

Order & Violence



Lecture 18: Democratization and democracy promotion

Chris Blattman

Today and next day

- I. What does it mean to be a democracy? An autocracy?
- II. Why do autocrats hold elections and other power-sharing institutions?
- III. What has driven waves of democratization?
 - Why did we see the “third wave” of democratization in the late 20th century?
 - Why are we seeing democratic rollbacks in the early 21st?
- IV. Can democracy be bestowed by rewriting the rules and introducing institutions?
 - Will the actual distribution of power change?
 - Do we have any evidence on the effects of exogenous rule changes?
- V. What kinds of democracy promotion should we expect to be effective? Ineffective?
- VI. Can democracy precede economic development?

I. What does it mean to be a democracy?
What does it mean to be an autocracy?

Some take a narrow, election centric view of democracy, as a set of rules about who decides

Democracy is *“the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”*

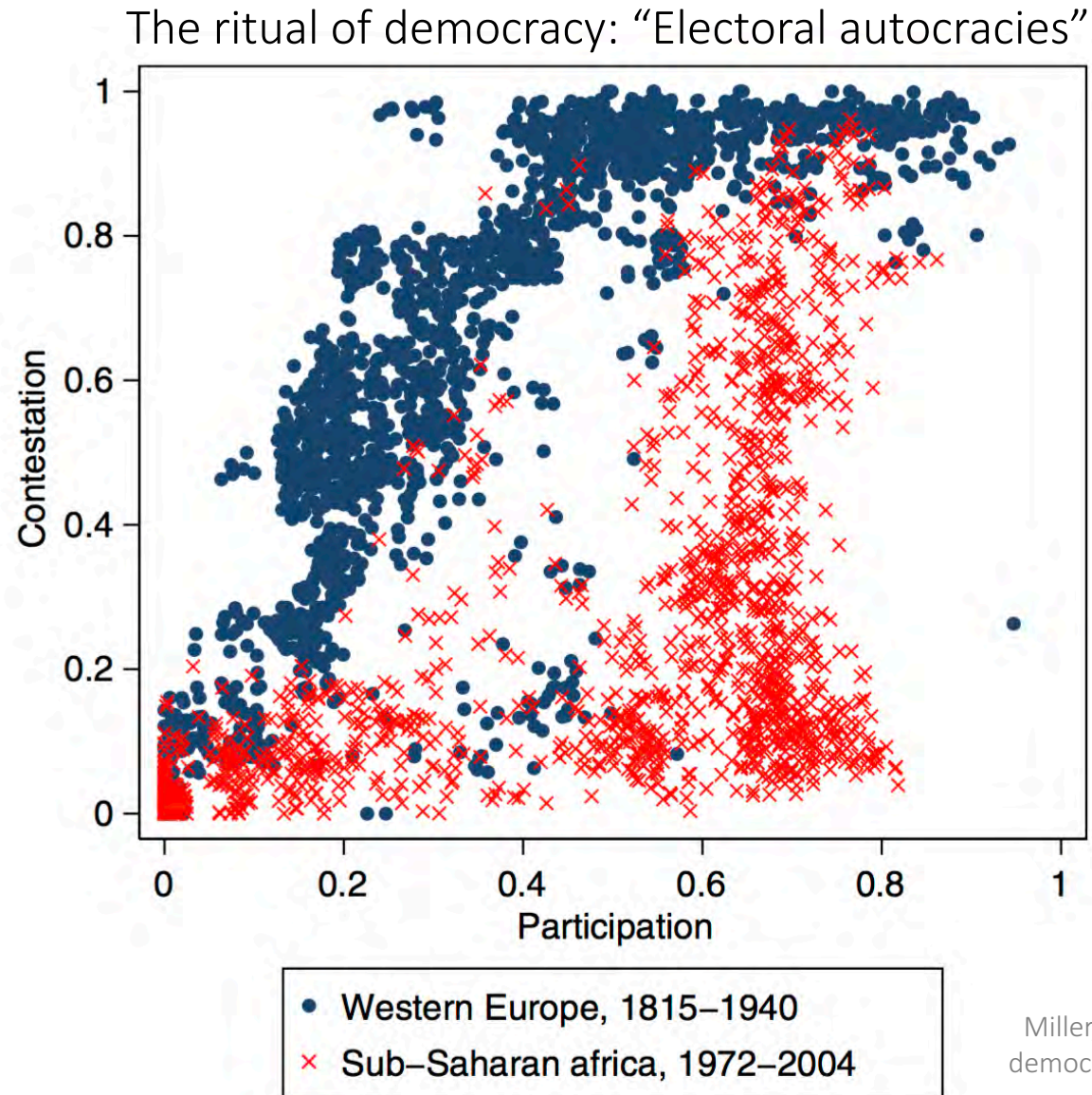
- Joseph Schumpeter (1942)



Problem 1: Autocracy is often a “residual” category

- Autocracy often defined as all the things that a democracy is not
- Democracy is multidimensional
 - Is it about processes like elections?
 - About particular rules and institutions?
 - Is it de facto, about roughly egalitarian possession of political power?
- And there are many varieties of autocracy
 - Many scholars distinguish between more narrow personalized/neopatrimonial regimes and ones with more institutionalized forms of power
 - Narrow versus broad selectorates
 - Other possible dimensions (Svolik)
 - Degree of military involvement
 - Restrictions on parties
 - How competitive and constrained is the legislature and executive?

Problem 2: Hard to take formal processes and institutions at face value

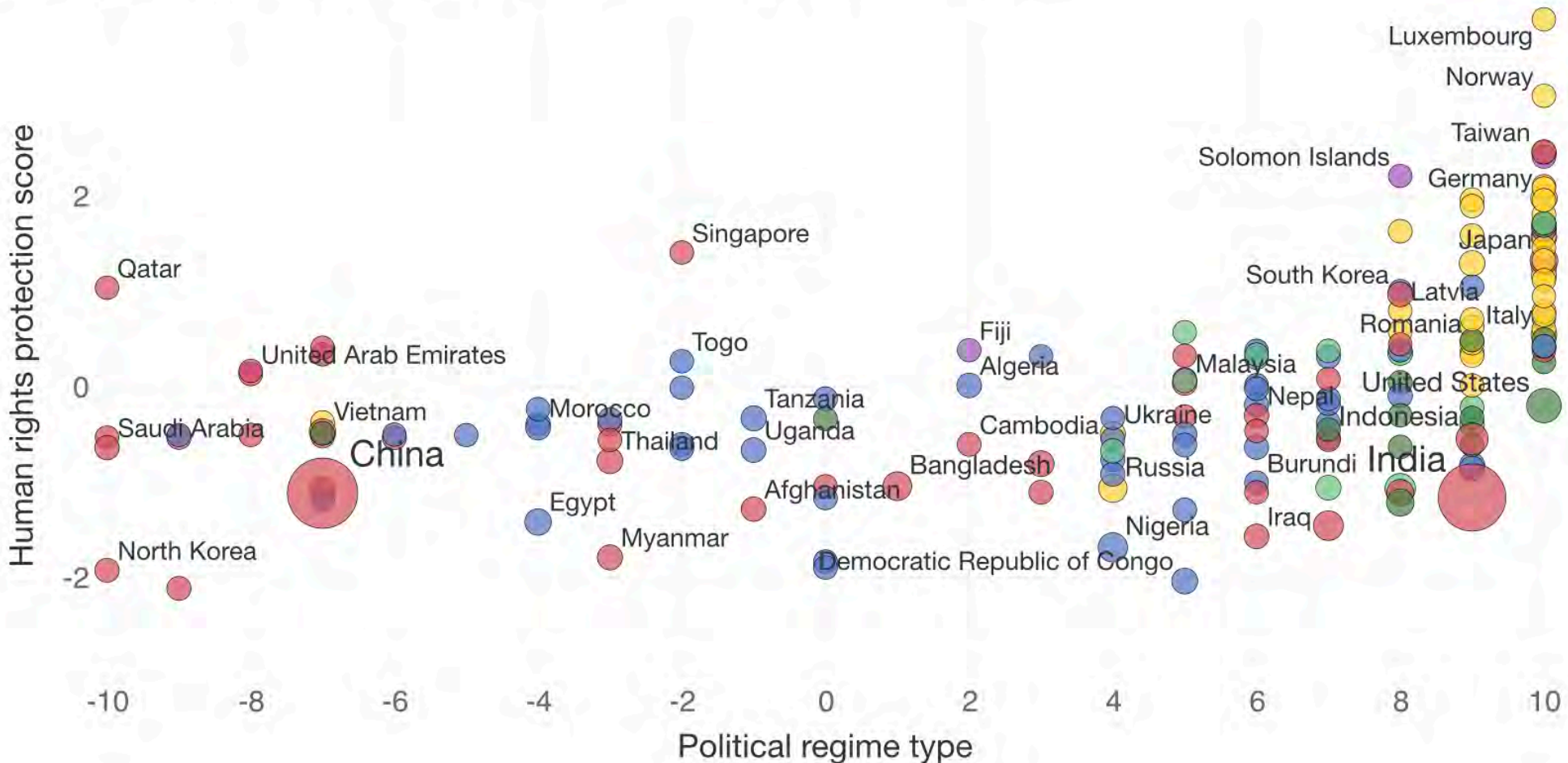


Miller, Michael K. "Democratic pieces: Autocratic elections and democratic development since 1815." *British Journal of Political Science* 45.03 (2015): 501-530.

Similarly, it is possible to have a competitive struggle for votes without actual freedoms or equal treatment

Human rights vs type of political regime, 2014

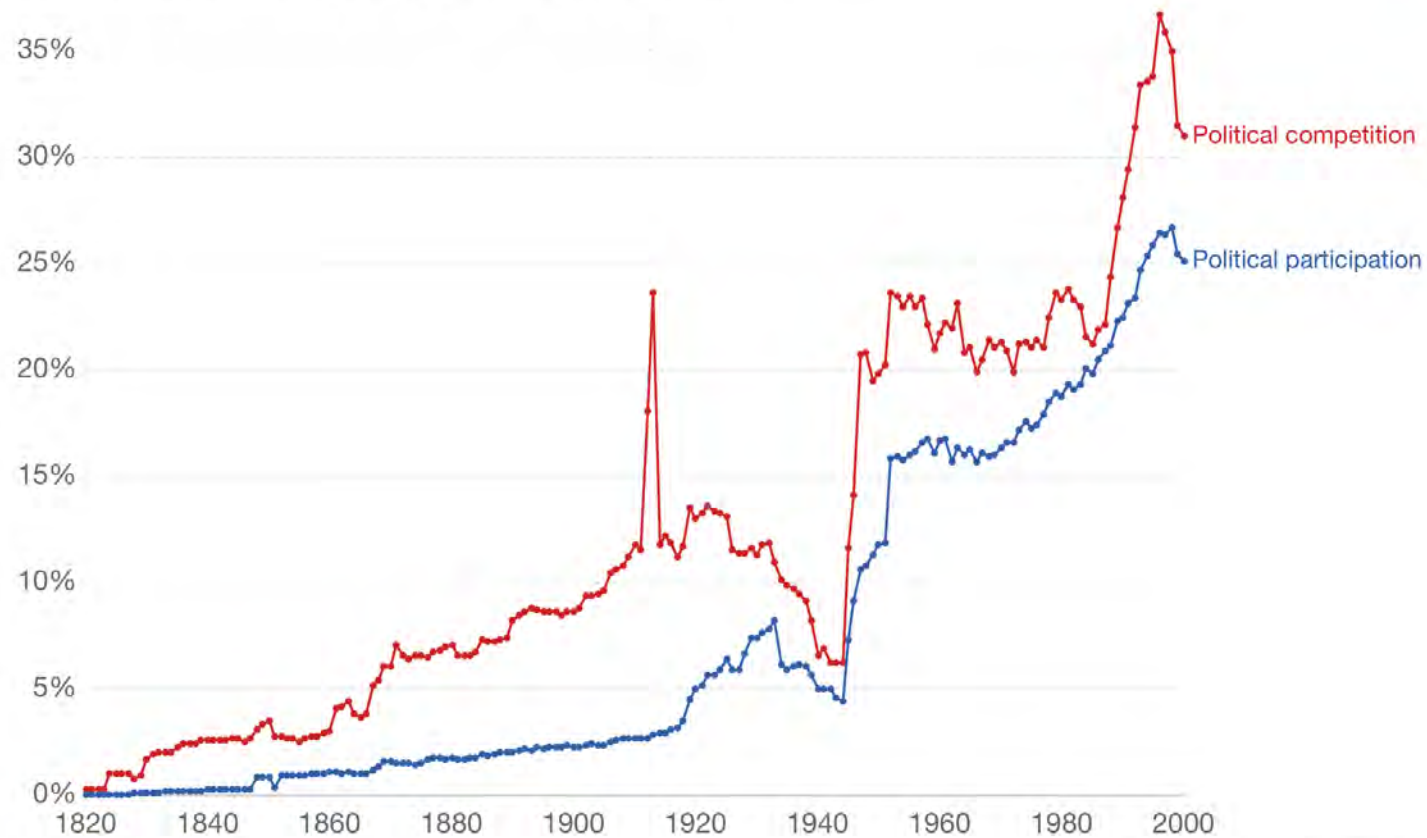
Political regime are classified on a range from -10 (full autocracy) to +10 (full democracy).



Perhaps we should regard participation and competition as necessary but not sufficient for democracy?

