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DEMOCRATIC DIFFUSION UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS: A
MICRO PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDES
TOWARD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE THROUGH
TRANSNATIONAL LINKAGES IN
AUTHORITARIAN CONTEXTS

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*Democratic Diffusion under the Magnifying Glass:
A Micro Perspective on the Change of Attitudes toward Democratic Governance
through Transnational Linkages in Authoritarian Contexts*

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Abstract

Students of democratic diffusion argue that strong ties to democracies foster political transformation in non-democratic regimes. They theoretically specify a long causal chain linking the micro-phenomenon of the democratic socialization of individual agents to the macro-phenomenon of regime-type change. However, we know little about the extent to which and the conditions under which transnational linkages familiarize domestic agents with democratic rules and practices. This paper empirically scrutinizes the micro-foundation of the democratic diffusion argument by analyzing the impact of social linkage (international education) and communication linkage (foreign media) on the attitudes toward democratic governance of state officials in the stable authoritarian regime of Morocco. As the machinery of government bureaucracy is particularly relevant for democratic change. However, bureaucrats, as direct beneficiaries of the incumbent regime, usually prefer the status quo. The results challenge the democratization potential of transnational linkages. Multiple regression analyses based on original survey data produce little supporting evidence for a democratizing effect of media broadcasting and international education on the attitudes of Moroccan state officials. While it appears that study visits to democracies have no statistically significant effect, foreign media can positively shape a state official's attitude, but only in non-politicized policy fields.

Keywords

Attitudes, authoritarian regimes, bureaucracy, democratic governance, democratisation, diffusion, linkage, socialisation.

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Introduction

These days, it is commonly accepted that democracy spreads globally (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006; Cederman & Gleditsch, 2004; Doorenspleet, 2004; Gleditsch & Ward, 2006; Elkins 2011; Wejnert, 2005). A glance at the world map is enough to see that democratic and non-democratic countries each cluster geographically and that processes of democratization appear in waves involving whole regional areas. Students of democratic diffusion generally argue that interchange with democratic societies, economies, and polities fosters political transformation in non-democratic regimes. Cross-national activities such as international communication, student exchanges, and global cooperative ventures are said not only to raise the costs of authoritarianism by leading to denouncing of autocratic abuses, increasing pressure on the international community to intervene, and changing domestic opportunity structures in favor of pro-democratic forces; they are also expected to form channels of ideological diffusion, shaping the attitudes if not the behaviors of domestic agents toward democratic rules and practices that are not readily available in the state-controlled public environment of authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2005: 24, Simmons *et al.*, 2006; Nye, 2004; Whitehead, 1996). While empirical studies confirm the existence of democratic diffusion and various theoretical arguments have been suggested to explain this phenomenon, the extent to which transnational influences actually shape the attitudes of individuals is an as yet under-researched question. The few existing studies on the impact of linkage on individuals are suggestive but do not provide systematic and consistent evidence about the postulated effect. This is problematic, since failing to empirically scrutinize the impact of transnational influences at the micro-level of individuals runs the risk of assigning democratic change to democratic diffusion where it was simply a result of independent choices by domestic agents or unconnected responses to explicit strategies of international democracy promoters. Against this background, I argue that the assumption of democratic socialization through transnational linkage is not as straightforward as postulated in the diffusion literature and, as a result, it needs to be directly examined.

In this paper, I explore the extent to which and the conditions under which linkage to established democracies shapes the attitudes toward democratic governance of domestic actors in authoritarian contexts. Whereas existing research centers mostly on average citizens, in particular middle classes and students not in power, I analyze the attitudes of state officials employed in an authoritarian regime. State officials are a particularly interesting group of domestic agents for the study of democratic diffusion from a micro perspective. As direct beneficiaries of the incumbent regime, they are less likely to favor democratic change and more difficult to influence from the outside. At the same time, compared with average citizens, bureaucrats are likely to have more frequent contacts at greater distances than their immediate neighborhood. Their direct involvement in public policy-making at the intermediate level between government and society makes them important for both authoritarian stability and the democratization of a regime (Freyburg, 2012). As “government in action”, state officials formulate and implement policy. Externally driven changes in understandings of appropriate governance among the administrative staff can thus directly shape national-level policies (Farazmand, 2010). Contrary to the political elite and diplomats, they also represent that part of the public sector which citizens actually have contact with and may shape their perceptions of how the political system functions. Moreover, administrative governance needs to meet democratic standards to make political institutions function democratically. Otherwise, there is the risk that democratization processes will result in an “enlightened dictatorship” that circumvents rather than allows effective democratic control by the citizens when used by specific classes and oligarchies to control political power and sustain ineffective corrupt regimes (Baker, 2002: 5). Hence, state officials are important in the transformation of a political regime.

This study addresses the question of whether state officials in non-democratic systems can adopt a positive mindset toward democratic governance as a consequence of social and communication

linkages to “the West”. To answer this question, I analyze new data based on an original survey on attitudes toward democratic governance that I personally conducted in ten different ministries in the authoritarian context of Morocco in 2008. The results of the cross-sectional study show no systematic relationship between exposure to transnational linkages (media/exchange) and agreement with democratic governance. While it appears that study visits to democracies have no statistically significant effect, foreign media can positively shape a state official’s attitude, but only in non-politicized policy fields.

In the next section, I synthesize the theoretical argument for democratic socialization as a result of exposure to transnational linkages, and formulate hypotheses regarding the conditions under which such an effect can be expected. I then present the research design, the methodological approach, and empirical analyses of the survey data. The succeeding sections summarize the findings and finish with a comprehensive discussion of the results.

Transnational Linkage and Democratic Diffusion

Students of the global spread of certain principles and practices identify subtle mechanisms of “uncoordinated” (Elkins & Simmons, 2005: 35) transfer, such as “emulation” (Simmons *et al.*, 2006: 795-8) and “contagion” (Whitehead, 1996: 5-8), which do not require a policy that actively promotes diffusion. Rather, they claim that democratic rules are diffused through neutral, or “non-coercive and often unintentional, channels from one country to another” (Schmitter, 1996: 30). In this process, linkage serves as a transmitter of international influence by way of diffusion (Gleditsch, 2002: 13; Way & Levitsky, 2007: 53).

The linkage model of external democratization contends that cross-national activities may export democratic rules and practices into authoritarian regimes where they could possibly advance, if not generate processes of democratic change. According to this view, democratization is not the result of various instruments and strategies, such as democracy assistance or political conditionality intentionally used by international actors (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011). Instead, the effects of linkage are diffuse, creating “multiple pressure points – from investors to technocrats to voters – that few autocrats can afford to ignore” (Levitsky & Way, 2005: 25). At its core, the linkage argument rests upon the assumption that links between democracies and non-democracies influence the attitudes of domestic actors in the latter and turn them into sympathizers, if not agents for democratic change.

The transnational diffusion of institutions and policies is catching the attention of a growing number of scholars in the fields of international and comparative studies (Gilardi, 2012). Both strands in the literature provide compelling explanations for the domestic impact of transnational influences. Theories of democratic diffusion point to the importance of spatial-temporal clusters in accounting for variations in the outcome of political transitions (Kopstein & Reilly, 2000; Brinks & Coppedge, 2006; Gleditsch & Ward, 2006). Theories of policy diffusion, in turn, highlight the importance of actors in spreading policy solutions, most of them assuming that “policy makers [...] learn from one another” (Gilardi, 2010: 650; cf., Volden *et al.*, 2008; Dobbin *et al.*, 2007). Both strands, however, ultimately focus on macro-level changes – that is regime-type change or (sub-) national policy adoption, respectively. In so doing, they take for granted any necessary effect on attitudes, and engage in what Checkel calls “as if” reasoning (Checkel & Moravcsik, 2001: 227). Eventually, the unit of analysis needs to be the individual (or a small group) in order to empirically scrutinize whether transnational factors cause the individual attitudinal and behavioral modifications required to produce change.

