Electoral Studies 66 (2020) 102163

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Electoral Studies

journal homepage: http://www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud

# Echoes of a fading past: Authoritarian legacies and far-right voting

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ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:*
Far-right voting
Voting behavior
Authoritarian legacies
Political socialization

ABSTRACT

In recent years, electoral support for the far-right has increased dramatically across the world. This phenomenon is especially acute in some new democracies; however, little attention has been devoted to the effects of the legacies of past authoritarian ideologies. We argue that the ideology of the past regime affects far-right support because voters that were politically socialized under authoritarianism will be biased against its ideological brand. To test this argument, we conduct an individual-level analysis across 20 countries between 1996 and 2018 using a difference-in-difference estimation and a country-level analysis using data from 39 democracies between 1980 and 2018. We demonstrate that voters socialized under right-wing dictatorships are less likely to support far-right parties compared to citizens that were socialized under different circumstances. Moreover, support for far-right parties is significantly lower in countries that transitioned from right-wing autocracies. Findings are discussed in light of the contribution to the far-right movement literature.

## 1. Introduction

During the past few years, support for far-right parties has proliferated across the globe. This trend is strong across several world regions and evident in both old and new democracies. In order to explain it, existing theories point to factors like negative levels of economic growth (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Funke et al., 2016), high levels of unemployment (Arzheimer, 2009), immigration issues (Halla et al., 2017), the type of the electoral system (Norris, 2005), and political opportunity (Meguid, 2005; Downes and Loveless, 2018). Critically, the vast majority of studies on far-right support focuses on the experience of consolidated Western European democracies. However, within the last decade, we observe a proliferation of far-right parties in legislatures across a diverse set of countries. In order to help explain this development, we propose an argument about the effects of the political past on the likelihood of voters supporting far-right parties.

One factor that becomes relevant when shifting our focus to new democracies is regime change. The first step towards democratization is the call for citizens to turn out and elect the government which will lead their country. These same citizens up until that moment were required to profess their allegiance to a regime not of their choosing. This is a drastic alteration of their role in politics. The electorate is forced to develop and express a political preference in a manner of months, while in other countries these preferences develop over long years of political socialization in democratic politics. The reference point for all these new voters is their experiences and political socialization under the authoritarian regime. Such authoritarian regimes may vary tremendously, but they all tend to utilize repression and limit the liberties and rights of their citizens. These characteristics create grievances, which affect how the authoritarian regime is remembered after its collapse. Often these grievances are extensive and the authoritarian regime is portrayed in very dark colors. However, authoritarian regimes in the period under study tend to have clear ideological leanings. They were distinguished as pro-communist, which followed a left-wing ideology, or anti-communist, which were on the right end of the spectrum. A recent paper by Dinas and Northmore-Ball shows that in new democracies citizens tend to be biased against the ideological brand of the old authoritarian regime and to position themselves away from it on the ideological scale (Dinas and Northmore-Ball, 2019). We propose that the aforementioned bias stems from spending ones formative years under authoritarian rule.

As the majority of voters were politically socialized under the old regime, the ideology of the previous authoritarian regime and the time since regime change should play a crucial role on the likelihood of citizens supporting far-right parties, which tend to be closer to old right-wing authoritarian regimes in terms of policy and ideology. Specifically, we contend that voters who spent their formative years under an authoritarian regime with right-wing ideological leanings will be less

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102163
Received 8 September 2019; Received in revised form 11 April 2020; Accepted 28 April 2020

likely to support far-right parties. This kind of behavior by the voters should culminate in very limited support for far-right parties in the years after regime change. As this phenomenon is powered by one's personal experiences under the authoritarian regime, we expect that the political environment will become less hostile to far-right parties as younger people with no experience of authoritarianism join the body of voters.

We test the effect of past authoritarian regimes on far-right support in two stages. In the first stage, we test whether voters who were politically socialized under right-wing autocracy are less likely to support far-right parties. We find robust support for our argument that citizens socialized under right-wing autocracy will be less likely to support far-right parties. In the second stage, we look at whether far-right parties have lower levels of support in countries that transitioned from right-leaning authoritarian regimes as well as how this relationship evolves over time. We find that support for far-right parties is lower in countries that transitioned from right-leaning authoritarian regimes and that this effect diminishes as the distance from the time of the transition increases.

This article aims to contribute in two areas of study. First, it helps explain the variation of far-right success across space and time in a global scale. It builds on the literature on far-right parties by enhancing our understanding of why and how the authoritarian past may influence the likelihood of voters supporting far-right parties. Second, this article aims to contribute to the wider literature on voting behavior, as it reinforces the idea that when thinking about the determinants of voting behavior, it is important to consider factors that may go beyond the current political regime.

## 2. Determinants of far-right support

We understand "far-right" as primarily "nativist" parties which mobilize support around the idea that "states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state" (Mudde, 2007: 19). In addition, far-right parties are usually populist (Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015). They tend to attack mainstream parties and politicians as an elite that exploits the state and takes advantage of the citizens (Hawkins, 2010). We differentiate between far-right parties, which are the focus of the present study, and far-left parties, which are outside of our scope. Parties in both families tend to be populist in their appeals, but while far-right parties pair populism with nativism, far-left parties pair populism with an anti-capitalist rhetoric and focus much more on socioeconomic inequality (March, 2012), characteristics historically associated with the left.

The fortunes of far-right parties in the electoral arena tend to be studied in terms of supply and demand. Demand-side theories focus on issues that could make citizens support far-right parties over mainstream alternatives (Kitschelt, 1995). On the other hand, supply-side arguments focus on the institutional arrangements that might affect electoral support for the far-right. More recent additions to the literature propose that unless supply and demand coexist during an electoral campaign, the success of far-right parties is highly unlikely (Golder, 2016).

Demand-side theories are structured around unemployment (Arzheimer, 2009), the level of immigration (Halla et al., 2017) or more abstractly the "losers of modernization" (Betz, 1994). One of the most robust findings of the demand-side arguments is that economic hardships tend to increase support for the far-right (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Funke et al., 2016; Hays et al., 2019). Economic crisis create rapid and unexpected losses for reasons not immediately discernible. This increases the information costs of voting and decreases the ability of voters to act retrospectively. As a result, the simple rhetoric of far-right parties, which tends to scapegoat minorities, may appear attractive and persuasive (Georgiadou et al., 2018).