Political participation and competition, World

Political participation is the share of the adult population who voted in previous elections. Political competition is one minus the share of the winning party's votes in a national election.

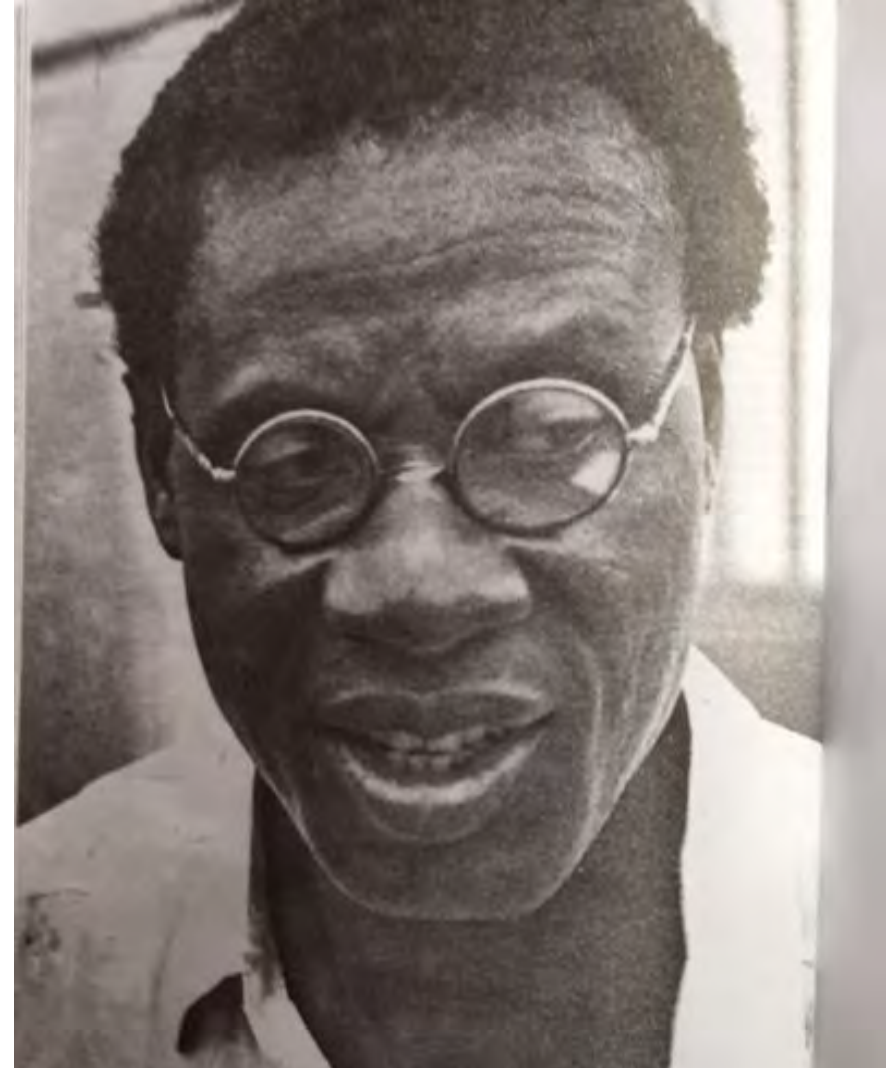


Source: How Was Life, OECD (2014)

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Problem 3: “Democracy” has become synonymous with a particular form and context: Liberal representative democracy with multiparty elections

- Claude Ake called this the “trivialization of democracy”
- It led to the confusion of democratic processes with democratic outcomes
 - Voting for representatives
 - Multiple parties
- Often conflates liberal political systems with liberal economic ones
 - E.g. the protection of property rights, free markets
- Sees many possible political paths to democratic outcomes
 - What is democracy as an outcome?



Sen's view

What exactly is democracy? We must not identify democracy with majority rule.

Democracy has complex demands, which certainly include voting and respect for election results, but it also requires the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements, and the guaranteeing of free discussion and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment.

— Amartya Sen



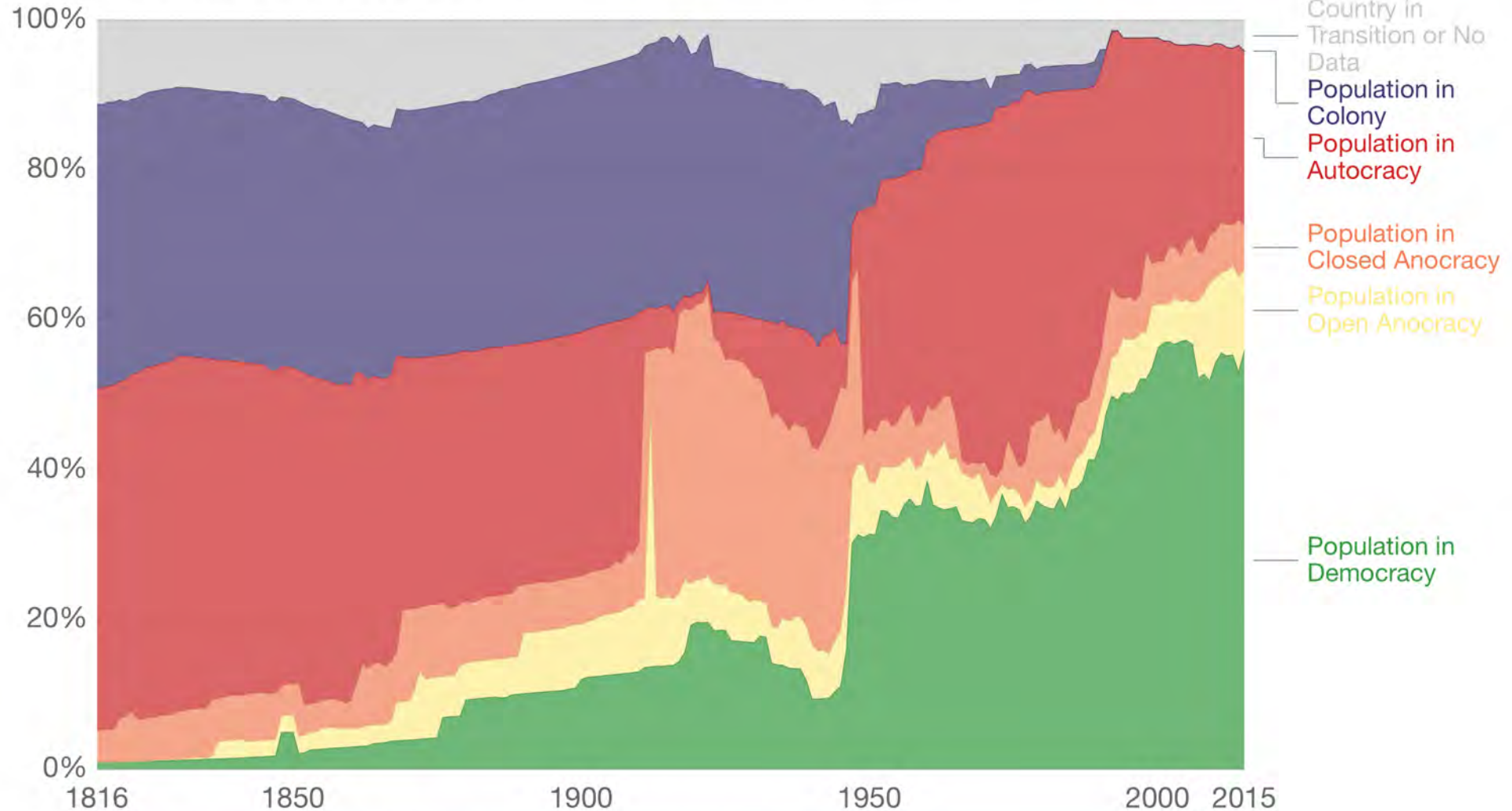
II. Why do autocrats hold elections and other power-sharing institutions?

Parliaments and elections

Politburos, ruling councils, and other power-sharing arrangements

Number of world citizens living under different political regimes

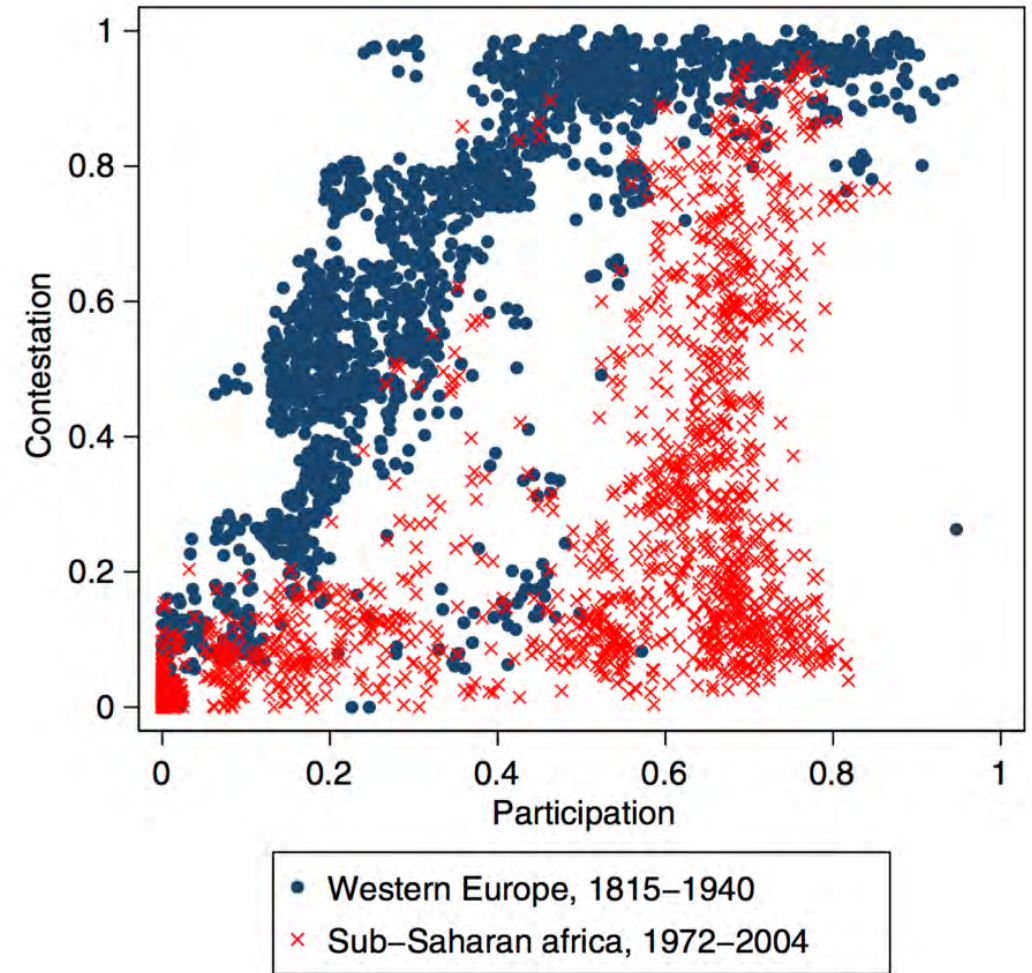
The scale goes from -10 (full autocracy) to 10 (full democracy). Anocracies are those scoring between -5 and 5. "Colony" (coded as -20) includes not only colonies, but also countries that were not yet sovereign states (e.g. the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1945–92).



Source: World Population by Political Regime they live in (OWID (2016))
OurWorldInData.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions-in-5-charts/ • CC BY

Since 1990, many newly democratizing countries have evolved into another, intermediate type: the semi-authoritarian state

- Proliferated in the former USSR, Balkans, sub-Saharan Africa, & Middle East
- Means holding regular elections and permitting the creation of a few opposition parties, a scattering of independent civic groups and independent newspapers
 - Leaders allow enough political freedoms to gain themselves credit and legitimacy as reformers
 - These regimes also maintain a strong enough hold on the levers of power to ensure that no threats to their rule emerge



Candidate explanations

- A. Window dressing (isomorphic mimicry)
- B. Information asymmetries
- C. Commitment problems
- D. Learning by doing

A. Window dressing

- “Isomorphic mimicry” (Andres, Pritchett and Woolcock)
- External incentives
 - Elections just clean enough to:
 - Get access to foreign aid and military assistance
 - Obtain membership in key organizations and trading relationships
- Internal incentives
 - A response to new domestic norms of democracy as the only legitimate form of rule
 - But the ritual of democracy is the minimum concession



The deadly Texas coral snake, *Micrurus tener* (the mimic)



The harmless Mexican milk snake, *Lampropeltis triangulum annulata* (the model)



