

PLS 341

# Politics of Development

Week 7, Lecture 1:  
States and state capacity

# Recap

- Unsatisfactory early explanations of development
- The developmental importance of institutions

# Part III

- (Political) institutions of development and their evolution, i.e. political development:
  - States and state capacity
  - State-society relations

# Plan for this week

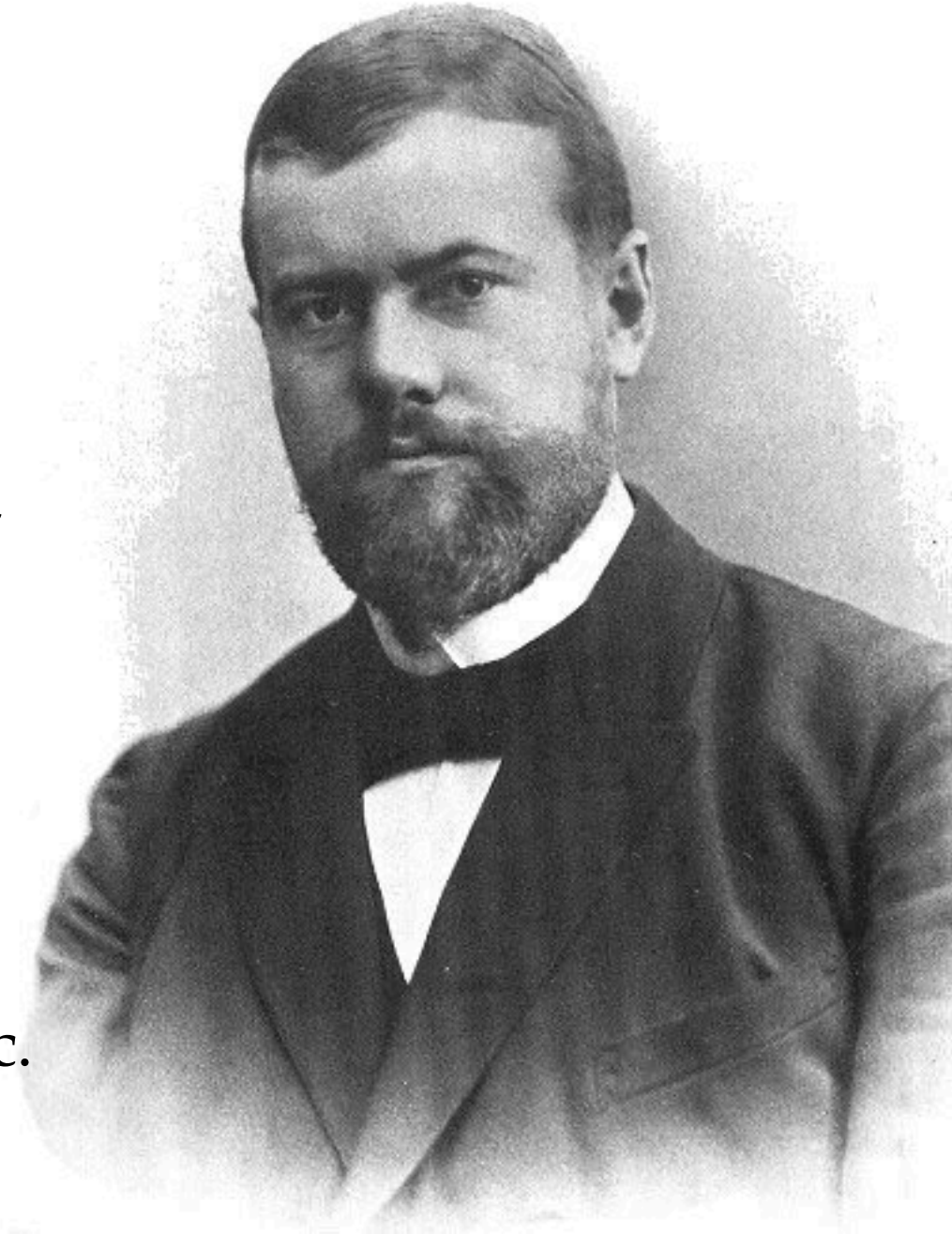
- States, state capacity, and its historical origins

# Plan for today

- States and state capacity:
  - Current scholarly consensus
  - Evidence of the developmental importance of state capacity
  - Conceptual and measurement challenges
  - Counter-evidence

# The state

- Weber:
  - “Human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within a given territory”
- Provider of public goods:
  - Protection from violence and other rights abuses
  - Dispute resolution and contract enforcement
  - Infrastructure, education, healthcare, etc.



