

Learning to Lose: Election Outcomes, Democratic Experience and Political Protest Potential

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Do democratic elections and experience with democracy affect citizens' propensity to engage in political protest? If so, how? We develop a model of protest potential based on the incentives election winners and losers face in new and established democratic systems. Using surveys conducted by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) in seventeen democracies around the globe, we compare the effect of being in the political minority or majority after an election on political protest potential. We find that being in the political minority heightens citizens' political protest potential. Moreover, we find that the effect of losing on protest potential is significantly greater in new democracies relative to established ones. These findings provide systematic evidence that election outcomes should be considered important indicators of political protest potential, and they imply that this effect is particularly salient in countries whose democratic institutions are relatively new and potentially more unstable.

The May 2000 presidential election in Peru between incumbent President Fujimori and his main challenger Alejandro Toledo was fraught with charges of vote rigging and unfair balloting. In fact, Toledo refused to accept the official outcome of the first round of balloting and withdrew from the second round runoff, calling on electoral officials to postpone the election to ensure the fairness of the electoral process and urging his supporters to boycott the election. After Fujimori won a third term by default, the country was thrown into disarray. In subsequent weeks and continuing even after Fujimori's inauguration, the country witnessed protests and riots that left buildings in the capital, Lima, in flames, several people dead and many more hurt. One former Peruvian member of Congress, Flores Nano, was quoted as saying, 'The inauguration of a new term lacks the one central element for the stability of government: legitimacy.'

In Venezuela's July 2000 presidential election, incumbent Hugo Chavez overwhelmingly won re-election, while pro-Chavez candidates claimed a number of provincial governorships and mayoral offices. Although the contest was mostly judged as fair, though less than perfect, by outside observers such as the Organization of American States and the Carter Center, there were violent street battles between supporters of President Hugo Chavez and opponents of his government, leading to the death of at least one person and a number of injured across the country.

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In the fall of 2000, the United States experienced one of the most hotly contested races for the presidency in the country's history between George W. Bush and Al Gore. Results were so close that the winner was not determined for weeks after the contest had been held. Among claims and counterclaims of faulty ballots and fraudulent tallies, supporters of both camps claimed that their man had won. In the end, only an intercession by the country's Supreme Court resolved the matter and installed George Bush as the nation's forty-third President. However, in stark contrast to the events in Peru and Venezuela, and despite passionate beliefs on both sides regarding their man's victory in the election contest, the United States did not experience the kind of political upheaval brought on by the losers' discontent with the election outcome that struck Peru and Venezuela; no one was seriously hurt, let alone killed. What is more, the protests that did occur in the United States tapered off relatively quickly after the Supreme Court made its decision, while Peru and Venezuela experienced prolonged and serious, even constitutional, crises.

What explains the difference in losers' behaviour in these countries? More generally, why are some losers more discontent than others, and what explains the willingness to engage in aggressive political participation in these differently situated countries? The answers to these questions are liable to have relevance beyond the specific cases of the United States, Venezuela and Peru. In fact, while stories of sore, as well as graceful, losers abound in electoral democracies around the globe, we know relatively little about what drives their dynamics. What appears clear, however, is that electoral losers play a crucial role in the functioning and development of democratic political institutions and that their perceptions of the system's legitimacy has potentially critical effects on that system's proper functioning and maintenance.

In this study, we seek to broaden our understanding of regime legitimacy and democratic stability by focusing on how people's allegiance to the political minority and majority affects their willingness to engage in political protest. Because democracies are designed to create winners and losers at election time, they face the potential for instability and upheaval brought about by different incentives that those in the political minority and majority have for safeguarding the system. We hypothesize that, relative to those in the majority (the winners), citizens who are in the political minority (the losers) have fewer incentives to maintain the status quo, and they are more likely to engage in political protest – or what some have called non-institutionalized political action.¹ Moreover, we argue that a country's democratic history can exacerbate or attenuate the extent to which political minority status affects people's willingness to engage in protests against the government: the more recently democratic institutions have been established, the stronger the effect of being in the minority should be.

POLITICAL MINORITY-MAJORITY STATUS AND PROTEST POTENTIAL

Scholars of comparative politics and political behaviour have long argued that the well-being of political institutions hinges on people's perceptions that these institutions are legitimate. When people believe that systems lack legitimacy, these institutions face instability that, if left unchecked, can lead to collapse.² Given the gravity of these

¹ Max Kaase, 'Interpersonal Trust, Political Trust, and Non-institutionalized Political Participation in Western Europe', *West European Politics*, 22 (1999), 1–21.

² G. Bingham Powell, *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). However, see also Nany Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

consequences, it is not surprising that researchers continue to scrutinize the conditions under which legitimacy is or remains high.

To gauge the extent to which a political system is legitimate in the eyes of citizens, researchers frequently have investigated the attitudes citizens hold towards the political system as well as citizens' political behaviour. Regarding the latter, they have focused on different measures of political participation to gauge the extent to which citizens accept the current institutional arrangements.³ Especially in the aftermath of the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, one important stream of research examined the individual-level determinants of political protest potential or what some have termed 'aggressive' or 'unconventional' political participation.⁴ These studies seek to shed light on the conditions under which individuals will engage in unconventional and uninstitutionalized forms of political participation that may be aimed at challenging the regime and bringing about change in or reform of the formal institutions of collective decision making.⁵

The scholarly literature that seeks to understand such behaviour is vast and comprises a multitude of perspectives, including theories of relative deprivation, instrumental institutionalism, historical-cultural institutionalism and resource mobilization.⁶ Typically, however, such theories are focused either on the behaviour of groups or the constraining influences of a country's macro-political context and do not usually examine the motivations of individuals directly. To supplement such studies, we focus on individual-level predispositions produced by the tensions inherent in democratic government to understand people's protest behaviour and to place these motivations in a country's political context. Specifically, we argue that knowing whether a citizen is a member of the political minority or majority goes a long way towards predicting that citizen's attitudes towards the government and her tendency to take to the streets to voice her discontent.

While they differ in important ways,⁷ all democracies, through elections, are expressly designed to create political inequalities among citizens and political elites at regular intervals. That is, while democratic political systems provide equal opportunities for citizens to participate in elections, they also produce unavoidably unequal outcomes by ensuring that some will be in the majority and that others will be in the minority. This inequality is likely to have consequences for how citizens view political institutions. In particular, given that citizens prefer being in the majority over being in the minority, it is usually the losers who have stronger incentives to bring about change than the winners.⁸ Political theory thus predicts that the legitimacy and stability of political systems is more

³ Edward N. Muller, Thomas Jukam and Mitchell Seligson, 'Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior', *American Journal of Political Science*, 26 (1982), 240–64.

⁴ Edward N. Muller and Karl-Dieter Opp, 'Rational Choice and Rebellious Collective Action', *American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), 471–88; Samuel Barnes and Max Kaase, eds, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1979).

⁵ Barnes and Kaase, *Political Action*; M. Kent Jennings and Jan van Deth, eds, *Continuities in Political Action* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989).

⁶ Barnes and Kaase, *Political Action*; Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, 'Contentious Politics in New Democracies: East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, 1989–93', *World Politics* 50 (1998), 547–81.

⁷ Different types of democratic systems define winners and losers in particular ways. Moreover, they determine the extent to which the winners may do what they want and what rights the losers have to prevent unfettered majority rule differently (Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999); G. Bingham Powell, *Elections As Instruments of Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000)).

