Rule by violence, rule by law: the evolution of voter suppression and lynching in the U.S. South

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Abstract

Voter suppression, widespread and diverse, can be categorized as ad-hoc, extra-legal, often tending toward violence, or institutionalized, legal, and typically non-violent. We argue why regimes would prefer the latter, and thus that when legal approaches to voter suppression are developed they should replace violent, extra-legal approaches. We apply this idea to an important historical phenomenon: the lynching of blacks in the American South. In contrast with previous studies, we argue lynching was a political tool used to disenfranchise black citizens. We find that lynchings were more likely to take place prior to elections and in areas where the Democratic Party faced greater political threat, until Jim Crow suppression laws were in place. Once such laws were in place, the salience of political factors disappears. These results have important implications for understanding lynching and evolving forms of black voter suppression in the South, and contemporary voter suppression in America and elsewhere.
During the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign the Republican nominee encouraged supporters to go into “certain places” that were likely to support his opponent and monitor the voting process. Subsequently, some of his armed supporters were observed “menacing” a Democratic Party campaign office (Rosza 2016). This incitement to intimidate voters by politicians is now rare in the U.S. and other advanced democracies, as is electoral violence, which unfortunately remains common in developing democracies (Blyman 2007). Yet, legal restrictions on voting remain common. In recent years state governments in the U.S. have—according to critics of these laws—renewed attempts to restrict the vote by tightening voter registration and identification laws, limiting how long polling places are open, and various other means (Bentele & O’Brien 2013). While the U.S. has a long and notorious history of voter suppression, the Australian state of Queensland enacted similar voter identification laws in 2014, leading to some voters being denied the right to vote (Arklay 2015). Thus, even in the most stable democracies, voter suppression, albeit subtle, institutionalized, and generally non-violent, remains a fact of political life. In this article we develop and test an argument about the evolving means of voter suppression in democracies by examining the use and then abandonment of lynching to suppress the black vote in the U.S. South in the decades after Reconstruction.

Despite the widespread presence of voter suppression across democracies, we understand little about choices governments make about the means of voter suppression. Understanding these choices is important since voter suppression can be effective, and the types of voter suppression have important implications for internal and external regime legitimacy, and ultimately who wields governing authority. In this article, we categorize different tactics into two main alternative approaches to voter suppression: extra-legal and ad hoc, often violent; and legal, institutionalized approaches, which are typically non-violent. We argue that for a variety of reasons as democracies develop the means of voter suppression evolve from ad-hoc, violent approaches to institutionalized and non-violent approaches. If our argument is correct, we should find that once legal, institutionalized means of voter suppression are in place violent voter suppression is rare, with rule by law
taking the place of rule by violence.

The American South provides an ideal context for the examination of the argument, as the systematic suppression of black electoral participation is arguably the most successful example of voter suppression in the history of democracies (Gibson 2013). Furthermore, it is a case of great importance, as the experiences of both violent and legal suppression—lynching and Jim Crow—played large roles in American history and culture (Francis 2014, Kato et al. 2015, Wood 2011), and indeed continue to have lasting repercussions into the present (King, Messner & Baller 2009, Jacobs, Carmichael & Kent 2005, Messner, Baller & Zevenbergen 2005). If our general argument is correct that governments prefer legal, institutionalized means of voter suppression, we should observe that lynchings were used to suppress the black vote, but that once Jim Crow voter suppression laws were in place White Southern Democrats abandoned the use of lynching for electoral purposes. We are certainly not arguing that lynchings were solely politically motivated before Jim Crow laws – lynchings had myriad causes, and were a means of social and economic control over blacks in the post-Reconstruction South (Clark 2009, Tolnay & Beck 1995). However, we argue that if lynchings were used to suppress the black vote we expect to find them more often in close proximity to elections, in areas where there is greater political threat to the power of the Democratic Party, and prior to the enactment of very successful Jim Crow voter suppression laws.

Despite contemporary press accounts explicitly linking electoral politics with lynchings in the post-Reconstruction South, and Congressional reports from the era arguing that violence was “no longer necessary because the laws are so framed that the Democrats can keep themselves in possession of the governments in every Southern State,” social scientists have failed to consistently find that lynchings were related to electoral politics, used as a means of suppressing the vote,\(^\text{1}\) and leading scholars continue to maintain political factors lack explanatory power (Bailey & Tolnay 2015). This reflects that scholars have not adequately modeled the variation in lynchings as a function

of the electoral calendar and threat to the Democratic Party across a large number of states, and fail to incorporate the fact that the relationship between electoral politics and lynchings should change dramatically once Jim Crow voter suppression laws are in place. Our analysis, using the most comprehensive database of lynchings in existence (Cook 2012) demonstrates support for our arguments.\(^2\)

Our argument and findings have some important implications. We show that regimes have a preference for legal, institutionalized and non-violent means of voter suppression, once such means are realizable. Of course, in countries that lack governing capacity, such approaches may be extremely difficult or impossible to implement, and thus we see violent voter suppression in such contexts. In addition, we provide a better understanding of the role of lynching (and violence more generally) in the suppression of the black vote in the South, and also help to explain why lynchings declined fairly precipitously in the early 1900s. Given that the suppression of the black vote was an important factor shaping the evolution of the American political system, this is itself an important finding. Our findings also put current attempts at voter suppression into broader historical context and help us better understand their motivation and form. Voter suppression approaches continue to evolve and be refined to adapt to changing political contexts.

1 Alternative approaches to voter suppression
Political elites engage in many types of electoral manipulation (Svolik & Chernykh 2014, Rozenas 2016). One important type of electoral manipulation, with a long history in the U.S. and elsewhere, is voter suppression, i.e. preventing groups with the legal right to vote from exercising that right. Though our analysis focuses on the suppression of the black vote in the U.S. South, our argument is more general. Voter suppression is historically a common phenomenon and remains so to this day, with different types of groups the focus of voter suppression efforts. Historically in Europe, the poor and working class were most often the target of attempts to suppress voting after the formal

\(^{2}\)The database is an updated version of the (Tolnay & Beck 1995) data on lynching, graciously provided by Wood Beck, Amy Bailey, and Stewart Tolnay.
franchise was extended (Goldstein 2013, Przeworski 2009). In the U.S. the poor and working class have also been targeted (Piven & Cloward 1988), but racial and ethnic groups have more often been the target of voter suppression efforts (and of course these categories often overlap, see Friedman [2005]). Other democracies with ethnic and racial minorities have similar experiences (Arklay 2015), and in many countries religious groups have been the focus of voter suppression efforts.

