

Does Nonviolence Work?  
The US House and the Civil Rights Movement

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# Peace vs. violence in today's protest movements

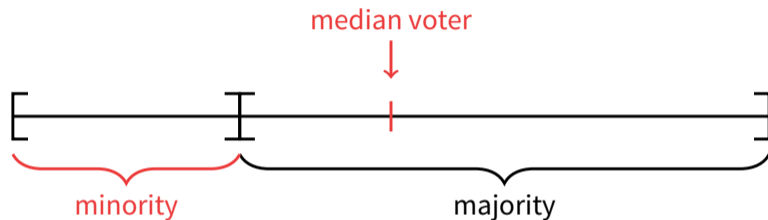


Washington, DC, January 2017



Hong Kong SAR, November 2019

## Protest in democracies in a median-voter model

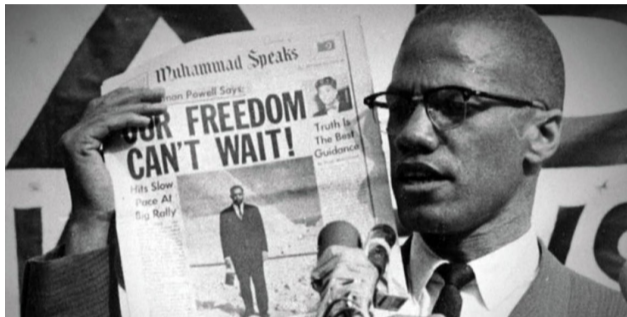


How can the **minority** influence the **median voter**?

# Peace vs. violence during the US Civil Rights Movement



Montgomery, AL, March 1965



New York, NY, August 1963

## Research question and preview

Did peaceful or violent protests affect the US House more?

- Peaceful: shifted votes left on civil rights and welfare bills.
- Violent: no effect—possible harm on crime bills.
- Protests brought Republicans into Southern politics.

Two types of effects: local and cross-district effects.

Identification: local effects with district fixed effects.

- Assumption: no differential trends.
- Results robust to an array of controls for trends.

## Specification and data

$$Y_{\ell t} = \underbrace{\beta_1 P_{\ell t-1} + \beta_2 V_{\ell t-1}}_{\text{protest histories}} + \underbrace{X'_{\ell t} \gamma + \lambda_{\ell} + \theta_{\text{South}(\ell) \times t}}_{\text{controls}} + U_{\ell t}$$

all else

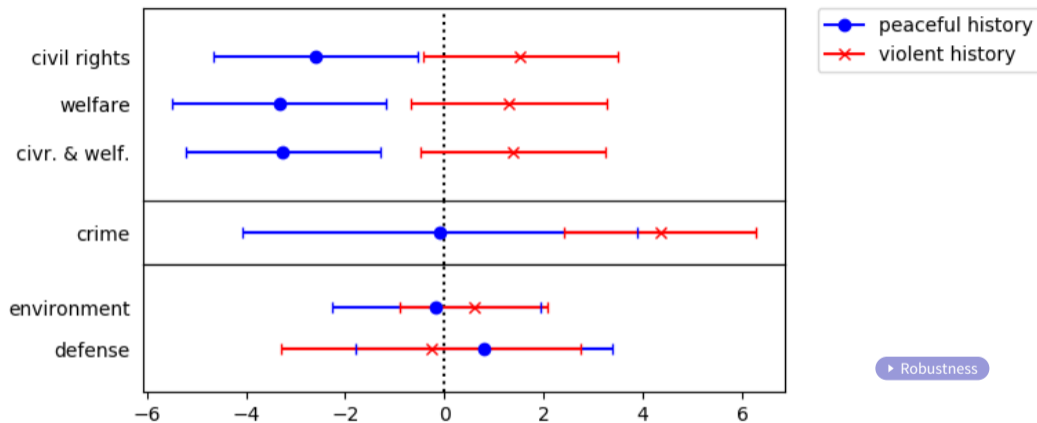
riots and when protesters threw bricks, etc.