⁸ William H. Riker, 'Political Theory and the Art of Heresthetics', in Ada W. Finifter, ed. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1983).

likely to be challenged by those in the minority than those in the majority. This means that political minority and majority status affects the legitimacy of a system because it affords actors' differing incentives to push for institutional change.⁹

We posit that this is likely to be the result of two interrelated phenomena grounded in people's views of the political process and of the outcomes produced by the political system. First, those in the minority are less likely to believe that the political process is fair, and they tend to doubt that the government is interested in and responsive to their needs. Secondly, because the political majority makes public policy, democratic systems are likely to produce policies that are closer to the majority's preferred outcomes than the minority's. Thus, aside from feeling ambivalent about the process of government, members of the minority are comparatively less likely to obtain desired outcomes from the political system.¹⁰ This, in turn, is likely to make them less likely to be satisfied with the actual outputs produced by the system.

The empirical literature on the minority–majority effect – also variously referred to as the winner or ‘home-team’ effect mentioned above – offers some robust findings in support of these conjectures.¹¹ For example, those who vote for the governing majority tend to express higher levels of satisfaction with and trust in the political system than those in the minority.¹² Having voted for the government also fosters increased levels of efficacy and government support.¹³ Moreover, the winner effect has been linked to other political attitudes such as perceptions of government responsiveness and fairness, as well as social trust and people's willingness to engage in political activism and protest.¹⁴

However, we would like to offer a few critical caveats when it comes to the validity and generalizability of this minority–majority or home-team effect. First, because the vast majority of studies of this effect have been conducted in a limited number of relatively

⁹ See Christopher J. Anderson, André Blais, Shaun Bowler and Ola Listhaug, *Losers' Consent: Elections and Democratic Legitimacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Consistent with this, a large body of research has found that those who have the greatest stake in the system – measured by people's economic or political interests (income, social class, and education) – also tend to express the highest levels of support for the existing political system (Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1965); Christopher J. Anderson and Christine A. Guillory, ‘Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems’, *American Political Science Review*, 91 (1997), 66–81; Richard Nadeau and André Blais, ‘Accepting the Election Outcome: The Effect of Participation on Losers' Consent’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 23 (1993), 553–63; Sidney Verba, Norman Nie and Jae-on Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1971)). Similarly, those who have a social or economic stake in the system also are less likely to engage in political protest (M. Kent Jennings and Jan van Deth, eds, *Continuities in Political Action* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989)).

¹⁰ For a related discussion, see Powell, *Elections As Instruments of Democracy*.

¹¹ Anderson *et al.*, *Losers' Consent*.

¹² Anderson and Guillory, ‘Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy’; Christopher J. Anderson and Andrew J. LoTempio, ‘Winning, Losing, and Political Trust in America’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 32 (2002), 335–51; Susan A. Banducci and Jeffrey A. Karp, ‘How Elections Change the Way Citizens View the Political System: Campaigns, Media Effects, and Electoral Outcomes in Comparative Perspective’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 33 (2003), 443–67.

¹³ Susan A. Banducci, Todd Donovan and Jeffrey A. Karp, ‘Proportional Representation and Attitudes about Politics: Results from New Zealand’, *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 533–55; Banducci and Karp, ‘How Elections Change the Way Citizens View the Political System’; Benjamin Ginsberg and Robert Weissberg, ‘Elections and the Mobilization of Popular Support’, *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (1978), 31–55.

¹⁴ E.g., Susan A. Banducci and Jeffrey A. Karp, ‘Perceptions of Fairness and Support for Proportional Representation’, *Political Behaviour*, 21 (1999), 217–38; Harold D. Clarke and Alan C. Acock, ‘National Elections and Political Attitudes: The Case of Political Efficacy’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1989), 551–62; M. Kent Jennings and Jan van Deth, ‘Conclusion: Some Consequences for Systems and Governments’, In M. Kent Jennings and Jan van Deth, eds, *Continuities in Political Action* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989).

similar countries – the established democracies of Western Europe and North America – it remains uncertain whether the minority–majority distinction in political behaviour holds much empirical leverage in democracies outside of the West or in countries that have established democratic rule fairly recently.

Secondly and more importantly, much of the prior literature has relied almost exclusively on attitudinal measures.¹⁵ This might be problematic in the light of findings, showing that distrust in or cynicism towards the political system do not necessarily predict political action, such as protest potential, which may undermine the political regime.¹⁶ Thus, an important question remains about whether the minority–majority effect documented in earlier research goes beyond what people think about politics and affects what people intend to (or actually) do. We address this question by measuring people’s behavioural intentions, which should be more predictive of actual behaviour.

Yet, if protest is simply one of many modes of participation citizens habitually engage in, such behaviour may not signal protest but simply an expanded repertoire of political action. For instance, some in the political minority may express their discontent by voting for extreme political parties, by withdrawing from the political process, or by engaging in lobbying activities. If this is the case, political minority and majority status may *not* strongly affect people’s propensity to engage in political protest. To show that the minority–majority distinction actually predicts behavioral intentions, it is therefore crucial to validate it by using measures that capture more than people’s like or dislike of the current institutional arrangements.

Finally, the validity of the minority–majority or home-team effect on views towards government has been questioned because the study of political support faces a number of empirical challenges. In particular, studies of system support can be and have been criticized for relying on ambiguous measures.¹⁷ To avoid the problems associated with ambiguous measures of attitudes about the political system, it would be useful to focus on political action to establish whether behaviours are similarly affected by differences in political minority and majority status. It stands to reason that disenchanting and distrusting citizens are the most likely candidates to engage in unconventional political activities outside the boundaries of institutionalized participation.¹⁸ However, empirical support of

¹⁵ Cf. Anderson *et al.*, *Losers’ Consent*.

¹⁶ Barbara G. Farah, Samuel H. Barnes and Felix Heunks, ‘Political Dissatisfaction’, in Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase, eds, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1979); Jacques Thomassen, ‘Economic Crisis, Dissatisfaction, and Protest’, in M. Kent Jennings and Jan van Deth, eds, *Continuities in Political Action* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989); Richard Topf, ‘Beyond Electoral Participation’, in Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs, eds, *Citizens and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Jonas Linde and Joakim Ekman, ‘Satisfaction With Democracy: A Note on a Frequently Used Indicator in Comparative Politics’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 42 (2003), 391–408. For the classic controversy, see the exchange between Citrin and Miller. Researchers have pointed out that Easton’s two categories do not exhaust the possible varieties of political attitudes towards democratic governance (M. Stephen Weatherford, ‘Measuring Political Legitimacy’, *American Political Science Review*, 86 (1992), 149–66). The object of citizen support does not have to be, and probably cannot be, reliably separated in terms of the system and the system’s outputs. The difficulties of independently measuring diffuse and specific support are enormous, and separate indicators of the two generally are found to be highly correlated (Max Kaase, ‘Political Alienation and Protest’, in Mattei Dogan, ed., *Comparing Pluralist Democracies* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988). This means, unfortunately, that the distinction between diffuse and specific support has mainly been relevant at the conceptual level, not in the world of empirical social research.

¹⁸ Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 3rd edn. (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 2002); Kaase, ‘Interpersonal Trust, Political Trust, and Non-institutionalized Political Participation in Western Europe’.

the link between distrust of government and protest behaviour is mixed.¹⁹ If the two are related, then both attitudes and behaviours should be affected by similar underlying factors. Whether this is indeed the case with regard to individuals' minority–majority status is a question we take up below.

POLITICAL MINORITY STATUS AND EXPERIENCE WITH DEMOCRACY: A MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC ACQUIESCENCE

Aside from viewing the motivations of individuals to engage in protest through the lens of winning and losing, we also believe that it is useful to place winners and losers in their particular political context. That is, aside from expecting that winners and losers differ in their predispositions to engage in protest, we also expect the extent to which this is the case to differ across new and established democratic systems. Specifically, being a member of the political minority or majority should have a stronger impact on protest potential in countries with shorter histories of democratic rule. This expectation is based on several, albeit related, factors, including perceptions of legitimacy and stability, political learning and the consequences of founding elections.

