The Effect of Military Campaigns on Political Identity

Evidence from Sherman's March

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Overview

- Personal identity can strongly influence economic and political behavior (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000)
- Growing interest within economics in identity formation (Shayo and Zussman, 2011; Atkin et al., 2021)
- Experience of war and violence could have strong effects on shaping personal identity
- I study the impact of military march of Union general Sherman through Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina during the Civil War on political identity and behavior in the South

Sherman's march

- Military campaign by Union General Sherman (from November 1864 until the until of the war in May 1865)
- Destruction of capital to break warfare capacity of the South
  - Economically important areas with critical infrastructure were targeted
- Army operated without supply lines - ”living off the land”

Literature review

- Formation of personal identity

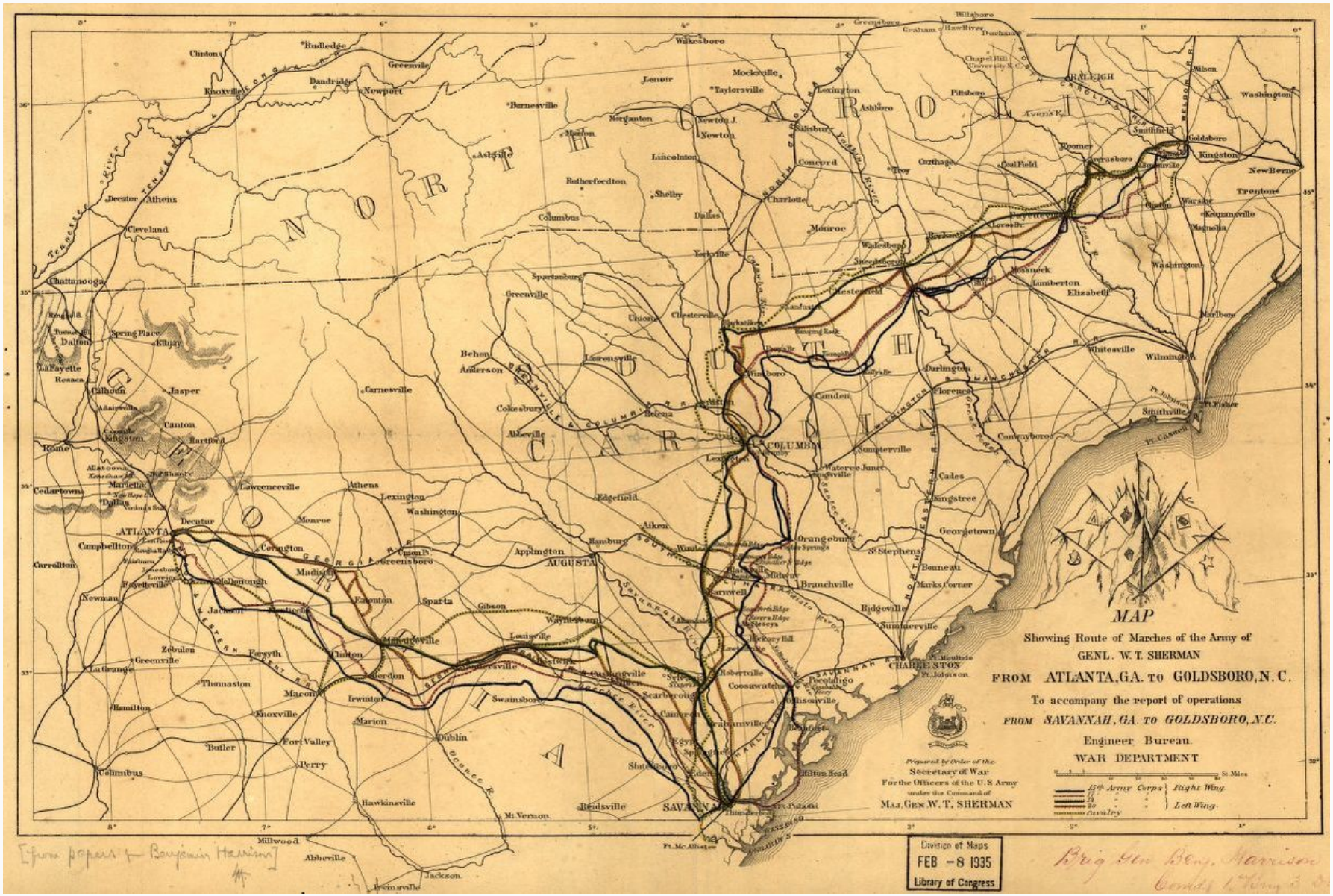
  Eifert et al. (2010), Shayo and Zussman (2011), Ananyev and Poyker (2019), and Atkin et al. (2021)

