Chapter 7: Barbara Geddes, a Master of Comparative Politics

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Abstract. This chapter traces the life and work of Barbara Geddes. Following the framework of the introduction, it analyses Geddes' innovative contribution to comparative politics as an intertwining of change from within the discipline and a layering process. Geddes' landmark works have shaped the agenda of comparative politics in recent decades (especially the study of democratisation and authoritarianism) by problematising existing knowledge and gradually accumulating new additions into a coherent research programme. The chapter provides the reader with an overview of her work and approach and argues for Geddes' inclusion among the *masters* of comparative politics. It begins by recapitulating the main aspects of her academic career, then examines her contributions to state autonomy in developing countries, theory building and research design, democratisation and autocratic regimes. The final section assesses Geddes' influence within and beyond political science, the main sources of innovation in her contributions, and concludes by drawing some lessons from her example. In short, the chapter shows how Geddes' career has advanced political science by expanding the field of inquiry and introducing new ideas.

Keywords. Barbara Geddes; research design; autocracy; democratisation

Introduction

From its foundation, political science, like other academic disciplines, has been dominated by males. Comparative politics is no exception: as Keohane noted, the discipline has long been a "procession of men" (2009, p. 359). Looking at the winners of the Johan Skytte Prize, only six out of twenty-eight have been women so far. As it should be unnecessary to specify, the female laureates – Elinor Claire Ostrom, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, Theda Skocpol, Pippa Norris (shared with Ronald F. Inglehart), Carole Pateman, Jane Mansbridge, and Margaret Levi – have nothing to envy their male counterparts. However, most of the women political scientists have been awarded only in recent years: therefore, if anything is changing, it is only recently and slowly.

This chapter seeks to scrutinize the legacy of one of the discipline's female *masters*, frontrunners and examples for the next generations. Barbara Geddes (born in 1944), longtime chair of the Political Science Department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA, the first woman to hold that position), should be duly considered among the pioneers of this welcome evolution, with landmark contributions to political science methodology, democratisation and authoritarianism. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the nature of the innovation Geddes brought to comparative politics. Accordingly, the chapter will assess Geddes' major works by adopting the framework on the origins of innovation and the degree of change offered in the introduction to this volume. Indeed, Geddes' innovation in comparative politics is analysed as an intertwining of *change from*

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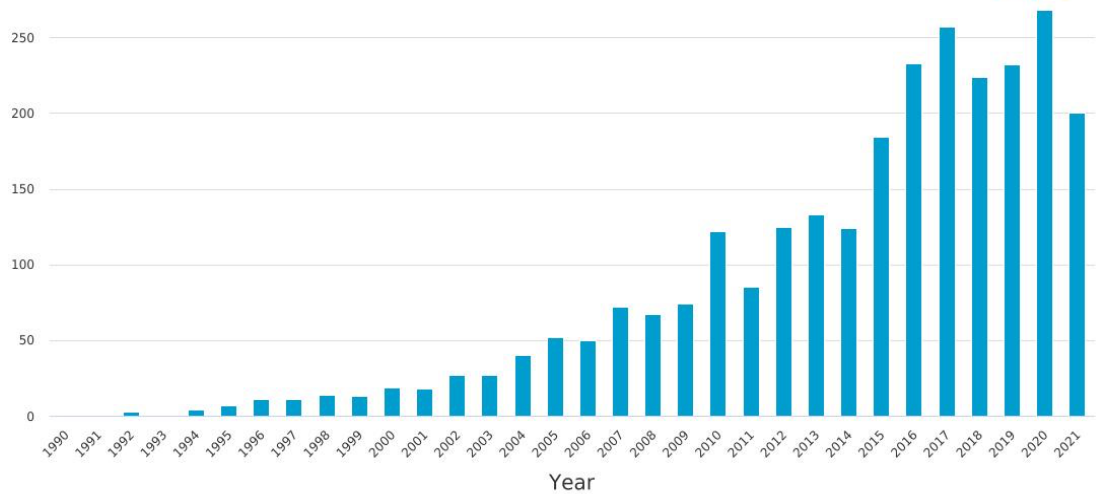
within the discipline and a *layering process*. In this chapter, "layering" is understood as a progressive change within a specific discipline (or sub-discipline, in this case comparative politics within the broader field of political science) based on a gradual replication, correction, integration and enrichment of previous theories and empirical analyses with new research. By "change from within" the chapter similarly refers to those processes that are established in order to consolidate the core knowledge of the academic field, rather than creating a patchwork of different layers that do not dialogue with each other. In short, by problematising existing knowledge and gradually accumulating new additions into a coherent research programme, Geddes has deeply shaped the agenda of comparative politics in recent decades.