In part, the effect we propose may be rooted in the relative poverty of social capital or civil society in new democracies. After all, citizens in established democracies are anchored more firmly to the democratic political system through social-group or interest-group memberships or their preferred political party's involvement in decision-making at various levels of government. As a result, losing in one part of the electoral arena might be compensated by the benefits gained from other social and political activities. More importantly, however, we would argue that losers should be more likely to push for changes in the political system – and do so by all means possible – when they perceive that protest is more likely to pay off. This should be the case when the system is not yet stable and, thus, susceptible to change. Because countries that have been democracies longer have higher levels of legitimacy than countries that became democratic more recently,²⁰ losers should be particularly keen on protesting the government in countries whose systems have not achieved sufficiently high levels of popular acceptance.

The issues of legitimacy and stability, and hence losers' relative incentives to push for changes, are related to citizens' beliefs about the predictability of the political system.

¹⁹ Pippa Norris, 'Institutional Explanations for Political Support', in Pippa Norris, ed., *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*; Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Richard Rose, William Mishler and Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post Communist Societies* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Jacques Thomassen, 'Support for Democratic Values', in Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs, eds, *Citizens and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Several scholars have investigated this idea. Inglehart, for example, finds that the length of time that democratic institutions have persisted is positively correlated with levels of political satisfaction (Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990)); Steven E. Finkel, Edward N. Muller and Mitchell A. Seligson, 'Economic Crisis, Incumbent Performance and Regime Support: A Comparison of Longitudinal Data from West Germany and Costa Rica', *British Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1989), 329–51, attribute the greater susceptibility of the German Weimar Republic to regime breakdown to the relative youth of its system in comparison to democracies such as France, Britain and the United States. Consistent with this, scholars have found that levels of democratic support are systematically lower in East-Central Europe than in the West (Gábor Tóka, 'Political Support in East-Central Europe', in Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs, eds., *Citizens and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Hesli and William M. Reisinger, 'Conceptions of Democracy Among Mass and Elite in Post-Soviet Societies', *British Journal of Political Science*, 27 (1997), 157–90.

Given that individuals develop expectations about the political system over time,²¹ uncertainty is high and levels of legitimacy low when the political system is new. In such an environment, electoral losers' subjective probability estimate of whether, when and under what conditions another election will be held in the future is relatively low. Being uncertain about these makes any one election win or loss comparatively more consequential for citizens of new democracies. And this creates incentives for losers to protest sooner rather than later. In contrast, the experience of routine elections and the peaceful transfer of power they ensure reinforces for citizens in older democracies that any one election outcome will not fundamentally reorient the relations of power or the outcomes produced by the system. Moreover, protest may seem worthless in established democracies where fundamental changes may seem improbable.

Finally, elections in new democracies are frequently contests between widely divergent ideologies and struggles over the structure of the new democratic institutions. Maybe more importantly, such elections often determine who has access to power or who gets to change these rules in favour of those currently in power. Not surprisingly, the aftermath of founding elections frequently brings about efforts to introduce changes in electoral systems that would benefit the current incumbents. In a nascent democracy, then, being the minority and majority weighs more heavily because citizens are less sure when and whether there will be another opportunity to determine who has the power to rule and who does not. Moreover, in new democracies the outputs produced by different political camps are likely to constitute more divergent visions of the good society than in more established ones.

As a result, being among the minority in a new democracy creates a more acute sense of lacking a stake in the system, and it creates incentives to engage in protest behaviour. Consequently, we expect that being in the minority should have a stronger effect on protest potential in newer democracies relative to mature ones. Based on these considerations, we consequently hypothesize an interaction between minority and majority status on one hand and length of democratic experience on the other – the more recent the establishment of democratic institutions, the more powerful the effect of winning and losing should be on political protest potential.

The idea that the impact of winning or losing on protest behaviour should be more pronounced in new democracies relative to old ones is open to challenge, however. Specifically, it is plausible that losing serves to demobilize rather than activate – that is, that losing leads to exit rather than voice, to use Hirschman's terminology, and that such a tendency may be stronger in newer democratic systems where citizens' beliefs in the efficacy of political participation have not been validated. While outright exit from the country is not an option for most citizens, losing elections may well lead to a sense of disillusion with politics and decreased confidence that political participation makes a difference. Losers may eventually consider some version of opting out of the political system – in particular, abstention from future political activity. If this is the case, political institutions are unlikely to be challenged by the losers in new democracies, or at the very least no more than by winners, and there should be few noticeable differences

²¹ Christopher J. Anderson and Kathleen M. O'Connor, 'System Change, Learning, and Public Opinion about the Economy', *British Journal of Political Science*, 30 (2000), 147–72; Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, 'Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe', *British Journal of Political Science*, 23 (1993), 521–48; William Mishler and Richard Rose, 'Learning and Re-Learning Regime Support: The Dynamics of Post-Communist Regimes', *European Journal of Political Research*, 41 (2002), 5–36; Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans, 'The Russian Election of 1993: Public Opinion and the Transition Experience', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 10 (1994), 38–60.

between losers and citizens who have already opted out of the political system by abstaining from electoral participation.

Alternatively, loser–winner distinctions in protest activity may not turn out to be very pronounced because protest is a normal feature of democratic governance. That is, instead of being a harbinger of low levels of legitimacy and citizens’ desire for systemic change, protest could be a sign of a healthy and vibrant democratic political culture. In fact, given the widely-documented broadening of the repertoire of political action across Western post-industrialized societies during the past decades,²² attending peaceful protest meetings or participating in peaceful protest marches may not so much constitute aggressive participation. Instead, it could be the manifestation of conventional activities that people engage in every day without questioning the legitimacy of the system or threatening its survival either explicitly or implicitly. Viewed from this perspective, non-violent protest activities are a sign of some basic level of confidence in the fundamental legitimacy of the political system and its responsiveness. If this is the case, we would expect levels of protest potential to be higher in old democracies relative to new ones. But more importantly, we would expect to find only small differences between winners’ and losers’ inclinations to engage in protest, and such differences should not be particularly pronounced in new democracies. Whether there is a relationship between winner and loser status on one hand and protest potential on the other, and whether this relationship is stronger in new relative to old democracies is therefore a question we seek to answer below.

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Testing our hypotheses requires data about protest potential at the level of individuals collected in an adequate number of contemporary democracies. Moreover, it requires that we match the outcomes of elections and government formation with information about people’s vote choices collected after elections have been held and governments have been formed. Among the few data sources that permit such an undertaking are the surveys that comprise the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), a periodic set of surveys conducted in a number of countries around the world.²³ We used the data collected in 1996 as part of that year’s focus on the ‘The Role of Government’. These surveys were conducted in twenty-five countries that differed widely with regard to political structures, economic and cultural characteristics, and, in particular, with regard to how long they have been democracies. We were able to use data from seventeen countries that provided the relevant survey items (in particular, past vote choice for the relevant election): Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Because these countries vary widely in their experience with electoral democracy and the

²² Cf. Dalton, *Citizen Politics*; Jennings and van Deth, *Continuities in Political Action*.

