

# Electoral Management Bodies and Democratization Success

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## Motivation

How best to focus democracy-related aid? *What* to support and *when*?

Descriptive studies find *autonomous* and *capable* EMBS associated with successful democratization.

How large and in what direction are the effects of increased EMB autonomy and capacity on democracy in liberalizing countries?

# EMBs in democratization



Ghana 2008



Kenya 2017

## Time

Political time doesn't pass at an equal pace in all places and at all times.

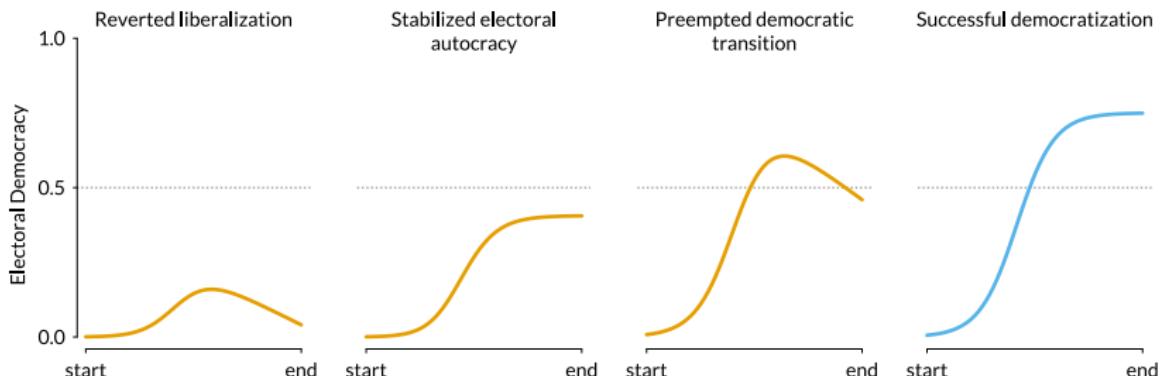
*What starts liberalization differs from what carries democratization.*

Reforms may only take effect or receive support once liberalization starts.

Democracy aid providers interested more in the final outcome rather than the pace to get it.

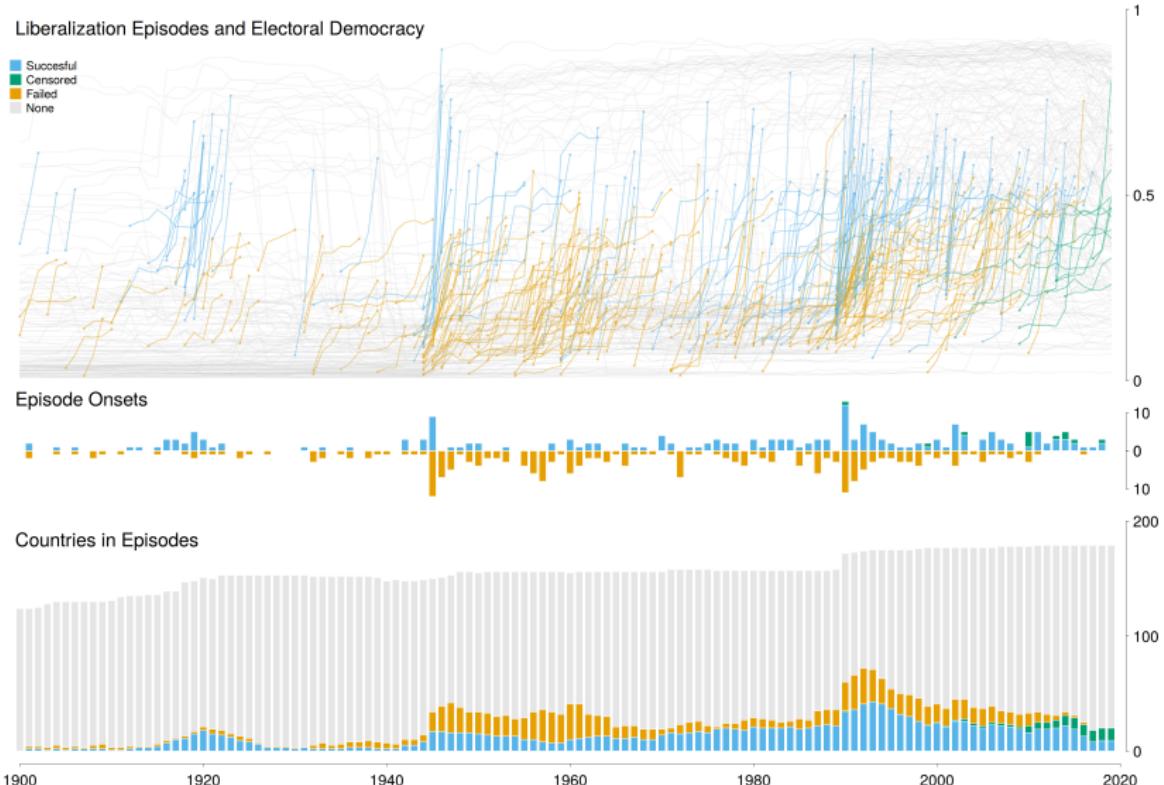
## Units: liberalization episodes

A period that starts while the country is an autocracy, and during which its democratic features observably improve. It can end through holding additional elections; reverting back; and losing momentum.



