

slide even in developed, long-time democracies? And how would this likely happen? Przeworski argues that democracy works best when there is something at stake in an election, but not too much (chapter 9). Deep societal/political divisions are therefore dangerous, as the stakes will be too high. It may make governments more willing to go to extreme lengths to win on election day and to avoid making concessions to the opposition. In such divided democratic societies, we have seen in recent years how parties have changed electoral maps and rules to increase their odds of winning and how the voices of independent media have been muted. Many of these changes may, in and of themselves, not constitute a clear and visible break with democracy. They may not even constitute a breach of the constitution or any formal law. That does not make them any less concerning, however, as many small, incremental changes that are made in the same direction can add up and have a large cumulative effect. The book convincingly demonstrates that democratic backsliding is not something that happens overnight. Rather, it is a gradual erosion of democratic norms and institutions (chapter 10).

In this regard, a key dilemma that Przeworski discusses at some length is what reaction we can expect from the voters who benefit from the policies of a government that gradually subverts democracy. These voters will receive the policies that they prefer in the short run, but this will come at the cost of (gradual) democratic backsliding. Partisan voters, even if they support democracy, may tolerate minor violations of democratic norms and institutions as long as the policies they are getting the policies they want implemented. But in the long run the cumulative effect of many minor violations will be decisive. It will become apparent that a red line has been crossed; that democracy is in peril. Przeworski teaches us that, as voters who care about democracy, we should

not accept *any* violations of democratic norms, even if the result of the violations is policies that conform to our ideological convictions. There is something bigger at stake. In that sense, the discussion of the future of democracy should be considered as essential reading for any democratic citizen.

Overall, *Crises of Democracy* is an essential reading for anyone interested in the current state of affairs in consolidated democracies. The book engages with many difficult and complex questions, but it does so in a very accessible way. The book should thus strongly appeal to academics and non-academics alike who care about democracy and are worried about the current state of affairs.

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**Isabela Mares and Lauren E. Young:**  
*Conditionality & Coercion: Electoral Clientelism in Eastern Europe*  
Oxford 2019: Oxford University Press,  
352 pp.

Along the sinuous course of post-communist transitions, the (re)construction of electoral democracy has meandered from 'in-exorable optimism' (p. 4) to stalemate simultaneous challenges [Offe 2004], to unexpected Euro-success [Vachudova 2005] and recent 'backsliding' [Vanhuyse 2006, 2008; Greskovits 2015]. While a highly developed literature dissects most of these developments, some underlying phenomena that cut across porous conceptual boundaries, have remained under-researched. Picking up the gauntlet, Mares and Young delve into the intricacies of 'electoral practices premised on coercion or offers of contingent favors' as a gateway to raising 'broader questions about the achievements and shortcomings of democratic elections

in CEE' (p. 4). In their rich contribution, Mares and Young deploy a complex set of quantitative and qualitative methods so as to zoom in on the illicit practices that mar 'everyday electoral practices' (p. 5) in Romania and Hungary.

To begin, Mares and Young accurately sum up that when it comes to electoral practices, the otherwise vast literature on post-communist democratisation typically boils down to an over-reliance on eliteitudes and on the programmatic linkages between parties and the electorate (p. 5). Although both resource-based and informational explanations offer rich accounts of the nature and use of clientelism, according to the authors the neat split between existing literatures underestimates the scope of agency (p. 33). To address this, Mares and Young propose a layered understanding wherein actors oscillate even within the same country and same party, based on resources used (public vs private) and the way in which they structure incentives (positive vs negative reinforcement) (pp. 17–21, Chapter 2). A first notable contribution to the literature is therefore that it shows how access to state resources enables clientelism, but neither necessitates nor fully explains it (p. 35). Rather, incumbency, co-partisanship with the national incumbent, the political fragmentation of local councils, and/or the magnitude of constituencies and their internal strife over social benefits increase the chances of state resources being deployed for clientelistic strategies (p. 35). This creates the analytical space for a secondary crucial contribution: it explains the co-constitutive relationship between informational explanations and resource-based accounts (pp. 39–41).

To pursue such a comprehensive agenda, typically difficult because of the illicit nature of the exchanges (p. 49), in Chapter 3 Mares and Young set out a multi-layered measurement strategy that combines traditional research methods with novel survey inquiries and experiments (p. 60).

To disentangle clientelism and patronage from the network of strategies pursued by post-communist parties (p. 49), the authors start with non-obtrusive surveys that aim to measure incidence (p. 49). This is supplemented with a qualitative analysis that dissects the micro-level strategies that constitute causal channels (p. 49). List experiments are then used to bring in further data regarding the way in which voters themselves respond to clientelism (p. 49), which candidates have factored into their evolving strategies.

Chapter 4 draws on and further contributes to recent studies showing that a scarcity of policy resources does not mean the elimination of electoral clientelism (p. 74). Specifically, in Romania and Hungary, neoliberal reforms have stripped many potential brokers, most notably mayors, of a wide array of resources. But the general economic scarcity has revamped anti-poverty policies into a highly potent tool (p. 75). In this sense, mayors can use either welfare programmes, welfare benefits, or, more broadly speaking, general administrative-political services as personalised favours that demand reciprocation through electoral behaviour (p. 80). As such, state employees can generally behave as brokers through political services at all stages of the campaign and election (p. 86). Because considerations on social desirability warp respondents' answers (p. 89), Mares and Young rely on an experimental choice-based conjoint design to unearth the important finding that clientelistic strategies are received heterogeneously across socio-economic groups (pp. 93, 99, 111). In this regard, while Hungary is shown to display some evidence for the 'supply-side factors' (political and economic) that condition the costliness of positive inducements such as policy favours, in Romania the connections to the electorate seem more spurious (p. 105).