²³ The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) is a continuing annual programme of surveys covering topics important to social science research (International Social Survey Program (ISSP), *International Social Survey Program: Role of Government III*, 1996 [Computer file] (Cologne, Germany: Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung [producer]. Cologne, Germany: Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung/Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors]). The ISSP jointly develops modules dealing with important areas in the social sciences, fields the modules in a fifteen-minute supplement to the regular national surveys undertaken by the members, includes an extensive common core on background variables, and makes the data available to the social science community.

length of time it has been in existence, it constitutes a very useful sample for the purposes of our analysis.²⁴

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: POLITICAL PROTEST POTENTIAL

Measuring politically sensitive attitudes and behaviours in the context of survey research has long proved challenging because of the interaction of respondent and interviewer, which may create pressures to provide socially desirable answers. For one, it is well known that people tend to over-report conventional political activities such as voting. At the same time, in the context of our study, it is possible that individuals may be reluctant to reveal their willingness to engage in protest against the government, especially in countries with relatively recent experiences with authoritarian politics where questions about protests against the government may be perceived as more sensitive. Thus, while measuring protest potential with the help of questions that ask respondents directly whether they have engaged in protest activities have considerable face validity, they may miscalculate people's proclivities to engage in protest because they are less accustomed to reporting anti-government activities.²⁵

Fortunately, a procedure developed by Muller allows us to address the issue of measuring protest potential, which also has been referred to as aggressive participation potential, in a straightforward way with the help of a composite index designed to tap into people's disposition to engage in protest activities.²⁶ Specifically, respondents were asked both about their past performance of as well as future intention to perform a series of behaviours described as actions people may take to demonstrate against the government (for question wording, see Appendix). These behaviours included going on a protest march or demonstration and attending a public meeting organized to protest against the government. A composite protest potential scale was constructed by summing participation weighted by intention across the behaviors.²⁷ The scale has a mean of 2.35 and a

²⁴ For a variety of reasons, we excluded several countries from the ISSP dataset. For Cyprus and Israel, no fieldwork dates were available and it was impossible to determine which election the vote recall question referred to. For the Philippines, the variable measuring respondents' vote in the last election was missing. For France, the vote in last election variable measured only voter preferences in the first round of the last presidential election. For Poland it was unclear exactly which parties respondents voted for as response categories in the survey did not match choices available to voters. Finally, we excluded Bulgaria because political developments made it impossible to classify voters as being winners or losers. In that country, field work was conducted between February and May of 1997, but the government stepped down after protests in February of 1997 and was replaced by an interim government under the Mayor of Sofia until elections were held in April.

²⁵ Cf. Piotr Kwiatkowski, 'Opinion Research and the Fall of Communism: Poland 1981–1990', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 4 (1992), 358–74.

²⁶ Edward N. Muller, *Aggressive Political Participation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979). See also Muller and Opp, 'Rational Choice and Rebellious Collective Action'. Because the repertoire of political action changed in the aftermath of the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the term 'unconventional participation' became less common as a description of various political acts outside of voting. Given that many of the acts that were considered unconventional have become conventional, we use the term 'protest potential' throughout this article.

²⁷ Following Muller and Opp ('Rational Choice and Rebellious Collective Action'), the composite participation potential variable is defined as the product of behavior and intention, where behaviour is scored 1 for lack of participation and 2 for participation, and intention is scored 1 for negative intention, 2 for conditionally positive intention, and 3 for unconditionally positive intention. While this means that the dependent variable is weighted

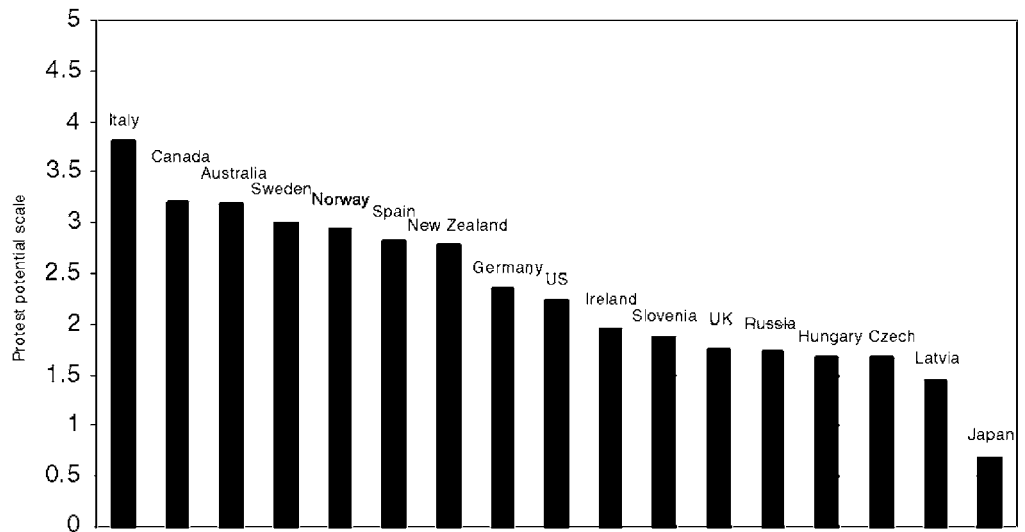


Fig. 1. Protest potential across seventeen democracies

standard deviation of 2.7; it ranges from 0 to 10 at the individual level, with higher values indicating a higher propensity to protest.²⁸

Figure 1 displays the distribution of responses on the composite protest scale across the countries included in this study. Examining the mean levels of protest potential shown in the graph, people's predispositions to engage in protest at first blush appear to be somewhat higher in older democracies. At the same time, countries as different as Hungary, Ireland, Russia and the United Kingdom had similar aggregate levels of protest potential between 1.5 and 2, and both the highest and the lowest levels of protest potential were found among the established democracies (Italy: 3.81; Japan, 0.68). Moreover, our analyses show that there was significant variation within each country on the protest potential scale (results not shown), with standard deviations ranging from a low of 1.56 in Japan to a high of 3.10 in Spain on the 0–10 scale. Thus, the data show that, while protest is not ubiquitous, a significant number of respondents were positively predisposed toward political protest, but there also was considerable variation in people's inclination to protest both within and across the countries included in our study.

(Footnote continued)

more towards measuring intentions than actual behaviour, note also that questions asking about actual anti-government activities may underestimate people's proclivities to engage in protest in new democracies because citizens in these countries are less accustomed to reporting anti-government activities. Thus, the 'would' component of the protest index may help capture some of the 'did' activities citizens are reluctant to report, and we believe that an index composed of 'would' and 'did' responses is superior to one constituted solely of one of them. Put another way, using only the "did" responses for our analysis is likely to lead to less valid inferences regarding protest behaviour. Overall, 16.7 per cent of respondents in our sample report having attended protest meetings, while 61.3 per cent indicated they would. Similarly, 14.3 per cent of respondents said they had attended protest demonstrations, while 48.9 per cent said they would do so.

²⁸ A constant equal to the number of items was subtracted from the total score in order to set the origin at zero.

Independent Variables

Our primary independent variables include political minority status and experience with democracy. To ensure that the multivariate models were well specified, we also controlled for a number of important individual-level predictors of political protest, including political efficacy, evaluations of the performance of the political system, political interest, ideology (left–right placement and ideological extremism), electoral participation, personal economic situation and demographic characteristics (age, gender and education) as well as country-level factors. We discuss each below (details can be found in the Appendix).