Few studies provide systematic evidence for a causal link between exposure to transnational linkages and pro-democratic attitudes of individuals. Those that exist are limited to one specific type of linkage (e.g. foreign media or international education) with each centering on different types of individuals (e.g. elite members, students, migrants) and using different indicators to measure attitude change. Pioneering empirical work on transnational interactions was conducted by social

psychologists during the 1950s and 60s. The general tenor of these studies is that attitudes are not significantly and positively influenced but converge toward the mean (Pollack, 1998: 12). Moreover, they point to the importance of conditions for effective attitude change through international activities, notably the quality of exposure and the receptivity of the local agents. Recent studies provide empirical support for the identification of “barriers to change” (Kelman 1962). In their study of the impact of educational experience on the political socialization of young Nepalese in US colleges, Sijapati and Hermann, for instance, conclude that for most students “early socialization continued to have an impact with parental transmission of political values and knowledge weighting heavily despite the distance” (2012: 160). Taking national socialization into account, Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, in contrast, still find that Mexicans residing in democratic host countries do “absorb attributes of democracy” (2010: 120), which, in the authors’ view, is reflected in a more critical evaluation of their home country’s democratic performance. Careja and Emmenegger’s (2012) study of returned migrants’ political attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe corroborates this finding. Analyzing the impact of West German mass media on public support for the former German Democratic Republic (DDR), Holger Kern and Jens Hainmueller, in turn, demonstrate that East Germans exposed to West German television were more supportive. According to them, this finding suggests that ‘West TV’ made “life under communism more bearable and the East German regime more tolerable” (2009: 378). In brief, the findings on attitude change via transnational influences so far are surprisingly inconsistent with one another.

Moreover, both micro- and macro-level studies of democratic diffusion barely consider the literature on international socialization that focuses on “social process[es] through which agent properties and preferences change as a result of interaction” (Checkel & Moravcsik, 2001: 220). Again, existing empirical research interested in the socialization of participants in international organizations like the United Nations or the European Union into new international roles yields mixed results. While some authors point to subtle but substantial shifts (e.g. Johnston, 2008), others find no evidence of international but of national socialization (e.g. Hooghe, 2005). Numerous studies on international micro-socialization show a pessimistic picture as they find “little or no evidence of the predicted attitude changes” (Pollack, 1998: 2). Given the scant and inconclusive evidence, the wide acceptance of the view that foreign media and international education positively shape the attitudes of local individuals is puzzling.

This paper puts the linkage argument for attitude change due to exposure under the analytic microscope: it zooms in on democratic socialization triggered by social or communication linkages at the level of individual state officials. The main argument I thus test is that one can predict the attitude toward democratic governance of a state official employed in an authoritarian regime from her exposure to transnational influences. The paper endeavors to enrich the literature on democratic diffusion in predominantly two regards, by directly testing its theoretical micro-foundation and by offering a systematic comparison of the democratization potential of the two most relevant types of linkages, foreign media and international education.

Attitude toward Democratic Governance

Attitudes are understood as “evaluative dispositions”, which are learnt and can be altered either through communication with others or direct personal experiences (Perloff, 2003; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). The notion of democratic governance corresponds to a manifestation of democratic principles in daily administrative practices. Unlike good governance, democratic governance is not limited to effectiveness and efficiency, but includes the legitimization of governance through democratic rules and practices (Coston, 1998). Enhancing the legitimacy of governance involves more than simply delivering more, better or faster services. Instead, the conditions for increasing legitimacy include undertaking initiatives focused on making public-sector activities more transparent, accountable,

interactive and accessible to citizens (Alford, 2002). Attitudes toward democratic governance thus capture state officials' understandings of the extent to which and the way in which public affairs should be managed in respect of the citizens' right to govern themselves.

In order to assess state officials' attitudes toward democratic modes of decision-making and implementation, a multi-dimensional approach is used, concentrating on three dimensions that are pivotal for democratic governance: transparency, accountability, and participation (Freyburg *et al.*, 2009). Transparency concerns the provision of and access to various kinds of information on sectoral policy and its consequences for citizens, civil society associations, and the media (Hood, 2010: 989). Accountability at the administrative level refers to the obligation for officials to justify the use of resources and the achievement of outcomes to citizens and independent third parties, and the establishment and application of procedures for administrative review, including the possibility of sanctions in the case of infringement (Grant & Keohane, 2005: 29; Diamond *et al.*, 1999: 3). Finally, participation largely corresponds to the key feature of the conventional understanding of democracy at the level of the nation state (Dahl, 1971; Verba, 1967). In terms of administrative governance, openness to participation means that all willing members of the public should have an equal and effective opportunity to make their interests and concerns known, thereby shaping the outcome of decisions. Participatory, transparent and accountable modes of governance imply changing the ways in which administrative decisions are made in authoritarian regimes. By constituting a democratic alternative to the rules and practices of the incumbent regime, they can confront its regulatory powers (Freyburg, 2011: 1006). Positively influencing attitudes toward these principles of democratic governance can contribute to the establishment of democratic decision-making within state administration.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Two types of linkage have attracted particular attention in the literature as spreading democratic rules beyond borders and, in doing so, being causes of democratization: social linkage and communication linkage. These linkages are also assumed to be the most relevant and particularly well-suited for shaping state officials' understanding of appropriate administrative governance. Social linkage is about "flows of people across borders" (Way & Levitsky, 2007: 53). State officials' understanding of appropriate governance is likely to be influenced by their personal experiences of democratic decision-making during longer stays abroad for educational or professional reasons. "Through the exchange experience, participants (who may have little exposure to democratic norms and ideas) observe how people behave within a democratic system, acquire knowledge about how democracy [or democratic governance, respectively] functions, and learn what to expect of their own leaders and institutions" (Pérez-Armendáriz & Crow, 2010).

H1: State officials in authoritarian regimes are more likely to have a positive attitude toward democratic governance when they have stayed abroad for educational or professional reasons in a Western democratic country.

Officials can also become acquainted with democratic governance at home through communication linkage; that is, "flows of information across borders" (Way & Levitsky, 2007: 53). The view that Western broadcasting nurtures pro-democratic attitudes and undermines public support for authoritarian regimes is widely shared (Whitehead, 1996: 6-8; Nye, 2004; Wejnert, 2005: 56; Kern & Hainmueller, 2009; Kern, 2011). Rather than doing so through personal experiences, exposure to foreign media familiarizes state officials with democratic modes of decision-making and implementation by confronting them with media content that delineates administrative practices in established democracies, exemplifies the involvement of the public in these processes, and highlights

the importance of democratic administrative governance, among other ways, by reporting on infringements.

H2: State officials in authoritarian regimes are more likely to have a positive attitude toward democratic governance when they use Western media for political information.

The corresponding null hypothesis is that exposure to transnational linkages has no significant impact on attitudes toward democratic governance. Scholars of political socialization usually consider socialization into fundamental political orientations as driven entirely by domestic conditions. They argue that these orientations are developed early and remain fairly stable during their existence (Searing *et al.*, 1976; Marsh, 1971; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969). Against this baseline argument, students of democratic diffusion contend that contact with democratic principles and practices through international activities can change local individuals' attitudes toward them.

Research Design

The argument is empirically explored by investigating the linkage between Western liberal democracies and a stable authoritarian regime, Morocco. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region consists of authoritarian regimes that – until spring 2011 – had experienced no noteworthy, genuinely endogenous democratization processes. The few low-level reforms such as the introduction of elections in some countries were “of little consequence in determining who will really rule” (Diamond, 2010: 95). Morocco is a particularly suitable case for examining democratic socialization through transnational linkages for two reasons: first, this bureaucratic monarchy can be considered a problematic country case where attitude change is unlikely to happen in the absence of external factors. Despite its, by regional standards, comparatively high degree of politicization, the country still appears to qualify as a liberalized autocracy: its mixture of “guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression” has led to a particularly durable and resilient authoritarian regime whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization (Diamond, 2002). The attitudes of state officials toward democratic governance are thus likely to be negative, and potential socialization effects can be better differentiated from domestic trends. At the same time, secondly, Morocco presents an easy case among today's non-democratic countries. The establishment of strong links with established democracies presupposes a certain political openness allowing for transnational exchange. In terms of generalization, this means that if linkage to democracies impacts the attitude of state officials in authoritarian regimes, we should be able to detect such an effect in Moroccan ministries. In turn, in the case of a negative finding, the conclusion is acceptable that in countries that are politically less liberalized and less connected to democracies than Morocco, linkage will also show no significant effect.