B. Information asymmetries

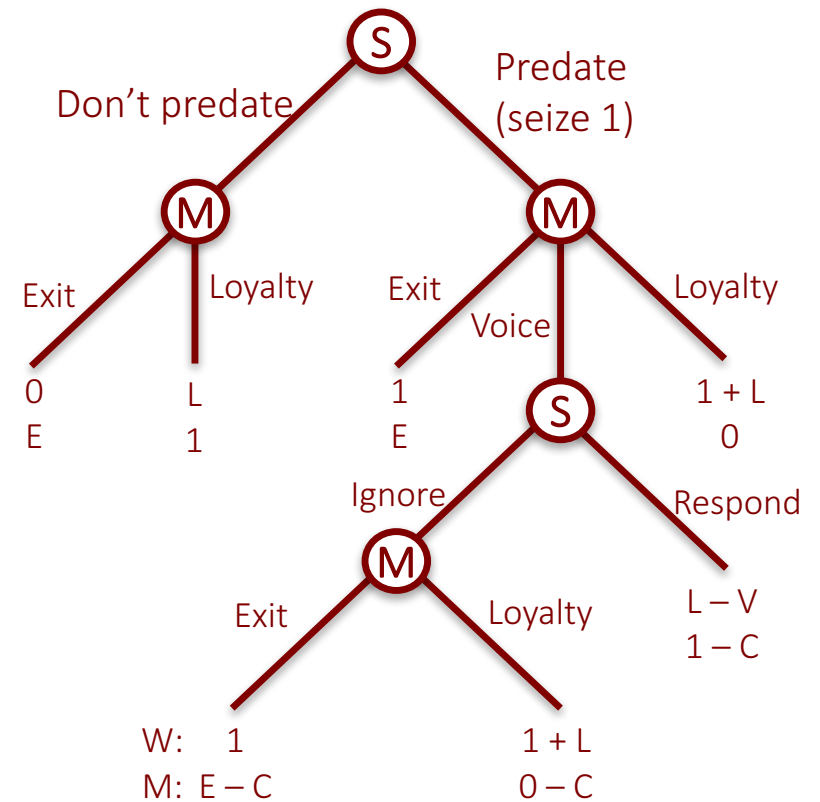
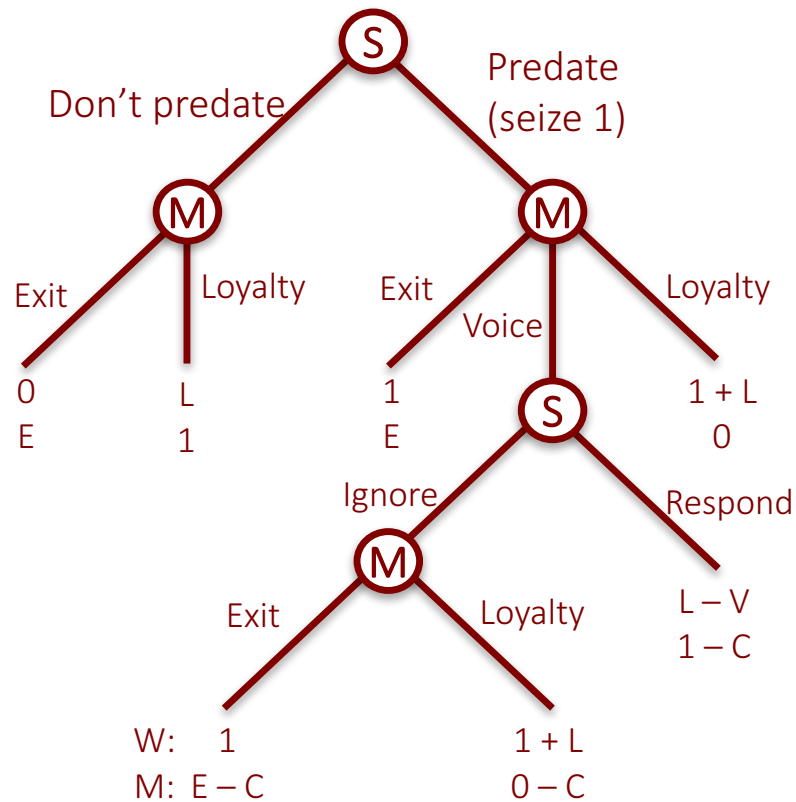
C. Commitment problems

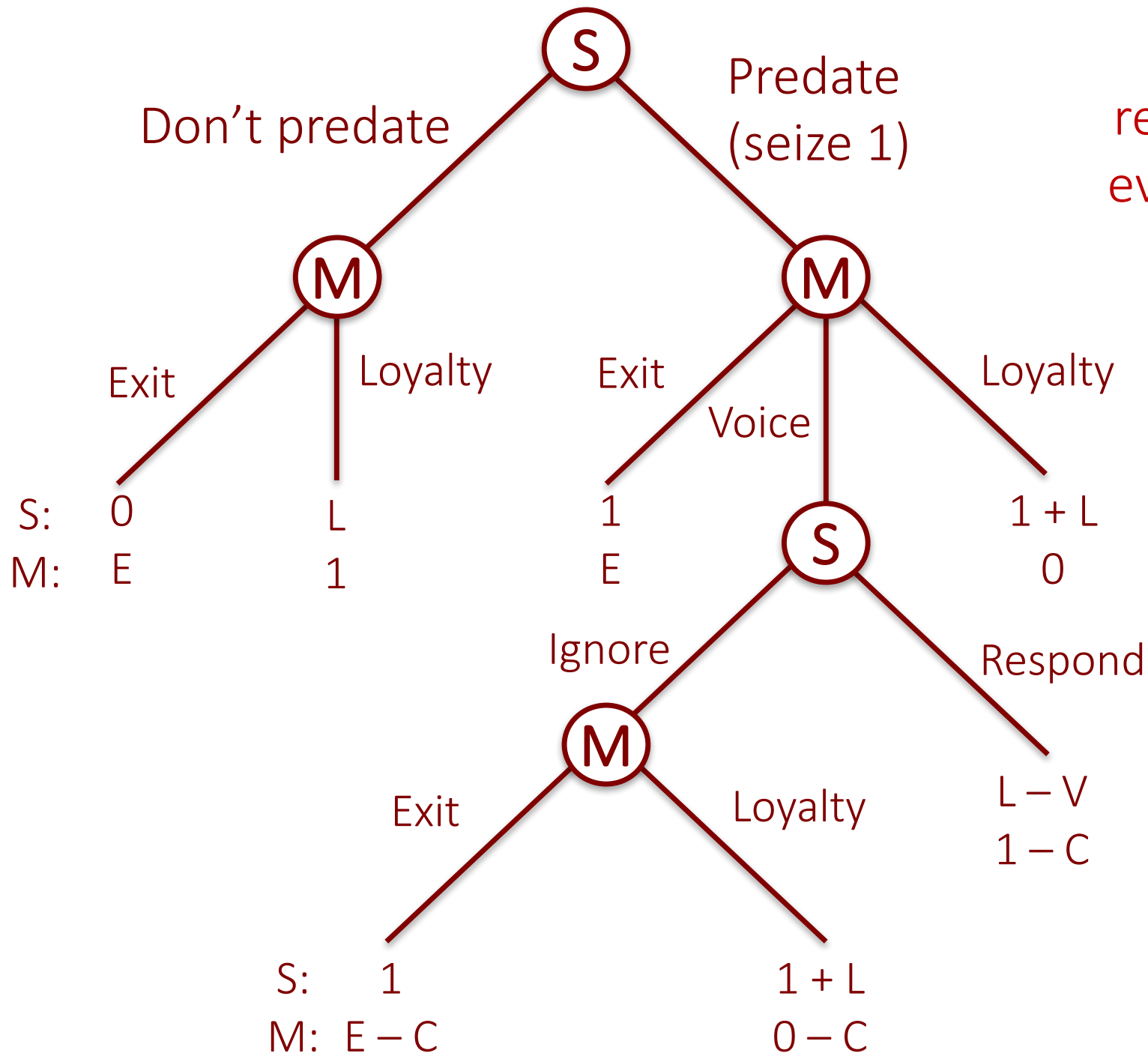
- The two fundamental challenges of dictatorships (Svolik 2012, Myerson 2008, Cox 2009)
 1. Threats from other powerful elites
 2. Threats from the masses
- To this some would add
 3. Information (principal-agent) problems in large bureaucracies
- Another way to frame the problem: How to maintain control, run the country efficiently, and achieve policy aims when...
 - There is no higher authority to enforce bargains
 - A highly secretive environment
 - Rules of the game are routinely broken, and lethal backstabbing common

Recall: We've been using the EVL model to understand two main kinds of political competition and bargaining

Between the autocrat (S) and other powerful elites (such as merchants, M) to control the state

Between the coalition of elites that runs the state (S) and the masses (M)





Is voice (civil war, revolts, mass protest) ever an equilibrium in this simple model? Why not?

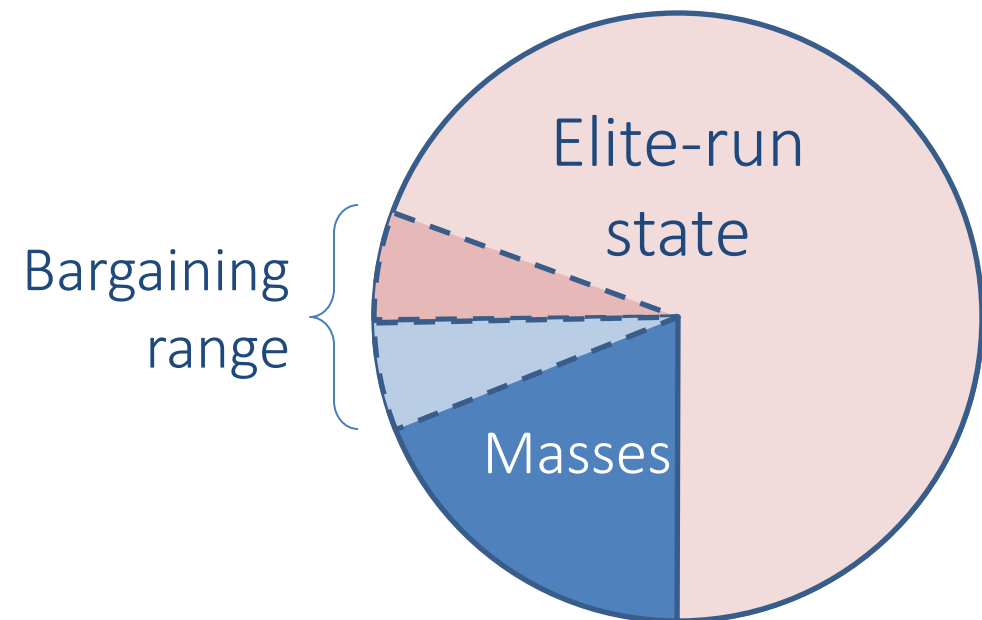
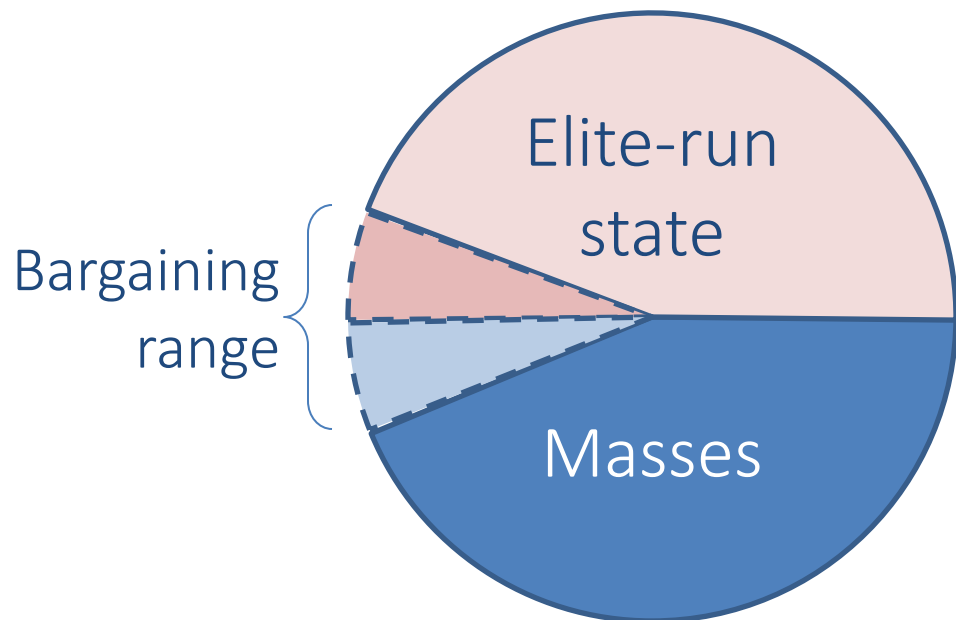
Our model of warfare was also a bargaining model where violence was never an equilibrium. We then relaxed the model in 5 ways to explain violence



- E, C, L and V are all dimensions of the relative political power of the masses
 - In the rationalist bargaining model, then all devolved down to the probability of victory
- But absent any bargaining failures, like most democratization models, it predicted peaceful bargaining
- Of course, just as we know wars happen, so do revolts, revolutions, mass protests, general strikes, and violent coups