On the other hand, supply-side arguments focus on the effects of favorable political opportunity structure, party organization, and ideology. Far-right parties are better equipped to succeed in proportional electoral systems with low parliamentary thresholds (Norris, 2005) and larger district magnitudes (Veugelers and Magnan, 2005), as their support base tends to be dispersed in space and cannot easily be classified in terms of class or any other social cleavage. While they are often seen as situational protest parties that attract those who have low trust in the system, the success of the French National Front since the 1980s shows that ethnonationalist, populist antiestablishment rhetoric can both increase support for the far-right and create a stable basis of supporters (Rydgren, 2005). The behavior of the mainstream parties also affects the supply of far-right parties. Established parties can hinder far-right parties by adopting a policy stance close to theirs and threaten to take control of their niche (Meguid, 2005; Downes and Loveless, 2018), or ignore their policy issues signaling to the electorate that they are not salient. However, this is risky and may instead increase support for the far-right (Lindstam, 2019). An alternative strategy would be to de-legitimize them by reminding voters of the far-right's ideological roots. But this approach loses its potency once the party manages to enter parliament (van Heerden and van der Brug, 2017).

Recent studies have been perceptive to the idea that new democracies will be different than older democracies when it comes to far-right support. A growing branch of the literature focuses on far-right support in post-communist countries (e.g., Pirro, 2014; Hanley and Sikk, 2016; Trumm, 2018). Of particular interest are the differences between far-right platforms in Western Europe compared to those in post-communist countries. According to Allen (2017), in post-communist countries religiosity is a more prominent determinant of far-right support, while the support base of far-right parties is comparatively more economically leftist, less focused on anti-immigrant attitudes, and less satisfied with democracy as a regime type. Mobilization patterns also differ.

Crucially, no studies examine the effect of a right-wing authoritarian past on far-right support. Dinas and Northmore-Ball (2019) argue that people who have experienced a right or left-wing authoritarian regime will be avert to placing themselves close to it in terms of ideology. This is a major contribution but the authors admit that they are agnostic when it comes the causal mechanisms. While Dinas and Northmore-Ball (2019) look at voters' self-classification using the ideological labels in relation to antidictator bias, we extend our analytical scope on voters' assessment on policies, ideologies and associated parties. Specifically, we propose and test the effect of right-wing authoritarian legacies on far-right voting. We leverage that far-right parties tend to be closer to old right-wing authoritarian regimes in terms of policy and ideology, especially when it comes to nativism.

As a result, this paper addresses a critical gap in the literature on far-right voting. The existing literature offers very few insights when we shift our focus to countries with a right-wing authoritarian past, as these countries have not been studied in contrast to older Western European democracies. Also, the literature on far-right support focuses solely in the European continent. As far-right parties have been almost exclusively in Europe, there was no need, or opportunity, to study them in other contexts. In recent years, though, this is no longer the case. In order to fill these critical gaps in the literature, we develop a theory on the effects of the authoritarian past on far-right voting which we test on a global sample.

## 3. Political socialization and authoritarian legacies

Authoritarian regimes are not ideologically neutral (Dinas and Northmore-Ball, 2019). Autocratic regimes after World War II, and especially during the Cold War, can most often be categorized as being pro-communist, which denotes adherence to a left-wing ideology, or anti-communist, which made these regimes clearly lean towards a right-wing rhetoric and ideology. In most cases, the regime leadership clearly identified themselves as part of either group (Brands, 2010; Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010). Given the context of the Cold War, political rhetoric was important as it pertained to the political as well as the

economic paradigm followed by the regime. The national and the religious identities were important reference points for the right-wing regimes, while communist regimes focused more on equality and the end goal of socialism.

While the ideological leanings of each regime are important, their policy goals also differed vastly. Left-wing autocracies tried to have complete control of the state and were keen on promoting economic equality based on a state centered economy (Meyer, 1966; Freeden, 2013). On the other hand, right-wing autocracies largely based their legitimacy on the fear of communism and were economically liberal (Linz, 2000; Freeden, 2013). These distinctions in ideological rhetoric and policy priorities are critical underlying factors capable of influencing the citizens' political socialization.

Political socialization takes place during the middle to late teens and early twenties (Inglehart, 1977). Significant political events that take place during that time have a great impact in forming the political identity of young citizens. Since such events have smaller effects on already mature citizens, it is likely that the political implications of said events will be in full display when the young generation starts dominating politics. This process forms political generations (Denemark et al., 2016). Research on this issue shows both that cohort effects are strong determinants of voting behavior (Van der Brug, 2010), and that the ability for political learning declines with age in a non-linear fashion (Franklin and van Spanje, 2012). The first years of adulthood are especially important, as voters are more open to altering their political preferences than in any other point in their lives (Stoker and Jennings, 2008). While voters may change their voting preferences during the course of their life, their voting habits are very stable by middle age (Sears, 1990), and are especially resistant to change as they pass the 60 years of age (Franklin and van Spanje, 2012).

Most of the above literature was developed based on research in stable democracies, so how would the process of political socialization work in new democracies? Given the lack of a functioning party system, individuals who spent their early adult life under authoritarian rule will not have developed party preferences as part of their political socialization. However, since political life and significant events during the formative years influence a person's political behavior, the political regime under which they lived should be a critical factor. Bermeo (1992) suggests that regime change can be a source of discontinuity: "[old] regimes can be the sort of nightmare that is simply so horrifying that it never leaves our consciousness. These old regimes are not a source of continuity but of discontinuity". Accordingly, the authoritarian past would be a lesson learned and the past mistakes to be avoided. This "learning by the opposition" view is shared by several authors studying new democracies that transitioned from military regimes (e.g., O'Donnell, 1973). In addition, voters initially form their preferences based on a normative understanding of Left and Right, with politics being understood in terms of sides and the political space as discontinuous (Bølstad and Dinas, 2017). So, voters in new democracies might struggle to identify in terms of parties, but it should be much easier for them to feel closer to one of the two sides of the political spectrum. For example, in the years following the fall of Franco's regime levels of partisan attachment were much lower among Spanish voters compared to citizens of established democracies. On the other hand, Spaniards would readily locate themselves on the left-right scale in rates comparable to citizens of established democracies. Also, this self identification remained relatively stable (Barnes et al., 1985, 1986). Therefore, being politically socialized under autocratic rule should affect political behavior even after a transition to democracy.

