



Author Guidance for Sandwich Strategy Case Research

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We realize this is a wish list: for comment and feedback please.

The following materials are intended to provide guidance for authors as they research and write up cases. The goal is to inform the comparative analysis of cases by seeking a relatively consistent empirical foundation across the diverse case narratives. Please contact either Jonathan Fox (fox@american.edu) or Rachel Robinson (robinson@american.edu) with any questions about the information below.

The first draft of the paper is due November 1, 2019. The PIs (and possibly members of the study's advisory committee) will provide feedback within four weeks of receipt of the first draft. A final revised version is due by January 15, 2020. The final draft should be 5,000-10,000 words, fully and appropriately cited.

Background

The goal of this project is to conduct a comparative study of whether and how sandwich strategy initiatives drive pro-accountability institutional change, both in Nigeria and in the global South more broadly. We seek to identify a substantial pool of potential cases (20-30), from which we will chose approximately 15 to compare in depth, including five from Nigeria.

Definition: sandwich strategy

The sandwich strategy is an attempt by pro-reform actors within government to drive institutional change by cultivating synergy with citizen action. The sandwich strategy relies on the mutually-reinforcing interaction between pro-reform actors in both state and society, not just initiatives from one or the other arena. *The hypothesis is that openings from above that make possible mobilization from below by tangibly reducing the risks/costs of collective action can enable pro-accountability actors in both state and society.* This approach transcends the conventional two-dimensional framework for understanding state-society relations, to identify state-society pro-reform coalitions that collaborate for change – possibly by engaging in conflict with anti-accountability coalitions that also bring together actors in state and society. See Figure 2 for a snapshot of convergence and conflict between actors for and against change in both state and society (the hamburger diagram)

Case Selection Criteria

- For the purposes of this comparative study, sandwich strategy cases are tangible initiatives by state actors to create space for societal action for pro-accountability institutional change (broadly-defined). “Tangible initiatives” refer to state actions that directly influence the immediate environment within which citizens decide whether and how to engage in collective action. This criterion *excludes* purely discursive measures, such as campaign promises, or laws and policies that are not actually implemented in practice.
- Such “openings from above” can “count” as cases regardless of the motivations of the state actors (which could be internally-driven or externally-induced). Variation in the motives and “staying power” of state actors will be a focus of the research rather than a case selection criterion.

- Specifically, this category of pro-reform initiatives is defined by state actors' active promotion of enabling environments for potentially autonomous collective action. Such action can involve either CSOs (social orgs or advocacy groups) or individuals (e.g., whistleblowers).
- Evidence for an “enabling environment” refers to tangible actions by state actors that reduce the costs and risks often inherent in collective action. Examples include delivery of material resources for organizing at scale, challenging impunity for rights violators, extending legitimacy or “cover” for collective action, or opening safe spaces that credibly reduce the fear of reprisals to make possible the exercise of at least partial freedom of association.
- “Potentially autonomous” refers to civic spaces or repertoires of action that may appear to be narrow and officially bounded, but which may become contested terrain and lead to further openings (i.e., “invited spaces” can become “claimed spaces”). The assumption here is that such pathways may not be predetermined.

Scope Conditions

- These criteria exclude cases of a government's authoritarian mobilization of citizens. Authoritarian mobilization by state actors often involves a combination of carrots and sticks. Sandwich strategies and their openings from above, in contrast, may involve carrots but also involve restraints on sticks (that is, threats by the opponents of citizen action from elsewhere in the state or society).
- Pro-reform official discourse is insufficient to “count” as a case.
- Pro-reform actors in the state may be low profile or invisible, either by chance or design.
- Cases can be national or subnational – and at either level cases are likely to be “uneven.” For example, in a national reform, the opening from above may only be effective in part of the country. Exclusively local cases are of less interest.
- Cases can be recent or historical.
- Cases can come from any issue area.
- Can be from any political system (democratic, one-party, authoritarian, etc.) but are unlikely to be from fully democratic systems given the risks/costs of collective action are lower, thus lessening the need for creation of an enabling environments from above.
- The state actors who have the potential to make the biggest difference likely control implementing agencies that can directly open up enabling environments for collective action against corruption and abuse; they are not policy advisors or elected officials who offer only enlightened discourse but lack operational capacity or are unwilling to risk their political capital.
- Ideal cases would involve multiple iterations of openings from above, but for the purposes of consideration for inclusion in this study such initiatives can also be one-off - if they are at scale.

