

Why Do Politicians Invest in Education?

Agustina S. Paglayan

Center for Global Development
University of California, San Diego

www.agustinapaglayan.com

[@aspaglayan](mailto:aspaglayan)

RISE Conference

06.21.18

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*)

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*)

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

why do govt's 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

who influences education policy?

politicians respond to:

- **technocrats and experts** (“what works”)
- **voters**
 - **democracy**, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access and learning
- **interest groups**
- **their own interest**

who influences education policy?

politicians respond to:

- **technocrats and experts** (“what works”)
- **voters**
 - **democracy**, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access and learning
- **interest groups**
 - **strong teacher unions** lead to higher salaries and spending, but block reforms that improve learning
- **their own interest**

outline

politicians respond to:

- technocrats and experts (“what works”)
- **voters**
 - **democracy**, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access and learning
- **interest groups**
 - **strong teacher unions** lead to higher salaries and spending, but block reforms that improve learning
- **their own interest**
 - e.g. **inculcate loyalty**, build military power, promote industrialization, etc.

politics matters,
but it influences education policy
in counterintuitive ways

outline

politicians respond to:

- technocrats and experts (“what works”)
- **voters**
 - ~~democracy, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor,~~
~~creates electoral incentives to improve access and learning~~
- **interest groups**
 - ~~strong teacher unions lead to higher salaries and spending,~~
but block reforms that improve learning
- **their own interest**
 - e.g. **inculcate loyalty**, build military power, promote industrialization, etc.

politicians respond to:

- **voters**

- **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

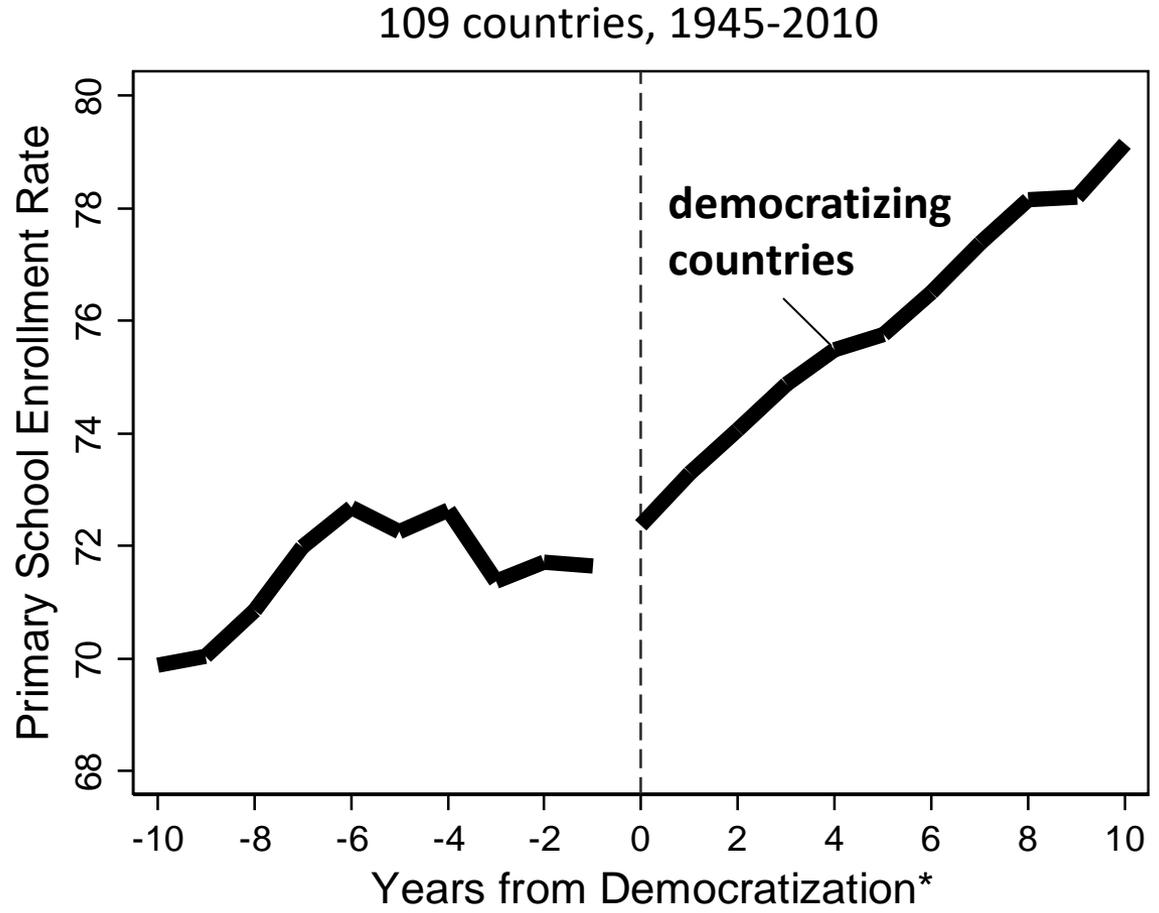
“the spread of **democratic voting rights**
played a leading role in explaining ...
the rise of primary schooling”

(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), ...

