

Why Do Politicians Invest in Education?

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the current paradigm

“**ignorance** on the part of the policy maker often explains why policies fail”

(Banerjee & Duflo 2011, *Poor Economics*)

“key to promoting learning is **evaluating what works** and using that evidence to inform policy change”

(The World Bank 2011, *Education Sector Strategy 2020*)

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“key to promoting learning is **evaluating what works** and using that evidence to inform policy change”

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→ “what works” approach is based on **assum's** about the **politics of education policy making**

why do govts provide education?
how do they choose education policies?
can evidence on what works lead to
better policy choices?

who influences education policy?

politicians respond to:

- technocrats and experts (“what works”)
 - voters
 - interest groups
 - their own interest
- very different implications for what to do

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- **voters**
 - **democracy**, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access and learning
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 - e.g. **inculcate loyalty**, build military power, promote industrialization, etc.

politics matters,
but it influences education policy
in counterintuitive ways

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politicians respond to:

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- **democracy**, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access

1. democracy is not a panacea

the democracy argument

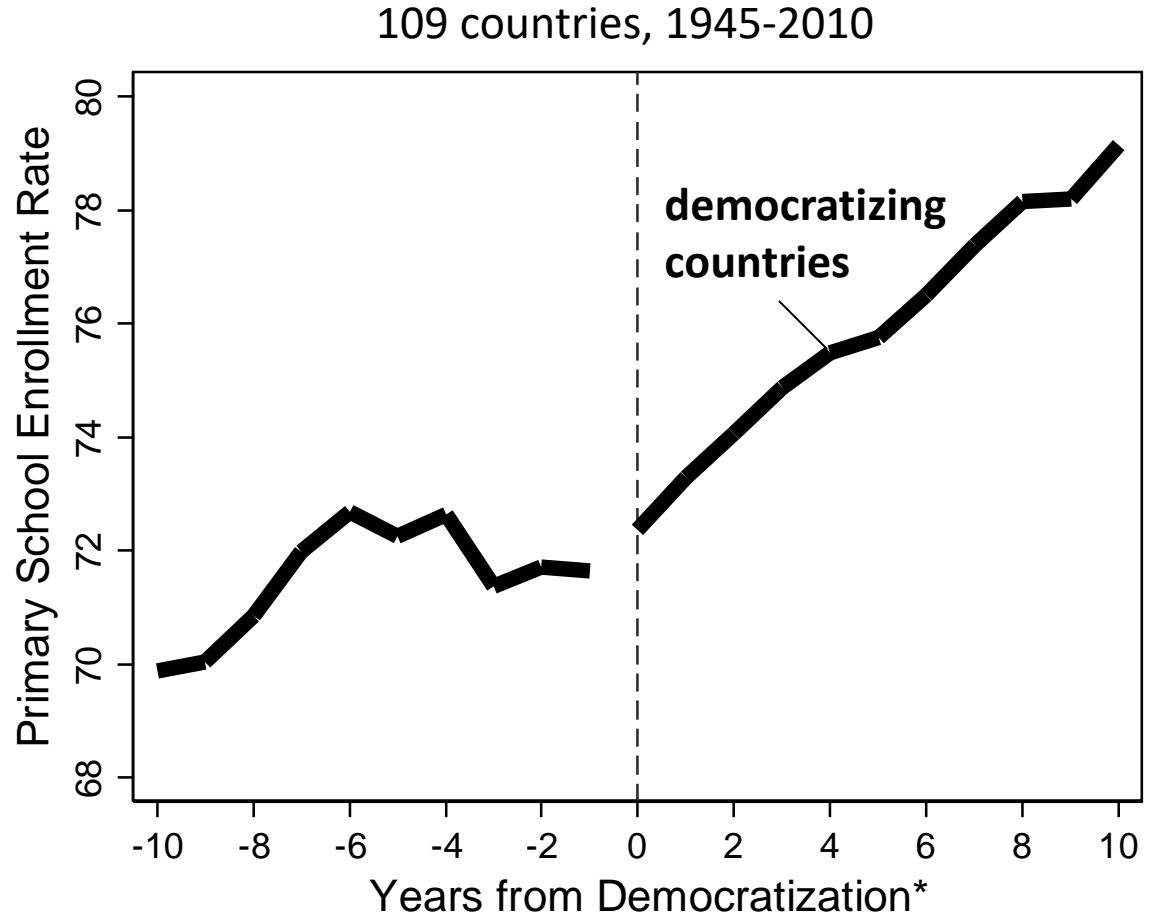
“the spread of **democratic voting rights**
played a leading role in explaining ...
the rise of primary schooling”

(Lindert 2004, 105)

also: Stasavage (2005), Ansell (2010), Brown & Hunter (2004), Mariscal & Sokoloff (2000), Lake & Baum (2003), Acemoglu & Robinson (2006), Harding & Stasavage (2014), Bussemeyer & Trampusch (2011), Gift & Wibbels (2014), ...

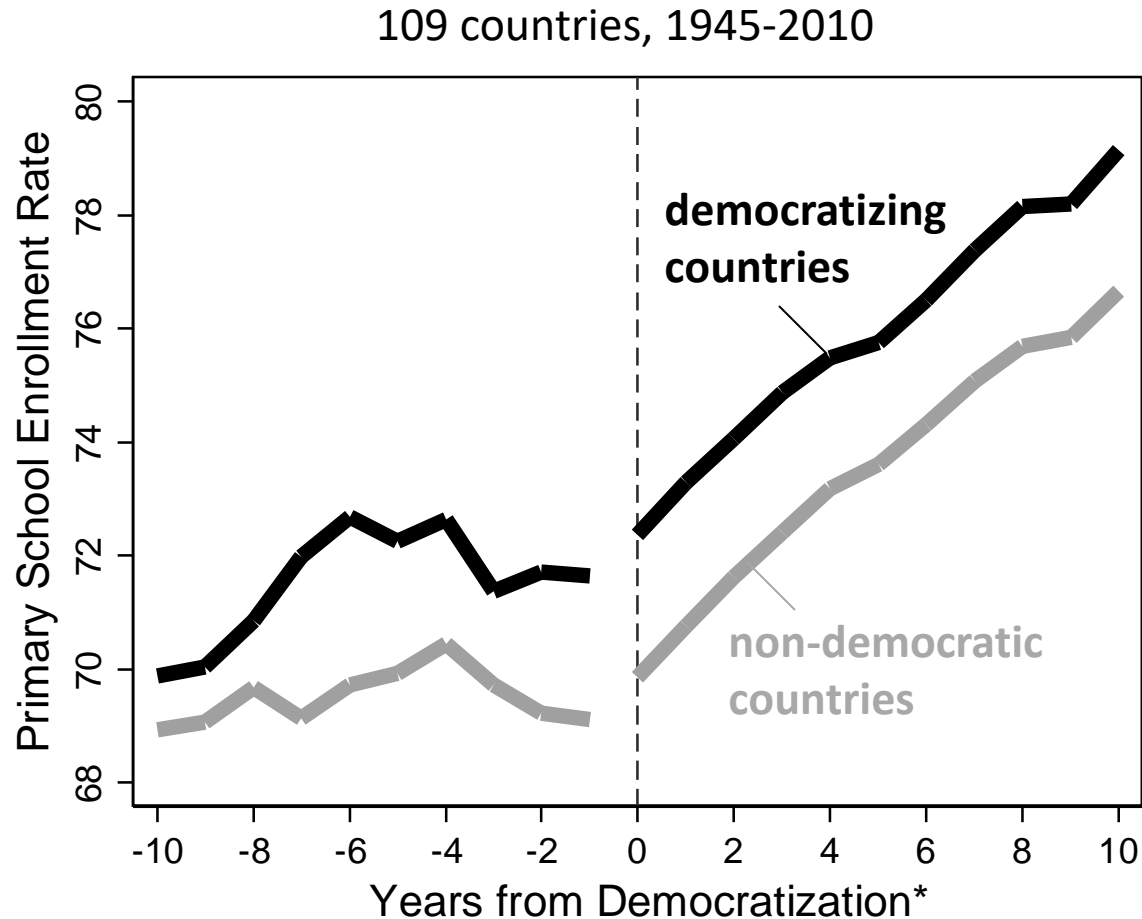
democracy does not increase access to schooling

