"(...) people have learned that democracy is not everything. There are times when one must give up democracy to save the country."

Augusto Pinochet.

1 Introduction

History is full of examples of authoritarian rulers attempting to influence people's beliefs and preferences: dictators impose their creeds through media and propaganda, educational systems, and sheer repression and coercion. This effort in shaping the hearts and minds of citizens most likely aims at increasing the probability of staying in power. Though rational individuals should not be fooled by dictators' efforts, research in social psychology suggests that these efforts could affect preferences. If political regimes have an impact on citizens' preferences, they can have long-term effects on a country's outcomes through citizens' choices after a regime change: individuals who grew up during a dictatorship might vote, in a democracy, following preferences partly shaped by the dictator's intentions or developed as an oppositional reaction to them. Preferences and beliefs may affect long-term economic outcomes directly (Guiso et al., 2006) or indirectly through political institutions (Mulligan et al., 2004; Besley & Kudamatsu, 2008). Then, what is the effect of these efforts on long-term political beliefs and preferences? Will individuals' political ideas be permanently affected by dictators' actions? To shed light on these questions I match self-reported preferences and beliefs with the political regime individuals lived during their childhood and early youth. Considering 18 Latin American countries in the period spanning 1995-2020 I use the variation in exposure to dictatorships by country and cohort of birth to identify, in a differences-in-differences setting, the effect of exposure on a set of outcome variables capturing preferences over political regimes, trust in institutions, and ideological orientation.

The focus on childhood and youth stems from psychological theories on preference and belief formation. As an empirically backed theory originally developed in the sixties, the Impressionable Years Hypothesis (IYH) states that individuals are more malleable during youth: core values are formed during this period and experience little to no change afterwards (Greenstein, 1965; Hess & Torney, 1967; Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). In a similar line, the work of economist James Heckman and co-authors has shown that the effect of shocks and stimuli on skill and personality development is greater during early childhood and decreases over time (Knudsen et al., 2006; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Heckman, 2011; Heckman et al., 2013; Gertler et al., 2014). Within

economics the IYH lies behind recent studies of preferences over redistribution (Giuliano & Spilimbergo, 2014; Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln, 2007) and political partisanship (Madestam & Yanagizawa-Drott, 2011), while in political science it is the starting point for studies on party affiliation and voting (Sears & Valentino, 1997; Valentino & Sears, 1998). This paper tests the IYH in the context of the formation of preferences over political regimes. The paper is also linked and contributes to recent research within economics on political preference formation (for instance on the role of propaganda and education, e.g. Adena et al. (2015); Cantoni et al. (2017); Yanagizawa-Drott (2014)). It also contributes empirical findings to the political economy literature exploring regime transitions.[1]

I focus on exposure to dictatorships because non-democratic regimes have stronger incentives than democracies to shape individuals' preferences, while also facing constraints. For dictators, losing power may result in severe economic losses, imprisonment or even death, whereas the benefits and rents associated with remaining in power tend to be higher than those perceived by government leaders or policy makers in democratic regimes. Thus, dictators have strong incentives to influence individuals' preferences to legitimate themselves and their regimes, increasing their chances of survival. In democratic regimes, government actions are constrained by a system of checks and balances -including the constitution, the rule of law, and the separation of powers- while multiple perspectives are represented in parliament through different parties. Government actions are scrutinized of a free press, and freedom of speech ensures that dissenting opinions can be heard. Democratic governments cannot coerce individuals into holding democratic beliefs or arbitrarily imprison those with non-democratic preferences. The situation is almost the opposite in a non-democratic regime: rulers dictate government actions at will, individuals with dissenting views can be coerced or incarcerated, freedom of speech is curtailed, political parties are banned, government propaganda is both pervasive and difficult to counter.

I focus on Latin America for two reasons. First, its political volatility has resulted in substantial variation in timing and duration of dictatorships across countries during the twentieth century, which is key for the identification strategy. Second, the survey I use consistently captures beliefs and preferences across a large set of countries and years. In contrast, surveys for other regions either lack key questions or fail to pro-

[1] Except Ticchi et al. (2013) and more recently Besley & Persson (2018), in general terms agents in this literature do not have preferences over regimes but derive them from the utility obtained under different regimes. Allowing regimes to have long-term effects on individuals' preferences contributes to the understanding of regime transitions, especially of pendular movements between regimes experienced by many countries in modern history.

vide adequate country-year coverage for conducting an empirical study.[2] Empirically, I match self-reported preferences and beliefs with the political regime under which individuals lived during childhood and youth. I analyze individuals from 18 countries surveyed between 1995 and 2020. To identify the effect of dictatrships on outcome variables, I exploit variation in the duration of exposure to political regimes during childhood and youth by country and birth cohort. In a repeated cross section setting, this is done by including cohort and country fixed effects and estimating the impact of exposure at the cohort-country level. I also include a battery of demographic and socioeconomic controls, country×year-of-survey fixed effects, and controls for exposure to macroeconomic shocks and the severity of the dictatorships. My empirical strategy abstracts from the specific mechanisms -suggested by the literature- through which beliefs and preferences may be shaped, estimating instead overall effect of exposure to dictatorships.

Ex ante, the effect of exposure to dictatorships on beliefs and preferences is ambiguous. On one hand, a growing body of literature in economics documents that propaganda and educational reforms effectively shape preferences (Adena et al., 2015; Cantoni et al., 2017; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln, 2007). This suggests that exposure to dictatorships could erode democratic values, reducing individuals' preference for democracy. On the other hand, research in psychology suggests that exposure to a particular viewpoint may lead to increased polarization and even strengthen opposing views (Lord et al., 1979; Cacioppo & Petty, 1979; Malamuth & Check, 1981), a result also found in economics (DellaVigna et al., 2014). This implies that exposure to dictatorships could trigger oppositional reactions, reinforcing democratic values and increasing individuals' preference for democracy. The effect of dictatorships on political idology is also ambiguous. While Latin American dictatorships sought to affect democratic value, the vast majority were right-wing regimes explicitly aiming to curb the spread of left-wing ideas.

The empirical results show that each additional year of exposure to dictatorship reduces the likelihood of an individual preferring democracy over any other political system by 2.2 percentage points. On average, exposed individuals experience 7.25 years of dictatorship starting at age 4, leading to a 18.1 percentage point reduction in their preference for democracy compared to non-exposed individuals. Exposure to dictatorships also decreases Confidence in Congress, the Judiciary, and the Armed

[2] For instance, a question on regime preferences is be systematically included in the Eurobarometer, World Value Survey or Afrobarometer. When available, coverage of relevant questions does not provide sufficient variation in political regimes for adequate empirical research.

Forces, reduces Satisfaction with Democracy, and decreases (increases) the likelihood of an individual to self-identify with the Right (Center/Left) on an ideological scale. All results align with the IYH. Additionally, auxiliary outcome variables suggest a decline in Confidence in Radio and Police, as well as a more negative Opinion of the United States and a higher likelihood of attending demonstrations. A series of extensions and robustness checks confirm the results. I show that they hold when estimating a more saturated specification, accounting for the differential impact of negative macroeconomic shocks, considering the distinct effects of Left-wing and Right-wing dictatorships, using a restricted sample of individuals with nonzero exposure, and applying alternative criteria to distinguish democracy from dictatorship. Moreover, exposure to dictatorships at ages outside the 4-to-25 range has little to no impact, consistent with the IYH.

I interpret these findings as evidence that that dictatorships erode democratic values. Drawing on political science literature, I highlith a potential link between the erosion of democratic values and an increase in individuals' self-identification with the (far) Left. These results confirm that non-democratic regimes can have persistent effects on a country's political landscape and outcomes, by shaping individuals' preferences. Since dictatorships influence democratic values and political orientation across generations, their long-term impact extends to the democratic process itself.

The findings have important policy implications for consolidating democracy in post-authoritarian societies. If dictatorships undermine democratic values and trust in institutions, rebuilding democracy requires more than institutional reforms —it necessitates targeted efforts to restore democratic norms and civic engagement. Educational programs that promote democratic values, critical thinking, and historical memory can help counteract the long-term effects of authoritarian socialization. Likewise, strengthening judicial independence, ensuring government transparency, and fostering a free press are crucial to rebuilding public trust in democratic institutions.

Additionally, the study underscores the need to address the economic dimensions of democratic consolidation. Since exposure to dictatorship -particularly during economic crises- exacerbates dissatisfaction with democracy, post-authoritarian governments must prioritize inclusive economic policies that reduce inequality and promote social mobility. By ensuring that democracy delivers tangible benefits, policymakers can mitigate the risk of authoritarian nostalgia and strengthen long-term democratic commitment.

The paper is structured as follows: first, I provide a brief overview of political regime changes in Latin America. Next, I introduce the Impressionable Years Hypothesis and

discuss related literature. Section 4 presents the data and descriptive statistics, and in Section 5 I discuss the identification strategy and empirical methodology. Then, I present and discuss the empirical results, and in Section 7 I explore extensions and robustness checks. The final section offers concluding remarks

2 Latin America and Dictatorships

This section analyzes Latin America's political history during the 20th century, characterized by waves of democratization and authoritarian regression. It describes how, following a period of democratic expansion from the 1930s to the early 1960s, the region experienced a series of military dictatorships in response to socio-political transformations and geopolitical pressures, particularly within the context of the Cold War. The section explores the economic, social, and ideological motivations behind these regimes and discusses their implications for shaping the political preferences and democratic values of generations exposed to them.

The political history of Latin America during the twentieth century is one of great turmoil, as illustrated in Figure 1 below (Zanatta, 2012; Rouquié, 1987). For decades, political conflict primarily reflected struggles between factions of an oligarchic elite and often involved authoritarian rule. However, a ave of democratization from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s transformed the region's political institutions.[3][4][5] This democratization process in many countries involved extending the franchise, reforming electoral laws and institutions, and creating mass parties that represented broader segments of the population. Nevertheless, during the 1960s and early 1970s, a wave of (mostly military) dictatorships spread across the region. This authoritarian reversal can be understood not only as a reaction to previous democratization efforts -often accompanied by redistributive policies perceived as 'excessive' by segments of the elites- but also as a geopolitical response within the Cold War context. The Cuban Revolution (1959) heightened fears communism, prompting the United States to launch the Alliance for Progress and support several anti-communist governments, both democratic and authoritarian. The political erosion of dictatorial regimes, international pressure

[3] See Figure A1 and Table A1 in the Appendix for details on each spell of dictatorship by country and the corresponding ruler(s).

[4] This wave was part of what political scientists refer to as the Second Wave of democratization worldwide (Huntington, 1991, 1993).

[5] Acemoglu & Robinson (2005) provides a structured analysis of regime transitions in 20th-century Latin America, linking inequality, the costs and benefits of repression, and democratization paths, including rapid and definitive democratization, blocked democratization, and pendular shifts between democracy and authoritarianism.

and macroeconomic shocks, among other factors, led to another wave of democratization beginning in the early 1980s. By 1990, only Cuba remained undemocratic.[6]

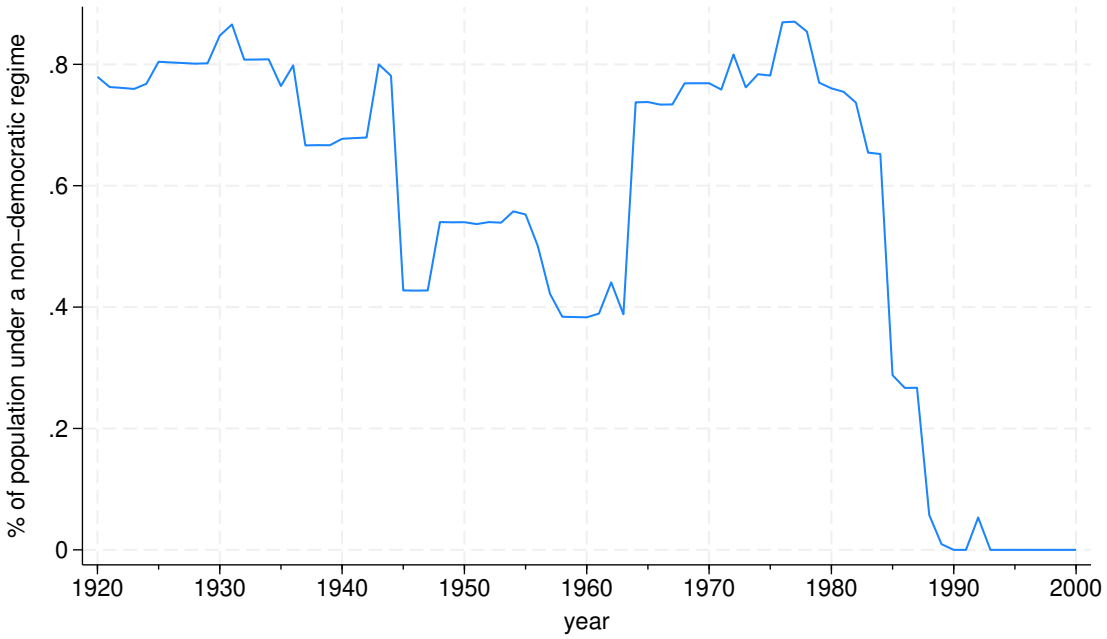

Figure 1: Dictatorships in Latin America, 1920 to 2000

Notes: The figure plots the share of the population of the 16 Latin American countries in the sample living under a non-democratic regime. Population data comes from the MOxLAD data set. Non-democratic regimes are those with a Polity Score Index (taken from the Polity IV Project data set) below zero.

History demonstrates that many non-democratic governments in the region explicitly sought to shape individuals' beliefs and preferences throughout the twentieth century. A key example is *Operation Condor*, a coordinated effort of military dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay (with minor participation from Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador) to control and suppress political opposition. These regimes propagated a strong anti-communist and anti-Left discourse that emphasized the 'dangers' of democracy and positioned the Armed Forces as the guardian of traditional values moral order. They reformed educational curricula to re-write history, exercised heavy media control, curtailed freedom of speech, banned political parties and severely restricted or outright prohibited democratic participation. The term *National Reorganization Process*, used by Argentina's dictatorship, aptly encapsulated the broaded intentions of authoritarian rules across the region.[7] However, *Operation Condor* was not the only instance of rulers attempting to manipu-

[6] This was part of the Third Wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991, 1993).

[7] Approximately 50,000 individuals were killed, and 400,000 were imprisoned as part of *Operation Condor*; 30,000 remain missing. For details, see McSherry (2002) and Kornbluh (2003).

late individua preferences in Latin America. Other non-democratic regimes also sought undermine democracy propaganda, indoctrination and coercion. [8]

Latin America's political history is deeply intertwined with its economic fluctuations, which have played a crucial role in shaping political regimes and citizens' preferences. The region has experienced recurring cycles of democratic transitions and authoritarian rule, often driven by economic crises, inequality, and external shocks. Understanding the economic context in which these regimes emerged and operated is essential to assessing how exposure to dictatorships shaped long-term political beliefs and institutional trust.

In the first half of the 20th century, Latin America's economic policies were shaped by a combination of export-led growth, state intervention, and early industrialization. Until the Great Depression, most countries followed a primary-export model, relying on commodities such as coffee, sugar, rubber, and minerals. This dependence on global markets made Latin American economies vulnerable to external shocks, leading to a shift toward import-substituting industrialization (ISI). Governments adopted protectionist measures, including tariffs, subsidies, and state-led investment, to reduce reliance on foreign goods and stimulate domestic production. National development banks and public enterprises emerged to support this transformation, reflecting broader trends in state-led economic planning.

By the mid-20th century, Latin America had embraced ISI, characterized by high state intervention, protectionism, and expansive public sector employment. While this model initially fostered growth, it eventually led to structural inefficiencies, fiscal deficits, and inflationary pressures. By the 1970s, many countries faced severe economic crises, exacerbated by external shocks such as oil price hikes and rising global interest rates. In response, military dictatorships took power in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, claiming economic stabilization as a primary objective. These regimes implemented market-oriented reforms—including trade liberalization, privatization, and reductions in state spending—with mixed effects on growth and inequality.

The 1980s marked a turning point, as Latin America faced a severe debt crisis triggered by excessive borrowing, rising interest rates, and declining commodity prices. The resulting economic contraction, hyperinflation, and social discontent undermined authoritarian legitimacy, paving the way for democratization. However, the structural adjustment programs of the late 1980s and 1990s—often guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—led to fiscal austerity and market liberalization. While these policies stabilized economies, they also deepened social inequal-

[8] See Section 6 for an in depth discussion of mechanisms in Latin America.

ities, fueling political dissatisfaction and, in some cases, nostalgia for authoritarian rule.

During the mid-20th century, Latin America followed an import-substitution industrialization (ISI) model, characterized by high state intervention, protectionist policies, and expansive public sector employment. While this model initially fostered economic growth and industrialization, it eventually led to structural inefficiencies, fiscal deficits, and inflationary pressures. By the 1970s, many countries faced severe economic crises, exacerbated by external factors such as the oil shocks and rising global interest rates. In response, military dictatorships seized power in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, often with the stated goal of stabilizing the economy and curbing inflation. These regimes implemented market-oriented reforms, including trade liberalization, privatization, and reductions in state spending, which had mixed effects on economic growth and inequality.

The 1980s marked a turning point as Latin America suffered a severe debt crisis, triggered by excessive borrowing, rising interest rates, and declining commodity prices. The crisis led to economic contraction, hyperinflation, and widespread social discontent, undermining the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. As a result, many countries transitioned back to democracy during the so-called "Third Wave" of democratization. However, the economic turmoil left a lasting impact on public trust in political institutions. The structural adjustment programs implemented in the late 1980s and 1990s, often under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, aimed to stabilize economies through fiscal austerity and market liberalization. While these policies contributed to macroeconomic stability, they also deepened social inequalities, fueling political dissatisfaction and, in some cases, nostalgia for authoritarian rule.

This economic backdrop is crucial for understanding the long-term effects of dictatorship on political attitudes. Exposure to authoritarian regimes during periods of economic crisis may have reinforced skepticism toward democratic governance, particularly if post-authoritarian governments struggled to deliver economic improvements. Conversely, in cases where democratization coincided with economic recovery, citizens may have developed stronger democratic commitments. By incorporating this economic context, this study provides a more comprehensive analysis of how political regimes influence individual preferences, demonstrating that the interaction between economic conditions and authoritarian rule plays a key role in shaping long-term political beliefs in Latin America.

Regarding political orientation, note that throughout the 20th century, Latin Amer-

ica was dominated by right-wing and military dictatorships, often supported by domestic elites and, in many cases, foreign powers such as the United States. These regimes emerged in response to economic crises, political instability, and fears of communist expansion, particularly during the Cold War. The vast majority of Latin American authoritarian governments during this period were characterized by repression, economic liberalization policies favoring elites, and strong military influence.[9]

While right-wing authoritarianism was the dominant pattern, there were a few exceptions of left-wing dictatorships in the region. The most prominent case is Cuba under Fidel Castro, who established a socialist state following the 1959 revolution, maintaining a one-party system under the Communist Party of Cuba.[10] Another case is the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua (1979–1990), which, although initially revolutionary and left-wing, faced internal opposition and U.S.-backed Contra forces, eventually transitioning to democracy in 1990 (Gould, 1990; Skidmore & Smith, 2022)). Additionally, Juan Velasco Alvarado's government in Peru (1968–1975) implemented left-leaning nationalist policies, including land reform and nationalization of industries, despite being a military dictatorship (McClintock & Vallas, 2003).

The predominance of right-wing authoritarianism in Latin America was not merely incidental but reflected broader geopolitical struggles, economic interests, and elite fears of social reform. The influence of the Cold War and U.S. interventionism further reinforced this pattern, as seen in Washington's support for anti-communist military regimes under doctrines like the National Security Doctrine (Harmer, 2011). These dynamics contributed to a historical trajectory in which right-wing and military dictatorships became the norm, while left-wing authoritarianism remained the exception.

A review of Latin American history reveals considerable variation in political regimes and explicit efforts to shape beliefs and preferences. Against this background, this paper empirically assess whether dictatorships succeeded in these attempts while testing the Impressionable Years Hypothesis. The next section introduces the literature on the IYH and discusses empirical evidence on the channels through which political regimes influence preferences.