Reproduced from Wilson et al. (2022)

# Units: liberalization episodes



Reproduced from Wilson et al. (2022)

## Method: NOCNO

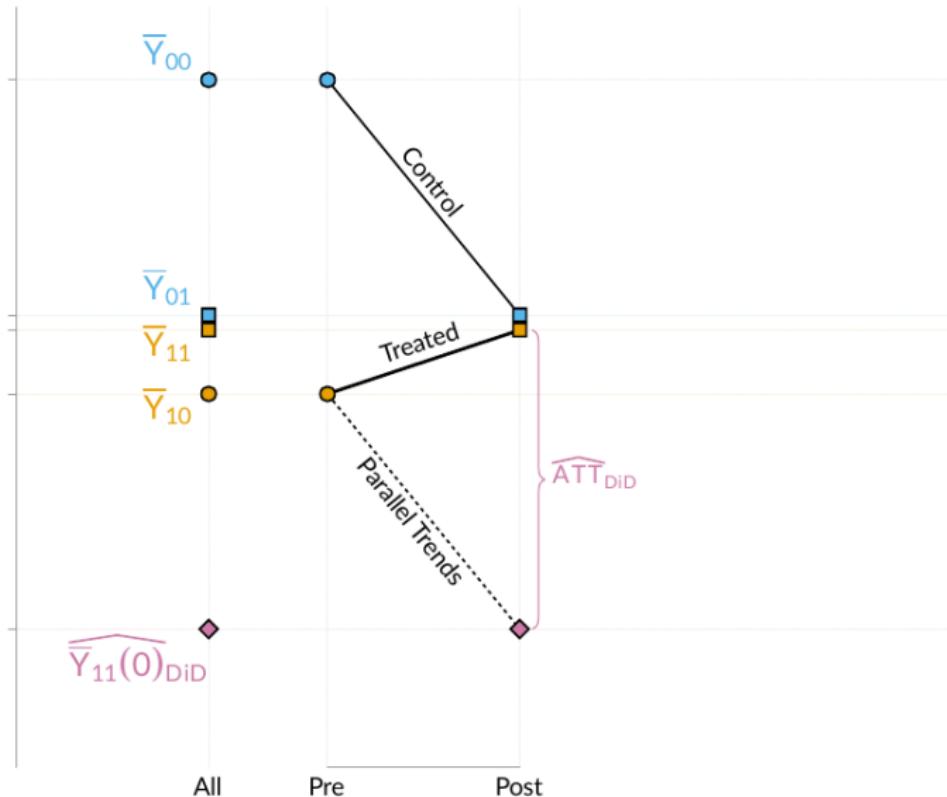
Panel data with two groups and two periods.

Unobserved confounding.

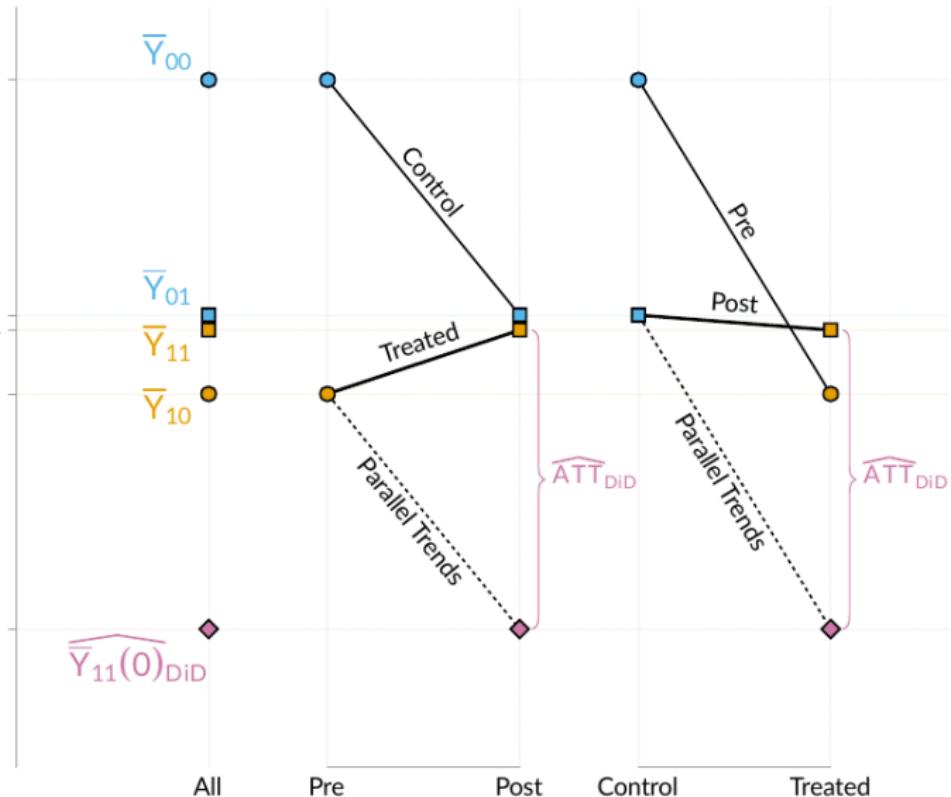
Generalized non-linear DiDiD (NOCNOC, Glynn and Ichino 2019) improves estimates over DiD by

- relaxing assumptions
- leveraging *placebo outcomes*, that have (some of) the same confounding but are (mostly) unaffected by the treatment.

