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Do Migrants Transfer Political Norms? A Comparative Study of Arab Migrants in Democracies and Autocracies

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Abstract

Migration scholars debate whether migration can induce or contribute to the democratization of sending countries through financial and social processes. Focusing on the effects of migration on individuals, I address this debate by asking two questions. First, do migrants transfer norms to people in their country of origin, and do those norms differ based on whether their country of residence is or is not a democracy? To answer these questions, I conduct a unique survey of Arab migrants around the world to examine their interactions with their families and their political and social beliefs as they relate to their country of origin. I find that there is a systematic difference in the attitudes and behaviors of migrants living in democracies—they are more likely to discuss politics with people in their country of origin and more supportive of democracy and liberal values than those living in autocratic countries.

Keywords: Public opinion, Global South migration, survey, autocracies.

Introduction

Migration scholars debate the impacts of emigration on social and political developments in migrant countries of origin (COOs). Some research argues that migration encourages political participation, enhances demands for government accountability, and reduces clientelism (Escribà-Folch, Meseguer, and Wright 2022; Pfutze 2014; Baser and Swain 2008; Batu 2019). Other scholars, however, have found instead that migration lowers participation, reduces demands on government, lowers social welfare spending, strengthens authoritarianism, and may even prolong conflicts (Easton and Montinola 2017; Goodman and Hiskey 2008; Germano 2013; Regan and Frank 2014; Doyle 2015; Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012; Bird 2019; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Miller and Ritter 2014).

Given these disparate findings, a key debate in this literature revolves around the conditions under which migration has a positive impact on demands for democracy versus a negative effect. This paper addresses this debate by proposing that the qualities and characteristics of migrant countries of residence (CORs) are conditioning variables in the effects of migration

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on COOs. I ask whether the norms migrants adopt abroad differ based on the characteristics of their CORs, and whether they pass on those norms to family and friends in their COOs. By norms, I mean ideas and practices related to governance, politics, and society. Pro-democracy norms are positive attitudes towards democracy and a desire to participate in democratic processes. Autocratic norms support the maintenance of autocratic government and discourage challenging existing power structures. My argument is that the regime type of a migrant's COR—whether it is democratic or autocratic—will affect their individual experiences, including their support for democracy and liberal values and their propensity to discuss political issues with family and friends in their COO. Migrants living in democratic CORs will absorb and transfer pro-democracy norms, while those in autocratic CORs will absorb and transfer anti-democratic norms.

To test my argument, I examine the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This region is particularly suitable for this study because emigration is directed both towards the authoritarian countries of the Arab Gulf and towards democratic countries in the Global North. Using an original survey targeting Arab migrants, the Arab Migrant and Diaspora Relationships Survey (AMDRS), and collecting an international sample, I test differences in political and social attitudes between migrants living in democratic countries versus those living in autocratic countries. I also examine whether and how migrants discuss political issues or advocate for policies or politicians.

This study contributes to the literature on migration and democracy in two important ways. First, it advances our knowledge about migration between autocratic countries, something which is increasingly common but remains understudied. Many large-N studies do not differentiate between emigration to democratic CORs and autocratic CORs, and others specifically focus on COOs where most migration is directed towards democracies. Few studies address norm transfer from autocracies, and those that do often rely on a single case.

Second, this paper focuses on processes of norm adoption and transfer by examining the relationship between migrants and people in their COOs, how they stay connected, the topics they engage in, and how their experiences in their COR influence their opinions on politics in their COOs. Due to data limitations, norm transfer from migrants to people in the COO is often assumed and proxied for by observable links, such as remittance receipt. Single-case studies support this assumption and operationalization. Less studied is the nature of migrant relationships with people in their COOs and how regime characteristics of the COR may affect those relationships. Thus, this paper can help explain the inconsistent findings on migration and democratization that are prevalent in the current literature.

This paper proceeds as follows: Firstly, I present key findings in the prevailing literature and my theoretical expectations. Next, I discuss the development and fielding of AMDRS. Thirdly, I present results from my analyses of this data and discuss their interpretation. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of my findings, their limitations, and avenues for further research.

Literature and Theory

Technological advances over the last 30 years have made it much easier for migrants to keep in touch with family and friends in the COO, access news and other information from the COO, and send money and goods home to support their families (Ashraf et al. 2011; Dedieu

et al. 2013; Lu and Villarreal 2021; Paarlberg 2017). This trend is reflected in the transnational political landscape, where increasingly it is the norm for states to adopt dual citizenship policies, allowing migrants to retain the citizenship of the COO and the privileges that come with it (Vink et al. 2019), including voting rights. In fact, expatriate enfranchisement has become increasingly common as financial remittances from migrants have increased in importance to developing countries (Erlingsson and Tuman 2017; Leblang 2017).

Migrants' social and political engagement in their COO comes with, and is motivated by, the norms and ideas that they become exposed to in the COR. They adapt these norms into their own behaviors and expectations of people they remain connected to in the COO. Previous studies have examined this causal mechanism at the individual level through focus groups as well as municipal- or state-level surveys. In Mali, for example, migrants to France are more likely to view female genital mutilation negatively than those in other African countries (Diabate and Mesplé-Somps 2019), while in Egypt, Coptic charitable organizations based in the United States transmit American expectations of professionalism to local collaborators (Brinkerhoff 2009). Migrants thus expose people in the COO to changing expectations about good governance, accountability, transparency, and access to decision making, which in turn can contribute to demands for democracy. For example, Barsbai et al. (2017) argue that the fall of Moldova's communist government can be attributed in part to emigration to Western democracies, which precipitated the transmission of new political ideas, thus changing political attitudes and moving electoral preferences away from the Communist Party over time.

The potential for emigration to trigger democratic regime change has unsurprisingly motivated a focus on emigration to democratic countries. If transnational links can transfer democratic norms, those norms must originate in democratic countries and those links must therefore be with those countries. Levitsky and Way (2006) make this argument about the democratizing effects of linkage and leverage: their definition of linkage is "the density of ties and cross-border flows between a particular country and *the U.S., EU, and western-dominated multilateral institutions,*" which includes migration and diaspora communities (383; emphasis added). Much of the emigration literature also makes this logic explicit. For example, in a study of the effects of migration on democratic attitudes in Mexico, Perez-Armendariz and Crow (2010) state that they chose Mexico as their case because of the large volume of Mexican migration to the United States and Canada, noting the importance of the political socialization experienced by Mexican migrants that brings their political opinions closer to those of American and Canadian citizens. They conclude, "If our hypotheses do not hold in Mexico, they are unlikely to hold elsewhere" (125). Similarly, Cordova and Hiskey (2015) examine migration from Latin American countries to the United States specifically, dropping countries in the region with large diaspora populations in other countries from their analyses. They write that this focus "rests on the general assumption that most U.S. immigrants will experience a better functioning and more democratic political system than their home country political system" (1466).

The logic of this process can be summarized as follows: first, the migrant leaves a nondemocratic COO and moves to a democratic COR. Assuming they stay in contact with people in the COO, they also transfer new social and political norms. Through social remittances, recipients develop new attitudes about governance, which eventually culminate in behavioral changes that demand democracy.