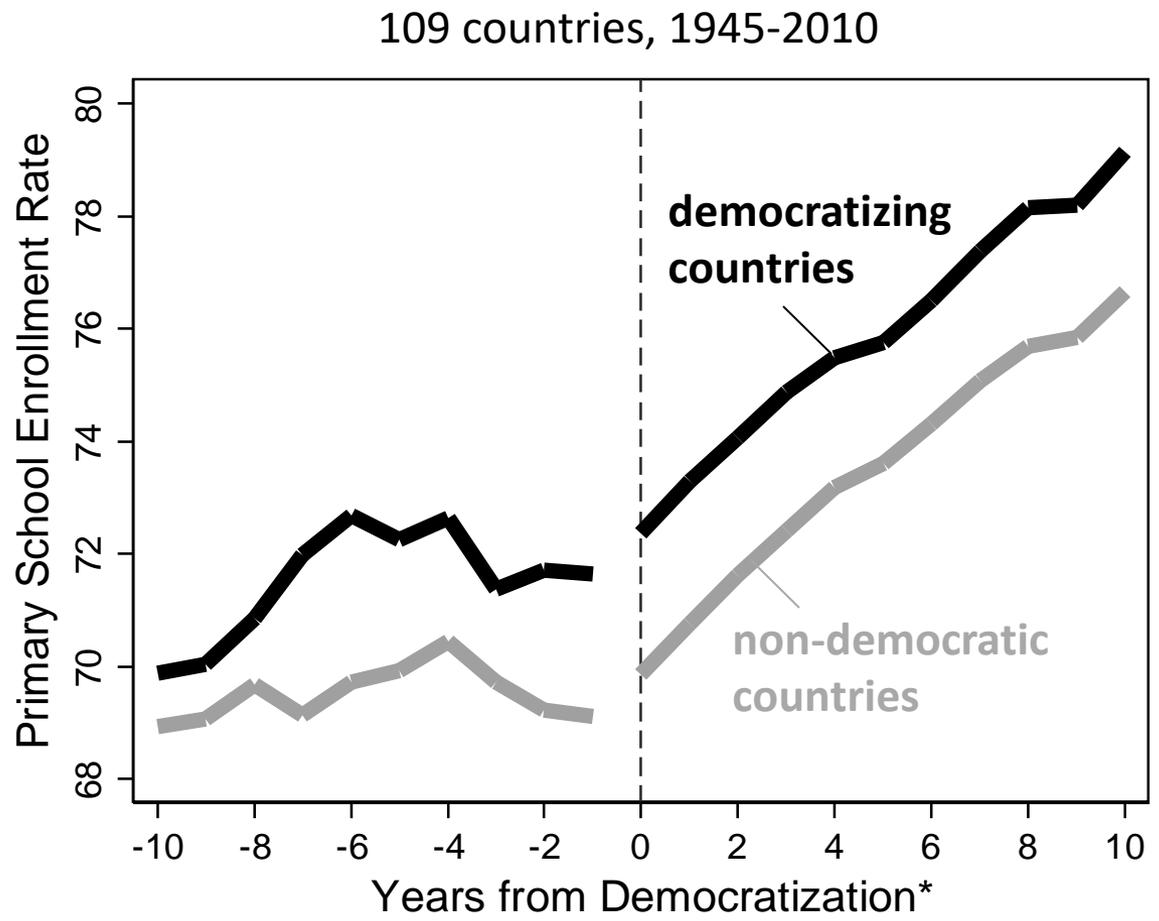
democracy does not increase access to schooling