Although not rare, voter suppression is not ubiquitous, and this reflects the varying costs and benefits of suppressing the vote. One major benefit of elections is that they can bring legitimacy to regimes (Hafner-Burton, Hyde & Jablonski 2014, Rozenas 2016). This is why most authoritarian states today allow elections to determine outcomes, even if these elections are not entirely free or fair (Levitsky & Way 2010). Rozenas (2016) argues that incumbents who are at-risk may be willing to take a gamble on fairer elections in order to signal that they have the support of the public which can bring greater legitimacy. The flip side of this argument is that if an electoral victory is believed to result from voter suppression, both internal and external audiences will think that the regime has less legitimacy, which can lead to internal unrest and opposition, or the lack of external support. Thus, voter suppression has the potential cost of a lack of legitimacy.

Of course, many regimes engage in voter suppression despite this risk, because suppressing the vote has potential benefits. Most obviously, electoral defeat means losing power and suppressing the vote can minimize the chances of such a defeat. In general, numerically larger out-groups present larger electoral threats in democracies, since all systems of democratic voting provide more power to larger groups (Blalock 1967). However, in addition to the size of the group competing for power, regimes also consider the preferences of opposing groups, which provide information about the tangible costs of losing elections in terms of economic, political, and social power. Ritter (2014) articulates this logic in the context of repression of political dissent, but the logic is analogous to voter suppression: repression of dissent is more likely in contexts where governments and opposition groups have major disagreements over policy, and so too should be the attempts to
minimize those groups’ influence on electoral politics via voter suppression.

Once regimes decide to attempt to suppress voting they may choose from a variety of different options. Most broadly, voter suppression can be placed into two categories: ad-hoc, extra-legal approaches and legal, institutionalized approaches. Ad-hoc, extra-legal approaches are often but not always violent, with examples including lone individuals or small decentralized groups engaging in suicide bombings at polling places to prevent opponents from voting (as in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years), groups of poll workers deciding to stuff or “lose” ballot boxes, or, we argue below, violent lynchings used to intimidate out-groups into not voting. The paradigmatic examples of legal, institutionalized approaches to voter suppression are Jim Crow laws like poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses, and some would say voter ID laws and restrictions on voting hours in the modern U.S.

A key factor distinguishing rule by violence vs. rule by law is that the latter requires centralized policy-making capabilities and a relatively robust set of institutions to carry out the centrally-crafted policy. For instance, poll taxes require institutions capable of record keeping across elections so as to not disenfranchise supporters able to pay the taxes, as well as the ability to (somewhat) faithfully process payments. Grandfather clauses (which prevented individuals from voting if their grandfather did not have the right to vote) require even longer-term record-keeping, for obvious reasons. White primaries (i.e. primaries restricted to whites), on the other hand, require not only the development of state institutions, but the the successful (re)establishment of non-state, party structures across numerous localities. Thus, only governments with reasonable state capacity can engage in institutionalized voter suppression, with not all regimes having the ability to use such centralized, legal approaches to voter suppression, either because they lack the state capacity or are concerned about legitimacy implications.

It is possible that regimes decide that extra-legal, ad hoc voter suppression is more effective at times. One advantage to these forms of suppression is what might be called “plausible deniability;” regimes can claim that they are uninvolved and thereby avoid negative reputational costs.
associated with suppressing the vote. However, even with such ad-hoc approaches it is usually clear to observers which groups are responsible for voter suppression and whether these groups are supporters of the regime since political opponents, journalists, and increasingly NGOs (such as the OECD and the Carter Center) monitor elections for precisely these types of activities. Furthermore, if extra-legal voter suppression becomes violent there are substantial reputational risks to regimes in terms of legitimacy, increasing associated costs of suppressing the vote. Finally, extra-legal, ad hoc approaches to voter suppression are less predictably effective since they rely on semi-autonomous groups for implementation.³ Dispersing hierarchical control over voter suppression aggravates collective action costs among the disparate agents of suppression, as well as transaction costs related to information, monitoring, and sanctioning.

Compared to extra-legal, ad-hoc, often violent approaches, however, institutionalized forms of voter suppression have several benefits opposite the aforementioned costs of extra-legal suppression. Some costs remain, however. One cost of the use of formal laws to suppress voting is that this ties the violation of democratic norms directly to a particular regime, damaging its reputation (for a discussion of this in the South, see Perman [2001]). But nearly all legal restrictions on voting are written to be neutral on their face, and are always justified by some important goal (like preventing voter fraud, or ensuring good decision-making in elections), thereby minimizing these reputational costs to some extent. As long as regimes can make it seem that the laws are neutral and fulfill some important goal, the reputational costs of voter suppression will be minimized, particularly compared to electoral violence associated with the regime (Valelly 2009). Furthermore, to the extent that internal and external audiences are not very concerned, legitimacy costs are minimized.