However, this same logic cannot apply to migrants in autocratic CORs. This is increasingly important as migration within the Global South, and specifically within nondemocratic developing countries, is a rapidly growing phenomenon (Kapur 2014). The World Bank (2018) records that autocratic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, and Kuwait are among the top 10 remittance-sending countries in the world today.

There is some evidence that migrants can transfer norms from autocratic contexts. For example, in a comparative study of Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey, Fargues (2006) finds that Morocco and Turkey, where most remittances come from advanced democracies in Europe, have seen decreased birth rates, while Egypt, where most remittances come from the more socially conservative countries of the Arab Gulf, has seen increased birth rates. Similarly, Tuccio and Wahba (2018) find that women in migrant households in Jordan are more likely to hold traditional gender roles, which they attribute to conservative social norms transferred from the oil-producing states of the Arab Gulf through migrant links.

Migrants can therefore have an outsized effect on the politics and society of their COOs, but what those effects are and how and why they are exercised continues to be a matter of debate. While some case studies have presented evidence of a conditioning effect of COR regime type, large-N studies have not demonstrated this effect. In their large-N study of the effects of remittances on democratization, Escribà-Folch, Meseuger, and Wright (2022) find no evidence of a social norm diffusion effect, and conclude that the impact of remittances is financial, not social. However, they point out that their study cannot differentiate whether remittances motivate change *towards* democracy or simply *away* from the incumbent regime, even when emigration leads to democratization.

Thus, I ask two questions. First, do migrants in autocratic countries systematically adopt and transfer autocratic political norms and ideas? Second, how can we reconcile conflicting findings in the literature, where migration appears to have both positive and negative effects on democracy? A test of conditional effects can help answer these questions. If migration exerts effects on people in the sending COO through changing social norms, then a conditional effect should be evident. Migrants in democratic CORs will exhibit systematically different attitudes and behaviors than those in autocratic CORs. As a result, they will transfer a different set of norms than those in autocracies, and their effects on the attitudes and behaviors of people in their COO will be different.

This conditional argument begins with a migrant from a nondemocratic COO. In entering a new COR, the migrant becomes exposed to new political and social norms. In democracies, those norms should include open access to politics and liberal values, such as freedom of speech/expression, as well as more progressive social values such as gender equality. We may also expect that migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to discuss politics and express political preferences with people in their COOs, since they will become accustomed to greater freedom of speech around political issues. In autocracies, these norms will instead include unequal access to politics and conservative social values, thereby reinforcing whatever political norms the migrant enters the COR with from their COO. Migrants in autocratic CORs will also be neither more nor less likely to discuss politics, since they will not be exposed to free speech norms; instead, whatever disposition they had towards political expression will not change. Table 1 presents my hypotheses:

Table 1: Expectations of migrant attitudes and behaviors, contingent on regime type of COR	
H1a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to support democracy in their COO.	H1b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be less likely to support democracy in their COO.
H2a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to express liberal values compared to those in autocratic CORs.	H2b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be less likely to express liberal values compared to those in democratic CORs.
H3a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to identify democracy and good governance as important issues in their COO compared to those in autocratic CORs.	H3b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be less likely to identify democracy and good governance as important issues in their COO compared to those in democratic CORs.
H4a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be less likely to approve of the incumbent government in their COO compared to those in autocratic CORs.	H4b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be more likely to approve of the incumbent government in their COO compared to those in democratic CORs.
H5a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to report discussing political issues with people in their COO compared to those in autocratic CORs.	H5b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be less likely to report discussing political issues with people in their COO compared to those in democratic CORs.
H6a: Migrants in democratic CORs will be more likely to report taking political actions related to their COO.	H6b: Migrants in autocratic CORs will be less likely to report taking political actions related to their COO.

Data and Methodology

This study focuses on Arab countries as sites of both immigration and emigration. Regarding destination trends, Arab emigration can be categorized into three strands: first, migration from countries in the Levant and North Africa to the Arab Gulf after the discovery of oil in the 1930 (Lori 2019); second, migration to Europe in the post-WWII period in response to workforce needs in countries recovering from the war (Hahamovitch 2003); and finally, migration to settler colonial countries in North America and Oceania as racial restrictions were lifted in response to civil rights demands (Chin 1996). The UN records over 6.5 million migrants from MENA in the Gulf countries in 2020 and an Arab migrant stock of almost 10 million throughout Europe (UN Population Data 2023). Additionally, migration from MENA to settler colonial countries has increased by about 300,000 people every five years (UN Population Data 2023) over the last 30 years.

The Arab world is of particular interest to this study because these countries have persistently defied global trends towards democratization, despite favorable economic and social conditions (Cincotta 2015; Bellin 2012) and high support for democracy at the individual level (Benstead 2015; Tessler and Gao 2005). Even in more politically open MENA countries, governments use institutional regulations and incentives to obstruct the formation of coherent, policy-oriented political opposition (Buttorff 2015; Freedom House 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). The mass protests of the Arab Spring in 2011-2012 caught many scholars of the region off guard (Anderson 2011; Bellin 2012), and its subsequent failings have garnered much scholarly attention. This raises several questions regarding migration: do Arab migrants in democratic CORs adopt pro-democracy norms? And are those in autocratic CORs see autocratic norms reinforced?

To see whether and how migrants absorb and diffuse political norms to family and friends in their COOs, I conduct an original survey of Arab migrants around the world, the Arab Migrant and Diaspora Relationship Survey (AMDRS). This survey was administered online between September 21-December 30, 2022.[2] The survey, available in English and Arabic, asked questions about respondents' migration experience. Using this data, I examine whether and how migrants adopt political and social norms from their CORs and whether they transfer those norms explicitly through political discussion and action.

Survey respondents were recruited via Facebook and Instagram ads as well as targeted internet message boards and email listservs. Facebook has many advantages in recruiting research survey participants, including immediate and direct access to a large pool of participants, particularly in developing countries (Neundorf and Öztürk 2021). The AMDRS was taken by 1,054 people, but some responses were dropped because the respondent did not indicate a COR. Further, I dropped responses from COOs with less than five respondents, which included most of the migrant-receiving countries of the Arab Gulf as well as Turkey. The final number of observations in the dataset is 639, with 237 respondents living in autocracies and 392 living in democracies. Table 2 presents summary statistics for the AMDRS:

Table 2: Summary Statistics for Arab Migrant and Diaspora Relationships Survey

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
COO ccode	639	614.045	105.668	275	679
Democratic COR	629	.623	.485	0	1
Years residing	636	2.535	1.246	1	5
Suggested support for politician	131	.214	.412	0	1
Married	499	.643	.48	0	1
Visit COO frequency	627	1.914	.99	1	4
Family in COO	637	.958	.202	0	1
Speak to family frequency	598	5.458	1.639	1	7
Speak to friends frequency	591	3.865	1.927	1	7
Suggested support for party	131	.206	.406	0	1
Suggested support for policy	131	.305	.462	0	1
Remittance sending frequency	579	2.364	1.153	1	4
Remittance sending binary	579	.656	.475	0	1
Receipt frequency	579	1.33	.691	1	4

[2] Greater discussion of the survey and its administration is available in the Appendix.