The variation between the regimes under consideration is vast, but they all repressed and limited liberties and rights to various extents. These key characteristics of authoritarian regimes create grievances within the citizenry. The extent of these grievances determines the way citizens will think of the authoritarian regime after its collapse. Moreover, the event of regime transition itself is a critical juncture in political life. After the old regime collapses, it is safe, or even encouraged, that grievances towards the old regime be expressed. Therefore, a critical mass of the citizens has a negative view of the past authoritarian regime during the post-transition era (Dinas and Northmore-Ball, 2019).

This bias against the old regime and political actors linked to it is based on individual experiences as well as reinforced by the spread of the idea that democracy is the only inherently legitimate form of government (Sen, 1999). The experience under authoritarianism creates an ideological bias against political parties and elites associated with the old regime through their history (Nicolacopoulos, 2005). In addition, this creates a lasting branding of the authoritarian regime's ideology as a whole (Dinas, 2017). So, citizens who have experienced the authoritarian regime will be most likely to identify similarities between far-right parties and the previous regime and distance themselves from it, a process similar to the "demonisation" described by van Heerden and van der Brug (2017), but at the individual citizen level. Even new parties, whose leadership had no relationship to the older authoritarian elites, try to avoid being given a label even remotely resembling the brand of the old regime. In several countries with a right-wing authoritarian past, parties for a long time refused to be labelled "right-wing" (Power and Zucco, 2009), or were harmed at the polls for accepting this label (Dinas, 2017).

Based on the above, at the individual-level we expect that citizens who were socialized under right-wing autocracy being less supportive of far-right parties than their compatriots, who were socialized under democracy, or people from other countries who did not have a similar authoritarian past. So, we formulate our main hypotheses:

**H1**. Citizens who spent their formative years under right-wing dictatorships will be less likely to support far-right parties compared to citizens in other countries.

**H2**. Citizens who spent their formative years under right-wing dictatorships will be less likely to support far-right parties compared to their compatriots who spent their formative years under democratic rule.

In addition we expect that this individual-level behavior will have observable implications at the country-level. In the years following regime transition, a significant percentage of the voting population will have been socialized under autocracy. As this sizable segment of the voting body is expected to have a negative bias towards far-right parties, we expect far-right parties to receive less support in countries who transitioned from a right wing authoritarian regime. Since this effect is a product of the personal experiences of specific individuals, its size should decrease over time due to generational replacement.

**H3**. Far-right parties will receive lower vote shares in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships.

**H4**. The effects of anti far-right bias on voting behavior in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships will diminish over time.

## 4. Data and research design

In the first stage of our analysis we consider the effect of voters' authoritarian experience during their formative years on the probability that they support a far-right party using a difference-in-difference estimation. For this purpose, we utilize survey data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Our sample includes survey responses from 20 democracies which have at least one far-right party in their parliament between 1996-2018.[1] In other words, we exclude all

[1] The classification of democracies relies on the Authoritarian Regimes Dataset (Wahman et al., 2013). The dataset classifies countries as democratic when they fall below a democracy threshold of 7.0 on a 10-point combined Freedom House and Polity democracy scale.

observations of countries without far-right parties.[2]

The sample includes countries with (1) a right-wing dictatorship past, (2) a left-wing dictatorship past, and (3) without any authoritarian experience since World War II.[3] We follow Dinas and Northmore-Ball (2019) and code authoritarian regimes as right-wing based on the existence of a history of war against communist/left-wing guerrillas. Also, we classify the axis countries in the World War II period as post right-wing dictatorships. The fascist legacy of these countries resembles the nationalistic emphasis of far-right parties, so we expect that the mechanisms described in the previous sections will be at work in these countries as well. On the other hand, we classify former communist states as post left-wing dictatorships. Finally, we classify countries without any dictatorship past since World War II as the comparison group. These old democracies can be used as a point of comparison for both left- and right-wing regimes. In addition, such a use of the old democracies allows us to account for periodic effects that may affect voters across both sets of countries. We provide a list of countries included in the sample in Table A2 of the appendix.

To identify far-right parties, we rely on the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), which classifies political parties and alliances into several party families on a Right-Left ideological scale based on their positions on key policies as described in their manifestos (Volkens et al., 2019; Krause et al., 2019). One of these families is nationalist parties, which are far-right in terms of ideology. Since our intention is to examine the support for far-right over time and space, the CMP is particularly well-suited to our purpose. Although alternative time-series datasets have become available, they tend to be limited in scope. As the CMP provides a unified classification across time and regions, it has been utilized for classifying far-right parties in many recent studies (e.g., Wagner and Meyer, 2017; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018; Hays et al., 2019).

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this dataset. First, the CMP's coding scheme is not designed to capture the discourse used by radical right parties (Protsyk and Garaz, 2013; Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015). Key policy issues of far-right discourse, such as immigration and integration, are reflected imperfectly in the CMP's classification. In addition, the CMP does not include marginal parties (Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015). Therefore, we run the risk of systematically excluding small parties. To mitigate these limitations, we utilize the PopuList project as a robustness check. The PopuList is a list of European parties classified as populist, far-right, far-left and Eurosceptic. It includes parties that obtained at least 2% of the vote in national parliamentary elections since 1998 (Rooduijn et al., 2019). PopuList follows the definition of Mudde (2007) and classifies as far-right parties those that are nativist and authoritarian. In Table A3 of the appendix we provide a list of parties classified as far-right by each dataset.