Educated at the University of California, Berkeley (BA 1978, PhD 1986), Geddes initially specialised in Latin America and development, influenced by scholars such as David Collier, Edson Nunes, Eric Nordlinger, Gary Cox, George Tsebelis, David Laitin and Margaret Levi. Her early work included analyses of administrative reform and corruption in Latin America. In the late 1990s, Geddes' research shifted to the study of autocracies and how internal characteristics of the ruling group affect their emergence, demise and possible democratisation – a *fil rouge* in her whole career. Her typology and data project formed the basis of "What do we know about democratization after twenty years" (1999) – one of the most cited articles on democratisation. Similarly, scholars openly speak of a *before and after Geddes* in authoritarianism studies Gerschewski, 2013; Pepinsky, 2014). Their rigorous theories and analyses make the study of Geddes a must for political comparativists of all fields.

Nevertheless, although she belongs to the same cohort as most of the widely recognised masters in political science, we can say that she has received a more modest recognition (at least outside the US), and only recently. To illustrate this roughly, Figure 1 shows the number of citations of Geddes' publications according to Scopus: most of them are concentrated in the last few years. This chapter therefore aims to contribute to do justice to Geddes' work by re-assessing her most important contributions. Moreover, as Geddes has recently (2017) mentioned, we can also argue that she embodies the overcoming of a latent divide in comparative politics, where women once fell into more interpretivist fields, by working more frequently on qualitative analyses (e.g., case studies). By contrast, Geddes has blurred these lines with precise statistical analyses and original datasets, and with fundamental insights into how to do research, build and test theories, particularly within the framework of rational choice institutionalism. Far from proposing a single, *ideal* method in political science, though, she offered common guidelines for accumulating knowledge and sharing it with the public.

Figure 7.1: Citations of Geddes' publications (Scopus)



Following the typology presented in the volume's introduction, the chapter frames Geddes' work as an innovation in comparative politics, combining change from within the discipline and a layering process. In doing so, the chapter re-evaluates her contributions on state autonomy and bureaucratic reform in Latin America and, secondly, *Paradigms and Sand Castles* – an essential toolkit for comparative politics research. It then illustrates Geddes' work on democratisation and authoritarianism, from articles in the late 1990s to a recent book. Finally, the last section evaluates the impact of Geddes' research on the development of political science, particularly for authoritarianism and democratisation studies, by problematising and reworking existing knowledge and gradually integrating new findings into a coherent research programme. It then concludes with some general lessons from her work.

The main innovation of Geddes' work

The state in developing countries

Geddes' first studies concerned Latin America, especially the role of the state in developing countries. Co-authored articles – "Sources of popular support for authoritarian regimes" (1989) or "Dilemmas of state-led modernization in Brazil" (1990) – already show traces of her future approach, which we can summarize as: (i) problematising existing knowledge (its theoretical underpinnings and empirical coverage) and (ii) proposing and evaluating the empirical validity of new analytical frameworks.

Geddes started from the assertion that theories of state formation (cf. Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985) may be affected by selection bias because they are tailored to Western Europe and the US. Thus, she examined the context of Latin America, with the interaction of political leaders, economic groups and public officials in the state-building process, weakened by colonialism and economic imperialism. The first phase of her career is thus devoted to modifying and innovating existing theories of state formation and testing them in Latin America.

Through a case study of Brazil between 1930 and the 1964 coup, Geddes examined what she calls the dilemma of state elites in developing countries, namely "increasing bureaucratic capacity [for implementing public policies for the common interest], on the one hand, and pressures for the distribution of jobs and other benefits, on the other" (1990, p. 231). She argued that public administration can only play a state-building role if it is

"insulated" from partisan interests. Nevertheless, administrative reforms can be promoted by the same interests that oppose the independence of civil servants, such as the amount of resources available to the incumbent. Thus, the formation of modern bureaucracies in Latin America is often affected by conflicting pressures, such as meritocratic recruitment, interference from changing executives and personal benefits. As a result, limited state capacity may be a precondition for regime instability (as exemplified by Brazil's democratic collapse in 1964). These initial analyses also included policy suggestions, such as the development of autonomous agencies to build state capacity.