- Impact of war on preferences and attitudes
  - Bauer et al. (2016), Adhvaryu and Fenske (2014), and Ochsner and Rösel (2017)
- Political economy of the US South
  - Naidu (2012), Hornbeck and Naidu (2014), Acharya et al. (2016), Feigenbaum et al. (2018), Feigenbaum et al. (2020), and Suryanarayan and White (2021)

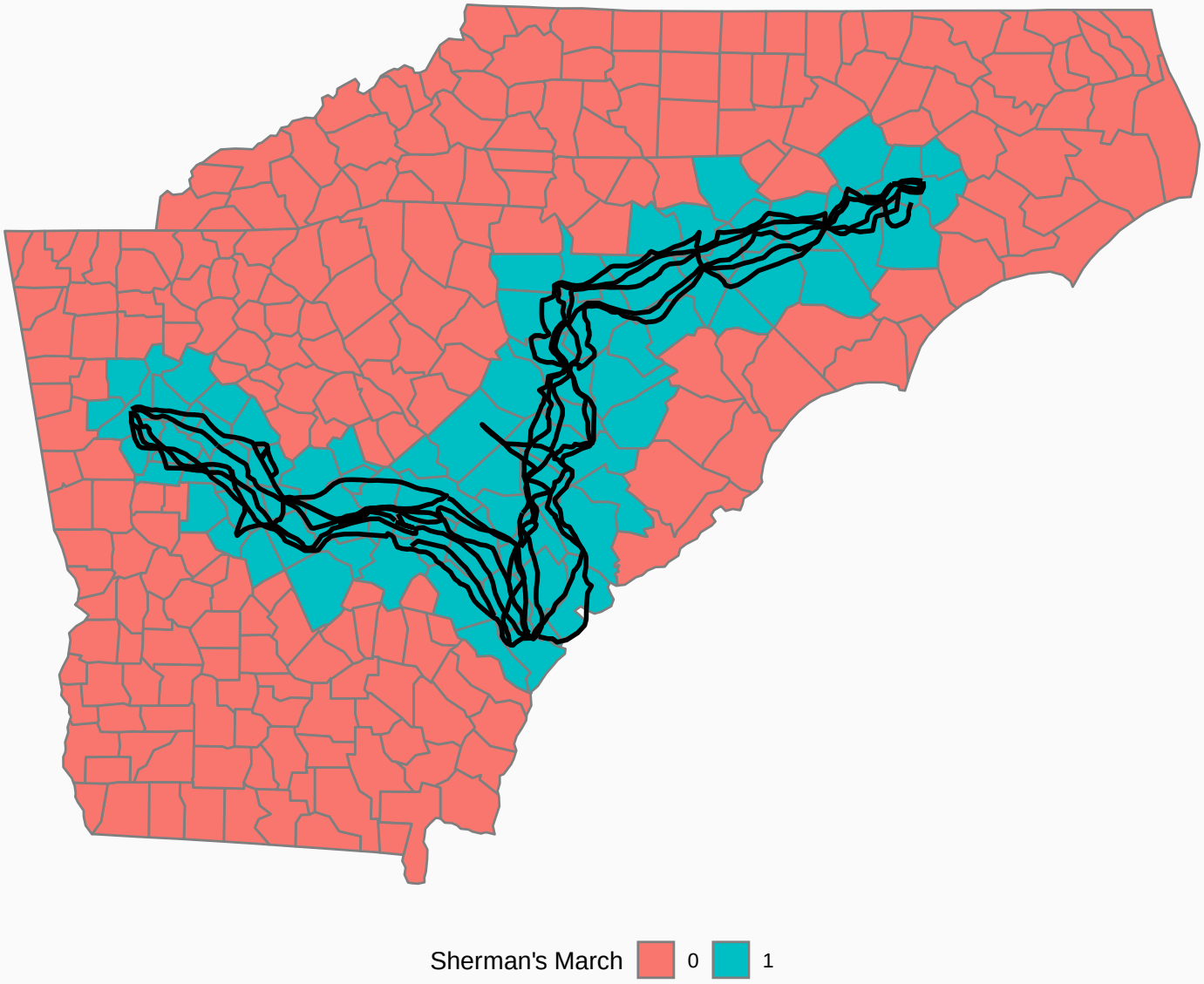
Data

- Digitized 1865 US War Department map of Sherman's march
- County-level covariates by Acharya et al. (2016)
  - share of slave population in 1860, democratic vote share, land inequality, lynch rate etc.
- Individual-level 1880 and 1930 US census data for frequency of first names
- OpenStreetMap data for contemporary names of all streets and roads
- Confederate monuments data from Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2019)

Sherman's march map



Sherman’s march map



Selection on observables with OLS

- County-level regression

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \text{march}_i + x_i'\gamma + \epsilon_i \tag{1}$$

- Controls
  - Proportion of slaves on the total population in 1860
  - Agricultural characteristics (land inequality, total value of the farm per improved acre, etc.)
  - Access to railways, total population in 1860
- Potential bias due to unmeasured confounders
- Results: ▸ voting ▸ other outcomes

Instrumental variable

- Straight line between the three main cities on the march's path (Atlanta, Savannah, Columbia)