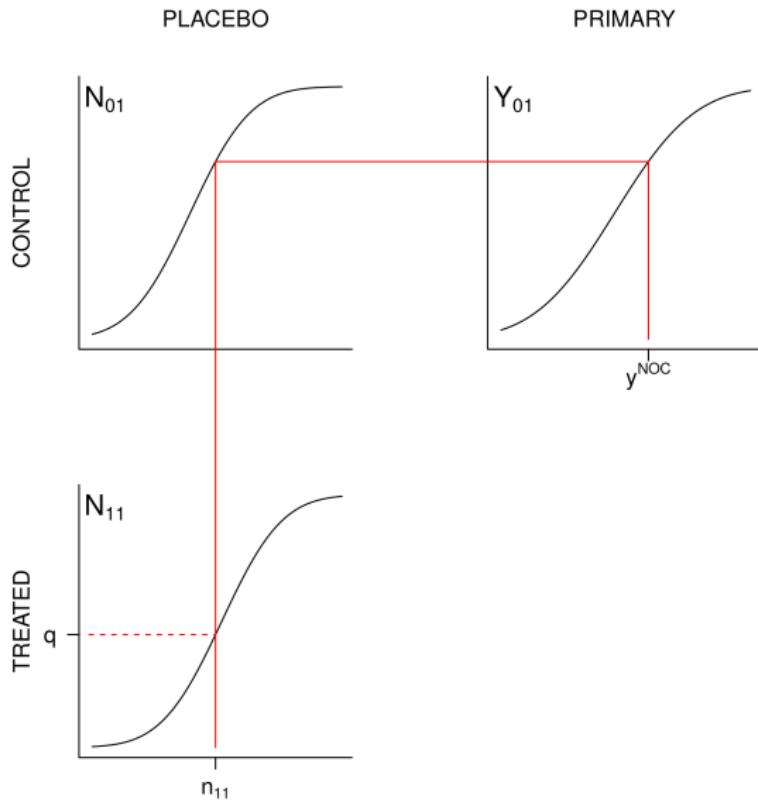
## Method: DiD



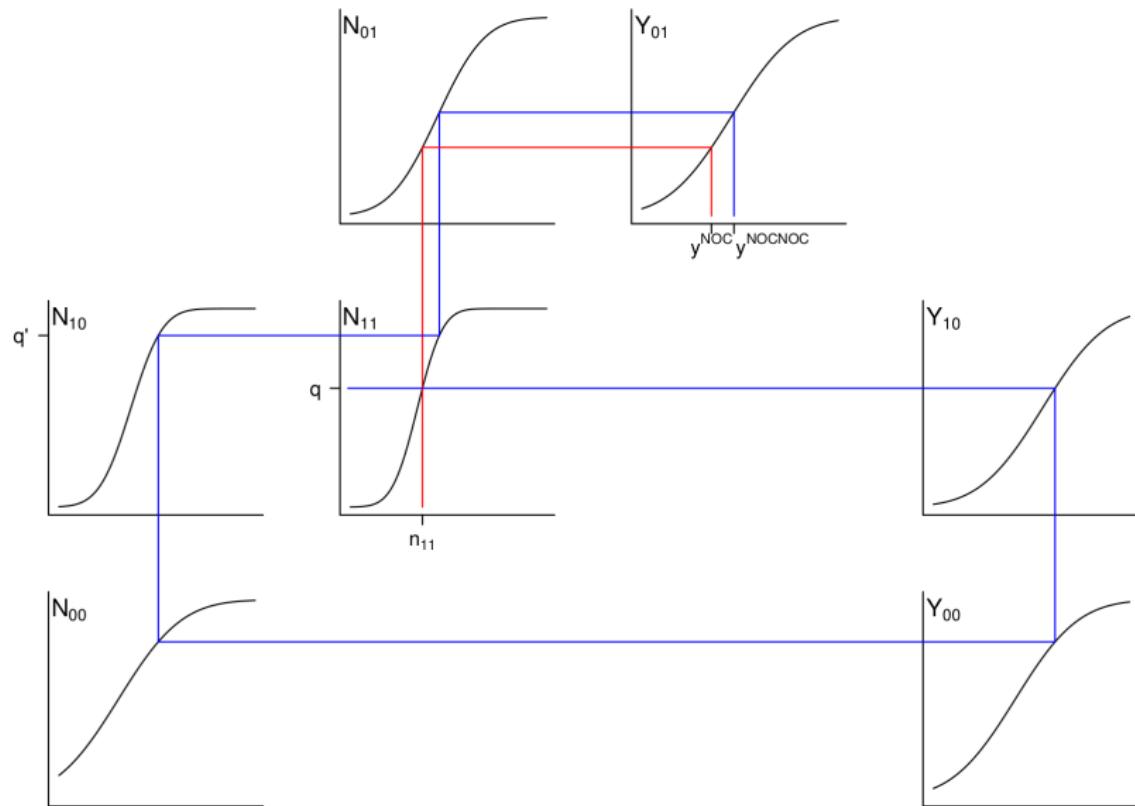
# Method: DiD



# Method: CiC / NOC

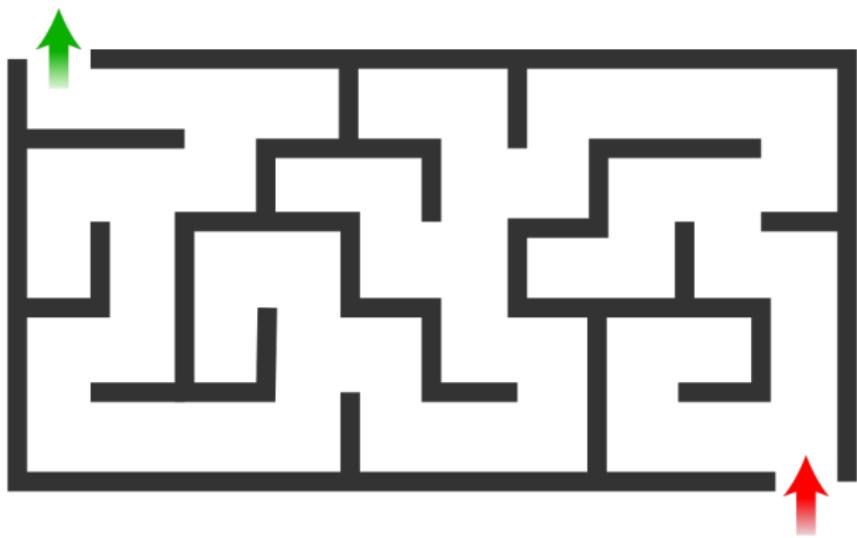


# Method: NOCNO



Reproduced from Glynn and Ichino (2019)

## Method: NOCNO



From Wikipedia

## Method: NOCNO

Adjusting for unobserved confounding by comparing changes in the treated and the control group

and

the differences in the primary outcome to those in the unaffected placebo outcome,

in a scale-invariant way

and without assuming linearity.

## Treatment: EMB autonomy

Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have autonomy from government to apply election laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?