Receipt binary	579	.212	.409	0	1
Vote in COO election binary	569	.165	.372	0	1
COO external vote	639	.421	.494	0	1
Male	498	.57	.496	0	1
Citizen of COR	498	.277	.448	0	1
Refugee	498	.135	.342	0	1
Intends return	269	.297	.458	0	1
College graduate	639	.761	.427	0	1
Employed	278	1	0	1	1
Muslim	498	.835	.371	0	1
Income situation	493	3.055	.826	2	4
Discusses politics	582	.234	.424	0	1
Discusses social issues	582	.397	.49	0	1
Discusses economic issues	582	.332	.471	0	1
Discusses personal issues	582	.674	.469	0	1
Discusses general issues	582	.742	.438	0	1
Important issue: economics	560	.623	.485	0	1
Important issue: corruption	560	.55	.498	0	1
Important issue: democracy	560	.248	.432	0	1
Important issue: human rights	560	.321	.467	0	1
Important issue: stability and security	560	.377	.485	0	1
Important issue: foreign intervention	560	.218	.413	0	1
Important issue: public services	560	.386	.487	0	1
Important issue: environment	560	.036	.186	0	1

AMDRS asks questions about the migrant's relationship with people in their COOs, their political behaviors, and their opinions about democracy and the incumbent government of their COO. It also collects demographic data, including education and socioeconomic status of respondents, which are strongly predictive of support for democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2010; Kapstein and Coverse 2008; Teorell 2012; Chu and Huang 2010) as well as political participation (Blais 2006; Larreguy and Marshall 2017; Owen 2009).[3]

Table 3 presents the hypotheses and the dependent variables questions used to test them.

I control for the strength of the respondent's connection with their COO, based on reported frequency of contact with their families in the COO and their interest in COO political and social issues. I assume that respondents who identify more strongly with the COO are more likely to have and express opinions about COO politics, regardless of whether the norms of their COR encourage political expression. This is to account for a possible self-selection effect; migrants who are more interested in politics and more supportive of democracy may be more likely to emigrate to a democratic country (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). If so, it may be that the respondent's interest in politics, rather than the regime type of their COR, is determining their support for democracy and disapproval of an authoritarian regime.[4]

[3] Complete text of the survey is available in the Appendix.

[4] Index components are included in the Appendix.

Table 3: Dependent variables questions per hypothesis	
H1ab	Agrees with statement: "People like me should support democracy in their country of origin."
H2ab	Disagrees with statement: "Censorship of films, television, and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards."
H3ab	Selects "democracy and representation" as one of 3 main issues facing COO
H4ab	Disagrees with statement: "People like me should support the government of their country of origin unconditionally."
H5ab	Reports talking about politics with people in the COO
H6ab	Reports suggesting that family and friends in the COO support a policy. Reports voting in an election (in countries that allow external voting) Reports donating to a social or charitable organization in their COO

Several demographic characteristics are thought to affect the connection between migrants and COOs, including poverty, education, and gender (Burgess 2014; Tsuda 2012). Additionally, migrants tend to orient themselves towards the COR over time, particularly once they obtain citizenship and start families, so I also control for age, years living in the COR, and social status (e.g., Waldinger and Duquette-Rury 2016), as well as remittance sending and receiving (Tsuda 2012).

I combine the AMDRS data with unemployment and GDP data from the World Bank on the COOs, averaging over the last five years, on the assumption that economic performance will influence migrants' views on their COOs' incumbent governments (de Miguel, Jamal, and Tessler 2015). I also control for whether the COO has provisions for expatriate voting, on the assumption that respondents who have external voting rights are more invested in the COO (Burgess 2014). I employ COO fixed effects to control for country-specific factors that are not captured by these macro indicators. I also set up the sampling design elements with the respondent as the single unit and their COO as the strata. No sampling weights were used since this requires a representative population dataset against which to weigh the data, and no such dataset exists for Arab migrants internationally. Instead, I specify the sampling design structure in the software program. I use logit and ordered logit models throughout, as applicable to the nature of the dependent variable.

Results

Table 4 presents several models testing H1ab. The first employs a simple model without country fixed effects or use of the survey sample design command. The second includes the same variables but uses the sample design command—all other models also use this command. The third model replaces individual variables measuring closeness to the COO and being informed about the COO with the indices discussed in the appendix. The fourth employs the indices and adds GDP per capita, averaged over the last five years, as a macroeconomic measure capturing each COOs wellbeing and economic performance. The final model adds to this country FE.

As shown below, living in a democratic COR increases the likelihood that a respondent will agree that they should support democracy in their COO. Figure 1 demonstrates the size of this effect in the country FE model. Living in a democratic COR decreases the likelihood that a respondent will express disagreement (1-2) or neutrality (3) with the idea that they should support democracy in their COO by 5%, and increases the likelihood that they strongly agree

with that sentiment by almost 12%, compared to migrants living in an autocratic COR. Thus, H1a and H1b are supported. Notably, feeling close to the COO and being informed about the COO, both as individual variables and as indices, are positively linked to support for democracy. This makes sense, since being interested in the COO should encourage more specific political opinions.

Table 4: Effects of COR regime type on support for democracy in the COO

Variables	*Simple model*	*Svyset model*	*With indices*	*With GDP pc*	*With Country FE*
Democratic COR	0.555**	0.555**	0.606**	0.621**	0.583**
	(0.208)	(0.209)	(0.212)	(0.212)	(0.224)
Remittance frequency	0.023	0.023	0.037	0.032	-0.001
	(0.082)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.091)
Close to COO	0.343***	0.343***			
	(0.079)	(0.090)			
Informed COO politics	0.383***	0.383***			
	(0.078)	(0.089)			
Age	0.161	0.161	0.173*	0.169	0.180*
	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.088)
Male	0.204	0.204	0.208	0.226	0.358
	(0.186)	(0.180)	(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.196)
Income situation	0.038	0.038	0.051	0.055	0.091
	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.105)	(0.107)	(0.108)
Education	-0.057	-0.057	-0.047	-0.044	-0.034
	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.053)
Married	-0.166	-0.166	-0.183	-0.183	-0.133
	(0.198)	(0.199)	(0.197)	(0.197)	(0.202)
Years residing In COR	-0.024	-0.024	-0.015	-0.005	-0.002
	(0.084)	(0.081)	(0.080)	(0.082)	(0.083)
COO Closeness index			0.111*	0.111*	0.114*
			(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.047)
COO Informed index			0.438***	0.431***	0.429***
			(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.101)
COO external vote				0.112	1.069
				(0.188)	(1.580)
COO GDPpc 5-yr average				0.000	0.000
				(0.000)	(0.000)
Svyset?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE?	No	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	457	457	458	458	458

*Note: standard errors in parentheses; +p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001*

Figure 1: Effect of living in a democratic COR on support for democracy in the COO