Political Minority–Majority Status. We classified respondents as belonging to the political minority or majority with the help of a survey question that asked which party the individual voted for in the last national election. We then combined these responses with information about the party or parties that controlled the executive branch of the countries at the time the survey was conducted. If the respondent’s past vote choice did not match the actual party in power – that is, if the person was in the political minority – we scored that individual as 1; those in the majority were scored 0.²⁹

Experience with Democracy. Following well-established practice, we relied on the number of years of continuous democracy between 1950 and the year of the survey (which varied slightly across countries) as an indicator of democratic history.³⁰

Control Variables. Along with our main independent variables of interest, we also included a number of important control variables, both at the level of individuals and the level of countries. Including these variables avoids drawing faulty inferences due to spuriousness that can result from omitting relevant variables. At the individual level, we controlled for influential political attitudes, such as political efficacy and interest in politics, as well as important demographic variables (such as education, age, gender and employment status) as standard predictors of political action. Moreover, we included

²⁹ The measure of minority-majority status may suffer from the potential problem of biased recall or over-reports favouring the victorious party or in our case under-reports of having voted for the losers (cf. Gerald C. Wright, ‘Errors in Measuring Vote Choice in the National Election Studies, 1952–88’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 37 (1993), 291–316.). This problem may be particularly acute because our surveys are not election surveys and the countries therefore had gaps of varying length between the last election and the conduct of the survey. As a check on the accuracy of the reported vote, we compared the aggregate distributions of actual election outcomes and recalled election outcomes. In our sample, 41.9 per cent of respondents reported voting for the losing parties in their countries; this is slightly higher than the 39.3 per cent of actual citizens of voting age who voted for the losing parties. That is, over-reporting is actually slightly more pervasive than under-reporting at a magnitude of about 2.6 percentage points. While this could lead to misrepresenting the true effects of political minority status, such a distortion is likely to be minimal given the small differences between sample and actual population. Another source of bias could exist if voters who have a higher level of protest potential would over-(under-)report their vote for the losing parties. If such a bias exists, there should be a relationship between levels of protest potential and over-(under-)report of the vote for losers. We therefore calculated the difference between the reported and the actual vote in a country and correlated this figure (a measure of over-report or under-report of the losing vote) with the levels of protest potential. This correlation was statistically insignificant: Pearson’s $r = -0.2$ ($p = 0.4$).

³⁰ Because not all surveys were conducted in 1996 (e.g., the New Zealand survey was conducted in 1997), countries’ democratic histories varied between three years (Russia) and forty-seven years (New Zealand), with all the established democracies clustering at over forty years of democracy.

variables measuring respondents' political preferences or political ideology. Including these variables helps guard against the attributing predictive power to the minority–majority status variable when the effect is, in fact, due simply to policy dissatisfaction.³¹

Moreover, we controlled for respondents' electoral participation³² and evaluations of the performance of the political system in the form of satisfaction with the performance of democracy. Including the electoral participation variable ensures that we properly attribute any effects for being among the majority and minority, while the inclusion of the regime evaluation variable ensures that we properly isolate the effect of being in the minority from the effect of having negative views about the political system.³³ At the level of countries, we controlled for level of economic development, macroeconomic performance,³⁴ as well as level of democracy. Coding procedures and descriptive statistics for all variables are listed in the Appendix.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Our research design requires that we combine information at the level of respondents (micro-level) and countries (macro-level). This means that our data have a multi-level structure where one unit of analysis (citizens) is nested within the other (countries).³⁵ To estimate our models, we therefore relied on statistical techniques developed specifically for modelling multilevel data structures.³⁶ Below, we show the coefficients of interest

³¹ There is a conceptual and empirical distinction between policy dissatisfaction with the current government and dissatisfaction because the voter's party did not get to form the government. Policy dissatisfaction is likely to be rooted in partisanship or ideology. Yet, while partisanship and ideology are long-standing predispositions that have their origins in early socialization experiences and have been shown to be quite stable during people's lifetimes, winning and losing vary as a function of how elections come out. Moreover, it is possible to be on the losing side of an election yet also have one's policy preferences implemented. To account for the impact of partisanship/ideology on protest potential in multivariate estimations, we included variables measuring people's left–right ideology and ideological extremism. Including these variables allows us to see whether being on the left or the right makes people more likely to protest (depending on who is in government). Moreover, given that governments (and governing coalitions) tend to be located near the median voter, we sought to estimate whether those outside the political mainstream – that is, those on the political extremes – are more likely to deny consent and try to bring about change or mobilize for it.

³² Following the argument that participation enhances feelings of trust and external efficacy (and vice versa) (cf. Steven E. Finkel, 'Reciprocal Effects of Participation and Political Efficacy: A Panel Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science*, 29 (1985), 891–913), we included a variable distinguishing voters and non-voters to control for differences attributable to having participated in the election. We expect that those who did not participate in the election (coded 1) will have more negative attitudes towards the political system than those who did (coded 0).

³³ We suspect that the satisfaction variable in part captures policy dissatisfaction as well.

³⁴ The ISSP surveys used here did not furnish variables measuring people's perceptions of economic performance. Thus, to the extent that economic perceptions deviate from objective reality, our estimates of the 'true' economic effects may be biased. To get a rough sense of how well objective economic conditions match up with economic evaluations, we constructed a dataset that included the West European countries included in our sample (comparable data were not available for the other countries). Using survey data drawn from the Eurobarometer and objective economic indicators for 1991–95, the Pearson correlation of growth and retrospective evaluations of national economy is robust and statistically significant: 0.68 ($p < 0.01$); the correlation of growth and retrospective evaluations of personal financial situation is similarly strong: 0.67 ($p < 0.01$).

³⁵ Anthony S. Bryk and Stephen W. Raudenbush, *Hierarchical Linear Models* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1992).

³⁶ Marco R. Steenbergen and Bradford S. Jones, 'Modeling Multilevel Data Structures', *American Journal of Political Science*, 46 (2002), 218–37. We used MLwiN 1.10.0006 (2000) to estimate these models.

(constants and independent variables), as well as the variance components at each level of our data (individual and country-level).

Do losers have higher protest potential than winners? To answer this question, we first examined the direct effect of minority status on people's predisposition to protest. However, because the ideology measures were not available for several countries, we estimated three models to ensure the robustness of our results. Model 1 employs data for all seventeen countries, but does not contain controls for ideology (left–right placement and ideological extremism) or the country-level control variables other than democratic experience. Model 2 is estimated with the help of data from fourteen countries (the original seventeen minus Italy, Latvia and Spain for which ideology measures were unavailable), but includes left–right placement and extremism as individual-level variables as well as all country-level control variables. Model 3, finally, includes all individual-level and country-level variables. We thus show three random intercept multilevel maximum likelihood IGLS (Iterative Generalized Least Squares) models with and without the ideology variables and with and without country-level controls.

The results of these analyses, shown in Table 1, provide unambiguous evidence in support of our main hypothesis. They show that being in the political minority was a powerful determinant of citizens' propensity to engage in political protest. The highly significant and positive coefficient of the political minority status variable indicates that election losers were significantly more likely to exhibit a willingness to engage in political protest against the government than those in the majority. This result was robust regardless of which countries are included or whether we control for ideology. Taken together, these models furnish systematic and very similar evidence in favour of a minority–majority effect on people's predispositions to protest.

The other individual-level variables either performed as hypothesized or failed to achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. As hypothesized, higher levels of political interest and efficacy increased citizens' willingness to engage in political protest, while satisfaction with the performance of the political system diminished it. The coefficient for age was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and in the expected direction; consistent with earlier research, we found that older citizens exhibited lower protest potential. The results for gender also were consistent with expectations: women were significantly less likely to get involved in political protest than men. Education also had a significant and positive effect on people's propensity to engage in protest – those with higher levels of education were much more likely to do so. Voting participation passed conventional levels of statistical significance in Models 1 and 2, indicating that non-voters had lower levels of protest potential when all countries were included. While having a job was negatively associated with protest potential, the coefficient failed to meet conventional levels of statistical significance in all models.