[9] Notable examples include the military juntas in Argentina (1976–1983), Chile under Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990), Brazil's military regime (1964–1985), and the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua (1936–1979) (Grandin, 2006; Loveman, 1999).

[10] Note that Latinobarometer has no data on Cuba.

3 Related literature

This section examines how political preferences are formed, focusing particularly on the long-term impact of early-life exposure to political regimes. It introduces the IYH, which suggests that experiences during youth have a lasting influence on individuals' beliefs and values. The section reviews empirical studies from social psychology, political science, and economics that support this hypothesis, highlighting research on political socialization, indoctrination through education, media influence, and economic incentives. It also discusses alternative theories, such as lifelong openness and increasing persistence, which offer competing perspectives on the flexibility of political attitudes over time. Ultimately, this literature review provides the theoretical foundation for the empirical analysis that follows, situating the study within broader debates on the transmission and durability of political preferences.

The question of whether dictators' attempts to shape individuals' beliefs and preferences achieved their intended effect is fundamentally a question about how political preferences are formed. Research in social psychology provides empirical evidence supporting the idea that early-life influences profoundly shape individuals' values, beliefs and preferences.[11] According to the IYH, once this early socialization period ends, core orientations are unlikely to change.[12] In contrast, the *lifelong openness hypothesis* posits that changes in life circumstances influence beliefs and preferences throughout an individuals lifetime (Brim & Kagan, 1980). This hypothesis predicts a high degree of attitudinal flexibility, which contrasts with most empirical evidence. As a result, birth cohorts that experience different economic, social and political conditions during their formative years will exhibit distinct attitudes later in life. Further research in social psychology and political science has investigated the impact of youth experiences on political preferences, finding additional support for the IYH (Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Sears & Valentino, 1997). One line of research in this area focuses on partisanship, studying party identification over an individual's lifetime or across cohorts. Studies that examine more broader political beliefs and preferences

[11] See, for instance, Cutler (1974), Easton & Dennis (1980), Greenstein (1965), Hess & Torney (1967), Sears (1975, 1983), Visser & Krosnick (1998).

[12] A related theory is the *increasing persistence hypothesis*. While it also acknowledges the malleability of individuals during youth, this theory emphasizes that both biological and social processes -such as brain deterioration and the accumulation of social ties with similar opinions- reduce the likelihood of belief and preference changes (Glenn, 1980). From an empirical perspective, this hypothesis is difficult to distinguish from the IYH, as both predict that beliefs and preferences are formed during early youth.

often focus on a single country.[13] There is no clear consensus on the duration of the Impressionable Years. Evidence of political socialization has been found for ages 18 to 25 (Newcomb et al., 1967), but also for ages 10 to 17 (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989) and even 4 to 18 (Madestam & Yanagizawa-Drott, 2011). Against this backdrop, in this paper I consider exposure during ages 4 to 25, as well as smaller age subperiods, and estimate the impacts on preferences for political regimes, confidence in institutions, and ideological orientation across a set of countries.

This study is closely related to the work of Giuliano & Spilimbergo (2014) and Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2014). Giuliano & Spilimbergo (2014) use regional variation in U.S. growth rates to examine the impact of economic shocks on belief and preference formation. Their results support the IYH: experiencing a severe recession during ages 18 to 25 leads to stronger preferences for redistribution, lower confidence in institutions, greater support for the Democratic party, and a stronger belief that luck, rather an effort, determines success in life. My study contributes to the literature on the long-term effects of political regimes on political beliefs and preferences by focusing specifically on Latin America, a region characterized by frequent shifts between democratic and authoritarian rule. Unlike Giuliano & Spilimbergo (2014), who examine the effects of economic recessions on belief formation, and Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2014), who focus on attitudes toward democracy and capitalism in post-communist Europe, my research exploits variation in exposure to non-democratic regimes across Latin American cohorts. This allows for an empirical assessment of how dictatorships shape democratic values, trust in institutions, and ideological self-placement in the long run. Additionally, my work provides novel evidence on the persistence of these effects by examining a broader range of political attitudes, including ideological positioning, which has been relatively underexplored in the literature.

Furthermore, Versteegen (2024) explore the relationship between nostalgia, relative deprivation, and support for radical right parties.[14] The findings suggest that nostalgia and perceived deprivation play significant roles in shaping support for radical right parties. Similarly, Durán & Trillas (2020) examine how perceptions of past authoritarian regimes influence contemporary democratic attitudes in Latin America. Their study builds on research on political socialization and historical memory. ass-

[13] See Osborne et al. (2011) and Valentino & Sears (2005, 1998) for studies on partisanship in the United States. See Persson & Oscarsson (2010) and Muñoz (2009) for studies of democracy in Sweden and Spain, respectively.

[14] The study operationalizes radical right support through variables such as vote propensity, party and politician liking, and conservatism. It also considers mediators like group-based and personal relative deprivation, and controls for demographic factors, national identity, personality traits, and personal trust.

esing whether nostalgia for authoritarian rule erodes democratic support.[15] The study finds that individuals who perceive past authoritarian regimes as more successful than contemporary democracies exhibit lower levels of support for democracy. This effect is particularly pronounced among older individuals, suggesting that personal experiences and memories play a critical role in shaping long-term political preferences. The authors' findings align with the broader literature on the formation of political attitudes during formative years, reinforcing the idea that past political contexts can have enduring effects on democratic legitimacy. The study contributes to the ongoing debate on democratic consolidation in Latin America by highlighting the challenge posed by positive recollections of authoritarian rule. The results suggest that beyond delivering economic growth and stability, democratic governments must also address perceptions of past regimes to sustain public support. By analyzing the persistence of authoritarian nostalgia, Durán & Trillas (2020) shed light on an important mechanism through which historical political experiences continue to shape contemporary political attitudes in the region.

This study departs from these works by directly testing the IYH in the context of Latin American dictatorships. I also employ a methodological approach that leverages within-country and within-cohort variation in exposure while controlling for macroeconomic shocks and other potential confounders.

Finally, my paper complements Acemoglu et al. (2024) by providing an empirical assessment of how political regimes shape long-term beliefs and preferences. While Acemoglu et al. (2024) highlights how democracies reinforce their own survival through exposure, my work focuses on the opposite scenario—how dictatorships erode democratic values and shift political orientations. Both papers engage with the IY), which suggests that exposure to political systems during youth has lasting effects. My study, however, extends this by showing that exposure to non-democratic regimes reduces preference for democracy, satisfaction with democratic institutions, and trust in key political structures. Additionally, while Acemoglu et al. (2024) discusses how democratic indoctrination fosters democratic values, my work demonstrates how dictatorships attempt (and sometimes fail) to achieve the opposite, with effects that can backfire, fostering political alienation and ideological shifts. Ultimately, my research provides a critical counterpoint to the idea that exposure to democracy is sufficient to sustain democratic norms. By examining the mechanisms through which dictatorships affect

[15] The authors introduce the concept of 'deviation in evaluations', which captures the difference between an individual's assessment of the current economic situation and their retrospective evaluation of the last authoritarian regime's economic performance.

political preferences, my work highlights the fragility of democratic values and the long-term consequences of authoritarian rule.

A review of the empirical literature provides insights into the channels through which a dictator can affect individuals' beliefs and preferences. First, early work on indoctrination through education can be found in the work of Lott. Lott (1990) posits that a component of education expenditure responds to an authority's intentions of favoring a particular ideology, preference or belief. Lott (1998) shows that totalitarian governments spend more resources on public education and media, presenting evidence suggesting that this is an attempt to control the information received by the citizens in order to indoctrinate them. The author suggests that dictators indoctrinate citizens to promote their beliefs and preferences and maintain power. Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln (2007) study the impact of growing up under a socialist dictatorship and find that individuals who grew up in East Germany (compared to those socialized in West Germany) prefer more state intervention and redistribution, and are more likely to think success in life depends on factors largely outside of their control, rather than on individual effort. Additionally, Cantoni et al. (2017) document how the introduction of new pro-regime contents in the curriculum in dictatorial China led to higher trust in government officials and a re-alignment of views on political participation and democracy with those promoted by the authorities.

Secondly, a recent stream of literature stresses the role of media and propaganda in preference formation (DellaVigna et al., 2014; DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007). In particular, Adena et al. (2015) study the causal effect of exposure to radial propaganda on voting outcomes during the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and find that the introduction of pro-Nazi messages in radio transmissions significantly increased Nazi support. Likewise, Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) finds that exposure to radial propaganda increased participation in the Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis, promoted by the non-democratic Hutu government.[16]

Third, another stream of literature emphasizes the role of economic incentives in preference formation (Di Tella et al., 2007; Manacorda et al., 2011). In this respect, Voigtländer & Voth (2014) finds that massive infrastructure spending in Germany significantly decreased resistance to the Nazi regime. Additionally, spending on development and reconstruction projects by the United States has been found to reduce opposition and improve perception of the government in occupied Iraq (Berman et al.,

[16] For the particular context of Latin America, González & Prem (2018) shows the effect of exposure to televised political campaigns against a constitutional reform promoted by Pinochet in Chile helped to defeat the dictator and shorten his spell in power.

2011) and Afghanistan (Beath et al., 2013).

The literature reviewed so far supports the idea that dictatorships can affect preferences through indoctrination in the educational system, media and propaganda, as well as transfers and economic opportunities.

In terms of theoretical literature, a regime's actions could not only affect preference formation but also the incentives for preference transmission. Ticchi et al. (2013) develop a model along these lines, in which governments invest in institutions that affect the transmission of parents' political preferences to their offspring. In the model, democracies have incentives to foster democratic values that, in turn, perpetuate democracy, while dictatorships have incentives to do the opposite. The model predicts that the longer the duration of a dictatorship, the lower the share of individuals with democratic beliefs and preferences. Alternatively, a cohort of individuals would be more strongly socialized in democratic values if raised in a democracy. More recently, Besley & Persson (2018) develops a closely related model with very similar implications. This literature also predicts that individuals should be more strongly affected by exposure during the Impressionable Years.

With respect to links to other studies, a significant body of literature focuses on the question of how democracies die, notably explored by Levitsky & Ziblatt (2024), who argue that authoritarian regimes not only suppress political opposition but also cultivate a cultural climate where democratic values are gradually weakened. Furthermore, Foa & Mounk (2016) find a decline in support for democracy among younger generations. Lupu & Peisakhin (2017) discuss the concept of 'political alienation' and suggest that authoritarian regimes push individuals away from the political center, often leading them to embrace more radical positions. This ideological shift aligns with the literature on political polarization, which posits that experiences of repression can fuel disillusionment and provoke ideological movements that challenge the existing order. Turning to economic conditions, Haggard & Kaufman (2012) highlight the importance of economic stability in shaping the political legacies of authoritarian regimes. This mirrors Boix & Stokes (2003) argument that economic downturns exacerbate the negative effects of authoritarian rule on public attitudes toward democracy, suggesting that the political and economic contexts are inextricably linked in the process of democratization. With respect to research on post-authoritarian transitions, Diamond (1999) and O'Donnell (1996) emphasize the need for educational reforms and the restoration of historical memory to rebuild democratic norms after authoritarian regimes. The literature on transitional justice (e.g., Teitel (2000)) further supports this notion, stressing the importance of truth commissions and memorialization efforts in

preserving democratic memory.

In this context, in the next subsection I provide examples and discuss the mechanisms through which dictators attempted to shape individuals' beliefs and preferences

Mechanisms in the Latin American context

First, latin American dictatorships have often manipulated the educational system to promote ideological indoctrination, consolidate power, and shape political preferences across generations. In Argentina, the military junta led by Videla (1976-1983) sought to control education as a means of enforcing the regime's conservative and nationalist ideology. The dictatorship revised school curricula to eliminate leftist and critical perspectives, promoted a nationalist historical narrative, and restricted academic freedom. Military authorities intervened in universities, expelling or disappearing faculty and students suspected of subversive activities. Textbooks were rewritten to emphasize traditional values and Catholic morality while suppressing discussion of human rights abuses (Buchbinder, 2012; Novaro et al., 2003). The Brazilian military regime (1964-1985) systematically restructured education to align with its anti-communist and nationalist goals. The government implemented a law in 1971 that emphasized technical education over humanities and social sciences, weakening critical thinking skills, and mandated patriotic education[17] designed to instill loyalty to the regime and discourage political dissent (Dreifuss, 1981). In Chile, the Pinochet dictatorship implemented deep reforms in the education system to suppress leftist ideologies and promote neoliberal economic principles. The government privatized large portions of the educational system and eliminated previous curricula that contained Marxist or socialist perspectives. The military government also rewrote history textbooks to present the 1973 coup as a necessary action to save Chile from communism, omitting references to human rights violations.[18] (Oppenheim, 2009). In Peru, during the military governments of Odría (1948–1956) and later Velasco Alvarado (1968–1975), education was used as a tool for ideological control. Odría suppressed university autonomy and persecuted leftist student movements. Later, Velasco promoted a form of nationalist and anti-imperialist education, incorporating socialist principles into school curricula while increasing state control over universities. While his policies were different from right-wing dictatorships, both regimes sought to use education to consolidate their political agendas (Cotler, 2005; Klarén, 2000). In Paraguay, Stroessner's long-lasting dictatorship (1954-1989) placed strong emphasis on promoting loyalty to his regime

[17] This included compulsory courses on 'Moral and Civic Education' and 'Social and Political Studies'

[18] Also, in universities, purges of leftist professors and students were common, and subjects such as sociology and political science were heavily censored.

through education. The curriculum was altered to highlight Stroessner's role in national development, glorify the Colorado Party, and reinforce anti-communist ideology. Dissenting perspectives were suppressed, and student organizations critical of the government were either banned or infiltrated by the regime's intelligence services (Lewis, 1980).

Second, Latin American dictatorships frequently used media control and disinformation campaigns to maintain political dominance, suppress dissent, and shape public opinion. Through censorship, propaganda, and direct state ownership of media outlets, authoritarian regimes ensured that only their narratives were disseminated, often portraying opposition groups as threats to national stability. The military dictatorship in Argentina tightly controlled the media to justify its repression and human rights violations. Newspapers, radio, and television were censored, and independent journalists faced imprisonment, forced exile, or execution. The regime also spread propaganda through the concept of the 'Proceso de Reorganización Nacional', presenting itself as the savior of Argentina from subversion and chaos.[19] (Avellaneda, 1986). The Brazilian military dictatorship implemented strict censorship laws, particularly under the AI-5 decree (1968), which enabled the regime to shut down newspapers, ban books, and prosecute journalists. The dictatorship developed close relationships with powerful media groups.[20] (De Albuquerque, 2011; Smith, 2010). In Chile, Pinochet's regime used extensive media control and misinformation campaigns to maintain its legitimacy.[21] The dictatorship spread narratives about the 'economic miracle' under neoliberal policies while hiding the negative consequences of privatization and inequality. Independent media outlets faced intimidation, censorship, and financial pressure. The secret police also infiltrated media networks to monitor journalists and suppress dissenting voices (Huneeus, 2016). Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay maintained strict control over the media, ensuring that only pro-government narratives were disseminated. State-owned media regularly broadcast messages glorifying Stroessner and his *Colorado Party* while denouncing opposition movements as foreign-influenced subversives. Independent journalists faced arrest, exile, or violent repression, while the

[19]For example, state-controlled media, such as Channel 7 and government-approved newspapers, actively downplayed the forced disappearances of thousands of political opponents and framed leftist groups as dangerous terrorists.

[20]Most notably *Rede Globo*, which became the dominant television network. Moreover, programs like *Jornal Nacional* often presented a sanitized version of reality, omitting reports on state violence and promoting the regime's economic achievements. Meanwhile, newspapers that attempted to resist censorship, had their pages blacked out as a form of protest.

[21]The military government controlled *El Mercurio*, one of Chile's largest newspapers, and ensured that *TV Nacional de Chile* functioned as a state propaganda outlet.

government systematically spread disinformation to justify its repressive policies. The dictatorship also engaged in historical revisionism, portraying Stroessner as the protector of Paraguay's stability and prosperity (Lewis, 1980).

Third, Latin American dictatorships often used economic incentives as a tool to align individuals' interests with those of the regime, fostering loyalty among key social groups, co-opting potential opposition, and consolidating power. These incentives included privileged access to state contracts, land distribution, preferential employment opportunities, wage controls, and subsidies that benefited business elites, the military, and politically connected workers. The Argentine military dictatorship implemented a neoliberal economic model that disproportionately benefited business elites while repressing labor unions. The state offered tax breaks, deregulation, and financial bailouts to industrialists and financiers aligned with the regime, fostering their political support.[22] Meanwhile, the systematic repression of labor unions -including forced disappearances of union leaders- discouraged worker opposition (Schvarzeret al. , 1986; O'donnell, 1978). The Brazilian military regime pursued an economic model known as the *Milagre Econômico* (1968–1973), which emphasized state-led industrialization, export growth, and foreign investment. To align industrialists with the dictatorship, the government provided generous tax incentives, subsidized credit, and protectionist policies that benefited large domestic and multinational corporations. Additionally, the regime implemented a wage suppression policy to control inflation and maintain a docile working class. The military also rewarded its supporters by granting lucrative positions in state-owned enterprises, reinforcing a system of patronage (Fishlow, 1980; Skidmore, 1990). Under Pinochet, the privatization of state-owned enterprises disproportionately benefited regime allies, as many firms were sold below market value to business elites with connections to the military government.[23] Moreover, Pinochet's labor policies weakened unions, ensuring that workers had little bargaining power while employers gained greater flexibility to set wages and working conditions (Silva, 1996, 1991). Although not a military dictatorship, Mexico's *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) dominated regime used extensive economic incentives to maintain political stability and consolidate its grip on power. The government co-opted labor movements by offering state-backed unions exclusive rights to negotiate wages and benefits in exchange for political loyalty. The PRI also implemented land redistribution programs that provided peasants with land while ensuring their dependence on

[22] The regime also expanded military benefits, increasing salaries, pensions, and housing subsidies for officers to ensure their loyalty.

[23] The regime also implemented a pension reform that shifted the system from a public to a private model, creating new financial opportunities for private firms aligned with the government.

the state. Government contracts, subsidies, and access to credit were selectively distributed to business elites who aligned with the ruling party (Cornelius, 1975; Collier & Collier, 2015). Stroessner's dictatorship was characterized by a vast patronage network that rewarded supporters through economic incentives. The regime controlled state employment, ensuring that government jobs were allocated primarily to members of the ruling *Colorado Party*. Businesses that aligned with the dictatorship received monopolistic privileges, tax exemptions, and access to state contracts, while political opponents faced economic marginalization. Additionally, Stroessner maintained rural support through land grants and agricultural subsidies that were distributed to loyal communities (Lewis, 1980).

Fourth, several dictatorial regimes throughout the 20th century used repression and coercion as central mechanisms to align the interests of individuals with those of the regime. The Argentine military dictatorship used widespread state terror to align the population's interests with the regime's goals of national security, anti-communism, and social order. The military junta systematically engaged in extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and the suppression of civil liberties. The regime's efforts to control and repress dissent sought to eliminate perceived left-wing and anti-regime groups, including activists, intellectuals, and even ordinary citizens, as thousands of individuals were abducted, tortured, and killed without due process. This brutal repression was not only a method of suppressing opposition but also a tool for reshaping public behavior, ensuring that individuals aligned their interests with the regime's ideology of anti-communism and nationalism (Gomez, 2001). Pinochet's regime relied heavily on repression and coercion to secure its control over Chilean society. The regime implemented the *Caravan of Death*, a brutal campaign to execute political prisoners, and used the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* as a tool to carry out surveillance, torture, and killings. The regime's repression was extensive, targeting trade unionists, left-wing political activists, intellectuals, and anyone associated with Salvador Allende's government (Weyland, 2002). The Brazilian military dictatorship followed a similar pattern of using repression and coercion to suppress political opposition and maintain control over the country. The government employed *Institutional Act Number 5*, which suspended constitutional rights, dissolved the legislature, and authorized the use of torture against political opponents. The regime justified its actions as necessary for the preservation of national security and the prevention of communist influence, a theme common among Latin American dictatorships during the Cold War. As in Argentina and Chile, repression was not only aimed at eliminating political opponents but also at ensuring that individuals' interests aligned with the authoritarian regime's goals.

