Good Lord, Bad Democrat

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Abstract

Do effective institutions under autocracy strengthen or weaken the foundations of democracy? This paper examines how competent governance in nondemocratic settings shapes long-run civic and political capacity. I study Japan's feudal domains (1600–1868), where institutional design was uniform but administrative performance varied widely. Using newly digitized domain-level and municipal data, I link historical measures of domain competence—peasant revolts per capita, currency discount rates, and the prevalence of Dutch-learning scholars—to local democratic outcomes in the early twentieth century: participation in village-level rural development programs (1932–1937) and votes for anti-suffrage, fascist-leaning parties in the 1937 general election. To address endogeneity in domain performance, I exploit exogenous variation from the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara, which reshuffled lords and fixed samurai-to-peasant ratios through rigid caste constraints. The results reveal a paradox of "competent autocracy": regions with more effective feudal administration were less able to coordinate collective action under democracy and exhibited stronger support for authoritarian movements. Administrative efficiency under autocracy promoted order but discouraged self-governance, suggesting that strong states can generate their own democratic deficits. [Early Stage Work]

Introduction

State capacity is widely regarded as a foundation of development. Governments that deliver order and public goods are expected to foster trust and, eventually, democratic participation. Yet administrative effectiveness can have ambiguous legacies when it arises under nondemocratic rule. Capable autocracies resolve conflict and coordinate activity from the top, substituting bureaucratic control for local initiative. Over time, citizens accustomed to such governance may become adept at compliance but less able—or less willing—to cooperate without state direction. This paper examines that paradox empirically: when and how effective autocratic rule produces societies that are stable, yet politically passive.

I show that under a uniform institutional framework in semi-feudal era —Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868)—differences in institutional performance rather than design had persistent consequences for democratic capacity in later years. Domains governed by more competent feudal lords developed stronger bureaucracies and higher fiscal and technological capability. Yet in the early twentieth century, these same regions proved less capable of local collective action and more willing to delegate political choice to elites. The results suggest that "good governance"under autocracy can crowd out civic competence: where the lord once solved coordination problems, citizens later struggled to do so themselves.

This paper speaks to a large literature on the long-run effects of institutions, from Putnam's civic traditions to Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson's inclusive-versus-extractive framework. Most of that work links institutional design—the rules governing participation and constraint —to later economic and political outcomes. I instead hold institutional design constant and exploit historical variation in institutional performance within a single autocratic system. Japan's Tokugawa polity imposed the same formal structures across nearly 300 domains: the same caste hierarchy, legal code, and property regime. Yet domains differed sharply in fiscal discipline, technological adaptation, and social stability. This heterogeneity allows me to isolate the legacy of administrative quality itself.

The results therefore complement, rather than contradict, the standard "good institutions, good citizens"logic. My focus is not on whether inclusive rules create civic virtue, but on whether well-functioning autocracy suppresses it. Under effective rule, citizens did not need

to organize for public goods provision; the state already solved those problems. The legacy of such competence is not authoritarian obedience but democratic incapacity—an equilibrium in which citizens expect the state, not themselves, to coordinate action.

I trace these legacies in two settings where local initiative and democratic belief were tested.

First, I study participation in Japan's 1930s Agricultural Reconstruction Program, which required every municipality to draft its own development plan to receive guaranteed state grants and loans. Because eligibility was universal and funding automatic upon submission, variation in participation reflected local collective action, not fiscal constraint. By this period, municipal councils were elected under universal male suffrage (since 1925), making this one of the first nationwide tests of self-governance at the local level. Yet many villages failed to submit plans, largely due to disagreement among councils and agricultural associations. These failures reveal the ability—or inability—of local communities to cooperate once the locus of authority shifted from the lord to the citizen.

Second, I examine the 1937 general election, focusing on support for splinter parties that broke from the major parties to back Prime Minister General Senjūrō Hayashi, who was widely viewed as uncharismatic but authoritarian. These parties advocated restrictions on universal suffrage and emphasized discipline over participation. Their platforms did not promise charismatic leadership or immediate material benefits; rather, they appealed to voters skeptical of party politics and mass democracy itself. The choice to endorse such parties represents not mere authoritarian preference but a voluntary withdrawal from democratic engagement. The pattern across both outcomes is consistent: regions once governed by more competent feudal rulers were less inclined to act collectively and more inclined to cede political responsibility to elites.

Because direct records of Tokugawa administration are scarce, I operationalize domain competence along three independent dimensions:

1. **Social stability:** frequency of peasant revolts per capita.

2. **Fiscal credibility:** discount rate of domain-issued currencies in 1870, which reflected expectations of solvency in early Meiji markets.

3. **Technical capacity:** density of Dutch-learning scholars (*rangakusha*) per capita, reflecting

domainal investment in applied expertise. During Japan's period of isolation (*sakoku*), Dutch studies provided the only sanctioned channel for accessing Western science, medicine, and military technology. Many of these scholars were directly employed by feudal governments as engineers, physicians, or military officers, making this a concrete measure of technical and administrative capability.

Together these measures capture variation in how effectively different domains implemented the same institutional template.

To address endogeneity—the possibility that domains with greater resources or civic capacity became more competent ex ante–I use the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara as an instrument for later administrative performance. The outcome of the battle, which determined the establishment of Tokugawa rule, was largely contingent and unexpected. Because the earlier *katanagari* (sword hunt) edict of 1588 had frozen the samurai class, defeated lords could not dismiss or replace their retainers. They lost land and peasants but retained disproportionately large numbers of samurai, creating high administrator-to-population ratios. This surplus of trained bureaucrats generated more professionalized administrations by necessity rather than design.

Victorious lords, by contrast, gained new territories—often dispersed exclaves carved from the diminished holdings of defeated clans—but were prohibited by shogunal regulation from promoting commoners to samurai status. As a result, they faced stretched administrative capacity despite territorial expansion. The shock of Sekigahara thus produced quasi-random variation in bureaucratic density, allowing me to identify the causal effect of administrative competence independent of preexisting civic conditions.

This historical accident provides exogenous variation in administrative capacity, effectively creating a natural experiment in bureaucratic density. The mechanism is reinforced by the hereditary assignment of offices: each domain's ministers and governors were drawn from a fixed set of high-ranking samurai families. Because elite lineages could not be created or replaced after the *katanagari* edict, domains differed in the depth of their administrative talent pools. Those with more such families in 1588 had a higher probability of producing and grooming capable future officials, much as random variation in family stock shapes human capital formation. This interaction between exogenous military loss and inherited bureaucratic

structure strengthens the instrument, linking post-battle samurai ratios to long-run administrative competence.

Linking these measures of historical competence to twentieth-century municipal and electoral data, I find a persistent negative relationship between autocratic performance and democratic capacity. Municipalities in more competent domains were less likely to complete agricultural development plans despite guaranteed funding, indicating weaker local coordination. The same regions exhibited greater support for anti-suffrage parties in 1937. These results hold across multiple specifications, including controls for contemporaneous income, education, and urbanization.

The mechanism is not cultural reverence for authority but the substitution of state coordination for civic organization. In regions where the lord's administration efficiently resolved conflict and delivered services, citizens had fewer incentives to form collective bodies. Over centuries, this equilibrium of delegated governance persisted, leaving communities less experienced in self-management once democratization occurred. When the Meiji and interwar governments demanded local initiative, those capacities—and the incentives to invest in them—were weak.

This paper contributes to comparative political economy in four ways:

1. **Conceptual:** It distinguishes institutional *performance* from institutional *design*, showing that even "good" autocratic governance can have perverse long-term effects.

2. **Empirical:** It constructs a new dataset that combines hand-collected 1870s domain-level fiscal and educational records with newly digitized 1930s municipal archives, enabling the first systematic analysis of how variation in feudal administrative performance shaped civic capacity during early democratization.

3. **Methodological:** It addresses endogeneity in institutional quality using an instrument rooted in exogenous military and demographic shocks.

4. **Substantive:** It redefines the legacy of state capacity—suggesting that competence under autocracy may crowd out, rather than complement, democratic capacity.

If efficient autocracies teach citizens that the state will solve coordination problems, democratization may yield not participation but paralysis. 'Good lords,' in this sense, make 'bad democrats'—a

dynamic that illuminates why some societies mobilize readily once the ruler steps aside while others remain politically inert.

Literature Review

The long-run persistence of institutional effects is a central concern in political economy. Institutions shape incentives and expectations, influencing both economic outcomes and civic behavior. Foundational studies highlight how institutional environments structure cooperation and trust. Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* (1993) attributes variation in governance performance across Italian regions to historical traditions of civic participation. Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001) formalized this intuition in their "inclusive versus extractive institutions" framework: inclusive institutions, which broaden access to participation, foster long-run development, whereas extractive institutions concentrate power and discourage initiative.

A large empirical literature has extended this logic to colonial, subnational, and precolonial contexts. Dell (2010) shows that the forced-labor *mita* system in Peru depressed long-run development; Banerjee and Iyer (2005) link British land tenure arrangements in India to persistent differences in investment; and Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) demonstrate that exposure to the slave trade eroded interpersonal trust across generations. Becker et al. (2016) similarly find that Habsburg administrative traditions left higher trust in state institutions long after the empire's collapse. This broad tradition—including the "reversal of fortune" argument of Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2002)—focuses on how differences in institutional *design* generated long-run divergence in economic performance and individual attituteds. The argument here instead concerns institutional *performance*: holding design constant, I examine how variation in administrative effectiveness within a single autocratic system shaped civic capacity over time.

A complementary literature examines how effective governance shapes political behavior more directly. Classic accounts of authoritarian and fascist support emphasize material and institutional failure: economic distress, inequality, and weak democratic performance create demand for decisive rule (Lipset 1960; Eichengreen 2018; Acemoglu, Egorov, and Sonin 2011; Linz 1978). Yet others suggest the opposite mechanism: that competent authoritarian governance can generate legitimacy through performance. Case studies of East Asia's developmental states

(Johnson 1982; Amsden 1989) and Singapore's bureaucratic authoritarianism (Rodan 2004) argue that administrative effectiveness may substitute for democratic accountability, fostering trust in performance rather than process. While largely interpretive and cross-national, these accounts raise an important but undertheorized question: how citizens socialized under efficient autocracy adapt to participatory governance once authority is decentralized.

This dynamic complicates democratization. Carothers (2002) describes a "sequencing dilemma," in which premature democratization after competent autocracy often produces instability and nostalgia for top-down order. Similar tensions appear in historical studies of Europe and Japan: hierarchical societies that long relied on elite coordination initially struggled with mass participation (Tilly 1992; Blackbourn and Eley 1984; Gordon 2003). Yet these explanations remain largely macro-level and descriptive, leaving the mechanisms through which effective rule shapes later collective capacity untested. The present study addresses that gap by examining how administrative competence under Tokugawa autocracy conditioned local cooperation and democratic engagement in the early twentieth century.