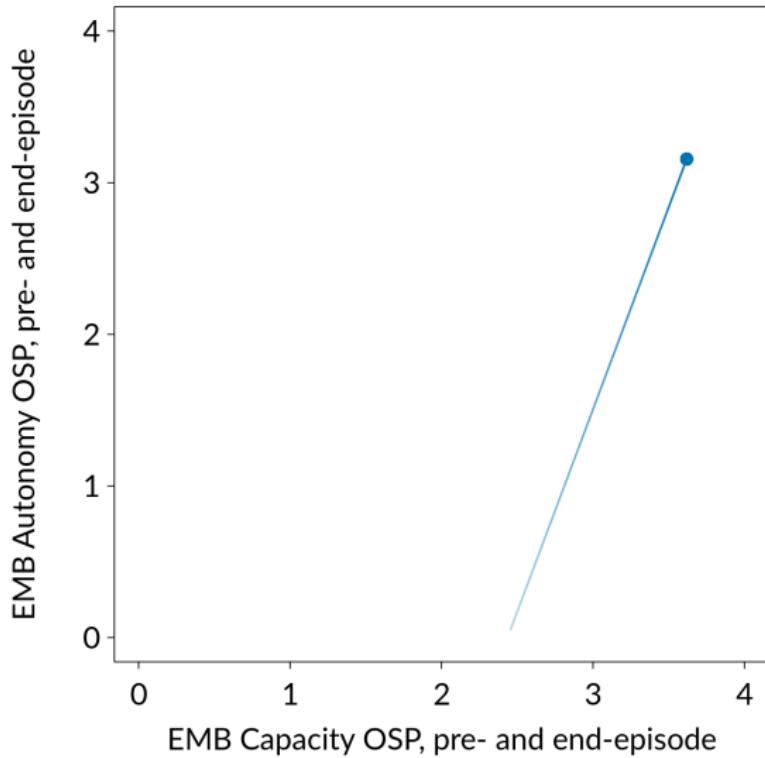
- 0: No. The EMB is controlled by the incumbent government, the military, or other de facto ruling body.
- 1: Somewhat. The EMB has some autonomy on some issues but on critical issues that influence the outcome of elections, the EMB is partial to the de facto ruling body.
- 2: Ambiguous. The EMB has some autonomy but is also partial, and it is unclear to what extent this influences the outcome of the election.
- 3: Almost. The EMB has autonomy and acts impartially almost all the time. It may be influenced by the de facto ruling body in some minor ways that do not influence the outcome of elections.
- 4: Yes. The EMB is autonomous and impartially applies elections laws and administrative rules.