Torture, imprisonment, and censorship were used to silence dissent, while the regime's control over the media helped to shape public opinion in favor of the junta (Skidmore, 1990).

To sum up this subsection, dictatorial regimes in Latin America employed various mechanisms to shape individuals' beliefs and preferences, ensuring the stability and longevity of their authoritarian systems. Among these mechanisms, the most prominent were the manipulation of the education system, control of the media, economic incentives, and repression. Through education, dictatorships shaped the population's ideology by rewriting curricula, censoring critical content, and promoting nationalist or neoliberal narratives. Media control allowed for the dissemination of official propaganda and the suppression of dissenting voices, while economic incentives aligned the interests of certain groups with those of the regime. Finally, repression and coercion played a central role in eliminating opponents and instilling fear as a tool of social control.

However, accurately identifying the impact of each of these mechanisms presents significant challenges. First, all these forces operated simultaneously, interacting in complex ways and reinforcing one another. Education not only instilled authoritarian values but also worked in tandem with censorship and media control. Economic incentives combined with repression to shape both opportunities and behaviors. Since these mechanisms functioned together, it is extremely difficult to isolate the specific effect of each one on individual beliefs and preferences. This interdependence hinders clear causal inferences about the relative weight of each strategy used by dictatorships. Moreover, additional factors further complicate the exploration of these mechanisms. In many cases, available data is limited or biased, as authoritarian regimes concealed information, destroyed records, or promoted distorted versions of reality. The persistence of official narratives and the lack of access to testimonies from victims and witnesses may restrict the scope of analysis. Likewise, measuring variables such as ideological indoctrination or the impact of fear on individual decision-making presents significant methodological challenges. For these reasons, while the main mechanisms used by dictatorships in Latin America have been described and presented here, this study does not aim to precisely disentangle their effects. Rather, it seeks to highlight their interconnection and their role in consolidating authoritarian regimes, recognizing that their impact was complex, dynamic, and difficult to isolate analytically. Finally, while the literature reviewed suggests that exposure should align individuals' beliefs and preferences with those promoted by the regime, the possibility of an oppositional reaction should not be discarded. Therefore, I remain agnostic regarding the direction

of the effect.

4 Data and Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the sources and key characteristics of the dataset used in the empirical analysis. The study relies on the Latinobarometer, a public opinion survey covering most Latin American countries from 1995 to 2020, that captures individual political beliefs, preferences, and demographic characteristics. To measure exposure to dictatorships, I employ the Polity Score Index, defining non-democratic regimes based on standard political economy criteria. Additionally, historical GDP data from the Montevideo-Oxford Latin American Economic History Database (MOxLAD) is used to account for macroeconomic shocks during individuals' formative years. Here, I also construct key variables, such as Preference for Democracy, Confidence in Institutions, and ideological self-placement, and provide descriptive statistics that illustrate significant variation across countries in both exposure to authoritarian rule and political attitudes.

Opinion Data

The Latinobarometer is a public opinion survey carried out across Latin America; covering 8 countries in 1995, it expanded to 17 in 1996 and to 18 in 2004, and is based on a nationally representative sample of about 1,100 individuals.[24] A core questionnaire captures respondents' characteristics, such as age, gender, religion, marital status, labour force status, educational level, socioeconomic status (as perceived by the interviewer), and a set of 12 variables capturing ownership of durable goods and access to services that serve as wealth indicators.[25] The survey also includes rotating modules on perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and preferences. The key advantage of the Latinobarometer over similar data sets is that information on political beliefs and preferences is consistently captured for all the countries and years covered. In contrast, opinion surveys for Africa, Asia or Europe typically lack a comprehensive set of questions suitable for the purpose of this paper, or are too small in terms of countries and years included. My sample comprises individuals aged 18 to 85 surveyed in all

[24] Though a rich data set, the Latinobarometer appears to be fairly unused in the economic literature, with the exception of the works of Graham and coauthors on happiness and inequality (Graham & Pettinato, 2001; Graham & Felton, 2006), and Durán & Trillas (2020).

[25] The goods and services included are: television (up to 2015), refrigerator, computer, washing machine, telephone (land line), cellphone (from 2010) car, own home (from 1997), second home, hot water, drinking water, and sewage system.

countries of Latin America, with the exception of Cuba and Haiti, between 1995 and 2020 (no data was collected in 1999, 2012, 2014 and 2019).

Political Regime Data

Estimating the impact of dictatorships requires a criterion for distinguishing political regimes. Based on standard practices in the political economy literature and the discussion in Munck & Verkuilen (2002) and Besley & Kudamatsu (2008), I use the Polity Score Index (from the Polity IV data set) as a demarcation criterion (Marshall & Jaggers, 2005). For a given country and year the data set measures how the executive power is recruited, which constrains (if any) limit the executive authority and the level of political competition. These dimensions are combined to construct an aggregate indicator capturing the type and quality of a political regime. This indicator -the Polity Score- takes values from -10 to 10 and it is customary in the literature to take negative values as indicating non-democratic regimes.

Note that the Polity Score Index is a useful tool for measuring democracy, but it has several limitations. First, it simplifies complex political systems into a single score, which can overlook important nuances. A country may score as a democracy while still exhibiting authoritarian tendencies, such as restricted political opposition. Second, the index focuses solely on political structures, excluding important socioeconomic factors like inequality or social freedoms, which also impact democracy. It also lacks context, failing to consider historical or cultural elements that shape a country's political system. Additionally, the Polity Score doesn't capture the full range of democratic features, such as civil liberties or the strength of democratic institutions. It uses arbitrary thresholds, making the categorization of regimes somewhat subjective and inconsistent. The scoring process itself is also subjective, especially for countries that don't fit neatly within the index's framework. Furthermore, the index's annual updates might not reflect rapid changes in a country's political environment, such as sudden democratic backsliding. Lastly, the binary nature of the index is inflexible, often forcing hybrid or transitional regimes into broad categories that don't fully reflect their political complexity. For all these reasons, I test the robustness of my results by using an alternative demarcation criteria compiled by Vanhanen (2000).

Historical Data

Economic conditions in Latin America have been very volatile during the twentieth century. In order to control for economic shocks during the Impressionable Years I use

historical data on Real GDP coming from the MOxLAD.[26]

Variable construction

To construct the outcome variables, I focus on questions which capture political beliefs and preferences potentially targeted by dictatorial regimes and that are available for all years and countries.

First, regarding regime preference, I focus on the following question:

With which of the following statements do you agree most?
a) *Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government;*
b) *Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one;*
c) *For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime.*

From these answers I construct Preference for Democracy, Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and Indifference between Regimes, three dummy variables that take value one when the individual expresses preference for a regime or indifference between them. Given the reviewed literature, it is reasonable to assume that dictators often try to reduce Preference for Democracy, as a means to increase the probability of their regime's survival.

In second place, I consider Confidence in Congress, Judiciary System, Political Parties and Armed Forces, which come from the following question:

Please look at this card and tell me how much confidence you have in each of the following groups/institutions. Would you say you have a lot, some, a little or no confidence?

Responses are recorded on a 1 to 4 scale. AWhile one could debate whether these are groups or institutions, I will refer to them as institutions for simplicity, and will refer to them altogether as Confidence in Institutions.[27] Results for each institution are interesting per se, but they could also be imperfectly capturing the behaviour of

[26] The MOxLAD brings together public data covering more than forty indicators for twenty Latin American countries for the period 1900-2000. Due to availability of Real GDP information I drop individuals born before 1939 in Paraguay, 1945 in Bolivia and Panama, 1950 in Dominican Republic, and 1920 for the rest of the countries.

[27] This is the set of institutions available for all years and countries in the survey. In Section 6 I use other institutions as additional outcome variables.

an underlying latent variable (e.g, a general sense of trust in institutions). Precisely, descriptive statistics show a close positive (negative) correlation between Confidence in Institutions and Preference for Democracy (Preference for Authoritarian Regimes); then any attempt to affect the latter should have an impact on the former.

Next, I consider Satisfaction with Democracy as another outcome variable, based on this question:

In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (country)?

This variable measures how satisfied individuals are with the way democracy works in their country, on a 1 to 4 scale. Descriptive statistics (below) show that Satisfaction with Democracy is positively (negatively) correlated with Confidence in Institutions and Preference for Democracy (Preference for Authoritarian Regimes), which supports the idea that the outcome variables considered so far can be thought of capturing an underlying taste for Democracy. If dictators' efforts are effective, exposure to dictatorship should reduce individuals' Preference for Democracy, Confidence in Institutions, and Satisfaction with Democracy, while an increase should be found in case efforts backfire.

Finally, I also consider Right-wing Orientation, coming from the following question:

In politics, people normally speak of 'Left' and 'Right'. On a scale where 0 is Left and 10 is Right, where would you place yourself?

This variable measures individuals' self location on an ideology scale that goes from Left (0) to Right (10). I include this variable in the analysis given the efforts of many dictatorships in the region to fight against the diffusion of Left-wing ideas, as commented in Section 2. As dictators' efforts could have succeeded or backfired in affecting individuals' ideologies I remain agnostic regarding expected results. Though most of the non-democratic regimes in Latin America throughout the twentieth century could be characterized as Right-wing, in Section 7 I repeat my estimation allowing differential effects by the ideological sign of the regime.[28]

Finally, in order to measure exposure to dictatorships I use the Polity Score Index to construct my main variable of interest, $ExpDict_{bc}$, which measures the share of

[28] Examples of Left-wing regimes are Peru's Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) and Nicaragua's Sandinistas (1979-1984).

years spent under a non-democratic regime between the ages 4 to 25 for an individual from cohort b born in country c. Using these data sets I construct two additional control variables. First, I construct a control variable measuring exposure to negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock_{bc}$); following Giuliano & Spilimbergo (2014) I consider severe recessions as the occasions in which Real GDP growth was below the 10th percentile of a country's growth rate distribution. This control variable measures the fraction of years between ages 4 to 25 spent in a recession for an individual from cohort b born in country c.[29] Second, I construct a control variable measuring the intensity of the dictatorial regime to which individuals were exposed ($ExpIntens_{bc}$); this variable captures the average Polity Score Index of all years spent under dictatorship, for an individual from cohort b born in country c. As extensions I repeat my estimation interacting exposure to dictatorships with these two controls.

Descriptive Statistics

The final sample comprises 416,293 individuals. Table A2 in the Appendix presents descriptive statistics for the main socioeconomic variables used as controls. Figure 2 below plots countries by the average exposure to dictatorship between ages 4 to 25 and the average value of the main outcome variables.

[29] Results do not change significantly under a different definition of a negative shock (e.g., growth below the 5th percentile).

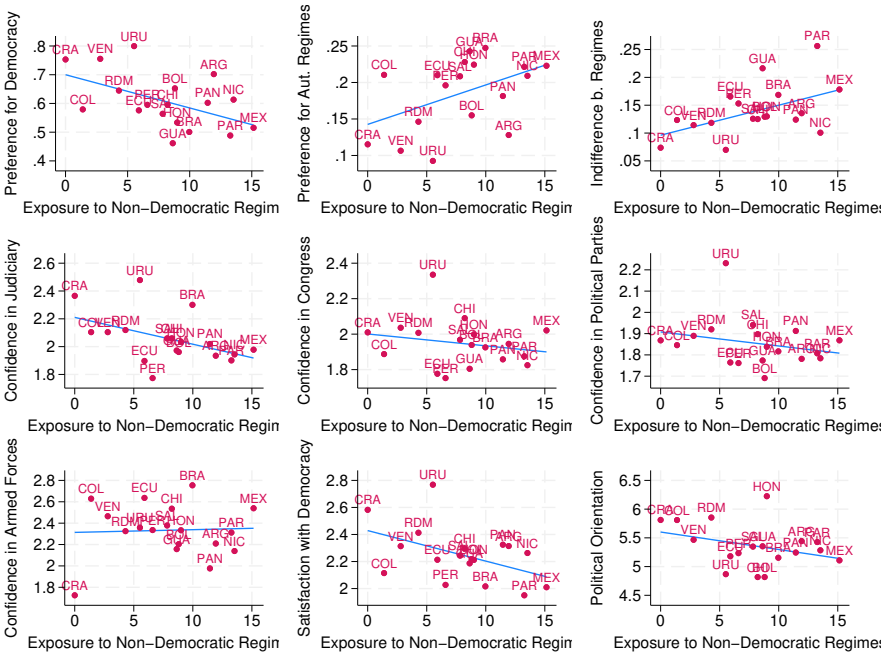

Figure 2: Outcome variables and exposure to non-democratic regimes

Notes: Each panel plots the average years of exposure to dictatorship between ages 4 and 25 and the average value of an outcome variable for each country in the sample.

This graph shows important differences between countries (e.g., democracy is preferred by 80.4% of Uruguayans but only 48.7% of Paraguayans) and suggests an effect of exposure to dictatorship: countries with higher exposure tend to display lower Confidence in institutions, Satisfaction with Democracy, and pPreference for democracy, while showing a higher Preference for Authoritarian Regimes. Table 1 below presents descriptive statistics for the main variables; note that the average exposure is 7.25 years for the whole sample (and 11.5 years for exposed individuals).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Observations	Value range	Median	Mean	Std. dev.
Exposure to dictatorship (in years)	416,293	0 to 22	5	7.25	7.6
Preference for Democracy	382,317	0 or 1	1	0.61	0.49
Preference for Authoritarianism	382,317	0 or 1	0	0.18	0.39
Indifference between Regimes	382,317	1 to 4	0	0.14	0.14
Confidence in Congress	391,724	1 to 4	2	1.95	0.87
Confidence in Judiciary	401,404	1 to 4	2	2.06	0.92
Confidence in Political Parties	405,563	1 to 4	2	1.86	0.88
Confidence in Armed Forces	370,798	1 to 4	2	2.40	1.01
Satisfaction with Democracy	396,420	1 to 4	2	2.25	0.89
Right-Wing orientation	328,848	0 to 10	5	5.34	2.81

Notes: The table reports the number of non-missing observations for the main outcome variables and exposure to dictatorships. The table includes the range of values that the variables can take, to ease the interpretation of the median, mean and standard deviation of the variables.

Figure 3 below plots the average values of selected outcome variables by country, showing significant positive correlation between them. Cross correlations between all outcome variables are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix: it shows that individuals who prefer Democracy tend to show higher Confidence in Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy, while the inverse is true for those preferring Authoritarian Regimes.

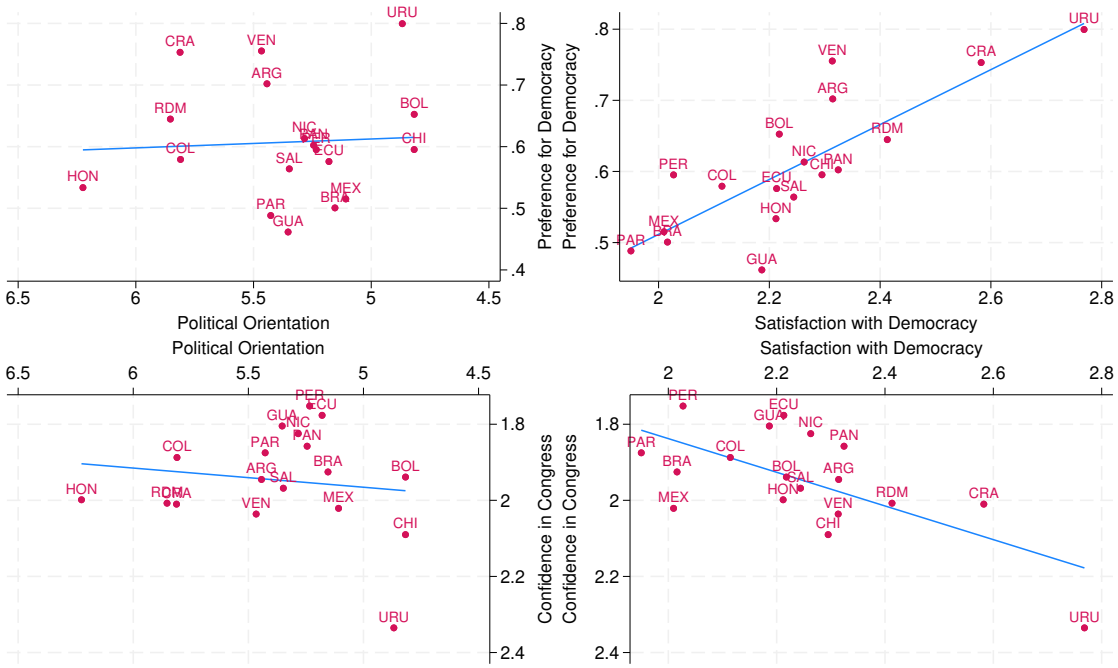

Figure 3: Correlations between selected outcome variables

Notes: Each panel plots the average value of two outcome variables for each country in the sample. The variables and scales of each panel match the ones used in neighbouring panels to ease grasping other cross correlations not included in the figure. See Table A3 in the Appendix for all cross correlations.

Additionally, Table A4 in the Appendix shows that stronger Right-wing Orientation is associated with higher Satisfaction with Democracy and greater Confidence in Institutions. In fact, individuals who self-identify as far-Left (scoring 0 or 1) display the highest Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and the lowest levels of Preference for Democracy, Satisfaction with Democracy, and Confidence in Institutions. This suggests that for a core segment of the far Left, institutions are not to be trusted, democracy is not necessarily viewed as the best way to govern a country, and satisfaction with democracy remains low. This patterns is not unique to the Latin American far Left, as similar correlations appear in other data sets.[30]

[30]For instance, the Eurobarometer also finds a positive correlation between satisfaction with democracy and self-placement on the left-right scale. The European Values Survey reports a positive correlation between self-placement and agreement with the statement that democracy is the best political system. Additionally, the World Values Survey finds a positive correlation between self-placement and confidence in parliament, the government, the judiciary, and the armed forces.

Moreover, this characterization of the far Left aligns with political science literature. In research on the ideological and historical roots of the Latin American Left, Castañeda (1995) and Panizza (2005) describe a 'hardcore' tradition stemming from Marxist thought. While the more social-democrat wing of the Left recognizes democracy and democratic values as inherebtly valuable and seeks to implement reforms through democratic means, a significant faction of the Left perceives democracy and its institutions as mechanisms that hinder 'real' change. Other scholars share this interpretation.[31] Indeed, party systems in Latin America have often (and still do) featured far-left parties that explicitly or implicitly distrust democracy (Colomer, 2005). The presence of guerilla movements across the continent further supports the notion that a segment of the left holds lower preference for democracy.[32] The cross-correlations across outcome variables are consistent with this interpretation of the Latin American Left and are relevant for the interpretation of my results later in this study.

5 Identification and Specification

This section details the empirical strategy for estimating the impact of exposure to dictatorships on political preferences. It leverages variation in regime duration across Latin American countries, using a regression framework with fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity. The preferred specification includes demographic and socioeconomic controls, as well as adjustments for macroeconomic shocks and inference challenges.

Identification comes from the fact that different countries experienced dictatorships of different lengths at different years. The cohorts born in 1980 and 1981 in Brazil and Colombia provide an example: those born in Colombia did not experience dictatorship at all, while for Brazilians, the 1980 cohort experienced one year of dictatorship, and the 1981 experienced none. The impact of exposure to dictatorship is identified by taking the difference in outcomes between the 1981 and 1980 cohorts within each country and comparing this difference across countries. In a setting with multiple countries and cohorts, the empirical strategy consists of estimating a regression capturing exposure to dictatorships, which varies at the cohort-country level, while controlling for country

[31] See Angell (1995), Hartlyn & Valenzuela (1995), Carr et al. (1993) and Castañeda (2006).

