Democratic Erosion in Arizona and New Mexico

A comparative analysis on the divergence of border states over time.

Capstone Thesis with Professor Sperber

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1. Introduction.

Whereas former US Supreme Court Chief Justice Brandeis once described US states as laboratories of democracy, recent scholarship on democratic erosion calls for scholars to reconsider the degree to which US states may also serve as laboratories for authoritarian practices (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). In this paper, I seek to advance the understanding of democratic erosion. First, I establish empirical variation in the level of democratic erosion across two US southern border states: Arizona and New Mexico. I also demonstrate that although journalistic accounts often emphasize the role of demography and geography as determinants of voter suppression, redistricting, populist rhetoric, and even racial profiling practices in Arizona, the aforementioned factors are more similar than different across Arizona and New Mexico.

Instead, I evaluate the hypothesis that long-run historical differences have influenced democratic erosion in these cases in ways previously overlooked. Specifically, I consider whether stronger Native American defense against white settlement in Arizona constituted a critical juncture that led to significantly more exclusive and ethnically charged state-level politics in Arizona than in neighboring New Mexico. To evaluate this hypothesis rigorously, I consider additional, competing hypotheses, including the possibility that rapid growth of Arizona’s older white population in recent decades, or differences in recent immigration flows may have steered the state in a less democratic direction than its neighbor. I find little evidence that these factors can explain what I demonstrate are longer-run political differences across state lines. Moreover, I show how historical conditions may have helped create the very conditions that lead “snowbirds” to flock to Arizona, be it for retirement or strong conservative business ties, in far greater numbers than New Mexico.
In Section 2 below, I introduce and define the key terms that contributed to my theoretical framework, followed briefly with what this paper contributes to existing literature. Then, I consider state-level variation in democratic erosion across the US and demonstrate that, while Arizona is gripped by severe antidemocratic politics, adjacent New Mexico ranks among the highest performing states in the US. In Section 3, I consider possible explanations for this variation and explain why it is plausible that historical events, even before these two states joined the Union, led to self-reinforcing differences contingent upon their political development. In the same section, I describe my methodological approach— including the logic of my case selection and the advantages of combining statistical analysis with process-tracing to evaluate my competing hypotheses. Section 4 presents the case studies, and Section 5 concludes with a discussion of this study’s limitations and possible directions for future research.

2. Contemporary Discourse on Democratic Erosion: What is it? Where is it going?

2.1. What is Democratic Erosion?

Democratic erosion is an up and coming term that, because of its youth, has been defined in many different ways. On one hand, there is a minimalistic approach being used that defines democratic erosion as “a deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance within any regime,” (Lust & Waldner, 2015, pg. 2). Additionally, they specify that within a democratic regime, democratic erosion is “a decline in the quality of democracy.” This is an important distinction; this paper will draw on the specification offered by Lust and Waldner because it

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1 In addition to being defined in different ways, there are a variety of terms that scholars have used interchangeably with ‘democratic erosion’. The most notable for purposes of this paper is ‘democratic backsliding’.
deals with two states from a democratic regime. On the other hand, there are mechanism-focused legal arguments when defining democratic erosion. Some literature discusses a heightened accusation of “stealth authoritarianism” that draws on democratic principles. Stealth authoritarianism “uses the law to entrench the status quo, insulate the incumbents from meaningful democratic challenges, and pave the way for the creation of a dominant-party or one-party state,” (Varol, 2015, pg. 1678). In other words, using democratic principles to achieve anti-democratic ends and ruling by law versus the more rational rule of law.²

This idea of stealth authoritarianism plays out in antidemocratic policy, such as voter suppression (through voter identification laws) and gerrymandering. These policies are what ultimately led to what is defined as democratic erosion in Arizona and New Mexico. A common thread between both of these practices is that data shows minorities are disproportionately disadvantaged by mechanisms that contribute to democratic erosion. While redistricting is generally a democratic idea to fairly represent electoral and political districts, there is literature that points to antidemocratic redistricting policies where boundaries are being drawn to favor one party over another. Adela de la Torre makes this point clear in an article that discusses the lack of Hispanic voter representation (2001)- discussed further in section 4.

It is worth noting that populism is also often associated with antidemocratic principles that lead to democratic erosion. Jan Warner-Müller, for example, argues that populism is claiming exclusive representation of the people; meaning that “they, and only they, represent the people,”

² Ruling by law refers to a more socialist approach, whereby the law is subjective and determined by rulers. Rule of law, however, refers to the American concept of “a government of laws and not men.” (John Adams, 1780)
(Müller, 2016). The danger here is that it leads to inherently antidemocratic principles because, “there is no single political will, let alone a single political opinion, in a modern, complex, pluralist – in short, enormously messy – democracy,” (Müller, 2016). Populism is dangerous for democracy and is becoming increasingly common in the US, and around the world, through the persistent polarization of politics. The most visible example of populism in this paper occurs in Arizona, regarding immigration rhetoric. Section 3 (and briefly section 4) fleshes out the unceasing anti-immigration politics that gives rise to populist politics endangering democratic principles in Arizona.

