

Wegner's reflections on the state of quantitative research on politics in the MENA region provide a useful review. Similarly, Ray Bush's chapter on the role of qualitative research methods in studying the Egyptian countryside and Ramaioli's chapter on interviewing Salafis suggest a distinctiveness to these research sites and populations.

There is thus a tension that threads through the volume: Should the MENA region be understood as exceptional, with unique research challenges, or is the depiction of "Middle East exceptionalism" misleading? Many of the contributors seem to be in the second camp, asserting that the challenges facing researchers in the MENA are largely not unique. For example, Paolo Rivetti and Shirin Saeidi conclude in their essay on Iran, "We found that our reflections from the field are relevant to researchers engaged in other settings as well, beyond the geographical limitation of the MENA region" (p. 45). The editors appear to feel similarly, drawing out themes through the introduction that transcend the region. It is thus unfortunate that the title of this volume, *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*, may lead readers to expect otherwise.

The essays compiled here easily fulfill Clark and Cavatorta's initial goal of "providing a guidebook on 'how to go about meeting the methodological and ethical challenges that fieldwork, so crucial for area studies scholars and for empirics-based knowledge more broadly, throws up'" (p. 1). But they achieve far more. They provide readers with thoughtful, reflective, entertaining essays that address the full span of issues facing our discipline today—from the everyday obstacles and evolving nature of research to research methods in the field, human and data security, research ethics and the limitations of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), the challenges of publication, and the double-edged sword of data transparency and the DA-RT initiative. These are topics of interest far beyond the MENA region. The volume should not be read as a book for and by the MENA community, but rather as insights from researchers focused on the region who are engaging in dialogue with scholars conducting research across the globe. It is an important contribution to the ongoing conversation about political science research from which we can all gain.

Information, Democracy, and Autocracy: Economic Transparency and Political (In)Stability. By James R. Hollyer, B. Peter Rosendorff, and James Raymond Vreeland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 396p. \$99.99 cloth, \$39.99 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592719001531

— Steven Lloyd Wilson, *University of Nevada, Reno*

Transparency is the sort of state attribute that tends—like low corruption or high levels of education—to be considered an unqualified positive. It is seen as a good thing to

have, independent of everything else we know about a particular state. Against this backdrop, James R. Hollyer, B. Peter Rosendorff, and James Raymond Vreeland bring nuance to the study of transparency in *Information, Democracy, and Autocracy*. The authors argue that transparency is a strategic decision that in an authoritarian context can have counterintuitive effects. The book provides a new measurement approach to transparency through an array of formal models, which examine the implications of transparency on autocracies and democracies, and qualitative case studies that walk through the logic of their findings in key country cases.

The authors summarize their measurement approach cleverly as "missing data are data" (p. 2). That is, in the context of data reported to international organizations such as the World Bank, the decision to *not* provide some data is in an indicator in and of itself. The authors use an item response theory (IRT) model to estimate the latent concept of economic transparency in a country time-series dataset from 1980 to 2010 by examining missingness in the widely used World Development Indicators (WDI) dataset of some 240 economic indicators. In addition, they present the model as a general method for estimating latent concepts that are represented by missingness in other data.

Although the book focuses on strategic transparency by regimes, fruitful additional work could explore whether there is systematic variance on missingness *within* subsets of the economic indicators, rather than calculating it as one overall quantity. That is, one could hypothesize that regimes with certain traits are more likely to be strategically silent about certain indicators, while being indifferent about accurately reporting others. Such additional work could provide much-needed leverage to understanding the mechanism behind transparency's mixed effects on authoritarian stability. The authors do note that the capacity to report data is very conceptually different from the willingness to do so, yet the two are difficult to separate from one another. Zero inflation models (models that attempt to compensate for multiple categorically different types of zeroes in data) are one way to at least metaphorically consider this issue. Lack of capacity and lack of willingness are categorically different nulls, but they should be hypothetically distinguishable from each other by which patterns of indicators are null.

In any case, this exploitation of missingness as its own measure is quite novel, and the generalized applicability of the method should have a great deal of utility for other data sources, especially in comparative politics. The missingness in data such as criminal justice indicators (for example, in crime rates, conviction rates, and police expenditures), health indicators (which can be sparse outside of life expectancy and infant mortality), or various inputs to state capacity indexes can all be conceived as depending on different latent quantities about which a regime is being strategically silent.

