

BACKLASH AND BACKSLIDING

Examining the connections between gender,
militarism, and democracy over time

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11 May 2023

Word count: 5,434

Abstract

Almost all progress toward democratization since the end of the Cold War has been eliminated. The trend toward autocracy corresponds with a global trend of backlash against women's rights. These processes occur in the shadow of increased military tension between great powers. This study aims to examine the connections between these three phenomena through quantitative analysis. Militarism and gender attitudes are aggregations of deeply held societal preferences and values and these preferences and values influence a state's susceptibility to democratic backsliding. Findings from 122 countries between 2000 and 2021 reveal that gender parity is a stronger indicator of present democratic integrity while militarism is a stronger predictor of democratic backsliding over the last 20 years.

I. Introduction

Theorists have long believed that democratization and industrialization were linear teleological processes that do not double back on themselves (Mounk, 2020). It stood to reason that women's rights should progress in the same way because democracy empowers women to organize and lobby democratic institutions for change (Tripp, 2013). However, women's rights are being rolled back by regimes worldwide, and democracy is also eroding at an alarming rate. Waves of populism and nationalism are evident across Europe, and persecution of minority populations in countries throughout Asia and the Middle East is increasing largely unchecked by the international community. It is clear that processes once thought to be irreversible like democratization and expansion of women's rights can indeed regress, and that they are doing so at an alarming rate.

According to data collected and analyzed each year by Varieties of Democracy (Alizada et al., 2021), global levels of democracy have decreased so much since their peak in the early 2000s that the global level of democracy had fallen back to its 1989 level. Global democratic backsliding has received a great deal of attention in recent years as its effects begin to extend beyond third-wave democracies. Populist movements and strong-man authoritarian leaders have gained traction in countries in Western Europe and North America that were previously thought

to be stable democracies. Tunisia, which VDem listed as its “top democratizer” in 2021 (Alizada et al., 2021), is now an autocracy after Tunisian President Kais Saied made a sudden power grab in 2022 (Ghannouchi, 2023). The sudden regime change in Tunisia surprised many who saw it as the last hope of the Arab Spring. Other former democracies like Turkey and Hungary have been steadily marching toward authoritarianism for years; concerns about democratic backsliding in India, Brazil, and Nigeria add to the litany of woe. While a large body of research on modernization theory (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997) and regime transition (Dahl, 1972) has examined and theorized the necessary prerequisites for the emergence of democratic governments, comparatively little is known about the conditions that lead to their degradation. It is apparent though that rather than simply being a reversal of democratization, democratic backsliding is a process with different causes, prerequisite conditions, and beneficiaries (Teorell, 2010 p.25).

II. Literature Review

Gender and Democracy

The rise of authoritarianism in the last twenty years has accompanied slowed progress on women’s well-being and inclusion. In many states where authoritarian leaders are eroding or eliminating democracy, women’s rights are also at risk. A recent analysis of 338 maximalist campaigns examined the role women play in resistance movements (Chenoweth, 2019). Data suggests that women’s involvement in these movements leads to a greater probability of success (Chenoweth & Marks, 2022). However, if these movements fail, women’s involvement leads to severe backlash against women’s rights under the surviving authoritarian regime. Chenoweth and Marks suggest that authoritarian leaders understand women’s impact on pro-democracy

movements and actively seek to hinder women's participation in civil society and activism. Policies limiting access to reproductive healthcare restrict women's economic opportunities, confine them to traditional domestic roles, and contribute to political marginalization. Chenoweth and Marks point out that patriarchal authoritarian leaders rail against "gender ideology" and gender identities outside of the Western gender binary that might subvert the traditional roles and characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity.

Gender and the Military

The values, beliefs, and characteristics classified as masculine and feminine vary across cultures, but socialization for masculinity is universally prevalent in modern militaries (Fergusun, 2021). Researchers posit that this is because characteristics associated with childbearing and nurturance, such as compassion and domesticism, are considered female traits and are thought to render women unfit for combat. Nonetheless, many states have integrated women into their armed forces. Some, such as Israel and Singapore, compel both women and men to serve in their state military for a specified period of time. Some experts, including Titunic (2008), argue that militaries do not encourage masculinity and aggression but rather camaraderie, discipline, and service, and that these values counteract sexism. However, women in the United States military continue to face sexual harassment and discrimination (Benedict, 2007). Women in the Israeli military report similar experiences (Rakhamilova, 2023). Both the U.S. military and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) provide evidence that women's inclusion in the military does not mitigate tendencies toward hierarchy and hypermasculinity; the division of labor according to gendered roles persists within both military organizations (Sasson-Levy, 2011).

