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DOI: 10.1111/1467-8675.12611

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Haitian Revolution: Capitalism, slavery, and counter-modernity

Eduardo Grüner

Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020

In the past 120 years, there have been 32,400 scholarly contributions on the Haitian Revolution. Two thirds of these were published in the past 20 years alone. This volume of published scholarship contrasts sharply with the more than 2 million outputs on the French Revolution over the same period. An intellectual revival seems afoot; perhaps the first concerted generational effort defying a longer tendency of scholastic occlusion vis-à-vis the Haitian Revolution. The upsurge in scholarship includes David Geggus' 1982 work on the Revolution's impact in the Atlantic World, which he followed with the Revolution's documentary history in 2014. There has also been Sibylle Fischer's 2004 *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Laurent Dubois' 2005 *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, and, belatedly in 2018, Julius S. Scott's *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*. Not to mention articles in such outlets as the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *Political Theory* by established scholars (Gurminder Bhambra), and newer voices (such as Adom Getachew) all keen to buck the historical trend. All of these, of course, build on C.L.R James' *Black Jacobins*, first published in 1939.

Eduardo Grüner's argument is simple and, for those who have been attentive to the growing scholarship on the topic, familiar enough: the historic and continuing significance of the Haitian Revolution has not only been ignored but persistently negated, particularly in democratic theory. Predictably, Grüner's contribution is a full-frontal charge leveled at Western political theory. The book's distinctiveness lies elsewhere and is threefold. First, his is a dialogue principally with Latin American critical and especially postcolonial scholars who, much like their Euro-American counterparts, have been just as blind to the importance of the Haitian Revolution. Given that it was the most far-reaching and successful decolonial struggle in the Atlantic, its muted intellectual reception in the context of numerous bi-centennial independence celebrations in Latin America, he argues, tells us something about blackness in the world today. As reflected in the book's title, a key concept in Grüner's treatment of the Haitian Revolution is that of counter-modernity, which is central to his critique of the various "posts" (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism) and even decoloniality. For Grüner, there is no escaping or transcending (European) modernity: a singular, global systemic phenomenon. Accordingly, there cannot be multiple, adjacent, and autonomous modernities precisely because capitalist accumulation has drawn multiple continents into a single but stratified whole. In addition, despite rhetorical gestures toward transcending modernity, there is no common experience of its dividend. A dividend, Grüner insists, mainly proscribed to white, European men. The Haitian Revolution exposed liberalism's partial scope; that is, it revealed and countered the Enlightenment's limited and fundamentally unequal modernity with a philosophically and ontologically expansive one. Thus, when Grüner invokes counter-modernity, he calls for countering this restricted, uneven version of modernity. For him, the baby and the bathwater must and can be remade, that is, modernity and its philosophical underpinnings can and must be constituted anew in how the Haitian Revolution tried to do. Additionally, for Grüner, modernity can only fully realize its possibilities—philosophically and materially—from within itself, globally distributing these more equitably while simultaneously confronting its partialities. Accordingly, it is from within its material base in the way that Haiti's slave plantations formed the foundation for the French bourgeoisie's emergence that we can counter our current modernity.

A second distinctive feature is Grüner's analytical approach, which resists a legalistic, proceduralist, and institutionalist take in favor of a semiotic framing of a universal blackness. This approach is especially evident in his discussion

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of the independent country's founding articles (i.e., its Constitution). What Grüner advances is the idea of blackness beyond chromatic marker, but more importantly, as a structural position and critical political stance—a counterpoint to domination. Hence, his detailed discussion of the Constitution's declaration that independence rendered all Haitians black, including women and those who were phenotypically non-black (i.e., German and Polish deserters who had been part of the French army). In his detailed discussion of the Haitian Constitutions (the two iterations of the 1801 draft and the final 1805 version), "… the profound meaning of Article 14" Grüner asserts is "its ironic—and *politicized*—universalization of the color black […] as the *privileged signifier*—or perhaps as the *semiotic carrier*—of a *critical materiality*" (205). To study the Haitian Constitution, then, is not only to undertake jurisprudential historiography but to confront a series of contemporary challenges regarding, inter alia, the homogenizing logics of the modern nation-state in the face of class, racial, and gender differences.

