

1 **The polar localization hub protein PopZ restrains adaptor dependent ClpXP**
2 **proteolysis in *Caulobacter crescentus***

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10 Running title: PopZ restrains ClpXP-mediated proteolysis

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24 **ABSTRACT**

25 In *Caulobacter crescentus*, timely degradation of several proteins by the ClpXP
26 protease is critical for proper cell cycle progression. During the cell cycle, the
27 ClpXP protease, the substrate CtrA and many other proteins are localized to the
28 stalked pole dependent on a polar interaction hub composed of PopZ protein
29 oligomers. Prior work suggests that the localization of ClpXP, protease
30 substrates, and cofactors is needed for recognition of substrates such as CtrA by
31 ClpXP. Here, we formally test this hypothesis by examining the role of PopZ in
32 ClpXP activity and find surprisingly that CtrA degradation is enhanced in cells
33 lacking polar localization due to loss of PopZ. The ClpXP adaptor CpdR is
34 required for this enhanced degradation of CtrA and other adaptor-dependent
35 substrates, but adaptor-independent substrate degradation is not affected upon
36 loss of PopZ. We find that overexpression of PopZ also leads to faster
37 degradation of CtrA, but is likely due to nonphysiologically relevant recognition of
38 CtrA by ClpXP alone as loss of CpdR does not affect this enhancement. Our
39 main conclusion is that loss of PopZ, and therefore loss of polar localization,
40 does not result in the loss of ClpXP regulated proteolysis, as would be predicted
41 from a model which requires polar localization of ClpXP for its activation. Rather,
42 our data point to a model where PopZ normally restrains ClpXP proteolysis by
43 promoting the inactivation of the CpdR adaptor, likely through the
44 phosphorylation activity of the CckA kinase.

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47 **IMPORTANCE**

48 Regulated proteolysis is critical for the cell cycle progression of bacteria such as
49 *Caulobacter crescentus*. According to one model, this regulated proteolysis
50 requires localization of the ClpXP protease at the stalked pole for its subsequent
51 degradation of substrates such as CtrA. This study offers evidence that supports
52 an alternative model to explain how localization might influence protein
53 degradation. Using a delocalized *in vivo* system created by the deletion of a pole
54 organizing protein PopZ, we show that activation of the ClpXP protease is
55 independent of its polar localization. The data points to a role for PopZ in
56 restraining ClpXP activity, likely by controlling the activity of upstream regulators
57 of protease activity, such as CckA, though changes in its localization.

58

59 **INTRODUCTION**

60 Proteolysis plays an important role in facilitating cell cycle progression and
61 various developmental transitions in bacteria. Examples are: cell cycle
62 progression in *Caulobacter crescentus* (*Caulobacter* hereafter) and cellular
63 transition from vegetative to sporulation stage in *Bacillus subtilis* (1-4). The cell
64 cycle of *Caulobacter* starts with a replication incompetent motile swarmer cell
65 (G1-like phase). In response to developmental cues, the swarmer (SW) cell
66 differentiates into a stalked (ST) cell. The ST cell is capable of replication and
67 division to give birth to a new SW cell. Following replication and asymmetric
68 division the mother ST cell immediately starts DNA replication and another round
69 of cell division whereas the new born SW cell again has to differentiate into ST

70 cell in order to continue its cell cycle (5, 6). To maintain such stringent control
71 during SW-to-ST transition, levels of many proteins, including a protein called
72 CtrA, change dramatically (3, 7).

73

74 CtrA is a transcriptional factor that controls transcription of ~95 genes and also
75 functions as an inhibitor of DNA replication (8, 9). In SW cells, CtrA is
76 phosphorylated by a membrane-bound bifunctional kinase CckA via the
77 phosphotransferase ChpT (10-12). The phosphorylated CtrA binds tightly to DNA
78 at chromosomal origin of replication (*oriC*) to block the initiation of replication (3,
79 8, 12). The same CckA-ChpT kinase pathway also phosphorylates the ClpX
80 adaptor and response regulator CpdR in the SW cell which functionally
81 inactivates it (12-15). During the SW-to-ST transition, the same CckA-ChpT
82 cascade dephosphorylates both CtrA and CpdR via shuttling of the phosphoryl
83 groups back to CckA (16, 17). The dephosphorylated CpdR then drives
84 localization of ClpXP protease to the stalk pole (13). In parallel with this, other
85 cofactors, PopA and RcdA, were shown to localize CtrA to the same stalk pole
86 (18, 19). This convergent localization of ClpXP protease and the CtrA substrate
87 at the stalk pole was postulated to increase the local concentration of the
88 protease and the substrate leading to the degradation of CtrA (19, 20). The
89 destruction of CtrA then allows the assembly of replication machinery at *oriC*,
90 which then initiates the replication process.

91

92 A pole organizing protein, called PopZ (Polar Organizing Protein-Z), was
93 identified in recent years. PopZ functions as a scaffold to recruit the accessory
94 factors and the protease complex involved in CtrA degradation at the stalked
95 pole (21). Besides serving as a scaffold, PopZ also anchors sister chromosomes
96 at the stalked pole by directly binding to ParB, which is associated with *oriC*
97 during chromosome segregation (22, 23). It also mediates polar localization of
98 proteins involved in cellular signaling including both the transmembrane histidine
99 kinase CckA and the DivJ protein through SpmX binding (23, 24). It was
100 proposed that PopZ functions as a switch between chromosome tethering and
101 protein scaffolding during SW-to-ST transition in *Caulobacter* to accommodate
102 programmed asymmetry during cell cycle (21). Further dissection of PopZ protein
103 revealed an N-terminal region, which is sufficient for binding all its partner
104 proteins, and a C-terminal region for homo-oligomerization (25). Together, these
105 protein localization studies supported a model where spatial
106 compartmentalization of the protease ClpXP and the substrate CtrA allows
107 removal of CtrA during SW-to-ST transition in *Caulobacter*.

108

109 Studies that were conducted recently suggested that spatial localization might
110 not be critical for CtrA degradation. The factor RcdA was shown necessary for
111 CtrA degradation as deletion of this factor did not support cell cycle changes in
112 CtrA degradation (18). Structure guided RcdA mutants that were incompetent to
113 localize to the stalk pole also failed to localize CtrA, but this delocalization did not
114 perturb cell cycle-dependent degradation of CtrA (26). Localization of ClpXP to

115 the stalk pole is not necessary for some of its activity as some ClpXP substrates,
116 such as FtsZ, were still degraded in a SW cell where ClpXP was shown to be
117 delocalized (27). Furthermore, *in vitro* reconstitution experiments using highly
118 purified proteins supported an adaptor hierarchy model where CpdR, RcdA and
119 PopA work in a coordinated fashion as adaptors to degrade many substrates
120 including CtrA (4, 15).