democracy does not increase access to schooling



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

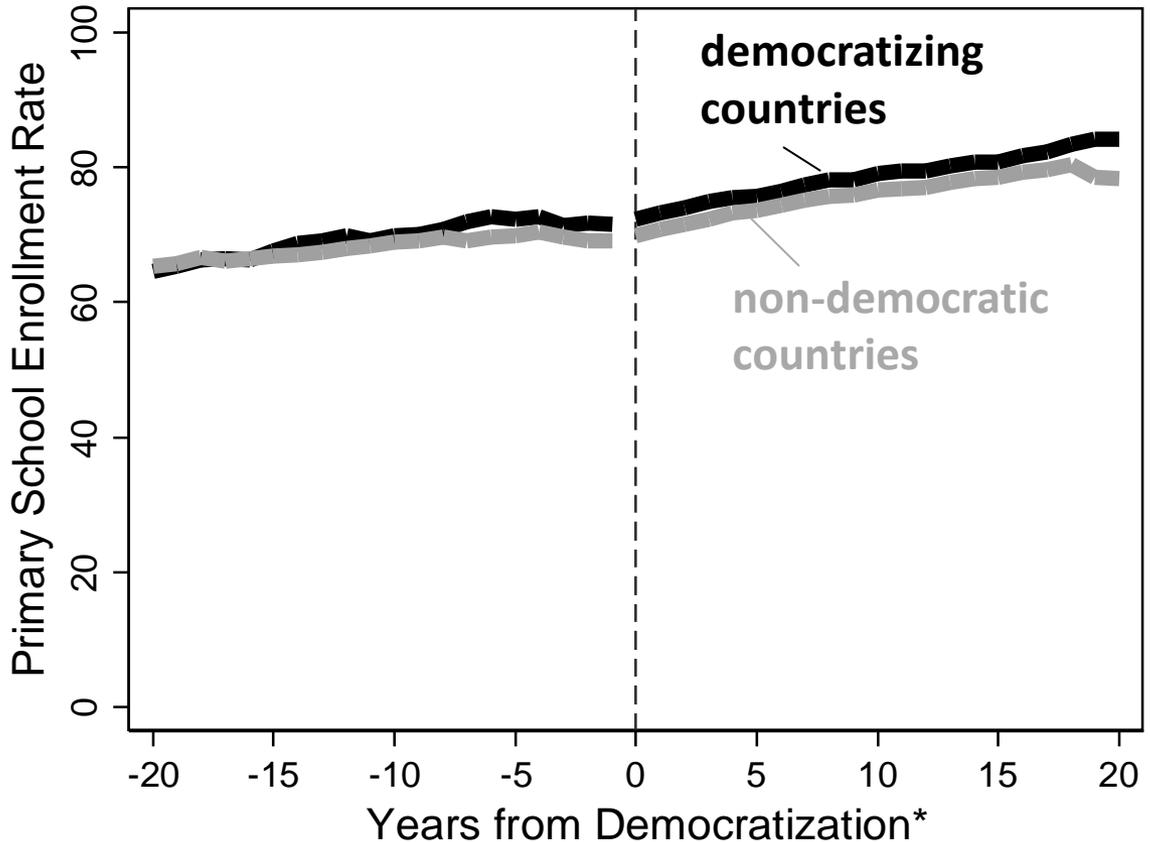
democracy does not increase access to schooling



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

democracy does not increase access to schooling

109 countries, 1945-2010



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

politicians respond to:

- technocrats and experts (“what works”)
- voters
 - ~~democracy, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access~~
 - **interest groups**
 - **strong teacher unions** lead to higher salaries and spending, but block reforms that improve learning

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”