Furthermore, this is not to say that the Constitution resolved this (and other) contradictions. Instead, according to Grüner, it constituted Nation and State as the nexus (as opposed to erasure) of religious, linguistic, gendered (if only in terms of the man–woman binary), and ethnic diversity. Therefore, the Haitian Revolution presaged and found an elegant philosophical expression of citizenship: one informed by a structural position within a (global) system of racialized accumulation and domination rather than a narrow conception rooted in a nativist and naturalist ideology.

Three chapters comprise *The Haitian Revolution*. The first deals with slavery and its relationship to what Grüner never explicitly labels as racial capitalism but certainly implies. This chapter, a cultural genealogy of modernity centered around the concept and practice of slavery in its Transatlantic form, ties both capitalism and liberalism to a distinct system of racialized bondage. Chapter 2 delves into the social dynamics leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the revolution; that is, the revolution's empirics. The final chapter, what may be of most relevance for this journals' readership, shows how the philosophical tenets and implications of the revolution have been occluded. Whether by Western or postcolonial thinkers, at the time of the revolution or more recently.

This structure contrasts with the original Spanish-language monograph published in 2010 consisting of two substantive sections with seven chapters and a third section, consisting of two appendices and the book's bibliography. The first appendix in the monograph's Spanish edition will interest historians and those keen on understanding the "factual chronology" of the revolution. The second appendix consists of the 1805 Constitution of Haiti. Neither of these appendices is in the English edition. Given Grüner's lengthy discussion of this Constitution, the inclusion of both the French and the translated version of the document would have been beneficial. Principally a philosophical rather than historical text, the book is somewhat scant on the actual drafting of these texts, which precludes the reader's grasping and, importantly, assessing Grüner's interpretations of the Constitution.

To more fully appreciate Grüner's hermeneutic strategy, which I think is his third core contribution, we should note his approach to political philosophy, which incorporates aesthetic and literary forms. To demonstrate this point, I turn to what may, at first, seem like an indulgent deliberation on the book's Spanish and English language titles.

In the original Spanish, the book's title, *La Oscuridad y Las Luces: Capitalismo, Cultura y Revolución*, translates to *The Darkness and the Lights: Capitalism, Culture, and Revolution*. With some license on my part, I would invoke this more evocative translation: *The Occlusion and the Light: Capitalism, Culture, and Revolution*. Here, the occlusion or opacity is the Enlightenment with the lights, the real enlightenment or illumination being the Haitian Revolution. A revolution that, according to Grüner and others, has long been cloaked in obscurity and silence. The literalness of the book's English title, presumably necessary to render its substance readily graspable, loses the poetics of the Spanish original, which are not a mere aesthetic flourish. They are central, in my reading, to Grüner's critical hermeneutics. For Grüner, the Arts' distinct expressive qualities (and aesthetics in general) surface and elucidate the opaque, the unspeakable, the suppressed, and the incomprehensible. These are all qualities of the Haitian Revolution itself, Grüner insists, which have contributed to the difficulty and, fundamentally, scholars' refusal to contend with its actuality and myriad implications. Indeed, when he writes about Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Grüner argues that the philosopher, in his political treatises, deploys slavery metaphorically to denote the bourgeoisie's political oppression in Europe. In his literary works, the philosopher presents slavery in its actuality, affecting specific (black) bodies in Europe's colonial outposts.