Looking at the effects for ideology (Model 3), we found that it significantly affected protest potential. Respondents who placed themselves on the political left had significantly higher levels of protest potential. Moreover, the coefficient for political extremism was statistically significant and in the hypothesized direction, indicating that respondents who placed themselves further away from the middle of the ideological scale were also more likely to engage in protest. Moreover, the inclusion of the ideology variables reduced the substantive significance of the loser variable somewhat. This suggests that part of the effect of losing reported in Models 1 and 2 is due to the greater propensity of those on the left and on the fringes to engage in protest.

TABLE 1 *Direct Effects of Political Minority Status and Democratic Experience on Political Protest Potential*

| Independent Variable | Model 1 Random Intercept Model | Model 2 Random Intercept Model | Model 3 Random Intercept Model |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Fixed Effects</i> | | | |
| Constant | 2.433*** (0.354) | 1.196 (1.698) | 2.081* (1.361) |
| Electoral losers (1 = minority; 0 = others) | 0.266*** (0.040) | 0.266*** (0.040) | 0.169** (0.052) |
| Nonvoter (1 = did not vote, 0 = voted) | -0.137** (0.052) | -0.137** (0.052) | -0.111 (0.081) |
| Age of democracy (in years) | 0.014 (0.008) | 0.027 (0.014) | 0.019 (0.011) |
| Interest in politics (high = great interest) | 0.556*** (0.018) | 0.556*** (0.018) | 0.544*** (0.025) |
| Political efficacy (high = more efficacious) | 0.125*** (0.025) | 0.126*** (0.025) | 0.120*** (0.033) |
| Evaluation of political system (high = positive) | -0.373*** (0.028) | -0.373*** (0.028) | -0.362*** (0.040) |
| Ideology (left-right) (high = far right) | - | - | -0.470*** (0.026) |
| Extreme ideology (high = extreme) | - | - | 0.125** (0.052) |
| Employment status (high = employed) | -0.127 (0.076) | -0.127 (0.076) | 0.034 (0.116) |
| Gender (1 = female) | -0.128*** (0.036) | -0.128*** (0.036) | -0.153** (0.048) |
| Age (high = older) | -0.027*** (0.001) | -0.027*** (0.001) | -0.029*** (0.002) |
| Education (high = high education) | 0.108*** (0.014) | 0.108*** (0.014) | 0.153*** (0.020) |
| GNP per capita | - | -0.036 (0.022) | -0.025 (0.018) |
| Economic growth (percentage change in GDP) | - | -0.029 (0.073) | -0.031 (0.060) |
| Democracy score (Freedom House index) | - | 0.242 (0.302) | 0.245 (0.246) |
| <i>Variance Components</i> | | | |
| Country-level | 0.419** (0.142) | 0.357** (0.121) | 0.200** (0.076) |
| Individual-level | 6.205*** (0.063) | 6.205*** (0.063) | 6.151*** (0.083) |
| <i>N</i> | 19,683 | 19,683 | 11,030 |
| -2 Log Likelihood | 91,863.41 | 91,860.55 | 51,386.57 |

Notes: Estimates are maximum likelihood estimates (IGLS); standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed tests of statistical significance.

The results also demonstrate that democratic age failed to exert a significant impact on citizens' tendency to engage in protest, regardless of whether we account for differences across individuals' attitudes and characteristics or countries' levels of development, economic performance and freedom. None of the country-level control variables were significantly different from zero, though the measure of economic development comes close.³⁷ However, even though these country-level controls individually do not pass conventional thresholds of statistical significance, their inclusion reduces the amount of country-level variance left unexplained by 30 per cent relative to the naïve model without country-level controls.³⁸ Thus, the inclusion of the country-level did not change the inference that protest potential is about as high among individuals in established democracies as in new democracies once important individual-level differences are accounted for.

COMPARING PROTEST POTENTIAL AMONG WINNERS AND LOSERS IN OLD AND NEW DEMOCRACIES

To establish whether being in the minority or majority had a stronger effect on the disposition to protest the shorter the country's history of democratic institutions, we examined the interactive effects of democratic age and minority–majority status on protest behaviour. We estimated an interactive model that included democratic age, majority–minority status, and an interaction of the two (as well as the other control variables). In the interaction model, our hypothesis would be supported if the interaction term was significant and negative, indicating a smaller effect for minority status, the older the democracy. Table 2 reports the results of three models, patterned after those reported in Table 1; the only difference is the inclusion of the interaction term.

The results strongly support the inference that the impact of winning and losing depends on the political context in which it is experienced. Specifically, they demonstrate that those in the minority had significantly higher levels of protest potential than those in the majority. In fact, the minority–majority variable had a larger independent effect than it did in the simple additive models reported in Table 1. However, we also find that the effect of majority–minority status on protest behaviour was significantly affected by how long democracy had been in existence. The negative coefficient for the interaction term indicates that democratic longevity reduced the probability that those in the minority would engage in political protest, whereas shorter periods of democratic rule increased it. These results were stable even when we controlled for ideology (Model 3).

To aid in the interpretation of these effects, we calculated the substantive effects of losing and democratic age on protest potential (this is done while holding all other variables at their mean). These calculations are displayed graphically in Figure 2. They show that the gap in protest potential between losers and winners early on during a country's democratic experience is about 0.5. As a country's experience with democracy increases, however, this difference between the two groups diminishes with every year and virtually disappears by the fiftieth year. The decrease in the gap is particularly noticeable after about twenty years.

³⁷ In part, this may be due to the correlations among the country-level indicators; for example, it is well established that democratic age and levels of freedom are correlated.

³⁸ In part, this may be due to the fact that the models that include the ideology variables are based on a smaller sample of countries, as Italy, Latvia and Spain are excluded from these estimations due to the non-availability of these variables for these countries.

TABLE 2 *Political Minority Status, Democratic Experience and Protest Potential: Contingent Effects*

| Independent Variable | Model 1 Random Intercept Model | Model 2 Random Intercept Model | Model 3 Random Intercept Model |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Fixed Effects</i> | | | |
| Constant | 2.362*** (0.355) | 1.033 (1.694) | 1.903 (1.372) |
| Electoral losers (1 = minority; 0 = others) | 0.492*** (0.086) | 0.494*** (0.086) | 0.418** (0.128) |
| Age of democracy (in years) | 0.016* (0.008) | 0.029* (0.014) | 0.021 (0.011) |
| Electoral losers × age of democracy | −0.006** (0.002) | −0.006** (0.002) | −0.007*** (0.002) |
| Non-voter (1 = did not vote, 0 = voted) | −0.130* (0.052) | −0.130* (0.052) | −0.108 (0.081) |
| Interest in politics (high = great interest) | 0.556*** (0.018) | 0.556*** (0.018) | 0.543*** (0.025) |
| Political efficacy (high = more efficacious) | 0.125*** (0.025) | 0.126*** (0.025) | 0.120*** (0.033) |
| Evaluation of political system (high = positive) | −0.369*** (0.028) | −0.369*** (0.028) | −0.357*** (0.040) |
| Ideology (left–right) (high = far right) | – | – | −0.466*** (0.026) |
| Extreme ideology (high = extreme) | – | – (.052) | 0.116* |
| Employment status (high = employed) | −0.126 (0.076) | −0.126 (0.076) | 0.032 (0.116) |
| Gender (1 = female) | −0.127*** (0.036) | −0.128*** (0.036) | −0.153*** (0.048) |
| Age (high = old) | −0.027*** (0.001) | −0.027*** (0.001) | −0.029*** (0.002) |
| Education (high = high education) | 0.109*** (0.014) | 0.108*** (0.014) | 0.154*** (0.020) |
| GNP per capita | – | −0.036 (0.022) | −0.025 (0.018) |
| Economic growth (percentage change in GDP) | – | −0.031 (0.076) | −0.033 (0.061) |
| Democracy score (Freedom House index) | – | 0.259 (0.301) | 0.262 (0.248) |
| <i>Variance Components</i> | | | |
| Country-level | 0.420** (0.142) | 0.355** (0.120) | 0.203** (0.077) |
| Individual-level | 6.202*** (0.063) | 6.202*** (0.063) | 6.148*** (0.083) |
| <i>N</i> | 19,683 | 19,683 | 11,030 |
| −2 Log Likelihood | 91,854.52 | 91,851.52 | 51,381.67 |

Notes: Estimates are maximum likelihood estimates (IGLS); standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed tests of statistical significance.

