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1

How Did First-Wave Democracies End Electoral Corruption?

The extension of voting rights during the first wave of democratization created lofty hopes and expectations. A character in Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* who had recently returned from the barricades of the 1848 revolution in Paris expressed the exuberance of the immediate period following the extension of suffrage as follows. “The Republic is proclaimed! We’ll be happy henceforth! . . . No more kings! You understand? The entire land free! The entire land free!” (Flaubert 2004, 2:235; Rosanvallon 2018: 261).

Democratic elites of the time shared this hopefulness about the transformative power of elections and anticipated that the adoption of universal suffrage would usher in far-reaching economic and social transformations. Léon Gambetta believed that universal suffrage had “the power to establish all freedoms and all. Universal suffrage can . . . establish for all time real order, absolute justice, full liberty and genuine equality” (Tourneur 1904: 41). Jules Ferry, a prominent Republican politician and one of the first Republican prime ministers of the Third Republic, hailed the introduction of universal suffrage as the “law of laws” (*la loi des lois*). According to Ferry, universal suffrage “was a sacred and sovereign institution. . . . Universal suffrage is not only right, legitimate and just, but is also inevitable. It is the entire present and the entire future. Universal suffrage is the honor of the masses, the security of the disadvantaged, the reconciliation of classes, the law for all” (1893: 92; cf. Rosanvallon 1992: 450). Other prominent Republican politicians shared

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Ferry's almost religious fervor for the institution of the suffrage. Louis Blanc, a historian and representative in the Chamber of Deputies, referred to the suffrage as "the triumphal arch through which all redemptive [*sauveur*] principles will pass" (Rosanvallon 1992: 449), while Gambetta called it the "sacred arch of democracy" (1881, 2:223).

The everyday, mundane reality of the first elections following suffrage expansion was a far cry from these lofty expectations. As soon as the period of canvassing began, candidates distributed money, gifts, or offers of food and drink. In Britain, where such practices of treating voters were more pronounced, poor voters spent most of their time wandering from one public house to another (Seymour 1915: 134). An electoral report from Lancaster vividly described such endless processions of voters during campaigns, noting that "nothing could be more degrading than the effect of this sort of canvass on voters. They struck work, they spent the nights in public houses and the days in wandering about, begging from the assistant on either side or a few shillings to enable them to continue their debauch" (Hansard, P.P. 1867: 3777).

In addition to bribing and treating, candidates used state employees at various levels of government during campaigns. These included mayors, policemen, and tax collectors or other employees of the local administration. In German national elections, candidates affiliated with the governmental majority deployed policemen to prevent opponents from distributing election material or from campaigning. In Prussia, *Landräte* state employees responsible for tax assessment and military conscription were routinely deployed during campaigns. At election time, the *Landräte* threatened voters with higher tax assessments during the following year if they supported the "incorrect political candidate" (Kühne 1994: 157). In France, mayors and employees of the local administration played a crucial role in mobilizing voters on election day by using a mix of promises of administrative favors and threats to cut local social assistance (JORF ChamberDeb, 24 June 1902).

Economic coercion was widespread at the time. On election day, enterprises turned into political battlegrounds. Candidates deployed rural employers to mobilize voters, equip them with the "correct ballot," and attempt to monitor their votes by taking advantage of imperfections in voting technology. As a report of the French parliament commented with regard to these electoral practices, "the large landowners, the powerful industry leaders, and, in general terms, the influential men who hold in their hands labor, in other words, the bread of families, . . . have used influences of all kinds, threats, repression, intrigues. They have attempted to distort elections

through a close surveillance of the vote, by controlling the ballots . . . at the time these ballots are handed over to the president of the voting station” (JORF ChamberDoc 1890, no. 107).

The widespread presence of various forms of malfeasance contributed to disillusionment with elections. Criticisms contending that electoral rights were only hollow promises and that elections were a form of hypocrisy intensified. Commenting on the first elections held in the Third Republic, one publication noted that “the universal suffrage, the expression of National Consciousness, was at the mercy of the cupidity and ambitions of its guardians. While appearing sovereign, France is actually enslaved.” Such a state of affairs was “humiliating, immoral and dangerous” (Legrand 1877: 10). Paul Granier de Cassagnac, a legislator from Gers, warned that the “universal suffrage has lost his prestige and authority” (JORF ChamberDeb, 18 December 1901). In France, this criticism was shared by both opponents and the strongest supporters of the Republican regime. A report of the Commission of Universal Suffrage of the French Chamber of Deputies noted that elections “failed to represent the true will of the people” (JORF ChamberDoc 1902, no. 181). Charles Benoist, a Republican legislator from Paris, commented on the tension between the promise of universal suffrage and the practical realities of elections: “In this country . . . political philosophy requires that one considers the people as the exclusive, inexhaustible, and constantly renewed source of power and law. If the universal suffrage is not free, and I say fully and absolutely free, . . . this philosophy will be nothing but a lie, this power, nothing but an usurpation, this law nothing but a scorn” (JORF ChamberDeb, 23 May 1907).

At the same time, this recognition of the shallowness of the democratic achievement set in motion an arduous political process that sought to remedy the multitude of electoral imperfections. In many countries, this process unfolded over several decades. Long periods of lull were punctured by surges in interest in reforming elections, only to be followed by neglect. Given that many of the legislators participating in these deliberations were beneficiaries of the electoral status quo, the formation of an encompassing coalition that supported reforms to democratize electoral practices was a highly difficult process.

In *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu remarked that the law “which determines the manner in which ballots [*billets de suffrage*] are distributed is a fundamental law in a democracy” (2002: 284). Here, Montesquieu highlights the importance of laws that organize practical, concrete details of elections for the functioning of democracies. Nineteenth-century political handbooks

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also stressed the importance of material guarantees as safeguards of the voting process. The entry on voting in the *General Dictionary of Politics* published in 1867 noted that “the freer a people is, the more carefully it surrounds the vote with the most meticulous guarantees” (Block 1880: 1123). In an 1896 study detailing the menu of electoral irregularities, an official of the French Ministry of Interior remarked that the freedom of the vote depended on its materiality (Uzé 1896: 9; cf. Ihl 1998: 84).