[32] Colomer (2005) calculates the average political orientation of voters from a set of 68 Latin American parties and finds that far-Left parties tend to be Communist (or Communist-inspired) and/or linked to guerrilla movements. Many guerrilla organizations originated as splinter factions of Communist or Socialist parties, including MLN-Tupamaros (Uruguay), Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombia), Sendero Luminoso (Peru), Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (Argentina) and Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Chile), among others.

and cohort fixed effects. This corresponds to the following baseline model:

$$Y_{ibct} = \alpha + \beta ExpDict_{bc} + \gamma_b + \delta_c + \varepsilon_{ibct} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ibct} is an outcome variable observed for individual i, born in year b, interviewed in country c, at time t. Cohort fixed effects (γ_b) capture common characteristics shared by individuals in the same birth-year cell, irrespective or their country of origin, thus accounting for cohort-specific beliefs and preferences (e.g., younger cohorts may have a stronger preference for democracy than older cohorts).[33] Country fixed effects (δ_c) account for common characteristics held by individuals from a given country, irrespective of their birth cohort, thus capturing time-invariant, structural differences across countries (e.g. religion, language). ε_{ibct} is an idiosyncratic error term. The main variable of interest, $ExpDict_{bct}$, measures the share of years between ages 4 and 25 lived under a non-democratic regime. As country of birth is not available, I use country of residence at the time of the survey instead, which may attenuate the estimated effects.[34] β measures the average effect on the outcome variable of an additional year of exposure to dictatorships during ages 4 to 25.

Incorporating additional controls, my preferred specification is:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{ibct} =& \alpha + \beta_1 ExpDict_{bct} + \beta_2 ExpIntens_{bct} + \beta_3 ExpShock_{bct} + \beta_4 X_i + \\ &+ \gamma_b + \delta_c \times \theta_t + \varepsilon_{ibct} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

This specification includes country×year-of-survey fixed effects ($\delta_c \times \theta_t$). This reduces concerns that responses may be influenced by events at the time of the survey: any common element to all inhabitants of a given country in a given year is accounted for by this term (e.g., the contemporaneous political situation in the country). X_i represents a vector of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of individuals, including age (one-year dummies), gender, seven dummies for educational level, three dummies for marital status, seven dummies for labour force status, five dummies for socioeconomic status, ten dummies for religion, and twelve dummies capturing access to goods and services. Finally, and as discussed, $ExpShock_{bct}$ captures exposure to severe

[33] Note that this specification implies that cohort-specific characteristics are common across countries: since I use variation in political regimes at the cohort-country level, I cannot control for factors that affect a cohort's beliefs and preferences in a given country but are unrelated to the political regime experienced by that cohort.

[34] The Latinobarometer includes a question on citizenship (for the period 2007-2020) that shows only 1.7% of the respondents are not citizens of the country where they reside. This reduces concern of migration affecting the estimation.

negative macroeconomic shocks experienced between ages 4 to 25, while $ExpIntens_{bct}$ captures the average Polity Score of the experienced dictatorships. ε_{ibct} is an idiosyncratic error term.

I estimate three specifications for each outcome variable. Specification (1) includes birth cohort fixed effects (γ_b), country fixed effects (δ_c), and country×year-of-survey fixed effects ($\delta_c \times \theta_t$). Specification (2) incorporates demographic and socioeconomic controls in X_i. Specification (3) adds $ExpIntens_{bc}$ and exposure to recessions ($ExpShock_{bc}$) and corresponds to equation 2. This is the most demanding specification and serves as the basis for further extensions and robustness checks. All regressions are estimated using OLS with standard errors clustered at the country level. Due to the small number of clusters (18), I correct the standard errors using the 'wild bootstrap' method (Cameron et al., 2008).[35] Additional fixed effects and a more saturated specification are incorporated in Section 7.

Challenges to the identification strategy

The regression specifications address several identification concerns. Country fixed effects reduce concerns that persistent differences across countries (e.g., income levels, policies) may be correlated with outcomes and thus bias the results. Likewise, cohort fixed effects control for cross-cohort changes in outcomes that occur independently of political regimes. Additionally, contemporaneous country-year shocks (i.e., factors affecting a country at the time of the survey) are accounted for by country×year-of-survey fixed effects.

Another concern is given by omitted variables. In this respect, my preferred specification includes as many socio-demographic controls as possible, as well as a term capturing exposure to macroeconomic shocks, which have been identified by Giuliano & Spilimbergo (2014) as preference-forming shocks. Although one might initially worry that exposure to dictatorships affects beliefs and preferences indirectly through the control variables (e.g., by influencing education), auxiliary regressions (available upon request) show that this is not the case.

A further challenge arises if unobservable factors simultaneously influence both exposure to dictatorship and the formation of beliefs and preferences. For instance, if a society has a low preference for democracy, this could lead to a transition towards dictatorship; individuals born and raised under the new regime may then display a low preference for democracy not only due to the dictator's actions but also because of intergenerational transmission of non-democratic values.

[35] I use the stata command *boottest* developed by Roodman (2018), with 999,999 repetitions.

In this context, the impact of exposure to an additional year of dictatorship can be identified if a random component influences regime transitions. In principle, since democracies do not have institutional mechanisms to transform into dictatorships (and viceversa) how and when a regime transitions is subject to a degree of randomness. The Latin American experience provides numerous examples of randomness affecting the start, end, and duration of dictatorships. Failed coups and rebellions illustrate how transitions can partly depend on chance.[36] In other cases, democratic regimes fell against the desires of a majority of society and as a consequence of independent actions of the armed forces.[37] Likewise, transitions were affected by sudden death or major medical illnesses, wars and natural disasters, external economic shocks and even foreign intervention (as cooperation and collaboration across dictatorial regimes or the involvement of the CIA).[38][39][40][41]

Although these examples illustrate the randomness behind regime transitions, they do not provide a systematic source of variation suitable for an instrumental variables approach. Therefore, my identification strategy relies on the assumption that exposure to an additional year of dictatorship during childhood and youth is subject to randomness.

[36] Consider failed assassination attempts of dictators as Pinochet in Chile (1986) and Stroessner in Paraguay (1974), to name a few. Chile illustrates the case of failed coups: democratic from 1935 to 1972, coups were attempted in 1936, 1938, 1939, 1943, 1948, 1955 and 1969.

[37] See Peeler (1998), O'Donnell et al. (1986) and Hartlyn & Valenzuela (1995).

[38] For instance, dictators Rafael Trujillo (Dominican Republic) and Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua) where assassinated, while Velasco Alvarado (Peru) suffered an aneurism. The sudden death of presidents Perón (Argentina) and Gestido (Uruguay) are key to understand subsequent dictatorships in both countries.

[39] Regarding wars, the Falklands/Malvinas islands' war in 1982 precipitated the fall of the Argentinian regime. Other relevant conflicts include Honduras-El Salvador (1969), Paraguay-Bolivia (1932-1935) and Peru-Ecuador (1941). As for natural disasters, Trujillo took advantage of the 1930 hurricane in Dominican Republic to strengthen his grip on the state, while the 1985 earthquake in Mexico led to reforms that accelerated the democratization process.

[40] For instance, the successful 1972 coup in Ecuador was directly linked to oil explorations and findings on the previous years. Brückner et al. (2012) find oil price shocks contribute to democratization processes, while Caselli & Tesei (2016) find resource windfalls exacerbate the authoritarian character of mild dictatorships.

[41] Coups promoted and/or backed by the CIA include Guatemala (1954), Ecuador (1961), Dominican Republic (1961), Brazil (1964), Bolivia (1971) and Chile (1973), among others. For accounts of the involvement of the United States in Latin American regime switches, see Blum (2003), Grimmett (2002), Grossman (1995), and Schoultz (1998).

6 Results

This section focuses on the empirical analysis of how exposure to dictatorships influences political attitudes and institutional trust. Using individual-level survey data, I estimate the impact of living under non-democratic regimes between the ages of 4 and 25 on Preferences for Democracy, Confidence in Institutions, and Ideological Orientation. The analysis employs a regression framework with fixed effects to account for country and cohort-specific factors, incorporating controls for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as exposure to macroeconomic shocks and the intensity of dictatorships. Robustness checks explore alternative specifications, including differential effects by ideological orientation of regimes and sensitivity to potential omitted variable bias.

In the following subsection I present the main results for Preference for Democracy. In Tables 2 and 3, the first column includes cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey fixed effects. Column 2 incorporates the already discussed controls and column 3 introduces the control for exposure to recessions. The main coefficient of interest is the one associated with $ExpDict_{bc}$, which measures the average effect of an additional year of exposure to dictatorships between the ages of 4 to 25. In the rest of the section, I present results for Confidence in Institutions, Satisfaction with Democracy, Right-wing Orientation, and additional outcome variables. For these variables, I present the results using my preferred specification.[42]

Preference for Democracy

Table 2 below shows that an additional year of exposure to dictatorships leads to a 2.5 percentage point reduction in the likelihood of preferring democracy, significant at the 10% level for my preferred specification. The coefficient is stable across specifications. This result implies that 7.25 years of exposure -average exposure in my sample- reduces Preference for Democracy by 18.1 percentage points, a sizeable effect considering a mean Preference for Democracy of 61.0% for the entire sample. Further results (see Table 4) show that this reduced democratic preference is almost evenly distributed between an increased Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (1.3 p.p.) and Indifference between Regimes (1 p.p.), both significant at 5% and 10% levels, respectively. Notably, experiencing a severe macroeconomic shock during exposure years ($ExpShock$) or the intensity of the dictatorship ($ExpIntens$) does not show a statistically significant relationship.

[42] Results for all the specifications are available upon request.

Table 2: Preference for democracy - Main results

	Preference for Democracy		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
ExpDict	**-0.021**	**-0.020***	**-0.025***
	(0.013)	**(0.011)**	**(0.013)**
ExpIntens			-0.001
			(0.001)
ExpShock			0.017
			(0.059)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893
R-squared	0.070	0.083	0.083
FE	yes	yes	yes
Controls	no	yes	yes
Macro shock	no	no	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, country×year-of-survey, and age×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

This result can be better understood in terms of persuasion rates, which measure the percentage of individuals who change their views due to exposure to dictatorships (DellaVigna & Gentzkow, 2010). In this paper, I follow Cantoni et al. (2017) and calculate conditional persuasion rates: given a belief promoted by a dictator, the conditional persuasion rate scales the effect of exposure to dictatorships on this belief by the share of the sample that would not hold the belief in the absence of exposure to dictatorship.[43] In this case, the conditional persuasion rate is 3.9%, meaning that experiencing an additional year of dictatorship between ages 4 and 25 would persuade 3.9% of the exposed individuals to declare that they do not prefer democracy. For Preference for Authoritarian Regimes, the persuasion rate is 7.4%. These rates align with other estimates in the persuasion literature.[44]

[43]For binary variables such as Preference for Democracy, I proceed as follows. First, I assume that the dictator seeks to reduce Preference for Democracy. Then, I estimate the effect of exposure to dictatorship on Preference for Democracy. I then predict the Preference for Democracy that exposed individuals would display if they had not been exposed at all. Finally, I calculate the share of the sample that would prefer democracy with zero exposure (combining the observed preference for non-exposed individuals and the counterfactual preference for exposed individuals). The conditional persuasion rate is defined as the regression coefficient divided by this share of the sample who prefers democracy when exposure is zero.

[44]DellaVigna & Kaplan (2007) find persuasion rates of 3%-8% for exposure to Fox News in the United States; DellaVigna et al. (2014) find rates of 4%-5% for exposure to Serbian radio.

To obtain more detailed information about the importance of the age of exposure, I repeat the estimations while considering exposure to dictatorships in smaller age intervals, allowing different coefficients for exposure at ages 4 to 12, 13 to 17 and 18 to 25. Results presented in Table 3 show that Preference for Democracy was greatly affected by exposure at ages 18 to 25; an additional year of dictatorship experienced at these ages reduces Preference for Democracy by 1.5 percentage points (significant at 10% levels).[45] Results also show smaller negative effects for exposure at ages 4 to 12 and 13 to 17, though they are not significant.

To further examine these results, I allow for negative macroeconomic shocks to have differential effects depending on exposure to dictatorship, as suggested by the political economy literature (Ticchi et al., 2013; Acemoglu et al., 2004; Dunning, 2008). On the one hand, negative shocks reduce resources available to a political regime, which could decrease any efforts undertaken to shape preferences or reduce their effectiveness. On the other hand, a recession may increase the likelihood of rebellion, thus increasing a dictator's incentives to influence preferences. I re-estimate my preferred specification, including an interaction term that captures the impact of negative macroeconomic shocks at different levels of exposure to dictatorships. Table A7 in the Appendix shows that the interaction term is not significant for Preference for Democracy but it is significant at 1% level for Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (-9.4 p.p), suggesting that experiencing a negative shock during a dictatorship reduces the likelihood of supporting dictatorships later on.

[45] A discussion of potential explanations behind stronger effects at this age band is presented further below.

Table 3: Preference for democracy - Differential effects by age band

	Preference for Democracy		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
ExpDict (4 to 12)	-0.004	-0.003	-0.009
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.008)
ExpDict (13 to 17)	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)
ExpDict (18 to 25)	-0.017***	-0.017***	-0.015*
	(0.006)	-0.006	(0.006)
ExpIntens (4 to 12)			-0.001
			(0.001)
ExpIntens (13 to 17)			0.000
			(0.001)
ExpIntens (18 to 25)			0.001
			(0.001)
ExpShock (4 to 12)			0.017
			(0.030)
ExpShock (13 to 17)			-0.007
			(0.015)
ExpShock (18 to 25)			0.012
			(0.021)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893
R-squared	0.070	0.083	0.0823
FE	yes	yes	yes
Controls	no	yes	yes
Macro shock	no	no	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 1, 13 to 17 and 18 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, country×year-of-survey, and . Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Finally, I allow for differential effects of exposure to dictatorships based on the severity or intensity of the regime. Though all regimes with a negative Polity Score are considered non-democratic, the literature recognizes differences across non-democratic regimes that may influence preference formation (Marshall & Jaggers, 2005). Individuals may be differentially affected depending on whether the dictator remains in power by restricting political competition and rigging elections or through arbitrary incarceration and torture. I re-estimate preferred specification, including an interaction term that captures the impact of an additional year of exposure to dictatorship for different average values of the Polity Score during the exposed years. Table A8 in the Appendix shows that the interaction term is small and not significant, ruling out differential effects of dictatorships for the three variables considered.

Confidence in Institutions, Satisfaction with Democracy and Right-wing Orientation

Table 4 reports the results of my preferred specification for Confidence in the four institutions considered, Satisfaction with Democracy and Right-wing Orientation. The table shows that exposure to dictatorship reduces Confidence in Congress, the Judiciary System, and the Armed Forces. Although negative, the coefficients for Confidence in Political Parties are not satistically significant. The largest impact corresponds to Confidence in the Judiciary. Coefficients imply that average exposure (7.25 years) lead to a reduction of 0.34, 0.53 and 0.39 points in a 1-to-4 scale for Confidence in Congress, the Armed Forces and the Judiciary, respectively. More intuitively, the corresponding persuasion rates are 3.9% for Confidence in Judiciary and 6.9% for Confidence in Congress.[46] Notably, if the dictator aimed to increase Confidence in Armed Forces, the negative effect of exposure implies a negative persuasion rate (-4.7%), meaning that these efforts backfired.[47]

Table 4: All outcome variables - Main results

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.025*	0.013**	0.010*	-0.027	-0.047*	-0.073***	-0.069*	-0.054*	-0.218
	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.190)
ExpIntens	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.020)
ExpShock	0.017	0.003	-0.006	0.066	-0.026	-0.005	0.141	0.005	0.199
	(0.059)	(0.032)	(0.018)	(0.106)	(0.109)	(0.118)	(0.145)	(0.113)	(0.739)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Results for exposure in smaller age intervals (see Table A5 in the Appendix) show

[46] Calculating conditional persuasion rates for confidence in institutions requires additional steps. First, I assume that the dictator intended to reduce Confidence in Judiciary and Congress, and construct two dummy variables that take value 0 when confidence is high (3 or 4) and 1 when it is low (1 or 2). I assume that the intention was to increase Confidence in Armed Forces and construct a dummy variable taking the value 0 when confidence is low and 1 when it is high. I then repeat the estimation of the effect of exposure to dictatorship with my preferred specification on the three dummies and use these coefficients to estimate conditional persuasion rates, as explained in a previous footnote.

[47] A discussion of potential reasons why the dictator's efforts may have backfired for some variables is presented later.

mixd results. I find negative impacts mostly concentrated among those exposed between ages 18 and 25, for Preference for Democracy and Indifference Between Regimes, as wll as for Confidence in Judiciary and Satisfaction with Democracy. However, there are traces of effects at other age bands: 4 to 12 for Indifference Between Regimes and Confidence in Armed Forces, and 13 to 17 for Confidence in Congress. Results for differential effects of macroeconomic shocks (see Table A7 in the Appendix) show an effect for Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and for Right-wing Orientation. First, experiencing a negative economic shock during a dictatorship at formative ages reduces the likelihood of preferring a dictatorship (9.4 p.p., significant at 1% levels), which suggests that unsuccesful dictatorship failed in their effort to shape individuals' preferences towards authoritarianism. Second, a negative and significant effect at the 1% level (-2.125) suggests that experiencing a negative shock during a dictatorship (which in my sample are mostly right-wing) pushed individuals strongly away from the Right of the political spectrum later in life, towards the Center and the Left. Beyond this result, the remaining findings suggest that experiencing a negative economic shock during a dictatorship at formative ages had no amplifying or mitigating effect on the primary role played by dictatorships. Allowing differential effects by dictatorship intensity (see Table A8 in the Appendix) yields no significant interaction effects.

Table 4 shows that an additional year of exposure to dictatorship between ages 4 and 25 reduces contemporaneous Satisfaction with Democracy by 0.055 (on a 1-to-4 scale); an individual exposed to the sample average of 7.25 years would display almost half a point lower Satisfaction with Democracy compared to a non-exposed individual. Alternatively, the corresponding persuasion rate is 5.9%, meaning each year of exposure leads 5.9% of the exposed individuals to be dissatisfied with democracy. Examining results by age band, the reduction in Satisfaction with Democracy is almost exclusively driven by exposure to dictatorships between ages 18 and 25 (see Table A5 in the Appendix). Interaction terms accounting for exposure to macroeconomic shocks and regime intensity are small and not significant (see Tables A7 and A8 in the Appendix).[48]

Regarding Right-wing Orientation, recall that this is measured on a scale from 0 (Left) to 10 (Right); a negative coefficient indicates a shift away from the Right and towards the Left. Results in Table 4 suggest that exposure to dictatorships reduces identification with the Right and increases identification with the Left, although the coefficient is imprecisely estimated. The results indicate that 7.25 years of exposure

[48] In this case I assume that the dictator's intention was to reduce Satisfaction with Democracy; the corresponding dummy takes the value 0 for Satisfaction with Democracy above or equal to 2 and 1 otherwise.

