

Andrés M. Schelp

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EDUCATION

Northwestern University

Chicago, IL

Committee: Stephen C. Nelson (chair), Daniel Krmaric, Andrew Roberts,
James Mahoney

Fields: International Relations, Comparative Politics
Ph.D. in Political Science (ABD)

Expected: June 2026

Master of Arts in Social Science

2023

University of San Andrés

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Master in International Politics and Economy

2021

University of Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, Argentina

B.A. in Political Science

2016

DISSERTATION

Title: Upholding Democratic Standards? The Politics of Global Ratings, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the Allocation of Foreign Assistance.

Description: The literature on global performance indicators underscores the role of private global assessments in shaping policymakers' decisions and evaluations of countries' performance. Yet, the informational foundations of these measures have often been understudied. My dissertation fills this gap by studying the politics of knowledge dynamics of global democratic standards by focusing on the influential case of the Freedom House's (FH) Freedom in the World (FITW) report. I examine FH's private democratic reports and empirically test their mutual influence with U.S.-led human rights evaluations. Using text-as-data methods, I find that lexical, semantic, and sentiment analyses covering 1981–2010 provide robust evidence consistent with a directional imprint of U.S. evaluations on FITW. Qualitative analysis following a process-tracing logic presents evidence consistent with the presence of this pathway. My dissertation papers go beyond examining global assessments' evaluative authority by conducting a mixed-methods study of the allocative authority of FH reports. Drawing on archival evidence, I recover meaningful instances of reliance on FH indicators within specific State Department bureaus, U.S. agencies, and programs. I provide novel qualitative evidence of the use of Freedom in the World (FITW) scores in the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) development-oriented eligibility decisions. Moreover, my statistical analysis of the MCC fund allocation indicates that lower scores were associated with sharp decreases in funding, but once countries reached median FITW scores, they did not receive any sustained benefits. In addition, I find meaningful qualitative evidence but mixed quantitative results in my preliminary analysis of the FITW report's role as a benchmark for allocating democracy aid and food-related benefits. My findings indicate that while these benchmarks were occasionally treated as background tools, in major U.S. foreign policy programs, they served as authoritative criteria shaping policy discussions and the allocation of costs and benefits.

WORKING PAPERS

1. **Swaying the Graders? The Politics of Global Democratic Assessments: The Freedom in the World Report and the U.S. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.**

[Previous versions were presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2024, 2025), the Northwestern University IR/CP Workshop (2024), the International Studies Association Convention (2025), and the Midwest Political Science Association Conference (2025)]

Global assessments shape how states are evaluated, rewarded, and sanctioned in world politics. Regarding democratic reports, research has found evidence of their implications for states' diplomacy as well as biases that align with states' foreign policy orientation. Yet, conclusions about what type of influence predominates, or its main pathways, are unclear. In this paper, I conduct the first test of the reciprocal evaluative pressures between private democratic assessments and state actors by leveraging their annual assessments as text data. With this aim, I focus on the Freedom in the World (FITW) report from Freedom House (FH) and the landmark U.S. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (HRR). Quantitative results on the lexical, semantic, and sentiment relationship from 1981 to 2010 presented robust evidence, consistent with a directional imprint from U.S. evaluations on FITW. One year after the HRR release, a one standard deviation (SD) rise in HRR negative sentiment was associated with a 0.212 SD increase in FITW's own negative sentiment. Conversely, FITW was weakly and non-robustly associated with later HRR assessments. Qualitative analysis following a process-tracing logic presents evidence consistent with the presence of this pathway: FH and U.S. foreign policy elites systematically considered each other's reports. However, HRR production was prone to internal political disputes, limiting NGOs' influence. These findings carry significant practical and normative implications, underscoring that the leading global purveyor of democracy standards at the time, used as a benchmark for development and aid allocation, consistently tracked Washington's human rights information and evaluations.

