

{ Some remarks on the US Election next week.

{ Reminder about China trip

{ Reminder about syllabus

I. Qualified to Vote?

A. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was broad agreement that not all persons are qualified to vote.

{ For reasons very similar to those that modern democracies use to exclude children from the franchise, the "center of gravity" in American political theories of suffrage was that many adults lacked the experience, intelligence, and independence to exercise sound judgment when voting.

{ The idea that people "were qualified" or "earned the right to vote" rather than received it as a birthright or birthday present was also very commonly in Western Europe during the 19th century.

} "Once break loose from the freehold qualification, and it will soon be found that every argument against that qualification goes the whole length of justifying and requiring universal suffrage." (1825 quote from Keyssar, pg. 49)

{ These ideas were partly "self serving" in the sense that it allowed those who benefited from the rules to feel that the rules in place served a useful social purpose in addition to securing their control over public policy.

{ However, as with the case of modern intuitions regarding children in today's democracies, many held their theirs of the proper qualifications to vote simply because it seemed "self-evident" to them, e.g. it was consistent with moral and intuitions norms they had internalized, as well as their personal experience.

B. The "freeholder" voting rules of the colonial period generally were generally kept in place in the states after independence..

{ It bears noting that the effects of stable freeholder suffrage rules, tends to vary as population density, farming technology, and land prices varies, because these factors affected the number of persons who held a sufficient quantity of land to qualify for suffrage.

{ In many cases the effects of increases in population and reduced average land holdings were offset by specifying town and country "free holder" qualifications that took account of the greater density of towns, in other land wealth or tax payments were used to characterize voting.

{ (Such changes were consistent with stable norms about who should vote.)

C. Examples of such rules in state constitutions include:

{ Vermont, 1776: " no male person, born in this country, or brought from over sea, ought to be holden by law, to serve any person, as a servant, slave or apprentice, after he arrives to the age of twenty-one Years, nor female, in like manner, after she arrives to the age of eighteen years, unless they are bound by their own consent, after they arrive to such age, or bound by law, for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like." (Note that Vermont thereby constitutionally eliminated slavery and indentured servants older than age 21) ... "That all elections ought to be free; and that all freemen. having a sufficient, evident, common interest with, and attachment to the community, have a right to elect officers, or be elected into office." ... "Every man of the full age of twenty-one years, having resided in this State for the space of one whole year, next before the election of representatives, and who is of a quiet and peaceable behaviour, and will take the following oath (or affirmation) shall be entitled to all the privileges of a freeman of this State.

I _____ solemnly swear, by the ever living God, (or affirm, in the presence of Almighty God,) that whenever I am called to give any vote or suffrage, touching any matter that concerns the State of Vermont, I will do it so, as in arty conscience, I shall judge will roost conduce to the best good of the same, as established by the constitution, without fear or favor of any man." (Note that the Vermont Constitution thereby also called for essentially Universal Male Suffrage.

{ New York, 1776: "And whereas an opinion hath long prevailed among divers of the good people of this State that voting at elections by ballot would tend more to preserve the liberty and equal freedom of the people than voting *viva voce*: To the end, therefore, that a fair experiment be made, which of those two methods of voting is to be preferred --

} Be it ordained, That as soon as may be after the termination of the present war between the United States of America and Great Britain, an act or acts be passed by the legislature of this State for causing all elections thereafter to be held in this State for senators and representatives in assembly **to be by ballot**, and directing the manner in which the same shall be conducted.(8) And whereas it is possible that, after all the care of the legislature in framing the said act or acts, certain inconveniences and mischiefs, unforeseen at this day, may be found to attend the said mode of electing by ballot:

} It is further ordained, That if, after a full and fair **experiment shall be made of voting by ballot** aforesaid, the same shall be found less conducive to the safety or interest of the State than the method of voting *viva voce*, it shall be lawful and constitutional for the legislature to abolish the same, provided two-thirds of the

members present in each house, respectively, shall concur therein. And further, that, during the continuance of the present war, and until the legislature of this State shall provide for the election of senators and representatives in assembly by ballot, the said election shall be made **viva voce**.