(the sample average) would move an individual 1.6 points away from the Right and toward the Left, with an implied persuasion rate of -9.1%, again indicating a backfire effect.[49]

To explore this result further, I convert the outcome variable into eleven dummies (one for each possible response) and estimate the impact of exposure on the probability of selecting each option. As Figure 4 (see Table A9 in the Appendix for regression results) illustrates, exposure to dictatorship decreases self-identification with the (far) Reft: coefficients are negative and significant at the 1%, 5%, and 1% levels for responses 8, 9, and 10, respectively. The largest coefficient in absolute value (-0.016) corresponds to the likelihood of selecting 10 (being far-right). Results also show positive effects for selecting 5 (1 p.p., significant at 5% levels), 2 and 0 (0.6p.p. and 0.5 p.p. significant at 1% and 10% levels, respectively).[50]

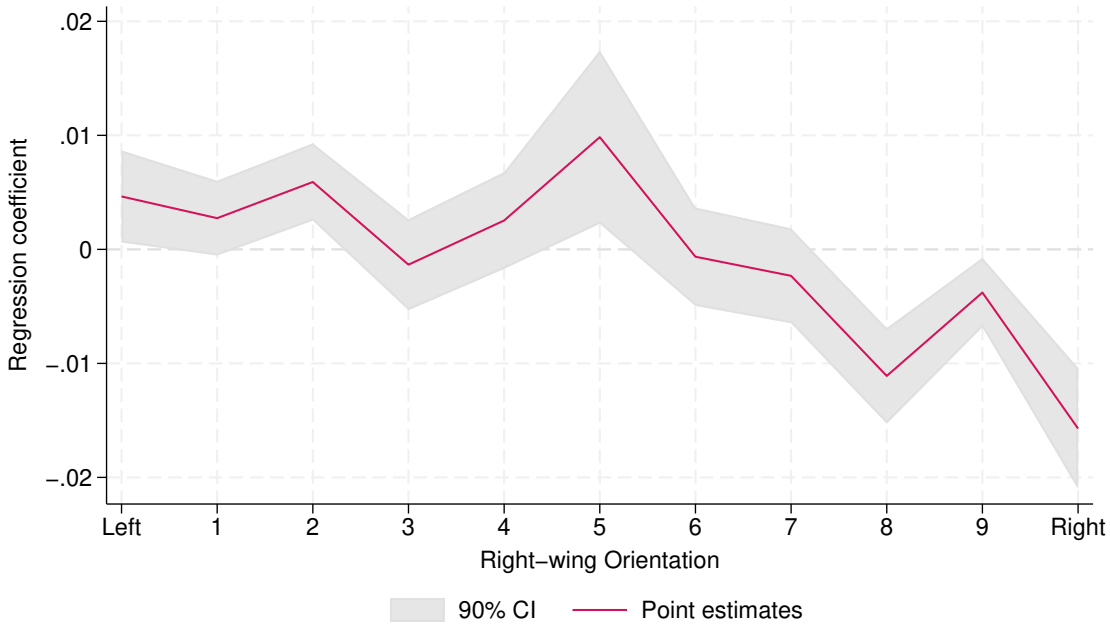

Figure 4: Right-wing orientation point estimates and 90% confidence interval

Notes: The figure plots the coefficients on the variable $expdict_{bc}$ taken from regressions of each of the eleven values of the Right-wing Orientation variable using my preferred specification (Specification 3). The shaded area represents the 90% confidence interval. See Table A9 in the Appendix for regression results

The shift away from the Right is fairly evenly distributed across the three age

[49]Given the predominance of Right-wing dictatorships in the region, I assume that the dictator's goal was to shift individuals away from the Left and toward the Right.The corresponding dummy variable takes the value 0 for Right-wing Orientation below or equal to 5 and 1 otherwise.

[50]I do not interpret this result as suggesting that exposure turns specific individuals from the far Right directly to the far Left, but rather that exposure shifts individuals gradually along the spectrum—for instance, from the far Right to the Right, from the Right to the Center Right, from the Center Right to the Center, and so forth.

bands, although the estimates are imprecise (see Table A5 in the Appendix). Interestingly, as mentioned before, results for differential effects by macroeconomic shocks (see Table A7 in the Appendix) show a large, negative effect (-2.125 on a 0-to-10 scale) on Right-wing Orientation for the interaction between exposure to dictatorships and severe macroeconomic crises. This suggests that experiencing a severe macroeconomic crisis during a dictatorship had a strong impact on ideological orientation. Again, allowing for differential effects by dictatorship intensity (see Table A8 in the Appendix) yields no significant interaction effects.

Overall, my findings indicate that greater exposure to dictatorship correlates with lower adherence to democratic values, with the most significant effects observed among individuals exposed between ages 18 and 25, as well as with a shift away from right-wing political identification. Possible explanations include authoritarian regimes' targeted efforts to influence youth through indoctrination, repression, or incentives, as well as the critical role of this age group in political mobilization, as well as the role of oppositional efforts by the people. These results highlight how regime experiences shape long-term political attitudes and contribute to broader debates on democratic resilience. A more detailed discussion of these findings follows in the next subsection.

Discussion of main results

Taken together, the results show that exposure to dictatorship during childhood and early youth affects political beliefs and preferences: higher levels of exposure lead to lower values in a set of variables associated with democratic values. While the coefficients are small, they are non-negligible, especially considering that the average exposure is 7.25 years. Results for exposure across age subgroups suggest that exposure at later ages (18 to 25) has a greater impact on the formation of political beliefs and preferences than exposure at earlier stages of life, which could be due to multiple factors.

First, individuals aged 18 to 25 represent a key subgroup in any attempt to mobilize opposition against an authoritarian regime. Youth often plays a leading role in protests and political mobilizations, both in democracies and authoritarian regimes.[51] An authoritarian ruler who anticipates the importance of youth may concentrate efforts precisely on this demographic. For example, the regime may tailor indoctrination

[51] This has been observed across Latin America throughout the twentieth century, as well as during political turmoil in the Eastern Bloc in the 1960s and, more recently, in protests across the Arab world. Even prosperous, stable, and long-standing democracies have experienced revolts in which youth played a crucial role, as illustrated by the case of France (May 1968) and the United States (the 1960s anti-war movement, the 2010s Occupy movement).

and propaganda to this group through targeted media campaigns or the educational system. Additionally, any transfers or preferential treatment used to elicit support may be specifically directed at this subgroup, or programs designed to address their needs may be implemented. Alternatively, if coercion and repression are the regime's primary tools for maintaining power, these may be disproportionately directed at youth to increase the probability of survival.[52] In this interpretation, stronger effects within this subgroup may reflect the increased intensity or targeting of the dictator's efforts to remain in power.[53]

Second, this subgroup corresponds to an age at which even the most politically disinterested individuals typically begin their political engagement, participating in democratic processes within the public sphere.[54] Of course, democracy extends beyond voting and typically includes free speech, a free press, separation of powers, and deliberation and legislation by an elected body, among other elements. Furthermore, during electoral campaigns, many details and particularities of how democracies function come to the forefront of public discussion and interest. If individuals develop an appreciation for democracy through direct exposure to its institutions and practices, then the effects of dictatorial rule may be strongest when experienced precisely at the age when individuals would normally be introduced to these elements. Under this interpretation, individuals are more likely to learn about and develop a preference for democracy when they experience an election cycle or see a functioning parliament at age 20 compared to at age 12. Consequently, the suppression of democratic institutions has a stronger effect when experienced at later ages.

It is important to note that dictators sometimes remain in power while nominally maintaining some democratic institutions, such as by rigging elections or allowing limited political activity within a restricted parliament. In this context, ages 18 to 25 mark individuals' first direct participation in this flawed version of democracy. To the extent that participation in a diluted form of democracy generates lower support than engagement in an unrestricted democratic system, this can also explain the stronger

[52] As a potential counterpoint, one could argue that a way to control youth is through early-age indoctrination. However, in the short run, allocating resources and effort to contain or convert contemporaneous youth may be optimal, while indoctrination of children or adolescents increases the probability of survival in the medium term.

[53] In this interpretation, the dictator targets "youth" broadly rather than specifically the 18–25 subgroup, but the strength of the effect arises because individuals remain impressionable at these ages.

[54] Voting has been compulsory in almost all Latin American countries since the establishment of democratic rule (Helmke & Meguid, 2007).

effects observed for this group.[55][56]

Third, this subgroup corresponds to a period of transition into adulthood, marked by a variety of life changes. These include completing or leaving the educational system, entering the labor market, leaving the family home (and possibly starting their own family), reaching the legal age of majority, and gaining the right to vote.

Some clarifications can be made regarding the results on confidence in institutions and satisfaction with democracy. These results have previously been interpreted, alongside those for regime preference, as capturing an underlying 'taste' for democracy. However, it is possible that exposure to dictatorship affects confidence in institutions and satisfaction with democracy for reasons beyond ideological shifts or through different mechanisms.

First, individuals might hold a lower opinion of Congress, the Judiciary, and Political Parties (or Democracy in general) if they believe these institutions bear some responsibility for the rise of the dictator, independently of the dictator's own efforts to shape beliefs and preferences. Second, dictatorship could have a lasting negative impact on the quality of these institutions (or democracy itself). In this case, lower confidence in the judiciary, for example, would result not (only) from the dictator's ability to shape preferences but also from its actual poor performance. Institutional quality could deteriorate either as a deliberate strategy to maintain power or through passive neglect.[57]

Similarly, beyond or independently of a dictator's deliberate efforts to shape beliefs and preferences, a prolonged ban on political parties could also weaken the quality of future politicians. Since part of a politician's formation occurs within political parties—through practice and mentorship by more experienced peers—long periods of heavy restrictions or outright bans on party activity could mean that, after a democratic transition, political parties and legislators lack experience and are of lower quality compared to a scenario without dictatorship.

Furthermore, lower satisfaction with democracy and confidence in institutions might stem from dissatisfaction with how these institutions handle challenges created by the

[55] For instance, this could be the first time individuals experience their preferred candidate or party being prohibited from participating in elections, or their first time voting in an election that is rigged or conducted under repression or coercion.

[56] Again, the effect arises because individuals are not (fully) affected before reaching voting age and remain impressionable until approximately age 25.

[57] For example, a dictator might appoint incompetent but loyal individuals to key administrative positions, who could remain in the bureaucratic structure after the regime change. Alternatively, the dictator could underfund the judiciary or reduce investments in public education, particularly in areas linked to human resource formation. Even after a democratic transition, these cuts could compromise institutional quality and efficiency in the medium run.

dictatorship itself. For instance, distrust in the judiciary may arise from its difficulty or failure to prosecute the dictator and his collaborators, especially in cases of human rights violations or state corruption. Similarly, lower confidence in Congress or political parties may be driven by their inability to fully undo the dictator's policies or by the fact that, in many countries, the dictator or his allies retained positions in Congress or led major political parties.

Two counterpoints should be noted regarding these last interpretations. First, the empirical specification includes year-country fixed effects and a comprehensive set of control variables. This setup helps account for the impact of dictatorship on contemporary institutional perceptions. For example, a large-scale corruption scandal linked to a former dictator would likely be (partially) absorbed by the year-country fixed effect. Second, the mechanisms discussed above should not necessarily affect individuals differently based on their age of exposure.[58]

Since the sample includes individuals aged 26 and older—excluding those still in their formative years—lower confidence in institutions stemming from these reasons should, in principle, affect all individuals similarly and thus have a limited impact on the estimated coefficients.

The effect of dictatorship on confidence in the armed forces appears to be subject to less debate or alternative interpretations. Given the armed forces' central role in maintaining dictatorships—and the fact that many dictators themselves were high-ranking military officers—it is reasonable to assume that any effort to shape beliefs and preferences would prioritize improving the military's image. In this context, the results strongly suggest that these efforts backfired, primarily due to the military's involvement in repression and coercion rather than institutional decline or dissatisfaction with its contemporary role.

The results also indicate that macroeconomic shocks do not have differential impacts, except for a negative and significant interaction effect on Confidence in Congress and Right-wing Orientation. Specifically, experiencing a year of dictatorship under a severe recession shifts an individual's ideological orientation 2.125 points to the left on a 0–10 scale. The size and sign of this interaction suggest that economic downturns reinforced the dictator's efforts to shape preferences, exacerbating the exposure

[58] For example, suppose a dictator ruled from 1980 to 1984, and this tenure had a long-lasting negative effect on the judiciary's quality. If the transition to democracy was peaceful and conditional on an amnesty law protecting the dictator and his allies, individuals surveyed in 1995 might hold negative views of the judiciary due to its poor quality and of Congress due to its failure to repeal the amnesty and investigate past corruption. Those who were 4–25 years old during the dictatorship would be 19–40 in 1995. It is unclear why these negative perceptions would be concentrated among this age group rather than affecting older individuals as well.

effect. However, the effect of exposure does not appear to depend on the severity of the dictatorship experienced.

Taken together, and assuming (as historical evidence suggests) that right-wing dictators strongly sought to influence ideological preferences, the results in Figure 4 imply that their efforts largely backfired. This finding contrasts with the economics literature on persuasion and preference formation, where efforts to influence beliefs typically either have no effect or succeed in the intended direction.

To better understand these results, recall the previously discussed correlations between Right-wing Orientation and other outcome variables: consistent with political science literature, individuals who identify with the far left tend to express lower satisfaction with democracy, a weaker preference for democracy, and lower trust in institutions. I interpret my findings as suggesting that, although dictators were effective in eroding democratic values, the resulting disenchantment and skepticism toward democracy and its institutions created fertile ground for radical and populist left-wing movements to thrive. This interpretation aligns with the positive and significant effect observed for Indifference between Regimes.

A deeper examination of these seemingly contradictory effects—where dictatorships reduce democratic values (aligning with the dictator's objectives) while simultaneously shifting ideological preferences leftward and decreasing confidence in the armed forces—suggests a framework of political alienation. In this view, the primary impact of dictatorship is to erode democratic values. Disenchanted, unsatisfied, and politically alienated individuals may then be more susceptible to radical or populist left-wing parties, a pattern consistent with political science literature and the observed increase in Indifference between Regimes.

However, this explanation raises a puzzle: why did the dictator's efforts succeed in eroding democratic values but fail in promoting right-wing ideology and military trust? One alternative interpretation suggests that dictatorships generate a backlash against ideological indoctrination and repression. In this view, the main effect of dictatorship is to provoke opposition to both the ideology it promotes and the institutions it uses for repression—explaining the increase in left-wing identification and the decline in confidence in the armed forces. The resulting shift toward the far left then drives reduced preference for democracy and trust in institutions, given the far left's critical and instrumental stance toward democracy.

A further distinction can be made between two dimensions: one relating to political regimes (democratic vs. non-democratic) and another to ideological alignment (left vs. right). The results suggest that dictatorships successfully shaped preferences along the

first dimension but provoked resistance along the second. This interpretation implies that preferences regarding political regimes are more malleable than ideological orientations, or at least that individuals are less resistant to influence regarding regime type than ideology.

This could be due to the role of direct exposure to democratic institutions and practices (e.g., congressional debates, electoral competition), which are often suppressed under dictatorship, compared to ideological persuasion, which operates through different channels. An individual does not need direct experience with far-left policies to identify as far-left, whereas exposure to a functioning democracy is more critical for fostering a preference for democracy. Consequently, while dictatorships undermine democratic values by disrupting democratic institutions, their right-wing indoctrination efforts prove less effective.

Intergenerational preference transmission models further support this idea: minorities tend to reinforce cultural traits when under threat, which could explain why left-wing ideologies persisted despite repression.[59] Additionally, majorities may invest less effort in transmitting widely held beliefs, which could explain why democratic values eroded under dictatorship while left-wing beliefs intensified.[60]

Finally, the concept of democratic indoctrination is relevant: democracies invest in fostering democratic values to reduce the likelihood of authoritarian transitions.[61] Thus, the estimated coefficients capture not only the effect of exposure to dictatorship but also the absence of exposure to democratic indoctrination. If dictatorships backfired in both dimensions, but the lack of democratic indoctrination had a stronger effect, this would explain the observed decline in democratic values despite the failure of right-wing indoctrination.

Links with theory

The existing literature highlights propaganda, education, and repression as primary tools used by authoritarian regimes to legitimize their rule and shape public opinion. My findings provide empirical evidence that exposure to dictatorship reduces preference for democracy, trust in political institutions, and satisfaction with democracy. Additionally, I show that right-wing dictatorships in Latin America had the unintended consequence of increasing left-wing ideological identification. This suggests that, beyond merely suppressing dissent, authoritarian regimes actively reshape the ideological landscape—potentially through both indoctrination and reactive opposition from the

[59] See Bisin & Verdier (2000, 2001).
[60] See Corradi et al. (1992) on resistance culture in the Southern Cone.
[61] See Ticchi et al. (2013); Besley & Persson (2018).

population.

My study also contributes to the literature on democratization by demonstrating that the effects of autocratic rule persist even after a transition to democracy. While much of the literature focuses on structural factors such as economic development or institutional strength, my work highlights the role of individual-level preferences in shaping the quality of democratic governance. By showing that exposure to dictatorship erodes democratic values, my research suggests that authoritarian legacies can hinder democratic consolidation even in formally democratic societies. This perspective aligns with and expands on existing theories of democratic backsliding and institutional distrust, emphasizing the long-term impact of political socialization under autocratic rule.

Finally, my work engages with the broader field of political economy by challenging the assumption that preferences for democracy are purely exogenous or driven solely by material incentives. Many models of political transitions assume that individuals' regime preferences respond primarily to economic conditions. However, my findings suggest that preferences are actively shaped by the political environment in which individuals come of age. This aligns with recent theoretical work, such as that of Ticchi et al. (2013) and Besley & Persson (2018), which argues that regimes strategically mold public preferences to ensure their survival. By providing empirical evidence for these models, my research strengthens the case for incorporating preference formation into theories of political regime dynamics.

In summary, my paper advances the theoretical understanding of how political regimes shape preferences by demonstrating that dictatorships influence long-term political beliefs through multiple mechanisms. By applying the IYH to Latin America, my work offers new insights into how exposure to autocratic rule affects democratic attitudes and ideological orientation. Furthermore, my findings have implications for the study of democratization and political economy, showing that authoritarian legacies can persist long after a regime transition. These contributions refine our understanding of how political experiences shape citizens' long-term attitudes, ultimately influencing the trajectory of democratic development.

7 Extensions and Robustness checks

In this section, I consider additional outcome variables, a more saturated specification, two falsification exercises testing for exposure before or after ages 4 to 25, an alternative age band for exposure (10 to 20), an alternative criterion to distinguish dictatorships

from democracies (Vanhanen, 2000), differential effects by the political orientation of the dictatorships and the level of income inequality experienced, and a restricted sample of individuals with nonzero exposure. Tables presented here and in the Appendix show regression results for my preferred specification. These robustness tests confirm the consistency of the main results.

First, I examine additional outcome variables that capture the effects of exposure on actual political behavior (attending authorized demonstrations, signing a petition), confidence in authorities (police, government), confidence in the media (television, newspapers, radio), and opinions of the United States.[62]

Table 5: Results for additional outcome variables

	Confidence in Television (1)	Confidence in Newspapers (2)	Confidence in Radio (3)	Confidence in Government (4)	Confidence in Police (5)	Attend a Demonstration (6)	Sign a Petition (7)	Opinion of United States (8)
ExpDict	-0.010	-0.003	-0.039*	-0.027	-0.071**	0.023*	-0.003	-0.035**
	´(0.013)	´(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.017)
ExpIntens	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.004	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002	-0.004
	(0.002)	´(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
ExpShock	-0.007	-0.089	0.035	0.090	0.149	-0.011	0.000	0.103
	(0.102)	(0.117)	(0.107)	(0.135)	(0.147)	(0.057)	(0.053)	(0.074)
Observations	240,012	169,054	156,630	251,189	301,994	154,830	82,199	221,145
R-squared	0.056	0.052	0.063	0.141	0.100	0.067	0.075	0.131
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 5 shows that exposure to dictatorship reduces confidence in Radio, confidence in the Police, and opinion of the United States. Lower confidence in radio could stem from past attempts by dictators to manipulate the media. The reduction in confidence in the police (along with decreased confidence in the armed forces) may be due to

[62] These confidence-related variables come from the same survey question already discussed. The political behavior variables are derived from the question: *I am going to read out a variety of political activities. I would like you to tell me, for each one, if you have ever done any of them, if you would ever do any of them, or if you would never do any of them?* I construct dummy variables that take a value of 1 if the individual has engaged in the activity and 0 otherwise. The variable capturing opinions of the United States comes from the question: *I would like to know your opinion about the following countries that I'm going to read. Do you have a very good, good, bad, or very bad opinion of....* I recode this variable on a 1-to-4 scale, consistent with other confidence-related questions. Confidence in television and police is available for all years, while availability for other variables varies as follows: confidence in newspapers (2001, 2003-2015), in radio (2001, 2003-2015), and in government (1995, 1996, 2002-2020); trust in the United States (2000-2007, 2009-2020). The question on attending authorized demonstrations was only asked in 2002 and 2005-2008, as well as in 2015, while signing a petition was recorded in 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000-2008, 2015, and 2020.

the role these institutions played in repression and coercion under non-democratic regimes. Additionally, the decline in opinion of the United States is consistent with its involvement in the rise of several dictatorships. More importantly, the results indicate that exposure to dictatorship may influence actual political behavior. There is a positive, albeit small, effect on the probability of attending a demonstration (2.3 percentage points, significant at the 10% level). However, the estimated reduction in the likelihood of signing a petition is imprecise.