## Treatment: EMB capacity

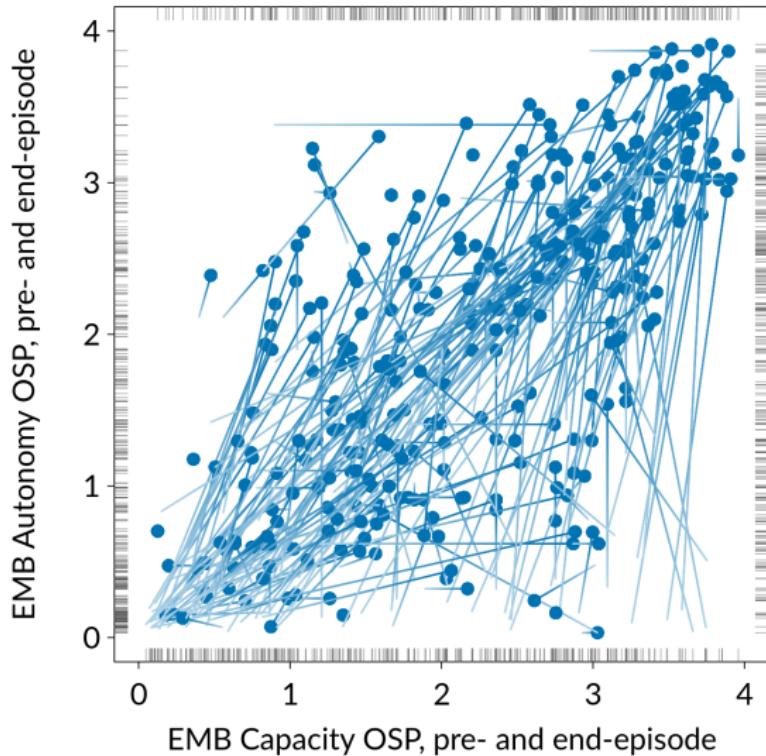
Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have sufficient staff and resources to administer a well-run national election?

- 0: No. There are glaring deficits in staff, financial, or other resources affecting the organization across the territory.
- 1: Not really. Deficits are not glaring but they nonetheless seriously compromised the organization of administratively well-run elections in many parts of the country.
- 2: Ambiguous. There might be serious deficiencies compromising the organization of the election but it could also be a product of human errors and co-incidence or other factors outside the control of the EMB.
- 3: Mostly. There are partial deficits in resources but these are neither serious nor widespread.
- 4: Yes. The EMB has adequate staff and other resources to administer a well-run election.

## Treatment: increases in EMB autonomy and capacity



## Treatment: increases in EMB autonomy and capacity



## Treatments

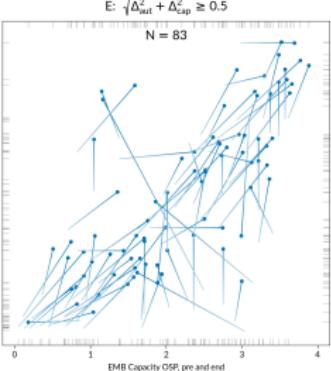
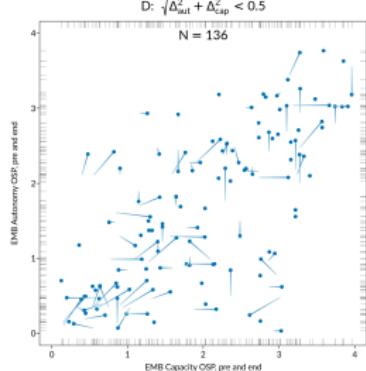
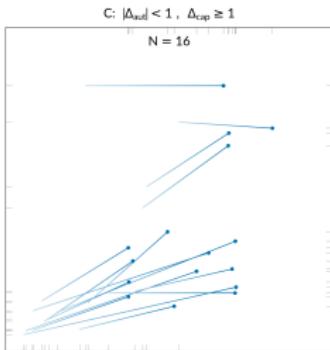
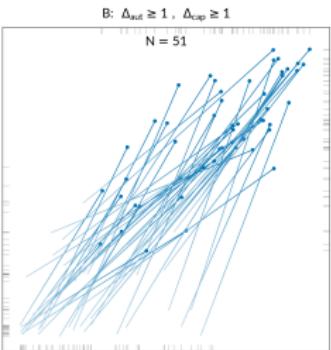
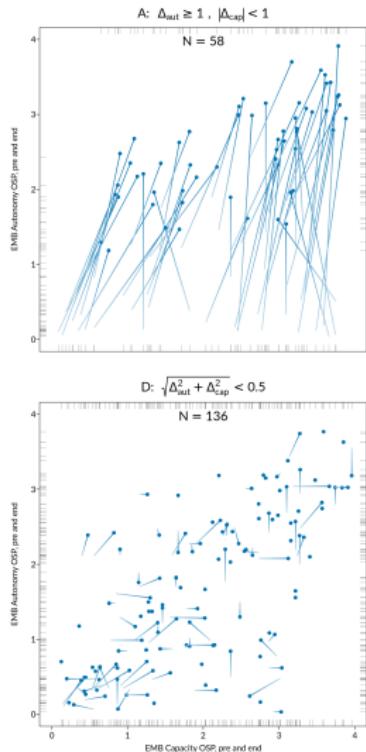
Treatment groups, by increases