Gender and the dimensions which define it enable the examination of a society's values and preferences. For this reason, gender has critical implications for individual identity and for larger social processes. Changes in defense policy in the European Union have led to discussions about the gendered relationship between the EU and the United States and their respective military forces (Hoijtink, 2020). During the Cold War, the United States stressed hard power and military build-up while several of the larger EU states including Germany, France, and the United Kingdom pivoted toward economic and cultural influence for values projection. As a result, the relations within NATO between the United States and EU states took on a gendered dynamic. The U.S. was the masculine protector, and the EU was feminized as a result of its weaker emphasis on hard power (Sjoberg & Via 2010 p. 33). Today, EU states are perceived to prefer negotiation, diplomacy, and peaceful resolution and to be more likely to appeal to international institutions while the United States has demonstrated a preference for coercion and military intervention.

It is possible that general discomfort among male voters with perceived feminization of national identity is shared and exploited by heads of state and that such attitudes fuel the surge of right-wing populism and patriarchal autocrats in Europe in recent years. Also notable is the fact that many European countries have increased military spending in the last several years (McKinsey & Company, 2022). The trend of increased defense spending is not limited to European states. Between 2000 and 2021, the percentage of global defense spending in Asia and Oceania increased from 18% to 28% (Hawkins, 2023). This increase is likely a response to the increasingly unstable, multipolar distribution of global power as the relationship between China and the United States grows increasingly competitive and Vladimir Putin displays aggression and eagerness to form ties with the authoritarian Iranian regime. Since the outbreak of the war in

Ukraine in 2022, European states have contributed significant military resources to the Ukrainian forces for their national defense in the war against Russia.

Militarism and democracy

Militarism in this paper refers to a state's preference for a strong military and the social and cultural values that shape this preference. Definitions of militarism in academic literature vary widely. The selected definition for this study is influenced by Beatty et al. (2007) who define militarism as “a propensity to employ a strong military force in establishing military power.” While the preferences underlying militarism may vary across time and cultures, there are several socio-political characteristics that are often present in individuals whose preferences are militaristic (McCleary & Williams, 2009). These include conservatism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and punitiveness. McCleary et al. (2015) found that these characteristics are much more strongly correlated with militarism in the United States than they are in South Korea. This finding suggests that the values and preferences underlying militarism vary between states. McCleary et al. found that the individual personality-correlate “authoritarianism” emphasizes “law and order, submission to authority, suppression of divergent thinking, adherence to Biblical principles, unilateral support for wartime policies”. Individual preferences can help describe a state or society's values, but they may also predict decision-making by heads of state. Horowitz and Stam (2014) found that leaders who had served in the military but had not seen combat were more likely to initiate armed conflict than those who had seen combat or those who had no military experience at all. Such scholarship makes it reasonable to expect that greater military influence in politics would promote the hyper-masculinity and hierarchy that characterize military culture.

Civilian oversight of the military is a critical factor in determining regime success and longevity. The ideal balance of civilian and military power is achieved when the military is “strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do” and “subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do” (Janjua, 2010). Historical precedent and norm establishment play critical roles in the establishment and strengthening of civilian oversight of the state military. Kenwick’s examination of the relationship between civilian oversight and regime stability finds that civilian control, which he defines as “the extent to which civilians dominate political decision-making and the robustness of this dominance to military involvement in politics,” is a self-reinforcing phenomenon (2020). Kenwick introduces the passage of time into his analysis of the stability of civilian control of government and finds that it has a significant impact. Kenwick theorizes that norm-establishment and learning among the military elite are the causes underlying this relationship. Civilian oversight is related to democracy as it represents a check on the power of the military. A government that sees a need to limit and monitor the military may be more likely to limit and monitor their executives as well.