Even though reputational costs of voter suppression do exist, governments will sometimes be

³ As Redding (2010) notes in his comparison of of North Carolina to the rest of the post-Reconstruction South, “[v]iolence and fraud had turned out to be effective elsewhere, but involved collective action mobilization and tended to only work as a temporary fix.” See also Kousser (1999), who recognizes the unstable nature of violence as the means to maintain Democratic hegemony in this era.
willing to pay them because legal, institutionalized forms of voter suppression implemented by official government bureaucracies are more predictable, effective and less violent. First, people are generally compliant with laws that benefit their group, even those imposing costs, if they expect others to also comply (Levi 1997). Not only do laws induce cooperation by threatening sanctions for their violation, they further induce cooperation by affecting expectations about others’ behaviors and the pay-offs of different strategies (McAdams 2000, Weingast 1997). Second, though even voting laws implemented by formal bureaucracies leave some room for discretion in enforcement (Atkeson, Bryant, Hall, Saunders & Alvarez 2010), formal laws are more predictably implemented and therefore have more predictable effects (Weber 1978), as Southern Democrats were aware of and openly discussed during the push to disenfranchisement (Bishop 1892). Being able to predict the extent of voter suppression with a reasonable degree of accuracy is important for politicians strategic about how and where to campaign and where to direct state resources. Third, another benefit of legal restrictions is their lower likelihood of producing violence, which imposes considerable reputational costs on regimes, due to both their more predictable enforcement as well as increased ability to control official state agents routinized to bureaucratic suppression rather than intimidation. Finally, once it is harder for certain groups to vote, opposition parties that might find a natural constituency in marginalized groups will focus less time appealing to and mobilizing these groups’ members. Thus, formalized policies creating expectations of suppression have characteristics of self-enforcing institutions, which ad hoc violence lacks.

If formal, centrally-directed and bureaucratically implemented laws are preferred, once governments have the ability to utilize them we should see a reduction in the use of ad-hoc, extra-legal and violent approaches. Historically, we see many instances of this “evolution” of voter suppression. When the Nazi party competed for power in the Weimar era, they relied on informal party groups to intimidate Communist and Social Democratic opponents, but once in power the Nazis disbanded opposing party organizations and unions altogether and electoral violence receded (Evans 2005). Similarly, in post-World War II Eastern Europe, groups supported by Moscow used ad hoc vio-
lence in the chaos of the war’s immediate aftermath, later using state institutions to systematically remove opposition groups from politics (Applebaum 2012). Of course, these systems ceased to be democracies altogether, but we see similar dynamics even within democracies, as we explore below. Specifically, we examine the evolution of voter suppression by analyzing lynchings after Reconstruction.

2 Voter suppression and lynching in the U.S. South

The U.S. South provides an interesting context for examining the empirical implications of our argument for a few reasons. First, as Gibson (2013) notes, the disfranchisement of blacks in the U.S. South after the 1870s is perhaps the largest reversal of voting rights in an otherwise functioning democracy in human history. Second, there is variation in strategies of voter suppression, with Southern states using both ad-hoc and extra-legal violence and institutional approaches to suppressing the black vote (Key 1949). Third, the disenfranchisement of blacks shaped the development of the American state and American political and policy outcomes for decades by contributing to the creation of the “Solid South” (Francis 2014, Kato et al. 2015, Katzenelson, Geiger & Kryder 1993, Rohde 1991). The partisan balance of power in the institutions of the federal and state governments, economic development, race relations and policy outcomes were shaped by the Democratic Party’s dominance of the South, which was enabled by the disenfranchisement of blacks. It is hard to exaggerate the importance of the case: it is the single largest disenfranchisement of voters, and its effects have reverberated for over a century, both domestically and internationally (Borstelmann 2009). In the remainder of this section, using existing historical evidence we argue that lynching and violence more broadly were used to suppress the vote, but that once legal means of voter suppression were in place violence was largely abandoned as a way to suppress the black vote, and we explain how we test these arguments more systematically.
2.1 Reconstruction and “Redemption”

If voter suppression is more likely to take place where there are large preference gaps between a regime and its opponents then it cannot be surprising that voter suppression emerged in the South after Reconstruction. The Southern defeat in the Civil War in 1865 dramatically reordered political, economic, and social relations. To be readmitted to the Union, Southern states had to rewrite their constitutions and ensure the rights guaranteed to blacks in the U.S. Constitution and federal enforcement statues. This included the right to vote for black males, which was enforced at bayonet point by federal troops (Foner 2011). Nevertheless, elites in the South wanted to try to reestablish a socio-economic system as close to the one that existed before the Civil War as possible (Wiener 1979). But this would require substantial policy changes from the Reconstruction-era status quo, and be virtually impossible as long as blacks had the right to vote. Preference gaps between white elites and blacks were massive, and in many parts of the South blacks were numerous enough to pose a serious political threat to the white Democratic Party — during Reconstruction hundreds of blacks and white Republican allies were elected or appointed to office in the South (Foner 1993). Furthermore, extensive contemporary accounts by white Democrats illustrate that even where blacks did not comprise a large portion of the electorate there existed a “palpable fear” that were white voters to become divided black voters could decide elections (Perman 2003, 25).

Thus, white Democrats could derive considerable benefits from suppressing the black vote, and almost immediately after blacks won the right to vote white Southerners began trying to reverse black suffrage (Redding 2010). It is worth pointing out that there was nothing culturally unique about the South that led to the emergence of voter suppression there; voter suppression was common throughout the U.S. at the time, but the system of federalism which gives the states many powers to determine voter eligibility led to various types of voter suppression targeting different groups depending on location. In the North, immigrants were targeted with restrictive legislation, often similar to laws used later in the South, for example, literacy tests (Keyssar 2009).

In contrast to these legalistic Northern approaches, however, violence and intimidation were
important to suppressing the black vote in the South (Key 1949, Woodward 1938). As Key (1949, 536) put it in his seminal work *Southern Politics*, “force and the threat of force had put the whites in power.” Even before the end of Reconstruction, during the election season of 1876, with federal troops still throughout much of the South, elites recommended violence and intimidation to wrest political control from bi-racial Republican governments. What can explain the use of violence in the South, rather than institutionalized approaches used to suppress voting in the North? Though some observers have long argued that the South has a particularly violent culture (Cash et al. 1941, Fischer 1991), which might lead naturally to the use of violence to suppress the vote, we think that the importance of violence in the suppression of the black vote reflects a number of other factors. First, while federal troops were in the South during Reconstruction it was not possible for Southern states to successfully implement legal, institutionalized forms of voter suppression (Perman 2003). Though federal troops left the South in 1877, immediate enactment of restrictive voting laws was hindered by the fact that blacks and Republicans from the North (the “carpetbaggers”) held some power in state governments and Republican dominance in Washington meant the federal government to hold a veto over Southern voting laws for a time (Perman 2003, Valelly 2009).