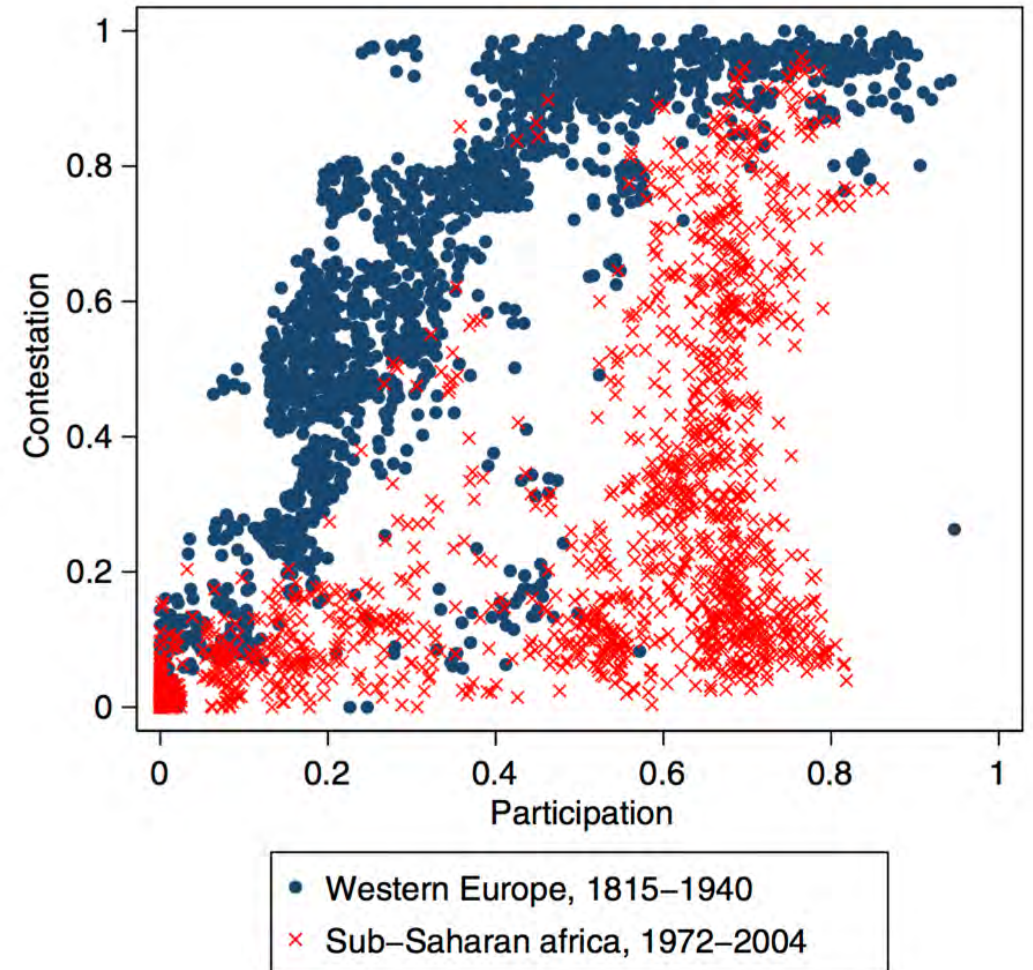
Information asymmetries: What if the state doesn't know how powerful the masses are (and vice versa)?

- Relative power is constantly beset by changes and shocks
 - New technologies of mobilization (e.g. social media), new international norms, economic and financial shocks and crises, etc.
- Protests, revolts, and other voice are a costly way to signal relative strength
 - Akin to skirmishes in war



Non-competitive elections: A less violent and costly way to signal

- Between the autocrat and elites
 - Legislatures provide a forum for opposing elites to signal their policy interests, and show they have mobilized support
 - Helps autocrat to identify how to reallocate patronage and make policy concessions
- Between autocrat and masses
 - Helps regime identify areas of low support or social discontent to address them and keep the regime stable
 - Large victory margins also help regime show opponents its strength and resources, in terms of buying off or intimidate the populace to vote for it



Can make similar arguments for why autocrats do not censor all social media dissent

Why Does China Allow Freer Social Media? Protests versus Surveillance and Propaganda

Bei Qin, David Strömberg, and Yanhui Wu

Table 2

Collective Action Posts

	<i>Total posts containing keywords</i>	<i>Out of a random 1,000 post sample:</i>				
		<i>Posts actually about defined topic</i>	<i>Forthcoming event</i>	<i>On-going event</i>	<i>Past event</i>	<i>General comments</i>
Conflict	382,232	398	1	11	156	230
Protest	2,526,325	317	2	19	172	124
Strike	1,348,964	312	5	178	39	90
Anti-Japan	2,506,944	504	9	188	42	265

Note: For each category of hot topic, out of the total instances of the words used, we investigate a random sample of 1,000 posts. We manually coded whether and how the posts cover a particular type of event.

B2. Another kind of information asymmetry: Running the bureaucratic state

The role of information not in political bargaining, but in performance management

Table 4

Coverage of Politicians

<i>Position</i>	<i># Posts</i> (1)	<i># Posts per position</i> (2)	<i>% Posts discussing specific corruption cases</i> (3)	<i>Measure of sentiment</i> (4)
Xi Jinping	1,374,780	1,374,780	0.23	0.88
Wen Jiabao	1,318,345	1,318,345	0.15	0.51
Li Keqiang	401,451	401,451	0.14	0.81
Hu Jintao	326,621	326,621	0.10	1.16
Provincial governor	728,386	23,496	1.88	-0.19
Provincial Party secretary	403,074	13,002	1.91	0.52
City mayor	3,431,471	10,305	1.39	0.17
City party secretary	718,856	2,159	2.81	0.28
County governor	719,634	251	1.21	-0.70
County Party secretary	324,522	113	4.40	-0.88
Village chief	1,053,346	25	0.65	-0.51
Village Party secretary	144,742	3	4.26	-1.40

Note: Column 1 shows the number of posts covering each position or top leader. The table is sorted by column 2—the number of posts per office. Column 3 shows the estimated percentage of posts mentioning a leader’s position that discuss specific corruption cases. Column 4 presents a broader measure of people’s sentiments towards the leader or type of leader. See text for details.

Every regime needs a way to monitor and incentivize low-tier officials

Local elections and media freedom is a way to solve this principal-agent problem

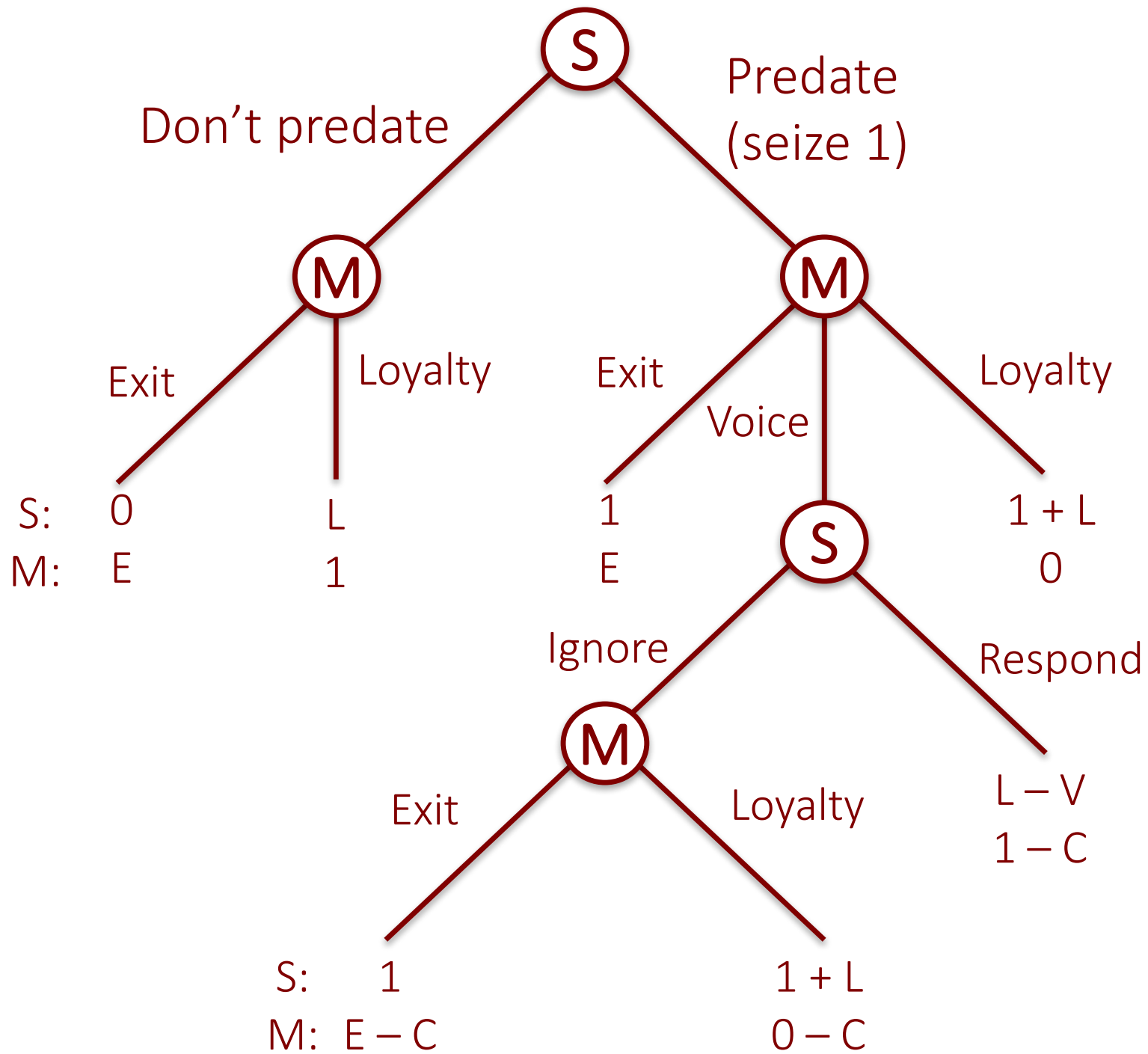
e.g. USSR 1985 (Svolik 2012)

- Mikhail Gorbachev, a new leader, faced an underperforming command economy, a surge in the budget deficit, and a sharp drop in oil prices
- How to restructure the economy?
- In a small meeting with leading Soviet intellectuals, Gorbachev acknowledged:

“The restructuring is progressing with great difficulty. We have no opposition party. How then can we control ourselves? Only through criticism and self-criticism. Most important: through glasnost.”

- Although Gorbachev also recognized that the free flow of information could undermine the very foundations of the Communist Party’s dictatorship:

“Democratism without glasnost does not exist. At the same time, democracy without limits is anarchy. That’s why it will be difficult.”



C. Commitment problem:
 How does the S commit to not to predate in future?

The EVL game was static (one shot), but states and autocrats face dynamic challenges (multi-period optimization)

Examples

- Mobilize elite resources to win a war and avoid subservience to a foreign power later
- Mobilize investment now to grow the economy and have a larger tax base in future
- Cope with a sudden financial crisis, e.g. a plunge in the main export commodity price

This is the fundamental problem of state building:

- Success requires elites or the masses to take a risk and grant the state more authority
- But can the state or the autocrat be trusted not to renege in future?
- There is no external authority
- All the incentives imply the autocrat/state will renege, and hence the deal unravels

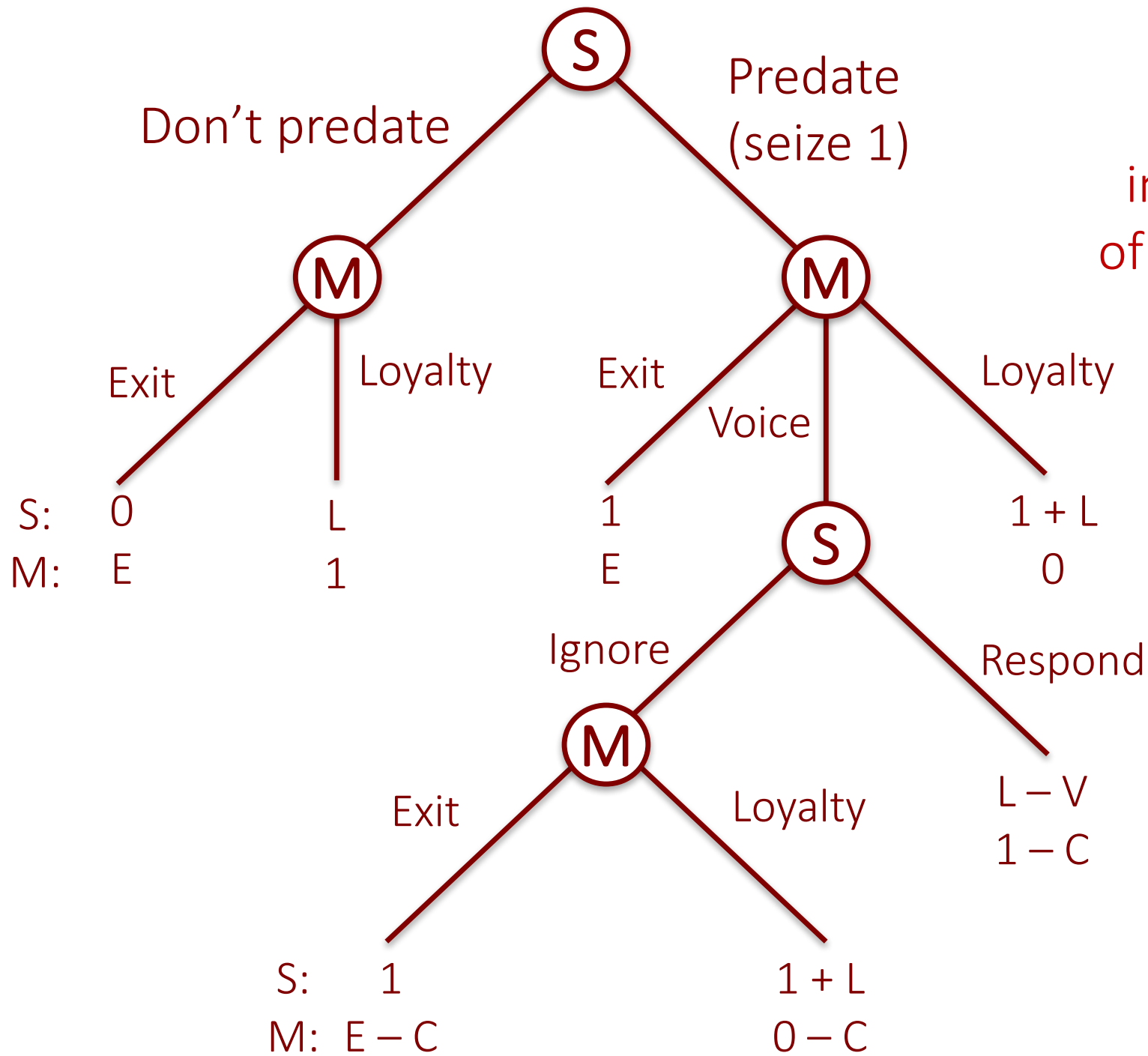
How do autocrats make credible commitments to elites and the masses?

