Chapter 7: Shifting Ideology and Interests: A More Likely Path to Universal Suffrage

1. Ideological Change and Constitutional Reform

Overall, the analysis to this point suggests that changes in income or in the distribution of income are unlikely to motivate suffrage reforms. In cases in which a large number of countries democratize more or less simultaneoulsy, the path to democracy must be found elesewhere. Two somewhat more roundabout mechanisms are developed in this chapter. First, it is possible that the theories of government used by individual inside and outside government change, so that suffrage, per se, because an important ideological consideration, an end as well as a mean. Second, it is possible that rather than producing a revolutionary threat, that large organizations (labor unions) are able to credibly threat reductions tax revenues. Both new ideologies and shifts in bargaining power are more likely to succede if they are promoted by organized groups, but neither requires a credible threat of revolution.

The Good Society and Public Policy

The first to be explored involves political communities in which the present median voter's evaluation of suffrage law is not entirely based on its indirect effects on fiscal policy as implicitly assumed above, but also on direct effects that those laws have the "good society." Insofar as those in power advance their economic and ideological interests, policy shifts and constitutional exchange will reflect new ideological interests as well as new economic interests. Thus, in the medieval world in which the power of the church and the royal family were thought to be goods in themselves, loyal members of parliament would accept and/or promote policies that increased the prestige of the church or nobility in cases in which such reforms had no obvious financial disadvantagees for the MPs. In casees, in which their financial interests were aligned with those interests, policies would advance those interests beyond the point where marginal costs equal marginal financial returns.

For example, large churches and government buildings would often be given prominant locations in city plans at market places, which might benefit from the traffic of pilgrims, tourists, and rent-seekers. On the other hand, they parliament would accept the idea that markets should not be open on Sundays, when traffic would be at its peak. When ideologies shift among those with the power to make public policies, such policies also tend to change. Modern shopping malls very rarely have churches or major government centers associated with them, even in relatively patriotic and religious communities.

Of interest for the present study is the fact that two long held theories of governmance began shifting slowly in the period often called the "Enlightenment." First, ideas about the devine nature of sovereignty were challenged by contract theories of the state. Second, ideas about political privileges began to shift as notions of "equality before the law" began to replace theories of family and royal privilege among educated people, including many members of parliament.

Participation in politics gradually came to be considered to be an "entitlement," rather than a privilege for "qualified" citizens. Rather than being decided as a matter of tradition and birth, participation in governance became a matter that should be earned in some way. At various times in the nineteenth century, it was believed by moderate members of the upper class that all property owners, all gainfully employed adults, all competent adults, or all adults should be entitled to vote. When the current rules are more restrictive than the suffrage norms, suffrage expansion would be widely considered to be a praiseworthy policy and, consequently, attract public expressions of support, even by those who might privately be opposed (Kuran 1989 or Brennan and Hamlin 2000).

Direct Preferences for Suffrage: Suffrage as a Good

In such cases, citizens would maximize a somewhat more complex utility function than assumed in most economic and game theoretic representation of rational decision makers. For example, an ideological interests in suffrage can be represented by including the breadth of suffrage as an argument in the typical citizen's indirect utility function, $S = s(T^L, T^K)$. The median voter's preferred level of suffrage would now maximize:

$$Uv = u(1- C(\gamma(L_v, K_v, T^L, T^K, Y, Z), Z)/Y) \, Yv,$$
$$\gamma(L_v, K_v, T^L, T^K, Y, Z), s(T^L, T^K)) \tag{8}$$

with first-order conditions:

$$U_{TL} = [U_X (-C_G)Yv/Y - U_G] \, G^*_{TL} + U_S S_{TL} = 0 \tag{9.1}$$

$$U_{TK} = [U_X(-C_G)Yv/Y - U_G]G^*_{TK} + U_S S_{TK} = 0 \quad (9.2)$$

where $S=s(T^L, T^K)$ refers to the percentage of adults eligible to vote given thresholds T^L and T^K.