Additionally, Southern state governments lacked much of an effective state apparatus to implement voter suppression laws (Redding 2010), which regardless were impossible to enact or enforce

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4 The Edgefield Plan in South Carolina, written by former Confederate General Martin W. Gary, laid out a scheme to organize citizen militias to ensure white Democrats voted and suppress black participation, which was both decentralized and violent. It read, in part: “Every Democrat must feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one negro, by intimidation, purchase, keeping him away or as each individual may determine, how he may best accomplish it” and that “in speeches to negroes you must remember that argument has no effect upon them: They can only be influenced by their fears.” see: http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/after_slavery EDUCATOR/unit_nine_documents/document_11

5 It is also notable that such an approach has difficulty explaining sharp changes in levels of violence over time.

6 Indeed, in the late 1860s some Southern states *did* attempted to enact laws restricting the black vote but these were overturned by federal legislation, and as long as federal troops and administrators oversaw elections such legal approaches were impossible (Gibson 2013).
overnight. As Valelly (2009, 130) explains, legal disenfranchisement “was indeed a process... its backers could not and did not do all of what they wanted right away.” This was partly because during Reconstruction federal officials enforced expanded government programs to some degree (Foner 2011, Scroggs 1961), but after Reconstruction agrarian interests successfully pushed for tax cuts, limiting the capacity of Southern governments (Woodman 1995). This lack of state capacity and inability to craft and implement institutionalized voter suppression plans created the conditions for extra-legal, ad-hoc and often violent forms of voter suppression (though ballot box stuffing and other non-violent approaches were also used, as Perman [2003] observes).7

Scholars agree that intimidation and violence were used to suppress black voting, but it is not clear that lynching was widely used to suppress voting. The consensus view among the sociologists who have most frequently studied the topic is that lynching was a response to economic threats posed by newly-freed black laborers (Beck & Tolnay 1990, Tolnay & Beck 1995, Soule 1992). After emancipation, labor costs for white planters rose astronomically and black and white laborers competed in a way they had not under slavery’s rigid labor market segmentation (Ransom & Sutch 2001). Beck & Tolnay (1990) find that, along with the black percentage of the population, high inflation and low cotton prices are associated with more lynchings, lending support to the economic origins of lynching thesis. Other scholars argue that lynchings were essentially a form of localized, ad hoc law enforcement in a society with a very weak state law enforcement apparatus (Clarke 1998).8

A small number of studies have examined whether lynchings were politically motivated, pro-

7In contrast, three factors encouraged legalized suppression in Northern states. First, state capacity had not been largely dismantled during the Civil War. Second, the large concentration of out-groups in dense urban neighborhoods decreased implementation costs. Third, Republican control over the federal government meant there would be no federal intervention in policies pursued by Republicans at the state-level to suppress the vote of Democratic-leaning groups (primarily immigrants and Catholics).

8And of course some lynchings were unrelated to politics or economics, and committed in response to real or perceived crimes (see the discussion of particular cases in Beck and Tolnay (1990) and Bailey and Tolnay (2005).
ducing inconsistent findings. But these studies focus on one or a small number of states, or national aggregate data or a limited time period both before and after Jim Crow laws (Inverarity 1976, Olzak 1990, Soule 1992) which, as we explain below, can make it difficult to determine whether lynchings were politically motivated and whether the move to institutionalized voter suppression led to a reduction in lynchings. Taking a step back from existing research, we think it is likely that lynchings were often used to suppress black voting since it emerged as a practice in the post-Reconstruction voter suppression era, and if one wanted to “send a message” that participation in politics was unacceptable using violence, lynching would be ideal. It is true that some lynchings were not very public, and it is also the case that other acts of violence were used to suppress voting. Nevertheless, in many cases lynching is more akin to terrorism than other forms of murder, in that it is intended not simply to kill a particular individual, but is rather a public spectacle designed to reinforce the existing socio-political order and provide a stark warning to its potential transgressors (Wood 2011). While it is highly likely that the prevalence of lynching was correlated with other forms of violence intended to suppress black electoral participation, it is specifically because of the visible, public nature of lynchings that they appeared in newspaper stories, have such a major place in American society and politics, are such a critical phenomenon to be examined, and that the data exist enabling us to analyze them 150 years later.

Violence appears to have been rather effective in driving white Republicans from office and often out of the South (Gibson 2013), but it was only partly effective in reducing black voting because it relied on ad hoc implementation at the local level and depended on the willingness of blacks to be intimidated into not voting (Key 1949, Kousser 1974, Redding & James 2001).9 As late as 1892—fifteen years after federal troops left the South and violence and intimidation were frequently used—black voter turnout was around 50% in many Southern states (Redding & James 2001). There were also costs associated with this violence. Violence, and lynching in particular,
troubled some Southern and many Northern elites (Francis 2014, Kato et al. 2015). Because of this, while violence persisted there was a small but real threat that the federal government would reoccupy the South to monitor elections (Valelly 2009), something which did occur for a handful of elections in certain states (Gibson 2013). That is, the gruesome and public nature of lynchings which made individuals use them to suppress the vote also carried substantial reputational costs that increased opposition to and undermined the legitimacy of Southern state governments (Perman 2003). But as long as the suppression of black voting remained localized and ad hoc, extreme acts of violence were always possible.

Because of these reputational costs and the relative ineffectiveness of violence, it appears that Southern elites searched for a more effective—institutionalized and non-violent—means of suppressing the black vote. Internal to Southern politics, forming coalitions to craft laws suppressing black voting became easier once blacks and black sympathizers were largely driven from most state governments by the late 1880s and early 1890s (Kousser 1974). Externally, by 1890 the Republican commitment at the national level to the protection of enfranchisement in the South had withered, a result of internal policy divisions over the primacy of economic matters over black voting rights and the collapse of the ability of Republicans to compete in the South (Valelly 2009). Thus, as the political ability to implement systematic policies increased within the South, the threat of Northern vetoes of restrictive voting laws disappeared (Perman 2003, Valelly 2009). Finally, as the economy of the South recovered and life returned to “normal,” state institutions gained additional capacity which made it possible to implement centralized policies in a variety of areas including education, criminal justice, and voter suppression.11

10 As Perman (2003, 39–42) describes, by 1891 even Senator William Stewart of Nevada, “the chief architect of the Fifteenth Amendment and the floor manager of the Enforcement Act of 1870” had abandoned the issue of enfranchisement and voted to defeat the Lodge Bill.