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For Grüner, then, there exists a symbiotic relationship between the two genres. In psychoanalytic terms, the literary became the vehicle for articulating the underbelly—indeed, the handmaiden—of modernity. The "truth structured like fiction" whereby it is "only fiction that allows for [the surfacing of] a contradiction that in theory [that is, philosophy] is not permitted" (152). This contradiction, the tension at the heart of both Enlightenment thought and a capitalist accumulation system founded on colonization and the enslavement of Africans, Grüner argues, was the source of cognitive dissonance, what he calls a "psychic' disavowal" (152) that only literary (as in aesthetic) intervention could acknowledge. A cloaked revelation, as it were. Hence, the analytical equivalence he accords the literary, "fictional" texts (e.g., his lengthy citations of Madison Smartt Bell's novel) and the scholarly, "nonfiction" in illuminating the Haitian Revolution. Relatedly, consider Grüner's turn to the psychoanalytic, which, at times, appears as self-indulgent meanderings. At its most instrumental, Grüner deploys the psychoanalytic (or its concepts) as the analytical glue binding the aesthetic, affective, and subjective, on the one hand, and, on the other, the realist materialism that guides his theorization. These hermeneutic tactics locate the book in the critical theory tradition as envisaged by the Frankfurt School and should render the book of particular interest to this audience.

There are numerous and equally compelling threads to this rich text. Nonetheless, there is a notable antagonism between religion and its relationship to contemporary emancipatory politics, which Grüner circumvents. The Enlightenment's disparagement of religion contrasts vividly with its mobilization (whether Vodou or Islam, both discussed by Grüner) by the slave revolutionaries. While Grüner acknowledges and foregrounds both religions' roles (but especially that of Vodou) as both ideological instruments in the hands of the slaves and as revolutionary practice, he does not take his analysis to its furthest reaches. If, as he argues, the Haitian Revolution was the first instance of a thoroughly counter-modern reaction to a world-system founded in the context of the European Enlightenment, then the role of religion in this countermovement (then and now) demands further elaboration. In refuting the Enlightenment's Self as partial and particularist (as opposed to all-embracing and universal), the Haitian revolutionaries' invocation of the metaphysical (by which I mean the supernatural) in the course of asserting a counter to the Enlightenment Self unified the political and the religious, the material and the symbolic. A unity whose truncated treatment vis-à-vis the ongoing and as yet unrealized implications of the revolution is all the more pronounced given Grüner's otherwise meticulous and thoroughgoing discussion. This truncation betrays an unresolved question, an ambivalence, perhaps even Grüner's discomfort regarding the contemporary place—if any—of religion in countering Eurocentric modernity.

The Haitian Revolution weaves effortlessly between the aesthetically inflected, the philosophical, the historical, the political, and the sociological, a compelling contribution in the humanist tradition. Moreover, regarding the possibilities for political transformation, it reanimates longstanding critiques of liberal individualism's theoretical and philosophical foundations. Grüner's book will appeal to and doubtless provoke scholars across many disciplines and intellectual persuasions, whether modernist, postmodernist, or, as Grüner himself prefers, counter-modernist. His is an invitation to wrestle anew with modernity's limits and contradictions through which wrestling we might yet realize its unfulfilled promises. In essence, we should all strive for black.

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DOI: 10.1111/1467-8675.12603

Lifeworlds of Islam: The pragmatics of a religion

Mohammed Bamyeh

Oxford University Press, 2019.

In *Lifeworlds of Islam: The Pragmatics of a Religion*, Mohammed Bamyeh adopts a sociological approach to explore the features that made Islam survive as a relevant perspective among others in a modern world. Accordingly, Islam, like any other religion or ideology, acquires its meaning from "the use to which it is put" (p. 205). Consequently, the social life of Islam depends on how useful it is for the lives of its adherents; its ability to persuade rather than oppress to maintain itself; and whether alternative ideologies become more practically effective. *Lifeworlds of Islam* argues that Islam survived not because it has an essential meaning or because it determined "anyone's behavior in specific ways" but "precisely because it lacked" such features (p. 4). Bamyeh borrows the term "lifeworlds" from phenomenology to refer to "spheres of practice" that sustain the life of a religion without oppression. The book traces, historically as well as in the present, how Islam was increasingly drawn upon as secular authorities failed to deliver on social solidarity, participatory ethics, political legitimation, social justice, and general civic ethics. Its main conclusion is that Islam serves as a "reserve discourse"—a reservoir of tools, ideas, and strategies that can be recruited when needed. The book's three core chapters explicate this conception of Islam by respectively examining how Islam functioned in social movements, public philosophy, and the global order.

