

POLS 280:  
Politics of Development  
and Foreign Aid

Class 17:

Political regimes and their developmental performance

# Recap

- Necessity of states for development
- Pitfalls of state capacity:
  - Legibility
  - Technical and 'wicked hard' problems in development

In what conditions does state capacity lead to development?  
In what conditions does state capacity undermine development?

# Plan for today

- Democratic and authoritarian regimes and their developmental performance

What are the benefits of  
democracy according to Sen?

# Benefits of democracy according to Sen

- Intrinsic value:
  - Guaranteeing political freedom
  - Enabling political and social participation
- Instrumental value:
  - People's ability to express and support their claims to political attention
- Opportunity for citizens to learn from one another, and for society to form its values and priorities:
  - Generation of informed and considered choices
  - Formation of values and priorities

• Sen, Amartya. 1999. "Democracy as a Universal Value." *Journal of Democracy* 10 (3): 3-17.



# Benefits of democracy according to Sen



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu3esi9x3EY>

But does democracy lead to  
development?

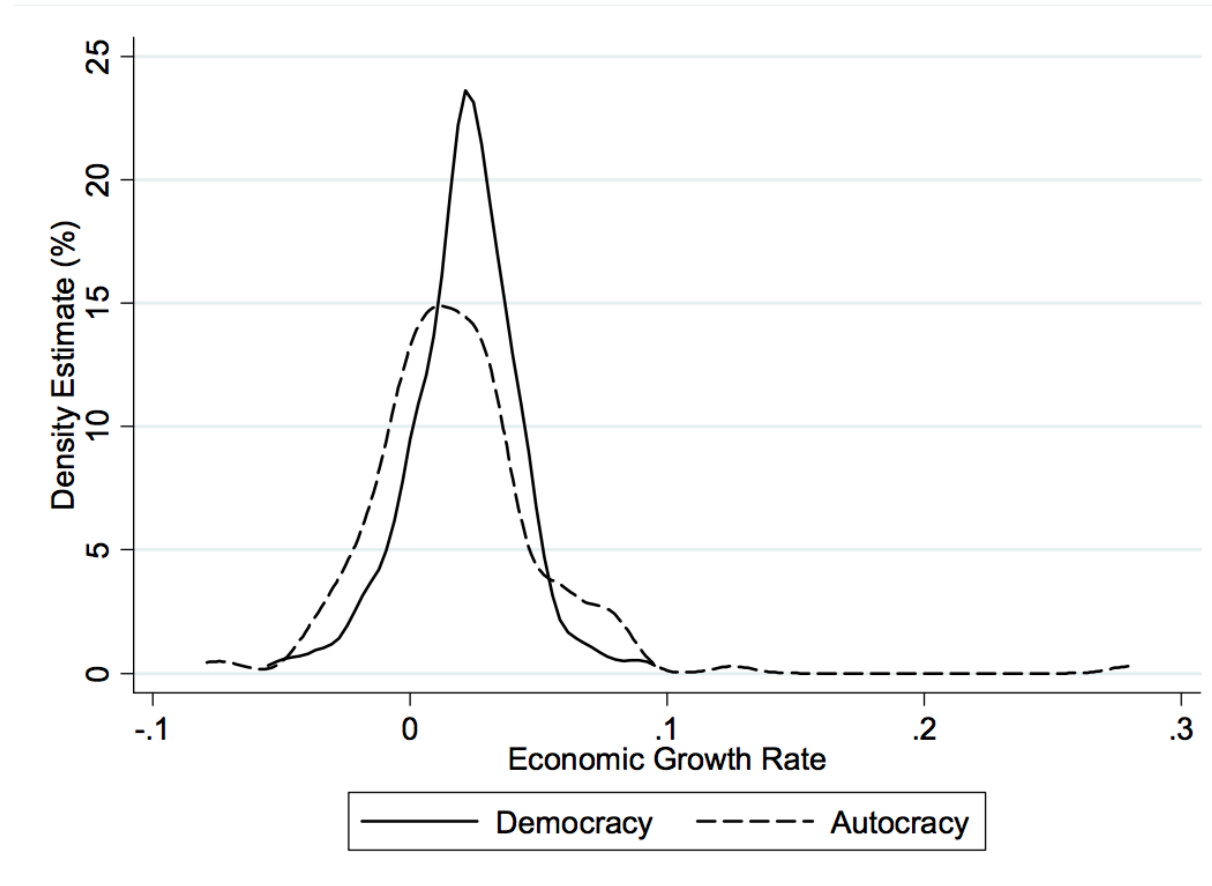


What are the developmental disadvantages of democracy?