11 Although Clarke (1998) has argued that lynchings declined in the early 1900s precisely because the development of a more reliable justice system and the use of the officially state-sanctioned death penalty became more widespread, this interpretation of the causal story is contested; see Baily and Tolnay (2015). Regardless, the fact that white elites began to argue “let the law and courts handle black criminals,” assumes the existence and effectiveness of such institu-
The result of these developments was, of course, Jim Crow laws disenfranchising nearly all blacks, including the grandfather clause, poll tax, and literacy test. In contrast with violence, the Jim Crow approach was more effective and gave the one-party systems of the South a “veneer of national legitimacy” (Gibson 2012, 59), i.e. there were fewer reputational costs than lynchings and murders. The first wave of statutes and state constitutional amendments aimed directly at disenfranchisement came between 1889–93 in Mississippi and South Carolina; the second came in 1898–1902, after the threat of Populism subsided (Kousser 1974). Jim Crow laws of the 1890s represented a more sophisticated form of legal voter suppression that could limit reputational costs to some degree compared to the black codes passed by many state governments in 1865–67, since Jim Crow laws were officially race-neutral, and indeed, laws like the literacy test and poll tax did reduce white voting in the South (Redding & James 2001), though they had a much larger impact on the black vote (Aldrich 2015). For instance, in Louisiana in 1896, over 130,000 Black citizens were registered to vote. In 1904, after Louisiana had instituted a poll tax, registration requirements, secret ballots, and literacy and property tests, along with a grandfather clause, this number had fallen to approximately one percent of the prior number, with only 1,342 registered Black voters in the state (Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Behring Center N.d.). Overall, voting among blacks in the South almost completely disappeared until the 1960s brought renewed federal intervention in Southern suppression of voting rights. In the analysis, we examine whether lynching was indeed used to suppress the black vote, and if so, whether this approach was abandoned as legal means of voter suppression were implemented.

2.2 Empirical expectations
We wish to systematically determine whether institutionalized voter suppression is preferred and leads to the abandonment of ad hoc forms. We provide some historical evidence that Southerners were searching for a more effective, less violent means of voter suppression above, but elites are not typically forthcoming about such preferences. However, we can use variation in the incidences, which were questionable for awhile after the Civil War (Clarke 1998, 285).
of ad hoc, extra-legal and violent approaches to voter suppression and how they vary over time and across space to test whether institutionalized, non-violent approaches are preferred. To the extent that lynching was an ad-hoc, extra-legal, violent approach to suppressing the black vote, we can use variation in the incidence of lynchings to gain leverage to test our arguments.

If we are correct that lynchings were used to suppress the black vote then we should find that they are more common when the threat of black political participation is highest. Most studies view the percentage of the population that is black as a measure of black political threat and it certainly is, but this blunt variable also measures a variety of other types of perceived social and economic threats (Blalock 1967). Therefore, a better test of whether lynchings were used to suppress the black vote is to see whether they vary with the electoral calendar, because logically, black voting was more of a threat to white elites around elections and we expect to see more lynchings as elections become closer. Though this seems obvious, previous studies have not taken advantage of such temporal variation. In addition, though the Republican Party was marginalized by the early 1880s in most of the South (Valelly 2009), the Populist Party emerged as a major threat to Democratic ruling elites in the late 1880s and early 1890s, with Populists in many places pursuing the formation of either biracial coalitions of the economic losers of the South’s agrarian society or successful in attracting enough white voters to threaten Democratic hegemony (Olzak 1990, Redding 2010). Therefore, we expect that prior to the enactment of Jim Crow laws when and where the Populist Party was more of a threat in the most recent past election cycle (i.e. gathered a greater share of the vote) we will observe more lynchings in the current election cycle.

Second, if our argument is correct that institutionalized, legal means of voter suppression are preferred then we expect to see a decline in lynchings once Jim Crow laws were in place. Of course, because not all lynchings were intended to suppress the black vote, we will not see the complete elimination of lynching. In addition, once Jim Crow laws were in place and the political impetus for lynching was minimal, the relationship between political variables—time to election and the strength of the Populist Party—should no longer be associated with lynching. That is,
if law is a substitute for violence like we argue, the link between lynchings and electoral factors should be severed once Jim Crow laws that suppressed the black vote were in place and blacks were no longer an electoral threat to white Democratic rule.

3 Analysis

3.1 Outcome variable

In order to analyze the rise and decline of lynchings and the substitutability of law for violence, we examine lynchings in 11 Southern states between 1876 and 1952. We suspect that lynchings are correlated with other less visible forms of violence and intimidation, but almost by definition we cannot systematically measure these, and despite their more public nature even collecting data on lynchings is extremely burdensome. Thus, most studies of lynching focus on one or a small number of states. The seminal studies by Tolnay & Beck (1992) and Tolnay & Beck (1995) are notable exceptions, and we use these data, which remain the most comprehensive data on lynchings in the South and the best for academic study (Cook 2012), to test our arguments. These data include 15 states from the period after Reconstruction to 1952, including all Southern states that joined the Confederacy, two border states that had slavery but did not join (Missouri and Kentucky), and two non-Southern, non-slave states (West Virginia and Indiana). We restrict our analyses to the 11 Southern slave states in the data that experienced more than one lynching event during the time period being examined: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.12

In our analysis of these 11 states, we examine the county-month as the unit of analysis. Counties were critical units of government in the era (Redding 2010), and the black political threat

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12Including Southern states that lack more than one recorded lynching event in the existing data does not change our substantive conclusions, but due to no variation in outcomes estimates of fixed and random effects for these states are highly problematic. Kentucky, although it did not secede, witnessed a high number of lynching events in the time period recorded, more than many Confederate states. And while it was not occupied by federal troops after the war, it’s antebellum economy was built on slavery—with Louisville a nationally notable slave market—and it was overseen by the Freedman’s Bureau after the Civil War.
varies (i.e. due to the Populist uprising or economic conditions) even across counties within states. The outcome variable presented in our primary analyses is whether a given county experienced a lynching event in a given month.

