

# Order & Violence

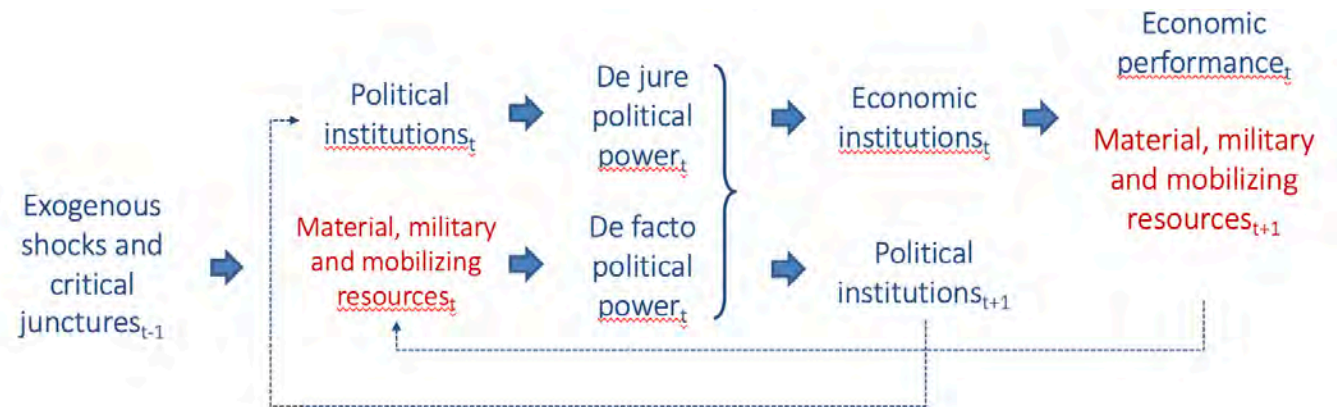
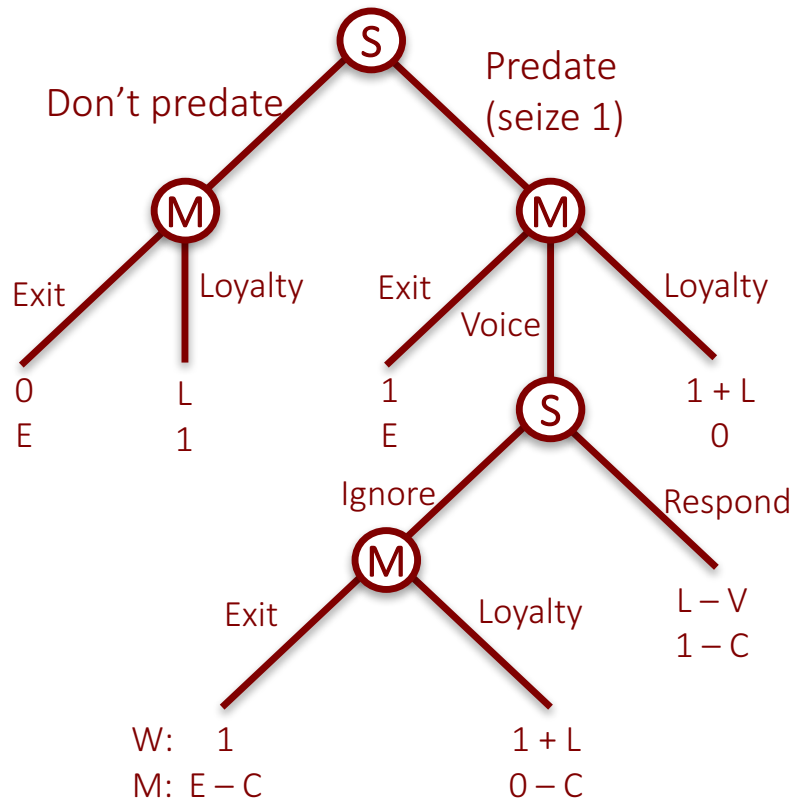


# Today

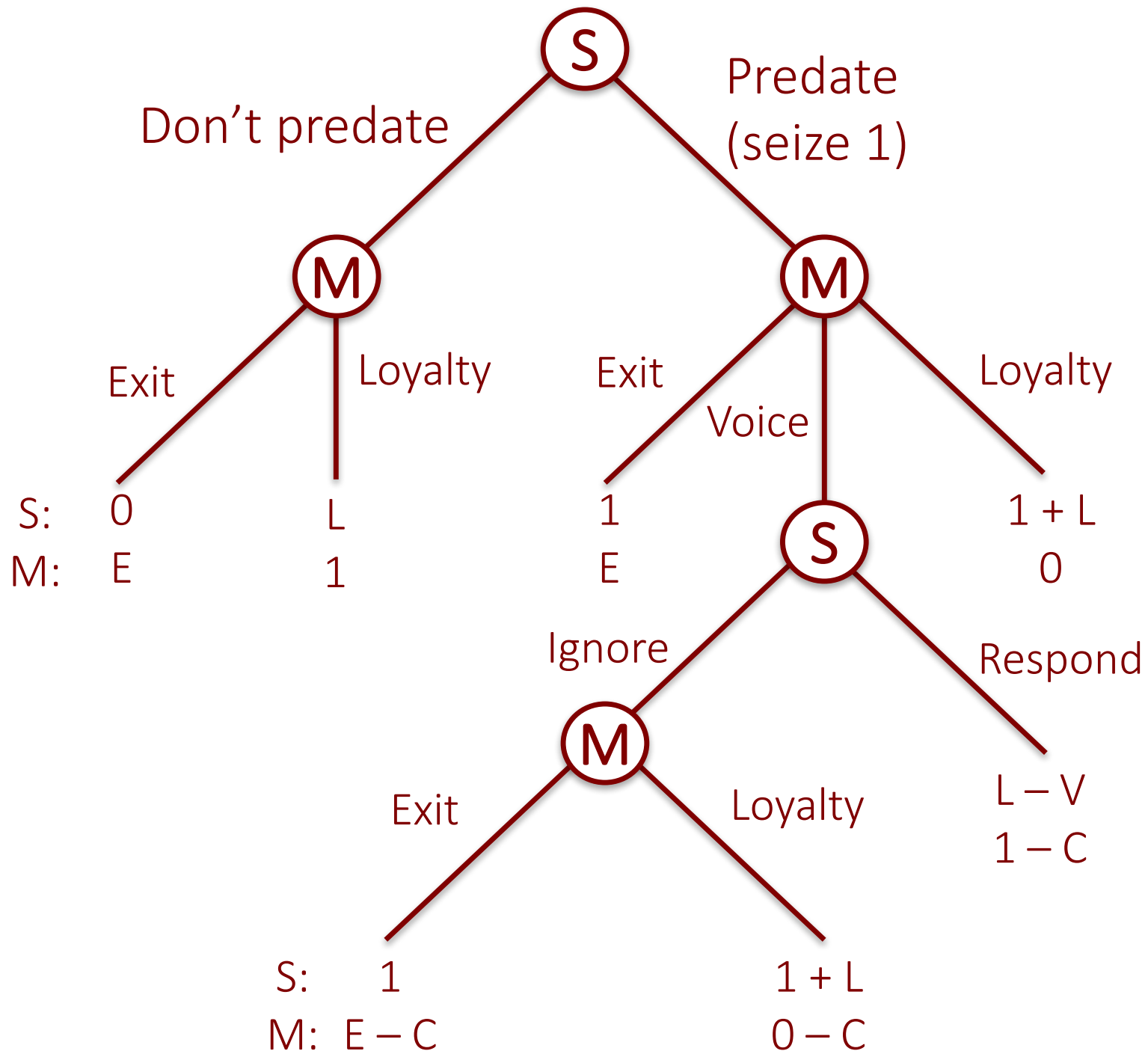
- I. What does it mean to be a democracy? An autocracy?
- II. Why do autocrats hold elections and other power-sharing institutions?
- III. What has driven waves of democratization?
  - Why did we see the “third wave” of democratization in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- IV. Can democracy be bestowed 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?
  - What kinds of democracy promotion should we expect to be effective? Ineffective?
- V. Can democracy precede economic development?
- VI. Closing messages