How do autocrats make credible commitments to elites and the masses?

1. Hand over partial control of the economy, military, or bureaucracy
2. Create formal organizations and procedures that help the elites/masses monitor the autocrat and coordinate to mobilize against the autocrat in the event of a violation
 1. Parliaments, politburos, ruling councils, party committees, etc
 2. Can vary in their degree of formalization, regularity
3. Create informal rules and norms around autocratic behavior that serve as coordinating devices for collective action against the autocrat

Common examples:

- China: Starting with Jiang Zemin we see formalization of decision-making bodies and rules, regular meetings, division of power, consensual decision-making, term limits...
- British monarchs: Formed parliament of nobles and separated taxation and spending decisions, in order to facilitate raising of money for war and development

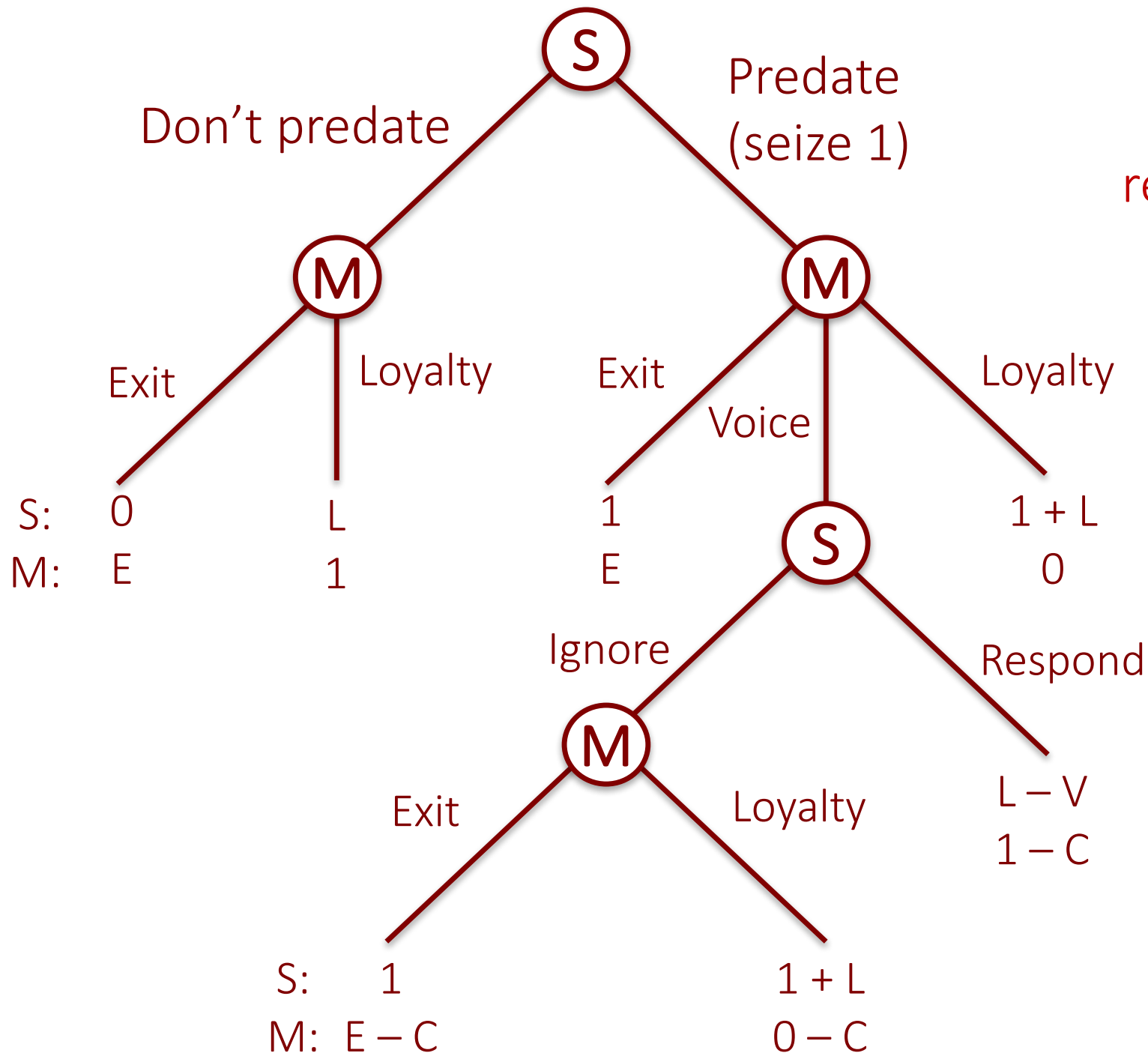


In this view, formal and informal institutions influence of values of L, C, E & V

III. What has driven successive waves of democratization?

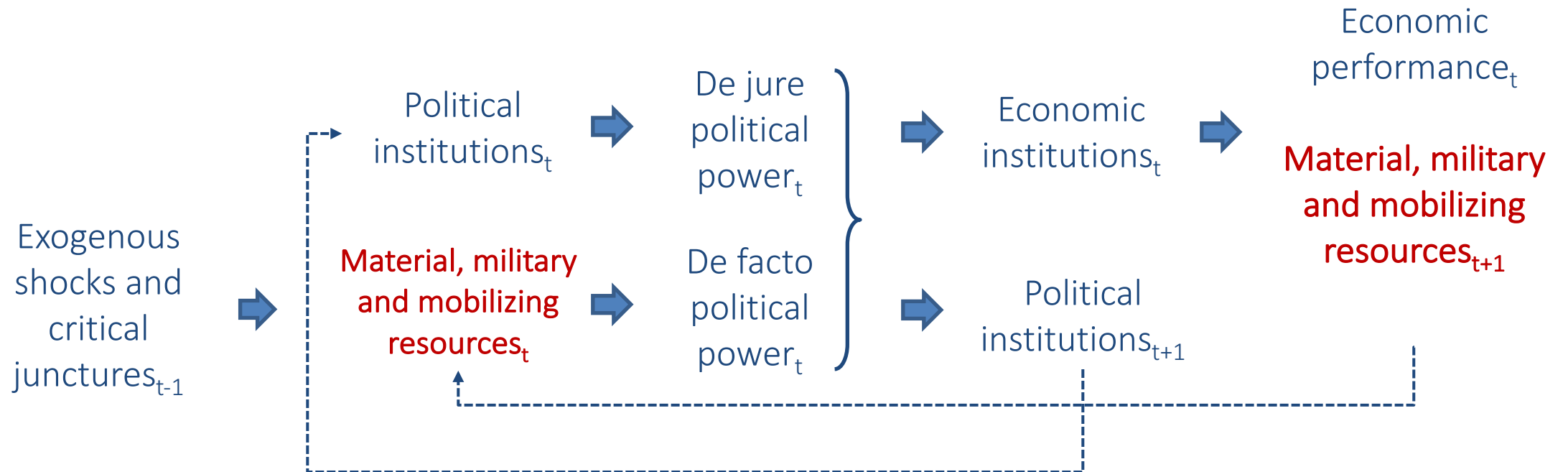
Recall: We defined political power as bargaining power: the ability to influence the behavior of others

1. Military power
 - The means of violence
2. Material power
 - Wealth and resources to incentivize others, to hire professional advocates or build coalitions
 - The ability to withhold or evade taxes
3. Mobilizational power
 - The capacity to sway: lead people, persuade followers, create networks, provoke responses, and incentivize and inspire people to action



Values of L, C, E & V
 were simply
 reflections of relative
 military,
 mobilizational, and
 material power

The same idea underlies most theories of institutional change
e.g. Acemoglu & Robinson

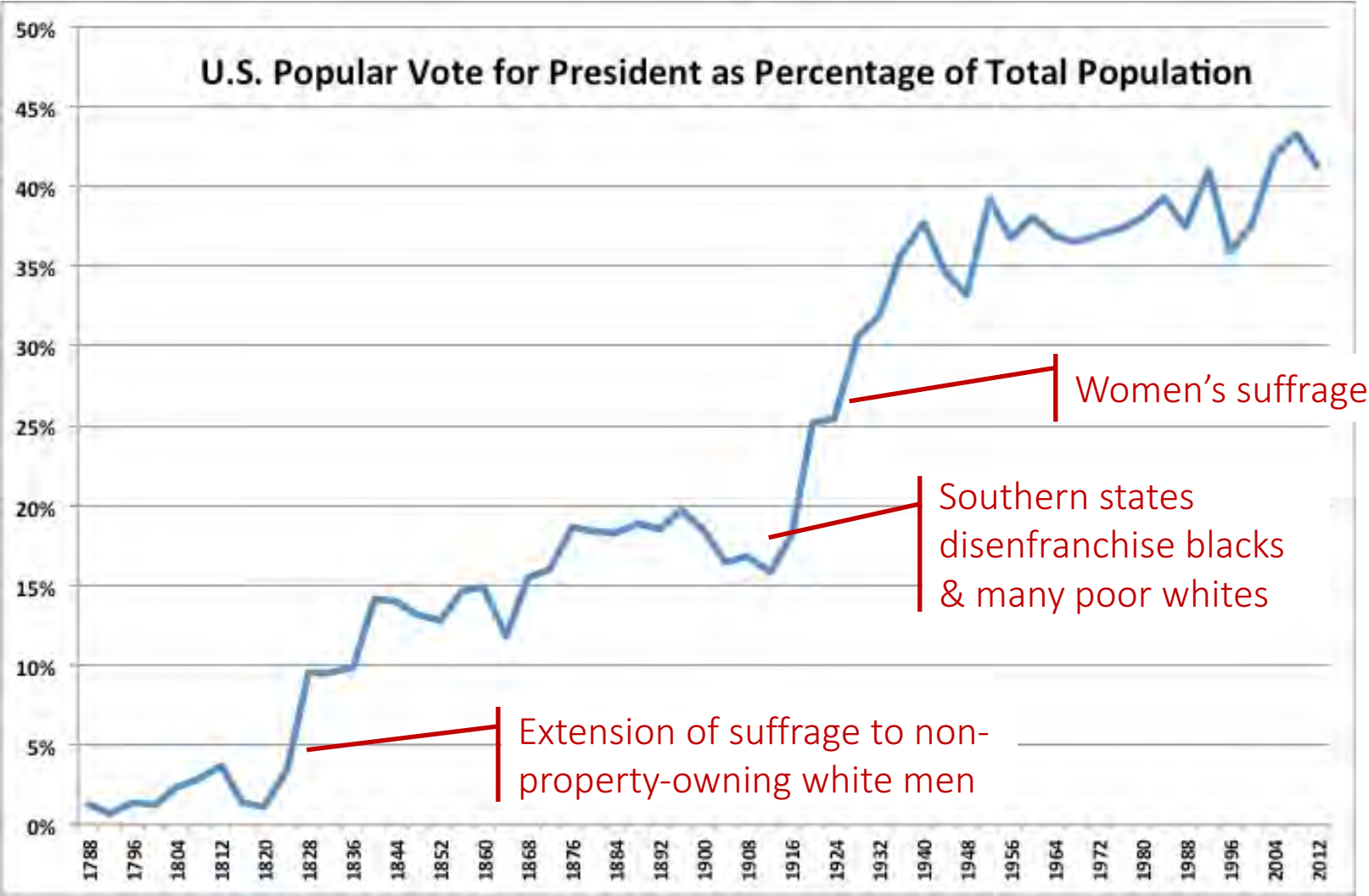


Most advanced democracies today were once limited democracies
Before norms of universal suffrage were established, early democracies simply excluded
the less powerful from participation

e.g. Who could vote in Great Britain?