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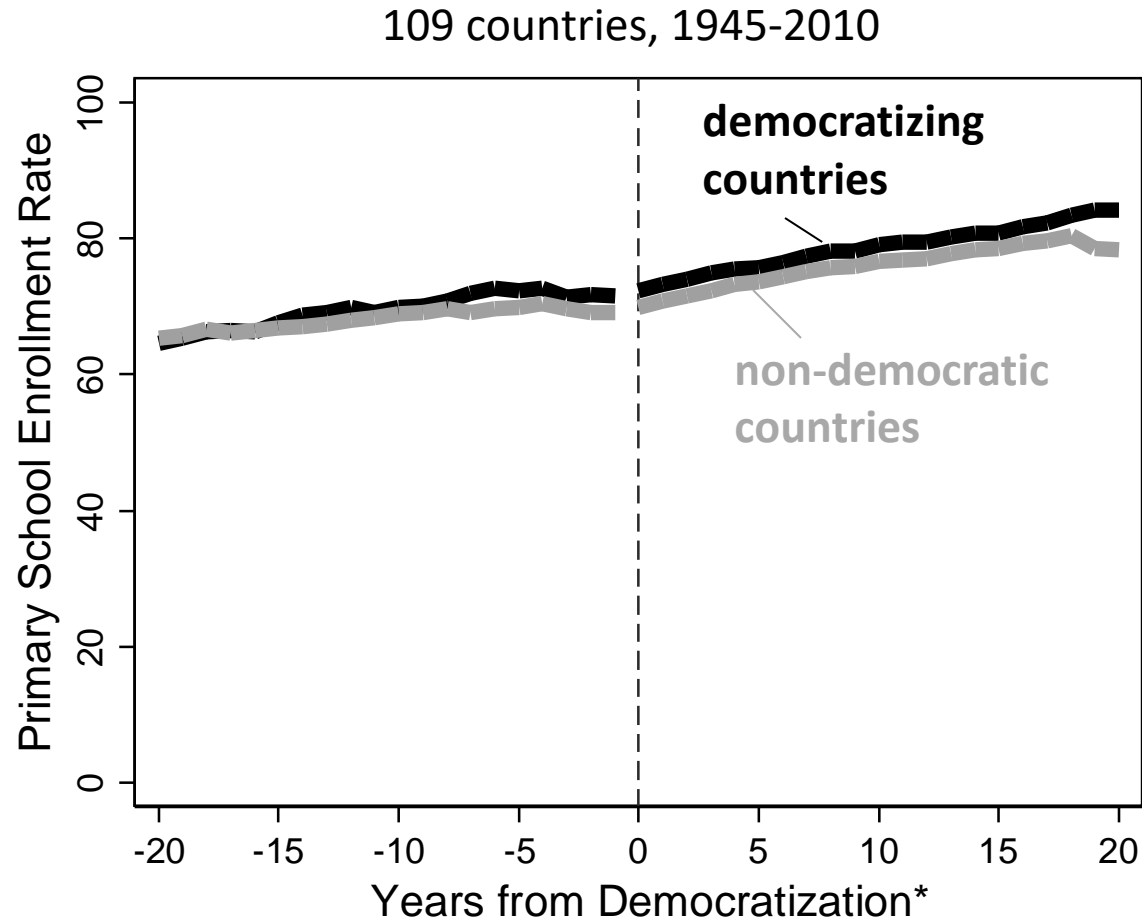
(*) Finding robust to four different measures of democracy: Polity binary, Polity continuous, Boix-Miller-Rosato, and universal male suffrage.

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2. there is considerable variation
between unions; *and*
teacher union strength is endogenous

the argument on unions

“the most well-positioned and organised interest group exerting pressure on the educational decision-making process is usually teacher unions”

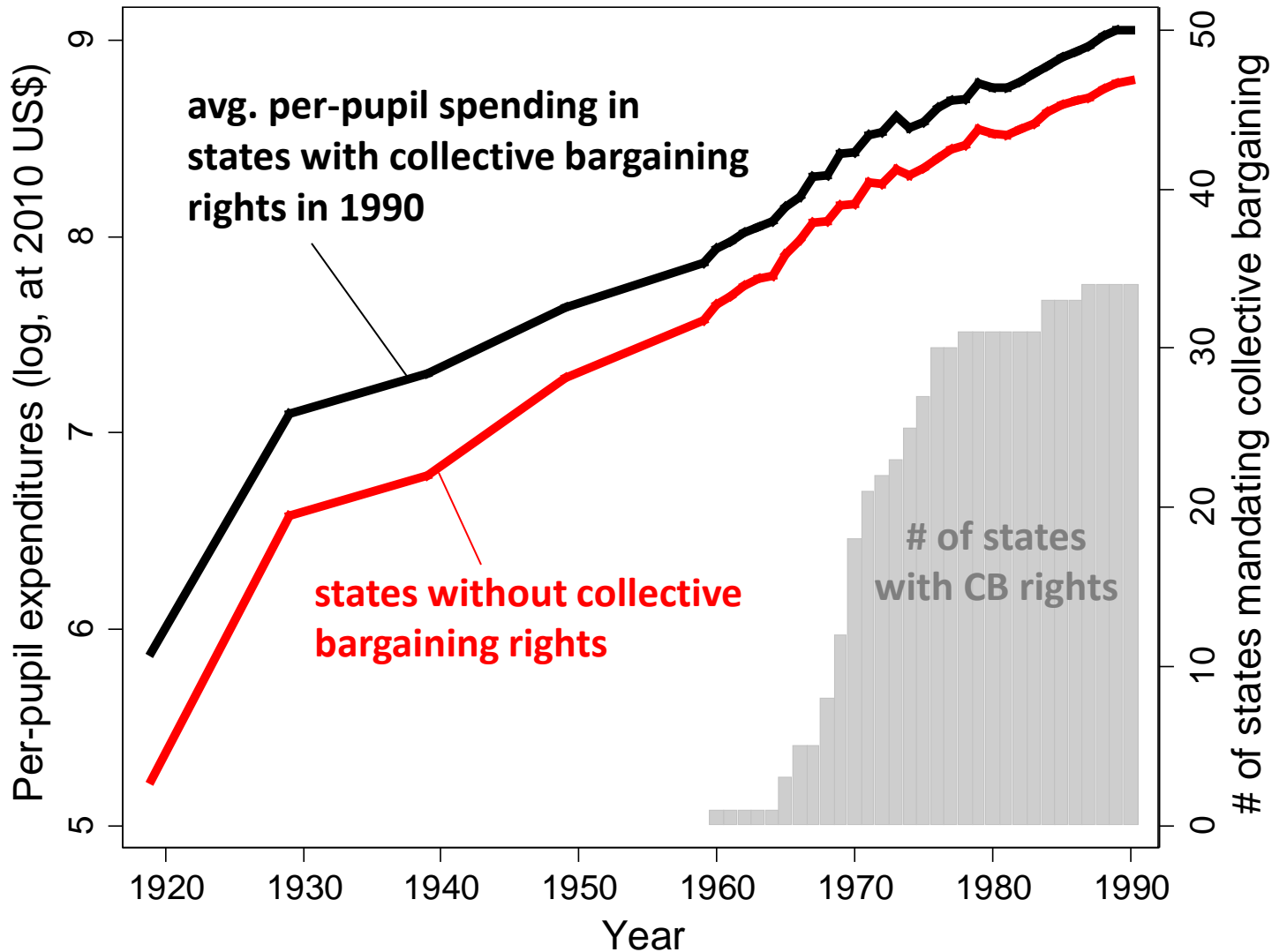
(DfID 2011)

“teachers’ unions [in the U.S.] are primarily **rent-seeking, raising school budgets and school inputs** but lowering student achievement”

