

policy-making arenas and variation of political insulation across countries based on institutional structures as well as the strategic choices of policy-makers. The presentation of the comparative case studies is masterful.

However, there is one central lacuna. Professor Ellermann acknowledges the absence of a theory of policy-maker preferences; rather she generates the preferences of this central actor inductively. In many ways, this is an understandable choice as she already has a complex matrix of variables that she weaves together. But it does raise the question of where the preferences of the central actor of the model are generated and also points to potential endogeneity issues. Even if we grant that policy-maker preferences can be distinctive from other political actors, there is the possibility that the initial array of political institutions and actors shapes the key decision-maker's policy proposal.

The case studies weave powerful stories of immigration policy-making but also introduce elements that appear central to the argument but are not addressed in the theoretical frame. In particular, the insulation of policy-makers from the public's restrictive policy preferences is an important element in the theory. Yet even when institutional structures remain constant, role of the public varies in part based on whether public opinion remains latent and unorganized versus when it is activated. Yet nothing in the theory accounts for the conditions under which we should expect public opinion to be activated. The role of the economy also appears important in many instances yet that element is not theorized either.


The book is lengthy and dense, so it is difficult to demand more. Yet an important omission is attention to alternate theories. The first chapter introduces and critiques most of the extant theoretical literature, but the case study chapters do not provide the promised attention to alternate theories. Ellermann's theoretical elements are woven into the case narratives with care, but research design in qualitative methods requires attention to alternative explanations as well.

Nonetheless, this book will leave an important mark on immigration policy scholarship both by its ambitious effort to find an encompassing theory of immigration policy and the careful attention to the complexity of immigration policy-making. Perhaps we should disavow Gary Freeman's call for multiple theories of migration policy-making and build on Professor Ellermann's elegant work.

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## Migration and Democracy: How Remittances Undermine Dictatorships

By Abel Escribà-Folch, Covadonga Meseguer and Joseph Wright.  
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In 1987, in the midst of El Salvador's civil war, President Napoleon Duarte appealed to U.S. President Reagan to grant immigration relief to Salvadorans who had left for the USA. Duarte said deporting these refugees back to El Salvador would ruin El Salvador's economy, citing the remittances they send back, which he estimated at \$600 million annually. Left unsaid was that most of those refugees opposed him, as many fled massacres committed by military units and death squads supported by both governments. But his message was clear: better that these communist sympathizers stay in the USA where they would not cause trouble and instead send money home to stabilize the country.

Today, remittances remain a potent political issue in every country dependent on them. Candidates campaign abroad in diaspora communities, promise to lower fees charged by money transfer services, and maintain good relations with migrant-receiving countries so as not to interrupt the flow of remittances. True or not, the perception is that remittances are key to regime survival.

In *Migration and Democracy*, Abel Escribà-Folch, Covadonga Meseguer, and Joseph Wright question this assumption. They find that for autocratic governments, rather than bolster incumbents, remittances undermine them. Remittances, the authors argue, are not simply tools of economic development, they are tools of democracy promotion. And they are far more effective tools than trade, investment, or civil society support precisely because their political impact is unanticipated.

Do migrants remit democracy? There is some evidence, largely from case studies, pointing to changing behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010). Much of this scholarship builds on Peggy Levitt's (1998) concept of social remittances, expanded to political remittances (Krawatzek and Muller-Funk 2020). But the causal mechanisms have been unclear. One of the book's strengths is that the authors draw these out more explicitly. In contrast to social remittance scholars, they argue that this is not an indirect impact (remittances facilitate pro-democracy sentiments), but a direct one. Their mechanism is twofold: that remittances fund the opposition and lessen the impact of clientelism by incumbents by making citizens less dependent on the government.

As the authors clearly demonstrate, remittances can have direct effects for opposition movements and parties. Remittances also serve to disproportionately boost the influence of the diaspora more generally. Diasporas' economic impact buys them voice and access to home country politicians. Electorates in migrants' countries of origin may complain about the influence of expatriate voters, but thanks to remittances, this influence is unavoidable, even if governments vary in how much access to the ballot they allow to migrants (Wellman 2021).

The authors anticipate challenges to their thesis: first, that remittances are counter-cyclical and thus help stabilize economies, and second, that migration can serve as a safety valve for dissatisfied citizens, as per Hirschman's (1970) exit/voice/loyalty framework which forms the book's theoretical backbone. Testing these with data from the World Bank and other sources, the authors find no evidence of remittance capture by governments. This makes intuitive sense, as a key appeal of remittances is that they evade state regulators. More questionable are other null results; for instance, that remittances have no effect on government revenues, including value added taxes (for which the authors acknowledge data are spotty). However, if this were the case, remittances would have no impact on

consumer spending at all, which would be a surprise to the governments and financial institutions promoting them. Government revenues, after all, are fungible, and there is evidence in the literature that remittances pay for public services (Adida and Girod 2011). Travelers to migrant-sending towns can readily see roads and schools built with remittances. Examining aggregate spending does not paint a full picture when remittances are so unevenly distributed geographically.

The book moves beyond the country level by testing these theories at a regional level. It focuses in large part on Africa, finding that remittances increase protest in opposition districts but not ruling party districts. These are supplemented by case studies of Senegal, Gambia, and also Cambodia, which illustrate how remittances decrease the impact of clientelism and increase opposition resources. However, more could be done in explaining and justifying the criteria for case selection as these countries are not among the top remittance-dependent states.

Will this theory travel well to other remittance-dependent regions like Central America or Central Asia? Indeed, the strongest counterargument to the claim that remittances increase democratization is to look at the countries which are most reliant on remittances. Measured as a percentage of GDP, these include states that are stable autocracies (Tajikistan), rapidly backsliding toward autocracy (El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan), entrenched narco-states (Honduras), or largely nonfunctioning (Somalia). These cases suggest a more complicated and conditional story: that remittances can bolster non-state actors and corrupt networks as well as pro-democratic actors, a potential subject for future research.

Despite remittances worldwide amounting to \$700 billion a year, there is a limited body of research on their political impact. This book is a welcome addition. The question of whether remittances have an impact on democratization is clearly relevant. As migrant-receiving countries throw up selective barriers to refugees from different regions—in some cases citing the nativist assumption that migrants from autocracies cannot adapt to democracies—their governments would do well to heed these findings. It is the diaspora that is among the most consequential democratic actors in their home countries, and their power comes from remittances. As the authors suggest, should rich countries truly care about democracy abroad, taking down these barriers would help.

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