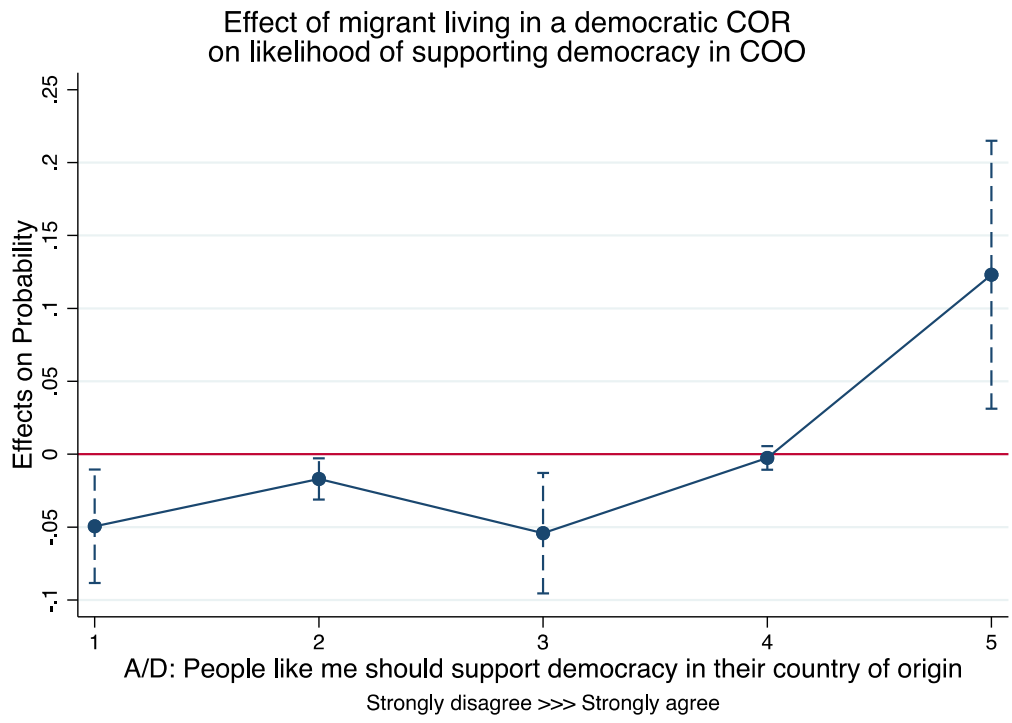
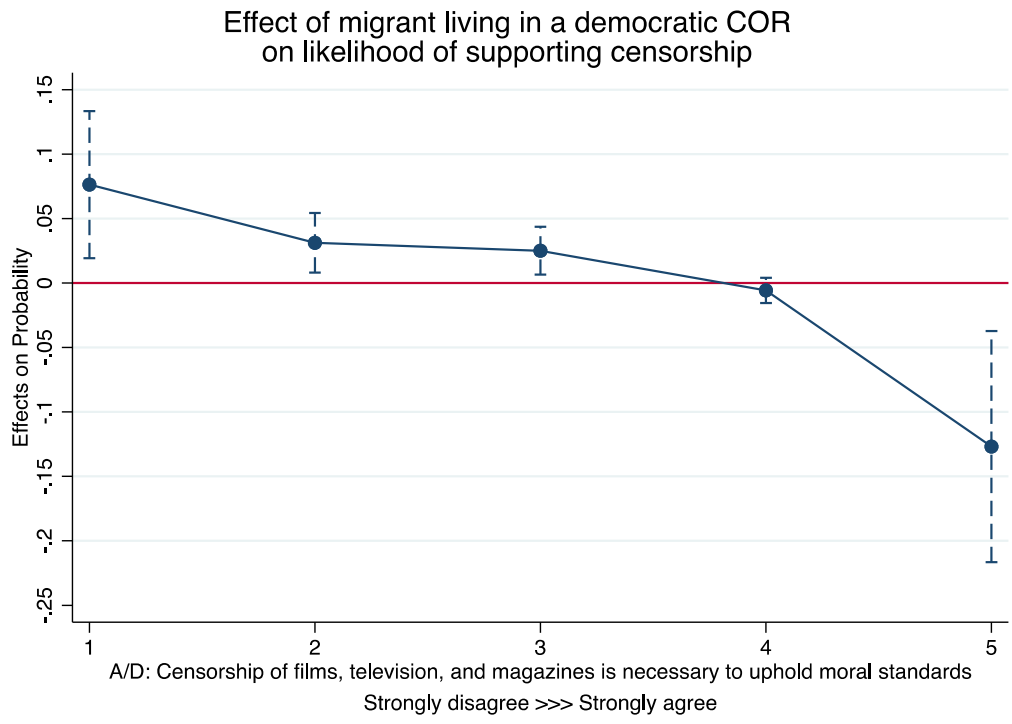


Table 5 presents the same models (excepting the first) testing H2ab. I use the statement "Censorship of films, television, and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards" as a measure of support for liberal values. I adapt this from Evans, Heath, and Lalljee (1996), who use "Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards" as part of a broader measure of libertarian/authoritarian attitudes among the British public. Respondents who live in a democratic COR see a decreased likelihood of agreeing with this statement compared to those living in an autocratic COR. Feeling close to the COO is positively associated with support for censorship, which may indicate that people who feel closer to their COO maintain more traditional or conservative values that would be associated with their COO. Being informed about the COO is negatively associated with support for censorship, however, which is consistent with what we would expect since these people may value free and open access to information. The control variables are also consistent with expectations, as people with more income and education are less likely to support censorship.

Table 5: Effects of COR regime type on support for censorship				
Variables	*Simple svyset model*	*With indices*	*With GDP pc*	*With Country FE*
Democratic	-0.723**	-0.671**	-0.606**	-0.664**
COR	(0.220)	(0.216)	(0.221)	(0.245)
Remittance	0.047	0.044	0.035	0.056
frequency	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.088)
Close to COO	0.376***			
	(0.083)			
Informed COO	-0.139			
politics	(0.075)			
Age	0.179*	0.165	0.157	0.153
	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.091)	(0.090)
Male	-0.039	0.002	0.039	0.045
	(0.181)	(0.182)	(0.183)	(0.189)
Income	-0.316**	-0.297**	-0.298**	-0.291*
situation	(0.110)	(0.110)	(0.110)	(0.113)
Education	-0.276***	-0.264***	-0.268***	-0.279***
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Married	0.401	0.424*	0.454*	0.451*
	(0.205)	(0.205)	(0.209)	(0.213)
Years residing	-0.037	-0.036	-0.014	-0.011
In COR	(0.092)	(0.093)	(0.094)	(0.096)
COO		0.214***	0.215***	0.216***
Closeness index		(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.046)
COO		-0.160	-0.173*	-0.177*
Informed index		(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.085)
COO external			0.438*	-0.359
vote			(0.189)	(1.442)
COO GDPpc			0.000	0.000
5-yr average			(0.000)	(0.000)
Country FE?	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	459	460	460	460
*Note: standard errors in parentheses; +p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001*				

Figure 2 shows that living in democratic CORs increases the likelihood that a migrant will report strong disapproval of censorship by about 8% compared to those living in autocratic CORs. Meanwhile, it decreases the likelihood of strong approval by about 12% compared to that latter group. Notably, the strongest effects are seen in expressions of strong agreement or disagreement, whereas there is a much smaller effect on more neutral positions. Thus, H2a and H2b are also supported.

