

Observational Research: Fixed Effects

Tutorial 8



Blair et al, 2023: Democracy Promotion in UN Peacekeeping

- UN Peacekeeping sometimes involve democracy promotion in its mandate and activities.
 - Voter education
 - Assistance to political parties
 - Assistance to democratic institutions (e.g., legislatures)
 - Assistance with planning and execution of elections
 - Security at polling places
- **Is democracy promotion by the UN peacekeeping missions effective?**

Read

- The introductory paragraph of the section titled “RESEARCH DESIGN” that starts with “We test our theory using four sources of data...” (p.1315).
 - The first three paragraphs of the subsection titled “Measuring Variation in UN Peacekeeping” (pp.1315-1316)
 - The fourth paragraph starts with “To test hypothesis 2, we code the number of uniformed personnel deployed to each UN mission...”
- The only paragraph of the subsection titled “Operationalizing Democracy” that starts with “We operationalize democracy using the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)...” (pp.1316-1317)
- The first three paragraphs of the section titled “ESTIMATION AND IDENTIFICATION” (p.1317) The third paragraph starts with “We further minimize bias by using country fixed effects...”
- The following portion of the section titled “RESULTS” (pp.1318-1320)
 - The first two paragraphs. The second paragraph starts with “Consistent with hypothesis 1...” and ends with “(between 0.008 and 0.009 points on the V-Dem index.”
 - The fourth paragraph starts with “Table 4 reports the correlation between V-Dem’s electoral democracy index and the number of uniformed personnel...”
- **Get a pdf the assigned sections highlighted:** jacobawinter.github.io/files/blair2023.pdf

Spot the mistake!

Suppose you met a team of scholars who try to address the same research question: whether democracy promotion in the UN peacekeeping missions is effective. **They told you that they would collect the data on all country-years in which there was a UN peacekeeping mission mandated with democracy promotion in all conflict or post-conflict countries in sub-Saharan Africa (i.e., those countries which experienced or is experiencing civil war or some form of significant internal strife) between 1991 and 2024.** They would use a V-Dem electoral democracy index to operationalize their dependent variable and examine how the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission mandated with democracy promotion influenced this dependent variable, controlling for confounding variables. Suppose that they would be able to collect all the relevant confounding variables and there would be no possibility of reverse causality.

What is a problem in their observational research design? What is a critical difference from the research design of Blair et al. (2023)? *Hint: We examined a similar problem in this week's lecture*

Research Design

1. What is the unit of analysis?
2. What is the scope of units and time periods for which data are collected?
3. How is the independent variable operationalized?
4. How is the dependent variable operationalized?
5. State the causal hypothesis for this observational research in your words, based on your answers to (3) and (4) above.