Information on individual characteristics and far-right support is extracted from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Modules 1 to 5. The CSES is a cross-national survey that is conducted during election years and targets those eligible to vote. It provides information on an individual's electoral preference in addition to the basic demographic characteristics. Since they use the same questionnaire across countries and periods, it enables us to conduct a cross-national time series comparison. Our dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether the survey respondent supports a far-right party.[4]

To assess the magnitude of the effect of authoritarian exposure, we relate the voters' generation, which experienced the authoritarian regime, to the likelihood of far-right support. We consider a cohort group as a "treatment group" if they spent their formative years under authoritarianism.[5] In other words, the "treatment" (authoritarian exposure) is only assigned to the cohort groups which lived under authoritarian regime during their formative years. Since the birth-year is not affected by any factor, the assignment is random.[6] At the same time, there are four different cohort groups: (A) cohorts in post-dictatorships who was exposed to authoritarianism during their formative years, (B) the same cohorts in old democracies, (C) cohorts in post-dictatorships who were never exposed to authoritarianism during their formative years, and (D) the same cohorts as group C in old democracies. With the comparison between these groups, we control all unobserved factors derived from country-level effects (authoritarian past) and cohort effects (for a graph illustration see Table A4 of the appendix).

The scatter plots in Fig. 1 summarize the data by showing average far-right support for the three groups of countries: post right- and left-wing dictatorships and old democracies. Each dot represents the mean far-right support by a birth-year group. Local smoothing functions suggest that although the age groups in old democracies have uniform distribution over the years, there are observable differences between age groups in post-dictatorships. Fig. 2 shows the difference in average far-right support between old democracies and post right- or left-wing dictatorships. In post left-wing dictatorships, the trend is different between the age groups born before and after the 1980s. In post right-wing dictatorships, all age groups are less likely to support the far-right; however, voters who were born before 1960 are even less likely to support far-right parties.[7]

To further clarify the effect of voters' authoritarian experience on the probability that they support a far-right party, we compare the cohort groups with and without authoritarian exposure during the formative years based on a difference-in-difference identification strategy. We use the following specification:

Model 1:

$$Far\ \ Right\ \ Support_{i,m,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Cohort\ \ Group_{i,m,t} + \beta_2 Authoritarian\ \ Past_{m,t} + \beta_3 \left(Cohort\ \ Group_{i,m,t} * Authoritarian\ \ Past_{m,t}\right) + \beta_4 D_{i,m,t} + \beta_5 \lambda_{m,t-1} + \varepsilon_{i,m,t} \quad (1)$$

where $i$ indexes individuals, $m$ indexes country, and $t$ indexes time (year of sample). *Cohort Group* is a dummy variable for each age group; and *Authoritarian Past* is a dummy variable equal to 1 for those countries with authoritarian experience either left- or right-wing. *Cohort Group* * *Authoritarian Past* is the treatment variable. $D_{i,m,t}$ is a vector of individual characteristics that help explain variation in far-right support. $\lambda_{m,t-1}$ is a vector of time-by-country factors. Standard errors are clustered by country to account for possible correlation among groups (Bertrand et al., 2004). In addition, given the limited number of observations in the country-year level variables, we utilize bootstrapping to increase the reliability of our coefficient estimates. The coefficient of interest, $\beta_3$, shows the effect that the authoritarian experience during the formative years has on the probability that a cohort group supports a far-right

[2] Also, we have excluded country-years that have extremely limited variation in the DV from the sample to avoid the separation problem in the logistic regression.

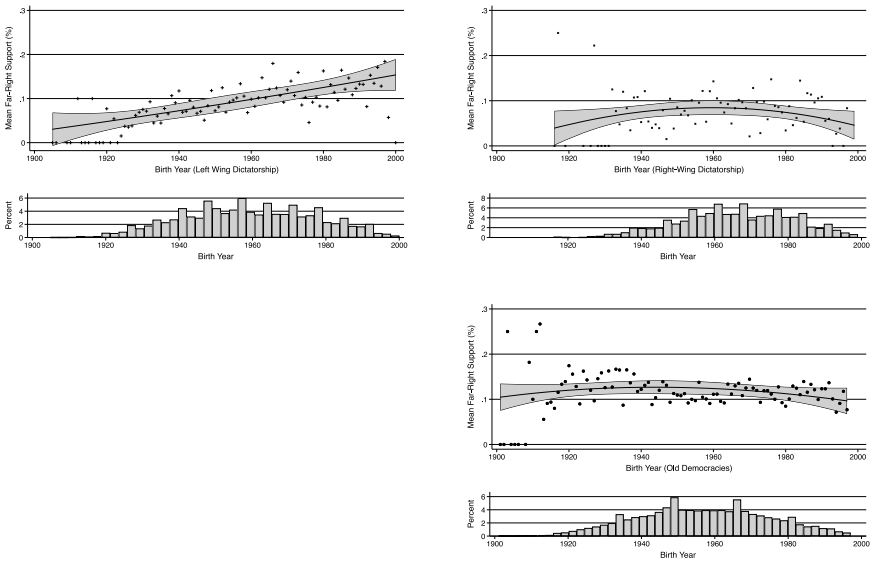
[3] Although there are several alternative classifications for the variety of authoritarian regimes (i.e., Wahman et al., 2013), we specifically focus on the ideological origin of the regimes since our primary focus is ideological leaning under authoritarianism.

[4] The survey asks what party the respondent would support if there was an election the following day.

[5] Although the direct operationalization of cohort groups is including dummy variables for each group based on their year of birth, this operationalization creates a separation problem in the logistic regression. Thus, we include cohort group dummies based on each decade during the observation period.

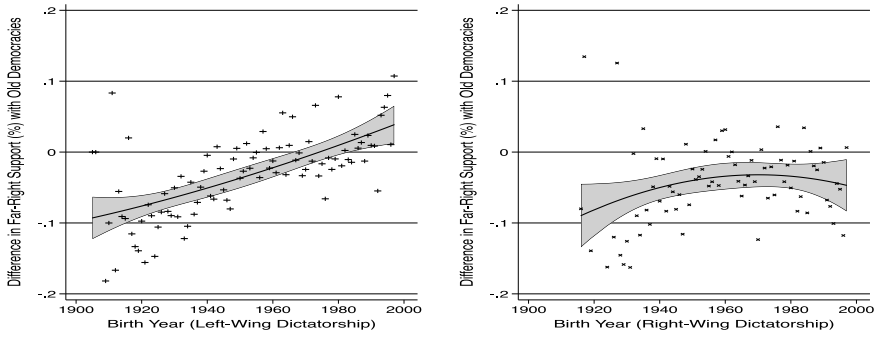
[6] Although this is an observational study, we utilize a difference-in-difference identification strategy which makes it appropriate to use language reserved for experimental studies (i.e., "treatment" or "control").

