The Real Winner's Curse

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Elections and peace

- Elections provide "an antidote to international war and civil strife" (Bill Clinton)

- Why?
  - Opposition preferences channeled (Regan & Henderson, 2002).
  - Less costly path to power than violence (Davenport, 2007).
  - Commitment to share decisionmaking (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006).
  - Legitimacy to group in power (Kurzman, Werum, & Burkhart, 2002).

- But...

Elections and violence

- In weak institutional settings, despite formal elections, groups may remain excluded or at the margin in practice
  - E.g. blacks in the US South, everyone but the PRI in México, the left in Colombia

- So what happens if they gain political power?
  - (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008) Losers (typically powerful political elites) might dislike it:
  - → Since *de jure* mechanisms failed, turn to *de facto* means to:
    - Avoid policy change
    - Deter further access to institutional power

- This paper. Studies the (violent) response of elites to the access of previously excluded groups to local executive office in Colombia

Summary

- Regression Discontinuity Design using close elections to approximate ideal experiment
  - Compare: left narrowly won vs. narrowly lost.
  - Premise: outcome is as good as random.

- We find entry of previously excluded groups exacerbated violence, which helped consolidate political exclusion
  1. Left-wing victory $\rightarrow$ $\uparrow$ paramilitary attacks ($\approx$ 1 standard deviation)
  2. Large left incumbency **dis**-advantage.
  3. Attacks concentrate during subsequent electoral campaign.
  4. Left implements (perhaps) different policies on land taxation
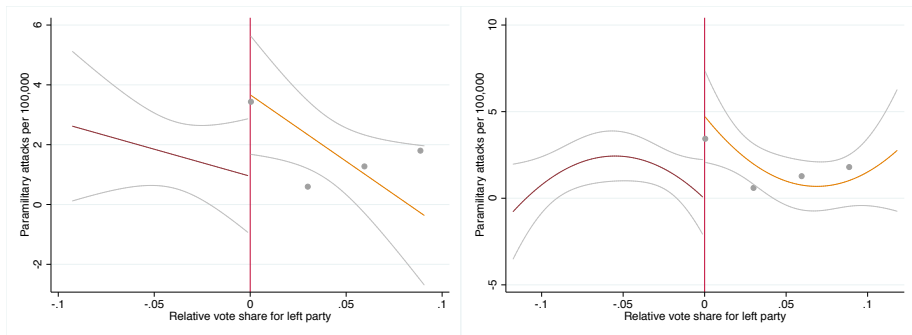 5. No similar effects for the right

Main results

Table 1: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on paramilitary attacks

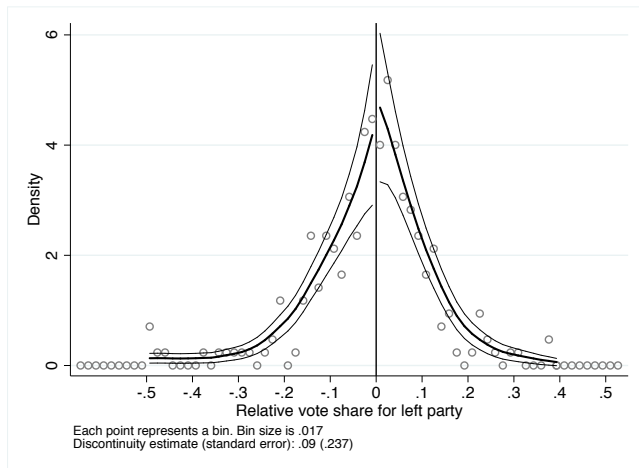| Dependent variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per 100,000 inhabitants during government period*							
	Linear polynomials				Quadratic polynomials		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: *Non-parametric estimates*								
Left-wing mayor elected	4.351**	5.258**	6.366***	6.757***	5.750**	5.321**	6.121**	6.300**
	(2.200)	(2.247)	(2.401)	(2.555)	(2.385)	(2.348)	(2.471)	(2.594)
Observations	157	121	106	100	186	136	156	143
Bandwidth	0.0930	0.0620	0.0520	0.0480	0.119	0.0770	0.0930	0.0810
Panel B: *Parametric estimates*								
Left-wing mayor elected	3.688*	3.564	3.520	3.561	5.225**	5.221**	5.782**	5.880**
	(2.075)	(2.217)	(2.186)	(2.292)	(2.466)	(2.529)	(2.670)	(2.864)
Observations	144	144	143	143	144	144	143	143
Bandwidth	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930	0.0930
(Local) polynomial order	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2