Figure 2: Effect of living in a democratic COR on supporting censorship



Testing H3ab demonstrates a positive relationship between living in a democratic COR and believing democracy and representation are important to the COO. However, it is only weakly significant, and graphing the results shows no significant effect. I therefore find no support for H3a or H3b, and do not present these results. Instead, I show in Figure 3 the distribution of respondents reporting each of the issues as concerns for the COO,[5] segmented by COR regime type. We can see that the top concerns for all migrants, regardless of COR type, are economic conditions, corruption, and internal stability. In fact, democracy is the third *least* important issue for all migrants, ahead of only foreign intervention and the environment. Thus, there do not appear to be systematic differences between migrants in terms of the issues they identify as important for their COOs.

[5] Note that each respondent could select up to three responses, but some selected only one or two. Thus, these numbers are not reflective of the total number of respondents.

Figure 3: Important issues for COO, by COR regime type

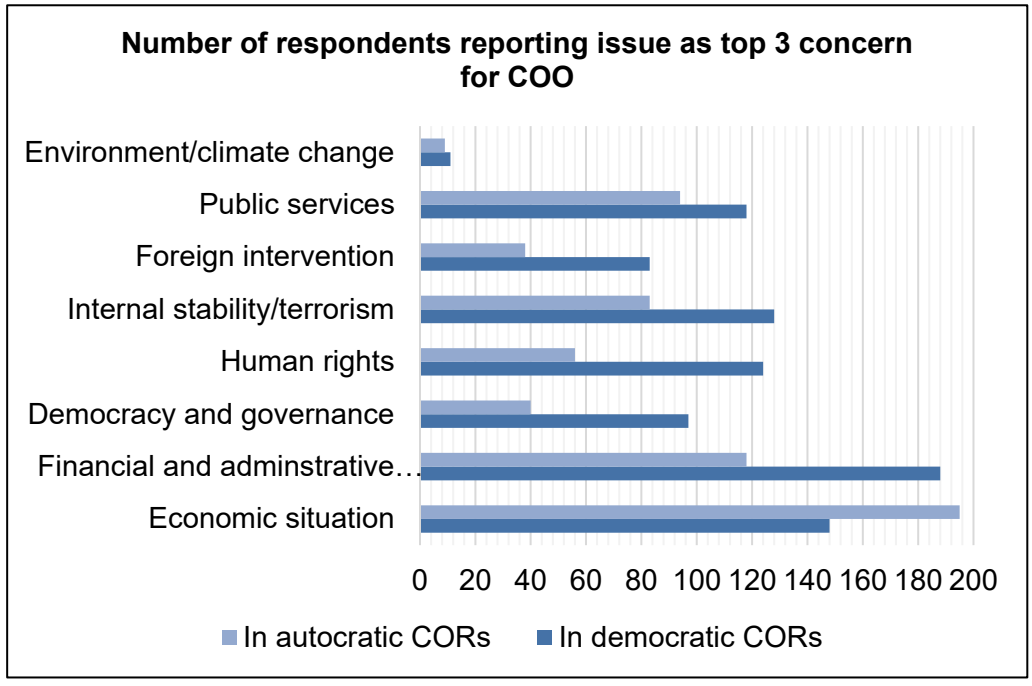


Table 6 presents tests of H4ab. Although there is some negative effect of living in a democratic COR on unconditional support for the COO government, the effect weakens as more variables are added and loses significance once country FE are added. Support for H4ab is thus mixed; further analysis, such as country-by-country split samples, could provide a more complete picture. Notably, people who feel close to their COO are more likely to express support for the incumbent government, which suggests that they may feel greater loyalty to the state as part of their COO identity.

Table 7 presents tests of H5ab. There is a strong positive relationship between living in a democratic COR and discussing politics with people in the COO. Figure 4 shows that living in a democracy increases the likelihood that a respondent will report discussing politics by over 20% compared to those living in autocratic CORs. Further, people who report being more informed about the COO are more likely to report discussing politics. There is thus strong support for H5a and H5b.

Table 6: Effects of COR regime type on unconditional support for incumbent government

Variables	*Simple svyset model*	*With indices*	*With GDP pc*	*With Country FE*
Democratic	-0.613**	-0.524*	-0.448*	-0.347
COR	(0.212)	(0.216)	(0.221)	(0.233)
Remittance	0.067	0.062	0.048	0.040
frequency	(0.090)	(0.092)	(0.093)	(0.097)
Close to COO	0.324***			
	(0.086)			
Informed COO	-0.051			
politics	(0.081)			
Age	0.031	-0.001	0.011	0.033
	(0.094)	(0.097)	(0.096)	(0.096)
Male	-0.154	-0.070	-0.091	-0.086
	(0.198)	(0.202)	(0.206)	(0.219)
Income	-0.027	0.001	-0.013	0.015
situation	(0.115)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.127)
Education	-0.076	-0.055	-0.101	-0.103
	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.059)	(0.061)
Married	0.022	0.045	0.098	0.080
	(0.224)	(0.227)	(0.230)	(0.238)
Years residing	0.030	0.057	0.022	0.015
In COR	(0.090)	(0.094)	(0.095)	(0.096)
COO		0.269***	0.268***	0.247***
Closeness index		(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.052)
COO		-0.125	-0.133	-0.133
Informed index		(0.090)	(0.093)	(0.092)
COO external			0.714**	2.050
vote			(0.227)	(1.633)
COO GDPpc			0.000	0.000
5-yr average			(0.000)	(0.000)
Country FE?	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	458	459	459	459

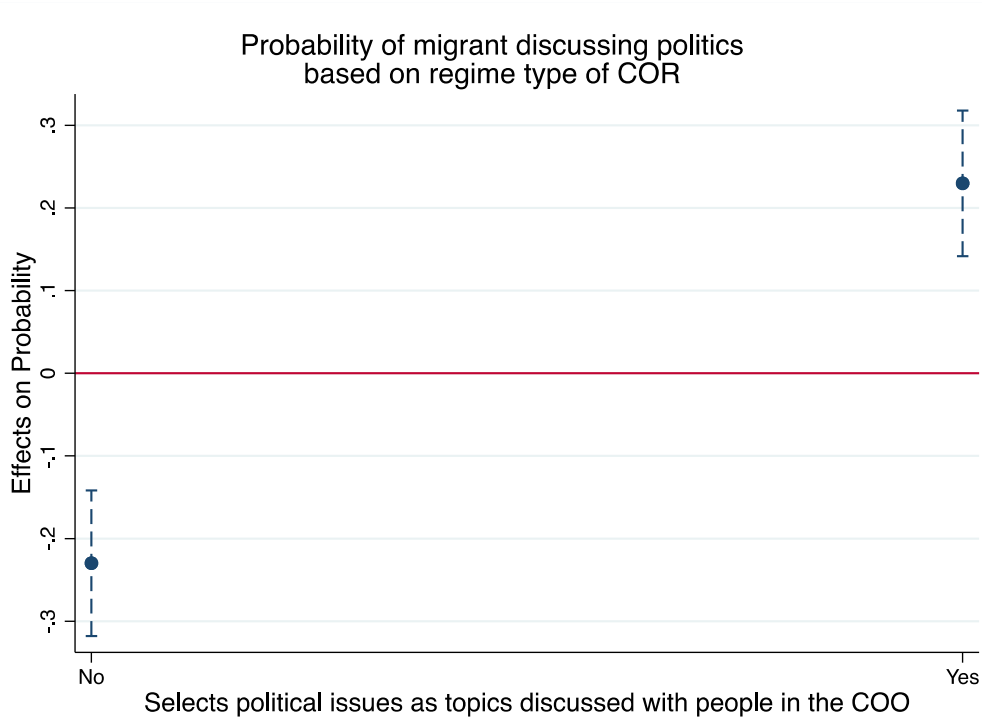
*Note: standard errors in parentheses; +p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001*