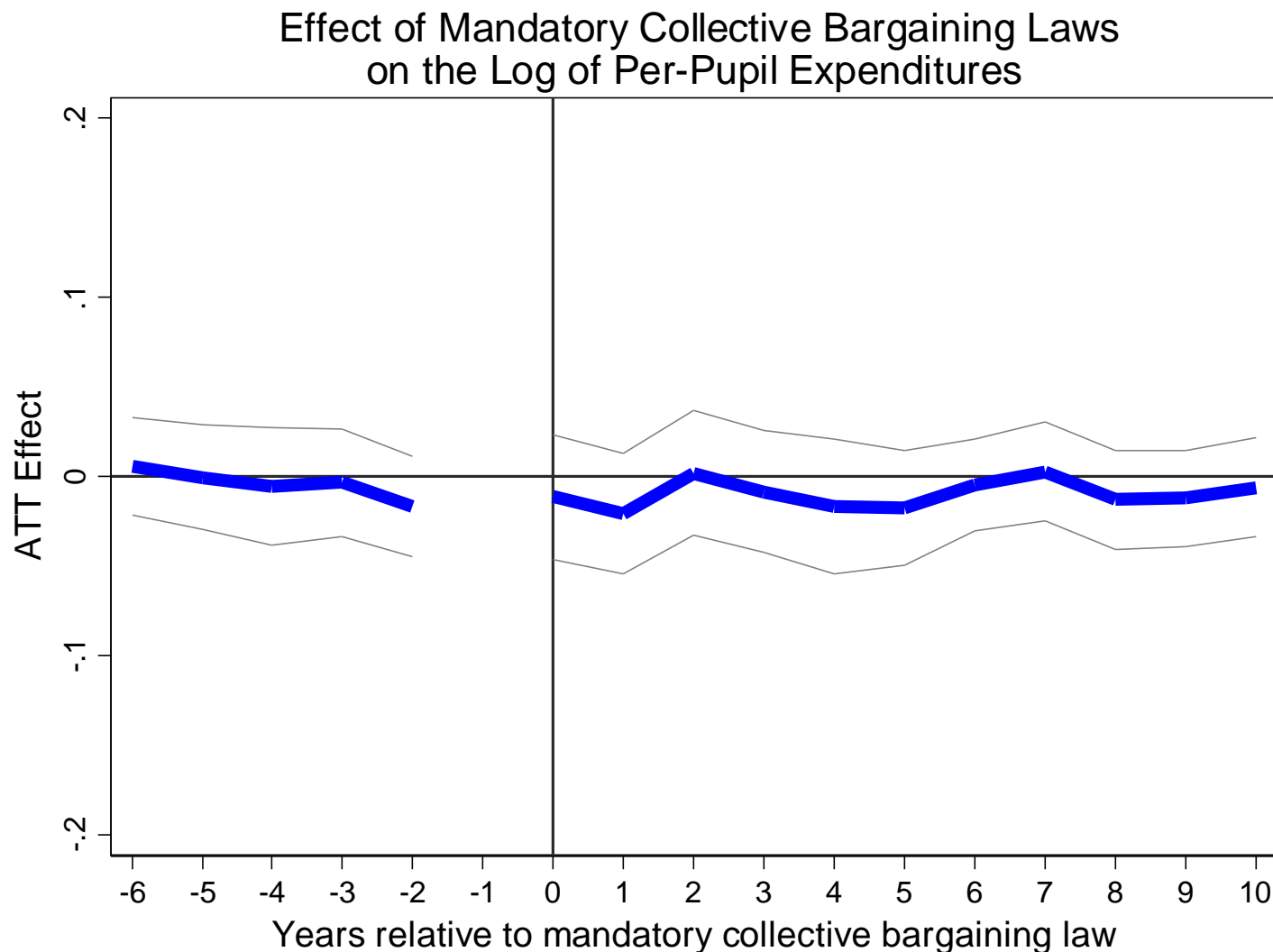
(Hoxby 1996, 711;
cf. Lovenheim 2009)

states that historically spent more on education
gave collective bargaining rights to teachers

states that historically spent more on education gave collective bargaining rights to teachers



mandating collective bargaining w/ teachers did not lead to higher salaries or spending



3. in democracies, the policymaking process entails negotiation and compromise

some benefits for unions, some for business groups → **prevalence of status quo** in salaries and spending

outline

politicians respond to:

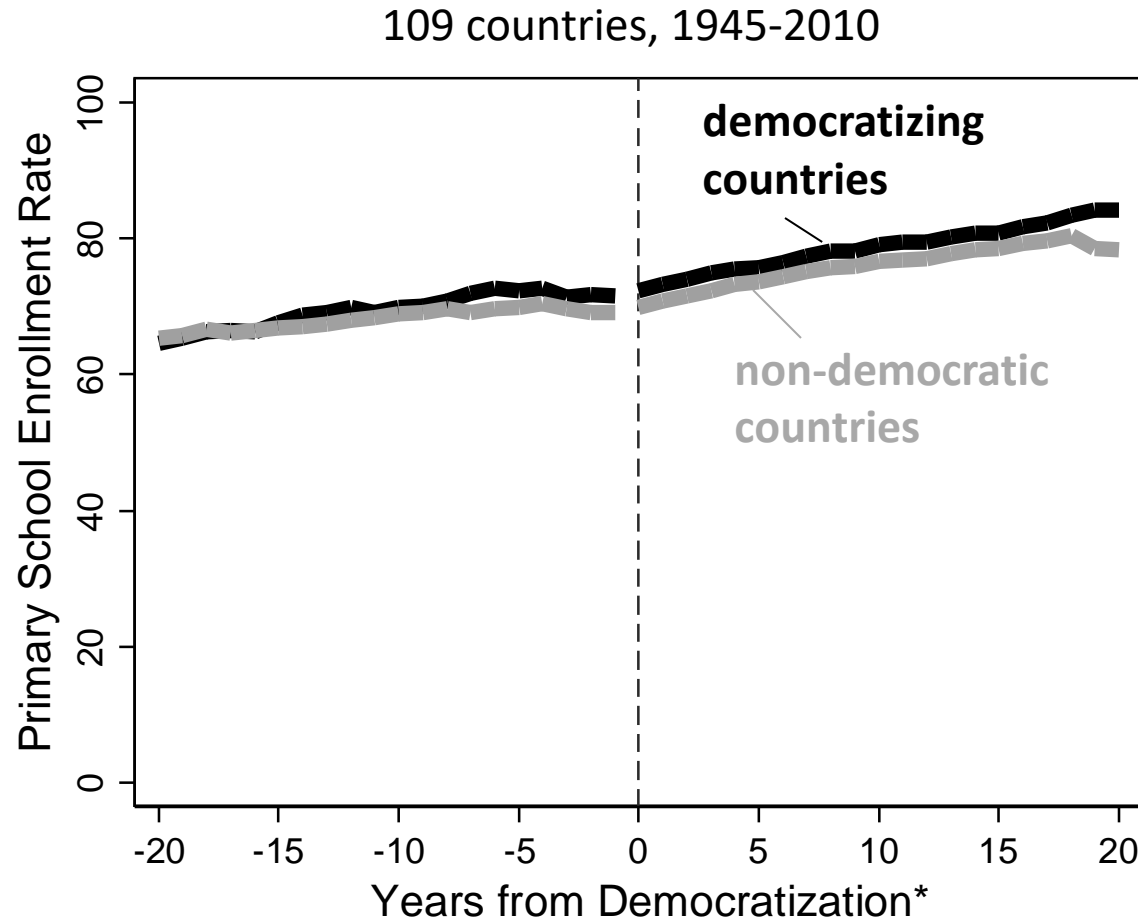
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4. politicians often introduce policies that experts want for reasons of their own; reasons that may have nothing to do with promoting human capital

e.g., **inculcate loyalty**

education to “moralize the masses”

- **high quantities** of primary education provided by **autocracies**



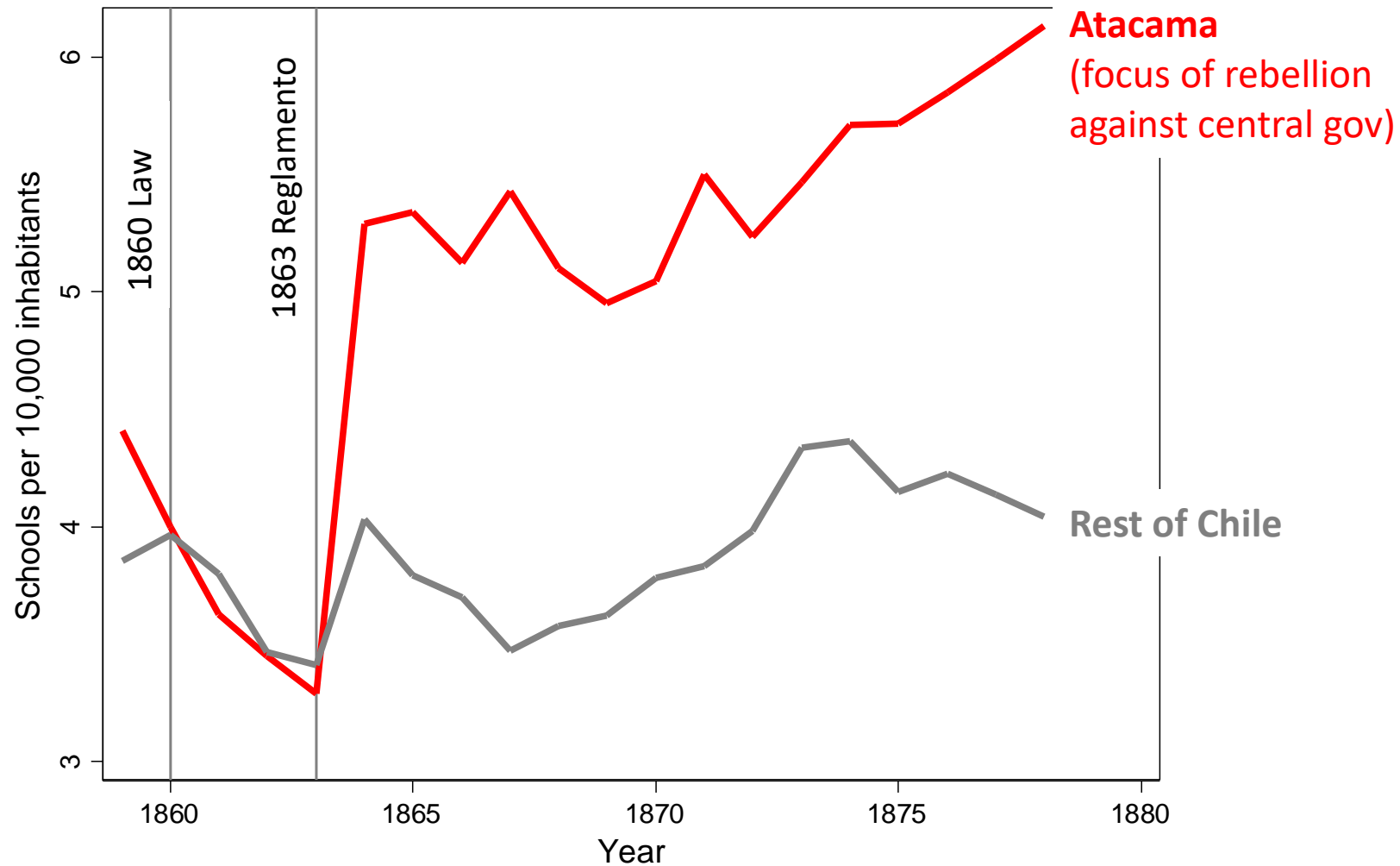
education to “moralize the masses”

