

# Development and Dominant Parties: Evidence from India's Green Revolution

Adi Dasgupta

dasgupta@fas.harvard.edu

## Overview

I connect literature on political economy of clientelism with research on dominant party regimes to argue that rural economic development, arising from the green revolution, brought about an end to dominant party rule in India.

## Theoretical Motivation

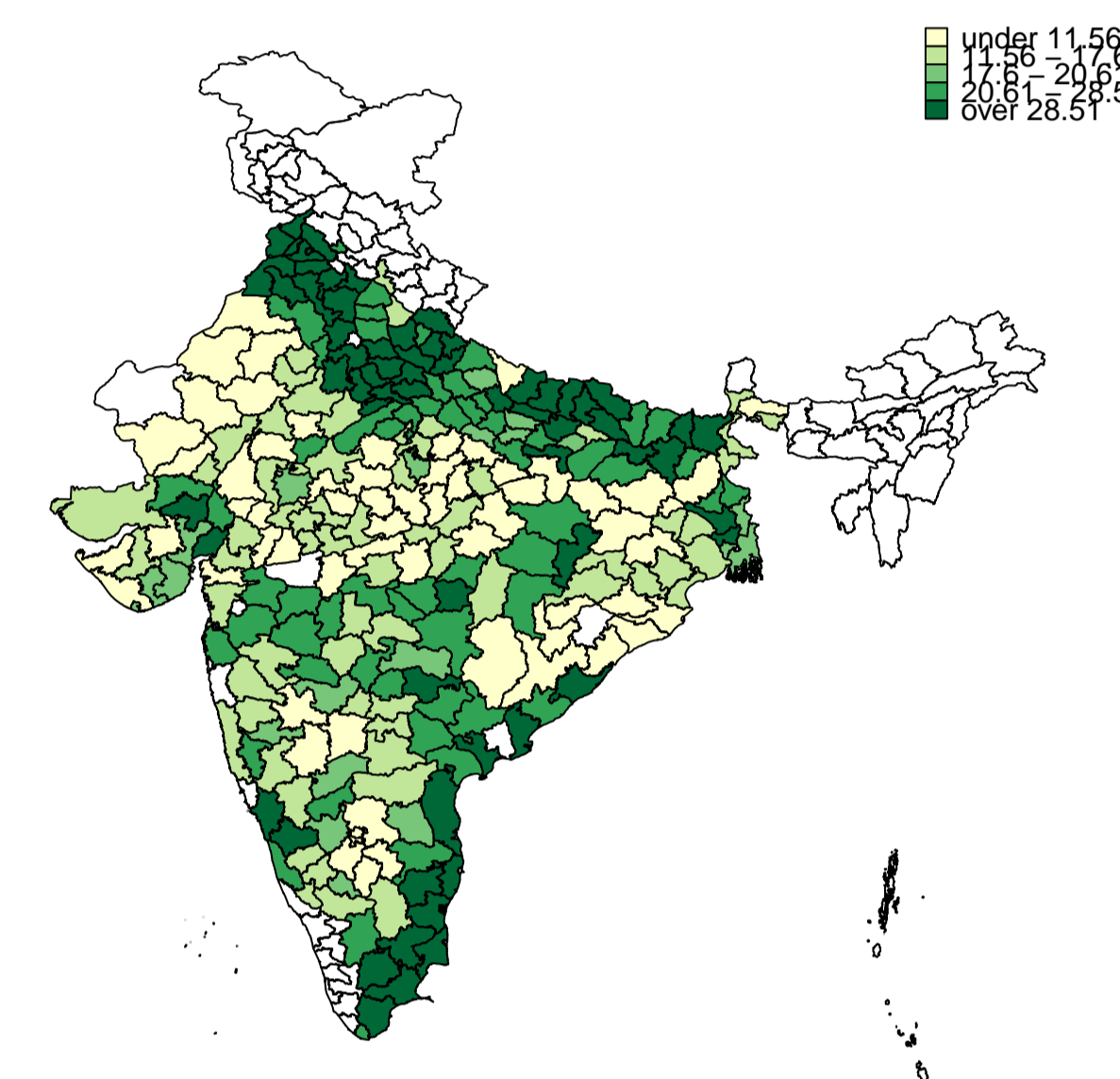
1. It is widely accepted that clientelism is less prevalent in high-income than in low-income environments.
2. Dominant party regimes often rely upon a "resource advantage", together with clientelism, to monopolize political power.
3. Does economic development therefore destroy support for dominant party regimes? May do so through two channels: 1) Increase private sector incomes, raising the costs of vote buying and 2) Increase the economic value of political control, raising the opportunity cost of supporting the regime among voters who do not share the dominant party's policy preferences.