A society may also express its attitude toward the military through its choice of elected leaders. Building on Horowitz and Stam (2014), this study will examine the head-of-state’s history of military experience but does so in order to assess societal preferences rather than individual actions. Nonetheless, in competitive electoral regimes, it is reasonable to assume that the electorate selects a leader whose values align with their own and therefore that the leader’s actions should broadly anticipate their wishes for fear of electoral backlash otherwise. Thus, a democratically elected leader with militaristic preferences should reflect a broader societal pattern. This assumption, however, does not necessarily apply in regimes that do not hold competitive elections. Civilian control of the military is another means of assessing militarism in

a society based on the assumption that a society that sees a need to limit the power of the military might not embrace hierarchy and hypermasculinity in governance and society.

Combined effects of militarism on democracy on gender equality

While there are bodies of literature linking militarism to regime type and gender attitudes to regime type, the only notable examination of these three concepts together is a research paper published by UN Women examining militarism and democracy. One of the four hypotheses presented and tested in that paper is that “The negative impact of militarization on gender inequality is weaker in countries with a higher democracy level” (Elveren, 2022). The author suggests that increased defense spending causes reduced spending on healthcare and education and that funding cuts for these programs disproportionately affect women. Elveren found that the negative impacts of increased defense spending on women were less pronounced in more democratic states. However, this relationship was not significant among high-income, Islamic, and MENA states. Elveren theorizes that entrenched conservative family laws and economic dependence on oil in Islamic and MENA countries limit the benefits women receive from social programs there. He does not offer an explanation for why the mitigating effect of democracy on the negative effects of militarization on gender equality is not significant among high-income countries. Notably, Elveren uses the Global Militarization Index (GMI) to quantify militarization and the Polity Index to quantify democracy. He combines the UNDP Gender Equality Index and the OECD’s Social Institutions and Gender Equality Index to quantify gender equality.

Case Analysis: Turkey

Backlash against women's rights can take many forms. The US Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision was shocking and produced a swift response from reproductive rights supporters (Sun N., 2022). However, in many cases, backlash is a much slower and more insidious process. When the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey, it was not an Islamist party and it pledged to expand civil liberties in anticipation of an EU alliance (Arat, 2022). The 1980s and 1990s were a time of robust action by women in civil society organizations, and these movements were bolstered by Turkey's EU candidacy. During the AKP's first term beginning in 2002, it implemented reforms for gender equality. Recep Tayyip Erdogan was Prime Minister at the time and signaled his support for the establishment of shelters for women facing gender-based violence. The AKP implemented penal reforms that mandated more severe punishments for sexual crimes against women, but these reforms and their consequences for perpetrators went largely unenforced. Thus, Erdogan and the AKP's concern did not bring about meaningful change for women in Turkey. It did, however, succeed in strengthening ties between Turkey and the EU through the signaling of progressive values.

The AKP once again returned to the issue of gender equality in 2010 in an effort to pass a referendum that included changes to the structure of the high court. Previously, the high court had remained a secular institution and thus presented an obstacle to the AKP's Islamist agenda. The referendum was put to a popular vote and a substantial majority voted for its passage. Thus, the AKP was able to begin a gradual takeover of the courts while ignoring entirely the gender equality measures included in the referendum. After the 2010 referendum, Erdogan and the AKP began passing increasingly paternalistic measures to encourage women to occupy traditional domestic roles. By increasing maternal leave, the AKP made women less attractive to employers. During this time Erdogan's government began rolling back civil liberties and limiting press

freedom. The AKP steadily re-implemented components of Sharia law and severely limited women's rights in marriage. With the courts in hand, the AKP continued consolidating power by replacing secular institutions with new Islamic ones. These new institutions reinforced paternalistic familialist policies and oversaw the continued rollback of women's rights. Gender policies promoted "gender justice" rather than gender equality in order to reinforce the separate but "complementary" roles of men and women.

The AKP consolidated power in the hands of the executive throughout the 2000s and 2010s. President Erdogan led this effort and has remained the head of the Turkish government since he was first elected. During his time as president, Erdogan has also overseen the rapid growth of an indigenous Turkish defense sector which has gained international attention due to the war in Ukraine (Witt, 2022). Turkish defense and aviation exports increased from \$248 million to \$3 billion between 2002 and 2019, and the number of Turkish defense companies has increased from 56 to 15,000 (Demir, 2020).