While there are a variety of mechanisms that cause democratic erosion, gerrymandering and voter suppression are of most relevance to this paper and will receive the bulk of attention in the empirical analysis (section 4).

2.2. What is Missing?

Much of the scholarship that discusses democratic erosion examines national-level and cross-country comparisons, however, Lieberman and a slew of coauthors (2017) embrace a historical comparative framework for democratic erosion that represents the otherwise understudied area. They argue that what is “uniquely threatening to democracy at the present moment requires looking beyond the contemporary” modern day lense (Lieberman et. al., 2017, pg. 1). Similarly, coauthors Levitsky and Ziblatt argue that democratic erosion is best studied at the state level in the US (2017, pgs. 1-8). I further argue that, with respect to voter suppression and redistricting practices, democratic erosion correlates strongly with mechanisms for antidemocratic practices when democratically elected leaders use their authority to suppress
minors, via strict voter ID laws and gerrymandering in this case. I explore the degree to which this relationship may be causal, though I do not assert or test for evidence of a causal relationship in this paper.

Overall, there is a lack of analysis offering a historical comparative approach, like Lieberman and his coauthors did. While the present day occurrences of democratic erosion are important, contemporary discourse leaves open questions about the long-term, social causes that vary across states. This paper explains the historical, political, and demographic influences, as well as the lasting impact of historic events as possible critical junctures in state development that has led to a divergence between Arizona and New Mexico- states that otherwise share similar, though not identical, characteristics. Below I explain my case selection, along with a set of competing hypotheses that I explore further in section four.

3. **Democracy at risk? Political differences across the Arizona-New Mexico border.**

3.1. **Case Selection.**

With respect to pluralism and democracy, Arizona lies among the most infamous cases in the US. The state has experienced state militias, “rogue sheriffs” that embrace a culture of bias, and have received copious amounts of attention surrounding its anti-immigration politics, especially with the 2016 presidential election where they overwhelmingly showed support for Donald Trump. These are not the only instances of Republican dominance in Arizona, nor are they isolated instances of anti-democratic practices occurring in the state’s heavy right-leaning legislative body. For example, in 2011, US Representative Gabby Giffords (D) was shot in a

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3 Donald Trump won approximately 48.1% of the vote in the 2016 Presidential Election, gaining all 11 of Arizona’s electoral votes.
grocery store parking lot during a constituency meeting in Tucson by a radical conservative who was fixated on Giffords. This particular incidence demonstrates the eroding democracy occurring in Arizona with polarized politics and ideology taking root.

These anecdotes go a long way to illuminate the kind of state Arizona has become. Many say the increase in right-leaning politics, with specific regard to anti-immigration, is “natural” being that it shares a border with Mexico. However, if this were true, a similar situation would seemingly unravel in other states that border Mexico, but the opposite is occurring. New Mexico ranks near the top of the list when examined for integrity and democratic practices across the US. The Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) ranks all US states by electoral integrity with an array of mechanisms on a 100-point index. While they are similar in terms of demography and historical backgrounds, they rank very differently where electoral integrity is concerned.

This paper will focus on two aspects of electoral integrity: voter suppression through voter ID laws and redistricting (read: gerrymandering). Figure 1 shows the undeniable difference between these two border state as Arizona received a rank of 53 compared to New Mexico’s 73, making them number two on the list, trailing Vermont. These differences are surprising considering the innate similarities they share, however they look more like distant relatives in present day. Below, I explore some of these similarities with respect to their demographic and political resemblance.


In this paper I use historical process tracing methods to evaluate the effects of long-run influences that have led Arizona and New Mexico to look so homogenous, each with higher than
average immigrant populations. However, they have simultaneously diverged politically. Because democratic erosion is unfolding right now, contemporary discourse does not reflect a fully digested understanding of this concept, especially in the US where democracy has always been considered a staple element. Historical process tracing is a useful tool that can be used to evaluate causal claims as well as chronicle political and social phenomena.⁴ I offer a comparative analysis that combines process tracing and the use of descriptive statistics to help me evaluate multiple possibilities that could explain democratic erosion through a lens different than a majority of contemporary discourse.

In particular, I pay special attention to the possible self-reinforcing effects of key historical events which are referred to in this paper as “critical junctures”. Critical junctures are defined by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson as “major events that disrupt the existing political and economic balance in one or many societies.”⁵ Acemoglu and Robinson detail in their book that critical junctures essentially launch states down their respective dependent paths. I apply that same logic in this paper through a state-level versus national-level lens. An example of this relates to past discrimination of Mexican-origin voters in Arizona dating back to the territorial days that will be fleshed out more in the subsequent sections. In short, the Early Literacy Requirement of 1909 unfavorably discriminated against Mexican-origin voters in the state, treating their voices in the same ways that play out today: unheard and underrepresented.

