Discussion of

Social Mobility and Revolution: The Impact of the Abolition of China's Civil Service Exam

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Aim and contribution

- This *is not* an all-compassing study of economic and social drivers of revolution
- This *is* a study of the role of (perceived) social mobility—or the lack thereof—for revolution
  - Did abolishing China's civil exam system induce more people to join the revolution in places where the exam system was relatively more important?
- The study brings a new and interesting piece of evidence to the question of how to understand revolutions
- The research question is backed up by historical anecdotal evidence
- The total influence of the abolition on revolutionary activities was probably even larger

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Figure : Tricky to separate social and economic mobility from general economic and political conditions

Identifying the effect of the quotas

- ▶ The dynamic specification estimating year-by-year effects is quite convincing Figure 4

- ▶ However, a concern is that the estimates vary with the inclusion of control variables (0.13–0.23 for 1905; 0.10–0.22 for 1906)

- ▶ Controlling for population is crucial
  - ▶ A need for controlling for population in a more flexible way
  - ▶ Is migration a concern here?

- ▶ Discuss the implications of not including time-variant control variables

- ▶ While the distribution of quota assignments is discrete over counties, it becomes continuous when aggregating at the prefecture level

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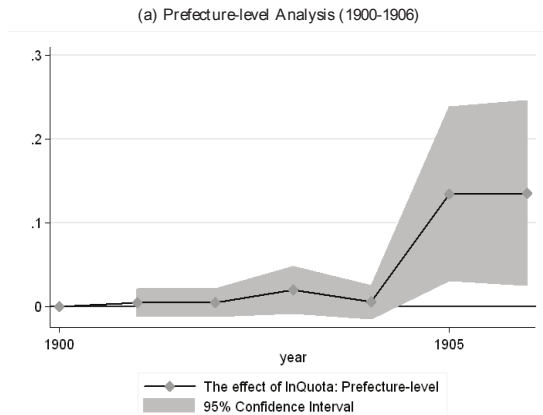
Linking the quotas to the 1911 uprisings

- It is problematic that the data on revolutionaries ends in 1906
  - Times were turbulent: As Table 2 shows, the impact of the quotas on political newcomers differs quite a lot in different years (1904, 1907, 1908, 1912)
- Connecting the abolition of the quotas to the 1911 uprising, through the revolutionaries, should be done in a two-step IV procedure
  - 1st stage: $\Delta \ln(k + \#\text{rev.})_p = \beta \ln \text{Quota}_p + \Psi X_p + \delta_{prov} + \epsilon_p$
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Figure 4: The Dynamic Impacts of ln Quota on the Probability of Having Revolutionaries

(a) Prefecture-level Analysis (1900-1906)

(b) Before and After the Abolition of the Exam in 1905

	Before the Abolition Ln (k+ # Presented Scholars in 1904)			After the Abolition Ln (k+ # Quasi-Presented Scholars in 1907)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ln(Quota)	0.375***	0.378***	0.305***	0.191***	0.218***	0.131*
	(0.076)	(0.097)	(0.092)	(0.069)	(0.078)	(0.067)
Ln(Popu 1880)	0.156**	0.148	0.091	0.197***	0.048	-0.045
	(0.069)	(0.094)	(0.084)	(0.072)	(0.086)	(0.068)
Ln(1+ # in of ce)			0.414***			0.423***
			(0.073)			(0.097)
Province FE		Y	Y		Y	Y
Observations	262	262	262	262	262	262
R-squared	0.255	0.279	0.411	0.132	0.381	0.510

(c) Before and After the Republican Revolution in 1911

	Before the Revolution Ln(k + # parliament members in 1908)			After the Revolution Ln(k+ # parliament members in 1912)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ln(Quota)	0.278***	0.252**	0.182*	0.523***	0.490***	0.456***
	(0.078)	(0.102)	(0.093)	(0.066)	(0.083)	(0.080)
Ln(Popu 1880)	0.227***	0.241**	0.186*	0.288***	0.363***	0.327***
	(0.077)	(0.109)	(0.102)	(0.056)	(0.079)	(0.078)
Ln(1+ # in of ce)			0.396***			0.166***
			(0.073)			(0.039)
Province FE		Y	Y		Y	Y
Observations	262	262	262	262	262	262
R-squared	0.225	0.250	0.369	0.586	0.604	0.624