3.2 Explanatory and control variables

To identify the institutionalization of voter suppression via Jim Crow laws, we consider nine distinct laws identified by intent and effect on voting that were present in the Jim Crow South: poll taxes, registration requirements, multiple-box voting, secret ballots, literacy tests, property tests, understanding clauses, grandfather clauses, and the white primary (Kousser 1974). As we discuss, historical evidence suggests that in years subsequent to multiple Jim Crow laws being implemented, black voters were nearly eliminated from electoral rolls. Ideally, we would be able to measure the effectiveness of Jim Crow laws, rather than their implementation. However, accurate data do not exist across Southern states, making this impossible. Recognizing that legal disenfranchisement was a process (Valelly 2009), taking a handful of years from the passage of laws to their effectiveness in eliminating blacks from electoral participation, we therefore make the conservative decision of classifying a state as having institutionalized voter suppression after the second of these nine laws have been adopted. Table 1 shows the temporal sequence of this adoption across the 11 states analyzed. In the appendix we show multiple alternative operationalizations of Jim Crow being put into effect, with consistent results.

One probable reason sociological studies reject political explanations for lynchings is that they typically fail to account for the fact that political threat varies not only with the size of the black population across areas, but also with the salience of electoral politics over time: when elections near, motives for political violence increase (Davenport 1997). To capture this fundamental temporal relationship we include a measure of days until the next Congressional election in our models, assigning to each month the date of the 15th.\footnote{Due to issues of data and comparability, we use federal general elections every two years across the states; due to the nature of their electoral constituency and candidates, Republican and}
Table 1: **Jim Crow law adoption by year.** The year in each state the second Jim Crow voter suppression law was adopted. Note: although Kentucky adopted a poll tax in 1891, it never adopted a second such law.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year of second policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were the October just prior to a November with an election on the 5th day this variable would take on the value of 21. If legal suppression replaces lynchings we should observe that prior to Jim Crow the electoral calendar is associated with lynchings, but that after Jim Crow this relationship disappears. And note, due to the fixed electoral calendar the timing of elections is exogenous to contemporary political mobilization, ensuring that election timing is not endogenous to outbreaks of political violence.\(^{14}\)

There was also spatio-temporal variation in political threat associated with the black vote due to partisan challenges to the white Democratic regimes in the South. Specifically, beginning in the late 1880s the Populist Party posed a serious threat—far more so than the Republican party—to Democrats. Though this threat began to recede by the mid-1890s it existed in some areas until the Democratic primaries should not be expected to have produced a perceived black political threat on the part of white Southerners.

\(^{14}\) Whether such is the case in parliamentary systems lacking fixed electoral calendars and the possibility to call elections at the height of mobilization (or violence) is worthy of empirical investigation.
elections of 1908 (Key 1949, Olzak 1990, Redding 2010). We expect that this “Populist uprising” is associated with more lynchings before Jim Crow restrictions were adopted, but not after. We use the county-level Populist vote share in the previous Congressional election to measure the Populist threat. If we observe that lynchings decline after a state adopts Jim Crow laws, and that the electoral calendar and Populist threat are no longer significant determinants of lynching after Jim Crow regimes are in place, then this would provide strong evidence for our argument that regimes prefer institutionalized voter suppression.

Further, we include controls to generate more accurate estimates. First, for numerous reasons, the black population should be strongly associated with lynching and electoral matters (Blalock 1967), but this relationship should be curvilinear with the effect declining as the black population becomes very large (Corzine, Creech & Corzine 1983). Therefore, we include a county’s population (%) that is black and its square. While the black population is certainly a measure of political threat, it also captures economic and social threats, making it impossible to conclude that a significant relationship between a larger black population and lynchings solely reflects attempts at voter suppression, which is why we focus primarily on our other indicators of black political threat.

During and immediately after Reconstruction the Republican Party posed a threat to white Democratic rule, but this threat was not serious for most of the period we examine, given its biracial coalition was fractured and weak as early as the years immediately after Reconstruction (Valelly 2009). Therefore, based on previous research we expect Republican support in a county is actually associated with fewer lynchings, since areas with stronger Republican support during the period of our analysis were almost certainly more supportive of black rights. Hagen, Makovi & Bearman (2013) find support for this seemingly-counterintuitive view, showing that Republican areas were more likely to see interventions by citizens and local officials to prevent the formation and reduce the lethality of lynch mobs.

To assess whether economic causes of lynchings are unaffected by legal restrictions on suffrage, we include the most commonly-used and relevant covariate in studies of lynching, dependence on
cotton, a proxy for economic motivations for lynchings. Following Hagen, Makovi & Bearman (2013), we measure a given county's dependence on cotton as the ratio of acreage of farmland devoted to cotton production and total agricultural acreage. Data are drawn from U.S. Agricultural Censuses.

Finally, we include a time covariate to capture any potential trend in the occurrence of lynchings not captured by our variables of interest. Before turning to the multivariate analysis we first examine the consistency of aggregate patterns with our arguments.

4 Results
A simple yearly time series of lynching events aggregated across the counties during the period discussed can serve as a first, crude test of our argument regarding electoral motives for lynching and the substitutability of law for violence. Figure 1 plots the yearly number of lynching events in the 11 Southern states being analyzed, and is annotated with two vertical dashed lines. The first of these is in 1889, the year the first Jim Crow voter suppression law was introduced (averaging across the 11 states), the second 1894, when two such laws were in effect (again, averaging across the 11 states).