⁴ More information about process tracing can be found in an article from David Collier, Understanding Process Tracing (October 2011).
⁵ This term comes directly out of a book they co-authored entitled: Why Nations Fail (2012).
Despite speculation that the differences existing between Arizona and New Mexico are due to recent political shifts, the divergence between these border states began centuries ago. There is an endogenous nature of racial and political domination in Arizona that leads to the democratic erosion seen today, while the opposite is true for New Mexico. Process tracing, alongside statistical data analysis, enables me to look for critical junctures and examine what influence they had, if any, on present day outcomes. Below I explore the plausibility of this hypothesis.

4. Present Day Arizona and New Mexico.

There are striking similarities between Arizona and New Mexico, representative of the fact that they border one another. What sets them apart, however, are the critical junctures that led to such colossal discrepancies in electoral integrity. This section will take a closer look at two mechanisms of democratic erosion occurring in Arizona, though not as intensely in New Mexico. Voter ID Laws have disproportionately affected many minority voters in Arizona and their electoral integrity ‘score’, according to the Electoral Integrity Project, has suffered because of it. New Mexico, on the other hand, is taking steps to increase voter registration, alongside less strict voter ID laws. Before examining the effects of these two mechanisms as they relate to democratic backsliding, understanding the history of these two states is key to understanding their contemporary makeup.

4.1. The Settlement of New Mexico and Arizona.

Until 1848, the territory that is now Arizona and New Mexico belonged to Mexico. The end of the Mexican-American War resulted in Mexico ceding approximately one-third of its then owned
territory to the United States—some of which included present day Arizona and New Mexico.\textsuperscript{6} While these areas became US territory in the mid-19th century, neither would become an official US state until 1912, due to animosity from existing states, especially for Arizona. Arizona was the last state to be admitted to the union due to a provision in their state constitution that included a recall of judges that then-President William Howard Taft warned he would not approve.\textsuperscript{7} Because New Mexico did not include this provision in their original constitution, they were admitted as the 47th state shortly before Arizona’s admission. Since becoming formally recognized as US states, New Mexico and Arizona have embarked on seemingly opposite routes to their present day circumstances. Because I am exploring the possible effects of the long-run historical events, the American Indian Wars are a sufficient starting point, because the US inherited many conflicts between settlers and indian tribes following the cession of territory to the US at the end of the Mexican-American War.

4.2. **The American Indian Wars.**

The American-Indian Wars are a collection of long-fought, armed conflicts that began in 1622 between European governments and colonists, eventually evolving into a conflict between American settlers and the native people of North America. Though the last battle was fought in 1890, the official end of the American Indian Wars is recognized in 1924.\textsuperscript{8} While these collective conflicts occurred all over the US, particular attention is paid in this section to conflicts that

\textsuperscript{6} The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was the first US armed conflict fought primarily on foreign soil. Note: In addition to present day Arizona and New Mexico, ceded territory also included parts of present day California, Utah, and Nevada.

\textsuperscript{7} Despite removing the provision from their state constitution, it was merely as means to become a formally recognized state and was quickly reinstated in the first election following statehood.

\textsuperscript{8} This extension is due to the presence of minor hostilities that continued well into the 1900’s.
affected what is present day New Mexico and Arizona. There are two conflicts of particular interest: the Navajo conflicts (1849-1863) and the Apache attacks (1861-1900).

The Navajo Conflicts began just after the end of the Mexican-American War, when the territory of present-day New Mexico and Arizona was ceded to the United States. There was still lasting conflict that existed between the United States’ white settlers and the native peoples who resided in this territory, spurring up conflict between them and the US Army. These conflicts resulted in Navajo incarceration to inhospitable reservations located far from their homeland. In overlapping context, the Apache attacks were taking root in an even bigger territory that included present day New Mexico and Arizona. These attacks began as a result of the Apache indians rejecting reservation life and staging innumerable attacks on outposts against the US military that were trying to control Apache groups.

Figure 2 displays the battles and military posts that existed during the duration of the American Indian Wars in the Western US. What is particularly interesting when comparing Arizona and New Mexico is how many more battles were fought in Arizona compared to New Mexico. This information helps point to a critical juncture that has contributed to the inherently different paths each of these states embarked on. According to Figure 2, at least six battles were fought in Arizona territory while none were fought in New Mexico’s. The Native American settlers likely had much more animosity towards the white settlers in Arizona due to the high death tolls and

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9 The Apache attacks encompassed a far bigger area than the Navajo attacks. In addition to Arizona and New Mexico that are of particular interest and examined extensively in this paper, the Apache attacks were also carried out in present day Texas and parts of Mexico.
displacement that occurred there, vastly more than in New Mexico’s territory. Over time, greater numbers of white settlers migrated to Arizona and quickly began pushing out minority groups.