More recent research highlights that institutional persistence is not limited to extractive regimes. Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson (2014) show that in Sierra Leone, chiefdoms historically governed by fewer ruling families—where political competition among chiefs was weaker—display lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes, and less economic diversification today. Yet these same areas also exhibit stronger local organization and civic participation, which the authors interpret as evidence of the capture of civil society by traditional authority. Chiefs used local organizations not to constrain power but to consolidate it, structuring participation around hierarchy rather than accountability.

Related evidence suggests that centralized authority can leave lasting imprints on regime preferences. Chlouba, Smith, and Wagner (2022) find that African regions with legacies of early centralized statehood display greater contemporary support for authoritarian rule, reflecting enduring expectations of top-down governance. By contrast, Doucette (2024) shows that German regions with historically inclusive local institutions were less supportive of autocratic parties during the interwar period. Together these studies suggest that institutional centralization shapes preferences over regime type, even after formal democratization.

Lowes and Nunn (2017) provide complementary evidence from the Kingdom of Kongo, showing that historical exposure to the precolonial Kuba state—a centralized and administratively sophisticated polity—shaped civic behavior in the present day. Using lab-in-the-field experiments, they find that descendants of areas historically incorporated into the Kuba Kingdom are less likely to comply with social norms in the absence of external enforcement. The authors interpret this as evidence that formal authority can crowd out intrinsic civic motivation: where obedience was ensured through coercive enforcement, individuals became less inclined to follow rules voluntarily.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that authority and hierarchy can produce long-run persistence in civic and political behavior. Yet most existing research examines institutional legacies through the lens of *form*—whether institutions were centralized, inclusive, or coercive—rather than through their *performance*. In Sierra Leone, authority persisted through the capture of civil society (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014); in the Kuba Kingdom, through the crowding out of intrinsic motivation (Lowes and Nunn 2017); and in Africa more broadly, through enduring expectations of command under early statehood (Chlouba, Smith, and Wagner 2022). Across these settings, persistence stems from coercive or exclusionary power rather than from the effectiveness of governance itself.

Building on this literature, the present study shifts attention from the maintenance of authority to the aftermath of its effectiveness. Unlike prior work that focuses on individual-level preferences or behavioral norms—such as rule-following in the Kuba Kingdom, civic participation under traditional chieftaincy in Sierra Leone, or authoritarian attitudes in Germany and Africa—this paper examines collective decision-making under early democratization. The central question is not whether citizens obeyed authority, but whether they later possessed the capacity to deliberate, coordinate, and act democratically once authority was decentralized. In societies long accustomed to efficient top-down governance, the transition to self-rule could produce not defiance but disengagement: a willingness to relinquish the burdens of democratic coordination.

To explore this mechanism, I analyze the persistence of administrative *competence*. In Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868), all domains operated within a uniform autocratic framework—fixed caste hierarchies, standardized property regimes, and limited scope for popular participation

—but differed markedly in administrative performance. Some domains maintained fiscal stability, social order, and openness to technological innovation; others defaulted, faced recurring unrest, or resisted modernization. Because institutional design was constant, variation in competence can be treated as independent of institutional form, allowing identification of its long-run civic effects. This shift—from inclusiveness of design to effectiveness of implementation—shows that capable autocratic governance can generate stability while weakening the foundations of democratic participation.

Conceptual Framework: The Legacy of Competent Autocracy

In most institutional theories, state capacity and institutional quality are treated as complements to democratic development: strong institutions build trust, lower transaction costs, and facilitate collective action. Yet this complementarity implicitly assumes that civic and administrative capabilities developed under autocracy are fully transferable to later democratic settings. When high administrative capacity emerges under nondemocratic rule, however, the same mechanisms that enable efficient top-down governance can also distort the incentives for collective organization once participation becomes possible.

Consider a simple intuition. Citizens face a collective action problem in providing local public goods and participating in democratic governance. Under autocracy, competent rulers solve these problems through centralized coordination: they internalize local externalities and supply order, infrastructure, and dispute resolution from above. This equilibrium minimizes coordination costs for citizens but also crowds out investment in the skills and institutions of self-governance. When autocratic rulers are less competent, by contrast, citizens must substitute their own effort for absent state capacity—developing informal norms, networks, and organizational know-how to manage collective tasks. These investments accumulate over time, creating civic capital that later facilitates cooperation under later democracy. Where governance was more competent, that capital never formed, leaving a legacy of administrative dependence and weaker collective capacity once authority was decentralized.

Formally, this mechanism can be viewed as a dynamic investment problem. In period t_0, a competent autocrat provides public goods efficiently, lowering the marginal return to citizen

effort in local organization or self-governance ($\partial U_i/\partial e_i < 0$). As a result, individuals rationally underinvest in the accumulation of coordination skills, networks, and local institutional capacity —forms of civic capital (C_t) that persist over time. Where rulers were less competent, citizens were compelled to substitute their own effort for absent state provision, increasing investment in C_t. Over successive periods, these differences compound, producing divergence in the civic capital stock. When democracy arrives in period t_1, regions with historically competent governance possess lower inherited C_t, resulting in weaker collective action and participation even under identical formal institutions. In this sense, competence under autocracy generates a *crowding-out effect* on civic capital formation.

This mechanism yields what can be described as a *dependency equilibrium*—a steady state in which citizens rationally choose delegation over participation because the expected return to collective action remains low. In such settings, strong states do not suppress democracy through coercion but render it unnecessary through efficiency. Unlike theories that identify weak institutions as the primary obstacle to democratization, this argument emphasizes that highly capable states can generate their own democratic deficit. The legacy of competent autocracy is not fear or repression, but habituation to effective top-down coordination that substitutes for bottom-up governance.

This framework reframes several debates in political economy. First, it extends institutional persistence theory by distinguishing between institutional *design* and institutional *performance*. Well-functioning autocracies may appear successful in delivering stability and growth, yet by lowering the need for local coordination, they weaken the skills and expectations required for democratic governance. Second, it provides microfoundations for performance-based legitimacy: citizens who experience efficient rule learn to equate competence with authority, making them more tolerant of nondemocratic leadership when democracies falter. Third, it links state capacity and civic culture through incentives rather than values—focusing on how past governance structures shape expectations about the returns to participation.

The case of Tokugawa Japan offers a natural test of this mechanism. All domains shared the same autocratic institutional structure—fixed caste hierarchies, standardized administrative codes, and limited local participation—but varied widely in bureaucratic performance. This

variation allows examination of how competent autocracy affected subsequent civic behavior. I measure domain competence through (1) the frequency of peasant revolts per capita (social stability), (2) the 1870 discount rate of domain currencies (fiscal credibility), and (3) the density of Dutch-learning scholars (*rangakusha*) per capita (investment in technical expertise). I then trace the long-run consequences of this competence for local collective action—measured by participation in 1930s agricultural development planning—and for democratic engagement, measured by electoral support for suffrage-restricting parties in 1937.

The key empirical prediction is that higher historical administrative competence reduced later democratic capacity. Domains that governed more effectively under autocracy produced stable and prosperous communities, but those same communities proved less willing or able to organize collectively when self-governance became possible.

0.0.1 Context: Japanese Feudal Institutions

The Tokugawa (Edo) polity (1600–1868) provides a uniquely informative setting for studying variation in institutional performance under uniform institutional design. Following the consolidation of power after the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara, the Tokugawa shogunate established a centralized yet highly decentralized political order: roughly 300 semi-autonomous domains (*han*) governed by feudal lords (*daimyō*) who exercised extensive authority over taxation, justice, and administration within their territories. The shogunate itself (*bakufu*) directly administered about one-quarter of Japan's land, including Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka, but otherwise refrained from intervening in domainal affairs.

Despite this autonomy, institutional structures were remarkably standardized. The *Buke Shohatto* (Laws for the Military Houses), first promulgated in 1615, prescribed the organization of domain administration, the hereditary status of retainers, restrictions on marriage, the right to maintain armies, and rules of succession. Each domain replicated a nearly identical bureaucratic hierarchy—headed by a council of chief retainers (*karō*), magistrates (*bugyō*), and accounting officials—who managed day-to-day affairs. Titles, administrative ranks, and lines of authority were consistent nationwide, differing primarily in scale rather than design.

The social hierarchy was strictly enforced through the caste system known as *shi–nō–kō–shō*

(warriors, farmers, artisans, merchants), which applied uniformly across all domains. Farmers were bound to their villages and prohibited from relocation; intermarriage and adoption across castes were forbidden; and commoners were excluded from all political positions above the village level. Even local self-governance occurred under direct samurai oversight: each cluster of villages was supervised by a *mura bugyō* (village magistrate), a samurai official responsible for tax collection, policing, and dispute resolution. Village headmen (*shōya*) and elders (*kōri*, *kumigashira*) carried out daily administration but operated under the authority of these samurai overseers.

Political offices within domains were hereditary and confined to the samurai class. High-ranking posts—such as *karō* (chief minister)—were reserved for a limited number of established families. While lords could adopt heirs or appoint administrators, these selections were restricted to samurai of comparable rank; recruitment from lower ranks was prohibited. This inheritance system limited upward mobility but also created persistence in bureaucratic quality: domains with deeper pools of high-ranking lineages enjoyed more continuity and administrative expertise.

The combination of **institutional uniformity and administrative autonomy** generated substantial variation in governance performance. The shogunate's meta-regulation standardized political form, but domains diverged sharply in fiscal health, social stability, and technological modernization. Some lords built capable bureaucracies and maintained stability; others experienced frequent peasant uprisings, defaults, and administrative breakdowns. In this sense, Tokugawa Japan represents a natural laboratory for distinguishing institutional *design* from institutional *performance*: a system where "good lords"and "bad lords"operated under the same formal rules yet produced profoundly different outcomes.

0.0.2 Proxy for Democratic Capacity: The Rural Development Program (1932–1938)

Following the Meiji Restoration, Japan underwent rapid administrative centralization and gradual political liberalization. The abolition of samurai privileges in the 1870s and the establishment of elected local assemblies in the 1880s created a nationwide framework for municipal and village self-government. The 1889 Municipal Government Act institutionalized village councils, whose

members were chosen by limited suffrage based on property and tax qualifications. By 1925, with the extension of universal male suffrage, all men aged 25 and above could vote in local as well as national elections. Village councils thus became the principal arena for community-level decision-making, composed of teachers, small landowners, merchants, journalists, and clerks rather than former elites. County councils—once dominated by landlords—were abolished in 1923, leaving the village as the primary locus of collective governance. By the early 1930s, Japan's local political institutions were both representative and decentralized, yet their capacity for deliberation and coordination still reflected long-standing regional differences in administrative development.

During the early 1930s, the Ministry of Agriculture launched a nationwide rural development initiative to address the agricultural downturn following the global depression. Rather than implementing a centralized plan, the program required each village to draft its own recovery proposal—outlining local needs, resources, and projects—in order to qualify for government subsidies and preferential loans. This design transformed the policy from a top-down transfer into a test of local organizational capacity.