in Europe and Latin America, **large-scale domestic conflict** created incentives for autocrats to expand primary schooling

- primary schools designed to **“moralize” the lower classes** and **promote orderly behavior** by instilling values and behaviors of obedience, discipline, respect for the rule of law, and respect for authority

education to “moralize the masses”

- Chile: 1859 civil war → 1860 Law of Primary Education

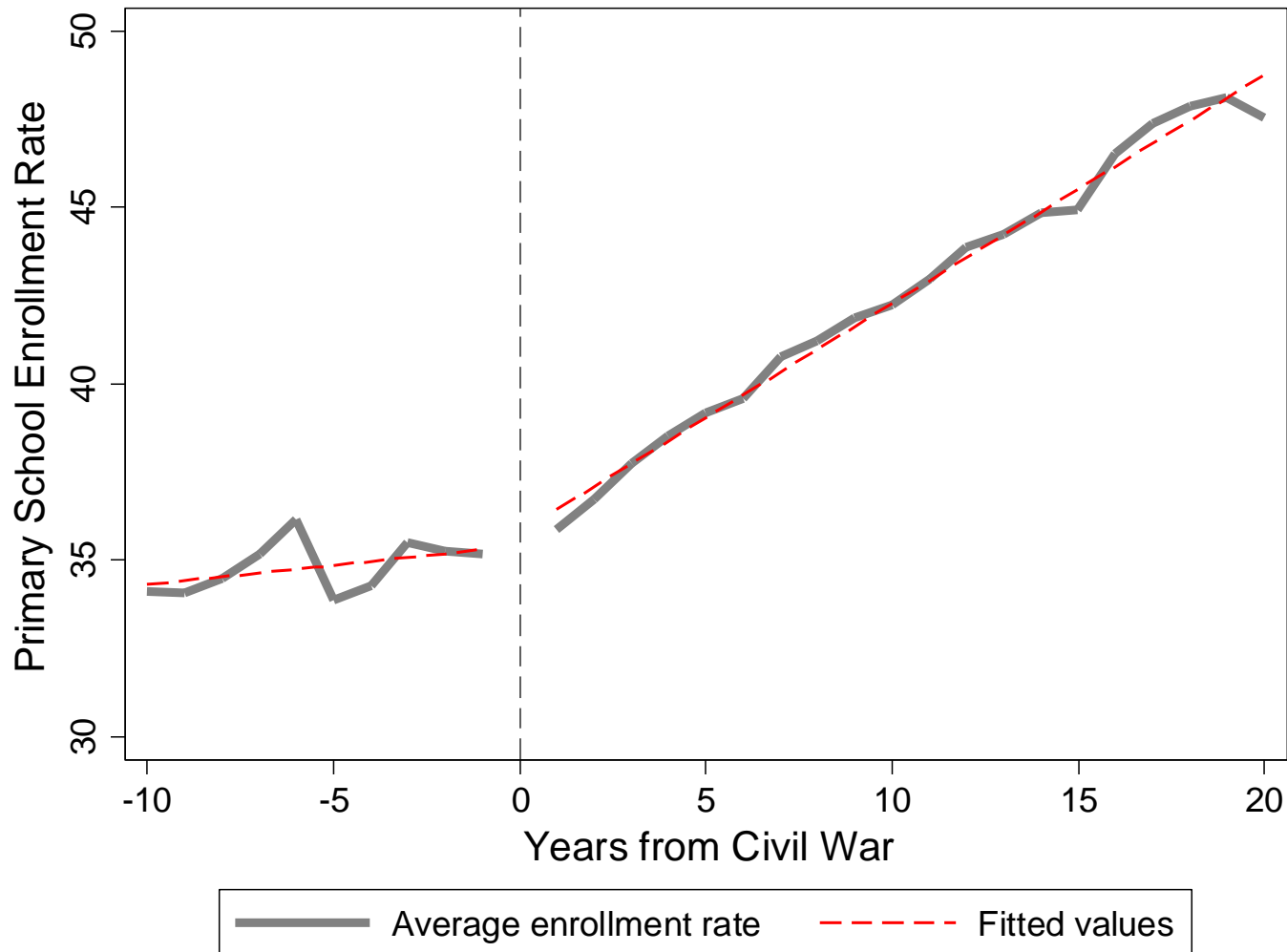


education to “moralize the masses”

- **Prussia:** peasants revolts → 1754, 1763 *School Regulations* to teach “**loyalty, obedience, and devotion** to the king” and discourage aspirations for social mobility (Johann Felbiger, quoted in Melton 2002; Boli and Ramirez 1987)
- **France:** July Revolution → 1833 *Guizot Law* “to improve the **moral life** of the poor, learn to **respect the laws** of the country and **its sovereign**, foster a true **patriotism**, and encourage the poor to be satisfied with their material condition” (Guizot 1816)
- **Argentina:** civil wars → 1884 Law: “primary instruction must be exclusively devoted to moral development and to the **maintenance of social order**” (Sarmiento 1849)

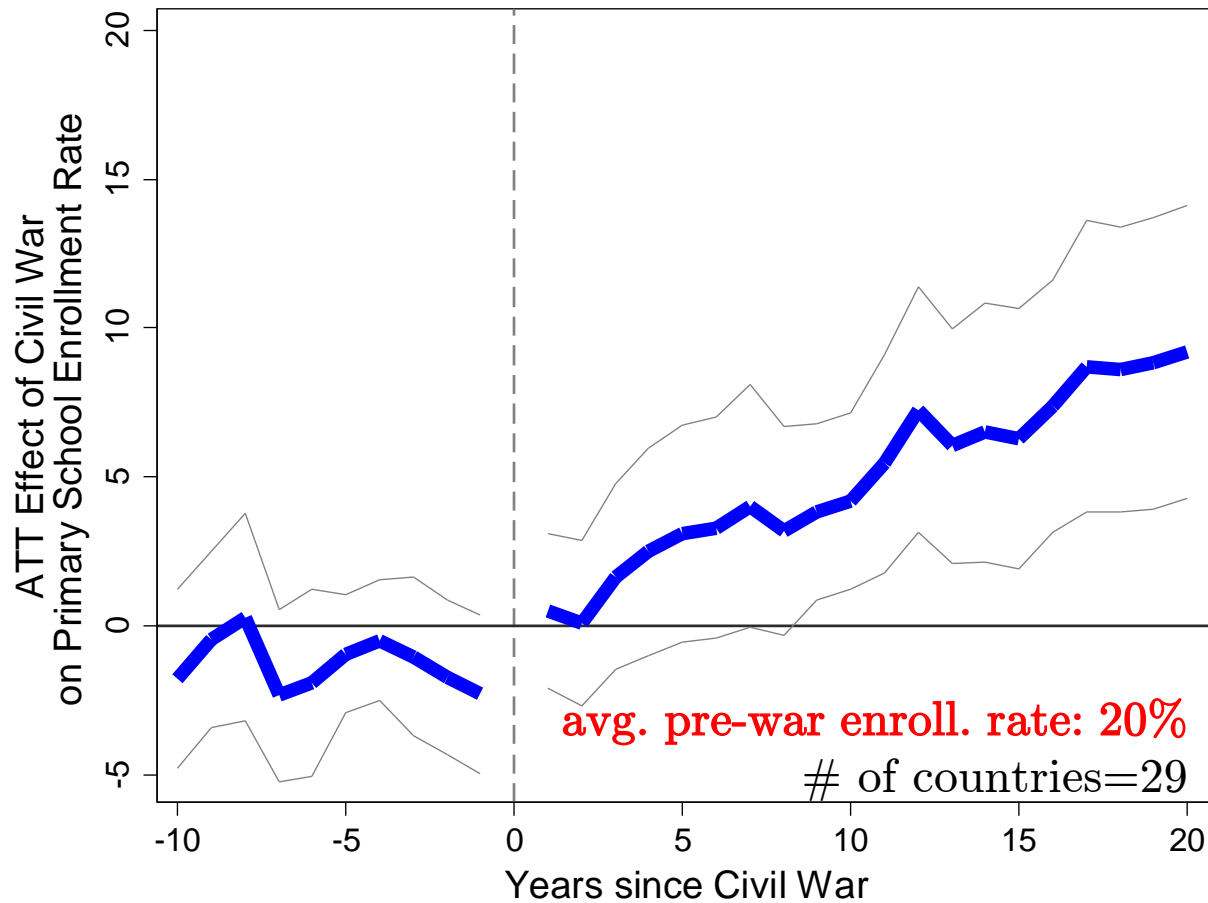
education to “moralize the masses”