Recall that in the absence of a nonfiscal interest in suffrage, the existing suffrage thresholds are optimal for the median voter. In this case, $U_S S_{TL} = 0$ and $U_S S_{TK} = 0$, and the first two terms in the first-order conditions are always satisfied at the median voter's ideal, G^*. As also previously noted, the same result also suggests that changes in median voter tastes with respect to private and public services or changes in the median voter's income will *not* cause the present median voter to change the existing suffrage laws. However, changes in the intensity of an individual's nonfiscal interest in suffrage can induce major suffrage reform.

Nonfiscal interests in suffrage imply that new tradeoffs between the median voter's interest in obtaining his or her ideal pattern of private and public services and that associated with his or her interest in suffrage rules for their own sake. This tradeoff is present whether the median voter's direct interest in suffrage implies that suffrage rules should either be less restrictive or more restrictive than the current rules are. For example, equations 9.1 and 9.2 imply that present suffrage laws will be changed if the median voter begins to have a nonfiscal interest in suffrage. In this case, $U_S S_{TL}$ and $U_S S_{TK}$ depart from zero and the median voter will prefer and adopt a new pattern of suffrage rules.

Applying the implicit function theorem to equations 9.1 and 9.2 allows the typical citizen's ideal suffrage rules to be characterized as:

$$T^{L*} = l(Li, Ki, T^L, T^K, Y, Z) \quad (10.1)$$

$$T^{K*} = k(Li, Ki, T^L, T^K, Y, Z) \quad (10.2)$$

where T^L, T^K are the existing suffrage laws that produced the present median voter and T^{L*}, T^{K*} are the new suffrage laws preferred by the present median voter.

The new rules imply a new median voter. For the triangular distributions assumed here, the next median voter will have endowments of labor and capital within the new electorate equal to $Lv - T^{L*}/tw$ and $Kv - T^{K*}/tw$ respectively, and income:

$$Y_v = (w(Lv - T^{L*}/tw) + r(Kv - T^{K*}/tw))(2 - \sqrt{2})/2 \quad (11)$$

which are somewhat below those of the present median voter when suffrage is expanded, as will be the case if $U_S S_{TL} > 0$ and $U_S S_{TK} > 0$.

Two types of nonfiscal suffrage preferences are of interest. First, consider the case in which suffrage is a good in the usual economic sense that the marginal utility of suffrage is always positive for the median voter. This might, for example, arise because voters internalize a democratic ideology or because such views are economically and socially rewarded.

Suppose further, as has been assumed above, that the median voter proposes his or her preferred electoral reform, subject to veto by his or her successor. The reforms recommended by the present median voter take account of the fact that the new median voter may select a different combination of services and taxes than that preferred by the current median. If a solution exists for 9.1 and 9.2, the voter will recommend a modest expansion of suffrage and that expansion will be adopted. The new median will not be inclined to veto the proposed reform, because the new median voter is clearly better off under the new rules. He or she is now able to obtain his or her ideal pattern of public policies.

Moreover, if the next median voter has the same tastes as the present median voter, as assumed here, the successor will also be interested in suffrage reform. At the new median voter's ideal policy (the new G^*) the marginal utility of suffrage expansion is positive as before. Consequently, the new median will further liberalize the franchise by further reducing the wealth and/or income requirements for voting. In the limit, a series of suffrage reforms would generate universal suffrage, as successive median voters extend suffrage entitlements.[53]

If suffrage is an ordinary good in the sense that it always has positive marginal utility, $U_s > 0$, only the corner solution of universal suffrage can be stable, although intermediate suffrage rules may be observed during the process of transition. Note also that changes in income *do not* play a role in this process of reform.