Formulating a proposal required deliberation between the elected village council, local agricultural cooperatives, and credit associations. Plans had to be publicly discussed, approved by the council, and submitted to the prefectural authorities before review by the ministry. Villages that completed the process received a fixed grant of 100 yen and access to low-interest loans, while those that failed to reach consensus or submit a plan received nothing. Because funding was effectively guaranteed upon submission, variation in participation reflected coordination capacity rather than resource constraints.

Between 1932 and 1937, roughly 70% of villages nationwide successfully submitted plans, though completion rates varied widely across and within prefectures. Some counties achieved near-universal participation within two years, while others saw fewer than half of villages apply, despite similar agricultural structures and identical financial incentives. The program ended in 1937 with the outbreak of the Sino–Japanese War, not due to budgetary limits, suggesting that non-participation stemmed from local, not central, factors. Frequent turnover of national governments during the early 1930s, combined with the program's uniform eligibility criteria,

makes partisan favoritism an implausible explanation for cross-village variation.

Archival evidence and contemporary reports indicate that the key obstacle to participation was the inability of local actors—village councils, cooperatives, and chambers of commerce—to coordinate agreement on shared development priorities. As such, variation in plan submission provides a behavioral measure of civic engagement and collective decision-making capacity at the village level. Because the program applied uniformly to all rural communities, it offers a standardized, contemporaneous proxy for local self-governance independent of economic endowments or urbanization.

In this study, I interpret successful participation in the Rural Development Program as evidence of higher civic capacity: the ability of communities to organize, deliberate, and act collectively in the provision of local public goods. Failure to submit a plan, by contrast, indicates reliance on external direction and limited experience in cooperative governance.

0.0.3 Proxy for Democratic Willingness : Democratic Backsliding and the 1937 Election

Japan's interwar democracy came under severe strain in the mid-1930s. Under the Meiji Constitution, the army and navy were formally independent of civilian control, but the Diet retained influence through budgetary authority and cabinet approval. This fragile balance collapsed after 1931, as military officers increasingly acted without oversight and public opinion turned against party politics. By 1936, following a series of assassinations and cabinet crises, the army openly blamed parliamentary democracy for Japan's instability and sought to curtail electoral participation.

In 1937, these tensions culminated in a general election called by Prime Minister General Senjūrō Hayashi. Hayashi, a career officer with limited charisma or party base, led a coalition of small splinter factions from Japan's three major parties that advocated restricting suffrage to men who had completed military service or were household heads—effectively reversing the universal male suffrage introduced in 1925. The established parties, by contrast, defended parliamentary institutions and mass participation. Voters therefore faced a clear choice between preserving democratic representation and endorsing a return to elite-led, efficiency-oriented governance.

Although Hayashi's bloc won only 40 of 466 seats, the 1937 election revealed meaningful variation in public support for anti-democratic platforms. Because these parties offered neither material redistribution nor charismatic leadership, their appeal rested on skepticism toward mass democracy itself. In this study, the share of votes for pro-Hayashi (anti-suffrage) candidates serves as a measure of citizens'willingness to delegate political authority upward—a behavioral indicator of democratic capacity.

0.0.4 Data Construction and Empirical Challenges

Empirically linking Tokugawa domain governance to modern outcomes poses substantial measurement challenges. Domain boundaries in the Edo period were highly fragmented and often non-contiguous. Many daimyo controlled scattered holdings across multiple provinces, while the Tokugawa shogunate (*bakufu*) maintained its own enclaves within nominally independent domains. In several regions, a system of *aikyū* (divided tenure) further split control of individual rice fields within the same village among different lords. As a result, the administrative geography of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries does not map cleanly onto modern municipal borders, generating potential spatial aggregation and boundary-assignment errors.

To address these issues, I constructed a new geospatial dataset that harmonizes historical and modern administrative units. Specifically, I overlaid the 1872 *Kyū-kō Kyū-ryō Tori-shirabe-chō* survey—compiled by the early Meiji government to record the holdings of former domains—onto the 1920 municipal boundary map produced by the Ministry of Transport. Where multiple lords claimed overlapping territory, I recorded all claimants and designated the "primary"ruler as the lord who controlled the urban settlement or the largest share of assessed tax yield (*koku*). This procedure minimizes misclassification bias while preserving information on overlapping jurisdiction.

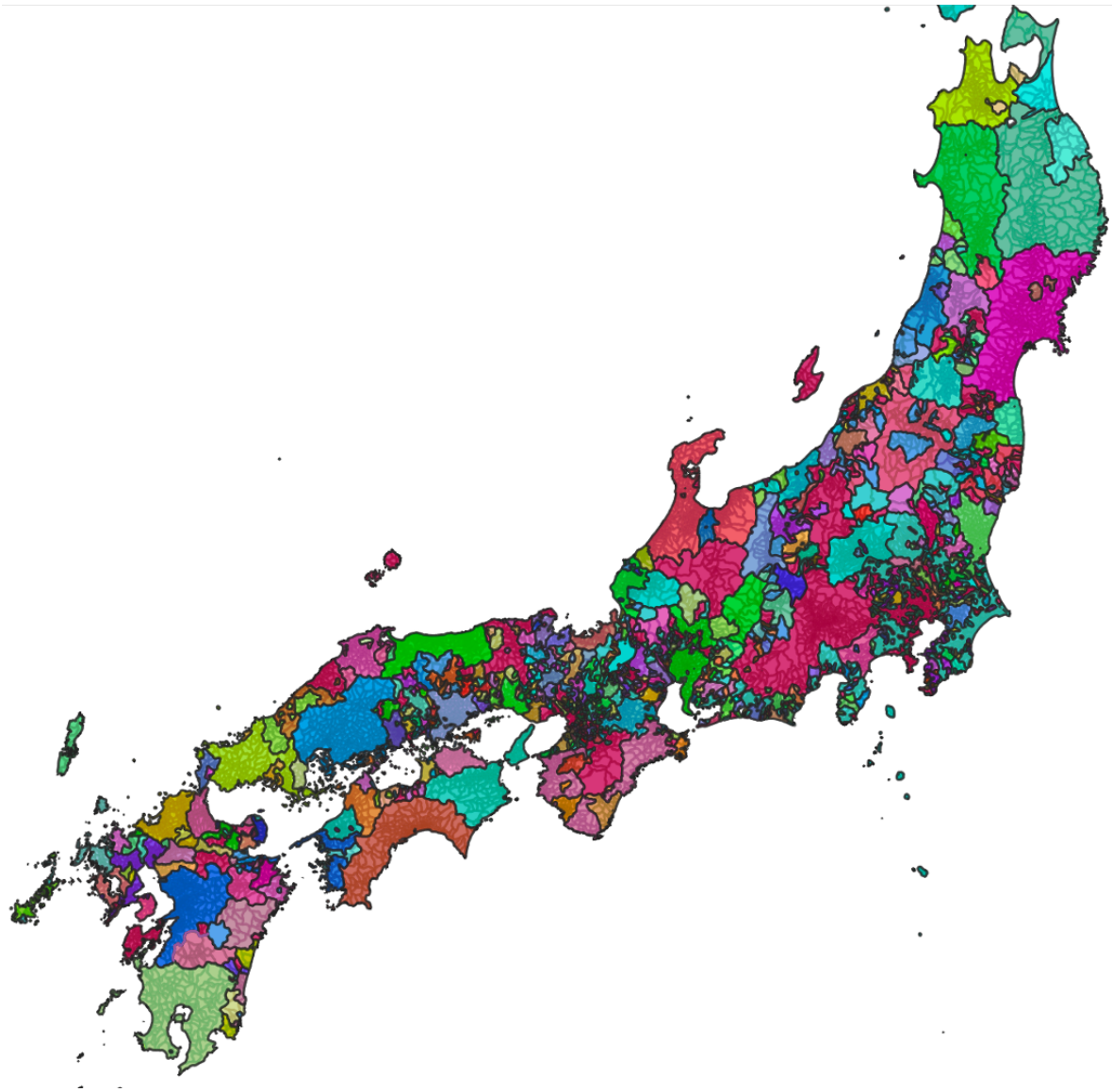


Figure 1: Territorial Holdings of Feudal Lords in Japan, 1868

Figure 1 illustrates the resulting domain map, capturing the spatial fragmentation and heterogeneity of Tokugawa governance. The dataset enables systematic analysis of institutional performance despite the absence of standardized historical boundaries.

Another challenge lies in the uneven availability of comparable data across domains. The Tokugawa regime did not maintain a centralized census, and surviving records differ in coverage and measurement units. To mitigate this problem, I focus on variables with credible, cross-domain comparability—such as fiscal solvency, incidence of peasant uprisings, and density of Dutch-learning scholars—and on regions where neighboring domains exhibited contrasting administrative practices. This approach allows for within-region comparisons that reduce confounding

from regional shocks or reporting bias.

Finally, the analysis leverages Meiji-era administrative and fiscal records, which provide the earliest standardized data corresponding to pre-Restoration domains. Although some areas—particularly in the Tōhoku region—suffered from incomplete reporting due to civil conflict, data quality is high in most other regions, especially Kyūshū and western Honshū, where domain boundaries and governance structures remained relatively stable after the seventeenth century.

Overall, this strategy integrates heterogeneous historical sources into a consistent spatial framework, allowing credible domain-level analysis of long-term institutional legacies.

0.0.5 Measurement of Feudal Administrative Competence

A core empirical challenge in analyzing Tokugawa Japan lies in the absence of standardized, cross-domain administrative statistics. The shogunate collected detailed data for its own territories, but never maintained a centralized census or fiscal registry covering all domains. Surviving records differ in scope, format, and quality, creating potential comparability and measurement-error problems. To approximate domain-level administrative performance, I construct three independent proxies that capture distinct dimensions of state capacity: social order, fiscal credibility, and investment in technical expertise. Each proxy is grounded in contemporaneous behavior observable across domains and measured using independently compiled historical sources.

(1) Social Stability: Frequency of Peasant Revolts. Under the rigid caste hierarchy of Tokugawa Japan, open rebellion (*ikki*) was extremely costly: participants faced execution, and entire villages could be punished collectively. The incidence of revolts therefore serves as a behavioral measure of governance failure rather than civic assertiveness. I measure the number of recorded peasant uprisings per capita using Aoki Nijiji's comprehensive dataset (百姓一揆の年次的研究, Yuhikaku, 1982), which compiles all documented uprisings by domain between 1600 and 1868. Because petitions and protests were common but rarely escalated to open revolt, frequent *ikki* indicate a breakdown of administrative control—the inability of domain officials to mediate conflict or maintain legitimacy. Given the extremely high cost of participation, repeated uprisings are more plausibly interpreted as evidence of weak governance capacity than of organized civic

engagement.

