

# Coordination: Constitutions and Revolutions

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LSE

February 22, 2013

## Introduction

Theory

Constitutions

Revolutions

Synthesis

- Multiple equilibria as an explanation

- A role for culture

- A role for leadership

Conclusion

# Plan

**Goal:** Understand the role of coordination in **maintenance** and **dissolution** of public order (rule of law and revolutions)

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- ▶ review of **coordination games**
- ▶ model of constitutions as coordinating devices for “policing the state” (Weingast), linking civic values to rule of law
- ▶ models of revolution that extend the logic of coordination games to explain their “predictable unpredictability” (Kuran)

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## **Applications:**

- ▶ Why so many coups in Latin America (in 20th century)?
- ▶ Why Arab Spring (Occupy Wall St, London Riots) so surprising?

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# Coordination games

## Stag hunt

		Player 2	
		Stag	Hare
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## Battle of the sexes

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**Distinctive feature:** No dominant strategy for either player; rather, rewards for matching counterpart's strategy.

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## Weingast (1997) overview: Policing the state

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### **Constitution?**

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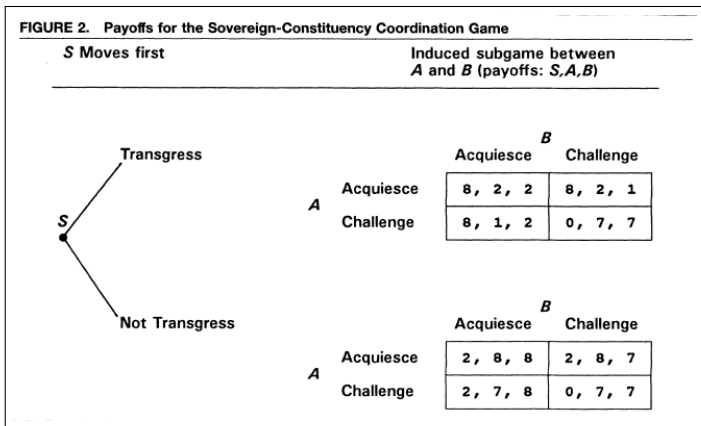
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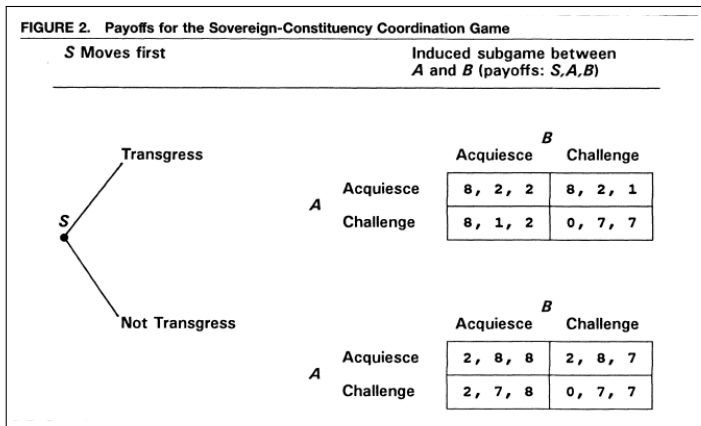
*One does not stop a coup d'état by an article of the constitution.*

But constitutions can be [coordinating devices](#).

## Weingast (1997): pure coordination model



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**SPNEs:**  $\{T; \text{Acq}(T), \text{Acq}(NT); \text{Acq}(T), \text{Acq}(NT)\}$  and  $\{NT; \text{Ch}(T), \text{Acq}(NT); \text{Ch}(T), \text{Acq}(NT)\}$



## Weingast (1997): pure coordination model (2)

Coordination is the whole problem here. Realistic?

- ▶ **Coordination important?** What if students only (not Muslim Brotherhood) had demonstrated on Jan25?
- ▶ **Coordination difficult?**
  - ▶ Communication about illegal actions difficult; communication itself may be difficult
  - ▶ Defining transgression may be difficult (goes outside the model)
  - ▶ Trust may be a problem, e.g. A uncertain about B's payoffs (goes outside the model)

## Weingast (1997): Targeted transgression model (one-shot)

FIGURE 4. Payoffs for the Sovereign-Constituency Transgression Game

S Moves first

Induced subgame between  
A and B (payoffs: S,A,B)