Ideological Norms and Suffrage Reform

Of course, nonfiscal interests in suffrage may not resemble those of ordinary goods or bads, but rather suffrage may be judged relative to some suffrage ideal or

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[53] In the case where suffrage is a bad, as might be the case under some elitist or hierarchical social theories, the marginal utility of suffrage expansion is negative, and the same process would lead to dictatorship--one-man vote.

widely held normative theory. For example, it may widely be believed that suffrage should based on "merit," however defined. Merit-based theories of suffrage imply that those who are properly qualified should be entitled to vote, but no others. In polities where suffrage norms are reasonably uniform and widespread, the nonfiscal utility of suffrage would be judged relative to the ideal level of suffrage associated with those norms, S^*, as with $S = n(|S^*- s(T^L, T^K))$.

A median voter who accepted a merit-based theory of suffrage would still face tradeoffs between advancing electoral norms and maintaining control over public policies. A forward looking median voter might realize that in such cases the sequence of suffrage adjustments will stop when a median voter is reached who considers the present suffrage rules to be ideal--or is himself or herself disinterested in suffrage as an end in its own right. At the equilibrium suffrage level, the marginal utility of further suffrage reform falls to zero, $U_SS_{TL} = 0$ and $U_SS_{TK} = 0$, and the current median voter's ideal suffrage law is the law of the land.

Figure 3

Median Voter's Prefered Suffrage Rule
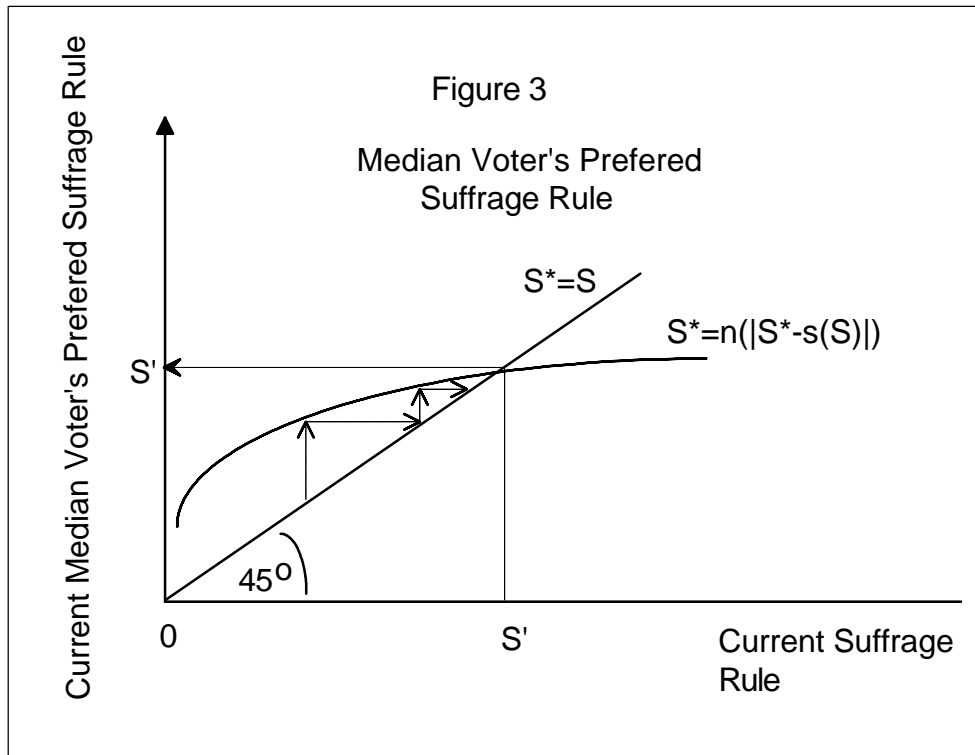
After reaching such a normative equilibrium, it is clear that increases in income will *not* induce further expansions of suffrage. At the norm-based equilibrium, the marginal utility of changing suffrage laws is zero, and thus, changes in the marginal utility of other goods and services do not affect the marginal rate of substitution between those goods and suffrage. (Recall that marginal rates of substitution can be expressed as a ratio of marginal utilities and that zero equals zero.) Economic growth and taste changes can affect the rules governing suffrage by affecting the marginal rate of substitution between suffrage and other desired services, but *only at points away from the normative equilibrium* where the marginal utility of suffrage reform differs from zero. Intuitively, the present median voter remains entirely content with the existing pattern of election law. He or she gets the fiscal package that is most attractive under an ideal combination of suffrage laws.