(2) Fiscal Credibility: Discount Rates of Domain Currencies. The Meiji government's 1871–1872 currency unification provides a unique cross-sectional measure of domain financial credibility. On the eve of reform, local currencies issued by daimyo were traded in Osaka, Japan's primary financial center, at variable discount rates relative to the new national standard. Following Tsuchiya and Yamaguchi (1973), I collect these discount rates and interpret higher discounts as a signal of fiscal weakness and limited trust in the issuing authority. Lower discounts, by contrast, reflect strong financial administration, credible monetary policy, and stable expectations of solvency. These rates therefore provide a market-based indicator of administrative competence observable immediately after the collapse of the feudal system.

(3) Technical Capacity: Density of Dutch-Learning Scholars. During Japan's isolation period (*sakoku*), the study of Western science was confined to a small number of scholars trained through Dutch sources (*rangakusha*). These individuals transmitted knowledge of medicine, engineering, and military technology to their home domains, and most were employed directly by domain governments as physicians, engineers, or technical advisors. I measure the number of *rangakusha* per capita using the National Museum of Japanese History's *Regional Rangaku Database* (地域蘭学者門人帳). Their prevalence reflects the extent of domainal investment in applied expertise and modernization capacity rather than merely intellectual curiosity. Because the Tokugawa shogunate regulated contact with foreign knowledge uniformly across domains, variation in *rangakusha* density captures local administrative initiative rather than policy access.

Together, these three measures provide a multidimensional assessment of domain competence: revolt frequency captures coercive and administrative control, currency discount rates capture fiscal reliability, and *rangakusha* density captures investment in technical and human capital. Although each proxy contains measurement error, their low conceptual overlap mitigates concerns of mechanical correlation. In subsequent analysis, I use both the individual indicators and their standardized composite as measures of historical administrative performance at the domain level.

0.0.6 Data on Pre-Shogunate Historical Variables

To capture exogenous variation in the early distribution of domain authority, I compile historical data from the transition between the Sengoku period (1467–1600) and the establishment of Tokugawa rule following the Battle of Sekigahara (1600). The battle marked a decisive reallocation of territorial control that shaped the composition and administrative structure of domains for the next two and a half centuries.

Sekigahara Outcomes. I construct two variables at the ruler–county level to characterize political realignment following the battle. The first, `Sekigahara_family`, identifies territories governed by families that fought on the losing side (*Seigun*). The second, `Sekigahara_land`, marks territories that were reassigned from a defeated clan to a victorious one after 1600. These measures capture the geographic footprint of postwar territorial redistribution that determined which lineages retained or lost administrative control. The coding of affiliations and transfers draws from the *Nihonshi Nenpyō–Chizu* (日本史年表・地図, Kodama 2025), which provides high-resolution chronological maps of domain boundaries and family holdings. I align these records with the 1920 geographic grid used elsewhere in the dataset to ensure consistent spatial units of observation.

Sengoku-Era Context. As background information, I also construct variables describing the political organization of regional rulers during the late Sengoku era—the period of endemic warfare immediately preceding Tokugawa consolidation. Because no quantitative records of fiscal or administrative performance exist for this era, I rely on qualitative codings derived from prosopographic reference works on Sengoku lords and their retainers (Yamamoto and Owada 1981; 1985). Two indicators are compiled at the county level as of 1560: (1) **Political strength**, capturing whether the local lord exercised effective rule or nominal authority under a council of retainers; and (2) **Institutional conservatism**, identifying whether the lord held the hereditary *shugo* title conferred by the Muromachi shogunate—a marker of formal legitimacy but often administrative rigidity.

0.0.7 Data from the Semi-Democratic Era (1930s)

The analysis combines data on local civic participation and electoral behavior during Japan's interwar period. All variables are measured at the municipal (village or town) level and aligned with the 1920 administrative boundaries to ensure spatial consistency with the historical domain dataset.

(1) Civic Participation. Village-level participation in the Rural Development Program is obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's official report, *List of Towns and Villages Establishing Economic Rehabilitation Plans for Agricultural, Mountain, and Fishing Villages in 1939* (農山漁村経済更生計画樹立町村名簿, 1939). The report records whether each municipality successfully submitted and obtained approval for its development plan, providing a nationwide measure of community initiative and coordination capacity. I code a binary variable equal to one for municipalities that completed the process and zero otherwise. Because funding was guaranteed upon submission and the program applied uniformly to all villages, variation in participation reflects differences in local organizational capacity rather than central resource allocation.

(2) Electoral Outcomes. Electoral data for the 1937 general election–the last competitive election before the wartime dissolution of political parties–are drawn from official records compiled by the House of Representatives Secretariat (*Shūgiin giin sōsenkyo ichiran dai 20-kai*, 衆議院議員総選挙一覧第 20 回, 1937). I digitized these reports using optical character recognition (OCR) and manually verified the results through double tabulation to correct transcription errors. The dataset includes candidate-level vote totals by constituency, which I aggregate to the municipal level using official district boundary maps. For comparison and robustness, These sources provide consistent coverage of electoral participation and partisan outcomes over Japan's gradual democratization from limited suffrage to universal male voting.

(3) Demographic and Socioeconomic Controls. Demographic characteristics are drawn from the full-count 1930 Population Census (*Kokusei chōsa hōkoku Shōwa 5-nen*, 国勢調査報告昭和 5 年, Vol. 4: Prefectural Edition, 内閣統計局, 1931–1935). The census reports population size,

occupational structure, literacy, and agricultural composition at the village level. I performed double-entry checks to identify inconsistencies and harmonized variable definitions across prefectural volumes. These data serve as controls for economic and human capital differences across localities.

0.1 Research Design: Instrumental Variable Strategy —The Battle of Sekigahara

A key empirical concern is that observed differences in domain competence may reflect pre-existing regional endowments rather than causal institutional variation. The Tokugawa shogunate, once established, rarely reassigned lords after the mid-seventeenth century and lacked the administrative capacity to intervene deeply in domain affairs. However, more capable or politically connected families might have been endowed with territories that were already wealthier or more strategically located, while less connected or weaker clans had to be content with peripheral regions. If such initial selection correlated with unobserved economic potential, simple cross-domain comparisons would conflate administrative competence with underlying geographic or resource-based advantages. To address this concern, I exploit exogenous variation generated by the Battle of Sekigahara, which abruptly reshaped Japan's territorial structure and reassigned large tracts of land independently of their prior economic productivity.

0.1.1 Historical Setting and Source of Exogeneity

The Battle of Sekigahara represented a decisive realignment of Japan's political geography. It marked Tokugawa Ieyasu's victory over Toyotomi loyalists and resulted in a large-scale redistribution of land and offices across more than 200 feudal families. Three features make this episode a credible source of exogenous variation in domain structure.

(1) Contingent Victory. The Battle of Sekigahara represented a decisive yet highly contingent political realignment. Although Tokugawa Ieyasu ultimately prevailed, the outcome hinged on the mid-battle defection of Kobayakawa Hideaki and several allied generals—a move neither

pre-coordinated nor anticipated by most Tokugawa-aligned clans outside the main Tokugawa branch (whose territories are excluded from this analysis). The defection abruptly collapsed the Toyotomi command structure and delivered Tokugawa victory within hours. Crucially, the battle's outcome was political rather than annihilatory: many losing families retained substantial retainer populations and intact administrative hierarchies, making it infeasible for the victors to abolish them outright. This combination of contingent victory and incomplete military destruction generated a sudden but uneven redistribution of territory and administrative labor, independent of preexisting governance capacity.

(2) Limited Strategic Sorting. Clan alignment at Sekigahara reflected contingent and personal factors—marriage alliances, court rivalries, and wartime feuds—rather than systematic institutional or economic differences. For example, neighboring Kyushu lords Katō Kiyomasa and Konishi Yukinaga, ruling domains of comparable wealth, chose opposite sides due to animosity during the Korean campaigns. Similar idiosyncratic alignments occurred across regions, suggesting that participation in the winning or losing coalition was orthogonal to prior economic potential or administrative competence.

(3) Asymmetric Consequences and the Samurai Constraint. The postwar redistribution of land created sharp, plausibly exogenous variation in administrative capacity through the rigid caste system institutionalized by the 1588 Toyotomi "Sword Hunt"(*katana-gari*). This reform tied samurai to their lords and farmers to their land, prohibiting movement across classes for nearly three centuries. When domains were reassigned after Sekigahara, peasants remained on their farms, while samurai followed their daimyō to new territories. Defeated families (*Seigun*) —stripped of land but unable to dismiss their retainers—governed compact territories with high samurai-to-peasant ratios and dense bureaucratic structures. Victorious clans, rewarded with confiscated lands often fragmented and geographically dispersed, inherited populations without corresponding administrative labor, stretching existing staffs thin. Because samurai status was hereditary and impermeable, these asymmetries persisted, generating durable cross-domain variation in bureaucratic density that was mechanically determined by postwar redistribution rather than endogenous governance choices.

0.1.2 Institutional Mechanism: The Samurai Constraint

The identifying mechanism operates through the rigid caste hierarchy established by the 1588 Toyotomi "Sword Hunt"(*katana-gari*), which bound farmers to the land and samurai to their lords, prohibiting mobility between classes. Samurai constituted the hereditary bureaucratic elite, monopolizing administrative, judicial, and fiscal functions. Because these restrictions were strictly enforced for nearly three centuries, each domain's samurai-to-peasant ratio was effectively fixed in the short run and could not be flexibly adjusted through labor mobility or recruitment.

This institutional rigidity transmitted the shock of Sekigahara into durable variation in administrative capacity:

1. **Defeated clans:** Reduced in territory but required to retain their retainer corps, they governed compact domains with high samurai density and tightly coordinated bureaucracies.

2. **Rewarded clans:** Granted confiscated and often fragmented lands, they inherited larger populations but limited administrative labor, producing thin bureaucratic coverage and weaker fiscal oversight.

Because samurai positions were hereditary and entry into the warrior class was prohibited, these differences persisted mechanically over time. Variation in samurai density—and hence in domain-level administrative capacity—thus reflects an exogenous redistribution of human capital induced by a quasi-random historical shock, not endogenous governance choices or resource endowments.

0.1.3 Empirical Validation

I test the historical predictions using domain-level data on samurai population density in 1876, matched to premodern domain boundaries. Table 1 reports regressions of samurai-per-capita on Sekigahara outcomes, controlling for domain size (*koku*), Tokugawa lineage status (*Tozama*), and regional fixed effects (*Kaido*). The results are consistent with the proposed mechanism:

- Domains ruled by families defeated at Sekigahara exhibit significantly higher samurai-to-population ratios.

- Confiscated territories reassigned to Tokugawa allies show significantly lower samurai density, consistent with thinner administrative structures.