Second, I incorporate age×cohort fixed effects. Coefficients from this more saturated specification (see Table A10 in the Appendix) are very similar in magnitude and statistical significance to my main estimates. Once again, results show that exposure reduces preference for democracy, confidence in Congress, the judiciary, and the armed forces, as well as satisfaction with democracy, while increasing indifference between regimes and preference for authoritarian rule.

Third, I examine exposure at ages 26 to 45 and, as a placebo test, during the 20 years before individuals were born (ages -20 to 0). Table 6 shows that the placebo exercise measuring exposure before birth yields small and statistically insignificant coefficients for all outcomes. Results for exposure at ages 26 to 45 show a negative and significant coefficient (at the 10% level) only for satisfaction with democracy and confidence in the armed forces. These results may be linked to the notorious role of the armed forces as a repressive institution during non-democratic regimes in the region. Overall, these findings suggest that belief and preference formation are most malleable between the ages of 4 and 25.

Table 6: Results for all outcome variables - Falsification exercises

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
	PANEL A: Exposure between ages 26 to 45								
ExpDict (26 to 45)	-0.006	0.012	-0.008	0.002	-0.027	-0.039	-0.074*	-0.047*	-0.029
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.049)	(0.040)	(0.027)	(0.155)
ExpIntens (26 to 45)	0.002	-0.001*	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.003	0.001	-0.004
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.009)
ExpShock (26 to 45)	0.061	-0.047	0.024	0.033	0.004	0.013	0.039	0.049	0.102
	(0.049)	(0.039)	(0.033)	(0.074)	(0.078)	(0.111)	(0.097)	(0.096)	(1.800)
Observations	115,349	115,349	115,349	123,131	117,457	121,194	113,328	120,023	97,922
R-squared	0.091	0.057	0.103	0.117	0.126	0.110	0.100	0.144	0.064
	PANEL B: Exposure between 20 years before birth and birth								
ExpDict (-20 to 0)	0.014	-0.004	-0.005	-0.013	0.003	0.006	0.003	0.028	-0.123
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.120)
ExpIntens (-20 to 0)	0.000	-0.001	0.001	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.004	0.000	-0.005
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.013)
ExpShock (-20 to 0)	0.014	0.000	0.012	0.076	0.109	0.126**	0.086	0.067	0.557**
	(0.029)	(0.017)	(0.018)	-0.056	(0.052)	(0.056)	(0.098)	(0.070)	(0.231)
Observations	353,138	353,138	353,138	374,504	361,877	370,929	342,740	366,063	304,516
R-squared	0.077	0.050	0.089	0.097	0.103	0.082	0.093	0.123	0.054
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 26 to 45 (Panel A) and 20 years before birth and birth (Panel B). Regressions are run on a sample of individuals aged 46 or older for Panel A and 18 or older (but born on or after 1940) for Panel B. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

In third place, I consider exposure to dictatorships during a different age band: 10 to 20 years old. Results in Table A6 in the Appendix are very similar in magnitude and significance to my main results. The main difference lies in a lower impact on Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and a non-significant effect on Indifference Between Regimes. The similarity in results between exposure to dictatorships at ages 4–25 and ages 10–20 suggests that the critical period for shaping beliefs and preferences extends beyond adolescence. This indicates that early childhood exposure (ages 4–9) and young adulthood (ages 21–25) do not significantly alter the overall impact of authoritarian regimes on individuals, though results for different age bands show a concentration of significant effects during exposure at ages 18–25.

One possible explanation is that the mechanisms influencing beliefs—such as education, media control, and repression—are most effective during adolescence and early adulthood when individuals are more impressionable and politically socialized. If exposure beyond this period does not change outcomes, it implies that the core effects of

dictatorship are already established by early adulthood. Alternatively, it may reflect that the methodology captures the main drivers of authoritarian influence within the 10–20 age range, while additional years of exposure do not contribute meaningfully. This suggests that future analyses could focus primarily on this age window without losing significant insights.

In fourth place, I repeat the empirical exercise using the Vanhanen Index (Vanhanen, 2000) as an alternative method for distinguishing democracies from dictatorships. I consider this index because, among alternatives to the Polity IV criteria, it is one of the few that covers all Latin American countries in my sample over the desired time horizon (see Munck & Verkuilen (2002) for a review of democracy indexes). In a detailed analysis, Munck & Verkuilen (2002) notes that the Vanhanen Index classifies regimes based solely on two dimensions—Competition and Participation—resulting in classifications that differ somewhat from those derived from the Polity Score Index.

However, the Vanhanen Index has several limitations. First, it simplifies complex democratic processes by focusing primarily on election outcomes, neglecting other key democratic elements such as political freedoms and the rule of law. Second, the index may be culturally and contextually biased, as it assumes that electoral competition is a universal indicator of democracy, overlooking factors like corruption or media restrictions that can distort elections. Additionally, it only considers formal electoral competition, ignoring non-electoral forms of democratic participation, such as civil society activism or direct democracy mechanisms. Furthermore, it places excessive emphasis on electoral outcomes, potentially overlooking the quality of governance, civil liberties, and the extent to which a system represents the will of the people. The index also lacks temporal sensitivity, failing to capture short-term fluctuations in democratic quality. Lastly, it generalizes democracy across countries with different political histories and structures, which may lead to misinterpretations in cross-country comparisons.

For the years and countries considered in my sample, both indexes agree on regime classification in 85.6% of cases. In 8.8% of cases, Vanhanen classifies a regime as a dictatorship when Polity IV considers it a democracy, while in 4.6% of cases the opposite occurs. Results (see Table A11 in the Appendix) show coefficients similar in size and sign to the main findings; Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and Confidence in the Armed Forces arenot significant anymore but Right-wing Orientation is. Additional results by age bands (available upon request) show significant effects of exposure at ages 18–25 on Indifference Between Regimes, Confidence in Political Parties, Congress, Judiciary, Armed Forces, and Satisfaction with Democracy, with signs and magnitudes

similar to those found using the Polity Score Index. Taken together, these results suggest that the choice of an index does not affect the conclusion that exposure to dictatorships between ages 4 and 25 significantly influenced subsequent political beliefs and preferences.

As another robustness check, in fifth place, I repeat my estimations while considering the political orientation of non-democratic regimes. Although most non-democratic regimes in Latin America can be classified as Right-Wing, the region also experienced Left-Wing dictatorships. While all dictators aim to erode democratic values to strengthen their hold on power, regimes with different political orientations may have distinct ideological goals, making it relevant to explore how exposure to different types of regimes affects Right-Wing Orientation.

Classifying regimes is a complex and often debated task. To construct a classification, I proceed as follows. First, I rely on existing datasets compiled by political science scholars: I use the dataset by Murillo et al. (2010), covering 1978–2000, and the Database of Political Institutions by Beck et al. (2001), spanning 1975–2000. From these sources, I extract ideological classifications of regimes (Left, Right, Center, Center-Left, etc.). Second, I infer the political orientation of regimes by cross-referencing this information with other datasets. I use data from 1975–2000 to classify parties and coalitions ideologically, then infer the orientation of pre-1975 regimes using a dataset on legislative elections for a subset of Latin American countries starting as early as 1912 (compiled by Coppedge (Coppedge)). Additionally, Baker & Greene (2011) code the ideology of Latin American political parties, allowing me to assign a political orientation to some non-democratic regimes led by parties or individuals strongly associated with a given ideology.[63] Finally, for remaining unclassified regimes, I manually assign a political orientation based on available information on policies and international relations.[64]

Since regime classification is debatable, I generate two classifications (available upon request): one considering only unambiguously Left-Wing dictatorships and another including ambiguous cases. I then repeat my estimations, transforming my variable $ExpDict_{bc}$ to include only exposure to non-Left dictatorships between ages 4 and 25.

Results (see Table A12 in the Appendix) are consistent with and align with my main results presented earlier. In Panel A, exposure to non-Left dictatorships reduces Preference for Democracy in 2.3 p.p., and it increases Preference for Authoritarian

[63] For this task, I use the Archigos dataset (Goemans et al., 2009), which provides the names of all individuals occupying the main executive position for each country and year in my sample.

[64] For instance, I classify regimes as Right-Wing if they severed diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, banned the Communist Party, or generally suppressed trade unions.

Regimes (1.1 p.p.) and Indifference Between Regimes (1 p.p.). It also reduces Confidence in Judiciary (0.062 points in a 1-to.4 scale) and Satisfaction with Democracy (0.061 points in a 1-to-4 scale). Results for the remaining variables are similar in sign and magnitude as my main results albeit not statistically significant. In Panel B, exposure to non-Left dictatorships reduces Preference for Democracy in 2.4 p.p., and it increases Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (1.3 p.p.) and Indifference Between Regimes (1.2 p.p.). It also reduces Confidence in Judiciary (0.054 points in a 1-to.4 scale) and Satisfaction with Democracy (0.068 points in a 1-to-4 scale). Results for the remaining variables are similar in sign and magnitude as my main results albeit not statistically significant. Overall, considering the political orientation of regimes does not affect the main conclusions: Right-Wing and Left-Wing dictatorships had similar effects on political beliefs and preferences.

As yet another robustness check, in sixth place, I repeat my estimations while considering inequality levels during exposure to dictatorships. It is possible that the impact of dictatorships on preference formation varies depending on whether the regime engaged in redistributive policies. To account for inequality, I rely on two sources: (1) Siniscalchi (2014), which compiles long-run historical Gini Index series for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, and (2) the UNU-WIDER World Income Inequality Database (UNU-WIDER, 2015), which covers a subset of countries in my sample, generally starting from the 1950s. Note first that data requirements imply that the estimating sample is about 38.6% smaller than the main one, and that two countries are lost in the process, hence this robustness check should be taken with caution.

I calculate the average Gini Index during exposure to dictatorship at ages 4–25 and construct a dummy variable indicating whether an individual experienced inequality above or below the median level in their country. I then repeat my estimations, including this dummy and an interaction term for exposure to both dictatorship and high inequality levels. Results (see Table A13 in the Appendix) show statistically significant results. Regarding Preference for Authoritarian Regimes, the coefficient for the High Gini dummy variable is statistically significant at the 1% levels (-0.018), which suggests that individuals living in countries with high inequality are generally less likely to prefer authoritarian regimes compared to those in low-inequality settings. However, the interaction term (0.012) is significant at the 5% level, indicating that among individuals in high-inequality countries, exposure to dictatorships increases the likelihood of preferring authoritarian regimes. This suggests that while high inequality alone is associated with lower support for authoritarianism, direct exposure to non-democratic regimes in such contexts can counteract this effect, potentially due to learned adapta-

tion or normalization of authoritarian rule. Regarding Indifference Between Regimes, the coefficient for the High Gini dummy variable is statistically significant at the 5% levels (0.33), implies that individuals in countries with high inequality tend to be more indifferent regarding regime type, showing less attachment to democracy relative to their counterparts in more equal societies. Interestingly, the interaction term (-0.013) is also significant at the 5% level, indicating that exposure to dictatorships reduces this indifference in high-inequality contexts. In other words, while high inequality makes individuals more ambivalent between democracy and authoritarianism, having experienced life under a dictatorship seems to push them toward taking a more defined stance—either in favor or against. Taken together, these results suggest a nuanced relationship between inequality, exposure to dictatorship, and political attitudes. In highly unequal societies, people tend to reject authoritarian regimes but are also more indifferent about democracy. However, direct experience with dictatorship in these settings can both increase support for authoritarian rule and reduce political indifference, potentially due to the long-term effects of political socialization under non-democratic governance.

As a final variation, I repeat the estimations using a restricted sample, excluding individuals with zero exposure. The identification of the effect of an additional year of exposure to dictatorships is now based on comparisons among individuals who experienced at least one year of dictatorship between the ages of 4 and 25. In Section 5, I discussed the possibility that an underlying variable could drive both beliefs and preferences as well as changes in political regimes. Although I cannot definitively rule out this possibility, I argued against it by highlighting the significant random component affecting the onset, duration, and termination of non-democratic regimes in my sample. If such an underlying variable were influencing both political regimes and beliefs, restricting the sample to exposed individuals would help mitigate this concern by ensuring greater similarity among them. This approach also allows me to exploit the randomness in the timing and duration of dictatorships.

The results (see Table A14 in the Appendix) closely resemble my main findings. The coefficients for Confidence in the Judiciary, Congress, and the Armed Forces remain similar in magnitude and statistical significance to the previous estimates. Likewise, the coefficients for Preference for Democracy, Preference for Authoritarian Regimes, Indifference Between Regimes, Satisfaction with Democracy, and Right-Wing Orientation are also comparable in size to the main findings, though estimated with less precision. Notably, restricting the sample results in a 36.9% reduction in observations. Consequently, the lack of statistical significance may stem either from improved iden-

tification of a truly non-existent effect or from reduced statistical power in detecting an existing one.

In the next section, I reflect on the study's main findings, emphasizing their implications for policy and economic analysis. I highlight how the results contribute to the existing literature and discuss their relevance in shaping future research. Additionally, I acknowledge potential limitations of the approach and suggest directions for further investigation.

8 Discussion and Final Remarks

Result summary and final remarks

This paper aims to establish the impact of growing up under a non-democratic regime. My main results show that exposure to dictatorships reduces Satisfaction with Democracy, Confidence in the Judiciary, Congress, and the Armed Forces, as well as Preference for Democracy. Conversely, it increases Preference for Authoritarian Regimes and Indifference Between Regimes. I interpret these findings as indicative of an erosion of democratic values. The quantitative effects can be substantial: 7.25 years of exposure (the sample average) lead to an 18.1% reduction in Preference for Democracy. Additionally, exposure to dictatorships shifts individuals away from the (far) Right and toward the Center and (far) Left of the political spectrum, with a 1.6-point shift on a 0-to-10 scale after 7.25 years of exposure.

Persuasion rates suggest that exposure to dictatorships effectively convinces between 3.9% and 7.4% of the exposed population to adopt the dictator's preferred views regarding Preference for Democracy, Preference for Authoritarian Regimes, and Confidence in the Judiciary, Congress, and Satisfaction with Democracy. However, exposure appears to backfire in terms of Confidence in the Armed Forces and Right-Wing Orientation, with persuasion rates of -4.7% and -9.1%, respectively.

Looking at additional outcomes, exposure appears to reduce confidence in institutions associated with repression (the Armed Forces, Police) or indoctrination (Radio) and worsens perceptions of countries involved in certain dictatorship periods (e.g., the United States). Exposure also seems to influence actual political behavior, increasing the likelihood of attending demonstrations. Furthermore, the results suggest that exposure to dictatorships has stronger effects when it occurs between the ages of 18 and 25—the period when individuals are most likely to begin their political lives in a democratic regime.

The effect of exposure does not appear to depend on the severity or ideological

orientation of the regime, nor on the degree of income inequality. However, the results suggest that exposure to severe macroeconomic shocks may amplify the effects of dictatorship exposure on individuals' ideological orientation. The findings are generally robust to various methodological checks, including adding additional fixed effects, restricting the sample to only exposed individuals, extending the exposure window beyond ages 4 to 25, and applying alternative criteria to distinguish dictatorships from democracies.

The findings indicate that dictatorships had seemingly contradictory effects: on the one hand, exposure eroded democratic values (aligning with the dictator's preferences), but on the other hand, it shifted preferences away from the Right and toward the Left. I interpret this as evidence that dictatorships contributed to the political alienation of individuals. The erosion of democratic values aligns with a profile of dissatisfied, disenchanted individuals who are more susceptible to capture by radical, populist political parties—an interpretation consistent with the political science literature. This is further supported by the observed increase in Indifference Between Regimes.

Alternatively, it may be useful to distinguish between two dimensions in interpreting these results: one related to political regimes (democratic vs. non-democratic) and another related to the ideological orientation of the regime (Left vs. Right). The findings suggest that individuals were successfully influenced along the first dimension but resisted and countered indoctrination along the second. This implies that preferences regarding political regimes are more malleable than ideological orientations—or, at the very least, that individuals are less effective at resisting indoctrination regarding regime type than ideology. This could be because democracy is embedded in a set of practices (such as congressional debates and party competition in regular elections) that dictatorships override, whereas ideological positions are less directly challenged.

Finally, the results confirm that non-democratic regimes can have long-lasting effects on individual preferences. To the extent that dictatorships shape democratic values and political orientations, they influence not only the outcomes of democratic processes but potentially the democratic process itself in the long run. These findings highlight the need for further research into the mechanisms through which regimes shape political preferences. This paper, therefore, provides valuable empirical evidence that can inform the development of further models in the political economy of dictatorships and regime transitions.

Links with relevant literature

As stated before, my empirical findings strongly support the IYH, which posits that

individuals are most susceptible to political socialization during their formative years, after which core political beliefs become relatively stable (Greenstein, 1965; Hess & Torney, 1967; Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). My results show that exposure to dictatorship during late adolescence and early adulthood (ages 18–25) has the most pronounced and persistent effects on political preferences, reducing support for democracy, trust in institutions, and satisfaction with democratic governance. The weaker or inconsistent effects of exposure at younger ages (4–12 and 13–17) suggest that individuals become more politically engaged and impressionable as they transition into adulthood. These findings reinforce the IYH by demonstrating that exposure to authoritarian rule during the critical period of political belief formation shapes attitudes that persist long after regime transitions.

My study also contributes to the broader literature on political preference formation, particularly on how political regimes shape long-term ideological orientations. Existing research has shown that authoritarian regimes influence citizens through propaganda, education, and controlled media environments (Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln, 2007; Cantoni et al., 2017; Adena et al., 2015). My findings suggest that these mechanisms—rather than direct coercion—are likely responsible for the observed erosion of democratic support. The persistence of these effects aligns with studies that document long-term preference formation under different political systems. For example, Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2014) found that individuals socialized under communism retained distinct political and economic attitudes even decades after transition, while Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln (2007) showed that East Germans maintained stronger preferences for state intervention despite experiencing democracy after 1990. My study extends this literature by showing that early exposure to dictatorship weakens democratic preferences, reduces institutional trust, and shifts ideological self-identification away from the political Right.

Furthermore, my results engage with the ongoing debate on whether exposure to authoritarianism fosters compliance or resistance. Some research suggests that prolonged exposure to repression may create oppositional attitudes, leading individuals to embrace democracy more strongly (Lord et al., 1979). However, my findings suggest that, in the Latin American context, authoritarian rule does not necessarily generate democratic mobilization; instead, it erodes support for democratic institutions and fosters disengagement. This is a crucial contribution because it challenges the assumption that democratization alone is sufficient to instill democratic norms over time. Instead, my results indicate that authoritarian legacies can have lasting effects on political culture, making democratic consolidation more difficult.

A deeper interpretation of my findings provides further insight into why exposure at ages 18–25 is particularly influential. This period coincides with early adulthood, when individuals begin participating in elections, engaging with political discourse, and developing ideological orientations. Exposure to dictatorship at this stage may shape norms of political participation, trust in institutions, and attitudes toward democracy in ways that persist over time. Additionally, individuals in this age range are more likely to be influenced by educational indoctrination and propaganda, as many are entering higher education or the workforce, where state narratives on governance are reinforced. In contrast, younger children may be less affected because their exposure is mediated through parents and teachers, who might counteract state messaging.

My findings also highlight a decline in trust in democratic institutions among those exposed to dictatorship. This suggests that authoritarian regimes do not just reduce democratic support; they actively damage perceptions of governance and political legitimacy. The fact that trust in Congress and the Judiciary is particularly affected aligns with research showing that authoritarian rule often fosters disillusionment with democratic institutions, political cynicism, and disengagement (**?**). This is significant because weakened institutional trust can make new democracies vulnerable to backsliding, as citizens with low confidence in democratic structures may be more willing to accept authoritarian alternatives.

Another key finding is that exposure to dictatorship reduces identification with the Right and increases identification with the Left. This suggests that the predominantly right-wing dictatorships in Latin America inadvertently pushed younger generations toward leftist ideologies. This aligns with research showing that repressive right-wing regimes often provoke left-wing political reactions Madestam & Yanagizawa-Drott (2011). However, the fact that this ideological shift does not translate into stronger democratic support indicates that some individuals exposed to dictatorship develop anti-establishment attitudes rather than a commitment to democratic governance. This nuanced finding adds depth to existing theories on how authoritarian legacies shape political identities.

