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## **State Capacity, Civic Order, and Democratic Survival**

Why do some democracies break down whereas others survive? It has been suggested that the state's capacity to provide a "civic order" – i.e., interactions between societal actors which are reasonably predictable, non-violent, and governed by the rule of law – might be the key to understanding patterns of survival and breakdown in democracies pestered by political crisis. More particularly, state capacity enables governments to dampen rights violations and open conflict and to initiate and implement policies, which is likely to influence satisfaction with regime performance on both the mass and elite

level positively. But discussions of this relationship have so far been bereft of elaborate theorizing and rigorous comparative analysis. We argue that a comparative empirical appraisal of this issue is warranted. In this paper, we first examine whether the level of state capacity (with civic order as a plausible mediator) accounts for patterns of democratic breakdown and survival in a context where virtually all democracies were put under duress by factors such as economic crisis and the seemingly success of autocracies. Here, we focus on Interwar Europe which makes up a social science laboratory for testing the importance of state capacity and civic order for democratic survival (versus breakdown). Based on the results, we

then discuss the extent to which states' ability to create a civic order is relevant for democratic stability today.