- Sherman was ordered to march through Atlanta, Savannah, and, Columbia, the counties between these cities were visited partly because they happened to be on the way
- Not valid if being placed on the line between major cities would have direct effect on the outcomes of interest
- Results: ▸ voting ▸ other outcomes

Difference-in-differences

- Exploits the panel nature of presidential election vote shares

$$v_{i1872} - v_{i1860} = \alpha_0 + \beta \text{march}_i + x_i'\gamma + \epsilon_i \tag{2}$$

- Issue: missing data for some counties (South Carolina did not have popular vote until 1872)
- Results: ▸ here

Robustness checks

- Different measure of exposure to Sherman's march
  - Use 10, 20, and 50 mile bands around the path of any of Sherman's armies as the definition of the treatment (instead of using only 5 mile band) ▸ here
- Applying the methods by Oster (2019) to assess sensitivity to selection on unobservables ▸ here
- Double machine learning method by Chernozhukov et al. (2018) to allow for non-linear effects of the controls
  - Selection on observables ▸ here
  - Instrumental variable ▸ here

Conclusion

- Smaller effects on voting outcomes
- Significant positive effects for some outcomes proxying for Southern identity are not robust across different specifications
- Sherman's march does not appear to be a transformative event as some of the historical literature would claim (e.g., Campbell, 2005)

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Thank you for your attention.