Table 7: Effect of COR regime type on likelihood of discussing politics with COO family and friends

Variables	*Simple svyset model*	*With indices*	*With GDP pc*	*With Country FE*
Democratic	1.296***	1.296***	1.371***	1.485***
COR	(0.298)	(0.298)	(0.296)	(0.311)
Remittance	0.209	0.206	0.227*	0.238
frequency	(0.109)	(0.110)	(0.113)	(0.121)
Close to COO	-0.022			
	(0.115)			
Informed COO	0.304*			
politics	(0.119)			
Age	-0.182	-0.181	-0.169	-0.172
	(0.111)	(0.111)	(0.114)	(0.119)
Male	0.569*	0.562*	0.497	0.470
	(0.258)	(0.259)	(0.261)	(0.269)
Income	0.164	0.152	0.112	0.119
situation	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.150)	(0.154)
Education	0.186**	0.184**	0.152*	0.144*
	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(0.073)
Married	-0.456	-0.485	-0.448	-0.500
	(0.271)	(0.272)	(0.275)	(0.286)
Years residing	0.154	0.162	0.120	0.120
In COR	(0.109)	(0.109)	(0.114)	(0.115)
COO		-0.016	-0.027	-0.047
Closeness index		(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.058)
COO		0.353**	0.376**	0.407**
Informed index		(0.131)	(0.138)	(0.140)
COO external			0.316	1.008
vote			(0.251)	(1.933)
COO GDPpc			0.000	0.000
5-yr average			(0.000)	(0.000)
Country FE?	No	No	No	Yes
Obs.	455	456	456	456

*Note: standard errors in parentheses; +p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001*

Figure 4: Effect of living in a democratic COR on discussing politics with people in COO



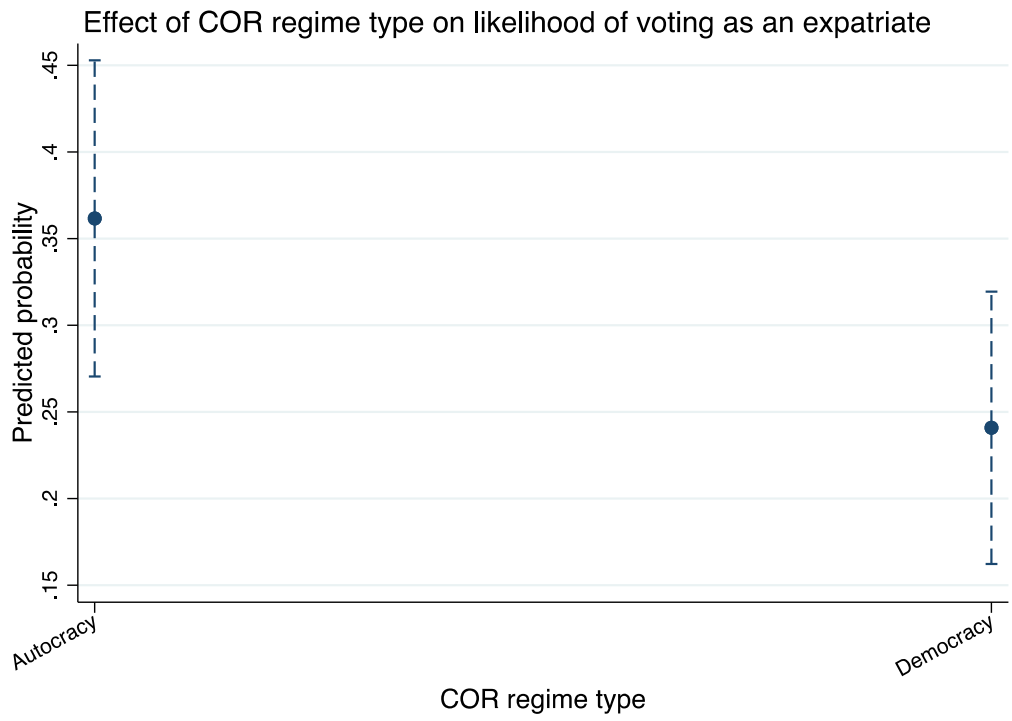
Finally, Table 8 shows tests of H6ab, using the country FE model across three variables: a binary variable recording whether the respondent has ever suggested to a family member or friend in their COO that they should support a political policy; an ordinal variable recording whether the respondent donates to social or charitable organizations in the COO; and a binary variable recording whether a respondent reports voting as an expatriate in a COO election in countries that have provisions for external elections. Living in a democracy is not associated with suggesting support for a policy in the COO or donating to organizations in the COO, and only weakly associated with voting externally. Figure 5 confirms that there is no significant effect, since the probability intervals on the likelihood of voting overlap across regime types. Thus, H6a and H6b are rejected.

Table 8: Effects of COR regime type on different types of political behaviors

Dependent Variable	*Suggested support for a policy in COO*	*Donated to a social/charitable organization in COO*	*External vote in COO election*
Democratic	0.790	0.099	-0.754+
COR	(0.634)	(0.235)	(0.420)
Remittance	-0.014	0.161+	-0.060
frequency	(0.217)	(0.092)	(0.166)
COO	0.168	0.106*	0.045
Closeness index	(0.122)	(0.043)	(0.078)
COO informed	0.394	0.127	0.320+
index	(0.333)	(0.096)	(0.190)
Age	-0.253	0.056	0.080
	(0.193)	(0.092)	(0.148)
Male	0.548	-0.109	0.943*
	(0.547)	(0.213)	(0.425)
Income	0.432	0.164	-0.039
situation	(0.327)	(0.121)	(0.232)
Education	-0.250	0.089	0.075
	(0.151)	(0.057)	(0.119)
Married	0.187	-0.020	0.327
	(0.508)	(0.215)	(0.408)
Years residing	-0.154	0.125	0.658***
In COR	(0.212)	(0.091)	(0.190)
COO	0.205	0.261	
External vote	(3.858)	(1.490)	
COO GDPpc	0.000	0.000	0.000
5-yr average	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	-4.049		-2.720
	(2.959)		(1.932)
Country FE?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	105	461	215

*Note: standard errors in parentheses; +p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001*