% of conservative votes by legislator from district  $\ell$

constructed from *The New York Times*

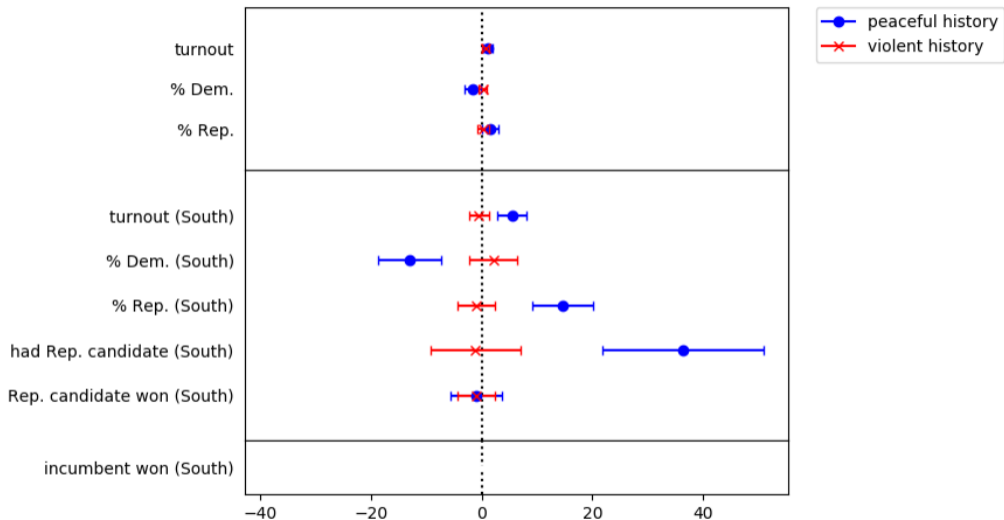
anti-civil-rights and war protest histories and fixed effects