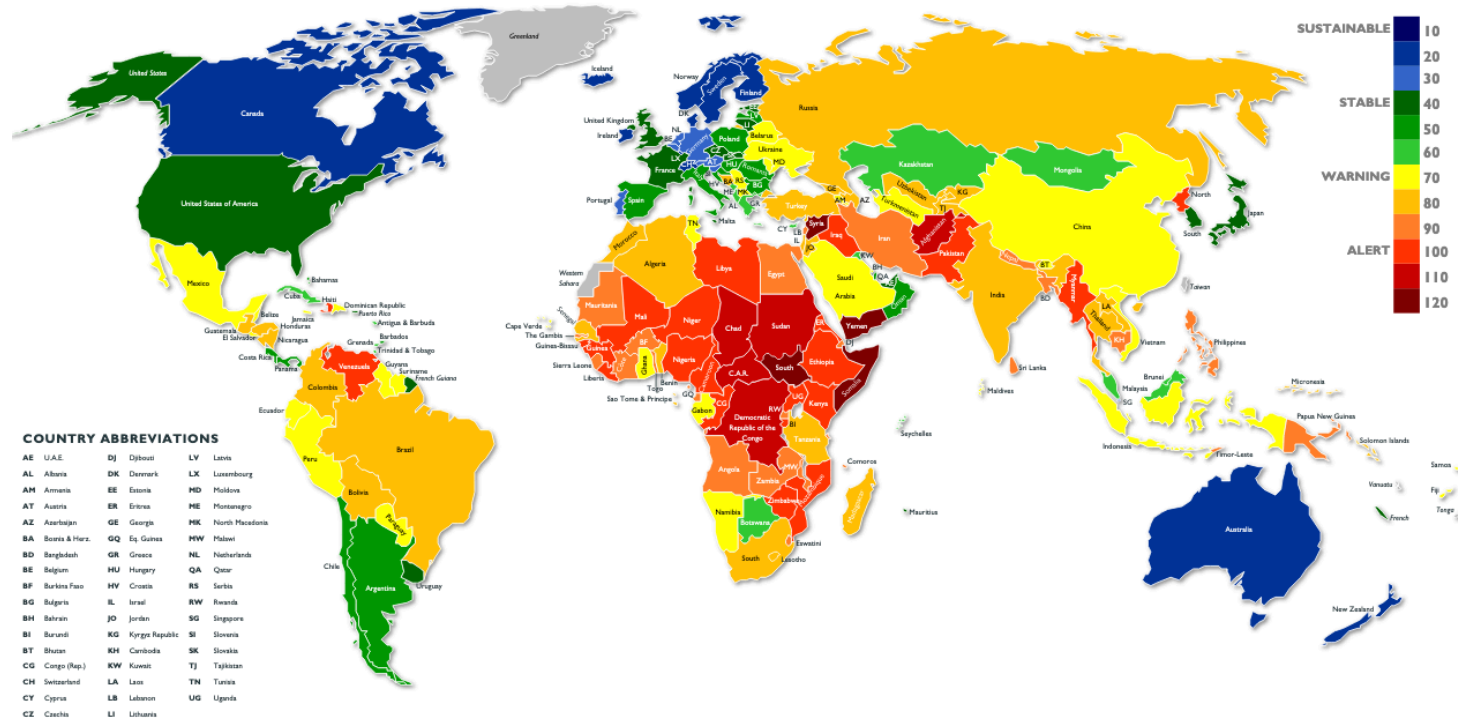
# State capacity

- State's ability to make and effectively implement decisions

# State capacity



THE WORLD IN 2020





# State capacity and development

- Opalo:
  - “Overall, weak state capacity is the most significant barrier to both political and economic development...”



Opalo, Ken. 2020. “Fiscal Capacity in African States.” *An Africanist Perspective Blog*, January 9.

# State capacity and development

- Fukuyama:
  - “For better or worse, there is no alternative to a modern, impersonal state as guarantor of order and security, and as a source of necessary public goods.”

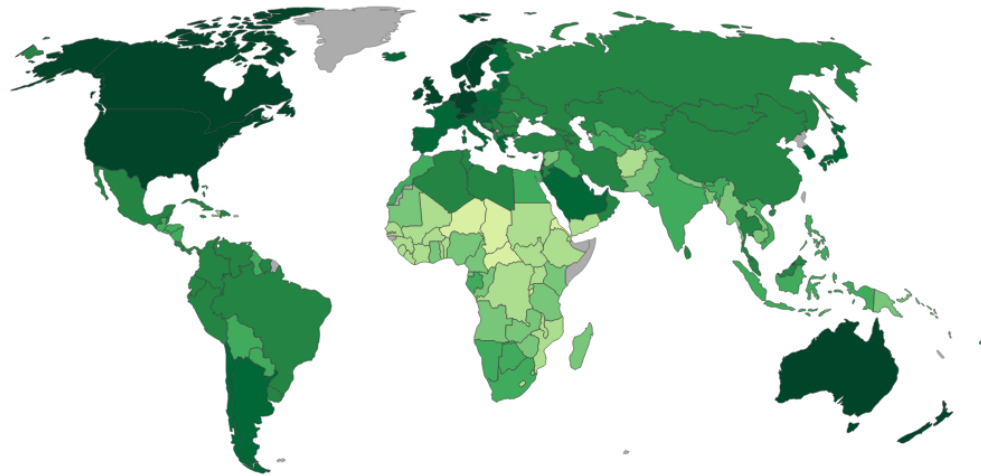


Fukuyama, Francis. 2014. *Political Order and Political Decay*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

# State capacity and development

## Human Development Index, 2014

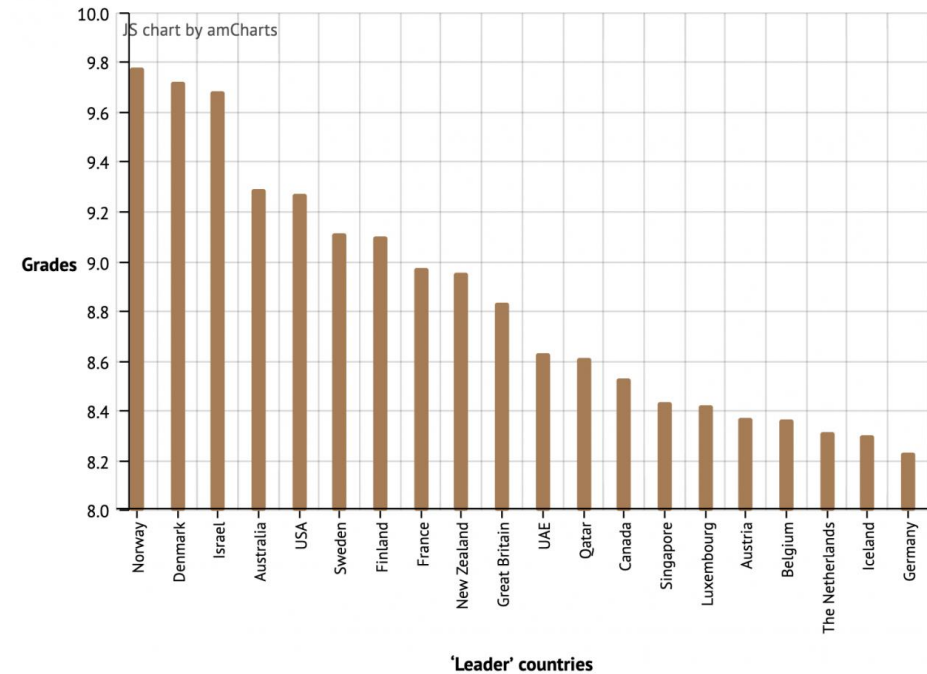
The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions.