In addition to the core measurement contribution, the authors present two main arguments that are each modeled at length with formal models and supported by brief case studies. First, they argue that transparency makes democracy more stable by providing credible economic data on which citizens can judge government effectiveness. Second, they claim that transparency can make the collective action problem easier to solve and thus can either destabilize unprepared autocracies or reinforce the power of savvy dictators who use the threat of mass uprising to unify elites; in addition, utility gains from increased FDI come on the heels of economic transparency. These arguments are convincing in the context of the extensive formal and statistical work showing emergent patterns in dictatorships and democracies.

The authors are careful to constrain their claims, noting that many factors determine whether the collective action problem can be solved; they also are meticulous in noting that economic transparency does not help solve the coordination problem despite broadly being under the same “informational” rubric. Yet despite the statistical and formal evidence, direct evidence that the proposed mechanism and subsequent autocratic strategic behavior are actually occurring, even in the handpicked case studies, is thin.

The proposed mechanism hinges on the proposition that credible economic data make it possible for citizens to coordinate political behavior, because it makes them aware that others share their grievances. But this awareness is not a particularly important component of solving the collective action problem in dictatorships. Prisoners in a concentration camp do not rush the guards not because they do not know they are all miserable, but because they cannot communicate effectively to coordinate rushing the guards at the same time. Similarly, in the book’s case study of the Soviet Union, Soviet citizens’ failure to protest en masse before perestroika was certainly not because they did not realize that everyone else was as unhappy as they were.

The proposed strategic behavior of autocrats (derived through formal models) is that, knowing that increased economic transparency will increase the likelihood of mass protest, autocrats increase transparency intentionally to cause an existential threat to the regime that forces elites to unify around them. However, the anecdotal evidence provided in the book in examining the USSR and China during the 1980s seems to suggest otherwise. Gorbachev’s and Deng’s actions during that decade, although they increased economic transparency in conjunction with other economic liberalizations, were hardly motivated by a desire to encourage mass mobilization and so unify the elites around them.

The statistical and formal evidence suggests that economic transparency matters. However, close exami-

nation of the causal mechanisms via the narrative case studies suggests that transparency is one component of a suite of tools used by competent, strategically minded dictators, rather than a discrete mechanism exploited on its own. There is a common pattern in comparative democratization in which everything normatively good, whether per capita GDP, education, resource endowments, or expansion of the internet, tends to stabilize already democratic states. And yet those same things have mixed effects in authoritarian regimes. Economic transparency, like these other elements, is a technology of governance that, if mastered, can be co-opted by dictators to reinforce their power but, if not, expands the cracks in their foundation.

Information, Democracy, and Autocracy provides a novel theoretical approach to leveraging meaningful data out of strategically missing data, although it overreaches when trying to use those measures to explain authoritarian survival strategies.

Votes for Survival: Relational Clientelism in Latin

America. By Simeon Nichter. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 324p. \$105.00 cloth, \$34.99 paper.
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— Wendy Hunter, *University of Texas*

Votes for Survival: Relational Clientelism in Latin America is an extraordinary piece of scholarship. In this major theoretical and empirical contribution to the study of clientelism’s persistence and evolution in the modern world, author Simeon Nichter understands the contingent exchange of material benefits for political support in terms of long-term relationships, rather than as one-off transactions that take place mainly around campaigns and elections. Departing from the conventional depiction of citizens (clients) as passive recipients of handouts delivered by political elites who target them for votes, Nichter portrays them as agents who demand benefits from politicians to whom they signal their support and from whom they secure commitments. By emphasizing the repeated nature of citizen–politician exchanges and assigning considerable importance to the demand side, *Votes for Survival* turns much of the recent literature on clientelism on its head.

The book opens by asking why clientelism, conceived by most recent political science literature in terms of contingent transactions made around election periods, persists in the face of four common contemporary challenges: rising incomes via economic development and social policy transfers, ballot secrecy resulting from institutional reforms, the prohibition and punishment of vote buying through the spread of legal reforms, and partisan strategies that focus more on programs than on patronage. Brazil, specifically the Northeast Region, presents an ideal context for trying to grapple with this