III. Theory and Hypotheses

This study centers its analysis around the state of democratic institutions. The decision to exclude electoral processes and outcomes from the analysis was made in accordance with the assertion that many third-wave democracies began holding elections as a means of signaling in order to appeal to the interests of the international order at the time (Daxecker et al., 2022). The inclusion of electoral indicators might skew results in favor of electoral autocracies where elections are held but government institutions are not democratic in character. While elections are a critical aspect of a representative democracy and are centered in much of the existing literature studying democracy, national elections are not held yearly and the status of national

elections in many states where democracy is fragile may change from year to year. Democratic institutions take longer to build and are less subject to change from year to year. A free press, an independent judiciary, and an effective legislative body can all serve to halt the consolidation of power under the executive, and for this reason, they are stronger indicators of a state's susceptibility to democratic backsliding. The press and the judiciary in particular also appear to be among the first targets for heads of state with authoritarian tendencies.

There is strong evidence to suggest that militaries are often hypermasculine and hierarchical in nature (Fergusun, 2021; Sasson-Levy, 2011). Masculinity frequently incorporates characteristics like dominance and aggressiveness as well as unwillingness to compromise. These characteristics would seem to favor an authoritarian regime over a democratic one. For this reason, the first hypothesis in this study is:

H1: There is an inverse relationship between the degree of military influence in a state in the early 2000s and the integrity of the state's democratic institutions in 2021.

The second hypothesis reflects an assumption that a state which dedicates more resources to the military believes more firmly in the value and nobility of the military and might prioritize militaristic values over democratic ones. These values may contribute to the erosion of democracy over time. Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

H2: There is an inverse relationship between military influence in the early 2000s and the change in democratic institutions' integrity between 2000 and 2021.

This study also seeks to assess the relationship between gender attitudes and democratic institutions. There is a tendency to assume that women's rights and inclusion are an outcome of democratization because greater equality is an outcome of democratization. This assumption fails to recognize that there are democratic states where rates of violence against women remain high

and financial and political inclusion is severely limited. While a state may hold elections and have *de jure* equality for women, societal attitudes toward women may take longer to change. Gender equality in a society is developed over many years, like institutional integrity and civilian oversight of the state military. This study theorizes that this is true because gender equality, institutional integrity, and civilian-military oversight are all reflections of much more deeply held values and preferences. As Kenwick states, norm formation and learning by elites take years. In order for civilian control over the military to persist, the military elites must be convinced that an attempted coup would not succeed. This study theorizes that the same framework of learning by elites over time can be applied to those who would seek to roll back women's rights or degrade a state's democratic institutions. For this reason, hypotheses 3 and 4 are:

H3: There is a direct relationship between gender equality and the integrity of the state's democratic institutions in 2021.

H4: There is a direct relationship between gender equality and the change in a state's democratic institutions' integrity between 2000 and 2021.

IV. Method

This study operationalizes democracy with two different variables. One is a composite score describing the integrity of democratic institutions in 2021. The other measures the change in this value between 2000 and 2021 (to be referred to as "demdelta"). The first value measures the present state of democratic institutions while the other measures the degradation or improvement that has occurred in the last twenty-one years. Both of these measures are included in response to Teorell's assertion that the factors that lead to the development of democracy and

the factors that sustain it are not necessarily the same. The 2021 indicator includes four sub-indicators taken from the International IDEA Global State of Democracy dataset (International IDEA). The value “effective parliament” measures executive oversight by a legislative body (Tuffis & Hudson, 2022). “Judicial Independence” measures the degree to which the judiciary (high and low courts) operates independently of other political actors. “Media Integrity” measures the degree to which the media is able to cover and publish diverse perspectives free of government censorship. Finally, “Free Political Parties” measures the ability of parties (opposition parties in particular) to form freely and run for office. These indicators all assess an aspect of institutional integrity. The four selected indicators were combined into a single indicator through factor analysis (Tuffis & Hudson, 2022).

Factor analysis was completed for the 2000 data (Figure 1) and the 2021 data (Figure 2), and the difference between the values or demdelta represents the change in democracy over time. Because a higher democracy index score corresponds to greater institutional integrity and $\text{demdelta} = \text{demindex2021} - \text{demindex2000}$, a negative value for the demdelta score indicates institutional degradation while a positive value indicates institutional improvement.