The following sections will explore the extent to which minority groups have been suppressed by two specific mechanisms that are related to contemporary democratic erosion: voter suppression through voter ID laws and redistricting, that more closely resembles gerrymandering. If my hypothesis holds true, there will be inherently drastic differences between minority voter suppression in these two border states, where Arizona’s minority groups are disproportionately suppressed compared to New Mexico’s. In addition, gerrymandering instances will be more apparent in Arizona to favor a one-party system.

4.3. Comparing Voter Suppression in Arizona and New Mexico.

Interestingly, both of these states experience polarization of formal institutions, though it has a more corrosive effect for democracy in Arizona. Aside from Bill Clinton’s narrow win in Arizona in 1996, Arizona has voted Republican since 1952. This has a lot to do with the state’s majority white population that continues to increase in age as more and more retiree’s migrate to Arizona. Not only do whites hold a significant share of the demographic makeup in the state, so do older whites, who dominate within the overall white demographic. This likely contributes to increasing Republican dominance over time. Figures 3 and 4, for instance, detail the seat share of the House and Senate in each state since the turn of the century. Republicans have held the power in Arizona for decades, the adverse being true in New Mexico, where Democrats have dominated. Though they look roughly similar demographically, having much higher shares of
hispanic population than the national average, the white population in Arizona largely contributes to this political discrepancy.

Figure 5 shows the share of different demographics between these border states, compared to the US and Vermont, which is used for a comparison because it tops the Electoral Integrity Project’s list as the state with the highest electoral integrity score. Arizona has a much higher white population than that in New Mexico and has become a polarizing force in Arizona. Adela de la Torre explains that “since the 1940s, Arizona conservative Republicans have largely dominated politics, their power base resting in the hands of white, upper-middle class males with strong business ties,” (2001, pg. 164).10 One plausible explanation surrounds the idea of white retirees and “snow birds” that migrate to Arizona, contributing to the aging white population that has created a dominant Republican party in the state for decades. This helps explain the suppression of minority voters as they are underrepresented in state legislature and become susceptible to laws that negatively impact hispanic voices, despite making up a significant share of the overall population.

Figure 6 shows voter identification laws across the US in 2018; Arizona, as one would expect, has some of the strictest voter ID laws in the country. New Mexico, conversely, maintains much more relaxed identification requirements. Though Hispanic voters make up a significant share of the population, they are disproportionately represented, as seen in Figure 7, which shows minority voter suppression in US states. Moreover, Hispanic voters are suppressed through voter

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10 At the time of publishing, Adela de la Torre was the Director of the Mexican American Studies and Research Center at the University of Arizona of Arizona at Tucson. Currently, she serves as the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UC Davis.
ID mechanisms that make casting a ballot increasingly hard in Arizona, because laws state that everyone must show some form of ID in order to vote- a requirement that dissuades and prevents many hispanic voters from being able to participate in elections and pushes more right-leaning, conservative politics to the forefront.

Voter ID laws are at the opposite end of the spectrum in New Mexico, where no document is required to vote. However, despite having a comparatively high score according to the Electoral Integrity Project (Figure 1), New Mexico has some of the lowest voter turnout in the country to date. Only two-thirds of the eligible voter population signed up to cast a ballot in the 2016 presidential election (Oxford, 2018). This problem does not go unnoticed in New Mexico, which is what sets them apart from Arizona on measures of democratic backsliding. Elected members of the New Mexico House and Senate are actively trying to increase voter turnout and participation in elections. Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto, a Democrat from Albuquerque, proposed a constitutional amendment to get every eligible voter registered in the state of New Mexico. In an interview, Senator Ivey-Soto explained, “if we are a democracy, we need to take that seriously and we need to really fulfill the federal mandates that are upon us to make sure that we reach out to everybody who’s qualified to vote, so that they’re able to make that decision themselves as to whether or not they want to vote.” This is in stark contrast to a state like Arizona, where the legislative members have actively worked to inhibit certain parts of the population from voting.

4.3.1. Exploring Trends: Early 1900s to Present.

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11 If this proposal passes, it would be voted on during the 2018 legislative session.
Preexisting animosity in Arizona in the early 20th century led many more Native American, and eventual minority settlers, to settle in other places to avoid inevitable conflict and danger. Arizona has continued on its path of destruction into present day through anti-immigration policies accompanied by negative rhetoric. As was previously discussed, suppression emerged early on when Arizona put an early literacy requirement in place that led to long lasting Republican domination and minority suppression. In present day, voter ID laws are becoming increasingly strict, and remain so in Arizona, while New Mexico has consistently been making strives towards equal representation.

In 2005, New Mexico passed SB 582, a law allowing immigrants to pay instate tuition at higher education institutions, encouraging and making post-secondary education a reality for immigrants. Since its passage, New Mexico legislators have unsuccessfully tried to repeal SB 582. SB 749, for example, would have revoked in-state tuition for undocumented students, but failed to pass in 2006. The bill remains intact today, with major concerns lying in the fact that it could lead to a surge in the New Mexican population from places like Arizona, where anti-immigration policies are dramatically more common.