Changes in the norm, however, can induce new reforms to be undertaken, insofar as U_SS_{TL} and U_SS_{TK} no longer equal zero.

Figure 2 illustrates the equilibrium patterns of suffrage that tend to emerge under these two cases. Two suffrage functions are depicted. The first, s(S), depicts an equilibrium at universal suffrage, as tends to be the case when suffrage is an ordinary good or universal suffrage is the norm. The second, $n(|S^*-S|)$, depicts an interior solution of the sort associated with a merit-based theory of suffrage. Other functional forms are, of course, possible according to the normative theories employed and the distribution of those theories. There may be, for example, more than one equilibrium (fixed point) set of qualifications for suffrage.[54]

2. **Technological Change, Interest Groups, and the Expansion of Suffrage**

The previous section suggests that industrialization itself is unlikely to generate directly a parliamentary interest in suffrage reform unless industrialization changes suffrage norms or a preexisting link exists between the degree of suffrage and the size of the tax base. Insofar as new suffrage norms are not obvious products of industrialization and suffrage-based tax constraints are not widely observed, the analysis to this point has failed to find a direct causal link between economic growth and major reforms of suffrage laws.

Of course, economic growth of the sort generated by rapid industrialization does more than simply increase wealth. It also alters the manner in which economic resources are employed throughout the economy being industrialized. By doing so, industrialization *also changes the relative cost and benefits of organizing politically active interest groups.* Many of the same technological advances that allow large industrial firms to be created and managed successfully also reduce the costs of forming and managing large politically active interest groups.

For example, the same improvements in communication and transport that allow economic entrepreneurs to assemble and manage large numbers of employees in the pursuit of profit also allows political entrepreneurs to assemble and coordinate the political activities of large numbers of individuals who share ideological or economic interests. The costs of organizing interest groups are further reduced by the successful creation of large industrial enterprises that place large numbers of individuals with more or less common economic interests in close proximity to one or another and within a well-functioning network of communication. Industrialization also induces firms to locate close to one another in order to reduce the cost of transporting intermediate goods and providing specialized services to large enterprises and their employees. Economic development, consequently, tends to increase population densities, which further reduces the costs of organizing politically active groups.

To the extent that political activities are what economists refer to as superior goods (goods that one purchases relatively more of as one's income rises), successful economic growth also increases the resources contributed to politically active interest groups.

In addition to promoting the growth of political and economic interest groups, industrialization also provides some economic interest groups with more powerful tools for influencing public policy. As industrialization takes place, larger firms tend to become larger and both labor and capital tend to become more specialized. As each citizen's personal income becomes increasingly dependent on the availability of other complementary resources and as the size of interest groups increases, it becomes increasingly possible for an economic interest group to reduce or threaten to reduce the incomes of those outside the group simply by temporarily withholding resources from the market, for example, through strikes and strike threats.

The present section of the paper explores the effect that organized ideological and economic interest groups may have on suffrage laws.

Ideological Interest Groups and Suffrage Reform

Perhaps the most obvious of the interest groups that can be expected to influence election laws are groups formed to promote suffrage per se. Suffrage groups use a variety of means to lobby those with the power to change the laws governing eligibility for suffrage. Within the present model, such groups will be effective if they either induce an entirely new preference for suffrage or induce a change in the norms that determine the proper scope of suffrage.[55] The public choice literature on interest groups implies that contributions to interest groups increase with personal income and with the productivity of interest group efforts. The better organized an interest group is, the more support it will receive, other things being equal.

In a setting where a nonfiscal interest in suffrage exists, support for suffrage movements will not come exclusively from those who are currently disenfranchised. The analysis above suggests that contributions to suffrage groups would be made by all citizens with an interest in broader suffrage.