# Results: peaceful protests worked, violence did not



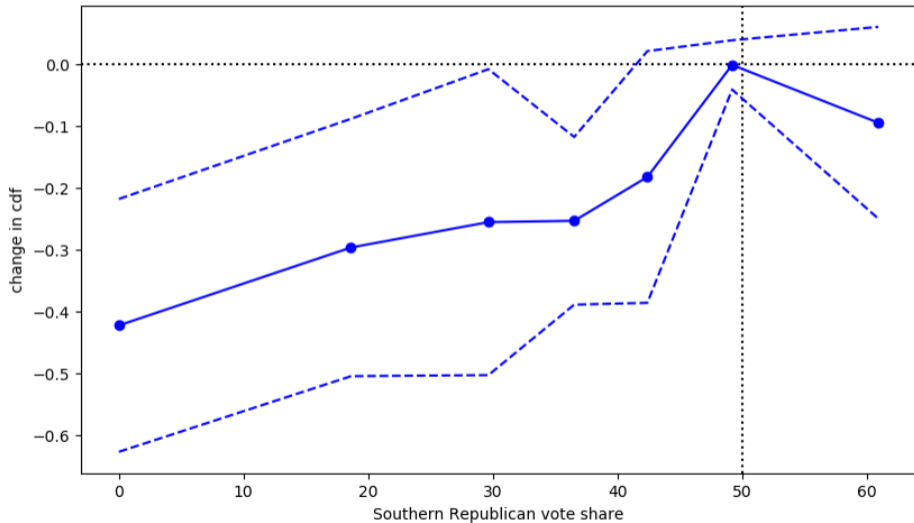
► Robustness

# Results: peaceful protests prompted Republican entry into South

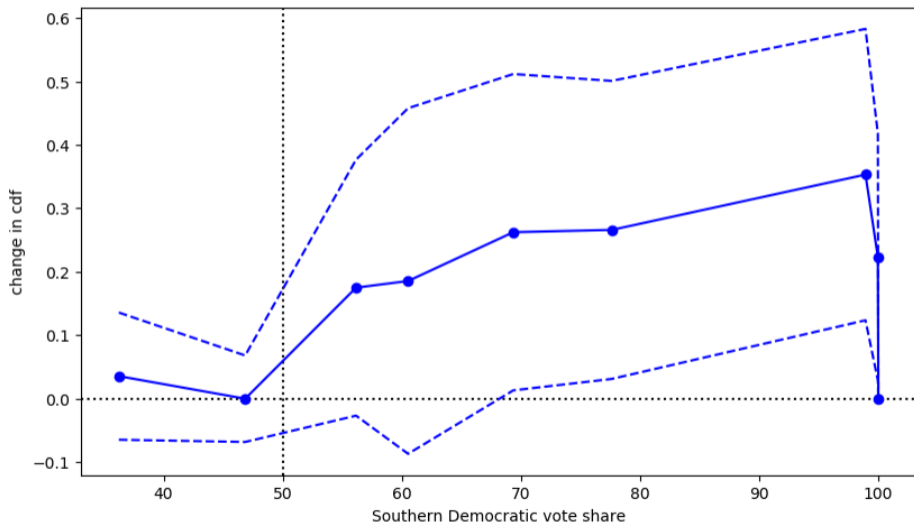




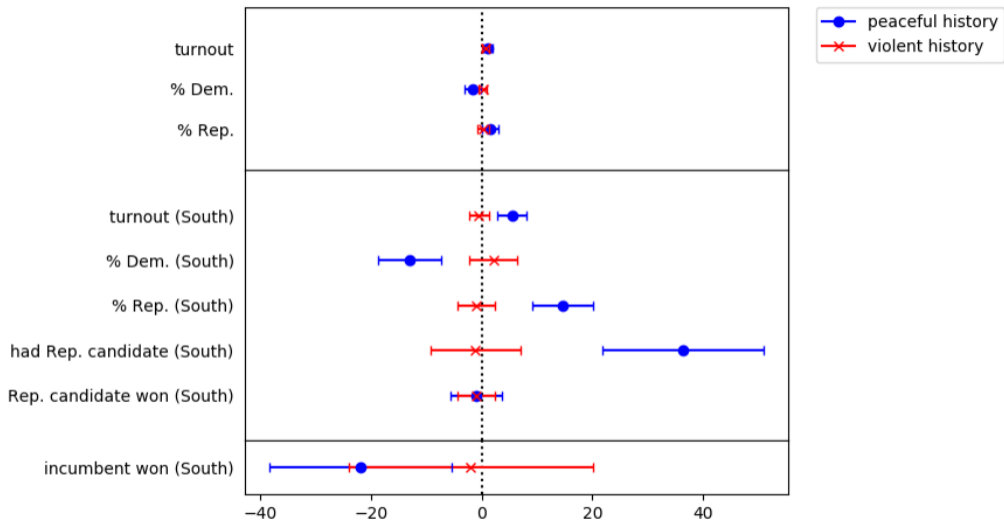
## Results: Republicans did not gain enough votes to win in the South



## Results: and Democrats as a party did not lose enough to lose



# Results: but incumbents were less likely to continue in office



## Counterfactuals: peaceful protests

	realized		no peaceful protests		
	% cons. (1)	margin (2)	% cons. (3)	margin (4)	$1 - (4)/(2)$ (5)
1964 Civil Rights Act	30.8	38.3	31.4	37.2	3.0
1965 Voting Rights Act	19.3	61.4	20.7	58.6	4.6
1968 Civil Rights Act	40.7	18.6	43.2	13.5	27.3
1970 Ext. of Voting Rights Act	33.2	33.7	35.3	29.5	12.5
1964 Econ. Opportunity Act	44.9	10.1	45.5	9.0	11.3
1965 Elem. and Sec. Educ. Act	37.0	26.0	38.6	22.9	12.0
1965 Social Security Act	27.6	44.9	29.2	41.7	7.1
1968 Gun Control Act	45.5	9.0	46.7	6.6	26.7