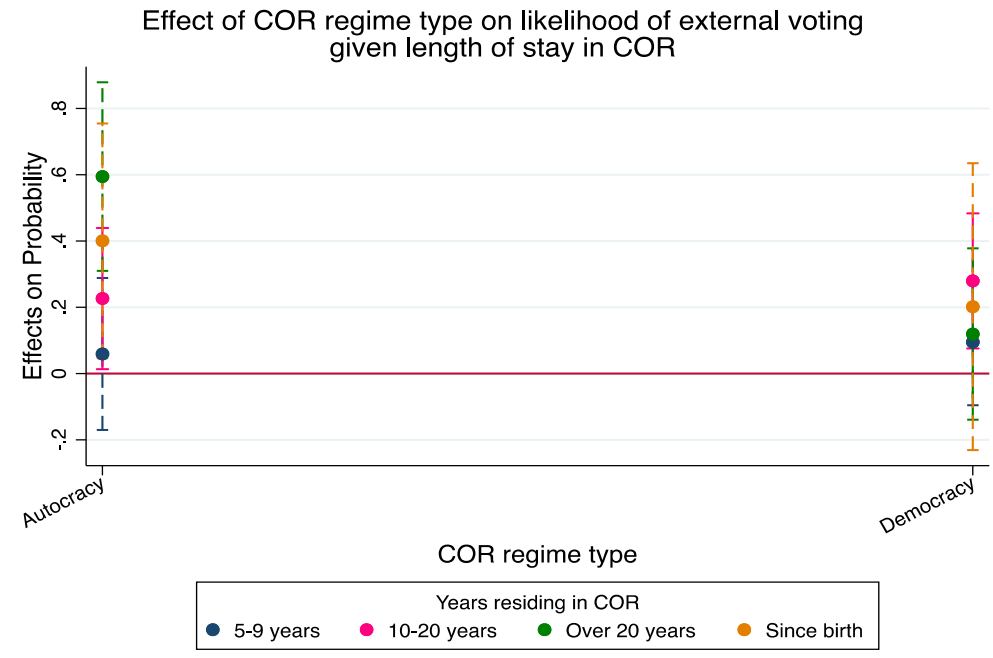
Figure 5: Effect of COR regime type on likelihood of external voting



Interestingly, the length of years residing in the COR is strongly and positively associated with the likelihood having voted in a COO election while living abroad. This goes against findings that migrants orient themselves away from the COO over time. To explore the possibility of the COR regime type conditioning the effect of years residing on the likelihood of external voting, I interact the two terms and graph the results. Figure 6 shows that longer lengths of stay increase the likelihood that a respondent reports external voting, but only in autocracies. Migrants in autocracies, and specifically the Arab Gulf, are unlikely to naturalize in their COR and usually return to their COO on retirement. Over time, they may become more oriented towards their COO because they have greater interest in the conditions in which they will face retirement and old age. Alternatively, this may be an artefact of the timing of elections and the small number of countries under consideration. To test this possibility, I replace the ordinal *years residing* variable with a binary *return intention* variable and interact it with the regime type variable. These tables are shown in the Appendix. While the COR democracy variable becomes significant at the 0.1 level in these models, the return intention variable is not significant, and neither is the interaction term. Also, the number of observations is cut by almost half, since over 45% of respondents said that they were unsure about whether they

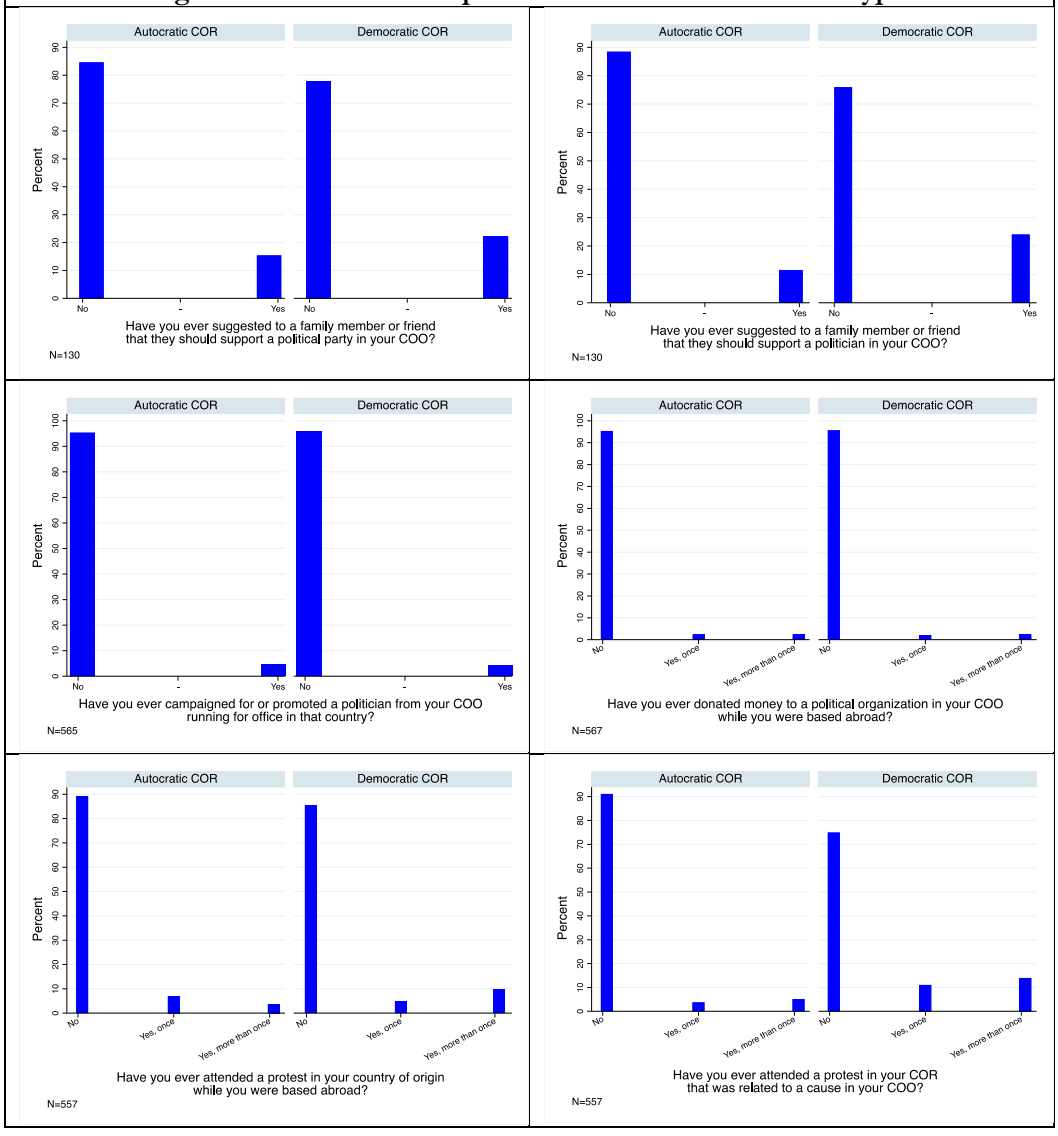
would return to their COO and were dropped from those analyses. This makes it difficult to assess the power of these models.

Figure 6: Effect of COR regime type on likelihood of external voting conditioned by length of COR stay



AMDRS also includes several questions about other forms of political action in the COO, including whether the respondent has donated to a political organization, campaigned for a politician, discussed supporting a politician or a political party with their family and friends in the COO, protested in the COO, or protested in the COR on an issue related to the COO. The distribution of these responses does not allow for quantitative analysis, so as an alternative I examine the distribution of these responses across COR types in Figure 7. In the first row, we see that more migrants living in democratic CORs report making overt suggestions or recommendations about political behaviors to family and friends in the COO compared to those in autocratic CORs. In the second row, there are minimal, if any, differences between those who report engaging in political campaigning or political donation across COR types. This may be due to the greater financial burden associated with these behaviors. In the last row, migrants in democratic CORs generally report engaging in protest behavior at higher frequencies than those in autocratic CORs. These differences are particularly notable when it comes to engaging in protests in the COR; unsurprisingly, those in democratic CORs report more protest participation than those in autocratic CORs. This reflects a more open political environment, which not only allows for contentious political expression, but also for organizing and mobilizing on issues related to the COO that may not be possible in an autocratic COR.