		B		
		Acquiesce	Challenge	
S	Transgress against both	A Acquiesce	8, 2, 2	8, 2, 1
	Transgress against both	A Challenge	8, 1, 2	0, 7, 7
S	Transgress against A	A Acquiesce	4, 2, 9	4, 2, 8
	Transgress against A	A Challenge	4, 1, 9	0, 7, 7
S	Transgress against B	A Acquiesce	4, 9, 2	4, 9, 1
	Transgress against B	A Challenge	4, 8, 2	0, 7, 7
S	Transgress against neither	A Acquiesce	2, 8, 8	2, 8, 7
	Transgress against neither	A Challenge	2, 7, 8	0, 7, 7

SPNEs:

- ▶ {Transgress vs. both; always acquiesce; always acquiesce}
- ▶ {Transgress against A; challenge if S transgresses against both (otherwise acquiesce); challenge if S transgresses against both (otherwise acquiesce)}
- ▶ {Transgress against B; challenge if S transgresses against both (otherwise acquiesce); challenge if S transgresses against both (otherwise acquiesce)}

## Weingast (1997): Targeted transgression model (one-shot) (2)

**Discussion question:** Why is there no “good” equilibrium? i.e. why can we not observe

- ▶ {Do not transgress; acquiesce; acquiesce}

in equilibrium?

(i.e. not an SPNE in the one-shot targeted transgression model)

## Weingast (1997): Targeted transgression model (repeated game)

If repeated game, the “good” equilibrium might be sustained by e.g. **grim trigger**:

*If A or B has ever failed to challenge a transgression by S against either player, then both acquiesce forever after.*

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What does targeted transgression model add?

- ▶ Realism, in that transgressions are often targeted
- ▶ Insights into the kind of civic values/constitutions necessary to “police the state”: not just self-defence but also sacrifices for other groups, or for principles/rights (Supported by reciprocity, unattractiveness of bad equilibrium)

## Weingast (1997) applicability

Constitutions as coordinating devices: supporting evidence

- ▶ “Unwritten” constitutions can be binding: e.g. selection of prime minister in UK (cf Imperial Japan, Germany)
- ▶ Written constitutions can be worthless: e.g. Latin America 1930-1980, with U.S.-influenced constitutions, 277 government changes; 38% were military coups.

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**Difficult question:** To what extent is “extraconstitutionality” in e.g. 20th century Latin America or Weimar Germany due to citizen values vs. circumstances?

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## Ceaușescu's last speech



## Logic of collective action?

In Olson, hard to explain *bandwagon effects*.

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- ▶ Marginal effectiveness that increases with number of participants?

This week's reading (Kuran, 1991): an account of bandwagon effects (threshold models, Granovetter 1978), with application to 1989.

# Bandwagon



# Puzzle

Why was 1989 so unexpected?

## Kuran: Basic model

### Assumptions:

- ▶ Each individual  $i$  has private preference  $x^i$ , where higher  $x^i$  indicates more anti-government feelings
- ▶  $S$  is the percent of the population publicly opposing the regime
- ▶ Net benefit of publicly expressing opposition depends positively on  $x^i$  and  $S$  (e.g. oppose if  $b(S, x_i) > 0$ , where  $\frac{\partial b}{\partial S} > 0$  and  $\frac{\partial b}{\partial x^i} > 0$ )

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(**Note:** Kuran recognizes that honestly expressing opposition itself is rewarding; c.f. Olson)

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### Implications:

- ▶ Each individual  $i$  has threshold level of  $S$ , which Kuran calls  $T^i$ , at which he or she will publicly oppose regime
- ▶ Level of public opposition sensitive to small changes in thresholds



# Illustration

Consider threshold sequence\*  $A$  in a ten-person population:

$$A = \{0, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10\}$$

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Starting from 0, equilibrium level of opposition: 1

Now consider slight variant:

$$A' = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10\}$$

Starting from 0, equilibrium level of opposition: 9.

\*Each number of the sequence indicates a threshold value  $T^i$ , i.e. a number of others who would need to publicly oppose the regime before a given individual  $i$  would publicly oppose the regime.

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# Multiple equilibria (1)

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More generally, the key theme is multiple equilibria:

- ▶ Weingast's pure coordination game can be in the bad equilibrium where sovereign transgresses or the good one where he doesn't. Same players, same payoffs, different outcome.
- ▶ Kuran's society can be in the equilibrium where no one expresses discontent or where everyone expresses discontent. Same players, (almost) same payoffs, different outcome.