- } VII. That **every male inhabitant of full age**, who shall have personally resided within one of the counties of this State for six months immediately preceding the day of election, shall, at such election, be entitled to vote for representatives of the said county in assembly; if, during the time aforesaid, he shall have been a freeholder, **possessing a freehold of the value of twenty pounds, within the said county, or have rented a tenement therein of the yearly value of forty shillings**, and been rated and **actually paid taxes to this State**: Provided always,
 - } VIII. That every elector, before he is admitted to vote, shall, if required by the returning-officer or either of the inspectors, take an oath, or, if of the people called Quakers, an affirmation, of allegiance to the State.
- { New Jersey, 1776: That all inhabitants of this Colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds proclamation money, clear estate in the same, and have resided within the county in which they claim a vote for twelve months immediately preceding the election, shall be entitled to vote for Representatives in Council and Assembly; and also for all other public officers, that shall be elected by the people of the county at large. (Note that the use of the word "inhabitants" allowed woman and blacks to vote in 1776.)
- { Delaware, 1765: "The right of suffrage in the election of members for both houses shall remain as exercised by law at present."
- { Maryland, 1776: "All freemen, above twenty-one years of age, having a freehold of fifty acres of land, in the county in which they offer to vote, and residing therein-and all freemen, having property in this State above the value of thirty pounds current money, and having resided in the county, in which they offer to vote, one whole year next preceding the election, shall have a right of suffrage, in the election of Delegates for such county."
- { Virginia, 1776: "The right of suffrage in the election of members for both Houses shall remain as exercised at present."
- { North Carolina, 1776: "That all freemen, of the age of twenty-one years, who have been inhabitants of any one county within the State twelve months immediately preceding the day of any election and possessed of a freehold within the same county of **fifty acres of land** for six months next before, and at the day of election, shall be entitled to vote for a member of the Senate."

{ Georgia, 1777: "The representatives shall be chosen out of the residents in each county, who shall have resided at least twelve months in this State, and three months in the county where they shall be elected; ... and they shall be of the **Protestant** religion, and of the age of twenty-one years, and shall be possessed in their own right of **two hundred and fifty acres** of land, or some property to the amount of **two hundred and fifty pounds**.

{

{ (Note the variety of suffrage rules in place, both respect to the size of the freehold, and the definition of "persons" potentially entitled to vote.)

D. Suffrage rules, however, gradually liberalized, and property and wealth rules were eliminated over the next 50 years or so. (See, for example, Keyssar, pg. 51).

{ The process was for the most part peaceful, although there were serious popular demonstrations by the unenfranchised.

{ It was not uncontentious, disagreements continued, but the center of gravity shifted toward those favoring essentially universal (white Christian) male suffrage before the Civil war in 1860.

{ Suffrage reform was often a campaign issue that would attract the votes of the currently enfranchises (Keyssar, 68-70, which suggests that norms within the enfranchised part of the distribution of voters were shifting through time.

{ (On the other hand, reform was not a slippery slope, many groups lost suffrage privileges that they once had as the expansion gradually took place, especially American blacks, Keyssar 56, 67.)

II. Rational Choice and the (more or less) Peaceful Expansion of Suffrage: The Importance of Changes in Norms

A. Stable Suffrage Restrictions under Majority Rule

{ In a polity where all citizens are eligible to vote and a median voter exists, two-candidate or two-party competition for office tends to converge to the policy preferences of the median voter.

{ If voters have similar tastes but have different incomes, the median voter tends to be the "voter" with the median endowment of capital and labor and public policies tend to be those which maximize his or her net benefits.

B. Note, however, that the median voter is not always the citizen with median income, because the distribution of citizenship may differ from the distribution of voters.

- i. For much of the history of the American colonies and European parliamentary systems, eligibility to vote was determined by wealth or tax payments, and consequently, the median voter was generally a citizen with substantially more income than that of the median resident.
- ii. These wealth-based systems of suffrage were extremely durable within Europe.
- iii. And the concept of wealth-based qualifications for suffrage clearly dates back at least to Greek times. (For example, Aristotle mentions wealth-based suffrage in the Politics.)
- iv. In modern democracies, suffrage eligibility is generally determined by citizenship and age, with the consequence that the median voter is older than the median citizen.

C. Suffrage restrictions can easily be incorporated into the standard electoral model.

- i. To account for the effects of suffrage law, all that needs to be done is to characterize how the electoral laws affect the distribution of voter policy preferences.
 - ◆ If restricted suffrage has no effect on the shape or center of this distribution, than suffrage laws will not affect public policy.
 - ◆ However, if suffrage laws affect the identity (interests) of the median voter, then public policies will vary systematically with the suffrage laws.
- ii. (Note that such effects may vary by policy. For example, "rich" and "poor" voters might have similar demands for environmental policy, public education, and economic growth--but quite different demands for airports, public health insurance, and public parks.)