Table 1: Effect of Sekigahara (1600) on Samurai per Capita in 1876

	(1) Full Controls	(2) Region FE only
Losing clan in Sekigahara	0.0137*** (0.0014)	0.0275*** (0.0014)
Confiscated land after Sekigahara	-0.0022. (0.0011)	-0.0034** (0.0012)
Domain size (koku)	0.00054*** (0.00002)	
No relation to Tokugawa clan (Tozama)	0.0121*** (0.0010)	
Regional FE (Kaido)	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,222	8,222
Adj. R^2	0.390	0.292

Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{.}p < 0.1$.

0.1.4 Discussion of Identification Concerns

A potential concern is that the Tokugawa (Eastern) coalition's victory reflected superior preexisting governance or coordination capacity. If so, the instrument could be correlated with unobserved institutional quality. However, such bias would operate in the opposite direction of my results: victorious domains, presumed to be initially more capable, inherited fragmented territories and exhibited lower samurai density, weakening administrative cohesion. Observing the opposite empirical pattern—higher competence among defeated domains—would therefore strengthen the causal interpretation rather than weaken it.

The long interval between the Sekigahara shock and democratization is not a weakness of the design but a feature of the Tokugawa institutional equilibrium. Once the initial redistribution of administrative labor occurred, no endogenous mechanism existed to undo it. Domain borders stabilized by the mid-seventeenth century; samurai status was hereditary and closed; and the shogunate lacked both the incentive and capacity to equalize administrative resources across domains. As a result, differences in bureaucratic density persisted mechanically until the collapse of the feudal order.

Overall, the Battle of Sekigahara created a one-time, discontinuous redistribution of administrative human capital under rigid institutional constraints. Because the samurai-to-peasant ratio was hereditary and effectively fixed, the resulting spatial variation in bureaucratic density provides plausibly exogenous historical variation in administrative competence, which I exploit in the instrumental variable framework below.

0.2 Empirical Strategy

To address potential endogeneity in the competence measures, I implement a two-stage least squares (2SLS) design. The outcome of the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) provides instruments for domain competence.

First Stage

$$\text{RevoltPerCapita}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot \text{LosingClan}_i + \beta_2 \cdot \text{LosingArea}_i + \gamma_r + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

where LosingClan_i is an indicator for families defeated at Sekigahara, LosingArea_i identifies territories confiscated and redistributed after the battle, and γ_r denotes region (*kaidō*) fixed effects.

The coefficients β_1 and β_2 capture the effect of Sekigahara outcomes on revolt intensity per capita, our proxy for domain competence.

Second Stage

$$\text{RuralDevelopmentApplication}_i = \delta + \theta \cdot \widehat{\text{RevoltPerCapita}}_i + \gamma_r + \nu_i \tag{2}$$

where $\widehat{\text{RevoltPerCapita}}_i$ is the predicted value from the first stage. The coefficient θ measures the causal effect of domain competence on local civic engagement, proxied by whether a village submitted a rural development plan in the 1930s.

In alternative specifications, the dependent variable $\text{RuralDevelopmentApplication}_i$ is replaced by support for authoritarian-leaning parties in the 1937 election, and the main explanatory variable is replaced by other competence proxies: the *currency discount rate* and the number of *rangakusha* (Dutch-learning scholars) per capita. These indicators, like peasant revolts, capture the governance quality of domain lords.

Because the latter two proxies are unavailable for some domains, I do not construct composite measures that would reduce the sample size. Instead, each proxy is analyzed separately to preserve coverage across domains.

A possible concern is that replacing the first-stage outcome could threaten external validity. However, all three indicators are proxies for the same underlying unobserved concept of competence and are in fact highly correlated. The use of multiple measures strengthens the robustness of the findings rather than undermines them.

Finally, one may worry that the Battle of Sekigahara itself could have shaped political identities directly, thereby violating the exclusion restriction. While Sekigahara is prominent in elite historiography, there is little reason to believe that it left a lasting impression on ordinary villagers. Collective memory was largely localized and domain boundaries shifted frequently before 1600, making the battle a remote and abstract event for peasants. What mattered for local populations was not who had won or lost a dynastic conflict, but how governance was organized in its aftermath.

Accordingly, the most plausible channel through which Sekigahara influenced later outcomes was institutional, not cultural: by reshaping the distribution of territories and samurai administrators, the battle altered governance structures in ways that persisted for centuries. This is precisely the variation exploited in the instrumental variable design.

0.3 Results on Agricultural Development Program

Table 2 shows that historical revolt intensity is positively and significantly associated with the likelihood that a village eventually completed the agricultural development program before 1938. In both the baseline and full specifications, the coefficient on *Revolt per capita* is around

0.33. Substantively, moving from a village with no recorded revolts to one with one standard deviation higher revolt intensity increases the probability of program completion by roughly 10 percentage points. This effect is large given that the baseline completion rate was about 50%.

The implication is that areas with weaker governance in the Tokugawa period—where revolts were more frequent—were more likely to exhibit bottom-up initiative during the agricultural crisis of the 1930s. Conversely, areas with competent feudal governance, which experienced fewer uprisings, were significantly less likely to mobilize independently and instead lagged in completing their development plans. This pattern supports the theoretical expectation that effective authoritarian governance can crowd out local initiative, leaving communities less prepared for self-directed collective action under democratic institutions. [1]

Table 2: IV Estimates of Rural Development Program Participation

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Revolt per capita	0.337*** (0.101)	0.327*** (0.098)
Population	-7.09e-06*** (6.77e-07)	-2.40e-06*** (7.14e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation		-0.048 (0.074)
Unemployment		-0.273 (0.189)
Agricultural employment share		0.638*** (0.057)
Manufacturing employment share		0.153 (0.116)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	14.36***	14.38***
Wu–Hausman	14.76***	15.13***
Sargan	24.75***	25.56***
Residual Std. Error	0.590 (df=8434)	0.572 (df=8430)
Observations	8444	8444

Notes: Dependent variable is eventual completion of agricultural development program before 1938 (*Agri13*). IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$.

[1] The Sargan overidentification test rejects the null of joint instrument validity, indicating potential correlation between at least one Sekigahara-based instrument and unobserved determinants of rural program participation. This result should be interpreted cautiously. The two instruments—clan defeat at Sekigahara and subsequent land transfer—are historically distinct but mechanically related through the Tokugawa redistribution process. Given that both variables derive from the same historical shock, their exclusion restrictions may not be fully independent, producing mechanical overidentification test failures even under plausible exogeneity. The first-stage F-statistics (≈14) and significant Wu–Hausman tests nevertheless confirm instrument relevance and endogeneity of the regressor, suggesting that the IV estimates still identify a meaningful causal component, though their interpretation should emphasize direction and relative magnitude rather than precise point estimates. Ongoing work explores alternative single-instrument specifications and limited-information maximum-likelihood (LIML) estimators to assess robustness to overidentification concerns.

Table 3 shows that domains with more stable and credible currencies were significantly less likely to complete rural development plans. The coefficient on *Hansatsu discount rates* is around –0.9, meaning that moving from the least (0%) to the most credible domains (100%) reduced the probability of program completion by roughly 15–20 percentage points. In other words, strong fiscal capacity in the Tokugawa period translated into weaker community initiative under democracy.

This supports the core argument of the paper: competent authoritarian governance produced dependency rather than self-governance, leaving villages less prepared to mobilize collectively once democratization created opportunities for local initiative.

Table 3: IV Estimates of Rural Development Program Participation and Domain Currency Discount Rates

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Currency discount rate (*Hansatsu*)	-0.888*** (0.180)	-0.907*** (0.176)
Population	-6.91e-06*** (5.99e-07)	-2.06e-06** (6.26e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation		0.027 (0.066)
Unemployment		-0.485** (0.154)
Agricultural employment share		0.524*** (0.050)
Manufacturing employment share		-0.161. (0.093)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	60.99***	60.39***
Wu–Hausman	29.26***	32.39***
Sargan	18.25***	17.68***
Residual Std. Error	0.534 (df=8635)	0.522 (df=8631)
Observations	8645	8645

Notes: Dependent variable is eventual completion of the agricultural development program before 1938 (*Agri13*). IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{.}p < 0.1$.

Table 4 shows that domains with more Dutch-learning scholars (*rangakusha*), a proxy for modernization and technological adoption, were significantly *less* likely to complete rural development plans in the 1930s. The coefficient is around –0.11, which implies that moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile in the distribution of scholars per capita reduced the probability of program completion by about 5–7 percentage points.

This suggests that domains that had invested heavily in modernization generated governance structures that reduced the space for grassroots initiative. By contrast, areas with fewer scholars

were more likely to mobilize collectively and complete their agricultural development programs. The finding is consistent with the argument that competent authoritarian governance left dependency legacies rather than preparing citizens for democratic self-rule.

Table 4: IV Estimates of Rural Development Program Participation and Rangakusha (Dutch Speaking Scholars)

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Rangakusha per capita	-0.109*** (0.021)	-0.118*** (0.023)
Population	-7.65e-06*** (7.28e-07)	-2.76e-06*** (7.84e-07)
FLMP		0.336** (0.106)
Unemployment		-1.215*** (0.231)
Agricultural share		0.425*** (0.067)
Manufacturing share		-0.256* (0.118)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	35.06***	29.42***
Wu–Hausman	51.85***	53.21***
Sargan	5.95*	5.88*
Residual Std. Error	0.632 (df=8440)	0.638 (df=8436)
Observations	8450	8450

Notes: Dependent variable is eventual completion of the agricultural development program before 1938 (*Agri13*). IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

0.4 Results on Authoritarian vote 1937

* INCOMPLETE: Classification of independent candidates are not yet finished; some districts are dropped for this section at the moment.

Table 5 reports the instrumental variable estimates of the effect of historical governance competence on authoritarian voting in the 1937 election. Across both specifications, the coefficient on *Revolt per capita* is negative and highly statistically significant. This implies that areas with more frequent peasant uprisings in the Tokugawa period—which signal weak governance and frequent breakdowns in lord–village relations—were *less* likely to support authoritarian-leaning parties.

The interpretation is straightforward: domains that governed competently and avoided revolts

left communities that later cast stronger support for parties advocating restrictions on suffrage and parliamentary politics. In contrast, domains with weaker governance, where peasant revolts were more common, produced electorates more resistant to authoritarian appeals.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical expectation that competent but nondemocratic institutions may cultivate dependency on strong rulers and weaken local civic initiative. Far from fostering democratic resilience, effective authoritarian governance appears to have entrenched attitudes that favored authoritarian retrenchment once Japan democratized.