Figure 7: Distribution of political behaviors across COR types



Discussion

The results of these analyses demonstrate that migrants in democratic CORs are more likely to express support for democracy in their COO and to espouse liberal values compared to migrants in autocratic CORs. They are also much more likely to report discussing political issues with people in their COO. However, they are not more likely than those in autocratic CORs to report democracy as a key issue for the COO, and there is no evidence of differences in political behaviors between the two groups. This may be an artefact of data limitations, however, and is worthy of further investigation.

The results demonstrate that living in a democracy not only makes migrants more supportive of democracy, but also imparts democratic norms, specifically norms around political speech.

The existence of a norm transfer mechanism between migrants in democracies and people in their COOs is evidenced by the increased likelihood of these migrants discussing political issues with people in their COOs. The political speech that survey respondents report strengthens support for the existence of a norm transfer mechanism and further suggests that democratic and politically liberal norms should transfer more easily and quickly than autocratic norms.

The analyses also reveal other trends in migrant opinion that appear conditioned by their relationship with their COO. Those who report feeling close to their COO and who say they are informed about issues in the COO are more likely to be supportive of democracy, less likely to support censorship, and more likely to report discussing politics with people in the COO. However, those who feel close to the COO are more likely to believe they should unconditionally support their COO's government, whereas being well-informed has no effect. Possibly these respondents feel a greater sense of loyalty to the COO government and/or share more traditional values.

Interestingly, age is not associated with support for censorship, but being married, having lower income, and having less education are. The latter two are associated with lower integration in the COR, which suggests that the extent to which migrants will absorb democratic norms is dependent on individual characteristics that facilitate or hinder exposure to COR culture. Greater education is also associated with a greater likelihood of discussing politics with people in the COO. This is consistent with studies on democratic attitudes: people who are better educated are better equipped to understand politics.

An alternative explanation for these findings is the selection effect of migrants to destination countries. Some research suggests that people who are more politically aware and more supportive of democracy are more likely to choose democratic countries as migration destinations (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). These migrants will already have democracy as a political preference independent of migration experience, and this would explain why they express support for democracy and liberal values and why they are more likely to engage in political discussion. While this is a plausible explanation, the results here do not suggest that this is the causal direction. Recall that migrants in democratic CORs are no more or less likely to identify democracy as a key issue for their COO compared to those in autocratic CORs. If migrants in democracies were already more supportive of democracy prior to migration relative to those in autocracies, we might expect to see a systematic difference here. In fact, even those who report being well-informed about issues in their COO are no more interested in democratic governance, whereas being well-informed is significant for support for democracy generally. This suggests that support for democracy and liberal values is an attitude that develops over time independently of any concerns about governance.

Finally, a COO's GDP per capita (averaged over five years) is never significant in explaining the political attitudes or behaviors of migrants, including donating to charitable causes. This is interesting when we consider that research on remittances shows that senders are responsive to negative conditions in the COO, increasing sending during economic downturns. It is possible that averages do not reflect migrants' perceptions of their COO's economic conditions. Also interesting is that whether a COO allows expatriate voting does not impact migrant attitudes and behaviors, with the exceptions of support for censorship and unconditional support for the incumbent COO government, where it is positively but

inconsistently significant. It is difficult to assess the meaningfulness of these results given the small sample of countries under consideration here, but it suggests that migrants from COOs that have external voting provisions feel greater loyalty to the incumbent government.

Conclusion

The results of these analyses show that migrants do indeed adopt different norms based on the characteristics of their COR. These norms influence some low-cost behaviors, such as political speech with family and friends, but do not significantly impact higher-cost behaviors such as voting or contentious actions. Further, the evidence of explicit discussions of politicians and policies between migrants in democratic CORs and people in their COOs supports the idea that there is an active process of norm transfer, an exchange of ideas between migrants and recipients in the COO.

The results also provide some guidance regarding our expectations about attitudes and behaviors among recipients in the COO. We can expect that democratic political norms are more likely to be transferred than autocratic political norms, since migrants in democratic CORs are more likely to discuss politics than those living in autocratic CORs. However, we should also consider that autocratic social norms may be more persistent than democratic norms. Further, we should consider that, since political action among migrants is affected by individual characteristics rather than experiences in the COR, a similar pattern should hold among recipients in the COO: political attitudes may be more likely to reflect exposure to migration than behaviors.

A further contribution of AMDRS comes from its focus on migration within the Global South and the MENA region specifically. By using the region as a site of both immigration and emigration, I examine the effect of cultural similarities in explaining norm transfer. Cultural, linguistic, and religious barriers do not appear to hinder norm absorption by migrants in democratic CORs, nor is there evidence that migrants are more susceptible to strengthening autocratic attitudes when they live in autocratic CORs that share those characteristics.

There are some limitations to this study that should be taken into consideration. Those who live in autocratic countries, both as migrants and citizens, may be particularly concerned about potential ramifications of expressing distrust or disapproval of the incumbent government and/or reporting political activities (see for e.g. Tannenberg 2022). Further, remittance receivers may not report or may underreport how often they receive remittances to avoid associated taxes (Shonkwiler et al. 2011), which further complicates the use of remittance receipt as a proxy for transnational links.

Studies of social desirability in survey responses show that the mode of administration affects how candid respondents will be (Krumpal 2013). Self-administered questionnaires are more likely to elicit candid responses especially on sensitive issues, whereas interviewer-assisted surveys may introduce social desirability bias. Because AMDRS is a computerized self-administered questionnaire (CSAQ), I as the interviewer played no role in the survey-taking process. While respondents or potential respondents could easily find information about me online (and perhaps guess at my own opinions based on that information), I did not observe them take the survey and have no method of identifying them personally or of linking their identity to any set of responses. This can mitigate some concerns around preference falsification.

An additional consideration is that AMDRS cannot be considered representative. Because of the niche nature of the target population, it is difficult to weigh the representativeness of the sample against the entire population of Arab migrants in the world. Further, the nature of online surveys is that they attract younger, better educated people who already have an interest in the topic under consideration—all of which is true for the AMDRS sample. Nevertheless, other studies have shown that internet survey results mimic those of more representative samples (Boas, Christenson, and Glick 2020; Pham, Rampazzo, and Rosenzweig 2019).

Despite these limitations, the insights presented from AMDRS are suggestive and worth further consideration. Most importantly, they suggest that migrant destination is an important consideration in observations of migration's effects on COOs and provide an explanation for the disparate findings in the migration literature. While individual case studies may find democratizing effects when they observe countries where migration is primarily directed towards democracies, these effects wash out in larger studies that combine countries where migration trends differ. Future studies can examine the proposed norm transfer mechanism by seeing how recipients in the COOs perceive, understand, and respond to political discussion with migrant friends and relatives.

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