Source: Human Development Index (UNDP)

OurWorldInData.org/human-development-index/ • CC BY-SA

The state capacity ranking's top 20 'leaders' and bottom 20 'outsiders' (final grades, on a scale of 0 to 10)



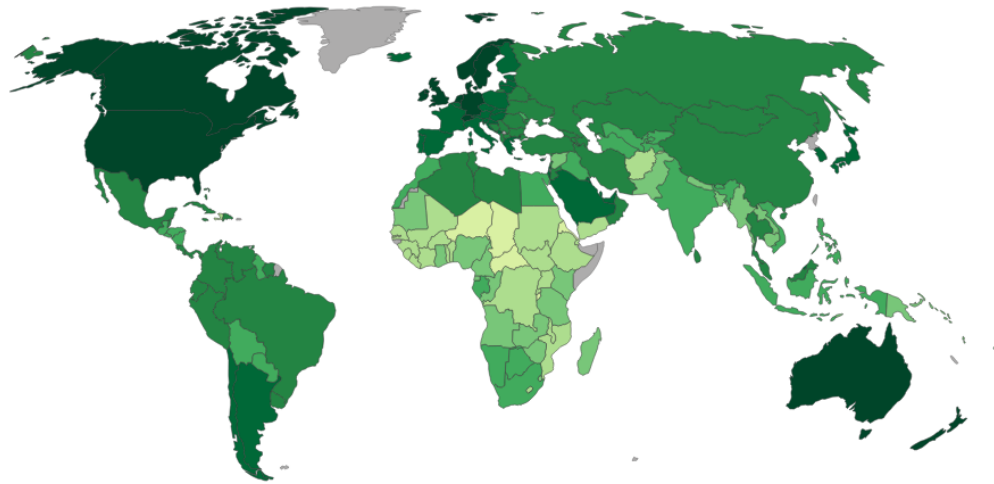
Ranking from Akhremenko, A. S., I. E. Gorelskiy, and A. Y. Melville. 2019. "How and Why Should We Measure and Compare State Capacity of Different Countries? An Experiment with Empirical Research." *Polis* (3): 49–68.

# State capacity and development

## Human Development Index, 2014

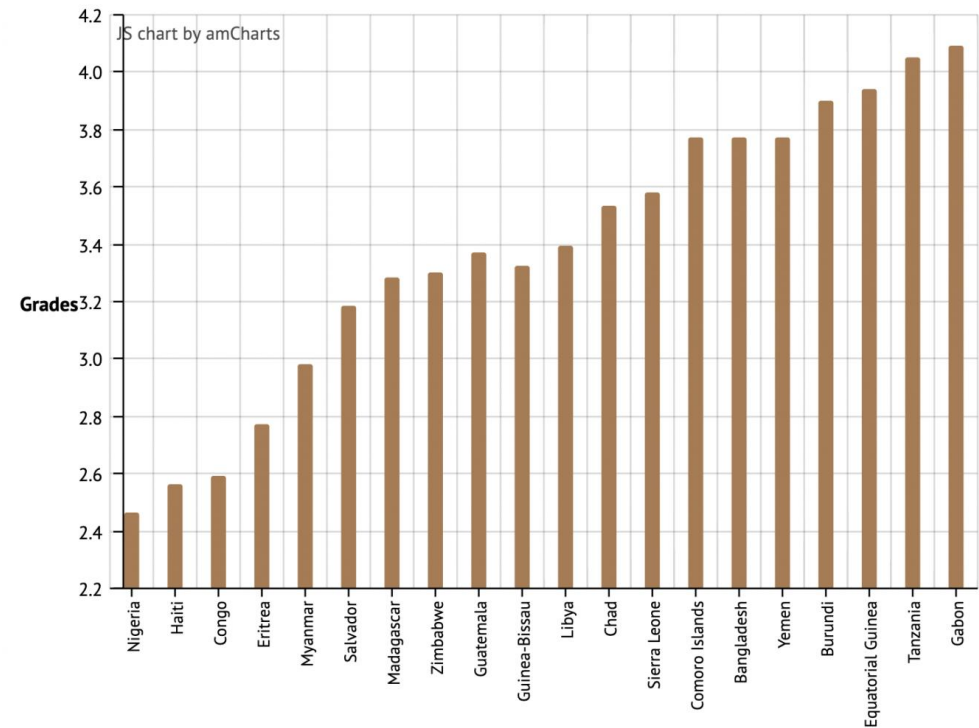
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Our World  
in Data



Source: Human Development Index (UNDP)