Variables

- The independent variable is an attempt by reformers within the state to take actions that *could* empower non-state actors, including grassroots-based membership organizations, more formal civil society organizations (CSOs) or citizens.
- Intermediate outcome: What is the geographic and social breadth of collective action that emerges or spreads in response to the opening? What is its intensity, repertoire, is it sustained in some way – and in what sense is it to some degree autonomous?

- The dependent variable (outcome of interest) is the degree of pro-accountability institutional change that may or may not result. “Degree” suggests the need to develop context-specific indicators of meaningful change. Outcomes are likely to be highly uneven, varying across territory, social groups - and will change over time. Therefore, case-specific indicators will be needed.

Causal Mechanisms

- The hypothesized causal mechanism involves iterative cycles of mutual empowerment between pro-accountability actors embedded in both state and society. Mutual support across the sectoral divide is expected to provide pro-accountability force with greater leverage, which is needed to offset possible backlash from anti-accountability forces. (See Figure 1 below)

Cross-cutting methodological issue: Look for “positive outliers”

- The answer to the “does it work” question is unlikely to be “yes or no.” Research methods that are capable of detecting outliers will be needed (e.g., “positive deviance”). The “positive outlier” approach emphasizes the search for exceptions to a dominant pattern – which in this case could involve the blockage or capture of the reform initiative by forces opposed to change. For example, a nationwide reform program could be blocked in most provinces, while also opening up unprecedented space in a significant minority of provinces. This approach suggests the relevance of indicators that can capture possible variation in degrees of autonomous action vs elite capture of these invited spaces, across territory or sectors.
- Cases do not need to be sustained or “successful” to be included and relevant for this analysis – it is to be expected that such initiatives may well be blocked, diverted or rolled back. Indeed, one question of interest is what characteristics of sandwich strategy initiatives distinguish those that are more vs less sustainable.

Factors to Include When Documenting Case Studies

Specify the Reform Actors

- Who were the key reform actors that took initiative from inside the state?
- Were they a network, a faction, did they control specific agencies or parts of agencies, or subnational governments? Or were they just one or more individuals? During what time period did they exercise influence, and where within the state?
- What were their main motives? (ideological, technical, electoral) To what degree were their actors self-driven or were they responding to external pressures? If the latter, where did those pressures come from?
- Who were those reformers’ main institutional allies, if any (elsewhere in the state, internationally)?
- Who were those reformers’ main allies in society, if any?