D. If suffrage laws affect public policies, it follows that suffrage reform will also affect public policies.

- i. Consequently, the present median voter will tend to oppose suffrage reform--regardless of the nature of the election law.
- ii. Insofar as public policies advance the interests of the current median voter, any reform of election law that changes the median voter (whether expanding or contracting the electorate), will make the present median voter worse off.
- iii. Thus, if the median elected representative, cast his or her vote on suffrage reform strictly according to the fiscal interests of the median voter, suffrage reform will never be adopted.
- iv. The fiscal effects of suffrage reform make the median voter worse off, and thus, the median voter will oppose all such reforms--other things being equal.

E. Note that this same logic implies that an increase in prosperity will not necessarily lead to expanding suffrage.

- i. As income increases, the median voter's demand for other (normal) goods and services tends to increase, but not his or her demand for suffrage.
 - } Suffrage is already at a "bliss point" and additional wealth or income does not affect demands for services that are at bliss points. [draw diagram]
- ii. Indeed, the effect of a general increase in wealth tends to be restricted suffrage rather than suffrage expansion.
 - ◆ Under wealth based suffrage law, economic prosperity expands the electoral roles without requiring new suffrage laws.
 - } More people simply qualify to vote under a wealth standard as income and wealth increase.
 - ◆ Thus, a median voter that wanted to preserve his or her position as the median voter, would favor raising the wealth or income qualifications for suffrage during periods of rising income--and favor lowering them somewhat during periods of decline.
 - } In this sense, democracy is an "inferior" good rather than a "superior" good in strictly economic terms.
- iii. In sum, **the median voter (with narrow interests) at any given point in history will be completely satisfied** with the preexisting suffrage constraints, at least as far as his fiscal interests are concerned, because those constraints made him the pivotal voter!
 - ◆ The use of majority rule in elections and within parliament does not, by itself, generate a political impulse for universal suffrage.
 - ◆ The present median voter is content to be the median voter and has no interest in enacting laws that will "worsen policy" by creating a new median voter.
 - ◆ In a stable economic and political environment, there can be no effective electoral pressure for electoral reform, based on narrow conceptions of self interest.

F. Tax-Base and Ideological Considerations in Suffrage Reform

- i. Differences in individual circumstances, tastes, and ideology imply that many citizens will be dissatisfied with the existing rules governing suffrage, including many who are entitled to vote.
 - ◆ For example, voters with relatively more wealth tend to prefer more restrictive rules, and voters with relatively less wealth tend to prefer less restrictive rules.
 - ◆ For such dissatisfied citizens, election law reform can generate a new median voter whose preferred policies are closer to their own.

- ii. The question addressed in the remainder of this lecture is whether such demands for suffrage reform might indirectly affect election law through legal, although possibly nonelectoral, means.
- G. The "tax constitution" implicit in the model used to this point allows the government to tax anyone that it wishes, although all taxpayers must be taxed at the same rate.
 - i. Suppose, for example, that the "tax constitution" required only those with the privilege of suffrage to pay taxes.
 - ◆ Such reasoning clearly played a role in the early European and American theories of representation, insofar as only substantial taxpayers were given the privilege of voting or were eligible for positions in parliament--and those not represented were not directly taxed.
 - ◆ Similar logic also applies to settings where territorial boundaries limit both tax base and electorate.
 - } If a group petitions to be included in a polity, it normally negotiates for representation or suffrage rights before agreeing to enter and pay taxes.
 - ◆ In such cases, suffrage rules not only determine the identity of the median voter, but also the tax base available to the polity.
 - ii. When the polity's tax base is affected by the degree of suffrage, the present median voter may have a fiscal interest in suffrage reform.
 - ◆ It remains the case that changes in suffrage laws will generate a new median voter who will have different demands for public services and also for suffrage laws, but in this case there are "benefits" as well as "costs."
 - ◆ In some cases, the fiscal loss from a new median voter tends is less than the fiscal gain associated with a broader tax base.
 - } If the anticipated advantage of a lower tax price for services more than offsets the losses associated with a "slightly" less attractive overall fiscal combination, the median voter will favor suffrage reform.
 - iii. In such cases, it is clear that economic growth would play a role in this process of suffrage reform.
 - ◆ Economic development increases the wealth and tax-worthiness of the presently untaxed non-voters.
 - ◆ A large enough increase in the taxable income or wealth of the unenfranchised can induce changes in election law in polities where it is easier to change election law than tax law.

- } Normally the reverse is true: it is generally easier to change tax law than election law, thus normally it will be tax law rather than election law that will be reformed.
- ◆ Note, however, that one cannot tax persons outside a community of country--short of conquest--unless new territories or countries join the federation.
 - } Thus, this case applies most naturally to confederal governance, and to local decisions to merge communities.
- iv. Ignoring the unusual cases, however, the analysis to this point suggests that changes in income or in the distribution of income are unlikely to motivate suffrage reforms, except in unusual fiscal circumstances.