The relationship between a direct interest in suffrage and contributions to suffrage groups can be analyzed with a minor extension of the model developed above. Suppose that a direct interest in suffrage exists and is sufficiently widespread that the pivotal voter is partly motivated by norm S_v^*. In a situation of stable election laws, the current pivotal voter is completely satisfied with the existing suffrage laws, so that $S_v^* = s(T^{L*}, T^{K*})$, where the ideal labor and capital thresholds for voting are determined as in the "norm" version of equation 8, for example, the result of maximizing $U_v = u(X_v, G_v, |S_v^*-S|)$. It is clear that the pivotal voter has no interest in supporting suffrage groups as a means of inducing suffrage reform, because he or she is completely satisfied with the status quo.

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[54] The extent of suffrage as a percentage of the citizenry is always bounded at 100%. Consequently, the continuity of functions s and n are sufficient to assure the existence of a fixed point. Note that the fixed points characterize equilibrium levels of suffrage. However, as noted above, in many cases, the fixed point will lie along the upper or lower bounds of S.

[55] Suffrage movements throughout Europe during the nineteenth century became increasingly strong during the course of the century. These groups were often supported by the liberal and labor movements, as each attempted to have suffrage extended to their own memberships. In this manner, ideology and narrow self-interest motivated politically active interest groups. However, their success was entirely dependent on "ideological" effects on those with the power to reform suffrage laws, as implied from the previous analysis.

On the other hand, all those whose norms or endowments call for more liberal election laws have an interest in supporting suffrage groups if there is a chance that the groups may influence the median voter's suffrage norm. Contributions to such groups, whether in kind or cash, provide individuals with a method of increasing their (expected) utility over the status quo as long as the suffrage movement is successful. For example, consider the case where new suffrage level $S' > S_v^*$ is supported by suffrage groups.

If suffrage groups are even slightly effective, contributions to suffrage groups increase the probability that S' will obtain. A citizen's donation, D_i, to the suffrage movement in such circumstances will maximize his expected utility:

$$U_i^e = (1-p(\Sigma Dj))\, u(X_v - D_i, G_v, n(|S_i^* - S_v^*|))$$
$$+ p(\Sigma Di)\, u(X_v - D_i, G_v, n(|S_i^* - S'|)) \tag{12}$$

where $P = p(\Sigma D_j)$ is the probabilistic success function of the relevant suffrage group's efforts to change suffrage norms, D_i is citizen i's donation, and ΣD_j is the total of all individual donations. Essentially, p describes the probability that moderate voters, including the median voter, are persuaded by the suffrage groups to adopt S' as their suffrage norm rather than S_v^*.

Under the usual Nash assumptions, the expected utility-maximizing donation satisfies:

$$-P_D U^0 + (1-P)(-U_X^0) + P_D U' + P(-U_X') = 0$$

which implies that D_i^* approximately satisfies:

$$P_D (U' - U^0) - U_X = 0 \tag{13}$$

Equation 13 implies that an individual's contributions to the suffrage group can be written as:

$$D_i^* = d(Y_i, S', Sv^*, \Sigma Dj, Y, Z) \tag{14}$$

with

$$D_i^*{}_{Y_i} = [P_D (1-t)(U_X' - U_X^0) - (1-t)U_{XX}]$$
$$/ -[(P_{DD}(U' - U^0) + P_D(U_X^0 - U_X') + U_{XX}] > 0$$
$$(\text{given } U_X' - U_X^0 >= 0) \tag{15.1}$$

and

$$D_i^*{}_{\Sigma Dj} = [P_{DD}(U' - U^0)]\, / -[(P_{DD}(U' - U^0) + P_D(U_X^0 - U_X') + U_{XX}] > 0$$
$$(\text{given } P_{DD} > 0) \tag{15.2}$$

Individual contributions increase as personal income increases and with the overall level of contributions if persuasive campaigns exhibit constant or increasing returns. In this case, Nash contribution levels also increase with personal income and the interest group's prospects of success (Congleton 1991).