OLS - voting outcomes

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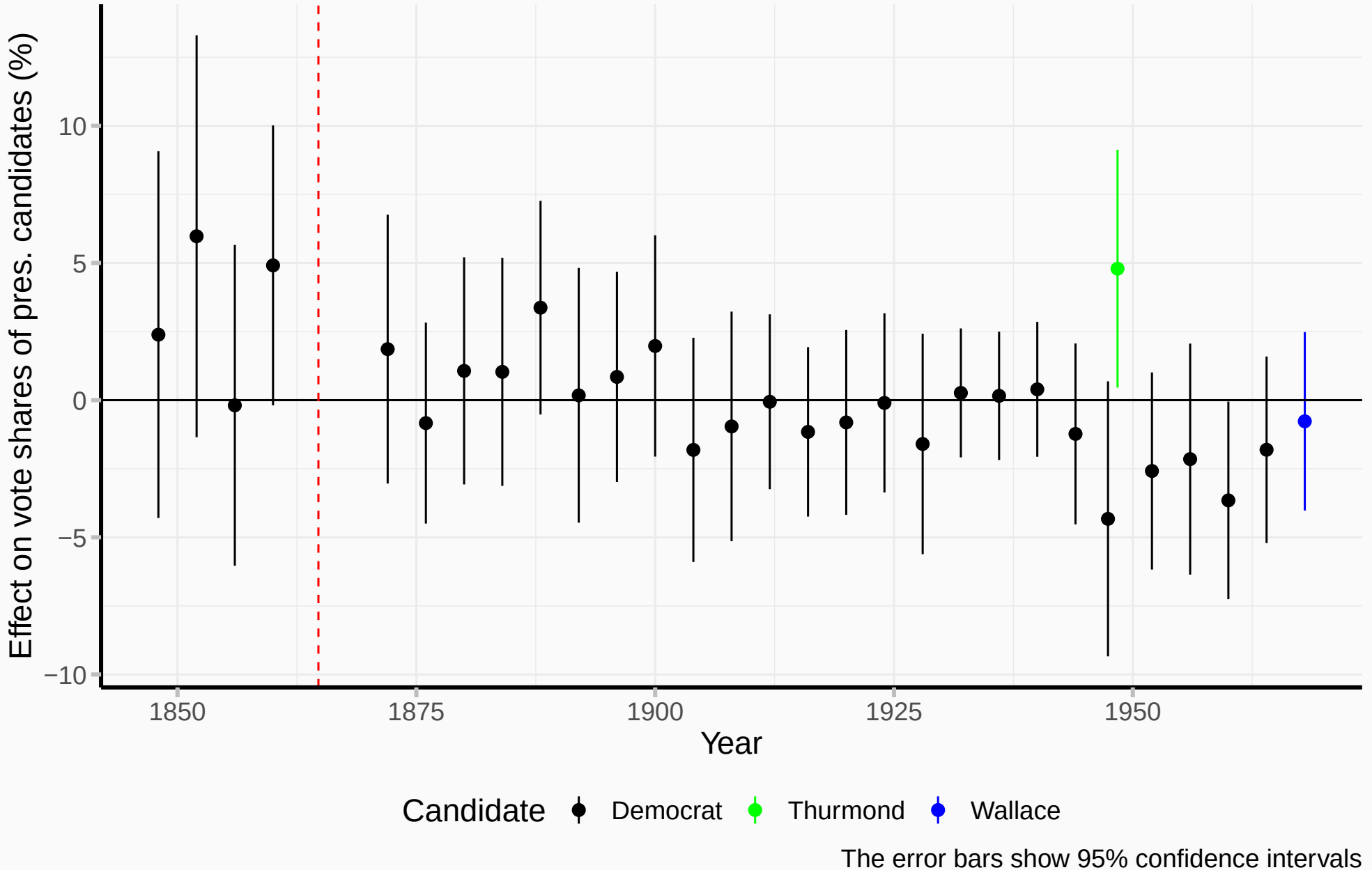