- Europe and Latin America, 1830-1950:



education to “moralize the masses”

- Europe and Latin America, 1830-1950:



results not driven by liberals winning; or incumbents winning

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a new paradigm

old: “key to promoting learning is evaluating what works and using that evidence to inform policy change”

(The World Bank 2011, *Education Sector Strategy 2020*)

new: key to improving learning is **understanding the politics of policymaking**, and using that knowledge *strategically* to identify favorable conditions and opportunities for reform

thank you!

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research: PE of education

why a PE of education research agenda?

→ “what works” approach is based on questionable assumptions about **what motivates govts** to provide education:

1. politicians have incentives to promote learning, but **don't know** how to
2. when **democracy** exists and the poor have a voice, politicians want to promote learning...

alternative: govts expand education for reasons that have **nothing to do with improving HK** of the poor

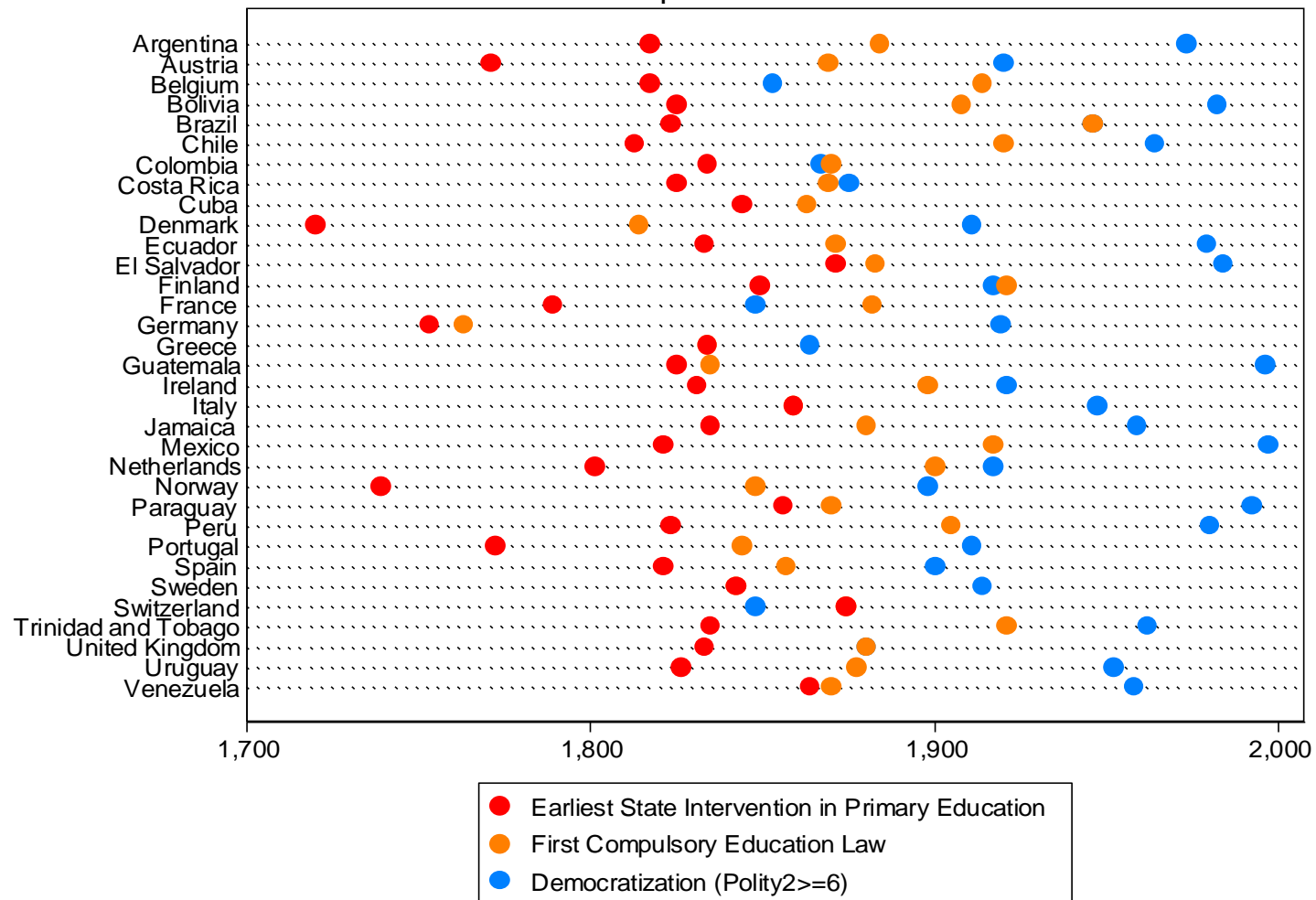
research: PE of education

different implications for what to do:

1. politicians want to promote learning, but don't know how
→ invest in understanding what works
2. when democracy exists and the poor have a voice, politicians want to promote learning, but don't know how to
→ invest in promoting democracy & understanding what works
3. govts provide education for reasons that have nothing to do with improving HK of the poor
→ invest in understanding (i) why govts provide education, and (ii) how/when govts' own goals can be aligned with donors' goal of promoting learning

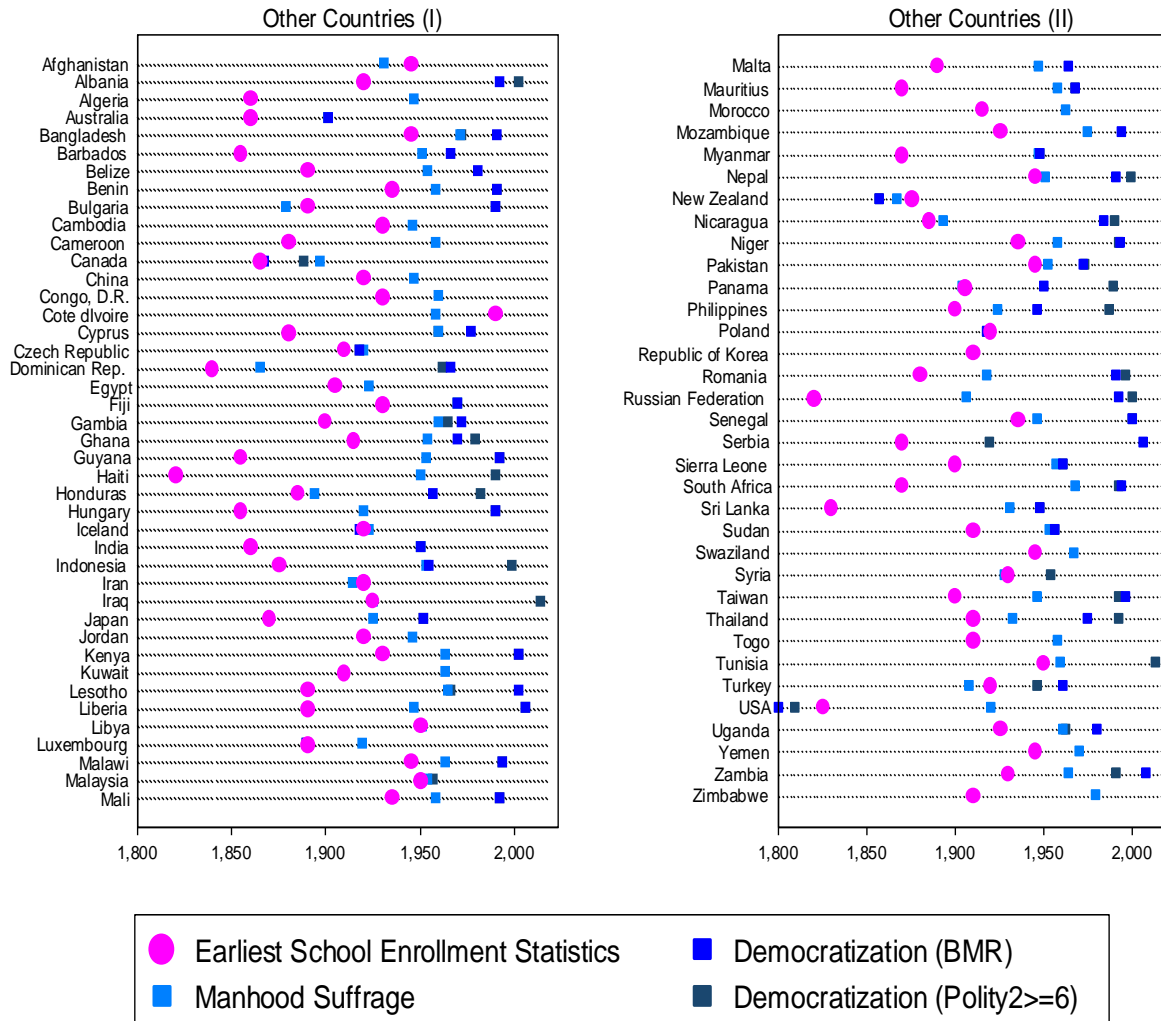
non-democratic origins of primary education