Insofar as persuasion and lobbying activities become more effective as more resources are devoted to them, the probability of suffrage reform increases as the resources available to suffrage groups increase, other things being equal. Economic development, consequently, tends to increase prospects for suffrage expansion by indirectly providing suffrage organizations with new resources for use in their persuasive campaigns. However, industrialization increases the probability that suffrage-expanding reforms will be adopted, only if the resources flowing to suffrage movements increase relative to those flowing to anti-suffrage movements.

3. Economic Interest Groups and Suffrage Reform

Economic growth also empowers economic interest groups for the same reasons and, moreover, provides those groups with additional tools for influencing ordinary public policies and constitutional law. By deepening the process of production and making greater use of specialization, industrialization tends to increase the economic independence of all agents within the economy both at the margin and inframarginally. This increase in interdependence allows economic interest groups to reduce national tax revenue and the income of all within the economy of interest by threatening to strike occasionally.

The increase in specialization that occurs during industrialization implies that strike threats become a more powerful tool for influencing public policy, one that will often be more effective than persuasion. Bargaining with a strike threat differs in several ways from usual characterization economic bargaining where both sides benefit from exchange.

A strike threat confronts those being struck with two alternatives, neither of which is as attractive as a no-threat setting. On the one hand, the struck party may accept the economic losses associated with being struck; on the other hand, the struck party may accept an otherwise undesirable contract. The bargains reached under strike threats, consequently, do not necessarily make both parties better off in the short or long run and may, in fact, make both parties worse off. In the conventional economic setting, a new labor contract entails higher wage rates for the striking employees and lower profits for the non-striking resource owners, often characterized as "firms," that is, employers or owners of the firm's capital. Firms may accept wage contracts that eventually cause them to become bankrupt, and workers may pay a higher price in lost wages during any strikes that are in fact implemented than they recoup in the subsequent wage contract. New legislation may similarly cost more than it generates in overall benefits in both the short and long run. As in a rent-seeking game, the losses generated by conflict can easily make all parties worse off as conflict intensifies.[56]

Nonetheless, a strike threat can be used to obtain changes in legislation favored by those striking or, in the case of interest here, to induce changes in political institutions favorable to the striking group.

Consider the following model of bargaining between the present median voter and an economic interest group using a strike threat. Recall that the quasi-constitutional rules governing suffrage determine the identity (total income) of the median voter, which along with the available tax base and cost of government services determines the level of government services. In the absence of a strike threat, the median voter under a given electoral set of rules (T^L, T^K) realizes after-tax consumption level $C^* = (1 - C(G^*,$ $Z)/Y)$ $(w(L_M - L_V) + r(K_M - Kv))(2 - \sqrt{2})/2)$ and government service level $G^* = C(L_v, K_v, T^L, T^K, Y, Z)$. As noted above, at this political equilibrium, the suffrage laws will maximize the welfare of the pivotal voter.[57]

In the usual neoclassical production function, production exhibits constant returns to scale and each factor is paid its full marginal product. In such an economy, a strike threat has fiscal effects only. A group that temporarily withholds their factors of production from the economy suffers a loss in income and nonstrikers suffer a reduction in the tax base, which either causes tax payments to rise for nonstrikers, public services to fall, or some combination of the two. (Recall that Y is an argument in G^*.) In an economy where substantial specialization exists or where there are increasing returns to scale, a group that withholds its factors of production from the economy may also reduce the incomes of nonstrikers by reducing the marginal product of their productive resources. (It is difficult to make automobiles without steel, steel without coal, and any of these without labor or transport.)