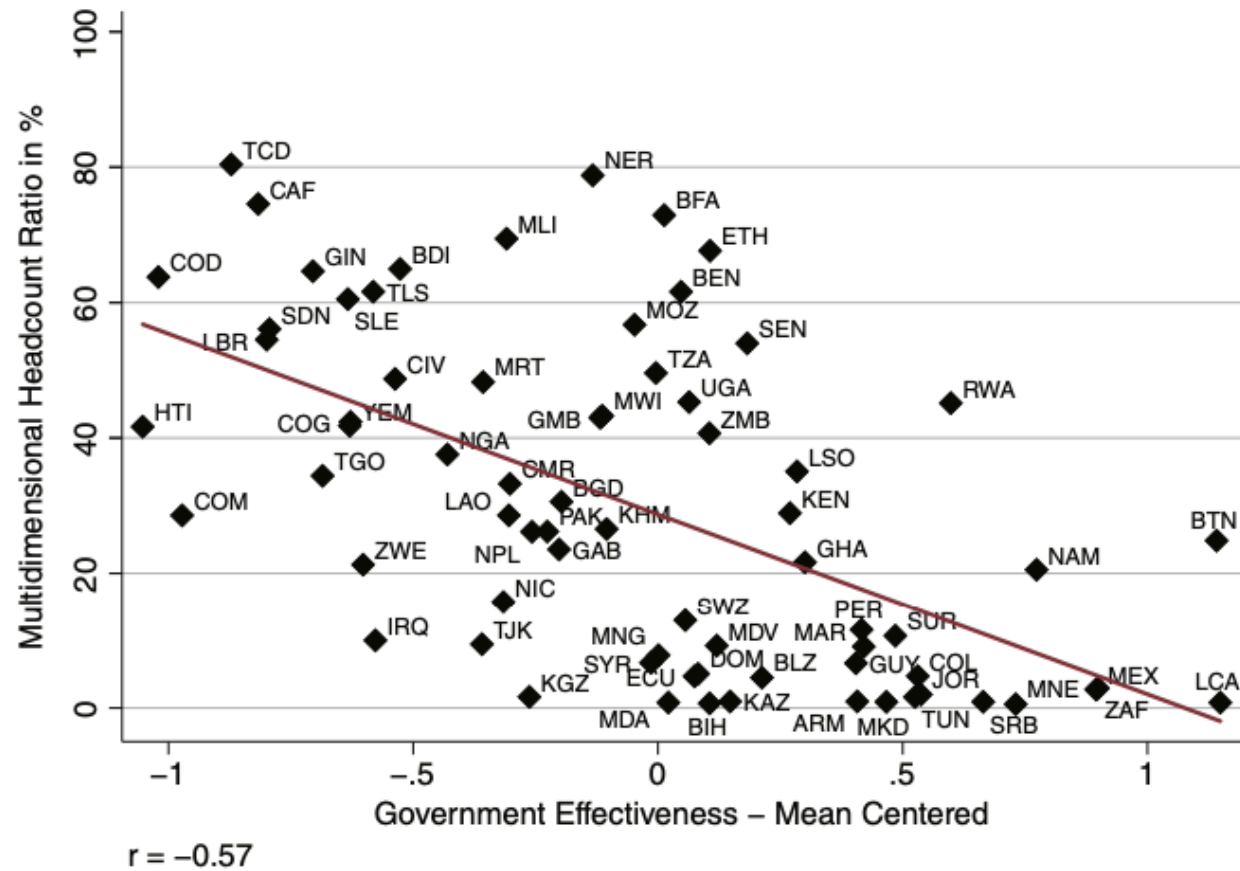
OurWorldInData.org/human-development-index/ • CC BY-SA