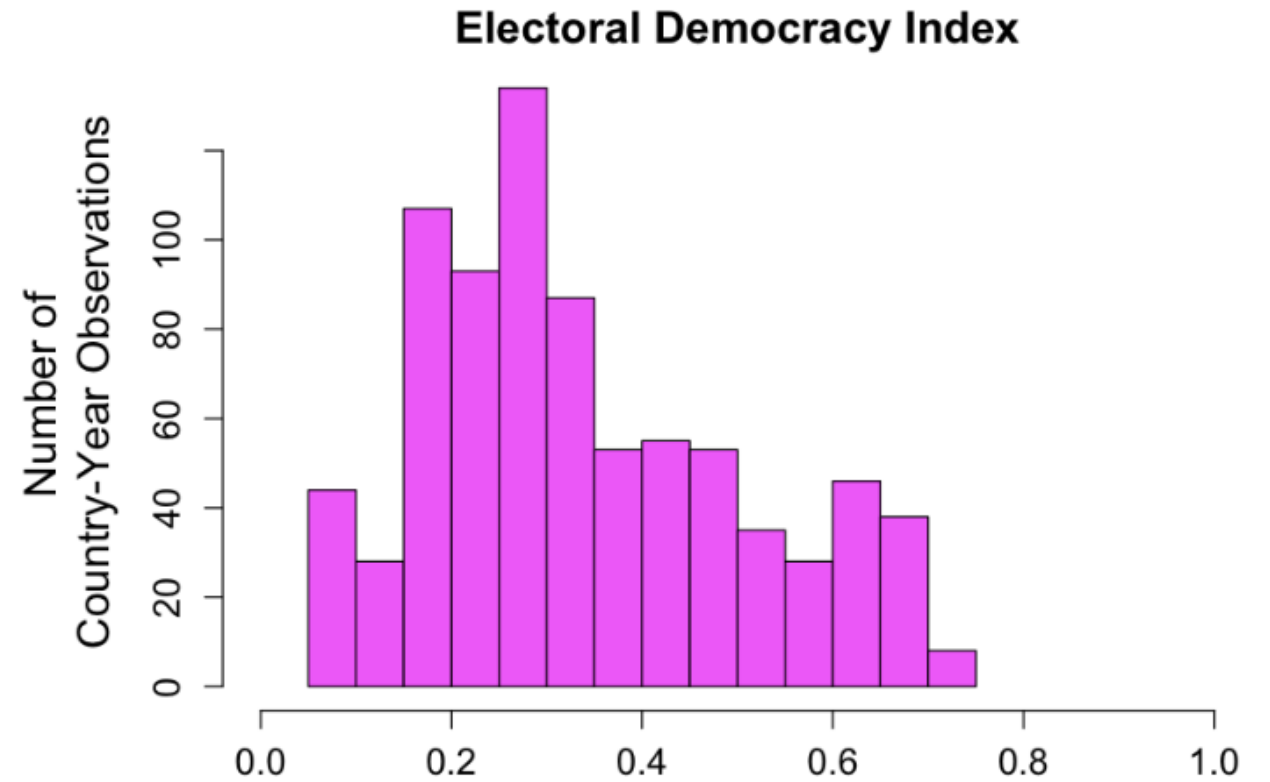
NOTE! Exam questions might look like this!

Independent Variable(s)

- Whether the mission's mandate includes democracy promotion ($X = 1$) or NOT ($X = 0$) in each country-year
- # of uniformed personnel deployed in the mission in each country-year
- # of civilian personnel deployed in the mission in each country-year
- Whether the mission actually carried out democracy promotion activities in the field ($X = 1$) or NOT ($X = 0$) in each country-year

Dependent Variable

- V-Dem: Expert coded measure of electoral democracy.



Research Design

- What is a special feature of their observational research design?

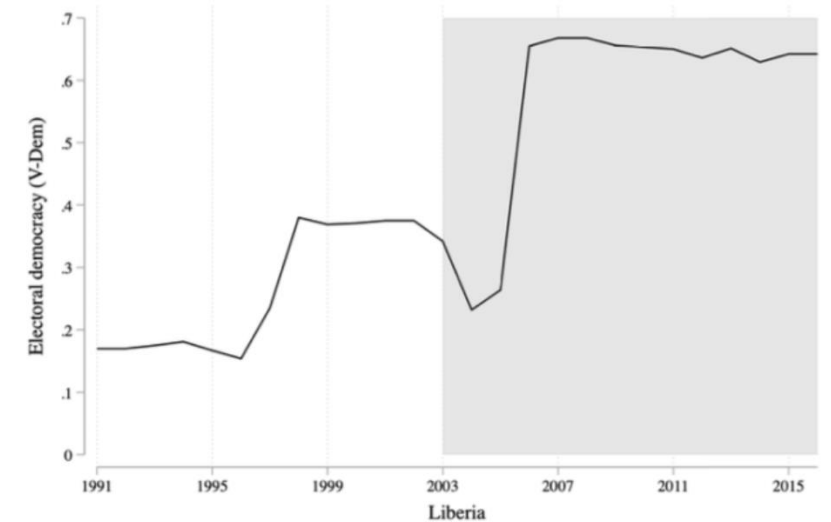
Fixed Effects

- What variables might determine democracy?
- Which of these don't change within a country?