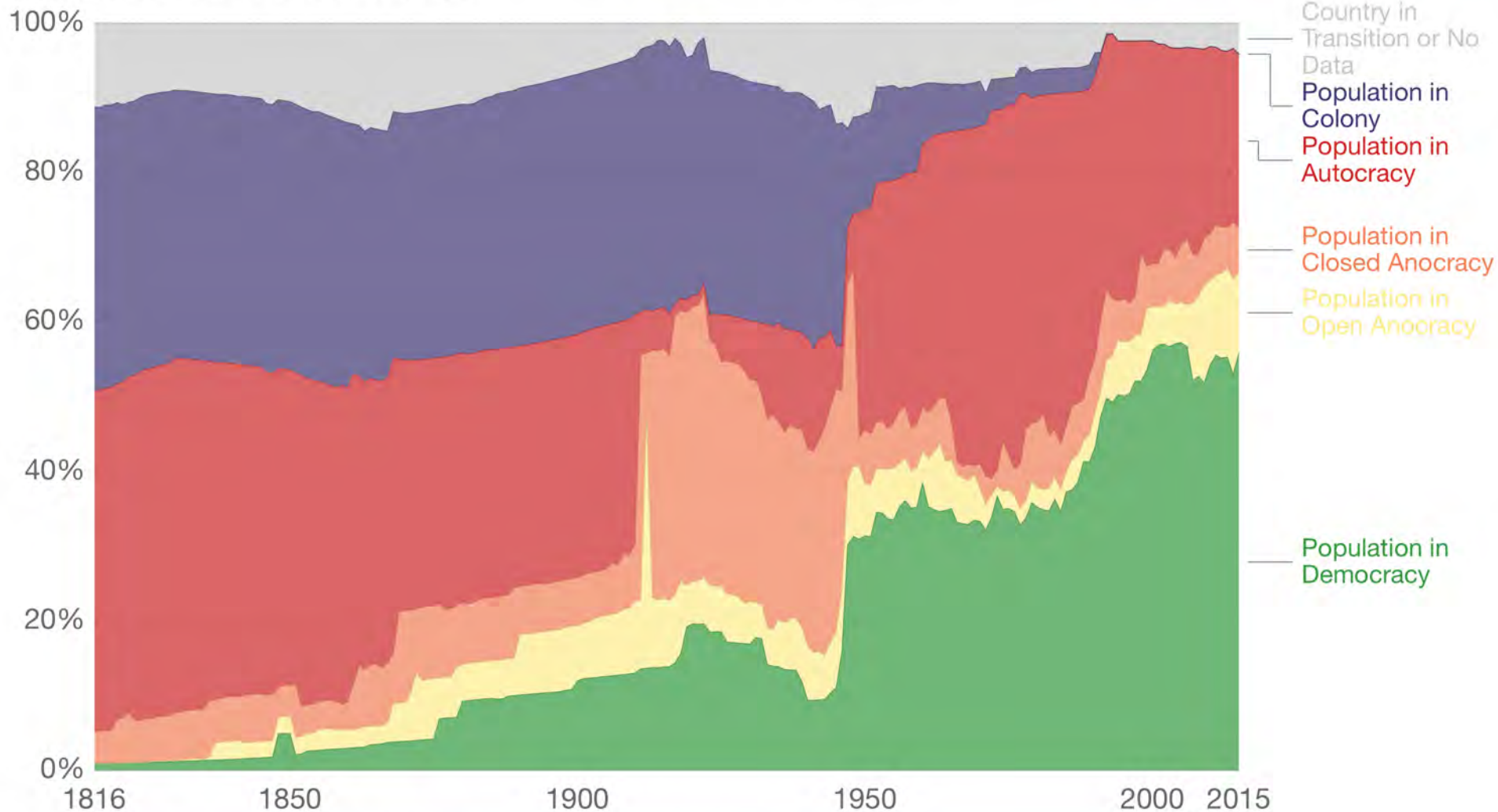
- 1432 Men owning large property (aristocracy)
- 1832 + Men who rent large property (1 in 7 males)
- 1867, 85 + Men in urban areas with property
- 1918 + all Men >21, + Women >30 with property
- 1928 + Women over 21 without property
- 1969 + Men and women 18-20

In the early history of the U.S., most states allowed only white male adult property owners to vote



Number of world citizens living under different political regimes

The scale goes from -10 (full autocracy) to 10 (full democracy). Anocracies are those scoring between -5 and 5. "Colony" (coded as -20) includes not only colonies, but also countries that were not yet sovereign states (e.g. the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1945–92).



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OurWorldInData.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions-in-5-charts/ • CC BY

Every country experience has been different, but there are some common arguments for democratization in the late 20th century. In order of (my personal view of) importance:

1. A diffusion of democratic norms and with it a de-legitimation of authoritarian rule
2. An increasingly organized civil society able to coordinate national conferences of elites, mass movements, or even protest
3. Many autocracies lost legitimacy after failing to deliver growth, or being associated with economic crisis, especially in the 1980s
4. Economic crises meant that many regimes were too fiscally or organizationally weak to coopt, repress or placate opposition or sustain their patrimonial network and hold on power

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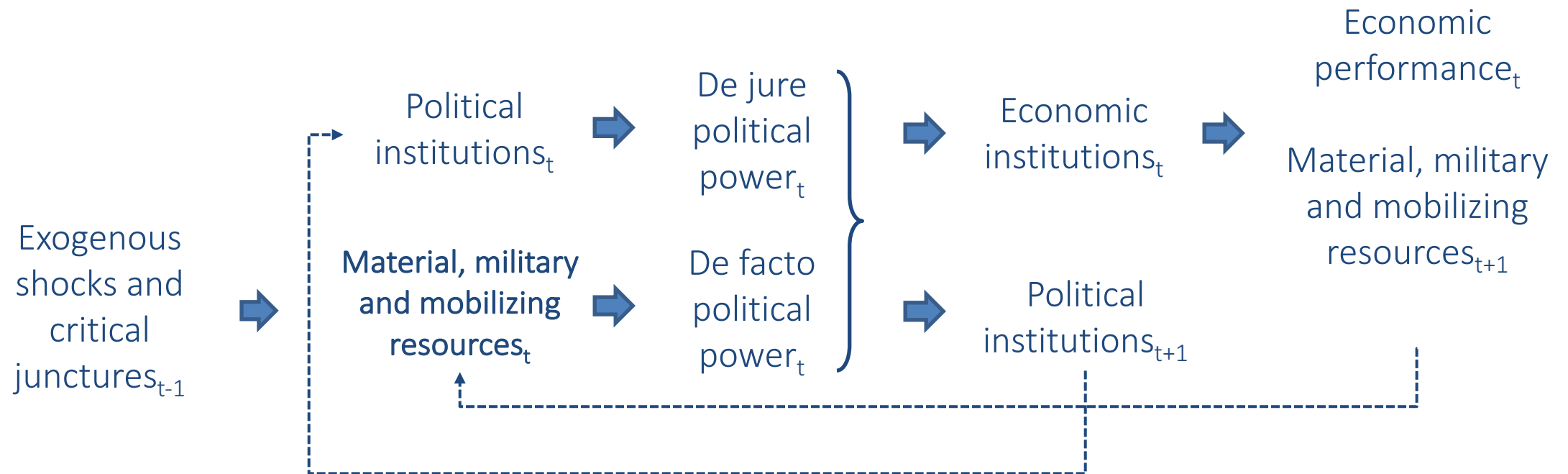
5. Tools of violent oppression became more costly due to credible threats of international intervention, and technology made it easier to communicate abuses
6. Slowly growing middle classes and more educated populations have sometimes demanded representation, redistribution, and political rights
7. Western donors have pressured some regimes to democratize or otherwise supported elections and popular movements

Only 2 or maybe 3 of these are “international” (5, 7, and maybe 1)

IV. What happens when actors try to change the rules/institutions exogenously, to bestow democracy?

So far, we have treated political institutions as an equilibrium outcome

- Institutions (e.g. democracy) are result of fundamental shifts in power plus chance
- No reason to think bestowing a new set of rules would change actual power balance



Contrast this with Amos Sawyer's plea for polycentric governance

- He wants enlightened Presidents of highly centralized regimes to:
 - Sign supranational treaties to constrain their power
 - Foster independent bureaucracies (line ministries, independent central bank)
 - Empower the legislature
 - Devolve tax and spending decisions to local bodies
 - Allow local elections for Mayors, etc
- Was Amos Sawyer naïve? Is this why he failed to change the Liberian post-war system of governance?



This is an experiment we cannot run. But we have some theory and examples to suggest that, on the margin, exogenous rule changes matter

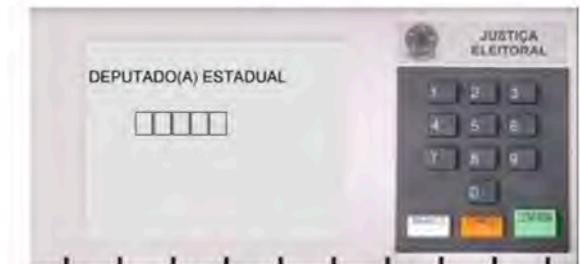
1. Changes in voting technology in Brazil
2. Changes to voting eligibility rules
3. Fiscal decentralization in China

Example 1: Enfranchising poorer voters increases redistribution in Brazil (Fujiwara 2015)

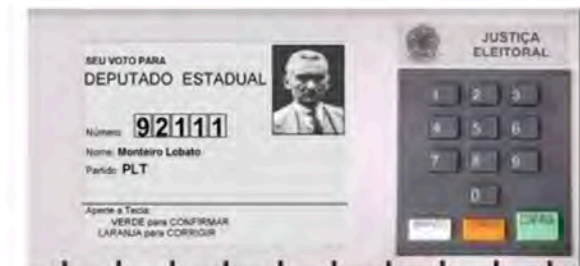
- Brazil uses written ballots but 1/4 of adults are unable to read/write
 - Thus large number of error-ridden and blank ballots are cast
- In 1998 election, municipalities with more than 40,500 registered voters used electronic voting machines that are visual and do not require reading/writing
- This caused a large de facto enfranchisement of less educated voters
- This led to the election of more left-wing state legislators, increased public health care spending, utilization (prenatal visits), and infant health (birthweight)



Paper ballot



Initial screen of the voting technology



Voting for (fictional) candidate number 92111 (name: Monteiro Lobato, party: PLT)

FIGURE 1.—Examples of the voting technologies.