## Applying the Argument to India

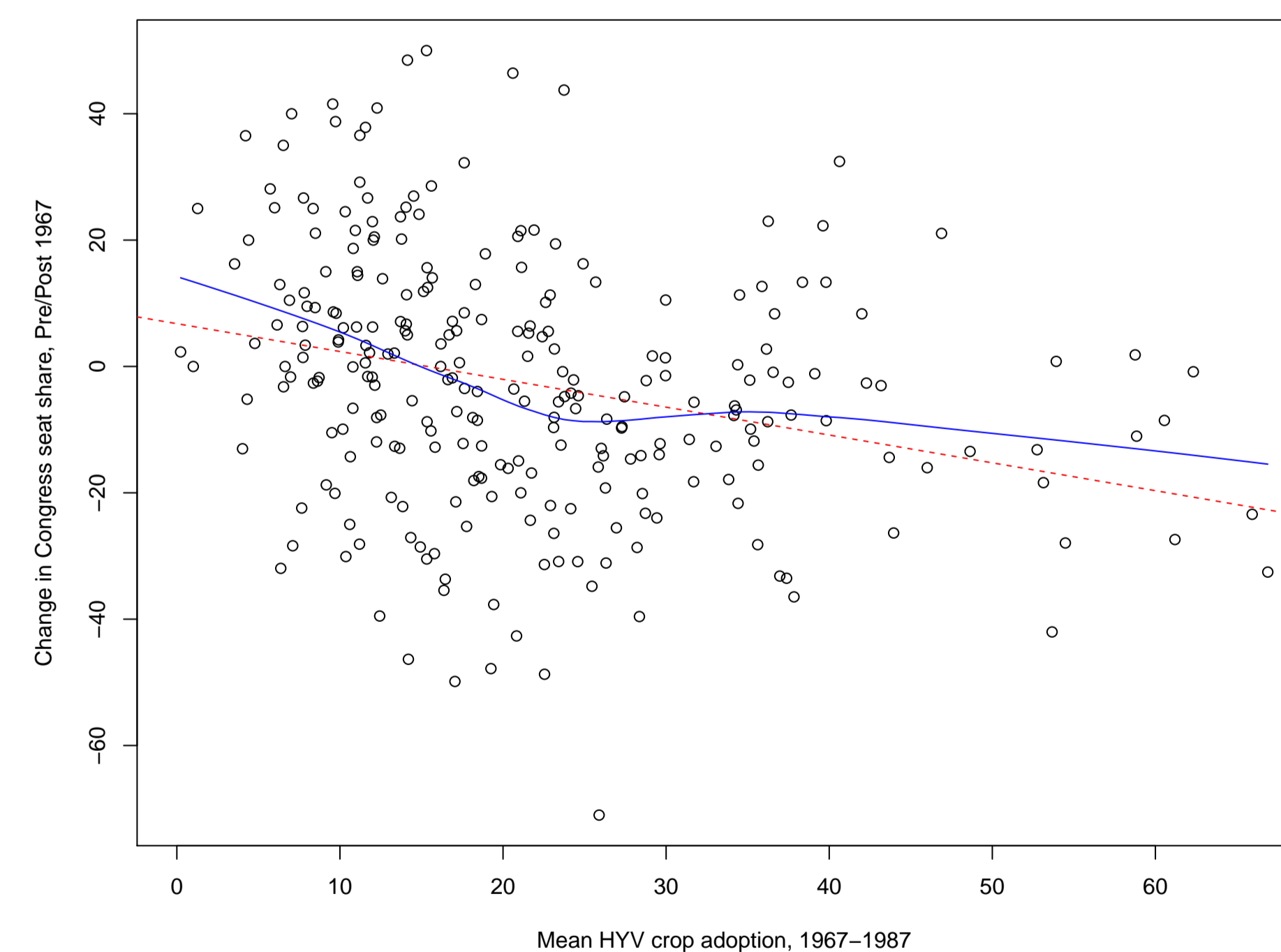
1. Reconsidering the Indian democratic "success story": the Congress party won national elections for three decades continuously until losing power for the first time in 1977. The urban-biased 'Congress system' sustained support in rural areas largely through clientelism.
2. I argue that the introduction of HYV crops in 1965/66, an intervention to increase food production, led to massive increase in agricultural productivity and unintended political consequences: reduced dependency of rural poor on government largesse and formation of agrarian opposition parties supported by agrarian economic interests. These two developments paved the way for the emergence of multi-party competition.