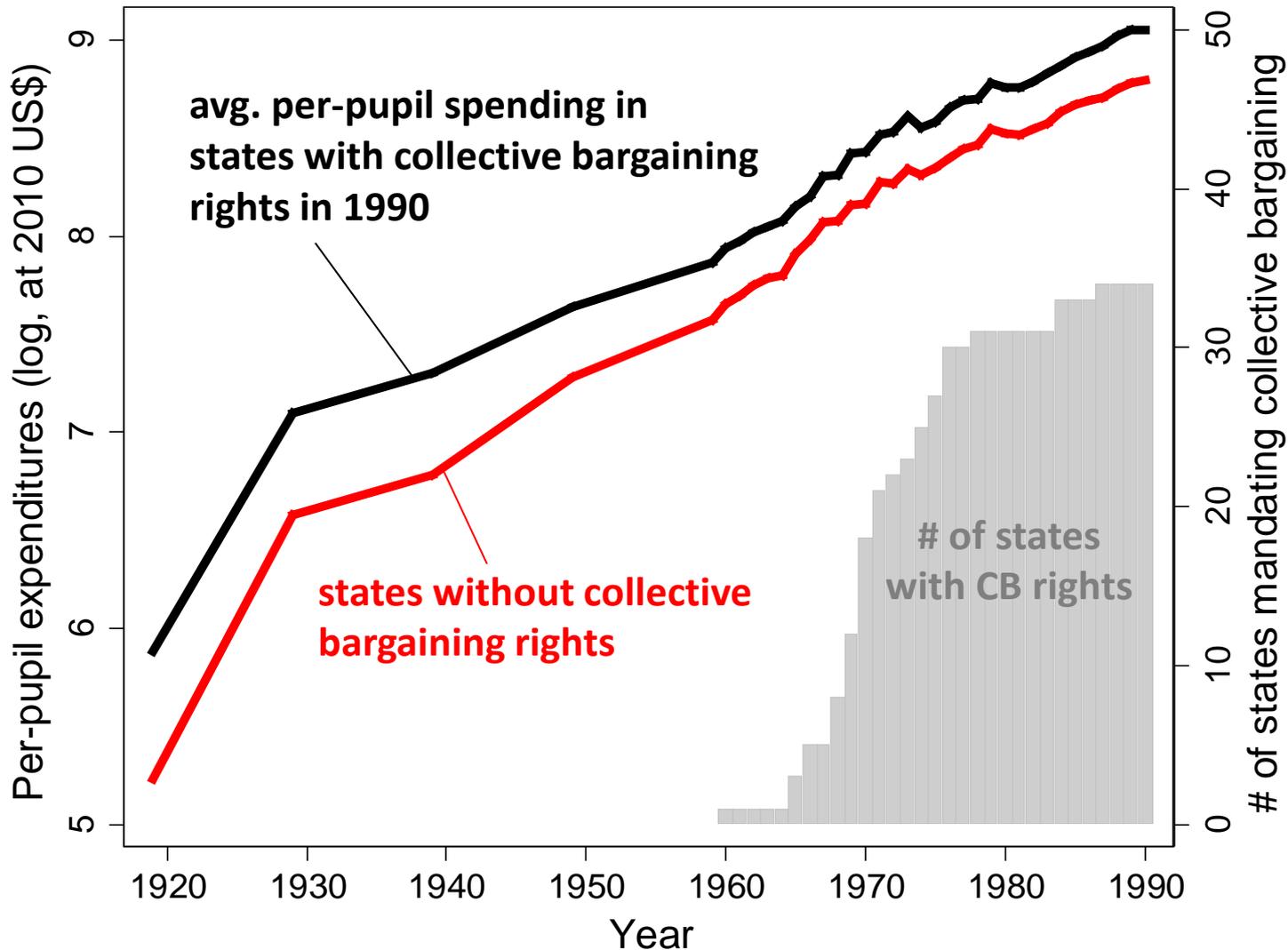
(DfID 2011)