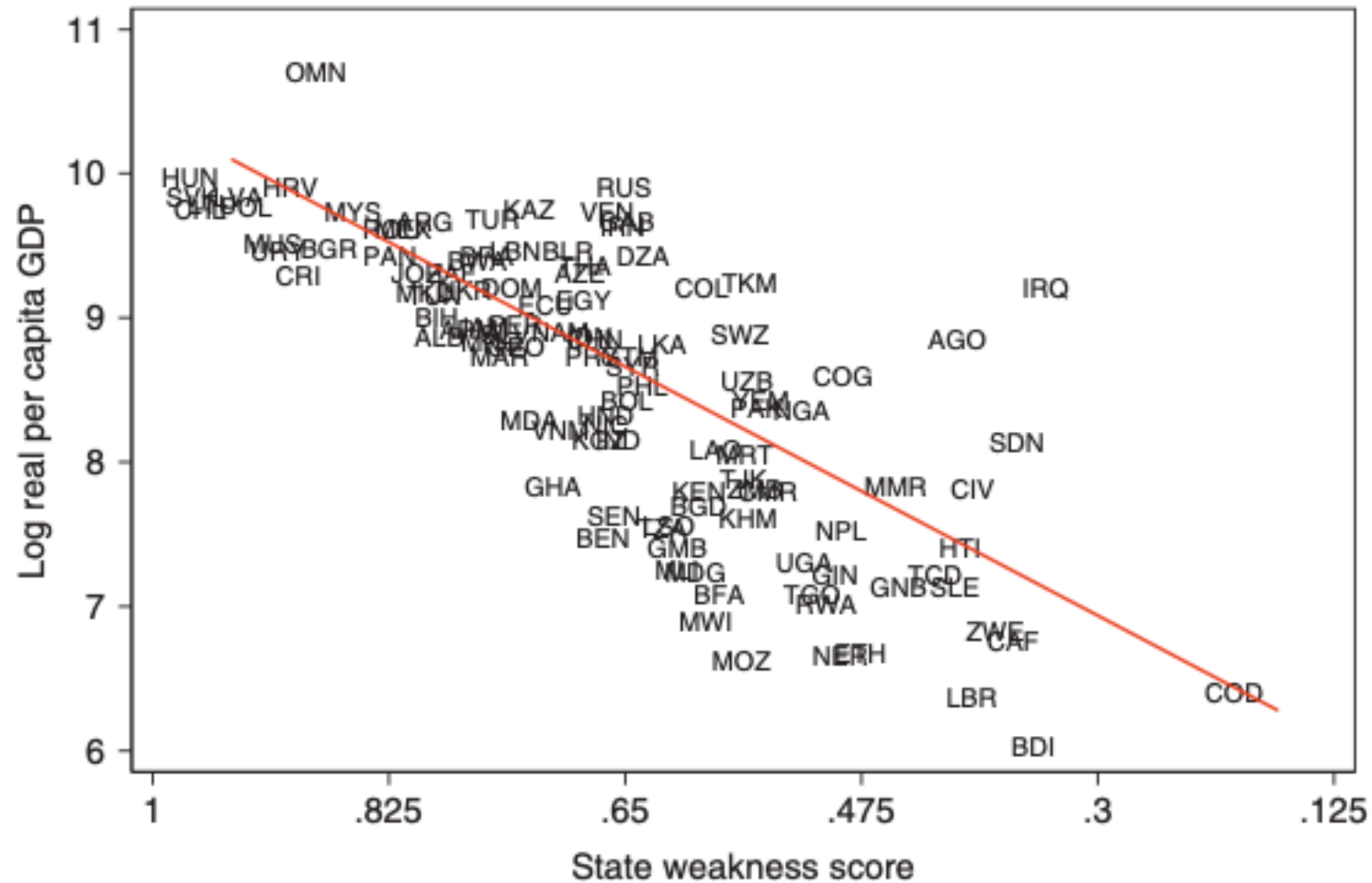
'Outsider' countries

Ranking from Akhremenko, A. S., I. E. Gorelskiy, and A. Y. Melville. 2019. "How and Why Should We Measure and Compare State Capacity of Different Countries? An Experiment with Empirical Research." *Polis* (3): 49–68.

# State capacity and development

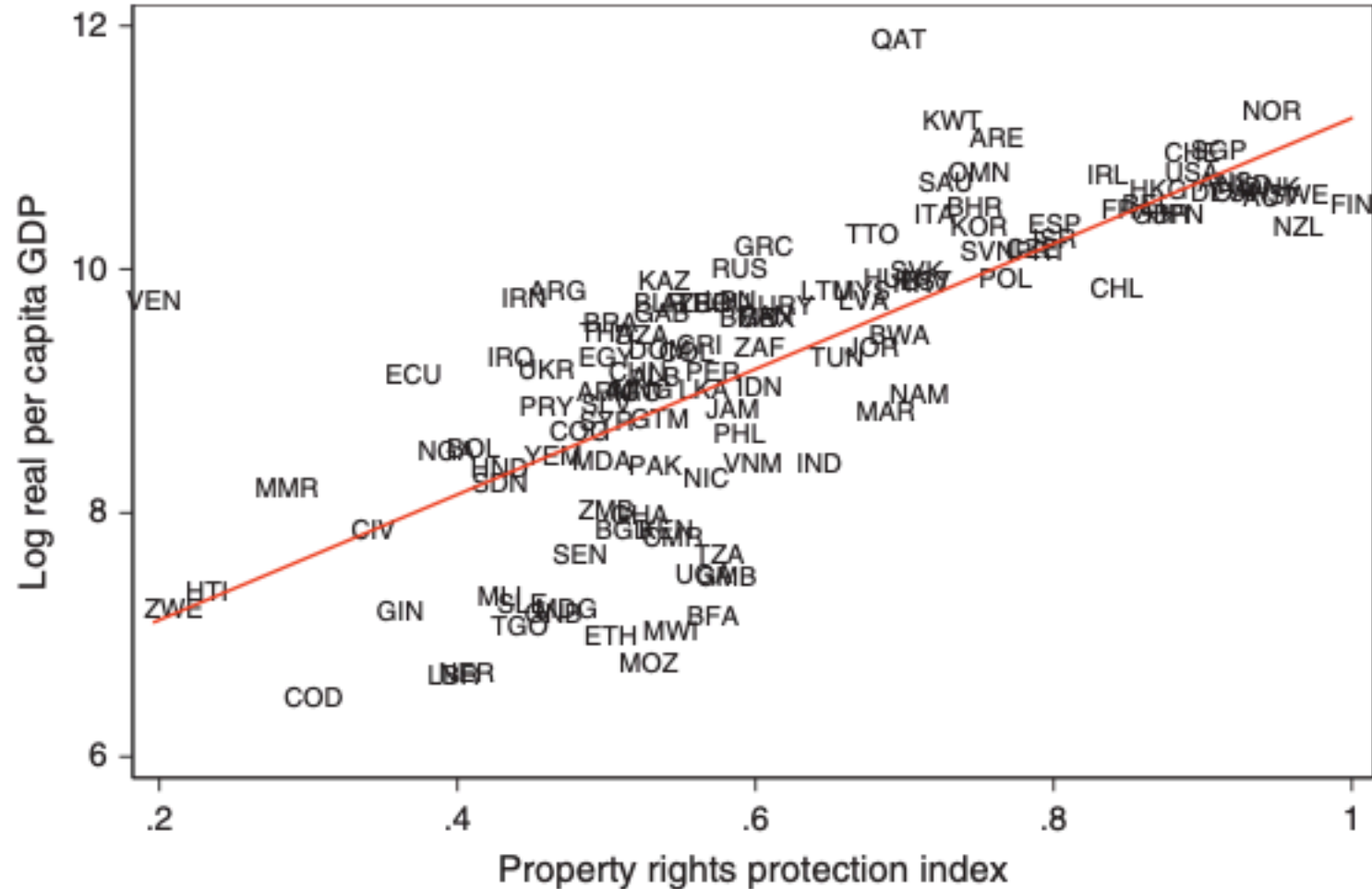


# State capacity and development



Source: Dincecco, Mark. 2017. *State Capacity and Economic Development: Present and Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# State capacity and development



Source: Dincecco, Mark. 2017. *State Capacity and Economic Development: Present and Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.





# Conceptual challenges

- State capacity vs. government/bureaucratic performance

- Williams, Martin J. 2020. "Beyond State Capacity: Bureaucratic Performance, Policy Implementation and Reform." *Journal of Institutional Economics*: 1–19.
- Cornell, Agnes, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Jan Teorell. 2020. "Bureaucracy and Growth." *Comparative Political Studies*.

- Varieties of state capacity:

- Berwick & Christia: administrative, coercive, and extractive capacity

- Berwick, Elissa, and Fotini Christia. 2018. "State Capacity Redux: Integrating Classical and Experimental Contributions to an Enduring Debate." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21(4): 1–21.