[7] Figure A1 in the appendix presents similar trends in an aggregate level using the vote share of far-right parties.




*Note:* Lines show the predicted far-right supports by the birth-year groups calculated by the fractional-polynomial prediction with the 95% confidence intervals.

**Fig. 1.** Average Far-Right Support by the Birth Year Groups.




*Note:* Lines show the observed difference in far-right supports compared with old democracies by the birth-year groups, calculated by the fractional-polynomial prediction with the 95% confidence intervals.

**Fig. 2.** Difference between Old Democracies and New Democracies.

party. We also estimate the models with country fixed effects as a robustness check to see whether the relationship would hold when controlling for all unobserved effects derived from country-specific factors.[8]

To operationalize treatment effects, we measure the *intensity* of treatment as the number of years of exposure to authoritarianism during their formative years. We specifically measure the years of authoritarian exposure between 18 and 25 years of age. We distinguish between right-wing and left-wing dictatorships, as we expect that the estimated direction of the effect will differ by authoritarian regime type. In sum, we account for the *characteristics* as well as the *intensity* of the treatment. The treatment group is divided into two groups: (1) exposure to right-wing dictatorships and (2) exposure to left-wing dictatorships during the formative years.

In addition, we include various control variables that may affect the dependent variable. We control for socio-demographic indicators including gender, level of education, and unemployment status. We also control for various country-level factors. First, we control for the variation in authoritarian regimes. Specifically, we control for left-wing dictatorship experience, which may affect the voters' behavior at the polls due to the opposite ideological bias (Dinas and Northmore-Ball, 2019). Second, we control for the electoral system. Proportional electoral systems provide more opportunities for niche parties to be successful (e.g., Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Norris, 2005; Veugelers and Magnan, 2005). To account for the difference in electoral system, we include both the effective number of parties[9] and the district

[8] We do not include year fixed effects since time dummies in logistic regression often suffer from complete and quasi-complete separation (Carter and Signorino, 2010).

[9] The variable is available at the Quality of Government Institute (Teorell et al., 2019).

magnitude.[10] Third, we control for GDP growth and unemployment rate,[11] as a difficult economic situation would increase demands for far-right parties (e.g., Funke et al., 2016). Fourth, we control for the level of immigration because increased influx of both labor migrants (e.g., Halla et al., 2017) and refugees (e.g., Dinas et al., 2019) may increase far-right support. To operationalize this, in the main models we use the number of refugees per capita.[12]

Finally, we control for the level of democracy.[13] This is to separate the effect of authoritarian past from the effect of the level of democratic consolidation. A recent study highlights the difference in political opportunity for far-right parties between new and old democracies (e.g., Allen, 2017). Because of the considerable electoral volatility after regime change, there is more open space especially for new niche parties to mobilize a variety of groups that in old democracies would be firm supporters of mainstream parties (Tavits, 2008). Thus, we expect that higher levels of democracy would negatively affect far-right support. Since this study specifically aims to examine the effects of socialization under the past regime in new democracies, it is crucial to distinguish them from the effect of being "new democracies." All time-varying control variables are lagged by one year since they are expected to affect voters retrospectively. The descriptive statistics of the variables are presented in Table A1 of the appendix.

Next, we extend the analysis at the country-level. This part of the study is aiming to test the country-level implications of our core argument in a broader set of countries. We consider the aggregate effects of socialization under the past regime on the vote share of far-right parties. We expect these socialization effects to diminish over time due to generational replacement after democratization. We operationalize our dependent variable based on the CMP. Our sample includes 39 countries from around the globe, both with and without far-right parties, between 1980-2018. In this part of the analysis we exclude the axis countries from the main models due to the following complication. We estimate the aggregate effects of socialization under the past regime, which should be observable in the years following regime change, when most of the active voters were socialized under the authoritarian regime. Since the window of our analysis is 1980–2018, 35–73 years had already passed since regime change in the axis countries. Due to this, generational replacement should have already washed away the effects of interest. The percentage of active voters who were politically socialized under the authoritarian regime would be too small to alter the country-level support for far-right parties. To account for this issue, we estimate our main models without the axis countries. However, we also present models with the full sample as a robustness check. We use the following specification:

Model 2:

$$FarRight\ \ VoteShare_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1\ \ Authoritarian\ \ Past_{i,t} + \alpha_2\ \ Years\ \ since\ \ Transition_{i,t} + \alpha_3\ \ (Authoritarian\ \ Past_{i,t} * Years\ \ since\ \ Transition_{i,t}) + \alpha_i\ \ \mathbf{X}_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

where $i$ indexes countries and $t$ indexes observation year. *Authoritarian Past* is a dummy variable equal to 1 for those countries with authoritarian experience of either right- or left-wing dictatorships. We operationalize *Years since Transition* as the years since the transition to democracy from the authoritarian regime.[14] $\mathbf{X}_{i,t-1}$ is a vector of time-by-country factors. We expect that a right-wing dictatorship experience has a negative effect on the likelihood of far-right supports in an aggregated-level. However, the marginal effect of the authoritarian experience