Geddes then extended her analysis to Colombia, Uruguay, Venezuela and Chile. She found that modernising administrative reforms are more likely to be adopted when patronage is unevenly distributed among the strongest parties in parliament and under stable patterns of party competition (1991, p. 372). These conditions, in turn, can promote state capacity and consolidation. The study of the struggle between politicians and bureaucrats is then the crux of her first book (1994), which contains a more detailed examination of the role of the state in developing countries. The concept of state autonomy is finally delineated, explaining the articulation of development policies based on the interaction between politicians, interest groups and the military. Geddes also shown how her analysis combines structural and individual explanations. The book represents an evolution of Geddes' personal approach to comparative politics, combining rational choice and historical institutionalism. The politician's dilemma in developing state is described as the "conflict between politician's [...] need for immediate political survival and longer-run collective interests in economic performance and regime stability" (1994, p. 18). This general orientation of her early research programme (i.e., re-evaluating old theories with evidence from a different context in order to modify and improve the theory itself) will be present in all her future publications.

Common standards in comparative politics

Knowledge cumulation and theory building

At the same time, Geddes developed a strong commitment to methodology. After influential articles (1990a; 1991a; 1995), she finally devoted an entire volume to her reflections: *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (2003; hereafter in the chapter: *Paradigms*). The book is a friendly guide to developing a coherent research strategy in comparative politics, with explanatory applications. Indeed, it is a welcome and much-needed innovation in political science, more in general, where methodological volumes have often remained theoretical. Moreover, unlike other methodological classics, the volume does not propose to export specific templates to the whole discipline, but rather to develop common standards depending on the research topic. In fact, while the book is organised around a rational choice and quantitative template, its considerations are drawn to be applicable to other approaches (e.g., qualitative comparisons).

The starting intuition of *Paradigms* is a self-reflection on the progress of the discipline: past "grand theories" in comparative politics, such as those on revolution (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985) or democratisation (Moore, 1966; O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986), proved of little help in explaining later events, often relegating the unexplained to contingency (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1989). This is because, Geddes

argued, these theories were developed without enough attention to issues of research design (2003, p. 4). Although built with immense human effort, because of inappropriate case selection or inaccessible replication data or codebooks, these paradigms soon became sandcastles that were "washed away" by the next generations of scholars. This was evident in the "inability to build on, develop, and extend old theories instead of periodically discarding them" (2003, p. 4), such as the once influential modernisation (Lipset, 1960) or dependency theories (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). This is also the reason why contemporary scholars find it more difficult to engage in the elaboration of macro-level theories and, thus, why "paradigms" – as "a set of more or less consistent theories and hypotheses that explain various aspects of reality and which, taken together, form a coherent worldview" – are less widely accepted today than "approaches" (e.g., neo-institutionalism and rational choice) – "a claim that certain factors – for example, states, classes, or political leaders – deserve attention, without articulating specific hypotheses about them; and [...] the belief that certain research methodologies are the most [...] appropriate means of gaining understanding" (2003, p. 21). Nevertheless, scholars should not abandon the development of coherent and falsifiable theories.

In fact, according to Geddes, the first step for political comparativists should be the selection of a research topic and, from there, the building of a concise theoretical framework. As an interesting point, she mentions the role of emotions in the choice of research questions (2003, p. 28). Indeed, this should be the meaning of scholarship as a "vocation": not to relegate research to the re-elaboration (of gaps) of previous literature (*contra* King, Keohane & Verba, 1994) – which may need to be completely reformulated – but rather to adopt curiosity, indignation and passion in a creative effort to elaborate simple models from complex facts. Second, it affirms how theories should disentangle composite results into specific, testable sequences:

> "A concrete research strategy [...] begins with the disaggregation of the big question [...] into a series of more researchable questions about mechanisms. The second step is a theorisation of the specific process chosen [...]. The third step is the articulation of testable implications derived from the theorisation. Decisions about the domains of different testable implications constitute the fourth step. The fifth is the actual discovery or collection of evidence on which to test the implications; the sixth is the testing itself; and the seventh is the interpretation of and response to test results" (2003, p.43).

The volume applies these considerations to reformulate earlier theories in comparative politics, starting with O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead's (1986) claim that every democratic transition begins with authoritarian elite divisions. It theorises transitions from autocracies and articulates their definitions of regime change, democratisation and political bargaining. Once the topic is chosen and defined, a few disaggregated issues, such as domestic politics in dictatorships, must be chosen. She therefore presented her well-known classification of authoritarian regimes, which the chapter will examine later. The typology is based on the differences between the groups that seize and keep political power in the autocratic regime: the leader, the military, or a political party. These actors may have different goals – the autocrat's family, military interests, or the party's electoral prospects after democratic transition – that can explain regime collapse. To integrate O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead's theory, her re-analysis would lead to the specification that divisions *within the military* often lead to regime collapse, but the same is not necessarily applicable to party or personalist regimes. In short, clarifying the argument is crucial to reconstructing a theory and testing its components.