- Mann: despotic vs. infrastructural power

- Mann, Michael. 1984. "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." *European Journal of Sociology* 25(2): 185–213.

- Soifer: central capacity, state weight, and territorial reach —>

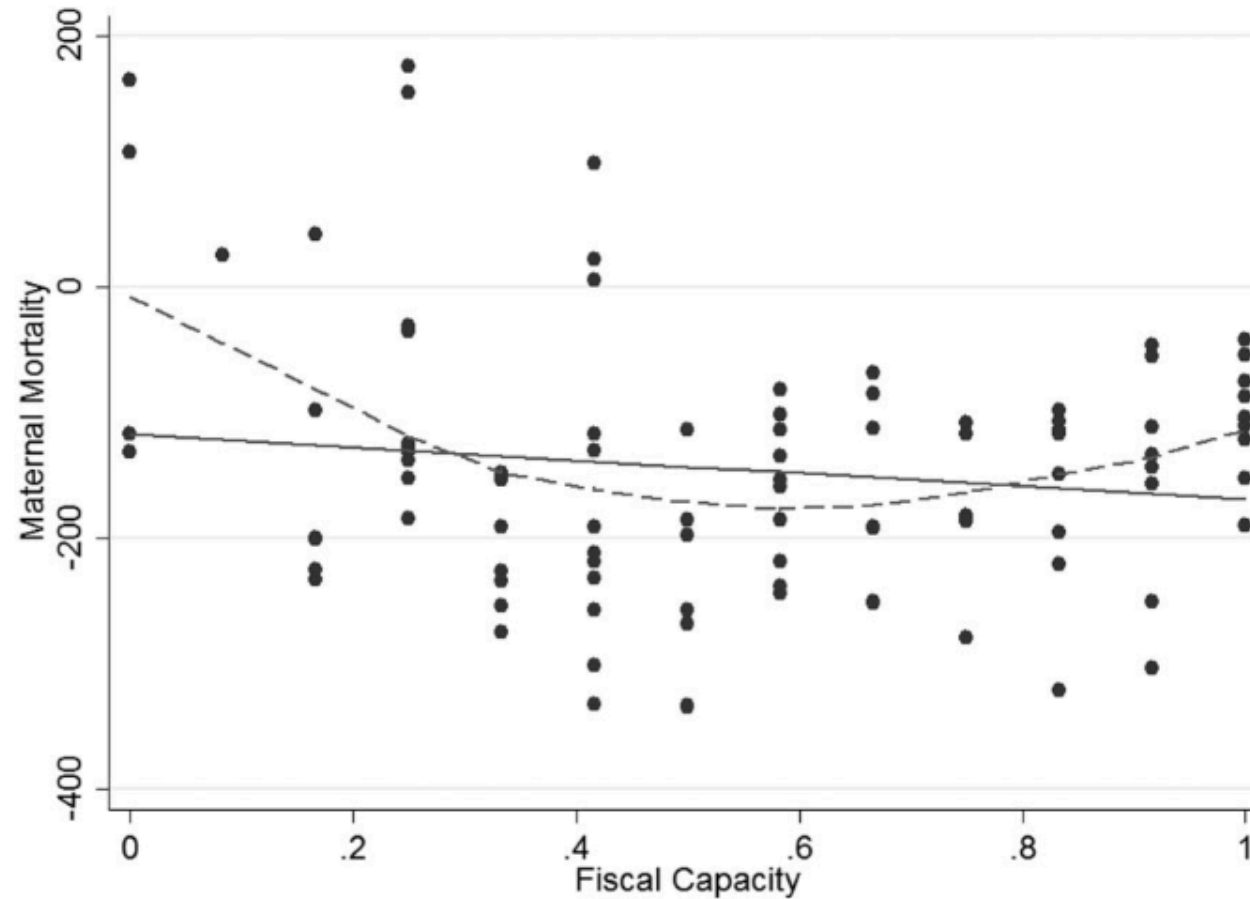
- Soifer, Hillel. 2008. "State Infrastructural Power: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43(3–4): 231–51.