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



III. What has driven successive waves of democratization?



Every country experience has been different, but there are some common arguments for democratization in the late 20th century

1. A diffusion and adoption of democratic norms and with it a de-legitimation of authoritarian rule
2. An increasingly organized civil society able to coordinate coalitions of excluded elites and mass movements such as protest
3. The economic crises of the 1980s
  - a) Many autocracies lost legitimacy after failing to deliver growth
  - b) Economic crises meant that many regimes were too fiscally or organizationally weak to coopt, repress or placate opposition and sustain patrimonial network
4. Slowly growing middle classes and more educated populations have sometimes demanded representation, redistribution, and political rights

International/external forces were important but arguably less important than the domestic forces 1-4 above

5. Geopolitical and ideological shifts with the end of the Cold War
  - a) Autocratic states suffered a sudden reduction in military and fiscal support
  - b) Collapse of Soviet economy pushed left opposition movements to moderate their demands for change – led to some ideological and policy convergence
6. Tools of violent oppression became more costly due to credible threats of international intervention (R2P) just as technology made it easier to communicate abuses
7. Western donors began to pressure some regimes to democratize (or otherwise supported elections and popular movements)

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

By domestic policymakers and activists?

By foreign powers and international agencies?



The argument so far—that democracy is an equilibrium outcome resulting from fundamental shifts in bargaining power—is in tension with Amos Sawyer’s plea for implementing 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? Or can rewriting institutions have a “treatment effect”?



# Post-conflict elections within 2 years of a peace deal are another possible example

Afghanistan



DRC



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

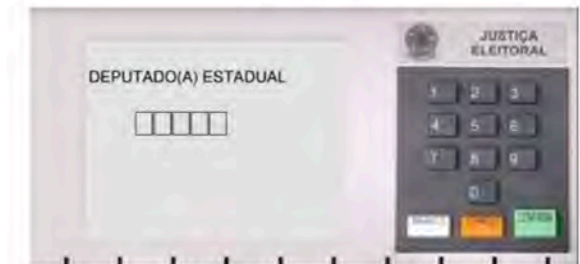
1. Changes in voting technology in Brazil
2. Changes to voting eligibility rules in early US
3. Fiscal decentralization in China
4. Fostering policy debates instead of patronage in West Africa

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

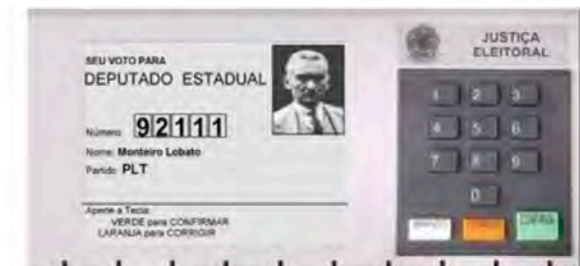
- Brazil uses written ballots but 1/4 of adults are unable to read/write
  - Thus large number of error-ridden and blank ballots are cast
- In 1998 election, municipalities with more than 40,500 registered voters used electronic voting machines that are visual and do not require reading/writing
- This 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

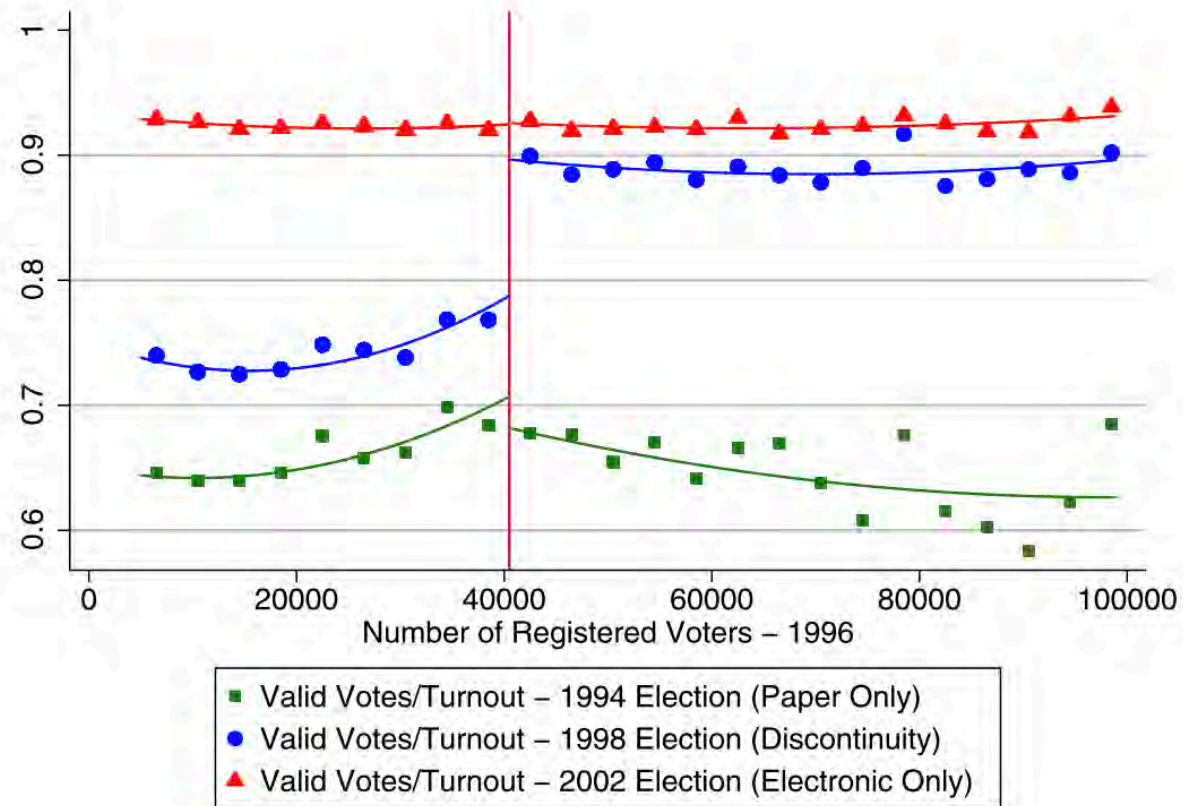
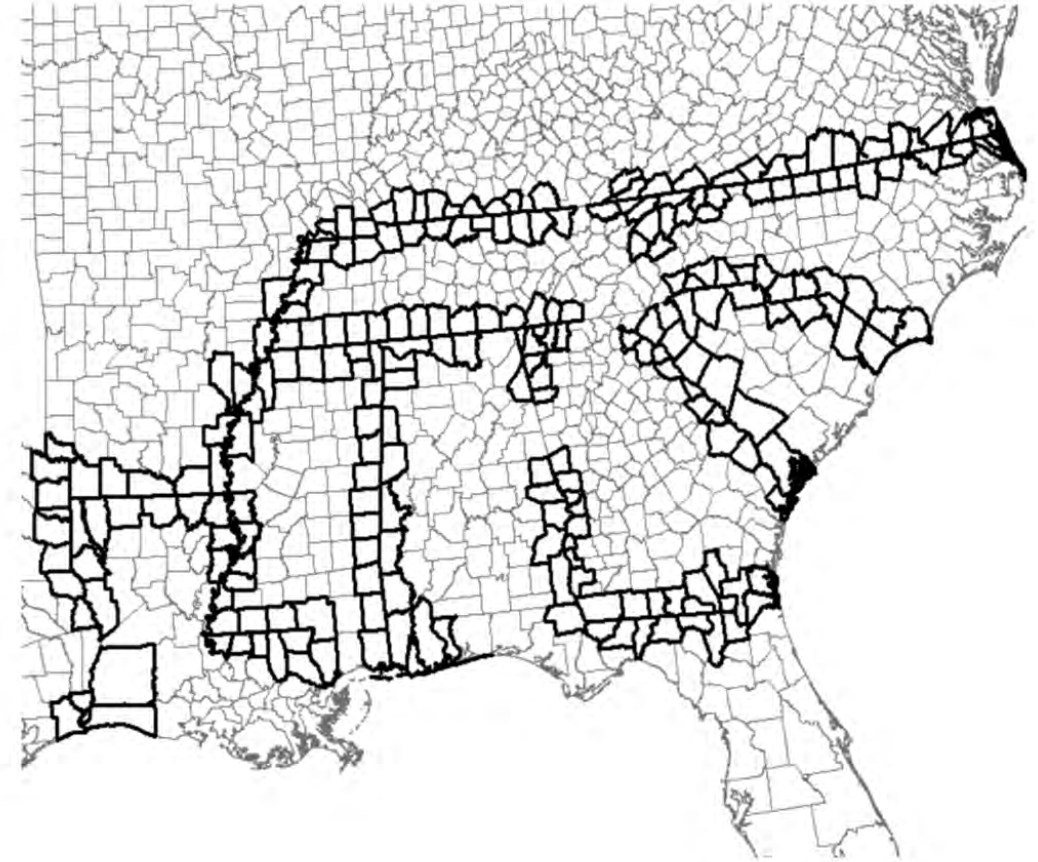