## Counterfactuals: violent protests

	realized		no violent protests		
	% cons. (1)	margin (2)	% cons. (3)	margin (4)	$1 - (4)/(2)$ (5)
1964 Civil Rights Act	30.8	38.3	30.8	38.4	-0.1
1965 Voting Rights Act	19.3	61.4	19.2	61.6	-0.3
1968 Civil Rights Act	40.7	18.6	40.4	19.2	-3.4
1970 Ext. of Voting Rights Act	33.2	33.7	32.7	34.7	-3.0
1964 Econ. Opportunity Act	44.9	10.1	44.9	10.2	-0.5
1965 Elem. and Sec. Educ. Act	37.0	26.0	36.9	26.2	-0.7
1965 Social Security Act	27.6	44.9	27.5	45.0	-0.4
1968 Gun Control Act	45.5	9.0	44.0	12.0	-32.3

## Contributions

Protests made American institutions more inclusive.

- Nonviolence secured support of majority.
- Violence may have backfired.
- Counterfactuals show larger margins on major bills.

South had distinct effects:

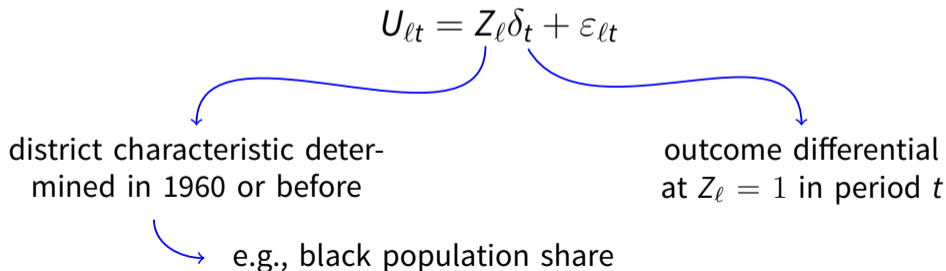
- turnover of incumbents
- landscape for Southern realignment

# Appendix

## Identifying assumption: no differential trends

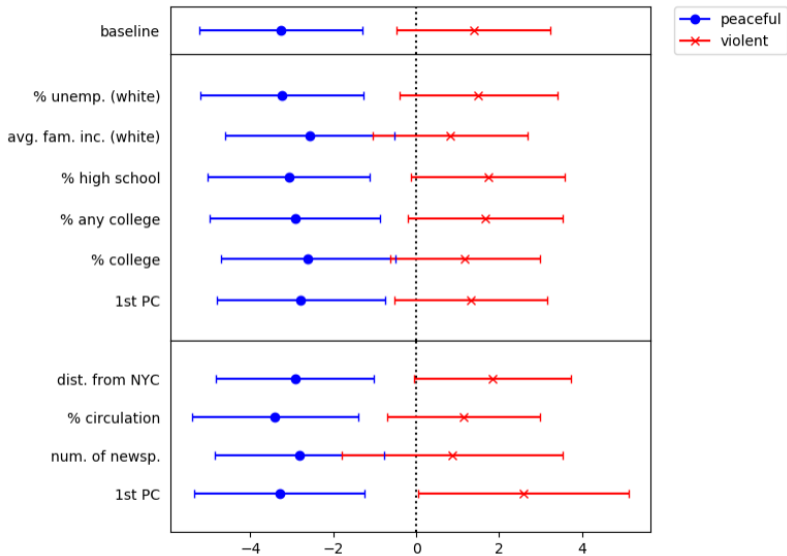
Key assumption: districts with protests were not on different trend than districts without.

To test this: absorb differential trends and see if effects remain.





# Effect of peaceful protests is robust (civil rights and welfare bills)



# Effect of violent protests is attributable to media markets (crime bills)