Figure 1

Variable	Factor1	Factor2
frepolp~2000	0.37304	-0.11504
legover~2000	0.12792	0.23890
judindep2000	0.04008	0.27086
mediain~2000	0.35897	0.12364

Figure 2

Variable	Factor1	Factor2
frepolp~2021	0.45081	-0.13620
legover~2021	-0.09132	0.41463
judindep2021	-0.11312	0.50977
mediain~2021	0.53243	-0.09352

Militarism is also operationalized through a combination of four factors. The first is the Global Militarization Index (GMI) which examines defense spending, firepower, and the portion of a state’s population serving in the military (vonBoemcken et al. 2022). GMI is measured in

2000 in order to assess its impact over time. The second component is a binary variable examining whether the head of state in 2000 had served in the military. These data are taken from 2000 from Horowitz and Stam (2014). The third component is a binary variable for whether the state has the legal capacity to compel civilians to serve in the military. This variable was coded based on data from the World Population Review (World Population Review, 2023). The final component is the dynamic measure of civilian oversight of the military taken from Kenwick (2020) which incorporates the impact of time on the strength of civilian control. Factor analysis is used to produce a single value for a country's militarism score with the weightings listed below in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Variable	Factor1	Factor2
normalizeGMI	-0.01239	0.31732
milservice	0.39969	-0.09342
Compulsory~e	0.03731	0.36783
ccs_dyna~c00	-0.44209	-0.09538

A similar method to the two described above was used to develop an index for gender attitudes. The gender index includes three values taken from the 2017 Index for Women Peace and Security developed by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. The legal inclusion index, financial inclusion index, and security index in addition to the 2017 sex ratio were combined into a single value through factor analysis with weightings listed in Figure 4.

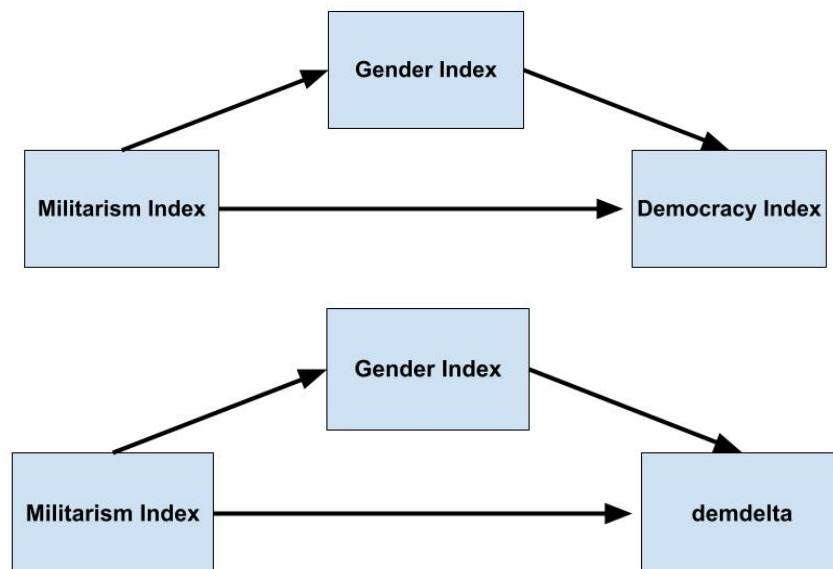
Figure 4

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3
Financials~g	0.01150	0.25498	0.27445
Legalstring	-0.31264	-0.72916	0.67389
Sexratiost~g	0.04946	0.36584	0.22359
Justicestr~g	0.67422	-0.83928	0.57406

Control variables for this analysis were chosen based on Teorell's discussion of demographic and economic conditions that favor democratization (2010, pg. 24-27). These variables include total population, unemployment, access to cell phones, GDP per capita, and urban population.¹ Data for these metrics were obtained from the World Bank's World Development DataBank.

This study employs a combination of ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models and mediation analysis through structural equation modeling in order to examine the relationships between militarism, the status of women, and institutional democratic integrity. 2021 democracy score and change in democracy score ("demdelta") are the dependent variables in all regressions and models. For the mediation analysis, the Militarism Index is the independent variable and the Gender Index is the mediating variable. This mediation analysis is conducted using structural equation modeling in STATA. These equations are modeled in Figure 5.