At least three notable things stand out looking at Figure 1. First, the number of lynchings rose dramatically the moment that Reconstruction ended and federal troops left the South; from 1877, we see an increase until violence reaches its apex in 1893, when lynchings are recorded in 118 counties. Second, the period when Jim Crow laws were being debated and adopted in Southern legislatures was the era that saw the highest levels of extra-judicial murder of black Americans, peaking just before the second Jim Crow law was put in place in most Southern states (and, as noted, the enactment and effective enforcement of these policies was a process rather than immediate). This suggests that the adoption of Jim Crow laws were in part an attempt to reduce such violence. Third, a multi-decade decline follows almost immediately after Southern states begin to enact a large number of Jim Crow laws that more fully disenfranchise blacks.
Figure 1: Lynching over time. Historical trend of number of lynching events per county-month by year in the 11 states examined. The first dashed vertical line is 1889, the year the first Jim Crow voter suppression law was introduced (averaging across states), the second in 1894, when two such laws were in effect.

The descriptive statistics presented in Figure 1 provide persuasive preliminary evidence for our argument. Despite these appearances, it is possible that the sharp and steady decline in lynchings was related to other factors, and the association visualized in Figure 1 is spurious. Examining our arguments about the changing relationship between black political threat and lynchings after Jim Crow can determine whether this is the case.

4.1 Political threat and lynching before and during Jim Crow

Given the dichotomous nature of our response, we present results of both standard and hierarchical logistic regression models. While included covariates account for county-level factors, it is also probably the case that state-level political factors shape lynchings and therefore we estimate logistic regression models with state fixed effects and hierarchical models with state-varying intercepts. The supplemental information examines the robustness of our findings to our classification of both lynching events and the institutionalization of Jim Crow. There we show that count models assessing county-months where multiple lynchings occurred are consistent with the results presented
below, as are alternative operationalizations of the implementation of Jim Crow in Southern states.

Table 2 examines the degree to which political factors are associated with lynching before and after the institutionalization of Jim Crow. Results of Models 1 and 2 are highly consistent with the argument that lynching was employed as a form of political violence after Reconstruction: when elections are more proximate and when and where Populists present a greater threat, the likelihood of lynching is greater, whereas Republican support decreases the likelihood. Although these two findings regarding Populist and Republican support do initially seem somewhat at odds with one another, it is important to keep in mind that very soon after Reconstruction, while Republicans did maintain some Southern support, they ceased to be a real threat to Democratic Southern governments. In addition, previous research has demonstrated that Republicans, who sympathized with blacks, were more likely to intervene to prevent lynchings where they were more numerous, as we noted before (Hagen, Makovi & Bearman 2013). In contrast, the Populist Party emerged as a genuine political threat during the period of this study and remained one in some areas for around two decades (Olzak 1990, Redding 2010). The most convincing evidence of the political nature of lynchings is found in the coefficient for the days to election variable. Days to election is exogenous because it is established by law well in advance of any particular election campaign (additionally, due to its two year cycle cannot merely measure annual seasonal effects). As elections near the likelihood of lynchings rise, and it is difficult to develop a reason why that would be the case were lynchings not intended to suppress black votes.

Both the percentage of the population that is black and its square are significant. This is consistent with the political threat hypothesis (Blalock 1967), but is also consistent with black social and economic threats. The proxy for economic threat (cotton dependence) is highly significant and positively associated with lynching, consistent with findings from sociological studies that lynchings were economically motivated. Finally, there is evidence for the existence of a general secular trend, over and above these factors.

Results presented in Table 2 not only provide strong evidence that prior to institutionalized
Table 2: **Lynching before and during Jim Crow.** Logistic regression models of lynching by county-month in 11 Southern states before and after the institutionalization of Jim Crow voter suppression laws.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Jim Crow</th>
<th>During Jim Crow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>−5.80***</td>
<td>−6.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days to election</td>
<td>−0.09*</td>
<td>−0.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Populist vote</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Republican vote</td>
<td>−0.11**</td>
<td>−0.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>1.53***</td>
<td>1.50***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black squared</td>
<td>−0.99***</td>
<td>−0.97***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton dependence</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>−0.29***</td>
<td>−0.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>9912.26</td>
<td>9841.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num. obs.</td>
<td>223350</td>
<td>223350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

voter suppression, political factors were consistently associated with lynchings, but also that once voter suppression laws were in place electoral factors are no longer salient. Models 3 and 4 illustrate that days to election and the Populist threat are irrelevant to the number of lynchings in the Jim Crow context: the magnitude of the coefficient for Populist threat falls by a quarter and is highly insignificant, and the estimated effect of days to election is not only statistically indistinguishable from zero, it is zero. As crucial is the fact that the economic factor associated with lynching does not become irrelevant after Jim Crow is in place, suggesting that legal disenfranchisement disrupted the existing political equilibrium of violence while leaving the economic untouched.

Comparing results in Models 1 and 2 to Models 3 and 4 makes clear the fact that, politically, law
was an effective substitute for violence in the American South. The degree to which this is the case is illustrated by the plots in Figure 2, which show predicted probabilities (with 95% confidence intervals) across the two eras. Each plot shows the expected probability of lynching when days to election (plot a) and Populist vote share (plot b) are allowed to vary from their minimum to maximum observed values, with all other covariates held constant at their means; black lines show predictions for the pre-Jim Crow-era, while gray lines show post-Jim Crow-era data.

Plot (a) in Figure 2 shows that the timing of elections are important to understanding the likelihood of lynching before—and only before—legal means of voter suppression were in place: going from the days immediately before an election to two years out is associated with the probability of a lynching occurring in a given month decreasing by 25%. While the change in odds of lynchings associated with these variables are small in absolute magnitude, this simply reflects that lynching was a fairly unusual event. A 25% reduction in the probability of public murder is, substantively, of great importance. And given that the days to election covariate is distributed evenly across its values due to the nature of the two-year Congressional election cycle, unlike most covariates of interest here it is the case that a large proportion of observations fall on the far left and right ends of the x-axis. As importantly, plot (a) also visually illustrates the fact that after Jim Crow is in effect the link between elections and lynchings is severed.