IV - voting outcomes

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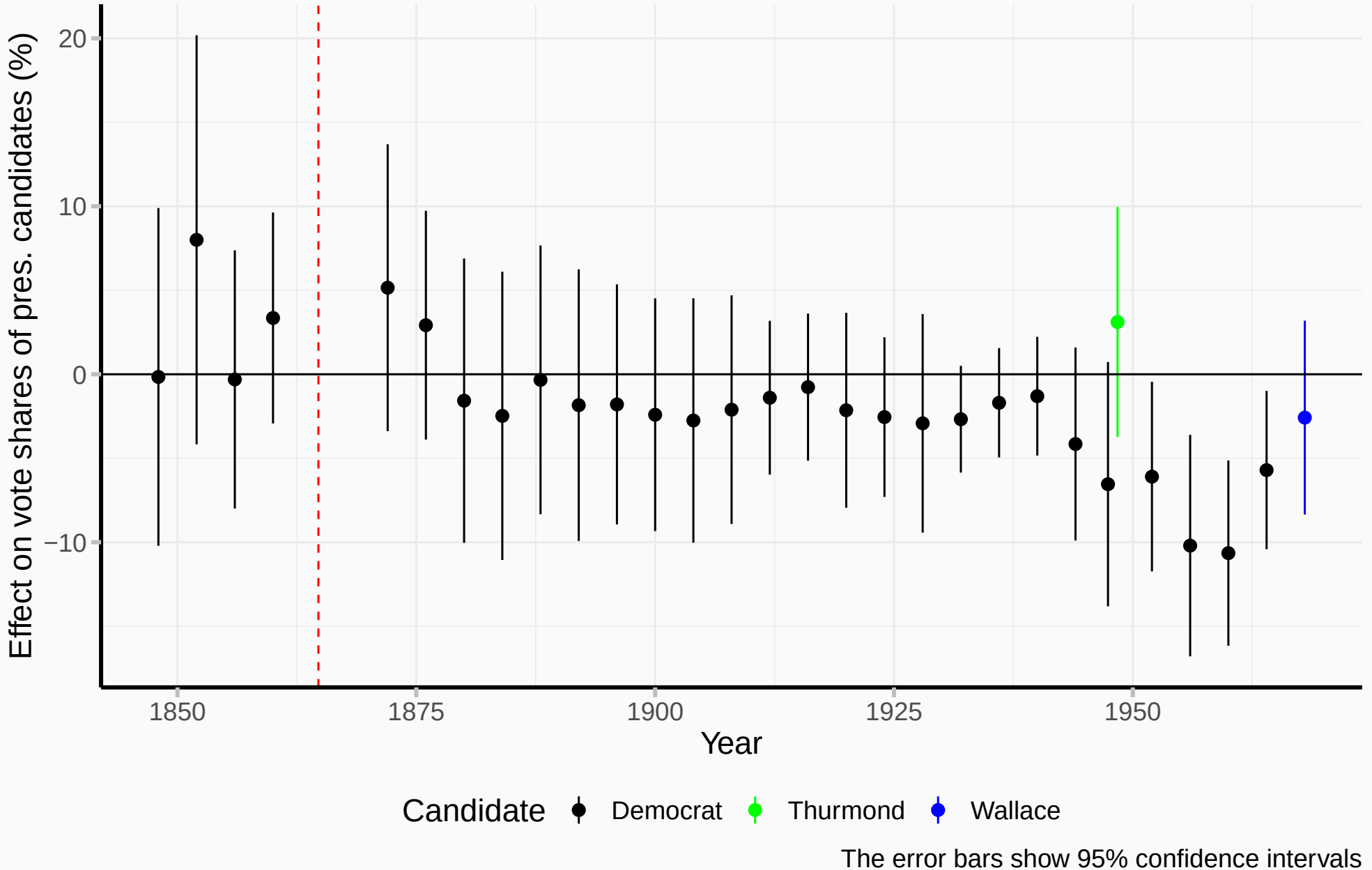