Main results

Figure 1: Effect of electing a left-leaning mayor on paramilitary attacks

Testing assumptions

No evidence of manipulation of election results

Figure 2: McCrary test: Sorting around the winning treshold for the left

Each point represents a bin. Bin size is .017
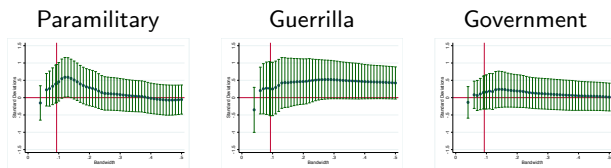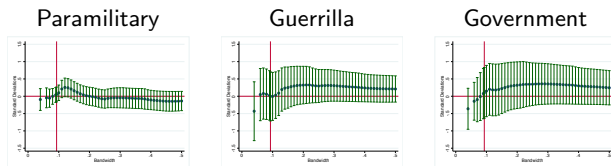Discontinuity estimate (standard error): .09 (.237)

Testing assumptions
No comparable effects before elections

Figure 3: Effect of electing a left-leaning mayor on previous violence

Attacks during previous government period by group

Paramilitary	Guerrilla	Government

Attacks in year before elections by group

Paramilitary	Guerrilla	Government

Alternative interpretations
"Not only paramilitary attacks"

Table 2: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on other forms of violence

Dependent variable: *Average yearly attacks or clashes per 100,000 during government period*				
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Attacks by		Clashes between		
guerrillas	government	guerrilla & paramilitary	guerrilla & government	paramilitary & government
Left-wing mayor elected				
0.731	1.602	0.228	1.776	0.281
(1.886)	(1.544)	(0.229)	(1.437)	(0.186)
Observations				
135	177	148	142	129
Bandwidth				
0.0761	0.112	0.0850	0.0787	0.0704

Alternative interpretations
"Left-wing politicians are 'bad' politicians"

Table 3: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on corruption and performance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A. *Dependent variable: disciplinary prosecutions*					
		Mayor is		Top official is	
	investigated	guilty	impeached	investigated	guilty
Left-wing mayor elected	0.168	0.173	0.0890	0.0468	-0.0675
	(0.225)	(0.166)	(0.141)	(0.103)	(0.0505)
Observations	99	72	73	123	78
Bandwidth	0.0861	0.0580	0.0592	0.121	0.0648

		Index of		Capital	Current
Panel B. *Dependent variable: Local government performance*					
	fiscal performance	legal rules compliance	admin. capacity	expenditure	expenditure
Left-wing mayor elected	-7.663	7.869	-11.19	0.210	-0.108
	(4.947)	(9.592)	(8.909)	(0.401)	(0.365)
Observations	90	62	41	174	182
Bandwidth	0.0799	0.0871	0.0519	0.114	0.118

Alternative interpretations

"Should happen to any extreme party"

Table 4: Effect of electing a right-wing mayor on violence

Dependent variable: *Average yearly attacks per 100,000 during government period*

	All groups (1)	Paramilitary (2)	Guerilla (3)	Government (4)
Panel A. *Non-parametric estimates*				
Right-wing mayor elected	0.440	0.175	0.0440	-0.543**
	(1.124)	(0.612)	(0.143)	(0.274)
Observations	386	380	269	437
Bandwidth	0.0657	0.0644	0.0443	0.0754
Panel B. *Parametric estimates*				
Right-wing mayor elected	0.274	0.186	0.0198	-0.508**
	(0.864)	(0.472)	(0.118)	(0.229)
Observations	386	378	268	436
Bandwidth	0.0660	0.0640	0.0440	0.0750

Alternative interpretations
"Should happen to any **new** party"

Table 5: Effect of electing a mayor from a new (non-left) party on paramilitary attacks