FIGURE 2.—Valid votes/turnout—local averages and parametric fit. Each marker represents the average value of the variable in a 4000-voter bin. The continuous lines are from a quadratic fit over the original (“unbinned”) data. The vertical line marks the 40,500-voter threshold.

## 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



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



# A natural experiment

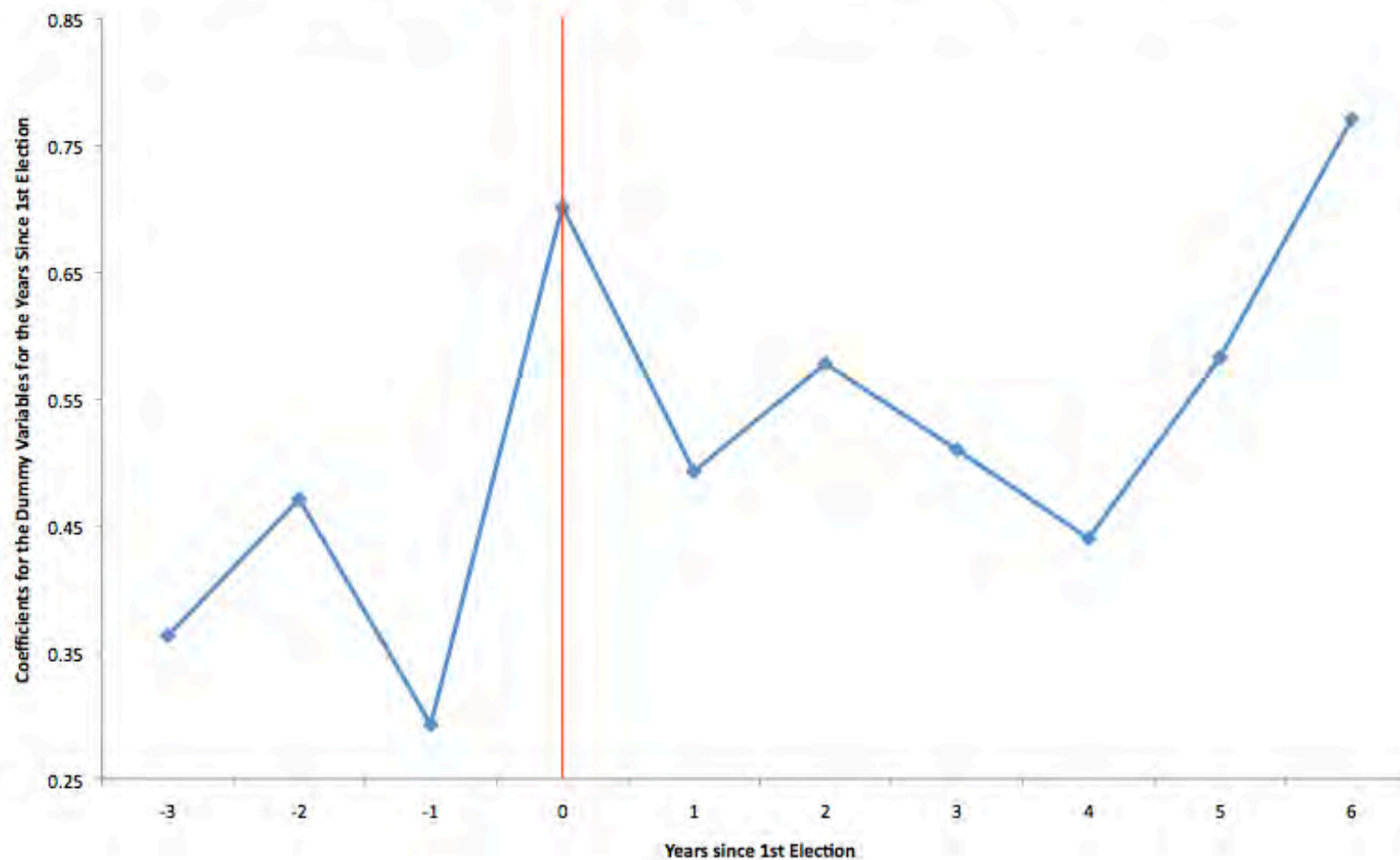
Martinez-Bravo, Padró i Miquel, Qian and Yao