There's a big discontinuity in voting at the 40,500 population mark in 1998

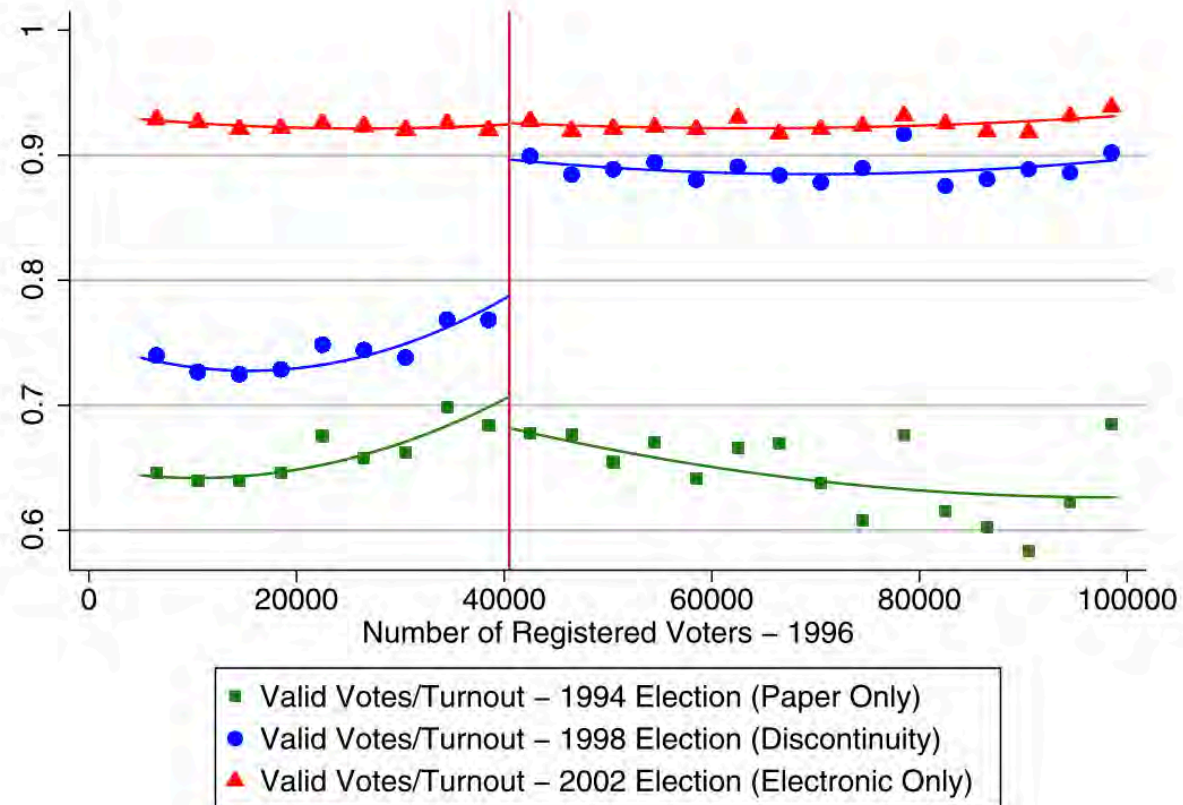
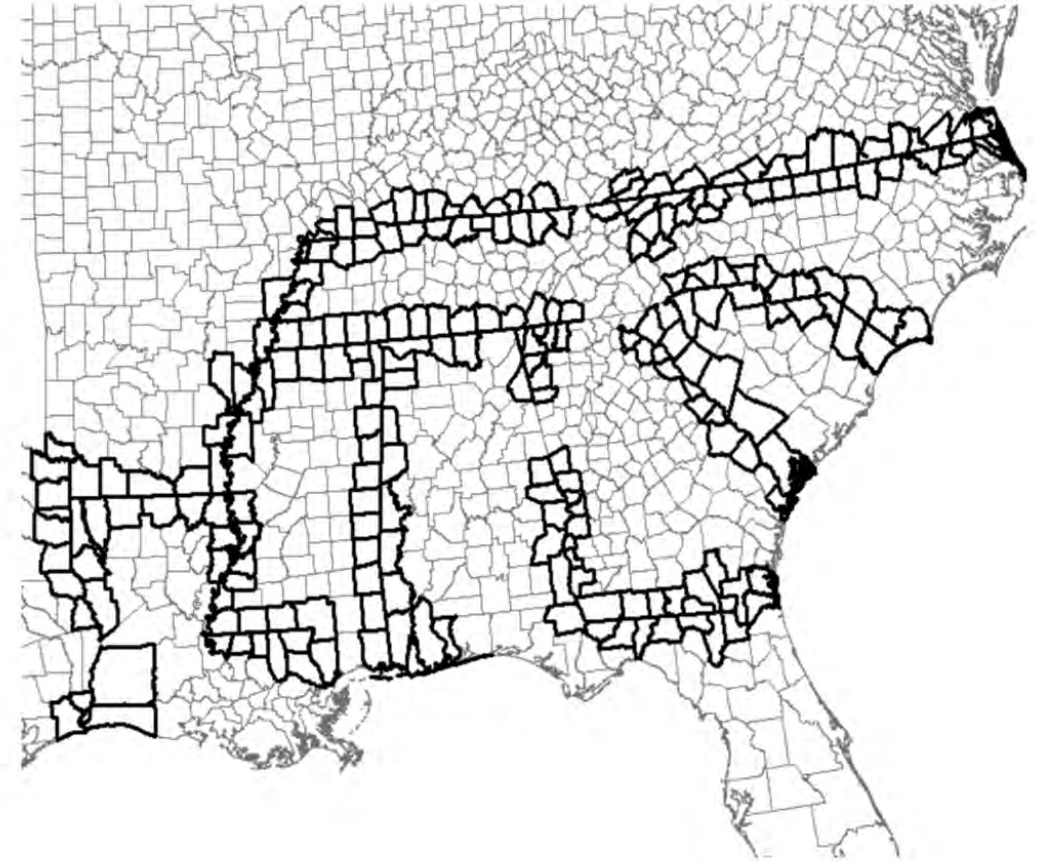
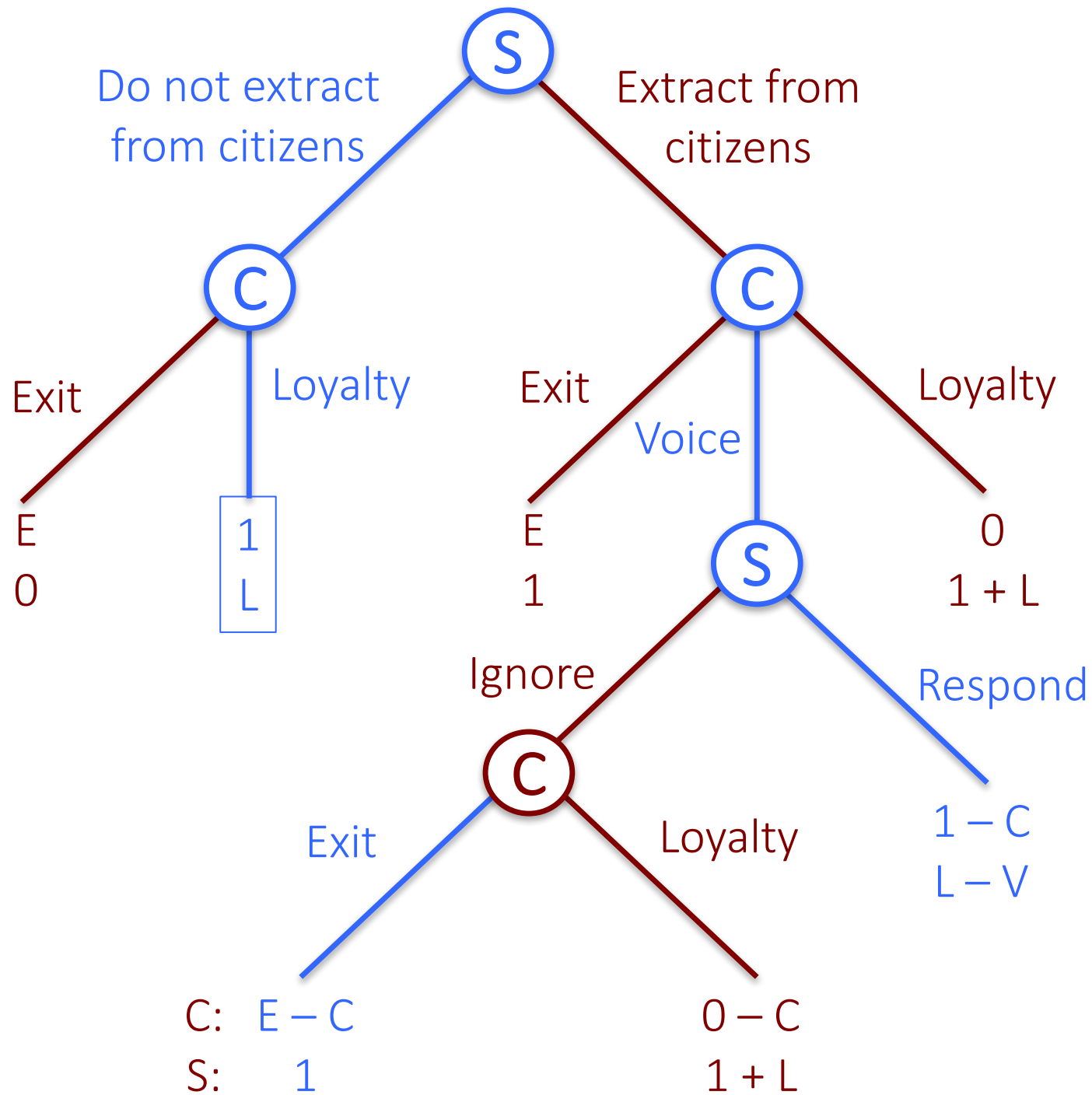


FIGURE 2.—Valid votes/turnout—local averages and parametric fit. Each marker represents the average value of the variable in a 4000-voter bin. The continuous lines are from a quadratic fit over the original (“unbinned”) data. The vertical line marks the 40,500-voter threshold.

Example 2: We see similar effects with the 19th century disenfranchisement of black citizens in the U.S. South

- Test the effects of poll taxes and literacy tests on political competition
- Comparing adjacent county-pairs that straddle state boundaries:
 - Each lowered electoral turnout by 8-22%
- Increased the Democratic (anti-Black) vote share in elections by 1-7%
 - Reduced the teacher-child ratio in black schools by 10-23%, with no effects on white teacher-child ratios
 - Estimates that black incomes fell 15%, while landowners had a 12% gain in incomes





These studies suggest that small changes in state autonomy (L) from process changes can have big effects on citizen bargaining power

Example 3: What about larger scale enfranchisement?
Village elections in China, (locally) enfranchising a billion people



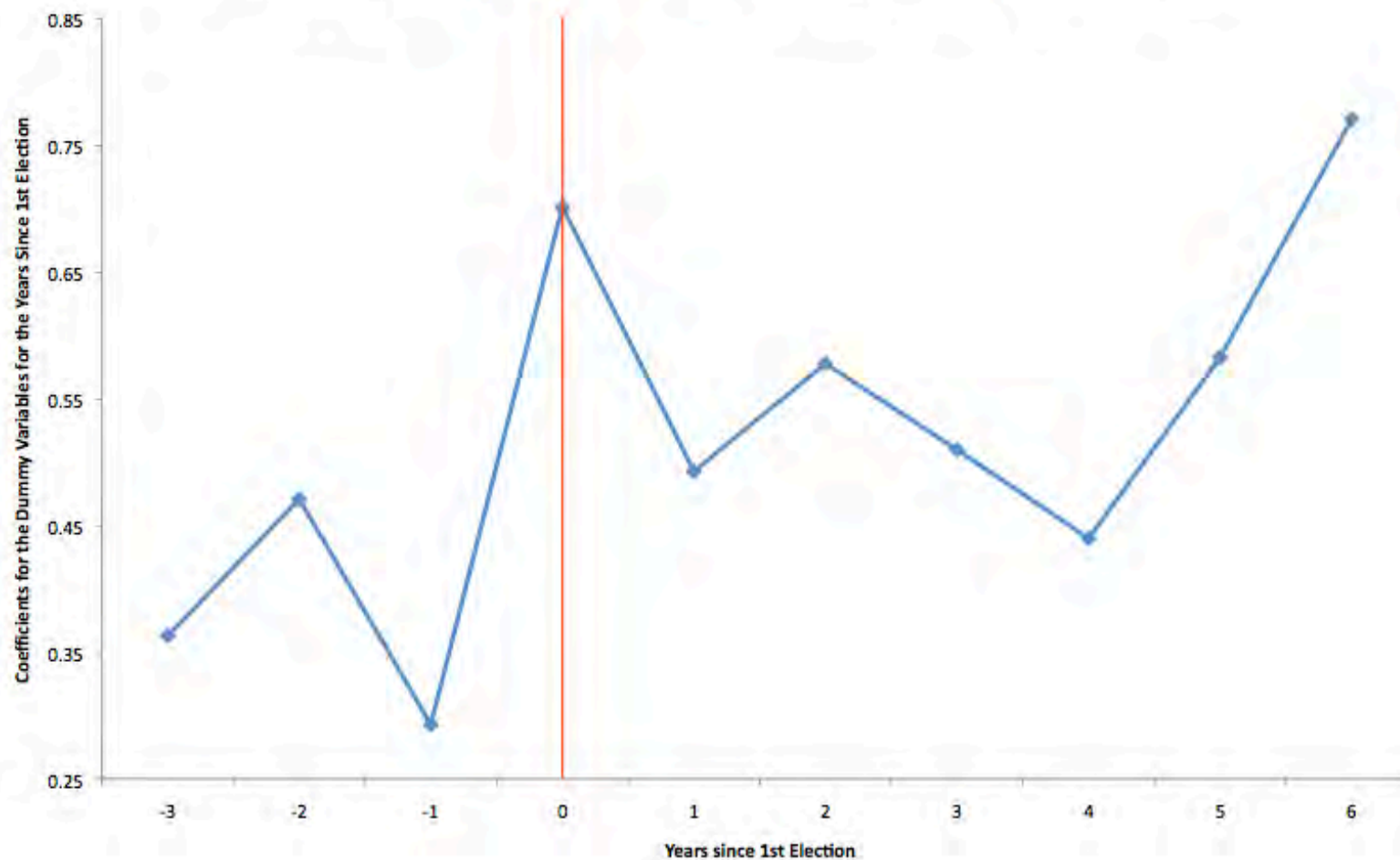
A natural experiment

Martinez-Bravo, Padró i Miquel, Qian and Yao

- Chinese government rolls out elections and some financial decentralization unsystematically
- Why? In autocratic countries, it is difficult to control local officials, and local elections one way to do so
 - Weak channels to receive feedback from citizens
 - Lack of information and appropriate oversight often results in the misbehavior of local officials
- Historically, the village government was comprised of two bodies that were appointed by the Communist Party: the Communist Party Branch and the Village Committee
 - The reform put the Village Committee up for election and left the Party Branch unchanged
 - Main role is provision of local public goods such as schooling, irrigation or village roads

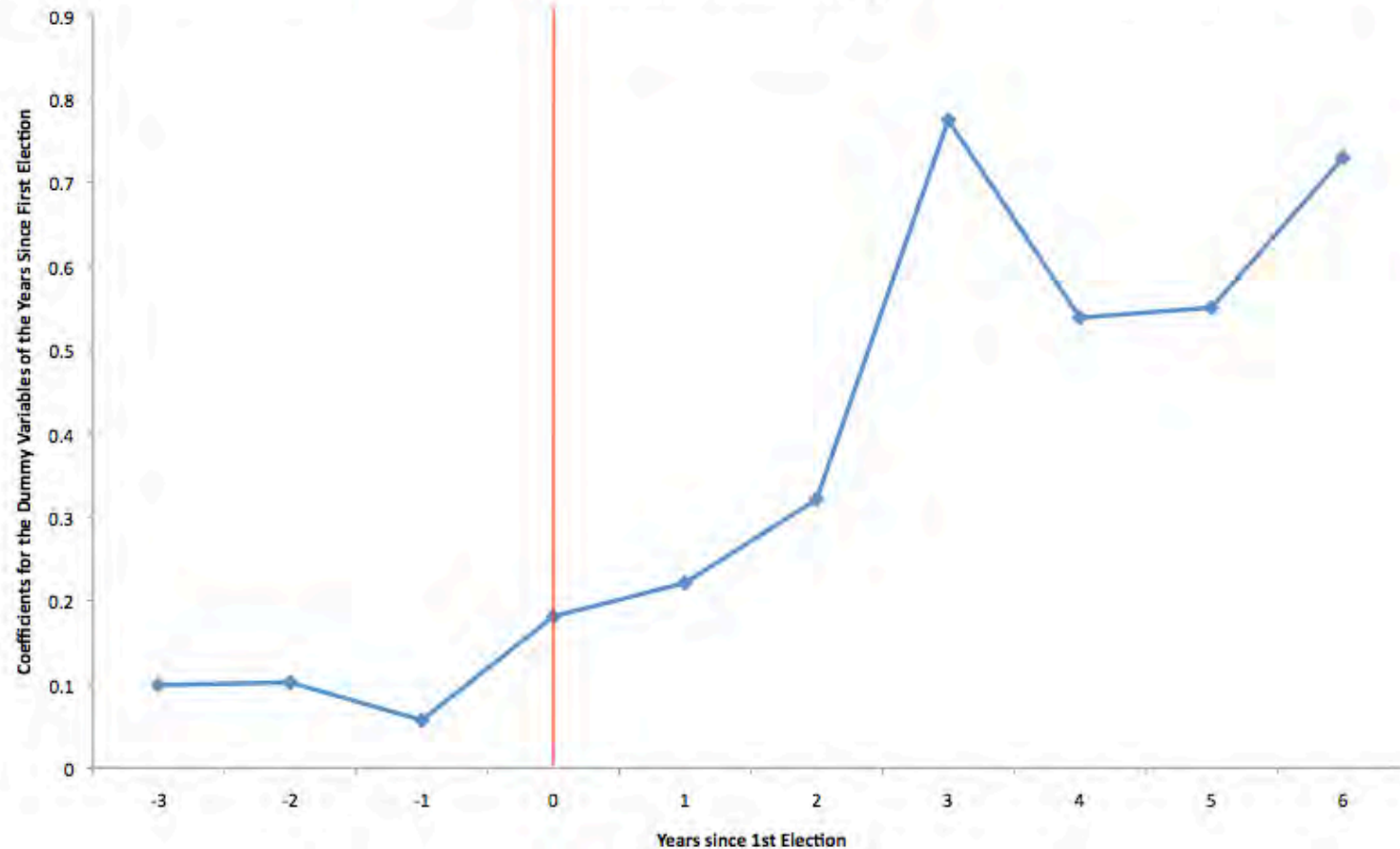
Document the economic and political history of 200 nearly representative villages from 29 provinces, 1982-2005, and compare outcomes in early and late democratized villages