primary educ. systems in Europe & Latin America emerged in **non-democracies**

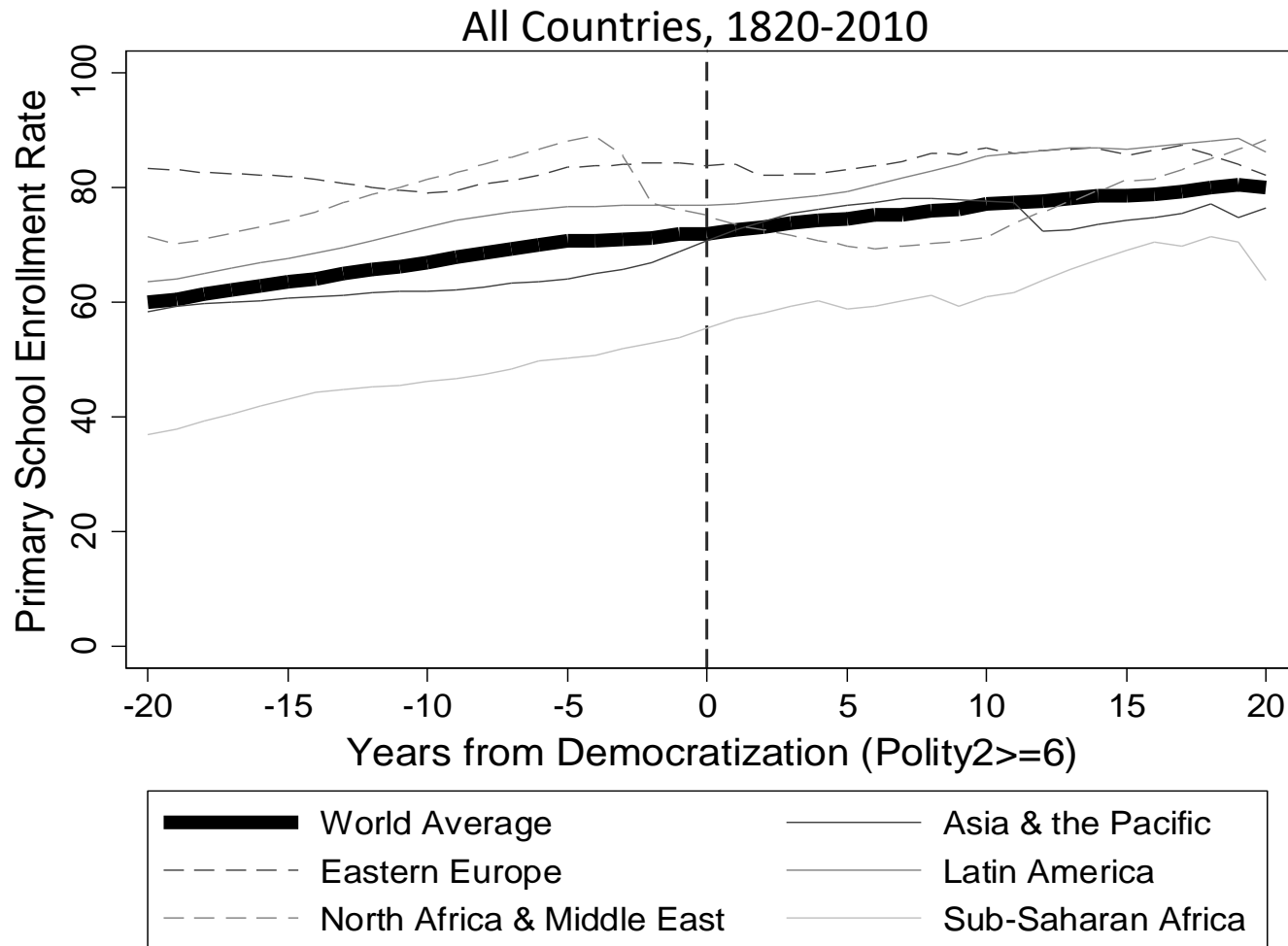


non-democratic origins of primary education

States worldwide took an interest in primary education well **before democratization**

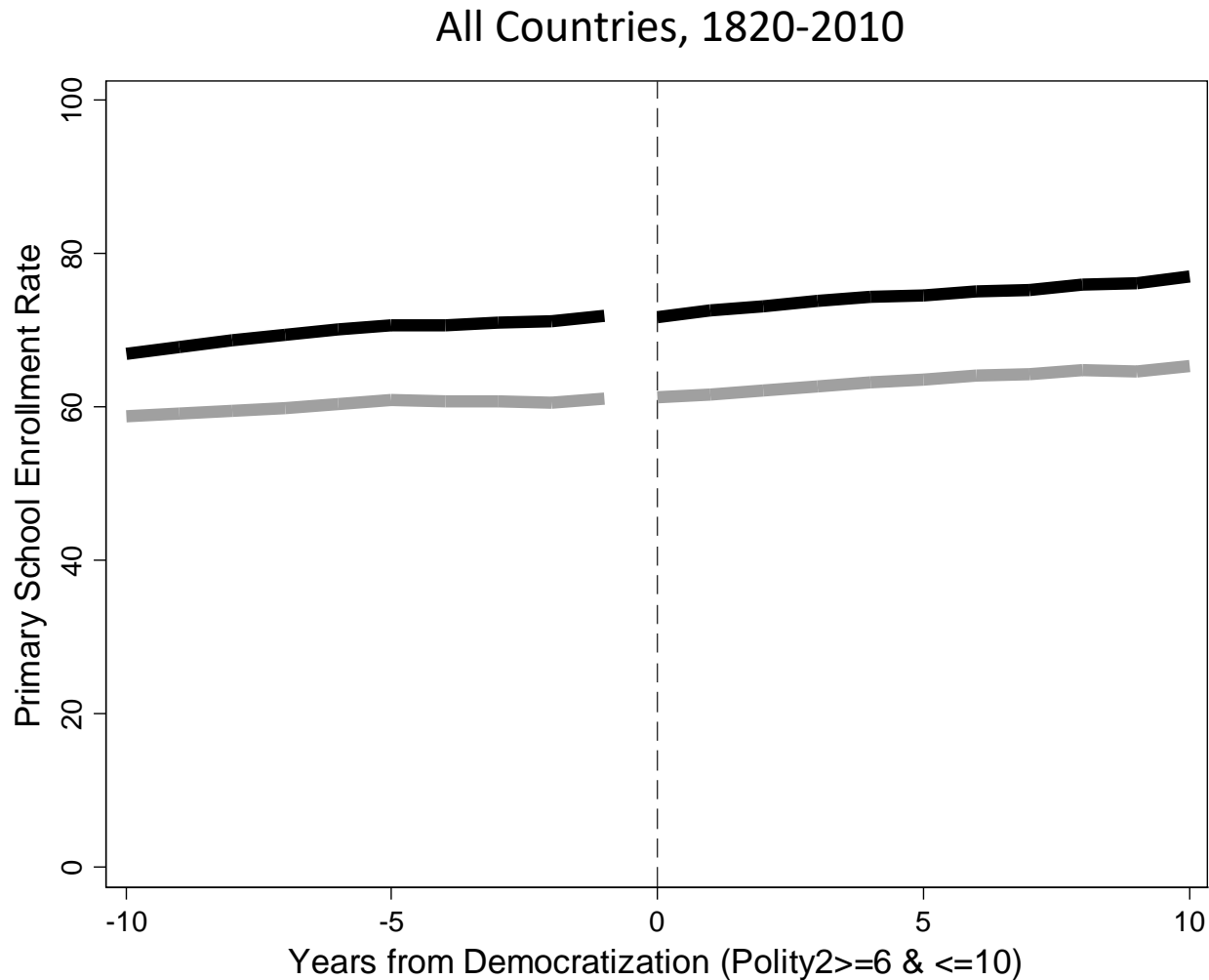


non-democratic expansion of education



NOTE: Finding robust to three different definitions and measures of democracy.