- 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



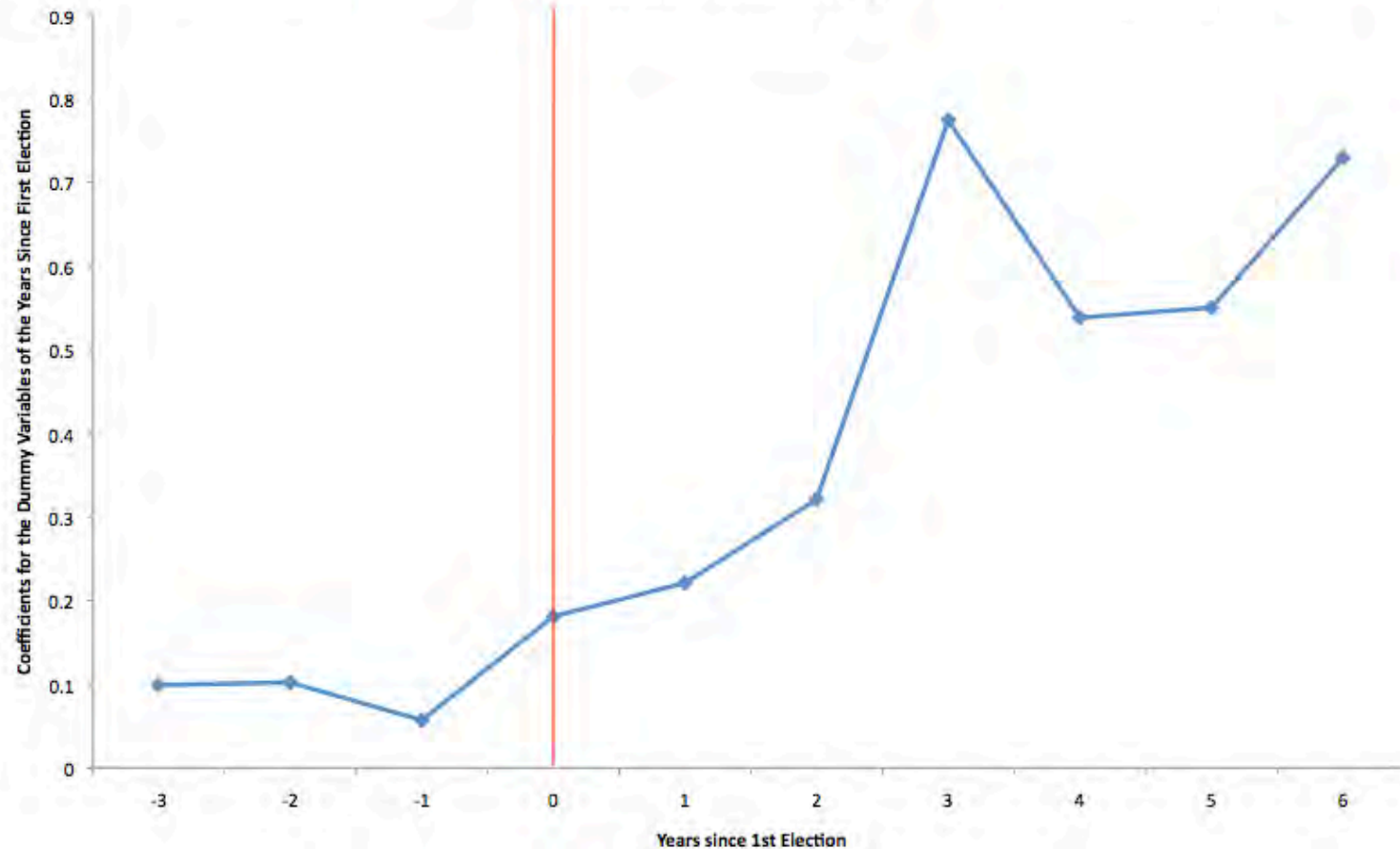
Document the economic and political history of 200 nearly representative villages from 29 provinces, 1982-2005, and compare outcomes in early and late democratized villages

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

- Citizens begin to learn and acquire democratic norms
- The autocratic election could be the starting point for internal struggle

“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



## 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 policy debates on issues? Can voters and parties be encouraged to shift away from vote buying?

Candidate debates in Sierra Leone

Bidwell et al., 2016



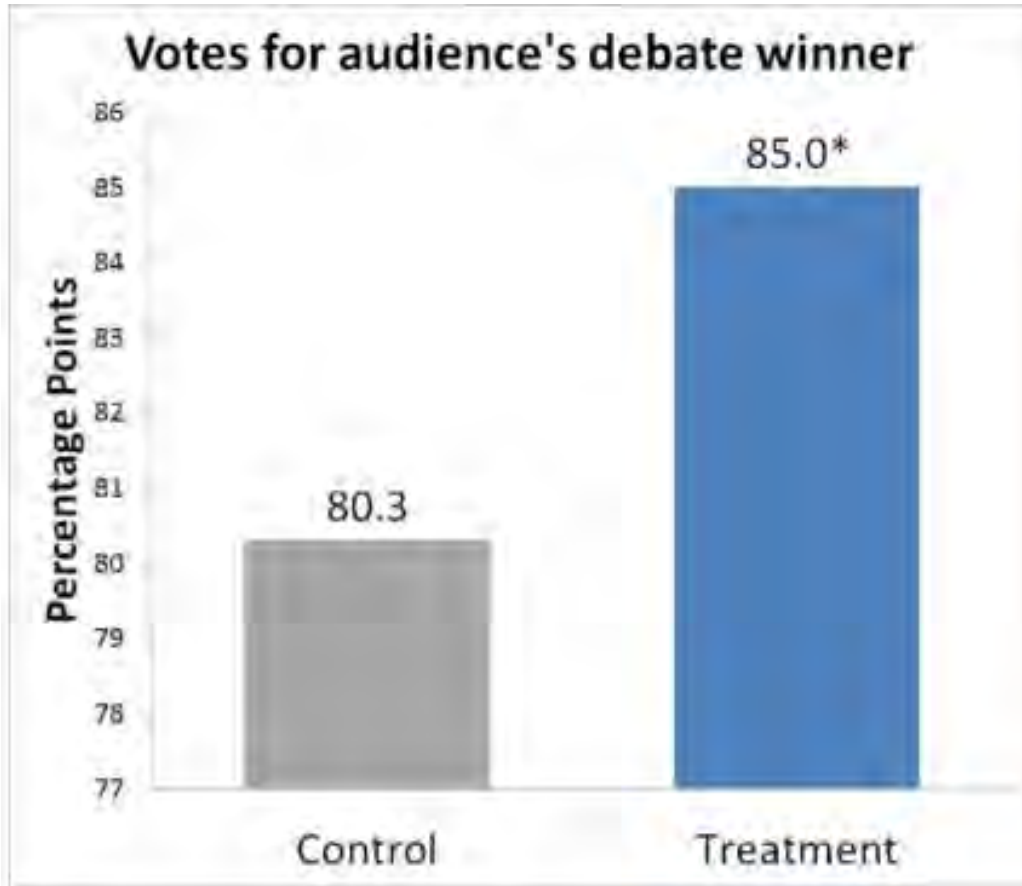
Candidate town halls in Benin

Wantchekon 2003, 2009





e.g. 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

## V. Can democracy precede development?

Many thinkers have argued that democracy is too slow and focuses too much on the short term to promote development



*“You gotta remember the smartest thing the Congress did was to limit the voters in this country. Out of three and a half to four million people, two hundred thousand voted. And that was true for a helluva long time, and the republic would never have survived if all the dummies had voted along with the intelligent people.”*