121

122 In this study, we find that CtrA degradation is enhanced in PopZ lacking cells
123 suggesting that PopZ restrains CtrA degradation. The ClpXP adaptor CpdR is
124 required for this enhanced degradation as CtrA degradation was stabilized in a
125 $\Delta cpdR \Delta popZ$ strain. This degradation enhancement in $\Delta popZ$ cells also extends
126 to additional CpdR and RcdA-dependent substrates, PdeA and TacA,
127 respectively. These results indicate that ClpXP is activated at the CpdR adaptor
128 level. However, ClpXP activity is not globally stimulated in $\Delta popZ$ cells as
129 degradation of adaptor-independent substrates, such as a degron-appended
130 GFP, is not affected. Overexpressing PopZ also leads to enhanced degradation
131 of CtrA, which we propose reflects a nonphysiological recognition of CtrA by
132 ClpXP alone, as loss of the CpdR adaptor does not affect this enhancement.
133 Together, these results support a model where PopZ-mediated localization of the
134 protease ClpXP and its adaptors is not essential for its activation but rather PopZ
135 may affect protein degradation principally through regulation of upstream indirect
136 regulators of the ClpXP protease such as the CckA kinase.

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138

139 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

140 **Bacterial culture conditions and plasmid construction.** *E.coli* and
141 *Caulobacter* strains used in the study are tabulated in Table 1. *E. coli* strains
142 were grown in LB media at 37 °C with the appropriate antibiotic (50 µg/ml
143 kanamycin, 15 µg/ml tetracycline, 30 µg/ml chloramphenicol). *Caulobacter*
144 strains were grown in Peptone-Yeast-Extract (PYE) media at 30 °C with the
145 appropriate antibiotic (1 µg/ml tetracycline, 1 µg/ml chloramphenicol, 5 µg/ml
146 kanamycin). PdeA and PopZ was PCR amplified and cloned into pENTR
147 plasmids. The insert was then moved into xylose-inducible expression plasmids
148 which append an M2-epitope tag on the N-terminus of the protein using
149 Gateway-based cloning (28). Microscopy was performed as described previously
150 (4, 15).

151

152 ***In vivo* protein degradation assays.** *Caulobacter* cells were grown to OD₆₀₀ ~
153 0.3 in PYE medium with appropriate antibiotic. Protein expression was induced
154 with xylose wherever required and then protein synthesis was blocked by the
155 addition of 50 µg/ml kanamycin or 30 µg/ml chloramphenicol. Equal volumes of
156 samples were collected at different time points as indicated in figures for Western
157 analysis.

158

159 **Western analysis.** Culture samples withdrawn at different time points were
160 centrifuged. After removal of supernatant, the pellets were resuspended in 2X

161 SDS sample buffer containing 40 mM DTT. The samples were boiled at 95 °C for
162 10 minutes and centrifuged to remove cellular debris. After centrifugation, the
163 extracts were resolved on 10-12% SDS-PAGE gels. Proteins from the gel were
164 then transferred to a polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF) membrane. After blocking
165 the membranes with 3% milk-TBST buffer, the membranes were probed with
166 primary antibodies overnight at 4 °C. Antibodies used were: polyclonal rabbit
167 anti-CtrA (1:5000 dilution), anti-DnaA (1:10000 dilution), anti-TacA (1:10000
168 dilution), affinity purified anti-PdeA (1:1000 dilution), anti-ClpP (1:5000 dilution) or
169 monoclonal mouse anti-FLAG M2 (1:5000 dilution; Sigma). After washing off the
170 excess primary antibody, the membranes were probed with goat anti-rabbit
171 (Millipore, USA) or goat anti-mouse (Millipore, USA) secondary antibodies
172 conjugated to HRP enzyme. Proteins were visualized by the luminescence from
173 HRP substrate using a chemiluminescence detection system G-box (Syngene,
174 UK).

175

176 **RESULTS**

177 **Degradation of CtrA is enhanced in cells lacking the polar organizing**
178 **protein PopZ.** PopZ is a scaffolding protein that facilitates polar localization of a
179 multitude of proteins including those that are directly involved in CtrA degradation
180 such as CpdR, RcdA, PopA and ClpX (21, 29). Cells lacking PopZ have
181 morphological defects and fail to localize the aforementioned factors to the
182 stalked pole (21, 29). Since polar localization of the ClpXP protease and the
183 substrate CtrA, facilitated by the cofactors CpdR/RcdA/PopA, was postulated to

184 be critical for CtrA degradation, we hypothesized that CtrA degradation would be
185 lost in cells lacking PopZ if this model was correct. Contrary to this hypothesis,
186 we observed that CtrA was degraded even more rapidly in $\Delta popZ$ than in
187 wildtype cells (Fig. 1A and 1B). CtrA stability and cell morphology were restored
188 to those of wildtype cells when this $\Delta popZ$ strain was transformed with a plasmid
189 expressing the protein PopZ, suggesting that the enhanced degradation of CtrA
190 in $\Delta popZ$ strain is due to specifically to loss of PopZ (Fig. 1A, 1B and 1C).
191 Together, these results suggest that the scaffolding protein PopZ restrains CtrA
192 degradation and support our *in vitro* work where CpdR, RcdA, PopA-cdG
193 physically interact even in the absence of subcellular localization to stimulate
194 ClpXP-mediated degradation of CtrA (Fig. 1D and (4)).

195

196 **Adaptor-independent ClpXP and non-ClpXP proteolysis is not affected in**
197 **cells lacking PopZ.** The loss of PopZ protein stimulated CtrA degradation. This
198 could be explained by prolific activation of ClpXP or proteolysis in general, or by
199 activation of the adaptors needed to degrade CtrA *in vivo*. To address this, we
200 monitored degradation of a ClpXP reporter substrate comprised of GFP fused to
201 the C-terminal degron of CtrA (GFP~CtrA₁₅) that does not require adaptors for
202 degradation. Degradation of M2 epitope tagged GFP~CtrA₁₅ is not affected in
203 $\Delta popZ$ cells compared to wildtype cells suggesting that the stimulation of CtrA
204 degradation is specific to changes in adaptor activity (Fig. 2A and 2B). To
205 examine whether protein degradation is globally stimulated in $\Delta popZ$ cells, we
206 monitored degradation of a ClpXP-independent substrate DnaA. Degradation of

207 DnaA was unaffected in $\Delta popZ$ cells compared to wildtype cells suggesting that
208 the enhancement in degradation in $\Delta popZ$ cells is specific to ClpXP-dependent
209 substrates (Fig. 2C and 2D). Therefore, we next set out to examine if changes in
210 adaptor activity explained the increased CtrA degradation in $\Delta popZ$ cells.