Chapter 1 elaborates on five characteristics of modern movements that rely on Islam as a language for social mobilization. These movements start out as mutual aid services (pp. 34–42); offer ways for social organization outside the state (pp. 42–54); politicize excluded sections of society (pp. 54–63); employ Islam for state as well as nonstate oriented participation (pp. 63–69); and their stated position fail to predict the way they transform once they gain political power (pp. 69–82). Best exemplified in the Muslim Brotherhood, such movements, Bamyeh argues, should be construed as on-going "broad experiments of social engagement" corresponding "to broad participatory demands" unable to find expression in formal and institutional settings (pp. 82–83). Chapter 2 traces how the retreat of traditional Islam as "a taken-for-granted, self-evident compass of everyday intellectual reflections" (p. 87) gave way first, to "instrumental Islam" and then to "hermeneutic Islam" as different modes of thinking that justify modern religiosity; that define the modern place and role of Islam in the public realm. Instrumentalism is concerned with "how to apply" the text and thus requires one to begin "from religion so as to bring life into alignment with it," whereas hermeneutics is concerned with "how to know" the text and thus requires one to begin "from life so as to bring religion into alignment with it" (p. 115). This difference in modes of thinking translates into opposing ways in which religiosity relates, first, to a sense of superiority and, second, to a particular collective identity (nationalism) (pp. 109–125). Chapter 3 addresses the main sociological features of Islam as a discourse for organizing a global society. Three principles (political, social, cultural) made the Muslim world appear "as a predictable world system, and acceptable as legitimate to most of its inhabitants" (p. 138): "partial control" (pp. 139–173), "free movement" (pp. 174–179), and "cultural heteroglossia" (pp. 179–191). According to Bamyeh, with the aid of these principles, "any global system could function with maximal systematicity and minimal interruption" (p. 138), and he helpfully indicates how current globalization patterns suggest a return to these principles.

Lifeworlds of Islam is insightful for understanding Islamic mobilization, knowledge production, and political manifestation. It engages with key figures of classical and contemporary Islam (e.g., al-Shafi'i, al-Ash'ari, al-Ghazali, Taha, Nursi, Shahrur, and Soroush), and, at important argumentative junctures, makes discerning references to Weber, Durkheim, Marx and Habermas, among others. The book will be of interest to sociologists of Islam and of religion more generally, as well as to scholars of historical and contemporary Islam and to those interested in the structures of, and prospects

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for, a humane organization of global social life. In less obvious ways, the book should also be of interest to political philosophers. I focus on that last category, but first I raise a challenge to Bamyeh's sociological methodology.

To explore the features that made Islam survive, Bamyeh does not need to give a comprehensive definition of what Islam is. His sociological focus allows him to attend to the other aspects of religion (e.g., doxastic, juristic) only when these speak to the sociology of Islam. Bamyeh's focus on how Muslims employ Islam in everyday life, instead of Islam as a belief system or as compatible with liberalism, democracy, or modernity enables him to avoid being essentialist or apologetic. Such avoidance is commendable and must be preserved. Nevertheless, Bamyeh's emphasis on "usefulness" raises the question of whether we can still distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate uses of religious texts and ideals, which in turn invites the worrying position that everything Muslims do with Islam is Islamic. Two related points are worth noting here. First, Bamyeh distances himself from Talal Asad's concept of tradition as requiring the discursive engagement "with a defined set of foundational texts" (p. 87) for the understanding of Islam. The point is to stress the importance of the relationship between modern nontraditional Islam and the identity of the religious person. Second, Bamyeh distances himself from Max Weber's understanding of religious ideas as "permanent and independent of context" (p. 159) to argue that religion as discourse, unlike religion as a system of ideas, can survive despite, or even because of, the transformation, interpretation, abandonment, and readoption of religious ideas. In this way, Bamyeh grants religious ideas an unconstrained flexibility in determining the behavior of religious persons. While I am sympathetic to the claim that the usefulness of religious ideals is a necessary condition for the social life of religion, my concern is that an emphasis on usefulness combined with undermining both, the centrality of a discursive connection with religious texts and the capacity of religious ideals to specify behavioral guidelines, will effectively make usefulness a necessary and sufficient condition for the survival of religion. If so, then no interpretation or application of religious texts could count as a violation of the normative core of religious ideals. One of the great benefits of Nietzschean or Foucauldian genealogy as a form of critique is that it is able to demonstrate historically how the distorted application of ideals such as freedom and equality could fail to realize the normative core that was originally responsible for accepting those ideals. I think it is crucially important, especially from a religious perspective, to ensure that the application of religious ideals retains in social practices the normative core of those ideals (without religiosity itself being dogmatic or essentialist in a rigid or authoritarian sense). The challenge is, thus, to maintain the nonessentialist and nonapologetic stance as we figure out how such "retainment" could be catered for while accepting that the social life of Islam necessarily depends on its usefulness in the lives of Muslims.

