

The committee is pleased to award the best paper on autocracy and democracy presented at the 2020 APSA Convention to "Genocide and the Gender Gap in Political Representation" by Nikhar Gaikwad, Erin Lin, and Noah Zucker. Using data from the Cambodian genocide, Gaikwad, Lin, and Zucker argue that mass violence can disrupt gender norms and, in the long run, produce higher levels of women's representation. They find that areas of Cambodia most affected by genocide in the late 1970s now have higher levels of women's representation. They suggest that this effect is due to the economic empowerment of women in the immediate wake of the genocide and the longer-term reshaping of cultural norms around the status of women due to this empowerment. The committee was impressed by the careful empirical work underlying these claims, which included oral histories with genocide survivors and the construction of an original dataset of geo-referenced mass graves to establish variation in local-level violence during the genocide. The paper contributes to an emerging literature on long-run legacies of mass political violence, which has already pointed to potential positive effects of violence, such as increased political participation. This paper's focus on gender and "cultural pathways of change" is a unique and welcome contribution to this body of work. The paper also contributes to our broader understanding of autocracy and democracy by showing the importance of women's economic autonomy for the emergence of norms favoring gender equality and democratic accountability.