The data comes from an original survey on administrative governance in state bureaucracy that I conducted in the summer of 2008 among 150 state officials in Morocco, 98 males and 52 females. The mean age is 41 years, with lower and upper quartiles of 25 and 57. Respondents could choose between French or Arabic as the language of communication; 9 percent picked the Arabic version. Due to the specific and limited nature of the target group, the questionnaire was cognitively pre-tested by knowledgeable experts (Presser *et al.*, 2004). Despite the precautions taken in questionnaire design and survey setting, the existence of preference falsification cannot be completely ruled out. Yet, I am not primarily interested in identifying the true understanding of appropriate governance among Moroccan state officials. Instead, I am concerned with estimating the difference in agreement with democratic governance between state officials who had been exposed to transnational influences and those who had not. It can essentially be assumed that there is no systematic bias of response tendencies between these two groups of state officials.

A Case-matched Cross-sectional Comparison Design

To determine the effect of linkage on the attitudes of Moroccan state officials toward democratic governance, I apply a “static-group comparison design” (Campbell & Stanley, 1966: 12). Two groups are chosen for study and each is observed at a single point in time. The two groups are exposed to different values of a causal variable – here, (no) exposure to a specific type of transnational linkage. The effect of linkage is defined as the difference in attitudes of state officials who had experienced the specific linkage (“treatment group”) and their colleagues who had not (“contrast group”), while including explicit controls for relevant alternative influences. Two conditions must be established before an acceptable causal inference can be drawn from such a cross-sectional design: first, it needs to be guaranteed that the allocation of officials to the focus and comparison groups is not determined by extraneous variables statistically correlated with the treatment variables; second, the two groups need to be similar in all relevant characteristics. Only if the individuals in the two groups do not considerably differ with regard to possibly confounding features, on average and with a sufficiently large sample size, can the difference in attitude be reliably associated with the treatment effect.

I opted for theoretically-controlled cluster sampling to address a possible selection bias since it was not possible to get comprehensive and reliable information about the larger population of Moroccan state officials, which would have been necessary to gain a sufficiently representative and random sample. In line with this procedure, I asked all the officials working in particular departments of certain ministries (clusters) to participate. The selection of ministries was based on the policy field’s degree of politicization, i.e. the political sensibility of the policy issues in terms of their importance for the integrity of the regime and the maintenance of political power by the ruling elite (Zimmerman, 1973: 1204). Ministries dealing with highly politicized issues are assumed to be less open to transnational influence since the regime is especially eager to maintain control over these fields.¹ All the officials employed in the selected departments belong to the sample of this study. The response rate was approximately 96 percent; nearly all the officials available during a period of three months in the summer of 2008 filled in the questionnaire.² That is, the selection of the state officials as a whole is not driven by certain individual characteristics that might impact the democratizing potential of linkages in an unintended way.

I apply the non-parametric matching technique for correcting for the possibility that the assignment of the state official to either group is driven by characteristics likely to also influence their attitudes toward democratic governance. It is, for instance, quite possible that younger state officials tend to turn toward Western media for political information and are more open-minded toward democratic modes of decision-making. Due to the binary character of most of the variables, I employ genetic one-to-one matching with replacement. According to this pre-processing method, observations are selected on the basis of relevant alternative explanatory variables in order to improve the balance that is “the degree to which the treatment and control covariate distributions resemble each other” (Ho *et al.*, 2007: 217). In other words, statistical balancing allows holding possible confounding variables constant. Given that in my dataset the number of potential control cases is smaller than the number of treated cases, I include only those variables that are directly “related to treatment assignments” (Ho *et*

¹ Interviews with (non-) governmental representatives from Morocco, Brussels, and EU member states helped to classify the policy issues under study. Touching upon internally sensitive issues such as corruption, patronage, and the entwinement of private business with governmental responsibilities, policy issues such as the regulation of competition can be treated as politicized (coded as 1). Indicators for non-politicized issues are, in particular, pluralized media coverage and the relative non-impairment of sectoral cooperation by political considerations. The list of selected ministries is given in the Online Appendix. The Online Appendix is available on the author’s website, <http://www.tina-freyburg.eu>

² Only one official flatly refused to fill in the questionnaire; fewer than five officials could not be reached because of professional commitments abroad or holidays.

al., 2007: 217). The following five covariates are assumed to well capture reasons for exposure: the respective other type of linkage, level of education (graduate or postgraduate studies), knowledge of foreign languages (here: French and English), gender, and age.³ I apply the technique separately for the two types of linkage and receive two treated and two comparison groups, one per linkage type. Due to the limited number of contrast cases for communication linkage (N=50 out of 150), I reverse the procedure and match the two groups based on the contrast group.

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 1 displays the covariate balance before and after the matching procedure for the two linkage types separately.⁴ As usual, I assess the similarity between the distribution of covariates within the treated and contrast groups ('optimal balance') in terms of standardized bias (left-hand panel) and *p*-values (right-hand panel) (Abadie, 2002; Diamond & Sekhon, 2008). A standardized bias within [-0.25; 0.25] indicates that a variable is well-balanced (Ho *et al.*, 2007: 220). The right-hand panel reports the *p*-values with .10 as threshold in order to identify whether real differences between the treated and the contrast groups persist. Figure 1 shows that for both types of linkages the distributions of a few covariates differed before matching, notably for age, command of English, and level of education ("postgraduate"). With the matching, these differences have been considerably reduced: for all covariates the remaining differences in mean range clearly within [-0.25; 0.25]. Moreover, all *p*-values are above 0.10. Hence, the matching procedure appears to have been successful in making the two groups of state officials comparable.

Operationalization of the Treatment Variables⁵

Social linkage refers to the officials' international experiences operationalized as a stay abroad for at least six months for educational or professional reasons in the 'old' member states of the European Union and/or the United States. This variable is coded as a binary variable, with 1 representing education in the EU and/or the USA. Overall, in the post-matching dataset, 56 out of 92 state officials had stayed abroad in an established Western democracy.

Communication linkage applies to Western print media and television channels. Respondents were asked to indicate which newspapers/magazines and television channels (in various languages) they read or watched for political information and how often they did so (occasionally, frequently, or every day). Media penetration is treated as dichotomous, with 1 representing regular media usage. In total, in the post-matching dataset, 48 out of 85 respondents stated that they use foreign media from European countries to acquire political information either frequently or every day.⁶ The variables for social linkage and communication linkage are not significantly interrelated, as corroborated by a Pearson's chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2(1)=2.48, p = .12, N=137$). Officials who had spent a considerable amount of time in "the West" did not consult Western media substantially more often, and *vice-versa*.

³ Details on operationalization are given below. Missing data have been multiply imputed ($m=5$) (King *et al.* 2001: 49) using the Amelia II's EMB algorithm (Honaker *et al.*, 2007). For the matching procedure and the regression analyses, the five data sets are combined on the basis of the calculated mean values.

⁴ The covariate balance including the percentage improvement in the standardized bias after matching is given in the Online Appendix, which will be made available on the author's website.

⁵ Basic descriptive statistics are given in the Appendix.

⁶ The newspapers read are: Courier International, El Pais, Figaro, Libération, Le Monde, Le Monde Diplomatique, New York Times, The Financial Times, and The Washington Post; the television channels used are Arte, BBC, CNN, Euronews, France 1 to 3, France 24, M6, TF1, TV5, TVE.