Case selection

Another *Paradigms*' key theme is case selection bias. Indeed, in the recent decades, the selection of cases under study based on the dependent variable or outcome (e.g., analysing *only* a case that has the occurrence of the phenomenon we are trying to explain) has gone from being the norm in political science to being harshly criticised (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994) – although multimethod methodologists have led to a more nuanced consideration of this debate (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). Another innovation of the volume is that Geddes offered a personal reworking of this critique – applicable to *both* qualitative and quantitative research. She first explains the logic of causal inference behind the criticism that theories based only on cases in which the outcome is present may lose explanatory power outside the reference population – thus, ignoring similar cases with a different outcome. Applying these considerations to the seminal *States and Social Revolutions* (1979) – on the history of revolutions in France, Russia and China – Geddes traced Theda Skocpol's arguments about the importance of an external threat, a split in the ruling elite, the rise of a dominant class and peasant unrest to explain why revolt occurs. In short, Geddes argued that Skocpol's case selection logic may be unclear. When her hypotheses are extended to other countries in Europe and Latin America, in fact, most of the causal factors cannot be confirmed. However, Geddes affirmed that selection bias does *not* only affect qualitative research. She reports concrete examples of large-N quantitative analyses that hypothesise a positive relationship between authoritarian control over labour and economic growth in developing countries (Johnson, 1987). However, because these works are limited to high-growth autocracies, they overlook several cases of stagnating economies and labour repression in which this association disappears.

Instead, in order to test a theory more accurately, Geddes suggested first identifying the unit of analysis and then the associated universe of potential observations (2003, p. 95), possibly including a variation of the outcome. Nevertheless, Geddes specified that a study of only those cases that have the outcome can still be useful for investigating causal mechanisms (2003, p. 109). In short, the case(s) chosen should be representative of the specific domains of the theory we aim to test (2003, p. 132). In historical research, since it is often impossible to focus on many cases, one solution may be to decompose the evidence related to a single case into multiple observations within the case itself (2003, p. 172).

Having identified a testable argument and a reference population, the next step is measurement. This is a difficult task in the social sciences, which are often characterised by thin indicators for unobservable thick concepts (Coppedge, 2012). Nevertheless, Geddes suggested some good practices: first, measurement should be based on the domain of the argument; second, coding schemes should always be available. In doing so, the volume replicates another seminal study in comparative politics: Lipset and Rokkan on cleavages and party formation (1967). According to Geddes, measurement ambiguity is the core limitation of this study. Lipset and Rokkan's main argument is that European party systems were consolidated long before mass enfranchisement, e.g., during the struggles between state and church and the industrial and commercial revolutions of the early twentieth century. These historical junctures, prior to the political enfranchisement of the working class and the Second World War, "froze" Western European party systems in the decades that followed. However, in order to account for discrepancies in Western Europe (e.g., fascist and communist parties), Lipset and Rokkan added new variables, and their "explanation degenerates into description" (2003, p. 151). This is the result, according to Geddes, of a non-rigorous design, without an

operationalisation codebook and with an unclear population of reference and articulation of concepts. In an expanded universe of cases in Latin America and Eastern Europe, and a brief analysis of their (relatively fluid) party systems, Geddes thus refuted Lipset and Rokkan's hypothesis (2003, p. 171; cf. Mair, 1997) – the stability of Western European party systems seemes to be produced by specific characteristics, not general trends.

Rational Choice

Geddes' *Paradigms* is also innovative in debunking common misconceptions about comparative politics rational choice approaches. First, against the prejudice that rational choice arguments are necessarily conservative, Geddes argued that this approach, adopted by scholars of different ideological orientations, does not intrinsically contain specific values. Second, although rational choice takes self-interested actors as the cornerstone of political action, Geddes specified that individual preferences are not assumed prior to analysis. The third misconception is that this approach takes preferences as given – an argument that the author refuted by affirming that this is to be demonstrated throughout the empirical investigation. Fourth, although rational choice is said to be based on unrealistic assumptions about informed people, Geddes admitted that agents have limited information but tend to behave as if they were rational. Fifth, to those who accuse the approach of being a-contextual, she responded that rational choice scholars regard contextual factors as crucial to defining the scope of the theory by shaping or constraining individual preferences. Moreover, to those who claim that rational choice is deterministic, Geddes also replied that this criticism may apply to the theoretical model, not to its probabilistic results. Finally, she denied that the approach cannot be used to explain path-dependent situations and specifies that rational choice arguments can include changing preferences. Geddes also re-elaborated the pillars of the rational choice approach: the prevalence of methodological individualism, which focuses on rational actors and the identification of their goals, institutions as contextual constraints and incentives, and the use of deductive logic (2003, p. 191).