While the comparative literature on democratization has sidestepped questions about the practical organization of elections, the goal of this study is to fill this theoretical and empirical gap. This book examines the adoption of electoral reforms that sought to protect the integrity of the electoral process and reduce opportunities for malfeasance. By addressing material imperfections in the voting process, these reforms attempted to complete the democratic project begun with the expansion of suffrage. By eliminating undue influences on voters’ autonomy, as well as opportunities for electoral malfeasance, the reforms were designed to transform nominal voting rights granted as a result of suffrage expansion into de facto political rights. In this study, I examine reforms that affect every stage of the electoral process: the organization of campaigns, the moment of the vote, and the counting of ballots.

One set of changes in electoral laws concerned the organization of campaigns. These reforms attempted to sanction candidates’ ability to reduce the incidence of vote-buying or treating. The Napoleonic Code that was adopted by a large number of European countries during the first half of the nineteenth century included one early effort to limit electoral fraud. This approach subjected exchanges that involved offers of money or goods to penal laws and established harsh punishments for bribery. Such provisions of the penal code met with a limited degree of success in curbing these illicit strategies because the legal burden of prosecuting bribery remained prohibitively high. As a result, countries that adopted the Napoleonic Code attempted to find other ways to sanction fraud throughout the nineteenth century. Political developments in France illustrate this trajectory of reform. Here, politicians attempted to introduce additional laws that complemented the penal code, but at the same time made it easier to sanction fraud, by relying on courts. By contrast, reformers in Britain adopted a different approach by placing stricter limits on campaign expenditures and imposing stronger punishments on candidates who exceeded these limits.

The second set of changes concerned the voting process itself. Here reformers attempted to reduce the ability of candidates and their brokers

to take advantage of imperfections in voting technology and pierce voter secrecy. The first component of these reforms was the adoption of ballot envelopes. Initially, this electoral innovation was adopted with great hesitation. In 1868, Württemberg introduced ballot envelopes but eliminated this provision in 1882 (Duplantier 1901: 245). Canada introduced ballot envelopes in 1876 but rescinded this provision in 1888 (*ibid.*, 246). Swiss cantons played a pioneering role in the introduction of this legislation. Waadt (or Vaudt), a canton in western Switzerland, mandated the introduction of ballot envelopes in 1881. This was followed by Tessin in 1889, St. Gall in 1890, and Luzern in 1893 (*ibid.*, 244–46). Legislation introduced in Norway in 1884 mandated ballot envelopes but required voters to sign their ballots. After a long period of negotiations, the German Reichstag mandated the introduction of ballot envelopes for national elections in 1903.

A related set of provisions to protect voter secrecy mandated the introduction of isolating spaces. The goal of these reforms was to allow voters to escape the gaze of candidate representatives located in the vicinity of ballot containers, known at the time as electoral urns. In 1856, Australia pioneered the introduction of isolating spaces (Duplantier 1901: 259). Britain introduced this reform as part of the Ballot Act enacted in 1872 (35 & 36 Vict., Article 26). The Ballot Act, in turn, served as a model for comprehensive electoral reform adopted in Belgium in 1877, the *loi Malou*. Luxembourg and the Netherlands introduced isolating spaces in 1879 and 1896, respectively. Romania adopted them as part of its electoral reform of 1899. Imperial Germany mandated isolating spaces together with ballot envelopes in 1903. France adopted the reforms in 1914.

A third set of reforms attempted to minimize the ability of election administrators to modify the outcome of elections at the time votes were counted. One strategy to reduce this electoral irregularity was to introduce harsh punishments under the penal code. This solution was adopted in Germany. An alternative avenue of reform considered by nineteenth-century parliaments mandated the presence of representatives of all candidates when ballots were counted. These electoral reforms were adopted in Britain in 1872 and in Belgium in 1877. The French parliament considered these proposals during multiple rounds of deliberations, spanning nearly three decades, but a political majority in favor of this reform could not be assembled.

Electoral reforms to protect electoral integrity were introduced at various stages in the process of democratization. Consequently, universal manhood suffrage was not a prerequisite for electoral reforms. Britain adopted reforms democratizing elections in parallel with reforms extending suffrage.

In Belgium, these significant electoral reforms were adopted prior to the introduction of mass suffrage. Developments in Imperial Germany contrast with those of other European countries. Despite its early extension of universal manhood suffrage, Germany granted elected legislators no responsibilities in forming governmental majorities. Even though Germany remained an electoral authoritarian regime until 1914, the Reichstag adopted electoral reforms protecting voter autonomy in 1903. France adopted these electoral reforms with significant delay after the introduction of universal suffrage. Over seventy years lapsed between the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1848 and the acceptance of electoral reforms to reduce opportunities for electoral malfeasance.

The goal of this study is to explain the political origin of electoral reforms designed to guarantee greater integrity of the electoral process by removing opportunities for illicit influence and fraud. I seek to understand the motivations of politicians who demanded these reforms and the process by which parliamentary majorities that supported reforms came about. I attempt to chronicle the initial rise in demand for these reforms and explain the motivations of legislators who supported electoral change. Who were the legislators who supported the introduction of these changes in electoral law? What explains their dissatisfaction with the status quo? Did this initial parliamentary impetus in support of electoral reforms vary across countries and across policy areas? Next, I turn to the negotiation of electoral reforms and seek to characterize the composition of the political majorities that supported reforms. My objective is to understand why the composition of the legislative majorities supporting these electoral reforms varied across countries and across policy areas.