In 2010, Arizona made these feelings clear with the passage of SB 1070: The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, one of the broadest and strictest anti-illegal immigration laws at the time. Among those in support of this bill was State Representative John Kavanagh (R), who posed this question to encourage voter support: “If a burglar breaks into your home, do you serve him dinner? That is pretty much what they do there with illegals,” (Archibold, 2010). He is referring to New Mexico, a state he believes does not do enough to deal
with illegal immigration. Then-Governor Bill Richardson fired back against anti-immigration rhetoric, explaining that there is a “decided positive in encouraging biculturalism and people working and living together instead of inciting tension. The worry I have about Arizona is it is going to spread. It arouses nativist instincts in people,” (Archibold). It is undeniable that while these states are neighbors, they are extremely divided over immigration policy that leads to extreme polarization in their state politics.

4.3.2. **Opposing discourse: Increased Voter Fraud.**

Briefly, it is worth noting that legislation being proposed in New Mexico to increase voter turnout have largely been unsuccessful. Senator Ivey-Soto’s proposed bill to register all eligible voters has been denied the past two legislative sessions, despite having a Democrat majority. Opponents of the proposal say it is essentially asking current legislators to ‘improve’ the laws that elected them, and they are unwilling to believe or admit that the system in place is not a good one; in many ways they are right, considering the high electoral integrity they maintain despite low voter turnout. Others say that increasing or making voter registration automatic will increase voter fraud and states should not force people to register if they do not want to participate. Largely, this counterargument is rejected because, for many eligible voters (especially those in strict voter ID law states like Arizona), they are not registered to vote because the laws have made it increasingly difficult to do so.

4.4. **Effects of Redistricting in Arizona and New Mexico.**

While Voter ID Law in the US dominates conversation surrounding electoral integrity, redistricting (read: gerrymandering) has not received a ton of press and is largely left out of the
national conversation. This is likely due to the fact that studies show gerrymandering in the US tends to favor Republicans. With a Republican President and Congress currently leading the country, it makes sense that this is not a topic of conversation. Section 4.4 explores the possibility of redistricting, turned gerrymandering in each of these states. If my hypothesis holds true, I would expect to see more apparent instances of gerrymandering in Arizona, compared to New Mexico, to favor one party over another. Initially, by reviewing figures 3 and 4, it is apparent that the possibility of Republicans garnering support in New Mexico is more likely than Democrats winning a majority in Arizona.¹²

4.4.1. When Redistricting turns into Gerrymandering.

While redistricting is the seemingly democratic process of dividing an area into political districts, gerrymandering is labeled as the “dirty” word for redistricting. Gerrymandering occurs when boundaries are drawn to create districts that favor one party over another. There is evidence that indicates Republican-favored boundaries in Arizona more clearly than can be seen in New Mexico, which positively correlates with the notion that redistricting naturally tends to favor Republicans. Current district boundaries for Arizona, using data from fivethirtyeight, shows that Republicans dominate in an area that has the smallest population of Latino/Hispanic voters (and a high population of white voters), according to population graphs created via Fact Finder. Figure 9 shows that Republicans largely dominate the boundaries in Arizona with mostly dark red spots. while in New Mexico, the shades of blue and red are much lighter, indicating the increased likelihood of competition in elections. In other words, candidates on both sides of the

¹² This is apparent in the fact that New Mexico has recently had Republican majorities in the legislature according to data in the Book of States 2017, Chapter 3: State Legislative Branch produced by Heather Perkins.
aisle have increased likelihood of winning in New Mexico, compared to those in Arizona, when Republicans are a clear dominating force. Additionally, in Arizona, Democrats have won districts only in places where the Latino/Hispanic population is the highest- along the Southern border with Mexico. At its end, these boundaries appear to be drawn in a way that suppresses minority voters to small pockets of Arizona. This becomes especially clear when you look at the legislative breakdown overtime where Republicans are dominating (Figure 3).

New Mexico looks and tends to be a bit more competitive in elections and, as a result, there do not experience as many issues with gerrymandering, similar to the fact that there is no significant history of intentionally suppressing voters based on demographics and geography, as was the case in Arizona in the 20th century (Adela de la Torre, pg. 165). When looking at demographic breakdown in Arizona, it reveals that the old, well-off, white population of Arizona represents a large majority of the voices that are heard in elections. Due to the continuous increase in this particular population, a reversal of these imbalanced boundaries seem impossible.