211

212 **Degradation of both CpdR and RcdA-dependent substrates is enhanced in**
213 **cells lacking PopZ.** Because CtrA requires CpdR, RcdA and PopA for
214 degradation, we explored the need for each tier of the adaptor hierarchy by using
215 substrates specific to each level. PdeA is a phosphodiesterase that only requires
216 the CpdR and TacA is a response regulator that requires both CpdR and RcdA
217 for ClpXP-mediated degradation. (4, 15, 30). In order to determine which tier of
218 adaptor-dependent proteolysis is compromised in $\Delta popZ$ cells, we monitored the
219 degradation of both PdeA and TacA. Degradation of both PdeA and TacA is
220 enhanced in cells lacking PopZ suggesting that along with CtrA degradation;
221 degradation of other adaptor-dependent ClpXP substrates is also stimulated in
222 $\Delta popZ$ cells (Fig. 3A and 3B). These results point to a conclusion that ClpXP is
223 constitutively activated at the CpdR adaptor level.

224

225 **CpdR is epistatic to PopZ in CtrA degradation pathway.** The adaptor CpdR is
226 required for stimulation of CtrA degradation both *in vivo* and *in vitro* (4, 13, 14).
227 We reasoned that since CpdR appears to be constitutively in $\Delta popZ$ cells,
228 deletion of CpdR in this background should result in loss of CtrA degradation. To
229 test this hypothesis we made a $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ double knock out strain by

230 transducing $\Delta cpdR:tet$ into the $\Delta popZ$ strain using $\phi Cr30$ phage. As expected,
231 CtrA degradation was stabilized in $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ double knockout background
232 similar to that in $\Delta cpdR$ strain (Fig. 4A). Microscopy experiments confirmed
233 delocalization of CpdR-YFP in the $\Delta popZ$ and $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ cells (Fig. 4B and
234 (21)). CtrA degradation was restored by complementing $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ strain with
235 a plasmid expressing the CpdR protein suggesting that the loss of CtrA
236 degradation in $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ strain could be attributed solely to loss of CpdR
237 (Fig. 4C). CpdR activity is regulated by phosphorylation as a nonphosphorable
238 CpdR (CpdR-D51A) prolifically delivers CtrA for degradation (13). Consistent with
239 this, expression of CpdR-D51A in $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ strain increases CtrA
240 degradation even more than WT (Fig. 4C). Taken together, these results suggest
241 that the adaptor protein, CpdR, is absolutely required for CtrA degradation in
242 $\Delta popZ$ cells.

243

244 **Overexpression of the PopZ protein stimulates CtrA degradation in a CpdR**
245 **independent manner.** Overexpression of PopZ leads to the enlargement of the
246 polar region and over-recruitment of proteins such as CtrA, CpdR, RcdA and
247 ClpX to these polar zones (21). To determine if prolific polar recruitment affects
248 substrate degradation, we monitored CtrA degradation in strains overexpression
249 PopZ. Because we had found that loss of PopZ results in increased CtrA
250 degradation, we were surprised to find that overproduction of PopZ also results in
251 faster CtrA compared to wildtype cells (Fig. 5A and 5B). This stimulation was
252 specific to CtrA; PdeA degradation was not affected (Fig. 5A and S1).

253 Overexpression of PopZ did not compromise protein degradation globally as
254 degradation of a ClpXP-independent substrate, DnaA, remained unaffected (Fig.
255 5A and S1).

256

257 Why is CtrA degradation stimulated upon PopZ overexpression but PdeA is not?
258 We considered this result in light of the fact that PdeA absolutely requires CpdR
259 for degradation both *in vivo* and *in vitro* (15, 31) while ClpXP alone can degrade
260 purified CtrA *in vitro* (32). Our working model is that overexpression of PopZ
261 forces ClpX and CtrA to the poles to increase local concentration sufficiently to
262 allow for the recognition of CtrA directly by ClpXP. If this is true, then this
263 overexpression should bypass the need for CpdR. Indeed, we found that CtrA,
264 which is stable in $\Delta cpdR$ cells as expected, was degraded in $\Delta cpdR$ cells
265 overproducing PopZ (Fig 5C and 5D). Importantly, PdeA was stable in the
266 absence of CpdR, regardless of PopZ overexpression. Together these results
267 suggest that forcing recruitment of the protease and the substrate by
268 overexpressing PopZ is sufficient to bypass the need for adaptors when the
269 substrate can be directly recognized by the protease.

270

271 **DISCUSSION**

272 In this work, we explored if polar localization of the ClpXP protease is critical for
273 its activation in *Caulobacter*. Prior genetic experiments showed that the adaptors
274 CpdR/RcdA/PopA are necessary for normal CtrA degradation *in vivo* and
275 microscopy-based experiments showed these factors facilitated localization of

276 the ClpXP protease and the CtrA substrate to the stalked pole presumably to aid
277 in degradation (13, 18, 19). Recent *in vitro* reconstitution experiments showed
278 that all these accessory factors work together as biochemical adaptors
279 enhancing the affinity of CtrA for ClpXP (4, 14). We found that CtrA is degraded
280 more rapidly in cells lacking the PopZ protein compared to wildtype. The fact
281 that the degradation of other CpdR and RcdA-dependent substrates is also
282 enhanced in $\Delta popZ$ cells supports a model where polar localization mediated by
283 PopZ protein might be critical for restraining adaptor-mediated protein
284 degradation rather than driving degradation.

285

286 CckA is a membrane-bound bifunctional histidine kinase. Autophosphorylation of
287 CckA results in phosphorylation of both CtrA and CpdR via the
288 phosphotransferase ChpT (10-12). When bound to cdG, CckA switches to a
289 phosphatase preferring state and dephosphorylates CtrA and CpdR (16, 17).
290 This allows cyclic fluctuation of CtrA activity via phosphorylation and proteolysis,
291 which is key for proper cell cycle progression. Because increased local density
292 of CckA at the stalked pole appears to drive its kinase activity (33) and PopZ is
293 needed for CckA localization (23), a working model for our results are that loss of
294 CckA localization forces it into a phosphatase state resulting in constitutive
295 dephosphorylation of CpdR and resulting activation of adaptor dependent ClpXP
296 degradation of substrates. Consistent with this, cells expressing mutant CckA
297 alleles with disrupted polar localization result in more rapid CtrA degradation
298 (34).