# Regime type and development

- Developmental disadvantages of democracies:
  - Slow and costly decision-making
  - Power of interest groups
  - Particularistic demands
  - Citizen myopia / present-bias
  - Politicians' incentives to deliver short-term observable benefits, not long-term development
- Potential advantages of (consolidated) autocracies:
  - Longer time horizons
  - Insulation from social demands that are not conducive to development
  - Easier, faster decision-making
  - Ease of implementation

# Regime type and development



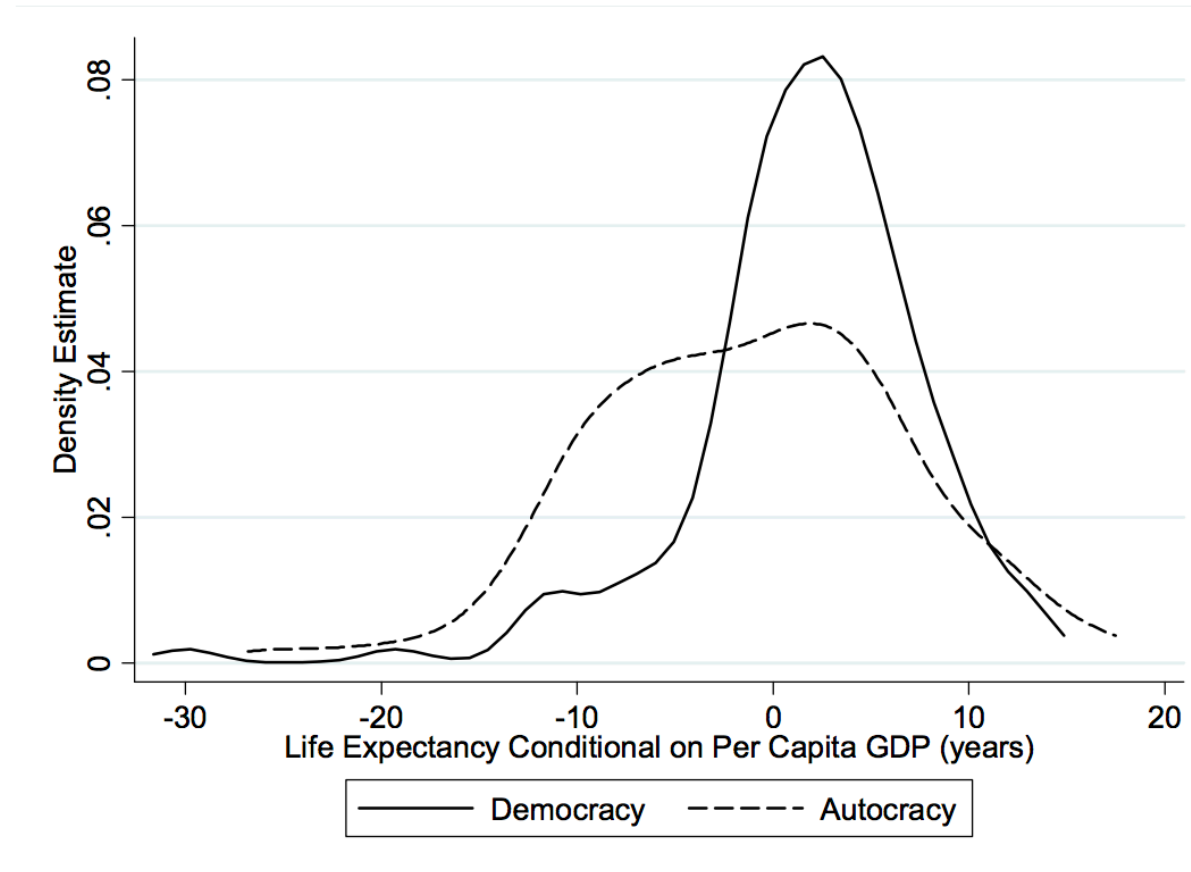
**Figure 1: Economic Growth Distributions among Democracies and Autocracies**

# Regime type and development

**Table 1: Autocracy, democracy, and development**

# Developing countries in each category 1960-2008	Big growth failure	Not big growth success or big growth failure	Big growth success
Autocracy or flawed democracy	10	70	9
Democracy	0	12	1

# Regime type and development



**Figure 2: Health Performance Distributions among Democracies and Autocracies**

# Regime type and development

- Democracies provide more education than autocracies
- However, no evidence that democracies offer better education
  - Dahlum, Sirianne, and Carl Henrik Knutsen. 2017. "Do Democracies Provide Better Education? Revisiting the Democracy–Human Capital Link." *World Development* 94. Elsevier Ltd: 186–99.

# Takeaways

- Mixed evidence overall, but much wider range of developmental performance among authoritarian regimes