Table 5: IV Estimates of Authoritarian Vote Share (1937 Election)

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Revolt per capita	-0.054*** (0.012)	-0.205*** (0.021)
Population	-6.44e-07 (5.19e-07)	-8.15e-07 (8.48e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation		-0.883*** (0.101)
Unemployment		-1.995*** (0.197)
Agricultural employment share		0.404*** (0.061)
Manufacturing employment share		0.602*** (0.110)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Electoral District FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	57.32***	45.23***
Wu–Hausman	0.86 (p=0.35)	140.65***
Sargan	750.27***	227.42***
Residual Std. Error	0.163 (df=4080)	0.244 (df=4076)
Observations	4084	4084

Notes: IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Table 6 shows that domain fiscal capacity, proxied by the exchange value of local paper currencies (*Hansatsu*), is positively associated with support for authoritarian parties in 1937. In both specifications, the coefficient on *Hansatsu value* is large, positive, and highly significant. Substantively, moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of Hansatsu credibility raises authoritarian vote share by roughly 6–8 percentage points.

These results reinforce the dependency legacy argument. Domains that had credibly managed their finances during the Tokugawa era left behind electorates more inclined to defer to strong state authority rather than defend democratic institutions. In contrast, areas with weaker fiscal

capacity were less supportive of authoritarian appeals.

Table 6: IV Estimates of Hansatsu (Domain Currency Value) and Authoritarian Vote Share, 1937

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Hansatsu value	0.014*** (0.001)	0.013*** (0.001)
Population	-4.86e-07 (6.67e-07)	-8.70e-07 (7.15e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation		-0.272*** (0.055)
Unemployment		-0.091 (0.139)
Agricultural share		0.208*** (0.045)
Manufacturing share		0.467*** (0.089)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Electoral District FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	543.5***	472.0***
Wu–Hausman	257.7***	214.5***
Sargan	517.4***	533.7***
Residual Std. Error	0.194 (df=1822)	0.191 (df=1818)
Observations	1825	1825

Notes: Dependent variable is authoritarian vote share in 1937 election. IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Table 7 reports IV estimates using the number of *rangakusha* (Dutch-learning scholars) per capita as a proxy for domain competence. Across both baseline and full specifications, the coefficient on *rangaku per capita* is strongly positive and highly significant. Substantively, moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of the distribution of scholars increases authoritarian vote share by roughly 8–10 percentage points.

This result is the mirror image of the agricultural program findings. Domains that invested in modernization and technical expertise during the Tokugawa period later produced electorates that were more receptive to authoritarian parties advocating suffrage restrictions in 1937. In contrast, areas with fewer scholars—arguably less competent governance—showed weaker support for authoritarian alternatives.

The implication is consistent with the dependency legacy hypothesis: while modernization signaled governance competence, it also habituated citizens to defer to strong rulers rather than engage in contentious democratic politics.

Table 7: IV Estimates of Rangakusha (Dutch-Learning Scholars) and Authoritarian Vote Share, 1937

	(1) Baseline	(2) Full Controls
Rangaku per capita	0.036*** (0.001)	0.038*** (0.001)
Population	1.53e-07 (4.31e-07)	1.12e-07 (4.56e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation		-0.339*** (0.035)
Unemployment		0.088 (0.075)
Agricultural share		0.219*** (0.028)
Manufacturing share		0.356*** (0.057)
Kaido (Region) FE	YES	YES
Electoral District FE	YES	YES
Diagnostic Tests		
Weak instruments (F)	4843***	4496***
Wu–Hausman	0.27	0.17
Sargan	69.05***	19.90***
Residual Std. Error	0.135 (df=4057)	0.131 (df=4053)
Observations	4060	4060

Notes: Dependent variable is authoritarian vote share in 1937 election. IV regressions with region (*kaidō*) fixed effects. Instruments: Sekigahara family defeat and Sekigahara land transfer. Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Placebo Test: Pre-Edo Governance Characteristics

As a robustness check, I test whether pre-Edo political arrangements—weak "nominal"leadership or hereditary *syugo* offices—predict participation in the 1930s agricultural development program. If long-run institutional outcomes were already determined prior to Sekigahara, we would expect these variables to matter.

Table 8 reports the results. Neither *Nominal* overlordship nor *Syugo* appointment is statistically significant, even when controlling for population, labor-market variables, sectoral structure, and regional highway dummies.

Table 8: Placebo Test: Pre-Edo Governance and Rural Development

Dependent variable	*Agricultural Development Program Application*	
Nominal (weak) overlordship	-0.0150 (0.0125)	
Shugo appointment of lord		-0.0025 (0.0114)
Population	-1.87e-06*** (5.56e-07)	-1.85e-06*** (5.56e-07)
Female Labor Market Participation	-0.0030 (0.059)	0.0056 (0.059)
Unemployment	-0.529*** (0.137)	-0.533*** (0.137)
Agricultural share	0.570*** (0.044)	0.566*** (0.044)
Manufacturing share	-0.052 (0.081)	-0.058 (0.081)
Region (Kaido) FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,626	8,626
Adj. R^2	0.097	0.097

Standard errors in parentheses. Significance codes: $^{***}p < 0.001$.

The absence of significant effects for either variable supports the interpretation that Edo-era institutional variation was not simply inherited from earlier Sengoku-period structures. Instead, the discontinuities observed in the main analysis reflect the exogenous redistribution of domains following the Battle of Sekigahara.

0.5 Case study 1: Hitoyoshi domain and Kumamoto domain in Higo prefecture

The quantitative evidence presented above shows a consistent pattern: domains with more competent governance in the Tokugawa era produced communities that were less likely to mobilize for rural development and more supportive of authoritarian parties in the 1930s. To better understand the mechanisms behind these results, this section turns to qualitative case studies of neighboring domains that exhibited sharp contrasts in governance quality.

This paired-comparison strategy serves three purposes. First, it addresses potential concerns

about endogeneity or omitted variables by showing that even within a shared geographic and cultural environment, governance differences produced distinct legacies. Second, it adds narrative depth to the statistical findings, highlighting how concrete historical experiences of villagers and domain elites generated the long-term patterns observed in the quantitative analysis.

The cases focus on domains in western Japan, where borders were clearly defined and variation in governance was pronounced. These neighboring domains allow us to observe how relatively competent and less competent lords pursued different policies, how their subjects experienced authority, and how these legacies resurfaced during the democratic experiments and crises of the 1930s.

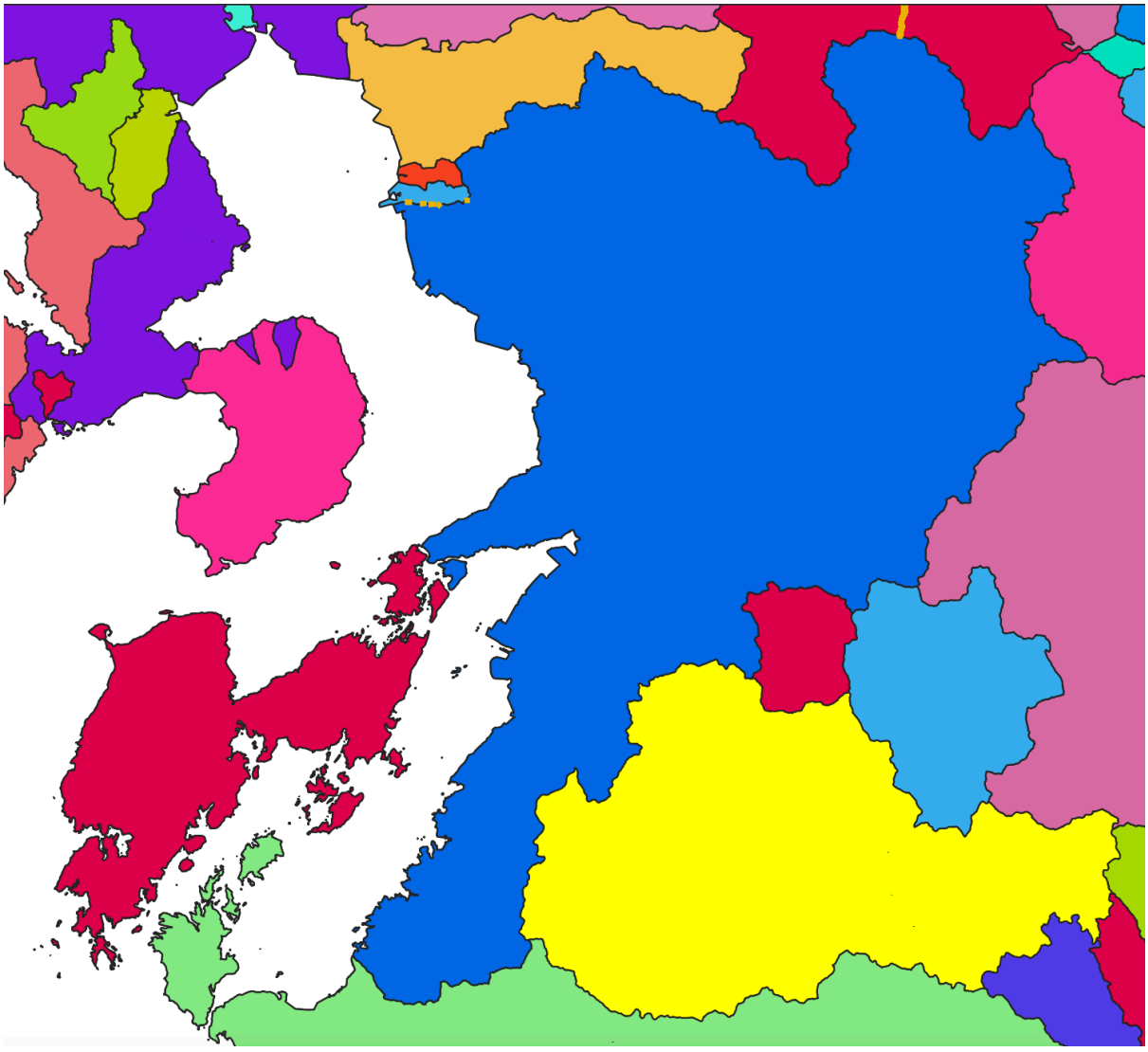


Figure 2: Territories of feudal lords in the Higo area (Red: the Shogunate; Blue; Kumamoto domain; Blight Yellow: Hitoyoshi domain)

The Hitoyoshi domain, colored blight yellow in Figure 5, was ruled by the Sagara family from 1193 until 1870, maintaining a medieval feudal structure throughout this period. This structure included a hereditary decentralized system of governance where branch families governed specific areas. The domain's military adhered to Yamaga-style methods that originated in the early 17th century until 1870. Efforts to modernize the domain began only in 1862, following a devastating fire known as the Torasuke Fire, which destroyed the castle and the capital city. However, these modernization efforts were short-lived, as the reformers were killed in an internal revolt in 1865. Consequently, the domain's governance, economy, and military remained largely unchanged by modern influences. Most government functions were hereditary, and the branch families had strong control over their own territories.