Measurement of the Dependent Variable

Since this study could not build on existing surveys, it required the creation of suitable items to measure the dependent variable: the state officials' attitudes toward democratic governance. The three theoretically derived dimensions of democratic governance – transparency, accountability, and participation – were operationalized with issue indicators pertaining to various aspects of administrative governance. Their formulation was inspired by conceptual work on public administration (reform) and linkage of (good) governance and development (Hyden *et al.*, 2004; Baker, 2002; Page, 1985). A 5-point Likert scale enables the reduction of complex beliefs into straight agree/disagree statements. The items are randomly distributed in two out of 36 different sets of questions.⁷ To account for the general tendency to provide affirmative answers, regardless of the content ('acquiescence effect'), the questionnaire contains statements on both democratic (positively-oriented items) and non-democratic governance features (negatively-oriented items).

Based on the theoretical idea that a true democrat is one who supports the regular democratic governance items and rejects their logical opposites, I used scales combining the positively-oriented items with the corresponding negatively-oriented ones. By employing an exploratory factor analysis, the positively-oriented items identified as relevant (factor loading $\geq .4$; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006: 823) are grouped in the three dimensions.⁸ The negatively-oriented items were not included in the factor analysis: with a non-response rate of about ten percent, the number of missing values is comparatively high. Their incorporation would have decreased the number of cases and thus led to a substantial loss of information on the regular items. The subscales were constructed by adding the values of the crucial positively- and negatively-framed items and dividing the sum by the number of items for each dimension; the aggregated scale measuring attitude toward democratic governance presents the means of the three subscales.

The first factor – participation – captures one of the key dimensions of the conventional understanding of democracy. It is traditionally perceived as the involvement of rule addressees in the rule-making process (item P3). In this sense, participation not only requires that state officials seek to guarantee citizens' knowledge about current governmental decisions in order to enable meaningful participation (item P2); it first and foremost presumes that state officials are willing to admit non-state actors representing all relevant interests into their decision-making processes (item P1). The conflicting item referring to public participation addresses the authoritarian claim of unlimited approval (item Pn). It reverses the direction of influence – citizens' views should not shape governmental policies, but are to be brought in line with them. Transparency as access to information for citizens means that governance-related information about administrative procedures is provided (item T2), and that instead of prepared governmental policy promotion packages, up-to-date and comprehensive information (item T1) that is actually demanded is available (item T3). The negatively-framed transparency item embodies the idea that authoritarian thinking is directly threatened if citizens are granted free access to information of interest to them (item Tn). Finally, accountability refers to "reviews [of] the expediency and procedural correctness of bureaucratic acts" (Schedler, 1999: 28). This can be done either by means of independent state institutions ("horizontal accountability", item A1) or by opportunities for citizens and their associations to request scrutiny of administrative practices ("vertical accountability", item A2). The third negatively-oriented item addresses an attitude statement that distorts the meaning of accountability by ascribing the monitoring of the correctness of

⁷ The Online Appendix displays the exact wording of the questions and the items.

⁸ The exploratory factor analysis is done using the robust mean and variance-adjusted weighted least squares (WLSMV) extraction procedure, as well as the oblique rotation method Oblimin. The results of the factor analysis, including an assessment of the model fit and the scales' unidimensionality and reliability, are given in the Online Appendix.

bureaucratic acts to a higher authority (item An). The distribution of the most condensed outcome variable, attitude toward democratic governance, is shown in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 here]

The beanplots (Kampstra, 2008) demonstrate that, overall, Moroccan state officials show a remarkably high degree of agreement with the democratic governance attitude statements, given that they are employed by an authoritarian regime. On a scale from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree')⁹, the averaged arithmetic mean, represented by the dashed line, is 4.01 in the left-hand panel displaying the attitudes of all state officials if matched on social linkage, and 4.08 in the right-hand panel showing the attitudes of the officials if matched on communication linkage. At the same time, despite the tendency of the responses to cluster at the 'positive' end of the scale, we do not observe a ceiling effect, as there was still considerable room for improvement. As for the differences between the treated and contrast groups, for both types of linkage the majority of the data points – represented by the longer thin lines with wider lines for duplicate values – clearly accumulate around the median for the treated group, as supported by the density shape. At the same time, in contrast with the respective comparison group, the plots are elongated, indicating that the attitudes of some officials became more extreme. Overall, as hypothesized, the attitudes of state officials with transnational experiences appear to be, on average, more positive than the attitudes of their colleagues without these experiences, as indicated by the thick horizontal line of the median. Yet, to what extent is this difference in the state officials' attitudes statistically significant and can be traced back to exposure to transnational linkages?

The Democratizing Potential of Transnational Linkages

To predict the levels of agreement with democratic governance from exposure to transnational linkages, I estimate a series of regression models using the aggregated scales of attitudes toward democratic governance and its three dimensions (participation, transparency, and accountability) as dependent variables (H1 and H2). For each I estimate a binary regression model and a multiple regression model controlling for relevant characteristics of the individual state official, namely the degree of politicization of the professional environment (see above), level of education (with graduate = 0 and postgraduate studies = 1), knowledge of French and English (with 1 for 'good' knowledge, i.e. scores ≥ 3 on a scale ranging from 'excellent' (5) to 'no knowledge' (0)), position within the state administration (with directorate = 1), age, and gender (with female = 1).¹⁰ All least square regression analyses are conducted separately for the two types of linkage.

[Figure 3 here]

The regression analyses reveal that Moroccan state officials that have studied in a Western democracy – be it in Europe or in the USA – do not have more positive attitudes toward democratic governance than their colleagues educated in a predominantly non-democratic environment. Agreement with democratic governance is not strongly associated with international education, if entered as single independent variable into a simple regression model; the coefficients are small and

⁹Values for the negatively-oriented items are reversed – that is, 1 stands for 'strongly agree' and 5 for 'strongly disagree' – for statements featuring non-democratic modes of making decisions. Consequently, the higher the value the less the respondent is in favor of the relevant item.

¹⁰The variation inflation factors (VIFs) demonstrate that the explanatory factors do not suffer greatly from multi-collinearity; they are clearly below the threshold of <5.0; see Table A2 in the Appendix.

non-significant for all four dependent variables ($B_{DG} = 0.07$, $t(67) = 0.671$, $p = .504$; $B_{PG} = -0.11$, $t(81) = -0.684$, $p = .496$; $B_{TG} = 0.09$, $t(77) = 0.889$, $p = .377$; $B_{AG} = 0.114$, $t(77) = 0.767$, $p = .445$).¹¹ That is, the differences between the two beanplots in the left-hand panel of Figure 2 are not statistically significant. This finding remains robust if one controls for alternative influences. I present the multiple regression models by plotting parallel lines for each dependent variable grouped by coefficients (Kastellec & Leoni, 2007: 766). A vertical scan of the left-hand panel in Figure 3 shows that the estimates for international education are small and non-significant across the models. Hence, on the basis of this study, Hypothesis H1 cannot be confirmed.

The regression models with use of foreign media as treatment variable show a picture similar to that featuring international education: Moroccan state officials who use foreign media products for political information do not have statistically significantly more positive attitudes than their colleagues without this experience. Exposure to foreign media does not significantly predict agreement with democratic governance; again, the coefficients are small and non-significant for all four dependent variables ($B_{DG} = 0.147$, $t(64) = 1.702$, $p = .0937$; $B_{PG} = -0.019$, $t(76) = -0.129$, $p = .898$; $B_{TG} = 0.109$, $t(74) = 1.10$, $p = .275$; $B_{AG} = 0.183$, $t(73) = 1.141$, $p = .258$). As shown in the right-hand panel of Figure 3, all coefficient lines for the use of foreign media cross the reference line. In other words, although the results are more supportive of the hypothesis of a positive influence of communication linkage, as also indicated by the beanplots in Figure 2, they suggest rejecting Hypothesis H2, too.