## Basic Findings in Two Plots

Mean HYV Crop Adoption Across Districts in India, 1967-1987



HYV adoption vs. Change in INC Seat Share by District



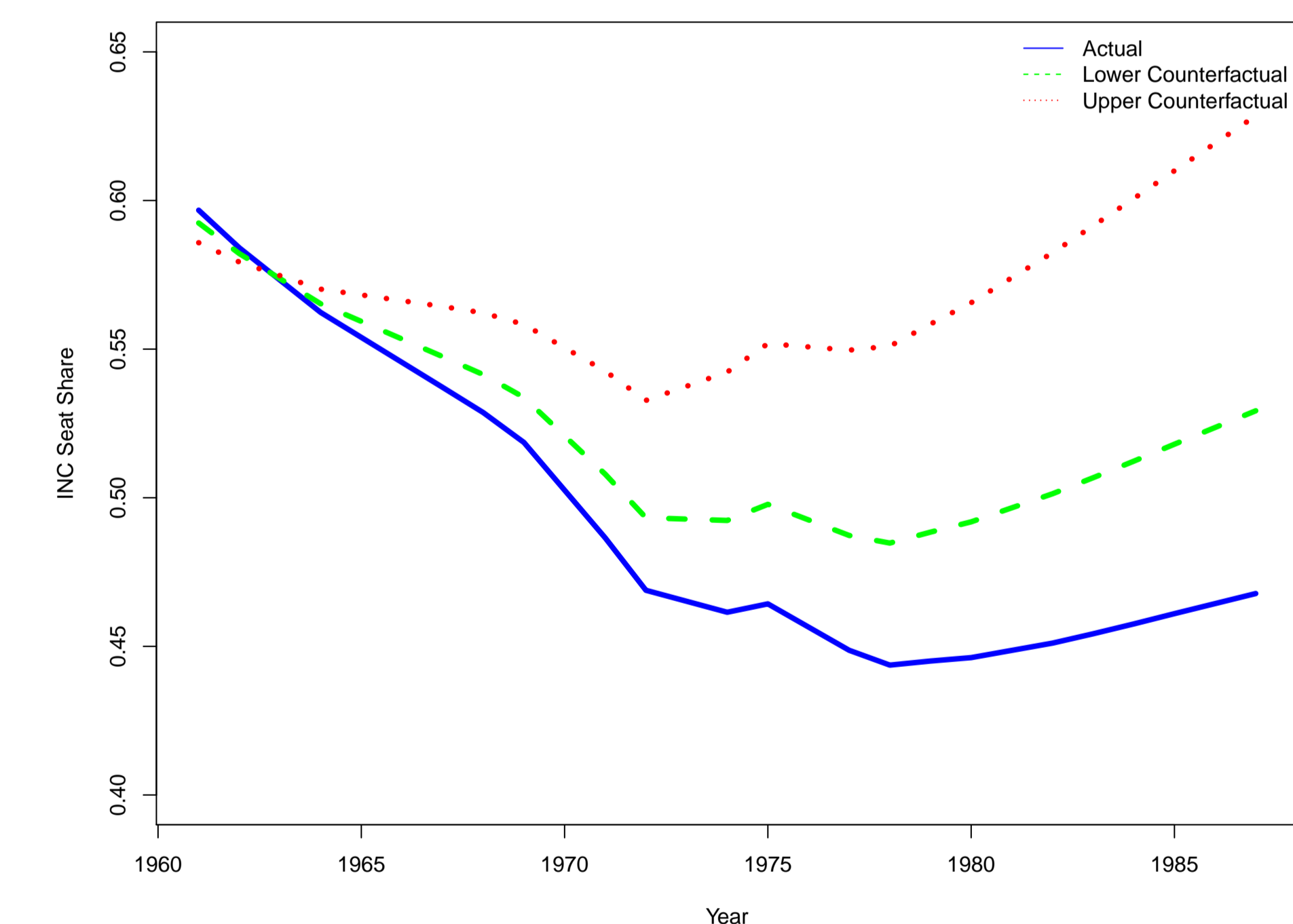
## Empirical Strategy

1. I geo-code state assembly and parliamentary constituencies to districts to connect annual HYV crop adoption data to 18,000 state assembly election races and 3,000 parliamentary races, 1961-1987.
2. Regress INC support on HYV crop adoption, including FEs, utilizing sub-national variation in intensity and time pattern of HYV crop adoption.
3. Also instrument for HYV crop adoption with a diff-in-diff style interaction of group indicator of pre-existing suitability based on irrigation coverage interacted with time dummy indicating arrival of HYV crops in 1965/66

## Summary and Extensions

1. Counter-factual simulations suggest that green revolution was pivotal in historical emergence of multi-party competition in India:

Actual and Counter-factual INC Seat Share Over Time



2. Ongoing research: using surveys to assess the connection between individual-level income and support for the Congress party and digitizing the biographies of Indian MPs to investigate whether the green revolution led to a rise in the legislative representation of farmers.