Notwithstanding this methodological challenge, *Lifeworlds of Islam* has an important contribution to make in contemporary political theorizing. In Chapter 2, Bamyeh revives a "now forgotten" early-Marx critique according to which "secularizing the state does not remove religion from politics" (p. 93). The more general point here is that putting ideals in practice, say in social struggles, "ensure[s] that such ideals cannot remain as unadulterated philosophical propositions, independently of how we experience them" (p. 92). By highlighting the experiential dimension, Bamyeh is in line with critics of political liberalism's restricted construal of secularism in terms of formal constitutional and legal regulation. The liberal aspiration for securing freedom and equality for religious and nonreligious citizens requires being attuned to secular and religious subjectivities, attitudes, and sensibilities.

Recent works in liberal political theory pay special attention to such criticisms. Most prominently and rigorously, Cécile Laborde (*Liberalism's Religion* (LR), 2017) attends to "what religion is like" (LR, 14) and rearticulates liberal theory by disaggregating the category of religion "into a plurality of different interpretive dimensions" (LR, 2). To each of these dimensions, corresponds a different sense in which a state can be said to be secular. Bamyeh, on the other hand, identifies multiple usages of religion: religion as "a vehicle for mobilizing dissent"; "a vehicle for emergency mobilization"; "a way of expressing moral superiority"; "a (passive) tradition"; "an (active) tradition"; and "a mechanism of psychological defense in new conditions" (p. 219). It would be productive to see how these usages relate to Laborde's interpretive dimensions of religion, and whether any of them call for further disaggregation and lead to additional senses of secularism.

More significantly, Laborde makes explicit how political liberalism relies on the assumption that the state must have exclusive sovereignty in setting the boundary between politics and religion (e.g., determining "what counts" as just, private, political). Her defense of this crucial assumption hinges on the claim that there is no "alternative account of how

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political conflicts about religion are to be articulated fairly" (LR, 166). Here, *Lifeworlds of Islam* could have a more radical contribution to make. The insufficiency of formal secularism underscores the need for a political-theoretical response to the plurality of modern societies that is attuned to the way citizens experience norms, ideals, and principles. This, in turn, could guide the development of practices and institutions conducive for the realization of freedom and equality. The pragmatics of civic participation, public knowledge, and historical structures that Bamyeh explores are valuable resources for articulating a nonstate centric response to modern plurality and political conflicts, as they take place in parallel to, or as a substitute for, the state's homogenizing and controlling institutions. Further, his discussion of shari'a, hermeneutics, and heteroglossia makes explicit the hidden values of these elements' anarchic qualities. A precious lesson we learn is that "what we call 'Islam' is typified above all else by constant internal struggles…[which] are precisely what provide it with license for more life and relevance" (p. 215). Islam, a shared reference point, works as a regulatory framework to offer "ways by which compromises may be made and justified" rather than "bring social struggles to an end" (p. 216). There is an important sense in which *Lifeworlds of Islam* can be read as illustrating the possibility for maintaining social harmony without sacrificing plurality or granting the state monopoly over the jurisdictional boundary between politics and religion. For instance, heteroglossia, which Bamyeh contrasts with diversity, does not merely contain opposites (arguments, positions, etc.) but these opposites "are features of the *same* system, not of competing systems" (p. 181). The significance of such possibility gains additional thrust with Bamyeh's recurring reminders that the modern state poses a problem; that in such a large system of power "danger is equally distributed across *all* ideologies, secular *and* religious," and hence "our fundamental problem is power structures, not religion" (p. 7). Thus, in order to treat religious and nonreligious citizens as free and equals, political theorizing might need to release the assumption of state sovereignty and draw on resources like those offered by Bamyeh to articulate a sociologically grounded political-theoretical response to modern plurality.