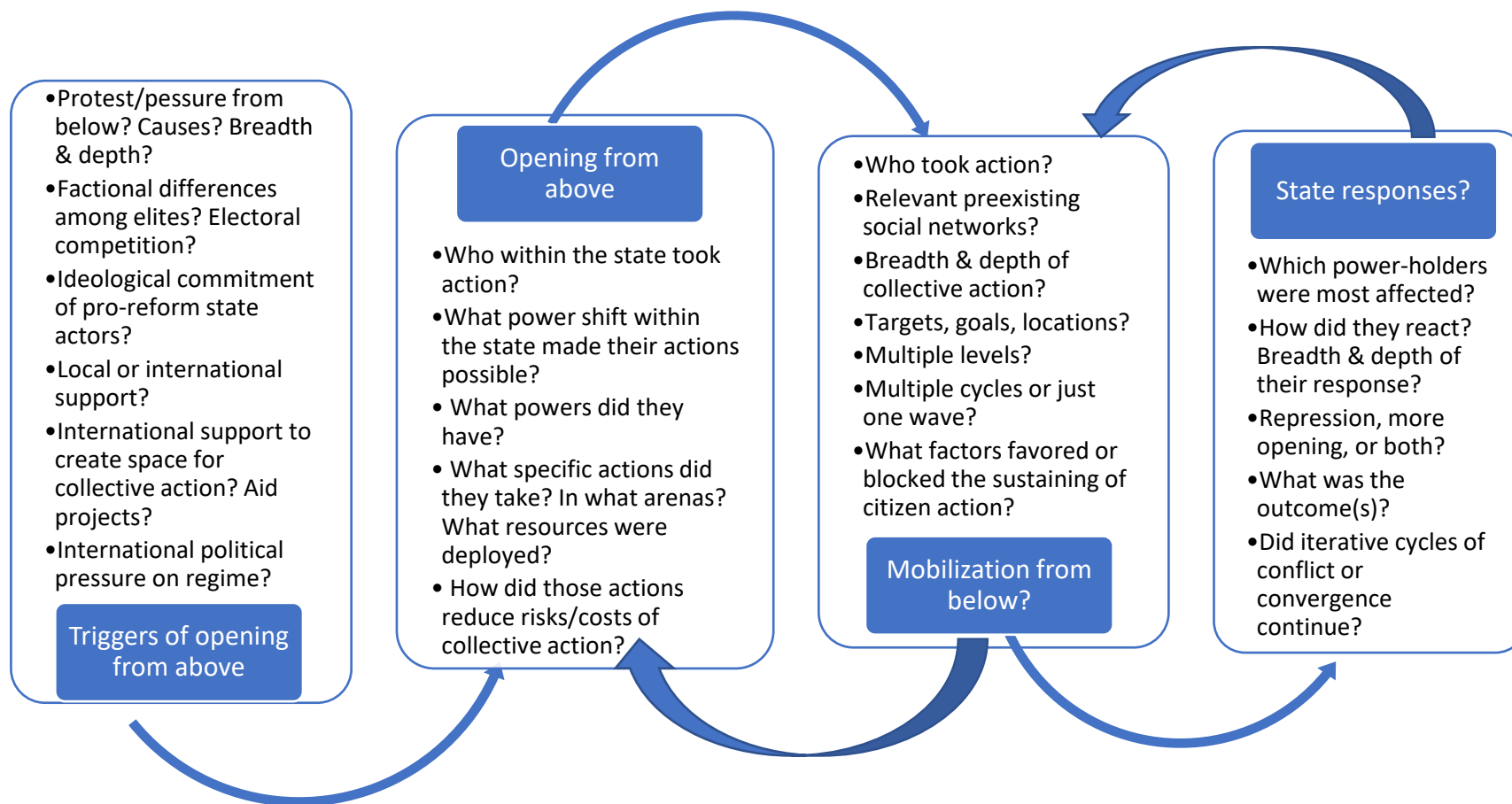
Reform dynamics: For each item, consider whether it was present, and if so, its scope and intensity:

- Reform initiative coincided with a broader “wave” of national political change or opening
- Electoral competition enabled opening for state actors to take reform initiative
- Reform initiative targets sector or region with pre-existing autonomous, broad-based mass membership organizations
- Reform initiative provides tangible political support, deploys large numbers of organizers/facilitators and/or provides direct funding to create or bolster autonomous, broad-based mass organizations

- Reform initiative directly convenes or indirectly creates space for at least partially autonomous membership organizations or community/constituency representatives to come together at scale (e.g., community organizations meet at district level, or district level organizations come together at state/provincial level)
- Reform initiative takes vigorous, tangible actions to implement official policy commitments that align with change agendas of autonomous mass organizations
- New policies tangibly extended rights to power-sharing over decisions over how to allocate public funds
- Reformists within state take actions to weaken or remove enemies of autonomous citizen action or mass organizations that are embedded in the state apparatus
- If the kinds of reform initiatives indicated above are captured or diverted by vested initiatives or backlash (as is likely), do any of the autonomous spaces survive? If so, what is their breadth and depth?
- CSO allies of membership organizations played significant role
- Reform initiative pursued a multi-level strategy to create openings
- Explicit open government and accountability measures implemented
- Targeted, proactive gender inclusion measures involved in reform initiative
- Targeted, proactive ethnic inclusion measures involved in reform initiative
- Reform initiative creates space in mass media for self-expression by autonomous mass organizations or allies (e.g., community radio in non-dominant languages)
- Grievance redress mechanism created that had the institutional capacity to actually redress grievances
- Reform initiative took specific actions or enabled human rights protections to reduce risk of reprisals
- Backlash against reformers in the state (violence or purges?)
- Backlash against active citizens' organizations from anti-change forces (how do state reformers respond to those threats?)

