



Q&A WITH

DANIEL GINGERICH (*Luebbert Article Prize*)

What caused you to embark on this project?

The scholarship on distributive politics in developing democracies features ample theoretical discussion of the role of vote secrecy in shaping phenomena such as clientelism and vote brokerage, but much less direct empirical evidence about how the effective secret ballot actually affected modalities of political engagement when it was introduced. My hope was that a well-structured historical project, with strong causal leverage and relatively precise measurement of outcomes, could offer a good deal to our understanding of how the secret ballot affected citizens' participation in elections.

What is one main thing you want the project to be remembered for ten years from now?

The Brazilian case offers a stark example of how so-called clean election reforms may, in fact, contribute to democratic backsliding. There are perhaps few institutional reforms more popularly associated with good government and the historical consolidation of democracy than the adoption of the secret ballot. Yet, in both Brazil (shown in my article) and the Southern United States (shown by others), the effective secret

ballot represented a frontal attack on political participation by the most vulnerable and economically downtrodden citizens. In both cases, this was by design. I want scholars and policymakers to appreciate this history as we consider contemporary political discussions about "election security" and "perfecting the democratic process."

What in your data or findings surprised you the most? Why?

To be honest, the central finding that the effective secret ballot had an enormous effect in disenfranchising functionally illiterate voters came as a bit of a surprise. Based on the US experience, I anticipated that there might be a disenfranchisement effect. However, the magnitude of the effect that I encountered in the data really did surprise me. After running the analyses and sharing my results, I scoured parliamentary debates and newspapers from the time period, only to find that disenfranchisement of functional illiterates was exactly what the proponents of the ballot reform had intended all along. In my view, this is why one does research – if you're never surprised, you're doing it wrong.



What would you change or do differently if you went back and did this project again?

I spent more time than I would like to admit setting up teams to collect, process, and clean the data. If I could do this all over again, I would hire a full time project manager to oversee the distinct tasks of the various research assistants involved in the project.

What is the biggest still unanswered question that emerges from your research?

In my mind, the biggest unanswered question is why the adoption of the effective secret ballot was utilized to strategically disenfranchise functionally illiterate voters in some settings but not in others. Danilo Medeiros and I take a step towards an answer to this question in a recently published piece in *Comparative Political Studies* ("Vote Secrecy with Diverse Voters"), but our empirical focus in that article is on the determinants of the preferences of individual politicians for or against the effective secret vote in a specific country (Brazil), rather than on cross-national differences. In the article, we argue that in order for the effective secret ballot to be used as an instrument of strategic disenfranchisement, illiterate voters need to make up a non-negligible proportion of the electorate and illiteracy must be correlated with a pre-ex-

isting political cleavage. But how often and why the effective secret ballot is actually used in that manner when said conditions prevail, is very much an open question.

If another scholar does the same project ten years from now, do you think their findings would be different from yours? And if yes, in which ways?

Yes and no. No, in the sense that I wouldn't anticipate that a scholar who at some point in the future went back to study the case of Brazil with some newly acquired data would produce results radically at odds with those in my article. At least I hope that that would not be the case! But if a scholar were to perform a similar historical study in a different country with different ballot design (perhaps owing to different electoral rules), then I certainly think it is possible that the findings would differ. In understanding the impact of the effective secret vote on disenfranchisement, the devil lies in the details of ballot design. The secret vote can be realized by a ballot that is easy for illiterates to navigate (e.g., mark an "x" next to an image representing your favored political party) or hard (e.g., write in the name or number of your favored candidate). The effective secret ballot in Brazil was intentionally designed to be difficult for illiterates to use. I would expect similar disenfranchising effects to be found only in other cases of unfriendly ballot design. ●



APSA | COMPARATIVE POLITICS

THE ORGANIZED SECTION IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS
OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME XXXI ISSUE 2 FALL 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Editors: The Global South <i>by Eugene Finkel, Adria Lawrence, and Andrew Mertha</i>	2
Why Transition to Modern Democracy Is Challenging in Developing Nations? Exploring The Role of Foreign Powers in Afghanistan <i>by Mohammad Qadam Shah</i>	5
The Origins and Consequences of Descriptive Representation in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service <i>by Ada Johnson-Kanu</i>	13
Pre-colonial Origins of Long-run State Development: Lessons from Burma (Myanmar) <i>by Htet Thiha Zaw</i>	24
Studying Forced Migration in the Global South: The Role of Everyday Politics <i>by Ezgi Irgil</i>	33
Criminal Violence, Insecurity, and Social Resistance: Insights from Mexico <i>by Sandra Ley</i>	41
Tunisia's Ambiguous Democracy <i>by Laryssa Chomiak</i>	49
Moderate Islamic Group and Democratic Regression in Indonesia: Implications for the Inclusion-Moderation Thesis <i>by Alexander R. Arifianto</i>	58
How Parties Respond to Weak Partisan Attachment: Evidence from India <i>by Neelanjan Sircar</i>	65
Ruling Networks and Intra-Regime Transitions <i>by Ammar Shamaileh</i>	73
LGBTQ Movements in the MENA: Reflection on The Politics of Marginalization and the Need to Move Away from the Margins of the Discipline <i>by Samer M. Anabtawi</i>	81
Indigenous Movements, Parties, And The State: Comparative Lessons from Latin America <i>by Carla Alberti</i>	90
How Southern is Central Asia? <i>by Shairbek Dzhuraev</i>	97
Q&A with Rachel Brule (Luebbert Book Prize)	106
Q&A with Daniel Gingerich (Luebbert Article Prize)	108
Q&A with Nikhar Gaikwad, Erin Lin and Noah Zucker (Sage Paper Prize)	110
Q&A with Jacob Nystrup and Stuart Bramwell (Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award)	112
Q&A with Marc Helbling, Liv Bjerre, Friederike Römer, and Malisa Zobel (Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award Honorable Mention)	114
Q&A with Noam Lupu (Theda Skocpol Prize for Emerging Scholars)	116
Q&A with Amy Erica Smith (Theda Skocpol Prize for Emerging Scholars)	118

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Johns Hopkins University
School of Advanced
International Studies

Lead Editor

Eugene Finkel
efinkel4@jhu.edu

Editors

Adria Lawrence
adria.lawrence@jhu.edu
Andrew Mertha
amertha1@jhu.edu

Editorial Board

Lisel Hintz
Sarah Parkinson
Pavithra Suryanarayan

Editorial Assistant

Maya Camargo-Vemuri

CONTACT

Johns Hopkins University
School of Advanced
International Studies
1740 Massachusetts Ave
NW
Washington, DC 20036