My results also have important implications for democratic resilience. The persistence of weakened democratic attitudes suggests that regime transitions alone are insufficient to restore democratic norms. If exposure to dictatorship during youth has long-term effects on political beliefs, this implies that post-transition democracies must actively invest in civic education, institutional reform, and trust-building measures to counteract the authoritarian legacy. The erosion of democratic support observed in my study may also help explain why some Latin American countries experience cycles

of democratization and authoritarianism, as citizens with weakened democratic values may be more willing to tolerate non-democratic rule in times of crisis.

In conclusion, my study provides strong empirical support for the IYH and deepens our understanding of how authoritarian regimes shape long-term political preferences. Unlike previous research that focuses on democracy reinforcing itself (Acemoglu et al., 2024), my findings show that dictatorships actively undermine democratic values, with effects that persist beyond regime transitions. By explicitly discussing theoretical mechanisms (propaganda, education, repression), the timing of effects (strongest at ages 18–25), and ideological shifts (erosion of right-wing identification), my study offers new insights into how authoritarian legacies shape contemporary political attitudes and institutional trust.

Limitations and further research

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations that future research should address. First, the use of repeated cross-sectional data rather than panel data prevents tracking individuals over time, limiting the ability to observe how exposure to dictatorship shapes political preferences dynamically. Future research could explore longitudinal surveys or historical panel datasets that allow for an event-study approach to better capture the evolution of attitudes before and after regime transitions.

Second, while this study identifies a strong correlation between dictatorship exposure and democratic preferences, it does not directly isolate the mechanisms—such as propaganda, education, or political violence—most responsible for shaping beliefs. Future work could incorporate text analysis of historical curricula, media archives, or survey experiments to test how different aspects of authoritarian regimes influence citizens' attitudes.

Third, the study primarily focuses on Latin America, where most 20th-century dictatorships were right-wing military regimes. It remains unclear whether similar patterns hold in regions with left-wing authoritarianism (e.g., Cuba, Venezuela) or in different historical contexts (e.g., Eastern Europe, Africa, or Asia). Comparative studies across different authoritarian regimes could help assess whether the observed effects generalize beyond Latin America.

Fourth, the study does not examine whether later-life political experiences—such as economic crises, exposure to democratic activism, or generational shifts—moderate the long-term effects of dictatorship exposure. Future research could explore whether civic education programs, democratic consolidation efforts, or changes in political institutions can reverse the erosion of democratic support observed in this study.

Finally, while this study emphasizes the long-term impact of dictatorship exposure, it does not directly assess political behavior, with the exception of attending demonstrations. Future work could complement these findings with electoral data, protest participation records, or social media analysis to examine whether weakened democratic attitudes translate into lower voter turnout, increased support for populist movements, or greater susceptibility to democratic backsliding.

Policy implications

In terms of policy implications, the findings of this paper offer important lessons for the consolidation and sustainability of democratic institutions in post-authoritarian contexts. If dictatorships erode democratic values, weaken trust in institutions, and shape ideological orientations, then democratization is not merely a matter of institutional reform but also requires efforts to rebuild democratic norms and foster civic engagement. This suggests that post-authoritarian governments must invest in strategies that promote democratic socialization, including civic education programs, institutional transparency, and mechanisms to restore trust in democratic governance.

One key implication is the role of education in counteracting the long-term effects of authoritarian socialization. Given that dictatorships often influence political beliefs through propaganda and controlled educational systems, democratic transitions must actively reform curricula to promote democratic values, political participation, and historical memory. Programs that teach critical thinking, the functioning of democratic institutions, and the consequences of authoritarian rule can help reverse some of the lingering effects of dictatorship. Historical memory policies—such as truth commissions, memorialization efforts, and school curricula acknowledging past human rights violations—may play a crucial role in ensuring that future generations do not romanticize authoritarian rule.

Additionally, the erosion of trust in democratic institutions among individuals exposed to dictatorships underscores the need for policies that enhance institutional credibility and accountability. Efforts to strengthen the judiciary, ensure free and fair elections, and promote government transparency are essential to restoring public confidence. Since authoritarian regimes often use state-controlled media to shape public opinion, fostering a free and independent press in post-authoritarian contexts is also critical for rebuilding democratic culture and providing citizens with reliable sources of information.

Moreover, this study's findings highlight the importance of economic policies in post-authoritarian settings. The interaction between exposure to dictatorship and

macroeconomic conditions suggests that economic stability plays a role in reinforcing or mitigating the long-term effects of authoritarian rule. Policymakers should prioritize inclusive economic policies that promote social mobility, reduce inequality, and prevent economic crises that could fuel dissatisfaction with democracy. Ensuring that democracy delivers tangible improvements in people's lives is key to preventing authoritarian nostalgia and sustaining long-term democratic commitment.

Finally, the results indicating that exposure to right-wing dictatorships leads to increased left-wing identification suggest that post-authoritarian societies may experience political polarization and ideological shifts that shape democratic stability. Policymakers should recognize the potential for backlash effects and work toward inclusive political institutions that allow for broad participation and representation, preventing cycles of authoritarian nostalgia and democratic disenchantment. Transitional justice mechanisms—such as trials for human rights violations and reparations for victims—can also contribute to strengthening democratic legitimacy by addressing past injustices and reinforcing the rule of law.

Last but not least, these broader policy implications for strengthening democracy align with the findings of Acemoglu et al. (2024) in the sense that effectively successful democracies breed their own support. To the extent that the fate of democracy and democratic institutions lies ultimately in the hands of voters and policy makers, one can link back to, and extract this very conclusion from, some of Salvador Allende's last words from his last speech: **"History is ours, and it is made by the people."**

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A Appendix

Tables

Table A1: Rulers by country and spell (1900-1990)

Country	Period	Ruler(s)	Country	Period	Ruler(s)
Argentina	1930 - 1932	Uriburu	El Salvador	1961 - 1962	[Junta] Portillo, Rivera, Avelar, Rodriguez Porth, Valiente
Argentina	1932 - 1938	Justo	El Salvador	1962	Cordón Cea
Argentina	1943 - 1944	Ramirez	El Salvador	1962 - 1963	Rivera
Argentina	1944 - 1946	Farrell	El Salvador	1972 - 1977	Armando Molina
Argentina	1946 - 1955	Peron	El Salvador	1977 - 1979	Romero
Argentina	1955	Lonardi	El Salvador	1979	[Junta] Gutiérrez, Avendaño, Majano, Mayorga Quiroz, Andino Gómez, Ungo
Argentina	1955 - 1958	Aramburu	El Salvador	1980	[Junta] Gutiérrez, Majano, Morales Erlich, Dada Hirezi, Ávalos Navarrete
Argentina	1958 - 1962	Frondizi	Guatemala	1898 - 1920	Estrada Cabrera
Argentina	1962 - 1963	Guido	Guatemala	1920	Herrera y Luna
Argentina	1963 - 1966	Illa	Guatemala	1931 - 1943	Ubico Castañeda
Argentina	1966 - 1970	Ongania	Guatemala	1954 - 1957	Castillo Armas
Argentina	1970 - 1971	Levingston	Guatemala	1957	Gonzáles López
Argentina	1971 - 1972	Lanusse	Guatemala	1957 - 1958	Florez Avendaño
Argentina	1976 - 1981	Videla	Guatemala	1958 - 1963	Ydígoras Fuentes
Argentina	1981	Viola	Guatemala	1963 - 1966	Peralta Azurdia
Argentina	1981 - 1982	Galtieri	Guatemala	1974 - 1978	Laugerud García
Argentina	1982	Bignone	Guatemala	1978 - 1982	Lucas García
Bolivia	1936 - 1937	Toro Ruilova	Guatemala	1982 - 1983	Ríos Montt
Bolivia	1937 - 1939	Busch Becerra	Guatemala	1983 - 1985	Mejía Víctores
Bolivia	1939 - 1940	Quintanilla Quiroga	Honduras	1907	[US Invasion] Oquelí Bustillo
Bolivia	1940 - 1943	Peñaranda Castillo	Honduras	1907	[US Invasion] Dávila Cuellar
Bolivia	1944 - 1946	Villaroel Lopez	Honduras	1912	[US Invasion] Bonilla Chirinos
Bolivia	1946	Guillén Olmos	Honduras	1919	[US Invasion] Bertrand Barahona
Bolivia	1946 - 1947	Monje Gutiérrez	Honduras	1924	[US Invasion] Lopez Gutiérrez
Bolivia	1947 - 1949	Hertzog Garaizabal	Honduras	1924	[US Invasion] Bueso Cuéllar, Dávila Bonilla
Bolivia	1949 - 1951	Urriolagoitia Harriague	Honduras	1924	[US Invasion] Tosta Carrasco
Bolivia	1951 - 1952	Ballivián Rojas	Honduras	1936 1949	Carías Andino
Bolivia	1952 - 1956	Paz Estenssoro	Honduras	1949 1954	Gálvez Durón
Bolivia	1956 - 1960	Siles Zuazo	Honduras	1954 1956	Lozano Díaz
Bolivia	1960 - 1964	Paz Estenssoro	Honduras	1956 1957	[Junta] Rodríguez Herrera, Caraccioli Moncada, Gálvez Barnes, Palma Gálvez
Bolivia	1964 - 1965	Barrientos Ortuño	Honduras	1958 1963	Villeda Morales
Bolivia	1965	Ovando Candía & Barrientos Ortuño	Honduras	1963 1971	López Arellano

Rulers by country and spell (1900-1990) (continued)

Country	Period	Ruler(s)	Country	Period	Ruler(s)
Bolivia	1966	Ovando Candía	Honduras	1971 1975	López Arellano
Bolivia	1966 - 1969	Barrientos Ortuño	Honduras	1975 1978	Melgar Castro
Bolivia	1969	Siles Salinas	Honduras	1978 1979	[Junta] Paz García, Álvarez Cruz, Zelaya Rodríguez
Bolivia	1969 - 1970	Ovando Candía	Mexico	1884 - 1911	Díaz
Bolivia	1970 - 1971	Torres González	Mexico	1917 - 1920	Carranza
Bolivia	1971 - 1978	Banzer Suárez	Mexico	1920	de la Huerta
Bolivia	1978	Pereda Asbún	Mexico	1920 - 1924	Obregón
Bolivia	1979	Padilla Arancibia	Mexico	1924 - 1928	Elías Calles
Bolivia	1979	Guevara Arze	Mexico	1928 - 1930	Portes Gil
Bolivia	1979 - 1980	Guelier Tejada	Mexico	1930 - 1932	Ortiz Rubio
Bolivia	1980 - 1981	Meza Tejada	Mexico	1932 - 1934	Rodríguez
Bolivia	1981 - 1982	[Junta] Bernal, Calderón, Mariscal, Morales, Pammo & Torrelio	Mexico	1934 - 1940	Cárdenas del Río
Brazil	1898 - 1902	Campos Sales	Mexico	1940 - 1946	Ávila Camacho
Brazil	1902 - 1906	Rodrigues Alves	Mexico	1946 - 1952	Alemán Valdés
Brazil	1906 - 1909	Moreira Pena	Mexico	1952 - 1958	Ruiz Cortines
Brazil	1909 - 1910	Peçanha	Mexico	1958 - 1964	López Mateos
Brazil	1910 - 1914	Rodrigues da Fonseca	Mexico	1964 - 1970	Díaz Ordaz
Brazil	1914 - 1918	Blás	Mexico	1970 - 1976	Echeverría Álvarez
Brazil	1918 - 1919	Moreira	Mexico	1976 - 1982	López Portillo y Pacheco
Brazil	1919 - 1922	Pessoa	Mexico	1982 - 1988	de la Madrid Hurtado
Brazil	1922 - 1926	Bernardes	Nicaragua	1893 - 1909	Santos Zelaya López
Brazil	1926 - 1930	Luís	Nicaragua	1910	Madriz Rodríguez
Brazil	1930 - 1945	Getulio Vargas	Nicaragua	1910 - 1911	Estrada Morales
Brazil	1964 - 1967	de Alencar	Nicaragua	1911 - 1916	Díaz Recinos
Brazil	1967 - 1969	da Costa e Silva	Nicaragua	1917 - 1920	Chamorro Vargas
Brazil	1969 - 1974	Garrastazu Médici	Nicaragua	1921 - 1923	Chamorro Bolaños
Brazil	1974 - 1979	Geisel	Nicaragua	1923 - 1924	Martínez González
Brazil	1979 - 1985	Figueiredo	Nicaragua	1925	Solórzano Gutiérrez
Chile	1924 - 1925	[Junta] Altamirano Talavera, Dartnell, Bello Codecido -	Nicaragua	1926	Chamorro Vargas
Chile	1925	Alessandri Palma	Nicaragua	1926 - 1928	[Civil war] Díaz Recinos / Sacasa
Chile	1925	Barros Borgoño	Nicaragua	1929 - 1932	Moncada
Chile	1926 - 1927	Figueroa Larraín	Nicaragua	1933 - 1936	Sacasa
Chile	1927 - 1931	Ibáñez del Campo	Nicaragua	1936	Brenes Jarquin
Chile	1931	Montero Rodríguez	Nicaragua	1937 - 1947	Somoza García
Chile	1931	Trucco Franzani	Nicaragua	1947	Lacayo Sacasa
Chile	1931 - 1932	Montero Rodríguez	Nicaragua	1947 - 1950	Román y Reyes
Chile	1932	Puga, Dávila Espinoza	Nicaragua	1950 - 1956	Somoza García
Chile	1932	Blanche, Oyanedel Urrutia	Nicaragua	1956 - 1963	Somoza Debayle
Chile	1933 - 1934	Alessandri Palma	Nicaragua	1963 - 1966	Schick Gutiérrez
Chile	1973 - 1988	Pinochet	Nicaragua	1966 - 1967	Guerrero Gutiérrez
Colombia	1904 - 1909	Reyes	Nicaragua	1967 - 1972	Somoza Debayle
Colombia	1909	Holguín	Nicaragua	1972 - 1974	[Junta] Martínez Lacayo, Lovo Cordero, Agüero Rocha, Paraguaga Irías
Colombia	1909 - 1910	González Valencia	Nicaragua	1974 - 1979	Somoza Debayle

Rulers by country and spell (1900-1990) (continued)

Country	Period	Ruler(s)	Country	Period	Ruler(s)
Colombia	1910 - 1914	Restrepo	Nicaragua	1979 - 1984	[Junta] Ortega, Ramírez, Chamorro, Robelo, Morales, Córdova Rivas, Cruz Porras
Colombia	1914 - 1918	Concha	Nicaragua	1985 - 1989	Ortega Saavedra
Colombia	1918 - 1921	Suárez	Panama	1903 - 1904	[Junta] Arango, Arias, Boyd, Espinosa Batista
Colombia	1921 - 1922	Holguín	Panama	1904 - 1908	Amador Guerrero
Colombia	1922 - 1926	Ospina	Panama	1908 - 1910	de Obaldía Gallegos
Colombia	1926 - 1930	Abadía Méndez	Panama	1910	Mendoza Soto
Colombia	1948 - 1950	Ospina Pérez	Panama	1910 - 1912	Arosemena Alba
Colombia	1950 - 1951	Gomez	Panama	1912 - 1916	Porras Barahona
Colombia	1951 - 1953	Urdaneta Arbeláez	Panama	1916 - 1918	Valdés Arce
Colombia	1953 - 1957	Rojas Pinilla	Panama	1918	Urriola Garrés
Dom. Republic	1899 - 1902	Jiménez	Panama	1918 - 1920	Porras Barahona
Dom. Republic	1902- 1903	Vásquez	Panama	1920	Lefevre de la Ossa
Dom. Republic	1903	Woss y Gil	Panama	1920 - 1924	Porras Barahona
Dom. Republic	1903- 1905	Morales Languasco	Panama	1924 - 1928	Chiari Robles
Dom. Republic	1906 - 1911	Cáceres	Panama	1928 - 1930	Arosemena Guillén
Dom. Republic	1911 - 1912	Victoria	Panama	1931 - 1932	Alfaro Jovane
Dom. Republic	1912 - 1913	Nouel	Panama	1932 - 1936	Arias Madrid
Dom. Republic	1913 - 1914	Bordas Valdez	Panama	1936 - 1939	Arosemena Barreati
Dom. Republic	1914	Báez Machado	Panama	1940	Boyd Briceño
Dom. Republic	1914 - 1916	Jiménez	Panama	1940 - 1941	Arias Madrid
Dom. Republic	1916	[US Occupation] Henríquez y Carvajal	Panama	1941 - 1945	Adolfo de la Guardia Arango
Dom. Republic	1916 - 1922	[US Occupation] Shepard Knapp (US Navy)	Panama	1945	Duncan Guillén-Arosemena
Dom. Republic	1922 - 1924	[US Occupation] Bautista Vicini Burgos	Panama	1945 - 1948	Jiménez Brin
Dom. Republic	1924 - 1930	Vásquez	Panama	1961 - 1964	Chiari Remón -
Dom. Republic	1930	Estrella Ureña	Panama	1964 - 1967	Robles Méndez -
Dom. Republic	1930 - 1938	Rafael Trujillo Molina	Panama	1967 - 1968	Robles
Dom. Republic	1938 - 1940	Peynado	Panama	1968 - 1969	Pinilla Fabrega / Urrutia Parrilla
Dom. Republic	1940 - 1942	de Jesús Troncoso de la Concha	Panama	1970 - 1978	Lakas Bahas
Dom. Republic	1942 - 1952	Rafael Trujillo Molina	Panama	1978 - 1982	Royo Sánchez
Dom. Republic	1952 - 1960	Héctor Trujillo Molina	Paraguay	1898 - 1902	Aceval
Dom. Republic	1966 - 1978	Balaguer Ricardo	Paraguay	1902 - 1904	Escurra
Ecuador	1895 - 1901	Alfaro	Paraguay	1905	Gaona
Ecuador	1901 - 1905	Plaza	Paraguay	1905 - 1906	Báez
Ecuador	1905 - 1906	García	Paraguay	1906 - 1908	Ferreira
Ecuador	1906 - 1911	Alfaro	Paraguay	1908 - 1910	González Navero
Ecuador	1911	Estrada	Paraguay	1910 - 1911	Gondra
Ecuador	1912	Freile Zaldumbide	Paraguay	1911	Jara
Ecuador	1912	Andrade Marín	Paraguay	1911 - 1912	Marcial Rojas
Ecuador	1912	Baquerizo Moreno	Paraguay	1912	González Navero
Ecuador	1912 - 1916	Plaza	Paraguay	1912 - 1916	Schaerer
Ecuador	1916 - 1920	Baquerizo Moreno	Paraguay	1916 - 1919	Franco
Ecuador	1920 - 1924	Tamayo	Paraguay	1919 - 1920	Montero
Ecuador	1924 - 1925	Córdova	Paraguay	1920 - 1921	Gondra

Rulers by country and spell (1900-1990) (continued)

