

Research Statement

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My research examines how ideas, identity and culture shape patterns of political order, both within countries and internationally. Substantively, my work has addressed the role of shared economic ideas in the formation of international institutions, as well as the causes of nationalism and its effect on state-building, secession, resistance to military occupation, and broad voting patterns across Eurasia. My published or forthcoming work to date consists primarily of two books and several articles. I am currently working on two new book projects, one on state-building and another on imperial legacies. Each of these works falls in a growing area of research at the intersection of international and comparative politics.

My first book, *Economic Liberalism and Its Rivals*, which was released in February 2009 by Cambridge University Press, draws upon the distinctive conditions created by the collapse of the Soviet Union to demonstrate that a set of shared economic ideas underpin states' support for international economic institutions. The book examines why the fifteen post-Soviet states, despite the many historical, institutional, and economic commonalities, have pursued such different courses with respect to membership in international trade institutions since they became independent in 1991. Relying on extensive use of closed ministerial archives, over 200 interviews with government officials in eight countries, and a novel cross-sectional time-series dataset that I created covering all fifteen countries over the first decade of independence, I chart the ideational changes in the region over time and show in detail how the changes in institutional membership result from shifts in ideas. The book combines a demonstration of historical contingency in the adoption or selection of economic ideas with a rigorous systematic analysis of the effects of those ideas on economic policy and institutional choice. It makes the case that states' institutional choices depend on the economic ideas of those who govern them, and that international institutions are formed on the basis of shared ideas. As a dynamic study of ideas and institutions over time, based on a relatively large number of countries in a controlled setting, the book presents both new theory and a distinctive method of research. The book was the recipient of the Hewett award in 2010, received an honorable mention for the Shulman prize, and was reviewed very positively in *Foreign Affairs*, *Perspectives on Politics*, and other leading journals.

My second book manuscript, *Resisting Occupation* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2011) examines the role of schooling in the formation of durable national loyalties. Drawing on a nested research design and a broad range of primary sources, the book argues that the national loyalties instilled in a population during the introduction of mass schooling—when a community shifts from an oral to a literate mass culture—produce a powerful and durable affective national tie. Once initially established through the schools, national identities are preserved and reproduced over time within families and reinforced by local communities in a way that makes these constructed identities highly resistant to significant change or elimination over time. As a result, I argue, if one knows the national content of the initial schooling in a community, this gives one remarkable power to predict how that community will align even more than a century hence.

Substantively, the book traces out the empirical implications of this argument across Eurasia to show that the nationalism instilled with the initial school content can predict which regions of a country will try to secede, which will engage in insurgencies or resist foreign occupation when others acquiesce, why some areas vote for nationalist parties when in other districts appeals to nationalism fail to mobilize popular support, and why the Communist party was defeated electorally in some countries rather than others. This latter component of this project—a demonstration of the link between pre-communist schooling, nationalism, and the rejection of Communist parties—was published in *World Politics* and in 2008 received the Luebbert Award for the Best Article Published in Comparative Politics in 2006 or 2007.

At the core of the book lies a natural experiment using two provinces in the Carpathian mountains to test for the enduring effects of school content on national loyalty. The two neighboring provinces were virtually identical to one another at the time schools were introduced to the area, but because they were divided by a (previously arbitrary) internal boundary within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they received very different national content in the curricula when their populations were first schooled. Drawing on archival work, field interviews, and a broad range of census and voting data, I show that while the two provinces remain similar to one another over the subsequent 120 years in terms of social structure, wealth, and a variety of other potential variables, the different loyalties of the population instilled with initial schooling lead these provinces to diverge at key points in the 20th century: in the initial interwar elections, in whether they take up armed resistance against Soviet or German occupation in the Second World War, whether they support secession from the Soviet union in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and whether they vote against the Communist party in the first free elections. The result is a clear demonstration of the durable effects of national school content, controlling for other variables of interest. The book extends this argument and examines the relative importance of initial schooling with respect to other variables with an examination of all of the provinces in the USSR, and also takes the argument outside of the Eurasian context to see how far it travels and to better ascertain the scope conditions of the argument.

Both of my book projects have been general theoretical works with an empirical focus on the Eurasian region, and I expect that Eurasia will continue to be the “natural laboratory” at the core of my empirical research. In part, this is because the region is ideal for examining the questions that drive my research. The borders shift, there are multiple imperial legacies in close geographical proximity, and the Communist experience—particularly the Soviet experience—imposed a high degree of formal institutional commonality across a region that was previously quite diverse. As a result, one can disentangle the effects of formal institutions from ideas and culture more easily in this region.

Regional specialization is also consistent with my general approach to scholarship. I have chosen to deepen my substantive knowledge and to rely primarily on experimental and quasi-experimental research designs in combination with archival and field work. Narrowing the empirical focus to Eurasia, at least for some critical component of the research design, has allowed me to better apprehend, measure, and incorporate the historical, cultural and other variables that are typically unobserved in accounts that rely on standard variables and more proximate causes. It has also permitted me to engage in the kind of careful tracing of causal processes to better identify whether and how these factors produce the posited effects.