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DOI: 10.1111/1467-8675.12604

Crises of democracy

Adam Przeworski

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Crises of Democracy is an important contribution to an academic discussion that has captured public attention, with Levistky and Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die*, Runciman's *How Democracy Ends*, or Ginsburg and Huq's more recent *How To Save a Constitutional Democracy* expressing similar concern for the fate of democracies. Przeworski breaks *Crises of Democracy* into three parts. The first looks at some common conditions that are present when scholars discuss a crisis in democracy, offers an historical narrative of four particular cases of democracies in crisis, and wraps up with lessons from history. The second part examines some of the issues of concern identified by scholars, evaluates the viability of causal arguments, and then looks at what might be new. The third part explains the mechanisms that make democracy viable, how democracies can be eliminated through a series of otherwise constitutionally permissible moves. He finally considers what can and cannot happen in the United States and elsewhere.

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Przeworski begins by explaining the motivation of all politicians; articulates his conceptualization of democracy as "a mechanism for processing conflicts"; expresses methodological skepticism vis-a-vis academic claims about causality; highlights the importance of thinking about the relationship between judgment and crisis; and raises his concern about recent political events (the election of Donald Trump probably most relevant—see especially pages 19, 1, 7, 9–10, but also in an important panel discussion on "Is Democracy in Crisis?" at the Chicago Center on Democracy, in November 2019). Briefly, Przeworski assumes that "the dream of all politicians is to conquer power and to hold on to it forever" and this motivates an expansion of authority (particularly of executives) while in office (p. 19) which can encourage "a gradual, almost imperceptible, erosion of democratic institutions and norms, subversion of democracy by stealth" (p. 15). Although all politicians may have similar desires, the question of why some politicians seem to pursue this more doggedly than others and some are more unwilling to leave office than others is a difficult one, which comes down to motives, which are unknowable (as he argued in the Chicago panel) and constraints, which are easier to identify (p. 20). Leaving office is the ultimate proof of democracy.

Przeworski's conception of democracy is a minimalist concept, a system in which incumbent governments step down from office when they lose elections (a position argued in his 1986 book *Capitalism and Democracy* and in the 2010 *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government*). It allows for conflicts to be processed through institutions that bound uncertainty and reduce the incentive to kill political opponents because opposition forces have the potential to occupy government in the future. It should not be identified with outcomes. It does not, for example, necessarily, produce more pro-poor policies than other forms of governments. If there are outcomes, they are that "[d]emocracy is a system that keeps us from killing each other; and that is good enough" (as he put it in Munck and Snyder's *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, p. 475). This is not all democracy *is* but it is the least controversial way of identifying democracy as an objective and standardizable variable that can be evaluated in very different contexts throughout the world.

For Przeworski, it is important to restrict definitions of democracy so that one can be clear about causality and reduce the role of scholars reading into political actions "threats" (or gifts) to democracy because these actions accord with the scholar's preference but cannot, otherwise, be causally connected to a minimalist definition of democracy. His reluctance to engage with democratization literature in the past decade has largely been because he saw discussions about the quality of democracy and threats to democracy as being ideologically laden and not especially persuasive. The election of US President Donald Trump, the British vote to leave the European Union, the Brazilian election of Jair Bolsonaro, and the improved electoral performance of conservative political parties with nationalist and/or populist messages in Poland, Hungary, and France among other countries led him to reconsider the idea that a crisis in a democracy could be a crisis of that democracy. The opening quote of Gramsci on the interregnum's indeterminacy and Przeworski's reminder that crisis comes from the Greek word for judgment highlight the role of social scientists in judging the present.