## Multiple equilibria (2)

Some differences in emphasis:

- ▶ In Weingast model, coordination problem of 2 groups; in Kuran, society-wide coordination problem
- ▶ Weingast emphasizes multiple equilibria, factors that might sustain them; Kuran emphasizes unpredictability of transitions among equilibria
- ▶ Weingast emphasizes importance of coordination for state's incentives; Kuran emphasizes extent of coordination challenges

## How do we explain social outcomes? (1)

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When there are multiple equilibria, what is the cause of one equilibrium being selected rather than another?

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		Drive on right	Drive on left
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Explanations of *which* equilibrium is chosen tend to be *ex post* rationalizations.

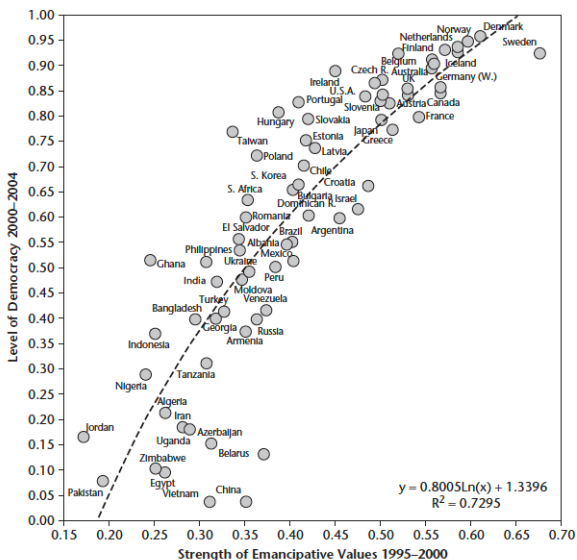
## How do we explain social outcomes? (2)

**My claim:** it is valuable to think clearly about arbitrariness.

- ▶ When are there likely to be multiple equilibria?
- ▶ Why is it hard to change from one equilibrium to another?
- ▶ How do societies move from one equilibrium to another?

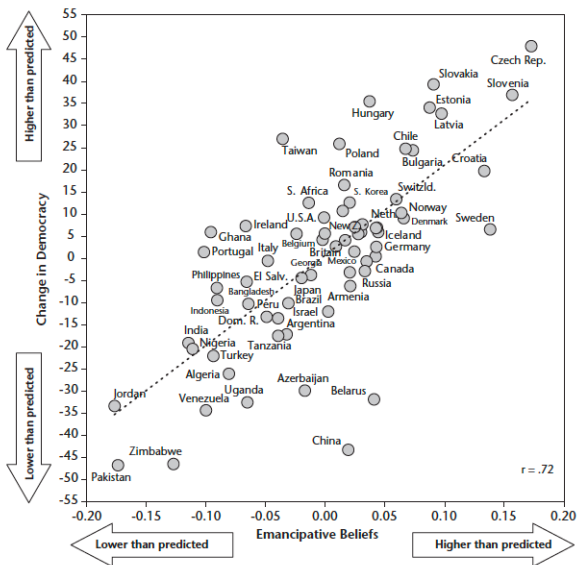


# Attitudes and democracy



- ▶ **Emancipative values:** composite of 14 WVS questions on gender equality, tolerance, autonomy, and participation
- ▶ **Level of democracy:** avg of four indices (e.g. Freedom House)

## Causal?



- ▶ **x-axis:** emancipative values around 1990, controlling for level of democracy 1984-1988
- ▶ **y-axis:** change in democracy, 1984-1988 → 2000-2004

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- ▶ In Kuran's model, a leader can initiate a transition simply by openly expressing opposition
- ▶ In Kuran's model, a leader can initiate a transition through actions or words that reduce others' fears of persecution, increase their frustration with the regime, increase their frustration with falsifying their preferences, etc.

(For more, see Ahlquist and Levi, 2011).

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# Summary

Key points from main readings:

- ▶ Weingast:
  - ▶ Coordination among citizens is vital for policing the state.
  - ▶ Due to multiple equilibria, it is difficult to predict whether/how much the state will be constrained.
  - ▶ Constitutions, leaders, galvanizing events may contribute to rule of law, but they may not be sufficient.
  - ▶ A mechanism by which civic culture/mass beliefs explain political outcomes.

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  - ▶ A mechanism by which civic culture/mass beliefs explain political outcomes.
- ▶ Kuran:
  - ▶ When costs or benefits of participation depend on others' participation, bandwagon effects.
  - ▶ Mass action is predictably unpredictable, especially in illiberal regimes.



**Next time:** commitment problems.

**Thank you!**