- A**      *Autonomy-only*
- B**      *Both autonomy and capacity*
- C**      *Capacity-only*
- A & B**    At least autonomy

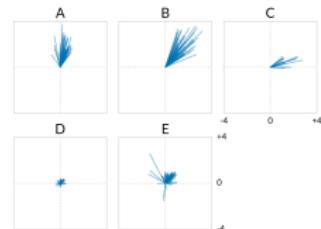
Control group

- D**      No notable increase in autonomy or capacity

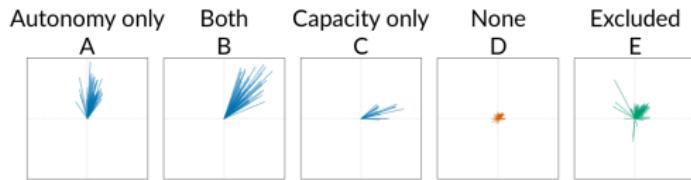
# Treatment and control groups



Changes from pre-episode values

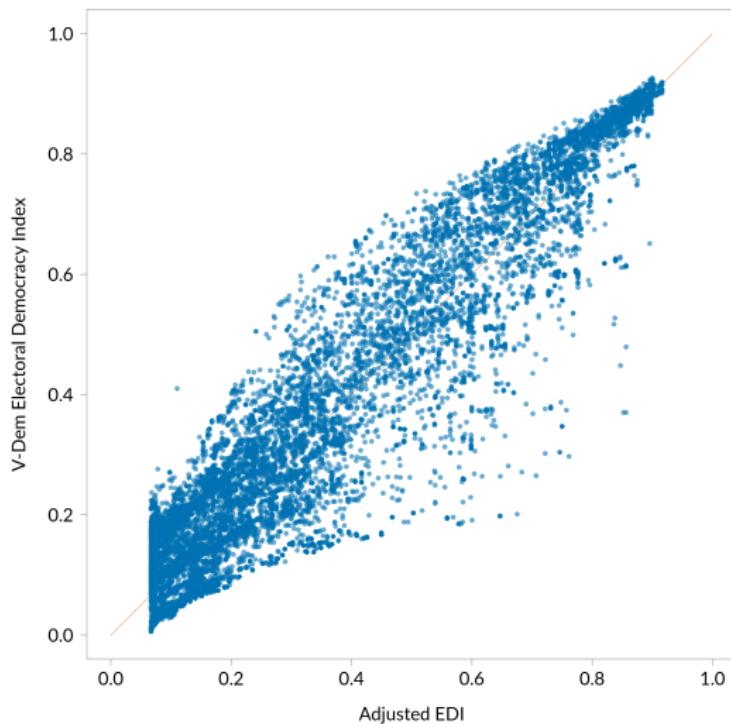


# Estimands



## Outcomes: primary

Electoral democracy without EMB features: analogue of V-Dem's EDI, computed from 22 non-EMB indexes.



## Outcome: placebo

Placebo outcomes under NOC and NOCNO have  
(most of) the same confounders as the primary  
outcome,  
are (mostly) unaffected by the treatment.

We use four placebo outcomes in turn

- *Property rights*
- *Freedom of religion*
- *High court independence*
- *Power distributed by social group*

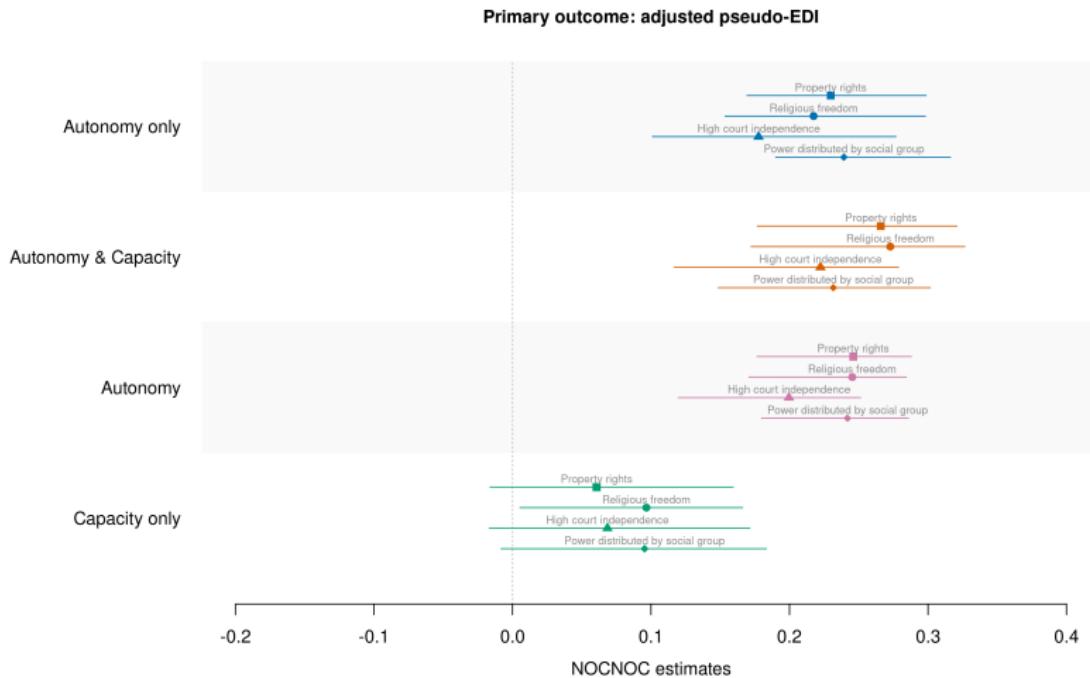
Imperfect placebos, but any effects of the treatment are  
likely in the same direction and smaller than on democracy.