In either case, it is clear that a strike threat makes nonstrikers worse off. Even with fiscal effects alone, the strategy of threatening to withhold temporarily labor and/or capital from the market potentially allows the unenfranchised to bargain with the enfranchised for electoral reform. In the absence of franchise reforms, the present pivotal voter will face higher taxes, lower government services, and reduced private consumption. In effect, the interest groups using the strike threats place the median voter in a situation similar to that analyzed above in the setting where the tax base was partly determined by suffrage levels.[58]

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[56] Fortunately, it is not necessarily the case that the strike-induced bargains make all parties worse off. If the mere threat of a strike is sufficient to induce a new bargain, the result tends to make both parties better off relative to the scenario where strikes are in fact implemented.

The new contract could clearly make both parties better off relative to the preexisting state of affairs. For example, strikes may fall to historically low levels following a major agreement, in a manner that allows all parties to benefit from greater certainty and productivity. Moreover, there are, of course, even more costly methods of posing a threat than that generated by simply withholding labor or capital from productive employment. Strikes are generally far less costly than civil wars.

[57] Although satisfactory to the pivotal member of parliament, the existing suffrage laws are not necessarily Pareto efficient. For example, unrealized gains from political exchange may exist in equilibrium if transactions costs are significant. The unenfranchised might well be willing to pay enough to induce the median voter to change suffrage rules, but may be unable to raise the money to deliver the necessary side payment to alter the "median voter's" position on the suffrage. (Recall equations 9.1 and 9.2.)

If strikes are easier to arrange than side payments, the constitutional bargain achieved with a strike threat could generate a Pareto-efficient constitution, although it is unlikely to be one that is Pareto superior to the initial constitutional setting.

[58] Historically, the disenfranchised also sought changes in specific labor and property regulations as well as changes in suffrage laws. The present analysis focuses on positive, rather than normative, issues and in particular on the use of strike threats to generate changes in suffrage laws. The "rent-seeking" aspect of strike threats has been analyzed in previous research.

The pivotal voter will be willing to vote for the suffrage expansion requested by the strikers whenever the expected losses from more frequent strikes exceed those associated with extending the franchise. If the present median voter's tradeoff between suffrage and fiscal stability is known beforehand, organized labor can select the probability of strikes that elicits the desired constitutional response--for example, extending the vote to union members, but perhaps not to peasants, persons on relief, women, or children.

However, the constitutional bargain reached depends somewhat on the particular sequence of offers and counteroffers that take place. In the case where the median voter is able to anticipate or elicit a menu of strike probabilities from the economic interest group (as within a Grossman and Helpman [1996] model), the present median voter will propose the suffrage reform that equates his or her expected marginal gains from increased income and tax-base security with the cost of the less appealing combination of government services that will be adopted by the new median voter.

Promises to reduce the probability of striking in the future are somewhat more creditable for radical suffrage reforms than for minor reforms. Once universal suffrage is obtained ($T^L = T^K = 0$), no further increase in suffrage can be secured via strike threat. Peaceful but *revolutionary* change can, thus, be a natural consequence of this economic form of constitutional bargaining.

The bargaining position of the well-organized, but unenfranchised is, of course, reinforced by increased specialization and given any generalized economies of scale, both of which allow the strikers to reduce the personal income of nonstrikers, but it does not require them. Industrialization, thus, increases the probability that strikers will be successful in their political aims.

It bears noting that the present analysis is not class based, but rather interest group and production based. Many economic groups that can be organized within a polity do not have similar incomes, as is true of farmers, or necessarily similar occupations, as with the old guilds or national labor federations, yet still exercise considerable power. A non-class-based economic interest group that currently exercises considerable political power is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).[59]

In the case of interest here, however, the constitutional interests of the unenfranchised is largely a result of their similar incomes, *because the electoral rules that strikers wish to change are income or class based!* Wealth- and income-based rules for suffrage discriminate against those who have low income and wealth, which is, of course, often used by sociologists as a method of defining socioeconomic classes.