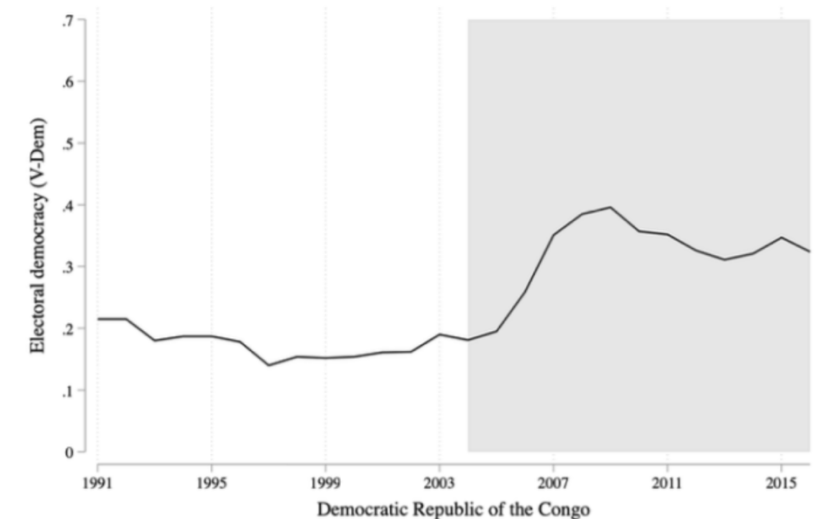
Fixed Effects

- The fixed effects model pools these within-country comparisons for all 32 countries and estimates the overall relationship between the quality of democracy (Y) and the U.N. peacekeeping mission with a democratic mandate (X) across multiple countries.
- Since this model is based on within-country comparisons — the comparison of a country to itself over time — it helps control for any characteristics — including confounding variables — that are reasonably expected to remain constant over the years, such as political culture of a country.

Liberia

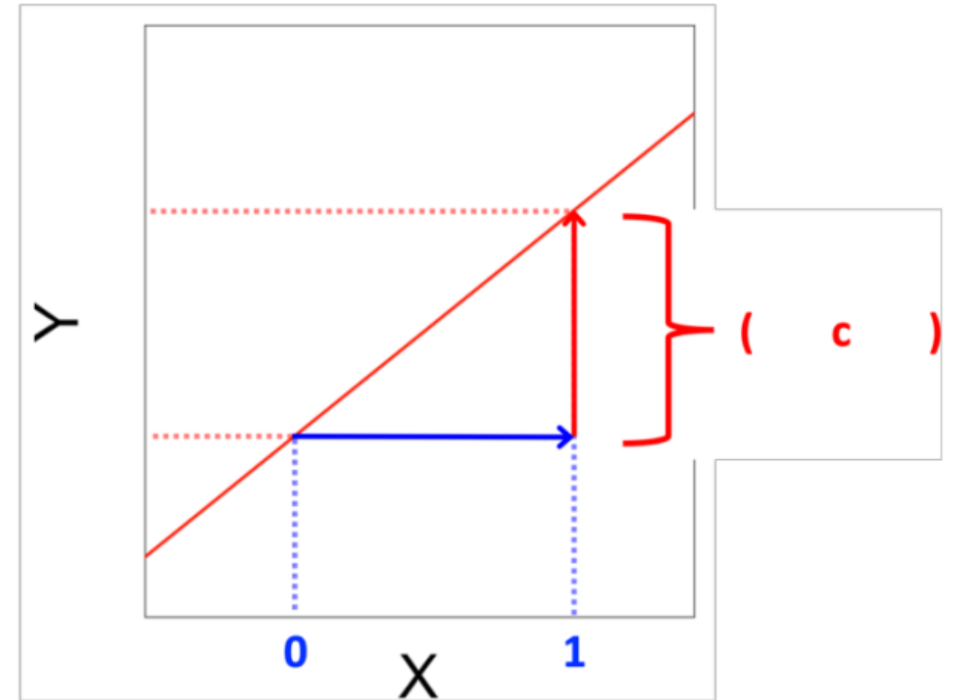


Democratic Republic of the Congo



Results

- What is X ? ($X=0$, $X=1$)
- What is Y ? ($Y=0$, $Y=1$)
- What is c ?