[Table 1 here]

Robustness

To provide more robust tests of the hypotheses on state officials' transnational socialization in democratic governance, I refine the analyses in four ways. First, I explicitly examine the assumption that informed the selection of ministries, namely that bureaucrats employed in less politically sensitive fields are more receptive to exposure to transnational linkages. Second, I re-run the analysis on pre-matched data. Third, I re-estimate the equations by entering a more differentiated measure of the respective treatments, namely the destinations of the stays abroad (Europe vs. USA) and the frequency of foreign media usage (frequently vs. daily), as dummy variables. Finally, I regress the agreement with the individual statement items on the linkage variable and the covariates to examine exactly which principles of democratic governance can be learned from the outside.

Whether the policy issues on which a state official works are politicized or not can be expected to determine how information on democratic governance provided by foreign media is perceived. It might be that democratic governance is less perceived as a threat to the regime's authority in non-politicized fields which provide public goods, such as the environment. Instead, state officials might understand how important democratic governance is for the well-being of the population. Based on this reasoning, I expect the interaction term 'foreign media x politicization' in particular to be positively associated with agreement with democratic governance, but I also include the second interaction term 'international education x politicization' in the analysis. Table 1 shows the descriptive and inferential statistics related to the respective cross-product term for the overall concept of democratic governance.¹² The assumption of a facilitating effect of a low degree of politicization would be supported if exposure to the respective linkage has a positive effect on the attitude of a state official only in a non-politicized environment. That is, there needs to be a significant difference in the

¹¹ The subscript letters refer to the different dependent variables, namely democratic governance (DG), participatory governance (PG), accountable governance (AG), and transparent governance (TG). The complete regression tables are given in the Online Appendix.

¹² Statistics for the three dimensions are given in the Online Appendix.

level of agreement between groups 1 and 2 but not between groups 3 and 4. As displayed in Table 1, state officials who work in non-politicized ministries and have experienced international activities have, on average, more positive attitudes than their colleagues without these experiences. I test whether the assumed facilitating effect is statistically significant using dummy variables. To this end, I generate a binary variable per group (D1, D2, D3, D4) and enter three of the variables (D1, D2, D3) into a series of regression analyses, one per linkage type and dependent variable. Subsequent Wald-coefficient tests support the expected significant difference in the effect of linkage on attitudes depending on the degree of politicization. It appears that foreign media broadcasting can positively shape the attitudes of state officials toward democratic governance if they are employed in non-politicized fields. In interpreting this finding one needs, however, to consider the small number of cases and the possibility of reversed causality due to the potential self-selection of more democratically-minded state officials into less politicized ministries.

Second, I re-run the analysis on the original, i.e. pre-matched and pre-imputed data. The coefficients for the two types of transnational influences are small, negative and non-significant for all four dependent variables in both simple and multiple regression models (Social linkage (full model): $B_{DG} = -0.03$, $t(89) = -0.389$, $p = .698$; Communication linkage (full model): $B_{DG} = -0.005$, $t(89) = -0.063$, $p = .950$).¹³

Third, it might well be that the democratizing effect of social linkage varies with regard to the host country. Public opinion polls in different Arab countries point to a largely negative evaluation of the USA but suggest extremely favorable attitudes toward European countries' foreign policy, including former European imperial powers, notably France, in Arab countries (Furia & Lucas, 2006: 601). Against this background, I expect a positive effect of social linkage to be limited to study stays in Europe. In order to assess whether the host region makes a difference in terms of the democratization potential of social linkage, I enter both destinations as dummy variables, i.e. Europe ($N=48$) and the USA ($N=9$); six state officials had stayed in both regions. Likewise, drawing on socialization research that stresses the intensity of exposure as important for its influence (e.g. Beyers, 2005), I expect the democratizing effect of communication linkage to vary depending on the frequency with which Western media products are used. In order to measure the intensity of exposure to foreign media, I enter two categories as dummy variables into the statistical analyses, with $N=53$ for frequent use and $N=38$ for daily use. The use of a more differentiated measure of the two types of transnational linkage does not alter the non-significant finding.¹⁴ The results of the multiple regression analyses including social linkage as treatment variable provide no support for the expected stronger and more positive influence of education in Europe. Favorable attitudes are not statistically significantly related to either destination (Europe: $B = 0.73$, $t(56) = 0.713$, $p = .48$; USA: $B = 0.30$, $t(56) = 1.590$, $p = .12$); the coefficients for study visits in Europe are, overall, even slightly lower compared to the coefficients for education in the US, although the difference is not statistically significant, as shown by a Wald coefficient test ($\chi^2(1) = 1.045$, $p = .31$). A similar picture appears if we look at the regression results for communication linkage. Here, the results corroborate that exposure to foreign media has no positive, statistically significant influence on the state officials' attitudes, as the coefficients for both frequent ($B = 0.08$, $t(47) = 0.633$, $p = .53$) and daily use ($B = 0.12$, $t(47) = 1.087$, $p = .28$) are low, non-significant, and do not differ statistically significantly ($\chi^2(1) = 0.0812$, $p = .78$). These findings are, however, only tentative and warrant further study.

[Figure 4 here]

¹³ The full result table is given in the Online Appendix.

¹⁴ Results are based on the respective full models as displayed in Figure 3 but with more differentiated measures of the treatment variables; the full regression table is given in the Online Appendix.

Finally, it might be that transnational linkages shape attitudes toward some specific aspects of democratic governance but not toward others, and that these effects are covered when aggregated measures are used. Figure 4 condenses the distribution of responses to the eleven statement items into horizontal net stacked bar charts. As I am mostly interested in the balance between agreement and disagreement and how strong this attitude is, I disregard the option to ‘neither agree nor disagree’, which is often used to state indifference (Johns, 2005: 240-1). For each statement item (P1 to An) and for each treated (SL1 and CL1) and contrast group (SL0 and CL0), the plot displays the proportion of agreement per response category. The graph allows for three comparisons: it facilitates comparisons across the individual items, between the two types of linkage, and between treated and contrast groups. The use of net stacked bar charts allows for easy comparison between agreement and disagreement with a specific item.

Three outcome patterns are easy to detect. First, responses are generally skewed toward the right, pointing to a general high agreement with items of democratic governance regardless of transnational linkage. The exceptions are, as expected, the reversed items of participatory (Pn) and accountable (An) governance, where strong disagreement corresponds to a democratic attitude. The disagreement is less strong for the third negatively-oriented item touching upon public access to information (Tn). Second, the response patterns appear to be rather similar for the treated and the comparison groups, with the attitudes of the treated group being, overall, slightly more negative. I repeat the multiple regression analyses entering responses to the individual statement items as dependent variables.¹⁵ Overall, the unreported results do not alter the above-discussed findings: the coefficients for international education and foreign media are small and statistically non-significant if entered as treatment variable. They also tend to be negative. This analysis of the individual items thus corroborates that, overall, state officials who have been exposed to transnational influences appear not to be more open-minded toward democratic governance. Instead, the results point to a (though not significant) negative effect of transnational linkages on attitudes toward democratic governance.

Discussion

The finding of a limited (in some cases potentially negative) effect of transnational influences on state officials’ attitudes challenges the theoretical micro-foundation of the democratic diffusion argument. If we cannot find empirical evidence for the first crucial step of attitudinal change, this casts doubt on whether the chain of mechanisms that link transnational exchange at the micro-level of individuals to democratic change at the macro-level of the overall polity works as assumed. At the same time, the limited effect corresponds to insights provided by students of international socialization. Most prominently, Herbert Kelman has identified barriers to change that “derive in part from the pre-existing attitudes of the target population and their motivation to maintain their present picture of the world” (1962: 69), and from individual experiences with the respective transnational linkage. A state official who reads Western newspapers might reinterpret the information or misunderstand it in such a way as to fit her pre-existing attitudes; her colleague abroad might “confirm them by being selective in his perception and by avoiding and reinterpreting information that does not fit his preconditions” (Kelman, 1962: 74). The role of strongly motivated negative attitudes toward democracies, “the West” or democratic principles pairs with the objection that state officials using Western media or having participated in student exchanges might present self-selected groups united by specific attributes that are likely to determine both their attitude toward democratic governance and their exposure to transnational linkages. For instance, it might be that particularly students from families loyal to the regime with good connections to the political elite and thus rather negative attitudes toward democratic governance can afford to study abroad. Western media, in turn, could be particularly

¹⁵ The full regression table is given in the Online Appendix.

attractive for those who are already open-minded about external influences and interested in learning more about the democratic abroad. Thus, for the two different types of linkage, self-selection should influence the estimations of a democratizing effect in opposite directions: fostering the effect in the case of media usage and hindering it in the case of international education – a conclusion that the present study’s results support only under the condition of a non-politicized professional environment. Nevertheless, this question deserves additional research.