The Argument in Brief

In a 2009 article, Adam Przeworski presented the central puzzle examined by the democratization literature as follows: “Why would people who monopolize political power ever decide to put their interests or values at risk by sharing it with others? Specifically, why would those who hold political rights in the form of suffrage decide to extend these rights to anyone else?” (2009: 291). While Przeworski considers dilemmas associated with the expansion of suffrage, his formulation naturally applies to the democratizing reforms examined in this study. Why do legislators elected under rules that permit some form of malfeasance choose to modify the laws that made their victory possible? Similar to the extension of suffrage, the choice to replace a

familiar institution with a novel one involves significant risk-taking by elected lawmakers. Reforms intended to reduce illicit strategies redistribute influence within the existing electorate by allowing the translation of preferences of some constituents into votes with less noise and bias. One of the goals of this study is to provide an account of the considerations politicians brought to bear on these decisions and the formation of majorities that supported a change in electoral rules.

In this book I propose a straightforward solution to Przeworski's democratization puzzle. I show that legislators turned to electoral reforms as economic and political changes such as elite splits increased the costs associated with different forms of electoral malfeasance. For legislators who faced such rising economic and electoral costs, electoral reforms presented an opportunity to level the playing field and impose constraints on the electoral strategies of their competitors. Understanding demand for reform requires us to unpack these economic and electoral costs that reduced the attractiveness of the status quo.

With regard to the reforms examined in this study, legislators had to choose between maintaining the status quo that provided opportunities for electoral malfeasance and supporting an alternative state that foreclosed such opportunities. My first assumption is that support for the status quo is conditioned by politicians' access to resources that can be politicized during campaigns. Such assets may include public resources of the state or private resources financed by the candidate or by the party. The former may include access to employees of the state administration who can be deployed during campaigns or access to the policy resources that can be offered to voters in exchange for their support. Private resources may include wealth or access to private employers as brokers.

The distribution of resources that can be politicized affects the initial political cleavage over the desirability of electoral reforms and the size of initial majorities supporting reforms. As long as a majority of legislators can access such resources and deploy these seamlessly during elections, the impetus for political change is low. Because the distribution of resources determines support for the status quo, the composition of political majorities that oppose reforms is likely to vary across reform dimensions. The composition of the majority supporting the status quo is likely to differ across irregularities that politicize private or public resources.

These initial majorities are, however, not static. This majority of resource-endowed politicians may disintegrate and give way to a new majority if political or economic changes increase the costs associated with various

illicit strategies. I consider two constraints on the use of illicit strategies. The first is the economic costs associated with different forms of malfeasance. The use of illicit strategies is likely to vary across space and time and be influenced by the economic characteristics of a particular constituency. All things being equal, a candidate who promises money or gifts in exchange for his vote will face higher economic costs if the number of poor voters that are necessary for this victory is higher. The economic costs of bribing are likely to be higher in regions with more generous anti-poverty programs or higher minimum wages. Electoral strategies that deploy employers or other private actors as brokers are also constrained by economic conditions in a particular region. The costs of economic coercion are higher in districts where labor is scarce or where a number of competitors can rehire voters targeted by coercive strategies.

In addition to economic costs, a politician who engages in bribery or coercion may also incur electoral costs. A candidate incurs electoral costs if the use of an illicit strategy reduces, rather than increases, the total number of votes received by the candidate in the respective constituency. A candidate incurs electoral costs if voters sanction electoral malfeasance. He may also incur electoral costs if the use of such a strategy reduces his opportunities to form electoral coalitions with other candidates. Consider two examples of electoral costs. A politician who competes on the basis of programmatic policies but engages in clientelistic promises may incur electoral costs. Voters are likely to punish a candidate who seeks to combine such appeals as “schizophrenic” (Kitschelt 2000). In an electoral system based on runoffs, a candidate who uses illicit strategies may incur electoral costs. Potential coalition partners may be deterred by these strategies and support his opponent during runoffs. As these examples illustrate, electoral costs may result from the responses of both the voters and the other candidates in electoral systems that require coordination during runoffs.

Such increases in economic and electoral costs are significant because they may bring about a coalitional realignment in support of a policy that reduces opportunities for malfeasance. A majority supporting reforms emerges if a group of resource-endowed politicians reconsiders the attractiveness of the status quo. The pivotal legislators in the new electoral majority supporting reforms are resource-endowed legislators who encounter high economic or electoral costs associated with illicit strategies. For legislators facing high economic or electoral costs, electoral reforms are preferable to the status quo, because they constrain resource-endowed legislators who do not face such constraints from using illicit strategies in future elections.

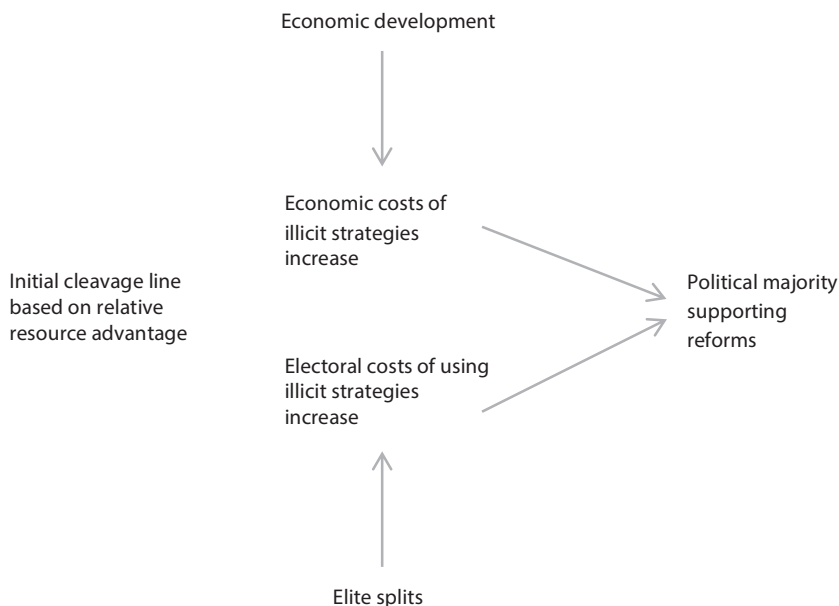


FIGURE 1.1. Pathways to electoral reform.