4. Economic Growth and Democracy

This and the previous chapter have explored several mechanisms through which political institutions might be liberalized in response to economic development. The results clearly imply that the connection between majority rule, economic growth, and the emergence of liberal democracy is not causal in the usual sense. Economic development that increases the median voter or the median member of parliament's income or wealth does not induce new, more inclusive rules for suffrage, even in cases where the median voter has a direct ideological interest in suffrage. Democracy does not arise because it is a "superior or normal" good in the usual economic sense, because the *current median voter is normally content with the election laws that made him or her pivotal regardless how restrictive* they are, and regardless of the pivotal voter's income level and occupation.

Rather, the analysis suggests that democracy may be indirectly produced by economic development, insofar as technological change and rising incomes empower interest groups with an interest in suffrage reform. Organized ideological groups may attempt to change widely held normative theories about proper qualifications for suffrage and, if successful, may induce significant changes in suffrage. Organized economic groups may use strike threats to secure an expanded suffrage in exchange for a larger and more stable supply of productive inputs, not for ideological reasons, but to obtain greater influence over the course of public policy. Both persuasive ideological campaigns and strike threats may induce radical reforms of suffrage laws through entirely legal and nonviolent means.

Suffrage reform, however, is not an all-or-nothing matter. The continuum of suffrage laws allows evolutionary reforms in election laws to take place incrementally through a series of relatively small reforms. The possibility of marginal adjustments allows negotiation, compromise, and moderate democratic reforms to be undertaken

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[59] Note that strike threats are a fairly old method of bargaining over taxes. For example, the Magna Carta was obtained from King John as a consequence of a strike threat made by an organized group of English barons.

without the necessity of civil wars or wholesale reform.[60] This theoretical possibility is clearly evident in the constitutional histories of Northern Europe. During the period between 1800 and 1920, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and Netherlands moved from electoral systems with very limited suffrage to universal suffrage. In none of these cases were revolutionary wars necessary. In all these cases, suffrage movements and strike threats produced a series of electoral reforms that in the end revolutionized governance in Europe.

Just as sudden breaks with the past are unnecessary for democracy to emerge from aristocratic parliamentary regimes, neither is "class consciousness per se" nor a creditable threat of revolution, as posited by Grossman (1991). The analysis demonstrates that radical reforms of suffrage laws can take place through a series of constitutional bargains (compromises) undertaken over many years. No clarion calls of "give me liberty or give me death" or "workers of the world unite" are necessary, although interest group activists may well be motivated in part by such ideological slogans and sentiments.[61]

Overall, the analysis suggests that industrialization and the enlightenment were clearly important triggers of the democratization of European politics. The enlightenment provided many of the ideas that motivated ideological interest groups, whereas the industrial revolution provided the resources required for interest groups to lobby more effectively for suffrage reform. The timing of the emergence of liberal parliamentary democracy in Western Europe can, thus, be attributed at least in part to economic developments, although economic developments cannot be said to have caused parliamentary democracy to emerge.

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[60] Implicit threats to withhold valuable inputs (labor and capital) also appear to have played a role in the much earlier emergence of democratic institutions in the British colonies that eventually became the United States of America. In the early American case, both labor and capital could choose among colonies. These resources tended to be attracted to colonies with more or less democratic colonies, evidently because it was believed that democracy would protect colonists against confiscatory policies that might be imposed by the colonial governors. In most cases, the popularly elected chamber had veto power over new policies, much to the lament of colonial governors.

[61] As noted above, the direction of causality does not appear to be unidirectional. As suffrage was extended in Northern Europe, additional economic liberalization tended to take place as well. The policy interests of the median voter became more liberal with the first changes in suffrage laws. That link in the bootstrap is left for future research.

It also bears noting that the present analysis has explored only half of the constitutional story. The radical expansion of suffrage in parliamentary systems is only one part of a liberal parliamentary regime. Clearly, the democratization of parliament will not affect the locus of policymaking power unless the parliament itself has the power to make significant policy choices. The other half of the story of liberal reform in northern Europe in the nineteenth century involves a shift of political authority from the king to the parliament. (See Congleton 2001 and 2003).