H. Ideological Change and Constitutional Reform

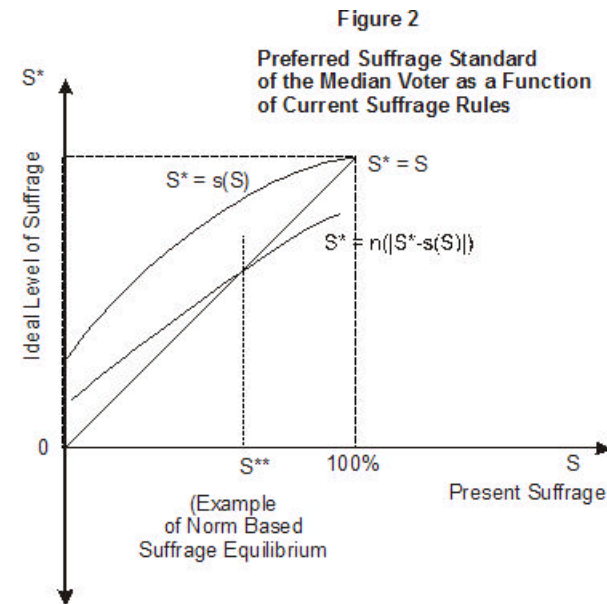
- i. We now consider the case in which at least some voters, including the median voter, have a direct interest in suffrage law--beyond that implied by its fiscal effects.
- ii. Such voters may be said to have an ideological (or normative) interest in suffrage law in addition to the fiscal interests analyzed above.
 - ◆ The normative or ideological theories of such voters imply that the breadth of suffrage--what is often referred to as "scope of democracy"--is an "end" in itself, as well as a "means" to secure public goods and services.
 - } For example, it may be widely felt that all property owners, all gainfully employed adults, all competent adults, or all adults should be entitled to vote.
 - } Such theories may imply that suffrage is a "right" or an "entitlement" belonging to all "qualified" citizens, rather than a privilege of birth or royal favor.
 - ◆ 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).
 - } In all such cases, citizens would maximize a somewhat more complex utility function than assumed above.
- iii. In effect, such ideological theory create another source of demand for suffrage law, which implies that the present median voter may not be at a bliss point.
 - ◆ Nonfiscal interests in suffrage law implies a new tradeoff between the median voter's interest in obtaining his or her ideal pattern of private and public services (best fiscal package) and his or her interest in suffrage rules for their own sake--as part of the good society.

- ◆ 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.

I. Two types of suffrage norms are of interest.

- i. 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.
 - } 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.
- ii. Alternatively, suffrage norms may not resemble those of ordinary goods or bads, but rather ideal level of suffrage may be judged relative to some widely held **normative theory**.
 - ◆ For example, merit-based theories of suffrage imply that those who are properly qualified should be entitled to vote, but no others.
 - ◆ In politics where suffrage norms are reasonably uniform and widespread, the nonfiscal utility of suffrage can be modeled by characterizing the distance the present laws are from the ideal state.
 - } If the current laws are $S = s(T^L, T^K)$ and the accepted ideal is, S^* , then the ideological demand can be written as $I^d = n(|S^* - s(T^L, T^K)|)$.
- iii. 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.
 - ◆ And, there may again be a "slippery slope," but in this case the sequence of suffrage adjustments would 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 ideal suffrage level, the marginal utility of further suffrage reform falls to zero, $U_{S^*T^L} = 0$ and $U_{S^*T^K} = 0$, and a stable equilibrium obtains.

- ◆ 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.
- iv. **Changes in the norm**, however, can induce new reforms to be undertaken, insofar as $U_{S^*T^L}$ and $U_{S^*T^K}$ no longer equal zero.



- v. Figure 2 illustrates the equilibrium patterns of suffrage that tend to emerge under these two types of normative theories of suffrage.
- ♦ These two types of norms have different suffrage demand functions associated with them.
 - ♦ 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.]

J. Perhaps the most obvious of the interest groups that can be expected to influence election laws are groups formed to promote suffrage per se.

- i. Suffrage groups use a variety of means to lobby those with the power to change the laws governing eligibility for suffrage.
- ii. 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.
- ♦ 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.
- iii. 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.
 - ♦ 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.
- iv. Economic development, consequently, tends to increase prospects for suffrage expansion by indirectly providing suffrage organizations with new resources for use in their persuasive campaigns.
- v. 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 antisuffrage movements.