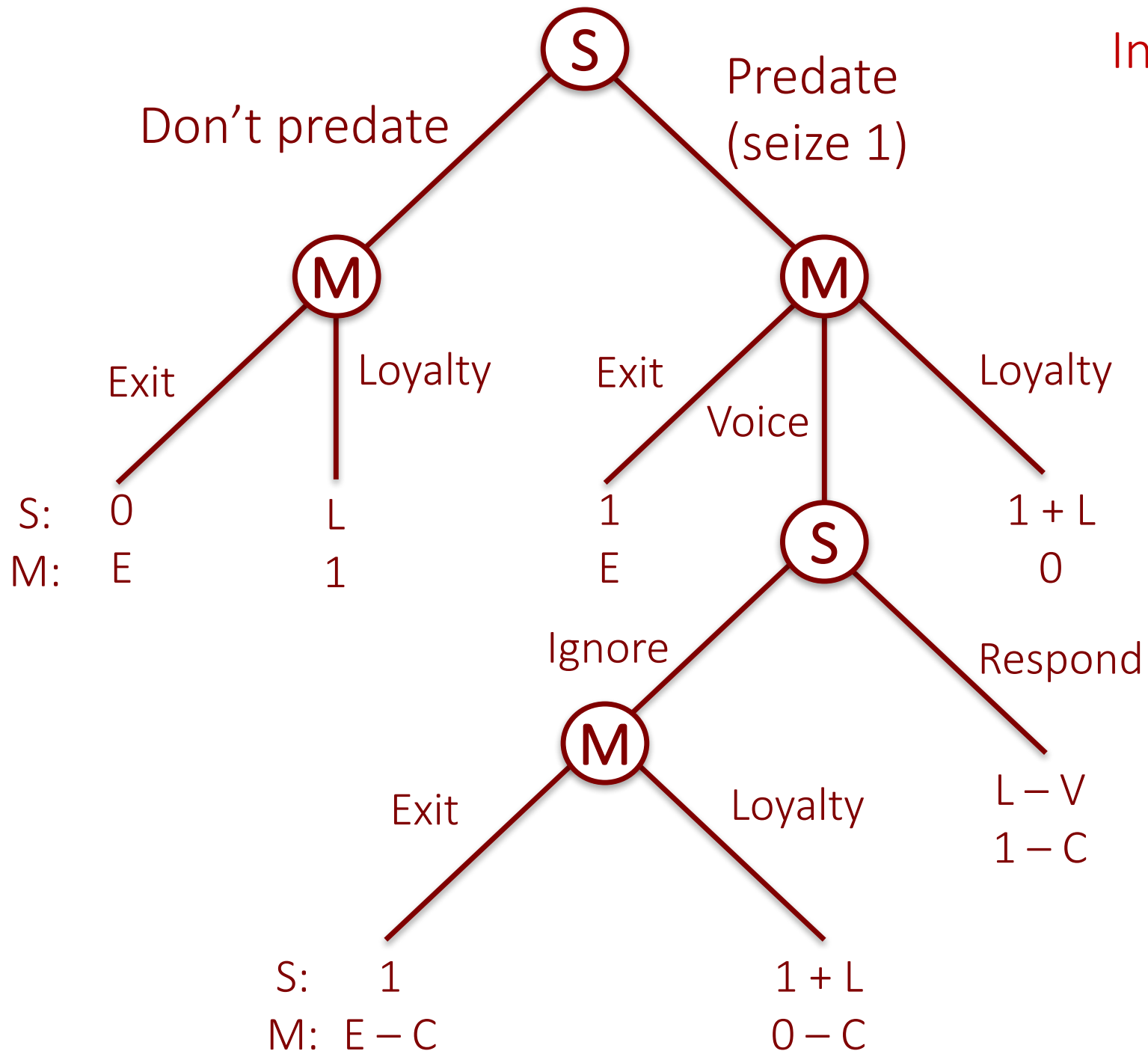
- Richard Nixon  
White House tapes (1971)

# Do countries need a base of economic development before they can democratize?



*“I do not believe that democracy necessarily leads to development. I believe that what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to disorderly conduct which are inimical to development.”*

- Lee Kwan Yew (1992)



In what sense are our political bargaining models consistent with Nixon and Lee Kwan Yew?

What are some possible democratic disadvantages/autocratic advantages?

# What are some possible democratic disadvantages/autocratic advantages?

1. Democratic decision-making can be slow and costly
  - Deliberation and contestation slows any process of reform
  - Minority interest groups can block reforms that benefit everyone else
2. Citizens may be present-biased or myopic
  - “Populist” policies may hinder aggregate growth
  - Citizens may be present-biased or myopic
3. Technocratic ability
  - Can make executive decisions faster – radical reform
  - Good implementers
4. Elections bias politicians to short-term observable reforms, not long term investments
  - Democratic politicians not rewarded for long run investments or policies with hard-to-observe effort
  - Autocrats may have a longer time horizon

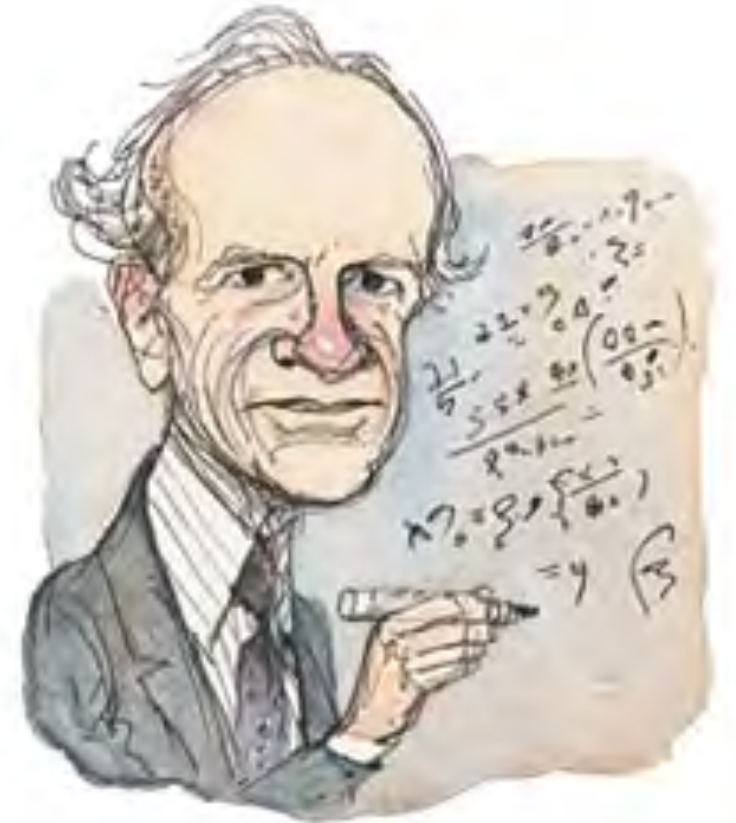
## The appeal of autocrats

*“Visionary leaders can accomplish more in autocratic than democratic governments because they need not heed legislative, judicial, or media constraints in promoting their agenda.*

*In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping made the decision to open communist China to private incentives in agriculture, and in a remarkably short time farm output increased dramatically.*

*Autocratic rulers in Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Chile produced similar quick turnabouts in their economies by making radical changes that usually involved a greater role for the private sector and private business.”*

— Gary Becker, 2010



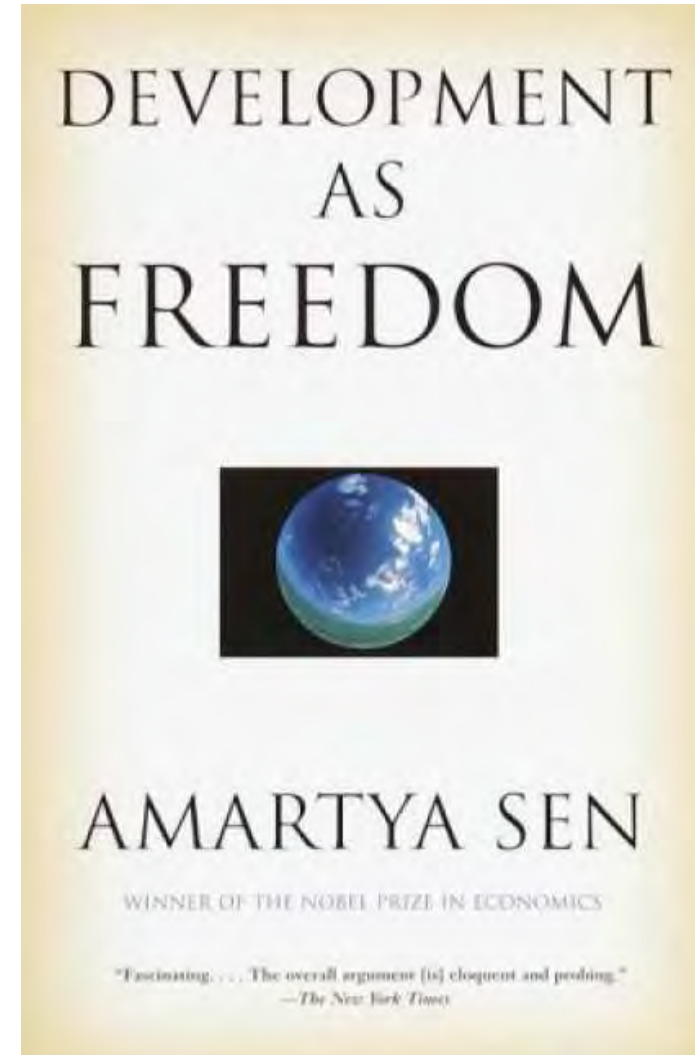


## Three arguments for democracy over autocracy

- A. The intrinsic value of self-determination
- B. Democracy is instrumentally useful in keeping governments accountable to all
- C. Autocracies are highly risky (Feeling lucky?)