299 Our results combined with others support a model where polar localization
300 organized by PopZ normally influences degradation of ClpXP substrates through
301 regulating the activity of CckA rather than by forcing substrates in close proximity
302 with proteases (Fig. 6). However, artificially increasing PopZ can force
303 corecruitment of ClpXP with substrates to drive degradation even in the absence
304 of adaptors. When PopZ is present at normal levels, CckA can switch between
305 the kinase and the phosphatase states to tightly control CpdR-dependent ClpXP
306 activation. However, when PopZ is deleted, CckA predominantly functions as a
307 phosphatase, resulting in dephosphorylation of CpdR and constitutively activation
308 of adaptor dependent ClpXP proteolysis. Interestingly, recent work shows that
309 certain stresses lead to rapid clearance of CtrA through a switch in CckA to its
310 phosphatase state without changes in CckA localization (35), further supporting
311 the critical role in CckA activity rather than its localization per se in controlling
312 CtrA degradation.

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314

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457 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

458

459 **Figure 1. CtrA degradation is enhanced in cells lacking the pole organizing**

460 **protein PopZ.** (A) CtrA degradation in wildtype, $\Delta popZ$ and $\Delta popZ$

461 complemented by a PopZ expressing plasmid (n.b., the xylose promoter is leaky

462 and PopZ is expressed even without addition of inducer). Cells were grown to

463 exponential phase in PYE and then translation was blocked by adding

464 kanamycin. CtrA stability was monitored by Western blot analyses by probing

465 the blots with anti-CtrA antibody. ClpP is shown as a loading control. (B)

466 Quantitation of Western blots. Bands corresponding to CtrA and ClpP were

467 quantified using ImageJ (NIH, USA) and normalized band intensities over time

468 are shown. Data represents mean \pm SD of two independent experiments. (C)

469 Complementation of PopZ protein expressed from a plasmid restored wildtype

470 morphology of $\Delta popZ$ cells. All strains were grown to logarithmic phase in PYE.

471 (D) A model depicting adaptor complex-mediated proteolysis of CtrA by ClpXP.

472 Here CpdR, RcdA and PopA assemble in a hierarchical manner to deliver many

473 substrates including CtrA to ClpXP for degradation (4).

474

475 **Figure 2. Degradation of either adaptor or ClpXP-independent proteolysis is**

476 **not compromised in wildtype and $\Delta popZ$ cells.** (A) Wildtype and $\Delta popZ$ cells

477 expressing an M2-epitope tagged GFP~CtrA₁₅ were grown to exponential phase

478 and induced with 0.3% xylose for 2 hours. Protein synthesis was then blocked by

479 the addition of chloramphenicol. Lysates from equal volumes of cells were

480 collected at indicated time points for SDS-PAGE gels. M2-GFP~CtrA₁₅ stability

481 was monitored by Western blot analyses by probing the blots with a anti-M2
482 antibody. ClpP is shown as a loading control. (B) Quantitation of Western blots.
483 Bands corresponding to M2GFP~CtrA₁₅ and ClpP were quantified using ImageJ
484 and normalized band intensities over time are shown. Data represents mean ±
485 SD from two biological replicates. (C) Degradation of ClpXP-independent
486 substrate DnaA is not affected in wildtype and $\Delta popZ$ cells. Conditions used were
487 similar as in figure 1A except that the blot was probed for anti-DnaA antibody.
488 ClpP is shown as a loading control. (D) Quantitation of Western blots from figure
489 2C.

490

491 **Figure 3. Degradation of CpdR and RcdA-dependent substrates is**
492 **enhanced in cells lacking PopZ.** (A) Strains expressing M2-tagged PdeA were
493 grown to exponential phase and induced with 0.3% xylose for 2 hours before
494 inhibiting protein translation by the addition of chloramphenicol. (C) TacA stability
495 was monitored in wildtype and $\Delta popZ$ cells. Lysates from equal volume of cells
496 were collected at indicated time points and loaded onto SDS-PAGE gels. PdeA
497 and TacA stability was monitored by Western blot analyses by probing the blots
498 with anti-M2 and anti-TacA antibodies. Asterisks denote cross-reacting band. (B,
499 D) Quantitation of Western blots. Bands corresponding to M2PdeA, TacA and
500 ClpP were quantified and normalized band intensities over time are shown. Data
501 represents mean ± SD from two biological replicates.

502

503 **Figure 4. CpdR is epistatic to PopZ in CtrA degradation pathway.** (A) CtrA
504 stability is monitored in wildtype, $\Delta popZ$, $\Delta cpdR$ and $\Delta cpdR \Delta popZ$ strains. (B)
505 Phase contrast and fluorescence microscopy images of wildtype, $\Delta popZ$, $\Delta cpdR$
506 $\Delta popZ$ cells expressing CpdR-YFP from a plasmid bearing a CpdR promoter.
507 Arrows indicate polar CpdR-YFP foci. (C) CtrA degradation is restored in
508 $\Delta cpdR \Delta popZ$ double knockout cells expressing CpdR from a plasmid. CpdR and
509 CpdR-D51A were expressed in $\Delta cpdR \Delta popZ$ cells from low copy xylose-
510 inducible plasmids. Cells were grown to exponential phase with 0.3% xylose or
511 not and protein synthesis was inhibited by adding chloramphenicol. Lysates from
512 equal number of cells were collected at indicated time points for Western
513 analysis. Asterisks denote cross-reacting bands.

514

515 **Figure 5. Overexpression of PopZ specifically stimulated CtrA degradation**
516 **in wildtype and $\Delta cpdR$ cells.** (A) Degradation of CtrA, PdeA, and DnaA was
517 monitored in wildtype cells or WT cells overexpressing PopZ from a high copy
518 xylose-inducible plasmid. Cultures were induced for 8 hours using 0.3% xylose
519 keeping them in exponential phase all time. After inhibiting protein synthesis by
520 the addition of kanamycin, lysates from equal volumes of cells were collected at
521 indicated time points and loaded onto SDS-PAGE gels. Asterisks denote cross-
522 reacting bands. (B) Bands corresponding to CtrA and ClpP were quantified using
523 ImageJ (NIH, USA) and normalized band intensities over time are shown. Data
524 represents mean \pm SD of three independent experiments. (C) Degradation of
525 CtrA, PdeA, and DnaA was monitored in $\Delta cpdR$ cells or $\Delta cpdR$ overexpressing

526 PopZ. (D) Bands corresponding to CtrA and ClpP were quantified and
527 normalized intensities are shown. Data represents mean \pm SD of three
528 independent experiments.