Figure 1. Sandwich Strategy Pathways: Scaffolding for Writing Case Studies

Process-tracing goal: Document and analyze iterative cycles of convergence and conflict: who did what, when and how at each turning point? (to promote a power shift to include the disenfranchised...)



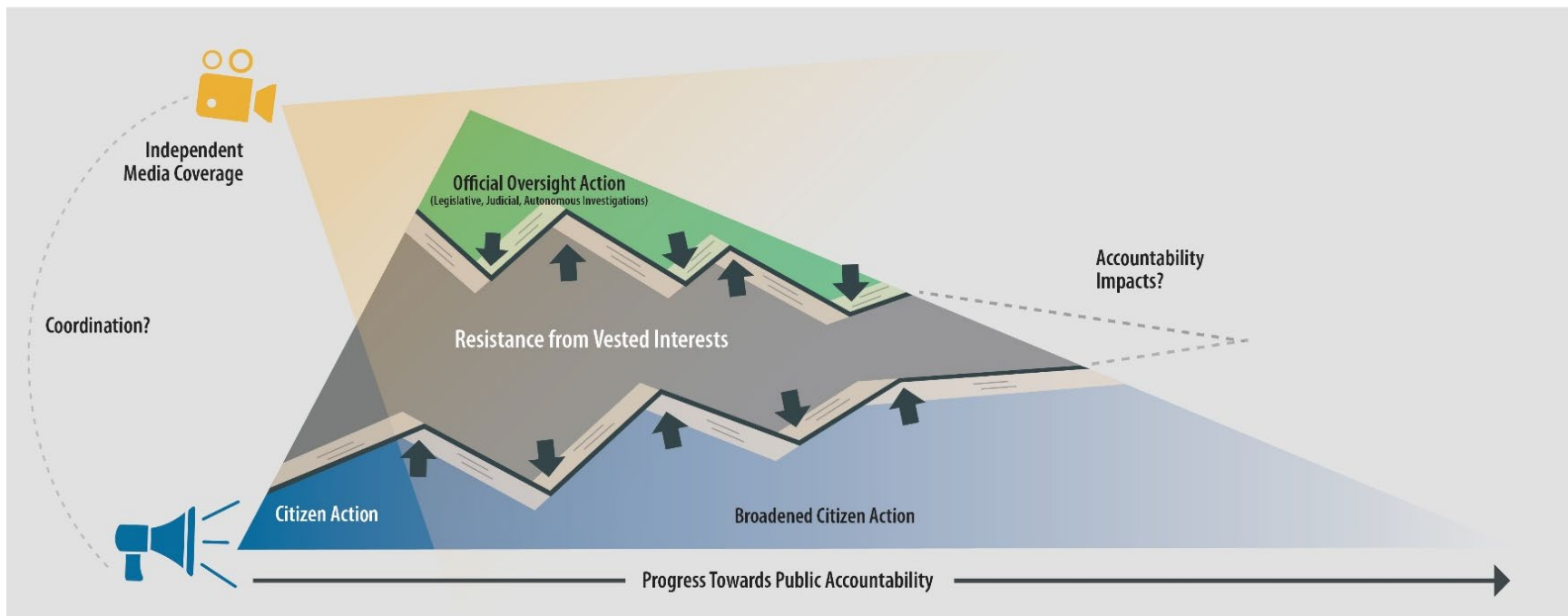
Outcomes (tangible indicators?):

- Where social/civic actors strengthened or weakened? If so, how?
- Where reformers within the state strengthened or weakened? If so, how
- Where opponents of power shifts strengthened or weakened? If so, how?

Figure 2. Visual Representation of Sandwich Strategy

HOW DOES VOICE TRIGGER TEETH?

Media spotlight and citizen action drive sandwich strategy power shift towards accountability outcomes



Independent Media Coverage: Refers to outlets with the capacity to influence public opinion (print, broadcast, online)

Official Oversight Action: Refers to public authorities with investigation and possibly sanctioning powers (horizontal accountability)

Citizen Action: Refers to a wide range of possible repertoires, ranging from institutional civic engagement to street protests and social media voice

Vested Interests: Refers to the political and economic actors that are responsible for or benefit from corruption, abuse and secrecy