## A. The intrinsic value of self-determination

- Economic development is a means, not an end
- Freedom has intrinsic value—it is an end
- Political freedom is a fundamental part of human freedom in general
- Some freedoms — freedom from coercion, freedom to participate in civic life — are contrary to autocracy



## B. Democracy keeps governments accountable to all

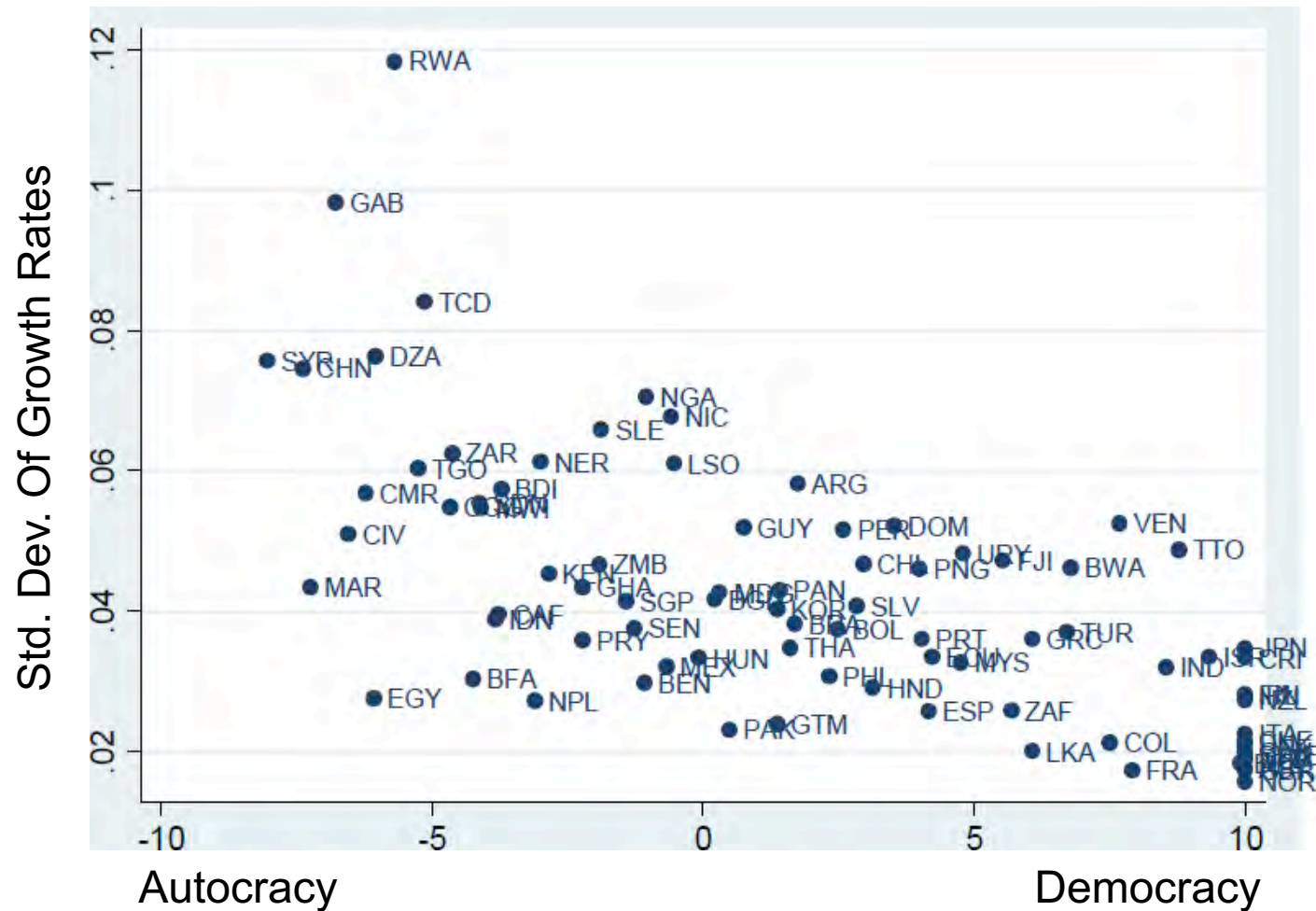
Amartya Sen argues that the true test of autocracy versus democracy is when a state faces a calamity

*"...no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press. We cannot find exceptions to this rule, no matter where we look..."*

*Famines are easy to prevent if there is a serious effort to do so, and a democratic government, facing elections and criticisms from opposition parties and independent newspapers, cannot help but make such an effort..."*



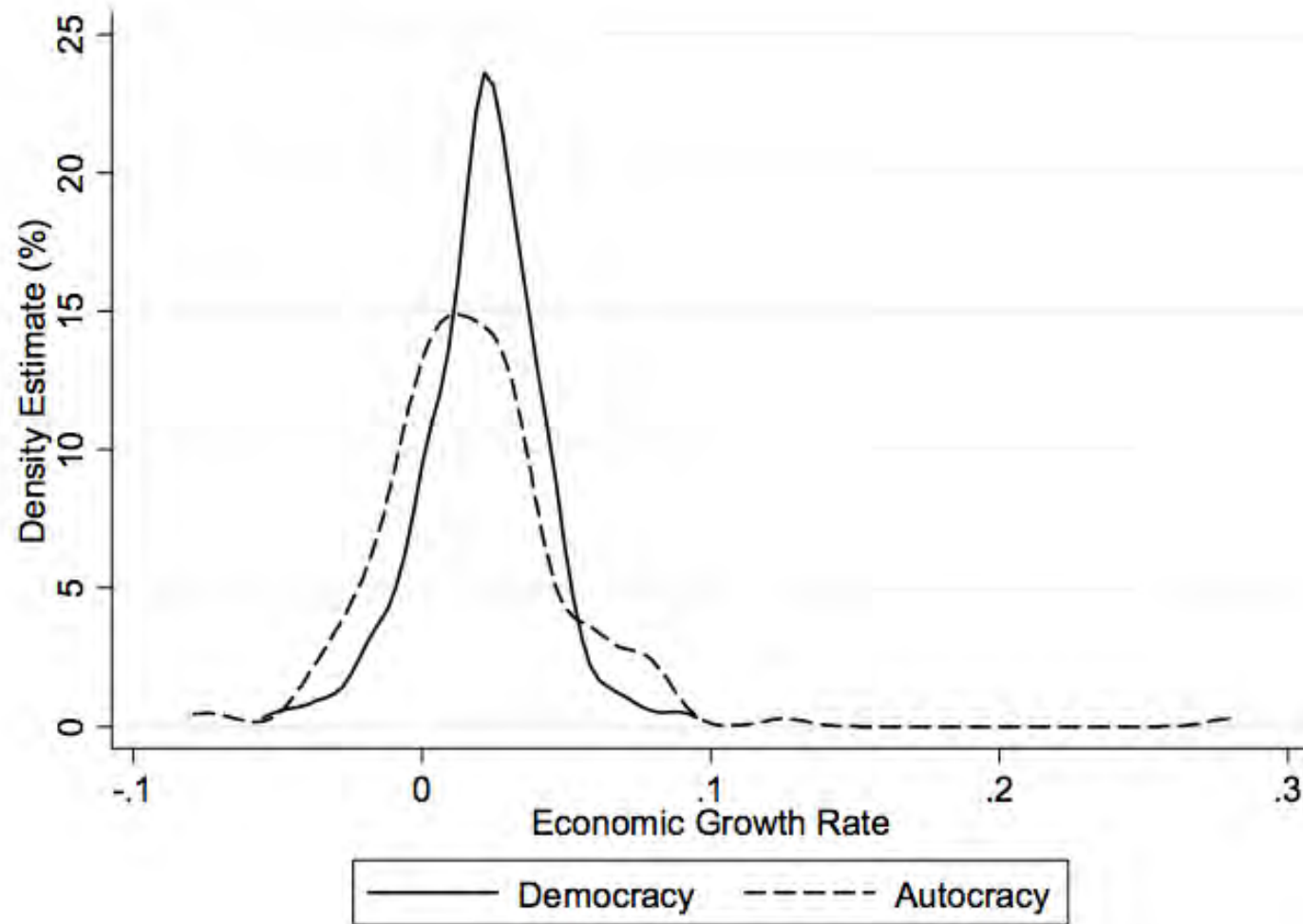
## C. Autocracies are risky



- No relationship between democracy (or autocracy) and growth
- But democracies have lower variance in growth
- A few high growth episodes in autocracies bring up their average