2. **Democracy Ratings in Action: The Freedom in the World Report and U.S. Development Assistance.**

[A previous version was presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2025)]

Since the end of the 20th century, many countries have incorporated information contained in global rankings, ratings, and indicators when crafting their foreign policies. However, empirical evidence about their implications is limited. To assess the relevance of democratic indicators, I focus on the Freedom in the World (FITW) report created by the American-based non-governmental organization Freedom House (FH) in 1973. I focus on two key observable implications to assess the sanctioning consequences of the report: outcasting and funding changes in development-related programs. Advancing previous research, my work provides novel qualitative evidence of reliance on FITW scores in the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) development-oriented eligibility decisions. It also shows how these scores featured in policy discussions both during the creation of the program and in the period leading up to its establishment. My statistical analysis of the MCC fund allocation indicates that lower scores were associated with sharp decreases in funding, but once countries reached median FITW scores, roughly corresponding to upgrades from the 'Not Free' category, countries did not receive any sustained benefits.

3. **Democracy Promotion and Ratings: Freedom House as a Benchmark for U.S. Assistance?**

Previous work has identified the involvement of the non-governmental organization Freedom House in U.S. democratic aid initiatives, as well as associations showing that aid provision aligns more closely with FH scores than with other indicators. In this paper, I critically examine archival sources and democracy aid program data, and contribute to research on U.S. governance assistance programs. I find meaningful qualitative evidence but mixed quantitative results in my preliminary analysis of the FITW report's role as a benchmark for allocating democracy aid, using data from USAID and the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. My work also shows mixed evidence of reliance on FH scores in other programs, including the Food for Progress initiative and the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

4. **Eagle Eyes on the South: How does regime type shift Americans' foreign policy preferences toward the economic and political rise of semi-peripheral states?**

[Presented at the International Studies Association Convention (2024) and the Midwest Political Science Association Conference (2025)]

While emerging work has provided insights into how countries' preferences are being shaped by the rise of China, the foreign policy implications of the limited but progressive rise of semi-peripheral countries have been left mostly unexplored. In this paper, I examine how the rising performance of these countries is perceived by American citizens. Also, I examine its implications for their foreign policy preferences

towards them. I rely on evidence of global political and economic trends, public officials' statements, and two online experiments to gauge the foreign policy implications of the political and economic rise of semi-peripheral democracies and autocracies. Results show that the political rise of countries, rather than the economic rise, triggers more negative reactions and stronger support for U.S. retaliatory action towards rising countries. Similarly, rising democratic states are given more leniency when compared with rising autocracies, with more support for retaliatory action to prevent their rise, mostly through economic and diplomatic means.

5. Perception of relative economic growth and internationalism: Do comparison effects between countries' economic performance fuel discontent with incumbents among Europeans?

[Presented at the Summer Economy & Society Conference (2023), the Midwest Political Science Association Conference (2024), and the Northwestern Computational and Quantitative Science Workshop (2024)]

How do individuals react towards their incumbents when their states underperform in global metrics compared to their peers? I argue that given Europe's deep economic and social integration as well as economic malaise after 2008, relative economic performance considerations among European countries gained increased relevance to domestic populations. I claim that internationalist dispositions amplify international comparisons with key reference countries as benchmarks for Europeans to assess the performance of their governments and institutions. Internationalist dispositions amplify comparisons with key benchmark countries, influencing public satisfaction with governments. Relying on data from 15 European countries (2002–2019), I find that individuals' international orientations moderate the perception of economic performance gaps between European countries, negatively affecting Europeans' satisfaction with their governments.

6. Rising Prices, Elite Rhetoric, and Material Conditions: Evidence from Turkey.

[Presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (2024)]

Do rhetorical frames used by politicians to deflect blame or to claim credit have any impact on public attitudes when economic times are tough? When consumer prices soar, the public's confidence in the ability of semi-authoritarian governments to competently steer the economy should collapse. However, the causes and consequences of inflation are complex, and some people may be swayed by the incumbent government's efforts to pin the blame for economic problems on misfortune (such as natural disasters and international commodity price shocks) and "bad" actors (such as domestic political opponents). A survey experiment reveals that when people are exposed to rhetorical frames that blame high inflation on international factors that are beyond the incumbent's control, they are less likely to assign full responsibility for the economic problem to the government.

