

2022 Best Published Article

Award committee: Sharan Grewal (William and Mary), Matt Graham (George Washington), and Vilde Lunnan Djuve (University of Oslo)

Agustina S. Paglayan (UCSD) for “The Non-Democratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence from 200 Years,” *American Political Science Review*, 115:1, 2021.

Prize committee citation: “In this ambitious, agenda-setting article, Paglayan debunks the conventional wisdom that democratization expanded access to mass education. Leveraging new data and state-of-the-art econometric techniques, Paglayan finds that mass education was actually already implemented in most democracies *prior* to their democratization. In other words, the lack of majority access to education – the key condition under which democratization increases access to primary education – rarely holds. Paglayan lays out an impressive and comprehensive investigation of this relationship by combining original data on the timing of primary education regulation in 33 European and Latin American countries with data on primary school enrollment that covers 109 countries from 1820 to 2010. Her original dataset is built by compiling a range of sources in English, Spanish and Portuguese to record the year in which governments began to fund, manage and mandate primary education. This data collection effort provides a more complete account of education roll-out in the early stages of modern history. Using difference-in-differences and interrupted time series methods, Paglayan shows that the inclusion of global trends and shocks in education provision removes the previously documented relationship between democratization and education. She then theorizes why autocracies might also expand education, whether to mold political values, foster industrialization and military strength, redistribute to their supporters, or compete internationally. Accordingly, in 75% of the countries that experienced democratization, the majority of the population already had access to education from the autocratic period. In these cases, democratization then had little impact in further improving education access among the poorest in society. As a whole, Paglayan’s brilliant research sets a new and crucial agenda for students of both the emergence of mass education, the causes and effects of democratization, and the policy-making mechanisms of autocracies. Why did non-democracies introduce mass access to education? How and why did mass education become a global phenomenon? And why are democracies not better at improving access to education? Combining exceptional theoretical clarity, data collection ingenuity and utmost methodological rigor, Paglayan’s work propels these questions to the forefront of our field.”

Honorable mentions:

Pavithra Suryanarayan (Johns Hopkins) and Steven White (Syracuse), “Slavery, Reconstruction, and Bureaucratic Capacity in the American South,” *American Political Science Review*, 115:2, 2021

Prize committee citation: “Placing the United States in comparative perspective, Suryanarayan and White explore what happens when the franchise is expanded to low-income voters. While canonical models expect democratization to lead to the redistribution of wealth, they argue that in ranked societies, elites are more likely to form cross-class alliances within their in-group to instead hollow out bureaucratic capacity to prevent redistribution. Examining the American South, they

show that the abolition of slavery temporarily led to higher levels of taxation, but that with the end of Reconstruction, areas that historically had more slavery began to see taxation decrease and their bureaucratic capacity weakened by a cross-class coalition of white voters. In presenting their evidence, Suryanarayan and White marshal together fine-grained data on slavery, taxation, and bureaucratic capacity, including by leveraging a creative new measure of age heaping in the census. Throughout their analysis, they also masterfully incorporate qualitative evidence to validate their assumptions and illustrate mechanisms. Together, they provide powerful evidence of how poor white voters seemed to forego potential economic gains in order to maintain their racial status hierarchy over newly enfranchised black voters. Overall, Suryanarayan and White provide a tremendous contribution to the study of democratization in the United States, and offer important qualifications to the common assumption in comparative politics that democratization produces redistribution.”

Amy Catalinac (NYU) and Lucia Motolinia (Wash U), “Geographically Targeted Spending in Mixed-Member Majoritarian Electoral Systems,” *World Politics*, 73:4, 2021.

Prize committee citation: “Understanding how political actors respond to the strategic incentives created by electoral systems is one of our discipline’s most important tasks. Examining the twenty-first century’s most common electoral reform, a switch to mixed-member electoral systems with multiple tiers, Catalinac and Motolinia provide a masterful account of how parties strategically respond to the incentives created by mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems, which determine the total number of seats awarded to a party according to performance in both a list-based (proportional) tier and a first-past-the-post (nominal) tier. Catalinac and Motolinia’s innovation is to show that MMM systems encourage vote-trading between large and small parties. In close races, a large party has incentives to secure the votes of a smaller party in the nominal tier by promising their support to the smaller party in the proportional tier, allowing both to win more seats than they would on their own. If in government, these parties may also geographically target spending to cement this alliance. In effect, this enables the large party in power to use state resources to buy off smaller parties that might otherwise join an opposition coalition, reinforcing its hold on power. Instead of offering the best of both worlds, these mixed member systems thus come closer to the worst of both worlds. Catalinac and Motolinia show this by weaving together detailed case studies and original datasets in two countries, Japan and Mexico. The findings provide valuable lessons for the future of electoral reform.”