- Horizontal and vertical variation

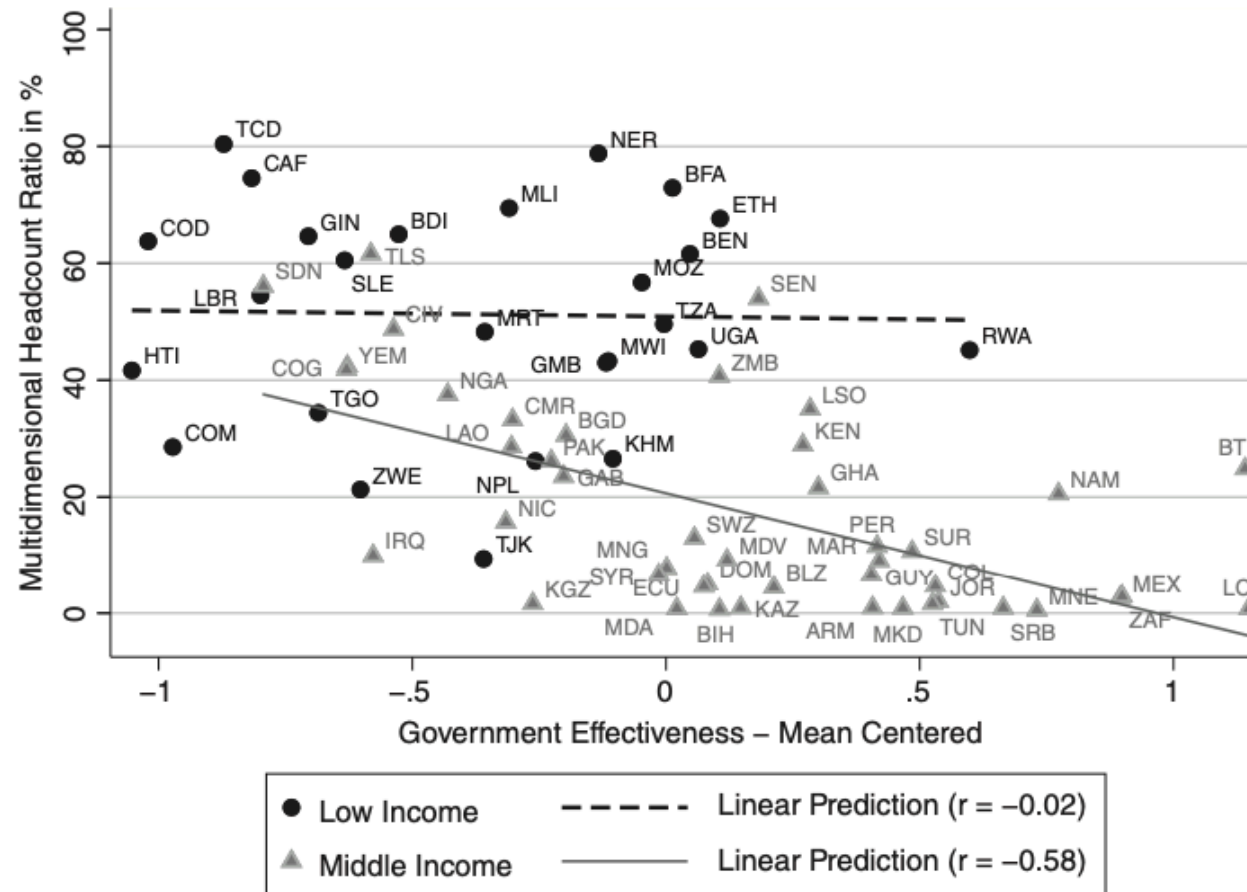
# Measurement challenges

- Taxation and tax compliance
- Property rights protections
- Cadastral surveys and censuses
- Expert rankings and societal experiences
- GDP per capita
- Infrastructure presence, e.g. road networks, post offices, luminosity
- Literacy

# Counter-evidence



# Counter-evidence





# Counter-evidence

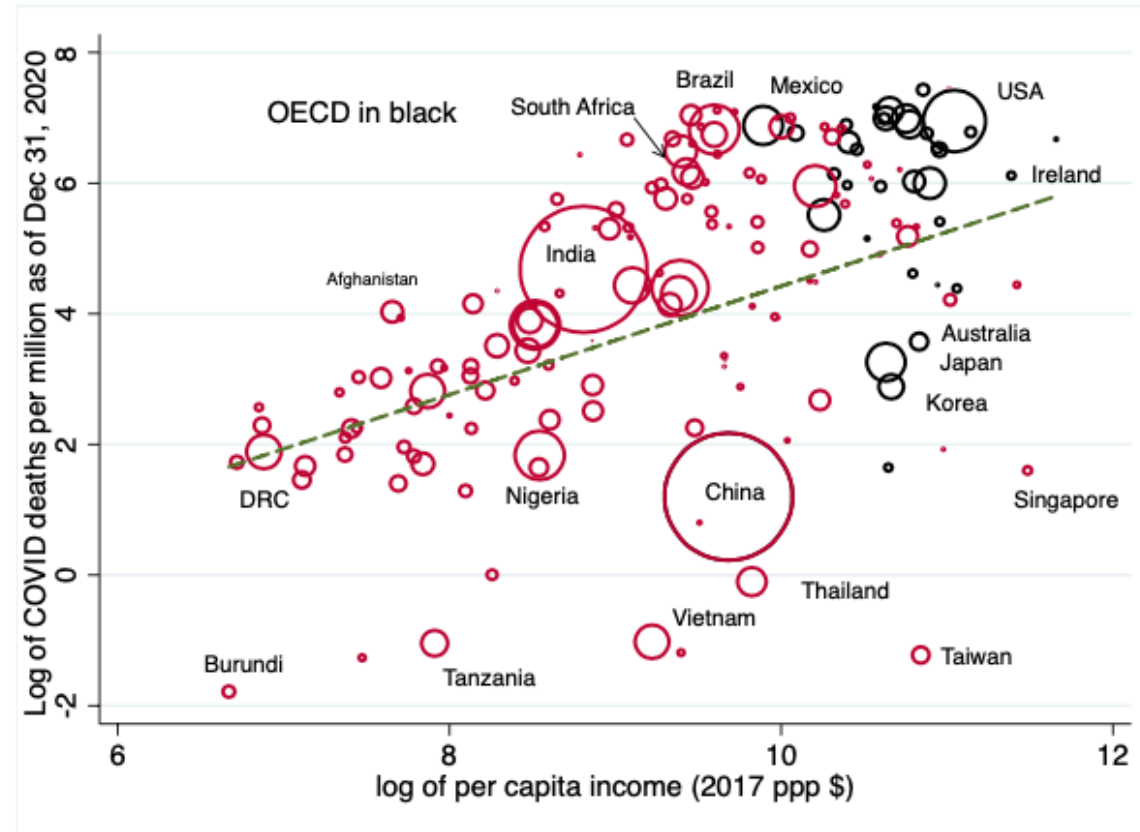
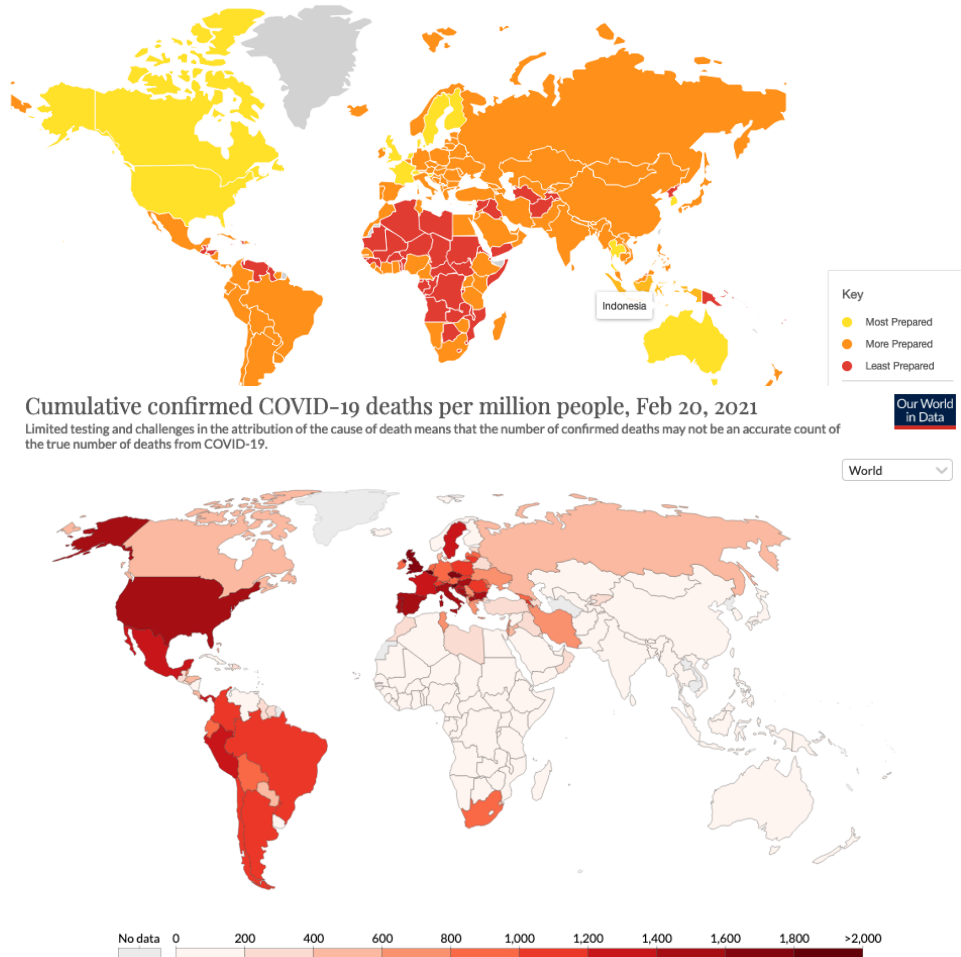