Democratic vote share difference

	1860-1872		1860-1900	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	47.991***	134.060***	54.809***	81.194***
	(1.476)	(35.609)	(1.264)	(24.693)
Sherman's march	-1.283	4.761	3.331	0.529
	(3.780)	(3.905)	(3.325)	(3.693)
Slave share		-34.542***		30.148***
		(7.729)		(7.242)
Land inequality		-31.547		-27.670
		(25.006)		(22.226)
Log of acres of improved land		9.691*		-2.175
		(5.112)		(3.734)
Log of farm value per acre		6.411		3.840
		(4.780)		(3.869)
Railway access		-2.661		1.398
		(2.654)		(2.652)
Log of total population		-20.525***		-1.394
		(5.452)		(4.256)
R2	0.001	0.271	0.006	0.130
R2 Adj.	-0.004	0.245	0.001	0.101
N	210	210	212	212
VCOV estimator	HC2	HC2	HC2	HC2

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Table 2: Other outcomes - OLS results

	First names (1880)	First names (1930)	Street names	Monuments	Lynch rate
March	-0.006	0.209**	0.146**	0.032	-0.004*
	(0.020)	(0.081)	(0.069)	(0.061)	(0.002)
N	262	305	305	305	299
Dep. v. mean	0.150	0.518	0.707	0.669	0.012
R^2	0.059	0.048	0.082	0.144	0.261

* p $<$ 0.1, ** p $<$ 0.05, *** p $<$ 0.01

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Table 3: Other outcomes - IV - second stage

	First names (1880)	First names (1930)	Street names	Monuments	Lynch rate
March	-0.006	0.074	0.064	0.061	-0.004
	(0.033)	(0.134)	(0.120)	(0.102)	(0.004)
N	262	305	305	305	299
Dep. v. mean	0.150	0.518	0.707	0.669	0.012
R^2	0.059	0.041	0.079	0.143	0.261

* p $<$ 0.1, ** p $<$ 0.05, *** p $<$ 0.01

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Table 4: Other outcomes - OLS - different treatment definitions

	First names (1880)	First names (1930)	Street names
Sherman's march (10 miles)	-0.017	0.210***	0.126*
	(0.020)	(0.080)	(0.065)
Sherman's march (20 miles)	0.004	0.186**	0.134*
	(0.020)	(0.082)	(0.079)
Sherman's march (50 miles)	0.007	-0.042	0.055
	(0.022)	(0.103)	(0.078)

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Table 5: Other outcomes - OLS - different treatment definitions - cont.

	Monuments	Lynch rate
Sherman's march (10 miles)	0.018	0.126*
	(0.059)	(0.065)
Sherman's march (20 miles)	-0.004	0.134*
	(0.057)	(0.079)
Sherman's march (50 miles)	0.080	0.055
	(0.061)	(0.078)

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Table 6: Sensitivity to unobservables using Oster (2019) methods

	Bias-adj. treatment effect		
	Est.	95% CI (l.)	95% CI (u.)
Democrats' share in 1872	10.291	-2.826	23.407
Democrats' share in 1900	-8.768	-16.976	-0.560
Thurmond's share in 1948	-0.284	-5.838	5.270
Conf. first names share-1880 census	-0.670	-51.851	50.511
Conf. first names share-1930 census	0.335	-612.692	613.363
Conf. streets share	42.748	-2416.738	2502.235
Conf. monument dummy	-1.339	-2.590	-0.087
Lynch rate	-0.026	-0.070	0.018

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Table 7: Sensitivity to unobservables using Oster (2019) methods - cont.

	Strength of sel. on unob. (δ)		
	Est.	95% CI (l.)	95% CI (u.)
Democrats' share in 1872	-0.072	-3.843	3.700
Democrats' share in 1900	0.286	-0.230	0.803
Thurmond's share in 1948	1.030	0.140	1.919
Conf. first names share-1880 census	-0.036	-5.187	5.116
Conf. first names share-1930 census	0.165	-6.418	6.749
Conf. streets share	0.255	-32.577	33.087
Conf. monument dummy	0.050	-0.129	0.229
Lynch rate	-27.523	-1700.354	1645.308

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DML -selection on obs. - voting outcomes