Figure 1.1 outlines the factors that contribute to the rise in electoral and economic costs, respectively. Economic development, on the one hand, and elite splits, on the other hand, reduce the attractiveness of the status quo even among legislators with an initial resource advantage. Taken together, these developments facilitate the formation of political majorities that support electoral reforms. These electoral majorities are likely to include both resource-constrained legislators and resource-endowed legislators who face high economic and electoral costs.

The nineteenth century was a period of massive economic transformations. These economic developments included industrialization, urbanization, and rising income levels. All of these changes increased the economic costs of various forms of electoral malfeasance, reducing their electoral desirability. These economic developments were more consequential for clientelistic strategies that used private economic resources. Such strategies included both vote-buying and economic coercion that uses private actors. A historian of German elections commented on the electoral consequences of labor scarcity experienced by many Prussian districts during the 1890s as follows: “In recent periods, landowners had to use this means of power [*Machtmittel*] very carefully because of the labor shortage that existed in the countryside.

One was happy if one could keep one's employees and one was careful to not antagonize the employees through electoral harassments and to not drive them to the cities" (Wulff 1922: 13). As this example suggests, labor scarcity resulting from economic development and migration to cities increased the economic costs of repressive electoral strategies.

In addition to economic developments, elite splits also have significant consequences in affecting legislators' preferences about the desirability of electoral reforms. Elite splits were a common political development in many first-wave democracies. In this study, I define elite splits in electoral terms, not as economic conflicts between owners of different factors. Such electoral splits among elites may come in a variety of forms. A party may break up into different factions that decide to field their own candidates. Alternatively, an informal pre-electoral alliance among parties may disintegrate, leading to the fielding of competing candidates.

Elite splits raise the electoral costs associated with various forms of malfeasance. In this study, I will document two distinct pathways by which elite splits raised the electoral costs associated with illicit strategies. The first of these mechanisms is present in countries whose electoral systems require electoral coordination in the second round. During the period examined in this study, many European countries, including Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, had majoritarian elections with runoffs. These electoral systems allowed a large number of candidates to enter in the first round but necessitated high levels of electoral coordination among candidates during a runoff. To win in the second round of a race, a candidate needed endorsements from former competitors. Such anticipation of electoral coordination in the second round increased the electoral costs associated with illicit strategies. Using different forms of malfeasance in the first round was likely to increase the wrath of opponents and reduce their willingness to endorse a candidate who had used illicit strategies. As such, a candidate who relied on different forms of malfeasance in the first round could find himself without coalition partners in the runoff, a situation that could lead to electoral loss. Such considerations about electoral costs affected legislators' views about the desirability of the status quo in the aftermath of elite splits. Following such splits, the pivotal group of legislators who embraced electoral reforms were resource-endowed legislators who now faced increased competition in runoffs. Illustrating this logic, the book will document the shift in the position of German National Liberals about the desirability of electoral reforms following the breakdown of the electoral cartel with Conservatives.

Second, elite splits also contributed to the formation of either parties or groups of politicians competing on the basis of programmatic promises. The most prominent example of such an elite split was that between Republicans and Radicals in the Third Republic. The split between various Liberal groups in Germany was also based on programmatic differentiation among these splinter groups. Elite splits altered candidates' ability to access resources necessary for the production of electoral malfeasance and at the same time increased incentives for programmatic differentiation. For candidates who were competing on the basis of programmatic promises, illicit strategies became an increasing liability, as they could undermine the credibility of their promises in the eyes of voters. In this political environment, elite splits also contributed to an increase in electoral costs. The shift in the position of these legislators facilitated the formation of a new parliamentary majority supporting electoral reforms. Legislators competing on the basis of programmatic promises became the pivotal group in the majority supporting reforms.

Let us consider some examples that illustrate the political consequences of elite splits. During Bismarck's chancellorship, Germany's parties on the right—the Conservatives, National Liberals, and Free Conservatives—formed an electoral alliance (*Kartellbündnis*). Additional alliances established by party organizations in each province underpinned this national cartel. As a result, the alliance fielded only one candidate in each district, who could benefit from the electoral support of the local state apparatus. Around 1900, this national electoral cartel disintegrated as a result of conflict among the parties on the right over trade issues. The breakdown of the *Kartellbündnis* changed the electoral considerations of candidates on the right about the attractiveness of using state resources. In this more fragmented political environment, candidates on the right found themselves in the novel situation of competing against each other while being, at the same time, dependent on coalitions in runoffs. This increase in electoral competition raised the electoral costs of strategies that politicized state resources. The use of such resources as policemen or state officials during campaigns by one candidate reduced the willingness of his opponents to support him during runoffs.

This cartel split affected the electoral strategies and the preferences for reforms of some legislators previously affiliated with these parties. Sensing these growing electoral costs, officials of Prussia's interior minister began to obfuscate their electoral strategy of politicizing state resources, attempting to pursue a policy of "noiseless" deployment of the state apparatus (Müller 1963; Mares 2015: 51). For National Liberals, rising electoral costs

contributed to an open indictment of electoral strategies that politicized state resources. Following the breakup of the *Kartellbündnis*, National Liberals supported the invalidation of candidates who politicized state resources. On the floor of the Reichstag and in the commission verifying electoral irregularities, National Liberals supported harsher punishments for candidates who used state resources during campaigns. The National Liberals' shift in position contributed to the formation of a new majority willing to sanction electoral malfeasance. As a result, the electoral jurisprudence adopted by the Reichstag included increasingly sharper sanctions for candidates who used state resources during campaigns (Hatschek 1920). Following the breakdown of the electoral cartel, the National Liberals also supported electoral reforms intended to ensure voter secrecy by cosponsoring legislation that mandated uniformly designed ballot containers.