The Hitoyoshi domain experienced five major internal revolts during the Edo period, with the final one occurring in 1865. The main branch of the Sagara clan was terminated in 1759 when the last ruler was assassinated, leading to the appointment of adapted rulers who further weakened the domain's governance. A significant peasant revolt, known as the Nagayama Revolt, erupted in 1841, during which 10,000 peasants stormed the capital. As a result, the Chief Minister was forced to commit seppuku. Subsequently, the vice chief, who had ordered the seppuku, was also executed due to internal disputes over the succession of the clan leadership. Medieval-style drama was not uncommon in the Sagara clan.

Despite being located inland, the Hitoyoshi domain had access to the sea through the port of Yatsushiro, thanks to the benevolence of the neighboring Kumamoto domain. The main economic activities of Hitoyoshi included purchasing foreign goods in the neighboring port of Nagasaki and reselling them at higher prices in Kyoto. Despite its obsolete governance structure, its economic activities remained relatively active.

The neighboring Kumamoto domain, colored blue in Figure 2, offers stark contrast in its institutional structure. In 1632, the Kumamoto domain came under the rule of the Hosokawa family after the previous ruling family, the Katō, was ousted due to scandals including killing of sacred monkeys. Unlike the local Sagara family of the Hitoyoshi domain, the Hosokawa family boasted a noble bloodline. They had previously governed the prominent cities of Kyoto and Osaka and played significant roles in the Muromachi shogunate, which preceded the Edo

shogunate. The Hosokawa family's distinguished heritage and experience in central governance marked a stark contrast to the more localized and insular rule of the Hitoyoshi domain.

The Hosokawa clan implemented the Tenaga system to effectively govern its realm. Under this system, the domain was divided into numerous administrative units called Tenagas, each comprising multiple villages. Within each Tenaga, a representative of the peasants, known as the Sojouya, was selected. Each Tenaga also had a government office called a Kaisho, staffed by officials sent from the domain government. Both the position of Sojouya and the government staff roles were non-hereditary. Successful Sojouyas and government officials were often transferred to other Tenagas to share their expertise and maintain efficient governance across the domain. This system promoted a meritocratic approach to local administration, ensuring that capable individuals could contribute to the domain's overall stability and productivity.

Since the Hōreki reform in 1752, various branches of the government and each Tenaga were allocated their own budgets. Tenagas were also granted the ability to request loans from the domain government to fund infrastructure projects. This policy led to numerous irrigation and land development initiatives at the Tenaga level. One of the most notable projects was the Tsujun Bridge, a modern stone-built aqueduct completed in 1854. The project was planned and overseen by Futa Yasunosuke, a wealthy peasant who had been appointed as a Sojouya. The Kumamoto domain government provided a loan for the project, but the local Tenaga was responsible for planning, hiring personnel, and procuring materials. They received guidance from a private engineering group called Taneyama-Ishiku, based in Yatsushiro. This collaborative effort exemplified the effective use of decentralized administration and local initiative in public works.

The Kumamoto domain also utilized an oversight function known as Yokome. During the Edo period, the domain government had its own representatives at the county level who were responsible for overseeing the activities of multiple Tenagas. However, the Yokome served an additional supervisory role, monitoring the actions of these county representatives. Similar to the position of Sojouya within the Tenaga system, the role of Yokome was often filled by wealthy peasants. This structure ensured multiple layers of accountability and governance, with local leaders playing crucial roles in maintaining the integrity and efficiency of administration

at different levels of the domain.

Kumamoto domain's public school was one of the few schools in Japan that accepted non-samurai, opening the door for farmers to study. In the Meiji era, it even created the first parliament of Japan by reorganizing the representatives of Tenagas. While it was not democratic, it was a significant step towards political modernization.

However, Kumamoto's negative aspect was its very expansionary fiscal policy, resulting in one of the highest tax rates in Japan. As a consequence, the Kumamoto domain experienced eight peasant revolts over 270 years, but all had fewer than 100 participants, unlike Hitoyoshi's revolts, which saw up to 10,000 participants.

Contrasting features of the two domains are summarized below. Reflecting Kumamoto's aggressive fiscal stance, Hitoyoshi's currency was in fact marginally more valuable, but Hitoyoshi experienced roughly five times more revolts per capita and produced fewer *rangakusha*.

Aspect	**Hitoyoshi**	**Kumamoto**
Government Appointment	Hereditary	Meritocratic
People' Participation in Governance	Low	High
Check and balance	Low	High
Class-based restrictions	High	Low
Fiscal sophistication	Low	High
Modernization	Low	High
Peasant Revolts per 10000 people	0.554	0.110
Modernization Efforts (Rangakusha per 10000 people)	0.94	1.11
Economic Stability (Currency Value)	91.6	87.15

Table 9: Comparison of Two Domains

* I am collecting some documentation of village governance in these regions in 1920s and 1930s, but the available record is scarce.

0.6 Setting 2: Kagoshima domain and Other smaller domain in Hyuga prefecture

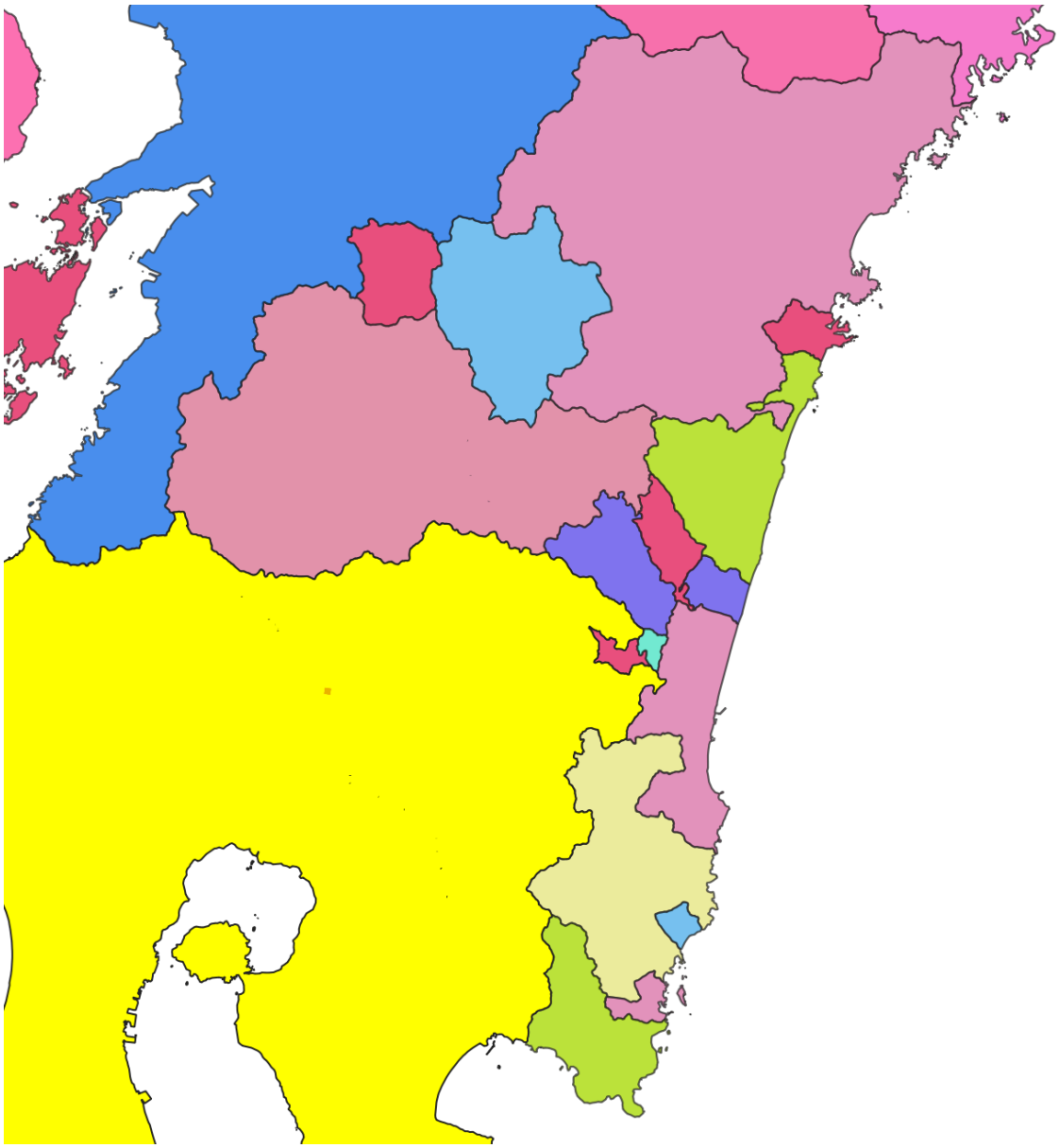


Figure 3: Territories of feudal lords in the Hyuga area (Red: the Shogunate; Blight Yellow: Kagoshima domain)

To the east of Higo province lay Hyuga, a region where small domains often held discontiguous territories. However, the Kagoshima domain (Colored yellow in Figure 3), based in Satsuma province, also held substantial territories within Hyuga domain. Kagoshima domain was one of the most modernized domains in Japan, successfully creating Western-style cannons and warships. While other smaller domains in Hyuga participated in the civil war on Kagoshima's

side, they were far less potent.

Kagoshima domain maintained a disproportionately large number of samurai, unlike other domains in Japan. This reflected its history: the Shimazu clan, which once governed nearly all of Kyushu's nine provinces before losing much of its territory at the Battle of Sekigahara, continued to support a swollen samurai class even after being reduced to just two provinces. As a result, approximately 37% of the population in Kagoshima held nominal samurai status, enabling them to participate in education, the military, and governance while also engaging in agricultural production. Kagoshima also appointed lower-ranking samurai to important government positions. Kagoshima, the southernmost domain in Japan, was the only domain that engaged in international trade despite the shogunate's ban. It also generated significant revenue from sugar plantations in its southern islands.

Among the other four domains in Hyuga, Nobeoka, Takanabe, and Sadohara all had discontiguous territories and had to govern their enclaves with viceroys. Nobeoka's ruling family, the Naito clan, held important hereditary roles in the central government in Edo, making the head of the domain effectively an absentee lord for significant periods. All four domains were small and had no notable modernization achievements.

Table 2 shows the contrast of different institutions across Hyuga prefecture. In quantitative terms, Kagoshima dwarfs others in terms of fiscal capacity and lack of peasant revolt per capita. The small domains of Sadohara and Obi had unusually high ratios of *rangakusha* per capita, but Kagoshima maintained a respectable 1.567 per 10,000 people. Broadly put, though the institutional difference is not as starkly contrasted as in the case of Kumamoto-Hitoyoshi, Kagoshima and others serve as different experience in the feudal era.

0.7 Case study and 1937 Election Result Outcome

INCOMPLETE

*[This part originally had Geographic Regression Discontinuity Design, but the units are not enough to run.]