Results

- Table 2, Model 1 (page 1319)
- What do “Controls” and “Country FE” mean?
- How should we substantively interpret the coefficient of the “Democracy Mandate” variable?

TABLE 2. Electoral Democracy and U

	(1)
Democracy mandate	0.121*** [0.013]
Observations	834
Controls	Yes
Country FE	Yes
Years of peace	N/A

Note: Coefficients from ordinary least squares (OLS) a subsample of countries with ongoing civil wars (col (columns 3, 4, and 5, respectively). We control for pop and IDPs living in the host country. Standard errors

NOTE! Exam questions might look like this!

Results

- Table 4, Model 1 (page 1319)
- What is the independent variable?
- How should we substantively interpret the coefficient of the “Democracy Mandate” variable?

TABLE 4. Electoral Democracy and UN

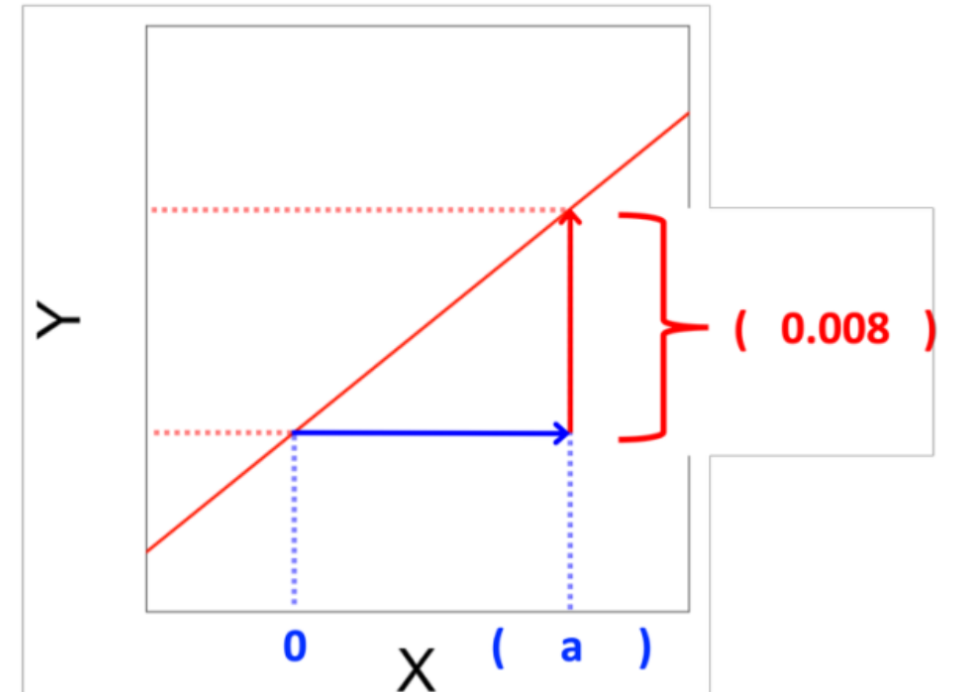
	(1)
# of uniformed personnel	0.008*** [0.001]
Observations	808
Controls	Yes
Country FE	Yes
Years of peace	N/A

NOTE! Exam questions might look like this!

Interpretation: What is X?

TABLE 4. Electoral Democracy and UN

	(1)
# of uniformed personnel	0.008*** [0.001]
Observations	808
Controls	Yes
Country FE	Yes
Years of peace	N/A



Evaluation

- Suppose some researchers argue that the study's focus on sub-Saharan African countries significantly compromises the external validity of the sample. They criticize that the authors should have included all countries around the world in their analysis.
- How would you respond to these researchers' criticisms? Offer an argument to defend the authors' observational research.