In neighboring France, the elite split between Republicans and Radicals also contributed to the formation of political majorities that supported electoral reforms. Although disagreement between these factions goes back to the first elections of the Third Republic, the split resulted in the formation of an independent Radical Party in 1902. As Radical Socialists competed on the basis of programmatic appeals—including demands for the introduction of progressive income taxes, social insurance, and labor market reforms—clientelistic strategies became politically counterproductive and were perceived more as a liability than as a source of electoral advantage. As Radicals began to endorse electoral reforms, the disagreement between Radicals and Republicans over the desirability of these reforms intensified.

This repositioning of Radical legislators on the question of electoral reforms was the decisive factor in the creation of a political majority that supported reforms. In the case of electoral reforms that limited the use of state resources during campaigns, Radicals' change in position about the desirability of these reforms contributed to the adoption of reforms that sanctioned electoral clientelism. A similar political dynamic was at play in the case of vote-buying reforms and contributed to the adoption of these reforms. Finally, Radical legislators were a pivotal group in facilitating the formation of an electoral majority supporting better protection of voter secrecy. Because these reforms were opposed by both centrist Republicans and Monarchist legislators, the repositioning of Radicals was of crucial importance in guaranteeing the adoption of these reforms.

The foregoing discussion has outlined an answer to Przeworski's "democratization dilemma" for reforms that limit various types of electoral malfeasance. In cases where both economic costs and electoral costs are low, the

initial resource asymmetry explains the size and composition of the majority opposing change. In such cases, I expect that a political majority of resource-endowed politicians will reject proposals for reform. By contrast, rising electoral and economic costs are likely to reduce the desirability of the status quo for a number of legislators and contribute to the formation of a different political majority favoring reforms. In my explanation, resource-endowed legislators who encounter high economic or electoral costs are politically pivotal. In Third Republic France, this role was played by Radical politicians who broke away from the Republican majority. In Imperial Germany, National Liberals played a similar role during the reforms associated with the protection of voter secrecy.

In addition, this book generates new insights about the position of parties on the right about electoral reforms. A number of studies infer such parties' positions toward electoral reforms from their affiliation with particular factors of production, such as land or capital (Boix 2003; Ziblatt 2017). Reflecting the interests of immobile factors, such as land, these parties are expected to oppose democratization. The preferences of these legislators are also expected to be stable over time and across dimensions. In contrast to these explanations, I suggest that the position of parties on the right with regard to electoral reforms will vary across policy areas, depending on the available resources that can be politicized during elections. Consider the positions of Monarchists and centrist Republican legislators in France during the negotiation of electoral reforms limiting different forms of malfeasance. Because Monarchists could only access private resources during campaigns, they opposed electoral reforms to limit bribery and treating of voters. At the same time, Monarchists and other non-Republican legislators on the right supported reforms that would limit the politicization of state resources during campaigns. Republican candidates, who could access political resources of the state, embraced the opposite position during these reforms. These legislators supported reforms that limited vote-buying but opposed reforms that attempted to rein in the use of state resources. In short, the overarching argument of this book can account for the different positions toward electoral reforms held by parties on the right. It can also explain why the composition of the electoral coalitions favoring reforms will vary across policy areas. The crucial variables that explain these different electoral majorities are the distribution of resources and the magnitude of economic and electoral costs.

The analysis presented in the book thus joins a growing literature that has examined the importance of elite splits for democratic reforms (Ansell and

Samuels 2014; Madrid 2019a, 2019b). The literature on third-wave democratization anticipated the importance of elite splits. Scholars such as Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) and Adam Przeworski (1991) argued that an elite split sets in motion a democratic transition. In recent years, explanations that stress the importance of elite splits for democratic reforms have experienced a comeback. Disagreement persists, however, as to how to conceptualize the salient elites as well as the sources of the split. Ben Ansell and David Samuels conceptualize elites as economic classes rather than partisan groups. In this framework, landholding elites oppose the extension of suffrage because it encroaches on their rights, while the middle classes support democratization in order to limit expropriation by state authorities (Ansell and Samuels 2014). In a number of articles analyzing the adoption of democratic reforms in Latin America, Raúl Madrid (2019a, 2019b) also focuses on the importance of elite splits but conceptualizes them in partisan terms. According to Madrid, splits within a ruling party weaken the control of insiders, while providing opportunities for the outside group to enact reforms (Madrid 2019b: 1540). Madrid shows how intra-elite splits within the ruling PAN party in Argentina contributed to the adoption of secret ballot reforms in 1912. Such reforms were supported by legislators who defected from the party in power in an effort to weaken the political machine of the incumbent. As will be discussed in chapter 2, the analysis of this book emphasizes partisan rather than economic elites.

Finally, this book speaks to theories that attribute an important role to Social Democratic parties as agents responsible for democratic reforms (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992). In contrast to these explanations, I show that the importance of such parties representing lower-income voters during these democratic breakthroughs was relatively limited. While Social Democratic legislators supported the adoption of reforms to limit various forms of electoral malfeasance, their participation was not a sufficient condition for actual policy change. By documenting the formation of electoral majorities that favored electoral reforms, I show that decisive political majorities form only after legislators affiliated with parties on the right who often had the resources to engage in various forms of electoral malpractice shifted their position in favor of reforms. To understand the adoption of these democratic reforms, we need to unpack the calculations of legislators associated with parties in the political center and the political right. The shift in these legislators' position explains the timing of the adoption of the different reforms democratizing electoral practices examined in this book.

Relationship to the Literature

In deriving its theoretical expectations about the sources of demand for electoral reforms, this study considers first and foremost the electoral motivations of politicians. Politicians choose electoral reforms that improve the likelihood of their future electoral victory by considering their available political resources and the economic and electoral costs to deploy such resources. In this section, I show how the theoretical predictions of this explanation build on, but also challenge, two dominant perspectives in the study of democratization. The first of these approaches is the modernization perspective, which examines the consequences of economic development for the adoption of democratic reforms. The second approach, the redistributive approach, derives predictions for democratic reforms—such as decisions to extend suffrage—from expectations about the future level of taxes and spending. While these perspectives provide important insights that are integrated in this study, neither of these approaches can explain the complex coalitional dynamics that led to the adoption of democratizing reforms limiting electoral malfeasance.

ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM

The most enduring theoretical perspective in the study of democratization is the modernization approach. Seymour Lipset's study "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," published in 1959 (see also Lipset 1994), was one of the earliest contributions that developed this perspective. Lipset uncovered a positive relationship between levels of economic development and the presence of a democratic regime. The modernization perspective was revived during the 1990s by Adam Przeworski and his collaborators. In a number of studies, these scholars have examined the correlations between economic development and regime transition and survival in a large number of regime changes in the period after World War II (Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Przeworski et al. 2000). Boix and Stokes (2003) extended these studies for first-wave democracies.

In recent years, a number of studies have extended predictions from the modernization perspective to the study of limiting electoral malfeasance. These studies have examined the consequences of economic modernization on reforms that limit vote-buying, focusing predominantly on the British experience (Cox 1987; Kam 2017; Stokes et al. 2015). One consequence of Britain's economic development throughout the nineteenth century was the

increase in the size of the constituency. Gary Cox examined several processes by which the growth in the size of constituencies reduced the attractiveness of electoral bribery. On the one hand, this increase stretched the budget of politicians, as “a fixed amount of money would buy a smaller proportion of total votes in small towns.” On the other hand, “even if the price of votes was less (in proportion to the greater number of voters), the costs of arranging to bribe many more electors, not to mention the increased risk of being caught, made bribery a less attractive option” (Cox 1987: 57).

In analyzing the British case, Susan Stokes and colleagues (2015) propose an additional mechanism linking economic development and the adoption of reforms that limit vote-buying. They conjecture that modernization exposed the monitoring difficulties endemic to vote-buying exchanges. Stokes and her coauthors argue that clientelistic exchanges such as bribery provide no economies of scale to candidates (*ibid.*, 216). As a result, it became increasingly difficult for brokers to structure clientelistic exchanges with voters and for candidates to monitor the activities of brokers. They note that “not just ‘arranging to bribe’ but holding the bribe’s recipient to account was a costly matter, one that was labor-intensive, requiring close and continuous contact between large numbers of electoral agents and individual voters” (*ibid.*). The growth of the size of the electorate increased candidates’ incentives to invest more in programmatic linkages to voters. “When the national electorate and local constituencies grew, party programs and print appeals became well worth the investment they required” (*ibid.*).

Empirically, the modernization perspective has identified macro-level correlations between broad structural changes and democratic reforms using cross-national data. While Cox (1987) and Stokes et al. (2015) spell out the implications of economic development for the strategies of politicians, these studies do not test their theoretical implications with individual-level data. In empirical terms, my study contributes to the modernization perspective by providing one of the first tests of this literature using legislator-level data. In theoretical terms, I propose an explanation that examines how economic development interacts with the resources available to legislators, on the one hand, and with their electoral costs, on the other hand, to affect demand for reform. While economic development may increase the costs of various illicit strategies, the importance of these processes in explaining the success of reforms needs to be assessed in conjunction with these additional variables. As discussed above, economic development is a decisive factor in the formation of a political majority that supports reforms only if it raises the economic costs of electoral malfeasance of resource-endowed legislators.

As subsequent chapters will document, in a significant number of cases, coalitional realignment in support of electoral reforms did not come about as a result of economic changes but as a result of elite splits that increased politicians' electoral costs associated with various forms of malfeasance.

REDISTRIBUTIVE THREATS

Other prominent theories explain elites' decisions to extend suffrage and democratize as responses to threats of mass unrest and massive upheaval (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000, 2006). In this explanation, political elites decide to extend suffrage and engage in other far-reaching political reforms in an effort to prevent massive unrest, radicalization, and revolution. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson formulated the central proposition of this explanation: democratization occurs "because the disenfranchised citizens can threaten the elite and force it to make concessions. These threats can take the form of strikes, demonstrations, riots, and—in the limit—a revolution. Because these actions impose costs on the elite, it will try to prevent them. . . . The elite must democratize—create a credible commitment to future majoritarian policies—if it wishes to avoid more democratic outcomes" (2006: xii–xiii).

Incumbent political elites are the crucial actors who choose the level and scope of suffrage extension. In developing their predictions about suffrage extension, Acemoglu and Robinson derive the preferences of elites from considerations about their future tax burden under new electoral rules (2006: 36). The change relative to the current tax burden of elites is a function of the level of inequality in a society. Consequently, elites incur higher future costs in terms of taxation in societies with higher levels of inequality. As a result, elites in societies with higher levels of inequality are more reluctant to fully extend suffrage and settle, instead, for more repressive political regimes. The most important limitation of this theory is the extremely long causal chain between the level of inequality and elites' position toward reform. This opens up a high indeterminacy that is never tested empirically.

Charles Boix (2003) presents a variation of this explanation. Similar to Acemoglu and Robinson, Boix also derives predictions about elites' decision to extend suffrage from their considerations about their expected tax rates under democratic or authoritarian regimes. Boix adds the twist that not all assets are fully taxable, as some elites retain their ability to shift their assets to a different constituency. This reduces the redistributive threats of a democratic transition even in a country with high levels of income inequality.

It follows that the relationship between asset inequality and democratic transitions is mediated by the asset specificity of an economy.

The most important aspect of these explanations is their ability to link structural inequalities, on the one hand, and differences in democratic outcomes, on the other hand. These theories capture some well-known stylized facts: highly unequal countries are more likely to remain authoritarian, while countries with lower levels of asset inequalities are more likely to experience a democratic transition. Similarly, the high mobility of capital assets may have facilitated democratic transitions even in countries with otherwise high levels of inequality. Britain's democratization during the nineteenth century may illustrate this development. Nevertheless, while the "end points" of these explanations reflect known empirical correlations, the intermediate steps connecting differences in inequality and regime types proposed by these theories are less persuasive and untested.