**Table 1**
Effects of variables on far-right support.

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individual-Level | | | | |
| Female | | −0.292*** | −0.342*** | −0.295*** |
| | | (0.061) | (0.058) | (0.059) |
| Post-secondary education | | −0.024 | −0.103 | −0.026 |
| | | (0.181) | (0.208) | (0.200) |
| Secondary education | | 0.288** | 0.251* | 0.247* |
| | | (0.125) | (0.149) | (0.127) |
| Unemployment | | 0.238* | 0.253* | |
| | | (0.123) | (0.138) | |
| **Right-wing dictatorship exposure** | **−0.178*** (0.045)** | **−0.180*** (0.051)** | **−0.071*** (0.023)** | **−0.102*** (0.038)** |
| Left-wing dictatorship exposure | −0.012 | −0.012 | −0.019 | −0.004 |
| | (0.032) | (0.032) | (0.034) | (0.046) |
| **Country-Year Level** | | | | |
| Right-wing dictatorship | 0.043 | 0.052 | | 0.017 |
| | (0.274) | (0.282) | | (0.557) |
| Left-wing dictatorship | −0.153 | −0.185 | | 0.190 |
| | (0.239) | (0.245) | | (0.553) |
| $ENP_{t-1}$ | | | | −0.168 |
| | | | | (0.151) |
| ln(District magnitude)$_{t-1}$ | | | | 0.074 |
| | | | | (0.161) |
| GDP growth$_{t-1}$ | | | | −0.005 |
| | | | | (0.036) |
| Unemployment$_{t-1}$ | | | | 0.008 |
| | | | | (0.063) |
| ln(Number of refugees per capita)$_{t-1}$ | | | | 0.168 |
| | | | | (0.154) |
| Level of democracy$_{t-1}$ | | | | −0.099 |
| | | | | (0.396) |
| Constant | −2.005*** | −1.976*** | −1.378*** | −0.314 |
| | (0.070) | (0.177) | (0.213) | (4.087) |
| Country FE | NO | NO | YES | NO |
| Observations | 57,755 | 54,237 | 48,645 | 55,882 |
| Number of Countries | 20 | 20 | 14 | 19 |
| Log-Likelihood | −20272.755 | −18855.319 | −16549.322 | −19451.803 |
| Pr. > $chi^2$ | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 |

*Note:* Dependent variable is whether the individual supports the far-right party in their country. Dummy variables indicating each age groups included in the models. Robust standard errors clustered by countries in parentheses. ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1.

[10] We utilize the mean district magnitude of House and Senate, which is available at the DPI (Cruz et al., 2018).

[11] We extracted the economic data from the World Development Indicator (WDI, 2019). We only include the country-year unemployment rate for the full model and drop the individual unemployment status since two variables may be correlated.

[12] We also estimate the same models with the number of immigrants as a robustness check. We extracted the data from UNHCR (2019) for the number of refugees and the QoG (Teorell et al., 2019) for the number of immigrants. We only include European countries for the models with the level of immigrants due to data limitations.

[13] We use the combined Freedom House and Polity democracy scale.

[14] We also control for time trends by including years since the end of World War II for old democracies.

should decrease as time goes by due to generational replacement.

For the country-level analysis, we employ a Tobit model that is suited to deal with the mass of zeros in the dependent variable (Jackman and Volpert, 1996).[15] Since far-right parties do not contest elections in all countries, it would create a bias for the data to be treated as continuous. However, the Tobit model allows us to accommodate this issue by censoring the data and retaining the variation in its uncensored component.

## 5. Results

Table 1 presents our main statistical results for the individual-level analysis.[16] Model 1 shows the baseline effect of the main variables without any controls. In Models 2–4, we control for individual-level factors (Model 2), country fixed effects (Model 3), and country-year level factors (Model 4). The effect of right-wing dictatorship exposure in the formative years is negative and statistically significant at the 99% confidence level across the models. This finding is consistent with our first hypothesis - citizens who spent their formative years under right-wing dictatorships will be less likely to support far-right parties. In addition, the identification for the countries with the right-wing dictatorship past never becomes statistically significant. This indicates that voters in post right-wing dictatorships who did not spend their formative years under authoritarianism, are indistinguishable from voters in old democracies.

Next, we present simulations based on Model 2.[17] Fig. 3 shows the predicted probabilities of supporting the far-right for the average voter in a post right-wing dictatorship compared to those in an old democracy. According to Fig. 3, the mean predicted probability depends on the number of years of authoritarian exposure during the formative years. First, the predicted probability of far-right support among the voters with more than three years of exposure to right-wing dictatorships is statistically lower than the predicted probability for voters in countries without a dictatorship past. Moreover, there is a statistically significant difference in the predicted probabilities of far-right support among voters in post right-wing dictatorships, depending on the years of authoritarian exposure during the formative years. For instance, voters with more than five years of experience under the right-wing dictatorship are less likely to support a far-right party compared to voters without any authoritarian exposure during their formative years.

In sum, we find strong empirical support for H1 - citizens who spent their formative years under right-wing dictatorships will be less likely to support far-right parties compared to citizens in other countries. In addition, we find empirical supports for H2 - citizens who spent their formative years under right-wing dictatorships will be less likely to support far-right parties compared to their compatriots who spent their formative years under democratic rule. The results of additional robustness checks with alternative data and model specifications are available in the online appendix. The statistical results are all consistent with our main results.

[15] In 75% of the observations the dependent variable takes a value of 0.

[16] The values of the Log-Likelihood indicate that the models explain a small portion of the variation in the dependent variable. This seemingly low level of model fit is due to the limited variation in our DV. Nevertheless, chi-squared tests show that all models are jointly significant.

[17] We do not use the most complete model (Model 4) because the model with individual-level controls (Model 2) is the most conservative estimation. Because the limited variation in the dependent variable, the estimation is vulnerable to the separation problem. Including the country-level variables with limited variation among individuals may bias the result. Moreover, the Log-Likelihood indicates that Model 2 better estimates the variation in the DV compared to Model 4.

## 6. Far-right support in the country-level

Next, we demonstrate the effects of authoritarian past on far-right support at the country-level. In Table 2 we present our analysis on the effects of the authoritarian past on far-right vote share. When we exclude the axis countries, we find statistical support for H3, that a right-wing dictatorship past negatively affects the vote share of far-right parties (Models 5–6). Additionally, we see that support for far-right parties increases steadily as years since transition increase. This is consistent with H4, which assumes that generational replacement will diminish the effects of anti far-right bias in post right-wing dictatorships over time. Although the direction of the effect of key independent variables is identical across models, we do not get statistically significant results in the models with the axis countries (Models 7–8). However, it is highly likely that since our analysis begins in 1980, we miss the window in which the hypothesized effect would be evident in the those countries.