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

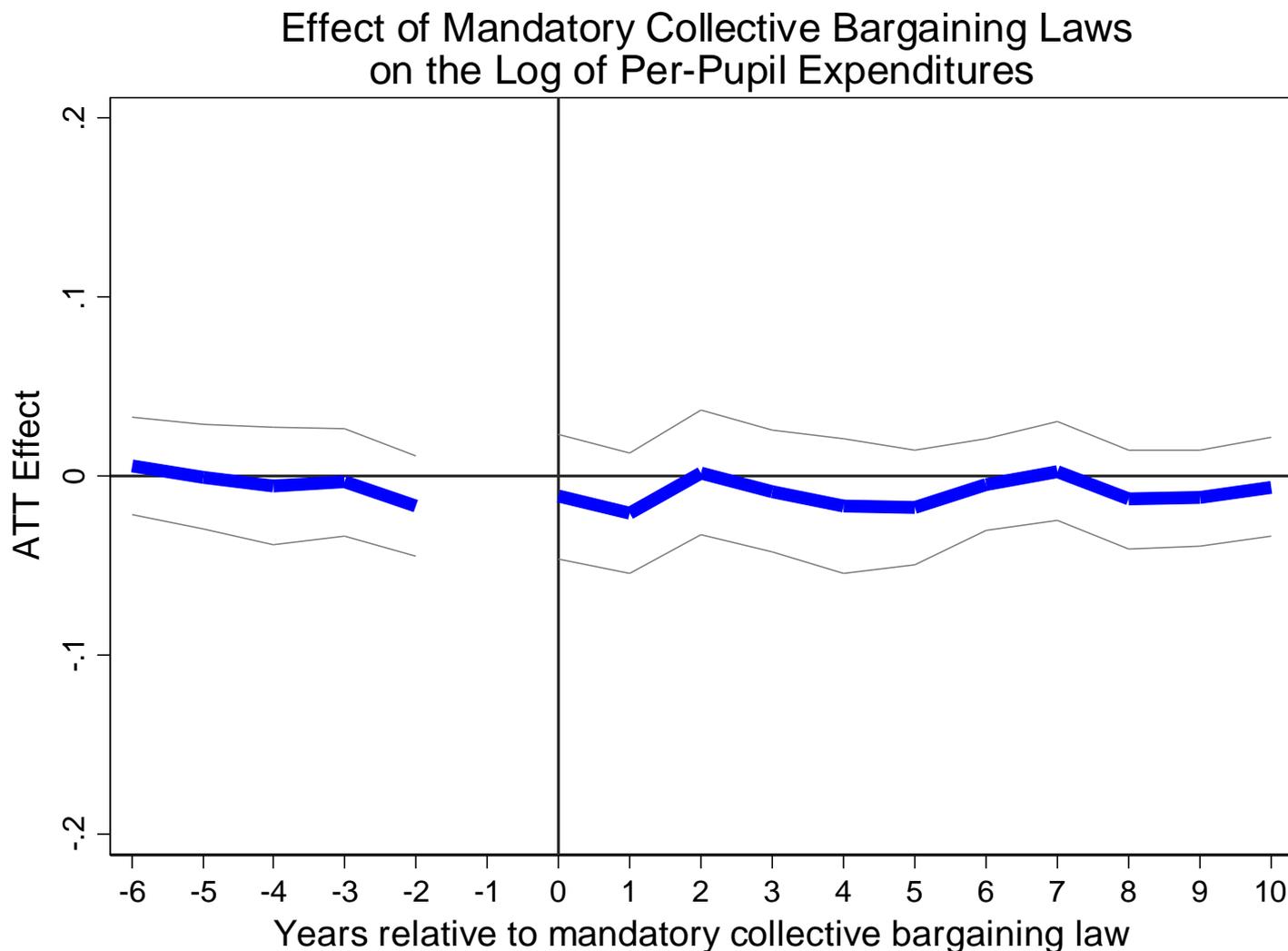
(Hoxby 1996, 711;
cf. Lovenheim 2009)

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:

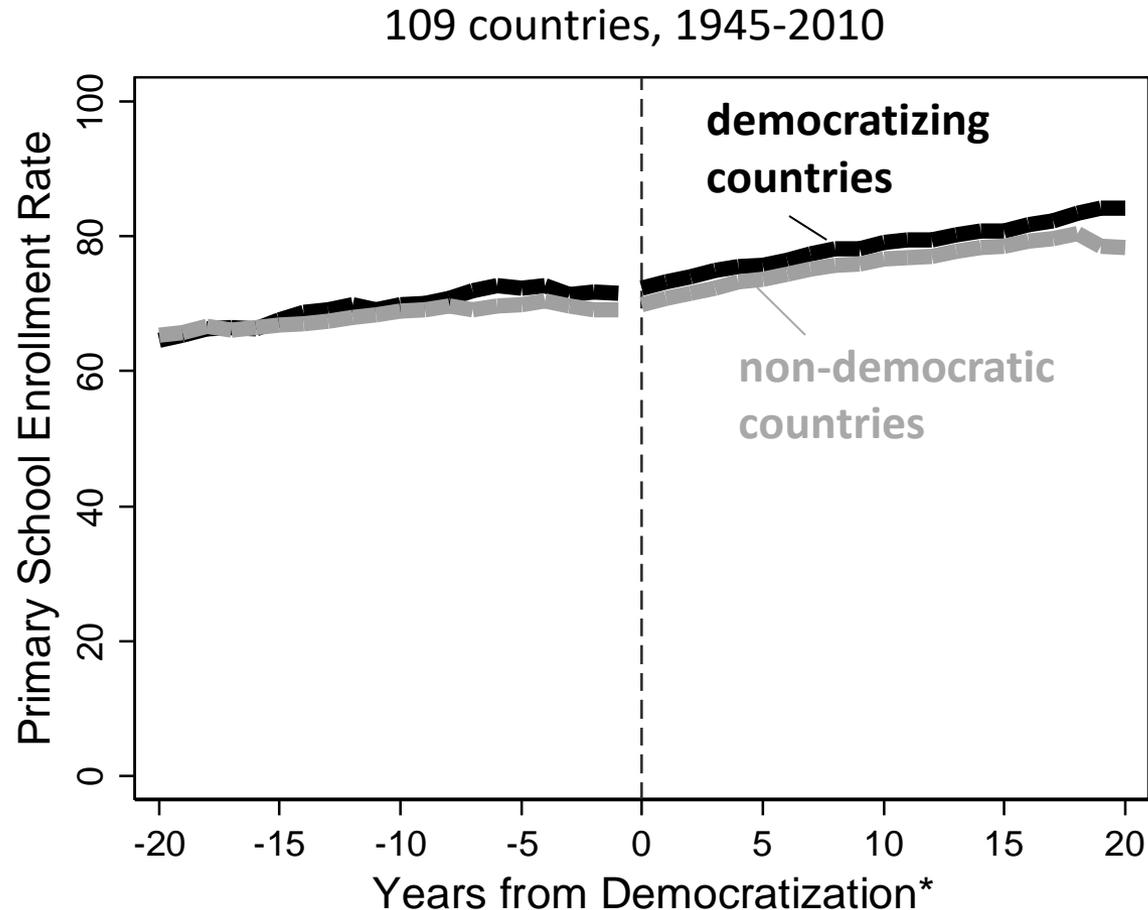
- technocrats and experts (“what works”)
- voters
 - ~~democracy, esp. the extension of voting rights to the poor, creates electoral incentives to improve access~~
- interest groups
 - ~~strong teacher unions lead to higher salaries and spending,~~
- **their own interest**

