Take-Home Exam in POL 2014:

Comparative Politics Spring Semester 2018

**General information:**

The take-home exam will be sent to the candidates on Monday, 26 February 2017 at 09:00 a.m. The deadline for submitting the exam is Friday, 2 March 2017 at 14:00 (2 p.m.) at the ISS reception. An electronic copy must also be submitted on Blackboard. The exam should be submitted in two copies, stapled, with course code and title (POL 2014: Comparative Politics), a title to your paper, and a CANDIDATENUMBER (NO NAME!) and a WORD COUNT.

**Specific information:**

Choose one of the three exam questions to answer below. The paper ought to be between 3000-5000 words. Standard style is Times New Roman 12 point, 1.5 line-spacing, and references in the text as well as at the end of the paper. You are expected to draw on the assigned readings. You may cite additional references, including books, reviewed articles, reliable internet sources etc. You are allowed to speak to fellow students, and to contact your lecturer if you have questions concerning the exam-question: (charles.butcher@ntnu.no). Plagiarism or other types of cheating is strictly prohibited at NTNU. This policy applies to this take-home exam. Incidences of plagiarism could result in being expelled from NTNU.

**Exam Key**

An important point is that the exam is designed to test, primarily, the material that was covered in the pensum. In theory, the students should be able to write a ‘A’ exam with only a very small amount of additional research. Students do not get extra marks for considering theories and works on democratization that we did not cover in the course (this probably indicates that they did not show up to class or follow the course).

All good exam responses will do the following:

- Be expressed clearly with few spelling mistakes or errors of grammar.
- Be referenced properly with page numbers when quotations are referenced or specific ideas come from specific parts of the text
- Be well structured with a coherent logic through the text
- Make an argument that is consistent throughout the text.
- Engage critically with theory and evidence using the ‘hurdles to causality’ model discussed in class.

Exam Questions:
1. In 2017 Tunisia was characterised as a democracy while Egypt was not. Prior to the Arab Spring, both were undemocratic regimes. Using the theories from the course, what best explains this difference? Use these cases to critically assess the explanatory power of the theories you discuss.

For this question the students basically need to demonstrate that they understand the theories from the course, including their causal mechanisms. They then need to be able to operationalize them in these two cases and identify what is similar and what is different and identify those things that are different (i.e vary) as possible causes. Really good answers will also explain the causal mechanisms underpinning these theories and find evidence on them and use this evidence to differentiate between different theories. Good answers will also be able to make an argument that one or another of these factors is the best explanation for the difference (not, they all matter a little bit). Other good answers might imply an interaction of sorts, but the main thing is that the conclusion they make is actually implied by the evidence that they present. I.e a worse response would make a claim that a particular factor mattered when the evidence suggests it does not.

These theories are (more or less):
- Economic decline (B+S, parts of H+K)
- Inequality (Acemoglu and Robinson, Boix)
- Capacities for collective action (H+K, parts of M+S)
- Authoritarian institutions (H+K, Magaloni, Geddes et al)
- Revenue sources (B+S, H+K)

2. Does the type of authoritarian regime (military, single party, monarchy, multiparty) impact the prospects of democratic transition? Use two case studies to critically assess the impact of authoritarian institutions on the prospects of sustainable democracy.

The response to this question is actually similar to question 1 except the students must understand deeply how the theories in the course connect authoritarian regime type to the prospects of democratization (and sustainable democracy). B+S don’t at all (except insofar as
the size of the winning coalition correlates with authoritarian types), while H+K, Magaloni and Geddes all do. The first part of an excellent answer will be demonstrating not only that they understand that authoritarian institutions were connected to the prospects of sustainable democratization in the course, but the reasons why (i.e the causal mechanisms). The connections are also not straightforward and the students will need to connect theories of short term and long term democratic transitions. For example, being a military regime increases the prospects of short term democratization but reduces the chances of long term democratization. However, military regimes tend to have ‘distributive’ transitions which produce better ‘quality’ democracies in the future and so on. How coherently the students can present these theories should bear on the mark. If they identify there are somewhat mixed predictions for some regime types, and this is justified, that is fine.

On the empirical side the best responses will show a method for picking their cases. A ‘matched’ case study set up would probably be best, with variation on the independent variable (i.e perhaps one case a military regime and one a multi-party, or something like this) and as much constant across the two cases as possible. Again, the best responses will use evidence that relates to the causal mechanism. If they can pull off a most different design, I’m okay with that.

As with the previous question, the inferences have to actually following from the evidence they present. Really good answers will provide specific sources of uncertainty for their conclusions. Of course, to the best of your knowledge the material in the case studies needs to be accurate, relevant to the theories and referenced.

3. What are the causes of sustainable democratic transitions in Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2016)? Critically assess these claims with reference to the main readings in the course. Use examples.

In B+M these are basically a dependence on taxation income (as contrasted to non-tax income, oil, aid, etc), economic crisis, the ability of the masses to overcome collective action problems, and coming to power on the back of a diverse winning coalition (i.e diverse revolutionary movements break ‘the iron law of oligarchy’.)

The students should then use the other material in the course to engage critically with these claims. We covered a critique of B+S in the course (Gallagher et al) so material from this needs
to be included. A second main point is that B+S don’t differentiate well between types of authoritarian regimes and this seems to matter for sustainable democratization (see H+K, Magaloni, Geddes), so their theory is incomplete. Some of their claims find support in other works we covered in class (capacities for collective action proxied as manufacturing as a % of GDP in H+K, economic growth in some model specifications in H+K, diverse coalitions in H+K) while there is very mixed, even contradictory support for others (Aid as a % of GDP, natural resource wealth in H+K). The best responses will reflect on what this means for how useful selectorate theory is of democratization in general. The answers should also engage with theories of democratic reversion in H+K.

The best answers on this question will critically assess both the logic of selectorate theory and the evidence for its claims. So there is a stronger emphasis on examining the concepts and logic in this question than the others. My sense for this question is that selectorate theory (as we read it) has problems with explaining democratization on a theoretical level because the masses are powerless in the model, yet most democratization occurs in the context of protest or armed conflict, and they claim that protest can matter later on. In general the actual propositions for what should be correlated with democratization find some mixed support in the other works we covered.