The following figures show a strong concentration of fascist party support in former Kumamoto

Aspect	Kagoshima	Nobeoka	Takanabe	Sadohara	Obi
Government Appointment	Meritocratic	Hereditary	Hereditary	Meritocratic	Hereditary
People' Participation in Governance	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Check and balance	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Class-based restrictions	Low	High	High	High	High
Fiscal sophistication	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Modernization	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Peasant Revolts per 10000 people	0.051	0.572	1.615	1.868	0.614
Modernization Efforts (Rangakusha per 10000 people)	1.567	0.818	0.923	5.606	2.252
Economic Stability (Currency Value)	161.3	81.9	96	99	88.8

Table 10: Comparison of Two Domains

domain and former Kagoshima domain, and the discontinuity is self-evident.

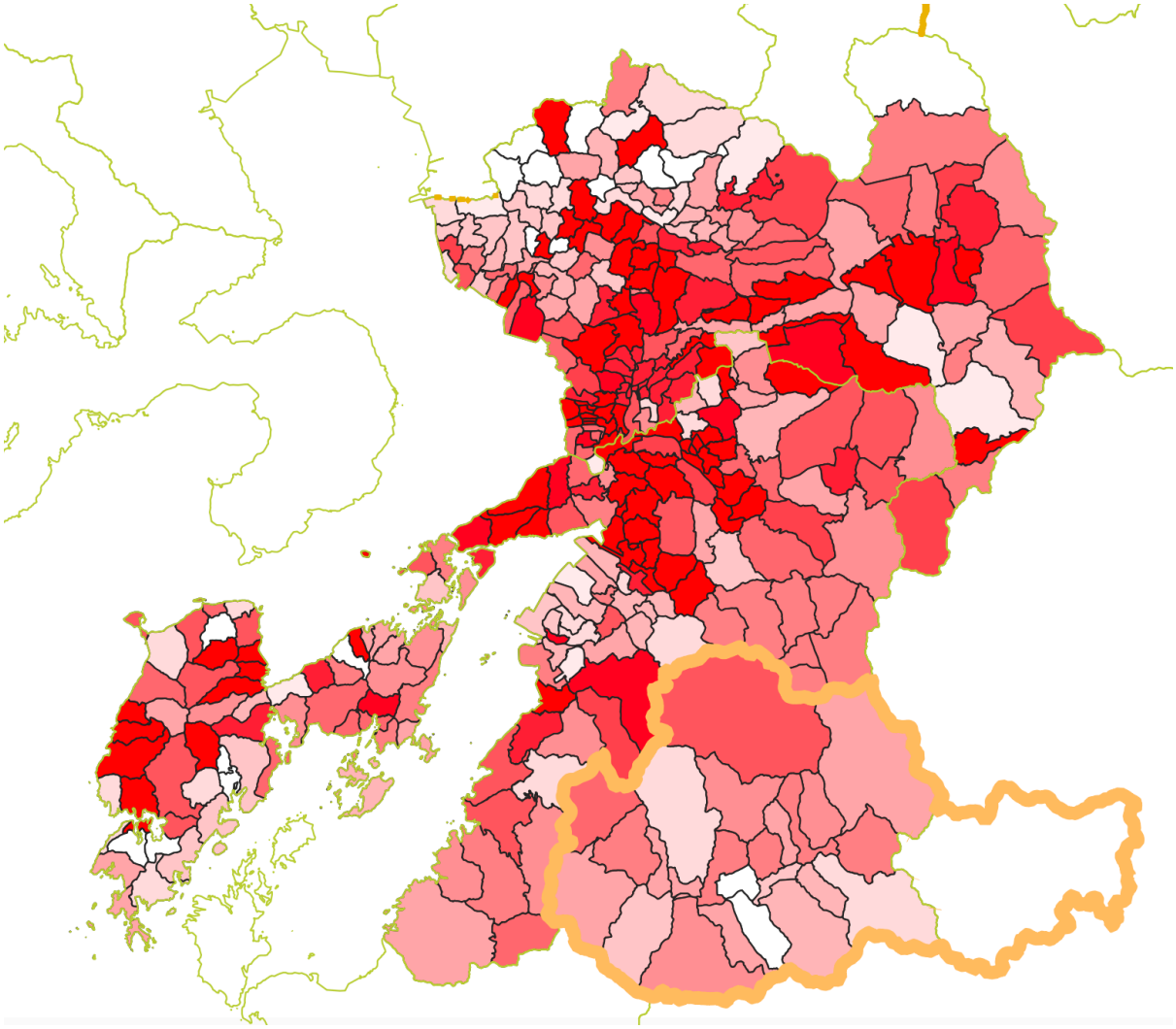


Figure 4: RD Map: Kumamoto-Hitoyosh with Hitoyoshi borders highlighted; Fascist parties vote share in 1937 in Kumamoto district in decile (Deep red: Top decile; White: Bottom decile

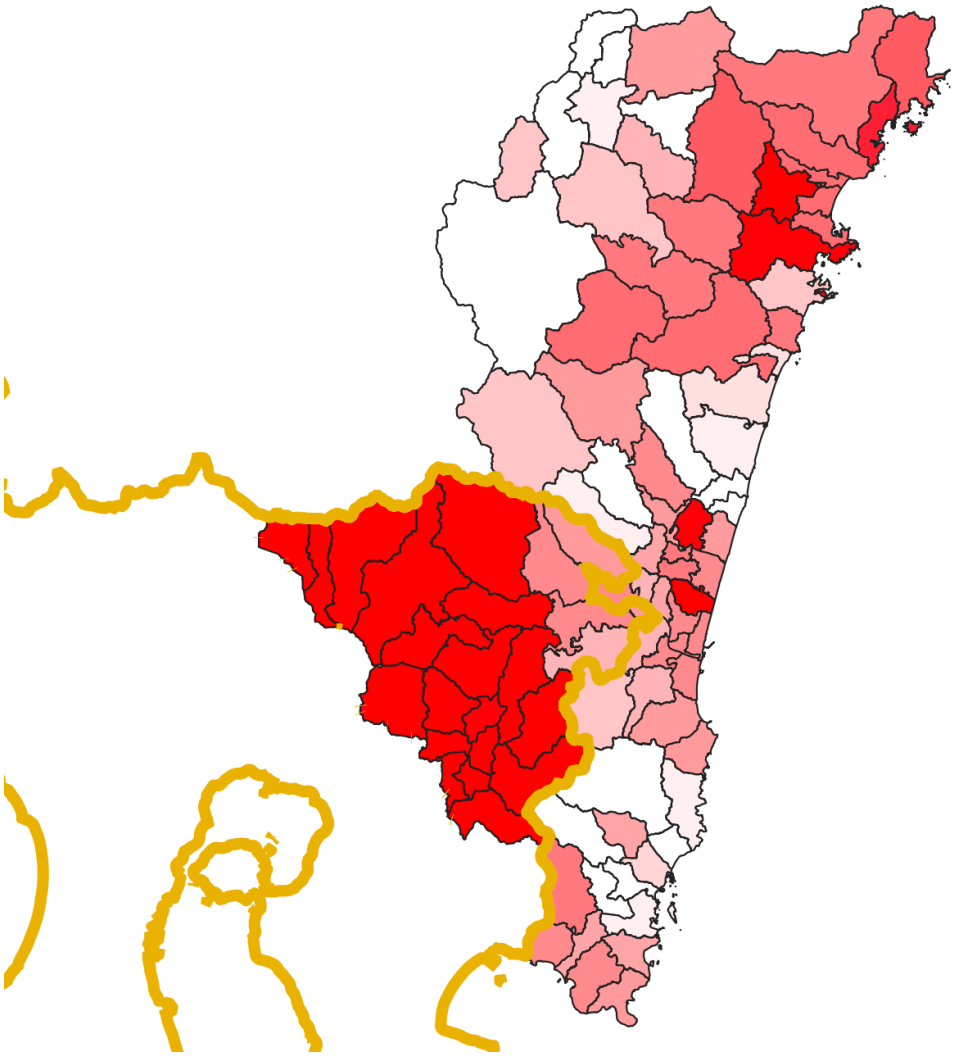


Figure 5: RD Map: Kumamoto-Hitoyosh with Kagoshima borders highlighted; Fascist parties vote share in 1937 in Miyazaki district in decile (Deep red: Top decile; White: Bottom decile

0.7.1 Discussion on Case Study and RD

In sum, the contrast between Hitoyoshi and Kumamoto illustrates the central mechanism of this paper. Despite Hitoyoshi's slightly more stable currency, its hereditary and decentralized governance structure generated frequent large-scale revolts and limited investment in modernization, leaving communities with weak institutional capacity for collective action. By contrast, Kumamoto's meritocratic Tenaga system, layered oversight, and investment in infrastructure and education fostered more effective governance, but also cultivated dependence on domain-led administration. These legacies align with the quantitative findings: well-governed domains produced subjects who were less inclined to initiate collective action under democratic institutions and more

receptive to authoritarian appeals, while less competent governance paradoxically encouraged grassroots mobilization as a survival strategy. This paired comparison thus adds qualitative depth to the statistical evidence, showing how concrete institutional arrangements left divergent imprints on community behavior well into the 1930s.

0.8 Conclusion

This paper has examined the long-term political consequences of competent authoritarian governance, using variation across Japan's Edo-period domains as a natural experiment. By combining novel historical data, an instrumental variable design leveraging the outcome of the Battle of Sekigahara, and geographic regression discontinuity analyses, I show that domains with more competent governance left enduring legacies of dependency. Communities governed by effective but nondemocratic rulers were less likely to mobilize collectively during the rural development campaigns of the 1930s and more likely to support authoritarian parties advocating suffrage restrictions. By contrast, domains with weaker governance, where breakdowns of authority were more common, fostered traditions of bottom-up initiative and later resisted authoritarian appeals.

These findings complicate conventional wisdom in two respects. First, they demonstrate that competence under authoritarianism is not unambiguously beneficial. While inclusive institutions are consistently linked to stronger democratic cultures, competent nondemocratic institutions can generate what I call *dependency legacies*—habits of deference to authority that weaken civic initiative and leave citizens more tolerant of authoritarian alternatives. Second, they reveal that the persistence of authoritarian nostalgia cannot be explained only by repression or ideology: it may also arise from lived experiences of order and stability under competent rule.

More broadly, the Japanese case underscores how institutional competence and inclusiveness must be distinguished when evaluating the long-term legacies of governance. Competent autocracies may deliver stability in the short run but risk undermining democratic resilience in the long run. This insight speaks to contemporary debates on democratic backsliding: just as citizens in interwar Japan came to favor suffrage restrictions after decades of competent feudal administration,

so too might today's populations, habituated to effective but illiberal governance, remain vulnerable to authoritarian appeals.

Future research should explore whether similar dependency legacies exist in other regions once ruled by competent nondemocratic regimes, from Prussia to Singapore. Such comparisons would deepen our understanding of how authoritarian competence interacts with democratization, and why the transition to durable democracy has proved more fragile in some contexts than others.

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