Clearly, rational choice does not have the monopoly of comparative politics: a deliberate combination of different approaches, depending on the object of study, may maximise relative strengths. However, the correct application of rational choice is not free of fundamental difficulties, such as aggregating different actors or treating political decisions as strategic interactions.

To conclude, *Paradigms* offers helpful suggestions for the elaboration of a theory, observable implications of an argument, rigorous case selection to test hypotheses in other contexts and sound empirical measurement. Unlike King, Keohane and Verba (1994), it does not seek to take the template of statistics or the hard sciences and apply it uncritically to political science because "quantification [...] solves few of the problems discussed in this book" (2003, p. 214). In fact, there may be specific trade-offs: while qualitative analyses may suffer from insufficiently replicable thick indicators, quantitative studies may rely on incomplete sources with the flaw of spurious correlations. Since poor data quality and measurement affect the results of the analysis, one should always examine the measurement criteria. Geddes thence suggested alternatives to the most common, if unspoken, explanatory logic in (quantitative and qualitative) comparative politics: the multivariate regression model (2003, p. 218). According to her, regression-like thinking permeates (both qualitative and quantitative) comparative politics, listing factors that co-vary with the outcome, discovered through statistics or historical evidence.

However, Geddes affirmed that "alternative understanding of theory creation I suggest has two elements, one having to do with how we approach big questions and the other

being a more general strategy for disciplining speculations into more fully coherent theories" (2003, p. 219). Indeed, a valuable research design should move from identifying "factors that contribute to outcomes to trying to explain the relationships among the moving parts of the processes leading to outcomes" (2003, p. 219). Good theory building is essential to understanding the full causal pattern or mechanism, which is to be investigated using multiple methods. Although Geddes (at least in *Paradigms*) never spoke directly of a mixed methods design, the suggestion of adopting different understandings of causation to improve empirical analysis is now influential in mixed or pluralist methods comparative politics (Brady, Collier & Seawright, 2006; Fearon & Laitin, 2008; Collier, Brady & Seawright, 2010; Berg-Schlosser, 2012). In short, according to Geddes, the good practice of social research should be the elaboration of cumulative, testable and replicable theories capable of unpacking the processes that lead to complex outcomes and integrating further rounds of analysis.

Gold standards in practice

Democratisation paths

Since the 1990s, Geddes has devoted herself to the study of how dictatorships end (1994a; 1995a): "What do we know about democratization after twenty years" (1999) is one of the most highly regarded articles on democratisation. After a theoretical reworking and data collection, she concluded that few of the generalisations made in the previous literature on the subject hold true in comparative terms, mainly because scholars have not considered the internal characteristics of autocracies. As a result, different types of autocracies may have different transitions. This missing piece has determined many of the weaknesses of the democratisation literature. For example, Przeworski and Limongi (1993) found that once a certain level of development is reached, democracy has more fertile soil. However, Geddes interpreted this relationship as S-shaped, with uncertainty in the middle. Similarly, historical-institutionalist analyses have assumed that intra-elite conflict always leads to authoritarian collapse (O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986), although this is not the case for every regime collapse, as described above in her other publications. In order to innovate and progressively develop her contribution, in fact, Geddes proposed to focus on a previously overlooked factor: intra-regime authoritarian politics.

Her classification of autocracies – as personalist (with a single leader, almost always a man, at the top), military (containing the seeds of their destruction because of internal feuds), one-party (competing in unfair elections, including the communist dictatorships, such as Peron's Argentina, Mexico under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional and the Revolutionary Party in Tanzania) – is updated in this publication, which also describes amalgams of pure types, e.g., Pinochet's Chile and Idi Amin's Uganda. In short, the characteristics of authoritarian rulers may affect regime duration. Overall, military and personalist dictatorships may be less durable than single-party ones, which is explained by the narrowness of the ruling group's support base and the need to reward members: "military regimes tend to split, personalist regimes to circle the wagons, and single parties to try to co-opt their critics" (1999, p. 135). In short, Geddes problematised previous contributions on democratisation and dictatorship with original analyses of previously underestimated aspects.