Redistributive theories of democratization have important limitations. First, as discussed above, the causal chain connecting structural economic conditions and elites' support for regime outcomes is extremely long. These intermediate steps, which are never explicitly tested or addressed, involve a lot of additional assumptions about the adoption of future levels of taxation and redistribution and the implementation of these policies in the new democracy. Surreptitiously, these assumptions shift the analytical emphasis away from bargains over electoral rules toward bargains about levels of taxes and spending. The assumptions made about these additional steps of the political process are never tested empirically. Why should one assume that in a recent democracy outgoing elites have no influence over the formulation of tax policy? Why should we assume that they have no role in the design of the institutions implementing social policy? Why should we follow the implications of the Meltzer-Richard model that higher inequality results in higher levels of redistribution, given the overwhelming empirical evidence contradicting the predictions of this model? The level of redistributive threat, which is the crucial intervening variable in these theories of democratization, is never sufficiently unpacked theoretically and empirically.

In this study, I challenge the premise made by redistributive theories of democratization that we need to sneak in considerations about future levels of taxation to explain choices over electoral rules. Rather, I suggest that we need to consider electoral motivations and examine how these considerations interact with elites' economic positions to explain support for reforms. In reintroducing electoral calculations into the study of democratic reforms, I join a political science literature that goes back to Schattschneider

(1960) but that has been revived in recent years (Valelly 2004; Teele 2018). Once we consider the electoral motivations of legislators, we can develop a range of additional predictions about demand for democratizing reforms. The analytical superiority of the account presented in this book—relative to modernization theories or redistributivist theories of democratization—lies in its ability to account for the dynamic changes in the composition of electoral coalitions supporting electoral reforms as well as for the heterogeneity in the composition of these coalitions.

In recent years, scholars have proposed “big bang” theories of democratization. Such theories presuppose that all democratic outcomes—be it the expansion of suffrage, the protection of ballot secrecy, or the elimination of fraud—follow a similar political logic and that the same variables can seamlessly explain the adoption of these reforms. In contrast to these studies, I suggest that it is essential to disaggregate different reform dimensions. The winners and losers of electoral reforms differ across various types of electoral reforms. As a result, the political coalitions that support electoral reforms also vary across different dimensions of democratization. This study of electoral reforms in first-wave democracies provides a useful blueprint for the analysis of democratic reforms in other historical or contemporary contexts.

Empirical Strategy

The empirical strategy of this study differs from existing approaches to the study of democratization. Foundational studies in the literature explain democratic transitions as a result of conflicts between different political classes. Barrington Moore’s seminal contribution (1966) to regime transitions explains the historical trajectories leading to liberal democracy, fascism, and communism as a result of interactions between landlords and commercial elites, on the one hand, and landlords and peasants, on the other. Gregory Luebbert (1991) explains regime outcomes in interwar Europe as a result of the political mobilization of the working classes and landless and middle-class peasants. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens (1992) explain differences in democratic transitions as a result of differences in working-class mobilization. By operating with highly aggregated political actors, these approaches sidestep important questions of political agency.

A second empirical strategy used in the literature on democratization has considered individual countries as the main unit of analysis. These analyses of democratic transitions using cross-national data sets have been widely

used (Boix 2003; Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Przeworski et al. 2000; Houle 2009; Ansell and Samuels 2014; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Haggard and Kaufman 2016). These authors have attempted to unpack correlates between a variety of economic factors and democratic transitions. Both Boix (2003) and Ansell and Samuels (2014) examine democratic transitions using both historical and postwar samples, covering the period between 1850 and 2004. In a recent example of this line of research, Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman (2016) have examined democratic transitions and democratic backsliding during the period 1980–2008.

In this study, I pursue a different empirical strategy. I examine decisions to adopt democratic reforms from the perspective of individual legislators who vote on proposals that seek to reduce various opportunities for electoral malfeasance (for similar studies, see Mares 2015; Aidt and Franck 2015; Teele 2018). In an earlier study (2015), I referred to this approach as “micro-historical institutionalism” and discussed the empirical advantages of this strategy. This research strategy is micro-historical because the unit of analysis is legislators rather than more aggregated units, such as countries or parties. The approach is “institutional” because it pays close attention to the electoral and parliamentary rules that affect the strategies of politicians.

This methodological choice presents us with numerous advantages relative to alternative empirical strategies. The first is that we measure political decisions at the appropriate level. Therefore, we avoid fallacies of aggregation that infer individual behavior from the observation of larger units. This empirical strategy also allows me to take advantage of the nested nature of the data and examine how partisan affiliations, on the one hand, and the individual attributes of candidates, on the other hand, help explain support for or opposition to electoral reforms. At the same time, the analysis allows me to consider the relative importance of economic conditions and electoral considerations in terms of their effect on legislators’ decision making. This enables me to provide a richer account of these political decisions as compared to modernization theories of democratization or approaches that invoke redistributive threats.

Employing this strategy and fulfilling its empirical promise required what Jeffrey Williamson (2006) has called “empirical heavy-lifting.” The empirical analysis of the book entailed collecting and digitizing multiple economic censuses, electoral data, and roll-call votes. To understand the motivations of actors considering various reforms, I draw on an analysis of additional archival evidence that includes ministerial sources and deliberations in parliamentary commissions and on the floor of the parliaments at

the time. Altogether, the new quantitative and historical sources allow us to characterize the individual and partisan motivations that facilitated the adoption of democratizing reforms and clarify why the composition of the electoral coalitions supporting reforms varied across countries and reform dimensions.

A Road Map of the Book

In chapter 2, I formulate the theoretical hypotheses of the study. I begin by describing the repertoire of electoral irregularities that occur during campaigns, at the moment of the vote, and at the time ballots are counted. I discuss both the heterogeneity in the types of resources that are politicized—which include both private resources financed by the individual candidates and public resources—and the variety of brokers or intermediaries deployed by candidates. Next, I unpack the considerations of legislators about the desirability of electoral reforms and look at both the relative advantages associated with access to resources that can be politicized during elections and the economic and electoral costs associated with different illicit strategies. The remaining part of the chapter examines the partisan political landscape in the different countries included in this study. I describe both the resource asymmetries across parties and the consequences of economic changes and elite splits for the formation of electoral majorities surrounding electoral reforms.