Dep. variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per 100,000 inhabitants during government period*				
	Non-parametric estimates		Parametric estimates	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Non left) New party elected	0.475	0.446	0.500*	0.274
	(0.334)	(0.424)	(0.285)	(0.407)
Observations	1099	1268	1100	1100
Bandwidth	0.0757	0.0942	0.0760	0.0760
(Local) polynomial order	1	2	1	2

Alternative interpretations
"This is just a UP story"

Table 6: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on paramilitary attacks
Differential effect of party *Unión Patriótica*

Dependent variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per 100,000 during government period*		
	(1)	(2)
Left-wing mayor elected	2.660*	4.558**
	(1.521)	(1.938)
Unión Patriótica (UP)	-0.657	-0.736
	(0.916)	(1.049)
UP $\times$ Left-wing mayor elected	14.51	14.88
	(11.65)	(11.60)
Observations	157	157
Bandwidth	0.0930	0.0930

Mechanisms

"This should occur mostly in weakly institutionalized areas"

Table 7: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on paramilitary attacks
Heterogeneous effects by state capacity

Dependent variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per 100,000 inhabitants during government period*	Public employees (per 1,000 inhabitants)	
	Local (1)	National (2)
Left-wing mayor elected	3.761*	3.395
	(2.085)	(2.144)
State capacity	0.117	0.0542
	(0.305)	(0.0469)
State capacity × Left-wing mayor elected	-0.661	-0.0821
	(0.410)	(0.0498)
Observations	157	157
Bandwidth	0.0930	0.0930
Mean state capacity	2.040	24.79
Std. Dev. state capacity	1.530	24.04

Mechanisms
"This should occur mostly during the AUC period"

Table 8: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on paramilitary attacks
Heterogeneous effects by timing of AUC domobilization

Dependent variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per 100,000 during government period*		
	(1)	(2)
A Left-wing mayor elected	5.659**	7.332**
	(2.343)	(2.942)
Post AUC demobilization	2.337	2.341
	(1.792)	(1.796)
B Post AUC demobilization × Left-wing mayor elected	-5.345**	-5.429**
	(2.304)	(2.336)
A + B	.314	1.903
Ho: A + B = 0		
F-statistic	.02	.86
P-value	.88	.36

Mechanisms
"Violence to avoid re-election of the left"

Table 9: Effect of electing a left-wing mayor on paramilitary attacks
Heterogeneous effects by year of violence after the election

Dependent variable: *Average yearly paramilitary attacks per*			
100,000 inhabitants at year... of government period			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Next election
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Left-wing mayor elected	4.783	-1.203	10.90*	18.48
	(3.375)	(1.410)	(6.355)	(11.56)
Observations	148	149	150	100
Bandwidth	0.0842	0.0860	0.0881	0.0677

Consequence

Incumbency **dis**advantage

Table 10: Incumbency advantage in Colombia

	Non-parametric estimates				Parametric estimates	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. Dependent variable: *Indicator of whether elected party (in t) runs and wins in $t+1$*						
Winner party in t	-0.183**	-0.213**	-0.167**	-0.194**	-0.166**	-0.195**
	(0.0895)	(0.107)	(0.0725)	(0.0911)	(0.0726)	(0.0912)
Left-wing party					0.570***	0.576***
					(0.0274)	(0.0334)
Winner party in t × Left-wing party					-0.946***	-0.979***
					(0.0511)	(0.0541)
Observations	810	1032	809	1029	809	1029
Bandwidth	0.0890	0.126	0.0890	0.126	0.0890	0.126
Panel B. Dependent variable: *Indicator of whether elected party (in t) runs in $t+1$*						
Winner party in t	-0.0474	-0.0961	-0.0283	-0.0702	-0.0273	-0.0706
	(0.0920)	(0.112)	(0.0734)	(0.0938)	(0.0734)	(0.0939)
Left-wing party					0.386***	0.397***
					(0.0264)	(0.0332)
Winner party in t × Left-wing party					-1.060***	-1.079***
					(0.0427)	(0.0438)
Observations	826	1027	830	1029	830	1029
Bandwidth	0.0920	0.126	0.0920	0.126	0.0920	0.126
(Local) polynomial order	1	2	1	2	1	2

What do we learn from this?