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**



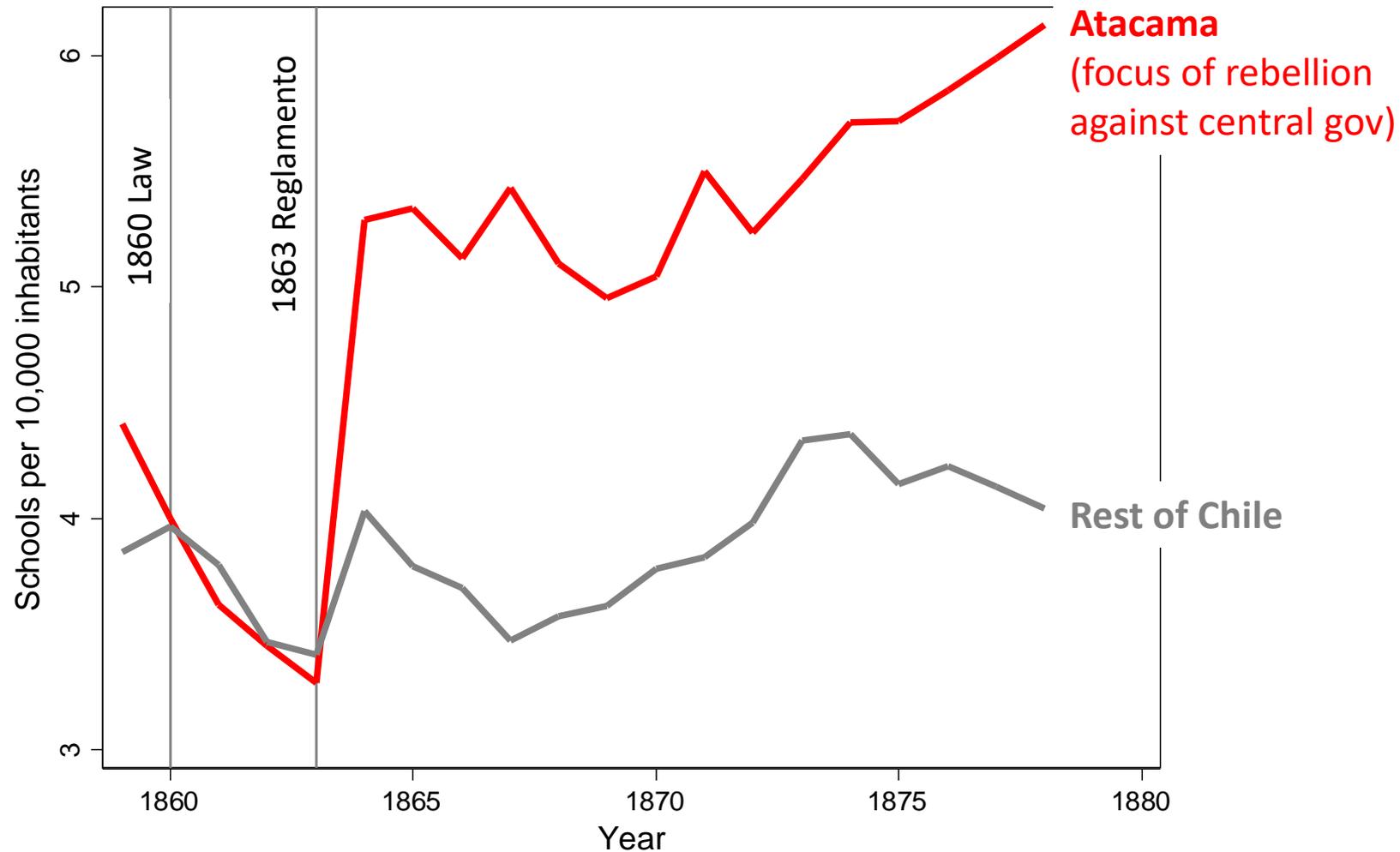
education to “moralize the masses”