529

530 **Figure 6. A model representing the role of PopZ is restraining proteolysis.**

531 When PopZ is present, CckA is properly localized to stalked pole where it can
532 switch between a kinase and a phosphatase states thus modulating
533 phosphorylation of CpdR. When CpdR is dephosphorylated it can prime the
534 ClpXP protease to activate degradation of substrates CtrA/TacA/PdeA. When
535 PopZ is absent, CckA is delocalized and predominantly functions as a
536 phosphatase (17, 34). CckA then dephosphorylates CpdR via ChpT. The
537 dephosphorylated CpdR constitutively primed ClpXP protease and prolifically
538 stimulates degradation of CtrA/TacA/PdeA.

539

540

541 **Supplemental information:**

542

543 **Figure S1. Quantitation of Western blots from Figure 5.** Bands corresponding
 544 to PdeA and DnaA were quantified using ImageJ and normalized band intensities
 545 over time are shown.

546

547 **TABLE 1. Strains and plasmids used in this study**

| Plasmid or strain | Description | Source |
|----------------------------|--|------------|
| Strains | | |
| <i>E. coli</i> TOP10 | cloning strain | Invitrogen |
| <i>C. crescentus</i> CB15N | synchronizable derivative of wild-type CB15 | (36) |
| CPC104 | CB15N $\Delta popZ$ (<i>spec^R</i>) | (23) |
| CPC165 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR$ (<i>tet^R</i>) | (28) |
| CPC164 | CB15N $\Delta tacA$ (<i>R</i>) | (28) |
| CPC204 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$ (<i>tet^R</i> and <i>spec^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC107 | CB15N WT : : pJS14 -P _{xyIX} - <i>popZ</i> (<i>cm^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC201 | CB15N $\Delta popZ$: : pJS14 -P _{xyIX} - <i>popZ</i> (<i>cm^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC313 | CB15N WT : : pLXM -P _{xyIX} - <i>pdeA</i> (<i>tet^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC314 | CB15N $\Delta popZ$: : pLXM -P _{xyIX} - <i>pdeA</i> (<i>tet^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC233 | CB15N WT : : pcpdR- <i>cpdR-yfp</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC234 | CB15N $\Delta popZ$: : pcpdR- <i>cpdR-yfp</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC235 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$: : pcpdR- <i>cpdR-</i> <i>yfp</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC551 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$: : pLXM-P _{xyIX} - <i>cpdR</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC552 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR\Delta popZ$: : pLXM-P _{xyIX} - <i>cpdR-D51A</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC118 | CB15N $\Delta cpdR$: : pJS14-P _{xyIX} - <i>popZ</i> (<i>cm^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC221 | CB15N WT : : pRX- <i>gfp~ctrA₁₅</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| CPC207 | CB15N $\Delta popZ$: : pRX- <i>gfp~ctrA₁₅</i> (<i>kan^R</i>) | This study |
| Plasmids | | |
| pENTR/D-TOPO | entry vector for Gateway cloning (<i>kan^R</i>) | Invitrogen |

| | | |
|------------|--|------|
| pJS14-DEST | pJS14-PxyIX-M2; high-copy, xylose inducible, N-terminus M2 tag (<i>cm^R</i>) | (28) |
| pLXM-DEST | pMR10-PxyIX-M2; broad host range, low-copy, xylose inducible, N-terminus M2 tag (<i>kan^R</i>) | (28) |
| pLXM-DEST | pMR20-PxyIX-M2; broad host range, low-copy, xylose inducible, N-terminus M2 tag (<i>tet^R</i>) | (28) |
| pRX | Replicative, xylose inducible, M2 tag (<i>kan^R</i>) | (37) |