Chapter 5 explores the scope of non-programmatic, negative reinforcements,

where candidates threaten to take away goods or access to specific incomes deriving from policy programs (welfare benefits) (p. 116). The crucial conveyor belt is that social policy programmes in CEE have been typically designed so as to allow mayors important room to manoeuvre in the allocation of benefits. This in turn opens up space for politicians to structure 'incentives as threats' (p. 114), against the pre-electoral background of 'turning a blind eye to a variety of illegal actions' (p. 122). Moreover, in order to make the threat credible, mayors qua brokers strive to project an aura of unlimited discretion over allocation, doubled by a perception of 'capriciousness, arbitrariness and ruthlessness' (p. 120). At the same time, however, the multi-layered analysis show that candidates do not have fully free reign, because there is a clear potential of electoral punishment directly linked to policy coercion (p. 137). While there is some support for the idea that poor economic local conditions are associated with higher coercion (particularly in Hungary), broadly speaking, supply-side political control is not fully causally linked with state-based forms of clientelism such as policy coercion (p. 145). Rather, the more consistent link that holds across both Romania and Hungary is that electoral strategies based on welfare coercion occur in localities that display a clear-cut cleavage vis-à-vis the existing policy status quo (p. 149).

Chapter 6 broadens the scope of the analysis of negative reinforcements, extending it beyond the level of policy-based coercion. In its broadest form, economic coercion ranges from direct money-lending to employer-employee relations and various types of lease and/or rental agreements (p. 151). The political entanglement typically appears from candidates who use the clout of 'enforcers' qua brokers for electoral favours in exchange for tolerating illicit activities (pp. 156, 163). Based on data from Hungary, where this phenomenon appears

to be more widespread than in neighbouring Romania (p. 168), Mares and Young find that while political control does not seem in fact to be associated with economic coercion, the latter is consistently associated with poor economic conditions (p. 169). In addition, similarly to policy coercion, economic coercion broadly defined is most often in localities fraught by high levels of conflicts with regards to the existing distribution of welfare and/or workfare programmes (p. 172).

Chapter 7 reassesses arguably the most studied component of clientelistic strategies – vote buying. The crucial issue here is that the unobtrusive techniques that yield a rich and encompassing picture of policy favours or different types of coercion can only offer an estimate of the scope of vote buying, without revealing much about effectiveness and causality (p. 183). To gain further insight, Mares and Young differentiate between targeted and non-targeted strategies. This offers a clearer picture of how vote buying differs from other clientelistic strategies that also politicise state resources (p. 173). Qualitative analysis, which disentangles the myriad of strategies, ranging from en-masse 'treating' to personalised 'bribing', reveals that while vote buying may appear common, it is not strategically deployed (p. 205) and is used rather as an amorphous supplement to other forms of clientelism (p. 174). On the surface, vote buying would therefore be expected to play an important role as a signalling tool, which is explored in depth through a survey-based experiment, embedded in a larger questionnaire fielded in rural Romania (p. 189). Interestingly, however, the data show that candidates who engage in vote buying 'are perceived as less desirable along a range of positive characteristics' (p. 194). This finding even cuts across voters' personal characteristics and ideological preferences (p. 199). As such, the comparable frequency between vote buying and more 'proven' strategies (p. 207) is likely at-

tributable to informal party organisations, which have thus far been critically under-explored (p. 214).

The crucial implication of Mares and Young's book is that the heterogeneity of clientelistic strategies can only be interpreted as a sign of shortcomings scattered through the entire scaffolding of post-communist democracies. Because none of the typical culprits from existing studies – political control, programmatic appeals, distributional conflict, etc. – can explain the full breadth of electoral clientelism, the authors advocate for nuanced policy countermeasures. Specifically, drawing on the recent Romanian approach through high prosecutorial intensity, Mares and Young suggest that the only way forward is to embed macro-level initiatives within multi-faceted strategies that impose harsh penalties for multiple manifestations of clientelism (pp. 216–217).

On the whole, Mares and Young's book impresses through analytical clarity and the research scope. The central argument – that clientelistic strategies intertwine programmatic and non-programmatic layers – represents a significant addition to conventional studies of post-communist transitions, because it opens up a flexible research agenda that blends in agency, structure, and contingency. The comparative angle gives the argument further potency as it juxtaposes developments from a 'transition laggard' like Romania, alongside those of a former 'poster-child' of success that has now turned into a topical case of backsliding, Hungary. The book's simultaneous dialogue with the literature on CEE transitions and with the scholarship on electoral clientelism sends out the strong message that many of the previous 'gold standards' in terms of methods and prescriptions require an deep reassessment.

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**Torben Iversen and David Soskice:**  
*Democracy and Prosperity: Reinventing Capitalism through a Turbulent Century*  
Princeton, NJ, 2019: Princeton University Press, 277 pp.

What is the relationship between democracy and capitalism? On the one hand, they seem to be in conflict. The democratic rule is 'one person, one vote', whereas in capitalism the rule seems to be 'one dollar, one vote'. On the other hand, democracy and capitalism have in most Western countries been in a convenient, albeit turbulent, marriage since the First World War, and the relationship has proved surprisingly resilient in the face of big economic and geopolitical disruptions throughout the century. This relationship is the topic of this bold book.

The book is bold because it goes against what can be described as the dominant contemporary view, in much of academia and the intellectual media, on the relationship between democracy and capitalism. That view goes like this: In contemporary capitalism, capital is global. Firms and banks can move investments around