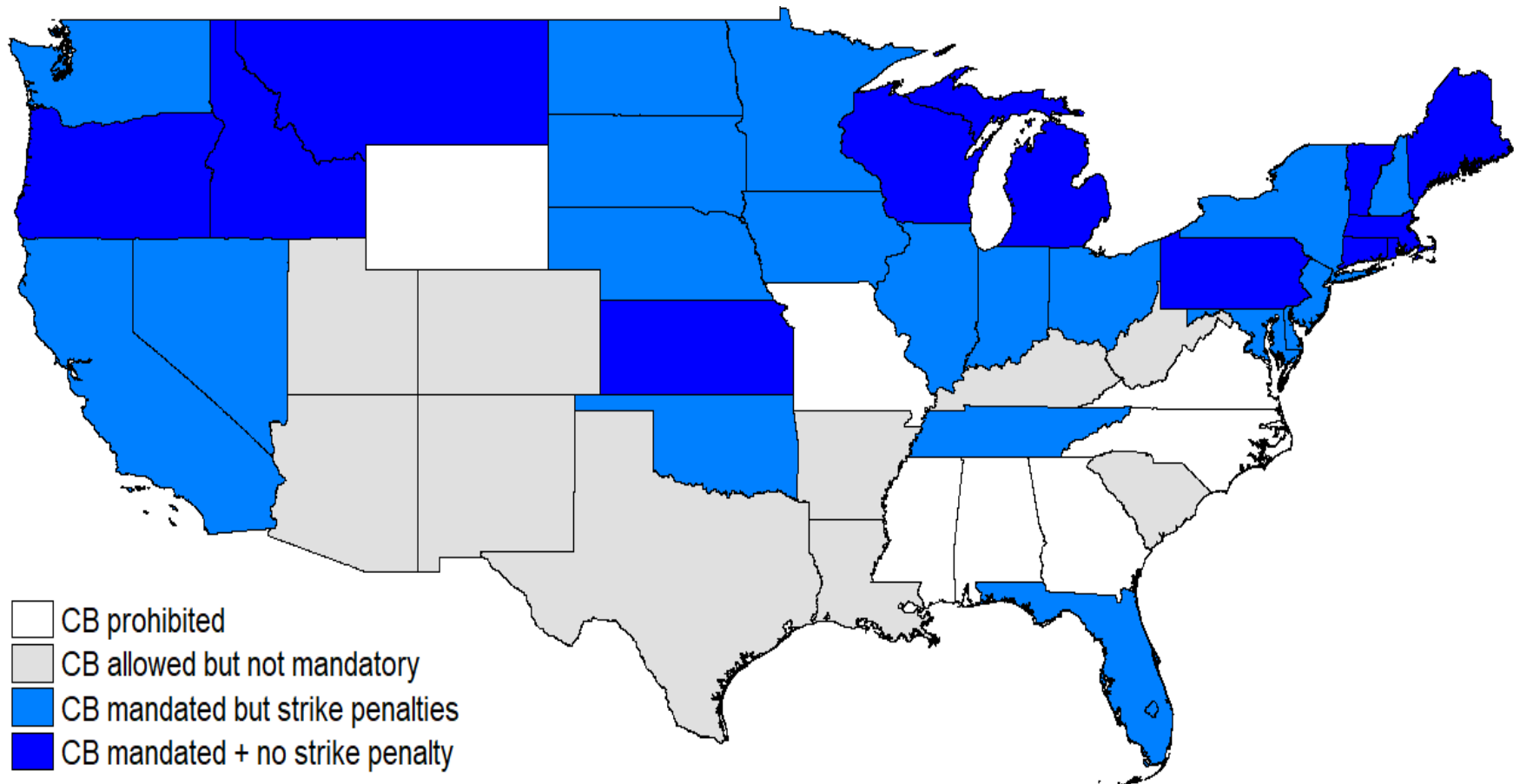
no positive impact of democratization



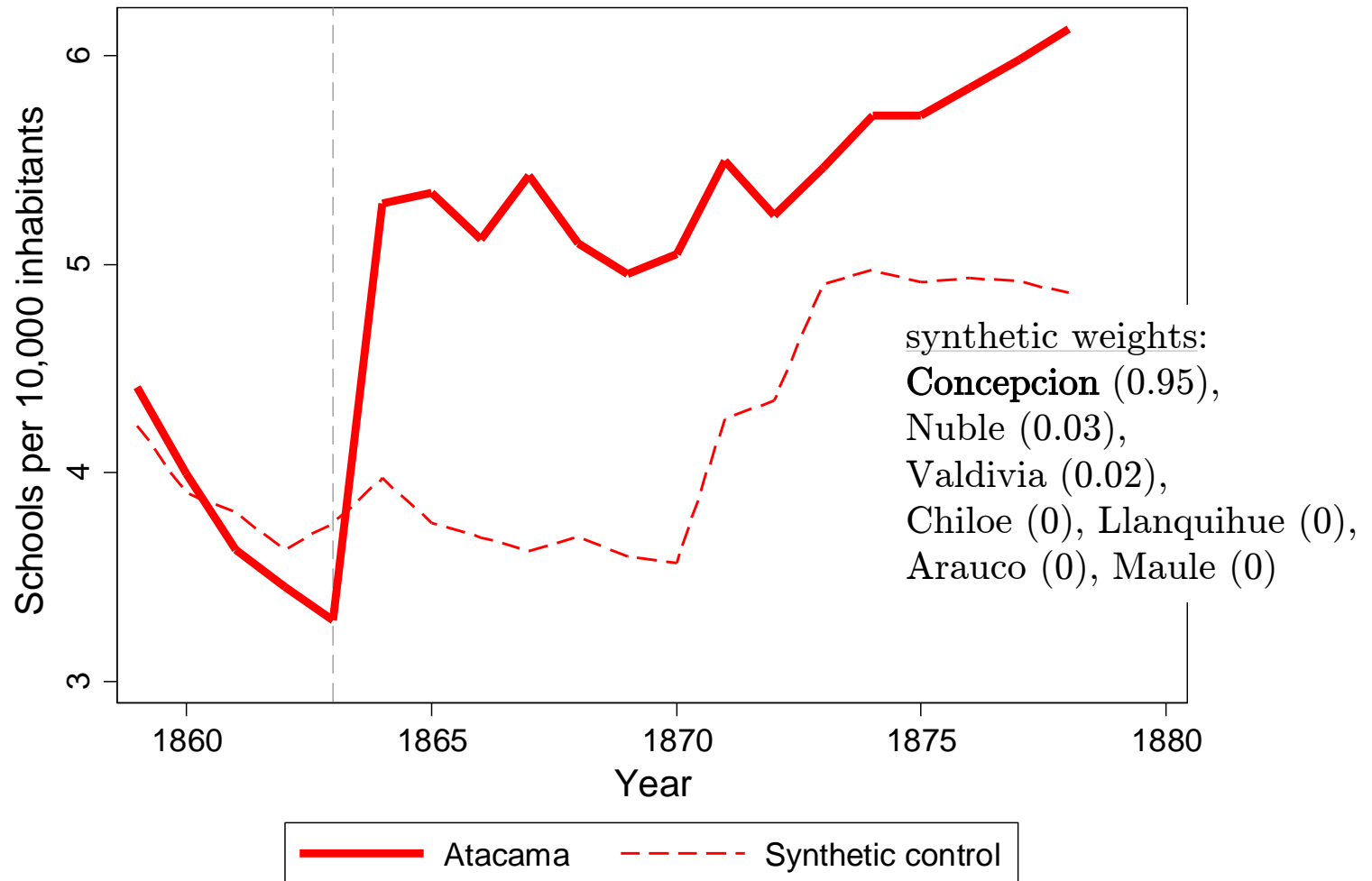
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laws and policies often cater to multiple competing interests