Figure 1

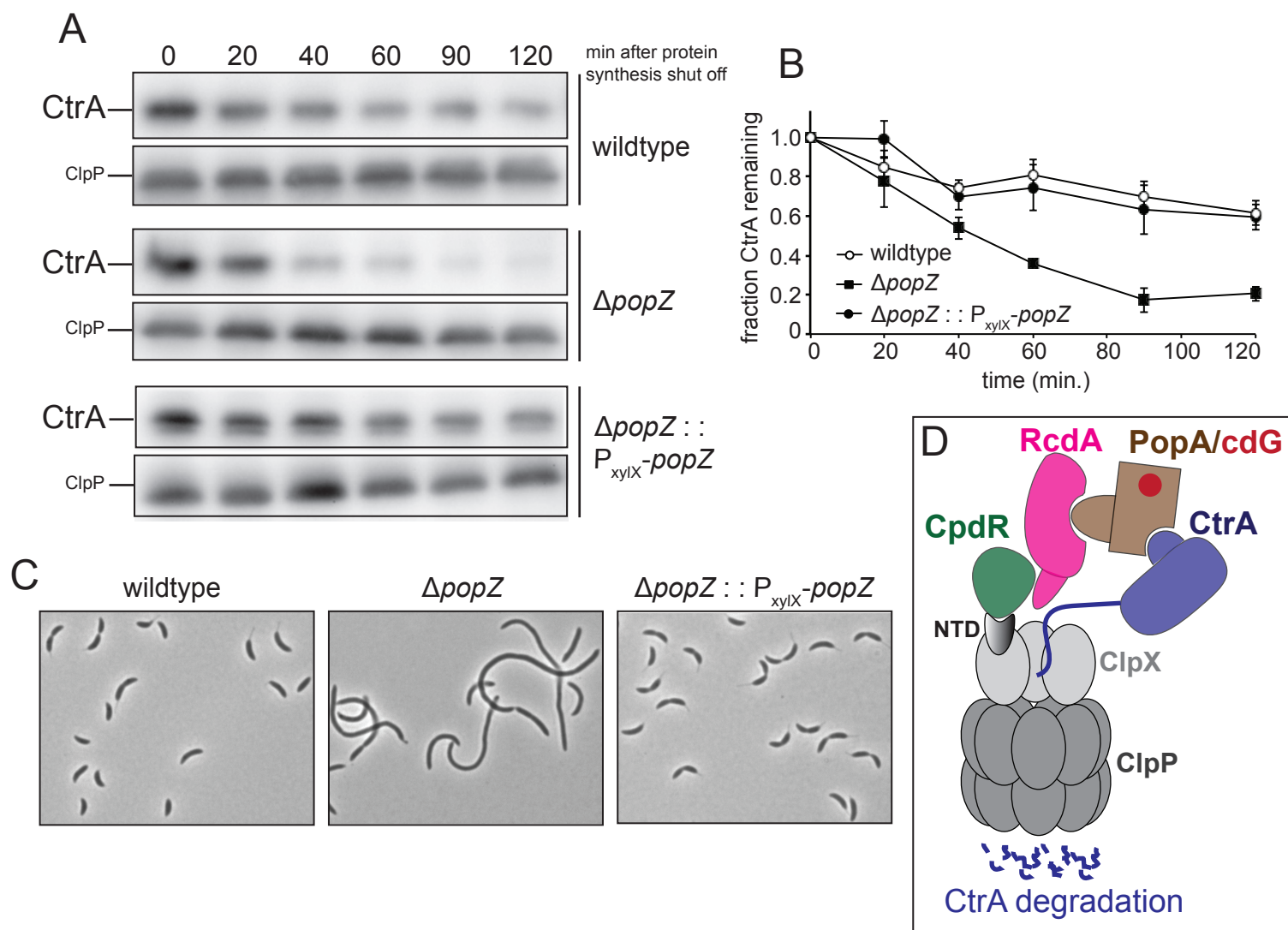


Figure 2

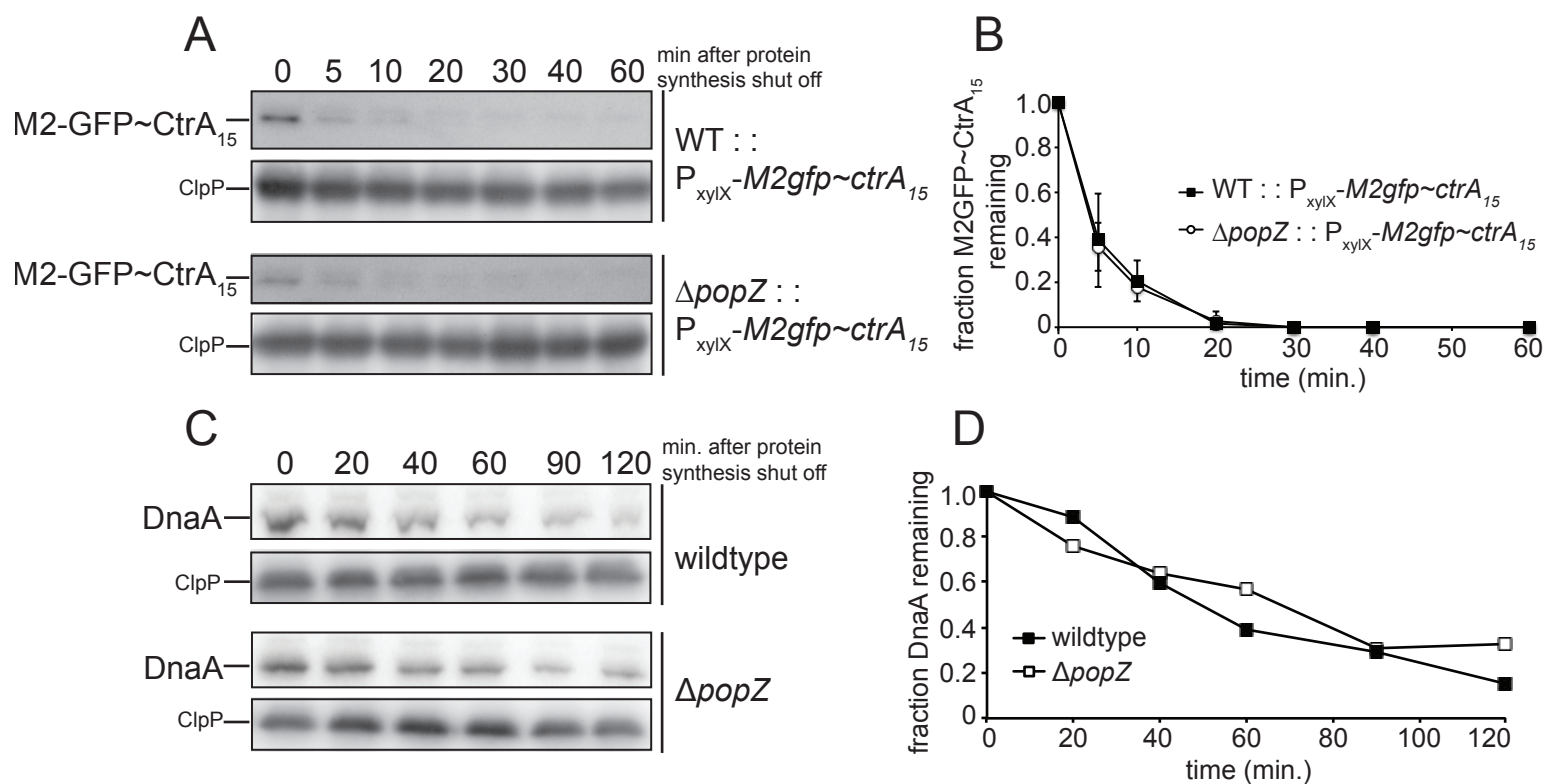