Country	Period	Ruler(s)
Ecuador	1925 - 1926	[Junta] Bustamante, Dillon, Oliva, Larrea, Gómez de la Torre, Garaicoa, Boloña, Arízaga, Moreno, Viteri, Ayora, Albornoz, Hidalgo, Gómez Gault, Egüez
Ecuador	1926 - 1931	Ayora
Ecuador	1931 - 1932	Baquerizo Moreno
Ecuador	1932	Guerrero Martínez
Ecuador	1932 - 1933	de Dios Martínez
Ecuador	1933 - 1934	Montalvo
Ecuador	1934 - 1935	Velasco Ibarra
Ecuador	1935 - 1937	Páez
Ecuador	1937 - 1938	Enriquez Gallo
Ecuador	1938	Borrero
Ecuador	1938 - 1939	Mosquera Narváez
Ecuador	1939	Arroyo del Río
Ecuador	1940	Córdova
Ecuador	1940 - 1944	Arroyo del Río
Ecuador	1944 - 1947	Velasco Ibarra
Ecuador	1961 - 1963	Arosemena Monroy
Ecuador	1963 - 1966	[Junta] Castro Jijón, Cabrera Sevilla, Freile Posso, Gándara
Ecuador	1966	Yeroví Indaburu
Ecuador	1966 - 1967	Arosemena
Ecuador	1972 - 1976	Rodríguez Lara
Ecuador	1976 - 1978	[Junta] Poveda, Durán Arcentales, Leoro Franco
El Salvador	1898 - 1903	Regalado
El Salvador	1903 - 1907	Escalón
El Salvador	1907 - 1911	Figueroa
El Salvador	1911 - 1913	Araujo
El Salvador	1913 - 1914	Meléndez
El Salvador	1914 - 1915	Quiñónez Molina
El Salvador	1915 - 1918	Meléndez
El Salvador	1919	Quiñónez Molina
El Salvador	1919 - 1923	Meléndez
El Salvador	1923 - 1927	Quiñónez Molina
El Salvador	1927 - 1931	Romero Bosque
El Salvador	1931	Araujo
El Salvador	1931 - 1934	Hernández Martínez
El Salvador	1934 - 1935	Menéndez
El Salvador	1935 - 1944	Hernández Martínez
El Salvador	1944	Menéndez
El Salvador	1944 - 1945	Aguirre y Salinas
El Salvador	1945 - 1948	Castaneda Castro
El Salvador	1948 - 1950	[Junta] Bolaños, Osorio, Galindo Pohl, Costa
El Salvador	1950 - 1956	Osorio
El Salvador	1956 - 1960	Lemus
El Salvador	1960 - 1961	[Junta] Falla Cáceres, Fortín Magaña, Castillo Figueroa, Yanes Urías, Castillo, Alonso Rosales
Paraguay	1921 - 1923	Eusebio Ayala
Paraguay	1923 - 1924	Eligio Ayala
Paraguay	1924	Riant
Paraguay	1924 - 1928	Eligio Ayala
Paraguay	1928 - 1932	Guggiari
Paraguay	1932 - 1936	Eusebio Ayala
Paraguay	1936	Franco
Paraguay	1940	Estigarribia
Paraguay	1940 - 1948	Morinigo
Paraguay	1948	Frutos
Paraguay	1948 - 1949	González Navero
Paraguay	1949	Molas López
Paraguay	1949 - 1954	Chaves
Paraguay	1954	Romero Pereira
Paraguay	1954 - 1989	Stroessner
Peru	1919 - 1930	Leguía y Salcedo
Peru	1931 - 1931	Sánchez Cerro
Peru	1931	Samanez
Peru	1931 - 1933	Sánchez Cerro
Peru	1948 - 1956	Odria Amoretti
Peru	1962 - 1963	Pérez Godoy
Peru	1963	Lindley López
Peru	1968 - 1975	Velasco Alvarado
Peru	1975 - 1978	Morales Bermúdez
Uruguay	1899 - 1903	Lindolfo Cuestas
Uruguay	1972 - 1976	Bordaberry
Uruguay	1976	Demicheli
Uruguay	1976 - 1981	Méndez
Uruguay	1981 - 1985	Álvarez
Venezuela	1899 - 1908	Castro
Venezuela	1909 - 1913	Gómez
Venezuela	1913 - 1914	Fortoul
Venezuela	1914 - 1922	Márquez Bustillos
Venezuela	1922 - 1929	Gómez
Venezuela	1929 - 1931	Pérez
Venezuela	1931 - 1935	Gómez
Venezuela	1936 - 1941	López Contreras
Venezuela	1941 - 1945	Medina Angarita
Venezuela	1945 - 1948	Betancourt
Venezuela	1948	Gallegos
Venezuela	1948 - 1950	Delgado Chalbaud
Venezuela	1950 - 1952	Suárez Flamerich
Venezuela	1952 - 1957	Pérez Jiménez

Rulers by country and spell (1900-1990) (continued)

Country	Period	Ruler(s)	Country	Period	Ruler(s)

Notes: The table omits rulers who stood in power for less than a month. Dictatorship periods are defined using the Polity Score Index. Names of rulers come from the Archigos data set (Goemans et al., 2009) complemented and contrasted with web queries.

Table A2: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Observations	% in the category
Education	416,293	
Illiterate		9.23%
Primary, incomplete		18.53%
Primary, complete		16.42%
Secondary, incomplete		15.88%
Secondary, complete		20.85%
Superior, incomplete		9.02%
Superior, complete		9.02%
Marital status	373,354	
Married/cohabiting		57.19%
Single		31.48%
Divorced/widowed/separated		11.3%
Access to goods and services	307,409	
Owns home		47.28%
Second home		10.24%
Drinking water		89.10%
Hot water		39.53%
Sewage system		70.78%
Television		88.60%
Refrigerator		80.10%
Computer		28.18%
Washing machine		54.48%
Telephone (landline)		45.36%
Cellphone		58.01%
Car		28.77%
Labour force status	305,891	
Self-employed		35.34%
Public employee		9.14%
Private employee		17.11%
Temporarily unemployed		5.72%
Retired		8.09%
Housekeeper		23.62%
Student		0.98%
Religion	289,171	
Catholic		74.42%
Evangelist		15.03%
Jehova witness		1.01%
None		5.21%
Other		4.33%

Notes: The table reports the number of non-missing observations for relevant characteristics of the individuals in my sample. It also shows the share of individuals in each response category. For the list of goods and services the Table reports the share of individuals that owns or has access to that good or service.

Table A3: Correlations across outcome variables

	Satisfaction with Democracy (1)	Confidence in Congress (2)	Confidence in Political Parties (3)	Confidence in Judiciary (4)	Confidence in Armed Forces (5)	Indifference between Regimes (6)	Preference for Democracy (7)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (8)
Satisfaction with Democracy	1							
Confidence in Congress	0.2768	1						
Confidence in Political Parties	0.2385	0.4952	1					
Confidence in Judiciary	0.253	0.5356	0.4365	1				
Confidence in Armed Forces	0.1488	0.3213	0.2918	0.3852	1			
Indifference between Regimes	-0.0801	-0.0116	-0.028	-0.0056	0.0239	1		
Preference for Democracy	0.164	0.0409	0.0759	0.0243	-0.0147	-0.6479	1	
Pref. for Authoritarian Regimes	-0.1314	-0.0413	-0.0699	-0.0258	-0.0051	-0.17	-0.6404	1
Right-wing Orientation	0.0242	0.0263	0.0267	0.0377	0.0851	0.0077	-0.0053	-0.0009

Notes: The table presents cross correlations across outcome variables.

Table A4: Outcome variable averages by right-wing orientation

	0 (Left)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (Right)
Preference for Democracy	0.58	0.60	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.62
Indifference between Regimes	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.12
Preference for Authoritarian Regimes	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.16	0.17	0.18
Satisfaction with Democracy	2.19	2.28	2.29	2.29	2.28	2.21	2.31	2.34	2.35	2.35	2.34
Confidence in Congress	1.84	1.93	2.01	2.02	2.03	1.94	2.07	2.07	2.06	2.06	1.99
Confidence in Judiciary	2.00	2.06	2.09	2.09	2.10	2.03	2.15	2.17	2.18	2.17	2.14
Confidence in Political Parties	1.84	1.89	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.83	1.97	1.97	1.96	1.97	1.93
Confidence in Armed Forces	2.30	2.34	2.31	2.34	2.37	2.41	2.50	2.55	2.58	2.55	2.52

Notes: The table presents average values of outcome variables by each value of the Right-wing Orientation scale.

Table A5: All outcome variables - Differential effects by age bands

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict (4 to 12)	0.009	0.007	0.004*	-0.019	-0.018	-0.025	-0.033**	-0.015	-0.073
	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.084)
ExpDict (13 to 17)	-0.003	0.002	-0.001	0.004	-0.023*	-0.014	-0.021	-0.009	-0.071
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.048)
ExpDict (18 to 25)	-0.015*	0.007	0.006*	-0.017	-0.018	-0.029*	-0.020	-0.024**	-0.064
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.103)
ExpIntens (4 to 12)	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002	0.004
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.009)
ExpIntens (13 to 17)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.002**	0.000	-0.002	0.000	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.007)
ExpIntens (18 to 25)	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.005**	0.005**	-0.005
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.010)
ExpShock (4 to 12)	0.017	-0.020	0.009	0.075	0.021	0.018	0.122*	0.077*	0.212
	(0.030)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.063)	(0.074)	(0.041)	(0.303)
ExpShock (13 to 17)	-0.007	0.006	0.001	0.007	-0.005	0.017	0.036	-0.035	0.036
	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.023)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.046)	(0.025)	(0.210)
ExpShock (18 to 25)	0.012	0.009	-0.014	-0.002	-0.018	-0.024	0.018	-0.017	-0.054
	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.304)
Observations	281,893	281,893	242,517	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 12, 13 to 17 and 18 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A6: All outcome variables - Exposure at ages 10 to 20

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.015*	0.007**	0.006	-0.012	-0.042**	-0.058***	-0.046*	-0.040**	-0.134
	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.020)	(0.105)
ExpIntens	0.002	0.003	-0.004	-0.007	-0.020	0.010	-0.023	0.004	0.047
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.024)	(0.021)	(0.145)
ExpDict	0.002	0.045**	-0.053*	0.064	0.002	0.060	0.112	-0.041	0.312
	(0.047)	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.073)	(0.106)	(0.085)	(0.128)	(0.113)	(0.687)
Observations	373,722	373,722	373,722	396,483	383,055	392,537	363,513	387,480	321,648
R-squared	0.078	0.048	0.086	0.097	0.105	0.85	0.094	0.125	0.056
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 10 to 20, run on a sample of individuals aged 18 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A7: All outcome variables - Differential effects by macro shocks

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.026*	0.019***	0.008	-0.029	-0.033	-0.079***	-0.064	-0.059*	-0.085
	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.045)	(0.033)	(0.185)
ExpIntens	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.019)
ExpShock	0.008	0.030	-0.015	0.058	0.040	-0.030	0.167	-0.018	0.817
	(0.070)	(0.034)	(0.021)	(0.109)	(0.117)	(0.127)	(0.170)	(0.140)	(0.841)
ExpDict×ExpShock	0.028	-0.094***	0.029	0.029	-0.223	0.084	-0.086	0.078	-2.125**
	(0.087)	(0.036)	(0.049)	(0.174)	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.376)	(0.190)	(1.044)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A8: All outcome variables - Differential effects by regime intensity

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.002	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002	-0.004	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.020)
ExpIntens	0.003	-0.001	0.000	-0.002	-0.005	0.005	0.002	0.011	-0.013
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.029)
ExpShock	-0.012	0.007	0.010	-0.037	-0.069	-0.051	-0.061	-0.003	-0.277
	(0.029)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.039)	(0.056)	-0.041	(0.048)	(0.039)	(0.260)
ExpDict×ExpIntens	0.010	0.006	-0.006	0.071	-0.014	(-0.017)	0.137	-0.022	0.232
	(0.066)	(0.032)	(0.022)	(0.103)	(0.104)	0.124	(0.137)	(0.113)	(0.754)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A9: Results for individual values of Right-wing Orientation

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	missing
ExpDict	0.005*	0.006	0.006***	-0.001	0.003	0.010**	-0.001	-0.002	-0.011***	-0.004**	-0.016***	0.009**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)
ExpIntens	-0.012	-0.019**	0.007	0.023**	-0.003	0.050**	-0.008	0.001	-0.010	-0.003	0.024*	-0.049***
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.018)
ExpShock	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001**	0.000	0.001**	0.000	0.000	-0.001*	-0.001
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409	307,409
R-squared	0.038	0.021	0.010	0.123	0.013	0.034	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.066	0.085
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A10: Results for all outcome variables - with age×cohort fixed effects

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.025*	0.012**	0.010*	-0.027	-0.047*	-0.073***	-0.067*	-0.054*	-0.214
	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.188)
ExpIntens	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.021)
ExpShock	0.022	0.003	-0.007	0.073	-0.027	0.001	0.135	0.007	0.236
	(0.060)	(0.030)	(0.017)	(0.109)	(0.113)	(0.118)	(0.150)	(0.114)	(0.737)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,021	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.086	0.055	0.094	0.106	0.116	0.096	0.101	0.135	0.064
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, country×year-of-survey and age×cohort. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A11: Results for all outcome variables - with Vanhanen (2000) definition of political regimes

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.018*	0.006	0.10**	-0.033	-0.032	-0.057*	-0.057	-0.047*	-0.325*
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.038)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.038)	(0.026)	(0.171)
ExpIntens	0.009	0.010	-0.007	0.059	-0.044	-0.034	0.119	-0.012	0.170
	(0.052)	(0.032)	(0.020)	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.116)	(0.146)	(0.109)	(0.702)
ExpShock	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.131	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions of various outcomes against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, with the measure of exposed individuals constructed on the basis of Vanhanen's indicator (Vanhanen, 2000). Regressions are run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A12: Results for all outcome variables - Exposure to non-Left wing dictatorships

	Preference for for Democracy (1)	Preference Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
	PANEL A: Exposure to dictatorships except non-ambiguous Left-wing ones								
ExpDict	-0.023*	0.011**	0.010**	-0.016	-0.038	-0.062**	-0.057	-0.061**	-0.196
	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.179)
ExpIntens	0.001	0.016	-0.014	-0.005	-0.012	-0.009	0.005	-0.012	0.034
	(0.000)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.074)	(0.037)	(1.067)	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.658)
ExpShock	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	-0.001	-0.002	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.043)	(0.005)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
	PANEL B: Exposure to dictatorships except non-ambiguous and ambiguous Left-wing ones								
ExpDict	-0.024*	0.013**	0.012*	-0.009	-0.031	-0.054**	-0.044	-0.068**	-0.170
	(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.182)
ExpIntens	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	-0.001	-0.002	0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.021)
ExpShock	0.013	0.005	-0.006	0.052	-0.042	-0.026	0.115	0.004	0.142
	(0.056)	(0.031)	(0.018)	(0.106)	(0.116)	(0.123)	(0.155)	(0.110)	(0.716)
Observations	281,893	281,893	281,893	299,225	288,426	295,979	274,020	292,500	241,884
R-squared	0.083	0.051	0.091	0.103	0.112	0.092	0.097	0.132	0.060
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure (*ExpIntens*), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks (*ExpShock*). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A13: Results for all outcome variables - Differential effects by inequality levels

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.018**	0.011	-0.004	-0.019	-0.062	-0.102*	-0.110	-0.089	0.075
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.062)	(0.077)	(0.068)	(0.349)
ExpIntens	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.000	-0.002	-0.001	-0.007
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.034)
ExpShock	-0.094	0.081***	-0.018	0.001	-0.031	-0.011	0.072	-0.129	-0.127
	(0.060)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.144)	(0.141)	(0.117)	(0.171)	(0.109)	(0.763)
Dummy High Gini	-0.001	-0.017**	0.021**	-0.020	-0.014	0.003	0.009	0.040	-0.145
	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.053)	(0.044)	(0.025)	(0.195)
ExpDict×Dummy	0.001	0.011**	-0.012**	0.011	0.011	0.009	-0.001	-0.019	0.085
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.117)
Observations	188,124	188,124	188,124	199,374	192,195	197,321	190,449	195,089	163,025
R-squared	0.089	0.054	0.084	0.110	0.116	0.092	0.096	0.139	0.054
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A14: Results for all outcome variables - Restricted sample (exposed only)

	Preference for Democracy (1)	Preference for Authoritarian Regimes (2)	Indifference between Regimes (3)	Confidence in Political Parties (4)	Confidence in Congress (5)	Confidence in Judiciary (6)	Confidence in Armed Forces (7)	Satisfaction with Democracy (8)	Right-wing Orientation (9)
ExpDict	-0.012	0.014***	-0.002	-0.020	-0.044	-0.071**	-0.056*	-0.041	-0.122
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.168)
ExpIntens	-0.003**	0.001	0.002**	-0.002	-0.005	0.001	-0.004	-0.003	-0.014
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.018)
ExpShock	-0.016	-0.003	0.025	0.093	-0.018	0.035	0.122	-0.065	-0.286
	(0.054)	(0.035)	(0.028)	(0.163)	(0.145)	(0.181)	(0.183)	(0.154)	(0.568)
Observations	194,219	194,219	194,219	207,213	200,572	204,915	197,988	202,082	166,137
R-squared	0.072	0.051	0.080	0.102	0.110	0.090	0.101	0.122	0.063
FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro shock	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Notes: The table reports results from regressions against exposure to non-democratic regimes between ages 4 to 25, run on a sample of individuals aged 26 or older with nonzero exposure. Standard errors clustered at country level and estimated with wild bootstrap, in parenthesis. Fixed effects include cohort, country, year-of-survey, and country×year-of-survey. Controls include age, gender, religion, marital status, workforce status, educational level, socioeconomic status, twelve indicators of access to goods and services, average Polity Score during years of exposure ($ExpIntens$), and exposure to severe negative macroeconomic shocks ($ExpShock$). Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Figures

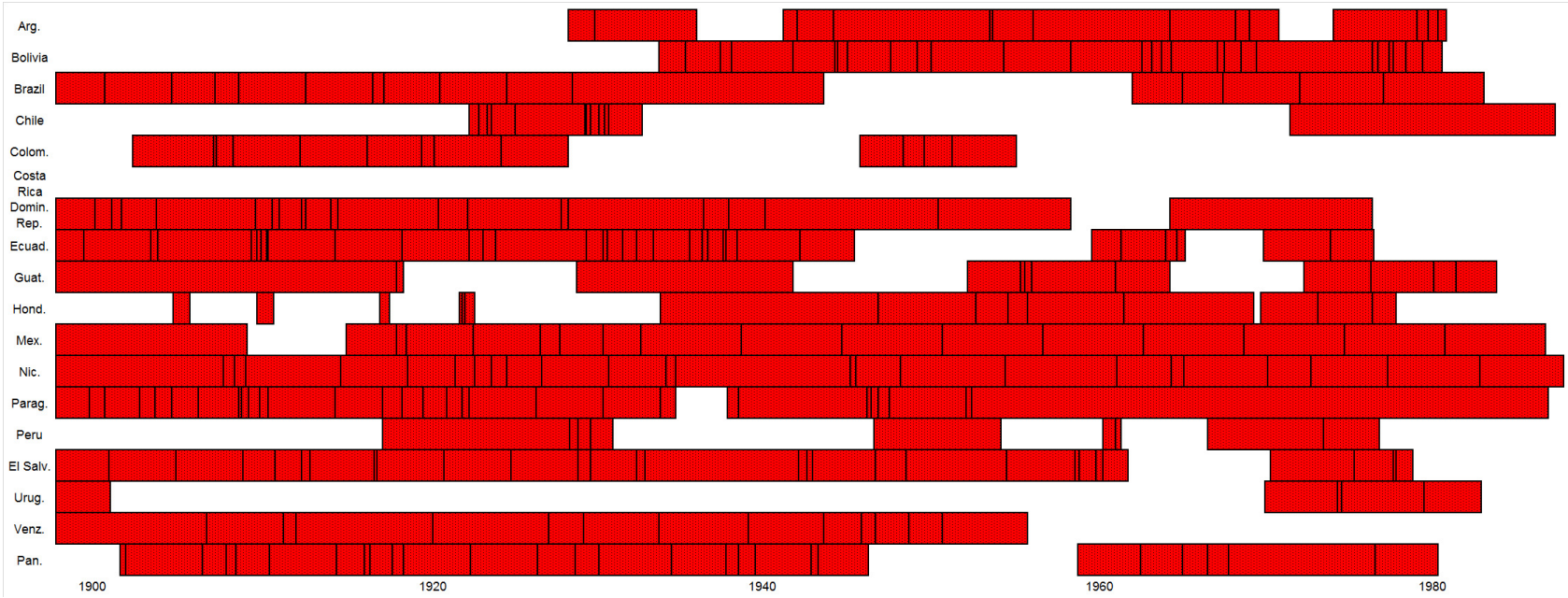

Figure A1: Dictatorship spells by country

Notes: The figure plots for each country the duration of each spell of non democratic regime, as defined by with the Polity Score Index. See Table A1 below for a detail on the ruling dictator in each period for each country and year.