

Revise & Resubmit

Strategies for handling R&Rs effectively

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Women in Comparative & International Politics (WICIP)

Roadmap

1. Reading the decision letter
2. The response memo, which is what gets judged
3. Disagreeing without losing the paper
4. Timelines, nerves, and second rounds

Reading the Letter

An R&R Is Good News

- Most submissions are desk rejected. You are past that.
- Major revisions is still good news.
- It is an invitation, not a promise.
- Read it once, then leave it for a few days.
- A baseline to aim for: an R&R on at least one dissertation paper before you go on the market.

The Editor Outranks the Reviewers

- The editor's letter tells you which comments actually count.
- Whatever they name is non-negotiable.
- Give the editor their own section, first, before any reviewer.
- If the editor skips a reviewer's demand, you probably have room on it.

When Reviewers Disagree

- Common, and not your fault.
- The editor will often tell you whose line to follow. If they do, follow it and say so.
- If they do not, do not email. Make the call yourself and flag it in the note to the editor at the top of the memo.
- **Or split it.** One wanted the controls cut, one wanted them featured. We cut the discussion, kept depth on the two interesting ones, and left them out of the figures.

Sorting the Comments

Must do

- Anything the editor repeats
- Shared across reviewers
- Cheap and reasonable

Can push back

- Contradicts another reviewer
- A different paper than yours
- Would break the argument

Not every comment is an instruction.

Major and Minor Are Different Jobs

- Major: new analysis, reframing, scope. Weeks, not evenings.
- Minor: wording, figures, citations. Just do them, and say you did.
- Nobody rejects a paper over citation style. Start with the big ones.

How I Plan a Revision

- Build the memo skeleton first: one heading per point, before writing anything.
- Then lump the points into categories, so related work gets done together.
- Put manageable chunks in your planner. Not "do the revisions", but one category at a time.

Then Work Through It

- Fill in the memo as you go, while the change is fresh. Not at the end.
- Save versions as you go.
- Then a couple of full passes over the memo and manuscript together.
- Page and paragraph numbers go in last, once nothing else will move.

The Response Memo

The Memo Is the Deliverable

- Reviewers read the memo first, and sometimes only the memo.
- Quote each comment, then answer it.
- Say what you changed and where. Page and line.
- Make it skimmable.

Two Ways to Organise It

Reviewer by reviewer

- Every comment, in their order
- Nothing looks dodged
- Longer, some repetition

By issue, across reviewers

- Overlapping points answered once
- Shorter, easier to read
- Risk: a reviewer cannot find their point

I have used both. My book memo is by issue. So was round one of my JPR paper.

You Can Switch Late

- Write it point by point first. If the overlap turns out to be enormous, collapse it by issue at the end.
- That direction is easy. Going the other way, from themes back to every individual point, is not.
- A summary of main changes at the start or end is optional. I do it sometimes, and it is hit or miss.

The Same Paper, Two Rounds

- **Round 1:** fourteen numbered issues, each opening "Reviewers 1 and 2 both…"
- **Round 2:** reviewer by reviewer, points named by topic. Five, then thirteen.
- The title changed between rounds. The cover letter said so, with the old manuscript ID.
- It was published.

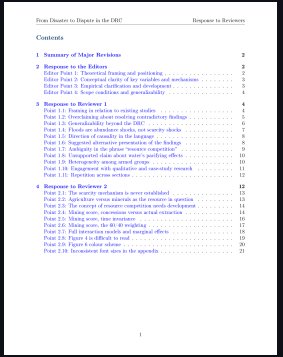
What Mine Actually Look Like

- Title page, then a table of contents. Reviewers navigate it.
- Summary of major revisions first, before any individual reply.
- Response to the editors, then Reviewer 1, then Reviewer 2.
- Numbered points throughout: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, each with a short descriptive title.

Formatting That Earns Goodwill

- The reviewer's words in a quote block, then your reply beneath.
- Name the point, do not just number it.
- Highlight what you changed so they can find it.
- Group by severity if it helps: theory, data, methods, minor.

Two Memos, Two Tables of Contents



From Disaster to Dispute in the DRC Response to Reviewers

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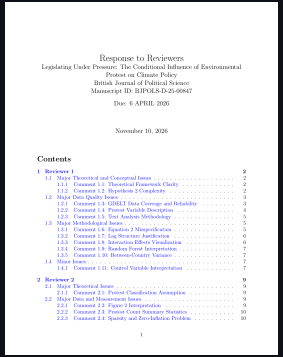
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Response to Reviewers
Legislating Under Pressure: The Conditional Influence of Environmental Protest on Climate Policy
British Journal of Political Science
Manuscript ID: BJPOLS-D-25-00847

Doc: 6 APRIL 2026

November 10, 2026

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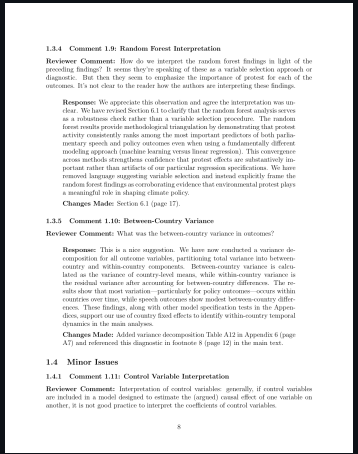
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Reviewer, then numbered points

Same, with severity groupings inside each reviewer

Both go reviewer by reviewer. Only the middle layer differs.