NON-ACADEMIC WRITINGS

1. 2019. [Regionalism and Democracy: A Review of Mercosur's democratic clause](#), with Lucas Chiodi and Carla Gebetsberger, *Debates Latinoamericanos* 17(35).
2. 2019. [The need to strengthen social cohesion and global governance dynamics](#), in *The G20 Agenda at the Argentine and Japan Meetings. What to expect from South Arabia G20?* Konrad Adenauer Foundation-CARI: Buenos Aires.
3. 2018. [A vision about regional contribution to a more effective global governance: the case of the multilateral international trade system](#), with Félix Peña, *Think 20 Communiqué - Global Solutions Journal*.

GRANTS

1. 2024. Minar Memorial Summer Award, Northwestern University, Department of Political Science (\$1,000).
2. 2023. Northwestern University Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program – Research Grant (\$1,500).

3. 2022. Call on American Politics and Methods Research, Northwestern University – Research Grant (\$1,000).
4. 2022. Minar Memorial Summer Award, Northwestern University, Department of Political Science (\$500).

INSTRUCTOR EXPERIENCE

1. 2025-2026. Graduate Instructor, International Studies Program, Northwestern University: Social Pressure in World Politics – Global Norms, Democracy, and the Politics of Global Rankings.

TEACHING ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

1. Undergraduate:

- 1.1. 2022–2024. Northwestern University: Courses include Introduction to International Relations, Globalization, Autocracy and Democracy, International Political Economy, Political Psychology, and Drugs and Politics.
- 1.2. 2018–2019. Argentine Catholic University: International Relations Theory.

2. Graduate:

- 2.1. 2020. Torcuato Di Tella University: Masters Thesis Seminar.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

1. 2023. For James Druckman, Northwestern University. Political Science Department Experimental Lab Manager, review of experimental designs, research projects and book manuscripts.

ACADEMIC COURSES AND SEMINARS

1. 2025. Northwestern University Political Science Department scholarship to participate in the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR) at Syracuse University (June 15-27).
2. 2023. Summer Economy & Society Conference, hosted by Northwestern University (July 8–11, 2023).
3. 2018. Process Tracing and Multivariate Analysis Methodology Courses, Catholic University of Uruguay Winter Methods School, Montevideo, Uruguay (July 22-27).
4. 2017. "Young Argentine Leaders" scholarship from the Fulbright Commission to study and debate about U.S. domestic and foreign policy at the University of Amherst Political Science Department (June 9-27).

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Discussant:

IR Internal Workshop, Northwestern University (2024); International Studies Association Annual Convention - Social Norms and Foreign Policy Panel (2025).

Reviewer:

Revista de Relaciones Internacionales (Universidad de la Plata, Argentina, 2024).

Teaching:

Inclusive Teaching Practicum, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, Northwestern University (2021); Annual Teaching Committee member, Northwestern University, Department of Political Science (2023-2024).

Service to the Northwestern Political Science Department:

Graduate Coordinator, International Relations Speaker Series (Visiting Speaker Series & Internal Workshop) (2025-26); Panelist, "Research in Five": Round Table with Prospective Graduate Students (2025); Instructor, Workshop on web scraping and text-as-data methods, R Workshop Series (2023); Panelist, Milestone Panel on Research Paper & Comprehensive Exam: Thoughts & Advice from Peers (2023); Ph.D. First-Year Student Peer Mentor (2021-2022 & 2022-2023).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1. 2016-2020. **Argentine Council on International Relations**, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Academic Assistant, Academic Secretariat.

Responsibilities: Presented academic and policy reports to the academic secretariat through formal presentations and written memos. Coordinated the interaction with the heads of the institution's academic committees and workshops. Assisted and coordinated the organization of academic and policy debate events with international and domestic think tanks, domestic governmental institutions, and diplomatic representatives (including the 2018 Think 20 Summit). Selected and guided the work of the institution's volunteers.

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Languages: *Spanish* (native), *English* (fluent).

Software & Programming Languages: R, \LaTeX , Qualtrics.