Years later (2009), she returned to her reflections on democratisation in an ongoing evolution of her research. Reviewing the work of Przeworski and colleagues (2000), the

links between democratisation and development are far from certain – although, according to Boix and Stokes (2003), we do know that the "costs" of democracy change over time, meaning that socio-economic variables are more relevant before 1945. However, Geddes noted that much of the disagreement stems from different (e.g., continuous or dichotomous) measures of democracy and development. Moreover, in unpacking the independent variable, scholars test the separate effects of education, equality, urbanisation and other factors on democracy. Among them, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that dictators are less willing to concede democracy in unequal societies because they fear resource redistribution. Geddes also reported on the seminal work of Boix (2003) on democracy and inequality and De Mesquita et al. (2005) on political competition between the rulers and the ruled. She argued that international or external factors should be included more often in democratisation research (Levitsky & Way, 2006). How to integrate these different explanations in a coherent way? Here we have another significant manifestation of Geddes' orientation on how to do research in comparative politics:

> "If we are trying to use the same simple statistical model, verbal argument, or game theoretic model to explain multiple disparate processes, we should not be surprised if only the most basic features can be clearly identified or if studies that focus on different regions, time periods, or samples produce different answers, since different processes predominate in different time periods and regions" (2009, p. 8).

In short, how the analysis is designed determines the results we get, and we should always pay attention to our scope conditions. Therefore, a more complex theory building and a clearly comparative design should be adopted: as specified, "no theory ever explains all outcomes, but I argue that there are systematic reasons why these theories explain only some democratizations" (2009, p. 15).

How autocracies work

The rest of Geddes' career has been devoted to the study of authoritarianism. The article co-authored with Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz (2014), "Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: a new dataset," which won the 2015 Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award from the American Political Science Association Comparative Politics Section, is widely recognised as a landmark. It introduces the "Autocratic Regime Data" (ARD), which classifies the characteristics of (military, party, personalist) ruling groups of 280 dictatorships (1946-2010). The puzzle that leads to the article is the same: Why do dictatorships collapse? And what comes next? The ARD is useful for quantitative analysis and in-depth case studies to identify transitions and their characteristics. Overall, its authors affirmed that, on average, single-party autocracies are the dominant type, the number of military regimes first increased and then decreased in the last century, while the number of monarchies remained stable (2014, p. 318). Moreover, comparing the ARD with other datasets (Goemans, Gleditsch & Chiozza 2009, Cheibub, Gandhi & Vreeland 2010), they confirmed that it may be more precise to classify by regime characteristics than by top leaders (2014, p. 320). Moreover, since a *political regime is defined as the set of informal and formal rules that determine who governs and how*, a transition from dictatorship may not necessarily lead to democracy but may include regime change within the authoritarian spectrum. Citing Iran in 1979 as a transition from autocracy to autocracy, Geddes and her co-authors specified that:

> "Autocratic regimes often last well beyond the tenure of any single ruler so the ouster of a dictator should not be equated with regime collapse [and a] [...]

> continuous period of authoritarianism – or spell – can conceal multiple, consecutive autocratic regimes" (2014, p. 316).

Specifically, conflating authoritarian spells with authoritarian collapses can lead scholars to erroneous results. In line with Geddes' previous research, misclassifications and poor use of data may explain inconclusive findings. Building on and integrating her previous work, in a continuous process of self-layering, the article examined how regime characteristics may alter the chances of democratisation: "only in military dictatorships is democratisation more likely than transition to subsequent autocracy. Personalist dictatorships are least likely to democratise" (2014, p. 324).

Geddes' most recent major and co-authored (by Wright and Frantz) work is *How Dictatorships Work* (2018). The volume represents a major contribution and exemplifies Geddes' innovations in comparative politics by (again) building on her previous research. In general, the authors' starting point is that the composition of the groups that initiate the dictatorship determines the various development of the regime.

Specifically, "seizure group" is the term used "to refer to the small group that literally ousts the incumbent and takes over in order to initiate dictatorship, as well as their organized support base" (2018, p. 3). The interests of the seizure group – as a revised data collection shows (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2017) – can help explain the life and demise of the autocratic regime. The volume thus provides readers with an updated overview of the types of autocracy initiation. First, most autocracies begin with coups, followed by self-coups or incumbent autocratisation and less often by insurgency, rebellion, foreign conquest. Coups are often organised by the military but can also be instigated by political parties. As we can see, Geddes' way of thinking remains the same, conceptually recalibrating the object of study and then carrying out more precise analyses. Indeed, the authors affirmed that a distinction should be drawn between regime initiating coups (from democracy or previous autocracy) and leadership changing coups in autocracies (2018, p. 47). This allows them to show that the likelihood of coups in autocracies may be explained by military grievances and interests (2018, p. 54). Geddes and her co-authors thus re-specified earlier arguments (e.g., Svolik, 2012) that linked regime change coups to the presence of a mobilised opposition, with a more thorough consideration of the population under study:

> "These findings suggest that Svolik's empirical results depend primarily on reshuffling coups within ongoing dictatorships. Eighty-five percent of leader change coups occur in military-led dictatorships, however. In other words, most of these coups replace one military dictator with another rather than replacing a civilian dictator with a military one" (2018, p. 56).