Przeworski's judgment is a complex: democracies are in crises but social science cannot quite explain why or when crises are fatal. Part one begins with the "signals that democracy is in crisis," including poor performance for established parties, decline in public confidence, and the inability of the government to maintain public order (p. 21). Although, by Przeworski's definition these are not crises of democracy—so long as office holders step down upon losing elections—there are reasons for concern that are particularly associated with polarization and the rise of "deeply ideological parties… [that enter] office seeking to remove institutional obstacles in order to solidify their political advantage" (p. 143). The stakes involved in occupying government—and therefore the cost of losing an election and sitting out one mandate—rise significantly under these conditions as do the incentives to expand government authority and incumbent advantage in electoral politics.

Przeworski then provides analytical narratives of Germany (1928–1933), Chile (1970–1973), France (1952–1962, 1968), and the United States (1964–1976), which demonstrate two moments where crises led to breakdowns in democracy and two which either did not or led to improved democracies. Przeworski is cautious about the lessons that can be drawn from these cases which he calls "some stories." These stories give some sense of conditions that can look very distressing while they are happening and lead to outcomes that are horrific, but the stories are not definitive and so he posits these conditions as concerning but not causal necessities from the point of view of social science.

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Przeworski is very concerned about right-wing ideological parties and the impact of polarization on the ability of citizens to process information (see, e.g., pp. 125, 132). The latter is especially important because it invalidates the primary mechanism that Weingast identified (in his 1997 *American Political Science Review* article), for preventing office holders from subverting democracy, namely, that such actions will lead to popular resistance. But if some part of the population discounts some or all information produced by another part, it is likely to not take serious concerns about democracy being in danger. If anything, it is more likely to think of these as opposition fantasies that are partisan exaggerations. This and the right-wing elements of political groups in the United States, Poland, Hungary, France, Brazil, and elsewhere concern Przeworski. But concern him in what way? He rejects most social scientific explanations and later confesses "I am skeptical that standard social science methods will take us far. There are many common trends and time series are relatively short, so I am concerned that we would find causality where there is none" (p. 125).

This is the great challenge because he perceives issues of grave concern but knows that he cannot identify causality at the level with which he will feel comfortable. In the Chicago panel, a presentation about this book, Przeworski cited legislation passed by Turkey's Justice and Development (AKP) party that allowed Turkish nationals outside of the country to vote in national elections. This seemingly inclusive and pro-democratic legislation led to an AKP victory because of the disproportionate presence of party supporters in the Turkish diaspora in Germany. This is one instance of many in which a government skews the political system in its favor through mechanisms that are constitutionally permissible. The legislation in itself was not the problem, but the outcome was. If scholars consider not what is permissible within the rules but the outcomes of policies in evaluating whether actions will make democracy more likely to breakdown, democracy is no longer simply categorizable as a system in which governments step down upon losing elections. It is something that is certified by academics whose judgment about future consequences of policies and legislation must be taken seriously.

This is very much at odds with Przeworski's long-held concern about precisely imposing subjective evaluations into democracy, which was the focus of his 2015 edited volume *Democracy in a Russian Mirror*. Consider the AKP extension of the vote to Turkish nationals—people who have Turkish citizenship but are outside of the country—and the plan of US presidential candidate Joe Biden to make a path for citizenship for "nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants" (https://joebiden.com/immigration/). Would such a move not have a decisive impact on partisan competition, at least in the short run? There are, of course, many differences between Erdogan and Biden, the AKP and Democrats, and the Turkish and American political systems. But which differences are definitive? For all his concern about conditions in contemporary democracy, Przeworski reverts to his skeptical approach, writing "the conclusion is paltry because it says that we cannot tell whether they are related and which matters most. But that is the best, I believe, we can do given what we now know" (p. 132). That is, there is reason for concern, but it is too difficult to know whether democracy will break down. But if scholars cannot know what can cause breakdown, that casts doubt on how the concern is evaluated and begs the question of why analysis of the breakdowns in Germany in the 1930s and Chile in the 1970s should be judged to be more appropriate models from which to learn than France and the United States in the 1960s. Przeworski's *Crises of Democracy* raises great questions and, wisely, suggests that social scientists cannot know that the former historical experiences are more relevant for the present moment.

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