Figure 5



V. Results

¹ GDP per capita and total population are logged.

The first set of regression results pertains to the dependent variable, demdelta (Figure 6). The regression table below includes five models. The first tests the relationship between the gender index and demdelta. The negative correlation coefficient suggests that improvements in women's status correspond to reductions in institutional integrity ($p < .001$). This finding runs counter to what was originally hypothesized, but in all models, the correlation coefficient for the Gender index is low suggesting that this measured effect is small. Model 5 includes the Gender index and the militarism index. The only variables with statistically significant relationships with demdelta in this model are population and the Militarism Index. This finding affirms the emerging trend of greater democratic resilience in smaller countries (Papada et al., 2023). These findings also suggest that militarism is a stronger predictor of institutional degradation than gender attitudes. Model 5, which included the Militarism Index, Gender Index, and all control variables has an adjusted R-squared value of 0.15. This suggests that even when both indices and all controls are included, this model can only explain 15% of the variation in demdelta scores among the countries in the sample.

Figure 6

VARIABLES	(1) Model 1	(2) Model 2	(3) Model 3	(4) Model 4	(5) Model 4
GDP per capita (log)				-0.07 (0.09)	-0.14 (0.10)
Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)				0.02*** (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Population (log)				-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)				0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
percentage urban population				-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Gender Index	0.49*** (0.05)		0.46*** (0.06)		0.42*** (0.07)
Militarism Index Score		-0.41*** (0.08)	-0.16* (0.08)		-0.13 (0.09)
Constant	0.01 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)	0.02 (0.05)	0.70 (0.86)	0.46 (0.83)
Observations	165	130	130	162	129
Adjusted R-squared	0.36	0.16	0.42	0.20	0.43

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Notably, when the same models were estimated for demdelta scores among NATO member states, the Gender Index was statistically significant with a correlation coefficient of .77 ($p<.05$). Additionally, when Model 5 was estimated for NATO member states, the adjusted R-squared value increased from .15 to .28. This suggests that the variables included in this model have much greater descriptive power for the demdelta scores of NATO states. Among NATO member states, the Gender Index was a stronger indicator of change in institutional integrity over the last 20 years than the Militarism Index. The opposite is true for non-NATO member states.

The same regression models used to assess demdelta were also estimated for the 2021 Democracy Index which examines the state of democratic institutions in 2021 (Figure 7). When tested independently, both the Militarism Index and the Gender Index had a statistically significant relationship with the 2021 Democracy Index.

Figure 7

VARIABLES	(1) Model 1	(2) Model 2	(3) Model 3	(4) Model 4	(5) Model 5
GDP per capita (log)				0.02 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)
Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)				-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
Population (log)				-0.06** (0.02)	-0.06* (0.02)
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)				-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
percentage urban population				0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Gender Index	-0.14*** (0.04)		-0.08 (0.04)		-0.03 (0.04)
Militarism Index Score		0.15** (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)		0.14* (0.06)
Constant	0.00 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.90 (0.52)	0.59 (0.55)
Observations	164	129	129	161	128
Adjusted R-squared	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.15

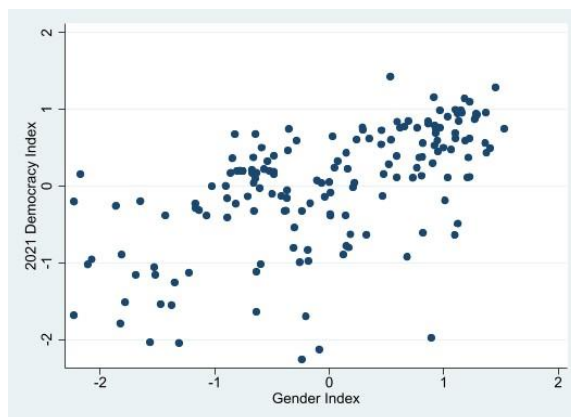
Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

The model that included only the Gender Index (Model 1) had an adjusted R-squared value of 0.36 while the model that included only the Militarism Index (Model 2) had an adjusted R-squared value of 0.16. This finding suggests that the Gender Index has greater explanatory power for the present state of democratic institutions than the Militarism Index. Model 5, which includes both indices and all five control variables, affirms this. The relationship between the Gender Index and the 2021 Democracy Index in Model 5 is significant at the highest level ($p<.001$) while the Militarism Index does not have a statistically significant relationship with the 2021 Democracy Index.