4.4.2. Opposing Discourse: Arizona Is Trying.

Counter arguments around gerrymandering talk of efforts to create a fair and equal redistricting policy in Arizona with implementations like Proposition 106. Proposition 106 was a constitutional amendment that created a redistricting commision. It was intended to increase overall fairness in redistricting Arizona, to minimize partisan and incumbent interest, by creating a five member commission. However, this did not entirely get rid of the problem. While on the outside it seemed as though Arizona was taking strides towards more democratically functioning institutions, there was no minority member on the commission. Consequently, it led to a lack of
representation for the growing population of Latinos in Arizona where approximately 1 in 4 Arizonians were of Latino descent upon the passage of this proposition (2007); that number is expected to rise to 1 in 3 by 2025 according to the US Census.

Other competing hypothesis argue that the white population is aging at an overwhelming rate over time, and therefore is experiencing “natural” polarization because older, white populations tend to vote Republican. Additionally, some people say that redistricting on account of race should occur because it increases the possibility of Latino voters electing Latino legislative members. However, this line of thinking neglects how the voter population, when combined with gerrymandering practices, has contributed to the disproportionate voice of the old, white populations “flocking” to Arizona upon retirement.

4.5. Analytical Findings.

After extensively reviewing current literature, trends, and critical junctures that have led Arizona and New Mexico to progress so differently, it has become clear that there are mechanisms at work in Arizona contributing to its extreme democratic erosion that ceases to exist in New Mexico. If and when antidemocratic practices emerged, legislators in New Mexico have pushed policy through the legislature that advocates for strong democratic principles. The voter ID laws that exist in Arizona directly and disproportionately suppress minority voters, allowing white, Republican voices to remain powerful through the decades; the same can be said for redistricting, though to a lesser degree.

There is a stronger argument for voter ID laws as a mechanism of democratic erosion than that for gerrymandering. This is largely due to the fact that Arizona has tried to take steps towards
healthy and democratic redistricting practices. However, when one looks closely it becomes clear that, while, from the outside it looks like Arizona is taking steps towards being more democratically inclusive, it is a facade. The white population in Arizona is vastly important, especially when compared to New Mexico, a higher democratically ranked state. Once anti-immigration took root in Arizona it only increased the white population that votes Republican, while simultaneously supporting anti-immigration rhetoric. New Mexico became almost like a safe haven for immigrants; the state’s legislation supports that belief. The laws passed in New Mexico (SB 582; Lax voter ID laws) only add to the “pro-immigrant” policies that attract immigrants to New Mexico. Alongside other Western US states, New Mexico has existing sanctuary policies for immigrants, despite threats from the Trump administration to defund federal grant money to states that do not comply with an executive order issued in 2017.\textsuperscript{13} Adversely, rogue sheriffs, like Joe Arpaio, in Arizona have made the state a difficult place to live for immigrants who are vastly unwelcomed by the deep rooted white population, who have suppressed immigrant voices through legislation. In addition, immigrants suppress their own voices for fear of being deported, justified by the strict immigration laws and rogue sheriffs existing in Arizona that are extremely anti-immigrant.

5. Conclusion.

From a long-run historical view, New Mexico and Arizona are strikingly similar. They are not, however, identical. Exploring the critical junctures that put these two border states on opposing paths was the primary driving force of this comparative analysis. It became clear that these two

\textsuperscript{13} Executive Order: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States was issued by President Trump in 2017 stating that (paraphrasing) any state attempting to shield ‘aliens’ from removal from the US are willfully violating Federal law.
states began diverging a long time ago. In the early 20th century, when they both had just become the last two states to join the Union, the battles fought on Arizona territory drastically outnumbered those fought in New Mexico, though they were a part of the same long run conflicts. The animosity created in Arizona between the white settlers and Native Americans set the stage for the future of the state, especially when it came to political leanings and agendas.

These findings are compatible with the democratic erosion occurring in Arizona, with historical influences playing a critical role. The adverse is true in New Mexico, as they are near the top of the Electoral Integrity Project’s list for maintaining electoral integrity and democratic practices. As discussed in section 4.5, these two states have starkly contrasting legislative practices, especially where it concerns voter ID laws and redistricting strategies. While Arizona and New Mexico look similar demographically and encountered similar historical events early on, they have separately defined themselves following the critical junctures fleshed out in section 4, and presently look more different than ever.

5.1. Limitations.

As discussed early on, the concept of democratic erosion is a newly emerging study. With this in mind, it is relevant to discuss the natural limitations that exist with current data and research. One explicit example pertains to the Electoral Integrity Project: they conducted a survey to illustrate how they came to the conclusions they did with the finalized ranking of each US state. In this survey experts from each state were asked a series of questions to help develop a picture of what each US state looked like more closely. The number of respondents in each state varied greatly, creating limitations for researchers. In Arizona, only 6 of the 40 experts contacted
responded, a 15% response rate—compared to a 17% response rate in New Mexico, with 3 of the
18 experts responding. This is important to take into account because, although they are all
considered experts, and there was not a ton of variance within responses relevant to this paper,
the pool was extremely small across the board. In the future, this study could build its credibility
by expanding the number of experts responding. Additionally, because this concept is so new,
tracking responses over time could allow researchers to examine trends and possibly even find
newly emerging critical junctures.