Even in the absence of strong pre-existing negative attitudes, the state official might have negative experiences abroad, such as an act of discrimination because of his origin or religion, that “interfere with the visitor’s ability to see the positive features of the host country” (Kelman, 1962: 75). Moreover, it might well be that the state official mingles only with people from abroad and does not actually have frequent contact with locals socialized in democracy. Again, further studies are needed that control more explicitly for factors referring to the type of experiences (e.g. rewarding or discriminating), the characteristics of the host country and the study program. With regard to foreign media, factors such as the exact content and the subjective perception of its consequences are to be considered. Given the function of the media as watchdog on government in Western democracies, reports on infringements, such as abuse of bureaucratic power, are common. Exposure to foreign media broadcasting may highlight the malfunctioning of democratic bureaucracies and demonstrate how democratic control of bureaucratic acts can irritate state officials individually. In addition, an analysis of the democratizing effect of foreign media needs to account for the increasingly important role of information provided via the internet and to control for domestic media products that take a critical stand toward the regime and may call for more democratic forms of governance. On the basis of the present study, we cannot say whether transnational linkages are *per se* unlikely to socialize domestic agents into democratic governance for predominantly two reasons: I have focused on just one, but crucial, group of individuals – state officials – rather than the citizenry, and on two types out of a broad range of transnational linkages (e.g. another influential type would be a family member who had emigrated to a democracy). It becomes, however, apparent that democratic socialization due to exposure to transnational linkages cannot be taken for granted.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to empirically scrutinize the theoretical micro-foundation of the democratic diffusion argument, namely attitudinal modifications at the level of the individual domestic agent that result from cross-national activities and are assumed to be crucial for democratic change. Specifically, it has examined whether penetration by Western media (communication linkage) or study visits to a democratic country (social linkage) positively shape the attitudes toward democratic governance of state officials employed by the authoritarian regime of Morocco. The descriptive analysis has revealed that Moroccan state officials indeed show a remarkably high degree of agreement with democratic governance despite being employed in a non-democratic polity. However, state officials exposed to transnational linkages are not statistically significantly more democratically-minded than their largely nationally-socialized colleagues. Only if employed in a non-politicized professional environment can exposure to foreign media have a positive democratizing effect. While a general democratizing effect of transnational linkages cannot be dismissed on the basis of this study – long and close relations with Western democracies over generations may well stand behind the high approval level – a specific effect of the most relevant types of linkage on the attitudes of state officials cannot be determined.

Certainly, this analysis of state officials’ attitudes toward core features of democratic governance and how they are shaped by transnational influences is only one step among many toward a better understanding of the democratization potential of transnational influences in authoritarian contexts. The results presented cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of the transformative potential of transnational interchange between established democracies and authoritarian regimes. Nevertheless, I

believe this study usefully complements the existing literature on democratic diffusion and also has relevance for contemporary foreign policies. If we accept state officials to be relevant actors for democratic change, the findings appear to challenge the effectiveness of cross-national activities such as international broadcasting as a means of democracy promotion. They also point to the importance of directly examining the micro-foundation of democratic diffusion and of looking more closely at the conditions (including the subjective experiences and existing attitudes) under which transnational linkages socialize which groups of domestic individuals into democratic principles and practices, and the way positive attitudes feed into processes of democratization.

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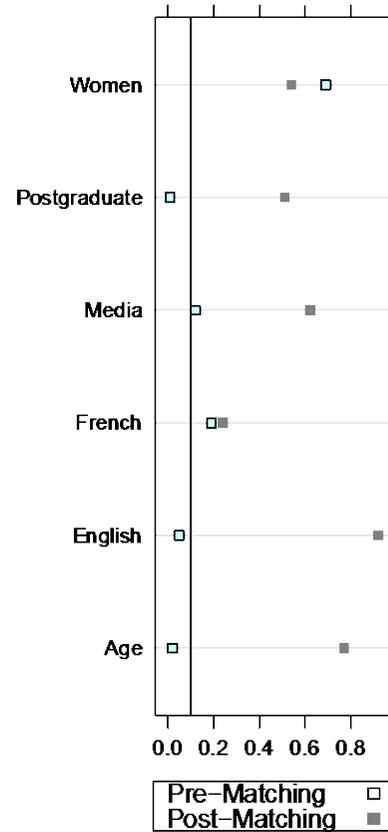
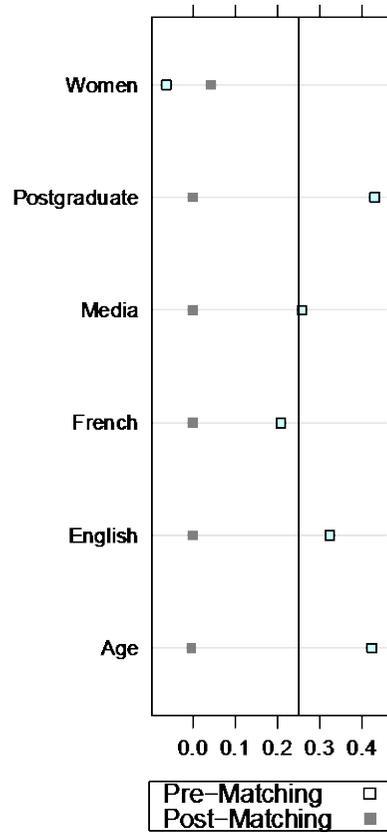
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TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Matching control and treated groups of state officials