One Point, Answered



1.3.4 Comment 1.9: Random Forest Interpretation

Reviewer Comment: How do we interpret the random forest findings in light of the preceding findings? It seems they're speaking of these as a variable selection approach or diagnostic. But then they seem to emphasize the importance of protest for each of the outcomes. It's not clear to the reader how the authors are interpreting these findings.

> **Response:** We appreciate this observation and agree the interpretation was unclear. We have revised Section 6.1 to clarify that the random forest analysis serves as a robustness check rather than a variable selection procedure. The random forest results provide methodological triangulation by demonstrating that protest activity consistently ranks among the most important predictors of both parliamentary speech and policy outcomes even when using a fundamentally different modeling approach (machine learning versus linear regression). This convergence across methods strengthens confidence that protest effects are substantively important rather than artifacts of our particular regression specifications. We have removed language suggesting variable selection and instead explicitly frame the random forest findings as corroborating evidence that environmental protest plays a meaningful role in shaping climate policy.
>
> **Changes Made:** Section 6.1 (page 17).

1.3.5 Comment 1.10: Between-Country Variance

Reviewer Comment: What was the between-country variance in outcomes?

> **Response:** This is a nice suggestion. We have now conducted a variance decomposition for all outcome variables, partitioning total variance into between-country and within-country components. Between-country variance is calculated as the variance of country-level means, while within-country variance is the residual variance after accounting for between-country differences. The results show that most variation—particularly for policy outcomes—occurs within countries over time, while speech outcomes show modest between-country differences. These findings, along with other model specification tests in the Appendices, support our use of country fixed effects to identify within-country temporal dynamics in the main analyses.
>
> **Changes Made:** Added variance decomposition Table A12 in Appendix 6 (page A7) and referenced this diagnostic in footnote 8 (page 12) in the main text.

1.4 Minor Issues

1.4.1 Comment 1.11: Control Variable Interpretation

Reviewer Comment: Interpretation of control variables: generally, if control variables are included in a model designed to estimate the (argued) causal effect of one variable on another, it is not good practice to interpret the coefficients of control variables.

- The comment, quoted in full
- Your reply directly beneath
- Numbered, and named
- Same shape every time

Clean and Marked Up

- Most journals want two files: a clean manuscript and a marked-up one.
- In LaTeX I colour every change as I go, `\color{red}`.
- The marked-up file is what proves you did what the memo claims.
- Tedious, and the thing reviewers notice.

Books Are a Different Animal

- Four reader reports, not two or three reviewers.
- The asks are structural: framing, scope, audience, competing works.
- The decision goes to a press board, not one editor.
- Months, not weeks.

My Book Memo Is by Theme

- Not reviewer by reviewer. Sections across all the readers.
- Dissertation-to-book transformation. Title, framing and scope. Literature update.
- Competing works. Theory. One chapter in detail. Audience. Figures.
- Four readers said overlapping things, so answering once was clearer.

The Cover Letter

- Short. A page at most, and it is not the memo.
- Say what changed at the level of theory, evidence, framing.
- Flag anything structural, like a new title, with the old manuscript ID.

Tone

- Grateful, not grovelling.
- Thank them again every few points, not just once at the top. It costs nothing and it reads well.
- Never sarcastic, even when you are right.
- Assume all three will read it.

Disagreeing

How to Push Back

- Agree with the point, then narrow the claim. "The distinction is right and we accept it," then say what the finding does and does not cover.
- Offer a substitute: a robustness check, an appendix, a footnote.
- Say what it would cost: the data does not exist, or it would be a different paper.
- Point at the other reviewer where they contradict each other, and let the editor decide.

Pushing Back Badly

- Ignoring a point. Silence reads as evasion.
- "The reviewer misunderstands." They read what you wrote.
- Arguing for a paragraph when changing one sentence would do.
- Winning the argument and losing the paper.

Timelines and Nerves

How Long It Takes

- Deadlines are usually soft. Ask for an extension.
- Do not sit on it for a year.
- Expect a second round. That is normal.
- Reject after an R&R happens, and it is survivable.

Takeaways

- An R&R is the good outcome. Treat it like one.
- The editor's letter is the map.
- The memo is what gets judged.
- You may disagree. Give reasons and offer something.

Questions?

Kasia, if you are here: how do you handle a very minor revision?