Chapter 3 examines efforts to adopt electoral reforms that limit the ability of candidates to politicize state resources during campaigns. I examine proposals to adopt such electoral reforms in France and Germany, two countries where this irregularity was pervasive, going back to the authoritarian period. In the initial stages of reforms, legislators affiliated with the governmental majorities opposed these proposals and used their sizable electoral majorities in the parliaments of the period to block the introduction of such reforms. The chapter examines the consequences of an elite split in the dominant coalition in both France and Germany for the introduction of these electoral reforms. I document how considerations about the rising electoral costs of these illicit strategies contributed to a partisan realignment during the period when reforms were considered by parliaments. In France, this partisan realignment facilitated the adoption of reforms that imposed stronger limits on the use of state resources during campaigns. These reforms were adopted immediately prior to World War I. In Imperial Germany, the elite split also contributed to the formation of a new political

majority in support of stronger sanctions for the use of state resources during campaigns. While Imperial Germany did not adopt new legislation that limited the electoral use of state resources, I document important changes in electoral jurisprudence adopted during the decade before World War I that imposed stronger sanctions on this electoral malfeasance.

In chapter 4, I examine electoral reforms that attempted to limit the use of vote-buying or treating. Candidates' use of these strategies differed significantly across the countries examined in this book. In Britain, candidates from both political parties engaged in vote-buying. This development contributed to the dramatic increase in candidates' private campaign expenditures during the second decade of the nineteenth century. In France, by contrast, vote-buying was a residual electoral irregularity and used primarily by Monarchists and other non-Republican candidates who were unable to access state resources. Vote-buying was a relatively underutilized campaign strategy in German elections as well. Here, the availability of state resources that could be politicized during elections and the much more severe punishment imposed on candidates who offered money or goods strongly reduced electoral incentives to use this strategy. The chapter examines political initiatives to introduce electoral reforms to limit vote-buying in France and Britain. Since vote-buying was an electoral irregularity financed by private resources, in both countries, the initial cleavage line over the introduction of these reforms pitted resource-endowed against resource-constrained candidates. Individual wealth remained an important predictor of a candidate's opposition to reforms limiting vote-buying. With respect to the partisan cleavages that developed during this electoral reform, I show that parties with a relative resource disadvantage supported electoral reforms to limit vote-buying, while parties that benefited from a relative electoral advantage opposed these reforms. This stands in interesting contrast to the coalitional dynamics over the reforms that attempted to reduce the ability of candidates to politicize state resources discussed in chapter 3. While Monarchists and other Conservative legislators spearheaded political initiatives to reduce the *candidature officielle*, these legislators strongly opposed efforts to reform vote-buying. While Republican candidates opposed reforms to limit the use of state resources during campaigns, they supported reforms to limit the use of vote-buying.

Chapter 5 turns to electoral reforms that attempted to protect the secrecy of the vote. While electoral laws in most countries included commitments to secret voting, this remained only a distant aspiration rather than a political reality. Imperfections in voting technology undermined voting secrecy.

The large variability in the shapes or colors of ballots made it possible for brokers stationed in the immediate vicinity of the urn to ascertain voters' choices. The chapter examines the adoption of electoral reforms to uphold voter secrecy in France and Germany. The proposed solutions that sought to remedy this situation included the introduction of ballot envelopes and isolating spaces. Such proposals for electoral reforms generated remarkably strong opposition. I examine the adoption of reforms to protect voter secrecy in France and Germany using a combination of roll-call votes and an analysis of parliamentary deliberations. I document the importance of elite splits in facilitating the formation of parliamentary majorities favoring reforms. Both the breakdown of the *Kartellbündnis* in Germany and the split between centrist Republicans and Radicals in France contributed to the formation of a parliamentary majority that endorsed electoral reforms.

In chapter 6, I examine reforms to combat electoral fraud. When counting ballots, presidents of polling places could undermine the results of an election by adding ballots to the urn, by subtracting ballots from it, or by replacing all the ballots. The chapter begins by documenting the incidence of fraud in nineteenth-century elections, using reports of electoral irregularities. Fraud was a relatively rare electoral occurrence, which resulted from the decentralized initiatives of voting bureau presidents. Efforts to coordinate fraud were rarely done so across districts. During nineteenth-century elections, we do not find cases of orchestrated fraud coordinated by regional or national party organizations.

In addressing the issue of electoral fraud, nineteenth-century reformers considered two possible solutions. The first was to subject such offenses to penal law and thus increase the relative punishment for acts of fraud relative to other campaign irregularities. Germany pursued this approach and imposed harsh punishments for fraud in its penal code. The second solution was to allow candidates' representatives to supervise ballot counting. This policy was adopted by Britain in 1872 as part of the Ballot Act and in Belgium in 1877. In both Belgium and Britain, the low-resource asymmetries among the two large parties facilitated the formation of an electoral majority in support of these reforms with relative ease. By contrast, in France, political negotiations around proposals to allow candidate representatives to supervise the counting of ballots lasted for over thirty years without yielding a decisive majority in favor of reforms. I document the formation of a political majority to reform fraud in nineteenth-century France, which brought together a coalition of extremes against the center. I show that both Monarchist and Socialist legislators who lacked connections to voting bureau

presidents and thus lacked the opportunities to engage in electoral fraud were the driving force behind the adoption of these reforms.

The concluding chapter discusses the implications of reforms adopted during the first wave of democratization for recent democracies. Bribery, intimidation, and fraud are recurrent problems in many contemporary democracies, where efforts to introduce electoral reforms have proven elusive and disappointing. I conclude the book by discussing the possible political interventions that increase the electoral costs of illicit exchanges of politicians and create electoral alliances in support of reforms to limit various types of electoral malfeasance.

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