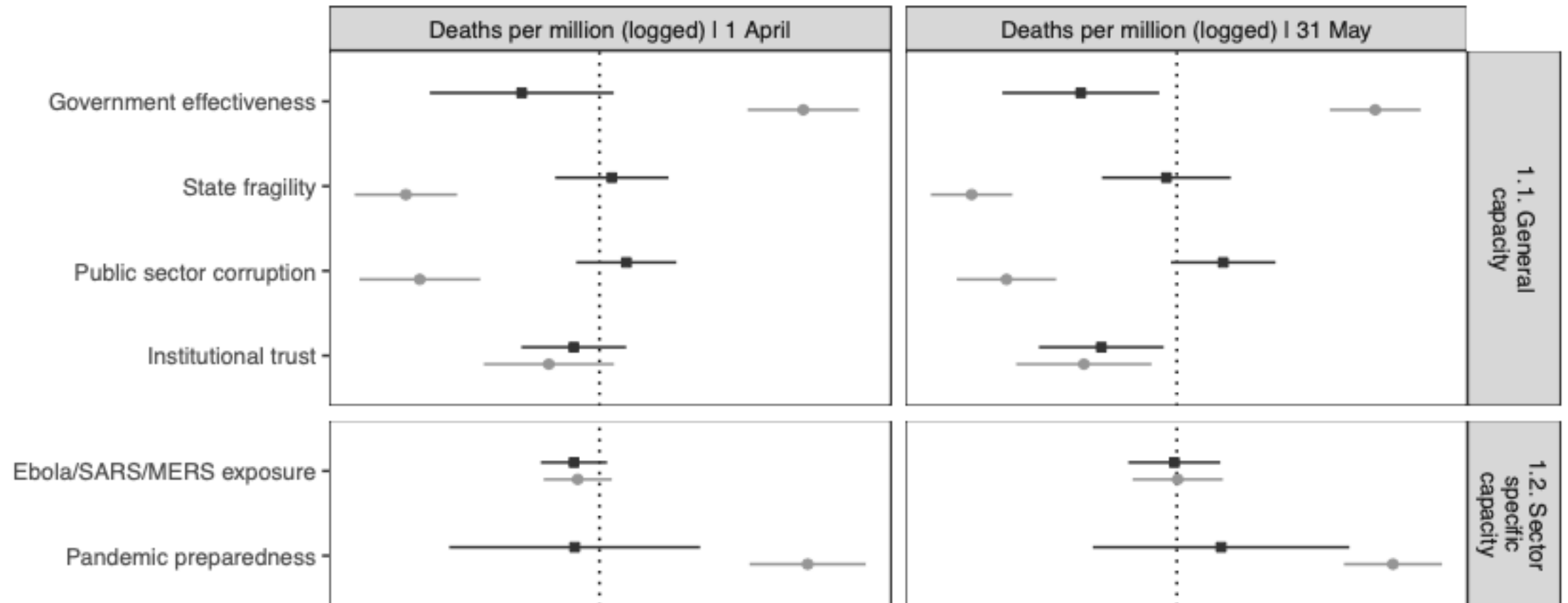
Figure 1: COVID-19 deaths per million and per capita income in 2019: broken line is the population-weighted regression line, areas of circles proportional to population

Deaton, Angus S. 2021. "COVID-19 and Global Income Inequality."

# Counter-evidence



# Counter-counter-evidence?



Source: Bosancianu, Constantin Manuel et al. 2020. "Political and Social Correlates of Covid-19 Mortality."



# Takeaways

- Despite emerging challenges, an apparent empirical regularity: no long-term development without substantial state capacity