Standardized Mean Differences

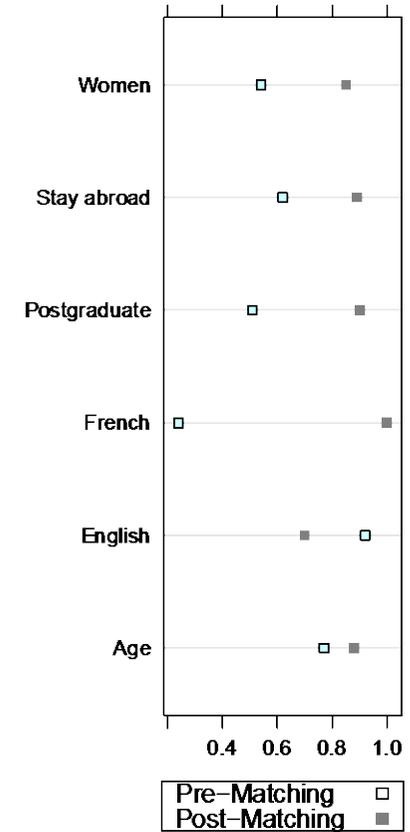
p-values



Social linkage

Standardized Mean Differences

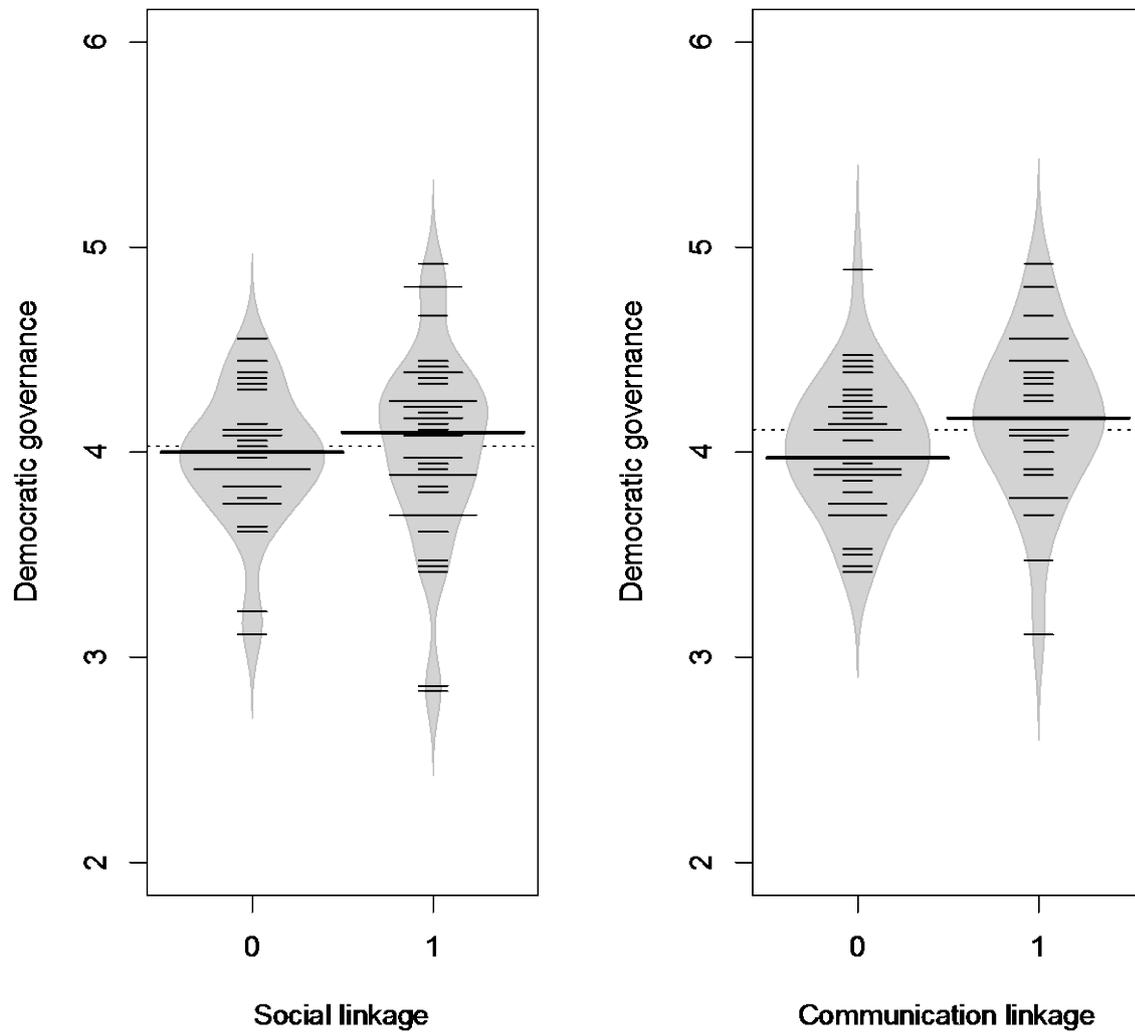
p-values



Communication linkage

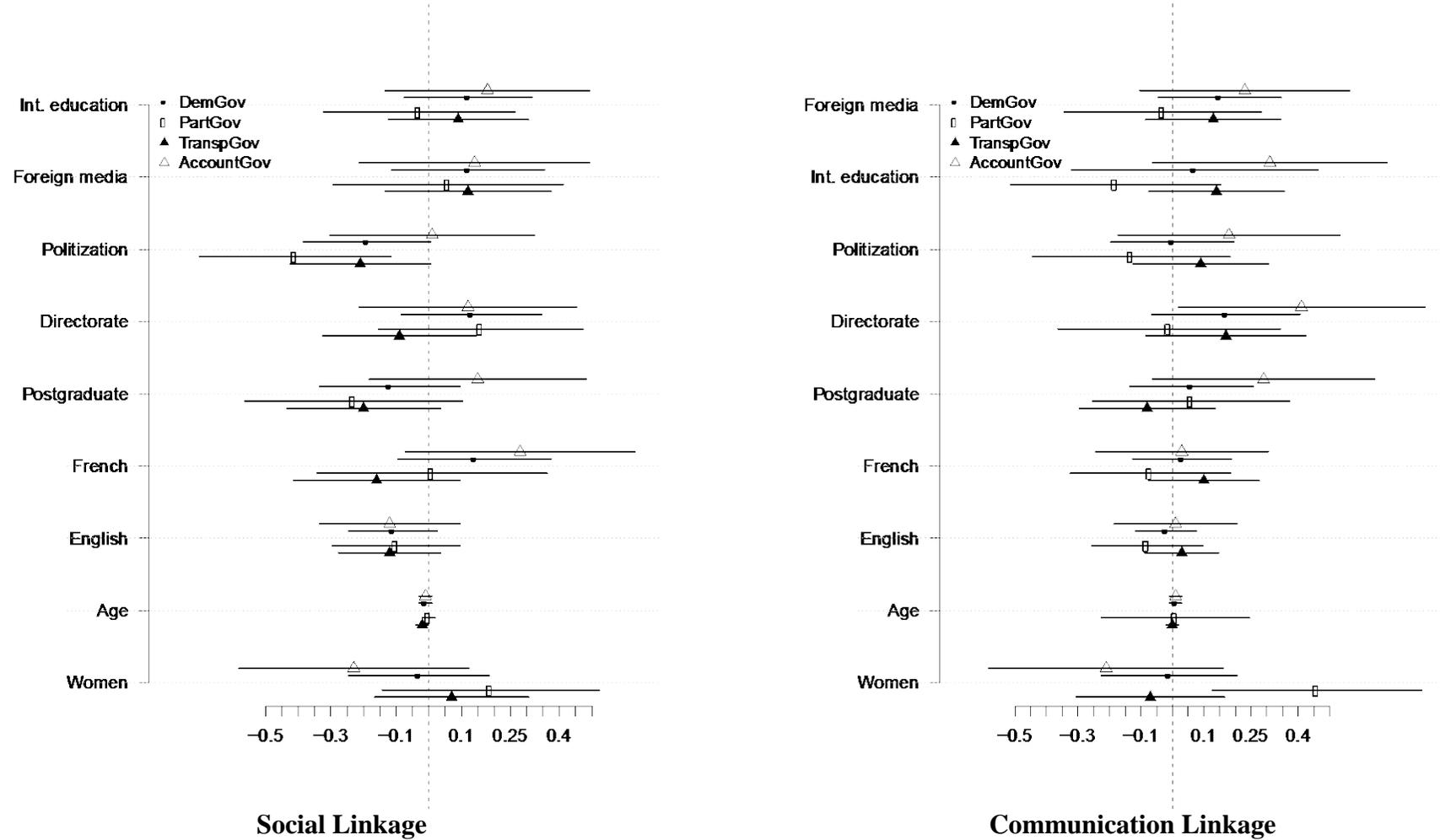
Note: *Left-hand panel:* Standardized bias, i.e. differences between the means of the treated and the contrast groups divided by the pooled standard deviation; *right-hand panel:* p-values, produced by t-tests for the binary variables and bootstrapped Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for the continuous variable 'age' (10,000 bootstrap samples); vertical lines mark specific threshold levels (or intervals) for the respective balance statistic; N = 150 total.