## Covariates

All at pre-episode values.

- Civil society participatory environment
- Democracy in the region
- EMB autonomy level
- EMB capacity level
- Episode start year
- Equal distribution of resources
- GDP per capita (Fariss et al. 2021, 2022)
- Presidentialism (Sigman and Lindberg 2017, 2019)

# Results: NOCNOC



With bootstrap 95% confidence intervals (B=100).

## Conclusion

Looking at *liberalization episodes* we estimate that increases in *EMB autonomy* yield substantial improvements in electoral democracy through other factors constitutive of it.

The average effect of autonomy increase is the same whether or not capacity increases.

Increases in *EMB capacity* without simultaneous increases in autonomy do not show effects of comparable magnitude or statistically distinguishable from zero.

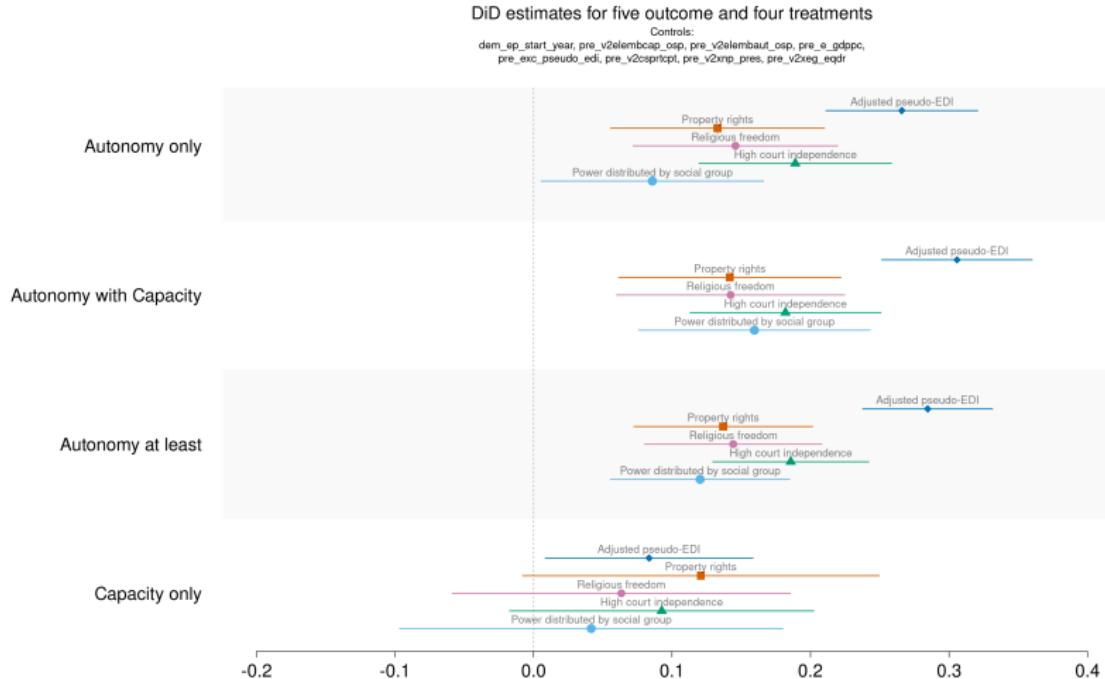
Thank you!

## Context

Part of a larger program on *Failing and Successful Democratization Episodes* led by Staffan I. Lindberg (ERC Consolidator Grant).