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

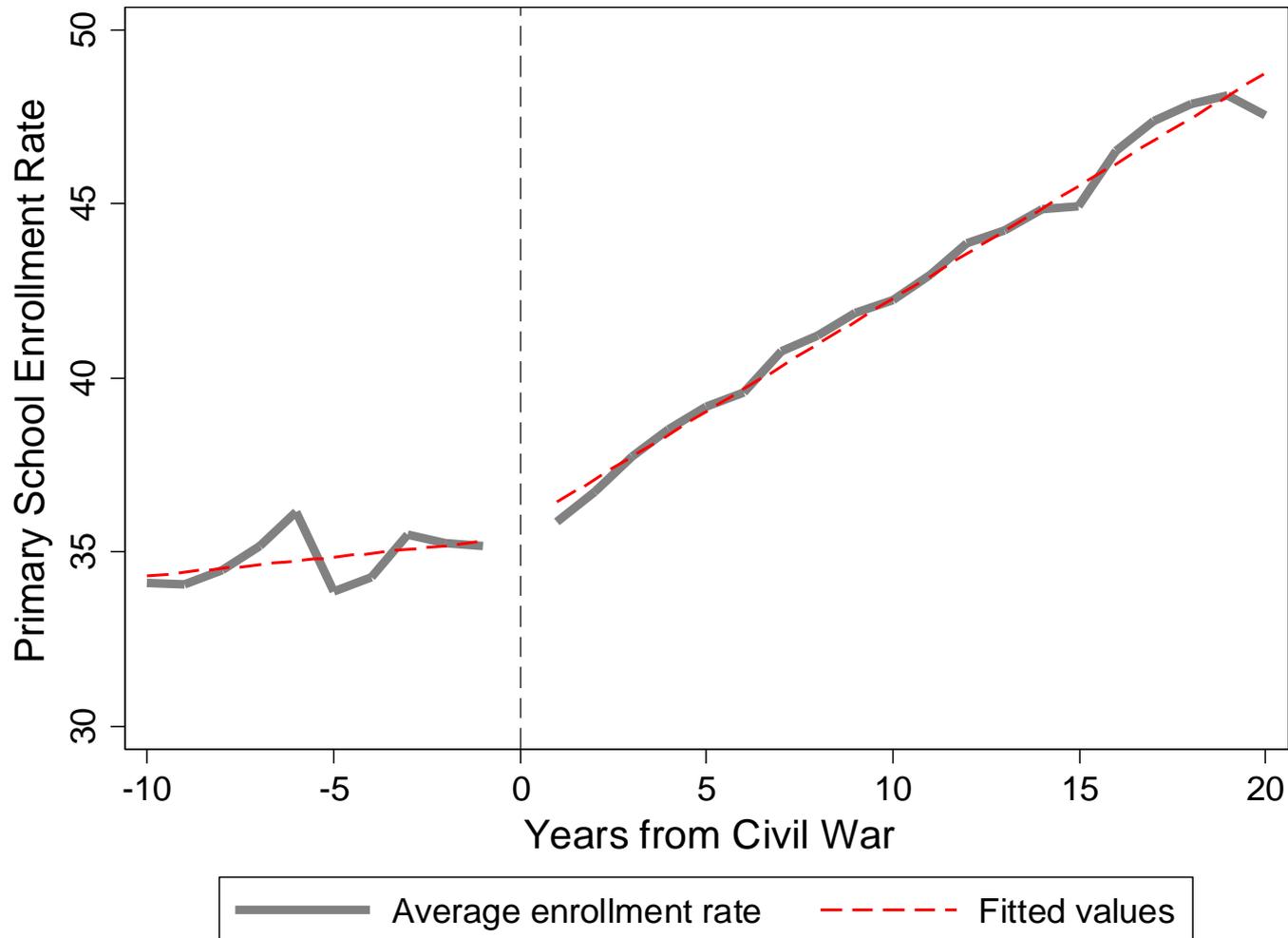


education to “moralize the masses”