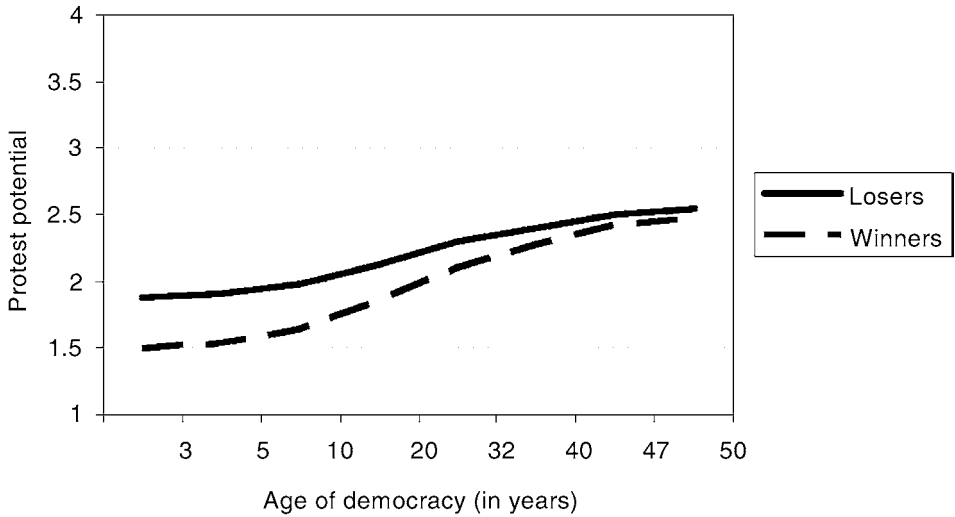


Fig. 2. Effects of loser status and democratic experience on protest potential

To help put these effects in context, it may be useful to compare them to the effects produced by other independent variables. For example, the loser effects are similar to those produced by left–right self-placement and political interest and larger than those by produced by ideological extremism, efficacy and evaluations of political system performance. For example, in the average democracy, moving one standard deviation on the left–right self-placement scale moves voters’ protest potential changes by 0.45 on the protest potential scale, while raising respondents’ level of political interest by one standard deviation is associated with a 0.62 increase in voters’ level of protest potential. In contrast, boosting respondents’ efficacy by one standard deviation leads only to a 0.10 increase in protest potential, while a similar lift in system evaluations reduces protest potential only by 0.27. These effects are larger than those produced by extremism, as a one standard deviation change on the ideological extremism scale moves voters’ protest potential only by 0.06.

DISCUSSION

In this article we have sought to examine how being in the political minority or majority affects people’s willingness to engage in political protest. We posited that losers would be more likely to protest against the political regime. Moreover, we argued that the effect of being among the losers differs systematically as a function of a country’s experience with democratic institutions. Losing should have a more powerful impact on people’s propensity to protest the political system the more recent the democratic institutions in a country. Using data collected in a large number of countries that differ significantly in their political structures, cultures and democratic histories, our findings strongly supported our expectations. When people find themselves in the political minority after an election, they express a greater willingness to protest against the government. Moreover, while being in

the minority generally made individuals more likely to protest, this effect was strongest in countries with more recently established democratic institutions.

These findings contribute to and extend previous analyses of differences between winners and losers by showing that, with respect to protest potential, minority status matters, and that it matters more in newer democracies.³⁹ These findings also contribute to the growing body of research, which shows that citizens' experiences with their political systems are dynamic, especially in new democracies.⁴⁰ Based on our results, we would expect changes in citizens' predispositions to engage in protest as they gain greater experience with the system. However, it remains for future studies to investigate, for instance, whether losers who continue to lose election after election are ever more prone to engage in protest or perhaps begin to view political action as futile. Answers to these kinds of questions would go a long way towards developing a more dynamic theory of political support.

Our results offer several insights for those engaged in the study of comparative politics and mass political behaviour. First, most studies of citizen support for the political system focus either on macro-level variables such as a country's democratic culture or on individual-level variables such as attitudes about the incumbent government. We integrate these two levels of analysis and extend these literatures by explaining people's willingness to engage in political protest as a function of both individual attributes and contextual constraints. By investigating the effects of being in the minority on political behaviour in both stable and newly-established democracies, we thus place citizens' membership in politically-relevant collectivities (winners and losers) in the context of a country's history and experience with democratic institutions. This allows us to integrate explanatory mechanisms across levels of analysis and account for them in our explanation of citizens' willingness to protest against their governments.

Secondly, the study expands what we know about the minority–majority distinction and how it affects political behaviour by measuring citizens' propensity to engage in political action rather than their attitudes towards the political system. We believe that these measures are more predictive of people's actual behaviour, lending greater support for our findings and allowing us to go even further in substantiating the minority–majority distinction.

Moreover, this study contributes to what we know about how people form attitudes in countries that have recently established democratic institutions. The events surrounding the 2004 presidential election in the Ukraine or the 2000 elections in Peru and Venezuela, for example, provide anecdotal evidence of such an effect. The results reported here provide additional and systematic evidence that experience with democracy is an important mediator of political behaviour directed against political authorities: in new democracies, the willingness to protest is driven quite powerfully by whether people are in the political minority after elections. Our analysis thus adds to research on political behaviour in new democracies by documenting the consequences different democratic trajectories can have for the link between people's political allegiances and political behaviour more generally.

³⁹ See also Anderson *et al.*, *Losers' Consent*.

⁴⁰ Anderson and O'Connor, 'System Change, Learning, and Public Opinion About the Economy'; James L. Gibson, 'Political and Economic Markets: Changes in the Connections Between Attitudes Toward Political Democracy and a Market Economy Within the Mass Culture of Russia and Ukraine', *Journal of Politics*, 58 (1996), 954–84; Mishler and Rose, 'Learning and Re-Learning Regime Support'; Whitefield and Evans, 'The Russian Election of 1993'.

Initially, we framed this research in terms of what the results could tell us about the relation between system legitimacy and stability. Our findings go beyond the simple statement that newer democracies are particularly vulnerable to instability; instead, it focuses on why and reports that such instability may stem from the minority's dissatisfaction with its political lot. Thus, paying attention to the demands of the political minority and finding ways to incorporate them into the policy-process appears to be particularly crucial in the initial stages of democratic transition. We speculate that this can be accomplished with the help of formal institutional tools such as power-sharing arrangements or in informal ways through consultation and public discussions. Ultimately, however, only time and people's continued exposure to free and fair political competition, satisfactory political outcomes, as well as alternation in power among contending groups will ensure the legitimacy of democratic political institutions.