Next, we present a simulation of the marginal effects of right-wing authoritarian past on the vote share of far-right parties. Since the magnitude of the interaction effect in nonlinear models does not equal the marginal effect of the interaction term (Ai and Norton, 2003), we estimate the difference as the marginal effect for countries where post right-wing dictatorship = 1 minus the marginal effect for countries where post right-wing dictatorship = 0, across the value of years since transition. Fig. 4 shows the estimated difference in the marginal effects for post right-wing dictatorships and old democracies regarding far-right vote share. Based on the graph, the vote share of far-right parties is lower in post right-wing authoritarian countries for 25 years following the regime transition.

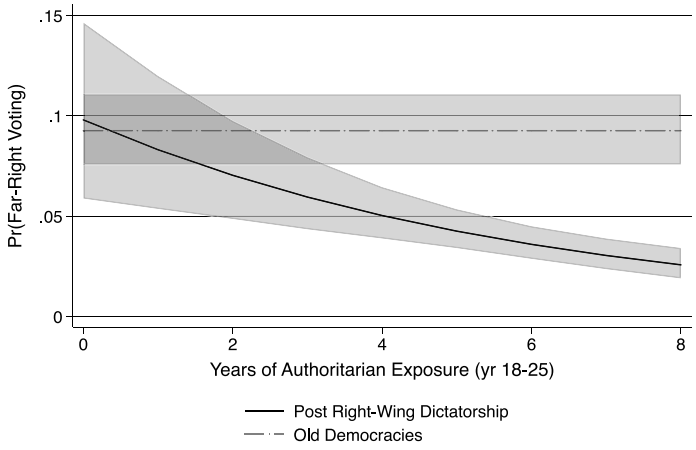
In sum, the simulations offer strong support for H3 - far-right parties will receive lower vote shares in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships. In addition, we also found support for H4 - the effects of anti far-right bias on voting behavior in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships will diminish over time. Robustness checks with alternative model specifications are available in the appendix. The statistical results are all consistent with our main results.

## 7. Discussion

Our analysis lends strong and consistent support to our theory, but a number of alternative theories and unexplored questions remain. While contrary to our hypothesis, it is possible to argue that aspects of the authoritarian past could be romanticized and that this would lead to an increase in support for far-right parties, which tend to be closer to old right-wing authoritarian regimes in terms of policy and ideology. The intuition is that the segments of the population that prospered under authoritarian rule will remember the regime fondly, which might affect their political attitudes and behavior and make them more likely to vote for parties whose outlook resembles that of the past regime.

There is very little theorizing on right-wing authoritarian nostalgia, but existing studies yield inconclusive results. Individuals may be nostalgic of the economic performance under the authoritarian regime, but outright support for return to a non-democratic regime is low (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Carlin and Singer, 2011; Sanches and Gorbunova, 2016). An alternative way to look at this is through the eyes of the political elites that comprised the party leadership. They took measures to avoid their party being linked to the right (Power and Zucco, 2009), which is an indication of how strong they expected the branding to be. For example, PSR, Portugal's main right wing party avoids using a name that might associate it with the right wing and it calls itself social democratic (Dinas and Northmore-Ball, 2019). Adding to the list, our present findings suggest that being politically socialized under a right-wing authoritarian regime is a strong indicator of not voting for far-right parties. While the presence and possible effects of authoritarian nostalgia in post right-wing authoritarian regimes is an open theoretical question, our models do not show empirical support for it.

Authoritarian nostalgia has been studied more in the context of post-




*Note:* Lines show the predicted probabilities of individual far-right support in the right-wing dictatorship countries and the old democracies, contingent on the years of authoritarian exposure (Model 2). Outer boundaries display the 95% confidence interval.

**Fig. 3.** Predicted Probability of Far-Right Party Support.

**Table 2**
Effects of variables on far-right vote share.

| Sample | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Without Axis Countries | | Full Sample | |
| **Right-wing dictatorship** | **−96.842*** (29.138)** | **−105.574*** (33.873)** | **−15.369 (9.611)** | **−7.335 (8.460)** |
| Left-wing dictatorship | 14.120* (7.763) | 26.374*** (7.417) | 17.602** (7.816) | 23.154*** (7.248) |
| **Right-wing * Years since transition** | **2.940*** (0.920)** | **3.165*** (0.950)** | **0.496*** (0.154)** | **0.226 (0.141)** |
| Left-wing * Years since transition | 0.079 (0.225) | −0.154 (0.176) | −0.009 (0.253) | −0.079 (0.181) |
| Years since transition | 0.223* (0.125) | 0.327*** (0.067) | 0.217* (0.117) | 0.307*** (0.070) |
| $ENP_{t-1}$ | 1.116 (0.769) | 1.170 (0.730) | 1.394* (0.816) | 2.111*** (0.652) |
| ln(District magnitude)$_{t-1}$ | 2.516* (1.482) | 1.762** (0.800) | 2.297 (1.434) | 0.685 (0.756) |
| GDP growth$_{t-1}$ | −0.199 (0.321) | −0.118 (0.186) | −0.118 (0.346) | −0.105 (0.189) |
| Unemployment$_{t-1}$ | 0.070 (0.368) | −0.417* (0.224) | 0.348 (0.317) | 0.003 (0.202) |
| ln(Number of refugees per capita)$_{t-1}$ | 1.971 (1.229) | 1.278** (0.554) | 2.878*** (1.008) | 1.247** (0.542) |
| Level of democracy$_{t-1}$ | −5.336* (2.923) | −3.390** (1.453) | −3.659 (2.493) | −3.119** (1.467) |
| Constant | 33.843 (27.798) | 9.774 (15.350) | 16.190 (25.139) | 3.654 (15.573) |
| Country RE | NO | YES | NO | YES |
| Observations | 292 | 291 | 321 | 320 |
| Uncensored | 130 | 130 | 150 | 150 |
| Censored | 162 | 161 | 171 | 170 |
| Number of Countries | 39 | 38 | 42 | 41 |
| Log-Likelihood | −578.299 | −505.491 | −664.362 | −591.972 |