Figure 3

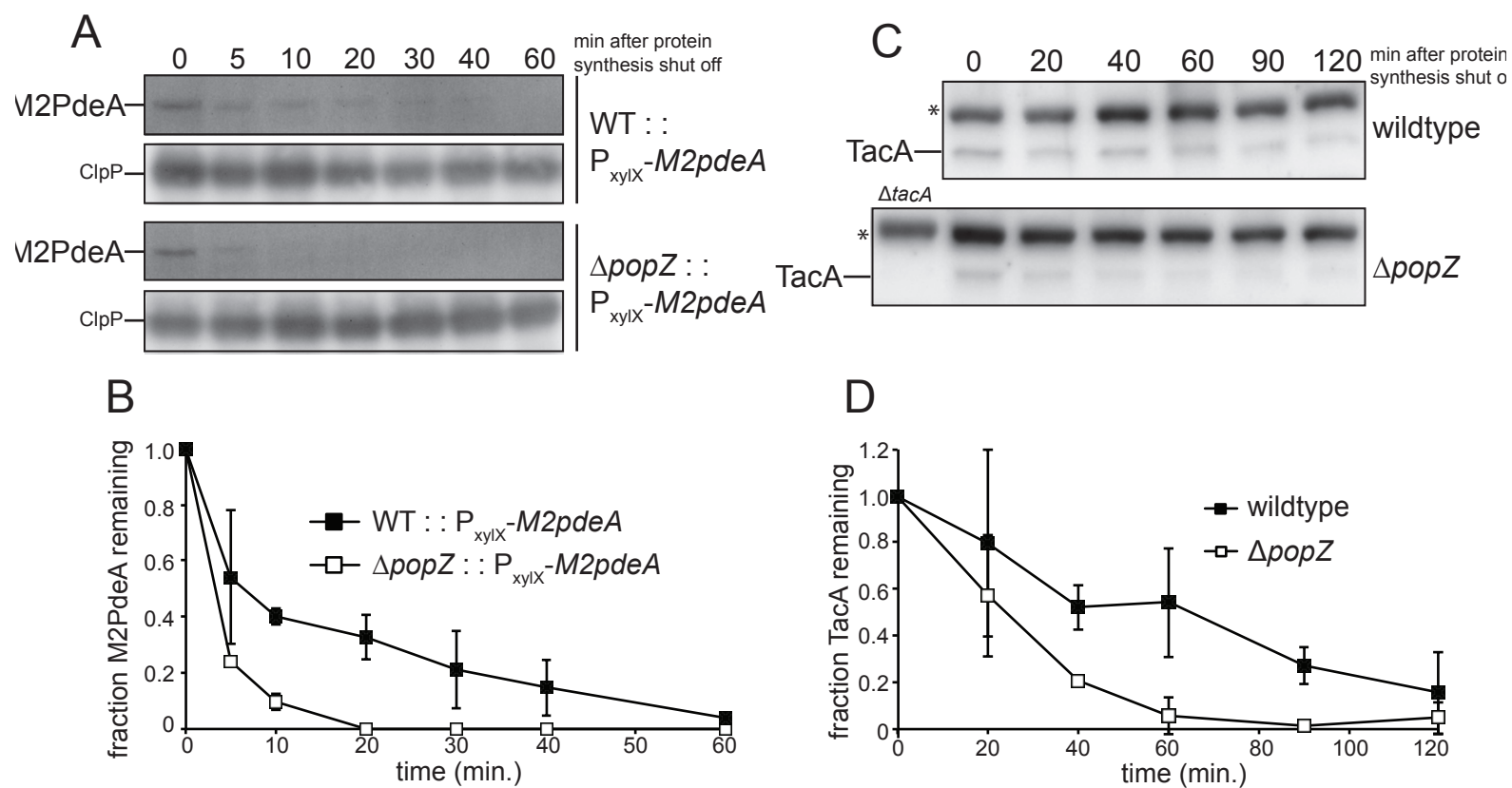


Figure 4

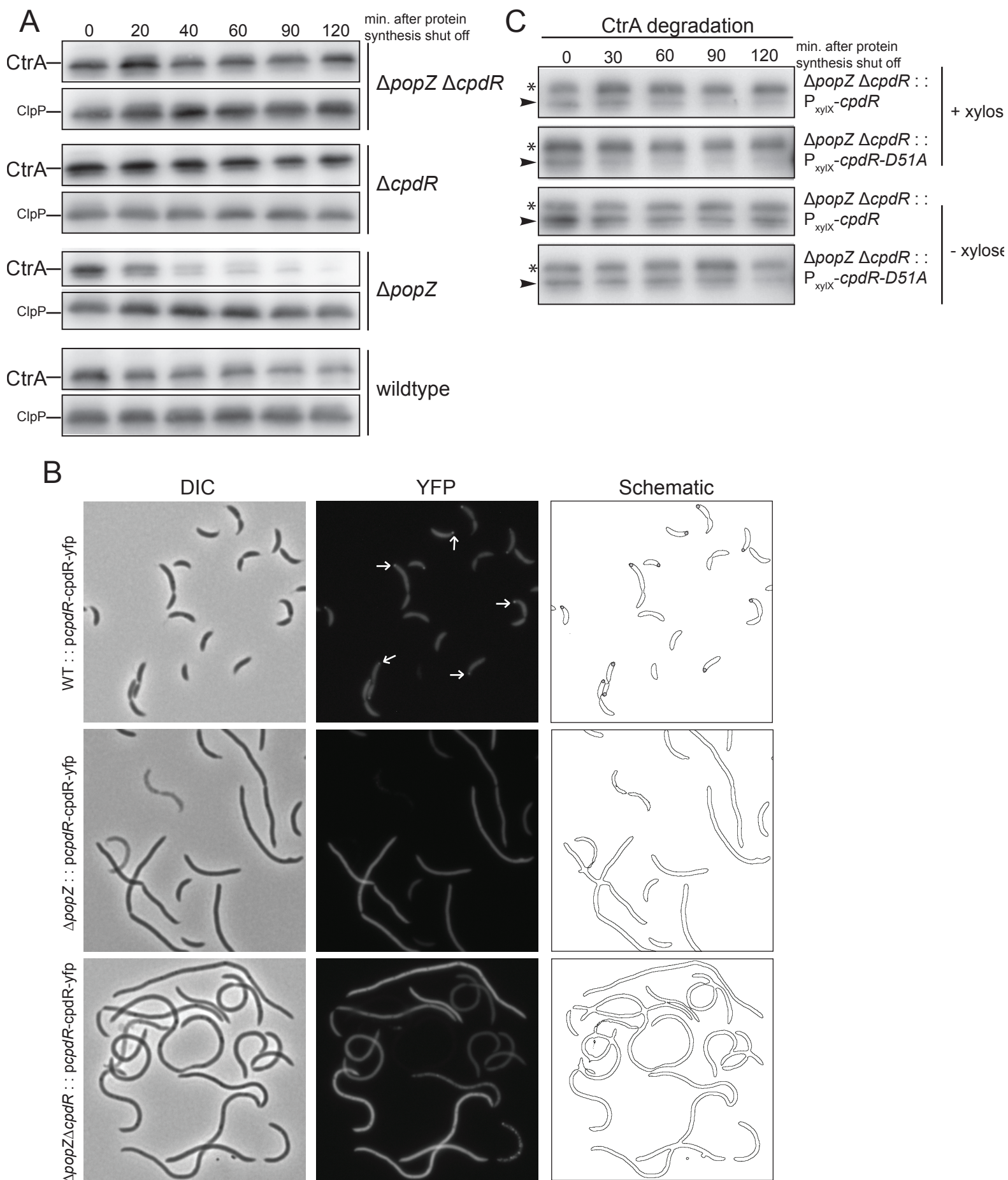


Figure 5