## The median autocracy performs worse

A subset of authoritarian countries have performed very well, pulling up the average



**Figure 1: Economic Growth Distributions among Democracies and Autocracies**

## Meanwhile, we may have selective attention and memories

Average articles per country (New York Times, 1960 to 2008) in each category of Growth and Autocracy

		Growth 1960-2008		
		Big Failure	Not Big Success or Big Failure	Big Success
Democracy, 1960-2008	Autocracy	5,705	14,890	41,952
	Democracy		16,222	

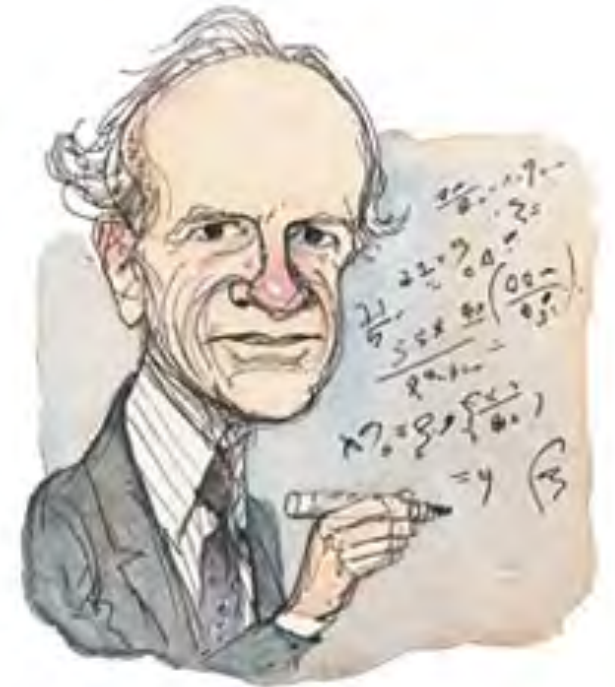
## Autocracies are probably most risky when they are more weakly institutionalized

*“Of course, the other side of autocratic rule is that badly misguided strong leaders can cause major damage.*

*[In democracies,] ...Visionaries’ accomplishments are usually constrained by due process that includes legislative, judicial, and interest group constraints.*

*On the other hand, bad leaders in democracies are also constrained, not only by due process, but also in addition by the reporting of a free competitive press and television, and nowadays too by a competitive Internet..”*

—Gary Becker, 2010



Personalized autocracy thus the most risky?  
Do you want to play leader roulette?





VI. Last, some general principles and themes

# Political development deserves more attention

Development is not simply about wealth creation

Some of the most fundamental freedoms are freedom from violence, freedom to shape your society, freedom to act collectively, and freedom of expression

# To understand local politics, look for the selectorate and the winning coalition

In many societies, the state is controlled by a narrow elite. This is the most common kind of state in human history.

These regimes tend to be coercive and extractive.

Formal institutions and processes can be deceptive, because in the modern world these unequal regimes have incentives to mimic more open and equal regimes

# A society's political institutions are an equilibrium outcome

Political power is bargaining power – military, material and mobilizational

To attain a more equal and just society, you need to try to alter the fundamental bargaining power

Rights and freedoms can seldom be bestowed, they must be seized

War, revolt, revolution, mass protest, national strikes,  
and other unrest are the exception not the rule

War and revolt simply draw our attention

But most of the time political bargains get made

We need to pay attention to the "dogs that don't bark"

Pay attention to “structural” drivers of conflict, but remember that political bargaining breaks down for a narrower and different set of reasons

Easy to blame protest, conflict, or unrest on inequality or injustice, but most unequal and unjust rivalries do not

Look for information asymmetries and commitment problems

Look for private incentives among elite coalitions

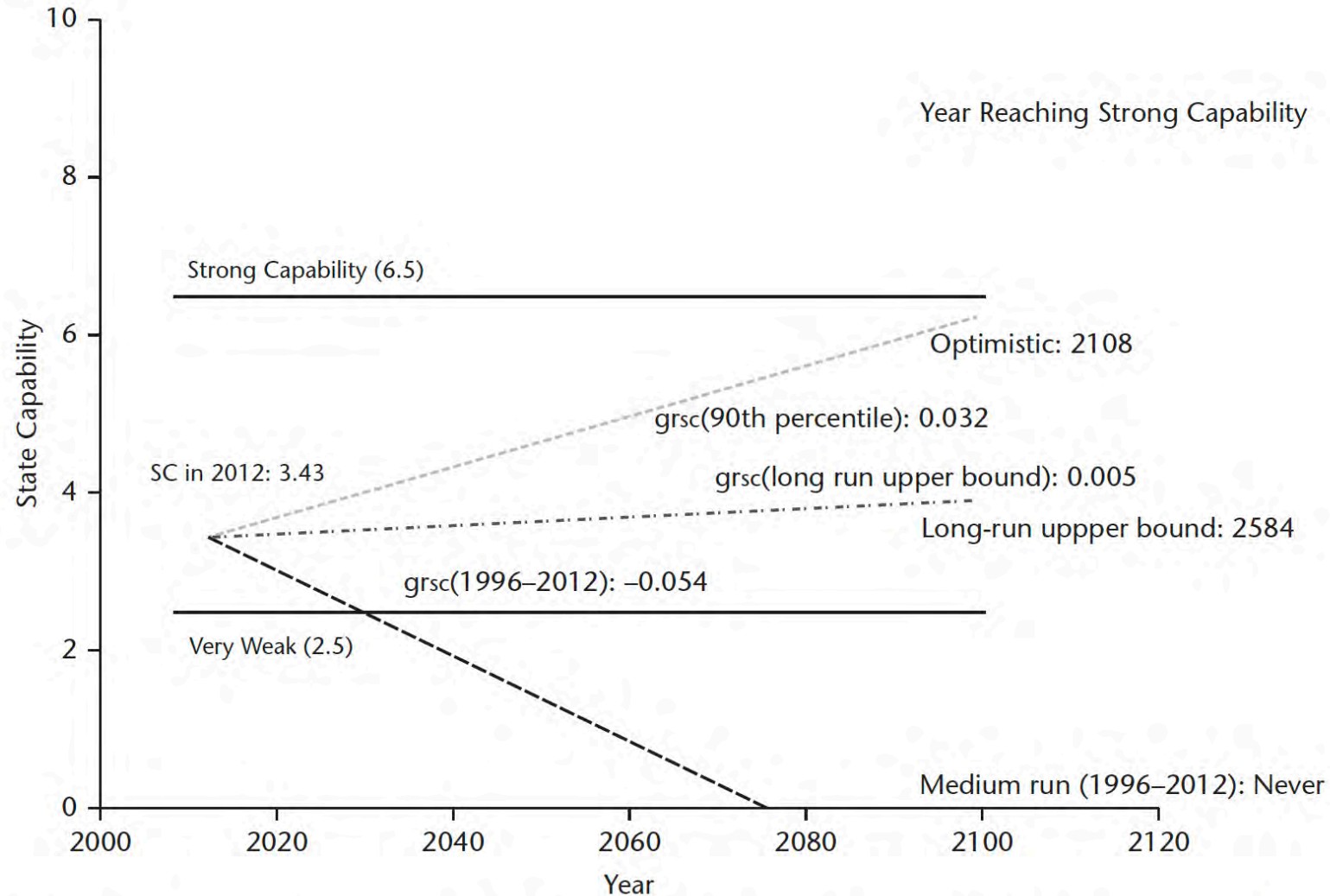
Consider the psychological incentives and biases

## Don't be an anti-politics machine

In addition to remembering the above lessons, there are a few additional ones...