The findings presented here also speak to other literatures on democratic consolidation, civil conflict and repression. For one, they provide a micro-level account for the widely cited aggregate-level finding that countries undergoing democratic transitions are more prone to civil unrest and civil war than either authoritarian or fully democratized states.⁴¹ We would argue that at least some of the underlying dynamics creating the inverted U-shaped curve between democracy and domestic violence are due to the incentives that first or second elections produce for new democratic winners and losers. Incidentally, these results are also consistent with the finding that elections are associated with greater levels of state repression, in particular in newly democratic states.⁴² Combined with the results reported in this study, these sets of aggregate level findings on civil strife and repression suggest that the path to successful democratic consolidation is hazardous during election time and, in large part, requires the support of the electoral losers. When losers do not grant this support – as they sometimes rightfully do, as the case of 'orange revolution' in the Ukraine suggests – political authorities can be in trouble.

These findings also tie in with research on the behaviour of political elites during periods of democratic regime change and consolidation.⁴³ They suggest that elites focused on exploiting the incentives of losers may be particularly successful in undermining political stability and democratic longevity. Thus, rather than focusing on polarization among citizens, it points to the need to understand those specific segments of the electorate that provide the most fertile ground for mobilization against the regime. Similarly, these results hold implications for understanding change in advanced industrial democracies. After all, a number of them have been engaged in various kinds of democratic reform. Our findings suggest that, in the established democracies, the desire for change is primarily located among the electoral losers (and perhaps electoral winners who are afraid of becoming losers). Examples of electoral reforms in countries such as France, New Zealand and Italy, for example, are good examples of such dynamics at work.

⁴¹ Havard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates and Niels Gleditsch, 'Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992', *American Political Science Review*, 95 (2001), 33–48.

⁴² Christian Davenport, 'From Ballots to Bullets: An Empirical Assessment of How National Elections Influence State Uses of Political Repression', *Electoral Studies*, 16 (1997), 517–40; Helen Fein, 'More Murder in the Middle: Life Integrity Violations and Democracy in the World, 1987', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 17 (1995), 170–91.

⁴³ Cf. Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times*; Gretchen Casper and Michelle M. Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

Our findings also are consistent with the finding reported in research on civic education that democracy can be learned under the right circumstances.⁴⁴ Western countries have spent considerable resources in trying to teach citizens in emerging democracies about democracy in order to shape people's democratic skills, values, attitudes and levels of participation. Our results suggest that such efforts at civic education may be particularly effective with regard to stabilizing a newly installed democratic regime if they focus on educating political losers about the democratic game.

This study also suggests fruitful avenues for future research. For instance, our findings suggest that it would be valuable to find out in greater detail the differences in citizen attitudes and political behaviour between older and newer democracies and to establish why such differences exist. A productive next step also might identify other critical behaviours that are influenced by people's status as supporters or opponents of those in power. There already is evidence that the minority–majority distinction drives attitudes about matters such as the state of the economy or corruption, with electoral losers taking a systematically more negative view of the nation's economic and political conditions.⁴⁵ Whether political minority status always predisposes citizens to take a more jaundiced view of politics, thus keeping governors honest and democracy vibrant, is a question worth answering in the context of debates over democratic legitimacy, accountability and beyond.

APPENDIX: VARIABLE QUESTION WORDING AND CODING

Composite Political Protest Potential Index. Based on the following questions: 'Would you or would you not do any of the following to protest against a government action you strongly oppose? (a) Attend a public meeting organized to protest against the government? (b) Go on a protest march or demonstration? Definitely would (3), probably would (2), probably would not /definitely would not (1).' 'And in the past five years, how many times have you done each of the following to protest against a government action you strongly oppose?' (a) Attended a public meeting organized to protest against the government; (b) Gone on a protest march or demonstration. Never (1), once/more than once (2).

Political Minority–Majority Status. 'Which party did you vote for in the last general election?' If party choice matches with a governing party (0), if it does not match a governing party (1).

Interest in Politics. 'How interested would you say you personally are in politics?' Very (5), fairly (4), somewhat (3), not very (2), not at all (1).

Political Efficacy. Average of four items; two internal efficacy items and two external efficacy items, ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 denoting 'strongly agree' and 5 'strongly disagree'. Question wording was: 'How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (a) People like me have no say about what the government does; (b) The average citizen has considerable influence on politics; (c) Elections are a good way of making governments aware of the important issues facing our country; (d) People we elect as members of parliament try to keep the promises they made in the election'. Index was recoded such that high values denote more efficacious responses.

Evaluations of Political System. 'All in all, how well or badly do you think the system of democracy in (country) works these days?' It works well and needs no changes (4), it works well but needs some changes

⁴⁴ Steven E. Finkel, 'Civic Education and the Mobilization of Political Participation in Developing Democracies', *Journal of Politics*, 64 (2002), 994–1020.

⁴⁵ Christopher J. Anderson and Yuliya V. Tverdova, 'Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies', *American Journal of Political Science*, 47 (2003), 91–109; Christopher J. Anderson, Silvia Mendes and Yuliya V. Tverdova, 'Endogenous Economic Voting: Evidence from the 1997 British Election', *Electoral Studies*, 23 (2004), 683–708.

(3), it does not work well and needs a lot of changes (2), it does not work well and needs to be completely changed (1).’

Left–Right Self-Placement. ‘Generally speaking, in politics do you usually think of yourself as (or ‘as a supporter of’)? Respondents were then given a chance to identify the party they felt close to or their political leaning, ranging from far left (1) to far right (5) on a 5 point scale (with centre left (2), centre (3), and centre right (4) as the intermediate categories).

Ideological Extremism. This measure was derived from respondents’ left–right self-placement. The extremism scale had three categories: centre (1), centre-left or centre-right (2), far-left/far-right (3).

Age. Respondent’s age.

Sex. Male (0), female (1).

Non-voter. ‘Did you vote in the most recent national election?’ No (1); all others (0).

Employment Status. ‘Respondent’s current employment status – current economic position, main source of living.’ Employed (1), unemployed (0).

Age of Democracy. Based on number of years of continuous democracy since 1950 as of the year of the survey.

Education. ‘What is the highest level of education that you attained?’ Respondents were coded on a 1 to 7 scale, where 7 denotes the highest level of education.

Economic Growth. Percentage change in gross domestic product over the previous year (1995–96). *Source:* World Bank, *World Development Report*.

GNP/per capita. In 1,000s of dollars (US). Gross national product per capita indicator (expressed in thousands of dollars). *Source:* World Bank, *World Development Report*.

Democracy Score. Freedom House index, ranking countries from 1 (not free) to 7 (free), on two dimensions: political rights and civil liberties. Average score of political rights and civil liberties ratings. *Source:* Raymond Gastil. *Freedom in the World*. (New York: Freedom House, various years).

TABLE A *Descriptive Statistics*

| Variable | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. dev. |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Composite protest potential index | 0 | 10 | 2.35 | 2.70 |
| Political minority–majority status | 0 | 1 | 0.42 | 0.49 |
| Age of democracy | 3 | 47 | 32.12 | 19.51 |
| Interest in politics | 1 | 5 | 2.93 | 1.14 |
| Efficacy | 1 | 5 | 2.85 | 0.80 |
| Evaluation of political system | 1 | 4 | 2.58 | 0.74 |
| Left–right self-placement | 1 | 5 | 2.91 | 0.96 |
| Ideological extremism | 1 | 3 | 1.82 | 0.52 |
| Age | 15 | 97 | 45.76 | 16.88 |
| Education | 1 | 7 | 4.48 | 1.41 |
| Gender | 0 | 1 | 0.52 | 0.50 |
| Employment status | 0 | 1 | 0.94 | 0.24 |
| Non-voter | 0 | 1 | 0.18 | 0.38 |
| GNP per capita | 2.30 | 41.29 | 18.30 | 10.81 |
| Economic growth | –4.51 | 10.35 | 2.41 | 2.78 |
| Democracy score | 3.5 | 7 | 6.46 | 0.84 |