This paper has offered strong evidence that Native American relations in the late 19th and early
20th century constituted critical junctures that have contributed to democratic erosion in Arizona
today. Future research on this topic could build on what I was able to put forth in this paper by
studying archival documents and exploring Arizona’s political evolution (or lack thereof) in
greater depth over time. Subsequently, though I noted competing hypotheses briefly throughout
this paper, I am unable to fully address them here. Future scholarship should take up competing
hypotheses and counter arguments, evaluating them more rigorously using presently emerging
data to offer what can be done to combat democratic erosion. Especially considering the new
political era the US is entering, filled with undeniable instances of democratic erosion.
6. Figures and Tables.

Figure 1. Ranking Electoral Integrity and Malpractices Across US States

Notes: This is taken from The Perceptions of Electoral Integrity 100-point Index, PEI, US, 2016. Lower scores indicate eroding electoral laws, procedures, and safeguards, according to local experts.

www.electoralintegrityproject.com
Figure 2. Western Indian Wars: Battles and Posts

Notes: This is Map 35 in Chapter 14 of Winning the West: The Army in the Indian Wars, 1865-1890, taken from the American Military History Army Historical Series Office of the Chief of Military History. United States Army.
http://www.history.army.mil/books/amh/Map14-35.jpg
Figure 3. Seat Share in Arizona Legislature

Notes: Information found in the Book of the States 2017, Chapter 3: State Legislative Branch produced by Heather Perkins; this graph shows dominance of Republican leadership in the Arizona state legislature over time.

Figure 4. Seat Share in New Mexico Legislature

Notes: Information found in the Book of the States 2017, Chapter 3: State Legislative Branch produced by Heather Perkins; this graph shows dominance of Democratic leadership in the New Mexico state legislature over time.
Figure 5. Racial Demographics Across States

Notes: The data used is from the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts updated July 2016; “other” denotes American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Taken from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AZ,NM/RHI725216#viewtop

Figure 6. Voter Identification Laws in 2018

Figure 7. Voter ID Laws and Voter Turnout by Race

Notes: Taken from Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes (2017) published in The Journal of Politics; the graph compares voter turnout by race in varying levels of voter ID strictness and does not control for any other factors.
Figure 9. Districts Drawn to Promote Proportionally Partisan Representation

Notes: The Atlas of Redistricting, *FiveThirtyEight*, 2018. The left represents the likelihood of each party to win each of AZ’s 9 seats based on historical patterns. The right represents the likelihood of each party to win each of NM’s 3 seats based on historical patterns. 

https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/redistricting-maps/#Proportional
7. Annotated Bibliography.


*Why Nations Fail* is a scholarly book written by a British political scientist (Robinson) from the University of Chicago and a Turkish-American economist (Acemoglu). It chronicles a wide-ranging topics, like how institutions respond to critical junctures and new opportunities. Overall, the book offers analysis based on years of research, making it a credible source for historical-comparative approaches to examining why nations fail. The authors are not known to hold strong biases and are not alluded to in this book, as it is a non-fiction work based on in-depth data and research.


This article is published in *The New York Times*, an American newspaper that has historically been recognized for its liberal perspective, though this article in particular is subject to less opinion due to its informative nature about laws in US states. This article draws on analysis that is fact-based but also includes transcripts from interviews of legislators on both sides of the aisle to reiterate the innate differences between New Mexico and Arizona when it comes to immigration policy.


This article is published in the *Texas Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy*, founded in 1997 by law students who previously founded the broader *Hispanic Law Journal*. This new distinction illuminates the journal’s passion and commitment to public policy issues that affect the Hispanic community in Texas. The public policy issues range, ‘without limitation’, from immigration and health care to freedom of speech and business. The journal is not known to hold political biases as it is dedicated explicitly to disseminating information on relevant issues. De la Torre is currently serving as the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UC Davis and has previously held roles and is considered an expert on Latino and Chicano issues.


This article is published on Fact Tank, a platform that seeks to “find news in the numbers”. It was created in 2013 and is housed within the Pew Research Center. The information of Fact Tank is written by experts that help paint an analytical picture based on in-depth research by its contributors. Because the information within Fact Tank relies
on data, it is not known to hold any biases. Pew Research Center, more broadly, is a nonpartisan organization that seeks to inform the public about issues/trends that shape the world.

Hajnal, Z., Lajevardi, N., & Nielson, L. (2017). Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes. The Journal of Politics, 79(2), 363-379. This article is published in The Journal of Politics, a peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to the expansion of nonpartisan and diverse research across multiple political science disciplines. The contributing authors of this article are all distinguished political science experts interconnected by the University of California, San Diego. The article gives an impartial approach to voter identification laws as they relate to minority voters in the United States, specifically African Americans and Latinos. This article sites a multitude of research supporting the concerns that increasingly strict voter identification laws could harm minority groups by suppressing minority voter turnout.