Figure 2. Attitudes toward democratic governance



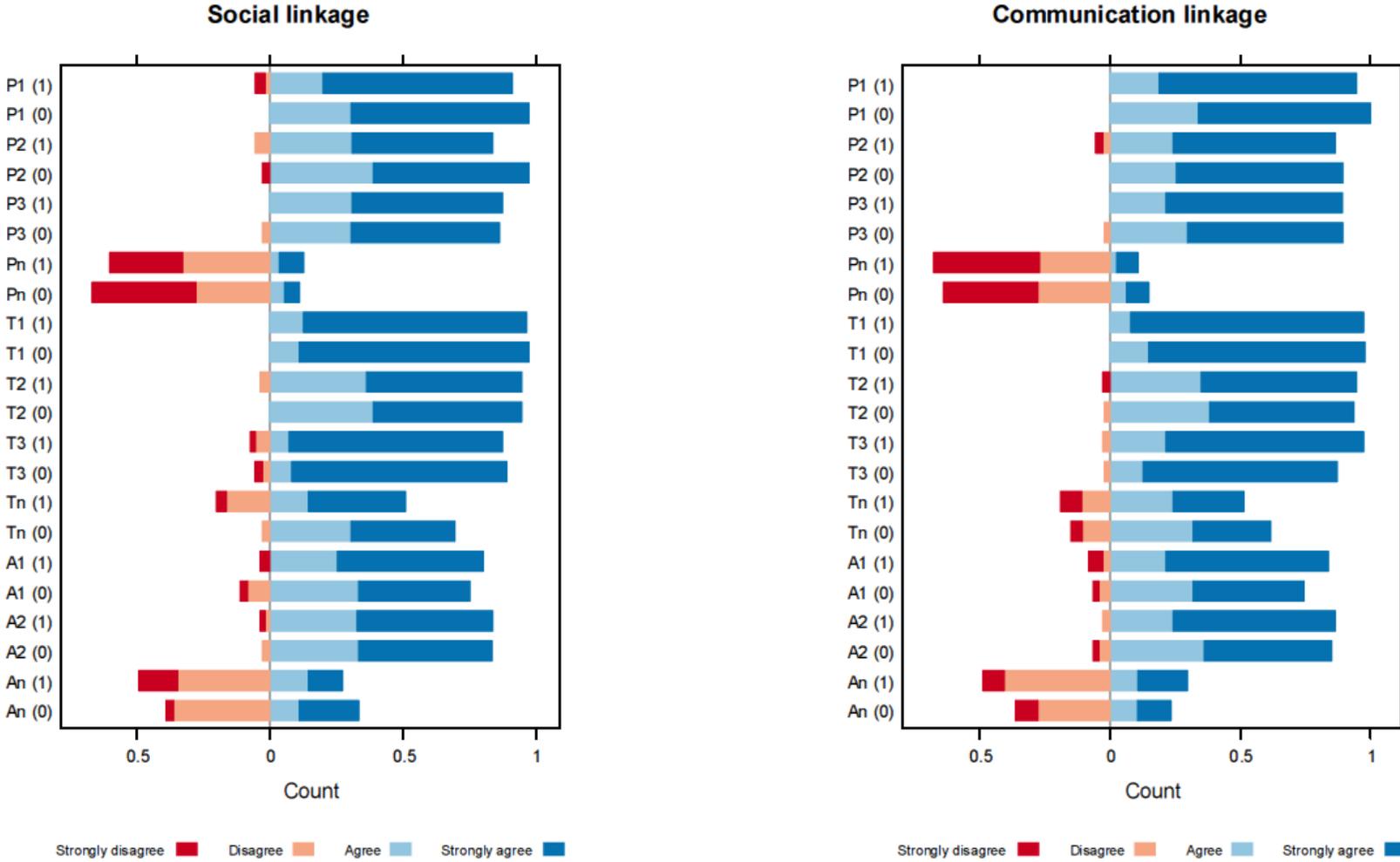
Note: Values range between 1 (non-democratic) and 5 (democratic); N= 40 (treated group, '1') / N = 29 (contrast group, '0') for social linkage, and N = 28 (treated group) / N = 38 (contrast group) for communication linkage.

Figure 3. Transnational linkages and attitude toward democratic governance



Note: *Left-hand panel:* Attitudes toward democratic/participatory/transparent/accountable governance regressed on international education introduced as dummy variable; *right-hand panel:* Same dependent variables regressed on foreign media introduced as dummy variable; regression coefficients are unstandardized with a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 4. Agreement with individual statement items



Note: the x-axis displays the percentage of agreement with each item; the numbering of items on the y-axis refers to the sub-dimensions Participation, Transparency, Accountability, as introduced above grouped by treatment (i.e. 0 for ‘contrast group’). I removed the neutral value to highlight negative and positive attitudes.

Table 1. Interaction effect ‘social | communication linkage x politicization’

		Democratic Governance				
		Social linkage		Communication linkage		
		No	Yes	No	Yes	
Politicization		<i>Descriptive statistics</i>				
		No	(1, N = 13) 4.07 (0.21)	(2, N = 13) 4.18 (0.44)	(1, N = 14) 3.92 (0.27)	(2, N = 15) 4.23 (0.31)
		Yes	(3, N = 16) 3.89 (0.38)	(4, N = 25) 3.97 (0.47)	(3, N = 23) 4.04 (0.28)	(4, N = 9) 4.01 (0.52)
		<i>Inferential statistics</i>				
No	(1) 0.08 (0.14), [67]	(2) 0.19 (0.14), [67]	(1) -0.10 (0.16), [61]	(2) 0.17 (0.16), [61]		
	<i>Wald-test: $\chi^2(1) = 0.429, p = .51$</i>		<i>Wald-test: $\chi^2(1) = 3.993, p = .05$</i>			
Yes	(3) -0.12 (0.13), [67]	(4) baseline category	(3) -0.01 (0.14), [61]	(4) baseline category		
	<i>Wald-test: $\chi^2(1) = 0.822, p = .36$</i>		<i>Wald-test: $\chi^2(1) = 0.003, p = .96$</i>			

Note: *Descriptive statistics:* mean value with standard deviation in parentheses; *Inferential statistics:* results of multiple regression analyses based on respective full model (Figure 3) with unstandardized coefficients and standard errors in parentheses.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Basic information of variables (original dataset)

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Attitude toward						
- Democratic Governance	110	4.06	.38	4.11	2.83	4.92
- Participatory Governance	133	4.31	.63	4.5	2	5
- Transparent Governance	132	4.03	.44	4	2	5
- Accountable Governance	126	3.83	.66	4	2	5
Foreign Media	140	0.65	.48	1	0	1
- frequently	140	0.38	.49	0	0	1
- daily	140	0.27	.45	0	0	1
International Education	147	0.41	.49	0	0	1
- EU	147	0.37	.48	0	0	1
- USA	147	0.10	.30	0	0	1
Women	150	0.35	.48	0	0	1
Age	147	40.65	7.95	40	25	57
French	149	4.65	.56	5	2	5
English	149	3.07	.90	3	1	5
Postgraduate	149	1.64	.48	2	1	2
Directorate	150	1.56	.50	2	1	2
Politicization	145	0.58	.50	1	0	1

Table A2. Assessment of multicollinearity

	Social Linkage				Communication Linkage			
	DemGov	PartGov	TranGov	AccGov	DemGov	PartGov	TranGov	AccGov
Media	1.12	1.13	1.12	1.15	1.13	1.11	1.12	1.10
Int. education	1.06	1.04	1.05	1.05	1.04	1.09	1.05	1.06
Women	1.18	1.17	1.21	1.19	1.47	1.34	1.49	1.33
Age	1.68	1.61	1.61	1.68	1.58	1.52	1.52	1.53
French	1.13	1.20	1.17	1.12	1.10	1.07	1.07	1.05
English	1.32	1.44	1.44	1.42	1.12	1.12	1.13	1.11
Postgraduate	1.12	1.11	1.11	1.10	1.29	1.27	1.32	1.27
Directorate	1.32	1.20	1.27	1.27	1.63	1.49	1.67	1.44
Politicization	1.04	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.26	1.28	1.25	1.21

Note: Values displayed are variance inflation factors (VIF) based on the respective full model in Figure 3.