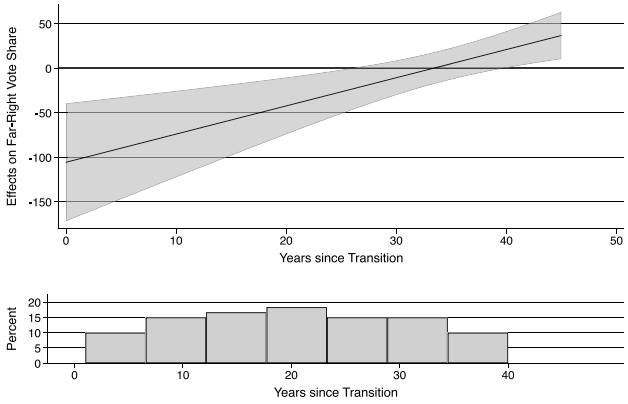
*Note:* Dependent variable is vote share of the far-right parties. The results are estimated based on Tobit models. Robust standard errors clustered by countries in parentheses. ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1.

communist countries. Communist nostalgia appears to develop mostly due to the need for a restoration of continuity with the communist past (Reifová, 2018), or due to the economic deficiencies of the current regime (White, 2010). Very few people seem to be nostalgic of the communist regime and rejective of liberal democracy on ideological grounds (Mishler and Rose, 1996; White, 2010). To make this distinction stronger, individuals who demonstrate nostalgia for the communist past do not necessarily wish to return to it (Prusik and Lewicka, 2016), which indicates that they are not averse to democracy on the basis of ideology. The above discussion shows mixed support for the authoritarian nostalgia hypothesis in post communist countries. While not all dimensions appear to resonate with the citizens, some aspects appear capable of drumming up support for far-left parties in the post-communist environment.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that, similarly to parties in post right-wing authoritarian regimes, in Eastern Europe both the successors of the communist parties and new parties tried to distance themselves from the past and opt to be labelled socialist instead. For example, the Polish successor party, Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP), which only eight years earlier cracked down on Solidarity and the opposition movement, immediately changed its symbols to the red rose of social democratic parties. Its program was also radically transformed. While support for it was very low in the 1989 elections, it was able to win the 1993 elections. On the contrary, the Czech successor party, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia retained its identity and as a result remained marginalized and obscure in the post-communist political environment (Grzymala-Busse, 2002). This shows that while parts of the population might be sympathetic to the communist regime, the parties do not expect to be able to maximize their vote share by closely associating themselves with the old regime. To put this in terms of supply and demand, authoritarian nostalgia theoretically could provide demand for far-left parties, but supply is limited due to the unwillingness of parties to locate themselves so far to the left. And parties that retained their identity did not fare as well as their counterparts that did not. These observations seem to mirror what we find in this paper for the opposite side of the spectrum. Further exploration of these dynamics could be a fruitful avenue for future research.

## 8. Conclusions

In this paper we argued that past regime ideology strongly affects far-right support, because voters politically socialized under authoritarianism will be biased against its ideological brand. We tested the effect of past authoritarian regimes on far-right voting using both individual-level analysis on far-right support and country-level analysis of far-right vote share. The statistical results indicate that far-right parties are less likely to be supported by citizens who were socialized under a right-wing autocracy. These parties are less likely to gain support




*Note:* Line shows the marginal effects of the right-wing dictatorship in vote share of far-right parties compared with the old democracies, contingent on the years since democratization (Model 6). Outer boundaries display the 95% confidence interval.

**Fig. 4.** Difference in the Marginal Effects of Post Right-Wing Dictatorship.

collectively in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships. These results indicate that the latent probability of far-right party success in countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships is much lower compared to the other groups of countries. However, far-right support increases over time as the proportion of voters who were socialized under autocracy decreases.

One of the limitations of our analysis is the limited variation in the dependent and main independent variables. The limited variation in the dependent variable in the individual-level analysis (i.e., 95% of survey respondents never support far-right parties) made it difficult to include a number of controls in the models and estimate the portion of variation in the dependent variable using logistic regression. Second, the limited variation in the main independent variable, post right-wing dictatorship, is an issue in the country-level analysis. As we are not able to directly observe the effect of socialization on far-right party vote share before 1980, the axis countries are not included in our main models.

Nonetheless, the statistical results are consistent with current events. For instance, it was 33 years since democratization in Brazil that Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right candidate defeated Fernando Haddad from the established Worker's Party in the 2018 presidential election. An important implication of our findings is that countries that transitioned from right-wing dictatorships more than a generation ago, now have a similar latent probability for a far-right party to be successful, as it just happened in the case of Brazil.

Our theoretical claim as well as statistical results have introduced a new dimension in understanding far-right success across space and time. The past regime type is a factor which can help predict the level of far-right support taking into consideration the brand of its ideology and time since the transition. Although our sample of analysis is limited, we are confident that a future empirical study including levels of far-right support in more recent elections in new democracies would only increase confidence in our findings.

Finally, this study creates several new research questions. The issues of authoritarian nostalgia as well as the possibility of mirror effects of far-left support in post-communist countries are briefly discussed in the previous section but deserve more attention. Another question would be whether the opposite argument is true as well. Would support for far-left parties be higher in countries with a right-wing authoritarian legacy and vice versa? Another question regards the mode of transition. Do violent transitions create the same branding effect with transitions via pacts? A different set of questions regards individual socializing mechanisms under authoritarianism. Key socializing agents like media, leaders, schools, and parents may influence one's political development in different ways. Following regime transition such complex dynamics could lead to different kinds of outcomes that warrant further exploration. We hope that our contribution will create the basis to investigate these as well as other questions.

## Acknowledgements

A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, and at MSU's graduate student Workshop on International Relations and Comparative Politics. The authors are thankful for the invaluable comments received on both occasions. The authors would especially like to thank Laron K. Williams, Michael Wahman, Eric Chang, and Cory Koedel, as well as the editors and the anonymous reviewers.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102163.

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