Plot (b) in Figure 2 shows that as vote shares for Populists in the previous election increase, the probability of lynchings rises. Going from the minimum to the maximum predicts a marked 82% increase. But, like with days to election, only before legal means of voter suppression are in place. Once Jim Crow laws formalize suppression, the relationship between Populist vote shares and lynching evaporates. Further, this is not simply a result of the temporal demise of the Populist party, as six of the 11 states analyzed had two policies in place during the mid-1890s (the height of the Populist threat), and thus the Populist threat is present in both the pre- and post-Jim Crow data sets.

The visualizations in Figure 2 along with the model results presented in Table 2 show that dur-
Figure 2: **Predicted probabilities.** The predicted probability of lynching in a given county-month across levels of the listed covariate when all other covariates are held at mean values. Black lines show the post-Reconstruction, Pre-Jim Crow era (Model 1), while gray lines show predicted probabilities during Jim Crow (Model 3). Note: plots (a) and (b) have divergent axes.

During the decades immediately following Reconstruction, political factors were an effective predictor of lynchings. They also show that the institutionalization of formal means of voter suppression in the Jim Crow era severs this relationship, illustrating that law served as an effective substitute for violence.

This is not to say that all such violence was political: the continued salience of cotton dependency underscores the point that many lynchings were driven in whole or part by economic threat. And yet it also further underscores the point that any political threat is conditioned by the broader electoral landscape: in a context of systematic legal disenfranchisement the motives to use and gains to be derived by violence-as-voter-suppression evaporate. Ad-hoc, extra-legal and violent voter suppression is replaced by legal means once the latter are available.
5 Conclusion

We argued that once legal, centralized means of voter suppression are available regimes will typically use these rather than ad-hoc, extra-legal often violent approaches because the costs of the former are less while the benefits are greater. We analyzed this in the context of the U.S. South after Reconstruction, which witnessed one of the greatest examples of voter suppression in a modern democracy. We found that prior to the enactment of Jim Crow laws lynchings were increasing dramatically in the South and that the time to elections and the strength of the Populist Party in the previous election were important predictors of lynchings. After Jim Crow is in place we see that the overall number of lynchings declines and that the electoral variables are no longer significant determinants of lynchings. In short, it appears that Jim Crow replaced lynching in the U.S. South.

This finding is surely of interest to students of American politics from a variety of disciplines. The experience of voter suppression and disenfranchisement of black citizens in the U.S. South after Reconstruction is critical to understanding American political development and to understanding contemporary race relations as well as the interactions between African Americans and the U.S. state. While lynching has been a major focal point of social science and historical research, the electoral nature of lynching has been under appreciated if not outright overlooked. In general, existing social scientific research concludes that economic rather than political factors drove variation in lynching in the American South. We offer a useful corrective to this: while we do find that economic factors are important, we show clearly that political factors are also salient. Not only has the history of lynching and disenfranchisement of blacks had lasting implications in a general sense, research shows that the legacy of particular lynchings continues to influence social relations today (King, Messner & Baller 2009, Jacobs, Carmichael & Kent 2005, Messner, Baller & Zevenbergen 2005).

But our findings have importance beyond the the post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow era South, or the U.S. more generally. Many democracies, at some point or another, experience voter suppression. Though voter suppression is widespread we understand little about the form that it takes.
Based on a simple cost-benefit model we argued that when legalized, institutionalized approaches to voter suppression are available they will be favored and we found support for this in our analysis. Because all participants in the events we examine are dead we cannot directly test how beliefs about costs and benefits shaped actions (and more generally regimes that suppress the vote do not acknowledge doing so or their motivations for doing so), but our results are consistent with the idea that legal, institutionalized approaches to voter suppression are preferred, an idea publicly expressed by many white Democratic elites in the 1890s (Perman 2003). This suggests that as democracies develop we will see fewer violent attempts at voter suppression, because these approaches are relatively costly and provide fewer benefits (otherwise, political lynching would not have been abandoned once Jim Crow was in place). But it also suggests that voter suppression will evolve toward approaches with fewer costs for regimes, becoming ever more sophisticated and subtle.

At the same time, it does seem that there is a secular increase in costs associated with voter suppression. Compared to the 19th century, norms of universal suffrage are hegemonic, increasing the reputational costs of voter suppression (Dahl 1973). This means attempts to limit the vote must not be as blatant, nor quite as effective, as in the past. As Valelly (2009) argues, while the “second Reconstruction” of the 1960s was successful due to changed internal and external attitudes and policies, it was at first met with significant opposition, both legal and systematic and extra-legal and violent. Furthermore, as recent jurisprudence tells us, laws raising barriers to voting are acceptable as long as their intentions are not too blatant. As noted, voter identification laws do fulfill some reasonable government purposes like preventing fraud, but they are likely to disproportionately affect black and other minority voters and be supported by states benefiting from such results (Bentele & O’Brien 2013, Rocha & Matsubayashi 2014, McKee 2015). On the other hand, these modern laws are far less effective at disenfranchising voters, and the federal courts would be far less likely to tolerate laws that were so blatantly intended to disenfranchise certain groups. Recent decisions by an appellate court overturning a North Carolina voting law compared
to the Supreme Court upholding an Ohio law are illustrative: the former was struck down explicitly because its lack of neutrality was so clear, given the legislature requested race-based turnout data and then crafted a law to hinder black turnout (Barnes & Marimow 2016).

Our framework of costs and benefits of voter suppression can provide the basis for examining a broader set of questions. Most basically, why is voter suppression more common in some countries than others? In winner-take-all systems the costs of losing elections are greater, and thus we think voter suppression should be less likely in proportional representation systems. The nature of the disagreements with regime opponents may also matter. For instance, it may be the case that mainly ideological differences between in and out-groups produce less voter suppression compared to systems where governments primarily provide patronage, and thus victory and defeat can mean the difference between employment and unemployment. It is also likely the case that voter suppression is in some sense easier, and thus perhaps more likely, where groups with different preferences are easily identifiable because of a visible racial or ethnic status or geographic location within a polity. While it is not possible to look at someone and determine whether they are a liberal or conservative, different racial and ethnic groups are more easily identifiable. This suggests that voter suppression may be more common in democracies with greater economic and racial diversity. Given the frequency of voter suppression and the way that it can influence outcomes this subject is certainly worthy of much greater scholarly attention in the future.

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