last year before breakdown as taken from studies (see discussions). Coding of the international system is based on Boix (2011: 823) categorization of the interwar period on whether it favored democratic (1918-1932) or autocratic (1933-) rule.
Table 2: State weaknesses in the interwar democratic periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disputed monopoly on violence</th>
<th>Administrative ineffectiveness</th>
<th>Citizenship disagreement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security force incoherence</td>
<td>Weak subordination of security forces</td>
<td>Territorial challenges</td>
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<td>Security force resource insufficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal, Lithuania, Spain</td>
<td>Uruguay, Chile</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Austria 1920-1921)</td>
<td>(Spain 1931)</td>
<td>(Estonia 1919)</td>
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Table 3: Mechanisms connecting interwar state weaknesses with democratic breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritarian restoration</th>
<th>Security delegitimization</th>
<th>Socioeconomic delegitimization</th>
<th>Elite bias delegitimization</th>
<th>Mass bias delegitimization</th>
<th>Citizenship violence</th>
<th>Citizenship injustices</th>
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