## Have a realistic sense of timeframe

Historically, improving governance and state capacity has taken a very, very long time



**Figure 1.2.** Alternative scenarios for the evolution of state capacity in Guatemala



Learn to distinguish between “2017 problems” and “1804 problems”  
Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock (2015)



**Figure 6.1.** How would you get from St Louis to Los Angeles in 2015?

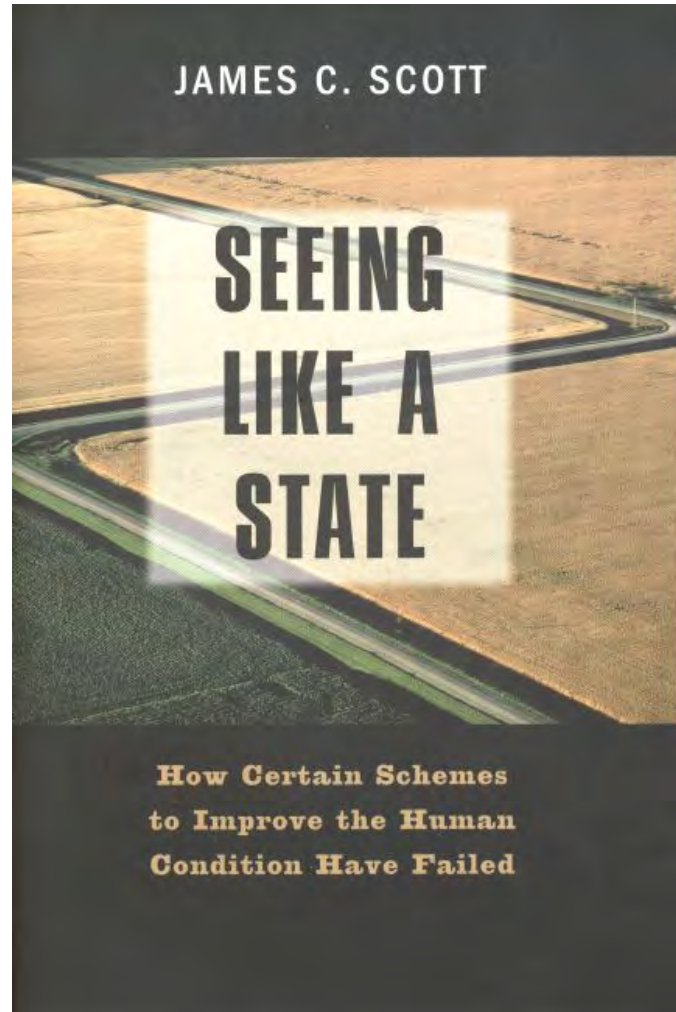
*Source:* Google Maps

Most aspects of political development, maybe the most important ones,  
are more of an “1804 problem”



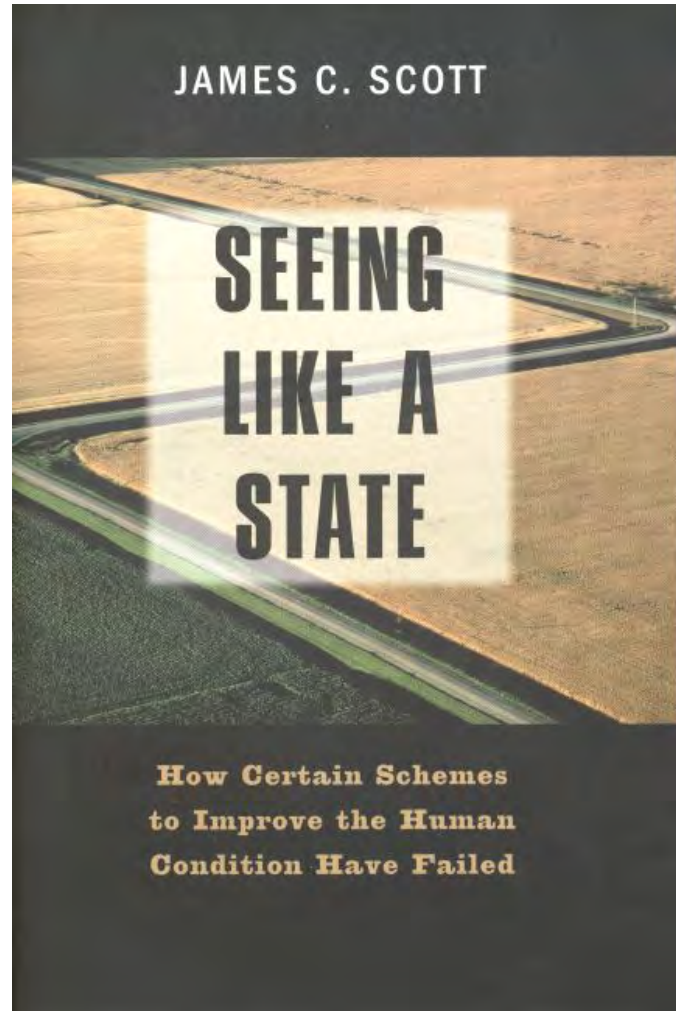
**Figure 6.2.** How would you get to the west coast from St. Louis in 1804?

Jim Scott: A root problem is an unerring confidence in the ability to engineer progress, even for the most difficult problems



- We mistake our ability to solve some types of problems for an ability to solve all problems the same way
- Scott calls this “High modernist ideology”
  - Byproduct of scientific and industrial progress
  - Confidence in the ability of scientific management to achieve satisfaction of wants and needs
  - Rational order is a means and an end

## What is Scott's recipe disastrous social engineering?



1. Ideological, self-confident belief in scientific and technical progress and the ability to technocratically order and improve society
2. Coercive states controlled by a narrow elite
3. Weak civil societies

If you must be a social engineer, be a piecemeal social engineer

Again and again in this class we've seen the benefits of a modest, incremental approach

- Economic reform
- Foreign military intervention
- Foreign aid
- State building
- Democracy promotion

*“The piecemeal engineer knows, like Socrates, how little he knows. He knows that we can learn only from our mistakes.*

*Accordingly, he will make his way, step by step, carefully comparing the results expected with the results achieved, and always on the look-out for the unavoidable unwanted consequences of reform...”*



*“The piecemeal engineer... will avoid undertaking reforms of a complexity and scope which make it impossible for him to disentangle causes and effects, and to know what he is really doing.”*





*“Such 'piecemeal tinkering' does not agree with the political temperament of many 'activists'.*

*Their programme, which too has been described as a programme of 'social engineering', may be called 'holistic' or 'Utopian engineering'.”*



*“Holistic or Utopian social engineering, as opposed to piecemeal social engineering, is never of a 'private' but always of a 'public' character. It aims at remodelling the 'whole of society' in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint...”*





Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping described China's economic strategy as "crossing the river by feeling each stone"

Finally, what is the answer to every question?