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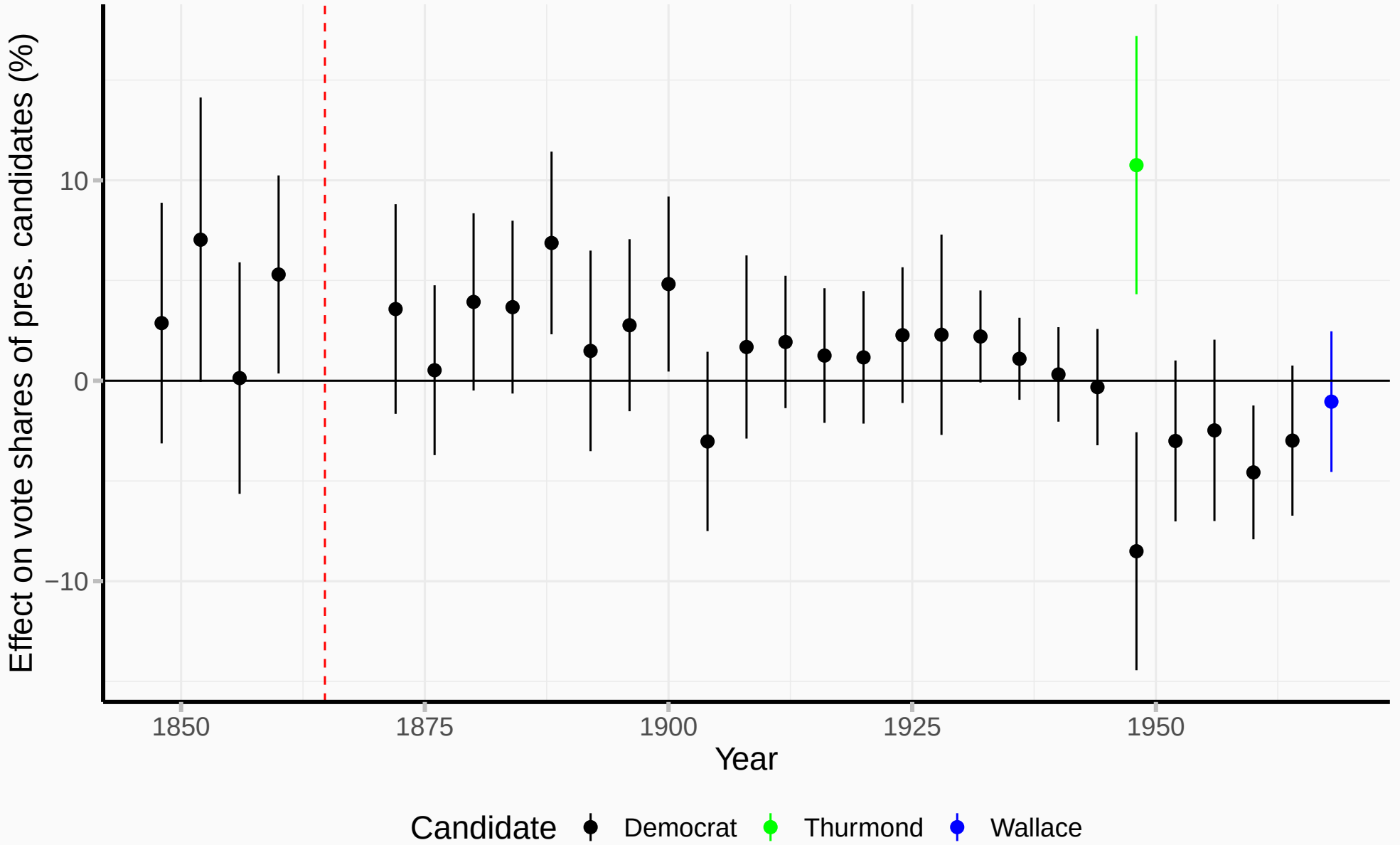

DML - IV - voting outcomes

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