Social control and collapse

As mentioned above, the book summarised here embodies Geddes' innovative approach, consolidated from two decades of academic research: first, by dissecting the object of study into different theoretical expectations at the meso-level, and second, by testing them through precise measurements and analyses. Specifically, the rest of the book (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2018) innovatively examined how a seizing group concentrates its power after a coup and chooses to either institutionalise or personalise it. The authors found that factionalism in the ruling group may undermine power sharing and facilitates one-man rule. Although elite bargaining is often influenced by formal institutions, the institutions themselves are determined by the pre-existing characteristics of the capture groups. Consequently, bargaining between the ruling coalition and the autocrat is more

effective when the dictator is weak – usually at the beginning of a dictatorship – and the group is cohesive enough to make credible threats. Otherwise, the dictator often increases their power through *divide et impera* strategies (2018, p. 71).

In short, the balance between "efforts by the inner circle to control the dictator, [...] by the dictator to escape control, and [...] by both to institutionalize the relationship in order to reduce potentially regime-destabilizing conflict" (2018, p. 74) often contributes to the unpredictability of autocracies (cf. Schedler, 2013). After these theoretical reflections, the authors tested their argument with an analysis of factionalism in the army and a new (and continuous) measure of personalism (cf. 2017) that is applicable to different types of autocracies. Indeed, factionalism emerges among the covariates of personalism of the autocratic regime.

Moreover, since it is the unity of the army that can challenge the dictator, they may in turn create a support party in order to be less dependent on the military and to attract reliable allies. These support parties can marginalize the army from politics and control the administration through institutions. This explains how party formation can prolong the dictator's survival. In turn, factionalism is linked to the ability to create a support party and the resulting personalisation of the regime.

Geddes and co-authors then explored how autocracies entrench their control over society, particularly how parliaments and local elections function to control party cadres and officials, implement and monitor policies, and gather information on citizens (2018, p. 130; cf. Geddes, 2018). These institutions are useful tools for autocrats, even if they are costly to change. Supporting parties should also serve the function of demonstrating the dictator's power to the inner circle through mobilisation (2018, p. 132) and keep local administration in check. In this way, institutional routinisation becomes an integral part of the regime: once formed, support parties are rarely dismantled. Geddes and colleagues then examine the role of authoritarian legislatures, which function as space for resource bargaining rather than arenas for (limited) policy competition (cf. Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007). However, elections remain essential for gaining external legitimacy, i.e. in terms of foreign aid, rather than for promoting democratisation. This analysis is a significant addition to the long-standing debate on the role of elections in authoritarian regimes (Lindberg, 2006; Bogaards, 2013). Indeed, after the 1990s, the number of multiparty elections in dictatorships increased dramatically in conjunction with foreign aid, but in most cases without leading to consolidated democratisation processes.

Nevertheless, Geddes and colleagues show how elections in dictatorships may have positive spillover effects for citizens: as government spending increases around elections, electoral contests are associated with lower infant mortality and higher health spending. However, such elections can also prolong regime longevity: thus, the benefits of elections for citizens may be a by-product of their strategic use by autocrats. On a parallel theme, Geddes and colleagues focus on repression (2018, p. 154). Threats of violence by regime cliques must be credible, even if they are rarely overtly exercised. For this reason, espionage and preventive repression are preferred tools, which explains the flourishing of security agencies in autocracies. When the dictator controls the security agencies, we can observe an "increase in regime longevity as a result of reductions in plotting [...], because other members of the inner circle understand that plots are unlikely to succeed" (2018, p. 162). The strategies for maintaining military acquiescence are though varied, ranging from counterbalancing with new militias to controlling nominations. But if the dictator goes too far, they may lose the trust of the army, which may turn against them.

Geddes and colleagues concluded their study by examining how dictatorships collapse. First, they confirmed that most often former autocracies transition into another autocracy rather than into a democracy. They then examined the impact of economic crisis (see Przeworski et al., 2000), depending on the type of authoritarianism: "institutions associated with extensive patron–client networks insulate dictatorships from the destabilising effects of economic crisis" (2018, p. 188), and therefore economic crisis will have a stronger impact on military autocracies. Geddes and her co-authors also found that the effect of personalisation on authoritarian stability may be dependent "on other inner-circle characteristics: it enhances regime survival in military-led dictatorships but decreases it in dictatorships led by inherited parties" (2018, p. 200). As a result, military regimes may be more likely to transition to democracy, while "democratization is less likely to follow party-led dictatorships. [...] party-led dictatorships are less likely to negotiate transitions than collegial military-led dictatorships, [...] if power is concentrated in the hands of the dictator" (2018, p. 210).