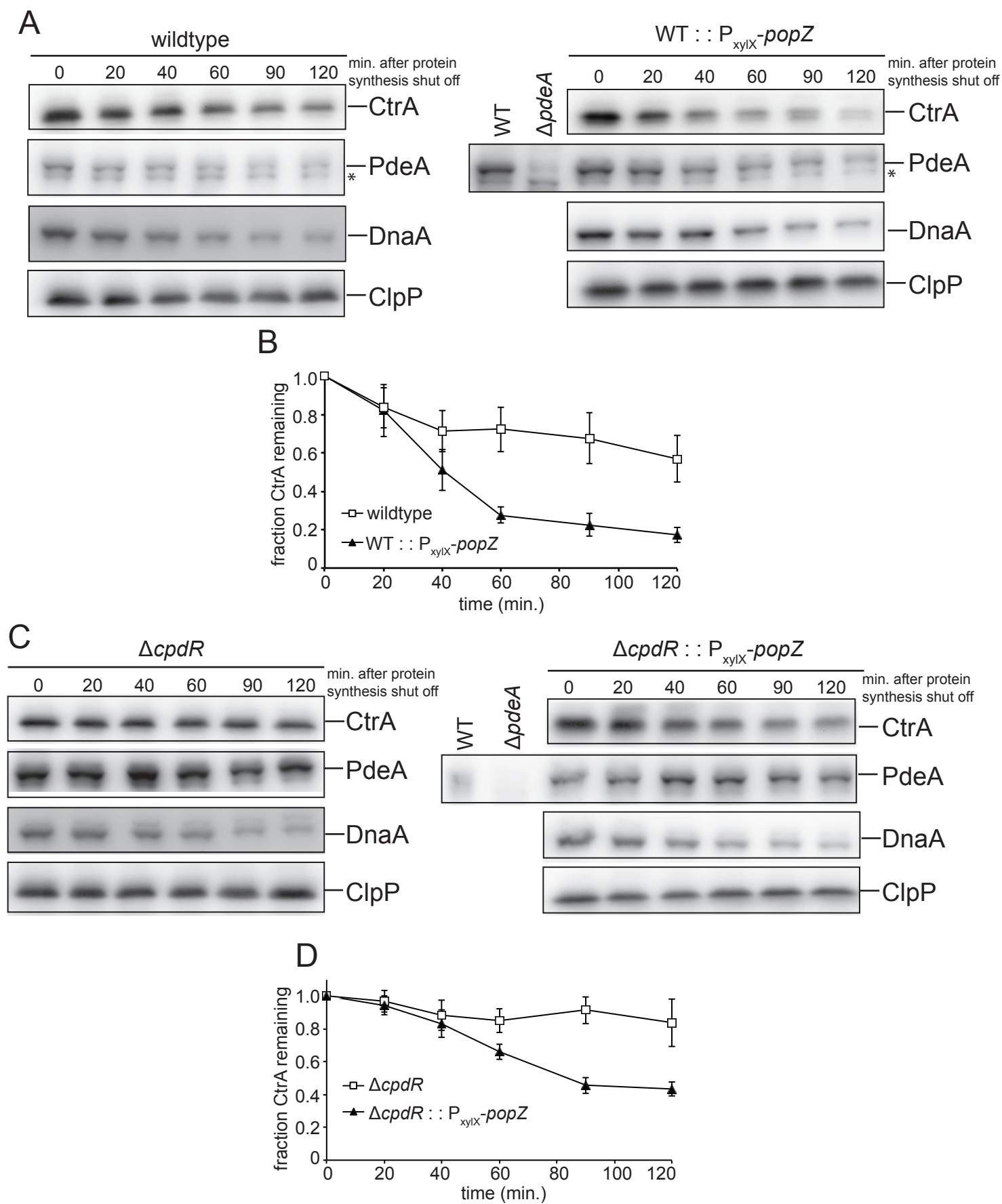


Figure 6

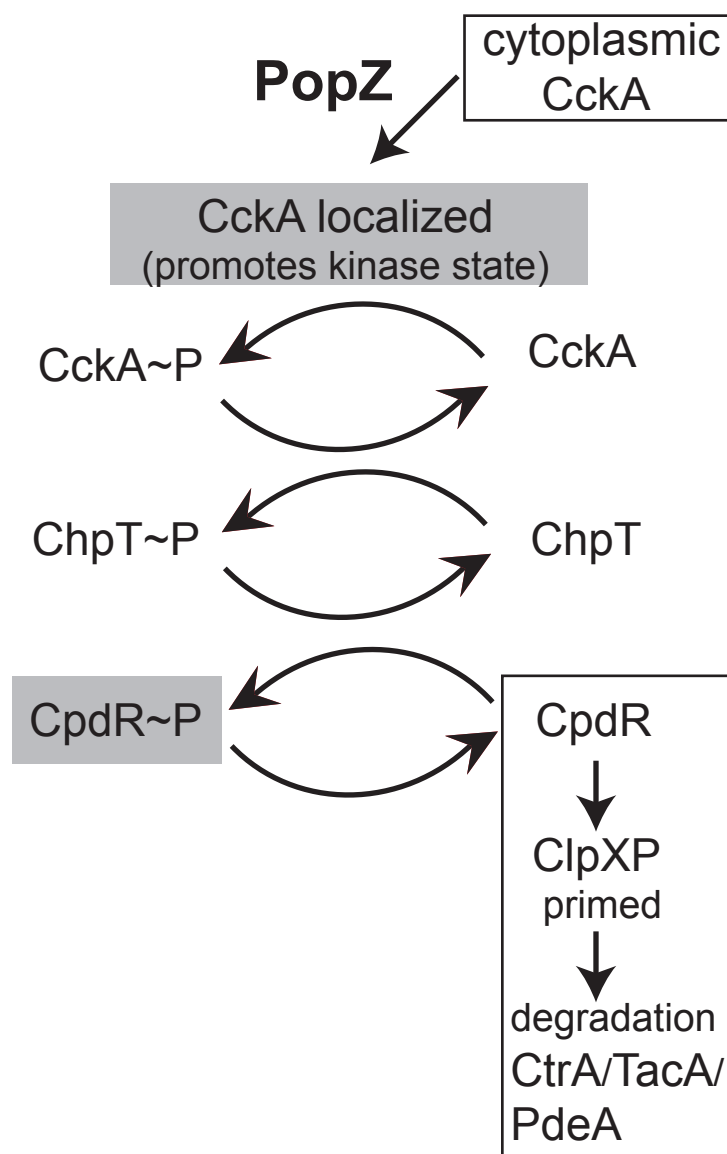


Figure S1