The second component of analysis in this study involves the structural equations modeled in the methods section. The output of the equation including the Militarism Index, Gender Index, and 2021 Democracy Index finds the indirect effect of gender on the relationship between militarism and democracy score is substantial and statistically significant. The indirect effect in this model has a coefficient of -0.254 ($p<.001$). By contrast, in the structural equation model with demdelta as the dependent variable, the indirect effect of gender on the relationship between

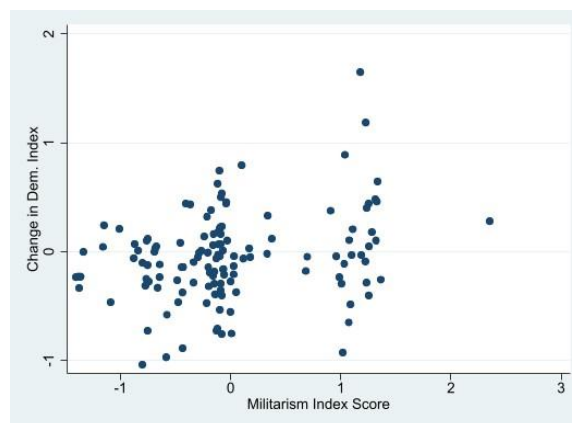
militarism and change in democracy score is much smaller and not statistically significant. The strength of the relationship between the Gender Index and 2021 Democracy Index scores is visible in Figure 7.

Figure 8



The strength of the relationship between demdelta and the Militarism Index is less obvious but still observable (Figure 8).²

Figure 9



There are two clusters around zero and one on the x-axis for this graph. This appears to be a result of the fact that two of the four components of the Militarism Index are binary variables. When analysis of demdelta is split between countries with a Militarism Index Score above 0.5

² Spearman's Rho = .396 ($p < .001$). Spearman's Rho value was used instead of Pearson's Rho because a Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that neither demdelta nor Militarism Index variables are normally distributed.

and countries with a score below 0.5,³ it becomes clear that the Gender Index is a much stronger predictor of demdelta among states with higher Militarism Index scores (Figure 9 & Figure 10).

Figure 10

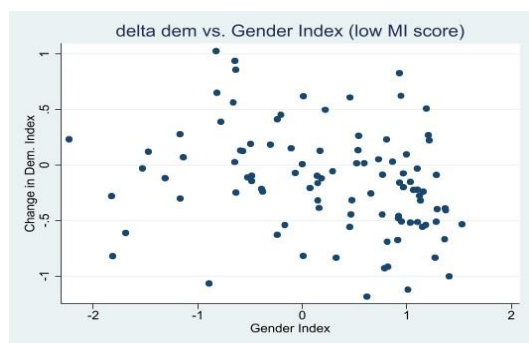
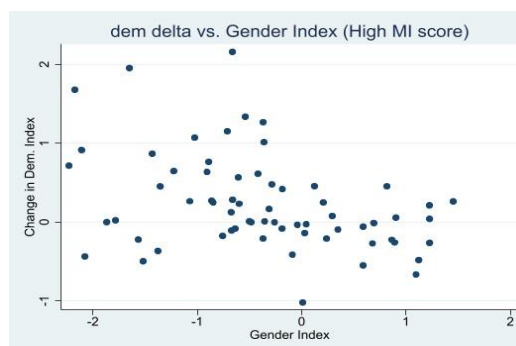


Figure 11



VI. Conclusion

The findings of the regression analyses and the structural equation modeling are sufficient to reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between militarism, gender, and the integrity of democratic institutions. Regression analyses performed for both dependent variables, the change in the Democracy Index between 2000 and 2001 and the 2021 value of the Democracy Index, reveal two different but significant relationships. The first of these is the statistically significant relationship between the 2021 Democracy Index value and the Gender index. Even when factors commonly associated with democratization like population, wealth, urbanization, and access to technology are controlled for, the relationship between the Gender Index and the 2021 Democracy Index is statistically significant with a correlation coefficient of .42 ($p < .001$). The Gender Index is a composite of values collected in 2017, and although causality cannot be established definitively, the time-lagged nature of the Gender Index suggests a strong relationship between these values and democracy scores four years later. The model including the Militarism Index and the Gender index (Model 3) has an R-squared value of .42