- **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)

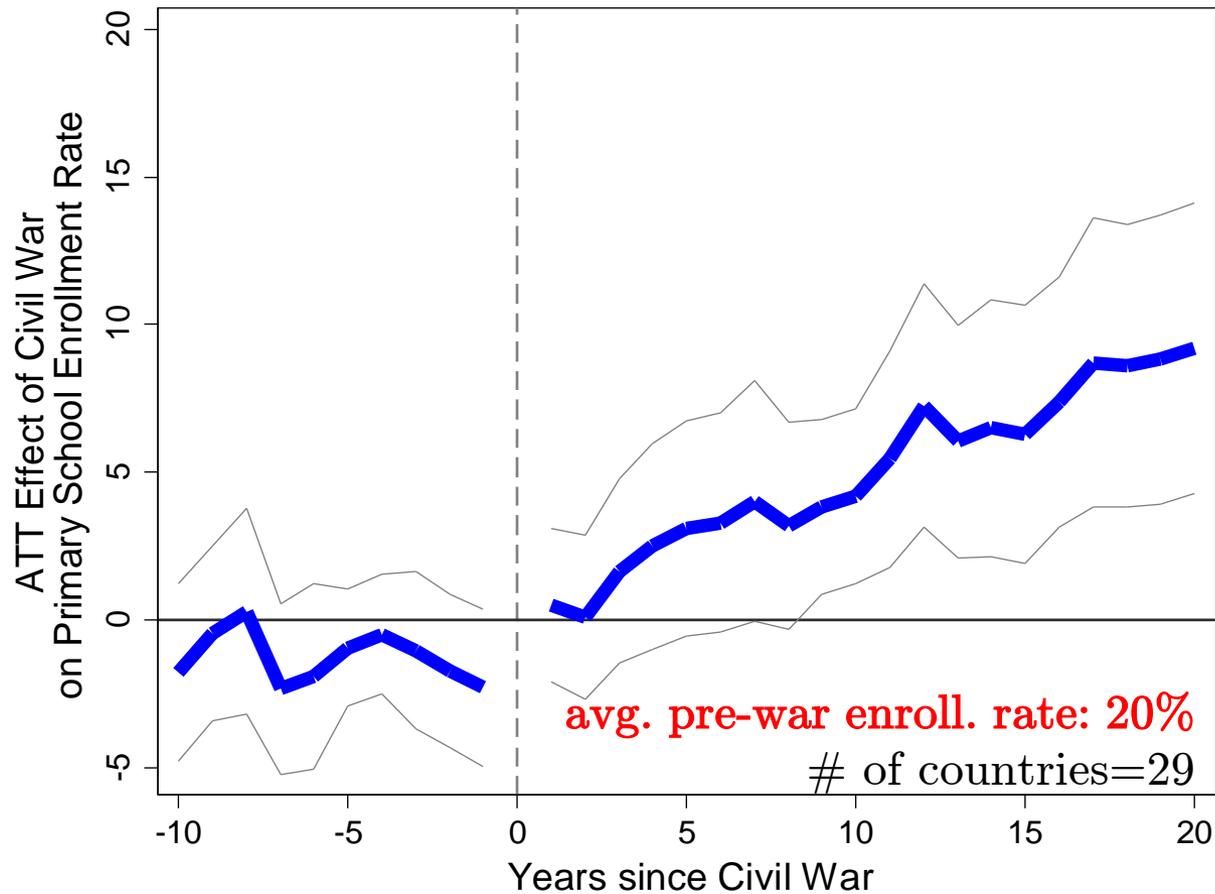
education to “moralize the masses”

- 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

politics matters,
but it influences education policy
in counterintuitive ways

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!

Agustina S. Paglayan

Center for Global Development
University of California, San Diego

www.agustinapaglayan.com

[@aspaglayan](mailto:aspaglayan)

RISE Conference

06.21.18