Figure 4: The Effect of Elections on Ln Total Public Goods Expenditure



Elections + fiscal decentralization seem to have increased the willingness of citizens to pay for public goods (and decreased inequality) because the elected government is more accountable to citizens

Figure 5: The Effect of Elections on Income Redistribution
(Ratio of incomes for households in the first pre-election income decile to households in the tenth pre-election income decile)



Example 4: An underrated consideration – Democratic practice

- Elites and the state have had decades if not centuries to practice coopting and coercing the population
- Many autocratic regimes have relatively little experience with active civil societies and how to manage them
- Populations in many countries have little experience as a civil society in a defined state



Besides facilitating peaceful bargains, partial democratization can be a stepping stone to further democratization

“Democratic governments have come into being slowly, after extended prior experience with more limited forms of participation during which leaders have reluctantly grown accustomed to tolerating dissent and opposition...”

—Jeane Kirkpatrick

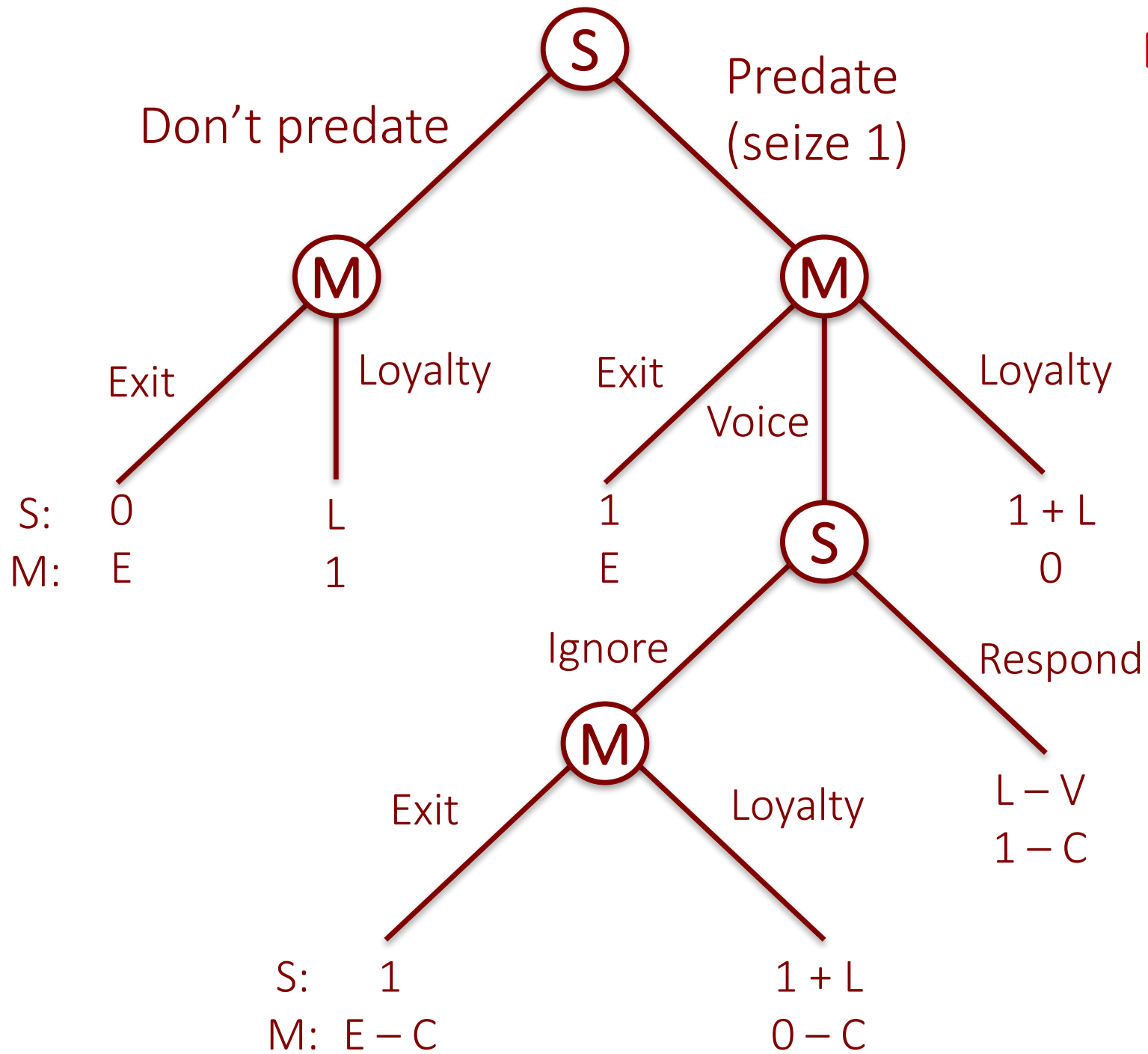


Citizens begin to learn and acquire democratic norms



Thus the non-competitive election could be the starting point for internal struggle





Envisions L, C, and V as evolving through "learning by doing"

An example of shifting norms around democratic processes: Uganda and vote buying

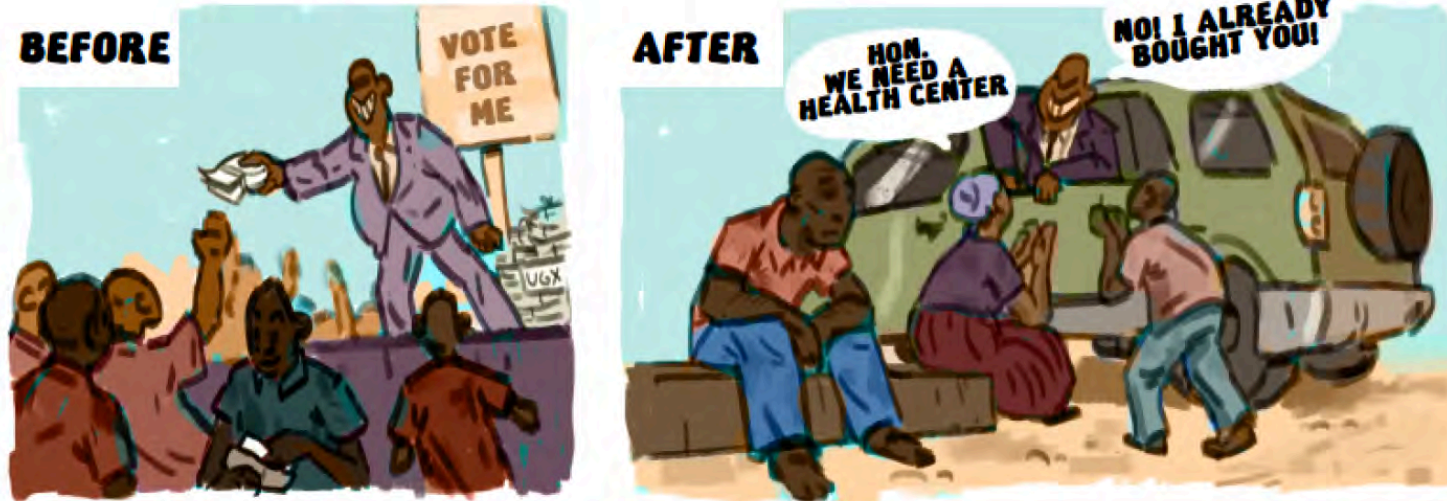
- 85% of respondents report politicians often/always give gifts as part of political campaigns
- 35% of survey respondents said they had been offered incentives to vote in elections, several months before the 2016 election
- These are typically small amounts per person, designed to create a sense of reciprocity



We studied a National Democratic Institute anti-vote selling campaign

You wouldn't sell your soul. You wouldn't sell your village's future.

WHY SELL YOUR VOTE?



Stand together with your community and
don't sell your vote.
It is your chance to demand a better future!

ACFIM
ALLIANCE FOR ELECTION
CAMPAIGN FINANCE MONITORING

Large effects, though not for the expected reason

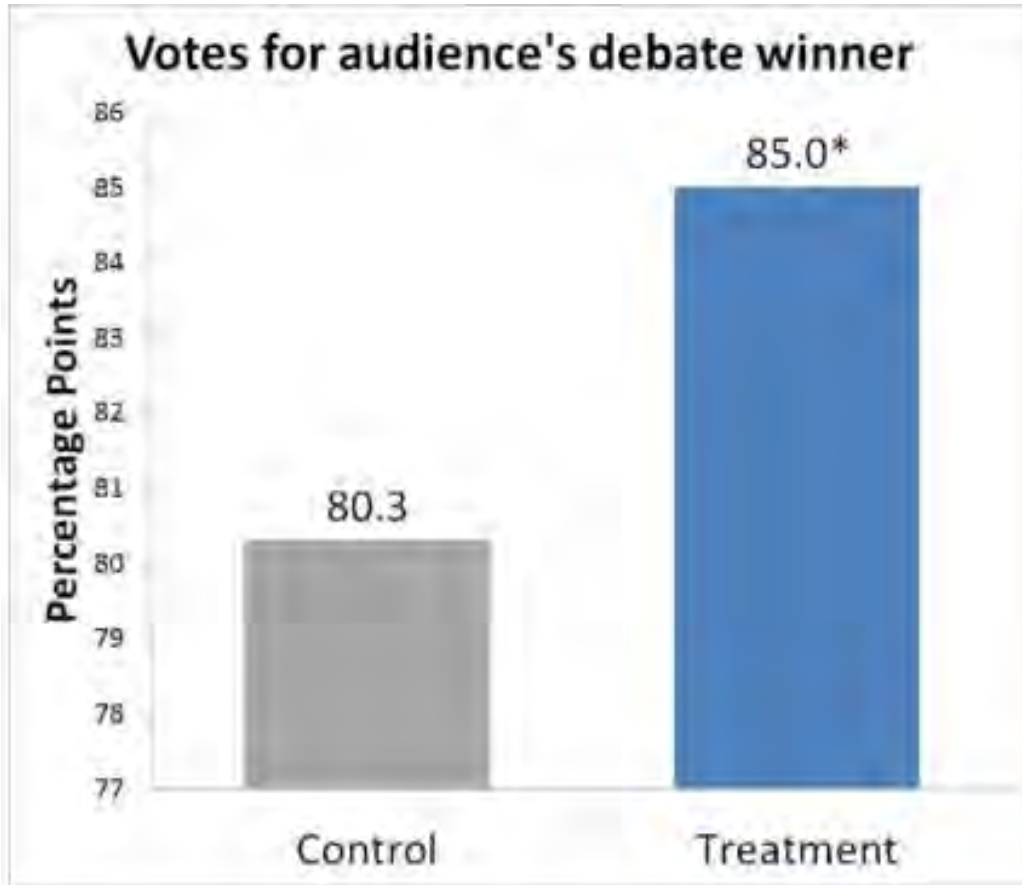
- The campaign did not stop voters from accepting cash and gifts
- Opposition candidates actually increases their vote buying and campaigning
- The anti-vote selling campaign seems to have persuaded some voters to take the money but vote their conscience
- Incumbent (mostly ruling party) candidates lost significant vote share
- Difficult to predict what will happen in future elections
 - Will politicians shift their tactics to
 - Or will they shift to campaigning based on issues: policies and public goods?

Another attempt at norm change:

What is the effect of starting candidate debates on issues? Can voters and parties be encouraged to shift away from vote buying?



A randomized trial in 14 constituencies (112 polling stations) suggest that debates changed how people voted



- In 2012 hosting MP debates increased voter knowledge
 - MP job responsibilities
 - Candidate qualifications
 - Candidate's positions and issues
- Changed how people voted
- Did much better than informative videos and radio reports
- Supporting debates may be a way to promote greater information without being accused of helping one side

Another way to view the evolution of democracy promotion: A shift to incrementalism

- Yes, bureaucratic incentives to be measurable and short term have changed the nature of democracy promotion
- But at the same time, they've led NGOs to avoid undertaking reforms of a complexity and scope that make it impossible to
 - disentangle causes and effects
 - to know what they are really doing
- With professionalization has come a new focus on piecemeal progress