Lee, J. C. (2016, November 03). How States Moved Toward Stricter Voter ID Laws. The New York Times, Retrieved February 02, 2018, from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/03/us/elections/how-states-moved-toward-stricter-voter-id-laws.html This article was published in the New York Times, an American newspaper that has historically been recognized for its liberal perspective, though this article in particular is subject to less opinion due to its informative nature about laws in US states. The article also pulls in expert analysis from Wendy Underhill, the program director for elections and redistricting at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), giving the article more credibility.

Lieberman, R. C., Mettler, S., Pepinsky, T. B., Roberts, K. M., & Valelly, R. (2017). Trumpism and American democracy: history, comparison, and the predicament of liberal democracy in the United States. 1-25. This article was published on the Social Science Research Network (SSRN), a worldwide collaborative that is focused on dispensing research papers in social science and humanities. It is reviewed by the staff solely to ensure scholarly discourse in each papers subject area, thereby possessing no ideological leaning. The contributing authors are all professors at highly respected institutions who focus on democracy studies, among other discourses. This particular collaborative article discusses “Trumpism”, a political phenomenon that gives way to a discussion of confidence, or lack thereof, for institutions in the United States today. To do that, they argue that a historical and comparative perspective is worthy of discussion in order to see the trend of erosion that has been occurring for decades. Ultimately, they assert that democracy is under threat in the
United States because there has been a shift in the ways that American institutions, identity, and norms work together.

Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2017). How a Democracy Dies. *The New Republic*, 1-8. This article was published in *The New Republic*, a journal of opinion that has promoted progressive ideology since its establishment in 1914. Though the journal itself has a tendency for political ideology, the article was adapted from a book written by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, two widely-cited senior political scientists at Harvard University. This article summarized the argument made by Levitsky and Ziblatt that liberal democracies are in danger of collapse. According to the authors, constitutional rules are not enough to sustain democracy, the development of democratic norms are an additional necessity. Ultimately, they say that by electing President Donald Trump in 2016, the United States failed to reinforce democratic norms and gave power to a leader who has used constitutional checks and balances as ‘weapons’ against those who do not control them. While democracy is still intact in the US today, the norms that prop up the institutions are in danger of eroding.

Lust, E., & Waldner, D. (2015). Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding. *US Agency for International Development*, 11, 1-15. The US Agency for International Development provided funding for this publication but does not necessarily reflect the views, policies, or otherwise, of the USAID. After reviewing the article and authors, it is not apparent that the article is bias in ways that would affect the credibility of the work. Lust and Waldner recognize the lack of knowledge about democratic backsliding and made it the goal of this paper to draw on broader theories of transitioning democracies to conceptualize and assess regime change over time. They conclude this portion of the text with an explanation of six different families of theories by which democratic backsliding can be observed/hypothesized; the effect of these theories are often referred to as “switches”.


Norris, Pippa; Nai, Alessandro; Grömping, Max, 2016, “Perceptions of Electoral Integrity - US

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14 The book referenced here is How Democracies Die, by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt.
This dataset was produced by the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), an independent academic project dedicated to US elections—discovering why they fail to uphold international standards and what can be done to reduce these occurrences. Pippa Norris is not only a contributor to this dataset, but also the founder of the EIP and a distinguished comparative political scientist at Harvard University. According to Google Scholar, she is the 4th most cited political scientist worldwide. Her work, along with the EIP in its entirety, is impartial and dedicated to elections and democracy in political institutions.

This article was published in the Silver City Daily Press and Independent, a local newspaper that serves the Silver City, NM area six days a week. Since its establishment in 1896, the paper has switched ownerships numerous times, maintaining a centrist-left point of view today. This article, however, is nonpartisan; it explains one of the legislative agenda items for the 2018 session in New Mexico: voter registration as one of the Democrats in the Senate is seeking to change the state’s constitution in hopes of increasing voter turnout by ensuring that anyone who can vote, would be legally eligible to do so.

Earlier this year the National Conference of State Legislatures published this information directly on their website to provide its viewers with background information about voter identification requirements and laws in each US state. Because it is solely based on the laws of each individual state, there is no information that could be viewed as partisan. The information on this site gives a detailed account of the kinds of documentation voters are required to have or obtain in order to be considered eligible to vote. It explains that 34 of the 50 states some form of identification, varying in degrees of strictness. The remaining sixteen use other methods like signatures or an affidavit of identity.
Paragraph for Cross-University Blog Post

This paper address causal questions about why Arizona and New Mexico, two adjacent US-Mexico border states, have diverged to look so different in present day. Though not identical, historically they have appeared very similar, in ways that range from fighting in the same wars, to developing demographics that mimic each other (i.e. with higher than national average immigrant populations). Moreover, this paper examines the hypothesis that initial differences in relations, in the American Indian War in particular, constituted critical junctures that helped set these two cases on self-reinforcing paths to their present day composition.