This is a direction in which I hope to play a more general role in moving the field. It was a desire to pull the field in the direction of greater primary research on problems of substantive interest that led me to develop the Problems of International Politics book series at Cambridge University Press, which I co-edit with Ian Shapiro. The series privileges works which rely on extensive data collection from original source materials rather than pre-existing datasets and is particularly targeting field and archival work conducted by the author on questions of substantive interest that fall between the traditional fields of international and comparative politics. The incentives of the field often work against the creation of such works, and our intent has been to create incentives for original, deeply empirical works that have a long shelf life and will be of enduring importance both to scholars in our field and the broader intellectual community.

Research in Progress

In addition to exploring how some of the arguments made in “Resisting Occupation” can be extended to explain interstate boundary disputes and also to problems with state-building in post-colonial settings, I am currently working on two new research projects.

State-building

I am currently working on a variety of topics related to state-building in contemporary settings. One ongoing project (with Harris Mylonas, a former student who now teaches at George Washington University) looks at international state-building and nation-building efforts. The project started with concerns that in policy circles there was inadequate knowledge of how third parties could facilitate state-building in contemporary contexts. We were particularly concerned by the widespread view that the path to stability in cases like Iraq and Afghanistan was to increase the size of the police and the army. In the lead article in a forthcoming (March 2012) special issue of *Ethnopolitics* entitled, “The Promethean Dilemma: Third Party State-Building on Occupied Territories,” we argue that an increase in the numbers of people who are trained in the arts and implements of force does little, on its own, to build the capacity of the state or to increase order. We posit that the primary task of building a state is the establishment of an effective administrative hierarchy. If efforts to build coercive capacity precede efforts to build loyalty and administrative hierarchy, we argue that the result is more likely to be a future civil war. We are now in the process of extending the analysis in the article to examine the broader history of efforts by outside powers to build, coopt, and maintain administrative control over territory.

“Imperial Footprints”

Another of my current research projects looks to identify and explain imperial legacies. More specifically, I am working on a project to explain why regional voting cleavages fall along 19th Century imperial boundaries in Poland, Romania, and Ukraine.

If you look at voting patterns in these three countries over the past decade, one immediately sees sharp regional patterns. Moreover, as the electoral systems mature, the regional voting patterns appear to be solidifying and getting closer to the boundaries of the Empires out of which these countries were constructed at the beginning of the 20th Century. The correlation between imperial boundaries and contemporary voting is so close that the best predictor of which party would win an electoral district in the 2007 legislative elections in Poland was whether

that district fell within the Prussian partition prior to 1918. The same was true for the most recent Romanian elections, which were dominated by a distinction between formerly Habsburg and formerly Ottoman (Moldavia, Walachia, Dobrogea) sections of the country. Although Ukraine's imperial legacies are more varied and complex than any other country in Eurasia, Ukrainian elections are increasingly divided between the former 18th-19th Century Russian Imperial Province of Novorossija, or "New Russia" (in the South and the East of the country where the pro-Russian Party of Regions party is dominant) and the "Orange" center and West. If one examines the attached maps, the spatial patterns are readily apparent. An explanation is more elusive. Why do 18th and 19th Century Imperial boundaries provide the best predictor of voting behavior in the 21st Century in the largest countries in Central Europe?

After initial work on this question during my leave in 2008-2009, I conducted an initial round of field interviews and data collection this past summer in Ukraine. Following some initial interviews and data collection in Odessa, I spent the next month interviewing respondents in the villages and towns along a 100km stretch of the former imperial/voting divide in Ukraine. I spoke to villagers about how voting worked in their areas and which parties or candidates they supported and why. As it became clear that party machines were playing an important role in the voting, I interviewed political party strategists and operatives on both sides of the divide, as well as the teams of "agitators" who engage in vote-buying and other forms of mobilization during the elections. From regional electoral office archives I collected village-level polling data and locations from the past two elections along both sides of the imperial boundary. From the electoral returns it became clear that the division was exceptionally sharp, such that not only was one party winning the broader districts, but extending its majorities to all of the villages within the district as well.

My initial findings suggest that two factors play an important role in determining the imperial voting pattern: regional political culture and the strength of the region-wide party machine. The two are related. I argue that the regional political culture, which in this specific case refers to attitudes towards Russian culture, is a product of the imperial legacy. In the Novorossija province, because the strategy of the Tsarist empire was to colonize the new territory it acquired from Ottoman empire, the nobility was Russian, the schools were typically in Russian, and peasantry therefore had a greater attachment to and identification with Russia and Russian culture. Areas to the north of the imperial boundary were annexed from Poland at the end of the 18th Century, and had Polish nobility which resisted the education of the peasantry and worked to block cultural developments that would lead to greater association with Russia.

These distinctive regional cultures then shape the character of the party organizations that succeed in the region. Issues that pertain to Ukraine's political and cultural relations with Russia (NATO, EU membership, language policy) are salient in contemporary Ukrainian politics, and pro-Russian parties have

developed stronger party machines in the provinces of Novorossija and more Ukrainian- and pro-Western parties have developed machines in the formerly Polish imperial territories. These machines—through their superior organization and vote-buying resources—are then able to secure the vote of those voters with much weaker preferences. The result is that the party machines then extend and harden the majorities for the dominant party within an imperial region, sharpening the regional distinction over time and leading to a stronger “imperial footprint” in the electoral results. This interaction between regional political cultures, issue salience, and party organizations appears to be the link between the 19th Century boundaries and contemporary voting patterns.