- With weak institutions, arrival of formerly excluded groups may exacerbate violence (or other costly forms of de jure power).
- Democratic elections need functioning state institutions in the territory.
- Key to anticipate the reaction of powerful local groups to national reforms potentially affecting their power.
- ⋆ Important in the <u>current</u> critical juncture.
- But not just in Colombia
  - Formal democratic institutions often coexist with informal local means of authoritarian control.
  - E.g. several nominally democratic regimes in Latin America and Asia (even today), as well as in developed nations historically.

Not just in Colombia...

- Examples:
    - PRI holding on to its power even through violent means when attempts at national democratization (Fox, 1994),
    - Santiago del Estero, Argentina: "where institutional control and clientelism failed (...) outright oppression filled the void" (Gibson, 2014).
    - US South: "mixes of boundary-controls strategies –violent and nonviolent, legal and illegal" (Gibson, 2014).
    - Philippines restoration of democracy in 1946: left Democratic Alliance illegally deprived of won seats by elite-controlled congress (Franco, 2001), violence towards left.
- But sometimes national reforms encouraging participation and inclusion prevent violence
    - India: Chandra and Garcia-Ponce (2016): emergence of local ethnic parties crowds out armed organizations.
- Key question: conditions under which societies can peacefully open up political spaces for traditionally excluded groups
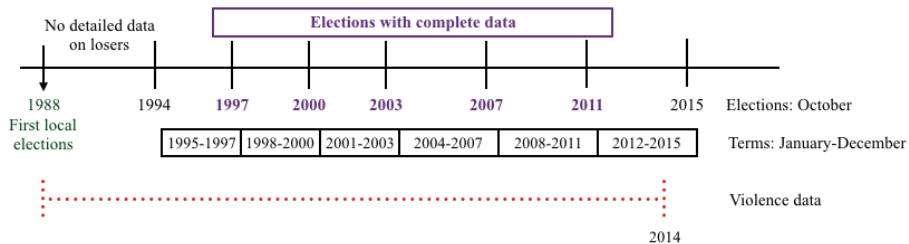
Thank You!

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Appendix Slides

Data: Elections timing

Figure 4: Elections timing and available data

Classifying the left
Three steps

1. Self-defined as communist, socialist, or social democratic (Keefer, 2012).
   - Check party names and self-claims, e.g: *Communist party of Colombia*, *Workers Independent Revolutionary Movement.*
2. Not all self-declare. Check proposals and classify policy stance (Budge, Bara, Volkens, & Klingemann, 2001)
   i. Pro-peasant or social re-vindication in nature.
   ii. More regulation of the market.
   iii. Defense of worker rights vs. exploitation.
   iv. Defend state owned, or communal property rights.
   v. Anti-imperialist.
   $\rightarrow$ We adopt left if 3 or more
3. Single-candidacy parties:
   - Screened government plan for three or more left-wing policy proposals.
4. 29 parties out of 540 were coded as left-leaning; 12 were able to reach first or second place in a mayoral election in our sample period.
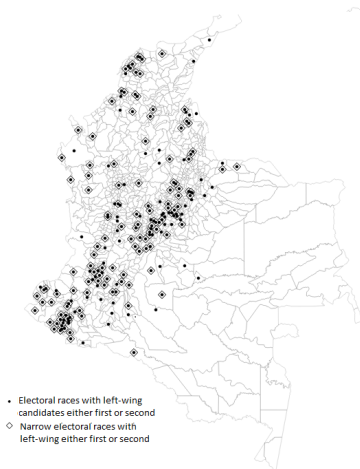
Classifying the right

- Similar three-step process.
- Five categories, adapted as well from Budge et al. (2001):
    1. Prioritizes economic growth/development over inequality and redistribution,
    2. Endorses free-market, orthodox policies, a limited role for the state, and the promotion of private enterprises,
    3. Family and religion as crucial moral pillars of society,
    4. Appeals to patriotism and/or nationalism and the suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion,
    5. Prioritizes law and order and a military approach to preserve the state's monopoly of violence.

External validity
"Close left-wing races not representative of all left-wing races"

Figure 5: Geographical distribution of electoral races featuring the left as winner or runner up: 1997-2011

- Electoral races with left-wing candidates either first or second
- ◇ Narrow electoral races with left-wing either first or second

External validity
"Not valid for landslides"

Figure 6: Effect of electing a left-leaning mayor on paramilitary attacks