³ This value was selected because there is a clear separation between the two clusters around .5 on the scatterplot. Notably, the number of observations that fall below that line is much larger than the number of observations above it.

which is substantially larger than the R-squared value of Model 1 which includes only the Gender Index (.36). This suggests that while the relationship between the Militarism Index and the 2021 Democracy Index does not have the same level of statistical significance ($p < .05$) as the relationship between the Gender Index and the 2021 Democracy Index ($p < .001$), the Militarism Index does contribute substantially to the descriptive power of the model. The inclusion of the control variables in the regression increases the R-squared value from .42 to .43 indicating that the control variables do not meaningfully improve the descriptive power of the model.

The results of the demdelta regression analysis describe a very different set of relationships. In the model that includes only the Gender Index and the Militarism Index, the Militarism Index has statistical significance ($p < .01$) while the Gender Index value does not. This suggests that the Militarism Index score from the 2000s is a stronger predictor of demdelta than the 2017 Gender Index score. While the inclusion of control variables added little to the descriptive power of the first set of regressions, their inclusion in the demdelta regression increases the R-squared value from 0.09 to 0.15, a substantial increase. Of particular note is the fact that when Model 5, which includes both indices and all control variables, is estimated only with countries that are not members of the NATO alliance, the R-squared value increases to 0.27 and the Militarism Index and population values are statistically significant ($p < .05$). When the same model is estimated with NATO member states, the R-squared adj. value (adjusted for small sample size), is 0.29 and only the Gender Index value is statistically significant ($p < .05$). This finding suggests that the Militarism Index score is a stronger predictor of democratic backsliding than the Gender Index score for non-NATO member states while the opposite is true for NATO member states. This finding also speaks to a flaw in an assumption made about militarism in this study: there are a number of stable democracies, many but not all of them NATO member states,

that spend a large portion of GDP on defense but also have well-established mechanisms for civilian oversight of the military.

A comparison of the regression analysis results of the two dependent variables appears to affirm the claim that the factors that lead to the development of democracy are different than the ones that contribute to its survival. While the 2000s Militarism Index was not a strong predictor for the present condition of democratic institutions, it is a fairly strong predictor of the change in the integrity of these institutions over the last 20 years and this is especially true among non-NATO member states. Mediation analysis for both dependent variables demonstrates that the relationship between the Militarism Index and the 2021 Democracy Index is mediated through the Gender Index. The coefficient of this indirect effect is -0.25 ($p < .001$). On the other hand, mediation analysis of the relationship between the Militarism Index and the Δ values reveals almost no indirect effects of the Militarism Index mediated through the Gender Index. This path has a coefficient of 0.043 and is not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

The regression models in this study use the maximum sample size possible with the available data. The primary limiting factor in this study is the availability of GMI data⁴ and Kenwick's civilian-oversight data.⁵ However, even the regression models with the lowest sample size include data from 129 countries. Nonetheless, the adjusted R-squared values are reported instead of the R-squared values in response to the incompleteness of the sample. Another possible limitation in this study is the potential for error introduced by each data source. This analysis incorporates data from six different sources each of which, in turn, are developed from their own various information sources. While some of these measures are quantitative while

⁴ Countries excluded from the GMI data include Cuba, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Haiti, Iceland, Togo, Liberia, Eswatini, Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea. Many of the excluded states are authoritarian states with low scores for both the Democracy Index and the Gender Index.

⁵ Countries excluded from Kenwick's dataset include Kosovo, Montenegro, Qatar and Yemen.

others rely on expert coding, each individual metric introduces additional potential for bias and error. Additionally, the differing regression results for NATO member-states and non-member-states indicate that there are factors that go largely unaccounted for in this study. These factors might account for variations in democratic integrity among wealthy countries with established democracies that also spend large portions of their GDPs on their state militaries.

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