As is common in previous works, her latest book is also an attempt to share academic knowledge with the public in the form of specific policy recommendations. First, in this volume, she and her co-authors suggested that foreign intervention in personalist regimes is unlikely to produce democratic openings. Second, that incumbent autocratisation is an increasingly important pattern for initiating dictatorship: therefore, international actors should be quick to condemn anti-democratic tendencies by leaders. They also argued that the inclusion of moderates in an authoritarian cabinet is designed to reassure foreign investors and should not be interpreted as a sign of democratisation. More generally, they affirmed that the international community should stop supporting "their dictators" (2018, p. 232) and react quickly against personalisation in dictatorships, as personalisation has dire consequences, such as worse governance and aggressive international behaviour. Moreover, seemingly democratic institutions can contribute to the routinisation of autocracy: semi-competitive elections, even if they are used to obtain international aid, can lead to benefits for the entire population, even if they do not promote democratisation. However, international aid should not be used to build internal security or police agencies or to enhance dictator's repressive capabilities.

Discussion

This chapter has traced Barbara Geddes' major works and how they have innovated comparative politics. Her academic trajectory, from the study of state autonomy in Latin America to democratisation and dictatorship, is a living proof of how to conduct theoretically grounded and empirically sound research. First, her suggestions on research design – how to build and test theories, how to avoid case selection bias in quantitative and qualitative analysis, on measurement and coding criteria, and on how to use rational choice and combine it with other approaches – are now widely implemented in comparative politics, as reported in one of the field's foundational handbooks (Caramani, 2020). Publications such as *Paradigms* (2003) represent must-reads in political science methodology and research design – useful for both variable- and case-centred scholars – and anticipate the most advanced, pluralistic methodological contributions in the discipline (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Gerring & Christenson, 2017).

Second, Geddes rejuvenated the study of democracy and autocracy. According to Gerschewski (2013), by bridging democratisation and authoritarianism scholars, Geddes' works paved the way for the contemporary renaissance of the research programme on authoritarianism – after the classic studies by Linz (2000) and O'Donnell, Schmitter &

Whitehead (1986) – which is now more focused on strategic interactions, repression, co-optation and institutions, largely thanks to Geddes' academic journey. Following her ground-breaking contributions, many scholars have refocused on authoritarianism with actor-centred (Wintrobe, 2000; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Svolik, 2012), institutionalist or structural approaches (Magaloni, 2006; Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Pepinsky, 2014; Knutsen & Nygård, 2015; cf. Gerschewski, 2013, p. 17). Her dataset (ARD) is one of the most widely used sources for the study of authoritarianism and political regimes (as frequently cited by Magaloni, 2006; Hadenius & Teorell, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Svolik, 2012; Boix & Svolik, 2013; Schedler, 2013). In fact, the ARD, whose article remains among the top ten most cited in *Perspective on Politics*, has guided hundreds of papers of qualitative and quantitative research on authoritarianism and is fundamental for its empirical precision and theoretical thickness (Pepinsky, 2014).

More specifically, Geddes brought the study of authoritarianism to focus on crucial variables that had previously been ignored, such as the internal characteristics and institutions of dictatorships. Any new contribution to the study of autocracy or democratisation must now include this aspect, as well as considerations of the differences between autocratic and democratic spells and the impact of development on democracy. Her article on democratisation (1999) is also her most cited article on Google Scholar, with more than 2900 citations (out of more than 16000 for her profile) and is still one of the most used readings in academic courses on the subject, due to its clarity, informativeness and ability to integrate previous knowledge.

Geddes' innovation in political science represents a case of the evolution of political science from within the discipline, through the creative reworking and thoughtful problematisation of previous fields of inquiry, in a gradual and constant layering of new knowledge. In summary, we can list the following fundamental innovations of Geddes:

- The improvement of social science theories (on the state, revolution, party system, development, democracy, autocracy, etc.) by strengthening previous generalisations through global comparisons;
- Combining classificatory and causal research by carefully defining the scope of the analysis, the independent variable(s), the outcome and the overall causal pattern;
- The flexibility of the research design, which, although based on rational choice and quantitative techniques, remains broadly applicable;
- The rigorous application of the fundamentals of the comparative method in order to find common, though flexible and adaptable, standards for political science;
- The pursuit of knowledge – the gradual accumulation of theories with new findings – in order to formulate policy recommendations
- For the breadth and depth of her vibrant intellectual enterprise, Geddes has significantly innovated and advanced comparative politics. Accordingly, she deserves to be counted among the masters of political science: an inspiring example for contemporary and future comparativists.

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