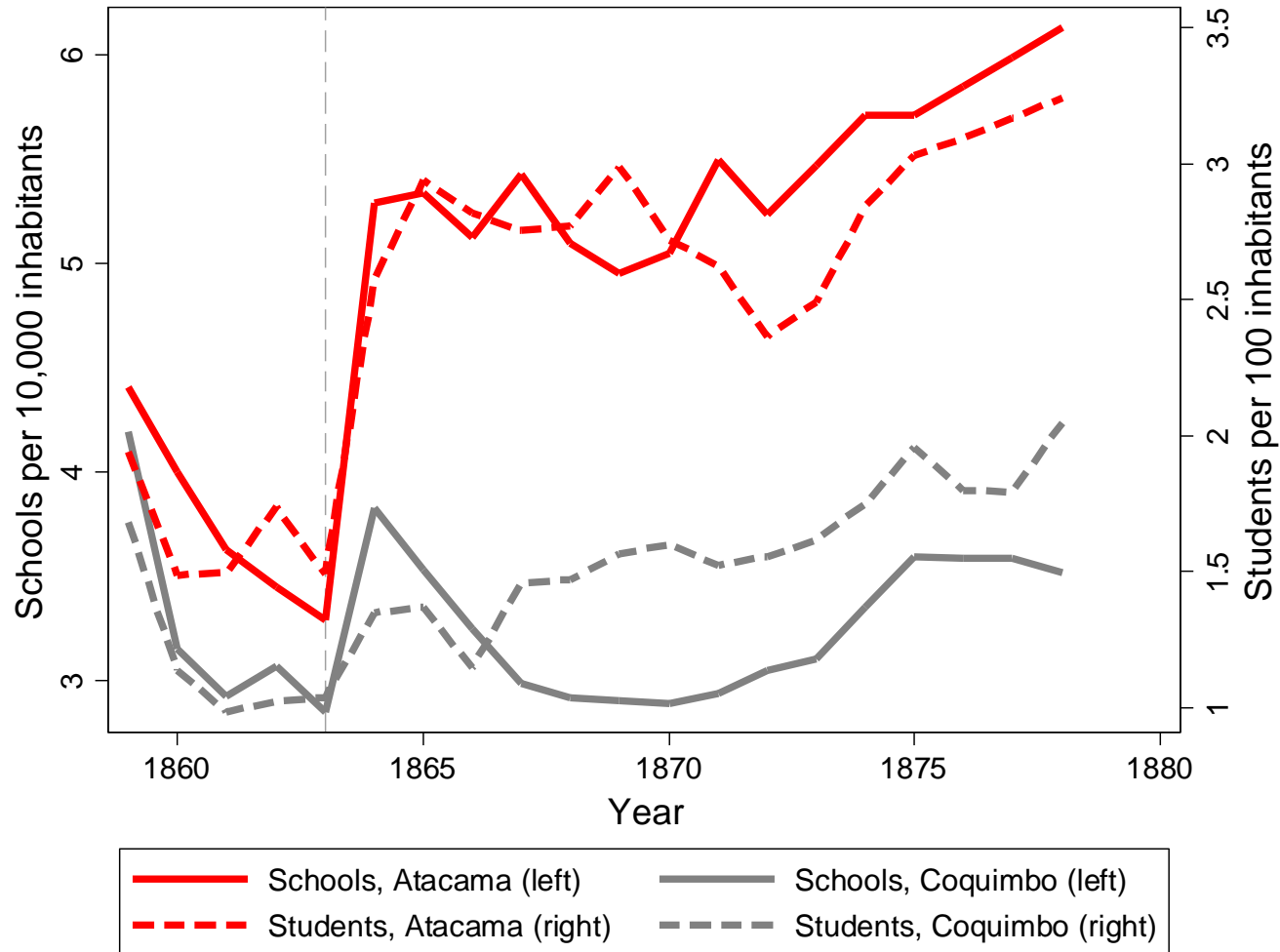
some benefits for unions, some for business groups → **prevalence of status quo** in salaries and spending



synthetic control



not driven by mining economy



driven by goal of reducing disorder

ANUARIO ESTADÍSTICO.

129

Segun esto, no ha habido alteracion en el número proporcional de los solteros; pero sí una disminucion de 1 por ciento en los casados, compensada con un aumento igual en la cifra de los viudos.

El siguiente extracto indica la cantidad efectiva i proporcional de los delitos principales, porque se ha procesado a los reos; como igualmente las profesiones que principalmente les corresponden.

DELITOS.	HOMBRES.	DELITOS.	MUJERES.
Robo i hurto...	3,329 93 p.º	Faltas de policia	743 35 p.º
Faltas de policia	2,808 28 "	Robo.....	494 21 "
Abigeato.....	708 7 "	Pendencia	229 11 "
Heridas.....	682 7 "	Injurias	182 8 "
Pendencia.....	608 6 "	Escándalo.....	140 7 "
Vagancia.....	306 4 "	Prostitucion...	74 3 "

GRADO DE INSTRUCCION.	HOMBRES.	MUJERES.	TOTAL.
Tienen alguna.	2,331 23 p.º	245 11 p.º	2,576 21 "
No tienen.....	7,597 77 "	1,900 89 "	9,497 79 "
TOTAL.....	9,928 100 "	2,145 100 "	12,073 100 "

Con respecto a la nacionalidad, los reos se distribuyen de esta manera:

NACIONALIDAD.	HOMBRES.	MUJERES.	TOTAL.

reduction in the share of prisoners who had formal education interpreted as “a good sign ... because **this reveals the good results that are produced by teaching morality to the masses**” (*Anuario Estadistico...* 1872: 120)

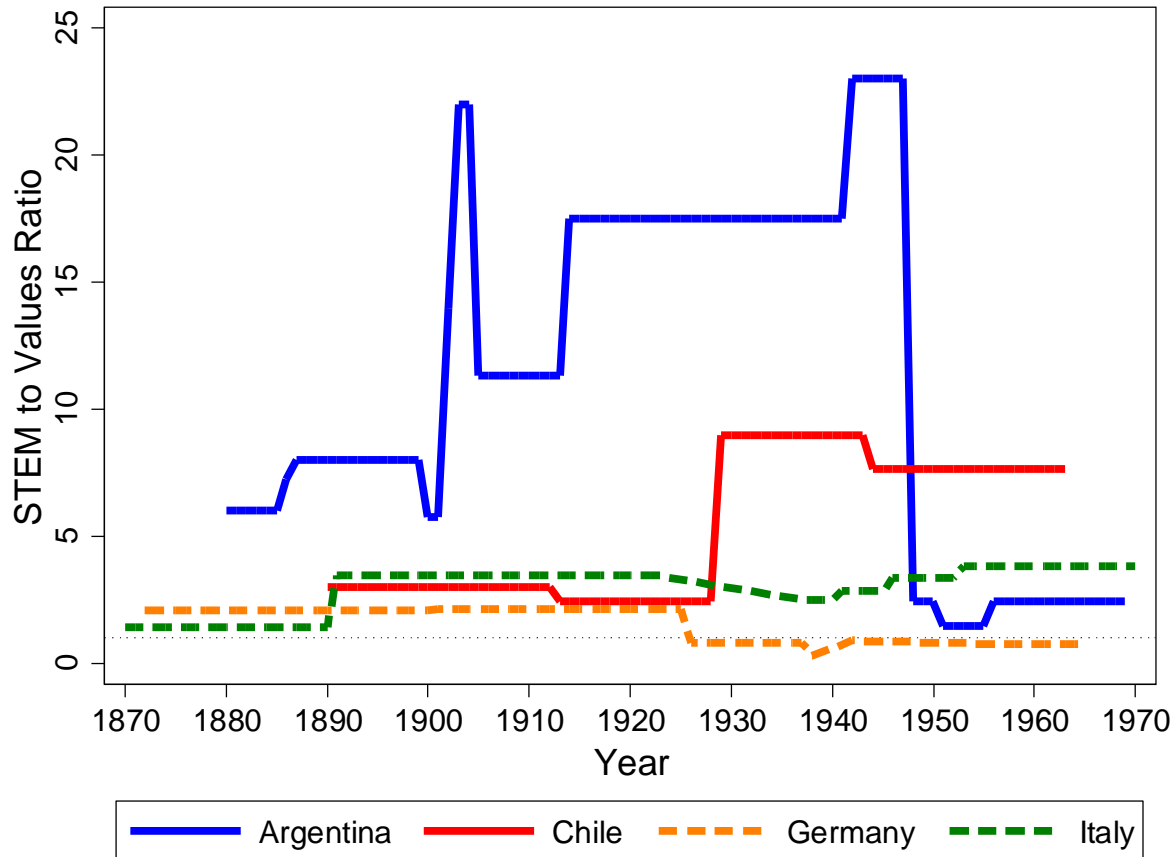
skills acquisition as a by-product

skills acquisition and social mobility is often a by-product of policies chosen to pursue other goals
(e.g. Argentina, France, China, USSR, Eastern Europe)

→ *Historical Education Quality Database*, tracking curriculum and teacher training and recruitment policies ~1870-2015

skills acquisition as a by-product

Big differences in **curriculum policy**:



... and big differences in **standards to become a teacher**

SOURCE: Historical Education Quality Database