<https://www.v-dem.net/fasdem.html>

# Results: DiD

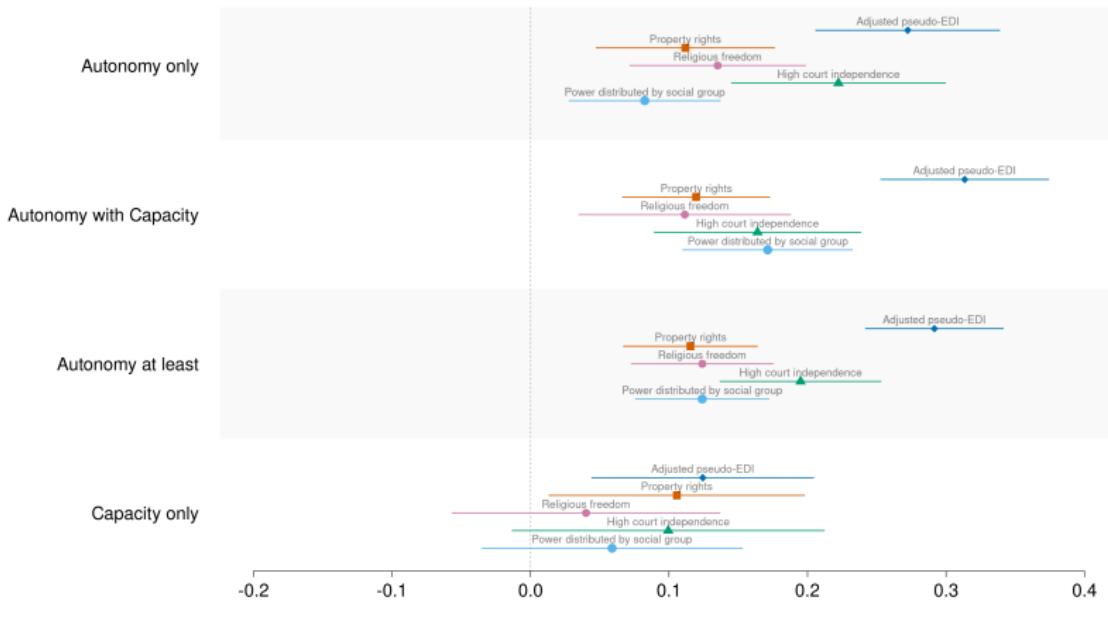


# Results: CiC

## CiC estimates for five outcome and four treatments

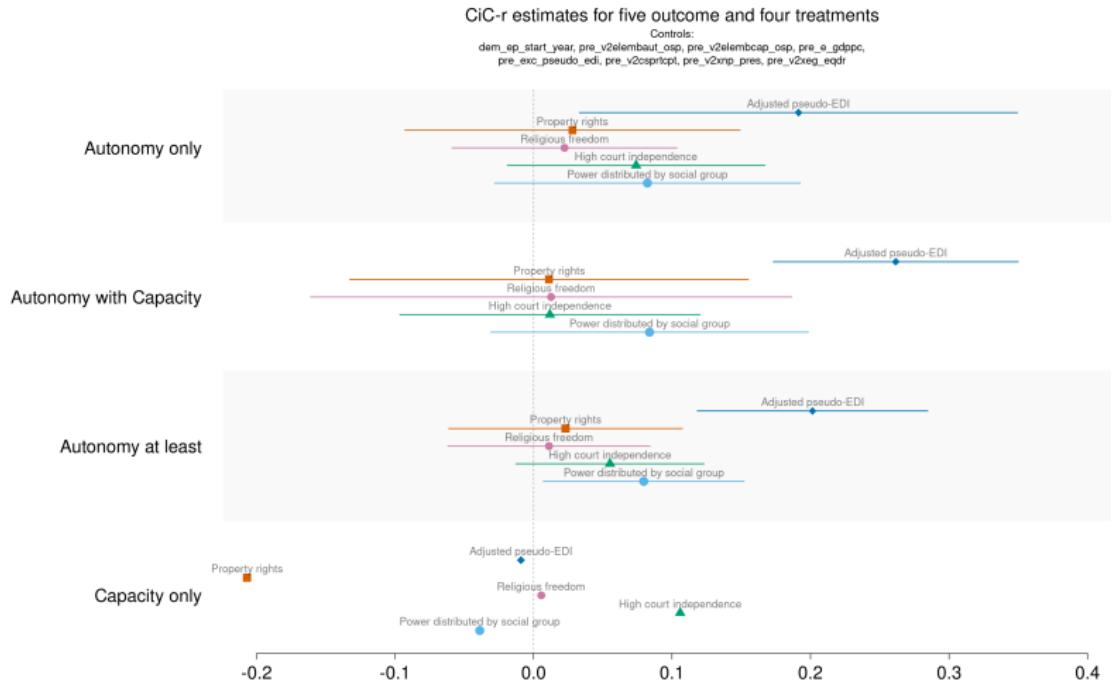
Controls:

dem\_ep\_start\_year, pre\_v2elembaut\_osp, pre\_v2elembcap\_osp, pre\_e\_gdppc,  
pre\_exc\_pseudo\_edl, pre\_v2cscript, pre\_v2xnp\_pres, pre\_v2xeg\_eqdr



With bootstrap (B=500) 95% confidence intervals.

# Results: CiC-r



## Outcomes: primary and placebo

Outcome	Description	Range
Primary: <i>Adjusted EDI</i>	<i>Electoral Democracy Index</i> <i>(v2x_polyarchy)</i> analogue, computed without EMB indexes	[0, 1]
Placebo: <i>Property rights</i>	<i>v2xcl_prpty_osp</i> divided by 4	[0, 1]
<i>Freedom of religion</i>	<i>v2clrelig_osp</i> divided by 4	[0, 1]
<i>High court independence</i>	<i>v2juhcind_osp</i> divided by 4	[0, 1]
<i>Power distributed by social group</i>	<i>v2pepwrsoc_osp</i> divided by 4	[0, 1]

I know what you mean ...

